

7th South Asian History Conference 2019
on
Trade, Trade Routes and Travels in South Asia

(Commemorating 550th Birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev)

From 22- 24 November, 2019

The economic and cultural history of most countries in South Asia is closely linked to the trade and trade routes since ancient times. In South Asia, the geography played the most important part in determining the promotion of trade and trade routes because of the variety of its physical features. The vast alluvial plains, dense forests, long stretch of deserts, deep rivers, mountain chains and rock plateaus have strongly influenced the pattern of societies and economies in the region and the nature of its political and administrative units. The travelogues and writings of Hun -Tsang, Fahian, Alberuni, Ali Hujwairi, Ibn Battuta and Al-Umari are of great significance in this regard. Without going through the pages of these travelers and writers of early medieval and medieval times, one cannot think of early medieval trade, trade routes and commerce. The formation of caravans, caravan serais, mode of transport, exchange of trade goods, system of trade practices, emergence of towns and cities on trade routes were important aspects of commerce and trade in those days.

The famous foreign trade routes connected Asia, Afghanistan and Persia through Multan-Quetta route, the Khyber Pass and the Kashmir routes. The merchants familiar with these routes were frequently passing between India, Bukhara, Iraq and even as far as Damascus. When the Portuguese discovered the sea route to India by rounding the Cape of Good Hope and Vasco-de-Gama landed in Calicut in 1498 A.D, India and its surrounding countries became the hub of commercial activities. The spices, perfumed woods, resins and natural products were the main goods for exchange that were transported along the trade routes between India and other South Asian countries. Besides these, horses, furs, precious stones, silk and silk stuff and slaves were among the chief luxury items of exchange among these countries and in addition to these items various types of clothes, fruits, plants and herbs, gold, silver Olive oil, rose water and glass were also transported.

The caravans were the old and the most popular method of travelling in those days. Camels, horses, mules, asses and oxen were used for carrying men, goods and provisions across the land

while boats were used to cross the rivers and the water ways. The caravans provided the maximum safety and security to the merchants, traders, adventurers and religious missionaries. The caravans also made an important contribution to the social, cultural, religious and economic life of the people. With the acquisition and exchange of goods, many relay stations for caravans and ships were established. The trading centers, towns and cities situated on the trade routes became very popular and gained in material wealth enormously. The centers of trade and commerce flourished into centers of political and religious powers as well. The caravans and trading ships alongside trade goods carried many aspects of Indian culture and it benefitted the elite as well as the poor in the South Asian region. The trade routes also made possible the journeys of Buddhist monks and the Brahmins, eventually facilitating a cultural and religious exchange between the communities. The Indian religions, rituals of worship with the mythologies, the system of state organization, script and literature and the use of Sanskrit as the sacred language was popularized by the travelers in the Islamic countries. Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Bhakti and Sufi movements emerged as the strongest spiritual forces in the towns, cities and the markets of the trade centers. A new economic order largely acquired through trade, further stabilized agriculture, native industries and domestic trade. Exchange of trade, craftsmen, artistic and technological skills, literature and culture promoted inter-community bonds and networks.

During colonial times, trade in South Asia has traditionally constituted a substantial exchange of agricultural goods, food items such as rice, sugar, oil, cotton and indigo, saltpeter between various countries. The East India Company's trade exported India's industrial and processed goods to Europe which further stimulated economic growth in the South Asian region. This exchange benefitted Asian exports to a great extent as the Europeans trade increased dramatically with the support of the British.

As the countries in the region got independence, the governments of modern South Asian countries focused their attention on the regional cooperation among themselves besides, promotion of trade. One among many initiatives, the establishment of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) is one initiative for regional cooperation in areas of trade, economic growth, social progress and cultural development. The SAARC aimed at collective self reliance among the countries of South Asia.

Historically, the trade routes have played very important role in exchange of socio-religious, cultural and philosophical ideas of different communities, societies and regions and even in modern days, the trade and commerce determine the political and social relations among the nations. They have always invited attention of the historians, economists, research scholars, social scientists and academics to deliberate upon various issues and aspects of trade and commerce and socio-political relations between various nations.

Against this backdrop, the 7th South Asian History conference aims at studying the trade, trade routes and travels in South Asian region (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Myanmar) to cover the history, politics, culture and economy in relation to their relevance and significance to the modern times. The Conference is being organized by the Department of History, Punjabi University, Patiala to commemorate the 550th the birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev from **22-24 November, 2019**.

Sub Themes:

- 1. Geographical, Political, Economic and Socio-Cultural conditions of South Asian Region.**
- 2. Towns, Cities and Markets in South Asia.**
- 3. Trade, Trade Routes and prominent travelers.**
- 4. Land and Water Routes.**
- 5. Silk Route and Cultural Exchange.**
- 6. Caravans and Caravan *Sarais*.**
- 7. Merchant, Merchant Classes and Guilds.**
- 8. Modes of Trade, Trade items and means of Exchange.**
- 9. Postal System, Communication, Customs and *Rahdaris*.**
- 10. European and South Asian Merchants.**
- 11. Flow of South Asian Goods and the Balance of Trade.**
- 12. Mobility, Security and Militarism on Trade Routes.**
- 13. Attitude of the Rulers towards Trade and Trade Routes.**
- 14. Impact of Trade and Commerce on the Politico-Economic Strengths.**
- 15. Philosophers, Sufis and Bhakti Saints and the Trade Centers.**
- 16. Guru Nanak Dev's Travels, Teachings and Relevance.**

17. Guru Nanak Dev in the literature of South Asian countries.

18. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and its Significance.

Call for Abstracts: The soft copy of the abstract of the full paper with a maximum of 500 words, double spaced (in Times New Roman, font size 12) written in English should be sent for acceptance at sahcptaabstracts@gmail.com on or before **30 September, 2019**. After scrutiny of the abstracts the authors will be notified regarding the acceptance of papers on **10 October, 2019**.

Final Submission of Papers: The soft copy of the full paper, double spaced (in Times Roman on size 12), within 7000 to 10, 000 words written in English should be sent at sahcptaper@gmail.com. The deadline for paper submission is **25 October, 2019**.

Registration: All participants are required to register. The scholars are required to register before or on 10 November, 2019. The registration fees (which includes accommodation and food for three days) for Indian Scholars is Rs. 1250/-, for scholars of other countries is 50 USD. The registration fees for Indian research students are Rs. 1000/-, for research student of other countries is 30 USD.

Mode of Payment: The details regarding mode of payment will be conveyed shortly.

Accommodation: The organizers will provide accommodation to the paper presenters only.

Publication: The proceedings of the conference will be duly published by Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala.

Other Information: Further details about the programme will be updated online.

Contact Information: Send in your queries at sahcptaqueries@gmail.com or contact the under mentioned.

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