

REDEEMING INDIA'S GLORIOUS PAST IN HIMALAYA-HIND MAHASAGAR RASHTRA SAMUH

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Abstract: This article explores the ancient cultural ties of Bharat (India) with other regions of the Himalaya-Hind Mahasagar Rashtra Samuh (the Himalayan-Indian Ocean Region), such as Suvarnadvip (Southeast Asia), Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Nepal, Persia (Iran), Khotan (China) and Arab (Middle East). It also examines the current bilateral relations of India with these regions and the future prospects of enhancing its strategic influence in this region. The article argues that India's intangible cultural heritage is a global civilizational asset that can foster peace and development through civilisational and cultural dialogue. It also suggests that India should leverage its ancient cultural ties and revive its ancient trade and maritime routes to open up new economic opportunities in this region.

Keywords: Civilizations, Cultural Ties, Himalaya-Hind Mahasagar Rashtra Samuh

1.0 Introduction

Bharat is one of the oldest civilizations in the world, having a rich history, spreading over 4000 years, and it has been a melting pot of several customs and traditions since time immemorial. This vast land of seekers and seers had been the genesis of philosophical thoughts, metaphysics and ancient schools of Indian Intellectual Traditions like Sāṃkhya Philosophy, Nyaya Philosophy, Vaiśeṣika Philosophy, Vedānta Philosophy, and Yoga Philosophy and so on. Since, right from the very early period, this land had seen a humongous number of great seekers whose relentless pursuit in unravelling the mysteries of creation, cause and effect, and constant effort to formulate a way of living that proves to be the utmost beneficial for the sustainable existence of life in the utmost harmonious way on a mass level on this planet, resulted in a very rich accumulation of intellectual wealth and as a result this land has an enormously rich history not only in terms of the time period and cultural heritage but also in terms of the magnitude of intellectual and spiritual wealth that has been bequeathed to us by our forefathers.

Bharat has many invaluable gifts to offer to the World and humanity from its enormously vast repository of ancient intellectual and spiritual traditions. After the United Nations had declared 21st June as the International Day of Yoga, giving effect to the proposal of our Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi, the whole world is mesmerised with the amazing benefits of Yoga. It is indeed a priceless treasure from the trove of India's ancient spiritual and cultural tradition to humanity. From Agra to Azerbaijan, Delhi to Dushanbe, Shanghai to Chicago, Jakarta to Johannesburg, Yoga has now become an all-pervading phenomenon, and hence it certainly has become one of the unifying forces of the world. Especially in a time when many parts of the world like West Asia are grappling with humanitarian crisis and trade war, and conflicts have become a daily phenomenon, Bharat with its democratic principles, spiritual ethos and ancient values and traditions, stands for a hope not only in the Himalaya-Hind Mahasagar region but also across the globe. The history of India provides a glimpse into the magnanimity of its evolution - from a country struggling under colonialism, to one of the leading economies in the world just within a span of fifty years.

Since Hind-Mahasagar is not only a maritime boundary but this region also facilitates as a passage for the world's most important Sea Line of Communication for trade, hence this region has enormous geopolitical importance, and being in the centre of this region, it's time India leveraged its ancient cultural ties with other countries in the Himalaya-Hind Mahasagar Rashtra Samuh in order to re-formulate it and revive ancient trade routes and maritime routes to open up new economic avenues. The intangible cultural heritage of India is a global civilisational heritage. This heritage, in this context of Himalaya-Hind Mahasagar Rashtra Samuh, would help maintain a civilizational and cultural dialogue between peoples, societies and cultures. This, in turn, would act

as a powerful catalyst for renewing the strategy of international communities towards peace and development. In this article, we have delved into ancient cultural ties of Bharat with rest of the other regions of Himalaya- Hind MahasagarRashtraSamuh viz. Suvarnadvip ,Ceylon, Nepal, Persia, Khotan and Arab. And simultaneously we have tried to explore the present bilateral relationship of India with these regions and also envision the future prospect in gaining the strategic dominance in this region.

1.1 South East Asia

Ancient India had strong ties with the countries of modern-day ASEAN countries, which can be easily found in every aspect of life, whether in architecture, customs, society, art, tradition, administration, religion etc., of that period. This intermingling found mention in various Hindu and Buddhist texts. The stories of Jatakas, the Katha Saritsagar, the BrihatKatha,theKathakosa and several other ancient texts discuss about a distant land beyond the sea i.e.Suvarnabhumi, which is common thought to refer to the modern South-East Asian peninsula, specifically the Indonesian archipelago, which was ruled byShrivijay empire of Shailendra,in the 4th century A.D. ,the first empire. The account of Dharmapala, a professor at NalandaUniversity in the 7th century, who visited Shrivijay, talks about the trading relationship of Shrivijay and India. I-Tsing's account also substantiates the claim of the bilateral relationship between India and the South-East Asian region. *Varshas* and *Dvipas*, which are geographical divisions of ancient puranic cosmological traditions indicate India's familiarity and intercourses were done by both sea and land route. Tamralipti was the chief port [Tamluk district of west Bengal] for the sea-route, and the passes of Patkai range were for the land route. These intercourses have imprinted an everlasting impact in the life of this region.

Indian Architecture also had a significant influence in the South-east Asian countries. A close imitation of Indian architecture, mixed with new ideas, established the grandeur and remarkable architecture in the forms of temple, stupas etc. Few prime examples are the Shaivite temple of Myson, a Buddhist temple at Dong Duong in Champa, which are closely associated with the architectural contours of the Mamallapuram near Chennai. The Brahmanical temples on the Dieng plateau express remarkable resemblance with the temple of Gupta era. The Angkorvat temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu at Kambuja [Cambodia], the largest temple in the world, built by King Yashovarman, under the counselling of his guru Divakar, conveys the story of Hindu inspiration. Angkor Thom, means NagaraDhamma or great city, the modern city of Yashodharapur built by king Java Varma, the 3rd, is one of the renowned monuments of the world. There are several other monuments,which were the result of the mixer of magnificent Hindu and Buddhist artistic tradition, some of these are Borobudur in Java, the Anand temple in Burma, ChudamaniVihara at Nagapatnam etc.The Sanskrit language was positioned on a high place in that time, and also it was the first language, which reached that region and generally, was used by the upper strata of the society. It was also the language of the court. Discoveries of 30 inscriptions in Champa and 70 in Kambuja, shows a great the popularity of Sanskrit among the masses. Besides this, there are several other discoveries like Kannad-Telugu script in lower Burma, Sanskrit inscriptions of Java Varman discovered at Neak-ta-Dambesdak, etc., which tells us the prevalence of the language.

Brahmanical religion had great influence in this region, which can be noticed by the discoveries of images of Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu in Java and Kambuja. People used to practice a profound spiritual life. Hinayana and Mahayana and tantric forms of Buddhism also found feet in these regions, especially Java, which fascinated many scholars for higher studies such as I-Tsing, Dharmapala and DipankarShrijnana.

These all cultural aspects of South East Asian Nations showcase the instrumental role of Bharat in shaping the ancient culture and society of countries in Hind Mahasagar, especially in the Indonesian Archipelago.

So, India's ancient cultural capital and dominant cultural influence in these South East Asian countries will play a vital role to revamp its bilateral relations with them and given the complex developments in the Indian Ocean region, particularly changes in the security and economic dynamics and to check the China's increasing presence in the Hind Mahasagar region, India's engagements with Hind MahasagarRashtraSamuh should be taken to a new heights where India should have enough strategic discernment to play a comprehensive and active role in regional affairs.

In order to escalate the bilateral ties, India has transformed its Look East policy into a more assertive Act East policy. Under it, India is working on several projects like India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway and the Kaladan Multimodal Project to enhance the maritime and air connectivity between India and ASEAN countries and transforming the corridors of connectivity into economic corridors. Recently, India organized the 10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue, under the theme of "strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation" to discuss the security, political, economic and cultural issues between both the parties.

India is also working on the extension of India-Myanmar-Thailand highway to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. A consensus on finalizing the proposed protocol of the India-Myanmar-Thailand motor vehicle Agreement has been reached, which will be critical for the seamless movement of cargo vehicles and passenger

along roads linking India, Myanmar and Thailand. India is also working on the Mekong- Ganga project, which is an initiative by India and five other ASEAN countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam for enhancing cooperation in culture, tourism, transport, education as well as communication. Both the rivers, Ganga and Mekong, are Civilization Rivers, and this initiative will help develop closer contacts among the people inhabiting these two river basins. Besides this, India is also working with Myanmar and Thailand for IMT trilateral Highway project. This project will connect Moreh district in Manipur to Mae Sot district in Thailand via Myanmar. India has also proposed to extend the highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to project its role in the emerging transportation architecture.

India is also working on the formula of 3C's, formulated by former foreign minister late SushmaSwaraj, which stands for commerce, connectivity and culture. For this India has been organizing a large number of programs to boost People-to-People contact, such as Students Exchange Programs, Special Training Course for diplomats, Exchange of Parliamentarians, Participation of ASEAN students in the National Children's Science Congress, ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks, ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Lecture Series, etc.

1.2 Sri Lanka

The relationship between India and Sri Lanka is more than 2500 years old. Both the countries have a long heritage of intellectual, cultural and religious intermingling. As per Indian Hindu tradition, Sri Rama was the harbinger of Indian culture to Ceylon. As per Sri Lankan chronicles, King Vijay of Bengal overpowered the local king and married his daughter and subsequently became the precursor of the Sinhalese race, on which the name of the island was called Simhala, in 500 BC. Asoka sent his son Mahendra and daughter to Ceylon in 2nd century BC, where they converted DevanampiyaTissa, the then king of the island, into Buddhism and it became the part of the people's lives, which is continued till today. It also holds a high position because the Tripitaka of Sthavir Buddhist sect, written in Pali language, was available only there. Due to Buddhism only, this island managed to unite itself among its diverse hostile races and organized in the social order. Penetration of Hindu culture can be seen in the images of Isurumuniya, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, which all are heavily influenced by Ajanta school of art. This interflow of cultural exchange continued through the ages and got accelerated under present Indian government, thanks to the several programs running under it. (Gokhale, B.G., 1962: 223)

Under SwadeshDarshan Program, Indian railway is introducing a special tourist train, which will visit the places associated with Hindu epic Ramayana. There are 15 destinations under this programme, and Sri Lanka is one of them. This step will increase the bilateral cultural relations between both countries. Similar to this line, the Sri Lankan government has also launched a Ramayan tourism circuit, which will connect all the places associated with the Hindu epic. Manavari temple, Ravan cave, Ashok Vatika, Seetha Amman temple, Divurumpola, Ussangoda, ThiruKoneswaram temple and Kathirkamam are part of this circuit. Besides this, there are several cooperation agreements have been signed between both the countries. Indian Cultural Centre in Colombo actively promotes awareness of Indian culture by offering classes in Indian music, dance, Hindi and yoga. Every year, cultural troops from both countries exchange visits. India offers scholarships to deserving Sri Lankan students, which shows a healthy relationship in the educational field also.

In the economic sector also, the exchanges between both countries are at pace. As India is the fourth leading investors in Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka is India's second-largest trading partner among all the SAARC countries. After signing FTA in 1998, Sri Lanka became one of the prime destinations for the Foreign Direct Investment from India. The ETCA agreement between both countries would also facilitate the exchanges between both the countries.

1.3 Nepal

Uniqueness in both countries is exceptional in many aspects like culture, history, geography social system, etc., which span through centuries. This Himalayan state located on a strategic position occupies a special significance in India's foreign policy. India and Nepal share multiple multilateral platforms; some of them are BBIN, BIMSTEC, NAM, SAARC, and so on. Both the countries share similar ties in terms of Hinduism and Buddhism as Buddha's birthplace, Lumbini located in present-day Nepal.

The Mauryan king Asoka exercised his dominance over Nepal, with daughter Charumati and son-in-law Devapal. Samudragupta also exercised his control over Nepal. The Buddhist philosopher of 4th-century Vasubandhu went to Nepal for the propagation of his teachings. However, Nepal became the real proponent of Buddhist learning under the reign of king Amsuvarman of Lichhavi dynasty in the 7th century. It has become an important site of Hinayana, Mahayana and Tantric Buddhism. Due to the several Islamic invasions of the medieval period, it has also become the resort of many Brahmans and Rajputs to get shelter.

In 1768, Gurkhas founded their rule, and along with this, they introduced Hinduism there and subsequently replaced Buddhism with Hinduism as the major religion. Besides, religion, Hinduism influenced the literature, language, art,

architecture customs, and traditions of Nepal, which can be noticed even today. The architecture and sculpture of Nepal's temples have a remarkable resemblance with the Indian style. There are many stupas and temples of this resemblance; one of them is world-renowned Pashupatinath temple of Lord Shiva, which is revered by all the Hindus of the world. The social system of Nepal imbibed the caste system of the Hindu system only. During some events, like Madhesi issues of 2015 and water dispute over the Kosi River, both the countries have developed a warm relation through ages.

Both the countries share an open border and unhindered movement of people and having a close bond through marriages and familial ties commonly known as "*roti betikarishta*". India is the largest investor of foreign capital in Nepal, along with the largest trading partner.

An agreement for electric rail track, linking Kathmandu with Raxaul in Bihar, has also been signed by both the parties. India is also developing inland waterways for the transportation of cargos, connecting Sagar (Indian Ocean) with Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest). Both the countries are also working on the sister-city agreement, under which pairs of the cities of Kathmandu-Varanasi, Lumbini-Bodhgaya and Janakpur-Ayodhya, would be developed on a similar model.

India always stands for any humanitarian assistance in any natural hazards situations of Nepal, as the country, located on the feet of the Himalayas and, is prone to any untoward situation.

1.4 Central Asia

Though, India has had relations with Central Asia since the 3rd century BC as the nation was on the route of the famous Silk Route only, which was the most trafficked route for the transportation of goods. But the cultural conquest of this region was made after the advent of Kushanas to the power prominence, partly due to their political influence over the region and partly due to the several Buddhist missionaries sent by the king. This intercourse has had a profound impact on the religious life of that region. In Kushanas' reign, Sarvastivada Buddhism was widespread in western Turkistan [west of Gandhara]. Many Buddhist stupas were erected in this period. Buddhism penetrated in many cities like Merv, Khalachayan, Tirmiz and Bokhara etc. of that time and imprinted its mark in the form of Stupas and Monasteries. Hiuen-Tsang, the famous Chinese traveller, also mentioned in his account about the dominance of Buddhism in the region. The archaeological exploration carried out by Sir Aurel Stein in 1908, also unearthed several Buddhist stupas, shrines and monasteries. Besides this, the images of Buddha, Ganesha, Kuber and others were also found.

A profound impact on the language and literature were also noticed. People were not unknown with the Sanskrit and Prakrit language, and this is evident from a number of discovered books written in Brahmi and Kharosthi script of India, discovered in Kuchi, Khotan, Gilgit and several other places. A literary work of Dhammapada in Pali language, a text of Udanavarga and drama of Sariputra-prakarana and Asvaghosa were also discovered. The importance of Prakrit can be noticed by the fact that it was the state language and the Kharosthi was the official script of Khotan and other southern regions. (Chopra, Das & Puri, 1974: 288)

There was also a fine similarity with the administration of the Indian system. The kings adopted several Indian offices such as *Chara* [spy], *Dutiya* [envoy], *Vinatilekha* [secret communication] etc. Around 40 coins, discovered in Khotan, implies that the language and administration used were of Indian origin. (Chopra, Das & Puri, 1974)

According to the ancient chronicle, an Indian empire ruled Khotan for fifty-six generations. Central Asian states adopted many royal features and titles of Indian monarchical government such as MaharajasaRayatirayasa, Sachadhamastidas etc. Many Khotanese Kings incorporated the name "Deva" with their names such as Maharaja Rajatiraja Deva VijitaSimha.

On the line of Indian family structure, Father used to lead the family and get reverence of all other family members. Slaves, both male and female, were treated as commodities. They used Indian words for clothes, such as *asurna* [woolen], *samna* [hemp], *pata* [silk], *charma* [leather] etc. Along this *tandul* [rice], *godhuma* [wheat], *ghrita* [ghee] etc. were used for food.

They also assimilated several Indian names of the professions. In medieval times also, Amir Khusrau, Dehlawi, Al-Biruni, Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan etc. are some names who came to India, from Central Asian routes and marked a significant presence in Indian History.

This region has always held strategic importance in geopolitics, as it always acts as a bridge between Asia and Europe and also, has potential to satiate India's energy requirement as this region is quite rich in natural resources such as petroleum and natural gas. India has also maintained a cordial relationship with central Asian countries to get this objective satisfied.

India has achieved significant success in concluding a trilateral agreement for renovation of Chabahar port. With the development of the INST Corridor and acquiring the membership of Ashgabat Agreement are also some of the examples of diplomatic victory of India. The proposed natural gas pipeline project TAPI, which would run

through four countries, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India, would only better the economic ties of India with Central Asian countries.

India's membership in Shanghai Corporation would also enhance the relationship with countries of this block such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. India's soft power in such as Indian classical dance, music, Bollywood movies, yoga, literature etc. have also played an instrumental role in strengthening its ties. India regularly and frequently arranges cultural events in these countries and also provides scholarships for study in India. There are several programs such as Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation, which provides technical assistance and proper training in areas such as banking, remote sensing and information technology in the leading institutions in India.

1.5 Iran

Indian cultural influence in Iran is little as compared to other spheres. However, traces of religion can be seen back to 3rd millennium B.C. in the sphere of religion and mythology. A more proper evidence of this ties can be noticed, when a mission, led by a Greek named Scylax was sent to the frontier of Gandhara by Darius in 510 BC, and consequently, he conquered the Indus valley and made it the 12th province of his kingdom. According to the account of Megasthenes, Mauryan kings used to lead the life in a Persian way. Similar to the Persian monarch, they also preferred a life of privacy and appeared only at some religious occasion surrounded by royal guards. Chandragupta Maurya incorporated a tradition of 'hair-washing', which was very much similar to Persian ritual called 'Tykta'.

Persian influence in the architecture can also be noticed in the Asokan lion pillar of Sarnath. Mauryan architecture also took the inspiration of using stone in lieu of wood from the Persia. These intercourses were also continued in the early centuries of the Christian era. We get to see the evidence of this exchange from the book *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, which tells us about the exchanges of a number of vessels from Barygaza [modern-day Broach in Gujrat] to the bazaar of Omana, a market town of Persia in that period. (Rawlinson, H.G., 2001: 16-29)

The famous game of modern time Chess, which was Shatranj, was also taken from India to Persia, which went to Arab and subsequently in Europe. *Panchtantra* of Pt. Vishnusharma was also translated into Pehlevi, which was a form of Persian, in the 6th century and eventually into Arabic, Syrian and other European languages. The popularity of Indian medical science in Persia can be evaluated from the fact that Barzouphyeh was sent by the Sassanid king Khusrau I to get the expertise in Indian medicine and science.

According to the accounts of Al-Tabari, a Persian historian of 9th century, Pulkeshin II sent some expensive souvenir along with a letter to the Sasanian ruler Khusrau II, who ruled 36 years in the region in 625 BC. In return, he also received a Persian mission depicted in an

Ajanta cave painting, which also substantiates the claim of diplomatic relations between both the countries in the medieval period. Evidence of two Buddhist monasteries and several brahminical temples were also discovered there. Till the 6th century, Buddhism was a major religion, and the cultural contact between both the regions was frequent, which gradually deteriorated at the end of the 7th century. This region provides India with the shortest access to the Caspian basin and the Caucasus region, which are a vast source of energy resources and in the present scenario, and in this growing hostilities with the countries like China and Pakistan, only through Iran, India can capture the markets as well as the energy resources of Afghanistan and Central Asia.

India is working on the project of International North-south Corridor (INSTC). It is a ship, rail and road route for moving freight between India, Russia, Europe and Central Asia, which was jointly initiated by India along with Russia and Iran in September 2000 in St. Petersburg. This route extends to Bandar Abbas, which is a sprawling port city, located on the southern coast of Iran. Due to its proximity to the Persian Gulf it occupies a strategic position on the Strait of Hormuz. It connects Bandar Abbas with Bandar-e-Anzali by road on the Iranian mainland, which is another Iranian port on the Caspian seaside. Mumbai is the southern hub of this route, which connects with Bandar-Abbas port. Besides this India has also developed Chabahar port, which is a seaport in southeastern Iran, in the Gulf of Oman, and the only Iranian port, having direct access to the ocean. Through this route, India can transport goods to Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan. This port will also ensure India's access to INSTC and eventually promote exports to Iran, Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries. It will also come handy in countering Chinese presence in the Arabian sea, as China developed the Gwadar port at Pakistan under its OBOR program.

1.6 Arab

India's cultural, political and economic ties with West Asia, which includes Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Turkey etc. can be traced back to an earlier time. Through Iran, Indian culture arrived in this region, as several works of Indian literature got translated from Persian into Arabic. Few good examples are *Kalila Wa Dimna* based on famous *Panchtantra*, *Brahmasphuta Siddhanta* and the *Khandakhadyaka*, the famous astronomical and mathematical works of the famous Indian mathematician Brahmagupta of 6th century. (Sachau, 1910: 15-31) Beside this a range

of writings of Chanakya, *Hitopadesha* and other works from logic to magic, were catalogued by Ibn Nadim, a bibliophile of Baghdad, in his of Arabic bibliographic biographic encyclopedia *Kitab-al-Fihrist*, [the book catalogue]. The sermons of Buddha were translated and compiled in Arabic with the name of *Kitab-ul-Budd*, *KitabBalawharand KitabBudhasafMufrad*.¹

In the pre-Islamic period, the commercial interchange was also at a great pace between both the regions. The frequent mentioning of Indian sword of steel in Arabic literature can be taken as evidence. The port city of Aden was a world-acclaimed industry of perfume, which had a massive demand in India. Similarly, Indian spices had a large market in Arabia. Indian merchants also used to attend the annual fair at DabaTabari, based in Oman and was one of the major ports of Arabia in pre-Islamic time.

Besides literature and commerce, there were many travellers, like merchant Suleman who visited India and praised Hindu proficiency in medicine, astronomy and philosophy. Abu Zayed Hasan-ulSayrafi who visited India in 916 A.D., showed interest in Hindu ascetic life. Al Baghdadi has given, in his account, the works of Hindu culture of the 10th century and narrated the theory of avatar along with Bodhisattva, Shiva, etc. (Ferrand, G., 1922: 50-57)

Hindu religious ideas influenced Islam to its core and led to the development of Sufism. Rambling Hindu saint sermonized several Hindu ideas and philosophies during the reign of Abbasid Khalifas. These sermons influenced a large number of Arabic philosophers. One of the examples is Abu-ul-Al-Ma'arri, who got so touched by it, so much so that he transformed himself into a vegetarian and led a life of solitude. It has always been a popular destination for Indians also, especially after the advent of Islam. (Hitti, P. K., 1937: 548-549)

In contemporary time, mutual connectivity has only increased with time. Today Indians are the largest community of expatriates in the region.

The relationship with the countries of this region is very crucial for India as most part of its oil supplies comes from this region only, and also a huge sum of remittances come to Indian economy from this region. In order to cater to these concerns, Modi rekindles the strong ties with West Asia with his policy of look west. Under which, India has taken some bold steps in recent past to better its relationship with the Arabic world, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which were, for a long time were viewed as supportive of Pakistan due to religious reasons and hence was left outside the purview of India's priorities.

Inauguration of the first Hindu temple by Honourable PM Modi in Dubai is the evidence of this new beginning. The growing interests in Indian economic Industry suggest that this relationship will only get new heights in the recent future. The recent visit of Saudi's Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman to India has deepened the strategic and security cooperation between both the countries. Saudi Arabia has also increased the quota of India's Haj pilgrimages by 25,000, indicates this trend. India also got access to strategic Oman port Duqm for military purpose, which would counter the rising influence of China in the Arabian Sea.

2.0 Conclusion

Export of Indian Culture since the ancient time shows its historical significance and political relevance in the peripheral states of Himalayan ranges and the coastal regions of the Hind Mahasagar and projected itself the civilizing force in many backward countries of this region.

Dr. R. C. Majumdar rightly points out that "the history of the colonies demonstrates the unsoundness of the popular belief that Hinduism cannot be adopted by the foreigners but is meant only for Central Asia and South-East Asia, shows the great vigour with which Indian culture and regions could absorb and vitalise foreign culture and could elevate even the aborigines and primitive races to higher and noble sphere of culture and civilization". (Majumdar, R. C., 1946: 223)

India brought to them intellectual and social awakening along with material prosperity. A new dawn of social order, organization, art etc. broke in these countries, with the advent of Brahman and Buddhist missionaries and the traders from India. It not only caused material prosperity in those backward regions but also rekindled the dormant intellect and acumen in the people, which enabled them to attain the heights of achievements without any difficulty.

These ancient ties are gaining the new heights under the able leadership of PM NarendraModi. There are several strategic achievements during his short reign. The unprecedented relationship with the Arab countries bypassing Pakistan is one of these. Modi's receiving of highest civilian honour of Saudi Arabia in 2016 and Zayed medal of UAE in this year, invitation in the inaugural meeting of the 46th Foreign Ministers' Conclave held at Abudhabi for the first time, which was attended by former foreign minister SushmaSwaraj as guest of honour, depicts the departure of Arab world from their traditional approach, which was quite closer with Pakistan.

¹*Ibn-Nadim-ul-Fihrist (Flugal), 305 and Passim.*

Maintaining a cordial relationship with Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia, which have a traditionally antagonistic attitude towards one another, is an excellent example of diplomatic acumen of our PM Narendra Modi.

India's foreign policy is on an upward trajectory, and its stature has grown significantly, and India is projecting itself on a global front as a net provider of security and prosperity. Mr Modi is sending out a strong message to the world that India would not restrict itself to the role of parochial and inward-looking. Policy reforms and latest engagements with the Indian

Diaspora in these regions have only added a force multipliers to India's soft power. Utilizing the platform of BIMSTEC, India is bridging the gap with the neighbours. By harnessing transnational Hindu and Buddhist civilization linkage, only enhanced the economic and maritime relationship, especially in south-east Asia. The inflow of Foreign Direct Investment has increased, and India has also improved its ranking in several Indices such as Ease of Doing Business Index. International Solar Alliance proposed by India has already gained the support of more than 122 countries, substantiate this claim.

India's pursuit for the permanent candidature in UN Security Council has been espoused by many countries of the world, indicates that, India is on its way to becoming a third power centre in the world after US and China. The recent international support, which India received after the abrogation of article 370, pertaining to Kashmir and the announcement of Mashood Azhar as global terrorist also substantiate this claim. In recent time India has done several rescue operations overseas, which indicates the revival of nationalistic resurgence. There are also few challenges for India in its way as, It is losing its eminent position in South

Asia due to some of its decisions in recent past like in Madheshi issue in Nepal, and fading significance of SAARC. Due to which its neighbours are tilting towards China. India should reinvent its role, especially in South Asia by shedding its big brother attitude and bringing all the players together on the platform of SAARC to proclaim its leadership not only in the region but also in the world. Due to proximity to the US, there is a rising trust deficit with old ally such as Russia. India should increase its global power while maintaining the cordial relationship with old allies.

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