



## HISTORICAL ATLAS OF SRINAGAR CITY- A GEOGRAPHICAL FACET IN URBAN STUDIES

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**ABSTRACT** Kashmir valley which is functionally a city-centered region, for the geographical, historical, socio-economic forces of urbanization have shaped and contributed to the emergence of urban primacy of Srinagar city. Being the single largest city, Srinagar constitutes around two-third of the state's urban population. The socio-cultural artifacts of Srinagar city is the accretion of a long period of time as over a period of six hundred years or so, the city has cradled itself between the hills of Hariparbat (Hawal) and Shankaracharya (Dalgate) along the banks of the river Jhelum. The present city thus stands as a mirror to reflect the complex historical background of the various stages which it has passed through.

Srinagar City has grown enormously in the last twenty years. Apropos to this, the present study tries to analyse and examine the spatial, socio-economic, historical and related characteristics of the Srinagar metropolis- *the Heart of Valley*. The authors suggested some revival measures for better urban management of the historic Srinagar city.

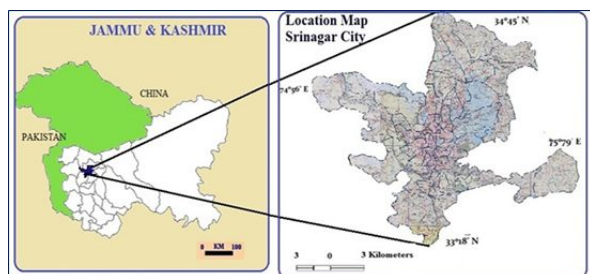
**KEYWORDS :** Srinagar Metropolis, Urban History, City core- Downtown, Geographical Facet

### Introduction

The Kashmir valley which is functionally a city-centered region, as the geographical, historical, socio-political and economic forces of urbanization have shaped and contributed to the emergence of urban primacy of Srinagar city. The phenomenon of primacy is extremely strong in the Jammu and Kashmir state; since, the single largest city i.e. Srinagar constitutes around two-third of the state's urban population and is two times larger than the second largest city of the state, Jammu. Srinagar, a primate and characteristically diversified as well as unique city, unanimously serves as a regional centre in the vast catchment with limited yet small urban centres. It is not only the largest urban centre both in terms of demographic size and areal spacing but also rapidly growing city amongst all Himalayan urban centres. In Kashmir valley, the index of primacy of Srinagar works out to be 7.9 for two city index (Srinagar and Anantnag) and connotes that the city is eight times larger in population than the second urban centre. Srinagar city for being the capital of the state, attracts people from all parts of the state, intrinsically Srinagar is the only Metropolitan city of the state.

### Location of the Study Area

Srinagar city is located between 33°53'49'' - 34°17'14'' N latitudes and 74°36'16'' - 75°01'26'' E longitudes. It is the summer capital of the state of Jammu & Kashmir. It is situated at an altitude of 1585 meters above the mean sea level and spreads over the midst of an oval shaped valley of Kashmir. The city as well as its hinterland is encircled by the natural wall of mountains. Apart from this the serpentine river Jhelum traverses the city from the south-east to north-west, dividing the city into two parts.



**Figure 1: Location of the Study Area**

### Database and Methodology

The universe of the present study is the Srinagar city, comprising a total of 68 wards. The Supplementary data related to the present study has been gathered using a variety of methods to gain a better understanding of the perspectives and priorities. Secondary data were obtained from publications of different organizations and offices of urban local

bodies in Srinagar city. The methodology adapted in the present study was of integrative, supplementary and complementary nature, to fulfill the set objectives related to the study area.

### Srinagar City in Time and Space

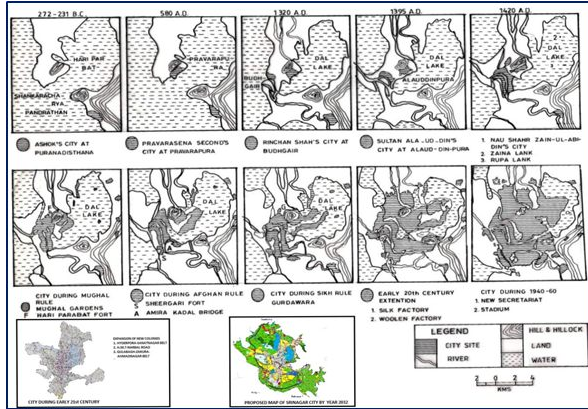
The socio-cultural artifacts of Srinagar city is the accretion of a long period of time as over a period of six centuries or so, the city has cradled itself between the hills of Hariparbat and Shankaracharya along the banks of river Jhelum (Master Plan, 2011). Circular residences around Srinagar date the settlement back to 4,000 years. Recorded history suggests the origin of Srinagar in the 3rd century B.C.E., founded by the King Pravarasena-II. History has shaped the development of Srinagar, but it was the lakes and Jhelum that have always remained at the center of all activity. Initially laid out to the north-eastern bank of the river Jhelum, Srinagar soon spread across to the opposite bank, the two sides linked by seven wooden bridges. The Srinagar city has rich historical credentials as it has originated and evolved to grow in its present form after being considerably modified by urban forces operating from the ancient to the modern period.

The present city thus stands as a mirror to reflect the complex historical background of the various stages which it has passed through and sequentially Srinagar became a part of following empires/rulers/kingdoms; and in its chronological order the following pattern has been observed: i) the ancient Hindu period; ii) the Muslim period; iii) the Sikh period; iv) the Dogra period; and v) the Modern period. The historical periods classified above are not just mere dates, they represent the landmarks in the history of the evolution of Srinagar city. These periods indicate significant historical events which have left their influence on the form and function of the city or the entry of a new dynamic political or economic force which mastered the destiny of the city.

### Srinagar city: Urban Growth in Contemporary Period (Last 7 decades)

The city experienced more or less uninterrupted growth during the modern period through the successive five year plans. The developments of most of the administrative, educational and medical institutions and residential colonies in and around the commercial core (Lal Chowk) have drastically changed the form and structure of the city. The establishment of a number of housing colonies viz; Rajbagh, Chanapora, Sanat Nagar, Barzulla, Hyderpora and Bemina, etc. have led to the wide expansion of the city limits. The recently constructed bypass road from Panthachowk to Parimpore also made the city to expand in a linear pattern along the both sides of the road. Further the construction of railway almost parallel to the bypass road has given a boost to the residential and industrial development in this area. It is because of these factors that this belt observed highest land use

transformation within the city during the last forty years. Srinagar city which was initially a religio-administrative centre has now been transformed into multifunctional city (Bhat, 2008).



Source: Modified After Town Planning Organisation, Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar (2016)

**Figure 2: Evolution of Srinagar City (272 BCE-2032)**

The history of urban improvement in Srinagar dates back to 1886 C.E, when the first municipality Act was passed. Archives reveal numerous Master Plans including Master Plan (2012-2032) that has been formulated recently, highlighting various aspects of unplanned urbanization of the city and suggests certain corrective measures in the form of allocation and relocation of certain land use categories. However till date not much of this has been implemented.

**Population and Spatial Growth**

In tracing the population size of Srinagar city, it may be noted that Srinagar city has been the largest urban settlement of Kashmir valley throughout the ages and continues to be the same event at present.

**Table 1: Srinagar City: Population Growth (1901-2011)**

Year	Population	Population Decadal Growth Rate	Area (in Km <sup>2</sup> )	Area Decadal Variation
1901	122618	-	12.80	—
1911	126344	+3.04	12.85	+0.5
1921	141735	+12.18	14.48	+1.63
1931	173573	+22.46	17.60	+3.12
1941	207787	+19.71	17.60	0
1951	246522	+18.64	29.52	+11.29
1961	285257	+15.71	41.42	+16.29
1971	403413	+34.31	82.88	+41.44
1981	606002	+40.13	208.09	+125.39
1991*	788680	+30.14	243.09	+16.82
2001	971357	+30.14	278.1	+14.40
2011	1147617	+18.15	291.8	+4.92

Source: Town Directory, Series-8, Part-X-A, Jammu and Kashmir, 1981 and Srinagar Municipal Corporation. \*Population of 1991 obtained through interpolation as census was not conducted in J&K.

According to first census (1891) Srinagar city recorded a total population of 118,960 persons. During the last century the population of Srinagar city (1901-2011) has been phenomenal, it increased from 122,618 persons in 1901 to 1147617 persons in 2011, indicating nine fold increase amounting to 692.18 percent growth. In the early decades from 1901-1961, the growth has been slow due to the low growth rates which has declined from 22.46 percent in 1931 to 15.71 percent in 1961. Post 1961 a new phase of growth of population commenced. A study of the changing density of population reveals that these have been large scale fluctuations during the inter censal period from 1901 to 2011. The population growth of the city from 1901-2011 has been shown in table 1.

Srinagar City has grown enormously in the last twenty years. The area of the city has increased from 12.80 Km<sup>2</sup> in 1901 to 291.8 Km<sup>2</sup> in 2011. Table 1 highlights the relationship between population growth and spatial extent of Srinagar city from 1901 to 2011. It is clear from table

1 that Srinagar city that post 1971, the city expanded at a faster rate with the decadal growth touching 126 percent. In contemporary period there has been an increase towards southern & northern sides viz., Hyderpora-Peerbagh, H.M.T, Nowgam, SanatNagar belt, Pampore, Ganderbal.

**Inferences and Suggestions**

1. Srinagar city is the largest urban entity in the entire Himalayan region in terms of population and constitutes the most urbanized district as well. The city despite its physical threshold and constraints is likely to expand and grow but ironically there is directionless growth of the city. In case the growth is not channelized and regulated it is likely to intrude towards a settlement pattern characterizing of unorganized, unplanned mess and haphazardness.
2. The urban primacy analysis of Srinagar city infers that impetus must be provided to generate newer growth centres and the existing ones must be revived. Proper investments in developmental sectors like infrastructure, education, occupation is needed, which will relieve existing pressure on Srinagar city.
3. The City has been growing at the hands of Realtors and Land Mafia and thus there's no proper planning, even if there is something that is messy planning. Ultimately, this (growth) is obviously going to be more of problem than solution. It is very pertinent and vibrant that 'No one is paying heed' to Master Plan (2012-2032). Zoning wasn't adhered to in the past nor is at present.
4. An Urban Housing Policy, with an impetus whereby inner city areas would systematically decrease in population, the middle areas remain almost static and the surrounding outer areas increase, is needed.
5. Also it is highly recommended that for proper planning of Srinagar city an Urban Information System (UIS) must be developed for Srinagar City.

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