MHI-110

Urbanisation in India-1
From The Earliest Times To *c.* 1300

**Chapter Wise Reference Book
Including Many Solved Sample Papers**

Based on

I.G.N.O.U.

& Various Central, State & Other Open Universities

By: **Gaurav Sahni**

Content

URBANISATION IN INDIA-1 FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO *c.* 1300

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BLOCK-1: INTRODUCTION TO URBAN HISTORY

BLOCK-2: THE EARLEST CITIES IN THE SUBCONTINENT

BLOCK-3: EARLY HISTORIC CITIES: NORTH INDIA

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Sample

QUESTION PAPER - 1

(Solved)

URBANISATION IN INDIA-1
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO *c.* 1300

MHI-110

Time: 3 Hours]   **[Maximum Marks : 100**

Note: *Answer any **five** of the following questions. All questions carry **equal** marks.*

Q. 1. What is urban history? Why do we need to study urban history through the lenses of many disciplines?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 4, Q. No. 3.

Q. 2. Trace the development of the studies of Harappan cities since they were first discovered.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 12, Q. No. 1.

Q. 3. What was the general pattern of the non-domestic use of Harappan urban spaces? In what ways did public space utilisation differ at Dholavira and why?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 26, Q. No. 5.

Q. 4. How did the Harappans organise craft production?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 32, Q. No. 4.

Q. 5. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Yakshas and Yakshis

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 85, '*Yakshas* and *Yakshis*'.

(b) The Western Deccan

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 91, 'The Western Deccan'.

(c) Citadel

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 103, 'Citadel'.

(d) Chaitya

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 110, 'What is a *Chaitya*?'

Q. 6. State the archaeological evidences that suggest the presence of specialisation in non-agricultural production.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 39, Q. No. 4.

Q. 7. Discuss the main features of the city of Mohenjodaro.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 45, Q. No. 2.

Q. 8. What role did iron technology play in the formation of Early Historic cities in the Ganga valley?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 56, Q. No. 4.

Q. 9. Describe the relationship between forest and village.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 62, Q. No. 3.

Q. 10. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Bhir Mound

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 73, 'Bhir Mound'.

(b) Tondaimandalam

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-17, Page No. 113, 'Tondaimandalam'.

(c) Vanagiri

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-18, Page No. 121, 'Vanagiri'.

(d) Post-Gupta Polity

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-19, Page No. 128, 'Post-Gupta Polity'.

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Sample

QUESTION PAPER - 2

(Solved)

URBANISATION IN INDIA-1
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Time: 3 Hours]   **[Maximum Marks : 100**

Note: *Answer any **five** of the following questions. All questions carry **equal** marks.*

Q. 1. What is the correlation between full-time specialisation and urbanism? Explain in the context of the Harappan cities.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 39, Q. No. 5.

Q. 2. What was the layout of the city of Mohenjodaro?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 45, Q. No. 3.

Q. 3. How have archaeologists characterised Early Historic urban centres in north India?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 56, Q. No. 5.

Q. 4. Describe the units of settlement in the period before the onset of urbanism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 62, Q. No. 4.

Q. 5. Write short notes on the following:

(a) **Taxila Valley**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 72, 'The Taxila Valley'.

(b) **Buddhist Art of Andhra**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 109, 'Buddhist Art of Andhra'.

(c) **Kanchipuram**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-17, Page No. 113, 'Kanchipuram'.

(d) **Puranic Pantheon**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 85, 'Puranic Pantheon'.

Q. 6. Discuss the importance of comparative method for the study of urbanism?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 4, Q. No. 4.

Q. 7. Do you agree with J.G. Shaffer's view that urban centres were present during the period between 1900 and 500 BCE?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 13, Q. No. 4.

Q. 8. Assess the nature of domestic use of spaces of the Harappans.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 26, Q. No. 6.

Q. 9. How do archaeologists look for exchange? Construct the story of Harappan exchange patterns.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 32, Q. No. 5.

Q. 10. Write short notes on the following:

(a) **The Eastern Deccan**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 91, 'The Eastern Deccan'.

(b) **Bathing Areas**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 104, 'Bathing Areas'.

(c) **Kilaiyur**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-18, Page No. 121, 'Kilaiyur'.

(d) **Early Medieval Port Cities**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-20, Page No. 138, 'Early Medieval Port Cities'.

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URBANISATION IN INDIA-1 FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO *c.* 1300

Understanding Urban History

1

INTRODUCTION

Cities emerged in Iraq, Egypt and the Indus Valley about five thousand years ago. Earlier very less number of people were staying in cities. Now people in cities out number those in villages.

Cities have become the greatest points of concentration of humans and their social relationships. Cities see public spectacles, religious and military processions and philosophical disputations. Cities have also been the scenes of violence, crime and the exploitation of urban masses.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

WHAT IS AN URBAN CENTRE?

Urban centres as compared to rural areas have a larger population, higher population density and greater social heterogeneity. Urban community engage in activities consisting of social, cultural, industrial, commercial, religious, artistic, educational, military, political or administrative functions. These activities require people having different kinds of skills and increasing degrees of specialisation. Every urban centre has the powerful rich living in the lap of luxury and poor outcastes performing unpleasant but necessary tasks. An urban centre performs activities like administration, ritual service and trade. Urban centres are home to rich and poor, rulers and the ruled, buyers and sellers, craftsmen and traders. Urban centres emerged when rulers, craft specialists, merchants and the rich people in such societies converged in a small geographical area. The functions of these groups determined the nature of the settlement.

WHAT IS SURPLUS?

Surplus is the produce brought to the city from the village. Urban centres develop various institutional mechanisms to extract food from villages. The mobilisation of surplus might happen in the form of tribute to an urban deity who might be believed to own the land. It might take the form of taxes imposed by the ruler or it might take the form of exchange in return for

goods supplied by craftsmen and merchants from the city. Thus, laws, traditions and belief systems backed by military force are used to transfer agricultural produce to cities.

Since a large number of people with diverse professions live in the city, the relationships among them are impersonal. Also, the inhabitants satisfy an economically substantial part of their daily needs in the local market. Social scientists consider urbanism as a dependent variable. They say urban centres reflect the economic aspect of a broad range of changes happening in a given society. Some scholars feel that the city acts as a container which means that the concentration of rulers and ruled, merchants and buyers, priests and devotees in a small geographical area brings in a qualitative change in the urban areas. This leads to the creation of a new landscape.

The city shows a transformation in the relationship among humans rather than between humans and nature. This transformation in the relationship among humans is called emergence of the state. The human groups that existed earlier were called kinship-based societies. Kinship-based society is usually called 'tribal society'. In tribal societies, the community members are related to each other. The natural resources available in the area are collectively owned. Tribal society does not create structures where wealth or resources are concentrated in a few families. In state societies, the web of kinship systems is modified to give opportunities to a few families to hoard wealth and enforce special control over human and natural resources.

Unlike tribes, states are based on the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of kings, priests and traders. The origin of cities is linked with a form of organisation that is characterised by impersonal contacts which are difficult to sustain through individual memory. The language of a king's command or a merchant's exchange needs to be precise. Even minor errors of verbal command can turn it into Chinese whispers. Thus, written records came to play an important role and the invention of writing happened.

WHAT IS URBAN HISTORY?

Urbanisation is the process by which the rural world spawned a new kind of settlement called the city. The urban history studies both the processes. The study of urban history is the study of change in legal-institutional, demographic and cultural processes. Urban history studies the economic, political, social and spatial systems that created this form of settlement.

URBANISM AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT

The study urban history has evolved in the last hundred years by learning from various disciplines. The study of urbanism requires a comparative and interdisciplinary method of study.

For example, an issue like water supply to Delhi needs an understanding of power structures, engineering practices and ecology of the region. Social science disciplines like sociology, economics and political science could deepen our understanding of Delhi.

URBANISM AND COMPARATIVE METHOD

Comparative research method identifies, analyses and explains similarities and differences across societies, nations and continents. It helps in understanding what is common to all cities and what sets them apart. It helps us observe continuities and change in urban process. Comparisons help us understand long-term patterns and changes in food habits, routines of waking, work and sleep, shapes of houses and modes of dress. It also gives us insights into the interaction between large global processes and local processes.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF URBANISM

Urban history is different from social or economic history since it approaches the city in its totality, the way a city is planned, designed, built, inhabited, appropriated, celebrated, despoiled and discarded. A city comprises all these variables in a given historical situation. Its landscape, imaginary and real, is the creation of its inhabitants. The denizens of the city are thus accorded an agency of their own. The study of urbanism not only includes kings and conquerors but also includes common people.

Modern Studies of Urbanism: Henri Pirenne and Max Weber

Since the start of the 20h century, historians like Henri Pirenne traced long-term patterns of change as part of the urban revolution in Europe. Pirenne studied the institutional processes that linked Europe and Asia. He stated that the European cities that emerged after the tenth century were the result of opening of trade routes with Asia. He interpreted the crusades as a covert war for opening trade routes. He saw the decline of feudalism in Europe was directly related to the new forms of organisation that emerged in medieval cities. Pirenne defined the European city as part of the big picture that redefined the histories of religion and feudalism.

Max Weber explored a deeper history of urbanism by pointing out that the European city of the Renaissance were a unique form of organisation that had no precedent in history and no parallels in China, India or the Arab world. He pointed out that in the pre-modern world cities represented a system of institutions dominated by political power. Besides an urban community, cities included fortifications, a market, a court and powerful professional groups that enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy.

Scholars consider pre-modern cities as 'parasitic' and modern cities as drivers of growth. The value system of pre-modern cities was governed by kingship, kinship, family and religion. In modern cities, rational and instrumental values are more important and alignments and conflicts along class lines are more pronounced.

Study of Urbanism in the USA

The Chicago School made the city of Chicago their field of observation and used scientific measurement, quantification and comparison for the study. Scholars like Louis Wirth studied urbanism in socio-psychological and historical-structural terms. They studied how land use had changed with different patterns of industrialism and changes in the social structure.

The tradition of 'Cultural Ecology' which emerged in the 1950s tried to understand urbanism as a result of dynamic interaction of humans, environment, technology and social structure. Scholars have tried to understand the process of urbanisation in places like Sumer, Egypt or the Indus Valley. Scholars like Jacobsen and Adams explained the decline of Sumerian cities as a result of excessive use of water from irrigation channels. These irrigation channels turned productive agricultural fields into salt marshes. Scholars argue that the decline of the Harappan civilisation was caused by ecological imbalance.

URBANISM AND MODERNITY

Modernity is the cultural concomitant of industrial capitalism with its notions of individualism and homogenisation of everyday practice. The construction of town halls of monumental scale with impressive clock towers in Europe is understood as the imposition of a new time discipline. The town hall symbolised a shift of power from traditional institutions like the church to a democratically elected town council.

Another group of scholars focussed on the built space of cities. They discussed the disappearance

of streets and sidewalks and connected it to the disintegration of the urban community. They studied the larger issues involved in the creation of super blocks and wastelands of deprivation that were neatly divided by freeways and underpasses.

URBAN HISTORIES AND THE 'CULTURAL TURN'

'Cultural Turn' means a shift to studying the experiential aspect of urbanism. Scholars tried to shift from grand theories and explanations to local knowledge and localized explanations of change. These studies tried to study the notions of structural explanations in terms of global categories like economy or politics. A large number of historians focused on micro histories of localities, issues related to gender, sexuality, subjectivity, race and caste. Scholars studied the process of the constitution of identities based on class, race, gender and sexuality.

Since the 1970s, there has been an awareness of the history of masculinity in the construction and management of urban spaces. Scholars have pointed out that ideas about public spaces and domestic space are inflected with male centric ideology. Historians of urbanism have also discussed issues of governmentality which means the creation of an apparatus that disciplines and controls the inhabitants of a city.

UNIT END EXERCISE

Q. 1. State the chief markers of an urban centre.

Ans. An urban centre is characterized by a variety of distinct features that differentiate it from rural settlements. One of the primary markers is its larger population and higher population density, as cities tend to be hubs of human activity where people live in close proximity. This density leads to greater social heterogeneity, meaning that people from diverse backgrounds, professions, and social groups coexist in the same space. Unlike rural communities, where agriculture is the predominant occupation, urban centres have a significant proportion of the population engaged in non-agricultural activities such as administration, trade, industry, education, and various service sectors. These economic activities necessitate a high degree of specialization, with individuals performing distinct yet interdependent roles, such as traders, craftsmen, industrial workers, religious functionaries and political administrators.

The presence of vertical hierarchies of power is another defining characteristic of urban centres. In cities, power is often concentrated among a select few who control resources, administration, and governance. This typically includes rulers, government officials,

religious leaders, merchants, and industrialists, who shape the social and economic structure of the city. The urban landscape is often marked by economic disparities, with the wealthy and influential enjoying privileges while the poor and marginalized are relegated to the lower strata of society, often engaging in menial labour or services that are essential but undervalued.

A crucial aspect of urban centres is their function as administrative, commercial, and cultural hubs. Many cities historically emerged around centres of power, such as palaces, temples, or trade routes. While agriculture may still exist in the peripheries of some cities, it does not define the urban economy. Instead, cities are known for their markets, industries, and political institutions. Historically, rulers and merchants have played a significant role in establishing cities, bringing together people of different professions to sustain and expand economic activity. The presence of a governing authority, often in the form of a state, is integral to urban centres, as cities require organized administration, infrastructure, and law enforcement to function effectively.

Urban centres also exhibit a high degree of mobility and communication. Unlike rural communities, where relationships are often kinship-based, urban life is marked by impersonal and transactional relationships driven by economic and social utility. This has historically necessitated advancements in record-keeping, leading to the development of writing and bureaucracy. Written records have played a crucial role in maintaining order, facilitating trade, and ensuring the smooth functioning of administrative processes.

Furthermore, urban centres act as focal points for cultural and intellectual activities. Cities have long been the birthplaces of artistic movements, religious institutions, and educational establishments. They house temples, churches, mosques, and universities, attracting scholars, priests, and philosophers who contribute to the intellectual and cultural growth of society. The presence of large public spaces such as marketplaces, town squares, and amphitheaters facilitates social interaction, entertainment, and public discourse.

In essence, an urban centre is more than just a settlement with a large population; it is a complex and dynamic space where economic, political, social, and cultural forces intersect. It thrives on diversity, specialization, and governance, shaping the course of human civilization over time. Whether in ancient cities like Mohenjodaro or modern metropolises like New York, urban centres continue to be the epicentres of power, trade, and cultural evolution, influencing societies on a broad scale.

Q. 2. What are the processes involved in the creation of surplus? Discuss its role and importance in the emergence and sustenance of a city.

Ans. Surplus means the produce brought to the city from the village. Surplus might happen in the form of tribute to an urban deity who might be believed to own the land. It might take the form of taxes or it might take the form of exchange in return for goods supplied by craftsmen and merchants from the city. Laws, traditions and belief systems backed by military force are used to transfer surplus to cities.

Surplus is essential for the cities since they do not produce food. Urban community engage in activities consisting of social, cultural, industrial, commercial, religious, artistic, educational, military, political or administrative functions. Cities are based on the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of kings, priests and traders. The origin of cities is linked with a form of organisation that is characterised by impersonal contacts which are difficult to sustain through individual memory.

Q. 3. What is urban history? Why do we need to study urban history through the lenses of many disciplines?

Ans. Urban history is the study of cities and urbanization over time. It examines the development, transformation, and influence of urban centers on human societies. Urban history looks at how cities emerged, expanded, and changed due to various economic, political, social, and cultural factors. It explores the relationship between cities and their rural surroundings, the organization of urban spaces, and the experiences of city dwellers.

Historically, urbanization has been linked to major societal changes, such as the rise of states, industrialization, and globalization. Urban history seeks to understand these processes by studying patterns of settlement, governance, infrastructure, and everyday life in cities.

Why Do We Need to Study Urban History Through Many Disciplines?

The study of urban history benefits from multiple disciplinary perspectives because cities are complex entities shaped by various interrelated factors. The interdisciplinary approach enhances our understanding of urban processes by incorporating insights from:

History: Provides chronological analysis of how cities developed and evolved over time, focusing on key events, policies, and transformations.

Sociology: Examines urban society, social structures, and how different groups interact within the city.

Economics: Analyzes trade, industrialization, labor markets, and the economic roles of cities.

Geography: Studies urban space, land use, and environmental factors that influence urban development.

Anthropology: Explores cultural aspects of urban life, including traditions, identities, and community structures.

Political Science: Investigates governance, urban planning, and policies that shape city life.

Architecture and Urban Planning: Looks at city design, infrastructure, and how physical spaces impact social interactions.

Environmental Studies: Assesses the impact of cities on natural resources, sustainability, and climate change.

For example, understanding how water supply systems function in a city like Delhi requires knowledge of engineering (for infrastructure), geography (for water sources), economics (for resource allocation), and politics (for governance and distribution). Similarly, studying urban inequality requires insights from history (how social divisions emerged), economics (income distribution), and sociology (class and identity).

By integrating these disciplines, urban history provides a holistic perspective on how cities have shaped human civilization and continue to influence our world today.

Q. 4. Discuss the importance of comparative method for the study of urbanism?

Ans. The **comparative method** plays a crucial role in the study of urbanism by enabling researchers to analyze similarities and differences across cities, societies, and historical periods. Cities have emerged and evolved under diverse conditions, shaped by economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental factors. By comparing urban centers across different regions and time periods, scholars can identify common patterns of urban development, understand unique city-specific characteristics, and explore broader trends in urbanization. The comparative approach allows for the recognition of universal urban experiences while acknowledging local variations in governance, spatial organization, social structures, and economic functions. For example, ancient cities like Rome, Baghdad, and Beijing shared some structural and administrative features but differed significantly in their planning, economic foundations, and cultural influences. Such comparisons help historians and urban scholars determine the extent to which external factors, such as trade routes, political power, and environmental conditions, influenced city development.

One of the key advantages of the comparative method is that it broadens our perspective beyond