

Chapter – 8: Villages, Towns and Trade

Iron Tools and Agriculture

- Iron tools – now a days – part of daily lives
- Use of iron – started 3000 years ago – largest collection – iron tools and weapons – found in megalithic burials
- 2500 years ago – evidence of growing use of iron tools
- Axes for clearing forests – iron ploughshare (imp. for increasing agriculture)

Other Steps to Increase Agriculture – Irrigation

- Kings and kingdoms – read about – could not exist without help of villages
- New tools, transplantation – increased agriculture – irrigation was also used – canals, wells, tanks, artificial lakes

Who Lived in the Villages?

- Southern and northern parts – 3 kinds of people
- Tamil region –
 - Large landowner – *vellalar*
 - Ordinary ploughmen – *uzhavar*
 - Landless labourers (including slaves) – *kadaisiyar* and *adimai*
- Northern part – village headmen – *grama bhojaka* – men from same family – held position – hereditary post
- *Grama bhojaka* – largest landowner – slaves and hired workers – cultivate land
- He was powerful – king used him – collect tax from village – also worked as judge and policemen
- Other independent farmers – *grihapatis* – small landowners
- Men and women – *dasa karmakara* – no land – worked on other's land
- Most villages – some craftspersons – blacksmith, potter, carpenter, weaver

The earliest Tamil compositions

- Earliest work in Tamil – *sangam* literature – 2300 years ago
- These text – known as *sangam* – composed and compiled in assemblies (*sangams*) of poets – in Madurai

Coins

- Archeologists – found several thousand coins – belonged to this period
- Earliest coins – used for 500 years – punch-marked coins

Punch-marked coins

- Generally rectangular or sometimes square and circle
- Cut out of metal sheets – OR – made of metal globules
- Coins – not inscribed – BUT – stamped with symbols – using dies and punches
- These coins – found over most parts of subcontinent – circulated till early centuries CE

Other means of exchange

- Carry white paddy – exchange with salt
- Travel in carts – along with families
- Salt merchants – left cities – cities become empty

Cities with Many Functions

- Single town – imp. – variety of reasons – Mathura
- Mathura – imp. settlement – more than 2500 years – located at crossroads of 2 major routes –
 - Northwest to east
 - North to south
- Fortifications around city – several shrines
- Farmers and herders – provided food for city
- Mathura – also a centre – fine sculptures
- 2000 years ago – Mathura – 2nd capital of Kushanas
- Mathura – also a religious centre – Buddhist monasteries, Jaina shrines – imp. centre – worship of Krishna
- Several inscriptions – found on stone surface and statues in Mathura
- These inscriptions – short – recording gifts – by men and women – to monasteries and shrines
- Inscriptions made by – kings and queens, officers, merchants, craftspersons – lived in the city
- Inscriptions from Mathura – mention – goldsmiths, blacksmiths, weavers, basket and garland makers, perfumers

Crafts and Craftspersons

- Archeological evidence for crafts also found – extremely fine pottery – Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW)
- Such name – found in northern part
- From texts – evidence – manufacture of cloth – imp.
- Famous centres – Varanasi in north – Madurai in south – men and women worked here
- Many craftspersons and merchants – formed associations – *shrenis*
- These associations – provided training, arranged raw material, distributed final product
- They organized trade – also worked as banks
- Rich men and women – deposited money – invested and part of interest – returned or used to support religious places

Rules for spinning and weaving

- These rules – mentioned in *Arthashastra* – describe – weaving and spinning – done in workshop – supervision of special official
- Widows, differently abled women, nuns, retired women servants – help in processing wool, bark, cotton, hemp, flax
- They should be paid according to quality and quantity of work
- Women – not allowed to leave home – send maids – acquire raw material – send finished product back
- Women – visit shop – visit at dawn – enough light to examine work – submit work and receive wages – superintendent – talks about anything else – should be punished

- Women – do not complete work – has to pay fine – thumbs can be cut off

A Closer Look – Arikamedu

- 2200-1900 years ago – Arikamedu (Pondicherry) – coastal settlement – ships unloaded goods
- Massive brick structure – may be a warehouse – found here
- Other finds – pottery from Mediterranean region –
 - Amphorae – double-handled jars – contained wine or oil
 - Arretine ware – red-glazed pottery – made by – pressing wet clay into stamped mould
 - Another kind of pottery – made locally – Roman designs used
- Small tanks found – may be dyeing vats – used to dye cloth
- Many evidence – making of beads – semi-precious stones and glass

An account by a Greek sailor – The story of Barygaza (Greek for Baruch)

- Gulf – very narrow at Barygaza – very hard to navigate
- Ships – steered in by local fishermen – employed by the king
- Imports were – wine, copper, tin, lead, coral (sea animals), topaz (crystals), cloth, gold and silver coins
- Exports were – plants from Himalayas, ivory, agate (crystals), carnelian (crystals), cotton, silk, perfumes
- Special gifts by merchants – for the king – vessels of silver, singing boys, beautiful women, fine wine and cloth

Trade and Traders

- Northern Black Polished Ware – fine pottery – bowls and plates – found at several sites – traders – carried them to other places – sell them
- South India – famous for gold, spices, pepper, precious stones
- Pepper – most valued in Roman Empire – known as black gold
- Many traders – carried goods to Rome – by ships, caravans
- Must be lot of trade – lots of Roman gold coins found in South India
- Traders – explored many sea routes
- Some followed the coasts – others across Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal – sailors took advantage of monsoon winds – cross the seas more quickly
- Reach western coast from East Africa – sail with south-west monsoon – sturdy (healthy) ships – long journeys

New Kingdoms Along the Coasts

- Southern half of subcontinent – long coastline – hills, plateaus, river valleys – Kaveri's valley – most fertile
- Chiefs and kings – controlled river valleys – became more powerful
- *Sangam* poems – mention *muvedar* – Tamil word – meaning 3 chiefs – heads of 3 ruling families – Cholas, Cheras, Pandyas – became powerful in South India – 2300 years ago
- Each chief – 2 centres of power – one on land – other on the coast

- Out of 6 cities – 2 more imp. –
 - Puhar or Kaveripattinam – port of Cholas
 - Madurai – capital of Pandyas
- Chiefs – did not collect taxes – demanded gifts from people
- Went on military expeditions – collected wealth from other lands – kept some with themselves – distributed rest with others
- Many poets' composition – found in *sangam* – composed praising chiefs – rewarded poets – precious stones, gold, horses, elephants, chariots, fine cloth
- 200 years later – dynasty – Satavahanas – became powerful in western India
- Most imp. ruler – Gautamiputra Shri Satakarni – known from inscriptions by his mother – Gautami Balashri
- All the Satavahana rulers – known as lord of *dakshinapatha* – route to south – used as name for southern region
- He sent army to eastern, western and southern coasts

Silk Route and the Kushanas

- Some kings – controlled – large portions of routes
- This happened – benefit from taxes, tributes, gifts – brought by traders – in return – protected traders from robbers
- Best-known rulers – Kushanas – ruled over Central Asia and north-west India – 2000 years ago
- 2 major centres of power – Peshawar and Mathura – Taxila was also included
- During their rule – part of Silk Route – extended from Central Asia to seaports of river Indus – silk – shipped to the Roman Empire