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## UNIT 22 SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MUGHAL CITIES\*

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### 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
  - 22.6.2 *Chowk*
  - 22.6.3 Sacred Spaces
  - 22.6.4 *Caravansarais*
- 22.7 Gardens in Mughal Cities
- 22.8 Population in Mughal Cities
- 22.9 Summary
- 22.10 Exercises
- 22.11 References

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### 22.1 INTRODUCTION

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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.

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### 22.2 CITIES AS CENTRES OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

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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.

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### 22.3 PATRIMONIAL-BUREAUCRATIC CITIES

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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.' Kiyoo 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).

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## 22.4 CAMP CITIES

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17<sup>th</sup> 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 retainers, 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. Shahjahanabad 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. Sobti (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 Sobti, 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 retainues; 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.

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## **22.5 RURAL-URBAN CONTINUUM: THE QASBAS**

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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 urban 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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).

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## 22.6 LANDSCAPE

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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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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## 22.7 GARDENS IN MUGHAL CITIES

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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 Avertah 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.

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## **22.8 POPULATION IN MUGHAL CITIES**

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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 (20<sup>th</sup>) 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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