

# **INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ANCIENT INDIA**

## **Introduction:**

International trade is referred to as the exchange or trade of goods and services between different nations. This kind of trade contributes and increases the world economy. The most commonly traded commodities are consumer goods, capital goods, raw materials, food, machinery etc.

International trade allows countries to expand their markets and access goods and services that otherwise may not have been available domestically. As a result of international trade, the market is more competitive. This ultimately results in more competitive pricing and brings a cheaper product home to the consumer. (Heakal, 2022)

International trade has increased exceptionally and includes services such as foreign transportation, travel and tourism, banking, warehousing, communication, advertising, and distribution and advertising.

The aim of international trade is to increase production and to raise the standard of living of the people. International trade helps citizens of one nation to consume and enjoy the possession of goods produced in some other nation. (Agarwal R C. n.d.)

No country can live in isolation and claim to be self-sufficient. Even countries with different ideologies, culture, and political, social and economic structure have trade relations with each other.

International trade not only results in increased efficiency but also allows countries to participate in a global economy, encouraging the opportunity for foreign direct investment (FDI). In theory, economies can thus grow more efficiently and become competitive economic participants more easily. For the receiving government, FDI is a means by which foreign currency and expertise can enter the country. It raises employment levels and theoretically, leads to a growth in the gross domestic product (GDP). For the investor, FDI offers company expansion and growth, which means higher revenues.

The importance of international trade was recognized early on by several political economists, trade and commerce in the development of a nation is second to none. (Heakal, 2022)

Thus, this paper is divided into three parts:

- Part I: International Trade in Ancient India (Akhand Bharath)
- Part II: Ancient Indian Trade Routes
- Part III: Trading in India under different Timeline

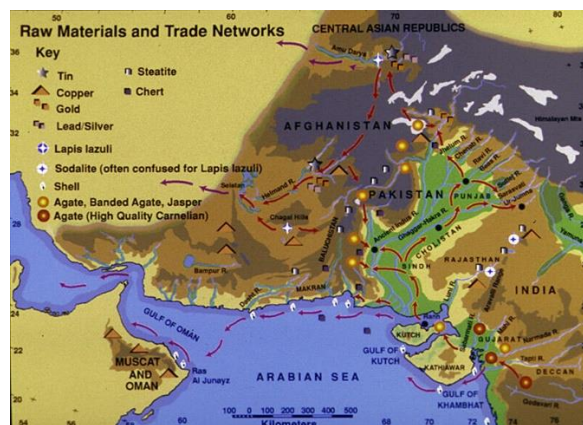
## Part I

### International Trade in Ancient India (Akhand Bharath)

The Indian subcontinent was recognized as a commercial zone of vital importance in the ancient times as revealed through the evidence of early Indian trade since nearly three and a half millennium years ago. Trade and crafts were the developments of surplus agricultural production which was noticed in India for the first time with the rise of urban centres in the Indus Valley Civilization (2600-1900 BCE). (PBS. n.d.).

From the earliest times, Indian trade flourished in all forms, be it limited internal (domestic) or long-distance external trade and be it through land or water. The Harappans have been well recognized as accomplished sea-farers as evidenced by depiction of boats on seals, tablets or amulets. (National Portal of India, n.d., para. 2)

India was the leading business center of the world and commercial towns like Harappa and Mohenjodaro were established for business. In ancient times, India had built strong business relations with other countries like Mesopotamia and trade took place between the two nations involving gold, silver, terracotta pots, precious stones, pearls, etc. Goods manufactured in India were known for their excellence as the goods produced in India were unique and were not available in any other part of the world.



Source: <https://www.harappa.com/indus2/139.html>

This map shows raw material distributions in the Indus Valley and adjacent regions. The extensive trade networks of the Harappan Period (2600-1900 BCE) linked distant resource areas to the major cities in the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra river valleys. Goods were shipped by boat along the rivers or by oxcart overland. The use of seals and sealings appears to have been integral to the development of trade networks. Seal impressions probably identified the owner(s) of goods, and perhaps the contents of the terra cotta vessels they were shipped in. Impressed clay was also used to seal rope or cloth that bound bales of goods. (Raw material and Trade networks. n.d.)

There is evidence that Maritime trade continued on a major scale in the Vedic (1500-800 BCE), Mauryan (c. 324-187 BCE), Kushana (circa 30 CE-circa 375) and Gupta periods (3rd century CE-543 CE) and also in the subsequent periods of south Indian dynasties like Pallavas, Chalukyas and Cholas. "May our ship embark to all quarters of the earth" is mentioned as the motto of Rig Vedic seafarers.

Similarly, Buddhist literature including Jataka stories, show evidences of sea voyages, shipwrecks and missionaries going overseas. There were feeder land routes for bringing goods from the point of their production to the points of export i.e. sea ports and vice versa. The feeder land routes acted as supporting collection as well as distribution channels during trade. (National Portal of India, n.d., para. 4 and 5)

Main goods traded initially were gold, spices, precious metals and the most traded goods, however, were textiles and also leading exporter of silk, cotton, sugar, etc. All these items were exported in exchange for gold and silver from other nations.

With respect to Indian Subcontinent there were many prominent routes - including the famous Silk Route- starting from China passing through Asia and reaching Europe; Spice route- from east to western parts of the world; and the Internal trade route were Uttarapatha, and Dakshinapatha. These routes passed through difficult terrains, river valleys and mountain passes. The Salt Route, Incense Route, Tin Route and The Amber Road are few more examples of trade routes in Ancient India. Overtime these routes evolved to form a complex grid for the flow and exchange of ideas, technology, art, literature and culture. The internal trade routes joined the external routes, which linked the subcontinent with other areas. Initially they were used for trade of common commodities, exquisite foreign items, medicines and essentials.

Towns such as Pataliputra, Ujjain, and Puhar were major trade centres, Ujjain, Mithila, Surat, Kanchi and Pataliputra were the main leaders of trade in India.

Goods manufactured in India were known for their excellence as the goods produced in India were unique and were not available in any other part of the world. Indians were very skilled at the art of building ships along with excellent knowledge of the sea routes, winds and other aspects of navigation. This enabled them to travel distant lands to perform trade.

**Table No: 9.1, Share Of World G.D.P(%)**

|                               | 1    | 1000 | 1500 | 1600 | 1700 | 1820 | 1870 | 1913  | 1950 | 1973 | 2001 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| EU12                          |      |      | 15.5 | 17.2 | 19.1 | 20.5 | 30.5 | 30.8  | 24.1 | 22.8 | 17.5 |
| totalWestern Europe           | 10.8 | 8.7  | 17.6 | 19.8 | 21.9 | 23.0 | 33.0 | 33.0  | 26.2 | 25.6 | 20.3 |
| Eastern Europe                | 1.9  | 2.2  | 1.7  | 2.8  | 3.1  | 3.6  | 4.5  | 4.9   | 3.5  | 3.4  | 2.0  |
| USA                           |      |      | 0.3  | 0.2  | 0.1  | 1.8  | 8.8  | 18.9  | 27.3 | 22.1 | 21.4 |
| Latin America                 | 2.2  | 3.9  | 2.4  | 1.1  | 1.7  | 2.2  | 2.5  | 4.4   | 7.8  | 8.7  | 8.3  |
| Japan                         | 1.2  | 2.4  | 3.1  | 2.9  | 4.1  | 3.0  | 2.3  | 2.6   | 3.0  | 7.8  | 7.1  |
| China                         | 26.1 | 22.7 | 24.9 | 19.0 | 22.3 | 32.9 | 17.1 | 8.8   | 4.5  | 4.6  | 12.3 |
| India                         | 32.9 | 28.7 | 24.4 | 22.4 | 24.4 | 16.0 | 12.1 | 7.5   | 4.2  | 3.1  | 5.4  |
| Asia(exc .japan)              | 75.1 | 67.6 | 61.9 | 62.5 | 57.7 | 56.4 | 36.1 | 22.3  | 15.4 | 16.4 | 30.9 |
| Africa                        | 6.9  | 11.7 | 7.8  | 7.1  | 6.9  | 4.5  | 4.1  | 2.9   | 3.8  | 3.4  | 3.3  |
| Share Of World Population (%) |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |      |      |      |
| EU12                          | 7.6  | 7.4  | 11.0 | 11.3 | 11.4 | 11.0 | 12.8 | 12.7  | 10.2 | 7.7  | 5.3  |
| totalWestern Europe           | 10.7 | 9.5  | 13.1 | 13.3 | 13.5 | 12.8 | 14.7 | 14.6  | 12.1 | 9.2  | 6.4  |
| Eastern Europe                | 2.1  | 2.4  | 3.1  | 3.0  | 3.1  | 3.5  | 4.2  | 4.4   | 3.5  | 2.8  | 2.0  |
| USA                           | 0.3  | 0.5  | 0.5  | 0.3  | 0.2  | 1.0  | 3.2  | 5.4   | 6.0  | 9.4  | 4.6  |
| Latin America                 | 2.4  | 4.3  | 4.0  | 1.5  | 2.0  | 2.1  | 3.2  | 4.5   | 6.6  | 7.9  | 8.6  |
| Japan                         | 1.3  | 2.8  | 3.5  | 3.3  | 4.5  | 3.0  | 2.7  | 2.9   | 3.3  | 2.8  | 2.1  |
| China                         | 25.8 | 22.3 | 23.5 | 28.8 | 22.9 | 36.6 | 28.1 | 24.45 | 21.7 | 22.5 | 20.7 |
| India                         | 32.5 | 28.0 | 25.1 | 24.3 | 27.3 | 20.1 | 19.9 | 17.0  | 14.2 | 14.8 | 16.6 |
| Asia(exc .japan)              | 74.2 | 65.6 | 61.2 | 64.7 | 62.1 | 65.2 | 57.5 | 51.7  | 51.4 | 54.6 | 57.4 |
| Africa                        | 7.1  | 12.1 | 10.6 | 9.9  | 10.1 | 7.1  | 7.1  | 7.0   | 9.0  | 10.0 | 13.4 |

Source-Maddison,2006, p638

The above Table shows the Share of World GDP (%) from 1<sup>st</sup> Century to 21<sup>st</sup> Century

International trade has been a significant part of India's history, with a rich and diverse heritage of commerce that spanned across continents. India's ancient trade routes have played a crucial role in connecting India to other regions of the world and facilitating the exchange of goods, ideas, and technologies. These trade routes were not just about commerce, but also played a significant role in cultural and intellectual exchange where in Indian merchants acted as intermediaries between different regions of the world, spreading knowledge of Indian mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, among other fields

## **Part II**

### **Ancient Trade Routes**

India has been a hub of international trade since ancient times, with a rich and diverse history of commerce that spanned across continents. The country's strategic geographical location, with access to both the Indian Ocean and the Himalayas, made it a gateway for trade between East Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

One of the most well-known ancient Indian trade routes was the Silk Road, which linked China to the Mediterranean through Central Asia. Indian merchants played a crucial role in this trade route, acting as intermediaries between Chinese and Roman merchants. Indian goods, such as cotton, spices, and precious stones, were highly sought after in both China and Rome.

Some of the important trade routes were:

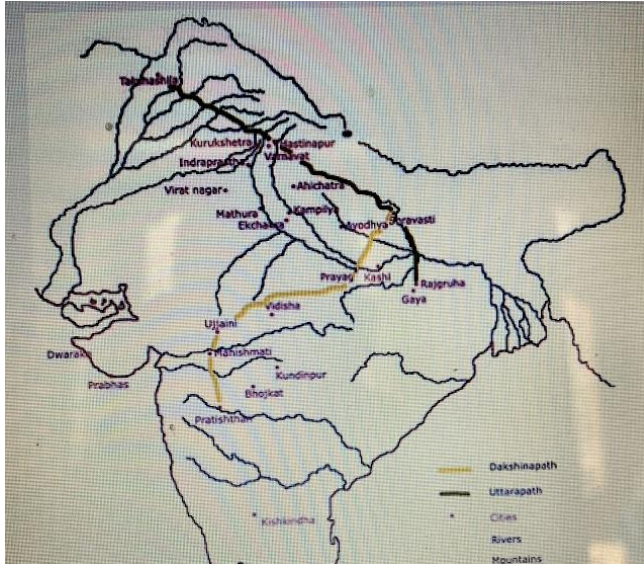
1. Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha
2. Spice Route
3. Silk Route
4. Incense Trade Route
5. Cotton Trade Route
6. Grand Trunk Road

#### **Ancient India's Superhighways - Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha**

Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha were two of the oldest known trade routes of ancient India.

##### **➤ Uttarapatha:**

Uttarapatha was the historical east-west superhighway of India. Spanning from Gandhara (present day Kandahar, Afghanistan) in the farthest North West, this highway went all the way through Takshashila, Lahore, Amritsar, Delhi, Kannauj, Prayag, Varanasi, Nalanda, Pataliputra and ended at the port of Tamralipta on the Gangetic delta in the Bay of Bengal.



(1)



Map 3.1: Routes and Nodes of the Uttarapatha (Sources: Chakrabarti 2001, 2005, 2007; Errington and Cribb 1992; Lahiri 1992; Schwartzberg 1992)

(2)

Uttarapatha in thick black line from Rajguha to Takshashila and Dakshinapatha in yellow line from Sravasti to Pratishthana via Prayag, Vidisha and Ujjaini

Source:

(1) <https://jogharshwardhan.blogspot.com/2022/08/ancient-indian-highways-dakshinapatha.html>

(2) <https://www.myindiamyglory.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Map-of-Uttarapatha.jpg>

The Uttarapatha formed an arterial link connecting the high mountain passes of the North West Himalayas to the trading ports at the mouth of the Ganga in the Bay of Bengal. At its height, the Uttarapatha would have covered more than 2,000 kms and was the longest road in the Asian continent.

Through the Himalayan section of the road, called the Himavatpatha, trade progressed from the fertile Gangetic plain onto Central Asia and further to present day Turkey and Central Europe. An eastern branch from the Himavatpatha connected to the Silk route, leading back into present day China and helped spread Buddhism in that country.

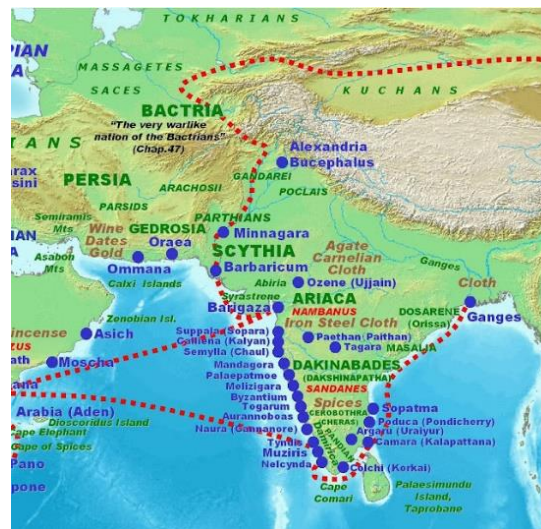
At the eastern most end point, from the port of Tamralipta, trade flourished with the far East countries of Kambuja Desha (present day Cambodia), Suvarnabhumi (present day Myanmar/Thailand) and Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka). Uttarapatha was truly an inter-continental super highway connecting East and South Asia with Central Asia and beyond to Central Europe.

Horses from Central Asia and Arabia, Silk from the Silk Road and precious stones (such as Lapis Lazuli) found its way down Uttarapatha to the Gangetic plain. Likewise, Indian spices, pearls from the East coast and Gangetic muslin moved West. Tamralipta acted as the main port transporting these materials to the Far East as well as to Ceylon.

Uttarapatha in the 21st century: Prior to 2010, National Highways NH-1 and NH-2 combined to make up the Uttarapatha. NH-1 ran from Attari at the India-Pakistan border to Delhi, while NH-2 ran from Delhi to Kolkata. In many places, especially in Haryana and Punjab, the road was simply known as the Grand Trunk Road. Today there is no one single highway that covers the entire stretch, but NH 44 and NH 19 covers most part of the Uttarapatha. ("Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha – Ancient India's Cultural Super Highways," 2021.

➤ **Dakshinapatha:**

As the name indicates, Dakshinapatha was the North-South super highway of the past. Starting at Shravasti in the Himalayan foothills, Dakshinapatha wound its way down south via Varanasi, Prayag, Chitrakoot, Vidisha and Ujjain before terminating at Pratishthana in the Deccan. Feeder roads were developed that connected Pratishthana with the famous trading port of Nala Sopara on the Arabian Sea as well as to Bharuch and further West to Dwaraka. From Pratishthana roads connected further south to the Chera, Chola and Pandyan kingdoms in Tamil country.



Source:

<https://jogharshwardhan.blogspot.com/2022/08/ancient-indian-highways-dakshinapatha.html>

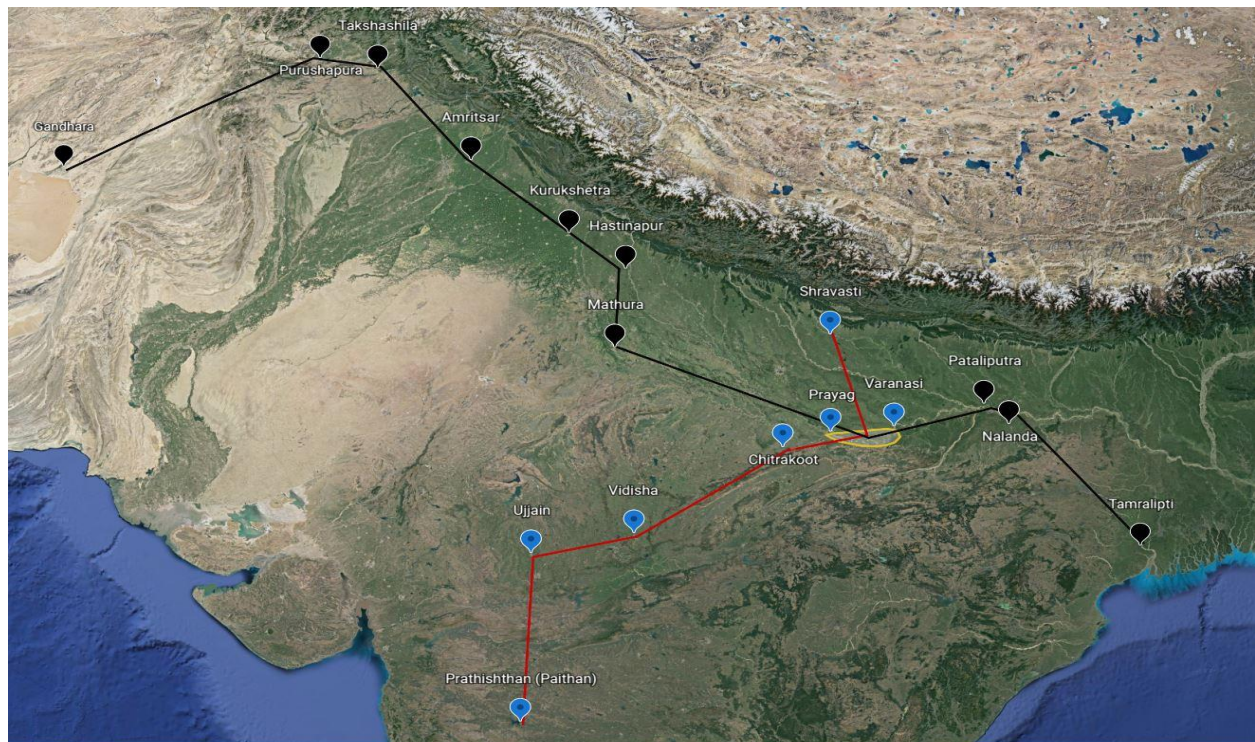


Dakshinapatha is mentioned as Dakinabades, Bharukachcha as Barigaza, Ujjaini as Ozene, Paithan as Paethan etc. (Jog H. 2022).

The distance of Dakshinapatha would have varied depending on the specific route taken and would have been dependent on the time period during which it was traveled.

The Dakshinapatha and the Uttarapatha met around Prayag-Varanasi. This was not merely the intersection of two arterial roads – Prayag/Varanasi sat at the confluence of the very best of the civilizational and cultural traits that defines our country. In many ways, we can trace back the special reverence reserved to Varanasi in our culture due to its unique location at the crossroads of cultural exchange between the East/West and North/South.

Dakshinapatha in the 21st century: Prior to 2010, NH-7 connecting Varanasi to Kanyakumari used to be India's premier arterial North-South road. Parts of this road was aligned with the Dakshinapatha of the past. NH-44 currently is the primary North-South road and runs from Kashmir to Kanyakumari; this road is also aligned away from the Dakshinapatha. ("Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha – Ancient India's Cultural Super Highways," 2021).



Source:

<https://letusdiscoverindia.com/uttarapatha-and-dakshinapatha-ancient-indias-cultural-super-highways/>

➤ **Spice Route:(1000 BCE to 120 BCE)**

The long-range spice trade began in around 1000 BCE with the movement of cinnamon, and perhaps pepper, from India and Indonesia to Egypt. By 1 CE, a full-blown trading network was operating across the seas of the Far East, with India at the centre. A maritime trading route of 9000 miles had evolved that stretched all the way from Rome, across the Mediterranean to northern Africa, through the Indian Ocean to Indonesia and on to China, with India at its centre. Indian dhows sailed south through the Indian Ocean to Indonesia, where they traded pepper for cloves and nutmeg. (Hancock, 2022.)

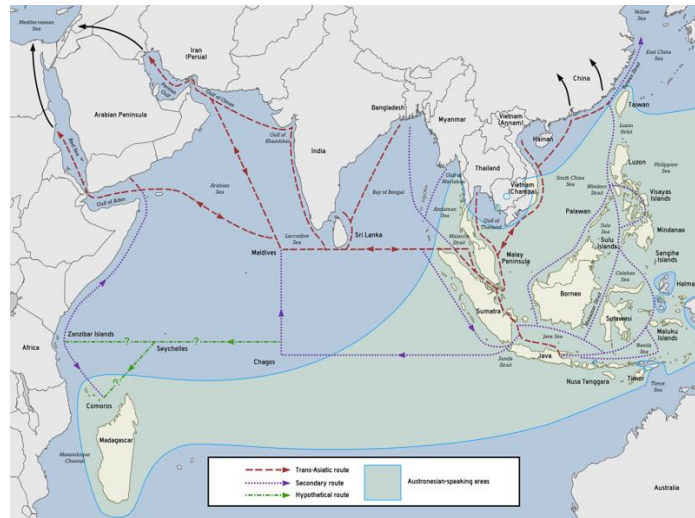
Spice routes linked the east with the west as it stretched from Japan through Indonesia to India to the Middle Eastern lands to Europe through Mediterranean, covering a distance of 15,000 kms. As India was the leading producer of spices, it became the Centre of the world's spice trade. (Raza Khan, 2018)

Spices were among the valued luxurious items that were exchanged for western commodities like gold and silver. However, other valuable goods were also exchanged across the spice routes such as textiles, metal work, saffron, incense, etc.

In the first century CE, India's spices—especially black pepper and malabathrum (a type of cinnamon)—became an important commodity in trade with the eastern Mediterranean. Demand for spices used in seasoning and preservation in the West spurred trade with India for cardamom, ginger, turmeric, saffron, nutmeg, and clove. In 1498, Vasco da Gama's sea route to India opened the spice trade to Europe, and for the next 200 years the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English would vie for control of the spice trade. ("The Story of India - Photos - Gallery 8," n.d.)

The Periplus, a Greek merchant's guide to the Indian trade from the 1st century CE notes twenty major ports on India's west coast. Muziris, the Graeco-Roman pronunciation of Muchiripattanam, was apparently the most important. It is mentioned in papyrus contracts dating back to the 2nd century CE in the West, and is recorded in Tamil poetry of that time. It was the first stop for ships on the direct route from the Red Sea and became a home away from home for many traders. Muziris is where trade began and flourished between India and the Mediterranean, primarily in spices. The trade lasted until the 4th century when it was taken over first by the Persians, and then

by Arabs and Arabic-speaking Jews in the 7th century. ("The Story of India - Photos - Gallery 1," n.d.)



Austronesian proto-historic and historic maritime trade network in the Indian Ocean  
Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Austronesian\\_maritime\\_trade\\_network\\_in\\_the\\_Indian\\_Ocean.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Austronesian_maritime_trade_network_in_the_Indian_Ocean.png)

➤ **Silk Route: (200 BCE to 300 CE)**

The Silk Road was an ancient trade route that linked the Western world with the Middle East and Asia. It was a major conduit for trade between the Roman Empire and China and later between medieval European kingdoms and China. ("Silk Road," n.d.)

The Silk Road brought trade and prosperity to Northern India

From about 200 BCE to 1500 CE, eastern and western traders traveled along the Silk Road, a network of trade routes that linked Rome in the West and Chang'an (today Xian) in the East. Silk, valued for its texture, was a major import of the Mediterranean region, and the Chinese intensely guarded their silk-making technique. ("The Story of India - Episode Summaries - Episode 3," n.d.)

A caravan track stretched west along the Great Wall of China, across the Pamirs, through Afghanistan, and into the Levant and Anatolia. Its length was about 4,000 miles (more than 6,400 km). Goods were then shipped to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea.

Originating at Xi'an (Sian), the 4,000-mile (6,400-km) road, actually a caravan tract, followed the Great Wall of China to the northwest, bypassed the Takla Makan Desert, climbed the Pamirs (mountains), crossed Afghanistan, and went on to the Levant; from there the merchandise was shipped across the Mediterranean Sea. Few persons traveled the entire route, and goods were handled in a staggered progression by middlemen. Chinese merchants exported silk to Western buyers. From Rome and later from Christian kingdoms, wools, gold, and silver traveled eastward.

Apart from material goods, religion was one of the West's major exports along the Silk Road. Early Assyrian Christians took their faith to Central Asia and China, while merchants from the Indian subcontinent exposed China to Buddhism. Disease also traveled along the Silk Road. Many scholars believe that the bubonic plague was spread to Europe from Asia, causing the Black Death pandemic in the mid-14th century.



Trading routes used around the 1st century CE centered on the Silk Road  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Transasia\\_trade\\_routes\\_1stC\\_CE\\_gr2.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Transasia_trade_routes_1stC_CE_gr2.png)

➤ **Incense Trade Route:(7<sup>th</sup> Century BC and 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD)**

The Incense Trade Route was an ancient network of major land and sea trading routes linking the Mediterranean world with eastern and southern sources of incense, spices and other luxury goods, stretching from Mediterranean ports across the Levant and Egypt through Northeastern Africa and Arabia to India and beyond. These routes collectively served as channels for the trading of goods such as Arabian frankincense and myrrh; Indian spices, precious stones, pearls, ebony, silk

and fine textiles; and from the Horn of Africa, rare woods, feathers, animal skins, Somali frankincense, gold, and slaves. The incense land trade from South Arabia to the Mediterranean flourished between roughly the 7th century BC and the 2nd century AD.



Source: <http://www.silkroutes.net/Images2/AxumIncenseTradeAfrica.gif>

➤ **Cotton Trade Route: (1<sup>st</sup> CE to 8<sup>th</sup> CE)**

Remnants of cotton thread have been found in the ruins of the Harappan civilization [5000-3500 BC], and the weavers of India have supplied the markets of the world with cotton cloth since at least the first century of the Christian era. The golden age of Indian cotton in recorded history stretches from that time until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Indian textiles were traded for Roman gold at the time of the Roman Empire; Pliny, the Roman historian of the 1st century AD, calculates the value of imports of Indian fabrics to Rome at a hundred million sesterces [equal at the time to 15 million Indian rupees] every year, and complains that India is draining Rome of her gold. Suleiman, an Arab trader who visits Calicut in 851 A.D writes in his diary "...garments are made in so extraordinary a manner that nowhere else are the like to be seen. These garments are wove to that degree of fineness that they may be drawn through a ring of middling size."<sup>1</sup> Tome Pires, a Portugese traveler of the 16th century writes in 1515 from Malacca describing the ships that come there from Gujarat and the Coromandel coast, worth eighty to ninety thousand cruzados, carrying cloth of thirty different sorts.<sup>2</sup> Pyrard de Laval in the early 17th century says Indian fabrics clothed "everyone from the Cape of Good Hope to China, man and woman...from head to foot."<sup>3</sup> Certainly the largest

manufactured trade item in the world in pre-industrial times, Indian cotton cloth, paid for in gold and silver, was the source of India's fabled wealth. (Uzramma, 2006)

In 400 BCE, the Greek historian, Herodotus wrote in his book *Historia*: “*In India, there are plants that produce sheep's wool.*” The cotton plant in India was referred to as “wool that grew on plants” for a long time by the Greeks. Thus, Rome was losing its wealth to India, which over time, led to a decision: the ban of Indian muslin around the 1st century CE. Even in other parts of Europe between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE, the elite classes wanted this unique fabric extensively worn by the common people in India at the same time period. Interestingly, India held this monopoly of cotton cultivation, production and trade for over 2,000 years. A forerunner in textiles, India specialized in cotton, associated dyes, prints, waves, machinery and, even, tailoring. India's long thread of antiquity is amply supported by ancient, medieval, and modern texts.

Muslin comes from Masuli, derived from Masulipatnam. This was the port on the Coromandel Coast from where cotton was exported to Europe and other countries. Mehargarh in Balochistan, a part of ancient India has fibers of cotton which were found mineralized in copper beads by the side of a skeleton's wrist during an excavation.

This is the oldest physical sample of cotton in the world, as the sample has been traced to 7th millennium BCE (9,000 years ago).

Detailed studies have proven that the fibers are from mature and ripe cotton seeds and were extracted using a refined process. This points to the maturity in the cotton cultivation method in India and fiber extraction 9,000 years ago.



Map 1: Silk and Cotton trading routes used around the 1st Century CE

Source: <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/interweaving-the-old-cotton-and-silk-routes/>

In the 1st century CE, cotton, indigo dyed-fabrics and other produce from India were in great demand in Rome which gave pearls and gold in exchange. ("The Story of a Plant Called Cotton," n.d.)

Cotton growing and manufacturing spread from northern and peninsular India from the 1st to 5th CE to Myanmar and South East Asia through conquest, trade and cultural linkages. This region (comprising present-day ASEAN), and the subcontinent, supplied cotton items to imperial China through the overland and maritime routes, which were well established by the 8th century CE.

Indian cotton and Chinese silk remained valuable components of the Silk Road trade that flourished between two ancient civilizations for two millennia. It is this history of interdependence when silk roads were cotton roads and vice versa, which underscores how integrated these two regions were, in fact, Asia itself was integrated, before European intervention. History illustrates that the longest road known to mankind functioned because of a combination of elements part geography, part politics and part people but the overriding factor was its inherent multilateralism, where roads were built, maintained and secured not just by empires, but small, independent oasis towns and regional kingdoms. (Lentin, 2017)

➤ **Grand Trunk Road:**

The Grand Trunk Road (formerly known as Sarak-e-Azam, Badshahi Sarak, and Jarneli Sarak) is one of Asia's oldest and longest major roads. For at least 2,500 years it has linked Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent. It runs roughly 2,400 km (1,491 mi) from Teknaf, Bangladesh on the border with Myanmar west to Kabul, Afghanistan, passing through Chittagong and Dhaka in Bangladesh, Kolkata, Prayagraj, Delhi, and Amritsar in India, and Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Peshawar in Pakistan.

The Grand Trunk Road is still used for transportation in present-day Indian subcontinent, where parts of the road have been widened and included in the national highway system.



Kos Minar, 17th century milestone. Each Minar marked one Kos (2 miles). Such Minar's dotted the Uttarapatha during Sher Shah Suri's time.



Grand Trunk Road named by British



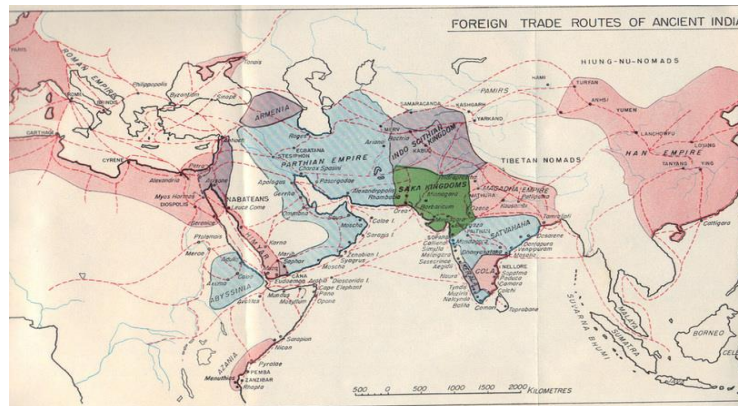
An original section of the Uttarapatha, located in Pakistan. Presumably improved upon over time by Sher Shah Suri and later the British.

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kos\\_Minar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kos_Minar) (1st Image)

<https://www.pakistancargo4u.co.uk/blog/g-t-road-pakistan-back-bone-economy/> (2<sup>nd</sup> Image)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Original\\_GT\\_Road\\_between\\_Margalla\\_and\\_kala\\_Chitta.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Original_GT_Road_between_Margalla_and_kala_Chitta.JPG) (3<sup>rd</sup> Image)



Source: From Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India by Moti Chandra (1977)

## Conclusion:

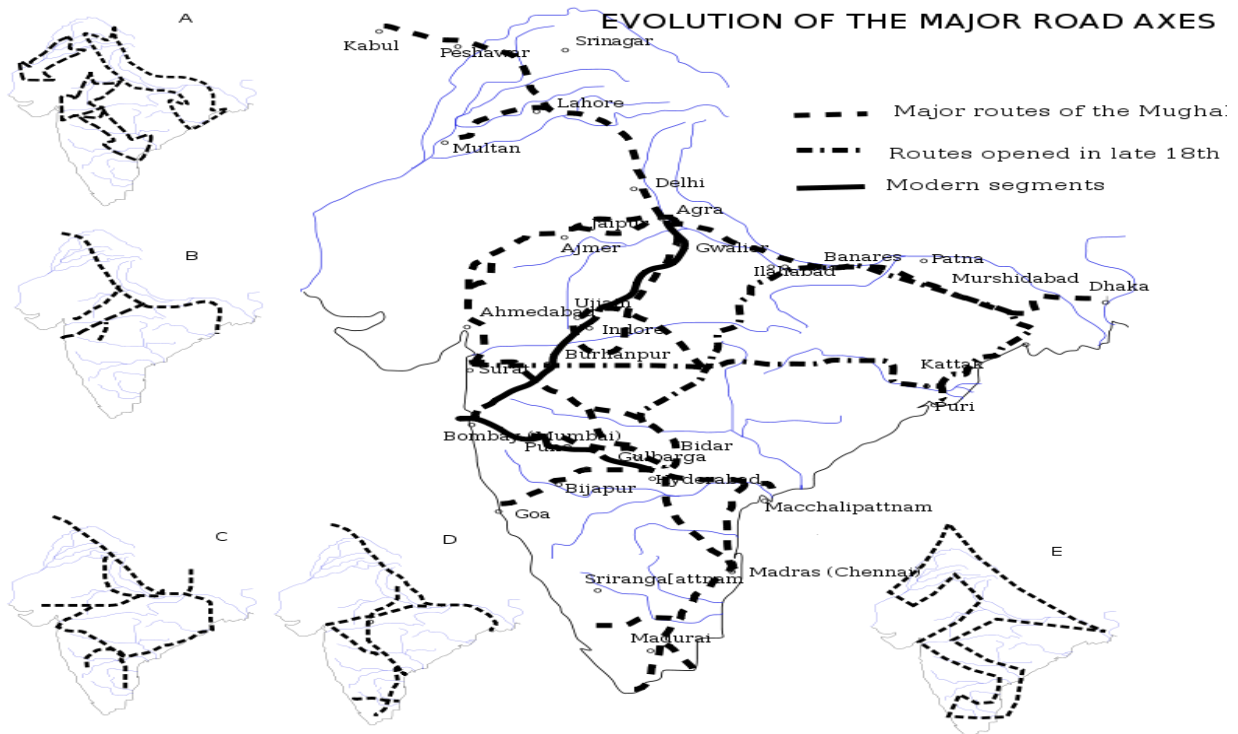
Ancient Indian trade routes were a crucial component of the country's economic, cultural, and political development. Some of the most well-known ancient Indian trade routes include the Silk Road, the Maritime Silk Road, the Grand Trunk Road, and the Spice Route. These routes allowed for the trade of commodities such as silk, spices, textiles, precious stones, and metals. Overall, ancient Indian trade routes were a testament to the country's strategic location and entrepreneurial spirit. They allowed for the exchange of goods and ideas between different civilizations and contributed to the development of a vibrant, multicultural society.



## Part III

### Trade in India under different Timeline

There has been a rich tradition of craftsmanship, manufacturing and trade in the world across the ages. early trade mostly concentrated on luxury items such as precious metals, spices, and exquisite fabrics, but as shipping got quicker, more dependable, and less expensive, even commonplace items such as olives and fish paste were shipped over long distances. India has a right to be proud of its role as an essential and fundamental element of the worldwide silk route, which was a historic trade route that spanned from the 2nd century BCE to the 14th century C. Trade enhanced cultural interaction, resulting in the spread of ideas and cultural practices, notably in the fields of language, religion, and art.



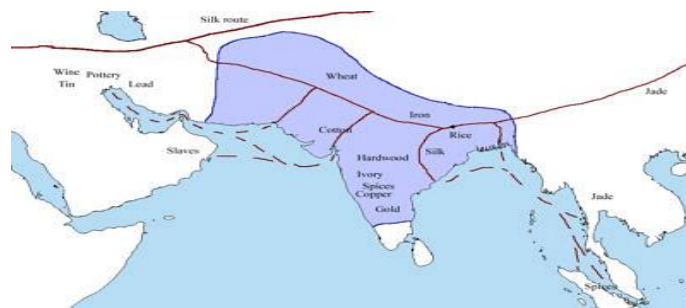
Evolution of Indian trade networks. The main map shows the routes since Mughal times, Inset A shows the major prehistorical cultural currents, B: pre-Mauryan routes, C: Mauryan routes, D: routes c. 1st century CE, and E: the "Z" shaped region of developed roads.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade\\_route](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_route)

- In **Mauryan period** (321 BCE until 181 BCE) most common imports were horses, gold, glass, linen & others items and the exported spices, pearls, gems, cotton textiles, ivory works, conch shells and other items which they produced. They mostly traded through roadways and waterways, Royal highway from northwest (Takshashila) to Pataliputra and also there were many internal routes.

Merchant Clubs were formed to organize Trade- Sanghas and 1/5<sup>th</sup> tax was levied on the price of goods and 5% on domestic goods & 10% on imported goods. They also had stamps on commodities which was produced internally at manufacturing place and external(imported) one's at tollgates. Tax/Toll were paid in cash rather than any other items.

Megasthenes refers to Artisans and Craftsmen. There were many handicrafts, among them 18 most important handicrafts at the period were organized into Guilds called Sirenis, Pramukha & Alderman, Jettaka etc.



Source: <https://mauryan2014.tumblr.com/post/100828642799/trade-and-commerce>

- In **Satavahana dynasty** (mid-1st century BCE to early 3rd century CE) – Romans imported majorly spices and along with it perfumes, jewels, ivory, fine textiles, stones like diamond, carnelian, turquoise, agate, sapphire, pearls, indigo, sandalwood and steel. They exported gold, silver, wine, tin, lead, coral and slaves. Even they had many internal and external trade routes with west and central asia along with Dakshinapatha & Uttarapatha.
- **The Gupta Empire** (320 CE to 550 CE)- Trade during this period stretched across northern, central and parts of southern India between 320 to 550 CE. This period has been called the

'Golden Age of India'. Chandra Gupta I, Samudra Gupta, Chandra Gupta II, Bindusara and Ashoka were the most notable rulers of the Gupta dynasty.

There were two types of merchants in the Gupta period namely Sresthi and Sarthavaha. Luxury goods were the principal articles of long distance trade. The internal trade used to be carried on by roads and rivers. Foreign trade was carried on by sea and land.

The following is the highlight during the Gupta period:

- Silk Route linked India to other markets.
- Indian merchants traded cashmere, cotton, spices for Chinese silk.
- Gupta, Tamil kingdoms in southern India traded actively most of by sea.
- Indian sailors used seasonal winds for getting into foreign markets across Arabian Sea.
- Trade played key role in propagating the Indian culture.
- Trade routes used at this period were Grand Trunk Road, Royal Road, Silk route, Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha.

Fa-Hien, the Chinese monk, who came to India in 399 CE to study Buddhism at Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Varanasi, had been an eyewitness of the Gupta Empire. With the expansion of overseas commerce, the Gupta period witnessed an era of general prosperity, economic progress, cultural extension, artistic attainment and architectural advancement. Fa-Hien on his way back to his homeland, in 413 CE, sailed from Tamralipti in Bengal and 14 days later reached Ceylon where he embarked for Java and passed through Nicobars and the Strait of Malacca to reach the Pacific. The oceanic navigation which was well advanced during the earlier centuries of the Christian era is borne out from Fa-Hien's writings. Another Chinese traveller Huein Tsang, who visited India between 633-645 AD had was also an eyewitness of the vast overseas trade during the Gupta period. Remarkable progress in astronomy was also achieved during this period. Aryabhata and Varahamihira, known in history as great astronomers, belonged to this period. The celestial bodies began to be accurately mapped and the art of oceanic navigation by rough and ready computation of position from known stars was established. During this period, several ports in the east and west were opened which greatly revived maritime trade with European and African countries. ("Indian Navy - Maritime Heritage," n.d.)

Gupta period was the first to use coins that were punch-marked made with silver and copper. However, only a certain type of coin was provided by a certain class of Indians.

During the Gupta period agriculture formed a significant part of the empire's economy. However, the trade and commerce activities of the Gupta Empire grew steadily. The merchant and other traders were organized into guilds. These guilds were given concessions in the taxes that were liable to be paid to the government. The guilds played a chief role in the goods industry and also helped to further strengthen the economic condition of the empire. The guilds had regulated their own laws and all the member merchants were expected to abide by these laws.

There was industrial development during the Gupta period. The textile industry was an essential industry of this empire. Some of the major items of produce included silk, muslin, calico, linen, wool and cotton. These goods were also exported. The other flourishing industries of the Gupta empire were ivory work, stone cutting and carving of stones like jasper, agate, quartz, carnelian, lapis- lazuli, etc; metal work on precious metals like gold, silver, copper, iron, bronze, lead, etc. Pearl industry was also very popular. However, the most important industry was pottery.

Trading activities within the empire were carried out very smoothly and efficiently. Animals were used for transporting goods from one place to another. Goods were also transported via sea- route with the help of ships. The Gupta rulers issued large number of gold coins. These gold coins were known as 'Dinars'. After the Saka- Kshatrapa kingdom of Gujarat was invaded, the Gupta rulers also issued silver coins. During the reign of the Gupta dynasty, lead and rare copper coins were also issued. Gupta Empire carried out trade with China, Ceylon and other European countries. After around 550 AD, trading activities with the Roman Empire were relaxed. The Guptas imported Chinese silk and ivory from East Africa. During this time, South- East Asia became a trade centre for the Gupta Empire.

(Hackensack Public Schools, n.d.)

### **The Southern Dynasties:**

The **Cholas**, **Cheras** and **Pandyas** were major powers of peninsular India. These rulers had established strong maritime trade links with the local rulers of Sumatra, Java, Malay Peninsula, Thailand and China. The knowledge of the monsoon winds was also developed during sea voyages in their period.

During the **Chola dynasty** (3rd-13th Century) extensive sea trade existed and new harbours with quarters, warehouses and workshops were established. Ship repair yards, wharfs and light houses were built along the Indian coast to support the powerful navy which protected their merchant ships.

Hinduism and Indian culture spread during the 5 to 12 centuries during the **Sri Vijaya Empire** which extended between India's eastern seaboard and the Far East. The Sri Vijayas' cultural and trading expeditions took them to far-flung areas such as Sumatra, Burma, the Malay Peninsula, Java, Thailand and Indo-China. They attracted Indian, Arab and Chinese merchants to ports where excellent harbour facilities were available. As a result of 'difference' between the Cholas, the Tamil kings and the Sri Vijayas, a series of sea battles were fought between their navies towards the end of the 10th Century AD resulting in the weakening of these empires and opening the way for Arab supremacy in the region. In 1007 AD, the Cholas defeated the Sri Vijayas and then ruled the Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatra and some neighbouring islands. The Pandya dynasty (6th – 16th Century) were eminent Agniveer and sea traders, with links extending from the Roman empire and Egypt in the West to China in the East. They controlled pearl farming that took place along the India's southern coastline, producing some of the finest pearls of those times.

The **Cheras** (12th Century) had a flourishing trade with the Greeks and the Romans. They navigated through various rivers which opened into the Arabian Sea. They used monsoon winds to sail their ships directly from the Indian ports of Tyndis (present day Periyapattanam, near Kochi) and Muziris (present day Pattanam, also near Kochi), to ports in Arabia.

The **Vijaynagar empire** (1336–1646 AD) established strong links with various parts of Southeast Asia, spread India's culture and traditions. This influence is visible even today in

Southeast Asia, as names of many places and people are of Indian origin. These kingdoms also helped spread both Hinduism and Buddhism, cultures and architectures in this region.

➤ **The Arabs:**

By the 8th Century AD, Arabs began to come to India by sea in great numbers as traders. Over the time, many parts of the modern day West Asia became nodal points for business between Europe, Southeast Asia and India. Soon the Arabs began controlling the trade routes, and acted as middlemen between the West and the East. The period from 900 to 1300 AD is considered the Early Age of maritime commerce in Southeast Asia.

➤ **Maritime India and the Europeans:**

The **Mughal dynasty** ruled over most of the northern India from 1526-1707 AD. Having found sufficient revenue from land resources, they did not pay much attention to the affairs of the sea. This enabled the Arabs to establish a monopoly over trade in the Indian Ocean. Hearing about the rich land called 'Hindustan' in the East, many European countries felt the need to find a direct sea route for trade. The Portuguese took the lead and were the first Europeans to arrive on Indian shores.

➤ **The Portuguese:**

The 16th Century is considered as an important landmark. Prior to this century, the calm and peaceful waters of the Indian Ocean were characterized by a brisk and prosperous commercial trade in which most of the coastal and seafaring communities from East Africa to Malaysia and Indonesian Islands participated actively. Vasco da Gama (1460 – 1524) was a Portuguese explorer discovered an oceanic route from Portugal to India. His arrival began a new chapter in India's maritime history. The calm and peaceful scene of trade was disturbed with the arrival of the Portuguese merchantmen, who set a strategy for control of the entire Indian Ocean. They set up factories at Calicut, Cochin, Goa, Surat and at other west coast ports. They also took control of all important Ports namely Hormuz, Socotra, Aden and Malacca to effectively

seize the Indian Ocean trade flow, thereby displaying the Arab monopoly over trade in the Indian Ocean Region.

➤ **The Dutch:**

The Dutch East India Company, established in 1592 in Amsterdam, Netherlands, sailed their first merchant fleet that reached India in 1595. The first Dutch base in the Indian Ocean Region was established at Batavia (present day Jakarta, Indonesia). They did not challenge the Portuguese and were given permission to set up a trading facility at Pulicat in 1608 which led to the formation of Dutch Coromandel. Subsequently, Dutch Surat and Dutch Bengal were established in 1616 and 1627 respectively. The Dutch conquered the forts on the Malabar Coast (present day Kerala) around 1661 and established Dutch Malabar to protect Ceylon from Portuguese invasion. Apart from textiles, the Dutch traded precious stones, indigo, silk, opium, cinnamon and pepper. ("Indian Navy - Maritime Heritage," n.d.)

**Conclusion:**

Trade has existed in Ancient India since time immemorial. Ancient India saw trade since the Harappan civilization. Routes such as the Silk Route, Incense Road, Spice Route, Cotton Route and Internal routes- Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha were used to trade materials from India. The new cities that came up during the ancient times included Pataliputra, Ujjain, Puhar, and Mathura. Many kingdoms/Dynasties followed these routes for trading. Taxes were levied on import and export commodities. There has been rich evidence that in ancient India, the trade logistics was highly efficient. Goods at that time moved mainly via multiple land routes and sea routes, some of which even exist today.

Among all the land routes, the Silk Route and Cotton Route were most significant. Actually, it was not a single road, but a network of many roads that merchants used for the trade of silk, slaves, and spices. The Grand route, on the other hand, exists even today and is useful for the transportation of goods. It is known as the Grand Trunk Road or the G.T Road. The route was built during the Mauryan Empire. This route was from the modern day Bangladesh in the east to Afghanistan in the west. The route was a lifeline to facilitate uninterrupted trade between India and Western Asia.

Over more than 90% of the trade in ancient India conducted primarily via sea routes. India has, in fact, a large number of ports like Lothal in the present day Gujarat to much more in the Southern peninsula. There were sea routes to the Mediterranean Sea and to many Southeast Asian countries India has a connection with Mesopotamia, Egypt, Africa, Arabian Peninsula and many other regions of the world via sea routes across the Indian Ocean. Trade via sea routes was at peak during the rule of Pallavas, Cholas and the Chalukyas in the Southern peninsula region of India.

Trade has come a long way since it was first introduced. Now, the merchants of India are doing trade with rest of the world via an extensive network of land, sea, air and digital.



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## Comprehensive overview of the literature that is referred and cited in the study:

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09733159.2012.690562>

**About the reference:** Informa is a leading international events, digital services and academic knowledge group. We're here to champion the specialist. Through hundreds of brands and a range of products and services, we connect businesses and professionals with the knowledge they need to learn more, know more and do more. Informa is listed on London Stock Exchange and a member of FTSE 100, with over 10,000 colleagues working in more than 30 countries.

Indian maritime activities have a long history covering a period of about five millennia from the very dawn of the Indus Valley civilization. There was a golden age of Indian seafaring, a major part of it remaining unknown or unexplored. Study and analysis of maritime history, hence, is essential to understand the nature and orientation of India's maritime culture. Maritime history of India, as such, has not been well documented. A grand historical narrative is required to boost support for a maritime build-up. It is also imperative to explain what kind of navy the nation needs and how it should be used. History also helps to define and devise naval diplomacy and strategy.

2. A. S. Gaur, Sundaresh & Sila Tripathi – 'Evidence for Indo-Roman Trade from Bet Dwarka Waters, West Coast of India'

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1095-9270.2005.00080.x>

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India had a very active maritime trade contact with the Roman world between the 4th century BC and the 4th century AD. In this context recent finds of stone anchors, potsherds, lead anchors and a lead ingot from 5 to 8 m water-depth near Bet Dwarka

jetty is significant. The sherds include amphoras, jars, bowls and lids. Archaeological finds along the Indian coast and comparison between amphoras from Bet Dwarka and the Mediterranean suggest that the artefacts from Bet Dwarka may be datable to between the 1st century BC and the 2nd century AD. The numbers of stone anchors suggests that this was an ancient anchorage.

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<https://prepp.in/news/e-492-economy-during-mauryan-period-ancient-india-history-notes#route>

**About the reference:** Prepp.in is an extensive search engine for the students, parents, and education industry players who are seeking information on government exams in India. One can rely on Prepp.in for getting most brief and relevant data. The Mauryan Dynasty ruled over most of India. It included what is now Iran, as well as parts of India's central and northern regions. During the Mauryas, agriculture constituted the backbone of the economy, but trade was becoming increasingly important. The majority of the population looked to be cultivators, and agricultural taxes were the principal source of revenue. Hundreds of kingdoms, numerous small armies, powerful regional chieftains, and internal strife gave way to a more centralised, disciplined administration.

4. Emergence of States, the Satavahanas, Trade and Commercial Activities.  
<https://www.flexiprep.com/NIOS-Notes/Senior-Secondary/History/NIOS-History-Module-1-Chapter-6-Post-Mauryan-Developments-Part-3.html>

**About the reference:** This module provides a brief overview about the Emergence of States in Kalinga and Deccan. After the decline of the Mauryan empire, the regions, including Kalinga and Deccan, noticed the emergence of some powerful kingdoms.

5. Mark, J. J. (2012, November 13). Ancient India. World History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from  
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**About the reference:** World History Publishing is a non-profit company registered in the United Kingdom. World History Foundation is a non-profit organization registered in Canada. World History Encyclopedia is a non-profit organization publishing the world's most-read history encyclopedia.

India is a country in South Asia whose name comes from the Indus River. The name 'Bharata' is used as a designation for the country in their constitution referencing the ancient mythological emperor, Bharata, whose story is told, in part, in the Indian epic Mahabharata. This article provides a complete overview of Ancient India.

6. Cartwright, M. (2021, June 09). The Spice Trade & the Age of Exploration. *World History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from

<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1777/the-spice-trade--the-age-of-exploration/>

**About the reference:** World History Encyclopedia is a non-profit organization publishing the world's most-read history encyclopedia.

One of the major motivating factors in the European Age of Exploration was the search for direct access to the highly lucrative Eastern spice trade. In the 15th century, spices came to Europe via the Middle East land and sea routes, and spices were in huge demand both for food dishes and for use in medicines. The problem was how to access this market by sea. Accordingly, explorers like Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) and Vasco da Gama (c. 1469- 1524) were sent to find a maritime route from Europe to Asia. To the west, Columbus found a new continent in his way, but to the south, da Gama did round the Cape of Good Hope, sail up the coast of East Africa, and cross the Indian Ocean to reach India. From 1500 onwards, first Portugal, and then other European powers, attempted to control the spice trade, the ports which marketed spices, and eventually the territories which grew them.

7. Benson, F. J. and Lay, . Maxwell Gordon (2022, August 11). road. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

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**About the reference:** road, Traveled way on which people, animals, or wheeled vehicles move. The earliest roads developed from paths and trails and appeared with the invention of wheeled vehicles about 3000 BC. Road systems were developed to facilitate trade in early civilizations; the first major road extended 1,500 mi (2,400 km) from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea and was used as early as 3500 BC. The Romans used roads to maintain control of their empire, with over 53,000 mi (85,000 km) of roadways extending across its lands; Roman construction techniques and design remained the most advanced until the late 1700s. In the early 19th century the invention of macadam road construction provided a quick and durable method for building roads, and asphalt and concrete also began to be used. Motorized traffic in the 20th century led to the limited-access highway, the first of which was a parkway in New York City (1925). Superhighways also appeared in Italy and Germany in the 1930s. In the 1950s the U.S. interstate highway system was inaugurated to link the country's major cities.

8. Dr. DK Hari and Dr. Hema Hari, The story of a plant called cotton & a pioneer named India.

Retrieved from <https://www.artofliving.org/in-en/culture/amazing-india/the-story-of-plant-called-cotton>

**About the reference:** Operating in 180 countries, The Art of Living is a non-profit, educational and humanitarian organization founded in 1981 by the world-renowned humanitarian and spiritual teacher - Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

This provides a complete overview of the story of a plant called cotton & a pioneer named India.

9. Gascoigne, Bamber. History World. From 2001, ongoing. <http://www.historyworld.net>

**About the reference:** HistoryWorld's aim is to make world history more easily accessible through interactive narratives and timelines. Written by Bamber Gascoigne, it consists of about 300 narratives (the alphabetical list runs from Aegean Civilization to Zoroastrianism) and some 10,000 events on searchable timelines.



10. Gascoigne, Bamber. "History of Trade" History World. From 2001, ongoing.

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/plaintexthistories.asp?historyid=ab72>

**About the reference:** History World's aim is to make world history more easily accessible through interactive narratives and timelines. Written by Bamber Gascoigne, it consists of about 300 narratives (the alphabetical list runs from Aegean Civilization to Zoroastrianism) and some 10,000 events on searchable timelines.

Trade provides mankind's most significant meeting place, the market. In primitive societies only religious events - cult rituals or rites of passage such as marriage - bring people together in a comparable way. But in these cases the participants are already linked, by custom or kinship.

This reference provides a complete overview of the history of trade.

11. Sumedha Verma Ojha, (Aug 12, 2016). Uttarapath and Dakshinapath: The Great Trade Routes of Jambudwipa.

<https://swarajyamag.com/culture/uttarapath-and-dakshinapath-the-great-trade-routes-of-jambudwipa>

**About the reference:** Swarajya is a 61-year-old independent media start-up. We are a new-age media company with a rich and storied legacy.

The Uttarapath and the Dakshinapath routes were like a colourful thread connecting different parts of the subcontinent to each other. These trade routes were the pulsating veins of the body politic which rendered it alive and vibrant and communicating within itself. It was the trade routes, along which people, goods and ideas moved. These were the pulsating veins of the body politic which rendered it alive and vibrant and communicating within itself.<sup>4</sup>

12. Textile trade in Ancient India- Indian Culture.

[https://indianculture.gov.in/node/2730145#:~:text=The%20Uttarapath%20\(northern](https://indianculture.gov.in/node/2730145#:~:text=The%20Uttarapath%20(northern)

[%20land%20routes,east%20Asia%2C%20central%20Asia%20and](#)

**About the reference:** The Indian Culture Portal is a part of the National Virtual Library of India project, funded by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. The portal has been created and developed by the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. Data has been provided by organizations of the Ministry of Culture.

It can be reasonably asserted that cotton, woolen and silk textiles have consistently remained popular articles of trade throughout the ancient period. It is equally true for the domestic as well as international trade. India can deservingly claim a place of pride for being an important and integral part of the international silk route which was a historic trade process for a pretty long time stretching from 2nd century BCE to 14th century C.

13. Towns and Trade in Ancient India -Unacademy.

<https://unacademy.com/content/upsc/study-material/ncert-notes/towns-and-trade-in-ancient-india/>

**About the reference:** Unacademy is India's largest online learning platform.

Ancient India saw trade since the Harappan civilization. The new cities that came up during the ancient times included Pataliputra, Ujjain, Puhar, and Mathura. Trade in the country during early years involved gold and then textiles, spices, as well as precious metals. The then-urban population is believed to have votive or religious engravings, gold, dishes and metals. Trade has existed in Ancient India since time immemorial. Routes such as the Silk Route, Amber Road, and the Spice Route were used to trade materials from India. Maritime trade, as well, flourished. In terms of currency, the Gupta period was perhaps the first to use coins that were punch-marked, made with silver and copper. However, only a certain type of coin was provided by a certain class of Indians. Trade has, thus, come a long way since it was first introduced.

14. Reem heakal (September 17, 2022). International Trade.

<https://www.investopedia.com/insights/what-is-international-trade/>

**About the reference:** Investopedia was founded in 1999 with the mission of simplifying financial decisions and information to give readers the confidence to manage every aspect of their financial life. Investopedia is a part of the [Dotdash Meredith](#) publishing family.

The world economies have become more intertwined through globalization and international trade is a major part of most economies. It provides consumers with a variety of options and increases competition so that businesses must produce cost-efficient and high-quality goods, benefiting these consumers.

Nations also benefit through international trade, focusing on producing the goods they have a comparative advantage in. Though some countries limit international trade through tariffs and quotas to protect domestic businesses, international trade has shown to benefit economies as a whole.

15. Momeni, M. R., & Chaharmahali Esfahani, M. (2020). Chabahar Role in Regional Convergence: A Case Study of the Cotton Route. *International Relations Research*, 9(5), 29-50.

**About the reference:** The Quarterly Journal of International Relations Research is published by the Iranian Association of International Relations.

Developments in the international system and the emergence of economic powers in the Asian continent have doubled the importance of the Continent in the future economic order of the world. Two major economic projects 'One Belt One Road' and 'Cotton Route' by China and India are a big step towards achieving the great goal. Chabahar Port is the key of the Indian Cotton Route project. Located along the Oman Sea, the port provides an opportunity for India to join the ancient Silk Road route to Central Asia and Afghanistan. On the other hand, due to its geo-strategic position, Chabahar is the transplant factor between India, Iran as well as the continents of Asia and Africa, therefore, can play an important role in facilitating regional convergence. This research tries to answer the question as what is the role of Chabahar in the regional

convergence? And what is the status of the Cotton Route project in the convergence? The hypothesis to answer the question is that due to its geo- strategic and geo-political and geo-economic position, Chabahar have an important role to create a common interest between Iran, Russia, central Asian states, Afghanistan and India in regional convergence, and The Cotton Route project can also be a complement to this convergence through the key role it plays in Indian foreign policy based on the 'Connect Central Asia Policy'. This paper is based on an analytical- descriptive method using both primary and secondary data including documents, reports, books, articles and web sites.

16. Dayalan, D. (2021). Silk and Cotton Textiles, the Principal Maritime Trade Commodities of Ancient India. *Acta Via Serica*, 6(2), 91-116.

**About the reference:** The textile industry has constituted the most important sector of the Indian economy and the Indian textile industry has been one of the leading textile industries in the world since antiquity. India has one of the finest textile traditions in the world with respect to weaving, dyeing, and surface decoration. The archaeological evidence and literary and epigraphical sources clearly indicate the prosperous status of cotton and silk textile production in India for centuries and these products have played a vital role in the maritime

trade relations between countries all along the ancient silk routes. The ancient silk routes not only played a dynamic role in promoting maritime trade, but were also responsible for the transmission of religion, culture, tradition, language, technology, art, and architectural idioms from India to other countries and vice versa.

17. Prasad, R. (2018). Some Historical Aspects of Indian Cotton and Cotton Textile Trade. *Asian Agri-History*, 22(3).

**About the reference:** i-Scholar is the "Collection of Journals" provided by Informatics. The i-Scholar gateway opens the delivery platform for both academic as well as corporate research segments.

Cotton is one of the greatest gifts that India has given to the world, and its cultivation goes back to even before the Vedic period. Europeans came to know of cotton only in the 5th century, when Alexander the Great attacked India. Even before the arrival of the Mughals, India was trading cotton with countries in the Middle East, continental Europe, and Egypt through the Silk Route. For the Mughals, this was the major export commodity and the trade through the Silk Route continued until 1498 CE, when the Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama landed at Kappadu near Kozhikode (formerly Calicut), in Kerala, and established the sea route for trade. The British East India Company established itself strongly after their victory over the Nawab of Bengal and his French associates in the Battle of Plassey on 23 June 1757. Export of cotton textiles and calico to Britain started in a big way and continued up to the end of the 18th century. However, the development of spinning and weaving machinery, during the late 18th century in Britain, reversed the trade by the early 19th century, and India became merely an exporter of raw cotton to Britain. During the late 18th century, the British cotton industry was the largest in the world, but the Anglo-French wars during 1778–83 reduced their trade with continental Europe, and USA became their major export market for cotton goods. Britain also started to import raw cotton from USA. India's cotton export to Britain suffered because of this. However, the American Civil War of 1861–65 blocked the supply of raw cotton from USA, and Britain again started imports from India. World War I (1914-17) completely shattered the British cotton industry and it never recovered, because other countries began to develop their textile industries. India now exports raw cotton mainly to neighboring Bangladesh and Pakistan, and to some Southeast Asian countries.

India's exports in 2016-17 were estimated at US\$ 6.3 billion (12.2% of the global exports). However, India is now the leading producer of organic cotton, the market for which is on the increase, but here again the trend is towards decline in area and production.

18. Liu, X. (2010). *The Silk Road in world history*. Oxford University Press.

**About the reference:** ResearchGate was started in 2008 to address the problems we saw in the way science is created and shared. Mission is to connect the world of science and make research open to all. The 20 million researchers in our community come from diverse sectors in over 190 countries, and use ResearchGate to connect, collaborate, and share their work. This volume on the Silk Road by Xinru Liu is a welcome addition to the New Oxford World

History series, which consists of brief and affordable introductions on a world region, period of history, or a general topic for world history classes or the interested general reader.

19. Liu, X. (1988). Ancient India and Ancient China. *Trade and Religious Exchanges AD, 1-600*.

**About the reference:** The importance of this book lies in conclusively establishing the linkages between, on the one hand, the transmission of Buddhism from India to China, and, on the other, the trade in commercial items that went on between these two countries.

20. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2022, August 18). *Silk Road*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Silk-Road-trade-route>

**About the reference:** Silk Road, also called Silk Route, ancient trade route, linking China with the West, that carried goods and ideas between the two great civilizations of Rome and China. Silk went westward, and wools, gold, and silver went east. China also received Nestorian Christianity and Buddhism (from India) via the Silk Road.

21. The German name Die Seidenstrasse translates to 'the Silk Road'. <en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-road> Accessed on 24.1.2017.

**About the reference:** 'Silk Road' is in fact a relatively recent term, and for the majority of their long history, these ancient roads had no particular name. In the mid-nineteenth

century, the German geologist, Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen, named the trade and communication network Die Seidenstrasse(the Silk Road), and the term, also used in the plural, continues to stir imaginations with its evocative mystery.

22. Dr Amit Kumar. - Maritime History of India: An Overview.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09733159.2012.690562>

**About the reference:** Informa is a leading international events, digital services and academic knowledge group. Through hundreds of brands and a range of products and services, we connect businesses and professionals with the knowledge they need to learn more, know more and do more. Informa is listed on London Stock Exchange and a member of FTSE 100, with over 10,000 colleagues working in more than 30 countries.

Indian maritime activities have a long history covering a period of about five millennia from the very dawn of the Indus Valley civilization. There was a golden age of Indian seafaring, a major part of it remaining unknown or unexplored. Study and analysis of maritime history, hence, is essential to understand the nature and orientation of India's maritime culture.

Maritime history of India, as such, has not been well documented. A grand historical narrative is required to boost support for a maritime build-up. It is also imperative to explain what kind of navy the nation needs and how it should be used. History also helps to define and devise naval diplomacy and strategy.

23. Patra, B. (2008). Merchants, Guilds and Trade in Ancient India: An Orissan Perspective. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 89, 133–168.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41692117>

**About the reference:** JSTOR is a digital library for the intellectually curious. We help everyone discover, share, and connect valuable ideas. JSTOR provides access to more than 12 million [journal articles](#), [books](#), [images](#), and [primary sources](#) in 75 disciplines.

JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Artstor, IthakaS+R, and Portico.

It provides an overview of the Merchants, Guilds and Trade in Ancient India, an OrissanPerspective.

24. UNESCO. Accessed June 20, 2020.

<https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/did-you-know-great-silk-roads>

**About the reference:** The Great Silk Roads bears significant historical and socio-cultural importance. However, the extent of their geographical reach is relatively unknown. They are a network of land and maritime routes covering expansive regions in Asia, Africa and Europe. Today, with multiple interactions among different peoples, the Great Silk Roads remain a pioneer trading route providing an outstanding model of long-lasting peaceful interactions between different cultures, societies and civilisations.

25. "The Silk Route." Accessed June 21, 2020. <http://www.sikkimsilkroute.com/about-silk-route/>

**About the reference:** We are travellers, and we cherish travelling to untouched destinations just like you. We have explored every corner of the Silk Route of Sikkim and our local contacts in the remotest areas help our guests to take some of the activities which others cannot arrange.

The **Silk Route** or **Silk Road** refers to a network of ancient trade routes connecting Asia, Europe and Africa. Extending more than 6,500 kms, the Silk Route was majorly used to transport Chinese Silk to Europe through Central Asia from 2nd Century BC. However, many trade routes (both sea and land routes) existed in much earlier times that connected the main Silk Route and traded in different commodities ranging from salt to gold. Silk Route's greatest contribution to world history was not mere trading of few commodities but exchange of ideas, art and science between Asia, Europe and Africa. It was **the world's first information superhighway**.



26. Ray, Haraprasad. Introduction. In North East India's Place in India-China Relations and Its Future Role in India's Economy, n.d.

**About the reference:** This article will look into the ancient trade route that existed between South Western China and India's North East region via Myanmar and the future of the trade route.

27. Chowdhury, Debasish Roy. "'Southern Silk Road' Linking China and India Seen as Key to Boosting Ties." South China Morning Post, October 23, 2013.

**About the reference:** This article will look into the ancient trade route that existed between South Western China and India's North East region via Myanmar and the future of the trade route.

28. "China Wants to Revive 'Southern Silk Road' with India." The Times of India, June 9, 2013. **About the reference:** This is an article published in The Times of India. Though the route of the new "Southern Silk Road" has yet to be determined, the success of the race across the four countries indicated that it is possible to build a transport passage along the route.

The route is expected to serve as an inland bridge linking South Asian countries and central, eastern coastal areas of China, so as to promote the development of western regions of China and boost the common prosperity of the nations along the route.

29. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352283570\\_Ancient\\_Trade\\_Routes\\_passing\\_through\\_Northern\\_India\\_to\\_Connect\\_with\\_Central\\_Asia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352283570_Ancient_Trade_Routes_passing_through_Northern_India_to_Connect_with_Central_Asia)

**About the reference:** ResearchGate was started in 2008 to address the problems we saw in the way science is created and shared. Our mission is to connect the world of science and make research open to all. The 20 million researchers in our community come from diverse sectors in over 190 countries, and use ResearchGate to connect, collaborate, and share their work.

Experts believe that South Asia can again be a hub of economic activities through improved connectivity with Central Asia. India must focus on improving connectivity along the ancient Silk Route to establish itself as a hub for trade by reviving the Asian trade route would put South Asia at the center of Europe and East Asia.