

# **Department of Geography, Patna University**

## **E-content**

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## **Morphology of Indian Cities**

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### **Introduction**

A large number of cities in India have a long history of their evolution. As a consequence, their nucleus and old part of the city is characterized by elements of natural growth which is recognized as indigenous parts of the cities. During British period, new anglicised part was added to the existing town with a large number of government offices, cantonment, civil lines, railway colonies etc. Later, during post independence period newly developed areas were added which were built up according to modern style, architecture and plan. Thus a single town or city may exhibit characteristic morphological features reflecting its development during different historical phases.

A. E. Smailes has identified six elements of morphology of Indian towns.

They are-

- i. Old walled towns
- ii. Extra mural extension
- iii. Cantonment
- iv. Civil lines
- v. Railway Colonies and
- vi. Residential colonies and industrial units developed after 1947

### **Characteristics of Morphology of Indian Cities**

Following distinct features are found in Indian cities-

## Department of Geography, Patna University

- 1. No clear cut delineation of residential and commercial areas -**  
In most of the Indian cities residential functions are located mixed with commercial functions which are found in core of the city identified as CBD. In fact, at the time of origin of the towns both commercial and residential functions originated simultaneously at the nucleus of the towns. Besides, commercial functions have encroached into residential zones. Even in newly developed areas, with the development of residential areas, commercial functions start to be located along the road or even within the residential buildings.
- 2. CBD is not devoid of residential population -** as found in developed countries. Though during day the CBD is congested with large number of people who visit there for shopping and other services, the night density of population is definitely much lower than the day time population. But the CBD or inner core of the city is not devoid of night population as there are residential uses of built up block in the upper storeys of the buildings as well as in the back portion of buildings.
- 3. Impact of British Period on Morphology-** The cities of India possess characteristic features of morphology revealing impact of British Period. There are clear cut anglicised portion of the cities located at a distance from old indigenous part. The impact of British period is evidenced in the architecture of buildings as well as functional use of land e.g. civil lines, railway colonies, cantonment, office buildings of collectorate, police lines etc. Even the colleges and schools which were established during British period bear the imprints of British architecture and style. In this section of the city roads are wide and straight and residential building are of big size.
- 4. Unplanned growth of functional areas-** Since most of the cities have a history of natural growth regarding their growth and expansion, therefore there has been unplanned growth of functional areas. Different functional zones are found mixed with one another

## Department of Geography, Patna University

in close proximity. However, in such cities there are newly developed urban built up areas which have developed in a planned way following urban planning norms regarding Street plan width of roads, etc.

5. **Haphazard skyline-** In most of the cities there is no regular pattern of declining skyline formed by declining the height of buildings from the inner core towards the periphery of the towns. In fact, high rise buildings and apartments are found in the inner core, intermediate zone as well as in the peripheral belt of the city. Close to high rise buildings, there may be single or double storey housing leading to irregular pattern of skyline.
6. **Absence of clear cut zonation of residential zones according to economic class-** In most of the cities of India there is no clear cut demarcation of different categories of residential zones based on economic class. In the inner zone comprising of the old built up areas, high, middle and low income groups residences are found in close proximity, though there is a tendency of high class residences to be relocated along the periphery. Similarly in the peripheral belt, majority of the houses belong to upper middle or high class residences but a considerable number of poor men's dwellings also exist which are older than high-class residences. In newly developed residential colonies there is tendency of segregation of dwellings based on caste or economic class considerations.
7. **Less suburban growth-** The growth of suburban areas depends on transportation facilities e.g. development of good quality wide roads and availability of cheap and speedy modes of transportation. In a large number of cities of India, due to less development of transportation facilities, people prefer to live in the inner or intermediate zone close to their place of work to save time and money on transportation. Only in metro cities of India, e.g. Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, etc. large scale development of suburban zone

## Department of Geography, Patna University

is found which is facilitated by the development of metro rail, local trains, public transport buses, etc.

8. **Sharp decline of population density from inner core towards periphery-** Regarding demographical morphology of cities, decline of population density from inner core towards outer peripheral belt is clearly observed. The nucleus of the cities or the inner core is characterized by highest density of population which gradually declines outwards towards the periphery. This is because, large proportion of urban population prefer to live within inner core to avail the facilities found there e.g. easy accessibility, nearness to the zone of employment etc. The outer zone is preferred by people belonging to high income group who have their own car or other means of transportation which make even long distance travel convenient. Therefore, in the outer zone, fringe areas or in suburban areas the density of population is much lower than that of the inner zone.
9. **Imprint of rural environment-** Since several cities in India have originated as marketplace for agricultural products, therefore the imprint of rural and agricultural environment is observed in them. In many houses, there has been a separate place for cowshed or rooms for storing grains and other agricultural products. At places a large number of cows and buffaloes are reared at one place and supplying milk to neighbouring population is an important source of livelihood to the people engaged in these activities. Large scale rural urban migration is also responsible for creating rural environment within urban limits.
10. **Growth of planned towns-** During post-independence period, several planned towns have developed which have planned layout of roads and clear cut demarcation of various urban land use and functional zones. Example of such towns are Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar, Gandhinagar, etc. Such towns have concentration of

## **Department of Geography, Patna University**

new urban built-up areas which follow norms of urban planning and structure.

Besides new planned areas are being added to old existing towns which comprise of better residential, commercial, administrative, recreational areas.

### **Conclusion**

Briefly it can be said that no cities in India perfectly follow the traditional model of urban morphology. Every city possesses the features of concentric zonation, sectoral or multiple nuclei model. Most of the Indian cities are not typical modern urban centres like the cities of developed countries, rather they are over grown villages and therefore they even today possess some of the rural characteristics e.g. existence of rural or agricultural functions, inadequate old and traditional residential houses, underdeveloped roads and lack of civic amenities. Most of the cities are highly congested especially in the inner zone and they lack plant layout of roads, open spaces and differentiating commercial and residential landuse.

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