



Early Maritime Contacts between Kalinga and Bali : A Historical Perspective

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Kalinga or Odisha in ancient times had brisk overseas contact with different parts of the world. In the process, Odia culture, customs, beliefs, ideas, language, script and manners were popularised in those lands where settlements were established by Odia merchants, missionaries and political adventurers. The maritime trade of Kalinga brought in vast amount of wealth and glory, and the prosperity of Kalinga beyond doubt was largely due to her overseas trade with distant lands. The people of ancient Odisha maintained enduring commercial and cultural relationship with the Indonesian islands of Java, Sumatra, Bali and Borneo, collectively known as *Suvarnadvipa* (roughly modern Indonesia). They played a leading role in the dissemination of their culture and civilization in the Indonesian island of Bali. In fact, Indonesian islands, particularly the island of Bali, formed the most attractive destination for the merchants of ancient Odisha.

The island of Bali is situated between Java and Lombok. In the Chinese sources it has been mentioned as Poli.¹ The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing,² who stayed at Sri Vijaya, mentions the name of Poli (Bali) among other islands. Bali is the only island, in the whole of Indonesia, where Hinduism, blended with Balinese concepts, is still prevalent. Even now Bali is a veritable repository of the Hindu

culture of India. Hindu Gods like Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, Varuna, and Ganesha are worshipped and highly venerated in Bali. H.B.Sarkar³ very correctly says, "Indeed, all known gods of any importance in the Hindu and Buddhist pantheon of India had their heyday in Bali." Lord Shiva, however, was considered the supreme and most powerful deity. He was the presiding deity and was considered the elder brother of Buddha. According to traditional beliefs, Bali was the centre of Universe and the abode of Gods. The Balinese verses, which refer to five pious women are very much similar to India i.e., "*Om Ahalya Draupadi Sita Dara (for Tara) Mandodari tatha panchakanya smarennityam.*" Besides Hinduism, Buddhism was also very popular in ancient Bali. Indian influence on Bali could be marked in composition of works on astrology (Balinese called it *wariga*). Sanskrit also influenced to a great extent the language and literature of the Balinese. The Balinese also celebrate Indian festivals like *Shivaratri*, *Saraswati puja*, *Durga puja* etc. The name Bali is said to have originated from the kingdom of the pious demon emperor Maha Bali (of the *vamana avatar* fame), who had gifted away the entire world to Lord Vishnu, who came to him in the disguise of a midget.⁴



There are ample proofs to testify that the Hindu influence from India reached Bali as a result of direct contact between the two countries. Recent archaeological discoveries indicate that the contact between India and Indonesia, particularly Bali, had been occurring at least from the beginning of Christian era (Common Era or CE).⁵ The discovery of Indian rouletted ware of first and second centuries CE from Sembiran (in north-east Bali) have established the fact that Indian traders were coming to the region. Discovery of rouletted ware, glass beads, semi-precious stone beads, potsherds with *kharosthi* characters etc., from Bali points to ancient cultural contact between Bali and different regions of India. Archaeological findings refer to the development of a trading network between eastern coast of India, Sri Lanka and Bali. The Hindu texts such as *Vrihat Samhita* and *Kathasarita Sagara* inform us that there were trade relations between India and Bali since very early times. However, the earliest Indian literary source which authentically mentions about the island of Bali is the Buddhist text *Aryamanjusrimulakalpa* (c. seventh-eighth century CE) which mentions “*Dvipe varusake chaiva nagnavali samudbhabe yavadvipoba ...*” In the opinion of K.S. Behera,⁶ *varusake* of the text is evidently Sumatra, *nagna dvipa* is the Nicobar island, *Yava dvipa* is Java and *vali* is no doubt, the island of Bali.

Kalinga had close links with the Hindu kingdom of Bali. The island of Bali was known to the sailors of Kalinga as *Narikela dvipa*. Many Balinese inscriptions refer to Bali as the island of coconut. The Poh Inscription of Bali (c. 905 CE) mentions that Bali was the island of coconut (*wanuari rumaksan ringnyu*)⁷ and once was the centre of Odisha’s commercial and maritime activities.⁸ The sailors of Kalinga made frequent

voyages to the island of Bali and had their settlements in the island who consequently disseminated Hindu culture there. As a result, the whole island of Bali was Hinduised. The reminiscent of this link of the glorious past has been preserved in a festival of Odisha known as *Bali yatra*, celebrated throughout the length and breadth of Odisha. It is also otherwise known as *boita bandana* festival. It is celebrated on the auspicious *purnima* (full-moon) day in the month of *kartika* (October-November). Even today, the people of Odisha celebrate this festival with much pomp and ceremony by sailing boats of banana peel in rivers, ponds and sea. The lit boats carry betel leaf and betel nuts as token of merchandise and are sent off amidst chanting of nostalgic refrains:

“*aa – ka – ma – ba (bha) i*
pana – gua – thoi
pana-gua-tora
masaka dharama mora”

At *Gadagadia ghatta* of Cuttack, on the bank of the great river Mahanadi, people of Odisha, irrespective of age, sex and caste, celebrate this festival in great earnest and pomp. On this auspicious day (*kartika purnima*), early in the morning, every household floats down in the sea, river, stream or even in the village tank (whichever is near or favourable to them), a gaily decorated *sholapith*, banana stem or paper boat with all paraphernalia of a real ship to mark the beginning of the voyage of shipping season. The scene of the celebration of the festival automatically creates a nostalgic mood in the minds of the spectators. In the words of A.K. Mishra,⁹ “The cold and misty dawn suddenly becomes vibrant and takes on a festive look as men, women and children, attired in colourful costumes throng all waterfronts carrying tiny boats made either of



banana peels, or *sholapith*, or paper, with lighted lamps inside, in a frenzied bid to launch those brightly lit toy vessels on the gentle waves to the accompaniment of ululations by women, blowing of conch, and occasional burst of crackers.” Again he observes, “The receding line of the flickering lamps and spectacle of a large number of Oriya [Odia] women, in colourful saris, for performing the rite of ‘*Boita-Bandana*’ (the ceremonial send-off to the sailing ships) evoke the memories of the voyages of the adventurous Kalingans of yore and create a truly romantic and nostalgic mood.”¹⁰ The small hours of the morning of *kartika purnima* were used to be considered as the most auspicious and suitable time for the beginning of sea journey.

Kalinga and the island of Bali have influenced each other’s culture to a very considerable extent, though the share of Kalingans was more. I.G.P. Phalgunadi, an Indonesian scholar who visited Odisha and did some field work in connection of his research was pleasantly surprised at many instances of similarity between the culture and life styles of the people of both the places. There are many cultural elements that are similar between Odisha and Bali, e.g. religious activities, dance forms, art and crafts, temples and monuments, textile designs, even food habits, manners and the vocabulary. Temples as socio-cultural centres are common both to Bali and Odisha. The discovery of similar type of rouletted ware at Sembiran, located in north eastern Bali and from the sites like Shishupalagarh, Manikpatna, Tamluk etc., of Odisha suggest trade contact between Odisha and the island of Bali.¹¹ Interestingly, a potsherd from Sembiran with *Kharosthi* inscription on it is an important discovery. A potsherd with *Kharosthi* characters also occurs at Manikpatna. Besides, in Bali, there is an inscription of the fourteenth century CE, which is clearly in Odia language and

script, spoken and written in contemporary Odisha.¹² P.C. Rath,¹³ on the basis of the language and script used in this 14th century CE inscription alludes that this might indicate ‘the arrival of a new batch of immigrants in sufficiently large number.’ The scripts used in Bali in the tenth century CE were also used in Kalinga. Hence, on the basis of this, the contact between Odisha and Bali can be easily established.

Odisha played a significant role in the evolution of Hindu culture in Bali. A section of *brahmanas* in the Karangasam district of Bali styled themselves as *Brahmana-Bouddha - Kalinga*. It seems very likely that their ancestors were immigrants from Kalinga. In this context, it is worthwhile to mention that some words and usages with regard to vocabulary, crafts, religious practices, form of worship, food habits and manners prevalent in Bali are indubitably of Odia in origin. There are linguistic parallels between Odisha and the island of Bali. For example, in the coastal districts of Odisha, mother is addressed as *bou* and father as *baba* and in Bali the former is called *bu* (*boo*) and the latter as *bapa*. In some places of Odisha, father is also called as *bapa* (the author was addressing his father as *bapa* while his wife is addressing her father as *baba*). The Balinese term for betel-nut is *buah*¹⁴ (*goah*) and in Odisha it is *gua* or *guah*. *Cina/China* is the Balinese word for groundnut, while in Odia it is *china* or *chinabadam*. Both Balinese as well as Odias used to call uncooked rice made out of part-boiled (or sun dried) paddy as *arua*.¹⁵ The plough is called *lengallo* in Bali while the Odias used the term *langala* for the same. Another very interesting example is the use of the word *peja* or *pejo*; both in Odisha and Bali it denoted the thick fluid which is separated from cooked rice before serving it. The Brahmin priest in Odisha is generally known as *Panda* whereas



in Balinese temples he is called *Padanda*¹⁶ [meaning the holder of the scripture of *dharma* for ruling over the people]. In the society of both the places, they (*brahmanas*) are held in high honour. Even the use of the term *beeja* for seminal fluid is common to both the Odias and the Balinese. I.G.P.Phalgunadi,¹⁷ expressing his personal observation, says: “I may mention here that I found a number of basic words used by Oriyas [Odias], some crafts, some forms of worship and some peculiar food-habits prevalent in Orissa [Odisha] to be common with Indonesia, especially with Bali and Java. For instance, we call the mother *Boo (bu)* in Indonesia like *Bou* in Oriya [Odia] and father as *Bapa* in Indonesia, *Bapo* in Javanese or *Bapa* in Balinese as in Oriya [Odia]. Betel nut is called *Goah* or *Buah* in Balinese as in Oriya [Odia]. Ground-nut is called *Kacang China* in Bali, like *Chinabadam* in Oriya [Odia]. We worship in Bali three deities, represented by masks, very much resembling the trinity, Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra in Orissa [Odisha]...In Bali, we are especially fond

of leaves of *sag* as in Orissa [Odisha], especially the young leaves of the drum-stick tree, known in Orissa [Odisha] as *sajana*. We love to cook its *sag* along with mashed coconut as is done in Orissa [Odisha]. We also love to eat cooked banana- flowers and the core-stem of the banana plant, and also to have our food on banana leaves as in Orissa [Odisha] and Bengal. We also prepare and eat a cake made of rice-flour with stuffings like those known as *manda* and *enduripitha* in Orissa [Odisha], among other such cakes made of rice flour. We worship a knotted bundle of paddy-sheaves as Shridevi, the goddess of crops or harvesting, who is worshipped with the same connotation as Lakshmi, in the month of *Margashira* in Orissa [Odisha]. Goddess Shri Lakshmi receives regular propitiation when the harvest is over. Lakshmi is regarded as the real owner of the rice fields. In west Java this goddess is known as *Devi Pohachi*, the Goddess of rice.”

The following table shows the similarities in Odia and Balinese words with their English meanings.

Odia	Balinese	English
<i>ajna</i>	<i>inge</i>	seeking permission in case of replying to elders
<i>arua</i>	<i>arua</i>	uncooked rice made out of parboiled/sun dried paddy
<i>beeja</i>	<i>beeja</i>	seminal fluid
<i>borokuli/ barakoli</i>	<i>bokul</i>	a kind of fruit (jujubes)
<i>bou</i>	<i>bu(boo)</i>	Mother
<i>chhuin</i>	<i>tui</i>	a kind of vegetable (especially of drum-stick tree (<i>sajana</i>))
<i>china (badam)</i>	<i>kacan (cina)/ kacang china</i>	peanut
<i>genda</i>	<i>gondan</i>	Snail



<i>gua</i>	<i>buah(goah)</i>	betel nut
<i>langala</i>	<i>lengallo</i>	Plough
<i>munha</i>	<i>muha</i>	Face
<i>panda</i>	<i>padanda</i>	priest of the temple
<i>papa/bapa</i>	<i>bapa</i>	Father
<i>para</i>	<i>dara</i>	Pigeon
<i>peja</i>	<i>peja/pejo</i>	thick fluid of cooked rice
<i>Ruti</i>	<i>roti</i>	Bread
<i>sanja</i>	<i>sanja</i>	Evening

Both the Balinese and the Odias with regards to food habits seem to have some common likes and dislikes. Both are fond of eating *saga*, especially *sajana saga* (young green leaves of drum-stick tree). Other favourite vegetables common to both include banana flowers (*bhanda*) and core stem (*manja*) of the banana plant. The Balinese also liked to have their food on banana leaves as in Odisha and Bengal. Similarly, cakes made out of rice-flour known as *manda* and *enduripitha* are also favourite dishes of both. The habit of chewing betel and keeping the ingredients in a wooden box are found in both the regions.

The island of Bali, even now, is a repository of the Hindu culture. It is rightly regarded as an 'island of Gods.' As in Odisha, a type of temple structure in Bali is known as *meru*.¹⁸ The Vasuki temple complex dedicated to Lord Shiva (Parama Shiva), where Shiva is supposed to sit on the head of the Vasuki, was constructed with the belief that Bali is the centre of Universe and Mount Agung on which it was built represented *mahameru* (highest mountain) or pivot axis of the universe.¹⁹ The *kirtimukha* motifs of Bali are influenced by that of the

Muktesvara temple of Odisha. The standing male and female figures of Pura Sukhavana are akin to early Odishan art. Various forms of worship also show remarkable similarity between the Odias and the Balinese. One of such instances is the worship of Goddess Sri or Sri Devi and Goddess Lakshmi respectively in Bali and Odisha. Although there is difference in the use of the term yet the form and object of worship is one and the same. Both in Bali and Odisha, the goddess is associated with *dhanya* and *tandula*. Hence, the goddess is otherwise venerated as *sritanduli* or *Sri Dhanya Rajni* (the Goddess of rice). In the observation of worship, the people of both Bali and Odisha worship a bundle of paddy sheaves to pay their respect to the corn deity. In Odisha, this worship is performed on every Thursday in the month of *margashira* (November-December) and is popular as *gurubara manabasa* or *Lakshmi puja*. As in Odisha, the practice of animal sacrifice is also chiefly reserved for Kali, Chandi, *Bhutas*, *Rakshasas* and other evil spirits in Bali.

Besides the worship of goddesses, along with the worship of Vishnu and Shiva, Buddhism was also prevalent in Bali. As the Mons regarded Vishnu as a sage like the Buddha, the Balinese



speak of Shiva as an elder brother of the Buddha.²⁰ In the observation of daily rituals; the Shaivite priests addressed God as Jagannath, Suresvara and Rudra, the last two for Shiva. Hence, the mention of the term Jagannath along with Shiva indicates that Lord Jagannath could be treated as being same as Shiva. (The priests chant *shlokas* like “*Om Ksamam mam Sivadeva, Jagannath hitamkara*”) In Bali, some of the rituals began with following *shlokas*:

*Om ksamasva mama Jagannatha
sarvapapanirataaram*

*Sarvakaryam idam dehi pranamami
Suresvaram.*²¹

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*Om ksamsva mam Sivadeva Jagannatha
hitamkara*

*Sarevapapa vimutkena pranammyaham
Suresvaram.*

The Sanskrit of these *shlokas* is poor. However, our concern is the inclusion of the name Jagannath in the above prayers, which suggests that there was cultural contact between Odisha and Bali. Jagannath, the presiding deity of Odisha, was also worshipped by the people of Bali. K.S. Behera who visited Bali in 1992 on the occasion of *Kalinga Bali Yatra* festival was astonished to see the widespread popularity of Jagannath worship in Bali.²² At Denpasar in Bali, there is a temple of Lord Jagannath though there is no statue at present except the empty *padmasana*.²³ The names of Puri and *Nilachala* were also used in ancient Java and Bali. In Bali, the temple where images were worshipped was called Puri/Pura.²⁴ Like the famous *Ratha yatra* (Car festival) of Puri; the Balinese also carry three wooden Gods in a grandeur procession. Masks resembling the

three deities, Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra of Odisha cover the three wooden Gods.²⁵

The accessory articles of Indian worship such as *ghrta* (clarified butter), *kusa* (a type of grass used in religious ceremonies), *tila* (sesame) and *madhu* (honey) are also used in Bali. However, one of the most important items used in the observation of religious ceremonies in Bali like that of Odisha and India is the holy water. The rivers of India are so popular among the Balinese that some rivers in Bali are named after the sacred rivers of India, i.e. Ganga, Sindhu and Yamuna. The Balinese thought that those rivers really were in *Kling* (Kalinga). Along with other rivers, the Mahanadi River flowing in Odisha is considered sacred by the Balinese. They utter “*Om Ganga, Sindhu, Saraswati, Vipasa, Kausiki-nadi, Yamuna, Mahanadi, srestha Sarayu mahati.*” Mahendratana, another famous river of Odisha, was also held in high esteem in Bali. This river originating from the foot of the Mahendragiri Mountain falls in the Bay of Bengal and is regarded as a holy river; similarly it is regarded as the most sacred river in Bali. Even in the Balinese *stutis* (verses), this river Mahendratana is mentioned along with other sacred rivers. This may indicate that in ancient times some of the emigrants definitely were from the Mahendra *parvata* (Mahendra mountain) area of the Ganjam district of Odisha.²⁶ The *stuti* or *shloka* runs as follows:

*"Om Ganga Sindhu Saraswati su Yamuna
Godavari Narmada Kaveri Sarayu
Mahendratana
Cornavati Renuka Bhadra Netravati
Mahasuranadi Khyata ca Gandaki Punyah
Puranjalah Samudrasahitah
Kurvantu te mangalam."*



The significant role played by the Kalinga people from the Mahendra region is also corroborated by the fact that king Jayavarman II, the founder of Khmer empire, was known as *Chakravarti Mahendra parvata (Phnom-kulen)*.²⁷

Besides Hinduism, Buddhism was also quite popular in Bali and probably was first followed in the island. Clay stupikas and votive tablets inscribed with Buddhist *dharani* of c. eighth century CE are some of the positive evidences of the popularity of Buddhism in Bali. In Odisha, votive tablets with inscriptions and figures of Buddha and Bodhisattvas are known from the excavations at Ratnagiri and Avana in the coastal Odisha. Similar objects have also been discovered from Bali. It is presumed that these objects were probably imported from eastern India, especially from Odisha. However, the comparative study and chemical analysis of such votive tablets found in eastern India and Bali may throw further welcome light on the subject. Both the people of Odisha and Bali treat banyan tree as holy.²⁸ Palm leaf manuscripts with pictures and writings are also known in both the regions.

Another resemblance between Odisha and the island of Bali is the designing patterns of clothes. The tie-and-dye fabric of Odisha has its close parallel in Bali. Bali is the only state in the Indonesian Archipelago famous for a particular type of tie-and-dye fabric known as *patola*. Odisha and Gujarat are the only states in India which specialise in this type of weaving. It is believed that the famous Sambalapuri style of textile weaving has influenced the *patola* tie and dye style of textile weaving of Bali. In Balinese cremation textile, Odishan *kumbha* designs are there. The keeling cloth, multicoloured striped and

checked textiles from Nusa Penida (it is an island South-East of Bali Island, Indonesia) indicate that such textiles were originally imported to Bali from Kalinga.

The similarity in some other social patterns of both Odisha and Bali provide tangible proof of maritime contacts between the two places. Rice is the staple food of both the people. The Hindu stratification of caste system is also to be found in the Indonesian society, though the *brahmins* and *kayasthas* (a branch of *kshatriyas*) are held in equal regard.²⁹ The behavioural features in both places also have much similarity. The youngsters, while passing along elders sitting or standing on the way, bend down separating themselves by stretching down their right hands towards ground. Raising of folded hands, as a common form of greeting, is a practice in both Odisha and Bali. Like Odisha, in the island of Bali, if a guest comes to a Hindu family he is first treated with a betel leaf and a nut. On auspicious occasions like marriage, the Balinese Hindus invite relatives to their house by sending betel leaf and nut as it is in practice in the coastal districts of Odisha.³⁰ In Bali, during marriage ceremony the bride and the groom wear a type of head dress (*mukuta*), which is very much like the head dress used in marriage ceremonies in Odisha. Rounding of hair by women in typical bun is alike in the villages of Odisha and Bali. The form of dance and music of the island of Bali also bear many similarities with that of Odisha. The folk dances of Odisha like *chaiti ghoda nata* (*chaiti ghoda* dance), *danda nata*, *naga nata* (naga dance), *kandhei nata* (puppet dance), *Ramalila* etc., are very much present in both the islands of Bali and Java, though in a slightly different form.³¹ There is also striking affinities between *Prahalada nataka* performance of Odisha and *Barong* dance of Bali. Besides,



different types of ornaments used by the women in Odisha almost half a century ago are still in use in the remote villages of Bali and Java. Certain rituals are also common to both the regions. One such ritual is the aforementioned *Bali Yatra* festival. In Odisha, it is regarded as the reminiscent of the past glorious maritime activities, where the young and the old alike sail lamp-lighter boats of *sholapith* or plantain plant bark. A similar ritual observed in Bali is called *Masakapam Kepesih* ceremony where infants are helped to sail tiny boats for the souls of their sailor and navigator ancestors. The festivals are held in both countries in the month of November. It is the time when the trade winds are favourable for navigation, of which in all probability the ancient mariners took advantage. It is, thus, evident that there was then a close commercial contact between Odisha and Bali. Besides, a myth associated with the Balinese village of Tenganan refers to earliest ancestors of the village as Kalinga.

Hence, from the perusal of the above description, it would appear that Kalinga had, over the centuries, close overseas contact with the island of Bali. Balinese religious beliefs, though greatly influenced by Hinduism, in reality are not totally Hinduism but intermingling of both Hinduism and indigenous practices. In spite of outside influences, the Balinese have never lost their indigenous practices. Unlike Indian's or Odia's calendar, the Balinese calendars follow five days a week and Saturdays are considered auspicious marked for worship of Saraswati.³² While the Indians do not consider *amavasya* as auspicious, the Balinese consider it as auspicious. In spite of such differences we can say that the Kalingans or the people of ancient Odisha tremendously contributed towards the evolution and development of Hindu culture in Bali.

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