CHAPTER 2

Origin and Growth of Towns and Cities in North India

The rise of towns has been described as a revolution in human history.¹ Many factors contributed in the growth of towns and cities in north India in the Gupta and post-Gupta period. Different terms i.e. *nagara*, *nigam*, *pura*, *purī*, *paṭṭana*, *puṭabhedna*, *kheṭaka*, *kharvaṭa*, *rājadhāni*, and *skandhāvāra* have been used for the cities which indicate varying role, hierarchy and functions of cities. On the basis of terms used with urban centres we can say that several factors such as political, religious, economic, ecological and educational helped cities to emerge in this period.

**POLITICAL FACTORS**

In India urbanization got boost during this period from agrarian expansion. Kāmandaka mentions that ‘a kingdom flourishes through the fertility of its soil, and the king prospers through the condition of the kingdom. Therefore for his own prosperity, a king should try to make his territory as fertile as possible’.² The epigraphic and literary sources refer to the protection given to the cultivators, merchants and *śrenīs* in north India by the kings and their feudatories. The Charter of Vishnushena, dated Samvat 649 (AD 592) records that cultivators coming out of their areas for sowing seeds during the rainy season were not be apprehended or engaged by the king or landlord in free labour (*varshāsusva-vishayāṭbij-ārtham-āgataka-karshakāḥsvāminā nagrāhyaḥ*)³ so that they can finish their work in time.
The epigraphic sources refer to grants of land made in almost whole of north India. The Ganesgad plates of Dhruvasena I, Gupta Samvat 207 (AD 526-27) from Gujarat refers to the grant of eight *khaṇḍas* of cultivated land to the brāhmaṇa Dhammila. It is recorded that no one could create even a small obstruction or objection to the donee while he enjoys the granted land. Similarly the first Palitana plates of Dhruvasena I, [Valabhi] Samvat 206 (AD 525-26),\(^5\) refers to land measuring 380 *pādvartas* with an irrigational well was granted to the two brāhmaṇas named Kūmārsārman and Jarabhajyi, for cultivating it or for assigning it to others. The grant of land was made in the Bhallara village to the brāhmaṇa Vishṇusārman with irrigation well is recorded in the second Palitana plates of Dhruvasena I, [Valabhi] Samvat 210 (AD 529).\(^6\) The two Palitana grants of Dhruvasena [I] Valabhi Samvat 207 (AD 527),\(^7\) record that the king Dhruvasena I gave 160 *pādvartas* of land having specific boundaries as *brahmadēya*, to the brāhmaṇa Mādhava.rs. There is a reference to the land granted by Dhruvasena I in third Palitana plates of Dhruvasena I, [Valabhi] Samvat 210 (AD 529),\(^8\) which must be cultivated by him or gifted to others. The Sunao Kala plates of Samagamasimha [Kalachuri] Samvat 292 (AD 540-41),\(^9\) refers to the village Šōnnavā granted by Māhārāja Samgamasīha to the brāhmaṇas Anantadatta, Prajāpatisārma, Šivadeva, Bhānudeva and Bhavaruchi, according to the maxim of *bhumichchhidra*. Where nobody should make any obstruction to these brāhmaṇas, while they enjoy the granted land according to the rules specified for *brahmadēyas* and *agrahāras*; they could cultivate it or get it cultivated or assign it to others. The Maliya copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Dharasena II, the year 252 (AD 571-72),\(^10\) land with specific demarcated boundaries was
granted to a brāhmaṇaṇa, for cultivating it or assigning it to another. The Lunsadi plates of Siladitya II [Gupta] Samvat 350 (AD 670)\textsuperscript{11} king with demarcated boundaries gave three pieces of cultivated land together with pond, to the two brothers. It was stressed that no one should cause any obstruction to these two donees, if they enjoy this land, cultivate it, get it cultivated, or assign it to others as per the rule of brahmadēyas. Similarly the Amauna plates of the Māhārāja Nandana, [Gupta] Samvat 232 (AD 551-52),\textsuperscript{12} from Bihar records that Māhārāja Dharasena of the Traikūṭā granted the land to the brāhmaṇaṇa named Naṇṇasvāmin. It is also referred to in this inscription that nobody shall cause obstruction to him while he enjoys, cultivates and assigns the land to others. This clearly show that Gupta and post-Gupta kings and their feudatories attempted to bring arid land under cultivation by giving land grants, through the brahmadēyas and agrahāras which worked in a more organized and systematic way in bringing marked changes in agricultural activities.

Similarly the brahmadēyas mainly functioned as an institutions integrating pre-existing pastoral and agricultural settlements into a new agrarian order and also as the disseminator of brahmanical ideology in the case of south India also.\textsuperscript{13}

There are references in the epigraphic sources regarding the sale of uncultivated land in north India by the Gupta and post-Gupta kings and their feudatories. The first, third and fifth Damodarpur copper-plate inscriptions of the Gupta period,\textsuperscript{14} from Bengal, refer to the sale of uncultivated (khila) land by the Gupta kings. The rates of land mentioned are three dināras for each kūlyavāpa and it is specifically mentioned that the land is yet unploughed and not given to anyone else. The fourth Damodarpur copper-plate inscription\textsuperscript{15} refers to the sale of vāstu land for the construction of two store
rooms. In the Baigram copper-plate inscription of the Gupta Year 128 (AD 448), there is a reference to Kumāramātya Kulavirdi selling the land that comprises of a shrubless fallow fields, which do not yield any revenue to the state, was also to be enjoyed for all time to come as long as the moon, the sun and the star endure, and to be free from any kind of taxes. The state made a grant to Bhōyila measuring three kūlyavāpas of khilā land and one drōṇavāpa of vāstu land, for dwelling site (tala) and laying paths (vāṭaka) in Śrīgōhāli. Such concessions given to the donees encouraged them to cultivate fallow fields so that in future such lands could also help in improving production. In Kalaikuri-Sultanpur copper-plate inscription of the Gupta Year 120 (AD 439), there is a reference to the sale of nine kūlyavāpa of uncultivated land, at the prevalent local rate of two dināras for each kūlyavāpa by the state, to the brāhmaṇas Dēvabhaṭṭa, Amaradatta and Mahāśēnadatta. Fa-Hian informs us about Ma-Teou-Lo (Mathura) that ‘kings and nobles of all countries erected vihāras for the priesthood, and endowed them with lands, gardens, houses and also men and oxen to cultivate them.’

Such efforts initiated by the kings not only brought more land under cultivation but also increased production which resulted in the emergence of markets.

The epigraphic sources refer to the construction and renovations of temple buildings carried out by the Gupta and post-Gupta kings, their feudatories, srenis and merchants. The Udayagiri cave inscription of Chandragupta II undated records the excavation of the cave as a temple of the god Siva under the name of Śambhu, by Virasena one of the ministers of Chandragupta II. The Junagarh rock inscription of Skandagupta, the year 136, 137 and 138 (AD 455-56, 456-57 and 457-58), there is a reference to the
construction of a temple of god Vishṇu under the name of Chakrabhṛt, by Parṇadatta the governor of Saurāshṭra. Similarly the Gangdhar stone inscription of Visvavarman of the year 480 (AD 423-24 or 425-26),\(^{21}\) refers to Mayurakshaka a minister of Visvavarman who built a temple of Vishṇu and a temple of the divine Mothers. The Eran stone boar inscription of Toramana undated\(^ {22}\) refers to the construction of the temple, by Dhanyavishṇu, the younger brother of the deceased Māhārāja Mātrivishṇu. Similarly the Haraha inscription of the reign of Isānavarman [Vikram] Samvat 611 (AD 554),\(^ {23}\) there is a reference to the reconstruction of the old and dilapidated temple of Śiva, by the king in jungle land. The above reference shows that the kings and their feudatories constructed and renovated temples not only in cities but in jungles also.

The king’s gave support and protection to merchants and śreṇis. They got constructed markets for the sale of surplus produce. Ayodhaya was an important trade centre. The king Atithi, son of Kuça, helped in various ways to develop it into an important trade centre.\(^ {24}\) The Rājataraṅginī of Kalhaṇa refers to king Pravarsena who built the city of Pravarapura. He established regular markets in the city. The king Pratāpāditya laid the foundation of Pratāpapura. This city had several merchants, who came from different regions and dealt in various products.\(^ {25}\) The coins of the Gupta kings have been recovered from Mumma Khan in Srinagar\(^ {26}\) which shows that this area was commercially active. The guilds of artisans and craftsmen were actively engaged in economic activities. The merchants, artisans and craftsmen inhabited important cities. The Indor copper-plate inscription of Skandagupta of AD 465-66,\(^ {27}\) refers to the guild of oilmen (tailikasrēṇi), residing in the city of Indrapura in complete unity. In Mandasor stone inscription of Kumaragupta and
Bandhuvarman, the Malava years 493 and 529 (AD 437-38),\textsuperscript{28} there is mention of skilled silk weavers who shifted to Daśapura from Lāṭa. It is further referred to in the inscription that they decided to shift to Daśapura because of the virtuous king.\textsuperscript{29} The king took adequate steps to regulate trade and commerce in Daśapura for the benefit of both traders and manufacturers. The Faridpur copper-plate inscription of the time of Gopchandra Regnal year 18 of sixth century AD\textsuperscript{30} refers to the uparika Nāgadeva who was the chief warden and the minister. He was entrusted with the principal business of regulating trade in new Avakāsikā. The Charter of Vishṇushēṇa, Samvat 649 (AD 605),\textsuperscript{31} refers to the community of merchants of Lōhāṭa who approached king Vishṇushēṇa for a favour and help. The sāmanta of Avanti, Vishṇushēṇa thus issued an order from Darpapura that he had given his assent to the sthiti-vyavasthā condition or letter of rules and regulations granted to the community of merchants residing at Lōhāṭākagrāma and persons while conducting their respective trades should not disturb sthiti-pātra-vyavasthā in any way. This helped the traders to have fair trade and they were benefitted immensely.

The kings and their feudatories not only exempted merchants and srenis from taxes, but also assigned important administrative duties to traders and merchants in city administration. Out of five Damodarpur copper-plate inscription of the Gupta Period, the plate first and second, of the time of Kumāragupta I, dated in 124 and 129 (G.E.) i.e. AD 443-444 and 448-449, refers to the members of city administration (nagara-sreshthin) which included Dhrṣtipāla who was president of the guild of artisans. It is further referred that Bandhumitra the merchant (sarthavāha), Dhrṣimitra the chief artisan (kulīka) and Śāmbapāla the chief scribe (prathama-kāyastha)
assisted the president in looking after the administrative affairs. Similarly the plate four of the time of Budhagupta (date in years lost from the upper left corner of the plate), refers to the members appointed by the *upārika-māhārāja* Jayadatta which included *nagara-śresṭhim* named Ribhupala, the merchant (*sārthavaha*) named Vasumitra, the chief *kulika* named Varadatta and the chief scribe (*pratham-kāyastha*) named Viprapāla. The plate five of the time of Bhānu (?) gupta, dated in 214 (G.E.) i.e. AD 533-534, also refers to the *vishayapati*, who was administering the affairs of the town (*adhisṭhāna*) in the company of *nagara-śresṭhim*, the *sārthavāha*, the *kulika* and the *kāyastha*. This suggests that kings entrusted the administrative duties to the *śrenis*, prosperous merchants, traders and also skilled craftsmen. The *Dasakumārarcarita* of Daṇḍin refers to the city of Valabhi in Saurashṭra and Grihagupta, the chief of sea-traders (*nāvikapate*), who possessed immense wealth like kubera. Valabhi was a prosperous centre of commerce and Grihagupta on account of his wealth and position was entrusted with the duty of administrating the city.

The kings and queens laid foundation of many new towns and cities during this period. The king Pravarsena II of Kashmir founded the city of Pravarapura. The large city had several temples and thirty-six lakh houses. Similarly Durlabhaka Pratāpāditya, laid the foundation of town Pratāpapura, and king Lalitāditya Muktāpiḍa laid the foundation of the town called Suniscitapura. He also built Darpitapura with a shrine of Kesāva (Viśṇu). He also laid the foundation of Phalapura, Lalitapura and Parihāsapura. The king Jayāpiḍa, founded the town of Jayapura. He also founded the town Vinayādityapura. In Doobi grant there is a reference to the king
Sthiravarman who built a new city on the bank of the holy river named Lauhitya.\textsuperscript{39} The Nidhanpur grant mentions the capital of the king Sthitaivarman situated in the hilly area. This \textit{pura} (city) was most probably Prāgjyotiśpura identified with the Jatiya and Dispur areas of modern Gauhati.\textsuperscript{40} The Vakāṭaka ruler Pravarasena II is said to have shifted his capital from Nandivardhana to the newly founded city of Pravarapura i.e. Paunar in Wardha district.\textsuperscript{41} His successor further shifted their capital to Padmapura as referred to in an unfinished Vakāṭaka plate from Drug.\textsuperscript{42} The above references suggest that kings laid the foundation of important cities and provided them with all amenities. The horizontal excavations of these cities can definitely help us to have clear picture of these important towns.

\textbf{RELIGIOUS FACTOR}

The process of urbanization in early medieval south India was accelerated by the rise of religious institutions which emerged with the cult of bhakti i.e. Śaivism and Vaisṇavism.\textsuperscript{43} Similarly the epigraphic and archaeological sources help us to know the rise of religious institutions in north India during the Gupta and post-Gupta period. The construction of temples dedicated to Visṇu, Śiva and female deities is referred to in the sources.

The Bhitari stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta which is undated records the installation of an image of the god vishṇu, under the name Śāṅgīn and the allotment, of idol to the village, in which the column still stands.\textsuperscript{44} This village emerged as an important urban centre owing to the popularity of this temple during the Gupta period, as reflected from the archaeological excavations also.\textsuperscript{45} 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, some local form of Lakshmi, the wife of Vishṇu. This village gradually developed into an important and popular town as referred to in the inscription of the year 214. The Khoh copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Sarvanatha, year 214, refers to the temple of the goddess Pishṭapurikādevī at the town of Mānapura. In the same inscription there is a reference to the transfer of two villages named Vyāghrapallika and Kācharapallika in the Maṇināga pētha, for the use of temple. Such developments helped religious centres to develop into important towns.

The Udaygiri cave inscription of Chandragupta II (undated) records the excavation of the cave as a temple of the god Śiva under the name of Śambhu, by Virasena, one of the ministers of Chandragupta II. The Udaygiri cave inscription of the year 106, also records the installation of an image of the Pārsvanatha, at the mouth of the cave. The rock cut sanctuaries and temples at Udaygiri suggest that possibly this place developed into an important town because of its cultural importance.

The Bodh-Gaya inscription of Mahanaman of the year 269, records the construction of Buddhist monastery, at the Bōdhimaṇḍa in the precincts of modern Bodh-Gaya, by Mahanaman. 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 the area.

There is a reference to the construction of the temple of Bhramara-mata in Chhoti Śādri inscription of the year 547 (AD 491). This temple played important role in the growth of the region of Chhoti Śādri, district Udaipur. The constant intrusion of pilgrims to this temple possibly helped it to grow into important area and also
led to the establishment of markets but we do not get any detailed information in this regard.\textsuperscript{53}

The kings and their feudatories invited and granted lands with several immunities to the brāhmaṇas. The Kanteru plates of SalankayanaVijaya-Skandavarman,\textsuperscript{54} dated fourth century AD, refers to the grant of a village Pallika i.e. Chintapuri, to the brāhmaṇa Śivāryya, resident of the village Lēkumāri. The Kalaikuri Sultanpur copper-plate inscription of the Gupta year 120 i.e. AD 439, refers to nine kūlyavāpa of land granted to the brāhmaṇas of Puṇḍravardhana.\textsuperscript{55} The second Palitana grant of Dhruvasena, [V] Samvat 206 (AD 525) from Katiawad,\textsuperscript{56} mentions a grant of a village to the brāhmaṇa Rotghamittra, resident of Simhapura. In Sunao Kala plates of Samagamsimha [Kalachuri-] Samvat 292 (AD 540-41),\textsuperscript{57} there is a reference to the grant of village Śōṇavva to five brāhmaṇas, who were the resident of the Bharukachha. The Navalakhi plates of Śiladitya I Gupta Samvat 286 (AD 605),\textsuperscript{58} records the gift of a village called Bhōṇadānaka to forty four brāhmaṇas who had emigrated from Samgapuri. The Lunsadi plates of Śiladitya II Gupta Samvat 350 (AD 670),\textsuperscript{59} refers to the grant of land to the brothers, coming from Dvipa, to the village of Dēsēnaka. The Valabhi grant of Dhruvasena III, dated Samvat 334 (AD 653-54), refers to the king who gave a plot of land in the village Paṭṭapadraka to the brāhmaṇa.\textsuperscript{60} The Nagowa plate of Gupta Samvat 320 (AD 640),\textsuperscript{61} also refers to the land granted to the brāhmaṇas of Dumbaragahavara and Jambūsara. The Anjaneri plates of Gurjara Jayabhata III of AD 709-710,\textsuperscript{62} there is a reference to the plot of land granted to the brāhmaṇa named Vasusvāmin, who was a resident of Brahmapuri. The plate number three, of the time of Budhagupta the date of which is lost in years from the upper
left corner of the plate, records that one kulyavapa of khila land, free from revenue was given to Nabhaka, with its boundaries for some prominent brāhamaṇas to settle there.\textsuperscript{63} Such land grants given by the ruling families in hitherto uncultivated and arid land led to agrarian extension which resulted in surplus production and emergence of market centres.\textsuperscript{64}

The brahmadēyas and agrahāras settlements together worked as suburbs or hinterlands and provided markets, artisans and labour to the cities. The sources refer to clubbing of two or more agrahāras also. There is a reference to the donation of the village Tiritthāna, in Bobbili plates of Chandavarman, King of Kalinga, year 4 dated fifth century AD,\textsuperscript{65} as an agrahāra which was clubbed to other surrounding thirty six agrahāras, by Chandavarman. Similarly the Nagowa Plates of [Gupta] Samvat 321 (AD 641),\textsuperscript{66} refer to the brāhamaṇa Dattasvāmin residing at Ayānakāgrahāra, and the brāhamaṇa Kumārasvāmin residing at Agastikāgrahāra. J.F.Fleet pointed out that both these agrahāras were suburb or hamlet of Dasāpura, which served the city of Dasāpura by providing resources for the residents of the town.\textsuperscript{67}

The new socio-economic development in the form of agrahāras and brahmadēyas not only ensured agrarian expansion but also helped in the organized distribution of surplus production. In most of the Gupta and post-Gupta inscriptions aprahata-khila\textsuperscript{68} and khila\textsuperscript{69} the uncultivated land was granted, with vāpra (pond)\textsuperscript{70} used for irrigation and kosṭikas (store-rooms)\textsuperscript{71} for storing surplus produce. This shows that authorities took keen interest and put iń
ECONOMIC FACTOR

The settled economy is possible only with the development in agriculture. The town economy is directly related to increased agricultural productivity, the proliferation of the crafts, more efficient transport, and the development of trade. Both agriculture and trade are the backbone of the Indian economy since ancient times. Kāmandaka refers to the cattle-rearing, cultivation and trade as the means of subsistence of the vaiśyas.

The Nārada Smṛti refers to the list of items, which a brāhamaṇa could not sell, while living by the occupations of a vaisya. According to Nārada a brāhamaṇa could not sell milk, sour milk, clarified butter, honey, beeswax, lac, pungent condiments, liquids used for flavouring, spirituous liquor, meat, boiled rice, seasamum, linen, the juice of the soma plant, flowers, fruit, precious stones, salt, cakes, plants, silk, skins, bone, blankets made of the hair of mountain-goat, animals whose foot is not cloven, earthen pots, buttermilk, vegetables, fresh ginger, and herbs. A brāhamaṇa could sell dry wood and dry grass, erakā grass, mulberry roots, and kusa grass, twigs of bamboos that have fallen spontaneously, the fruits of the jujube tree and of the ḍuṅḍu plant, ropes, thread of cotton, and seasamum. The above details suggest that most of the agrarian products were important items of trade which could be sold both by brāhamaṇa and vaisyā traders.

The Amarkoṣa refers to the cash crops like rice, cotton, oilseeds, indigo and mustard seeds, which led to the increase in source of income to the state. The fiscal terms directly related to the cultivation are referred to in the literary and epigraphic sources. The Vishṇu Saṃhitā mentions that king shall collect from his subjects, as revenue, 1/6th of the paddy and other food grain; 2% on
animals and clothes, 1/6th of meat, honey, clarified butter, medicinal herbs, scents, flowers, fruits, timbers, leaves, deer-skins, earthen vessels (baked and unbaked) and bamboo works. He shall collect 1/10th [of the profit] of indigenous articles as duty, and 1/20th of that on imported articles. There is a reference to the taxes like klripta and upaklripta (these are technical fiscal expressions, the meaning of which is not known) in the inscriptions of the Gupta and post-Gupta period. The Palitan plates of Dharasena II, [Gupta] Samvat 252 (AD 572), the Nagowa plates of [G-] Samvat 320 (AD 640), the Karitalai copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Jayanatha, the year 174 (AD 493-94), refer to the land granted with udraṅga, and uparikara. Similarly the Khoh copper-plate inscriptions of the Māhārāja Hastin of the year 156 and 163 (AD 475-76 and 482-83), Khoh copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Sarvanatha (undated), Khoh copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Sarvanatha, the year 214 (AD 533-34), Majhgawam copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Hastin, the year 191 (AD 510-11) and the Madhuban copper-plate of Harṣa, dated Samvat 25 (AD 631-32), refer to the village granted with udraṅga and uparikara. Udraṅga was possibly the share of the produce collected usually for the king and uparikara was a tax levied on cultivators who had no proprietary rights in the soil.

In Sunao Kala plates of Samgamsirīha [Kalachuri] Samvat 292 (AD 540-41), there is a reference to the grant of village according to the rule of brahmadēyas and agrahāras. The villagers were asked to pay customary méya (what is to be measured, méya is a technical term used for grain, which is measurable), gold and other taxes, to the donee. It is mentioned in Bobbili plates of
Chandavarman, king of Kalinga, year 4,⁸⁷ that the villagers had to
give all that is measurable (mēya i.e grains), gold etc to the donee.

The Nirmand copper-plate inscription of the māhāsāmanta
and mahārāja Samudrasena of seventh century AD,⁸⁸ refers to the
bali, charu, sattra and udraṅga. There is a reference to the grant of
village to Bhaṭṭa Vātasvāmin and Bhaṭṭa Śivadevasvāmin, together
with udraṅga. In undated Rajim copper-plate inscription of the Rājā
Tivardeva,⁸⁹ there is a reference to the dāradraṇaka.⁹⁰ The above
references clearly show that agricultural and dairy products were
one of the major sources of income to the state. This highest tax
payee sector was supported by the kings and their feudatories,
merchants, brāhmaṇas and temples. The land grants resulted in
the increase in surplus production and state income, which further
supported non-food producing class. Thus agriculture was the very
base of the economy and the most important source of revenue to
the state.

The economic prosperity of the period is clear from the
numismatic evidence as well. According to A.S. Altekar, ‘during
Samudragupta period, the imperial coinage recorded considerable
progress in types, varieties and artistic excellence. His gold coins
which were issued in large number, show six different types. Several
new gold and silver coins were introduced by Chandragupta II.
Similarly Kumāragupta I introduced fourteen types of gold and silver
coins for his provinces. Most of the coins issued by the Guptas rank
among the best specimens of the numismatic art.. The tranquility
and prosperity of Kumāragupta empire is reflected in his coinage,
which is noteworthy for its remarkable originality, artistic merit and
the poetic excellence of its legends.’⁹¹ With the variety and purity of
gold coins it can be concluded that economic prosperity was there.
A large number of gold coins have been found from various hoards in Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Though there is a myth that alloying in the gold coins increased from 29% to 57% after Narasimhagupta, which reflected poor economy. But the gold content of 113 grains was continuously maintained in the gold currency of the Guptas.

The literary sources also throw light on the prosperity of the traders and merchants living in various parts of north India. In Kālidāsa Abhijñānasākuntala there is a reference to the city of Sāketa, where resided a sea trader Dhanamitra, who had accumulated wealth through extensive commerce at sea. In the Dasakumārcarita of Daṇḍin there is a reference to Grihagupta, the chief of sea-traders (nāvika-pate), who possessed immense wealth like Kubera. He was a native of Valabha. The Mrichchhakatika of Śūdraka refers to the gem factory in the house of a merchant named Charudatta at Pāṭaliputra, where various gems are stored and goldsmiths worked on them. There is a reference in Visākhadatta’s Mudrārākṣasa to the head of the jeweller’s guilds (manīār-sethi), Chandanadāsa by name, who was an inhabitant of Pushpapura. The Mandsor stone inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvarman, the Malava years 493 and 529 (AD 437-38 and AD 473-74), refers to the guild of silk weavers of Dasāpura, who got constructed the temple of sun god. They had amassed great wealth as silk weavers. It shows that silk was an important item of trade both in national and international markets. The Indore copper-plate inscription of Skandagupta of the year 146 (AD 465-66), refers to the guild of oilmen (tailika-srēṇi), which was headed by Jīvanta, he resided at the town of Indrapur. This guild of oil-men (tailika-srēṇi)
had to maintain the sun temple, which was the perpetual property of the guild. The *Kādambarī* mentions guilds of various artists and traders living in Ujjaini. They carried on organized trade at Ujjaini. The city had regularly arranged markets for not only trading in manufactured goods but other locally produced items also which were sold in the markets. The state and local administration regulated trade activities. The large scale excavations can help us to know the nature and planning of such important centres as epigraphic and literary sources only provide scattered references.

**ECOLOGICAL FACTOR**

The location of settlement played an important role in the concentration of population and in the growth of towns and cities. According to G. Sjoberg the world’s earliest cities arose mainly in those regions where climate and soil were highly favourable to the development of plant and animal life, so that larger populations could be supported with existing technology upon a small land area. The main source of wealth in India was its rich soil, river system, mountain ranges and seas.

The north India was rich in productive soil and raw material. Hiuen-Tsang while referring to the kingdom of Kia-Shi-Mi-Lo (Kashmir) mentioned that, the soil in this area was fit for producing cereals and abounded in fruits and flowers, the fragrant turmeric, *fō-chū* (Lentilles de verre) and medicinal herbs. The kingdom of Brahmapura Po-Lo-Hih-Mo-Pu-Lo is the ancient capital of the Chamba state according to B.C.Law. But Alexander Cunningham accepts Brahmapura of Hiuen-Tsang located in the region of Garhwal and Kumaun. It had rich and fertile soil. The land was sown and reaped in respective seasons. This region was thickly
populated and most of the population was engaged in commerce. The region had copper mines. The work on the copper mines of Dhanpur and Pokhri in Garhwal is still continuing. Geographically each area is gifted with a special kind of vegetation and minerals, which is an asset for the region. It helps the region to grow and develop into important centre on account of these assets.

Several important cities emerged in the agriculturally rich Indus-Ganga doab. Jalandhar situated between the river Satluj and Beas was a fertile region. Hiuen-Tsang referred to Che-lan- t’o-lo or Jalandhar which was favourable for the cultivation of cereals, and it produced large amount of rice. The forests were thick and umbrageous, fruits and flowers were produced in abundance. The houses in Jalandhar were rich and well supplied. Sthâneśvara was another important city which extended from the river Satluj to the Ganges. According to Hiuen-Tsang the soil of Sthâneśvara (Sa-T’a-Ni-Shi-Fa-Lo) was rich and fertile and the crops were grown in abundance. The families were rich and given to excessive luxury. The majority of the people pursued trade and a few were given to farming.

The Ganga valley served as an epicenter for the growth of early cities in India, probably because the area enjoyed a natural environment conducive to agriculture and was able to sustain a high concentration of population. Kasi located on the western side of the river Ganges, was agriculturally rich and densely populated. According to Hiuen-Tsang the climate of Kasi was soft and the crops were abundant. The fruit trees were grown at every place. Mathura situated on the right bank of Yamuna was also agriculturally rich as clear from the Hiuen-Tsang’s reference to the soil of Mathura as rich, fertile, and fit for producing good quality grain. The people
took care of the cultivation of *An-mo-lo* trees which grew in clusters like forests in Mathura. The country produced a fine species of cotton fabric and yellow gold as well.\textsuperscript{110} The Jain monks also referred to Mathura as a great centre of trade where people preferred trade to farming.\textsuperscript{111} The people preferred trade because of the large profits earned through it.

The strategic location of Kanauj on the right bank of Ganges helped it to grow as the highway of commerce and communication in early medieval India.\textsuperscript{112} Hiuen-Tsang mentions that the valuable merchandise was collected at Kanauj in great quantities and the people were well off, the houses were rich and flowers and fruits were gown in plenty.\textsuperscript{113} The horizontal excavation of the area can help us to have important information of this important town.

The main reason for the emergence of towns in the Malwa region was also the extensive agricultural base linking central and western India.\textsuperscript{114} Most of the cities located in western and central India were agriculturally rich and involved in trade and commerce. The Mandasor stone inscription of Kumaragupta and Bandhuvarman, the Malava year 493 and 529 (AD 437-38 and 473-74),\textsuperscript{115} refers to the city of Dasâpura, which was embraced by two charming rivers, with tremulous water. This was the main reason for the prosperity of the town. Dasâpura was an important centre of trade and manufacture. The rivers served as water route to send and receive items of trade. Madhya Dèsa according to Fa-Hian had good climate and the area had neither frost nor snow. The inhabitants were prosperous and happy.\textsuperscript{116} Hiuen-Tsang refers to U-she-yen-na (Ujjaini) having dense population with the establishments of wealthy people.\textsuperscript{117} Sânkasaya (Sang-ka-shi) region according to Fa-Hian was abundantly productive; the people were very prosperous and
rich beyond comparison. The traders from all countries thronged this area and obtained all they required.\textsuperscript{118}

Bharukaccha (Bṛṅgukaccha), identical with modern Broach or Bharoch in Kathiāwād, was a port town. According to Divyāvadāna, Bharukaccha was a rich and prosperous city and thickly populated. Hiuen-Tsang also refers to the people of Bharoach (Po-Lu-Ka-Che-Po) who were mainly supported by the sea. The soil of the area was impregnated with salt. The people boiled sea-water to get the salt, and their sole profit was from the sea.\textsuperscript{119} Similarly Valabhi was also important trade centre located in the Saurashṭra region. The guilds of sea-trader had amassed immense wealth.\textsuperscript{120} Possibly the trade with neighbouring countries helped the guild of sea traders to earn heavy profits. Hiuen-Tsang also refers to the population in Fa-La-Pi or Valabhi as very dense and having the establishments which were rich. The rare and valuable products of distant regions were stored at Valabhi in great quantities,\textsuperscript{121} from where these were transported to other areas. Hiuen-Tsang refers to men of Valabhi who derived their livelihood mainly from the sea.\textsuperscript{122} Due to the importance of the region in AD 390 Chandragupta II launched a powerful offensive against the Sāka Kshatrapas of Mālwā, Gujarat, and Kathiawar. The campaign was remarkably successful and the Sākas, who were ruling over this territory for more than three hundred years, were completely wiped out from the political map of India. The rich provinces of Mālwā, Gujarat, and Kathiawar were annexed to the Gupta empire and they opened a new avenue for direct maritime trade with the west.\textsuperscript{123}

The Raghuvanḍa of Kālidāsa refers to Tamluk or Tāmralipti situated on the bank of the river Kapisā as important port town. According to the Kathāsaritsāgara Tāmralipti was also a maritime
port and an emporium of commerce from the fourth to the twelfth century AD. Hiuen-Tsang refers to Tan-Mo-Li-Ti or Tāmarālipti as coastal town. The wonderful articles of value and variety of gems were found in abundance at Tāmarālipti therefore the people of the country were very rich.¹²⁴ No doubt physical environment plays crucial role in urban growth, but the role of geographical factors in the emergence of settlement cannot be emphasized beyond a certain point since many other factors combined to provide a complementary situation for the rise and growth of settlements.¹²⁵

EDUCATIONAL FACTOR

The educational factor also played important role in the growth and development of cities and towns in ancient India. The education including grammar, composition, logic, metaphysics, mathematics, medicine, and astronomy became highly specialized and reached at an advanced level in the Gupta and post-Gupta period.¹²⁶ Many cities developed as educational centres and continued to be so in later stages. Banaras emerged as one of the famous centre of learning. The Benaras inscription of Pantha (undated) refers to the people of Banaras engaged in study and interpretation of Vēdas.¹²⁷ According to Hiuen-Tsang, ‘the people of P’o-Lo-Ni-Sse or Banaras were earnestly given to study. There were about thirty saṅghārāmas and three thousand priests. They studied the little vehicle according to the Sarhmatīya school (Ching-liang-pong). There were hundred or so deva temples with about 10,000 sanctuaries’.¹²⁸

Fa-Hian while referring to (Pa-Liu-Fou) Pataliputra mentions that, ‘the temple belonging to the little vehicle existed at Pataliputra. In the college attached to the temple many eminent shamanas came
from every quarter of the world for receiving the quality education. Pataliputra was famous city of Magadha region which continued to be an important educational centre even after Gupta rule. According to Hiuen-Tsang Mo-kie-t’o (Magadha) had fifty saṅghārāmas, with about ten thousand priests, of whom the greater number studied the great vehicle. The quality education was provided at Pataliputra thus students from all quarters thronged to this important centre of education.

During AD 320 to 750 many maṭha, temples and vihāras were constructed. They offered free education and accommodation to both students and teachers. The Mundesvari inscription of Udayasena the [Harṣa] year 30, refers to the building of maṭha, by Danḍanāyaka Gomibhaṭa, near the temple of Vinītesvara. The Aphsad stone inscription of Adityasena which is undated, records that the building of a religious college or monastery was built by Śrīmati mother of Adityasena. Kalhaṇa’s Rājatarāṅgiṇī also refers to the construction of two temples and a maṭha for Pasūpata [mendicants] on the hill of Pradyumna. The construction of Meghamāṭha, by the king Meghavāhana is referred to in Kalhaṇa’s Rājatarāṅgiṇī. One of the ministers of king Jayapiḍa also built a maṭha at the castle of Jayapura. These maṭhas led to the growth of these areas and helped them to develop into important centres of learning in later stages. The Brahmamaṭha in Kāshmir served as an important centre of education. Several students came from distant lands to this maṭha for receiving quality education. The maṭhas of Kāshmir attracted students from different regions and unrestricted movement of students in this area suggest that Kāshmir was a major centre of learning.
Hiuen-Tsang refers to the sanghārāmas located at Nālanda serving as an important centre of learning for thousand years and students came to Nālanda to accomplish their studies.\textsuperscript{138} The Nālanda stone inscription, of the reign of Yasōvarmanmadēva of sixth century AD,\textsuperscript{139} refers to great scholars having mastery on sacred texts teaching at Nālandā which was an important centre of education. In the same inscription it is recorded that Nālandā had temples which were the pleasant abode of the learned and virtuous Saṅgha. Nālandā continued to flourish as centre of education in later period also.

The grants given to learned brāhamaṇas in the form of agrahāras and brahmadhēyas also helped in the diffusion of education. The learned brāhamaṇas of various schools were invited to teach and settle down in the granted villages by the kings and their feudatories. The āśramas of these brāhamaṇas served as educational institutions in initial stages. The Harṣacarita refers to the brāhamaṇa bhavanās which worked as institutions of learning. The group of students used to visit them for quality learning.\textsuperscript{140} The Nirmand copper-plate inscription of the Māhāsāmanta and Māhārāja Samudrasena of seventh century AD\textsuperscript{141} refers to the agrahāra of Nirmanḍa which was donated to the brāhamaṇas who studied the Atharvaveda. They imparted quality education to the students visiting this important agrahāra. Hiuen-Tsang refers to Kulu as an important place. However no other detail is available regarding this important educational centre. The first Nagowa plate of [Gupta] Samvat 320 (AD 640-41),\textsuperscript{142} refers to the land granted to the two brāhamaṇas i.e. Agnisvāmin and Kumārasvāmin, who belonged to the gotras of the Pārāsāras and Kausikas and to the Vājasanēyas school. Similarly the second Nagowa plate of Dhruvasena II [Gupta]
Samvat 321 (AD 640-41),\textsuperscript{143} refers to the two donees named Dattasvāmin and Kumarsvāmin, who belonged to the gotras of the Pārāsāras, and to the schools of Mādhyaandina-Vājasanēyas and Vājasanēyas. Similarly in Nausari plates of Sryasraya-Siladitya, the year 421,\textsuperscript{144} there is a reference to the grant of village Aṣṭṭi-grāma, to the brāhmaṇa Ḫhōgikkasvāmin. The donee was an Adhvaryu a student of the Yajurvēda, the pupil of Kikkasvāmin. In Sultanpur copper-plate inscription (AD 440),\textsuperscript{145} there is a reference to the application to sell nine kulyavāpas of land, to the brāhmaṇas Dēvabhaṭṭa, Amaradatta and Mahāsēnadatta, who belonged to Pūṇḍravarddhana. They were students of the Vājasanēya school and were well versed in the four Vēdas. Similarly in Khoh copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Hastin, the year 156 (AD 475-76),\textsuperscript{146} there is a reference to the grant of the village Vasunatarashanḍika, granted to brāhmaṇa Gopasvāmin, of the Vājasanēya-Mādhyaṁdina (sākhā) and other brāhmaṇas. The Khoh copper-plate inscription of the Māhārāja Hastin, the year 163 (AD 482-83),\textsuperscript{147} refers to the grant of agrahāra named Kôrparika, to the brāhmaṇas. The donees were Devasvāmin, of the Bhardvāja gotra, a student of Vājasanēya and Šarvasvāmin, Gorisvāmin and Divākarsvāmin of the Kautsagotra, students of Vājasanēya, Svatsvāmin, Varunsvāmin of the Bhārgavagotra, students of Kaṭha sākhā and Mātrisārman, a student of Vājasanēya sākhā. In all the above inscriptions brāhmaṇas have been referred to with their schools and specialization. By inviting learned brāhmaṇas of various schools to settle in villages gave boost to educational activities. Such centres catered not only to the needs of local residents but also students coming from far flung areas. With this we can conclude that number of factors together played important role
in the growth and emergence of urban centres in north India and no single factor led to the emergence of urban centres. The education, ecology, religion, economy and polity all played varying roles in the rise and development of urban centres during this period.
Notes and References


5Ibid., Vol. XI, No. 9, pp. 104 ff.

6Ibid., pp. 108 ff.

7Ibid., Vol. XVII, No. 7, pp. 105 ff.


11EI, Vol. IV, No. 8, pp. 74 ff.


13R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, p. 17.

15 Ibid., pp. 137 ff.

16 Ibid., Vol. XXI, No. 14, pp. 81 ff.

17 Ibid., Vol. XXXI, No. 9, pp. 57 ff.


20 Ibid., No. 14, pp. 56-65.

21 Ibid., No. 17, pp. 72-78.

22 Ibid., No. 36, pp. 158-61.


25 R.S. Pandit, *Rājatarāṇgiṇī the Saga of the Kings of Kāshmir*, p. 121.


28 Ibid., No. 18, p. 84.

29 Ibid., pp. 79-88.


34 Ibid., p. 121.

35 Ibid., p. 139.

36 Ibid., p. 142.

37 Ibid., p. 167.

38 Ibid., p. 169.

39* Indian Historical Quaterly*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 241-46 (hereafter IHQ);


41 *JRASB*, Vol. XXIX, p. 159 (hereafter *JARSB*).


46 J.F.Fleet, *CII*, No. 25, pp. 112-16.


49 *Ibid.*, No. 61, pp. 258-60.

50 *IAR.* 1997-98, pp. 136-42.


As referred to by R. Champakalakshmi in *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization South India 300BC to AD1300*, p. 56-57 and 67-68;

James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power (Lordship in an Early Indian State)*, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 82-120.

54 *El.*, Vol. XXV, No. 8, pp. 46-47.


64 According to R. Champakalakshmi contextual evidence shows that they were harbingers of advanced farming methods-irrigation, management of resources and means of production, in
Romila Thapar, ed., *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, Bombay, 1996, p. 279.

65 *EI*, Vol. XXVII, No. 8, p. 36.


67 According to R.N. Nandi dispersal of a section of urban population and the rise of a surplus appropriating class in the hinterland, was the principal factor in initiating a whole series of developments. The growth of private farming and a servile labour force, improvements in the technique of agriculture and increase in crop-production and the cumulative effect of all this on the ultimate growth of a market-economy of towns during the eleventh century in south India.


69 In third Damodarpur copper-plate inscription of the time of Budhagupta (date in year lost), *Ibid.*, pp. 134-37; in Paharpur copper-


74 Nita Verma, *Society and Economy in Ancient India an Epigraphic Study of the Maitrakas (c. AD 475-775)*, Delhi, 1992, p. 82.


76 In Poona plates of the Vakaṭaka Queen Prabhavati Gupta, the 13th year (fifth century AD) in *EI*, Vol. XV, No. 4, pp. 39-44.


84 *Udraṅga* is a technical fiscal term Dr. Bühler has brought to notice in *IA*, Vol. XII, p. 189, note 39, that in the *Sāsvatakôsha*, Zachoriae’s edition, pp. 29, 260, it is explained as *uddhāra* and *udgrantha* (? *udgrāha*) and thus seems to mean ‘the share of the produce collected usually for the king’. The only passage in which it
occurs otherwise than among the technical conditions of a grant, is
in connection with Kharagraha II.; e.g. in line 46 of the Alina grant of

U.N.Ghoshal, The Agrarian System in Ancient India, Calcutta, 1973,
pp. 56-57.

85 Dr. Bühler mentions that uparikara is a technical term, the
meaning of which has not been made clear. But he suggests that the
first component of this prākrita word uparī or upri, see Molesworth
and Candy’s, Marāthi Dictionary, and Wilson’s Glossary of Indian
Terms; and that the term denotes ‘a tax levied on cultivators who
have no proprietary rights in the soil,’ p. 98. Uparikara is the rent paid
by the temporary tenants, in U.N.Ghoshal, op. cit., p. 50.


87 Ibid., Vol. XVII, No. 9, pp. 33-36.

88 Ibid., No. 80, pp. 286-91.

*dāradraṇaka* is a fiscal term, which may refer to some agricultural cess. *Ibid.*, p. 299, fn.1.

91 A.S. Altekar mentions 1821 gold coins found from Bayana hoard in Rajasthan, 200 gold coins from Kālighat hoard, 160 from Bharsar hoard, 13 from Hugli hoard, 17 from Kotwā hoard, 11 from Basti hoard, 22 from Hajipur hoard, 40 from Tekri Debra hoard, 17 from Kasarva hoard, 33 from Mithathal and 9 from Kumarkhan hoard, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Varanasi, 1956, pp. 3 and 6. Recently number of gold coins of the Gupta period mainly of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II were unearthed from a road constructing site at Ahiran district Murshidabad.


According to B.C.Law Garhwal and Kumaon districts were reigned by the Katur or Katuria rājās connected with Kortripura of Samudragupta’s Allahabad pillar inscription.

Even Samuel Beal in his work accept Garhwal and Kumaon region as the location of Brahmapura. In Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records of the Western Worlds Translated from the Chinese of Huien Tsang (A.D.629), p. 198.
107 Ibid., p. 183.


109 Samuel Beal, op. cit., p. 44.

110 Ibid., pp. 179-80.


113 Samuel Beal, op. cit., p. 206.


116 Samuel Beal, op. cit., p. 54.

Samuel Beal, *Travels of Fa-Hian and Sung-Yun Buddhist Pilgrims from China to India (400 A.D. and 518 A.D.)*, p. 68.


Samuel Beal, *op. cit.*, p. 266.


A.S.Altekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.


Renu Thakur, *op. cit.*, p. 188.


Samuel Beal, *op. cit.*, Chap. VII, p. 44.

*Ibid.*, Chap. VIII, p. 82.


M.A. Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 113.


J.F. Fleet, *CII*, No. 21, pp. 93-100.