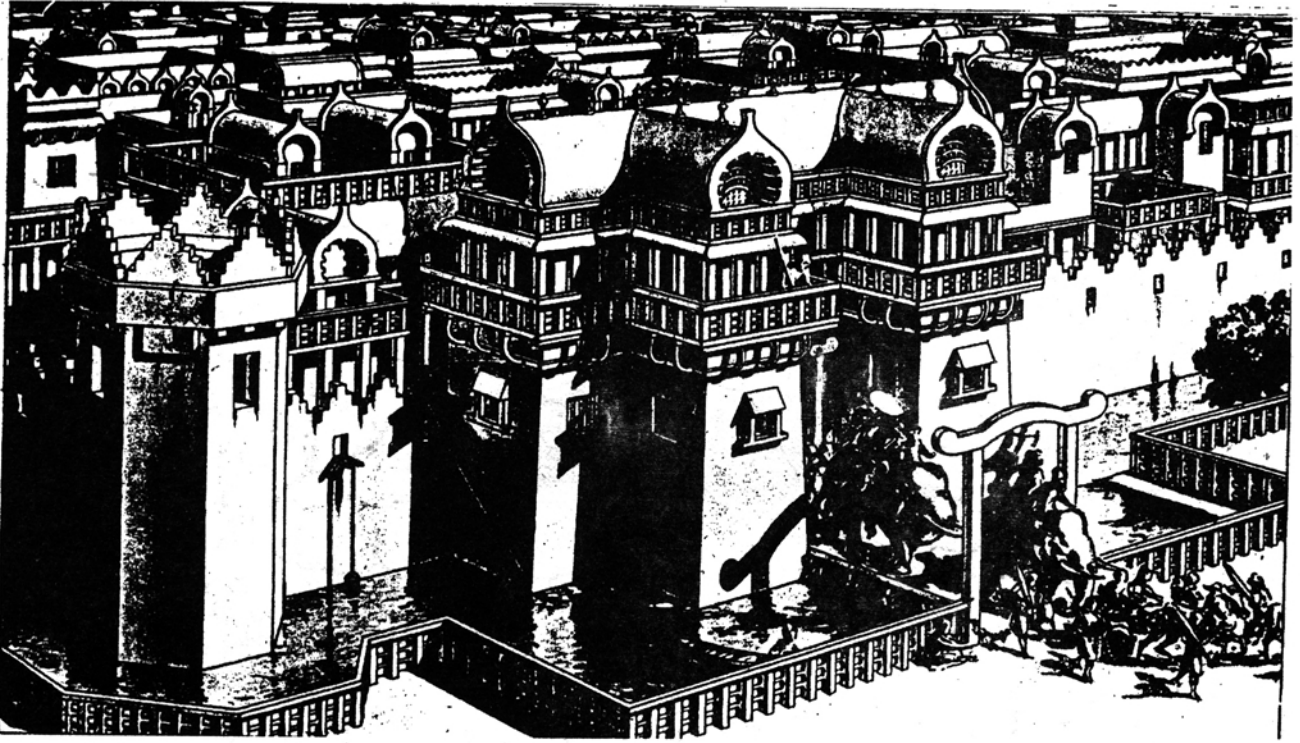


CITIES OF THE MAHAJANAPADAS



Look at the pictures of the cities of the mahajanapadas. Can you guess what kind of people lived in them? Discuss some of the problems faced by people living in cities. Do you think these problems would have existed even in the cities of the mahajanapadas ?

The Emergence of Artisans, Traders and Cities

The age of the *mahajanapadas* was one of major changes. You read in the previous chapter that the kings were becoming powerful and they had begun to employ soldiers and officials. They had also begun to collect taxes from peasants on a regular basis. These changes were having an effect on other things as well. Collection of regular taxes enabled kings to accumulate a lot of wealth. Besides the kings their relatives, army commanders and officials also became wealthy. They now desired to live in luxury and wanted the best weapons, ornaments, utensils, clothes and beautiful palaces.

Some peasants were becoming rich and wanted to possess things of good quality. Seeing the demand for so many goods, some skilled people gave up agriculture. They began to produce vessels, ornaments, weapons, clothes etc., and made their living by selling them. In this way, artisans came into being. In some places fine quality clothes were made, in others sturdy weapons, and in still others, ornaments were fashioned with gold and precious stones brought from far off places.

However, there remained the problem of reaching goods made in different places to the rich people in different cities and villages. Some people thought, "Why not buy goods made by artisans and take them to different

places to sell? If we buy them cheap and sell them for a higher price, we will become rich.” In this way, traders came into being. Traders in those days were called 'Seththis'.

Artisans and traders began to gather around the kings and their officers. The king's settlement slowly grew, and became a city. Very big cities were called 'Mahanagaras'.

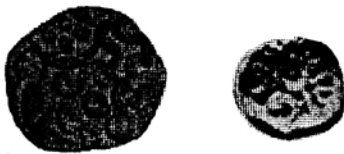
• **Look at Map 6 and name some of the mahanagaras of those times.**

There are two long routes shown on the map one going northwards called the 'Uttarapatha' and one going southwards called the 'Dakshinapatha'. Traders used these routes to take their ware from town to town.

• **List the cities which fall on these routes:**

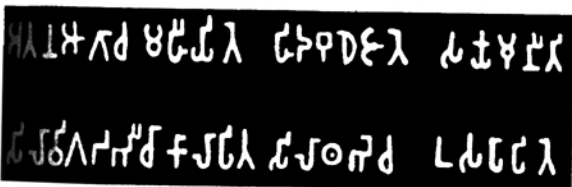
- **Cities of the Northern Route (Uttarapatha)**
- **Cities of the Southern Route (Dakshinapatha)**

There were two other developments during those days. Firstly coins came to be used as a result of increase in trade.



Karshapanas or mashes : the coins of mahajanapadas

Besides, traders too had to maintain records and accounts. Messages and information had to be sent to far off places. The king and his officers also had to keep records of payment of taxes. These developments resulted in the beginning of writing.



Script of the time of the mahajanapadas

• **You have read about the hunter-gatherers. Give three reasons why towns could not develop in those days.**

The Poor of the Cities



Kings, ministers, commanders, traders and other wealthy people began to live in cities. Rich peasants from neighbouring villages also began to flock to the bustling cities, attracted by the glitter and activity. These people needed help in work like cleaning, filling water, washing utensils, weaving flower garlands, keeping the roads clean and carrying loads for the traders. Some poor people began to do such work. In this way, the poor in the cities made their living by serving the rich.

The Poor in the Villages

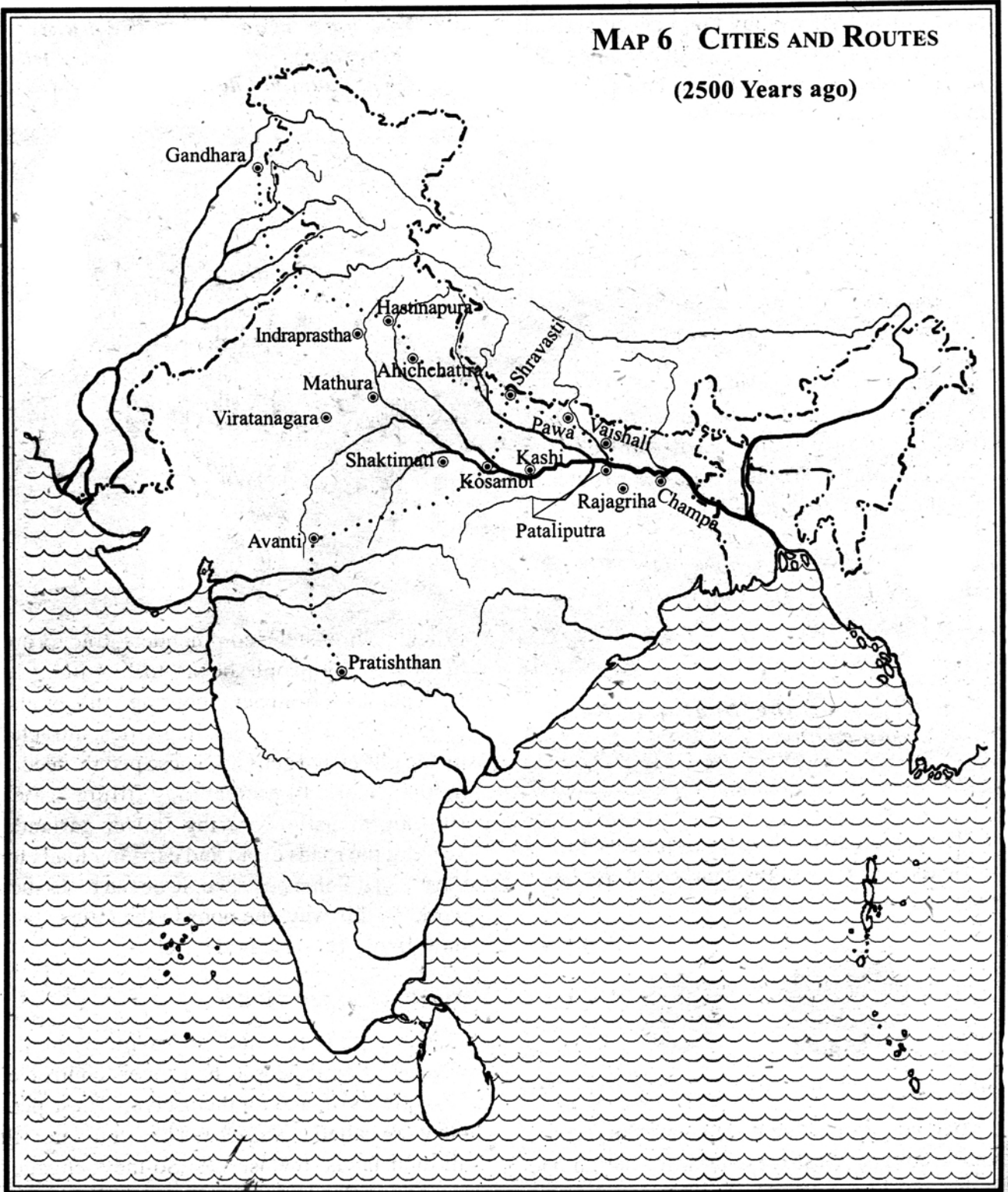
Many changes had taken place in the villages. Some people had taken control of large pieces of land for themselves. These people were called *grihapatis*. They could not till all their lands themselves. So they engaged servants and slaves to work on their lands. The labourers were called 'Kammakaras' and the slaves were called 'Dasas'. Household tasks and work on fields was also done by slaves.

The *grihapatis* were producing so much grain that they started bringing it to the cities for sale. Traders would buy this grain from them and sell it to the city folk.

• **What work did the poor in cities do?**

MAP 6 CITIES AND ROUTES

(2500 Years ago)

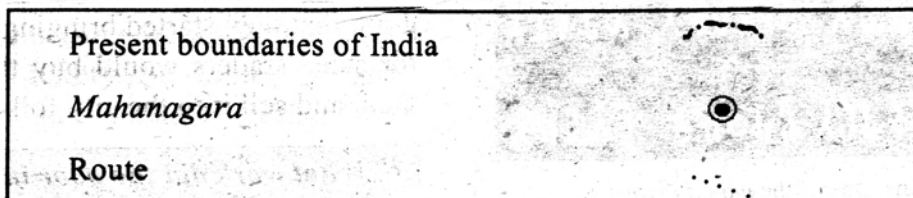


Based upon Survey of India outline map printed in 1987.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

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- *Why did the grihapatis in villages feel the need to have labourers?*
- *How did the city people get grain?*

The Money Game

With the increase in trade, the use of coin money became common. Money could buy anything - a variety of goods, servants, slaves. Nobody cared for people who did not have money. The greed for more and more money led people into lying, betraying each other and stealing.

In the old days, people of a *jana* used to help one another. There was trust amongst them, and they made their living through joint efforts. This way of life was slowly dying out.

Let us read some stories to find out more about the lives, thoughts and desires of the people of the *mahanagaras*.

RANGU'S COIN - A STORY

In a corner of Shravasti, the capital of Kosala mahajanapada, there was a small hut. Rangu and Basanti lived together in this hut. Rangu was a water carrier. Everyday he used to fill up water from the well and supply it to the shops in the market to quench people's

thirst.

Basanti made flower garlands and sold them to the rich. Rangu and Basanti were very poor. They never had enough to eat.

Once, Rangu found a silver coin lying on the road. He kept it very carefully. Well, that was all the wealth he owned!

Anathapindika's Caravan

One day, Rangu was filling water in the earthen pots kept in the shops. Just then, about fifteen bullock carts and five or six camels entered the bazar. The carts and animals were laden with goods. There was much excitement in the bazar; "Setthi Anathapindika's caravan has come!" Anathapindika was one of the big traders of Shravasti. Labourers unloaded the baggage, as the cartmen sat down to rest under a tree.

Rangu gave water to the tired cartmen and then sat with them to chat. One of them began to tell him tales of their journey from Takshashila to Shravasti, passing through many cities on the way. He also told him what the setthi had sold and what he had purchased.



Rangu asked, "Did you also buy anything from those cities?" His eyes gleaming, the cartman replied, "Yes - see this zari cloth. Our generous setthi gave us some money, so I bought this cloth in the bazar at Hastinapur. How do you like it?" Rangu said, "Its very beautiful. You are fortunate to have a master like Anathapindika."

The cartman answered, "Right now, the setthi's nature appears to be good. But who can tell? Maybe he will turn out to be like Kali's mistress." Then, the cartman related the story of Kali's mistress.

Tale of the Courteous Mistress

A rich woman called Videhika lived in Shravasti. She was courteous with everybody, and never got angry. She was known far and wide for her pleasant nature.

A slave woman named Kali used to work in Videhika's house. She used to cook, wash clothes and utensils, sweep and swop, as well as do other household chores with a lot of care. She never gave her mistress any cause for complaint.



One day Kali thought, "Could my mistress really be so good natured? I do all her work, and serve her well. So perhaps there's

no cause for her to be angry." She then decided to put her mistress through a test.

One day she woke up late. Her mistress asked her why she had overslept. The next day also she got up late. Her mistress got angry and rebuked her. But Kali wanted to test her further. When, on the third day she once again got up late, her mistress was so angry that she hit Kali on the head with an iron rod. Kali's head began to bleed profusely. Kali then realised that her mistress did not have a calm and peaceful nature. As long as Kali did all the work efficiently, her mistress was calm. But if she ever woke up late, she would beat her

up in anger.

After listening to the story, Rangu said to the cartman, "You are right, brother. People like setthis and grihapatis don't consider slaves and kammakaras to be worth anything at all."



- What work did Rangu do?
- What had the cartman bought? How did he get the money for it?
- Why did the cartman tell Rangu the story of 'The Courteous Mistress'?
- If there was nobody to do all the work in her house, would the mistress have been good natured to everyone?
- Look at the map and point out the cities which Anathapindika's caravan must have passed through from Takshashila to Shravasti.

Rangu Goes to the Bazar

Having seen the cartman's zari cloth, Rangu felt very much like buying something for Basanti. But where was the money? Suddenly, he remembered that he had a coin. He was delighted, and ran home to get it.

Wandering around in the bazar, he saw a goldsmith's shop. He thought that he could buy a small gold ring. The goldsmith had beautiful ornaments, but they were all very costly. Rangu realised how foolish he had been. He left the shop with his head hanging low.

He wanted to buy some zari cloth for Basanti, so he went to a cloth merchant. He had a lot of expensive cloth. The merchant said, "This zari cloth has come from Kashi. It costs five coins. The coloured cloth is from Ujjayini. Its price is two coins." Rangu had only one coin, so he sadly turned away.

There was a servant working in the cloth shop. He noticed Rangu's downcast face and began to talk to him. Rangu said, "Brother,

give me some ideas about how to earn money." The servant in the shop laughed and replied, "Do you want to know how people are earning money these days? Here, listen to this story."

The Cunning Trader

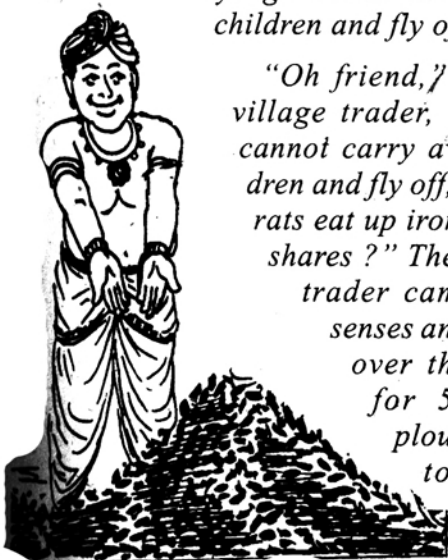
There were two traders in Kashi mahajanapada. One lived in a village and the other in a town. Both were good friends. Once, the trader in the village kept 500 iron ploughshares with the trader in the town, and left on some work to another place.

The trader in the town sold the ploughshares and kept the money with himself. He then spread rat droppings over the place where the ploughshares had been kept. After a while, the trader from the village arrived and asked for his ploughshares. The cunning trader pointed to the rat droppings and said, "Alas! The rats have eaten up all your ploughshares."

The trader from the village realised that the urban trader was deceiving him. He said, "Oh well, if the rats have eaten them, what can be done?" So saying, he went off to bathe, taking the cunning trader's son with him. He went to another friend's place, and left the boy there saying, "Don't go anywhere." He bathed in the river and then returned to the cunning trader's house. The cunning trader asked him, "Where is my son?"

The village trader replied, "I had seated your son on the river bank, and was bathing. A bird swooped down and, lifting your son in its claws, flew away. I clapped my hands, shouted and tried to save him, but I couldn't." The cunning trader angrily said, "You are lying. Birds cannot lift children and fly off."

"Oh friend," said the village trader, "If birds cannot carry away children and fly off, then can rats eat up iron ploughshares?" The cunning trader came to his senses and handed over the money for 500 iron ploughshares to his friend.



After that, the village trader returned the cunning trader's son.

- Where did Rangu get money to buy something for Basanti?
- What all did Rangu try to buy, and why was he not able to buy them?
- How did the urban trader try to cheat his friend?
- How did the friend manage to recover his money from the cunning trader?
- Who told Rangu the story of the cunning trader and why?

Rangu Buys a Cup

Rangu was amused after hearing the story of the cunning trader. He felt light-hearted, and he once again wandered into the bazar. He thought that goods which came from far off places were certainly going to be expensive. "Let me buy something made by the artisans of Shravasti itself", he thought. After wandering through many places, Rangu landed up at a coppersmith's shop. There were several types of copper, bronze and brass vessels in his shop. Rangu liked one of the copper cups.

On being asked the price, the coppersmith told him, "You will get a pair of cups for three coins". But Rangu had only one coin. He pleaded with the coppersmith to give him a cup for one coin. The coppersmith answered, "But copper is so expensive. We get it from Rajagriha. How can I reduce the price?" Rangu pleaded with the coppersmith to reduce the price. The coppersmith finally said, "All right. Do one thing. In a little while, sethi Anathapindika is going to arrive here to buy vessels. If you clean all the vessels, I'll definitely give you the cup for one coin."

Rangu worked hard and cleaned all the vessels. Just then Anathapindika arrived there on a horse. The coppersmith showed him all his wares. Anathapindika took out his records and studied the accounts written in them. He said to the coppersmith, "I have already given you half the amount. Here is the rest of it." The sethi gave the coppersmith some silver coins.

When the bullock carts came Rangu packed the vessels into baskets and loaded them onto



was steeped in thought. Basanti asked him what he was thinking. Rangu replied, "Everybody has found some path or the other. Which path should I take?" Basanti asked, "What path?"

Rangu said, "The cunning trader deceived his friend and told lies to earn money. Should I do that? The cartman had faith in his master's

the carts. Rangu then gave the coppersmith the coin, and happily returned home with his copper cup.

goodwill, but Kali tested her mistress and showed that one cannot have faith in masters."

Basanti said, "Yes, and we used to have a coin that we found through sheer luck, and now you have spent it. Should we then depend on good fortune alone? Is there any other way of avoiding misery?"

Now Basanti too was deep in thought. After a while, she said, "Today, in the forest where I had gone to pick flowers, there were some wandering mendicants (parivrajakas). They too were discussing these matters. There were many people from the city who had come to listen to them speak. Shall we also go there?"

Rangu eagerly said, "Oh yes! Let's go."

• Complete the sentences -

The _____ did not give Rangu the cup for one coin because _____.

Rangu had to _____ in order to buy the cup.

The setthi had written _____ in his records.

Rangu and Basanti's Questions

Rangu arrived home and gave Basanti the copper cup. She was very happy, but Rangu



EXERCISES

1. Look at Map 6 and list the cities from the age of the *mahajanapadas* which exist even today. What remains of those times can be found in them today?
2. Who consumed the grain that was sold by the *grihapatis* in the cities?
3. You read the story of Sarama's father in the chapter on the pastoral Aryans. What differences do you find between the situation of Sarama's father and that of Rangu of Shravasti?
4. There are several things written here. Select and place them in columns according to their period.

	Pastoral Aryans	Small <i>Janapadas</i>	Mahajanapadas
1.			
2.			
3.			

Agriculture, ministers, war to gain cows, army, village, town, *rajanya*, coins, *bali* (tribute), traders, *janapada*, writing, wandering in search of fodder, laws regarding *bali* payment, several crafts, *ganasanghas*, Vedas.

5. a. There are several points listed here. Choose the two main points of Rangu's story.
 - Rangu's work was to fill water.
 - Rangu talked to the cartman.
 - Rangu was poor.
 - The goods in the bazaar were so costly that Rangu could not buy anything.
 - Rangu cleaned the vessels in the coppersmith's shop.
- b. Here are two important points about the cities of the *mahajanapadas*. Add a few more points to the list-
 1. There were big *bazars* with many wares in the cities.
 2. Trade was carried out with coins in towns and cities.
 - 3.
 - 4.
6. What problems of today's cities existed even in the cities of the *mahajanapadas* ?
7. a. There is a picture on page 52. Describe the picture in 6 - 7 lines by completing this sentence. "The picture shows a big palace and tall buildings. The walls of the palace are high, and
- b. What are the similarities and differences between this picture and the one on page 55?
8. You have read about the cities of the Indus Valley. What are the similarities and differences between those cities and the cities of the *mahajanapadas*?

	Cities of the Indus Valley	Cities of the <i>mahajanapadas</i>
a. On the banks of which rivers were they located ? b. What were the items of trade in the cities ? c. Writing d. Use of coins for trading e. Artisans		