CHAPTER ONE

Contextualising the Problem

Introduction

Cities have challenged human imagination ever since they came into existence. From the smallest to the largest, the earliest to the latest, cities have been the greatest points of concentration of men and women and their social relationships. As concrete expressions of the concentration of women and men they have displayed the glories of urban art and architecture in temples, tombs and palaces. They have also been the scenes of violence, crime and the exploitation of urban masses (Southall 1998:8-9). The concentration of the productive forces meant that the goods and services previously enjoyed by all in relatively egalitarian self subsistent communities could be greatly multiplied but not shared by all. City as a system of life has been promoted and resisted by different communities. There have been urban religions and there have been religions, which would shun the urban space. But once the city was invented nobody could be indifferent to it. Indeed city penetrates the structure of biological evolution. The alley cats and dogs are animal denizens of the city with an outlook as urban as those of the human counterparts (Martindale 1966:10).

For a historian the validity of the exercise of studying urbanism is that they are lighthouses, which gives them an entry into the happenings in the past. With the concentration of social praxis in a small geographical space our understanding of the beginnings of such seminal processes as the emergence of state and class seems to be moored to archaeological remains of urban centres. Also, the theme of urbanisation connects us to the study of a process, which happened in many parts of the world across time and space. This means that we move out of the insularity of history and effectively
learn from other disciplines like economics, sociology and anthropology.

This study is broadly chronological in its structure. The first two chapters deal with the theoretical issues relating to urbanisation. While the present chapter assesses the state of debate about urbanisation in the Indian sub-continent, chapter II tries to understand this debate in the broader context of urban theory.

Any society which has cities is in all aspects an urban society. Rural refers to only a set of specialities of an urban society characterised by being linked to specific geographical spaces. With such an understanding it is important to understand the emergence of cities as a problem of spatial differentiation. Insights provided by 'Cultural ecology' have made urban studies more sensitive to understanding culture in its geographical setting. That is why chapter III deals with the historical geography of the Malwa region.

Chapter IV and V try to handle the archaeological data relating to the process of urbanisation in Malwa. The validity of this exercise is self-evident in the sense that the origins of urbanism are hidden in the ruins of this past.

Chapters VI and VII shift the focus of our study by studying the ruins of Sanchi. The large body of its inscriptive material with its laconic one liners has fascinated and defied historians. This unique blend of archaeology and writing gives us an idea of the peoples and places of those times.

It is poets and writers who provide flesh and bone to the idea of a city as a vibrant living space. That is why in chapter VIII we concentrate on the study of literature both to understand the process of the emergence of city in Malwa and to create the image of the city as a lived space.
The Problem

Sixth century B.C. saw the beginnings of urbanism in the Ganges valley and some of the surrounding areas. It is usually referred to as the second urbanisation, the first one being that of the Indus valley, much removed from the former in time and space. In the past twenty years many scholars have taken up a systematic study of this problem. The aim of the present work is to test the generalisations made about the second urbanisation by (1) studying the process of urbanisation at the level of a spatial segment i.e. in Malwa and (2) doing a detailed study of the structure of urbanisation at a regional level. The thesis intends to interrogate and critique the dominant paradigm of understanding the Indian past from the north Indian perspective.

The Antecedents

The focus of the present work is to study how a pre urban society changes over to an urban one. This calls for a brief review of works on urbanisation in the sixth century B.C. B.B.Dutt (1925) was one of the earliest historians to write a full length book on urbanism in the early historic India. He studied the town planning of ancient Indian cities. This work was based on a study of ancient Indian texts like the Arthashastra and Manasara. Considering that archaeological reports on early Indian cities were not available, his dependence on literature is understandable. However, the ancient Indian texts have been used uncritically. In the 1930s Coomarswamy was trying to understand the ancient Indian past from the north Indian perspective.

urbanism in the language of the ancient Indian architecture (Meister 1992). He published a series of remarkable studies on the architectural aspects of various units of settlement. He culled information from the literature and gateways of ancient Stupas like Sanchi. These studies remain unsurpassed in their meticulous study of ancient Indian architecture.

The well known archaeologist Stuart Piggot (1945) wrote a small monograph on ancient Indian cities. It was primarily aimed at readers interested in the Indian history. As such the book is more of a descriptive catalogue of names of some ancient Indian cities.

The work by A. Ghosh (Ghosh 1973) on cities in ancient India is a milestone in writings on urbanism. An archaeologist by profession Ghosh was also aware of the larger sociological literature on early cities. Unfortunately, the theoretical sophistication which informed his writing in the early chapters is not translated into a fruitful examination of archaeological and literary data. His limitations were partly the result of the shortcomings of contemporary archaeology. The Indian archaeology has shown a general lack of concern with theoretical issues. Small test trenches for the recovery of trait lists was all that was available to him. The preceding generation of archaeologists had either neglected literary sources or directed their energies towards demonstrating the historicity of ancient texts (Lal 1955). There was a complete lack of concern with the processual issues.

Chakrabarti's (Chakrabarti 1995) book on urbanisation is disappointing. The book begins with a stimulating chapter on theory making in archaeology. However, we do not find any evidence of conscious application of theory in rest of the book. In other chapters there is a pedestrian detailing of archaeological reports scattered in various journals.

Erdosy's study of patterns of urbanism (Erdosy 1988) is important because he consciously formulated question which could be empirically verified. To him urbanisation is the central aspect of the development of complex societies and hence the most convenient focus of study. He studied the settlement pattern of the ancient Vatsa Janapada.
to understand the process of urbanisation in the early historic India. He focussed on the study of three factors—site size, inter site distance and surface finds for creating a settlement typology. The crucial indicator for the evolution of urban centres is seen in the emergence of a three or four tiered hierarchy of settlement types. By the 10th-7th centuries B.C. a two tier hierarchy of settlements had emerged in this area. By 600 - 350 B.C. it was transformed into a four tiered hierarchy. Artefact scatters provided him evidences for functional distinctions. While the smallest settlements yielded microlithic tools, the next level supplied iron slag. Further up the ladder, towns showed evidence for the manufacture of prestige goods and trading activities. Great religious and secular establishments were restricted to the largest settlements.

Emergence of settlement hierarchy is the key to Erdosy's arguments. The study of settlement pattern in Mesopotamia was built on a foundation of previous excavation reports (Adams 1981). In Erdosy's case the entire superstructure of arguments is based on a shaky foundation. The area of a mound can significantly differ from the inhabited segment within it. A fixed mathematical relationship between site size and population will be misleading. For example a very small section of the Harappan settlement of Surkotda was inhabited (Joshi 1990:26). The character of rural settlements could depend on it being a base for sedentary agriculture or pastoral nomads. Ancient Indian literature provides references to villages of artisans and craftsmen whose primary function is not agriculture. The Jātakas talk about manufacturer's villages exclusively peopled by smiths or carpenters (Fick 1920:280-285). Similarly, in the Harappan civilization even smaller settlements have yielded a whole range of buildings and goods associated with power and wealth.² The

²The report on the excavation is a small Harappan settlement like Allahdino show that it had buildings performing specialised functions. It has yielded gold and silver obtained from regions far away. Seals and sealings too have been found. See Fairservis (1982).
hierarchy of settlements is created in the cultural universe of a resident community. Unless we understand the cultural world of those people generalisations based on artefact scatter and site size can be quite misleading.

Erdosy believes that craft activities, trade and redistribution were at the root of the rise of cities. Very little evidence has been provided to work out the processes relating to trade and redistribution. The discovery of hierarchy of settlements becomes the omnibus explanatory tool for everything.

There has been a parallel stream of monographs on the history of individual cities. So we have studies galore for cities like Banaras (Altekar 1937), Kausambi (Ghosh 1935) and Ujjayini (Chakrabarti ed. 1980) etc. Studies of this genre had some inherent limitations. They were so enmeshed in detailing the life of a city that they lost sight of the larger issues relating to urbanisation. One could find everything in the city texts except the informing principle that created the city.

All the works mentioned above addressed themselves to some specific issue relating to cities. In other words the process of urbanisation was not an issue for them. They would be lost in the details of architecture or glorying in the greatness of a city. History was abolished. The credit for shifting the focus on such issues belongs to scholars like Sharma (1968) Kosambi (1963) and Ghosh (1973). They tried to understand the emergence of urban centres as part of a larger process of social change. They also tried to show that the urban centres had a historical beginning and their character changed over a period of time. Sharma's famous review of Ghosh's book has set the tenor of debate on the cities in ancient India. Each year brings a new crop of books on cities (Thakur 1981, Chakrabarti 1995).
The discussion on the origin of the urban centres has centred round two issues. Some scholars have emphasised the changes in the institutional structure, and more specifically the political processes in bringing about urbanisation. Others have highlighted the role of technological change in catalysing the social changes leading to the birth of urban centres.

**Political Structure and Urbanisation**

Scholars like A. Ghosh and Dilip Chakrabarti emphasise the role of political authority in bringing about changes in the material conditions of the society leading to the emergence of urban centres. Chakrabarti says, "In fact a local agricultural base, an organised trade activity and a centralised political power structure went into the making of each of them (Rājagriha, Vārāṇasi, Kauśambi and Ujjain) as a city. Of these three factors primary emphasis should perhaps be given on the factor of political power" (Chakrabarti 1973). Ghosh thinks that the economic changes followed rather than preceded the establishment of the Janapadas by various chiefs. He emphasises the fact that technological changes such as the introduction of iron did not automatically lead to the beginning of urbanisation. Discussing the well known debate on the problem of surplus agricultural produce (which is related to the existence of non food producing groups of the urban areas) he says, "More than a surplus or even a capacity to produce surplus what is required is a socio political institution to force or induce the farmer to produce a surplus, to divert the surplus where it is required" (Ghosh 1973: 20-21). This attempt to give primacy to the political authority bringing about economic changes is obviously derived from the works of Sjoberg and Mumford. Mumford saw the emergence of political authority as a culmination of changes in the socio-economic structure. The king
emerged at the stage of take off into urbanism. However, in the present case little attempt is made to discuss the core processes or the various mechanisms which went into the formation of urban centres. The discussions, buttressed no doubt by ancient literature tend to view the beginning of cities as the handiwork of royalties. It has however, been established in other fields of history writing that visibility and reality are not the same thing. Kings were the most visible entities in the sixth century B.C. but that should not lead us into believing that they catalysed all the changes in the sixth century B.C. While talking about the formation of the Janapadas, which were to become the seats of urban centres, Ghosh gives a cautious note, "The establishment of the Janapada itself was the result of the new society of the later Vedic age in which economic and political factors played their part with the former perhaps remaining in the background to boost up the latter" (Ghosh 1973:22). However, this issue has not been discussed in detail. What were the new factors which led to the transition from the 'lineage society' or 'tribal society' to a stratified state society and to the consequent rise of the urban centres? Besides the contribution of the pre-urban chalcolithic cultures, especially the B.R.W culture of Rajasthan, Central India and the Lower and the Middle Gangetic valley has not been examined in detail.

**Technological Change and Urbanisation**

It is around issues such as the role of iron technology and urbanism that most of the discussion has taken place. It has provided us many insights into the problem of

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urbanisation in the sixth century B.C. Questions leading to fresh inquiries into the process of urbanisation have also been raised. D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma have underlined the primacy of economic factors and large scale technological change in bringing about social transformation.

Sharma argues that the focus of change in the sixth century B.C. shifted from the upper Ganga plain to the middle Ganga plain. This area roughly corresponds to the Gangetic plains east of Allahabad and west of the Rajmahal hills. He contends that the alluvial plains combined with the heavy rainfall in this area are likely to promote thick vegetation. For a group to undertake agriculture such a landscape would require iron axes for clearing its dense forest. The hard clayey soil further requires iron plough shares to dig the fields for cultivation (Sharma 1983:90-92). Sharma has also marshalled impressive data from the Pali canons and other sources roughly dating to the sixth - fourth century B.C. to prove that iron implements were indeed being used. (Sharma 1983:89-110).

Discussing the origins of Buddhism, Prof. Sharma states that the iron plough was the single most important variable which transformed the tribal society. He says, "The new agriculture (by plough in the iron age) led to the production of surplus on a scale which could not be attained with stone or copper implements. This prepared the ground for the rise of urban settlements in North - eastern India (Sharma1968)." Thus, the stimulant for

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4 Sharma has slightly modified his position in his subsequent writings. He believes that in the later Vedic period the apparatus of a 'proto state' had come into existence. The two upper Varnas were siphoning off the surplus of the society. "The state could not assume a full fledged shape because the surplus available from agriculture was still marginal. Agriculture carried with wooden ploughshare in the upper Ganga plains could create a subsistence economy and not a large surplus producing economy"(Sharma 1989:30). Talking about the sixth century he says "Familiar with the rich iron ores found in Chotanagpur, people made great strides in the use of iron technology...All this made possible the use of iron ploughshare and the other agricultural tools." Together with some parallel processes this created conditions for the production of greater surplus (ibid.31).
change is reduced to certain technological innovations i.e. the change - over from the chalcolithic to the iron age. Iron axes and plough shares led to the production of surplus which in turn led to craft specialisation and the emergence of urban centres.

**Iron Tools in Archaeology**

The problem of the iron age and its impact on society has been discussed by many writers (Chakrabarti 1973, 1976, 1992; Ray 1975). The beginnings of the use of iron in India date back to the 10th - 9th centuries B.C. In the Doab region the iron age dates back to the 9th century B.C. or earlier in sites like Atranjikhera (Chakrabarti 1976). We have certain references to the use of iron in the agricultural production. N.R. Ray probably made the most significant contribution to the debate on the notion of the iron age by pointing out that up to the second century A.D. no iron ploughshare or iron axe had been reported from any of the Ganga valley sites (Ray 1973). This impression holds true. Some excavators have reported the finds of agricultural implements from the fourth century B.C. In his survey of the finds of iron agricultural implements in the N.B.P.W. levels in the the Kanpur district, M. Lal has reported the presence of axes, adzes, chisels, hoes, sickles and screw rods (Lal 1984:73). However, he does not report the finding of iron ploughshare. To Sharma's response that the absence of plough shares is related to the fact that the moist weather conditions destroyed iron artifacts, it has been pointed out that such a logic would apply to all iron artifacts and not particularly to iron ploughshares.

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5See Chakrabarti 1992:96-123). However, many of the references in the early texts cited by him are equivocal. Many scholars do not accept his interpretation. See Thakur (1994).
Since other kinds of iron tools are regularly reported in the archaeological records for this region there is no reason why iron ploughshares alone should have perished (Sarao 1989:36). Also the forest clearing tool kit was already present in the P.G.W. assemblage. Although the number of tools increases in the N.B.P.W. levels, most of these additions consist of tools like pins, nails etc. (ibid.37).

**Relationship Between Iron and Social Change**

History, tackling the past, must raise alone as many questions as are raised by all the social sciences put together when they tackle the present (Braudel 1989:22)

R.S. Sharma has argued that the sudden increase in the number of settlements in the N.B.P.W. phase in the alluvial belt of the middle Ganga valley is a proof of the crucial impact of iron (Sharma 1983:100). The N.B.P.W. phase saw an increase in the number of settlements in many parts of the country. For example, in an intensive survey of the Kanpur district Makhan Lal found evidences for the presence of 46 sites in the P.G.W. phase dating back to 700 B.C. and 99 sites in the N.B.P.W. phase dated to the period before the third century B.C. (Lal 1984:49). Erdosy in his survey of the Allahabad area found that between 600 to 350 B.C., the number of settlements increased only from 16 to 21. However, there was a manifold increase in the size of the settlements (Coningham 1995). Similarly, there was an increase in the number of settlements in the Kanpur district.

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*6 See Coningham in Allchin (ed.) 1995, has quoted from Erdosy's study of the Allahabad area. He points out that between 1000 to 600 B.C. there were 15 sites less than six hectares in size and one site of 10 Hectares. In the period 600 to 350 B.C. there were 17 sites less than six hectares in size, two sites 6.75 and 6.12 hectares in size, one site of twelve hectares and one site of fifty hectares.*
Malwa region too from roughly the 6th century B.C.

The discussion reveals that the increase in the number of settlements was by no means confined to the Middle Ganga valley. We observe population increase in the upper Ganga valley as well as the Malwa area. It can equally be argued that the population increase was part of a independent process observable in agricultural societies. Also, we need to keep in mind Erdosy's observation that uncrilical reliance on the dating of N.B.P.W. has often led to a situation where the large time bracket of 600 to 100 B.C. is treated as one unit. This often gives the impression of a sudden leap to urban civilization (Erdosy 1995). This indicates that the notion of the middle Ganga valley being a virgin territory, where large scale colonisation took place only as a result of the introduction of iron in agriculture, is not substantiated by the archaeological record. Erdosy believes that iron tools came in increasing use in the later phase of the N.B.P.W. dated to c. 350 B.C. By this time, urban centres dotted the landscape of the entire sub continent. This would complicate the issue of the relationship between iron technology and the onset of urbanism. Archaeology gives us mixed signals since it is difficult to determine the chronology of most of the excavated and reported early historic settlements.

The advent of iron technology is believed to have catalysed the process of urbanisation by increasing food production. However, any increase in agricultural productivity can be accounted for by many factors basically related to the human understanding of existing energy sources. Thus, crop rotation, introduction of new varieties of crops, irrigation, use of manures and greater input of human labour during various phases of crop production would be as important as the introduction of tools tipped with iron.
If iron and urbanisation appear together it does indicate a relationship between the two. But one cannot talk of a causal primacy of one over the other on a priori assumption (Foucault 1970: xiii). That is why we need to investigate the matter further. To be able to understand the relationship between iron age technology and its impact on society we need to frame questions which might find answers in other kinds of sources. How is a forested tract colonised? Is it that one day a group of people from faraway lands come to a forest armed with axes, clear the forest and start ploughing the fields? In that case, who feeds them until the crops are harvested? Does advanced plough cultivation require a more complex political system? What is the social context of technology? Why should a community want to adopt a new technology? Why should they want to colonise a new terrain? How much would a ploughshare cost? Was it cheap enough to be possessed by an average cultivator? Some of the answers might be provided by anthropological literature (Forsyth 1919, Boserup 1965). Ancient Indian literature also might provide us some clues.

The Anthropological Evidence

Interesting examples of forest clearance are found in ethnological literature. One description is provided by Captain J. Forsyth (1919). His description of the forests in and around Pachmarhi in Madhya Pradesh, dates to the 1860s. It is important for the present research because it is close to the Malwa region. Pachmarhi is located in the Satpura mountain range and receives high rainfall. Forsyth writes:

The jungle that sprang upon the old clearings was so thick and a miasma
so deadly, as to baffle all attempts at renewed occupation by the Hindu cultivators densely crowded in the adjoining open country. Here and there the Korkus whose constitution seems impervious to malaria, have settled down on some neighbouring rising ground, and built villages and have cleared and tilled the open part of the valley. But it is a terrible struggle between the aborigine and the jungle with its immense unremitting strength of vegetation and tribes of wild beasts. Every now and then the heart of the Korku fails him and he abandons the contest; flitting off to some hill side where he may easily contend with axe and fire against the less exuberant vegetation of the thin mountain soil (p.118)

Everywhere the aboriginal is the pioneer of the more settled races in their advance against wilderness. His capacity for toil that would break the heart of a Hindu, his endurance of malaria and his fearlessness of the jungle eminently qualify him for this function, and his thriftlessness and hatred of being long settled in a locality as certainly ensure the fruits of his labour reverting as a permanancy to the settled races of the plains. The process is everywhere much the same. The frontier villages in the possession of the Hindu landholder, or of the Gond Thakurs, or chiefs, usually comprehend large areas of culturable but uncleared land and there are always numbers of the aborigines floating about such frontiers, earning precarious livelihood by wood cutting and occasional jobs, or working as farm servants who can be induced to break it up (ibid 161).

Forsyth also points out that aborigines have no instruments except an axe. They practice slash and burn cultivation and the productivity is very high (ibid 83). When forests are burnt green shoots appear for the grazing of the vast herds of cattle, which form the greater part of the wealth of the people in the neighbourhood of the jungle tracts.

The descriptions of Forsyth supported by numerous other ethnographic notes, indicate that the clearance of the forest is done in many stages. The iron axe and the iron plough are probably used in different modes of agriculture. And there is always a relationship between the aborigines and advanced agriculturists. There are exchanges of various goods between settled agriculturists and forest dwellers creating conditions for change in the modes of life of one group or the other.
Ester Boserup, basing her generalisation on a large number of anthropological studies has shown that there are five types of land use in order of increasing intensity:

a) Forest fallow cultivation having around 20 years' regeneration cycle.

b) Bush fallow cultivation having about 6 years' regeneration cycle.

c) Short fallow cultivation having two or one year regeneration cycle.

d) Annual cropping.

e) Multi-cropping.

The kind of agricultural tools needed in a given context depend upon the system of land use. In the forest fallow cultivation system trees are felled with axe or burned on the root after having been killed by ringing. Logs and other unburnt remnants of the natural vegetation are left in the field together with the ashes and roots of the trees. Sowing and planting are done directly in the ashes without any land preparation. Land is highly productive at this stage. The plough cannot be used on this kind of surface, since it is littered with unburnt objects, which will hinder its movement. The only tool that can be used is a digging stick to scratch the ashes. The plough requires a clean permanently cleared surface. In Boserup's scheme the plough can be applied only when grassy land appears as a result of annual cropping. Grass cannot be removed or burnt by hoeing. Since the burning of forests can be assumed to have been the earliest form of cultivation, one would expect the presence of agricultural communities practicing agriculture before the coming of plough based cultivation. In fact, communities moving into forest land have been known to abandon 'advanced' methods of cultivation and revert to slash and burn cultivation (Boserup 1965). Boserup's model of agricultural development can be questioned as to its universality or as to its linear succession of various kinds of
agriculture. However, her model does indicate that technology has a context. It has to be understood in the context of social need and the surrounding environment. She suggests that communities and individuals do not adopt advanced plough cultivation immediately after clearing forests. Her model indicates that while axes are primarily associated with slash and burn cultivation, ploughs are used only by advanced agriculturists. As such ploughs and axes are used in different kinds of agricultural practices and the plough would therefore, have been introduced much later in the early historic period (Sharma’s hypothesis seems to indicate that they were introduced simultaneously) This will be especially true of the tropical forest (From where Boserup provides her illustrations), in a context in which there is a shift from pastoralism to agriculture. In a diachronic archaeological context it can be said that if axes are found and ploughshares missing in a particular culture sequence, it is likely that they were practicing pre-plough cultivation. This seems to have been the case until the 5th 4th century B.C. in the upper and middle Ganga valley. Similarly, communities might be practising different forms of agriculture in the same historic period. It might mean that even when some group had adopted plough cultivation in the middle Ganga valley other groups might continue to practise other forms of agriculture. (Incidentally Bāṇabhaṭṭa’s Harṣacarita while talking about cultivation in the forest clearly mentions that people were digging the earth with spades. They could not use ploughs because the clearings were scattered and the earth was hard as iron.)

What is important from our point of view is that technology itself is mobilised in a social context. The fact that the iron ploughshare was available need not mean that all social groups would automatically use it. Scholars might differ over the reason why a particular technology is adopted. Boserup would think that it is related to population
increase. Others might think that it is related to greater demand for surplus in a stratified society.

Although Ghosh (1973:11) has discussed the problem of megalithic cultures, scholars linking the iron age and urbanisation have completely overlooked the reverse side of the argument. One could ask "Does the use of iron plough in a productive area lead to urbanisation?" Studies on the contemporary non state formations ranging from the Naga hills to large parts of the Chotanagpur plateau present numerous examples of communities using iron weapons, axes and ploughshares (For a general picture see Haimendorf 1989, Danda 1991). Even the hunting gathering tribe of the Chenchus in Andhra Pradesh use iron-tipped arrows and digging sticks (Haimendorf 1989:6-7). In Andhra Pradesh most of the tribes practise plough cultivation (Ibid.51). Even the tribes of Bastar practise plough cultivation (Ibid.201). Even more astonishing is the case of the Apa Tanis tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They grow rice in irrigated terraced fields. They practice intensive cultivation with iron hoes. "The fact that roughly 300 people can make a living on one square kilometer would be unusual among primitive subsistence cultivators dependent on their own resources, but in an area where no other tribe had until recently any idea of intensive cultivation, the achievement of the Apa Tanis is truly astonishing." (Ibid 28). Similarly Danda who has done a study of the tribal economy in India found that out of 610 tribal communities 186 practiced settled agriculture, 111 were shifting cultivators and 18 practiced terraced cultivation (Danda 1991:187). Obviously most of the tribes of contemporary India practised cultivation. All are familiar with iron and iron plough shares (whether they use it or not is a different matter). Not all of them are confined to infertile agricultural tracts. However, these communities have not developed states or cities. Thus,
the anthropological evidence calls in question the linear, unidirectional, and determining role of the iron technology.

Obviously, the iron technology has been widely disseminated in the Indian subcontinent since its original discovery in the first millennium B.C. However if modern examples are any indicators (According to the 1981 census every 14th man in our country is a tribesman) a very large section of India has been "non state", "non urban" India in its history. These tribal communities were by no means confined to non-fertile areas of the sub continent. However, right into the modern times, in spite of their iron axes, ploughs and weapons they have not developed stratified state formations. If the iron plough could produce the lofty ideals of Buddhism, what kept every 14th Indian "arrested" in tribal isolation even in 1981? This brings us to the theoretical weakness of the proposition of discovery of iron leading to urbanisation. Stated simply, Sharma's thesis assumes that iron led to increase in production. The growing differences in wealth resulted in social differences that could not be managed by egalitarian kinship system. So, there was a problem of distribution which could be solved by organisation in a state. This proposition does not distinguish between the system's problem (problem of organisation of unequal distribution) and the new form of social integration which emerged. It does not explain the new form of social integration which emerged.  

The anthropological studies also detail the method of dispossession of tribal communities and the introduction of intensive farming in many areas. Writing about the various Gond tribes in Andhra Pradesh, Haimendorf says that they used to practise shifting cultivation. Every two or three years they used to shift their fields and sometimes also

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7 See Habermas 1979 for a discussion on the limitations of theories relating to the origin of state.
their settlements. The advanced agricultural population from the surrounding areas used to occupy the land left fallow by the cultivators. The new settlers used to obtain title deeds to these lands since the Gonds had no concept of private property. At the turn of the century it was government policy to open up the forested districts and encourage the influx of new settlers. Ownership was granted free of charge for as much land as they could make arable. Haimendorf also details extra-legal means for dispossessing the Gond tribesmen (Haimendorf 1989:51-78). These details support the description given by Forsyth where he claims that it is the primitive agriculturists who precede the advanced cultivators in clearing forests.

Prof. Sharma's hypothesis about the role of iron technology has one more questionable assumption. It is believed that in the middle and the lower Ganga valley were largely absent before the coming of iron. A few marginal communities practising primitive agriculture might have been present, but it was the iron wielding Aryans who with their axes and ploughs cleared the virgin forests and started intensive cultivation which provided the surplus leading to urbanisation. Boserup's thesis about the intensity of land use would question such a hypothesis. Her observation seems to be supported by the fact that besides the important sites of Kausambi, Chirand, Sonepur etc., more than one hundred neolithic - chalcolithic sites have been reported from the alluvial plains of the middle and lower Ganga valley (based on the reported sites in IAR 52-53 to 79-80). The Black and Red ware which occurs in pre iron and iron age contexts has not been properly classified. Thus a precise idea of the pre iron age sites is not possible. But it is likely that these areas had very many pre iron age agricultural settlements. This is circumstantially

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8 Also, see discussion on the beginnings of rice cultivation in parts of the Allahabad district by G.R. Sharma et al. (1980).
proved by the fact that the popular word for rice in these areas is 'Chawal' which is a non Sanskrit word probably picked up from the Mundari language (Chatterji 1965). The speakers of the Indo European language group picked up these words because of its widespread prevalence. This might indicate the fact that rice cultivation was widely practiced before the coming of the Indo - Europeans. This observation is substantiated by Dilip Chakrabarti. He reports that there are a large number of pre iron age agricultural settlements in Bihar and West Bengal. In Bengal alone they number more than sixty (Chakrabarti 1995: 159-160). Their size varies from less than 1 acre to 8-9 acres. The distribution of these sites conforms to the distribution pattern of modern villages indicating a continuity in the pattern of agricultural settlements from the pre iron age days. At Senuar in Bihar has been found impressive evidence of crops - rice, barley, dwarf wheat, bread wheat, sorghum, millet, chick pea, green gram, field pea, lentil, horse gram, grass pea, sesamum and linseed. Even before the coming of iron prosperous agricultural settlements existed in the lower and the middle Gangetic valley. Iron would have facilitated agricultural activities. However, the contention that forests were cleared and prosperous agricultural settlements came into existence after the coming of iron is disproved by archaeology. In fact in most of the cases the location of the settlements, the house types and the housing materials used in the chalcolithic settlements show remarkable continuity into modern times. Extensive remains of rice from chalcolithic sites indicate that rice had already become the staple diet of the population. In fact Chakrabarti contends that there is no specific evidence to prove that the number of sites increased, or that the settlements became larger in east India or central India after the introduction of iron (Chakrabarti 1995: 168).
The Textual Evidence

We shall use the testimony from two books - the Harṣacaritam of Bāṇabhaṭṭa dating to the 7th century and the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya written sometime between 200 B.C. and A.D.200. The Harsacaritam, though removed from our period by almost a 1000 years is important because it refers to the Malwa area. Thus it is among the few texts from ancient India whose descriptions have a concrete geographical locus. Although it was written in the context of established agricultural societies, the descriptions might provide us an idea of the process of the extension of cultivation. The Arthaśāstra has been selected because it deals with the problem of extension of cultivation and tax collection. Chronologically too it is closer to the period under review.

A study of the Arthasastra indicates that cutting down trees and clearing forests was a lower order problem. In the section on 'Janapada niveśa' and occupying unoccupied lands, the primary concern is the organisation of manpower.9 There is a discussion about the kind of land available, water resources etc. Also the 'Śūnya niveśa' section indicates that the 'Śūnya' was not an empty space, but was already occupied by communities of various kinds - presumably primitive agriculturists who were brought within the sphere of state power (Kangle1992:32). This evidence is supported by Patanjali's Mahābhāṣya too, where the Arāṇya is shown as an inhabited space (Agnihotri1963:272). This

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9This evidence ties in with the long history of peasant protests discussed by Irfan Habib. The most visible method of peasant protests in the pre-modern period was running away from the villages. As its counter part, the chief concern of the Zamindars was how to prevent peasant from going to other areas (Habib1963:333-51). It indicates a favourable man-land ratio, so that peasants could shift from one area to another. It shows that mobilisation of labour was the most important obstacle for the regimes of power when they wanted to colonise new areas.
observation is supported by numerous descriptions in the early medieval inscriptions where kings and chieftains are shown as occupying such land (Chattopadhyaya: 1990:3-4).

The following description from the Harṣacaritāṃ gives us an idea of the process of expansion of agriculture:

Entering he saw while still at some distance a forest settlement, distinguished by wooded districts, turned grey by the smoke from granaries of wild grain in which heaps of burning Śaṅkika chaff sent up a blaze... The outskirts being for the most part forest many parcels of rice land, threshing ground and tith were being apportioned by small farmers, and with no little vigour of language, since it was mainly spade culture and they were anxious for the support of their families... owing to the difficulty of ploughing the sparsely scattered fields covered with Kāśa grass. With their few clear spaces, their black soil stiff as black iron, the branches bursting from the tree trunks set up here and there, their growth of impenetrable chayaka, their wealth of Alambusha and their Kokilaksha bushes not yet cleared away. (Cowell 1961:225)

In other places again blacksmiths were almost intensifying the heat by burning heaps of wood for charcoal. On every side the prospect was filled with the inhabitants of the district, who dwelt in the surrounding country, entering the woods to collect timber and enveloped in the provisions guarded for them by old men stationed in the hamlet houses of vicinity... on their shoulders were set strong axes... strong oxen marched before them in couple. (Ibid.227)

These descriptions are important from our point of view because they show that although the plough, and iron were available to these communities, they were not using it. This supports Boserup's view that the availability of the iron plough share was no guarantee of its use. The description also gives us an idea of the process of forest clearance. New areas are shown as being cleared by either the foresters themselves or by the people of the surrounding villages. This tallies in with the descriptions provided by Forsyth.

Evidence from the early medieval settlements suggests that many non peasant village settlements were forcibly brought under control by kings. Similarly, the early
literature contrasts Janapada and Aranyā. The Aranyā meaning forest was not an empty
space. It contained many 'tribal villages' called 'Palli' where people practiced primitive
agriculture. Over a period of time many of the 'Pallis' were converted into Grāmas. The
presence of a large number of place names with Palli endings might suggest that in the
historical period a large number of villages practising primitive agriculture were converted
into peasant villages practising advanced agriculture (Chattopadhyaya 1990:3-4). An early
medieval text giving various definitions of the spatial limits of a village, defines Grāma as
an area which grass cutters and wood cutters covered in a day (ibid.5). In this definition
forest cover is considered part of the village. It is these areas which could more easily be
brought under cultivation.

The anthropological data together with the information provided by the
Arthaśāstra and the Harṣācaritaṁ indicate that the primary mode of introducing intensive
agriculture was the transfer or shift of population from areas where intensive farming was
practised. The aboriginal populations were given to an ideology of celebration and sharing
rather than power and accumulation. Many of the modern day tribes knew the use of
plough and iron but it did not lead to intensive cultivation and state formation. All this fits
in with the notion of what has been called 'stone age economics.' In this mode of
economy, technology is harnessed to increasing leisure rather than increasing production.
The Arthaśāstra's advice for the transfer of population from intensive agricultural zones
needs to be understood in the light of the fact that these people had an ideology
encouraging them to harness technology to higher production. These people were part of
state society and therefore used to yielding part of their produce to the non producers. In
fact, the land grants to the brahmins might be an attempt not so much to bring virgin
forest under cultivation as to bring previously 'free' communities under the aegis of the state. They would introduce ideologies geared to centralisation of power. This centralisation could be in the form of either some ritual centre where every one was expected to make gifts, or direct taxation.

The details and descriptions presented above talk about situations of the intensification of agriculture in state societies. It is difficult to visualise what must have happened in the pre state situation. However it is important to remember the ideological context of the intensification of agriculture.¹⁰

If we shift our focus to some other societies and examine the process of urbanisation we might gain some insights into the problem of the role of iron in early historic urbanism. The Greeks did not use the iron ploughshare in antiquity. In fact in Europe the iron plough came in general use only in the 9th 10th centuries. Besides, northern Europe which developed a sophisticated iron technology in the early centuries of the Christian era and used the iron plough did not develop cities in that period. Even more instructive is the case of the Maya civilization. The Maya civilization flourished in

¹⁰It is issues of this kind which have made Marxist thinkers rethink the issues of base and superstructure. By the end of the 1920s and continuing through the 30s a critique of orthodox Marxism was unfolding in the writings of Korch, Lukacs and Gramsci. The analytical shifts introduced more and more space for rethinking 'superstructure'. As long as culture was conceived as merely an extension of physiological adaptation, differences in the local adaptation were believed to be insignificant. Once it was accepted that cultural adaptations were related to the creation of systems of meanings, the position changed. The distinct historical trajectory of a community became critical in explaining its dynamics. It is shifts of this kind in our understanding that the cultural sphere in all its manifestations is seen as the key terrain upon which class, economic issues, ideology, politics and power are mediated (Cruz and Lewis: 1994:5). It was such issues which led scholars like Godelier to redefine infrastructure. Parts of the social structure which were traditionally believed to be superstructure (Godelier 1984). What all this has resulted in is that frontiers of various disciplines are being redrawn and things usually far apart are brought closer.
the Peten region which is a tropical quasi-rain-forest area having 71" rainfall per annum. They managed to clear forests and establish cities without having a developed metallurgy (Millon 1968).

The examples cited above indicate that social organisation can successfully harness even primitive technology to mobilise surplus. This observation is supported by certain experiments with primitive tools. According to one experiment a neolithic stone axe could fell a tree having a diameter of 30cm. in 30 minutes.\(^{11}\) Even the most finely honed steel knife is no sharper than a knife of obsidian (Percy Knauth 1976:9). Of course this efficiency might vary with the kind of wood that is to be cut and the quality of stone itself, but it indicates that forest clearing even with stone and copper axes was not impossible. The Maya civilization was an example of such a development.

Sharma based his hypothesis on the notion that iron is a democratic metal and once the art of iron smelting was mastered its dissemination was very fast and it soon reached the hands of the pioneering agriculturists. However, this view needs to be examined in terms of the fact as to when was the art of iron smelting mastered in India. The process of development in the art of iron smelting took a few hundred years. We get some information from the history of metallurgy in India. Bharadwaj writing about the phases in the development of iron concludes that upto about 600 B.C. iron metallurgy was in an elementary stage of development. This is evident from the wasteful rich metalliferous slags discovered from the strata belonging to this phase. The period between 600-200 B.C. witnessed experimentation with the processes of carburization and registered some

\(^{11}\) A stone-axe was reconstructed by mounting the neolithic flint head on a copy of a neolithic haft preserved at the bottom of a bog in Denmark. Using short rapid strokes the experimenters learnt to fell trees having a diameter of more than 30 cm in 30 minutes. See Randhawa, M.S. 1980 A history of Agriculture in India, New Delhi, Vol 1.
advance as indicated by the prolific use of this metal. Wootz or the steel making process was mastered between 200 B.C. and A.D.200. Wrought iron (in use until 600 B.C. or may be till the later phases of experimentation) is tougher than other available metals but it cannot take a satisfactory sharp edge which is obtainable only in steel (Derry and Williams 1960:55-56). One wonders if the iron tools of the early historical phase could constitute any dramatic advance over the copper and stone tools, as far as agricultural productivity concerned. In fact we do not know what the cost of an iron ploughshare in those times would be. The Hittites who pioneered iron technology used to exchange iron with the royal families of those times and itemized the gifts of iron presented or received as tokens of esteem at the court and elsewhere (Knauth 1976: 89). This indicates the high value of iron in those times. The English on the other hand were using iron bars as money at the time of Julius Caesar. However, they were also using iron ploughshares (ibid 95) What we are trying to suggest is that the presence of iron technology per se need not lead to its immediate adoption by the peasantry. It needs to be defined by the historical context. Whether a common peasant could afford to buy an iron tool needs to be understood from the context. Considering the fact that a primitive furnace worked by the Agaria

12 That there was no dramatic transition from the copper to iron age in central India is proved by the fact that in Prakash the phase which saw the beginning of the use of iron also witnessed the use of copper implements in largest numbers. See B K Thapar(1965) "Prakash 1955", Ancient India, No. 20-21.

13 Indian historians discussing the role of iron in social transformation have not discussed the costs involved in the production of iron in different periods of history. It is a serious oversight. Writing about the Vikings, a Danish archaeologist says that to an iron age man a sword cost as much as a modest car today (Klesius2000). The perceptive remarks of the great historian Braudel ought to be quoted "...until the eighteenth, or even the nineteenth century, in Europe (and naturally it was even truer outside Europe) the quantity of iron produced and used was not able to tip the balance of material civilization." (Braudel 1985:374). "At the dawn of history, in the age of Homer, a warrior's armour was worth 'three pairs of oxen, a sword seven, and the bit of a horse's bridle more than the
tribesmen required 12 hectares of forest wood to produce 220 maunds of iron in an year (Ratnagar 1995), might indicate that iron would not be very cheap. Considering the fact that new technologies are appropriated by the powerful people in class societies, it is more likely that the ruling Ksatriya groups benefitted from the new technology for it helped them create more destructive weapons. In the debate about the role of iron technology the factor of regional variation has been overlooked. There are likely to be regional variations in the types of implements used depending on the soil type. For example, in modern times, in the black soil region, for cotton and Jowar rotation, normal harrow (Bakhar) is better suited than implements like ploughs. During summer it develops deep cracks which helps circulate nitrogen. Even now, in the dry farming areas, the black cotton soil is ploughed only once every three years for raising jowar (Dhavalikar 1985). Similarly, the literary reference used by Sharma that many pairs of oxen needed for ploughing were proof of the use of iron plough, does not hold ground. In the nineteenth century Maharastra the acacia wood ploughs required the traction strength of one to five pairs of bullocks (Ratnagar 1995).

Prof. Sharma specifies the middle Ganga valley as the locale for his hypothesis. Excepting him nobody is concerned about the regional factor. So generalizations are made for the entire subcontinent without taking into account regional variations. If we look at the geographical setting of the early urban centres, the middle Ganga valley does not seem to have any concentration of urban centres. The upper Ganga valley has nearly as many important urban centres. Thus we have the anomalous situation where generalisations are

animal itself. 'The period covered in this book was still very much the age of wood."(ibid.383). "It could even be maintained that copper played an equally great or perhaps more important role than iron at that time."

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made for the entire sub continent without regional studies. One of the factors in the emergence of towns is their geographical location and the catchment area. We do not have studies which pay sufficient attention to locational factors. It is only after understanding the patterns of adaptation to the local environment that we can make meaningful comparisons and generalisations about the process of urbanisation in ancient India.

Urbanisation in the sixth century B.C. covered a large area. Archaeologically speaking these areas had very diverse patterns of evolution. For example the Malwa region had a long history of agricultural settlements before the onset of urbanism. On the other hand, the coming of urban centres in the Maharashtra area was preceded by a large scale desertion of agricultural settlements and a shift to nomadic life. If such diverse groups are to be encompassed within the emerging urban society, the notion of a unilinear growth leading to urbanisation needs to be scrutinised. Most of the writings presume a unilinear pattern of evolution.

Iron age city clearances could be captured by the city once again. Xu Xang’s description of Kapilvastu the capital of the Sakyas shows that most of it had been recaptured by the forest. It indicates the decisive role of the social organisation. A group might decide to abandon a settlement for fear of invasion, epidemic or lure of a better place, or for that matter a thousand reasons known and unknown.

Some scholars (Chakravarti 1995:7-8) have approvingly quoted archaeologists who have applied systemic models to the understanding of change in the past. In this approach the society is visualised as a system. The social system is divided into various sub systems like economy, religion, and society. Changes in one sub system are counteracted or amplified by changes in other sub systems. So every study of change...
becomes a study in the interaction between various sub systems. This interesting project for understanding the past has not been applied on early historic urbanism. Also, the systems theory understands change as a minor deviation within the overall pattern of the system which almost amounts to giving up causal primacy to any sub-system. Causation is central to historical understanding. Tiny changes which catalysed historic change need to be understood and amplified. Otherwise there is the very real danger of saying, "everything was caused by everything else." Such an analysis would reduce personalities like the Buddha to a non-significant component of Buddhism. Also, in the systems modelling the list of sub-systems creating a system seem to vary. Obviously, conventional categories are utilised in systemic models too. Whether sub systemic wholes are able to capture the reality of the past needs to be demonstrated. The use of conventional categories in the systemic analysis proves that such categories have a validity. These subsystems are important components of analysis but some components are more important than others. We do not intend to discover some predetermined pattern of primacy of one sub system over the other. However, we believe that causation and primacy of specific sub-structures is an important component of the historical analysis. The systems model might present us an ambitious design for understanding the archaeological remains. However, the post structuralist archaeology sensitizes us to the fact that we need flexibility and a fluidity of categories. Rather than fixed categories determining a concrete world in advance, we might use constellations of concepts each finding its meaning in the others. There is a refusal to totalise and an attempt is made to understand local matters and the cultural fragment (Shanks 1990:310).

The discussion initiated by Kosambi and Sharma about the role of iron in the sixth
century B.C. had a decisive impact. Books and articles have wrestled with these issues ever since. Also, there has been a greater effort to cull information from archaeology. Since archaeology is based on study of remains from the past settlements it is amenable to cultural materialist interpretations. It is more difficult to recover institutions and study ideology with the help of archaeology.

Of late, there have been attempts to reconstruct the institutional structures of the society in the later Vedic period to understand the process of evolution of state (Sharma 1983, Thapar 1984, Roy 1994). R.S. Sharma studied the institutions of the early and later Vedic society. He pointed out that the relatively egalitarian society of the early Vedic society started disintegrating in the later Vedic period. The literature shows evidence of tension between Rājanya and Vaiśyas. Peasants (Vaiśyas) were considered fit to be conquered and exploited by the Rājanyas (Sharma 1983:74, 78). The rituals served to strengthen the authority of the Brahmans and Rājanyas over the Vaiśyas. The rituals also served to win allies for the Vedic ruling class (ibid.78). The process of subjugation of the Vaiśyas by the Rājanyas was the one of the key points in Romila Thapar’s formulation of the idea of transition from lineage to state. The senior lineages were those of the Rājanyas while the junior lineages were called Vaiśyas. The Vaiśyas as the junior lineage provided prestations to the Rājanyas (Thapar 1984:30-31). Vedic society, according to her was a lineage based chiefdom in which stratification was reinforced by perpetual wars. This was because after victories in wars spoils were distributed differentially. With the settling down of pastoral communities, agriculture became the main occupation and land the most important form of property. The elaborate set of rituals provided the chiefs legitimacy for their power. However, it was a society given to ritual prestation and symbolic burning of surplus. The
emergence of Gahapatis signified the break up of the clan and emergence of individual property owners. The Vedic rituals helped establish higher status for Kshatriyas and Brahmanas. The need for more and more surplus on the part of these groups led to extension of cultivation. Simultaneously commercial groups also emerged. Large scale trade was simply the spatial enlargement of earlier inter-tribal exchange practices. The emergence of the commercial economy encouraged the decline of the lineage system (ibid. 159). Seats of political power became the urban centres. Emergence of Magadha, etc. signified full fledged state society.

Thapar’s analysis offers useful insights into ancient Indian literature and makes an attempt to see the changes through a structural analysis of the ancient Indian society. However, some of the problems remain. Since the texts reflect centuries of encrustation of the beliefs and ideas of a particular group of people i.e. the Brahmanas, we get a biased picture of the developments. In this formulation such categories as caste are the basic units of analysis of social change. One wonders if the north Indian society in the 6th century B.C. was divided along caste lines. Thapar talks about newly emerging agrarian society but these changes have not been adequately emphasised. Similarly, the possibility of the exchange of goods inherent in the requirements of a tribal society and its elite has not received full attention. This phenomenon is seen as the precursor of towns but is not discussed in detail.

Among recent additions to the study of the emergence of state in ancient India, Kumkum Roy’s Emergence of Monarchy in Northern India deserves special attention. She has used the material from the later Vedic literature to reconstruct the process of the emergence of state. The scholar focuses upon the discussion on caste, kinship and gender
to show how new patterns of domination entrench themselves in these structures. One can see the appearance of the apparatus of the state in her account.

The Vedic literature referred to several competing categories like the Śreṣṭha, Rājā, Virāja, Adhipati etc. to signify legitimate power in the society. However, it was the Rājā who emerged as the most powerful member of the society in the subsequent period. While the word Rājā referred to a nobleman in the early Vedic period, over a period of time it came to mean the king. In this long period of transition Rājā appropriated the qualities of other status categories and marginalised them. Such an exercise would ensure a greater acceptance for the Rājā since he would be seen as an Adhipati, a Śreṣṭha or a Svarāja by different groups with different concepts of legitimate power.

We find several developments in the later Vedic period. Soma sacrifices were designed to ensure victory over cousins and kinsmen. Also, during the Soma sacrifices oblations were offered to paternal ancestors for the first time. The strengthening of ties between father and son and their linear descendants meant that resources were being transferred vertically from father to son and not shared by the entire tribe.

The Rājasūya, Asvamedha and Vājapeya sacrifices appeared in the later Vedic period. They were meant to provide legitimacy for the king’s rule. It was emphasised through these sacrifices that the king ensured the well-being of the people. It was because of the sacrifices that cows gave milk and fields yielded crops. The relationship of creation to the performance of sacrifices would indicate that the physical processes of production and reproduction were marginalised. This Brahmanical formulation effectively marginalised the role of producers and women. King emerged as the hub of the entire system since only he could perform such expensive sacrifices. The performance of
sacrifice involved the appropriation of the labour of the primary producers in the form of grain and animal produce. It also required access to the labour of craftsmen. Also, such occasions seem to have become the means of widening the exchange networks as the performer came in contact with many rulers and chiefs. The king's sacrifices became a spectacular occasion for the conversion of wealth into prestige and power. King rewarded the priest and important guests on such occasions. As such, the Rājā of the early Vedic period who shared his resources with all the members of the tribe was replaced by a Rājā who presented gifts to a selected set of influential individuals.

One significant example of the change in the status of the Rājā was a shift in the notion of his duties. In the early Vedic society Rājā was supposed to protect the Rīta, broadly meaning the universal norms. In the later Vedic society Rājā's duty was the protection of the Dharma. Whereas, Rīta was one and the same for everyone, Dharma varied according to the location of the individual in the Varna hierarchy. It seems that a determined effort was made to marry the emergent notions of state and hierarchical notions of Varna. It was repeatedly emphasised that the king was a Ksatriya. In the emerging state system royalty's relationship with the producers was crucial. This class was generally referred to as the Vīś.

The Pariplava cycle of the Asvamedha shows how attempts were made to expand the horizon of the state power. For this ten day cycle of prayers each day was assigned to a distinctive deity, a special category of traditional lore and a Vīś. Many of these Vīś had non Vedic deities. Probably such rituals were a means of incorporating the non Vedic groups. Much more ruthlessness and force could be used on such groups for exploitation compared to the Vīś which was the king's own.

In the later Vedic period new forms of property were emerging which were based
on trade and crafts. Some of these resources could not be controlled by the ritual process. So, the Rājā also developed a new role for himself i.e. the protection of people's life and wealth. This new role helped him gain acceptance among these new property holding groups. It also helped the Rājā gain a share in their wealth.

The emergence of the institution of Rājā was interwoven with the emergence of the Griha as the legitimate householding unit in the Brahmanical texts. While there were several kinds of households in the early Vedic period, Griha emerged as single acceptable unit in the later Vedic period. Relations within the Griha were structured along hierarchical, patriarchal lines. Such a household unit suited the Rājā as he could establish relationship with the Gahapati for the mobilisation of resources or manpower.

Among the various forms of marriage discussed in the later Vedic literature the Brahma form was preferred which contained strong patriarchal elements since it envisaged the gift of women by a patriarch to another male householder for the continuance of the patriliny.

The ritual identity of the Raja and the Grihastha brought the values of the Rajya into the household. Grihapatī’s gift giving also strengthened his power vis-à-vis the kinship network. Notions of hierarchically structured kinship helped king. The king's prescribed duty for upholding the Āśramas meant that he supported the Grihapatī. This meant that he protected the Grihapatī’s rights on property and women. The role of Rājā changed when he became the protector of unequal Varna and āśrama system.

There were some other significant developments too. These were the emergence of the institution of Danda and the evolution of a means of communication needed for the transmission of command. He had assembled the Sūta, Gāmanī, Senānī, Saṃgrahitṛi etc.
as his assistants in the job of collecting revenues and imposing coercion. Also the king emerged as the dispenser of justice - a mechanism of coercion meant to buttress the ideal of the just and impartial Rāja in case of conflict among his subjects. Overt coercion was supplemented by other forms of dominance.

The development of the means of communication was the other significant aspect of this period. Sūta who sang king’s glory, the movement of the horse during the Aśvamedha, the homogenization of the folklore under the Brahmanas and the Brahmanical participation in the household rituals communicated the idea of kingship to the rest of the society. Unlike the early Vedic period the later Vedic king supposedly ruled because of his ability to perform sacrifices. Obviously, rituals became effective substitutes for other leadership qualities.

Emerging Varṇa system was reinforced through daily rituals. Sacrifices evolved as a means of showing various categories their place in the society. Upanayana was different for different Varṇas. The daily offering of food etc. varied along the Varṇa lines. These rituals were meant to strengthen the notion of Varṇa in the day today life. Such developments affected the institution of the Rāja. Systems of the flow of exchange would be different for Brahmaṇa, Rāja and Vaisya. This delimited the social space within which the Raja could intervene.

This study of the emergence of monarchy is important as it tries to understand the Brahmanical discourse on the emergence of state. Such categories as caste, kinship and household are effectively brought under scrutiny to understand their bearing on the emergence of the state. Earlier attempts on the emergence of the state had not analysed these categories. Ray’s attempt is to understand North India primarily through the
Brahmanical texts. While studying Malwa we could examine the validity of these and also, we shall have greater reliance on archaeology and inscriptions material to give us a clue to the human aspect of the transformation. City and state were more common forms of organisation than caste and tribe. Caste and tribe seem to have preceded emergence of the city and state. An enquiry into the pre urban structures like caste and tribe would provide us useful insights into the problem of the emergence of cities. It was changes in these structures which led to the emergence of cities. They provided building blocks for the onset of urbanism.

The discussion relating to urbanisation in the 6th century B.C. is itself linked with the theoretical debates about the origin of cities. As such it will be a useful exercise to follow some of the trends in the discussion on urbanisation. In the following section we shall briefly review some of the theories of the origin of civilization, because it is within this framework that the phenomenon of the origin of urban centres has to be located.