

India Indonesia

Legacy of Intimate Encounters

Edited by
Gautam Kumar Jha & Son Kuswadi



India–Indonesia

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India-Indonesia
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Preface

EARLIEST Indian contacts with Indonesia were established centuries before the Christian era. Suvarnabhumi (Sumatra) is mentioned in the Jatakas, in the Hindu epics as well as in *Mahavamsa*. However there is no sequential documentation or are facts available for the same. Indian traders who mainly traded with Indonesia for spices, sandalwood, pearls and *rudrakshas* (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*) were instrumental in establishing links between the two countries. A recent DNA analysis of a tooth found in the imported pottery in Bali points to the presence of Indian traders in the region during the late first millennium BCE.

There are evidences to show that starting from 3500 BCE till 500 BCE there was active trade between the two countries, and Balinese were buying large amount of Indian pottery. It is also clear that during the later phase, traders who mostly made their travel through sea, brought Hindu priests with them and slowly intermingled with the locals who accepted the same without any resistance. However, there are instances of Indian traders having married the locals and bringing priests with them thus helping in the spread of Hinduism. It is also evident that Indian kingship and the contemporary governing system attracted the local rulers who adopted it to acquire greater power by citing that the king's status was at par with God. Hindu religion and culture were accepted throughout Java, Bali and Sumatra, and so were Buddhism, and finally Islam which entered Indonesia through Sumatra. All these three religions, i.e. Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam,

came to Indonesia from India. The impact is so pervasive that entire Indonesia, for example, Java, Bali, Sumatra and Kalimantan exhibit traits not differing from the mainland India. India is not only the source of spiritualism for Hindus and Buddhists of Indonesia but Muslims also see India as somehow part of the Indian cultural fraternity.

India and Indonesia have experienced very close historical and civilizational relations, which was actively fostered from the ancient times to sixteenth century CE. During the Indonesian freedom struggle, its leaders were very much inspired by the anti-colonial views of Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and others.

Indian National Congress had opposed British moves by expressing its resentment over the use of Indian resources, both human and material, against Indonesia and favoured the crusade for decolonization. Jawaharlal Nehru said:

We must insist that no Indian troop is used against the government of the Indonesian Republic and that no material of war is sent from India to help the Dutch government. We must help Indonesians wherever we can.

While expressing strong solidarity with Indonesians, he stated,

I should like to convey Dr. Sukarno that if I can be of any service to the cause of Indonesian freedom, I shall gladly visit Java in spite of the urgent and important work in India.

During the post-colonial period, the bilateral relations passed through an incoherent phase coupled with confusion and misconceptions. None the less, well-wishers in both the countries worked hard to bring the derailed train back on the track. The Look East Policy efforts initiated by the Indian government during the 1990s enabled India to participate actively in the South-East Asian affairs and happily Indonesia has proved one of the greatest allies in realizing the overall objectives of this policy.

Indulging our research more on cultural relations we think that both the countries can make stronger base in order to improve their existing interactions in other fields of bilateral cooperation.

Gautam Kumar Jha
Son Kuswadi



AMBASSADOR
REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
NEW DELHI



MESSAGE

The present book *India-Indonesia: Legacy of Intimate Encounters* is a culmination of the second and third days of the International Conference on India-Indonesia Bilateral Ties, held during 18-20 November 2013, where a constellation of scholars from both the countries presented papers and indulged in academic discourse to converge our efforts to forge stronger bilateral ties between the two nations. At the three-day international conference, the course of discussions happened over a range of diverse topics — politics, strategy, social, religion, art and culture.

I think the present work is significant as it could serve as a guideline for both the governments to respond to the need of the people and realize the same by bringing various policies in order to understand each other better and bring both the countries as close as possible.

As both nations aspire to fly high amid numerous challenges it is easier for us to identify such challenges and work to resolve the roadblocks for the welfare of the common people.

I congratulate Prof. S.K. Sopory, the Honourable Vice-Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU); Prof. Aslam Islahi, the Dean, School of Languages, Literature & Culture Studies, JNU; Prof. B.R. Deepak, Chairperson; Dr Gautam Kumar Jha, Centre for Chinese & Southeast Asian Studies, School of Languages, Literature & Culture Studies, JNU; Dr Eng. Son Kuswadi, the Education Attaché of the Indonesian Embassy, New Delhi; and Mr Hammam, the President of the Association of Indonesian Overseas Students, New Delhi for the success of this conference. I would also like to thank and congratulate all the participants for their enthusiasm and interest which contributed to the success of the conference.

New Delhi
16 April 2014



Rizali W. Indrakesuma

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>Message</i>	xiii
— <i>Rizali W. Indrakesuma</i> , His Excellency, the Ambassador of Republic of Indonesia	
1. When the Elders Faced God: State Policy and Theravada Revival in Indonesia	1
— <i>Saumyajit Ray</i>	
2. The Typological Characteristics of Bahasa Indonesia	21
— <i>Pradeep Kumar Das</i>	
3. Culture, Not Cash-based Tourism: A Case Study of Bali, Indonesia	39
— <i>Gautam Kumar Jha</i>	
4. The Palm Leaves Balinese Calendar: Reflection of Cultural Ties between India and Indonesia	52
— <i>Bachchan Kumar</i>	
5. The Rituals in Javanese Mystical Movement: The Subud Brotherhood	62
— <i>Asfa Widiyanto</i>	
6. Hinduism and Rituals in Bali	75
— <i>Gautam Kumar Jha</i>	

7. Monuments in Indonesia as Sites of Nation Building 87
— *A.S. Gayathiri*
8. Impression of Indian Culture on Indonesian Dances 98
— *Laxman Singh*
9. Colonial Legacy of Education in Ind(ones)ia 105
— *Kashyap Deep'ak*
10. From Arabian Trade to Peaceful Coexistence: Journey of Islam in India and Indonesia 120
— *Mohammad Saleem*
11. Wayang Kulit: An Extraordinary Art of Indonesia 131
— *Raveesh Rajanya*
12. Rabindranath Tagore and Ki Hajar Dewantara 147
— *Supardi*
13. Understanding Various Nuances of Languages and Linguistic Diversity in Indonesia and India: A Systemic Functional Perspective on Language as Social Semiotics 157
— *Susanto*
14. Hinduism in Indonesia: A Historical Study of Religio-Cultural Cross-Fertilization in Ancient Traditions 172
— *Umesh Kumar Khute*
15. A Comparative Discourse on Muslim and Hindu Preaching Texts 180
— *Hammam*

16. Revisiting Tagore's Java Journey: A Tour Undertaken to Explore and Restore Lost Ties 203
— *Anurima Chanda and Siddhartha Chakraborti*
17. Budaya Kesantunan Berbahasa Dalam Pembelajaran di Kelas: Penelitian Etnografi Komunikasi di Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Universitas Negeri Jakarta 216
— *Muhammad Yazid A.R. Gege*
- List of Contributors* 246

When the Elders Faced God

State Policy and Theravada Revival in Indonesia

Saumyajit Ray

FROM the time the secularist ideal sought to separate church and state, religion, by default, emerged as a potent social institution, a serious (even original) claimant for the allegiance of the people. Secularism was seen by large segments of scholarly and lay opinion as an assault on the church. At various times, this assault was sought to be reversed by public movements aimed at providing a scriptural basis to the laws made by the state.

Indonesia, as the largest Muslim nation on earth with a stimulating Hindu and Buddhist past, found in monotheism an inspiring political ideal; belief in One God (though not the same God) was found necessary to unite the population as One People. Accordingly, such belief was made a primary requirement in the state policy of *pancasila* (five principles). After the failed communist coup in October 1965, official monotheism was reiterated by the rulers. It was not because Islam, the majority religion, was a rigidly monotheistic faith, but because the attempted coup by communists made godlessness complete anathema to Indonesian society.

This presented Buddhism, one of Indonesia's ancient religions, with a dilemma: it was silent on God, but to continue to be recognized as an "official" religion in the country, it had

to officially profess belief in one. Buddhism, from the reign of King Bimbisara during the *tathagata's* lifetime and that of Devanamapiya Ashoka (both of Magadha) to those of the Ceylonese kings (beginning with Devanamapiya Tissa), had always received state patronage. Nowhere was it required to modify the *dhamma* in order to obtain official recognition.

Theravadi monks from Sri Lanka and Thailand were in the forefront of the Buddhist revival in Indonesia in the beginning of the twentieth century. Faced with the monotheistic *pancasila*, it was now necessary to preserve the sanctity and purity of the *dhamma* as laid down in the Pali canon. The *theras* were found in the forefront yet again.

Rules of Monastic Discipline and the Emergence of Theravada

Immediately after the *tathagata* attained *mahaparinibbana* at Kusinara (modern Kushinagar), a monk named Subhadda, who joined the Order at his old age (not to be confused with Subhadda, the *tathagata's* last convert) started to rejoice. Now that the Buddha had passed away, he declared, monks belonging to his Order could throw off the shackles of discipline and start enjoying life. Alarmed at such open display of indiscipline, Thera Mahakassapa, the seniormost elder (*sanghatthera*) among the monks, decided that it was high time that the Buddha's philosophy (including the rules of discipline for the *sangha*, the formal monastic Order) was compiled and finalized. In the presence of 500 qualified monks was thus recited, compiled and arranged the Pali canon, in the Magadhan capital Rajagaha (modern Rajgir) during the reign of the once rabidly anti-Buddhist monarch Ajatasattu.¹

¹ Kanai Lal Hazra, 1981, *History of Theravada Buddhism in South-East Asia with Special Reference to India and Ceylon*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, pp. 25-26. Wilhelm Geiger, 1912, *Mahavamsa: The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, Delhi: Asian Educational Services (repr. 2003), pp. 14-18.

This threefold Pali canon, better known as the *Tipitaka* (Three Baskets), was first put into writing in Ceylon during the reign of the Sinhala monarch Vattagamani Abhaya around 80 BCE.² It consists of the *Sutta* (Discourses), *Vinaya* (Rules of Discipline) and *Abhidhamma* (Philosophical Doctrines). The Ceylonese *viharas* (monasteries) have succeeded in preserving the sacred Pali texts in the same manner in which they were compiled and formalized. Considering that the origin of the *Tipitaka* was Magadha, this is a commendable achievement indeed.

A hundred years after the Buddha's *mahaparinibbana*, controversy arose when the Vajjian monks at Vesali (modern Vaishali) began insisting on a relaxation of the rules of monastic conduct. They had already introduced certain observances which were anathema to the conservative group of *theras* (elders). The elders refused to permit even the slightest deviation from the *vinayas* (rules of monastic discipline) finalized at Rajagaha nearly a century back, and threw the deviant monks out of the *sangha*. The expelled monks revolted. They convened in large numbers (10,000) in a council (*mahasamgiti*) in which they formalized their schism with the *theras*.³ Henceforth, the Vajjian monks who had deviated from the Pali canon were called the *mahasamghikas*, as different from the orthodox and conservative elders (*theravadis*).

During the reign of Ashoka, the Devanamapiya Piyadassi, controversy arose yet again when the elders found the monastic order infiltrated by insincere monks, and they refused to perform the *uposatha* (cleansing ceremony marked by fasting and recital of scriptures) with them. The "insincere" monks,

² Narada Thera, 1942, *The Buddha Dhamma or the Life and Teachings of the Buddha*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services (repr. 1999), p. 81.

³ Anukul Chandra Banerjee, 2006, "The Theravada School of Buddhist Thought" in A.K. Narain (ed.), *Studies in Pali and Buddhism*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, p. 20. Geiger, op. cit., pp. 19-25.

for whom the yellow robe was more important than the rules of conduct, were an influential lot. They instigated the monarch against the elders. The monarch, already a hothead, executed many of the elders who, till their last breath, insisted on adhering to the *vinaya*. Ashoka later regretted his action, and convened the Third Council under the presidency of Thera Moggaliputta Tissa at Pataliputta, the new capital of Magadha.⁴

Thera Moggaliputta, who authored the *Kathavatthu* (Points of Controversy, one of the seven books of the *abhidhamma*), purified the Order by expelling the “insincere” monks, and convinced the monarch to send religious missionaries (*dhammaduta*) to many lands outside Jambudipa (Skt Jamdudwipa or India). One of those sent was Thera Mahinda (Skt Mahendra), the son of the monarch. The country chosen for his missionary activity was Lankadipa (also known as Tambapanni, modern Sri Lanka).⁵

There is no doubt that Piyadassi Ashoka had extended official support to Theravada, its doctrine, and its monks and nuns. By sending his son to Sri Lanka as a *dhammaduta* accompanied by a branch from the sacred *bo* tree (to be planted in the newly-converted island), he became the first royal sponsor of *theravadi* endeavours. Even as Thera Mahinda won the island of Tambapanni for Theravada, it was actually his father Dhammashoka who was the real winner. Without the backing from the Magadhan throne and Ashoka’s influence over Devanamapiya Tissa, the Sinhala (Pali Sihala) king, converting Tambapanni to Buddhism would not have been possible.

⁴ Geiger, op. cit., pp. 26-50.

⁵ Reginald Stephen Copleston, 1908, *Buddhism Primitive and Present in Magadha and in Ceylon*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services (repr. 1984), p. 196. Hermann Oldenberg, 1879, *The Dipavamsa: An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services (repr. 2001), p. 160.

Buddhism in Indonesian History

Buddhism is one of the ancient religions of Indonesia, the only faith apart from Hinduism with roots in India. Founded by Gotama Buddha, a Sakyan prince who renounced the throne and the good life and took to monasticism while still in his thirties, this religion neither accepted the existence of a soul (*atta*) or that of a Supreme Being (*paramatta*) as the centre of creation nor regarded its founder as an incarnation (*avatara*) or messenger of God.⁶

Emphasizing the need to get rid of worldly attachments (*upadana*) as the way to overcome suffering (*dukkha*), the Buddha laid down the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya atthangika magga*, consisting of Right Understanding, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Endeavour, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration) leading not only to cessation of all suffering but also to total emancipation from the cycle of birth and rebirth and achievement of complete bliss (*nibbana*). This he declared in the very first discourse he gave at the Deer Park in Isipatana (modern Sarnath) near Varanasi, popularly known as the Discourse to Establish the Wheel of Righteousness (*Dhammacakkappabattana Sutta*). The Buddha was seen by his original followers as an extraordinary teacher who preached his doctrine (*dhamma*) for the salvation of mankind.

As memorized, recited, compiled and formalized by his disciples, the language of the *dhamma* was Pali. In fact, it was in Pali that the *tathagata* is believed to have spoken to his disciples. Theravada (Doctrine of the Elders), the oldest and most puritan of all branches of Buddhism, draws its authority from the sacred Pali canon.

The Buddhism that was introduced into Indonesia during historical times, on the other hand, was largely non-Theravada,

⁶ Narada Thera, op. cit., pp. 176-81.