

Tracing the Ancient Trade route from Rājagṛiha to Tāmraliptī during the period of 3rd Century BCE to 6th Century CE

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Abstract: India shows a clear cultural revolution in the 6th century BCE in the form of Archaeology and History. This began in the Middle Ganga area but expanded over the Indian subcontinent within a few decades. Buddhism had a significant role in this cultural revolution, which affected India in many areas, including politics, economy, culture, and religion. Trade is also a part of the economy. “Uttarapatha” and “Dakshinapatha” were the most popular commerce routes during this time period. Most academics researched *Uttarapatha* and *Dakshinapatha*, but no research was done on the Rājagṛiha to Tāmraliptī trade route, which was the primary city of Buddhism and to the principal trading port in east India. This route was the historical marine and land trading routes along India’s east coast. It is proven by the chronicles, jātakas, and archaeological findings which detail the inter-relationship had with Buddhist monasteries and commerce guilds (Shreni). This trade route was more accurate in international trade as well as cultural exchanges during and as well as after the period of king Ashoka (3rd century BCE). And it continued until the end of the Pala period. This paper tries to trace this trade route which was knowingly or unknowingly hidden on the east coast of India.

Keyword: Archaeological findings, Buddhist Monasteries, Rājagṛiha, Tāmraliptī, Trade Exchanges

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INTRODUCTION

This topic will focus on “Tracing the Ancient Trade route from Rājagṛiha to Tāmraliptī during the period of 3rd Century BCE to 6th Century CE”. Rājagṛiha, the capital of the principal kingdom of Magadha, was documented as one of the key towns that carried Buddhism throughout India, South Asia, and Southeast Asia as early as the sixth century BCE. When Fā-Hian and Xung-sang visited India, Rājagṛiha was established as a commerce hub between the fifth and seventh century CE. According to historical sources Tāmraliptī appears to have been active as an essential international Indian port as early as the 3rd Century BCE. In addition, significant kingdoms such as the Maurya and Shunga were centred along the east coast Ganga valley. Most earlier studies in the region have concentrated on the cultural interaction between “Uttarapata” and “Dakshinapatha,” as well as the “Silk Road” trade. They did not, however, observe the trade route flowing from Rājagṛiha to Tāmraliptī, where the nearest road leads to the sea.

The next point is the relationship between trade and Buddhism. When looking at the historical relationship between trade and Buddhism, traders like Anthapindika and Tapassu-Bhallika can be classified as Buddhists. In addition, Buddhism was primarily disseminated through trade to the north, west, and south of India and certain other countries.

The majority of rock-cut caves in western India are created and maintained with the help of traders. Traders' contributions are clearly documented throughout Nalanda's history. Buddhism began to expand throughout India and South Asia in the third century BCE, with traders playing an important role. This Article investigates the ancient trade route between Rājagṛiha and Tāmraliptī with the help of Buddhism and Archaeological material remains.

ANCIENT TRADE IN INDIA

The main challenge for the first two-legged man was to protect himself from predators and find foods. Man used rock caves and rock shelters as his habitat in the early days. As for food, they used to hunt and eat animals daily. Their lives were simple, and they did not have massive needs. Humans had finished hunting animals and began cultivating and domesticating animals for their needs by the next moment. As a result, they began to create permanent habitats instead of living by traveling based on the seasons. Over time, it became clear to them that living on these farms was relatively difficult compared to hunting down the previously trained animals. With that, they began to focus on sharing their products. This is the

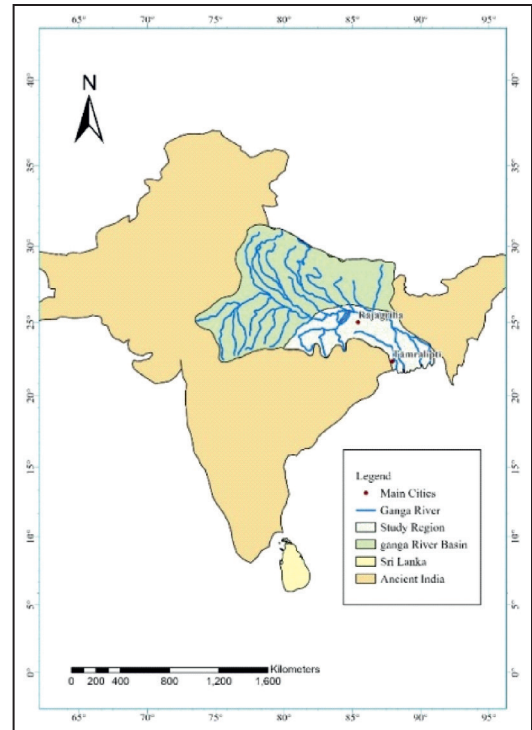


Figure 1: Ancient India Map with Ganga Valley Basin and Research Region

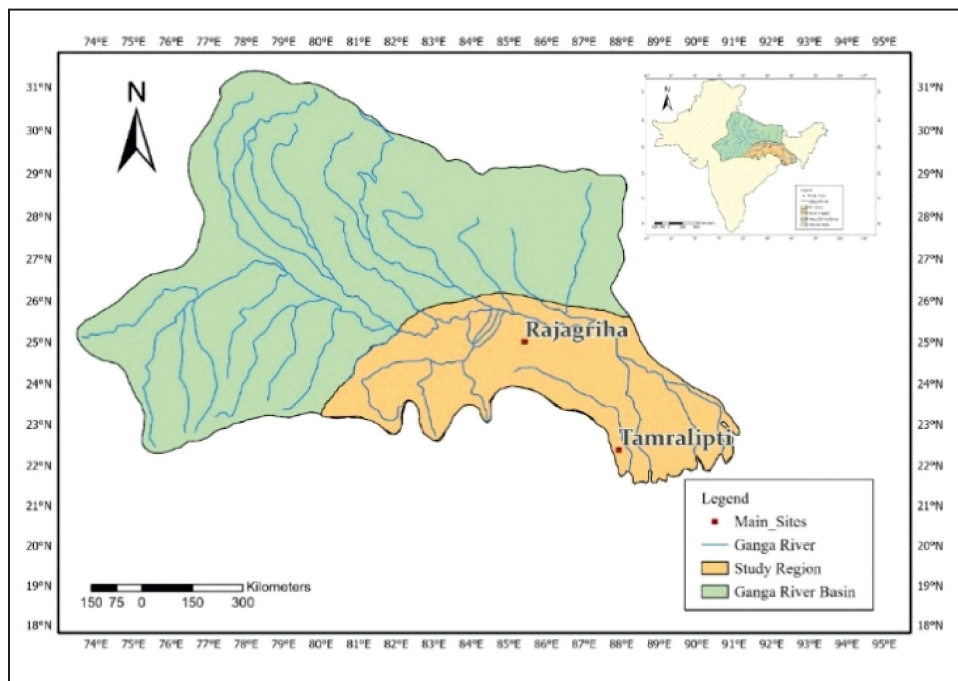


Figure 2: Ganga River Basin Map with Research Area

beginning of an exchange economy. Man, first exchanged the surplus of his plantations with one another and later made costumes and weapons. This was initially limited to where they lived. But then they took their products out of their settlements along various new routes. But human beings realized the dangerous nature of traveling alone, and then began to travel in groups. This can be identified as caravan trade¹. The beginning of the caravan trade can be dated back to the proto historical period. When it comes to India in Indus Valley cities, they began the exchange sales first in the Asian region (Rao, 2018).

Piggott believes that perhaps the merchants from Harappa came to south Baluchistan, but their stay was not more important than the temporary sojourn of caravans (Vats, 1975: 113). This view, put forward by Piggott, is made easier by the city organization found in the two major cities of the Indus Valley (Piggott 1950:113-114). Most of the features are typical of modern developed cities. Archaeological excavations at Lothal also unearthed a small replica of Mohenjo-Daro by Rao. K. N. Rao reveals that there were shops on both sides of its main streets. Also, late excavations at the Lothal uncovered a dock (Patowary, 2020). This dock is clear evidence of the Indus Valley shipping trade. Then Rao and Kosambi found some boat figures inscribed in Harappan age potteries (Tripathi, 2017b). Later, George F. Dales also found a terracotta object representing a boat (Dales, 1965).

The river valley civilizations of world history reveal a great deal of the connection with those civilizations. The Mesopotamian and Indus Valley Civilizations are two major river valley civilizations that provide evidence in this regard. Analysts point out similarities between the pictorial characters found in these two civilizations (McIntosh, 2017). They also point out that these two groups of civilizations may have maintained a barter system (ibid). Despite these connections, the remains of a large building found in Mohenjo-Daro have now been identified as a granary. It confirms that these people used some form of banking or savings system. The Indus Valley Civilization was active in India from around 2500 BC - 1700 BCE (Allchin, 2021). Evidence for an advanced banking system associated with Mesopotamia can be seen in the findings of grain stores, animal farm findings, and other valuable commodity storage sites. When the exchange was predominant, animal exchange was mainly used, and castles were used as a medium. As Figueira points out, man has come to need money as a definite factor (Whipps, 2007). They were eager to find alternatives. On the other hand, they believe that such a medium of exchange can make the affairs of society more just and fair with greater transparency. Moreover, they have identified the need for a small medium of exchange for assistance in times of war. Athens, Aegina, Curren, and Persia followed suit and created their coins (ibid).

After the Indus valley age, the Vedic age began in India. In this period, Vedic literature mentioned “pani” or “Panin” as the name of merchants (Chandra, 1977: vii). However, these persons never got a good position in Vedic society. But they collected their Excess and began to visit village to a village. In long-distance trade, they understand that they need the support of others to protect them from wild animals and robbers². Then they started to move as a group. Also, these traders began to worship certain gods and goddesses for their protection³. In north India, there are many temples for yaksha “Manibhadra,” and Yaksha “Parkham” (Ojha, 2016; Tiwari, 2021). The literature source says about a person called “Sārthavāha.” Sārthavāha⁴ is self-explanatory and the leader of traveling merchants who invested their capital.

In the 6th century BCE, these merchants got the third position in society called “Vaiśya.” However, most religions are never ready to accept these commercial activities positively (Gokhale, 1977)⁵. However, society is realistic enough to acknowledge that the merchant and his activities are essential to society. Thus it is clear that before the establishment of Buddhism in ancient Indian society, they did not approve of the participation of traders in religious activities. These religious offerings are

critical events in ancient Indian society, reflecting man's social status. Even though they have high status as a social class, not allowing them to participate in the religious offerings is like sending them to the status of Sudra in society. As a result, they withdrew from the Vedic teachings and tradition. But Buddhism did not view commercial activity negatively. This is clear from the Buddha's portrayal of himself as a merchant in his previous life. For example, stories (jātakas) like *Vannupatha*, *Kutavanija*, *Seravanija* (Babbitt, 1912), *Samudra Vaiśya*, and *Mahā Janakajātakas* say about the history of traders and caravans⁶. Because of the place that Buddhism gave to them, many Indian merchants became Buddhists⁷. As a result, from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE, trading ships and caravans from India transported Buddhist monks and their primary cargos of goods such as textiles, ivory, sandalwood, and spices (Mahavamsa: chp.13, verse 20-21). In the form of manuscripts, images, and other portable icons, material Buddhist culture also traveled along the trade routes, carried abroad by those who needed religious objects for protection, veneration, or proselytizing purposes.

With the arrival of King Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE, Buddhism began to spread rapidly based in Eastern India. Merchants were often the agent of the spread of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent. Using *Uththarapatha* and *Dakshinapatha*, Buddhism spread through inland trade routes in India and Asian countries, including China⁸. Also, the message of Buddhism spread to other Asian countries through the port of Tāmraliptī, the leading Indian port in the East⁹. This propaganda was so powerful that the Theravāda Dhamma was propagated in the 3rd century BCE in countries like Sri Lanka and Cambodia. Also, the emperors Sri Vijaya and Shailendra, who dominated trade in Southeast Asia by the 7th -8th centuries CE, were Buddhists. These data confirm the connection between trade and Buddhism and its history. Also, another significant factor presents the data regarding this relationship. That is NBPW potteries. These are mainly found in the entire region of the Ganga Valley, from the lower Ganges to the upper Ganges. It is also unique because these potteries were obsolete from about the 7th century BCE to the end of the 1st century BCE (Kanungo et al., 2021). These reusable potteries date back to the most popular period of Buddhism in East India and have since become obsolete. In the inner citadel, excavations of Anuradhapura have also uncovered fragments of this type of potteries.

ROUTES OF ANCIENT TRAVELERS

History tells of two tourists traveling in the eastern part of India between the 5th and 8th centuries CE. Namely Hwen-Tsang (Beal, 1884) and Fa-Hien (Legge, 1971). These two have included the sites they heard and saw in their travel records during their visit to India. These reports were later translated into English. Through it can study the routes that they traveled in India. Although it is impossible to get accurate information about the trade routes that existed in India since the 6th century BCE, it is possible to get an overview of the route they visited in India. In Ganga valley Hwen-Tsang first reached Sravasti. Since then he has traveled to Vaishali. For this he used the northern border of the Ganga valley. He was later traveled from Vaishali to Mithila. Then entered the valley of Nepal and visited Lumbini and Kapilavastu. Again he has come to Vaishali from Nepal. From Vaishali, Hwen Tsang came to Kaushambi, then Sarnath after that Bodh-Gaya, and onward to Rājagṛiha town. From there, He visited several places, including Tiladaka and Nālandā. From Nālandā, he went to Giriya and then proceeded through the hill of Shekhapura to Rajauna (near modern Lakhisarai). Then he went to Hiranya-Parvat in the neighborhood of Munger. After Munger, he traveled around 300li (80km) and reached Champa. Then Champa, Hwen Tsang moved to Tāmraliptī¹⁰. Considering Hwen Tsang's trajectory, it is clear that he was planning to travel to places he heard about and try to visit those places.

Fa Hien traveled to east India after Hwen Tsang. Fa Hien travels from Mathura to Sankisa and Vaishali via Sravasti and Kushinagar. From there, he crossed the Ganga river and reached Pātaliputra.

From pataliputra Fa-Hien next visited to Rājagriha and from there to Gaya. T. Sen states that Fa Hien traveled from Bodh Gaya to Sarnath and Tāmraliptī (Sen, 2006). But anil Kumar, who takes a different meaning, states that Fa Hien traveled from Gaya to Kurkihar and back to Pātaliputra. Fa Hien then went to Champa and came to the port of Tāmraliptī, and sailed to Ceylon (Kumar, 2007). The answer to this question can be found in Legge's book "The Travels of Fa Hien." According to it, Fa Hien goes to Gaya and from there to Kurkihar. Later, he has gone to Varanasi from there, as shown in chapter 34 (Legge, 1971: 96-98). Then come to Pātaliputra and go to Champa and travel to Tāmraliptī.

TRADE AND MANUFACTURE CITIES

Gaya can be pointed out as a city belonging to the ancient kingdom of Magadha. The Buddha attained enlightenment in Bodh-Gaya, a small area in the city of Gaya. There were also three monasteries when the Fa Hien went to this city (Legge 1971: 89; Barua 1969: 118). According to him, in history, 500 merchants offered roasted flour and honey to the Buddha in Gaya city (Legge 1971: 89)¹¹. Also, the three most popular brothers¹² of the Buddha's time, the Kasyapa brothers, became to Buddhist followers with their 1000 followers. This has also happened in Gaya city (Legge 1971: 89). As Hwen Tsang points out, he saw a stupa near the Neranjana River in Gaya. A stupa has also been erected at the place where it is mentioned in history that the god Sakra offered Kusa grass to the Buddha (Beal 1884: 123-124). Laura also mentions two rock-cut cave viharas built by Dasaratha in his book. The Bodh Gaya carries the primary evidence of the merchants' activities Gaya. The inscription of King Mahānāman (169CE) in Bodh Gaya, Architecture of Bodh Gaya Mahavihara¹³, and the relation of kings and monks of Ceylon with this vihara can be pointed out as such evidence (Barua 1969: 124). Geiger, in particular, points out that one vihara at Bodh Gaya was built by Sri Meghavanna king who ruled from 352-379 CE Ceylon. It is also said that the then King of India, Samudragupta, permitted the King of Ceylon to build the vihara (Mahavamsa: xxxix). Barua points out that the vihara must have been the place MarSinh's fort (Barua 1969: 125). Commenting on the other two viharas mentioned above, Barua points out that Matron Kurangi built these temples in memory of her late husband King Kausikiputra. It shows the votive labels found in the old stone railing of Bodh Gaya (ibid: 125)¹⁴. The Bodh Gaya inscription of King Mahānāman also mentions the Buddhist sites located around the Bodh Gaya (Barua 1969: 123). This suggests that King attempted in the 2nd century CE to educate pilgrims and tourists about the surrounding Buddhist shrines. That also suggests that by the 2nd century CE, many people came here to worship.

Taradih Archaeological Site presents data related to 5 periods. Located to the south of Gaya, this city can be identified as Hazaribagh and a more critical place. Archaeological excavations have been carried out at this site from 1981 to 83.

Period I dated to the chalcolithic period. This period has evidence of economic and agricultural activities. Hunting and fishing played a leading role here (IAR 1981-82: 11). And stone axe was found dating back to the neolithic period (IAR 1982-83: 16). The housing structure of this period is wattle and daub (IAR 1981-82: 11: 11). Ovens represent this period, but there is no evidence of Ironworks (ibid). In excavation unearthed copper fish hook and a blade of carnelian (ibid). Handmade potteries were appearing. Redware, BRW, and BW were found in good numbers. Dish-on-stand, lipped bowl, bowl, out curved rim, ring based bowl, perforated bowl, spouted vessel, shallow and deep dish, the dish with in-curved or straight-sided rim, small vase, small to medium size jar, sharp carina, were the pottery remains. antiquity included were beads of terracotta, and stone, arrow-head made of bone, and a small neolithic celt. Designs consisted of twisted rope, pinch and cut signs, knob patterns, and dish-shaped beads.

Period II gave shreds of iron evidence along with NBPW, Grey Ware, Black slipware, BRW, and Redware were found as the potteries. Vases, handi, rimless handi, lota-shaped vessels, basins, lipped bowls, lid-cum-bowls are the ceramic items in this period. And archaeologists recovered Black slipped ware with graffiti marks. Also, stone beads, balls, and bangles, Terracotta bead, animal head, wheel, and a broken naga figurine, Bone objects of arrowheads, dice points and stylus. Iron slags, nails, and a few crucibles were found (IAR 1982-83 : 16; IAR 1981-82: 11). Other than these finding there were two ring wells were discovered.

Then in Period III, ceramic of the Kushana period, Sprinklers, high narrow-necked surahi. Except for ceramics in this period representing conical objects, ear-ornaments, bangles, dabbers, discs of different materials, terracotta and semi-precious stones. Period IV dates back to the Gupta period. In this period Gupta and late Gupta antiquities, sealing, votive stupas of stone, terracotta seals, beads of semi-precious stones, stone images of buddha, Avalokitesvara, a replica of temple, bangles of terracotta, bones, glasses, and unfinished image of Vishnu were discovered (IAR 1982-83: 11: 16).

The crucible is one of the most crucial evidence from the Taradih archeological site from 1981-83. This invention, used in metal smelting furnaces, highlights the essential factors that led to Taradih's metallurgy (Solangaarachchi, 2011).

According to the Indian Archaeology Report 1991-92, the city of Hazaribagh can be identified as an important city in the history of iron technology (IAR 1991-92). Misra points out that Hazaribagh is a city that supplied the raw materials for the Nalanda Monastery. Hazaribagh is also a city that provided the raw material for Indus valley civilization. The brass objects found in Nālandā are similar to the metal's copper and tin mine composition this Hazaribagh (Misra, 2017: 272-273). In the excavation 1982-83, archaeologists found a temple dated back to Pala period (IAR 1985: 15).

The earliest data on factors from Dihar date back to the chalcolithic period. During the archeological excavations of 1983-84, a study was carried out at a place within 7m from the associated river, and a cultural deposit could be identified. Evidence for two eras has been uncovered, with the first dating to the Chalcolithic period and the second to the early historic period. BRW has been identified as the most popular pottery type in this layer. The second epoch found in Dihar dates back to the first century CE. The peculiarity is that NBPW was not found in this era. Archaeologists dated Dihar to the Shunga and Kushana eras¹⁵. Many cast copper coins have been found during excavations carried out here. And also site showed up stone beads and terracotta objects within the excavation (IAR 1983-84: 92-93)¹⁶.

Hwen Tsang states that King Bimbisāra, the king of the Maghadha, held a meeting with all the Brahmin Householders of the Maghadha kingdom and hundreds of thousands of merchants (Beal 1884: 177). The cullavagga also mentions a leading merchant in the city of Rājagriha who completed 60 aramas in one day and offered them to the monks (Cullavagga vi.1.4). This is also quoted by Baura (Baura 1969: 137). Cullavagga also provides evidence that merchants traded between cities in the 6th century BC (buddhas time). According to it, the great Merchant of Savatthi named Anāthapiṇḍika met the great Merchant of Rājagriha when he came to Rājagriha for businesses (cullavagga: vi.4.1). It also reveals information about the marital relations that existed between the merchants. According to it, Anāthapiṇḍika is married to the sister of the great Merchant of Rājagriha. This is an excellent example of the marital relations that existed between the merchant castes in the past (ibid). It can also be explained by referring to the great Merchant of Rājagriha that the name "Gruhapathi" or "Gapathi" is also used in Buddhist literature to refer to merchants or trade leaders (ibid).

Arhat Sāriputta was born in Nālandā and built a stupa by king Ashoka for his memory in Nālandā (Legge 1971: 46,81). Also, where the place arhat Sāriputta attended nibbāna made a stupa called Kalapinaka (Beal 1884: 180). Hwen Tsang mentions several monasteries later built by several kings

in Nālandā (Ibid: 168-174)¹⁷. Donations to the Nālandā monastery are mentioned in inscriptions and literary sources. Meanwhile, Balaputradeva made a new monastery in Nālandā and requested his friend Devapala the king of Bengal to grant 5 villages to maintain the new monastery (Baura 1969: 147). It also mentions grants made by the kings Harsha and Gupta and an offering of 100 “agraharas” made by Damodara Gupta (Kumar 2007: 134). Hwen Tsang points out in his book that Nālandā owned 100 acres of land when he arrived in Nālandā (Beal 1884: 112). But Anil Kumar quotes, I Tsing arrived in Nālandā between the 7th- 9th centuries, that number had grown up to 200 (Kumar 2007: 142). It is very important to consider the economic activities related to Nālandā and the nearby KurkiharNālandā. Both these places have bronze images, Kurkihar alone around 200. Nālandā furnace shows industrial activities at Nālandā. The manufactured blue granite stone sculptures (Misra, 2017: 337). Tiladaka can be pointed out as another unique monastery near Nālandā. Baura points out that it was built by a descendant of King Bimbisara (Baura 1969: 151).

Lakhisarai is a city belonging to the magadha dynasty. The city also exemplifies a number of archaeological and historical sites. Excavations in the city have also uncovered Buddha statues. Among them are Buddha statues with inscriptions. Archaeological excavations at Lakhisarai in 1986-87 have identified a Panchayathanamonastery¹⁸. According to the Indian Archeology Report of 1989-90, this site dates back to the 10th century CE¹⁹ (*Indian Archaeology* 1989-90: 25). However, the dimensions of the bricks used for the monastery are 32 x 24 x 6 cm. Such large bricks were used in history during the Mauryan and Shunga eras between the 3rd century BCE and the 1st century BCE.

The city now known as “Bhagalpur” was formerly known as Champa. Hwen Tsang travels to this city during his visit, and when he goes there, he points out that this city is a fertile city suitable for cultivation. He suggests that most monasteries may have existed in the past and that about 200 monks lived in the city when he visited (Beal 1884: 191-192). It also points out that these monks were monks who practiced Teravada Buddhism. Like Hwen Tsang, Fa Hien also comments on Champa. Commenting on the city’s location, he further points out that the Buddha practiced walking meditation in this city. Fa Hien added that three previous Buddhas also lived in the Champa city (Legge 1971: 100). And as per his travel record he traveled directly from Champa to Tāmraliptī. Hwen Tsang traveled to two other cities and then to the port of Tāmraliptī, indicating that the city was once a significant stop on the Ganga River.

Archaeological excavations at the Champa lasted from 1969 to 1973. The excavations were carried out to investigate the facts mentioned in Jain and Buddhist literary sources. During the 1969-70 excavation²⁰, copper cast coins, and a few punch mark coins, pottery types such as black slipped, gray ware and NBPW, Shunga terracotta, bone points, and iron objects were reported (*Indian Archaeology* 1969-70). The second excavation occurred in 1970-71, where evidence of three periods was found. Trench number CMP-2, based on excavations, shows that the earliest evidence of the site dates from the 2nd to the 1st century BC. The key elements identified are NBPW and black ware with fine fabric, terracotta figurines, bone points, and spindles (*Indian Archaeology* 1970-71). Excavations at the trench number CMP-1H have uncovered evidence of its Gupta age. Terracotta human and animal figurines and terracotta pendants were found (ibid).

The fortification found in this city was made with red and yellow soil. Moreover, the baked bricks found on this site are around 40x25x7cms in size. The west side of this wall has wooden posts. According to the 1970-71 report, this site has three periods. The first Period is divided into three phases. Phase I has red and black ware (lower deposit), black ware, plain redware, and NBPW. Also, semi-precious stone beads, terracotta plaques, animal figurines, bone points, Copper cast coins, and copper pieces were found, and the Floor was paved with brick. Phase 1B has a lesser number

of findings. Nevertheless, less amount of NBPW and grey ware were found. In phase 1C, terracotta animal and human figurines were recorded. Second Period related to Gupta period and no such details in 1971-72 excavation on Gupta period remainings (Indian Archaeology 1971-72).

The third excavation was done in 1972-73, and it reported late NBPW related to the Kushan and Gupta periods. Those are associated with terracotta toy carts, copper cast coins, bone points, and bone arrowheads. This excavation gave a large number of painted NBPW in the Period I. NBPW in Phase 1A showing the details of paintings Fish scale designs, horizontal patterns, and dot signs. This excavation delivered Naga figures and stone, bone, and ivory beads. It also includes copper ear ornaments, nose rings, and hair clips (Indian Archaeology 1972-73). The 1974-75 report makes special mention of the champa site. Accordingly, the city of Champa is described as a jewelery manufacturing center (IAR 1974-75: 9).

Kanjol (Kankjol) is located in raajmahal (Cunningham 1871: 478). In literature, this place is named as Gungjook (Cunningham 1871: 479). Kajinghara (Kankjol) is also a name for this place. This site, with 300 monks and six to seven sangharamas was located 200km from Champa (Beal 1884: 193). Specially Hwen Tsang visited this city during his tour of India.

Mangolkot site exposes Kushana and Gupta period homestead patterns. It gives data from the chalcolithic to the Late Medieval Period. Period I: The first phase giving the data of chalcolithic. This period gives data of potteries BRW²¹, Black-slipped, Red Slipped, Lustrous red, Black and grey, Buff and cream-slipped wares. The site floor is rammed earth with lime, cow dung, and potsherds. Then the clay is dumped into debris. Also, this site gives details of rice cultivation, which was evident from the remains of rice husks in pottery. Here, the excavation found copper objects such as stylus, fish-hook and bone tools, and terracotta and stone beads. The special finding of this site in the excavation of 1989-90 is fragment skeletal along with heaps of Black and red ware of various sizes, a few beads, and iron objects. The 1st period dated to 1200BCE-600BCE (Indian Archaeology 1989-90: 108)²². Period II dated to 600BCE-300BCE (Ibid: 109)²³. This period dated with a lesser number of black slipped ware and alone with some new ceramics. But plain redware, brown and grey ware, black slipped ware, and buff ware industries represent here. Furthermore, terracotta female figures and a few beads were found in this context. Period III shows the data of the Maurya and shunga dynasties (3rd century BCE-1st century BC) (ibid)²⁴. There is no evidence of BRW, but Black slipped ware is continuing. Especially this period showing the evidence of NBPW, red slipped ware; grey-black slipped wares incised patterns.

Also, period III represents female heads of typical Maurya patna style and beads of semi-precious stones like crystal, Carnelian, glass, jasper, agate, onyx, etc. Here it shows cast copper coins of both circular and square varieties. Settlements of mud houses were also found under this excavation and the floor was designed using potsherds and lime-rammed floorings. Then Period IV dated back to 1st and 3rd century CE (Kushana Era) (ibid)²⁵. NBPW are absence of this period. And red ware are the most common pottery type in this period. Copper bowls and needles are presents as the special finding of this period. Period V goes with gupta period around 4th century CE to 6th century CE. The ceramic industry is associated with thin fabric, creamware with slip and wash, and gray ware. Bowls, dishes, vases, basins, and vessels represent pottery types. They used well-burnt potteries, and an Inscription was found dated to 4th and 6th century CE with Brahmi characters (Ibid: 109; Indian Archaeology, 1989-90). 1989-90 excavation unearthed a buddha figure in this site and it attached to the main report as an appendix (Indian Archaeology 1989-90: pl. xxxi A). But the period of this image is not mentioned in the text. These details give an idea that in between 6th century to 3rd century BC, no special activities happened in Mangolkot. As well as it can say this period is a silence period of the trade.

Pundravarddhana is the next site that Hwen Tsang mentioned in his book. Samuel Beal used HH Wilsons book and mentioned this place as a collective of districts. Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Nadiya, Birhum, Bardwan, Midnapur, Jangal mahals, Ramghadh, Pachit, Palaman, and part of Chunar (Beal 1884: 194). According to Hwen Tsang, this city was riched in grain produce (Beal 1884: 194). He mentions that he found about 20 sangharamas in this city and 3000 priests. They studied both the little wheel and the great wheel (Beal 1884:195). The archaeological excavations done at this site record BRW deposits (Indian Archaeology, 1982-83). Based on these potteries, this site can be dated from 6th century BC to 3rd century BCE.

The earliest historical evidence of Chandraketugarh goes to the Maurya period. Punch mark copper coins of ship type, ivory objects, bone dice and beads, precious and semi-precious stone, and NBPW remnants are the most common factors related to that period in this site. Evidence for the shunga period is found second only to this site, which dates to the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. This period represents the factors of terracotta figures, cast copper coins, and beads. The third period of this site goes to 1st and 3rd century CE. Specific findings of this period are terracotta and erotic plaques. Chandraketugarh also contains evidence related to the Gupta era. Considering these factors, it can be

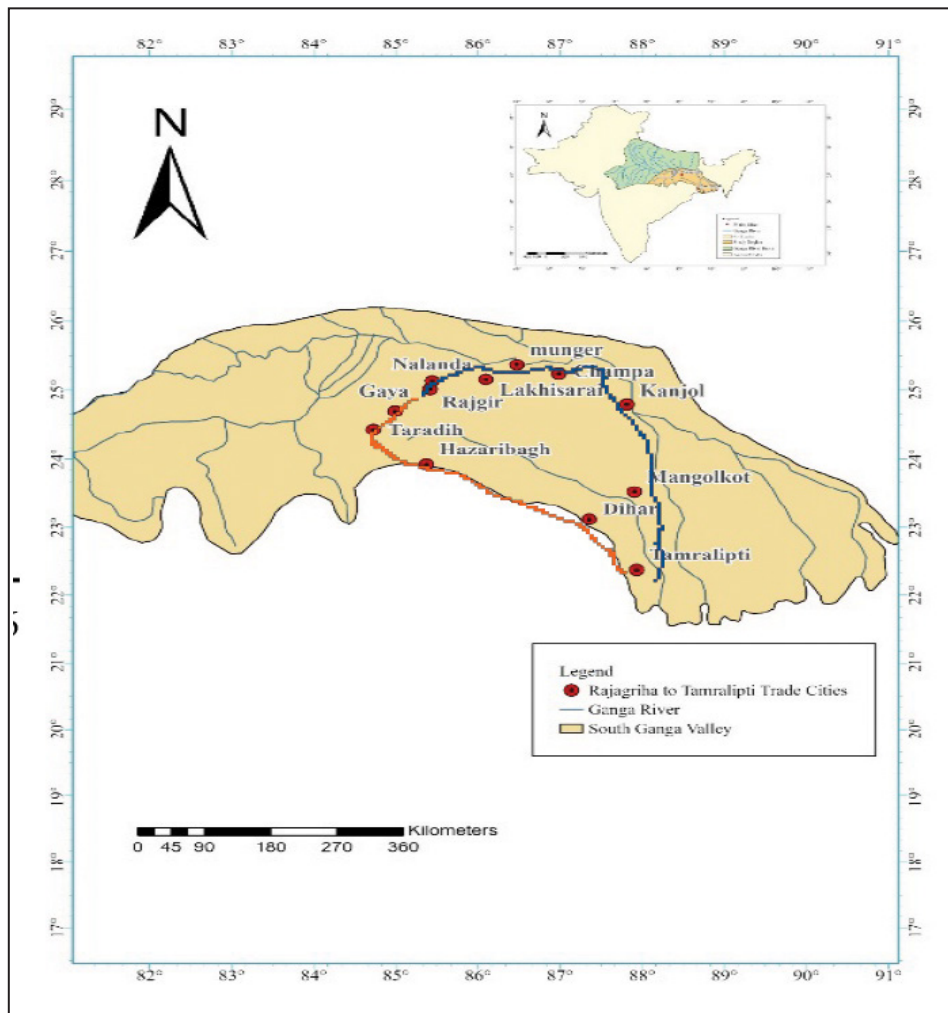


Figure 3: Sites and Routes From Rājagriha to Tāmraliptī – 1. Ganga River Route (River Base Route), 2. Ganga Valley Route (Land Route-blue line), 3. Rājagriha, Gaya, Taradih Possibly connected route for Vaishali to Tāmralipti Trade Route (red line)

pointed out as an archeological site that was archaeologically active from around the 3rd century BC to the 6th century CE and beyond²⁶.

Tāmraliptī was built on the bank of the Rūpanārayana river as a belief. Part of the city is now buried under the river silt, and the temple remains are now partly underground. Houses are found at 18 to 20 feet below the surface. In Rūpanārayana, silver and copper coins bearing Buddhist symbols have been recently discovered (Tripathi et al. 1994: 35). Tāmraliptī had ten sangharamas, and that sangarama was used by 1000 priests when Hwen Tsang attended. Moreover, he said the peoples of Tāmraliptī were rich. A nearby place called Karnasuvana has around ten sangharamas and about 2000 priests (Beal 1884:200). Fa-Hien states that when he attended Tāmraliptī there were 22 monasteries. These are all monasteries full of monks. He took a large merchant-vessel and went to the country of Sinhala. For this sea journey, he got 14 days. Special point he made is this vessel did sailing day and night. As according to his note Tāmraliptī to singhaladēsa 700 yojanas (Legge 1971: 100). Buddhist literature mentioned Kausambhi, Champa and Tāmraliptī along the Ganga and Yamuna boat routes (Tripathi et al. 1994: 35). Tamralipti is a good cloth manufacturing centre in Brihadkalpasutrashya (Tripathi et al. 1994: 36). And Chief export items were grains, earthen ware, clothes and glass (ibid). Excavations were carried out near the tamralipti port in the past to identify it as the modern tamluk in 1973-74, and the purpose of the excavations was to identify whether the site was an ancient port. It contains data from 4 eras and dates to the Chalcolithic period. NBPW can be traced back to the second era. Also burnt floor and number of post-holes have been identified in that layer. According to the IAR report, the floor was made of rammed brick grits. Period IV belongs to the shunga era. Rouletted and red polish ware were identified during Period IV. There is also clear evidence of maritime trade contact with the Roman world (IAR 1974-75: 32-33).

Maheswarapur, original capital of nabada. The Mahavamsa said that the thero Mahadeva was sent to Mahesa-Mandala, in the time of Ashoka (240BCE) (Mahavamsa: chp.xii). according to Cunningham the name mahesa-mandala used for this site.

CONCLUSION

Buddhism began with the association of Magadha in India, and it was considered as the center of Buddhism. Many Buddhist Archeological sites are centered around the Ganga valley. The city of Rājgir occupies a vital place in studying these Buddhist archeological approaches. Rājgir was one of India's most populous colonies (Janapada) in the 6th century BCE. The first successful ruler was King Bimbisara (543BCE – 491 BCE). He is succeeded by his son King Ajasathru (491 BCE – 461 BCE). He later moved the old Rājgir city to the place now known as the new Rājgir and later to the modern Pātaliputra. The specialty of Rajgir is the city where the Buddha spent most of his life. Buddha attained enlightenment in the city of Bodh Gaya. For more than 54 years since his enlightenment, the city has been associated with many Buddhas life phenomena. The other thing is that many monks, including his main disciples ArahātKashyapa, ArahātSariputta, live in the vicinity of this Rājgir city. As a result, many major Buddhist temples are being built around this city, and Vēnuvan and Nālandā occupy a special place. According to the Buddha, monks need a permanent abode only during the rainy season.

The earliest monasteries created in Buddhism are known as vihāras. Anāthapindika, King Bimbisāra, and Jīvaka are thus mentioned in Buddhism as the first monasteries' contributors. However, many later monks were ordained in these vihāras and required the teaching of the Dhamma. These viharas developed into Mahāvihāra²⁷. The contemporary society, teachings of the Brahmins

consisted of four main social castes. The third caste was the “*Vaishya*” caste. According to sources, these were merchants. As Gokhale points out, they are a group of people considered not pure people in society. They are not qualified for Brahmanical *śraddha* (Gokhale, 1977). Especially those who travel by sea receive less recognition in the society. But they held a high position in society due to the perception that they were a necessary group for the socio-economic process. Due to the lack of discouragements in social and religious activities, this business community began to deviate from the teachings of Brahmanism. They embraced Buddhism primarily because of the greater religious tolerance in Buddhism.

By this time, Buddhism had become more popular in the Ganga valley. Due to that, a large number of temples were created. The Tāmraliptī port was also one of the destinations for many traders from central India, including Varānasi. Although trade was based on land and the Ganga river, many merchants needed overnight accommodation in contemporary society. Buddhist Monasteries were able to provide an answer to this problem. As a result, the business community became closer to Buddhism. They provided all the facilities required for Buddhist temples and monks. They also made significant donations to these Buddhist temples. At the same time, these temples were of significant financial value, such as land offerings. Buddhist monasteries and trade remained closely linked until the violent Islamic invasions of the 12th century CE.

Ancient Trade from Rājagriha to Tāmraliptī can be traced in two ways. Namely, land trade and Ganga River trade. Land trade route can divide in to two.

One from Rājagriha to Ganga valley and then onwards to Tāmraliptī. This route also can named as northern route.

Second from Rājagriha to Tāmraliptī via Gaya, Taradih, Hazaribagh, and Dihar. This can named as southern route.

Northern route starts from Rajagriha to Tāmraliptī passing Lakhisarai, Munger and Champa, Kanjol, Mangalkot and Chandrakotgarh. Among these places, Rājagriha, Champa, Mangalkot and Tāmraliptī can be named as the ancient trade cities using the literature and archaeological findings. And all these cities containing rich sources of ancient buddhist monasteries. Other cities can be referred to as halting trade cities. Southern route containing number of production cities such as Taradih and hazaribadh.

Meanwhile, Buddhist viharas can be found in every city except the production sites. A careful reading of Buddhist history reveals that the merchants worked more closely with the Buddhist *viharas* as I discuss in above. Also, according to the Buddhist *Bhikku Vinaya*, it is forbidden to take individual donations as offerings except for the Buddha Sasana. So it is clear that these monasteries were public places. Monasteries can also be pointed out as a place where merchants stay during their travels. This was also one of the reasons for the merchants to build Arama and monasteries. Evidence for this can be found in *Cullavagga* and other Buddhist sources. Archaeological evidence can also be pointed out. A good example of this is the inscription in the 6th cave vihara in the Nashik rock cut cave that a merchant built.

Text

1. line: sidhamviragahapatisaneyagamamsa (1) lenam (2)
2. line: deyadhamakutumbiniya (3) chasanamdasiriya (4) ovarakoduhutu
3. line: yachasapurisadatavaovarakoevalenamchatugabham
4. line: niyuta (5) bhikhusamghasachatudisasaniyachitam

Translation

“success! This cave, a pious gift of the householder vira, a merchant, a cell of his wife Nandasiri, and a cell of his daughter Purisadatta; the cave thus completed to the four cells has been bequeathed to the universal *Sangha*.” (Epigraphia Indica, viii: 75)

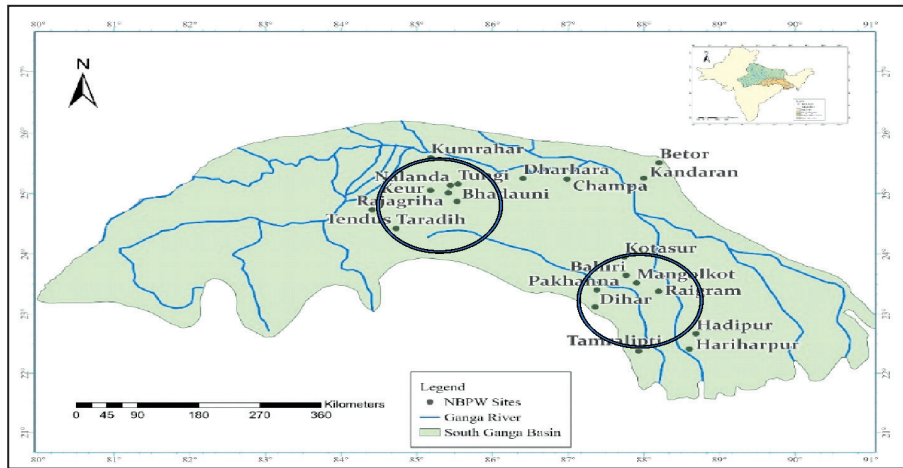


Figure 4: NBPW Sites in Research Region with Rajagriha City and Tamralipti Port
(Source: Kanungo et al. 2021; Singh, 2021)

In addition, a carving in Bharut depicting anāthapindika buying a Jethavana garden.

The south Ganga Basin from Rājagriha to Tāmraliptī also represents Potteries in all significant excavation sites. NBPW has earned a special place among the ancient potteries in East India. This species can be introduced as a pot shade species that started around the 7th century BC and disappeared by the 2nd century CE. These NBPW potteries are mainly found in the ganga valley. The peculiarity is that the use of this pottery was limited to the time when Buddhism was most prevalent in this region. Also, these NBPW potteries are limited in made and have been reused. Kanungo and his team, who studied the NBPW pottery species, point out that it may have been used by people living in the upper strata of society (Kanungo et al., 2021). In addition to these NBPWs, Redware, BRW, and Gray ware are the essential potteries in this area. Also, Several inscribed potteries have also been identified. The script in them can be identified as early brahmi. NBP wares were found at the inner citadel excavation

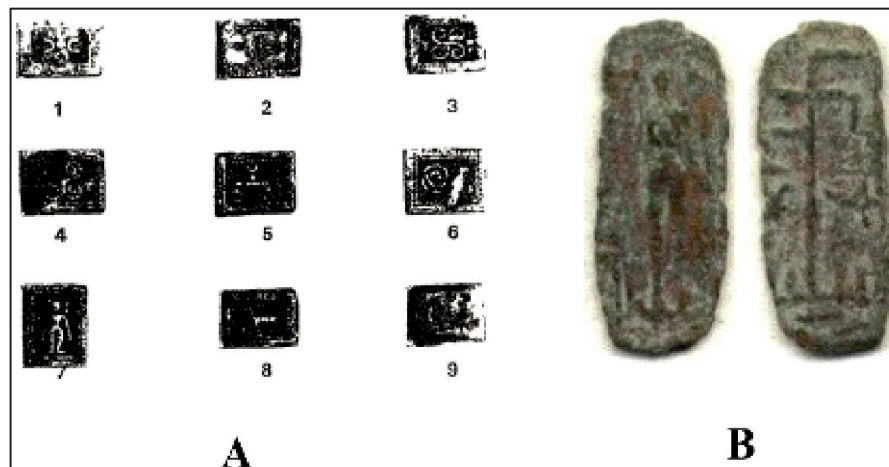


Figure 5: Rājagriha Lakshmi Depicted coin (A); Sri Lakshmi Coin in Sri Lanka (B)

in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka (Daraniyagala 1969). This is one example of the relationship between Sri Lanka and India as well as the long distance and international trade. This fact can be further clarified with another significant archaeological identification. During the Rājagriha excavations, a coin similar to the Sri Lakshmi coin in Sri Lanka was identified.

Place: Rājgir, Patna Bihar.

Metal: Copper

Coin shape: rectangular

weight: 1.8 grains

size: 15x11mm.

Obverse: A figure of a nude woman facing front as illustrated within the raised border. They probably represent the abhisheka of Lakshmi, although the elephants on either side of the head are not distinct.

Reverse: Plain (Ghose, 1972)

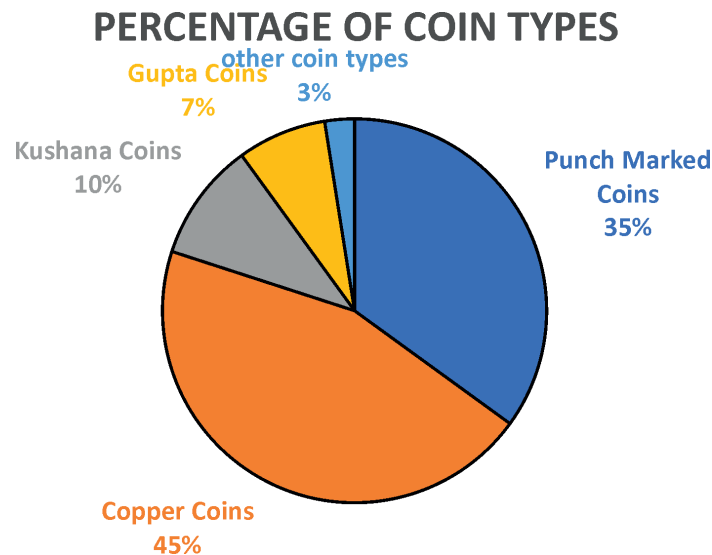


Figure 6: Ancient coins types classification in ancient India (Source : 1960 – 1990 Indian Archaeology Review Reports (27 archaeology excavations))

This type of rectangular coin recognizing as “Lakshmi coin” in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, it was dated in Sri Lanka around the 2nd century BC, and lasted until about the 7th century CE²⁸. Archaeological excavations done in Birbhum district of Bengal have brought to light a coin with a boat motif besides northern black polished ware, sunga terracotta, black and redware, and other artifacts (Tripathi 1994: 19). Punch marked coins with ship motifs were collected from the excavations of Chandraketurgarh and other sites of Bengal (IAR 1962-63: 46). Boat symbols with oar and boatman cast copper coins were found in Bengal (Tripathi 1994: 14). Ship symbol is noticed on the terracotta sealings and in the graffiti on potter from the coastal Bengal and inland Gange’s centers. Similar types were found in Vaishali. A boat, prow, stern, oar, passenger decks, and a female standing in the boats (Tripathi 1994: 15). Roman gold coins of Gordian, Constantine, and others found at Bamanghati and Tāmraliptī show evidence of the Roman trade happening in using Tāmraliptī with Rome (Tripathi 1994: 16). Terracotta seals of Bangarh, Haripur, and Tāmraliptī Museum examined by Mukherjee are inscribed in Kharoshti Brahmi script of the early centuries of the Christian era (Tripathi 1994: 35).

Analytical studies of coins found in Bihar and West Bengal between 1960 and 1990, dating to the 6th century BC and the 6th century CE, cast copper coins (copper coins) were found in many

excavation sites in Bihar and Bengal. The second-largest type is punch Mark coins. These two types of numismatics goes back to Maurya and Shunga periods. It shows that these two periods are prevalent in Indian economic activities in East India. However, the data recorded here, representing all the eras of Maurya, shunga, Kushana, and Gupta, indicate a continuing history from the Maurya to the Gupta in the eastern Indian region from Rājagriha to Tāmraliptī.

On examination of the above, it is clear that the trade between the Rājagriha and Tāmraliptī cities was not only one route but along several routes. It is clear from the above study that the Buddhist monasteries made the primary intervention. However, as this research was based solely on archaeological records and literary sources, I would like to point out that it is paramount to substantiate the facts relevant to this study in the future through archaeological fieldwork. If archeological research is done to study, many factors can be revealed.

NOTES

1. These travelers named as “sartha” in Indian sub-continent (Chandra, 1977).
2. Panthagataka and paripanthin are the robbers who disturb panins (Chandra 1977: vii).
3. Moti Chandra mentions a goddess named “Manimekhala,” the goddess of the sailors (Levi, 1930)
4. Sartha means “merchants who invested equal amount of capital and who carried on trade with outside market travelling in a caravan.” Their leader was known as sarthavaha. (Chandra 1977) the nearest equivalent to the term is caravan leader.
5. “Manu Place the merchant in the company of a medley of disreputable groups such as arsonists, singers, dancers, and acrobats, the ritually unclean flock, and ordains that those who undertake voyages beyond the must not be entertained at a sraddha....”
6. This is about a time when the Buddha was the leader of a trade group of 500 people in Vannupatha *Jātaka*. Seravanija *Jātaka* portrays the Buddha as a merchant..
7. For example according to cullavagga great merchant of rājgir was a devotee of buddhism and as well as the great merchant of Vaishali named anātapindika also a devotee of buddhism.
8. The trade conducted along the ancient overland roads connecting East and West, known popularly as the Silk Road (a term coined by the nineteenth-century German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen), ran from Xi’an in China to the Mediterranean port cities of Antioch and Tyre.
9. The sail was the mainstay of the Maritime Trade. There were two main periods used during the voyage in the Indian Ocean region. From May to August, the monsoon blows from the west or south; from December to March, it blows from the northwest or northeast.
10. as literature says hsuantsang travel once from bodh-gaya to champa (Kumar, 2007).
11. When fa-Hien attending these places topes were reared (89).
12. Uruvela Kashyap, Nadi Kashyap, and Gaya Kashyap
13. Mahabodhi sangarama had six halls with towers of observation of three storeys.it was encircled by a wall of defense thirty ot forty feet high... Colours red and blue... Around 1000 bhikkus of stavira school lived here.. (Barua 1969: 123)
14. Epigraphia Indica. 1912. Luders, H. vol.X. Culcutta: Superintendent government printing India. P.96. No.939-944
15. Due to the small number of archeological excavations carried out on the city of Dihar, it is difficult to say that its history dates not going back to the 6th to 3rd century BC, as well as the NBPW has not been found in the city. But due to the lack of conclusive evidence, it is difficult to say whether Dihar was a thriving trading city during that period. I consider this to be a place where future archeological studies should take place.

16. Indian Archaeology 1983-84 A Review. 1986. Rao, Nagaraja (ed.).New Delhi: Archaeology Survey of India.
17. sangarama made by Sakradithya, His son buddhagupta-rajā built a Sangharama on east side. Baladithya-rajā made a sangarama on north-east side (ibid: 168). Son of him named king vajra made a sangarama in west side. After this a king of central india made a Sangharama on the north of this vajras Sangharama (ibid: 170). Siladithya-rajā made a vihara using brass (amaradevas vihara) (ibid: 174).
18. Panchayathana = five arama temple
19. using sculptures
20. They selected the mound that had been the least damaged for excavation, and during the excavation, they identified a wall known as the “ghost wall” and later it named as fortification wall. Excavations from 1969-73 are based on this fortification wall.
21. bowls, Vases, Jars, Channel-spouted bowls, dish on stand, handis
22. However, archaeological data from the 1986-87 IARR report indicate that this period dates back to 1500 BCE (Indian Archaeology 1986-87: 96).
23. 1986-87 IAR report, this period named as Period III and dated to 700BCE-400BCE (ibid: 97)
24. 1986-87 IAR report, this period named as Period IV and dated to 400BCE-100BCE (ibid: 97)
25. 1986-87 IAR report, this period named as Period V and named as Shunga-KushanaPeriod (ibid: 97)
26. Indian Archaeology reports 1957-1963
27. Nālandā was one of the major Mahāvihāras thus developed.
28. Sri Lakshmi coin type populated in Ceylon between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC (Jayasuriya, 2020).

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