

INTRODUCTION

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"The historian of towns is concerned not only with people that they inhabit. In some sort a town is a document; it displays its history in its public face, as well as in its archives."

G. H. Martin¹

Historians work with documents and reach back to people through their written and printed texts. In their attempt to look into the past they also use other material, adducing evidence from artifacts of all kinds and calling as freely as they can upon common sense, which is sharpened by experience. They ponder over the marks that man leaves behind him. The historian's first and last concern may be, must be, with his text but the text has a setting which is ultimately the whole sum of human activity and in order to interpret the past we must be ready to come to terms with anything that has registered it.

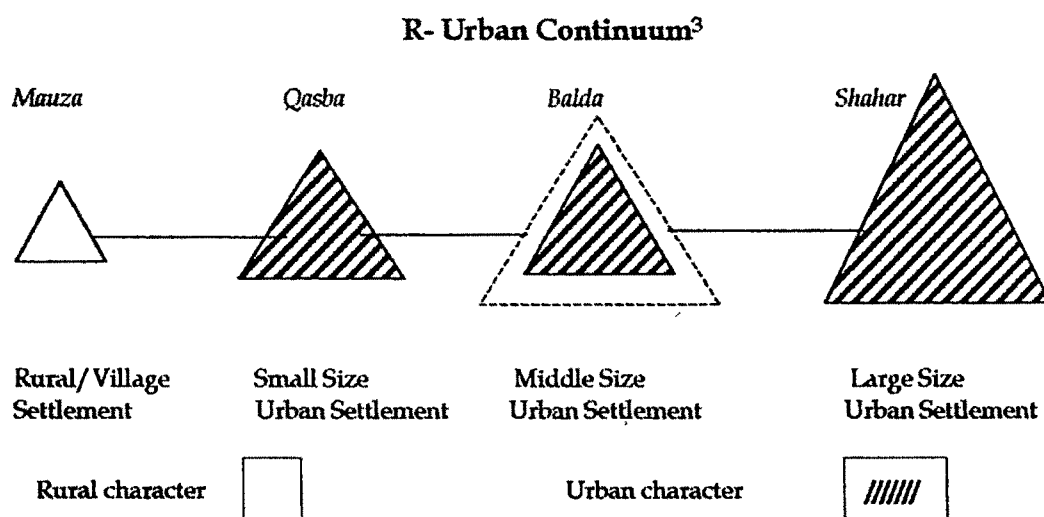
Urbanization is understood as a process of emergence, growth and sustenance of urban settlements both in time and space. It is possible due to the simultaneous activity of the catalysts like natural environment, geomorphology, political apparatus, economic systems and societal networks. Researchers in the field of urban studies have made efforts in the understanding of the dynamics of urban catalysts in historical, geographical, economic, social, architectural, settlement planning and development context. However, these studies have certain limitations when assessed from the perspective of urban history. Whatever research pieces are available appear to be urban biographies or case studies of urban settlements. The component of interdependence between the rural and urban settlements seems to be partially examined in relation to a geographical region, city region or man-made political and economic territory. Therefore, at the outset, it can be observed that Indian Urban History is in its formative stage. Historians like Nurul Hasan, S. C. Misra, Satish Chandra, J. S. Grewal, Indu Banga and a few others have emphasized the need of the study of

¹ 'The Town As Palimpsest' in *The Study of Urban History*, (Ed.) H. J. Dyos, London, 1968, p. 155.

rural-urban interaction in relation to the either region. They advocated for the development of a methodology based on interdisciplinary approach, realization of the vitality of agrarian potential in the sustenance of urban settlements, non-agrarian mobility and social networks at the horizontal and vertical plane and, finally, the examination of r-urban continuum. In the context of the nineteenth century, I could understand from the works of historians like C. A. Bayly, Narayani Gupta, Indu Banga, Veena Sachdeva, Reeta Grewal, Nita Kumar, Indrani Ganguly, Ravinder Kumar, Mariam Dossal, Gita Bajpai, Frank Broeze, Jim Masselos, Dwijendra Tripathi, Sinnapal Arasratnam that they adopted the suggested methodology and tried to understand the large urban settlements in relation to their hinterland during the colonial rule. However, their research has limitations in the understanding of the medium and small size urban settlements. Therefore, my attempt in this respect is to fill the vacuum by examining the case of the small urban settlements in South Gujarat in Western India during the nineteenth century in relation to the above-suggested approach.

For the understanding of urban settlements in relation to their size and functionality, I base my hypothesis developed on the basis of C. A. Bayly's book *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*; the concept of r-urban continuum and the model worked out by A. B. Saxena in her unpublished Ph.D thesis entitled "Urban Dynamics in Haryana, 14th to Mid-18th Century". This hypothesis and model has been examined in case of Padra, a small urban settlement of Central Gujarat ² for the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. This model is illustrated here. However, explanations regarding theoretical basis and application in South Gujarat appear in Chapter IV entitled 'Urban Centres in South Gujarat' in the thesis "Small Urban Settlements in South Gujarat during the Nineteenth Century".

² A. B. Saxena and Hitendra J. Maurya, 'Impact of Environment and Trade on the Growth and Sustenance of Small Urban Settlements: A Case Study of Padra Town in Gujarat', *Proceedings of the UGC- National Seminar on Environment and Trade: Policies and Perspective of the Third World Countries* M. K. Amin College, Padra, M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara. (Forthcoming September 2003).



The present Gujarat state is a recent territorial phenomenon of Union of India that saw the light of the day on 1st May 1960 as a result of its separation on linguistic basis from Greater Bombay. G. H. Desai, M. S. Commissariat, William Rush Brook, A. K. Forbes, K. M. Munshi, V. K. Chavda, J. M. Mehta, P. R. Mehta, Dalpatram, Narmad, R. D. Chocksy, Neera Desai, Jan Bremen, David Hardiman, Howard Spodek, Ajay Sakaria and many others have vividly constructed the history of Gujarat region from various aspects. Their observations are extremely helpful in the understanding of the sub-regions of Gujarat. However, my query remains unanswered in relation to the small urban settlements and their functional dynamics.

A few words regarding the selection of the region under study and identification of the selected region's territory are in order. First of all, South Gujarat is a geographical term and not a political, economic or social one (my emphasis). However, it is true that in course of time it established its presence in Gujarat due to its location and other factors like life style, language, performing arts and so on. It has access to seacoast on one hand and connectivity to the inland regions of Gujarat and the Indian sub-continent through roads and railways on the other. The strategic location, geographical advantages in terms

³ R. Ramchandran, *Urbanization and Urban Systems in India*, pp. 96-119 & 293-321.

of natural endowments and exploiting potential of land and human resources provided it exposure towards the international frontiers. The human settlements that emerged, grew and sustained themselves did exist in clusters in the South Gujarat sub-region. This very aspect of South Gujarat inspired me to examine it thoroughly. Further, a few words about the South Gujarat territory undertaken by me for study are also needed for clarification as this territory does not correspond to the traditional understanding of South Gujarat or to the territory undertaken by the scholars for study as South Gujarat.

The South Gujarat sub-region forms a part of the Western seaboard of India. It has the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Cambay as its western border. Historically⁴ it is termed as Lat/Lata/ Larike/Lati.⁵ The minimum territory⁶ of the South Gujarat sub-region lies between the river Mahi and the river Narmada whereas the maximum territory⁷ stretches between the river Mahi in the north and the river Damanganga in the south. It means that this portion of Gujarat state lies in the present districts of Bharuch, Narmada, Surat, Navsari, Dang and Valsad and partly in Anand and Vadodara districts in Gujarat and to a certain extent in Dhulia and Nasik Districts of Maharashtra. Thus the South Gujarat territory under examination does not follow the conventional understanding of South Gujarat sub-region nor does it follow the maximum bounds of the territory suggested by H. D. Sankalia.⁸ The territory under examination includes the territory below Dabka where the river Mahi falls in the Gulf of Cambay⁹ extending to the river Damanganga in the south along the western coast in terms

⁴The historical period stands from the second century down to the fifteenth century. See H. D. Sankalia, 'Lata-Its Historical and Cultural Significance, *Aspects of Indian History and Archaeology*, pp. 27-28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-37.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸ H. D. Sankalia, 'Lata- Its Historical and Cultural Significance, *Aspects of Indian History and Archaeology*, p. 28.

⁹This meeting point of Mahi with that of Gulf of Cambay's water is popularly understood as Mahisagar.

of length; the breadth wise extent lies between the seacoast and the eastern limits of the present Gujarat State. In this way the portion of Dhulia and Nasik Districts of Maharashtra state are excluded from the area covered under study. The reason for excluding Maharashtra portion is obvious, as it does not form a part of the present Gujarat State whereas the portions of Anand and Vadodara districts lie in the territory of Central Gujarat. Finally, the area under investigation covers the urban settlements that lie in the present districts of Bharuch/Broach, Narmada, Surat, Navsari, Dang, Valsad and the border portion of Vadodara district comprising the southern borders of Sinor *taluka* and Tilakwada *peta mahal* (see Location Map in Chapter I).

This thesis has been worked out in six stages.

Chapter I: The Making of South Gujarat

Chapter II: Agrarian Potential of South Gujarat

Chapter III: Non-Agricultural Production, Trade and Commerce

Chapter IV: Urban Centers in South Gujarat

Chapter V: Social Components of South Gujarat

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Chapter I, entitled 'The Making of South Gujarat,' discusses the South Gujarat territory as a construct (my emphasis) from different perspectives with the help of five sections. The beginning is made through the sketch of the formation of administrative territories under various ruling authorities during the nineteenth century. The rest of the sections follow this section on geomorphological features, natural endowments and human resource potential of the South Gujarat sub-region. This stage is illustrated through tables and maps on location, administrative territory, physical features and natural endowments of the South Gujarat territory.

Chapter II entitled 'Agrarian Potential of South Gujarat' estimates the agricultural capabilities through the realization of actually cultivated land estimates, irrigation facilities, agricultural yield, revenue management, revenue returns and trade in agricultural produce at the inter- and intra-level among the

large, medium and small size urban settlements within the South Gujarat territory and western India. The statistical details in this chapter have been explained with the help of graphs.

Chapter III entitled 'Non-Agricultural Production, Trade and Commerce,' traces the centres of non-agricultural produce, production method, trade and commerce statistics, means of transport and communication, operation of market forces, local markets, nature of investments and savings in the urban and rural settlements and registers transformation in the medium and small size urban settlements which took place under the changed political and economic circumstances.

Chapter IV entitled 'Urban Centres in South Gujarat' classifies the urban settlements on the basis of the size and functional role during the nineteenth century. This chapter is constructed in two stages. The first deals with the subject matter and scope of urban history and discussion on the model of r-urban continuum whereas the second section gives outline of the biography and functional dynamism of the urban settlements within South Gujarat.

Chapter V entitled 'Social Components of South Gujarat' provides the details regarding the community, class and caste structure in the rural and urban setting of the South Gujarat territory. It traces the mutual relationships among the communities of South Gujarat and the transformations that the society underwent as a result of new political and economic systems under the British rule and the adaptations to the changes by the Native States in the sub-region.

The entire argument in this thesis is summed up with the assessment of quantum mechanism of the urban settlements in the sub region in Chapter VI entitled 'Conclusion'. The striking feature that emerges from the discussion is that though the Gujarat region in general and sub-region in particular evidenced decay in the economic growth at the wake of changed political circumstances sustained itself with the predominance of agrarian economy and restricted urban

growth. The element of interdependence between the urban and rural settlement is established both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Many a times the discussions in the chapters has been supported by the details that appears in appendices on measurement, *taluka* maps and location maps of towns during the twentieth century.

Sources undertaken in the development of this thesis are both unpublished and published contemporary and archival sources extant today. These are in English, Gujarati and Marathi languages. Both these sources are collected mainly from three places i.e. Mumbai, Vadodara and Pune. However, my visits to the local libraries at Navsari, Bansda and Dharampur have been extremely helpful in the collection of the research materials. The most useful sources have been the *Memoirs*, *Memorandums*, *Revision of Survey and Settlement* and the *Gazetteers* of both Bombay Presidency and the Imperial series. The *Gazetteers* provide a plethora of information on every aspect of life with reliable statistical details. However, I have rechecked these sources with that of the contemporary archival materials (like Political Department and Revenue Department Reports) available at Mumbai and Vadodara. The *Census Reports* for the last quarter of the nineteenth century have been the other instrument of verifications of the empirical details in the understanding of the urban settlements in the South Gujarat territory. The Proceedings of the *Faujdari* and *Diwani Adalats* have provided immense help in the understanding of the social relationships among the communities within the South Gujarat territory.