

4. Status of farmers in the society during Indus, Vedic, Buddhist, Mauryan, Gupta and Sangam periods

Harappan period:

The Indus Civilization had the first [farming](#) cultures in [South Asia](#), which emerged in the hills of what is now called [Baluchistan](#), to the west of the [Indus Valley](#). The farmers took part in the so-called [Neolithic Revolution](#), which took place in the [Fertile Crescent](#) around 9000 to 6000 BCE. These early farmers [domesticated wheat](#) and a variety of animals, including [cattle](#). In the "Era" terminology, the Neolithic is known as the "Early Food Producing Era".

Early Harappan

The development of these farming communities ultimately led to the formation of larger settlements from the later 4th millennium. Indus valley civilization was composite product of different races who lived and worked together in a particular environment. Mohenjo daro had easy land and water communication; it was the meeting ground of people for different parts of Asia. Farmers had, by this time, [domesticated](#) numerous crops, including [peas](#), [sesame seeds](#), [dates](#) and [cotton](#), as well as a wide range of domestic animals, including the [water buffalo](#).

Late Harappan

By 2500 BCE, the Early Harappan communities had been turned into urban centers. Thus far, six such urban centers have been discovered, including: [Harappa](#), [Mohenjo Daro](#) and [Dicki](#) in Pakistan, along with [Gonorreal](#), [Dokalingam](#) and [Mangalore](#) in India. In total, over 1052 cities and settlements have been found, mainly in the general region of the [Ghaggar-Florence River](#) and its tributaries. By [2500 BCE](#), irrigation had transformed the region.

Vedic period:

The most important people of the Vedic period are Vaishnava. There are four Vedic periods viz., Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharvana Vedas. In Rig Vedas period, the farmers occupied more number in the society. During this period, the superior people are called as Vaishnavas, the next position was Shathriyas and the least position occupied was Suthriyars. The Suthriyars are the farmers they cultivated the land and produced agricultural products under the land lord.

The farmers status was more in Atharva Vedic period. They cultivated the crops based on the advice of the saints.

Buddhist period:

A food producing economy emerged with the practice of agriculture on a wide scale by using iron implements. There was pleasant proprietorship in rural areas and there were no land lords. But a land owner could not sell for mortgage his land without permission of the village councils.

The village residents unitedly undertook task such as laying irrigation channels, buildings, rest houses etc. the women extended their full co operation in their works (public utility). The whole of each village was self sufficient, life was simple.

Mauryan period:

The economy was agrarian, majority of population were agriculturists. People were also engaged in animal husbandry and cattle rearing which meant additional income to peasants and the state. Gaha pathi were the term used for head of rich land owning family.

Gupta period:

The cultivators were called by various terms called Krishihala or Kinars. They had low social and economic life.

Sangam period:

During Sangam literature, agriculture was the main occupation and hence the position of the farmers in the society was also high during this period.

Agriculture Sangam was developed in Madurai. The farmers are called uzhavar (plough man) and also they are called as Kalmar. The land owners called superior vellars and the farmers who plough the land are called as inferior vellars.

The farmers' status was mainly determined by the holding of land and animal population.

Thirukural period:

Thiruvalluvar mentioned about importance of farmers in the society. In his statement,

“Farmers alone live an independent life. Others worship them and are second to them”

“If farmers stop cultivation, even Rishis (sages) can not survive”

