

# CLASSIFICATION OF TOWNS

THE STUDY of towns, as discussed earlier, constitutes a vital field of urban geography, and is based on a numerous distinct features, such as, age, size, population, geographic location, etc. taking into account such attributes, it can be seen that towns may vary from each other in terms of their characteristics. On this basis, various geographers have attempted to classify towns, which adds a new dimension in the study of urban development.

Though the towns have been classified in many ways, the most significant and meaningful classification has been made on the basis of the population size, the functional structure and the age.

## Classification of Towns by Age

The relics of urban development came to-light after archaeological excavations. This reveals the earliest towns of the eastern world, e.g., Mohanjodaro, Harappa, Vaishali, Nalanda and Takshasila, Greek and Roman towns, medieval renaissance Baroue followed by the industrial and modern towns. In the entire world at present the modern towns are thousands in number which developed into towns, cities, metropolis besides sub-urban area and conurbations. Lewis Mumford<sup>1</sup> had presented six fold classification of urban centres : Eopolis (small town), polis (major town), metropolis (large city), megalopolis (sectoral urban development in a country), tyranopolis (countrywide urban development), ecumonopolis (world urbanization) and nekropolis (as ghost city). Doxiades<sup>2</sup> has formulated dynopolis as the city of transport development. J.M. Houston<sup>3</sup> recognized three stages of urban growth in Europe :

### *The Nuclear Stage*

This is represented by central area of a large town confined inside wall like the Boulevards of Paris, Vienna and Moscow.

## *The Formative Stage*

During nineteenth century the extension of industrial revolution changed the transport network and trade. This favoured the spread of houses and factories outside the central area along lines of transport and communication.

## *The Modern Stage*

This has developed the motor transport which favoured the growth of suburban towns in a big way. Griffith Taylor<sup>4</sup> while examining the urban settlements of Canada recognized four stages of urban growth which are as follows :

*The Infantile Stage:* The smaller town has been considered in this stage where the separation of commercial and residential areas could not be separated and the buildings and lanes are haphazardly distributed. Teghra in Begusarai district is an example of this stage.

*The Juvenile Stage:* In this stage the skyline of the houses rise and the factories are also established at places. Munger is an example of this stage.

*The Mature Stage:* This stage is marked by well separated residential and commercial area. The rise of new colonies on the fringe and vertical expansion is the rule. The urban centres of Ontario, Delhi, Patna, London, Dar'es Salaam and Cario come in this stage.

*Senility:* This stage is marked by cease of growth, decay of some areas and decline in economic development. In Britain, the industrial towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire and Durham are some of the examples. In Uttar Pradesh, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Mathura and Muzaffarnagar are towns of senile stage.

## *Mumford's Classification of Towns*

As a physical entity, social phenomena, technological advancement, cultural ties and historical evolution Lewis Mumford considered the stages of growth of towns as follows.<sup>5</sup>

*Eopolis:* It is a small town of village origin-which are based on agriculture, mining and fishing.

*Polis:* It is a sort of market town with wholesale grain market and retail market. Some industries may also be found at this stage.

*Metropolis:* It is a large city with at least 10 lakhs of population. It has dominating position on neighbourhood towns and cities, along with

number of industries and outlying residential colonies in its suburb. At this stage, the integration of culture, retail business and bankers are found along with the university level education.

*Megalopolis:* When several cities and metropolises coalesce with each other forming a giant urban centre over a greater part of a nation than it is known as megalopolis. This is an urban area of material wealth, original art, varieties of business, industrial development and poly-nuclear city centres. New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Morrisville form a megalopolis on the eastern Atlantic sea coast of U.S.A. (Fig. 4.1).

*Tyranopolis:* In tyranopolis city countrywide urbanization predominates the scene. Here the display and expense become the measurement of culture, standard of living and the expansion of trade and commerce of both national and international levels. Great Britain may attain this stage where about 90 per cent people are living in urban areas.

*Nekropolis:* It is known as ghost city or dead city. This stage may be attained due to war, famine and diseases and the decline of municipal services, decay of cultural institutions and the relict features of towns give a deserted look like the ancient Babylon, Nineveh, Vaishali, Mohanjodaro and Harappa. This is the last stage of the decline of urbanization.

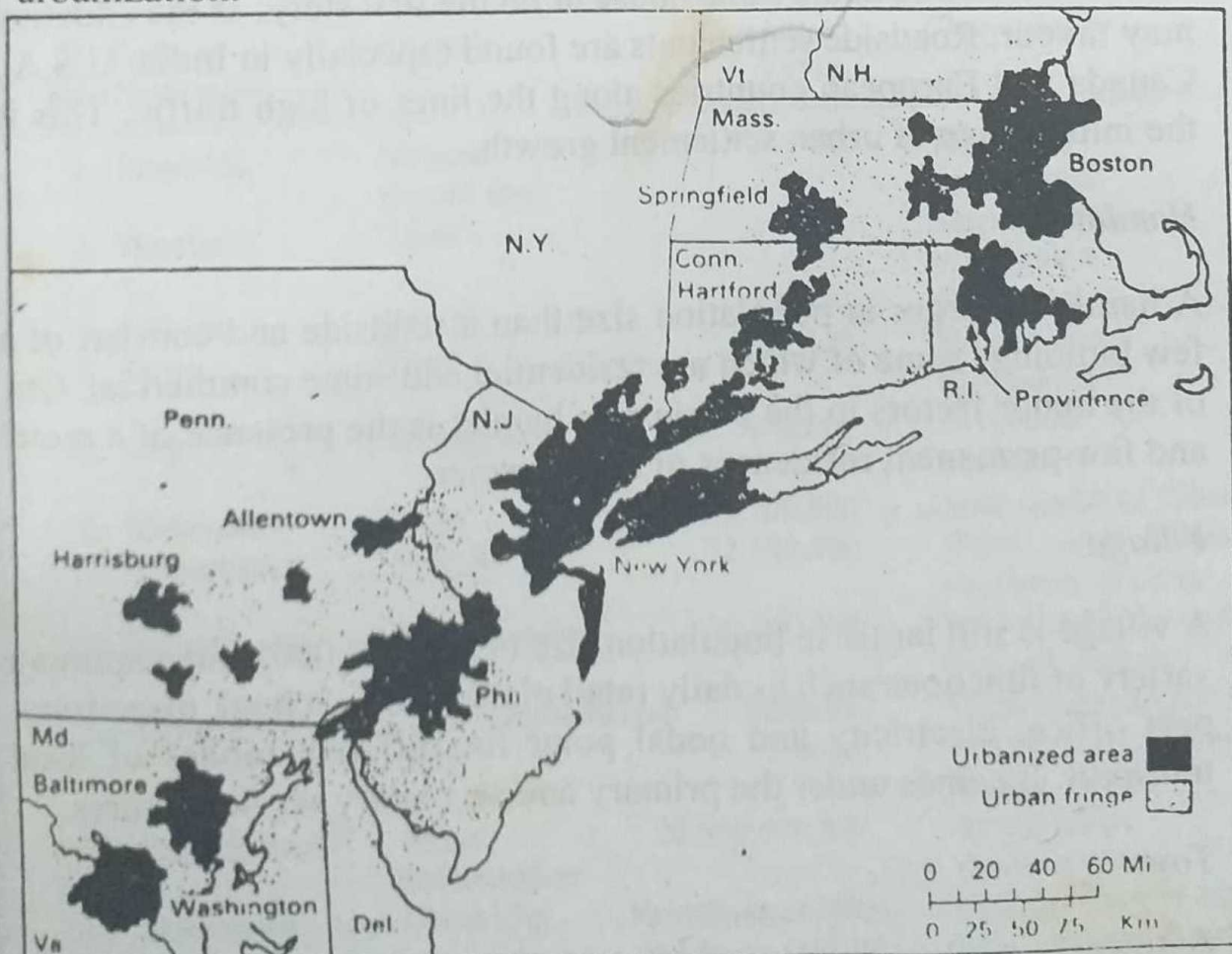


FIG. 4.1 : Megalopolis : Eastern Coast of U.S.A.

In contrast, we have the invisible city, the product of revolution in communication and electric transmission. This has helped even the remote villages to have the urban component of life and hence we avoid the city where the degeneration of urban environment by slums and squatters and heaps of garbage disfavour sound human living. Doxiades has favoured the term *dynopolis* a city not for man but meant for cars, aeroplanes, helicopters and rocket.

### **Cycle of Urban Development**

The origin, growth and stage of an urban settlement favours its cyclic character. Whether it is a hamlet or a village, the availability of tertiary activities adds an urban character in it. Hence, the size of service centres ranges from roadside to *ecumonopolis*, a stage of world urbanization. Some of these terminologies are very loosely defined but some are very precise.

#### *Roadside*

A roadside is an isolated housing unit of gasoline station, petrol pump, betal shop or tea stall etc. situated along a highway. The owners of such units either reside in the same house or on the first story, as the situation may favour. Roadside settlements are found especially in India, U.S.A., Canada and European countries along the lines of high traffic. This is the initial stage of urban settlement growth.

#### *Hamlet*

A hamlet is larger in population size than a roadside and consists of a few buildings some of which are residential and some commercial. One of the major factors in the origin of a hamlet is the presence of a motel and few permanent residences of businessmen.

#### *Village*

A village is still larger in population size (150 to 10,000) and acquires a variety of functions such as daily retail market, high school, dispensary, post office, electricity and nodal point for different modes of local transport. It comes under the primary and secondary service centres.

#### *Town*

A town is a place having a municipality or an administration of a notified area committee. The population may range from 2,000 to 20,000

and it may have predominance of tertiary functions, e.g., shopping, transport, house renting and store house of various items along with a wholesale grain market. It may be a centre for Anchal Headquarter, telephone exchange, college and railway station as well.

*City*

In case an urban centre acquires a population of more than 1,00,000 than it is known as a city. This criteria has been adopted by the census of India. It acquires diversified functions such as administrative, business, education, transport, industrial and religious, etc. and different nodes of business area may be identified and it must be a railway junction or perform a university level service.

*Conurbation*

In a conurbation cities coalesce with each other due to expansion of industries and grow together economically. Politically it may be independent, viz., Mumbai and Thana constitute an urbanized cluster but they are independent from the point of view of administration.

## *Metropolis*

According to the census of India an urban centre having 10,00,000 of population is known as metropolis. Hence, the term millionaire city is self-evident. The 1991 census of India showed that there were 25 metropolis in the country and about 150 in the entire world. It is also known as a cosmopolitan city.

## *Megalopolis*

This term has been used for the most massive concentration of urbanized settlement on the Atlantic Sea Board of North America over a stretch of 900 kilometres from Boston in the North upto Florida in the South. It resulted obviously from the coalesce of chain of metropolitan areas, each of which grew around a substantial urban nucleus. The super metropolitan character of this vast area and the greatest urban growth ever observed earned it a special name megalopolis given by Jean Gottmann.

## *Tyranopolis*

When the whole country is urbanized than it may be called tyranopolis. Until now this situation of urban development has not aroused throughout the world but the increase of urban population of Great Britain, Germany and U.S.A. the spread of tyranopolis by 100 per cent urban development is not very far.

## *Ecumonopolis*

This is the stage of world urbanization. Near about A.D. 2050 the world may pass through this last stage of urban development and people will get food from ocean which covers about 78 per cent area of the globe.<sup>7</sup>

## **Classification of Towns by Population**

In terms of population, towns have been classified into: Small towns, major towns, city and metropolis, as shown in table below. These classifications are made on the basis of number of inhabitants in an urban centre and their density per square kilometre. Towns having a population below 50,000 are called small towns; and those whose population ranges from 50,000 to 99,999 are called major towns. A city has above 100,000 inhabitants, and a metropolis has a population of 1,000,000.