## Maritime Trade of Ancient Kalinga

Dr. Prafulla Chandra Mohanty

The Ancient Kalinga (Orissa) had a rich maritime heritage. References to the maritime trade of Orissa in the Greek, Roman, Arab and the Chinese sources reveal that geographical location of Orissa on the eastern Board made it a gateway to the oversea expansion of religion, philosophy, art and architecture in the south and south-east Asian countries, which still bear their glaring imprints. Its prosperity chiefly depended upon its flourishing maritime trade and overseas colonies. Being situated on the shore of Bay of Bengal its stretchy coastline studded with several ports, since the precenturies A.D. facilitated overseas contact with many foreign countries like the Roman empire, Ceylon, China, Burma, the islands of Indonesia-Java, Bali, Sumatra and Borneo collectively known as the Suvarnadipa in the ancient time. Besides a favourable geographical setting it proposed a band of daring adventurous sailors and seamen, justly acclaimed as 'Kalingah Sahasikah (the brave Kalingans) in the Sanskrit literature. Maritime adventurism was indeed, in the blood of the mercantile community of Kalinga.

Orissa, the core area of past Kalinga enjoyed a maritime past of acknowledged commercial and colonial enterprise as noted by ancient Greeks, Romans, Arabs and the Chinese. From the Buddhist period, the people of Kalinga were known for their maritime trade activities. The

author of periplus of the Erythraean Sea observed in the early years of Christian Era how ships sailed regularly from the Kalingan sea coast towards Malaysia. Ptolemy, the celebrated Greek geographer, noted in the second century A.D. that a number of ports existed in Kalinga such as Palura, Apheterian, Kati-kardama, Kanagara and Manda. Two other famous ports Dantapura and Kalinga Nagar have been vividly described in contemporary Indian literature. Fa-Hien, the Chinese pilgrim of the fourth century A.D. has also left an illustrated account of famous Kalinga sea port named Tamralipti. The people of Kalinga were pioneers of Indian colonisation beyond India and the Indian archipelago. The eastern sea or the present Bay of Bengal was known as the 'Kalinga Sea' in the past and was dominated by the ships of Kalinga. All islands in Kalinga sea were called 'Kaling Dresu'. The name of Utkal Desa, denoting the Hindu colonial settlements from Rangoon (Yangon) to Pegu is of special interest. the Pali canon mentions Utkal as the home of merchants. Readers of Buddhist literature know the story of two merchants of Brahmadesh, Tapussu and Bhalluk, who met Buddha at the end of the seventh week after his enlightenment and offered five hundred cartful food grains etc. as gift and became his first disciples. The fact that inhabitants of Orissa (the then Kalinga) were November - 2011-

adept in construction of powerful vessels, as described in the "Brahmanda Purana". The text relates to strong and swift rowing boats found in the Chilika Lake, carrying thousands of persons. The bodies of the boats were covered with copper plates. These had wheels and were well equipped with all sorts of machines. Proficient sailors were moving to different areas like Java, Malaya and Ceylon with Merchandise. The people of Kalinga had colonies in Siam, Burma and Suvarnadvipa. These colonies constituted the Brihat Kalinga. Till to-day some of the inhabitants are known as the Kalingas. In the Aitareya Brahmana, the sea is mentioned as bottomless and the nourisher of land. The Satpatha Brahmana also mentions the Ratnakar (The Arbian sea) and the Mohododhi (Bay of Bengal). Kalinga Adhipati (King) is called as the Mohododhi Pati also. The Prachya Kalinga denoted the eastern part on the coast of Kalinga Sagar which extended from the river Godavari to Suvarnarekha.

According to the Chinese texts 'Kun-Lun' people are known as the people of Kalinga. The foundation of Kalinga settlements was in the northern part of the Malaya Peninsula as well in Java and in the dissemination of the art of writing in south East Asia. The Chinese texts and other corroborative evidence prove that the Kalingan adventurers sailed from the port of Polura in the 1st century A.D. for settlement in these places. The text also reveals that the King of Kalinga established a kingdom there in the early century of Christian era, and numerous Brahmans came from India (Kalinga) in search of wealth. Twenty thousand families were sent to Java by the Prince of Kalinga. These people prospered and multiplied. They continued, however, in an uncivilised state till the year 289 (Javanese era i.e. Saka era) when the Almighty blessed them with a Prince, named Kano. Historians marked this Kano is nothing but an inhabitant of Kanosi near Gopalpur Port of Ganjam Coastline. Three generations of Kings ruled for a total period of four hundred years.

In the seventh century B.C. the name of Burma was Kalinga Rastra. The inhabitants of lower Burma were known as Kalinga (Tri-Kalinga). The name of the place was Srikshetra. It has been described as Chelitala by Chinese travellers. The name of Pegu was shna and Udissa (Orissa). The Hindu inhabitants of Malaya also called themselves as 'Kalinga'. It is believed that prior to the conquest of Kalinga by Ashoka, a kingdom had been established in Burma. Reference is made to a Hindu King of Kalinga, who established the Kingdom in 544 B.C. It is mentioned in the Vasya Brihat Kathamanjari that Tamralipti was a very important city being the terminal point of the grand route and was sea trading centre. Another Jatak story mentions that the port of Tamralipti like the Port of Bheru Kachha on the western sea coast of India, carried trade with both Srilanka and Subarnabhumi, Kanchanapura, the capital of Kalinga was a port which had trade relations with Srilanka. Kanchanpura has been identified with Dantapura, the capital of Kalinga which was called Palur by Ptolemy. Palur in Orissa, according to Prof. S. Levy, is only Tamil equivalent of Dandapura.

Orissa in those days seems to have supplied spices, diamonds and precious stones to the Roman empire, elephants to Ceylon, precious stones, ivory, paper, butel nuts, betel nuts, drugs, fine textiles and fabrics to China besides rice and forest goods to other countries. The valuable merchandise, which includes silk, gold, gems, porcelain, sandal wood and spices imported from China. Fine glass, Indian steel, incense, ivory, exotic birds from the Arbian kingdom had to be unloaded, lugged 50 miles on rugged terrain by

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men and animals with heavy guard and loaded on vessels for trading. Silk route of the sea was connected with China-India and the middle East via Malaya Peninsula. Orissa, as is evident from the many stone panels showing ships carrying elephants, exported to a large number of these of huge pachyderms and fanciful raiah may even have brought in a stray giraffe (a panel in Konark Temple depicts the animal). Extremely large elephants are found in Kalinga but in no other parts of India. Buddhist pilgrims name various groups of ships on the basis of their size. The larger ships named as Mohanava could carry at least 700 members, crew and cargoes of elephants too. Kalinga's overseas trade were spread all over Burma, Malaysia, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Bali and China on the east and after the ninth century, over Arbia, Greece and even West Africa in the west. The articles traded were pearls and muslins of the finest quality, silk and mulberry cotton bales, conch shells, Indigo, corn, elephants and spices.

When Orissa came under the Mughals the ports of Orissa Coast were thriving. In the seventh century, when the European merchants began their adventures in eastern trade, almost all of them gravitated towards the Orissan coast for commercial activities. During rule of Akbar, the southern ports of Orissa including Palura, Sonepore, Gopalpur, Chilika and Chitrotpola lost their importance. On the other hand, some of the northern ports such as Balasore, Pipili and Harishpur came into the greater focus and developed into important naval centres. The Portuguese, Dutch, Danes and English had their maritime trade settlements on the coast of Orissa. Because of the long coastline and navigable rivers, the Orissan coast had a large number of flourishing ports like Balasore, Dhamra, Harishpur, Kakatpur, Konark, Puri, Gopalpur, Chilika, Sonepur, Mantridi, Baruva and many others. With the passage of time these ports decayed and became almost non-functional. The maritime trade

was also largely disturbed by the pirates. The Arkan Pirates, both Magh and Feringi used to plunder maritime business. The pirates carry Hindus and Muslims, pierced their palms, threw them in the decks of their ships and sell them as slaves (captives) at a higher price. This creates fear in the minds of maritime traders which abstained them from the sea voyage. The advent of roads, rail roads also lessen the importance of river port routes for transportation. However the post independent era carry some steps to develop certain ports in the area like Paradeep, Gopalpur, Dhamara, etc. The ports of Orissa especially Gopalpur and Paradeep had a good commercial contact with various other countries like United Kingdom, Ceylon, Germany, France, Italy, USA, Belgium, Burma, Rangoon, and many other ancient ports of the world. The vessels sailed from here are well supported with the North-west wind and the returned journey by South-east wind.

To overcome the dangers of cyclone, Tornado, Shark, Piracy etc. the farers had to look God Almighty for protection. The blessings and grace of the Gods and Goddesses were often invoked for successful trading voyages and to escape perils of the sea. Such sea gods and goddesses are Baruna, Laxmi, Mangala, Kalijai, Narayani, Bhagabati, Ramachandi, Harachandi, Jayachandi, Kondhoni, Gangamata, Bhairabi, Biraja, Charchika, Bhatarika, Taratarini, Basuli, Durga, Joginees, etc. There are also some maritime trade related festivals like Bali Jatra, Khudarukuni, Ushakothi, Jahni Osha, Nat Osha, etc.

Orissa, now remembers its past maritime trade glory which also throws light on the history of maritime trade activities of the world.

Dr. Prafulla Chandra Mohanty, Sanskruti Sadan, At-Boiyali, P.O.-Mantridi, Dist.- Ganjam-761008.