CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION
Urbanization is the process of origin, sustenance and development of the urban centres. It is a significant development of human civilization in its journey of culminating its unending goal. It is the products of human civilization in its developed stage.

Urbanization in early Assam was an important development in the process of the development of history and civilization of the land. It was occurred in the existing socio-politico-cultural atmosphere of the land since the epic age and left significant consequences towards the history and civilization of the land.

Urbanization started in early Assam before or during the epic period. The causative factors and other features of the urbanization of Early Assam indicate that the urbanization of the land was done more or less at par with the urbanization in the other territories of the northern India. The surplus agricultural products, administrative
compulsion, trade and commerce, defense, warfare, geographical location, cultural and religious factors etc. were the main factors for the origin of the cities of ancient Assam as like the factors that led to the origin of the cities in early historic India.

The reason for similarity in occurrence and development of the urbanization in early historic India and in early Assam was that the urbanization in ancient Assam was held as the process of Aryanization of Assam during the later Vedic period which was the legacy of the process of extension of Aryan settlement towards northern and eastern India. It was king Naraka who was born and brought up at Videha under king Janak, started the process of Aryanization by establishing twice born Brahmins in Prāgjiyotisapura after making himself the king of the land. Since then there started a close contact between kingdom of Prāgjiyotisa-Kāmarūpa and rest of the territories of northern India. This relation was more developed in the subsequent periods. In the various chapters of the Mahābhārata, Bhagadatta, the son and successor of king Naraka was frequently mentioned. He played the great role in the Kurukshetra War fighting against the Pāndava and died in the hands of Arjuna after proving his great heroism. Extension of Kāmarūpa kingdom towards Bengal and Gauḍ under the Pragjiyotisa-Kamarūpa kings like Mahendravarman, Bhūtiyarman, Bhāskaravarman and Sri Harsa led to the strengthening of cultural contacts between early Assam and rest of the territories of northern India. This political as well as cultural contact led to
have the effect to the urbanization along with the other affairs of Ancient Assam. Naturally there witnessed the similarity in the growth of urbanization in ancient Assam with rest of the territories of eastern and northern India. In the other words the on going urbanization of the eastern and northern India influenced to the growth and development of urbanization in ancient Assam. The influence of the urbanization of northern and eastern India was noticed in all socio-political and cultural life of the urban centres of early Assam. However the local culture and traditions also played the role in culminating the urbanization of the land.

The influence of the urbanization of early historic India upon ancient Assam was noticed in formation of kingdoms, its capital cities and organizing and planning the administrative set up of the kingdom. This influence was also witnessed in the formation of the administrative divisions like bhuktis, visayas, etc. and in the appointment of the officials like annatyas, senapatis, and other civil and military officials, judicial officials, ambassadors, spies, provincial and other local officials and the like. In respect of fortifications of the cities, selection of the sites for establishment of cities, construction of ramparts, protective walls etc were done by the city planners of early Assam as like in other places of India of the time. Similarly in the socio-cultural life the similarities were noticed in respect of division of castes, formation of artisan and professional classes and practicing religious beliefs and the like. There were the similarity in respect of observing the social rites and rituals, performing the Vedic
ceremonies like Rajasuya, Asvamedha sacrifices etc. The different activities of arts, architecture, sculpture, paintings etc were done in ancient Assam in parity with the contemporary other places of northern India.

Although there were numbers of similarities between the urbanization and other developments of early Assam and early historic India yet there were certain differences too. These may be point out as the following.

Comparing to the numbers of the cities of early historic India there were less numbers of cities in early Assam. When there were different types of cities in the different places of early historic India as like the administrative cities, economic and commercial cities and the like, there were mainly the administrative cities in early Assam. Most of the cities of early Assam like Prâgjyotisapura, Hâruppeswara, Durjjayanagara, Kâmarûpanagara etc. were the capital cities and related to the government and administration of the country. In ancient Assam there was hardly a city that related to other than political and administrative activities.

From the point of the territorial extension and density of population the city of early historic India were comparatively larger than the cities of early Assam. The discovered archeological remains of moats, parikha, ramparts, etc. of the cities early historic India like Pataliputra, Râjagriha etc. indicate that the cities of early historic India were stronger and more extensive than the cities of early Assam.
In respect of social life the cities of early historic India were more organized than the cities of early Assam. As for example mention may be made of the different professionals groups (doctors, lawyers etc.), artisans and craftsmen, public entertainers (musicians, dancers, prostitutes etc.) and the like. Strict state control was maintained in some of the important cities of early historic India to look after the affairs of the social groups and the classes. Thus under the Mauryas to look after the affairs of the prostitutes there was the superintendent who was called as Gānikādhyakṣa5 and under the Kusānas he was called as the Varanukhyā6. But although there was the institution of Prostitute in ancient Assam yet there was no any reference of such state control and appointment of officials to look after the institution.

In regards to the administration of the cities of early historic India there was more organized administrative system than the cities of early Assam. As for instance under the Mauryas to look after the affairs of the city like Pātaliputra there were the especial administrator who was called as Nāgaraka7 or Puromukhya who worked under the supervision of the Samaharta8. Besides, Megasthenese indicates the working of a separate municipal body for the city Pataliputra under the Mauryas consisting of 30 members who in their turn divided into six departments headed by six superintendents and entrusted the duties of administration and management of the city Pātaliputra 9. But for the cities of ancient Assam there were no such separate officials or body to manage the city.
administration. The king and his administration managed the administration of the capital cities of ancient Assam.

To manage the economic activities of the cities of early historic India there was an elaborate organized system. Kautilya indicates that to manage the industries of the city of Pātaliputra under the Mauryas there were the officials like Sutrādhyaksha\(^6\), Sauvārṇika, Lohādhyaksha, akaradhyaksha\(^7\), Lakshanādhyaksha, Kupyādhyaksha etc. To regulate the markets under the Mauryas there was the Panyādhyaksha (Superintendent of markets). But there were no such separate officials to look after the affairs of the economic activities of early Assam. The government officials were entrusted to manage these activities by the administration of early Assam. Thus Sri Suchita who was a Mahāsāmanta (great feudatory chief) and Senādhyaksha (military commander) looked after the affairs of movements of the boats of the fishermen who settled dispute between the user of the fishing boats and the public boats during the reign of king Hajjaravarman (9th century A.D.\(^8\).

However although the Urban centres of Early Assam were not as elaborate, extensive and proper managerial system as the cities of early historic India or other places of India of the times yet the measures that were adopted by the city builders of ancient Assam were suitable and adequate to the region. The king and his administration provided adequate and suitable administration and proper management of the cities especially for the capital cities so as to provide its protection, administration,
development and for culmination of its desired ends. They protected their cities by maintaining the principles of natural protection, constructing the forts\textsuperscript{13}, ramparts and boundary walls\textsuperscript{14} and maintained the law and order situation deploying the strong and efficient military personals\textsuperscript{15}. They provide suitable administration for the cities by taking special care and entrusted the duties to the different governmental officials\textsuperscript{16}. The kings of Early Assam undertook different activities to develop social, economic, religious and cultural life of the city dwellers of ancient Assam. Thus they strictly controlled the society, adopted the measures for development of trade and commerce, roads and communications, adopted the measures for religious uplift, Cultural attainment, and the like. Thus they made their city like Pragjyotisapura as the best of the cities\textsuperscript{17}.

It is mentionable that the urban centres that had emerged in ancient Assam in the form of the cities like Pragjyotisapura, Haruppeswara, Durjayanagara, Kamarūpanagara, Sonitapura, Kundilanagara etc. were either started to face decline or lost their importance from the beginning of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. A series of new cities started to appear in different places of Assam to meet up the political and economic necessities in the changing situation. Some of such new cities were Charāideo, Gargaon, Rongpur, Guwahati, Dimapur, Sadiya etc. The declining of the old cities was followed their destruction. This destruction of the old cities of Assam was so severe that it is now going to be difficult to find out the least remains so as to identify some of the old cities of Assam.
Most probably this is the reasons for the dearth of any archeological remains of the cities of early Assam, which are informed in the literature and the epigraphic records. Thus although in the Nowgong Grant of Balavarman (885-910 A.D.) indicates that king Vanamālā(835-865 A.D.) erected a palace in his capital at Hāruppeswara, which had many rooms and were decorated with ornamentations and realistic pictures but not a single remains of the buildings of the palace could be seen at present to confirm the epigraphic reference. Many of the areas indicate as the prosperous and populous cities of ancient Assam in the literature and epigraphs are now heap with the scattered broken stones of the buildings and slabs of the pillars. Some of such ruins of the cities are found at Surjya Pāhār in Goalpara, Ambārī in Guwahati, Madan -Kāmdev near Guwahati, Kapili Valley in Nowgong, Da-Parbatia in Tezpur, Dayāṅg- Dhansiri Valley in Golāghat, Sadiyā in Dibrugarh and the like. Most of the cities had been already converted to rural settlements and forest in the subsequent period. This process of decline of the cities of early Assam was started approximately after 12th century A.D. or from earlier and ultimately led to its gradual destruction. Certain factors for the declining and destruction of the cities of ancient Assam can be attributed as the following –

Most of the urban centres of ancient Assam were the capital cities. The rise and fall of a ruling dynasty left impact on its capital cities. It is seen that in every time of changing the ruling dynasty in early Assam the capital cities were changed. Thus in the pre-historic times during
the reign of the danava ruler Mahiranga Danava and his successors Mairānka was the capital city of Pragjyotisa kingdom. From the time of the accession of Naraka to the throne of Pragjyotisa kingdom Pragjyotisapura was made the capital city of the kingdom. Pragjyotisapura remained as the capital city of Pragjyotisa-Kamarūpa kingdom till the rule of the last king of the Varman dynasty. With the establishment of the Sālastambha dynasty (middle of 7th century A.D.) the capital city of Pragjyotisa-Kamarūpa kingdom was shifted to Haruppeswara which was continued throughout the reign of kings of this dynasty. Afterwards during the reign of kings of the Pāla dynasty (990-1138 A.D.) the capitals of their kingdom were shifted to Durjayanagara, Hadapyaka and Kāmarūpanagara. And finally after the end of the 12th century during the reign of the Kamarūpa king Sandhyā the capital of Kamarūpa kingdom was shifted from the bank of the river Brahmaputra to Kamatāpur, 14 miles southeast of present Koch Bihār. This changing of the capital from one place to another led to the declining as well as destruction of the earlier capital cities of the kingdom. The changing of the capital led to the shifting of habitats of the king, his administrative staffs and other followers to the new city which ultimately decreased the importance of the earlier city and gradually converted it to the rural habitat.

The weak successors of certain kingdoms of ancient Assam were also responsible for the declining of their kingdoms as well as its capital cities. As for example the fall of the ruling family of the kingdoms of Sonitpur and Vidarbha can be cited. The two kingdoms along with the
capital cities faced downfall after the death of king Bâna and Bhismak respectively. There is no information of the continuation of the rule in Sonitapura after the death of its traditional ruler Bâna although the kingdom and capital city Sonitpur was greatly flourished during reign of that king. Similarly there is no information of continuation of the kingdom of Vidarbha and its capital Kundilnagar after the death of king Bhismak. The historicity of both king Bana with his capital city Sonitpur and king Bhismak with his capital city Kundilnagar have been proved with the heaps of ruins of the two cities in Tezpur and Sadiya respectively. Thus it is evident that soon after the death of king Bâna his kingdom as well as his capital city Sonitpur had been declined. Similarly with the death of another traditional ruler Bhismak of Kundilnagar his kingdom of Bidarbha had been declined along with its capital city Kundilnagar.

The repeated invasions that made on the kingdom of Kâmarūpa by the Pâlas, the Senas and Mahummedan rulers of Bengal during 12th century A.D. and the failure of the Kâmarūpa kings to resist the same was also a factor for the declining and destruction of the urban centres of ancient Assam. With growing deterioration of the strength of the last Pâla rulers of Kâmarūpa in the 12th century A.D. and constant attempts of the Pâla and the Sena rulers of Bengal to extend their sway towards Kâmarūpa kingdom were the two main causes for the repeated attacks the Pâla and Sena rulers on Kâmarūpa in the 12th century A.D.
The first invasion upon Kāmarūpa was done by Rāmapāla (1085-1130) of Bengal by deputing his general Tingadeva during the period from A.D. 1125 to A.D. 1130. In this attack Rajyapāla, last Pāla ruler of Kāmarūpa was defeated and the western portion of Kāmarūpa was occupied and Tingadeva was placed as the vassal of Rāmapāla in the occupied territory of Kāmarūpa. But within a short time Tingadeva revolted against his master Rāmapāla. Later he was replaced with Vaidyadeva by Kumārapāla (1130-1135 A.D.), the successor of Rāmapāla. Afterwards Vaidyadeva also declared independence of Kumārapāla and established himself in the throne of Kāmarūpa by defeating Rajyapāla, the last Pala king of Kāmarūpa and donated land in Bādā visaya within Prāgjyotisa bhukti by A.D. 1138. Afterwards there occurred the repeated invasions on Kāmarūpa from the side of the rulers of Bengal. Thus the Deopārā inscription of Vijaysena indicates the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Vijayasena. Again the Mādhāinagar Grant of Lakshmanasena also states the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Lakshmanasena.

Tabqāt-i-Nāsirī and Kānāi Varasi Bowā Inscription of North Guwahati witness the Mahmmeđans invasions on Kāmarūpa from 1205-06 A.D. which was started by Bakhtiyār Khilji. In the Kānāi Varasi Bowā Inscription indicates the repulse of the invasion of Bakhtiyār by Kāmarūpa king Prithu. A severe invasion of the Mahmmeđans in Kāmarūpa was took place in 1256-57 under Ikhtiyār-Uddin Yuzbek during the reign of
Kāmarūpa king Sandhyā where Kāmarūpa king Sandhyā was greatly defeated.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} half of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century there were constant attacks on Kāmarūpa from Bengal either under the kings of Pāla and Sena dynasties of Bengal or under the Mahmmedans. These repeated invasions of Kāmarūpa from Bengal’s sides turned the existing capital city of Prājyotisa-Kāmarūpa kingdom into a battle-field and finally compelled the Kāmarūpa king Sandhyā in 1257 A.D. to shift the capital of his kingdom from Kāmarūpanagara to Kamatāpur near present Koch Bihār. The shifting of the capital from Kāmarūpanagara to Kamatāpur naturally decreased the importance of the city of Kāmarūpanagara and thus gradually led to the decline and destruction of the city.

The change of civilization in Assam in 13\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. was also a factor for the declining and destruction of the ancient cities of Assam. It was in the beginning of 13\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. that the Ahoms, the descendents of the great Shan or the Tai race entered to the easternmost part of Assam through the Pātkāi pass and established their rule in Upper Assam with their capital at CharāIDEO\textsuperscript{34} (at present in the district of Sibsagar). With the establishment of the Ahom rule in Assam a great socio-political, economic and cultural change was started in Assam. A series new cities consisting of capital as well as other cities emerged in Assam like CharāIDEO, Rongpur, Gargaon, Guwahati etc. as a part of the new political set up. With
the coming of the new cities the old cities lost their importance and ultimately led to their decline and destruction.

Some of the natural and climatic factors were also responsible for the destruction of the cities of ancient Assam. The natural calamities that occurred frequently in the land like floods, earthquakes etc. created great havoc to the people and monuments of the land. The multiplication of the rivers in the land and the heavy rainfall that has been occurred upon the region in greater part of the year are the two main factors for the occurrence of frequent flood in the land which played great role for damage and destruction in a larger scale to the land since long past. Again due to the existence of the land in the earthquake prone zone the land has been facing the frequent earthquakes of different ranges in different times. There were good examples of earthquakes of high intensity that occurred in the land in past. It is believed that in the great earthquake of 1897, great numbers of monuments were fell down. Thus the natural calamities like frequent floods and earthquakes of the land not only damaged the historical monuments of the ancient cities of Assam but also responsible for disappearance of the remains of the same.

The natural vegetation and humidity of the soil were also the factors for the damage and destruction of the monuments of the ancient cities of Assam. The growing of the papal tree in the ruins of the buildings of the ancient monuments certainly leads its destruction. The humidity of the region leads to the moisture which has been playing as a
great factor for the destruction of the ancient buildings of the land. The acidic nature of the soil of the land has been also played the role to the decay and destruction of the terracotta and historical monuments and other remains of ancient urbanization of the land.

It is strange that although the literatures\textsuperscript{36} and the epigraphs\textsuperscript{37} of Assam mention about the availability of magnificent and decorative buildings in the cities of ancient Assam yet no such remains of these buildings has been found so far. It indicates that these buildings were most probably constructed with perishable materials like wood, bamboo, mud, reeds etc. The description of Strabo and Arrian regarding the constructions of the buildings and forts of the Mauryan times is mentionable in this respect. Thus Strabo indicates that the city of Pataliputra was girt with a wooden wall, pierced with loopholes for shootings arrows\textsuperscript{38} and Arrian States that all the cities situated on the bank of the river or on the seashores were constructed with wood instead of bricks\textsuperscript{39}. Thus most probably the construction of the buildings or the palaces in Assam in ancient times was done with perishable materials like wood, bamboo, reed etc. Due to the natural calamities or other natural factors these constructions were destroyed. Thus the use of the perishable materials for construction of the buildings in ancient Assam was also a factor the destruction of the cities of ancient Assam.

Thus as part of development of culture and civilization the urbanization was started and developed in early Assam and a great role
played in the progress of history of the land. But due to the declining of the political power of the Kāmarūpa in the second half of the 12th century A.D. under the weak rulers of the kingdom and the growing influence of the Pālas and the Senas of Bengal from the middle of 12th century and the Mahmmedans in the beginning of 13th century towards the kingdom led to the declining of the political power as well as urbanization in the land. Some natural factors like floods, earthquakes, natural visitations, humidity etc. also played for the destruction of the monuments of the ancient cities of ancient Assam.

Notes and References:

1. Rāmāyana, (Adikānda, Chap. XXXV); It is mentioned in the Adikanda Ramayana that Amurtaraja, the son of Kusi founded the city of Pragjyotisa on the Varāha mountain.

2. K.P., Chap.38, V.116

3. Mahābhārata, (Dronaparvan, XXVI-XXX)

4. Thakur, V. K., Urbanization in Ancient India, New Delhi, 1981, p.21

5. Arthasastra, II, 27


7. Arthasastra, II, 36

8. Arthasastra, II, 16

9. McCrindle, J. W. : Ancient India as Described by Megasthenese
10. Arthasastra, II, 23

11. Ibid, 12


13. K. P., Chap. 84, V. 116


20. K. P., Chap. 38, V. 119


25. Vishnu Purana, Bk. I


29. E.I., I, p. 305 (V. 20


32. Bhattacharya, P. N., *Kamarupa Sasanavali*, Benaras, 1931 (Intro.) p. 44; Bhattasali, I.H.Q., IX, pp. 45-50


35. Ibid, p.350

36. K. P., chap. 40, V.60 Chap.63, V.136,

37. Bargaon Grant of Ratnapala, LL.30-36


39. Ibid, p.67