

Kalinga In South East Asia

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Overseas trade and maritime activities played a significant role in the spread of the glorious Indian civilization abroad. Indians and more specifically the people of Kalinga went to South East Asia and established colonies there. 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 natives, and adopted some traits of their civilization. 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 and the natives formed one society, which absorbed the culture and civilization of both the groups. Indian culture formed an important component of the composite culture

of the land. About Indianization, AP. Patnaik 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 the product of this Indianization, a series of kingdoms were born that in the beginning were the true Indian states like Cambodia, Champa and the small states of Malay peninsula; the

kingdoms of Sumatra, Java and Bali; and finally the Burmese and Thai kingdoms. Though each of these states develop 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 a part of it, on the eastern coast, which with its typical Indian culture had predominately 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."¹ Besides, the Indian immigrants in the Malay Archipelago are still called *Orang Klinig*,² which is perhaps derived from the word, Kalinga, the name by which the inhabitants of Orissa were once known.

The people of Kalinga played an important role in colonizing several parts of South-East Asia. 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"³ In this connection many important questions arise which are yet to be answered. 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 South-East Asia? What was the nature of the migration of the people of Kalinga? Satisfactory answers to these questions is difficult to find. However, an humble 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 countries⁴. 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 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, Sakas and the Kushanas. Basically it is attributed to the pressure of the Kushana invasion of India in the first century A.D.⁵ But this assumption seems to be unacceptable. It is to be remembered that the conquests of the foreigners in the early centuries A.D. 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 conquest of Kalinga by emperor Asoka in the third century BC, which might have provoked an exodus.⁶ Could it be that Kalinga people migrated en masse to South-East Asia on the wake of the Kalinga war of Asoka? There is no historical evidence of such a movement. Archaeological sources are silent regarding this. But it appears indirectly in one of the rock edicts of Asoka

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 Asoka, 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.⁷ But G. Coedes remarks that there was no mass emigration from India.⁸ The exodus was pre-eminently caused by 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. D.P. Singhal 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."⁹ 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, the Greater Indian theory was a by-product of Indian Freedom Movement. According to them, the Indian historians struggling under the stigma of their own colonial subjection tried to compensate for this by establishing the fact that even India was strong enough to establish colonies in

ancient times.¹⁰ In 1926 the 'Grater India Society' was established in Calcutta and R.C.Majumdar published a series of articles on the ancient Indian colonies in the Far East. This Greater India theory has been recently objected to 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 Lamb, "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 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 and 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 subcontinent."¹¹ Many scholars have described the eastward spread of Indian civilization in terms of a series of 'waves'. B.K.Majumdar says "From the second to the fifth centuries A.D. 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."¹²

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. In the opinion of Romila Thaper, trade led to settlements, which slowly developed into colonies.¹³ N. J. Krom says that the Indian penetration into South-East Asia began with traders who settled and married native women, thereby introducing Indian culture.¹⁴ G. Coedes is of the opinion that the spread of Indian culture was as a result of intensification of Indian trade with South-East Asia early in the Christian era.¹⁵ According to R.C. Majumdar, 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.¹⁶ The Indian traders, while trading indirectly transmitted their customs, the Indian religious ideas and the technical skill to the populations of the respective places. 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.

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.¹⁷ J.F. Cady, 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 sea-borne commercial intercourse at all, but rather advanced political entities in their own right."¹⁸ J.C. Van Lear has also strongly rejected this theory.¹⁹ Since the traders belonged to the lower strata of Indian caste system they had least possibility of acting as administrators, advisors, etc.

The *Kshyatriya* hypothesis in connection with the colonization and Indianization of the South-East Asia has been propounded by a host of scholars. This theory ascribes 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.²⁰ C.C. Berg advocates that the Indian culture went to South-East Asia with the activities of Indian warrior immigrants who captured the political power of the region.²¹ 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. So this oldest conjecture was one of colonization by Indian monarchs and might be combined with intermarriage between those Indian princes and daughters of local chiefs. However, so far as

the *Kshyatriya* theory of Indian colonization is concerned there exists very little proof of any direct political influence in South-East Asia. F.D.K. Bosch has criticized this theory : “A conquering prince would have mentioned his success in an inscription, or, if not, one of his descendants would have done so.”²² 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* in the process of Indian colonization in South-East Asia cannot be ruled out.

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. The priests included the Brahmins, the Buddhists and the Jain monks. In addition to being religious specialists they were experts in *Dharmasastra* (religious rites), *Arthasastra* (political affairs) and *SiIpasatra* (art and architecture). They must have acted as the development planners and 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.²³ J.C.Van Lear has given emphasis upon the role of the Brahman’s for the colonization of South-East Asia.²⁴

It is said that the transmission occurred at the court level and was the work of the *Brahmanas*.²⁵ 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.²⁶ Van Lear 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 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 organisation of the rulers territory into a state (patrimonial).²⁷ WF Wertheim, a Dutch scholar, corroborates this view : “The so-called ‘Hindu colonization 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 of Government and things sacral.”²⁸

R.C Majumdar, sums up the situation : “The zeal of the *Brahmans* and Buddhists, pressure caused by increasing population and invasion of foreign hords, 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. Sometimes a military 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.”²⁹ Gradually the new culture spread over the region.

The colonization was never be the work of any single community. People of different castes or groups were involved in the trading activities. Maritime trade was not restricted to the *Vaishyas*, 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 people called the *Sadhabas* in Kalinga who carried on this maritime trade. The people of all castes, the *Vaishyas*, *Kshyatriyas*, *Brahmanas* and even *Sudras* formed the *Sadhabas*.

Thus, the colonization was a combined effort of people belonging to several castes groups over a long period of time. The trading trips carried with it *Brahmins* who acted as

advisers because of their expertise over various branches of knowledge, the *Kshyatriyas* who associated fighting with the trade for their survival and the *Vaishyas* who earned the title of honest businessmen, *Sadhu*, or *Sadhaba*.

Now question arises : What was the role of the people of South-East Asia in the process of colonization? What sort of civilization existed in there before the advent of Indian cultural elements? Were they merely passive recipients or did they actively participate in the process? The propounders of Greater India theory put forward, the passive recipient theory. J.C. Van Lear was the first to project the Indonesian element in the process.³⁰ 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 they were developed in a number of fields there was least chance of their welcoming the foreigners. Advocates who hold the opposite view say 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.

That the people of Kalinga played a significant role in the process of colonization of South-East Asia and Ceylon is supported by evidences. 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 remarkable among the Oriyas in ancient times, who cherished the ambition of founding colonies in distant lands. Recent researches on the Indian colonization has revealed that Kalinga had lion's share in the over-seas expansion and colonization. The naval power of Kalinga made it possible for her to establish kingdoms in the South-East Asia in the early stages of colonization and finally a great empire during the middle ages.³¹ Tradition holds that 20,000 families were sent from Kalinga to Java by the prince of Kalinga; their number multiplied and they prospered. Both R.K. Mookerji and Crawford hold the view that all the Hindu influences in Java was from Kalinga.³² The fact admits very little doubt that many Kalingan rulers ruled over Ceylon and established dynasties there. Starting from Vijaya upto 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. The capital of Burma, Prome was named as *Srikshetra* for some time. 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. However, it is difficult to ascertain the exact share of the Kalingan people in Greater India, but it is to be presumed that they had a lion's share in it. On the colonization of South-East Asia, M.N.Das says 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.³³ By 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. Even today 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 proclaim a cultural conquest of that land by Kalinga. The names like Talaing, Telinga, Kling, Keling and Kalinga are still used by the people of Burma and Malayasia.

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