Chapter – III
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MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND COMMERCIAL COMMODITIES

Fortunately, Sind possessed both over land-routes and sea-routes and its inter regional trade was transformed by both routes.

The first important route for inter-regional trade was between Thatta and Laharibandar. It appears from the account of Hamilton that a Kafila was sent from Thatta to Laharibandar and all goods and merchandise which imported or exported between both places were transported on camels, oxen and horses. When a Kafila or carvan was sent from Thatta to Laharibandar, a guard with 100 or 200 horses was appointed to protect them from the loot of the Baluchis and Makranis. The guard was appointed by the Viceroy (Governor) of Thatta.¹

From Thatta another route went towards Agra.² From the other sources we find that Thatta also developed its inter-regional trade through Bhakkar.³

Irfan Habib mentions in his Atlas about the land route from Multan to Bhakkar thence to Thatta.⁴ A Kafila of Thatta was sent to Multan, Lahore and Agra and business was carried on among the merchants of all

2. William Hawkins, Early Travels in India, pp. 100, 218.
the regions. It is mentioned in factory records that the merchants of Thatta hired carts from Agra to Multan thence to Thatta.  

From *Ain-i-Akbari* we find another route which started from Thatta to Qandahar. This route was around the mountains and one of them inclined towards Qandahar. The next route, started from Thatta towards Ahmadabad along with Radhanpur.  

The other major routes started from Bhakkar. Irfan Habib mentions about two land routes which started from there one of them went from Bhakkar towards Qandahar. The next route commenced from Ajmer to Jaisalmer and thence to Bhakkar. Besides these routes the trade was also carried from Agra to Bhakkar through camels. However, it was one of the important route of inland trade which had twenty days journey to cover the distance between Agra and Bhakkar. Next important route started from Siwistan to Thatta. This was also known as Lakhi route. Irfan Habib provides more detail about this route. According to him this route emerged from Siwistan, led through the narrow lakhi pass, between Lakhi hill and the Indus. It then went by the way of San to Nairankot and then

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acrossed the river at Samuvi to Thatta.\textsuperscript{12} The other routes were from Jaisalmer to Thatta and from Ahmadabad to Nagar Parkar thence to Thatta.\textsuperscript{13} Next important route mentions in other sources such as route from Mansura to Rajasthan.\textsuperscript{14} According to Abul Fazl one route also called Kirthar which commenced from Siwistan to Sewi\textsuperscript{15} (See Appendix I).

Besides the land routes Sind had also sea-routes for trade. As Irfan Habib mentions that except the four month of winter, the boats were the main means of transportations. The first water ways was from Multan to Thatta.\textsuperscript{16} Next sea-route started from Thatta to Laharibandar and the distance between both the places (from boat) was of 3 days.\textsuperscript{17} Irfan Habib mentions about other route which went from Siwistan and Nasrpur to Thatta.\textsuperscript{18} The goods were carried through boats from Agra to Thatta, but at the time of rainy season, it took forty days to reach Thatta along with Multan, Sitpur, Bhakkar and Rohri and each boat could be loaded sixty tons or upwards.\textsuperscript{19} Besides these sea routes, which connected Sind with the important coastal towns of India, also carried foreign trade of Sind.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{12} An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, op.cit p. 15.
\bibitem{13} Ibid, p. 16.
\bibitem{14} PHIC (68 Session), p. 278.
\bibitem{15} Ain, pp. 338-39.
\bibitem{16} An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, op.cit, p. 16.
\bibitem{17} Withington, Early Travels in India, pp. 212-213.
\bibitem{18} An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, op.cit, p. 16.
\bibitem{19} William Finch, Early Travels in India, p. 161.
\end{thebibliography}
The trade between Thatta and Hurmuz was passed through water ways and import – export was carried by the Portuguese frigates.\textsuperscript{20} Next sea-route started from Laharibandar to Masqat.\textsuperscript{21}

The land routes and sea-routes played an important role in the economic prosperity of Sind because through these routes the commodities were carried easily from one place to another place. The merchants of distant places like Agra found it cheaper to bring their goods by land route. The merchants of Thatta hired carts from Agra to Multan thence to Thatta because from Agra to Multan the transport charges including custom charges did not exceed one rupee per mound.\textsuperscript{22}

**Commercial commodities – Export and Import**

Sind had self sufficient economy and it was in a position to export surplus produce and manufactured goods to its neighbouring regions. Geographical situation of Sind made it an important part of western India. Its sea-routes, land routes and cheaper transport charges enabled it to attract the transit trade from far off regions such as Delhi, Agra, Southern parts of India etc. Besides the inter-regional trade it had trade contact to the far off countries.

Most of the commercial commodities were produced in Sind and it had few imports from the other regions. According to Ibn Batutah Sind

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\item[20.] E.F.I. 1618-1621, p. 12; *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, op.cit, p. 83.
\item[21.] Ibid 1624-29, p. 54.
\item[22.] Ibid 1634-36, pp. 130-131.
\end{itemize}
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possessed a large port and the revenue from this port was sixty lakhs per year\(^\text{23}\) and the port of Laharibandar had capacity to receive 200 or 300 ships at a time.\(^\text{24}\) The Arab geographers, Ibn Hauqal and Al Masudi observed that commodities like oranges, ivory, drugs, camels and cambay shoes were exported through Laharibandar. It enjoyed central position between Persia, Iraq and Arabia on the West and Sind, Lahore and India in its North-East. It was connected with these regions by means of river.\(^\text{25}\)

We also find that the goods were exported mainly to the Persian Gulf or sent Southward along the coast to Gujarat and Goa.\(^\text{26}\) Thatta was conquered (1591) during Akbar’s time and the Portuguese established friendly relation with the Mughal officials of the port.\(^\text{27}\)

All export and import was done through Thatta and its port, Laharibandar. Manucci mentions in his account that the Arabian and Persian vessels were anchored at Laharibandar and the port exported white and black sugar, butter, olive oil and cocos which was known as Indian nut. Besides these commodities white linen (cotton cloth and printed cloth) were also exported to them. In return they imported dates, horses, seed pearls, incense, gummastic, senna leaves, and Jews stones.

\(^{26}\) From Akbar to Aurangzeb, op.cit, p. 41.  
\(^{27}\) India at the death of Akbar, op.cit, p. 204.
All these goods which were imported by Arabian and Persian vessels, came from Mecca.\textsuperscript{28}

The charge of the ships, which passed from Sind to Persia, varied according to the nature of the ships such as the loaded ship of indigo, sugar etc. charged as seven rupees per \textit{corwar}, which was equivalent to eight mounds of Sind. The goods were also sent into \textit{Pukka} which consisted of forty piece of goods.\textsuperscript{29}

A chart has been given by W.H. Moreland of the Indian export trade at the opening of the Seventeenth century to shows that calico was the chief commodity which was exported at that time to Persian Gulf and Goa from Laharibandar.\textsuperscript{30}

There were various commodities which were exported from Laharibandar such as yarn, silk, Indigo, saltpetre, sugar, leather goods, ornamented desks, writing cases and other goods made with ivory and ebony, quilts, and mattresses. And the important commodities which were

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\textbf{Coastal Region} & \textbf{Principal Export} & \textbf{Destination} \\
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Sind-Laharibandar & Calico & Persian Gulf, Coastwise to Goa \\
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\textsuperscript{28} Manucci, Vol. I, p. 58; \textit{A social and cultural history of Sind}, op.cit, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{29} E.F.I. 1634-36, pp. 133-34 (\textit{Khar-war-an ass’s load})
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{From Akbar to Aurangzeb}, op.cit, p. 57.
received by Laharibandar were pearl from Bahrain, gold, silver, drugs and dates were brought by the Portuguese.\(^{31}\) The textile industry of Thatta was in flourishing condition and it was the cheaper place for cloth manufacturing. 3000 families of weavers were engaged in textile industry of Thatta.\(^{32}\) The weavers of Thatta manufactured *Jamewar* (Wrought silk), *Kutanees* (cotton) were made to mix silk and cotton and silk mixed with carmina wool as *culbuleys* were manufactured there.\(^{33}\) Besides these cloths, white and printed cloth were also manufactured in Thatta and exported to Arabia and Persia.\(^{34}\) We also find that leather was made from buffaloe’s skin which was named by the Portuguese as Sindi leather.\(^{35}\) It was exported to Arabia and Persia.\(^{36}\) Sindi leather was best in comparison to the leather of other parts of India.\(^{37}\)

Thatta was also very rich to produce grain and butter for the local consumption and for export to other countries like Masqat.\(^{38}\) Great quantity of butter were also exported. It generally melt and put up in jars which called *Duppas*.\(^{39}\)

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Another important goods were perfumes which were prepared especially in Thatta and from there it was carried to Surat and thence to China. In China it beared good price. A root called, Putchock or Radix dulics was used in its composition.\textsuperscript{40} According to factory records Indigo and Sugar were brought from Agra to Thatta and from there it was carried to Congo and Basra.\textsuperscript{41}

Indigo was the important cash crop and produced in Siwistan. It was able to manufacture 2,000 mounds of indigo per year.\textsuperscript{42} It brought to Thatta via the river and thence it was exported to Persia and Arabia.\textsuperscript{43} They imported metals, particularly silver was brought from Persia. But species and luxury goods imported from both the places.\textsuperscript{44} (See Appendix II).

As we have already seen that the commodities of Sind were exported to foreign countries but export-import of these commodities were also carried on between the towns of Sind. All transactions took place for trading purpose via land routes or sea-routes.

As Thatta produced wheat, butter, oil and cloths and all these commodities exported to Bhakkar.\textsuperscript{45} Besides Bhakkar, Thatta also

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p. 126.
\item \textsuperscript{41} E.F.I 1634-36, p. 130.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid , p. 129; \textit{India at the death of Akbar}, op.cit, p. 204.
\item \textsuperscript{43} \textit{India at the death of Akbar}, op.cit., p. 204.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{45} E.F.I. 1634-36, p. 129.
\end{itemize}
exported butter and oil to Siwistan. Opium was also produced in Thatta and exported to Siwistan for sale via river which took ten days to reach there and the custom charges was six rupees upon a boat.\(^{46}\) Besides Bhakkar and Siwistan, Nasrpur were also engaged in trade with Thatta and it exported butter and grain to Nasrpur.\(^{47}\)

As we have already seen that most of the commodities were exported from Thatta but it received few commodities from the neighbouring regions. A textile industry was established at Thatta, Nasrpur and Siwistan and 3000 families of weavers in Thatta and Nasrpur and 1000 families in Siwistan were engaged to weave cloth.\(^{48}\) Cotton yarn produced in Thatta was 30 to 40 percent dearer than Surat because it was procured from Cutch.\(^{49}\)

Laharibandar imported Sugar both candy and powder from Multan and Lahore, Bengal Cloth, painted cloth and white cotton fabrics from its northern provinces.\(^{50}\) We also find that ghee and opium were sent to Thatta from Siwistan via river.\(^{51}\) (see Appendix-III).

\(^{46}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) Ibid.
\(^{48}\) Ibid, pp. 128, 129, 130.
\(^{49}\) Ibid, p. 130.
\(^{50}\) H.K. Naqvi, Vol. I, op.cit, pp. 81-83.
\(^{51}\) Ansar Zahid Khan, op.cit, p. 263.