CHAPTER II

GEOGRAPHICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The Physical setting of India has played an important role in the development of its trade and commerce. The geographical features of a country influence the behaviour of her people. It also determines the course of her history and culture. Geography of an area is the foundation for most of the aspects of its historical knowledge. Physical geography gives a common denominator to all the historical events. The vastness of India has rightly given her the status and recognition of a subcontinent. The cultural developments in this area has resulted in radical migration of the people from other countries from time to time. This position has made India a zone of constant immigration owing to its location on the margin of the Eurasian continent. Being situated at a strategic point, taking the advantage of its vast coastline and the mountain passes, it played an important role in the exchange of culture and materials. Subbarao explained the human geography by dividing the subcontinent into three main areas (a) the areas of attraction like the Indus, Ganga and Krishna basins; (b) the areas of relative isolation such as lower Sind, Rajputam, Gujarat, Assam, Orissa and Kerala; and (c) the areas of isolation (culs de sac) represented mainly by tribal areas of Central Indian mass. (Subbarao, 1955). Further with regard to this view, it was felt that ecological factors were not taken into consideration by him, while the understanding the role of human
geography. Therefore Agrawal stresses on the geographical and ecological factors which play a significant role in diffusion as well as in moulding the cultural adaptations (Agrawal, 1982).

**IMPORTANCE OF GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS**

The geographical factors of an area govern the geo-economic and geo-political features. The geographical and physical features of an area influences the economic development of a country. The economic development brings the world market in much closer contact and thus it helps in the growth of political and cultural activities. The physical environment of a region exert quite a decisive influence in flashing the destiny of the country. The economic production of an area is influenced by the diversities of the geographical features. The people in ancient times quelled the natural geographical barriers to break through the chain of isolation and thus there was interaction of cultures and exchange of goods and services. The geographical situation conditions a great deal of pleasures and pains, experienced by merchants and travellers in ancient times, who covered the various trade routes. The trade routes which passed through inaccessible mountains and deserts were naturally very difficult to transverse. But those other routes, which passed through the open valley, vast plains proved considerably easier. The different types of geographical conditions has a great regulating influence on the human habitat of the different regions. Thus the people of different geographical conditions
respond differently to their environment. Hence there arises wide economic disparities prevailing in different areas.

Thus it would be helpful to look into the geographical factors of a region to know about the aspects of trade like the movement of goods and services, food economy, the natural products, etc. These factors will help us to formulate the economic and commercial activities of a region under review.

The present area under study forms the Western part of the Deccan peninsula which is geologically one of the oldest regions of the earth. Physiographically, changes have however resulted in the formation of smaller zones generally with uniform physical characteristics. It is confined between latitudes 13°44' N to 24°7' N. to the longitudes 68°4' E to 80°33' E which covers the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Western parts of Madhya Pradesh. This regions is drained by many rivers like, Sabarmati, Mahi, Narmada, Tapi, Krishna, Godāvari, and their tributaries. The present drainage system acts like a key to the past and portraits almost connected evolution of the river systems. This region occupied an important position as being situated in the western lithoral and was accessible to the maritime trade with other countries.

A brief account of the present environmental settings, viz. river system, geology, climate, soil and vegetation is outlined to know the resource potentiality, the availability and distribution of raw materials,
plants and the nature of climatic condition. It will help us to know about the distribution of the raw materials, plants and the climatic conditions which in turn will help us to know about the layout of routes, distribution of materials and its imports and exports, the emergence of commercial centres, etc. This data is beneficial in understanding the trade pattern of the ancient times.

A regional study of Western India is helpful in understanding physical condition which governs the natural landscape and then proceed to portray the complex facts about the inter-relationship between the natural factors and human agencies.

GEOGRAPHY AND TOPOGRAPHY

From the physiographical point of view the present state of Gujarat and Western part of Madhya Pradesh comprises of the peninsulas of Kathiawad and Kutch, the plains of Gujarat, Southern Gujarat, and Central Indian highland. These regions in ancient times were known as Saurashtra, Kutch, Anarta, Lata and Malwa.

The region of Saurashtra was once a group of islands of volcanic origin separated from the mainland. A belt of salt-land, with occasional marshes and pools seen even today suggests that the northeastern margin of the peninsula was once washed by the sea. In the south of Saurashtra, the
coastal strip is muddy and occasionally fringed with a line of wind blown sand dunes, while on the north west, it is dotted with mangroves. In the interior the low hills or surface irregularities are formed by courses of small rivers. The land running parallel to the coastline is very fertile.

There was an open sea between Kutch and Indus (Schoff, 1912:173-74). The coast of Kutch both on south and west is surrounded by marshy zone occupying the intertidal limits drained only by muddy channels in which sea water flows at high tide to join the main creeks. The development of drainage has not reached a stage of integration in the coastal areas. The Runn of Kutch becomes dry during summer and water logged during rainy season.

The region of Anarta and Lata is an alluvial plain partly formed by the annual flood deposits of the Sabarmali, Mahi, Narmada, and Tapi rivers. The north western part of this region is salty and marshy whereas the southern half becomes fertile and is good for pasture. Malwa has the characteristics of Deccan plateau with low flat hills, drained by Narmada.

Topographically, Maharashtra has four principle units, the Sahyadri, the Plateau proper, the Tapi basin and the Wardha-Wainganga plain. Several passes have linked the table land of Maharashtra and low land of Konkan. From Sahyadri lateral hill ranges stretch eastward across the plateau gradually decreasing in height. The Deccan trap in Western India locally interspread with ultratrappean bed, weathers into a rich black soil which is fertile and moistured.
The Tāpi basin in the north is an asymmetrical valley with a gentle southern slope which abruptly rises to the north towards the Satapudā hills. The area is known for its abundance of dykes which have influenced the courses of many tributary streams. The Satapudā forms a continuous barrier along the northern boundary of Khandesh but ends abruptly to develop the plains of Southern Gujarat. Further south runs the Sahyādri which leaves a narrow coastal belt facing the sea. The Wardha Wainganga plain is the lowest part of this region. Due to proximity to the sea and high rainfall, there evolved a lowland relief.

The northeastern hills of this region consist of outliers of the Aravalli system, the Vindhya, the Satapudā and the Sahyādri. These hills are detached masses of Deccan trap rising from an undulating country and at times, are jungle clad. The people in ancient times had to move together in caravans to transport goods and services from one place to another. The hills yields various kinds of rocks and are quarries of semiprecious stones which have been ejected through the Deccan Lava. The Rajpipla hills are famous for agate quarries.

Steatite, quartzite, jasper, sand stone, agate, quartz, etc. are the types of stones which occur in this area. These were used for ornaments for export in ancient times. Minerals like mica, maganese, iron ore, lead ore, copper ore, etc. also occur in this region.
DRAINAGE SYSTEM

The present drainage system acts like a key to the past and portrays almost connected evolution of the drainage at least in the recent past.

The Western zone of India has a network of rivers which flow westward into the Arabian sea and rivers like the Krishna and the Godāvari which flow into Bay of Bengal. These big rivers have many tributaries. There are a number of small rivers which are short and fast, but are not proper for navigation. They become dry during the hot summer and flood during the rainy season.

The Narmada and the Tāpi play an important role in this region. The Narmada rises from the plateau of Amarkantaka in Madhya Pradesh and after travelling a distance of nearly 1300 KM westwards, enjoins the Arabian sea. Owing to its rocky course the Narmadā is unsuitable for navigation, (east of Bharuch) except by the country boats which were used for trading articles during ancient period. The Tāpi rises in Satapudā plateau and flows westward. The estuarine of Tāpi is good for agricultural purposes.

The rivers of the Kutch flow both towards the north and also towards the south from the central highland and are parallel to one another. They are Naiera, the Kankamati and the Rukmati. Drainage in Saurashtra presents a radical pattern and they flow out in all direction. Bhādar being the longest in the region. Rivers like Banās, Saraswati and Rupen falls into
the Little Rann of Kutch. These rivers have developed broad and shallow channels in their sandy and gravelly deposits from the Aravalli hills. Two important rivers which have their sources in the outliers of the Aravallis are the Sabarmati and Mahi. These two rivers have several tributaries.

Another important river of this region is Godavari which has the longest course among all the rivers of the Deccan. It rises at Trimbak near Nasik. It has played an important role in preserving the relics of different places of human civilisation. Chalcolithic cultures and settlements of the historical period flourished on the banks of this river. Of these the important sites are Nasik, Nevasa and Diamabad.

The rivers like Krishna, Bhima and their tributaries also played equal part in draining this region. Krishna has its source near Mahabaleshwar on the Sahyadri. This river gave rise to many important historical towns and cities like Kolhapur, Brahmagiri, etc. A possible reason for the occupation of the upper Krishna basin in this period may have been the gold reserves in its vicinity. Numerous ancient gold mines have been found in various parts of the Raichur doab, south east of the valley (Baron and Dey, 1955:129).

The sea level on the west coast always changes and there is sedimentation, which has considerably reduced the intricism value of the port sites. Historically speaking almost every safe creek and estuary had a port but its importance depended on the hinterland (Ray, 1986:15).
Climate is the prime factor of the physical environment, along with geology and physiography, which affects soil, vegetation and geo-morphic processes. Climate affects the nature of cropping pattern, agricultural practice, livestock and forest economy of the region.

The climatic condition of Western India is typically dry and humid, and monsoonal in character with rainy and cold weather. An arid climate dominates Kutch, the western parts of Banaskantha and Mehsana districts, the northern fringe of the peninsula and the extreme west of Jamnagar district. In these regions the annual rainfall ranges from 40 to 60 cms. Isolated patches of tropical thorn forests and grasslands support numerous cattles. The southern Gujarat has a semi-humid climate. Rainfall ranges from 60 to 150 cms. and the area covers tropical forests. Rest of Gujarat has a semi arid climate. Cultivation extends over much of this land and few forested areas consists of dry deciduous forest. (Bhan, 1989:220).

The Konkan and the Deccan plateau has a parched appearance under intense heat. During later part of the summer, there is possibility of thunderstrom. This brings out monsoonal downpours which causes heavy erosion, flooded river that carry away fine soils down the stream. The coastal region is humid. The Western margin of the plateau, being closer to the sea is less continental and presents a comparatively low annual range of temperature. The Western Maharashtra and on the plateau has a heavy
rainfall followed by a dry spell and a heavy shower. The Western Madhya Pradesh region has a fairly high temperature throughout the year with tropical monsoon season.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The natural vegetation which covers the region of Gujarat and Western Madhya Pradesh is dry thorny forest. Small trees or open shrubs characterise the dry segment and bush in the northern coast of Kathiawad and Kutch. Dry deciduous species dot the surface of Girnar Hills. Moist deciduous thorn and littoral types are also found.

The plants remains recovered from the excavated sites of Western India are similar to those found in this region today, implying a similar type of environment. Millets are an extremely interesting and important group of plants, better adapted to the hot season.

Black cotton soil of Western India has additional benefits as it reduces labour inputs to cultivation. The other crops grown here are bajra, jawar, ragi, wheat, barley, maize etc. The development of cash crops such as groundnut and cotton in Gujarat helped the merchants to exchange these products with the other foreign products.

The animals like sheep, goat, cattle, camels and buffalos are the common species of this region. The wild animals which are found in this region are wild asses, lions, rhinoceroses, etc.
In the region of Maharashtra on the basis of ecological considerations, the following vegetation is found. The tropical wet evergreen forests are found on the hill tops and the slopes in the Western margin of the plateau which grades into tropical semi evergreen, when one moves from Sahyadri into 'Maval'. Further east is the tropical moist deciduous zone.

**POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

Politics and commerce go hand in hand. The policy of the ancient Indian rulers was to foster trade and commerce, both within India and the far flung countries. Political factors played a significant role in developing the course of Indian trade. Development of commerce and trade presupposes proper and efficient facilities of mobility of goods. Hence the State, in its efforts to promote trade, gave top priority to the task of making roads for transportation of merchandise from one centre to another. The faster mobility of goods increased the quantum of trade and this helped in two purposes. On one hand it gave a fillip to the development of trade and commerce, and on the other hand, it enhanced State revenues, accruing out of taxes and other duties, etc. The State also helped and undertook all possible measures to improve the means of communication and transport. A flourishing trade, in its very nature, demands an expansion of currency as a medium of exchange. Therefore the State took to minting of coins for the development of both internal and external trade. The State maintained a healthy foreign relationship to regulate the trade and commerce of that period.
Thus an overview of the political conditions prevailing in Western India will help us to determine the commercial development of this region. From this study we can know their authority and contribution on trade. A brief political background is given here in the following pages.

The history of Western India attained some definite clarity with the expansion of Mauryan empire, which covered almost the whole of India. The supremacy of Chandragupta Maurya (324 to 300 B.C.) extended over Anarta and Saurashtra. His rule over this area is attested by a later inscription of the time of Rudradaman (A.D. 150) who refers to Chandragupta's 'Rastriyâ' or a governor named Vâsya Puśyā Gupta, as the builder of the dam, Sudarsâna lake at Girnar (Keilhorn, 1889:36). The fourteen edicts of Aśoka at Junâgarh give ample evidence of the Mauryan rule over Gujarat, where Tuśaspha (Yavana) is mentioned as viceroy of Aśoka (Keilhorn, 1889:36-49). The rock edicts of Aśoka are generally distributed on the borders of his empire. His rock edicts have been found at Junagarh and Sopara (Hultzch, 1925:1-27). Therefore the inscriptional evidences suggest that the Gujarat Malwa and part of Maharashtra was under the suzerainty of the Mauryas. It is certain that Mauryan rule in the province did not last after Samprati in B.C. 200 (Sankalia, 1941).

When the Āndhras under Krisna extended their rule upto Nasik and further west, they might have spread their jurisdiction over Gujarat. This was also possible during the rule of Śri Śatakarni, who has been referred to as "Protector of the West", in the inscription of Khârvela dated to C. 168 B.C. (Banerjee, 1950: 74-82). A coin of Śri Satakarni with Bull-mark
was secured from Karvan (Majmudar, 1960:104). Apart from this, a hoard of lead coins of the Andhras, were discovered from Karvan (Majmudar, 1960:104) a famous seat of Pasupata sect. These two evidences seem to indicate that Gujarat definitely enjoyed sovereignty of the Andhras for some time.

The political condition of India was rather disturbed when Bactrian Greeks invaded the North India under Demetrius about 185 B.C. From the accounts of Strabo and Justin, it is evident that Menander surpassed even Alexander by conquering parts of India. The Greek coins found from Saurashtra and South Gujarat, confirms the Greek rule over Gujarat. It seems that the Greeks came from Sind, overran Kutch and Saurashtra and reached Bharuch by sea. The Greek rule extended upto Broach can be justified by the evidence of coins of Eucratides, Apollodotus and Menander found at Broach (Majmudar, 1960:48-49). The author of the Periplus (240 A.D.) refers that old drachmae bearing the Greek inscriptions of Apollodotus and Menander were current in Barygaza till his time (Majmudar, 1960:19). It is however suggested that the Greek rule over Gujarat and other area did not last long, but may have continued under Soter I through his general Apollodotus II whose coins were imitated by the Sakaś-Kshatrapas, Caśtana and Nahapāna (Tarn, 1951:318). The early works like Milindapañña and Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya flourished about 1st Century B.C. are the testimony of that period.

The Sātavāhana rule in this area is indicated by the literary tradition, which is supported by the literary evidences of Ptolemy's
'Geographica' which tells about the capital of the Satavahana kings was at the city of Pratiṣṭhāna, identified with modern Paithan on the Godāvari in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra State. Records of the early members of the family have been discovered at Nasik and Nanaghat in Northern Maharashtra. Their literary records has also been found in the vicinity of Vidisha. Gautamiputra Satakarni extended his sway over Malwa and Saurashtra in the north in 124 A.D. The Periplus mentions during A.D. 70 and 80, that the Satavahanas held sway over different market towns of Dakshināpatha (Maharashtra and South India). Gautamiputra Satakarni appears to have lost most of the districts he had conquered from the Kshaharatas. The northern part of his empire was lost to the Kshatrapas of Kardamaka family is suggested by the Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman.

The Śakas advancing southwards, conquered the Greek sea - province of Kutch and Saurashtra. Their power eventually extended upto Mathura and parts of Ujjain (Thapar, 1966:96). Mathura became the headquarters of early Śakas in the time of Maues. According to the Indian tradition the Śakas were driven out of Ujjain and pushed westward into the region of Gujarat; Kutch and Kathiawad by about 58 B.C. (Rapson, 1935:168).

Though there is hardly any evidence of Śaka rule in Western India, around 100 A.D. another branch of Śakas known as Kṣaharata whose rule is known from their coins found along the Western coast of India and Malwas. Bhumaka, was succeeded by Nahapāna. Very few coins of his are found from Gujarat proper, but none of them are dated. On the strength of the
inscriptions the Kṣaharata rule over Gujarat is fixed as the first quarter of the second century A.D. (Keilhorn, 1905:78). The Kṣaharatas were exterminated by Sātakarni Gotamiputra and Gujarat once again passed over into the hands of the Āndras. This political change is very clear from the Nasik inscription of Vasisthiputra Pulumāvi which used the epithet destroyer of the family of Kṣaharatas for Gautamiputra Sātakarni (Keilhorn, 1905:60). The Āndhra coins found from Karvan, Broach, Anand, Siddhapur, etc. are the eloquent testimony to this fact.

The Āndras were soon overthrown by another branch of the Kṣatrapa dynasty, known as Western Kṣatrapas or Kardamakas (Majumdar, 1960:63). This dynasty ruled over Gujarat for nearly two hundred years. This was a period of much prosperity and stability in Gujarat according to the information gathered from the distribution of their coins and inscriptions. The power of this dynasty reached its zenith under the rule of Rudradāman I. During his rule the power of the Kṣatrapas extended over all parts of Gujarat, Central India, Rajputana and Northern Konkan (Sircar, 1942:117). The Girnar inscription of Rudradāman I mentions his victory over Sātakarni, the ruler of Deccan. He was a Mahākṣatrapa. His capital was at Ujjain and the Western part of his kingdom was ruled by his Governor Suvisākha. The adoption of the title Kṣatrapa by the later kings shows the loss of power of Kṣatrapa rule in Western India. They ruled from 226 Šaka era (304 A.D.) and continued probably till 390 A.D. when Western India was annexed by the Guptas.
The Gupta sway over Gujarat is attested by inscriptive as well as numismatic evidences. In the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta (C. 330 - 370 A.D.), it is mentioned that the Western Kṣatrapas were paying homage to the Gupta emperor Samudragupta (Fleet, 1970:155). Chandragupta II planned his campaign against Malwa, Gujarat and Saurashtra and conquered by defeating Kṣatrapa king Rudrasinha III of Ujjain, is attested by the Udaigiri and Sanchi inscription (Fleet, 1970:31) and is also seen in his rare silver coins which are directly imitated from those of the Western Kṣatrapa (Rapson, 1935). Kumāragupta’s rule was marked by the silver coins found in hoard at Amreli (Shastri, 1936:37-38) and at Anand (Majmudar, 1965:137). His number of coins found from Saurashtra and Gujarat bear eloquent testimony to his long and firmly established regime (415 - 455 A.D.) supported by a well organized system of administration. Inscriptions of Skandagupta are also found in this region. He defeated the Huṇas with the help of Yaśovarman of Malwa. These evidences definitely prove that the Gupta rulers ousted the existing rulers and appointed their own viceroys, a native at the ancient capital of this province at Girinagar. The Gupta empire was invaded by Huṇas and the Gupta rule disintegrated.

Around the close of the fifth century A.D., a Huṇa chief Toramāṇa, advancing from Punjab, conquered a large part of Western India and Eran (Sagar district. M.P.). the Sanjeli copper plates, Eran Boar inscription of Toramāṇa and the Gwalior stone inscription of Mihirakula give us facts about the Huṇa reign in India. The Sanjeli plates show that the extent of the Toramāṇa’s empire included western Malwa and the adjoining border land
of Gujarat. One of these plates, dated 3rd regnal year of Toramāna, refers to the Mahārāja Bhuta, who was governing the Śivabhāgapura Viśaya, as a feudatory of Toramāna. Mihirakula succeeded his father in 515 A.D. and remained in power at least for 15 years till 530 A.D. He was defeated by Yaśodharaman (Mehta, 1978).

A small but independent dynasty of the Traikūṭakas furnishes the history of southern Gujarat and Konkan in the fifth century A.D. The earliest known Traikūṭaka king was Indradutta. The mention of Trikuṭa in the description of Raghu's 'Digvijaya' suggests that Kālidāsa, who flourished during the reign of Chandragupta II knew of a Traikūṭaka kingdom of Western Coast. Indradutta ruled over Lāta in the year 456 - 457 A.D. He was followed by his son Dahrasena. Dahrasena is known from his coins found in Daman. Dahrasena was followed by Vyāghrasena who ruled in Lāta and Konkan (Mirashi, 1951). But by about 500 A.D. the Traikūṭakas (boasted by the Kanheri plates) were crushed by the Vākātaka king Hariṣena mentioned in Ajantā inscription.

In the middle of fifth century A.D. the Vākātakas and petty rulers, the Ābhīras came up in the southern part of Western India. The inscription and the Brahmanical literature, the Pūranas give ample evidence of their rule. They ruled in Viḍarbha (Berar). The Vākātaka records are usually dated in the regnal year of the kings. So long their dates were determined by synchronising the reign of Vākātakas with Guptas, based on the known fact that Rudrasena II, fourth in descendant from Vidhyashakti, married Prabhāvatī-Guptā daughter of Chandragupta II.
The Vakataka suzerainty over Nata may have lasted the whole reign of Harišena till 520 A.D. A new vassal king probably the Kalacūri king Krishnaraja, was ruling between Narmadā and Tāpi around 540 A.D. From the records of his son Sankaragana (Keilhorn, 1905:296), and his grandson Buddhanga (Keilhorn, 1905:294), his territory extended upto Nasik district. From the epigraphical records, it appears that they could have been acted as the feudatories of the Traikātakas. They were followed by the Gurjaras and the Chaullukya.

In 630 A.D., around Broach, a branch and feudatories of the Gurjara-Pratiḥāra dynasty of Jodhpur under Daddā II established their rule in Lata country (Mirashi, 1951). From his epigraphical records found at (Kaira, Sankheda and Sangama), one come to know that he accepted the suzerainty of Pulakesin II and styled as Sāmantā. He shifted his capital to Bharuch. The last king Daddā III ruled till 680 A.D. Southern Lata perhaps was a Chaullukya province. Evidence of their rule was established by Sendraka chief who seems to be a Chaulakyan feudatory. (Keilhorn, 1905:265). His decendants must have been ruling as independent kings.

The political power of Western India shifted to Vallabhī under the Maitrakas (470 A.D. - 788 A.D.), whose rule is evidenced by 80 copper plates. During the rule of Bhuddagupta in 500 A.D., he appointed Bhattaraka as the Governor of this province. With the death of Bhuddagupta, Dronasimha a son of Bhattaraka claimed himself Maharaja in his official records. His brother Mahāsāmanta Mahārāja Dhruvasena I (A.D. 526 - 546)
succeeded him. He was followed by Mahārāja Guhasena (560 - 568 A.D.) The kings followed could have been feudatories upto Dhruvasena II (641 A.D.). He was followed by Dhruvasena III and Silāditya V. Besides these, epigraphical and numismatic evidences also proved the Maitraka stronghold over Gujarat. They issued silver and copper coins (Virji, 1951).

Thus the Maitraka kings of Vallabhi ruled over Saurashtra and some parts of the mainland of Gujarat. In the east their authority extended upto Western Malwa when they were at the peak of their power. After Silāditya V, Siladitya VI came to power but the glory of the Maitrakas was foiling fast (Virji, 1951). The Gurjara Pratihāras had already wrested Malwa. Moreover, the constant Arab raid (760 A.D. and 776 A.D.) shattered the imperial power of Maitrakas.

Along with the powerful rulers, petty chiefs and feudatories were ruling in Western India. The rules and regulation made in every field were almost same among different dynasties and moreover were followed by the feudatories and other chiefs.

Thus the geographical factors helps in exerting a decisive influence in flashing the destiny of a country. It governs the geo-economic and geopolitical factors. It determines the course of history and culture. On the other hand, the political knowledge of an area helps in knowing the economic aspects of a region. In turn, the trade mechanism backed by the powerful rulers brought about prosperity of the region. For proper usage of trading products, the geographical factors helped in enhancing the commercial activity of an area.