

CLASS: 7
HISTORY
CHAPTER 6 – Towns, Traders and Craftspersons
MODULE- 2/4
HANDOUT

- **A NETWORK OF SMALL TOWNS**

- From the eighth century onwards several small towns emerged in **the** subcontinent.
- These towns emerged from large villages. They usually had a **mandapika** (called as mandi in later times) to which nearby villagers brought their produce to sell. They also had market streets called **hatta** or (hatt in the later times) lined with shops.
- There were streets for different kinds of artisans such as potters, oil pressers, sugar makers, toddy makers, smiths, stonemasons, etc.
- Many traders came from far and near to these towns to buy local articles and sell products of distant places like horses, salt, camphor, saffron, betel nut and spices like pepper.
- **Samanta [Zamindar]** – Usually a samanta or, in later times, a Zamindar built fortified palace in or near these towns and levied taxes on traders artisans and articles of trade. They donated right to collect taxes to local temples which had been built by themselves or by rich merchant.

- **TRADERS BIG AND SMALL-**

- There were many kinds of traders. These included **the Banjaras**. Several traders especially horse traders, formed associations, with headmen who negotiated on their behalf with warriors who bought horses.
- Traders had to pass through many kingdoms and forests, they usually travelled in caravans and **formed guilds** to protect their interests. **Manigramam and Nanadesi** were most famous guilds in south India.

- **Major Communities:**

- There were also communities like the **Chettiars** and the **Marwari Oswal** who went on to become the principal trading groups of the country.
- Gujarati traders, such as **Hindu Baniyas and Muslim Bohras**, traded extensively with the ports of the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, East Africa, Southeast Asia and China. They sold textiles and species in these ports and, in exchange, they brought gold and ivory from Africa; and spices, tin, Chinese blue pottery and silver from South Asia and China.

- **Spices and Cotton Cloth**

- The towns on the west coast were home to Arab, Persian, Chinese, Jewish and Syrian Christian traders.
- Indian spices and cloth sold in the Red Sea ports were purchased by Italian traders and eventually reached European markets, fetching very high profits.
- They became an important part of European cooking, and cotton cloth was very attractive. This eventually drew European traders to India.

- **KABUL-**
 - Kabul became politically and commercially important from sixteenth century onwards. Kabul and Qandahar were linked to the Silk Route. Besides, trade in horses was carried on through this route. Camels carried dried fruits, dates, carpets, silks and even fresh fruits from Kabul to the subcontinent and elsewhere.
 - **The Craftspersons of Bidar :**
 - The crafts persons of Bidar were so famous for their inlay work in copper and silver that it came to be called Bidri.
 - **Panchalas and Vishwakarma** community, consisting of goldsmiths, bronzesmiths, blacksmiths, masons and carpenters, were essential to the building of temples. They also played an important role in the construction of palaces, big buildings, tanks and reservoirs.
 - Weavers such as the **Saliyar or Kaikkolars** emerged as prosperous communities, making donations to temples. Some aspects of cloth making like cotton cleaning, spinning and dyeing became specialized and independent crafts.
 - **Murshidabad** [West Bengal] situated on the banks of Bhagirathi River was major centre for silks and became the capital of Bengal in 1704. It declined in the course of the century due to competition from cheap mill- made cloth from England
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Key Words:

Guilds: An association of craftsmen or merchants who followed the same profession.