

Towns, Traders and Craftspersons

Q1. 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.

Answer:

- (a) The Rajarajeshvara temple was built in **1010 A.D.**
- (b) Ajmer is associated with the Sufi saint **Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti.**
- (c) Hampi was the capital of the **Vijayanagara** Empire.
- (d) The Dutch established a settlement at **Masulipatnam** in Andhra Pradesh.

Q2. 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.

Answer:

- (a) True
- (b) False
- (c) False
- (d) False

Q3. How was water supplied to the city of Thanjavur?

Answer: Water supply to the city of Thanjavur came from wells and tanks.

Q4. Who lived in the “Black Towns” in cities such as Madras?

Answer: During the eighteenth century, cities such as Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras were formed. During this period, major changes took place as craft and commerce merchants and artisans (such as weavers) transferred to the Black Towns' crafts established by European companies within these new cities. 'Ers blacks' or native merchants and craftsmen were confined here, while 'white' rulers occupied the superior residences of St. George's Fort in Madras or St. William's Fort in Calcutta.

Q5. Why do you think towns grew around temples?

Answer: Towns grew around temples because:

- Temples were central to the economy and the society.
- Rulers endowed temples with grants of land and money to carry out elaborate rituals, feed pilgrims and priests, and celebrate festivals. Pilgrims who flocked to the temples also made donations.
- Temples were centers for commercial activities and craft production.
- Temple authorities used their wealth to finance trade and banking. Also, the large number of pilgrims provided ample opportunities for traders and artisans to conduct business. Some examples of temple towns are Bhilashvamin (Bhilsa or Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh), and Somnath in Gujarat.

Q6. How important were craftspersons for the building and maintenance of temples?

Answer:

- Bronze smiths, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters, and masons contributed to building temples.
- Craftspersons played a crucial role in the building and adorning of temples with gold, silver, alloy-work, and textile and wood products.
- Craftspersons also catered to the needs of pilgrims, thereby forming an important part of the ongoing trade.
- Prosperous weavers also made donations to temples.

Q7. Why did people from distant lands visit Surat?

Answer: People from distant lands visited Surat because it was the gateway of trade with west Asia.

- Surat was the gateway for trade with West Asia via the Gulf of Ormuz. Surat has also been called the gate to Mecca because many pilgrim ships set sail from Surat. –
- In the seventeenth century, the Portuguese, Dutch and English had their factories and warehouses at Surat.
- The textiles of Surat were famous for their gold lace borders (zari) and had a market in West Asia, Africa and Europe.
- The state also had numerous rest-houses to take care of the needs of people from all over the world who came to the city. There were magnificent buildings and innumerable pleasure parks.
- The Kathiawad seths or mahajans (moneychangers) had huge banking houses at Surat. Also, the Surat hundis were honored in the far-off markets of Cairo in Egypt, Basra in Iraq and Antwerp in Belgium.

Q8. In what ways was craft production in cities like Calcutta different from that in cities like Thanjavur?

Answer: Craft production was organized by European companies in cities such as Calcutta where craftsmen were not free to sell their own crafts and textiles. In Calcutta, merchants and artisans (such as weavers) were taken to the 'black town' established by European companies. The 'blacks' or native traders and craftspersons were confined here while the 'white' rulers occupied the superior residencies of St. William Fort in Calcutta. Whereas in Thanjavur, the craftsmen were independent and free to sell their products. They also lived in the vicinity of the temples and the Salia weavers of Thanjavur manufactured flags used in the celebration of the temple, fine cotton, and nobility for the king, and thick cotton cloth for the public.