Chapter Four. The Evolution of Pre-Modern Economic Activity
Advertising is the educational program of capitalism, the sponsored art of
capitalism, the language of capitalism, the pornography of capitalism \(^1\). The
hunting and food gathering society gave way to agriculture. Freed from the
constraints of looking for food men could settle down in one place and build small
village communities which over a millennia grew in large much larger settlements
and later morphed into cities. Humans began farming about 12,000 years ago. With
bronze, the Indus Valley civilization that existed before the Aryan Vedic Age
produced so much beyond its own needs that it could export its surplus far off
countries.

Agriculture freed man from a nomadic existence and allowed for the growth of
permanent and semi-permanent dwellings. As hunting and food gathering societies
eventually gave way to agriculture; men found it useful to give up drifting and put
up settlements. To continue cultivation nomads and hunters- gatherers had to settle
in one place as agriculture provided a stable of means of sustenance. The surplus
could be stored more easily and for longer period of time. It allowed men to stave
off starvation through times of stress like drought. The creation of surplus also
created the necessity of some form of administrative control over it. Since
agricultural production was a full-time job, farmers couldn’t fight; and fighters
couldn’t farm. It eventually led to class distinction. – one group of men would
produce, while another group would provide protection from raiders. This class
distinction eventually led to the emergence of administrative control over the
produce of the community, and a rudimentary form of state system came into
existence.

The Indus Valley civilization which falls somewhere in the Bronze Age was able to
produce so much that it needed granaries (at Harappa among other places) to store
its surplus. This surplus then could be exchanged for other commodities that the
civilization was unable to produce on its own. However the introduction of iron
and tools made of it by the sequent civilization created surplus on a scale which
could not be attained with stone or copper implements. Surplus eventually led to
the development of urban areas thatmorphed into cities. This surplus therefore
played a direct role in urbanization and the formation of the earliest state systems.
The town planning of the Indus Valley Civilization was remarkable.
As B.B. Lal points out, 'One finds the streets and lanes laid out according to a set plan: the main streets running from north to south and the cross streets running at right angles to them.'

But perhaps the most important landmark of the civilization was its great granary at Harappa measuring an overall area of 55 by 43 meters. Each of the blocks contained six storage halls, each hall measuring 15 by 6 meters externally. Excavations and archaeological finding have also found fashion appurtenance like ear-rings, necklaces bracelets, girdles and anklets etc. Seals of the Indus Valley have been found in far off places like the cities of Ur, Susa, Umma, Lagash, and Tell Asmar hinting at the possibilities which the creation of surplus created over a period of time.

In ancient India, the system of paying royal tributes and or taxes with food grains, handmade commodities were the cost of political protection paid to the king. Failure to pay royal tributes to the king, tribal chiefs could have meant revocation of the communal protection. On other occasions it might have involved exposure to institutional violence as well.

House holding means economic self-sufficiency by families who hope to save enough after paying off the royal dues or tributes and the gifts to the priestly class.
Whatever remained after paying off the power structure was the source of sustenance and there was no room for exchange. So the question of advertising as an economic activity doesn't arise. Market activities are intricately linked with the creation of surplus and their appropriation through various means. Since time immemorial men have sought to appropriate the surplus through 'the mechanism of kinship, religion, war, plunder, ritualistic ranks, taxes, tithes, tribute trade, grants rewards salaries etc.'

Goods were produced locally and limited in number. Goods circulated slowly through inheritance and carried stories and lore with them- the meaning of ancestry - with them. With the circulation on money, financial institutions came into being and with it came the concept of loans and interest rates. Banks, depository financial institutions, and the like that we find so ubiquitous these days evolved at this time, and have survived since then. However any analysis's of history would be incomplete without taking into account the Marxist perspective, which looks upon history as defined by productive relations. As Marx states in the 1859 “Preface to the Critique of Political Economy”: The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social
consciousness’. The productive forces had changed but not the production relations.

In India the caste system and its attendant regulatory order shaped the society and its consumption habits. As R.S. Sharma points out ‘social surplus was thus appropriated through the mechanism of the Varna System. Ancient India’s juridico-legal advice for the distribution of the social surplus lay in the ritual based Varna just as that of Ancient Greece and Rome lay in the device of citizenship’ 6. The Varna system prescribed trade and business for the Vaisyas only and thus restricted trade practices. Vaisyas were located down the social hierarchy, just above the Sudras or the laboring class.

Consumption pattern in agricultural societies coincided with seasonal changes. Seasons of plenty often follow seasons of scarcity. Poor rains, drought, pestilence have as much a negative impact on agricultural production as raids, loot and plunders by other tribal groups. Indian religious rituals and festivals are scattered around sowing and harvesting seasons.
Since harvesting is not a yearlong activity hoarding allows the people to survive from one season to another. Hoarding essentially creates scarcity therefore goods that are produced to be exchanged with agricultural produce will also follow the pattern of this cycle: produced at times of plenty; hoarded at times of distress. Poor communication networks prevented goods from flowing out and into places far away from their place of origin. Producers sold things to consumers within their own geography. By extension, producers were personally known to consumers and the activity of sale and purchase was tinged with a relationship less intimate than friendship.

Production activities were caste defined, and thus restricted to the Vaisyas. Professions were passed on from father to sons. With limited social mobility, hierarchy was reinforced. And religious rituals were incomplete without an elaborate exchange of goods from the lower caste to the upper castes. Exchange of commodities took place through either Dana or Dakshina which very often became an informal fee paid for the rituals performed. The emergence of Buddhism is often regarded as a form of rebellion against elaborate and expensive Vedic rituals that consumed scarce resources and entailed a lot of gift giving which sapped the lower
classes. So while there was surplus, consumption was still restricted to the two upper castes. The *Brahmanas* and the *Kshatriyas* exercised monopoly over consumption. Rituals and animal sacrifices were extravaganza that an evolving society desperately trying to shed its tribalism could ill afford.

The emergence and initial success of Buddhism and Jainism during this period can be looked upon as ideologies that preached removal of restrictions on consumption by the lower classes. They disallowed the emerging priestly class from laying claim to any privilege. Buddhism and Jainism had two fold advantages for the lower classes. They removed the priestly class from appropriating the surplus of the lower class and allowed for an accumulation of wealth. Secondly it didn’t prescribe performance of any systematic performance of ceremonies. On the contrary, consumption restrictions were imposed on the priestly class themselves. A Buddhist monk was to have no claim whatsoever on any worldly possession. Buddhism prescription of salvation didn’t involve pacifying angry gods with ritualistic sacrifices. It prescribed a commitment to ethical behavior. Salvation was personalized. To each one his own redemption through his own actions.

Romila Thapar points out that Buddhist teaching lay stress on the distinctive roles
of the monk and the householder and the separate methods of each in the search for liberation from rebirth thus gaining support from classes that produced surplus and wanted to hoard it. Social philosophies were tuning themselves to people’s aspirations. Those that allowed for easier access to economic resources were preferred at the cost of those that didn’t.

Buddhism’s success also stemmed from the fact that it preached austerity for the priestly class, abandoned its claims on the surplus of the society and used persuasion instead of intimidation for sustaining itself. The monk’s vow of begging for alms had as its counterpart the commitment of the lay follower to the giving of alms. Unlike the Varna system, Buddhism didn’t concern itself with the creation of a caste based society, and thus allowed enough opportunities for social mobility.

Buddhist ideology made for a much convenient consumption pattern. Not surprisingly the Vaisyas who were the principle tax payers adopted Buddhism. Changing religion freed people from wasteful expenditure.

With Buddhism coming to the fore, the notion of gift giving underwent a subtle change. Since Buddhism promoted detachment from worldly possession, it was but imperative for the Buddhist monks not to receive goods beyond the immediate
need of goods that could be consumed immediately. The teachings of Buddha himself recognized the needs of hoarding that could make for future investments.

As Romila Thapar points out to a passage from the Buddhist text Digha Nikaya III where Buddha reportedly promotes hoarding:

Whoso is virtuous and intelligent.

Shines like a fire that blazes on the hill.

To him amassing wealth like roving bee

Its honey gathering [and hurting naught],

Riches mount up as ant-heap growing high.

When the good layman wealth has so amassed

Able is he to benefit his clan.

In portions four let him divide that wealth

So binds he to himself life’s friendly things.

One portion let him spend and taste the fruit.

His business to conduct let him take two.

And portion four let him reserve and hoard;

So there’ll be wherewithal in times of need 9.
The teaching of Buddha thus didn’t consider economic activity or wealth creation as immoral and actively gave it the legitimacy it sorely needed. Wealth allowed kinship ties to grow allowed for possessing worldly purchase and most importantly admitted the permissibility of reserving and hoarding, which are important economic activities. The introduction of money in place of the barter allowed further mobility. Since the barter provided no definite possibility of exchange: how should a cow’s worth be calculated? Two bags of rice or three goats? Exchange of commodity was thus restricted, depended on two individuals who wanted exactly what the other possessed. The introduction of currency freed the system of exchange and provided a means through which limited number of commodities could easily be mutually exchanged.

But a far more radical innovation that would have far reaching consequences was the introduction of coins into the social system that allowed for easier exchange of goods and commodities. The introduction of monetized economy allowed for freer exchange of goods and commodities from arbitrary exchange rates that the barter system entailed. For barter to be successful, depends on two persons possessing exactly the things which the other would want. As such, barter is based on chance.
Economic transactions hinges on finding the right person at the right time. Barter also meant a system of exchange carried out through the means of perishable commodities. Cattles could die and grains may turn rancid, thereby discounting the possibility of exchange. Barter would also mean carrying the good or commodity to the market place. Trade therefore would be restricted only to places where the to-be-exchanges good or commodity can be taken: the local market. Only non-perishable goods or commodities (probably luxury goods) items could be carried on long distance voyages. As well-known historically the principle commodities that were carried on the long distance silk route were silk, jade, brocades that could be sold only to the affluent class.

Coins on the other hand, were non-perishable, allowed the value of goods and commodities to be stored for future exchanges. It could be stored, transported, and most importantly hoarded allowing the surplus of one generation to be passed on to the other. The period from about the 5th century AD, brought new means of exchange. The age of the Guptas saw the introduction of gold coins, leading to an easier exchange of goods and commodities being produced and a further expansion of the indigenous markets. Newer markets created demands for newer products.
creating a more diversified economy. And though coins have been in circulation in India in one form or the other since the 5th c B.C there is no doubt that 'the abundance of metal money between c. 200 BC and AD 300 fits with the progress of handicrafts, long distance trade and urbanism all evidenced by excavations, and corroborated by inscriptional, Buddhist and classical sources. But coins came in with their own unique problems. If there are many coin issuing agencies the exchange would be trapped in the quagmire of exchange rates all over again. How much should a coin issued by one kingdom fetch or buy when taken to another kingdom. Coins made out of copper will be valuable if there's an authority guaranteeing its value across a particular geographical area. In India of today, this function is usually done by the Reserve Bank of India. It promises to 'pay the bearer of currency note' the sum of its value. But in ancient times coins of copper would have no value if taken out of their area of circulation. In this case, for business outside the local or regional market, coins need to have an intrinsic value. They must be valuable in themselves no matter which king or emperor's face is engraved on them. So copper coins would be used locally, while silver and gold coins could facilitate trade inter-regional trade. There is plenty of evidence to show that both copper and gold coins were in circulation in the 5th century AD.
Discovery of copper coins would suggest intra-regional trade, while findings of gold coins would probably suggest some form of inter-regional trade.

Trade would also suffer if there are too many kingdoms issuing their own currencies, creating impediments in the exchange of commodities. For trade to flourish there must be a singular political authority whose writ runs over a large geographical area: an Empire. Empires allow the same denominational coins to circulate over a vast area. No wonder then that trade flourished during the Kushanas and the Gupta period that ruled over large chunks of south Asia.

R.S.Sharma speaks about commodity production during the Kushanas period that must have promoted both internal and external trade. A paucity of coins directly led to market's shrinkage and constricted trade activity. The aftermath of the Kushanas and Gupta Age is marked by the absence of coins. The period from 650 AD to 1000 AD saw the total disappearance of gold coins in India. The implications were a shrunk economy. Goods were unable to circulate over a large area. Exchange became much more difficult and local needs were mostly met locally, leading to a shrinking economy. The contraction of the economy would
have meant a decline of crafts and industries which were concentrated in the local area. A revival of trade and commercial activity takes place in the post 10th Century because of the emergence of various dynasties in India as a whole. The post-Gupta age saw a fragmentation of political authority and a triad contest for supremacy between the Rashtrakutas of the west Deccan, Pratiharas of the north, and the Palas of Bengal. Markets could flourish only in emancipative conditions. Too many tariff barriers will limit its growth. Advertising in modern India has flourished only when the tariff barriers were removed and foreign investment came in.

The monetary based economy thus declined after the Gupta period. In the absence of currency system, existing government started making payment in land grants. Places that adopted land grants in lieu of payment of cash created pressure on land. The contraction of money indicates a decline of crafts and industries concentrated in urban areas.

A break from the existing condition came about in the 12th century with invasions from the East. Though these invasions came at the end of a period of long decline they set in motion a process. The Sultanate system created an extensive territory under one crown, a common market using a single currency system and an adequate supply of gold to allow long distance trade to flourish. The Sultanate
system also brought into being a rich class of bureaucrats and tax collectors that could afford luxury goods and commodities. Empires were bad news for existing regional kingdoms, but rendered to the manufacturing and artisan class a unified market.

With the same technology available everywhere (albeit with slight local modifications) goods and commodities remained more or less the same. Things that were made in one village would be as good or as bad as the goods in another. Market place meant a number of seller/producers often selling the same things. Consumer loyalty often developed over a period of time, based on how the supplier could distinguish his product from other suppliers. Somewhere in the prevailing economic system, the idea of a brand began to emerge. A brand is defined as a way of distinguishing a product from other varieties of the same product. Products themselves came to acquire value because of their consistent quality, thus reducing the buyer’s anxiety about its efficiency, competence, and satisfaction. Overtime these products developed their own unique identity.

Geographical indication as brand name

The term branding emerged in Medieval Europe when farmers and cattle owners
would ‘brand’ their animals to prevent others from claiming them as their own. In
the early stages of human development villages emerged as self-sufficient
economic units producing everything that it required. Villages had their own
carpenters (badai), gold-smiths (sonar) and iron-smiths (lohar) etc. With poor
connectivity and an absence of scale of economies, the few sales and purchases
would therefore often take place between people who knew each other. Goods
produced locally would be consumed locally. ‘Consumers could readily identify
the sources of goods. Buyers were able to learn through personal experiences of the
abilities, consistency, and reliability of a supplier, while suppliers were able to
adapt simple production methods to the needs of individual customers who were
known personally’12. In an agrarian economy, consumable goods emerged as a
brand. Because of their better quality some products came to be differentiated from
other similar products on the basis of their place of origin. Even today, people in
India use Multani mitti, Lahori namak, buy banarsi saree, eat banarsi paan, Kabuli
chana, Dehraduni chawal, Shimla mirch, etc. These commodities were the
precursor to the modern brands, laying claim to a distinctive identity. Brands
emerged as a means of providing reassurance of consistent quality to spatially
dispersed customers who because of the use of intermediaries had no direct
relationship with the consumers of their products.

In India, agricultural produce emerged as brand. Certain merchandises and products came to acquire a brand name often associated with the place of their origin. Though every village produced its own clothing needs, sarees from Banaras (now Varanasi), locks from Aligarh, utensils from Moradabad, came to attain a mark of distinction. This kind of distinction was not limited to consumer durables. Oranges from Nagpur, pedas from Mathura, petha from Agra, came to acquire a reputation for their quality. To distinguish their products from those of others producers, sellers would harp on the place of origin creating a brand name or a mark of distinction. This was perhaps the earliest form of a brand. Branding allowed the seller to demand his price and removed him from competition from other producers of the same commodity or product.

The Sultanate and the Mughal’s system brought into existence a class that demanded luxury goods. The noble’s taste’s for the products of high and intricate skills encouraged the tendency towards specialization which became a characteristic feature of India’s manufacturing class. This tendency towards
specialization led to the emergence of highly skilled workers and occupations. But since the demand from the nobility could only be for expensive luxury goods that could be created only through elaborate craft techniques these goods could not have been mass produced. In the absence of mass production, these goods were produced only through labour intensive technology. Even today, hand-crafted goods are valued over the mass produced, and advertised as ‘hand-crafted’. Advertising could have no role to play if the goods are targeted at a very small buying community.

As pointed out earlier, the surplus of one age finances the transition into another. If the surplus of the agricultural communities brought into existence large towns and self-governing city states, and initiated urbanization, the overabundance of the Industrial Revolution ushered in an age of consumerism. In England, property laws were well defined and the power of the King and the aristocracy were limited. The commodification of labour and the levy of money freed the labour class to produce what it will and consume what it may. Agriculture surplus could be consumed in return for manufactured commodities to be mutually exchanged through the receipt and payment of legal tender. Markets overtime became impersonalized. In markets
filled with a variety of goods and commodities of the same class and kind individual producers had to distinguish their product through brand identification, which in turn led to advertising.

Advertising was first used to not just introduce products but to ‘explain’ their use as well. People had to be informed what goods could do ‘for’ them and ‘to’ them. In the case of Europe, the events of the preceding two centuries created the conditions ripe for a giant leap that would revolutionize the production process. Industrial revolution came out directly out of the surplus that had accrued among a certain class of people. Enclosure Acts (1760-1830) did away with the remnants of the ancient collective economy of the village and turned vast area of land into private properties. Commercially minded landlords ‘monopolized the land which was cultivated by tenant farmers employing landless or smallholders’14. The existing infrastructure like ports, railways, roads, doubled up as overhead capital allowing for easier diffusion of goods. Lastly came in the technological innovations that allowed human labour not to produce things directly but only supervise ‘things’ that produced things. From producers of objects, men became managers of objects that produced objects. As Charlie Chaplin satirized in his
Modern Times, men were reduced to ‘tightening bolts with spanners’.

In India things were different. As Tapan Raychaudhuri points, ‘a lot was happening but on a limited scale and the sum total of new development didn’t amount to a break from the past: continuity was still the dominant characteristic15. India’s economy had been sufficiently monetized even before the Mughals set foot on Indian soil. Agricultural tax would be collected in cash, which compelled the producing class to sell their produce, reinforcing a market-based economy. The Mughals themselves created vast areas for urbanization when they laid the foundations of a number of cities most notably Agra, Lahore, and the short lived Fatehpur Sikri creating ‘vast commercial emporiums’. Sumptuous and conspicuous consumption habits marked the Mughals and the nobility that they engendered.

The Mughals created a vast labour intensive empire wherein all the parts were geared to sustain the Imperial system: A large Army to coerce citizenry and an equally vast array of officials to collect revenue to finance the Mughal Army and the Imperial expenses. A large manpower was needed to render services to the state and its affluent class. Mughal peace and a vast empire under the sway of one monarch had very positive implications for the economy. The Army the Imperial
court and the nobility needed consumer goods items, which were manufactured in *karkhanas* of Delhi, Agra. Mughal India produced around 150 different types and varieties of cotton fabric—often named after their place of origin. The need of a large standing army led to development of the metallurgy industry. The textile industry exported dyed cotton clothes to Persia and Turkey. Peace and increased urbanization expanding the demand for manufactured products. Indian goods especially textiles, sugar and diamonds found markets in Poland, Egypt, and Arabia. But 'the double tyranny of a caste based social system and a rapacious administration destroyed economic incentives and inhibited mobility' \(^{16}\). The existing caste system did bestow a sense of intra-caste identity and must have fostered intra-caste co-operation, but it obstructed technological advancement because of its 'tenacious adherence to traditionalism and a mutual segregation of the various branches of production' \(^{17}\).

The desire for luxuries and for obtaining articles made according to their own tastes and specifications led the nobility to have their own *karkhanas* for manufacturing robes, utensils, arms and furniture's etc., \(^{18}\). The traditional consumption pattern of the affluent class created a demand for a wide variety of
goods but most of the manufacturing units that produced these items were owned by the Imperial courts and its hangers-on. The primary object of these manufactories was to cater to the needs of the Imperial army and court and wasn’t meant for the markets. For the nobility goods and commodities had to look different from what must have been easily available in the markets. Goods produced for the nobility not only served their utility they also marked social rank and class. For the royalty and the nobility, things could have value only when they had not been mass produced. Such insistence led to the emergence of highly specialized manual skills that machines couldn’t have replicated even if they had existed. Investments in the *karkhanas* therefore didn’t lead to ‘any improvement in the techniques of mass production, however large the patronage extended by them [nobles] to skilled workers’\(^{19}\). And therefore there was no incentive for mechanization. High tax rates pauperized the peasantry who could have formed the bulk of the consuming class. Irfan Habib notes, ‘by and large it seems that the share of the produce taken as revenue ranged from one-third to half in most parts of northern India and the Deccan\(^{20}\). Instead it was the Mughal state and its outgrowths the affluent class that guided what was to be produced and consumed. Classes were differentiated from one another on the basis of affluence and
affluence itself was measured not only on the basis of possessions of things but also servants and slaves. The Mughal Army, one of the largest employers in the Mughal state, had two or three servants per fighting man, not counting the vast array of camp followers. A substantial part of the labour force was entrapped in unproductive activities.

Furthermore, restrictions on the two arms of supply and demand acted as a break on capital formation in the manufacturing sector. Heavy taxes on the peasant class effectively reduced their purchasing power and brought down the demand for manufactured goods. On the other hand, well-functioning manufactories that could have met rural and urban demand were meant for producing goods only for the nobles and the royalty. With competitive consumption between the nobility and the palace, artisans had to produce things that were not only unique but also different and only one of its kinds. Novelty defined status. A thing had value only when it wasn't available to others. The emphasis on hand-crafted goods, mechanization was ignored.

In their consumption habits the Mughal nobility became a trendsetter and a model for emulation for the subordinate social classes. Because of their exposure to a
wide variety of goods and commodities, this class was also able to fashion out the 'cosmopolitan taste' out of its consumption habits. For the lower classes especially for the vast majority of the agricultural and the artisans their consumption habit were guided as much by economics as by their caste affiliations. Deviations in consumption habits and ethos with the larger majority would have invited social censure, and retribution in the form of ex-communciation and a loss of caste identity. The two mutually reinforcing factors of occupation and castes led Max Weber to comment that 'a ritual law in which every change of occupation, every change in work technique, may result in ritual degradation is certainly not capable of giving birth to economic and technical revolution from within itself, or even facilitating the first germination of capitalism in its midst'. Commitment to customary pursuits hindered occupational mobility, and skills and education never came together. But to blame the caste system for the inadequate development of the economic system is to ignore factors like the demand and the size of the market, the availability of capital, the presence of labour class etc.

For the next stage of economic evolution to materialize what was needed was accumulated capital and a class ready to invest it. But contrarily the class that had
capital had no investment opportunities. The lording lifestyle of the nobility prevented large scale savings. The surplus or the revenue extracted from the agricultural class would be funneled into infrastructure (imperial palaces, cenotaphs, forts, \textit{sarais}), the maintenance of an army of retainers and finally into the maintenance of an opulent lifestyle with which the word ‘Mughal’ has now become synonymous. Income distribution severely restricted the demand for mass produced goods. With such a system in force the monied class had two options: spend on luxurious consumption or hoard.

Another very striking contrast was the absence of labour saving devices. Emphasis on highly skilled manual labour, led one European traveler to comment, that a job which could be done by one man in Holland ‘passes through four hands before it is finished’\textsuperscript{23}. Whatever India could produce during the period wasn’t because of, but rather despite the technology that it possessed. At the time of Akbar’s death, iron-ore was collected through surface excavations and coal was not mined at all\textsuperscript{24}. In the absence of international competition, there was no incentive to innovate. The cheap availability of labour and an emphasis on manually produced artifacts further compounded the problem. Indian artisans produced things low in volume but high
in value. Such small scale production led the early European traders to buy articles and store the stocks in warehouses over a period of time before the stock could be transported to their place of sale so as to cut down of transportation costs. Not surprisingly these warehouses developed around natural ports and later on led to the emergence of cities like Calcutta Bombay and Madras.

But perhaps the most glaring absence of all was that of the printing press (which became the vehicle of advertising), which didn’t come to India even at the end of the 17th century. While India produced a great many litterateurs, it failed to produce a method to mass circulate their work. The printing press was the first mass production machine that became the vehicle for circulation of advertisements. Gutenberg’s enterprise allowed for the accumulation of knowledge, laid foundation to the merit based education system and made it easier to pass human experiences from one generation to another. Printing thus became a tool of revolution by which world commercial networks [was] established and maintained; [and] by which a mobile economy [was] underwritten and secured25.

In India the printing press was brought by Christian missionaries driven by proselytizing zeal and later found its way into becoming a commercial enterprise. The press itself directly played a role in national awakening, an idea that wasn’t
lost on the early nationalist leadership. The closest thing that came to the means of mass communication was the *waqi-a-navis* and the *sawanih-nigar*, “who may be best described as news-writers”\(^{26}\). Acting as quasi-vigilance commissions these officials were charged with reporting instances of malfeasances. But not unlike today’s press, they would often be accused of aligning themselves with, and being on the payroll of the establishment. They were widely reported to be corrupt and to conceal or complain solely from interested motives”\(^{27}\). The first formal newspaper would come out in 1780, pioneered by the reckless James Augustus Hickey who used his two sheets to spread scurrilous rumours and make disparaging remarks about the expatriate English community. Such poor communication networks didn’t allow for the growth of the appurtenances that usually entailed the growth of a medium of mass communication.

Before a product or a commodity comes into existence, a producer has to consider the nature of the demand for the product, the availability of the resources, the price at which the product can be sold and the cost of manufacturing it, and then define the means for advertising it, if at all. Business and manufacturing activities need and operate on information. With poor communications producers in India lacked

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the knowledge of the demand size, the availability of supply, the presence of untapped markets etc. The sheets waqi-a-navis were poor third world cousins of the newspapers abroad that published information which had commercial values, like the arrival or departure of ships. Not unsurprisingly most of India’s medieval history has been constructed from accounts left by foreign travelers.

In England, the foreign imports especially grocery items like chocolate, coffee, and tea from Latin America, Africa and Asia, were first promoted through the means of print. Ceramics and teapots established a new consumer culture long before the Industrial Revolution induced consumerism. Consumption of tea and especially coffee led to coffee houses and the creation of public space where the germs of democracy could sprout. Consumption habits created public sphere where critical public debate could take shape ‘endeavouring to influence the decision of state authority appealed to the critical public in order to legitimate demand before this new forum.’ In India declining surplus pared down the size of the Army, weakened the central authority and led to the emergence of other regional entities that competed for revenue along with the Mughal authorities. Loosening of central potencies led the intermediaries like the zamindars to turn into rent-expropriators.
The decline of the Indian nobility also led to the decline of the artisan community who had state patronage, and dethronement of the Indian rulers in the 18th century meant the impoverishment of their courtiers and the administrators', and of the native upper classes in general [leading] to a decline in luxury trade dependent on them. Poor communication meant English trade was carried only in the port cities. Indian goods would reach their traditional markets through English merchants, and ‘Luxury goods became the trophies of global trade beyond the gift giving of great kings, Tsars, and Mughals’ and at home they became the means through which social prestige could be enhanced. English shops would display goods imported from the East and the West Indies and English shops would proudly display ‘French clothes and Italian textiles’.
References:

3. Ibid. Pg 18
9. Ibid. Pg 162
11. Ibid. Pg. 56
13. Ibid. Pg. 93
16. Ibid. Pg 261
19. Ibid. Pg 160
27. Ibid. Pg. 340