

Unit 11

Functional Classification of Cities : Commercial, Administrative and Pilgrimage Towns

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Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- describe the different functions of cities;
- discuss the nature and character of commercial centres;
- explain the characteristics of administrative towns;
- describe the features of pilgrimage cities and towns; and
- analyse the interconnectedness among commercial, administrative and pilgrimage cities and towns.

11.1 Introduction

In this unit the functions that a city performs have been discussed. Functional analysis of cities and towns is based on the various functions which they perform according to the needs of time and place in any country. They exist to perform certain functions and provide certain services for the area around them. Consequently each urban centre, whether a metropolis or a small town can be characterised in terms of their functionality. In other words the activities of people of that particular area constitute the function of that urban area. It is the functional specialisation which distinguishes them from the surrounding areas. Their status is generally determined by the number and nature of functions they perform. With the rapid pace of urbanisation and increased opportunities of employment the functional specialisation of cities and towns have become more and more complex. Though several functions are common in most of the towns and cities, there exist marked disparities in the degree of functional specialisation as determined by the factors of site and situation, economy and culture and the stages of their development.

When important cities and towns are classified according to their respective functions, it stands out clearly that these functions cannot be performed effectively by any substitute centres. Examples of this phenomena are service centres, local market centres, mining centres, shipping port cities etc. For example, it would be more profitable to have steel industries near iron ore sources.

11.2 Functions of Cities

The functions of towns have been investigated within a number of conceptual frameworks including central place theory and the urban economic base. It might be asserted that the geographical study of urban functions is well accommodated within these two frameworks, but if this claim is accepted then it is necessary to explain the need for functional classification of towns and cities.

According to Auroousseau's (1924) there are six urban functions:

- i) Administrative function.
- ii) Defence functions.
- iii) Cultural functions.
- iv) Production functions.
- v) Communication functions.
- vi) Recreation functions.

He noted that while a combination of these functions was performed by any given city, one function usually tended to overshadow the rest. Thus he enunciated the concept of functional differentiation and functional specialisation.

Cities serve manifold functions in the economy and culture of a society. All cities have some functions in common, all cities have some functions peculiar to their sites and situations, to the people whom they serve, and all cities have some functions peculiar to their development and their history. Hence cities may be classified more effectively on the basis of their functions as a criterion than perhaps according to any other attributes.

The classification procedure that is adopted should produce groups of towns about which the greatest number, most precise, and most important standards can be made for the differentiating characteristics, and more generally, to be justified on other than pedagogic grounds. Thus any classification should be relevant to a well defined problem or group of problems. Thus when towns and cities are classified we not only want to be able to say something about the function or the functions typical to that group; but there should be knowledge of additional characteristics of the towns in that group.

Several classifications of cities in terms of the functions that they perform have been developed within the past decade by different social scientists and geographers. For example, Chauncy D. Harris and Edward L. Ullman have classified cities as:

- i) **Central place:** These areas perform comprehensive services for those areas which fall outside of the central city. The central places are often seen in the big cities and they are like the main market. There may be several services like production, distribution and other trading

works and functions. The central places are the core part of any city. But in modern urban centres and in modern cities there may be many central places, a number of business centres as well as industrial and residential areas.

- ii) **Transport cities:** They perform bulk and allied services along the transport routes, and they are supported by the areas that may be remote in their distance but close in connection because of the city's strategic location on the transport routes. These towns either produce transport equipment or serve as the main transport junction or they are situated and connected near rail and road links. Transport towns are situated near a chain of routes of transportation. Transport cities are also cities which are situated at the meeting point of transport routes. Transport cities are very crucial in modern days of urban functions because the main cities provide several types of goods and services to the other parts of the country.
- iii) **Specialised function cities:** These cities perform a single service such as mining, manufacturing, education, recreation or administrative. The specialised function towns and cities are thus located in such a way that they may perform any single and specialised function and this may be due to their strategic location like their closeness to coal mines, river banks, iron ore etc. But it should be kept in mind that all functions are likely to be present in some degrees in every city.

Thus we have seen how the functional classification is very vital for city analysis and city understanding. Functional classification of towns indicates the activities mix of urban places. In India the Census has classified ten main urban functions. These are as follows:

A) Primary functional activities

- i) Cultivators.
- ii) Agricultural labourers.
- iii) Livestock, forestry and fishing.
- iv) Mining.

B) Industry

- i) Manufacturing.
- ii) Processing.
- iii) Servicing and repairs.
- iv) Construction.

C) Trade

- i) Trade and commerce.

D) Transport

- i) Transport.
- ii) Storage.
- iii) Communication.

11.3 Commercial Centres

Trade and commerce were the two major activities of medieval towns and cities as discussed earlier. Merchants and traders were organised into guilds. Besides the distribution of goods and services these guilds were acting as banks. They usually received public money and paid regular interest on it. Guilds also functioned as ordinary courts and the king recognised their customary laws. In the past also skilled workers were organised into factories. R.K. Mukherjee has presented a systematic account of state enterprises in the Mughal period. Besides state enterprises there were individual entrepreneurs. There was an interesting fact that the growth of the commercial centres have taken place in the respective state capitals also. This happened because the merchants needed the kings and state patronage for their safety. The merchants were organised on the basis of appropriate hinterland and availability of channels of communication. There were both inland market towns and the sea ports for trade and commerce.

The rise and fall of different commercial towns and cities and markets are dependent, on political security. They are also dependent to a great extent on hinterland commodities, transport, trade and commerce in large cities, and the discovery of new maritime trade routes. Thus with the discovery of new sea trade route by Vasco-da-Gama, Calicut became an important commercial centre, and with the development and growth of Bombay under British rule, Broach and Surat suffered a setback. However, many market towns and urban places which were dependent on the inland supply of raw materials continued to function despite the political neglect and different changes in international markets. There was also a network of commercial centres with a multiple level of hierarchy. The commercial centres came up more smoothly with the political stability. Market towns and cities had a large number of merchants in contrast to the villages. Many craftsmen such as weavers, oilmen, smiths and shoemakers traded their goods and maintained contacts with both large market towns and the villages. The increased magnetisation led to the consumption of some urban goods and adoption of the urban style of life.

Today the cities have the focal point for economic processes and activities. They exist and develop in terms of their commercial and economic activities. The cities provide commercial services to their hinterlands and the surrounding areas. The city offers a wide variety of goods and services and these are sold and purchased both within and outside the city. From this viewpoint, we can say that in modern times the cities are essentially a centre for commercial and economic activities.

In the post-independence period, the emergence of mining towns is a typical example of commercial towns. Their character and nature can be easily seen to be based on the mining activities only. The list of mining towns in India is large. Commercial agriculture in modern times also gave rise to many towns and cities. There are lots of tea plantations in south India, Assam and other parts of the country. These tea plantations have given rise to several factories for processing tea. According to Ashok Mitra (1973) there are about 656 towns and cities which are recognised as agricultural towns and centres. As perceived earlier, agriculture was a village activity, but today it is no more a village activity only, rather it is also an urban phenomenon. A substantial number of India's innovative and prosperous farmers live in towns. The Green Revolution in Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh had vitalised and generated a number of towns which provided a number of amenities to the new rural middle class farmers and agriculturalists.

Cities and towns have been main centres of secondary activities for a long time. In post independence period we have seen a number of secondary activities which have come up in the modern cities and towns. After five decades of independence, India has possessed a large number of commercial and industrial cities. We can see that industrialisation and the commercialisation process have already contributed to the rapid growth of cities in India. In the contemporary period the main metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Delhi are the most important centres for commercial and industrial activities. Apart from the metropolitan cities we have other port cities like Visakhapatnam, Cochin, Surat, etc. which have been prime centres of commercial activities. The other such cities are Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Poona, Bangalore and Hyderabad. The emergence of Hyderabad and Bangalore are the two recent examples of the commercial and industrial cities which have emerged in recent times due to their commercial and service industries. Bangalore and Hyderabad are famous for their software industries worldwide. On the other hand, the growth of tertiary sectors also contributes in a direct way to the city growth. In every city, part of city tertiary activities is meant for the city's own population. The role of the tertiary sector in the city growth and development is very important in contemporary times. The city and the countryside interact more closely today than ever before. The range of tertiary sector and activities has expanded to include educational institutions, hospitals, cinema houses, courts, banks and other financial institutions. Thus, we can say that the contemporary towns and cities are acting as service centres for rural areas. There is a daily movement of people from rural to urban centres for these tertiary services. Thus we have seen how towns and cities are acting as centres for all the three levels, viz., primary, secondary and the tertiary sectors.

Reflection and Action 11.1

Identify a city in India, such as, Patna, Jaipur, Agra, Chennai, etc. Visit a library and collect as much material as possible on this city and the dominant function for which it is known.

Write an essay on "The Functions of ----- City". In about two pages. Also note down the type of function that it performs. Discuss your essay with the other learners at your Study Centre.

11.4 Administrative Towns

Administrative towns and cities have a long history and still they occupy a central place in the emergence of the city. Several administrative urban centres emerged and declined in Indian urban history with the rise and fall of different kingdoms. Pataliputra, Vijaynagram, Madurai, Golconda are all examples of administrative cities and towns which are no more identified as administrative towns. It is noteworthy that different political regimes had selected the same cities and urban centres for locating their political capitals. Thus each of the several cities of Delhi was built by a different dynasty. Similarly, in the case of Agra in the Medieval period and Pataliputra have become capital cities again and again.

So we can say that what was being known as administrative towns in earlier times are now known for some other function. The emergence of towns and cities as important places in Indian history has not lost significance even now. Throughout history the administrative cities have held an eminent position among the various types of cities and towns. In the past history, the wealth and happiness of the kingdoms were measured

in terms of the prosperity of capital cities. At the lower levels several provincial and lower administrative capitals owed their importance to political and administrative processes within the kingdoms. So we can say that the capital and other administrative cities and towns have kept a significant place in Indian society. At present too, great importance is attached to administrative capitals.

Several administrative towns and cities are the headquarters of different states such as Patna, Lucknow, Chandigarh, and Guwahati etc. Administrative towns not only include state capitals but also other cities and towns which perform other important administrative and public functions. The colonial rulers established a series of cities which served as administrative centres for them. There were also many small kingdoms at that time whose capitals vary from small to big urban administrative towns and cities. We have the sources to establish the fact that at that point of time Banaras, Poona, and Ahmedabad were medium size towns, whereas Mysore, Udaipur, Jaipur, Bikaner etc. were small towns. Throughout history it was the administrative towns and cities which have flourished and dominated the urban scene in terms of their numbers and population.

During British rule over India, the administrative factor played an important role in the process of urbanisation. The provincial capitals, the district headquarters, and the tehsil towns grew in importance and overshadowed the earlier urban centres. The administrative towns and cities began to acquire a new urban form in the presence of the civil lines and cantonments. The national capitals and some of the provincial capitals as well shifted to hill stations, such as Shimla, Darjeeling, and Shillong during the summer, thus generating a new class of transient capital cities. After independence, the administrative aspects of urbanisation and the growth of the cities and towns is seen in the emergence of new state capitals like Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar and Gandhinagar. The number of states in India has increased and the political process in India could well bring about further division of the larger states on administrative and political grounds. Naturally it increased the number of administrative cities and administrative towns in the country. This paved the way for the emergence of new state capitals and the related urban paraphernalia. At a lower level there has been a constant increase in the tehsil and district headquarters which is fast growing in the post independent era. Thus, we can see a close relation between administrative cities and origin and growth of other types of cities. While we have seen that the commercial and industrial cities also flourished during the earlier period, but primarily the commercial activities were present due to the administrative character of these cities and towns. We have already mentioned above that during the colonial phase the administrative reasons and factors have played an important role in the emergence of various capital cities in India. During this period the commercial centres of earlier period have transformed into administrative cities in the forms of the provincial capitals, tehsil headquarters, and district headquarters. The administrative towns and capitals began to acquire a new urban form in the form of civil lines and cantonments.

11.5 Pilgrimage Cities and Towns

Pilgrimage journey is a hierarchical form of rite of passage. It involves mainly three stages of functions. The first is initiation, second is liminality and the third one is reaggregation. *The first stage is the awareness to start the journey; the second is the journey itself and the different experiences of the pilgrimages; and the last stage is returning home from*

the pilgrimages. The notion of pilgrimage has four main connotations in Hindu religious literature viz.

- i) a route going to a place where one can receive manifestive power.
- ii) the bank of a river where one can take the holy dip as the rite of the purification,
- iii) a sacred site where lies the power of manifestation and finally,
- iv) the religious territory which became sacred due to several divine activities and work of the Almighty.

Box 11.1 Sanctity of Pilgrimages

The studies of functional classifications of the pilgrimage centers are quite necessary as Indian religious entity is based on the different types of pilgrimages and holy journey. Above all, pilgrimages are universal in character. A pilgrimage belongs to human experience of sanctity of place. It also generates a particular geographical behaviour in journey and rituals performed as expressed in the ties between the religious attitudes and lived space. The sanctity of place forms a life cycle like that of human beings. During medieval period many writings are available describing the glory of holy places in different ways at different magnitudes.

Religion always played an important role in the life and culture of Indians. There were several religious centers which emerged in India side by side with other urban centres. It is a well known fact that Hinduism comprises various forms of rituals. Among the various rituals there is a practice of pilgrimages. The most important places of worship were temples, which were situated in various towns and cities. The Hindu temple was the house of God and constituted a self-sufficient and autonomous unit. In olden times it is known that there were no transport facilities like today, people and urban communities often grew around temples and sacred places, mostly to cater to pilgrim needs. This paved the way for traders and other business communities to establish their own trade and business in these temple towns. In other words the flow of pilgrims created a circulation network of a religious nature, promoting secondary flows of traders and artisans who catered to the needs of these pilgrims. The pan-Indian centres of pilgrimages were situated in all parts of the country from Kedarnath, and Badrinath in Himalayas in the north, to Rameswaram in the south. Puri in the east and Dwarka in the west of India.

Holy places thus contributed to the circuit pattern of the pilgrimages. This included the most important pan-Indian religious centres. But it is not compulsory that all the religious centres develop into full-fledged urban centres. In recent times the most urbanised religious centres are Allahabad and Varanasi or Banaras. This could be explained by the fact that both these cities had significant locational advantages and their central regional locations encouraged their urban development, much beyond their role as pilgrimage centres.

During the medieval period many writings are available describing the glory of the various religious places in different ways at different magnitudes. Many temples have a network of subsidiary temples but some didn't have subsidiary temples. These temples usually did not develop into fullfledged urban areas. Only temples in urban centres which had been connected with military or trade centres became part of fully evolved urban centres.

Geographers and social scientists divide the holy places and pilgrimage centres into mainly three groups.

- i) The holy places near a river or the water flows.
- ii) Particular deity site or any shrine which is associated with a particular deity.
- iii) Mandala sites which have importance in terms of the visit paid by the worshipers. For example, Varanasi or Benaras, Mathura and Kashi are the examples of some of the mandalas which a devotee tries their level best to visit once in this life time.

The holy places which are near water flows are numerous in the Indian subcontinent and in the country. Examples of pilgrimage centre which are situated on the banks of rivers are Varanasi, Haridwar, Rudraprayag, Buxar, Allahabad, etc. Similarly, there are the urban areas in which a particular deity is assumed to be born or has a special influence on that particular place. This urban centre attracts lots of pilgrims annually. The result is that they are now more and more urbanised due to the flow of devotees. The last category comprises mandala site. Since ancient times there are several mandalas which are prescribed for the Hindus for the pilgrimage. These are centres like Badrinath, Rameswaram, etc. so we can say that the mandalas also have a significant place in the growth of urban centres in India.

The role of religion and pilgrimages are of particular interest to sociologists and this is a special case for urban growth in India which is not found anywhere in the world. This is due to the fact that India is dominated by its Hindu population and the religious importance of the pilgrimages is immense in this religion. Talking about other religions like Islam and Sikhism, we have several places which can be termed as their holy places and is being visited by the respective followers. But there is a difference between the Hindu pilgrimage centre and the other religious communities' holy places. Places like Ajmer Shariff and Jama Masjid of Delhi are important for Muslims in India, but we cannot claim that the cities of Delhi and Ajmer were constructed for this purpose, or that these cities are known only for the pilgrimage purpose.

Reflection and Action 11.2

Have you visited a pilgrimage centre recently or in the recent past? If so, describe the pilgrimage centre and the nature of the city in which it exists in about two pages. You must focus on the religious element and its socio-historical significance for the people in general. If you have not visited a pilgrimage centre, read about a centre like Haridwar or Tirupati and write about its nature and function as a pilgrimage city.

Share your account with other learners at the Study Centre where you attend counselling sessions.

11.6 Interconnectedness among Administrative, Commercial and Pilgrimage Centres

The cities since ancient times have been formed for administrative, commercial or religious purposes. The pre-colonial urban centres tended to be political at the core. This can be seen from the fact that the rise

and fall of the city structure was closely associated with the rise and fall of the regime, though the addition of commercial and religious activities would give the urban centres a certain immunity from political vicissitudes. This was also due to the fact that the merchants needed protection for their trade and commerce. To protect and profess the religion, the kingdoms also started building several beautiful temples and shrines during this period. These towns were built around the ruler and his kinsmen and other followers. Physical changes in these towns and urban centres during the 19th century can be analysed as the urban centres were used and built as administrative outposts for collecting land revenue and other taxes. They were also used as an army post etc. particularly during the British period.

Thus, when a ruler in pre-colonial period built a city, lots of commercial and religious activities were bound to occur. The royal towns and cities were elaborately planned. Within the metropolis a separate place was assigned for the royal palace. Temple towns were formed with distinct characteristics. They had several successive rings of circumambulatory paths to go round the central plots where the temples were situated. A number of minor shrines were also set up in these towns. A temple town such as Srirangam, Tirupati, Kashi or Puri were the centres of diverse cultural activities. The employees of the temple included priests, musicians, attendants, dancers and other staff. Generally, the temples maintained educational and other cultural institutes. Temples were also landowners contributing in their own way to the economic development of the region. Temples in some parts of south India were also corporate bodies exercising secular powers. The Tirupati temple is one of the richest temples in India and funds several institutions like University and Hospital, etc. Thus these temple sites attracted lots of pilgrims. While some were known as the all India pilgrim centres, others were regional ones. The former included Hardwar, Gaya, Nasik, Ujjain, Pushkar and Mathura. All these cities formed part of the sacred places of India and pilgrimage centres for the people. With the movement of large number of people to these centres there came to exist trading and servicing activities. Along with trade and commerce, the rulers were always present to protect these holy places.

Thus, we can see an intricate relationship between administrative, commercial and pilgrimage towns and urban centres in India. Religion and pilgrimage centres were socially being sustained by the political power. It is seen that kings and different kingdoms adopted a religion and military expeditions were motivated to spread of that religion. The king always acted as a chief patron of the religion. One of the chief activities connected with the religion was the construction of the temples and different types of mosques. The social organisation of various cities reflected all the three characters of the city viz. administrative, commercial and religious. It is also to be noted that different political regimes selected time and again the same site to build their political capitals. For example, the city of Delhi was built by several dynasties. A great city always nourishes a particular religion of its own. In other words the cities became the concrete symbol of the culture and aspiration of the emperors. Pataliputra under the rule of Samrat Ashoka, who turned Buddhist, changed its character completely. He disbanded his standing army and the city was thrown open for Buddhist pilgrims. Similarly, Jainism was promoted by the commercial section of society. Thus we can say that the sacred places were not isolated, rather they were closely associated with the administration and the commercial parts of the society and urban centres in Indian history.

11.7 Conclusion

A town or city normally performs various functions. In modern times, no city performs a single function. Rather, a city can be termed as a multifunctional entity. One can however, easily identify the single most dominant function of a city or town. But since the city is a dynamic process and a dynamic entity, the primary function can change over a period of time. An administrative city may later on become a pilgrimage centre and vice versa. Similarly, a commercial centre of yesterday may act as the political capital of today. So the functional classification cannot be done based on a rigid principle. The growth of the market and commercial towns followed a different pattern although trade and commerce were concentrated in the capital cities, as they needed political protection. They were also organised on the basis of the availability of channels of communications. There was also a proliferation of the temples and sacred places along with administrative and commercial centres and they ultimately became pilgrimage centres. With the growth of Sikhism, several sacred towns like Amritsar and Anandpur Saheb came into existence. These towns and cities thus functioned as religious centres. There is a network of pilgrimage centres now available for Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs etc. The religious centres became closely associated with the broad ethnic and religious identities of the several communities.

The functional classification of the Indian cities thus poses several problems. There is an overlapping character of various cities and towns. They have a long urban history and are very complex in terms of economy, culture, planning structure. But the functional analysis is vital to understand the various types of cities. The functional analysis also gives us the understanding with a different viewpoint. Mark Jefferson (1939) has rightly remarked that, 'cities do not grow up of themselves; rather countrysides set them up to do tasks that must be performed in the central places'. In other words, a city functions not only for its own sake but it discharges certain functions for its surrounding areas also. The functional specialisation thus takes into account the surrounding areas of the city. The surrounding areas on the contrary functions for the need of the main city.

11.8 Further Reading

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