



Economic Role Of Inland Trade Routes As Reflected In Jatakas

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Abstract: The inland routes throughout the time they cover are extensively discussed in the *Jātakas*. A significant factor in the development of culture is geography. A nation's trading routes are also influenced by its geographic location. Naturally, routes over mountains and deserts are exceedingly challenging, but the same routes through wide-open valleys, rivers, and open plains become simpler. The *Jātakas* describe a variety of roads, though it might be challenging to tell them apart. This quest for a natural route must have lasted for aeons, and over time, a network of trade routes spread over the entire nation. *Jātakas* provided numerous references, such as inland trade routes, which were crucial and played an important role in the economic growth of Buddhism.

Index Terms-Trade Routes, *Jātakas*, Inland, Buddhism.

Introduction: The inland routes were those leading from one important trade centre to another within the country, not only on the east and west coasts but also in the northern, central and southern parts of the entire sub-continent. The roads were generally uneven and dirty.¹ There appear to have existed certain kingdoms to the west of the Kuru regions. This kingdom and further west, Gandhara province, (Rawalpindi District in West Panjab and Peshawar District in the North-West Frontier Province) were both under one ruler. In the extreme west was the land of the Kambhoja whose customs were savage.² Unless there was road communication between these tracts and India proper their commercial relations can hardly be explained.

Magadha (approximately Patna and Gaya districts of south Bihar) was the capital of a kingdom bearing that name. From there travel was possible to Banaras and Anga.³ From Magadha one could also proceed to Kosala.⁴ Another important city in this region was Rajagaha (Rajagaha near Rajgir among the hills near Gaya) which seems to have been another capital. The Magadha was now roughly represented by the modern districts of Patna and Gaya in south Bihar. It was called the city of Vesali (Vaisali), the modern Basarh, which lies to the east of Gandak in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar because it must have been within the sphere of Lichchavi influence. The last destination was Pasanaka Cetiya, a Buddhist religious establishment, not far from Magadha.

In the Uttarapatha, we may start with Kapisa as the most westerly point of contact of commerce by land with the tracts of central and eastern India and once well-known for its horses and grape wine. The next most important landmark in this region was Takkasila (Taxila), once a famous university town in Gandhara, which was accessible from a large number of towns within the country like Kosala, Banaras, Indraprastha, Uttara-Pancala city (Ahicchatra), Kampilla (Kampil) and Kalacampa in Anga. Banaras, the next most important city in the Uttarapatha, could be reached from Magadha, Anga and even the distant Kaveripattana in the Kingdom of Damila. Banaras could also be approached from Mahismati, the Mandhata or Maheswar on the Narmada as well as from Sagala (Sialkot) in the kingdom of Madda (Madra). Ujjain in Avanti was available from Vidisa in the Dasarna kingdom while Vidisa itself had a road connection with Sibipur (Shorkot in U.P.) or from Jetuttara or Arittapura in the Sibi kingdom.

In the Dakshinapatha one could go from Dantapura in Kalinga to Indrapatta (Indraprastha) from where, as noted earlier, there seems to have existed a road to Taxila, Banaras or Sagala. From Kalinga, one could also move to the Assaka country through which ran the river Godavari on whose banks stood its capital, Potali, probably the Potana of the *Digha-Nikaya*. So we may presume that from Potali to Dantapura there must have

been road communication. From Damila (Tamilakam) one could reach Banaras which, as we have seen like Taxila, was approachable either from the east or the west, by road.

Aim of Study: For a very long time, the foundation of all religions is money. Without funding, all religions would have to cease to exist. Buddhism also had an impact on the economy, which grew as a result of successful trading along various trade routes throughout the nation. On a broad scale, it is believed that the *Jātakas* relate to these trade routes. The *Jātakas* portrayed social and economic situations. One of the factors in the thriving economic situation were the trade channels.

Review of Literature: The book *Early Buddhism and its origin*⁵ provided information about the economic foundations of early Buddhism. He has discussed the religious, social, economic, and political background of early Buddhism. He also discussed that trade and commerce were prominent aspects of the economic foundations of early Buddhism but not touched on the trade route's importance in the growth of Buddhism. The book *Trade and trade routes in ancient India*⁶ provides information about trade and different trade routes in ancient Indian times. In this work, the author deals with the problems related to ancient Indian merchants, their trade, the trade regulations and the network of trade routes. The book did not provide sufficient information regarding the economic role of trade routes in the growth of Buddhism.

Inland Trade Routes in Jatakas: In the *Jātakas* the hubs of activity centred mainly in the cities of Varanasi (Banaras) in the kingdom of Kasi, Savatthi (Sravasti), Taxila and Ujjain. Some of the other countries were on the eastern side of Uttarapatha. In the extreme east was Anga (region east of Magadha and west of Rajamahar Hills) which was separated from Magadha by the river Campa. In this kingdom lay the famous city of Kalacampa⁷ from where merchants embarked for Suvarnabhumi.

The *Guttala- Jātaka* refers to a route from Ujjain to Banaras. Ujjain was within the realm of Avanti. The kingdom of Avanti was included in the South country. Therefore, there can be little doubt that Banaras traders went to Ujjain by road for, in the *Guttala- Jātaka*, we find how "certain traders of Banaras made the journey to Ujjain for trade."⁸ Such a course could only have been possible in those days by road which must have existed between these two cities.

From Banaras travellers used to travel to Takasila (Taxila) through Kosala, corresponding roughly to modern Oudh, with its capital at Ayodhya (Faridabad). As can be seen from the *Saikappa- Jātaka* such travel was undertaken mainly though not entirely for purposes of study in the celebrated university established there. From the *Brahmadatta- Jātaka* we find that sometimes people went first to Kosal,⁹ The capital of which was Saketa (Ayodhya) and thence to Taxila in the Gandhara country. This Taxila has been identified with Shaderi or Dheri Shahan in the Rawalpindi district, West Punjab. Taxila was also approachable to other towns. We learn from the *Dasabrahmana- Jātaka* that Taxila could be reached from Indapatta (Indraprastha) also and that Indapatta was in the kingdom of the Kurus.¹⁰ This famous city of Taxila was also accessible by road from several other kingdoms like Mithila (capital of Videha), and Panchala city (kampilaka kingdom). The *Gutha Pana- Jātaka* has recorded how the citizens of Anga and Magadha travelled from one kingdom to another.

There was another city called Sagala (modern Sialkot)¹¹ in the kingdom of Madda (Madra) which was reached by road from the city of Kusavati in the Malla kingdom. It is called the royal city (*Rajdhani*) and has been identified with Kusinara, the later Kasia. From the *Kusa- Jātaka* we learn how the king of Kusavati set out with a great retinue from his capital and in course of time reached the city of Sagala.¹² Another important centre of road contact was the Dasarna country. In the *Mahunaradakassapa- Jātaka* it is associated with Videha.¹³ Its capital was Vidisa which has been identified with modern Bhilsa or Besnagar. Its pristine was metropolis near the former town.¹⁴ This Sibi kingdom is also mentioned in the *Sivi- Jātaka* with its capital at Jetuttara identified with the tract about Nagari, eleven miles north of Chittor.¹⁵

We may now turn to the localities mentioned in the north-western region of the country, namely, Gujarat and Sind. The *Ghanata- Jātaka* mention is made of the kingdom of Dvaravati the capital of which had the sea on one side and a mountain on the other.¹⁶ This region has been identified with the south of the peninsula of Gujarat wherein lays Prabhasa or Somnath and to its west was Dvaravati better known as Dwaraka also known as Abdinagari and Kusasthali once the capital of Anarta. In this region must be mentioned the great commercial cities of Bharukaccha (Broach) and Supparaka (Sopara), already noted earlier. They were the most prominent among the embarking stations on the west coast. They were also accessible by land right up to Kalacampa.

We shall first take up Kalinga. From the *Kurudhamma- Jātaka* it would appear as if there was road communication between Dantapura (capital of Kalinga in South Orissa) and Indapatta city in the Kuru kingdom.¹⁷ From Dantapura, if the *Kalinga-Bodhi- Jātaka* is to be depended upon, people could travel also by road to the city of Sagala in the kingdom of Madda and from there return to Dantapura. While referring to Kalinga mention is made in the Culla Kalinga country of the Assaka (Asmaka) country and it would appear as if their territories were contiguous. Asika was also one of the kingdoms ruled over by Gotamiputra Satakarani, on the Krsnavena (river Krsna) reminiscent of Arsika mentioned by Patanjali, and is identical with Asaka or Asmaka on the Godavari.¹⁸

The most prominent region in the southern part of the country were the kingdoms of Damila, Kalinga, Dandaka and Serrated that which was place where medium-class horses were available. Another important region in southern India was the kingdom of Damila mentioned for example in the *Akitta- Jātaka*. Therein we find how the Great Being (*Bodhisatta*), once departed from Banaras, came eventually to Kaveripattana, the metropolis of Damila,¹⁹ which was no other than the Damirike of the Periplus. This would imply that people from Banaras could, even though eventually, travel to Damila where the famous town of Kaveripattana, also called Puhar, was a great centre of commerce. All these pleasures must have been possible owing to its wealth and prosperity emanating from its commerce. The *Jātakas* mention yet another kingdom called Seri and the *Serivaniya- Jātaka* relates how an entry could be made into its capital city Andhapura across the river Telavaha.²⁰ We have now to see whether the *Jātakas* refer to any region with which the rest of the cities mentioned in them had any road connections.

Prince Asoka was ruling over the Avanti County by the appointment of his father, during a journey to Ujjain he arrived at Cetiya, the "capital of his royal mother". From this tradition, it may be seen how there seems to have existed a road from Pataliputra to Ujjain from where one could arrive also at Cetiya which was no other than Cetiya-nagara, which, as we have seen from the *Cetiya- Jātaka*, was the capital of the Ceti²¹ kingdom, roughly corresponding to modern Bundelkhand and a part of the former central Provinces. So it may be seen how one could travel from Pataliputra first to Ujjain and thence to Cetiya-nagara. From the *Vesantara- Jātaka* one finds that Cetiya-nagara was thirty leagues away from Jetuttara, the Sibi capital which must have stood not far from the modern town of Banda.²²

When important persons travelled on the road then also it was repaired. Bimbisara (the king of Magadha) when heard that the Buddha was proceeding from Vaisali to Magadha, he requested him to postpone his journey temporarily to give him time to repair the road. The road from Rajagriha to the extent of five *yojanas* was levelled and at every *yojana*, a rest house was set up. Across the Ganga, the Vajjis also did the same thing. When all this arrangement was complete, the Buddha set out on his journey.²³ In ancient India, free rest-houses were provided on roads for the comfort of travellers. A *Jātaka* gives an interesting story about the erection of such a rest-house.²⁴ It is related that the Bodhisattva and his comrade a carpenter, built rest-houses on the city square. But they decided that in the performance of such a religious act they would not take the help of any woman. The rest-houses were provided with chowkies for sitting and water pots. It was fenced with a wall which had a gate. In the open space inside the rest-houses sand was spread and outside rows of palm trees were planted. A *Jātaka* informs us that a Bodhisattva was engaged in repairing roads. He with his comrades got up early in the morning and then with road making-implements such as shovels and rollers they went to their work. At first, they removed stones from the road crossings and to facilitate the movement of the wheels, they lopped off certain trees with their axes. The even roads were levelled, dykes were made, tanks were dug up and the rest houses were raised. The Bodhisattva and his comrades did the same work as the labour force accompanying Bharata's army.²⁵ It is also evident from the *Jātakas* that the sanitation and repair of the roads were entrusted to a specialized labour force but it is not known what position they occupied in the general administration of the state or the city.

Conclusion: These narratives have shown how travellers might move across the country from east to west or north to south. In the northern region of the country, from Gandhara to Anga, it appears that such routes existed. In the eastern and southern regions of the country, they relate to routes that go from the Himalayan region to Kalinga and even to Damila or Tamil Nadu. This quest for a natural route must have lasted for aeons, and over time, a network of trade routes spread over the entire nation. Numerous trade routes that were significant from the perspective of commercial activity are mentioned in the *Jātakas*. Along these trade routes, Buddhist monks travelled with traders who provided security for them in exchange for financial support for their survival.

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