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## Indian Footprints Abroad

The impact of Indian civilisation over a large number of countries beyond its borders has not been adequately highlighted. At times it has been totally misrepresented due to ignorance or design.

A Western historian, Stanley Lane-Poole, for example, observes, "The inhabitants of the vast and populous countries of India seem to have been doomed, from the earliest times, to be the prey of every invader who came upon them from the north; while they, on the other hand, never made any conquests of any importance, at least in historical times, beyond what are considered as the natural limits of the country – the Himalaya mountains and the Indus." In a country where even the images of gods and goddesses are shown as holding some weapon, it is unimaginable that their devotees have no guts to fight.

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He further says in *Medieval India – Under Mohammedan Rule 712-1764*: “During the Hindu period, which may be considered as reaching down to about the year one thousand of the Christian era, all India was subject to races of men ...” and mentions “the ancient in-roads of the Persians and the Greeks...” (p. 402).

It is amusing that when Darius takes a couple of districts in the north-west, and Alexander the Great while pursuing the Persians takes over that Persian satrapy, it is called as conquering “all India”. Having taken that Persian province ruled by King Porus, Alexander exhorts his soldiers to attack India, the ‘Golden Bird’, but they refuse. For one thing, after a prolonged campaign, they were tired and homesick. Secondly, they said that in India even women wield weapons to safeguard their sovereignty.

On Lane-Poole’s observation that the Indians had never gone beyond their borders we may point out that even in pre-historic times the Hindus crossed the Pacific Ocean and reached Americas. In the seventh century BC they went to the east coast of Africa, as also to Ceylon. In the first century BC/AD they conquered Funan and Java and spread over the entire region of Southeast Asia where their reign lasted for more than 1200 years – the ‘doomed’ people who ‘never made any conquests of any importance.’

With the advent of the Buddha, the religion he propagated spread far and wide from Greece, Egypt, and Afghanistan in the West to Central Asia, Mongolia, China, Japan and many parts of Southeast Asia.

Let us now elaborate and substantiate with authoritative references what has been recapitulated above.

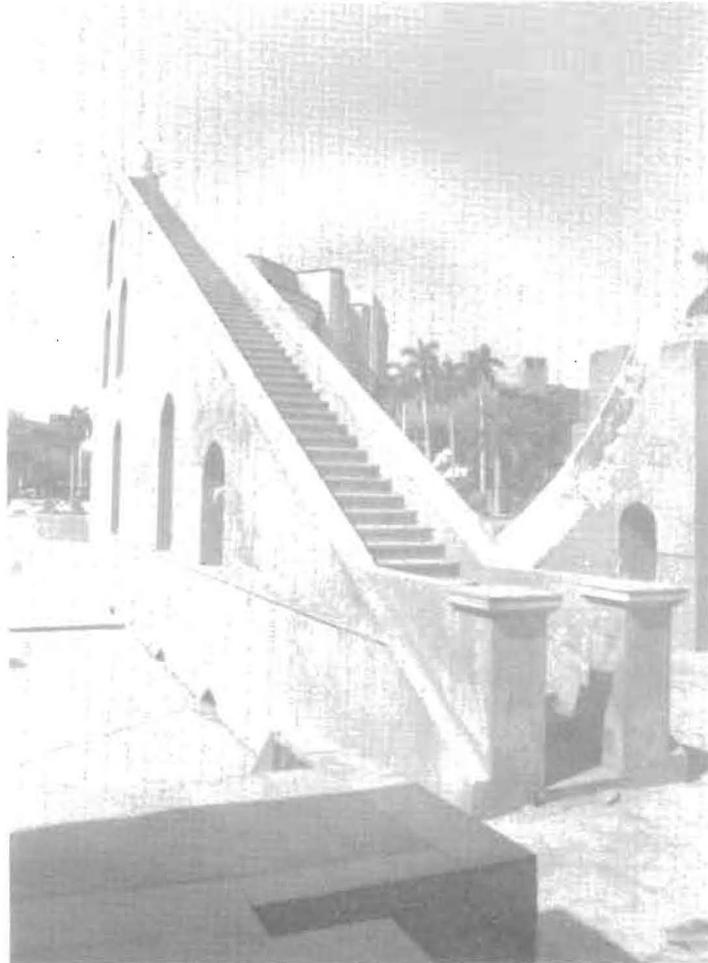
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## Indians in Mexico

The earliest visits of Indian Hindus were to Central and South America where they founded the Maya, Aztec and Toltec civilisations and iconography. At Uxmal, Yucatan (Mexico), there is a huge staircase of more than 50 steps with a dilapidated room on the top. As it defied all descriptions of any modern or ancient building, the Spanish inhabitants refer to it as 'House of the Magicians.' Actually, it is an astronomical instrument constructed by American 'Indians' to calculate time. Modern research scholars say that these 'Indians' possessed 'awesome knowledge' of astronomy and mathematics. *Jyotisha* - or astrology and astronomy – is as old as the *Vedas*. The *rishis* (seers) studied the subject and formulated rules in terse short sentences called *sutras*. These were memorised and passed on from one generation to another.

The first book on the subject was written by Maharishi Lagadha and was called *Vedanga Jyotisha*. Opinions differ about the date of its composition. Prof. Max Muller puts it as 300 BC, Colebrooke 1410 BC, and Prof. Whitney 1338 BC. Based on this book, astronomical instruments were devised and observatories raised. The Hindus who left for the Americas carried this knowledge with them and built these 'Equatorial Dials' which were referred to by some locals as 'pyramids', 'House of Magicians', and so on. Almost an exact copy of the Uxmal 'House of Magicians' can be seen at the Jantar Mantar observatory built by Maharaja Jai Singh of Jaipur in 1724. It is known as *samrat yantra* or equatorial dial which indicates local time, Meridian Pass time – to an accuracy of 12 seconds – zenith, distance, altitude and declination.

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Brihat Samrat Yantra – constructed by Maharaja Jai Singh of Jaipur at the Jantar Mantar group of astronomical observatories at New Delhi.



The so-called 'House of Magician at Uxmal' (Yucatan) in Mexico built by Red Indians bears a striking similarity

Most of the modern historians have also come to the conclusion that such similar structures have been put up by Indians who came from Southeast Asia. Sir Robert Marett in his book entitled *Peru* (London, 1977) thinks that their ancestors “did come from Asia although not from the East Indies.” (p.57)

Analysing the physical features of the Yucatan Mayas, Sylvanus G. Morley points several similarities with the East Asians. These are: a) epicanthic eye-fold which is an internal fold of the eye very characteristic of eastern Asiatics; b) the Mongolian spot – a blue or purple spot at the base of the spine; and c) the line patterns on the palms of people of both the regions. Morley says in *The Ancient Maya* (Stanford University Press, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., 1947) that judged by such ‘basic criteria’ as stature, colour, head shape and hair, “all Maya speaking groups would seem to have sprung originally from the same common ancestral stock” (p. 23 & 25).

He adds that Mayas had “awesome knowledge of the movements of the heavenly bodies, ability to predict eclipses, the appearance and disappearance of Venus from the eastern and western skies” (p. 264). For making such calculations, the detailed knowledge of mathematics is essential. Morley points out that “...positional Mathematics and the conception of zero which it involves had been developed but once in history, namely by the Hindus who devised the decimal notation with its numerical symbols about the eighth century of the Christian era” (ibid, p. 275) (although it was devised by the Hindus many centuries earlier than the eighth century). Norman P. Wright in *Mexican Kaleidoscope* testifies to the astounding knowledge of Mayas of “mathematics including the use of zero” (p. 9).

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At Quirigua, Izabal in Guatemala, there is a temple of God Zoomorph. The fine frieze is a perfect representation of the *Kurma Avatara* (tortoise incarnation) of Lord Vishnu of the Indian mythology. The cross-legged lotus posture is typically Indian, so is the face, except for the variation of slightly slanting eyes. The artistic embellishment of the crown worn by the God, reflects the style as later found in the Amaravati friezes in India. The American Indians also have a pantheon of gods and goddesses as among the Hindus of India. There is even a goddess for child-birth – Ixchel, wife of Itzamna, head of the Mayan pantheon, not heard of in India.

According to Donald A. Mackenzie, India was the ancient homeland of Polynesians who left India in the fourth century BC. He says in *Myths of Pre-Columbian America* that “they were not only daring but expert mariners, and even after settling on the coral islands of Oceania, continued to set out on long and adventurous voyages of exploration” (Preface, page iv).

He traces in the chapters that follow “many links between the Old and New Worlds” and thinks “none is more remarkable than that afforded by the American story of Yappan which so closely resembles in its essential features, a characteristic Hindu myth found in the *Mahabharata*” (Preface, p. viii). He elaborates the story in Chapter XIII.

He continues, “With that piece of evidence alone a good circumstantial case is made out for the transference of pre-Columbian America of Hindu modes of thoughts, Hindu myths and deities and Hindu religious practices, coloured somewhat by influence to which they had been, subjected on the way between India and America...” (Preface, p. viii)

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He begins the third chapter entitled, 'The Indian Elephant in American Art', by quoting Bancroft who says in *The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America*, (London, 1876, Vol. V) "There is not the slightest ground for supposing that the Mexicans or Peruvians were acquainted with any portion of the Hindoo mythology; but since their knowledge of even one species of animal peculiar to the Old Continent, and not found in America, would, if distinctly proved, furnish a convincing argument of a communication having taken place in former ages between the people of the two hemispheres..." and then mentions animals like rhinoceros and elephants found mostly in India.

Another conclusive evidence of the migration of Indians to Americas is the presence of cotton plant. Zenaide A. Ragozin says in *History of Vedic India* (1984, p.33) that "the cotton plant in ancient times was found only in India." Wilfred H. Schoff asserts in *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (Reprint 1974, p. 71) that "cotton is native in India and woven into cloth by the natives of that country before the dawn of history."

The well-known British historian, J.W. Hewitt, late Commissioner of the then Chota Nagpur of India, specifically mentions that "the Indians had gone to America...they (Sca Kapina) came from India to America, for cotton is an indigenous plant of India, first used for weaving purposes in India and China" – (*The Ruling Races of Prehistoric Times, Vol II, 1894, p. 263*).

On reading my article, 'The Enigma of American Indians', in the November 11, 2002 issue of *Migration & Diffusion* published from Vienna (Austria), Graeme R. Kearsley drew attention to his book *Pacal's Portal to*

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*Paradise at Palenque.* In that book he speaks about the discovery of Palenque in early nineteenth century located in the dense tropical forests of South East Mexico in the state of Chiapas. A Frenchman, Frederic Maximilien Waldeck, inspired by engravings of the site by Ricardo Armendariz took residence in Mexico City as the Count of Waldech, set about collecting rare books on the subject, and visited the ruins in 1831.

Waldeck's conclusion on the origin of the builders of Palenque is "that it was culture-bearers from Chaldea and the Hindus of India who were responsible for its construction and iconography." Chaldea, incidentally, is a distortion of 'Choladesh' established by the Aryan Panis settled in South Deccan of India ruled by the Cholas. In ancient times, they had migrated to a place between the deltas of Euphrates and Tigris rivers at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Kearsley has written two other books – *Inca Origins* and *Mayan Genesis* in which he discusses in detail that the Incas were from India.

In the opinions of many scholars from different countries, there appears to be little doubt that the Hindus of India had gone to Americas in pre-historic times and founded several civilisations. There were several waves of immigrants to that region; and at least one must have gone from India who had an "awesome knowledge" of mathematics and astronomy.

By carefully observing the phases of the sun and the moon from their stone observatories – mistook as 'House of Magicians' – the Mayans then independently worked out the length of a tropical year as 365.24 days, and that of a month as 29.52 days! None else but the Hindus of India could have made such accurate calculations.

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### **Route Taken by Indians**

Some explorers are of the view that the route followed by the early Indians to Americas was via the Bering Straits (Sir Robert, p. 32; R.H.K. Marett, p. 40). The seafarers would have hugged the shores of China for a short distance, gone along Japan, Kurile Islands, Kamchatka and then crossed the Bering near the Arctic in the late glacial times. It is also possible that there was a chain of islands connecting Polynesia to the western coast of South America and they might have preferred to sail on high seas across the Pacific Ocean.

### **Other Voyages**

There are authentic records to show that Indians had established trading centres on the East coast of Africa as well as on the island of Sukhrara (Socotra), in the Gulf of Aden, and in Madagascar.

About the same time the King of Kalinga of Singha dynasty - which had then included some districts of Bengal and Andhra Pradesh - banished his son from the kingdom. The Prince, Vijaya Singha, sailed south in the Bay of Bengal with his followers and their families. According to Pali works like *Mahavamsa* and *Rajavalliya* dealing with the history of Ceylon, he approached the shores of Ceylon from the southern side.

Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji, says in *A History of Seaborne Trade etc* (1962) that "the date of Vijaya's landing in Ceylon is said to have been the very day on which another very important event happened in the far off fatherland of Vijaya, for it was the day (in 543 BC) on which the Buddha

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attained Nirvana.” The Prince was welcomed by the people. He married a Veddha Princess and as a result of this union, their progeny came to be known as ‘Singhalese’ (‘The Lion Race’). The Veddhas were the earliest authentic inhabitants of the island known for their immense vitality, inventiveness and enterprise. As far as can be ascertained, this was the earliest permanent Indian settlement in the islands of the South seas.

It appears that at that time Ceylon was considered as a tourist paradise. The well-known Greek author, Homer, gathered his material for that part of his *Odyssey* (speaking of Ulysses and Circe) from the eastern mariners recounting the legends of *Taprobane* as the Greeks referred to Ceylon. *Taprobane*, according to Tresidder, comes from the Sanskrit meaning ‘the great pond’ or ‘a pond covered with red lotus’. The Arabs called it *Serendiv* or *Tenerisim*, the ‘Isle of Delight’. The Chinese referred to it as Pa-on-tchow, the ‘Island of Gems’.

### Hindu Kingdoms in Southeast Asia

After a few centuries, a Hindu missionary called Kaundinya travelled to South Asia and set up a kingdom at Funan, which roughly corresponds to modern Kampuchea. The Queen of the country, Liu-ye, ‘Willow Leaf,’ wanted to pillage and seize the ship but Kaundinya shot an arrow which pierced through her ship. Frightened, she gave up the battle, and Kaundinya took her as his wife. *The History of Liang Dynasty* confirms that Kaundinya was an inhabitant of India.

Kaundinya is a very important name in the history of Greater India. It will spring up again and again in various places where his descendants

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ruled. The kings of other countries took pride in tracing their connections with him to claim royalty. Kaundinya and his successors ruled over Funan for about 100 years. The last king handed over the care of his affairs to his great General *Fan Shih-nan*, in short, *Fan man*, identified as Shri Mara mentioned in the Sanskrit stele of Vo-Canh in what is now known as South Vietnam, the region of Nha-trang.

He was brave and attacked the neighbouring kingdoms who all became his vassals. He himself took the title of the Great King of Funan. He built large ships and, says the French historian, G. Coedes, in *The Indianised States of South East Asia* (Honolulu, 1968) : "Sailing over the immense sea, he attacked more than ten kingdoms including those of Ch'u-tu-K'un, Chiu-chih, and Tien-sun. He extended his territory five or six thousand *li*" (p. 38) (1000 *li* = 400 kms). In the third century AD, "Funan conquered nearly all the Malay Peninsula viz. the Indianised States of Tamralinga, Pan Pan and others" (R. Le May : *The Culture of South East Asia*, 1954 p. 112).

Thus, starting from the southern tip of the present Cochin China, the Funan kingdom moved to the Delta of *Mekong* river and gradually extended over modern Kampuchea, Annam along with the valley of the *Menam* river and down into the Malay Peninsula.

At the end of the fifth century AD, a descendant of Kaundinya for the first time carried the Indian honorific suffix 'Varman' and called himself Kaundinya Jayavarman. This Prince sent his merchants to Canton along with a Buddhist priest Nagasena seeking the help of the Chinese Emperor to subdue the King of Champa.

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Jayavarman was a great King, held in high esteem by the Chinese Emperor. On the occasion of the embassy of 503 AD, an Imperial order says: "The King of Funan, Kaundinya Jayavarman, lives at the limits of the ocean. From generation to generation he and his people have governed the distant lands of the South. Their sincerity manifests itself afar; through their many interpreters they offered presents and homage; it is fitting to reciprocate and show them favour and accord them a glorious title. That is possible with the title of General of the Pacified South, King of Funan."

The Great King of Funan died in 514. Funan was the dominating power on the peninsula for five centuries. Even after his fall, the memory of his glory echoed in the corridors of history. The kings of pre-Angkorian Cambodia regarded it as an honour to relate their origin to the Kings of Vyadhapura, capital of the kingdom.

About the same time, another king named Sri Vijaya established his kingdom at Palembang and acquired great eminence in the seventh century AD. In the Far East, Borneo was reached as borne by the discovery of the seven Sanskrit inscriptions in the districts of Kotei, observes R.C. Majumdar in *Hindu Colonies in the Far East* (1973 p.21).

According to Javanese traditions, the Hindus founded the state of Java in 56 AD. The Hindu hero is said to be Aji Saka who claimed his lineage to a king of *Mahabharata*. It is said some soothsayers had predicted the destruction of Gujarat. The King therefore sent away his son to Southeast Asian countries. As no news was received about his safety, he sent another fleet of ships to find out his whereabouts and the people reported his safe arrival in Java.

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Then rose the Shailendra empire in Indonesia which reached its high water-mark of grandeur and glory in the eighth century AD. The two kingdoms of Palembang and Central Java remained on friendly terms but after 775 AD, Shailendras wrested the Ligor region from Sri Vijaya. They established their authority over the Malay peninsula and in 782 AD ascended the throne of Java. "During the last quarter of the eighth century AD, the Hindu Kingdom of Sumatra, Java and Malay Peninsula have all to succumb to, or at least feel the weight of, this new power," says R. C. Majumdar.

The Arabs called Shailendra as Zabag Maharaja. Masudi (943 AD) was lavish in his praise for the power and prosperity of the Maharaja. He said, "Kalah in north Malay lay within his realm and was the focal point where the ships of Oman and Siraf foregathered. The capital of the Maharaja at Palembang was lined with shops displaying all kinds of commodities." He added, "this King is in possession of more kinds of perfumes and spices than any other king." According to him, his empire was so extensive that "no one, even with a ship of utmost speed, can go over all the isles, which are all inhabited, in less than two years".

According to Buzurg (tenth century), another Arab writer of repute, Palembang possessed a magnificent bay much wider and more secure for shipping than that of Basra. Idrisi (1110-66) gave another reason for the unprecedented prosperity of the kingdom during the tenth and early eleventh centuries. About that time, China was involved in a civil war for about a century (879-979) and many of the merchants carrying on business there thought it prudent to transfer their trading activities to the kingdom

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of Zabag. They were impressed “by the fairness, good behaviour and gentle manners of the natives, and also owing to the excellent opportunities for trade.”

Thus, the Hindu kings ruled over a major portion of Southeast Asia for more than 1200 years. They gave good governance to the local people, maintained law and order, and developed industries. They never treated the regions they occupied as ‘colonies’ and spent what they earned on the welfare of the people and building beautiful temples. They did their best to bring peace and prosperity to the region and the traces of their magnificent rule are still there for any visitor to see.

Angkor Vat, for example, is an embodiment of Hindu religious pantheon. Whereas on the mainland there had been occasional estrangements between the followers of Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu – the Saivaites and the Vaishnavites - in Angkor Vat temples one may see both of them together, with an occasional Buddha thrown in between.

The entire group of temples spreading over an area of about 10,000 acres is a picture of harmony and beauty. At times you may find a huge face – as if of a benign throbbing stone – looking down upon you, at others you may see a fine filigree stone carving like a jeweller’s piece.

Initially, these temples were built during the reign of Suryavarman II in the early twelfth century AD dedicated to Lord Vishnu; later, several additions were made. They are constructed in the classical style of Khmer architecture. The *shikhars* and domes look like lotus buds. Miles and miles of galleries are decorated with the images of Hindu gods and goddesses sculpted in relief or round. When the French explorer, Henri Mouhot,

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wading through vegetation growth, suddenly discovered the group in 1866, he was wonderstruck.

### **Advent of Buddha**

Buddha was born in the seventh century BC as Prince Siddhartha. He was the son of King Shuddhodana and Queen Maya Devi who reigned in Kapilvastu at the foot of the Himalayas in North India. Siddhartha was married to Princess Yasodhara and had a son named Rahul.

Although he was kept amidst luxurious surroundings he managed to find out that the human life was full of sorrows and miseries. He stood against the rigid Hindu caste system and was perhaps the first protestant of the world who denounced all scriptural authorities, including that of the *Vedas*. He renounced royalty and left his family for forests in Bihar (then called Magadha) to find a way to end all human miseries.

After following strict discipline he attained Enlightenment and came to be known as Buddha – the Enlightened one. He laid down an eight-fold path involving right thinking, right conduct, right action, right livelihood and so on. He advised his followers to avoid extremes and take to middle path. His teachings became very popular and spread to distant countries.

Asoka the Great, in the third century BC, declared Buddhism as state religion and thereafter it was propagated with a missionary zeal. He sent his own son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Sri Lanka to teach the tenets of Buddhism to royalty.

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The Buddhist missionaries also reached the Southeast Asian region to spread the message of their Master. According to Dr. Stutterheim of the Dutch Archaeological Department, Mahayana Buddhism was introduced into Java by Princess Tara, the daughter of Dharmapala, King of Bengal. She married Prince Jayanasa of the dynasty of Sri Vijaya, which intensified Buddhist influence in Indonesia.

It may be surmised that Princess Tara inspired the construction of the Borobudur Buddhist stupa. Sir Stamford Raffle says in *History of Java*, that a fleet of ships landed 5000 immigrants from India in 603 AD which included many artisans and artists. The chief architect of the stupa was an Indian named Guna who was assisted by the locals and some Indian artists. The construction was ready by 750 AD, the like of which is not to be seen on the mainland India, or anywhere else in the world. It is a fusion of the architecture of India and Indonesia incorporating the essence of Buddhist doctrine.

Borobudur stands on a carved lotus pedestal of 350 feet square around a natural mound rising 100 feet, in eight terraces. The first four terraces are decorated mainly with the images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. The fifth terrace is a pedestal to rise to the spiritual path of Enlightenment. The remaining four are therefore severely restrained almost ascetic, signifying the Buddhist advanced practice of Mahasatipatthan. Grousset counted no less than 436 niches displaying large statues in the lower rungs having three-mile long galleries lined on either side with carved bas-reliefs of over 1500 incidents representing the 'complete' Buddha in plastic art form.

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In the spread of Buddhism there was a two-way traffic, that is, not only the missionaries went out to other countries but many earnest students came to the birthplace of the Buddha to study treatises like *Suttapitaka* comprising five *Nikayas*. Some of them stayed for many years at places like Nalanda, copied many books and took them home.

One of the most noted Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Xuanzang, among many others, reached India in 630 AD and spent fourteen years visiting Buddhist temples and monasteries. Apart from being a devout monk he was a keen observer of men and matters and has left behind fascinating account of India's history and geography during the reigns of King Harsha (609-642 AD), Chalukya ruler Pulakesin II (609-642 AD) and Narasimhavarman I of Kanchi (630-638 AD).

He met many learned scholars and was often invited by kings and distinguished persons to teach the Buddhist doctrine, which resulted in fruitful interaction. He returned to China with 657 volumes of sacred texts! He spent his final years translating and interpreting those texts making a unique contribution to Buddhist literature.

To honour Zuanzang, an international seminar was organised in India in January 2003 in the Golden Jubilee year of the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara. On that occasion, the Xuanzang Memorial, as a symbol of Indo-Chinese friendship, was handed over by Government of India to the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara.

The philosophy of Buddhism has spread along the entire Silk Road running from Mongolia, via Central Asia to Afghanistan. It has followers

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in China, Japan, Southeast Asia, Egypt and Greece. The popularity of *Milinda Panho*, or the questions of Milinda or Menander of Greece, clearly establishes the hold of Buddhist thought over the Indo-Greek monarchies. It is likely, observes Sardar Panikkar, that Ashoka sent his missionaries to the Greek dynasties of Bactria, Egypt and North-west Frontier.

The late Dr. Raghu Vira, a polyglot untiring traveller, discovered thousands of manuscripts pertaining to Buddhism at various sites, including Mongolia. These are now with his son Lokesh Chandra of Delhi.

The shocking destruction of the seventy-feet high cliff-face friezes of Bamiyan Buddhas by the Talibans in Afghanistan has pushed the subject into limelight. The UNESCO has to acquire more teeth to firmly stop such destruction of human heritage everywhere in the world.

Discussing the artistic motifs and styles of these Bamiyan colossi and other statues, Marilyn M. Rhie says that chronologically they cover a period between the second and the seventh centuries AD which include the Kushan-Gandhara sculpture. Closely similar to these is the splendid Buddha of Kham Zargar near Kapisi, also in Afghanistan. She thinks that the pattern of rib-like folds of drapery in several Buddha figures was derived from Dalverzin-tepe Buddhist Temple no. 2 in South Uzbekistan constructed after the first half of the second century AD. The territory of Gandhara then included Peshawar (Purushapura), valley of the Kabul river, Swat, Buner as well as the western portions of the Punjab between the Indus and the Jhelum rivers.

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### **Buddha in Central Asia**

There are many other Buddha statues in Central Asia which show that at that period Buddhism had a complete sway over the region. At the Pingling cave in the Kansu province is the standing Bodhisattva of the late fourth century.

On the domed ceiling of Cave GK 21 at Kumtura, there are 13 standing Bodhisattvas painted in trapezoidal panels. These caves are in Kucha province on the Northern Silk Road in Eastern part of Central Asia. The Indianization of Khotan, Kucha and other areas in Central Asia is confirmed by the great mass of Buddhist literature discovered by several expeditions.

At Nan-shih-k'u, Cave I houses colossal standing images of seven Buddhas, north-west of Ch'ang-an, a great city on the main commercial route in North Central China. There is a standing clay Buddha statue from New Cave I at Kizil belonging to the sixth century and some paintings at Tun-huang in Cave 263 and Cave 254 belonging to the fifth century AD.

Some of the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China – as also of the Central Asian region – have therefore in their bosom many secrets of Indian art and culture which await further research and investigations. These constitute the heritage of human race, which need to be preserved lest some fanatics destroy it.

Thus, the Hindus of India, it is well established, crossed the Pacific Ocean in prehistoric period and went to the Americas. There they founded

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several civilisations and the research scholars are trying to trace the mysteries of their art and iconography.

In the seventh century BC, they set up trading centres on the east coast of Africa, and went to Sri Lanka to launch the great Singha Dynasty. They established a Hindu kingdom in Funan – modern Kampuchea – and conquered many adjoining countries, and islands like Borneo – *Varhina Dvipa* - and Celebes.

Wherever they went, the local people had their own culture and traditions and there was a free give-and-take. They seldom exploited the natural resources of the countries they ruled and always tried to raise the living standards of the people, and enrich the region.

The Buddhist missionaries, particularly after King Asoka declared Buddhism as State religion, went far and wide to propagate the message of peace and non-violence of their Master. The entire area extending from Japan in the East to Egypt in the West, traversing China, Mongolia, the Central Asian region and Afghanistan, is studded with Buddhist literature and statues of the Buddha.

The contribution of India is succinctly summarised by the French savant, Sylvan Levi, who says, “From Persia to the Chinese Sea, from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceana to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales, her civilization; she has left indelible imprints upon one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries...”

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