

Mobility and Migration of Indians to Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The paper presents the evolution of cultures from the footprints to highways through the ages between India and Sri Lanka. It focuses on the theoretical aspects of mobility of people, ideas and culture through the land, and covers movements of the Indians to Sri Lanka in the pre-modern period. It identifies four phases of Indo-Sri Lankan cultural exchanges. Sri Lanka appears in the full view of the history of India through the prism of the Ram Katha dating back to about 6th-5th century B.C. in The Ramayana but the nucleus of the story goes back to a hoary antiquity not computable in historical time frame. Later, the relations find firm and crystallised historical perspectives during the times of Ashoka (3rd century B.C.) when his children visited Sri Lanka to propagate Dhamma. This is the first recorded encounter between India and Sri Lanka. This legendary historical mission had accelerated the process of migration and mobilisation of people along with ideas and culture in all its aspects on a wider scale. This movement was further accentuated by the visits of the Chinese pilgrims in a wider frame (c 4th-7th centuries). The movement of ideas now became three directional from China, India and Sri Lanka. Cultural and missionary exchanges became vigorous, diversified and meaningful. Further encounters between India and Sri Lanka became more politically pronounced during the Pallava- Chola periods of history in addition to economic and cultural relations. A strong political formation took shape in India and Sri Lanka. The political adventures of the Cholas were multi- dimensional incorporating trade, goods, and naval expeditions through Sri Lanka to South- East Asia. The upshots of the Cholas military expeditions to Sri Lanka were of far reaching economic and commercial consequences. This movement culminated in vigorous cultural and political formation from India, Sri Lanka and South- East Asia. The proposed paper analyses interaction between India and Sri Lanka which led to deep and sustained assimilation of ideas, cultures and people at multifarious levels viz. art forms, literature, establishment of monasteries and monuments in a synthesised manner. The sea lanes of the Indian Ocean in and around Sri Lanka scripted altogether a new phase of exchange of ideas and routes which is present in Sri Lankan history. Evidences of theoretical models i.e. flag follows missionaries, flag follows trade and flag follows sword as envisaged by Colin Renfrew are noticeable in different periods of time.

Key Words: *Assimilation, Migration, Indo Sri Lanka, historical perspective*

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