

Towns, Traders and Craftspersons

Some Important Terms

1. **Mandapika or mandi:** A place to which nearby villagers brought their produce to sell.
2. **Haat/Hatta:** Market streets lined with shops.
3. **Devadasis:** Temple dancers.
4. **Emporium:** A place where goods from diverse production centres are brought and sold.
5. **Hundi:** It is a note recording a deposit made by a person. The amount deposited can be claimed in another place by presenting the record of the deposits.
6. **Factor:** Official merchant of the East India Company.

Textbook Exercises

LET'S RECALL

1. **Fill in the blanks:**

- (a) The Rajarajeshvara temple was built in
- (b) Ajmer is associated with the Sufi saint.....
- (c) Hampi was the capital of the Empire.
- (d) The Dutch established a settlement at..... in Andhra Pradesh.

Ans. (a) Thanjavur (b) Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti (c) Vijayanagara (d) Masulipatnam.

2. **State whether true or false:**

- (a) We know the name of the architect of the Rajarajeshvara temple from an inscription.
- (b) Merchants preferred to travel individually rather than in caravans.
- (c) Kabul was a major centre for trade in elephants.
- (d) Surat was an important trading port on the Bay of Bengal.

Ans. (a) true (b) false (c) false (d) false

3. **How was water supplied to the city of Thanjavur?**

Ans. The perennial river Kaveri flows near the city of Thanjavur. It was from this river water was supplied to the city. Other sources were wells and tanks.

4. **Who lived in the "Black towns" in cities such as Madras?**

Ans. The native traders, craftspersons, merchants and artisans lived in the "Black Towns" in the cities such as Madras.

LET'S UNDERSTAND

5. **Why do you think towns grew around temples?**

Ans. Temples were often central to the economy and society. Rulers built temples to demonstrate their devotion to various deities. They also endowed temples with grants of land and money to carry out elaborate rituals, feed pilgrims and priests and celebrate festivals. Pilgrims also flocked to the temples also made donations. Temple authorities used their wealth to finance trade and company. Gradually a large number of priests, workers, artisans, traders, etc. settled near the temple to cater to its needs and those of the pilgrims. Thus towns emerged around temples.

6. **How important were craftspersons for the building and maintenance of temples?**

Ans. Craftspersons played an important role in building and maintenance temples. Their importance in this field can be assessed easily by the following examples. The craftspersons of Bidar were so famed for their inlay work in copper and silver that it came to be called Bidai. The Panchalas or Viswakarma community, consisting of gold smiths, black smiths, masons and carpenters were essential to the building of temples. Weavers emerged as prosperous communities, making donations to temples.

7. Why did people from distant lands visit Surat?

Ans. Surat was an important port on the west coast of India subcontinent during medieval period. It was an emporium of western trade during the Mughal period. It was the gateway for trade with West Asia via the Gulf of Ormuz. It has also been called the gate to Mecca because many pilgrims ships set sail from here. The city was cosmopolitan and people of all castes and creeds lived there. In the 17th century the Portuguese, Dutch and English had their factories and warehouses at Surat. There were also several retail and wholesale shops selling cotton textiles. The textiles of Surat were famous for their gold lace borders (zari) and had a market in West Asia, Africa and Europe. The state built numerous rest- houses in the city. All the above mentioned factors encouraged the people from all over the world to visit Surat.

8. In what ways was craft production in cities like Calcutta different from that in cities like Thanjavur?

Ans. Craft production in Calcutta: Craftspersons were not free to produce what they wanted. Instead they had to produce according to the demand of the East India Company. They were made to move into Black Towns established by the European companies. The only buyer of their products was the East India Company. They had to work on a system of advances which meant that they had to weave cloth which was already promised to European agents. Weavers no longer had the liberty of selling their own cloth or weaving their own patterns. They had to reproduce the designs supplied to them by the Company agents.

Craft Production in Thanjavur: The crafts persons were independent. They were free to produce what they wanted. They usually lived close to temples. Hence they had to dearth of buyers of their products. Weavers were free to sell their own cloths. They could weave by their own patterns. They never needed to reproduce the same designs. Also, they didn't have to work on a system of advances.

LET'S DISCUSS

9. Compare any one of the cities described in this chapter with a town or a village with which you are familiar. Do you notice any similarities or differences?

Ans. We can compare New Delhi, the capital of India—with Thanjavur, the capital city of Cholas.

Some of the similarities that we notice are as follows:

- (i) Parliament House from where the whole country is governed, is situated here.
- (ii) Supreme Court, the place of justice, is also located here.
- (iii) It is a commercial place. Business flourishes here.
- (iv) People from all over India visit this place.
- (v) Job opportunities are in plenty. Hence sometimes people come here to settle down.

Some of the differences that we notice are as follows:

- (i) Unlike Thanjavur, the size of the city of Delhi is much larger.
- (ii) It is expanding very fast.
- (iii) Law and order situation is not proper. Hence illegal activities are on increase.
- (iv) Delhi is becoming overcrowded day by day. The reason behind it is that people from distant places come here in pursuit of job and finally they settle down.

10. What were the problems encountered by merchants? Do you think some of these problems persist today?

Ans. The merchants had to pass through many kingdoms and forests. They had fear of being robbed while passing through forests. Hence they usually travelled in caravans and formed guilds to protect their interests. Great Indian traders like Mulla Abdul Ghafur and Virji Vora who owned a large number of ships competed with them. But the European Companies used their naval power to gain control of the sea trade and forced Indian traders to work as their agents. These were the problems encountered by the then merchants. There is no exaggeration if we say that some of these problems still exist today.

LET'S DO

11. Find out more about the architecture of either Thanjavur or Hampi, and prepare a scrap book illustrating temples and other buildings from these cities.

Ans. Do it yourself.

12. Find out about any present day pilgrimage centre. Why do you think people go there? What do they do there? Are there any shops in the area? If so, what is bought and sold there?

Ans. Vaishno Devi temple in Kashmir is a pilgrimage centre where thousands of devoted people visit everyday to seek the blessings of the Goddess. They worship the Goddess and offer 'prasad'. Yes, there are many shops in the area. The shopkeepers, who are local merchants and traders, sell prasad. They also sell different types of woollen clothes at reasonable price.