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UNIT : II

CONCEPT OF PRIMATE CITY

The Law of Primate City was first proposed by Mark Jefferson in 1939. He defined primate city as the largest city which is at least twice as large as the second largest city and more than twice as significant, socially and economically. According to him the primate city or the largest city shall be super eminent not merely in size but in national influence.

According to this concept there is one city which has the dominance of the whole economic, social and political scene of that country. Such cities are generally primary, orthogenetic cities in context of their origin. According to Redfield and Singer (1954) orthogenetic cities are the cities of "Great Tradition" which translate folk society into the urban world. Such primate cities are generally the first city of the region in terms of their origin.

The concept of primate city suggests one very large city with many smaller cities and no intermediate sized urban centers. Thus, this concept presents a city system which is in contrast with the Rank Size Rule by Zipf or the Central Place Theory by Christaller.

Characteristics of Primate City

- 1) The primate city of a country is the largest in population size. It's population size is disproportionately larger than the second largest city.
- 2) Such cities are generally the first city of the country in terms of origin.
- 3) A primate city possesses economic dominance, cultural and political significance.
- 4) It presents itself as a centre for national identity.
- 5) It has all the functions and services of the largest urban centre related to trade, transportation, market, recreation, tourism etc.

6) It controls the media, creates jobs, circulates currency and sets trends.

7) It's influence is experienced throughout the entire country.

Examples of Primate Cities

Mark Jefferson analyzed the data showing population size of 51 countries of the world. In 21 countries, the population size of a primate city was twice the size of the second largest city and in 18 countries it was three times higher than second rank cities. On the basis of his empirical observations, Jefferson gave the concept of primate city. However, Jefferson did not explain the factors which contribute to the development of the primate city. London and Paris are two best examples of primate cities. A large number of primate cities of the world are generally the national capital city of that country, e.g. Kuala Lumpur, Mexico City, Lima, Seoul, Vienna, Budapest, Sao Paulo and Tokyo. Bangkok is said to be "the most primate city on the Earth" because its population is approximately forty times larger than the population of the second largest city of Thailand.

Conditions responsible for the growth of primate cities

Linsky has tried to define conditions which are responsible for the growth of primate cities. They have small territory, colonial history, high agricultural dependency, low per capita income and high population growth. Most of these characteristics are found in developing countries of Asia and Latin America.

In India there are four largest cities viz. Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai which are comparable to a great extent in population size. But none can be termed as a primate city. This may be due to the fact that the country has a vast territorial extent and a diversified economy and culture. Therefore, no city can meet the aspirations of the entire country. Hence, no one city can be termed as a primate city.

On the other hand, primate cities are generally not observed in developed countries which do not have a history of colonial rule, their economy is

not agriculture based and they have high levels of industrialization and urbanization.