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## **Trade and Commerce in Ancient Haryana**

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**Abstract:** - The natural conditions of Haryana provided the key to the spiritual and material advancement of the people. Like other parts of India, this region has given full support and encouragement to agriculturists, artisans, and traders since ancient times. The economic life of man in this region passed through many stages. India has long been a trading nation, which has sold precious commodities like spices, perfumes, precious stones, jewellery, silk, muslin, and medicinal drugs, etc. to the world since the Harappan era. The Vedic economy gave equal importance to both internal and external trade. Manufacturing activity was brisk during the Mauryan rule. The Mauryans had laid down rules and regulations on trade movement. After the establishment of the rule of the Kushans, India made significant progress in its commercial and colonial activities and developed trade relations with foreign countries. The Guptas not only expanded its eastern trade but also opened up the western maritime trade, resulting in unmatched economic success.

**Key Words:** - Meaning, Trade, Commerce, Ancient Haryana, Internal Trade, External Trade.

**Introduction:** - The collection, distribution, and exchange of commodities is called trade. It is a process that depends on many factors, such as the nature and quantity of production, transportation facilities, the safety and security of traders, and the exchange pattern. Trade also involves various sections of society, including merchants, traders, farmers, and artisans. In a somewhat indirect way, even the political authorities have a stake in it, as their taxes on articles of commerce are an important source of state revenue.

The historian tries to present a true picture of the past by examining all the available materials such as important literary sources, archaeological sources, and accounts of foreigners to create history like a scientist. Trade and commerce have played a major role in the Indian economy from the very beginning. Trade and commerce have always been the pillars of Indian culture and civilization. Apart from these material considerations, trade and commerce provide a



lifestyle based on the human values of cooperation and labor. The prosperity and progress of the nation are closely linked to trade and commerce. Of the four purusharthas, 'dharma' 'artha', 'karma', and 'moksha', 'dharma' was considered the most important, but the economic aspect was never ignored in the history of ancient India. In the Vedas, we find many prayers in which the Aryans pray to the

Gods for their prosperity. According to Kautilya, no person can discharge his religious duties efficiently without wealth. Sources such as the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and Ptolemy's only to Western countries but also to the Malay Peninsula and the islands of Java and Sumatra to trade. Contemporary Buddhist texts give a long list of trade centers in the Far East, which largely agrees with Ptolemy. This trade continued during the Gupta period. It is thus evident that Indians paid due attention to the mobilization of the economic resources available in the country.

Geographical factors play a major role in shaping the trading prosperity of a region, but real economic prosperity requires the active participation of man. Natural resources should be exploited only when they yield results. Similarly, the natural conditions of Haryana provided the key to the spiritual and material advancement of the people. Like other parts of India, this region has given full support and encouragement to farmers, artisans, and traders since ancient times. This research paper discusses trade and commerce, an aspect of the economic life of Haryana from ancient times to 1200 AD. The economic life of man in the region under review passed through several stages. In the first stage, the total economic activity of the man was limited to gathering food. This era was the human food-gathering economy, in which the entire economic activities of human life were limited to food. Although the man of this era used to satisfy his hunger with the fruits and flowers produced by himself, tubers and roots, meat of animals killed in hunting and fish hunted on the river bank, etc. The stone tools recovered from Haryana not only provide new clues about the evolution of man on the subcontinent but may also lead to the rock shelters of early man in the region. The evidence possibly belongs to the Stone Age culture of the Paleolithic phase. In this phase 'the livelihood was hunting and gathering of food in one form or the other.

### **Trade and Commerce in the Proto-historic period:**



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According to Allchin, Indians started exchanging goods in the Stone Age. Neolithic people traded stone tools in exchange for grains. Thus, the process of exchange and distribution of goods started from the Neolithic period itself.

Artifacts recovered from various Harappan sites in Haryana show the remains of a well-organized trade system. It probably involved a planned distribution association. Similar goods like tools, weights, beads, and seals were produced in the region. Regulating exchange rates, weights and measures was necessary for trade. The system of weights and measures was involved in trade under the Harappan Civilization, which proves that there must have been some government control for the control of weights and measures in this era. Archaeologists have found copper and gold jewellery from various Harappan sites in Haryana. Gold came from the mines of Mysore, while copper came from Rajasthan. Excavations at Mitathal have found traces of ancient carts at road level. This shows that the people of Harappa used to trade with people from far and wide. In this era, convoys of traders used to travel far and wide by both land and water routes to do business. These traders travelling in convoys used bullock carts etc. for travelling on land routes. It is a natural tendency of the man to cooperate with other people doing the same business. As industry and trade grow, urbanization takes place. Then the people doing business form associations to protect their interests. Thus associations came into existence with urbanization. The first urbanization in this region also took place in the Harappan culture. The Harappan culture developed many crafts and industries. It had trade relations with people from far and wide. There is sufficient archaeological evidence to support this view. This shows that industry, crafts and trade were flourishing in this culture in this region. In this era, agriculture and trade were given importance and the art of making artistic pottery for daily use, making stone and metal utensils, making various types of jewelry and making jewelry studded with precious stones had developed as a business. There is no doubt that trade started with the exchange of goods. But the barter system worked only when both people wanted each other's goods. So we chose a medium of exchange and everyone could use it. These were gold, silver and copper coins. Thus, coins developed according to everyone's convenience. Researchers have found some seals and triangles made of clay at Harappan sites in this region. This shows that seals and triangles were used as a medium of exchange for traders.



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## **Trade and Commerce in the Vedic Period:**

In the Vedic age, the trade of weaving, carpentry, metallurgy, pottery making etc. was well developed, but probably the trades associated with these like weaver, carpenter, blacksmith, potter etc. could not be identified as caste or class, on the contrary different members of the same family followed different crafts. In terms of material development, the post-Vedic civilization was more developed than the Rigvedic civilization and trade also developed in the post-Vedic age. The use of many types of metals like gold, copper, bronze etc. is mentioned in the Rigveda. It is said in the Rigveda that cows were the medium of exchange. But then most of the trade was done through the exchange of goods. Earlier "haar" was a gold necklace. Later it also started being used as a coin to award the poet. The Rigveda shows that bargaining to fix prices was common. In the Rigveda, traders used the word 'Vaaniij'.

Merchants in the later Vedic period also used barter systems for their trade. They sold clothes, bed covers, goat skins and much more. Trade and craftsmen were developing in this era, which led to the growth of trade associations which is clear evidence of trade development. The literature of this period mentions a class of merchants called 'Panis'. They were traders as well as money lenders.

Archaeological sources also support references to trade in Vedic literature. Based on literary and archaeological sources, it appears that trade had limitations. Full-time artisans required an efficient agricultural economy. This should have yielded a surplus and allowed some trade. But, without maps and trade, we cannot imagine an urban economy in this region during the Vedic period. The Vedic economy is a pre-urban, traditional stage. It is between the tribal and urban modes of production. Occupations increased and as a result, the society became complex. But the shape of their houses, ornaments and settlements suggest a class division. The agricultural economy, iron technology and trade suggest that the Vedic people were close to a class-based society. There was some social stratification and few large settlements. In their later phase, there were limited specialized crafts.

## **Trade and Commerce in the Early Historical Period:**



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During the early historical period, all industries were growing rapidly due to the inclusion of the necessary measurement system for buying and selling in trade, the use of currency for exchange and the use of various types of loans for credit transactions. In fact, the business activities had become so advanced in this era that India of this era had established good trade relations not only with the internal parts of the country but also with foreign countries. Along with the development of arts and crafts, trade was also flourishing and it got a great boost due to the improvement in the means of transportation. The distant and foreign trade developed under the Mauryas got a boost due to the invasion of Alexander, who opened new trade routes with the Western world.

The Greek historian Arrian states "It is reported that the country beyond the Hyphaes (Beas) was highly fertile, and that: the inhabitants were good agriculturists, brave in war, and living under an excellent system of government, as the hordes were ruled by an aristocracy which exercised its authority with justice and moderation. It is also reported that the people had a greater number of elephants than other Indians and that they were of superior size and courage." This refers to the people of eastern Punjab and Haryana. They have received recognition for their strong ambitions and successful farms.

Kautilya's Arthashastra mentions trade as one of the three major types of economic activities. According to him, the state should ensure that the trade routes are safe, and that goods are not adulterated, or that consumers are not cheated by dishonest traders. Trade and commerce have played an important role in promoting the growth of the economy by contributing significantly in terms of tax revenue and by providing gainful employment to a large section of society. Ashoka's pillar at Topra near Sugh in Ambala suggests their location on the North Indian routes. Rohitak (Rohtak) and Shrugna (Sugh in Ambala) were located on the southern and northern routes respectively. The use of coin money further promoted trade. Punch-marked and copper-cast coins, considered to be the oldest coins of India, have also been found from several sites in Haryana. Coin molds have been found from Sugh, Jagadhari, Naraingarh, Sadhaura, Raja-Karan-ka-Qila Theh-Polar, (District Karnal) Sonipat Agroha, Khokharkot and Naurangabad. A large number of Kushan coins have also been discovered in Ambala, Kurukshetra, Karnal,



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Sonapat, Jind, Sirsa, Gurgaon, Bhiwani and Rohtak districts. Coins of the Kunid Republic have also been found from Naraingarh, Sadhaura, Chhoti Karori, Badi Karori, Madalpur and Karnal. The above reference to the large-scale issuance of copper coins by foreign and native republics shows the existence of a developed economy during this period.

### **Trade and Commerce in the Historical period:**

The Yaudheya rule in Haryana ended with the beginning of the historical period, as the Prayag Prashasti shows that the Yaudheyas paid all kinds of taxes, and obeyed and respected the strict orders of Samudragupta. According to R.C. Majumdar, Samudragupta's empire extended to Punjab in the west, possibly including the eastern districts between Lahore and Karnal. The discovery of some Gupta coins in Haryana lends some credence to this.

Huna inscriptions and coins show that their empire included Kashmir, Punjab and parts of Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. This period of struggle for political power in North India saw the rise of a new dynasty founded by Pushpabhuti in Haryana which was then known as 'Srikanth Janapada'. The early rulers of this dynasty probably served under the Guptas, but with changing circumstances, they also showed their loyalty to the Huns, who were gaining dominance in the region. This shows that after going through the struggle for political power in Haryana, the Pushpabhutis emerged politically very strong. Coins were also issued for exchange during this period. Hun coins have also been collected from Ambala by Rogers. The above details show that coins were also used for exchange during this period in Haryana. With the decline of the Kushans, urban development and architectural activity suffered a setback throughout northern India. After the decline of the Yaudheyas in the 4th century AD, Sugh, Daulatpur, Raja-Karan-ka-Kila, Agroha and Khokrakot became their descendants. It appears that the decline of trade, decline of the political power of the Yaudheyas, invasion of the Huns, rise of feudatories of the so-called 'Kota' family, drying up of the Saraswati etc. must have been strong factors for the decline of urban centers in this region.

### **Trade and Commerce in the Early Medieval Period (After Harsha to 1200 A.D.):**





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The decline of urban centers which began after the fall of the Kushans in North India and the Yaudheyas in Haryana reached its peak in the early medieval period. After the death of Harsha, anarchy prevailed in Haryana and the state had to face the attacks of the Huns and the Turks. The events that took place here in the early medieval period must have had an impact on the economic character of the region.

The rise of Harsha on the political scene of India marked the expansion of the Kannauj state into a vast empire. However, he could not consolidate his state into a fully centralized imperial structure like the Mauryas. Rulers like the Guptas and Harsha also ruled over a large state that was loosely held together by patronage relations. R.S. Sharma has shown not only the political disintegration and administrative decentralization brought about by chieftains and vassals but also the emergence of a social system in which the propertied class usurped the surplus produce of the peasants by exercising superior authority over their lands and persons. R.S. Sharma's observation seems difficult to apply to the field of study under consideration as the paucity of available source material makes the task difficult. Only a few comments can be made about the feudal system in Haryana during the early medieval period. The near contemporary source, Harshacharita, refers to the 'Samantas', their various categories, and the feudal system nurtured for Harsha's military campaigns. It also refers to the atrocities committed by the jagirdars (Bhojapatis). Further the mention of 'Agrahara' and 'Agraharika' suggests that during Harsha's time, the area of land occupied by the feudatories of the Brahmans was of considerable importance. On the basis of some epigraphic evidence, it seems that Pinjore, Sirsa, Hansi, Thanesar and Gurgaon were probably the main administrative units with the capital at Delhi (Dillika). The genealogy mentioned in Mahendrapal's Pehowa Parasasti shows that the Tomara king ruled over the Haryana region as a feudatory of the Paratiharas.

The trade evidence of this time is very limited. The Pehowa inscription of 882 AD, is the only evidence that describes the trade activity of this region, this inscription refers to a mutual agreement between some pious traders who met at a horse fair in Pehowa and agreed to levy certain taxes on themselves and their customers, and the proceeds from that tax were to be distributed among the temples or priests and in a fair manner in a fixed proportion. The inscription



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shows that Pehowa had become an import center for the trade of horses, where horse traders from different places used to assemble every year on a particular day for the sale and purchase of horses.

The archaeological remains also shed some light on the trading activities of that period. The discovery of several sculptures made of black stone from the region of this period suggests that it was imported from Kashmir or some other hilly areas in the neighborhood. Some marble pieces excavated from various sites of this period also indicate their import from Rajasthan, which is the nearest source. The trading activities of this period can also be estimated from the description of the trade routes mentioned in various sources. However, the indigenous evidence relating to the state of trade routes during this period is extremely inadequate. It is largely supplemented by information obtained from the accounts of travelers and chroniclers who visited India after the Muslim invasions. Alberini, who visited Haryana in the early 11th century, also mentions some important routes which either passed through the region or reached some other destination. Though the available sources regarding the conditions of trade are inadequate, it can be safely stated that during the period under review, trade in general suffered a severe setback due to political instability in the region.

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