CHAPTER V, Pt-1

STATE CONTROL ON TRADE IN POST MAURYA PERIOD.

Kosamulo hi rājeti prāvadah sārvālaukikah

..... Kāmandaṅkīya Nītisāra -XXI : 33.
The voluminous literature of ancient India contains both sacred and secular texts. Of the various sacred texts, a substantial portion comprises legal and theoretical treatises like the epics as they are in present form to-day, the Dharmasastras of Manu Yaññavalkya and Nārada. All these texts are to be taken into consideration for our study of the post Maurya period. Though these texts are of definite importance for the study of the socio-economic and administrative system of ancient India, they are essentially normative and prescriptive in character. Hence they give us descriptions of an idealised state, and often lay down principles which may be contrary and contradictory to the actual incidents taking place and thus they give us only one side of the picture. Therefore, for supplementary information we must take into account the archaeological and inscriptions as well as accounts left by foreign travellers visiting the sub-continent. These texts are also by no means standard historical literature, but sometimes elements of over estimation, ignorance creep into their accounts, but nevertheless, their narratives are often products of eye-witnesses and must be given due consideration for the study of period under survey.

Amongst the different constituent elements of the state, the importance of the treasury seems to have been
grasped by ancient Indian thinkers. The Santiparva of the Mbh. calls upon the king to guard his finances with great effort since kings depend upon Kosa which tends to the prosperity of the kingdom. Kam. states that it is on the lips of all, that the king is dependent on Kosa. The two great pillars of the Indian states in ancient India were the revenue and the army. Manu says that Kosa and the government of the realm depend on the king and they should be the personal concern of the king. Yaj. recommends that the king should personally look into the income and expenditure every day and keep in his treasury whatever is brought by those who are appointed to bring gold and wealth. The principal means of filling the treasury is taxation. It is therefore, necessary to consider first the principles of taxation as evolved by our writers. Moreover the king was not entitled to levy taxes at his pleasures or sweet will but that the rates of taxes varied not only according to the commodities but also according to times either normal or during exigencies. Moreover both Manu and Mbh assign that the king when increasing taxes should be careful and should draws taxes from the realm highly in the way "the bee draws honey from the trees" i.e. little by little and that taxation is meant for the protection of the subjects and that it is the kings wages (vetana) for the protection he affords.
A king must not lack in zeal and earnestness for the continued improvement of his kingdom by not only acquiring money and property, but also by regularly increasing the same by means of trade and commerce and finally utilising the increased wealth for good causes. This statement of Manu unravels the spirit of Indian culture which recommends acquisition of wealth to be ultimately spent for noble causes. Unless the king zeals the urge of acquiring what is not acquired and remains contended with whatever he already possesses, the result is that, in comparison with other kingdoms, his position would be inferior. It is a matter of common knowledge that an all round development of a state is only possible by improving its financial conditions, that is treasury which has its root in trade. It is therefore quite imperative that the king should devote his attention to the welfare of his state by properly extending trade and commerce.

The great epics of India show clearly how the socio-economic ideas regulating the relation between the individual traders, merchants, artisans and the state had gradually evolved and firmly established themselves on Indian soil. The king has to do everything for fairness of justice to all individuals of the state. Hence laws were made regulating trade so as to bring things at a fair price.
to all concerned, and to make possible the all round prosperity of the state as an organic whole with a special eye to the interest of all classes and as well as their harmonious development. Thus we may presume on the basis of the available evidences that the king became mindful of his duty to protect trade of his country in as much as traders contributed much to the royal treasury. Nārada warns Yudhīsthira that he should realise only such dues as prescribed in the canon and no arbitrary imposts are to be realised from merchants who come from different countries for gain. The Mbh. also enjoins that the tax on merchandise should be levied by the king after all due considerations "Yo gyakṣmaṇcha sāmprekṣaya vāṇijā dāpayet karaṇ" therefore the king should levy taxes upon merchants after carefully considering the affairs relating to purchase and sale the distance travelled, the provisions consumed and the charges of securing the goods. This verse occurs practically in the same form in Manu. Prof. U. N. Ghoshal\textsuperscript{11} thinks that the particular tax here mentioned is an impost upon the net profit of the merchant. While Prof. D. N. Jha\textsuperscript{12} thinks however, the use of karaṇ is the plural form of kara; in the present context this does not seem to indicate one tax but appears to imply all taxes imposed on the mercantile class. Although the passage shows an appreciation of the difficulties in assessing
merchant's profits isit should not necessarily refer
to an independent tax on the net profits. Whatever may
be the cause but both Mbh. and Manu like Kautilya recommends the king to fix the tax on traders after taking
into concern the costs of various other factors. As
regards trade in Ram. details are lacking except for
a few references to merchants and occasional references to
the sea are met with, but nothing more is known. In one
place of the Ayodhya-Kāṇḍa merchants of Aparānta and
Kerala are evidently referred to. These evidences might
suggest the existence of sea-borne trade carried on by
the merchants. But nothing is known about kings' associa-
tion with such trading activities. The evidences gleaned
from the Mbh. evidently shows that the king exerted some
sort of fiscal control over the traders.

When discussing the Dharmaśāstras of Manu it should
be borne in mind, that we do not find any systematic pres-
cription as that of one which we find in Kautilya. There
are a few fiscal terms like sulka/ tolls, kara tax on
merchants, punching a stamping fees upon weights and
measures, and ferry charges and boat hire. All these
terms were well operated in the Arthaśāstra, and included
in the list of revenue collection. Therefore judged
from this light it appears that such fiscal terms which
we get in the later texts are indicative of kings fiscal control over trade and commerce.

Now let us take the first term sulka or toll or customs duties. References in the Dharmaśāstras, Smritis and the Puranas unlike the Arthaśāstra enable us to trace a gradual evolution from crude to more advanced methods of assessment. Thus according to Manu the king should take \( \frac{1}{20} \) of that which persons having experience of toll houses and skilled in estimating the value of all kinds of merchandise may fix as the value for each commodity. A variant of the above rule occurs in the Rājadharma section of the Agnipurāṇa\(^{16}\) according to which the king may take \( \frac{1}{20} \) of internal merchandise and for foreign merchandise as such as would leave the trader a profit of \( \frac{1}{20} \).

In connection with the above-mentioned text of Manu, while some commentators take it to refer to \( \frac{1}{20} \) of the amount of merchandise, others refer it to \( \frac{1}{20} \) of the profit derived from the same. Mitramisra in his well known Digest called the Rājañītiparākṣa\(^{17}\) follows the latter interpretation and adds that although the text of Manu refers to \( \frac{1}{20} \) of the value of the commodity, it should be interpreted to refer to \( \frac{1}{20} \) of the excess on
the principal; for, if the king were to take \( \frac{1}{20} \) of the principal, the merchant would be ruined. It is evident that in the former sense alone the tax would amount to a duty properly so called, while in the latter sense it would be a tax upon profits. The correctness of the former interpretation is vouched for by a reference to the parallel system of the Arthasastra and by the independent mention of tax on merchants' profits (kara) in the Smrtis.

Very similar is the rule of Yājñavalkya according to whom the king may take a duty of \( \frac{1}{20} \) of the value estimated by the royal officers.

Vijnanesvara, commenting upon the text of Yājñavalkya quoted above, takes it to mean that the king should take \( \frac{1}{20} \) of the price as fixed by himself. This interpretation, however, is disproved by the fact that the State regulation of prices is mentioned by our authorities in a separate context. Nārada like the Arthaśāstra, expressly contemplates the merchants as paying the duty (śulka) at the toll-house.

The rules of the Smṛti regarding the administration of the śulka and the policy of its collection correspond, as far as they go, to the system of the Arthaśāstra. Thus Manu and Yājñavalkya prescribe a fine of eight times
the amount if the traders under stated the value of their merchandise. In thorough accord with the Arthasastra again, the Smṛtis forbid, on pain of confiscation of the whole merchandise, the exportation of what is proclaimed as suited for the king's use and of the country. Thus we see that in case of the traders indulged in any kind of fraudulent practices like using of counterfeit real mark or in correctly stating and wrongly showing the amount, the quantity of the merchandise or in order to evade the just legal ṛulka the traders had to face severe consequences.

Nārada²⁴ (Sambhuya Samutthāna) lays down that whatever is to be used by Srotriyaś (brāhmaṇas learned in the Vedas) for domestic purposes he is exempted from paying any kind of toll or customs duties, but if they are engaged in trade they had to pay taxes on every merchandise. Moreover, both Nārada and Bṛhaspati²⁵ are unanimous in stating that when traders carry on business jointly it is called partnership, which is a little of law. Where several partners are jointly carrying on business for the purpose of gains the contribution of funds towards the common stock of the association forms the basis of their undertaking. Each of the partners are to contribute his proper share to the king, which comprises the stores,
the food, charges for toll and the like, the loss the freight and the expense of keeping valuable must be duly paid by each of the several partners in accordance with the terms of their agreements. The texts is more eloquent in referring that "a trader when reaching a toll-house should pay the legal duty. A prudent man must not try to evade it because it is called a king's tax." Here the term king's tax may be taken into consideration. A duty is the king's due, it is levied by the kings in fact an imposition and hence the traders must not defraud the king of his share. If he evades the toll-house or if a trader sells his commodities at another hour than the legal hour of sale as scheduled by the king. Similarly if he does not state the value of his goods correctly he shall be fined eight times the amount of which he tried to evade.

The above discussion is more or less akin to the Arthasastra state of government. We find that the traders were subjected to vexatious interferences on the part of the state. The traders were left with no incentive to defraud the king or to make a misstatement of facts regarding the commodities they are carrying or to evade the toll-tax for all of which he was to pay a fine double the commodities he is carrying. The state
or the ruler thus gained in two-fold ways, first all the duties imposed upon the commodities of the traders went to the royal treasury and secondary the traders were in no way to charge exorbitant rates of profit.

Let us now turn to another class of taxes levied upon the merchants. While the Arthaśāstra understands kara in the technical sense to mean a kind of benevolence levied upon traders of various classes, the Śāstras take it to be a normal tax upon merchants. According to Manu, the king should levy taxes (kara) upon merchants after carefully examining the affairs relating to purchase and sales the distance travelled the charges for protection the provision they consumed etc. This rule occurs practically in the same form in a discourse upon polity in the Mbh. both authorities probably deriving it from the same source it is evident that the particular tax here mentioned is an impost upon the net profit of the merchant.

Turning to the next branch of revenue we may mention that the Śāstras apparently contemplated like the Arthaśāstra a tax to be derived from weights and measures. This is also referred in the text of Vasistha, which has not properly explained it. More explicit is the rule of Manu according to whom all weights and measures must be well examined ie.
must be stamped with the royal marks and they should be re-examined once in every 6 months. Comparison with the parallel rule of the Arthasastra suggest that this examination was made an occasion for the collection of a small punching fee. The next group of charges in the Smriti to which we next turn our attention has its precise parallel in the system of the Arthasastra. Thus Manu mentions ferry charges (Tara or Tārika) according to the following scale:

1. An (empty) cart ..................... 1 pana
2. A man's load ......................... 1/2 "
3. An animal and a woman .......... 1/4 "
4. A man without load .............. 1/8 "
5. Empty vessels and men without luggage. ................. A trifle

For long distances along the banks of the rivers the fare Tara should be proportion to the distance and duration of the journey while no settled charge is prescribed for the journey on sea. The above texts does not expressly mention whether state boats or the private boats are herein question, but the context in which it occurs and the analogy the Arthasastra rule permits us to refer it with confidence to the former.
The kṣaṇḍikī Mātisāra an important text on polity and statecraft emphatically states that Koša (royal treasury) according to experts in public finance, should be endowed with multiple means of income by way of revenue collection and limited or restricted outlets for expenses (by observance of rules of economy), which is full of desired commodities (for trade, yielding profit), and which is supervised by trusted officials of proven character. It should be rich with accumulation of pearls, gold and precious jewels, inherited from ancestors as earned by righteous means (by normal course of revenue collection). Moreover the finances may be utilised for purposes and trade. (IV : 62-64). In another context (IV 51-52), the author in course of his description of land resources (bhūsampad or janapadesampad) says that land should not be only fertile, productive of different types of commodities, but should also possess adequate communication links, by water-routes and land routes conducive to trade. Moreover when making settlements in a newly colonised area the king must inhabit craftsmen and traders (engaged in their respective vocations, and those who will ungrudgingly bear the burden of taxation, even when excess levies are imposed and which is visited by foreigners from different other kingdoms for trade and other purposes. Such a land should be devolped at all costs (with all possible efforts) at it becomes the root of all property.
The above prescriptive treatise echoes in a similar manner like the Arthasastra. The king by all means is the upholder of trade and commerce. He encourages traders in newly colonised area, offers adequate facilities opening trade routes, supervises trade and commerce through trusted officials, and offers lucrative terms to foreign traders. The king is conscious, that the revenues earned through trading activities will enhance the treasury.

There is another interesting evidence in a late text called the Dasakumāraçāmīta of Dandi who flourished in South India in the 7th Cent. A.D. states that a valuable article in possession of a courtesan was found to have been a stolen property. She was at first reluctant to disclose the source wherefrom she procured it. But under the pressure of the king, the name of the innocent merchant Arthapati was divulged. The king was inflicting capital punishment on Arthapati. The king was then requested in the following manner: Since there is a privilege granted to the merchants by the Mauryas, that they should not be punished with death in this kind of crime, in case you are angry you may banish this wretch, from the country after confiscating his entire property. The Mauryas here are identified by Sircar with the hononymous imperial family of Magadha. The interesting fact is that for the same offence i.e.
theft here) administration of justice is differently meted
act to merchant and other people. This may be considered
as a judicial concession of the king to traders. 368.

Section - II.

The most important event in the commercial history
of India during the post Maurya period was the Indo-Roman
Commerce. 37 The beginning of the trade probably developed
from the reign of Augustus (BC- 27 - AD 14) Strabo writes
in the 1st century AD "during his stay with his friend,
that about one hundred and twenty ships set sail from
Nyos - Hormos to India although in the time of Ptolemies
scarcely one would venture on this voyage and commerce
with the Indies".

The Periplus Tes-Erythrus Thalasses, 38 an account of
maritime trade in India left behind by an anonymous Greek
sailor, the Natural History of Pliny 39 refers to particular
wind, which the Greek sailors used to reach India in a
relatively shorter time. During his course of journey from
the Roman World to India he mentioned a number of ports,
marts, towns, the names of kings as well as the commodities
for export and import. The account of Pliny shows also
how the overseas trade with India developed in four stages.
by proper utilization of the Etesian Wind\textsuperscript{40} or Hippal\textsuperscript{\textit{vs}}
Wind. Each of the succeeding stages in the development
of the sea routes proved to be shorter, and safer than
each preceding one. Another interesting feature of
the various stages of development of the sea route is
that the shorter and safer the journey is, the more
it was directed towards the southern part of India. Thus
in its early stages ships came to Patala, then to Jaigarh
in Western Deccan and finally to Muziris\textsuperscript{41} in Kerala. The
other important factor in this maritime commerce between
India and Rome was that the early part of the first
century AD witnessed the rise of number of formidable
powers in Eurasia. They were China in the far east, the
Roman Empire in the west and the Parthian empire in Iran
and the emergent Kus\textae\text{na} empire with his strong-bold in
Bactra. Available sources of information show that there
was a common point of interest among the Romans the Parthians
and the Chinese.\textsuperscript{42} The silk which China solely produced
it was the Romans who craved for this as a luxury item
and the Parthians acted as intermediaries and sent the
goods from China to the Roman World, of these states the
Parthians in Iran occupied a position in between the
Chinese and Roman Empires and controlled considerable
portions of the famous silk route. Traders whether going
to the Roman Empire or to China, had to pass through the
Parthian Empire which naturally extracted commercial taxes at a very high rate. The Parthians were well aware of the fact that as there was no other alternative way for the Roman Emperors or the Chinese to take recourse to. The Roman emperors were on the other hand on the look out of a viable economic alternative to oust the Parthians. At this juncture the Hippalus was introduced and this brought the Indian sub-continent in commercial contact with the Roman World.

The author of the Periplus has provided us with a fairly exhaustive list of items for export and import at Barbaricum. "Among the imports were a great deal of thin clothing, and a little spurious figured linens topaz, coral, storax, frankincense, vessels of glass, silver and gold plate and a little wine". The item of exports are as follows: - "costus, bdellium, lycium nard, turquoise, lepis-lazuli, seric-skin, cotton-cloth, silk-yarn and indigo". A glance at the list of the articles mentioned above would immediately suggest that these were mostly if not all luxury items commanding a high price meant for a selected few. It is significant to note that according to the author of the Periplus "ships lie at anchor at Barbaricum but all their cargoes are carried up to the metropolis by the river to the king". The merchandise
appears to have been brought under the notice of the king before being finally readed for transaction. This suggest two possibilities (a) king at Minnagara probably imposed some amount of control over the import export transactions and therefore supervised the merchandise. (b) he might have been interested in some of the luxury items which he had reserved for him. That is why all the merchandise had to be shown to him or atleast to his officials. In view of the both the possibilities the interest of the king in the luxury items transacted in Indo-Roman trade is unmistakable. The king is the upholder of foreign trade and seems to have profitably utilised the Indo-Roman trade to enrich the treasury, either in the form of levy of commercial taxes or in the form of acquisition of valuable articles for himself.

The Periplus has given an exhaustive account of ports and towns of Dachinabades. According to the author of the Periplus, Barygaza and areas around it were ruled by Nambanus, identified with Nahapana. The Periplus gives a thorough account of items for export and import through this port. In the same section the account continues, "in those times moreover, these were imported as present to the king costly silver vases, instrument of music, handsome young women for concubinage superior wine apparel, ..."
plain but costly, and the choicest unguents." This description of import of the items are specially meant for the king. These were naturally goods of highest quantity and price. Interestingly enough unguents meant for the king are expressly said to be choicest, while the same article brought as a general item for import is neither costly nor great in quantity. The statement of the author of the Periplus that articles were imported for the king as presents is somewhat peculiar. If it is the merchants who presented the king with choicest articles then the merchants probably might have paid them as some short of "najrana" in order to keep him good humour. In that case apart from the over all economic prosperity of his realm, brought about by brisk, and a regular levy of commercial taxes, the king utilizes the commerce to acquire the choicest articles of luxury probably free of costs.

The author of the Periplus makes some more interesting comments regarding the port of Barygaza. "The gulf of Barygaza was narrow and at the very entrance of it stood a narrow strip of shoal rough and beset with rocks". For this reason native fishermen were appointed by the government and were stationed with well manned long boats called Trappaga and Cotymba at the entrance of the river, whence they go out as far as Syrestrane to meet ships and pilot them upto Barygaza. This arrangement of providing
violated vessels to sailors engaged in Indo-Roman trade undoubtedly speaks of Nahapana's interest and encouragement to traders who played an important part in enriching his treasury.

The account of Barygaza in the Periplus is followed by that of Calliene (i.e. Kalyan near Bombay). The city of Calliene in the time of Elder Saraganus became a lawful market town, but since it came into the possession of Sāndāres, the port is much obstructed and the Greek ships landing there, may chance to be taken to Barygaza under guard. The two political personalities figuring in the above passage are elder Saraganus i.e. Sātakarni-I and Sandares is Sundars Sātakarni of the Sātavāhana dynasty. The present passage speaks of a naval blockade resulting in the obstruction of Calliene. While ships originally bound for Calliene were brought to Barygaza by Nahapāna, who was then ruling over this area. By causing diversion of trade from his enemy's port, Nahapāna not only succeeded in bringing larger number of ships to his own territory but also an enormous amount of wealth for his treasury.

The Mention of another port the Periplus gives is Muziris. It is a city at the height of prosperity frequented as it is by ships from Ariake and Greek ships for Egypt. It is interesting to note that the Cera king is said to have
presented to visitors at Muziris, the rare products of seas and mountains. Visitors at a great entrepot were no one than the Great and Roman traders. Making presents to foreign traders with rare products by the king may be interpreted as samples of commodities fit to be exchanged through trade. Moreover, the gift of rare products was made to induce the foreign trader to pay frequent visits to the port. The king was to show a favourable attitude to the traders to encourage foreign trade. In this connexion it may be mentioned that a temple of Augustus was established at Muziris. Such a temple appears to have been constructed or at least meant for Greeko-Roman traders. This implies a regular settlement or some sort of a colony of Yavana traders established at Muziris, the construction of a temple for foreigners is rather unlikely in an area not frequently visited, and inhabited by them. The settlement of foreign traders must have been approved and encouraged by the existing political authority. This may point to the king's interest in foreign trade.

Among other important port were Nelcynda (called Neacyndi by Pliny) and Bacare which figures in the Periplus as being included within the Pandian territory. The Pandian king, at least according to one version, figures in Strabo's Geography as having sent an embassy to Augustus
Caesar, the celebrated Roman emperor. An important aspect of this mission was a letter sent by the Indian king to Augustus. "He (the Indian king) set a high value on being Caesar's friend and was willing to grant him a passage wherever he wished to go through his dominions, and to assist him in any good enterprise". Warming has successfully established the commercial character of this Indian embassy. We have already discussed that Augustus was interested in establishing direct commercial contact with India, obviously to obviate the inimical and exacting Parthians. The Indian king seems to have sent to the Roman emperor an open invitation to initiate regular commercial intercourse through his kingdom. The Pandya king appears to have been quite aware of the economic advantages and importance of such a trade contact. The economic interests of rulers of two far-flung country may be said to have coincided. This exemplifies how a diplomatic negotiation between two countries was rooted to their respective commercial interests.

In the Geographike Huphgesis of Ptolemy we get some interesting informations regarding Indo Roman trade. After the Khaberos emporium, the name of another emporium Poduca is found. The same port also figures in the Periplus. The place has been identified with the
archaeological site of Arikamedu (near Pandicherry). Two sectors (northern and southern) were excavated. The northern sector has yielded a substantial structure more than 150 ft. in length built about 50 A.D. The building has been identified by excavators as a warehouse. The existence of this suggested warehouse makes Arikamedu or Poduce a centre of trade. The southern sector has yielded two walled courtyards, which according to the excavation reports were used for production and preparation of muslin cloths which the classical authors highly spoke of, as an export item. Moreover, some of traders suggested to have been established their colonies here. The combined testimony of these two finds prove that Arikamedu like Puhap and Muziris was a trading station where Graeco-Roman traders established their own settlements. Such a settlement of foreign traders in an area outside their homeland is difficult to establish without the direct consent or interest of the ruler. This is in close accordance with the Arthaśāstra. The ruler seems to have received traders with a gesture of open invitation and even allowed them to open up some sort of colonies. It is the prospect of Indo-Roman trade that prompted the Indian ruler to open diplomatic negotiations with the Roman empire. The Indian ruler not only enriched his treasury by collecting levies and thus increasing volume of commerce, but also procured choicest and luxury articles for himself through traders.
From the above discussion on the basis of the Periplus as well as that of Ptolemy we can form the conclusion that the Indo-Roman trade in fact reached its zenith during the period under survey. It was the lure of gold as well as the luxury goods that prompted the rulers of different periods as well as of different areas to have an open mind to encourage foreign trade and traders in all possible ways. The king not only procured choicest and luxury commodities by upholding foreign trade but also enriched his treasury with the influx of commercial levies.

Section-III.

The most outstanding of the foreign powers of the post Maurya period was of Kusāṇas. Originally a Central Asiatic Nomadic people in origin, the Kusāṇas extended their dominions into major parts of North India, as far as Benaras and Kausāmbi (near Allahabad). The significant fact is that the kusāṇa Empire not only embraced territories lying outside the geographical confines of the sub-continent but also maintained and encouraged international and commercial contact. It was Kaniska who seems to have controlled the vast empire connecting the three parts
of the sea road, first the road of the two seas the Caspians and Euxine, secondly the road crossing the Euphrates and ultimately reaching the Mediterranean ports, and thirdly the route connecting the Red Sea with the Lower Indus Valley. Such a complete mastery would also increase the flow of international trade. Moreover, articles of trade would move through a secure road protected by a strong central authority. The political control of the Kusānas over the extensive territories must have enabled them to enrich their treasury by levying revenues on Indo-Roman trade and traders. Archaeological excavation at Bagram in Afghanistan which formed an integral part of the Kusāna Empire yielded among other things a storehouse assignable to the Kusāna period. It contained remains of articles and wares from different countries. Since Bagram was an important trading station and also following wheeler's suggestions then the storehouse appears to have been a depot for receipt of dues in kinds levied on traders participating in the highly profitable Indo-Roman trade. It is not impossible that other important commercial centres included within the kusāna empire also probably had such storehouse for the collection of commercial dues in kinds. Since it is well known that the principal items of Indo-Roman commerce were mostly luxury, and hence costly goods, the kusānas appear to have collected precious objects through the collection of commercial levies. Such
store house must have been places of government planning and hence are royal stores which suggest kings participation in the distribution policy concerning trade.

Attention may be drawn to an epigraphic record from Kanheri which formed a part of the Satavahana Empire. The record states "...... the meritorious gifts of the Sāgara pāloganas. The turn may be very similar to Basilikoi Aleis who are royal boatman employed by the Government viewed from this light this royal boatman might have been employed by the king to pilot the boat or ships so that they reach the ports safely. They were employed with a view to watch over and guard sea routes frequented by foreign traders engaged in the Indo-Roman commerce. Such steps were taken by the king to encourage foreign traders and facilitate trading so that trade passes on smoothly and without hindrances. Such hindrances might have been created by pirates, who often over powered heavy ships and looted all commodities.

The Junāgarh Rock Inscription of Rudradāman-I which eualogises, the career and achievements of Rudradāman I dated (Saka era 72 = 150 A.D.) credits the king for having rendered protection to nagara nigama Janepada from
robbers, beasts and diseases. Nagara usually means a town, janapada a country site, Nigama also means a market place a city or a town. It also stand for a road, or a caravan or company of merchants. In that case it appears that the king is said to have rendered protection to roads, caravans and the company of merchants. Such a measure of protection is taken against robbers, beasts, and diseases. The system is more or less similar to the Arthasastra government, where the king takes an active part in maintaining trade routes. Protective measures have been enforced in the rural and urban areas lying within the empire of the king to ensure safety to traders and encourage commercial activities. Besides this L.14 of the same inscription mentions that his treasury over flowed with "... besides minerals, lawfully obtained by him through the collection of taxes, tolls and customs duties and shares. Here the terms toll is to be taken into consideration. Sulka is generally imposed on all commercial commodities whether inland or foreign and also on movement of traffic. An insecure condition is hardly favourable to trade and commerce. Rudradaman's protective measures to ensure safety of trade routes seems to have not only facilitated regular movements of trade with smooth inflow of commercial merchandise to his kingdom, but also would result in the collection of handsome amount of commercial levies like Sulka which would considerably enrich his treasury.
After the downfall of the Kuśāṇas, there were a number of local independent states over greater parts of northern India. The foundation of the Gupta dynasty in Magadha, in C 319 -320 A.D. Once again ushered in an age of political unification in northern India. A number of epigraphic records are found from Damodarpur ¹⁶⁵ (Dinajpur dist.) in Bangladesh which formed part of the Gupta empire. These records begin with the name of the reigning Gupta emperor adorned with usual imperial titles, and the name of the provincial governor appointed by him followed by that of the district officer. The officer-in-charge of the district (viṣaya) seems to have been helped by four persons. Nagarārāreśṭhi, Sārtthavāha, Prathama Kulika, Prathamakāyañastha. The term Nagarārāreśṭhi literally means Sreṣṭhi of a town, nagara, D.C. Sircar identifies him with the guild president, probably meaning that he was the president of the merchant guild. Sārtthavāha stands for, according to Sircar, the merchant he may also be considered as a representative of the caravans (or inland) traders. How they were appointed whether by selection or election or nomination is uncertain, at the present stage of our knowledge. But what is interesting is the inclusion of two persons belonging to mercantile community in the adhisthānādhiśkaraṇa i.e. city council. The merchant has normally little direct involvement in
administrative affairs. His precise function in such a city council cannot be ascertained due to the paucity of data. That he probably enjoyed some administrative prerogatives in the city council may not be an unreasonable hypothesis. This may mean either that the merchant was gradually making his presence felt in the politico-administrative circles or he has been included in the board as the representative of his own community. Whatever may be the cause, the root of his importance in administrative affairs and recognition must have been his affluence based upon trade. Besides this there is another term Saulkika i.e. derived from sulka i.e. tolls and customs, and Saulkika was incharge of the collection of the same. From this we can infer that the Gupta kings like the Mauryas maintained a large bureaucratic staff, and the above mentioned officer mostly corresponds to Sulkaadhyaaha of the Mauryas who is the collector of customs and tolls from the merchants.

After the downfall of the Guptas, the process of disintegration of the Gupta empire set in. Ambitious feudatory rulers gradually carved independent principalities. Amongst them is Mahāmāta Sri Viṣṇusena also called Viṣṇubhata who is known to have issued an order in the year 357６ from the residence Lohāta, in the Gulf of Kutch. The purport of the record is that Viṣṇusena being approached by the Vaniggrāma community, favoured this
community. It was D.D. Kosambi who clearly established
the relation between Manigrāma, and Vaniggrāma/Vaniyagrama
in sense of an association of merchants. The charter issued
to the Vanigrāma community by Visnusena contains 72 acāras
or customary laws some of which are of considerable interest
from the point of view of traders. They are as follows:
"All the members of different guilds are not to flock to
the same market" - clause no. 12: "A merchant belonging to
another district or kingdom should not be a witness in a
criminal case involving persons of a locality
where he happened to be present on account of some reason
or other" - clause no. 16: "Merchants staying abroad for
a year were exempted from paying any entrance fee while
returning to their native place, but an exit tax had to be
paid by them, when they went out for business again" - clause
no. 52.

These appear to have been certain favours and
exemptions fiscal and legal in nature - offered by the king
to the trading community. Rohar according to D.C. Sircar
is the same as Lohātegrāma is the chief sea port of the
Anjar District. Sircar suggests that Lohāta was a port in
current. A settlement of a mercantile community in
or near the sea port would not usually be conducive to the
development of trade and commerce of the region concerned.
It is significant to note that the charter was issued for the protection and settlement of his dominion "janapadasya, pariraksana Sannivesanāya. This is probably a policy similar to that of janapada nivesa of the Arthasastra which also recommends the ruler to show certain anugrahas or favours to initial settlers in a newly colonised area. Viewed from this light the ruler seems to have allowed some exemptions and favours to a mercantile community in order to probably induce them to establish settlements in his territory.

The record also refers to a number of taxes mostly toll due and ferry charges to be levied by the king. The settlement of a trading community probably near a sea-port at once ensures brisk commercial intercourse and enable the king to fill up his treasury by various types of commercial taxes.

More interesting may be the extent of two other clauses. The first says Āsāgha māsi Pauṣa drasta vyani māna pautavam, adāne rupakah sa pādah saha dhārnikena." Sircar comments that "māna pautava which had to be examined in the months of Āsāgha and Pauṣa seems to have been a store house where grains were measured and stored. But the term māna Pautavann may better be taken in the sense of weight and measures. The clause probably stands for regular examination
of weights and measures, in every asadha and Pausa and some sort of examination fee (ādāna, dharmunika) had to be paid to the government obviously by merchants. This is a similar echo like the Arthasastra. The ruler thus maintains a regular control over trade by arranging a compulsory checking of weights and measures. This step is taken definitely with a view to safeguard against traders prevent fraudulent practices of traders which may not only go against and peoples interest in general, but also may adversely affect the proper collection of commercial taxes payable by merchants to the king.

Clause no. 26 states "A - Saṁvadyā vyāvahāratah śulkādiham ca dhānyādi pravesyato nīśkayasyato va śulkam aṣṭagūnaṃ dāpyah". The passage, especially the terms pravesyata, and nīskasayata, may suggest that he closely watched marketing and distribution of an essential commodity like grain. If any one stored and disposed of grains without the states knowledge or without informing royal officials, they were forced to pay eight times the usual tax. Thus we see that the king actively controlled trade, through marketing and distribution policy. Moreover, some amount of control over traders activities by stern invigilation by the ruler may reasonably be inferred.
A study of the different clauses, throw interesting side lights: (1) the king in question shows an inviting and encouraging attitude to the Vanigrama community by allowing certain favours exemptions, (ii) but at the same time probably does not allow to shift the entire economic initiative in their hands. The ruler closely controls trade without taking active participation. He supervises the marketing and distribution of commodities, and maintains a standardisation of weights and measures, which is one of the most important ways of controlling trade.

The present inscription also lays down some ferry charges. These are Clause 53 - a boat full of vessels probably of metal the crossing fare was 12 silver coins but in case these were meant for some religious purposes the amount was 1¼ silver coins. Clause 54 - a boat full of camels and buffaloes a tax was 5¼ silver coins and no concession was allowed even when these were meant for religious causes. Similarly clause 55 refers to a boat full of bulls was 2 silver coins but reducible 2¼ silver coins if these were meant for religious purposes. Clause 56 - tax levied on a boat full of paddy or grains in general was ½ of the amount prescribed for a boat full of vessels. Similarly clause 61 refers that the crossing charge for a boat full of bamboo was 6¼ coins not reducible even if
meant for religious purposes. All these clauses deal with ferry charges which was one of the major sources of royal revenue according to the ancient Indian law givers. It is interesting to note that the ruling authority did not allow concession of taxes on certain articles even if these were meant for religious purposes. These ferry charges taradeya or tarika which our ancient law givers suggest was one of the most important sources of revenue.

An interesting record issued by a fewdatory king Prthivícandra Bhogasakti dated 710-711 A.D.\(^3\) contains that "the merchants residing in Sāmagiri are not to pay octroi duty in the whole kingdom". The merchant however gain a definite fiscal favour i.e. exemption from local taxes. The commercial character of Sāmagiri is clearly evident from the suffix pattana meaning a trade centre. The record explicitly states pūrvamūt sāditam i.e. devastated earlier, and this probably affected the economy of the region. The town was recolonised in order to realise its commercial potentials. Such a programme could be fruitful by a regular settlement of merchants. With this view the ruler takes a favourable attitude towards the traders and offers them inducements, for the long-term development of the trade centre.
Among the articles of very high demand which traders dealt in was the horse. The king and the merchants of the ruling class had genuine interest in obtaining this animal. The Pehoe. Ins. of 883 A.D. contains an account of the horse trade. It also discloses names of thirty three or thirty four horse dealers and their respective countries and localities. References is also found to the sale of horses ... and other animals to the king. Moreover, the record also says that at Traighātaka and other places horses were meant for sale to king only. This seems to imply that other persons were debarred from horse as purchasers. The king held a monopoly control over the horse trade, and naturally had the prerogative to reserve for himself horses of best breeds.

The heydays of the Colas began since the reign of Rājarāja dated (785-1014) A.D. During this period Mamallapuram was one of the Principal ports of the Cola empire. Hall suggests on the basis of epigraphic records that it was important for the king to establish a relationship with this port. A local assembly was entrusted with the reorganisation of the administrative set up of this entrepot. And among persons included in the responsible posts of the local assembly, one belonged to a well-known organisation
The king however encouraged the merchants with valuable administrative posts, so that his trading activities succeed more. (2) the affluence of the traders namely from trading to administrative ports may be accepted. This is a similar reflection to the power of the Setthis in the Buddhist, Jataha, whose wealth and influence gave them a footing in the political arena also.

According to the Annals of the Sung dynasty the just mission to China from Chu-lin = Chola country arrived in 1015 A.D. The name of the king was Rājarāja, who sent a mission with pearls like articles as tributes to the Chinese king in order to induce the foreign traders to come and trade. This diplomatic negotiation between two, political powers thus began mainly for opening commercial dialogues between the two.

Kulottunga I epithet Sūngamati-vīrāta may appear striking. The term Sunga stands for taxes levied on ships, boats etc. the term then denotes tolls and customs. The royal epithet of Kulottunga-I mentioned above shows that he exempted tolls and customs dues. Such a fiscal remission was obviously meant for traders particularly those engaged in foreign trade. This would consequently attract traders and probably increase the volume of trade.
Commercial levies of different nature and on different sources could then be imposed by the king. It would not be a mistake to mention here that Kulottunga maintained contacts with his counterpart in Pagan and renamed the port of Visakahapattanam as Kullatanga Cholo Paṭṭanam.

The port in question is also to have been looked after among other by an itinerant mercantile organisation. This implies the ruler was particularly the upholder of foreign trade. The decision of exempting tolls and customs is then actually a part of his programme of encouraging trade, which in its turn would yield long-term fiscal returns. A mission from the Burmese king is said to have been received by the same Chola king. Another embassy was sent to China under the name of a king Ti-hu-kia-lo who is identified with Kulottunga. Seventy-two men was sent in course of this embassy who were given 81800 strings of copper cash in return for the articles of tribute given to the Chines king. The commercial character of this mission is beyond doubt that the ruler have made a handsome profit through this foreign trade.

The above discussion therefore, seems to highlight that Chola emperors were probably interested to explore and
exploit profit potentialities of international trade in which South India during the period under review vigorously participated. The items of trade were mostly luxury goods of fancy prices. The revenue earning possibilities of trade in such costly items, hardly escaped the notice of Chola king, under whom the Cholás emerged not only as a political power but also as a front ranking commercial force. Moreover, with the widening scope of far-flung maritime, commerce in and through Chola realm mercantile organisations naturally came to the limelight.

But Kulottōnga's successors did not appreciate the exemptions by the ruler to the mercantile community. The epigraphic records (1238-1239 A.D.) coming from the Tanjore district, the area under the direct control of the Chola emperors, that fiscal extortions were carried by the later rulers extensively. This is more or less supplemented by Chau-Ju-Kua, a Chinese administrative officer who opined that this policy of fleecing the traders was carried on so extensively that the Chola kingdom was rarely visited by traders because of excessive taxation there. Thus we see that if the ruler are intent upon, the attitude of fleecing the traders, the latter would certainly avoid those ports. As a result of which the economic prosperity of the king will be in stagnant position.
The activities of the highly renowned mercantile community the 500 Svāmīs of Aayavole are known from an inscription found in Karnataka in 1150 A.D. The following description as quoted in the inscription - "Famed throughout the World, visiting the Cera, Chola, Pandya, .......... by land and water routes, penetrating into the region of six continents, with superior elephants, well bred, horses, sapphires, moonstones, sandal, camphor... by selling them Wholesale or by hawking, preventing the loss of customs duties they fill up the emperors treasury and of jewels and his armoury of weapons". The far-flung commercial contacts maintained by this mercantile community through over land and maritime speaks highly of their mobility. The articles these traders dealt with may be broadly classified into : (i) animals necessary for military purposes, (ii) mineral products, (iii) luxury items. Though these are not essential commodities of daily need, but commodities of high value and within the purchasing power of a selected view. What is more interesting is that these traders fill up the kings treasury with gold, jewels and armoury. Thus it appears that these merchants were the suppliers of valuable commodities to the king. It may also mean that their trading activities laid to the collection of handsome amount of levies for the king for this reason the king often had to show favours to the important trading communities.
From the region around the Krishna delta and the adjacent coastal areas Ganapati's Motupalle Pillar inscription is found dated 1244-1245 A.D. Matupalle is southeast of Krishna delta and also figures in Marco-polo's travels. Ganapati's record from Matupalle is expressly stated to have been Abhayasasana i.e. royal charter of security issued in favour of traders. L. 135 of this inscription reads "by this glorious Maharaja Ganapatideva the following edicts assuring safety has been granted to traders by sea, starting for and arriving from all continents islands, foreign countries and cities". The royal proclamation guaranteeing security to traders may strongly imply that previously traders had enjoyed little safety in carrying commercial activities in an around Motupalle. In L. 140 the king frankly admits" formerly kings used to take by force the whole cargo namely gold elephants horses gems etc. carried by ships and vessels, which after they had started from one country to another were attacked by storms, wrecked and thrown on the shore". It reasonably followed that owing to such heinous acts by the king traders consequently began to avoid the ports, otherwise Ganapati need not had to declare security for traders afresh. Ganapati also stated "we out of mercy for the sake of glory and merit are granting every thing besides the fixed duties to those who have incurred the great risks of a sea-voyage with the
thought that wealth is more valuable than even life. A large number of items export and import mostly luxury goods are enumerated as dutiable products in the record. Apart from levy of taxes on these articles Ganapati also collected a duty on one in 30 on all exports and imports. This reasonable fiscal system must have encouraged traders from all over the country to select Matupalle as one of their major ports of call and such a decision could have obviously resulted in the collection of a regular and a handsome amount of revenue to the treasury by the king. Marco-polo, the celebrated venetian traveller who came to this port in 1293 A.D. spoke highly of Mutfili i.e. Motupalle. The most interesting statement of Pol is that he calls the Kâkatiya as the kingdom of Mutfili. The importance of the port has increased to such an extent that the name of the port was applied to denote the whole kingdom.

An inscription dated 1256 A.D. found from the Nellore district states that an itinerant mercantile organisation along with the Ur assembly controlled the collection of levies associated with boats and ships. Thus we see that the affluence of the merchants was firmly established and they were in a position to extent their sphere of activities and enjoyed administrative prerogatives.
While merchants were gradually entering into the domain of administration in the Yadava kingdom the Nayakas who served in the neighbouring state of the Hoysalas are described in an inscription dated 1257 to have put down conspiracies that were launched by the merchant and acquired control over them at the same time. The merchants thus may reasonably be held to have been among those who laid such conspiracies against the ruling political authority. The nature of the conspiracy whether economic or political or a combination of both has not been specified in this record. Nevertheless it appears more or less certain that merchants were sometimes becoming powerful enough to dominate the king or at least attempted to do so.

The Kottayam plates of Vira Rāghava the ruler of Kerala dated 1320 A.D. records that a merchant was conferred with the title of Manigrāmama. The inscription declares some privileges and prerogatives and right to be enjoyed by the recipient of the title. Among these, the right of proclamation, monopoly of trade in four quarters, are particularly significant. No direct information is obtained beyond these rights. The four quarter of the pattana or port from is mentioned in the inscription. Such rights can be called farming rights offered by the ruler probably against a stipulated share of money to be earned by the
trader out of the port. This is a departure of attitude by the ruler in the Arthasastra state. The above mentioned might had been enjoyed by the king in the theoretical texts. But the king grants the traders with such rights against enjoyed in a port against a stipulated share of money.

Lastly we take Muslim account. An exhaustive description regarding trade and commerce in Mabar is obtained. Mabar exported silken stuff, aromatic roots and large pearls, while imported from China, various sorts of choice merchandise. Whatever commodities for goods were imported (he shall) have the first selection until which none else was allowed to purchase. When he had selected his goods he dispatched them on his own ships or delivered them to merchants and shipowners to carry to the island of Kais. There also it was not permitted to any merchant to contract or bargain until the factors of Malik-ul-Islam had selected what they required and after that the merchants were allowed to buy whatever was suited to the wants of Mabar. With the prices obtained by their sale such goods were purchased as were suitable for the home market.

Mabar appears to have assumed the role of an intermediary for the supply of Chinese goods in the remote
areas of Kais. The king ruling in Mabar was most probably
the Pandya king who participated in this trade, prompted
by the profit potentialities of this commercial intercourse.
As the king selects the goods first through his agents
the best commodities would naturally be set apart for the
king, therefore, the chances of profit for the king for
such commodities is certain and the amount of gain is
larger. Moreover the kings restricts the initiative of
the private traders. His position is further strengthened
because he has his own ships, and thus does not depend
upon the traders. Therefore to conclude the king by his
active participation and control over foreign trade
derived a substantial income.

When concluding, we can say that in ancient India
the state rarely assumed a managerial role. It is only in
the Maurya period and the prescriptions of the Arthaśāstra,
that the king imposed firm control over traders engaged
in production himself actively participated in trade like
any other individual trader. Moreover while the Arthaśāstra
state maintained a monopoly control of trade in certain
commodities - luxury as well as essential items, kings
of the post Maurya period imposed control only over
luxury commodities, and other items which had definite
importance to the ruler e.g. horse. The
treaties like the Dharmashastra and epics also sanctioned state control over such restricted number of items, as well as maintained some fiscal control. Regarding foreign trade the rulers maintained a very work attitude and was respected as the upholder of foreign trade. This attitude on the part of the rulers cannot be betrayed because often we have noticed that the rulers were more or less dependant on these traders who almost in variably began to act as the procurer of revenue, and the supplies of luxury and costly goods to the king. The logical outcome of this would naturally be the increasing dependance of the ruler upon these traders or commissioned agents, for acquiring choicest goods for himself and revenue to enrich his treasury. The king thus often had to acknowledge the importance of traders by inviting them to his own territory with concessional terms, by creating Vaisya-grafras and by arranging for their safety in long distance trade. Moreover the trader also managed for himself access into the royal court, though his affluence of wealth and power. The trader thus seems to have acquired, if not purchased political cum administrative authority, along with the king. Traders thus became a potential power group parallel to the king in the post-Maurya period.
Notes :-

1. Ramayana and Mahabharata:
   Each of these two great works throw a flood of light as the conditions of India in the past, but as is well known to most scholars, there is a great difficulty in utilising the materials functioned by them. The two great works were not the production of a particular period but grew out of older nuclei handled and rehandled by subsequent composers. They thus took centuries to be reduced to their present form. Our difficulty therefore lies in separating the various strata of composition, which one sure to bear the stamp of the age, in which they were produced. The traditions about historical events may be reproduced intact by a subsequent writer, but whenever someone tries to draw a picture it is true to be influenced imperceptively by the ideas and condition of the age in which the writer lives.

N.C. Banerjee, Economic life - Progress in Ancient India.

2. Gautama, Kautilya, Manu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada, Brhaspati and the Mahābhārata.
5. Yajñavalkya (I : 327 : 328)
7. Mbh. Sānti parva (88 : 4-6) (71 : 20)
8. N.C. Banerjee - Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India.
    Mbh Santiparva : 130-135.
    (Ramāyana Ayodhya Kānda 3)
14. N.N. Khe|n : Agrarian & Fiscal Economy
    (Importance of Treasury, page 242)
15. Ibid. - Ayodhya Kanda 3 of Ramayana.
16. VIII, 398.
17. U.N. Ghosal - Hindu Revenue System, page 109,
22. Yaj: 262.
23. As examples of goods proclaimed for the king's use, Medhatithi mentions elephants from the Eastern countries, saffrons, silks, woollens from Kashmir horses from the western countries, precious stones, pearls etc. from the southern countries. Medhatrthi further illustrates the class of goods whose export is forbidden, by the king, by the example of crops during famine. This evidently points to a policy of prohibition of export of food-grains as a measure of famine relief. (H.R.S., page 119)
26. (A duty is the king's due and traders must not defraud the king of it.)
29. Yogaksema, explained by Medhatithi as charges for protection against robbers, during journey, through forests, is taken by Kullūka to include the net profits as well. In either case the nature of the tax remains the same.
33. VIII : 403.
35. Manu VII : 404-406
37. R.H. Worthington: The Commerce between the Roman
Empire & India. (1928) R.E.M. Wheeler Rome
Beyond the Imperial Frontier (1954).
39. Edited & Translated by H. Rackham - The Natural History of Pliny.
40. Periplus Section : 57.
42. R. Chakrabarty - Economic factors in Political History.
( an unpublished thesis), page 305.
43. L. Boulnois - The Silk Road (1966), C.G.F. Simkin
Traditional Trade of Asia (1968).
45. Periplus Section 39.
46. Periplus Section 38.
47. Periplus Section 50.
48. Periplus Section 44: The expression Basilikoi Aleis may be translated literally as the man in the king's domain who go around the sea.
48. Periplus Section 52.
49. Periplus Section 54.
52. Strabo, Book-XV - A variant reading states that it was sent by a king called Poros.
59. B. N. Mukherjee - The Rise and Fall of the Kusana Empire
60. Ibid.


67. Ibid.

68. E.I. XXX, page 163-81: According to D.C. Sircar, the two dates are 592 A.D. and 605 A.D.


70. cf. Kautilya Arthasastra-II : I

71. cf. Kautilya Arthasastra-II : 16


75. E.I.-I, page 184-190.
"Traighātakādiṭhānesu Kevālaṁ rājakīyā evopakraya".


77. Ibid. - Ibid.


79. Ibid. - Ibid.

80. K.A.N. Sastri - op.cit. page 331.


82. ARE - 204 of 1910.

83. K.A.N. Sastri - op.cit. page 316.


86. E.I. XII, page 188-196.

87. The Hou-Hon-Shu describes Ho-Pu as being famous for pearl-fisheries during the later Han Period (around the middle of the 2nd Cent. A.D.) In earlier times the governors of Ho-Pu, had all been by large avaricious and corrupt. They exacted as much revenue as possible from pearl trade. People engaged in pearl-fisheries and pearl-trade understandably left the province, leading to enormous economic decline in the area.


92. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. III: *History of India as told by its Historians*, page 32.