Towards a Conclusion

The introduction of new principles of organisation means the establishment of a new level of social integration. This in turn makes it possible to implement available (or to produce new) technical-organisational knowledge; it makes possible, that is, an increase in productive forces and an expansion of system complexity. Thus, for social evolution, learning processes in the domain of moral-practical consciousness function as pacemakers (Habermas 1983:160).

Discussions relating to urbanisation have concentrated on technical growth and ignored the role of moral practical knowledge. This approach adopts a technologistic approach to social evolution. Organisational aspects are also part of evolution especially when we examine the issue of the evolution of state and urban centres. The replacement of the kinship system with the state requires not an expansion of our control over external nature but knowledge that can be embodied in structures of interaction among human beings. Many scholars have shown that the function of the distribution of social wealth in primitive societies was performed by kinship systems. In many ancient civilizations access to means of production was by systems of domination.1 The belief that technology acts as the engine of social evolution does not distinguish between system problems and the solutions to them. It assumes that technological evolution creates surplus. We still need to explain how such a surplus production would overload the adaptive capacity of the kinship system. But such a problem does not automatically explain the emergence of a solution. We shall have to work out the evolutionary process that found the solution to this problem.

The discussion in the preceding chapters shows that the emergence of urban

1 As Habermas points out only in capitalism, when the market, along with its steering function, also assumed the function of stabilising class relationships, did the relations of production come forth as such and take on an economic form. The relations of production can make use of different institutions (Habermas 1979:146).
centres in Malwa was a complex process. Malwa had a long history of agriculture. Compared to many parts of north India this area showed precocious beginnings of agriculture dating back to the middle of the third millennium B.C. Although the process was discontinuous, there was a pattern of increase in the number and size of agricultural settlements. Settlements like Navdatoli show the emergence of very large and prosperous agricultural communities in the middle of the second millennium B.C. Evidences from Inamgaon in Maharastra together with Navdatoli in Malwa and Ahar in Rajasthan seem to show the emergence of chieftdoms. What was it that prevented them from evolving into states and cities? They had the technology and the potential for 'Surplus'.

We can give some tentative answer if we analyse the archaeological and literary material just before the emergence of the Avanti Mahājanapada. Our analysis of the archaeological material shows that there was a large scale desertion of settlements in the beginning of the first millennium B.C. Scholars believe that it was caused by environmental factors. That some of it was caused by war or shift of population, can be inferred from the evidences of burning and desertion found in the archaeological material. The migration of the Yadava lineage to the Malwa area is supported by the Vedic and epic texts. The large scale desertion and evidences of warfare seem to indicate a catastrophic collision of two modes of life. Once the dust settled down, the emergence of a synthesis is obvious.² This collision led to a merger of the North and the Central Indian traditions. Malwa became a part of the larger sub-continental tradition in economy (presence of the BRW and NBPW traditions), ideology (Brahmanism) and polity (the idea of Mahājanapada). The large scale resettlement speaks of a new equilibrium. It is likely that a pastoral nomadic aristocracy managed to establish its rule over communities which were

² Our study of the developments in the earlier phase indicated that Rajasthan, Malwa and Maharastra showed similar evolutionary processes.
more advanced economically. The new ruling class's capacity for siphoning off surplus is visible in the construction of fortifications. State emerged in a situation of warfare. This warfare could have been among the communities who inhabited this area for thousands of years. But warfare cannot explain the emergence of states. Wars took place earlier too without leading to the formation of states. The warfare of this period probably involved emigrants from the north. The question why the warlike migrants succeeded in establishing state society requires some explanation. The later Vedic tradition is remarkable for the extra-ordinary growth of hieratic literature. Most of the later Vedic literature is concerned with the performance of sacrifices and rituals of various kinds (Roy 1994: 14). That it represented a true picture of north Indian society is proved by religious movements like Buddhism and Jainism, which protested against excessive ritualism. These sacrifices are believed to have hindered the development of state society. It seems to us that the Brahmanical sacrifices made mobilisation of huge resources possible - something that communities with equalitarian traditions would have resisted otherwise (Roy 1994: 124). It would have ensured the emergence of a group of people who worked out the mechanisms for siphoning off surplus. Although it is true that this surplus was destroyed at the time of the sacrifice, it created the possibility for mobilisation of surplus. Such surpluses could be used for the enrichment of small sections. The shift from an economy geared to sacrifices to one where kings appropriated the surplus emerged in the context of the shift of communities from the Saraswati region. Thus, state emerged in the context of Brahmanical ideology and shift to a new area where the hostile environment made warriors (Kshatriyas) more important. These Kshatriyas appropriated some of the surplus and emerged as the founders of kingdoms in the time of the Buddha. We believe that the subjugation of local communities could be turned into enduring forms of domination with the help of Brahmanical ideology. It was this 'Varna ideology' of
expropriation acting on the local agricultural communities, which triggered off the process of the emergence of state. No wonder the descriptions of the early Mahājanapadas invariably speak of Brahmana ministers in association with the kings. It was Brahmanism which organised the "moral-practical" world which helped generate "Surplus" needed for the upkeep of the ruling classes.

The fact that the Yādavas had a political structure similar to the 'segmentary lineage' meant that we see an alternate route to evolution of polity in Malwa. Their lack of centralisation would hinder the concentration of wealth and power in a small class. This probably explains the relatively late emergence of Avanti as a Mahājanapada. The Malwa area had a long history of agriculture - much longer than that of northern India. However, cities and states emerged later in this area. The Yādavas seem to have had scant regard for the Brahmanas. Thus, it took longer for Brahmanical ideology to strike roots in this area. Pradyota, the first monarch, of course had Brahmana priests and ministers.

Our evidences indicate Malwa area developed an hierarchical organisation in the second millennium B.C. The literary references show that towards the beginning of the first millennium B.C. some of the communities had institutionalised temporarily political roles. Continuous war and booty distribution seemed to strengthen some groups. The kinship system was unable to cope up ecologically conditioned problems of population shift distribution of social wealth. These problems became more and more visible the more frequently they led to conflicts that overloaded the archaic institutions. The variety of conflicts discussed in the Yādava assembly is a proof of that. Probably, among a few Yādava groups chiefs were empowered to adjudicate cases of conflict, no longer only according to the concrete distribution of power, but according to socially recognised norms grounded in tradition. This gave that extra power to the chief who acquired a position superior to the rest of the community. This idea was based on the notion of the
moral-practical superiority of the ruler. On the basis of political domination the material production process could then be uncoupled from the limiting conditions of the kinship system and reorganised via relations of domination. This led to the emergence of class structures. The ruler secured the loyalty of his officials, of the priests and warrior families by assuring them privileged access to the means of production (Habermas 1979: 162-163).

The forces of production which were already discovered by the agricultural communities in Malwa could now be utilized on a large scale. The intensification of agriculture and stock farming, and the expansion of the crafts were the results of the enlarged organisational capacity of class society.

The emergence of urban centres was part of a parallel and interrelated process. A number of closely related developments provided the impetus for the development of urban centres. The early stages of the emergence of urban centres show a process of centralisation of power and formation of linkages among communities in far flung areas. These processes were interlinked and seem to have reinforced each other. This indicates that the emergence of key institutions like kingship and inequality need to be understood in the context of intra and inter-community levels at the same time.

The expansion of structures of power over larger and larger areas meant incorporation of diverse traditions and a certain homogenisation of the urban space. The diversity of traditions could mean the presence of people (Yavanas) from lands faraway. More importantly, it meant incorporation of local traditions from the surrounding areas. Urban centres were in continuous interaction with the people of villages and forest areas. This meant a two way traffic of men and ideas. Descriptions of Ujjain dwell upon diversity - from its variety of religious establishments - Buddhists, worshippers of Mahākāla, Kāmadeva and Dakini, to the diverse groups of people from various corners of the known world. More than the homogeneity of the urban space, diversity was a statement of the
strength of urban processes. It was a barometer of its engagement with the world outside.

Our analysis of the inscriptive material from Sanchi indicated that the population of the Malwa area had a Dravidian sub-stratum. The Avanti area represented a cultural zone with strong Dravidian influences. That probably explains the pairing of Avanti with Asmaka in the time of the Buddha. By the early centuries of the Christian era Avanti had moved out of the orbit of Asmaka and it was paired with Akara. The processes which led to the merger of Avanti and Akara are not clear to us. As pointed out earlier, the importance of Vidisa lay in its location along a path that went through dangerous forests. Probably, this advantage was undercut by the gradual advance of agriculture.

We know precious little about the structure of urbanism in Malwa because most of the excavation reports stop at the onset of urbanism. Thus, we have to depend on literary and inscriptive material. It also shows that the richer people had larger kinship networks. New systems of power had seized on this archaic system. We are not clear how it operated in the world of state society. Our perusal of the inscriptive material at Sanchi shows that the pattern of patronage shifted from small donors to more powerful and prosperous ones. From the second century onwards donors were not donating money for small slabs but were building temples. This suggests to us that there was a shift in the class which patronised Buddhism. Alternately, it could show increasing centralisation of resources in the hands of a small class. This pattern of centralisation is visible in literary descriptions of Ujjain right till the end of the period we have surveyed. The descriptions of Ujjain leave us in no doubt about the enormous centralisation of resources. Similarly, our discussion on literature showed that Ujjain was increasingly substituted for Avanti and Malwa in the religious literature. So, religion was also showing a process of centralisation. Although the Malwa area did not show the emergence of centralising polities, we have evidence for centralisation in economy and ideology. Such a picture does
not match with the dominant view of ancient Indian society and economy after the fourth century. But this would accord with the view of regionalisation of economy and ideology.

But that is another story.