CHAPTER 6

Trade and Trade Routes

Production and consumption are the two main activities of man. The agrarian expansion generates surplus production for consumption and proliferation of various crafts. The surplus production leads to the trade activities. India is known for her fabulous wealth, in the form of hills and fertile plains, ever since the ancient times. The physiography, political and religious policies resulted in the growth of towns on the major trade routes of ancient India. These towns grew into trade and industrial centers which led to the general prosperity in the Gupta and post-Gupta period.

The descriptions of the wide variety of goods sold in the Indian markets of those days are found in the literary and epigraphic sources. The Amarkośa refers to the word kraya-vikraya for the commercial transactions. The merchants and traders played important role in inter and intra trade activities and city administration. The literary and epigraphic sources throw considerable light on the traders and merchants of those times. The terms such as vānīka, śresthīn and sārthavāha were used for merchants and traders in the sources. The three Sanjeli copper plates of Huna king Toramāna, regnal years 3, 6 and 19 (c. AD 500-20) throw considerable light on trade and traders of western India. These inscriptions give a list of traders who came to Vadrapāli, the administrative headquarters of Śivabhāgapura viśaya, from Daśpura, Ujjaini and Kanauj. It suggests that Vadrapāli was an important trade centre where merchants went for better profit and for procuring local goods. Śudraka in the Mrichchhakatika mentions the young
merchant (sārthavāha), who had amassed a great wealth by visiting many cities in connection with trade. The Dasakumāracarita refers to the caravan leader (sārthavāha) who came to Ujjaini and merchant (sresthin) of Champa. There is a reference to the merchant (vānika) in Vasantagadh inscription of Varmalata [Vikrama] Samvat 682 (AD 625). They worked as money lenders or bankers. The sresthin and sārthavāha were the members of the local advisory council which helped the district officers in controlling local affairs in the towns. They became members of such bodies on account of the huge wealth, they amassed through trade. In the fragmentary inscriptions from Chitorgarh there is a reference to the family of Vishnudatta, who is described as vanijām sreṣṭho, who was best among the merchants. Genealogically he appears to have been connected with the naigam or merchant family of Mandasor, referred to in the Mandasor record of 532. The sea traders, who possessed immense wealth, are also described in the literary and epigraphic records of that period. An inscription of Udayasena, the [Harsha] year 30 (unknown) refers to the merchants trading through water. Kālidāsa in the Raghuvança refers to people of Vanga who were expert in the art of navigation. Daṇḍin refers to the merchant Ratnodbhava who was expert in trading across the seas.

The wealthy guilds inhabited towns and cities. The Jambūdvīpaprajñapti the text of early third century AD, mentions eighteen traditional guilds of potters, silk weavers (patṭaila), goldsmiths, cooks (sūvakāra), singers (gandhabba), barbers (kāsavaga), garland makers, vegetables growers (kāchhī), the betel leaf sellers, cobblers, oil-pressers (jantapīlaga), sellers of napkins (gaṅchhī), calico-printers (chhimpa), braziers, tailors (sīvaga), cowherds, hunters (bhilla) and fishermen. The existence of guilds
refers to the organized manufacturing and trading activities in India. They carried on their business efficiently and enjoyed rich profits. There is a reference to the head of the jewelers guild (maṇīarsēthī) in the Mudrārakṣasa.13 Daṇḍin in the Daśakumārakarita refers to the association of traders (ṣreṇī) and merchants association (vaṇijagamsamāja).14 Similarly, the Indor copper-plate inscription of Skandagupta, dated the year 146 (AD 465-66) mentions about the guild of oil-men who lived in complete unity and had a store of wealth.15 The Mandasor stone inscription of Kumaragupta and Bandhuvarman, the Malava year 493 and 529 (AD 437-38 and 473-74) refers to the guild of silk-weavers, who were renowned in the world for their craft.16 In the Charter of Vishnushena, Samvat 649 (592 AD), there is a reference to the community of merchants of Lōhāṭā in Gujarat, being favoured by the ruler with the ruler’s āchāra-sthiti-patra.17 The Charter of Vishnushena dated Samvat 649 (592 AD) refers to the member of different guilds who were not allowed to flock to the each other’s market (sarva-ṣrēnīnām-ēk-āpanakō-na-dēyāḥ) so that chaos is not created in the markets.18 By restricting each guild in respective area peace and harmony was maintained by the ruler. Thus they were helped to thrive and carry on their trade efficiently. The Gupta records also show that guilds carried out their liability even if they changed their headquarters.19 The existence of guilds suggests organized trade which was carried on both by the merchants in local and prized goods.

The Arthasāstra refers to the king constructing markets (panyapattana)20 for selling and buying raw material and finished products. Amarsirnha also supports the existence of local markets where surplus produce was bought and sold.21 Kālidāsa refers to a town market-place (vipaṇī) lined with big shops on both sides of the
highway.\textsuperscript{22} He refers to a similar market-place (\textit{vipa-nil}) in the \textit{Mālavikāgnimitra}.\textsuperscript{23} Fa-Hian while mentioning Ma-Teou-Lo (Mathura) points out that market-place existed with in the city premises.\textsuperscript{24} The existence of markets throws light on the flourishing internal and external trade.

The Sino-Indian trade relations developed during the first few centuries AD. To analyze Sino-Indian trade relations it is necessary to focus on the location of the silk route in China and south Asia. This route started from China and divided it into two parts i.e. northern and southern. The northern route ran through the oases between northern edge of the Takla Makan desert and Tienshan mountains. The southern route ran along the southern edge and the Kunlun mountains. Probably Fa-Hian started from China and followed southern route of the Takla Makan desert and Kunlun mountains. He referred to the region of Khotan as Yu-teen. It was a large district on the south-west of the desert of Gobi, embracing the country south of Oxus and Yarkand, along the northern base of Kunlun mountains.\textsuperscript{25}

These two routes along the edges of Takla Makan desert met at Kashgar and again split into two branches. The northern branch was an extension of the northern route along the Takla Makan desert. It ran through Kakand and Samarkand in the countries of Ferghana and Sogdiana (modern Kirgiziya, north Tadzhikistan and Uzbekistan of Soviet Union) and then westward to the Caspian sea. Probably Hieun-Tsang followed this route as he referred to the region Fie-Han or Ferghana and Sa-ma-kien or Samarkand on his way to India.\textsuperscript{26} The southern branch went through modern Bactria and met northern branch at Merv in Margiana (modern Turkmenistan
in the Soviet Union). There is not much evidence available on the route from Kashgar to Bactria.

Further Hiuen-Tsang entered Kia-Pi-Shi or Kapisa via Po-ho (Balk, at the north of river Oxus). This was the major route which ran through Kapisa and the Kabul valley to the core region of the Kushana empire namely Purushapura or Pushkalavati or Peshawar and Taxila. This was the route followed by Hiuen-Tsang, from Gandhara. He entered Po-Shi-Kie-Lo-Fa-Ti or Pushkalavati, U-Chang-Na or Udyana which lay to the north of Peshawar on the Swat river, Hiuen-Tsang’s testimony confirms that the area included the whole hill-region south of the Hindukush and Dārd country (from Chitral to the Indus) via Po-Lu-Lo (Bolor the modern Balti, Baltistan or little Tibet including the mountains adjoining the southern margin of Pamir to Ta-Cha-Shi-Lo or Taxila. While Fa-Hian took a short cut from Khotan and moved towards Gandhara (modern Dheri and Banjour region) via Udayana or Woo-Chang (Swat valley) after crossing Indus. From Gandhara via Taxila (on the western side of the Indus and between the river Indus and Gandhara) he entered Pushkalavati or Peshawar.

These routes connected Kashgar to Kashmir through Gilgit and was active from AD 320 to 750. This major route from Kashmir connecting India to central Asia gained importance during this period. This route was used both by traders and merchants to enter India during the Kushana period and continued to be so in the Gupta and post-Gupta period as clear from the literary and archaeological sources. It brought both the western and the Ganges plains closer to China.

The sources throw light on the transactions between India and other countries through these land and sea routes. India had trade
relations with Egypt, Greece, Rome, Persia, Arabia, Syria and Ceylon and in the east with Comodobia, Siam, the Malay Archipelago and China. The port of Tamralipti was connected to Persia, Arabia and Byzantium on the one hand and Sri Lanka, China and south-east Asia on the other.\textsuperscript{35} The sources also mention trade relations and cultural intercourse between India and the west. Varāhamihira refers to eight sources from where best kinds of pearls could be obtained i.e. Siṃhalaka (Ceylon), Paraloka (Travancore coast), Saurāṣṭra (Kathiawad peninsula), Tāmraparni river, Pārsāva (Persia), a northern country, Pāṇḍya-Vāṭaka and the Himalayas.\textsuperscript{36} Similarly Cosmas Indikopleustes in the \textit{Christian Topography} informs us that in the sixth century Sri-Lanka emerged as a great centre of sea trade.\textsuperscript{37} The ships from Iran and Abyssinia came to Sri-Lanka and sailed from there to other countries.\textsuperscript{38} The merchants exported silk-cloth, agallochum and sandalwood from Sri-Lanka to other countries. The port of Kalyan was famous for the fine quality of cotton textile, sesamum and copper.\textsuperscript{39} The ships from Sri-Lanka reached Sindh port for items such as musk, castor seed and nard.\textsuperscript{40} Fa-Hian also visited Ceylon on a great merchant vessel.\textsuperscript{41} Fa-Hian gives reference to the \textit{peepal} tree imported from mid-India by the king of Ceylon.\textsuperscript{42} Kalhana in the \textit{Rājarāngini} also mentions export from Ceylon.\textsuperscript{43} The \textit{Jātakas} record that Suvarṇabhūmi had trade relations with Bharukachha and Champa.\textsuperscript{44}

India had established colonies and trade relations with the south-eastern countries from the earliest times. Almost whole of Indo-China and Indonesia comprising of Burma, Siam, Malay Peninsula and Annam in the mainland and the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali, Borneo and many others have trade linkages with India.\textsuperscript{45}
During the Gupta period the trade relations with the eastern countries also grew considerably. The term *dvipāntra* was used for the eastern archipelago in the Sanskrit literature.\(^4^6\) In the *Mārkanaḍeya Purāṇa*, dated third to sixth century AD, there is a reference to the Indradvīpa, Kaserumān, Tāmraparṇa, Gabhastimān, Nāgadvīpa, Saumya, Gandharva and Vāruṇa (Borneo) islands surrounded by the sea.\(^4^7\) The *Vāmana Purāṇa*, dated fifth to tenth century AD, further clarifies that these nine islands were sanctified by the Indians by the performance of *yajñas*, wars and business (*iṣṭavyuddha-vāṇijyabhīḥ karmabhiḥ kṛtapāvanāḥ*).

India imported silk from Egypt and China, slaves from Ethiopia and horses from Arabia and Persia.\(^4^8\) From Iraq India imported copper, lead, paper, carpets, glass and chemicals. This shows that India was as an import market for all major commodities from various countries. So India need to import a very few products. Probably this favourable trade drew vast amounts of gold and silver exceeding all other parts of the contemporary world. It was utilized in building temples, monasteries and palaces. This self-sufficient economy used to carry local transactions through barter system and cowries. This probably resulted in less distribution of gold currency in market for local transaction.

Further for internal and external trade there is a reference to use of the Mauryan highway connecting north-west to Mathura, the Ganges plain, Ujjain and the Deccan. The cities lying on this highway continued to be important commercial centres in the Gupta and post-Gupta period. The flourishing cities referred to by Hiuen-Tsang were located on a route connecting Kashmir with the rivers Yamuna and the Ganga.
Fa-Hian and Hiuen-Tsang referred to many new and old towns that existed on this highway. From Kashmir Hiuen-Tsang moved to Jālandhara or She-Lan-T’o-Lo via Punach (Pun-Nu-Tso), Rajapuri (Ho-Lo-She-Pu-Lo), Takka (Tseh-Kia) and Chinapati (Chi-Na-Po-Ti). He mentions the people having luxurious dwellings in Jālandhara. From Jālandhar he moved towards Kiu-Lu-Ta or Kuluta, modern Kulu and referred to this region as famous for medicinal roots, gold, silver, copper, fire drops (crystal) and native copper. The Nirmanḍ copper-plate inscription of the Māhāsāmanta and Māhārāja Samudrasena dated AD 612-13 also confirms that Kulu was a place of importance during the post-Gupta period. Nirmanḍ was possibly a nodal station located on an important trade route connecting India, western Tibet and central Asia.

The Rājatarāṅgīṇī of Kalhaṇa refers to important urban settlements. The king Pravarsena built the city named Pravarapura and provided regularly arranged markets. Similarly the town named Pratāpura developed into an important trade centre in the reign of king Pratāpāditya, where merchants came from all regions and dealt in various items. Sanghol in Punjab was one of the major towns during the Gupta and post-Gupta period which is confirmed by the archaeological excavations as well. The discovery of Samudragupta standard type coins and a sealing of the Gupta period, defence-complex of the first century to fifth century AD shows that Sanghol was an important commercial and political centre during the Gupta period. The habitation site shows the existence of baked- brick structures and covered drains belonging to the Gupta period. This further confirmed that the region was well populated during the period. Probably this region was also famous
for its stone making industries. A large number of sculptures have been recovered from this site.\textsuperscript{58}

Ropar was a flourishing town from the Harappan period to the post-Gupta period. It is located on the left bank of the Sutlej, where the river emerges into plains from Siwali hills.\textsuperscript{59} The excavation conducted at Ropar by Y. D. Sharma yielded Gupta coins of gold and copper along with other objects of excellent craftsmanship. The coins and other antiquities recovered from the site are displayed in the Ropar museum.\textsuperscript{60}

The Mauryan highway also connected Taxila, Kashmir via hilly tracts of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab plains to the famous city of Mathura. In between this route Hiuen-Tsang also referred to the important city of Sa-Ta-Ni-Shi-Fa-Lo or Sthaneśvara. From Mathura Hiuen-Tsang moved towards Sa-Ta-Ni-Shi-Fa-Lo or Sthaneśvara which had fertile soil and could produce abundant grains. This region emerged as important commercial centre in the Vardhan period. It acted as a centre of accumulation of rare and valuable merchandise from every quarter.\textsuperscript{61} The \textit{Harṣacarita} also refers to a market-place of Sthaneśvara,\textsuperscript{62} where merchandise was kept for sale in the shops.\textsuperscript{63} Several Gupta gold and silver coins of Harṣavardhana recovered from present Haryana and Punjab suggest the importance of this region during the Gupta and post-Gupta period.\textsuperscript{64}

Mathura continued to function and retain its importance from AD 320 to 750. However Fa-Hian did not follow this highway connecting Kashmir to Mathura. He entered Mathura from Peshawar via Nagara (now in India) and Bhida (the present Punjab), by following the course of river Yamuna.\textsuperscript{65} Similarly from Kulu Hiuen-Tsang moved towards Mathura or Mo-Tu-Lo. Thus it is clear that
Mathura was an important commercial centre during the Gupta and post-Gupta period. Fa-Hian refers to specialty of Mathura in producing dress material. Hiuen-Tsang refers to the people of Mathura (Ma-teou-lo) clad in fine cotton fabric. The fine cotton, gold and grains were the main items of exchange in Mathura in local and international market. The excavation of the area can help us to have clear idea of the planning of this important urban centre. He further adds that the soil of Mathura (Mo-tu-lo) was rich and fertile and fit for producing grains. The excavation carried out at Mathura revealed terracotta sealings and coins of the early and late Gupta period, which confirms that Mathura was an important town during the Gupta period.

The Chinese sources throw light on the route connecting Mathura to Pataliputra. From Mathura Fa-Hian moved towards the famous city of Pataliputra (modern Patna). On his way to Pataliputra he crossed the important Buddhist centres like Sankasya, a village forty five miles north-west of Kanauj, Sravasti situated on the south bank of the river Rapti and about eighty eight miles north of Ayodhya, modern Sahet Mahet village, Kapilavastu, present village of Kohana, about hundred miles north-west of the city of Banaras, Ramagram an area between Kapilavastu and Kusinagara and Vaisali.

From Sthaneśvara Hiuen-Tsang moved towards the famous city of Kanyakubja, or Kie-Jo-Kio-She-Kwo via Srughna (modern Kalsi or near Kalsi) and Matipura or Ma-Ti-Pu-Lo (a large town in western Rohilkhanda near Bijnor). In between this route from Sthaneśvara to Kanyakubja he referred to the hilly tracts of Brahmapura or Po-Lo-Hih-Mo-Pu-Lo the Garhwal and Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. While referring to Po-lo-hih-mo-pu-lo or
Brahmapura Hiuen-Tsang mentions that the area produced teou-shih i.e. native copper and rock crystal.\textsuperscript{74} He also covered the areas of Govisana or Kiu-Pi-Shwong-Na (modern village of Ujjain, just one mile away from Kaspura in the eastward direction), Ahikshetra (modern Ahichchhatra, great mound of ruins called Atranjikhera four miles to the south of Karsana) and Kapitha or Kie-Pi-Tha (modern Sankisa, forty miles south-east of Atranjikhera) and then entered Kanyakubja.\textsuperscript{75} Though we do not get much evidence on the prosperity of these towns but Kanyakubja (Kie-Jo-Kio-She-Kwo) is referred to as important town where valuable merchandise from different quarters was collected in great quantities.\textsuperscript{76} This town was located on the southern bank of the river Bhagirathi near the confluence of rivers Ganga and Kali.\textsuperscript{77} Kanyakubja on account of its strategic location developed into a centre of trade activities. This region was also famous for its stone and terracotta industries in the Gupta and post-Gupta period. This riverine region helped in trading and transporting heavy items like stone sculptures.

Sources show that Hiuen-Tsang followed the northern route from Sthanesvara to Ahikshetra and from Kanauj to Prayaga he followed southern route.\textsuperscript{78} According to him Prayaga was full of grains and fruit trees. It was famous for the best quality of rice and sugarcane.\textsuperscript{79} From Kanauj Hiuen-Tsang moved towards Ayodhya or O-Yu-To, which is located near Kakupur, an old town, twenty miles north-west from Kanpur.\textsuperscript{80} The city was full of cereals, flowers and fruits. From there he moved towards Prayaga or Po-Lo-Ye-Kia or Allahabad at the junction of the Ganges and Yamuna and covered the region of Kausambi or Kiau-Shang-Mi (this area is identified with Kausambi-nagara, an old village on the Yamuna, about thirty miles away from Allahabad).
From Kausambi he reached Banaras or Po-Lo-Ni-Sse via Śravasti, Kapilvastu, Ramgram and Kusinagara. He noticed many deserted and ruined Buddhist sites. However while referring to Banaras Hiuen-Tsang mentions that the families living at Banaras were rich and rare objects were available in the city. The Buddhist texts also throw light on the prosperity of Banaras. The Mahāvastu refers to rich merchants of the city crossing high seas with ships, laden with merchandise for trade. The Dhammapada, a text of third century B.C., refers to the trade relation between Banaras and Śrāvasti and Banaras and Taxila. A few gold coins and some seals of the Gupta rulers have been recovered from Bharsar near Banaras which suggests that Banaras was an important commercial centre during the Gupta period as well.

Hiuen-Tsang refers to the kingdom of Ghazipur or Chen-Chu. It was a town located on the river Ganges just fifty miles east of Banaras. The people of this region were wealthy and prosperous. The land was fertile and was cultivated regularly. From Ghazipur he reached Vaiśāli or Fie-She-Li. The soil of this region was rich and fertile. The fruits and flowers were grown in abundance in this area. The Vinaya texts and the Lalitavistara of pre-Gupta period, refer to Vaiśāli as an opulent, prosperous, populous town, abundant in food, high buildings and pleasure gardens. Numerous sealings of the Gupta period found from Vaiśali suggest that it was both a centre of manufacture and trade activities. The sources show that these two towns were important commercial centres of this period.

From Vaiśali he went towards Vrijji or Fo-Li-Shi and Nepal or Ni-Po-Lo. He came back to Vaiśali from Nepal and finally entered Pātaliputra which was situated on the confluence of rivers the Ganges, Son, and Gandak. During the Gupta period Pātaliputra was
a magnificent and populous city. It was the main centre of riverine traffic of the lower Gangetic plains. There is a reference to the shops at Pātaliputra filled with all kinds of goods, with several buyers and sellers in the *Ubhayābhisārika*, written by Vararuchi during the Gupta period. The *Dasakumāracarita* also refers to the city of Pushpapura i.e. Pātaliputra having precious articles and gems. Daṇḍin refers to the merchants engaged in sea trade at Pushpapura. This suggests that rich merchants from different regions and countries came to Pātaliputra for trade purpose. Numbers of Gupta coins found from Pātaliputra testify to the prosperity of the city of Pātaliputra. The smaller cities located around Pātaliputra and on the eastern coast prospered during the Gupta period. Similarly cities in western India and those on the trade routes from Kashmir to the middle Ganges thrived on trade relations.

While Fa-Hian moved towards Gaya and Rajgriha from Pātaliputra. He further came back to Pātaliputra via Banaras (along the course of the Ganges and moved towards Champa (modern Champanagar, three miles west of Baglipura) and from there to Tamralipta (modern Tamluk). He refers to these cities as important port towns located in eastern region. While Hiuen-Tsang after crossing hills of Mongir entered Champa, the Bhagalpura district, Pun-Na-Fa-Tan-No or Pundравardhana which included the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpura, Rangpura, Ndiya, Bīrbhum, Bardwan, Midnapura, Jangal Mahalas, Ramgarh, Pachit and parts of China. From there he moved towards Tamralipti or Ta-Mo-Li-Ti modern Tamluk, just above its junction with the Hugli via Kamrupa or Kia-Mo-Lu-Po, the region included Manipura, Jayantiya, Kachhār, west Assam, parts of Silhet or Srihatṭa, Samtata or Samtata or San-Mo-
Ta-Cha the region of eastern Bengal. Tāmralipti is the same as Tamluk in the Midnapur district of West Bengal. Kālidāsa in Raghuvança locates Tamluk on the bank of the river Kapisā, identified by Pargiter with the Kasai flowing through the district of Midnapur. It was a centre of prosperous trade where valuable articles and gems were collected in abundance. The Brhat Jātaka referred to the export of cotton and woolen clothes from Tāmralipti to international market. This shows that Tamralipti was an important port city participating in foreign trade.

Chandraketugarh was another important town of this region in West Bengal neither referred to by Fa-Hian nor Hiuen-Tsang. The excavation at Chandraketugarh in West Bengal, revealed that period VII, belonging to circa third to sixth century was perhaps the most flourishing period of the site. The excavation revealed remains of the fortified township with five successive periods, ranging from pre-Mauryan to Gupta period. The ruins of the ancient city of Chandraketugarh yielded hundreds of silver punch-marked, copper cast coins and some Gupta coins of rare variety. The discovery of two Archer type coins of Chandragupta II and one Chandragupta-Kumardevi coin confirms the antiquity and commercial importance of the port-city of Chandraketugarh, particularly in the days of the imperial Guptas. Recently number of gold coins of the Gupta period mainly of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II were unearthed at a road constructing site at Ahiran district Murshidabad, which further confirms beyond doubt that Murshidabad was an important trade centre in the Gupta period.

From Tamralipti Fa-Hian boarded a ship and went towards the country of Simhala, modern Sri-Lanka. From here he moved towards China in a mercantile ship while, Hiuen-Tsang came back to India
from Simhala via Kong-Kin-Na-Pu-Lo or Konkanpur which was traced near Golkonda. He then moved towards Mo-Ho-La-Cha or Maharashtra the capital of which was traced near the river Tapti or the Ghirna. From there he moved towards Po-Lu-Kie-Che-Po or Bharukachha. On the western sea coast Bharukachha, Sopara and Kalyana and on the eastern sea were the famous ports participating actively in the foreign trade.\textsuperscript{105}

The account of Cosmos mentions various other port towns located on the western coast of India such as Calliena (Kalyan), Sibor (Chaul) and the markets of Male (Malabar), Parti, Manglore, Solapatana, Nelopatana and Pandopatana.\textsuperscript{106} The inscriptions show that Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Skandagupta, were all interested in controlling the Saurashtra coast because of its strategic location.\textsuperscript{107} Bharukachha, modern Bhroach was an important seat of sea-going trade and commerce in Kathiawad. While moving southward from Persian Gulf, Bhroach was the major sea-port for Roman trade in Kushana period. The \textit{Divyāvadāna} refers to Bharukachha as a rich, prosperous and thickly populated city.\textsuperscript{108} Bhroach played important role in the trade with China in Gupta and post-Gupta period.\textsuperscript{109} Hiuen-Tsang mentions Bharukachha (Po-Lu-Kie-Che-Po) as the main centre of salt trade.\textsuperscript{110} The \textit{Sussondi Jātaka} gives detail of the journey of the minstrel Saggas from Banaras to Bharukachha a \textit{paṭṭan-gāma} from where ships sailed to Suvarṇabhūmi for trade purpose.\textsuperscript{111} As the seaports in western India continued to flourish the new Kashmir route brought both western India and the Ganges plains closer to China.\textsuperscript{112}

From Bharukachha via Atali or O-Cha-Li in the far north of Kachha or Kie-Cha he went towards Valabhi or Fa-La-Pi and Ujjaini via Anandapura, Saurashtra, modern Surat and Gujarat.\textsuperscript{113} Ujjaini
served as a link between the sea ports and Deccan during the period under study. The *Mrichchhakaṭṭika* of Śudraka of the fourth-fifth century AD, mentions a sārthvāha named Charudatta who lived in the city of Ujjaini. The merchants (vānija) from Ujjaini went to other cities for trade purposes. There is a reference in the *Mrichchhakaṭṭika* to the vessels going abroad from Ujjaini specifically for the trade purpose. Śudraka also gives reference to the guards patrolling royal roads (rājmārga) at Ujjaini. Bāna mentions Ujjaini as rich and prosperous town. The precious stones and other luxurious items came to Ujjaini from different countries and these were set for sale in the markets (hattas) of Ujjaini. The *Pādmaprābhṛṭakam* of Śudraka refers to the market place of Ujjaini filled with horses, elephants, chariots, soldiers and other products. Ujjaini was connected to Sindh, Multan, Bolor, Kashgar and Khotan, this route was used by Hiuen-Tsang to reach China. The excavation carried out at Ujjaini suggests that site was continuously inhabited up to medieval period. However further excavations can help us to have more information on the planning and layout of this important town.

Valabhi was also an important centre during this period. The *Daśākumāračarita* a text of the seventh century AD refers to the chief of sea traders inhabiting Valabhi. This trader had amassed immense wealth like Kubera. Valabhi was also famous for various industries. The stone polishing industry flourished in Valabhi. According to Hiuen-Tsang Valabhi was also famous for spinning, weaving, masonry, carpentry, iron smelting, jewellery, brass ware and pottery making industries. The gold and silver vessels of exquisite workmanship were produced in Valabhi which were
possibly exported to foreign countries. The cloth painting and printing industry also flourished here.

The sources also throw light on the items of trade. Several animals, birds and other products constituted important items of international trade. India traded in best quality of elephants, rhinoceros and tortoise shells. The caged birds, elephants, oxen and horses were also important trade items. Nārada refers to trade items like cow, elephants, horses, meat, bones, honey, milk, water and butter. Šudraka also refers to trade in birds such as pigeons, dove, parrots and fish. Nārada further clarifies that milch cattle ought to be examined within three days of its purchase and beasts of burden could be examined within five days of purchase. This shows that animal and birds were important items of international trade and every care was taken to sell and purchase best quality of cattle and other animals.

The domesticated animals, such as horse and elephant were of special significance as these were integral elements of armed forces in pre-modern times and also effective symbols of power, prestige and pre-eminence in society. Kalinga was famous for unique quality of elephants, used in war and for other purposes. The Rājatarāṅginī mentions export of elephants from Kalinga in the Gupta and the post-Gupta period. Hiuen-Tsang also mentions that Kie-Ling-Kia, Kalinga produced the great tawny wild elephants, which were much prized in the neighbouring provinces. The export of Indian elephants to Iran from earliest time is referred to in the Śṛṅgārahāta. The horses were imported from Vanāyu, Ārātta, Kamboja, Bhardvāja, Sindh and Persia. The Rāmayana refers to the Kamboja horses and mighty elephants in the city of Ayodhya. The horses were considered to be prized gifts. The Kādāmbari of
Bāṇa refers to the gift of horses to the king of Ujjaini by the king of Persia. The coastal Bengal was also involved in the shipping of horses to south-east Asian counties from the Kushana to the medieval period.

Many more commodities were exported from India to other countries. Mainly corals, pearls and glass were exported to China. The corals were in great demand and extremely valuable commodity in China during former Han rule and continued to fetch high prices in the Gupta period as well. The red corals were exported from the western Mediterranean through red sea route and also through northern route from central Asia. Similarly pearls were in great demand and highly valued items of trade in ancient China. The pearls were exported to Barygaza from south India as pearls from Persia, were of lower quality than those of south India. Śudraka refers to sārthavāha named Charudatta, who was native of Ujjaini. He traded in various jewels (maṇi) like lapis lazuli (vaidurya), pearls (mauktī), corals (pravālaka), topazes (pushparagendra), sapphire (neela), cat’s eyes (kaketrak), rubies (padmarāgam), emerald (raktapṛbhṛteen) and conches (sāṅkha). Varāhamihira also refers to eight sources of obtaining best quality pearls i.e. Simhala (Ceylon), Paraloka (Travancore Coast), Saurāṣṭra (Kathiwad Peninsula), Tāmraparṇi river, Pārsāva (Persia), a northern country, Pāṇḍya-vāṭaka and the Himalayas. The Meghaduta mentions gems, conches, pearl-shells, emeralds and pieces of corals arranged for sale in market-places in the city of Visāla, in the country of Avanti. The Kumārasambhavam also refers to sale of pearls (rattan), corals, gold, gems and sapphire in the markets. The Raghuvançā mentions gems, ruby, sapphire stone and pearls as important items of trade. In addition to these other precious and
semiprecious stones like māṇika, panna, māhanila, lapis lazuli, coral, moonstone, ruby and kāstubha gem were also important items of exchange. The traders trading in them earned great profits. Nārada mentions that examination of jewels, pearls and corals must take place within seven days of their sale and purchase to ascertain their purity.

Various other products such as crystal sugar, pepper, ginger and black salt were also exported from India to other countries. According to Śudraka orris-roots (vyaya-granthi), ginger, treacle (saguḍa and shunthi) and black-pepper were sold in the markets. Kālidāsa refers to sale of rice, pepper, cardamoms, ketaks, aksha and clove. Daṇḍin refers to pepper (tail māmlak), cinnamon (chinaphala) and ginger (yathālabhmāmyiya) as important items of external trade. The panasa fruit, black collyrium, saffron paint (kum-kum), musk (kasturi), sandal juice (chandan-ras), camphor (karpūr), sesamum, kesara (bakula or pumnaga) and betel-rolls (tāmbulam) were also important items of trade. Kamandaka in the Kamandakiya Nitisara mentions sesamum seeds, champaka flowers and sandal wood as important items of trade.

Silk was the most important item that China exported to India. Daṇḍin refers to China-silk in the Dasākumāraracarita. Bāṣa refers to export of silk from Pundŗa region also. But Chinese silk was much in demand because of its better quality, texture and processing. India imported silk yarn and cloth from China and then exported the Chinese silk to the Mediterranean world. Thus it can be concluded that various types of silk, fine linen, honey, wine, saffron paste, black sesame seeds, khadira fibres (kesar), cloves, crystalline camphor (shwetakapur), cotton,
indigo (*neel*), melting gum (*guggal*), medicinal plants and herbs, shell ornaments, fish and betel leaves were important items of trade. The indigo and Deodar wood were also exported to Tibet.

The Chinese sources refer to the demand of Indian gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, tin, fine cloth, woolen textiles and various types of incense in international market. Nārada refers to various conditions in which the price of the commodity changed. The trade was regulated by the imposition of certain laws and conditions so that the interests of both seller and purchaser could be safeguarded and manufacturer and trader receive their due in time.

Wine (*ratiphala*) and perfumes spirits and liquors were also sold and purchased. Nārada refers to the extraction of wine and spirits as important industry of the period. The male and female slaves were also an important item of trade. Male slaves could be examined within half a month and female slaves within a month of their purchase. The texts refer to returns of sold goods such as the apparels. The value of apparel once washed was diminished an eighth part, twice washed fourth part, thrice washed third part and four times washed the price became half from its original cost. The texts also refers to the punishments for adulteration and non-delivery of goods to the buyers. This perhaps helped to check adultery to some extent during the period of our study.

Both local and international trade was in flourishing condition during the Gupta and post-Gupta period. The Indian items were in great demand in China and south Asian countries. The number of items exported was high then the number of items imported. The prosperity of the *vanija*, *sārthavāha* and the existence of various *śrenīs* throw light on the prosperous urban economy.
Notes and References

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34 Xinru Liu, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.


37 McCrindle, *Notes from Ancient India*, p. 160.

38 Motichandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*, p. 178.


44 B.C.Law, Historical Geography of Ancient India, pp. 278 and 43.

45 R.C.Majumdar, Ancient India and South-East Asia, 3rd ed., Baroda, 1971, p. 35.

46 Motichandra, op. cit., p. 169.

47 Ibid.


49 Samuel Beal, op. cit., p. 34.

50 Ibid., p.177.


53 R.S.Pandit, op. cit., Part IV, p. 121.

54 IAR, 1970-71, p. 30. Excavation at Sanghol (District Ludhiana, Punjab), clearly refers to the defence-complex, which belongs to
period IV of the site dated to second half of the 1st century to 5th century AD.


60 [http://asi.nic.in/asi_museums_ropar.asp](http://asi.nic.in/asi_museums_ropar.asp) and Data collected from Ropar museum which was visited by us as a part of field trip in 2011-12.


We found a number of Gupta and post-Gupta silver and gold coins from Haryana and Punjab region.


67 Samuel Beal, *Travels of Fa-Hian and Sung-Yun AD 400 and AD 518: Buddhist Pilgrims from China to India*, p. 60.


72 James Legge, *op. cit.*, pp. 77, 47, 55, 64, 68 and 72.


74 *Ibid*.


Samuel Beal, *op. cit.*, p. 44.


A.S. Altekar mentions that the numerous guild-sealings found at Vaiśāli and give us a vivid picture of the working of guild organization during the Gupta period. The existence of joint guilds of bankers, traders and caravans with their membership spread over a
large number of towns is referred to in A.S. Altekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-32.


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95 James Legge, *op. cit.*, pp. 77, 87, 93 and 100.


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p. 207.


101 The remains of the pre-Gupta levels indicate that the structures had been of mud, bamboos and timber while period V assigned to the Gupta period saw the introduction of burnt bricks. *Ibid.*, 1956-57, pp. 29-30.


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151 P. De Lacy Johnstone, *op. cit.*, Chaps.1, 5, 30 and 50, pp.6 and 38.


160 M. N. Dutt, *Kamandakiya Nitisara or the Element of Polity*, Chaps. 5 and 7, p. 46.


178 He refers to laws on the sale and purchase of thread, cotton, substances from which wine or spirits are extracted, lead, tin,
weapons of every description, leather, copper, iron, bricks, oil of every kind, spirits, honey, butter, sugar and salt. J. Jolly, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

179 P. De Lacy Johnstone, *op. cit.*, Chaps 9 and 120, p. 82.


181 As referred to by Kālidāsa in *Raghuvaṇaṇa* and Śudraka in *Mrichchhakaṭiṇa*.

