

URBAN Morphology of two Religious centres of Gaya city and Deoghar in old Bihar

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Urban settlement is a part of the settlement fabric. It is like, "An organic whole with a distinction in build and structure etc. Morphology evolved through various ecological processes".¹ The urban activities are expressed in physical forms. Thus, the study of form or morphology of urban settlement is very important.²

Morphology of a town is concerned with the ground build and skyline of the houses. The plan may be internal which concerns with the arrangement of streets and built space,³ or external which concerns with shape and the bird's eye view of the street patterns developed in a settlement.⁴

Cozon viewed, 'A town plan comprises the geographical alignment of the urban built-up area in its full morphological detail and diversity bringing the plan into intimate relation with the aspect of building fabric and of landuse. A town plan can be defined, therefore, as the topographic arrangements of an urban built up area and all its man-made features'.⁵ According to Brush, "Interpretation of the morphology of Indian cities begins with mapping the existing layout of streets, the arrangement and characteristics of buildings, associated patterns of landuse."⁶

Morphology is concerned with the plan and build of the habitat, viewed and interpreted in terms of its origin, growth and function.⁷ Morphological studies often deal with development of forms and pattern of the present city or other urban area through time, in short, with evolution.⁸

Towns are themselves areas of appreciable size, and have an internal geography that is full of interest and significance. When within any urban area, we recognize belts, shopping areas, residential quarters and such like, we are expressing the internal structure of the town, in terms of different users of urban land. It can also be described in terms of the physical forms and arrangement of the spaces and building that compose the urban landscape, or townscape, as it may be called. Differences in either or both these intimately related aspects of urban morphology, function and form give a basis for the recognition of urban regions. It is the description of their nature, their relative disposition and their social interdependence that constitutes a geographical analysis of an urban area.⁹ Significant as are the differences between planned and unplanned towns, there are others no less important for urban geography that have been very much less generally recognized. Towns which have roots dating back to mediaeval times or beyond are notably different from those which are entirely products of the modern period, whether of colonization or of the other development that have been responsible for the modern multiplication of town. From the standpoint of modern urban morphology a distinction perhaps even more fundamental than that between planned and unplanned towns is that between towns which originally or at some period in their history have had clearly defined extension, and those which have not. In the former, the area which represents this definitive extent is a recognizable and often fundamentally distinctive feature embodied in the present-day urban area. This kernel may or not be a planned town, originally conceived as an entity and laid out formally, but it is hardly less distinctive if it is not.¹⁰ As the urban core develops, the surrounding tracts appear as integuments of differing character, the products of successive phases of urban growth and the accompanying functional changes. The growth of every town is a twin

process of outward extension and internal reorganization. Each phase adds new fabric – outside in the form of accretion, within, in the form of replacement. Replacement of old buildings by new ones, specially constructed for new functions and current standards, is always include much adaptation of old forms to new uses. At any time, many of the existing structures are obsolescent and in their deterioration are subject to functional change; they are converted for new uses.¹¹ Gaya and Deoghar are sacred urban centers of ancient origin. “The need of worship has played by far the most vital part in the evolution of the city since its very birth.”¹² From the religious point of view the cities have assumed, more or less a national character. The temples and sacred ponds have contributed towards their growth so much so that cities may be divided into three zones according to their sphere of influence. These roughly correspond with the Inner, Middle, and Outer Zones of the city. The Temples are so numerous, particularly in the Inner Zone that they form a conspicuous element in the cultural landscape of the cities of Gaya and Deoghar. The number of temples have not been decreased during the recent past, but are increasing. A religious centre has particular geographical importance because of the strong centripetal flow of traffic it may generate. A circulation system is set up that may augment significantly the flow of traffic in existing patterns; or it may cut across other circulation patterns; associated with commercial, administrative and military networks. This religious circulation promotes secondary flows of trade, cultural exchange, social mixing and political interaction.¹³

Morphological features of sacred urban centers in India are almost the same. There is obviously two parts of any such centers like Varanasi, Mathura, Haridwar, Ayodhya, Puri, Rameshwaram etc. The old parts have narrow and crooked street plans with major settlements of **PANDAS** and priests. Functional morphology dominate worship and pilgrim-tourists related articles. The whole environs in the oldest part is sacred, and creating ‘Sacred zone.’ Same is the case with Varanasi where the streets in Vishwanath Temple complex (Ganga river side) streets are not wide enough for wheeled carriage particularly in the densely settled areas. The streets generally were at a lower level than the entrance of the houses and shops that lined them. In these oldest settled areas all roads lead to the Sanctum Sanctorum. Characteristically, the twin features, Church and market place, dominated the plans of many towns, and mediaeval urbanism is epitomized in the cathedral city (Smailes, 1967, 20). The Sacred morphology of Gaya and Deoghar is characterized by such urban features. Most Hindu holy place are landmarks rather than places sanctified by the mythological or historical acts of a hierophant, although this type of sacred places is also known.¹⁴ The distribution of Hindu holy places shows some correspondence with selected features of the physical landscape, although the degree of holiness ascribes to such features varies from region to region. The sanctity of places is diffuse enough to be insignificant in the location of Hindu temples. Since most large Hindu temples are endowed as autonomous institutions by persons of wealth, these structures need not be very close to communities, although especially sacred sites create their own population cluster providing a variety of economic services. The choice of temple site is thus adjusted to the local sacred geography and Hindu temple location is to that extent god-oriented rather than community-oriented.¹⁵ Gaya (M.Cor; 3,83,197; 2001), the shrine eternal, represents an amalgam of pre-historic and historic period. As a part of Magadh, it remained outside the pale of Aryanism and was associated with the culture of the Vratyas. Though not specifically mentioned in the Vedas, it is mentioned in the Nirukta; Ramayan and the Mahabharata. As one of the greatest place of pilgrimages, the sanctity of Gaya sraddha is based upon a legend in the GAYAMAHATAMYA. Yajnavalkya, Vasistha and Atri recognize Gaya as a place of offering PINDA at Pretshila. According to GAYAMAHATAMYA, God granted Gayasure’s request for being the holiest,

Sankaracharya gave Gaya the place of honour.¹⁶ Gaya holds an important place on the religious map of the world. It is the 'PITRI TIRTHA' par excellence and commands reverence all over the Hindu domain. It is located on the high Western bank of the river Phalgu, the joint stream of the Mohana and the Niranjana (Lilajana), regarded more sacred than the holy Ganga.¹⁷ Extending from 24° 35' 36" to 24° 50' 30" North latitudes, and from 84° 57' 58" to 85° 03' 18" East longitudes, it is the 2nd city of Bihar. It covers an area of about 30,72 km.² It is an important junction on the Grand Chord section of the Eastern Mid Railway. It is connected with the National Highway No. 23 by a 32 Kms. long modern road at Dobhi. It is now on the Air-map of India. It experiences the Tropical Monsoon Type of Climate, Summer (Max 45°C) are hot, Winters (Min 3°C) are cold. The rainy season lasts for about three months. DEOGHAR (M;98,372;2001).¹⁸ Deoghar (Baidyanathdham, one of the holiest pilgrim centers of Hindu, echo with religious slogan of "BOL, BAM BOL BAM" in the SRAVAN month (July-August). Lakhs of pilgrims visit the place. The streets and lanes at this time are swelled and become choked with devotees. Pilgrims, men and women trek from Sultanganj to Deoghar, a distance of about 100 kms. In day and night, sun and rain carrying sacred water of Ganga. It is an unending CARAVAN of trekkers in saffron garments. Their faces tired but radiant with religious faiths, strong determination and sublime devotion. They offer the water of the Ganga on Shive Ligam at Deoghar and then proceed to basukinath (43 kms). Where the long trekking

The functional morphology of the roads lanes leading to these Sacred sites are quite different which display and sell mainly PUJA ingredients, cloths, utensils, idols and curio-items. Deoghar can be reached via Jasidih, via Jasidih, a railway junction on the Main Line of Eastern Railway. From Jasidih, a branch line goes to Deoghar, a distance of only 8 kms. There are well metalled roads between Bhagalpur and Deoghar, Godda and Deoghar, Dumka and Deoghar and Jamui and Deoghar, Buses and taxis ply regularly on these roads.

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