

CHAPTER 2

VILLAGES AND FIELDS

(100 AD TO 1000 AD)

Look at the pictures of this chapter carefully. What are the things in the pictures that you can still see around you? Agriculture of which regions is discussed in this chapter?

In the days when small and big kings were busy fighting in the battle fields, and their courts were full of the pomp and splendor of artists and poets; in the villages, peasants were toiling hard to improve agriculture and bring more and more land under cultivation. Those were the times when people were expanding agriculture. More and more land was being brought under cultivation and new villages were being set up. Many tribes, which were hunters and cattle herders also took to agriculture. Kings were fighting to gain control over these areas. By taxing the produce from these fields, the kings were amassing wealth. The same money was used to maintain poets, artists and the pomp of the courts.

Let us, for a while, forget the princely courts and battlefields and talk about what was happening in the fields and what the farmers were doing at that time.

- *Summarise the above section in three sentences.*

Initially, agriculture was practiced mostly on river-banks where water could be found all through the year. However, such perennial rivers and streams were very few. Most of the rivers and streams dried up after the rainy season. In such areas, it was difficult to extend agriculture. So when people tried to expand agriculture in those areas, they always made efforts to irrigate their fields.



Fig. 1 Many tribes took to agriculture for the first time

IRRIGATION IN THE PLATEAU REGION

People who were extending agriculture in the plateau regions of Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra found a method of irrigation that suited the condition of their land.

Figure 2 will help you to understand what the terrain in the plateau region looked like and how the farmers used the terrain to irrigate their land.

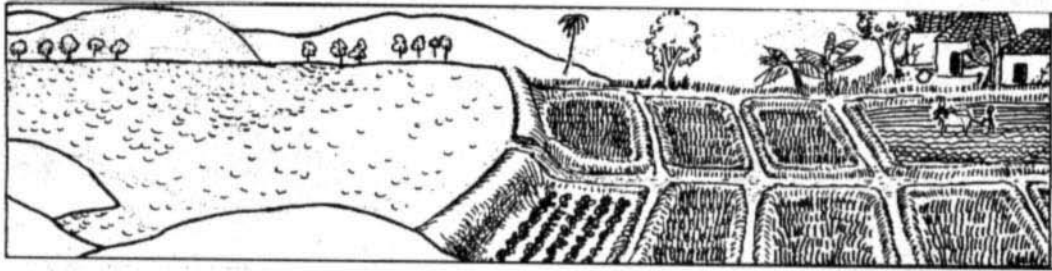


Fig. 2 Tank irrigation in the plateau

- Describe figure 2 in detail.
- Also, locate the states mentioned above in the map of India.

IRRIGATION IN THE PLAINS

In India, apart from plateaus there are vast plains also. See figure 3 to find out what arrangement farmers of this area made to irrigate their land.



Fig. 3 Irrigation in the plains

- With the help of your teacher, locate on the wall map of India the states that lie in the plains.
- Why do you think the farmers in the plains did not construct tanks as was done in the plateau region? To find out, compare the land shown in fig. 2 and fig. 3.

Farmers in the plains dug hundreds of wells and stepped wells (bavdis) but people in the plateaus did not do so. It is difficult to dig wells in the plateau. Just under the soil cover is a rocky layer and water can be found only in the cracks of the rocks. On the other hand, in the plains, the land has soil and sand beneath it. Water can be found in the layers of soil and sand. So it is easy to

dig wells. In class 6 you read “A village of the Plains- Kotgaon” and “A village of the Plateau- Balampur”. In those lessons you studied the differences between the ways of irrigation in the plains and plateaus. Even in such old times, peasants, through their experience, were able to find ways of irrigation that suited their lands.

DEVICES FOR LIFTING WATER

Peasants also invented various devices to draw water from the wells. Perhaps the earliest of these devices was *dhenkli* or lift bucket.

See figure 4 to understand how the *dhenkli* is used to draw out water.

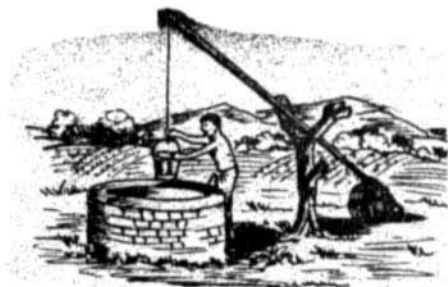


Fig. 4 Dhenkli

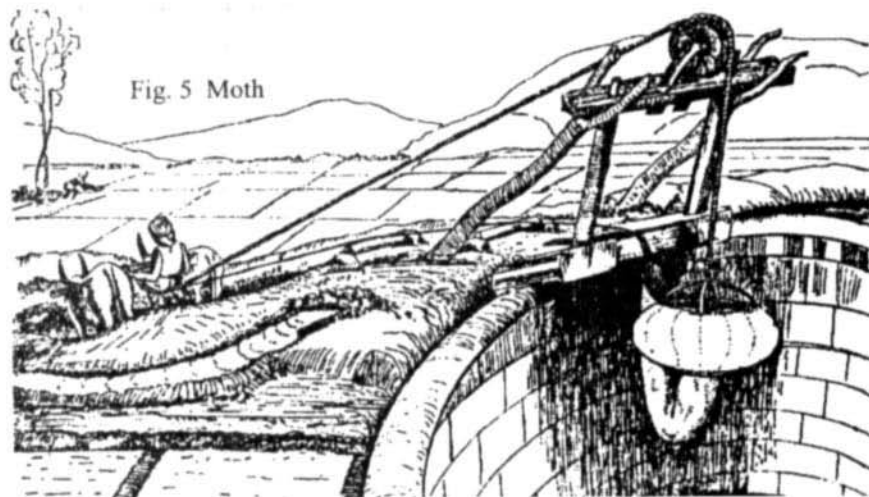


Fig. 5 Moth

Later, bullocks began to be yoked to the *moth* for drawing out water.

- Find out whether the *dhenkli* or the *moth* was used in your area also,

In olden times, these were the only devices for irrigation. People continuously tried to improve the devices. A new device that was made was the *Arghatta* or the water wheel.

Understand from figure 6 how the *arghatta* was used for drawing out water.

- Was this device also used in your surroundings? What was it called in your area?

A great deal of labour and money went into the construction and installation of these devices for irrigation. Often, only rich people in the village could afford them. Many peasants must have been practicing agriculture without irrigation, as they do even today.

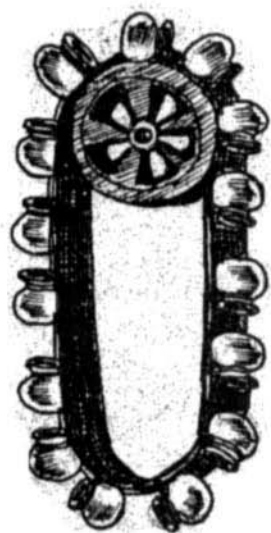


Fig. 6 Arghatta

THE DELTA

Farmers who lived in the river deltas could find enough water for extending agriculture. In the coastal areas, a river broadens and flows in small distributaries. These distributaries are always full of water. A river carries with it plenty of alluvial soil. This soil gets deposited around these distributaries and is very fertile. All these distributaries flow into the sea. This area is known as the delta of the river.

Farmers extending agriculture in the deltas benefited greatly from the fertile soil and abundant water. However, even this area had its problems. A lot of water would collect in the delta, making cultivation impossible. Further, the distributaries were frequently flooded.

- *Locate the deltas of some of the major rivers in the map of India.*
- *Write three most important points aspects of a delta.*

Embankments and Canals

To overcome the problem of floods, farmers built embankments on the banks of these distributaries so that water did not fill their fields. Then, canals were built near these embankments, so that only the required amount of water could be taken to the fields. Drains were built to clear out water in case of water logging in the fields.

After making all these efforts, farmers started growing three crops a year in the fertile soil of the deltas. Rice became the main crop in many such areas.

- *Identify the embankment, canal and the distributory in figure 7.*

Fig. 7 Irrigation through canals and embankments in the deltas





Fig. 8 Fields amidst forests and hills

HILLY REGIONS

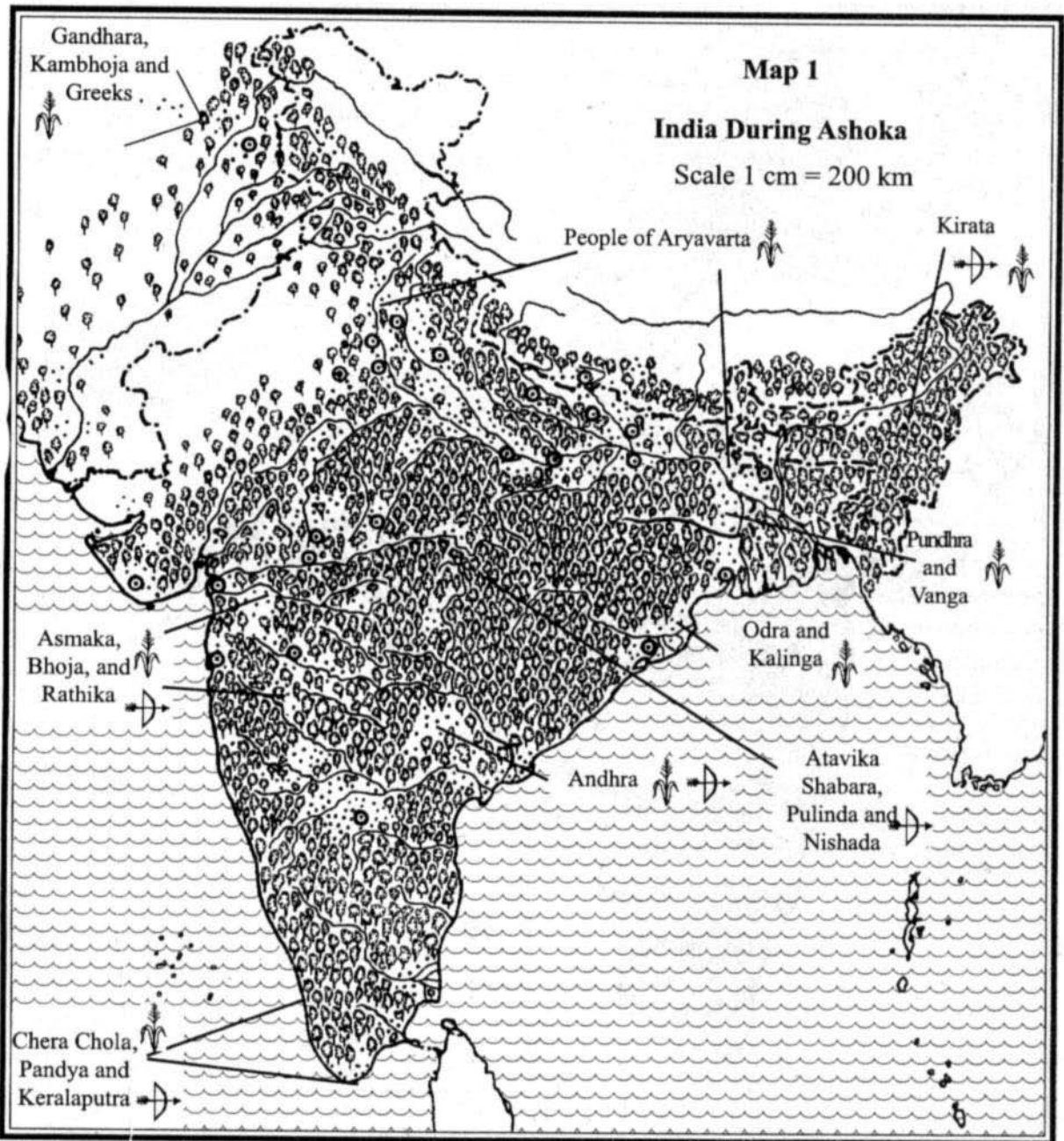
For people living in hilly areas, irrigation was a big problem mainly because water flowed down the slopes swiftly. Nevertheless, even in such areas, people made efforts to spread agriculture. They looked for plain lands between the slopes of the hills. Then, after clearing forests, they started practicing agriculture. The forest dwelling tribes adopted crops like *Kodo*, *Kutki*, *Sama*, *Jowar* etc. These crops require less water. Many tribes started cultivating these crops. Along with agriculture they continued hunting and gathering of fruits from the forests. Small villages emerged beside the fields in the forests.

- *You read in class 6 the description of a village in the hills- Pahwadi. In Pahwadi you must have noticed many of the things mentioned above.*

EMERGENCE OF NEW VILLAGES AND TOWNS

In this manner, through the efforts of the farmers of those times, many villages were settled and there was also an increase in agricultural production. Over a period of about four hundred years, areas with thick forest cover were gradually replaced with fields and villages. Population increased and with them, the number of villages increased. With this, there emerged a class of artisans who made several articles needed by the people. Many traders emerged to sell these things. Among these villages, there developed many small and big towns which were full of the hustle and bustle of artisans and traders.

- *In Map 1, the urban and rural areas of Ashokan times are shown. Colour the towns red; the rural areas, yellow and the forests, green.*
- *Now look at Map 2 carefully and identify the forests, the urban and the rural areas in India in 1000 AD. In this map as well, mark the towns in red. Use green for the forests and yellow for the rural areas.*



Based upon Survey of India Outline map printed in 1979. The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of 12 nautical miles measured from the appropriate baseline.

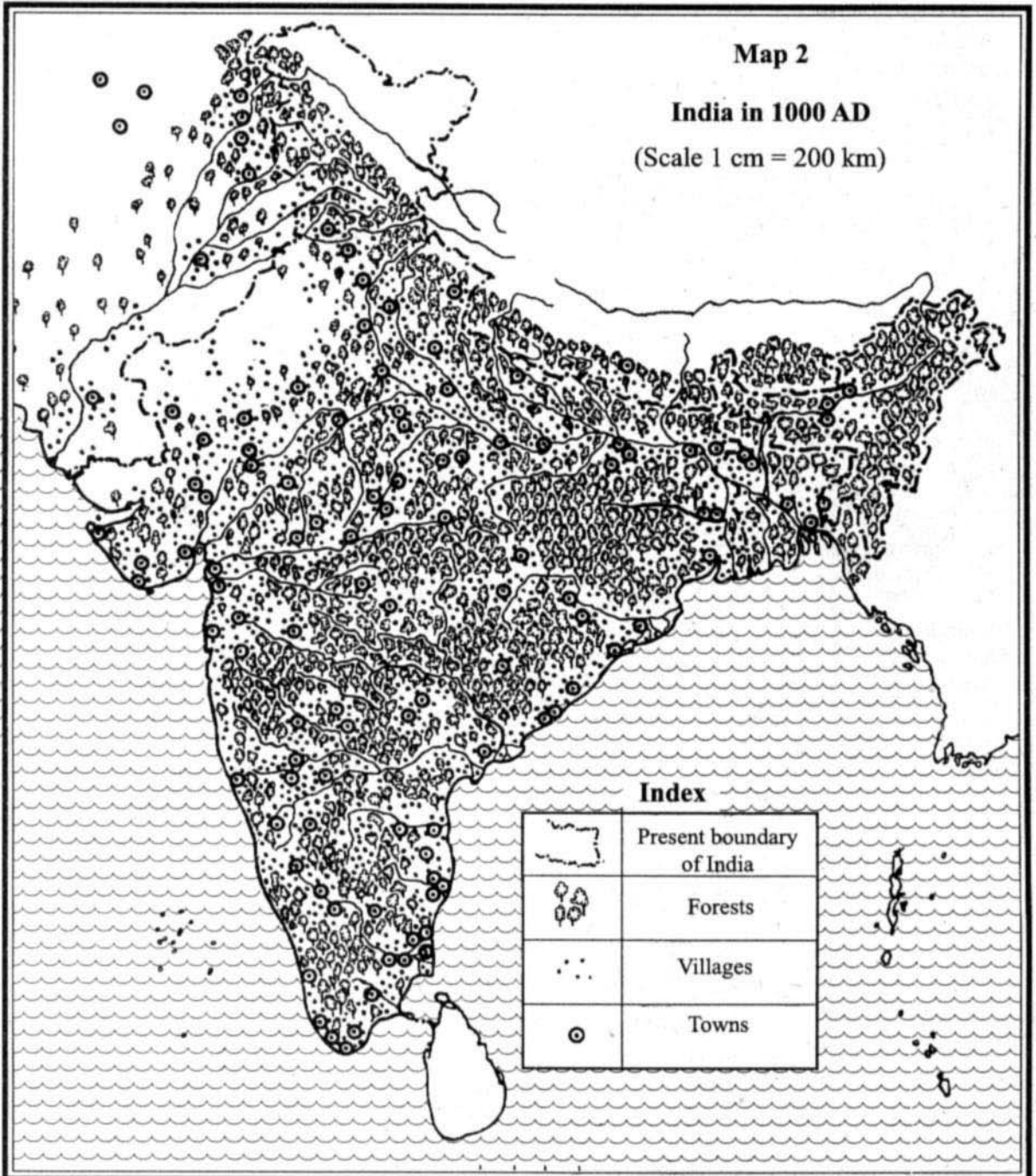
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	Present boundary of India		Villages
	Forests		Main occupation: Agriculture
	Cities		Predominantly Hunter gatherers
Chera	People living in the region		People practicing both agriculture and hunting and gathering

Map 2

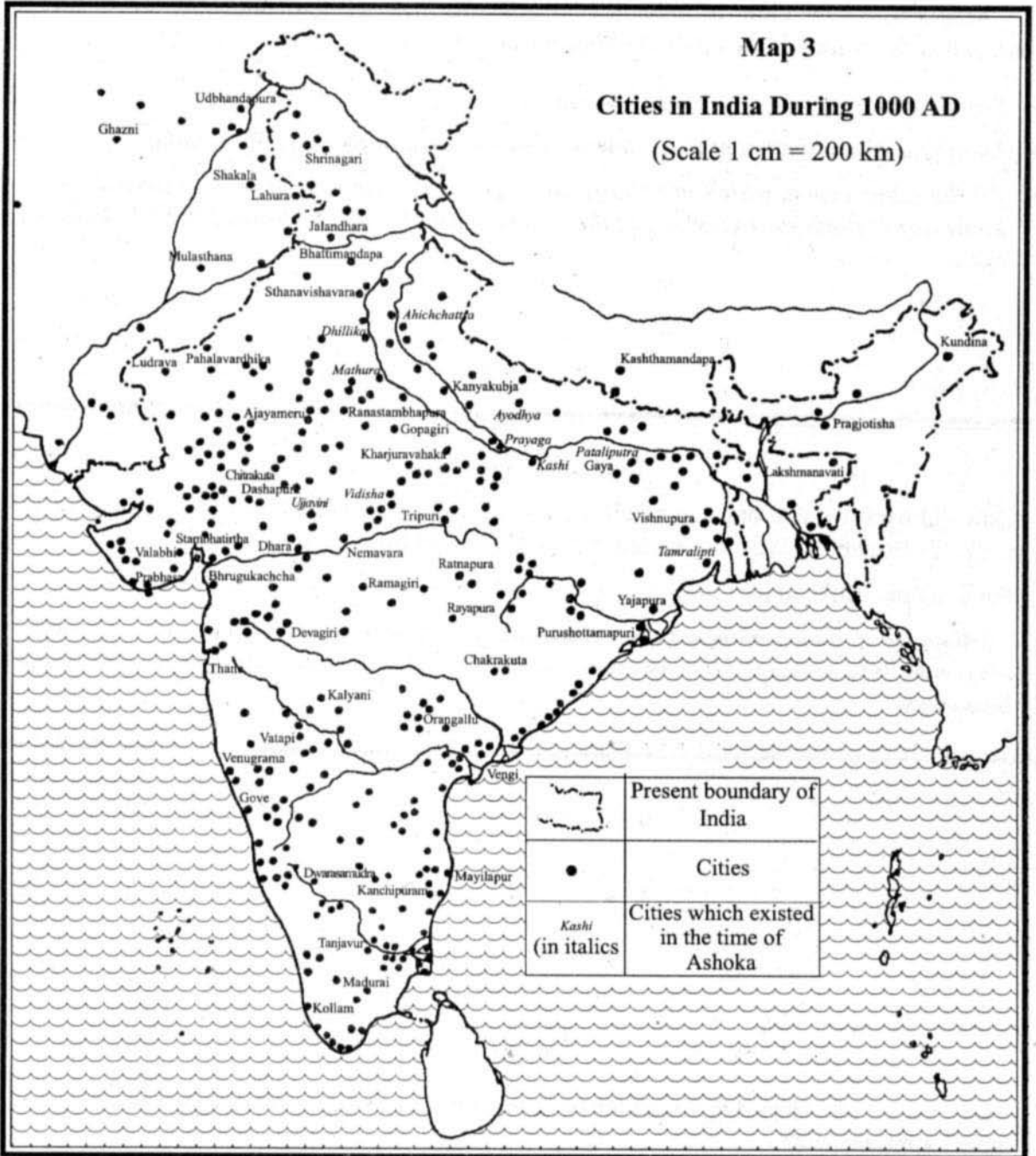
India in 1000 AD

(Scale 1 cm = 200 km)



Based upon Survey of India Outline map printed in 1979. The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of 12 nautical miles measured from the appropriate baseline.

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- *Compare the two maps and identify the changes you can see in India from the time of king Ashoka to 1000 AD.*

Map 3 shows the cities of India in 1000 AD. This map does not show the forests and rural areas so that the names of the cities could be written clearly.

- *See the names of towns and cities in Map 3.*
- *Identify and make a list of those towns, which existed in the time of Ashoka.*
- *All the other towns, which are shown in Map 3, came up after Ashoka's period. Do you know any of these towns? Many of these towns, which were settled in 1000 AD, exist even today.*

Evidence from the past...

How did we learn that one and a half thousand years ago, there were various arrangements made for irrigation? We have evidence from the inscriptions of that period.

For example: Look at part of an inscription of 1209 AD found in the Karnataka state:

" Bittaya son of Mahapradhana Kumarpanditaya, got a tank constructed to the north of Kalideva. He also settled a village in his name called Bittiyehalli. He also built another tank called Bittaya Samudram."

EXERCISE

1. What method was adopted to irrigate the fields in the plateau regions? What advantage did the plateau offer for this method?
2. What techniques did farmers use for irrigation in the plains? Why was this easy in the plains?
3. a. What were the advantages and the problems for the farmers who lived in the river deltas?
b. What efforts did they make to improve agriculture?
4. a. How did tribes practice agriculture in the hilly regions?
b. Did they subsist solely on agriculture?
5. In 1000 AD how many cities existed to the south of the Narmada river? How many cities existed in this area in Ashoka's time?