

# MARITIME RELATION OF KALINGA WITH SRILANKA

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The maritime trade and commercial activities of the people in ancient India is one of the fascinating chapters of historical study. The peculiar geographical location proved quite conducive for the establishment of different commercial and cultural interactions with many countries both far and wide. India, a country with a large peninsula bounded by seas on three sides offers ample opportunities in the arena of trade and commerce.

There was a time when deep seas and high mountains remained for a longtime an inaccessible domain for foreigners, but with the march of time, these so-called barriers proved to be benevolent and productive. They acted as excellent natural avenues for new trade ventures and infact, it is the geography that provided a commercial mileage for India for the last many centuries.

The beginning of the sea-faring traditions of India is known from the discovery of Indus valley civilization. The representation of ships in Harappan seals and paintings gives us the idea about their maritime trade in ancient times. The Vedic literature is replete with references to ships and sea voyages. In *Rigveda*, *Varuna* has been described as the Lord of the sea and the sea has been described as *Ratnakara* or the treasure house of wealth. The epics like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* contains several passages which indicate interaction between India and far off countries. The *Buddhist Jatakas* refers to several sea voyages and the dangers associated with it. The *Harshacharita* (7th century A.D.) mentions that sea voyage assures wealth (*abharamanna-Sri. Samkarshanane*).

The unique geographical position of Orissa, as the meeting ground of the North and the South, and its location near the sea provided an excellent opportunity to its people for trans-oceanic commerce. The region had a distinct identity of its own as Kalinga which once covered not only coastal Orissa but also the adjoining tracts of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. In the wider sense, ancient Kalinga comprised the major part of the eastern India from the Ganga to the Gadavari. The references to Kalinga occur in the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Puranas* and other Sanskrit texts besides Jaina and Buddhist literature. Pliny places Kalinga on the seacoast and refers to its three divisions. The great sailors of Kalinga, crossed the ocean and reached the distant lands.

## Sources

A plenty source of informations are available about the maritime activities of the people of Kalinga. Kalidasa in his famous *Raghuvamsa* referred to the king of Kalinga as “the Lord of the sea”—(*Patir Mahendrasya Mahodadhe/cha*)<sup>1</sup>. The *Aryamanjusrimulakalpa*, a text of Mahayana Buddhism, refers to “all islands in the Kalinga Sea” (Kalingadresu)<sup>2</sup>. From these statements it seems that the eastern sea or the modern Bay of Bengal was known in the past as the “Kalinga Sea” being dominated by the ships of Kalinga. In the Sanskrit literature the people of Kalinga have been spoken of as brave (*Kalihgah Sahasikah*)<sup>3</sup> due to their maritital character and maritime adventure.

The people of Kalinga expand their maritime trade and cultural relation mainly after third century B.C. The history of Kalinga generally begins from the third century B.C. During the time of Asoka, Kalinga had already established her position in maritime activities and strengthened the naval forces to face the Magadhan forces. Under Kharavela, Kalinga became famous as a major power of Eastern India around the first century B.C.. As known from Hatigumpha inscription, Kharavela defeated the Tamil confederacy and “caused the procurement of pearls, precious stones and Jewels from the Pandya King”. In the Buddhist Jataka Stories, the story book of *Vrihatkatha* and in Kautilya’s *Arthasastra*, we find the reference of maritime activities of the people of Kalinga in ancient time.

A sculptured frieze collected from the vicinity of the Brahmesvara temple, Bhubaneswar depicts boats carrying elephants. Another sculpture, supposed to have been collected from Konark and now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta depicts a boat being rowed by four persons with a royal personage and an elephant inside the boat. These two sculptures justify atleast two points that the ships of ancient Orissa were well built and were strong enough to carry elephant and that elephant was an item of export among many other items. Another slab containing an image of Mahisamardini has been collected from Brahmesvara temple has the representation of a boat below the pedestal of the Devi. At Konark on the parapet of the *Jagamohana*, the Martanda Bhairavas are shown as dancing on the boats. On the *Bhogamandapa* of the Jagannath temple of Puri, there is a magnificent representation of a boat in chlorite stone. Another magnificent representation of a boat, can be noticed in the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar. The scene represents a woman, steering a boat with an oar.

## Foreign Accounts

The accounts of foreign travellers, pilgrims and sailors help us in many ways in reconstructing the maritime history of Orissa. The unknown author of the *periplus of the Erythrean Sea* is so far the earliest foreigner to have referred to the Orissan coasts in first century A.D.

In second century A.D. Ptolemy during his Journey of the east coast has referred to the port of *Palur*. In the fifth century A.D. Fa-Hien, the Chinese pilgrim has elaborately described the port of Tamralipti where from he embarked upon a direct voyage to Srilanka (Ceylon). In seventh century A.D. Hiuen-Tsang visited Orissa and has left his accounts. He has described *Che-Li-ta-lo* as a resting place for the sea going traders. I-Tsang in the same century has left description of the port *Tamralipti* and the sea route up to Sumatra. During ninth and tenth centuries A.D. Arab and Persian geographers have furnished valuable accounts in this connection<sup>4</sup> Ibn Khurdadhbih in his itinerary mentions the names like *Knja* (Ganja) and *Smndr* (*Samudra* or Sea). The anonymous writer of the *Hadud-al-Alam* in tenth century A.D. also refers to *smndr* along with the name of *Urshin* or *Orshfin* (Orissa).

Both Ibn Khurdadhbih and the anonymous writer of *Hadud-al-Alam* give a long list of products and export commodities of ancient Orissa like elephants, pepper, rotang, cotton, white conch etc.

### **Ports**

Kalinga had maintained a number of prosperous sea ports for trade and commerce. The sea ports were centres of life of the people in commercial, cultural and political fields. The ports served as a medium of export not only of merchandise but also for culture and civilization.

The Buddhist scripture *Seuki* mentions a number of ports on the "Utkala" coast. The Greek geographer Ptolemy, except *paloura* has mentioned some other ports in the Kalinga, coast Viz - *Pitundra* (Pithunda), *Ganje* (Unidentified) and *Tamalites* (Tamralipti) through which Kalinga had cultural and commercial intercourse with the outside world during the early Christian centuries<sup>5</sup>. Besides these, there were a number of other ports in Kalinga namely—*Konarka*, *Chilika*, *Kalinganagara*, *Chelitalo*, *Harispur* etc.

Gerini has identified *paloura* of Ptolemy with *Palur*, a village in Ganjam district bearing the same name till today. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen.-Tsang, who visited Orissa in the 7th century A.D. mentions the name of important port *Chelitalo*. The Chinese name *Chelitalo* has been variously restored as *Charitrapur*, *Chitrotola* (*Chitrotpala*) and *Sri-tra* (Or *Srikshetra*), *Konark* and the town of *Puri*. In any case, it was a major centre of sea faring activity in the 7th century A.D.. However, the most probable identification of *Che-Li-ta-lo* could be the modern *Mainikpatna*<sup>7</sup>. The port of *Manikpatna* has been recently excavated which has been archaeologically established as an international sea port. The name *Manikpatna* is a modern one coming to it from *Kanchi-Kaveri* expedition of *Purusottam Dev* being associated with *Manika-Gouduni*.

### **Factors leading to maritime activities**

From the very dawn of history, the people Kalinga were engaged in maritime-activities for various reasons. The lure of foreign trade was no doubt the main factor, but

the spirit of adventure, the establishment of colonies and Kingdoms and the spread of religion and culture also haunted in their minds. The pressure of population in some parts of India sometimes led to the migration of people of foreign lands from such parts. As a result of this vast process lasting for several centuries, Indian culture and colonization spread to Simhala (Ceylon), Burma (Suvamadvipa), Java, Sumatra, Bali, Borneo etc.

### **Kalinga and Simhala**

In ancient period Simhala (Srilanka) was named as Tamraparni. The culture and commercial intercourse between Ceylon and Kalinga country, which existed from the early times was very intimate and long standing. It can be said certainly that by 5th century B.C., there existed close relationship between the two Kingdoms. According to *Mahavamsa*, Vijaya, the first King of Ceylon came from Eastern India.

Tradition holds that Vijaya was the son of Simhabahu of Simhapura. Simhabahu banished his son Vijaya and his seven hundred companions for their misconduct, and set them afloat on a ship. After long and eventful voyage, they landed near the present site of Puttalam on the north-west coast of Srilanka and set about the business of colonizing the island. This has been considered as the beginning of the story of man in Srilanka<sup>8</sup>. Vijaya's grandmother Susima was the daughter of the King of Kalinga and was married to king of Vanga. The newly conquered island was called Simhala Dvipa after the name of Simhavahu, the father of Vijaya. Further it is known from *Mahavamsa* that King Vijaya, towards the end of his reign invited his younger brother in Simhapura, to come to Srilanka as his successor. But the younger brother was not willing to come and sent his youngest son Panduvasudeva. Panduvasudeva landed at Gokanna (Present Tinkomalee) in north east of the island with thirty two followers and subsequently enthroned at Upatisagama ensuring the continuity of Vijayan dynasty in Simhala. Gokanna was a natural port which regularly received ships from Bay of Bengal<sup>9</sup>. For Ceylon, the names like, Vijaya, Simhabahu and Simhapura seemed legendary but for Kalinga, Simhapura was a historical city from pre-Christian centuries up to the Gangas. *Chulavamsa* mentions Simhapura as the capital of Kalinga. As the episode of Vijaya cannot be separated from Ceylonese history, so is his ancestry inseparable from Kalinga.

From the Buddhist work *Dipavamsa*, it is known that Asoka sent his son Mahendra to the island of Ceylon for the spread of Buddhism. Mahendra arrived at the island a month after the second coronation of its King Tissa in 250 B.C.<sup>10</sup> Later on Sanghamitra, the wife of prince Agnibrahma and the daughter of Asoka<sup>11</sup>, sailed from Tamralipti to Ceylon to ordain Anula and chief queen of Tissa and to organize the order of nuns in that island. Emperor Asoka sent on this occasion a sapling of the Bodhi tree in the custody of his daughter<sup>12</sup>. After reaching Ceylon Sanghamitra planted the Bodhi tree there. Further the *Samantapasadika*.<sup>13</sup> reveals that, Sanghamitra went to Ceylon being accompanied by eight families of Kalinga with a sacred Bodhi tree. Later on there developed the

Theravada School of Buddhism in the island. The Dathavamsa,<sup>14</sup> a Buddhist work speaks eloquently of the friendly relations between the king Guhasiva of Kalinga and Mahadisena (277-304 AD) of Ceylon. The same work of the third century A.D. reveals that Dantakumara, a prince of Ujjain married Hemamala the daughter of king Guhasiva of Kalinga and received from him the tooth relic of Goutama Buddha as dowry, which was being worshipped in a stupa in Kalinga since the days of Guhasiva's predecessor Brahmadatta. Dantakumara then took the sacred relic to Ceylon where it was enshrined in a stupa.

The fourth and the fifth century A.D. marked a brilliant epoch in the history of Ceylonese Buddhism. The Buddhist Viharas, stupas and chaityas were not only constructed during this period but some valuable works on Buddhist religion and philosophy, as well as, some important Chronicles were produced. The *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* composed in C.350 A.D. and 475 A.D. respectively, are a great source of history of both India and Ceylon. The celebrated Buddhist Scholar Buddhaghosa, who lived in the court of King Mahanama composed his well known work *Visudhimagga* expounding *sila*, *samadhi*, Prajna wrote important commentaries on the Tripitakas. Another Hinayanic philosopher Buddhadatta produced valuable treatises on *Abhidhamma* and *Vinaya*<sup>15</sup>. The influences of these two scholars very soon spread over Burma, Siam and Cambodia and systematised the religion of these places for all time to come.

The name Buddhaghosa has clustered round in a series of legends, and it is at present difficult to say whether he was born in India or Ceylon or in Burma<sup>16</sup>. It is however, true that he was a great cultural link among these three countries, and in India particular, he was intimately associated with the Buddhistic culture of Rishikulya-Godavari-Krishna and Kaveri valleys, where Hinayanism got a fresh lease of life owing to his influence.

The rising tide of Ceylonese Buddhism must have had considerable influence over Orissa as active intercourse of both commercial and cultural nature is known to have existed between the two countries during the period. The Sihalavihara<sup>17</sup> which had been constructed as early as third century A.D. somewhere in the Krishna-Godavari doab and the famous Mahabodhi Samgharama<sup>18</sup> erected at Bodhgaya by king Srimeghavarma (304-322 A.D.) became the centre of Ceylonese culture, and a large number of devoted pilgrim from Ceylon used to come over India for visiting these holy places. Kalinga, situated in between these Ceylonese strongholds, afforded the only possible high roads to these travellers, while her great ports were invariably used by them both for landing and embarktion.

Three distinguished pilgrims of Ceylon came to Kalinga to visit the holy places of Buddhasilakala, who came with his kinsman Mogallana during the reign of Kassapa-I (460-478 A.D.) the king of Ceylon and returned with a hair relic. Mahanama, who probably

came during the rule of Ceylonese King Aggabodhi I (568-601 A.D.) and donated a small shrine of the Buddha and sramana- Prakhyatakirti belonging to the royal family of Ceylon, who had his visit recorded in an undated inscription at Bodhgaya. All of them came and went back through the ports of Kalinga by inspiring her people with the Theravada traditions<sup>19</sup>. The most popular sea-route, frequently used by the traders and pilgrims was from Tamraparni to Tamralipti and Pataliputra was also linked through water ways. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien is known to have made boat Journey from Pataliputra to Tamralipti and from Tamralipti a sea voyage to Ceylon<sup>20</sup>. The famous port Che-Li-talo in the Wu-ta (Odra) country was also having active maritime intercourse with Ceylon and standing on its shore Yuan-chwang could think of the tooth relic of Buddha preserved in that distant islands.<sup>21</sup>

People from Kalinga and Wu-ta country also used to visit Ceylon to pay honour to the sacred tooth and the monastic institutions of that island. The *Chulavamsa*<sup>22</sup> records that during the reign of Ceylonese king Aggabodhi-II (610-611 A.D), the king of Kalinga accompanied by his wife and the minister came to Ceylon. We know from the same source that king Vijayabahu-I of Ceylon married Trilokasundari, the daughter of the king of Kalinga<sup>23</sup>. Her kinsmen Madhukarnava, Bhimaraja and Balatkara settled in Ceylon. The *Chulavamsa* further informs us that some members of the royal house of Kalinga became the rulers of Ceylon in later period<sup>24</sup>. From epigraphical evidences we come to know that Nissankamalla and Sahasamalla, the sons of king Goparaja of Kalinga became the ruler of Ceylon sometimes before 1200 A.D.<sup>25</sup>

The effect of the relationship between the royal families of Kalinga and Ceylon must have been considerable in the socio-religious life of the two countries. The cultural bond between them appears to be Buddhistic and more particularly Hinayanic and this system of Buddhism is known to have a remarkable predominance in Kalinga as late as the seventh century A.D.

After Nissankamalla, a bloody war took place for a long period for the throne and a number of his successors lost their lives within a small span of their rule. But during this critical time, Kalyanavati, the widow queen of Nissankamalla ruled for long six years, which was very peaceful in comparison to the reign of the successors of Nissankamalla. After the rule of Kalyanavati again disturbances took place in the house of the royal family of Ceylon. Taking this opportunity, Magha, a prince of Kalinga came to Ceylon with 24,000 soldiers and defeated Parakrama Pandya. He ruled the island for 21 years (1214–35 A.D).

The sea-borne trade between Kalinga and Ceylon continued throughout the ancient period. Ceylon occupied a strategic position so far as inter-oceanic commerce was concerned. It was a meeting place of merchants and sailors coming from the Eastern as well as the Western sea. Trade between Kalinga and Simhala must have increased as a result of the strong political link that existed between the two countries.

From Ceylonese point of view Kalinga was famous for elephants. From the account of Cosmos who belonged to sixth century A.D., it is known that Ceylon used to purchase elephants from India, mainly from Kalinga. Kalinga in its turn imported pearl and silver from Ceylon and exported precious stones, ivory, pepper, betel-nuts, drugs and fine textile products to foreign countries in general and Ceylon in particular.

From the above facts, it has been presumed that the relation between Kalinga and Simhala has not only been very old but also has been very brisk spreading into different walks of life. Starting from political activities, trade and commerce, it extended up to religion and culture.

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