

# NEWSLETTER Vaastuyogam

Connecting Vaastu to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



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## EDITORIAL



Welcome to the February 2014 issue of Vaastuyogam.

For some time now, Vaastuyogam has been carrying a series of interviews with town planners and architects on the urban environment. This month we touch upon two issues central to urban life and culture - Police and Roads.

Vaastuyogam spoke to Mr. Shivanand Swamy, the eminent professor from CEPT university about the crucial role of road transport in the urban environment. As, he rightly says, "As Water Is for Life, Transport Is for Cities. Without transport, cities cannot exist."

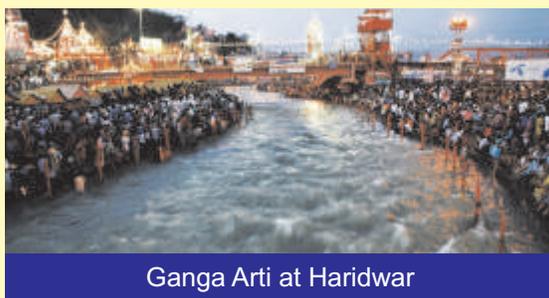
The Satellite Police Station is a landmark in the interaction between public and police in Ahmedabad. Both Mr. Manubhai Patel and Mukund Patel with their Ahmedabad Nagrik Police Utkarsh Samiti, have done a yeoman task of providing a soothing setting for the people using The Satellite Police Station and the people visiting it. We hope that many more such projects take shape and the bonds between the people and police become stronger so that ultimately, the urban environment becomes more worthwhile and liveable.

We start off our yatra to the ancient Saptapuris with a visit to Haridwar. As Haridwar is incomplete without the Ganga we have included a separate article on Maa Ganga.

I earnestly hope that readers will use background information provided by us to make these ancient pilgrimages.

Happy reading!

**Dr. Ravi Rao** ■



Ganga Arti at Haridwar

## ARCHITECT'S VOICE

### Urbanisation and Transport

*"As Water Is For Life,  
Transport Is For Cities.  
Without transport,  
cities cannot exist."*

-Prof. H. M. Shivanand Swamy  
Executive Director (CEPT)

Urban is all about accessibility. Urban is all about connecting people & activities. Briefly, that is the core of the proposition; as water is for life, transport is for cities. Without transport, cities cannot exist. They came into existence because there was transportation. Transport is life of urban.



Professor  
H. M. Shivanand Swamy

Transportation is to be seen in the broadest sense as the need for people to move about. People move because they have to reach their destinations where they are needed to perform their roles and functions.

Urban transport is not just roads, busses, cars, footpaths or walking or so on so forth. Urban transport is the outcome of these things. The outcome is in terms of, "I need to be there, when I need to be there; and I need to be there at the right cost (including both the direct and indirect costs) Therefore, by outcome we mean the arrangement that enables people to move at costs they can afford and within the right time. Within urban space, to enable this outcome, we have roads and vehicles as well as signals and other control systems and allied infrastructure such as bus terminals, bus stops etc and finally the regulatory systems like the R.T.O etc.

If you look at cities the world over, the cities of Australia and U.S.A are probably the worst in terms of sustainability. They are all car dependent. They

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Dr. M Ramachandran, Secretary, Urban Development Ministry, Govt. of India and Shivanand Swamy, (*Extreme Right*) Executive Director of CEPT

Prof. H.M. Shivanand Swamy, an economist and urban planner by training has over 30 years of experience in teaching, research and professional consultancy. He is the Executive Director for Centre of Excellence in Urban Transport (Coe-UT), Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University, Ahmedabad, India. He is leading multi-disciplinary teams in areas of urban transport planning, urban and regional planning, urban environment, land and housing. His strength is his strategic and programmatic skills. He is spearheading key urban projects including the Bus Rapid Transit Systems for Ahmedabad, Surat, Hubli Dharwad, Vadodra and Indore; Integrated Mobility Plan for Ahmedabad, City Development Plans, toolkits, Service Level Benchmarking and transport policies.

He was also instrumental in the design of urban development policy for Gujarat. He is heading the operational plan for BRTS and route rationalization for bus services in



BRTS, Ahmedabad.

Ahmedabad. Prof. Swamy is one of the principal resource persons on urban and transport issues for the government of India and State of Gujarat.

Prof Shivanand Swamy is currently designing BRTS system for Surat and Hubli-dharwad. The Ahmedabad BRTS has brought a range of social, economic and environmental benefits to the residents of the city. The

system contributes extensively to reducing travel time, the cost of travel, and the need to use private vehicles for everyday commuting. This is evident in the consistent increase in ridership. It has resulted in enhanced revenue generation, quality of life, and improved economic opportunities for the people who can now easily travel to far-flung parts of the city. The fares are quite affordable. The Janmarg carries about 1.2 lakh passengers every day. For its contribution to the creation of an efficient and sustainable and environment friendly public transport system, the Ahmedabad BRTS was awarded the Best Sustainable Transport Award, 2010 and was adjudged the Best Mass Rapid Transit System by the Government of India, 2009.

**ARCHITECT'S VOICE**

◀ continued from page 1

consume much more space per person in terms of living, in terms of mobility; in fact, in every aspect their resource consumption is very high.

On the extreme opposite we have cities in India and south-east Asia where the densities are very high. Here people consume much less space for working, living and mobility. And in between these two poles we have European cities. The numbers are:- USA and Australia are about 5 to 15 people per hectare; Europe is between 25 to 40 people per hectare ; India is 120 to 130 per hectare, Mumbai is 250 to 300 per hectare .

When you have high densities travel tends to be short. What is the important part of this is that as distances are short, modes other than the automobile become operative; cycling and walking for instance.

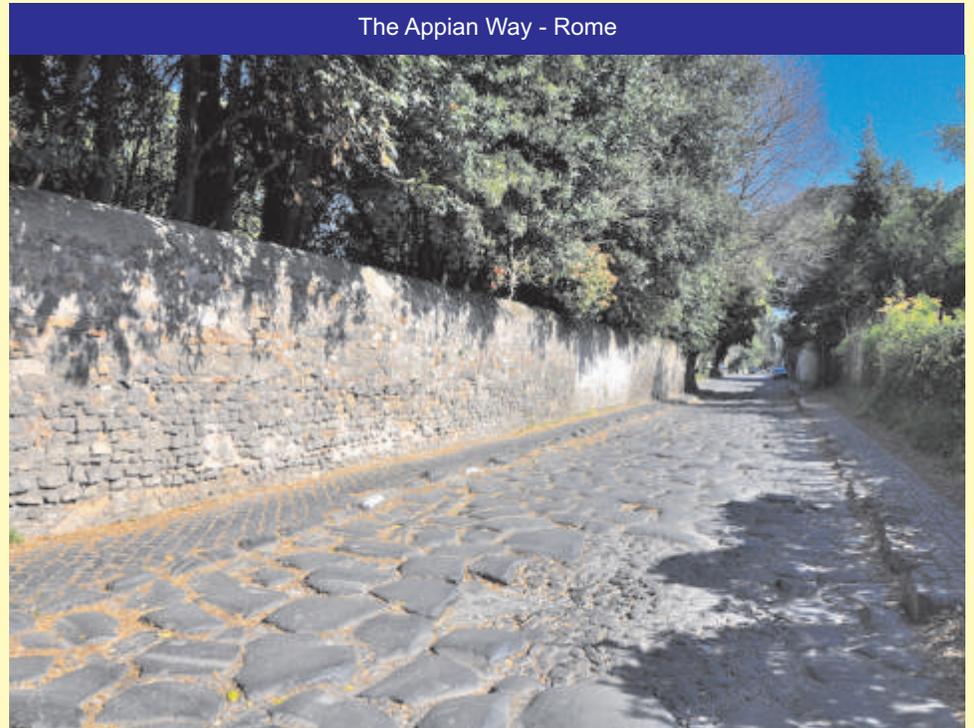
While we have had this traditional advantage of having a sustainable urban existence now we are being influenced by cities in North America. Cars are becoming a major attraction and people are moving towards car ownership as never before. What we have not yet realized is that roads are roads and there is only that much width that you can add to them. Irrespective of whatever widths you add, junctions will become bottlenecks. The increased dependency on two - wheelers and four - wheelers sooner than later will bring negative outcome in terms of urban development and urban growth.

Till recently we called Bangalore the 'Garden City of India', but look at the mess it is in today. It takes anything from one to two hours to travel from one point to another! But Ahmadabad is still a 20 minutes city. Ahmadabad has a population of 60 lakhs and Bangalore has 80 lakhs! But what a difference in travel time!

What you and I have to spend every day is 24 hours only. In this we need to work, to sleep, to eat , to be with family and friends. And here the question arises. Is it really worth to travel so many hours every day?

**Roads**

The worst part of the road story is the way we use roads; We basically abuse and not use the roads:-



The Appian Way - Rome

**The Appian Way**

The Appian Way was called by the ancient romans as 'reginaviarum', the queen of the roads. It was once one of the world's most important roads and the most famous of all the roads that radiated from Rome towards the far ends of the Roman Empire. It is certainly the most important ancient road whose ruins survives till today. It connected Rome with Brindisi in the south of Italy, a strategic harbour linking Italy to Greece and the Middle East.

The construction of the Appian Way was started by the censor Appio Claudio Cieco (who gave the name to the road) in 312 B.C. The road, differently to all the previous ones realised, was entirely paved and the stones not only were perfectly matching each other but were also polished. This way the road could be used with no issues also under the rain. It was 4,1 meters wide, which allowed to cross it both ways at the same time. At the sides of it there were sidewalks, exactly like we see today at the sides of the modern roads or streets.

The road began as a level dirt surface upon which mortar and small stones were laid. On top of that, gravel was placed, topped with interlocking stones that would provide a flat surface for those traveling along the 56 km long road. Historians say the stones fit together so well that it was nearly impossible to stick a knife between them. Ditches were dug on either side of the road and were protected by retaining walls

We don't leave footpaths for people. If they are there, then, they are taken over by hawkers and squatters. Solid waste is littered all over the footpaths. Likewise with the sanitation that goes along the roads and footpaths.

On the roads we don't follow traffic rules; we drive on the wrong side; we occupy road space for parking and other activities. We seem to think that on-street parking is our birthright. Streets are for mobility and any stationary element has to be off them.

Traffic laws and their implementation are important, but the sad thing is that we do not value life. An old man is crossing the road, we honk and honk! We don't respect the fact that he is an old man and allow him his time to cross the road. And this tells us all about ourselves. We have to learn to value other people as we value ourselves. We have to learn civility and learn what civic society is about. ■

to be concluded next month