



# NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON URBAN HISTORY OF BANGALORE: A REPORT

**Organized by the Department of History, Christ College,  
Bangalore, in association with Indian Council of Historical  
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It was Toynbee who gave the opinion, "the history of cities is an integral part of the history of human affairs as a whole." From the position of a tiny village in 12th century to the position of the fifth biggest and the most westernized city in India, Bangalore had many strides in its growth. Last two decades have seen the emergence of Bangalore as one of the fastest growing cities in Asia, if not the world. The city has grown in different magnitudes reaching to a position as the Silicon Valley of India.

But what is the essence of the city? It is no longer a network of colonial landmarks and commercial lanes. There is something greater than this. We need to understand the city's growth or transformation within the larger context of economic and cultural changes occurring globally. Globalization has changed the very way in which the city is imagined. This workshop traced this transformation historically, not merely of the recent past but in the colonial and postcolonial period.

In the development of any city there are defining moments. Considering Bangalore we find the important defining moments like the attempt of Kempe Gowda in 1537, at the cost of 3 lakhs it passed from the Mughals to the Wodeyars in 1759, the

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establishment of a Cantonment by the British in 1809 and most recently the growth of software industry.

The development of Bangalore through these defining moments was studied under different sessions with the presentation of twenty papers. Basically it was not limited to political history, instead different aspects of the process of urbanization were undertaken for deliberations.

The National workshop was inaugurated by Dr. M. S. Thimmappa, the Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University, who shared his experiences of associating with the city of Bangalore from the 1960s. He appreciated the efforts of Christ College for organising such a relevant topic taking into consideration the importance of Bangalore.

The Keynote address was delivered by Prof. K. S. Mathew, member of Indian Council of Historical Research and former Head, Dept. of History, Pondicherry University. He spoke on the theme "Urban History: Problems and Perspectives." He tried to explain the phenomena of urbanization taking the examples of many cities of Medieval Europe and India. The theories of Henri Pirenne, Lewis Mumford and Max Weber were used to explain the phenomenal growth of the cities.

Fr. Sebastian, Principal of Christ College, who presided over the function, explained the commitment of Christ College in promoting the research activities.

## Session I: History of Urban Space in Bangalore

Urbanization is accompanied by rapid spatial expansion. In the post independence period Bangalore has grown by leaps and bounds. The spatial expansion has been steady immediately after independence, whereas between 1971 and 1981 there has been drastic growth from 60 sq. kms. to 102 sq. kms. Different aspects this growth in the urban space was dealt with in this session. Prof. M. D. Rajan tried to picture the city through his paper titled "Bangalore Cantonment during First World War". The kind of urban growth, which necessitated a good administrative system based on the lines of British administration, was the focal point of discussion in the paper of Dr. Basavaraj Akki. The period covered was specifically from 1862 to 1956.

Dr. Sanjive Aundhe in his paper touched upon an important aspect of contemporary Bangalore. Public-private partnership in the development of infrastructure is a recent and most important development in the city of Bangalore.

## Session II: Ecological History and Aesthetics of Urbanization

Bangalore is known as the Garden city of India and is famous for the colonial monuments including the monkey top architectural style. The numerous green belts, well-laid gardens, natural lakes and the salubrious climate had undergone changes. What is the impact of this on the urban life of Bangalore today? .

Dr. Jyothi Bai in her paper titled "Religion and Art in Bangalore: A Study of Churches" gave a clear picture of the architectural style of the churches during the colonial period. An environment activist himself, Leo Saldanah brought to light the different transformations in the urban landscape of Bangalore touching upon the unbalanced planning and its harmful effects. It is possible to understand the religious life of Bangalore from the images of the architectural style of the temples. They were artistic as well as religious symbols.

Sudarsan. P presented a paper "Expansion of Bangalore City: Nature of Land Use Patterns". The focus of this paper was the post independence period. The ever-growing need for the supply of lands was not properly dealt with the government, which gave rise to alternative forms of urban expansion and ecologies.

Radha Chanchani tried to address some of the concerns and pertinent questions related to urban planning and architecture, ecological sustainable development, etc... Through her paper titled "Urban Landscape of Bangalore: Directions of Change" she tried to understand the global phenomena of urbanization which is reflected in the case of Bangalore.

## Session III: History of Social Identities in Urban Spaces

Jawaharlal Nehru opined that the pluralistic Indian experience was at the centre of national history. This is the same in the case of Bangalore. With the rapid urbanization, Bangalore has become home for people belonging to different communities and regions. The development of Bangalore as an industrial hub over the last fifty years have attracted people from rural areas, other cities and other states.

The cosmopolitan nature of Bangalore is reflected in the presence of the different religions and cultures. The origin and growth of Christianity was traced by Dr. Francis Thonippara. He explored the Christian presence from the arrival of the British up to the migration of Christians to the city of Bangalore in the last decades.

The emergence of an elite urban class in the later nineteenth century and the curious mix of western and oriental values led to the founding of neo-religious movements in Bangalore like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, The Ramakrishna Mission and the Narayanaguru Movement. This was the subject matter of Dr. Leela's paper on neo-religious movements in Bangalore. Prof. Khalid Irfan, in his presentation on the Growth of Islam in Bangalore tried to put the early presence of Islam about 400 years ago. It had taken deep roots during the reign of the Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan and continued through the efforts of saints, literary figures and social and educational organizations.

One of the interesting aspects of urbanization of Bangalore was the topic of Shashidhar IAS, namely "A History of Migration to Bangalore". Bangalore Population has increased from 1.44 lakhs in 1871 to 56.86 lakhs in 2001.

## Session IV: Institutions and Urbanization of Bangalore

Bangalore, which is known today as the knowledge capital, has a historical development of its own. The progressive policies of Mirza Ismail, Sir M. Vishwesharaya gave the atmosphere for the same. The Urbanization has had influences from the centers of higher learning like Indian Institute of Science and the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences and institutions established by Christian Missionaries.

Dr. J. V. Gayathri, in her paper "Growth of Education and Industries in Bangalore: Some Issues and Encounters" tried to highlight the influencing factors for the enormous growth of Bangalore. The establishment of Indian Institute of Science in 1911 and the various educational institutions started by the missionaries and the surge of industrial growth in the post-independence period are the important aspects.

The number of educational institutions started by the Christian organizations from the 1830s played a very important role in the urbanization of Bangalore. These institutions had a focus on integral development of the individual with its components like academic, human, and societal excellence. This was the focal point of the paper of Jose C. C.

The medical and social history of Bangalore was depicted very well by the paper by Dr. Sanjiv Jain and Dr. Pratima Murthy on "Madmen and Specialists: The Lunatic asylum, Bangalore and its Successors". The initiative of the British to start the present NIMHANS and the development of psychiatry through this institution were all part of the city's life and culture.

## Session V: The City and Technology in Historical Perspective

Bangalore is one of the most industrialized cities in India. From the public sector units like Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Bharat Electronics Limited, Indian Telephone Industry which were established under the second five year plan to Infosys and Wipro, the growth has been rapid. Information Technology has made it possible for Bangalore to become one of the most preferred global hubs for Business Process Outsourcing. This session tried to study this transition and generate insights into the changing nature of technology and work organization and its impact on the city.

Prof. D. K. Subramanian of Indian Institute of Science, in his paper "Industrialization of Bangalore and its Impact" highlighted that the city always had a strong culture of technology development and saw an innovative kind of development in Industry.

One of the reasons for the growth of Bangalore is the development of software industry. Dr. Balaji Parthasarathy in his paper on "Development of Software Industry in Bangalore- A Historical Perspective" brought out the major factors for development of Bangalore as one of the software producing regions like the availability of skills and public policy, low-value added services etc.

## Session VI: Gender and Urbanization in Bangalore

Though it was popularly perceived that urbanization would lead to the empowerment of women, it is now widely recognized that our cities are equally, if not more violent than our villages. Recent data shows the rates of violence against women is the highest in Indian cities like Delhi and Mumbai. Though women now have better access to social and economic resources, the changing nature of patriarchy in urban areas is also to be noted. This session offered an insight in gender-based studies.

Dr. Parimala V Rao raised a few important issues in her paper, "Position of Women in Public and Private Space in Bangalore: A Study of Four Families". With a high literacy rate of 81.40% women in Bangalore how far they have access to professional opportunities and how much freedom they have from gender bias and sexual harassment- these issues were studied taking four families using the method of participant observation. One of the dark images of urbanization is represented by the number of dowry deaths. Bangalore is no exception to this as they happen mainly in middle and lower classes of the society. Anitha Ravindrakumar in her paper titled "Dowry deaths in the Urban Space of Bangalore" pointed out, among the things, Sanskritization, hypergamy and late marriages.

## Valedictory Session

The chief guest of this session was Mr. Jayakar Jerome IAS, Commissioner of Bangalore Development Authority. He recollected the memories of his long association with the city. One of the major reasons for the growth of industries in Bangalore was the socio-political movement in Maharashtra and West Bengal, which compelled some of the firms to get shifted to Bangalore. This in turn gave a boost to the industrialization and urbanization of Bangalore. He lauded the efforts of Christ College in promoting the research activities.

The participants of the two-day workshop came out with the following resolutions and presented to the Chief Guest:

- 1) There is an urgency to preserve and protect the important heritage centers both in private and public space, thereby nurturing the individual identity of the city.
- 2) To concretize the conceptual thinking of the city's identity an independent chair or perhaps a department for the study of various facets of urban development must be set up at postgraduate level, on the lines of Masters in Rural Development, in Bangalore University.
- 3) A Comprehensive development format inclusive of safeguarding the ecological balance and environmental protection is to be regarded as a principal requirement.

Having briefly gone over each of the thematic sessions, I must add that this workshop brought together scholars and researchers of different persuasions, from different academic and institutional backgrounds. There were scholars and researchers from different institutions like the Indian Institute of Management, (IIM) Bangalore; Bangalore University; Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore; National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore; National Law School of India University (NLSU), Bangalore; Dept. of Sociology, University of Hyderabad; State Archives, Mysore; Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Mumbai; Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore; Directorate of Census Operations, Bangalore; Dept. of History, Pondicherry University; National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore; Indian Institute of Science, (IISc) Bangalore; Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Bangalore; Environment Support Group, Bangalore etc. The plurality of perspectives enriched the deliberations during the two days of the workshop.

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*The next three articles are some select papers presented in the National Workshop.*