



## Reflections on Town Planning Education in Ancient India & Its Contemporary Relevance

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### Abstract

Great Indian scriptures are replete with the instances of perfectly planned towns & cities. There were references to meticulous actions taken towards designing residential houses, forts, palaces, citadels & border towns. There followed prescribed plans in building houses through erecting pillars, consecrating idols, structuring places & designing the inner chambers. The ancient Indians always relied on acute precision in planning while they believed that good planning brings goodness to the place they dwell. The great Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata reflect portrayal of cities with multi-storeyed buildings with airy balconies and large porticoes. this paper examines the town planning education & links the contemporary relevance of such knowledge in addressing messy urbanization process today. the historicity of town planning as mentioned in ancient Indian scriptures & reflects on the relevance of proper planning in town building .

**Keywords:** city planning, contemporary relevance, strategy

### Introduction

There are innumerable examples of great towns built according to great planning & reflects on the exclusive penetration of intelligence of Indian builders towards planning a township. The edification about town planning these scriptures provide is beyond doubt is acceptable even today. With the rise of ancient Indian republican states, there was a transformation in town planning , citadels & fortifications increased & this was continued till medieval period. After the coming of the British there was a dramatic change

in town planning. ( Dutt. B. B. - Town Planning In Ancient India 2014) .

### Features of Town Planning

1. Searching for a suitable plot /site without harming nature
2. Considering dimensions of the house to be built
3. Avoiding clash with nature's resources
4. Giving great attention for water resources
5. Identifying neighborliness



6. Suiting perennial focus for drinking water
7. Avoiding pitiable measurement of houses
8. Avoiding wrong doorway sides
9. Avoiding dark corner inside the house
10. Providing for sun light focusing

It is a known fact that the well site plan of the historic cities of Ayodhya & Indraprastha was similar to the plan found in the great architectural work Manasaara. Buddhist works also mention bigger city walls & fortified towns. (Dutt. B. B. - Town Planning In Ancient India).

#### References in Mahabharatha-

The great Indian epic Mahabharata mentions houses built in the capital city which were as tall as mountains of Kailasa parvatha. The cities of Indraprastha & Hastinapura located in the present Meerut district of Uttarpradesh were built on specific designs. The cities were planned with high rise building resembling present day sky scrapers.

#### References in the Buddhist Literature

The Jataka tales, the precious book on Buddhism refer to individual houses. They were in a straight line, full-sized & built according to vastu. It is said Gautama Buddha delivered discourses on architecture

and even told his disciples that supervising the construction of a building was one of the duties of the Buddhist monk order. These jataka tales mention Viharas Ardhayogas Praasadas Harmyas & guhas. A Buddhist treatise known as Chullavagga is said to have contained literature on Science of architecture.

#### References in Puranas

The following puranas mention the importance on vastu in town planning

Agni  
Brahmananda  
Linga  
Matsya  
Narada  
Skanda  
Vayu

#### References in Matsya Purana-

it refers to 18 saints who were scholars in science of building & architecture. The names of the scholars are mentioned as

Anirudha  
Atri  
Brahma  
Brighu  
Brihaspathi  
Garga  
Kumara  
Maya  
Nagna ajitha  
Nandeasha  
Narada



Purandhara  
Saunaka  
Shukra  
Vasistha  
Vasudeva  
Vishalaskha  
Vishwakarma

### References in Samhita

The samhitas also mention residential & temple architectures. There is a reference to underground water derivation technique. The exact mentioning of water springs building houses near water sources is evident. This book mentions that water tanks & sumps have to be directed in the eastern side. This was because the morning sun rays were full of energy & water if exposed to sun would be pure & hygienic. Brihat samhita also mentions the glue which was used for residential purposes.

### References in agamas

The various Agamas also give much useful information on architecture. Notable among them are

- ✓ Amsumadbheda agama.
- ✓ Kamika agama,
- ✓ Karna agama,
- ✓ Suprabheda agama,
- ✓ Vaikhansa agama

References in Tantra Books – The architectural planning of cities is also

mentioned in kirana tanthra & haya Sheersha Tanthra

References in Kautilya's Arthashastra – Kautilya refers to structures which have to be palced inside a fortress & structures posted outside the citadels. He mention the security planning & civic amenities which were to be provided

References in Shukraneethi Saara – there are various references to township building in this work. The embankment to river , water shedding , clustery of city houses are mentioned.( Anthony De Costa – Indian Architectural Theory- Contemporary Uses Of Vaastu Vidya 2014 ).

**References in Manasara** - Till today Manasaara is considered as a great volume on Architecture. Even though the book deals with Iconographic architectural details. It represents the universality of Vaastu shastra tradition . The science behind consecration of idols, building temples structure lands suitable for temple construction , lands suitable for residential construction , water ponds , etc are mentioned. ( Prabhakar .V. Begde- Town Planning In Ancient & Medieval India 2014 ).

### References in Mayamata

**The treatise on Town planning is mayamata which** occupies a very important place in Indian architectural History . This treatise



by Maya is very important as it deals with structural combinations of temples, cities, towns, prayer halls etc in a vivid way. His other works Surya Siddhanta & Samarangana Sutrakshastra deal in planning & architecture. (Anthony De Costa – Indian Architectural Theory-Contemporary Uses Of Vaastu Vidya 2014)

The dimensions called AAYA is given perfectly. The accuracy of the calculation fascinates the present builders as well. The perfect proportional building not intervening with the nature, not spoiling the resources of the nature, are so accurate that according to him each ground each plot is full of life & hence to be built without causing harm to nature. (Prabhakar .V. Begde- Town Planning In Ancient & Medieval India 2014). The building house should be planned as each one has the formula to be followed. The book classifies the AAYA

1. AYA – which increases the profit & yields good results
2. VYAYA – which means loss or failure
3. NAKSHATRA – the stellar support
4. YONI- Source or orientation of the building
5. VAARA- solar week day supporting the construction

6. TITHI – Lunar day supporting the construction

All these six features had to be adopted before constructing a house. The planning if done accordingly would benefit the householder with good health & good living. Otherwise the construction would end up in loss & disdain. These developments depended on the Phala Jyotisha which included ganitha or mathematical calculation, phalitha which is the predictive part & samhitha included vaasthu or the weather forecasting (Prabhakar .V. Begde- Town Planning In Ancient & Medieval India 2014).

**Conclusion** – Thus the ancient Indian valued the nature, valued the planning for the goodness & wellbeing of the people living in it. Each city, each town, each residential area was planned accordingly. The accuracy of their estimation was so perfect that modern civil engineers, architects & builders are amazed to know their source. The modern day planners & builders, if pursue the accurateness of the ancient Indians, they can avoid several of the ailing effects of present day city building. The use of precision of the calculation of sites was so unique that present day city builders can adopt these calculations.



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