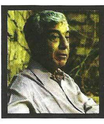
The Urban Metropolis - The Crucible of All Thought

Professor Jaisim started Jaisim Fountainhead in the year 1970, drawing inspiration from icons like Mies Van Der Rohe, Buckminster Fuller and Otto Koenigsberger.



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A city, as we understand, is a place where human activity is at an intense pace and owes its presence to the migration of people from various areas to a centralised position to interact and perform in such a manner that there is something to gain from being present. A city is a nerve centre of human activity. Such activity may be diverse – from being – political, to cultural, to business, to pure entertainment. In our cities, there is a continuous influx of people. It is these people that make the cities. The spirit of the mind cannot work alone. It is the evolution of the thought process that makes a civilisation. As cities bustled to the brim, decentralisation took place.

The cities pushed groups of people to its peripheries. These isolated groups became cults of spaces and thought, the metamorphic exchange died. For an evolving continuum, a great influx is needed - feed from the city, and go back to the islands to digest it, but must come back to feed from the city again. It is a cycle. It was on this very idea that successful civilisations thrived. Looking back, the rich and the intellectuals moved to the suburbs, and the poor converged to the city core - the urban structure of wealth collapsed, and culture and civilisation died (this is the present scenario of many an Indian city).

Yes, it is terrible living in the Urban mess of today. Whether it is a sprawl or a high rise concentrate, the issues are only labeled differently. The aches and pains are similar but are in different muscles and joints. Applying balm only superficially kills the pain.

A policeman stops traffic in one direction only to cause chaos and jam at another junction. We have seen these examples of attempting to speed up and unravel traffic by putting up flyovers and various forms of transport within cities only to shift the blame. Short-term solutions are not the answers. It has to be addressed holistically. Widening streets and making them roads is only causing greater flutter.

The Urban Slum is a major part of the perceived mess, yet one could not be more wrong. The slum is an interwoven part of the metro fabric. It is a part of the life, THE EKISTICS chain within our cities. It is ever changing, ever evolving, transient in body and yet permanent in spirit. Dreams, hopes, aspirations, triumphs, tribulations are all reflected within this myriad space.

It is the blood stream of the city - vital to it. The city is the pot of gold and from this slum starts the journey towards this beacon of a promise. Attempting to solve organically grown cities by applying grid iron solutions is not even a palliative. Cities that have survived through the ages are the ones that organically grew and evolved. The designed and tailor-made ones have often decayed and faded away into dust. The human habitat is a complex being - it is alive and kicking. To give it a sedative of chloroform and attempting to operate surgically is not only shortsighted but very dangerous to the future. Amputation is no way to make a person run, let alone think. From the ashes a new growth pattern emerged, and the metamorphous of exchange was alive.

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SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE

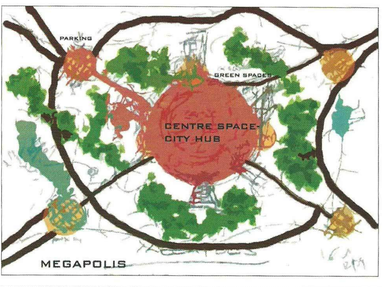
Cities are going to grow; they are going to be self contained economic cauldrons. Singapore and Hong Kong are a few of the examples. City states are perhaps one way to look towards the future of habitation. They will interact with the larger rural agro sprawl. It is only a matter of time when political and economic forces make this transformation and recognition into a reality.

It is evident that a rural approach can have no bearing on the Urban city ethos. So is the vice versa. If this clamor for independence is not recognised early enough, there will arise enough chaos and cultural clash to make another scenario unfold. They may declare independence and move away, If not physically by default of Time and Space – a strange alien culture.Geographically a City of Tomorrow is not dependent on an umbilical chord for its survival. They may even float into the vast oceans or go deep down into the waters or into the cold Arctic and Antarctic regions and as sure as fancy may be to outer space and beyond.

THIS is the URBAN story. Today in the Indian Cities we have to question – What is the urban content that is so crucial – WE THE PEOPLE? Or just.

There is chaos at present that prevails in the Indian urban scenario and from it evolves an order that synthesises with the ethos and culture of a people.

This cannot be restrained to the five major metropolises but must deliver to new addresses. These are possible by moving even beyond the second and third tier cities. Connectivity and communication are the integrating factors. Mobility is crucial.



WORK AND PLAY - CAN IT BE WORK WITH AND IN PLAY!

The five senses and the five elements that compose all human activity have a phenomenal number of combinations in the primary sense. And when moved to subtleties it leaves us with so many options that shocks' one to see the prison like boring repetition that goes by the term urban infrastructure. These technology dominated structures must give play to the sense of art and aesthetics.

What is the threshold of tolerance? - this differs from culture to culture. From birth to death which no longer can be said to - not in our hands - mankind has the opportunity and ability to choose and decide and act. Yes, but they must respond positively to responsibility.

CLEAN WITHIN AND UGLY WITHOUT!

What we lack with overpowering technology is the civic sense, for the obvious reason, we have adopted and adapted something which we do not comprehend. Weather and climate can in a manner of speaking are within the grasp of being cooked to any taste to suit the palate of life pattern one chooses. Urbanisation is the process of human evolution.

One cannot reverse this. From a roving hunter to a settled farmer it took thousands of years. Today as civil society gathers momentum the city becomes the core. This core shall only get stronger. The metamorphic transformation from city to a metropolis is only a matter of time.

The urban core will be the space to study learn and entertain. To interact, the spaces of isolation for the individual would be possible only for the very rich or the vagabond. The Gypsy ever moving and wandering could be an accepted scenario. 80 per cent urban and 20 per cent rural is the possible scenario in the near future, the inevitable result of the human thirst for the utopia of knowledge and conquest. Nature will respond with many ramifications.

IMPACT OF PLANNED METROS ON EXISTING CITIES

It is obvious that one cannot impose new fancy ideas and technology on existing growing urban high density spaces without paying heavily for the consequences. Temporary salve is all that one achieves, the pain that again emerges is unbearable. More salve only for more pain later.

Imaginative artistic innovation is totally missing these days. Technology-driven wonders keep persisting with short-term salves. These are not even solutions – forget answers. Bengaluru is one example of the massive macabre of a meaningless shameful surgery that is on and on. The city is in eternal coma. No thought, a brain-dead city – full of Zombies. What was until the eighties a magical garden city, visited and copied and imitated to be the Singapore of today is a body that is continuously operated on without respite and not a moment to sit up and relax and reflect.

Organic on one side grid iron on another, street widening with short over bridges with metro rail crisscrossing them with no apparent reason, newly planned residential areas suddenly ripped with widening roads. Pedestrian over bridges for school children with super adult sized steps, well the ridiculous sham continues day in day out.

These are today's pains and struggles of an evolving urban people. The transformation will take place. This is the pain of today for tomorrow's pleasure. Only we must learn to observe, learn and grow in a positive sense letting the organic pattern of aesthetics and sense of life dominates over technological magic shows.

The collapse of a civilisation and its cities is imminent when government interferes beyond its realm into the daily life of the city, its business and its people.

The role of the government is to govern, and not get into the business of business. The human never die, spirit will not only survive but shall prevail.

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