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Traces Of Town Planning In Vedic And Post Vedic Era-Finding The Roots

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Abstract

The Vedic and Post Vedic eras in ancient India provide valuable insights into the traces of town planning during that time. While written records from that period are limited, archaeological findings and references in ancient texts offer glimpses into the urban organization and layout of settlements. The paper is an attempt to analyze the traces of town planning in vedic and post vedic era through various archeological evidences and historical literature. The paper also find the connectivity of the modern town planning concepts with the ancient medieval and colonial era.

Kerwords: Town Planning, Sustainable development, Ancient, Medieval and Colonia Era, Smart City.

Introduction-History of Town Planning

The history of town planning in India dates back thousands of years and is influenced by various civilizations, cultures, and rulers who have shaped the urban landscape of the country. Ancient town planning practices in India were characterized by a strong emphasis on layout, architecture, infrastructure, and social organization. Town planning during the medieval period in India was influenced by various dynasties and empires that ruled different regions of the subcontinent. Town planning in colonial India was largely influenced by British colonial rule, which spanned from the 17th century to the mid-20th century. The British introduced new urban planning principles and transformed existing towns to suit their administrative and economic needs. Town planning in modern India has undergone significant changes and challenges as the country has experienced rapid urbanization and population growth. Despite the Evolution of human and human settlement pattern and planning the connectivity from the roots are still visible. This paper is an attempt to re-find those connections and roots.

Literature Review

There are various scholars who have researched about the concept of town planning in ancient medieval colonial and post colonial times. Few of the researched were quite interesting to know the evolution of town planning in India, These arguments are not to be ignored while writing this paper thus the research method of critically analyzing and formalizing the basis of research are as follows:

The glorious antiquities of ancient India have continued to rise in stature since time immemorial, notwithstanding the researchers' differing perspectives. The article's main goal is abundantly supported by the crude remains of ancient tradition and the voyage from the original, rich, and ancient Indian civilization to the Gupta Dynasty with a transit through the epic age. The towns of the Indus Valley Civilization, particularly the twin cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, as well as other important archaeological certifications and findings, have been extensively highlighted with the division of historical ages. In addition to that, archaeologists, anthropologists and ancient historians to the calibre of Sir John Marshall, Hieun Tsang, Daya Ram Sahni, Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyaya, Nani Gopal Mazumdar, E.J.H. Mackay together with excavation samples, carbon analysis, pictographs, inscriptions, numismatic testimonies, different chronological references documented the erstwhile town planning, metropolitan civilization, societal pattern, rituals till the approach of the Aryans. The historical evidence of epic towns such as Hastinapur, Indraprastha, Girivraja, Mathura, Dwarka, Mahismati, Pragjyotishpur, Prabhas, Ayodhya, and Mithila has been referenced alongside the era of the Rgveda and Mahabharata. Henceforth the article aims to allude the noteworthy references from Cities in the Period of Sungas & Guptas in reference of the populaces like Purushpur, Sakala, and historically famous provinces like Uttarapatha (including Kandharpart) - Taxila, (2) Avasthira (western part) - Ujjayini, (3) Dakshinapatha - Suvarnagiri, (4) Kalinga - Tosali (Orissa) (5) Prachya, Prachina, Pras - Pataliputra. (Patra, 2021)

Urban areas have long been places of social and economic mingling. With the arrival of the Turks in India during the 13th and 14th centuries, their ascent and expansion accelerated. By maintaining recognisable planning for the construction of tall buildings, mausoleums, gardens, mosques, water tanks, canals, and similar infrastructure, the Sultan Firuz Shah (1351–88) surpasses his contemporaries. This essay primarily focused on the town planning of "Hisar-i-Firuz," which was built under the direction of Firuz Shah Tughluq, who stayed in this area for an extended period of time. The town's establishment was the Sultan's response to the challenge of reclaiming this area of the desert. (K., 2023)

Sultanpur Lodhi offers the chance to investigate city modules for the revitalization of historic cities thanks to its legacy of having historic palaces, vital terrain, and artefacts from many architectural styles. According to data from the Office of Punjab Urban Planning and Development Authority (2017), 81 percent of city's urban population resided in squalid housing. As a result, it is one among the top three cities in Punjab, India, in terms of population density. Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Sikh, and British influences are all present in its culture. There is a need to preserve the city's dynamic culture and traditions because the economy of this city is built on agricultural industries like rice shellers and other small scale companies, which in turn drive housing demand. (Lodhi & Sharma, 2018)

When Patrick Geddes arrived in Madras, India, in 1914, the plague pandemic on the subcontinent had already claimed 10 million lives. Geddes, a Scottish pioneer in urban planning, had been called to speak about his theories and then to assess the government's harsh plan to "sanitise" cities by removing slums, enlarging streets, and installing public restrooms. Geddes took an unexpected action. He spent four years travelling to numerous Indian cities and wrote a number of studies praising local urbanism as being superior to British *idées fixes*. The official sanitation campaign, he came to the conclusion, posed a serious threat to the environmental and cultural underpinnings of Indian town life. His concepts were somewhat successful in Lucknow, Baroda,

and Indore. Because of the enormous cost of developing New Delhi on an imperial scale after the First World War, the greater urban-reform effort in India ultimately failed.(Comment, 1914)

Metropolitan planning has changed significantly during the past 60 years. Planning-related concerns hardly ever stray from the norm. Their master plans served as a guide for early urban planning. Between the middle of the 1960s and the late 1970s, the four major metropolises of India—Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, and Chennai—developed their master plans. The development of urban planning concepts since the 1960s with regard to four Indian metropolises, to look at their planning approach and determine if it is sufficient to address the issue of the metropolises, and finally, how the neoliberal paradigm has influenced their approach. It is clear that the issue was not addressed by any city master plans. The key problems continue to be housing shortage, population increase, and land use planning.(JOY, 2015)

The Indian mediaeval (Islamic) cities in terms of technology and the environment. The main findings include (a) identifying and assessing the distinctive characteristics of the cities that were closely connected to the natural environment, (b) analysing the environmental conservation measures, sustainable practises, and eco-friendly technologies adopted in these cities, (c) determining the environmental impact of these cities, and (d) investigating those eco-friendly practises and technologies that are still relevant today.(Sharma et al., 2019)

The state of commerce and urbanisation under the Western Gangas, the first indigenous state's founders in southern Karnataka (about the fourth to early eleventh century ce). The primary evidence for the development of urban centres during the Western Gangas period comes from the inscriptions they produced. The supporters of the Indian Feudalism model contend that the Western Ganga reign did not correspond with any period of decline in trade or commerce.(Dayma, 2020)

Sustainable development has long been a concern for the entire world. The majority of developing nations have chaotic metropolitan environments with unchecked rapid expansion. India's unchecked urban growth is a result of the country's quick urbanisation in almost every metropolis. As a result, the constructed cultural legacy of urban areas is rapidly declining. The effort of Indian cities' urban (built) heritage is to highlight the negative effects that fast urbanisation and unmanaged development can have on their architectural history. The study used Visakhapatnam as a case study because it was seen as an Indian city that was rapidly urbanising (and becoming a smart city) and had a vanishing cultural legacy. Cultural heritage, urbanisation, Vizag heritage, vernacular architecture, endangered cultural heritage, urbanisation and preservation, and heritage in urbanising societies.(Rambhakta, 2020)

A detailed analysis of the evolution of the street network in Vrindavan town, one of the key temple towns in Mathura district, and an examination of the morphological growth of the region using satellite pictures. The layout and architectural style of the ancient portion and the newly constructed Vrindavan differ significantly. The spatial organisation of traditional religious precincts, which were formerly regional centres of integration, has dramatically changed as a result of increasing accessibility and migration. The problem of conserving and preserving the sacred precincts of old towns is made more difficult by the growth and diversification of transportation methods as well as the continued rise in religious tourism. (Kapoor et al., 2022)

The study of its cities has been the main method used to understand the Indus Civilization (3rd to 2nd millennium BC). The majority of the inhabitants did, however, reside in rural settlements, the material remnants of which have not been the subject of archaeological study. There is disagreement over the nature of the Indus Civilization's social structure, and little research has been done on the interactions between urban and rural areas or the effects of urbanisation on rural hinterlands due to the focus on urban sites and elite objects. One of the main connections between a city and the villages that surround it is the production of food,

especially that of staple crops. The Indus Civilization's everyday commerce and grain processing practises were impacted by city development. This makes it easier to determine if city-centered social organisation models can be used to explain all facets of relationships between rural and urban areas. At the village site of Masudpur VII in Haryana, India, materials from the Early and Mature Harappan periods have been used to examine the goals of crop processing, the crop assortment, and the local climatic circumstances.(Bates, 2011)

Most of Telangana's small and medium-sized towns were historically the capitals of former Samsthans and Zamindaris, land revenue administration units, and sub-regional authorities under British and Princely States' Rules in India until Independence in 1947. These Samsthans, Zamindars, and Jagirdars served as "Chieftains" of their respective lands and were based in "Palaces" in their capital city or town. Old Samsthan/Zamindari village palaces and historic sites symbolise local histories whose relevance, memory, and history need to be maintained for future generations.(Town & Plans, n.d.)

Even while city-regions have frequently been created in the UK for strictly commercial reasons, they are increasingly being seen as the best scale for planning and development. City-regions are rich, socioecological environments as well as socioeconomic units for achieving competitiveness. Although the literature on progressive regionalism has made major strides in this direction, there are still worries that important modern issues like environmental sustainability, cultural viability, socioeconomic exclusion, or political (dis)empowerment have not been addressed comprehensively.(Axinte et al., 2019)

Thus depending on these arguments it was quite evident that the traces of town planning can be embarked from ancient, medieval, colonial and post-colonial era. The following are few of the evidences for the same.

Evidences of Urban and Regional Planning in Vedas

The Vedas, ancient sacred texts of Hinduism, primarily focus on spiritual, philosophical, and ritual aspects rather than explicit discussions on town planning. However, some references and principles related to settlement and architecture can be found in the Vedas. The Rigveda, the oldest of the four Vedas, mentions the concept of "grama" and "pura," which refer to settlements and cities, respectively. While the descriptions are limited, they suggest the existence of organized settlements with specific spaces allocated for different purposes.

The Rigveda also introduces the concept of the "Mandala," which represents a cosmic diagram or sacred space. Mandala is often associated with the design of sacred rituals and cosmic order. Some scholars interpret this concept as a metaphorical representation of the ideal spatial organization, including town planning.

The Vedas emphasize the importance of sacred directions, such as the east (where the sun rises) and the north (considered auspicious). These directions often played a role in the placement of important structures, including temples, within a settlement.

The Atharvaveda contains descriptions of architectural elements like pillars, halls, altars, and various types of buildings. While these references are more focused on religious and ritual structures, they provide insights into the architectural practices of the time.

Although not explicitly mentioned in the Vedas, Vastu Shastra, the ancient Indian science of architecture and town planning, draws inspiration from Vedic principles. Vastu Shastra deals with the design and layout of buildings, taking into consideration factors like orientation, proportions, and cosmic harmony.

It's important to note that the information on town planning in the Vedas is relatively limited compared to other aspects of Vedic literature. The Vedic texts primarily focus on spiritual and philosophical aspects of life.

The Social order found quite evident in modern era was described in manusmriti as the Laws of Manu or Manava Dharma Shastra, is an ancient legal and ethical text of Hinduism. It is attributed to the legendary figure Manu, who is considered the progenitor of humanity in Hindu mythology. The Manusmriti is believed to have been composed between the 2nd century BCE and the 3rd century CE, although it underwent revisions and additions over time. The Manusmriti is one of the many Dharmashastras, which are texts that deal with moral, social, and legal codes according to Hindu traditions. It covers a wide range of topics, including social organization, governance, law, morality, and personal conduct. However, it's important to note that the Manusmriti represents one particular perspective on these matters and does not encompass the entirety of Hindu philosophy or practice.

Critics argue that the Manusmriti perpetuates social inequalities, gender discrimination, and caste-based discrimination, which are inconsistent with modern ideals of equality and social justice. They argue that its teachings should be reinterpreted and contextualized in light of contemporary societal values.

It's important to note that the Manusmriti represents a specific legal and ethical perspective prevalent in ancient India and does not represent the entirety of Hindu philosophy or contemporary Hindu thought and practice. Hinduism encompasses a diverse range of beliefs and interpretations, and individuals and communities adhere to a variety of moral, social, and legal principles.

The impact of these social orders and hierarchy is still followed or rather are visible in concepts and planning orders of cities in today's scenarios, different mohallas in core of the cities or differentiation of housing types as per affordability are all visible and distinguish these social disparities or orders.

Evidences of Urban and Regional Planning in Post Vedic times

Indus Valley Civilization (2600 BCE - 1900 BCE): The cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, such as Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, are considered early examples of urban planning. They featured grid-like street patterns, well-defined blocks, and sophisticated drainage systems. The cities had fortified citadels, public buildings, granaries, and an advanced water supply and sanitation infrastructure.

Mauryan Empire (321 BCE - 185 BCE): Under the Mauryan Empire, Emperor Chandragupta Maurya and his successors implemented town planning practices in cities like Pataliputra (present-day Patna). These cities had a well-organized street grid, fortified walls, palaces, public buildings, and recreational spaces.

Satavahana Dynasty (1st century BCE - 3rd century CE): Amaravati, the capital city of the Satavahana Dynasty, was planned on a grand scale. It had well-laid-out streets, residential areas, and a centralized Buddhist stupa. The city incorporated natural features such as rivers and hills into its design.

Gupta Empire (4th century CE - 6th century CE): The Gupta Empire is known for its architectural and artistic achievements. Though detailed information on town planning is limited, the Ajanta and Ellora caves provide glimpses into the organization of monastic complexes and cave dwellings, reflecting the principles of town planning.

Chola Dynasty (9th century CE - 13th century CE): The Chola Dynasty is renowned for its temple architecture and urban planning. The Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur is a remarkable example of Chola town planning. The temple complex was designed to integrate natural elements, such as rivers and gardens, and featured well-defined spaces for worship, administrative functions, and cultural activities.

Vijayanagara Empire (14th century CE - 17th century CE): Hampi, the capital city of the Vijayanagara Empire, exemplifies ancient town planning in India. It consisted of several functional zones, including royal enclosures, residential areas, markets, water tanks, and religious complexes. The city was laid out along an east-west axis and showcased architectural marvels like the Vittala Temple and Virupaksha Temple.

Islamic Influence: With the advent of Islamic rulers in India, particularly during the Delhi Sultanate (13th-16th centuries) and the Mughal Empire (16th-19th centuries), there was a significant influence of Islamic architectural and planning practices.

Walled Cities: Many medieval cities were fortified with walls for defense purposes. These walls often enclosed the city and had gates for controlled access. Examples include the walled cities of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur.

Planned Layout: Islamic rulers introduced planned layouts for cities, including the establishment of new cities and expansion of existing ones. They emphasized the division of the city into different quarters based on function, such as residential, commercial, and administrative areas.

Bazaars and Markets: Markets and bazaars were integral parts of medieval towns. They were often centrally located and served as commercial hubs where traders and merchants conducted business. Examples include Chandni Chowk in Delhi and Meena Bazaar in Agra.

Mosque Complexes: Islamic rulers constructed grand mosque complexes, such as the Jama Masjid in Delhi and the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, which served as important religious and social centers within the towns. These complexes often included courtyards, prayer halls, and other facilities.

Charbagh Gardens: The Mughals introduced the concept of Charbagh gardens, which were quadrilateral gardens divided into four parts by water channels or walkways. They were often associated with palaces, mausoleums, and important buildings. The Taj Mahal complex in Agra is a famous example of town planning with Charbagh gardens.

Water Management: Medieval towns implemented various water management systems, including canals, tanks, and stepwells, for water supply and irrigation purposes. Examples include the Chand Baori stepwell in Abhaneri, Rajasthan, and the Baoli of Nizamuddin in Delhi.

Planned Capitals: Medieval rulers often established new capital cities, reflecting their power and grandeur. These capital cities, such as Fatehpur Sikri (Mughal capital) and Daulatabad (Yadava dynasty capital), featured planned layouts, palaces, administrative buildings, and other architectural marvels.

Heritage Conservation: Some medieval towns, like Hampi in Karnataka, were built around existing natural features and historic structures. These towns aimed to preserve the heritage and architectural splendor of the past.

British Settlements and Administrative Centers: The British established several administrative centers and trading posts throughout India. Cities like Calcutta (now Kolkata), Madras (now Chennai), Bombay (now Mumbai), and Delhi became important centers of British power and governance. These cities were redesigned and expanded to accommodate the growing British population and serve as administrative hubs.

Civil Lines: The British introduced the concept of "Civil Lines," which were planned European quarters within Indian cities. These areas were reserved for British officials and European residents. Civil Lines featured wide streets, spacious houses, parks, and other amenities that catered to the British community.

Cantonments: The British established military cantonments in various parts of India. These cantonments served as military bases and included well-planned layouts with barracks, parade grounds, hospitals, and other facilities. Examples include the cantonments in Bangalore, Secunderabad, and Pune.

Garden Cities: The British introduced the concept of garden cities, inspired by the urban planning ideas of Ebenezer Howard. These planned settlements emphasized the integration of green spaces, residential areas, and industrial zones. Examples include Shimla, Ooty, and Darjeeling, which served as hill stations and retreats for British officials.

Railway Towns: The expansion of the railway network in India led to the development of railway towns. These towns were strategically planned around railway stations and served as important transportation and trade centers. Examples include Jamalpur, Kharagpur, and Mughalsarai.

New Delhi: One of the most significant town planning projects during the colonial era was the construction of New Delhi as the new capital of British India. The city was designed by British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens and his team. New Delhi features wide avenues, grand government buildings, open spaces, and a central ceremonial axis that culminates at the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House).

Infrastructure Development: The British introduced modern infrastructure in cities, including improved road networks, bridges, railways, and public utilities like water supply and sanitation systems. They also developed public buildings, such as town halls, courts, post offices, and educational institutions, which reflected British architectural styles.

Heritage Conservation: The British played a role in preserving and restoring historic monuments and sites. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was established to identify, protect, and conserve historical and cultural heritage. Significant sites, such as the Ajanta and Ellora Caves, the temples of Khajuraho, and the Qutub Minar complex, were protected and maintained.

Town planning during colonial India primarily served the interests of the British administration and aimed to create functional, orderly, and modern urban environments. The influence of British architectural styles and planning principles can still be seen in many cities across India today.

Synthesis between Historical and Modern Concept of Urban and regional planning

The followings are the process and procedures of town planning in modern India, these are influenced by the practices of town planning ancient medieval and colonial India, hereby which concept or procedure is influence from where in the history, and the synthesis of historical and modern concepts are described as below:

Urban Development Authorities: The Indian government has established urban development authorities at various levels, such as state and city-level development authorities, to oversee urban planning and development. These authorities are responsible for formulating master plans, zoning regulations, and infrastructure development in cities. The kings and the leaders of ancient civilizations were doing this activity in past as democratic set up of governing people were not existing in that era the scale of settlements were smaller in those times but the activities can be related.

Master Plans: Master plans are prepared for cities to guide their future growth and development. These plans typically include land-use patterns, transportation networks, infrastructure provisions, environmental considerations, and policies for housing and commercial development. Master plans are periodically revised to adapt to changing needs and challenges. The organized patterns of activities and different zones as described in master plan of modern day can be also cities in the city pattern of medieval era and in human civilization of ancient era, the only difference can be seen in evolution of the concept and scale as the population during that time was less in comparison to day's head counts.

Planned Urban Extensions: With the aim of managing urban sprawl and accommodating population growth, planned urban extensions are developed on the outskirts of existing cities. These extensions involve the creation of new residential areas, commercial zones, and infrastructure to accommodate population influx. This was not seen in historical context as human settlement or cities in that era were small and people were living a subsistent life style thus they use to make new settlements and cities rather than extending the existing one as there was lot of space and land to accommodate the growth rate at that times

Smart Cities Mission: The Indian government launched the Smart Cities Mission in 2015, aiming to transform selected cities into smart and sustainable urban centers. The mission focuses on leveraging technology, improving infrastructure, enhancing quality of life, and promoting sustainable development practices in these cities. This concept is also not influenced by history but while achieving these plan if the indigenous practices are followed we will be able to connect to wards are roots and will also be able to achieve complete sustainability.

The following are the concepts improvised through the concepts of colonial and post-colonial era in India as the foundation of town planning in India was laid by Britishers in India. The reflection of these concept can be seen as a way to reachout back to the basic or to correct the damages or negative planning done out of ignorance and situations of rapid development seen in Indian cities.

Sustainable Development: Town planning in modern India emphasizes sustainability and environmental considerations. Efforts are made to incorporate green spaces, promote renewable energy, enhance waste management systems, and adopt environmentally friendly practices in urban development projects.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): TOD is being increasingly emphasized in urban planning. It involves creating compact, mixed-use developments around public transportation nodes, promoting walkability, reducing dependency on private vehicles, and integrating different modes of transportation.

Heritage Conservation: India is known for its rich architectural and cultural heritage. Efforts are made to protect and preserve historic sites, monuments, and heritage areas through conservation plans and regulations. Organizations like the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) play a crucial role in safeguarding and promoting heritage conservation.

Slum Rehabilitation and Affordable Housing: Due to rapid urbanization, the presence of slums and a lack of affordable housing are significant challenges. Town planning initiatives focus on slum rehabilitation projects, affordable housing schemes, and inclusive development to provide decent living conditions for all.

Participatory Planning: There is a growing emphasis on participatory planning, involving the participation of citizens, local communities, and stakeholders in decision-making processes. Public consultations, community engagement, and citizen feedback mechanisms are used to ensure inclusive and people-centric urban development.

It's important to note that the implementation and effectiveness of town planning in modern India vary across different cities and regions. Rapid urbanization, infrastructure gaps, population pressures, and economic disparities pose significant challenges to effective town planning. Nonetheless, the Indian government continues to prioritize urban development and invest in sustainable and inclusive planning practices to address these challenges and shape the future of cities in the country.

Conclusion

To conclude the further research regarding the synthesis of past and present concept of town planning is needed to entrust the holistic development of cities and to achieve sustainability through indigenous and historical methods of town planning.

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