

Sopara: An Ancient Port, Trade Center and a Teertha

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Abstract

Nallasopara is looked upon as one of the most unpleasant suburbs to go to in present-day Mumbai. However, Sopara or Surparaka, as it was known in the past, had a glorious run not only as an important port on the western coast of India and but also as a major

trade center. It had trade links with the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and the Middle East so much so that it finds mention in a 2000-year-old book Periplus of the Erythraean Sea.

It is also believed to be the capital of Apranta (old name for Konkan) and is also the oldest historical testament of Mumbai, in the form of Ashokan Edicts. Apart from all these things, Sopara is also an important Teertha.

Sopara finds itself mentioned as an important Teertha in almost all faiths of Indian origin. Brahmanical texts mention it as Parshuramtirtha. Buddhist text Divyavdana mentions it as the place where Buddha himself visited. Jain text Vividhatirthkalpa mentions it as one of the 84 most revered Teerthas for the Jains.

It doesn't stop here; Sopara has also lured a lot of foreign travelers. Travelers ranging from Chinese Huen Tsang to Arab Al Idrisi amongst others have paid a visit to the place. Hebrew texts refer to Sopara as Ophir. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on Sopara as an ancient Teertha, a place to which a lot of Yatras took place and a place where foreigners flocked much before travel and tourism became mainstream in today's world.

We would present this on the basis of historical and literary references, previous archaeological works on the site as well as data revealed by the recent archaeological explorations conducted at the site.

Introduction

Travel or Yatra has always intrigued mankind and humans have always had the quest of finding answers to the curiosity that arises in their minds. Yatra can be for religious

upliftment or for seeking pleasure or as a hobby or to kill the boredom from mundane life. Travel can also be for economic gains if used as a profession, and also for studies and research purposes.

Travel is a privilege that most of us enjoy today with our means of subsistence already took care of and there's excess in both time and money to satiate our hunger; however, it would not have been the case in the past as the everyday struggles were very real for most of the lot and travel, in any form, would have been a luxury and rarity.

Sopara or Surparaka, as it was called, is a land that has attracted people from all walks of life and for various purposes in those days; and is luring researchers and scholars today to study the depths of its vibrant past. With this paper, the authors would like to bring forth the multi-faceted Sopara using multiple sources, some of which are interestingly overlapping.

Methodology

We have taken into account religious literary sources – Buddhist, Jaina, and Brahmanical, to establish Sopara as an important Teertha Kshetra and also to see how it is important for all the major religions discussed. The work on the Buddhist and Brahmanical context of Sopara has been done extensively, so we have taken that into account and focus is more on the Jaina sources.

Apart from these, we would also look at other literary sources, archaeological data, traveller accounts, maps, and works of other scholars to establish the point of Port and Trade Centre. We have also done a village to village survey looking for sites mentioned in literature and oral traditions.

Literary Sources – Religious

Almost all the religious sources refer to Sopara as a city or a land of great importance and to be very holy. Legends associated with births to the conquests of kings to missionary activities to the origin of Sopara – all indicate that the place is very important, both in terms of sacredness and other religious importance.

1. Brahmanical

Brahmanical writings assert Surparaka as a holy place. It is believed that Surparaka was established by the 6th avatar of Vishnu – Parshurama and hence it is a holy Teertha. With Sahyadri mountain ranges to the east, the Arabian Sea to the west, Vaitarna river to the north and Ulhas river at the south, Parshurama created Surparaka in such a way that the people of the holy place live with subsistence.

Parshurama also brought various Sanskrit Vedics to teach people and also shielded the place with his Parshu (Axe). Sopara is referred to as Parshuramteertha. The Mahabharata mentions that while visiting various places on the western coast, Arjuna came to very holy Surparaka. (Indraji 1882:3) Sopara is considered as land which had 108 teerthas and numerous kunds.

Padmapurana mentions the names of 108 teerthas and also mentions that it is one of the holiest places. A dip in one of these kundas or Vaitarni river can wash away all your sins. (Nirmal Mahatmya 2008 reprint) Skandapurana mentions that Sopara region is extremely holy and if someone observes vrat and tapa here then it will lead to paapvimochana and the benefits will be multiplied 7 crore times.

Tryambakeshwaramahatmya mentions Nirmal as the purest Teertha which helps in

attaining swarga. Harivamsa mentions that it is a very holy place and also gives its dimensions. (Nirmal Surpur 1979)

2. Buddhist

Sopara holds a very important place in the Buddhist tradition. In a previous birth, Gautama Buddha was born as a Bodhisattva Supparaka. (Hardy 1853:13) Buddha being given the name Supparaka itself claims the importance of the place. Apart from this, the story of Bodhisattva Punna/Purna also states that Buddha visited Supparaka on Punna's request when Punna went to Sravasti.

Buddha came here and converted to Buddhism a Brahmanical sage Vakkali and 500 widows, whom he gave his nails and some hair as relics, over which they built a Stupa, called Widows' Stupa. (Indraji 1882:3) 8 th and 9 th Asokan edicts found at Sopara points to the importance of Sopara during the 3rd century BCE.

Buddhist texts Mahavamsa says that after the 3rd Buddhist council, Asoka sent to Aparanta (Konkan) one of his missionaries, Yavana Dhammarakhita/Dhammarakshita. This missionary is said to have preached the Buddhist faith to 70,000 hearers, of which 1000 men and more than 1000 women, all of whom were Kshatriyas, entered the priesthood. Yavana is generally referred to a Greek or a Bactrian and the selection of this missionary indicates that the population at Sopara would have certain foreign elements in it.

Pt. Bhagwanlal Indraji also believes that Dhammarakhita made Sopara as the base and then spread Buddhism across western India from here. (Indraji 1882:2) Mahavamsa also mentions that the first Sinhalese king of Sri Lanka, Vijaya, sailed from the

Supparaka on the Indian coast. This Supparaka has to be Sopara given the importance of the place.

3. Jaina

Etymologically, Vasai (southern part of Sopara) name originates from the word Vaas or Baas meaning Vasti or Basti, a term often used to indicate a settlement of Jain monks. (Sandesara: 1945:128) The mythical king Shripal Raja had married the daughter of King Mahasena, Tialakasundari, who was the king of Sopara. (Mehta: 1992:215-220) Paumacariyam (Jaina version of Ramayana) also mentions Sopara. It mentions that Luv-Kush had conquered Sopara, amongst other places. (Paumacariyam: Vora 2005:510)

Sopara is regarded as the ancient Taleti (foothill) of the sacred Shatrunjaya hill by the followers of the Jaina faith. Shatrunjaya is to the Jains what Mecca is to the Muslims. The Jains believe that Sopara was the earliest Taleti of Shatrunjaya, established by 1st Tirthankara Adinath's eldest son Bharat Chakravarti, which gradually shifted to Valbhipura (Gujarat) and then again reshifted to Palitana (Gujarat) where it is still being worshipped today.

There are ample references that attribute this special status to Sopara. (P. Bhagyayashsuri Kale Shah: 2019). Asoka's grandson Samprati (2nd century BCE) was an ardent follower of Jainism, had given patronage, and facilitated safe travel for Sadhus in the Sopara region. (Khshemkirti: Vol.3:917-21)

The Jains have various Gachhas (loosely translates to factions or sects) which have their own sets of rules and functioning. In the ancient times, there were 84 gachhas, the

seeds of which were sown in Sopara circa 1st century BCE – 1 st century CE. The following classification shows how it came into existence according to the Jaina texts:-

Vajrasensuri

- Nagendrasuri → 21 Gachhas
- Chandrasuri → 21 Gachhas
- Nirvruttisuri → 21 Gachhas
- Vidyadharsuri → 21 Gachhas

This is how Acharya Vajrasensuri sowed the seeds and 84 Gachhas came into existence. Out of the 84 Gachhas, one was Shurparaka or Sopariya Gachha. (Jain Paramparano Itihasa: Vol.2:2003) Sopariya Gachha was still active till 1953 CE. (Gode: 1953).

Acharya Yakshadevsuri, the 17th head of the Parsvanath parampara (followers of 23rd Tirthankara Parsvanath's tradition) had visited during the end of 12-year famine in Veer Samvat 585 (58CE). Here he tried to restore and salvage the Agamas by conducting an Agam Vachna. Agam Vachna is a congregation of Sadhus where they memorize the Agamas, as there was no proper way of writing these Agamas down.

More than 1000 Sadhus and Sadhvis were part of this congregation.

(Munigyaansundarvijay: 1944) Acharya Jinaprabhasuri (14th century CE) mentions, in his work Vividh Tirth Kalpa, that Sopara was one of the 84 most important teerthas for Jains. He also mentions that Sopara had an image of Adinath which people worshipped.

Jains believed that it was a jivitswami (made when Tirthankara was alive) image of Adinath. Pethad Shah (1223CE-1283CE), a wealthy merchant, constructed 84 temples all across India; out of which 51st temple he constructed was a Parsvanath temple at Sopara. (P. Bhagyayashsuri Kale Shah: 2019) Apart from these, Jaina texts also point towards various Pratishtha, Diksha, Sangha-yatra, and Chaturmaas at Sopara (from 1st century CE till the 19th century), indicating that it was a sacred place for them.

Literary Sources –Non- Religious

1. Cave Inscriptions

Western Indian cave inscriptions contain numerous references to Sopara. An inscription from Karle from 1st century CE records donation made by Satimita from Sopara along with some relics which can be related to BhadantaDhammutariya. Satimita is Dhammutariya's nephew and the name of the Bhadanta signifies his connection with the Dharmottariyasect. (Kumari 2019).

Ushavdatta's inscription from Nasik Panduleni caves from the 2nd century CE mentions his gift of a guesthouse with four doors and four verandahs at Sorparaga (mostly to Brahmanas given the flow of the inscription). At about the same time Naneghat inscription records excavation of a cistern by Govindadasa of Soparaya. Similarly, an inscription at Kanheri records the gift of a cistern by worshipper Samika. (Indraji 1882)

2. Traveler Accounts

Part I Foreign Travellers:

Travelers have been writing about Sopara since the 1st century CE. The 1st-

century book, by an unknown author, The **Periplus of the Erythraean Sea**, finds mention of Sopara multiple times. It is followed by the Greek Geographer, **Ptolemy**, who **describes Sopara as Ariake** makes mention of the rivers around. However, the placements of the locations are a bit off according to scholars.

Both these works touch upon the fact that Sopara/Ouppara/Ariake was an important seaport and also touch upon it as a link between Kalyan and Bharuch. (McKrinkle: 1885:38-42) (Indraji: 1882:5-6) In the 6th century CE, Greek Merchant and monk **Kosmas Indikopleustes** has referred to Sibor near Kalyan. During the 10th century, Arab traveler Al Masudi mentions **Subara** along with Thana. Persian travelers Ibn Haukal and Al Istakhu and Arab Geographer Al Biruni mentions **Surbarah, Surabaya, and Subara** respectively. In the 12th century, African geographer Al Idrisi describes **Subara** as one of the emporiums of India with great trade.

In 1322 a Christian missionary Jordanus mentions about strife with Musalmans of Thana and also points towards the presence of Christians at that time in Sopara. He also traveled from Thana to Broach via Supera. (Indraji 1882) All these accounts indicate the importance of Sopara as an important port and a trade center as well as a link between the rest of the world and Indian hinterlands.

Part II Indian Yatras and Travel Accounts:

We have already looked at some of the missionary attempts by various religions at Sopara. Apart from these, there are various travels – both yatra and otherwise, recorded to and from Sopara. An 8th-century book Kuvalayamala (778CE) mentions the chronicles of a merchant Lobhadeva from Takhshashila who came to Dakshinapatha to Sopara to sell his horses. At Sopara he meets a shresthin (guild-head/banker) who

helps him sell his horses and helps him become rich.

Interestingly, it mentions that Sopparaya traders had their own clubs and customs and foreign traders had to share their adventures. This indicates that foreigners would be frequenting the region. It also describes a Tirtha-yatrika with reference to dress and equipment. It also mentions the necessity of princes to ride horses and the author also mentions in detail the 18 different breeds of horse alongwith varna and lanchhana.

(Upadhye: 1970). The way this book describes horses and horse trade in such detail makes the authors believe that the Jain community at Sopara or the person who commissioned the book was perhaps involved in the horse trade. Another indicator to support the idea is that Ghodbunder, which is supposed to be a port involved in horse trade according to scholars, is not far away from Sopara. Another important reference is that Vastupal and Tejpal, who were ministers of the Solankis and also the ones to commission the Dilwara temples at Abu, were born at Sopara (circa 12th century).

After moving to Gujarat, they had taken out tirth-yatras to Sopara and had also commissioned for the construction of a temple. Along with this, some references speak of their donations towards 700 Brahmasala, 700 Mathas, 3002 Shiv Temples, 84 ponds, 464 wells, and 64 masjids. The numbers might be a bit of an exaggeration but it indicates that these ministers were open to donations to institutions outside their faith as well as the rich cultural diversity of Sopara.

According to the Jaina texts, there are references to various sangha-yatras that merchants and shresthis from various regions have taken to Sopara ranging from the 2nd century till the 19th century. A yatra is not only inbound but can also be outbound. People from Sopara have also set outside and have left their markers there. Around the

middle of the 12th century, Sopara had the honor of sending the Konkan delegate, Tejakantha, to a literary congress held in Kashmir. The Konkan king who sent him is named Aparaditya. (Indraji: 1882:6)

In the Sojitra town in Gujarat, a Bronze votive image dated V.S.1514 (1457CE) has been found where the person who commissioned and installed the image was from Sahuala, which is one of the names by which Sopara was referred to in the past. (Prachin Pratima Lekh Sangraha: 76)

Part III Shree Sopara Vignaptika:

Shree Sopara Vignaptika is a memoir in a poetic form describing a sadhakas journey to the sacred land of Sopara. It is taken from a handwritten manuscript roughly dating to the 13th-15th century and is written in early Gujarati apabrahmsa and the name of the author is not mentioned. (First printed in Anusandhan magazine: vol. 56: Aug 2011:58)

The author mentions how he is visiting Sopara, which is a Teertha Kshetra having a jivit swami murti of the first Tirthankara Adinath and is a sarvasrestha teerth equating the journey to this single tirth to yatra to 68 tirth combined. He also refers to it as Shatrunjaya Taleti. He gives a vivid description of the geography and biodiversity of the region. He describes the place close to the coastline and is a land of 1300 sarovar.

There are fruits, flowers and other cultivations like coconut, banana, grapes, taad (ice apple), bijora, rice, ketki, mogra, champa, agar, pagar, nagarvel (beetlenut leaves), elaichi, lavang, sandalwood. He mentions the grandeur of the trees and the spread of the heavy vegetation.

Then he goes on to describe how people worship with raas-bhas, singing, dancing and how the bhakti puts an end to all the worries and all he wants is to be one with the God. The most beautiful part is that he addresses the natural beauty and the deity with the same affection and respect. The journey described is both physical as well as transcendental for the yatrik.

Archaeological Sources

1. Previous Explorations and Excavations around the Buddha Stupa

Numerous archaeological excavations and explorations have been conducted in and around Sopara which has yielded in a treasure trove of data. The Buddha stupa site of Sopara, locally known as Buruda Rajacha Kot, was excavated by Bhagwanlal Indraji in 1882 and yielded a large stone coffer within a brick building chamber with 8 metal images of Buddha including Maitreya Buddha, a copper casket with stones, gold flowers and scented powder, jewelry, relics such as begging bowl and a silver coin of Gautamiputra Satkarni (1st century CE).



8th Ashokan Edict

Though the stupa dates back to the 3rd century BCE, the metal images seem to be around 8th-9th century CE; probably put when the stupa was expanded during the reign of Rashtrakutas. Also, a fragment of the 8th Rock Edict of Asoka was found from the nearby Bhatela pond. (Indraji 1882) The rock edict is perhaps not only Sopara's but also Mumbai's earliest historical evidence.

The site was re-excavated by M.M.Qureshi of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1939-40 when several stone lintels and two small stupas were found on the south side of the main stupa in addition to a few shards of plain glazed ware of the Muslim period. (Tripathi Gaur 1997). In 1956, fragments of the 9th edict of Asoka were found by a little boy from Bhuigaon (A.Ghosh: ASI:1993) Anwar Munshi (1972) found a number of Satavahana lead coins at Sopara.



Buddha Stupa

Exploration (1994) in the adjoining area has yielded RPW and Glazed Ware. The evidence is further corroborated by a joint excavation in 1993 carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India and the British Academy, Hyderabad where antiquities of the Early Historical period (Satavahana and Kshatrapa period) – lead and copper coins,

semi-precious stone beads, small fragments of Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), Roman amphorae pieces and Islamic Blue Glazed ware were discovered. An earthen wall and a fourteen coarse stone wall with varying sizes of stone blocks were also encountered during this excavation. A Portuguese landing place to the east of Gaas has also been found. (Tripathi Gaur 1997)

Kindly make a note of the kichakas/bharvahakas lying in the vicinity of the Stupa. These are apparently brought to the site later on after they were found elsewhere, but they indicate to the presence of a temple structure nearby. There are at least 4 kichakas. Also, there are more than 10 votive Stupas, some of which were unearthed during the recent excavations by MS Chauhan. These votive stupas are the markers that people would be visiting here to fulfill their wishes.



The kichakas / bharvahakas lying around the Buddha Stupa



Votive stupa next to Buddha stupa

2. Remains around Chakreshwar Talao

A lot of sculptures have been found near the Chakreshwar Talao and are kept in the Shri Ram temple in the vicinity. The temple doesn't seem to be much older than 100 years but the remains found nearby are all kept here in the temple premises. Of all the medieval sculptures listed, noticeable ones are the Brahma, with a full-grown beard and 3 heads and the rare image of Agni, which is showed riding his vahana the Ram. Other figures lying are Mahishasuramardini, Surya, Ganesha, Uma-Maheshwara, Harihara, Gajalakshmi, Jain Ambika, a Nandi, several memorial stones and Surasundaris.



Agni riding the Ram, Brahma



Jain Ambika, Uma Maheshwara, Ganesha, Harihara



Gajalakshmi, Surya, Mahishasuramardini



Nandi, Memorial Stones

Another interesting thing to notice is as old temple plinth next to the temple.



Old temple plinth right next to the new temple

3. Remains around Gaas village

The area around Gaas village is rich in archaeological remains. Bhagwanlal Indrajī also refers to the area near Ram Kund (Gaas tank) as a place with remains of old Jain temple. (Indrajī: 1882:4) A lot of remains have been found from the water tank in the Taki Pada region of Gaas including lintels of Jain temple and other fragments, Vishnu, hero stones, and other debris that indicate the presence of temple/temples in the vicinity.

A notable finding is a stone anchor found in the area which coincides with the place where an earlier port would have been; which has now been filled up due to siltation. A temple plinth has also been found in the same region, where a slum dwells today. Some of these remains are with the University of Mumbai while some lie in the custody of the temples in the region.



Lintel of a Jain temple in marble, Remains of a Jain temple



Vishnu(with Dashavtara), Remains pertaining to Jaina faith (heavily corroded)



Some Kichakas from Taki Pada, Temple Plinth – Taki Pada



Debris of old temple remains

4. Recent Findings

Amongst the recent findings are the Surya image from Gaas (in custody of Sopara Acchalgachha Jain Sangh) and 7 Bronzes of Jaina Tirthankaras (in custody of Chalpeth/Agashi Jain Sangh). All the images have inscriptions on them. The Surya image is dated 1412CE while the Bronzes range from 1458CE-1555CE. The authors of this paper have presented a paper on the Jaina findings recently establishing that

Sopara was a very important Teertha Kshetra for Jains during the 14th – 16th century. An important point to note is that the Modhas, who were Brahmana merchants and rose to prominence under the Rashtrakutas around 10th -11th century CE in Sanjan, are mentioned in the inscriptions on these images.

The images are predominantly Jaina origin; so does it indicate that the Modhas shifted to Sopara and went back to their roots as a trading community as visible amongst the other communities mentioned on the votive images. Also noticeable is that there was some transition in their faith or some amalgamation with the other Jain merchants residing in the region then. (P.Bhagyayashsuri Kale Shah: 2019) (Dalal: 2019).

Apart from these, new findings include the Vishnu image with Dashavtara panel supposedly belonging to the Shilahara-Yadava period and Ganesha panel, which is mostly Medieval. Both this panel and the image lie with the Shankar Nageshwar Mandir in Nala village.



7 Bronzes found. Now lying in the custody of Agashi Jain Temple Trust

Sr.no	Tirthankar	Date	Dimesnsion	Weight	Type
1	Neminath	VS1515/1458CE	152mm x 92mm	0.630kg	Panchtirthi
2	Adinath	VS1518/1461CE	212mm x 138mm	1.08kg	Panchtirthi
3	Sumtinath	VS1527/1470CE	200mm x 130mm	1.05kg	Panchtirthi
4	Shreyanshnath	VS1531/1474CE	168mm x 102mm	0.780kg	Panchtirthi
5	Sambhavnath	VS1533/1476CE	290mm x 205mm	2.2kg	Chaturvimsati
6	Adinath	VS1612/1555CE	105mm x 82mm	1.01kg	Image to be mounted on something
7	Vimalnath	NA (Broken)	107mm x 107mm	0.580kg	Mostly Panchtirthi

Details of the Bronzes



Ganesha panel (mostly medieval), Vishnu (with Dashavtara)

Sopara as a Trade Center and a Port

1. Trade Center

We have already look at various references that describe Sopara as a trade center or a place where the merchant or trader community thrived. In some of the religious myths and legends, the protagonist is involved in maritime or some other form of trade. Ancient trade roads linked Sopara through Kalyan with Nasik, Paithan, and Ter in the Deccan. The mentions at various important caves along the trade routes are a testimony to it. The donations also assert that the traders thrived at Sopara.

One peculiar mention pertaining to trade is that Kalal (people who were involved in liquor making and selling) were present in Sopara. However, these people were not looked down on or banished from society and in fact, had the right to commensality. (Malaygiri:6:44). The most intriguing thing is that this is mentioned by a Jain sadhu. This is a mark of Sopara being an ancient cosmopolitan.

2. Port

Sopara has been a thriving port since the 2-3 rd century BCE, if not earlier. The mentions in the Periplus mention how the monsoons would be the decider of the seasons and would help in the inflow, harbour and outflow of the ships coming from India as well as the world. The discovery of Caves at Edvan is again a sign that this would have been important in the history of Sopara as a port as this is the northern marker of Sopara and also the entry point into Vaitarna. (Pandit Kale:2013).

An ancient stone anchor was found in 2018 by one of the authors of this paper. The anchor again lies in the proximity of Gaas – Taki Pada. A lot of archaeological findings

depicted above have been found in this region. The anchor is a pointer of the place where probably the ships would be harboured. Interestingly near the stone anchor site, there is a Bandar Masjid; Bandar means port, does the name have any resemblance with its past? (Kale:2018)

A Kutchi sea manual from the 17th-century talks of a regular cargo trade route through the Bolinj-Sopara creek. Agashi was a shipbuilding center till the 17th century where the Marathas, as well as the Portuguese, built vessels up to 500 tonnes size. (Arunachalam:2002)

Sopara used to be a thriving port till its decline started due to siltation of the channels. Experts also opine that the sea level would have been almost 0.5m above then the present level around 2nd -3 rd century BCE.

The siltation occurred gradually over a period of 2000 years and the siltation process hastened during the colonial period due to heavy deforestation in the hinterland and the construction of the rail track on a high embankment in the 2nd half of the 19th century dismembered the channel, leaving the middle sections dry. Also the rapid urbanization in the region has resulted in the filling up of the remaining channels. (Arunachalam:2002)

Interpretation and Discussion

1. An Ancient Emporium

The archaeological remains found vouch for the literary references. The religious remains found depict the multi-coloured past of the same region. There is much more

to be found but one thing which is endorsed by the finding is that Sopara was a cosmopolitan where people from all backgrounds and ethnicities lived together, used the available resources and prospered. There were no differences even against the Yavanas or the Kalals. Some tiffs would have been there, given the human nature, but otherwise they blossomed as a community.

This was prevalent all throughout except for the arrival of the Portuguese – who not only had an anti-Islamic view but went on hitting everything that came their way. Once the Portuguese were ousted by the Marathas and was also under the British rule after that, the teerthas again started blooming from whatever was leftover.

As Nirmal Mahatmya points out that the Jains and the Buddhists tried to woo the Brahmanas but never harmed anyone and only did it peacefully because the land of Nirmal is so pious; however there are only 3 entities that have harmed people here – Vimalasura, Shurpanakha and Portuguese. Therefore it is not only a cosmopolitan but an emporium.

The Pillars – Teertha, Trade and Port

The monks are supposed to live in isolation from the society but they settled on the trade routes! Be it the caves or the temples or the monasteries, they needed something for subsistence; maybe even something more than subsistence. All these religions would not have survived without the patronage of either the kings the wealthy community. However, this isn't a one ended road. The people involved in the trade would need something more in their lives because what would they do with the excess they have – use it on their other development and what better than yatra.

The trade in these regions was heavily dependent on the climate, it even is today, and as we have seen even in references that in times of famine it was the monastic order that guided them. This was not only restricted to the people living locally but everyone who aspired to be a *teertha-yatrik*.

Thirdly, the trade wouldn't have been what it was if it was not a port. It was the port that was the passage between the hinterland and the world. These three are the plinths over which Sopara matured and stood firmly for over 2000 years. All of the references above prove that from the 3rd century BCE to the 15th century, Sopara was not only a place of sanctity but was one of the leading ports and trade centers on the western coast of India.

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