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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Today more people live in cities than in villages. This was not the case before the twenty-first century. Lest we be misled by this overwhelming change, the study of urbanisation in history should begin with an understanding of a few preliminary points:

- 1) When we use the term urban in the context of a society, it should not be taken to mean that all people in that society would be living in cities, towns or other similar settlements. In other words, in societies where cities and towns existed, there also existed other types of human settlements such as villages, hamlets, forest regions and other types of spaces. For periods of history for which written records are available, we generally find different kinds of terms denoting different types of settlements. For example, in early texts terms such as *pura*, *nagara*, *mahanagara* would refer to different types of towns and cities, *pattana* generally to commercial centers, *grama*, *palli* etc. to rural settlements, and *aranya*, *atavi*, *vana*, *jangala* and similar terms to forest areas. In the medieval period though these terms continued to be in use (with the exception of *mahanagara*) new terms were added to the terminology – *abad* (a newly built town), *qasba* for a township, *shahr* for city and *bandar* for port. During the medieval period specific terms for capital cities were in use. For the capital city Delhi various terms were used by the contemporary chroniclers – *shahr-i nau*, *hazrat Delhi*, *dar-ul Khilafat*. New words like *qasbas* (townships), *mawas* (rebellious territories/villages) and *mahal* (revenue paying units/villages) emerged; while for villages and forests terms like *grama* (*gaon*) and *vana* continued.

The presence of other types of settlements would, in turn, necessitate an understanding of how people living in them interacted with one another and particularly with those who lived in the cities.

- 2) It is necessary to keep it in mind that all societies or cultures do not necessarily have city- dwelling or town-dwelling people. This means that the emergence of towns and cities in a culture will have to be explained by referring to the historical reasons why particular societies start experiencing the process of urbanisation resulting in the emergence of towns and cities in a situation which was not urban earlier. For example, till about the middle of the third millennium BCE, if we consider the vast region in which the major and minor Indus Valley or Harappan cities emerged, no human settlement which can be called town or city can be identified. There were numerous settlements scattered over the area, but it was only from around the middle of the third millennium BCE that one finds settlements which exhibit urban characteristics. This transformation in the cultural landscape has engaged the attention of archeologists for many years now. Similarly, the appearance of cities and towns in the plains of the Indian subcontinent between the middle of the first millennium BCE and the last two centuries BCE has evoked different responses from archaeologists and historians trying to explain the process of urbanisation.
- 3) Urbanisation in the Indus Valley in the Bronze Age in the third millennium BCE and in the Ganga Valley from the middle of the first millennium BCE would indicate that there may have been different phases of urbanisation, each requiring investigation regarding the conditions of their rise and decline. The rise and fall of urban centres does not necessarily imply disappearance of other forms of human settlements. Rural settlements, pastoral terrains and forest cultures may have continued even when urban centres were emerging or declining, although the way

the existence of urban centres affected the cultures of other settlements requires adequate investigation.

- 4) The existence of urban settlements along with settlements which were different means discussion of what is urban in relation to what is non-urban. How does one define a city or a town, particularly while analysing pre-historic societies? Let us start by admitting that the task is not an easy one. Usually, a large inhabited space, when compared with other smaller settlements of the same culture, would be called a city. Although largeness of site in many ways is indicative of the urbanity of a site (because it may indicate the largeness of the population inhabiting that space, the varieties of occupations pursued by them, etc.), it is not always a dependable criterion for determining the nature of a site. A city in fact represented the convergence of a variety of features: high density of population, implying comparative scarcity of land for agricultural and other pursuits; differentiation within the population in terms of their occupations; presence of monumental structures, including ritual structures; political, strategic and commercial importance suggested by the fortification of a site, intended to protect it from possible attacks. Some of these features, when they are found at a site, are taken by archaeologists to characterise it as urban, but the problem of grading urban centres as major- minor city, town or commercial centre will remain. Finding out the multi-functionality or otherwise of a site, its size, and the density of habitations at the site may be ways of ascertaining the measure of its significance in the society, of which hierarchy in different forms was an integral feature.
- 5) It is necessary to remember that in societies or cultures where urban centres were present there also existed heterogeneity and inequality. It is not possible to identify various ethnic or social groups who may have been present in a city on the basis of archaeological evidence alone, but archaeologists nevertheless do attempt to understand the social structure of a city by trying to distinguish between 'posh' and 'poor' areas; between large and small residences; they also compare the repertoire of artefacts at different kinds of sites such as burial sites or manufacturing sites. Such comparisons do not always yield fruitful results; the significance of difference in the variety and quality of artefacts at particular locations may be viewed from different angles. Of these, difference in status and wealth may have been one.

The presence of different social groups in urban centres, their occupational variety, their residential quarters, their relative status and natural attitudes are sometimes vividly portrayed in some texts. The nature and meaning of such textual evidence will be discussed in an appropriate context.

- 6) It is universally recognised that cities were points of convergence of different ethnic groups, different communities and of their cultures. Such a convergence of diverse groups and ideologies led to the emergence of cultures and worldviews different from those of rural settlements. 'Urbane', vastly different from the 'rustic' was considered to be the model to be followed, although orthodox elements in a culture might consider cities to be centres of vice or social degradation. Even so, our texts have vivid descriptions of life in cities, their various residential quarters, their political importance and of the varieties of activities which marked cities out, to most sections of people, as covetable places to live in.

In the Course an attempt is made to highlight the general features of urbanism in specific regions during a particular period; its continuity and processes of change,

etc. In each Block one Unit is exclusively devoted to a city that represents the characteristics of an urban centre of a particular period and time.

To understand urbanism in the subcontinent for the pre-historic and early historic periods our focus is more on archaeological remains and settlement pattern. However for the medieval period with the exception of Vijayanagara (Hampi), Fatehpur Sikri, Lal Kot and Purana Qila (Delhi) comprehensive excavation reports are unavailable. Thus, our reliance is more on textual references (in which our data is comparatively rich for the period), inscriptions (epigraphs) and monuments.

The Course begins (**Block 1**) with an explanation of the idea of an urban centre in a historical context. What parameters help us in identifying an urban centre? In what ways did it differ from rural settlements? What led to the emergence of an urban centre? In what ways did the connotation/understanding of an 'urban' site/centre vary over different historical periods? What was the relationship of an 'urban' centre with the periphery and the hinterland? Historiography of cities over different periods of time forms the *core* of our enquiry. How was a so-called *modern colonial* city different from *ancient* or *pre-colonial* cities?

Block 2 focuses on the 'First cities' of the subcontinent – the Indus Valley cities. It addresses the issue: how to understand early urbanism using archaeology as a tool? How were the urban spaces spatially segregated in the Harappan settlements? Use of the 'ramp' and 'step' approaches to identify public and private spaces; craft production, exchange networks, specialisation of crafts, hierarchy of towns, and stratified societies form part of the discussion of the 'First urbanisation'.

The next phase of urbanisation is visible in the 6th century BCE which scholars have termed as the 'Second urbanisation' (**Block 3**). The role of iron technology in the emergence of early historic cities is highly contested. This period is marked by the emergence of empires as well as dominance of large cities like Taxila and Pataliputra. The Block also looks into the utilisation of spaces inside as well as outside the urban spaces, nature and pattern of its fortification, etc. Unlike the Harappan towns early historic cities were closely related centres of political power. The spatial patterns of urbanisation in the Deccan and the early Tamilakam suggest that the pattern of urbanisation in peninsular India differed from urbanisation in north India; Roman trade played a key role in its expansion. The geography of Tamilakam region played a crucial role in urban formations. Here, the relationship between various categories of spaces such as *grama*, *ghosha*, and *aranya* is also analysed. The cities were often depicted differently in the normative texts as against the *kavyas*.

The so-called 'Third urbanisation' and the emergence of towns under the Delhi Sultans is the theme of **Block 4**. The early medieval urbanisation is examined from textual and archaeological perspectives. The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate brought dramatic changes in the cityscapes – with new markers and skylines – the mosques and tombs of the new rulers. The centralised state, high level of monetisation, liberation of the artisanal classes, new technologies, *sufi* movement, etc. all left deep imprints on the pattern of growth of towns in the medieval period. The Mughals further expanded the cities and a sort of symbiotic relationship seems to have existed between the towns and the country, though scholars have argued their parasitic nature as well. Historians have also contested whether the Mughal cities were 'camp cities' or architectural representations of a 'patrimonial-bureaucratic' empire (**Block 5**).

Though towns continued to flourish in the eighteenth century, the impact of the British colonial policies became evident by the turn of the eighteenth century (**Block 6**). Colonialism further altered the cityscape. Political exigency and the idea of a superior white 'race' required that natives be kept at a distance. Thus emerged the idea of 'White' and 'Black' towns. After the 1857 rebellion the British empire invoked the idea of 'grandeur' as a defining characteristic of the townscape (New Delhi). Capitalism and industrialisation led to the emergence of working class *ghettos* in towns and cities (**Blocks 7 and 8**).



BLOCK 1 INTRODUCTION TO URBAN HISTORY

In the last few decades urban studies have received special attention of scholars. A powerful tradition of scholarship believed that the post renaissance western cities were centres of economic growth while Asian cities were predominantly political and cultural in nature.

The ancient cities are viewed by archaeologists and historians from different angles and parameters. While studies on Harappan cities have been published by archaeologists from the early 20th century under the aegis of Archaeological Survey of India, new techniques like GIS are now being used to get a more comprehensive picture of the past. From the early historical period written texts along with archaeology help us in enriching our information. Scholars have also looked into the spatial pattern of urbanisation. They have enquired about issues like the shift from the Indus/Ghaggar/Hakra Valley ('first urbanisation') to the Ganga plains ('second phase'). More recent studies have looked at the emergence of urbanisation as a result of agrarian expansion and suggest that it was in no way the sign of decline of urban centres (**Unit 2**). Medieval cities in Europe have been studied as centres of economic growth. However, the medieval urbanism in the subcontinent was not only affected by commercial and political factors but also by *sufi* and *bhakti* currents. The Mughal towns are also viewed by scholars as 'poliscracy' (a state which was dominantly run by urban centres and rural centres fell under complete subordination) and the 16th century Portuguese cities as 'polisgarchic' (a town based government established for the purpose of extracting surplus from hinterland) (**Unit 3**).

The approaches to the study of the 19th century cities are influenced by the currents of colonialism and capitalism leading to the emergence of industrial cities, canal colonies, Hill stations, etc. Cities also emerged as centres of spectacles, sites of nationalist movements, religious conflicts and places of agitations of the working and depressed classes (**Unit 4**).



UNIT 1 WHAT IS URBAN HISTORY?*

Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 What is an Urban Centre?
- 1.3 What is Surplus?
- 1.4 What is Urban History?
- 1.5 Urbanism as an Interdisciplinary Project
- 1.6 Urbanism and Comparative Method
- 1.7 Historiography of Urbanism
 - 1.7.1 Modern Studies of Urbanism: Henri Pirenne and Max Weber
 - 1.7.2 Study of Urbanism in the USA
- 1.8 Urbanism and Modernity
- 1.9 Urban Histories and the 'Cultural Turn'
- 1.10 Summary
- 1.11 Exercises
- 1.12 References

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Today more people live in cities than in villages. This was not the case even in the beginning of the twenty-first century. As we turn our gaze backwards we find that a very small percentage of population lived in cities in the pre-modern world. Then there was a time when cities did not exist. People lived in forest settlements and agricultural villages. About five thousand years ago cities emerged in Iraq, Egypt and the Indus Valley. As an evolutionary marker in human history the emergence of cities was an irreversible change in the sense that although individual cities rose and fell, the city as a form of habitation continued in one or another area. And today we have reached a stage when people in cities outnumber those in villages. Such a fundamental change in human history needs to be studied.

From the earliest to the latest, cities have been the greatest points of concentration of humans and their social relationships. As concrete expressions of the concentration of women and men they have displayed the glories of urban art and architecture in temples, tombs and palaces. Public spectacles, religious and military processions and philosophical disputations were part of the experience of the city. Cities have also been the scenes of violence, crime and the exploitation of urban masses (Southall, 1998:8-9). There have been religions focussing on crises and miseries caused by urbanism and there have been religions that shunned the urban space. Once the city came into existence, nobody could be indifferent to it. In fact the city seems to penetrate the very structure of biological evolution. Alley cats and dogs are animal denizens of the city with an outlook as urban as those of the human counterparts (Martindale, 1966:10).

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1.2 WHAT IS AN URBAN CENTRE?

Mohenjodaro and New York – two cities separated in time and space could not be more different. Yet both are called urban centres. The concept of an urban centre should be able to encompass the great variety of forms. Compared to rural settlements urban centres have a larger population, higher population density and greater social heterogeneity. Important members of the urban community engage in activities that are not directly related to food production. These activities consist of social, cultural, industrial, commercial, religious, artistic, educational, military, political or administrative functions. Such diverse activities require people having different kinds of skills. This leads to increasing degrees of specialisation. Craftsmanship and trading are distinct but interdependent activities. Similarly, personnel of administration and political control might be connected to each other. People of complementary professions tend to stay close to each other since it makes for more efficient transactions. Translated into spatial terms, such clustering leads to increased density of population. Individuals performing economic, religious and political roles need each other to survive. But their ties are defined not by kinship but by mutual utility. Individuals and groups that coordinate various specialised activities tend to concentrate power. For example the state is the greatest coordinator of diverse and sometimes conflicting demands of different interest groups. Officials like kings, ministers, generals and priests who blend the needs of heterogeneous groups manage to concentrate considerable power in their hands. Thus coordination gives rise to vertical hierarchies of powerful and powerless classes. Consequently, every urban centre is characterised by the presence of the powerful rich living in the lap of luxury and poor outcasts performing unpleasant but necessary tasks like cremating the dead, cleaning streets and in some cases even removing night soil.

The primary functions of an urban centre are activities like administration, ritual service and trade. Urban centres are home to rich and poor, rulers and the ruled, buyers and sellers, craftsmen and traders (Wirth, 1938:360-366). In many pre-modern cities the larger proportion of the population was engaged in agricultural activities. However, the city was recognised and remembered not for its agricultural produce but for the presence of kings or temples or markets.

Hunting-gathering communities who populated the planet earth for a long time never produced an urban centre. Agricultural communities that emerged about ten thousand years ago did not produce urban centres for the first five thousand years. It was in the wake of developments in the field of social organisation and technology that urban centres sprang up for the first time in some of the areas where agricultural communities lived. Urban centres emerged in agricultural societies that were socially stratified and politically organised. They also had craft specialists in their community. Societies based on political domination by a small group claiming monopoly over the use of force are called state societies. Urban centres emerged when rulers, craft specialists, merchants and the rich people in such societies converged in a small geographical area. The functions of these groups determined the nature of the settlement. As the historian, Braudel, points out, the most obvious characteristic of a town is the way it concentrates its activity into as confined an area as possible, cramming its inhabitants closely together and obliging them to crowd through streets sometimes too narrow for traffic, and eventually to build upwards (Braudel, 1989:180-81).

1.3 WHAT IS SURPLUS?

If we examine urban centres as units of settlement, they perform specialised functions in relation to a broader hinterland (Trigger, 2003:120). This relationship of interdependence,

favourable to the urban centre, usually emanates from its advantageous geographical location (location on trade routes, control of natural resources etc.). Rulers, priests, craftsmen and traders depend on agriculturists to produce their food. Historically, pre-modern cities have mercilessly exploited their rural surroundings. Given the primitive state of technology, agriculturists produced small quantities of grains that could barely take care of the requirements of the producers. Part of this produce was siphoned off to cities. The food that is siphoned off to cities is called 'surplus'. 'Surplus' does not mean the produce over and above the requirements of the cultivators. Rather it is the produce brought to the city from the village. It is possible that the villagers might have needed that food. Urban centres develop a variety of institutional mechanisms to extract food from villages. This mobilisation of 'surplus' might take the form of tribute to an urban deity who might be believed to own the land, the source of all produce. It might take the form of taxes imposed by the king or it might take the form of exchange in return for goods supplied by craftsmen and merchants from the city. Thus, laws, traditions and belief systems backed by military force were used to transfer agricultural produce to cities. Commenting on the towns of medieval France, the historian Braudel said, 'Any town of unequivocally urban status would be surrounded by a ring of bourgs, each of them linking it by extension to the Lilliputian world of villages...Every town, small or large, would have a supply zone on which it was dependent. A town was like a huge stomach, drawing on not one but several successive areas and zones of influence.' (Braudel, 1989:182-185) Given the fact that a large number of people with diverse professions stay in the city, the relationships among the residents are impersonal. Also, the inhabitants of such a settlement satisfy an economically substantial part of their daily needs in the local market.

Many social scientists regard urbanism as a dependent variable. According to them urban centres reflect the economic aspect of a broad range of changes taking place in a given society (Fischer, 1975:367-373). Other scholars feel that the city acts as a 'container' meaning that the concentration of rulers and ruled, merchants and buyers, priests and devotees in a small geographical area brings in a qualitative change in the urban space. This leads to the creation of a new landscape. In the city are concentrated the innovations and changes that occur in the larger society. It needs to be emphasised that the idea of concentration extends beyond the mere aggregation of population to include its more profound social, cultural and politico-economic implications, since these are even more highly concentrated (Southall 1998:8-10). In other words, the city is the hub of power, the site of control. As has been stated by Braudel, the town stood above all for domination. When we try to define or rank it, the basis is its capacity to command and the area it commanded (Braudel 1989:181). This observation underscores the centrality of power in the formation of urban centres.

The coming of the city represented a transformation in the relationship among humans rather than between humans and nature. This transformation in the relationship among humans is called emergence of the state. The human groups that existed earlier were called kinship-based societies. Kinship-based society is usually called 'tribal society'. Tribal societies are organised on the principle that all the members of the community are related to each other. The natural resources available in the area are collectively owned. Consequently, tribal society does not create structures where wealth or resources are concentrated in a few families. In state societies, the web of kinship systems is modified to give opportunities to a few families to hoard wealth and enforce special control over human and natural resources. States, unlike tribes, are based on the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of kings, priests and traders. Unfettered by local kinship networks, kings and traders create networks of exchange with kings, chiefs and craft persons of distant lands. The powerful members of state societies are hungry for various

craft products because exotic goods from distant lands add to their prestige and power. So, the powerful members of state societies enforce communication between settlements for the purposes of mobilisation of food and minerals. They want mobility of population for the purpose of production or warfare. The physical spaces where the state societies emerged sometimes developed into cities. That is why scholars believe that the coming of cities was related to a transformation in the realm of social organisation. There could be states without cities but there was no city without the state.

For a historian, the validity of the exercise of studying urbanism is that urban centres were like lighthouses which give us an entry into the happenings in the past. Our understanding of the beginnings of such important processes as the emergence of the state and class can be better understood if we study the process of urbanisation. Also, the theme of urbanisation connects us to the study of a process which occurred in many parts of the world across time and space. This means that we move out of the insularity of history and effectively learn from other disciplines like economics, sociology, anthropology, demography and literature. Any society which has cities is an urban society.

The origin of cities is associated with a form of organisation that is characterised by impersonal contacts. Such contacts and transactions are difficult to sustain through individual memory. The language of a king's command or a merchant's exchange needs to be precise. Even minor errors of verbal command can turn it into Chinese whispers. Thus, written records came to play an important role in impersonal transactions. Many instances of early urbanism are, therefore, associated with the invention of writing. A written text could carry the instructions of the powerful to places where they themselves were not present. In a non-literate context every instruction was tied to the specific context of its utterance. Writing was a true universal, a form of conversation in which speakers and listeners did not sit face to face. It could transcend the boundaries of memory and forgetting. The instructions of kings, holy men and merchants could travel to distant lands. Writing made possible the storing, freezing and dissemination of knowledge. This could be used for agreements between merchants, recording the commandments of a king for the people he controlled, or announcing religious sermons in their unadulterated form. Writing, thus, opened the possibility of new forms of organisation of political, economic and religious structures.

1.4 WHAT IS URBAN HISTORY?

Today urbanisation refers to population shift from rural to urban areas. In the historical context, urbanisation also referred to the process by which the rural world spawned a new kind of settlement called the city. The study of urban history is an attempt to study both processes. Urban and rural do not refer to separate and distinct processes. Once the city was invented, 'rural' simply represented a form of specialisation. Cities cannot be understood without their rural hinterland and rural peasantry cannot be understood without discovering its links with the city. So, the study of urban history automatically becomes the study of change in legal-institutional, demographic and cultural processes. Urban history is an enquiry into the economic, political, social and spatial systems that created this form of settlement. A city needs to be placed in its regional, national and trans-national context.

1.5 URBANISM AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT

The study of urbanism requires a comparative and interdisciplinary method of study. Interdisciplinarity is important for studying urban history because this field has evolved

in the last hundred years by learning from various disciplines. Urban studies have repeatedly breached boundaries of disciplines. For example, a simple issue like water supply to the city of Delhi could show how the city has pulled water not only from the Yamuna but even from the distant Ganga and Beas rivers. An understanding of the water supply system would require us to understand how Delhi is able to override the water requirements of the local populations of various areas to slake its thirst. It will also require a study of unequal water distribution to different areas inside Delhi. The study would require not only an understanding of water flows from forests, mountains and rivers but also an understanding of negotiations of power and skills of engineering. Similar studies can be made about the supply of electricity to Delhi from different parts of north India. We shall also need to understand what Delhi gives in return for the resources it consumes. So, a study of the modern urbanism in Delhi needs an understanding of power structures, engineering practices and ecology of the region. Social science disciplines like sociology, economics and political science could deepen our understanding by focusing on the negotiations of power and wealth between Delhi and other regions and among the denizens of Delhi. Yet, such a study would not be complete without studying the experiential and cultural landscape of Delhi. Such a study would require an understanding of literature, art, photography and film. So the rich texture of urban studies is the product of an expanding and eclectic source base.

1.6 URBANISM AND COMPARATIVE METHOD

The attempt to identify, analyse and explain similarities and differences across societies, nations and continents is called comparative research method. It involves the creation of comparable datasets and a search for conceptual and functional equivalence. Such a method might lead to a deeper understanding of urbanism. Comparisons across time or space broaden our horizon and give us a perspective about the past. This method leads to a focus on empirical data collection. It is crucial for understanding what is common to all cities as well as what sets them apart. Such a study helps us observe continuities and change in urban processes. Comparisons over long periods of time and across space help historians understand long term patterns and changes. The long term continuities have been called 'structures of everyday life'. They could include food habits, routines of waking, work and sleep, shapes of houses and modes of dress. The comparative method also gives us insights into the interaction between large global processes and local processes. Urban historians have discovered that all cities need resources like food, raw materials and manpower that are not locally available in sufficient quantities. Cities also need a viable economic function, access to wider commercial networks, organisational stability and security provided by political authority. Comparisons show how becoming globally urban is a new phase in world history. They also show how urban life has spawned new sets of problems related to not only institutional organisation but also to issues of the sustainability of this mode of life.

The divide between rich and poor is one of the abiding characteristics of urban centres. This is seen in the unequal distribution of wealth, spatial segregation and persistence of a socio-cultural divide. While rapid urbanisation and fluctuations in the rate of growth in modern times dramatise the rich-poor contrast, a comparative method indicates that competition over land, labour and capital is intrinsic to urbanism. This in turn leads to discrimination against the poor. Cities not only discriminate against the poor, they also marginalise women, religious groups and social minorities. However, local experiences of different cities indicate that they have fought discrimination and marginalisation with varying rates of success. So, marginalisation is not the last word in the landscape of evolving urbanism of modern times.

1.7 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF URBANISM

Modern studies of urbanism began in the late 19th century as an intersection of arts, humanities and social sciences. There was an attempt to understand the experiential nature and the built environment of the city. Every city had an independent personality and at the same time it was part of a larger system of urbanisation. The historian Hobsbawm compared urban history to a 'variety store' in which everything was up for inclusion. Many historians believed that urban history did not have a field of its own and was merely a stage for larger historical processes. Yet, urban history is distinctive in one fundamental way from social or economic history – it approaches the city in its totality – the way a city is planned, designed, built, inhabited, appropriated, celebrated, despoiled and discarded (Hayden, 1996:15). A city is treated as a play of all these variables in a given historical situation. Its landscape, imaginary and real, is the creation of its inhabitants. Thus, denizens of the city are accorded an agency of their own. The study of urbanism shifts focus from kings and conquerors to also include common people and the marginalised like prostitutes, untouchables and trans-genders.

1.7.1 Modern Studies of Urbanism: Henri Pirenne and Max Weber

The beginnings of systematic studies of urbanism were connected with the period that witnessed phenomenal growth of urban centres as a result of industrialisation. Much of this interest was related to anxieties about urban problems caused by overcrowding, poverty and unsanitary conditions as well as the attempt to create a more planned society (Shane, 2016:13). These writings would sometimes be coloured by nostalgia for the lost idyllic world of the past. The city was considered the root cause of moral and physical decay. From the beginning of the twentieth century, historians like Henri Pirenne traced long term patterns of change as part of the urban revolution in Europe. Pirenne focused on the study of institutional processes that connected Europe and Asia. According to him, the European cities that emerged after the tenth century were the result of opening of trade routes with Asia. He interpreted the crusades as a covert war for opening trade routes. To him the decline of feudalism in Europe was directly related to the new forms of organisation that emerged in medieval cities. Pirenne had defined the European city as part of the big picture that redefined the histories of religion and feudalism.

Max Weber saw the transactional and depersonalised nature of modern economies and social relationships as the explanation for the 'life of lonely crowds'. Weber excavated a deeper history of urbanism by pointing out that the European city of the Renaissance represented a unique form of organisation that had no precedent in history and no parallels in China, India or the Arab world. He pointed out that in the pre-modern world cities the world over represented a system of institutions dominated by political power. Apart from an urban community cities included fortifications, a market, a court and powerful professional groups that enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy. What distinguished the Renaissance city was that it was controlled by merchant associations rather than kings or priests. These cities, having wrested power from the political elite, laid the foundations of capitalism. There have been debates about the nature of pre-modern cities and the dominant scholarly opinion seems to suggest that pre-modern cities were dominated by the political elite and that the economy of the city was subservient to politics. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the most important cities of the pre-modern world like Rome, Constantinople, Baghdad, Delhi or Beijing were political capitals in the first place. On the other hand, New York, arguably the most important city of the last hundred years, is not a political capital. That is why

scholars characterise pre-modern cities as ‘parasitic’ and modern cities as drivers of growth. The value system of pre-modern cities was governed by kingship, kinship, family and religion. In modern cities rational and instrumental values become more important and alignments and conflicts along class lines become more pronounced. Such discussions easily move into debates about industrialisation and deindustrialisation in colonial India.

1.7.2 Study of Urbanism in the USA

In USA, the Chicago School experimented with new ways of understanding urbanism. They made the city of Chicago their field of observation and put special emphasis on scientific measurement, quantification and comparison. Urban life was believed to be embedded in its wider geographic and material environment. Scholars like Louis Wirth studied urbanism in socio-psychological and historical-structural terms. It was shown how land use had changed with different patterns of industrialism and changes in the social structure.

The tradition of ‘Cultural Ecology’ that emerged in the 1950s tried to understand urbanism as a consequence of dynamic interaction of humans, environment, technology and social structure. Scholars trying to understand the process of urbanisation in places like Sumer, Egypt or the Indus Valley systematically worked out the interplay of environment and culture. Concerns about climate change have made historians aware of the environmentally destructive role of cities. That is why scholars like Jacobsen and Adams could explain the decline of Sumerian cities as a result of excessive use of water from irrigation channels. These irrigation channels turned productive agricultural fields into salt marshes (Jacobsen and Adams 1958). Arguments have been made about the decline of the Harappan civilisation being caused by ecological imbalance.

The space that a city needs to meet its requirements of water, electricity and waste disposal has grown exponentially in the last hundred years. The connection between the built and natural environment is visible in the engineering of natural water sources. The Romans created elaborate networks of aqueducts and waterways to take care of their water and sanitation requirements. This required control over water reservoirs of neighbouring areas and engineering solutions. It also required resolution of legal and political issues related to ownership of land and water bodies. Scholarly discussions have, therefore, included issues of unequal access to natural resources and social justice. The huge appetite for natural resources found in modern cities has made it a subject of environmental history and the discovery of ‘inconvenient truths’.

1.8 URBANISM AND MODERNITY

There has been a distinct tradition of studying urbanism as a site of modernity. The modern city as envisaged by planners has a top down approach with planned rows of buildings, regulated routes for traffic and scaled distances. Modernity is understood as the cultural concomitant of industrial capitalism with its notions of individualism and homogenisation of everyday practice. In Europe, the construction of town halls of monumental scale with impressive clock towers is understood as the imposition of a new time discipline. The town hall also symbolised a shift of power from traditional institutions like the church to a democratically elected town council.

Another stream of scholarship focussed on the built space of cities. It discussed the disappearance of streets and sidewalks and connected it to the disintegration of the urban community. These scholars examined the larger issues involved in the creation of super blocks and wastelands of deprivation that were neatly divided by freeways and

underpasses. The creation of parallel lives in suburbs and slums were part of a single process. There has been an attempt to understand the landscapes of roads, streets and buildings as well as the landscapes of the mind.

1.9 URBAN HISTORIES AND THE 'CULTURAL TURN'

The study of Urban History has also seen a 'Cultural Turn'. The 'Cultural Turn' signifies a shift to studying the experiential aspect of urbanism. Scholars tried to move away from grand theories and explanations in favour of local knowledge and localised explanations of change. These studies questioned notions of structural explanations in terms of global categories like economy or politics. Micro histories of localities, issues related to gender, sexuality, subjectivity, race and caste became the dominant concerns of a large number of historians. Rather than viewing the city as a fixed space within which the drama of urban life unfolded, scholars studied the process of the constitution of identities based on class, race, gender and sexuality. The material and symbolic spaces were being continuously dissolved and recreated in the lived life of peoples. They pointed out that people live in cities in local spaces created out of routine practices and a series of personal and impersonal networks. The Facebook or Twitter interactions are part of that network. However, most of this network remains elusive to authorities who might want to order and control these spaces. Cities have provided opportunities for the marginal to challenge the mainstream. Such deep currents of resistance are elusive and travel across porous boundaries.

Earlier, issues of gender had been absent from urban studies. Beginning from the 1970s, there has been an awareness of the history of masculinity in the construction and management of urban spaces. Scholars have pointed out that ideas about public spaces and domestic space are inflected with male centric ideology. It is a truism that individual houses are designed with clear division of male and female spaces. Modern planning seems to have replicated that pattern on a grand scale. Gender studies created new approaches to understanding the architecture and planning of urban spaces. The city was shown to be a predominantly male space. For example, the blindness of male ideologies could be discerned in the near universal absence of public toilets for women in most cities until the first half of the twentieth century. The urban space, according to feminist readings, could be visualised as a male space of lonely crowds and fleeting encounters.

Historians of urbanism have also discussed issues of governmentality which refers to the creation of an apparatus that disciplines and controls the inhabitants of a city. These apparatuses create mechanisms that instil the idea of government of the self, the family, and acceptance of government by the state. Scholars have shown that the practices of statistical surveys and mapping of urban population objectified the urban population. From the stand point of authority issues of public health which required provision of waste water management created a frame for control. Similarly, laying of streets ensured control over the circulation of population.

1.10 SUMMARY

Urban history has learnt from a variety of disciplines. Beginning its career as a minor description of memoirs about cities, it turned into a major discipline that provided insights into major historical transformations. It draws upon disciplines of geography, sociology, economics, history and literature. But as a discipline, its boundaries are blurred, with ongoing negotiations along its changing peripheries. What makes urban studies a

challenging field is that it is not simply interdisciplinary but that its boundaries dissolve and joint efforts begin to look for new and unexpected answers. It remains committed to understanding the intersection of global and the local. Issues of environment and sustainability have become important in the current discussions on urbanism. The fact that urban studies relate to different streams of thought makes it a vibrant intellectual enterprise. Historians of urbanism continue to transcend boundaries created by disciplines. They continue to explore real and imagined spaces with their flow of people and invention of spaces. New York and Mohenjodaro might share very little in the experiential or imagined worlds, however, the patterns of control and the ability to invent new occupations make them cities.

1.11 EXERCISES

- 1) State the chief markers of an urban centre.
- 2) What are the processes involved in the creation of surplus? Discuss its role and importance in the emergence and sustenance of a city.
- 3) What is urban history? Why do we need to study urban history through the lenses of many disciplines?
- 4) Discuss the importance of comparative method for the study of urbanism?
- 5) Discuss the process of the emergence of urban history as a field of study by describing its historiography.
- 6) What are the ideas of Henri Pirenne and Max Weber on urbanism?
- 7) What were the innovations introduced by the Chicago School in the study of urbanism?

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UNIT 2 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ANCIENT CITIES*

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The Harappan Cities
 - 2.2.1 Early Archaeology of Harappan Cities
 - 2.2.2 Recent Data and New Interpretations
- 2.3 Between the Harappan and the Early Historic: An Absence of Cities?
- 2.4 The Early Historic Cities
 - 2.4.1 Early Historic Cities in Texts
 - 2.4.2 Understanding Early Historic Urbanisation
 - 2.4.3 Exploring and Excavating Early Historic Urban Centres
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Exercises
- 2.7 References

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The earliest cities that came up around 2600 BCE in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent lasted for nearly 700 years. These cities are associated with the Harappan or the Indus period. The abandonment of most of these settlements around 1900 BCE marked the end of the first phase of urbanism. The next stage of urban centres, referred to as the Early Historic period, began around 500 BCE and continued for nearly 1000 years. Unlike the gap in the urban centres between the Harappan and the Early Historic, this was not the case with the subsequent Early Medieval-Medieval (sixth-fifteenth centuries CE), Early Modern (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries CE) and Modern (nineteenth-twentieth centuries CE) periods. However what changed was that many of the Early Historic cities declined and instead new urban centres emerged in the Early Medieval-Medieval as well as in each of the later phases.

While the study of the Harappan cities is based solely on archaeological data, that of the Early Historic draws on multiple sources, ranging from texts, inscriptions, and coins to visual and archaeological data. It is important to understand that forms of cities are constantly changing over time. Hence the Harappan cities would have been very different from those of the Early Historic. Neither are all cities similar to each other even within the same period. The internal chronology of the Harappan cities is still not very well worked out to enable a comparative study of cities that were established in an earlier phase with those that may have been setup slightly later. However, during the Early Historic period, differences have been noted, especially in the case of the successive cities at Bhir Mound, Sirkap, and Sirsukh in the Taxila valley. What also needs to be noted is that the foci of studies for the cities in these two different periods have been dissimilar, partly due to the nature of sources and available data. This Unit, the ambit of which is limited to the Ancient period, has three Sections, the first on the Harappan cities, the second on the absence of cities between the Harappan and the Early Historic, and the third on the Early Historic cities.

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2.2 THE HARAPPAN CITIES

The Harappan cities must have been among several ancient cities that stood as massive mounds spoken of by locals as ancient places. One of these ancient places brought Charles Masson in his random explorations through the Punjab where he noted the size of the site. It was Alexander Cunningham who visited Harappa on one of his early tours searching for archaeological evidence in the northern part of the subcontinent; yet, he was unable to recognise its antiquity, despite seeing a seal with characters that were completely unfamiliar till then. The seal as a distinctive artefact, found at such distant sites as Harappa and Mohenjodaro, and subsequent discoveries of the same type from Mesopotamian sites, led John Marshall to finally announce evidence of a Bronze Age in South Asia. Much has been written on Harappan urban centres and on urbanism in third millennium BCE South Asia. Here, we will look briefly at some of the studies published on the Harappan period. The discussion is divided into two sections, one on early work, and the second on later studies that specialised on particular aspects. In both stages, there are studies that worked towards presenting syntheses of the evidence as well. At the same time, while a large number of articles and research papers have been written on Harappan archaeology, this historiography is limited to surveying primarily the monographs that have dealt with aspects of the Harappan cities. However, **Block 2 (Units 5-9)** will suggest several readings through which other aspects of the Harappan can be further explored.

2.2.1 Early Archaeology of Harappan Cities

Publications that go back to the discovery of the Harappan cities give us an indication of what motivated early explorations and excavations. For one thing, it appears that certain artefacts became recognised as distinctive and characteristic of that found from Harappa and Mohenjodaro, the primary being the steatite seal. Other artefacts became associated alongside, such as red slipped pottery of distinctive shapes with paintings in black, and strikingly similar long stone blades of a cream coloured chert. These were seen to occur largely in the valley of the Indus river. But other explorations, such as of L.P. Tessitori (1918-19) in Rajasthan, in the uplands of Sind by N.G. Majumdar (1934) in the early 1930s, or of Aurel Stein in the Cholistan in the early 1940s (Stein, 1942; Gupta, 1989), revealed several sites, some of which had similar archaeological material, and some had ceramics of different types. These, thus, enabled a sequence of archaeological cultures based on ceramics to be built for the northwestern part of the subcontinent.

Sustained excavation of Mohenjodaro (Marshall, 1931; Mackay, 1938) and Harappa (Vats, 1940) provided the first images of Bronze Age urban centres in South Asia. By the 1940s, several smaller settlements had been excavated in the uplands of Sind and in the Indus valley. But it was these two cities of roughly commensurate size and a strikingly similar material culture that captured the imagination of scholars who attempted to synthesise the available evidence. This was done by scholars within South Asia as well as outside. Piggott (1952: 136) considered the two cities as twin capitals of a state whose uniform material culture was seen in terms of a 'monotonous regularity of a highly organised community under some strong system of centralised government, controlling production and distribution and no doubt levying a system of tolls and customs throughout the territory under its rule.' The Harappan cities were also framed in terms of what was already known about cities in Mesopotamia. The link in Mesopotamia between sacred and secular powers prompted the attribution in South Asia to similar organisational entities. Thus, when the stone bust of a male was found at Mohenjodaro, it was termed as 'priest-king', a term that survives till date.

2.2.2 Recent Data and New Interpretations

Early impressionistic assumptions are now being seriously questioned. The idea of Mohenjodaro and Harappa being exactly similar and revealing a monotonous material culture is no longer considered the case. Also, despite the amount of archaeological work that has been undertaken at both sites, the positive identification of material or structures with religion remains tentative at best for the Bronze Age in South Asia.

The above two ways in which Harappan archaeology is being rethought is due to the sustained work that has been done in investigating a myriad range of sites. The partition of the northwestern part of the subcontinent in 1947, and the creation of two separate nation-states had a direct impact on the archaeology of the Harappan period. As the two major settlements, Mohenjodaro and Harappa, fell within the territory of Pakistan, there was a surge of archaeological activity to recover more Harappan sites within the new nation-state of India. Large parts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh were combed, resulting in the discovery of new Harappan sites as well as other archaeological cultures and materials, which were not known so far. Many of the non-Harappan sites, which were chronologically earlier, concurrent or later than the Harappan cities, were identified as either chalcolithic or Early Iron Age settlements, the latter filling the chronological gap between the Harappan and the Early Historic periods.

Excavations and explorations of Harappan sites have been useful because they have added to the range of information already known in terms of locations, materials, and built spaces. Several sites were excavated in the 1950s and 1960s (Lothal and Kalibangan) and in the 1990s (Dholavira, Rakhigarhi) by the Archaeological Survey of India. These large and small sites, such as Harappa (Meadow, ed. 1991), Lothal (Rao 1979, 1985), Surkotada (Joshi 1990), Kalibangan (Lal et al, 2003, 2015; Sharma, 1999 for the burials), Banawali (Bisht, 1982, 1984), and Dholavira (Bisht, 1991) have been published in reports to varying degrees. Smaller sites were excavated and certain regions (such as Gujarat) well explored by Indian universities, such as Deccan College, M.S. University of Baroda and the Institute of Rajasthan Studies. To take the case of Gujarat, excavation reports, both preliminary and detailed, were published on Kuntasi (Dhavalikar et al., 1996), Nagwada (Hegde et al., 1988), Nageshwar (Hegde et al., 1990), Bagasra (Sonawane et al., 2003; Bhan et al., 2005), Shikarpur (Bhan and Ajithprasad, n.d.), and Kanmer (Kharakwal et al., 2007; Kharakwal et. al., 2008). These sites, located on the margins of the Harappan zone, have provided useful information on the rationale for the location of these sites, their functions and their interactions with local communities as reflected in the finds of local ceramics along with classic Harappan shapes. Another region, on the margins, is the Sind Kohistan, where extensive surveys were carried out by Flam (1988), many decades after Majumdar, resulting in more Harappan sites being discovered. Yet another area is the Cholistan, a survey (Mughal, 1997) that led to the recovery of several sites from the Early to the Late Harappan periods.

Major work has been achieved through the generation of archaeological data using new techniques, as well as new interpretations of the existing material. In this context, one can note the explorations and excavations at sites like Mohenjodaro and Harappa with fresh questions and new technologies. At Mohenjodaro, for example, the moratorium on further excavations pushed scholars to work on the site without physically interfering with the site in any way. An important surface survey of Mohenjodaro enabled scholars to recover micro-evidence of craft activities, and helped to show where particular processes of crafts were possibly practiced (Bondioli, Tosi and Vidale 1984). More important, it illustrated a useful strategy to obtain vital information through a careful and

systematic surface survey. A sustained period of studying the old field records, and incorporating the data on artefacts, not previously mentioned in the Mohenjodaro excavation report, enabled a re-analysis of different excavated sectors of the city. Thus, a re-analysis of artefacts within the HR Area has been published (Jansen and Urban, 1985), providing a better understanding of the contexts from where artefacts were recovered. New insights have also come about through the employment of methodologies such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) by a Japanese team to study spatial landscapes over several levels from the micro to the macro (Teramura et al., 2008).

The attention that Harappan archaeology has attracted and the data that has been generated has also meant that scholars have been able to concentrate on particular aspects. Thus, we find entire monographs dedicated to certain themes, such as trade, political organisation, technologies and crafts; geological provenience studies; discovery of the Harappan; and the end/decline of the Harappan urban centres. While themes, such as trade, are relatively easily understood through archaeological data, other aspects such as political organisation are more polemical and involve an innovative use of archaeological evidence and anthropological insights. Other aspects, such as Harappan society, are less easily understood through archaeological evidence and hence have been little worked on.

Shereen Ratnagar's (1981, 2004) work on trade has woven together archaeological evidence to construct a picture of the long-distance networks of the Harappans necessitated by the Bronze Age nature of its economy. While Mesopotamian texts helped to identify the region's maritime trading partners, most of the argument for overland links rests on finds of distinctive archaeological material in various regions. Thus, Harappan weights, seals, black-slipped jars, and carnelian beads are as diagnostic as carved chlorite vessels from Iran, Mesopotamian cylinder seals or Persian Gulf seals from Bahrain. Ratnagar has also tried to understand the larger implications of the long distance trading networks of the Bronze Age world.

The political structure of the Harappan has long been under contention with several divergent views of the lack of a state, a single state and of multiple states. The first was propounded earlier by Walter Fairervis (1961, 1971) but the more prevalent have been the latter two positions. Gregory Possehl (2002: 6), too, while agreeing to a level of socio-cultural complexity, argued for the absence of a state due to the lack of sculptures of rulers or palaces, of a bureaucracy and of a state religion. However, this was a change from his earlier position (Possehl, 1977) where he saw the Mature Harappan as a state that came to an end, even while certain traditions seemed to continue into later periods. The case for multiple states rests on Jonathan Kenoyer's (1997) suggestion that the Harappan situation may have mirrored that of the later city-states of the Gangetic plain. He (Kenoyer, 1997: 69) suggested that the lack of a single building or group of buildings dominating at either Mohenjodaro or Harappa suggests the absence of a hereditary monarchy and that the walled areas at both cities with large buildings and open spaces may be evidence of separate elite communities at both cities and within each city.

Ratnagar (1991: 166-67), on the other hand, has also used the example of the city-states in the Early Dynastic period in Mesopotamia but to argue that, despite the same writing system, similar religious architecture, metallurgy and seal carving styles, one must take note of different weight systems, large palace complexes at different sites and the occurrence of monumental art at several cities, pointing to the existence of multiple polities. To reinforce the hypothesis about a single state as an alternative model, she (Ratnagar, 1991: 169-70) pointed out the probable colonies in the Makran, Kutch,

Kathiawar and the Oxus; the similarities in Harappan ‘infrastructural elements like bricks, chert blades, metal tools, and carts’; the lack of regional clusters of any animal motif on Harappan seals; and in fact, the ubiquity of the unicorn motif, the absence of any building such as the Great Bath or the Pillared Hall at any site other than Mohenjodaro; and that Mohenjodaro alone has revealed stone statues of men. Ratnagar’s (Ratnagar, 1991: 184-90) contention is that the Harappan represents an archaic state in a society transitional between those structured on kinship and those on class. Given the context of the lack of money, market systems and private ownership of resources, the economy would have functioned through the mobilisation of labour. This form of early state, unlike the developed Ur III state in Mesopotamia, would also have functioned without a developed bureaucracy, with state functionaries having ties of clientship or personal or affinal relationships; in other words, a system that still retained several elements of kinship based societies.

The research on craft technologies has also focused on the wealth of detailed evidence that Harappan archaeologists have been able to unearth. Systematic surface surveys¹ of certain sites, such as Mohenjodaro (Bondioli et al., 1984) and Chanhudaro (Shar and Vidale, 1985) have shown the way to a useful strategy to study sites without having to excavate them. Other methods, such as ethnoarchaeology² and experimental archaeology³ have been used to understand aspects of craft production, such as spatial patterns of production, processes, specialisation, and organisation. An ethnoarchaeological study (Kenoyer et al., 1991, 1994) of contemporary stone bead making at Khambhat was undertaken to suggest ways in which ancient bead making techniques and organisation could be understood. Experimental work on stoneware bangles was also attempted (Halim and Vidale, 1984; Kenoyer, 1994) to reconstruct clay processing processes, as well as methods of finishing the bangles, and achieving the black colour of some of them through reduction firing.⁴ The fact that two entire monographs have been written on Harappan crafts and technologies (Vidale, 2000; Miller, 2009) shows the amount of data that has been generated. An affiliated monograph could be the compendium on Harappan architecture and infrastructural arrangements (Joshi, 2008). Randall Law (2011) in a recent study has tried to identify the geological sources of the stone and metal artefacts excavated from Harappa.

The discovery of the Harappan itself has been a fascinating story, one illustrated well by Nayanjot Lahiri (2005) with a wealth of detail from the archives. This is part of a genre of writing that has focused on the history of Indian archaeology, on the personas involved and the actions that they took. The story is a useful comment on how sites get excavated and how they are reported. Lahiri’s (2000) edited book brings together archaeologists and their hypotheses on what led to the end or decline of the Harappan cities, one of the most debated issues in Harappan archaeology. A book on the same theme in the same year was written by Ratnagar (2000), who has most innovatively examined the archaeological evidence, to illustrate the signs of stress in the upper levels of a site like Mohenjodaro, and to explain what may have occurred around the end of the second millennium BCE.

¹ **Surface surveys** involve the recording of artefacts and architectural remains that are visible on the surface of a site or landscape.

² **Ethnoarchaeology** is the study of material culture in the present day by archaeologists to interpret archaeological data from the past.

³ **Experimental archaeology** involves present day experimental studies conducted in the laboratory or field by archaeologists to understand past technologies and manufacturing processes.

⁴ **Reduction firing technique** is a method of firing in a closed kiln so that no air can enter.

This period has continued to retain the interest of scholars and non-specialists, as is apparent by the publication of several books, with a great amount of visual detail, aimed at a more general audience (Wheeler, 1953; Lal, 1997; Kenoyer, 1998; Ratnagar, 2001; Possehl, 2002; Habib, 2002; Aronovsky and Gopinath, 2004; Kenoyer and Heuston, 2005; McIntosh, 2008; Wright, 2010). All of these have a set pro forma, laying out the Harappan landscape, detailing the distribution of sites in that landscape and then discussing the morphology of cities, the economy with trade and crafts, and the end of the urban culture. Possehl (2002) did attempt to go into aspects of gender but it remained a limited exercise. The Harappan is the one Bronze Age culture that has been so well investigated from a purely archaeological perspective, essentially because that remains the primary means through which we can understand that society. Yet, notwithstanding the amount that has already been written on the Harappan, the potential remains for much more to be attempted.

2.3 BETWEEN THE HARAPPAN AND THE EARLY HISTORIC: AN ABSENCE OF CITIES?

There is a general consensus amongst most archaeologists that the intervening period between the end of the Harappan to the beginning of the Early Historic (1900-500 BCE) was devoid of urban centres. It is not as though there were no settlements in various parts of the subcontinent but the nature of these was rural in character. However, there is one archaeologist (Shaffer, 1993) who has argued for the presence of urban centres during this period in Cholistan in present day Pakistan, and in eastern Punjab, which for him included the contemporary Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, northern Rajasthan, and the western parts of Uttar Pradesh. The evidence cited by Jim Shaffer was the continued occupation of these two areas in the Late and post Harappan periods as well as the presence of a few large sites (six in the range of 10.1-20 hectare and one of 38.1 hectare) in Cholistan, and one site (9.6 hectare) in eastern Punjab. These sizes are not at all comparable to many of the Mature Harappan cities, which were over 200 hectares. Several other points that were raised by Shaffer have further been critiqued in detail by Menon and Varma (2005).

Whether there was any connection between the Harappan and the Early Historic cities has also been a matter of debate. Here again, except for Shaffer (1993), a large number of archaeologists have found little similarity between the urban centres of these two periods (Ghosh, 1973; Allchin, 1982; Lal, 1982; Lal, 1997; Jansen, 1997; Menon and Varma, 2005). A close examination of the cities in the two periods showed few parallels in settlement morphology, as was evident from the numerous differences in fortifications, city plans, drainage systems, public buildings, and domestic architecture (Menon and Varma, 2005). It needs to be kept in mind that the physical dissimilarities between the Harappan and Early Historic cities are primarily a reflection of the critical differences in the polities, economies and societies of the two periods, although about some of these aspects too, there is a contrary position. For instance, Kenoyer (1997, 1998) has suggested that the state and social structures in the two periods were similar, even though no supporting evidence has been cited.

Given the evidence that is available till date, it seems to be the case that there is a gap of nearly 1400 years between the first and second phases of urbanisation in the subcontinent. Moreover, the cities in these two periods were vastly different in form too. Another contrasting aspect lies in the geographical locations of the cities and towns in the two periods, as will be evident from the discussions in **Blocks 2 and 3 (Units 5-11 and 14)**.

2.4 THE EARLY HISTORIC CITIES

The studies on Early Historic urbanism can be broadly divided into three categories. The first would be those that are primarily based on texts, which are normative or narrative in nature. These can be traced to nearly a century ago with the monographs of C. P. V. Ayyar's *Town Planning in Ancient Deccan* (1916) and B. B. Dutt's *Town Planning in Ancient India* (1925), which were followed by several others and include the more recent studies by Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya (2003) and Shonaleeka Kaul (2010). The second includes the overviews of urbanisation and urbanism in the Early Historic period by archaeologists (Ghosh, 1973; Allchin, 1989; Allchin, 1990; Allchin, 1995; Chakrabarti, 1995; Jha, 1998) and historians (Thakur, 1981; Prasad, 1984; Basant, 2012). The third comprises archaeological research undertaken with the specific purpose of investigating Early Historic urbanisation and urbanism primarily through field surveys and excavations. Although systematic surveys carried out specifically to examine urbanisation or urbanism began rather late in the subcontinent (Erdosy, 1988; Smith, 2001; Smith, 2002), this was not the case with the excavations of Early Historic cities. The latter have deep antecedents in the Indian subcontinent, beginning with the archaeological excavations of Early Historic cities, such as Bhita near Allahabad (Marshall, 1915), and Sirkap [from 1913 till 1934] in the Taxila valley in Pakistan (Marshall, 1951) to more recent work at Sisupalgarh in Orissa (Mohanty and Smith, 2008) and Indor Khera near Anupshahar in the Upper Ganga plains (Menon and Varma, 2010; Varma and Menon, 2015), and Adam in central Deccan (Nath, 2016).

2.4.1 Early Historic Cities in Texts

In this section, the recent textual studies (Chattopadhyaya, 2003; Kaul, 2010, 2016) on the city in early India will be discussed. Several important points were raised by Chattopadhyaya, which were later followed up in greater detail by Kaul.

For Chattopadhyaya, texts provide literary images as well as normative prescriptions about cities. Undoubtedly the literary accounts would have drawn from the lived reality of urban residents, yet Chattopadhyaya (2003: 128) warns us that 'literature can hardly be expected to provide description with cartographic precision.' Moreover, he (Chattopadhyaya, 2003: 106) tells us that 'perspectives from literature cannot be a substitute for research on processes of urbanisation, urban morphology and demography, urban material culture and such other facets of the city which literature is not really concerned with. Literature only tells more eloquently than even other written sources such as inscriptions, about the 'citi-ness' of the city beyond its physical contours.' Thus the strength of texts is that they help us to understand how cities were perceived and even conceptualised in the Early Historic period. He also points out that while the city would have been seen very differently by distinct social groups, it is predominantly the normative view that would have been projected in the texts. In particular, he highlights two perspectives, viz, the *rāṣṭra*'s views as represented in a normative text like the *Arthaśāstra*, and a more mundane description of a city in the *Silappadikāram*, which is a narrative text. In the former, the city is seen as a hierarchised space, often centering on the king. On the other hand, the alternate perspective talked about the city as a space where individuals from different social and occupational groups intersected, marked by a range of activities where several options could be exercised.

Kaul's (2010) study deals with the imaginative representation of urbanism based on the Sanskrit *kavyas*, which chronologically span over a thousand years of the first millennium CE. There are generalised images of the city that cannot be located to any specific urban centre. Moreover the chronological frame of her study includes both the Early

Historic as well as the Early Medieval, thus making it difficult to discern whether there were different perceptions of urbanism in the two successive periods. Kaul (2016) while following up on some of Chattopadhyaya's arguments further makes the point that not only is there a difference in perspectives between normative and narrative texts, but also within each of these two categories. For example, different versions of urbanism have been represented in the three normative texts, the *Arthasāstra*, *Dharmasutras* and *Kāmasutra*. Similarly within the narrative texts too, like the *Ramayana* and *Padataditaka*, cities are projected in distinct ways. Kaul (ibid) has also mentioned the variations in the perception of cities between the Brahmanical Sanskrit, like the *Dharmasutras*, and Buddhist Pali texts. The Brahmanical *Dharmasutras* were not very favourable towards cities as they regarded them with distrust and places where Vedic sacrifices could not be performed. On the other hand, the Buddhist Pali texts were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about urbanism.

Undoubtedly, the texts do inform us about various imaginings of urbanism; however it is through archaeology alone that the material remains of ancient cities can actually be uncovered.

2.4.2 Understanding Early Historic Urbanisation

Ram Sharan Sharma (1974), drawing on Damodar Dharmananda Kosambi's ideas (1952 [reprint 2006]), first made a causal link between iron technology and the beginning of states and cities in the Early Historic period. It was Amalananda Ghosh (1973), however, who raised several important issues related not just to the emergence but also the defining characteristics and what distinguishes the urban from the rural. For Ghosh, political and economic factors played a far more critical role in the establishment of cities, rather than iron technology. His narrative is based on a critical reading of both texts and the archaeological data. To a large extent Ghosh was the first scholar to have stressed the relevance of archaeological data for a fuller understanding of the Early Historic urban centres. This was reiterated by Vijay Kumar Thakur (1981:25) who makes the point that despite the limitations of archaeology, "it remains the best source for the study of the material aspects of a civilization".

Following Kosambi and Sharma, Thakur, too, attributed urbanisation in the Early Historic phase to the widespread use of iron technology and increased agricultural production. His monograph had generalised chapters on urban economy, society and culture based largely on textual and visual evidence. The specificities that can be provided by archaeological data particularly on architectural plans, houses, and contexts of craft production were however absent. Moreover, his discussion on the decline of Early Historic cities is largely inspired by Sharma's (1972) thesis of urban decay in the period between c.300 and 1000 CE.

While Thakur's study did not make any temporal or spatial distinctions in the urban centres of the Early Historic period, Kameshwar Prasad (1984) in his work focused solely on the Kushana cities. With the re-emergence of urbanism from about 500 BCE, there was a steady increase in the growth of cities and towns and the process of urbanisation peaked under the Kushanas. His work focused on the location, morphology, crafts, trade and trade routes during the Kushana period. Prasad has based his narrative largely on the archaeological data although occasionally textual evidence is also cited. Had the Kushana city of Sirsukh in the Taxila valley been excavated more extensively by John Marshall, Prasad would have had much more data to draw upon, unlike the scrappy bit of information that is available so far. One can only hope that sometime in future such an excavation will be carried out. Like Sharma and Thakur, he too has argued for a decline of urban centres in the post Kushana period.

Frank Raymond Allchin (1989, 1990, 1995) has argued that urbanisation as well as urbanism should not be viewed as a homogeneous process in the subcontinent. While attempting to delineate the regional patterns of city formation in Early Historic South Asia, he identified six distinct regions with different trajectories, which included the Ganges basin, the northwest [that comprised present day Pakistan and Afghanistan], central India, Deccan, the western and eastern coastal strips along the peninsula, and the island of Sri Lanka. On the basis of size, he formulated six categories of cities. Extending his argument he suggested that the largest cities were in the central Gangetic valley, and those in the other areas, such as the northwest, central India, the Deccan, or in eastern India were smaller. Chronologically, the first cities to come up were those located in the middle Ganga valley, the Ganga-Yamuna doab, and the northwest. He also made the point that there would have been different reasons for the emergence of cities in various regions of the subcontinent and these needed to be archaeologically investigated. Like the scholars before him, he too made a powerful plea, however one that has largely remained unheeded, for a systematic and problem oriented archaeological research on the Early Historic cities in South Asia.

Dilip K. Chakrabarti's (1995) monograph is a catalogue of ancient Indian cities. His work is largely a compilation of archaeological data taken from the excavation reports of the Harappan as well as the Early Historic cities. The archaeological information that he has collated on the Harappan and Early Historic urban centres is descriptive in nature. While there is little analysis regarding urbanism, he does suggest some of the factors that could have played a role in the emergence of cities in these two distinct phases. He has considered irrigation and craft specialisation to have been the key variables for urbanisation in the Harappan period. For the reappearance of cities in the Early Historic period, he has regarded the formation of the regional kingdoms around c.500 BCE as being a critical element.

Satyendra Kumar Jha (1998) urged us to not view the emergence of urbanisation in the Gangetic valley as a homogeneous development, instead he alerted us to the possibility of both spatial and temporal variations. However in order to work out these different trajectories both of the emergence as well as the specific characteristics of individual cities and towns even within the Gangetic valley, we need corresponding detailed archaeological data which is unfortunately unavailable till date.

P. K. Basant (2012) too, has analysed urbanisation, albeit within the region of Malwa in central India. His study has drawn on multiple sources, ranging from the archaeological and visual data to inscriptions and texts. Like several other historians, he also points to a link between the emergence of a state and urban centres. The latter is seen as a space that comprised of diverse social and religious communities. At the same time, he has argued that the city cannot be viewed in isolation but has to be located within a larger landscape. Thus the processes of urbanisation can only be understood in terms of the linkages between the city and its hinterland. Once again it is archaeological data alone that can help us better understand urbanisation and the related question of local and regional networks of urban centres in Malwa in the Early Historic period.

Thus we find that most of the studies on Early Historic urbanisation and urbanism remain limited in their analyses due to the paucity of archaeological data. This problem can only be rectified by encouraging more archaeological field work in future with the specific aim of investigating Early Historic towns and cities in the different regions of the subcontinent.

2.4.3 Exploring and Excavating Early Historic Urban Centres

There are very few examples of archaeological surveys that have been undertaken in India with the specific goal of understanding urbanisation or urban centres in the Early Historic period. Possibly the first such attempt was made by George Erdosy (1988) through his survey in the doab tehsils of Chail, Manjhapur and Sirathu in Allahabad district, Uttar Pradesh. His study highlighted the importance of field surveys to better understand the problem of urbanisation in Early Historic north India.

A field survey involving a systematic sampling strategy was carried out by Monica Smith (2001) at the Early Historic town of Kaundinyapura in central India. In order to assess the relationship between Kaundinyapura and its intermediate hinterland, an area encompassing a ten-kilometer radius around the site was also surveyed. Within this outlying survey zone, Dhamantri, a smaller mound about 4 kilometers from Kaundinyapura, was also surveyed. Her study indicated that the local and regional social and economic networks may have been more important than the long distance relationships in the Early Historic period.

After Kaundinyapura, Smith (2002:121) went on to undertake a systematic field survey of Sisupalgarh, an Early Historic city in Orissa. Her study revealed evidence for habitation throughout the fortified area, instead of 'an empty ceremonial or administrative center'. Further the variations in the architectural fragments may indicate distinctive neighborhoods in terms of access to different materials. She has also argued that the commonly held view about regular long distance contacts being a characteristic feature of the Early Historic period was not substantiated by the archaeological evidence from this site. Her survey revealed a much higher proportion of locally-made items as compared to the non-local artefacts. Moreover the scant evidence for indicators of production, such as lithic debris or slag, suggested that the production loci may have been outside the city walls.

Of the numerous excavations of Early Historic urban centres in South Asia, the most informative are those carried out at Bhita near Allahabad (Marshall, 1915), Sirkap in the Taxila valley in Pakistan (Marshall 1951), Sonkh near Mathura (Härtel, 1993), Arikamedu near Puducherry (Begley, et al., 1996, 2004), Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka (Conningham, 1999, 2006), Mahasthangarh in Bangladesh (Alam and Salles, 2001), Nagarjunakonda in eastern Deccan (Soundara Rajan, 2006), Sisupalgarh in Orissa (Smith and Mohanty, 2008) and Indor Khera near Anupshahar (Menon and Varma, 2010, Varma and Menon, 2015), and Adam in central Deccan (Nath, 2016). These excavations have provided a wealth of evidence about various aspects of Early Historic cities and towns. This information includes sizes, fortifications, layouts, and spaces outside the urban centres. Further detailed plans of public and religious buildings including a palace at Sirkap, as well as those of houses are available. There is also some archaeological data on craft production including technological processes, spatial contexts and organisation.

What needs to be kept in mind, however, is that archaeological field practices are constantly evolving, not just due to the availability of more sophisticated technologies but also because of newer themes and questions that have continued to be addressed over a period of time. Thus, the current survey and excavation methods are quite different from those prevalent in the previous century. For example, the standard practice now is to first undertake a systematic survey of a site before excavating it, as was the case at both Sisupalgarh and Indor Khera. In contrast, no systematic intensive survey was carried out in the Taxila valley before excavating at Bhira Mound, Sirkap or Sirsukh.

Another difference lies in the digging and collecting methods, as well as recording practices. The former entailed digging with pick axes to swiftly move large amounts of earth. Generally the earlier practice was to collect mostly whole artefacts but not the broken or incomplete objects. While recording too, the exact location from where each artefact was recovered was seldom noted, hence a lot of contextual data was absent in the early excavation reports. One can also note that at many of the excavations that were carried out in the past, archaeologists rarely paid any attention to debitage that can provide important evidence about craft production. Neither do we have any information about areas where craft production would have taken place.

The current practice in excavations is to dig very carefully, using smaller tools like the trowel, and maintain a meticulous record of all artefacts, organic remains and debitage. Why is it important to record all the finds as well as make a note of what was found where? The reason for maintaining such a careful record is that this information alone will help the archaeologist in understanding what went on in the ancient cities. An archaeological data as rich as this, allows the possibility of reconstructing the daily lives of the urban residents and their quotidian activities in the past.

2.5 SUMMARY

Mohenjodaro and Harappa were among the earliest cities that came up in the northwestern part of the subcontinent between 2600 and 1900 BCE. A large number of Harappan sites, both large and small, have been excavated, resulting in a vast corpus of archaeological data. This rich data has enabled detailed studies on myriad themes, such as trade, political organisation, technologies and crafts, geological provenience studies, and the end of Harappan urban centres. After a gap of nearly 1400 years, the next phase of urban centres is seen around 500 BCE. Unlike in the Harappan period when the cities were largely confined to the northwestern part, in the Early Historic, urban centres emerged in different regions of the subcontinent. The studies on the Early Historic cities can be divided into three groups: first are those based on texts; second are the syntheses of urbanisation and urbanism; and the third comprises the surveys and excavations undertaken to specifically investigate aspects of urban centres. It is through textual studies that we get glimpses of how ancient cities were perceived and even conceptualised. The monographs on Early Historic cities have focused on the location, morphology, crafts, trade and trade routes. As compared to the Harappan, considerably less is known about the Early Historic cities due to the uneven nature of archaeological research in the two periods. Despite what has already been written on the Harappan and the Early Historic urban centres, much more can be investigated specially through more systematic surveys and careful excavations with detailed contextual documentation.

2.6 EXERCISES

- 1) Trace the development of the studies of Harappan cities since they were first discovered.
- 2) What are the new methodologies used by archaeologists to study the Harappan cities?
- 3) How are the Harappan cities viewed and studied by archaeologists?
- 4) Do you agree with J. G. Shaffer's view that urban centres were present during the period between 1900 and 500 BCE?
- 5) In what ways do texts provide varying images of cities? Substantiate your argument by giving examples.

- 6) Several historians have suggested links between the emergence of iron technology and beginning of the state structures and the cities? Elaborate on this causal relationship.
- 7) Discuss the major surveys and excavations of Early Historic cities. What are their limitations?
- 8) Why is there relatively less information about the Early Historic cities as compared to the Harappan?

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UNIT 3 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF MEDIEVAL URBANISATION*

Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Idea of Medieval Cities in Europe
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- 3.4 The Idea of Medieval Urbanism
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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Cities, as indicators of economic growth and social change, mean different things in different historical periods and regional contexts (Schultz, 1979: 15). Though the nomenclatures of 'city' and 'town' are used for all historical periods by many without much time-wise distinction, historians know for certain that the content of 'city' and 'town' changes over time. In other words urban centres are not static, on the other hand they keep on changing their meanings over time on the basis of changing larger socio-economic processes, within which they get shaped and formatted. In that sense they are microcosms which reflect the larger world. This type of perception made some to look at town or city to be a social form in which the essential properties of larger systems of social relations are grossly concentrated and intensified (Abrams, 1978: 9-10). The perception that cities are reflective of the larger socio-economic processes inherently prompts many to look at cities of medieval period as something significantly different from those of ancient period and also of modern period, where entirely different systems of social relations operated.

3.2 IDEA OF MEDIEVAL CITIES IN EUROPE

While arguing that cities are indicators of economic growth over time, historians and sociologists have also been trying to look into the nuanced nature of urban processes corresponding to it. Max Weber perceived the Western medieval cities to be centres of production in contrast to the ancient Greek or Roman cities, which were largely centres

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of consumption. These medieval cities are said to have become the launching pad for the development of capitalism in the West, when they combined processes of production with those of exchange and also gave 'political and cultural' priority to the interests of 'producers' and 'traders', over and above those of the 'consumers' that had been the case during the ancient period in the West. Max Weber also refers to the types of social activities happening in the western medieval towns from the part of these 'producers' and 'traders' for 'constituting or evading some form of power'. The urban dwellers of medieval West, constituted of the 'producers' and 'traders', broke their dependence on the legitimate feudal authorities around them and usurped power from them to resort to 'non-legitimate domination' by putting themselves illegitimately on artisans and peasants, who in turn were required to rely upon them. It was through rational associations and confraternities of burghers that the latter usurped power and there were cases when a private club of rich citizens claimed for their right to grant citizenship. The atmosphere of autonomy of the city that allowed rational economic action, free conduct of trade as well as pursuit of gain and protected the interests of 'producers' both in the domains of economy and power exercise was instrumental in the development of 'work ethic' in medieval western cities (Weber, 1966; Weber, 1968: 1212-1367; Wood, 2007: 158-173; Abrams, 1978: 28-30). Max Weber argued that what constituted an ideal full urban community was a settlement displaying relative pre-dominance of trade-commercial relations and having a fortification, a market, a court of its own and at least partially autonomous law, a related form of association and required amount of autonomy and autocephaly that allowed the burghers to participate in the election of authorities that governed them (Weber, 1966: 80-1; Weber, 1968: 1215-1231). This was an ideal typical construction, which was also excessively euro-centric.

The role of medieval cities in the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism has been a theme of vibrant academic debates for a long span of time and so has been the theme of formation of a working class in the cities as inevitable component of social evolution. Henry Pirenne argues for the primacy of medieval cities and long-distance trade as the engines of social change and views that with the commercial revival in western Europe from the eleventh century on, the country started orienting itself towards towns (Pirenne, 1956: 81-110). The initial arguments of Maurice Dobb that the rise of medieval towns and the growth of markets had exercised a disintegrating impact on the structure of feudalism and 'prepared for the growth of forces that weakened and supplanted it' (Dobb, 2007: 70-1) was modified by him later following a debate with Paul Sweezy, who questioned the externality of towns in relation to feudalism. In response, Maurice Dobb argued that the rise of medieval towns was a process internal to feudal system and highlighted the incapacity of feudal social relations 'to contain the process of petty production and exchange that feudalism itself generated' and showed this process to be a struggle of different groups within the feudal order to dominate small-scale production and to appropriate the profits of trade' (Sweezy, 2006: 40; Dobb, 2007: 59-61). He perceived medieval towns as oases in a rather unfree society that acted as magnets of freedom for the pressurised and exploited rural population making them migrate to towns (Dobb, 2007: 70).

Historians realised that there were different types of medieval towns that emerged in the West and that they were not of the same economic and political value in effecting the transition from feudalism. Straightjacketing the medieval towns into one category has proved to be erroneous. Henri Pirenne identified two different categories of medieval towns: a) towns of Liege type and b) those of Flemish type. The Liege type of town was primarily political or seat of bishop or of his court, where the main people were ecclesiastical gentry, administrators with a few artisans and servants providing them with finished goods. The Flemish type of city was principally an economic unit, which

was ruled by a wealthy oligarchy consisting of rich merchant magnates and financial families. These towns took origin along the channels of long-distance trade and were located outside the old Roman settlements as well ecclesiastical townships and feudal fortifications. The inhabitants of such cities lived by trade making them evolve as the base for the new anti-feudal ruling class (Pirenne, 1956: 55-100, 124-44, 160).

Fernand Braudel says that there were three basic types of towns in the course of their evolution: a) open towns which were not differentiated from their hinterland and were at times blending into it, as were seen in ancient Greece and Rome. In the open towns, sizeable amount of power remained with the structures of an agrarian world. b) The second type consisted of closed towns, which were self-sufficient units and 'closed in on themselves in every sense' and 'the walls of these towns marked the boundaries of an individual way of life more than a territory', as we see in the case of medieval towns. The moment a peasant fleeing from the seigniorial servitude crossed the ramparts of the medieval town and entered the walled space of the town, he got relieved of his servitude and became free and the seigniorial lord could not touch him. In closed towns there was a relative appropriation of power by those residing within the town. c) The third type consisted of the subject towns which were held in the gamut of subjection by prince and state, as in the case of early modern towns like Florence that the Medicis had subjugated or Paris that the Bourbon rulers kept as their capital. The closed towns or the mercantile towns were viewed as having caused the Western Europe to advance economically (Braudel, 1973: 401-6; Abrams, 1978: 24-5).

As one of the important markers by which a town is distinguished from the country side is the nature of division of labour, historians have been looking at the labour processes in medieval towns, as well. Though theoretically Fernand Braudel agrees that the merchants, the functions of political, religious and economic control and the craft activities would go over to the town side, he views that the complete span of these professions was seen only in big towns and not in small towns, where the manpower was limited (Abrams, 1978: 376). In fact the labour process of medieval towns was not so intense and complex as we find in the modern cities which rose with industrial capitalism. Moreover, unlike the medieval cities, the type of social trends that appeared with industrial capitalism necessitated the emergence of planned cities for modern period, with a fixed pattern of policing, street plans, earmarked spaces for stores, transport lines, labeled and segregated neighbourhoods, configurations of political power, specific rules related to hygiene and health care etc. The different forms of control that were exercised over the urban space after industrial capitalism may not be seen in medieval cities in the way they are found in modern towns.

Recently there have been attempts to look at medieval cities from the perspective of cultural formation and introduce urban identities and city-forms as cultural constructions, which were being recurrently refashioned and modified. The urban communities are studied vis-à-vis their cultural formation thanks to their participation in community movements, confrontations with alien cultures, formation of plural societies, dual or multiple loyalties and multiple affiliations.

Many historical geographers and historians argue that the spatial processes involved in the construction of the urban units can be analysed and studied to decode the intentions of the human agents and the extent of their realisations. Spatial studies got significant attention with the works of Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja on the 'production of space' (Foucault, 1986: 22-27; Foucault, Wright and Rabinow, 1982: 14-20; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1989). Historical geographers argue that spatial process is something that happens not by accident, but with definite purposes and logic. They view that "space", particularly urban space, is intentionally charged with meaning

and show the ways how meanings of power and domination are inscribed into urban space (Harvey, 2001; Gregory, 2000: 644-646; Harvey, 1973; Harvey, 1985; Harvey, 2007). Spatialisation focuses on 'space' as a fundamental variable influencing both society's organisation and operation as well as the behaviour of its individual members (Cox, 1976: 182-207). This type of study emerges from the assumption that man makes imprints on geography in the material process of existence by repeated modifications in the landscape and that by a historical study of landscape one can decipher the context of human activity and can trace the human thought behind it. Michel Foucault, who saw power as being inscribed in space, was convinced that analysis of power in society could be achieved through an analysis of control over space (Foucault, 1980: 76-77; Baker, 2003: 65). Historical geographers and historians now make a distinction between private and public spaces, sacred and profane spaces, commercial and ceremonial spaces, shared and divided spaces, male and female spaces and individual and institutional spaces and they realise that spaces are contested resources which individuals and groups seek to control as demonstration of their own power (Ploszajska, 1994: 413-429; Malekandathil, 2009: 13-38).

Sociologists and urban historians maintain that a study of the process of urbanisation has to focus on the variables of population, social organisation, the physical environment and technology. The process of urban modification begins when the changing social organisation and technological innovation mediate in the urban space in such a way that the balance between the population and the environment gets changed. The societal process emerging out of it causes various types of structures to appear in the urban space (Schultz, 1979: 15). Stanley K. Schultz says that for understanding the nuances of urbanisation process, one should analyse such aspects like size of population concentration, rural-urban-rural migration patterns, fertility-mortality ratios, rate of literacy etc., under the category of population and the type of geography chosen for habitation as well as the physical spacing and distance of communities within that geography should be examined to get a picture of the urban environment with which the urban dwellers are interacting. In order to understand the nature of mediation done by technology in urban space one should also analyse the nature of communication lines, modes of transportation as well as informational network and the nature of social organisation is better understood only when one examines the nature of the status and power groups within the urban communities, besides analysing the percentage of work force involved in non-agricultural enterprises, diversity of occupational structure, methods of recruitment for employment and nature as well as means of economic exchange etc (Schultz, 1979: 14-16).

3.3 PERCEPTIONS ON MEDIEVAL INDIAN CITIES

A vibrant academic debate on medieval Indian cities was initiated by Mohammed Habib with his argument on the sudden spurt of labour process in North India followed by an 'urban revolution' triggered off by the conquest of Mohammed Ghori. However he attributed the commencement of this labour process to an external factor, i.e., political conquest by Mohammed Ghori. He maintained that the low-caste Indian workers who till then remained outside the walls of towns and in the peripheries, entered the towns along with the forces of Mohammed Ghori, offering their services for government in the form of fighting force and for manufacturing sector to produce finished products. The new regime removed all kinds of discrimination against the city-workers, who in turn sustained it for more than 500 years. The religion of Islam acted as magnet attracting the city-workers like elephant-drivers, butchers, weavers etc., to get converted to it, as it gave them some sort of upward social mobility. Unlike during the time of Thakurs,

when military profession was hereditary and linked with land tenure, the new regime recruited fighting force out of the working class of the towns. The Turkish co-sharers of power drew their military force, workers for *karkhanas*, artisans, personal servants, musicians, dancing girls etc., from the large bulk of work force available in the towns. He views the conquest of India by Mohammed Ghori as a revolution of Indian city labour spearheaded by Ghorian Turks (Habib, 1952: 55-78).

Irfan Habib was critical of the way how the labour process was explained by Mohammed Habib to study the nature of the emergence of urban centres in Medieval India. Though Irfan Habib accepts the expansion of urban economy with increase in the number and size of towns, growth in craft production and commerce during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, he says that this happened primarily because of the changes or innovations made in technology for making paper, textiles and buildings; flow of gold and silver for minting coins to promote trade and the formation of the new ruling class that appropriated a large chunk of rural surplus through the new land revenue system and spent in towns, where they resided. However, he argues that these changes happened not because of 'liberation' of any segment of society. He maintains that slave labour or unfree labour was vital in almost all the domains of production in the Indian towns of this period (Habib, 1978: 289-98).

Scholars like B.D. Chattopadhyaya and R. Champakalakshmi have traced the origins of medieval Indian towns back to ninth century onwards. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, focusing on north-west India, has highlighted the emergence of townships in Indo-Gangetic divide, the Upper Ganga basin and the Malwa region thanks to the forces emitted by trade. He examines the nodal economic points of these geographies and shows that before their emergence as full-fledged urban centres under the Gurjara Pratihara, they were pivotal points in local trade. He estimates the appearance of 20 towns in Gujarat, 131 in Rajasthan, 78 in Karnataka during the eleventh century and 70 in Andhra during the period between 1000 and 1336 (Chattopadhyaya, 1997: 132-181). Though the origins of many of these towns were caused by trade, a considerable number of them were loci of power for the regional rulers.

However, R. Champakalakshmi focuses on south India and examines several towns of varying size and nature in Chola territory that appeared during the period between ninth and thirteenth centuries thanks to the stimulus from external trade. By her meticulous analysis, she shows that all the medieval south Indian towns were not alike; on the contrary she speaks of marked distinctions visible among the mercantile towns, royal towns, ceremonial-cum-religious towns of the Cholas and the militarised and fortified towns of Vijayanagara kingdom. The revival of long-distance trade in the tenth century and the eventual organisation of commerce by various guilds caused many towns, particularly along the coast, to evolve in Chola territories that extended to Andhra and southern Karnataka. Concomitantly, there also evolved several urban centres with the convergence of surplus from *brahmadeyas* and temples and with the political and economic power getting increasingly focused on the temple in the ninth century. The latter became the central mobilising institution of royal cities like Tanjavur, where the elites and power groups occupied the spatial ring around the 'ceremonial centre' of temple, while the artisan and service groups lived in the outer ring. The new urban processes around *viradalam* and *suradalam*, which evolved as militarily protected towns in the thirteenth century, were indicative of the weight of power that the mercantile bodies appropriated by this time. She also refers to fortified urban centres which the *nayaks* of the militarised Vijayanagara state set up in the areas of their control from fourteenth century onwards as distinct from sacred complex (Champakalakshmi, 1996: 25-72).

The binary opposite of town and countryside has been a tool of analysis for several historians who examined the socio-economic processes of medieval India. What constituted a medieval Indian town of north India has been the focus of analysis for scholars like K.M Ashraf, H.K. Naqvi and W.H. Moreland (Ashraf, 1970; Moreland, 1962; Moreland, 1979; Naqvi, 1968; Naqvi, 1972). Their studies revolved primarily around the examination of the main features of the major towns of north India and their linkages with economic progress. The academic efforts of a large number of scholars working on the city-scape of different parts of medieval India like S.C.Misra, Shireen Moosvi, R.E. Frykenberg, Stephen Blake, Shama Mitra Chenoy, Satish Chandra, K.S.Mathew, Aniruddha Ray, Sinnappah Arasaratnam, K.K.Trivedi, I.P.Gupta, J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga helped the emergence of urban history as a separate branch of historical study in India (Moosvi, 2008, 1987; Misra, 1985, 1964; Chenoy, 1998; Frykenberg, 1993; Blake, 1993; Chandra, 1997; Hasan, 2008; Thakur, 1994; Gupta, 1986; Mathew and Ahmad, 1990; Trivedi, 1998; Grewal and Banga, 1985; Banga, 1992, 1991; Arasaratnam and Ray, 1994; Singh, 1985).

Shireen Moosvi focuses more on the major manufacturing towns of north India, which then experienced intense labour processes. (Moosvi, 1987: 300-320). In her recent work she has used details concerning the urban tax-income from different *sūbas* and cities for examining the degree of urbanisation in Mughal India. She says that the *sūba* of Gujarat, which had participation in long-distance trade and craft production, had the highest urban taxation (at 18.654% of the *jama* ')and was the most urbanised region in the empire, and it was followed by the *sūba* of Agra, where urban taxation was 15.712 % of the *jama* '. On the basis of *Āīni Akbarī* she has estimated the amount being spent for the maintenance of the urban population and the amount left in the country side for subsistence-level existence. She states that in Mughal India about 17.42 % of total population lived in urban centres while 82.58% resided in country side(Moosvi, 2008: 119-134). Stephen Blake studies Shahjahanabad as a "sovereign city" and says that it was personal, familial in nature and was guided by the desires of the patrimonial bureaucratic emperors. To him a sovereign city was an extended patriarchal household of the emperor himself at the micro-level. But from macro-perspective, it was the kingdom in miniature. It was the capital of a patrimonial bureaucratic empire, in whose state formation process the emperor used to extend personal patrimonial control over the space of kingdom through a bureaucratic arrangement. Here the bureaucracy was made loyal to the emperor through nuanced military, political and economic mechanisms and arrangements. 'Sovereign city' was the urban expression of the political authority in space and the palace in the city was the symbol of the cosmic order formulated and legitimised by the presence of the emperor (Stephen Blake, *Shahjahanabad: Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639-1739*, Delhi, 1993). Satish Chandra links the nobility of Medieval India intrinsically with urban culture. Though the nobility in India was not a legal category, unlike in Europe, the nobles being involved in the tasks of government at higher levels reflected a certain level of culture and urbanity (Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals, Mughal Empire, 1525-1748*, Part –II, New Delhi, 1999, p.379). He also refers to the conflicting conditions of disquiet cities in the eighteenth century India, where the leading nobles or court parties were driven by factions formed on the basis of language, culture, patronage and regional origin (Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, New Delhi, 2002: 280-300).

The various edited works of Indu Banga brought urban historians together to look into the nuanced meanings of urbanism in India. Her edited work *Ports and their Hinterlands in India* brought before the scholars various conceptual and methodological issues to be addressed while studying the urbanisation processes of port-towns (Indu Banga

Ports and their Hinterlands in India, 1700-1950, Delhi, 1992). K.S. Mathew and Afzal Ahmad look at the emergence of the Portuguese city of Cochin in 1527 as a separate urban enclave being distinct from the 'native Cochin', being administered with its own municipal system. Its urban vibrancy rested on the vast wealth from spice trade with various European markets (Mathew and Ahmad, 1990). Sinnapah Arasaratnam and Anirudha Ray show the role of indigenous banking, artisanal manufacture and trade in the development of the urban centres of Masulipatnam and Cambay. Though both the cities were centres of major trans-continental trading networks, eventually they suffered terribly because of hinterland political instabilities and European sea-faring challenges. The various mercantile communities, who became heavily vulnerable to extraneous pressures, could not eventually find means to conduct their business in a sustained way against the background of constantly changing conditions and could not carry forth their mercantile wealth and traditions uninterruptedly from generation to generation (Arasaratnam and Ray, 1994).

Now there is an increasing desire among the urban historians to move away from the study of towns as descriptive categories and look into the value attached to medieval towns. Everybody knows that this is not as simple as it may appear to be. The causative factors for the emergence and sustenance of the medieval towns varied from time to time, causing changes to happen in their functional roles. There were cases when towns like Agra, which emerged mainly because of political reasons, had accumulated lot of economic meanings in course of time and later grew as one of the most thriving commercial centres of north India even after the shifting of the power base of the Mughals to Delhi and elsewhere. Certain towns like Benares, which though emerged mainly because of religious and pilgrimage reasons, became major centre of banking and mercantile activities radically transforming the very economic content of the town. Some towns like Goa that initially appeared because of trade being the motor, eventually lost its prime mercantile character because of the excessive intervention and control of the Portuguese state, which made the various merchant groups flee to commercially liberal spaces in the Indian Ocean, converting Goa eventually as a dry seat of Portuguese power bereft of any significant trade and actual substance of power. Most of the towns of medieval India underwent this process of radical transformation, as a result of which towns that initially emerged with certain definite types of causes got new functions and roles to play in course of time. This shift was necessitated by the emergence of new power groups and status groups in the city space, who in their eagerness to articulate meanings of their role and position into the physicality of the town, saw to it that the old power groups and their operational-cum-habitational spaces functionally got relegated to background, which conveniently was developed in eventual course of time as an essential condition for asserting the power of the former. The overlapping of urban functions at different time points and the conflicting assertions made by different power groups used to get reflected in the spatial processes and a decoding of urban geographical layers would bring home the chronological sequences of various layers of values and logic inscribed into city space (Malekandathil, 2009: 13-38).

3.4 THE IDEA OF MEDIEVAL URBANISM

Let us look into the nature of urbanism in the medieval period which was greatly guided by polity, trade and society.

3.4.1 Commercially and Politically Charged Urbanism

There were basically two types of urbanism that appeared in India during the medieval and early modern period. On the one hand there was the 'commercially charged

urbanism' that made appearance in major manufacturing-cum-exchange centres of India thanks to the economic forces emitted by them and on the other hand there was the 'politically charged urbanism', where the actual power processes emitted the type of forces required for urbanisation. Delhi formed the principal one among the politically charged urban centres, while Daulatabad, Gulbarga, Gaur, Agra, Lahore, Bijapur, Golconda emerged eventually as other significant 'political towns' (Ashraf, 1970:100-210). The commercially charged urban centres evolved along the nodal points of the major trade routes running through the length and breadth of the country. Jaunpur, Burhanpur, Multan, Patna, Ahmedabad, Ujjain, Ajmer and Allahabad (Moreland, 1962 :145-172; Naqvi, 1968:12-130) emerged principally as commercially charged towns, though later with the establishment of provincial capitals in these urban centres, their town-character got a different twist. As commerce and politics were interwoven during this period, very often these two different categories of towns did not exist as compartmentalised insular entities, but as geo-economic units inseparably having the features of the both. These domains had multiple points of intersection. In fact the revival of trade in the 10th 11th centuries stimulated the process of urban dissemination in different parts of India; however the entry of Islam with elements of urban culture borrowed from the erstwhile Sassanid Persia intensified the process, causing several towns and quasi towns to emerge in the hubs of economic and cultural exchanges.

Islam as an ideology introduced certain cultural practices that accelerated the production and consumption of certain particular types of wares for meeting the requirements stipulated by the tenets of the belief system. Because of the Islamic stipulation that both the male and female adherents should cover their entire body with clothes, there suddenly came an enormous demand for various types of cloths and textiles, which in turn intensified weaving activities in an unprecedented way. It is interesting to note here that because of the intrinsic linkages that textile manufacturing had then with Islam and Muslim weavers, many non- Muslim weavers in different parts of India also started observing several of Muslim festivities including Muharram, which some of the Hindu weavers celebrated in Andhra Pradesh with an entirely different nomenclature. This process in the long run attracted like a magnet different groups of people involved in weaving activities to the evolving Islamic enclaves, which soon became the converging points for artisans and traders. Most of the newly emerging towns like Multan, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Surat etc., had a predominant weaver group that was specialised in the manufacturing of various types of textiles (Moreland, 1962: 160-172). The economic forces emitted by the *iqtdari* system, which created a large class of consumers with immense purchasing-ability, accelerated the process of urban dissemination in a big way. By pumping agrarian surplus to the centres of their habitat, the *iqtdars* switched on the motors of urbanisation in several enclaves.

3.4.2 Urbanism and Sufi and Bhakti Spaces

In many of the smaller towns and *qasbas* the weavers and the various categories of artisans used to get themselves linked with the Sufi space and the platforms of Bhakti tradition in their efforts to get themselves detached from the 'abominable and contemptuous position' that the rural society then thrust on them and to get themselves socially acceptable and receptive to the evolving middle class of these towns. Both Sufism and Bhakti movement evolved as cultural motors of urbanism in many parts of India and through their multiple platforms, ritual practices and ideologies they provided a certain amount of cohesion, meaning and a new type of identity to the otherwise scattered categories of artisans, bolstering their self-pride. This is evident in the metaphors and similes that the saints were then using. Kabir increasingly used metaphors and similes from weaving in his verses (Singh, 1993: 48). Both Sufism and Bhakti movements

legitimised the culture of work in the attempts to make their ideologies acceptable to the various artisan groups, which in turn helped also to stimulate the process of secondary sector production and urban formations. The inevitable result was the growing reduction in the ability of rural magnates and aristocrats to control labour within the confines of the villages and this was followed by a great flow of workforce to the evolving urban enclaves that favoured work-culture. Maksud Ahmad Khan gives another perception about Sufi impact on urbanisation. To him the Sufi saints who went to remote places and interior geographies propagating the tenets of their masters, were instrumental in their urbanisation process. These remote places over a period of time acquired fame and popularity because of their association with Sufi saints, which in turn made many pilgrims and devotees flock around them, causing them to evolve as urban centres. In this process places like Sylhet (located near Dacca), whose origin and growth is associated with the Sufi pir Shah Jalauddin, became urban units (Khan, 2004: 103-5).

By fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Sufism and Bhakti movements including those of Kabirpanthis and Dadupanthis were increasingly evolving as religious movements of the towns, catering to the spiritual, social and psychological issues predominantly of the urban dwellers, which the mainstream conservative strands of these religions failed to properly address.¹ Irfan Habib (1969: 6-13) also discusses the issue of artisan participation in the Bhakti movements of North India from a different perspective. (Some aspects of Satish Chandra's perceptions are given earlier. So I am skipping this point here.) The adherents of some of the sects that I mentioned above may appear to be numerically marginal from the present day perspective; but the type of mobilisation that Bhakti movements and Sufism made among the artisan groups of north India and the long-term impact that they exerted on their social and economic formations as dwellers of the evolving towns cannot be ignored. Unlike the rural communities which were stable with various organisational devices, the evolving towns represented anarchic space, with wide gap between the wealthy merchants and poor settlers, with problems of over-employment and underemployment, consequent to which the destitute artisans increasingly resorted to these new religious movements to find a meaning against the background of accumulation of inordinate wealth in the hands of a few. The itinerant weavers and artisans, who went from town to town carrying the new religious values, were also carriers of the newly emerging urban culture.² This is seen in a considerable degree in Jaunpur, Gwalior, Mandu, Burhanpur, Varanasi, Ludhiana, Panipat, Ahmedabad etc., which by this time had evolved as significant secondary towns and were ably networked by people and institutions linked with commodity movements or by faith-related travels (Grewal, 2006: 325-6; Iraqi, 2009: 56-74; Rizvi, 1978; Lorenzen, 1987: 287-303; Lorenzen, 1981). Kabir whose initial profession was weaving spent a great amount of time in the weaver's town of Benares, addressing the spiritual and societal issues of urban city-dwellers through his poetical pieces. Dadu who was born of a cotton-carder at Ahmedabad in 1544 kept small towns like Kalyanpur, Kevalpur etc., as his main centres of activities (Callewaert, 1988: 33-6; 67-72).

¹ Here one may find a striking parallel with the religious movements of the Franciscan Friars (the Mendicants), the Dominican Friars (the Predicants), Alleluians, Flagellants, Waldensians, Patarines, Arnoldists, Poor Lombards, Joachimites, Dulcinians, Albigensians and *Humiliatis*, which spread as religious movements of the evolving medieval European towns, addressing the various issues and sensibilities of urban dwellers. For details see Donald F. Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, London, 2002; pp. 203-14; C. Violantem, "Eresie Urbane e Eresie Rurali in Italia dal XI al XIII secolo", in O. Capitani (ed.), *Medioevo Ereticale*, Bologna, 1977.

² One finds a remarkable amount of parallelism in European history. For details see R.W. Southern, (1970) *Western Society and the Church in Middle Age* (Middlesex: Harmondsworth), pp. 273-86; Donald F. Logan, (2002) *A History of the Church* (London: Routledge), pp. 275-93.

3.4.3 Poliscracy

From sixteenth century onwards, the strategy of establishment of a chain of towns both for mobilising resources from the hinterland and also for integrating the far-flung regions with the core centre of power exercise was resorted to by the Mughals and the Portuguese as essential ingredient of their political processes. The imperial foundations of the Mughals and the Portuguese consisted to a considerable extent in the chain of towns, which the rulers or their various power-sharers or their representatives erected along the length and breadth of their empires in the process of extending authority over countryside and extracting its surplus. In that sense that the rule of the Mughals can be called “poliscracy”, which as a term stemming from the Greek word ‘polis’ (town), is indicative of the ‘rule’ of the superior authority through the medium of towns and town dwellers, which in turn made the countryside remain economically and politically subordinate to it in a hierarchical sequence. This view, however, does not deny the fact that countryside also had seeds for expansion or contraction of urban economies. It is true that the rural–urban continuum is to be viewed from both the perspectives. In fact the working of ‘poliscratic’ form of government was facilitated by the creation of several ‘politically charged towns’ and also by adding political meanings to the mercantile towns already in existence.

Among the Mughals it was Akbar who first started the ‘poliscratic’ form of governance with the construction of a chain of towns in key resource-yielding locations as pillars for sustaining his evolving empire. Akbar founded and re-founded or conquered or modified several towns, including the imperial capital cities of Agra (which became the capital of the Mughals during 1565-1571; 1598-1605) Fatehpur Sikri (1571-1585), Lahore (1585-1598) (Hasan, 2008: 225-31). The westward shifting of capital from one city to another corresponded to the geographical conquests that he made westwards, which in turn is indicative of his desire to consolidate his political position over the newly conquered terrains and potentially rebellious enclaves, besides mobilising resources, through the medium of towns, where his co-sharers of power were made to settle down. Consequently, the shifting of power base from one town to another politically ensured cementing and consolidation of his position in the frontier regions of the empire and economically opened the doors of their commodity hinterlands to the circulatory processes that he had already stimulated through his fiscal and economic initiatives. The conquest of Muzaffrid Gujarat (1572-3) made Akbar the master of the vibrant port-towns of Surat, Broach and Cambay, while the occupation of Bengal (1574-6) facilitated him to have control over the evolving towns of Chittagong, Satgaon and Buttor (Betor-Howrah) in Bengal. Chittagong and Satgaon had become towns with establishment of the trading houses of Portuguese private traders and renegades (Campos, 1979:66-99). The Portuguese had established a chain of huts and bamboo structures at Buttor (Betor-Howrah) along the river as temporary residences and commercial establishments, which they used to set fire on their departure, as is attested to by Caesar Frederick (1969: 411; 439) in 1565. In 1583 Akbar constructed the new town of Allahabad (at the site of old Prayag) with a massive fortress at the converging point of the land-route and the fluvial routes of Ganges as well as Yamuna, which eventually evolved as an economic device to mobilise resources from the eastern Gangetic valley (Richards, 1993: 27-30; 62). One of the major features of the ‘poliscratic’ policies of the Mughals was the frequent shifting of the power base to newer and newer towns along with the expanding political frontiers and for responding to the new political challenges. Thus though Jahangir kept Agra as his power base from 1607 to 1612 and occasionally visited it, he kept on transferring capital to Ajmer, Kashmir and Lahore (Hasan, 2008: 226). Shahjahan shifted his power base to the newly built city of Shahjahanabad (1639) (Blake, 1993) in Delhi after his initial rule at Agra (1628-1639), while Aurangzeb shifted his capital from Shahjahanabad to Agra (1669-1671) (Hasan, 2008: 226) and finally

to the city of Aurangabad (1683), (Malekandathil, 2013: 140-159) built in his name in Deccan. Though Agra was often regarded as one of the capital cities of the empire, the court along with major institutions and devices of power was constantly on the move from place to place, creating different categories of intermediaries and activating urbanisation processes along the length and breadth of the empire in a degree and form required for a 'poliscratic' form of government.

The ruling class might have been tiny in most of these towns; however the concomitant creation of different segments of intermediaries to cater to their multiple needs accelerated complex labour process in these evolving towns emitting massive waves of urbanisation. In this process of frequent capital-transfers, newer cities were established and the existing ones were stimulated and expanded to meet the new requirements; however the most striking development was that several satellite towns and *qasbas* were formed as intermediate and secondary urban centres between these mega cities. The wealth from the countryside was increasingly made to get concentrated in these *qasbas*, where production and exchange activities often for meeting the needs of the superior imperial mega cities used to happen. The *qasbas*, as feeder towns, formed the economic devices with the help of which the pillars of the imperial mega cities were inserted into the heart of the larger types of commodity hinterland scattered over the vast expanse of countryside. Through these graded hierarchy of towns, which evolved over time on the basis of the degree of labour-intensive activities happening there and remained interlinked as beads in a chain, the resource flow from the countryside to the imperial mega cities took place uninterruptedly in a way that would sustain the costly edifices of the empire, besides satisfying the consumerist demands of the equally hierarchical power classes, their multiple intermediaries, associates and subordinates.

Thus, concomitant to the erection and occupation of various towns was the creation of a long hierarchy of nobility under the *mansabdari* system as co-sharers of power, who residing in the evolving towns started pumping wealth into it from their *jagirs* in the country side. These co-sharers of power turned out to be strongest consumption class, with remarkably high abilities of spending, which stimulated the economy both in the manufacturing of finished products as well as in their exchange processes. Towns turned out to be the principal habitats for these nobles and the *jagirs* which they used to receive under *mansabdari* system introduced by Akbar, provided immense wealth for their spending. With a salary of Rs. 25 per month for an ordinary Mughal cavalry man having three horses and Rs.30,000 per mensem as *zat* salary of a noble of 5000 of the first rank, (Chandra, 2006:160-1) there was an enormous body of hierarchy in every town with spending ability of varying nature who could pump a huge amount of wealth into the market, augmenting the numerical strength and purchasing power of consumption class, which in turn increased the demand for various types of luxurious items like textiles, silken clothes, carpets of silk, tapestry etc. Abul Fazl says that Akbar had ordered that people of certain rank should wear only certain articles, evidently with a view to equating consumption habit with social ranks (*Ain-i Akbari*, 1977, Vol. I, *Ain* 32: 94). The lavish spending and the ostentatious consumerist behaviour of the nobles as well as the moneyed groups were increasingly viewed as indexes for their social standing. Consequently manufacturing activities of different nature that catered to the variegated needs of the emerging consumer class, got widely disseminated in towns and in their vicinities, followed by intensification of secondary production and acceleration of trade oriented towards overseas markets.

The promotion of the 'poliscratic' government was realised by increasing urban-oriented activities, the chief among them being technological innovations that got intensified from the time of Akbar onwards. Akbar, who was very keen to stimulate the process of craft

production and trade, introduced new technologies in the production of textiles. He got the craftsmen trained in the manufacturing of silken clothes, brocade, tapestry and carpets of silk and brocade in India with a view to making Indian pieces excel the Persian and European ones (Habib, 2005: 132). Efficient masters and experts brought to India by Akbar gave instructions in textile production, at times mixing the Iranian, European and Chinese patterns with Indian. Very often the cities of Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Lahore and Ahmedabad became the laboratories where these technological experiments were frequently done and these cities soon became the major centres for craft-production (Habib, 2005: 132-133). The intensified production of silk and textiles and their trade in Mughal terrain is attested to by the *Ain-i Akbari*, which also gives a long list of cotton clothes, like *khasa* (whose price varied between 3 rupees and 15 *mohur*, per piece), *chautar* (three rupees to 9 *mohur*), *malmal* (4 rupees), *tansukh*, *gangajal* (four rupee to five *mohur*) and *bhiraun* (four rupee to four *mohur*). A wide variety of other cotton clothes like *salu mihrkul*, *siri saf*, *sahan*, *jhona*, *atan*, *asawali*, *bafta*, *mahmudi*, *panchtoliya*, *jhola* etc., were also taken to the Mughal urban markets for trade (*Ain-i Akbari*, 1977, Vol. I, *Ain* 32: 100-101). With the increase in production of textiles over and above the local demand, they were increasingly taken for exchange through the sea ports of Bengal and Gujarat. The Surat-Burhanpur-Agra route (Tavernier, 1925: 40-53; Mundy, 1914: 9-65; Monserrate, 1922: 5-27) and the Surat-Ahmedabad-Agra route were frequently resorted to for linking the production centres of these towns with the port-towns and exchange centres along coastal India (Tavernier, 1925: 54-72; Mundy, 1914: 231-72). From the various north Indian towns finished products were taken to the ports of Bengal through the fluvial route with the help of barges (Habib, 1999: 70) and also through the Grant Trunk road, built by Sher Shah initially from Attock to Delhi (Farooque, 1977: 11) and later extended as a route from Agra to Sonargaon in east Bengal (Qanungo, 1965: 315-6).

3.4.4 Portuguese Cities: Polisgarchic

The Portuguese too resorted to the medium of cities, for sustaining their imperial edifice, but with a different meaning, entirely different from the way the Mughals used them. The Portuguese used cities as economic devices for extracting surplus and making profit from the countryside concentrate on such cities, which they finally took to Europe. Unlike the Mughals who allowed the wealth to circulate within India and who allowed the towns to develop on the basis of responses that the various urban players gave to the requirements of the market and their political exigencies, the Portuguese, who established a chain of towns like Quilon, Cochin, Cranganore, Cannanore, Mangalore, Honawar, Barcelor, Goa, Tana, Bassein, Daman and Diu along the west coast of India, (Silveira, 1991: 80-90; Malekandathil, 2001: 74-5, 148-50, 177-8) had already in their hands certain set- moulds, which they conveniently used for shaping the character and format of their urban enclaves in a way that would maximise extraction from the hinterland (Rossa, 1997). This particular form of Portuguese town-based government that was introduced along the west coast of India can be called 'polisgarchic', which though is stemming from the same word polis (town) is used to denote the 'rule' of foreign powers through the medium of towns for the purpose of extracting surplus from the hinterland and for the purpose of exerting controls of various nature over native resources and skills. Initially Cochin and later Goa were developed as the fixed core centres of the Portuguese government in India while other Portuguese controlled port-towns along coastal India had supplementing and complementing functions to play in the larger project of extraction (Malekandathil, 2010: 301-328). From 1505 onwards, Cochin was the capital of the *Estado da India* and it was only in 1530 that the capital of *Estado da India* was shifted from Cochin to Goa (Godinho, 1982: 34).

The amount of wealth that the Portuguese used to accumulate from the trading activities of their various urban centres located along the west coast of India was enormous. The annual value of private trade happening in the Portuguese town of Cochin around 1610 was 22,80,000 *pardaos*,³ while that of Goa for the same period was 46, 66, 000 *pardaos*. The annual income from the customs house of the city of Goa was 210000 *pardaos* (Cunha, 1995: 256-7). The annual value of trade of Diu in 1610 was 54, 27, 900 *xerafins*, that of Bassein was 31, 96, 800 *xerafins*, while that of Daman was 1225440 *xerafins* and of Chaul was 6,92,640 *xerafins*.⁴ A considerable share of the wealth thus getting accumulated in these towns was appropriated by the Portuguese in the form of customs duty (varying between 3.5 % to 6 %) and transferred to Europe in different forms.

Goa, which happened to be the core centre of power, experienced the highest level of exclusiveness with cultural homogenisation and standardisation introduced by way of commonality of religion, food code, dress code and language code for the residents, while the other towns had varying degrees of inclusiveness and cultural heterogeneity with multi-cultural residents being given varying functional roles to play on the basis of the distance of each town from the power centre of Goa. In the city of Goa, every resident had to adhere to Portuguese religion and Lusitanian cultural practices (Malekandathil, 2009: 25-7), whereas in other Portuguese towns non-Portuguese residents increased proportionate to their distance from the power centre. The general praxis was such that the more distant a town was from the power centre of Goa, the more accommodative its urban space was, both commercially and culturally, as in the case of the Portuguese town of Diu, where only a very few Portuguese people lived, while a considerable chunk of its dwellers happened to be banias (Pearson, 1971: 67-72).

The 'polisgarchic' scheme of Portuguese government consisted initially only of their towns along the west coast of India; however, the enclaves that the Portuguese private traders developed along the eastern coast of India like Nagappattinam on the mouth of Kavery, Mylapore and Pulicat near Madras, Devanampattinam near Pondicherry, Hughli in Bengal etc., evolved as mercantile towns, resisting the interference of the extracting and controlling institutions of the Portuguese towns from the west coast (Thomaz, 1994; Subramanyam, 1990; Subramanyam, 1990; Stephen, 1997; Stephen, 2008: 11-21; Malekandathil, 2010: 68-71). The Portuguese private traders wanted to keep their towns function independent of Portuguese *Estado da India*. However, the Portuguese officials were not happy with these developments and twice, in 1547 and 1568, military preparations were made by the Portuguese officials to destroy these private urban settlements along the Tamil coast and to bring these settlers to the official Portuguese enclaves on the west coast of India (Thomaz, 2005: 10-11). But the proposed military expeditions were not carried out and the mercantile urban settlements of the private Portuguese traders were eventually integrated with the 'polisgarchic' system of Portuguese governance of the west coast of India through a process of taming done with the help of

³ This information is inferred from the customs duty of 80, 000 *pardaos* (which is levied at 3.5%) that the king of Cochin used to collect in 1612. BNL, Cod. 11410, fol. 116v, *Orçamento de 1612 Cochin*. This piece of information can be corroborated with the one per cent duty that the city of Cochin used to levy on every trader for the maintenance of the city. The annual average of import for the period from 1587 till 1598 was 7, 34, 900 *pardaos*. BNL, Fundo Geral, Codice No. 1980 "Livro das Despesas de hum por cento", *Taboada* section, fol. 5-16. Pius Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, p.192.

⁴ This is assessed on the basis of customs duty collected for the same period from Diu (2, 44, 500 *xerafins*), Bassein (1,44,000 *xerafins*), Daman (55,200 *xerafins*) and Chaul (31,200 *xerafins*). (Cunha, 1995: 215).

ecclesiastical institutions like diocese of Mylapore erected in 1606 and the various religious orders, particularly the Franciscan Capuchins in the towns of Coromandel and the Augustinians in Bengal (Meersman, 1982: 61-70; Malekandathil, 2013: 185-204).

3.5 'CITY STATES'

Another set of medieval towns that we see in India can be grouped under the section of city states, as in the case of Calicut and Cochin that appeared in extreme south during this period. These were small states or quasi-states that appeared around the port-cities of Calicut and Cochin respectively drawing energy for their political processes from maritime trade in the way city-states appeared around cities in Venice and Florence in Italy (Pölnitz, 1949; Luzzatto, 1961; Lane, 1973); the Hanseatic cities of Bremen, Lübeck, Hamburg and Danzig in Germany (Danzig is now in Poland.); (Pölnitz, 1953; Hellenbenz, 1956: 28-49; Malekandathil, 1999: 3-22) and the Swahili city-states of Mogadishu, Barawa, Pate, Melinde, Mombasa, Pemba, Zanzibar, Kilwa, Sofala and Inhambane in East Africa (Sinclair and Hakansson, 2000: 63-78; Pearson, 1998). With the returns from the maritime trade from their port-cities, the rulers of the urban nuclei of Calicut and Cochin carved out sizeable hinterland in the process of building states; however these city states of India differ very much from the Hanseatic and Italian city states in political structure and in the way production and exchanges are organised for sustaining their power processes (For study on the city-state of Cochin see Malekandathil, 2001). The port-cities that evolved because of intensified maritime trade became the core areas of power exercise for the city-states of India, while the scattered production centres in the interior were attached to the power-edifice and trading activities of the ports by political conquests. The traces of Calicut emerging as a city-state could be connected with the transfer of the royal residence of the chief of Nediyrappu Swarupam from the inland agrarian pocket of Nediyrappu in Ernad (Malappuram District) to the maritime trade center of Calicut against the background of stimulated maritime trade in the thirteenth century, after having defeated its original chieftain, the Polathiri. Later with the wealth from the trade of Calicut and the support from Muslim mercantile collaborators, the chief of Nediyrappu Swarupam, who eventually took the title of Samoothiri or Zamorin, annexed neighbouring geographies, converting them into pepper hinterland for the maritime trade in Calicut (Malekandathil, 1999: 9). Similarly the chief of the Perumpadappu Swarupam, who had his headquarters in the agrarian belt of Vanneri also started moving down to south, first to Mahodayapuram (Cranganore), and later to the newly emerging settlement of Cochin, where he established his royal residence around 1405. It shortly evolved as an urban unit and with the intensification of maritime trade following the entry of the Portuguese, Cochin became a major city with immense mercantile wealth on the west coast of India and its ruler started consolidating his position in the pepper-hinterland for the purpose of linking the process of production of pepper with the trading activities in Cochin. (Malekandathil, 2001: 30-33). In most of the city-states in Europe like the Hanseatic cities power resided with the merchants and producers living in the cities, while in the city-states of Calicut and Cochin actual power remained with political rulers; but a considerable chunk of power was shared with their major mercantile allies. In this process of power-sharing, a foreign Muslim merchant was given the charge of administering the overseas trade of Calicut, while its domestic trade was handed over to a local Mapilla Muslim. The latter eventually came to be known as the Koya of Calicut, who became one of the highest administratively powerful positions in Calicut. In Cochin the Jewish traders and the Portuguese private traders, besides the Konkans and the Pattars, were the major mercantile collaborators for the king of Cochin. As councilors and ministers to the king of Cochin, they enjoyed considerable amount of power and clout (Malekandathil, 2007:

260-285). However, there was frequent change in their power relations and equations that added nuanced character to the inner dynamics of the city.

3.6 SUMMARY

The foregoing analysis makes it clear that a uni-layered perception of medieval town has the danger of losing the multiple meanings that it had articulated into the historical processes of India. There are multiple possibilities and ways of understanding towns of medieval India. It is obvious that historically these towns played the role of bridging the big gap of time with two different sets of socio-economic processes, one from the ancient and the other of the modern times. Besides being a bridge between two time periods, the medieval town had certain intrinsic features which were the concentrated and intensified representations and reflections of larger socio-economic and political processes within which they got evolved.

3.7 EXERCISES

- 1) What are the approaches to study the medieval towns?
- 2) How did scholars perceive medieval European cities?
- 3) Comment on Henry Pirenne's idea of the primacy of medieval towns?
- 4) Examine Mohammad Habib's argument of 'urban revolution' in the 13th-14th centuries.
- 5) How are medieval cities of the subcontinent viewed by scholars?
- 6) What is the idea of 'commercially and politically charged' urbanism?
- 7) What is 'polisocracy' and how does it differ from 'polisgarchic' towns?
- 8) Discuss the historiography of the medieval towns.

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UNIT 4 THEMES ON MODERN CITIES*

Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Space and Urban Theory
- 4.3 Materialities
- 4.4 Knowledges: Science, Planning and Expertise
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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Let's begin with a little experiment. Put down the words, images and ideas that you would think of as 'modern'. Now look at them again and consider how many of them you might associate with the city. You will probably find that there is a close connection between our ideas of the 'modern' and those of the 'urban'. In this section, we will work through some of the key ways in which ideas about the connection between these two terms, modern and urban, have been articulated by a very wide range of scholars: historians, geographers, philosophers and sociologists.

4.2 SPACE AND URBAN THEORY

One term that will recur through your exploration of the history of the modern city, is 'space'; scholars sometimes even refer to a 'spatial turn' in social theory. Recent theories of the city, for reasons that will become clearer as you read on, have been closely associated with the relationship between space and society.

But what is meant by 'space' in this context? Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's seminal book *The Production of Space*, argued against approaches that, on the one hand, presented space as a simple setting or backdrop where the action (be it the movement of people or the construction of buildings) took place. On the other hand, he also objected to the treatment of space solely as metaphor without any reference to its material aspect at all. He suggested, instead, that space is 'produced' by each historical society in three interconnected ways which produce perceived, conceived and lived spaces (and they corresponded to spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of representation). Analyses that restrict themselves to any one of these elements can only be partial.

Perceived space, Lefebvre suggests, refers to the elements of space as they are sensed by the body, manipulated with the hands and moved through, 'the practical basis of the perception of the outside world' (Lefebvre, 1998: 66-71). This is closely associated with his idea of spatial practice. *Conceived space*, in contrast, is the idea of space that

derives from specialised knowledge derived from thinking about space. These could arise from geography, physics, urban planning or even theology and include the ways of drawing borders, mapping cities, our units for measuring distance and area, or even ways of imagining the world. Lefebvre often used the term representations of space to refer to this process. *Lived space*, however, differs from both perceived and conceived space, since it could either amplify or undermine each of the other two aspects (Lefebvre, 1998: 40).

In other words, according to Lefebvre, social relations operate through space and space generates social relations as well, combining both the material and non-material. Seeing space in this fashion opens up the possibility of looking at the ways in which relations of class, gender, or caste are formed by space, and are also formative of it.

As the geographer Edward Soja has pointed out, a general assumption of much social theory has been that *time* is a dynamic entity while *space* is essentially static and unchanging (Soja, 1989). He therefore tried to reverse this orientation. As a result, one may identify a variety of approaches Marxist, Weberian, feminist and post-structuralist which use this expanded understanding of space to develop an understanding of the city.

Among those who understood the city as a combination of a social and a spatial dynamics, in the early 20th century even before Lefebvre, were members of the Chicago School. Their approach was called *human ecology* because it borrowed much of its terminology from Darwinian ideas of evolution. Ernest Burgess, one of its most influential members, suggested that the city emerged as a series of concentric circles based on a competition between its users. In such a model, the centre of the city was made up by business districts, which paid higher rent than any of the other potential users. Around this centre lay other sections of society such as the working classes, who wished to live near their places of work, high class apartments – for those who wished to escape the crowded city centre – and finally the suburban commuters, usually those who had a car (in the American context). Once these initial distributions are stabilised based on market forces, each area develops a distinct cultural character.

Such an approach emphasised the ways in which the economy, culture and spatial layout of the city were intertwined. Despite criticism, the basic ideas of the ecological approach persist, particularly the idea of the city as a series of concentric circles reflecting the distribution of the population, itself a result of property values and mobility.

Not all approaches to urban history, however, agree that space should be the most important analytical tool for the study of the city. The early 20th century sociologist Georg Simmel concentrated on the ways in which the size of groups qualitatively shaped the nature of their interactions (Saunders, 1993: 88-97). In his essay, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', Simmel argued that the sheer density of interactions between human beings in the city tended to shape the nature of cities. Anonymity, as well as the need to stand out through adopting the latest fashions, simultaneously emerge from the impersonal quality of city life.

Urban historians drawing on Weberian categories have tended to suggest that, while the city could be seen as a self-contained social entity in pre-modern times, it is harder to do so for the modern period (Abrams and Wrigley, 1978). In a review of a range of theorists on the urban question, Peter Saunders argues that space was not a category around which a social dynamic peculiar to the modern city could be identified. Instead, most theorists have revealed that the city is a space where general societal processes may be observed more intensively.

Space has been a very important category in the ways in which recent approaches to urban history (as well as urban studies generally) have developed. Being sensitive to its operations has generated much interesting empirical work, as we shall see below. It is important, however, to think carefully about the ways in which this category is used in each context – whether space is seen as simply a container for events, or as a pure metaphor, or as a site for complex articulations of social relations of production and reproduction, or as generating an independent dynamic of its own.

4.3 MATERIALITIES

Throughout human history, cities were marked by distinct ways of organising materials in space – ways that are very different from the countryside. Modern cities, for instance, appear as dense agglomerations of people and automobiles, but also concrete, steel, glass and asphalt, quite unlike the low density village, and not at all like the small walled medieval town.

There are two axes along which the history of the modern city has been analysed. First, cities have been classified on the basis of their *material culture* – forms of energy in use, modes of transport, and the use of labour-saving machinery. Thus, a distinction has often been made between the pre-industrial city and the post-industrial city. The usual dividing point, here, is made with the identification of the different technologies that divide the pre-industrial from the industrial city (King, 1976; Sjöberg, 1966). In many cities in the third world, this is often re-stated as a division between industrial and pre-industrial parts of the city, a question to which we will return in our discussion about colonial cities.

This brings us to the second major theme: the modern city as the seat of capitalism and industry. Industry, particularly in the 19th century, gave rise to new towns and reshaped many existing urban centres. With factories came concentrations of populations who lived in squalor: the urban poor with or without factory jobs. Other problems came to be understood as characteristically urban: sanitation, provision of water, public transport and housing. The responses to these problems were shaped by three elements: struggles by people (for e.g. in the workplace, through campaigns, through strikes or riots), discourses (about health and sanitation) and plans. Each of these will be discussed in the Units that follow. Friedrich Engels' 1844 work *The Condition of the Working Class in England* is often considered one of the founding texts of urban studies since it focussed on several of these interlinked themes.

Although there is a long tradition of seeing cities as the key sites from which capitalism emerged in early modern Europe, the relationship between the two is more contested. The historian Henri Pirenne suggested that the expansion of trade and the money economy radiating out from the city was the key to the disintegration of feudalism and enabled the emergence of capitalism. This is a claim that has been disputed since some argue that the origins of capitalism could be traced to the countryside.

David Harvey, however, has tried to outline a deeper relationship between the city and contemporary capitalism (Harvey, 1989). Harvey draws on the Marxist theory of recurrent over-accumulation of capital in the circuit of production, which leads to the switching of capital from the primary circuit (that is, production of goods) to the secondary circuit of capital (that is, things like roads and railways), where the returns follow a very different temporal structure from normal commodities. Harvey makes a strong claim for the built environment (especially in cities) being a large component of this circuit: in other words, the production of (urban) space, according to Harvey, is

more than a side-effect of the growth of wealth, it is crucial to the circulation of capital itself.

Feminist geographers have critiqued these ideas of Harvey for presenting a complete system in which little or no place is given to the question of social reproduction, the home and domesticity. Cindi Katz, while appreciating Harvey's work, also points to his unwillingness to deal with the uncomfortable questions that are raised by framing material changes and developments within the social formation in this way (Katz in Castree and Gregory, 2006: 234-46).

There are other interesting approaches to the materiality of the city. Leif Jerram has studied the layouts of kitchens in Weimar Germany to argue that the wall dividing the kitchen from the living room (found in Frankfurt but absent in Munich) in fact generated very different kinds of experiences of women's domestic labour (Jerram, 2006). Wiebe Bijker and Karin Bijsterveld similarly draw on the feedback provided by Dutch women in the post war period, who were called on to comment on public housing schemes by "walking through the plans" and arriving at quite a different perspective on the uses and design of domestic space. Both these studies point to the importance of going beyond planning to an understanding of how the physical materiality of space produces, and is reshaped by, certain kinds of actions.

4.4 KNOWLEDGES: SCIENCE, PLANNING AND EXPERTISE

As we have seen in our discussion of the industrial city, it became the site for the intervention of a number of experts to solve 'urban problems'. The emergence of new forms of knowledge and their relationship to the city is another aspect that has set the modern city apart from its pre-modern predecessor. The urban plan has been a particularly significant object of study in modern cities.

Modern urban plans were associated with new forms of knowledge which claimed to be based on objective truth. In this Section, we will consider one of these – public health – but there were many others, such as cartography, engineering, demography and economics, which had their respective experts, and were considered crucial to the operation of the modern city. Modern plans are all encompassing, in trying to structure urban space as a whole, ranging from large public thoroughfares to individual houses. Yet, older city plans, which were envisaged in order to build an ideal society, were never completely abandoned, but were integrated in the forms taken by planning. The planning of the modern city is often epitomised by the transformations of Paris after the 1850s, and the efforts of Baron Georges Haussmann (Harvey, 2003). Appointed by Napoleon III in 1853, he famously demolished large parts of the old city in order to create a new Paris of wide boulevards and underground sewers. There is some dispute about whether his efforts should unequivocally be considered as either new, or as a distinct way of reconfiguring the 'modern' city (see Harvey, 2003). For instance, Matthew Gandy, looking at the sewers constructed under Haussmann, suggests that they served fundamentally aesthetic, rather than functional uses, since the architecture was decidedly non-modern in orientation (Gandy, 1999). Nevertheless, many of Haussmann's methods and their outcomes have provided a model of modern urban government – not only to those leaders of new nation-states building cities, but also planners envisioning them and historians describing them.

Part of the rationale for the demolition of parts of Paris under Haussmann was that narrow streets were particularly conducive to urban insurrections, as had happened in

Paris in 1830 and 1848. Insurgents could easily build barricades across narrow streets and fight through winding alleys. In contrast, armies coming to put down rebellion could not move through these spaces easily. The new Paris boulevards simultaneously solved the problem of the mobility of the troops as well as the problem of the invisibility of the poor. They also ensured a smoother flow of people and goods within Paris, lubricating the circuits of capital that were beginning to dominate the city. Finally, they were better suited to the display of Imperial pageantry. The technical inputs that went into the creation of Haussman's plans included accurate cadastral maps of the city, which were the first of their kind (Harvey, 2003: 107). The study of Paris as it was envisaged and built by Haussmann helps us understand the key themes of modern planning and the distinctive relations between power, technical knowledge, and capitalist interests.

Public health was a form of knowledge that emerged out of the experiences of overcrowding and disease in the mid-19th century European city. Early urban planning in Europe was partly prompted by the alarm felt by middle class reformers about slums in cities like London and Northern England. The earliest statistics collected revealed the impact of overcrowding in these slums on the life expectancy of its residents. Different kinds of theories of health came to shape planning in cities. Thus, miasmatic theories of disease – the idea that disease spread through putrid vapours – advocated aggressive cleansing of cities and the areas in which the poor lived. In contrast, those theories that understood disease as caused by the spread of bacteria could focus on urban changes which could leave alone those parts of the city in which disease could rage, provided the disease did not spread. More generally, however, the idea of open, sunlit spaces and the circulation of air as essential to good public health came to be accepted in all approaches to urban planning.

Planning, through these variegated concerns and sites of expertise, was coming to embrace all parts of the city. The French philosopher Michel Foucault has tried to outline the operations of two modes of modern power through a discussion about discipline and governmentality. Discipline, he argued, involved the operation of power upon the body – inducing new ways of behaving and conduct through the diffusion of sites of surveillance (Foucault, 1995). Governmentality, for Foucault operated through a more long range mechanism, operating upon populations to subtly coax broader transformations into existence (Burchell et al., 1991). His understanding has been very influential in framing urban studies generally and history in particular.

Patrick Joyce has examined the operations of a new governmentality in Manchester (Joyce, 2003). Ostensibly objective and scientific actions were invoked to suggest the emergence of a realm that was beyond politics – one where the only decisions that needed taking were on purely technical grounds. The material infrastructure of the city – its sewers, roads, public buildings – was organised in a manner that generated an image of a self-regulating city. This would be one in which socio-political organisation was seen as unnecessary because decisions were dictated by purely technical considerations. Circulation in such a city was unimpeded – roads were wide, drains operated to carry waste away without visible effort, piped water reached directly into citizens' homes. These were supplemented by an articulation of the city as transparent. Maps and guidebooks, with steadily increasing mass circulation through the 19th century, described a city that could be easily known and through which movement was easy. Public libraries were another way in which a putatively enlightened citizen was being nudged into existence by the actions of the state.

Urban institutions like the city hall, libraries, schools, workhouses and prisons were also, however, sites for the operation of disciplinary power. Here particular kinds of

bodily habits and a structuring of time could be brought into being through surveillance and intimate control. In these and other respects, planning was based on the idea that the material environment could have ‘beneficial’ effects beyond the purely physical. William Glover has discussed the ways in which this premise could operate in ways that were not exactly ‘disciplinary’ in the Foucauldian sense. He points out that urban layouts were often understood by colonial authorities as being able to generate new sentiments and tastes through persuasion rather than surveillance. (Glover, 2008) Nor should we discount the elements of civic pride and celebration of the burgeoning wealth of industrial ‘city fathers’ that was sought to be diffused through the architectural grandeur of many of these urban institutions (Briggs 1963).

We have seen that modern urban planning was closely connected to other sciences and the operations of the state. But what of urban planning itself? As Peter Hall suggests, modern planning was often conceived in terms of countering the influence of the state and the market. (Hall, 2002: 3) The design and planning of the modernist city of Brasilia, as James Holston demonstrates, aimed to create a new, more equal and better society. (Holston, 1989: Ch. 2) For some, like the urban planner and architect Le Corbusier, this was to be done through razing old structures and creating new ‘machines for living’ (his term for a home). For others, like Edwin Lutyens in New Delhi, the enterprise was a more symbolic one with the order of empire reflected in the layout of the streets and buildings. For yet others, like Patrick Geddes, planning was a piecemeal enterprise in building a new society with due sensitivity to what was unique and particular to its existing form. In contrast, the state in Singapore was compelled to plan the city/nation/state to survive expulsion from the Malaysian federation, and to provide much higher standards for citizens through self owned housing which also intervened in transforming social life in a number of interesting ways. Urban planning thus aligned the ideas of the (usually) white male planner with the imperatives of the state at different historical conjunctures, which is a central contradiction of modern planning as an activity.

Urban historians have carefully demonstrated that the ideas that underlay such plans often diverged significantly from the cities that emerged. Plans for cities often seem to run into problems relating to budgets and time, especially in colonised countries such as India. Also, when plans did more or less translate into built structures, the use that people made of the spaces often confounded the expectations of planners (Holston, 1989). Only more rarely, such as in Singapore, were the state’s objectives partly achieved.

Technical and specialised knowledges, and the experts that wield them, have found modern cities to be ideal sites for experimentation and articulation. Equally, however, modern urban planning has embraced many of these forms of knowledge and used them to articulate new visions of humanity. The politics of such ‘conceptions of space’ are a fertile field of study for urban historians.

4.5 CONNECTIONS AND FLOWS

Urbanisation itself is a concept that cannot be understood except in relationship to the goods and people that flock towards a central space. A network of cities along a trade route, a series of temple towns that constitute a sacred geography, or a cluster of town which are focussed on production for the market could be some instances of the different functions of cities and their relations to regions. Some cities can be understood only as a system of relationships with other cities or within a region. This is implicit, for instance in the invocation of the functional role of cities in their description. Thus, the idea that Bombay is a port city, or that late-19th century Delhi was a rail hub suggests that the

nature of the city has something to do with its connections. Many of these forms of connections between cities have existed in the past. In the modern period, certain forms of connections were powerfully enhanced while others were altered.

Among those processes that powerfully re-shaped the connections of modern cities were the circuits of capital and industry. The discussion of whether or not India was de-urbanised in the colonial period have tended to focus on this issue. Thus, the processes of British conquest and 'pacification' are seen as having led to deurbanisation as they entailed a destruction of some of the interconnected networks of economic flows and political authority in pre-colonial India (Bayly, 1992). The processes of urbanisation that gathered pace in India in the late-19th and early 20th century were related to the way industrialisation brought people and goods from surrounding regions into the city.

The establishment of the railways is considered another constitutive attribute of the urban system of colonial India. The railway network connected urban centres (usually port cities, but also railway marts) to hinterlands from which goods flowed. In the 20th century automobile age, the highway, the car and movement of capital in cities has altered the form of cities dramatically from the railway age. A variety of forms of contemporary urban development are included here, as well as the post-suburb – a suburb that has, in some senses, reached central city levels of concentration and urbanisation – and the edge city – massive, usually office or mall, developments taking advantage of the low rents on the outskirts of cities (Soja, 2000).

Beyond the suburban, regional or the national, historians are also beginning to study the more global connections of cities. Colonialism was one of the ways in which connections, unequal and exploitative as they might be, were forged between metropolitan and colonial cities. The study of cities at either end of the colonial relationship must be considered incomplete if the connections and their effects on the culture and material fabric of these cities are not examined (King, 1990). For the contemporary period, Saskia Sassen's work has generated a debate about 'Global Cities'. She argues that despite the rapid movement of capital in the world economy and the emergence of modern forms of communication that have opened up the possibility of decentralised means of coordinating enterprises, urban agglomerations still persist. These global cities are relatively disconnected from their hinterland and form key nodes in an increasingly global circulation of capital.

Do these new ways of conceptualising the city lead us to the conclusion that the city is not a separate entity at all?

4.6 TEXTURES: POLITICS AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN MODERN CITIES

As we have seen, there are many theories about the social, cultural and economic processes going on in modern cities. As a result, the politics and everyday life of cities have been an important topic of study. In this Section we will look at a small segment of a much wider body of work that has tried to develop a sense of the texture of life in modern cities.

Many accounts of urban life focus on moving around in the city, the realm of the public, and the pleasures of the street. While many of these have been written in gender-neutral terms, feminist theory has pointed out the ways in which these foundational categories are in fact gendered. While the 19th century bourgeois male – the *flâneur* – was entranced by the sights of the city he strolled through, a woman walking in the same fashion would

be considered “out of place” and the object of coercive or disciplinary power. Mobility in the city, posed in this way, has been a useful starting point for investigations of the everyday spatialisation of gender relations in the city (Nair, 2005). Indeed, as Doreen Massey points out, the limitation of women’s mobility in public has been closely tied to their roles as wives and mothers (Massey, 1994: 179). Divisions between public and private, between home and workplace continue to be enforced, often in brutal and violent ways. These are all key categories, struggles over which come to define the gendered texture of everyday life in the city. Integrating gender into the study of urban history requires rethinking many key categories and scales of urban analysis.

While the operations of gender in the city have often been subsumed within an implicitly male subject in the city, the operations of race have been hyper-visible. One of the central propositions by scholars about the colonial city has been its duality based on racial separation. They have frequently referred to the very different characteristics of that part of the city inhabited or built by the colonisers and that of the portion occupied by the native inhabitants (Abu-Lughod, 1965). These are often seen, explicitly or implicitly, as the modern and pre-modern portions of the city. The colonial city typically had lower densities of population, was more sanitary, streets were wide and laid out according to plans and buildings had a non-traditional architecture. In New Delhi, for instance, the bungalow was a form of dwelling that was culturally and spatially integrated into what King calls the ‘colonial third culture’ – i.e. the values of the colonisers in the colony (King, 1976). This was in contrast to the indigenous parts of the city, for instance, the Casbah in Algiers, or the so-called Black Town of Calcutta. These parts were more crowded, the streets were often narrow and winding, houses and markets were laid out in traditional ways and often seen as insanitary and disease-prone. Duality in the colonial city seems self-evident. Even so, there were processes that cut across both parts of the city and the ways in which the ‘difference was maintained was neither static nor self-evident. Swati Chattopadhyay has argued that the repeated demarcation of ‘white town’ from ‘black town’ in Calcutta was aimed more at papering over disturbing similarities than in describing differences (Chattopadhyay, 2000).

The unevenness of power resources in different parts of the city cannot be understood as a settled or stable relationship. The city has been seen as a site for the dramatic confrontation between power and, sometimes violent, resistance. Mike Davis’ work depicts the ways in which the elite of Los Angeles have made the city, through gated communities and the positioning of police stations, into a literal war zone (Davis, 2006). His work has been seen as having anticipated many of the factors that sparked violent riots around issues of race and class in the 1990s. Davis’ more recent work *Planet of Slums* has highlighted the worldwide explosion of urban populations and their concentration in precarious, dangerous and marginal lands.

But everyday life in the modern city is more than simply the question of labour, conflict and resistance. Its defining feature is often seen as the contradictions emerging out of these very processes (Berman, 1997). The dazzling profusion of commodities and lights have provoked opposing responses of attraction and repulsion, sometimes, as with Walter Benjamin’s work on Paris, in the same person. Yet some approaches to the experience of life in the city have seen it as a source of liberation from old identities. Elizabeth Wilson argues that, despite all the problems mentioned above, this nevertheless remains true of women’s experience of the city (Wilson, 1991). In the Indian context, for instance, this has been confirmed by Dalit experiences of the move from the countryside to the city which are seen as leaving behind forms of servitude and bondage.

4.7 URBAN HISTORY IN INDIA: KEY THEMES

Early scholarship on the Indian city constructed the city as the stage on which wider debates over nationalism, colonialism, and capitalism could occur. Many other accounts of the Indian city emerged from histories of labour, the police, industrialisation and nationalism. More recently, urban history has turned to more thematic concerns, both by using new material and new categories of analysis.

Accounts of urbanisation and de-urbanisation in India are an excellent instance of the immersion of urban history in broader debates of Indian history. As we have seen above, industrial decline and the emergence of new trade and transport networks shaped the growth of Indian cities. Port cities, like Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi grew, in part, as a result of their connection to international trade. Modern industry also emerged in some of these as well as in other centres further inland like Kanpur and Ahmedabad. The relationship of the city to its rural hinterland has been a crucial theme here, as streams of migrants swelled the size of these cities (Chakrabarty, 1989; Chandavarkar, 1994; Joshi, 2005). Variations on the theme of race and urbanisation have been at the heart of studies of the new centres for administration and recreation established by the British. Hill stations, in particular, emerged as a result of theories about the impact of the climate on the bodies of British officials (Kanwar, 2003; Kennedy, 1996).

Urban centres have often been presented as stages for the concentrated manifestation of colonial power. Thus, many cities in North India saw brutal retaliation in the aftermath of revolts in 1857. Residents were severely punished and old parts of the city were remodelled in ways reminiscent of Haussmann's Paris (Gupta, 1981; Oldenburg, 1984). Discourses on urban sanitation and public health were used to discipline the urban poor – on an everyday scale as well as during epidemics (Chandavarkar, 1998; Gooptu, 2001; Hosagrahar, 2005; Kidambi, 2007). Scholars have also studied the more directly coercive elements of colonial social control (Arnold, 1986; Chandavarkar, 1998). Stephen Legg demonstrates that carefully calibrated police arrangements were a routine part of colonial governmentality, of a piece with a number of other forms of segregation and distribution in space desired by colonial planners (Legg, 2007).

This is, however, only part of the story. Conflicts and confusions between agencies of the state meant that the project of social control was never complete or successful (Legg, 2007). Most historians have also demonstrated that these projects of control were resisted. Workers rioted against plague regulations, attempts to control construction through bye-laws were subverted and processions held out a periodic threat to the order that colonial officials tried to create. Indigenous cultural forms have been seen as yet another source of resistance to colonial power (Haynes, 1992).

More generally, the city has been studied as the domain of culture par excellence. In Lucknow and Delhi, for instance, the literary cultures of the city have been presented as crucial grounds for cohesion and everyday social intercourse (Gupta, 1981; Oldenburg, 1984). The more recent engagement with post-colonial theory has brought to the fore ideas of Indian cities as a joint project or outcome of the hybridisation of traditional and modern discursive constructs (Chattopadhyay, 2005; Hosagrahar, 2005; Chopra, 2011). Janaki Nair's survey of recent urban history points out that one of the strengths of these studies is their use of varied sources: architectural layouts, literary texts, diaries and works of art (Nair, 2009). However, Nair also raises the question of whether cultural particularities should always be read as signs of resistance.

More explicit anti-colonial nationalism is also thought to have had urban roots. Work in the 1970s examined the participation of urban elites and middle classes in representative

bodies like municipalities (Dobbin, 1972; Ray, 1979). Urban governance was one of the early avenues for Indians to be involved in (limited) policy formulation from the late 19th century onwards. Here too, however, Douglas Haynes shows that traditional forms of authority were reconstituted within modern administrative structures (Haynes, 1992).

More recently, however, the links between urban politics and nationalism have been explored in new ways. Sandip Hazareesingh points to the ways in which debates between Gandhi and B.G. Horniman over urban society could have resulted in divergent notions of nationalism (Hazareesingh, 2007). Others have paid attention to the city as an arena for voluntary organisations that generated a vibrant urban public sphere (Kidambi, 2007). Nair's work connects class, language and religious identity in post-colonial Bangalore to point to the continuing salience of these forms of organisation (Nair, 2005).

This serves to highlight the fact that Indian cities have been marked by complex lines of social conflict. Studies of the industrial working classes and the urban poor have usually had to tackle the question of religious conflict as well as agitations at the workplace (Chakrabarty, 1989; Chandavarkar, 1994; Gooptu, 2001; Joshi, 2005). Studies of communal conflict in cities have been drawn into discussions of administrative culture (Freitag, 1989). More neglected, until recently, has been the theme of the gendered experience of the city and its interaction with the complex field of urban power and opportunity (Chattopadhyay, 2005; Nair, 2005).

4.8 SUMMARY

The relative neglect of the Indian city by historians in the past has been reversed by the outpouring of scholarly accounts over the last ten years. As you continue through the Units of this course, you will see the varied set of thematic concerns and conceptual approaches which make Indian urban history among the most vibrant fields of study today.

4.9 EXERCISES

- 1) Discuss the key features of Lefebvre's notion of space. Why would the historian find this useful?
- 2) 'Urban and modern are closely linked'. Comment on this statement.
- 3) Discuss the various theories that have been put forward by scholars who have analysed the modernity.
- 4) Why is the study of material or physical aspects of the city alone inadequate in understanding urban history?
- 5) What is the role of connections and flows in shaping urban centres?
- 6) Discuss major themes in the study of urban history in India, especially in the present.

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