

SAGARDHARA



JANUARY 2021

MARITIME HISTORY SOCIETY

VOL IV/ 20-21



Proceedings from
**NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE CONCLAVE
2020**

'Unsung Frames of India's Maritime History'

REGULAR FEATURES

Jewel from the Past
Book Review

Glimpses of the Conclave



Inaugural Session



**Unsung Frame I:
Coastal Communities**



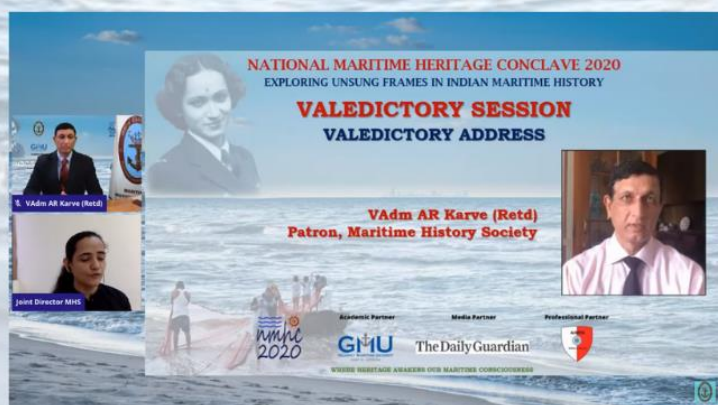
Special Session



**Unsung Frame II:
Influence of Women in Maritime History**



**Unsung Frame III:
Trans-Maritime Connectivity Across IOR**



Valedictory Session

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Published by: Maritime History Society, Mumbai, India

January 2021

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DIRECTOR'S DESK



The turn to Year 2021 emerges with a focus on “Maritime Consciousness” with enhanced prominence through the otherwise called year of a global pandemic. MHS 2.0 seized the rising wave of opportunity to create better awareness, curate consciousness and skillfully harness the mind space among key people and agencies in the oceanic realm in India and beyond.

***On the other side of a storm is the strength that comes from having navigated through it. Raise your sail and begin.”
- Gregory S Williams.***

Commemorating multiple frames as a research spectrum has been the effort of Maritime History Society (MHS). That drive enabled the 41st Annual Maritime Seminar to be enhanced into the maiden National Maritime Heritage Conclave (NMHC) 2020 on the theme “Unsung Frames in Maritime History. Implementing a core value of collaborative effort, MHS was honoured to have for NMHC2020, Gujarat Maritime University as the Academic Partner, The Daily Guardian as the Media Partner and All India Marine Pilots Association (AIMPA) as the Professional Partner. Streamed live on digital media, NMHC 2020 drew encouraging online participation and positive feedback as an important initiative towards actionable maritime consciousness. This edition of Sagardhara brings the proceedings of NMHC 2020. A sign of MHS growing reach is the increasing demands for sharing vignettes of our maritime heritage. Team MHS, on 19 Dec 2020 hosted an audio visual presentation cum discussion on “A Maritime Journey of Mumbai” at the Jashne Dastane Mumbai festival organised by Mumbai Research Chapter of Asiatic Society of Mumbai. The conversation provided an engaging span from pre-history to current status of Mumbai as a Port City.

Year 2020 closed with a flourish as The Week in its 27 Dec 2020 Anniversary Special Double Issue put out a 14 piece cover story called “Ocean Churning” as a voyage through India’s eventful maritime past. Facilitated by Team MHS and its researchers these articles included an interview with Director MHS which made a national appeal saying, “We must unwrap neglected frames of (maritime) history.” MHS sets itself into 2021 on course to “Enhance Influence for Greater Maritime Consciousness.” Partner with us to promote sea mindedness.

Sam No Varunah

Commodore Odakkal Johnson
Director and Head of Research, MHS

NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE CONCLAVE 2020

Inaugural Session

Joint Director, MHS: Good Morning. I am Dr. Soni Wadhwa Joint Director Research at the Maritime History Society. On behalf of team MHS, I would like to welcome you all for our first National Maritime Heritage Conclave, conceptualized around the theme of 'Exploring Unsung Frames of Indian Maritime History'. Let me now invite our Director Cmde Odakkal Johnson to officially welcome you all and proceed towards the interesting line up of deliberations.

Director, MHS: Thank You Dr. Soni. Good Morning to a very illustrious and eminent panel both in the studio and to many joining from the YouTube link. Vice Admiral RB Pandit Chairman Maritime History Society and Chief of Staff Western Naval Command, Prof Vasant Shinde Director general National Maritime Museum at Lothal, Director In-charge of Gujarat Maritime University Prof (Dr.) Shantakumar and Gujarat Maritime University being the academic partner. I also welcome Capt. Gajanand Karanjikar who is not here in this session but as Founder President of All India Marine Pilots association he is another collaborator and The Daily Guardian Team. Many other Veterans serving and retired Flag Officers, Maritime enthusiasts and members from the media, academia; Greetings and I express my personal thanks and gratitude for joining the endeavors of the Maritime History Society this morning, to the first ever National

Maritime Heritage Conclave. Let me begin by going onto the phrase Maritime Consciousness or as I wrote yesterday in the curtain raiser article, multiple frames of Maritime Consciousness. This is the century of the seas and we have multiple sea-based trade connects which you will hear Prof. Shinde talk about in a while. One of the big challenges that India faces today is the prevailing mindset where cultural heritage and professional sea based activities need to integrate to build what is in our core and be as a maritime Nation and the needs therefore are reinforce understanding of Maritime History in the public Domain, elevate public domain on maritime presentation of the seas, comprehend the presentation of seas in a better form, comprehend and bring awareness of Maritime Sector as a collaborative effort to strengthen contemporary Maritime Past of India for a great Maritime future. Why is this Important? India's Maritime Character, its heritage, its Geostrategic Location, are all factors that have defined our growth as a nation. With a very rugged terrain which ranges from mountains to coast line along the boundary lines, India naturally extends into the sea as a reality that has been realized over a period of time.

Indian Maritime History requires a greater appreciation and there is a need to develop a comprehensive

Maritime Consciousness, and introspect deeply on our engagement with the Indian Ocean and our understanding of the past, foster an environment of informed Maritime opinion amongst the various agencies and engender awareness on our sustainability and consciousness. With that I would like to handover back to the anchor to introduce briefly our inaugural address and the chairman MHS.

Joint Director, MHS: Thank You sir. Let us now proceed to the inaugural address by Vice Admiral RB Pandit, Chief of Staff Western Naval Command and also Chairman MHS. For the purpose of this National Maritime Heritage Conclave, he has recorded a special message on video and the same shall soon be played live.

VAdm RB Pandit: VAdm AR Karve Patron MHS, Prof Vasant Shinde Director General National Maritime Museum Lothal, Prof Shantakumar Director Gujarat National Law University and Director In-charge Gujarat Maritime University, Veterans, serving naval personnel, members of the academia and the media. Greetings. It is with great pleasure that I appear before you to inaugurate National Maritime heritage Conclave which is the digital avatar of the 41st Maritime History Societies seminar on the theme exploring unsung frames in India's Maritime History. At the outset I would like to congratulate the entire team MHS for their untiring effort at awakening Maritime Consciousness in our fellow citizens and this time reaching out to a larger national

audience. Maritime History of India deserves a closer look and the attention of both the young and the veteran, the scholar and the curious, the academic and the lay person alike and I am delighted to note that the conclave this time takes into ambit the full spectrum of the audience. The Indian Navy is well informed of India's Maritime History for it Illuminates the past and enables the Navy to build on the experience of our forebearers. It is not a secret that our Maritime Legacy is not well documented or studied adequately and that for far too long we have relied on the work of itinerant explorers, foreign adventurers and colonial masters. They have come benefited from what we had to offer and presented a narrative that ignored or downplayed certain facets while emphasizing others. Slowly but surely, we are making good the gaps in our understanding through the effort of many voices both individual and institutional. This conclave seeks to go down this road, find nooks and crannies to explore and dig out nuggets of information that will serve to make a vivid picture when put together.

In the Maritime world today, we are equipped with the best of technologies to navigate the world's oceans and this has served to make seafaring a lot safer and predictable than it ever was and if I may say so it has also taken away some of the romance associated with seafaring. While it is interesting to note how Indians across ancient and medieval ages handled the rigors and dangers of seafaring or to revel in the knowledge that the word Navigation comes from the Sanskrit word *navgati*, but have we dug deeper? What do we

know of the lived realities of those sailors and navigators the traders who braved ocean voyages? It is only very recently that we have made any serious efforts to explore these issues and though we are now beginning to appreciate the log books, that the Kutchi malams maintained four to five centuries back. Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the book *Malam ni Pothis* a collection of Gujarati manuscripts describing the pre modern navigation techniques of Gujarat in April 2015. There is nevertheless a lot that remains to be explored. While going back in time is not possible, we can certainly turn to the coastal communities to understand the lives, find traces that may have retained of the lifestyle beliefs and cultural practices evolved over the millennia of an intimate connects with the oceans. Our coasts are home to communities whose perceptions understandings and knowledge about the sea we have failed to record. We know of the broad things like our maritime trade intercourse right from the days of the Harappan civilization. But connecting the intimate lessons of the past will probably help us navigate the shoals and hazards of the present. The many challenges effecting coastal communities both directly and indirectly. Can we learn from the past to help balance the need for development with its impact on the coast or help make seafaring a rewarding vocation for the traditional communities?

For over five centuries the Koli fishing communities have been living and working all around the coastal

waters of the seven islands that make up the Its present-day city of Mumbai. Today not only their livelihood is under threat but also their very existence. It is a matter of regret as well as astonishment that we have increasingly seen the Kolis being replaced by fishers from interior parts of India including Bihar and also Himalayan Nepal. Is this a potent of things to come? In this light what we learn about the coastal communities is crucial who knows how many communities and populations have vanished in the recent past because of the changes in the oceans all around us. What can we know about the people who used to live around the Lothal dock that was in use until even the 18th century, till the seas dried up around it? While some experts may understand the cause-and-effect relationship of such significant realignments we need such issues to be discussed in the public forums and we expect that we shall begin to bridge gaps in our understanding of history and heritage through the eminent and young scholars involved in the discussions.

We hope that in the process of listening we shall be enlightened about how to help the communities, undertake appropriate development initiatives, channelize tourism opportunities whilst helping them sustain livelihoods an also contributing to the preservation of Indian Maritime cultural heritage in general. Let us spend some time thinking about the richness of our Maritime past as lived by them and I am sure listening to the experts talk

about the anthropological and historical aspects of these issues, will be fascinating.

The second subtheme of the first day of conclave was Gender is not only relevant as more and more women are breaking glass ceilings and shattering stereotypes. Even in the seafaring world, it will be interesting to know more about the endeavors of the so-called weaker sex in this area overtime. He looked forward to listening the women officer's speakers talk about the experience of the sea and to throw light on some inspiring examples from their past, so that the debate moves from the petty and trivial consideration to a more nuanced one. In the context of sea consciousness some of our recent initiatives Project Mausam, Sagarmala or Samudra Sethu take forward the legacy of connectivity our ancestors have bequeath to us. While we know about India's trade connect with Southeast Asia, and Mesopotamia since the beginning of our civilization new details keep emerging. Indeed, breakthroughs in our historical understanding of the transoceanic exchanges both cultural and commercial Have relevance to current day geopolitics and continued research on the topic will always remain a priority. India must learn about her Maritime Past in order to understand her present, and her interrelationship with the maritime neighbors. He felt confident of the scholarly papers set to be presented in the session 'Trans-Oceanic connectivity in the Indian Ocean Region' will highlight fresh perspectives on our ties with countries

on the Indian Ocean realm. There is a clear resurgence of interest in the academia, among general enthusiasts and those who follow trends and narratives, and showing fresh interest in the Maritime medium. The Indian Navy has always taken the lead to enhance education as well as awareness, enhancement of India's maritime tradition and capability into the public knowledge space. A dedicate history project collates content to bring out a compilation every decade. An initiative in hand is to collaborate in the production of a children's comic series to build interest in our maritime past amongst the young. We are committed to see the Maritime History Society take forward its vision of excellence in Maritime studies, that has driven a series of digital initiatives even through these last seven months of the pandemic induced restrictions. Do visit the online content of the MHS and pass on the learnings to a wider audience.

With these few remarks Vice Admiral RB Pandit declared the conclave open. He looked forward to fruitful discussions, questions and comments on exploring the unsung frames in Indian maritime history. He wished the organizers the very best for setting a benchmark that we must meet and exceed in our journey towards meeting the Golden Jubilee Goals. He extended his thanks to veteran scholars and young researchers for setting time out to integrate their thoughts and present them to the audiences and he shows great solidarity with all maritime enthusiasts including naval personnel attending the conclave for it is their

sustained expression of interest in this subject.

Let us remember that we have gathered here to reflect on subjects less studied from maritime history, and not just to enjoy the discussions but also take them forward. Let no frame be missed or remain unsung, the prominent and the ordinary all deserves study capture and projection to build a wave of influence of a Maritime India. Let Heritage awaken our Maritime Consciousness. Jai Hind. Sam Noh Varuna. Thank You.”

Joint Director, MHS: Thank you sir for inaugurating the conclave and for ensuring your presence in your absence as the same. Let us move forward to the thematic address of the conclave which will be delivered by Prof (Dr) S. Shanatakumar. It is under his leadership that the Gujarat Maritime University has become the academic partner for this conclave. We welcome you sir kindly give us your views on the theme of Conclave ‘Exploring Unsung Frames in Indian Maritime History’. Over to you sir.

Dr. Shantkumar: Thank you Dr. Soni, distinguished speakers in the inaugural session Vice Admiral RB Pandit Chairman Maritime History Society and Chief of Staff Western Naval Command, Prof Vasant Shinde Director general National Maritime Museum at Lothal, Cmde Dr. Odakkal Johnson Director Maritime History Society, other eminent speakers, conference attendees, ladies and gentlemen. I deem it an honour, a privileged to deliver this thematic address at this Maritime Heritage

Conclave. My sincere appreciations to the Maritime History Society which is a 42 years old academic initiative of the Western Naval Command of the Indian Navy. Despite the lockdown in place for over six months it has sustained a targeted awareness enhancement of Indian Maritime dimensions through online medium. True to its mission of awakening Maritime Consciousness the maritime history society holds an annual seminar on a specific element of Maritime History. This 42nd edition of this Maritime History Seminar has been upgraded to National Maritime Heritage conclave and I’m extremely delighted to be a part of the Maritime Heritage Conclave. Coming to the theme, India gifted with a very rich Maritime sea has witnessed a resurgent interest in the past few years with the synergized efforts from the national leadership, academia, key intellectuals and initiatives of the integrators like the maritime history society. This conclave will definitely stimulate discussions on the underexplored dimensions of Indian Maritime History and become starting point for further research in Maritime history with coastal communities and women at the centre of its attention which will certainly provide an opportunity to bring to light the lesser-known narrative surrounding the coastal community and women. In spite of advances in science and technology and in spite of socio-cultural Economic Development happening globally. It is extremely disappointing to learn that the maritime sector has been uniquely affected by gender biases over the years. Though historically women have played a very important role in

advancing and number of issues, Central to Ocean governance, as understood today whether in the context of industrial and small-scale fisheries, or about ships and vessels the gendered life worlds of marine-grade societies have been amply documented particularly in terms of how sailing, surfing, Maritime navigation and other forms of seafaring have historically been perceived as distinctly masculinized practices. While some have credited this difference with the general perception. Women's work in order to counteract evident male domination of the industry, from 1989 onwards the International Maritime organization (IMO) has supported a capacity building program called strengthening Maritime Resource Development.

This program initially called strategy on the integration of women in the maritime sector encourages the participation of women in all spheres of the maritime sector, which is the second conference on Maritime women Global Leadership held in 2014 by the world Maritime University in Sweden, gender related issues were observed among various Maritime sectors, including seafaring ports administration law and education. No doubt, including women as part of the diverse Maritime work force enlarges the talent pool available for highly competitive market providing a global benefit for both the public and private Maritime success. Empowering women in the maritime community was selected as the World Maritime Day theme for 2019. This provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the

importance of gender equality and to highlight the important contribution of women all over the world to the maritime sector. That's what this study conducted by International Labour Organization (ILO) women represent only less than two percent of the world's 1.25 million seafarers and 94% of the two percent of female seafarers are working only in the cruise industry. Within this historically male-dominated industry, IMO has been making a concerted effort to help the industry move forward and support women to achieve a representation that is in keeping with the 21st century expectations within the framework of Maritime development and through its women in Maritime programs under the slogan "Training, Visibility, Recognition", IMO has taken a strategic approach towards enhancing the contribution of women as key maritime stakeholders. We need to support the participation of women in both shore based and seagoing ports, employment in the shipping sector has been shown to provide women with access to a regular means of livelihood.

This has a direct impact on the economic viability of the extended family structure particularly in the developing regions of the world. For Effective Ocean governance and irreducible contribution of female voices is necessary. Overall women are often regarded as major actors driving sustainable development because of their inclusiveness and collaborative roles.

Similarly, we have proof that women have advocated for the

common goal in marine conservation, raising important and often neglected concerns. If women for instance are not included in fisheries management, we miss the complete picture of social ecological linkages of marine ecosystems. In Maritime industries, women will definitely enlarge the talent pool for Innovation and smart growth besides the manifold possibilities for promoting the involvement of women in Ocean governance and policy making, we still find how gender biases still influence our interactions with the ocean. It is necessary to reduce the structural and the systematically embedded hurdles that continued to lead to gendered decision taking with regards to the ocean.

In this context this Maritime Heritage conclave on the theme of Coastal Community and the influence of women in Maritime history intends not only to recognize the role of women and Coastal communities in motion governance from a historical perspective, but also to empower women in the maritime community and remind the need to ungender the ocean, to explain why women matter in motion governance. Efforts like this and IMO's gender program initiated in 1989 has helped put in place an institutional framework to incorporate a gender dimension into IMO's policies and procedures. This has supported access to Maritime training and employment opportunities for women in the maritime sector. I'm extremely proud to say that when we started the first batch at the Gujarat Maritime University last year 60% of our

students were girls. And even in the batch which we admitted recently, 55% of our students are girls. I believe conferences like this and the deliberations therein revolving around the role of women in motion governance, while not only acknowledge the historical contributions women have made, but will also certainly contribute to create more opportunities and possibilities for more and more women to join the Maritime sector and play a very significant role in ocean governance and in the maritime industry. I thank the Commodore Dr Odakkal Johnson, Director Maritime History Society, for giving me this wonderful opportunity to be a part of this very important conclave and for giving the opportunity for the Gujarat Maritime University to be an academic partner for this wonderful initiative of the Maritime History Society. I wish the conclave a grand success. Thank you.

Joint Director, MHS: Thank you very much sir. Indeed, the pleasure is all ours. Let us now turn to the next speaker, Prof. Vasant Shinde - Director-General, National Maritime Heritage Complex, Gandhinagar and former Vice-Chancellor of Deccan College, Postgraduate and Research Institute, Pune. will be delivering the keynote address for the conclave. Shinde's sweeping overview of India's long standing maritime traditions and its role in the development of the subcontinent reflected the wealth of experience garnered over his forty-year career in archaeology, and in particular proto-historic studies.

As far as the Indian Subcontinent is concerned, evidence of maritime contact can be traced back almost nine thousand years to about the year 7000 BCE. The site of Mehrgarh, set on the banks of the Bolan River overlooking the vast plains of Baluchistan, was one among a few other known sites that acted as a prelude to the extensive and expansive Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilisation. During some of the earliest phases of occupation at Mehrgarh, objects were recovered that did not seem to be of local origin but rather had their provenance traced to West Asia and the Middle East, particularly Iran and Oman. Archaeologists and researchers have used such objects to assert the idea of maritime contact since the earliest days of settlement in the Indian Subcontinent. Since then, particular attention has been given to the maritime dimension in Harappan studies, and evidence – both direct and circumstantial have strongly indicated an active maritime contact. The excavations at the site of Lothal, Gujarat revealed what is believed to be one of the earliest known constructed dockyards across the world. Such discoveries indicated the pioneering effort and advances made by the Harappans in port and ship building that would have bolstered trade and commerce.

Harappan seals are an important piece of evidence to support strong maritime commercial contact between the people of the Indus Valley Civilisation on the one hand and other Bronze Age Civilisations like the Egyptians and Mesopotamians on the other. Such objects of Harappan origin

have been frequently reported from the latter two regions, best exemplified by findings from the Mesopotamian sites of Ur and Uruk. Conversely, there is little to no evidence of Egyptian or Mesopotamian artefacts from sites in the Indus Valley. A few theories were proposed to account for this imbalance. Some studies of Indus Valley settlements suggested that there was a general paucity of raw material but an abundance of well-developed technology and skill. As such, raw material was imported and finished products were exported to the west. Literary evidence from Mesopotamia alludes to the land of the Harappans referring to it as 'Meluha'. There appears to have been a high demand across sites in the Persian Gulf for copper, carnelian beads as well as beads of other semi-precious stones such as lapis lazuli. While both land and sea routes were developed, the maritime connect was found to be more convenient – providing easy access to Oman, and from there to Egypt and Mesopotamia.

It has been propounded that immense wealth was generated through this maritime trade which ultimately translated into the rise and growth of a number of cities in the Indus Valley and beyond. While Egypt and Mesopotamia had a monarchical system with much of the wealth being spent to enhance social prestige as reflected in the monumental buildings and architecture, the system of Harappan governance is believed to have been quite different. Here, the wealth amassed from maritime contact and trade was used to develop cities, town and associated infrastructure

while establishing an intricate system of intra-connectivity that spread across 1.5 million square kilometers. In this regard, maritime activity coupled with Harappan pragmatism ultimately ushered in the first urbanisation observed in the Indian Subcontinent. Although nautical and navigational knowledge systems of the Harappans remain largely conjectural, ethnographic parallels can be drawn upon to support this conjecture. The Dhow trade between Gujarat and Oman is a long-standing tradition with age-old boats (traditional boat building) still used by the communities that are economically dependent on this exchange.

The millennium following the decline of the Harappans is shrouded in obscurity – cities and towns seem to have declined or disappeared, trade and exchange made way for agro-pastoralism, and perhaps coincidentally, contact over the maritime medium during this time appears to have been dormant. This gap is often filled with the misled notion that paints dramatic tales of invasions followed by cultural annihilations. In fact, through contact, culture is a result of an ever changing and ever evolving amalgamation of its different forms.

As far as the Indus Valley Civilisation is concerned, studies have indicated a substantial reduction in sea levels coinciding with its decline. A number of once active ports now found themselves inland and witnessed a reduction in maritime activity. So, while cultures continued to exist, they could not evolve into civilisations nor

could the existing civilisations be sustained in the absence of wealth generated from exports across the maritime network. However, concurrent to the re-introduction of maritime connectivity during the Greco-Roman Classical Period, there appears to be resurgence in the development of cities and culture. This ultimately constituted the second urbanisation in the Subcontinent – a phenomena that has more or less maintained continuity till the present. The maritime spice route opened up channels for trade that were extremely lucrative to India. In fact, it was the period following this that saw the spread of Indian Culture into the Southeast Asian archipelago.

The positive effects of maritime connectivity in terms of progress and development are well known. In the Indian Subcontinent, the wealth that results from contact over this medium has helped cultures grow and evolve into civilisations. To cite an example from the modern period, Japan – a country that was nearly destroyed by World War II – managed to rebuild its economy and within a few decades became a global economic power purely because it utilised the maritime medium to import raw materials and export finished products – a tradition long practiced by the Harappans.

The importance of contact via the maritime medium in state building has been acknowledged by the government. In view of this, project Mausam had been launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Culture to understand the role played by climate and its impact on culture. In addition, the

Ministry of Shipping has been developing a National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal. This is intended to be a state-of-the-art museum, conservation centre and national maritime research organisation. Both these initiatives aim at reconstructing maritime history of the country and the contribution made by India through maritime contact. At this juncture, it is important that organisations such as the Maritime History Society (MHS), Maritime Research Society, Pune, etc. co-ordinate on joint projects and resource sharing while maintaining their identity.

Thank You to the esteemed panelists of the inaugural session. I must acknowledge the clear stream of thought which is the need for enhanced Maritime consciousness. I'm expressing the solidarity between institutions Gujarat Maritime University and Maritime History Society. I wanted you to have a closing word sir of the need for us to take this journey forward.

Prof Shantakumar: Remembering the heroes of the past not leaving even a frame, the height of work we have to do. In fact any nation progresses, it doesn't progress in a day, it happens over a period of time with the efforts of lots of people, but then in the process, the contribution of many of us goes unnoticed and that is where we feel highly obliged to the Maritime History Society for taking cognizance of this and for spending two days in remembering all those unsung heroes, not to miss out a single frame the events which has happened in recognising the country of what we

are today, especially the maritime society that has evolved and therefore I sincerely appreciate the efforts of Maritime History Society in recognizing the contributions made by many of the coastal communities, especially the women being the focus I was very happy that in the maritime sector there is a society which is focusing its attention on women, who had been a forgotten lot even today. The ILO study states that less than two percent of women are in the maritime sector. This is something which we need to work together on and see that we bring adequate representation to women and to make it an equitable place where everyone has a role to play. Thank you.

Director MHS: Thank you Dr Shantakumar. We at MHS are committed, to the larger audience I want to say good days are lying ahead. We are going to catch the rising surge of Maritime awakening, we will bring academics, we will bring material culture, we will bring practices, we will make things happen just connect with us, enjoy these deliberations. I now invite Prof Vasant Shinde Director-General, National Maritime Heritage Complex, Gandhinagar and former Vice-Chancellor of Deccan College, Postgraduate and Research Institute, Pune. Prof. Shinde's sweeping overview of India's long standing maritime traditions and its role in the development of the subcontinent reflected the wealth of experience garnered over his forty-year career in archaeology, and in particular proto-historic studies.

Prof Vasant Shinde: As far as the Indian Subcontinent is concerned,

evidence of maritime contact can be traced back almost nine thousand years to about the year 7000 BCE. The site of Mehrgarh, set on the banks of the Bolan River overlooking the vast plains of Baluchistan, was one among a few other known sites that acted as a prelude to the extensive and expansive Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilisation. During some of the earliest phases of occupation at Mehrgarh, objects were recovered that did not seem to be of local origin but rather had their provenance traced to West Asia and the Middle East, particularly Iran and Oman. Archaeologists and researchers have used such objects to assert the idea of maritime contact since the earliest days of settlement in the Indian Subcontinent. Since then, particular attention has been given to the maritime dimension in Harappan studies, and evidence – both direct and circumstantial have strongly indicated an active maritime contact. The excavations at the site of Lothal, Gujarat revealed what is believed to be one of the earliest known constructed dockyards across the world. Such discoveries indicated the pioneering effort and advances made by the Harappans in port and ship building that would have bolstered trade and commerce.

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the latter two regions, best exemplified by findings from the Mesopotamian sites of Ur and Uruk. Conversely, there is little to no evidence of Egyptian or Mesopotamian artefacts from sites in the Indus Valley. A few theories were proposed to account for this imbalance. Some studies of Indus Valley settlements suggested that there was a general paucity of raw material but an abundance of well-developed technology and skill. As such, raw material was imported and finished products were exported to the west. Literary evidence from Mesopotamia alludes to the land of the Harappans referring to it as 'Meluha'. There appears to have been a high demand across sites in the Persian Gulf for copper, carnelian beads as well as beads of other semi-precious stones such as lapis lazuli. While both land and sea routes were developed, the maritime connect was found to be more convenient – providing easy access to Oman, and from there to Egypt and Mesopotamia.

It has been propounded that immense wealth was generated through this maritime trade which ultimately translated into the rise and growth of a number of cities in the Indus Valley and beyond. While Egypt and Mesopotamia had a monarchical system with much of the wealth being spent to enhance social prestige as reflected in the monumental buildings and architecture, the system of Harappan governance is believed to have been quite different. Here, the wealth amassed from maritime contact and trade was used to develop cities, town and associated infrastructure

while establishing an intricate system of intra-connectivity that spread across 1.5 million square kilometres. In this regard, maritime activity coupled with Harappan pragmatism ultimately ushered in the first urbanisation observed in the Indian Subcontinent. Although nautical and navigational knowledge systems of the Harappans remain largely conjectural, ethnographic parallels can be drawn upon to support this conjecture. The Dhow trade between Gujarat and Oman is a long-standing tradition with age-old boats (traditional boat building) still used by the communities that are economically dependent on this exchange.

The millennium following the decline of the Harappans is shrouded in obscurity – cities and towns seem to have declined or disappeared, trade and exchange made way for agro-pastoralism, and perhaps coincidentally, contact over the maritime medium during this time appears to have been dormant. This gap is often filled with the misled notion that paints dramatic tales of invasions followed by cultural annihilations. In fact, through contact, culture is a result of an ever changing and ever evolving amalgamation of its different forms. As far as the Indus Valley Civilisation is concerned, studies have indicated a substantial reduction in sea levels coinciding with its decline. A number of once active ports now found themselves inland and witnessed a reduction in maritime activity. So, while cultures continued to exist, they could not evolve into civilisations nor could the existing

civilisations be sustained in the absence of wealth generated from exports across the maritime network.

However, concurrent to the re-introduction of maritime connectivity during the Greco-Roman Classical Period, there appears to be resurgence in the development of cities and culture. This ultimately constituted the second urbanisation in the Subcontinent – a phenomena that has more or less maintained continuity till the present. The maritime spice route opened up channels for trade that were extremely lucrative to India. In fact, it was the period following this that saw the spread of Indian Culture into the Southeast Asian archipelago.

The positive effects of maritime connectivity in terms of progress and development are well known. In the Indian Subcontinent, the wealth that results from contact over this medium has helped cultures grow and evolve into civilisations. To cite an example from the modern period, Japan – a country that was nearly destroyed by World War II – managed to rebuild its economy and within a few decades became a global economic power purely because it utilised the maritime medium to import raw materials and export finished products – a tradition long practiced by the Harappans.

The importance of contact via the maritime medium in state building has been acknowledged by the government. In view of this, project Mausam had been launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Culture to understand the role played by climate and its impact on culture. In addition, the Ministry of Shipping has been

developing a National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal. This is intended to be a state-of-the-art museum, conservation centre and national maritime research organisation. Both these initiatives aim at reconstructing maritime history of the country and the contribution made by India through maritime contact. At this juncture, it is important that organisations such as the Maritime

History Society (MHS), Maritime Research Society, Pune, etc co-ordinate on joint projects and resource sharing while maintaining their identity.

Joint Director, MHS: Thank you to Prof Vasant Shinde and Prof. Shantakumar. We now end the inaugural session.

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NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE CONCLAVE 2020

Unsung Frame I: Coastal Communities

Proceedings of a panel discussion with Prof Ranabir Chakravarti, Lt. Cdr. Kalesh Mohanan, Ms Leora Pezarkar, Dr Andre Baptista and Mr Dennard Dsouza moderated by Dr Radhika Seshan

The first session of the conclave was initiated with the intention of stimulating a discussion on the importance of coastal communities in the broader narrative of maritime history. The tone for the session was set by Dr Radhika Seshan, Eminent historian and former head of department Savitribai Phule Pune University. The discussion began with Doctor Seshan questioning the long held axiomatic definition of coastal communities being those groups of people who are exclusively involved in the act of fishing and seaward activities. But Dr Seshan insists on broadening the horizon by including agriculture, handicraft, tourism etc. Vis a vis the communities associated with these activities who were tied to the coastal fabric of their environment.

Prof Ranabir Chakravarti, a renowned maritime historian and faculty at the Jawaharlal Nehru University explained the place of the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta, which is the world's largest delta region comprising modern Tripura, West Bengal and Bangladesh. The fluvial zone fostered human

engagement with the seas and the hinterlands since time immemorial giving access both to the hinterlands and the oceans. Prof Ranabir Chakravarti touched upon the influence of the sea on the coastal heritage of Bengal and how it shaped its history and influenced its folklore. The finds of coins in Wari - Bateshwar dating to 400-300 BP are classic example of the how the sea impacted numismatic iconography. The heap of coins found at Wari Bateshwar, which lies on the outskirts of the city of Dhaka depict Shrimp and piscatorial imagery. Something very unique for coinages of this period.

The influence of the delta on the culture of greater Bengal was so deep and thoroughly incised in the Psyche of the Bengali cultural ethos so much so that even contemporary music of SD Burman reflects this landscape in its lyrics.

Dr Chakravarti laments that the role of coastal communities from the earliest days up until the late medieval times has not managed to figure greatly in traditional Indian

literary genres. He also contrastingly points out that although in early Indian Sanskrit literature the coastal communities do not figure significantly, references to Navikas and Mahanavikas are scattered all across early Indian literary genres. These communities from the area may have been quite affluent too as can be deduced from the study of an inscription of a Bengali Mahanavika of Raktamrittika named Buddhagupta which was found in Malaysia. The delta as a coastal zone fostered a generation of communities that contributed immensely in the history of South Asia.

Lt Cdr Kalesh Mohanan brought in a different dimension to the discourse of coastal communities in the in Andaman and Nicobar Island. Historically the Andaman were a sanctuary for the primitive tribes that made the island their home even before the advent of the chalcolithic era. The tribes migrated to the island most probably in canoes and ever since established themselves in harmony with the prevalent ecosystem. The island was unexplored until the colonial era although the Cholas did know of the islands but did not establish themselves like the English. Since then, the islands have been open to people from the island of the Indian mainland. He stroked a different to the discussion by saying the

Aboriginal community was not as much a maritime community say as compared to the mainlander who are from neighbouring Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. He justified comments by showing the intensity of maritime activity of the non-natives was much more than the aboriginals, who venture out to sea for a limited time and reason.

Lt Cdr Mohanan Specified that the communities of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were essentially as island communities – an apt way of reminding his fellow scholars that no two communities are the same and that the expression “coastal communities” is not enough to talk about the unsung frame of communities that the session was dedicated to. Lt Cdr Mohanan shed light on the nature of these coastal communities as opposed to those from the mainland. The islanders of the Andaman were cocooned from the world at large and this has made them culturally and racially distinct from the mainlanders. The islanders, because of their insularity, depended completely on the local resources.

Something interesting was when a community member spoke of how she looks at her community under the rubric of Coastal community. Miss Leora Pezarkar discussed her work on the Bene Israeli community, a community to which

she herself belongs to. Her work was mainly centred around the lifestyle and community oral history. A very interesting story she narrated was that of the foundation story of her community. The Bene Israelis identified their presence in India as a result of a shipwreck on the coast of the Konkan where six pair of males and females laid the foundation of the Indianised Bene Israeli Jews. The close association of the community with the coast and their lifestyle so intertwined to the tides of the sea makes Leora to identify the Bene Israelis as a littoral. Food as an important culture marker in anthropological study figures prominently in Leora's work. The Jews are known for their strict adherence of Kosher. Leora points out that the Bene Israelis have maintained this tradition of food purity although the food has been adapted to local cultivars. She also pointed out that the community adapted to the local customs while also retaining their very idiosyncratic Jewish tradition for example they kept the Sabbath which is the Jewish day however alien it was to the local surroundings, this peculiarity gave them the moniker *Shanivar Teli* where *Shanivar* meant Saturday and *Teli* meant the profession the community adopted after their migration to India as Oil pressers.

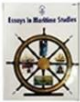






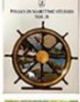











Dr Andre Baptista later presented an example of the way the local

community of Chandor helped in excavating an area on the Konkan coast. He drew attention to the immense possibility of educating the coastal communities and enlisting their support in archaeological and conservation projects. Speaking of the Konkan coast exploration, Dr Andre Baptista made a case for the need to work towards the inclusion of the local coastal communities in the matters pertaining to their heritage. In his case study of the communities of the Chandor village, Dr Baptista pointed out the enthusiasm and zest with which these communities involved themselves in the excavations hosted by ASI.

Dennard D'Souza underlined the fact that with the homogenization of all cultures, the uniqueness as well as the diversity of the peoples living on the coasts are fast eroding. He shared his journey while researching the coastal communities of Ratnagiri. He elaborated on what triggered his interest to research on the Konkan. According to him the ancient literary sources were virtually mute on the communities of the western coast, which contrary to this historical lull, was pulsating with activity, this history however needs to be weaned out through methods of Oral history. The Indian tradition for long has been passing its understanding of the past thorough

legend and stories in an oral form. These stories are great historical material and can be tapped in to recreate histories of Coastal India's maritime past vis a vis its communities. The session one of the seminar shed light on the many dimensions of coastal communities of India who here before were relegated to the back burners of history writing. The session encompassed panelist who came from different background of academic spectrum.

We had great scholars like Dr Radhika Seshan and Dr Ranabir Chakravarti who are stalwarts of Indian maritime history. We had people like Lt Cdr Mohanan who were form the naval background who have seen the seas more closely and finally we had young researchers like Dr Andre Baptista, Ms Leora Pezarkar and Mr. Dennard H Dsouza who were carrying on the baton for the future of maritime history.

<h1 style="text-align: center;">MHS PUBLICATIONS</h1> <h2 style="text-align: center;"><i>Glimpses of Indian Maritime History</i></h2>	
 <p>MHS 1: Essays in Maritime Studies; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 450.00</p>	 <p>MHS 11: Indian Boat Designs and Forms By Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 600.00</p>
 <p>MHS 2: Sea & Hill Forts of Western India; Wg Cdr (Dr MS Naravane (Retd); Rs 750.00</p>	 <p>MHS 12: Maritime Heritage of Southern Peninsular India; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 650.00</p>
 <p>MHS 3: Heritage Sites of Maritime Maharashtra; Wg Cdr (Dr) MS Naravane (Retd); Rs 650.00</p>	 <p>MHS 13: Maritime Heritage of Konkan; Prof Sachin Pendse; Rs 650.00</p>
 <p>MHS 4: Heritage of Indian Sea Navigation; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 500.00</p>	 <p>MHS 14: Maritime Heritage of Lakshadweep and Minicoy Islands; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 600.00</p>
 <p>MHS 5: Essays in Maritime Studies, Vol II; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 350.00</p>	 <p>MHS 15: Maritime Heritage of Goa and Uttar Kannada; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd) and Prof Sachin Pendse; Rs 600.00</p>
 <p>MHS 6: Chola Navigation Package; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 250.00</p>	 <p>MHS 16: Maritime Heritage of Gujarat, Kathiawad and Kutch; Prof Mary R Edward; Rs 650.00</p>
 <p>MHS 7: Mumbai By the Sea; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 500.00</p>	 <p>MHS 17: Timeless Wake: The Legacy of The Royal Indian Navy During World War II; Commodore Odakkal Johnson; Rs 950.00</p>
 <p>MHS 8: Navigational Hazards, Landmarks and Early Charting – Special Study of Konkan and South Gujarat; Prof B Arunachalam (Retd), Prof Mary Edward and Prof Sachin Pendse; Rs 450.00</p>	 <p>MHS 18 & 19: The First Indian: Story of the First Indian Solo Circumnavigation under Sail; Commander Dilip Donde (Retd); Rs 499.00</p>
 <p>MHS 9: The Environmental History of Maritime Forts in and around Mumbai; By Dr Sudha Srivastava and Dr Dipti Mukherji; Rs 400.00</p>	 <p>MHS 20: Maritime Heritage of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha; By B Sukumar & Ahalya Sukumar - Prof B Arunachalam (Retd); Rs 650.00</p>
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NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE CONCLAVE 2020

Special Session

Impressions by RAdm RJ Nadkarni on the Essay Writing Competition 2020 and Sagara- A Musical Tribute to the Boatmen of India.

It was a special session dedicated to two important activities at Maritime History Society.

Dr Soni Wadhwa: We shall begin with the announcement of the winners of the Adm JG Nadkarni Memorial Essay Competition. This essay competition was announced in the month of July after the inaugural talk by Rear Adm RJ Nadkarni on Navigational Methods of the Ancient Mariners. The theme of the essay competition was Reflections on Indian Nautical Knowledge: Past, Present, and Ways Ahead. Rear Adm RJ Nadkarni had kindly agreed to judge the submissions. Let me request Rear Adm RJ Nadkarni to speak about his experience of reading the essays.

Rear Admiral Ravindra Jayant Nadkarni, Flag Officer Offshore Defence Advisory Group has himself undertaken a maritime passage through a number of significant Navigational, Operations and Command tenures in the Indian Navy. An avid yachtsman, he was part of a tri service sailing expedition onboard Indian Naval Sailing Vessel Samudra on a Round the World Sailing Voyage in 1988-89. On attaining Flag Rank, he was the Chief Staff Officer (Operations) Western Naval Command then moved through the flag assignments of Flag

Officer Doctrines & Concepts, Flag Officer Commanding Karnataka Naval Area and Chief of Staff Southern Naval Command before his present assignment. Sir, I now invite you to share your thoughts about the submissions you received for the essay competition.

Adm RJ Nadkarni: Thank you very much and I hope that you all can hear me. Firstly, thank you for the introduction and I would also take this opportunity to thank the Maritime History Society for conceptualizing Admiral JG Nadkarni Memorial Essay Competition honouring my late father as they had also done in conducting the Adm JG Nadkarni Memorial Lecture which I was involved with, some months back. Also, thank you for giving me the opportunity to adjudge these essays and I must admit that this was a very difficult job because I think all the essays had put in a lot of efforts in carrying out excellent research and also, they displayed a very good compositional skill. The results were very close but at the end of it I hope I was able to do justice to the efforts and I do hope that the result will probably reflect that.

I would also like to compliment the Session coordinator and the panelists

of the previous sessions who were talking about the maritime communities along our coast and I can only say that there is so much to learn in this subject called maritime history and one can never stop learning! It has been a fascinating discussion and I hope that the subsequent discussions will also have so much that one can learn.

Of course, I am not a historian nor a scholar not even an academic. I am just a Naval Officer, one who has been able to do a fair amount of reading through my years in service. So, what I am about to express is largely based on that experience.

As you all are aware, India has a very long maritime history with historical records at least going back all the way up to the Harappan or Indus Valley Civilisation. During this time, India had trade connections with a number of other ancient civilisations like the Mesopotamia, the Romans, the Egyptians etc. We have also discovered a lot of archaeological sites such as the famous dock at Lothal that has revealed the maritime and seafaring expertise of those generations. Broadly speaking, India's maritime history can be divided into five periods. Firstly, we have the ancient civilisations which I would call as the period of Antiquity when we had civilisations such as the Harappans. Then we had the period extending from First millennium BCE to the first millennium CE- around two thousand years- which included the period where dynasties such as the Mauryas and Guptas ruled most of India and also that was a little bit of the medieval period which was covered.

Then we had what can be generally described as the Age of Discovery which is roughly the second millennium CE. Then we of course had the rise of Islam. Thereafter, we see a trade increase in India and the Arab world and many Arab navigators such as Ibn Majid who discovered so many facets of navigation which I had also discussed in my previous lecture.

Then, we had other explorers, notable among them for us at least was Vasco Da Gama who discovered the sea route from Europe to India in 1498. Then we went in to the colonial period when the Portuguese were followed by several other colonial powers like the British and we came under colonial rule. And then, we have the post-independent period that is 1947 onwards. Now, for all the facts that we are aware of regarding our maritime history we are reliant on several sources. First, we have the various archaeological artefacts such as those which were discovered in Harappa, the Lothal dock etc. More recently we have discovered several of these artefacts in Pattanam which gives rise to the theory that in all probability, that is the famed Muziris which was the hub of trade in the ancient world.

Then we have a number of historical books such as the Vedas, the Rig Veda for example, the Puranas as well as the Jatakas which gave a lot of accounts about how the seafarers of the past who travelled from place to place, how they built the ships and also how they conducted trade. Then we have reports of various travelers such as Marco Polo and other Italian travelers such as Nicolo Conti as well as Chinese

travelers like Fa Hien and Hieun Tsang as well as Arabs such as Ibn Battuta. All of these have contributed in some manner and given us accounts of what they saw of the seafarers in seafaring communities of India at the time and thereby enabled us to get more and more information about our own history.

Then there are books which are based on scientific observations and in this I would specifically refer to many of the books which describe methods of navigation that were followed in the ancient world especially in India which I had covered during my previous lecture and that also has improved our body of knowledge. And lastly, I think one aspect that is more relevant for India is the history which was passed by word of mouth from one generation to the other. Of course, sometimes with history which is passed, some of you must have played this game called Chinese Whispers' I am sure in the past and we know that as you go from one person to the other the words change. And similarly, it is possible that history also may have over a period of time changed from what it was originally, it may have got a little embellished and the final product of which we are aware may have been quite different than what it was originally but that is all we can go by.

So, the historical knowledge that we now have depends largely on the interpretation of all the source material that we have. And sometimes it can be quite difficult to sift fact from fiction. Like I said, there is a likelihood of embellishments especially in what is there in the written material, of course,

in terms of artefacts and in the story in what the artefacts tell us. So, therefore, I feel historians and the people who are researching might need to be a little cautious of placing their complete trust in the veracity of the documents and also separate myth from fact. So, while one can place a fair degree of reliance on books such as the Vedas maybe other epics that we have you may find that one cannot place total reliance on those books.

So, what do these historical sources tell us? Firstly, that seafaring has been a part of India's history for a millennia now and the sea has remained the most efficient method for transporting men, material over long distances. Mostly for trade for exploration and conquests. We know now that the ancient Indian civilisations would go to the East and West right from the Indus Valley onwards and artefacts found in many places along the Indian coasts is testimony to this fact.

The ancient shipbuilders that were there also seemed to have a lot of skills which are comparable to those of other maritime civilization and other maritime nations and the skill continued even during the colonial period. We had famous shipbuilders such as the Wadias, we had the Bombay dockyard which is more than 250 years old which produced a large number of ships which are even now floating such as the *HMS Trincomalee* produced for the Royal British Navy. We had the *HMS Minden* on which Francis Scott Keys famously composed the Star-Spangled Banner which is the US National Anthem and so many more ships which were built and facilitated yeomen

service especially for the Royal Navy. So, this art continued till the twentieth century. However, maybe after independence the ship building skills seem to have gone down. Today, I feel we are well behind major ship building nations notably the Japanese, the Koreans and the Chinese who are the top three in terms of productivity as well as the shipbuilding skill itself. So, I think there is a long way to go before we can aim to reach those heights. Similarly, in the old days, the ancient ports such as Bharuch and Muziris were amongst the largest trading hubs of the ancient ports but sadly today, most of our present-day ports do not really compare with those ports of the past.

Even ports like Colombo have outstepped ports like Cochin as a trans-shipment hub. This is despite India actually being blessed with a large number of natural harbours especially with those which are found on the west coast. We also know that ancient Indians were expert navigators and they had discovered navigation by the heavenly bodies as well as using the trade winds as well as being able to calculate courses using just the natural elements. This is something that we can be very proud of and over the years I think we have been helped by the interacting with our own navigators as well as navigators of other civilization and countries especially the Arabs with whom we had a lot of interaction especially in the second millennium.

Throughout most of history, Indians have mostly used the sea for trade but also in some regards for conquests and explorations. The most notable of this

instance are the Cholas who invaded parts of Sri Lanka and South East Asia and till this day we find that the cultural influence that the Cholas spread in those regions has remained. A large number of temples and Hindu artefacts and many tales of Mahabharata being told in those regions. We of course do not have any well-known explorers that the Western civilisations and the Chinese have such as Columbus, Magellan, Vasco da Gama and even Zheng He. But we do have a large number of people who have travelled from the West to the East and our seafaring expertise has been quite proficient throughout these years.

In terms of the Navy, we have had ancient Indian dynasties such as the Mauryas who had navies but we have not seen significant battles in the ancient days such as the Battle of Salamis which was fought between the Greek and the Persians. Only when we come to the colonial period, we find mention of heroic Naval Admirals such as the Kunjali Marakkars and Kanhoji Angre. However, despite having some successes ultimately, they too lost to technologically superior European powers. And, post-independence of course, our Navy has grown from strength to strength evolving from a small force which was divided between the Indian Navy and the Pakistani Navy. It has grown to where we are now. And for this we have to thank many of the Admirals who served in our early Navy. Admirals such as VAdm N Krishnan, Adm RL Pereira, VAdm MP Awati as well as the heroes of War of 1971 such as Capt. Mulla and many of them continue to inspire us with all their

achievements and heroic tales. So, from all this we see that ancient Indians had a strong maritime character but with the passage of time somehow, we seemed to have changed this mindset. Perhaps, it is due to the fact that throughout centuries we have been invaded many times from the North and this has led our mindsets to change towards our Northern frontiers and forget about the sea which in fact is a larger frontier and thereby become a nation of landlubbers. My father often used to say that this maritime character can be shown or can be evidence boast in small things such as when Indians go to the beach it is often not to swim or sail as one would find in countries such as Australia, New Zealand or the US but to eat *Bhelpuri* and *Chaat* or just take pony-rides. So, I think this is what a large number of people are lacking in terms of how they see the sea. And, unless we change this basic mindset, I think it would be a huge challenge for us to return to the glory days of the past. However, it is very commendable that the initiatives taken by the government in the recent years such as Project Sagarmala as well as those which are taken by independent bodies such as the Maritime History Society itself as well as those that are taken by the Indian Maritime Foundation. all these are the steps in the right direction to spread a greater awareness about our maritime past and the importance of the sea in our future. So, with that, I would like to once again compliment all the essayists for the efforts and hope that seminars and webinars such as these will continue to further our own

knowledge about India's maritime history. Thank you very much!

The second highlight of the Special Session was the release of the song titled Sagara penned by Director, MHS, Cmde (Dr) Odakkal Johnson to pay a tribute to the Boatmen of India. An entire team had worked hard to help it become a musical tribute. In his words, Director shared insights on what inspired him to pen the beautiful song.

Dir, MHS: "Thank you, Dr Soni. I am very glad to have with me the people who made this possible- Ms Riddhi Joshi who has lent her vocals and Mr.



Prathamesh Sawant who has visualized it artistically. When we went into lockdown and we had various discussions, studies and enquiries, especially after the Founder's Day celebration where we looked at the cultural elements and reflections of the maritime space, that is when on one of the evenings, some of the thoughts of the boatmen of India came and working with the team my initial text we were able to fine tune and revise and for that purpose we could write the lyrics. We were helped by David Sinchury, a musician and a whole lot of people who worked to bring out this song.

To do the honours of actually releasing, more than hearing me I think you would prefer to hear the song. I would like to invite a very great supporter of the Maritime History Society-Dr Gita Kasturi-and for that I would handover back to Dr Soni to introduce Dr Gita Kasturi who is going to formally release the song."

Dr Soni Wadhwa: Thank you Sir. I am glad to share that we have a special guest, Dr Gita Kasturi to release the song Sagara. Dr Gita Kasturi is a practicing lawyer of the Bombay High Court. She has obtained her doctorate from the Mumbai University in Indian Philosophy. Dr Kasturi is currently on the legal panel of the India Government Mint & Children's Film Society of India, apart from providing advisory services to various other government bodies. She is also the Joint Finance Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai. Ma'am, over to you!

Dr Gita Kasturi: Good afternoon everyone! On the occasion of the National Maritime Heritage Conclave 2020, I wish to congratulate Cmde Johnson and his team for planning this Conclave and creating an online platform to bring out and promote maritime consciousness. To make this conclave interwoven with lyrics and music, the team has spent time in making a song which I would like to release today. Hope you all enjoy this musical rendition titled Sagara. Thank you so much for inviting me to be a part of this team, Cmde Johnson.

छोड़े तू किनारा, सागर पुकारा
जा रे मालम तू, लहरों पे लहरा
पाल खोले, हवाएं हो सागरा
गलवट बढ़ाते, तू लहरा....

सा सा गा रे सा सागरा
सा सा, तू लहरों पे लेहरा
सा सा गा रे सा ओ सागरा
तू गलवट बढ़ाता चल

ओझल हैं दिशाएं, ओ सागरा
दिव्य: सहारा है, लहरों पे लहरा,
जय जयकारा, सागर तू सागरा
वापस फिर आना, तू लहरा

सा सा गा रे सा सागरा
सा सा, तू लहरों पे लेहरा
सा सा गा रे सा ओ सागरा
तू गलवट बढ़ाता चल

सा सा गा रे सा सागरा
सा सा गा रे सा सागरा
सा सा गा रे सा सागरा
तू लहरों पे लेहरा

NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE CONCLAVE 2020

Unsung frame II – Influence of Women in India's Maritime History

Proceedings of a conversation with Lt. Cdr Rajeshwari Kori(Retd), Ms Reshma Nilofer, Ms Sucheta Jadhav and Ms Poorvi Shriyan anchored by Ms Amruta Talawadekar

Amruta Talawadekar: The vision at the Maritime History Society is to evolve into a body of eminence in the field of maritime history through nurturing of historical research among young mariners, showcase Indian maritime heritage and publication of emerging perspectives for a vibrant and resurgent maritime India. Moving ahead towards this vision, the session was based on the theme - Women in the Indian Maritime History. Women have proved to be avid warriors and brilliant administrators while securing a place in history, be it in fields of warfare, politics, art, literature and business among others. Across time, we have seen women be a part of the social, educational and humanitarian circle in society contributing immensely to every field. The maritime medium or the sea doesn't see gender. A number of women have proved themselves in the field of shipping, warfare, aviation and sailing among other fields within the maritime domain. The session thus looked into the contribution of women in the maritime field. In the present times women have reached new heights in every field. In 1992, the Indian Navy began inducting women for selected branches of the Indian Navy. Over the years the branches expanded and today we have women in the fields of Air Traffic Control, Observers, Law, Logistics, Education, Naval Architecture and the Naval Armament Inspectorate. Dr. Barbara Ghosh became one of the first Indian women to have attained the rank of a commander. She was also the

first woman medical officer to have received a permanent service commission. Dr. Punita Arora became the first female Vice Admiral in the Indian Navy. Capt. Radhika Menon became the first Indian female captain of a Merchant Navy ship. She led a dangerous mission rescuing seven fishermen who were trapped at the Bay of Bengal in a sinking boat which capsized due to engine failure and breakdown of the boat's anchor as a result of a sea storm in 2015. With her spirit, dedication and courage she was a proud recipient of the top international bravery award by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2016. In 2017, the Indian Coast Guard became the first Indian force to have inducted women officers for combat and patrolling roles onboard KV Kuber.



Image1. Capt. Radhika Menon and team (Source - <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/the-life-of-radhika-menon-india-s-first-female-merchant-navy-captain-to-win-top-bravery-award-266004.html>)

In 2018, six women officers led by Lt Cdr Vartika Joshi successfully circumnavigated around the globe in a sailboat. They displayed their sheer passion, perseverance and unrelenting spirit towards the sea on their 254-day long voyage facing the rough seas, scorching sun and freezing winds. Their boat was named as Tarini or the saving goddess.



Image 2. Women officers onboard INSV Tarini (Source <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/navys-women-team-sets-sail-from-go-to-circumnavigate-globe/article19655415.ece>)

Sub Lt. Riti Singh and Lt. Kumudini Tyagi became one of the first women to have joined as an 'Observer' (Airborne Tactician) in the Indian Navy's helicopter stream. Earlier, the entry of women was restricted to the fixed-wing aircraft that took off and landed ashore.

In 2019, Sub. Lt. Shubhangi Swaroop was part of the first batch of women pilots inducted in the Indian Navy.

Historically defence was said to have been a male dominated field till the 20th century. India was by then under the British rule and was part of the Queen's provinces. The maritime security was under the Royal Indian Navy. During World War II, the Royal Indian Navy began inducting Indians including women to fill up shore jobs. The Women's Auxiliary Corps (India) was set up in April 1942. Subsequently the Women's Royal Indian Naval Service that was part of the Women's Auxiliary Corps was set up in Feb 1944. This became a symbol of the new era and a pioneering step for women aspiring to be in the defence field. Even though women never went at sea, they played a crucial role in the strategizing, documentation and decoding for the war. They were given duties like cipher work, decoding secret messages, manning switchboards and were trained in gunnery tactics, maintenance of equipment etc. Primary training was held at HMIS Talwar. With the increase in the number of trainees, training centres were opened at HMIS Jahanara and HMIS Nalini at Calcutta. Around 1945, four officers including Second



Image 3. Female ratings of the Women's Royal Indian Naval Service (WRINS) (Source <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-news-in-a-first-indian-navy-woman-officers-to-join-warships-crew-2844391>)

Officer Kalyani Sen were sent to the United Kingdom for an instructional course.



Image 4. Second Officer Kalyani Sen with her English counterpart (Source - <https://wrens.org.uk/2019/12/30/womens-royal-indian-naval-service-established-during-ww2/>)

Kalyani Sen thus became the first Indian Service woman to have travelled to the United Kingdom. By 1952, nearly two third women from the WRIN were of Indian National. The WRIN took part in discussions, debates, and general knowledge tests which proved invaluable in developing the skills and broadening the future outlook of Indian women. The sari and shirt attire of the WRINS symbolised the 'new Indian woman' linking 'modern ideology while maintaining the desire to preserve the Indian culture'.

The Women's Auxiliary Corps and the Women's Royal Indian Naval Service became the only women crew to have served the Indian Armed Forces in a non-medical role till 1992. Through confidence, a sense of duty and pride of service, these women were able to make a lasting difference in the maritime defence of the country. As rightly said by Lt Cdr Kori 'Sex is a biological

construction, whereas gender is a social construction'.



Image 5. Female ratings at work (Source - <https://www.thebetterindia.com/122948/indian-women-world-war-2-navy-second-officer-kalyani-sen/>)

Not just defence, but one will be surprised to know about a woman back in history who set a benchmark in the field of shipping and entrepreneurship. Just like the other maritime fields, shipping too has predominantly been a male profession. Being sensitive in nature, the shipping industry has been affected rigorously in any economic or political crisis. Varying problems and challenges are a crucial part of this industry. Being a diverse industry, shipping has involved knowledge of various fields combined together. Even with this, we had Shrimati Sumati Morarjee, who set a new benchmark in the field of entrepreneurship.

Her journey from an ordinary woman to the Executive Director of Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd, the biggest Indian Shipping company in the

private sector in India is an example of her strength, will and foresight. Sumati or Jamuna as she was called before marriage was the daughter of a Merchant Prince in Bombay. Being the only daughter with six sons, she was the apple of their eye. In Spite of this, she was always treated at par with the sons. Although she did not take any formal education, she had a sharp and brilliant mind and fulfilled her education by keeping her eyes and ears open. Her father's clients would often visit their home from which she began to take keen interest in a few business deals. As she turned 13, she was married off to Shantikumar, the only son of Narottam Morarjee, the father of Indian Shipping. Narottam Morarjee along with his associates founded the Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd in 1919. After marriage Jamuna was renamed as Sumati or the one with good intellect. Her father-in-law was quick to realize her intelligence and grasping abilities and encouraged her just like her father. She was soon nominated as a member of the managing agency of Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd. Sumati had frequently accompanied her father-in-law on his business trips and observed the functioning and fundamentals of all the subordinate firms. After the tragic death of Narottam Morarjee in 1929, the couple had to take over the company. Sumati was to soon steer the shipping company through its rocks and shoals. She took keen interest in the day-to-day affairs of the company. By 1940, Sumati took over to become the Director of Scindia Shipping Company and rose to executive directorship of the company. In 1956, she was elected as the president of the prestigious Indian

National Steamship Owners Association. She was re-elected to the position four times. She treated her ships as her daughters and would frequently visit them. Like any naval chief she instructed her ships to be spick and span. She was well aware of how things worked at sea, the mechanism of ships and the difficulties faced at high seas. She was the mastermind behind launching a campaign in order to protect Indian Shipping from the Wealth Tax Bill and the Merchant Shipping Bill. The decisions went in favor of Sumati and she proved that even at rough times she could do what a man could or even better.



Image 6. Sumati Morarjee (Source - Sumati Morarjee Felicitation Volume)

By the age of 61, Sumati was synonymous with Scindia. During her Directorship, the annual profits historically rose, making it highest among the Indian Companies. 1949-1969 came to be known as the 'Sumati

era'. Her vision was not only business but the upliftment of the shipping industry as well as the people. She was a woman of avid qualities of leadership, entrepreneurship and competence. For those who knew her, she was not only smart headed but also a gracious lady with immense charm and culture.

Going back in time, Queen Naganika was the ruler of the Satvahana Dynasty during the 1st century BCE. The dynasty flourished due to numerous trade links with the west. As a result, ports such as Sopara eventually prospered. She became the first woman in the Indian subcontinent to have coins issued in her name. The fact that her name was inscribed on these coins, itself proves her might during that time. A lot about her continues to remain a mystery but she is a good starting point to begin the conversation about the rare to find women in Indian maritime history.

Ummayama Rani on the other hand was the queen of Venad which was the earlier name of Trivancore, a kingdom in South India from 1677 to 1684 who ruled on behalf of her nephew Raja Ravi Varma. In 1684 she is said to have aided the English in setting up a trading post in Travancore. The appearance of women in Travancore politics was exceptional one. Her period of administration was action packed. These women have indeed proved to be of exceptional substance.

Arguably, these women were not connected directly to Indian maritime history but the fact that they fought the European powers on the coastlines of India indicate that they must have had some kind of maritime vision so as to

defend themselves from the attacks coming from the seaward side. It indicates that they did have some sort of vigilance and alertness in place that helped them see land and sea in continuity. In coastlines, where the sea stops and where the land begins can be a bit complicated.

Poorvi: We all know that Independence to India was not served to us on a silver platter. It was fought for by the people of our country with blood and sweat. Men, women, and children all were involved in this hard-fought battle. However, not all have been given due recognition for the work they have done. Many prominent ladies have been a part of the struggle. Hardly any of them are given the limelight which they deserve. Rani Abbakka was one of such earliest Indians to fight away the colonial powers and is historically considered as the "first woman freedom fighter of India". Since the 7th century, maritime trade especially in spices, textiles, war horses etc. had flourished between the communities of India's western coast and the Arabian Peninsula. With an eye on this lucrative trade, several European powers had been trying to discover the sea route to India. The Portuguese finally became the first Europeans to find a sea route to India when Vasco Da Gama reached Calicut in 1498 after a long voyage. Five years later, the Portuguese built their first fort at Cochin. This was followed by the establishment of a ring of forts in the Indian Ocean region - in India, Muscat, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, even as far as Macau in China.

This, along with its superior naval technology, put the control of all the

spice routes to India into the hands of the Portuguese. For the whole of the 16th century, Portuguese dominance in the region remains unchallenged by any other European power. Trading in the Indian Ocean, which had hitherto been a free trade zone for Indian, Arab, Persian and African ships, now required a paid permit (*cartaz*) from the Portuguese. The naval superiority of the Portuguese meant that they invariably won against local rulers who rebelled. In 1526, the Portuguese captured the Mangalore port. Their next target was Ullal, a thriving port town that lay nestled between the verdant peaks of the Western Ghats and the cerulean blue waters of the Arabian Sea. Ullal was the capital of the Chowta king Thirumala Raya III. As the Chowtas were a matrilineal dynasty, the king's heir was his young niece, Abbakka. The fiercely independent princess had been trained in sword fighting, archery, cavalry, military strategy, diplomacy and all other subjects of statecraft from a very young age. As such, when Abbakka was crowned the Queen of Ullal, she was deeply aware of the threat posed by the Portuguese presence on the coast and equally determined to resist it with all she had.

Ullal being a port town was known for its strategic importance. That is why the Portuguese were desperate to capture it. With an eye on Ullal's trade the Portuguese had been trying to exact tributes and taxes from Rani Abbakka. Incensed and exasperated at the unfair demands, she refused to accede to the Portuguese demands. Rani Abbakka's non-compliance with the Portuguese demands further fueled their plan to get hold over the region. Her ships

continued to trade with the Arabs despite attacks by the Portuguese. From Mogaveeras and Billava archers to Mappilah oars men, people of all castes and religions found a place in her army and navy. The Mogaveera Muslim fishermen were an extremely powerful asset for her, as they helped in her naval battles with the Portuguese.

Infuriated by her effrontery, the Portuguese began attacking Ullal repeatedly. The first battle took place in the year 1556, which ended in an uneasy truce. Two years later, the Portuguese attacked with a larger force and were able to ransack the settlement at Ullal to some extent. However, Rani Abbakka's masterful battle tactics and diplomatic strategy pushed them back once again. During the next battle, the Portuguese army attacked Ullal and managed to capture the royal palace. However, Rani Abbakka escaped before they could capture her. Along with 200 loyal soldiers, she raided the Portuguese in the dead of night and killed the general along with 70 of his soldiers. Frightened by the ferocity of the attack, the remaining Portuguese troops fled to their ships

By this time, the Portuguese had become alarmed about Rani Abbakka's growing reputation inspiring other rulers. When repeated frontal attacks didn't work, they resorted to treachery. A series of edicts were passed to make any alliance with the defiant queen illegal. In 1581, 3000 Portuguese troops supported by an armada of battleships attacked Ullal in a surprise pre-dawn attack. Rani Abbakka was returning from a visit to her family temple and was caught off guard but she

immediately mounted her horse and rode into the battle, leading her troops in a fierce counter-offensive. Her piercing battle cry – “Save the motherland. Fight them on land and the sea. Fight them on the streets and the beaches. Push them back to the waters”, echoed through winds as she and her soldiers fired flaming arrows at the Portuguese ships. While many of the ships in the Portuguese armada burnt that night, Rani Abbakka was wounded in the crossfire and was captured by the enemy with the help of a few bribed chieftains. Rebellious till the very end, the fearless queen breathed her last in captivity. However, her legacy lived on through her equally fierce and brave daughters who continued to defend Tulu Nadu from the Portuguese. The legendary queen of Ullal continues to live on in the folk culture of the Dakshin Kannada region through Bhuta Kola and Yakshagana. In recent years, her story has been gradually coming to public attention. Dakshin Kannada has been holding an annual celebration in her memory, Veera Rani Abbakka Utsava, for the last few years.

A warrior queen who gave her life in defence of her freedom and motherland, Rani Abbakka remained a major thorn in the Portuguese’ side throughout her rule despite their superior military power. This itself speaks volumes about her courage and ingenuity. For her bravery, she came to be known as Abhaya Rani or ‘The Fearless Queen.’ Nevertheless, her splendid story remains primarily forgotten by history books.

Lt Cdr Kori (Retd): Ms Kori joined the Indian Navy in 1995. Her father was also

in the Indian Navy. She had once heard Late Vadm M P Awati speak on joining the Indian Navy which inspired her. She was part of the fourth batch. According to her, the Indian Navy has always been proactive in giving more exposure to women officers. It is also due to the Navy’s exposure to foreign countries that enables women to see the world, compare each other and give women a better platform. When she joined in 1995, there were only shore jobs and she was delighted to hear that the Indian Navy was thinking of posting women officers on board ships. As soon as they did, she dived in and enquired to join. It took some time for the Indian Navy to jot down a plan regarding what to do, how to send and whom to send. She got my sea legs onboard INS Jyoti in 1997 where she was posted along with then Surgeon Cdr Vinita Tomar. They sailed for almost 18 months onboard.

On board she was treated like any other officer. There was no discrimination. She was given the same duties which a male officer would have been given. After her posting onboard, she also did many shore jobs before joining the Government of Maharashtra. During her ongoing posting at Raigad, she was sent for a rescue operation during the Kolhapur floods. They were 16 people, she being the only women officer. She played a crucial role to connect the Government of Maharashtra and the Indian Navy to provide humanitarian relief since their crew had men but limited resources. They were the first to reach with supplies. For her it was a wonderful and learning opportunity. As Ms Kori puts it ‘the sea has made me very competent. When I go for my disaster management training

session, when I tell them about the Navy, Kargil wars and my story, they are fascinated. They ask me how much is the pay and allowance and that makes

Lt. Commander Rajeshwari Kori

She is the first women officer to be posted onboard a warship in the Asian subcontinent who has featured in the Limca book of records. She has been felicitated with Yashaswini Award by the Ministry of Defence by the hands of Chief of Army staff and Defence Minister Mrs Nirmala Sitaraman in April 2018. She also sailed on the last leg of circumnavigation in 2003-2004 on board INS Tarangini. She is currently the Deputy Controller of Civil Defence, in the government of Maharashtra and has led many rescue operations in collaboration with the government of Maharashtra and the Indian Navy.



Image 7. Lt. Cdr Kori on a rescue mission

me sad. I didn't look at it for money. It was something different and out of the ordinary during those times and wanted to keep up my father's name'. At the end of her conversation, she rightly commented said that the sea is made for those who want an adventurous and

disciplined life. Make your name and make your fame.

Ms Sucheta Jadhav: A lot of people are worried about sailing on water which is what the creators of SY Antara want to break. The motto of the venture started by Capt. Donde and Ms Jadhav, SY Antara is to offer the opportunity to sail to anybody who wants to take up the adventure and to eventually make it as ordinary as going on a trek, rappelling or taking up any other adventure in the country. There were two things that triggered Ms Jadhav. One was Capt. Dilip Donde (First Indian to have solo circumnavigated the globe). He wrote a book called The First India. On reading the book, she was really inspired to know about somebody like this who could go around the world



Image 8. Sucheta Jadhav onboard SY Antara

alone. Subsequently after eye witnessing the journey of the Tarini officers with Capt. Donde, she was impressed on how they grew from amateur sailors to be able to do a

circumnavigation. As a civilian, the only option for her back then was to take up some sort of a civilian training in sailing and while she did some amount of training in Bombay Harbour, what really helped her was the participation in the Clipper Round the World race and the transatlantic leg in 2018. She surprisingly started her journey at the age of 50 putting out a strong point that gender and age are just in one's mind which doesn't stop one from doing anything. For her it was a great high to sail at Cape town on her 50th birthday.

When she started out sailing, she realized that most of the sailing that happens today is primarily focused in the naval field or in the competitive field. What Capt. Donde and she intended was to make sailing an option open for anybody in India and abroad who wanted to explore the coastline and generally just enjoy being on a sailboat. Their objective was to make sailing available to anybody who wants to sail. They have started to offer half and full day sails. They also offer long journey sails for people to experience what it feels like to be out of sight from the coast into the blue waters, to watch the stars up there and to be completely at sea. For Ms Jadhav, the sea is something

Ms. Sucheta Jadhav:

First Mate and Marketing Manager SY Antara. She has participated in the Clipper, Round the World Race in 2017-18 and is a RYA certified crew member of the sailboat Antara. She is an entrepreneur and has undertaken various assignments in the past demonstrating her leadership and managerial skills.

that one would want to make friends with, explore and be out at. The funny thing in her case was that much younger women have inspired her. Not having looked up through history, she was inspired by the Tarini girls. One of the things she strongly believes is that sea doesn't look at gender and women need to pursue this for the sheer love and passion for sailing and the sea. Doesn't matter what recognition one gets. Do it because you enjoy it.

Ms Reshma Nilofer: When somebody told her that there hasn't been anybody in this field of marine piloting, her first thought was that someone needs to start. There is always a first time. This was the biggest inspiration for her. Nothing is impossible. There are women going to Mars and here we are in 2020 thinking about what we cannot do as women. So, there is only one way to find out which is by doing it ourselves which is what she did.

Not initially having role models, Ms Nilofer had heard about Capt. Radhika Menon, the first Indian master mariner. Her initial start to this career was to do something offbeat. Bhau Chidambaram Pillai was the first swadeshi ship owner a swadeshi movement member. When the English were ruling over India, he did some remarkable work for the nation that inspired her. According to her "I feel blessed to be present in the maritime domain with many other stalwarts". It is a heavy legacy to carry forward but it is not impossible. It is funny that in 2020 too, women question themselves as to whether we are worthy of that honor. Women by nature keep self-doubting at times but they need to step up and take this forward for the

generation to come up and be aware of our history so that the younger generation can have a reference point to look back and compare their progress. Women have for long stood in the backstage and its now time to say we can and we will aim and touch both professional and personal fields. Maritime domain has been a male dominated field for quite long and the women today have been able to change it and are in the right path.

Her biggest recognition has been the Nari Shakti Puraskar last year by the hands of honorable President which is the highest recognition for women in the country. This will be an inspiration and a proof of the many opportunities that women have in the country today. As she quoted “I am glad to be making a small impact for the cause of gender diversity and inclusion in 2020 so that 2040 will not be the same for other

Ms. Reshma Nilofer:

She is India's first and only woman Marine Pilot. She is currently a pilot at Kolkata's Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Port Trust. She has sailed for 2 years with Maersk, the container fleet. She pilots ships in and out of Kolkata, Haldia ports, Budge oil terminals, Diamond Harbour and Sagar Anchorages. She is a mentor for women in shipping, and an advocate for gender diversity and inclusion.

women in the maritime history book. Seafaring is not for weakhearted.

Being the first few, you are bearing the flag for the entire womenkind and you need to be excellent at what u do. Piloting requires patience and perseverance. We need women with nerves of steel who can enter the field. This field is rewarding, challenging and extremely satisfying. When I go onboard, I still get raised eyebrows and captains asking me are you the only pilot in your country. With so many women across the country, I am really

looking forward to work with other women in this profession”.

Joint Director, MHS: It is so inspirational to see these women speak. Lt Cdr Kori said she got inspired by Awati sir. Sucheta said there is no age barrier or gender barrier while Reshma made it so simple by saying no one did it so she thought she should. While we generally talk about women and their struggle it's great to see women talk about the simpler side of their journey. Talking about enjoyment, interest, passion etc. It was also great to see you talk about your journey with respect to the women in After all our past and present goes hand in hand. Your talk will inspire many in their career in entrepreneurship and seamanship tomorrow.

NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE CONCLAVE 2020

Unsung Frame – III Trans-Maritime Connectivity Across Indian Ocean Region

Academic paper Presentation by Cmde Ajay Agarwal, Cmde Sanjay D'Cunha,
Ms Aishwarya Devasthali

Paper I: INDIAN DHOWS: CONNECTING THE GULF OF KACHCHH TO THE PERSIAN GULF

Cmde Ajay Agarwal

Introduction

Indian Ocean has a unique geographical identity wherein, unlike the other major oceans of the world, which are open from both ends, the Indian Ocean is closed on the north side which forms a kind of roof on top of the ocean. The roof of the western side of the Indian ocean that runs in east - west direction and has two water bodies on either ends in the form of Gulf of Kachchh in the East and the Persian Gulf in the West. Another interesting aspect of this geography is the major rivers that drain into these water bodies. While the Tigris-Euphrates river system drains in the North-western tip of the Persian Gulf, the mighty Indus and as some believe the now extinct river Saraswati drain into the seas adjoining the Gulf of Kachchh. As the banks of rivers have been the cradle of civilisations of the ancient times, these rivers were also the cradle of two great civilisations of their times namely the Mesopotamian and the Indus Valley. It therefore should

not come as a surprise that as these two cultures flourished, they established trade links with each other for mutual benefits. In this paper an attempt will be made to understand maritime connection between these two significant water bodies, societies as well as cultures in the Indian Ocean and the role played by Indian Dhows in it.

In order to understand these transoceanic connections, we need to appreciate the two fertile valleys which produced surplus products available for trade. Since both these regions are connected by land through Gedrosia (Makran coast) it is possible that initially the trade may have taken place between these two civilizations through the land route.

In due course the Monsoon wind pattern was identified which facilitated movement from West Asia to West coast of India through the North -West monsoon in Summers and South - East wind pattern in winter to make an expeditious voyage. Taking advantage

of these wind patterns it was possible to move across the seas to the Western most part of the Indian Ocean from the West coast of India.

The two river systems that were mentioned earlier acted as a highway to facilitate quicker and safer movement of men and material from hinterland to the sea coast by using river navigation technique. It needs to be visualised that in the absence of a developed road network in that era, fraught with several manmade and natural risks enroute, the rivers became an unhindered and fastest means to provide access to the areas deep inside the heartland from the coast and vice-e-versa. Having been bestowed with such good geography it was natural for these two great civilisations of the ancient world to trade with each other.

Historical Background

Indian maritime history can be traced back to Indus Valley civilisation which flourished in the third millennium BC. During this period trade was established with Mesopotamia and Rome. In the Middle-East and Aegean region excavation of a variety of ornamental objects made of Lapis Lazuli, which was mined only at a few places of North-East Afghanistan and South Pakistan, provides evidence of trade between the two regions: Archaeological evidence in the form of Indian Red Clay potteries which was made in Gujarat, found in the Northern coast of Oman and in the ancient port city of Suhar (modern day Sohar) gives earliest evidence of the possibility of the trade between these two regions.

Dr RK Mookarjee in his seminal work Indian Shipping has estimated that there was a maritime trade-link between India and Babylon as old as 3000 BC. This is based on the finding of Indian Teak in the ruins of Ur when Ur Bagas, the first king of United Babylonia, ruled in Ur of the Chaldeens. The heavy size of the wood used in the temple of Ur and in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 BC) at Birs Nimrud, part of which is now exhibited in the British Museum, gives credence to the possibility of such heavy items to be transported by the medium of sea from Malabar coast where it was grown in abundance. Presence of Indian clothes with indigo, precious stones, sandalwood, Indian animals, ivory and other items point towards a thriving trade between India and the Arabian Peninsula.⁴ Another factor that could have given a major impetus to trade between the Persian Gulf and the Gujarat region was the reign of Darius I, the Persian king whose territory included both the regions. He was the first ever foreign imperial power to rule over parts of India in the 5th century BC, and his empire extended from Mediterranean Sea to Indus Valley in west - East direction.

Obviously, such a 'connect' would have further strengthened the trade and cultural connections across the entire kingdom. Darius I understood the importance of the sea-trade and thus attempted to establish a maritime link between Egypt and South Asia. He also thought of linking Red Sea with Mediterranean Sea in 510 BC. Despite these brave attempts the Persian empire that he wanted to promote, did

not succeed in establishing itself as a maritime power.

Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, one of the oldest known records of sea navigation (equivalent to modern day Sailing Directions) refers to trade between Rome and India sailing along the Red Sea⁵ and specifically mentions Barygaza (Bharuch) and Muziris near present day Kochi) with Egyptian port of Mussal harbour.⁶ This book is believed to have been written in the first century AD by an unknown navigator. The Chinese traveler Huan Tsang who visited India in 7th century AD refers to the seafaring community of Broach (modern day Bharuch) and the flourishing trade in the region. With the advent of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century AD, the shipbuilding as well maritime trade started shifting first in favour of Iranians and then to Arabs. By the end of the first millennium, the ship-borne trade had shifted from Indians to the hands of Arab traders where it remained till the arrival of Europeans.⁷ This transition of power from Hindu sailors to Arabs was largely peaceful and the concept of *Mere Liberum* prevailed in the Western Indian Ocean. The transition was primarily driven by commercial, religious and cultural ambitions.

Gujarat and Malabar were the initial two areas which came under the influence of the Arab traders who settled there in the coastal belt. The Arab traders, however, did not show any territorial ambition except once when Mohammad Bin Qassim attacked Sindh in 712 AD. They were very highly skilled seafarers who sailed the ships

to and from the Indian ports but the trade on the coast remained predominantly in the hands of the Hindu traders. The arrival of Mughal rule in India in the 14th century did not change much as Mughals were a land power and did not make any attempts to develop their maritime power. Their primary interest towards the sea was limited to Hajj pilgrimage and collection of taxes from maritime trade. There is an anecdotal reference that Jahangir was fascinated by the rise and fall of tide at sea and hence would sometimes visit Gujarat coast. He, however, did not take any interest in the maritime matters. An unintended benefit of this benign 'neglect' of seas resulted in Gujarat being left peaceful and free of any invasions or attacks during the Mughal period, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This led to substantial development of overall trade, including maritime trade in Gujarat.

Elsewhere in the Indian Ocean the discovery of a sea route through the Cape of Good Hope by Portuguese in the end of the 15th century, however, changed the peace and tranquility that had characterized these waters so far. Portuguese, armed with "Papal Bulls" from Pope came with a political ambition to proclaim Asia and Africa as an exclusive domain of Portugal and capture the lucrative spice trade with Europe.

Despite the interference from the European powers who competed against each other to dominate the flourishing trade, Gujarat became an important centre of maritime activities on the West coast of India from 17th

Century AD onwards, where seafaring turned into the maritime culture of its people, resulting in shipbuilding and maritime trade flourishing for nearly three centuries. It, in fact, literally remains the last bastion of sail ships (dhows) building in the current times. While there were supposed to be 'Baragam'⁸ (twelve villages) where seafaring was being practiced at one time, it is now reduced to just three distinct regions, namely Mandvi - north of Rann of Kachchh, Salaya - south of the Kachchh, and the Gulf of Cambay region.

It is unfortunate that there is hardly any authentic written record from Indian sources available to provide details of seafaring by the Indians. Thus, most of the information has been gleaned from the foreign written sources like the work of master navigators Ibn Majid and Suleiman al Mahri of Arab in the 15th century, Marco Polo of the 13th century and a few Chinese travelers. Later on, Indian written records in the form of *Rahmanis* and *Roz Namas* have been found. While *Rahmanis* is in the form of instructions to sailors, *Roz Namas* are akin to sailing logs, detailing the day-to-day log book entries of the voyages. The Gujarati sailors wrote *Pothis*, which also describe the navigational situations encountered by them during sailings. The *Pothis* held in the Indian National Museum belong to the period between 1664 to 1920. Whatever evidences available so far clearly show that for full thirty centuries India stood out as the very heart of the commercial world, cultivating trade relations successively with the Phoenicians, Jews, Assyrians,

Greeks, Egyptians, and Romans in ancient time⁹.

The key enablers of this maritime tradition included the Indian seafarers, the boats built by them and the wind patterns of the Northern Indian Ocean that were particularly suitable for ships to sail to and from Indian peninsula using wind power. Since India lies entirely in the belt of the North East trade winds blowing in India from about the end October to February and March, this helped the traders from the Mediterranean world, Egypt and Mesopotamia¹⁰ to sail to western Indian ports. These wind patterns were exploited by seamen to undertake trade using sail-ships. During this passage of nearly 6000 years of known history, where powers of kings and dynasties rose and subsided like the flood and ebb tides of the Indian Ocean, there has been one constant key player - the Indian seaman with his indigenously built country craft. He sailed the seas far and wide, carrying with him his culture, tradition, religion, ideas, besides goods and people. He developed the art of shipbuilding, navigation and cartography to harness the sea. He developed an efficient method of exchange of goods to trade with distant kingdoms. He also became a medium of exchange of these and several other facets of life at sea with the larger seafaring community in the Indian Ocean region. Indian seafaring tradition, therefore, continued to evolve in the last three millennia, shaped by the events occurring in the region and survives even today. The indigenously built boats were the main mode of transport for the maritime trade in the Northern

Indian Ocean. They were the most primitive means of communication and transportation in the world and can be equated to the caravans on land. While there were several shipbuilding centres and ports all along the west coast of India, the ships built by Gujarati craftsmen and the Gujarati seamen played a key role in this thriving trade.

Maritime Culture in the Gulf of Kachchh

Salaya can be considered as the Mecca of Dhows since the 17th Century, due to the sheer spread of activities related to them, be it construction or seamen sailing on them, or the trade related activities that flourished in the region. One of the remarkable features of the development of seafaring in Kachchh was the royal patronage. During the reign of Rao Desalji I, Rao Lakhpatji and Rao Godji the technical and engineering expertise of Malam acquired in the Netherlands furthered the ship-building activities of Kachchh¹¹. It is no wonder then, when British first came to India in the early 17th century to trade, they chose Surat as their 'first port of call' to establish a British factory. It is here on the banks of River Rukmavati and its estuary that the largest numbers of Dhows were built and are still being built, even though their numbers are dwindling at an alarming rate.

The region was continuously being ruled by Jadeja Rajputs from the sixteenth century till it joined the Indian dominion in June 1948 as one of the 565 *Riyasats* (Estates) freed from British occupation. The documented

history of the Salaya region may be traced back to the commencement of the 19th century when British in Bombay Presidency started taking interest in the affairs of the state. Prior to this the British limited themselves to the Gulf of Cambay where Surat was located. It was a few incidences of piracy in Dwarka region and perceived lawlessness that British decided to intervene in the affairs of the region. Since then, Kathiawar region became a British protectorate and after independence the eastern part of it which is known as Kachchh became part of India and the western Sindh along with Karachi became part of Pakistan.

There are principally two parts of this region which are umbilically connected to shipping. One part of it is occupied by Bhadalas who are Sunni Muslims and the other part belongs to Kharawas who are Hindus. Both communities have been involved in the shipping as well as ship-building business for more than a century. Originally, they formed part of the erstwhile Kathiawar region that was governed by the Bombay Presidency during the British rule. The dhows built by them are primarily used for business in the Persian Gulf region of the Western Indian Ocean. They are also called as 'Vahaans' (literally means of transport in Hindi) in this region. The culture of dhows is very much alive in the region even today wherein as of July 2020 it is estimated that about 300 dhows of various vintage are still registered with DG Shipping.¹²

In the present times the shipbuilding and sailing crew are

predominantly Muslims that come from the Bhadala community. The shore business is dominated by Hindus of Kharwa community and by Jains. All young men of the region have grown up hearing the stories of rags to riches by a few seamen from their community who learnt the ropes of seamanship on dhows of Salaya, and subsequently migrated to Dubai and other ports in Persian Gulf. They returned every year with large sums of money to marry, build large houses and retire comfortably. The locals from other communities, however, hold the view that most nouveau-riche of both the communities have acquired their ill-gotten wealth by indulging in smuggling activities onboard dhows while operating out of Dubai. In the 1970s and 1980s, prior to opening up of Indian economy in 1991, the import duty on foreign goods, especially the luxury goods were so high that a full-fledged and well-oiled smuggling system functioned wherein gold, silver, electronic goods, watches, perfumes, cigarettes and alcohol were frequently smuggled in India. Since Dubai was a free port the price difference of these luxury items between India and Dubai became very large, thus making the illegal trade very lucrative for dhows. A brief description of these two key seafaring communities is as follows: -

Bhadas. A typical crew of the Bhadala community will join a shipyard as a teenager where a dhow is being built. While some joined shipping as crew others worked in other related fields in shore offices. In pre-partitioned India Karachi was the main port of Sindh and the interiors of the state like Hyderabad were connected with the sea through a

network of river navigation systems. This river navigation system stretched right up to Multan thus providing a well-connected hinterland to Karachi port. Due to the strategic location and a well-developed port, the trade as far as from Afghanistan got routed through Karachi port. *Bhadas*, the shipping community, together with another local tribe named *Lohanies*, who ran caravans between Sindh and Afghanistan, traded with the commodities supplied to/from deep hinterlands of West Pakistan and to the bazaars of Kabul & Bokhara in Afghanistan.

Kharvas. Kharvas are the Hindu community involved in the shipping activities in the region. They are nearly on the same track as Bhadas amongst Muslims yet there are distinct differences between the two communities. The etymology of the term Kharwa is traced from the Sanskrit meaning 'carrier of salt'¹³. They have traditionally been serving under the Hindu seths of Bhatiya and Lohana communities and their women worked in the houses of these communities as domestic help. This system continues to exist even now albeit with some differences. As Bhatiyas and Lohanas progressively moved out of shipping business in the last century or so, the Kharvas also moved over to other businesses run by them in India and abroad. Running shops and factories by these businessman communities with loyal Kharva workers having old family ties became an alternative to operating ships at sea with them. While there has been a change in the nature of business from sailing on ships to operating

businesses ashore the community continues to follow the old custom of returning to their hometown during monsoons when the ships are laid-off due to bad weather. Hence, most Kharvas working in the Persian Gulf and East Africa regions continue to return to Mandvi during the Monsoon season to meet their extended families and perform all family rituals like weddings and other religious ceremonies. Oman is a popular place for Kharvas to find job opportunities and work under the Bhatiyas and Lohanas who have set up businesses there.

Trade between Gulf of Kachchh and the Persian Gulf

Ancient Trade. For the Indus valley people Frankincense was the most attractive item imported from Arabia. India exported wool, onyx, chalcedony, lapis-lazuli, and jasper, resinous gum, oils, brassware, furs, asafetida, musk, embroidered woolen fabrics and coloured carpets to its trading partners in Europe and Babylon. But the most sought after and valuable of them were Indian silk, cotton cloths including canvas, calicoes and the muslins of the finest texture. The cotton grown in Malwa region was considered to be of high quality and the fine fabric made out of it with colourful dyes was the main export of the Kachchh port to West Asia and East Africa. This trade remained popular till the arrival of British in India who cornered this cotton for their mills in England.

18th and 19th Century Trade. In the end of eighteenth century the control of Mughal rulers on the peripheral jagirs started diminishing. The

districts of Bhuj and Nawanagar produced good quality of cotton which was much in demand in West Asia. Due to its location Mandvi became a major port of the Gulf. During the same period in the middle of the eighteenth century, a similar development took place in West Asia where the Al-Busaidis came to power in Masqat (Muscat) in 1749. This commerce-oriented dynasty promoted trade and commerce in the Arabian Sea and Gujarat. The rise of this "Omani commercial empire," accompanied by a "commercial renaissance" at the Swahili coast, inspired confidence among merchants and created an atmosphere that was conducive to trade between Gujarat, the West Asian, and East African ports.

20th Century Trade. The thriving shipping trade of sail ships by the Bhadala community before independence started declining due to the advent of steam shipping and a large volume of traffic already in the hands of British promoted shipping companies. However, the coastal trade had remained in the hands of the native shipping companies who continued to operate the sailing ships. This resulted in a decline in the trade undertaken by the dhows of Salaya region. The situation of Dhows of Salaya region continued to decline till 1970s when Dubai assumed prominence as a free port and the difference between import duty in India and the local cost in Dubai made it an attractive trade. Many made fortunes during this period and decided to shift to shore based jobs. After the establishment of Dubai free

port, the dhows got a new lease of life as they got actively involved in trade with the Gulf region. This brought immense prosperity to the Salaya region. Subsequently those who had made their fortunes in the shipping trade preferred to stay on shore and hired poorer people from their community to sail on dhows.

After independence due to non-availability of any traditional land route from India to Iran, Iraq passing through Pakistan became unviable due to political reasons, the complete role for transportation of all commodities, especially the low-cost bulk cargo fell on the dhows. Once the USA attacked Iraq January 1991 due to its illegal occupation of Kuwait in August 1990 various financial and material restrictions were imposed on Iraq by the UN. Due to these restrictions, Indian dhows found a good opportunity to transport all basic necessity items to Iraq through them, by doing casting to avoid detection by the UN sponsored/multinational forces.

Pearling in Persian Gulf. A special mention needs to be made of the commonality of the Pearling between the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Kachchh. According to *Varahamihira, Garuda Purana* and *Bhoja*, pearling (or pearl-fishing) was carried on in the whole of the Indian Ocean as far as the Persian Gulf, and its chief centres included Gulf of Mannar, coasts of Ceylon and Saurashtra¹⁵. These pearls would thereafter come to the emporiums of the western coast of India for sale. Surat was one of the biggest trading ports for the pearls of Basra. Pearl

diving which involved extreme hard work and considered dangerous, was glorified in folk songs. Songs of the seamen, especially those involved in the pearling tradition, travelled with the dhows from one port city to another.

Glimpse into Current Mode of Operation of Dhows

It would be interesting to know how the ancient dhow trade is being conducted between the ports of Gulf of Kachchh and Persian Gulf in the modern times. An average Indian Dhow is built on the coast of Salaya in the port towns of Porbandar, Veraval or Bedi (Jamnagar). The size varies from 500 to 1700 tons but usually 600 to 700 tons. It is driven by an engine and a single sail and moves at a slow speed of 5 to 7 knots¹⁶. While the exact number of Indian dhows is not yet identified, Gujarat alone is expected to have about 350 of them in 2019. Approximately 10,000 personnel from Gujarat were estimated to be employed on board these Dhows in 2010. The current number may be much lesser, but no official figures are available. According to one estimate, at the height of piracy about 600 dhows were operating in the Gulf of Aden to provide sustenance primarily to Somali population¹⁷. This number of 600 dhows, however, includes those flying the flag of Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, Oman and a very large percentage of Indian dhows.

The normal modus operandi is that once they are built in one of the ports of Salaya, these ships are registered as Mechanized Sailing Vessels (MSV)

which are primarily supposed to be propelled by sails for voyages. This is done to take advantage of low cost of registration charged by the Indian government in case of traditional sailing vessels. In addition, they are fitted with a small propulsion plant (diesel engine) to help in auxiliary propulsion. However, once the Dhow is registered in India, it is sailed to foreign destinations in Persian Gulf and ports of Arabian Peninsula. Here the small propulsion plant is removed and a more powerful engine of a higher capacity is put and the hull is suitably strengthened to carry a larger quantity of cargo. Now the dhow becomes a proper motorized vessel, capable of carrying a much larger amount of cargo to a greater distance and at a much better speed. This is where the vessel moves from legal to illegal area, in terms of its registration documentation.

Generally, there is a businessman from the Gulf region involved in providing support during this modification. He along with the original Indian owner, who owned the boat exclusively when it left the Indian shore, becomes the joint owner of the vessel and profits from the income generated by it as a mechanised vessel or a launch. Thereafter the dhow with its Gujarati crew sails in/out of the Persian Gulf usually going to Somalia, Yemen and Oman. Despite several incidents of high jacking by the Somali pirates and a ban imposed by the Indian DG Shipping for them to sail close to the Somalian waters, these dhows continue to operate in the region seeking means of livelihood and sometime in search for high profits.

In the recent past the turmoil in Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen has had involvement of extra-regional powers like USA, EU who imposed various sanctions on countries under UN or other resolutions. Under these sanctions the life of common people is adversely affected as many of the items which are considered of dual use (military and civil purpose) are not allowed to be imported. In addition, in case airports, and major ports are closed down due to military action, no supplies could reach these beleaguered people. In such cases Indian dhows, driven with the motive of quick profits and lack of an alternative means of livelihood, would do coasting, enter minor ports and transfer vital items ashore. Sometimes they inter-mingle with the local traffic of the fishermen of the area and avoid detection by security agencies, in case they were carrying dual-use cargo, which may not be officially permitted to be transported. In such cases the freight charges would be much higher and result in extra profit to the dhow owners and the crew. These dhows therefore almost became the indispensable logistics providers to the common population of such countries.

Conclusion

The maritime connectivity between the Gulf and Kachchh and the Persian Gulf, lasting over six millennia has risen, fallen and risen several times like the rising and falling tides of the waters of the Indian Ocean that washes their shores. The dhows and the seamen who sailed on them were the ambassadors of exchange of not just the trade but also of people, ideas,

culture, religion, food, music and history. They were ably supported by the several communities like the shipbuilders, traders, religious preachers and rulers. In the recent times when steam and iron ships nearly killed the sailing ships of Kachchh, the export of low value commodities foodstuff like salt, onions, watermelons and mangoes to the Arabian Peninsula helped them survive. On return voyage these dhows loaded dates and sold them in the markets of Mumbai before returning home to Kachchh.

When the opportunity to go to sea started getting unattractive for the Kachchi sailors and traders, they opened businesses in the Gulf region and many of them have flourished there. Khimji family, who has recently been conferred the title of 'Sheikh' by the Sultan of Oman in recognition of their services to that country epitomizes the human connection of Kachchh with the Persian Gulf. The era of the 1970s of trade with Dubai was a controversial one. When the trade sanctions by the UN started strangulating the common people of the Persian Gulf in 1990s, the Dhows came to their rescue. Now when the dhow-building is almost dead, there have been several cases of rich Sheikhs of the Gulf ordering custom-built dhows from the shipbuilders of Salaya which has helped the art of dhow building to survive for some more time.

The ancient connection between these two communities continue to survive and sustain, albeit with the same quietness that has characterized this relationship for several centuries.

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Paper II: THE CULTURAL - CIVILIZATIONAL IMPACT ON CHINESE AND INDIAN NEW REGIONALISM IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Commodore Sanjay D'Cunha, VSM

Introduction India and China are the two civilizational powers in Asia that have emerged as pivotal states in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Their civilizational greatness harking back to over 5000 years has always been the focus and the basis on which the two countries have sought a privileged position. Whilst India was the birthplace of Buddhism, and the fountainhead from where it spread to the entire region, Chinese scholars like Fa Hein travelled by foot from China to India, visiting sacred Buddhist sites in Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia between 399-412. Their scholarly accounts in the courts of Indian rulers are reminiscent of an era wherein China and India enjoyed a preponderance of soft power. These countries were also the predominant economies in the pre-colonial period. China's tryst with the Indian Ocean and India's tryst with the East Pacific has been historic with memories of voyages, trade and people movement in the ancient period.

The Chola maritime voyages of trade and conquest are the earliest manifestations of ancient regionalism evidenced by India. This trade and commerce resulted in extensive cultural exchanges with Southeast Asia and even beyond the Strait of Malacca, in order to establish new trading links. Similarly, the Ming Dynasty established

trading routes and naval voyages with the island states of the Indian Ocean, including Ceylon, Seychelles and Madagascar right up to the East African coast. Ancient China had a rich trading and cultural connect with these regions. The historic naval expeditions by Admiral Zheng and his formidable fleet gave China the possibility to reach all Southeast Asian countries, the Indian subcontinent, and the coasts of Africa.

The advent of European imperialism witnessed the rapid decline of China and India. However, in the postcolonial period both countries have come a full circle overcoming the challenges of the imperial-colonial period and have been able to position in terms of economic rise, cultural and civilizational renaissance and the attendant derivatives of science & technology, industrial power and military power projected through varying matrices of National Power and Comprehensive National Power, which is now being witnessed in the Indian and Pacific oceanic theatres.

The New Regionalism Approach envisages for the Asian Powers the potential of rediscovery of the ancient civilizational and cultural icons of trade, connectivity and maritime power. New Regionalism in its innate dynamics has seen China and India

shaping the Asia-Pacific economic and security architecture. This energy of a new manifest destiny for the two Asian powers emerges from the civilizational - cultural contexts of India and China.

The paper dwells on the cultural - civilizational focus of India and China that dates back to pre-historic times and builds a narrative of how these two countries are using this ancient connect across the region to influence geopolitics in the Region.

The Rise of India Dash overthrew the colonial yoke and gained independence in Aug 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru who took over as the first Prime Minister of India was faced with a myriad of challenges. These include above all the scars of partition and the largest exodus of mankind, as refugees moved from both sides into the newly formed independent states of India and Pakistan. Simultaneously there was the need to integrate a host of independent princely States into the Union of India. Above all there was the first Indo Pak War of 1947-48, when the young nation faced battle lines in Kashmir. The Two-nation theory, dividing the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan was a legacy of the British policy of 'Divide and Rule', that was to haunt relations between the two nations, casting a shadow over the potential of India to attain the heights that had been attained in the pre-colonial period when India was a dominant and rich civilization that was respected around the world.

Mired as Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian administration was, in setting the young nation on the path to

nationhood, foreign policy took a back seat. Yet, the political leadership under Nehru, placed India's Asian identity and relations with East and South East Asia at the centre stage of India's relations with the world immediately after India gained independence. This was evident from the First Asian Relations conference in New Delhi in 1947 and the first Asian African Conference in Bandung in 1955, when Nehru sought to define a new post-colonial relationship between the developing countries of the region, forge a new post-colonial Asian identity and pursue the idea of a new Asia.

Yet, the politics of the Cold War, on the one-hand, and India's own 'inward-looking' model of industrial development, weakened her interface with much of Asia. As India drew closer to the Soviet Union and adopted a Socialist pattern of governance, the emphasis on import substitution distanced her from the rest of the world. The reduced emphasis on trade and economic engagement saw the steady erosion of India's physical connectivity as well as maritime links. This was particularly disappointing because many of the nations of Asia and Africa that had obtained their independence at about the same time as India looked up to her to provide leadership in the third world and found that this was not forthcoming. The reason for the special affinity that these countries had with India was not misplaced given the privileged position that India enjoyed as a civilizational power that had exercised influence over the complete Indian Ocean periphery. In effect, Nehruvian

strategic doctrine contributed to a virtual absence of any strategic relationships between India and the outside world.

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a turning point for India. Driven by a huge balance of payments crisis, but also by a need to integrate with a globalizing world, India embarked on a remarkable economic liberalization process. India's 'new economic policies' emphasized greater trade and investment openness. India's greater integration into globalization created new opportunities and perceptions about India. Simultaneously, the Narasimha Rao government enunciated the Look East policy in 1991, which heralded new relationships, as India pursued increased trade and investment cooperation with ASEAN and other East Asian countries.

The continuous double digit growth rate of India in the latter part of the 90s and early part of this century added to her economic stature, while the nuclear tests in 1998 added to her international clout. India suddenly became more assertive, which allowed her to negotiate with other powers with greater confidence. A large part of this discourse was guided by China and the influence that the country was establishing in South East Asia and India's immediate neighborhood. This was reflected in India's cautious realpolitik which was a departure from Nehruvian thinking but still retained its essential flavor. Recognizing the growing importance of India not only in the Indian Ocean, but the larger Asia

Pacific, the United States also began to woo India. In one of the major deviations of US foreign policy, the US signed the Civil Nuclear Deal thereby removing several hurdles in India's integration with the nuclear community. Recommencement of the suspended Malabar exercises in 2006 with an increase in its scope and complexity was a move that demonstrated US desire for India to play a larger role in the security architecture of the Asia Pacific. It was also aimed to bolster India in an attempt to contain an ascendant and increasingly assertive China.

Even though India began to tilt more towards the US, it was clear that India sought a path of strategic autonomy, wherein she could follow an independent foreign policy and not be beholden to anyone. This has been India's stand since independence, when she did not ally with either the US or the Soviet bloc but rather chose to champion the cause of the third world through the Non-Aligned movement. India would rather see a multipolar world in which India has a strategic role to play rather than be part of a US alliance system. This is an essential part of Indian strategic culture - that of a proud nation with a civilizational greatness that will not allow her to bow to anyone because she has the inherent belief that she will attain her manifest destiny, as a natural progression of the rising indices of power that she has begun to possess. The closer cooperation with the other major powers is also indicative of an acceptance by the Indian political establishment of the realist concepts of Balance of Power, which is a clear

departure from Nehruvian thought and an enunciation of the larger role that India seeks to play in the emerging world order.

The rise of a nationalist government under Narendra Modi in 2014 has perhaps been the most significant change in India's trajectory, which has resulted in closer integration with the world. Besides focusing on her immediate neighborhood in South Asia, Modi has sought to give greater impetus to the 'Look East' policy of the early 1990s, through the 'Act East' policy which gives action orientation and signifies the increased importance that India gives to South East Asia and the Asia Pacific. Most importantly, India has once again begun to go back to the seas and the traditional maritime preponderance that she enjoyed right through her history, when India was respected across the Indian Ocean and beyond for her great civilization, cultural superiority and soft power. This facet is all the more significant because the country has finally sought to overcome the continental mindset which had resulted in her neglecting the seas. Since times immemorial India has been a maritime power.

It is this superior maritime power that gave her respect and status across the Indian Ocean states and beyond. When India chose to neglect the seas, she lost not just her civilization connect but also her very independence to colonial powers. In seeking to reverse this sea blindness, Modi has sought to emphasize closer cooperation with the region. In order to allay any fears that the countries of the

region may have of India's outreach, the acronym 'SAGAR' meaning 'ocean' was coined – Safety and Growth for all in the Region, which is indicative of the greater significance that India accords to the seas and India's maritime neighbors.

The launch of Project Mausam in 2014 at the UNESCO's World Heritage Committee Meeting held in Doha, Qatar is however the most significant of all Indian ventures since it spells out for the first time the larger dimension of the Modi Government's plan. Launched initially as an 'initiative' under the Ministry of Culture to reach out to near and distant neighbours by promoting the cultural and civilizational connect across the Indian Ocean, the aim was to have it nominated to the UNESCO World Heritage List. Project Mausam seeks to recreate the ancient civilisation connect across the region, when the entire Indian Ocean span was one large space extending from the Arab world in the Western reaches to South East Asia at the Eastern fringes, with the Indian sub-continent straddling the region and adding to both expanses of the Ocean. It is this very civilizational connect that India seeks to re-discover through Project Mausam.

By harking back to ancient times, when India was a preponderant civilization with influential connects through ideology, people to people contact and interactions aimed at common prosperity, the Modi government is reaching out to the region and its identity. As Braudel notes, "The relationship between these huge areas was the result of a series of

pendulum movements of greater or lesser strength, either side of the centrally positioned Indian subcontinent. The swing might benefit first the East then the West, redistributing functions, power, and political or economic advance. Through all these vicissitudes, however, India maintained her central position – her merchants in Gujarat and on the Malabar or Coromandel coasts prevailed for centuries on end against their many competitors – the Arab traders of the Red Sea, the Persian merchants of the Gulf, or the Chinese merchants familiar with the Indonesian sea.”

This is a more than subtle reference to the prominent place that India possessed in this region. Clearly, Modi is trying to draw attention to this fact, as India seeks to establish closer ties with the states of the region.

The Rise of China On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China (PRC) from atop Tiananmen, after a near complete victory by the Communist Party of China (CPC) over the Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War. Mao believed that socialism, based on a Soviet-style centrally controlled economy, would eventually triumph over all other ideologies and make China great again. The consequences of Maoist policies were economically and humanly disastrous. At the time of his death, Mao's reign left behind a virtual "clean slate".

The arrival of Deng Xiaoping and his epochal reforms in 1978 marked a major shift from traditionalist Maoist

agenda. Deng sought to rebuild China through the “four modernizations” in agriculture, industry, science and technology, and the military. These reforms resulted in the remarkable rise of China.

In the post-Cold War period, China sought to further consolidate its national power through a new emphasis on resurrecting nationalism at the state, societal, and ideological levels as a means of preserving social control. As a result, a series of reform policies were initiated that covered virtually all aspects of governance. Controlled external integration transformed China into an export powerhouse that rapidly secured huge international market shares because of their ability to exploit China's lower-skilled labour costs while maintaining superior quality. They brought in greater privatization, corporatorised State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), introduced fiscal reforms, expanded foreign trade which in turn brought in Foreign Direct Investment for the first time in China.

By 2003, China declared that it had “core interests” that must be respected by all outside powers.¹⁵ Simultaneously, China articulated a new theory of ‘peaceful rise’, which was later replaced to ‘peaceful development’. However, Hu Jintao's 2004 speech on the “new historic missions” of the PLA clearly signaled the country's growing contemplation of international leadership and the likely military role it would entail. This marked a major shift from the hide and bide’ approach of Deng Xiaoping since

the end of the Cold War, to a more assertive leadership seeking to play a larger international role. Meanwhile, the Chinese economy was making giant strides as the GDP continued to grow rapidly.

By the time of the global financial crisis of 2008, China had arrived as a new great power in international politics. Its economy had grown continuously since the end of the Cold War thanks to its deepened integration with the global trading system. Chinese military capabilities also had expanded in unrecognizable ways. China was well on the way to acquiring the ability to dominate its periphery and project power into those maritime spaces wherein it had not operated before. This brought her into direct confrontation with countries of South East Asia and the Asia Pacific over conflicting claims and ownership of island territories.

Even as most countries began to get suspicious of China's growing rise and influence abroad, China sought to quell any suspicions by perpetuating the thought that its rise was a natural progression of her growing economic progress, which was attributable to her ancient civilizational strength rather than being just a national phenomenon. In perpetuating the China model of growth, the PRC sought to discredit the geopolitics of modernity based on Western capitalism and highlight the success of a 'post-modern' order heralded by the Chinese order.

Chinese New Regionalism is the cornerstone of Post Modernism that

prescribes China's rejuvenation to greatness. This New Regionalism attempts to replace the international order controlled by the Westphalian system with the Chinese traditional value system tinted with Chinese socialism. China's choice has been to weave a new framework wherein words like "liberty," "democracy," and "human rights" that are used to describe the framework of the modern nation-state are moulded to a new framework with new discursive terms such as "civilization" (wenming), "kingly way" (wangdao) and "all-under-heaven" (tianxia).

The newly emerging Chinese hegemony is a form of New Regionalism that seeks justification by admitting uniquely Chinese concepts of traditional order such as "tribute-investiture system," "civilization-state," "empire-state," and "all under-heaven" into the realm of contemporary international politics. There is no better evidence of Chinese New Regionalism than the Belt and Road initiative a signature initiative of the Xi Jinping administration that takes the discourse of 'revival' and links it to the ancient concept of 'Silk Road'. Xi Jinping has sought to bring about important shifts in the social, economic and political dynamics of contemporary globalisation by conceptualising the Silk Road as a geocultural construct; a romanticised, grand narrative of pre-modern globalisation in which; exchange, trade and cross-cultural encounters came to be associated with discourses of peace, international harmony and dialogue. Further, by linking the success of the Silk Road to the civilizational greatness

of China itself, Xi has sought to use geocultural advantage to accumulate power and influence by building connectivity and entanglements across multiple sectors.

The Belt and Road Initiative itself has two parts. The Silk Road Economic Belt with its continental route seeks to establish Chinese primacy in the Eurasian heartland, whilst the Maritime Silk Road traces the maritime route from the South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca, the entire Indian Ocean, the Middle East and into the Mediterranean Sea.

China has traditionally been a continental power with a landward focus that extended into the Eurasian heartland. In the maritime dimension, whilst there was active trade with South East Asia and the Indian Ocean countries during the period of the Song dynasty, the movement of Chinese vessels in the Indian Ocean was relatively limited.

In the current geopolitical scenario, China has realized that her interests lie at sea, both with her immediate concerns in the South China Sea and also extending into the Indian Ocean where her main Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) run. With the formidable presence of the United States and its allies running across East Asia, South East Asia and extending to the Middle East, China realises that the maritime dimension is too significant to ignore. The geographical location of India at the centre of the Indian Ocean poses a continuous challenge to her economic well-being that is linked to

the trade routes through the Indian Ocean.

The Maritime Silk Road, is therefore the critical element in Chinese policy that seeks to nullify the relative vulnerability that China presently possesses in the Indian Ocean. China has sought to justify her renewed ties with the Indian Ocean States as a relic of her maritime history. It is pertinent to note however, that for most of ancient recorded history, China had limited ingress into the Indian Ocean. It was only during the early 15th century, that the Ming dynasty's Admiral Zheng He made forays into the Indian Ocean with notable success. These voyages were a part of several Ming expeditions under eunuchs, many of whom were Muslims, while the crew and navigators were also non-Chinese and perhaps drawn from the coastal regions such as Fu-jian Arabs.

During the last decade of the previous century, the Chinese have actually given focus to these voyages, by referring to the 'Mingshi', which is considered to be the most elaborate and complete history of the Ming Dynasty. These accounts spread the popular perception by the Xi administration that the voyages were 'friendly diplomatic activities' with the aim of proving that the Chinese always held a benevolent relationship in the Indian Ocean. The official narrative claims that when Chinese navigator Zheng He sailed along what is today the Maritime Silk Road, he simply demanded that locals should kowtow to the scrolls of the Son of Heaven [the Chinese Emperor]. He brought back

exotic animals as tributes to the Ming court, otherwise, these countries were left intact. Even whilst this is the perception that is being perpetuated by China, it is widely believed that the expeditions were anything but peaceful diplomatic ventures. The position of military interventions by Zheng He in South and South East Asia is further supported by the historian Tansen Sen who argues that the Yongle emperor in China wanted to exert military power in South Asia to legitimize his usurpation at the Ming court.

Whatever be the actual facts, it is important to note that the Chinese have sought to portray the image of China as a sea-faring nation that had deep cultural roots with South East Asia and more importantly with the Indian Ocean states through the maritime route. China has thus reappropriated the maritime route in the Indian Ocean as a legacy of its ancient civilizational – cultural connect and the basis for its 21st century Maritime Silk Road.

Conclusion In summation therefore, the 21st century has witnessed the rise of the two major powers of Asia, namely India and China, both having all the indices of great power status and ancient civilization than spans over centuries. As with all great powers, both nations seek to expand their influence over the countries of the region. In a defining and enduring characteristic of 21st century geostrategic relations as enunciated in the New Regionalism approaches of India and China, these countries are seeking to utilize their ancient ties and civilizational greatness to re-establish

a ‘connect’ across the region. The Belt and Road Initiative is a clear ideation of the cultural-civilizational- economic greatness that China seeks to leverage in expanding its sphere of influence. By harking back to the Ming dynasty and the voyages of Zheng He, China has sought to construct a benign image of an ancient great power, that sought not to establish hegemony over the region but in which the local rulers paid obeisance to the Ming Emperor, who had the ‘Mandate of Heaven’. In this Confucian model, China projects itself as the Centre of the world, and a tributary system extending outwards by which all nations eventually acknowledge the superior civilization of China. The Belt and Road initiative follows the same model, under the same Confucian concept that does not seek domination but to ensure that all nations rise economically, whilst being carefully circumscribed under the benign gaze of China.

Sucked in, as India is, with the growing Chinese maritime presence in its immediate neighborhood, and the constant and direct threat from China on its northern land borders, India has little option but to bolster her capabilities in the Indian Ocean, which has been her backyard since the ancient civilizational connect of the Harappan era. This is also in keeping with her growing international stature and her ambitions of being the preponderant power in the Indian Ocean. The ancient civilizational connect and cultural soft power with the entire maritime space of the Indian Ocean extending to the African coast, the Red Sea and the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations in the West to

South East Asia, Indo-China and upto China itself in the East is a powerful ideational construct that India seeks to leverage to her advantage.

Project Mausam has met with little success, not because of lack of its appeal but because it has not been properly funded or supported by a 'whole of country' approach that seeks to advance its aims, like the BRI presently does. Yet it has a nascent advantage in that it is backed by historical evidence that is recognized without reservation across the region. Vis a vis the aggressive drive by the Chinese dragon, the Indian elephant in its slow but unobtrusive way has provided an alternate ideational image of a country that seeks Security and Growth for all in the Region.

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Paper III: INDIA, AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN: REVIEWING INTERCONNECTIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SIDDIS OF JANJIRA IN AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Aishwarya Devasthali, Project Research Associate, MHS

Indian Ocean has been a major means of communication of earliest long- distance navigation between the western and the eastern parts of Asia, Africa and often extending well up too much of Europe for several millennia. It has witnessed extensive maritime trade, naval expeditions and pilgrimages across its extensive network. Oceanic activity in the region encouraged by the unique feature of monsoons allowed the countries to have an active participation in maritime trade, thus creating a long history covering a period of about five millennia from the very dawn of the Indus Valley civilization. Thus, maritime history and heritage is a testimony of our strong connections and relationship with the sea. Ships traversing the Indian Ocean carried valuable merchandise, skills, knowledge, culture, religions, ideas, inventions, artistic styles, philosophies, and social customs from one end to another.

Indo-African relations are one of the unsung yet very important segments among others to understand the factor of trans-oceanic connectivity. The evidence of African trade in India dates back

to more than five thousand years before present. This can be surely understood from antiquities unearthed at various Indus valley sites. The Indus merchants reached as far as the Persian Gulf and Euphrates-Tigris valleys. Terracotta models of gorilla and 'mummy' and a variety of African wood found at Lothal suggest trade with East Africa and Egypt. Another evidence of contact is provided by the name *sikotarimata* associated with sea goddesses and ports of Gujarat. While some of the gamesmen from Lothal simulate those from tomb of queen of Hatchepsout, the etched and plain carnelian beads found in Egypt and in Bahrain are products of bead factory of Lothal.

This human intercourse was greatly facilitated by the trade winds which blow from November to March from the north-east and carried dhows from Asia to the East African coast. From May through September the winds reverse themselves, blowing from the southwest, and so carried the dhows and the crew back to the Arabian Peninsula, India, and the Far East. For the five months that the winds blow east to west, later as the times passed, Indians, Arabs, and other Asians could reach several points of East Africa, from the Horn

to the present-day Mozambique and beyond, selling their goods, establishing contacts.

In India's complex mosaic of histories, the story of the Africans who became Indians is a curious one. Their passage to India and their history has a huge scope for documented but the consensus seems to be that they are descendants of the Bantu people of East Africa and originated from Abyssinia in present day Ethiopia. They were first brought to India as slaves of the Arab traders in the 7th and 8th century and later came as traders themselves with the Portuguese and British. Many came for better prospects. The Siddis, it appears, whilst ethnically similar in India, are not one people. Depending on their passage to India and where they settled, they differ in the language, religion and to some extent in economic backgrounds as well. The present paper is just a try towards exploring and highlighting India-Africa linkages with special reference to the Siddis. The Siddis were originally slaves turned traders turned rulers from Abyssinia (Africa), locally known as the Siddis or the habshis in India. Originally from the east coast of Africa around the region of Ethiopia, they had entered military service in many of the Sultanates in South Asia, and rapidly rose up the ranks. Malik Ambar (d. 1626) was one of the most well-known Siddis, and was eventually acting regent for the kingdom of Ahmednagar. Yet,

despite having being so close to political power and social presence for several centuries with deep connections with the sea, the Siddis have not been celebrated for their contributions with respect to maritime heritage. The paper tries to take into consideration some important archaeological traces left behind by the Siddis such as the most well-known fort of Janjira, the Siddi palace, Khokri tombs and some inscriptions and numismatic wealth. The author has collected the data through few site visits and digitally available sources.

Background: The Konkan region came under the control of Magadha Empire since the time of Bimbisara and Ajatashatru with their successors. Later many dynasties ruled over this region like: Nanda dynasty, Maurya dynasty, Satavahans, Traikutkas, Kalchuris, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Kadambas and lastly Yadavas of Devagiri. In 1296 CE, this region came under the control of Delhi Sultanate which in 1347 CE passed into the hands of Alauddin Bahaman Shah who laid the foundation of Bahamani Kingdom. The Deccan rulers stabilized their rule taking the support of local Deccanies and the foreigners who were Iranians and the migrants from Africa (Ethiopians and Abyssinians). Most of them came here as merchants, nobles and ambassadors. These men, from the Arab El Habish the people of north-east Africa, were known as Habshis, or more often as Sidis, which was

originally a term of respect, a corrupt form of Syed. Though most Habshis came to India as slaves, their faithfulness, courage, and energy often raised them to positions of high trust in the Bahmani court. According to Orme the successful Abyssinians gathered round them all of their countrymen whom they could procure either by purchase or invitation, including Negroes from other parts of Africa, as well as Abyssinians. Malik Ambar was one such noble who raised to a high position by becoming a King maker of Ahmednagar. He successfully checked the Mughal advance in Deccan and made alliance with the Abyssinian sailor turned nobles called Siddis and installed them as rulers of Murud-Janjira.



Image 9. Malik Ambar

Janjira, which later became a small princely state on the western coast of India, although being small in size, it left a tremendous impact on the history of Konkan region for over three centuries because of its strategic position and its wily indomitable rulers. The fort of Janjira on the sea is the only one of its kind and is considered as the fort which remained unconquered.

Fort Janjira Island fort of Janjira is situated on an oval shaped rock off the Arabian Sea coast near the port town of Murud. It was the main citadel of the Siddis constructed in basalt block laid in lime mortar.

An inscription records that the construction of the fort was started by Fahim Khan during reign of Murtaza Nizam Shah I in (1576-77 CE) and completed by Siddi Yakut Khan II from (1710-1728 CE). Important structures inside the fort are Pir Panchayatan, Horse stable, Sirulkhan's palace, Citadel and Western darwaaja. To the east side, opposite Rajpuri, is a large entrance gateway with steps leading to the water. This huge arched entrance greets with a panel to one side- of six elephants trapped by a single tiger. This main gate of the fort faces Rajapuri on the shore and can be seen only when one is about 40 feet (12 m) away from it. It has a small postern gate towards the open sea for escape. The main entrance has a stone carving, depicting six elephants trapped by a single tiger, a symbol of the bravery of the Siddis, where tiger is said to be

siddis and elephants the various kingdoms that tried to capture the island fortress, showcasing the Siddi philosophy of might. On the other side are two tuskers fighting each other as two lions looked on.

The fort has 19 rounded three-tiered bastions mounted with ample of canons, still intact. Once inside the Fort, one gets a mixed feeling of awe and remorse huge three and half storied wall with arched windows. It was the fallen Durbar Hall. Near the heavy iron studded gates is a large white stone let into the walls, on which is carved the word *yohar* meaning 1111 h. (A.D. 1694). This marks the beginning of the building of the walls, which were finished in A.D. 1707 by Siddi Sirul khan (1707-1733). The first object of interest on passing through the gateway are the ruins of a large mansion said to have been built in the time of sidi sirul khan. This building, like the fort walls, is of well-cut blocks of trap strongly cemented. The windows are surrounded by ornamental stone carving in the Saracenic style. Now in ruins, the fort in its heyday was a full-fledged living fort with all the necessary facilities, e.g., palaces, quarters for officers, mosque, two small 60-feet-deep (18 m) natural fresh water lakes, etc.

This fort stood invincible against the attacks of Portuguese, Marathas and British leaving a tremendous impact on the history of Konkan region for over three centuries because of its strategic position. It

was a key to naval supremacy in that area.

Khokari Tombs Khokari, a small village on the mainland almost opposite the Janjira fortress, contains three massive stone tombs in the Indo-Saracenic style. The largest is the tomb of Sidi Sirul Khán who was chief of Janjira from 1707 to 1733, and the two smaller buildings are the tombs of Sidi Kásim commonly known as Yákut Khán, and of his brother Khairiyát Khán who was in command of Danda-Rájpuri (1670-1677) and of Janjira (1677-1696). The tomb of Sirul Khán is said to have been built during his lifetime. Yákut Khan's tomb had an Arabic inscription stating that he died on Thursday 30th Jamma-Dilawal H. 1118 (ad 1707). Khairiyát Khán's has also an inscription. The number inscribed to indicate the date of his death is H. 1018, but the Arabic

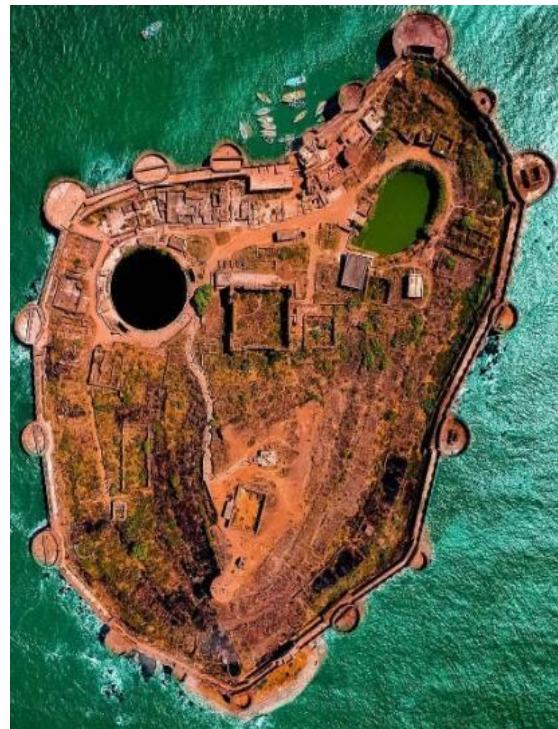


Image 10. Aerial View of Fort Janjira

words (using the Abjad system) provide the date H. 1108 (ad 1696).

The site at Khokri is only one and half kilometers due east from the town of Rajpuri, but is completely hidden from view till the last bend in the Tala- Murud road. Facing the bay on a bight in the harbour of the Māndād river estuary, the view from the tombs is spectacular. The site has several baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) trees, a reminder of the African connection of the Siddis. The complex is large and sprawling and contains several other graves apart from the four large tombs. The three tombs of Siddi Surur, Siddi Yāqut and Khairiyāt Khān are set on high terraced platforms on the western side of the road that leads to the village of Khar Amboli. Among them, the two tombs of Khairiyāt Khān and Siddi Yāqut are on a double-terraced platform and, most unusually, face each other. The entrances to the tombs are therefore opposite each other across a small paved area, facing the cardinal directions of west and east respectively, the west in the Deccan being an approximate direction indicating the qibla – the direction of prayer towards Mecca. While completing the relatively modest tombs of his mentors, Sirul Khān built himself such an enormous funerary, as an embodiment of his absolute power, relatively peaceful reign, territorial expansion, and building prowess. The scheme of ornamentation was unique, and more than an inadvertent result of the various cultural forces that the Siddis

encountered: the architecture was intended to make a bold declaration of sovereignty.

Numismatic evidences: The silver *ankushi* rupee was stuck in the name of Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II, minted under the dominions of the Siddis of Janjira. The coin was issued when Siddi Ibrahim Khan II was the ruler of Janjira. The obverse side of the coin depicts ‘Shah Ali Gauhar’, the pre accession name of the emperor Shah Alam II. This coin (as shown in the picture) belongs to Janjira mint, the letter ‘*ja*’ in Devanagari is added upside down above the word *julus* in the reverse side.

Conclusion:

Afro-Indians called Siddis possess a rich heritage, which extends back several centuries to the region of Ethiopia. Entering India in the capacity of traders and achieving recognition in administrative and military positions in the vicinity, the Siddis soon took charge of the fortress of Janjira, indirectly keeping sway over Konkan which lay on the west coast of India and used the sea power as their seat of government. It is interesting to note, that today, the African community in India is well assimilated into the local population and small communities of Siddis live in parts of Gujrat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa and Hyderabad. The descendants of these African rulers inter married with other Indian communities and thus slowly lost their identity.

Today, there are around fifty thousand people of African descent in India and most of them descendants of the Africans who came here centuries ago. They speak local Indian languages, wear traditional Indian clothes and follow local dietary practices. One can only recognise them through their physical appearance. One of the few remnants of their African past is their music and dance. Thus, Siddis of Janjira are a living example of maritime connectivity, possess great potential and offer a sound scope in domain of studies in maritime history and both tangible and intangible aspects of heritage.

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Audience Interaction

Audience: Do we find anything on transition to the lateen sails? Also, if we give dhows a heritage tag, will that help bring the boat building and dhow heritage of India into focus? How will

the revival of dhow heritage help build our own maritime power?

Cmdr Ajay Agarwal: Thank you for the question. Yes, the lateen sails were considered as a primary feature for identifying dhows in the 18th century.

But we can't say that the lateen sails were used across the board all over. There is a sati sail also, which is a mix of a square and a triangular sail. In case of dhows and the country crafts, they are not consistent in the design. One design went from one shipyard to another shipyard, as there was no exchange of inputs on design, ships of another design were made while the names were retained such as Batelias, Kotiyas, Konnis, all these names were given. There was no uniformity per say. Unfortunately, we don't have any detailed records of seeing how the progression happened. Now, if you see the excavation, then you can see the images that are there in Ajanta, you will see that Indian boats are always shows with the masts but without furling their sails. So, we really don't know, except for a few places in South East Asia. In Borobudur I have seen as image where all the sails have been deployed. But we don't really know how the sails have evolved. As I said sati sail or lateen sail are much of a part and parcel of the dhow sail features.

The second part about labelling the dhows with the cultural tag, is a very interesting factor. Oman has taken a lead in this. In fact, couple of years back there was a sailing expedition undertaken from Oman to India in an Indian made dhow. The ship came to Mumbai also. In Dubai there are cruises on Dhows. So, these places have gone about institutionalizing dhows as a part of their culture. There is a Dhow museum in Oman where dhows are being preserved in a very good way. Unfortunately, in case of India, as the craft is still live, we haven't given it a

status of a cultural heritage or history. But it is a living history and it is right time for us to start collaborating with the dhow builders to look at this as a medium of culture.

Audience: To talk about the Abyssinians in India, is there any material evidence which talks about the maritime component that connects these communities to those native to India. Any community practices or are we still basing most of our studies on the material heritage. What are your thoughts on this Indo-Africa connection?

Ms Aishwarya Devasthali: From what I know, there are a lot of intangible heritage. The community has some sort of linguistic cultural connectivity as well. According to my opinion these intangible cultural connections like the dance, language, etc. need to be documented first. There are some scholars who are trying to document these. There are a sizeable amount of people belonging to this community, so we have a lot of scope.

Audience: How important is the political support to the maritime connectivity to building this maritime prowess or maritime power. Today we have Sagar, but it's not that it was absent earlier. The second and a very specific question is about the Vladivostok of the Chennai-Maritime Corridor that was announced in the East Asia Summit, how does it enhance and does it bring security challenges?

Cmde Sanjay D'Cunha: Thank you Sir. The focus of my talk has been to bring out the cultural and civilizational

impact, in Chinese and Indian new originalism. What we are looking at is the way in which these countries are harking back to their ancient civilizations and using that as the basis for extending their influence in the region. What we are seeing from the Chinese side is very direct. The belt and bolt initiative is very direct. Even if they don't have a civilization connect, they are harking back to Zeng Hi of the Ming dynasty. Trying to show that their civilization spread not only in South East Asia but also in Indian Ocean and beyond. India has had an even deeper maritime connect right from the Harappan civilization to the Sumerian or Babylonian culture or the Mahapajit kingdoms of the South East Asia. But you look at the immediate impact after our independence. We neglected, firstly it was our continental outlook which focused on Delhi. And secondly, we were so caught up in our own unique problems with partition, the princely states, socialism or the Soviet embrace etc. that it prevented India from projecting outwards towards its true potential from being recognized. India has been traditionally recognized as a maritime nation having great maritime influence since times immemorial. One may argue that it was not there in our subconscious also. I mean how writings are there on India's maritime history or the importance of seas. We need to give importance to the seas. I think we have only KM Panikkar's book that talks strongly about it. It is now that the maritime history is gaining importance in last few decades. I think primarily because India was a closed economy till 1991. It prevented us from connecting with

various nations. After 1991 with the "Look East initiative" or now with the "Act East Initiative" we are actually reaching out not only to South East Asia but to East Asia as well. Projects such as Sagar etc. may have been implemented but it wasn't given that amount of focus. But after 1991, India's participation in ASEAN and East Asia Summit, etc. can be seen as efforts by India to reach out to larger community. But interestingly, like China, India is trying to bring in the civilizational connect and that is very important and has gained emphasis over the last 30 years and more so in the project Mausam. But Project Mausam is also slow on the uptake. It hasn't really taken off because of various issues. I hope it answers the questions.

Comments from Dr Laxmi Subramaniam: The three papers together emphasis the thematic connectivity of the panel. The connections between and the maritime world of the Western Indian Ocean are materialized in the three papers. One speaks of ships, the actual carriers and the other of civilization and sense of purpose by Asian countries and the third about the people who are unsung, even forgotten. Can we see initiatives from the Navy as real stakeholders in accessing the practices of the people living on coasts? So much has been lost in terms of material of ethnography. Can we see small initiatives to recover these voices? I believe that the Navy plays a key role in this sort of archive production without which we cannot write our history. We will simply revoke old fragments and celebrate continuities and lament the

disruptions without really adding to the field. The papers were terrific in focusing on the three major vectors of

maritime connection: boats, ideas and people.

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NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE CONCLAVE 2020

Valedictory Session

Joint Director, MHS: Before I invite our chief Patron Vice Admiral A. R. Karve to deliver the valedictory address, the onus is on me to provide the summation of the conclave so far. Maritime History Society organised the first of its National Maritime Heritage Conclave was set rolling with the words of Vice Admiral RB Pandit, Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command and Chairman of Maritime History Society. In his inaugural address, he pointed out that the maritime history of India deserves the attention of both young and veteran scholars. He bemoaned the fact that as a nation, we have failed to record the knowledge and traditions of the local Communities who call the coast as their home. Going deeper into the theme of the Conclave, he highlighted that the maritime medium remains a mystery due to our ignorance which can be overcome by digging deeper and exploring topics such as the unsung frames of the coastal communities and the contribution of women in the Indian maritime history. He also reiterated the need to address a gap in our maritime history and heritage for which the eminent and young scholars must come together and be involved in a copious discourse. With reference to the coastal communities, he observed that the sea facing communities in our country have proven to be

extremely helpful as they offer aid and assistance to the Indian Navy in times of disasters and catastrophes.

The objectives of the conclave were to stimulate discussions on the under explored dimensions of Indian maritime history, especially coastal communities and the role of women in the Indian maritime past and present. It is hoped that thoughts from the various sessions would become starting points for further research in maritime history with coastal communities and women as foci, which would, in turn, influence policy on development, tourism and climate change. Academic institutions and government institutions ought to be sensitive towards the hardly known narratives surrounding coastal communities and women. More research needs to be envisaged to understand the cultural and infrastructural barriers interfering with their interaction with the seas. The conclave was an attempt towards articulating thoughts and ideas about communities living on the coastline and about women who have contributed to Indian naval power and maritime influences historically and in the present.

Scholars talking about the coastal communities at the Conclave highlighted the significance of turning to the communities living,

currently or previously, on the coastline of India. Prof Ranabir Chakravarti touched upon the influence of the sea on the coastal heritage of Bengal (in the larger sense of today's Bangladesh and Tripura). He spoke about fascinating examples of the influence of the delta on the culture - an example includes the music of SD Burman. Lt Cdr Karesh Mohanan spoke about the specificity of the communities of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as island communities - an apt way of reminding his fellow scholars that no two communities are the same and that the expression "coastal communities" is not enough to talk about the unsung frame of communities that the session was dedicated to. Leora Pezarkar discussed her work on the Bene Israeli community and their way of life... Dr Andre Baptista presented an example of the way the East Indian community helped in excavating the area near He drew attention to the immense possibility of educating the coastal communities and enlisting their support in archaeological and conservation projects. Dennard D'Souza underlined the fact that with the homogenisation of all cultures, the uniqueness as well as the diversity of the peoples living on the coasts are fast eroding.

Women in the maritime history of other countries and locations are rare to find. Internationally speaking, the women one hears of is Englishwoman Janet Taylor. Taylor is known for adjusting calculations to identify locations realising that the earth is

spheroidal, not spherical. She went on to teach navigation, wrote a lot of books and developed a lot of nautical instruments. Women like the Swiss explorer Isabelle Eberhardt, known for her exploration of Algeria, and closer home Rani Abbakka and the Pepper Queen Keladi Chennamma are known for having the maritime vision for resisting the influence of the Portuguese. In the modern period of Indian history, we hear of the women's wing of the Royal Indian Navy, the WRIN. In the session on women in the Indian maritime history, Lt Cdr Rajeshwari Kori, Pilot Reshma Nilofer and Sucheta Jadhav spoke about the experience of being at sea as women. The three women spoke about their journey as professionals and left us with thoughts about: what can we do to make our shipping and naval environments inclusive? Is gender parity so difficult to achieve in the 21st century? What can we learn from these women to make more women feel welcomed into the maritime domain? What can we do to inspire more women to join the maritime professions as entrepreneurs, pilots, and naval personnel in several capacities? Like all elements of nature, the seas do not discriminate in terms of gender. We need to take a closer look at the power structures created around the access to the sea and its resources. With the examples of Sumati Morarjee and Captain Radhika Menon, one sees inspiring stories that need to multiply.

Maritime trade routes have perhaps received the most attention

within maritime history everywhere in the world. It is trade and commerce that has conventionally been understood to the primordial connection that human civilisation has had with the oceanic expanses on the planet. Thus, while they are not an unsung frame per se, the retellings and the reinterpretations they facilitate definitely are. Cmde Ajay Agarwal's study of the dhows sailing between the Gulf of Kachchh and the Persian Gulf reiterated the history of the sailing and trading connection between India and several coasts on the west. The Bhadals and the Kharvas have been impacted as a result of the sanctions by the United Nations on Iraq in the 1990s. The chain of events and their consequences are a lot more complex than this summary but the key take away is that the larger geopolitical contexts have fostered networks and relationships that pan out in smaller narratives. The Khimji family received the title of Sheikh from the Sultan of Oman a few years ago. Thus, we are yet to see how these transoceanic connections are yet to pan out in our times.

Similarly, the appropriation of the historical maritime route by China indicates that it what is past is not really past. The trade connections belonging to the past have consequences for claims in the present times. The new regionalism perspective presented by Cmde Sanjay D'Cunha focused on the way the power politics continues to unravel in the Indian Ocean Region today. His analysis calls for a relook

at the support being extended to Project Mausam, a crucial initiative towards the display of India's historical presence in the Indian Ocean.

While the previous papers talked about the movement of goods, the India-Africa connection highlighted by Aishwarya Devasthali was one instance of talking about movement of people. The presence of the Siddis in the Indian soil can be appreciated from the instances of built heritage they have left behind - the fort of Janjira, the Kokari tombs, and the coins minted under the dominion of the Siddis are examples of the exchange that has materialised over centuries, if not millennia. Thus, there is a need to study the archaeological evidence from the perspective of the communities that have moved across the ocean.

We hope that this national maritime heritage conclave has been able to do its small bit to shape the direction maritime history, as a discipline, in India must consider taking so that it may include areas neglected previously. We shall continue to address many more unsung frames in our research projects and our upcoming initiatives. Thank you so much for your interest in maritime history and the work of Maritime History Society. With these thoughts I now invite Vice Admiral AR Karve (Retired). He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 July 1980 and retired after 38 years of distinguished naval service in July 2018 as the Flag Officer

Commanding-in-Chief Southern Naval Command. In a range of operational, staff and command assignments, Admiral, an anti-submarine Warfare Specialist, had the honour to be both the commissioning crew of INS Virat and its Commanding officer in the rank of Captain. He also commanded patrol vessel INS Ajay, frigate INS Dunagiri and destroyer INS Ranvijay apart from later heading the sword arm of the Indian Navy as Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet in rank of Rear Admiral.

Admiral Karve has held prestigious positions in the Flag Ranks as steering Indian Naval Operations, Chief of Personnel and Chief of Staff at Western Naval Command. He has been closely associated as a paper presenter, supporter and Trustee of the Maritime History Society at many occasions.

He is an avid reader and takes keen interest in Maritime Strategy and Heritage. He is pursuing a PhD from University of Mumbai and became Patron of MHS in April this year. Dear Sir, let us hear from you.

Patron MHS: Good afternoon, everybody. And I must say it is a great pleasure for me to deliver this valedictory address. Over the last two days maritime history society has provided an excellent platform to showcase the deep exploring unsung frames in Indian maritime history. It is a very apt, the subject in these times. I am happy you see the participation of several people in different capacities, as resource

persons academic collaborators, as media partners, young, researchers, and as facilitator and as keen audiences, from all walks of life, including the Navy and the student community in particular. The director wanted a program in a space that is not strictly academic, but at the same time one that carries rigor and spirit that truly objective academic context, then you have to shift from the normal seminar format to the Conclave format is definitely could be very successful. And I hope this continues in future as well. The entire MHS team, certainly deserves many congratulations for the excellent show that they have, put up. And I also convey to all the speakers my heartfelt thanks. The speakers have shown the light on things that are missing in our maritime in our narrative about our maritime history. without addressing these gaps any attempt of challenging pasta or other narratives about India's maritime past will be incomplete and leave us stripped of any credibility to talk about the omissions for the narrative. Bengal and the Andaman and Nicobar are two coastal areas that are important in terms of coastal community. That was part of the first part of this conclave. We saw that no two coasts are alike. Consequently, no two coastal communities have the same attitude to the sea. Bene Israelis, East Indians do not step into the same seat price. Be a part of that expression. Women are another frame that deserve attention with the narrative of Indian maritime history. Women in history and women in the

present, was good focus subject and shows that justice needs to be done to explore more stories, to undertake more research and listen more on this subject. In a way, listening to women's voices will automatically cover the space for addressing voices, of coastal community. Seafaring is not patented by any gender. And as Sucheta Jadhav pointed out, sea knows no gender. I hope we take this opportunity of listening to our panelists to work towards women's empowerment to discover the skill capacity and attitudes, that women who have been employed in matters with sea. Regarding connectivity in the Indian Ocean I am eager to note the different trajectories taken by the sea routes in ocean in the past, new knowledge on these trans-oceanic connections speak volumes about how inexhaustible this research is, relationships that much enjoyed with the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, and continues to have India's relationship with east Pacific, China's relationship with the Indian Ocean, India - Africa relationship as evidenced in archaeological traces are areas of study which can have influence in significant ways in present day geostratifications. Having addressed these unsung frames, over two days we need to think of a way forward. valedictory should not just be about looking back, but also looking into the future. So, after this first national conclave maritime history society has a lot more to explore. I would like to draw attention to three particular areas. The first of these areas is underwater

archaeology. Recently maritime history society has collaborated with UNESCO New Delhi, and the National Maritime foundation to organize a workshop on safeguarding underwater cultural heritage.

This is yet another unsung frame of exploring Indian maritime domain. I always emphasized that the 'H' in maritime history society is not just History, but Heritage as well. MHS is as much maritime heritage society, as it is a maritime history society. Underwater exploration can show up secrets that need to be discovered. Without these the mission of maritime history society to use heritage to awaken maritime consciousness, shall remain unfulfilled. I hope we stand committed to identifying key projects, and add underwater archaeological sites near the coast to begin with, and then moving gradually deeper into the ocean to reconstruct Indian maritime heritage. This shall also help in revisiting our maritime stories, and putting them in tangible heritage. MHS has the right intellectual resources to make this happen. The second area of research focus for maritime history society is an in depth study of Indian nautical knowledge. Nautical knowledge is necessary to explore, because it is the bedrock of maritime heritage. Sophisticated knowledge across all components of navigation must surely have existed, seemingly simple things like winds, tides, currents observation of celestial bodies so far today's shape shifted into complex disciplines such as oceanography, the

complex technological advancements, but it is fascinating to go back and imagine what kind of astronomy, astrology cartography shipbuilding knowledge etc. was employed by sailor, while getting from point A to point B, in the past. This law is critical to understanding how they transported culture and farmers from point A to point B. We have the commemoration of the Bali yatra every year. But what beyond that? The *pothis* of Kutchi *malams* are a glorious record. We can leave ought to have the imagination to use the same divide deeper in time and discover the very basic technical aspects of sailing because so far, we have already seen the cultural and commercial consequences and manifestation of seafaring, and the connectivity it enabled. The stone anchors and toy ships and depiction of boats found in the Harapan civilization are indications of how seafaring happened. Maritime history society gets now deeper the mysteries of the navigation contexts of coasting and ocean sailing on the routes, we have evidence for. Such as Saurashtra to Oman, Malabar to the red sea route, . Khambat to Madagascar route, Tamil Nadu to Sumatra, and Kalinga to Bali to name a few. This study of the art of safe passage is going to be a significant contributor with deep implications for scholars in both sciences and the humanities. The third research focus of maritime society is the narrative of Indian maritime history itself. I call it a magnum opus that I hope will become an important point of reference to be

cited for its credibility and authority. MHS has organized many programs over the years, and undertaking so many initiatives on so many topics, which I feel can be used as research material comprehensive for to meet its primary objective, that is narrating India's maritime history. Two books that specifically deal with the subject, our K N Panikkar's, India and Indian ocean and K Shridharan's, A maritime history of India. After the time, both were published a lot of other materials has emerged. Since its inception in 1978 MHS has acquired a new perspective, worked with a lot of scholars published several books. It is now time to string it all together, and bring out a comprehensive document on India's maritime history. These three focus areas require considerable effort, resources, in terms of manpower, work space, books, travel, and working, and a lot more. Friends let us partner with maritime history society to achieve its goals and raise the discourse about Indian maritime history in the country and the world. Let us support MHS to make the founder, Late Vice Admiral M P Awati's vision a reality. Let us voice a strong support the work of MHS so that as a society, we stand benefited by rising maritime awareness. that is the need of an hour. Do come forward to help support the various arms of maritime history society, such as *Manthan*, *Sethu*, *Sindhu*, *Sagaralaya*, and *Meghadoot*. Among themselves, these cover, museum space, research work and public outreach. One can get involved in archives, one can get involved as a volunteer, one can be

associated as a collaborator in any capacity. With this first national maritime conclave, maritime history society has enlisted the support of an academic partner, the GMU professional partner the Pilots Association, and a media partner. It is a welcome indication that professional institutions have more than willing to collaborate and join the movement to discover India's maritime past and history. I hope this movement continues with full vigour in future. Thank everyone for making this such success. And thank you all for having the letting me deliver this valedictory address.

Joint Director, MHS: Thank you so much sir for setting the expectations from the maritime history society after the conclave. As always, your words will guide us in to meet our immediate goals and long-term goals too. Let me now invite Commodore Odakkal Johnson, Director MHS for his closing remarks, Sir over to you.

Director MHS: Thank you, Dr. Soni. This is not part of the schedule, but having seen the deliberations over two days from a distance, perspective. I'm very glad and I must share a secret that team MHS has been adamant from ISIS, and I've been at the alternative location, and it's been such a great joy. And I want to compliment, particularly, there is a formal vote of thanks after this but I want to compliment my senior team Cmde Bakshi, Dr Soni and Mr. Mathew assistant director, and the complete support of Admiral Karve, in the form of the initiative that we have taken,

and I'm mentioning this particularly because you can dare to dream, but to actually deliver you need everyone. And it's not just a mention of the team. In closing, admiral Karve did mention about partnering with amateurs and a support to MHS. I am asking for the larger audience, and people through you. There is much you can invest and build on, invest in the things that we do. Our website is very user friendly, go to our support page. Open your wallets and your hearts and contribute. We have surprises coming up, we have courses coming up, we have internships coming up we have a lot of things. But we can't do it alone. So, come together, and we will have been able to do this last two days without support, almost 65 to 70 people I was writing and all of them are not going to be mentioned. And that is what has made this possible we need you. And with that, I'm going to hand over back to the Conclave coordinator has been doing a fantastic job. Thank you Dr. Soni and continuing the proceeding and allow me, allowing me to disrupt in between, as it was. Thank you. And Sham No Varuna to all audience.

Joint Director, MHS: Thanks to you sir for letting us do this and for your guidance. Let me now call upon Commodore Vikram Bakshi additional director of maritime history society to deliver the vote of thanks. Commodore Vikram Bakshi, the winner of Nausena medal, was commissioned into the Indian Navy on first July 1989, an alumnus of the defense, national defense Academy and BSSC Wellington. The officer

joined the Indian Navy submarine arm in 1991. He is a communication specialist and has served in various capacities of conventional diesel electric submarines. He commanded INS Shankush, during which, time the submarine was awarded the chief of the Naval Staff Unit Citation for exceptional devotion to duty he was conferred with a Nausena medal in 2008. He also commanded the Indian naval ship Rajkot before being appointed as the command submarine officer at the western naval come up. Prior to being appointed as the additional director of MHS in July 2019, the officer was the Commodore of the yard at Naval dockyard. Sir, please come and deliver your vote thanks.

Addl Director, MHS: As all good things come to an end, so does this maiden attempt of the Maritime History Society at conducting a National Maritime Heritage Conclave – a graduation from the earlier annual seminar at this time of the year. In March, when we faced the lock down, who could have thought that we would evolve the way we have, especially with our meagre resources. It required self-belief, foresight and abundance of support from each and every corner. The society, under the Directors dynamic leadership, transformed and adapted itself to maintain connect using digital platforms starting with the launch of its website in May whilst commemorating our Founder's Day. Without dwelling more into our exertions and for those who are present but not conversant with the

working of the Society, I would like to inform that it is the Trustees and Governing Body members who decide, well before, the path that the Society is to tread in the following year and thereafter it is kept on track by our Academic Council which oversees our work every quarter. In short, the Society functions smoothly through prior proper planning and support which keeps it firmly on track to achieving its charted goals, mission objectives and long-term perspective. As is evident, the supporters to the Society's cause which is to nurture historical research and showcase our maritime heritage are many and I have been given the privilege to express our sincere and humble gratitude to all these people. I have tried to cover most of our well-wishers but just in case I do miss out on someone I would like to apologise in advance.

I begin with thanking our Chief Patron, the Flag Officer Commander-in-Chief Vice Adm Ajith Kumar who has supported our endeavours to the hilt, permitting the Society the autonomy it requires to grow and alleviating our lack of resources through generous grants. I want to thank our Patron Vice Adm Karve for being a mentor and encouraging the intellectual efforts of the Society despite his busy schedule as the member of the Armed Forces Tribunal Regional Bench Lucknow and for delivering the incisive, astute and thoughtful valedictory speech. Our sincere gratitude to the Chairman MHS and Chief of Staff Western Naval Command, Vice Adm RB Pandit for graciously accepting our request to

deliver the inaugural address and consistently supporting us. Many thanks to the Vice Chairman, Rear Adm Vennom Srinivas, Flag Officer Maharashtra Area for providing advice and inspiring us for the conduct of this conclave despite the lockdown and sparing his valuable time to announce prize winner of the Adm JG Nadkarni Memorial Essay Competition in the Indian Navy category during this conclave. Special thanks to Adm RJ Nadkarni for painstakingly judging each of the submissions we received for the Adm JG Nadkarni Memorial Essay Competition and helping us identify the winners in the keenly contested event.

We sincerely appreciate Prof Vasant Shinde, a renowned Archaeologist and Director General of National Maritime Heritage Complex, Lothal for sparing his valuable time and agreeing to be the Chief Guest and delivering the keynote address. I want to express our gratitude to Dr Shanthakumar, Director & VC at GNLU and GMU for collaborating with MHS as an academic partner for the conduct of this conclave and for his insightful thematic talk which gave it a great start and Dr Gita Kasturi a renowned practicing lawyer, member of the managing committee of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai and legal panel member of Govt Mint and Children Film Society of India for releasing the Sagara Song as well as Capt. Gajanan Karanjikar, President All India Maritime Pilots Association for partnering with MHS for this conclave and announcing the prize

winner for the Adm JG Nadkarni Memorial Essay Competition in the Student and Maritime Professional categories.

For the lively discussions, I would like to thank the participating resource personalities Dr Radhika Sheshan, Prof Ranbir Chakravorty, Prof Lakshmi Subramaniam, Ms Leora Pezarkar, Ms Sucheta Jadhav, Ms Reshma Nilofer, Lt Cdr Rajeshwari Kori, Commodores Ajay Agarwal and Sanjay D'Cunha for their talks and papers.

A big thank you to all the trustees and the naval community for supporting the conclave and our cause. I am certain that each one of us stood to gain from the conclave for it is the famous that most of us are aware of but addressing the unsung people connected with the maritime medium is what we thought would be a welcome change and I trust we all got several takeaways from the addresses, conversations and discussions during the last two days.

There are also some unsung frames to this conclave who worked hard to ensure its success. The Sagara song was conceived and composed by our Director Cmde Odakkal Johnson. The time lapse doodle artist is a very dear friend of MHS Mr. Prathamesh Sawant. The song was sung by Ms Riddhi Joshi and its music was composed and produced by Shri David Sinchury. The tech support was given by Shri Ravi Prakash, Shri Minar Nail and Shri Samuel Thomas.

Last but not the least, I wish to congratulate and thank the MHS Team to have conceived a very apt theme for its maiden National Conclave and work towards throwing more light on the unsung aspects of maritime customs and culture via this medium. In the words of our Director, may many more of us be ignited with a

passion for things maritime, as life began at sea and that is where we all shall end like a drop that goes back to the ocean. Salvation or Moksha is finally going back to the ocean. Many thanks to you all for being here, wishing you a great afternoon and pleasant memories. Goodbye and godspeed.

Maritime History Society

Where Heritage Awakens Our Maritime Consciousness

UPCOMING INITIATIVES

A Journey of India's Maritime Heritage

A textual account of India's Maritime History encompassing the geographies and episodes from Indian history previously not seen as significant units of discussion under maritime history.



JEWEL FROM THE PAST

THE SEA-SILK ROUTE OF MARCO POLO IN SOUTH ASIA

Dr Dipti Mukherji

Marco Polo was an early Venetian traveler of the 13 century who travelled to China across Central Asia together with his father and uncle and stayed in China for a fairly long period to document knowledge of China at the time Kublai Khan was ruling China. His travel route overland across the breadth of Asia has come to be known as the Silk Route. Marco Polo visited China for a second time and stayed in China for eighteen years and took a return voyage by sea from China along the South East Asian peninsula and through archipelagoes to reach Sri Lanka and South India before proceeding further along the west coast of India upto Khambayat to ultimately land in the port of Hormuz at the head of the Persian Gulf and then proceed to Venetia. This paper will project Marco Polo's return sea voyage with special reference to India and Sri Lanka. With considerable unwillingness, the Khan of China had permitted Marco Polo to return home. He was loaded with gifts and was assigned the task of taking a

Chinese princess to Persia as a bride for the Persian prince. The voyage commenced in the year 1290 AD and continued for nearly three years with stops enroute, awaiting suitable weather for onward journeys. This period he utilized to gather knowledge about the land and people of the areas and surroundings he was voyaging through. Though illiterate, Marco Polo was an astoundingly intelligent man, with a keen and sharp memory. He could recount his experiences and knowledge to a co-prisoner when he was jailed in an Italian prison. It was his jail mate who recorded Marco Polo's wisdom, which came to light much after his death. Realising its value, his wisdom has been recorded in many European languages time and again and over 150 editions of his work have come out to date. Yule's edition is considered to be the most authentic and is used extensively.

The importance of Marco Polo's knowledge can be well understood

when it is realized that for over five or six centuries, it is Marco Polo's knowledge that forms the foundation of all European knowledge of the Orient, beyond India, especially of China and the Far East. In South East Asia, Marco Polo refers to twelve geographical locations. As one of the first Europeans to travel in South East Asia and the first to report in detail, Polo is the father of European scholastic interest in East Asia and attractions towards the area. He visited the kingdom of Champa which is on the eastern seaboard of Vietnam. He had also referred to the Islands of Sondur and Condur as two uninhabited islands. After leaving these islands he proceeded for 500 miles to the south east to reach Laach somewhere on the east coast of Malaya or Mekong delta. To accept the direction as south east is to identify Lochac or Laach, Polo identified as lying on the main maritime trade route between the Straits of Malacca and the China Sea. He describes the island as large and rich. He also states that the island is rich in gold, elephants and game, both beasts and birds. From this region came all the porcelain shells that are used as money in different countries. From here he proceeded to Pentan and other islands. He describes this place

as very wild covered with forests of trees of great utility. After leaving Pentan and sailing for some sixty miles, where the water is only about four paces deep, he proceeded west. Obviously, the reference is to the Singapore neighborhood and entrance to the Malacca Strait. Here, when the big ships passed through, they had to haul up their rudders because they could draw only four paces of water. As one sails to the southeast from here, for some 30 miles, an island that forms a kingdom called Malaiur is reached. Malaiur is in Central Sumatra. He said that there is a great deal of trade in spices and aloewood.

After leaving the island of Pentan and sailing about 100 miles to the southeast, he reached Java the Lesser that is Java of the present day. He talks about the eight kingdoms of Java. After leaving Java and sailing along the islands for 100 miles he reached a very large and wealthy island called Angaman (Andaman). Marco Polo described a maritime journey through the area delimited to the north by the old eastern Indo - Chinese coastal kingdom of Champa and to the west by the Nicobar and Andaman Islands. After he left the island of Angaman and sailed about a

thousand miles to the southwest he reached the island of Seilan. He narrates Seilan as the best island of its size in the world. Its area is of 2400 sq miles and in circuit around 3600 miles. The north wind blows with such great strength in the country that it has caused the sea to submerge a large part of the island. And that is the reason he states for the small size of the island. He describes the island having a king who is called Sedemain (Sendaman or Chera). The people are idolaters, and they live on flesh and milk. They subsist on rice and sesamum oil. The island of Seilan had abundance of brazil - wood. Of course, he had talked a good deal about the sapphires and topazes and amethysts and many other precious stones of the island which are not found in any other part of the world. The king of the island had a ruby which was the finest in the world. According to him the people of Seilan are poor and cowardly in character. They get their soldiers from Saracen troops and other foreign parts. This island, as described by him, is the Island of Gems. The native king of this area was Pandita Parakrama Bahu. The Tamils of the region possessed the whole northern half of the island. This is historically correct, as the Cholas ruled over northern Jaffna. He

also describes that this island had high mountains which were steep and precipitous.

After leaving the island of Seitan he sailed west about 60 miles to the great province of Maabar (the southeast of Coromandel coast) which according to him is in Greater India. According to him it is the best of all Indies. He narrated that in Maabar there were five kings who were own brothers and the name of the crowned king was Sondar Band Devar (Sundara Pandya). Pearls of the finest quality were procured in this region. The sea here forms a gulf between the island of Seilan and the mainland. All round, the water has a depth of 10-12 fathoms and in some places not more than two fathoms. The pearl fishers take their vessels and proceed into this gulf between April and May. They go first to a place called Bettelar or Vedalar (Vedalai near Mandapam) and then go into the Gulf for about 60 miles to carry out pearl diving. These fish charmers dive for pearls during nights at depths of 4 to 12 fathoms. It is important to note that Maabar was the name given by the Arabs to distinguish the Coromandel coast from Malabar on the west coast. Apart from pearls, the area is known for oysters and corals obtained to the

south of the Palk Strait. Pearls are sought for in the cooler months of the year; as soon as the middle of May is passed no pearl shells are found here. The port of Maabar according to him was called Kayalpattanam. And Marco Polo called it as The Cail. It is located on a kayal or lagoon on the Tambraparni over about a mile and a half from its mouth. Chinese and Arab pottery is found here which suggests Kayal was an emporium, known for entrepot trade.

Talking of Maabar and Seilan, Marco Polo has much to say about the Chola navigation in these waters. He states the navigators of South India, do not use the Pole Star for guidance, it gets "lost" round about the latitude of Comorin. They use southern stars especially Canopus. He further states that the local expert seamen use sea 'charts' and they trade by sea with the East African shores. They reach East Africa in the outward voyage in 20 days, but their return voyage often takes about 3 months because of the strong currents and tides on the East African coast- obviously a reference to the Agulhas and the Mozambique currents.

After leaving the Malabar, Marco Polo travelled for 500 miles towards the south west to reach the kingdom

of Coilum (Quilon or Kollam) the greatest port of trade in south east Asia. He describes that the local people are idolaters and some are Christians and Jews. There was considerable trade with the western world. Ginger and the finest pepper, tropical timber and ivory were the major trade products. He stated that the merchants from Arabia and Levant come here for trade. Further north of Quilon is Mt Dilly. Marco Polo also talks of Comari or Cape Comorin but there is confusion in the sequence of places, as he mentions Mt. Dilly before Comorin. This may be a memory slip. He described the wild country of Malabar with beasts of all kinds. From Comari he proceeded to Eli (Mt Dilly). He describes the people as idolaters. There was no proper harbour in Eli but there were many great rivers with estuaries which were wide and deep. He said pepper and ginger and other spices are grown in large quantities. The king of the region was rich in treasure but he did not have strong forces. But it was difficult for the enemies to attack and approach the kingdom, therefore he was not afraid. Probably the port location had a natural harbour which gave protection to the ships. Mt Dilly is referred to as Yeli-mala by the people of Malabar as it had the cliffed

coast. This place also had Sapta shala or Seven Hills. This part of Malabar was noted for the export of cardamom.

Marco Polo described Malabar (Melibar) as a great kingdom lying towards the sea on the west. The people here are idolaters; they have a king and speak in their own language. Garden of the North Star could be seen two cubits above the water. He talks about pirates here, probably confusing with Gujarat. These pirates according to him are accompanied by wife and children and they stay out the whole summer. Their method is to join the fleet of 20 or 30 to form a sea cordon. They drop off till there is an interval of 5 or 6 miles between the ships, so that they cover something like a hundred miles of sea pretty fast, and no ship can escape them. Marco Polo talked about the abundance of pepper, ginger cinnamon and nuts in this region, Delicate and beautiful buckrams were manufactured here. The ships that came from the East used to bring copper in ballast, silk cloths and gold and sandals, silver, spikenard, cloves and other fine spices. All these indicate the great trading activity of this port, especially with Aden and Manzi.

From Malabar, Marco Polo proceeded towards Gujarat. He talked about the great number of cities and towns, but he did not describe them as his narration would be too long, He also visited Thana (Tana) on the way, but the travelogue of Thana was written after the description of Gujarat. Most probably he was confused about the direction, Marco Polo described Thana as a great kingdom lying towards the west. He stated that the kingdom of Thana was great, both in size and worth. The people here were idolaters with a language of their own. Plenty of brown incense is found here. Thana was frequented by ships and merchants from Arab countries and the Persian Gulf. Leather, buckram and cotton were exported from Thana. Merchants of Thana imported gold, silver, copper and other things in demand. The main import was Arab horses, landed from Hormuz. With the King's connivance many corsairs launched from this port and seas around to plunder merchants. These corsairs had a covenant with the King, and he kept all the horses they captured. This is because he did not have any horses. Therefore, Thana was an important horse trading centre. The king did not allow anybody to trade in his port without

bringing the horses. This place was also noted as Konkan-Tana. Thana had a Hindu prince. Polo also mentions Tana-Maiambu ie. Thana - Mumbai. He also placed Thana to the west of Gujarat which indicates his dislocation of geographical order.

Marco Polo sailed from Thana further west to reach Khambayat (Cambay). But before talking of Cambay he described Gujarat (Gojurat) as a great kingdom. The people were idolaters but spoke in a peculiar language. From here he stated that the North Star was conspicuous and was at an altitude of about 6 cubits. The seamen here were the most desperate pirates. After capturing a merchant vessel, they forced them to swallow a stuff called Tamarindi mixed in sea water, which produced a violent purging. This was done to prevent the merchants from swallowing valuable stones and pearls. Ginger and indigo were exported. Cotton was available in plenty. The cotton trees here were of great size, full six paces high and of 20 years age. The cotton of the place was used for making quilt. The people here dressed with skin cloth of goat skin, ox-skins or buffalo skin. Marco Polo also appreciated the embroidery work of Gujarat woven as mats in red

and blue leather with figures of birds and beasts.

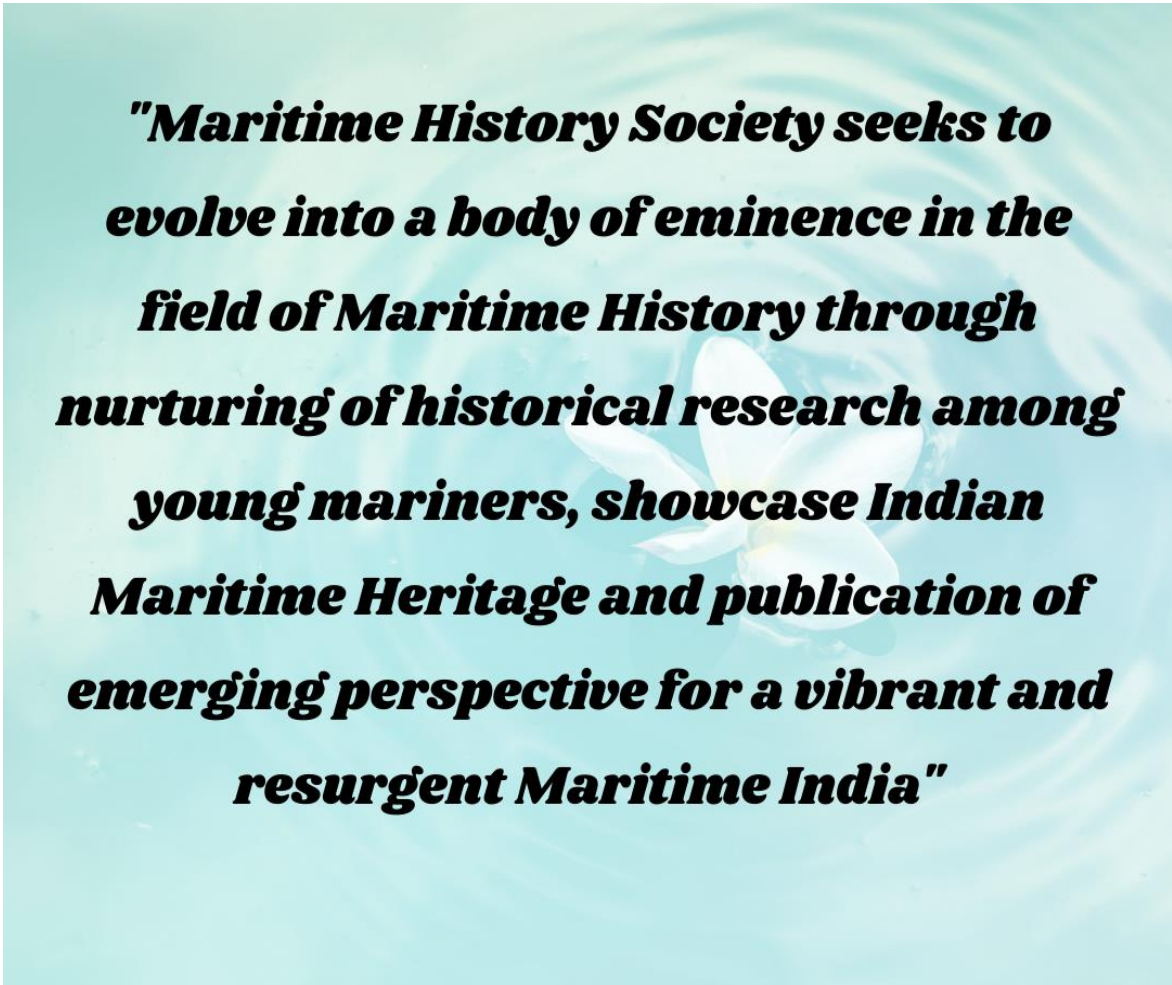
Further he proceeded towards west to Khambayat (Cambay). The people here too were idolaters and had language of their own. North Star was clearly visible from here. And it could be seen at a higher altitude. Great deal of trade was carried out here. Indigo was produced in great abundance. Cotton was exported from here. Trading in hides was also found here. Merchants from all quarters came here with gold, silver and copper. The kingdom was prosperous, abounding in commerce and luxury. It was a great Indian trade mart. The indigo of Khambayat was a staple export. Marco Polo sailed from Khambayat to the west to Somnath (Semnath). A king ruled this area. They spoke in a language of their own. The people lived by trade and industry. According him the people were honest. It was a place of very great trade. Somnath was the name of a temple. The city was named as Devapattan. Ultimately from Somnath, Marco Polo reached the Makran coast (Kesmakaran). He stated that this was the last land of India towards the west and northwest. The people here were Saracens. This part was called as Greater India.

In conclusion it may be stated that Marco Polo's travel accounts although written in the 13th century, were a source of tremendous importance to the Europeans and the Mediterranean merchants. Great knowledge accrued about the trade commodities and the wealth of the Indian coastal areas, the islands of the Southeast Asia, Champa, and China. There was no doubt considerable confusion in the topographical sequence of areas in Marco Polo's narrations. This may be because he talked from memory that may have slipped here and there, and

that be after a lapse of time. Till late in the colonial period, and the trading voyages, Marco Polo's account was the most authentic source of knowledge.

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BOOK REVIEW

TIDELESS WAKE: THE LEGACY OF THE ROYAL INDIAN NAVY DURING WORLD WAR II BY ODAKKAL JOHNSON

Professor Emeritus Derek Law, The University of Strathclyde, Scotland

The Royal Indian Navy's role in the Second World War is too often under-regarded. There are two existing major accounts: an excellent official history was published in 1964 and D. J. Hastings' history *The Royal Indian Navy, 1612-1950* appeared in 1988. Both are excellent studies but rather dry and academic in style and content, the former without illustrations and the latter with a few poorly reproduced black and white images. A quarter of a century on, this new and comprehensive history has been published. Although equally rigorously academic in its approach it is also cleverly aimed in part at a younger audience both in style and in a profusely illustrated content.

The book quickly sketches the background of Indian naval history over two millennia before turning to its main theme of World War II. Although the British inspired Indian Navy was started in 1612, it is a surprise to discover that the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) was only established in late 1934. It was at that point a small force and by the start of World War 2 in 1939 it consisted of a mere 3000 men with half a dozen sloops and an array of small craft.

Although the RIN may have been small, its reach in World War 2 was

astonishing. It is easy to assume their participation in actions around the shores of India, but Johnson gives full prominence to the all too little noticed presence in other theatres throughout the war. There is a substantial section on their activities in the Red Sea and East Africa where bitter but often unregarded campaigns were fought, as well as in the Persian Gulf where very active campaigns took place in Iran and Iraq. He also records the almost unknown service in the Battle of the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean up to operation Husky – the landings in Sicily – where *Sutlej* had the responsible duty of Senior Officer of the anti-submarine patrol – and on into the eastern Mediterranean. Ships of the RIN were involved in U-boat sinking, the capture of an Italian submarine and a remarkable single ship action against Japanese commerce raiders by HMIS *Bengal*. These stirring but largely neglected tales are brought to life.

There is, of course, a substantial section on the war against Japan. But the range of involvement of the RIN is greater than might be generally understood. This went from escorting the first convoys to and from Singapore to the coastal forces actions of the so-called Bombay Buccaneers to the crew of landing craft producing the

seemingly endless series of landings in Burma and the steady grinding down of Japanese resistance there. This perhaps better known campaign is fully described. There is then an excellent account of activity which took place beyond VJ Day ranging from mine clearance operations in the Malacca Straits to taking the surrender of isolated Japanese garrisons in the Andaman Islands.

A particular virtue of the book is that it is not confined to tales of heroic action. There is a full account of how the RIN expanded throughout the war and the quite astonishing logistics involved. This was not just a case of adding ships and men - eventually some 40,000 were serving. There is a good extended study of the growth of the RIN support services on shore which covers everything from the little known WRINS - Women's Royal Indian Naval Service - to all the varied branches ranging from Naval Law to Landing Craft Training.

The book continues with an account of the infamous 1947 Royal Indian Navy Mutiny. This potentially divisive piece of history is fully but dispassionately described, concentrating on facts rather than judgements. Then finally the book concludes with a brief section on the first two decades of India's independent navy (of which the author was a prominent member). This then justifies the appropriateness of the title, as that navy grew out of the wake of what went before. The book has a clever and unique conceit in that it is

presented as a grandfather relating history to his grandson. This allows the author very cleverly to insert little nuggets of background information as conversation pieces between grandfather Baba and his grandson Josh at the start and end of each chapter. There are two other excellent features. This is a rather sumptuous publication of the Maritime History Society based in Mumbai and it is replete with illustrations throughout the text which give a real sense of time and period. The mix includes pages from log books, official reports, campaign maps, contemporary photographs, paintings, copies of signals and newspaper cuttings. The second clever feature is what the author self-deprecatingly describes as fiction. In fact, what he has done is to take several formal reports of action or service and reframe them as personal accounts. In reality this is a very positive presentational device which makes for an excellent fluid read rather than showing the staccato formality of the original records. It certainly does not turn fact into fiction.

This is the 17th volume published by the Maritime History Society. The quality of the production is exceptional and makes this a very fine publication. The work is rigorously academic and has obviously been fully researched from original sources. And yet its great strength lies in its presentation, which offers a degree of accessibility to new generations for whom the Second World War is ancient history from a previous millennium.

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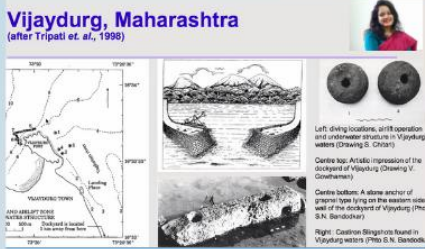
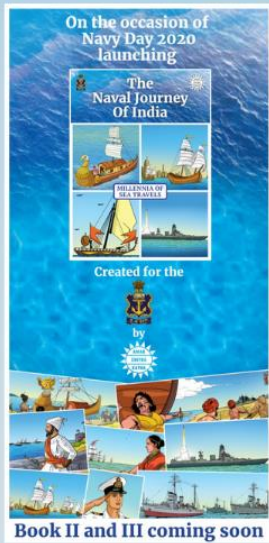
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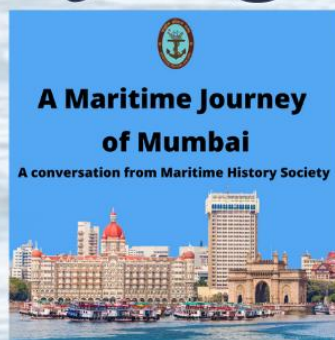


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