



# Select Profiles of Indian Businessmen: A Sprinkling From The Past

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## ABSTRACT

India has a long history of business and international trade that spans 4000 years, however, profiles of ancient businessmen are rarely available to students to help them visualize a person and environment of an earlier era. This article has short profiles of businessmen across many centuries based on ancient texts, recent findings of ancient inscriptions and other recorded history. The case stories will hopefully provide human faces to help understand business history and the unique business practices in India. The practice of 'Dana' and the hindu suggestion to businessmen to return some of the profits for the welfare of society can be seen from most profiles. The article is barely representative with numerous recent findings of inscriptions across India, Indonesia, South East Asia that refer to Indian Businessmen, however an attempt was made to capture profiles from across the timeline. The article has short introductions to Saddalputra, Ananthapindaka, Dhannavridhi, Nagarshrestin Ribhupala, Jagat Sheth, Chatti Setti, Dhananjaya, Kaundinya, Jagdu Shah and Elelasingan.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India has a business history spanning some four thousand years considering that the oldest book in the world the 'Rig Veda' has mentions about seafaring and large ships. The corporatization of business has also a long history in India starting from the 'gana' and 'sreni' or guild type of organizations which are well described in the book 'Corporate life in ancient India (Muzumdar, 1922, #)'. A few profiles of historical individuals may provide a slice of business history at a time when India has only western role models in the area of business. These profiles are a quick introduction and more research is needed about the individuals and many more like them that have dotted India's long business history.

## 2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is an attempt to fill a long standing gap in Indian business history of having profiles of ancient businessmen. The national education policy 2020 hopes to bring more Indian content into the curriculum and also

provide a sense of pride in our country and civilization so that the colonised mind is freed. These profiles are presented because of the practice of 'daana' or philanthropy practiced by these ancient businessmen and which is a recommended way for businessmen as per India's ancient wisdom. Therefore, the article will help to initiate discussions on the concept of 'daana' in the contemporary world.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on using a wide range of secondary data sources to arrive at the profiles of ancient businessmen. As, various historical mentions have been quoted here, History journals, reported archeological findings, ancient texts, East India Company records, Jain and Buddhist literature are some of the diverse sources used. The effort was to use a variety of sources to develop a profile and provide a timeline.

## 4. GATHAPATHI SADDALPUTRA

The story of Saddalputra has been made

popular in Jain literature 'Upasak Dasha' which is an agama (sacred text based on Lord Mahavira's lectures). Both Lord Mahavira from Vaishali and Saddalputra from Polasapur (Patna), were from places in present day Bihar. Lord Mahavira visited the workshop or factory of Gathapathi Saddalputra. Mahavira lived between 599BCE and 527 BCE.

Saddalputra was an entrepreneur 2500+ years ago who had a large factory near present day Patna manufacturing clay pots and pans. He had 500 shops to distribute his ware. He distributed his products using the Ganga River to transport his products all across the Ganga River. He also owned 10,000 cows. "There is reference to a wealthy potter, Saddalputta, who owned 500 potters' workshops and in addition organized the distribution of their product himself, owning a fleet of boats that carried the pottery to various market towns on the Ganges (Thaper, 1966, 30)" There are some discrepancies in the number of shops and factories he owned, however, all references indicate large numbers. The existence of Saddalputra is a historical fact, however, over the 2500 years some discrepancies seem to appear when different sources that describe his business are compared.

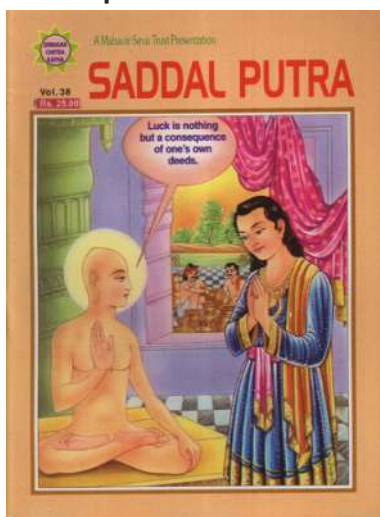
"In Upasakadaahga Sutram there is mention of a rich merchant-employer named Saddalputra who invested one crore 'Suvanna' (gold coins) in business and owned 500 workshops (apana) outside the town of Polasapura where earthen pots and wares were

manufactured in large scale by hundreds of potters. They worked daily for wages which was paid both in cash and in kind. There are other examples at different places in the texts which testify that there was big merchant- employers who commanded great capital and position in the society and established big centers of production. Such units of production may be termed as factories as they very well fit in the present definition of factories in India". "The factories or workshops of the type set up by Saddalputra near Polasapura'- can be compared with the modern industrial estates." "We also find reference of Saddalputra of Polasapura having 500 Ipai (work-sheds) where potters were provided with all sorts of infrastructure to manufacture earthenware of various descriptions." "Saddalputta of Polasapura invested one crore Hiranna (gold pieces) in his business of manufacture of earthen wares, kept one crore as reserve and utilized about a crore over his necessities and luxuries (JAIN, 1980, #)".

## 5. ANANTHAPINDAKA

We learn about a businessman called Ananthapindaka mostly from Buddhist literature as he was not only a contemporary, but supported Buddha with land, buildings and food to run monasteries that housed his direct disciples. Ananthapindaka was the chief lay male disciple (apart from the monks and nuns) of Buddha, however, for the purpose of this article, we can restrict ourselves to Ananthapindaka the businessman. Sudatta was the son of Sumana Setthi a wealthy banker from Savatthi (now in U.P) and in time became the richest banker and

Picture 1: Jain picture book on Saddalputra



Picture 2: Ananthapindika buying Jetavana - Beglar, Joseph David, 1875 - British Library



wealthy merchant of Savatthi or the Setthi of Savatthi. This is during the 6th and 5th century B.C.

“Anātha,piṇḍika was the son of the seth Sumana (Sumana Setṭhī) of Sāvattī, and in due course became the seth of Sāvattī himself. On account of his unsurpassed generosity, he is well known in Buddhism as the foremost of lay-supporters or alms-givers (dāyaka). Although his personal name was Sudatta, he is better known as Anātha,piṇḍika, “the giver of alms to the destitute,” because of his consistent and great munificence (AA 1:384). He bought the Jetavana (Prince Jeta's grove) at a high price and therein built a monastery, named after him (the Anāthapiṇḍikass'ārāma). The Commentaries say that he daily fed hundreds of monks in house, and provided meals for guests, the villagers, invalids, and others, and had 500 seats ready for any guests. (Tan, 2008, 7)” Today, Jetavana is an important destination in the Buddhist tourist circuit and attracts tourists from all-over South-East Asia and Japan.

The story of his buying the Jetavana from a prince is indicative of his wealth. The prince wants the entire surface of the land to be covered with gold coins. In his devotion to Buddha, Sudatta Setthi covers most of the land with gold coins and sends his men to fetch more gold to fill the remaining portion. At this point the prince, overwhelmed by Sudatta Setthi's devotion, voluntarily reduces the price of the land. Just one instance of the kind of wealth he had. He took care of Buddha and his disciples living in Jetavana for 25 rainy seasons, providing for food, maintenance, water and all that was needed. When one goes by the origins of the word Setthi, one can assume that apart from being the leader of some Shreni/guild, he was the Government (King) appointed banker in the town of Savatthi who had married the daughter of the authorized banker (and obviously very rich banker/merchant) of Rajgir.

Both Sudatta Setthi and Saddalputra are good examples of not only rich businessmen in ancient India, they are great examples of the commitment to society that Indian businessmen have always had especially in doing philanthropy and charity.

## 6. KANJI MALAM

This is not a businessman; however, his story tells us about international trade during 1497-98. While addressing the Indian community in Portugal in 2017, the Prime Minister of India Sri Narendra Modi referred to Kanji Malam. Ever since, many newspapers and even maritime conferences have discussed this name.

“Navigational and mercantile activities went together in Gujarat. There is no dearth of literature showing that Muslim and Hindu navigators and merchants from the region was settled in Zanzibar and Pemba and along the East Africa Coast in towns such as Kilwa, Bagamoyo, Mombasa and Malindi in the 16th and 17th centuries, at the time when Vasco da Gama reached Calicut from East Africa in 1498. In Kutchi tradition it was Kanji Malam, a navigator belonging to the Muslim Bhadala seafaring clan, who piloted da Gama's ship from Malindi to Calicut (Mehta, 2001, 1738)”

Kanji Malam was a navigator and Seafaring captain from Mandvi in Gujarat which was a well-established ship building town making 'dhows' and having a good international trade with East Africa, Persian Gulf and Malabar. In the 18th century traders belonging to Mandvi owned 400 ships according to many reports. Kanji Malam's religious identity is part of academic discussions with claims of his being a Hindu belonging to the Kharwa caste (Rajasthani community living in Mandvi port) and his being

**Picture 3: Kanji malam and Vasco di gama at the maritime museum in Kochi**



a Muslim as mentioned in the above reference. His religious identity was subject of debate; however, recent journal articles have established that he was a Hindu. This is not really important, that he was an Indian with seafaring skills to commandeer ships and navigated Vasco Di Gama into India is important, when all the textbooks have told us only about Vasco Di Gama without reference to the critical assistance, he received from an Indian to reach India.

## 7. DHANAVRIDDI

This is possibly the earliest reference to an international trader from India. Kalidasa is likely to have written the historical play 'Shakuntala' in about 400-500 BC. The events described refer to the Mahabharata period which many believe happened anywhere between 1000-2000 BC. It is important to understand that Mahabharata is a itihasa. Itihasa is a literary form which uses history to build a narrative. It is not entirely a figment of imagination, even if some exaggeration and points of viewing history are included.

Dhanavriddi was a wealthy seafaring merchant around 1000-2000 BC, who had assets valued in the millions at that time. The following extract from 'Shakuntala' meant to tell us about the fairness of the king, also tells us about the merchant Dhanavriddi. "Be it known to his Majesty. A seafaring merchant named Dhanavriddi has been lost in a shipwreck. He is childless, and his property, amounting to several millions, reverts to the crown. Will his Majesty take action?" (Sadly.) It is dreadful to be childless. Vetravati, he had great riches. There must be several wives. Let inquiry be made. There may be a wife who is with child.

*Portress*, "We have this moment heard that a merchant's, daughter of Saketa, is his wife. And she is soon to become a mother."

*King*(sadly), "The child shall receive the inheritance. Go, inform the minister (Kalidasa, 1912, #)".

The story of Dhanavriddi and other references to ships of various sizes even in the Vedas contribute to establishing the antiquity of Indian International Business. Even as there is no

proof/physical evidence of the existence of Dhanavriddi in western scientific terms, his existence is most probable.

## 8. NAGARASRESTHIN RIBHUPALA

Srestin was a title the leader of a guild/Sreni had in ancient India. The Jathaka tales mention 18 different Srenis or guilds even though there were many more spread across India for at least a thousand years, evidence is found all over India of the various gunas/srenis and other forms of guilds. The name of Ribhupala was discovered in the Damodarpur copper plates which was a recent archaeological discovery relating to the Guptha kingdom from Damodarpur now in Bangladesh. Ribhupala, having visited a temple in Nepal, consecrated the same deities in the village that he lived, after building a temple and store house on land he purchased from the government of the day. He paid 21 gold dinars (8grms each) for 7 Kulyavapa of land as per the copper plates. It is difficult with the limited information available to estimate the wealth or the exact nature of business of Ribhpala. We can be certain he was a business leader of the time and was able to build two temples and fund them as part of his religious/social work. Nagarasrestin means that he was also a banker and the wealthiest merchant in the village.

"This is evident in the case of nagaraśresthin. Ribhupāla recorded in the Damodarpur plate of the time of Budhagupta, without date, assignable to the last quarter of the fifth century (ibid.: 336–9). Ribhupāla was a member of the adhiṣṭ ḥ ānādhikaraṇa (ibid.: 337, ll. 3–4). He petitioned for the sale and donation of land plots to construct two temples and two small storehouses for the deities Kokāmukhasvāmin and Śvetavarāhasvāmin in the vicinity of land plots which he had previously donated to them in Doṅgāgrāma. According to Sircar, Kokāmukha was a pilgrimage place (tīrtha) located in the eastern part of present-day Nepal, and Ribhupāla may have been there on pilgrimage and, after his return, donated a large area of land in his native district to those deities (Sircar 1971: 275–81). Then he constructed temples and storehouses for the



same deities near to the donated tract, due to the difficulty in sending income from the land to the tīrtha in Nepal (ibid.: 281). On both occasions, Ribhupāla seemed to be involved in the management of temple land and in forwarding its income. Through these acts, he was able to establish a strong presence and influence in the village while furthering his interests in the city as a merchant: he established in the village two temples and their landed property, in whose management he may have held a vested interest. At least one of those temples, that of Śvetavarāhasvāmin, survived to be the donee of the case recorded in the Damodarpur plate of year 224 Gupta Era (Sircar 1965: 346–50).

This fact attests to the success of Ribhupāla's attempt. Compared with their prominence in the earlier period, merchant groups were relatively insignificant after the mid-sixth century. The continuance of their trade activity in the late seventh century is confirmed by the account of the Chinese monk I-ching, which describes hundreds of merchants travelling from Tāmralipti to the Magadha area forming a caravan (Adachi 1942: 139; cf. I-Ching 1986: 79). The same text attests to the seaborne trade network connecting Tāmralipti and Harikela in Bengal with South India, Siṅhala and South-East Asia in the seventh century (Adachi 1942: 78, 93, 174; cf. (Furui, 2013, 391-412)''

## 9. JAGATH SETH FATEH CHAND

Jagath Seth Fateh Chand was a banker who had branches spread all over India and belonged to a wealthy family that dominated banking starting in early 18th century. Jagath Seth's story is worthy of an interesting film. From lending money to the East India Company and sometimes getting returned in silver or bullion at a price he fixed, to influencing policy with the local nawab and the Mughal rulers, to having funded both sides in a war, Jagath Seth was an accomplished merchant and banker from Musheerabad in West Bengal where his Bungalow still stands as a museum.

“In the fourth year of the reign of Muhammad Shah, that is, some time between the beginning of November 1722 and the end of

October 1723, Seth Fateh Chand received from the emperor the title of Jagat Seth and his son Anand Chand the title of Seth so that the name of the banking house became “Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Anand Chand.” The correct name does not appear in the Bengal records till the year 1740. The original farman of the emperor which is still in the possession of the family has been thus translated: — “At this victorious hour and happy moment, the world-obeyed command of sunny lusture receives the honour of issue that, from the Court of eternal sovereignty, Seth Fateh Chand—with the award of the title of Jagat Seth as a hereditary distinction and the bestowal of magnificent robes of honour, an elephant and a pearl earring, and his son Anand Chand with the title of Seth and the gift of robes of honour and a pearl earring—have hoarded the treasure of trust and dignity. It is proper that civil and ministerial officers and all secretaries of the 'present and future, living within the protected territories should designate the aforesaid Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and also designate his son Seth Anand Chand. They should deem this imperative from the presence of glorious majesty. -Written on the 12th Rajab, in the fourth year of the exalted reign.

A tradition has been handed down in the family to the effect that Fateh Chand received the title as a reward for services rendered to the emperor. There was a famine in Delhi and great was the suffering- of its inhabitants. Fateh Chand who was in the city at the time, appeared at Court where he was received with honor and

Picture 4: House of Jagath Seth in Musheerabad, West Bengal



undertook to relieve the people from their distress. He seems to have recommended the temporary issue of some kind of paper money for he requested the emperor to announce publicly that hundis would be placed in circulation in the city. This was done with the happy result that the famine disappeared. The emperor was highly pleased with Fateh Chand and conferred upon him the title of Jagat Seth, (LITTLE, 1960, 40)”

“Fateh Chand obtained from the emperor the title of Seth. The Farman conferring the title is dated the 5th year of the reign of the emperor Farrukhsiyar and is couched in similar terms to the farman granted to Manik Chand. The farman was presented to the Victoria Memorial at Calcutta by the head of the family on the occasion of Lord Curzon's visit to the ancient home of the Seths on the 1st March 1902 (LITTLE, 1960, 46)”.

“As to the wealth of the house of the Jagat Seths, it is extremely difficult to form a correct estimation. Ghulam Husain, the author of Siyaru'l Mutākhirōn, writes: 'Their wealth was such that there is no mentioning it without seeming to exaggerate and to deal in extravagant fables'. A Bengali poet wrote: 'As the Ganges pours its water into the sea by a hundred mouths, so wealth flowed into the treasury of the Seths'. In the early 1760s William Bolts, an official of the English Company who was then in Bengal, estimated that the house possessed a capital of 7 crores (70 million) of rupees, 'as his countrymen calculate'. However, N. K. Sinha holds that in their heyday the Jagat Seths must have possessed at least 140 million rupees as their working capital. That this is not improbable is indicated by the annual income of the Seths which was noted by Luke Scrafton in 1757 reproduced below in Table 1:

**Table 1 : The Jagat Seths' Estimated Annual Income, 1757 (in rupees)**

Particulars	Amount in Rs.
On 2/3 of Revenue at 10%	10,60,000
Interest from Zamindars	13,50,000
On re-coining 50 Lakhs at 7%	3,50,000
Interest on 40 Lakhs at 37.5%	15,00,000
Interest from Batta or Exchange Rates 7 to 8 Lakhs	7,00,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,50,000</b>

Sources: Luke Scrafton to Robert Clive, 17 December, 1757, Orme Mss. India XVIII, f. 5043; Eur. G23, Box 37.

How rich the Seths were is also borne out by other references in contemporary Persian chronicles. For example, when the Marathas, guided by Mir Habib, led a lightning raid into Murshidabad in 1742, they succeeded in plundering the Jagat Seths' house and carried away `20 million (0.3 million according to Karam Ali, the author of Muzaffarnama) besides a large quantity of other goods. The translator of Siyaru'l Mutākhirōn, Hajji Mustafa, was struck by the remarkable fact that this huge sum was all in Arcot rupees and added: 'so amazing a loss which would distress any monarch in Europe, affected him [Jagat Seth Fatechand] so little that he continued to give government bills of exchange at sight of full one crore at a time (Chaudhury, 2015, 90-91)”

Much like Shantidas Jhaveri of

Ahmedabad and Fateh Chand of Mushirabad, Virji Vohra was the 'Nagar Sheth' of Surat and a prominent Jain businessman who also been written about a great deal thanks to substantial evidence of his wealth and business available in the company records or the records of the East India company.

#### 10. CHATTI SETTI

We learn about Chetti Setti from an inscription found near Arsikere, Hassan Dist, Karnataka which dates to 1187CE. Chetti Setti was member of the guild called “Nanadesi Tisai Ayirattu-ainnuruvar” which was a powerful trade guild that traded in many commodities including horses, gold, cardamom, Lavang, gems and diamonds etc across various kingdoms in India and internationally from Iran to Indonesia

and as per some records even Rome. Prof Daud Ali has written an interesting article providing detailed profiles of two 12th century Indian businessmen living in the Hoysala Empire, based on inscriptions found. For lack of space and since Chetti Setti inscription is dated some 70 years before that of Kunja Setti, it was considered to extract a few lines of the profile of Chetti Setti, even as Kunja Setti's profile is equally interesting as he originally belonged to Kerala and was a mahāvadaḍavyavahāri from present day quilon who lived in the Hoysala kingdom. The article from which the profile of Chatti Setti has been extracted, has many more profiles of businessmen and discusses how commerce and governance were closely entwined in ancient and middle India.

“Our first inscription, dating from 1188 AD during the reign of Ballāla II, records the erection of a Śiva temple by a powerful merchant named Chatti in his name at the village of Banavur, with lands for the performance of rituals obtained from the gāvunḍas and subjects of the village. Chattiṣeṭṭi had descended from a family of merchant brāhmaṇas whose original home is not mentioned. His inscription begins by praising the virtues of his grandfather, one Māchiseṭṭi and his wife Dugale whose son Māreya “attained riches through trade” (dhanamāṇi vāṇijyadind arjjisute). Māreya is described as pursuing the three “goals of life” (rectitude, pleasure, and policy), having enjoyments, and performing pious acts. To his wife Pochale two sons were born, Chattiṣeṭṭi and Dāṣiseṭṭi. Dāṣiseṭṭi is described as transporting precious goods and wealth in all the cardinal directions and spreading them across the land. His brother Chattiṣeṭṭi gained fame by bringing “in ships (bahitrade) multitudes of horses which were ornaments to the horse of Hari, elephants which were equal to the elephant of Indra, and pearls like dewdrops” and happily sold them to many kings. The inscription then lists meritorious acts including the building and repair of various tanks, including one in the Hoysala capital at Dorasamudra, the construction of the Chatteśvara temple, and repairs to a Kalideva shrine. With the account of his lineage and meritorious acts

complete, the inscription switches register, opening with a fresh benediction, followed by the praśasti of the aiññūrruvar, which is made to eulogize Chattiṣeṭṭi himself, ending with the announcement of his construction and endowment of the Chatteśvara temple at Banavur (Ali, 2009, 813) ”

Like Jagath Seth had minting rights, Chatti Setti also had rights to mint coins in the Hoysala kingdom which only goes to show his wealth and connections with royalty. Chatti Setti was not only a rich businessman who belonged to a large and prosperous merchant guild, he was also a courtier in the Hoysala kingdom with rights to mint coins. One can easily visualize Chetti Setti the international trader and nobleman in the Hoysala Kingdom, 12 CE. Recent excavations in Pudukkottai, Karur and other parts of Tamilnadu mention different merchants, guild leaders and guilds.

#### 11. DHANANJAYA

While not much is known about the exact merchandise the merchant of Manavur dealt in, it is clear that he traveled from his town to do business. He owned an Indira Vimana (which must have been a wheeled vehicle pulled by animals, going by the Indira vimana depicted in the Madurai Meenakshi temple) and his meeting with the Pandya king Sadayavarman Kulasekaran I who ruled from 1190 CE to 1205 CE indicates likely dates of his existence.

There is a Dhanajaya statue within the famous Madurai Meenakshi temple that stands testimony to his existence as also numerous texts that document the history of the temple.

“Once Dhananjaya, a merchant of Manavur, where the Pandyas had arrived after the second deluge in Kumari Kandam, having been overtaken by nightfall in Kadamba forest, spent the night in the Indra Vimana. When next morning he woke up, he was surprised to see signs of worship. Thinking that it must be the work of the Devas, he told the Pandya, Kulasekhara, in Manavur, of this. Meanwhile Lord Shiva had instructed Pandya in a dream to build a temple and a city at the spot Dhananjaya would indicate. Kulasekhara did so. Thus originated the temple and city (Hindu of

**Picture 5: Author at the statue of Dhananjaya at Meenakshi temple, Madurai**



Universe & khemani, n.d.)”.

“Kulasekara the Pandya king was ruling from Manavur which was situated to the east Kadambavanam. Dhananjaya, a merchant, was once returning to manavur after transacting business in several places. When he reached Kadambavanam it was dark and it was a Monday. To his surprise, he found Devas from Devaioka doing puja to Somasundareswarar. The pujas continued throughout the night and the Devas disappeared at dawn. The merchant, on return to his place, informed the king about it. The king was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva who appeared in the form of a siddhapurusha in the King's Dream and asked him to transform the Kadambavanam into a beautiful city (GOPALAN, 1995, 21-22)”.

It was a merchant who was instrumental in choosing the site for the temple and the Madurai city which was built around the temple.

## 12. KAUNDINYA: THE MERCHANT WHO BECAME KING

A merchant who set out to trade, won over a female pirate, married her and established the kingdom of what is today called Cambodia. Kaundinya was not only the second monarch (first being his consort Soma) of Funan/Kambuja, his dynasty ruled over the region for many centuries with his descendents taking over the reign. While literature is divided over the origins of Kaundinya, from Malaysia to Mysore, Pallava kingdom, Andhra and Orissa,

most recent works deduce that he might most likely have been from Andhra/Orissa coast. This is 1st century CE. The kaundinya dynasty was also famous for its commerce and international trade friendly laws and ports in the region for many hundreds of years. There is no specific evidence of the merchandise that Kaundinya was carrying in his ship, though we might guess that it was cloth, pottery, and semi-precious stones.

“According to K'ang T'ai, a Chinese envoy who visited Funan in the middle of the third century CE, the first king of Funan was a certain Hun-t'ien, that is, Kaundinya, who came either from India or from the Malay Peninsula or the southern islands. This Chinese version of the dynastic origin of Funan has been corroborated by a Sanskrit inscription of Champa belonging to the third century CE. Though scholars agree on the point that the kingdom of Funan came into existence some time during the first century CE, after the union of a Brahmin named Kaundinya with the Naga Princess Soma(Lieu-Ye), there is considerable disagreement on the homeland of Kaundinya. This mystical union which was still commemorated at the court of Angkor at the end of the thirteenth century in a rite identical with that of the Pallava kings of Kanchi made some scholars to believe that Kaundinya probably belonged to the Pallava kingdom (Patra, 2011, 34).

**Picture 6: Statue of King Kaundinya and queen Soma in Combodia**





“Though the historical accuracy of the myth of a foreign man marrying a native princess and establishing a dynasty over the land now known to Khmer as Kampuchea is impossible to verify, the Khmer have believed in it for over fifteen hundred years. When people believe in myths, the myths themselves become reality to the people who believe in them, and "people act, or even base their lives upon them, especially in times of crisis (Raymond, 2005, 145). While conventional proof may be lacking about Kaundinya 1, sufficient proof is available about the descendants of Kaundinya to say that it was a historical fact. The Hindu temples in Cambodia and their origins also tell us many interesting stories of the social, cultural and business relationship of Cambodia and India.

### 13. ELELASINGAN

Elelasingan is another popular Tamil merchant from Tamilnadu. His fame comes from the fact that he supported the great humanist and poet 'Valluvar' in Mylapore (which is today a bustling central locality in Chennai). Elelasingan was an international trader with strong trading relations with Sri Lanka. In his youth Elelasingan supplied yarn to weaver Valluvar and became his friend, follower, and patron. Elelasingan lived in 20-30 BCE. “Another of the laudatory stanzas says that Elelasingan (Lion of the Surf), an owner of surf-boats, which were used up to the beginning of this century for communication between ships and shore at Madras, was his patron and brought him up (POPLEY, 1931, 16)”

“Elelasingan was a ship merchant of Mayilapur. He accepted Thiruvalluvar as his teacher and was his first disciple. In 21 BC, Uggiraperuvazhuthi, the Tamil King, decided to send a delegation to Augustus Caesar and strengthen the trade link. He told the Romans visiting him that he is sending a delegation of merchants to Rome with Elelasingan as leader (Moodali, 2015, 14)”

There are many stories about Elelasingan in Tamil folklore including one of his dumping gold biscuits into the sea only to recover it later as the fishermen return them to the legitimate owner based on the markings on the gold biscuits. Elelasingan built a temple to Valluvar

when Valluvar died and this temple survives even today.

### 14. JAGDU SHAH

Jagdu Shah was a renowned merchant who lived in Kutch, India in the 13th century. He owned many ships, which he used to travel west to Persia, Arabia and Africa. He traded mainly in grains, cotton and spices He also was a great philanthropist and even today is remembered for his charitable and philanthropic deeds.

Jagdu Shah was son of a Jain merchant named Solsha, who later migrated from Mandavi to Bhadreswar. He inherited his father's business and expanded trade and earned great wealth. He married a pious lady named Yashomati and had one son. He was given titles of honour like Sheth and Shahsaudagar and Daan-veer. Jagdu Shah was so rich that when in years 1257–1259, a great famine struck Kutch he distributed free food continuously for three years across Cutch and Kathiawar, saving thousands of lives. His name and fame for this generosity gained so much that famine came to be known as Jagdu Shah's famine.

Today, there are various stories, poems, etc. about his generosity in many languages. Jagdu Shah is known to have renovated the old Bhadreswar Jain Temple around 1259, that is 1315 according to the Vikram Samvnt calendar. Further, he is said to have built a fort around Bhadreswar for protection of port-city. Also, he is said to have spent funds for renovation of Hindu temples. (Bhansali, n.d.)”

“Jagdu had regular trade relation with Persia, was so rich that during a terrible famine lasting for three years, he was able to distribute gram free to the people”. “Jagdu had also built a mosque for the use of Muslims (Jain, 1990, 107.79)” “The first Indian reference to (Old) Hormuz and to its trade with India comes from a Sanskrit text of Gujarat composed in the thirteenth century. The Jagadu-charita is a biography of a Jain merchant of Gujarat (fl. 1256-58), composed by Sarvananda. It says that Jagadu carried on regular trade with Iran and had an Indian agent of his stationed at Hormuz. It was Jagadu's own ship through which he

carried goods to and fro between Gujarat and Hormuz. A document preserved in the Lekhapaddhati bears further testimony to flourishing trade between Gujarat and Hormuz during the thirteenth century. The document contains instructions from an official named Jayataka at Pattan (in Gujarat) to Vijayasimha posted at the Ghogha port (in Gulf of Cambay) telling him that when a ship from Hormuz arrived at that port, he should inform the writer of the varieties of goods and the number and breeds of horses brought by that vessel (Moosvi, 2009, 240)''

Jagdu Shah has lived on from the 13th century CE till today through inscriptions that indicate his donations to temples and other

ancient buildings, as well as in popular Gujarathi folklore, plays, poems and other literary works.

## 15. CONCLUSION

India's International trade has been taking place from time immemorial and every part of India has been involved in international business for many hundreds of centuries. The profiles are merely representative and future research on the basis of recent findings of archeology including inscriptions can tell us a lot about ancient industrialists, traders, bankers and international businessmen. Interestingly, many of the businessmen listed here have lived so long because of their 'Dana' or philanthropy which has lived on to tell their tale.

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