Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

The geographical continuity of North-West India with Western Iran and West Asia is a well-known fact. The cultural contacts and commercial interactions between India and West Asia go back to a very remote antiquity.\footnote{1} There is a growing volume of evidences, field archaeology, numismatic and literary evidence bearing witness to the varying fortunes of a continuous trade. Strabo, Pliny, the anonymous author of the “Periplus of the Erythrian Sea” clearly mark the different stages of increasing knowledge of the East which was spreading in the West Asia. Various archaeological evidences and a large number of coins, which are found in different parts of India, give a crystal clear picture of the trade.

Trade during the Indus Valley Civilization (C2500B.C. -1800B.C.)

India’s commercial interactions with West Asian countries can be traced back from the days of Indus-Valley civilization\footnote{2} and prior to this. The extensive researches on the famous pre-Harappan site at Mehergarh (in Bolan Valley, Pakistan) strongly indicate the availability of non-local objects at Mehergarh.\footnote{3} It is likely that the people of Mehergarh through exchange procured these objects.\footnote{4} This would suggest the beginning of exchange related functions in pre-Harappan context (around fifth Millennium B.C). It was the river basins of India where the civilizations appeared in a highly commercialised form. The fertile soil of river basin, navigation, fishing, shipping created a very favourable condition for trade. Navigation created a new class of sailors as traders. The fishing centres turned into mercantile towns.\footnote{5} It was really a cradle of commerce. The traders had sufficient knowledge of navigation, land routes, the deserts of Rajasthan and Arab world also.\footnote{6} They maintained a close commercial contact with the outside worlds like Sumer.\footnote{7} They exported goods both by land routes and sea routes to the West Asian countries.

Some evidences point out the fact that there was trade between India and West Asia during the period of Indus Valley civilization. The seal of Tell
Asmar is, however, certainly of Indian workmanship. The appearance of elephants, rhinoceros and crocodile (gharial) clearly supports the commercial relations between them. The representation on a seal of a mast less ship with a central cabin and steersmen seated at the rudder indicates that the people of Indus-Valley were fully acquainted with the maritime activities. The boat has a sharply upturned prow and stern, similar to the archaic representation on early Minoan seals, cylinders of Sumer and pre-dynastic pottery of Egypt. Mackay thinks that the Indus Valley was in close contact with Sumer and Elam by sea-route also. Indus ports thus appear to have been great commercial ports carrying on trade with Ur, Kish, and Lagash and also with Egypt.

A round seal (type ‘h’) found in the pre-dynastic cemetery at Ur and described and illustrated by Lagrain, undoubtedly resembles some of the Indus seals in the material and shape. The fish of course commonly appears on the Mohenjodaro seals, it is common there as in the Sumerian Signatory but the scorpion has yet to be identified amongst the Indus-Valley pictographs and one very notable example occurs on an axe head of Eighteenth Dynasty. The occurrence of a humped bull at both Mohenjodaro and Susa implies the communication between these two civilizations and further suggests that the inter communication took place by land rather than river. Another seal bearing the figures of antelope was perhaps imported from Elam to India. The most interesting seal portrays a hero grappling a tiger on the either side of him by throat was found at Harappa. The seal recalls a scene on the ivory handle of knife from Geobelel-Ark in which human figure is at the grips of lions. This scene may be identified with the exploits of Eabani or Enkidu who was represented in Sumerian legend as fighting with lions & bulls in forest.

The different marks on seals point out the trade routes followed by the traders. Seals with animals on other designed motifs indicate the trademark for land routes whereas the seals with ship or boat motif indicate the trademark of sea-borne trade. An interesting fragment of a vessel was found in a low stratum at Mohenjodaro. This is of light green steatite. The carving is very much similar to that found in different sites of Mesopotamia. It, therefore, definitely
came to India by way of import from Mesopotamia. Other objects found at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, for example, beads of unusual shape can be linked up with the conditions of the West such as Egypt. The cloth must have been exported to Mesopotamia since, in the back of one seal still preserves its imprint. The texts from Lagash reveal that the garments were being traded for Dilmun copper. The commercial tablets often refer to the transport by water or by, cattle and assess.

Trade was sufficiently well organized to secure regular supplies not only of food stuffs from the fertile regions but also of gold, silver, copper, tin, lead. They might have been imported from the neighboring countries to the north and west, namely from Persia and Afghanistan. On the other hand the manufactured goods including beads, knobbed pottery, vases and cloth were exported to Mesopotamia, Egypt and other countries. The ornaments include, fly amulets, such as were common in early Dynastic Mesopotamia, a pin with double scroll head, parallel to the double spiral headed pins which are distributed from the Indus-Valley through Annnan and Hissar-II & III to Troy, the cyclades and the Balkans. Harappa was exporting timber, copper, gold, ivory, stones and beads. Romila Thapar has pointed out that this is in keeping with the patterns of trade, existing in the ancient period when Indian enterprise across the sea was limited to the sale of Indian goods where there was demand and not involved to any large extent in acquiring the vital commodities unalienable in the sub-continent.

The excavations at Lothal, point out that the city was a harbour where sea-borne trade might have been originated. On the other hand, the Sumerian trader undertook the sea voyages over the Persian Gulf to Bahrain and Oman and reached at the Indus-Valley and at other coastal towns of India. The natural coastline, fine harbours, navigable rivers, fertile lands, provided a conducive atmosphere to the growth of intensive trade. Other important small port towns of Indus Valley were Chahnudaro, Suktagendor, in the distant outposts. The possibility can not be ruled out that some of the Sumerians and Iranian merchants had temporarily taken residence at Harappa and Mohenjodaro in
connection with the trade, as indicated by some of the graves, excavated by Wheeler at Harappa. Similarly it can be presumed that there might have been a colony of Indian traders in the city of Sumer. To keep up the trade links with terminal markets, to dispose of their goods and to collect the return cargo by caravans, a good number of guards were provided. The island of Bahrain commanded the shipping dam of the Persian Gulf, which led among the coast of Persia right up to the mouth of Indus. It has, therefore, been argued that in 3rd millennium B.C., Bahrain merchants were handling the trade and transshipment between India and west. The traders were using the southern routes by sea and land for westerly connections. The location of Harappan sites indicates the use of several minor Kirthar passes as well as the Bolan and Gomal passes but not the Khyber Pass.

In another excavation it is found that Harappan shells and etched carnelian beads are found in Mesopotamian royal burials. Several small monkey figurines occur in Mesopotamia, although the monkey is not native to Western Asia. The animal, which some Harappans may have taken abroad as pet, appears to have held fascination for Mesopotamians, who used the figurines as amulets. Mesopotamian clay tablets refer to certain varieties of wood and gold and lapis lazuli coming from Meluha; ivory too was a Harappan items used in Southern Mesopotamia.

But Mortim Wheeler suggests that in the cemetery at Harappa, a grave with wooden coffin and reed shroud is in the Mesopotamia not the Harappan tradition. Mesopotamians appear to have been charmed by the Indian monkeys and peacocks and presumably some Harappans saw the Bacterian camels in Kalibangan or Mahenjodaro (even if they did not fancy it for its is just depicted on one figurine at Shortughai and possibly one copper tablets of Mohenjodaro).

It Ras al Junayz (Oman) where occurred Harappan type jars, two scratched with Harappan signs, as well as pottery painted with motifs resembling Harappan designs, there well may have been a sea port. Some of
the bronze mirrors of Bactria, late 3rd Millennium type, occur sporadically at Harappan sites and in upper Gulf, Kulli region, Mesopotamia and Elam.35

On the basis of above findings it may be concluded that there was a good trade between two civilizations. And its indelible impacts are found at different places in different forms.

**Trade In Vedic Period (C1500B.C. - 600B.C.)**

The collapse of Indus-Valley civilization did not bring an end of commercial relations between the two civilizations. It continued in the Vedic period about which the Vedic literature provides references. The merchants offered prayers and oblation to seek the divine grace for success in trade.36 At that time the navigation was very much difficult and dangerous and shipwrecks were probably a common occurrence, the daring merchants nonetheless ventured regularly on a sea voyage with hundred oars ships.37 Therefore, it was prayed when a merchant goes out for business, Vaisyanara may kindly look after the children and other relatives of foreign going merchants.38 The traders were moving in all directions, to different foreign countries. The international trade was regulated and controlled by a certain section of Dasyu society. They were no other than Panis who were referred to as Dasyus. They held a prominent place in the field of commerce and trade. They were mighty and intelligent people and accumulated fabulous wealth through extensive international trade and commerce.39 They made India a great centre of the world. Archaeology corroborates the fact by exploring many world famous cities, which were well surrounded by vast and productive villages40 with flourishing agriculture41, which produced sufficient surplus.42

The material life of Rig Veda was steeped in cattle keeping and animal breeding activities. There is little doubt that cattle wealth (godhana) constituted in most important aspect of social wealth if Rig Vedic days.42 The Rg Veda was acquainted with regular sea faring, which is claimed on the basis of expression of sataritranau and the praise of Samudra by a person going through it.44
Various references about the trading activities in Atharva Veda clearly establishes the fact that there must had been a flourishing trade.

About the trade relations between India and west Asia, some evidences clearly point out the fact, the trace of this intercourse is found in the cuneiform inscriptions of the Hittite Kings of Mitanni in Kappadokia belonging to fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Again these kings bore Aryan names and worshipped the Vedic gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuna and Asvins whom they call by their Vedic title Nasatya. This clearly presents the fact that there was a close contact between these people. But we cann’t precisely determine how, with the Aryans of Vedic Age, who were at that time dwelling in Punjab. It has been claimed that the word “Sindhu” found in the library of Assurbanipal (668-626 B.C) is used in the sense of “Indian cotton” and the word is said to be much older, belonging in reality to the Akkaddian tongue, where it is expressed by the ideographs meaning a Vegetable cloth. It is believed that Ashurbanipal was a great cultivator who had sent for Indian plants, including the “Wool bearing” trees. At any rate we know that the cotton trade of western India is of great antiquity. The Indians, when the Greeks first came in contact with them were dressed in wool grown on trees. The night and Dawn are compared as ‘two female weavers” in Rig Veda. The similar type of comparison is available in Arabic and Hebrew sources. Again the logs of Indian teak have been found in the temples of the Moon at Mugheir (the Ur of Chaldeas) and in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, both belonging to sixth century B.C. These evidences are enough to presume that there was a flourishing trade between these two sub-continents.

A Brief Review of Trade

A dramatic change in the political relations between India and West-Asia came with the invasions of Cyrus,(C558B.C.-529B.C.) Darius (C521B.C.-486B.C.) and Alexander(C327B.C.-486B.C.) They not only controlled some parts India but also broke the isolation of India in the world arena. The political relations gave a boost to trade and cultural relations. Alexander opened the flood
gates of Indo-West Asian trade during 4th century B.C. Alexander planned to invade India not with a view to establishing the Greek rule but to control the commerce of India.\textsuperscript{52} Trade centers were established all along the course of Indus on important land routes. Bukephala and Nikaca were built on the banks of Hydaspes, Jhelum, Alexandria on the Indus at the confluence of the Indus and Chenab at Patala, at the head of Indus delta.\textsuperscript{53} Nearchus, the admiral in charge of Greek fleet, explored the way to Persian Gulf.\textsuperscript{54} Culturally, India and Greece are the legacies of Alexander's campaign.\textsuperscript{55} India received from Greece the lessons of astronomy, Gandhara art. Whether Indian art and architecture was influenced by Greek style of art and architecture or not is difficult to determine. India on the other hand influenced Greece with her philosophy and religion.\textsuperscript{56}

The foundation of Mauryan (C321B.C.-184B.C.) Empire brought a substantial change in commerce. Though Mauryan Empire extended beyond the Hindukush, it led to the expansion of India's foreign trade and it brought a change in the economic structure of India. Trade regulations were carefully planned, suited to a well-organized economy and trade was brought under the state control with the appointment of Panyadhyaksha, the Superintendent of Trade.\textsuperscript{57} It was the duty of Government to maintain a balance between the interest of the state and traders, traders and customers. The state officials were entrusted with different duties to carry out trade smoothly and stringent punishment was given to the people for violation of trade rules and regulations.\textsuperscript{58} During this period, the state itself engaged in trade on fairly extensive scale. For the first time in the economic history of the world, Kautilya introduced the policy of 'mixed economy' in which private sector ran side by side.\textsuperscript{59} The presence of Megasthenes, the ambassadore of Seleucus, in the Mauryan court point out the fact that the international commerce during the Mauryan period had gained momentum. In another instance, Bindusara, the second Mauryan king, asked Antiochus-I to send, wine, dried figs and a Greek philosopher.\textsuperscript{60} The greatest impact of West Asian culture was felt during this period. The Mauryan administration, building art, architecture, sculpture, medicine, all were influenced by the culture of West Asian people and Acheimenids. From the
above facts it can clearly be presumed that there must have been a developed trade though the foreign sources, numismatic as well as archaeological sources don’t throw much light on the volume of trade.

After the fall of Mauryan Empire, in early 2\textsuperscript{nd} century B.C, the foreign trade through land routes was very much disturbed. On the ruins of imperial structure of Mauryas, there arose a number of cities republican or tribal and monarchical. such as, Taxila, Panchala, Mathura, Kausambi etc. The trade routes now\ came under the control of more than one state, which proved quite detrimental to the free flow of commerce.\textsuperscript{61} The traders from the distant lands had to pay tolls to so many kingdoms that it became a costly affair. This seaborne trade reached at its peak during the time of Satavahanas (1\textsuperscript{st} C.B.C.-3\textsuperscript{rd} C.A.D.).\textsuperscript{62} These commercial activities continued right up to the second century A.D. Foreign trade now shifted to south and south India participated vigorously in commercial activities of India with the west. This is clear & evident from the account of Egyptian trade and commerce with East Africa and India as given in the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea ships of the western countries loaded with merchandise visited Indian ports of Broach, Dravida country, Supara (Sopara) and Kalyana (near Mumbai).\textsuperscript{63}

A great change in trade relations with the West Asian countries came during the second and third centuries A.D. But with the rise of Gupta Empire, at the heart of Indian Empire moved inland towards central India and a cultural development set in with a distinctive Indian character. The emergence of the Sassanian Empire in 227 B.C., also checked the direct communication between the two areas. A sea change in the trade relations came during the Kushan(1\textsuperscript{st} C.A.D.-2\textsuperscript{nd} C.A.D.) period which included Afghanistan, Bactria and much of Central Asia composing the various peoples like Indo-Greeks, Parthians, Scythians, Iranians and Chinese and other. The spread of Buddhism to Central Asia and the cosmopolitan culture of Kushanas(1\textsuperscript{st} C.A.D.-2\textsuperscript{nd} C.A.D.) created a fertile ground for the advancement of trade.\textsuperscript{64}
An area around the Mediterranean Sea enclosed the vast Empire of Rome. The northern frontier was bordered by Hadrian's wall between England and Scotland and the rivers Rhine and Danube on the continent. The Eastern border ran across the territories of Modern Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel.\textsuperscript{65} The vast Empire of Rome opened the ample opportunities of trade with different countries in different directions in order to meet the needs of the people. The prevalence of peace and a strategic position due to its geographical importance, it became the focal point of attraction of the merchants. But one of the strange thing in this trade was, Indian merchants seldom met their Roman counterparts. The very reason was that the intermediaries who took maximum advantage of Indo-Roman trade. The intermediaries of Indo-Roman trade were the Alexandrians, Greeks, Syrians, Jews, Parthians, Armenians and Arabs who controlled the land routes leading to east.

The trade of West Asia with India was not confined to North India only but it was spread up to South India also. Three main South Indian areas like Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras were also actively involved in this trade.\textsuperscript{66} They were carrying the commercial relations mainly through the waterways. Among the most important ports of south India were, Muziris, Nelcynda, Uraiyur, Kollichi, Puhar etc., which mainly controlled the trade.\textsuperscript{67} It marks the presence of large number of foreigners in the South Indian states who were employed in different works of state. From the beginning of Roman Empire, the Pandyan people had probably taken the leading part in encouraging the Romans to come and trade for what they sent, as we have seen, as embassy to Augustus. In another interesting fact, the Tamil poet Nakkirar exhorts, a Pandya prince brought the cool and fragrant wine, to drink in peace, by the Yavana merchants. From the beginning, Pandya people had taken much interest in Indo-Roman trade and encouraged the trade. Agaru or Uraiyur was the main centre of muslin in South-Indian, which was attracting a large number of Greeks to collect this. A large number of gold coins chiefly struck by Roman emperors have been found in South India. Among other trade centers, Muziris was the main centre, it attracted large number of Greek and Arab vessels. At that time, the Chera
Kingdom was famous for its pepper while Pandya was famous for pearls. Sixty eight hoards of Roman coins have so far been unearthed in the sub-continent, not less than fifty seven of them found in the south of Vindhyas. So a flourishing trade relation was there in between South India and Roman Empire.

India, "the Queen of Eastern Sea" was famous for different goods, which were exported to different parts of the world. Among the export goods the most important forest products were ebony, teak wood, sandalwood, bamboo are important. Various Narioles types of consumer goods such as wheat, rice, clarified butter, seasame oil, honey, capal, lac, indigo, purple were also exported to the Mediterranean countries. Among the animals, which were, favourite items of West were apes, monkeys, Nilgiri Langurs, tiger, yak, rhinoceroses, parrots, peacocks etc. The spice was the favourite item of the West Asian people which mainly comprised the pepper, spikenard, cloves, costus, bdellium, cardamum, aloe and saffron. The vegetable products like palm wine, castor, sugar were the important which reached in the Mediterranean countries. The gold, silver, copper, iron, steel was the main items of export in metal. The ladies not only in the fingers and ears but also on the shoes largely used Indian muslin and pearls, which posed a great danger to the Roman economy.

The list of goods, which were imported by India from the West Asian countries, was comparatively small. The most important products of import were, Arabian incense, sweet clover, cinnamon etc. Some of the consumer goods which were also imported by the Indians were figs, dates, beverages, wines; were less in number in comparison of goods which were exported from India. Among the metals and mineral products, tin, lead, gold, silver, glass asphalt antimony, orpiment etc. were important. Some of the precious stones like Topaz, pearls, corals etc. were coming to India. The horses of Arabian countries were a favourite item of Indians. And sometimes the merchants of West Asian Countries presented horses to the Indian rulers. Again India took the advantage of existing slave trade in western markets and imported the slaves into India in 1st C.A.D.
The trade between India and West Asian countries created a very favourable condition for India because the trade was in favour of India. About this Pliny commented, “In one year” does India drain us no less than 550 million sesterces (22,000,000)\textsuperscript{77} Again he remarked, “at the lowest computation India, the Seres and the Arabian Peninsula with drew from our Empire 100 million sesterces every year, so dearly we pay for our luxury and our women.”\textsuperscript{78} This indicates that the Indo-West Asian trade was infavour of India and this view is further supported by the excavations of Roman coins at different places in hoards. The Roman people were paying a heavy price for Indian goods because the Arabs, Phoenicians, Syrian, Persians merchants were playing the role of intermediary and demanding a high price for Indian goods. Again, due to the lack of price control mechanism in Roman market just like Indian markets provided the Roman merchants a golden opportunity to satiate their parsimonious attitude.

Routes

According to Warmington, there were three main routes from Puteoli to the Middle East.\textsuperscript{79} Robbers and pirates endangered the trade routes connecting India to West Asia on land. The sea route was equally dangerous due to stormy weathers, presence of pirates. Therefore, the caravan traders were taking the help of private army from guilds to protect their goods from external attacks. From pre-historic times, the great trade routes have connected India with the West. Among these routes, running form the mouth of Indus to Euphrates and at Euphrates the roads branch off to Antioch and Levantine ports.\textsuperscript{80} There was the overland route from India passes to Balkh and from Balkh to the Caspian sea. And this route reaches at Antioch by way of Hekatompylos and Ktesiphone. Finally there was a circuitous route, down the Persian and Arabian coasts to Aden up the Red Sea to Suez and from Suez to Egypt on the one hand and Tyre and Sidon on the other.\textsuperscript{81} Except these main routes, there were many routes, which were followed by different traders in different times. The Roman merchants usually preferred the Red Sea route instead of land routes to India. Indian traders were following both the routes but the land routes were more
favourable to them. Because Indian ships were not strong enough to stand against the bad weather of Sea. The caravan traders were taking all precautions before journey. Sometimes they take the help of Sthalniyamaka, to guide in the route, which had enough experience in this field. Again they were taking care of various things like the possibility of roads being ruined, water would become scarce, there would be no food and grass for bullock and availability of fresh vegetables. The sea merchants were taking care of monsoon, the direction of winds, precautions against sea pirates, food, water etc. The direction finding birds were helping a lot to the merchants to find the direction. Despite of so many difficulties, the traders braved all the hurdles in order to bring the closeness between the two sub continents. These traders in Ancient India were not only mercenary traders but also the ambassadors of Indian culture who were though working for their own profits, carrying the cultural ideas with them to distant lands. Crossing the geographical boundaries they helped the human society to come closer.

Along the trade routes various trade centers grew which attracted the goods from nearby regions. Therefore it was easy for the traders to collect different goods, which were cheap at different points. Most of the important trade centers of India were, Barygaza, Ujjaini, Muziris, Soppara, Pataliputra, Kalyana, Poduca, Kaveripattanam, Tamralipti etc. Most of these places were situated on the sea-shore because sea route was quite cheap for the traders. Vast coastline of India was a blessing in disguise for India's trade development. It may be one cause for the underdevelopment of transportation system on land routes. Because carts, chariots were the sole means of carrier of goods from Harappan times till the medieval period. During this period the boat making technology had changed a lot.

Cultural Development

The cultural connections developed during this period are clearly felt in different walks of life. Indian art and architecture is highly indebted to the western impact. Gandhara art is a glaring example of this. Art, architecture,
sculpture, painting, all are more or less influenced by the western impact.\textsuperscript{86} In
the sphere of language, the similarity between, Brahmi and Kharosti clearly
established a deep cultural interaction between these two sub continents.\textsuperscript{87} The
impact of Persian, Iranian and Assyrian people on Indian culture was largely felt
during the Mauryan period. The Mauryan Royal palace, high ways, Ashokan
pillars, cave architecture had felt the indelible impact of West Asian Culture.
Indian coinage was largely influenced by the coinage of Roman system. India
has equally influenced the astronomy, mathematics, philosophy etc. though
cultural exchange was not on equal terms, India was much more influenced by
the Western system.

As a profession, the trading and commercial activities were given due
importance in ancient Indian society. It is a well accepted fact that economic
pursuit in ancient India was associated with the Vaisya community. This class in
mentioned as Gahapatis in Buddhist literature and as Gahavais in the Jaina
canons.\textsuperscript{88} The Vaisyas provided the economic support to elaborate structure of
the society. As a class they amassed huge fortunes, acquired mostly in trade by
sea and caravans. In Vedic times, this trading community was called as Panis.\textsuperscript{89}
The importance of trade can be realized from this that there was a special
community to take care of the trade. This community was transferring the trade
secrets to the future generation and they were keeping the secrets of the trade
confined among them.

Various organizations, which grew up to smoothen the process of trade,
among them the guild, was the most important organization which provided not
only training to the workers but also social status to the workers of guild.\textsuperscript{90}
Probably, guilds were mainly responsible for the production of goods for the
international markets because their style of production was quite innovative and
a large number of people were employed to produce a huge quantity of goods for
the market. Therefore, it may be presumed that the role of guilds in the growth
of trade was immense. The guilds were acting as banking organizations also.
They were providing loans for trade and were keeping the deposits of the people
by paying interests. It was the duty of guild to determine the quality of goods
and to fix the price of goods. Usually the state authority did not interfere into the function of the guilds. Guilds played a predominant role in the trade activities by providing good quality of goods.

**Geographical Knowledge**

The trade relations between two sub-continents can't be perceived thoroughly unless we don't have good geographical knowledge about the West Asian Empires in ancient period. The physical confirmation of West Asia is favourable to the growth of large Empires. The vast plain which extends from the foot of Niphates and Zagros to the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, there are no natural fastness. Similarly, only not quite to the same extent, in the upland region which succeeds to this plain upto the east and there is a deficiency of natural barriers. The upland and lowland powers are generally pretty, evenly balanced. In this geographical area, the Egyptian territory was bounded on the South and West by Nubian and Sahara deserts, on the East by Gulf of Suez and Red Sea. The Persian Empire stretches in the north extending from lower Danube, North-East to the Black-Sea; thence North and East of the Caspian to the Central Asia. The Assyria and Chaldean Empire was situated on a plateau bounded by the mountains on the north and east, desert on the west and Akkad on the South. These Empires were always fighting among themselves in order to establish a vast Empire at the cost of others. In different times, the West Asian region had passed to the foreign hands like Alexander, Roman Empire. The Roman Empire had included the vast area of West Asia comprising modern Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel. Therefore in this work the Roman Empire is frequently mentioned because the main seat of Empire was West Asia.

To construct the maritime history is a difficult task for the historians. Very little definitive evidences is available to us to draw a picture of trade. Some of the foreign literary accounts like Pliny's Natural History, Strabo's Geography, Arrian's Indika and Periplus of Erythraian Sea throw much light on India's foreign trade. But the authenticity of these sources is questioned because most of
the authors provide the information’s from the secondary sources. Again the contradictory statements given by these authors create the hurdles for the historians to construct the concrete history. Indian sources also provide some information’s about this. These sources are, Jataka stories, Buddhist, Jaina sources, Arthasastra, etc. which provide the information about the Indo-West Asian trade. These sources are not enough to draw the picture of India’s foreign trade. A real progress has been achieved in this direction after the archaeological excavations of different places. These sources provide a good account of trade and numismatic sources which are also helpful in this context. Most of the items of India’s foreign trade are perishable and this in the main difficulty to determine the origin of goods of export.

**Reasons of this Trade**

The vast geographical area of India was sufficient enough to cater the needs of the people, having fertile soil, rich forests and, rich flora and fauna. After all, the economic activities of ancient times was not solely determined not only by the economic structure but more significantly by cultural values. The cultural values of India did not provide a fertile ground for the development of trade. The attitude of Brahminical tradition towards international trade was unfavorable because it was destroying the basic fabric of caste system by pollution of indigenous people coming in contact with foreigners, in their views. Again the accumulation of wealth was criticized in different scriptures. These types of attitude inhibited the development of trade. In spite of so many obstacles, India’s foreign trade flourished in a great extent.

The very basic reason for a well-documented trade relationship with West Asian countries are the surplus production of goods, which were badly needed by the people of West. Due to infertile lands of West Asia, they were always in need of food grains, which mainly compelled them to carry a direct trade with India. The Indian mineral products, food products, forest products were quite good in comparison with other products. Again the geographical continuity and political nexus activated this trade. The establishment of the Roman Empire and
the increasing prosperity of the Roman nobility created a heavy demand for India’s luxury goods and gave a further fillip to Indo-Roman trade connection in the early centuries of Christian era. Rome enriched by the spoils and tributes from so many foreign lands and had acquired a taste for luxuries of every kind. The capital of the greatest Empire ever established in Europe was filled with the people who had inherited the great wealth and whose sole occupation was enjoyment of these riches. The retiring generals found their villas, dull, rustic and old fashioned made all the more unbearable because they had brought back with them masses of coinage, bullion and slaves. They had developed expensive tastes and they did so with feverish haste and great display. Common emulated the fashion determined by the elites. This increased the demand for Indian luxurious goods in Roman markets to the highest level. The unprecedented demand of luxurious goods was beyond the reach of India and that’s why India sometimes exported the Chinese silk and other products to Rome.

Ancient Trade Mechanism

The trade during ancient times was totally different from the modern times. In modern times, the profit motive, division of labour, the market system and the transportation system are major determinants of trade and commerce. Though these forces were prevalent in ancient times, these were in rudimentary forms. Basically the trade in ancient times can be defined within the four walls of anthropological trade. According to author, Polanyi, man like other animals was presented by God as naturally self sufficient. But with the advancement of culture, men’s needs grew in monstrous proportion, which led the people to depend on each other to fulfill the needs. And this gave way to trade. According to Aristotle, “Trade is natural when it serves the survival of community by maintaining its self-sufficiency”. Polanyi regarded the commercial trade as unnatural form of trade; natural was gainless, since it merely, maintained the self-sufficiency. One may assume very clearly that replacing, the barter trade by money trade brought the profit motive forefront. Again trade appears as a two way movement of goods through markets and money as quantifiable goods used for indirect exchange in order to facilitate the
movements. Here, market appears as the locus of exchange and money as the means of exchange. The market is generating the institutions of which trade and money are functions. The trade may be within the contiguous social units (i.e., internal trade) or between the groups across the cultural boundaries (external trade).

With the growth of agriculture, the rural economy gradually transformed. The surplus production gave rise to trade and commerce. Because the human needs are unlimited and he constantly searches the goods, which are beyond of his reach. The diversity in geographical distribution of wealth renders it necessary for man to obtain from distant areas, those commodities which are not produced within its locality. Thus the foreign trade, that is the trade between the geographically separated groups, has dominated practically all societies.

Again the trade usually starts when a producer has the capacity to produce more items than his immediate needs, the excess products are generally meant for transaction at the exchange center. Therefore, it is duty of a trader who establishes a link between the producer and a consumer. In ancient Indian societies, the trade mechanism was basically operated through the forces like demand, supply and price fixes markets. This is a complex interplay of various forces including the state based polity and an administrative structure. The prime mover of trade in a state society is the classical law of comparative advantage. For the advancement of economy, the specialization in crafts, productions, occupations and professions. As a person is unable to meet his own requirements in an advanced society, he/she depends upon other to cater his/her needs and this in the dragging force of national and international trade.

Thus the anthropologists, particularly economic anthropologists would try to situate trade in an overall human culture. Marxist ideas, which have immensely influenced the study of economic history, give priority to economic factors and forces as determinants of social forms. Some of the recent studies of many own-European and simplex societies point out the importance of social and cultural forms of economic development and growth. Persons, for example,
considers social systems as having functional sub-systems: economics as
perceived as an adaptive sub-system. 105

In this context, the idea of Polanyi, the founder of substantivist school is
more acceptable than the formalist school of economists. The substantivist
position considers trade to be relatively peaceful method of acquiring goods,
which are not locally available. 106 According to Polanyi, the market trade is to be
associated with modern industrial capitalist economy. He discounts any
possibility to market trade with supply, demand and price mechanisms in pre­
capitalistic societies. The market, or open market is the price setting mechanism,
which is of recent origin. Market trading requires large number of buyers and
sellers and perfect competition, which is reached when distinct relations between
prices, supply, demand and transactions are worked out. Substantivists think that
market is different to a market place. Therefore, they precisely designate the
trade in early societies as market less trade though there were market places.

With the passage of time, the facets of trade and commerce changed and
it was transformed from a simple business to a complex business. Here some
efforts are made to present the determinants of ancient trade which are totally
different from modern trade and commerce.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Primary Sources

Among the early literature primarily included The Periplus of the
Erythrean Sea an anonymous mariner’s account of early maritime trade with the
Indian subcontinent. It finds out the routes of trade and gives a detailed picture
of Indian ports. Both the Periplus and the Natural History of Pliny contain
useful references between India and West. They provide an elaborate account of
the advantages and disadvantages of the ports along the coasts of the sub
continent; the mechanism of exchange between traders from India and the West;
and the provenance of goods transported to the ports for export. Pliny is more
useful for information on the uses of commodities imported into Rome and their
comparative prices in the market. The colossal Geography of Strabo written about A.D. 19 contained exhaustive and accurate information primarily about Egypt and is of much less value for the Indian sub-continent. Strabo has based his account of India on earlier writers like Megasthenes and Nearchus and deals with diverse subjects like customs, division of castes and Alexander’s campaign.

The Guide to Geography by Claudius Ptolemy, written in the middle of second century A.D., has very little narrative. It contains a series of tables of names and places followed by figures giving latitude and longitudes. These are of little use to us as they are based on a distorted map of India, which makes the west coast turn around a little below Bombay and run eastward, practically eliminating the peninsular region. Again a soldier physician who wrote his Materia Medica around 65 A.D. provides considerable information on spices used in pharmacology.

Secondary Sources

The monographs, which considerably influenced early studies, were those of G. Rawlinson, Intercourse between India and Western World from the earliest times to the fall of Rome, R.E.M. Wheeler, Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers and M.P. Charlesworth, Roman Trade with India: A Resurvey. The Objective of all these works remained same -- to provide justification for the commercial enterprise of European nations in general scanty evidences and biases prevented these works to unravel the truth. But E.H. Warmington’s work, “The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India” traces out the relations of India and West from Indus Valley up to Sixth century AD. Just like others he also gave support to the Western exploitation of Indian resources in particular. As Warmington put it: “The West: the little changing people of the East allowed the West to find them out. We have then, on the one side of the Orient, then as now, a disjointed aggregate of countries but without the uniting force of British rule which she now has and while open to commerce, contented generally to remain within her borders and to engage in agriculture.” He outlined that the trade between India and West was basically indirect which gave a boost to Indian handicraft
industries. Again he pointed out about the barter system, which creates the controversies, but the possibilities can't be over looked. His indications are the collapse of trade led the political and economic disintegration of the Empire. It is very difficult to accept because it may be one factor amongst the various factors responsible for the down fall of the Empire.

But G.F. Hourani's book, "Arab seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times" only gives an overview of trade with scanty evidences. He has made little use of known facts of commercial intercourse between different countries.

On the basis of ceramic evidences and excavations at Arikamedu, Wheeler in Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers pointed out that the Rouletted ware was new to South India. On the basis of this, it is determined that Rouletted ware was imported from Mediterranean region and Arikamedu was a Roman settlement super imposed on a purely native and local culture.

Amongst the various books published recently J.I. Miler approached the subject differently. He started by listing spices described in classical literature and used not only as condiments in food but as ingredients in ointments, drugs as preservative and as incense. In his book, "The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire", he has identified the botanical names of the plants and demarcation of the natural habitat of the plant leading to the demarcation of fortunes not only to Indian Subcontinent but also to South East Asia and China. It has been suggested that the Indians from Konkan coast, in their own ships sailed for ports at the mouth of the Red Sea, while Southern Arabians were the carriers from Malabar and possibly also from Sri Lanka and the Greeks were the caries from India to Egypt.

Bernadi in his book "The Economic problems of the Roman Empire at the time of Decline" exploded the myth, which was often quoted by Pliny regarding the drain of wealth, and it became the sole cause of downfall. He pointed out that the decline was an internal process though drain of money contributed a lot in this matter but was not solely responsible.
Prakash Chandra Prasad in *Foreign Trade and Commerce in India* tried to bring out the importance of foreign trade in Ancient India and the place it occupied in the economic development of human Civilization from 3rd Millennium B.C. to 1st century A. It also provides an overview without making a deeper analysis.

In this book, "*Trade and Trade Route in Ancient India*" by Moti Chandra deals with the problems related to ancient Indian merchants, their trade and trade regulations. He established a very intimate relationship between trade and politics and tried to elucidate contemporary political conditions in different periods of Indian history. His use of precious material facts and methodology for discovering the new facts, create the new edifice of Indian history and culture.

The book, "*Ancient India: A study of cultural contacts*" by Nalinee M. Chapecar, emphasizes cultural contacts from very ancient times of Rig Veda period. In his views, Iranians are perhaps the only people who primarily maintained the relations with Indians before their coming to India. India in the beginning developed political contacts with Greece, commerce with Rome and cultural contacts with Iran. He traced out the impacts of Iranians on every walk of Indian people.

Seeley and Turner have brought another interesting thing to light in their article "*Metallurgic investigations of three early Indian coinages*" that the isotope ratios of coins of Kura Kings of Deccan were closely matching with Sardinian and Spanish lead sources exploited by Romans. Also the silver coins of Nahapana show a striking similarity with the pre-Nero-Silver issues not only in their fitness but also in the lead and gold content.

P.J. Turner's, "*The Development of trade between the Roman Empire and the East under Augusts*" outlined that initially the silver coins were preferred more for the eastern trade. But the introduction of gold coins got an edge over silver coins. There was distinct shortage of gold from the period of Nero's reforms of the currencies to Trajan's time.
The spurt of trade bore resemblances with many Indian goods including Roman lamps as pointed by Himansu Prabha Ray in Monastery and Guild under Satavahanas. Again she pointed out that due to the trade, the territories of South India not only flourished economically but the traders also contributed richly to Buddhist Sanghas. The term yavanas, which was referred for Greeks by Buddhist Sanghas in the later phase, included all foreign traders who made rich donations to the Buddhist Sanghas.

Vimla Beghley's book "The Ancient Port of Arikamedu-New Excavation and Researches" is basically based on excavation at Arikamedu between 1989-92. According to her, the trade with the Mediterranean basin seems to have been at its height between 50 B.C. and 50 A.D. She believed that the ancient settlement at Arikamedu was continued and towards the end of the 2nd Century A.D. (or slightly later) the site was abandoned. But she also suggests that some commerce with Mediterranean World continued till 7th Century A.D. by South Indian rulers like Cholas and others. She has gone through the detailed findings of Arikamedu and has given some new perceptions about the glorious Indo-Roman trade.

Rome and India the Ancient Sea Trade presents new evidences about the dating, provenance and distribution of classical imports to India that such as terra-sigillara, amphoras, glass and bronzes, which indicate that, previously held assumption about the trade must be revised. Further the detailed analyses of pottery presented, here suggest that the trade network along the eastern coast of peninsular India and Sri Lanka was more widespread than previously suspected. Questions related to routes and navigation from Red Sea to the Western Coast of Peninsular India are critically examined through the various sources from primary text to textual and archaeological sources by Vimla Begley and Richard Daniel De. Puma. Tradition and Archaeology – Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean by Himanshu Prabha Ray and Jean Franco’s Sales concentrate on two broad themes covering archaeological evidence of maritime links and technological studies of watercraft involved in trade and communication. The
inter-disciplinary dialogues provide new insight on early sea faring in the Indian Ocean and questions to several existing theories that have continued to be repeated in archaeological and historical writings. She pointed out, “Trade didn’t cease with decline of Empire: instead there were relocations in routes and changes in the participant involved.”

R. Champaklakshmi in Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation in South India 1300 BC to 1300 AD focuses on two major periods of urbanisation in South India – the early historical period and the early medieval period prior to the rise of Vijaynagar Empire. The author, R. Champaklakshmi discusses urbanism not merely in terms of economy and demography but also a function of Chola imperialism and Bhakti ideology. Again she pointed out that early urbanism was not the result of forces of an inner growth but was of a secondary generation induced by inter regional trade and maritime trade between South India and the Mediterranean West.

The book of Himanshu Prabha Ray, Archaeology of Sea-Faring: The Indian Ocean in the Ancient Period attempts to compile recent archaeological research on sea faring instead of chronological narratives of maritime contacts. Her attention has been centred on material remains as indicators of contacts rather than on the communities themselves, especially the coastal communities settled along the Indian Ocean littoral. She has referred the maritime trade in Indian Ocean with glimpses without making a thorough analysis.

In comparison to these works, my research work is quite innovative. Some of the old books like purples of Erythran Sea, National History, guide to Geography were mainly dependent on secondary sources whose artificially is sometimes questioned. Again they did not have good idea about the geographical position of India. The books of H.G. Rawlinson, R.E.M. Wheeler. M.P. Charlesworth provide scanty evidences and biases prevented, this authors to present the fact. They basically derive the facts from numismatic sources; foreign accounts neglecting the archaeological anthropological and paleo botanical sources. In this connection the works of Himanshu Prabha Roy. Vimala Vegley, R.
Champaklakshmi are quite praise worthy. They have made an effort to present the facts with the help of archaeological sources. But they also neglect the paleo-botanical and anthropological data. In this work, the paleo-botanical, anthropological and archaeological facts were presented with due importance. Again these earlier works mainly concentrate on Roman Empire putting negligible importance on West Asia traders’ role in this trade. But the present work mainly concentrate on West Asia traders and their rule. An economic transaction or trade relation can’t be viewed singularly without weighing its impacts on social and cultural organisations. While earlier works have failed to present a holistic picture but here an effort is made to present these things with special importance.

**Methodology**

As history is concerned with the recreation of his significant features of the past with the help of numerous fragmentary evidences usually called the sources. In the writing of history, the primary sources always play predominant role to prepare the base and synthesise the facts. Therefore priority is given to collect to every kind of primary sources varying from inscriptions, numismatic sources, textual evidences and foreign accounts etc. Archaeological data is the main stay of the work. Some of the recent excavations of Myos Harmas, Leukas Limen, Berenice, Leuke Kome in the Gulf and Arikanedu, Kohlapur, Arikamedu, Paithain etc. throw more light on this topic. Again emphasis is given on the use of archaeological materials including field archaeological evidence, epigraphic, numismatic and art historical sources -- the latter ones throwing lights on material culture. Anthropological data is given priority to appreciate the possibilities of exchange among relatively simpler societies.

Among secondary sources the books and journals are important. Old as well as new edition books dealing with Ancient India’s trade will be the main source. Libraries of Indian Archaeological Survey of India, Achieves of India, National Museum and ICHR provide a large number of books relating to this. I have made a sincere effort in this direction of collect and collate all the
informations regarding the research. Again the museums like National Museum Calcutta Museum, Pondicherry Museum provided a lot of information and broaden the knowledge on this topic.

The journals like Art and Letters, Antiquity, American Journal of Archaeology, Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient, Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, Calcutta are the backbone of research. The articles of these journals not only provide good data but also present the new methodology adopted to derive the conclusion. Some of the excavation reports available in those journals are valuable source for the work. Every effort has been made to collect and collate all the latest information in this topics work.

Finally the help of different professors and researchers, who are dealing with trade related matters, is taken into account. The authors usually commit mistakes like biasness in the interpretation of history. Best efforts are made in this direction to keep these mistakes at abeyance.

This topic is chosen for research because trade and commerce is an emerging area of research. The trade and commerce between two lands not only bring economic prosperity but also cultural prosperity by establishing a cultural proximity among the people. In this work, in addition with economic exchange the cultural exchange are given priority. If the Indians are considered as the successors of the Iranian people who has migrated during the Vedic phase and established the Indian culture, then it evokes a sense of interest to know about the relations of these people with Indians after segregation. Again it is obvious that when the two civilisations like Mesopotamia and Indus Valley sprang up in the same Asiatic soil, there must be some relations among these people and it is the bounden duty of historians to explore the facts and to present in a picturesque manner. Considering of as a challenge to historians, an attempt is made in this regard to broader the sphere of knowledge of general people and to bring the curiosity abysmally low. The historians pay West Asia as an area of research in Ancient period toward attention. Most of the works relating to trade and commerce in ancient India concentrate on Roman Empire, and South-East Asia,
which was the focal point of attraction of ancient traders. The authors of Indo-Roman trade sometimes highlight the trade with West Asia with a negligible importance and most of the works are done on the basis of foreign accounts where the archaeological, anthropological, epigraphic data are least used. Therefore, taking all these facts into account an innovative effort has been made in this direction with all latest available data to examine this area from a new angle of view.

Some of the historians label the period between the Rig Vedic Age and the rise of Mauryan Empire as ‘Dark ages’ in history. The Indian people were dubbed as isolated people and living in their world with a frog mentality. In this connection the pronouncement of V.A. Smith that the Macedonian invasion was the sheet anchor of Indian history emerged as the outcome of impact of the West.  

This Macedonian invasion was regarded as the boon in disguise by breaking the shackles of isolation of India and opened the ways in brisk contacts, commercial and cultural contacts of the Sub continent with West.  

This logic of colonial historians to justify and validate the colonial role for the advancement and betterment of Indians is understandable in some extent. But the validity and authenticity of the statement is challenged on the ground that India was nevertheless isolated. Its contact with West Asian countries can be traced from Indus valley period and prior to this. But colonial historians have turned a blind eye or underscored this fact in order to substantiate their point of contention. The invasion of Alexander and Cyrus brought India into the vision of Western people. But this theory has been challenged here and it has been proved that this theory does not contain much water. This was a misconception of some historians who had committed it without making a threadbare discussion of every fact. The trade and commerce with West Asian people had been continued from Indus Valley civilisation with many ups and downs till the third century A.D. and touched the lowest ebb in this period. But this trade again revived in 11th century A.D. and continued smoothly.
The basic aims and objectives of this work are to understand the different stages through which the commercial relations between the Indian sub continent and West Asia developed and declined. Again an attempt has been made to classify different types of primary source materials such as archaeological report, textual evidence, epigraphy and numismatic etc and to collate information bearing upon the theme. In this context it is also essential to understand the pattern of change in commercial relations by analyzing the movements of different items, which entered commercial exchange, and by studying their origins, procurements and relative values etc. It is also important to understand the social organization of commerce by studying, as far as possible, the composition of people involved in trade and interactions between different groups. The trade between India and West Asia was carried by different group of merchants and how they were competing among themselves to garner more profits is also discussed. Again the impact of trade on economy polity, society and culture is attempted to study.

Chapterisation: -

Chapter-1: It deals with the trails of trade from very antiquity. It also refers about the trade routes, goods of trade etc. with a glimpse. A brief discussion about these areas, objectives, methodology is also made in this chapter.

Chapter-2: This chapter starts with the invasion of Darius and Alexander. It also describes about the different political and socio-economic respects of their invasions.

Chapter-3: It deals with the trade during the Maurya period. Lack of evidences does not throw much light on trade relations. But in political sphere, the exchange of embassies gives an idea that the people of India and West Asia were very close. Again in cultural front many similarities are found between Indian art, architecture and sculpture with West Asian counterpart. Ashoka's untiring effort to propagate the idea of Buddhism in distant lands brought more closeness among the people. These things have been vividly discussed in this chapter.
Chapter-4: In this chapter, a detailed picture of India’s trade with West Asia is presented. The trade routes, goods of export and import, business organizations are also discussed vividly. The flourishing trade of South India with Rome is also discussed.

Chapter-5: It deals with the conclusion of whole work. An overall assessment of trade and its impact or different spheres is illustrated.
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