
Kaliprasad Khorap: Sea Piracy by European Traders and Its Impact on Shipping Industry of Odisha

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***Abstract:** The name of the story is derived from the ship's name Kaliprasad Khorap. Kaliprasad name is usually given to human child but here the ship turns into a child whose name is given the similar manner. This is a story of eighteenth century India when Odisha had a prosperous people with a high degree of urbanization. All these disappeared with the decline of shipping industry and salt industry. It is a critical moment in Indian history that Indian shipping Companies got threatened by the European Companies. Here the story talks of the threat of these powers against Kalinga Shipping Companies operating in Indian Ocean. Shipping industry in India was very much developed during the 18th century. They used to compete with the European powers in the domain of shipping industry. They used to carry commodities like rice pottery, cotton and iron etc and returned back with some commodities required by the people of Odisha.*

***Key words:** Kaliprasad Khorap, Piracy in Sea, Phiringi or European traders, Shipping Industry etc.*

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Introduction

It is a story where the shipping magnates held a meeting and decided to confront the all-white races. While ships used to move in sea they confronted the piracy against them by the white pirates. It is interesting to note here that piracy does not happen only for wealth but it is a part of power relationship. It is an instrument of power struggle between the European powers and Indian States. The powerful countries having control over the ship building activities and navigation of ships do not approve the smaller countries are getting involved in navigation of the ships. It is a part of their

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cultural world view that they are the masters of the navigation of ships and others were ignorant of it. It is a question of sovereignty as after the Mughul power got declined and there was a transition from the Mughal to Maratha to East India Company and they feel convinced of the world situation that the acquiring of power and sovereignty does not operate now with any nation except upcoming East India Company or other European companies operating in the Indian Ocean, There were Dutch, French and Portugal companies working to dominate in Indian ocean. It is a critical moment in Indian history that Indian shipping Companies got threatened by the European Companies. Here the story talks of the threat of these powers against Kalinga Shipping Companies operating in Indian Ocean.

During the Mughal period Odisha was a prosperous state and it had trading business with South East Countries. With the trading their economy and society turned more prosperous which is an eyesore for the European powers. As told by a traveller to Indian regarding the well developed foreign trade in India reproduced here. “The reason for the great wealth of India is this, that the country is well watered, well peopled and well cultivated. It has many mines of gold silver and other metals. The thing human beings need is clothing and India produces such textiles as are not to be found in any other country. Other necessities too are produced in abundance in this country. Every year the ships that depart from Indian ports of other countries are filled with different kinds of commodities from India and return filled with coined money. The ships that come from the Great Ocean., South - East Asian ports to India exchange commodities for commodities they do not take away any coined money from India.”

The Text of the Story

Economic Prosperity among the Rural Masses

The shipping industry of Odisha brought the prosperity among the rural masses. The rural rich belonging to Khandayat caste started owning the ships and the potter community exported pots turned prosperous and the fishing community works over making chudda or flattened rice acquired little bit prosperity. This brings overall prosperity around the rural masses. During the eighteenth century there was a class of industrialists or Mahajans in Odisha who used to control over the ship industries and in navigation of ships. They did not face the challenge from others owners of the ships from different states of India. But from the piracy of European powers who went on attacking the ships owned by the Odiya Mahajan. Furthermore the Mahajan is a different category of people who do not hail from trading class of people like Bania, Teli or Sundi etc who get involved in trading in traditional economy of Odisha. These Mahajans came from the cultivating Khandayata Caste who invested their agricultural surplus in industry. It seems that the trajectory of Odisha history would have been different if the Maratha rule and British rule would not have happened. The rich peasantry belonging to Khandayat went for industrialization like the Europeans in the late medieval period.

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Their activities in shipping and salt improved the economic status of all other communities including the fishermen to potter community. Million people got benefited from the activities related to Salt industry and shipping industry which resulted in investment of social surplus produced in agriculture to go for industry and the laboring masses got benefited from these activities. But all these got ruined by the Maratha rule by their plundering approach against the local rich and the policies affecting the industries by the colonial state.

Piracy by the white

The attacks on the ships from Odisha by the European pirates created havoc in social economic life of people. While the ships from Balesore and other ports got raided by the white pirates and this got discussed among the shipping magnets of that time. The man who survived from the attack on their ship told in detail that these white pirates were known as Phiringi and they were strong and well-built and armed. They attacked their ships and killed some of them and allowed others to remain in prison.

Before the Britishers renamed Sutanati as Calcutta there was a port town known as Sutanati and from Balesore port the ships used to go to Sutanati of Bengal which later renamed as the city of Calcutta. The shipping industry was highly indigenous and one can find the Odiya words for each part of the ship and those working in the ship as crews. This explains the development of language comes with the economic growth.

Darkest Phase

Odisha faced darkest phase in its history after the 1866 famine. Millions people lost their lives. Its identity got questioned. There was an attack over the identity. Its language and culture were under the attacks. It had no territorial nationalism. Economy, Culture, Identity and political nationality all connected with each other. People of Odisha confronted such a gigantic problem. How to confront it turns into a million dollar debate in cities of Odisha? In the debate Fakirmohan Senapati as an intellectual and leader of renaissance finds the answer. That lethargy of Odiyas is the real problem and it needs to be broken first. He gave an answer to the problem that only way to concentrates on reading which can create an answer. It is a long drawn revolution. People must start with reading. This is the time young entered into schools and college who took his advice seriously and they started reading classics in English and Odiya. Garudi mantra the story carries the meaning of Senapati's advice to young students.

Decline of the Shipping Industry

The shipping industries confronted the piracy in ocean by the most powerful white races and which made Odiya businessmen disinterested in sending their ships to move to South East Asia and

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Sri Lanka. The industrialists held discussion among themselves whether they would pursue their shipping business or close forever. The white race threatens them but they decided to go for business with the British as they argue that they were the Brahmins among the white race. The Brahmins behave in a vegetarian manner and go to the river Ganga to take bath whereas other races like Portuguese and French do not follow the Brahminic values. The British behavior charmed them and they decided to have business with the British who controlled the Sutanati which went for making of Calcutta. They exported the rice and cotton to them and their payments were quick and they did not dilly dally the payment. This made them convinced that their ships would do business with the British at Sutanati.

Fishing Community

The fishermen are the original inhabitants on the sea coast and they prospered as the boatmen and fishing. They produce the Chuda for which they have some expertise. This makes them a multi functional community. They adopted the Buddhist religion and later most of them maintain some autonomy within Hinduism as they do not worship the deities of Hinduism and they have their own gods associated with sea. Most of them are landless people but live on share cropping and selling fish.

Potter Community

The potter community is the first artistic community who produces the pottery in various designs. They remain as the property less people. They are given land on lease by the landed elite for supplying the pots. The community suffers today as the landed elite have withdrawn their land and they remain as poor and poverty stricken. With the coming of the Brahmin landowning community they employ the pottery community as agricultural labour not the Dalit labour.

Blacksmith Community

Iron ore got exported in the ships and here the blacksmiths played critical role in extraction of iron ore and they had technical knowledge in production of iron. The engineering activities in traditional society got handled by these two communities. They were small in number but highly productive/ They got discriminated by the high caste Hindu society and they moved away from the main village and started living in a separate cluster of houses.

Prosperity of Peasant Community

The peasant society has undergone transformation because of additional income coming from the foreign trade. Trading helped the rice to be exported from the coastal Odisha in general and Balesore

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specifically. The alluvial soil helps in agricultural production without disruption. The story goes that one year production sustains three years of consumption. All these activities improved the income of peasant society and as surplus rice got exported. Furthermore production of cotton improved their level of income.

European Imperialism

The European business class used their illegal means including the piracy in ocean to stop the navigation of the ships; this story turns into a text against imperialism before they ruled over Indian subcontinent. They apply all tricks to conquer India, including piracy in sea against the ships doing business. That is the strength of any country where economy determines the freedom. Trading in Ocean created hope and despair and the European powers started controlling it by using terrorist methods. By sending pirates to the ship and used the friendship of the crews of the ship as an alibi to enter into their world. They arrested their crews and their captain and they killed the captain. They took them to an island in ocean and kept them in prison. This is a terrible experience of people involved in navigation who are peace loving people.

The dialogue among the shipping magnets tell us that they are ready to work with Britishers as they are Brahmins among the Europeans. They give an example regarding a manager of the Company goes to take bath in the river Ganga in Sutanati and never eats the non veg and a vegetarian. This is the way the British influences the Indians as the Sanskritisation process works here among the industrialists. (Srinivas 1966) Defining Sanskritization Srinivas writes, "Sanskritization is a process by which a lower caste or tribe or any other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a higher or more often twice-born caste." This Brahminic behavior of British business man impresses the Odiya industrialists. They decide to work the British no other European powers. They exhibit the hatred against the others like Portuguese and Dutch company. Their shipping industries get ignored by them. It is a prelude to British imperialism in India.

Sociology of Shipping Industry

Out of eight ship industrialists Shri De chaired the meeting, the king of Balesore and other seven are a part of Khandayat community who owns the ships. In the meeting chaired by De who has eight ships and others have four to five ships. Their main source of income comes from the shipping business and the ships carry the various commodities too far off places like Srilanka and Indian ports of the South Coast and in the East Sultanate the port on the river Hugli later named as the city of Calcutta. In the meeting the proposal to cancel the shipping business because of the imminent threat from European pirates in the South Coast Ocean. All of them were known as Phrygia and as they look alike and most dangerous of them were Portuguese who sent the pirates to their ship carrying rice and pot to Srilanka. The crews got abducted from the ship and sent to the prison of a small

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island owned by the Portuguese. One of them in disguise came out of the prison and entered into a ship going to Dhaka. It took six months to reach Balesore coming through jungles and mushy earth.

Gamachha Symbol of Servility

The crew Hagu wearing a gamuchha on his shoulders bowing down to each ship owner and narrated the story of piracy in sea. It is the symbolic sign of lower rung person to speak before the rich and powerful. Carrying gamuchha before the audience makes one sober and gentle. “ Four ships moved together from the port. We waited three days for tide in the river to move out of the port. One went to Srilanka and another to Colombo port. Another two went towards Sutanati in north. Ships moved ahead in day and night as the atmosphere was smooth. In one day we found a ship rushing towards our ship. After reaching our ship the white pirates reached our ship . They stopped their ship because it was a tradition of supporting the other ships in ocean. We expected the ship coming towards us needed our help. Those came to our ship were well built and five feet height and fair looking people. They had red eyes and drunk heavily and there was a smell of liquor coming from their mouths. They started running around the ship. They carried the swords with them, they were speaking in some hip hip language, Our captain wanted to know from them something but they did not allow and they beheaded our captain. They caught all of us in teeing us with the rope..They picked us to their ship. They kept us inside the room of the ship and gave us little food flattened rice. We refused to eat and they hit one of us with their boot and he fell down and died after two days. We threw him into the sea. Their ship stopped in a port but actually it was an island which owned by them. They kept us in prison. A lot of sailors from other ships were tied and kept in their prison. Their captains and crews we tried to remember but it was difficult to pronounce. Some of their names we remember such as Captain Malpica, Jukarta, hagri Buse, Mister Decsta. “ In answering to Mr De he replied they were white people most probably they were Portuguesa. Their king also came to commit dacoit which was a rare thing.

Kaliprasad the Ship

Hearing the attacks from sea pirates over the ship and killing of crews and captain of the ship broke Shri De. The Kaliprasad with the full of commodities turned into a big loss. This ship had a history that the day it started from the port and it reached the Sutanati in a day. The ship had six thousands quintal of rice and two thousands quintal of iron and clothes costing two thousand rupees. The English merchants demanded to have better quality of rice. The cost of the rice came around 11 Anna per quintal of rice. My family members including children were fond of the Kaliprasad so much and he decided to send iron in the ship instead of wood. They used make the coloured flags to hoist on the ship mast. With the advice of Govinda he sent the ship to Batabi port instead of Visakhapatana.

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Decision taken by the Association of Industrialists

All the ship owners had a proposal to discontinue the shipping business but after discussing in detail they found it that it was unwise to discontinue the business. Their investment in ships is so huge they could not allow their ships to remain in the port without doing work, one proposal was to go to south only and another proposal was to go to the Sutanati of Bengal. Another proposal was to work with only British not the other European powers. All these proposals got discussed among them and in the end they decided to go to Sutanati as the British working there. In the end they decided to deal with the British not with other European powers. It was accepted by all the members and some of them supported the social behavior of the British merchants who behaved like the Brahmins as they used to visit the river Ganga and take bath and offer the puja

Perception of the British

The British were as a community Mlechha and they ate the beef and liquor. But they were sons of the Lakshmi . while dealing with customers they deal fairly and they did not create hitch hitch. Their payment was very fast and done quickly. The other European powers would be pushed out of India then they would be all join the piracy.

They pirates were not English people and they were the ‘ *Phatua gai jati*’ they were the Portuguese. The owners of the ships were aware of the existence of many nations in Europe like ours. French English . They were interested in having a working relationship with the English people.

On the level of perception that the English people drink a lot when they did not have work. Their two ships were lying in the port of Balesore and they did not have people to pull the ships as labour was expensive there.

In their meeting the resolution got passed that they would work with the English people not other European powers. They had a close association with the Sutanati and Indian people from different communities started opening their offices here and had houses here. The English company had started functioning from here and they had employees belonging to Telugu who started working from here. Around the fort they had built a canal by which the Marathas could not enter inside the fort.

Conclusion

Shipping industry in India was very much developed during the 18th century. They used to compete with the European powers in the domain of shipping industry. They used to carry commodities like rice pottery, cotton and iron etc and returned back with some commodities required by the people of

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Odisha. They confronted the European companies working in Indian Ocean who used all means to terrorize them, It brought general prosperity of rural masses and it created the centres of urbanization such as Balesore, Cuttack etc. The piracy by the Portuguese threatened their works as mariners and it ended in the death of the industry.

Notes &References

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