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A Study on Urban Centres in Eastern India (6th to 9th Century A.D.)

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Till recently, History largely meant a political game between kings and nobles or wars and conspiracies or treaties. But increasingly historians are now committed towards the economic, social as well as the religious aspects of the life of our forefathers. To all these, study of urban history has added a new dimension.

Definition of an urban centre

At the outset, we need to know the changing definitions of urban centre and the process of urbanism in History. Historians would consider urban centre as a unit of settlement, established by man, influenced by several historical factors. The Archaeologists take any settlement as urban which exposes few streets and one or two public buildings. The Anthropologists and Sociologists consider urban growth as a natural process and consider population and ecological factors as of prime importance in the growth of towns. Similarly an economist would look into the growth of towns mainly through economic factors.

Childe has listed monumental buildings, large settlement with dense population, non-food producing classes (including rulers, artisans and merchants) and the cultivation of art, science and writing as the basic traits of the urban revolution which took place in the bronze age. According to him, craft specialists as well as the role of surplus which supported non-food producing classes were important to enliven a city. (Childe :1950 : 3-17)

But according to Adams increased size and density of population are crucial to urbanism and the contribution of specialized crafts is negligible to primary urban needs. (Adams:1968 : 18-26)

Among Indian Historians, A. Ghosh was one of the pioneer Archaeologists to tackle the problem of urbanization in early historical times. He considered an administrative and mercantile organization to be the pre-requisite for a city. (Ghosh :1973 : 19)