

# HISTORY

## Chapter 8: Vital Villages, Thriving Towns



## Vital Villages, Thriving Towns

### Agricultural Production

Many kingdoms in ancient India flourished due to an increase in the agricultural production. The reasons which led to a substantial increase in the agricultural production are:

- The increasing use of iron helped in the growth of agricultural production. Iron tools such as axes helped in the clearing of forests and iron ploughshares were used for plowing the land.
- The system of transplantation of rice and irrigation works such as wells, canals, tanks etc. also led to an increase in the agricultural production.



**The increasing use of iron tools increased the agricultural production**

#### Other steps to increase production:

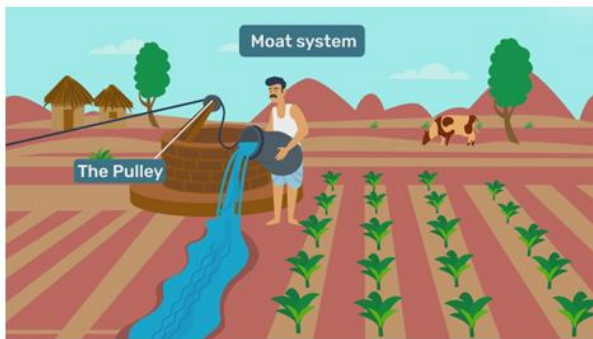
irrigation The kings and kingdoms you have been reading about could not have existed without the support of flourishing villages. While new tools and the system of transplantation (Chapter 6) increased production, irrigation was also used. Irrigation works that were built during this time included canals, wells, tanks, and artificial lakes.

#### Villages and People

Villages were largely inhabited in the northern and southern part of the Indian subcontinent by mainly three kinds of people:

- In the Tamil region, the big land owners were known as vellalar. Uzhavar were the ordinary ploughmen while landless labourers including slaves were known as kadaiyiar and adimai.
- In the north, the head of the village was known as the grama bhojaka. He was the largest landowner and generally collected taxes for the king. He also employed several slaves and workers to work on his farm.

- The gram bhojaka also acted as a judge or policeman whenever the need arose.
- Independent farmers who owned small lands in the villages were known as grihpatis.
- There were many landless labourers in the villages who worked on the lands of big landowners. They were called dasa karmakaras.
- Many craftsmen such as potters, blacksmiths, weavers, spinners and carpenters also resided in the villages.



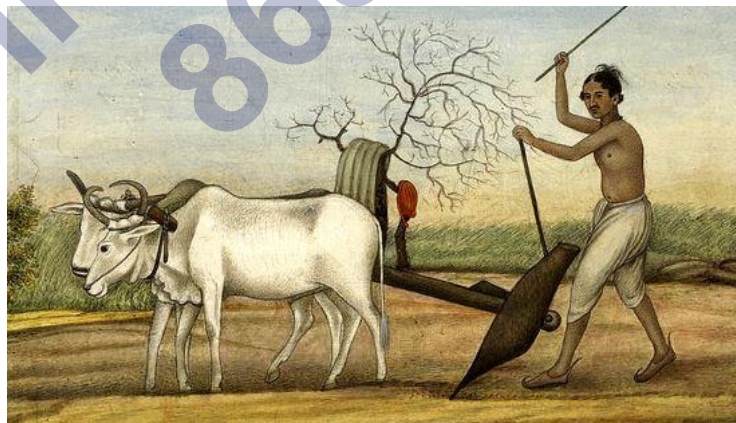
Wells



Tanks



Canals



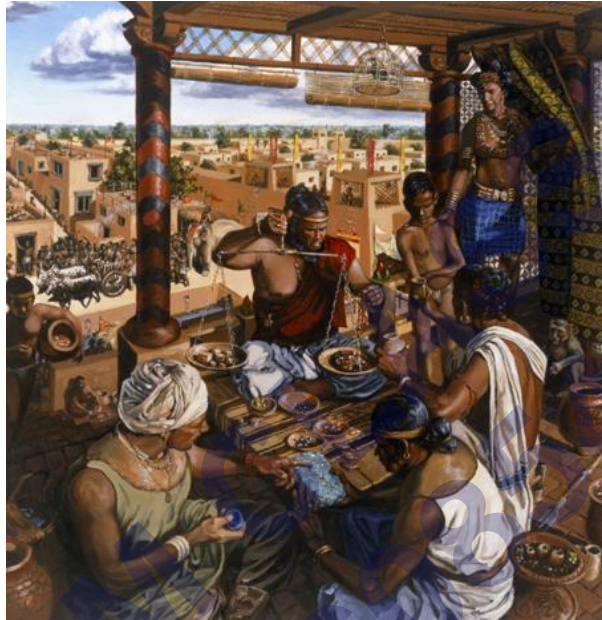
Farmers working as labourers in the lands of big land owners came to be known as dasa karmakaras

### Crafts and crafts persons

We also have archaeological evidence for crafts. These include extremely fine pottery, known as the Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW). It gets its name from the fact that it is generally found in the northern part of the subcontinent.

Remember that the archaeological evidence for many crafts may not have survived. We know from texts that the manufacture of cloth was important. There were famous centres such as Varanasi in the north, and Madurai in the south. Both men and women worked in these centres.

Many crafts persons and merchants now formed associations known as shrenis. These shrenis of crafts persons provided training, procured raw material, and distributed the finished product. Then shrenis of merchants organised the trade. Shrenis also served as banks, where rich men and women deposited money. This was invested, and part of the interest was returned or used to support religious institutions such as monasteries.



## Cities in the Past

We get information about the various cities of the past from written and archaeological sources.

- The Jatakas were stories which were composed by ordinary people but were written down and preserved by the Buddhist monks.
- These stories throw light on the occupations, social and economic conditions of the people of those times.
- Many images and scenes illustrating the lives of the people living in villages and cities were carved as sculptures. These were an important source of the past.
- Many capital cities were surrounded by large walls and gates. These helped the archaeologists in understanding the geographical and economic condition of the cities of the past.
- In several houses of the cities, rows of pots or ceramic rings arranged on top of each other have been found. These are known as ring wells. They were probably used as drains or garbage dumps
- The accounts left by early sailors and travellers who visited various cities also formed an

important source of the past. One unknown Greek sailor has left an account of the port of Bharuch in Gujarat. He observed that in the ports, the ships were steered by skilled fishermen who were employed by the king. He also recorded that commodities such as copper, tin, lead, gold and silver coins were imported, while ivory, plants of the Himalayan region, cotton and silk were exported.

- Several coins have been found by the archaeologists. The earliest coins which have been found were in use about 500 years ago. These were called punched marked coins as designs were punched onto the metal.
- The Northern Black Polished Ware, a type of pottery, has been excavated from many parts of Northern India. This gives us important information on the economic activities of the people at that time.
- Through various texts and manuscripts, we have come to know that the manufacture of cloth was an important economic activity. Varanasi in the north and Madurai in the south were important cloth manufacturing centres.
- Written evidences also tell us that various crafts persons and merchants had formed their own associations known as shrenis. These shrenis provided training related to trade practices to the people. They also arranged for raw materials and distributed finished goods to the people. People even deposited their money in these shrenis.





A punch marked coin



Northern Black Polished Ware was so called as it was generally found in the northern region of the Indian subcontinent and was black in colour with a shiny surface

### Mathura- A City which Performed Many Functions

Mathura was an important centre as it was located at a strategic position at a cross road leading from the northwest to the east and north to south. The city was fortified and is still known for fine pieces of sculptures.

Mathura became the second capital city of the Kushanas. It was later developed into a religious centre. Mathura had Buddhist monasteries, Jain shrines and many Hindu temples devoted to Lord Krishna.

Many inscriptions have been found on the stone and statues in Mathura. These contain written records of various gifts made by the kings, queens, merchants, officers etc. to the monasteries and shrines.



**Mathura was a famous religious center in ancient India.  
It had Buddhist monasteries, Jain shrines  
and several temples devoted to Lord Krishna.**

### **The Port of Arikamedu**

Arikamedu is a port in Pondicherry which had a coastal settlement about 2,000 years ago. Many ships unloaded their goods here. The remains of a great warehouse have been discovered from this site. Many pots from the Mediterranean region such as amphorae, red glazed pottery (also known as Arretine Ware, named after a city in Italy) etc. have been found here. This pottery was made by pressing wet clay into a stamped mould. Many Roman lamps, glassware and gems have also been discovered at this site.

Small tanks have been found in Arikamedu, which were perhaps used to dye the cloth. Many beads were also made out of glass and semi-precious stones.



**The Port of Arikamedu**

### **Coins**

You may have noticed how wealth is measured in terms of coins in the story on page 90.

Archaeologists have found several thousands of coins belonging to this period. The earliest coins which were in use for about 500 years were punch marked coins, such as the one shown below.



### **Sangam Literature**

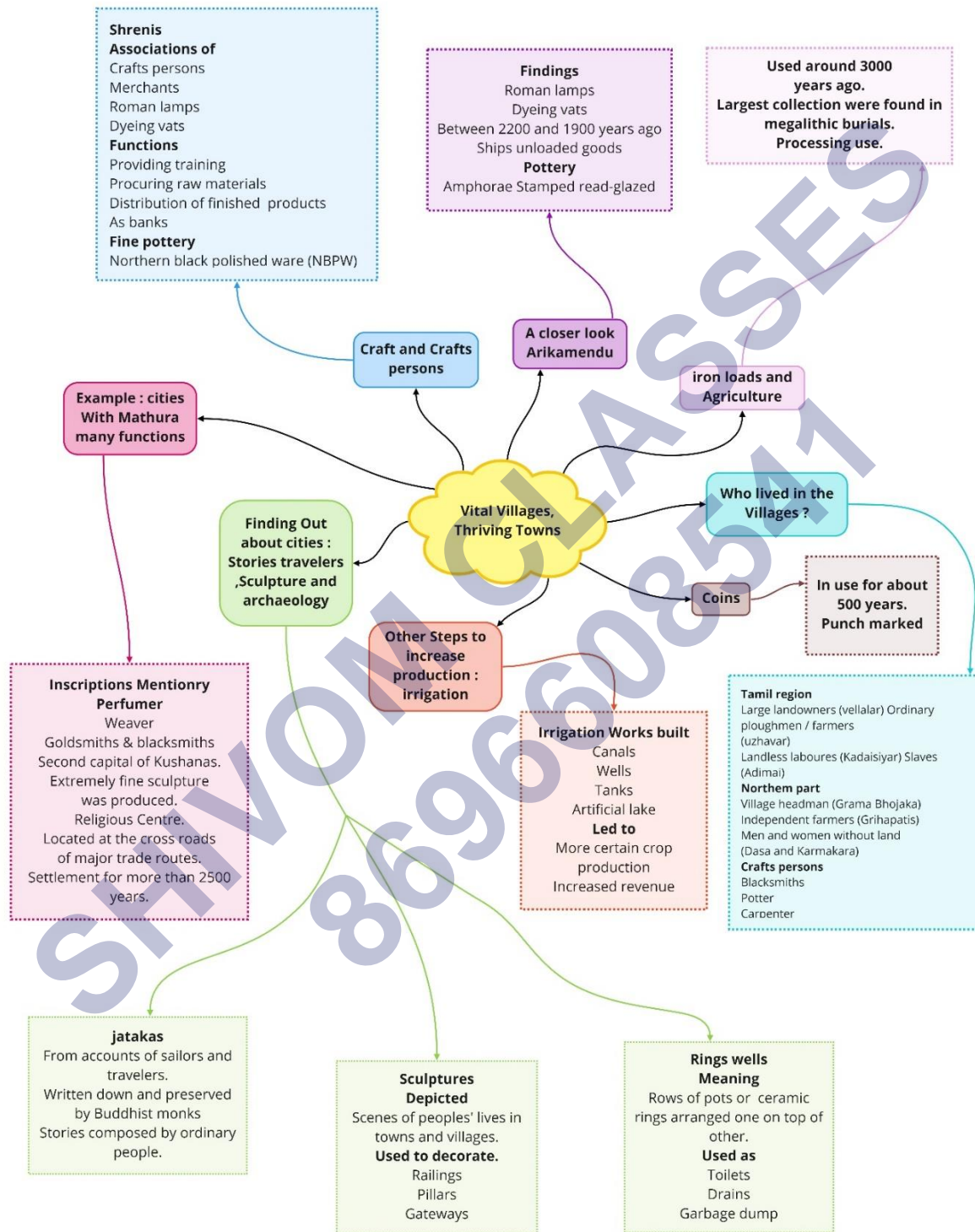
- Sangam literature refers to the earliest literary works in the Tamil language.

- These works were composed about 2300 years ago.
- They are called Sangam as they were composed and compiled in assemblies of poets which were held in the city of Madurai.
- They also form an important source of information of this period.





Class : 6th Social Studies (History)  
Chapter - 8 : Vital Villages, Thriving Towns



## Important Questions

### ➤ Multiple Choice Questions:

Question 1. Shrenis were:

- (a) Associations of farmers
- (b) Associations of slaves
- (c) Associations of women
- (d) Associations of artisans and merchants.

Question 2. Mathura has been an important settlement for more than:

- (a) 5000 years
- (b) 4000 years
- (c) 3000 years
- (d) 2500 years

Question 3. Roman designs were found in:

- (a) Mathura site
- (b) Samath Site
- (c) Arikamedu site
- (d) Pataliputra

Question 4. Rules for spinning and weaving are mentioned in Arthashastra:

- (a) Chapter 8
- (b) Chapter 10
- (c) Chapter 12
- (d) Chapter 15

Question 5. What was not found in Arikamedu?

- (a) Bricks structure which may have been warehouse.
- (b) Pottery along with Roman pottery.
- (c) Small tanks for dyeing the cloths.
- (d) Making of beads from semi-precious stones and glass.
- (e) Emblem.

Question 6. There is evidence for the growing use of iron tools:

- (a) Around 2500 years ago

- (b) Around 3000 years ago
- (c) Around 3500 years ago
- (d) Around 4000 years ago

Question 7. Canals, wells, tanks and artificial lakes specially contribute in:

- (a) Building houses
- (b) Irrigation
- (c) Animal bath
- (d) Rearing of animals

Question 8. Jatakas are:

- (a) Stories composed by ordinary people
- (b) Stories composed by Sangams
- (c) Text composed by Buddhist monks
- (d) Text composed by Kings

Question 9. Who described all the ports he visited?

- (a) Megasthenes
- (b) An Italian sailor
- (c) An unknown Greek sailor
- (d) None

Question 10. The design of earliest coins were:

- (a) Punched to the metal
- (b) Engraved on the metal None.
- (c) Colouring on the metal
- (d) None

Question 11. Some of the largest collections of iron tools and weapons were found in the:

- (a) Sanchi stupas
- (b) Mehrgarh
- (c) Megalithic burials
- (d) Ring wells

Question 12. Which of the following was the means of irrigation that were built around 2500 years:

- (a) Canals
- (b) Wells
- (c) Artificial lakes
- (d) All of these

Question 13. An assembly of gathering of literacy persons:

- (a) Satembly
- (b) Satyam
- (c) Sangam
- (d) Sagar

Question 14. Archaeologists have found rows of pots, or ceramic rings arranged one on top of the other. These are known as:

- (a) Canals wells
- (b) Tank wells
- (c) Tube wells
- (d) Ring wells

Question 15. Mathura became the second capital of \_\_\_\_\_

- (a) Mauryas
- (b) Kushanas
- (c) Pallavas
- (d) Guptas

➤ **Match The Following:**

|    | Column-I          |    | Column-II |
|----|-------------------|----|-----------|
| 1. | Ploughmen         | A. | Vellalar  |
| 2. | Landless labourer | B. | Uzhavar   |
| 3. | Large landowner   | C. | Kadaiyyar |

➤ **Fill in the blanks:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ was a word used for large landowners in Tamil.
2. The gramabhojaka often got his land cultivated by the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Ploughmen were known as \_\_\_\_\_ in Tamil.

4. Most grihapatis were \_\_\_\_\_ landowners.
5. Punch marked coins were made of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ are tall double-handled jars that contained liquids such as wine or oil.

### ➤ Write true (T) or false (F):

1. Grama Bhojaka also functioned as a judge, and sometimes as a policeman.
2. Mathura was an important centre for the worship of Lord Shiva.
3. The Tamil terms are found in Sangam literature.
4. Ring wells were used for bathing.
5. Stamped red-glazed pottery, known as Arretine Ware.

### ➤ Very Short Questions:

1. When did the use of iron begin in the subcontinent?
2. What does vellalar mean?
3. Why were Varanasi and Madurai famous?
4. Where were some of the largest collections of iron tools found?
5. How wealth is measured during early times?
6. What were Shrenis?
7. How did Dasa Karmakara earn a living?
8. Who was called Grama Bhojaka?
9. Who was Dasa Karmakara?
10. What is Sangam literature?
11. What was Arikamedu during ancient India?
12. What were aqueducts?
13. What do you understand by Jatakas?
14. What are ring wells?
15. Make a list of the occupations of people who lived in Mathura.

### ➤ Short Questions:

1. What were ring wells used for?
2. Why the earliest coins which were in use for about 500 years were called punch marked coins?

3. Why some of the earliest works in Tamil, known as Sangam literature?
4. List all the women who could be employed by the superintendent.
5. What kinds of inscription have been found in Mathura?

### ➤ Long Questions:

1. Who lived in the village?
2. What are the ways of finding out about early cities?
3. What has been found in the archaeological excavations at Arikamedu?
4. What were the functions performed by Shrenis?
5. Mathura has been an important settlement for more than 2500 years. Give reasons.
6. Write a short note on Grama Bhojaka.

### ANSWER KEY –

### ➤ Multiple Choice Answer:

1. (d) Associations of artisans and merchants.
2. (d) 2500 years
3. (c) Arikamedu site
4. (a) Chapter 8
5. (d) Making of beads from semi-precious stones and glass.
6. (a) Around 2500 years ago
7. (b) Irrigation
8. (a) Stories composed by ordinary people
9. (c) An unknown Greek sailor
10. (a) Punched to the metal
11. (c) Megalithic burials
12. (d) All of these
13. (c) Sangam
14. (d) Ring wells
15. (b) Kushanas

### ➤ Match The Following:

|  | Column-I |  | Column-II |
|--|----------|--|-----------|
|  |          |  |           |

|    |                   |    |           |
|----|-------------------|----|-----------|
| 1. | Ploughmen         | B. | Uzhavar   |
| 2. | Landless labourer | C. | Kadasiyar |
| 3. | Large landowner   | A. | Vellalar  |

➤ **Fill in the blanks:**

1. Vellalar
2. Slaves and hired workers
3. Uzhavar
4. Smaller
5. Silver
6. Amphorae

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F):**

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True

➤ **Very Short Answer:**

1. Use of iron in the subcontinent began about 3000 years ago.
2. In the Tamil region, large landowners were known as vellalar.
3. Both were famous centres for manufacturing of cloth.
4. These were found in the megalithic burials.
5. Wealth is measured in terms of coins.
6. Many crafts persons and merchants formed associations known as shrenis.
7. Dasa Karmakara had to earn a living working on the fields owned by others.
8. In the northern part of the country, the village headman was known as the grama bhojaka.
9. There were men and women who did not own land were known as the dasa karmakara.
10. Some of the earliest works in Tamil, known as Sangam literature, were composed around 2300 years ago.

11. Between 2200 and 1900 years ago, Arikamedu was a coastal settlement where ships unloaded goods from distant lands.
12. Huge aqueducts were the channels to supply water which were built to bring water to the city for the baths, fountains and toilets.
13. These were stories that were probably composed by ordinary people, and then written down and preserved by Buddhist monks.
14. In many cities, archaeologists have found rows of pots, or ceramic rings arranged one on top of the other. These are known as ring wells.
15. The main occupations of the people were goldsmiths, blacksmiths, weavers, basket makers, garland makers, perfumers.

### ➤ Short Answer:

1. These seem to have been used as toilets in some cases, and as drains and garbage dumps. These ring wells are usually found in individual houses.
2. They have been given this name because the designs were punched on to the metal — silver or copper.
3. These texts were called Sangam because they were supposed to have been composed and compiled in assemblies (known as sangams) of poets that were held in the city of Madurai.
4. Widows, young women who are differently abled, nuns, mothers of courtesans, retired women servants of the king, women who have retired from service in temples, may be employed by the superintendent.
5. Generally, these are short inscriptions, recording gifts made by men (and sometimes women) to monasteries and shrines. These were made by kings and queens, officers, merchants, and crafts persons who lived in the city.

### ➤ Long Answer:

1. There were at least three different kinds of people living in most villages in the southern and northern parts of the subcontinent. In the Tamil region, large landowners were known as vellalar, ordinary ploughmen were known as uzharvar, and landless labourers, including slaves, were known as kadaiyiar and adimai.
2. **Ways of finding out about early cities are:**
  - Sculptors carved scenes depicting peoples' lives in towns and villages, as well as in the forest.
  - Archaeologists' findings such as found rows of pots, or ceramic rings arranged one on top of the other.



- Accounts of sailors and travellers who visited them.
- 3. Findings in the archaeological excavations at Arikamedu were:**
- A massive brick structure, which may have been a warehouse, was found at the site.
  - Other finds include pottery from the Mediterranean region, such as amphorae and stamped red-glazed pottery, known as Arretine Ware, which was named after a city in Italy.
  - Roman lamps, glassware and gems have also been found at the site.
- 4. Functions performed by Shrenis were:**
- These shrenis of crafts persons provided training, procured raw material, and distributed the finished product.
  - Then shrenis of merchants organised the trade.
  - Shrenis also served as banks, where rich men and women deposited money. This was invested, and part of the interest was returned or used to support religious institutions such as monasteries.
- 5. Reasons:**
- It was important because it was located at the cross roads of two major routes of travel and trade – from the northwest to the east and from north to south.
  - There were fortifications around the city, and several shrines.
  - Farmers and herders from adjoining areas provided food for people in the city.
  - Mathura was also a centre where some extremely fine sculpture was produced.
- 6. Grama Bhojaka:**
- In the northern part of the country, the village headman was known as the grama bhojaka.
  - Usually, men from the same family held the position for generations. In other words, the post was hereditary.
  - The grama bhojaka was often the largest landowner.
  - Generally, he had slaves and hired workers to cultivate the land.
  - Besides, as he was powerful, the king often used him to collect taxes from the village.
  - He also functioned as a judge, and sometimes as a policeman.