CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Trade may be understood, in its widest sense, as the reciprocal traffic of materials or goods directed by human agency from one place to another. It can also be defined as merchantile employment carried out as a means of livelihood or profit. The activity to satisfy human wants account for an extensive system of exchange between the inhabitants of different places. The monetary system enabled trade to develop into a specialised social activity. Production and consumption are the two main activities of man. Both these activities depend upon their sphere of circulation. This process is carried out by the merchant community. The exchange of goods led to regional contacts which in turn led to mutual and cultural dissemination.

The earlier works covered a much wider scale in terms of geographical area and time span. In other words, it was more generalized in form. Therefore, in order to understand the trade pattern in its proper perspective, the region of Western India in general and that of Gujarat in particular, restricting the time bracket of 3rd century B.C. to 7th century A.D. was undertaken. Western India, being the nuclear region offered a great potential for the development of commercial activity right from the Harappan times for overseas as well as inland trade. The focus of earlier
work was laid mainly on the trade of a particular cultural period or of a particular dynasty. Sometimes the trade was dealt, in general, covering whole of ancient India or just an aspect of inland or maritime trade. It was a long felt desideration to highlight various facts of trade in the light of recent discoveries incorporating both archaeological and literary sources pertaining to Western India with special reference to Gujarat. The present work examines the aspect of industrial and mercantile activity along with character, composition and role of merchants in the society of Western India during 3rd century B.C. to 7th century A.D. By restricting the space and time, here an attempt has been made to study human interaction in patterns of social structure in a more comprehensive manner incorporating various aspects related to trade and commerce. In a way, it helped in understanding the major developments in trade which took place in the economic history of human civilisation of Western India. The foreign trade of Western India has been viewed as link in the long chain of mercantile activity. While doing so, the role of foreigners have also been highlighted. The growth of commerce brought into prominence, along with the role of merchants who acted as middlemen for exchange and distribution of goods. Through the process of commodities exchange, they were able to amass wealth and there was an uprising in profitability in this region. The analysis of Western Indian trade would help us to understand the pattern of commercial activities with the adjoining regions of the Indian subcontinent on one hand and the outside world on the other.

In the prehistoric period, man was basically a part of his environment. From the archaeological records, it is quite clear that even
during prehistoric period, the people had developed contacts with long distant contemporary communities for obtaining some of the required commodities. During the Harappan period, the elaborate social structure and the standard of living must have been maintained by highly developed system of communication and trade. The Harappans were known for their multidirectional penetration for acquiring either required goods in finished forms or raw materials. Most of the excavated sites of Gujarat offered excellent evidences in this regard. The Harappans had a well developed chain of exchange system with transportation of goods taking place both over short and long distances - maritime and inland - backed by professional faith at all levels of distribution. In this regard, interesting evidences have been brought forth from the recently excavated sites of Gujarat indicating their involvement in the long distant trade. Craft production of a wide range can also be vouched from the discovery of antiquities from the Harappan domain as well as from the other sites of contemporary civilization.

However, during the post urban Harappan phase, evidence for economic activity as a sign of long distant trade was virtually absent. Hence, specialized production and range of products was much reduced. The mosaic of stylistic traits which emerges in the post urban phase is indicative of shortened range of craftsmen and trade inter-exchange. Though specific archaeological evidences are mere, Vedic literature is rich in information which speaks about the knowledge of sea, maritime and inland trade, a particular community involved in trade, the existence of guild
organization, etc. Thus, the development of trade during the protohistoric period paved way for the commercial exchange for the subsequent periods.

It appears that the location of Gujarat on the Western littoral, was advantageous for the commercial activities with other countries and with its neighbouring hinterland regions. Geographically, the littoral area with its river mouths and creeks could harbour the sea faring ships in the ports and the easily traversable terrain led to the trade routes on which there was a busy movement of goods. These creeks also provided the incoming ships with safe anchorage. The importance of Western India lay in its location ideally situated to control routes from south and north as a buffer zone between the two. The expansion of overseas trade during the period under review led to the development of several new ports along the west coast. Their importance increased as they were linked with hinterland by means of passes and river routes. The Western Indian ports like Bharuch, Somnath, Dwarka, Nagara, Kalyan, Sopara, etc. and market centres such as Devnimori, Akota, Karvan, Ujjain, Mahismati, Paithan, Bhokardan, Brahmapuri, Ter, etc, situated at nodal points were very well interlinked with trade routes as thriving centres. The natural resources like suitable productive soil, mines, forests, variety of agricultural products, besides rich deposits of semiprecious stones in this region provided a solid economic basis for the growth and development of its trade and industries.

Though antiquity of India's contact with outside world could be traced right from the beginning of human civilization, there was an unprecedented
rise in India's external trade relations in the beginning of the Christian era. The Mauryan period resulted in the development of the looping trade along the west and east coast. Its trade policy helped in building a solid infrastructure (roads, rest houses, river crossings, etc.). Due to these infrastructures, the commercial transactions facilitated the development of trade. This is reflected in the material remains from different excavated sites. The traders and businessmen, both Indian and foreign fully participated in material transactions. The trading circuits of the Mauryans, seems to have continued in the subsequent period though in an altered form with considerably diminished State control. During this period, Western India, Deccan and South India were the main theatres of commercial activities as it was mostly sea borne activity. A bulk of India's foreign trade was with the Mediterranean region. An ever increasing demand for oriental luxurious commodities by the Roman nobility and the encouragement in trade given by their emperors, further accelerated the growth of Indo - Roman commerce. The significance of this maritime trade, which was mutual, provided a context for the legitimate exchange of products and led to the inflow of foreign currency in this period. It had a subtle repercussion on the socio - political temper of this period. It seemingly stimulated internal movements of commodities, opened out new techo-cultural bias in craftsmanship and coastal stations and inner marts played a crucial role in trade transactions. It made this region, a zone of peace, prosperity and thriving trade channel.

The increase in the volume of trade activity made it necessary to improve the organisation. The necessity of living together and forming
corporations was due to the prevailing insecurity and instability of social life enforced upon traders. The localization of trade and industries proved an important factor in the development of corporate system. The epigraphical record clearly suggest the developed organisation of guild system in the region of Western India. The inscriptions of Western India record investments made with the different guilds dwelling at Govardhana. The guilds also made donations as the Junnar inscription records the gift of a seven celled cave and a cistern by the guild of corn dealers. The guilds served the purpose of protecting the interest of the indigenous traders and craftsmen against foreign competitors. They rendered valuable services to the people by ministering to all the wants economic, social and religious. From the inscriptions of this region and literary sources of this period, one can infer that these guilds served as multipurpose organisation. They operated as banks and their functions used to be trustworthy and thus they gained confidence of the people who used to invest money. The Gupta kings - Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta - deposited money and from the interest two alm houses were maintained. There was freedom of mobility to the guild members, when a member deposited money and migrated to Indore, the guild used it for the purpose for which it was invested. They also enforced both the executive and judicial powers. The State used to take the help of guild heads to settle trade disputes. Furthermore, they had the authority to execute military powers. Arthasastra mentions a class of Srenis whose profession was war and trade, and were mainly found in Khamboja and Saurashtra, engaged in trade and wielding weapons. The State used to take the help of Srenibalas whenever needed.
They also took to public works as seen from the Junnar inscription of Kumaragupta. They built roads, pools, houses, temples, cistern etc. On the other hand, promotion of trade was encouraged by the State authority as trade was one of the chief sources of state revenue. Hence, the State took interest in their workings, gave protection and supplied capital to enhance the trade. During the Gupta period, guilds of traders had their branches all over the country. The members of these guilds were required to visit several places in connection with commercial activities. The prices were fixed with honesty and integrity. The Toramana inscriptions talk about the weights and measures for different small articles to fix the prices. From this study one can infer that the formation of guilds was not necessarily based on caste alone, but usually on trade and profession. Such corporate bodies can be constructed to imply an inter-mixture of castes, based on professional skill. Their executives also could have been likewise a mixture and not of any particular sect. This study also reveals, the prestige and high esteem the guilds held.

While comparing the working system of other countries, it was found that almost all the countries had a sort of mixed economy. The trade organisation were flexible. The principle of liberty and equality was regarded in the very organisation of the guilds. All the measures underline the fact that like today, the ancient authorities also tried to maintain a welfare state by widely suppressing all deceptive practices and carefully planning the general welfare to enhance and develop the trade economy.
The political authorities of Western India controlled and coordinated external exchange as they had to mobilize resources to support its claim to power. Substantial sources of revenue were the customs and other levies collected along the political boundaries and ports. The foreign merchants handed over their cargoes to local middlemen who then transported the goods to markets places. The west coast of India had three major groups of ports - (1) Barbaricum; (2) Bharuch and Kalyan; (3) Cragannore and Kottayam. Of these, Bharuch was the principal collecting and shipping port for Northern and Central India. Bactria was also connected to Bharuch via Mathura. From various centres goods were brought down to Bharuch for export and foreign goods were taken to various trade centres from this port. As many of the centres of this region were situated on the main trade routes, which provided facilities for sorting, handling, storing and transporting the goods to various centres. The large variety of artefacts unearthed during excavation at different sites of Western India is an indicator of increased division of labour and the proliferation of crafts. As the exchange of goods increased in volume, it gave rise to market places and towns. The growth and development of various trade centres helped in laying out the land routes. The epigraphical records of different dynasties of this region mentions about the migration of traders, Brahmansas, donors, foreign merchants and travelers like Hiuen - Tsang and others. From these inscriptions, one can infer that there were developed trade routes, which were busy and connected different region of Western India. Roman trade was brisk and Western Indian coastal region helped in facilitating the trade at a faster pace.
In the early centuries of Christian era trade between India and Rome reached its zenith and with the downfall of the Gupta empire India's overseas trade received a setback. The M.S. University copper plates of the time of Toramana records exclusively the activities of foreign traders. This is probably one of the earliest inscriptions making specific reference to the term 'Vaidesya Vanijakah' meaning a merchant dealing with foreign trade. A large number of congregation of foreign traders coming from different parts of India as mentioned in these charters shows that in spite of the political upheavals, commercial activities went on uninterrupted. Thus, the archaeological and literary sources helped in tracing the various major and minor trade routes of Western India. Paithan and Ter were the richest centres of manufacturing terracotta and kaolin figures. This is proved by the discovery of a large number of figures and above all moulds for manufacturing such figures. An ivory figure of Lakshmi from Ter and its replica discovered at the ancient city of Pompeii, further highlights the brisk trade between the two regions. Other foreign antiquities from different sites of Western India indicate material exchange in this period. They brought about a revolutionary change in Indian culture and society. The prosperity of Gupta period was mainly the result of Indo - Roman trade. The maritime trade connection with Southeast Asian countries with Gujarat dates back to 6th century A.D.is very well recorded in a Javanese chronicle. The Buddhist work Manju Srikalpa Taru records the maritime trade of the Hātraka period.

A better idea of the trade mechanism could be understood by enumerating the commodities in demand during this time possibly indicates
its production and retail centres. Periplus refers to agricultural produces like wheat, rice, butter, sesame which were exported from Barygaza. A majority of the items shipped from the west coast of India were sent in their raw or unfinished state. They were bulk items like wood, aromatics, semiprecious stones, cloths of various kind, exotic birds etc. Western India has been described as the main source of herbs, cotton, wood and semiprecious stones. The Rajpipla mines near Bharuch are famous for agate and other semi precious stones, whereas Kathiawad region was known for aromatic herbs. An important conclusion that emerges from this discussion is that a majority of these exports products were locally available in this region. The local availability of bulk items would have solved the problems of transportation as well. The study of foreign antiquities unearthed from the excavated sites point out to the nature of imports. The main import items were wine, gold, glass products, medicines, copper, dates, coral, silver, etc. Wine was widely consumed and can be seen from the resinous substance at the bottom of amphoras found from the Buddhist centre of Devnimori and even at Dwarka. The glass products found from Nagara, Somnath and Ter and the large bronze amphoras from Kolhapur and amphora sherds from various sites of Western India shows some of the materials brought to India through the Western ports. All these antiquities help us to understand the pattern of trade activity carried out during the period under review.

The commercial links of Western India with the outside world have left some impact on its culture as well as on the cultures of other countries.
It left influence on the politics, economy, religion, art, and even on the society as a whole. Western India is rich in data showing foreign influence on the political theory, administrative organisation, law and legal institutions. For example, Kushana empire was found like its predecessors and successors, on the basis of autonomy and feudalism. The Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman shows that foreign rulers were well versed in Indian science and polity and adopted general administrative machinery for it. In general, the foreign rulers used high sounding epithets like 'King of Kings' (in Greek) and the corresponding Indian titles like Chakravarti, Rajadhiraja, Mahakshaptra, etc. The relations between the Mauryans and their western neighbours were very cordial in nature. Chandragupta was an enthusiastic admirer of Greek customs and etiquette. Envoys and foreign queen must have enhanced the Hellenistic tendencies. Even Bindusara also pursued a pacific policy towards the Western powers. An important feature of the administration was the regular practice of the Greeks having dual rulers, like Lysias and Antialcidas, Strabo I and Strabo II and in the same way Chastana and Rudradaman. It also prevailed among the Pallavas and Cholas of the South India.

In the field of economy the Sakas helped in the steady growth of Indian economy. Besides the achievement of Hippalus which led to the discovery of sea route from India to the Western World, new trade routes opened from India leading to the Central Asia and China. The Romans were attracted by the raw material available in India and were unable to counter balance the inflow of Indian products, with a result the Roman
gold Denarii was drained out. One of the remarkable features of the period is the introduction of regular coinage or minted metal in business transaction. The old system of barter had not altogether passed away, but gradually coins came into use and became the chief currency. The coins prevailing in Western India was influenced by its foreign prototypes. The foreign coins like those of Graeco - Bactrian and Roman, profoundly influenced the coins of the ruling dynasties of this region, who adopted their stylistic features.

In the pre Mauryan society, the Varnas and Ashramas were the dominant features of the social order. The combined impact of the foreigners converted India into an ethnological centre in which a number of races were found. This led to intermingling and inter marriages of different groups and this also shows that they gradually incorporated into Hindu society. As Gujarat was situated on the borderland, it received as well as suffered the purity in the influx of foreigners. The Māhābhārata states that the Kshatriyas of this land lost their status as they had no Brahmanas to perform the rituals. India's social order was completely revolutionized due to these trade relations. Indians borrowed the Graeco - Roman elements in architecture and household articles. The Gandharan art is not typically Indian, nevertheless, all its sources of inspiration are taken from Indian theme. The architecture and Buddhist sculptures excavated at Devnimori has a typical influence of Graeco - Roman style. Even the Mathura school of art was developed by the synthesis of Indian, Greek and Persian cultures, though it maintained Indian subject. The heavy size statues of Saka-
Chastana, Kanishka, all clad in Central Asian - Scythian dress and footwear are in a class and style apart. Roman Heracles and Nemean lion seen in relief are not only Western in theme, but also seem to have been, inspired by Roman aesthetics, ideals and artistic treatment.

Religion also influenced the invaders and traders. The rich mercantile community patronised the new faiths like Buddhism and and even adopted Indian names, and thus completely assimilated Indian way of life. No other example of cultural synthesis better than this can be fond which was the outcome of Indo-Roman trade relations. Several foreigners came into its fold. Likewise, the Garuda Pillar Inscription of Heliodorous clearly demonstrates the adaptability of Hindu religion by the foreigners.

Thus the comprehensive study of the archaeological as well as literary data, supported by geographical and ecological factors, established the region of Western India did not keep itself aloof from the main currents of the Indian trade mechanism and moved along with its neighbouring regions and participated in the cultural development through the ages. Being situated on the western lithoral, it played its own role in the economic and cultural development as a buffer zone of the Indian subcontinent. It served as a connecting link between the hinterlands of our country and parts of the overseas world. Due to this feature, the area under review from 3rd. century B.C. to 7th. century A.D. showed the reflections of political and cultural diffusion and played a crucial role in the development of trade, highlighting its impact on the overall prosperity of the country.
Fig. 1
Rock Painting Depicting Sailing Boats at Chamardi Near Vallabhipur

Fig. 2
Roman Amphorae Sherds Found From Gujarat
Fig. 3
Red Polished Ware Sherds Found From Gujarat

Fig. 4A
Roman Copper Coin (Follis) Found From Gujarat (Obverse)
Fig. 4A
Roman Copper Coin (Follis) Found From Gujarat (Reverse)

Fig. 4B
Roman Copper Coin (Follis) Found From Gujarat (Obverse)
Fig. 4B
Roman Copper Coin (Follis) Found From Gujarat (Reverse)

Fig. 4C
Roman Copper Coin (Follis) Found From Gujarat (Obverse)
Fig. 4C
Roman Copper Coin (Follis) Found From Gujarat (Reverse)

Fig. 5
Terracotta Seals Found From Vadnagar (Gujarat)
Fig. 6
Bronze Atlas From Shamlaji (Gujarat)
Fig. 7A
Figurine (Female Head) on Pottery Handle From Khakharda, Jamnagar District (Gujarat)

Fig. 7B
Figurine (Female Head) on Pottery Handle From Chachlana, Jamnagar District (Gujarat)
Fig. 8
Cameo From Karvan (Gujarat)
Fig. 9A
Bronze Handle From Akota (Gujarat)

Fig. 9B
Detail of the Bronze Handle From Akota (Gujarat)
Fig. 10A
Gold Ring From Vallabhipur (Gujarat)

Fig. 10B
Detail of the Gold Ring From Vallabhipur (Gujarat)