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# Urban Centers and Their Functions in Medieval Karnataka

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‘Urbanization’ is an interesting subject which is attracting the scholars very much in recent times, because the subject speaks about the changes in the society from rural condition to urban situation, with all the necessary developments.

The process of urbanization is not a new phenomena. Since the ancient period this process is continuing. For e.g. all the ancient dynasties of both north and south have had their urbanization. The Indus Valley Civilization, Mauryan Empire, Gupta Empire, the Muhammadans and host of other dynasties in the north have shown us the urban process in their archaeological remains and there are also the literary evidences to prove this process.

In South India also the Satavahanas, Pallavas, Cholas, Chalukyas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagara Empire and other dynasties witnessed the urban situation in their economy and the society. Though this process was there, serious research has not been made on the urbanization in Medieval Karnataka, except for a light touch given by Dr . A Appadorai ,<sup>1</sup> Dr . G. R. Kuppaswamy<sup>2</sup> and Dr . G. S. Dikshit<sup>3</sup> who give a generalised view about the process of urbanization in medieval Karnataka. But no one has ever described the features of urbanisation. Hence I found it necessary to contribute something about the features of urbanization along with the availability of literature and the archaeological source materials.

In the general sense of the term, urbanization means, changing situation in the villages, which transforms the village life of the town or patnam. But we cannot distinguish the village from the town in their life sketch. Because in some matters, both of them contains the same features. But for study convenience, we must have some sort of differences in them and it is quite certain, that we will see the differences.

According to J. Clyde Mitchell “Urbanization as being the process of becoming urban, moving to cities, changing from agriculture to other pursuits, common to cities and correspondingly changing of behavioural patterns”.<sup>4</sup>

‘Urbanization’ means the way of life which is above the life of a village and this is called the life of the town or pattana a natural consequence of the consolidation of the Aryan tribal system into large states and kingdoms was the general development of the village settlements into larger towns and cities planned on the same principles in which the different villages united were grouped around the royal palace.<sup>5</sup>

The site for the construction of the town was always chosen in a place that was well wooded, fertile with supplies of water and food and not too far from the hill.<sup>6</sup> the towns were well fortified with several lined of forts intercepted by deep and impassable moats.<sup>7</sup>

## I. FEATURES OF URBANIZATION

It is noticeable in urbanization everywhere that the factors of site and situation have considerable impact upon the nature of the urban area. Site refers to the actual physical characteristics of the location on which a city or town is built. The situation refers primarily site with other parts of the area in which the town is located to the region of which it is a part, and even with many of the larger towns, the nation and other nations. It denotes the sites at rivers, tanks, channels for immigration and invasion, site of ports, fairs, markets for trade and commerce.<sup>8</sup>

Another feature was the town, which was required to construct good roads, wells and reservoirs, public parks and orchards, taverns, temples and “garden tanks filled with lotus” and gorges and chatrams for travellers to rest in.<sup>9</sup>

The most pertinent feature was the existence of religion, education and the government. For e.g. the religions followed by the construction of temples, most nearly provide focus in an urban residential life. Jatras, festivities, gathering etc., ceremonial occasions made all people of different religions to come and settle in a particular town which makes it a secular town. Education invite the teachers, students for thought and training. The government makes the people to avail the public transport system.



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Urbanization had the feature of Puras the extension of townships numbering from two to seven as per the town's importance and the population strength.<sup>10</sup>

Another living feature was the individual, who occupies a prominent position in the economy. The urbanite for his status, drew largely upon wealth accruing primarily from trade and merchandise, therefore it was often, than not a precarious, reliance upon the whims of markets. The urbanite lived in the world of his own creation, breaking frequently the frontiers of the social order fixed by his forefathers. The urbanite developed heterogenous social relations, a much bigger and complicated contact and an international outlook.

A special feature of the urbanization was the existence of several Mutts or Mathas and the Agraharas in the towns, meant for higher learning and the study of the Sastras and also the ghatikas, supporter of piety and mines of enjoyment, which were attracting the students from all corners to get the advantage of the facilities provided in pursuit of knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

In the process of urbanization the town consists of all the eighteen castes as Setties, Ankakaras, Gaundas, Gavareyas and others and the town was to be governed by the corporation, which was there to perform the works of merit.<sup>13</sup>

One more feature was the administration of the twins by the Merchant guilds, Nigama Sabhas, some times expanding themselves into an assembly of citizens of which the Pattanaswami was the head.<sup>14</sup> It was also featured with the composition of an assembly, which had the Mayor, the Senabova, Manigara and of trading guilds.<sup>15</sup>

Yet another feature of urbanization was the social-economic structure revealing the existence of the division of labour. For e.g. in Somanathapura town, the groups within the structure were engaged in non-productive occupations offered primarily by the temple complex. No doubt, it had the support of a productive economy.<sup>16</sup>

Sometimes the urbanization was featured by the Prabhus (headmen) and the inhabitants agreed among themselves to make their village into a town and to make their village into a town and establish a weekly fair in it and were giving a charter to the town. For e.g. during the reign of Narasimha III of the Hoysals dynasty, the headmen and the people of Moguru agreed to convert their village into a town, by establishing a fair.

Besides they have given a charter stating that the people who constructed the houses in the new town were exempted to pay the taxes and the outsiders were being invited to come and settle in the new town.<sup>17</sup> Some other times the temple complex was also featured in the process of urbanization. For e.g. a governor of Puligere converted the village Puligere into a town or pura which was around the Jaina temple. Besides, he has also invited the artisans, priests, dancers and others to come and settle in the new town.<sup>18</sup>

In several times, Brahmins caused the process of urbanization by establishing a town and making the town a Metropolis. For e.g. Balligave in Shimoga district, was established by the ParavarumPrajegum or Brahmanas and the inhabitants.<sup>19</sup> The town Sundi was also established by the Brahmanas and Chetties.<sup>20</sup>

Above mentioned are some of the features of urbanization in Medieval Karnataka found in my research work. I hope scholars would view this attempt as the beginning and make all the effort contribute for the development of this field systematically.

**END NOTES:**

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- [3] Dikshit G. S. : Local-self Government in Medieval Karnataka.
- [4] Clyde Mitchell, J. :Urbanization ,Detribalization and Stabilization in south Africa, p,693 ff.
- [5] Krishna Rao, M. V. : The Gangas of Talkad, p. 158
- [6] Ibid, p. 159.
- [7] Pampa, Adipurana 6 Asvayapadya 102, 103.
- [8] Breese, Gerald : Urbanization in newly developing countries, New Delhi 1969, p. 3.
- [9] E. C. Vol. V, Ak.82
- [10] E. C.Vol. V, Ak.178
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- [15] E.. C.VII, Sk. 94.
- [16] Shivanna K.S. ; a Critique of Hoysala Polity, p.70.
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- [19] 19. E.C. VII Sk. III.
- [20] 20. Dikshit, G. S. : Local-self Government in Medieval Karnataka, p. 156.