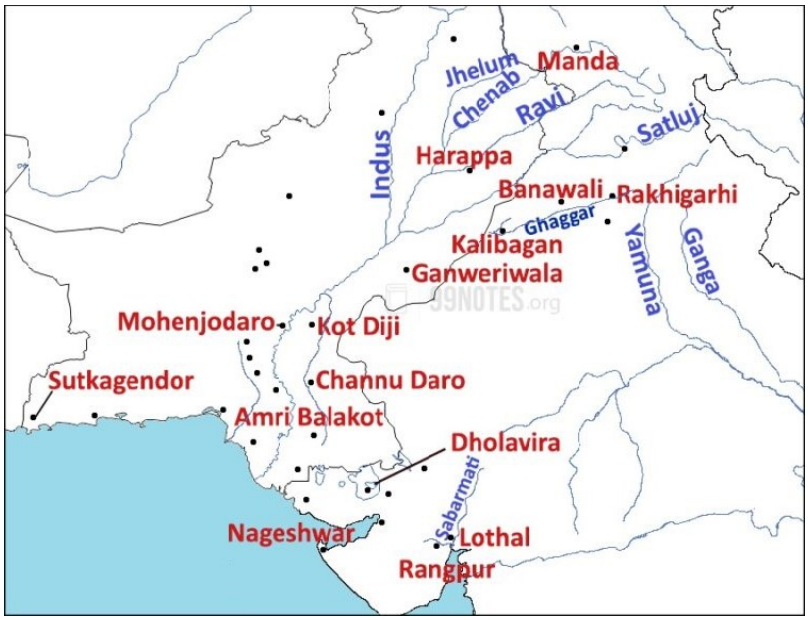
# Rise and fall of cities in India

## Why in News?

India has undergone five urbanisations evolving from the mercantile Harappan period to the post-independence industrial cities.

## What was the first urbanization?

- **Indus Valley Urbanization** - First urbanisation was under the mercantile Harappans in the north-western part of India.
- **Period** – 2500 to 1900 BCE
- It was a vast civilisation, spread over a large geography, larger than any of the other contemporaneous ones in Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia.
- **Indus Valley Civilization Cities**
  - Harappa and Mohenjodaro  in present-day Pakistan.
  - Rakhigarhi in Haryana
  - Kalibangan in Rajasthan
  - Dholavira and Lothal in Gujarat.



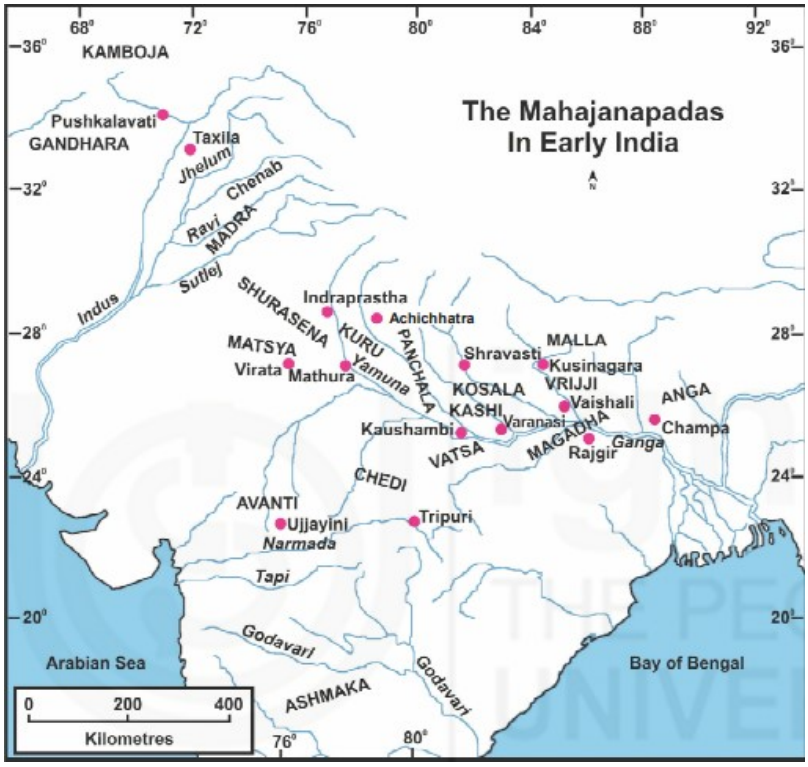

- **Characteristics of Harappan Cities**
- **Grid Layout** - The cities were meticulously planned with a grid layout, featuring wide, intersecting streets with separate entry and exit to control movement.
- **Standardized Brick Construction** - Buildings were built using standardized bricks in 1:2:4 ratio, suggesting a centralized system of production and distribution.
- **Citadels** - Many cities had fortified citadels, likely used for defense or administrative purposes.
- **Drainage Systems** - The cities boasted sophisticated drainage systems, including

underground pipes and covered drains, to prevent flooding and maintain sanitation.

- **Water Supply Systems** - Wells and reservoirs were used to supply water to the city's inhabitants.
- **Granaries and Warehouses** - Large granaries and warehouses were found, indicating a well-organized system of food storage and distribution.
- **Great Bath** - Mohenjo-Daro featured a large, rectangular structure known as the Great Bath, possibly used for ritual cleansing or bathing.
- **Assembly Hall** - Harappa had a large, rectangular building that may have served as an assembly hall or meeting place.
- **Trade and Commerce** - The cities were involved in extensive trade, with evidence of long-distance trade networks
- Dholavira and Lothal were both significant centers of maritime trade.
- **Art and Crafts** - The Indus Valley people were skilled artisans, producing a variety of artifacts, including pottery, seals, and jewellery.

## What was the second Urbanization?

- **Mahajanapadas** - The second urbanisation happened 1,500 years after Harappa.
- **Period** - 500 BCE
- **Aryan Arrival** - Around 1500 BCE, the Aryan or Indo-European people came from Southern Russia, through the Oxus, bringing with them horses.
- These were mostly men, intermarrying with the local women, changing the makeup of the local DNA.
- Over time, they moved further east, into the Gangetic Plain.
- Ganga plains established trade relations with the Indus plains and beyond.
- **Cities** - Taxila, Pataliputra, Rajagriha, Shravasti, Kashi, Kaushambi and Ujjain




- **Characteristics**
- **Fortified Cities -** Many of these cities were fortified with walls and gates to protect

them from attacks.

- **Diverse Cultures -** Due to their geographical locations, these cities often exhibited diverse cultural influences.
- **Centralized Administration -** Magadha's cities were characterized by a centralized administration, with a strong king and a well-organized bureaucracy.
- **Religious Centers -** Many of these cities like Kashi were important religious centers, attracting pilgrims and scholars from across the region.
- **Mercantile cities** - Merchant activity played a pivotal role in shaping the urban landscape of the Mahajanapada and Magadha periods due to expansin of trade networks.
- **Trade Route** - Cities located on major trade routes, such as Taxila, Pataliputra, and Ujjain, experienced rapid growth due to their strategic positions.
- Toll taxes became important to protect the highways.
- **Emergence of New Philosophies** - The rise of Buddhism and Jainism was closely intertwined with the growth of trade and mercantile activity.
- Buddhist literatures provided information about the urbanization of this period.
- **First Coinage** - The first punch-marked coins in India were minted by the Mahajanapadas and merchant guilds of this region.
- **Fall of Trade** – Around the 5th Century CE, with the fall of Rome , an important trading partner , and the invasion of the Hunas, the merchants lost their importance.
- With the Trade fell, and the Mahajanapadas began to disintegrate.

## What was the third urbanization?

- **Temple urbanisation** - The 3rd urbanisation took place as Temple Cities across South India and Southeast Asia.
- **Period** – 7th to 12th Century
- By the 10th Century Chola period, full-blown temple urbanisation emerged.
- **Cities** – Madurai, Kancheepuram, Thanjavur, Srirangam
- **Characteristics**
- **Temple Center** - Temple was the nerve centre of political and economic activity, surrounded by markets, courtiers, and courtesans.
- **Spiritual and Cultural Hubs -** Temples were centers of spiritual and cultural activities, hosting religious ceremonies, festivals, and educational institutions.
- This attracted scholars, artists, and craftsmen, further contributing to the development of the city.
- **Pilgrimage Centers -** Temples often served as important pilgrimage sites, attracting devotees and contributed to the growth of surrounding settlements.
- **Rise of Agriculture** - These Cities were more agricultural than mercantile.
- After the 4th-5th Century, when export-led mercantile trade fell, agriculture and Agri based activities started gaining prominent economic activity.
- **Devadana Lands -** Temples often received endowments of land and other resources, which generated income through agriculture, trade, and other economic activities.
- **Brahmadeya** - Around the time Buddhism was slowly declining and Brahmadeya or donations to Brahmins/temples started emerging.
- **Society** - These temples had Brahmin priests, Kshatriya patrons, Vaishya merchants, artists, etc.

- **Changes in Society** - Endogamy flourished and the caste system solidified.

## What was the fourth Urbanization?

- **Muslim Metropolis** - The 4th urbanisation is the Muslim Metropolis of Delhi sultanate and Mughal empire.
- **Period** - 12th to 17th Century CE.
- According to Abu-l Fazl, in 1594 there were 2837 towns of which 180 were named as larger cities.
- **Cities**
  - Delhi sultanate – Delhi, Hisar, Hansi, Sirsa, Meerut, and Aligarh.
  - Mughal Cities - Agra , Fatehpur Siki, Lahore, Sikandra, Shahjahanabad

- **Characteristics**
- It was primarily agricultural.
- **Feudal System** - The courtiers were paid by giving them a share of the village wealth.
- **Religious Character** - Sufism, Dargahs (shrines), and Pirs became important.
- The Jama Masjid becomes a central site in these cities.
- **Cultural Centers** – Lahore, Agra were renowned cultural center under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, known for its poetry, music, and arts.
- **Bazaars and Markets -** Vibrant bazaars and markets catered to the needs of the population, offering a wide range of goods and services.
- **Fusion of Architectural Styles** - Mughal architecture often incorporated elements from Persian and Islamic styles, resulting in a unique and distinctive aesthetic.

## What was the fifth Urbanization?

- **Postcolonial cities** – 5th urbanisation is the colonial and post-colonial cities.
- Colonial administration had created a new urban, industrial and imperial landscape.

- **Period** - 17th Century onwards.
- **New Factors** - Forces of international trade, mercantilism and capitalism now came to define the nature of society.
- **Colonial Cities**
  - **British Colonial Cities** – Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Shimla
  - **French Cities** – Pondicherry , Mahe
  - **Portuguese Cities** – Goa, Diu, Daman
  - **Dutch** – Masulipatinam
- **Characteristics**
- Colonial cities reflected the mercantile culture of the European.
- **The big coastal cities** — Mumbai, Chennai, Calcutta, Kochi began as fortified settlements of the colonial powers, either the Portuguese or the Dutch or the French or the British.
- **European bases** - European commercial Companies had set up base in different places early during the Mughal era
  - Portuguese in Panaji in 1510
  - Dutch in Masulipatnam in 1605
  - British in Madras in 1639
  - French in Pondicherry in 1673.
- **Trading Centers** - With the expansion of commercial activity, towns grew around these trading centres.
- **Economic Capitals** - After the Battle of Plassey in 1757, expansion of trade made colonial port cities such as Madras, Calcutta and Bombay rapidly emerged as the new economic capitals.
- **Hill Stations** – Development hill stations Shima, Ooty were a distinctive feature of colonial urban development.
- **Cultural Integration** - Building with Indian and European cultural mix Indo Saracenic style was created.
  - **Churches, cathedrals** – Bom Basilica in Goa, Santhome Church
  - **Administrative buildings** –Fort St. George , Fort St. William.

## How the cities are developed post-independence?

- **Post Independence Cities** – Growth of planned cities due to Industrialization and State reorganization.
- **Capital Cities** – New capital cities were constructed with the emergence of new States during state reorganization.
  - **Chandigarh** - Designed by Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier.
  - **Bhubaneswar** – It was selected to be the capital of Odisha in 1948 by integrating the temple town into its planning and the needs of modern administration.
  - **Gandhinagar** – It was formed in 1960 as capital of Gujarat.
- **Industrial Cities** - With heavy industrialisation, part of India's Five Year Plans, industrial cities like Bhilai, Jamshedpur, and Rourkela.

## Reference

[The Indian Express | Rise and fall of cities in India]