



Town Planning

LONDON Part I

The Vaastu way

This month onwards the Vaastu way series will examine the history and background of some prominent Indian and international cities. We shall also see how far the town planning of these cities is in consonance or other wise with Vaastu. We begin with London.

This essay draws generously from electronic encyclopedias, research papers, (published and unpublished) on the subject. It is also based on findings of our panel of astrologers and other experts on the subject.

In the course of the next few issues of Vaastuyogam, The Vaastu Way series will focus on town planning. Vaastu presupposes Vaastu compliant town planning. Sadly this is not so and it makes the job of Vaastu perfect site-selection a herculean task.

City planning is a process of planning for the improvement of urban centers in order to create healthy and safe living conditions, efficient transport and communication that will provide for adequate public facilities in aesthetic surroundings. Planning that also includes outlying communities and highways is termed regional planning. However, Vaastu addresses both of these in its town planning injunctions. Vaastu lays stress on roads, public buildings, function related zoning of the city and its green cover. Foreseeing the pressure growth puts on the town's infrastructure Vaastu places a population cap on various types of towns, insisting that either the town be upgraded to the next in the hierarchy or that a freeze be put to its expansion.

There are certain parameters that recur in Vaastu writings on town planning. Towns should be near rivers, lakes or in case of trading towns next to the sea coast. Roads should be straight and broad. Temples, Palaces are to be in the centre of the town and roads that access these are to be the broadest. There is also mention of an open village square for public purpose.

These same principals appear in many of the ancient towns elsewhere in the world as well. Many ancient cities were built from definite plans. The fundamental feature of the plans of Babylon, Nineveh, and the cities of ancient Greece and of China was a geographical pattern of main streets running north and south and east and west, with a public square or forum in the center. In all their towns the Romans emphasized drainage and water supply and practiced zoning.

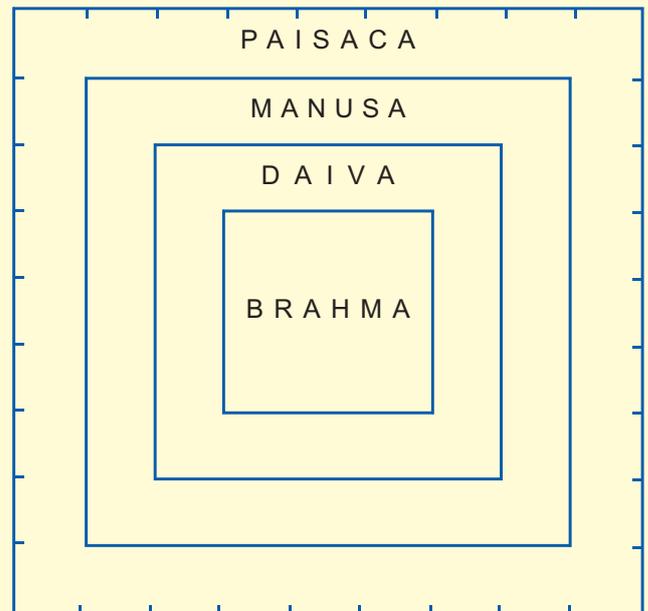
City planning has been a profession since the early twentieth century. Its development has been marked by an ongoing contrast or tension between "open-ended" plans intended to encourage and accommodate growth and the less common "closed" plans for towns serving specific limited populations, such as religious utopias, company towns, and exclusive suburbs.

The first towns on the Atlantic coast, such as Jamestown, Boston, and

New Amsterdam, grew by accretion, rather than systematic design. Yet conscious town planning appeared as early as 1638 with New Haven, Connecticut. Nine large squares were arranged in rows of three, with the central square serving as the town common or green. William Penn's and Thomas Holme's plan for Philadelphia, laid out in 1682, was a systematic application of the gridiron pattern, with regular blocks and straight streets crossing at right angles. Four public greens, in addition to a central square to serve as a civic center, sought to make Philadelphia a "green country town." Extended from the Delaware to the Schuylkill River, the plan also gave the new settlement room for future growth.

Spanish settlements on the northern frontier of Mexico were guided by the Laws of the Indies (1573), a royal proclamation that prescribed the layout of new towns. The essential elements were a central square within a grid and public institutions situated around the square. The influence of Spanish rectilinear planning could be seen in frontier towns such as Santa Fe, San Antonio, and Los Angeles. Similar planning principles were apparent in the layout of the eighteenth-century French colonial city of New Orleans.

Paramasayin Diagram



Zoning of a paramasayin diagram according to *Mayamata* (stanza 9.61) and *Manasara* (stanzas 9.170-174)

According to Chapter IX of "MAYAMATAM" Vaastu Shastras most respected treatise the Brahma zone in the center and the Daiva, Manusa and Paisaca zones must be determined, one after the other. The dwellings of Brahmins should be in the Daiva and Manusa zones and those of the craftsmen in the Paisaca zone.



LANDMARK

This Vaastu Way series on town planning examines prominent towns and cities of India as well as other parts of the globe.

While it is true that the cities of foreign countries have developed in total ignorance of Vaastu it is also true that much of Vaastu is also commonsense. Therefore, it doesn't come as a surprise that many of these cities, unknown to their planners, have followed Vaastu guidelines – in fact in some cases much better than the Indian ones.

Methodology

The essays will follow a pattern as outlined:-

First the city under consideration shall be described with pictures and supporting text. Also a glimpse into its history will be recounted.

Secondly – as a parallel stream – Vaastu injunctions on town planning will be discussed in reference to the city under consideration.

Finally, views from town planners , architects and historians will be incorporated into the essays.

London

The series begins with a study of London.

London, the capital of the United Kingdom, has a recorded history that goes back over 2,000 years. During this time, it has grown to become one of the most significant financial and cultural capitals of the world. It has experienced plague, devastating fire, civil war, aerial bombardment and terrorist attacks

During the 19th century, London was transformed into the world's largest city and capital of the British Empire. Its population expanded from 1 million in 1800 to 6.7 million a century later. During this period, London became a global political, financial, and trading capital. In this position, it was largely unrivaled until the latter part of the century, when Paris and New York began to threaten its dominance. While the city grew wealthy as Britain's holdings expanded, 19th century London was also a city of poverty, where millions lived in overcrowded and unsanitary slums. Also, it was during this period that many famous landmarks of London were constructed. ■

THIS ARTICLE ON LONDON WILL BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT ISSUE. DISCUSSED IN IT ARE THE VARIOUS VAASTU CONNECTS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS.

Buckingham Palace is a symbol and home of the British monarchy, an art gallery and tourist attraction. Behind the gilded railings and gates and the famous facade which has been described as looking "like everybody's idea of a palace" is not only the weekday home of the Queen and Prince Philip but also the London residence of the Duke of York and the Earl and Countess of Wessex. The palace also houses the offices of the Royal Household and is the workplace of 450 people.

The palace, like Windsor Castle, is owned by the British state. It is not the monarch's personal property. The British Government currently provides £15 million yearly for the palace's upkeep.

The Buckingham Palace has been a rallying point for the British people at times of national rejoicing and crisis.



Tower Bridge

Tower Bridge

London's Tower Bridge is one of the most recognizable bridges in the world. Its Victorian Gothic style stems from a law that forced the designers to create a structure that would be in harmony with the nearby Tower of London.

Plans for the Tower Bridge were devised around 1876 when the east of London became extremely crowded and a bridge across the Thames in that area of the city seemed a necessity. It would take another eight years - and lots of discussions about the design - before construction of the bridge started. The bridge, designed by city architect Horace Jones in collaboration with John Wolfe Barry, would eventually be completed in 1894. Five contractors and nearly 450 workers were involved in the construction of the 265 meter long bridge. It took 11,000 tons of steel to build the framework. At the time many people disliked its Victorian Gothic design, but over time the bridge became one of London's most famous symbols.

Mechanics: The proximity of the harbor and its location in the direction of the sea required for the bridge to allow the passage of large vessels. Hence the decision to create a moveable bridge which can be opened to accommodate boat traffic. The mechanism to open the bridge is hidden in the two towers. Until 1976, when the mechanism became electrified, steam power was used to pump water into hydraulic accumulators which powered the engines.

Buckingham Palace





MONUMENTS OF LONDON

London is the largest urban zone in the European Union by most measures. A major settlement for two millennia, its history goes back to its founding by the Romans, who called it Londinium. London's core, the ancient City of London, the 'square mile', retains its mediaeval boundaries. Since at least the nineteenth century, the name "London" has also referred to the metropolis developed around it. Today, the bulk of this conurbation forms the London region and the Greater London administrative area, with its own elected mayor and assembly.

London is a leading global city and one of the world's largest financial centers with the largest city GDP in Europe. Central London is home to the headquarters of most of the UK's top 100 listed companies (the FTSE 100) and more than 100 of Europe's 500 largest. London's influence in politics, finance, education, entertainment, media, fashion, the arts and culture in general contributes to its global position. It is a major tourist destination for both domestic and overseas visitors. London Underground network, administered by Transport for London, is the most extensive underground railway network in the world, London Heathrow Airport is the world's busiest airport by number of international passengers and the airspace is the busiest of any urban center in the world.



Westminster

The Palace of Westminster, also known as the Houses of Parliament or Westminster Palace, is the seat of the two houses of the Parliament of the United Kingdom the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

The name may refer to either of two structures: the Old Palace, a medieval building complex most of which was destroyed in 1834, and its replacement the New Palace that stands today; it has retained the style and status of a royal residence, despite its actual use.

The first royal palace was built on the site in the eleventh century, and Westminster was the primary London residence of the Kings of England until a fire destroyed much of the complex in 1512. After that, it served as the home of Parliament, which had been meeting there since the thirteenth century, and the seat of the Royal Courts of Justice, based in and around Westminster Hall.



Trafalgar Square

Trafalgar Square is a square in central London, England. The name commemorates the Battle of Trafalgar (1805), a British naval victory of the Napoleonic Wars. With its position in the heart of London, it is a tourist attraction; and one of the most famous squares in the United Kingdom and the world. At its centre is Nelson's Column, which is guarded by four lion statues at its base. Statues and sculptures are on display in the square, including a fourth plinth displaying changing pieces of contemporary art, and it is a site of political demonstrations.

Trafalgar Square ranks as the fourth most popular tourist attraction on Earth with more than fifteen million visitors a year. The day after Michael Jackson's death, crowds gathered at Trafalgar Square for a mass moonwalk in his memory



St Paul's Cathedral

St Paul's Cathedral is an Anglican cathedral on Ludgate Hill, the highest point in the City of London, and is the seat of the Bishop of London. The present building dates from the 17th century and was designed by Sir Christopher Wren. It is generally reckoned to be London's fifth St Paul's Cathedral, all having been built on the same site since 604 A.D. The cathedral is one of London's most famous and most recognizable sights.

The Royal Family holds most of its important marriages, christenings and funerals at Westminster Abbey, but St Paul's was used for the marriage of Charles, Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer. The religious service for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was also celebrated there.