CHAPTER V

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF TOWNS

Medieval Indian towns can be considered in their various functional aspects, as centres either of administration, military activity, industry, commerce maritime trade, religion or education. It is, however, difficult to classify them rigidly on these lines, for a town might originally be established as an administrative centre, have grown into a great commercial or industrial city and vice versa. Another difficulty in arranging towns in functional categories is the paucity of relevant and authentic data. The stability of the empire in medieval period, the geographical and economic imperatives and sociopolitical activities and reforms created suitable conditions for urbanisation. As a result of this, large number of towns developed and specialised in different functions. In the following sections a broad classification has been made.

ADMINISTRATIVE TOWNS

Administrative towns include towns which were the head quarters of administration of the empire, a province
or sarkar. The population in these towns included retinues, office clerks and soldiers stationed there for itself. In these towns, the royal courts, royal palaces and harems were built in the first instance. Gradually, the residential lines of royal servants, court officers came into existence. The need of consumers' goods and civil supplies gave rise to rudimentary shopping centres, weekly markets and handicraft manufacturing estates. With the rapid growth of population in the long run there developed permanent shops, smallscale and cottage handicrafts, schools for children, saraies for travellers, mosques and temples. Though started primarily as an administrative centre subsequently might have become an important commercial and industrial centre and thus continued to retain its importance, even when it ceased to be a seat of administration. Towns like Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Delhi, Lahore, Ahmadabad and Patna are the best illustrations of such towns.

MILITARY TOWNS

There were a large number of towns at strategic sites, where fortresses developed and armies encamped. A number of such towns in each region owed their importance to the fact that they were located at strategic points and were fortified, and powerful garrisons were maintained there.
Towns like Allahabad (U.P.), Ajmer (Rajasthan), Kalinjar (Orissa), come under this category of towns.

Such towns, though originally established on account of some strategic importance, grew into administrative centres later on and expanded rapidly. Allahabad was an important strategic centre, but it soon became an administrative centre and capital of one of the biggest provinces. Similarly, Ajmer, primarily a military and strategic town, lateron become an administrative centre, and capital of a province. Such towns if situated on important routes began to develop as commercial centres. Manuoci mentions about Attock that a castle, called by the same name (Attock) was built there where all the caravans from Iran, Samarakand, Bukhara and various other Kingdoms used to halt. There came every year one hundred and fifty thousand horses, more or less besides many camels. Most of these loaded with various kinds of fruits and other commodities. All these were brought across the river to be sold in Hindustan, from which the Mughal King derived great revenue.

In many cases, where for various reasons, military importance of a town declined, it continued to flourish as a big commercial or industrial centre. Bhakkar
was famous for its fortification and strategic importance, but it continued to flourish as a large commercial and industrial centre, retained the importance of a strategic centre. Such towns had strong forts and large garrisons were maintained there.

COMMERCIAL TOWNS

In this category are included towns which grew up and remained primarily commercial centres. Some of them started as administrative or military centres but remained important as commercial centres even when their political or military importance declined or they might have become administrative or military centres because of their commercial importance such as Lahore.

Raj Mahal was formerly the Capital of Bengal but when Dacca developed as a commercial centre it became the capital of the province. Tavernier records, "The governor and merchants who dwelt at Raj Mahal removed to Dacca, which is today a place of considerable trade".

Multan was old commercial centre. According to Manucci, it was an ancient city, where before the arrival of the Portuguese, many caravans of merchandise, spice and drugs used to come. According to Thevenot it was a place of great trade. According to Manrique, "Multan was well
stocked and plentifully supplied with all necessaries and convenience man desires". According to Khulast-ut Tawarik "various articles of all countries were bought and sold there". Multan also became the chief market for different commodities which were collected from different regions. It was a great market of textile goods, which were sent from here to different parts of the country as well as to foreign countries. According to Pelsaert, Multan received large quantities of cotton, coarse yarn, Bengal cotton-goods, turbans, prints, red salt from Burhanpur and small quantities of spices.

Lahore became the seat of government because it had been a flourishing commercial centre, since very old days. Pelsaert narrating about Lahore mentions, "It was a great centre of trade in the days before the English came to Agra, and the Armenian and Aleppo merchants did a large and very profitable business. According to Monserrate, "this city is second to none, either in Asia or in Europe, with regard to size, population and wealth. It is crowded with merchants who foregather there from all over Asia. In all these respects it excels other cities as also in the huge quantity of every kind of merchandise, which is imported".

Delhi was the chief city of India during the reign of Shahjahan. The rise of Delhi was at the Court of Agra (The old seat of government), in those days trade followed the king. Bernier writes about Delhi, when he visited the city in 1663 A.D., that the city was well developed in commercial activities, where costly merchandise was generally kept in ware-houses. Merchants gathered at least from twenty foreign countries, together with a number of inland traders of India.

Agra was one of the most important cities from the point of view of commercial activities. There were eighty multistoryed inns for foreign merchants with very noble lodgings, store houses, stables etc.

Banaras was a famous emporium for the products of Bengal. Finch calls it to be a "Principal market of Bengal goods". It was a great market of textile goods and from there the foreign merchants purchased large quantities of goods. Manucci refers to the export of its goods to many parts of the world.

Burhanpur too became a merchant town. Burhanpur was the chief market for textile goods, weapons of war and such other commodities, Joseph Salbanks writing about Burhanpur describes", where markools, pistals and swords
are among commodities that are very saleable, woolen cloth in this place will prove a great commodity, as the cloth of gold and silver, velvets, broad cloths attract buyers because there are so many Gallants.\textsuperscript{21}

The market were plentifully stored with all provisions collected from all parts of the country.\textsuperscript{22} It was also the chief market of agricultural and commercial commodities.\textsuperscript{23} Being a flourishing centre of industries foreign factories were established there and a large number of foreign merchants visited it.\textsuperscript{24}

**INDUSTRIAL TOWNS**

In the medieval period there appears a correlation between industrialisation and urbanisations. As industrial activity increased so increased the population. This growth of population was the root cause of urbanisation during this period of history. The rulers were fond of crafts and industrial goods. They patronised the craftsmen and enterprenures, who designed the new pattern and bore testimony to the fact that they had an intelligent bent of mind and an especial aptitude for the planning and production of customary consumer goods and newer luxury goods needed for the royal household and nobles.
There is historical evidence that provides us ample proof that this patronising of the indigenous craftsmen and helping them in markets gave rise to the town and city population as hundreds of rural craftsmen and skilled workers along with the old and new, professional and a mature industrialists and adventurous entrepreneurs moved to the rising cities and towns. The industrial activity is the sinequanon of trading and commercial activity as many bankers, financiers, transporters, unskilled workers and several other members of the public came and settled down for good in these springing industrial towns.

In Shahjahan's reign saltpetre and opium industries developed extensively. The indigo industry also developed. The shawl industry of Kashmir and Punjab, the carpet industry of Agra and Amritsar, the Kamkhwab and other embroidery works of Ahmadabad, the cotton goods of Bengal and the manufacture of procelain, carving in ivory and inlaid metal vessels reached their zenith in the reign of Shahjahan.

Delhi was famous for its cotton fabrics especially chintzes, during medieval period. The chintzes were coloured ones next in quality to those of Masulipattam only. These were produced in large quantities and in several qualities
with a wide range of prices to suit pockets of high and low. Indigo industry too was in a flourishing state. Shoe making, sugar, building industry etc. were also some of the most important industries of Delhi at that time.

Agra was a commercial town but it was also an important centre of industries during the Mughal Period. Agra manufactures turned out a variety of goods. Carpets occupied a prominent place though cotton goods too were widely produced. Silken stuffs and very fine cloth from threads of gold and silver were woven for turbans. Agra was celebrated for its dyestuffs, white sugar, extraction of rose essence, perfumes and stone cutting industries.

In Ahmadabad a large number of industries developed both by Indians and Europeans. Most important industries were those of painting, seal engraving, making of boxes and ink stands. Stuff of gold embroidery and woolen stuffs were skillfully woven. Good cloth, swords and daggers were manufactured, salt was also extracted.

PORT TOWNS

India had been connected with foreign countries by sea-routes from time immemorial and many port towns are consequently very old, having been centres of overseas-trade and centres of coastal trade from ancient times.
Some of the important port towns of the country were Surat, Cambay, Broach, Lahori Bandar and Raj Mahal. The growth and decline of the port towns, was influenced by the geographical, economic and political factors. The prosperity of a port town depended on its hinterland, facility of communications with the interior and the location of the harbour. When the sea was close to Cambay, it was a very good port as vessels reached the town directly but when the sea receded, it resulted in immense loss to the port of Cambay.

A convenient base for loading and unloading the goods from the ships, and excellent water or road communication for collecting and dispatching, the goods to distant places, further added to the growth of such towns. This was especially the case of the port of Surat. Surat had a good harbour and had also a convenient base for collecting goods for export as it was well connected by roads, with the different regions. Goods produced in the empire of the Great Mughals reached Surat to be exported by sea to different places of Asia and Europe.

The port of Cambay was according to the Jahangir "The largest port in Hindustan". According to De-Laet, "The port is so crowded that not infrequently 200 vessels
may be seen here at once and the same time.\textsuperscript{31} According to Abul Fazl Broach was a maritime town of first rate importance.\textsuperscript{32} Cambay was the market of Gujarat,\textsuperscript{33} the inhabitants of which supplied themselves to commerce and carried on an extensive business with Iran. Here the foreign factors also established and goods from different countries,\textsuperscript{34} were collected. Textile goods were manufactured. The port towns especially those handing over sea trade become by centres of commerce and industry.

**RELIGIOUS TOWNS**

Some towns acquired importance because of
1) Religious activity, and 2) Association of some saints. Among these were towns which have been regarded as sacred traditionally and thus became centres of pilgrimage of learning and even where the other factors combined to give added importance to such towns, their religious importance continued to contribute materially towards their importance. Towns like Allahabad, Banaras, Sialkot, Fatehpur Sikri, Ajmer, Jaganath Puri, Hardwar, Mathura, Dwarka are the best illustrations of such towns. Some of these towns acquired importance because of their association with some saint, or religious leader or because some religious order was established there, such as Hansi, where Shaikh Jamal-uddin
the successor of Shaikh Farid-uddin Ganji Shaker was established and his tomb was also situated.

A large number of saints were established at Kalpi. The order of Abu-Ali Qalandar was established at Panipat. In Sialkot Muslim saint Imam-Ali-ul-Haq used to reside. Eminent saints like Shaikh Farid-uddin Sani and Shaikh Muhammad Masum-Kabuli reposed in Sirhind. Bahraich too was a centre of muslim religious activity, and it had the Shrines of Saiyed Salar Masum and Rajab Salar.

Very frequently these centres received endowments and charitable grants from the government or religious minded persons. Here institutions of religious, educational and charitable character were established, such as Matths, Khanqahs, Darghas, Madersahs, Pathshalas and Hospices. Sialkot thus became the seat of muslim learning, scholars like Maulana Kamal, Maulvi Abdul Hakim and Maulvi Abdullah resided at Sialkot. Sirhind had a famous school of medicines from which doctors went to distant ports. Similarly, Banaras and Tirhut became seats of Hindu learning and culture.
Most of such towns were centres of pilgrimage, and even though they may not have had a large permanent population during the off season of pilgrimage or fairs, it increased and for a while during the period of pilgrimage the towns become centres of brisk trade.
REFERENCES

7. Thevenot, p.77.
11. ibid., p.31.
12. ibid., p.30.
15. Stanely Lane Poole, Medical India under Mohammadan Rule, p.333.
17. Finch, p.66.
25. Naqvi, H.K., Urbanisation and Urban Centres under the Great Mughals, p.65.
27. Thevenot, op. cit., p.18.
28. ibid., p.77.
33. Finch, op. cit., p.64.
34. Gokhale, B.G., op. cit., p.75.
36. ibid., p.13.
37. ibid., p.182.
CHAPTER VI

SOME IMPORTANT MEDIEVAL TOWNS

Medieval period was rich in tradition of urbanisation during which new towns emerged and older ones revived. Royal capital cities, viz., Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore flourished and expanded to a very great extent. The development of these towns was not a development by chance. It was the outcome of various factors e.g. a) introduction of a land tenure system conducive to the growth of productivity, b) industrial activity catering to the civilian, army and palace requirements, c) inland and foreign trade, d) numerous administrative reforms e.g., introduction of revenue system, division of territory into Subah, Sarkar, Dustar and Mahal, e) cultural and religious activities, f) peace and tranquility on the political front, g) mobilization of state resources, h) creative urge of the Mughal Kings.

Mughal King's concerted efforts laid foundation of new towns and greatly embellished the older ones. They constructed forts, palaces, mosques, tombs and shrines, dug canals and laid gardens. In a situation like this,