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## TRADE AND COMMERCE FROM MAURYAN TO KUSHANA PERIOD

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**Abstract:-**The jatakas constantly refer to the standard number of eighteen important handicrafts and industries. The jatakas mention numerous metals, including brass and bronze together with manufacture of ornaments from preceious metals and of domestic and agricultural implements from baser metals. Kautilya gives many details of metallurgical interest and refers to the manufacture of copper, led, tin, bronze, brass, iron, and other wares.

**Keywords:**Kushana Period , industries , domestic and agricultural implements .

### TRADE AND SOCIETY

Guidance of their business conduct known as samaya and srenidharma. The indo-greek king menandar patronized trade emporiums of sagala (sakala) where traders from different places assembled. In the territory of shakas there were trade centres of kapisa, taxila, puskalavati and Mathura. Kushana traders established trade relations with china, Rome, sindhu, sauvira, kapisa, gandhara, pushkalavati etc. Trade centres of vidisha, ujjaini, bharukachchha, surparaka, prabhasa, dasapura and nasika were under the occupation of western kshatrapas.

### STATE AND TRADE

Kautilya enjoins the king to prevent obstruction on trade routes by his favourites (vallabhas), officers, and frontier guards (antapalas) as well as from thieves and animal herds. Dealers in scents, garlands, grains and liquids, and expert artisans had their habitations to the east of the royal palace along with the members of the Kshatriya caste. Dealers in cooked food, liquor, and flesh lived on the southern side along with vaishyas, prostitutes, and musicians. The western side was allotted to the shudras, the makers of woolen and cotton goods and armourers. Workers in base metals and precious stones lived on the north along with Brahmins. Strict control of artisans and traders, to which is devoted a good part of the section on kantakasodhana. According to Strabo, if a person caused the loss of hand or an eye to a craftman, he was put to death.

### TRADE ROUTES

Mesopotamian and Indian traders exported to Ur various Indian commodities like gold, silver, copper, lapislazuli, stone, beads, ivory, combs, ornaments etc. Lothal, where a dockyard has been discovered, was the main mart for export of copper and ivory to Ur, Kish, Lagsh, Tell-asmar, Susa, diyala, etc. Route between India and Bactria through the pass of Khyber and the valley of Kabul became the main route between India and western Asia. A number of PGW sites, such as, indraprastha, hastinapur, ahichchatra, kampilya etc. Uttarapatha or the great northern route, which went from taxila to Mathura and connected several important commercial centres. There were many subsidiary routes to this great route, such as, from Varanasi to Mathura, Varanasi to vaisali, saket to sravasti, kapilavastu to rajagriha, vaisali to rajagriha via pataliputra, champa to tamraparni, etc.

The great northern route was the main commercial route during the rule of the mauruyas.

- Megasthenes has described this route in eight stages.
- The Greeks described this route as 'Royal Road'.

- The route between the north and the south lay through avanti across the vindhyas.
- It has been called the dakshinapatha marga, which connected mahismati with amaravati.

The southern route was divided into different segments, such as pratisthana to nasik, bharukachchha to sopara (surparaka) and kalayan, muziris to kaveripattanam or puhar, etc.

An anonymous Alexandrian sailor, the periplus (the full title of the book periplus maris erythrae {or periplus of the erythrean sea}). It was written around 60 AD. 'periplus' means a sailing chart and a traveller's hand book and 'erythrean sea' is the red sea), the middle stream of the Indus at the mouth was navigable and on this stream there existed a commercial emporium named barbaricum, which was the port of the town known as minnagara. Bharukachchha or barygaza of the greek accounts was one of the most important emporiums of India, particularly of western India. The next port below bharukachchha was surparaka (sopara), which was a seaport of a market town named kalyan.

Muziris on the Malabar Coast, kaveripattanam or puhar and arikamedu on the tamil coast were three most important emporiums of roman trade. In the time of Ptolemy, there was one more port on the tamil coast named as nikam or negapattam which was very famous for its trade. Masalia of the periplus or modern masulipatanam was a very famous commercial centre in Andhra. Gang of the periplus, which was another name of the town of tamralipati, was a great terminal port on the eastern coast in Bengal.

From there the ships took off for their destinations in suvarnabhumi and Sri Lanka.

### ARTERIAL ROADS AND TRADE ROUTES

Kautilya mentions different types of roads and pathways such as the king's highway, the merchant's road, ruler roads, paths to fields, forests, and so on, and prescribes their respective width and the arrangements for their proper maintenance.

Megasthenese was stuck by the royal road leading from the Indus to pataliputra which was continued from there to the mouth of the ganga, and pliny has noted its different stages, with the distances in roman miles, in a difficult and much discussed passage.

The sutlej near its junction with the beas, the yamuna near the present bureah, the ganga somewhere near hastinapur, dabhai about twelve miles south of anupshahr, kanauj or some smaller place in its vicinity, and prayaga at the confluence of the ganga and the yamuna, formed, according to Mc crindle, the principal stages in the road to the capital.

A road from sravasti to rajagriha is mentioned in the jatakas, and up to kusinara this must have passed along the foot of the Himalayas where the rivers were more easily crossed; from kusinara to rajagriha there were 12 halts including one at vaisali, with a single crossing of the ganga at patna, as we learn from the itinerary of the Buddha recorded in the digha nikaya.

Anther route from sravasti to the 'borders' is mentioned in the jatakas. This, taken along with Panini's reference to a north-west route (uttarapatha) may mean that there was another road from sravasti to the north-west across the land of the five rivers, linking it up with the great highways of central and western Asia.

Another road led from sravasti to the south-west by way of kausambi, vidisa and pratisthana on the Godavari. There was also a road to Sind, the home of horses and asses, and sauvira with its capital at roruva or roruka seaports like tamralipti in the east, bharukachchha and surparaka (sopara) in the west, were connected with the main trade routes. Bridges were not known, but only fords and ferries. Kautilya prefers land routes as they were less risky and open to all use in all weather. The jatakas have preserved the memory of daring sea-voyages to baveru (Babylon) in the west and suvarnabhumi, perhaps a generic name for burma and Malaysia, in the east. The jatakas also mentions 'shore-sighting birds' which were used in locating the nearest land when the ship's position became doubtful. India maintained connection with Egypt by the red sea route and with the Seleucid empire by the Persian gulf. Strabo has preserved an interesting reminiscence of the Indian share in the western trade.

In the region of Ptolemy eurgetes II (145—116 BC), an Indian who was stranded on the shore of the arabian gulf (red sea) was brought to Alexandria. Ptolemy sent two expeditions under eudoxus of cyzicus, both of which made successful voyages to India and returned laden with goods. India was connected with the west on land by three roads. The northernmost was along with the Kabul river across the narrow section of the mountains of afghanistan where only the hindukush separates the basins of the oxus and the Indus. The second lay about five hundred miles to the south-west where the afghan mountain end and open up with an easy way across 400 miles of plateau from kandahar to heart, and another way from the south-east of kandahar . through the bolan pass into the lower Indus valley.

A third route led across the deserts of makran or along the coast of baluchistan.

Kautilya mentions kauseya (silk) from the chinabhumi, which seems to mean not china but the land of the shin tribe of gilgit and its neighbourhood. He also describes wollen blankets from Nepal called bhangisi and apasaraka, made of eight pieces, black in colour and rain-proof (varsha-varanam). In order to facilitate bacrian trade with India, Antiochus I at the time of his joint rule with seleucus (285-280 BC) made a special issue of coins of the Indian instead of the attic standard.

## TRADE HAZARDS

Trade routes were to be looked after and protected by samaharta. Megasthenes refers to some officers who constructed roads, and at every ten stadia set up a pillar to show the by-roads and distances. Superintendent of ships – navadhyaksa. Currency and medium of exchange Niska and hiranyapinda, perhaps, were two types of metallic medium of exchange prevalent in vedic India. Rigvedic niskas and hiranyapindas, in this period, stood as a link between the money and currency stages of the development of the economy. The later vedic samhitas and the brahmanas refer to satamana and pada as the two other denominations of metallic medium of exchange.

Under the rule of nandas, standard weight of their coinage was determined and later, the mauryan govt established its control over the system of currency. The silver and the copper karsapana or silver punch-marked coins were standard currency during the mauryan period. The descendents of asoka had to issue copper punch-marked coins, but the silver punch-marked coins continued to remain in circulation. Foreign rulers like the indo-greeks, the indo-scythians and the indo-parthians issued silver and copper coins bearing common legends, to fill the gap in the monetary system.

The satavahanas issued their copper coins with the ujjain symbol bearing a ship. The standard coinage of satavahanas, predominantly of lead, was of great economic significance because in the absence of silver in the south, lead was the only alternative with which the satavahanas maintained the monetary balance between the two currency systems – of copper in the north and of silver in the west.

The kushanas were the first Indian rulers to issue gold coins, on the roman pattern. Organization of trade, commerce and craftsmen in ancient India. Sreni was a general term for guilds including merchantile corporations. The specific term for traders' corporation was perhaps nigama. Puga represented interests of different traders, crafts, and professions of a locality. The sathra type guilds were mobile corporations for the transit (caravan) trade. Such a company of traders was led by a leader called the sarthavaha. Greek evidence and the jatakas show that occupations were generally hereditary, and the jatakas mention 'the eighteen guilds', several instances of industries localized in particular towns and villages, of separate crafts each having a pramukha (president) or jettha (elderman) presiding over it. Sarthavahas – caravan leaders. Of the sanghas described by kautilya headed by mukhyas, some adopted vartta (agriculture, cattle-rearing, and trade) as their profession.

## CONSTITUTION OF GUILDS

The srenis headed by high executive officers (adhyakshas or mukhyas) who are assisted by committees of two, three, or five persons called advisers for the public good (samukahitavadins) or for public business (karya-chintana). A2 brihaspati, the adhyakshas are permitted to punish wrongdoers by reprimand.

## CONVENTIONS OR COMPACTS OF GUILDS

- Narada and brihaspati give various examples of conventions or compacts made by the groups.
- Katyayana calls such compacts by the title of sthitipatras which he defines as a deed of convention made by the srenis and other bodies for preserving their usages intact.
- The corresponding tilte in brihaspati is samvitpatras.
- Rights and duties of individual members
- The evidence of the late smriti law of guilds is corroborated in part by certain type of clay-seals, which have been recovered from the excavations of gupta sites at basarh (ancient vaisali) and bhita (near Allahabad).
- These seals bear the legend nigama in gupta characters (bhita) and more particularly the legends sreni-kulika-nigama and sreni-sarthavaha-kulika-nigama (basarh).
- Documents – sthitipatras or samvitpatras.
- The indore copper plate ins of the emperor skandagupta records the endowment (perpetual gift) of a sum of money by a Brahmin donar to the local guild of oilmen for the purpose of provision of a fixed quantity of oil for a sun-temple.

Industries and trade

## TEXTILES

The list comprises stuffs of cotton, linen (kshauma), dukula (made from the fibres of that plant), silk (from the cocoons of silkworms), patroma (washed silk) sheep's wool and the hair of other animals, as well as clothes embroidered with patterns or with gold thread. We even hear of cloth woven wholly of gold thread.

In kautilya's time vanga (east Bengal) was famous for its fabrics of dukula, linen, and cotton; pundra (north Bengal) for dukula and patroma; banaras for linen and cotton; and magadha for patroma; while madhura (the capital of pandya kingdom), aparanta (konkan), kalinga, vatsa (the territory around kausambi), and mahisha were other renowned centres of the cotton industry.

Kautilya likewise mentions two varieties of rain-proof wollens as products of Nepal, while the jatakas refer to the wool of kotumbara in the Punjab. References in the Mahabharata, the milindapanho, the divyavadana and other works prove that the lower ganga basin, varanasi, kotumbara, and aparanta, as also the tamil kingdom in the far south, were still famous for

the production of textiles of different kinds. Muslins of the finest sort (of vanga and pundra?) were called gangetic. Muslins in large quantities were produced in the region of masalia (kalinga?).

Argaru (uraiyur, the old chola capital) gave its name to a local variety of muslin. Muslins, coarse dyed cloth ('molochine' or 'mallow cloth') and much ordinary cloth (for stuffing) were carried to the great marts of ujjaini (from vatsa) and tagara (from mahisa) for export abroad. Ariaca produced great quantities of cotton cloth out of its coarse variety of raw cotton, also for foreign export.

## MINING AND METALLURGY

Pliny observed that India had neither brass nor lead, but exchanged precious stones and pearls for them. Copper, tin and lead had to be imported into barygaza and the Malabar ports in the latter half of the first century AD.

According to the testimony of the periplus, the manufacture of Indian iron and steel was so advanced in quality and quantity that they were exported from ariaca (Kathiawar and the adjoining inland country) to east Africa. Gold bullion was exported, according to the periplus, from the Persian gulf by way of eastern Arabia to western India. Tounge-scraper, as we learn from the medical work of charaka, were made of gold, silver, lead, copper, and bronze or bell-metal; surgical instruments, says susruta, should be of damasked steel (saikyayasa). The acharanga sutra mentions bowls made of iron, tin, lead, and brass.

## GEMS AND JEWELLERY:

In the first century AD according to the author of the periplus, pearl-fisheries were operated off 'colchi' (korakai on the tamraparni river in the pandya kingdom) and off the 'coast country' (i.e. cholamandalam), which correspond respectively to the gulf of mannar and the palk strait.

Another site of pearl-fisheries mentioned in the periplus lay in the lower ganga. A third pearl-fishery is located by pliny at perimula (semylla, modern chaul on the west coast). Pliny also gives a long list of Indian precious stones and calls India the great producer of the most costly gems. Beryls, says pliny, were rarely found outside India, while Ptolemy in the following century specifically mentions pounnata, an inland city in the south, as their source.

Diamonds, according to Ptolemy, were obtained from the town of kosa, from the territory of the sabarai and from the mouth of the river adamas. As the periplus, agate and carnelian were worked from the rocks of the deccan trap for export to the west. Ptolemy records that mount sardonix (i.e., the satpura range) was the place where the precious stone of that name was found. The science of testing gems is recognized in a divyavadana story as part of the regular training of merchants' sons, and included by vatsyayana in a list of sixty-four fine arts (angavidyas).

## Wood-crafts

### Kautilya mentions five kinds,

1. chandana,
2. agaru,
3. tailaparnika,
4. bhadrasri and
5. Kaleyaka.

## Sharp-edged razor-like (kshura-kalpah) weapons.

### Animal products

At the time of the periplus, dasarna (eastern malwa) gave its name to a species of ivory well known to the greek traders of the west coast. The ivory-workers of vidisha, the capital of east malwa, recorded their donation on a gateway of the greek stupa at sanchi.

## Interest, profits and wages

Manu, while repeating the legal rate of  $1\frac{1}{4}\%$  per month allowed by gautama and vashishtha, alternatively sanctions 2% in general or 2,3,4 and 5 per cent, for Brahmin, kshatirya, vaishya and sudra debtors respectively. Yajnavalkya repeats manu's schedule of rates and reconciles their patent inconsistency by confining by 11% rate to loans secured by pledges. The maxima are declared to be five times the principal amount in case of grain, fruit, wool, and beasts of burden (manu), or twice, thrice, four and eight times of gold, grains, clothes and fluids respectively (yajnavalkya). We learn from the ins of the saka ushavadata that two weavers' guilds at govardhana (nasik) stipulated to pay interest at only 1%, and  $\frac{3}{4}\%$  per month (i.e. 12% and 9% per annum).



## Foreign trade

A2 pliny, India in those early centuries was annually draining the roman empire of its gold valued at 50 million sesterces and had established a favourable balance of trade in the foreign markets. The chief articles of export from India were spices, perfumes, medicinal herbs, pigments, pearls, precious stones (like diamond, sapphire, turquoise, and lapis-lazuli), iron, steel, copper, sandalwood, animal skins, cotton cloth, silk yarn, muslin, indigo, ivory, porcelain and tortoise-shells. The principles of imports were cloth, linen, perfumes, medicinal herbs, glass vessels, silver, gold, tin, lead, pigments, precious stones, and coral.

## II. TRADE AND COMMERCE FROM THE KUSHANA TO THE PRE-GUPTA PERIOD (AD 50-250)

India imported from the west limited quantities of copper, tin, lead, glass, antimony, linen, coral, and wine. The discovery of vases near arikamedu virapattanam, near pondicherry, proves that it was (from about AD 30) a prosperous settlement. Myos Hormos (on the red sea) was also a centre for Indian trade. It was visited by Strabo (the roman historian) in the first century AD, who found that 120 ships sailed for India. The periplus also mentions at least 20 Indian ports and their exports.

Some of the important ports were barbaricum (a greek form of the Indian name, possibly bahardipur), barygaza (broach), suppara (sopara), kalliena (kalyana), mandagora (possibly bankot naura), muziris and barake (the famous pepper ports). It also gives some information about the trade in muslins at pondicherry and soptama (madras) and masalia (masulipattanam), the ivories of pukar (in orissa), and fine textiles from varanasi, and the malabathrum, brought down from the jungles for export from tamralipti (tamluk) at the mouth of the ganga. Indians had also settled down in the island of socotra for purposes of trade.

Pepper continued to be a very valuable export commodity even in the 13th century as marco polo, the Italian traveller (who spent two years in south India), mentions that the size of a ship was measured by the number of baskets of pepper it could carry – sometimes as many as five to six thousand. Sometime in the first century AD., the west asian cities of palmyra and petra became the chief emporia of Indian trade to which goods were brought by sea and then taken overland.

The medieval javan accounts state that 20,000 indian families arrived in java from kalinga in the second century AD., among other kings, to promote trade and industry. Pepper was still in such demand in the west that when Alaric (the goth) besieged rome in AD 410, he demanded, among other things, about 1,500 kgs of Indian pepper for saving the city from destruction. Suvarnabhumi (suvarnadvipa); kambuja (Kampuchea); and champa (Annam).

## III. TRADE AND COMMERCE IN THE GUPTA PERIOD

The most noteworthy change in foreign trade was the decline of the roman trade, and also decline of three important southern ports of Muziris, arikamedu, and kaveripattanam.

### Nature of trade

The sarthvaha or caravan-trader was an imp figure in the city life. The volume of external trade of India with china greatly increased during the gupta period. Chinese silk, which was known as chinasunka, had a good market in India. Two most important items of export from India to the Byzantine empire were silk and spices. Trade in silk was so imp that in the Byzantine empire, in order to regulate silk prices all over the country, Justinian (AD 527-65) enacted the law that one pound of silk should not cost more than eight pieces of gold. The cosmas' indicplecustes of the middle of the sixth century informs us that the ports of the east and west coast of India were linked together through sri lanka.

Ivory was exported from Ethiopia to India. horses were imported from north-west India as well as from Arabia, Persia, and Afghanistan.

### Commodity structure of trade

Fu-nan (the predecessor kingdom of Cambodia) Rudravarman, the king of fu-nan, sent a mission to the Chinese emperor in AD 519 with the present of a Buddha image made of Indian sandalwood. From the amarakosa we learnt that mashaparni, a medicinal plant, was acquired from kamboja, beyond gandhara, in extreme north-west, while silhaka (a kind of incense) as well as asafoetida was supplied by turuska, bahluka, and ramatha (islands of western asia). Pearls, from the junction of the tamraparni river with the sea, formed the most precious product of the pandya country in the time of kalidasa, while heuntsang knew the same land (under the name of malakuta) as a depot for sea-pearls. Corals were obtained from the sea, separating India from sri lanka, in kalidasa's time according to an allusion in the raghuvamsam.

Cosmas not only mentions silk as product of china but also includes it in the list of articles sent through Indonesia and the east Indian coast to sri lanka for export to the west. Ivory was exported from Ethiopia to India in the time of cosmas, who adds that ehiopian elephants were numerous and had larger husks than the Indian elephants.

An additional article of trade was musk which, according to cosmas, was procured at sindh for export. Copper was obtained from mlechchha countries, according to the amarakosa. Sapphire was imported into India from sri lanka, while emerald

was imported by the Ethiopians who secured it from the blemmyes (naives of nubia).

“Indian iron not liable to corrosion” is among justinian’s list of imported articles above quoted. Diamonds are included in the list of exports from India to the roman orient, fu-nan and kiao-chi in the passage of the annals of the t’ang dynasty cited above.

As regards textiles, cosmas tells us that cloth for making dresses was exported from kalyana. A variety of fabrics called po-tie (‘cotton brocade’ or ‘cotton stuffs’) is mentioned in the authoritative chinese works as an Indian product which was exported to china from ho-lo-tan or java.

### Inland trade

A number of the most important trading stations of India are mentioned by cosmas writing in the early part of the sixth century. The list comprises sindhu, orrhotha, calliana, sibor, and no less than five parts of male (Malabar) on the west coast, as well as marallo and caver along this coast. Among other ports, flourishing during this period, may be mentioned tamralipti at the head of the ganga delta. Journeys of merchants from distant ayodhya to tamralipti are recorded in the eighth century ins of udayamana. In odra country there was, according to hiuen-tsang, a famous seaport called charitra, while kongoda (modern ganjam dist), according to the same authority, grew very rich because of its maritime trade. That the people of the ganga delta had the overwhelming share in the trade from tamralipti is proved by reminiscences of their maritime activities in the raghuvasam and the dasakumaracharita.

### Currency

The earliest gupta coins apparently are the kushana prototypes; but the later gupta coins of the later part of the reign of skandagupta are silver, heavier than those of the early kings. The percentage of gold in these coins also declined. Chandragupta II was the first gupta king who minted silver coins after defeating the saka satraps of ujjain. His successor kumaragupta II continued the minting of silver coins. In addition to the gold and silver coins, copper coins were also minted in the gupta period. Money-lending

In the gupta period, wealth acquired by money-lending was termed as ‘spotted’ or ‘black’. There were different rates of interests which varied from caste to caste. In the contemporary legal sources six kinds of interests are mentioned.

## IV. IMPORTANT PORTS AND COMMERCIAL TOWNS OF EARLY ANCIENT INDIA

**Arikamedu:** important centre of trade and commerce with the western world and an indo-roman coastal trading station, during the early centuries of the Christian era. After the second century AD it ceased to be an active commercial centre. Numerous Italian, greek pottery pieces and roman coins have been found from here.

**Barbaricum:** located at the middle mouth of the Indus, barbaricum has been mentioned by numerous foreign sources and was a great port and a market town. Barbaricum imported a great deal of fine clothing, linen, precious stones, silver, gold plates, and wine from different parts of the world. It exported various commodities, particularly cotton cloth, silk yarn, and indigo, produced in different parts of India.

**Bharukachchha or broach:** located on the banks of river narmada, most famous port and commercial centre of Gujarat. Champa: situated in bhagalpur dist of bihar. Champa was capital of ancient anga in the sixth century BC. It is also a place of pilgrimage for the Buddhists and the jains alike. In the sixth century BC champa was one of the six great cities of northern India.

**Chaul:** situated on the Arabian coast, about 48 km from Bombay in thane dist of MH. Chaul was very ancient port which has been mentioned by Ptolemy by about 150 AD and the arab accounts of the tenth or twelfth centuries; but the port of chaul came into prominence in the medieval period. Kaveripattanam or puhar: situated on the estuary of the river kaveri in siyali taluka of TN, kaveripattanam is also known as kaveripattinam and kaveripumpattinam. It was the capital of the early chola kings of the sangam age, which has been described in numerous sangam works and also by Ptolemy and the periplus. Kausambi: situated on the northern bank of yamuna about 48 km to the south-west of Allahabad in U.P., kausambi was the capital of vatsa kingdom in the sixth century BC when Udayan was its ruler.

The nanda merged the kingdom of vatsa with the magadhan empire.

**Madurai:** situated on the banks of river vaigai in TN, it was one of the greatest commercial centres of peninsular India, which has been mentioned by Ptolemy as Modoura. During the period of early pandyas, it was their capital and also the famous centre of the poets of the sangam age. In the classical accounts it has been described as “the Mediterranean emporium in the south”. To promote the trade with the roman world, the pandyan king sent an embassy to the roman king Caesar augustus. The roman coins found here point to the close commercial links between madurai and the roman world.

**Mouziris or Muziris:** we find frequent references of this port in the periplus, Ptolemy and other greek accounts. Most of the scholars have identified it with moyirikotta on the Malabar coast opposite the site at cranganore near alwaye in kerala. Some scholars have identified mouziris with cranganore. In the second century AD, it was the greatest port on the Malabar coast, and at this port the roman and the arab ships exchanged their commodities for Indian goods. It exported great quantities of spices, precious stones, and peepal leaves, to the eastern and western world alike.



**Negapatam:** situated in tanjavur dist of TN, negapatam was a very ancient port on the coromandel coast, and of all the ports on the coromandel coast, negapatam has the longest history. From Ptolemy's references, it appears that it was one of the centres of Roman trade.

**Pratishthana or paithan:** situated on the northern bank of the Godavari in Aurangabad dist of MH, it was a flourishing centre of trade and commerce during the Satavahana period, which has been corroborated by the author of the Periplus. It lay on the main trade route from the north to the south and was particularly famous for its textiles.

**Suparaka or Sopara:** situated about 60 km north of Bombay in MH, Suparaka was a very famous ancient port. Ptolemy, Megasthenes, Strabo, and other early Greek writers, the early Buddhist texts, the Mahabharata etc describe it as a great seacoast emporium. At least from the fourth century BC to the tenth century AD, it was an important centre of trade and commerce. Suparaka was also the great centre of Buddhism.

**Tamralipti:** identified with Tamaluk in the Midnapur dist of West Bengal, Tamralipti was a very ancient port. It was famous as a maritime port and an emporium of commerce from the fourth century BC to the twelfth century AD. At the close of the twelfth century, this port declined and its place was taken by Satgaon.

**Vidisha, Bhilsa or Besanagar:** situated on the western bank of the river Betwa in Vidisha dist of MP, Vidisha or Besanagar finds frequent mention in ancient India literature and foreign accounts. Its economic prosperity was due to its advantageous location on the cross-roads of two important trade routes – one of which ran from Pratishthan to Mahismati, Ujjain and Kosambi, while the other connected Bharukachchha and Suparaka on the Arabian Sea to Mathura via Ujjain. Vidisha is one of the richest cities of ancient India. Kalidasa in his Meghadoot refers to Vidisha as a place where everybody gets wealth to his heart's content.

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