

URBANIZATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

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Urbanization is an important element of ancient history. The city life indicates the growth and development of a particular civilization. Indus valley civilization is the first ever civilization which has promoted city culture. Aryans are the villagers and they have carried on their village life by accepting agriculture and cattle breeding as their own professions. The Mauryans have constructed four kinds of cities which are described by Kautilya in his Arthashastra. The city Patliputra was described by Greek writer Megasthenes, Fa-hin, Huang Tsang. The Chinese travelers have also expressed their high opinions on Patliputra city. Several cities like Sravasthi, Vaishali, Karnavathi, Pataliputra, Taxil, Kunthalavanam, Rajagriha and other cities have been founded by ancient rulers. All these cities have been developed as trading centers from where the Indian traders have supplied goods to foreign countries. The Capital cities of Ancient India have been served as religious, political and social centers. Most of the cities have witnessed beautiful temples during the period of Guptas. The city construction is coupled with temple construction in South India. All the ancient dynasties right from Mauryans to Harsha and from Satavahanas to Cholas in South have found great cities and provided all civic facilities with great care. All these issues are highlighted in the present article.

Key Words: Civilization, cattle breeding, Arthashastra, ancient rulers, ancient dynasties
The concept of urbanization is not new to India. Indus people, Mauryans, Guptas and Satavahanas in South India are the master builders of great cities.

OBJECTIVES:

On the basis of above discussion, present article has been written by keeping following objectives as base.

1. To focus on the urbanization in India right from Paleolithic age.
2. To discuss the urbanization during the Mauryans and Guptas period.
3. To focus on the urbanization made during Satavahanas and other South Indian rulers.
4. To focus on the descriptions made by foreign travelers on Indian cities.

On the basis of above objectives, present article has been written.

METHODOLOGY:

Doctrinaire approach has been adopted to write this article. Several primary sources have been consulted in form of inscriptions for the construction of the cities in Ancient India. Several books available are consulted to have firsthand knowledge on the ancient cities. Books on city life have been consulted to throw light on the ancient cities. Several experts have been consulted to grasp knowledge on the construction of ancient cities. Thus by following this methodology, present article has been written.

HYPOTHESIS:

On the basis of tentative conclusions, present article has been completed.

1. The people of Paleolithic age are fond of constructing beautiful cities.
2. Indus people are the real builders of great cities.
3. Mauryans have followed the Indus people suit in the construction of cities like Patliputra.
4. Dharanikota, Prasthitanapuram, Kanchipuram, Tanjore of the great cities founded by different dynasties in South India.

On the basis of these tentative conclusions, entire article has been written.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

City life has been considered as comfortable life in all countries. The development of the cities indicates the greatness of civilization. Education and society can be developed only through the urbanization. Hence the ancient rulers have given much importance for the development of urban centers. All these issues should be known to the modern people by which a thought provoking studies can be made by the modern research scholars.

THEME OF THE PAPER:

Indus people are the founders of beautiful cities. They have preferred trade and commerce rather than agriculture as their profession. Commercial centers have been developed by the people of ancient India. Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan, Chanhudaro and other cities have been founded by the people of Indus.

Aryans are not the city lovers. They have adopted agriculture as their profession. They are the wanderers migrated from Eastern Europe to India. No great cities could be found during the Rig Vedic period. After the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism, the trading centers have been established.

The real founders of the great cities are the Mauryans. Patliputra was praised by Megasthenese, Fah-in and Huang Tsang, all foreign travelers from Greece and China. In South India, Satavahanas, Pandians have founded many cities particularly where the temples are built.

Aryans are the wanderers. They have migrated from Eastern Europe to India, Iran and other countries. Mostly they have preferred village life. They have adopted agriculture as their profession. They are high class cattle breeders. They are accustomed with milk products and they have domesticated cows for which wars are fought and exhibited in Mahabharata.¹ The mighty Aryans have settled at gangetic valley and they have extended their sway over Jamuna and other parts of North India. The Aryans for the first time were divided into three tribes such as Yaduvas, Bharatas and Turvasas. The King of Bharatas ruled this country as country was named after him as Bharatadesa. The pre-urban phase of Aryan occupation of Northern India is well documented in the so called painted grey ware culture described by archaeologists. A wheel was invented by Indus valley people to soften the clay which is useful to manufacture pots. But this pottery wheel was modified by Aryans which was sophisticated in compared to the Indus wheel. This wheel was the indicator of rapid growth of urban life. This wheel was responsible for making trains, automobiles and even aero planes. The pottery wheel was the source of modern civilization particularly growth in cities. The vedic pre-urban Aryans were also familiar with the use of the plough and of metals such as copper, bronze and iron. For nearly a thousand years from 1500 to 600 BC, the pre-urban Aryans lived in enclosed rectangular villages, divided into four segments by two main streets which crossed each other in the centre. Four gates located in each of the four cardinal directions provided entry into the village. The lands around the village were communally owned and used for cultivation and grazing. Their society was essentially egalitarian with no marked distinctions between the various sections of the population.

During the post vedic period, sixteen mahajanapadas could be found. Out of these Mahajanapadas, Kuru, Panchala, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala are the powerful kingdoms. Out of these Kuru and Panchala are the powerful janapadas who were picturized by Veda Vyas in Mahabharata. Entire Mahabharatam story relied upon Kuru and Panchala supported by Pandavas. Major cities like Indraprastha, Dwaraka could be found in Mahabharata. The incessant warfare among the janapadas forced to construct strong capital cities equipped with high facilities. All the janapadas are having 16 capital cities which are very strong in nature. The earliest cities of this period were Hastinapura, Sravasthi, Ujjain, Champa, Kapilavasthu, Mahishmati, Rajgir, Ayodhya, Kausambi and Varanasi. The location of most of these cities is supported by archaeological evidence in addition to the literary evidence.² During later vedic period, authority of the kings have been exceedingly increased. They have ruled according to the grant of Dharmasastras. The duties of the king were prescribed by Manu Dharmasastra, Narada Smriti and Yagnavalkya Smriti. The king was assisted by the brahmanas, the art of writing was still unknown and there is no direct evidence of it as yet. After the 6th century B.C, major cities which are mentioned earlier played a notable role in the growth of urban life.

¹ Virata Parvam, Mahabharata written by Veda Vyasa in Sanskrit.

² J. Talboys Wheeler, India: Vedic and Post Vedic, Rupa Publications, India, 2007, P. 21

Urban cities are the trading centers from which trading activities are being carried out. Exports were made from the cities. Varanasi, Sravasthi, Ayodhya, Saketha were the cities which produced valuable goods to be supplied to neighbouring countries.

The emergence of cities in the Post-Vedic period is to be attributed, in the final analysis to economic forces. Aryan cities are in abundance of iron by which axes, ploughs, knives are made. Some of the iron utensils were used to make sugar called Sarakara in Sanskrit. Unearthing of sugar bowls at Ayodhya indicates that the Aryans used sugar in their food extensively. The contact between Aryans and non-Aryans is responsible for the growth of population. This population has migrated to small villages and constructed semi-urban areas for their settlement. The Vedic literature has referred non-aryans as panis, dasas or dasyas. The pre-Aryan component of the population was probably larger than the Aryan component. However, through the process of Sanskritization, the Aryan and pre-Aryan cultures fused to form richer and more varied Indian culture.

The complexity of urbanization during the Mauryan period is indicated by the presence of different types of towns in addition to the capital or administrative city. Different types of cities mentioned by both Buddhist and Mauryan literary sources.³ The types of towns were: Rajadhaniya nagara, Kharvata, Sthaniya nagara, Putabhedana, Pattana, Nigama and dronamukha. Rajadhaniya is not but the capital city of the Mauryans. Sthaniya nagara is the capital of provinces which are controlled by Mauryans. The Kharvata nagara was the focal point of about 200 villages smaller than a Sthaniya nagara which covered 800 villages. The Kheta was a small town comparable to the Kharvata but it was located in a hostile territory within the empire and therefore treated with disdain by the rulers.

Another four types of cities such as Putabhedana was a large commercial centre specializing in wholesale trade. The Nigamma was an ordinary market centre which the term itself refers to an organization of merchants. The Pattana was a coastal trading town, while the Dronamukha was located at the mouth of a river and served as a port city. Other types of towns mentioned are Khadavara, a military camp and Nivesa, an encampment. Both these were of a temporary nature. The Mauryans have selected the cities which are eligible to impart arts, culture, literature and other professions to the students. Higher education centers are located in the cities known for fine arts and arts. Taxashila and Nalanda are the cities which have been regarded as high centers of education. Taxashila was the center for learning right from the days of Nandas. Sanskrit Vidya peet was located to teach philosophy to the high bound students. Similarly, Nalanda was developed as a city and established a university there by Kumara Gupta, the Gupta ruler. 10,000 villages have been donated to pattern this university. Hian Tsang has worked as Vice Chancellor to this university for two years from 1630-32 A.D. Thousands of students from across the world this university to receive quality education.

The cities of this period resembled the early Aryan villages. They were all walled cities, rectangular or square with four gates, one in the centre of each side. The city was surrounded by moats and walls in some cases in a successive concentric manner.

³ Ibid

The city has the king's palace, the council hall, the royal store house, buildings used for dramatic arts and sports, business quarters and residences of ordinary people. Larger cities had market places and rest houses for travelers.

Kautilya, the Prime Minister of Maurya Chandra Gupta has described the city of Patliputra and its grandeur. The Patliputra has served as capital for nearly 700 years. The downfall of the city was witnessed by Hian Tsang who shed tears on the fall of great city. He praised Lord Buddha for the reconstruction of the city. According to Kautilya, a capital city should have three royal highways in the east-west direction and three in the north-south direction dividing the city into 16 sectors, each sector having a specific type of land use. These specific land uses included the following: the palaces of the king, the ministers and the priests, the houses of dealers in flowers and perfumes, residences of warriors, warehouses and workshops, stables for elephants, camels and horses, records and audit offices, the labour colony, the royal armoury, residences of merchants, living quarters of courtesans and dancers, residences of craftsmen in wool, leather, etc., the royal treasury and mint, the residences of brahmanas and temples, houses of metal workers and workers in jewellery and so on.⁴ The Brahmanas and Kshatriyas used to live in rich areas covered by beautiful scenarios. The Vaishyas lived in the southern parts of the city. The Vaishyas profession was shared by Jains who also lived in the southern most part of the city. Jains were the most popular merchants who have carried on their lives on the trading activities. It is a known fact that most of the jains were converted into vaishyas during Mauryans and later Mauryan period. The streets are about eight metres and the residents used to throw the garbage at the end of the streets which were collected by scavengers appointed by the state. Women are responsible to keep the roads clean and instruct the scavengers to keep the garbage at the earliest. The larger houses had courtyards, pounding sheds, and latrines for the tenants. Security was a major obsession with the city fathers and consequently, a complete record of the city population was maintained and the activities of strangers monitored.

Patliputra was administered by Nagarika whose position can be compared with modern Mayor. The city was divided into wards and 30 members would be selected from these wards. All the 30 members were divided into five committees. Each committee is consisting of six members. Each committee was entrusted to perform different duties such as lighting, sanitation, measurements, education and welcoming of foreign officials and to look after the fairs and festivals to be observed in the city. This administration was regarded as of great quality which was followed by the later Mauryans.

Mauryans cities were flourished with great industries. Industrial goods were manufactured and supplied to the required people. The workers to work in these industries were coming from nearby villages which mean all the city were attached with the cultured villages. All the varnas co-ordinate together to make the city life wonderful. Thus, there were villages of reed makers, salt makers, potters and so on. Within the city itself, there was a great variety of crafts and industries.

⁴ Vijay Kumar Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, Abhinav publications, 2009, Pg. 54

The sixty odd industries mentioned may be grouped into 11 categories as follows: carpentry and wood work, textiles, stone work, metal work including smiths and jewelers, bone and ivory work, glass industry, perfumery, liquor and oil manufacture, clay works including pottery, terracotta figure making, modeling and brick making, leather industry and other miscellaneous industries such as making garlands, baskets, combs, musical instruments and painting.⁵ The labourers belonged to sreni are involved in the manufacturing sector and regulated the trading activities. The guilds of merchants dealing in various goods were called nigamas.

The Chinese travelers Fa Hien and Hien Tsang have described the beautiness of the cities of ancient India whose descriptions were supported by Indian writers. The archeological evidences are also supported the views expressed by foreign travelers and the Indian historians. The literary accounts describe the utter ruin and abandonment of a number of well-known cities of the earlier period. But at the beginning of 7th century, the cities like Mathura, Sravasthi, Taxashila, Kausambi and Pataliputra have lost their grandeur. Kanauj and Nalanda are elevated to high position and proved their grandeur by producing quality textile and other goods. Kanauj was the capital city of Harshavardhana and Nalanda was the city of learning. Even now, a university could be found in the city of Nalanda which is being patronized by the Buddhist countries like Srilanka, Nepal, etc.

The historians could observe the decline of urban centers due to the floods, natural calamities, etc. During those days, no technology was available to prevent such calamities. Development of feudalism and decline of vast empires was responsible for the decline of urban centers. The Rajputs did not evince much interest for the construction of great cities. The invasions of Hunas, Arabs led to the downfall of North Indian cities situated in the Gangetic valley. The Buddhist culture was totally ravaged by the carelessness of the Arabs. The internal warfare among the feudal lords led the downfall of the great cities which provided high quality goods which proved the greatness of Indian Subcontinent to the contemporary world. With the decline of urban cities, the trading activities have also declined by which the people were denied the required goods. The poverty has been reached to highest peak due to the scarcity of supply of goods to the people.

Coming to the South, urbanization has been slowly and steadily grown and beautiful cities could be found in far South. Generally the South India comprises Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Karnataka and some parts of Western India. South Indian culture particularly Kerala and Tamil Nadu were dominated by Dravidian civilization.⁶ Dravidian civilization is totally different from Aryan civilization. Andhra Satavahanas were responsible for importing culture from north to south and entire South was Aryanized. Aryans from north came to south and learned the art of warfare, dressing, eating and relation between male and female. The intermingling of south and north paved the way for the development of Aryan culture in south. The Southern people began to praise the Aryan leaders like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. The urbanization was also learned by the people of South India.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Sastri K.A. Nilakanta, A History of South India, Oxford India Paperbacks, 1997, Pg. 62

The early settlements in South India could be found between 2300-1800 B.C. Their houses have been constructed in the plain areas and on the banks of the rivers. Fortunately the South Indian Rivers are not furious like Ganga and Yamuna which are flowing in North. Like the North Indian tribes, the southern people have domesticated the cattle and learned to till the lands to grow the crops. Handmade pottery and stone axes are also found but the use of metals was not known. Terracotta objects and rock paintings are also traced to this period. Between 1800 and 1500 B.C, the rural settlements show further advancement with the use of metal and wheel-turned pottery. But in South India, no urban cities could be found as there is no influence of Harappan culture on the south. The urbanization was started in south in 1st century B.C. Pandians, Chera and Chola were the ancient kingdoms setup in South India have started urban centers to facilitate the traders to carry on their trading activities. A characteristic of this period is the occurrence of circular hutments made of wattle and daub on wooden frames with mud floors. Objects made of copper and bronze made their first appearance during this period. In South India, the use of metals could be found between 10th century to 6th century but not extensively. Nilagiri hills were the example where the metal utensils were found. Historians are of the opinion that area around the Nilgiri hills is said to be the land of urbanization but class cities have been constructed only in 2nd and 1st century B.C. Horses appear on the scene for the first time indicating greater mobility of the people. A large number of sites belonging to this period have been excavated in the states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. At that point of time, the stage was set for the emergence of urban centers.

The Tamil literature was said to be developed in urban centers. Sanghama age was responsible for the development of Tamil literature. Three assemblies were said to be conducted by Lord Shiva to produce galaxy of literature in Tamil. Hence the development of Tamil language paved the way for rapid growth of cities in Tamil Nadu in the early centuries.⁷ In compared to the Tamil literature, Telugu and Kannada were developed in 10th century AD which was much later than the Tamil literature. Due to the hectic political activities in Andhra, Satavahanas have constructed high cities which stood an example to the contemporary roman civilization.

From early times, the Tamil country which included the two southern states of India was divided into four mandalams equivalent to the mahajanapadas of the North, though differing from the janapadas in terms of their non-tribal origins. The mandalams were further subdivided into smaller territorial units called nadus and kottams. A king ruled over the mandalams, while chieftains ruled over the smaller territorial units and paid tribute to the king. After going through the administrative setup, the historians could found the development of urban cities in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Oraiyyuru, Kanchipuram, Madurai and other cities were developed with the help of skilled artisans. In compared to the cities of north, southern cities are neat and clean. In addition, there were a number of port cities specializing in international trade.

In the early Tamil cities, the King's palace and the temples were enclosed within four walls, but the cities as a whole did not have walls. In the main city, the buildings were made of bricks and tiles, cemented by mortar.

⁷ Ibid

The major components of Tamil society in the Sangam period were the Parpanars (brahmanas), Arasars (nobles), Vellalars (peasants) and the Vaniyars (traders). But this division of castes resembles the varna system of north. The South Indian historians do not concur with the view expressed by northern historians. Varna system is not known to South Indians till the emergence of Andhra Satavahanas. But it is quite wrong, the urban centers and the trading activities of vaniyars clearly indicate that the trading activities are responsible for the urbanization in south which is coincided with the north.

As it is already mentioned that the major cities of this period were Puhar, the Chola port and coastal capital; Uraiyur, the Chola inland capital; Korkai, the Pandya coastal capital; Madurai, the Pandya inland capital; Musiri, the Chera port and Vanji or Karur, the Chera inland capital. Ancient Tamil kingdoms do have two capital cities.⁸ One city is the main capital, another is supplemented to the main cities. The King and the Prince used to stay in the capitals to monitor the political situation.

The ancient Pandya kingdom is having its relations with roman civilization. The Pandian kings used to export Korals and other sea products to the Romans. The Indian traders are said to travel to Rome to carry out their trading activities. Some of the Pandian coins were found on the Roman coast to indicate the trading relations between Rome and Pandians.

Most of the southern cities are survived even now. Kancheepuram, Madurai were still existed as great cities. Both are pilgrim cities which attracted the people from Hindu communities. Kamakshi temple of Kanchi and Meenakshi temple of Madurai were notorious for the Dravidian style. Thus the Dravidian city could be regarded as wonderful but not vulnerable. For the success of southern cities, one reason can be ascertained that the muslimans did not touch south till the invasions made by Allauddin Khilji. As the muslimans failed to reach the south, the cities remained untouched and continued to be flourished even after independence.

The Satavahanas were the masters to construct high velocity of cities with great vigour. Amaravathi, Dhanyakatakam, Ghantasala, Arikamedu, Mysolium, the port cities have been constructed by Satavahana rulers. Buddhist centers like Amaravathi and Pratistana puram were notorious cities of 1st and 2nd century AD. Pleenii, the author of *Historia Naturalis*, has stated that the Andhra kings are having 30 cities with strong forts which could protect the people from enemies. Even the females are the designers of the cities under the instructions of the kings. Thus, the first phase of urbanization could be found in south which was inherited by the later rulers.

CONCLUSION:

The History of Ancient India is a wonderful synthesis of the construction of the cities by which the Indian civilization was developed at a rapid note. All the rulers right from the Mauryans have taken their essence from people of Indus who are responsible for founding great cities. The Mauryans, the Guptas, Harshavardhana and the South Indian dynasty like Satavahanas, Pallavas and Cholas have constructed notorious cities which are praised by the foreign travelers in an extensive manner.

⁸ R. Champakalakshmi, *An illustrated history of South India*, Oxford publications, 2009, Pg. 43

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