PREFACE

THE CITY IN HISTORY

Throughout history, there has existed a certain fascination with the city, with the urban phenomena, which is probably as ancient as the origin of the city itself and can be found in the folk wisdom as well as the more sophisticated social and political speculations of the majority of the civilizations. The preoccupation with the city – with its singularity, its strengths and weaknesses, its distinction from the countryside and a strong predilection to moral evaluation of the city, a highly ambivalent attitude towards the appreciation of the power, wealth and potential creativity of the city and also the fear of its corrupting influence vis-à-vis the simple virtues of the countryside.

The city as one finds it in history, is the focus of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community. It is the place where the rays of the many separate beams of light fall into focus, with gains in both social effectiveness and significance. The city is the form and symbol of an integrated social relationship; it is the seat of the temple, the market the hall of justice, the academy of learning. Here, in the city, the achievements of civilization are multiplied manifold, is transformed into visible signs, symbols, patterns of conduct, systems of order, here too, the ritual passes on occasion into the active drama of a full, differentiated and self-conscious society.¹

¹ Lewis Mumford, *Culture of Cities*, London, 1938, p.3.
Raymond Williams’s writes that the word-city is from the French cite or Latin civitas. However, “city” in the sense that we use today was actually urbs. The Latin civitas was from the Latin civis or citizen, which approximates the sense of ‘national’ as used today.²

Urbanism is seen to be a way of life with a complex social organisation. Also, it is seen as a settlement pattern, a relatively permanent habitation, with a large and differentiated population, thickly settled, freed from the labour of producing its own food. Urbanization is also a transformative process.³ The life patterns change dynamically. People freed from having to produce their own food because of the surplus that was created by technological innovation, began to live in settlements identified by specific forms of social organization such as the state, cultic forms (forms of religious worship.) and municipal rights.

The City In India

The traditional Indian town has frequently been characterised as having served as a fortress; the bazaar and the temple or mosque formed the basic components of the Indian town, qasbas as they were later called. These headquarter towns linked the villages with the regional level of government, in a predominantly agrarian society and was the nexus of cash flow within that society.

The local ruler, who was the major landowner, tended to invite merchants, artisans, administrators, and professionals to settle in his fortress headquarter town. These non-landed tradesmen and professionals depended

² Raymond Williams, Keywords, A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, New York, 1976, p.46.
³ Susan Vishwanathan, “Interpretations of the City”, in Susan Vishwanathan (ed). Structure And Transformation In India, Delhi, OUP, 2001, p.153
on the ruler for protection. Not being tied to the land they had greater mobility that they could use as leverage against the ruler in case of oppression or excessive taxation. With the expansion of commerce and accumulation of economic power in the tradesmen’s hands, conflicts often arose between the military ruler and the business and professional classes. In the historical context of security and political instability, the military ruler usually had the upper hand, as he provided the indispensable protection for these fragmented polities.⁴

Whereas the towns constituted hinges linking vertically the lower level of the settlement hierarchy with the higher ones, their main role was to act as military headquarters in the basic antagonistic relations with neighbouring towns, most of which were on the same hierarchical level. Except for the short periods of central imperial governments- occurring under the Mauryas, Guptas, and the Mughals, the numerous towns were antagonistic towards one another. This hostility and competition resulted in constant warfare, inhibiting full regional and market integration.⁵

The urban system in pre- British India was accordingly, critically affected by two types of conflict and tension: between opposing neighbouring towns that served as headquarters for the local military rulers and between the landholding ruler and the non- landed merchants and professionals. The political-geographical pattern of the warrior- ruler, who dominated their local kingdoms, were in constant strife with their neighbours, and struggled with competitive internal economic powers, was well suited to a great variety of regions across a wide span of time. It developed in many periods and areas of

⁴ S.N.Eisenstadt and A.Shachar, Society, Culture and Urbanization, California, Sage, 1987, p.231.
India, the best studied of which have been the following: Eastern Uttar Pradesh, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the Vijaynagar Empire of South India, fourteenth to sixteenth centuries; and Saurashtra. In all these cases, the towns were the locus of militant antagonism between local neighbouring small princedoms, each of which was in turn afflicted by the inner tension existing between the landed military ruler and the mobile traders and professional groups. Thus, the towns reflected the fragmentary structure of Indian Society that existed in most periods of its history.

The following elements constituted the permanent components of the Indian urban system: the military political town, serving as a centre for the flow of cash nexus in the society and often for the redistributive system, and the temple or the full-fledged temple town. The many variations existing among the different periods and areas developed with respect to a) the degree of existence of a more centralised hierarchy or, at least, attempts at maintaining such hierarchy – and hence also the relative importance of the town at the upper levels of such hierarchy, b) the relative importance of the coastal towns (littoral) in relation to those of the hinterland, and c) the importance of temple centres and networks in relation to the more political and commercial towns. d) Trading post cities, or thalassocracies.

These variations were influenced by the degree of political centralisations and the relative importance of internal and international trade. Common to all these systems were the continuous shifts in the relational

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8 Howard Spodek, “Urban Politics In The Local Kingdoms Of India.” Modern Asian Studies, 7, 2,1973, pp.253-275
9 Eisenstadt and Shachar, op cit, p.234.
importance of different towns, mainly related to the political fortunes of their rulers and the vagaries of international trade.\textsuperscript{11}

Although states of different scope arose in India, from semi-imperial to small patrimonial centres, the entire Indian cultural tradition cannot be identified in a single one. The religious texts had a lot to say on the problem of policy, the behaviour of princes and the duties and rights of subjects. However, more than in any other civilisation, politics was viewed in secular terms that emphasized its distance from the ideological centre of the civilisation, its tradition and identity.

The relative independence of the cultural traditions, centres and symbols of identity from the political centre was paralleled by the social structure’s relative autonomy, the complex of castes and villages, and the networks of cultural communication.\textsuperscript{12} These castes and caste networks were not however simple primordial or territorial units of the kind known in many primitive societies. They were much more elaborate ideological constructions that raised primordial givens or attributes to a higher level of symbolisation, thus giving rise to a wide definition of communities markets and networks.\textsuperscript{13}

It was within these groupings and networks that the major types of institutional entrepreneurs and elites emerged. These were political and economic entrepreneurs and articulators of models of cultural order and ascriptive solidarity whose activities were structured by the two fundamental

aspects of Indian social life. On the one hand, these activities were rooted in and defined by the combination of ascriptive primordial and ritual characteristics. On the other hand, such definitions placed very strong emphasis on the proper performance of mundane activities.

In most of these groups some combination of ownership of resources and control over their use and conversion developed. In the macro-societal setting, such conversion was effected primarily through the inter-relations among different caste groups and the networks. A peculiar characteristic of markets thus developed in India.  

There developed relatively wide institutional markets that were embedded in broader ascriptive units, mainly in the local and regional caste networks. These were relatively broad constructions that were continuously being reconstructed. The markets, the widest of which were religious, temple centred, and fairs were to some degree cross cutting. That is, the religious markets were controlled in a relatively flexible, yet not unstructured way by the association between the Brahmins, the kings and the different caste networks.

Throughout its long history, India has witnessed the continuous rise of new organisational settings, many religious movements, redefinition of the boundaries of political units. Technological changes, and levels of social differentiation, some economic restructuring and transformation of social and economic policies, all directed by these coalitions and set within the basic premises of this civilization.

The Pre-Industrial City

Manuel Castells has argued that the state of technology and agriculture allowed production in excess of that needed for mere subsistence. The system of distribution and the segmentalisation of roles developed accordingly. Cities emerged as the residential form for those individuals not directly involved in agriculture production.\textsuperscript{15} Religious, administrative and political centres became the morphological and spatial symbols of social complexity. Monumental public buildings symbolized the surplus of material goods and religious fervour, such as in the Egyptian Pyramids or in the Sumerian Ziggurat. For the first time in human history, the Sumerian temple community technically permitted and psychologically compelled the production of an agricultural surplus and applied the surplus to support specialists.\textsuperscript{16}

One of the finest works on the emergence of the city is by Max Weber, who located the city within two aspects as a) morphology, the analysis of work and settlement patterns in the city, and b) social values, arising out of the particular relationship of size and density. For Weber, the politico-administrative organization of the city was of great importance. Urban economic policy necessitated the interweave of relations between city, countryside transport, communication and regulative functions. Regarding the market, Weber writes, that in its first stage of development as a special political form, the fortified city was incorporated in or dependent upon a castle, the fortress of a king, nobleman or association of knights. It is the relationship between the garrison and the civil population that leads to the


\textsuperscript{16} Susan Vishwanathan, op.cit. p.155.
development of a market. Wherever a fortress exists, artisans are invited or appear to fulfil the needs of the garrison. Municipal councils emerged where there was a tension between the lord, resident military families and the merchants. It is the competition and tension between these various strata that leads to the struggle for individual rights. The consolidation of municipal councils is the first step toward the formation of an urban community.  

Weber believed that the urban community in its fully formulated sense of fort, market, and judicial administration was typical only of the Occident. He argued that China, Japan and India, while having forts and markets could not evolve individual rights because of the stronghold of traditional roots and ties. It was in the Occidental city that the bondsman became free. This freedom was made possible by the rational acquisition and management of money.

The political and strategic factors for the rise of cities have also been reflected upon by other thinkers, “Without doubt”, says Sjoberg, “since cities first emerged, their fortunes have been functionally linked to military conquest or political stability. It is hardly fortuitous that the great cities of the pre-industrial world have been those within powerful kingdoms or in the heartland of the empire”. Political control as the key variable in urbanization is confirmed by the capital city’s pre-eminence in both size and cultural influence in the overall feudal order.

Not only have cities emerged, flourished and decayed on royal whims and fancies, but also their dispersion and diffusion was towards previously non-urbanized regions with the extension of the power group’s domains, notably through empire building. For Dobb, the economic, commercial factor was more important than the political because at the expense of the feudal nobility, the power of the merchant class was strengthened. Sjoberg, to, considers this to be an integral part of the political factor, for merchants are seen as emissaries of the power group wanting to expand its domain. Typically an empire at its apogee contains an overgrowing body of urbanities and an upper class that has waxed more affluent and has increased its demands for a variety of goods. Merchants are thereby encouraged to extend their sphere of operation into more remote regions, with the result that entrepots and emporia are set up which in turn may be transformed into small urban centres. Such an eventuality largely depended upon the degree of support and protection offered by the political base within the homeland. If nothing else, far-flung trading centres require stable supply lines if they are to be maintained. 

The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution meant not merely the substitution of machines for tools, the replacement of inanimate sources of energy for animate sources, the extended economic capacity of society but the application of new forms of technology to manufacturing, transportation and warfare. It was this, which led to the growth of cities larger than the world

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had ever seen. With the intensification of commercial activities, more and more workers were needed. There was an increase in the rate of migration to meet the demands of the factory system. A new type of community emerged in the Western world – the mass production society.\textsuperscript{23}

The disadvantages of concentration led to the rise of slums. Transport facilities were not adequate, sufficient food and shelter could not be provided – yet the illusion remained that city life provided greater economic rewards, propelled immigration. Increasing mechanization of agriculture meant that the human was gradually divorced from the soil.

The city is also characterized as a way of life. Louis Wirth defined the distinguishing features of the modern city as large size, population density, heterogeneity of people and cultures, the nature of social relationships which were anonymous, transitory and impersonal, where occupational specialization was at its optimum, communication systems were secular and segmental and emphasized secondary contact.\textsuperscript{24} Society would become more complex. There would be a marked tendency toward differentiation and specialization, the separation of home and work, the functional specialization of space, resulting in the segregation of function. The city became a mosaic of social worlds.

Heterogeneity is that social variable which explains the fact that cities are composed of multitudes of different peoples, the consequences of migration of people of diverse origins. The occupations are more specialized and varied. Heterogeneity reinforces a sense of anonymity and difference so that people recognize one another by visual symbols, the uniform becomes

\textsuperscript{23} Susan Vishwanathan, op.cit., p.159.
\textsuperscript{24} Louis Wirth, City As a Way of Life, Chicago, 1969, p.75.
the symbol of the role. Hierarchy and anonymity led to the establishment of formal and reified modes of control – state, bureaucracy – surveillance systems – as opposed to informal controls such as gossip, rumours or ridicule. The clock becomes, with the uniform, the symbol of the social order. The mass production of goods, standardization of facilities, the adjustment of leisure activities, the growth of mass movements are all the consequence of this urban form: the metropolis.

The city disappeared as a relatively autonomous domain with the development of industrial capitalism. The city comes to be related to the country in a hierarchic, interdependent manner and had to deal with a peculiar problem how to maintain the balance between high levels of standardization and the cultic significance given to individualism and uniqueness. Towns revolved around manpower and markets. Industry made use of functional elements such as raw materials and transport networks. Industry organized the urban landscape.

Castells suggests that we substitute the term urbanisation with: 'the social production of spatial forms'. The ideological notion of urbanization in terms of this refers to a process by which a significantly large proportion of the population of a society is concentrated in a certain space. These urban areas are functionally and socially independent from an internal point of view and are part of the urban network. The urban form typical of advanced capitalist society is distinguished by (a) size (b) diffusion in space of activities functions, groups and (c) their interdependence because of geographical interconnection. Within such a space, a whole range of activities develops: (a) production, including agriculture (b) consumption,
including the reproduction of labour power (c), exchange (d) administration.\textsuperscript{25}

In advanced capitalism, industry is freed from factors of rigid spatial location such as raw materials or specific markets. It is on the other hand, increasingly dependent on skilled manpower and the technological and industrial environment through the chain of functional relations already established.

The Colonial City

Though the Industrial Revolution influenced the growth and expansion of cities in the modern age, it was colonialism which had an impact on the urban tradition in the Afro-Asian world. Many cities grew in the colonial state with factories, commercial establishments and ports controlled by the colonial powers. Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were colonial by-products. Others developed by virtue of being administrative centres. Not essentially a colonial city, Delhi registered a tremendous growth after the British decided to shift their capital from Calcutta to the newly built city of Delhi, adjacent to Shajahanabad.\textsuperscript{26} Kanpur was also a village till the British decided to set up a cantonment there and later cotton textile industries.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} Castells, op.cit., p.75.
\textsuperscript{26} (a) Gerald Breese, \textit{Urbanisation in Newly Developing Countries}, New Delhi, Prentice Hall, 1978, pp.32-37, 55-63.
Urban development was influenced by colonial politics in many ways. The pre-industrial undifferentiated urban structure intermingled with expansive and differentiated land use. The result was a 'combination of very high population density in relatively small areas and relatively low population density over other large areas.' This was a result of a conscious policy of segregation followed by the colonial masters. They developed separate enclaves for European officers and businessmen away from the indigenous cities. In some ex-colonies like India, these still exist as the Civil Lines.

From the late nineteenth century to the present, some of the largest cities in India have either been on coastal sites founded by foreign colonialists or have emerged owing to the bulk of their growth to foreign enterprises, or like Delhi, developed for political – administrative purposes by the colonial power. Morphologically, Asian cities have developed historically as 'dual cities' comprising a 'modern' or 'western' section and the 'traditional, indigenous' town. The pattern of 'civil lines' plus 'cantonment' and 'indigenous city' is particularly common in Northern India – New Delhi is a classical model of the dual city.

The primary concern of the traditional city revolved around religious, political or administrative functions. In many South Asian cities, forms of

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28 Breese, op.cit., p.56.  
31 "The major metropolis in almost every newly industrializing country is not a single unified city, but, in fact, two different cities, Physically juxtaposed but architecturally and socially distinct. These dual cities have usually been a legacy from the colonial past. J.E. Brush, "Spatial Patterns of Population in Indian Cities", Geographical Review, (58), 1965, pp.362-391.
residential segregation are characterized not simply by indigenous criteria of stratification (such as caste, religion, language) but by additional criteria derived from a relatively large bureaucracy. Also, ethnic and racial distinctions add further dimension to residential differentiation and occasionally provide the basis for communal conflict. The newly developing parts of the South Asian city, (e.g., the whole of New Delhi) are based on the assumptions of western technology, for example road networks, distances and width as well as urban forms such as individual dwelling types and suburbs.

The first characteristic of the colonial city is that it is the product of a contact situation, between at least two different cultures. There exists in the indigenous and colonial sectors of the city, areas of urban space, which are perceived, structured and utilized according to value systems unique to the culture in question.

In each cultural section of the city (i.e., that of the indigenous and that of the immigrant culture), the forms of that section are governed by the institutional system of each culture. While the institutional system of each culture includes kinship, education, religion, law, economic institutions and recreation, the values, beliefs and forms of activity related to these institutions are different.

As a form of social organisation, caste can only be explained in cultural terms. With its notions of hierarchy, purity and pollution, caste

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33 Ibid. p.9.
34 Ibid.
comprehends a system of 'social space', which partially accounts for the physical – spatial form of the city. The institution of religion is characterized by a set of values, beliefs and practices and these regulate attitudes to the environment, location of settlement and the physical-spatial provision required for worship. For example, the Hindu belief system requires that the dead be cremated. Islam and Christianity decree that the dead be buried. So, in a city with Muslim and Christian population there are burial grounds.

The socio-spatial structure of the colonial urban settlement can be understood in terms of two reference models. The first of these is to be found in earlier patterns of colonial settlement in the indigenous society; the second, in the urban forms of the metropolitan society already determined by an advanced stage of industrial urbanization.35

The functional specialisation of land use occurs spatially, separating the work place and residence. Human and social activities were demarcated into work and non-work, a division of time. For the industrial urban people, it also meant a distinct area for recreation. Increasingly, the pre-industrial society, characterised by the elite-mass dichotomy, was being replaced by other parameters – occupation, life style, income location and style of residence.

To deal with the new social disorganisation, generated by the colonial experience, society turned more competent both in terms of organization and knowledge. New institutions of local government, new methods of social control (police), transport and communications (new technologies), new occupational roles (civil engineers, sanitary inspectors), new systems for

promoting and organizing knowledge (institutionalised research, professional associations and scientific journals) developed. These changes both in knowledge and organization can be traced in the socio-spatial structure of the colonial city – 'the town hall, police station, public works, water works, library, etc.\textsuperscript{36}

The late 19\textsuperscript{th} century medical theories also influenced the demarcation of physical space in the colonial settlement and between it and the indigenous city. A causal connection between aerial distance and bacterial infection was assumed. The metropolitan city – its social structure and physical – spatial forms acted as a reference model for the colonial urban settlement. These explain the 'sanitary space' dividing individual units within the system as well as the system as a whole from the indigenous settlement area.\textsuperscript{37}

Vital to the colonial concept is the dominance – dependence relationship that intercedes at two levels. Firstly, the colonized society is dependent on the metropolitan; one consequence of this is that the colonial settlement is primarily devoted to political, military and administrative functions. Their inhabitants keep order, administer justice, control aspects of the economy but not, as is the case in the industrial city, generate production. It is this kind of phenomenon, which Castells has in mind in his concept of 'dependent urbanization', urbanization takes place in the colonial society but industrialization, which historically has generated urbanization in modern, politically autonomous societies, takes place in the metropolitan society.\textsuperscript{38}

The colonial urban settlement in a colonial city in India consisted of two

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Castells, The Urban Question, op. cit. p.75.
significant sites – the cantonment and the civil station. In the civil station of a typical town lived those members of the colonial bureaucracy whose political, administrative and cultural function is manifest in their designations- the ‘collector’, ‘judge’, ‘district superintendent of police’, ‘civil surgeon’, ‘teacher’ and ‘missionary’. In addition there were representatives of European business interests as well as, in the later stages, those members of the indigenous society who either belonged to the colonial bureaucracy or who subscribed economically or culturally, to the values of the colonial system. In the cantonment, the army was the ultimate means of social control. So, the ‘managers’ of the colonial system were located in the colonial urban settlement.

Secondly, the city also reflects the dominance – dependence relationship, wherein social, economic, political and racial reasons kept the indigenous and colonial parts of the city separate. Either, distinct areas or reserves were created explicitly or legally enforced, for different racial groups with unequal facilities. In India, this was implicit with economic (cost of land and housing) and cultural deterrents effectively preventing infiltration, except by those willing and able to adopt the attributes and lifestyles of the colonial inhabitants. Moving into such enclaves was a hallmark of social mobility, wherein ‘modernisation’ was equated with ‘westernisation’. These were the culturally, constituted behavioural environments of the colonial community.

For the colonial community, segregation was a vital instrument of control to maintain its own self-identity, essential in the performance of its

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role within the colonial social and political system. In an uncertain world, such visible symbols, like ‘clubs’ and ‘dancing’ provided emotional support.

Segregation also helped to supervise ‘native’ affairs, to maintain the existing social relationships. The indigenous city zones contributed more to the city’s exchequer, and yet were battling with overcrowding and increasing population. The colonial enclaves got the lion’s share of electric services, piped water supply, underground drainage and sewerage. Often attempts to improve conditions in the old city areas were thwarted, for example, Nehru experienced this discrimination as Chairman of the Allahabad Municipality during 1921-23.40

The indigenous culture too helped to maintain this system, through the inherent socio-spatial categories, like caste. The physical segregation of the urban population in a colonial city on the basis of political, socio-economic, ethnic and cultural criteria led to a tendency of the behaviour of all ethnic groups to be explained in certain ‘standard categorical’ terms. Thus, a process of classification took place.

The colonial city was a ‘container’ of cultural pluralism but where a particular cultural section had the monopoly of political power. The extensive spatial provision within the colonial settlement as well as the spatial division between it and the indigenous settlements, are to be accounted for not simply in terms of cultural differences but in terms of the distribution of power.41

A fresh dimension was added to urban politics with the introduction of municipal administration. So far the cities had been governed under the

shadow of an all-pervasive political authority. Now, the lesser mortals were provided with an opportunity to exercise some influence over the built environment. What followed was a larger political tussle between various sections and interests to control resources in order to establish their hegemony and bickering within the municipal bodies to grant favours, divert funds to a particular area or head, or to shift the tax burden from a particular area. This tussle was accentuated when the municipal system was democratised. The masses became a pawn in the electoral battles.

These changes are reflected in a traditional/modern society like India. The Rural-Urban Relationship Committee of the Government of India, stated that 'most of the local bodies in India are torn by factions and do not fully devote their time and energy to serving the people'. As K.M. Ashraf observes, the municipal leaders, with their rentier outlook, faced with mounting economic pressures and sensitive to increasing challenges to their hegemony in the city, are deliberately opposed to such public programmes as would impose burdens on them or deprive them of existing privilege.

However, city politics was not limited to the municipal arena alone. There was also a larger politics in which state, provincial or national leaders were involved, part of their efforts to maintain a safe constituency. This could be seen in terms of a neat network between different levels of politics. The leaders controlling the higher tiers of power would weaken the lower levels by centralizing political initiatives and decision making into their own hands.

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in order to maintain their hegemony. Bureaucrats and administrators also joined the power game.\textsuperscript{45}

The tussle over resource allocation meant that dispersal of funds was highly discriminatory. A thriving industrial city would attract hordes of people. Migration, a result of the push and pull factor, makes available cheap labour for the city's factories. The already overgrown nucleus gets further overcrowded. The migrant worker flocks to the central areas to save money and time in commuting, living in unventilated and squalid settlements lacking basic amenities. The more prosperous shift to less congested areas, leading to suburban growth, prohibitive for the ordinary worker. All this puts civic facilities under great strain. The flight to the suburbs leaves behind vacant plots put to commercial use, as the returns are higher for both the owner and the developer who in most cases specialize in unauthorized constructions. Thus, a vicious circle is created which becomes difficult to displace owning to the utility it has to the power that be.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. p.35.