

Block

5

URBANISATION IN MEDIEVAL INDIA-2

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BLOCK 5 URBANISATION IN MEDIEVAL INDIA - 2

The plethora of European accounts available to us on Mughal cities largely look at the medieval cities from European lens – its primate cities are often branded as ‘camp cities’. Max Weber differentiated between the ‘Occident’ and the ‘Orient’. The ‘Oriental’ cities were viewed by them as mere extension of the Imperial household. The Weberian concept of patron-client relationship is often transformed to view the empire as ‘patrimonial-bureaucratic’ and its capital cities embodied the ‘patrimonial bureaucratic cities’ based on patron (emperor)-client (subjects) relationship. For Perry Anderson also Asian cities were subject to the ‘whims’ and ‘forces’ of the princes (**Unit 22**). Often these studies have branded medieval society ‘a stagnant society’, ignoring the ‘vitality’ of the medieval cities. The *Pax Mughalica* accelerated urbanisation. The high level of monetisation, centralisation of Mughal power, strengthening of the road and communication networks, a process which began with Sher Shah Sur strengthened further in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, making travel easy and comfortable which provided push to trade and commerce and fillip to urbanisation. Tavernier’s comment that ‘In India a village must be very small indeed if it has not a money-changer called a shroff, who was a banker to make remittances in money and issue letters of exchange’ clearly speaks of presence of high level of monetisation in Mughal India.

By the third quarter of the seventeenth century almost entire Deccan fell under the Mughal sway. Cities like Bidar, Bijapur, Golconda, Burhanpur emerged as prominent urban centres where Mughal influence started showing prominently. However, in spite of strong Mughal impact, the Deccan cities closely integrated their indigenous culture, it thus reflected unique characteristics in built forms and city-culture (**Unit 23**). The urban social life and culture forms the theme of **Unit 24**. The cities broadly appeared as if divided into two broad divisions – *ashraf* and *ajlaf*. Nonetheless, there was a strong presence of middle class. The cities bloomed with cross-cultural ethos, in spite of strong religious and caste divisions cities imbibed traditions across caste and religious lines, celebrations appears to be a common heritage, status was of extreme importance and often cause of clashes, but clashes on ‘communal’ lines were never part of the cultural ethos, a feature that emerged so prominently as colonial legacy. The next three **Units (25, 26, and 27)** are planned to provide you with an in-depth analysis of varied urban forms – the primate cities, religious centres and port towns. The purpose is to reflect upon the seminal focus on specific cities, primarily to look into how certain broad characteristics of the Mughal towns were evident at these specific centres. One would find that such characterisations are broad and often overlap.



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UNIT 22 SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MUGHAL CITIES*

Structure

- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Cities as Centres of Power and Authority
- 22.3 Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Cities
- 22.4 Camp Cities
- 22.5 Rural-Urban Continuum: The *Qasbas*
- 22.6 Landscape
 - 22.6.1 Planning and Fortification
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22.1 INTRODUCTION

Abul Fazl in his *Ain-i Akbari* comments that, 'People that are attached to the world would collect in *towns* without which there would be no progress' clearly suggestive of the importance and cosmopolitan nature of the cities in the medieval period as convergence centres, a centre where life bustled with *people* across regions, and where the pleasure could be attained.

Under the Mughals terms *qasba*, *balda*, *shahr* and *bandar* were in currency to denote various kinds of towns, metropolitan cities and port towns. There seems a clear distinction between the small town and the big town among the minds of medieval chroniclers. *Shahr* (Persian)/*balda* (Arabic) was used to address a big town. *Bahar-i Ajam* mentions *shahr* having lofty buildings with huge pleasure gardens. The capital towns were addressed as *dar-ul khilafat*. *Bandar* was a port town; while *qasba* as defined by Khwaja Yasin (Mahmud, 2000: 249) was 'a big village by which the *pargana* is known'. Thus *qasba* was a 'rurban' centre; a township with strong rural-urban interface. A newly established centre generally had an epithet *abad*; while *pura* denoted a *mandi* or a suburb. Thus the connotation of early medieval *pura* denoting a *nagara* got transformed in the medieval period and certain new vocabulary gained currency so also the nature of the cityscape.

22.2 CITIES AS CENTRES OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

The selection of site for the royal palace somewhat suggests 'metaphors of control', argues Catherine Asher. Babur choosing his garden residence in Agra at a site of his

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victory 'symbolized his ability to hold and mould unruly Hindustan'. Similarly, Humayun decided to construct Dinpanah at a site of old legendary Pandava capital Indraprastha meant to associate with 'an ancient pre-Islamic past' (Asher, 1993: 281). Akbar's constructions of fort at Allahabad, argues Asher (1993: 281), was 'clearly a statement of Mughal authority over earlier traditions and thus at the same time a link with the past.' Ebba Koch argues that in Shah Jahan's period, 'the use of the baluster column and *bangala* roof of the *jharokha* in the public audience hall of Shahjahan's Delhi palace is a highly conscious projection of Solomonic imagery' (cited in Asher, 1993: 283). Eurocentrists argued that the Asian Islamic cities owed their existence to king's power and authority. Perry Anderson commented, 'the fate of the Islamic cities was normally determined by that of the state whose fortune had conferred their prosperity on them' (cited in Chenoy, 2015: 4). The capital towns built by the Mughals were schemed to serve the theatric expression of splendour, power and authority. Chandni Chowk rivalled Chahar Bagh of Isphahan at the same time Jami Masjid of Shahjahanabad meant to 'dwarf the Safavid Masjid-i Shah' (Hambly, 1982: 446). The capital city was planned keeping in mind the 'pomp of processions', 'spectacles' and public 'pageants'. The 'palace' served a 'stage' and 'amphitheatre' around which flowed the 'aura' of spectacles, festivities and institutions – political, cultural, commercial and religious. 'This was like a play within a play... in which the relationships between courtiers were based on a false code of manners which nevertheless aped the truth'. The Mughal towns 'demonstrated and celebrated the divinity' of the emperor. The royal feasts, religious ceremonies, birth and death ceremonies and betrothals were means to show 'ostentatious show of power' 'appropriating symbolically the entire city' (Petruccioli, 2015: 542-543). The sub-Imperial structures of provincial governors, etc. were also not lagging behind in aping the Imperial styles in built forms and their residences were equally ostentatious display and assertion of power and authority at the provincial and local levels.

In the royal palace space was marked for the royal audience (*jharokha darshan*) which appropriated the city. It symbolised an attempt of the Mughal rulers to combine *divinity* with authority; Emperor, being symbol of the *ray of God on earth (zil-al Allah)*. From Akbar's reign onwards all the Mughal capital cities – Agra, Fathpur Sikri, Shahjahanabad, and Lahore's royal palaces had specified spaces for *jharokha darshan*. Asher (1993: 282) argues, 'Since the Mughals believed themselves semi-divine, the adaptation of *darshan* in their own court ceremony with all its connotations – secular and sacred – was intentional.' Such was the powerful impact of the ceremony that daily hundreds assembled to have a glance of the emperor. Some were so regular visitors that a separate class known as *darshania* emerged who would not eat until they had a glimpse of the emperor. The practice so started by Akbar continued till Aurangzeb's reign unabated.

Mughal emperors also used the cityscape to create awe and display authority. When Aurangzeb defeated Dara Shikoh and captured Dara and his son he put them into chains and paraded them on the streets of Shahjahanabad in scorching heat. Here, Aurangzeb used the cityscape to legitimise his power and authority.

22.3 PATRIMONIAL-BUREAUCRATIC CITIES

Blake begins with his analogy that sovereign Asian cities differed in character from the western cities. Blake characterises Mughal empire as 'patrimonial-bureaucratic' and the imperial city as an extension of the Imperial household bounded by 'personal ties' with the emperor and their relationship being that of a father and a son. Even all production and exchange relations, patterns of consumption and social interactions in the city aped

the lifestyle of the imperial household and the nobility; in the field of culture as well 'courtly culture' dominated. The king (patron) and the nobility (clients) dominated the cityscape. Unlike the western cities there was no existence of municipal self government nor was there presence of class consciousness among the city dwellers as a group. Blake (1991: 25) argues that, 'As a sovereign city, Shahjahanabad must be seen in the context of the patrimonial-bureaucratic character of the Mughal Empire. The city was inextricably bound up with the state, and it was the personal, household-oriented character of the state that determined the order and style of the city... In the city the imperial household loomed large... Shahjahanabad was the urban conclusion to the patrimonial-bureaucratic premises of the state, the city as mansion an inescapable implication of the state as household.' Kiyo Iizuka (1991:34), though does not discuss directly Blake's thesis, while discussing urban planning of Shahjahanabad, does emphasise that the 'urban forms and patterns developed on their own in response to the emperor's basic needs and idea and little attention was paid to social planning.' Thus city dynamism was exclusively related to the presence of the emperor and his nobles. However, Abul Fazl writing about the cities completely ignores the 'royalty' as chief marker of the city. Instead, he states that, 'A city may be defined to be a place where artisans of various kinds dwell'. If one looks at the morphology of the city of Shahjahanabad, separate enclaves were for the professionals, merchants and artisanal classes, apart from the presence of bustling market streets. Chenoy (2015: 9) criticises Blake that, 'The idea of patrimonial-bureaucratic empire did not translate itself into the built form of the city either. There was much more to the city [of Shahjahanabad] than the 'palace fortress', a handful of havelis, clusters of hutments, mosques and some big bazaars. There were a substantial number of stratified residences belonging to the middle income groups, like professionals, rich and petty merchants and low ranking mansabdars, etc...'

Arguing about the city plan of Fathpur Sikri, Rezavi states that it suggests somewhat opposite picture. 'A single kitchen in the noble's establishment would take care of his household... Interestingly at Fathpur Sikri Palace, just like a noble's house there was only one *matabakh* (kitchen) ... Similarly beverages were supplied all over the palace from a single *Abdarkhana*... the principal *Haramsara* (equivalent to the *zanankhana* of the noble's house) was occupied by emperor's numerous wives, although it was within the means of the Mughals to have constructed separate abodes for their women' (Rezavi, 1998:108). Blake's argument that nobles mansions created 'satellite' growth at micro level is equally countered by Rezavi with regard to Fathpur Sikri. According to him (1998: 109) nobles' quarters occupied northeastern ridge between Agra Darwaza and Tansen Baradari and a few around Ajmeri Darwaza within the city walls. 'Its colossal hydraulic works for water supply, the efficient well-planned roads, streets, and by-lanes, and the presence of a large number of monumental gardens, *sarais* (inns), and well-defined suburbs, point to the desire of the Mughal architects to not only redesign the urban landscape but also to provide for public services' (Rezavi, 1998: 26).

22.4 CAMP CITIES

17th century traveller Francois Bernier remarks that Indian cities were merely 'military camps'. Mughal courts no doubt showed 'extraordinary mobility' and replicate the royal palace suggestive of city on the move. Father Monserrate (1590) mentions the length of Akbar's camp on the move was around 2.5 kilometres, with all his retinues, ministers and servants. Basing on Bernier's account Karl Marx also reiterates that the main reason behind the retarded urban growth was that the cities in India were mere military camps. There is absolutely no denying the fact that with the camp surrounding area used to get commercially charged. However, arguing that Mughal cities had no

independent commercial viability sans the emperor and where no independent spaces were provided for the bazaars seems to be too stretched an argument. The capital towns like Agra, Fathpur Sikri and Shahjahanabad were vibrant commercial centres. Shahajahanabad had two series of principal bazaars Faiz Bazaar, Urdu Bazaar, Fathpuri bazaar. Chandni Chowk had shops all around. Bernier is full of praise for Delhi's markets and commodities sold there. Praising Sadullah Khan Chowk market Bernier (1916: 243) comments, 'Here too is held a bazaar or market for endless variety of things; which... is the rendezvous for all sorts of mountebanks and jugglers.'

At Sikri the houses of the merchants and professional classes formed very much part of the city enclosure suggestive of 'a fairly close relationship between the political authority and the commercial classes' (Rezavi, 1998: 36). Hakim Abul Fath Gilani in 1581 and Ralph Fitch in 1584, when Fathpur Sikri was still the capital city, mention Fathpur as vibrant commercial centre; later William Finch, writing almost thirty years after, though mentions the desolate state of the palace and its buildings he does talk about it being an important centre of indigo production. Pelsaert (2009: 4) who also visited Agra in the reign of Jahangir (1605-1627), when Sikandara was being abandoned by the royalty long back (1586), applauds the commercial vibrancy of the place:

On the other side of the river is a city named Sikandra [i.e. Fathpur Sikri], well built and populated, but chiefly by banian merchants, for through it must pass all the merchandise... Here the officers of Nur Jahan Begam, who built their sarai there, collect duties on all these goods before they can be shipped across the river...

Bernier and Blake's analogy completely ignores the *middle class*, *urban poor* and *artisanal classes*. Almost all the Mughal cities were provided with separate *mohallas* for the professional classes and artisans, and the *service* class. The vibrancy of Mughal *bazaars* so passionately recorded by almost all European travellers is completely ignored. Thus an impression is being created that the development of cities proper was *more* a recent phenomenon, not developed in the past. Pelsaert (2009: 9) clearly mentions the city of Agra and Sikri was full of artisans, particularly known for its carpet industry, but 'the city contains all sorts of artisans in great numbers'. Bernier also gives a vivid description of the presence of rich merchants in Delhi: 'Amid these streets are dispersed the habitations of *Mansebdars*, or petty *Omrahs*, officers of justice, rich merchants, and others...' (Bernier, 1916: 246). Clearly there lived a sizable merchant class who had permanent dwellings and warehouses in the city and were not subject to move along with the camp movements. However, there is no denying the fact that the demand generated by the Imperial household and the nobility was enormous to provide vibrancy and vitality to the city.

Mobile Urbanism

Mohammad Gharipour and Manu P. Solti (2015: 23-24) have highlighted that in general mobile tents as 'urban forms' was an important feature of the Islamic cities. They argue that there existed an 'unusual dual world of Islamic settlements – the sedentarised and tribal nomadic'. This 'cultural duality' created 'marriage between the tent and the palace'. They argue that the 'early Islamic cities created by migrant populations... not only imparted special character to the urban cores and peripheries of these disparate environments, but also created differentiated urban and sub-urban districts' (Gharipour and Solti, 2015: 24).

The royal tent residences were an important feature of the Islamic cities. Even Babur never established/constructed any palace complex instead lived in open, so established the garden complexes at Agra where he often stayed in his *Bagh-i Hasht Bihisht*.

When Akbar planned Agra fort and Fathpur Sikri they were largely modelled on royal ‘camps’; rather the plan of Akbar’s capital city Sikri was based on ‘peripatetic mobile tent cities’ (Rezavi, 2013: 206). To consolidate their position, suppress internal rebellions and face external threats Mughal emperors had to be always on the move and they used these mobile tents as their ‘portable palaces’ (p.34). Bernier provides a graphic account of these tents which were structured on the lines of the palace itself:

Whenever the King travels in military pomp he has always two private camps; that is to say two separate bodies of tents. One of these camps being constantly a day in advance of the other...called Peiche-kanes or houses which precede (Bernier, 1916: 359).

Each encampment requires for its carriage 100 elephants, 500 camels, 400 carts, and 100 bearers. It is escorted by 500 troopers, *Mansabdars*, *Ahadis*. Besides, there are employed a thousand *Farrashes*, natives of Iran, Turan, and Hindustan, 500 pioneers, 100 water-carriers, 50 carpenters, tent-makers, and torch bearers, 30 workers in leather, and 150 sweepers (Abul Fazl, 1977, *Ain* 16: 49).

Bernier (1916: 359-372) mentions the elaborate structure of pitched camp of Aurangzeb on their way from Delhi to Kashmir via Lahore which he himself accompanied – the camp was provided with *diwan-i am-o khas* (which he mentions was the largest structure); *ghusal khana*, *kalwat khana*, *zenana*, *chauki khana*, royal *bazaar*, tents of the Omrahs, *naqqar khana*. Traders, merchants, and artisans of all sorts also formed an integral part of the camp. Thus the tent cities were largely housed by the imperial household, nobility, soldiers and the royal retainers; camps had separate palace structures, female apartments. Such large were these camp structures that during Akbar’s reign creation of pre-fabricated structures was the result of frequent camp pitching. Further, wherever the ‘royal camps’ were pitched the area was usually charged with brisk commercial activities. We get frequent references that traders and grain merchants used to flock in the area with their commodities which had huge demands. As a result, wherever the camps used to move the prices in those territories were usually hiked exorbitantly. When the camp was on the move all routine activities of the empire were conducted within the camp itself – even the coins were struck at *urdu-i mualla* do survive. Thus, Bernier’s account as well as description of royal camps provided by Abul Fazl clearly suggests that while Mughal cities in no way may be called ‘camp cities’, Mughal ‘camps’ in itself were practically a city on the move.

22.5 RURAL-URBAN CONTINUUM: THE *QASBAS*

Mughal cities are often described as nothing but a conglomeration of villages by European travellers. Commenting upon the growth of the city of Agra, Pelsaert (2009: 1) argues that it ‘was a mere village, lying in the jurisdiction of Bayana, until King Akbar chose it for his residence in the year 1556.’ Irfan Habib argues that ‘Indian village was a stable economic unit, essentially self-sufficient in respect to its own consumption needs.’ ‘The trade was heavily in one direction – from villages to town.’ Apart from salt and jaggery, and some luxury items consumed by superior classes there was hardly ‘a rural demand for products of urban crafts’ (Habib, 1999: 89-90; Habib, 2017: 186). K.N. Chaudhuri (1978: 81) also affirms that ‘The traffic seems to have been in a decidedly one-way direction.’ Thus, Irfan Habib and K. N. Chaudhuri believe that medieval towns were parasitic in nature. According to him, ‘the bulk of the rural surplus [in the form of land revenue] was removed, created the conditions for the establishment of the rural market.’ Thus ‘the collection of enormous revenues from the agricultural sector and their concentration in the hands of small ruling class, the Indian economy had achieved a considerable expansion of its urban sector during the Mughal period’ (Habib, 2017:

190, 212). However, Chetan Singh argues that 'there existed a symbiotic relationship between the town and country in the seventeenth century' (Singh, 1991: 174). He argues that towns in the medieval Punjab were located in the rich agricultural zones. While villages supplied food and raw material to the towns, equally important was their dependence on towns. If the demand for agricultural produce declined villages would equally be 'impoverished'

Qasbas as rural town began to emerge in the Sultanate period. However, it received a real push under the Mughals. The highly monetised economy and vibrant commercialisation provided a push to the growth of *qasbas*. The urban demand for raw materials and food as well as extraction of revenue surplus in cash stimulated trade. This led to spurt in another category of intermediate and small towns, the *qasbas*. It is not that the *qasbas* were altogether a new category. However, in the Sultanate period *qasba* 'was a village with a fort', by sixteenth-seventeenth centuries *qasba* 'was a village with a market' (Chandra, 2005: 85) is clearly suggestive of the role reversal as a result of high level of monetisation. Satish Chandra (2005: 86) argues that there existed a close inter-relationship between a *qasba*, village and a town. He emphasises that *qasbas* were 'an integral part of the growth of agricultural production and the growth of money-economy' (Chandra, 2008: 97). Here resided the elites of the village – the *zamindars*, Brahmins and the *sasan* (revenue free grantees) holders. He underlines that these 'small towns not only acted as markets and centres of sale of agricultural produce but also developed as centres of handicrafts. The metallurgical base of the small towns in the upper Ganga valley enabled the Afghan soldiers to be equipped with muskets and all their other requirements.' Nizamuddin Ahmad in his *Tabaqat-i Akbari* records that Akbar's dominion consisted of 3200 towns (*qasbas*) and 120 cities (*balda/shahr*). Generally speaking under the Mughals *qasbas* were *pargana* headquarters. M.P. Singh (1985) has calculated on this premise if each *pargana* was a *qasba* under the Mughals then in 1647 CE there existed 4350 *qasbas* which showed a minor increase by 1720 CE to 4716. *Qasbas* generally developed from a big village as a market centre and provided with weekly markets, *haats* at regular intervals and were crucial interface between the cities and villages meeting the rural-urban demands. These *qasbas* received real push from agrarian hinterland while also being the trading and commercial marts. 'These *qasbas* served as procurement and marketing' and 'supply centres for cities and towns' (Bhardwaj, 2014: 321). It is interesting that western Rajasthan, being situated in the Thar Desert region, in the eighteenth century saw a spurt of *qasbas* largely owing to emergence of *mandis* and *chowkis* as transit dues collection centres and being situated on local trading network; while in the Mewat region, being agriculturally rich tract as compared to western Rajasthan, its rise occurred in the agricultural settings. The *mahajans* of the *qasba* used to buy agricultural produce from peasants directly for onward transaction in the cities of Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, etc. Some *qasbas* served as training centres for horses in Mewat region.

The eighteenth century saw again an unprecedented growth of *qasbas*. Manasari Sato's study on Southern Rajasthan, Harauti (Kota) region, suggests that in the eighteenth century a number of *qasbas* emerged in the region. From the second half of the eighteenth century a new trend was emerging in that there was a growth of market towns/villages with suffix '*ganj*' emerging in large numbers – Ganeshganj, Kishanganj, Daulatganj, Chhatarganj, Ramganj and so on. Interestingly these market/villages developed next to the old *qasbas*. Chandkheri was a *ganj* recorded in the second half of the eighteenth century that developed next to old *qasba* Khanpur. Daulatganj and Ummedganj developed next to *qasba* Nandgaon. Sato argues that the data suggests that by the turn of the 18th century the commercial activities of old *qasbas* had slowed down, with 'no capacity for further development' giving rise to emergence of new market towns/villages

next to the old existing *qasbas* (Sato, 1997: 57-86). GSL Devra's (2014: Chapter 8) study on Western Rajasthan also shows that the decline of Mughal power was detrimental to the rise of big cities/capital towns in the eighteenth century. However, in the eighteenth century merchants and traders organised their commercial activities at local and regional levels leading to a spurt in number of *qasbas* in western Rajasthan. Earlier, *mandis* which were part of the *qasbas* now emerged as prime centres of dues collection, and in due course they themselves assumed the status of a *qasba* – Rajgarh, Reni and Nohar. The study suggests that even *chowkis* of certain *mandis* in due course emerged as new *mandis* and later as *qasbas*. Rajgarh and Churu were such *chowkies* which later acquired the status of *mandis/qasbas* where migrated the Banias and merchants in large numbers which provided boost to the commercial activities in the region.¹ Thus Sato and G.S.L. Devra's studies on western Rajasthan confirm that in the eighteenth century there was substantial increase in the *qasbas* suggestive of the spate of commercial activities at local and regional levels which started showing signs of decline in the nineteenth century. In Bengal, intermediate towns like Bhagwangola, Azimganj, Katwa, Kalna, and Chittagong emerged. In Bengal production in *mufassil* towns got stimulated. The cotton textile zone emerged in the Nadia, Dhaka, Lakhimpur and Midnapur axis. Similarly, a silk axis emerged in Rajshahi and Bishnupur zone along the Murshidabad-Qasimbazar core (Datta, 2014: 92-93).

22.6 LANDSCAPE

There were two types of Mughal towns - *sui generis* or processual and Imperial towns built by the rulers, royalty and the elites. In the first category generally fall either the market centres, religious centres or port cities; while the second is dominated by capital towns, administrative centres, frontier/strategic towns, etc. K.N. Chaudhuri argues that there existed hierarchy of towns in the Mughal empire. He graded capital cities (Delhi, Agra, Lahore, Ahmadabad, Patna, Burhanpur and further northwest Kabul and Qandahar) as primate cities (those that influenced the whole empire) 'ranked by political influence but its economic role may be no higher than that of a provincial town' (Chaudhuri, 1978: 82). Thus Chaudhuri puts their commercial and industrial functions at the backdoor. Besides, Gwalior, Allahabad, Chunar, Aurangabad and Junnar are identified by him as 'garrison towns' that 'provided military sinews of the empire' (Chaudhuri, 1978: 85). On account of their association with political power their fate too was often linked with the fate of the ruler/dynasty, and thus were fragile in nature. Vijayanagar, Bijapur, Golconda, Bidar, Poona all declined with the decline of the political power of their patrons. However, Perry Anderson groups all Islamic towns in the category of Imperial towns. He (1974: 504) argues that, 'Grown in disorder, lacking plan or charter, the fate of the Islamic cities was normally determined by that of the state whose fortune had conferred their prosperity on them.' Anderson's analogy, however, is not found to be correct in the context of medieval Mughal cities. The primate towns like Shahjahanabad, Agra, Fathpur Sikri, Lahore, etc. were clearly well planned and brisk centres of trade and commercial activities (a detailed discussion in this regard is given in Unit 25). However, none of these categories could develop in isolation; one feature overlaps the other. Lahore was strategic cum administrative centre and at the same time was the commercial hub linked to the silk route. Similarly, Banaras was primarily a religious town, that also excelled in textile production, particularly silk and brocade. Nonetheless specific manufacturing towns also prospered. Bayana gained prominence on account of its indigo production; Khairabad, Daryabad in Oudh rose to prominence on account of their textiles.

¹ For details on emergence of *qasbas* and their origin see our Course MHI-05: History of Indian Economy, Block 4, Unit 20.2.

The seventeenth century saw emergence of a number of towns under the aegis of Mughal nobles and *jagirdars* being appointed in various regions and localities. The entire region of Rohilkhand inhabited by the Rohilla Afghans emerged in the mid-seventeenth century when Bahadur Khan Rohilla relocated the so-called fifty two sub-tribes of the Rohillas in the region. Shahjahanpur emerged as stronghold of the Rohillas. Rustam Khan Deccani founded Moradabad in the region after Prince Murad. In 1713 Muhammad Khan Bangash, another Afghan noble laid the foundation of Farrukhabad and got settled there his fellow-countrymen. Similarly, near Etawah, Yakdil Khan founded Yakdilabad (Ekdil) – initially he established there a *sarai* and a mosque in 1629-32.

22.6.1 Planning and Fortification

Perry Anderson (1974:504) is highly critical of the medieval Asian cities which he believes were completely devoid of planning:

Consequent to their pattern of hasty settlement and desolation, Islamic cities lacked any coherent internal structure whether administrative or architonic. They were confused amorphous mazes of streets and buildings, without public centres or spaces; focused only on mosques and bazaars and the local trades huddled around them.

However, contrary to Anderson's view, planning was key to all Mughal structures. One of the paintings of *Baburnama* shows architect holding the plan of Babur's garden while others were busy in measurement and other activities. Shahjahanabad is the perfect example of a Mughal planned city. In the Mughal establishment there existed a separate department of buildings (*imarat*) headed by *mir-i imarat*. In his *Ain-i Akbari* Abul Fazl has devoted a full section on *Ain-i imarat*. He records the *amla-o faila-i imarat* (building staff). There was a separate *darogha* (superintendent) of *imarat*. For royal constructions separate *muhandis/mimar* (architect) was appointed who looked after the construction work. Ustad Ahmad and Ustad Hamid were chief architects of building of Shahjahanabad. The architects were to prepare a plan (*tarh*); while *naqqash* was the tracer/carver and *parchinkar* was the engraver. Whether it were a palace, a city or a garden, plan was essential. There was a whole team of construction workers mentioned in the *Ain* – *gilkar* (clay worker), *sangatarshan* (stone cutters), *khisht-malan* (brick layers), *khisht puzan* (brick burners), *ahak puzan* (lime burners), *durudgaran/najjar* (carpenters), etc. *Mushrif-i imarat* was the accountant who looked after the finances of the constructions (Rezavi, 2013: 22-24).

The cities of Samarqand and Bukhara were well fortified, so were the medieval cities of the subcontinent either by a thick outer wall or a deep ditch/trench. However, while Central Asian cities enclosed within their city walls palace and the quarters of nobles; the Sultanate cities were fortified, with the difference that Sultanate fortifications were limited to imperial establishments and common people largely lived outside the fortifications. It was under the Tughluqs that for the first time besides the palace, town was also fortified. Mughal cities generally amassed the palace, nobles and the common masses, merchants, etc. encompassing the suburbs (*rabaz*), 'suggestive of the close symbiosis between the political authority and the commercial classes' (Rezavi, 1998: 105). The towns exposed to external frontiers like Lahore, Ahmadabad, Broach, Baroda, and Cambay were protected by thick walls with battlements; While Shahjahanabad, Ajmer, Multan and Kol were walled cities. Interestingly Agra (protected by deep trench instead) and Ujjain were towns with no city walls, though its counter city Fathpur Sikri was very much protected by a wall (Rezavi, 1998: 105). In contrast to Timurid palaces, Mughal palaces were always fortified structures. Further, Timurid palaces were always located at the periphery of the city, away from the city population. Though Mughal

palaces were always fronting the rivers nevertheless they always occupied the central place in the city. Asher argues that the practice of *jharokha darshan* required common people to visit daily to the palace for the glimpse of the monarch, it had to be in the heart of the city, approachable for the common masses. Since the palaces were housed within the city, for 'privacy' and 'protection' fortification of the Imperial household was a must. At the same time, while Timurid palace structures were set in the garden-compounds, Mughal palaces had gardens. Asher argues, thus, Mughal movement was from 'public to private' (Asher, 1993).

The residences of the Omrahs (*mansabdars*) – *jagirdars*, *zamindars*, and officials (*subadar*, *diwan*, etc.) in the provinces were almost replica of imperial structures. Asher calls these structures as 'sub-imperial palaces'. Her study of Munim Khan Khan-i Khanan's constructions at Jaunpur (*hammam* and bridge) and Chunar (palace) and Raja Man Singh's constructions at Rohtasgarh suggest 'rapid spread of technology and imperial taste, ... echoed in a sub-imperial palace settings' (Asher, 1993: 284). Munim Khan's *hammam*, his famous bridge and a pavilion overlooking the Ganges, a riverfront façade, presence of a Mughal idiom in this sub-imperial structure – suggests the 'authority of Munim Khan Khan-i Khanan' (Asher, 1993: 284). Man Singh's Rohtasgarh was a step ahead. Here, Man Singh built a temple dedicated to local deity Rohitasava and another one dedicated to Raja Harishchandra, a mythical hero. It is like symbolic assertion of imperial power by invoking Solomon in their palaces, argues Asher (1993: 285), 'Raja Man Singh manipulated local tradition to strengthen the aura of power associated with this palace and Man Singh himself.' Man Singh's palace at Rohtas even had *jharokha*, a privilege exclusive of the imperial structures reflects the power and authority expressed in the sub-imperial palaces.

22.6.2 Chowk

Bazaar-i Chaharsu (shopping square with which were connected shops and streets intersecting at right angles; a Persian and Central Asian feature) of the Sultanate cities continued during Akbar's period. Arif Qandahari mentions that in 1576-77 Akbar ordered at Fathpur Sikri to build a *chaharsuq* stretching from the royal court to Agra Darwaza. Arif Qandahari mentions that the *chaharsuq* at Sikri was provided with well-decorated shops. However, by seventeenth century *chaharsuq* got replaced by Hindawi *chowk*. Bijapur, capital city of the Adil Shahis, was described by Mulla Nusrati in his *Alinama* (1647) comprised of beautiful *chowks*, each comprised of four shopping streets (Siddiqui, 2012: 49). In Shahjahanabad, Chandni Chowk, Chowk Sadullah Khan were important market centres.

22.6.3 Sacred Spaces

Asher argues that Chishti *sufis* had a deep impact on Mughal emperors. It, according to her, played an important role in determining the cityscape of the imperial cities. Shaikh Salim Chishti's *dargah* formed very much part of Fathpur Sikri. Akbar's fort at Ajmer and Jahangir and Shahjahan's palaces and *baradari* at Ana Sagar again confirms 'royal link' with the premier Chishti saint Shaikh, Muinuddin Chishti. Similarly, Humayun planned to construct his Dinpanah next to Chishti Shaikh, Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah*. Asher argues that even Bahadur Shah II's (1837-1858) decision to build his palace, Zafar Mahal, next to Chishti saint Shaikh Bakhtiyar Kaki's tomb was to establish a link with 'religious authority'. Similarly, Akbar's chroniclers' contention that Agra was located in the centre of Hindustan recalls 'Abbasid caliph al-Mansur's conception of Baghdad' (Asher, 1993: 281). Asher also connects the use of white marble linking sacred authority with temporal. Asher argues that use of white marble was associated with saints. Shaikh Salim Chishti's *dargah* was built in white marble. In Akbar's constructions the exception

was his private audience hall where marble was used. Following Akbar usage of marble started in royal tombs (Sikandra; Itimaduddaula's tomb); Jahangir used it in his palace; Shahjahan profusely used white marble in his constructions. However, marble was not used in *Chihil Sutun* (public audience hall) by Shahjahan where stood the nobility. Similarly, marble was used *exclusively* in all imperially commissioned mosques (*qibla* was generally of white marble) and Chishti *dargahs*. 'Thus, marble in Mughal palaces helps blur the lines between ruler and the divine' (Asher, 1993: 283).

Mughals equally tried to appropriate the sacred spaces of the cities to legitimize their power and authority. From the onset, after his victory at Panipat in 1526 Babur visited all the Chishti shrines of Delhi followed by reading of *khutba* in Delhi in his name, symbolising assertion of his sovereignty. Regular visits to various Chishti shrines were an important act of appropriating the cityscape. Abul Fazl mentions Akbar's visits to Delhi as *ziyarat* (pilgrimage). Shahjahan equally paid his regular visits to the Chishti *dargah* of Nizamuddin Auliya. Even the grand edifice Jami Mosque of Shahjahanabad was put under the aegis of Nizamiyya branch of the Chishtis. An important aspect of the cityscape of Delhi was Humayun's tomb which was appropriated by the Mughal rulers as part of *ziyarat* in the Mughal scheme to the extent, that while describing Shahjahan's visit to Humayun's tomb Muhammad Salih Kambo records it as 'the most noble and august among the sacred places of the land.' Koch argues that 'the cult of dynastic commemoration was eventually to supercede the religious one... From 1568 onwards, even before the completion of Humayun's mausoleum, Akbar's historians refer explicitly to the emperor's visits to it and even describe it as "the site of the holiest of tombs"' (Koch, 1993: 13).

22.6.4 Caravansarais

To facilitate stay of merchants and travellers *caravansarais* (inns) formed an important aspect of the cityscape, particularly in the primate cities. These *sarais* were walled enclosures with huge gateways and fort like stone structures with bastions. They had their own wells and separate enclosures for bullock-carts and animals. It is recorded that the city of Agra had as many as eighty *sarais*. The Akbari Sarai, Bhore ki Sarai, Jalal Khan ki Sarai, Itibar Khan ki Sarai and Khoja Sarai were among a few massive structures in Agra. However, riverine *sarai* of Nur Jahan facing the *ghat* was outstanding of all. It could house 500 horses and 2000-3000 travellers. Each room had vaulted roofs and a verandah. In Delhi near Humayun's tomb Haji Begum built Arab ki Sarai in 1560 which could house 300 travellers. Fathpuri Begum and Akbarabadi Begum also erected *sarais* near the mosques built by them to facilitate the travellers'/pilgrims' stay. The *caravansarai* built by Jahanara Begum for the travellers near her garden was most magnificent of all. It was a double storey structure. Bernier (1916: 281) records:

The *Karauansara* is in the form of a large square with arcades, ...Above the arcades runs a gallery all around the building, into which open the same number of chambers as there are below. This place is the rendezvous of the rich *Persian*, *Usbek*, and other foreign merchants, who in general may be accommodated with empty chambers, in which they remain with perfect security, the gate being closed at night.

22.7 GARDENS IN MUGHAL CITIES

Gardens preceded the Mughals. Lodis were the first to build garden structures. However, it were under the Mughals that they occupied centrality in urban spaces – it was a place of final abode (Mughal tomb gardens), places of refuge and recreation, a place for feasts and receptions, a place for abdication as well as occupying the kingship. However,

gardens also intricately formed part of the Imperial residential complexes as well as those of the nobles termed as *khanabagh* or *sarai bustan*. Jim Westcoat Jr. believes 'garden events often served as metaphors for the territorial aspirations of the king'. 'Gardens also served as the spatial setting for rituals associated with grievance, justice and reconciliation' (Westcoat, 1991: 58, 60). The garden was also a place for feasts and reception. Babur addressed his soul to rest in peace in *bagh-i Zar Afshan*; thus 'retired king takes up permanent occupancy in a completed garden'. An active king in contrast 'constructs, visits and performs' (Westcoat, 1991: 60). Humayun's river front garden had four two storey structures (*chahar taqs*) connected with four barges where a month long festivities of music, feasts, intellectual discourses were conducted and honours were bestowed. There were other such floating barges on the Yamuna. Khwandmir writes about the nature of commodities available here were, 'every person could obtain whatever he wanted of various kinds of foods, drinks, dresses, clothes, ammunitions, and weapons of war...' (Khwandmir: 45 cited in Westcoat, 1991: 60). Humayun used to go out every Tuesdays and Sundays with royal ladies and the court in these riverfront gardens. New years' feasts were celebrated by Humayun in *Chahar Bagh*. Important events related to Akbar's early life also occurred in the gardens – his circumcision and infant Akbar's win in a wrestling match occurred in Avartah or Urta Bagh near Kabul. Thus, gardens assumed places of vibrant activities in the urban centres under the Mughals. European travellers described the city of Agra as garden city of the Mughals. In the capital-city Fathpur Sikri a total of twenty nine gardens were constructed within the city (in all twenty) and outside its ramparts (six) out of which three were located within the palace complex. Hayat Bakhsh garden was Shahjahan's palace garden housed in Shahjahanabad. Among the pleasure gardens of Shahjahan Shahlamar gardens of Kashmir and Lahore and the Nishat Bagh of Kashmir stand out. Similarly, among the tomb/funerary gardens Humayun's tomb and Taj Mahal are striking examples. Jahangir's wife and Man Singh's daughter Shah Begum's tomb at Khusrau Bagh is another towering garden tomb structure situated in Allahabad. James Dickie (1985: 132) describes tomb garden as – 'a garden amounts to a material anticipation of immaterial bliss.' Humayun's tomb soon became the favourite destination of Mughal rulers who paid regular visits to the tomb. These tomb gardens were also accessible to common people.

Not just the capital cities but cities across the Mughal empire were adorned with beautiful gardens by the rulers or nobles. The garden of Rafiz Rakha (Aam-Khas Bagh) built during Akbar's reign at Sirhind was so famous that Shahjahan paid six visits to Sirhind garden.

Thus gardens formed central to the landscape of Mughal cities. Mughals introduced Persian concept of *chaharbagh* where the garden landscape symbolised divine spaces. Pleasure gardens were laid out generally in *chaharbagh* tradition, divided into four quadrants with *baradari* (pavilions) and water tanks along with the causeways and water channels. At Fathpur Sikri, out of the total twenty nine gardens fifteen were *chaharbagh*. Babur himself ordered to construct a garden at Sikri (*bagh-i Fath*) to commemorate his victory at Khanwa (1527). Another garden *bagh-i Nilofar* (lotus garden) Babur built at Dholpur, both in the *chaharbagh* tradition. However, not all the gardens were made in *chaharbagh* tradition. The Mughal garden at Wah, 1 kilometre from Taxila near Hasan Abdal was not a symmetrical construction.

22.8 POPULATION IN MUGHAL CITIES

The urban push received under the Delhi Sultans continued unabated under the Mughals. Cities were often overcrowded. Irfan Habib has worked out a figure of 12½ to 15 per cent for the urban population in Mughal India; while according to an estimate of Shireen

Moosvi (2015: 410) in c. 1600 urban population of Mughal India was approximately 15 per cent. Thus in North India in the seventeenth century, urban growth was much higher than British India in the mid-eighteenth century which was approximately 13.8 per cent for western Europe and 7.1 per cent for central Europe (Datta, 2014: 87). Thus growth of urban population in medieval India in comparison to medieval Europe was much higher.

One does find often either a rough estimate or comparison of big towns with contemporary European cities. Ralph Fitch, writing in 1584, compares Fathpur Sikri and Agra as 'greater than London and very populous'. Jourdan mentions Agra as the largest city in the world and compared that it was bigger than Cairo. Lahore was compared with Constantinople and Ahmadabad with London. Bernier (1916: 238-239) commented 'Delhi and Agra rival Paris in beauty, extent and number of inhabitants.' Stephen Blake has estimated the population of the city of Shahjahanabad and its suburbs to be approximately 475,000-550,000. He argues that around eighty per cent of the population lived in the walled city (Blake, 1991: 67).

Population Estimates

Town	Year	Population
Agra	1609	500,000
	1629-43	660,000
Patna	1671	200,000
Masulipatnam	1672	200,000
Surat	1700	20,000

Source: Habib, 2017: 212.

Thus, 'based on the collection of enormous revenues from the agricultural sector and their concentration in the hands of a small ruling class, the Indian economy had achieved a considerable expansion of its urban sector during the Mughal period. Not only was a high proportion of the urban population employed in industrial crafts, but it would appear that in actual volume of output per head of the period could invite comparison with the early decades of this (20th) century' (Habib, 2017: 212-213).

22.9 SUMMARY

The *Pax-Mughalica* accelerated the growth of urbanisation in the medieval period. The flow of revenue surplus to the towns facilitated the growth of intermediate towns (*qasbas*). Though primate cities gained prominence under political patronage, their commercial vibrancy could not simply be negated. At the same time, growth of urban crafts led to the rise of specialised towns like Bayana and Khairabad. Thus urbanisation in Mughal India was unprecedented and even overshadowed the growth of towns in western Europe during that period.

22.10 EXERCISES

- 1) Critically examine the spatial characteristics of Mughal cities.
- 2) To what extent Mughal primate cities symbolised centres of power and authority?
- 3) Do you agree with Stephen Blake's analogy of patrimonial-bureaucratic cities?

- 4) Examine Bernier's idea of camp cities.
- 5) To what extent Mughal cities reflect rural-urban continuum?
- 6) Discuss briefly the characteristics of the Mughal cityscape.
- 7) 'Gardens formed the 'key' to the cityscape of Mughal cities.' Comment.

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UNIT 23 URBAN PATTERNS IN MEDIEVAL DECCAN*

Structure

- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Golconda
- 23.3 Bijapur
- 23.4 Industrial Cities of the Deccan
 - 23.4.1 Textile Centres
 - 23.4.2 Saltpetre and Gunpowder Production Centres
 - 23.4.3 Diamond Industries and the Urban Growth
- 23.5 Manufacturing Town: Bidar
- 23.6 Summary
- 23.7 Exercises
- 23.8 References

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Studies on urbanisation of the Deccan have, on the whole, been rather limited, leading often to the impression that there was very little urbanisation in the region. This is far from being the case, for there were, historically, a large number of urban settlements visible here from fairly early time. Ranabir Chakravarti has, for instance, pointed to the presence of inscriptions to the existence of terms such as *mandapikā*, *petha* or *penthā*, *nagaram*, and *śulkaśthāna*, all of which refer to market centres. We can therefore talk of the existence of a large number of small urban centres in the region.

A question that needs to be asked is whether such small centres were characteristic of the Deccan. A corollary to this would be whether there were large urban centres as well. The answer to both questions would be 'yes'. Given the geography of the Deccan, there were a large number of smaller centres that can be identified. Sources from Maharashtra, for example, refer to *kasbas* (*qasbas*), *peths* and *mire*. *Kasbas* were understood to be places that had a permanent market. Thus, an urban centre could have both a *kasba* (a permanent market) and a *peth* (a local or semi-permanent market) within it. In modern times, the city of Pune has within it a number of localities which have the name of a day of the week as a prefix, and *peth* as a suffix – *Shukrawarpeth*, for example. At some time in the history of the city, therefore, it is clear these areas were the scene of local markets. Bhakti literature of the 13th century, especially of the Mahanubhav cult, has references to *hat* and to evening bazaars held in larger settlements, and also makes mention of the number of buyers and sellers that thronged these markets.

A further aspect of consideration is whether one can take the entire Deccan as a single unit for studying urban patterns, or whether one would have to distinguish the kinds of urban settlements that made their appearance in the different geographical sub-regions of the plateau proper, the eastern and western coastal strips, and the hilly terrains bordering the plateau. In addition, one would also have to take into account the various political regimes that came up, and the capitals or provincial administrative centres that they established.

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It is clear that in addition to markets and trade routes, urban settlements grew around forts as well. According to the Persian text *Burhan-i Maasir* forts were of two kinds, *Qalah* being a fort on a hill while *Hisar* was a fort on a plain; to these can be added the sea-forts along the coastal tract. Obviously around hill forts there could not be large scale urban settlements, but towns do seem to have grown up nearby. We have, for example, the fort and town of Penukonda in Andhra Pradesh where the fort was on the hill and the town below, but the town too was surrounded by a wall. Similar to this is the city of Junnar in Maharashtra, which is located on the plain below Shivneri fort. In contrast to this was the fort of Daulatabad, where it appears that the urban area was located a short distance away.

When one is talking of urbanisation in the Deccan, it is necessary to keep in mind the geography of the region, and the political systems that came into existence during the medieval period. Urbanisation has always been seen in tandem with the existence and spread of state systems, and therefore, we have to keep in mind the capitals of these states, as new or expanding urban centres under the Deccani rulers.

In the period up to the 14th century (till the establishment of the Bahmani Sultanate), among the most important of the Deccan rulers were the Chalukyas, who ruled first from Badami (modern Karnataka), and later from Kalyani (modern Basavakalyan). Neither of these two cities is today a particularly large urban centre, but between the 10th and probably the 12th centuries, they were fairly large centres. Basavakalyan, in particular, going by the descriptions that one finds in Virasaiva poetry, was a large and populous city, well laid out, and with a great many markets in it. Other medieval kingdoms included the Kakatiyas, who established their capital at Warangal, in modern Andhra Pradesh, The Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta, and the Yadavas of Devagiri. All of these cities, while perhaps not as large as some of those on the north Indian plains, were nevertheless important centres.

With the establishment of the Bahmani sultanate, newer centres came into existence. The Bahmanis first established their capital at Gulbarga, and later moved to Bidar. Bidar fort remains today a testament to the engineering skills of the time, not just in size, but also in layout and in water management systems. The subsequent establishment of the successor states of the Bahmanis resulted in new urban centres, for new capital cities came up at Ahmadnagar, Golconda, Hyderabad, Bijapur, and many others. As is well known, the Qutb Shahis of Golconda and the Adil Shahis of Bijapur were the longest lasting, and their cities were probably among the largest.

23.2 GOLCONDA

The fort of Golconda encompassed within its walls the city of Golconda as well. It is usually assumed that the Sultans established the fortress, but they apparently added to a mud fort that had been built there earlier by the Kakatiyas, to make it one of the largest and strongest forts of the Deccan. Using the natural rocky landscape, walls were added, and a large area was enclosed. Technologically, too, the fort was distinctive, for it included a method for bringing water from quite a distance (from an area today known as *Durgam Cheruvu*, meaning 'hidden lake') which lies about 6 km from the fort. There was also a method of transmitting sound, for the sound of a clap when standing right at the centre of the dome at the entrance of the fort can be heard at the top, at the citadel.

Within the fort was located an armoury and stables, and of course, the necessary royal enclosures. Beyond the first set of walls lay the town, also enclosed. Many of the walls still exist, even though the fort itself was largely destroyed in the 17th century. A short

distance away from the fort are to be seen the tombs of the Qutb Shahi sultans, in the typical Deccani style of architecture, comprising of large domes, set atop a square structure.

The ramparts of the old city can still be seen. It appears that there were three lines of walls – one surrounding the citadel, one enclosing the city, at the bottom of the rocky incline on which the fort is placed, and one on the plain below, but on the fort side of the river Musi.



Figure 23.1: Note the walls of the Golconda Fort, which fit into the landscape of the area.

Photograph by Radhika Seshan



Figure 23.2: The central area of the Golconda Fort, with the *zenana* in the background, and a fountain in the central courtyard. Photograph by Radhika Seshan



Figure 23.3: Another view of the inside of the Golconda Fort.
Photograph by Radhika Seshan



Figure 23.4: The city of Hyderabad in the background; note the line of the walls, and the path alongside.
Photograph by Radhika Seshan



Figure 23.5: Note the Golconda Fort walls in the distance. Photograph by Radhika Seshan

Golconda was for a long time the capital of the kingdom, but in the late 16th century, the fort apparently started becoming too crowded. The Sultan then decided to establish a new city, called *Bhagnagar* (according to local legend, in memory of a legendary dancer and his paramour, Bhagmati), or Hyderabad. This city was on the plain below the rocks on which the fort was located, and was, in its own time, one of the richest in India.

In its layout, Hyderabad's old city is very similar to other old cities, in that it has a single defined political and economic centre (the area around the Charminar), and nearby, the markets. It is possible to see in this layout itself the economic functions of the city, with the old *chudi bazaar* on one side of the Charminar, and lanes with different kinds of products radiating in other directions. The older markets, as well as the houses of the nobles, can still be seen.

However, within the fort, it is rather difficult to identify the market areas or the residential quarters of the nobles. What remains today is a large number of houses, most of which seem to belong to the 20th century, and the fort itself, as a distinct historical (and tourist) location.

23.3 BIJAPUR

Like Golconda, Bijapur too was an old city, which came back into prominence when the Adil Shahi Sultans made it their capital. Bijapur seems to be a derivative from the original name of *Vijayapura*, city of victory (the modern railway station has this name), but the name of Bijapur is much better remembered. This city is located on a plain, and is surrounded by a wall. Also like Golconda, the city and fort both lay within the walls; and the tombs of the Adil Shahi sultans are also located within the walls. Bijapur today is seen as almost synonymous with the Gol Gumbaz (the tomb of Muhammad Adil Shah [d. 1656]), the monument with the largest dome in India.



Figure 23.6: A close up of the Gol Gumbaz dome. Note the minarets at the sides.

Photograph by Radhika Seshan

Given the rather dry nature of the region, water supply was obviously a prime concern. This seems to have been met by the construction of two large tanks within the city walls, known as *Taj Bawdi* and *Chand Bawdi*.



Figure 23.7: Taj Bawdi, Bijapur – note the sluice gates.

Photograph by Radhika Seshan



Figure 23.8: Taj Bawdi, Bijapur – see the wall opposite the one in the picture above.

Photograph by Radhika Seshan

One of the most detailed descriptions of Bijapur comes from Asad Beg, the envoy whom Akbar sent to the Deccan. Among other things, he commented on the bazaar that was near the house in which he lived, and remarked on the bazaar itself, saying that “Before each shop was a beautiful green tree, and the whole bazaar was extremely clean”. He went on to say that the bazaar was filled with a variety of goods.

Ferishta’s account gives us considerable information about the growth of the city. As Bijapur grew, the Adil Shahi Sultans established a new market area just outside the city, which was called Shahpur. This was followed by the establishment of yet another suburb, Nauraspur, about 4 kilometres away from the fort, at the end of the 16th century. A 19th century history of Bijapur, that of J. D. B. Gribble, says that “excluding the citadel, Bijapur within walls, during the days of the monarchy, seems to have been divided into thirty-three wards or *peths*”.

What needs to be underlined about both these cities is the continuity of occupation, and the economic and political vibrancy. To these must be added the craft expertise visible in the monuments still extant, and in the descriptions of the bazaars and the goods from travellers like the Frenchman Abbé Carré in the 17th century, his slightly earlier countryman Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, as well as a host of others. Even if we do not get details about urban planning and layout, it is possible to match the existing structures with the earlier descriptions, so as to understand not just the nature of urbanisation in the Deccan, but also the continued history of urbanisation in this region.

23.4 INDUSTRIAL CITIES OF THE DECCAN

In the Deccan towns received special boost as a result of the blooming textiles, saltpetre and diamond mining industries in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries.

23.4.1 Textile Centres

There was a great demand for urban industrial products for exports as well as for the developed cities and towns in the Deccan during the period under review. The most important of the urban industries were cotton and silk weaving industry.

Throughout the seventeenth century Aurangabad, for instance, was famous for white cotton cloth and silk-stuff, and Burhanpur for fine white and printed cloth, which was exported in large quantities by Persian and Armenian merchants to Persia, Arabia and Turkey.

Burhanpur was founded in 1398-99 by the Faruqi ruler of Khandesh Sultan Nasir Khan and named after the famous Chishti sufi saint Burhan al-Din Gharib. It remained all though an important sufi centre as well as an important centre of Indo-Persian learning. It enjoyed the patronage of Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan, the famous noble of Akbar who himself was a scholar of great repute. It was flocked by number of scholars from Persia (Isfahan and Shiraz) – Khwaja Ahmad Shirazi, Mohammad Baqar Kashani, Mirza Mohammad Isfahani. A number of monuments built by Khan-i Khanan still survive to date. Like other Deccani forts, the city spread was in the valley (Tapti) along the river front while the fort (Asir) was situated on the hill miles away, on the top. The immediate hinterland was Adilabad *pargana*, a rich cotton growing regions of India. Throughout the Mughal period it enjoyed a great reputation for its rich textiles – brocade, flowered silk, gold and silver embroidery. The merchants presence could well be attested to by the presence of *caravanserais* in the city where merchants were housed and which provides places for the transit of goods (Gordon, 2008: 286). French traveller Tavernier (Vol. I:42-43) who visited Burhanpur in 1677 writes:

There is a considerable trade in this town, and both at Brampore itself and in all the province an enormous quantity of very transparent Muslins are made, which are exported to Persia, Turkey, Muscovie, Poland, Arabia, Grand Cairo, and other places. Some of these are dyed various colours and ornamented with flowers, and women make veils and scarfs of them; they also serve for the covers of beds, and for handkerchiefs,... There are other fabrics, which are allowed to remain white, with a stripe or two of gold or silver running the whole length of the piece, and at each of the ends, from the breadth of one inch up to twelve or fifteen – in some more, and in others less – it is a tissue of gold, silver, and of silk with flowers, and there is no reverse, one side being as beautiful as the other... Some of these fabrics are all banded, half cotton and half gold or silver, such pieces being called ornis.

However, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Burhanpur faced the Maratha onslaught. They captured the fort and sacked the city twice in 1685 and 1698 which forced the merchants to bypass the Burhanpur route. In 1711, Dutch preferred to follow more westerly route, bypassing Burhanpur. It had deep impact on the fortunes of the flourishing city and its trade and manufactures; and the city shrank; though the textile production continued and formed major craft of the city. The late Mughal documents speak about the presence of nine wholesale markets of various commodity (cloth, cattle/horses, gold/silver jewelley, metal, leather etc.) in the city (Gordon, 2008: 295-296).

Specially the cities of Qutub Shahi kingdom produced a large quantity of printed cloth which was claimed to be the best to be found in India. They also manufactured all sorts of calicoes which were as cheap and plentiful as in any other part of India, but different in texture and pattern from those of other regions. The painted cloth of these cities was also quite famous all over India due to the special dyestuff called *chay*, which was produced only in the eastern Deccan, and monopolised as a rule by the king.

The Adil Shahi sultanate had a flourishing cotton and silk weaving industry. Cotton was produced in the uplands of Deccan and Kanara, and silk required by the weavers was imported from China. The curious feature of this industry in the northern part of kingdom was that it was situated around the ports, so that the cotton required for it had to be transported from the Deccan uplands. It is possible that in the uplands also there were

towns where the weaving industries flourished, but as the foreign travellers, who are often the major sources of information on the industries of the time restricted their observation to the coast, they do not mention any of the internal centres. The ports of the Konkan around which the industry flourished were Chaul, Dabhol, Rajapur and Vengurla, where the cotton weaving industry survives to this day. At these centres cotton and silk stuffs were manufactured in great abundance and of many varieties and various colours. The cotton goods of these places were in great demand in Persia, Arabia and some parts of East Africa. The state took active interest in the weaving industry and the weavers were granted exemption from certain taxes. In the Southern part of the kingdom the English factors found the cotton industry flourishing at Hubli and Lakshameshwar and in the country behind Karwar.

Calicoes and Muslins were the principal varieties of cotton cloth produced in the Deccan. The weaving of the first variety was fairly common throughout India, but the muslin industry was localised in Deccan and Bengal. On the Konkan coast, Dabhol, Rajapur and Chaul specialised in calicoes and muslins, while Vengurla produced coarse cotton cloth for the home market. The southern centers of the weaving industry also produced calicoes and, in addition, seem to have specialised in carpet weaving and allied industries. It also seems that the saris and other cloths required by women were produced in and around Dharwar.

About the organisation of the cotton weaving industry we have very little information. It seems probable that it was financed by the middleman or the Bania who kept in close touch with the market and requirements of the exporters. The English went to the market towns for the purchase of pepper, cotton goods, etc., and usually entered into negotiations with a local merchant whom they appointed as their broker. A prominent figure in the markets of Bijapur was *Benidas* the broker employed by the English. *Bimaldas* and *Vitthal Gomati* were two other brokers who did business for the English factors. The brokers were financed by the foreign traders, and the producers of pepper and the cotton weavers were in turn financed by the brokers. The English factors found that the calicoes manufactured by the weavers were of short dimensions only and if they wanted large sized cloth, the only alternative before them was to finance the weavers with the cost of altering their looms in order to make the cloth broader. This shows that the weaving industry depended for its finance on an outside agency.

Cotton goods manufactured in a number of cities in the Bijapur kingdom were carried to Persia, Arabia and Mozambique in East Africa by Muslim and Portuguese traders. During the first half of the seventeenth century both Dabhol and Rajapur sent out large quantities of cotton cloths to Persia and Arabia, but the English merchants who carried on this trade considered the cloth as too fine for England. In the Kanara country also cotton cloth was produced at Hubli and Lakshameshwar and was exported by the English from Karwar. After the loss of Chaul, Karwar became the greatest port of Bijapur on the west coast. "The finest muslins of western India were exported from here. The weaving country was inland, to the east of Sahyadris, at Hubli (in Dharwar district), and at other centres, where the English East India Company had agents and employed as many as 50,000 weavers."

Many kind of rich cloths were in demand in the kingdom by small minority mostly the nobility. These were velvets, satins, scarlet cloths and damasks. These came mostly from Arabia, though Caesar Frederick notices a certain amount of velvet and scarlet cloths imported at Chaul from Portugal. Some quantities of woollen cloth were imported into Goa and thence into Bijapur by the Portuguese. During the seventeenth century English merchants found that there was a demand in the kingdom for broad cloth. No mention of this variety is found in the accounts of travellers during the sixteenth century.

It seems probable, therefore, that the English were the first to introduce it into the kingdom. At any rate they developed the trade in this commodity to a considerable extent. It was brought to Rajapur and Dabhol and transported inland to Raybag, the most important mart in the kingdom. The silk weaving industry of Chaul and Dabhol was supplied with its raw material from China.

23.4.2 Saltpetre and Gunpowder Production Centres

Saltpetre was produced in considerable quantities in different parts of the Deccan. The English factors made more than one attempt to refine saltpetre locally and then export it, but the experiment failed as the cost of refining proved too excessive. They therefore continued to buy and export unrefined saltpetre.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam argues that the coastal trade in rice and saltpetre was on a large scale in the seventeenth century and should be included among the profitable commodities of Portuguese trade. However, according to Afzal Ahmed these were not the general items of trade on which a profit might be earned, but were rather bought to be supplied to the war affected areas for the consumption of the soldiers and the Portuguese residing in those part, and profits of this trade were made by the local Indian producers and by the 'married and settled merchants' and not by the Portuguese *Estado da India*. Some of the producers might have belonged to the Bijapur sultanate.

The coastal trade in rice, saltpetre and other commodities of prime necessity, which reached peak during the period between 1628 and 1663, was mostly to supply the Portuguese war-affected area, including Muscat in the Persian Gulf, Malacca and the ports on India and Ceylon. They were never commodities which could yield the Portuguese treasury any extra income, except for the taxes they could levy over their transactions. A partial exception is the case of saltpetre, which was acquired from various regions of India to produce gunpowder for both the Portuguese and the Indian rulers in exchange for diplomatic favours against the Dutch and the English.

The increase in demand for both the items was due mainly to the prevailing circumstances during three decades of war. However, among these, rice certainly turned out to be a very important commodity in shaping Portuguese diplomacy with the rulers of Kanara and Bijapur. At least in the case of the Kanara region, where rice was produced in abundance, it gave a very powerful instrument to the Nayakas who used to bargain the prices of pepper against the purchase of rice and to a lesser extent saltpetre.

On the other hand, although the saltpetre had to be purchased, the gunpowder gave the Portuguese a commanding position in local diplomacy, thanks to the perpetual rivalry between the Mughals and the states of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. In return for its supply, the Portuguese were able to insist on the expulsion of the Dutch and the English from their territories. The sultans of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar urgently needed gunpowder, when, as happened often during the wars with the Mughal, their factories were not able to produce sufficient to supply their forces. However, the largest part of the gunpowder was used by the Portuguese themselves during their wars against the Dutch and the local states such as Kanara and Bijapur.

A certain amount of borax was also produced in the Adil Shahi kingdom and most of it seems to have been used for dyeing cotton goods, but some quantities of it were occasionally bought by the English merchants for export. The centre of the saltpetre and borax trade was Raybag. At Mirjan, a port twenty five miles south-east of Karwar, saltpeter was shipped for Surat.

The kingdom of Bijapur, like the Qutb Shahi kingdom, possessed iron deposits though

on a modest scale. Vijayanagar had a good supply of iron and saltpetre and the kingdom of Bijapur used to import considerable quantities of these commodities from there. Bijapur undoubtedly benefited from the iron deposits in Vijayanagar when it annexed much of the territory belonging to it.

23.4.3 Diamond Industries and the Urban Growth

The most famous industry in the Adil Shahi and Qutub Shahi kingdom was diamond mining. The most important mines of the former kingdom were at Raolkonda, and those of the latter kingdom were located at Kulur on the Krishna. The mines were leased out by the king to merchants on payment of a certain amount of money, who employed a number of miners, whose total number were located at Kulur was reported at 30,000 to 60,000, and the town's population at 100,000. Stones of more than 10 carats formerly belonged to the king, and one of such diamonds mined at Kulur was the famous *koh-i nur*.

The existence of diamond mines in the 'Adil Shahi kingdom has been noted by all the travellers who visited the kingdom during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There were in all fifteen diamond mines in the kingdom of Bijapur the principal of which was situated near Ramalakota or Raolkonda as it is called by Tavernier and the English merchants. The diamonds produced from the Bijapur mines were generally good, but in size and weight they were not equal to the Golconda diamond. There were numerous diamond cutters near the mines to cut and polish the diamonds. But their work was of a crude kind and they were unable to give the diamonds such "lively polish" as the craftsmen of Europe did.

The diamond mining industry was in the hands of Gujarati merchants. The mines were the king's property and were farmed to intending prospectors. Many labourers flocked to the mines and were employed by the prospectors. There were also a number of skilled workmen to prepare the diamonds for the market after they were dug out of the mines. The finished product was sent by the merchants to their agents in Surat, Goa, Bijapur, Agra, Delhi and other places. Tavernier found a high sense of business honesty among the diamond merchants. The Bijapur diamond prospectors were a prosperous community and were apparently much better off than their counterparts in Golconda.

It seems that by 1663, the output from the Ramalakota (Raolkonda) mines had reduced considerably, for the Dutch East India Company's chief factor, Pieter de Lange, observes: 'But now nothing of more interest [is] to be found'. He writes that one famous courtier, Balasahap (Balasaheb), of the Bijapur court had begun mining his lands situated around Minismoel in the hope that 'what is lost in Rauwelcotte, appear there to be gained again'. It was hoped that it would yield a 'good quantity of flatten or white small diamonds (wit bort)'.

The rulers of the kingdom of Bijapur and Golconda held proprietary rights over the mines in their territories. The mining of diamonds and its trade provided these rulers with the prospect of enormous profits. The rulers supervised the working of the mines through their officials. However, it seems that the ruler of Bijapur was often unhappy with his governors in respect to the management and income of the diamond mines.

There was a good market in diamonds in Jinji and Vellore dating from Vijayanagar times, but it seems to have declined after the fall of Vijayanagar. It is difficult to identify where the diamonds came from, but contemporary records speak of them as being mined in the territory of Jinji and the previous Vijayanagar kings. Later the country passed under Bijapur rule. A report of 1685 speaks of a number of wealthy merchants descending on Vellore for the diamond auctions and buying stones, large and small, for

‘hundreds of thousands of reals’. Obviously this market had moved in our period probably northwards to Golconda, after her conquests of most of the mining districts.

Traders from Bijapur, Vellore, Goa and other places had their factors in Jinji. Prior to the contract of 1643, signed between the Vijayanagar Emperor and the Dutch Company, the diamonds were purchased at Jinji and taken to Goa, from where they were sent to Portugal. It was common practice to lease the diamond fields on certain conditions. Around 1615, the two diamond mines of Banganapalle and Cottecotte were leased out for approximately 200,000 reals of eight that is 400,000 rupees. The lease was based on condition of delivery of all the stones, which weighed from 4 to 25 *mangelins*, to the king. Apart from the payment to the governor of the place and the obligatory parting with diamonds above specified weights, the merchants also paid two percent on all purchases to the King, who receives also a royalty from the merchants for permission to mine. The rates were 2 *pagodas* per *diem* for 50 men and 4 *pagodas* for employing 100 men.

The mine would naturally have greatly affected the economy of the surrounding villages by drawing their population to work in them. However, we do not know if such workers were converted into wage labourers in the modern sense of the word. The available evidence about labourers and their conditions in the diamond fields shows that their number was considerable and that they were paid low wages. Tavernier mentions that, the wages of workers at Raolconda mines, “these poor people only earn 3 pagodas per annum; i.e. equal to about one rupee or 27 pence per mensem or less than a penny a day.” This was perhaps due to the lack of development of mining technology. Simple tools were used by employing semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Our sources do suggest some development in mining engineering.

In 1615, Willem den Dorst, the chief factor of Dutch East India Company on Coromandel, submitted a report about the prospects of this trade in Coromandel. He reported that ‘Sensier’ (Jinji) had emerged as an important market for the diamond trade, and that merchant from Bijapur, Goa, Jinji and Vellore were trading there. He writes that ‘due to wars elsewhere, merchants, with their households and families had migrated to Gingi. Some of them kept their factors, mostly Brahmins, to purchase diamonds there’. He reported that he had seen 300-400 carats of diamonds with their merchants, and estimated that one could annually collect diamonds worth 100,000 *reals* of eight or even more. He had himself purchased diamonds from Bijapur merchants and had found that it was 18 to 20 per cent cheaper to purchase diamonds in Jinji. He explains that this was because the European currency yielded an 18 per cent profit when exchanged with local currency.

In September 1615, the factor Leonard Wolff was deputed to secure the rights to trade in diamonds in Bijapur. But this mission failed. Then Pieter Gillisz was sent, but he also failed in his endeavour. However the mission under Willem den Dorst purchased diamonds worth 6,000-7,000 *pagodas* in March 1616.

In Bijapur there were 15 mines, of which only those yielding the smallest stones were allowed by the Sultan to be worked, partly to prevent large stones becoming too common, and partly to avoid exciting Aurangzeb’s cupidity. There seems to be some more mines out of the list mentioned by Tavernier. Varthema also talked about the diamonds of Bijapur, and said that there was “a mountain in the kingdom of Bijapur where they dig out diamonds, which mountain is a league distant from the city, and is surrounded by a wall, and is kept by a strong guard.”

Thus these small manufacturing towns of the Deccan owed much to their existence and growth to the ‘*networking*’ with the hinterland *vis-a-vis* the trading routes and the

ports across India and the Indian Ocean what Stewart Gordon (2008: 297-298) has rightly illustrated and concludes in the context of Burhanpur:

The analysis of the city of Burhanpur suggests a series of non-contiguous networks that shifted overtime...the network of military recruitment...

The basic supply network was more stable...

The network of Sufi shrines, once established seem to have been stable throughout the period...

Burhanpur's demand network arose and fell with its prosperity. Like any capital of small Indian kingdom Burhanpur, under the Farukhis, benefitted from taxes that came to the king. Though its nobility was small, it was the centre of demand for high-end craft skills and arts – weaving, iron work, painting, book production, musical instrument making. The skilled craftsmen who serviced the court were part of a network that included such courts across much of India at the time. These small centres were the refuge from turbulent times for skilled craftsmen. A small city like Burhanpur was also the repository of courtly customs and knowledge...The network of such men went beyond India and included jurists and clerics from Central Asia, Persia, Afghanistan, and the middle East...

In its glory days, Burhanpur was connected to astonishing far-flung networks. A small number of specialized cotton fabrics multiplied to many varieties, all with specific local and distant markets. The streams of fabrics from Burhanpur joined those from the contemporary production centres of the Ganges Valley, Malwa, and Gujarat. This textile network was as much about information that flowed backing as it was about production. India's exporters knew what sorts of cloth sold in Poland or Africa – length, fineness, uses, colors and anticipated prices.

Maratha conquest in the middle decades of the eighteenth century brought great changes in Burhanpur's networks. Fewer varieties of cloth were produced though they still travelled far...

23.5 MANUFACTURING TOWN: BIDAR

We have discussed the growth of the capital city Bidar (founded by Ahmad I in *circa* 1424 CE) in Unit 18 Section 7. Here our purpose is to discuss the emergence of Bidar as a manufacturing centre in the 16-18th centuries. The town of Bidar is known for its *bidri* work. The Bahamanids encouraged local industries and popularised them to such an extent that goods were perpetually sent to foreign countries. However, other than *bidri* the town and the district is known for its cotton and silk, and iron and steel works. Paithan, Daulatabad, Gulbarga and Khidki produced good silken cloth on low prices. Mashor, Himroo, Saris, Dhotis, Mulmul and various other kinds of cloth were manufactured, which became very popular with foreign traders and local Amirs. Bidar became a centre of pot manufacturing industries. Even today the Bidri work industry is alive and produces rare specimens of art and skill.

The Bahamani Government had regular trade relations with Persia, Arabia, Africa, Europe and the countries of the Far East. The main outlets for the Bahmanids were Goa, Dabhol, Mahim and Masulipatam which were first-class ports under their control. Nikitin describes Dabhol in very glowing terms. Ferishta mentions that the Bahamanids had many ships which were used for commercial purposes. These ships exported textiles, Bidri work, Warangal carpets and other Indian merchandise and brought gold, spices, china goods, perfumes, drugs, horses, pearls, and slaves (Sinha, 1964: 151-153).

The origin of bidriware is linked to the Bahmani dynasty of the Deccan. It is believed that the technique was introduced to the Bahamani Kingdom from Iran (in one version,

via Iraq, Ajmer and Bijapur) (Stronge, 1985: 15). This craft was introduced in Bidar during the rule of Bahmanis. It is stated that king Ahmad Shah Wali brought some skilled workers from Iran for the construction of Rangin Mahal, and some of them were experts in gold and silver work. Abdul bin Kaiser was proficient in inlaying silver and gold on zinc alloy and in making fine articles of artistic excellence. The then Sultan, taking keen interest in this handicraft, started a training centre in the Mahmud Gawan Madrasa (college) located in Bidar (Yazdani, 1992: 20-21). Enjoying royal patronage, this craft reached a high degree of excellence. Most of the craftsmen trained in this school took to this industry. Thus this craft, which flourished under the Royal patronage of the Bahamani monarchs, the nobility and other rich families, reached a high degree of excellence (*Gazetter of Bidar*, 1977: 187). There is so far no evidence whatsoever for the production of metal objects by the technique we know as Bidri before the 17th century (Stronge, 1985: 16). So far, the earliest unambiguous reference to Bidriware is in the *Chahar Gulshan*, a history of India written in Persian in 1759. There seems to be no other written reference to Bidri from then until the 1809 account of the industry at Purnea. However, there is a small body of material evidence for the industry from the 17th century, in the form of actual pieces or representations of them in painting and considerably more for the 18th century.

Bidriware: The Technique

Process: The basic materials required in Bidri industry are zinc, copper, silver and a particle type of earth. The process of production may be divided into 4 main stages viz. casting, engraving, inlaying and oxidizing.

Techniques of Ornamentation: There are five main types of inlay for ornamenting Bidriware objects. According to the process used for the inlay, the work is known as Tarkashi (if only wire is inlaid), Tehnishan (if the inlay looks flush with the surface of the object); Mahtabi or Aftabi (if the design looks black against the overlaid metal sheet); Zarnishan (if the inlaid pieces are in low relief); and Zarbuland (if the inlaid pieces are in high relief) (Mittal, 2011: 16-19).

Unique feature: A unique aspect of the Bidriware craft is the soil used to ornament the art objects. This soil, which has not received rain or sunlight for centuries, is collected by artisans from the inner areas of the Bidar fort. The soil contains ingredients that give a lustrous black colour to Bidriware. The paucity of raw materials impedes the mass production of Bidriware artifacts. The intricate nature of the Bidriware craft demands pains taking efforts from the artists. Bidri craft is metal work where objects are cast from an alloy in which zinc predominates with small amounts of lead as well as copper and tin. The traditional artifacts made are the hookahs, goblets, vases, caskets, jewellery and various other decorative accessories (*Handicrafts Bidriware of Bidar*: 1-5).

Bidriware in 17th and 18th Centuries

Bidri also begins to appear in painting in the 17th century. Jagdish Mittal refers to a picture of about 1625 in the State Museum, Hyderabad which apparently shows a huqqa inlaid with silver and brass. In the 18th century, the picture begins to come into focus, particular centres of production can be established beyond doubt. Apart from its evidence from the *Chahar Gulshan*, it is also known from an illustration to an atlas produced in Faizabad in 1770. This was commissioned by a French officer, Colonel Jean Baptiste Gentil, who served a military adviser to the Nawab of Oudh from 1763-75. During this period he employed local artists to produce a series of illustrated works concerned with the political and social history of India. The first was an atlas, now in India office library, which includes a map of the *subah* of Bidar. Drawings are included on either side of the map; these now, for the most part, representatives of the different Sufi Orders, but also include a Bidri craftsman and the ware produced at Bidar (Patel, 2009: 76).



Figure 23.9: Hookah Base; 17/18th Century; Courtesy Louvre Museum, Paris

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Hookah_base_Louvre_MAO739.jpg

Bidri exhibited in 1851 for special praise and included a page of details of decoration on huqqas which, Owen Jones thought, were all remarkable for great elegance of outline, and for such judicious treatment of the surface decoration that every ornament tended to further develop the general form. Exhibitions, museums all were tangible-business at Bidar was booming with the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition Catalogue (1886: 291).

In Hyderabad State, which included Bidar, the Bidri industry flourished under the Asaf Jahi rulers from the early 18th until the mid-20th century. An added incentive to these artisans was that apart from personal use by the local nobles, there was a prevailing custom of presenting a set of Bidriware to the bridegroom at the time of marriage. As Mukharji (1974: 183) notes, “no dowry is considered complete among the better class of Muhammadans, unless a complete set of Bidriware, from bed-legs to a spittoon, is included”. The Bidri industry was not in good shape in the early 19th century. Heyne (1817: 227) mentions “the men (Bidri workers) complained of want, in an employment which in former times had been the means of subsisting a numerous class of their own caste, now scarcely yielded food for five families that remained” but we are convinced by the exquisite quality of a hookah base in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum – dated 1818 that there were still meticulous craftsmen at this time. Instead, it seems that it was patronage that was lacking, either because of economic hardship or changing tastes.



Figure 23.10: Cup with lid, Bidriware about 1850. Courtesy: V&A Museum no. 151&A-1852
Source: <http://images.vam.ac.uk/indexplus/page/Home.html> https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/43/Bidriware_cup_and_lid%2C_ca_1850_V%26A_Museum.jpg;
Author: VAwetteam at English Wikipedia.

A great incentive to Indian craftsmen was the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in London, in 1851, and the Paris Universal Exposition of 1855. The admiration expressed by the visitors for the excellence shown by Indian craftsmen in the elegant shape of the objects, refinement in execution, as well as vitality, freshness and richness of design, was encouraging to the Bidri artisans as well. Fascinated by the works displayed in the exhibition, Sir Owen Jones singled Bidri in his book *Grammar of Ornament*, published in 1856. A few years later, the Nizam had some fine specimens made for presentation to the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), when he visited India in 1875-76. These objects were first displayed in the Indian Section of the South Kensington Museum, London, lent to the Paris Universal Exposition of 1878 and later exhibited in the United States of America (Wilkinson, 1999: 5). To revive this craft, in 1913 the Nizam's government started a training school for Bidri work at Bidar with these artisan's as instructors. The school was merged with a local High School in 1938 (Gowd, 1967: 4).

Thus the walled capital town of Bidar though already achieved importance under the Bahmanids and the Barid Shahis, the vitality of the town as a celebrated production centre of manufacture of *Bidriware* which leaves a distinct mark on the growth of the town of Bidar itself which attracted the artisans from nearby who provided the vibrancy to the city life. Unfortunately, being an 'elite' craft it always showed signs of anxiety in the absence of royal patronage. Sadly, there is not much demand now for these beautiful manufactures, and the industry is fast dwindling.

23.6 SUMMARY

The cities of the medieval Deccan were multifaceted. The cities like Goconda and Bijapur were prominently capital towns and emerged into prominence as fortified centres of power where stationed the Sultan, the bureaucracy, the elites, *sufis*, artisans, traders and merchants. The Deccan had a network of a number of small manufacturing towns known for its textiles (Burhanpur and Aurangabad), diamond mining (Raolconda, Kulur), and saltpetre and gunpowder (Raybag, Mirjan). All connected to and flourished through a *web of networks* across India and Indian Ocean. However, from the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth centuries onwards this *network* started showing *breaks* that had deep impact on the fate of these small towns and started showing fall in their fortunes and existence.

23.7 EXERCISES

- 1) Trace the development of medieval urban centres along the forts in the Deccan with special reference to Golconda.
- 2) Analyse the growth of fort towns of Bijapur and Golconda.
- 3) Discuss the growth of chief industrial cities in the Deccan. How did textiles, saltpetre and diamond mining facilitated the growth of these towns?
- 4) Critically examine the emergence of Bidar as a manufacturing town.
- 5) Highlight the importance of *bidriware* in the rise and growth of the town of Bidar.

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UNIT 24 URBAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY*

Structure

- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 Courtly Culture
- 24.3 Social Morphology
- 24.4 Middle Class
- 24.5 Slaves and Domestic Servants
- 24.6 Familial and Gender Relations
- 24.7 Civic Society
- 24.8 Cities and Cross-Cultural Perspective
- 24.9 Lived Cities and Literary Culture
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24.1 INTRODUCTION

Lewis Mumford's (1961: 570) comment that city is 'energy converted into culture' clearly highlights the finite 'cultural' role of the cities; the vibrancy of city life impacting the culture vis-a-vis making a 'civilisation'. The bustling life of cities must be seen against this backdrop.

However, the scope of medieval society is too vast to cover all facets of social life. Here an attempt is being made to provide you glimpses of the broad trends. Certain important themes which are presently too crucial to view a society like crime and criminality, notions of public health and hygiene, idea of pollution, diseases, and environmental concerns of the society are largely left outside the scope of the present Unit.

24.2 COURTLY CULTURE

Akhlaq

The underlining notion of the courtly culture of the Mughals was 'status' not wealth. Jahangir's noble Muhammad Baqir clearly states 'loss of wealth is of little concern' (Mukhia, 2004: 72). Their dominant attributes were high social rank, status, sword, and noble birth. The culture of 'largesse' 'generosity' was all pervasive. Akbar's noble Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan and Abul Fazl's brother Faizi, both, looked down upon wealth with 'contempt'. Babur was nicknamed Qalandar (recluse) when he distributed one Shahrukhi for every soul in Kabul from his acquired treasure from Agra. Fights for money are hardly recorded, though frequent tensions could be seen over 'status'.

Medieval period saw spurt in the emergence of *akhlaq* literature (literature on etiquettes). Mukhia (2004: 74-75) argues that, 'like all good theatre, the Mughal court had a vision

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of social order in which it was to play the role model by distancing itself from the mass of its subjects. Since the state stood at the apex of the many layers of society, the order in the court was the text for social order and meticulous observation of etiquette was the key to its preservation.’ One of the earliest text (13th century) on *akhlaq* literature, *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* of Nasir al-Din Tusi spells out etiquettes covering all walks of life from eating, sleeping, talking. Its importance can be gauged from the fact that it was read out to Akbar daily. *Akhlaq* literature has decoded etiquettes for the elites in and outside the court asserting superiority of the ‘courtly’ culture over commons. Thus elites used to carry the ‘aura’ of the court with them. Interestingly there was no distinction of etiquettes in public or private spaces. These etiquettes were based on the principal of hierarchy and privileges, which is very much clear from Abul Fazl’s comment in his *Ain*:

The wise ones have counselled that visionary princes do not appoint every lowly person to their service; of the ones thus appointed, not everyone is admitted daily into the Presence; among those upon whom this privilege has been conferred, not everyone becomes entitled to proximity in conversation;...not all are to be permitted familiarity of address;...not everyone is admitted into the august assembly;...everyone is not allowed into the assembly of secret counsel;...not all obtain place in the exclusive council of advisors (cited in Mukhia, 2004: 76).

It was expected from men to wear simple, white clothes, while decorative clothes should be women’s preserve, believed Aurangzeb. The lifestyle of the Mughals and Mughal court etiquettes and ceremonies were replicated by the nobility. High nobles often forced their servants to perform *kurnish*. Another term that gained currency to denote gentlemanliness/manners was *mirzai* – term often used for men of culture and refinement. In the early seventeenth century Mirza Kamran composed *Mirza Nama* on the manners and culture and rules of *mirzai*. According to *Mirza Nama* an educated person must have command over Arabic, Persian and Turkish and must know Shaikh Sadi’s *Gulistan* and *Bostan*, poems of Hafiz and *Shahnama* of Firdausi. *Mirza Nama* (cited in Blake, 1991: 138) comments: ‘In society he (Mirza) should try to guard against the shame of committing any mistake in conversation, for such incorrectness in speech is considered a great fault in a Mirza.’ While narrating the etiquettes of Mirza Abu Said, grandson of Itimaduddaula and brother’s son of Nur Jahan Begum, Shahnawaz Khan records his so-called *mirzai* that, ‘He was known for his beauty and princeliness, and he had a great taste both in dress and food... He had such nicety and such lofty ideas that sometimes he was still arranging his turban when news came that the darbar had broken up, and sometimes when he was not content with the arrangement of his turban he put off his riding.’ Thus *adab* (etiquettes) was key to Mughal courtly culture. However, the eighteenth century liberated these ‘inflexible’ etiquettes/rules governing the empire.

Ashraf

Ziauddin Barani, a 14th century chronicler of Muhammad bin Tughluq, in his *Fatwa-i Jahandari* clearly distinguishes *ashraf* as ‘virtuous’ and *ajlaf* as ‘ignoble’. *Ashraf* were termed by Barani as ‘sons of Muhammad’; higher in status; while *ajlaf* were ‘low born’. Thus *Ashraf* were racially superior. Here, the terms, *ashraf* and *ajlaf*, are used in an extremely loose sense, *ashraf* denoting elites (not just the Muslim elites of royal descent); while *ajlaf*, the commoners, poor echelons of urban society. In its broad sense *ashraf* was a class of nobles – gentlemen and urbane – settled as soldiers, administrators and scholars. In the seventeenth century, with the integration of Bengal with north India, Bengal, specially the provincial capital Dhaka, was exposed to new upcountry class of Muslim *ashraf* who claimed their descent from Islamic west – Mashhad, Tehran, Badakhshan, Mazandaran, Gilan, etc. It ousted old *ashraf* – the Afghans – who were pushed further east and the south. Richard Eaton

argues that the period saw ‘widening of social cleavage between *Ashraf* Muslims and those rural masses who had been gradually becoming absorbed into a distinctly local variant of Muslim society since fourteenth century.’ Commenting on the lifestyle of these *ashrafs* of Bengal Tapan Raychaudhuri (1953: 200) also underlines that they spoke ‘in a very low voice with much order, moderation, gravity, and sweetness.’

These *ashraf* had ostentatious lifestyle that imitated the royalty. It is reported that in Abul Fazl’s kitchen everyday one thousand dishes were cooked. Bernier (1916: 213) comments that they had ‘large establishments of wives, servants, camels and horses’. Within the palace enclosures of the nobles luxury reigned. They maintained huge gardens and tanks; music, drinks and dance constituted the very core of palace-parties (for details also see the following section). Hindu nobles were equally not lagging behind in aping Muslim dress style and etiquettes of the court.

24.3 SOCIAL MORPHOLOGY

An interesting feature of Mughal cities was absence of physical segregation of the social classes. The spaces of the rich and poor were not divided into separate enclaves, a type of Black town-white town isolation that one finds later in the colonial period. Similarly, there existed no physical divide on the basis of caste or religion; there was also no segregation of residential spaces from commercial spaces. Bernier (1916: 246) comments:

Amidst these streets are dispersed the habitations of *Mansebdars*, or petty *Omrahs*, officers of justice, rich merchants, and others; many of which have a tolerable appearance... Intermixed with these different houses is an immense number of small ones... in which lodge the common troopers, and all that vast multitude of servants and camp followers who follow the court and the army.

The description of Shahjahanabad in *Muraqqa-i Delhi*, almost hundred years later, during Muhammad Shah’s period, also clearly suggests the presence of intermingled communities:

From the south of Hauz-i Qazi till Turkaman Gate, along with streets on both sides are:

On one side, the shop of *halwai* (sweet seller), Kucha Bazar Imli, Mohalla and Kucha of Pati Ram, Bangla of Hafiz Fida, Kucha Murghian (birds and fowl), residence of ryots (*makan-i riaya*), houses of Kashmiri Pandits, *haveli* of Dudhadhari, house of Lala Gulab Rai Pandit, the Tahsildar of Palam proper, Kucha of Mai Das, Than of Panj Piran, Kucha of Shidi Qasim, which leads to Kucha of Pati Ram. In the Kucha of Shidi Qasim there is the residence of Govardhan Kashmiri and of Mir Khan Tunda, who is unsurpassable in singing and dancing, the house of Mirza Fathullah Beg Chela, *haveli* of Maulavi Fath Ali Sahib *jagirdar*, houses of other ryots (*riaya*), the well of Naurang Rai, *havelis* of Baniyas (*baqqalan*). And in the Kucha going towards the city wall, there is the property (*riyasat*) of *khatiks* who work with leather (*chirm sazan*), the small garden of Tansukh Rai Kaghazi, the *hauz* (tank) of Nawab Muzaffar Khan and the residences of ryots (*riaya*).

From the Than Panj Piran, may be found *havelis* of Lala Basanti Ram Sadasukh Pandit, and Bazar Sita Ram, the Katra of Jani Khan and the *riyasat* (properties) of the ryots... (cited from Hasan, 2005: 89).

However, some localities (*mohalla*) exclusively belonged to a single artisanal group/ caste like *mohalla* Churigarani, *mohalla* Dhobiwala, *mohalla* Kashtibanan (boatmen) in Shahjahanabad. Banarasidas’ account also suggests, at family level, people moved in their own circles – among their caste fellows and occupational friends.

Moreover, their houses do indicate the vast difference in their living standards. The houses of the commoners appears to be largely of mud, thatched roof and bamboos. Pelsaert (2009: 60-61) comments on the presence of hierarchy among different classes as well as the pathetic life the commoners were living:

Of the rich in their great superfluity and absolute power, and the utter subjection and poverty of the common people – poverty so great and miserable that the life of the people can be depicted or accurately described only as the home of stark want and the dwelling-place of bitter woe...

Their houses are built of mud with thatched roofs. Furniture there is little or none, except some earthenware pots to hold water and for cooking, and two beds... Their bedclothes are scanty, merely a sheet, or perhaps two, serving both as under and over-sheet; this is sufficient in the hot weather, but the bitter cold nights are miserable indeed, and they try to keep warm over little cow-dung fires which lit outside the doors, because the houses have no chimneys; the smoke from these fires all over the city is so great that the eyes run, and the throat seems to be choked.

Thevenot also comments that large part of the cityscape was occupied by the nobles (their *havelis* and gardens); while ordinary houses were small. Tavernier's (1977: 100) observation on Patna is no different: 'The houses are not better than those in the majority of other towns of India, and they are nearly all roofed with thatch or bamboo.' Equally congruent is Bernier's (1916: 246) remark who mentions that only a few of the houses of petty *Omrahs* and *mansabdars* were of 'brick or stone, and several are made only of clay and straw, yet they are airy and pleasant, most of them having courts and gardens, being commodious inside and containing good furniture. The thatched roof is supported by a layer of long, handsome, and strong canes, and the clay walls are covered with a fine white lime. Intermixed... [with these houses there were several] small ones, built of mud and thatched with straw, in which lodge the common troopers, and all that vast multitude of servants and camp-followers who follow the court and the army.' Bernier comments, 'It is because of these wretched mud and thatch houses that I always represent to myself *Dehli* as a *collection of many villages*.' He attributes these houses to be the main reason of the vulnerability of Delhi to frequent fires, particularly in summers. In 1662 alone the city went into flames thrice gutting almost sixty thousand such houses. The big *Omrahs*, however, used to keep *khas-khas* lining to keep their houses cool. Commenting on their buildings Bernier (1916: 249) remarks, 'the capital of *Hindustan* is not destitute of handsome buildings.' Yet, it was only Banaras that attracted the praise of European travellers who record well built houses of brick and cut-stones.

However, a large number of labour force in the cities was mobile. Babur was struck by the rapidity with which Indian cities and towns were constructed and depopulated. Surat had huge floating population. The labour force in Surat used to swell at the time of the departure of ships to Red Sea and Persia (January to March) on account of increased demand for loading and unloading of goods, informs Thevenot and Careri.

Cities were also places of frauds. Banarasidas reports that a *sarraf* dealt them counterfeit money. The cities were also vulnerable to burglary and thefts, even the most secured city like Shahjahanabad was not free from such thefts. Anand Ram Mukhlis records that Khanan, a beef-butcher of Shahjahanabad was involved in a number of theft and burglary cases in the city during Muhammad Shah's period. Similarly, city was vulnerable to 'pastoral brigands' who surrounded the city suburbs. Nadir Shah and later Ahmad Shah Abdali's sack of the city made the city even more vulnerable (Chenoy, 2015: 162-164).

24.4 MIDDLE CLASS

The idea of urban 'middle class' emerged in Europe in the fourteenth century as a counter to feudal classes. The middle class was defined as the one existing between the 'aristocracy and the serfs'. The new emerging class was comprised of not only the rising trading and merchant community but also classes of new 'professionals' – lawyers, physicians, and so on. When Bernier (1916: 252) visited India he made his famous remark that, 'In *Dehli* there is no *middle state*. A man must either be of the highest rank or live miserably.' Moreland (1962: 73-78) comments that professional classes of clerks and accountants were in huge numbers during Akbar's reign but they owed their existence to imperial service and had no independent status away from the state, thus were largely 'parasitic'. Moreland (1962: 77-78) though agreeing that some professions like medicine, literature, art and music did exist, found that 'the most striking fact is the narrowness of the market for their products and services. The educated middle class was very small, and the physician or artist or literary man could hope to obtain an adequate income only by attaching himself to the Imperial Court or to one of the provincial Governors who organised their surroundings on its model.'

However, in the medieval period there existed innumerable professional and service classes (merchants, traders, physicians, architects, teachers, poets, musicians, scholars, etc.) which could be categorised as middle class. There was presence of independent classes of merchants, traders and commercial classes (*sarrafs* and *mahajans*) that were flourishing communities and enjoyed high status in the society. Medical profession was the most flourishing profession. Iqtidar Alam Khan (1976: 40) counters Moreland that by mid-seventeenth century 'total number of physicians living entirely on feudal patronage was negligible'. He argues that they were much in demand and were freely available in the town markets (*tabinan-i kucha-o-bazaar*). *Tazkira-i Pir Hassu Teli* mentions *hakim* as the private practitioner at Lahore during Shahjahan's reign. Manucci himself worked as an independent and successful practitioner at Lahore once he had lost his service under Dara Shukoh and earned handsomely. It was not the big cities alone but we get reference of professional medical practitioners available in the cities of Sirhind, Jaunpur, Khairabad, Banaras, Kalanaur and Hissar where their services could be obtained on payment. Banarasidas informs in his *Ardhakathanak* that during his childhood he was treated for a year by a physician of Jaunpur; when his father fell ill in 1616 he was treated by a physician of Banaras. Balkrishan Brahman informs that local physician in Hissar Manka Tabib had a flourishing practice (Khan, 1976: 37-39). However, the perquisites available in the employment of nobles and *mansabdars* were quite attractive. Hospitals (*shifakhana*s) run by the state and nobles in the towns also employed a large number of medical practitioners, one such was established by Jahangir for the travellers.

Professional Mobility

Max Weber argues that in the pre-colonial India there existed no inter-craft mobility. If one applies his argument in the context of urban middle class there appears frequent professional movement among these urban classes in search of better employment and opportunities. The famous *sufi* saint Muhammad Ghaus Shattari's father was a trader involved in sale and purchase of paper at Mandu. Banarasidas' grandfather Muldas was a *modi* who had served under one of the nobles of Humayun. Banarasidas' father served as *fotedar* under Srimal Rai Dhanna who was *diwan* of Sulaiman Kararani. Later he established his own business at Agra. Similarly, among famous poets of Akbar's reign Ghubari was son of a grain merchant (*baqqal*); Mahim's father was arrow-maker (*tirgar*); Qasim Hindi was son of elephant-keeper (*filban*); while Qazi Multani was

himself a trader. The founders of the famous business houses – Rustamji and Abdul Ghafur of Surat were from priestly class. From eighteenth century onwards we find frequent instances of Mahajans, Khatris and Banias joining the local administration as record keepers and accountants (Khan, 1976: 41-42). The *insha* writers, accountants and other administrative professionals also showed tremendous movement in terms of their choice of jobs undertaken and being left at will. *Tazkira-i Pir Hassu Teli's* compiler Surat Singh's brother at first took the job of *waqai nigar* of Lahore; then he joined as official in Gujarat; after his return he remains unemployed and then joined as *amil* of *pargana* Jahangirpur; thence he joined *khalisa* establishment at Batala; then moved to Bhatinda as *diwan*; then shifted to Agra as *wakil* of Rai Behari Mal; then he again moved to Lahore and then to Kabul as *khan-i saman*; once again he left the job within a month for not liking the work (Khan, 1976: 44).

Geographical Mobility

These professional classes not only enjoyed professional mobility at will but also their movement from one place to another in search of better opportunities was exceptional. The merchant communities moved frequently from one city to another and slow means of communication did not appear to be a stigma in the smooth and frequent movements. Banarasidas' *Ardhakathanak* suggests that he himself moved from Jaunpur to Agra then to Khairabad, then again from Khairabad to Banaras, Jaunpur and Patna. Then from Patna he again went to Agra, in between travelling to Khairabad again. Astonishingly he shuttled frequently between five *subas* – Delhi, Agra, Awadh, Allahabad and Bihar – but did not encounter any highway robbery. Similarly, the famous Jagat Seths of Murshidabad hailed from Nagaur (Rajasthan), then their ancestor Hirananda Shah moved to Patna and thence to Murshidabad (Khan, 1976: 42). One finds that such movement was not just confined to individuals, instead movement of group of professional classes enmasse was also common. Banarasidas records specific community of Oswals living in a locality at Fatehpur. There is still a separate Katra attributed to Kashmiris near Delhi Gate of the fort of Shahjahanabad named Kashmiri Katra. There was also considerable population of Khatris at Surat suggestive of their migration from Punjab.

Iqtidar Alam Khan (1976: 43-44) attributes the major reasons of this professional and geographical mobility to uniform pattern of administration as well as excessive demand of experts for *insha* writers and accountants.

24.5 SLAVES AND DOMESTIC SERVANTS

By Mughal period elite military slaves, an important strength of the Sultanate ruling class, had completely disappeared and 'slave labour formed a small component of the labour force, being restricted largely to domestic service... and concubinage' (Moosvi, 2011: 347). Akbar declared slave trade illegal and banned forcible enslavement of war captives. In 1582 he liberated thousands of them. A section of released slaves formed his personal armed guards and attendants under the category *chelas*. *Chelas* as a distinct category of troopers appears to have continued even during Aurangzeb's reign. Manucci calls them 'branded' men (those troopers who used to bring their horses for branding). It appears that in the sixteenth century slave trade along the coastal areas was rampant. We hear of imports of Abyssinian and Arakane slaves reaching Indian ports. Goa appeared to be an attractive slave market in the sixteenth century. Portuguese employed African slaves as labour on their ships, fighting force as well as domestic servants. They even noticed both male and female slaves in Portuguese Daman. He records, they 'work and procreate only for their master'. They were employed as domestic servants, palanquin bearers and/or carried their umbrellas. These slaves were

generally from Mombasa, Mozambique and Sofala. Thevenot comments that in Goa each Portuguese possessed 30 to 40 slaves (Ray, 1998: 219-220). Hugli, Chittagong, Tamluk emerged as prominent slave markets in the sixteenth century, particularly Arakanese slave entered Bengal and sold in the Indian markets. Companies indulged into slave trade but, it appears, that the impact of Akbar's ban had deep impact which is evident in Dutch Factor Van den Broecke's complaint in 1623 that slaves were expensive at Surat for Muslims did not approve it. However, the Mughal state permitted open sale of slaves during famines. Some change in the state policy appears to have occurred when Aurangzeb lifted ban on tax on slave trading.

However, these domestic slaves and concubines were employed profusely in the aristocratic household and even in the houses of petty officials. European travellers, Pelsaert and Bernier have recorded the presence of innumerable domestic servants. Fryer (1672-81; cited in Moosvi, 2011: 346) comments, 'hoeever badly off a [cavalry] soldier is, he must have three or four servants.' Jafer Zattalli (1710) briefs presence of a man-slave and a slave girl as an essential component of a household.

Another category of slaves were eunuchs. They were largely employed as guards in the female establishments, the *haram*. They were distinct from *chelas* and were addressed as *khwaja* and *khwajasara*. Khwaja Hilal was so powerful and prominent among eunuch officers of Jahangir that he even built a fine mansion in Agra and founded town of Runkata/Rungata. Eunuchs continued to be supplied from the *sarkars* of Sylhet and Ghoraghat in Bengal in spite of Jahangir's claim of stern actions taken against them.

Begar was considered unethical. Akbar (1597) and Shahjahan (1641) proclaimed this from time to time. It is interesting, when Akbar built his fort in 1598 at Nagar in Srinagar, he inscribed that in its construction, 'no unpaid labour was used there and 11,000,000 *dams* (copper coins) were spent from the imperial treasury for the payment of labour' (Moosvi, 2011: 347).

24.6 FAMILIAL AND GENDER RELATIONS

In the medieval period mortality rate appears to be exceptionally high. Banarasidas' two brothers died in infancy so did eight children of his. Muhammad Ghaus Shattari also informs that he lost his brother in infancy. 'Child labour' appears to be common. The painting depicting the construction of Sikri portrays three young boys carrying bricks and mortars. Thevenot and Tavernier record that boys were being employed in the soldering works at Agra, and in diamond mining – to fetch water and carry mud. They were also employed in diamond polishing.

The *akhlaq* literature of the medieval period centres around 'masculinity'. It keeps women away from the ideals/norms of *akhlaq*. It articulates what an ideal nobles' son should be, women do not figure in these ideals. In the medieval period familial relations were governed more by the contemporary situations and cannot be judged by modern yardsticks. Marriage age was also quite low. In Bengal it was as low as eight or nine. Banarasidas got married when he was just eleven, though in the 33 R. Y. Akbar fixed the minimum marriage age of women at 14 and that of a boy at 16, it appears that the rule was not strictly followed. Similarly, Akbar encouraged widow remarriage. Among the Hindus monogamy appears to be a norm. However, on account of high mortality rate marrying a number of times after wife's death does not appear stigma either. After Banarasidas' wife's death he married her sister and after her death again married a girl of the same locality. Among the Muslims as per law they could keep as many as four wives. However, the *nikahnamas* (marriage agreements) from Surat throw interesting light on men/women familial relations. In one of the *nikahnamas* the wife puts condition

as part of *mihr* according to which groom was denied the right of second marriage and was asked not to resort to wife bashing. It was also sought that the groom will not leave his wife for long (long absences were a common feature among the merchant communities) and will not fail to provide maintenance. In another instance he was asked not to keep a slave girl as his concubine, otherwise she would have the right to sell her off or manumit her. Any violation was subject to annulment of marriage (Moosvi, 1992: 401-402).

However, a fifteenth century text *Jnana Panchami Katha* comments that a daughter caused grief as soon as she was born clearly reflects on the condition of women during the medieval period. In general, women were kept under 'greater sequestration' – *purdah*, screening women from public gaze. Bernier observed that royal women were 'almost inaccessible to the sight of man'. This 'seclusion' became more evident from Akbar's period onwards. However, elite women's visibility in the 'masculine' 'patriarchic' state was very much evident. Mughal royal women were seen advising and counselling the emperor, issuing *hukms* (orders), taking active part in the administration. Babur's grandmother Ehsan Daulat Begum used to give 'prudent' advice to Babur. Nurjahan and Mumtaz Mahal were among powerful consorts of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Nurjahan is reported to have formed her own *junta* (clique) comprising of her relations and Irani/Rajput nobles. During Mahabat Khan's rebellion she excelled in her talents and got Jahangir released. Similarly, in the absence of Raja Man Singh, Amber state was managed by Rani Gaur. Abul Fazl was full of praise for the valour Rani Durgavati had shown against Akbar's forces. The royal seal was always kept by the chief queen. Among other powerful women were Janahara and Zinutunnisa Begums, daughters of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. Thus royal women were active participants in the State politics. The medieval women from the merchant families did look after the business of their husbands. When a Surat merchant died during his voyage to Mecca, his widow sought permission from the *qazi* to look after her husband's business. However, women enjoyed power so long as they were not a threat to the male 'masculinity'. Manucci records that Mughal *haram* was kept under strict surveillance of "toothless women" "matrons" and "eunuchs". Even spies were kept to have a watch over the *zenana* women's activities.

Equally empowered was the women labour force, which was a common sight in medieval India. In the urban areas the biggest employer was the construction industry. In the Mughal paintings they are shown crushing stones, pounding bricks, sieving lime and carrying mortar at construction sites. It also suggests that they were largely employed in the unskilled jobs. They were shown fully clad but without veils, their head covered with a *chadar/odhni*. This is clearly suggestive that their employment potential empowered them. We do not find them using veil which was largely thrust upon medieval women of higher classes. Both, the Hindu and the Muslim women were employed in the construction as is evident from their dress. Hindu women are shown wearing *angarkha* and *choli*; while Muslim women are shown wearing *peshwaz* (long kurta). Interestingly, their counterpart males are shown wearing only *langota*. It clearly suggests that the wages of unskilled workers were too meagre. However, skilled workers – stonecutters, masons, etc. were shown fully clad with clothes in the same painting suggestive of their higher wage structure and higher place in the social hierarchy. Abul Fazl records a meagre 2 *dams* as the lowest daily wages in the construction industry. Tavernier mentions women peddlers in Burhanpur selling rice, butter, vegetables, etc. Another profession where women appear prominently was the inn-keeping. A Persian merchant Rafiuddin Shirazi, visiting India in the sixteenth century informs that: 'On roads used by people at every *farsakh* (two and half miles) or half *farsakh*, notables of this country have founded or left behind in trust *sarais* (inns), where persons of the caste of *bhatayars* (male) reside so that whenever the travelers arrive, they can on payment

stay there and give provisions for food to the *bhatiyari* (female) who then cooks the food according to their tastes and takes her wage' (cited in Moosvi, 1993: 20). European travellers – Withington (1612-13), Peter Mundy (c. 1630) – in general have observed the strong presence of *bhatiyari* (women inn-keepers). Midwifery was another profession probably exclusive to women.

Women were employed as domestic servants in large numbers. Pelsaert informs that nobles' wives had a minimum of ten servants each. As far as wages of these female servants was concerned, women employed in the Mughal *harem* were paid monthly stipend at two categories – one was paid Rs. 20-51 and women worker at little lower station were paid Rs. 2-40 (Moosvi, 1993: 28).

The concubinage was another feature of the world of Mughal family and the aristocracy, and a form of bondage without the institution of marriage was kept solely for pleasure. Any free or slave girl, or among the war captives could be taken as concubine, as a right of ownership over her body. Once a slave girl achieved a concubine status her status among slave girls changed and now she was entitled to certain privileges. If she bore a child then, she was still not free but she now could not be sold or be given as gift. Their position was different from the legally wedded wives whose status was the highest. Babur uses the term *khwatinlar* for wives. Some women entered *harem* as legal wives but those who were not from the aristocratic family were not given higher status and were known as *Agha*; while the concubines were addressed as *Aghachas*. At times they could assume status of a legally wedded wife depending on the sole will of their master/husband. These concubines were also known as *ghunachachi* (mistress)/*sarari* (concubines) or simply *bibi*. Though concubines ranked lower than wives, their children enjoyed equal status and there appears no differentiation or sly in accepting them. Akbar's younger sons, Murad and Danial were from his concubines. Aurangzeb's favourite son Kam Bakhsh was from Udaipuri Begum who was earlier Dara's concubine. Abul Fazl records that under Akbar all free and servile wives were known as *paristaran*. The higher ones used to get an allowance of Rs. 51-20 and lower one between Rs. 40-10, records Abul Fazl. Jahangir termed these concubines as *Khawas-i Khidmatgaran* (Bano, 1999: 353-357). Mughal nobles copied the lifestyle of the rulers and maintained a number of concubines, records Pelsaert (2009: 64): 'As a rule they have three or four wives, the daughters of worthy men, but the senior wife commands most respect... Each wife has separate apartments for herself and her slaves, of whom there may be 10, or 20, or 100 according to her fortune. Each has a regular monthly allowance for her *gastos* [expenditure].'

24.7 CIVIC SOCIETY

Max Weber argues that in the non-western cities there was complete absence of civic society (municipal self-government – administrative councils, counsellors, mayor, etc.) nor was there presence of any class consciousness among social groups. There existed no corporate body of 'citizens'. Beyond the state power merchants and artisans of the city possessed no independent legal and judicial entity. However, Holton (1986: 123-128) argues that there was hardly much difference in the European and non-European societies. He underlines that, it is questionable 'how far Western cities differed from their non-Western counterparts where similar clan and tribal ties undoubtedly persisted... family clans within the occidental [European] city coexisted with groups like guilds and confraternities, this more fluid pluralistic picture of the varied bases to urban life may not differ all that much from the non-Western picture' (Holton, 1986: 124).

However, our data does suggest that there was very much presence of civic society in the medieval period. The locality in Ahmadabad were known as *pol* protected by *pratoli* (gate); while under the Islamic influence it came to be known as a *mohalla* protected by enclosed gates. The *kotwal* of the city was no doubt a state official but Abul Fazl clearly mentions the presence of *mir-i mohalla/sar-i giroh*:

Of every guild of artificers, he should name one as guildmaster (*sar-i giroh*) and another as broker (*dalal*) by whose intelligence, the business of purchase and sale should be conducted (*Ain*, 1978: II, 44).

The *Kotwal* in every city, town and village (*shahr, qasba wa deh*) should... write down... details of the inhabitants of the houses in every locality (*mohalla*)... Streets should be fixed and a street superintendent (*mir-i mohalla*) should be appointed so that good and bad of the street may happen under his right direction (*Mirat*, 1928: I, 145).

Misra (n.d.: 85) argues that, 'It reflected an anxiety regarding the temper of the town, the necessity to keep the official eyes and ears close to the ground, in touch with the local organizations.' These localities (*pols, mohalla*) were guarded by massive gates keeping only well guarded small exits open and a close watch was kept on all strangers entering. In each *pol/mohalla* in Gujarat had a body of merchants and crafts known as *mahajan*. The head of these *mahajans* was known as Sheth and the head of all these *Sheths* was known as *Nagarsheth*. These Sheth existed even for the humblest crafts like brick layers, basket makers, etc. The position of both was hereditary. The *Nagarsheth* of Ahmadabad was very powerful. He was the head of the entire establishment and all disputes/matters related to particular craft/commercial establishments were solved by him. However, he was not supposed to interfere in the internal matters of a *mahajan*. In the eighteenth century following the political chaos *Nagarsheth's* power increased greatly. He looked after the safety from the external threats as well. When Ahmadabad was attacked by the Marathas the *Nagarsheth* rescued the town by giving ransom to the Marathas. In return 'the *mahajans* jointly agreed to bequeath him a fraction of the town duties in perpetuity.' This town level body does not appear to be exclusive of Hindu community. In 1714, Kapurchand Bhansali was the *Nagarsheth* while Mulla Abdul Aziz was the *Sheth* of the Bohras. Sheth were liable for the conduct of their community. Thus, medieval cities did have 'self-governing institutions' of their own (Misra, n.d.: 85-90). Though we do not know much about the functioning of *Nagarsheth* in Shahjahanabad and other cities, there existed *haveli* of *Nagarsheth* in *bazaar Dariba Kalan* in Shahjahanabad which suggests that it was a pan-Indian phenomenon.

24.8 CITIES AND CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Medieval cities were vibrant centres of cosmopolitan cultures. *Sufi khanqahs*, situated at the outskirts of the cities, were important centres of cultural activities. The whole *khanqah* establishment of the *sufis* at Mehrauli was sacred for both the Hindus and the Muslims alike, so were the *dargah* of Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi, Shaikh Mooinuddin Chishti's *dargah* at Ajmer and *dargah* of Gesudaraz at Gulbarga. Both Hindus and Muslims celebrated Hindu festival of Dipawali. Similarly, *Muraqqa-i Delhi* informs that Majnun Nanak Shahi was venerated by Hindus and Muslims alike and his followers used to celebrate Muharram in their own unique way. In Delhi, Basant Panchami celebrations began with the footprint of Prophet and drew participation of members of both the communities. Similarly, *Muraqqa* informs when Javed Khan used to recite elegies of Imam Husain (*marsia khwan*) people of all communities assembled to listen to him. Similarly, people of all communities used to assemble at *tazia khana* of Imam

Husain (Hasan, 2005: 90). The city temple of Bhairoji in Ajmer was looked after by a Muslim priest (Moini, 2015: 117). Carnivals around the *khanqahs* (*urs*), *sama mehfil*s were the common site in the urban suburbs of the *khanqahs*. On the birthday celebrations of Prophet Muhammad at Qadam Sharif and Basant festival at Arab ki Sarai both the Hindus and the Muslims used to take part with equal enthusiasm, lamps were illuminated and all joined in the fireworks. Dargah Quli Khan records that at the tomb of Nasiruddin Chirag both Hindus and Muslims assembled in large numbers and used to take a dip in the nearby tank, especially during the month of Dipawali.

The festivals at times appears to be part of a common heritage. Mughal paintings suggest that holi, rakhi, dussehra, dipawali all were celebrated with equal zeal along with eids in the imperial court. Even on Shivratri both Akbar and Jahangir used to throw big banquets and invited *yogis* in large numbers on the occasion. The city *bazaars* were full of 'montebans and jugglers' and 'astrologers', records Bernier (1916: 243).

Education also appears to be beyond the restricted religious boundaries. There seems no restriction on *only* Muslims joining the *maktab* for learning. Balkrishan Brahman, famous *munshi* of Shahjahan's reign was sent to the *maktab* of Akhund Abdul Hamid in Hissar, thence was sent to *daftar khana* (office of an accountant) to learn arithmetic and accountancy, which he did not like and later joined Shaikh Jalal Hisari to master Persian prose (*insha*), poetry, mysticism and ethics under his aegis. Even a Hindu Brahman had no hitch in copying the texts sitting inside the mosque. In one of the letters of Shaikh Jalal Hisari, Shaikh asked his friend to grant permission for copying a *qasida* (poem) from *Bahr-i Abrar* which he requested Balkrishan Brahman, a Hindu, to copy inside the mosque on account of his friend's hesitation to grant permission to carry the book outside the premises of the mosque.

24.9 LIVED CITIES AND LITERARY CULTURE

Urban centres were where poets, literary personalities, scholars assembled to demonstrate their talents so also in search of opportunities and patronage. *Ahl-i qalam* (men of pen) were key to urban social life. *Muraqqa* informs that in Shahjahanabad *qahwa khanas* were places where literary personalities used to assemble daily and recite their compositions. Even private *mehfil*s of nobles were equally filled with dancers and musicians. Khafi Khan looks at it as sign of deterioration. He laments the nobles' sons abandoning traditional professions and acquiring talents in music. Dargah Quli Khan in his *Muraqqa* informs that in Delhi, 'music was a popular and all pervasive form of entertainment' (Chenoy, 2015: 180). Besides, *marsiya khana*s were popular where elegies in praise of Hazrat Imam Husain were recited by *marsiya khwans*. Javed Khan, son of Muhammad Shah's *amir* was skilled in *marsiya* recitations. During Muharram people used to flock to *ashura khanas* (place where Hazrat Imam Husain's death is commemorated) to listen to him. Naimat Khan *alias* Sada Rang, was exceptional in playing *been*. He also records a number of great musicians of the first half of the eighteenth century in Delhi "Hasan Khan Rebabi, Baqir Tamburchi, Ghulam Muhammad Sarangi-Nawaz, Ghasi Ram Pakhawaji, etc.; while Mian Hinga performed dances even outside the walls of the fort (Chenoy, 2015: 181-182). In the prime cities like Shahjahanabad *mushairas* (literary evening) in the mansions of nobles was a common sight. Khan Dauran's *mushairas* used to gather large number of poets. Shahjahan's noble Shah Nawaz Safavi is reported to have had musicians and singers in such large numbers that their count surpassed any other nobles' household (Blake, 1991: 139). The music parties were most common form of relaxation. Shahjahan's favourite singers and musicians (*kalavant*) were Kavindra, Chitra Khan, Lal Khan and Srimen. Muhammad Shah, who was also fond of music, had in his court Boli Khan (*kalavant*) and Jattah (*qawwal*)

who were held in high esteem. Rahim Khan, Daulat Khan, Kiyan Khan, and Haddu brothers were held in such high esteem for their *khyal* singing that on every 25th day of the month singers, commoners and nobles assembled to listen to their singing in Shahjahanabad, records Dargah Quli Khan (cited from Blake, 1991: 158). The eighteenth century Shahjahanabad streets were full of life with singers and dancers at every nook and corner of the city. *Muraqqa* informs that when Miyan Mir Haiga used to dance in the square of Urdu Bazaar in front of the fortress gate, daily, huge crowd of nobles and commoners alike gathered to watch his great feat (cited in Blake: 1991: 159).

Madrasa (secondary school) and *maktabs* (grammar school) were always attached to the mosques where primary education used to take place. Banarasidas and Muhammad Ghaus Shattari's educational careers throw salient light on the pattern of education prevailed in the cities. Banarasidas, a Jain Bania was sent to a school (*chatsal*) to learn reading and writing from a Brahman teacher. He then learnt traditional sciences from Pandit Devdatta and religious knowledge from Jain scholars. In contrast, Balkrishan Brahman was sent for his early education to a *maktab* (see *supra*). The syllabus of these *maktabs* was well defined and often revised. Sikandar Lodi revised and expanded the syllabus, which under the aegis of Akbar was again revised by Fathullah Shirazi; later in the eighteenth century Mulla Nizam al-Din of Farangi Mahal, Lucknow revised the syllabus known as *dars-i nizamia*. Pupils were imparted training in Arabic, Persian, Islamic law (*fiqh*, *tafsir* and *hadis*), *kalam* (scholastic philosophy) and *mantiq* (logic). Chandra Bhan Brahman, Sujana Rai Bhandari, Anand Ram Mukhlis were expert Persian *insha* writers and *munshis*.

Elite women appear to have received education on an equal footing at primary level. Several of royal women were exceptional composers of verses. Gulbadan Begum, aunt of Akbar, was well versed in Persian and Turkish. She composed a number of verses as well as writing *Humayun Nama* on Akbar's request. Aurangzeb's daughter Zeb al-Nisa was a great poetess and used to compose verses under the pseudonym *makhfi* (concealed). She maintained a huge library and established *Bait-ul Ulum* (academy) for training artists.

Mughal emperors, particularly, Babur and Jahangir were great writers. Akbar himself possessed a huge library containing approximately 26,000 books. Akbar's noble Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan was a great patron of poets, writers, scholars, calligraphists and painters. He himself was a great writer of *insha*, and is reported to have drafted letter for Abdullah Khan Uzbek. Himself a great scholar of Hindi poetry, he provided patronage to a number of Hindi poets. He also had a huge personal library where a staff of 95 calligraphers, binders, painters, etc. were employed. Similarly, Khan Dauran also had a number of calligraphers in his library. Sadullah Khan is reported to have composed the calligraphy of the Red fort; Aurangzeb's noble Aqil Khan was a great *masnavi* writer. The early eighteenth century saw emergence of a number of Urdu poets in Delhi—Mirza Abdul Bedil (d. 1720), Zafar Zattali (d. 1713), Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Jahan (1702-1781).

In Bengal under the influence of Vaishnava *bhakti* a number of poet-saints emerged. During the seventeenth century a lot of women under the influence of Vaishnava *bhakti* cultivated interests in language and literature. Jhannava Devi was well-versed in *Bhakti Shastra*, similarly Satyabhama Devi, daughter-in-law of Srinivas Acharya used to enter into philosophical discourses. Nityananda's daughter-in-law composed *Ananaga Kadambabali*.

24.10 SUMMARY

The cities were networks for social interactions and it was a place booming with economic opportunities. The medieval urban culture was dominated by courtly culture. There existed social hierarchies among *ashraf* and *ajlaf*, nonetheless, there was more 'inter-connectedness' than 'segregation' among various social groups. The social cohesion and cross-cultural mingling was 'key' to the medieval urban social ethos.

24.11 EXERCISES

- 1) In what ways did the *akhalaq* influence the urban cultural ethos in the medieval period?
- 2) The medieval urban social morphology presents a contrast of coexistence of elites and commoners. Comment.
- 3) Comment on Bernier's analysis that there was no 'middle state' in Mughal India.
- 4) Elaborate on the world of slave household and domestic servants in Mughal India.
- 5) How did the familial relations govern in the medieval period? Discuss in the light of the position of women in Mughal India.
- 6) Discuss Max Weber's idea of the absence of 'civic society' in the 'Orient' in the light of medieval urban society.
- 7) Medieval society truly represented the mingling of cross-cultural ethos. Comment.

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UNIT 25 PRIMATE CITIES: AGRA-FATHPUR SIKRI-SHAHJAHANABAD*

Structure

- 25.1 Introduction
- 25.2 Agra
- 25.3 Fathpur/Fatehpur Sikri
- 25.4 Shahjahanabad
- 25.5 Pattern of the Cityscape
- 25.6 Mobility of the Mughal Capital Cities
- 25.7 Symbolism in Mughal Primate Cities
- 25.8 Summary
- 25.9 Exercises
- 25.10 References

25.1 INTRODUCTION

The idea to discuss Agra, Fathpur Sikri and Shahjahanabad, the primate capital cities of the Mughal empire, is to present before you what purpose did these cities serve? How did they look like? What was their morphology? Why did Mughals shift their capital cities at all? What happened when they ceased to be the capitals?

Rapaport has articulated two types of capitals – dispersed and compact. Dispersed capitals were those ‘where the political/ideological center(s) is isolated from other settings of social and economic life’ while in compact capitals ‘political, residential, and economic activities are nucleated’ (Rapaport cited in Sinopoli, 1994: 293). Mughal primate cities can be representative of the dispersed capitals. ‘The Mughals constructed multiple capitals, used sequentially and simultaneously, and also conducted much of the business of empire in mobile imperial camps’ (Sinopoli, 1994: 294). Agra, Fathpur Sikri, Delhi, Lahore all at one point or the other enjoyed the status of the capital cities. Both Agra and Fathpur shared almost the adjacent spaces, situated within the distance of twelve miles. Agra emerged into prominence in the early 16th century when Sikandar Lodi decided to make it his capital and continued to enjoy this status (interregnum of 16 years when Fathpur overpowers Agra) till the mid-17th century; while Delhi occupied its primacy from very early on assimilating within herself a number of capital cities (for details see Unit 21, Block 4 (2) of this Course) before finally occupying almost a permanent place as a capital town in 1648, when Shahjahan shifted his capital to Shahjahanabad (except an interregnum of almost fifty years when Calcutta was the colonial capital) till date.

25.2 AGRA

Among the Mughal primate cities Agra occupied distinct place for being the *exclusive* capital city of the Mughals. In 1506 Sultan Sikandar Shah Lodi (r. 1489-1517) decided

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to shift his capital from Delhi to Agra, perhaps to keep watch over the developments in Rajputana and the surrounding areas of Mewat and constructed a fort there. Presently the only monument of Sikandar that survived is Baradwari near Sikandara which is said to be a mint of Sikandar. It remained the capital of the Mughal ruling house for about more than a century with the exception of an interregnum of a decade and half later when Akbar decided to move to Fathpur Sikri (1571-1586). After which Shahjahan once again decided to shift to Delhi (Shahjahanabad) in 1648. Trivedi (2014: 114) argues that, 'The selection of the site of Agra to act as the centre of political authority, relegating Delhi to a subordinate position, appears to be a well deliberated political decision. With the progress of time, Agra grew into a vibrant economic hub of north India, which Delhi could not attain, though political authority was brought back to it.' The strategic location and the commercial vibrancy of the city are uncontested "situated at the vast expanse of the Ganges-Yamuna Doab, with commercial navigational advantage (connected to Bengal via riverine route) and its strategic location, situating within the controlling distance of Kalpi-Chanderi-Gujarat and the Deccan route. Ralph Fitch (1583-1591) mentions his journey from Agra to Bengal accompanied with 104 boats. Similarly, John Jourdain (1608-1617) records that every year approximately 10000 tons of salt was transported to Bengal via boats, clearly speaks of the importance of the Agra riverine route. The barges as huge as 100 tons carried the load of 5000-7000 tons at a time. Pelsaert (2009: 4) mentions about the innumerable merchandises being transported in and outside Agra/Sikri through the riverine route, 'the merchandise brought from *Porop* [East], and *Bengalen purop* [East] and the Bhutan mountains, namely, cotton goods from Bengal, raw silk from Patna, spikenard, borax, verdigris, ginger, fennel, and thousands of sorts of drugs, too numerous to detail in this place... and also... innumerable kinds of grain, butter, and other provisions, which are produced in the Eastern provinces, and imported thence.' It truly emerged as a commercially vibrant city and an important centre of exchange across north India. The city life bustled with activities of the merchants, *mahajans*, and *sarrafis*. There thronged the merchants not only from all parts of India but across Europe. The most coveted item among the Europeans was indigo. In 1643 Dutch alone ordered 7000 maunds of indigo from Agra. The brisk riverine trading activities added another beautiful landscape to the city – its *ghats* (quays):

There were *ghats* (quays) of brick, and red and white sandstone masonry... almost entirely built up into series of broad stairs, with *chowkis* (pedestals) and multi-storeyed octagonal *burjis* between them; spacious *chabutaras* (platforms), covered corridors, closed chambers (for ladies) and *dalans* (pillared verandahs) overlooking them, and ramps (for cattle), which were characteristic features of a **medieval ghat**. The *chhatris* which crowned the towers gorgeously outlined the *ghats* on the water-way and presented a beautiful river-front (Nath, 1997: 162).

Among the *ghats*, Hathi-Ghat was a beautiful structure, built of white-yellowish Gwalior stone and had two elephant statues at the entrance, thus so named. However, presently none of the medieval *ghats* survive and the river bank lies completely desolate.

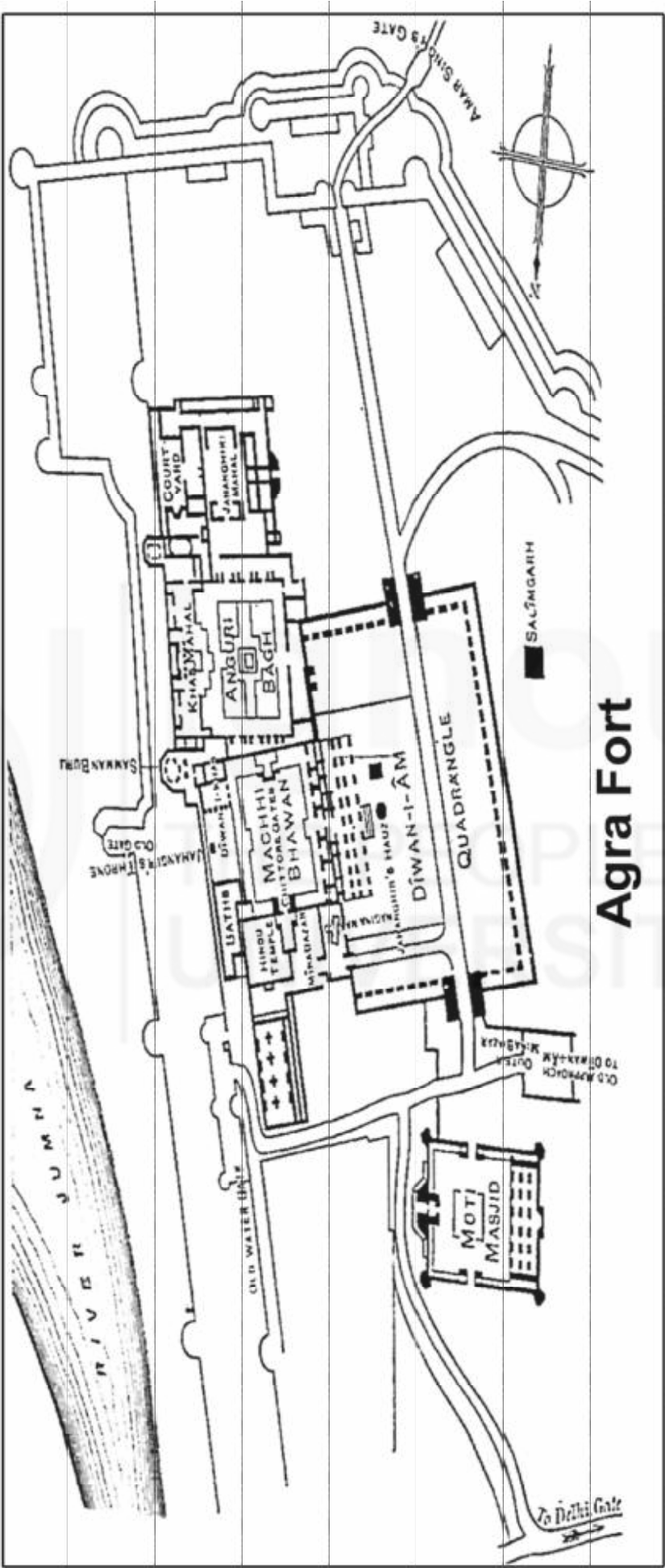
Humayun's coronation took place in the Jama Masjid of Agra and he is also said to have constructed a palace, a garden and a mosque. Sher Shah is also reported to have repaired the fort of Badalgarh. Prior to the construction of Agra fort, Akbar founded town of Nagari Chain in 1563, 11 kms south of Agra. The order of the construction of Agra fort by demolishing the existing one was given in 1564-65 under the supervision of Qasim Khan. Abul Fazl mentions building of five hundred masonry structures inside the fort after Bengal and Gujarat styles and named it *Dar-ul Khilafat* Akbarabad. However, hardly any structure of Akbar's time is extant now with the exception of Jahangiri Mahal as a result of Shahjahan's alterations around Delhi gate. Later, in 1654

Shahjahan also added *Moti Mahal* and *Moti Masjid* (Pearl Mosque) in white marble for his wife Moti Begum to the south of Itimaduddaula's tomb. Akbar started construction of his future tomb, Sikandara, which, in 1607, when Jahangir visited the site, he deliberately departed from traditional domed architectural plan in deference to Akbar's cultural ideas. Itimaduddaula's tomb by the Yamuna built by Nur Jahan, her daughter, in 1628 is another imposing royal edifice in Agra built during Jahangir's reign. Among other important surviving structures of the later period are tomb of Firuz Khan Khwajasara (c. 1647), in charge of *harem* under Shahjahan and the Jami Mosque commissioned by Jahanara Begum in 1648; its eastern side and the main gateway was destroyed by the British in 1857. However, the most imposing structure added to the cityscape by Shahjahan was Taj Mahal (mausoleum of Mumtaz Mahal; 1631-1643) – a monument that still stands out among all structures of the city.

The fort was situated on the western bank of the river Yamuna on a high ground. It had high walls, gateways and bastions surrounded by a ditch all around the fort-wall. In the fort were housed palaces, *harem*, gardens, *chowks* and mosques. Such was the huge establishment that Father Manrique calls it a city within a city. There were three separate palaces of the emperor and separate ones were of Nur Jahan and Mariam Makani, records Pelsaert. The *harem*, where women of different countries resided, was known as *Bangla Mahal*. Across the fort was *Nakkhas*. Further outside the fort were houses of Khurram, Man Singh, etc. Dara Shikoh's palace was towards the north of the fort. Sikandara, where housed the tomb of Akbar was situated on the opposite side bank of the river. Pelsaert mentions it the chief centre of trading activities. Commodities across India used to come here and thence taken inside the city by crossing the river (Ray, 2015: 245-258).

Petrucchioli argues that Agra was in no way different from the pre-Mughal cities like Gwalior. He states that it was based on 'anti-urban concept which sets up the palace/fortress of the Rajah against the city/ghetto of the populace' (Petrucchioli, 2015: 545). Both Agra and Gwalior were placed at a high point with imposing walls and bastions. Pelsaert (c. 1626) found the city 'exceedingly large', but 'unwalled' and 'without a regular plan'. Pelsaert (2009: 2) comments on its overgrowing expanse that by Jahangir's reign it expanded to such an extent that the city of Akbar with its security gates 'now stand in the middle of the city, and the area of buildings outside them is fully three times greater in extent'. Thus, 'The city of Agra grew haphazardly and gradually over the centuries from an ancient habitat and, except for the fact that all its principal roads sloped towards, and led to, the river Jamuna (Yamuna), **it had no town-planning**' (Nath, 1997: 159). The region where the city developed was the Jamuna ravines (*khar/tilas/mounds*) leaving the city plan to be laid on uneven grounds – Manpada is higher by 30 feet than Hing ki Mandi; similarly Gali Hakimani is higher than Zin-Khanah. The city had three main axis/broadways of the city: a) Ghatia – Dhuliaganj – Pathwari – Jamuna; b) Sarafa – Kashmiri Bazar – Malika Bazar – Kachehri Ghat – Jamuna; c) Rawatpara – Daresi – Jamuna (Nath, 1997: 159).

The city was constantly expanding. Ralph Fitch (1583-91) compares it with London. Father Monserrate has estimated it 4 miles long and 2 miles broad; while Abul Fazl calculates it to be 10 miles long. Jahangir provides its circumference equal to 17.5 miles (7 kos) long and approximately 2 miles broad. During Shahjahan's period Peter Mundy estimated that the city was 15 miles long. Manucci assessed its extent around 24 miles. These are no doubt rough estimates nonetheless suggests the vibrancy of the city which was constantly expanding. Such vitality is evident from the population estimates as well. Ralph Fitch assessed that the population of Agra was greater than England which approximates to over 2 lakh inhabitants.

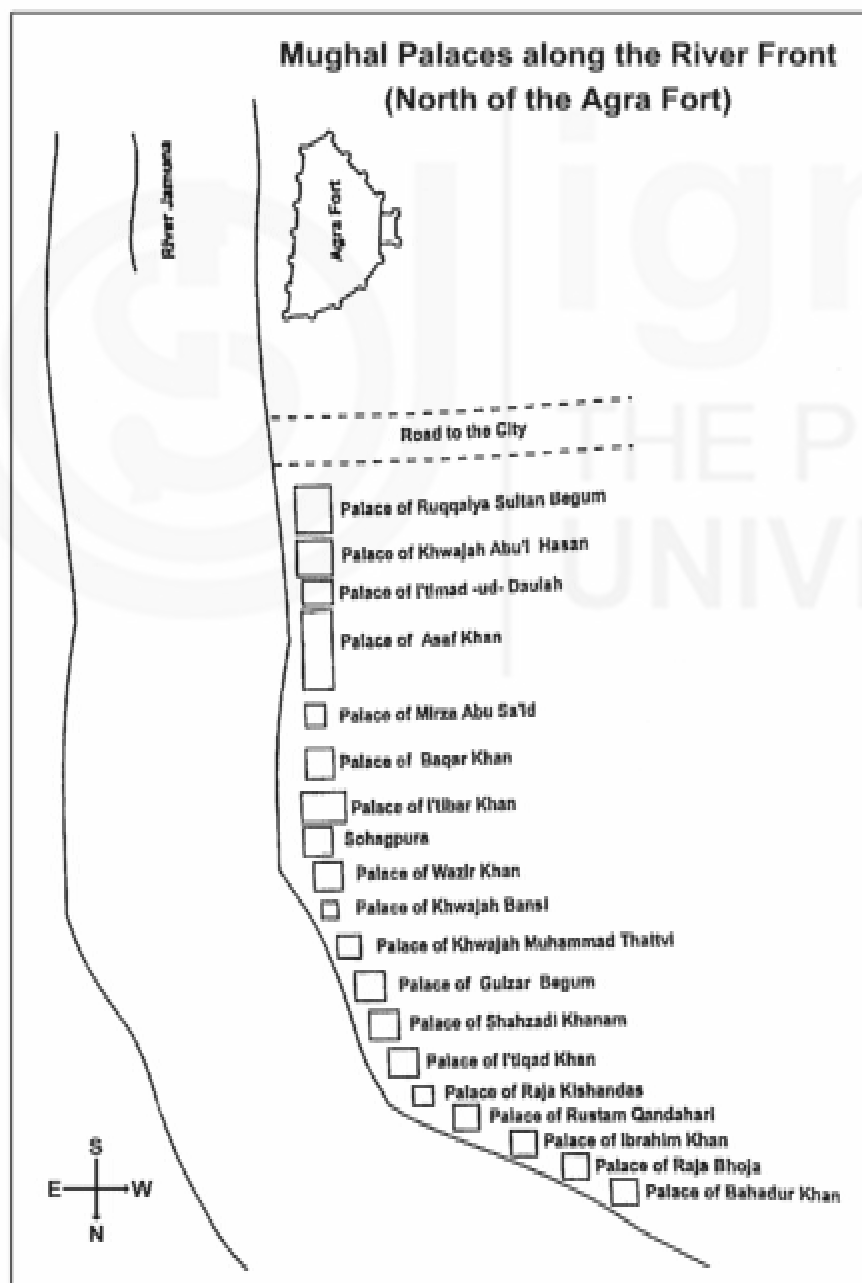


Agra Fort

Map 1: Plan of Agra Fort [Havell, E.B., (1904) *A Handbook to Agra and the Taj, Sikandara, Fatehpur-Sikri and the Neighbourhood* (London: Longmans, Green , and Co.), p. 43]

Father Manrique assessed an exaggerated figure of the population to around 6,60,000. Jourdain (1608-1617) boasts that Agra was the biggest city in the world, bigger than Cairo; while Mandelso (1638) found it 'at least twice as big as Ispahan'. I.P. Gupta (1986) has estimated that the population of Agra was two lakhs in the sixteenth century which swelled to seven lakhs by the mid-seventeenth century with a radius of the city expanding to 20-30 miles. These estimates may again be rough and at times exaggerated but no doubt reflect the prominence of the city.

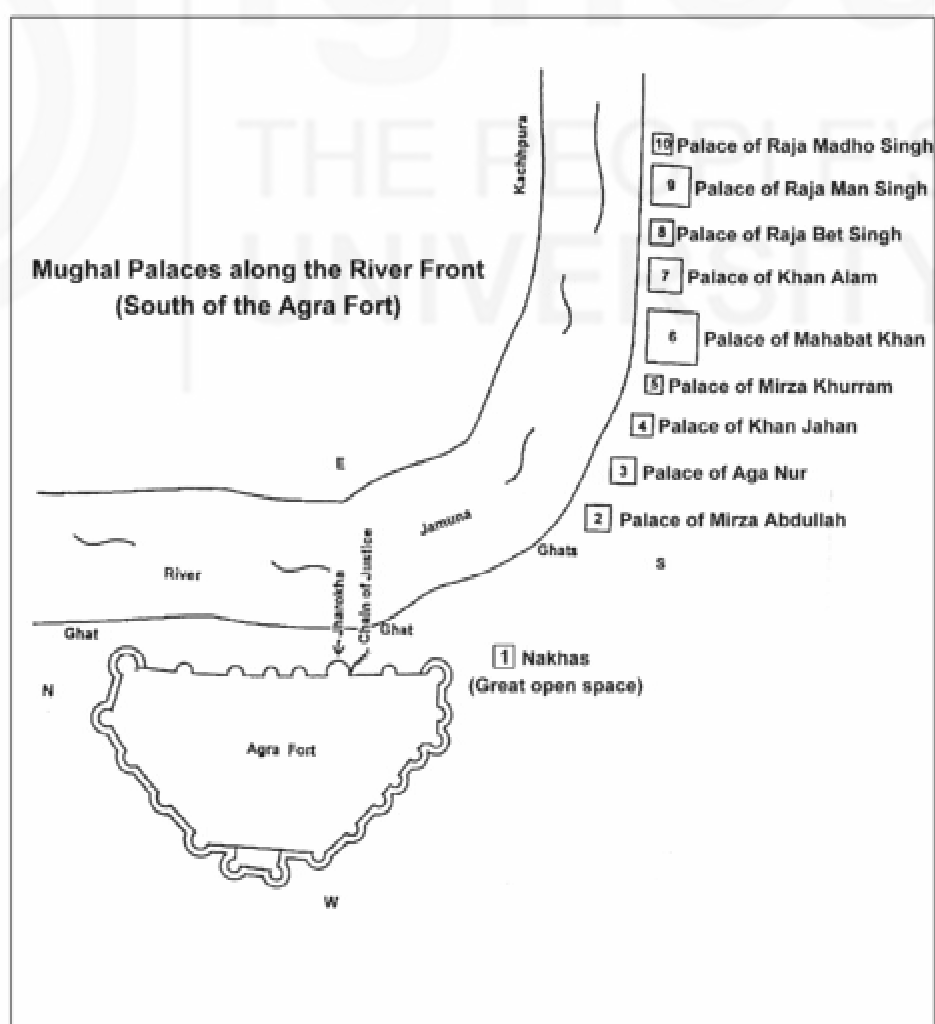
Agra is highly praised by European travellers for its *havelis*/palaces of the nobles. Pelsaert (2009: 2) records that around 6 *kos* [15 miles] of the area along the 'waterfront is occupied by the costly palaces of all the famous lords [i.e. on the western /right bank of the river Yamuna]. Thevenot mentions thirty palaces of big grandees along the river. These tastefully built red sandstone *havelis* were provided with arched portals (*pols/polis*) at the entrance; brackets and *chhajja* supported by latticed (*jali*) balcony (*gaukh*), along with *chhatris* and *chaukhandis* and *chhaparkhats* (Nath, 1997: 160). However, travellers equally disdained its 'narrow' and 'congested' lanes.



Map 2: Plan of Palaces along the River Front, Agra [Nath, R., (1997) *Agra and Its Monuments* (Agra: The Historical Research Documentation Programme, p. 22, Map 4)]

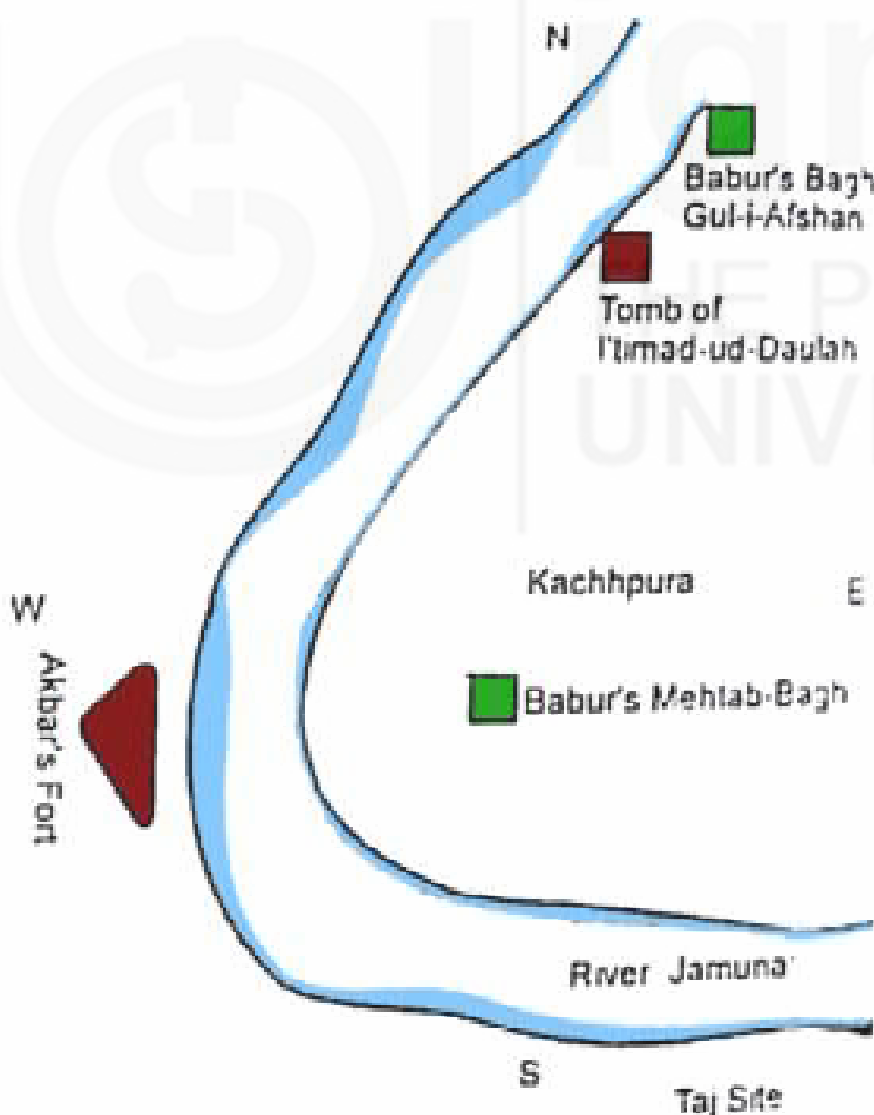
Agra city was provided with a simple nonetheless extremely efficient drainage system which was a great contribution of Akbar. 'All main roads and streets were paved with red sandstone slabs, with the middle portion sloping towards the sides where *pucci masonry nalis* (water channels) were built, so as to drain off the rain-water into them. These *nalis* were, in turn, connected with large, underground, stone masonry *nalas* (*drains*) which were all diverted to two main drains, on either side of the city, which fell into the river' (Nath, 1997:160). A number of tanks were constructed in the city to provide water all the year round. It is recorded that among them four – Hauz-i Kalan, Hauz of Dehra Bagh and tomb of Itibar Khan and Guru ka Tal were in operation till the eighteenth century. The city is well provided with wells and step-wells (*baolis*). Ladli Bagh and Dehra Bagh (Kuan Kamal Khan) wells were so huge that as much as 32 *purs* were drawn by bullocks in one go. *Baoli* in front of the Diwan-i Am, in Agra fort survives to day. The *baoli* attached to Akbari Mahal to the south of the fort is another huge six storey structure built entirely of red sandstone.

Being the chief trading entrepôt, *caravan sarais* were the added feature of the cityscape of Agra. It is recorded that more than sixty *sarais* were in Agra in the seventeenth century, with lofty gates, commodious apartments which provided not only the shelter and food, as well as space for storage of the goods, but also enough shades were there for the bullock-carts, horses and other retinues. There were a number of important *sarais* (Arab ki Sarai, Bhore ki Sarai, Jalal Khan ki Sarai), but the riverine *sarai* of Nur Jahan, which still survives and built exclusively to cater to riverine traffic, stands out. Thevenot records the presence of eighty *sarais* around the *chowk* in front of the fort and also the similar number of *hammams* (public baths) in the city.



Map 3: Plan of Palaces along the River Front, Agra [Nath, R., (1997) *Agra and Its Monuments* (Agra: The Historical Research Documentation Programme, p. 23, Map 5)]

Gardens formed the 'core' of the cityscape. Garden structures were the chief spaces where the Mughals resided in Central Asia. Ebba Koch (2008: 555-556) views the Mughal city of Agra as a truly garden city where, 'The Timurid concept of a formally planned garden was creatively adapted to a riverfront situation.' Babur built two of his gardens Mehtab Bagh and Achanak Bagh in the *charbagh* and terraced style. Another garden of Babur, Bagh-i Gul Afshan which was later renovated by Nur Jahan and renamed Bagh-i Nur Afshan (now known as Ram Bagh), built in *chaharbagh* style with network of canals, tanks and water chutes (descending in three terraces) where water was supplied through Persian wheel. It served as a typical pleasure garden of the Mughals. But among his choicest gardens was Bagh-i Zar Afshan or Bagh-i Hasht Bihisht, built in the *chaharbagh* style. It is here that Babur was initially laid to rest before being finally taken to Kabul by Haji Begum. Presently only a few traces of it are visible, rest of the garden is completely destroyed. Itmaduddaula's tomb contains a huge layout of a garden. Taj Mahal was constructed in the garden of Man Singh. Jahangir also built his palace within a garden to the southwest of the city. Besides these exclusive pleasure gardens and tomb gardens, *havelis* of the nobles stood amidst gardens. The presence of gardens all over makes Pelsaert (2008: 1) to comment: 'The luxuriance of the groves all round makes it resemble a royal park rather than a city.'



Map 4: River Front Gardens of Babur and the Taj, Agra [Nath, R., (1997) *Agra and Its Monuments* (Agra: The Historical Research Documentation Programme, p. 112, Fig. 32)]

Apart from the imperial structure, the nobility was also involved in the constructions in the city. Itimaduddaula built Itimadpura. A number of other *puras* built by nobles were Vazirpura, Jaisinghpura and Pratappura. The city also appears to have earliest Christian enclaves where housed the earliest Christian cemetery of northern India containing tombstones of Christians – Armenians, European travellers, missionaries, adventurers, traders, and soldiers. The Dutch also had their permanent factory at Agra. The Christians settled down in Agra in Padritola and built a church and a college here as early as 1599 encouraged by Akbar's catholic outlook. Akbar even granted annual maintenance to the church which was continued even under Jahangir's patronage. However, the support was withdrawn by Shahjahan. He even destroyed the clock atop the church in 1635 whose gong could be heard far off. However, when 160 years later French aristocrat Count de Modave visited Agra he found descendents of the Jesuit families still living there.

Another feature marked the city was that there was no physical or spatial segregation on the basis of religion or class. Pelsaert records (2009: 1) that 'the whole place is closely built over and inhabited, Hindus mingled with Moslems, the rich with the poor.' Though in the inns segregation of Hindu and Muslims was visible as well as certain inns were reserved for the Christians, Arabs and the Armenians.

When French aristocrat Count de Modave visited Agra in 1775 he found the city in a dilapidated state. He records that both Sikandara and the Taj were in bad conditions owing to lack of proper maintenance (Ray, 2015: 257-258); no doubt the city succumbed to the brunt of Ahmad Shah Abdali's plunder (1757) and the Jat onslaught (1761). However, he still found presence of merchant houses, often two storeyed, in the city.

25.3 FATHPUR/FATEHPUR SIKRI

The building of Sikri was not Akbar's first project, prior to that Akbar had already founded Nagar Chain and had also constructed a fort at Agra. The chief point of contention among the historians is whether Fathpur Sikri planned by Akbar was primarily his residential headquarter or else it was a fullfledged town? R. Nath believes that it was Akbar's residential headquarter, without unsettling the capital status of Agra, where he planned to move in 1571 which he finally abandoned in 1586 during his lifetime. However, Nadeem Rezavi (2013: 6, 56, 91) believes that it was very much 'Akbar's capital'; 'the official city'. It not only housed the imperial household but the mansions of the *amirs*, and houses of bureaucracy were scattered all over (Rezavi, 2013: Chapter 5). Aniruddha Ray (2015: 284) argues, 'when the *darbar* was being held at Fatehpur, Agra had not been abandoned. The principal treasury was located at Agra in 1577-8 and had not been transferred there.' Irfan Habib also believes that 'both these towns were jointly acting as capitals of the empire' (Habib cited in Ray, 2015: 284).

Pre-Akbar Sikri

Sikri derives its name from its inhabitants Sikarwar Rajputs. Under the Saiyyids the *pargana* Sikri fell under Bayana *shiq*. The area around Nagar (surrounding Akbar's fortification wall) does indicate presence of a flourishing township during the Sultanate period. There survived six mosques and a tomb of that period (Rezavi, 2013: 10-11). The first encounter of the Mughals with Sikri occurred during the battle of Khanwa (1527), an area lying 16 kms west of Sikri. Babur built a garden here after his victory and named Bagh-i Fath from which Akbar's city derived its name. Babur also built a water pavilion in the middle of the lake. It is interesting that these structures were situated across the river bank and Akbar built his new enterprise on the other side, the western section of the river front.

Petruccioli argues that Sikri was a 'planned city'. However, Rezavi (1998:107) thinks that the construction of various structures suggests that 'it did not develop at one point of time, nor does it appear to have followed a single plan'. 'Not all the buildings in the town of Fatehpur Sikri were designed or planned right from the beginning', comments Rezavi (1998: 46). This is very much clear from Arif Qandhari's account about three major stages of constructions:

1571

A compulsory decree was issued that nobody should obstruct anyone who wants to build a house (*khana*) within the expanse of the said circuit and it should be entered without any fear of dispute in the lands so that it is duly populated...

1573-74

Its court (*sahn*) has been raised on steps (*paya*); and subterranean reservoirs *sardabha* where tops have been covered and made level (with surface of the courtyard) with stone and lime. In some places they are latticed (*mushabbak*) so that whenever it rains the water collected in the courtyard pours through those lattices and collected in the subterranean tanks. *Thus the general public has its need for water fulfilled...*

1576-77

...five shops (*dakakin*) of red stone, mortar, and lime should be constructed from the royal court to the gate which faces towards the *dar al-khilafat* Agra, and close to the *darbar* a *chaharsuq* comprising of well-decorated shops was built. A *Tripoliya* (three arched structure) of red stone has been built towards the bazaar...

(Rezavi, 1998: 107)

The city structures were thus constructed in phased manner. Maryam Zamani shifted to Sikri [Rang Mahal] in 1568-69 near the hospice of Shaikh Salim Chishti. By 1580 almost the entire palace complex and major city constructions were completed.

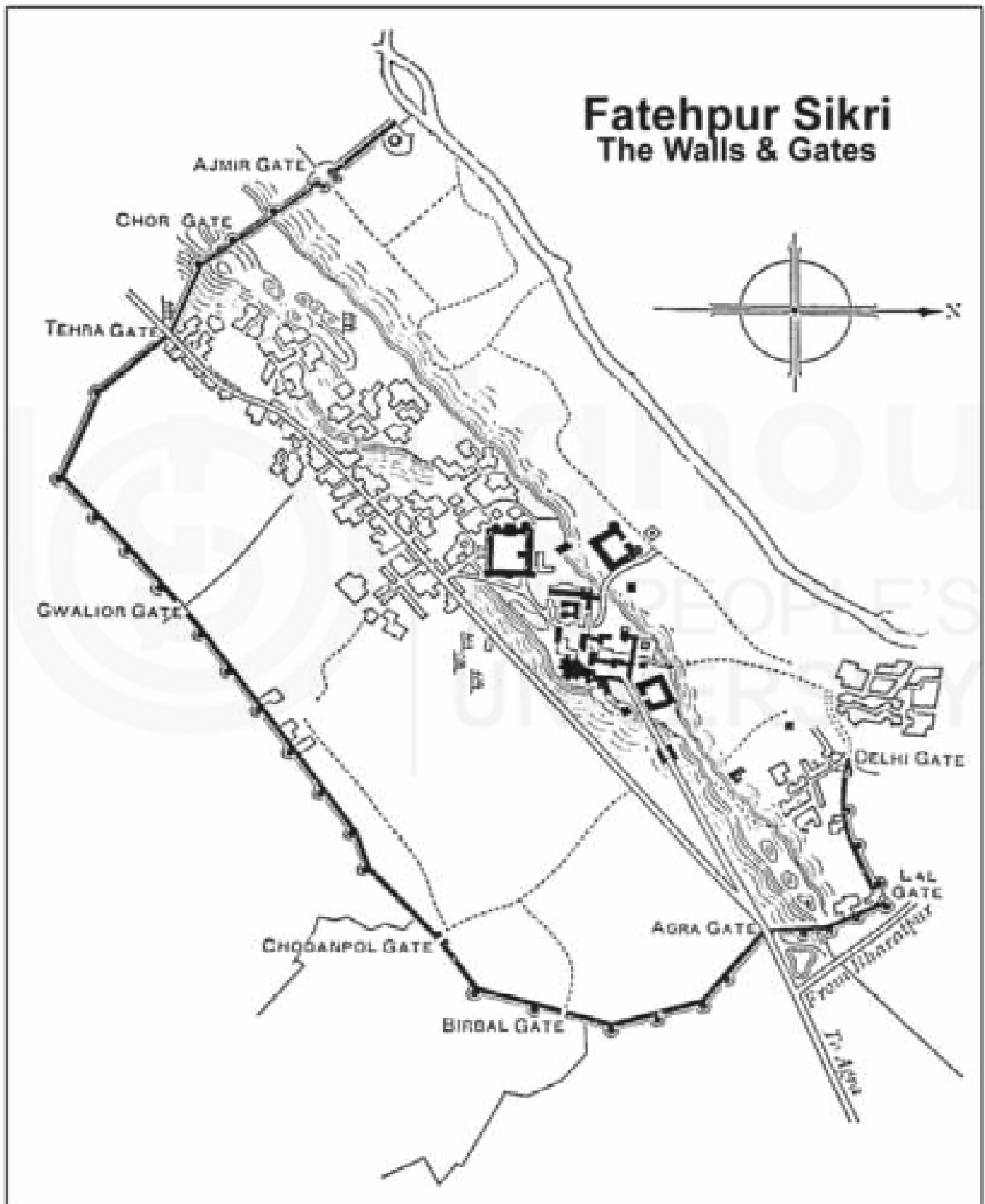
Chronology of Constructions at Fatehpur Sikri

Year of Construction	Structure
1571-72	Central Archway
1572	Birbal's Palace
1572-73	<i>Haramsara</i> ('Jodhbai Palace')
1573-74	Jama Masjid
1574-75	Buland Darwaza
1575	Ibadatkhana
1576-77	<i>Chaharsuq</i>
1580	Palace Complex completed

Source: Rezavi, 1998: Chapter 3, pp. 46-53.

The palace complex was planned from the scratch. Khari Nadi's water was dammed and thirteen sluices (*terah mori*) were built to create a vast lake to ensure the water supply all the year round. At the main ridge were built the royal mansions, while the sides below the ridges were allotted for commoners and the nobles enjoyed a living

along Yamuna bank; similarly traders' establishments and warehouses were also along the river front. The lake area at Sikri was exclusively reserved for the pleasure gardens and pavilions of the royal household and the nobility; their mansions and gardens remained largely outside the city. The city was provided with eight gateways – Ajmeri Darwaza, Tehra Darwaza, Gwalior Darwaza, Chandra Pol, Birbal Pol, Agra Darwaza, Lal Darwaza, and Delhi Darwaza.

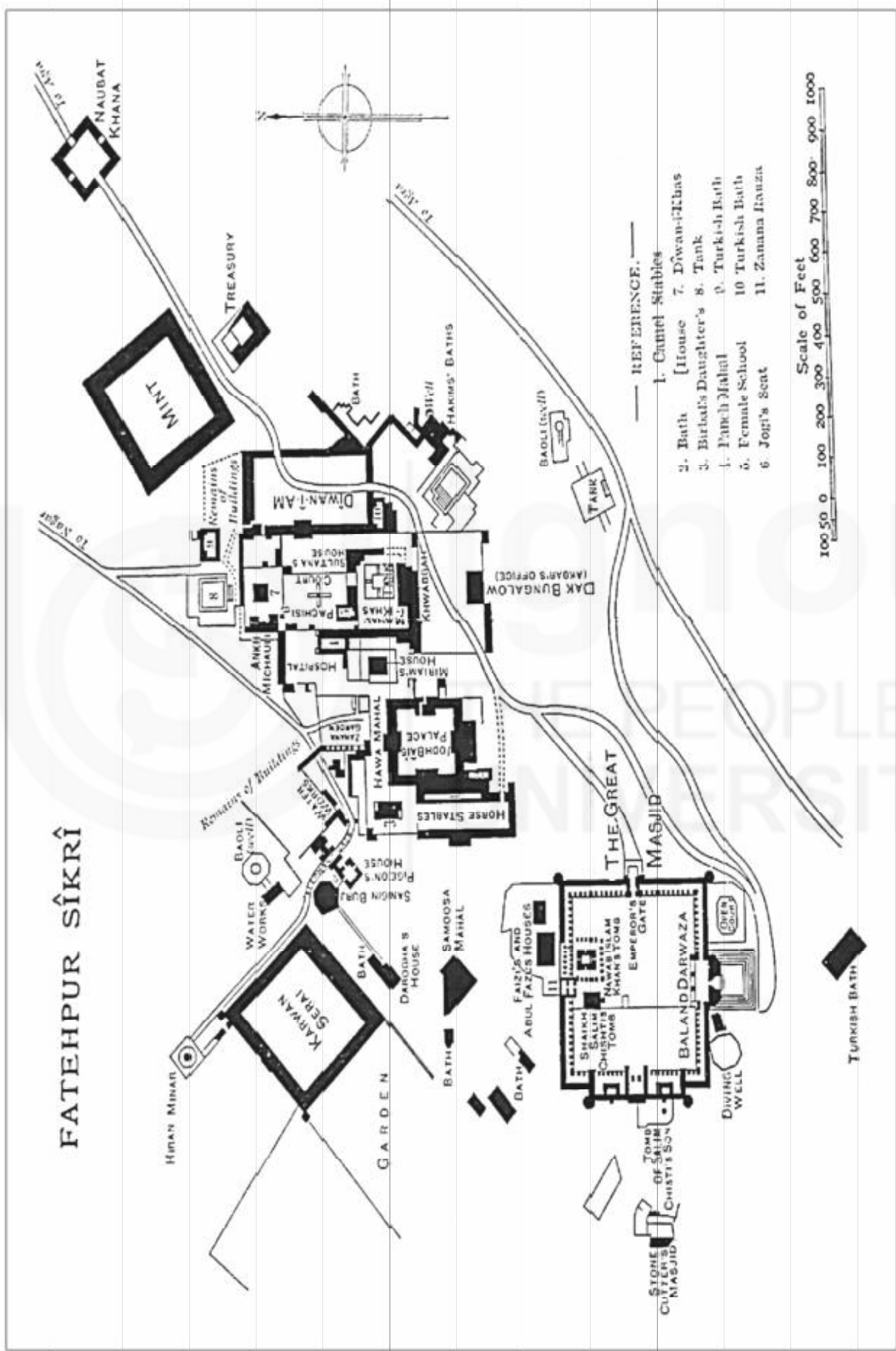


Map 5: Plan of Fatehpur Sikri [Havell, E.B., (1904) *A Handbook to Agra and the Taj, Sikandara, Fatehpur-Sikri and the Neighbourhood* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co.), p. 108]

The ridge comprised of three major complexes. In the north-east, the highest point, housed the ‘sacred’ buildings (*sahn-i Ibadat*) – stonecutter’s mosque, Jami Masjid and the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti. At the second level situated the royal mansions (*sahn-i Khass*) – Raniwas (Jodhbai’s Palace), Mahl-i Ilahi (Birbal’s house) and the Baithak (Maryam’s House) accompanied with Shahi Bazaar (horse stables) and Mina Bazaar (camel stables) and the garden. The third (further down the ridge) comprised of public buildings (*sahn-i Rayyat*) – the Panch Mahal, Khwabgah, Shahi Kutubkhana (Turkish Sultana’s House adjunct), and the Diwan-i Khass (*Ekstambha Prasada*; the private audience chamber) where the government business was transacted (Nath, 2015: 570). Some of the structures, like Buland Darwaza, were mere symbolic (symbolised Akbar’s victory of Gujarat); while others were *ceremonial* and *functional*, like Mahal-i Ilahi was associated with Akbar’s *Tauhid-i Ilahi*; Baithak was the place where Akbar used to meet people (musicians, painters and poets and spent his cultural evenings; Shahi Kutubkhana served as royal library; while its top floor was *chitrashala* (Nath, 2015: 570). Thus the palace complex had two separate sections – public spaces (*diwan-i am*; hall of public audience and *diwan-i khas*; hall of private chamber) leading to private quarters (*haramsara*). The entry gate was Hathipol in front of which stood the *Hiran Minar* – a milestone as well as *akash diya*. The entire city of Sikri followed the grid plan based on *chaharbagh* tradition which Rezavi (1998: 38-39) and Petruccioli argues ‘that the whole township was divided into eight functional zones by the roads passing through its eight gates’, ‘of which the central was reserved for the imperial establishments and bureaucratic offices’. Another central point in the city that Satish Davar identifies (cited in Rezavi, 1998: 39) was a small mosque situated in the city market along with mosque of *Sangatarashan* (Stonecutter’s) near Akbar’s Jami Mosque.

There were as many as five Akbari markets and four *sarais* at Sikri. ‘The main shopping complex and commercial area was situated at a distance towards the east within the city walls... “Industrial area and artisans” dwellings were located at the farthest point from the imperial quarters: the bulk of this area in fact was situated outside the city walls’ (Rezavi, 1998: 105). Rezavi’s excavations suggest that indigo cultivation, leatherworkers, meat sellers all either situated close to the city wall or else were located outside the walls; iron smith’s cottage was located at Delhi gate. Similarly, *jogipura* and brothels (*shaitanpura*) were also got settled outside the city walls. As for residential quarters, Rezavi (1998: 40) identifies, were mainly two “one around Shaikhupura, ‘area of Salim Chishti’; and the other neighbourhood of Khwaja-i Jahan where Abdul Qadir Badauni used to live. The nobility occupied northern ridge between the Tansen Baradari and *sarai* near Agra Darwaza where were located probably the residences of Iranian nobles for in this area a Shi’ites praying marble tablet has been discovered (see **Map 6**). Similarly in the Indrawali Ghati Rezavi believes that Rajputs had their residences; another area where nobles had their residential quarters was at the top of the southern ridge (Rezavi, 1998: 40-41, 105). Rezavi’s archeological finds suggests that houses of the nobility were generally made of ‘rubble stones bound with lime mortar, sometimes ashlarred with red sandstone but generally covered with a thick veneer of lime plaster’ as against the official enclave where buildings ‘were all built of the locally-quarried red sandstone’ (Rezavi, 1998: 97-98).

The geological terrain was exploited to store rain water to be collected in a *jhalra* (lit. a step well; a submerged water storage structure), two underground *birkas* (covered water tanks) and numerous tanks, *kundas* and reservoirs. On the two sides of the palace two waterworks were created to ensure regular water supply (Nath, 2015: 567). It is interesting that Sikri’s roofs were invariably covered by semispherical cupolas and dome structures are rare (except in Jami Masjid and Shaikh Salim Chishti’s tomb).



Map 6: Palace Complex, Fatehpur Sikri and the Neighbourhood (London: Longmans, Green, and Co.), p. 107]

‘The *ladao* or wagon vaulted ceilings made of stone ribs and panels in which beams have been used as ribs’ and *chhappar* ceilings (Faizi’s House and Raniwas), a typical local village and folk structure are hallmark styles, used most effectively at Sikri.

The fort entrance was Hathi-Pol which had eight hundred metres long porticoed street flanked by shops on both sides and at halfway mark was crossed at *charsuq*. Its width itself speaks of its functional utility for the royal procession.

However, Fatehpur was not the industrial town rather was more a commercial city. This is attested to by the presence of mint here. The only industry developed here was that of carpet manufacturing to cater to urban elites. Pelsaert informs us that the industry was largely set up by immigrant Iranian artisans (Ray, 2015: 285). It is estimated that approximately 10,000 artisans were employed in the construction activities only. The population of the city is estimated to be around 2,20,000 people which was even higher than the then city of London (Ray, 2015: 287).

Fatehpur Sikri and Indigenous Traditions

Sikri was just not the symbol of Islamic ideas, instead it was a fine blend of *local* and *Islamic* traditions. Equally important for Akbar were pre-existing traditions. He expressed this connect by imbibing numerous pre-Islamic traditions in built-forms. Thus, Akbar and his artisans derived heavily from local and indigenous traditions with artistic innovations to construct Sikri which reflects Akbar’s cosmopolitan outlook and his extremely liberal personality traits. Its main sources of inspiration came from Jamuna-Chambal region (comprised of Delhi, Agra, Dholpur, Gwalior and Malwa-Gujarat-Rajasthan) from where most of his men and material for the construction were drawn. The architects and the artisans heavily derived from the traditional *silpashastras* in which they were experts. Most of the buildings in the complex were housed in the most favoured *silpashastric* directions the north and the east. Astrology and astronomy equally determined the auspicious and inauspicious effects (Nath, 2015: 568-570). The *poli* (porch), *tibara* (a room with three doors) and *duchhattis* (garret), best represented in Abul Fazl’s House, Rang Mahal and Raniwas used to ensure the ‘maximum seclusion and security’ were the incorporations of the architect builders of Jamuna-Chambal. The ‘Jodhbai Palace’ (*shabistan-i Iqbal*) was inspired by Hindu and Jain Gujarat architectural forms. However, Rezavi believes that both ‘Jodhbai Palace’ and ‘Jahangiri Mahal’ were constructed in *chaturshala* plan on which Buddhist *Viharas* were constructed.

Another feature of the city was its inspiration from the layout of the Mughal *camps* “the canvas, wood and cloth were transformed into stone at large. Scholars are almost in unison that Sikri was the translation of ‘camp’ into stone. S.A.A. Rizvi (cited from Nath, 2015: 580 fn. 24) argues that Fatehpur Sikri was ‘identical’ to an imperial Mughal camp. R. Nath also agrees with Rizvi that there was impact of Mughal camps in its execution. Rezavi (1998: 28) also acknowledges that ‘the Mughal encampment appears to have been the principal inspiration for town planning’. Nath comments that Sikri ‘had their prototypes in the wooden *raotis* and cloth *chandovas* of the Mughal camp. The enclosed and covered passages from the Kutubkhana to Khwabgah on the ground floor, or from the Sahn-i Rayyat to the Sahn-i Khass, and to the Panch Mahal are stone translations of canvas-and carpet *sarpardas* [or *qanat*]. Similarly, the *khaprel* (tile) roofs of the Khwabgah resemble the fine awning *chandova* of the Mughal camp. The oblong *chhaparkhats* (lit. a bedstead with curtains), that constitute the super structure for a number of buildings, are stone replicas of wooden *raotis* described by Abul Fazl’ (Nath, 2015: 568). As per the encampment where centre was occupied by the Emperor, surrounded by the princes and nobles followed by the service area; while markets were placed at the corners; thus the camp, so was the city, was arranged in ‘hierarchical

progression from the public to the private areas' (Rezavi, 1998: 31). Sikri's *akashdiya* (poles bearing lamps), the Hiran Minar, situated in front of the main entrance gate Hathipol was in tune with the *Akashdiya* stood beyond *diwankhana* in the camps. Petruccioli (2015: 544) also argues that 'the garden and the encampment were the only forms available to the Mughals.' So when they transformed the court into 'built in architecture' it was 'a camp in stone'. Petruccioli calls Fathpur Sikri a 'city frozen in time' and 'a unique case' in the town planning.

However, Nath believes, in spite of the borrowings, 'the occupation of a temporary level site of wood, canvas, and cloth tents and the construction of a permanent level stone buildings on a hilltop are two altogether different ventures governed by altogether different principles and techniques' (Nath, 2015: 581). A number of pillar styles were used in Sikri – *ruchaka* (in Khwabagh), *bhadra* (in stonecutter's mosque) and *misraka*. Out of these *misraka* was typical of Sikri created by Akbar's own artisans; while *bhadra* 'with *ghanta-mala* and *srivatsa* motifs' was typical of Malwa-Gujarat-Rajasthan temple art (Nath, 2015: 573). It is interesting that arches were sparingly used that too only in the sacred complex which are 'mostly used ornamentally and without voisoirs' (Nath, 2015: 573). Instead bracket-and-eave combination is the most copiously used form at Sikri to cover spaces. *Jharokha* windows and *chhatris* were other indigenous styles used amply at Sikri. Another indigenous, nonetheless distinctive style profusely used at Sikri (largely to cover verandahs and pavilions – Elephant Gate) was sloping *khaprel* or tile roof. Similarly, 'the bulbous onion-shaped double-dome type with a high neck universally used in Mughal paintings and inspired by the Central Asian circular dome tent, the *yurt*, known in India as *qubba*... was purely academic, for his architects did not use it' (Nath, 2015: 577). Instead they used local *bitaura* (locally used to keep fodder and cow-dungcakes) 'in a grand, dignified and perfectly stylized way' (Nath, 2015: 577).

Gardens were another form with which the Mughals were acquainted with. Mughal urban designs followed *chaharbagh* symmetry. 'The axes, joints, and nodules of a garden were turned architecturally into pavilions, the *chabutaras*, waterfalls, pools, *karwan sarais* (travellers' inns), and symmetrical roads' (Rezavi, 1998: 33). (For details see Unit 22, Section 22.7 of this Block).

25.4 SHAHAJAHANABAD

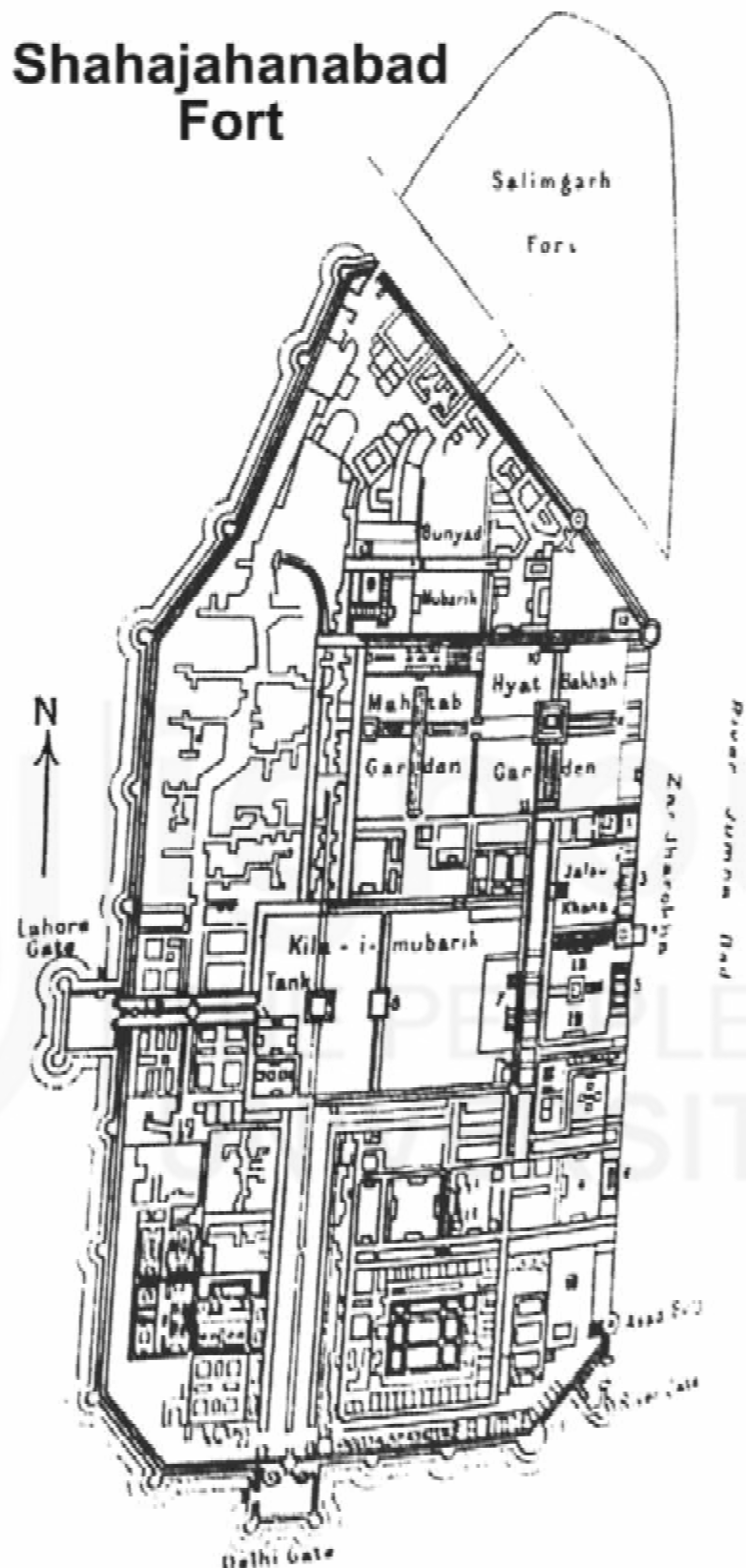
Delhi was a city of great antiquity and was the seat of many kings and Sultans in the past (see Unit 21, Block 4 (2) of this Course). It had situational advantage too – located in the Aravalli Hills on the banks of the mighty river Yamuna, with moderate climate and thick vegetation, provided a picturesque landscape. In contrast to Agra, Shahjahanabad set on a wide plain against the background of Yamuna on its west. It was also centrally located with a vast hinterland, providing security vis-a-vis commercial vibrancy. It was also blessed by the religious divines – being the chief centre of the Chishti *sufi* activities, popularly known as *bais khwaja ki chaukhat* (abode of 22 saints). In 1639 Shahjahan decided to move his capital to Shahjahanabad where he finally shifts in 1648. Amal-i Salih and Abdul Hamid Lahori mention that Shahjahan decided to move his capital on account of hot climate of the city (Agra), water shortage and above all congestion and overcrowding made it untenable for king's processions and army movements. The principal gateways were too small to ensure free movement of people, particularly during special ceremonies and festivals.

The site selected for the new capital town was between Nurpur and Firuz Shah Kotla. The chief architect of the city were *mi'mar* Ustad Ahmad and Ustad Lahori who draw the plan (*tarh*). The boundary of the city and the Qila-i Mubarak was provided with a

mud wall (the wall collapsed in 1650 due to excessive rains and later in the 26th regnal year Shahjahan started construction of stone and mortar wall) beginning from Kashmiri gate to Mori gate consisted of 11 monumental gates (later in 1658 another gate (Turkaman) was added) along with a few Khirkis (posterns; Khirki Farrashkhana, Khirki Buland Bagh, etc.) for the easy access of the residents with a circumference of five and half miles. The fort had 21 bastions, four gates (Lahori, west; Akbarabadi, southwest; Salimgarh, north and Khizr, east) and two windows – Musamman Burj, the *jharokha Darshan* (place for public audience). The fort was provided with aesthetically built buildings – Naqqar Khana, Diwan-i Am-o Khas, Zenana (Rang Mahal/Shish Mahal). Manucci (2010: I, 177) describes the city ‘in the shape of an imperfect half-moon’. The fort was octagonal, built in the Baghdadi style at the centre of the eastern quarter of the city, almost double the size of Agra fort. The fort was defended by a 10 yards deep and 20 yards wide moat. Outside the Lahori gate was an open space, a royal square where ‘the tents of such Rajas as are in the King’s pay, and whose weekly turn it is to mount guard, are pitched in this square’ (Bernier, 1916: 243). Besides this and towards the river front, the fort was surrounded by gardens (Anguri Bagh, north; Buland Bagh, south; and Gulabi Bagh, west). Another important bagh in the city was Bagh-i Sahibabad, laid out in 1650 and presented by Shahjahan to his daughter Jahanara Begum who built another garden next to it. Another towering structure built across the fort was Jama Masjid. Jama Masjid, Fathpuri Masjid and Akbarabadi Masjid (no more extant now) were the three prominent religious structures that dominated the skyline of the city.

The city planning of Shahjahanabad was influenced by Indo-Islamic ideas. Its city plan was governed by ancient *shilpashastra* text *Mansara*. “the bowstring format of the city plan (the semi-circular plan of the city on the banks of river Yamuna was bow); while its streets were the strings, the two side streets (eastwards and north-east) were the bent parts of the bow and the two meeting points ‘Chandni Chowk ... to the Lahori Gate of the city ... was the hand of the bowman ... the most important place was the connecting point of two streets. Here the palace fortress was built’ (Ray, 2015: 293). In the Islamic thought city symbolised human body – ‘the four limbs [hands and feet] compared to four gates of the city ... The palace-fort faced Mecca in the west. Chandni Chowk was going towards west and face of the *Jami Masjid* was also towards west. The eight gateways of the city could be compared to the four gates of paradise’ (Ray, 2015: 294).

The city was provided with beautiful bazaars and havelis of the princes and the nobles. The princes and nobles built their houses along the banks of river Yamuna. However, Bernier (1916: 247) comments: ‘The dwellings of the *Omrahs*, though mostly situated on the banks of the river and in the suburbs, are yet scattered in every direction’. Among such prominent constructions were the havelis of Dara Shikoh (present Dara Shikoh’s library), Ali Mardan Khan (northeast of the fort facing the river), Shaista Khan (opposite Lahori gate), Saadullah Khan (south of the fort), Ustad Ahmad and Ustad Hamid (the architects; towards northern gate of the Jama Masjid), Khalilullah Khan (near Ajmeri gate), Mir Jumla (Chawri Bazar), and of Rao Rayan Raghunath Das (in Dariba Kalan). Apart from havelis the city was provided with the houses of Hindu and Armenian merchants which were even six to seven storey high, comments Salih Kambo. Thus the houses of Princes and higher nobles were generally towards the riverfront; while lower class nobles resided around Jama Masjid.



Map 7: Shahjahanabad Fort [Fanshawe, H.C., (1902) *Delhi: Past and Present (with maps and Illustrations)* (London: John Murray), p. 23]

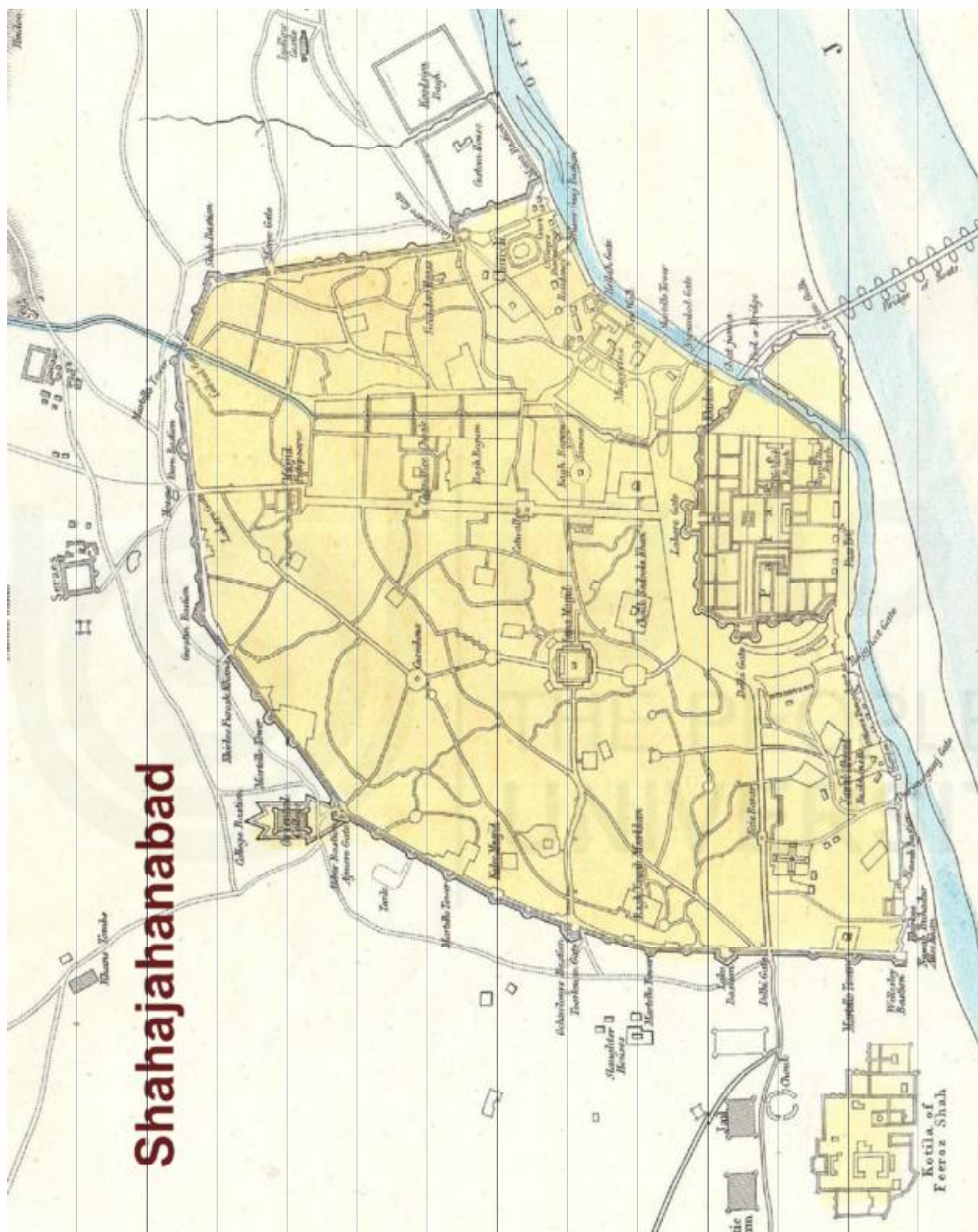
Bernier (1916: 245) also provides a vivid description of these houses:

The houses of the merchants are built over these warehouses, at the back of the arcades: they look handsome enough from the street, and appear tolerably commodious within; they are airy, at a distance from the dust, and communicate with the terrace-roofs over the shops, on which the inhabitants sleep at night...A few, and only a few, other parts of the city have good houses raised on terraces, the buildings over the shops being often too low to be seen from the street. The rich merchants have their dwellings elsewhere, to which they retire after the hours of business.

In the city there were magnificent *sarais* for travellers. While two were attached to Akbarabadi and Fathpuri mosques, the Begum ki Sarai (the *caravan sarai*) was independent and built by Jahanara Begum, Shahjahan's daughter. It was built between the fort and the *chowk* and was a double storeyed square structure with two monumental gateways one opened towards Sahibabad Bagh (northern gate) and the southern gate opened towards Chandni Chowk. Praising Jahanara's *sarai* Bernier (1916: 281) comments: 'The *Karuansara* is in the form of a large square with arcades, like our *Palace Royale*,... This place is the rendezvous of the rich *Persian*, *Usbek*, and other foreign merchants, who in general may be accommodated with empty chambers in which they remain with perfect security, the gate being closed at night.'

The city was provided with two major streets: one between Lahori Gate to Fathpuri Masjid and the other between Lahori Gate to the Akbarabadi Gate. The *nahr-i Bihisht* passed through from the middle of the former street, provided with trees and arched openings where shops and warehouses were housed. The section from Lahori Gate to the Kotwali was known as Urdu Bazar, served largely the imperial household; from Chabutara Kotwali to Chandni Chowk was Jauhari (jewellers') market thence was the Chandni Chowk market with shops on both sides. There were in all 440 double storeyed shops in this section. On the northern side of the Chowk was Begum's Sarai (which was destroyed and where presently housed the Town Hall). The last leg of the road was known as Bazaar-i Kalan or Fathpuri Bazaar. Faiz Bazaar was located between the Akbarabadi Masjid and Akbarabadi Gate of the city. The Chowk Sadullah Khan situated between the eastern gate of the Jama Masjid towards the fort. Bernier (1916: 243) comments that, 'Here... is held a *bazaar* or market for an endless variety of things; which like the *Pont-neuf* at Paris, is the rendezvous for all sorts of mountebanks and jugglers... astrologers...' The city water supply was provided with *nahr-i Bihisht*. Shahjahan re-excavated Firuz's Shah's Rajabwah using the alignment of the Shekhu-ni and extended it further 30 *kos* (approximately 75 miles) towards Delhi. Its one branch enters Chandni Chowk near Fathpuri Masjid flowing from the middle of the bazaar to Faiz Bazaar; the other entered from Sahibabad and along the northeast it flowed into the Qila-i Mubarak, the stream was lifted up to the Shah Burj thence the water was distributed to various sections of the fort via channels.

The gardens were embedded into the landscape of Shahjahan's city. The layout of one of the earliest garden was to the south-west of Idgah, the Karol Bagh garden built by Firuz Shah Tughluq. Towards the northwest of Shahjahanabad, near Sabzi Mandi Raushanara Begum (daughter of Shahjahan) and Sirhindi Begum (wife of Shahjahan) built two gardens in 1653. In the same year Akbarabadi Begum built Shalimar garden to the northwest of the above gardens which Bernier calls 'King's country house'. It was Shahjahan's pleasure garden where several pleasure pavilions including Shish Mahal were built, along with a tank and received canal water. It had rare varieties of fruit trees. It was here Prince Aurangzeb was crowned in 1659. Bagh Sihezari (Tis Hazari Bagh) was built between the Kashmiri and Kabuli gates, where lies the tomb of Jinat-al Nisa, daughter of Aurangzeb. Bagh-i Jawahar Khan was built between Sabzi Mandi and Shalimar Bagh in 1665. During Muhammad Shah's reign towards Sabzi Mandi two more gardens, Bagh-i Fidai Khan and Bagh Karre Khan, were built. Later, Bagh Chak Bakram was also built in the vicinity.



Map 8: Plan of Shahjahanabad

Source: Cassell's Weekly Dispatch Atlas, 1863; <http://www.geographicus.com/mm5/cartographers/>
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0d/1863_Dispatch_Atlas_Map_of_Delhi%2C_India_-_Geographicus_-_Delhi-dispatch-1867.jpg

In the suburbs were spread royal hunting grounds/lodges (*shikargah*). Firuz Shah Tughluq's hunting lodge was Kushak-i Shikar, northwest of Bagh Sihezari. Shahjahan's hunting preserves were Nangloi Zail, which had a *shikargah*, a *hashtsal* and a *filkhana*. Another was at Janti in Kanjhola Zail; next to it was situated Dara Shikoh's country house. In 1748 towards Kashmiri Gate Qudsiya Begum built Qudsiya Bagh, a palace and a mosque. These *shikargahs* and gardens surrounding the suburbs made Delhi environmentally much greener than Agra and Lahore.

The suburbs were the arteries of the city, on the one hand these suburbs were vibrant commercial centres and chief points of supply to the city, on the other hand were points of religious cityscapes. In 1820 Fortescue reports that there were as many as 52 bazaars and 36 *mandis* in and around Shahjahanabad (Chenoy, 2015: 114). The suburbs of Shahjahanabad were dotted with a number of *mandis* and marts. The grain *mandis* were located at Paharganj, Patparganj, Shah Dara and Kotla Mubarakpur. To the northwest of Shahjahanabad was sabzi *mandi* (vegetable market) and next to it was a horse market (*nakkhas*); Salimgarh, east of Yamuna, across the fort was resting and alighting point of grains for the Banjaras. Jaisinghpura, southeast of Paharganj appears to be an important centre of transit goods. The revenue records of Amber rulers shows that substantial income was received to the state exchequer of Sawai Jai Singh through custom dues passing through Jaisinghpura. It is clearly suggestive of the fact that the suburb was chief centre of brisk trading activities. In 1771-81 Najaf Khan, regent of Shah Alam II, built a settlement towards southwest of Naraina, and named after him Najafgarh, being served his country retreat (with a garden and a palace). The suburbs had magnificent *sarais* for the travellers/merchants. Most lofty structure was Arab ki Sarai built by Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan near Humayun's tomb. Writing in 1820 William Hamilton (cited in Chenoy, 2015: 133) praised the chain of Delhi entrepôt: 'Delhi had a chain of entrepot markets around it, namely, Pulwul, Balamghur, Rewary, Sonapat, Baghatpat, Tilpat, Bernaver, Shamlee, Panipat, Jygar, Kurnal, Kunjpoora, Indree, Secundra and Shahzada.' These entrepot markets were largely hinterlands connected with trade centres where exchanged the bulk goods before entering the city markets.

The spiritual landscape which was largely dominated by *sufi khanqahs*, *dargahs* and *mazars* was occupied towards the suburbs. The chief centres of *sufi* activities was Ghayaspur where lay the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. Further south of the Kotla was *dargah* of Nasiruddin Chirag and its further south was the Qutb Complex, the chief centre of Chishti *Sufis* which housed the *dargah* of Shaikh Bakhtiyar Kaki. *Sufis*, being the patron saints, also occupied an important place within the cityscape of Shahjahanabad – Shah Bula (Chawri Bazaar), Hazrat Miran Shah Nanu (Fathpuri), Sarmad and Hare Bhare Shah Sahib (Jama Masjid). Similarly, a number of temples also formed part of the morphology of the city of Shahjahanabad. As many as seven temples were constructed within the city by the Khatris, Kayasths, Banias and Jains – in Kucha-i Pati Ram, in Muhalla Naya Bans (a Shivalaya), in Katra Nil (Ladliji's temple), near Lahori Gate (Jain idol), in Maliwara (Jauhri's Jain temple), in Dariba Kalan (Jain Tirthankars' temple). Since Shahjahan ordered mosques to be built everywhere, where Muslims lived, the city of Shahjahanabad had as many as 200 mosques built within the city complex during 1639-1739; while 99 mosques were built in the suburbs.

Aurangzeb introduced some changes in the layout of the fort as well as the city. To keep the proceedings of Diwan-i Aam-o Khas away from the public gaze Aurangzeb ordered to construct barbicans outside the Lahori and Delhi gates. He also widened the Lahori gate for the smooth movement of the cavalry. Shahjahan placed two elephants on the Lahori and Akbarabadi gates that were brought down by Aurangzeb (Ray, 2015: 294).

Manucci (2010: II, 110) reported: 'Frequently horsemen were obliged to wait a long time at the gate; and several times the king himself, on his way to hunt, was forced to retrace his steps, not being able to pass. He issued an order for three gates to be made at this place. To carry this out it was necessary to knock down several mansions, the cost of which was paid for by the king without hesitation.' Aurangzeb's noble Bakhtawar Khan built a suburb, Bakhtawar Nagar near Shahjahanabad which was provided with a *sarai* along with a garden, a well, and a public bath along with a mosque. During Aurangzeb's reign his daughter Zinatunnisa Begum built Zinat Bari, southwest old Nasir Ganj where lies the princess buried. Bhagwa Bari is another garden south of the *chowk* Saadullah Khan where lies buried Muhammad Shah's daughter (1748). In the eighteenth century a number of *sarais* were also built within the city and in the suburbs – Sarai Bangash in Khari Baoli was one such structure.

Shahjahanabad enjoyed importance not just being the capital city of the empire, but was also the commercial hub, well connected with the hinterland. Shahjahanabad was full of impromptu elementary bazaars (*nakhas*). Almost every gateway was provided with a market. Daryaganj, as the name itself suggests was the market along the *darya* (river Yamuna); Next to Idgah was the horse market; the four corners of Jama Masjid provided with four local markets. Further along both sides of the major streets of Shahjahanabad retail shopping arcades (*dakakin*) were there. Faiz Bazaar was the central market provided with goods of high aesthetics, charm and beauty, records Dargah Quli Khan. The market between the fort gate towards Lahori gate was Urdu bazaar, Jauhari bazaar, Chandni Chowk, Fathpuri bazaar and Khari Baoli catering to the needs of the elites.

Shahjahanabad also emerged as the major centre of learning where flocked together scholars not only from different parts of India but also central Asia and Iran. The imperial college was Dar-ul Baqa. During Shahjahan's reign Maulana Sadrudin Khan was the principal of the college. Besides this main centre of learning every mosque had the *madrasa* attached to it. In 1710 Nawab Ghaziuddin Firuz Jung established a *madrasa* outside the Ajmeri gate and Nawab Raushan-ud Daulah in Sunehri Masjid in 1721-22. In 1722 Nawab Sharafuddaula Iradatmand Khan established two *madrasas* in Dariba Kalan and Muhallah Rudgaran. The famous Delhi College was established in 1792.

The city bustled with innumerable people in the streets. Though it is difficult to assess the exact multitude of population in the city, almost all European travellers and Persian chroniclers speak about the crowded streets and myriad population. Salih Kombo has compared Shahjahanabad with Baghdad; while Bernier estimates it to the size of Paris. However, European travellers generally speak about the floating population of the city. Thevenot mentions when the Emperor was in town the population of the city swells to around 400,000, otherwise it reduces to one sixth. Stephen Blake (2017: 67) has estimated population of the city in 1659 around 500,000 but believes that imperial household constituted eighty per cent of it. Writing in 1850 Emily Metcalfe (cited in Chenoy, 2015: 142) records presence of approximately 246 mosques, 147 Hindu temples and 23462 households in Delhi.

25.5 PATTERN OF THE CITISCAPE

There appear common threads in the spatial patterns of the Mughal primate cities. The urban space was integrated to the riverfront scheme, even for Taj no separate site was chosen instead it was integrated to riverfront. All the three primate capital cities were situated on the banks of river Yamuna. The eastern banks of the river were generally open spaces reserved for elephant fights, festivals, fireworks and other royal spectacles.

The fort was a huge structure covered with a high wall, gateways and a moat. It was a city within a city, marked by a central square (*chowk*) and gardens apart from the palaces and administrative buildings.

The centre of the city was the palace; both sides of the palace, flanking the river banks, were generally occupied by the nobles and the elites. Away from the palace were the houses of the commoners. The houses of commoners were small and of thatched roofs, comment Thevenot and Bernier.

Interestingly, leaving Shahjahanabad, which was constructed through a proper plan, one does not find such planning neither at Agra nor at Fatehpur Sikri. While Fatehpur and Shahjahanabad were walled cities, this does not hold good for Agra. The city of Agra expanded beyond its walls.

The *chowks* were the chief centres of commercial activities where flocked the merchants, artisans and the shopkeepers. Shops were all along both sides of the streets.

Bernier, though he comments that the city of Agra was much bigger than Delhi, laments that as a capital it was inferior to Shahjahanabad. He brands Agra as a 'rural' town with narrow and small streets, and praises the straight and broad streets of Shahjahanabad.

Generally the houses of the nobles and elites were situated amidst the gardens (forests, comments Pelsaert).

25.6 MOBILITY OF THE MUGHAL CAPITAL CITIES

The Mughal capitals present a contrast – there was no capital *city*, instead there were capital *cities*. The mobility was the key element of the Mughal capitals. A 'peripatetic pattern' is evident in terms of Mughal capital cities. Though for Babur Agra was the capital city, he spent most of his time in imperial camps which remained his mobile capital all through. Humayun shifted his capital to Delhi (Dinpanah; 1530-1540). However, his political compulsions pushed him towards Lahore (1540-1554) and once again Humayun occupies Delhi and makes it his seat of imperial power till his death in 1556. Akbar begins his capital seat from Delhi (1556-1560). However shifts his capital to Agra in 1560. Again he decides to move the imperial centre little away from Agra, nonetheless, adjacent, to Fatehpur Sikri which he abandons in 1586 to move towards Lahore and remains there till 1596. Thence instead of re-occupying Fatehpur Sikri, he resides at Agra till his death (1605). For Jahangir Agra remained more or less a static capital city. Shahjahan begins his seat from Agra but abandons it in 1648, though during 1639 to 1648 (when he finally shifted to Shahjahanabad) he shuttles between Agra and Delhi. For Aurangzeb for initial twenty years Delhi served the imperial seat, but finally was abandoned in favour of Aurangabad till his death. Interestingly even when it were the capitals Mughal emperors hardly stayed there for long. Agra was Akbar's capital for approximately 36 years out of which 22 years he remained outside the city. Similarly during his 22 years reign Jahangir was at Agra only for 14 years (Sinopoli, 1994: 295-296).

Why was such a peripatetic attitude of the Mughals towards the capital cities? Sinopoli has argued that it was a result of 'local political, military, and logistical conditions that affected imperial stability'. It was also meant to be a 'conspicuous display of imperial wealth'. At ideological front it was 'to symbolically equate king's person with the empire and the desire of individual rulers to define and materially represent their centrality to imperial structure and stability' (Sinopoli, 1994: 296). Akbar's motive behind his shift from Delhi to Agra was 'to dissociate himself from the power and interference of the

traditional elites of Delhi' (Sinopoli, 1994: 300). She further views his shift to Fatehpur Sikri was equally motivated to 'isolate' 'potentially recalcitrant nobles' 'from the resources of wealth and power of Agra' (Sinopoli, 1994: 300).

25.7 SYMBOLISM IN MUGHAL PRIMATE CITIES

Sinopoli (1994: 300) argues that 'Fatehpur Sikri is the most dramatic physical expression of Akbar's concept of kingship... it was in large part a political stage, utilized by the king and court, while the bulk of the economic and military facilities remained in nearby Agra.' Abul Fazl, architect of penning down Akbar's ideas, articulated that 'architecture fulfilled a ceremonial function' that reflected in Fatehpur Sikri constructions to its fullest.

The palace complex at Agra, situated along the banks of Yamuna was a symbolic representation of the supreme divine power of the king (being situated at a high pedestal); while the nobles had to be stationed under the shadow of the royal palace. In between lay the open field, the royal square (*maidan-i shah*) on the banks of Yamuna where king was to inspect troops, royal ceremonies and processions were organised, also a place for royal spectacles, elephant fight, etc. It was also where people assembled for the divine glimpse of the emperor (*jharokha darshan*) (Petrucchioli, 2015: 545).

The symbolism is best illustrated in Panch Mahal and Ekstambha Prasada (Diwan-i Khass). Panch Mahal was directly connected with Akbar's *jharokha darshan*; while Ekstambha Prasada, a single pillar supporting a circular platform, represented 'Akbar's belief in sun worship and to symbolize the ancient Indian concept of world's sustenance through the axis pillar of the cosmic order as daily measured out by the *Surya-Purusha*' (Nath, 2015: 570). It was a 'proto-type of unitary wooden pillar of Gujarat'. 'It was inspired by, and is a reflection of, his [Akbar's] thought and personality' (Nath, 2015: 570).

Commenting on the symbolism of Fatehpur Sikri Petruccioli argues, 'The sequence of enclosures of Diwan-i Amm, the Diwan-i Khass, from the Khwabgah to the so-called Palace of Jodhbai, made-up the setting for a theatrical scheme of arrangement, "an Aula Regis as a simulacrum of the Cosmos", where a *libretto* of performances which take place simultaneously in space and time, like a fresco-sequence, reiterates the divine origin of the god-like prince. The Anup Talao fountain and the Diwan-i Khass, which embody complex symbols, make up at the same time an allegory of spiritual pilgrimage on the part of the Sufi Akbar from the terrestrial world towards Universal and Celestial Harmony, at the centre of which is placed Akbar in the role of Cosmocrat. A subtle play of equivocation between cult of the throne and the cult of the Divine spreads out from this strange building at Fatehpur Sikri across the entire Mughal domain' (Petrucchioli, 2015: 545). 'This was the setting of the daily *darbar*, a sacred representation of the divine origin of the king...' (Petrucchioli, 2015: 545-546).

Similar symbolism is visible in the construction of the capital city of Shahjahanabad. The palace was placed symbolically at the centre of the city, empire and the Universe. 'The Palace was the Theatre of the World. The two porticoed avenues [Faiz Bazaar and Chandni Chowk] project the movement of King of Kings into the heart of the Mughal city where on the occasion of the principal religious and civil feasts (particularly the New Year or the feast of *Nauruz*, and the emperor's birthday), the population, amassed under the porticoes or on the terraces of the houses, participated in a baroque and theatrical ceremony: the slow progression of the Divine 'Presence' of the ruler which dominated the entire procession' (Petrucchioli, 2015: 547).

Shahjahan's new capital city Shahjahanabad thus symbolised the centre of the world.

‘The king was himself the *axis mundi*, the center of the universe. The capital city was located at the centre of the kingdom, the palace-fortress at the center of the city, and the throne of the king at the centre of the universe’ (Blake, 2017: 29). Shahjahan completely dissociated religious authority from the political centre; unlike Akbar in whose Fathpur Sikri Salim Chishti’s tomb and the Jami mosque forms very much part of the centre, Shahjahan did not construct Jami mosque within the palace complex instead built outside thus exclusively placed the ‘royal palace’ the centre of the empire (later Aurangzeb constructed Moti Masjid as part of the palace complex). Thus Shahjahan’s new capital truly symbolises what Liverani argues, ‘the significance of the construction of a new capital was second in symbolic value only to the act of world creation by the gods’ (cited in Sinopoli, 1994: 304).

Thus ‘the Mughal capitals by individual rulers may be viewed as a physical extension of the political and symbolic authority of the ruler, as well as a means of distinguishing a ruler from its predecessors’; it can be looked in the ‘broader framework of imperial strategies for expressions of power and legitimation’ (Sinopoli, 1994: 304-305).

25.8 SUMMARY

The primate cities of Agra-Fathpur Sikri-Shahjahanabad derived their strength for being the capital cities of the empire, nonetheless, they were vibrant trading and commercial centres as well as production centres. They flourished and survived even when they were no longer the capitals of the empire. In these primate cities riverine landscape occupied the centre in the spatial settings; the palace and the nobles’ houses occupied the riverine front. The fort, fortification walls, the central mosque and the *chowk* (*chaharsuq*) occupied the principal spaces in the scheme. While the principal mosque very much formed part of the fort structures, both at Agra and Fathpur Sikri, Shahjahan separated the two and kept the mosque outside the fort – symbolising the authority of the monarch above religious authority. Agra and Fathpur Sikri show lack of planning, but Shahjahanabad was perfectly planned. Early capital towns (Agra and Sikri) strongly suggest central Asian impact where camps were being transformed into the built in structures as is starkly evident in Akbar’s Sikri. Nonetheless, impact of indigenous artisans and provincial styles – Gujarat-Rajasthan (Yamuna-Chambal) – is also clearly evident.

25.9 EXERCISES

- 1) Discuss the growth of the city of Agra under the Mughals.
- 2) Why did Shahjahan decided to shift his capital city to Shahjahanabad? What were the characteristics of the city of Shahjahanabad?
- 3) Compare Agra, Fathpur Sikri and Shahjahanabad as Mughal capital towns.
- 4) Do you agree that Mughal capital Shahjahanabad was the planned city?
- 5) Mughal capitals so designed were *camps in stone*. Comment.
- 6) Mughal primate cities are the symbolic representation of the supreme divine power of the king. Comment.

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UNIT 26 SACRED CITY SPACES: AJMER-BANARAS-PANDHARPUR*

Structure

- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 Ajmer
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- 26.5 Summary
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26.1 INTRODUCTION

In the present Unit we intend to bring to light the trajectories of the sacred cities in the medieval period. Among Ajmer, Banaras and Pandharpur, the antiquity and vibrancy of Banaras never seems to have died at any point of time. Ajmer, though an important capital centre of the Chauhans, reached its height as a significant '*sufi*' centre during the medieval period. Similarly, Pandharpur, prominent centre of Vithoba *bhakti* tradition, exclusively owes its emergence being the centre of activities of the Vithoba cult in the medieval period. The scope of the present Unit is to trace the development of sacred centres during the medieval period, the developments in the later centuries are largely kept out of the discussions. These cities are articulated to buttress their role as premier pilgrimage destinations. The institution of pilgrimage, though a pan-human phenomenon, is an integral part of Indian tradition. Millions of Indians periodically pay visits to their respective *tirthas* with a desire to *purify* soul and attain solution to their mundane problems. Let us see in the medieval period what role did *religion* play in the growth of cities and how cities, faith and growth were interlinked.

26.2 AJMER

Ajmer as a city has a long antiquity. *Prithviraja Vijaya*, composed in 1190, is full of praises of the enchanting beauty of the region:

Ajaimeru (Ajmer) is full of temples of gods, and is thus like Meru, the abode of gods...Baoris, wells, talaos, Pyavoos (water stalls) are full of water here. People sitting in the jharokas enjoy the cool breeze of the Ganges of Paradise. The Varuna...(god of water) has come and taken shelter in the wells on the hill-fort of Ajmer...The increasing prosperity of the city has laid low the pride of Amaravati (the mythical city of god Indra). Other cities where there are thieves, tyrannical rulers, and poor and famine-stricken people, cannot come up to this city, which knows these things not...The city of Rama won after crossing the sea (the golden Lanka) and that founded by Krishna in the sea (Dwarka), are not fit to be slave girls to this city (cited in Sarda, 2011: 30-31).

Clearly, in spite of *Prithviraja Vijaya*'s hyperbolic representation, it does indicate that the city was bustling with life, with people. Today we identify the city synonym with *sufi*

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activities. However, by eighth century it was a vibrant town and chief centre of Jain activities which is attested to by the presence of Digambar Jain Thadas and Chhatrees of Jain Acharyas and Bhattarakas (Sarda, 2011: 30). By the time of Ajairaj/Annaji (1130-1150), who built the Ana Sagar Lake, Ajmer seems to have emerged a prominent centre of Hindu faith. *Prithviraja Vijaya* records a number of temples built by Visaldeva (1151-1163). He also constructed Visalsar (Visla) lake and a college at Ajmer. Ajmer tasted the first onslaught of Muslim invasion as early as 1191-1192 when Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghori wrested Ajmer from Prithviraj Chauhan and converted Visalsar college into a mosque – Arai Din Ka Jhonpra (According to a Jain tradition it was a Jain temple built by Seth Vikramadeva Kala). Hasan Nizami, who accompanied Shihabuddin's forces, got mesmerised by the enchanting beauty of the city:

The courtyard of the garden had been draped in the seven-coloured velvet and the surface of mountains and deserts had become objects of envy for the picture gallery of China...and that the choicest of the lucky heavenly bodies had assembled at one place,...

The morning breeze had diffused fragrance in the courtyard of the garden, and the zephyr had burnt aloe-wood in the green surroundings. The soul nourishing northern wind was carrying in its skirt and sleeves fresh ambergris brought from a heap of jasmine... There were streams of limpid water as palatable as the water of *Kausar* [the spring water of paradise], and so clean that pebbles lying in its bottom could be clearly seen even in a dark night. Astonishingly the water was as sweet as the water of *Salsabeel* [a spring in paradise] and so agreeable that it seemed to be possessing the property of the water of life.

Although the city and the surrounding areas presented an attractive appearance on account of the pretty blossoms and flowers growing all around, it was due to its pleasant climate and abundance of water and trees that it had become an extremely delightful place (Nizami, 1998: 62-64).

The city is the abode of famous Chishti *sufi* saint Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti who accompanied Shihabuddin Ghori. Situated in the spurs of Taragarh hill it has its principal entrance gate towards north. Besides, it has five smaller gates two towards east opening in the Khadim *mohalla* and three towards west (one towards burial ground, other towards Akbari mosque, street leading to Tripolia Gate and the third through the *mahfilkhana*). However, in spite of being the chief centre of *sufi* activities, it appears that throughout the Sultanate period the city largely remained in abeyance. It is recorded that as late as mid-fifteenth century 'tigers used to roam where the tomb of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti stands' (Sarda, 2011: 32); though we do get the reference that Iltutmish (in 1227) and Muhammad bin Tughluq (1332) did visit Ajmer to pay their homage to the Khwaja's tomb. In 1464 Mallu Khan, then governor of Ajmer, built a mausoleum over the tomb of the Khwaja as well as constructed two Malusar tanks, and a garden to the south of Ajmer at the spurs of the Taragarh Hills. Sultan Bahlul Lodi (r. 1451-1488) and Sher Shah Sur's (1544) visits to the shrine is also recorded by Ahmad Yadgar and Abdullah respectively. In 1535 Rao Maldeo of Malwa took possession of Ajmer. He got the fortress strengthened.

The city emerges prominently during Akbar's reign. It was in 1556 that Ajmer passed into the hands of Akbar. History is filled with the romantic association Akbar shared with the city – his thanksgiving pilgrimage on foot from Agra to Ajmer after the birth of Prince Salim in 1569. Since then almost every year Akbar paid regular visits to the city and the revered tomb till 1580. Strangely after 1580 there was not a single visit paid by the emperor in rest of his long another twenty five years' reign.

Thus the city had more to offer than simply being the adorned *sufi* centre. It was its 'strategic position combined with commercial importance... No ruler of Delhi could control the commercial emporium of Gujarat without controlling the trade-route which passed through Ajmer... Ajmer, the *point d'appui* of Rajputana, served as a watch-tower over the neighbouring states of Mewar and Marwar' (Tirmizi, 1968: 9,11). This explains, apart from Akbar's religious inclinations for the place, why did Akbar pay regular visits to Ajmer so regularly in the early years of his reign and why did his regular visits stop after 1580. By 1580 almost entire Rajputana sans Mewar came under Akbar's sway. Akbar consolidated his position which is clearly reflected in his reorganisation of administration leading to formation of *subas*. Thus in 1580 Akbar created a separate *suba* Ajmer to be governed by a *subadar*. This explains why he discontinued his regular visits to Ajmer. There existed an uneasy calm between the Mewar rulers and the Mughals leading to Jahangir moving to Ajmer once again. Jahangir made Ajmer his headquarter during his campaign against Rana Amar Singh of Mewar and stayed there for long three years (1613-16) to settle the state of affairs resulting in the golden handshake of the Rana and the Mughal emperor with the signing of the treaty in 1615. Thence onwards peace continued in the region throughout Shahjahan's reign. Shahjahan, along with his daughter Jahan Ara Begum, was a regular visitor to the city and the shrine which appears to be purely guided by her veneration of faith in the Khwaja and his shrine. However, once again Aurangzeb's visits coincided with the existing political turmoil in the region. Aurangzeb faced three encounters in the vicinity of Ajmer – first he fought against Dara Shikoh at Deorai, four miles south of Ajmer in 1659; second in 1679 he made Ajmer his headquarter to annex Marwar following Raja Jaswant Singh's death; and the third in 1680-81 when Prince Akbar raised the banner of revolt against his father, Aurangzeb. During his stays Aurangzeb paid visits to the shrine. However, after 1681 Aurangzeb moved towards Deccan not to return ever. In the first half of the eighteenth century there were constant clashes between the Kachhwaha rulers and the Mughals over the supremacy of Ajmer. Finally, in 1756 Marathas wrested it from Abhay Singh and finally it was ceded to Sir David Ochterlony in 1818 by Bapu Sindhia.

These political developments altered the cityscape substantially. The major constructions were undertaken during Akbar's reign. Akbar provided the city its city wall with strong ramparts and a deep moat. The city wall had five ornamental lofty gates – Delhi, Madar, Usri, Agra and Tripolia. Abul Fazl mentions the fort on a hill as 'one of the most important in India' (Abul Fazl, 1978: II, 278). He repaired and extended the existing old fort and built a palace called Daulatkhana. The lofty and imposing main entrance gateway of Akbar faces the city - Nayabazar. He also built the Khas Bazaar, Dargah Bazaar and added a mosque to the *dargah* (Akbari Masjid, 1570, built of red sandstone). Akbar's governor Ismail Quli Khan built Buland Darwaza in 1569-70 on the shrine of Miran Saiyyad Husain (Sarda, 2011: 33; Narayan, 1997: 169). William Finch (1608-1611) though praises the palace and Akbar's other constructions found the city structures of a moderate level, 'Asmere [Ajmer], seated upon the top of an inaccessible mountaine of 3c. ascent, being a fort invincible; the citie at the foot not great, inclosed with a stone wall, ditched round, the buildings reasonable faire; without the wals are many antiquities, amongst which, some 2c. toward Agra, is a very faire tanke [Ana Sagar]' (Foster, 2012: 170-171).



Akbar's Fort, Ajmer

Photograph by Aditya Vijayavargia, April 2013

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/10/Main_Entrance_of_Akbar%27s_Fort.jpg

Jahangir was a great naturalist and it was natural for him to fall in love with the enchanting beauty of lakes of Ajmer. During his long three years stay he built a palace and gardens (Daulat Bagh and Kaiser Bagh) on the *chashma* of Hafiz Jamal which he named *chashma-i Nur* (ruins of which still survive on the Pushkar Lake behind Jodhpur Ghat). Jahangir was so enamoured with the beauty of the place that he records that he visited the place thirty-eight times during his stay of three years at Ajmer. Jahangir also ordered to carve out an elephant in stone. Where the statue was laid the whole *mohalla* came to be known as Hathi Bhata (lit. elephant in stone). Shahjahan added a marble mosque in 1637 to the west of the Muinuddin Chishti's tomb. He also built a marble parapet with arched roofs, and five *baradaris* (pavilions) of marble and a hammam (Turkish bath) against the picturesque settings of Ana Sagar. Princess Jahan Ara Begum got erected the present Begami Dalan of the Dargah in 1648 (Moini, 2015: 147). Two ladies of the Mughal *harem* built two mosques during Shahjahan's reign – one was built

in 1643 by Miya Bai, the wet nurse and female attendant of Princess Zebunnisa Begum built opposite Motikatra; and another by Tansen's daughter Bai Tilokdi (Tilok Devi), who was also a musician (*kalavant*) in 1652 in Dargah Bazar. No monument was built by Aurangzeb here. However, Saiyyid Brothers built a mausoleum of their father here. The Maratha governor Santooji did constructed a garden Chishti Chaman in 1769 outside Madar Gate which was later converted into a *sarai*. Later in 1773 Mirza Chaman Beg on behalf of Mahadji Sindhia built an Idgah. In 1791 Sivaji Nana built on the Taragarh Hill a Jhalra (water reservoir) known as Nana Sahib ka Jhalra. He also designed the Naya Bazaar.

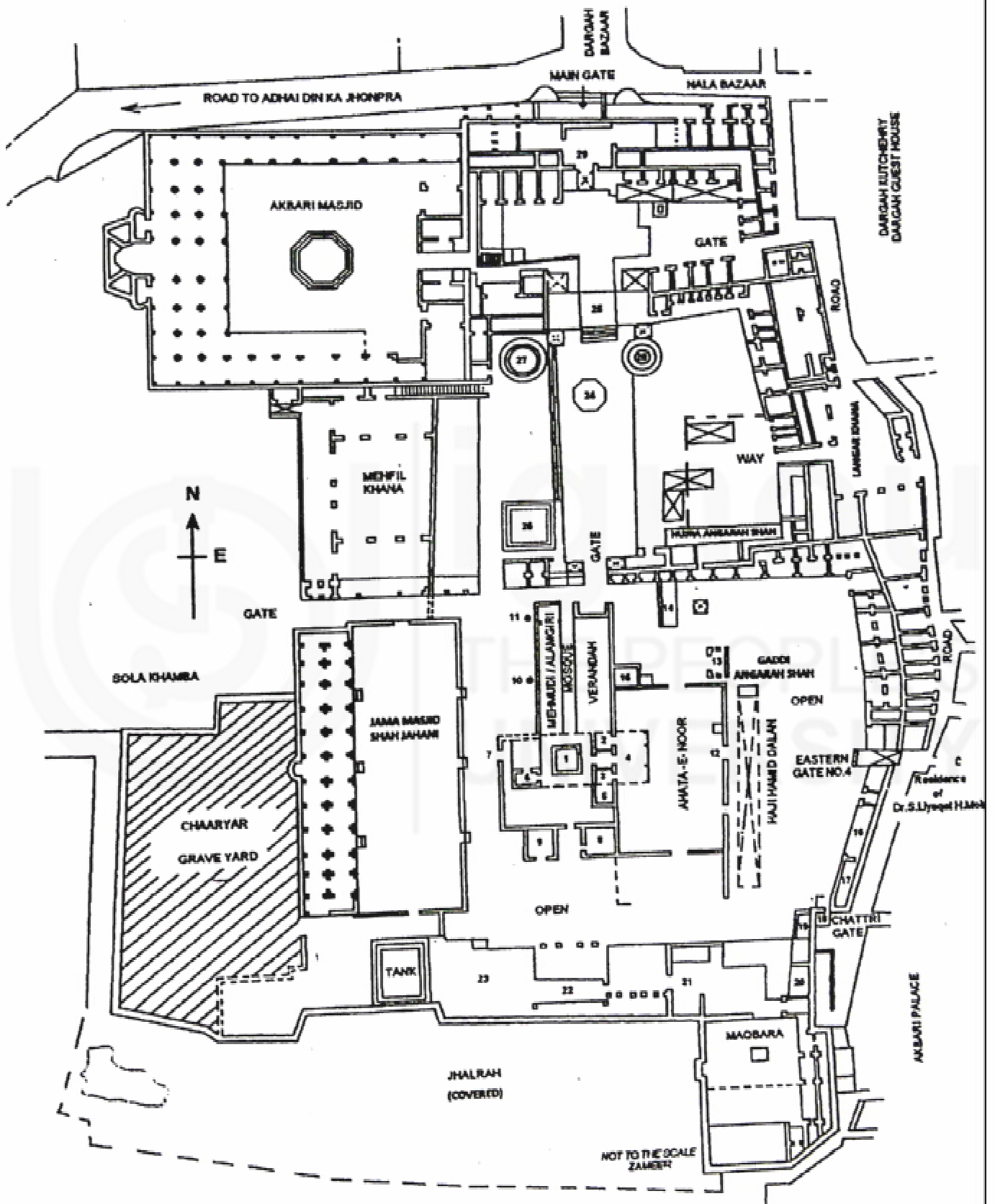


Baradari on Anasagar Lake

Photograph by Singh92Karan, July 2011

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/96/Panoramic_view_of_Anasagar.jpg

Population wise the city of Ajmer appears to be a humble town. In the census of 1837 its population recorded was merely 23,432; which in 1871 increased to 26,569 and it rose to 73,839 in 1901 (Sarda, 2011: 268, 271). However, town being the chief *sufi* centre must have attracted considerable floating population, converging into the city at the time of the *urs* and also at the time of the fair held at Pushkar, the holy city of the Hindus, where housed the famous temple of Brahma and the Brahma Sarovar. Watson (1904: 40) records that at the time of the *urs* in the month of Rajab [1-6], which lasts for six days approximately 25000 visit the city for pilgrimage every year; while Sarda (2011: 17) mentions the figure of pilgrims visiting the *dargah* at the time of the *urs* is about 50,000. Though we do not have population figures of early period, it appears that the Muslim population of the city was considerable (in 1881 as against 29270 Hindus there were 18702 Muslims). Watson (1904: 34) informs that the 'Musalmans in the district are chiefly the attendants on the Muhammadan shrines, and most of them hold revenue-free land in the *jagir* villages attached to these institutions. Sarda (2011: 21-22) also records that 'the indigenous Musalmans' were chiefly '*khadims* of the *dargah*' and also were the converted Muslims the Deswalis and the Inderkotis. During Akbar's period the city had the annual revenues of 1,22,56,297 *dams* out of which 802440 formed part of *suyurghal* (revenue free grant) confirms Sarda's statement that the city got liberal grants from the Mughal rulers (Abul Fazl, 1978: 278). Surely the pilgrims visiting the city were the chief revenue generators for the city; their presence must have enhanced the commercial activities in the city. We do not have much record as far as houses of commoners are concerned. When Sir Thomas Roe visited the city in 1616 he comments, 'The king now resides in a base old city wherein is no house but of mud, not so great as a cottage of Hounslow Heath, only himself hath one of stone His Lords live in tents' (cited in Sarda, 2011: 34). Mughal nobles also established suburbs – in 1704 Sayad Abdullah Khan built Abdullahpura consisting of a tomb for his wife, a mosque and a garden.



Plan of *Dargah* of Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti
Courtesy: Moini, Syed Liyaqat Hussain, (2015) *The Dargah of "Khwaja Gharib-Un Nawaz" of Ajmer* (Jodhpur: Book Treasure), p. 300.

The city presents remarkable tradition of syncreticism. The liberal grants to the shrine were given not only by the Muslim rulers/officers/commoners but also by their Hindu counterparts. A number of *vakalatnamas* of Hindus survive to this date attesting to the liberal grants made by them to the shrine. Even till 1821 a number of Hindus were getting daily subsistence allowance from the shrine. Such was/is the tradition of the *dargah* and the city that the Hindu Basant festival is still officially celebrated at the *dargah* both by the Hindu and the Muslim subjects. Similarly, on Holi Hindus visit the *dargah* and rub *gulal* at the steps of the main gate of the *Dargah*, singing in praise of the Khwaja. Even during Dipawali the Hindu devotees light the lamp at the *dargah*. As late as 1818 the chief priest of the city Bhairon temple was a Muslim, Abdullah Shah (Moini, 2015: Chapter III).

The city was not much known for its manufactures. However, the city produced cotton and leather. Among the coarse cotton produce were : *reza khes*, *dhoti susi*, *charkhana chadar*, carpets and rugs. The city is also abundantly provided with sandal-wood related items, incense and rosaries to cater to the pilgrims. Since it was the convergence point for trade there resided wealthy *seths* (mahajans and banias – Oswals, Agarwals, Maheshwaris, Bijbairagis) involved in commercial activities. Oswal *seths* have a number of *chhatris* and *chabutaras* in Dada Bari. The houses of the rich were studded with rich wood and stone carvings (Watson, 1904: 26, 63-66, 74).

26.3 BANARAS

The plaque on the Manikarnika Ghat aptly defines the city of Banaras:

This is Manikarnika
Where death is auspicious
Where life is fruitful
Where one grazes the pastures of heaven.
There is no tirtha like Kashi
There is no linga like Vishveshvara,
Not in the whole Universe.
(Eck, 1983: 238)

The city of Kashi, popularly known as Banaras during the medieval and the British periods, after independence, in 1956 was renamed Varanasi. It was also given the name Avimukta (never forsaken), Anandavana (forest of bliss), Rudravasa (abode of Shiva). Kashi is all pervading – there is Uttar Kashi in the Himalayas and Shiva Kashi in the Tamil South. Kashi (Baranasi, so mentioned in the Buddhist *Jataka*), the capital city of the ancient Kashi Kingdom (*mahajanapada*) enjoyed special place among the sacred centres of India, a *tirtha*, a place where *moksha* (*nirvana*) can be achieved. In the Shastric tradition Kashi is believed to be the ‘genesis of the universe’ and the ‘navel’ of the world. It has the honour of being one of the most revered places for the Hindus – the city of the Shiva, with hundreds of Shiva temples. However, Shiva does not have the *exclusive* presence, instead its equally important for the Jains and the Buddhists. Gautam Buddha came here to preach his first sermon (at Sarnath, 10 kms from the old city). When Xuan Zang (646) visited Varanasi he records presence of thirty Buddhist monasteries and three thousand monks. Sherring remarks that, ‘lands lying on the banks of the Ganges to the northeast of the river Barna’ formed part of the Buddhist remains. According to the Jaina tradition their seventh *Tirthankar* Suparshva and twenty-third *Tirthankar* Parshvanath were born here. Mahavir himself visited Varanasi and preached here. Jaina scholar Jina Prabha Suri who visited Varanasi in the fourteenth century does mention the presence of Parshavanatha temple (still extant in the Jaina compound,

Bhelupura) in Kashi. Even he identifies 'Buddhist pillars' within the Gyanvapi mosque and a few Buddhist remains near Bisheshwar temple. *Mahabharata*, Buddhist *Jatakas* and Jaina *Agamas* refer to Varanasi (so derived its name for being situated between the Varna and Asi rivers), and Baranasi in Pali from which the term Banaras is derived. Heber, who visited the city in 1824 was full of praise for the Jain temple that he visited. Situated on the western bank of river Ganga, it possesses series of picturesque *ghats* all along the river in a radius of about three miles. Its vast sacred expanse is truly reflected in a pilgrim's statement mentioned in the *Padma Purana* (cited in Eck, 1983: xvi): "Making a pilgrimage there in Banaras everyday for a whole year, still she did not reach all the sacred places. For in Banaras there is a sacred place in every step."

The city has history of almost 2500 years. It is the place where great sages like Buddha, Mahavir and Shankar gathered to deliver their message. *Kashi Mahatmya* is narrated in a number of *Puranas* (*Skanda Purana*, *Brahmavaivarta Purana*). Sherring (2002: 7) speaks admiringly:

Benares is a city of no mean antiquity. Twenty-five centuries ago, at least, it was famous. When Babylon was struggling with Nineveh for supremacy, when Tyre was planting her colonies, when Athens was growing in strength, before Rome had become known, or Greece had contended with Persia, or Cyrus had added luster to the Persian monarchy, or Nebuchadnezzar had captured Jerusalem, ... she [Banaras] had already risen to greatness, if not to glory.

Eck (1983: 6) applauds, 'There are few cities in India as traditionally Hindu and as symbolic of the whole of Hindu culture as the city of Banaras.' Ralph Fitch (1584) found the city where 'they all be Gentiles'. Bishop Heber (1828: 371), visiting in the early nineteenth century, also echoes in the same voice, 'a very remarkable city, more entirely and characteristically Eastern'. Bernier mentions it 'Athens of India'; while others have compared it with 'Jerusalem' and 'Mecca' for Hindus. The sense of the sacred city pervades everywhere as rightly pointed out by Eck (1983: 19): 'A multitude of Hindu deities is visible everywhere in Banaras. Over the doorways of temples and houses. ... On the walls of tea stalls and tailor shops. ... And on the whitewashed walls of houses and public buildings.'

The oldest city was located in the Rajghat plateau fronting the Ganges on its east and skirted by Varna towards west and the north where situated the Adi Keshava temple on the confluence of Varna and the Ganges. The Gahadavalas made Kashi as their capital and thus provided the political patronage to the city, made liberal religious grants. However, in the year 1193-94 Qutbuddin Aibak's army destroyed the city from which it could never recover. The city later developed along the Ganges on the high ridge to the south of the Rajghat plateau. To the west of this high ridge are located the lower lands dotted with a number of lakes and ponds (*kunds* and *talab*) – Mandakini, Matsyodari, Benia/Veni, etc. (James Prinsep's map of 1822 records as many as 33 such water bodies out of which many have vanished since then).

The city is divided into four¹ broad sacred zones (Kashi, Varanasi, Avimukta and Vishvanath Antargriha) each with a distinct circumambulation path (*pradakshinapatha*); Kashi had the circumambulation path of five days with 108 temples along the circumambulation path; while other circumambulations are for a day; and that of *Antargriha* could be completed within an hour or two. The innermost zone is where the chief deity Shiva Vishvanatha is located; while Kashi is the outermost and the biggest circle comprised of five *kroshas* (*panchakrosha*; Kashi, Varanasi, Avimukta, Antargriha, and the central *linga* of Vishvanatha). The Dehali Vinayaka (a form of Ganesha) temple,

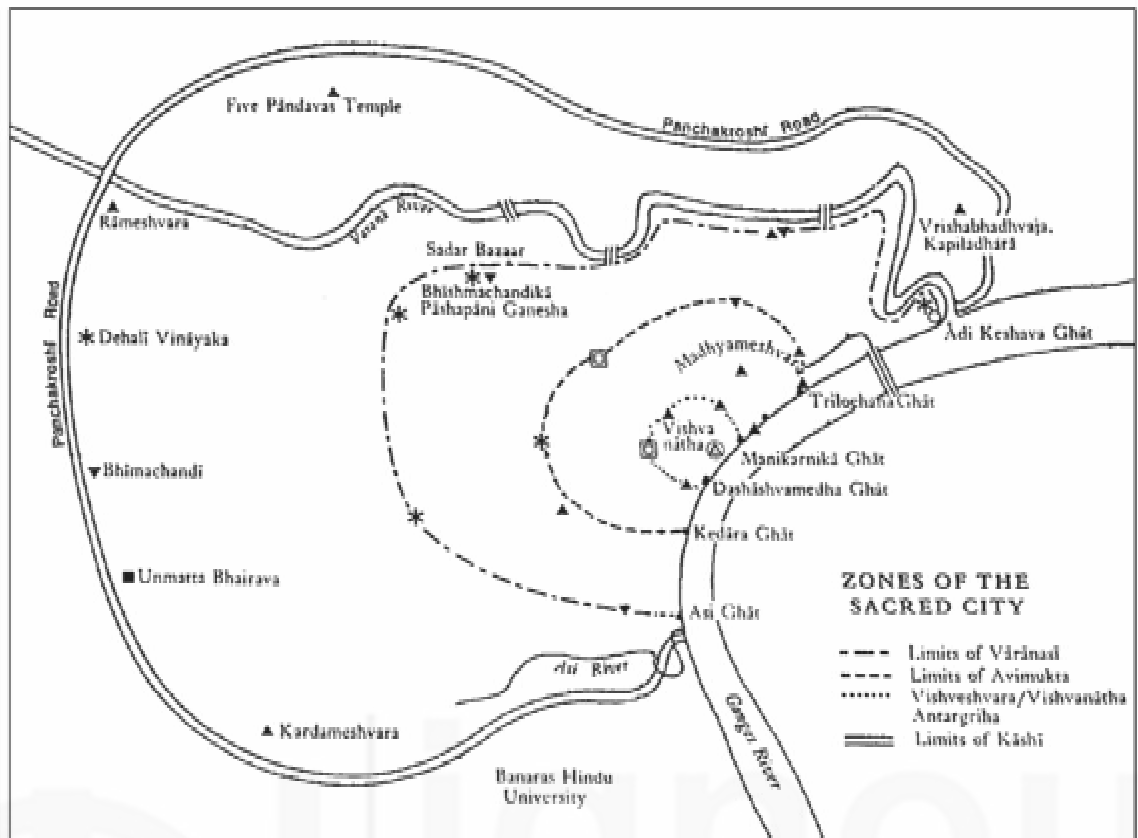
¹ Sherring (2002: 93), however, speaks of three grand divisions of the city – Benares, Kasi and Kedar.

situated along the Kashi zone served as the guardian, the 'western door' of Kashi. The circumambulation path of Kashi begins from the centre, from Manikarnika Ghat with successive halts at Kardameshvara, Bhimachandi, Rameshvara, Five Pandavas and finally the Vrishabhadvaja Kapiladhara, terminating at Vishvanatha temple. The *Antargriha* which comprised the Vishvanath temple had three supreme fields, based on the analogy of Shiva trident, the Omkara Khanda in the north, Vishveshvara Khanda at the centre and Kedar Khanda in the south (Eck, 1983: 351-357).

Ghats and Kunds of Banaras



Ghats and Water Bodies in Banaras [After Eck, Diana L., *Banaras: City of Light*, London: Routledge, facing page 2]



Sacred Zones in Banaras [After Eck, Diana L., *Banaras: City of Light*, London: Routledge, p. 351]



Three Khandas of Banaras [After Eck, Diana L., *Banaras: City of Light*, London: Routledge, p. 356]

The dominant Hindu deity is Lord Shiva (Kedareshvara) who is said to have taken permanent abode here. Xuan Zang mentions that 'Maheshvara Deva' was worshipped in more than hundred temples and some of the worshippers were 'radical ascetics, going without clothing and smearing their bodies with ashes' – a feature still predominates the Shiva city (Eck, 1983: 71). The central place in the spatial pilgrimage route occupied by Vishveshvaraya temple; however, it was not always the case. Prior to the fourteenth century Omkareshvara and Avimuktesvarlingas were predominant, later when *Kashi Khanda* was compiled in the fourteenth century Vishveshvaraya linga assumed prominence and enjoys the prominence since then (Eck, 1983).



Vishveshvaraya (Kashi-Vishvanath) Temple, c. 1920

Source: *Benares: The Golden Temple, India, ca. 1915*

Photographs from the Centre for the Study of World Christianity, University of Edinburgh, U.K., ca.1900-ca.1940s; <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/divinity/research/centres/world-christianity/collections-resources>; https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/eb/Benares_The_Golden_Temple%2C_India%2C_ca._1915_%28IMP-CSCNWW33-OS14-66%29.jpg

All along the temple are series of *ashramas* (Anandamayi, Kabir Math, Shankaracharya math, Niranjani akhara, etc.) where the tradition of spiritual education is still continuing. The city is an important centre of Vedic education. *Ashramas* are also centres where yogic exercises and meditations are regularly performed; while the *ghats* along the river are centres where thousands take ritual dips daily. Here lived the great sages – Patanjali (2 century BCE), Shankara (8th century) Ramanuja (11th century), Madhav, Vallabha, Vira Shaivas, Gorakhnathis, Aghoris, Kabir Panthis all have their monastery (*math*) here. Heber (1828: 384) is also full of praise of Banaras ghats ‘crowded with bathers and worshippers’. In the medieval period as well the city continued to enjoy the status of centre of high learning and intellectual thought. Bernier (1916: 334) records: ‘The town...resembles rather the schools of the ancients; the masters being dispersed over different parts of the town in private houses, and principally in the gardens of the suburbs...Some of these masters have four disciples...and the most eminent may have twelve or fifteen.’ They taught Sanskrit, Vedas, Puranas, philosophy, medicine and astronomy, records Bernier. He also mentions presence of a large hall (library) full of books. The city was the convergence point of literary ideas across India. Maharashtra Brahmins migrated to Kashi and became votaries of intellectual life in Banaras. Narayan Bhatta was the chief force behind the construction of Vishvanatha temple in late 1500. He compiled *Tristhalisetu* (on Kashi, Prayaga and Gaya). Ramananda (15th c.) lit the torch of *bhakti* at Panchganga Ghat – both Tulsi Das and Kabir were said to be his disciples. In the seventeenth century, another migrant from Andhra region Jagannatha Pandita, a Telugu Brahman, got settled in Banaras and composed *Ganga Lahari* in praise of Ganges.

In the medieval period the city represented dominance of the Indo-Islamic character which is largely evident in its built in environment – mosques, bazaars, tombs and gardens. Sandria Freitag calls it a ‘mughalizing’ city. However, Madhuri Desai (2012: 24) looks at these developments as more a ‘long term manifestation of the syncretic culture of northern India.’ Aurangzeb even renamed the city as Muhammadabad, however, the name could not get currency and Kashi continued to remain in the popular memory. Among the Islamic buildings in 1659 Aurangzeb built a mosque near Ratneshwar temple and another near Brihadeshwar temple; in 1669 Dharahara mosque was built. Besides, a number of *ghats* and temples were also constructed during this period. Rao Surjan built Bundiparkota Ghat in the late sixteenth century. Manmandir and Manmandir Ghat and Kanganwali Haveli on Panchaganga Ghat were built by the Maharajas of Jaipur in c. 1600; Kedar temple and Kedar Ghat and Kumarasvami math nearby were built by Kumarakurupar of south India under Mughal patronage in 1695.

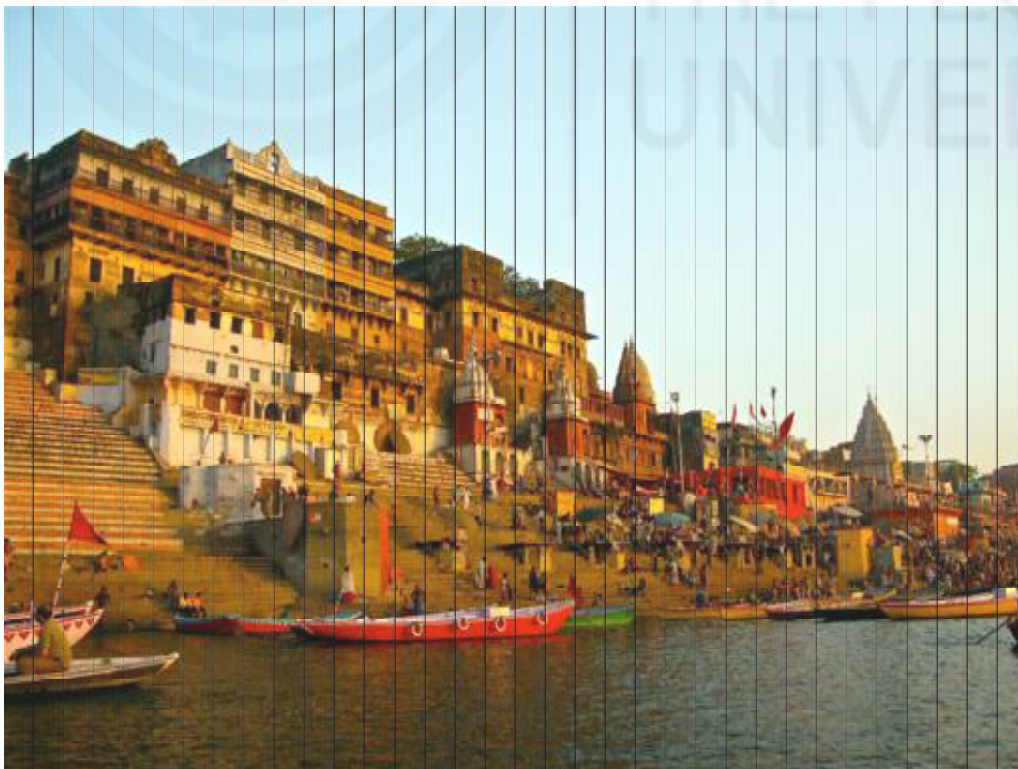
However, it is rightly stated by Altekar that modern Banaras is the creation of the Marathas. In the eighteenth century Marathas and Peshwas added and repaired a few existing structures on to the Brahmanical landscape of the city. In 1730s Peshwas built Brahma and Durga Ghats. In 1735 Awadh Nawab’s noble Meer Rustam Ali built Meer Pushta on Meer Ghat and Rana of Udaipur constructed Rana Mahal in 1785. Ahilyabai Holkar added Manikarnika Kund on Manikarnika Ghat (1791) and constructed Gautameshvar/Tarakeshvar temple to add to the religious landscape; Dashashvamedha and Manikarnika Ghats were made public *ghats*. She also constructed in 1789 Ahilyabai Brahmapuri (for Brahmana priests) and Ahilyabai Wada against the backdrop of the Dashashvamedha Ghat. Madhuri Desai (2012: 29) argues that, ‘These *ghats* were constructed to accommodate, or realize, the city’s textualized sacred geography as a spiritual public space...they [Manikarnika and Dashashvamedha Ghats] began to represent the quintessential Banarasi image that has been the source of so much picturesque representation.’ Later, in the nineteenth century a number of temples (Prayageshvara on Dashashvamedha Ghat and Amethi Shiv temple on Manikarnika Ghat) were also constructed, asserting its ritualistic Banarasi identity further.



Islamic Imprints in Kashi: Aurangzeb's (Dharahara) Mosque

Photo by Man (author), July 2009; Originally posted to Flickr as [1]

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0c/Alamgir_Mosque_by_the_Ganges_ghats%2C_Varanasi.jpg



Ahilya Ghat

Photograph by Ken Wieland; March, 2009

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/04/Ahilya_Ghat_by_the_Ganges%2C_Varanasi.jpg

Throughout the medieval period the city shared high level of syncretic tradition and one does not find any Hindu-Muslim conflict during the medieval period. The first communal 'riot' in Banaras is reported in 1809, at Gyanvapi/Vishvanath site.

The morphology of the town presents the city with a 'maze' of narrow lanes. Bishop Heber (1828: 371-72), who passed through the city in 1824-25, complains that 'streets are [not] wide enough for a wheel-carriage', 'alleys so crowded, so narrow, and so winding, that even a tonjon [an open chair carried by bearers on their shoulders; *palki*] passed with difficulty' where 'the sacred bulls devoted to Siva... walk lazily up and down these narrow streets or seen lying across them...' The population of the city was quite considerable. Heber (1828: 382) records its population by 1803 census numbered 582000. Twining who visited Banaras in 1794 estimated the population of the city approximately 400000-500000 people. Viscount Valentia (1805) mentions that Muslims here are one in ten. He records that pilgrims, apart from various parts of India, also flock to the city from as far as Tibet and Burma (Heber, 1828: 374). Sherring (2002: 338) also mentions Banaras being the favourite 'resort' for the 'native princes'. Marathas, Peshwas had their permanent residences in the city. Heber is full of praise for the lofty houses 'none... less than two stories, most of three, and several of five or six... The streets... are considerably lower than the ground-floors of the houses, which have mostly arched rows in front with little shops behind them... the houses are richly embellished with verandahs, galleries, projecting oriel windows, and very broad and overhanging eaves, supported by carved brackets.'

Heber applauds equally the commercial potential of the city: 'Benares is, in fact, a very industrious and wealthy as well as a very holy city' (Heber, 1828: 381). He praises its marts which were full of commodities like shawls from the north, diamonds from south and muslin from Dacca and other luxury items from Lucknow, Monghyr transported through the 'main artery of the Ganges' (Heber, 1828: 382). Besides, the city was also known for her own products – silk, cotton and fine woollens. Sherring informs that a considerable amount of trade in sugar, saltpetre, and indigo was done every year. He also praises the fine gold embroidery, kincob (kimkhab) and filigree in gold produced in the city (Sherring, 2002: 329). Sherring equally praises the 'extensive fraternity of bankers' who largely conducted their business in Chaukhamba street.

In the eighteenth century the city passed into the hands of Kashiraj (kings of Kashi) – Mansaram, Balwant Singh and Chet Singh. Chet Singh gave stout resistance to British power but had to surrender and in 1794 the city finally came under British administration. British altered the city's landscape: the narrow roads were broadened and the *chowk* thus cleared came into existence the modern Dashashvamedha Luxa road. In the process many ponds and lakes were filled. Soon Christian influence began with the establishment of Church Missionary Society. In the field of education the traditional *guru-shishya parampara* took a backseat with the establishment of the Sanskrit College in Banaras in 1791, later known as Queen's College. In 1904 Madan Mohan Malaviya laid the foundation of Banaras Hindu University.

26.4 PANDHARPUR

Pandharpur, 72 kilometres away from Sholapur, is situated under the picturesque terrain of Bhima/Chandrabhaga (called Chandrabhaga on account of having shape of a crescent moon) river in the state of Maharashtra. The Varkari saint-poetess Bahinabai has captured the beauty of the town in beautiful verse:

- 1 Such is the glory of Bhima river, pervading all our being,
That Brahma is speechless when attempting to describe it
 - ...
 - 3 It is here that the Bhima and the Candrabhaga unite,
How can one sufficiently praise their glory?
 - ...
 - 9 Even the gods come together here to bathe,
Riding here at mid-day in their Vimanas,
 - ...
 - 11 Blessed is Pundalika ! Blessed his devotion !
Through him the sacred place experienced its greatness.
- (Deleury, 1969: 22-23)

The town lies on the right (west) bank of the river in the Bhima-Upper Krishna basin. The basin itself is bounded on the north by Balaghat ranges; on the west lies the Sahyadri mountain range; towards south is situated the Gandharvad range while towards east lies the slope and the low plains. The town is also almost the convergent point of Marathi-Kannada languages. Geopolitically, it is also situated on the prime communication lines from Ahmadnagar, Poona, Kolhapur, Bijapur and Sholapur; situated too close to the nerve centre of the Deccan on account of which most of its history is shadowed by internecine political struggles [Gulbarga, Bidar, Vijayanagar, Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar] (Deleury, 1969: 23-24). Though the town was strategically located it could never develop as a prominent trading centre or a commercially viable link. The land around the city was fertile, but it could not be rated among rich regions from the point of view of agriculture either. The chief produce being cotton and millets (jowar and bajra).



The town exclusively owes its existence to the rise of *bhakti* tradition in the region. Presently, it is known as southern Kashi of India so also *bhuvaikuntha* (paradise on earth) and occupies the status of *kuladevata* of Maharashtra.

The saga of the presiding deity Sri Vitthala/Vithoba of the town passed through innumerable ups and downs. The great temple is connected with the Varkari Sampradaya, a Vaishnavite sect. However, in contrast they are not the followers of Ramanuja but that of Shankara, thus followers of *advaita* (non-dualistic philosophy), their Bible is *Jnaneshvari* of Sant Jnaneshvar/Jnanadeva, composed in 1290. They possessed extremely eclectic outlook. Pandharpur has imbibed unique blend of liberal tradition based on the *bhakti* of both Hari (Vishnu) and Hare (Shiva) and its poet-saints largely hailed from lower caste groups (though Jnandeva was a Brahman): Namdev – a tailor, Gora – a potter, Chokha – a Mahar. Its followers also belonged to various groups – farmers, petty officials, trader, and craftsmen. They are devotees of Krishna and Tulsi is his favourite plant, Varkaris wear rosary of Tulsi beads and they are strict vegetarians. Ironically, during the pre-independence period ‘untouchables’ were denied entry into the Vithoba temple; they used to perform the puja from the Samadhi of Chokhamela. The gates for ‘Harijan’ could be opened only after the independence (Deleury, 1960: 51).

Vitthala is not mentioned in the Vedas, Epics or Puranas. Varkari saint poets identify Him with Krishna who came to meet the devotee Pundalik, and transformed from a folk deity to Vishnu-Krishna. Panduranga, a local deity entered into Brahmanical fold as an *avatara* (incarnation) of Vishnu. There survives three Sanskrit *Mahatmyas* (glorification) of Pandharpur; the earliest is of pre-13th century suggests that the earliest glorification text on Pandharpur pre-dates the Marathi poet-saints devoted to Vitthala. Dhare (2011: 233) also believes that the Vedicisation and Vaishnavisation of Vitthal had begun much before the rise of the Varkari saints. Deleury (1960: 6) rightly points out that, ‘The Varkari panth came into being long after the god had been installed in the temple...’ Vitthala is ‘convergence, synthesis and confluence’ of different streams of Indic religious traditions – folk, Vaishnava and Shaiva and eventually occurred their Vaishnavisation in the form of Gopal-Krishna.

The pilgrimage is a must for a Varkari. The sect name itself denotes *one who journeys to Pandharpur* (*var* – time; *kari* – to do) at fixed times. The sect as well as the town thus owes its popularity to *pilgrimage* by thousands of devotees who flock together every Asadh (mid-June to mid-July) and Kartik (mid-October to mid-November); Bhanudas is reported to have brought back the deity on Kartik *ekadashi* (*ekadashi* (eleventh day of the bright fortnight) which are considered most auspicious by the Varkaris. Namdev in his *abhang* states that, ‘I’ll not miss the kartikis and the Asadhis’ (Deleury, 1960: 11). Almost seven to eight lakh devotees join the pilgrimage procession in the Asadhi *ekadashi*; while three to four lakhs during the Kartiki *ekadashi* followed by two lakhs in Magh and approximately one lakh joins in Chaitr *ekadashi*. The processions, all terminating on the day of *ekadashi*, begin from different directions. This organised procession began in the eighteenth century and the credit for it is said to have been given to Haibatrao of Arphal in Satara who donated a *palaki* and a bullock cart, etc. for procession. The first procession (known as *palakis*) to be organised carrying the *padukas* (sandals) is that of Jnanadeva from Alandi (carrying the *padukas* of Jnandeva in a palanquin/*palaki*) followed by other Varkari saints (Tukaram’s from Dehu; Eknath from Paithan, Namdeva from Pandharpur) from their birthplace to Pandharpur. During the processions the devotees are organised in groups known as *dindi* (Deleury, 1960: 18; Kularni, 2006: 153-154).



Jnaneshwar *Palaki*

Photo: Van j; Originally posted at Flickr_08; January, 2005

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9e/Alandi_Palki_08.jpg



Jnaneshwar *Palaki* Route [After Deleury, G.A., (1960) *The Cult of Vithoba* (Poona: Deccan College), pp. 82-83.]

The city had a chequered history from being a small village to a prominent centre of Varkari faith. In the 6th century copper plate grant of Rashtrakuta ruler Amoghavarsha I (516 CE) it is mentioned as Pandarangapalli (*palli*= a small village). In the copper plate of 757 CE of Chalukya ruler Kirtivarman II the area is mentioned as Bhandaragavattiga (*vattiga* means 'of the hill'), a village 'on the bank of the Bhimarathi'. The 1237 CE inscription of the Hoyasalas which is housed in the Great temple of Vitthala the place mentioned is no longer a small village (*palli*) but a *mahagrama* (a large village i.e. a small town - a *qasba*). In the two inscriptions, pertaining to the gifts to the temple, it is no longer mentioned a *mahagrama* but a *pura* – a town. The 1276 inscription of Pandit Hemadri and 1277 inscription of king Ramachandra record the place as Phaganipura (Deleury, 1960: Chapter II). Thus the emergence of Pandharpur as a town coincides with the establishment of the Varkari *sampradaya* and the entry of Jnanadeva on the scene in the thirteenth century.

The geopolitical situation of Pandharpur always exposed the city to frequent attacks which made the city quite vulnerable from the very beginning. The city as a result remained under the sway of varying powers, some were instrumental in the progress and growth of the city, while under a few its fortunes fluctuated. While Pandharpur flourished under the Yadavas of Devgiri, the region faced the onslaught by Malik Kafur. However, submission of Ramchandra saved the region and the city which could not save itself from Muhammad bin Tughluq's attacks. It is said that this time devotees carried the deity to a hiding place and it was Bhanudas (1448-1513) who brought back the deity to the town in the early 16th century and the temple could be restored under the patronage of Bidar sultan. However, in the late fifteenth century with the decline of the Bahmanid power and the rise of the five Sultanates the town again became the hotbed of rivalries of the Sultanate. In the seventeenth century the city once again revived; even Sri Vitthala image where it stands today as well as the four pillared hall in front are said to be a seventeenth century construction. Once again in 1659 during Shivaji-Afzal Khan scuffle city faced the challenge and again the deity is reported to have been sent in hiding to 'escape destruction'. In 1686 Aurangzeb pitched his camp at Akluj, between Malsiras and Pandharpur and continued his operations from there for the next five years; finally leaving the area only in 1699. The first half of the eighteenth century was not good as the region faced constant clashes between the Nizams and the Marathas. The city indeed saw its golden age in the second half of the eighteenth century under Maratha patronage. In the early nineteenth century Patwardhan feudatories were most powerful in the region. They liaised with the British and finally in 1817 the town came under British hegemony (Deleury, 1960: 40-51).

The centre of the city is the Sri Vitthala temple. It is a huge complex with eight gates. The entry is from Mahadwar gate exiting into Paschim Dwar gate. Near the Mahadwar is Samadhi-pith of saint Chokhamela. One enters into Namdev Pyari crossing through the Mandap is the Solahkhamba (so-called on account of being constituted of sixteen pillars; one of which is of pure gold and another silver plated). In this area is situated the earliest 1237 CE inscription. Next to it is Chaukhamba (four pillard hall) leading to the *anteroom* or the *garbhagriha* where the main deity is housed. In the northeast of the deity lies the Rukmini, consort of Vitthala. The complex also housed the idols of Satyabhama and Rahi (Radha). The entrance to the deity is towards west from Rupyacha Darwaza, while Hathi Dwar (elephant door) lies to the south. Sri Vithoba's idol is three and half feet tall having shivaling on the head; neck is adorned with *kaustubha mani*; while on his chest are imprinted the footmark of his devotee (*vastalanchhana*). Pandharpur is almost situated on the confluence of Kannada and Marathi speaking territories. It shared close affinity with Kannada to the extent that Jnaneshwar, Eknath and Namdev address the deity as Kannada Vitthala. The chief mentor and priests of the temple are Badava Brahmins.



1. Sri Vitthala

Image by Balkrishna Kulkarni, Pre-1928

Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c5/Syayambhuvithoba.jpg>

2. Sri Vitthala

Source: *The Life and Teachings of Tukaram*, 1922, p. 53

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/40/Vitthala.jpg>

The city has truly been called a mini Kashi. Its similarity to Banaras temples could be visible in each corner of the city. Like Banaras the cityscape of Pandharpur is also constituted of two sacred zones – a) central zone where is situated the chief deity – Sri Vitthala called *devapradakshina*; b) second, along the banks of Bhima. Here *pradakshinapath* followed temples along the banks called *Nagarapradakshina*, each having its own circumambulation path stretching from a few hours to a few days – *devapradakshina* (devotees make a full circular circumambulation path of the deities around the Vitthoba temple). The circle begins at Mahadwara Ghat passing through Pundalika, Dattatreya, Kala Maruti, Krishnajibava, Gopala terminating at Uddhava Ghat. The *Nagarapradakshina* (circumambulation of the town) ‘consists of many “stations” and covers nearly fifteen miles. The start is from Pundalik temple whence a boat will take the pilgrim down to the Visnupada temple’; passing through Narada, Ananatapur, Mahadeva, Gopalpur, Padmavati, Vyasa, Lakhubai, Ambabai temples, terminating at Mahadwara Ghat (Deleury, 1960: 57, 102). Mostly Kolis and Badavas are incharge of the temple offerings and upkeep.

The sacred landscape provided architectural marvels to the cityscape. The present city landscape is the contribution of the Marathas, particularly the Holkars. Along the river there lie eleven *ghats* – Krishnaji Ghat, Uddhava Ghat, Mahadwar Ghat, Chandrabhaga Ghat, Datta Ghat, Haridas Ghat, Kasar Ghat, Kumbhar Ghat. The earliest Ghat was built in 1770 while the latest one was in 1820. This is the period when most of the temples of the town also came up. All along the *ghats* are temples – Murlidhar, Ramchandra (built by Ahilyabai Holkar), Belicha Mahadev (built by Maratha noble Janaji Baji Ghatge), Namdev, some are located in the middle of the river as well (Pundalik, Vishnupada). Most of the temples along the river are Shaiva temples. The Mallikarjuna temple of Shiva is one of the oldest in the city. Another old shrine in the

city is that of Kalibhairava which got renovated in 1780. Other important temples on the *devapradakshina* road are Beri Madhav, Kala Maruti and Shakambhari (repaired in 1775). Trimbakeshwar temple situated towards the north of the Vitthal shrine is presently almost lost amidst the city structures. The chief temple of Vithoba itself is the embodiment of rich egalitarian outlook of the *bhakti* tradition. This egalitarian outlook was also reflected from every expression of the Varkaris. They repeat Jnanba-Tukaram (Jnanadeva was a Brahmin; while Tukaram was a Sudra) during their recitations. The great temple of Sri Vithoba is the contribution of the Yadava minister Hemadri. The 1273 inscription housed on the slab Chauryasi in the Vithoba temple mentions a number of gifts made by the minister for the upkeep of the temple attests to Hemadri's contribution. Another inscription of 1276 mentions about the gifts made by Pandit Hemadri and another of 1277 refers to gifts offered by the king Ramachandra himself. Some of the remains of the temple attest to the building structures of Hemadpanti style. Among other imposing architectural buildings are the Holkar and Shinde palaces on the Mahadwar Ghat flanking north and southern parts of the river respectively.



Varkari Devotees at Chandrabhaga Ghats

Source: 'Pandharpur Temple Gets Its First Women and Non-Brahman Priests', *Indian Express*, Pune, July 27, 2014; <http://images.indianexpress.com/2014/07/pandharpur-1.jpg>

The Varkari Sampradaya was not only instrumental in the rise and growth of the town of Pandharpur, it brought the town to the cultural map of India. The town soon emerged as a prominent centre of literary activities. In fact the Marathi renaissance owes its rise and growth to Varkari saint-poets who largely composed their works at Pandharpur and the Marathi language got the enrichment here. The earliest work produced was Jnanadeva's *Jnaneshvari* (1290). Eknath (1513-1599) brought out the critical edition of *Jnaneshvari*. He also penned the commentary of the eleventh chapter of *Bhagavata Purana* and *Bhavartha Ramayana*, *Rukmini Swayamvar* in Marathi. Marathi literature is equally enriched by the *bharudas* (untraditional metaphorical drama-verses on morality and *bhakti*) of Eknath. Sridharswami composed most of his works at Pandharpur – *Harivijaya* (1702), *Ramvijaya* (1703), *Pandavapratapa* (1712). He also wrote *Panduranga Mahatmya* on the origin of Vitthala of Pandharpur. Mahipati (1715-1790) wrote the biography of the saints of Pandharpur – *Sant Lilamrita*, *Bhakt Lilamrita*, and *Bhaktavijaya*. Moropant (1729-1794) was another great Marathi litterateur who translated Sanskrit epics into Marathi. Another eighteenth century Marathi literary figure known for his devotion to Vithoba was Jyotipant Mahabhat (d. 1788) (Deleury, 1960: 48).

26.5 SUMMARY

Ajmer, Banaras and Pandharpur were prominent sacred cities of the medieval period being centres of *sufi*, Hindu and *bhakti* traditions. While Banaras and Pandharpur emerged on account of their having a strong religious roots, Ajmer initially enjoyed its prominence for being located at a strategic location. However, soon it also emerged as a prominent *sufi* centre under the Mughals. On the contrary, Banaras, on account of being located at the main line of communication was always a commercially vibrant city, that enjoyed high reputation for its crafts, nonetheless was primarily always known for being the premier religious and cultural centre – known as the ‘city of light’, ‘abode of God’ and its fame never faded away in spite of fluctuating fortunes. The saga of Pandharpur is little different. Pandharpur saw gradual growth from a small village to a prominent town in the thirteenth century – a growth which was exclusively related to the rise of the Varkari sect in the region and Pandharpur being the centre of its activities. The astonishing connects of all the three sacred centres is the liberal patronage they received at the hands of the Marathas. All the major existing shrines in their present state in Banaras as well as Pandharpur are the result of the liberal grants given by the Marathas (Peshwas) for the constructions, restorations and maintenance of the major temples. The shrine of Ajmer also received liberal grants and patronage of the Marathas in the eighteenth century.

26.6 EXERCISES

- 1) To what extent Chishti shrine contributed to the rise of Ajmer as an important urban centre?
- 2) Discuss the growth pattern of the city of Ajmer in the medieval period.
- 3) What makes Banaras so unique a city? Elaborate.
- 4) Analyse sacred zones and *khandas* of Banaras. How did it influence the cityscape?
- 5) In what ways was the growth pattern of the town of Pandharpur different from other religious centres like Ajmer and Banaras?
- 6) Analyse the growth pattern of Ajmer, Banaras and Pandharpur. What makes them distinct as an urban centre?

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UNIT 27 CASE STUDY : MASULIPATNAM*

Structure

- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 Physical Contours of the Port
- 27.3 Water, Health and the City Dwellings
- 27.4 Port and the City: Linkages
- 27.5 Port and the Hinterland : Political Environment
- 27.6 Portuguese and the Port of Masulipatnam
- 27.7 Masulipatnam in the Seventeenth Century
- 27.8 Decline of the Port of Masulipatnam
- 27.9 Summary
- 27.10 Exercises
- 27.11 References

27.1 INTRODUCTION

The port city of Masulipatnam (Machhlipatnam) is aptly described by Arasaratnam presenting contrasting characteristics of ‘approval and hate’ as expressed by European travellers:

It is thus claimed as an excellent harbour and a dangerous roadstead, healthy and airy while also being putrid and of foul stench, well-watered and swampy, good stately buildings and dangerously congested streets, a place of extensive and busy commerce and of rigorous state monopolies’ (Ray and Arasaratnam, 1994: 3).

The city in its hey days was called *bandar-i mubarak*, but had a short life span. It emerged into prominence in the late sixteenth century and saw its decline in the eighteenth century. Let us traverse the journey of the rise, growth and decline of the port and the city.

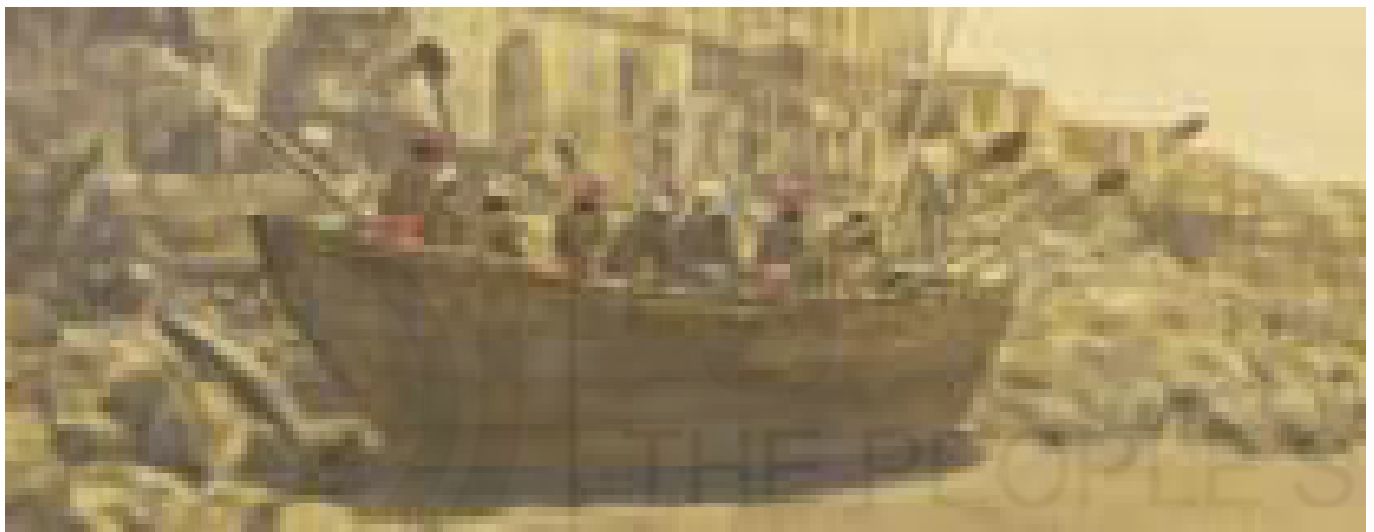
27.2 PHYSICAL CONTOURS OF THE PORT

Masulipatnam situated on latitude 16°9’N, longitude 81°10’E, was the port on the southeast coast (of modern Andhra Pradesh) during the 16th-17th centuries. It is located at one of the many exits of the river Krishna and its tributaries into the Bay of Bengal and these tributaries constituted the Krishna delta, an alluvial plain. One branch of the river falls into the sea at Pt. Divi while the major stream breaks up into three mouths and discharges itself further to the south. Pt. Divi is an important navigational mark for ships sailing into Masulipatnam. From Pt. Divi, the coast extends towards north-northwest and constitutes a semi-circular bay in which Masulipatnam is situated. In the entire stretch a number of branches of the Krishna river fall into the sea and deposit large quantities of earth forming shoal flats along the coast. The coast is of low level and the rise and fall of tide is about 4 to 5 feet in the spring at the mouth of these rivers. The shore is very flat and the depth in approaching it is not more than half a fathom (a unit to

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measure the depth of water) for the distance of a mile. Large ships bound for the Masulipatnam road are advised to keep along the edge of the shoal flats and not access closer than 4 fathoms of water. The semi-circular bag has at its eastern most end, Pt. Narsapore, where the river of Narsapore, a branch of the Godavari falls into the sea.

It was an open roadstead port, like several others on the Coromandel coast; it had possibly the best anchoring terrain. It had a firm ground, a mixture of sand and mud, was available from 1 to 4 miles from the shore where ships of upto 1000 tons could anchor safely for most of the years, except during the turbulent months of October, November and December. The ships stood in 3 to 4 fathoms of water. It was possibly the best anchoring ground in the Bay of Bengal. The port was situated on the southern side of a bay commonly called the Bay of Masulipatnam. In fact, the *masula* boat (flat-bottomed, high sided, open boat) that piled from shore to ship were generally of larger size than their counterparts further south. They had a capacity of 6 to 8 *lasts* or 12 to 16 tons.



Masula Boat, Madras, 1851

Source: <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/photocoll/m/largeimage56887.html>

The bay to the north of Masulipatnam provided safe anchoring for vessels during the height of the south-west monsoon in the months of June and July, when the winds in the Bay of Bengal are strong. During this period there is strong surf at the bar of the Masulipatnam port and to the north and south, this bay is most calm. Native craft when faced the heavy surf, used to sail and anchor in the smooth waters of the bay. It has a soft muddy bottoms. Larger vessels could not sail into it but small crafts of the locality could easily enter into it. It extends 3 miles between the villages of Pechapatnam and Chinnakara.

Of the two creeks which opened into the sea north of Masulipatnam, none of them was large or perennial which could facilitate vessels of any size. One was located on the north of a suburban village Surigamato the north of Masulipatnam, and was commercially not viable. The other was located on the north of Masulipatnam suited for sea-transport and was useful to the port and the city. It used to have 3 to 18 feet of water depending on seasons and plying of boats depended on that.



Masulipatnam, 1759

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4b/Musalipatam_Mschilipatnam_port_in_1759.jpg

27.3 WATER, HEALTH AND THE CITY DWELLINGS

The water around the city was mostly stagnant, creating swamps which emitted a nasty stench in particular month of the year. The climate conditions of the city and its vicinity had attracted contradictory responses from its visitors. Some praised its salubrious climate while large majority of travellers reported the opposite.

The water of Masulipatnam was brackish, saline and not-fit for consumption. Therefore potable water was brought from 5 to 9 miles in the interior. Europeans boiled the water with spices for drinking purposes. This storage of drinkable water created problems for the urban population.

Death rates were very high among the Dutch and the English who had large presence there. This was presumable the reason behind their constant search for new residences, a few miles away from the city of Masulipatnam. The English had established Madapollam and suburban areas of Narsapore as their alternative places of residence. Since places were situated near perennial rivers and in the shade of a cultivated interior of the Godavari delta, it had a positive impact on their health.

27.4 PORT AND THE CITY: LINKAGES

The port and the city were linked in a curious manner. Goods were unloaded near the river mouth or boats of about 10 to 15 tones used to enter the river and unload goods nearer the city. The city was situated some distance (a little over a mile) away from the bar of the river. At the bar of the river, on the sea front, emerged a small complex of buildings which subsequently transformed into a bar town and included a **basecamp**

small office and a guard post for the Shah-bunder. The city was linked with the port by the sandy stretch which was prone to the flow of the tide and turned into a swamp regularly. At some point a bridge was built over the swamp to facilitate trade and traffic. The city was built on a low lying land, with a river in the north deep enough to allow small ships to come in and the southwestern part of the city was on the higher ground, by virtue of which it was less prone to floods and received better ventilation. However, the busiest part with commercial activities was confined to the northern side, closer to the river. In the history of Masulipatnam port and city, what was very striking was the relative frequency of cyclonic storms and floods with ravaging impact on the coast.



The Port and the City, 1676

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4b/Musalipatam_Mschilipatnam_port_in_1759.jpg

The city was devoid of any stately buildings for public or private purposes. However, later in the latter half of the 17th century, there are frequent references to large attractive residences built by private individuals.

27.5 PORT AND THE HINTERLAND: POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Two peculiar characteristic features of the pre-modern port cities were their fragility and proneness to change on account of changed political circumstances in their hinterland. The rise of Masulipatnam in the period 1570-1600 coincided with the decline of Pulicat in the decade of 1565-1575. The history of the port city in earlier centuries is not so well attested by contemporary sources.

The Arab traders mention Masulipatnam as a port settlement founded by them in the fourteenth century and occupied by Bahmani Sultans late in the fifteenth century. The area between the mouths of the Krishna and Godavari rivers, was the frontier between three political rivals : the Vijayanagar Empire, the Bahmani kingdom's successor – the Golconda Sultanate – and the Gajapati kingdom of Odisha. Another earlier evidence about Masulipatnam port is a Chinese rutter (or pilot, c.1500) who mentions navigation between Sha-li-patan and Lamri (or Aceh head). Tom Pires and Duarte Barbosa hardly

referred to it. In 1550, it is referred to in the bill of lading of nau de Rei. Thus, as late as the mid-sixteenth century, Masulipatnam was a supplier of textiles to other ports. It played a limited role.

However, in early 1560's, Ibrahim Qutb Shah (1550-1580), the fourth Sultan of Golconda, brought the area under its administration. With the sack of Vijaynagar city Ibrahim Qutb Shah got enormous tribute transferred to Golconda, which further contributed to its emergence as a provincial fortress town with incredible capacity for sustaining a huge population. Ibrahim Qutb Shah's contemporary and namesake, Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur also showed interest in seaborne trade. By the 1560's, there developed close links between Golconda and Masulipatnam soon in the 17th century it transformed itself into the principal commercial centre in the Bay of Bengal.

27.6 PORTUGUESE AND THE PORT OF MASULIPATNAM

The Portuguese were familiar with the ports on the Krishna-Godavari delta. This is corroborated by the maps of the 1530's and 1540's. The first mention of the port occurs in the Portuguese sources in 1540's. It is mentioned as a shelter for fugitive and renegade Portuguese and also as a supplier of white and painted textiles. By 1568 the Portuguese captain of Manar was expected to collect tributes from ports on Coromandel especially Masulipatnam. The emphasis on tribute from Masulipatnam in Portuguese sources was based on the perception of the Portuguese who considered Masulipatnam as part of an anti-Portuguese (i.e. anti *Estado da India*) network of trade. His hostility of the Portuguese was also owing to Masulipatnam's trade with Aceh, Malay Peninsula ports, Pegu, and Arakan. Masulipatnam's trade with Aceh was identified as part of an anti-Portuguese or at least non-Portuguese network of high seas trade. The rise of the north Sumatran Sultanate of Aceh in 16th century is explained in terms of, on one hand, its political and cultural influence in the Indonesian Archipelago (especially as a centre of diffusion of Islam) and on the other hand, rise of Aceh was attributed to Aceh's influence over pepper and spice trade with the Red Sea. Therefore, in this context, the capture of Melaka by the Portuguese (1511) led to the flight of Muslim merchants from there, initially to the northeast Sumatran ports of Pasai and Pidir and later from 1520's on to Aceh, or more precisely Kutaraja, the Bandar Aceh Dar-us Salam. Aceh rose to prominence as an enterpot for its proximity to the pepper producing area of the Sumatran west coast and its linkage with Western Indian Ocean. But during the seventeenth century, the links between Aceh and the Western Indian Ocean weakened. During the sixteenth century, the link between Masulipatnam and Aceh grew stronger and stronger. We hear about an axis formed between the Sultans of Bijapur, Golconda and Aceh and one Portuguese source refers to sacral sieges of Melaka by the anti-Portuguese league when Sultan of Golconda Cota Maluco (i.e. Qutb-ul Mulk) helped Aceh directly to fight against the common enemy, the Portuguese. Thus, Masulipatnam was identified as non-Portuguese/ anti-Portuguese network of high seas trade.

Between 1512 to 1570's, while the Portuguese on one hand established fairly good relations with the succeeding kings of Aceh, on the other hand Aceh also maintained an independent relationship with Masulipatnam. In 1581, a Portuguese source refers to Masulipatnam as a port of the Cota Maluco, in which there is great trade with diverse parts, principally with Aceh which they supply from there with textiles, munitions, and arms and with many other things of importance. By 1585, the English traveller Ralph Fitch reported about the prosperity of Masulipatnam, where ships came from 'India, Pegu and Sumatra, richly laden with pepper, spices, etc.'

However, between 1580's and 1590's some kind of truce was established between Goa and Qutb Shahi rulers. By 1590, as per the treaty of 1590, the Sultan of Golconda Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah agreed to send a shipload of rice (about 300 *khandis* or 10,000 kg.) every year to Portuguese garrisons at Ceylon. Another major occurrence around 1590 was that a link was established between Masulipatnam and the Red Sea and Mecca. An additional demand was created for textiles from northern Coromandel and interior Andhra (near Warangal), an aspect of trade which already had precedence but now there was a concentrated demand for export of textiles from Masulipatnam to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Around 1590, another complementary event took place, i.e., rise of Narasapurpettai (commonly known as Narasapore, in Company records) as ship manufacturing centre which had many advantages as a shipbuilding yard. Locally built ships facilitated Sultan's dispatch of rice to be distributed as alms in Mecca, and travel of Hajj pilgrims. With frequent occurrences of impediments and their resolutions in Masulipatnam's trade with the Portuguese, Masulipatnam eventually (an agreement was reached between Portuguese and the rulers of Masulipatnam) emerged as a major trading enterpot.

27.7 MASULIPATNAM IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The port and the city expanded greatly in the seventeenth century. John Fryer (1672-81) estimated the population of the city in 1673 around 200,000. The seventeenth century largely belonged to Dutch domination. Ever since the collapse of the Vijayanagara power in 1565 Qutb Shahi rulers of Golconda maintained effective control over the city and the port. Among the European powers, Portuguese presence gradually receded. The Dutch established themselves in the port in 1606 with a modest presence and by 1640s they were a formidable force here. However, from 1678 their downturn started. Though, in 1686 they emerged once again so powerful that even they could control the city and the port for a few months ousting the Qutb Shahis. In contrast the English presence remained more or less muted throughout. The English established themselves in 1620s, followed by the Danes in 1625. Danes though initially had prominence, by late seventeenth century they too became feeble. The French were the last to enter in 1669.

In the seventeenth century southeast Asian network (Acheh, Pegu, Melaka) played an important role in the growth of Masulipatnam as an important port. The city attracted the merchants and traders on account of its rich hinterland which made the city an important centre of export of painted *chintz*, salt and rice. Masulipatnam is surrounded by a web of weaving villages in a radius of 50 miles. The island of Divi was rich in *chaya* root, a plant used for making excellent dye, made the region rich in *chintz* production. The port was also known for its salt pans, thus salt formed an important component of the city's exports. In the seventeenth century Masulipatnam's yearly income from salt exports alone was 41,000 pagodas. It was exported via coastal route to Bengal and down south and through the caravans of Lambadi traders on oxloads into the interiors.

Interestingly, neither the Golconda Sultanate nor European Companies ever tried to fortify the town. There was no flotilla of boats ever maintained for the coastal defense, nor was the city fortified. In 1672 Qutb Shahis built a mud fort at the bar of the river. In the city Dutch defense was by far the best, though in 1752 when French occupied Masulipatnam they began major fortifications of the city.

The city and the port had multi ethnic/linguistic groups – Mongols, Turks, Persians,

Arabs, Chulia (Tamil) Muslims, Golconda Muslims, Telugus, Odias, Arakanese, Peguans, Achenese, Malays, Javanese, English, Dutch, Danes, French, Jews, Pathans, Armenians, Kannadas. Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah's (1621-24) close links with the Safavids encouraged the influx of Persian merchants further. The city enjoyed communal harmony and hardly any instance of robbery or theft was reported. William Norris (1699) observed 'absence of drunkenness, disorders, riotous behaviours, or quarelling in the city' (Ray and Arasaratnam, 1994: 20).

27.8 DECLINE OF THE PORT OF MASULIPATNAM

The port and the town started declining by mid-eighteenth century. The rich hinterland on which the prosperity of the town and the port depended for its supplies got affected severely. The rice producing hinterland on which the town depended greatly for its food requirements and exports, earlier yielded revenues of Rs. 100,000 (from *parganas* of Tumdurru and Bomdata, the best paddy yielding regions), in 1752 were leased out to meager Rs. 22,000 and in 1753 for mere Rs. 3000. Further, Masulipatnam was feeder port to consumer markets of Golconda and Hyderabad. However, the Nizams of Hyderabad hardly paid attention to the route. Gradually the exports of products like Bengal silk and other luxury goods to the interiors declined. The rise of Vizagapatnam for export of textiles also had a detrimental effect. In 1766 English got control over the resources of Northern Sarkars. In this period major demand was for long cloth which was largely fetched from Madapollam and Injaram and was indirectly financed from the resources of Masulipatnam itself. Then the textiles were to be shipped. Since Vizagapatnam was better located, British found it more convenient to transport the Andhra goods to Vizagapatnam. It had detrimental effect on Masulipatnam. Gradually merchants' prospects also declined for, by 1771 English East India Company tried to reach directly to the weavers in the hinterland rather than through brokers and merchants. The chiefs of Masulipatnam and Vizagapatnam vehemently opposed this in vain. The ultimate result was the increasing penetration of European private enterprises which further contributed to the regeneration of the hinterland economy. By the turn of the eighteenth century Masulipatnam was exporting very limited quantities to Jeddah and the Persian Gulfport of Bussora and there also existed some trade with Bengal. Merchant families also started migrating to San Thome and Madras. Only a few Armenian merchants continued their trade that too as agents to Madras and Calcutta merchants. Further, East India Company hardly paid attention to the maintenance of the port resulted in lot of silting. Jacob Hafner, Dutch East India Company servant, who visited the city in 1778 found 'the morass outside the walls that emitted a unbearable stench in dry weather, the insufferable heat when "one can neither, read, nor write nor think"... he found the city "moderately well populated" and singled out "Moors" and Armenians among its population.' The final blow to the port was done by 1800 cyclone resulting in flattening the area between the sea and the town 'to an 'expanse of sea and mud'. The earlier advantage of the secured spaces for the ship thus disappeared leading English to abandon the port in 1833 (Ray and Arasaratnam, 1994: Chapter 4).

27.9 SUMMARY

The port and the city of Masulipatnam saw its rise in the mid-sixteenth century. It was hub of Arab, Persian, European and Indian merchants – a truly cosmopolitan city. The advantage of the port was in its being a perfect natural harbour. Its growth could largely be attributed to possessing vast hinterland supplying rice and fine textiles for exports. The city declined with the rupture of this port-hinterland nexus, rise of Vizagapatnam and finally the cyclone disaster of 1800 destroyed its advantage of being one of the finest natural harbour.

27.10 EXERCISES

- 1) What situational advantages the port of Masulipatnam possessed?
- 2) What was the impact of Masulipatnam's geological terrain on water, health and the city dwellings?
- 3) Trace the prominence of Portuguese in the port town of Masulipatnam in the sixteenth century.
- 4) Discuss the rise of European powers in the seventeenth century in the port town of Masulipatnam.

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