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**Urban Governance in the  
Context of Urban 'Primacy':  
A Comparison of Karnataka  
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# URBAN GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN 'PRIMACY': A COMPARISON OF KARNATAKA AND ANDHRA PRADESH

Anil Kumar Vaddiraju\*

## Abstract

*This article posits that studies dealing with the contemporary urbanization phenomenon in respect of the developing countries need to pay as much attention to 'governance' as to their 'political economy'. The paper contrasts the overemphasis on the political economy of cities with a comparison of the urbanization process and governance with respect to Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh as a case in point. The paper finds that the two states continue to remain characterized by 'urban primacy' and the absence of a required focus on constitutional governance despite the presence of the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act. The paper emphasises that there is need for concerted efforts on the part of the state towards a genuine urban decentralization in the context of a growing urban centralization and 'primacy' in order to ensure that governance at the district and taluk-level cities is not neglected completely.*

**Key words:** Urban Governance; urbanization; urban primacy; Constitutional governance; Karnataka; Andhra Pradesh

## Introduction

This paper argues that while studying the urbanization process in contemporary developing countries, as much attention should be devoted to governance, as to the political economy. Secondly, taking the example of two south Indian states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh<sup>1</sup>, the paper argues that both the states are characterised by 'urban primacy' i.e., the size of the first cities (Bangalore and Hyderabad) is many times more than the second cities (district-level cities). This connotes what Kundu (2014) called 'top heavy' urbanization in these two states. The paper further argues that this 'top heavy' urbanization process has deleterious effects on the governance of both district-level cities and the 'primate cities' themselves. In this pattern of development, while the district-level cities suffer owing to lack of sufficient attention on their governance, primate cities' governance too suffers owing to the un-governability of their size. Urban local self-governance then becomes only nominal in both the cases.

While the above themes are the foci of this paper, the first section deals with the approach of the paper and makes it clear why a re-orientation of focus is needed in urbanization studies from political economy to governance. The second section deals with a comparison of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh; the third section focuses on the nature of urban primacy and its effects on governance; and the fourth section draws all the strands together and forms the conclusion.

## Governance or Political Economy?

From a perspective of urbanization, it is often viewed that while the cities of the Western world form the core of urban governance, those of the developing countries continue to grapple mainly with the issues of political economy or are characterised, as they have been, by informal economies and other political economy issues such as the tertiary sector. Another strand of argument is that since cities of the

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developing countries evolved from the erstwhile Western colonialism (and hence, as the outposts of the Western world<sup>ii</sup>) they constitute 'peripheral' cities not only in the context of the global political economy, but also as far as the subject of urban governance is concerned (Flanagan, 1993).

This point of view is presented by Flanagan in his *Contemporary Urban Sociology*. Flanagan, in his study, says:

Among the major issues addressed by Third World urban sociology traditionally, perhaps the informal sector is the most indicative of the importance and the maturation of political economy under the world-system approach. This is because it illustrates the seamlessness of the structural forces that impact the cities of the world. Today the restructuring of the world economy displaces large segments of working class of the industrialized nations while generating a proto-working-class force in Third World cities. On the periphery the pool of would-be industrial workers concentrated in cities grows too rapidly while in the core the pool of displaced workers fails to evaporate. Cities are overpopulated with workers; we say "overurbanized". As workers find their way into the shadowy realms of created or left by dynamics of capitalism, we say that their employment has become "informal". (pp130-131)

However, the above point of view needs a correction in that not only the developing country cities have no longer remained on the global periphery, but also the spurt in urbanization since the 1990s has changed the landscape of issues in the urban science of these countries. However important the political economy may be, these cities have also acquired new features and new problems related to urban governance. The point to be noted is that the 'governance dimension' of these cities is critically important<sup>iii</sup> for the overall well-being of the people, both rich and poor.

In contrast to Flanagan's viewpoint, urbanization in the context of developing countries has received increased positive attention in the texts of urban politics (Davies and Imbroscio, 2009) in that there is a greater appreciation observed of the developing country urbanization pattern in respect of urban politics and urban governance *vis-a-vis* what Flanagan views. In fact, the political economy approach followed by Flanagan largely describes the developing country urbanization pattern in negative terms, while Stern (2009), for example, observes after reviewing the state-of-the-art in developing country urban studies, as below:

'As the growing importance (socially and economically) of cities is recognised, urban political studies will undoubtedly gain more traction in the comparative field. Just as political studies have followed urbanization patterns in the United States and Western Europe, the force of practical issues –such as dealing with poverty, disease, inequity, social diversity and infrastructural scarcity–will demand imaginative ideas that can help us to understand the complex politics of urban development of 80 percent of the world's population.

For the future of urban political studies in developing countries, there is nowhere to go but up'.

The above observations made by Stern (2009: 164-165) are indicative of a very positive attitude shown by urban politics texts towards the developing country urban politics and governance issues. The reasons for Flanagan taking a negative view and later urban politics texts taking a more positive approach are both ideological and temporal in nature. First, Flanagan takes an explicitly Marxian approach rooted in the third world studies of the 80s and 90s. Second, ever since Flanagan wrote his text in 1993, urbanization as a process has picked up its momentum in the developing world in general and South Asia in particular. With the increasing momentum of urbanization taking place in this part of the world, which remains largely unplanned, *ad hoc* and haphazard, a plethora of urban politics and governance issues have come to the fore. Therefore while we *do not* dismiss the ideological approach followed by Flanagan, the issues that have emerged today in the context of the developing world and South Asian urban areas in particular have more to do with urban governance, politics and planning. In fact, there is now a reconsideration of the entire approach of viewing the world in three parts, first, second and the third, besides many ramifications that the temporal and spatial changes have brought in to bear upon such a point of view.

Another important point is that not all cities in the developing countries have had an equal degree of colonial past and secondly those which were non-colonial cities, mostly parts of the local princely states, have had their own significant share of ethnic diversities and issues. A singular political economy approach may possibly gloss over these dimensions of reality, while sidestepping the most crucial issues pertaining to the politics and governance of these cities while on the other side, *politics of class*, as political economy so significantly focuses upon, forms only a marginal dimension of the politics and governance of these cities.

The dichotomizing of governance and the political economy may appear less than being correct, as some would argue that both the dimensions are important. The central focus on governance in this paper is on the ground that, so far there has been an overemphasis on the urban political economy rather than urban governance and politics. This exclusive focus on political economy most often overlooks the complex and relevant aspects of politics and governance. Secondly, most of the political economy studies concentrate on the metropolitan urban agglomerations, ignoring the district-level cities. This holds true in spite of the studies, as exceptions, that deal with the issue of urban governance with respect to the cities of developing countries. Flanagan's study, mentioned above, falls under the group of political economy studies. Flanagan discounts all other approaches to studying the developing world urban reality, other than a political economy/world system approach.

This is true of both the developing world and the region of South Asia, with the latter being considered historically as the least urbanised part of the developing world. It is indeed in keeping with the momentum of the South Asian urbanization process that the *Human Development Report of South Asia* made urbanization its major theme in 2014. *This fact indicates that there has been certain change as far as urbanization in the context of developing countries is considered, between 1993 and 2014.*

The *South Asia Human Development Report of 2014* for example, observes as follows:

'The challenges posed by urbanization in South Asia are complex and multi-faceted, especially when that urbanization has been rapid, mostly unplanned and disorganized. When these are compounded by pollution, congestion and inadequate basic services including water, power and transport, urbanization can become a nightmare for all, including policy makers. Cities also create challenges in the form of urban slums with inadequate access to water and sanitation facilities and insecure land tenure. Urbanization in this sense can be a source of accentuating poverty and inequality and a breeding ground for social conflict.

On the contrary, urbanization also provides opportunities. Urbanization can be a major force of wealth creation and freedom from deprivation. It is the driving force for modernization, economic growth and human development' (pp iv-v).

The above observation amply brings to the fore the dilemmas posed by the kind of urbanization process taking place in the developing countries in general, and South Asia in particular. Especially, the key words used in explaining the urbanization process in South Asia today, i.e., 'rapid, mostly unplanned and disorganised' point to the adverse impact on governance in terms of providing the basic facilities to the city dwellers and even overshadowing the other advantages associated with the urbanization.

The major findings of the *South Asia Human Development Report 2014* are:

1. 'Urbanization in South Asia has been rapid, unplanned and uneven, with a large share of the population concentrated in few large cities. The share of the small and medium cities in the total urban population has been declining overtime, putting strains on existing resources in the mega-cities. The level of urbanization in South Asia is increasing at fast rate, driven predominantly by the natural increases in urban population and rural to urban migration.
2. Urbanization has emerged as key contributor to economic growth for the South Asia region, with three fourths of total growth being generated in the cities. This urban economic growth process is beneficial not only for creating urban employment, but also for contributing to rural development in the region.
3. While urbanization has generated many opportunities in terms of urban-led economic growth for countries in South Asia, urban centres subsume wide disparities in access to key infrastructure and services like water, sanitation, adequate housing, public transport, health and education. These disparities are particularly pronounced between the slum and non-slum populations of the cities. They act as restraints on people's capabilities and are a major determinant of urban poverty and inequality.
4. Though the process of urbanization has been fairly recent, many of South Asia's mega-cities are already experiencing a decaying urban environment. Hazardous levels of air and water pollution, improper solid waste management and the

inability of cities to provide clean water and sanitation to urban residents have put the sustainability and liveability of South Asian cities into question.

5. The challenge for urban governance in South Asia is to go beyond creating wealth for only some of its urban residents. Urban governance in the region must work on critical issues including effective decentralization of power and resources; mobilizing revenues for financing urban infrastructure and municipal services; focusing on synergies between urban growth and informal employment; and improving the quality of urban environment for the vast majority of the urban poor' (pp2-3).

In this context, this study focuses on urban governance at the district-level cities in India. In fact, we look at both urban governance and local democracy.

### **The concept of governance**

From the foregoing discussion, it comes out that governance of cities is as much important as their political economy. The word governance has multiple connotations. The term has come to be used essentially as neoliberal governance wherein the state retreats and is no more a regulator or provider, but a facilitator. Following this definition, the state essentially has to facilitate markets and market-led development. The state of this type is envisaged as consisting of a thin bureaucracy, with the majority of its functions being outsourced to either private market players or civil society. This definition of the state builds on the failure of the commandist state in delivering high rates of economic growth. This is essentially an economic definition of the state in terms of its ability to promote markets and market associated development. The definition of a facilitator state came into prominence, essentially in the 1990s. Mark Bevir (2011) defines governance essentially as a 'pattern of rule' in which the state is characterised by a certain hybridness. That is, the state combines its functions with the outsourcing of its major functions to markets and civil society actors. Another definition of governance is provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) according to which the state has to function in partnership with market and civil society in a tri-sector (state, market and civil society) model.

However, these definitions discussed above connote roles for markets and civil society actors in varying degrees. Another dimension of governance concerns the relationship between governance and social capital. According to this definition, governance becomes effective, efficient and economical only if there is social capital in its surrounding society. That is, the more the civil society organizations that pressurise the state to work, the better will be the functioning of the state. To state otherwise, it is the density of civil society organizations, according to this point of view, which matters. Also following this view point, the state-civil society relationship is crucial irrespective of the nature of relationship i.e., synergistic or contestatory.

In this paper, by governance we mean *constitutional governance*. That is, governance as laid out by the Indian Constitution, particularly the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act concerning urban governance. Accordingly, this paper examines whether the governance at the district-level cities conforms to this mandatory stipulation or not.

The urban decentralization law being implemented in district-level cities in India is the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, the main features of which include:

### *The macro national policy*

The macro-policy for urban governance at the district-level is provided by the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment. The main features of this are: conducting regular periodic elections with affirmative action for SCs, STs and OBCs; providing 33 percent reservation for women; planning for town/city through district planning committees, planning for metropolitan cities through metropolitan planning committees; and constituting ward committees for citizen participation in governance.

As regards planning, the Constitution, as per article 243ZD (Jha and Mathur, 1999), has this to say:

1. *There shall be constituted in every state at the district level a district planning committee to consolidate the plans provided by the panchayats and the municipalities in the district and to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole.*
2. *The legislature of a state may, by law, make provisions with respect to*
  - a) *The composition of the district planning committees*
  - b) *The manner in which the seats in such committees shall be filled.*  
*Provided that not less than four-fifths of the total number of members of such a committee shall be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members of the panchayat at the district level and of the municipalities in the district in proportion to the ratio between population of the rural areas and of the urban areas in the district;*
  - c) *The functions relating to district planning which may be assigned to such committees;*
  - d) *The manner in which the chairperson of such committees shall be chosen'*

According to the Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution, i.e. article 243W, eighteen aspects<sup>iv</sup> of governance are to be devolved to urban local bodies (Jha and Mathur, 1999). Therefore, the macro-policy towards district urban planning and governance is clear. The Constitution is also clear on the devolution of powers and the functions to be devolved to the local bodies. However, while the Constitutional authority is promulgated by the central government and the legislature, the powers and functions to the local bodies are to be devolved by the state governments in India.

The interesting point is that the Indian state and its bureaucracy have to adapt to both the facilitator paradigm of governance and the constitutional decentralization process. The Indian state's response to adapting to both is imperfect, leaving much to be desired. S.K. Das (2013) notes the same point regarding bureaucracy. And it comes out in this study that this is the crucial dilemma which surrounds district level governance. This dilemma defines the very essence of the functioning or otherwise of local democracy, defined by the Constitution as local self-government. Besides the bureaucracy, many other structures of the state also tend to resist local self-governments particularly in urban areas at all levels. The Indian bureaucracy, in particular, appears markedly reluctant to adapt to both the concepts of state-as-facilitator and urban local-self government. This aspect is noted by Das (2013) as well. Das, for example, observes:

'As regards the facilitator's role, there have been significant problems. For example, the provisions of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74th amendments to the Constitution provide for passing on power to the elected members of the local bodies. These amendments have brought about a local governance system in which participate, regulate and monitor how agreed-upon things are done. The previous development administration in the district was centred on the Collector, with development programmes implemented by civil servants. The new system has reduced the role of the Collector and other civil servants, and brought in new institutions such as zila, intermediate and gram panchayats. This has altered the role of the civil servants working at the district and local levels from that of implementers to facilitators. Unfortunately, most civil servants working at the field level are yet to come to terms with their diminished role' (Das, 2013: 56-57).

### **Comparing Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh**

The methodological approach adopted in the paper relates to a comparison of Karnataka with Andhra Pradesh. Why these states? Because, at the outset, we have to note that the economic reforms initiated since 1991 have led to tremendous regional disparities in the country. Not all the states of the country have been growing evenly. The southern states, along with the western states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab, have been growing at a greater rate than the eastern and northern states. The growth of southern states has been rapid with Karnataka and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh being part of this process. Indeed, these two states adopted economic and governance reforms early and, as a consequence, investments have been flowing to these states significantly in sectors such as Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), bio-technology and the service sector<sup>v</sup>. Today Karnataka, more specifically Bangalore, which has come to be known as the 'silicon valley of India', alone accounts for 38 percent of the software exports from the country, followed by Andhra Pradesh (read Hyderabad) accounting for 14 percent of the software exports (Das and Sagara, 2017). The then two chief ministers of these states, S.M. Krishna in Karnataka and Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh, have been more than enthusiastic about the economic and governance reforms. In fact the latter was called, at that time, the 'poster boy' of economic and governance reforms, as he was able to attract substantial investments into the state. These reforms initiated by these two chief ministers in the early 90s have been continuing irrespective of the change of parties in government, change of chief ministers and even bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh state. In fact, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have been competing with one another in attracting investments. The politics underlying these reforms has been well noted (Mooij, 2004, Assadi, 2017 and Srinivasulu, 2017).

In the scholarly literature, one finds three explicit comparisons carried out with respect to these two states (Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka): one by Balasubramanyam and Balasubramanyam (Balasubramanyam and Balasubramanyam, 2012) and the other by Manor (2006). The first one, while comparing the political economy of these two states, holds that these are 'disparate twins' and the second paper by Manor (2006) compares the 'Successful Governance Reforms' of these two states.

Balasubramanyam and Balasubramanyam (2012) argues that the Karnataka model of development, led by software technology and the tertiary sector, has not succeeded in reducing rural poverty and that a substantial rural-urban inequality has led to Karnataka's 'elitist' growth. The study in fact terms it as 'Karnataka's Elitist Growth Model'. On the other hand, the study claims that the AP model of development has been able to reduce rural poverty to a fair extent, thanks to what the study calls a 'Populist Model of Development?' (the study observes this with a question mark). Following the study, the success of the AP model in reducing substantially both rural poverty and urban poverty could be attributed to the populist policies introduced by successive governments (Balasubramanyam and Balasubramanyam, 2012).

The study observes as follows:

'Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, though geographically contiguous, exhibit distinctly different growth and development trajectories. AP's record on reduction of poverty and fertility is commendable though it ranks lower than most other states, including Karnataka on other development indicators, such as literacy rates and absolute levels of mortality. Growth in Karnataka is driven mostly by the tertiary sector and skill intensive manufactures. The sort of growth experienced by Karnataka has provided jobs for the skilled and earned it kudos for its contribution to the production and export of software from the country. But its record on poverty reduction and creation of employment is relatively poor. The growth and development experience of the two states illustrates the influence of history and institutions in shaping policies for development and implementing them.'(pp50-51)

In the second instance of comparison, Manor (2006) discusses some prominent governance reforms being successfully implemented in both the states such as the *Bhoomi* project, the *Bangalore Action Task Force* (BATF) in Karnataka and women's self-help group programme, *Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas* (DWCRA) and Hyderabad Metro water reforms etc. In this regard, he highlights the role of the political leadership in steering these reforms successfully. Besides, Manor (2004) also compares the political developments of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Thus, these two adjacent states, which also share strong linguistic and cultural similarities, have been compared earlier in the literature. And what we are attempting to do in this paper is on the same lines. The two states have been growing at a rapid pace besides being ahead in carrying out economic and governance reforms. The point, however, is, the growth in these two states, thanks to an early adoption of economic and governance reforms, has been taking place in and around the capital cities. In Karnataka, the growth has been in and around Bangalore, while in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, in and around Hyderabad. Thus growth, a fall out of economic reforms, has also resulted in urban growth. Moreover, this urban growth is happening when the surrounding agricultural regions of the two states remain relatively neglected. Thus, the growth story presents itself as a regionally uneven and basically urban phenomenon.

In fact, a study terms the Chandrababu Naidu initiated growth path as 'Hyderabad-centric' (Srinivasulu, 2017) and the same holds true in the case of Bangalore. It is also true that the agricultural

sector in these states has been in dire straits. Farmers' suicides have been taking place in both the states. Scholarly reports with precise reasons and the extent of farmers' suicides remain few and far between. However, the media has more often than not put the number of suicides in thousands in both the states. Thus, the alarm bells are ringing clearly as far as the agricultural sector is concerned. Thus, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and now Telangana are comparable in view of a similar pattern of development.

It is a fact that growth is taking place in urban areas and is largely urban-centric. Therefore, it is important to examine the nature of urbanization in these two states. That is what this paper intends to undertake. In the context of the above said pattern of development, what has been happening to the governance of district-tier cities in these states? That is what we attempt to explore comparatively.

### **Urban Primacy and Urban Centralization<sup>vi</sup>**

Amitabh Kundu (2009) has earlier characterised the Asian and Indian urban development pattern as 'exclusionary urban development'. While this is true, what is taking place is not only exclusionary for social groups, but also spatially very unequal and uneven. The pattern of urbanization in the three south Indian states under consideration is so characterised by 'urban primacy' and spatial inequality<sup>vii</sup> that it is similar to what was earlier evidenced in respect of the Latin American continent. Here only one city in each state dominates urban development while the rest of the cities are either comparatively small or their development and governance have got stunted. The qualitative and quantitative nature of development is that of 'primate cities'; and the cities surrounding them are different in terms of demography, political economy, civic amenities and governance. We discuss the same below:

#### *'Urban Primacy' in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh*

Urban primacy is a significant factor in the urban development in these two states. The concept of urban primacy was originally introduced by geographer Mark Jefferson (1939). As Jordanian scholar Servet Mutlu (1989:611-12) puts it:

*'Primacy, in the original Jeffersonian sense of the term, means that the size of the first city in a country is disproportionately large in relation to the size of the second city.'*

The literature on urban primacy informs us that this is a feature that usually takes place in the development pattern of today's developing countries. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the context of Latin America (Browning, 1989). Browning, for example, 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...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' (1989:71-2).

The urban development process in Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh exhibits a very high level of spatial concentration; there is no spatial de-concentration or decentralization of urban development. Therefore, much of the attention is directed towards the development of Bangalore and Hyderabad cities in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh respectively. The impact of this urban primacy is increasingly being reflected in the neglect of district-tier cities with respect to development, governance and democracy. The literature on urban primacy informs us that such a phenomenon is associated with inequality among cities within the urban system, intra-city inequality among social groups and that this pattern of development is highly elite-oriented. The figures given below attest to the phenomenon of primate city development:

### *Karnataka*

- According to the 2011 census, Bangalore with 8.426 million population is bigger by 9.49 times than Mysore, the latter with a population of 8,87,446.
- According to the 2011 census, Bangalore, with a population of 8.426 million is bigger by 8.9 times than the second biggest city of Karnataka Hubballi, with a population of 9,43,857.

### *Andhra Pradesh*

- According to the 2011 census, Hyderabad, with a population of 6.81 million, is bigger than the next biggest city in Telangana, Warangal, by 8.3 times. Warangal has a population of 8,11,844 (close to Mysore's population).
- According to the 2011 census, Hyderabad with a population of 6.81 million is bigger than the next biggest city in Andhra Pradesh, Guntur, by 9.15 times. Guntur's population is 7,43,654.

Amitabh Kundu (2014) calls Indian urbanization a 'top heavy' urbanization process. However, we need to critically examine this concept. First, this 'top heavy' urbanization process is partly an historical colonial development hangover and secondly, the rapid increase of primate city development has its roots in the economic reforms introduced way back in 1991. In fact, it is the competitive interest shown by state governments in attracting industries such as IT and ITES, bio-technology industry and all other forms of industry and investments to the capital cities that has resulted in this 'top heavy' urbanization or primate city development. For example, Shaw (1996) 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).

As for Karnataka, the official document 'Urban Development Policy for Karnataka' (2009) states thus:

'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)

Some of the additional implications of this process are presented here. Urban primacy means that due to the spatial concentration of the urban population, one big city develops overtaking others in terms of population growth: thus it acquires the position of a mega urban agglomeration with the service sector, industry and informal economies all being concentrated in such mega urban agglomerations. In terms of census classification, these become metropolises. What appears disturbing is that this pattern of urban growth is highly and fallaciously recommended by economists because the process is said to carry with it economies of scale and positive externalities. However, this pattern of urban growth has serious negative implications for politics and governance. Some of these we discuss as below:

Urban primacy means political concentration, in that political power flows from cities. What takes place is a spatial concentration of political and bureaucratic power with the offices of government, bureaucracy, justice and law and order getting concentrated in the mega urban agglomerations. This in turn leads to the spatial concentration of decision-making power with respect to all matters that concern the citizens of the entire geographical region.

Urban primacy also means the domination of a single city over others. The mega urban agglomerations that flourish in the processes described above tend to dominate economically, politically and culturally all the other cities and other surrounding rural areas of the region. These mega urban agglomerations become centres of economic, political and cultural elites who spin around themselves an entire paraphernalia of media, technocracy and political middlemen. The culture industries of particular language or ethnic groups too become concentrated in these mega urban agglomerations, thus making them invincible to other cities in terms of hegemony and also their economies wield enormous power and dominance. And the last, but not least, fact is that the financial services of an entire economy too get concentrated in these cities. Cities of this type (described as mega urban agglomerations) become hubs and headquarters of a finance capital from where financial services branch out to other places in the region.

Urban primacy means also political centralization in terms of primate city development running counter to the logic of decentralization and the subsidiarity principle. Urban primacy, as mentioned above, runs squarely counter to the decentralization drives, reforms and laws. Both intra-city and inter-city decision-making powers get concentrated in the hands of top political elite groups considering that these mega urban agglomerations also serve as political capitals. This pattern of urban development is the very antithesis of the decentralization process.

Urban development of this kind leads to the concentration of all health and educational services in one city. Often, mega urban agglomerations also happen to be centres of education and health- both public and private. All university and higher education centres, and all hospitals and the healthcare industry in general, get concentrated in mega urban agglomerations, thus causing enormous difficulties, in the process, for the citizens in other places in the region in terms of accessing them when in need. Gradually, these education and health industries develop their own elite groups that are more interested in protecting their vested interests in these mega urban agglomerations. Thus a primate city becomes the only repository of these high quality services such as super-specialty hospitals and higher education in elite institutions of technology and management, besides hosting a multitude of elite 'think tanks' of policy thinking and making.

Some of the problems of governance in primate cities in India are interesting and obvious. Regarding Bangalore city itself, Thippaiah (2017) has elaborated on 'Water and Environmental Crisis in Megacity: Vanishing Lakes and Over-exploitation of Ground Water in Bangalore'. Asha (2017) has discussed earlier regarding 'Globalization, Urbanization and Marginalization of Disadvantaged: The Health of Unorganised Workers in Bangalore', Manasi (2017) has elaborated on the problems of e-waste in a primate city like Bangalore. Kalra (2017) has discussed the issues and problems of solid waste management and Ravi (2017) has elaborated on 'Urban Governance, Air Pollution and Health Implications'. While such impressive scholarly literature on the implications of urban primacy exists for Bangalore, similar research is hard to find for Hyderabad. However, the problems highlighted for Bangalore are symptomatic of all the primate cities and Hyderabad has similar problems too.

Browning (1989), while discussing the consequences of urban primacy, notes as below:

'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' (pp76).

A more telling consequence is, as Browning observes:

'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.'

**Table 1: Sample Demographics of Urban System in Karnataka**

City	Level of the city	Population
<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	Taluk of H-D District	24,613
Kalghatgi	Taluk of H-D District	14,676
Kundagol	Taluk of H-D District	16,837
<b>Udupi</b>	<b>District Capital</b>	<b>1,65,401</b>
Karkala	Taluk of Udupi District	25,824
Kundapur	Taluk of Udupi District	1,60,000
Udupi	Taluk of Udupi District	NA

Source: Census of India, 2011.

**Table 2: Sample Demographics of Urban System in Andhra Pradesh**

City	Level of the city	Population
<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 of Mahabubnagar Dist.	
Badepally	Mandal of Mahabubnagar Dist.	32,598
Narayanpet	Mandal of Mahabubnagar Dist.	41,752
<b>Kurnool</b>	<b>District Capital</b>	<b>4,24,920</b>
Nandyal	Mandal of Kurnool Dist.	2,11,000
Adoni	Mandal of Kurnool Dist.	1,66,344
Yemmiganur	Mandal of Kurnool Dist.	95,149
Dhone	Mandal of Kurnool Dist.	59,272

Source: Census of India, 2011.

The above two tables clearly point to a population concentration in two major capitals. Following the 2011 census, this data taken at one point clearly alerts us to the process and nature of urban development. This spatial concentration of urban development, wherein a single city dominates over all other district cities is called the development of 'urban primacy'. The nature of this development as we have argued earlier tells us about the 'metropolization' of urban development in these two states. By 'urban primacy' we *do not* mean that the urban sector is the primary sector. The phrase 'urban primacy' connotes a specific meaning of metropolization of urban development and urban concentration of population according to what Amitabh Kundu has earlier called a 'top heavy' urban development process with serious implications for all the other sectors and also other cities of the region.

The main consequence of the above described pattern of urban development is that district and taluk tier cities get completely neglected in respect of urban development and governance policy. Within these, the condition of the district tier cities—which serve as district capitals—is somewhat better, as they can easily draw the immediate attention of bureaucrats who stay and work there. When compared even to the district tier cities, the taluk tier cities—which are home to taluk panchayats—suffer the most. Their development and governance are nobody's concern and usually they fall outside the attention purview of politicians, bureaucrats and planners; nor do they have anyone to champion their

cause. They are struggling through various stages of decay and their woes regarding basic services such as sanitation, drinking water and solid waste disposal remain unaddressed. The citizens of these cities become second rate or third rate citizens in the urban hierarchy, as per the urbanity norms. They are neither rural nor urban. Neither have they gram sabhas to vent their grievances nor is there avocal media to speak on their behalf. Thus, the condition of cities that serve as taluk headquarters is that of alimbo between the rural and the urban; further, these cities are neglected by both authorities who care for rural areas and those who care for urban areas. Often, they lack in industry and the manufacture sector or the service sector. These taluk headquarters, as a consequence, become massive sources of out-migration to primate cities.

Urban decentralization, following the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, happens to be a state subject. But most of the state governments appear reluctant to implement the law to accomplish this in letter and spirit. The Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh governments are no different in this respect. As far as laws *per se* are concerned, in Karnataka the previous laws such as *Karnataka Municipalities Act of 1964*, and *Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act of 1976*, are still prevalent and operative. According to the Constitution, the earlier laws have to be abolished and the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution should be fully followed in the governance of cities. This, however, has not happened. The situation is similar in respect of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Thus, city-level governance still privileges the laws prior to the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment law. In addition to this, our studies show that the district level governance is run primarily by the bureaucracy in both the states. While it is the Deputy Commissioner's office that takes all the important decisions regarding district level urban governance in Karnataka, it is the Municipal Commissioner's office that takes all the decisions regarding the same in Andhra Pradesh. With regard to the District Planning Committees(DPCs), while these institutions are formed in Karnataka and are essentially planned for rural areas, where they are working—and in substantial number of districts in Karnataka they are not in working condition, in Andhra Pradesh, they are not even formed. Thus the role of DPCs as institutions is solely limited to rural planning, if at all they are conducting district planning. District-level urban planning is next to absent and while there is some growth of district-level cities, this takes place in an unplanned, *ad hoc* and haphazard manner. Thus this author contests the claim that there is sufficient urban governance and planning at the district level.

## Conclusion

As already stated in the introduction to this paper, the developing country cities can be approached either from the point of view of political economy or governance. We have preferred to follow the latter approach. We have argued that although we *do not* dismiss the approaches of political economy focusing on informal and tertiary sectors of cities, what we have tried to highlight is that the developing country cities also have come to be confronted with remarkable governance problems of late, particularly against the backdrop of a rapidly growing urbanization process and urban centralization. Therefore, focusing on governance of cities is important.

Secondly and more importantly, we have argued that the states of Karnataka and AP are characterised by the development of primate cities of Bangalore and Hyderabad. We have also discussed the consequences of primate city development for the rest of the cities in both the states. We

have held that the major consequence of the development of the primate cities is that the district tier cities get neglected in governance and provision of basic minimum needs and urban planning. Shaw's observation<sup>viii</sup> in this regard is true.

Finally, does urban concentration mean poor governance? Both at the level of district tier cities and taluk panchayats and at the level of primate cities themselves? The answer to this question is an unequivocal 'yes'. As we argued earlier on in the paper, primate city development runs counter to the spirit of constitutional local self-governance. Firstly, the primate cities themselves become too large for the purpose of local self-governance. In the process of urban concentration, the spirit of decentralization is lost. Secondly, even for those who govern these cities in the current fashion, the cities are simply too large in size to be manageable. All the problems that Browning has mentioned above in the context of Latin America are also true of the Indian primate city development. That is to say clearly there is an inverse relationship between the governability of the city and the size of the urban agglomeration. The current problems that the megacities in India are affected with are a clear indication of these: traffic congestion; air pollution; housing problem; increasing crime rate; and the failure of civic authorities and citizens to take action on any of these in an effective manner. This is besides the problems of dominance and hegemony of the primate cities over the lower tier cities that we have mentioned earlier on.

At the level of the district level cities –at any rate in the current dispensation—we have argued that the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution is observed only cursorily; certainly not beyond the conduct of periodic elections. The actual practice of urban governance firstly takes place in terms of the laws prior to that of the Amendment, and the district urban governance is run by the Deputy Commissioner as in the case of Karnataka, or the same is run by the district Municipal Commissioner in the case of Andhra Pradesh. We have also mentioned that the DPCs are instituted in Karnataka but do not function effectively *vis-a-vis* urban governance, and the same are not even in place in Andhra Pradesh. Considering this fact, the district-level urban governance and planning certainly are far from what they are envisaged to take place in terms of local self-governance by the Indian Constitution. The policy implication that flows from this discussion is, therefore, that there should be both spatial de-concentration of urban development and political decentralization of urban governance.

The only solution out of the present model of mega-city development is to develop the district and taluk level cities as major infrastructural, industrial and social sector hubs, thereby diverting some of the in- migrants to the mega-cities into the district level cities. This is possible only if the district level cities are made into attractive destinations for investment as well as habitation. For this again, first the governance of these district level cities has to be streamlined. Not that economic and social sector growth is not taking place now in the district level cities, it is already haphazard, ad hoc and unmanaged. Therefore urban development, even decentralized, spatially distributed urban development requires better urban governance at every level that is not merely the handmaiden of vested interests whether within the state or outside.

## End Notes

- i Throughout this paper the name Andhra Pradesh is used to connote both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as the state was divided only recently and division of the state does not have much bearing on the central arguments of the paper. The development of Hyderabad as an Information Technology (IT) centre has happened much before the division of the state. And is since only, if anything, augmented further after the division of the state into Telangana and new Andhra Pradesh.
- ii Contrary to the opinion that the colonial legacy is the reason why we neglected large cities, this author thinks that, in the first place, the colonial legacy is why we have the current large cities. Colonial rule depended primarily on creating three presidency areas of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras and these three primate cities, later along with Delhi and some others have developed in a neo-colonial and neo-liberal model of development.
- iii This paper does not deal with the political economy issues of the cities. For example, we do not devote much space to deal with issues such as unemployment, inequality and poverty because these are not the focus around which the paper is written.
- iv The 'Twelfth Schedule' of the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act consists of the following:
1. 'Urban planning including town planning
  2. Regulation of land-use and construction of buildings
  3. Planning for economic and social development.
  4. Roads and bridges.
  5. Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.
  6. Public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management.
  7. Fire services.
  8. Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects.
  9. Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society, including the handicapped and mentally challenged.
  10. Slum improvement and upgradation.
  11. Urban poverty alleviation.
  12. Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens and playgrounds.
  13. Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects.
  14. Burials and burial grounds, cremations, cremation grounds and electric crematoriums.
  15. Cattle pounds, prevention of cruelty to animals.
  16. Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths.
  17. Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences.
  18. Regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries'. (Jha and Mathur, 1999, 304-5)
- v On the reforms carried out to encourage IT an ITES in India and the extent of development of IT sector in various states including Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, see a recent paper by Keshab Das and Hastimal Sagara (2017).
- vi Written five years after the initiation of the liberalization process, Annapurna Shaw's article sounds almost prophetic. Most of her predictions on the future of urbanization under a liberalised economy have come true regarding Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. For instance, Shaw observes thus:  
'With the industrial/business class on the ascendancy, greater attention will be focused on the urban—the headquarter location of major industry and business and the place of residency of this class. State governments will compete with one another to provide the best urban facilities in order to attract new industries and business, particularly those involving foreign equity. This will necessitate major investments in urban infrastructure and the largest metro cities with their already developed markets and basic infrastructure would receive the greatest attention'---Shaw (1996:227-8)
- vii I thank Professor Kala Seetharam Sridhar, who at first brought this phenomenon to my notice regarding Bangalore and Karnataka (personal communication).
- viii 'However, there exists considerable tension between the state and urban local bodies with the former unwilling to relinquish its control over the urban. It is seen, for instance, in the slow compliance of most states to the 74<sup>th</sup> (Constitution Amendment) Act, 1992. This will affect the speed with which urban areas are able to become vibrant, democratic units of self-governance, accountable to the local population. Until this transition is made from the state to the local level, policy making will remain mostly rhetorical with little impact on the day-to-day living conditions in our cities' (Shaw, 1996:227-8).

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