Chapter – 6 History

Town, Traders and Craftspersons

- One of the most interesting aspects of the medieval period in the 17th century was the growth of urbanization.
- The Arabs, Turkish and Afghans settled in many parts of the country leading to the evolution of towns and cities.

• Sources of Knowing About the History of this Period:

- (i) The sources of history are travelers' accounts.
- Monserrate, Flitch, Thomas Roe, Domingo Paes, Nicolo Conti and Abdul Razzaq Samarqandi wrote aboute the life of this period.

• Court Towns:

- (i) Some of the important court towns were Lahore, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Delhi.
- (ii) Fatehpur Sikri was the new capital founded by Akbar.
- (iii) Delhi was known as Shahjahanabad and was buit by Shah Jahan in 1639.

• Port and Trading Towns:

- (i) Some towns developed as ports due to their proximity to the sea shore.
- (ii) Some major ports were Cambay, Surat, Broach, Masulipatanam, Nagapattinam, etc.

• Administrative Towns:

- (i) Some towns were capital citites. They were centres of administration.
- (ii) Thanjavur and Uraiyur were important centres.

• Temple Towns and Pilgrimage Centres:

- (i) Temples towns were important centres of urbanization and led to development of cities, economy and society.
- (ii) Pilgrims gave huge donaitons to temples. This wealth was used by temple authorities to finance their trade and banking.
- (iii) Some such important towns were Somnath, Madurai, Trupati, Vrindavan, Ajmer, etc.

• How important was Bronze:

- (i) Bronze is an alloy compound of copper and tin.
- (ii) Chola rulers used this metal to make statues through the 'lost wax' technique.
- Emergence of Small Towns:

- (i) From the 8th century onwards, small towns emerged in India. They emerged from large villages. They had a 'mandapika' where villagers sold their produce.
- (ii) Likewise, there were market streets, called 'hatta', full of shops.
- (iii) Many villagers came to buy local articles and sell products like horses, camphor, saffron betel nut, spices, salt, etc.
- (iv) Normally a Samanta was appointed who fortified the palaces and gave the right to collect taxes from traders, artisans, etc.

• Name of Traders:

- (i) Many kinds of traders existed.
- (ii) Trader travelled in caravans by forming guilds.
- (iii) Trade was done on a regular basis within the peninsula and with South-east Asia and China.
- Some other important traders were the Chettiars, Marwari, Banjaras, Baniyas, Muslim Bohras, etc.

• Crafts in Towns:

- (i) Craft work was famous by the name of Bidri in the region.
- (ii) The goldsmith, bronzesmith, blacksmith, masons and carpenters were together called as the 'Panchalas' or 'Vishwakarma'.
- (iii) Some other crafts were cotton cleaning, spinning and dyeing.