CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The towns of medieval India owed their origin generally to military, commercial and administrative causes, but a very large number of them developed as industries expanded or urban-population grew. The geographical situation and the topography of the region determined the choice of the original sites and the later growth of these cities.

During this period a large group of cities grew in importance due to the fact that they were favourably located being situated on the bank of a navigable river or near a good harbour, or in the centre of a productive area, or at a site which provided suitable defence. The trade routes and facilities of means of communication too greatly influenced the growth of the towns. Most of the towns in the 17th century were situated on the junction of trade routes or near one major trade routes or were connected with each other by important routes. Thus a net of cross-country roads passed through the existing important towns. The security and the towns, proper administration and facilities available on the trade routes further contributed to the growth of the towns. Indian and foreign merchants plied the trade between them.
The urbanisation was mainly due to industrial and commercial causes and the establishment of a strong central government. As specialised trade developed with other regions, these cities grew in size and importance. Expansion of cultivation, increase and surplus of agricultural produce and raw-material, shift of rural population to urban centres and finally the growing commerce and expanding trade and industries were the important factors which promoted the growth of medieval Indian towns. With the concentration of power and wealth at the capitals and other places the population grew rapidly and the administrative towns became centres of commercial and economic activity.

In India, the 17th century was an era of stabilization and as the result of external stimulus, there was an expansion in foreign trade. Foreign merchants flocked to India and foreign factories were established in different towns and by virtue of these commercial activity increased immensely. Trade by sea as well as by land increased in volume. The port-towns and the maritime regions flourished. The advantageous position in respect of foreign trade led to a considerable expansion of towns.

The towns of northern India, particularly, during this period were large and prosperous and expanded tremendously in size, extent, population and commerce, trade and
industries throughout the 17th century. Some of them compared favourably in size and population with European towns like London and Paris. Agra and Ahmadabad were among the biggest towns of the world. A few towns declined due to natural calamities.

One sees a vigorous urbanisation which reached its climax in the 17th century. A large number of new towns were springing up all over northern India. The pace of urbanisation was much more rapid during the 17th century than in the 16th. During the reign of Akbar, according to Nizamuddin there were about 3,200 towns out of which 120, were large cities, while in the 17th century the number of cities was much greater.

The pressure of urban needs, and the opportunities of an open market for labour and goods, the dynamic agents of capitalism, viz., prosperous middleclass, the banks, and the increasing capital put in circulation the expanding trade and production were chief causes of rapid urbanisation and growth of Indian towns of this period. Most of the towns had exclusively commercial character. A majority of the towns of northern India whether big or small, particularly of Gujarat, Bengal, Sind, Punjab and Delhi were commercial and manufacturing centres. A statistical survey of cities at the present day proves

that these cities long retained their commercial character and that these cities were all along centres of economic activity. The commercial and manufacturing centres extended their influence over the neighbouring regions. The cities became active centres of trade. The trade was rapidly spreading from one town to the other and the neighbouring regions were linked by commercial and industrial relations, and also had commercial contacts with the outer world.

Towns, which at one time were primarily of administrative importance subsequently became important centres of commerce and industry. No town retained purely one character. The capital towns did not depend entirely upon the court and the presence of the royal camp, but commerce and industry dominated them. Towns of military and strategic importance also became administrative centres. Such towns might not have had much commerce or industry, but because of large population they also developed minor industries and played an important role in the economic life of the country. The port towns too remained as commercial and industrial centres.

The layout, planning and general appearance of the towns depended on their location. The towns were strongly fortified. Towns of this period were quite large and had spacious buildings. The general appearance of the towns shows that they were well planned and had a magnificent appearance.
The cities were divided into different quarters for different purposes, and had numerous roads. The government offices, markets and shops were located at the most suitable and convenient places. In port towns, the chief offices were situated near the custom house. A city in general had broad and spacious streets, and trees were generally planted on both sides. Large and well laid out gardens were a common feature of these towns.

Inspite of the tremendous growth of the towns proper administration was maintained. For ensuring all round security of the towns military and police arrangements were made. The police was organised more or less on the same lines as exist in modern times. For town administration and for maintaining law and order in the cities different officers were appointed. The Kotwal was the most important officer, who was responsible for town administration. Proper security measures against attacks from outside and thefts were taken. Guards, sentries, police and garrisons were maintained in the cities. Thefts and robberies were sternly put down. Security of life and property was ensured and public enjoyed the repose of security under the local administration.

In a city, all sorts of civic amenities were available. For water supply various means existed and the modern methods like passing the water through underground
channels were also practiced. Proper hygiene and sanitary arrangements were available. The roads and streets were cleaned and drains were constructed. Light arrangements were also available.

Public institutions like sarais, baths, schools mosques, wells and gardens were constructed for the benefit of the public and were properly administered. The policy of the state was benevolent in character. The administration of the town was carried with a view to the interest and welfare of the public. Various officers of justice were stationed in towns to safeguard the interests of the public. Officers of high integrity, scholarship and ability were appointed.

In view of public interest prohibition was enforced, immoral traffic was discouraged and measures were taken to prevent epidemics, floods, famines, and diseases. Free medical aid was given to the needy. Hospitals for men and animals were established. For feeding the poor people there used to be free kitchens. Alms were liberally given irrespective of caste and creed. The state tried its best to suppress social evils and raise the moral standards of the people.

Due to the economic pressure on the towns and the existence of octroi and custom houses, mints, the indigenous banking system and a flourishing middle class, a new pattern
of towns administration was emerging. To realise the state dues, and for carrying on commercial transactions smoothly in the city proper administrative machinery was established. Various officers were appointed to control and administer the markets properly in the interest of both the public and the government. Frauds were discouraged in every possible way. Standard weights, coins and measures were used in business transactions. Master craftsmen were controlled. The octroi, and custom stations and ferries were properly controlled. A team of officers was engaged and strict rules and regulations were enforced. Licences were issued to foreign merchants. The coming and going of the foreign merchants to foreign countries was recorded. The port towns were separately administered and smuggling was sternly suppressed.

For the internal as well as external trade a large number of Indian merchants who exclusively directed their attention to mercantile enterprise flourished. The desire for gain and profit was strong enough in this class to counterbalance the hardships, risks and dangers of carrying their goods from one place to the other. With the growth of the middle class, capital came into circulation and was invested. Credit and banking system became popular in the country as well in foreign countries. All these factors immensely helped in the growth of trade. The brokers helped the foreign and Indian merchants and other
manufacturers of the towns. The middle class grew stronger, and controlled the lower class, especially the artisans and weavers. This class had a great influence on the upper class too. The cities became the strongholds of trading classes, and this change in towns considerably modified the character of the towns themselves.

There was a constant overflow of the proletariat into towns which was absorbed there. To the cities came expert artisans and master craftsmen. The most important fact in the whole urban transition was the displacement of population that took place all over the region. People engaged in various professions and a variety of occupations moved from rural to urban areas.

The urban society of northern India in the 17th century was based on a hierarchy of social classes particularly in respect of birth and profession. There was a wide gap in the standard of living amongst the various classes of society. The upper classes lived luxuriously and spent money lavishly in displaying their wealth. The middle class was well-to-do and did not spend money in outward show, but made investments in business for profit. However quite a large number of merchants wore maintaining a high standard and could be compared with those of the upper classes. The lower class mostly consisted of the working classes, whose standard of living was comparatively very low. However in some places the condition of the lower class was deplorable and the evils of capitalism had become apparent in the 17th century.
In the domain of art, literature, music, painting and other cultural activities progress was made rapidly.

A variety of pastimes, games and sports were popular. Towns were cultural centres. Scholars and persons interested in religion, education, and cultural pursuits flocked to the urban centres from distant parts of the empire. Communal harmony was preserved in urban centres.

**RELATION BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS:**

In the 17th century, there was a close interdependence between the rural and urban areas. All cities were dependent for the supply of raw-material and food-stuff on external resources. Export of the manufactured products compensated for such import. Thus these relations rested upon a free economy marked by mutual interchange of services between the city and the rural areas. The villages were dependent upon the towns for disposing of their surplus produce, while each city was the market for the surrounding country.

Generally there was always found in the town a weekly or biweekly market, where the rural population brought their produce and goods for sale and took away from there the wares required by them. Various professionals, like the soldiers, servants, artisans and skilled craftsmen were all recruited from the villages. The rural population
was attracted to the city for recreational purposes, and attended especially those functions where they could combine pleasure with profit. In addition to these, the state celebrations, presence of king on public occasions, important religious ceremonies and religious festivals, were some of the important occasions when the rural population was attracted to the cities.

**THE INFLUENCE OF ROYALTY ON THE CITY:**

In medieval age royalty greatly influenced the city, its buildings, the life of the people, the moral tone of society fashion, arts etc. in various spheres.

The luxurious life of the kings, their lavish tastes and habits and varied interests in different fields greatly contributed to the growth of new institutions, and in setting up a new pattern of life. The pattern was copied in every possible way by the upper classes, which too had far-reaching effects on the life of the city. All this greatly influenced the growth of urban life and commercial and industrial activities. The Court attracted a large number of Indian and foreign merchants from far and distant regions, and the King's patronage of men of letters of arts and crafts and all those who ministered to their pleasures or pastimes determined the cultural level and trends of the time.
A large number of royal karkhanas were maintained, where skilled craftsmen in various trades were employed and thus it provided a great scope for employing various types of professionals. In addition to it a large number of skilled craftsmen were also engaged by the upper classes for the production of commodities for personal use as well as for giving presents to the king on different occasions.

It was partly due to the influence of royalty, that cities became the centres of art and culture. The kings were usually lavish in giving alms and charity, especially on their birthdays, weighing celebrations and during special festivals. On such occasions, the granting of robes, giving expensive gifts like horses, elephants and jewels was the usual feature. This policy of the kings benefitted the upper class as well as the masses. The charitable institutions, like madrasas, khanqahs, and hospitals were founded and proper aid given to run them efficiently.

The towns also became centres of religious and cultural activities and the kings patronised the Brahmins, Pandits, Ulama, Muslim saints and religious heads. The personal interest of the kings in visiting the tomb and mausoleums, and the respect shown to religious men and scholars helped to foster a religious outlook
amongst the masses. Beautiful gardens were laid out and mausoleums and other public buildings were constructed in the city and outside by kings and noblemen.

The kings and nobles participated in public festivals, organised by both Hindus and Muslims. The royal games like elephant fighting etc., which were organised in the city further gave an opportunity to the masses for recreation themselves. The court greatly influenced the social life of the upperclasses. The modes of recreation and devices for pleasure seeking, drinking parties and such other diversions had a great effect on the life of the nobility and then on urban life as a whole.