

Making of Mumbai

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Preamble

There seems to be increasing awareness of improving the urban habitat; the creation of the Urban Renewal Fund is a signal in this direction.

The city or the urban center has to co-exist with its not-so-urban surroundings or environment. It has to reflect, support, sustain the economy, ecology, ethos, culture and civilisation of the entire region. Failure to do so would result in acute imbalances: one-way migration, slums, deprivation of humane values, underworld etc. are some of them.

Mumbai is a point of contact and interaction with the rest of the world. It has to be beautiful to attract the best, it has to be hospitable to those who come in, it has to be smart to export the best from its environment to the best in the world.

Every city must have a vision about its future and the city must move towards this vision in gradual but phased manner. This vision must be articulated by the city, its surroundings, the region of the country, the nation and perhaps the continent as a whole in the same order; because each one of these segments has something to contribute and something to gain from the city.

Vision for Mumbai

What is the vision of Mumbai 20 years hence? 50 years hence?

- @ A decent place to live and work for the Mumbaikars.
- @ A jewel in the crown of the shining state of Maharashtra.
- @ The greatest port city on the Western coast of India
- @ Business capital of India.
- @ Center for international business and finance on the Eastern Hemisphere.
- @ Hollywood of the East.

Given the aspirations of India to be an economic superpower, and the fact that Mumbai is already the business capital of India, the chances are that most Indians would opt for the fifth option listed above. Because no other city in India is competent and equipped to aspire for this status. This can be the supra-vision for Mumbai; other visions will have to be within the overall framework of the supra-vision.

There is no conflict as far as Mumbai becoming a decent place to live and work for Mumbaikars. Even within the supra-vision, this vision has its relevance. With the supra-vision, Mumbai would emerge as a great city and it can remain a jewel in the crown of Maharashtra. Mumbai need not be the greatest port city on the Western coast of India under the supra-vision. You have to make a conscious choice whether you want all the logistics to be handled thro Mumbai or through a string of other ports. With the supra-

vision, Mumbai can still be the Business capital of India. India's film industry is concentrated at Mumbai; but it is nowhere near to becoming another Hollywood due to a variety of inadequacies. So this can only be subservient to the supra-vision. In fact it makes sense to create another satellite city exclusively as the Hollywood of the East.

If this set of logic holds good, then the vision for Mumbai can be put down as

Mumbai shall emerge as the Center for International Business and Finance on the Eastern Hemisphere with excellent ambient conditions for living and working; it shall be the Business Capital of India.

This is a vision statement articulated by this author based on certain logic. The vision statement could be different if another person or a set of persons articulate it. For the purpose of this article the vision statement shall be the one stated above. The remaining part of this article is based on this.

Meaning of the Vision

Any activity that supports international finance and business would have a presence in the city of Mumbai. All organisations, institutions, agencies and persons that are connected with international business and finance from across the world must be present in Mumbai. This would mean

- a. All the International banks, funding agencies, trading organisations, stock & commodity exchanges and all the global firms with active interest in India will have a presence in Mumbai.
- b. All Indian firms with active international/global interest will have a presence in Mumbai.
- c. Mumbai would become a hub where foreign nationals and Indian nationals would interact continuously. Many foreign nationals would come to Mumbai on work-permit for medium term basis while many would come on short business trips.
 - a. There would be Hotels to house those who come on short business trips while there would be living apartments/condominiums for those who come to stay in Mumbai on medium term perk-permits.
 - b. There would be arena for sports [tennis, squash, golf swimming etc], culture, recreation and entertainment facilities for this mixed population. These facilities will have to be of international class and taste. These would be supported by adequate and proper ancillary facilities of transport, skills, supplies and all other logistics.
- d. The business area of Mumbai would have offices and other facilities that offer international class facilities on short-term and long-term basis for all those who come to Mumbai. These would be supported by facilities of transport, skills, supplies and complete logistics. The transport would cover an international airport with easy connectivity to all major international cities, a

domestic airport with easy connections to all Indian cities as well as rapid and enjoyable internal transport systems. Mumbai would have international quality shopping malls, international quality product display centers, international exhibition centers, trade centers, convention centers, art galleries etc.

Creating Strategic Options

Mumbai has to be re-invented. This involves two major thrust areas or focuses. The first focus is de-congesting Mumbai so that it is able to breathe fresh air. The second focus is creating new infrastructure. Both have to go hand in hand and in line with a long-term script or a master-plan.

Focus One: De-congesting Mumbai:

The major constraint of Mumbai is space. So any activity that is not directly related to the above will have little or no space in the city of Mumbai. Similarly any activity that need not be done only in Mumbai would have to find place outside the city of Mumbai.

Mumbai Port is already congested and in-coming ships have to wait long times before docking. On a long term perspective it is desirable to develop a string of specialised ports/ terminals along the coast spanning about 250 kms on the north and south of Mumbai and shift the entire port activities to them. This would reduce the traffic in and through Mumbai to a great extent. Large number of offices, yards, warehouses etc would also be shifted out of Mumbai releasing enormous space.

Central Railway and Western Railway have their Head Quarters in Mumbai. This is a legacy of our development. In these days of rapid communication it is not necessary that the Central Railway and Western railway should have their Head Quarters in the metropolis of Mumbai. The Central Railway Head Quarters can be shifted to a place in the interior, say Kalyan or Manmad or Nashik or Bhusaval. Similarly the Western Railway Head quarters must be shifted to some town to the northern part of Mumbai, say Valsad, or Bharuch or Baroda or Godhra. This would mean a lot for the development of those towns besides tremendous breathing space to Mumbai. It will release office and residential space; large number of railway employees will be moved out of Mumbai; large number of vendors and service providers to railways would also shift their activities out of Mumbai. This would mean a great relief on the fragile infrastructure of Mumbai.

A Mega Railway Terminus must be built on the Dahisar-Diva railway line and all outstation trains must be made to terminate there. Mumbai should opt for the rapid transit system of SkyTrains within the metropolis; this should be well connected with the Mega Railway Terminus and all the suburbs of the city. Within the metropolis there would be no surface trains; all railway-tracks would be stripped out. This would release enormous amount of land-space for the city to develop its much needed infrastructure of parks, green spaces, roads or anything else.

The state capital of Maharashtra need not be located within Mumbai. Like Gujarat has developed its Gandhinagar, Maharashtra should develop its Shivajinagar at least 100 km away from Mumbai. This city would naturally be well-connected with Mumbai and all the other cities through Expressways and rail-links. This would ensure the much needed development of that region besides ensuring the much needed breathing space to Mumbai.

Once the port activities are shifted outside Mumbai, there will be no reason for Food Corporation of India to have its go-downs in Mumbai; similarly Fertilizer Corporation India and other PSUs would not also need any go-downs in Mumbai.

In fact no PSU nor any bank would need to have its corporate office in Mumbai; depending upon their interest in international business and finance they would at best need representative offices in Mumbai. All corporate entities must be told to shift their corporate office outside Mumbai; only their international businesses would need to be housed in Mumbai.

No production-units big or small should be housed within the metropolis of Mumbai. The same applies to BPOs, KPOs, software development units etc.

Bollywood would be created at 100 kms beyond the Mega Railway Terminus and this would be connected to Mumbai through exclusive expressway. It would also have its own airport and extensive residential areas and entertainment facilities.

Focus-Two: Creating New facilities

Strategy for Implementation

1. Acceptance of the vision [master plan] by the Metropolitan Authority. The authority must be revamped to include high profile professionals. Its jurisdiction of authority must be reassessed to fit the role envisaged by it.
2. Metropolitan area including satellite towns and cities to be defined for development.
3. Promotion of a string of Ports adjacent to Mumbai to relieve the port activities from Mumbai
4. Shifting of rail Head Quarters of central Railway and Western railway to suitable locations outside the metropolis.
5. Creation of a Mega Rail Terminus on the Dahisar-Panvel line and re-directing the long distance trains to and from Mumbai.
6. Creation of rapid transport system within Mumbai keeping a 50 year or 100 year horizon.
7. Encourage shifting of corporate head offices to outside Mumbai. [This is already happening with corporates shifting their operational HQ to other locations]
8. Create time frame for each of the activities and ensure their timely implementation.

9. Funding the above activities would need high level of innovation. To facilitate this the Metropolitan Authority must tie up leading funding agencies and consulting firms and create innovative funding mechanism for each activity.