

# The Industrial Revolution and Industrial Heritage in the City of Karachi: A Historical Overview of the Industrial Revolution, Related Heritage, and Its Current State in the City of Karachi

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**Abstract**— The industrial revolution in the Indian subcontinent is different to that from the Western world both in era and typology. The colonialism in the Indian subcontinent has highly influenced the industrial architecture of the cities. The physical type of industrial heritage in the city of Karachi, for example, are the buildings related to seaport and railways, is linked to the British empire. Karachi, already prior to being the capital of Pakistan was an important city due to its maritime business and strategic location. It has been under the rule of different empires connecting east and central Asia to Europe. One can still find traces of different empires, but most prominently is that of the British empire and its industrial revolution that shaped the city. The seaport acted as a catalyst that started a chain reaction of development in the city of Karachi. It was because of the seaport that the Britishers conquered the city and started developing trade routes through the sea route. The area grew from a small fishermen town to a metropolitan city due to the Karachi seaport. The industrial revolution in current-day Pakistan can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century during the colonial time and Karachi was the centre of it.

This paper explains the physical type of industrial heritage of Karachi, its history, and its importance in the development of the city from a small fishermen town to a business and trading hub. The influence of the British empire in developing the seaport and its built environment. The paper explains the development of Karachi's seaport through the study of ancient maps, photographs, and drawings. The paper will also investigate the buildings which Britishers built to support different activities at the port during their rule and will delve into the present condition, values, and potential of reuse to play an active part in urban regeneration and tourism. Unlike the Western world, industrial heritage in Pakistan is not recognized as such. Post-industrial era sites are currently not on the radar as potential places for future city redevelopment despite their (potential) heritage value and potentials for urban development in Pakistan. However, due to exceptional demographic and geographic challenges, it may well become valuable to reconsider its potential.

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The seaport's Wharves, warehouses, transportation roots, and organizational buildings acted as nodes in various trade activities of the city. Most of the buildings are still intact and in use while some of them are abandoned with high potential for adaptive reuse and regeneration. The research fits in the broader project of a PhD research on industrial heritage of Pakistan, its identification, and potentialities.

**Keywords**— Adaptive reuse, Industrial revolution, Industrial heritage, Karachi Pakistan, Regeneration