

Management of Maritime Trade Activities of the Merchants of Prachi Valley of Odisha in India

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Abstract

The maritime trade of the merchants of the Prachi Valley of Odisha is an important aspect of the economic system of Eastern India in the past. The colonizing spirit of the people of ancient Kalinga was certainly promoted by their maritime trade contacts. The region of the Prachi Valley was one of the main centers for maritime trade of ancient Kalinga as well as of medieval Utkal. The merchants or *Sadhava* of Odisha had great proficiency in sea voyage during the ancient as well as medieval periods. The main contribution of this study is that it undertakes the economic activities of merchants of the Prachi valley region of Odisha in Eastern India. During the ancient and medieval periods, the Prachi was a large navigable river of that region. In the past, the Prachi and other rivers of Odisha had played a major role in the maritime activities with inland and overseas countries. The merchants of the Prachi Valley were regularly using both the rivers Prachi and Chitroptala as their principal river routes for their maritime activities. It can be presumed by observing the geographical location of the present Konarka town that long years ago the place of Konarka was possibly a flourishing port-town, which was located near the mouth of river Chitroptala. The people of Prachi Valley as well as Kalinga were colonizing the far off lands of Java, Sumatra, Indonesia, Burma, Rome, Greece, Siam, China, Ceylon (Srilanka), Malaya-Peninsula and other countries. Due to the domination of foreign merchants in the coast of Odisha, the traditional maritime trade of the Prachi Valley was disappeared in the subsequent period. The aim of this article is to give emphasis on the maritime trade of the Prachi Valley of the state of Odisha in India. The primary as well as secondary source material have been critically analyzed and used in the writing of this article.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The maritime trade contact of the Prachi Valley was the fascinating aspect of the economic history of ancient and medieval Odisha. Being situated on the borders of the sea, Orissa had trade relations with overseas countries from the earliest time. Orissa's geographical area and her beneficial function alongside the shore of the Bay of Bengal furnished a higher possibility for its human beings for maritime trade contacts. During the ancient and early medieval periods, the coastal region of Orissa was famous as in the name of Kalinga. The Eastern sea or the modern Bay of Bengal was well known in ancient times as the "Kalinga Sagara" and was controlled by merchants as well as Kalinga's ships. The merchants/*Sadhavas* of Orissa had great experiences on ancient and medieval voyages. The maritime trade activities of the *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley as well as whole Kalinga in overseas countries had a great remarkable contribution towards the economic prosperity of the society in early period. The people of Kalinga from a very early period were also famous for their colonizing activity (Majumdar, Vol.II,1937-38, p.112). The colonizing spirit of the people of ancient Kalinga was certainly promoted by their maritime trade contacts, which again, were instrumental in the diffusion of Indian culture and the establishment of Indian colonies throughout South-East Asia (Das, 1977, p.252). The region of the Prachi Valley

was the key center for maritime trade of ancient Kalinga as well as of medieval Utkal. The present article attempts to highlight the maritime trade activities of the merchants/*sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley of Odisha.

1.1. Literature Review-

Some of the earlier scholars have done works on maritime trade of Odisha and also done a few works on maritime trade of the Prachi Valley. No one scholar has undertaken the extensive work on maritime activities of the Prachi Valley. Most of the earlier scholars have not paid proper attention to all the aspects of the maritime activities of the Prachi Valley in their scholarly works. The different works of the earlier scholars, historians, archaeologists, antiquarians are *Books, Journals, Reviews, Records, Reports, Gazetteers, Proceedings*, etc. The titles of earlier works and their authors are being mentioned as follows. G.S. Das has written a book entitled *Exploration of the Prachi Valley* in 1958. This work of is undoubtedly a pioneer work and it records most of the ancient historical sites of the Prachi Valley briefly. But the detailed maritime trade of the said valley have not been elaborated in it. R.C. Panda has published an Odia book *Prachi nadira Aitihāsika Bivāba* in 1969. This book gives a brief account of all the aspects of the Prachi Valley civilization including the maritime activities. The book does not contain the detailed descriptions of the maritime activities of the Prachi valley. P.K. Ray has edited *Archaeological Survey Report*

Prachi Valley in 1975. This report contains a brief account of the archaeological sites of the Prachi valley, but it has not mentioned about the maritime trade in detail. L.S.S. O' Malley has edited *Puri, A Gazetteer* in 1908(Reprinted in 1984). This *Gazetteer* briefly gives vivid accounts of the Prachi Valley. They are location of the Prachi Valley, traditions and religious systems, which were prevalent there, a brief account of some temples, etc. N. Senapati and D.C. Kuanr have edited *Orissa District Gazetteers, Puri* in 1977. They have recorded only a brief description regarding some aspects of the PrachiValley. This *Gazetteer* has not mentioned the details of maritime trade of the whole Prachi Valley. K.S. Behera and U.N. Dhal have edited a Sanskrit book *Prachi Mahatmyam* in which they have highlighted the religious importance of the Prachi Valley only but not the detail Maritime trade of the whole existed temples of the said valley. A.K. Mishra has published an article on "Prachi Valley Civilization: Revised" in 2007. In this article, he has just overlooked the ancient civilization of the Prachi Valley in within 6 pages but not covered the detailed maritime trade of the Prachi valley.

The above works of the earlier scholars have initially helped the present researcher to write the proposed work. Although the earlier scholarly works have not extensively covered the Maritime trade of the Prachi Valley but these works are necessary for the completion of present piece of work. All the earlier literary works have been utilized in this work

2. METHODOLOGY

Primary as well as secondary sources were used in the writing of this article. The primary and secondary sources were gathered through Gazetteers, books, Texts, the sensible observation, public opinions, and hearsay accounts through interview method. In the field observation, the author had interacted with some senior persons like Hansanatha Sahoo, Dr. Prasanta Kumar Pradhan, Dr. Santosh Kumar Mitra, Dr. Atul Kumar Pradhan, Mr. Brahmananda Biswal, and a few priests of the Mangala temple of Kakatpur with regard to the maritime trade of the Prachi valley region. The gathered facts in regards to the maritime trade of the merchants of Prachi Valley of Odisha are mostly based on secondary sources. The facts gathered from both the sources are applied in this article.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Due to traditional maritime trade relations of Prchi Valley with different parts of India and overseas countries, a glorious civilization was developed in the eastern part of Odisha. The *Gazetteer of Puri District* records that "Centuries ago the Prachi was a large navigable river" (*Puri District Gazetteer*, 13th Edition, p. 303 Also see Panda, 1969, p.97). The river Prachi is very small in comparison to the other rivers like Mahanadi, Brahmani, Birupa, Budhabalanga, Survarnarekha, etc. A thorough investigation of the earlier scholars related to the

fact that the river Prachi originated from the Mahanadi and took its course from 'Dakamba' near Naraj(Ray, 1975, p.1). The place Dakamba is about two and half miles to the northwest of the historic medieval fort of Sarangagarh (Das,1958, p.5). The river Prachi rises about two miles north-west of the Kantapara village and flows close to the boundary between undivided Cuttack and Puri districts(O' Malley,1908, Reprinted-1984, pp.12-13 Also see Ganguly, 1975, p.94). This river is located between the Kushabhadra and Devi rivers in the coastal belt of Orissa. The river Prachi was one of the oldest rivers in the eastern part of Orissa and it is considered to be the most sacred by the Orissan people. The *Prachi Mahatmyam* highlights the glory of the Prachi river and records it as a dried up river in the lower Mahanadi basin(Behera & Dhal, 1992, p.xiii). This river was one day the most important river in the Mahanadi Delta. But now there is no trace of the Prachi river to the north of Kuakhai. To the south of the Kuakhai from Phulnakhara to Bhingarpur, the river is known as *Gambhirganda*. After this, it is called the 'Sola river' up to Govindarampatna. The river Manikarnika branching off the Kushabhadra joins the Prachi at the holy place of 'Antarvedi' also known as *Manikarnika tirtha*. The river Lalita rising from the Prachi joins it again at *Gotirtha*, a place of Pilgrimage. The Kadua river falls into the Prachi at Tandahar and thereafter the sacred Prachi river joins the sea at a place named *Kelunimuhana*,

which is known as the *Muktitirtha*. The northern side areas of the Prachi Valley are Govindpur, Jagatsinghpur and Balikuda Police Stations of the undivided Cuttack district while the southern side comprises of Balipatna, Balianta, Nimapara, Gop and Kakatpur Police Stations of the undivided Puri district respectively. Though the river Prachi is a small river(in size) at present, it appears to have been a large one in the remote past. During the ancient and medieval periods, the Prachi was a large navigable river of that region. The tide (flow) of the sea (Bay of Bengal) enters into the Prachi river as far as Kundheihat, ten miles from its mouth and the river Prachi in this portion remains navigable throughout the year. The river Prachi was acting as an important water route of that region during the ancient and medieval periods. The merchants (*Sadhavas*) of the Prachi Valley had been maintaining their trade relations with different parts of India and overseas countries since the second century A.D. They were certainly carrying on their traditional trade in the water routes of the river Prachi and its tributaries, which were directly and indirectly connected with the Bay of Bengal. In the past the river Prachi had eight tributaries. They are such as Kadua, Chandramauli, Chitroptala, Kandalanadi, Baladidhara, Jiunti, Kalua and Potanadi (Hunter, Vol.II, 1872, Appendix-p.3). Most of the *sakhanadis*(tributaries) of the river Prachi are now shallow in different places. But in early

period they were very deep like the Prachi river. The people of the Prachi Valley and its adjacent areas regularly used the above *sakhanadis* as their daily routes. Because there was no good communication facilities in that region like the land routes of the modern period.

3.1. Sources of the Maritime Trade of Prachi Valley

In the past, the Prachi and other rivers of Orissa had played a noteworthy role in the maritime trade activities with inland and overseas countries. Unfortunately, we have no sufficient historical records regarding the maritime trade of the *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley as well as whole Orissa during the ancient and medieval periods. Yet we indirectly get glimpses of their maritime activities from the different sources and till today the memory of their voyages to distant lands is preserved in a unique manner. The scanty sources (evidences) relating to the maritime trade of Kalinga as well as the Prachi Valley are religious texts, folklores, folksongs, traditions, legends, stories, festivals, customs, literatures, travel accounts, archaeological artefacts (which have been unearthed by the eminent archaeologists from the different sites), detached sculptural panels, palm leaf manuscripts, temple arts, paintings, inscription, public opinions, etc. Out of these sources, some have been utilized in their appropriate places of the subject.

The *Aryamanjusree Mulakalpa*, a *Mahayan* text of Buddhism, has described the

Bay of Bengal as the Kalingan sea (Ganapati Sastri 1920, p.168). Some Buddhist texts like *Dathavamsa*, *Lalitavistara* and *Siyuki* record that the kings of Utkal (Kalinga) had cordial relation with the rulers of China. At that time the people used to travel in the sea routes by means of boats. According to *Raghuvamsa* of Kalidasa, the king of Kalinga is considered as 'Mahodadhipati' i.e. Lord of the great ocean (Nandargikar 1891, p.140). It is known from some literatures that during the medieval period overseas trade of Orissa was in flourishing condition. Sarala Das in his *Sarala Mahabharata* and Dinakrishna Das in his *Rasakallola* have used some terms relating to maritime trade. They are *Boita*, *Naba*, *Sadhava*, *Sadhavani*, *Manga*, *Navika* etc. and islands like Srilanka, Java, Bali, Suvarnavdipa, etc. This information has been referred by K.S. Behera in his book *Sagara O Sahitya* (Behera, 1993, pp.42-45). There are also some references to the boats men of Utkal found mentioned in the *Labanyabati*. It mentions that the boats men or *Sadhavas* were bringing huge wealth and jewels from overseas countries and they used to give some of its to the prince of Utkal (*Labanyabati*, 1983, p.90, 208).

Some stone sculptural panels depicting boats carrying elephants found in the walls of some notable temples of Orissa. It certainly indicates a large numbers of elephants were exported to overseas countries by boats through the merchants of the ancient and medieval

Orissa. A sculptural panel in the Konarka Sun temple depicts a Giraffe, an African animal in a boat. It suggests that the maritime contact of Orissa with Arab merchants who might have been commissioned to bring this animal from Africa to the Eastern coast (Behera, 1999, p.168). There is a good representation of a boat in chlorite stone depicted on the *bhogamandapa* wall of the Jagannatha temple of Puri. Another magnificent representation of boat found depicted in the wall of Lingaraja temple of Bhubaneswar. The sculptural panels of the temples remind us the maritime activities of the *Sadhavas* of ancient Orissa (Kalinga). The maritime pride of ancient Kalinga inspired artists to depict boats in sculptures. An interesting sculpture now preserved in Orissa State Museum, shows two boats in which elephants are being carried (Behera, 1982, p.35). Besides, there are some traditional stories also inform us with regard to the role of maritime merchants (*Sadhavas*), their fabulous wealth and their style of life. They are *Charimahajanapua katha*, *Boita bandapana katha* (Story of Tapoi), etc. Although the above sources do not give accurate information regarding the maritime trade of the Prachi Valley as well as whole Orissa, but we have to accept here to conceive some ideas about the maritime glory of the *Sadhavas* of past. These scanty sources are only available at present to write something on the subject of maritime history of the ancient and medieval Orissa.

3.2. Maritime Trade Contacts of the Prachi Valley as well as Kalinga

So far as the maritime trade relation is concerned, the region of the Prachi Valley was an integral zone of ancient Kalinga. The present piece of work can not be highlighted without the name of Kalinga. Before going to the subject (fact), we have to discuss here briefly about the maritime trade contacts of Kalinga along with the Prachi valley. It is indirectly known from the different sources that the merchants of ancient and medieval Orissa had commercial as well as cultural contacts with the people of overseas countries. The people of Kalinga were the pioneers in colonizing the far off lands of Java, Sumatra, Indonesia, Burma, Rome, Greece, Siam, China, Ceylon (Srilanka), Malaya-Peninsula and other countries (Banerjee, 1930, p.98). Satya Narayana Rajguru refers to the people of Kalinga had cordial relation with Ceylon through the boats during the period of 3rd-4th century A.D. (Rajguru, 1985, p.77). It is known from the tradition that the people of Kalinga as well as Prachi Valley had also social-relationship with the people of Srilanka. The *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley had acquired wealth and power through the maritime trade contact with distant lands across the seas. The maritime trade of ancient Orissa with Roman Empire was carried on by boats through Daya-Bhargavi-Kuakhai-Prachi rivers routes to some of the old seaports like *Konnagara* (Konarka) of Ptolemy or *Chitroptala bandara* nearby the

famous town *Che-li-ta-lo (Charitra)* of Hiuen Tsang's Travel Accounts (Mahalik, 2004, p.41). A number of *Sadhavas* were living on the banks of river Prachi and they were carrying on their trade through the river route of Prachi with overseas countries like Bali, Java, Bernio, Ceylon, etc (Chandra, Vol.1, 1998, pp.95-96). After returning from their overseas trade, the Odia *Sadhavas* were erecting temples on the banks of river Prachi for public worship (*Odissara Tantra Sanskruti*, 1997, p.70). The maritime activities of the *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley as well as whole Kalinga indicate that the merchants of this region carried on a prosperous trade through land, river and sea-routes. Even women were also allowed to travel different overseas countries on the *boitas*, which can be found from a stone art of Bhubaneswar (*Journal of Asiatic Society Letters*, Vol. XVII; No.2, 1951, pp.114ff). Through the trade contacts, some of the merchants of Kalinga had permanently settled in distant countries (Mahtab, Vol.1, 1977, pp.75-83). R.C. Majumdar remarks that the famous Sailendra's of Java originally went from Kalinga and spread their power in South-East Asia through the lower Burma and Malaya Peninsula (Majumdar, 1963, p.7). Legend in Java says that "twenty thousand families were sent to Java by the Prince of Kling (Kalinga) and these people had prospered and multiplied there." (Mahtab, pp.75-83 Also see Behera, 1977, p.199). In this connection B.N.Lunia also refers to the country of Java

appears to have been colonized in the first century of the Christian era and the wave of colonists went from Kalinga (Lunia, 2001-2002, pp.247-248). Even some of the names of the local territories of Java were named accordingly the names of the ancient kingdoms of India. For example; there is a State (Kingdom) in Java, which is called by Chinese people as *Ho-linga*. The name *Ho-linga* in Java is generally recognized by scholars as a Chinese form of Kalinga. The presence of a kingdom in Java bearing the name Kalinga (*Ho-linga*) evidently proves that the place was dominated by the people of Kalinga. Although the colonists from different parts of India entered into the Malaya peninsula but the colonists from Kalinga predominated among them. It clearly suggests that the distant lands of Java and Malaya peninsula were ultimately colonized by the people of Kalinga. It was possible only by the overseas (maritime) trade contacts of the merchants of ancient Kalinga. It appears that because of the commercial contact, the Kalingan sailors initially reached the above places. Thus, we can rightly assert that the merchants of Kalinga as well as the Prachi Valley had maintained their maritime trade contacts with the different overseas countries.

3.3. Articles of Export and Import in Maritime Trade of Prachi Valley / Kalinga

The different types of articles (commodities), which involved in the maritime trade of the Prachi Valley as well as whole

Kalinga are not much known to us. Whatever source is available is not sufficient to describe in detail regarding it. The merchants or *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley and other parts of Kalinga seem to have exported the articles like spices, betel nuts, betel leaves, coconuts, white conch shells, drugs, iron objects, jewels, diamond, ivory, ivory works of fine workmanship, cotton and silk fabrics (*Kenduli kasta*), *Pipili chandua*, pepper, salt, oil seeds, sugarcane, elephants, precious stones to foreign countries like China, Ceylon, Roman empire, Java, Sumatra, Bali, etc. The cloth of Kalinga had earned a great reputation at home and abroad (Mital, 1962, p.106). In this connection one of the scholars like Prasanta Kumar Pradhan of Adasapur says that the *Kendulikasta* (cotton) saris were largely produced from the village Kenduli for the purpose of maritime trade with different parts of Kalinga and overseas countries. Chandanpur and Banamalipur of the Prachi Valley region were famous for the production of betel leaf and betel nuts respectively. China received precious stones, ivory, pepper, betel nuts, drugs and fine textile fabrics for which the region of Kalinga was famous (Behera, 1977, p.120). Diamond probably constituted the principal article of export of Kalinga to the Western World. The Hirakud region of Sambalpur on the banks of river Mahanadi was famous for the production of diamond (Das, 1971, pp.1-8). The *Sadhavas* / merchants of Prachi Valley possibly purchased diamonds from the particular merchants those

who used to carry on their trade with Sambalpur region through the Mahanadi river. Some of the merchants of the western part of Orissa possibly used to carry on their maritime trade on diamond with overseas countries through the Prachi river. The elephants of ancient Orissa were much prized by the neighboring states as well as overseas countries. From the accounts of Cosmos (6th century A.D.) we know that the king of Ceylon used to purchase elephants from India. Kalinga was very famous for elephants in the past. That was why, Ceylon used to purchase elephants from the regions of Kalinga. The early Muslim expeditions in Orissa were also mainly motivated by a desire to obtain elephants (Panda, 1991, p.60). Pepper was an important item of export to the Roman Empire. Here B.S. Das is of the view that the commodities were exported from ancient Orissa to Rome for earning of the Roman gold (Das, 1978, p.19). Some Roman Gold coins are also unearthed from the different excavated sites, which have been discussed in earlier. The merchants of the Prachi Valley as well as whole Kalinga possibly imported articles like pearl and silver from Ceylon, garments (China masuka) and Chinese pottery from China, Roman pottery, gold and pearls from Rome. One kind of pumpkin known as 'Boitakakharu' or 'Boitalu' in Orissa which as its name indicates was certainly, a sea born vegetable brought from foreign countries in *Boitas* or boats (Panigrahi, 1995, p.466). Regarding the import article in maritime trade of

the Prachi Valley, Gangadhara Panda, a senior retired teacher of Kakatpur remarks that different types of spices were imported from the Overseas countries. The local tradition of the Prachi Valley says that gold and silver were the most important items of import of the *Sadhavas* in maritime trade.

3.4. Medium of Exchange in Maritime Trade of Prachi Valley

A systematic and currency system must have been introduced by the rulers of Orissa for the transaction of trade and commerce during the ancient and medieval periods. In this regard we have to depend upon some archaeological sources, which are found from the different excavated sites of Orissa. The history of coinage in Orissa begins with the Punch-Marked coins. Moreover, these (Punch-Marked) coins were not circulated in large numbers in ancient Orissa. The “Puri-Kushana” coins (of copper) have been unearthed from the upper most limit of the site of Sisupalgarh (Lal, 1948, p.72). The date of these Puri-Kushana coins (imitation of Kushana coins) has been assigned to the middle of the 4th century A.D.(Lal, 1948, p.72). According to N.K. Sahu ‘Puri- Kushana’ coins were struck by the Murunda kings who ruled in Orissa in 3rd and 4th century A.D. The existence of Puri-Kushana coins in this site indicates that these coins were possibly used by the local people of that area as well as the Prachi Valley for transaction of their commodities in ancient period. J.K.Sahu remarks that the Kushana and

imitation of Kushana (Puri-Kushana) coins were circulated in Orissa through the pilgrims and traders in a late period after 3rd century A.D.(Sahu, 1997, p.247). Some scholars have designated the Puri-Kushana coins as the Odia-Kushana coins. Here K. S. Behera is of the view that the trade and commerce at regional and inter-regional levels were facilitated with the circulation of both Punch-Marked coins and Kushana coins(Behera, 1999, pp.165-166). These Puri-Kushana coins were used as the medium of exchange till the 5th century A.D. Most probably, during this period, the maritime traders of the Prachi Valley and the adjacent areas of Sishupalgarh used to transact their traditional business through the Puri-Kushana coins as the medium of exchange for commodities.

The Cowrie currency system seems to have been popular in Orissa during the medieval period. This Cowrie currency was mostly used for petty transactions and it was in popular use side by side with metal currencies. The earlier reference to the use of Cowrie currency are found from the Bhaumakara inscriptions and this Cowrie currency system continued during the Ganga and Gajapati periods(Mishra, 1934, p.15,23,24). The *Algum inscription* of the time of Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva dated 1140-41 A.D. records the Cowrie currency system(*Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. XXIX, p.45). An Odia inscription from Indupur belonging to the first half of the 16th century A.D. refers to 75

Kahanas of Cowries. The word *Kahana* was a small denomination of the Cowrie currency and it was calculated in the *kada*, *ganda* and *pana* terms (Dey, *OHRJ*, No.1 & No.2, pp. 10-21). In this connection, the well known historian Karuna Sagar Behera remarks that the use of Cowries in Orissa suggests maritime trade contact with the Maldive Islands (Behera, 1999, pp.167-168). Most probably, merchants of the most of foreign countries had not used the Cowrie currency as the medium of exchange for their commodities, which were being exported to Kalinga. Here K. Acharya opines that the Cowrie currency was used in Orissa till the beginning of the 19th century A.D. (Acharya, 1983, p.88). This Cowrie currency system was basically used by the rural people in local trade. It can be presumed that the rural trade of the Prachi Valley was also carried on by Cowrie currency in the medieval period. The barter system must have prevailed in Orissa for the transaction of local commodities. In some places of the Prachi Valley, the traditional trades were also transacted in local markets through the barter system by the exchange of local products among themselves (traders).

3.5. Ports and Harbours of the Prachi Valley

The *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley were using some ports and harbours for their maritime trade with different parts of Kalinga and overseas countries. The important ports of ancient and medieval Orissa were Tamralipti, Chitroptala nearby the *Che-li-ta-lo* town, Palour,

Dantapura, Pithunda, Kalingapatnam, Khalkattapatna, Manikpatna, Gaurangapatna, Chilka, Kakatpur, Balipatna, Astaranga, Birudipatna, etc. of international repute (Pattanaik, 2005, p.213). Among these, the ports of Kakatpur, Astaranga, Chitroptala (nearby the famous town *Che-li-ta-lo* of Hiuen Tsang's Travel Account) and Balipatna were frequently used by the *Sadhavas* of the Prachi valley. Besides, there were many harbours found in the river Prachi, they were mostly small in size. The *Sadhavas* were sailing in their boats on the Bay of Bengal through the river Prachi and its tributaries for maritime trade. At present the Prachi and Sola rivers are become shallow naturally. There were many business centres in the valley of these rivers. A big banyan tree located to the west of the village Jharillo under Govindpur Police station is called as "Boita Bandha Banyan Tree", where boats were said to be taking shelter (Ray 1975, p.43). On Niali-Madhava road a large number of mounds are to be found which give an indication of the location of the harbours on those places. On Amaresvara road a site containing such mound is known as "Kudapatna" where boats were taking shelter while on their way to their respective destinations (Ray, 1975, p.43). Very close to this place (Kudapatna), another mound called "Gopalakuda" is also noticed. According to local tradition the *Sadhavas*, on their way for maritime trade, used to halt here for homage to God Ramachandra for their safe journey.

Chahata, near Chaurashi contains a mound 'Boitadhiha' from where ancient pottery were unearthed. In between Chahata and Tulasipur, on the bank of river Prachi, an ancient Siva temple known as Bandaresvara(Vandesvara) is appeared. The local tradition says that the river Prachi was very deep here and its water never becomes dry. This was possibly the centre (place) of all ports for which reason the *Sivalinga* is known as 'Bandaresvara'. On the basis of tradition, the local people say that *Sadhavas* were sailing in their boats for trade with distant lands after worshipping this God.

There were many sand mounds on the banks of the river Prachi. In the vicinity of Kakatpur in the valley of river Prachi some sand mounds are found known as the 'Boitakuda' and a field is called "Jahajapadia"/ship field (Panda, 1969, p.161). Most probably, the trading boats of *Sadhavas* took shelter in these places for safety. Near the sea beach, at Astaranga some *Boitakudas* are also found. There was a flourishing port noticed in the east of Astaranga village, which formed by two piles of soil and now it is a tank(Ray, 1975, p.44 Also see Mohapatra, 1986, p.32). There was link between this tank and river Prachi through a water course. The boats coming through the river were entering into this tank for safety. As Astaranga is nearby the seashore, here was a harbour and even passenger carrying boats were starting journey from this place. The local people of Astaranga say that there was a very rich

merchant named Dadhivamana Sahu of this area. He had possessed some boats. He was carrying on his trade contact especially with Ceylon. Once at the time of returning from Ceylon, he had brought a stone image of Goddess Mangala with him. He installed that image (Goddess) at Kakatpur by which the Goddess became famous as Kakatpur Mangala(Panda, 1969, p.97).

Trade and Commerce was also carried in the river Chitroptala, a tributary of Prachi. Ptolemy's statement with regard to a great port at *Konnagara* (modern Konarka) and it might have developed in the second century A.D. The river Kadua, a tributary of Prachi has merged with the river Prachi at a place called Tandahar near Chitresvari. Amidst the heaps of sand a light post is seen. This post was acting as a signal to the boats(ships) sailing on the Bay of Bengal and river Prachi (Ray,1975, p.44). Radha Charana Panda has opined that when Hiuen Tsang visited Orissa in 640 A.D., at that time the name of Konarka town was possibly *Che-li-ta-lo*(Panda, 1969,pp.48-49). The reference to 'Che-li-ta-lo' for the first time appears in the Accounts of Hiuen Tsang who has given the following description of the town. "The South-eastern frontiers of the country (*Wu-Cha* or *Odra*) border on the Bay of Bengal, there is a town called 'Che-li-ta-lo' (*Charitra*). This is a rendezvous for merchants who embark on the sea and for others from distant places who travel here and there"(Beal, 1911, p.134). Thomas

Watters remarks on the account of Hiuen Tsang's travel that the town 'Che-li-ta-lo' was near the shore of the ocean in the south east of the *Odra* country. That town was about 20 Li (5 miles) in circuit. It was a thoroughfare and resting place for sea going strangers and traders from the distant lands (Watters, Vol-II, 1961, p.94). The merchants depart for distant countries and strangers come and go and stop here on their way. Here are found all sorts of rare and precious articles (Watters, Vol-II, 1961, p.94). U.K. Subudhi identifies the place *Che-li-ta-lo* with village Chitresvari, about 2-3 km distance from the excavated Buddhist site of Kuruma near Konarka (Subudhi, Vol.II, No.2, July, 1981, pp.12-14). In this regard *Puri District Gazetteer* records that "the local tradition speaks of an old port at the mouth of river Chitroptala, if true, might with some reason, be identified with the port near the town *Che-li-ta-lo*, that lay to the South-east of the capital of *Wu-cha (Odra)* is the time of Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century A.D." (*Puri District Gazetteer*, 13th Edition, p.313). Here Radha Charana Panda is of the view that when Hiuen Tsang visited Orissa then the name of Konarka town was possibly *Chitroptala* or *Charitra*. Hiuen Tsang has mentioned (in his account) to this town as *Che-li-ta-lo* in his own language. When the Konarka town was an important centre of maritime trade at that time there was a great port on the mouth of river Chitroptala (Panda, 1969, pp.48-49). Here the present author is accepting the views of

Radha Charana Panda and other earlier scholars those who accept the great port, which located nearby the town *Che-li-ta-lo (Charitra)* mentioned in *Hiuen Tsang's Travel Account*. The town *Che-li-ta-lo*, which was the centre of maritime traders, is possibly the place of modern Konarka town. The great port close to the *Che-li-ta-lo* town may be identified with the *Chitroptala bandara*, which exactly located on the mouth of river Chitroptala. The place *Che-li-ta-lo* was possibly a famous port-town, which was the resting place for the maritime traders at the time of Hiuen Tsang's visit. The *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley were carrying on their maritime trade relations with overseas countries through the *Chitroptala bandara*, which was the great port of that region. The mouth of the river Chitroptala was located about 2 or 3 miles distance to the south of the mouth of river Prachi (Dixit, 2000, pp.6-7). The merchants of the Prachi Valley were regularly using both the rivers Prachi and Chitroptala as their principal river routes for their maritime activities. It can be presumed by observing the geographical location of the present Konarka town that long years ago the place of Konarka was possibly a flourishing port-town, which located near the mouth of river Chitroptala. Most probably, this town had been maintaining as a great centre for maritime traders from the early centuries of the Christian era. The people of Konarka region and its adjacent areas used to carry on their maritime

activities with the overseas countries through the nearby great port i.e. *Chitroptala bandara*.

In the 16th century A.D. Marathas used to come to Machhagaon port in the river Devi, which located in the east of river Prachi. They were transacting their trade up to Harispur (Jagatsinghpur) through the river Alaka, a tributary of river Devi. They had built a trade centre there. The Portuguese and Olandas (Dutch) merchants were transacting their business in the rivers Prachi and Devi (Ray, 1975, pp.44-45). In the 16th century A.D., Orissan ports were mostly filled up with foreign traders (merchants). Thus, for the transaction of the maritime trade, some ports and harbours had been established in the river Prachi and its tributaries. The *Sadhasvas* of the Prachi Valley were regularly navigating the river Prachi for their maritime activities till the advent of the European merchants on the coast of Orissa.

3.6. Development of Maritime Trade in the Prachi Valley

The earliest known maritime trade of Kalinga begins with the Asoka's invasion of Kalinga in 261 B.C. But the maritime trade (activities) of the Prachi Valley started after king Kharavela of Kalinga. According to *Hatigumpha Inscription*, in the fifth regnal year Kharavela renovated a canal from Tanasulia up to his capital (Barua, 1929, p.14,43. Also see Panda, 1969, p.24, 38). This canal had been originally excavated three hundred years (*Ti-sata-vasa*) before by Nanda king

Mahapadmanada (Sahu, Mishra and Sahu, 1981, p.40). Most probably, the river Prachi was an inactive canal at the time of Kharavela who restored it to good condition. In later that canal was possibly flowed towards the Bay of Bengal and subsequently converted to a river in the name of Prachi. The river Prachi was acting as a channel between the river Mahanadi and the Bay of Bengal (Mahapatra, 1997, p.70). *The Periplus of the Erytherian Sea* written by an unknown Greek Sailor of the 1st century A.D. records that *Dosarene* was a Kalingan port and it was famous for its (best type of) ivory known as Dosarenic (Schoff, 1974, pp.46-49). A few scholars say that the place *Dosarene* was possibly the name of the modern Konarka town. It is known from Ptolemy's *Geography* that there was a famous port town named *Konnagara* in Orissan coast in the second century A.D. Most probably, this *Konnagara* can be identified with the modern town of Konarka. From the account of Ptolemy we can partially presume that the river Prachi along with its tributary river Chitroptala was suitable for navigation. Because these two rivers were near to the town of Konarka and were possibly acting as an important water routes for the people of that region. Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang has also left in his account regarding the great port of this region. He records an important town called *Che-li-ta-lo*, near seashore of the ocean, as a resting place for sea going traders and strangers from distant lands. Most probably, the port-town

Che-li-ta-lo was the name of the present Konarka town at the time of Hiuen Tsang's visit. This statement is already mentioned earlier. The mouth of river Prachi was also located near the town of Konarka(Rajguru,1985, p.66).The famous port near the *Che-li-ta-lo* town was possibly the *Chitroptala bandara*. The merchants of the Prachi Valley regularly used this port for their overseas trade. Ancient literatures also record that Prachi was a famous river of the Puri district and it was used as a principal river route by the merchants of that region. There were some small ports as well as harbours, which noticed in the Prachi and Sola rivers. A good number of sand mounds are also found on the banks of river Prachi and Sola river. At present the width of the Sola river would be approximately 300 to 400 cubits. It clearly indicates that the river Sola was deep and wide in the past. It is known from the tradition of villages, which existed on the banks of the both Sola and Prachi rivers, *Sadhavas* were largely living in these villages during the medieval period. The *Sadhavas* of these villages were carrying on their maritime trade relations with both inland and overseas countries. Some of the places of the lower part of the Prachi Valley indicate the ancient maritime activities of the *Sadhavas*. There is a *Boitadhiha* noticed at Chahata. A portion of an iron pillar, which was possibly used for fastening the boats, is still to be seen in this place where the river Prachi and

its tributary Lalita have joined (Ray,1975, pp. 43-44).

According to tradition and public opinion, the local name of Chitroptala river was *Patharabuhanadi*, which was used for carrying of stones. This river was the main tributary of the river Prachi . Legend also supports that the stones of Konarka Sun temple were carried away from the distant places of Orissa through the river routes of Prachi and Chitroptala. Most probably, the huge stones, which have been used in the Konarka Sun Temple, were carried away through the Prachi and Chitroptala river routes. Because there was no good communication facility there in land routes at that time. The famous Sun temple of Konarka was constructed in the 1st half of the 13th century A.D. During the construction period of the Sun temple the river Prachi and its tributary Chitroptala were possibly very depth, by which the huge stones were easily carried away by boats from the distant areas. These two rivers were probably acting as principal water routes and suitable for maritime activities during that period. It seems that the maritime trade of the Prachi Valley was highly flourished during the 13th and 14th century A.D. On the basis of available evidences it can be said that the maritime trade in the Prachi river became suitable long years after king Kharavela of Kalinga. The merchants (*Sadhavas*) of the Prachi Valley used to carry on their trade with Mahanadi in the west and Bay of Bengal in the east. The trading boats of the

western part of Orissa, which were coming in the Mahanadi river, they used to enter into the Bay of Bengal through the Prachi river (Mahapatra 1997, p.70). It is also known from the *Prachina Itihasa of Orissa* that the river Prachi and its principal tributary rivers were very deep and they were suitable for the prosperous maritime trade during the 12th and 13th century A.D. But now there is no any sign of maritime trade in the Prachi river and its tributaries. On the basis of artefacts found from Manikpatna excavation, K.S. Behera suggests that the overseas contact of the merchants of Kalinga with Srilanka, South-east-Asia and China was very much cordial between 10th and 14th centuries (Behera 1999, p.170). The existence of the Celadon ware as well as Chinese coins in coastal Orissa provides the evidence for exchange between China and Orissa. The maritime trade of the Prachi Valley was possibly carried on during that period. Thereafter, the maritime trade also continued by the merchants of the Prachi Valley.

There is a local tradition regarding the maritime trade of the Prachi region found from the history of the Mangala temple of Kakatpur. According to this tradition, a rich merchant named Dadhibamana Sahu of Astaranga brought the present image of Goddess Mangala from one of his Voyages to foreign countries such as Srilanka (Ceylon) in the 15th century A.D. (Panda, 1969, p.97, 163. Also see Donaldson, Vol.1, 2000, p.161). It is known from this

tradition that the river Prachi was suitable for maritime trade (activities) during that period. In this connection, the poet Chintamani Mohanty also refers to the chlorite image of Goddess Mangala of Kakatpur was brought from Ceylon by a merchant of Astaranga and during this period the river Prachi had played a significant role in the maritime trade (Mohanty, 1923, p.178). There is also another good evidence from the Mangala temple of Kakatpur, which supports the maritime trade of that region. In the *bhogamandapa* of the temple of Goddess Mangala, there is a big bell on which “**Grace 15th M.V. 527**” is inscribed in English language. This huge bell is made of bronze and it is suspending from the ceiling of the *bhogamandapa*. The priests of the temple trace that the bell was possibly collected from any foreign ship by local merchants of Kakatpur. In this connection, Radha Charana Panda, observing the language of the bell, says that the bell was brought from the ship of British merchants and it belonged to 16th century A.D. (Panda, 1969, p.101). Here P.K.Ray opines that the bronze bell hangs inside the temple indicating the Portuguese interference in the religious affair of the place during their course of trade in coastal area of Orissa and their settlement at Kakatpur via Prachi river (Ray, 1975, p.60). Arun Dixit is of the view that the bell was brought from Greece by a merchant who donated it to Goddess Mangala (Dixit, 2000, pp.17-18). Scholars give different views with

regard to the bell of the *bhogamandapa*. Although it is not clearly known from the earlier works regarding the bell belongs to which (particular) country. Here one thing is true that the bell was collected from any foreign ship, which was being used by overseas merchants. Most probably, the bell was collected by the *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley from any foreign ship while they were carrying on their maritime trade with overseas countries through the *Chitroptala bandara*. In this connection, Gangadhara Panda of Kakatpur opines that when the bell was brought to the Mangala temple at that time the maritime trade was actively carried on by the *Sadhavas* of that region. The existence of bell indicates that the maritime trade of the Prachi Valley was certainly active during that period when it was collected.

According to the local legend in Kakatpur region, the original image of Goddess Mangala was thrown by some devotees into the depth water of Prachi river near the site of present temple for safety. This incidence occurred when Kalapahara (a muslim invader) attacked the Kakatpur area by the help of native Muslim community. In the later period while a *Sadhava* or merchant of this region (Kakatpur) was navigating in a boat, at that time his boat was suddenly stopped on that particular place (spot). Goddess Mangala shown herself to that merchant in a dream at the same night and said the details of story (regarding her safety). Then

the merchant, in the next day, rescued the image of Goddess Mangala from the depth water of that spot of river Prachi(Mohanty,1923,p.178). The image of Goddess Mangala was noticed nearby the site of Mangalapur, a small village located on the bank of river Prachi as opined by the people of Kakatpur. This legend certainly reminds us that the river Prachi was deep and active for maritime trade during the attack of Kalapahara, who belonged to the 2nd half of the 16th century A.D. The maritime activities of the Prachi Valley were possibly continued by the *Sadhavas* till the advent of European merchants in the coasts of Orissa in the early part of the 17th century A.D. Thereafter, the European merchants gradually occupied the ports of Orissa and carried on their maritime trade with the different parts of India and overseas countries. A large number of merchants of Europe came to the port of Machhagaon and then controlled the port of Hariharapur (modern Jagatsinghpur). Local legend says that the merchants of Portuguese and Olandas carried on their trade relations with the region of the Prachi Valley through the river route of Prachi. Some of the merchants of Portuguese and Olandas were regularly adopting the occupation of pirates and looting the boats of the local *Sadhavas* when they were navigating for their traditional trade. They were watching the mouths of Prachi and Chitroptala rivers for plundering the goods (articles) and wealth of *Sadhavas* of that region. There was a broken

palace, noticed near Chitresvari, is known as 'Golaragarh.' In this broken palace some pirates lived and they regularly robbed the wealth of *Sadhavas* (Ray, 1975, p.44) Even they killed *Sadhavas* and sailors for wealth. The traditional maritime trade of the Prachi Valley was severely affected by the presence of European merchants and subsequently the maritime trade both inland and overseas countries were started to decline in that valley.

3.7. Decline of the Maritime trade in Prachi Valley

With the downfall of the Gajapati dynasty in the 16th century A.D. along with their political dominance, the maritime trade of the medieval Orissa started to decline rapidly. Due to the domination of foreign merchants in the coast of Orissa, the traditional maritime trade of the Prachi Valley was disappeared in the subsequent period. There was no political power to check the barbarous activities of the pirates and the monopoly attitude of the European merchants in the region of Prachi Valley. The growth of some rigid caste system in society undermined the overseas maritime trade and left it to the *Vaishyas* only. Practically, some natural calamities created a great obstacle for the continuation of maritime activities in the Prachi river. The mouths of river Prachi and some of its tributaries gradually became inactive due to silting, which came from the Bay of Bengal by the direction of wind. As a result of which, the different parts of the Prachi river became dried

up. In the course of time, the river Prachi did not become suitable for navigation. By which the maritime activities of the *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley naturally came to an end. After the close of Prachi river in different places, some of its tributaries like Sola and Baranga in upper part became dry. Kuakhai, the tributary of the Kathjori river was subsequently divided into Kushabhadra, Daya and Bhargavi rivers respectively. The lower part of Kuakhai river i.e. Devi river entered into the Bay of Bengal through the different small streams. Due to these natural obstacles and the advent of European merchants, the traditional maritime trade of the *Sadhavas* of the Prachi Valley was permanently closed for ever.

IV. CONCLUSION

We know from the above discussion that the maritime trade activities of the merchants of Prachi Valley was started after king Kharavela of Kalinga. There is no authentic historical evidence regarding the river Prachi whether it was suitable for navigation or not before Kharavela. There were many *boitakudas* established in different places of the Prachi Valley for the purpose of shelter of maritime boats. Some ports and harbours were also established by the *Sadhavas* of this region for the purpose of maritime trade. Like other regions of Orissa, the Prachi Valley had been carrying on its traditional maritime trade with the different parts of Kalinga as well as overseas

countries till the advent of the European merchants in the coast of Orissa. The maritime trade contacts of the Prachi Valley in the past with the overseas countries had beneficial outcome on the life and culture of the people of coastal Odisha. The economic condition of the *Sadhavas* as well as craftsmen of that region was sound due to extensive trade with inland and overseas countries. On account of the economic solvency of the people through the maritime trade, a glorious civilization was naturally flourished there in the past. The maritime trade of the Prachi Valley was highly developed during the period from 12th century to the 16th century A.D. Really, the natural calamities created a major obstacle for maritime activities in the river Prachi. It naturally affected the maritime trade of the *Sadhavas* of that region. In the course of time, the mouths of river Prachi and its tributaries became dry and covered with sands and silt. By which the Prachi river and its *sakhanadis* did not become suitable for navigation by the traditional *Sadhavas* of that region. Advent of the European Merchants and subsequently occupation of Orissa by the British East India Company led to the decline of the traditional maritime trade in the valley of river Prachi. Introduction of modern transport and communication facilities both in land and seas by the British Authority directly affected the traditional maritime trade (activities) of the Prachi Valley. The daring maritime activities of the brave *Sadhavas* of that period gradually

ceased to exist in overseas countries. In the subsequent period, the traditional maritime trade of the *Sadhavas* of Prachi Valley was disappeared for ever. Really, the vigorous role of the maritime traders (*Sadhavas*) is buried in the development of modern transport and communication facility. Now their spirit of voyage is merely commemorated in the form of different symbolic representations not only in the valley of river Prachi but also in whole Orissa. The floating of paper boats in the *Kartika Purnima* day, the *Akashadvipa*, *Baliyatra*, *Khudurikuni Osha*, *Bhodei Osha*, *Chaitiparva*, etc. are only the symbols of the maritime glory of the merchants of the Prachi Valley of Odisha in Eastern India.

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