Conclusion

After evaluating the Gupta and post-Gupta period afresh we have been able to study urban growth in this period. The factors responsible for the rise of small and big towns in different parts of north India have been studied by us. The unprecedented growth of agriculture through grants of land resulted in surplus production. The new methods of cultivation and advancement in the field of irrigation not only increased the production of cereals but also fruits and vegetables. The Gupta and post-Gupta rulers and their feudatories (sāmanta) made land grants in the form of agrahāras and brahmadēyas. It not only brought uncultivated land under cultivation but also led to more organized distribution of surplus production, which emerged as the primary causative factor in the growth of urban centres. Various factors contributed together in the growth of new and sustenance of old political, religious, commercial and educational centres¹. The kings and their feudatories both directly and indirectly paved the way for the growth of urban centres. The agrahāras and brahmadēyas grants resulted in agrarian expansion. In later stages villages granted to brāhamaṇās developed in the form of nodal centres and served the surrounding cities. These villages served as educational institutions. The construction of temples and monasteries resulted in the growth of cities. In the Khoh copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Samkshobha, the
year 209, there is a reference to the grant of village of Ōpāṇi to a temple of the goddess Pishṭapuri. This temple later on helped this settlement to grow into important town of Mānapura as referred to in the Khoh copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Sarvanatha, year 214. In the same inscription there is a reference to the transfer of two villages named Vyāghrapallika and Kācharapallika for the use of temple. Such developments helped religious centres to develop into important towns. The excavation at Semthan in Kashmir valley revealed that it was religious in character. The further excavation can throw more light on the nature and extent of this important city. The Deogarh shrine in Jhansi district was a temple settlement initially and later it continued to flourish as an cultural centre. The temple at Bhitarigaon was also planned and elevated with architectural perfection during the Gupta period. It possibly emerged as important town in later stage. The excavation revealed a Buddhist stupa named Hidamba Tikdi at Mansar in district Nagpur. Around this stupa possibly large number of population settled down which is confirmed by the excavation. The site shows continuous habitation from c. 200 BC to AD 700. The excavation at Indragarh in Mandasor district revealed the remains of the temple, details of which is referred to in the Indragadh inscription of Nannappa v.s. 767 (AD 710-11). The excavation also revealed arrow-heads and daggers of iron, fragments of ivory and painted glass bangles and beads, which shows that various crafts were practiced here.
The literary and archaeological sources refer to the agrarian sector as the highest tax payee sector of this period. Most of the agricultural products were commercial products and used for national and international trade. The charter of Vishnusena Samvat 649 gives us important information of important commodities which were bought and sold in the markets. The inscription refers to sale of paddy, thread, bamboos, cumin seed, black mustard, coriander, wine, leather, ginger, indigo, oil and sugarcane. The charter also refers to sale of animals like asses, camels, buffaloes and, bulls. Several guilds of traders and manufactures existed at Lohata which was an important port town in Gujarat. These items were traded in ships. The mention of concessions for both local and foreign traders have been referred to in the Charter. Vadrapali was another important town where merchants flocked from different areas for trade. The inscription also mentions vanigrama a professional body of merchants operating at Vadrapali. The same body of merchants was active in Lohatagrama. The local level irrigational projects have also been referred to in the records. Broach and Sopara on western coast and Tamluk on the eastern coast continued to be important port cities. These regions encouraged trade linkages with both small and big centres and led to inter-regional and intra-regional trade contacts. Similarly old commercial cities continued to flourish as important trade centres. The archaeological details of Sanghol and Ropar throw light on the importance of these cities of Punjab during Gupta and post-Gupta period. The excavation in 1970-71 revealed a defence complex of the first c. to fifth c. AD. It
consisted of a series of three moats, one outside the rampart and the other two inside it, which made the city impregnable. The habitation site showing baked brick structures and covered drains belonging to the Gupta period. Many sculptures recovered from the site throw light on the cultural importance of Sanghol during this period. The discovery of Samudragupta standard type coins and sealings of the Gupta period, possibly of a governor with the legend shows that Sanghol was commercial centre during the Gupta period. Similarly the excavation at Ropar yielded Gupta gold and copper coins and other objects of perfect craftsmanship and its importance as flourishing town. A silver spoon, cup and measuring ladle and anthropomorphic vessels made of iron of the Gupta period found from Ropar show the excellence of the art of silversmith and blacksmith.

The term *nagari* and *rājdhāni* is used as suffix for Pushpapura in the *Daśakumāracakīta* and *Mudrarakṣasa*. The *Mrichchhkaṭika* also referred to it as a fortified city. The Allahabad post-humous stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta dated fourth century AD refers to the city named Pushpapura. The excavations were conducted to ascertain the nature of this important town by Dr. D.B. Spooner in 1912-13 who found an interesting layout of the monastery of the Gupta period. This monastic complex was further excavated by A.S. Altekar and V.K. Mishra in 1959 which was built in the Gupta period. Numbers of Gupta coins found from Pataliputra testify to the prosperity of the city of Pataliputra. But the site is not horizontally excavated to reveal the cultural
assemblage of the Gupta and post-Gupta period. Similarly the excavation at Maner in district Patna was marked by the appearance of Gupta and late Gupta antiquities along with the remains of burnt brick structures with well made foundations, ring-wells for soakage purposes and flooring made of rammed clay.

The excavation at Ayodhya shows evidence of town planning in the late NBP phase when we find terracotta ringwells and structures of baked bricks. After the end of this phase we get a baked brick wall of the Śunga period and a part of the house complex of Gupta times. It is stated that “occupation continued through the Śunga, Kushana and Gupta periods to medieval times.” In Spurious Gaya copper-plate inscription of the time of Samudragupta of the year 9 (sixth-sevent century AD) Ayodhya is referred to as jayaskandhavāra. The Damodarpur copper-plate inscription of the time of Bhānugupta (AD 433-34) shows that either khila (uncultivated) land was fully utilized or too expensive to afford due to over population or the lands were already utilized accordingly in Ayodhya. Even Hiuen-Tsang referred to that Ayodhya is fertile, yielding good crops, luxuriant vegetation and had rich fruit orchards. The inscriptions show that Ayodhya also emerged as important political centre. But archaeological evidence is still awaited. The vertical excavation have not revealed any impressive structure from Ayodhya but suggest continuity in occupation from Śunga period to medieval period. The artefacts found from Mathura region throw light on the perfection attained in different arts.
The Jaina images from Mathura exhibit great amount of self confidence, vigour and sophistication. The *ardhanarishvara* head housed in the Mathura museum displays high workmanship of plastic art of the Gupta age. It is believed that only a master artist could have brought this perfect synthesis in stone. Mathura was an important centre of stone industry.

Sthahneśvara emerged as an important centre of culture, philosophy and religion in the Harṣa’s reign. The excavation conducted during 1989-90 revealed fortified wall of Vardhana period which was renovated later. A massive brick building of substantial size has been exposed at Sthaneśvara of Vardhan period. Sthaneśvara has been referred to by Hiuen-Tsang acted as centre of accumulation of rare and valuable merchantile from every quarter. Kanauj in Farrukhabad district was the capital of Harṣa, but its material remains are yet to be exposed. Sravasti, on the borders of Gonda and Bahrooch districts, occupation ended towards the beginning of the Christian era, when the city lost its metropolitan character. But recent excavation conducted at Sravasti in 2000-2001 revealed a good number of brick structures belonging to period III i.e. Gupta and post-Gupta period. Most of them were secular in nature and possibly used for habitation. The excavation also revealed two community wells and two ring wells of the Gupta period, which shows that this region must be populated. Which further challenge R.S. Sharma’s view on decay Similarly excavation in 2014 at Purana quila in Delhi revealed fine quality of artefact and brick structutres of the Gupta period. Which suggest that it was an important towns
during the Gupta period. More excavations can throw valuable light on the nature and extent of this town.

The recovery of four seals from Bhita testifies to the use of ivory for making seals and sealings. The beautifully inscribed surface of the seal, surrounded by a headline and the device of crawling tortoise show the fineness achieved by the ivory workers of this region. These ivory products were affordable by the rich and wealthy class of the society only, which further changed our view and to look this region with new perspective. The excavation at Bhita near Allahabad done by John Marshall in 1911-12 identifies construction of the Maurya period and of the first c. BC and first c. AD. Though no Gupta coins have been reported from this place, but Gupta seals, sealings and terracottas pre-dominate. From the excavation at Bhita a gold ring, gold bead, two miniature gold beads joined together and a flat wheel of gold with axle and spokes and disc of gold embossed with a human face shows the importance of gold factory of Valabhi. The excavation at Maya-na-khado in Valabhi revealed traces of furnaces of the fourth-fifth AD, probably these were meant for smelting iron.

Kausambi, 60 km to the south west of Allahabad is richer in relics belonging to Kushana times than those belonging to the Gupta age. The settlement seems to have fallen on bad days after the Gupta period as shown by the nature of deposit. But the excavation at Kausambi revealed Ghositarama monastery in a good form even after second century AD and referred to by Fa-Hian. Hiuen-Tsang also
referred to Kausambi rich in sugarcane cultivation, which is again a commercial product to support sugar industries of India. The *Ratnāvali* refers to the merchant (*vanija*) of Kausambi returning from Simhala and a magician who came from Ujjaini to Kausambi. This shows that society of this region also included non-agrarian population. The excavation at Kausambi revealed a life-size seated image of Jaina *tirthāṇkar* Padmaprabhu of the fourth-fifth century, which further throw light on the expertise of the stone workers of that region. This shows that people of this region was prosperous. The excavation at Kausambi revealed a life-size seated image of Jaina *tirthāṇkar* Padmaprabhu of the fourth-fifth century, which further throw light on the expertise of the stone workers of that region. This shows that people of this region were prosperous.

The construction of wooden temples and images found from Lahaul Spiti, Bharmur in Chamba district and Nirmanaḍa show that these region lie on the important trade route connecting India and central Asia. Nirmanaḍa emerged as a nodal centre which served this region as clear from the Nirmanda copper-plate inscription. Semthan in Kashmir region also emerged as religious centres as referred to in archaeological sources. According to him Semthan in Kashmir acquired a predominantly religious character as clear from the excavation reports of the Period V (Gupta and post-Gupta period). Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh lay on the main highway of north India connecting to the outside world.
Kanauj in Farrukhabad district was the capital of Harśa, but its material remains are yet to be exposed. Its earlier occupation clearly lasted from NBP times till the end of the Kushana period. After this period we find a gap in occupation and then the medieval period started. But Hiuen-Tsang mentions that the valuable merchandise were collected at Kanauj in great quantities, the houses were rich and flowers and fruits grown in plenty. The excavation record does not reveal the exact picture of this town. The material remains are yet to be exposed.

The extensive excavation at Rajghat in Varanasi carried out at this site in 1957-58 and in 1960-65. At Rajghat the maximum structural activity is noticeable in the NBP and Kushana phases. The period 0-300 is called the most prosperous at Rajghat. The succeeding period AD 300-700 is considered equally prosperous, on the ground that it had an underground structure which was probably used for storing foodgrains and that its art was more sophisticated. Hiuen-Tsang refers to the climate of Kasi soft, the crops were abundant and fruit trees were grown at every place. He further refers to the people of this region were earnestly given to study. There were thirty sangramas and three thousand priests and hundred or so Deva temples with about ten thousand sancturaies. He also referred to that the families of Banaras as rich and rare objects were available there. The Buddhist text Anguttara and Dighanikaya also refer to wealth and prosperity of the city during this period. Banaras is also famous for its beautiful silk clothes and finest cotton clothes.
But the gold coins and seals of the Gupta ruler unearthed from Bharsar near Banaras suggest flourishing trade in this town. The excavation also revealed round copper coins and small lid earthen jars made of copper of fifth-sixth century for storing these coins. The excavation also revealed a sealing inscribed in Gupta characters of the city administration of Banaras. The excavation revealed a massive circular structure, dated circa fourth-fifth century AD in 1966-67. The well was constructed on the edge of the habitation. This further shows that the city was well-populated.

Mason in Ghazipur district thirty six km east from Varanasi shows decline in Gupta times. The period AD 200-600 shows badly damaged structures, although it has a few clay seals inscribed in Gupta character and some terracotta figurines of the Gupta style. But Hiuen-Tsang’s account shows totally different situation of this town. He reached Ghazipur after crossing Banaras, where people were wealthy and prosperous and the land was fertile and cultivated regularly. He further referred to that this town is surrounded by villages from where urban requirements were catered to. A excellent copper mirror having a handle and a hook of the Gupta period was found from Mason shows perfection in glass industry. The glass objects and ivory game pieces and dice have been excavated from this site. The excavation also revealed terracotta sealings and coins of the early and late Gupta period.

Rajgir in Nalanda district was a religious place in the Gupta period when the Maniyar *matha* was setup and
embellished with stuccos. By and large, the place had lost its urban character. But the Nalanda stone inscription of the reign of Yaśovarmanadeva (sixth c. AD) referred to Nalanda as important centre of learning, where scholars come from different part of the world shows its importance as a centre of learning.

Taradih in Gaya district was an important town till the beginning of the Gupta period. According to Fa-Hian the city of Gaya was desolated and deserted when he visited it. But the excavation report shows its importance and continuity in the Gupta and post-Gupta period. The excavation at Taradih marked by the appearance of the Gupta and post-Gupta remains comprising of rampart and burnt brick structure, nail, arrowheads, spearheads and rings made of iron. The Bodh-Gaya inscription of Mahanaman of the year 269, records the construction of Buddhist monastery, at the Bodhimalanda in the modern Bodh-Gaya. Possibly Bodh-Gaya developed into important cultural centre during this period. The excavation of the site can definitely help us to know the role of this monastery in the development of this area. Even R.S.Sharma accepts that this region developed as a pilgrimage centre (*tirtha*) in early medieval times.

The site of Tamluka or Tamralipti in Midnapur district seems to have been practically abandoned after the third c. AD. According to R.S.Sahrma Fa-Hian is silent about the port town. But Fa-Hian in his journey to Simhala boarded a ship from Tamralipti. This shows that Tamralipti must be a port town for international trade. According to the *Raghuvansa*
Tamralipti was another important port town. According to the *Kathsaritasagar* was a maritime port and emporium of commerce from the fourth to the twelfth c. AD. Hiuen-Tsang refers to Tamralipti full of valuable articles and variety of gems and people of the country were very rich. Even Hiuen-Tsang boarded a ship from Tamralipti and went to Simhala and again came back to India via Konkanpur. The excavation at Chandraketugarh revealed remains of a fortified township showing five successive periods ranging from pre-Mauryan to Gupta period. The period V and VI dated circa 3rd to 6th century was possibly the most flourishing period of the site. The remains of pre-Gupta levels indicated that the structures had been of mud, bamboos and timber while period V i.e. Gupta period saw the introduction of burnt bricks. In the course of the digging of the Gupta structures at Khana-Mihirer-Dhipi in Chandraketugarh, several Gupta and post-Gupta antiquities in the form of stone sculptures, stone querns and pottery were found. The discovery of two archer type coins of Chandragupta II and one Chandragupta Kumardvi coin confirms the antiquity and commercial importance of the port of Chandraketugarh.4

Tumain in Guna district was habited from fifth c. BC to the twelfth c. AD. It seems to have been in a good shape till fifth c. AD. The artefacts suggest urbanism, which continued in the period from the first c. to the fifth c. AD. But excavation also support the use of baked-bricks for construction of houses and other buildings in period IV dated from sixth-twelfth c. AD.
Daśpura in Madhya Pradesh is referred to in the Mandsore stone inscription of Kumargupta and Bandhuvarman, the Malava Years 493 and 529 (AD 437-38 and 473-74) as important commercial centre, where guild of silk weavers shifted from Lāṭa. Further in the same inscription there is a reference to the city of Daśpura having multi storied buildings. Agastikagrahara and Ayanakagrahara were suburbs or hamlet of this major city. The excavation of the area can throw more light on the lay out and planning of the settlement.

The excavation at Besnangar in Vidisha district revealed red ware with painting, terracotta objects, a silver coin, brick pavement and other antiquities of the Gupta period. The post-Gupta phase has pottery and some terracotta objects only. According to the excavator the site shows the sign of decay. The use of epithet skandhavāra for Vidisha in Vadner plates of Buddhharaja [Kalachuri] samvat 360 (AD 608-9) and the term rājdhāni (surrounded by Vetravati river) in the Kādambari, show that the place enjoyed urban status.

Dangwada in district Ujjain R.S.Sharma accepts that Gupta-Ksatrapa period is obviously that of decline. But the Kādambari referred to guilds of various artists and traders i.e. nigam, sreṇi, pura, pāshanḍa living in Ujjaini, which suggest that organized trade was carried out through merchant guilds of Ujjaini. It referred to as māhānagri in the Kādambari. Hiuen-Tsang refers to Ujjaini having dense population and establishments of wealthy people. The Kādambari refers to Ujjaini as a well planned city fortified with deep moat. He mentions that the city was divided into blocks by royal roads.
No doubt some excavations were conducted but these were mainly confined to the chalcolithic culture at Kayatha. Ujjaini served as a link between the sea ports and the river Ganges and Deccan and also connected to Sindh, Multan, Bolar, Kashgar and Khotan, during the period under study. There is a reference to the market (hatṭo) filled with horses, elephants, chariots, soldiers and other products in *Padmaprabhṛitakam*. Daṇḍin refers to a gem factory in Ujjaini. The excavation at Broach or Bharuch revealed brick structures of the third-seventh/eighth centuries AD at Broach. The inscriptions show that Gupta kings Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Skandagupta were all interested in controlling the Saurashtra coast because of strategic location. According to *Divyavdāna* Bharukaccha was a rich and prosperous city and thickly populated. The people of Broach mainly supported by the sea and the main centre of salt trade. The *Sussondi Jataka* refers to the journey of Sagga from Banaras to Bharukaccha, which was a sea port town (*patṭan-gāma*) from where ships sailed to different countries. Valabhi was the seat of the Maitrakas power the excavated area does not suggest much urban prosperity for Valabhi. But literary and archaeological sources throw light on the prosperity of this city. Many agrahāra and brahmadeya grants were given in and around Valabhi, which led to the growth of Valabhi as an important centre. The *Daśakumāračarita* referred to the chief of sea traders (*navikapate*) named Grihagupta dwelt in Valabhi. Possibly Valabhi was a prosperous centre of commerce and Grihagupta was entrusted with the duty of administrating the city. Hiuen-Tsang refers to this region
dense and establishments were rich and the region of Saurashtra is dependent on this city. The rare and valuable products of distant regions were stored at Valabhi in great quantities. Valabhi was famous for its jewellery, carpentry, polishing industry and brassware industry. It was also a great centre of learning in the western India. The excavation at Pauni in Bhandara district was abandoned after the second c. AD. But the excavation at Pauni, ascertains the nature and various phases of construction of the rampart raised around the habitation site. With the discovery of the Vakataka copper-plates within the rampart in 1968 help scholars to conclude that possibly the rampart was built during the Vakataka rule. The U-shaped rampart encloses the habitational area from three sides while on the northern side the perennial river Wainganga served as a natural barrier. The details suggest that Pauni was definitely an important urban centre under the Vakatakas.

Atranjikhera yielded antiquities belonging to Śunga, Kushana and Gupta times, but those pertaining to Gupta times are practically negligible. Though he accept that some ‘excellent sculptures’ are attributed to the Guptas. This site does not show a break in occupation after the fourth c., but the deposits attributed to the period c. AD 350-1110 are much thinner than those ascribed to the period c.50 BC-c.320AD.

Sopara is mentioned as one of the richest city in Surat plates of Vyaghrasena, the year 241 (AD 490-91). The Daśakumarcarita refers to a small town (puram) named Khetaka. Later on it is referred to as skandhavara in the
Lunsadi plates of Šiladitya II, [Gupta] samvat 350 (AD 669-70). In second c. AD structural activity started at Devnimori (Buddhist settlement) and continued up to eighth century AD. Pragjyotispura (identified with the Jatiya and Dispur areas of modern Gauhati) referred to as the capital of the king Sthitavarman in the Nidhanpur grant. Similarly Kalinga referred to as fortified town (durga) having a rampart (prakāra) in the Priyadarśika. The rock cut sanctuaries and temples at Udaygiri suggest that possibly these developed into important town because of its cultural importance. The excavation at Udaygiri in Cuttak and Jajpur districts revealed remains of a huge monastic complex, of the sixth-seventh centuries and eighth century AD. The excavation at Suryapahar in district Goalpara, in 1997-98 revealed the southern area of the mound which has brought to light several ancient brick walls, brick paved pathways and southern enclosure wall of the temple complex of the Gupta period.

The main thrust of the above survey is that towns and trade flourished in different regions of northern India. The present states of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Gujarat witnessed the process of urbanization. Old towns were able to sustain them and many new settlements emerging. The large scale agrarian expansion through land grants brought arid and barren land under cultivation which increase the surplus produce resulted in the emergence of markets. Both local and foreign merchants participated in the trade. The ruling elite provide concessions to traders which encouraged them to establish more rigorous
trade linkages. The guilds of merchants and manufacturers were encouraged to maintain peace and harmony. The kings laid foundation of number of towns in different parts of north India. The literary and epigraphic sources have number of such references but we do not have the archaeological evidence of these towns. The present state of Punjab and Haryana and Jammu Kashmir also give evidences of flourishing towns but these are fewer in number.

The lack of inscriptions from this region pose serious difficulty in understanding the nature and extent of the settlements and the archaeological data is very meager. However baked brick structures, coins, seals, sealings, sculptures, ramparts, moats temples monasteries, houses, drains, beads and jewelery all testify to the existence of urban activities. It is difficult to accept R. S. Sharma’s assertion of decay of urban traditions in the Indian context in the Gupta and the post Gupta period. The pattern of urbanization was not homogeneous and had regional variations during this period.
Notes and References

1 See chapter 2

2 Ranabir Chakravarti, ‘Three copper plates of the sixth century AD:
Glimpses of socio-economic and cultural life in western India’, in Allen M.

3 As referred to in the charter of Vishnushena, Samvat 649 (AD 592) in *El*, Vol. XXX, No. 30, p. 172; The three Sanjeli copper plates of Huna king Toramāṇa, regnal years 3, 6 and 19 (c. AD 500-20) in Ranabir Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India up to c. AD 1300*, p. 264; Ranabir Chakravarti, *op. cit.*


5 See Appendix

6 *El*, Vol. XXX, No. 30, p. 163-81

7 The *Rājatarangini* has several such references but archaeologically cities have not been identified. Many inscriptions also refer to towns but these are yet not identified.

8 R.S. Sharma, *op. cit.*; also see V.K. Thakur, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-69.