



# The lesson of Anandi

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In a specially convened session, the nobility of the city—the municipality, with anger and fury, condemned how the ‘unholy’ women of the city were the reason of God’s wrath, source of youth’s poor performance in education, the misguiding to the Ashrafiya women. Thus, the municipality convicted their existence. In anticipation of making a city sinless and holy, it was announced to consecrate the sinning women out of the city to a barren land where snakes and sparsity were in abundance.



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Ruins of a house in Shahi Mohalla of Lahore a.k.a Heera Mandi; which used to be a hub of economic activity back in time

As the dishonored women settled in desolation, there started an economic activity. Their advent was coupled with the arrival of vendors—the paan frosh, the watering agent, imam masjid, the fruit-sellers. Witnessing the contrary to what was anticipated, the ‘visitors’ to these women started pouring in from the city. So much so, that members of nobility prolonged their delays to this previously barren land in name of trade and other excuses. The municipality could do nothing but witness the flight of nobility and capital to this newly developed town. Shortly, what in retrospect is a jiffy, there developed a city called Anandi.

This short story by the eminent Urdu writer Ghulam Abbas not only suggests the societal bigotry, inhumane and merciless attempt to ostracize women of a particular profession but it also tells a moving story of how cities develop. The cities develop around economic activity. If there’s an economic activity, people will gather around it to agglomerate.

In the case of Pakistan, it provides two counter-intuitive suggestions to ‘master-planners’: the cities evolve as per the needs of people, and their activities. Secondly, cities can agglomerate without causing unbearable congestion or sprawl for that matter.