Role of Kalinga in the Process of Ancient Indian Colonization in South-East Asia

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Maritime activity of India which is one of the fascinating fields of historical research is as old as its civilization, and as such may be traced back to the Harappan times. Maritime study comprises many aspects such as the study of ancient maritime structure, ancient ports, trade emporiums, trade routes, articles of import and export, navigation, shipbuilding technology, direction of monsoon winds, sea currents etc. So far as ancient maritime history of India is concerned; the much debated question of colonization also came to the

picture, which seems to play an important role. India has a long and glorious maritime heritage. Her stretchy coastline on the east, south and west, bordering the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea has been studded with many flourishing ports and port towns since time immemorial. India's strategic position had, thus, invested her from the earliest times with responsibilities to play an important role as 'a first-class maritime power'. India had close contactcommercial, cultural and political with the foreign countries such as South-east Asian countries i.e. Java. Sumatra, Bali, Borneo, Siam (Thailand), Champa (Vietnam); Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Rome, Africa etc. which has been referred to by both indigenous and foreign sources. The overseas relation of India with far off countries, particularly with Southeast Asia is noteworthy, and it is recorded that ancient India had established colonies in different regions of Southeast Asia. Referring to ancient India's colonizing zeal R.K.Mookerji1 writes "The early growth of her (India's) shipping and shipbuilding, coupled with the genius and energy of her merchants, the skill and daring of her seamen, the enterprise of her colonists, and the zeal of her missionaries, secured to India the command of sea for ages, and helped her to attain and long maintain her proud position as the mistress of the Eastern Seas." In the present paper, a sincere endeavour has been made to analyse ancient Indian colonization in Southeast Asia with specific reference to the role played by Kalinga or ancient Orissa in it.

Colonization in connection with the overseas trade and maritime activities is an unavoidable aspect to be studied in its historical perspective. It is a yardstick to measure the penetration and intensification of Indian as well as the Kalingan traits in South-East Asia. The connotation of the word colonization varied from time to time. By colonization it is, however, generally understood that a set of people go from one country to another and permanently make it their home. In other words, it is the practice of acquiring colonies by conquest or other means and making them dependant. But, the colonizing activity of the ancient Indians was distinctive in several respects. The Indians wherever they went, settled down there, absorbed some of the cultural aspects of the original inhabitants, and

adopted some traits of the civilization of the people. In spite of their superiority they never tried to dominate, rather they allowed the indigenous elements to grow. The ancient Indian colonists had the practical knowledge of adaptability.

After centuries of interaction both the colonists as well as the original settlers formed one society, each saturated with the culture and civilization of the other, though the dissemination of Indian culture formed a lion's share. About the Indianization, A.P. Patnaik² says "the expansion of Indian civilization to the South-East Asia during the early centuries of Christian era is one of the outstanding events in the history of the world." As a product of this Indianization, a series of kingdoms came into existence like Cambodia, Champa, Burma, Siam, Java, Bali, Sumatra etc. with tangible Indian influence. Though each of these states developed according to its own genius through a process of interaction with the physical and social environment of the respective area, their cultures never lost the family resemblance that they owed to their common origin. This common origin could be India as a whole or that of Kalinga, on the eastern

coast, which with its typical Indian culture had predominantly influenced the people of South-East Asian countries at a very early period. The Chinese travellers and historians of the period have spoken of a people in South-East Asia as Kunlun (the people of Kalinga) whose civilizing influence might have created this effect. According to A.P.Patnaik, "Ku-lung" or 'K'un-lun, which was the usual designation of the Kalinga people in the Southeast Asian region. was gradually transformed to 'Kling' or 'Keling'. Besides, the Indian immigrants in the Malay Archipelago are still called Orang Kling4, which is a survival of the name Kalinga, by which the inhabitants of Orissa were once known.

The people of Kalinga had a big share in the process of colonizing activities of South-East Asia. They indeed, were the pioneers. Even for several centuries, Kalinga remained in the form of 'Greater Kalinga' acquiring several islands and countries, which lay around the Indian seas under its suzerainty. It is also said that long before the Pallavas of Kanchi, the people of ancient Orissa had laid the foundation of Indian or Indianised states "beyond the moving seas"5. In this connection, many important questions arise which are yet to be answered such as, why did the people of Kalinga go to such distant places in the remote past? What prompted them to undertake this hazardous task? At what point of time did these people take up seafaring and made voyages to distant lands? What exactly was the share of Kalinga in the process of colonization and Indianization of Southeast Asia? What was the nature of migration of the people of Kalinga? Satisfactory answer to these questions is a difficult task. However, a moderate attempt in this line has been made below.

Different scholars have advocated different theories on the migration. Kautilya's Arthashastra recommends seizure of the territory of other countries and deporting surplus population of his own, which can be taken to indicate an early wave of Indian immigration to South-East Asia and other countries. But this interpretation is so imaginative that it looks like a flight of nationalistic fancy rather than sober historical thinking. Some scholars, however, seek to particularize a few definite waves of migration from India and assign causes to the same. They say that the Aryan

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conquest drove the pre-Aryan settlers of India towards the countries beyond the sea in the east and South-east and that the Hindus were forced to migrate there in large numbers by political events in later times. Most of the theories, however, are based on disturbed life in India, which compelled the people to take shelter in distant lands. One theory advocates that the first wave of Hindu migration in the early centuries of the Christian era occurred owing to the invasion of India by the foreign hordes such as the Greeks, the Shakas and the Kushanas. Basically it is attributed to the pressure of the Kushana invasions of India in the first century CE.7 This assumption, in the absence of historical proof, however, seems to be unacceptable. It is to be remembered that the conquests of the foreigners in the early centuries CE hardly affected the area beyond the Gangetic plain. Further, there was ample space in India itself for them to take shelter. It is, therefore, difficult and not proper to regard the foreign conquest as a sufficient cause, by itself, for a large-scale migration to a distant land beyond the sea.

The migration of the Kalingans, in particular, is attributed to the bloody

conquest of Kalinga by the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka in the third century BCE, which, it is suggested, might have provoked an exodus8. Could it be that Kalinga people migrated, enmass to South-East Asia on the wake of the Kalinga war of Ashoka? There is no historical evidence of such a movement. Archaeological evidences are silent too. But it appears indirectly in one of the rock edicts of Ashoka that after Kalinga war, the grief stricken emperor has not only spoken of the 'dead and deported' but also of 'the people who were fortunate to have escaped' without mentioning the land to which they escaped. As the small kingdom of Kalinga was surrounded on three sides by the mighty empire of Ashoka, thousands of young people from Kalinga, experts in navigation, might have preferred to escape into the distant lands through the sea rather than being deported to Magadha as prisoners. 9 But G. Coedes¹⁰ remarks that there was no mass emigration from India. The exodus was preeminently caused commercial considerations. It is quite remarkable that despite the large-scale influx of Indians including the Kalingans of various economic classes and intellectual levels over a long

period, there is no evidence of any local resistance to their arrival. The Indians also did not regard these new lands as outlets for their excessive population or an exclusive market for their growing trade nor did they insist on the superiority of their culture. It was what as D.P.Singhal11 remarks, "Whenever Indians settled they gave what they had and took what they could. Thus was evolved, by mutual consent, a new culture whose dominant note was Indian." The regions, especially the islands of South-East Asia were so much influenced by the Indian culture that many scholars have gone to the extent of declaring them as a part of 'Greater India', 'Indian Colonies', 'Extended part of India', 'Further India' etc. According to H. Kulke and D. Rothermund 12 the Greater Indian theory was a by product of Indian Freedom Movement. According to them the Indian historians smarting under the stigma of their own colonial subjection, tried to compensate for this by establishing the theory that Indians of yore were strong enough to establish colonies of their own. In 1926, at the initiative of Kalidas Nag, the 'Grater India Society' was established in Calcutta and in subsequent years. R.C. Majumdar, a doyen of Indian

historians published a number of books and articles on the subject what he called 'Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East'. R.C.Majumdar¹³ writes, "For nearly fifteen hundred years, and down to a period when the Hindus had lost their independence in their own home, Hindu kings were ruling over Indo-China and the numerous islands of the Indian Archipelago, from Sumatra to New Guinea. Indian religion, Indian culture, Indian laws and Indian government moulded the lives of the primitive races all over this wide region (Far East), and they imbibed a more elevated moral spirit and a higher intellectual taste through the religion, art, and literature of India. In short, the people were lifted to a higher plane of civilisation. A greater India was established by a gentle fusion of races, which richly endowed the original inhabitants with the spiritual heritage India.....The colonial and cultural expansion of India is one of the most brilliant, but forgotten, episodes of Indian history, of which any Indian may justly feel proud." This 'Greater India' theory, however, has been recently refuted by many scholars from South-East Asia.

The early South-East Asia remained under the influence of Indian culture from

the very ancient times. In the words of A. Lamb¹⁴, "By the opening of the Christian era the civilization of India had begun to spread across the Bay of Bengal into both island and mainland of South-East Asia; and by the fifth century A.D. Indianized states, that is to say states organized along the traditional lines of Indian political theory and following the Buddhist or Hindu religions, had established themselves in many regions of Burma, Thailand, Indo-China, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Some of these states were in time to grow into great empires dominating the zone between metropolitan India and the Chinese southern border. which has sometimes been described as 'Further India' or 'Greater India'. Once rooted in South-East Asian soil, Indian civilization evolved in part through the action of forces of South-East Asia origin, and in part through the influence of cultural and political changes in the Indian sub-continent. Many scholars have described the eastward spread of Indian civilization in terms of a series of 'waves'. B.K. Majumdar¹⁵ says "From the second to the fifth centuries A.D.(CE) the Hindus, belonging particularly to the South, north-east India, showed signs of maritime

activities which culminated in the establishment of their political power beyond the seas. The fascinating account of Hindu colonial and cultural expansion beyond India proper, the plantation of Hindu colonies in Sumatra, Java, Malaya Peninsula, Champa and Kambuja and the establishment of the kingdom of Sri Vijaya (modern Palembang) under the Sailendra kings should ever remain a glorious episode in ancient Indian history."

In this connection several theories like the Vaishya theory, the Kshyatriya theory and the Brahmana theory have been formulated by the scholars. The Vaishya theory gives the credit of colonization to the Vaishyas, the Kshyatriya theory to the Kshyatriyas and the Brahmana theory to the Brahmanas.

The Vaishyas or the trading communities of India have been given the credit of colonizing South-East Asia. Trade was the driving force for the early contact. Trade in the opinion of Romila Thaper¹⁶ led to settlements, which slowly developed into colonies. The Sanskrit and Pali works like the Brihat Katha, Kathakosha, Jatakas, Milindapanho,

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Niddesa (Pali canonical work), Jain texts etc. refer to trading voyages between Indian ports. and Suvarnadvipa and Suvarnabhumi.N.J.Krom¹⁷ says that the Indian penetration into South-East Asia began with traders who settled and married native women, thereby introducing Indian culture. G. Coedes¹⁸ is of the opinion that the spread of Indian culture was a result of intensification of Indian trade with South-East Asia early in the Christian era. According to Majumdar¹⁹, 'as in all ages and countries, the prospect of acquiring wealth first tempted the Indian traders and merchants to explore unknown territories beyond their own frontiers'. The Indian traders, while trading indirectly transmitted their customs, the Indian religious ideas and the technical skill to the populations of the respective places. Further, he also expressed that "the merchants in India, as in other countries, must have been pioneers in the exploration of Southeast Asia. The knowledge and experience gained by them. must have induced not only other traders, but also peoples of different categories to follow in their wake"20. The inscriptions also show that guilds of Indian merchants had established outposts in many

parts of South-East Asia. They provided an important transmission belt for all kinds of cultural influences. The concepts like *Suvarnabhumi* (lands of gold or Indo-China), *Suvarnadvipa* (islands of gold or Indonesia) refers to importance of traders who considered those regions as mine-house of gold or precious commodities. All these suggest that trade was the primary concern of the Indian colonists.²¹

This theory, however, is not free from criticism. If merchants played a major part in the transmission of culture then the centres of Hindu civilization would have developed on the coastal areas, the areas usually frequented by the traders. But in Indonesia. these are found in interior areas and mountains and in case of Java, in the almost inaccessible plains of Kedu and Prambanan. Commercial contacts are also inadequate for the transmission of the higher civilization of one people to another.22 J.F. Cady²³ who criticizes this assumption remarks, 'Some of the strongest centres of Indian influence, such as central Java, Mon Dvaravati. Cambodian Angkor, and Pagan Burma, were not centres of seaborne commercial intercourse at all. but rather advanced political

entities in their own might' J.C. Van Lear²⁴ has also strongly rejected this theory. Since the traders belonged to the lower strata (third in rank) of Indian caste system they had least possibility of acting as administrators, advisors etc.

The Kshyatriya hypothesis in connection with colonization Indianization of the South-East Asia has been propounded by a host of scholars. This theory ascribed the transmission of Indian culture to the conquest of South-East Asia by the Indian princes and kings who crossed the Bay of Bengal with all their retinue and founded strong 'Indian' or 'Hindu' kingdoms there.25 It is said that the Indian culture went to South-East Asia with the activities of Indian warrior immigrants who captured the political power of the region. This theory further propounds that Indian monarchs ousted from their realms sought new lands in Indonesia. They conquered certain areas and introduced Hindu civilization among the native population. Accordingly it was one of colonization by Indian monarchs, and might have resulted in intermarriage between those Indian princes and daughters of local chiefs which further strengthened the

process of colonization by the Kshyatriyas. However, so far as the Kshvatriva theory of Indian colonization is concerned there exists very little proof of any direct political influence in South-East Asia. R.C.Majumdar²⁶ is of the opinion that "we must not presume that this colonization (Hindu colonization) was the result of any military expedition, deliberately undertaken by any Indian king for this purpose". F.D.K. Bosch²⁷ has also criticized this theory. Bosch has put forth his claim on the following ground that "A conquering prince would have mentioned his success in an inscription, or, if not, one of his descendants would have done so." But this practice is absent in the South-East Asian islands. In the absence of such records. the Sanskrit names, adopted by the rulers of South-East Asia is taken as the most important evidence in this regard. But the pure Sanskrit form adopted by the South-East Asian rulers' shows that they had adopted these names not from the names of the Indian rulers but from Sanskrit language itself. However, the role of the Kshatriyas and the warriors in the process of Indian colonization in South-East Asia cannot altogether be ruled out. Megasthenes's reference to the

organization of 'Board of Admiralty' under the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta Maurya, depiction of the figure of sailing vessels on the coins of Satavahana and Pallava kings, Samudragupta's claim to have exercised suzerainty over "all islands" and particularly, powerful naval expeditions by Chola emperors (11th century CE) against Sumatra and Malaya Peninsula indicate to the significant role played by the rulers and warriors in the process of colonization.

The third theory, the Brahmana theory seems to be the most successful explanation. This theory says that the Indian priests disseminated and upheld Indian culture in places outside India, including Indonesia. Amongst priests were included the Brahmins. the Buddhists and the Jain monks. In addition to being religious specialists they were experts in Dharmashastra (religious rites), Arthashastra (economic affairs) Silpashastra (art architecture). They must have acted as development planners and as advisors to the rulers of South-East Asia. They gradually improved their own ways of administration and language. Besides, this theory is based on the fact that Indian influence is mostly evident in the

religious outlook on life manifested by holy monuments (Chandis), and Sanskrit words which enriched the Indonesian vernaculars.28 R. Le May is of the opinion that 'The beginning of Indian colonization overseas eastward go back a very long way in time and it is almost certain the results seen today were, in the main, not achieved by military expeditions, but by peaceful trading and religious teaching and thereby all the more permanent"29. J.C. Van Lear³⁰ has given emphasis upon the role of the Brahmans' for the colonization of South-East Asia.

It is said that the transmission occurred at the court level and was the work of the Brahmanas. The Brahmana priests functioned to complete the merger with local cults, to make rulers avataras of Hindu Gods, to concoct impressive royal genealogies, and eventually to Hindu literature, legal code, and governmental forms.31 Van Lear³² says, "the initiative for the coming of Indian civilization emanated from the Indonesian ruling groups, or was at least an affair of both the Indonesian dynasties and the Indian hierarchy. The course of events amounted essentially to a summoning to Indonesia of Brahmin priests and Indian

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court artificers. The Indian priesthood was called eastward certainly because of its wide renown-for the magical, sacral legitimation of dynastic interests and the domestication of subjects, and probably for the organization of the rulers' territory into a state (patrimonial). In corroboration to this W.F. Wertheim³³, a Dutch scholar has summarized this view as follows: "The socalled 'Hindu colonisation process, is reduced, in the modern conception, to the presence at the Javanese courts of a comparatively small number of very influential Indian Brahmins, lending political support to Javanese rulers by providing them with a kind of investiture and with a genealogic confirmation of membership in a high caste, and acting at the same time as advisers in affairs Government and things sacral."

R.C. Majumdar³⁴, has summed up by saying "the zeal of the Brahmans and Buddhists, pressure caused by increasing population and invasion of foreign hordes, and the spirit of adventure of the *Kshyatriya* princes and nobles added to the commercial enterprise of the merchants, and caused a steady flow of Indian emigrants to various parts of the Indo-China Peninsula and the

east Indies. Many of these emigrants permanently settled in these foreign lands. They married women of the localities and the influence of their superior culture gradually Hinduised the society. This imperceptible but gradual penetration, often aided by active missionary propaganda, gradually spread Hindu religion, art, literature and social ideas in all directions. military Sometimes a adventurer seized the political power and established a Hindu kingdom. The fusion between the Indian settlers and the Hinduised local people was so complete that it is not always possible to distinguish between the two. The latter assumed Hindu names and adopted Sanskrit or Pali language and Hindu religion, manners and customs, while the Indians imbibed local habits and social usages and merged themselves into the local communities. Thus, grew up the Indian colonial kingdoms, which were constantly strengthened by fresh streams of immigration from the motherland." Gradually, the new culture spread from place to place and engulfed the entire region.

The colonization process under discussion can never be the work of any single community. It has been said

earlier that people of different castes were involved in the trading activities. Maritime trade was not restricted to the Vaishvas, the traditional traders, only. The profitability part of it attracted people from different castes who had the money and the mentality to take up the trip. Hence, as suggested earlier, there grew up a class of rich merchants called the Sadhabas or Sadhavas in Kalinga (ancient Orissa) who carried on this maritime trade. They used ships called *Boitas* (the word *Boita* is probably derived from the Sanskrit word Vahitra, meaning a ship or vessel) to travel to distant lands such as Java, Sumatra, Bali, Borneo, Sri Lanka, Burma, Siam, Champa etc. to carry out trade and for cultural expansion. Kartika Purnima Day (full moon day of *Kartika* falling in the months of October - November) was considered by the Sadhabas as an auspicious day to begin their sea voyages. They, however, did not belong to a particular caste but constituted a class including people from different castes indulging in the maritime trade. Thus, people of all castes i.e. Vaishyas, Kshyatriyas, Brahmanas and even Shudras formed the Sadhabas.

Thus, colonization was neither done by any caste nor

during a short span of time. It was a combined effort of various participants over a long period of time. Nevertheless, the trading trips were carried with them Brahmins who acted as advisers because of their expertise over various branches of knowledge, the Kshvatrivas who gradually fused their traditional occupation with that of trade for their survival and the Vaishvas who earned the title of honest businessmen 'Sadhu' or 'Sadhaha'.

Now question arises as to what was the role of the people of South-East Asia in the process of colonization? What sort of civilization existed there before the advent of Indian cultural elements? Were they merely passive recipients or did they actively participate the process? The propounders of 'Greater India' theory put forward, the passive recipient theory. But it will be wrong to think that the areas of Southeast Asia were merely 'cultural appendages' of India. The Dutch scholar, J.C. Van Leur³⁵ was the first to project the Indonesian element in the process. He has highlighted the great skill and courage of the Indonesians. Early Indonesian inscriptions show that trade, agriculture and craftsmanship had considerable progress in

early Indonesia. If this view is to be accepted then the early Indonesians were a developed lot and if that be so there was the least chance of their welcoming the foreigners. At the same time, protagonists of the opposite view said that the Indonesian people as well as the rulers themselves invited and welcomed the Indians in large numbers. Whatever may be the fact, source materials are very scanty either way. The chauvinistic approach of the modern scholars of the South-East Asia has made them argue in support of their country. But one thing is certain that when the Indians first went there probably there was no resistance from the local people, although whether they welcomed them or not is a difficult story altogether. Initially there was very good relationship between the original settlers and the foreigners, which continued to remain so almost, till the end. This, however, does not mean that the local people were underdeveloped or backward nor does this prove that they were very developed. As stated earlier, the claim of Indian scholars on 'Greater India' theory is not free from chauvinistic approach. According to tradition, it is recorded that Fu-nan was the first kingdom in the Southeast Asia which was founded by a *Brahmana* from India named Kaundinya (1st Century CE). Gradually, several other Hindu colonies were developed in Kambuja, Champa, Java, Sumatra, Bali, Borneo etc.

The role of Kalinga in the process of colonization of South-East Asia and Ceylon is supported by various sources. It is believed that the first impulse to the colonizing activity and expansion of India had its origin in the daring spirit of Kalinga. The spirit of enterprise and adventure was so remarkable among the Oriyas in ancient times that they have been referred to in the Sanskrit literature as Kalingah Sahasikah (the brave Kalingans). They cherished the ambition of founding colonies in distant lands. Recent researches on the Indian colonization have revealed that Kalinga had a major share in the over-seas expansion and colonization. The naval power of Kalinga made it possible for her to establish kingdoms in South-East Asia in the early stages of colonization and finally a great empire during the middle ages³⁶. Tradition holds that 20,000 families were sent from Kalinga to Java by the prince of Kalinga who further

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multiplied and prospered. Similar traditions of colonists from Kalinga (ancient Orissa) are preserved in the chronicles of Java. According to A. Bhattacharjee³⁷ "the most important kingdom of Java during the Tang period was Kalinga, named after the well known province of India. Thus, it is quite natural that the colonists from Kalinga dominated Java or at least a part of it. Any way, the name Kalinga and the popular belief that the original colonists of Java came from Kalinga indicate a close affinity between Java and Kalinga country". Both R.K. Mookerji38 and Crawford hold the view that all the Hindu influences in Java were from Kalinga³⁹. The Buddha images of Borobudur, the greatest monument of the Sailendras in Java, are found to have been modeled up on the Buddhas from Ratnagiri in Orissa⁴⁰. The fact admits very little doubt that many Kalingan rulers' ruled over Ceylon and established dynasties there. Starting from Vijaya up to Nishanka Malla many kings of Ceylon were either from Kalinga or had matrimonial relationship with the ruling families of Kalinga.

There was a Hindu kingdom in central Java, which the Chinese called as *Holing* or

Kalinga. Prome, the capital of Burma for some time was named as Shrikshetra after the name of famous Shrikshetra (modern Puri) of Orissa. The Sailendras, the most famous ruling dynasty of Sumatra were not only contemporary of the Sailodbhavas of Kalinga but were supposed to be their offshoots. It is believed that the Sailendras came directly from India and were connected with the Sailodbhava kings of Kalinga.41 However, it is difficult to ascertain the exact share of the Kalingan people in 'Greater India', but it can be inferred that they had a lion's share in it. Highlighting the role of Kalinga in the colonization of Southeast Asia, M. N. Das⁴² said that the expansion of Kalinga, politically and culturally, into the lands so mentioned, was really a great contribution of that land to the civilization of the East. Spreading Hinduism and Buddhism, Indian literature and art, and still more, infusing the Indian blood into various parts of the Asiatic hemisphere, Kalinga had greatly advanced the movement for 'Greater India'. The legacies of the past remain till to day. Even to day, the Pacific islanders look towards the shores of India in memory of a very remote age when the people from that side

went and civilized them. The remains of Hindu and Buddhist architecture in Malaysia still indicate the cultural conquest of that land by Kalinga. The names like *Talaing*, *Telinga*, *Kling*, *Keling* and Kalinga still continue to exist and used by the people of Burma and Malaysia.

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