

## **Challenges of Urbanization in South India: Diverse Patterns and Different Trajectories**

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*There are broadly two strands of argument regarding the urbanization process in India. One, the urbanisation process is centred around large urban agglomerations and is exclusionary in nature (Kundu:2003); two, the process is taking place primarily through the spread of small towns and census towns and is a dispersed pattern of urbanization (Guin and Das:2015). When viewed from these two points of view, the urbanisation pattern in south India substantiates both the viewpoints. In the sense that the two large states, Karnataka and (united) Andhra Pradesh have witnessed an extraordinary growth of urban agglomerations of Bangalore and Hyderabad with urban primacy and to an extent exclusionary urbanisation being the main feature, while the two other states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala have experienced more dispersed and possibly more inclusive urbanisation process over the inter-census period of 2001 to 2011. This paper elucidates these processes of urbanization in South India and the challenges inherent to them.*

*Keywords: urbanisation, south Indian states, urban primacy, thin urban spread, dispersed urbanisation*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper deals with the challenges to the urbanisation process in the context of south India. The main objective of the paper is to delineate the patterns of urbanisation in the four south Indian states and, in the process, to shed light on the implications of these processes and lessons for the other Indian states. The paper also attempts to probe on issues concerning urban planning such as prevalence of poverty in these states. An introduction apart, the paper is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The second section dwells on Kerala and Tamil Nadu, while the third section briefly focuses on the issue of urban poverty in these states. The fourth section draws lessons from the diverse patterns of urbanisation process of these states for the other Indian states. The final section presents the concluding thoughts.

There are broadly two strands of argument regarding the urbanisation process in India. One, the urbanisation process is centred around the large urban agglomerations and is exclusionary in nature (Kundu: 2003), two, the process is taking place primarily through the spread of small towns and census towns and is a dispersed pattern of urbanisation (Guin and Das:2015). When viewed from these two points of view, the urbanisation pattern in south India corresponds to both the points of view. In the sense that the two large states, Karnataka and (united) Andhra Pradesh, have seen an extraordinary growth of urban agglomerations of Bangalore and Hyderabad with urban primacy being the main feature, while the two other states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala have witnessed a more dispersed urbanisation process over the census decade of 2001 to 2011. Thus, this paper argues that while the urbanisation pattern in the former two states i.e., Karnataka

and (united) Andhra Pradesh, exemplifies urban primacy and exclusionary urban growth, exacerbating urban-rural inequalities, the pattern of urbanisation in the context of Kerala and Tamil Nadu has been more dispersed and thus, to a certain extent, more inclusive. This is particularly true in the case of Kerala with the emergence of a number of new small and census towns between 2001 and 2011. The urbanisation pattern observed in respect of Tamil Nadu too is more or less the same. The former two states, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh support the argument put forth by Kundu (2003) whereas a dispersed pattern of urbanisation in respect of Kerala and Tamil Nadu substantiates the viewpoint made by Guin and Das (2015). These patterns of urbanisation within South India are thus diverse and throw up challenges to policy making with respect to urbanisation across different states within India in general, and South India in particular.

According to Census classification, any locality with a population of 5000 persons and 75 percent of the male population working in non-agricultural occupations and a density of 400 persons per square kilometre population is an urban locality. Further, the Census provides a detailed classification of urban areas, as is shown in the following Table:

**TABLE 1  
CLASSIFICATION OF URBAN LOCALITIES IN INDIA**

<b>Category of City/ Town</b>	<b>Population Range</b>
<b>Class I</b>	1,00,000 and above
<b>Class II</b>	50,000-99,999
<b>Class III</b>	20,000-49,999
<b>Class IV</b>	10,000-19,999
<b>Class V</b>	5,000-9,999
<b>Class VI</b>	Less than 5,000

These urban localities are of critical importance to the Indian economy and polity and society, as their economic contribution to national income is substantial and growing; their political significance stems from the fact that political power flows from them; cities form the nodes and sinews of political power. Socially and culturally, they have both liberatory and emancipatory potential besides being hegemonic in the larger society; the below Table presented below illuminates a tentative estimate of the contribution of cities to the national income.

**TABLE 2  
CONTRIBUTION OF CITIES TO THE NATIONAL INCOME IN INDIA  
(APPROXIMATE ESTIMATES)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Percentage of urban to the total population</b>	<b>Estimated contribution of urban area to the national income ( %)</b>
<b>1951</b>	17.3	29
<b>1981</b>	23.3	47
<b>1991</b>	25.7	55
<b>2001</b>	30.5	60

Source: National Commission on Urbanisation (2001)

In the overall urbanization scenario of the country, along with Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and Goa, the south Indian states too are ahead. In respect of Kerala, urbanization accounts for 47.7 percent, 48.4 percent for Tamil Nadu, 38.47 per cent for Karnataka and 33.49 percent for A.P. This urbanisation process could be attributed largely to economic reforms and subsequent growth of the economy.

**TABLE 3**  
**URBANISATION IN FOUR SOUTH INDIAN STATES 1991-2011**  
**(URBAN POPULATION FIGURES IN PERCENTAGES)**

State/Year	1991	2001	2011
<b>Karnataka</b>	30.9	33.99	38.67
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	26.9	27.30	33.49
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	34.2	44.0	48.4
<b>Kerala</b>	26.4	26.0	47.7

Source: Census of 1991, 2001, 2011.

The above Table shows a steady urbanisation across all the south Indian states over the census periods from 1991 to 2011. In respect of Karnataka urbanisation shows an increase from of 30.9 percent in 1991 to 38.67 percent in 2011. In the case of Andhra Pradesh from 26.9 percent in 1991 to 33.49 percent in 2011. Similarly in respect of Tamil Nadu urbanisation shows an increase from 34.2 percent in 1991 to 48.4 percent in 2011, while in the case of Kerala 26.4 percent in 1991 to 47.7 percent in 2011 (though with a dip in 2001). Thus, while all the south Indian states have been observed urbanising, their trajectories over the past three decades have differed.

In the following section, first we consider the cases of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

#### **‘URBAN PRIMACY’ IN KARNATAKA AND ANDHRA PRADESH**

Urban primacy remains a significant factor in the urban development of these two states. The concept of urban primacy was first introduced by geographer Mark Jefferson<sup>1</sup> (Jefferson: 1939). As Jordanian scholar Servet Mutlu<sup>1</sup> (Mutlu,1989:611-12) puts it:

‘Primacy, in the original Jeffersonian [Mark Jefferson: 1939] sense of the term, means that the size of the first city in a country [or a State of a country] is disproportionately large in relation to the size of the second city.’

The literature on urban primacy highlights that this is a feature that usually characterises in the pattern of development in today’s developing countries. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the context of Latin America (Browning:1989). Browning says:

‘The urban system of most Latin American countries is dominated by a primate city which overwhelms the cultural, economic, political and social life of the nation.’ And Browning goes on to say, ‘Latin America, among the world’s regions, is most characterized by high primacy. Most Latin American countries not only have a primate city, they exhibit strong or prominent primacy. A disturbing recent trend is the growth of many of the primate cities into giant cities with populations exceeding six million.’ (Browning, 1989, pp71-2)

The urban development process in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh remains characterised by spatial concentration; there is a serious absence of spatial de-concentration or decentralization of urban development. The consequence of this urban primacy is that the district-tier cities get neglected in respect of development, governance and local democracy. The literature on urban primacy suggests that the phenomenon is associated with inequality among cities within the urban system, and intra-city inequality among social groups, and that this pattern of development is highly elitist in nature. The figures below attest to the phenomenon of primate city development:

- **Karnataka**

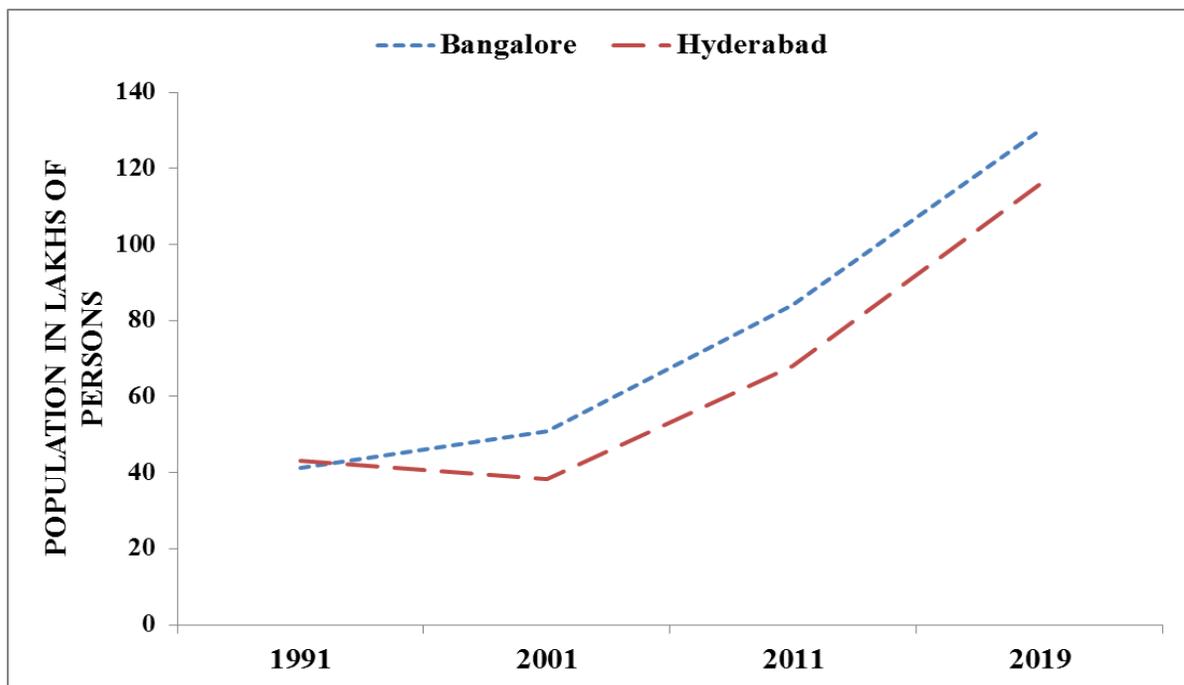
- According to 2011 census, Bangalore with a population of 8.426 million is 9.49 times larger than Mysore, which is home to a population of 8,87,446.
- According to 2011 census, Bangalore with a population of 8.426 million is 8.9 times larger than the second largest city of Karnataka i.e., Hubballi, with a population of 9,43,857.
- **Andhra Pradesh(AP)**
  - According to 2011 census, Hyderabad with a population of 6.81 million is 8.3 times larger than the next biggest city in Telangana, Warangal, with a population of 8,11,844 (close to Mysore’s population).
  - According to 2011 census, Hyderabad with a population of 6.81 million is 9.15 times larger than the next largest city in Andhra Pradesh, Guntur, whose population is 7,43,654.

**TABLE 4**  
**POPULATION FIGURES OF BANGALORE AND HYDERABAD (1991-2019)**

City/ Population	1991	2001	2011	2019
<b>Bangalore</b>	4,130,000	5,101,000	8,421,970	13,000,000
<b>Hyderabad</b>	4,300,000	3,829,753	6,810,000	11,572,000

Source: Census of India

**FIGURE 1**  
**POPULATION GROWTH OF BANGALORE AND HYDERABAD**



What we present here reminds us of what Amitabh Kundu earlier called ‘top heavy’ urbanization process<sup>1</sup>. We need to explain this concept. First, this ‘top heavy’ urbanization process is partly a historical

product of colonialism; and secondly, the process of primate city development is further accentuated by the economic reform process started since 1991. The state governments, in their eagerness to attract industries such as Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), pharmaceuticals industry, bio-technology and other investments to their respective capital cities, have been largely responsible for 'top heavy' urbanization. For example, Shaw (1999) says the following regarding Hyderabad in her article calling the latter, 'The Rising Star: Hyderabad':

'No other city has been hailed as much by the media as Hyderabad symbolising an information-based economy exporting to global markets and drawing on high quality professionals and technology as Hyderabad. And no other state has received as much media attention in this context as Andhra Pradesh. Though Bangalore is still ahead in terms of its software output, Hyderabad is predicted to overtake it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The thrust towards software and information systems of Andhra Pradesh and Hyderabad received a big boost in the mid-nineties with Chandrababu Naidu coming to power in the state.' (pp976-977)

The Table given below presents the sample demographics of the urban system in Andhra Pradesh. As the Table illustrates the differences in population sizes between different cities are clear. The Table also shows the differences in the population size of the state capital of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, and the district capitals of Mahabubnagar and Kurnool and the towns below them. It can be seen from the Table that there is a staggering difference in the population between Hyderabad and the district cities and towns below them. This snapshot picture demonstrates the nature of urban primacy and urban development in Andhra Pradesh.

**TABLE 5  
STRUCTURE OF URBAN SYSTEM IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

<b>City</b>	<b>Level of the City</b>	<b>Population (2011)</b>
<b>Hyderabad</b>	<b>State Capital</b>	<b>6.81 Million</b>
<b>Mahabubnagar</b>	<b>District Capital</b>	<b>2, 17,942</b>
Mahabubnagar	Mandal coming under Mahabubnagar District	
Badepally	Mandal coming under Mahabubnagar District	32,598
Narayanpet	Mandal coming under Mahabubnagar District	41,752
<b>Kurnool</b>	<b>District Capital</b>	<b>4,24,920</b>
Nandyal	Mandal coming under Kurnool District	2,11,000
Adoni	Mandal coming under Kurnool District	1,66,344
Yemmiganur	Mandal coming under Kurnool District	95,149
Dhone	Mandal coming under Kurnool District	59,272

Regarding Karnataka, the official document ‘Urban Development Policy for Karnataka’ (2009) has this to say:

‘As in the case of economic and human development, there are serious regional imbalances in urban development in Karnataka... Much of the imbalance is caused by the huge gap between the size and economic role of Bangalore and the next largest cities in the State or what may be called the “Bangalore-centric” development.’ (pp7-8)

The Table given below presents a picture of the sample demographics of the urban system in Karnataka. From the Table, it is clear that population size varies drastically across the state capital, district capital and towns below them. We also observe that the same is the case with Andhra Pradesh. The Table below provides sample demographic statistics for the state capital Bangalore and two districts Hubballi- Dharwad and Udupi. The differences in figures are self-explanatory.

**TABLE 6  
THE STRUCTURE OF URBAN SYSTEM IN KARNATAKA**

City	Level of the City	Population (2011)
<b>Bangalore</b>	<b>State Capital</b>	<b>8.426 Million</b>
<b>Hubballi-Dharwad (H-D)</b>	<b>District Capital</b>	<b>9,43,857</b>
Navalgund	Taluka under Dharwad District	24,613
Kalghatgi	Taluka under Dharwad District	14,676
Kundagol	Taluka under Dharwad District	16,837
<b>Udupi</b>	<b>District Capital</b>	<b>1,65,401</b>
Karkala	Taluka under Udupi District	25,824
Kundapur	Taluka under Udupi District	1,60,000
Udupi	Taluka under Udupi District	

Some implications of the process are the following. Urban primacy means spatial concentration of urban population. One large city develops in terms of population over the others, acquiring the position of a mega urban agglomeration. Service sector, industry and informal economies get concentrated in the mega urban agglomerations. This pattern of urban growth is highly and fallaciously recommended by economists because it is said to carry economies of scale and positive externalities. However, this has serious negative implications for politics and governance. Some of them we discuss below.

Urban primacy means political concentration. With political power flowing from the cities, what takes place is a spatial concentration of political and bureaucratic power. The offices of government, bureaucracy, justice and law and order are all concentrated in the mega urban agglomerations leading to a spatial concentration of the decision making power.

Urban primacy also means domination of a single city over the others. The mega urban agglomerations tend to dominate economically, politically and culturally over the other cities and surrounding rural areas of the region. Also, the mega urban agglomerations become centres of economic, political and cultural elite, around which form the paraphernalia of media, technocracy and political middlemen. The culture industries of particular languages or ethnic groups too get concentrated in these mega urban agglomerations, making them sources of cultural hegemony. Their economies wield enormous power and dominance. The financial

services of an entire economy too are often concentrated in the mega cities becoming hubs and headquarters of finance from where, financial services branch out to other cities and places of the region.

Urban primacy being coterminous with political centralization runs against the tenets of decentralization and subsidiarity principle. Both intra-city and inter-city decision making powers get concentrated in the hands of top political elite groups as these mega urban agglomerations also serve as political capitals.

Urban development of this kind leads to the concentration of health and educational services, both public and private, in one city. Elite university and higher education centres, hospitals and healthcare industries, become concentrated in mega urban agglomerations, making it difficult for citizens from other places to access these services. Gradually these education and health industries develop their own elites. Thus primate city becomes the only repository of high quality services such as super-specialty hospitals and elite institutions of higher learning.

Browning (1989), while noting the consequences of urban primacy, states that,

‘It should be noted at the outset that the consequences of high urban primacy need to be viewed in the context in which they are found. In Latin America, for example, many of the countries are so small in area and population that it makes sense to have most of the high order urban functions in one city. Primate cities in these countries can easily serve the entire country and are in no danger of becoming excessively large. In larger countries, however, the concentration of so much of a country’s population, political power, wealth, brains and talent often comes at the expense of the regional centres. The siphoning off from the provinces of these able and ambitious people deprives these regions of people with leadership qualities.’ (p.76).

A more telling consequence, as Browning says, is that:

‘Growth of the larger primate cities has worsened already severe urban problems: traffic, pollution (air and water), the provision of water and waste disposal, and increase in land prices and crime levels. Politicians and political parties are often particularly sensitive to the needs of primate city, traditionally a symbol of national pride and achievement. The political authorities also view these giant cities as potential tinder boxes of discontent. Thus there is a tendency to favour the primate city at the expense of the smaller towns and rural areas who are left to muddle through because they pose less of a threat to political stability.’

While the above are the consequences of urban primacy, two interesting facts worth noting regarding Andhra Pradesh are that it is the only state where along with Hyderabad, during the period 1991 to 2011, other urban agglomerations too have grown steadily from 15 in 1991 to 58 in 2011. The second important fact is that Andhra Pradesh is also the state that accounts for the second highest slum population at 15.6 percent out of the total slum population of India for 2011. This has grown from 12 percent in 2001 to 15.6 percent. This is second highest in the country after Maharashtra. Considering a steady growth of urban agglomerations and even steadier growth of Hyderabad city, we may infer that a considerable percentage of this population growth is the result of migration to urban agglomerations in general and, Hyderabad, in particular. Karnataka, on the other hand, has not witnessed a similar growth of urban agglomerations other than Bangalore. The number of other urban agglomerations shows a decline from 24 in 2001 to 22 in 2011, while Karnataka's share in slum population remains marginal at 5 percent, despite witnessing an increase in slum population by of 0.5 percent.

The Table given below presents a comparative picture of the growth of urban agglomerations for four south Indian states.

**TABLE 7**  
**NUMBER OF URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS IN SOUTH INDIA AND ALL INDIA**

State/ Year	1991	2001	2011
<b>Karnataka</b>	22	24	22
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	15	37	58
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	34	27	25
<b>Kerala</b>	16	17	19
<b>All India</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>474</b>

Source: Census of India, 2011(2019)

The above Table clearly shows that the number of urban agglomerations with a million plus population has actually come down in Tamil Nadu from 34 to 25 over the period from 1991 to 2011, while they have remained more or less stable at 22 in Karnataka during 1991 and 2011. The two states that have seen a fair growth of urban agglomerations are Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Andhra Pradesh has seen a steep rise in urban agglomerations from 15 in 1991 to 58 in 2011, while Kerala has seen a rise in agglomerations from 16 to 19 –an increase, not so steep as in the case of Andhra Pradesh. However, together, these present an interesting picture. In Andhra Pradesh in particular we observe a spectacular growth of Hyderabad as well as other urban agglomerations, while in respect of Karnataka, it is that of Bangalore alone. In Tamil Nadu, we see a growth in population of Chennai, while a decline in number of other urban agglomerations. In respect of Kerala we see a fair growth of statutory towns, census towns and more importantly, a steady though marginal, growth of agglomerations. Thus it is undeniable that south India has been urbanising at a steady pace over the past 30 years though each state in its own way and according to its earlier set trajectory.

**TABLE 8**  
**PERCENTAGE OF SLUM POPULATION TO THE TOTAL SLUM POPULATION OF INDIA**

State/ Year	1991	2001	2011
<b>Karnataka</b>	NA	4.5	5
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	NA	12	15.6
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	NA	8.1	8.9
<b>Kerala</b>	NA	NA	NA
<b>All India</b>	<b>54.9</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>29.4</b>

Source: Census of India, 2011(2019) ( NA= Figures Not Available)

The above Table presents figures for slum population in the country. The overall percentage of slum population to the total urban population has come down in the country from 54.9 percent in 1991 to 29.4 percent in 2011. The trends in the south Indian states appear to the contrary as compared to the all India scenario. The slum population has marginal increase in Karnataka from 4.5 percent in 2001 to 5 percent in 2011, while, Andhra Pradesh has witnessed, along with an overall rapid urbanisation trend, a rapid growth in slum population from 12 percent in 2001 to 15.6 percent in 2011 and Tamil Nadu has also seen a marginal increase in the slum population from 8.1 to 8.9 during the period 2001 to 2011. While the national trends show a considerable decline in the slum population, the trends in south India in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular, show a net increase in the slum population.

#### **DISPERSED URBANISATION: KERALA AND TAMIL NADU**

##### **Kerala**

Historically, Kerala has had a unique pattern of human habitation in terms of being characterised by a rural-urban continuum rather than a spatial break between the rural and urban areas. For the eye of a casual

observer, it is difficult to differentiate between urban and rural localities in the case of Kerala. However, the scenario is changing with Kerala urbanising at a faster pace during the inter-census period of 2001-2011. As the Table given below shows clearly the percentage of urban population in Kerala was only 26 percent in 2001, has jumped to 47.7 percent by 2011. The Kerala State Urbanisation Report, 2012, explains the recent spurt in urbanisation in the following words:

‘The analysis of the components of urban growth, namely, natural increase, net migration and areal reclassification, reveals that urbanisation in Kerala is mainly due to areal reclassification and that the other two factors are comparatively insignificant in Kerala scenario. Areal reclassification is the declaration of a hitherto rural area as urban mainly due to the shift in occupational structure there from agriculture to other categories of employment making the percentage of non agricultural male workers greater than 75, thus satisfying the census criteria to declare an area as urban. This may not have reflection in the physical development, but for presence of nodes with significant built up to cater the population in this area’ (pp106).

And the report goes on to observe:

Urbanisation in the state of Kerala shows marked peculiarities. Generally, increase in urban population growth rate is the result of overconcentration in the existing cities especially million plus urban agglomerations. This is true in the case of urbanisation in the other states of India. However, in Kerala, the main reason for urban population growth is the increase in the number of urban areas as well as urbanisation of peripheral areas of existing major urban centres. The existence of more census towns (class 3&4 towns) shows higher degree of dispersion of urban settlements.’(pp106)

The report makes clear the pattern of urban growth in Kerala in the following observation:

‘The higher order towns (Class I and II) in Kerala show a decline in growth of population whereas the lower order towns (Class III towns located mainly in the fringe areas of higher order towns) are growing. Analysis shows that the outgrowths of Class I towns and Class II towns show more growth (in population) than their core indicating a stage of suburbanisation in Kerala.’(pp106).

**TABLE 9**  
**URBANISATION IN KERALA 2001-2011: A PANOPTIC VIEW**

Category of City/ Town	Population Range	No. of Towns in 2001	Total Urban Population in 2001	No of Towns in 2011	Total Urban Population in 2011
<b>Class I</b>	1,00,000 and above	10	36,92,165	9	32,62,380
<b>Class II</b>	50,000-99,999	24	15,87,908	29	18,88,254
<b>Class III</b>	20,000-49,999	72	27,96,457	254	79,25,828
<b>Class IV</b>	10,000-19,999	37	5,66,635	159	23,52,637
<b>Class V</b>	5,000-9,999	15	1,19,062	61	4,67,045
<b>Class VI</b>	Less than 5,000	1	4,699	8	36,027
<b>Total</b>		<b>159</b>	<b>82,66,925</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>1,59,32,171</b>

Source: Census of India (Provisional Population Statistics)

**TABLE 10**  
**THE GROWTH OF CLASS III, IV AND V TOWNS IN KERALA**

Category of City/ Town	Population Range	No. of Towns in 2001	No of Towns in 2011
<b>Class I</b>	1,00,000 and above	10	9
<b>Class II</b>	50,000-99,999	24	29
<b>Class III</b>	20,000-49,999	72	254
<b>Class IV</b>	10,000-19,999	37	159
<b>Class V</b>	5,000-9,999	15	61
<b>Class VI</b>	Less than 5,000	1	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>159</b>	<b>520</b>

Source: Census of India, 2011 (Provisional Population Statistics)

The above Table clearly shows that class III towns have increased from 72 to 254; class IV towns from 37 to 159; and class V towns from 15 to 61. These account for the major part of increase in the urbanisation of Kerala. On the other hand the 2011 Census figures presented by the Union government, tell us that urban agglomerations too have increased in Kerala from 16 in 1991 to 19 in 2011. There is a difference in the data provided by both the State Urbanisation Report, which shows a decline in the number of urban agglomerations, and the Union government's census report, which shows a steady, (though not steep) increase in urban agglomerations in Kerala. There is a likelihood that both are correct and along with class III, IV and V towns, class I urban agglomerations too are on the rise. Whichever is the case, or both taken together, they present a different picture from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Certainly urban primacy is not the prevalent feature of Kerala, on the contrary, it is urban dispersal among many class I to V towns that is the salient feature.

**TABLE 11**  
**PROPORTION OF URBAN POPULATION: 2001-2011 KERALA**

State / District Code	State / District	Proportion 2001	Proportion 2011
1	2	3	4
<b>32</b>	<b>Kerala</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>47.7</b>
1	Kasaragod	19.4	38.9
2	Kannur	50.3	65.0
3	Wayanad	3.8	3.9
4	Kozhikode	38.2	67.2
5	Malappuram	9.8	44.2
6	Palakkad	13.6	24.1
7	Thrissur	28.2	67.2
8	Ernakulam	47.6	68.1
9	Idukki	5.1	4.7
10	Kottayam	15.3	28.6
11	Alappuzha	29.5	54.0
12	Pathanamthitta	10.0	11.0
13	Kollam	18.0	45.0
14	Thiruvananthapuram	33.8	53.7

**TABLE 12**  
**POPULATION AND DECADAL CHANGE BY RESIDENCE: 2011 (PERSONS) KERALA**

State / District Code	State / District	Urban Population 2011	Percentage decadal change 2001-2011
32	Kerala	1,59,34,926	92.8
1	Kasaragod	5,09,047	117.8
2	Kannur	16,40,986	35.3
3	Wayanad	31580	6.6
4	Kozhikode	20,72,572	88.2
5	Malappuram	18,17,211	410.2
6	Palakkad	6,76,810	89.8
7	Thrissur	20,96,406	149.7
8	Ernakulam	22,34,363	51.3
9	Idukki	52045	-9.6
10	Kottayam	5,65,393	88.6
11	Alappuzha	11,48,146	84.8
12	Pathanamthitta	1,31,613	6.3
13	Kollam	11,87,158	154.8
14	Thiruvananthapuram	17,71,596	62.3

The urban growth in Kerala during the inter-census period 2001-2011 has been rapid, with two highlights. One, it is not on the line that Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have witnessed. Kerala has seen the growth of many urban centres besides a quantum jump in the number of census towns and statutory towns during the period. This is not merely because of ‘census activism’ or an aggressive registration of small places as ‘urban localities’. There has been a genuine growth of the census and statutory towns and a number of urban agglomerations other than Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of the State.

The recent growth trends have posed new problems to urban governance in Kerala. The new Census Towns and Statutory Towns need new local governance institutions and mechanisms. Although Kerala is well-known for its achievements in the domain of local self-governance, this is largely limited to rural areas i.e., Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Now, in the light of new developments, Kerala has to provide a fresh impetus to urban local self-governance. A recent Paper (from Centre for Public Policy) Research by Mathew and Dhanuraj (Mathew and Dhanuraj: 2017) argues that at present the urban local governments in Kerala operate under a very restricted conditions; and that the Kerala Municipality Act provides for overwhelming powers to the state government to intervene, and often, to overrule urban local self-governments. The paper, for instance, notes that:

‘The devolution of functions to ULBs is only partial, as Kerala Municipality Act, 1994 gives the state Government overriding powers over ULBs. Some of the provisions of the Act that allow the State Government to prevail over ULBs are listed below:

- Section 56, Kerala Municipality Act: *Government may, by notification in Gazette make rule to carry out all or any purpose of KM Act subject to approval by the state legislature.*
- Section 64, Kerala Municipality Act: *Government may dissolve LSGIs if the Government is of the opinion that the LSGIs persistently make default in performing the duties imposed on it by law. The dissolution of the LSGIs is subject to approval by the state legislature.*
- Section 57, Kerala Municipality Act: *Government may cancel a resolution or decision taken by LSGIs if Government is of the opinion that it is not legally passed or in excess*

*of the power conferred by KMAct/any other law or likely to endanger human life, health, public safety or communal harmony or in violation of directions issued by Government.*

- Section 58, Kerala Municipality Act: *The State Government have the power to issue directions to local bodies in accordance with the national and state policies in matters of finance, maintenance of accounts, office managements, selection of schemes, sites and beneficiaries, proper function of ward sabhas and ward committees, welfare programmes, environmental control etc.*

The above provisions illustrate that ULBs in Kerala are functioning in a restrictive setting. The result is that ULBs are unable to exercise the powers that are transferred to them.’ (All emphasis in the quotation in the original).

The CPPR article concludes by observing:

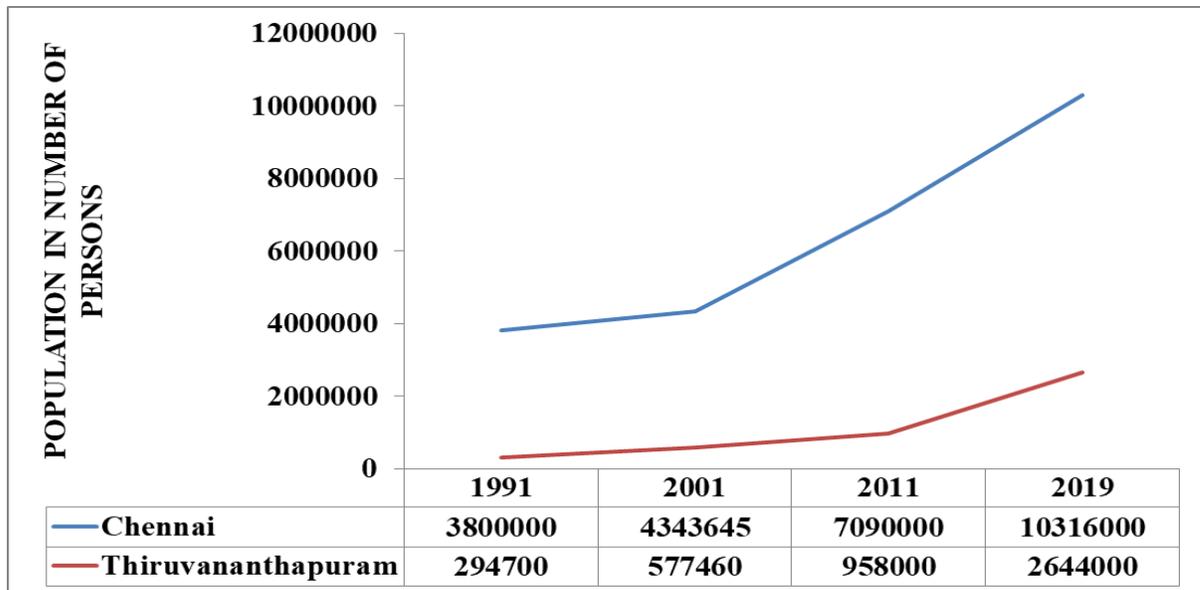
‘Rapid level of urbanisation in Kerala calls for the improvement of urban infrastructural facilities. In theory, the city government should be in charge of meeting the growing demands of a city. However, in Kerala, for every problem faced by a city, ranging from waste management to transportation, local bodies/ Mayors look to the State or Central Government for help, because the local bodies in the state are powerless and lacking in adequate resources’.

And,

‘ULBs can manage the needs of the cities, only if they develop into independent and autonomous institutions. To achieve this, more administrative and fiscal powers should be delegated to the local bodies’.

The above observations made by the CPPR paper can be taken as an indicator of the challenges faced by Kerala in its urbanisation process and governance.

**FIGURE 2**  
**POPULATION GROWTH OF CHENNAI AND THIRUVANANTHAPURAM (1991-2019)**



**TABLE 13**  
**POPULATION GROWTH FIGURES FOR CHENNAI AND THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**  
**(1991-2019)**

City/ Population	1991	2001	2011	2019
<b>Chennai</b>	3,800,000	4,343,645	7,090,000	10,316,000
<b>Thiruvananthapuram</b>	294,700(?)	577,460	958,000	2,644,000

Source: Census of India

### Tamil Nadu

According to 2011 census, Tamil Nadu has witnessed a steady decline in the number of urban agglomerations from 34 in 1991 to 27 in 2001 to 25 in 2011. While Chennai has seen a growth it is not as steep as in respect of Bangalore and Hyderabad. The urban slums too have registered a marginal growth in Tamil Nadu during 2001 to 2011 from 8.1 percent of the total slum population of the country to 8.9 percent. Urban poverty in Tamil Nadu has been drastically reduced. Below are given urban poverty figures for all the four south Indian states.

**TABLE 14**  
**PERCENTAGE OF URBAN POPULATION UNDER POVERTY LINE**

State/ Year	2004-5	2008-9	2010-11
<b>Karnataka</b>	25.9	19.6	15.3
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	23.4	17.7	5.8
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	19.8	12.8	6.5
<b>Kerala</b>	18.4	12.1	5.0
<b>All India</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>13.7</b>

Source: Census of India, 2011(2019).

### ‘URBANISATION OF POVERTY’?

According to the *India: Urban Poverty Report of 2009* based on 2001 census, there is an ‘urbanisation of poverty’ in India. However, the figures presented above do not support that view. Certainly, so far as the four south Indian states are concerned, proportions of population living below poverty line (measured according Tendulkar Committee calculations) has come down drastically during 1991 to 2011. The above figures speak for themselves. Among these, only Karnataka accounts for 15.3 percent of urban poor, which is above the national average of 13.7 percent for 2011. However, we hasten to add that Karnataka too has witnessed drastic reduction in urban poverty from 25.9 percent to 15.3 percent. The above statistics certainly do not lead us into believing that there is an ‘urbanisation of poverty’. In all the four south Indian states, urban poverty has come down drastically during 1991 to 2011. There is a need to mention here the growth of slum population in Andhra Pradesh. Does that indicate urbanisation of poverty in that state? In Andhra Pradesh too, urban poverty has gone down drastically during 2004-5 and 2011. This, perhaps, indicates that not all slum populations come under poverty line or slum populations have been better covered by different governments in terms of urban welfare schemes.

## CONCLUSIONS

In an overall perspective of urbanisation of south Indian States, when we compare the of states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala with the other two south Indian States i.e., Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, we find that the latter exhibit marked urban 'primacy', with the primate cities of Bangalore and Hyderabad being pre-eminent in the urbanisation process, whereas, in respect of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the urbanisation process appears to be more dispersed, and spread across many districts with the respective capital cities of Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram not being the sole 'primate' cities. The statistics presented above on urbanisation show that in Karnataka, only Bangalore accounts for a major part of the urbanisation process, not other urban agglomerations; whereas in Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad has been growing steadily along with other urban agglomerations. In Tamil Nadu, on the other hand while the population of Chennai has been growing, the number of other urban agglomerations has declined. However, Tamil Nadu still has many and significant urban centres comparable in terms of population size to Chennai. This is also true for Kerala, where Thiruvananthapuram is not the sole primate city. For example, according to 2011 Census, in the case of Kerala, Ernakulam (32,82,388) and Kozhikode (30,86,293) seem to be more or less closer in terms of population to Thiruvananthapuram (33,01,437). Likewise, according to Census of 2011, in Tamil Nadu, Vellore (3,936,331), Kancheepuram (3,998,252) and Coimbatore (3,458,045) are closer to that of Chennai (4,636,732) in terms of population. Therefore, urban 'primacy' does not seem to have played a major role in the cases of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. This may also be due to other processes such as industrialisation process which is dispersed, and owing to specific policies of development and urbanization.

So, the point is what other states can learn from south India? Urban primacy and exclusionary development may be avoided and a dispersed urbanisation process may be adopted, so that the urbanisation process becomes spatially and socially just and equitable. The paper demonstrates that both Kundu's and Guin's views are vindicated by the south Indian urbanisation process. Karnataka and AP support Kundu's view; Kerala and Tamil Nadu support Guin's view. Both views are important so far as the urbanisation process in south India is concerned. And it should be borne in mind that the Kerala government State Urbanisation report in fact recommends integrated and 'compact urban form' as the need of the hour in the context a of thinly distributed 'urban spread' that is taking place now in the form of class III,IV and V towns. On the other hand, in respect of Karnataka and AP, we observe too much urban of concentration in one city. Therefore, the policy learning from these two extremes is that, both urban concentration and thin urban spread, should be avoided and that medium-size district- level towns, even if they are class I or II categories, should be prioritised in urban development. This kind of urbanisation pattern, along with concomitant industrialisation, seems to be already underway in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, this could be the policy towards which future urbanisation should be directed across south Indian states and also other Indian states.

The major urbanisation challenge to Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh is to ensure that their urbanisation process proceeds in a spatially just and socially equitable manner. For Kerala, it is to find the optimum size of urban unit to be developed. For all the states of south India the challenge is to develop robust, self-governing urban local governance institutions on the lines indicated by the constitution of India in its 74th Amendment. If the latter is true in respect of Karnataka, AP/ Telangana (now) and Kerala, it is more than true for Tamil Nadu where local bodies have remained dormant for many years now with the local government elections only recently held. The challenge of a genuine local self-government at the city-level is a common challenge for all the south Indian states.

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