

comes the intercourse between India the kingdom of India. In spite of the evidences to be found in the Bible, writers have been very little disposed to credit it for historical purpose. The evidence is too strong to be slighted".¹ Suited in the mainland, Judea was not in a position to develop a direct trade with India. She had no water-front at all and consequently no harbours. She had entirely to depend upon the Egyptians and the Syrians who controlled the sea and the trade routes of India. The galleys of India brought their goods to Yemen or Arabia Felix. Yemen was the great mart for Indian goods : it was a distributing centre and from it Indian commodities were taken to Syria by the caravan or to Egypt by the Egyptian Vessels. "From the very earliest ages the refined civilization of Egypt and Syria sought with avidity the spices, the aromatics, the metals, the precious and scented woods, the gems, the ivory in a kind, all the valuable merchandise which the rich soil of India supplied in abundance."² King Solomon, however, when he came to the throne, tried to get the control of Indian trade. He saw that the Egyptian power was on its decline and realized that importance of utilizing Idumee as sea port on the Red Sea and which had inherited as the conquest of his father—for materialising his plans of direct trade relations with India. But since the Jews had not been experienced in the art of navigation, he had to seek the cooperation of Hiram, the king of the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians were the pioneers in navigation. Whether they dealt directly with India is a subject of great controversy. Mr. Robertson is favourably inclined. After showing how the poverty of the land compelled the Phoenicians to subsist by commerce, he goes on to say, "among the various branches of their commerce, that with India may be regarded as one of the most considerable and most lucrative as by their situation on the mediterranean, and the imperfect state of navigation, they could not attempt to open a direct communication with India by sea: the enterprising spirit of commerce prompted them to west from the Idumacans some commodious harbours towards the bottom of the Arabian Gulf. From these they held a regular intercourse with India on

¹ cf. W. Robertson *"Disquisition"* p.9-10.

² I. Lenormant and E. Chevallier, *"Ancient History of the East* Vol. I, p. 144.

the one hand, and with the eastern and southern coasts of Africa on the other. The distance, however, from the Arabian Gulf to Zyre, was considerable, and rendered the conveyance of goods to it by land carriages so heaviest and extensive that it became necessary for them to take possession of Phinocolura, the nearest port in the mediterranean to the Arabian Gulf, thither all the commodities brought from India were conveyed overland by a route much shorter, and more practicable, than that by which the productions of the East were carried at a subsequent period from the opposite shore of the Arabian Gulf to the Nile. At Rhinocolura they were re-shipped, and transported by an easy navigation to Tyre, and distributed throughout the world. This, as it is the earliest route of communication with India of which we have any authentic description, had so many advantages over any ever known, before the modern discovery of a new course of navigation to the east, that the Phoenicians could apply other nations with the productions of India in greater abundance and at a cheaper rate, than any people of antiquity.”¹ Another evidence supporting the view of Mr. Robertson is to be found in the fact that the Phoenicians introduced their letters in India a direct proof of their intercourse. King Solomon, stimulated or otherwise by the neighbouring Phoenicians, joined hands with Hiram, king of Tyre and built a fleet at Elath and Eziongeber. Manned by Phoenician sailors, it sailed to Qahir and brought back many treasures which two kings shared between themselves. The location of Qahir is another unsettled topic. But for all practical purposes Prof. Lassen had closed the controversy by identifying it with Abhira in the province of Gujrat in India. With the interval of three years, the voyage was repeated and the ships laden with all precious articles to enrich the country so much so that “the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made her to be as Sycamore trees that are in the vale for abundance”.² Thus all the advantages of trade were secured for the people with exposing to the dangers attendant upon it. Consequently in the words of Dean Stanley (Senai and Palestine. p. 261) “To describe the capital as a place where shall

¹ W. Robertson “Disquisition” p. 7-8.

² I Kings X27.

go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass by” (Isaiah XXXIII 21) is not, as according to western notions it would be an expression of weakness and danger, but of prosperity and security.”

The trade between India and Judea does not date with Soloman : it enjoys considerable antiquity; mentions of Qphir are to be found long before the time of Soloman in the I Chronicles XXIX, 4, I kings XXII 48, and in Isaiah, XIII 12. These Biblical evidences may be supplemented by linguistic evidences such as the Hebrew word *tuki* which is but a little changed form of the poetical word *Tokei* i.e. the Tamil-malayalam language for peacock or the Hebrew word *Ahalim* or *Aholoth*—‘aloes’—a corruption of the Tamil-malayalam word, *Aghil*.¹

The rise of Babylonia marks the high water mark in the ancient commercial activity of India. Situated at the confluence of the Euphrates and the Tigris joining the Persian Gulf with the mediterranean and being a meeting place of upper and lower Asia, Babylon was destined to be the great emporium of the eastern and western trade. It was the meeting place of routes from all parts of the ancient world. There is ample evidence, says Mr. Kennedy, that “warrants us in the belief that maritime commerce between India and Babylon flourished in the seventh and sixth and more especially in the sixth century B.C. It was chiefly in the hands of the Dravidians although Aryans also had a share in it, and as Indian traders settled afterwards in Arabia and on the eastern coast of Africa, and as we find them settling at this very time on the coast of China, we cannot doubt that they had their settlements in Babylon also. But the sixth and seventh centuries are the culminating period of Babylonian greatness. Babylon which had been destroyed by Senkacherib and rebuilt by Esarhaddon ; Babylon, which had fused her importance and her fame to the sanctity of her temples now appears before us of a sudden as the greatest commercial mart of the world. There was no limit to her power. She arose and utterly overthrew her ancient rival and oppressor Nineveh. With Nebuchadnezzar she became the

¹ cf. E. J. Simcox — “*Primitive Civilizations*” Vol. I, p. 545.

wonder of the world But the secret of her greatness lay to her monopoly of the treasures of the east, in the shouting of the Chaldeans in their ships and smartly orientals who frequented her lazars. It moved the envy of the nations. Paharaoh Necho (612-596 B. C.) vainly sacrificed his subjects in order to reopen the canal which Seti I had made from the Nile to the Red Sea : and he despatched his Phoenician fleet round Africa in the hope of discovering a new world for commerce. And a long ago, the rivalry of the Spaniards and the Portuguese for the treasures of India was anticipated and equalled by the rivalry of Babylonians and Egyptians when the world was as yet one and twenty centuries younger.”¹ This commercial intercourse told very decidedly on the literature of India. Sea played an immense role and ‘*Mokar*’ the monster fish was constantly alluded to. The Vedic dieties fall in the back ground and the Hindu mind of the times soared high in inventing fantastic cosmogonies as is to be found in the Vishnu Purana where it is said that “the Supreme Being placed the Earth on the summit of the ocean, where it floats like a mighty vessel and from its expansive surface does not sink beneath the waters.” The entire literature smacks of commercialism and is essentially different in nature from the early Vedic literature so much so that Prof. Max Muller in his “*History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*” says, “there is throughout the Brahmanas, such a complete misunderstanding of the original intention of the Vedic hymns that we can hardly understand how such an estrangement could have taken place unless there had been at some time or other a sudden and violent breaks in the chain of tradition”. This “estrangement” can be accounted by foreign influence which follows the footsteps of commerce.” The focus of this foreign influence upon India was therefore in the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries” and certainly not “later than the time of Buddha, for this great teacher found all India believing in metempsychosis, which is not a Vedic doctrine” and must therefore be an exotic.² It must not however be supposed that the maritime activity of the Hindoos dates from the period : nay sea-farming had become a matter of habit with

¹ J. Kennedy J. R. A. S. 1898, p. 270-1.

* Rev. Joshep Edkins J. R. A. S. 1886, p. 6.

them : Buddha in the Kevaddhu Sutta of the Digha (fifth century B.C.) says by way of simile "Long ago ocean going merchants were wont to plunge forth upon the sea, on board a ship, taking with them a shore-sighting bird. When the ship was out of sight of land they would set the shore-sighting bird free. And it would go to the east and to the south and to the west and to the north, and to the intermediate points, and rise aloft. If on the horizon it caught sight of land, thither it would go back to the ship again. Just so, brother etc." Mr. Rhys Davids comments that such a Sinitic would scarcely be made use of, in ordinary talk, unless the habit referred to were of some standing and matter of general knowledge."¹

The decline of Babylon however was as sudden as her rise and dates from the reign of king Darius (579-484 B. C). From the fifth century on, we no longer find the commercial tablets that were so numerous in earlier times. The Persian conquest not only destroyed Babylon but extended to Egypt. The canals build for riverine traffic decayed and the flow of the rivers was impeded by dams : as a result of this the Arabs became the caviars of trade and Yemen interests the splendour of Babylon and Palmyra. The Chaldeans also in spite of the sweeping expeditions of Darius continued their trade by establishing their colonies at Gerrha and other places.

The conquests Darius brought under his rule a vast Empire which became contiguous with that of the empire of Alexander. It was quite impossible for the two emperors full of earth hunger remain as goodly neighbours, friction was bound to arise and Alexander waiting for an opportunity set out on his career of conquest. In one sweep he destroyed the empire of Darius and extended his dominion over Egypt, Central Asia and the northern part of India.

The motives of Alexander's gigantic expedition are a matter of conjecture. Vindication for humiliation suffered at the hands of Darius has been put forth as one of them. Prof. Lassen, however radically enough, ventures to say that greed of gold was the object of Alexander's expedition and that it was whetted by

¹ *J. R. A. S.* 1899, Vol. 31, p.432

the presence of Indian goods in Greece. The commercial intercourse with Greece as with Judea has left its impress upon the language of the two trading people.” Thus the Greek name for rice (*oryza*), ginger (*zingiber*), and cinnamon (*karpion*) have a close correspondence with their Tamil equivalents, viz., *arisi*, *inchiver*, and *karava* respectively; and this identity of Greek with Tamil words clearly indicates that it was Greek merchants who conveyed these articles and their names to Europe from Tamil land. Again, the name *Yavan*, the name by which these Western merchants were known, which in old Sanskrit poetry is invariable used to denote the Greeks, is derived from the Greek word *Jaonis*, the name of the Greeks in their own language.”¹ Another word that may be added to this group of words having a common origin is the parrell words for ivory or elephant in Greek “*Elephas*” in Egyptian “*Ebu*” and “*Ebha*” in Sanskrit which in the opinion of Prof. Lassen indicate a common Sanskrit origin.

Whatever may have been the motives of Alexander, it is quite certain that having known India intimately, he did conceive the idea of bringing the two countries in close commercial relation. Alexander found that this rich trade of India was monopolized by the Phoenicians of Zyre who supplied the rest of the world with Indian commodities. His envy of the Phoenicians was considerably heightened by his personal knowledge of the prosperity of India. “The country he had hitherto visited, was so populous and well cultivated, or abounded in so many valuable productions of nature and of art, as that part of India through which he had let his army. But when he was informed in every place, and probably with exaggerated description, how much the India was interior to the Ganges, and how far all that he had hitherto beheld was surpassed in the happy regions through which that great river flows, it is not wonderful that his eagerness to view and to take possession of them should have prompted him to assemble his soldiers, and to propose that they should resume their march towards that quarter where wealth, dominion, and fame awaited them.”² The northern part of India which Alexander subdued was given over by him to Porus, his ally and is said to have

¹ R. K. Mookerji “*Indian Shipping*” p. 121

² W. Robertson “Disquisition”, p. 16-17.

contained "no fewer than four thousand towns." "Even in the most restricted sense" comments Mr. Robertson "that can be given to the vague indefinite appellations of nations and towns, an idea is conveyed of a very great degree of population. As the fleet (of Alexander) sailed down the river (Indus), the country on each side was found to be in no respect inferior to that of which the government was committed to Porus."¹

The memoirs or journals of his generals Ptolemy, Aristobulus, and Nearchus opened the knowledge of India to Greece and to Europe. Having conquered Egypt, Alexander thought of opening a direct trade between India and Greece. With this object in view he founded the city of Alexandria after his own name which became the greatest emporium of trade in ancient times and continued to be so in spite of many vicissitudes. He cherished many a dream of permanently joining India to his empire and some of it, not all of them, would have been realized had he lived longer. Unfortunately he died soon after he established his empire which within a short time crumbled to pieces. The governors of the different provinces parcelled out among themselves the whole empire. Goaded, by ambition, emulation and personal curiosity/animosity they fought among themselves for supremacy. It would be erroneous to suppose that the commercial relation between India and Greece ceased because of the fall of Alexander's empire : just the reverse, the relations became closer. Seleucus, the most enterprising and ambitious general of Alexander, after seizing for himself the Persian empire, sought to join to his dominions the provinces of India conquered by Alexander. Seleucus was alive to the commercial gains to be derived by such a conquest and determined to carry out his plans by means of his vast armies. But his adversary was more than a match for him. Chandragupta (Sandracottus of the Greeks) was ruling India as a benevolent despot, Amidst all medievalism he was a modern man endowed with both brain and brawn. Seleucus realized the superior strength of his enemy and wisely concluded peace and to cultivate friendly relations between the two, he sent Megasthenes as an ambassador to the court of

¹ W. Robertson "*Disquisition*" p. 22.

Chundragupta. Magasthenes was followed by Daimachus to continue the friendly relations. The Greeks maintained their intercourse with India through the Graceo-Bactrian kingdom for a long time though we have very scanty means to judge its magnitude and charter. The Chinese historians tell us "that about one hundred and twenty-six years before the Christain Era, a powerful horde of Tartars, pushed from their native seats on the confines of China, and obliged to move towards the west by the pressure of a more numerous body that rolled on behind them, passed the Taxartes, and pouring in upon Bactria, like an irresistible torrent, overwhelmed that kingdom, and put an end to the dominion of the Greeks there, after it had been established near one hundred and thirty years".¹ Though the land communication was thus interrupted, Alexandria continued to be the emporium of sea trade between Greece and India. Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, during his governorship greatly encouraged the Indian Commerce. His son Ptolemy Philadelphus, in order to carry the articles of India directly to Alexandria started constructing a canal joining the Red Sea and the Nile : the project however was too big and was abandoned. He however built a city on the west coast on the Red Sea and called it Berenice and it continued to be the staple town for Indian trade :

"But while the monarchs of Egypt and Syria laboured with emulation and ardour to secure to their subjects all the advantages of the Indian trade, a power arose in the west which proved fatal to both. The Romans, by the vigour of their military institutions, and the wisdom of their political conduct, having rendered themselves masters of all Italy and Sicily, soon overturned the rival republic of Carthage ; A. C. 55, subjected Macedonia and Greece, extended their dominion over Syria, and at last turned their victorious arms against Egypt, the only kingdom remaining of those established by the successor of Alexander the Great."

With the subjugation of Egypt the lucrative commerce from India flowed into Rome; but this was not the only way. There was another trade route for the Indian commodities into the west. It was a land route and was intended by Solomon to concentrate the Indian trade in judea. It passed the town of Tadmora or Dalmyra situated midway between the Euphratis and the

¹ W. Robertson "*Disquisition*" p. 37.

mediterranean. After the subjugation of Syria by Romans, Palmyra became independent and grew to be a populous and flourishing town. It became a distributing centre. But the Roman cupidity knew no bounds. At the slightest sign of ill-feeling on the part of Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra, the Romans took the city and included it within their empire.

But the inclusion of Palmyra was not enough for the Romans to monopolize the Indian trade for, another power equally strong was rising into the east. The Parthians had dominated central Asia and had made the boundaries of their empire contiguous with that of the Romans. The struggle between Parthia and Rome extended from 55 to 20 B. C. but the struggle for supremacy remained indecisive. "The warfare between 55 and 20 B. C. had left the two empires with a wholesome respect for each other: and Augustus left it as a principle of imperial policy that the west bank of the Euphrates was the proper limit for the Roman empire, beyond which the power of Rome could not with advantage be extended".¹ The policy of the Roman Empire during the two centuries following the Christain era was "to encourage direct sea trade with India, cutting out all overland routes through Parthia and thus avoiding the annoyance of fiscal dependence on that consistent enemy of Rome".² Under the Pax Romana, trade between India was greatly fostered and grew so much in importance, guides to the ports of the India and itinerary of land travels and caravans were begun to be written for the benefits of the merchants. It was during the middle of the first century A. D. that Hippolus, a Greek Egyptian, discovered the regularity of the Indian monsoon and thus facilitated the voyage of the traders. It was also about this time that a Greek merchant wrote "The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea" or guide to the Indian ocean. It is the most authentic document we have for the study of the Indian commercial activity. Another Greek adventurer, Isodore of Charax travelled round the Parthian kingdom and gave a full account of the Caravan trade along the land route. Before this it had to receive the oriental goods from the hands of the others. The

¹ Isidore of Charax "*Parthian Stations*" ed, W. H. Schoff, p. 21.

² *Ibid*, p. 19.

Arabs concealed all information relating to India to perpetuate their monopoly and the Parthian tolls greatly augmented the value of the Indian commodities, "so that all this rich trade that flowed to Rome paid its tolls to the empire of Parthia and to the Arab kingdoms, unless Rome could develop and control a seaborne trade to India".¹ But this discovery of the monsoons by Hippolus, the columbus of modern times fulfilled much felt want of the Romans." Great shiftings of national power followed this entry of the Roman shipping into the Indian ocean. One by one Petia and Gerrha, Palmyra and Parthia itself, their revenues sapped by the diversion of accustomed trade, fell into Roman hands. The Homerite kingdom in South Arabia fell upon hard times, its capital into ruin, and some to its best men northward and as the Ghassanids bowed the neck to Rome, Abyssinia flourished in proportion as its old enemy declined. If this state of things had continued, the whole course of later events might have changed. Islam might never have appeared, and a greater Rome might have left its system of law and government from the Thames to the Ganges. But the logic of history was too strong. Gradually the treasure that fell to the Roman arms was expended in suppressing insurrections in the conquered provinces in civil wars at home, and in a constant drain of specie to the east in the settlement of adverse trade balances; a drain which was very real and menacing to a nation which made no notable advance in production or industry by means of which new wealth could be created."²

As regards the Roman trade with India we have a thesaurus of information though by no means unquestionable.

The first kind of evidence is the number of embassies sent to Rome from India and Ceylon.

The first embassy came from Ceylon and is recorded by Pliny. It is impossible to determine its exact date : but certain circumstantial evidences would warrant us in placing somewhere between A. D. 41 and 54. It was sent to Claudis and reached him

¹ *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* , W. H. Schoff, p. 5.

² Erased.

at a time when more serious events such as the intrigues of Agrippina and Messalina's violent death too much occupied the minds of the Roman historian to make an adequate mention of it. The embassy was sent by Chundra Muka Siwa King of Celyon who ruled from 44 to 52 A. D.¹

Other embassies soon followed. The second came to Trojan in A. D. 107, third to Antonius Pius A. D. 138, fourth to Julian A. D. 361 and the fifth to Justinian A. D. 530. The natives of Indian make no mention of these embassies. They are recorded by Roman historian and barely so, consequently it is very difficult to infer regarding the object of these embassies. They however serve to demonstrate that intercourse between India and Rome was constant and alive and that "during the reign of Servius, his son Commodus, and the pseudo antonines", when Alexandria and Palmyra were both occupied with commerce and were both prosperous. Roman intercourse with India was at its height. Then Roman literature gave more of its attention to Indian matters and did not, as of old, confine itself to quotation from the historians of Alexander or the narratives of the Seleucidian Ambassadors, but drew its information from other and independent sources.²

Other evidences mostly of a literary character strengthen the same conclusion. Dr. Hirth in his "China and the Roman Orient" quotes Sung-Shu, a Chinese historian 500 A.D. writing about the period 420-478 A. D. saying; "As regards Ta-ts'in (Syria) and I'ien Chu (India) far out on the western ocean, we have to say that, although the envoys of the two Han dynasties have experienced the special difficulties of this road. Yet traffic in merchandise has been effected, and the goods have been sent out to the foreign tribes, the force of winds, driving them far away across the waves of the sea. There are lofty ranges of mountains quite different from those we know and a great variety of populous tribes having different names and bearing uncommon designations, they being of a class quite different from our

¹ *cf.* *J.R.A.S.* 1860 Vol. XVIII, p. 349-50.

² *cf.* *J.R.A.S.* Vol. XIX, p. 276.

own. All the precious things of land and water come from them, as well as the gems made of rhinoceros horns and chrysoprase, serpent pearls and asbestos cloth, there being innumerable varieties of these curiosities : and also the doctrine of the abstraction of mind in devotion to the Lord of the world (Buddha)—all this having caused navigation and trade to be extended to these parts.”

Another Chinese historian Ma-Touanlin in his *Researches into antiquity* says “India (A. D. 500-16) carries on a considerable commerce by sea with Ta-Tsin, the Roman empire and the Ansi or ASE”.¹

A writer of considerable acumen makes bold to say after the destruction of Palmyra, direct trade between India and Rome never existed. The Romans, he says, established their trading station at Adule, the chief port of Ethiopia and “though under Constantine there was much economic prosperity, yet the Roman trading activity never extended beyond Adule”.

Archaeological discoveries and historical references however point to quite the opposite conclusion. Mr. Vincent Smith remarks; “There is good reason to believe that considerable colonies of Roman subjects engaged in trade were settled in southern India during the first two centuries of our era, and that European soldiers, described as powerful Yavanas, and dumb Mlecchas (barbarians) clad in complete armour, acted as bodyguards to Tamil kings, while the large ships of the Yavanas lay off Muziris (Cranganore) to receive the cargoes of pepper paid for by Roman gold”.² Not only were there Roman trading colonies but that “Roman soldiers were enlisted in the service of the Pandyas and other Tamil kings”.³ And “during the reign of the Pandya Aryappadai-Kadaretha - Nedunj - Cheliyan, Roman soldiers were

¹ Quote in the *J. R. A. S.* Vol. XIX, p. 307.

² *Early History of India*, p. 400-1.

³ Quoted in Mookerjee's *Indian Shipping*, p. 128.

employed to guard the jobs of the fort of Madura".¹ Numismatic evidences also bear out the intimate commercial relations between India and Rome.

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This intimate commercial intercourse between Rome and India is very readily accounted for by the fact that "from the time of Mark Antony to the time of Justinian i.e. from B. C. 30 to A. D. 550, their political importance as allies against the Parthians and Sassanians, and their commercial importance as controllers of one of the main trade routes between the east and the west, made the friendship of the Kusans or Sakas, who held the Indus Valley and Bactria, a matter of highest importance to Rome"²

With this short sketch of the trade relations of India with foreign countries we will now consider the articles of commerce and trade routes and the important ports of India.

The Periplus, Ptolemy's Geography and the Christain Topography are the chief sources that furnish with information on the articles of commerce and the ports of India.

The Periplus mentions the following as articles of export:

(1) Spikenard, (2) Cortus, (3) Bdellium, (4) Ivory, (5) Qugate, (6) Lycirem, (7) Cotton cloth of all kinds, (8) Silk cloth, (9) Mallow-cloth, (10) Yarn, (11) Long pepper, (12) Diamonds, (13) Sapphiris, (14) Tortoise shell, (15) Transperent stones of all kinds, (16) Pearls, . (17) Malabathrum, (18) Incense, (19) Indigo.

Under imports it mentions: (1) Wine, (2) Copper, (3) Tin, (4) Lead, (5) Coral, (6) Thin clothing and Inferior sorts of all kinds, (7) Sweet clover, (8) Flint and crude glass, (9) Antimony, (10) Gold and Silver coins accruing from the favourable balance of trade.

The Periplus or the marine guide book to the Indian ocean mentions the following trading ports of India :

- (1) Barygaza or the modern Baroach the principle trading centre of western India. It mentions two inland towns connected with Baroach, Paithan and Tagara.
- (2) Souppara—modern Supara near Bassein.
- (3) Kalliean—the present Kalyan.
- (4) Semulla—presumably modern Chembur.

¹ Quoted *Ibid*, p. 128.

* Quoted in Mukerjee—"Indian Shpping", p. 139.

- (5) Mandagora.
- (6) Palaipatami.
- (7) Melizeigara.
- (8) Tyndis.
- (9) Muziris.
- (10) Nelkynda.

“Ptolemy’s Geography” describes the whole sea coast from the mouths of the Indus to those of the Ganges, and mentions many towns and ports of commercial importance. These are, among others, Syrastra (Surat), Monoglosson (Mangrol) in Guzerat, Ariake (Maharashtra), Soupara, Muziris, Bakarei, Maisoli (Masli-patnam), Kounagara (Konarak), and other places”.¹

Certain of the Tamil poets have beautifully described some of the commercial ports and towns in southern India. One of them says, “The thriving town of Muchiri, where the beautiful large ships of the Yavans, bringing gold, come splashing the white foam on the waters of the Periplus which belongs to the Cherala, and return laden with pepper.” “Fish is bartered for paddy, which is brought in baskets to the houses,” says another. “Sacks of pepper are brought from the houses to the market: the gold received from ships, in exchange for articles sold, is brought to shore in barges at Muchiri, where the music of the Surging sea never ceases, and where Kudduvan (the Chera king) presents to visitors the rare products of the seas and mountains.”² The description given of Kaviripaddinam (the Kamara of the Periplus and Khaberis of Ptolemy) or Pukar are equally important and inspiring. It was built on the northern bank of the Kaveri river; then a broad and deep stream in which heavily laden ships entered from the sea without slacking sail. The town was divided into two parts, one of which, Maruvar-Pakkam, adjoined the sea coast. Near the beach in Maruvar-Pakkam were raised platforms and godowns and warehouses where the foods landed from ships were stored. Here the goods were stamped with the Tiger stamps (the emblem of the Chola kings) after payment of customs duty, and passed on to merchants’ warehouses. Close by were the settlements of the

¹ R. K. Mookerjee “*Indian Shipping*”, p. 134.

² Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 135.

Yavana (foreign) merchants, where many articles were always exposed for sale. Here were also the headquarters of the foreign traders who had come from beyond the seas and who spoke various tongues. Vendors of fragrant pastes and powders, of flowers and incense, tailors who worked on silk, wool, or cotton, traders in sandal, aghil, coral, pearl, gold, and precious stones, grain merchants, washermen, dealers in fish baits, butchers, blacksmiths, braziers, carpenters, copper smiths, painters, sculptors, goldsmiths cobblers, and toy-makers all had their habitation in Maravar-Pakkam.”¹

The trade routes from India to the west may be conveniently divided under two heads. (1) The land routes and (2) The marine route.

It is truly said that individual migration is a habit of civilized man. Ancient folks, because of their strong gregarious instinct or because of the want of security, always moved in bands. This habit of theirs is well depicted in their methods of trade. Compelled to be peddlars, fear of competition was never too strong to break the tradings. Caravan which moved from place to place with their loaded animals under conditions so unfavourable that easygoing modern man with all the keen business instinct in him will rather quit worshipping the mamon rather than undergo the difficulties ill-compensated by gain. Speaking of the Caravan Mr. Harbur says, “The very course of the Caravan was not a matter of free choice, but of established custom. In the vast steppes of sandy deserts, which they had to traverse, nature had sparing allotted to the traveller a few scattered places of rest, where, under the shade of palm trees, and beside the cool fountains at their feet, the merchant and the beast of burden might enjoy the refreshment rendered necessary by so much suffering. Such places of repose became centreparts of commerce, and not unfrequently the sites of temples and sancturies, under the protection of which the marchants prosecuted his trade, and to which the pilgrim resorted.”² Being subject to these conditions the Caravan route was never a straight one, it was always zigzag and when we look

¹ Mookerjee R. K. “*Indian Shipping*”, p. 135-136.

² Quoted in *the Calcutta Review*, Vol. 19, p. 345 .

at maps of ancient trade we are struck with a network of small roads meeting and crossing each other at various points. However we may decipher two main trade routes from India to the mediterranean. The northern most followed the river Oxus and encircling the northern basin of the Caspian sea converged on the Black sea and thence to Constantinople. The middle one rather followed a straight path, with many bifurcations which meet at market. It starts on along the southern basin of the Caspian Sea through, Tebriz, Erzewm Trebizond and through the Black Sea to Constantinople. These were the two main land trade routes between the India and the west.

There were also two marine routes though one of them was only halfway marine. Of these one was the Red Sea route. Ships from Indian ports crossed the Indian ocean either to southern Africa or sailed upwards, and touched at the ports of southern Arabia and Aden and through the *St. of Babel-mandeb* (the gate of Tears) ploughed the waters of the Red Sea, touching at Jedda on the Arabian coast and Bernice on the Egyptian coast. From Bernice goods were taken by Caravan to Thebes and Kos where they were gained through the Nile to Alexandria and from thence to Europe. The other marine route lay through the Persian gulf. Ships sailed from Baroach and kept hugging close to the land and touched at Masket and at Ormuz through the gulf of Oman to Bassora. From Bassora at the mouth of the Persian gulf, the goods were taken by the Caravan along the shores of the Euphrates and Tygris through Babylonia to Antioch on the mediterranean.

These two marine trade routes continued upto the present time but the story of the land trade routes is entirely different. They were closed and were closed for ever and the history of their foreclosure is perhaps the only event in the Asiatic continent that profoundly affected the history of Europe.