



CULTURAL AFFINITY BETWEEN INDIA AND SRILANKA-A HISTORICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT:-*(The ancient and Medieval relation of Srilanka is to India as originated in India. Buddhism , the state religion of modern Srilanka originated from ancient India. Most of the Sinhalese were the Indo-Aryan migrated to Srilanka from the north-east India specifically from Kalinga. The founder of the Sinhalese kingdom in Srilanka was Bijay, the Kalingan prince of India. The second ethnic group of Srilankan population were the Tamils migrated from south India. From many a time Chola rulers of South India built many Hindu and Buddhist temples and stupas. If we go to the epics it was the Indians who ruled Sinhala of Lanka in the name of Ravan and his brother Bibhisana who were Indian origin. Present Srilanka is an independent kingdom from British administration like India. Thus both the countries are the legacies of Indians and heritage of the country.)*

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The relations between India and Srilanka have been friendly but it was embittered during the Srilanka civil war. Srilanka has been considered as Lanka which has been depicted in the great epic Ramayan. The sage Maharshi was able to describe the glorious heritage of Srilanka that the demon king Ravana kidnapped Sita, the best half of God Ramachandra. History says Ramachandra was the first Indian king who identified Indian culture and tradition at Srilanka. So Lanka is called as swarna bhumi and full of natural resources. From historical research it is known that the first foot print of the man fell at Srilanka before 35000 years ago. In 500 B.C. a clan from India started their survival at Srilanka. From the legendary point of view it is known that a man called Bijay was the first inhabitant at Srilanka. According to the traditional Srilanka chronicles such as Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa Buddhism was introduced in to Srilanka in the 4th. Century B.C. by venerable Mahinda (Mahendra), the son of the great king Ashok and during the reign of Srilankan King Devanam priya Tissa. During this time the sampling of Budha tree was brought to Srilanka by Mahinda and the first Buddhist monastery and Budhit manuments were established. Among these monuments the Isurumani Vihara and the Vessagira Vihara remain important centre of worship. He is also credited with the construction of the Patamaka-Cetiya, the Jambukala Vihara and Hattallisaka Vihar etc. The Pali canon having previously been preserved as an oral tradition which was perhaps constructed in about 300B.C.

Srilanka has the longest continuous history of Buddhism of any Buddhist action with the Buddhist sangha having existed in large unbroken period since 4th. Century B.C. During the periods of declines the Srilanka monastic lineage was revived through contact with Myanmar and Thailand. However during the British colonial rule, due to the influence of Mahayana budhists, the Theravada Buddhist institute of Srilanka had to face chalanges but Theravada tradition has been alive for over 2600 years along with tamils from India.

Lanka is the name given in the Hindu mythology the island fortress capital of the legendary demon king Ravana, in the epics of The Ramayan and the Mahabharat. The fortress was situated on a plateau amidst three mountain peaks known as the Trikuta mountains. The ancient kingdom of Lankapura is thought to have been burnt by Hanuman during the rule of Ravana. After the death of Ravana it was ruled by his youngest brother Bibhisana. The mythological site of Lanka is identified with Srilanka. The descendants of Bibhisana ruled Lanka during the periods of Pandavas and according to Mahabharat the Pandav Sahadev visited this kingdom during his southern military campaign for the Rajasuya of Yudhisthira. Besides the evidence of Srilanka relation with Bharat varsa are proved through the specimens of some Saiva temples of our country and Srilanka. The Baijnath saiva temple in Himachal Pradesh also known as Ravan Khole and Kakinada temple in Andhrapradesh containing a huge siva linga supposed to be installed by Ravana himself with a statue of Ravana near the temple are the specimens of



the Indo-Srilankan culture entity. Similarly the remains of Seetha temples and Manneswaram temple in Srilanka built by Ravana are the examples of Indo-Srilankan relation during epic age. Even different texts on astronomy, medicine, linguistics and spirituality attributed to Ravana which are found to be in the subcontinent and influence of art and architecture are the best specimens of Indo-Srilanka cultural affinity. Successors of Ravana were cordial towards India, Bibhisana, the successor of Ravana was the devotee of Ramachandra and subordinate to him.

The origin of Srilanka relieved in Indian ethnic groups during the ancient period. According to the archaeological and literature, the early tribes to settled in Srilanka were the Sinhalese and the Tamils both of whom were migrated from India. The Sinhalese first came from north India and Bengal and they belong to Indo-Aryan ethnic groups of north India. They have genetic relationship with the north Indians. According to “Mahavamsa” , the Buddhist chronicle, the Sinhalese people migrated to Srilanka from northern part of India although many archaeologist and anthropologist prove the history of Srilanka dates back to pre-historic period i.e. 38,000 B.C. Even some biological researchers view that the Sinhalese genetic structure is moist close to northern Indians genetic structures. The Sinhalese language is very close to Indo-Aryan languages than other south Indian languages like Dravidian language or Tamil language. The Sinhalese native language Sinhala is an Indo-Aryan language within the border group of Indo-European languages. The early form of Sinhala was brought to Srilanka by the ancestors of the Sinhalese people from northern India and Kalinga who settled from the island in the 6th. Century B.C.

According to Buddhist Chronicle Dipavamsa the Sinhalese are descendants of the sellers who came to the island in 543 B.C. from Singhapura in Kalinga led by the prince Bijay and the Sinhalese form the majority of the Srilanka population. The prince Bijay of Singhapura in ancient Kalinga migrated to Tamrapani along with his 700 followers exiled from Kalinga and founded a new civilization known as Sinhalese state. Bijaya’s great-grand mother belong to Kalinga Royal lineage. The name “sinhala” was the title of his father and founded a new kingdom as Sinhale. Bijay ruled for thirty two years in Sinhala and minimum 2500 families of kalinga origin migrated to Srilanka during his rule. In 3rd century B.C. the relation between Kalinga and Srilanka reveals with the introduction of Mahayanist Buddhism in Srilanka by the emperor Ashok’s son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra. The Digha Nikaya refers to the coastal kingdom of Dantapura where Kalinga and the King Guhasiva fearing danger from the Magadhan king Padhu sent a Buddhist tooth relics secretly to his friend Mahasena of Buddhist kingdom of Srilanka through his daughter Hemamala and son-in-law Dantakumar. They reached Anuradhapura and handed over the relic to the king Meghabarna, the son of Mahasena. Further as regards to the Indo-Srilanka relation the king Bijay-I ruled from 1055 to 1110 A.D. and married the kalingan princess Trailokyasundari. Another source refers to Srilanka’s relationship is the marriage of Nissankamalla, the son of Kalingan king Jayagopa with the daughter of Srilanka king Parakramabahu. After his death his son-in-law Kirti Nissanka, ruled from 1187 to 1196 A.D. established Kalinga Vana(forest) in Srilanka to honour his birth place.

The second ethnic group of Srilank tribes were the Tamils. They are two groups living in Srilanka namely Srilanka Tamils and the Indian Tamils of the hill country migrated from Tamilnadu to Srilanka as bonded labourers in 19th century to work in Srilanka tree plantation. The Indian Tamils live in country side and form a separate community although having Srilankan citizenship. Indo-Srilanka relation during early medieval period is revealed history of south India. Some south Indian rulers ruled in some parts of Srilanka and Indian influence on Srilanka was felt during the reign of Cholas from 993 A.D. to 1077 A.D. The Chola rule in Srilanka began in 993 A.D. by the Chola king Raj Raj Chola of South India. The capital of new province was Polonnaruwa and it continued up to 1077 A.D. During the Chola rule many Chola officials and Tamil traders built Siva temples at Trincomalee and Manner .Another Siva temple built at Jananathapuram after the name of the queen Raja Raja-I. Some Buddhist temples such as Velgam Vihare also known as saddavihare in Trincomali district of Anuradhapura. After the end of the Chola rule in Srilanka the Paandyan’s invaded Srilanka again in 13th century. Eventually a Tamil kingdom, the Jaffna kingdom was founded in northern Srilanka. In southern Srilanka there were a series



of Buddhist state lets. In later medieval period some local rulers got able to rule in many fragments of Srilanka.

It was this fragmented state that allowed the Portuguese and the Dutch to establish control over coastal Srilanka in the 1500s. Finally the British occupied Srilanka from Dutch and Srilanka continued to be as a British colony till its independence on 14th February 1948. New constitution was formed in 1972 where constitution acknowledged the greatest religion among all and the country was named as Srilanka in place of Cylone. In many sphere both the countries have taken stern steps through bioetical pact. The rival between military force of Srilanka and Liberation of Tamil Tiger Elam (LT T E) came to an end in 2009. In this critical juncture India sent her forces to Srilanka for fighting against terrorism. On 29th November 1977 a cultural co-ordial pact was signed between both the countries at New Delhi for cultural imagination. Every year India offers scholarship to 90 students for studying M.A. and researching various fields. On December 1998 Indo-Srilanka foundation was established for ensuring development among the youths of both the countries.

Thus, the relation founded by Ramachandra, the king of Ayudhya through his “Setubandha” has been super structured and faced till now so long as the tells of Rama –Sita-Ravan exist it will reminds us the cultural affinity of both the countries.

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