

Tamil–Korean relationship

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1.0 Preamble

“India and Korea are not such distant countries. They are countries long bound by commerce and intermarriage. And in this instance of marriage between the young royalty of India and Korea, Buddhism was formally introduced to Korea - certainly a matter demonstrating significant transference” states Professor Kim Byeongmo of the department of Anthropology and Archaeology at Hanyang University, in his book entitled “Kim Byeongmo's Archaeological Travels: Heo Hwangok's Route, from India to Gaya” [1]. Parthasarathi, the past Ambassador of India in Seoul and author of a novel based on the old legend of an Indian princess marrying a Korean prince, pointed out several similarities between Korea and India such as Buddhism, Hinduism, respect for the elders, etc., Further he observes that the two countries in the past few decades have failed to renew this old friendship [2].

The ongoing transformation of Korea-India relations is not a coincidence but has roots in their common values and interests. First, Korea and India, as two great countries of Asia, share the principles of democracy and market economy. Second, these countries are key members of the Asian economy, the most dynamic and fastest growing economic region of the world today. India as one of the 'BRIC' countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) is progressing towards becoming a major economic power of the world. Korea, since its successful recovery from the Asian currency crisis of the late 1990s, has emerged as an engine for economic growth and vitality. The current economic scenario opens new vistas for closer cooperation. Since the early 1960s, South Korea has achieved an incredible record of growth and integration into the high-

tech modern world economy. Four decades ago, its GDP per capita was comparable with levels in the poorer countries of Africa and Asia. In 2004, South Korea joined the trillion dollar club of world economies. Today its GDP per capita is equal to the lesser economies of the EU. The areas of strongest development have been shipbuilding, semiconductors and consumer electronics, the automobiles, textiles and steel [3].

India and Korea established diplomatic relations in 1973. Bilateral trade was \$9.17 billion in 2006 and exceeded \$10 billion in 2007. The development of bilateral relations in the field of foreign direct investment (FDI) is an exemplary model for other countries to emulate. While most nations were lukewarm to India's economic reforms and liberalisation in the early 1990s, Korean companies demonstrated their confidence in the fundamentals of the Indian economy and its growth potential by investing in a big way. That is why Korean companies like Samsung, Hyundai and LG are now household names in India: their products have found a place in many homes, illustrating the confidence of Indian buyers in Korean goods. Korean companies in India are not only producing for the local market, they are also exporting these products, creating a 'Made in India' brand in the global market. It is even more heartening to note that hitherto one-way investment flows from Korea to India are gradually acquiring a two-way dimension: recently, Korea's Daewoo Commercial Vehicles was acquired by Indian automobile company Tata Motors [4].

In a most prophetic way Rabindranath Tagore the well known Indian poet and Nobel Laureate wrote about Korea in his poem entitled “The Lamp of the East” which was published in the Dong-A Ilbo newspaper in 1929 which turned out to be true eventually [5].

*In the golden age of Asia
Korea was one of its lamp-bearers
And that lamp is waiting to be lighted once again
For the illumination in the East.*

Thus it is timely to focus on India-Korea relationship not only from an economical point of view but also from historical, cultural and linguistic point of views. The purpose of this paper is to do so and bring these two economical powers of Asia closer for mutual prosperity.

2.0 Historical links

2.1 Silk Road

Ancient India had considerable trade links with the Middle East, Europe (Greece and Rome) and China. This trade was carried out over land partly along what came to be alluded to as the silk route and partly through maritime trade. By the time of Pliny, the Roman historian, Roman trade with India was thriving, and indeed creating a balance of payments problem for the Roman Empire [6]. In South India, which had a thriving maritime trade, Roman coins even circulated in their original form, albeit slashed at times as a gesture disclaiming intrusions of foreign sovereignty? [7] India maintained close trade and cultural relations with China. India exported coral, pearls, glass vessels and beads to China. In return, India got jade and silk from China. During the course of this trade, Chinese merchants and traders brought thousands of Chinese coins to India which was sometimes used as money. Archaeologists have discovered Chinese coins in many places such as Mahabalipuram and Tanjavur in India. These Chinese coins are made of copper or bronze. They are round and have a prominent square-shaped hole in the centre. These coins were cast in moulds. The coins bear inscriptions in the Chinese script [8].

The earliest record of the presence of Chinese and Europeans (Yavana) in India was mentioned in Mahabharata chronicles (c. BCE 3139? or 600-700) [9] and in an Indian royal wedding in Ramayana (c. 450 BCE) epic [10]. This flourishing trade was mentioned

variously in Sangam and post-sangam (Bakthi) period of Tamil literary history [BCE 40 to CE 600][11]. William Colenso, a missionary explorer in New Zealand found a bronze bell among the Ma-ori tribes in 1836 with Tamil inscriptions (Mohoyideen Buk's ship's bell) indicating Tamil trader's presence in the far east Asia [12]. The spread of Buddhism in South East and Far East Asia was essentially through the silk route established earlier by traders [13]. Though Korea had its own identity in history during this time, there were times when it existed in truce with mighty Chinese dynasties in the past. Hence, it is assumed that when ancient Indians refer to China, it most probably included Korea as well.

2.2 Korean Legends

2.2.3 Korean Myth of "Dan-Gun" and Indian Parallels

The legend of "Dan-Gun, First King of Korea" is narrated in Samguk Yusa [14], a Korean text written by a monk, Iryon (1206 AD-1289 AD). In this Old Book (which is sometimes referred to as the Old Testament of Korea) it is written, *"In ancient times Hwan-in (Heavenly King, Chesok or Sakrodevendra) had a young son whose name was Hwan-ung. The boy wished to descend from heaven and live in the human world. His father, after examining three great mountains, chose T'aebaek-san (the Myohyang Mountains in North Korea) as a suitable place for his heavenly son to bring happiness to human beings. He gave Hwan-ung three heavenly treasures, and commanded him to rule over his people.*

With three thousand of his loyal subjects Hwan-ung descended from heaven and appeared under a sandalwood tree on T'aebaek Mountain. He named the place Sin-si (city of god) and assumed the title of Hwan-ung Ch'onwang (heavenly king). He led his ministers of wind, rain and clouds in teaching the people more than 360 useful arts, including agriculture and medicine, inculcated moral principles and imposed a code of law.

A person familiar with Indian mythology will easily find parallels here. The heavenly father is referred in this myth as *Sakrodevendra*. The God with Chakra and the word ‘*Deveendra*’ applies to the primordial supreme God, often cited by Vedas as Narayana. According to Srimad Vikhanasotpatti Caritram (ஸ்ரீமத் விகனஸோத்பத்தி சரித்ரம்) Narayana created Vikhanasa and gave him the celestial knowledge of governance (Vaikhanasa agamam) which is practiced even today by priests in India [15]. The ministers such as Earl Wind, Chancellor Rain and Chancellor Cloud that are referred in the Korean myth are also the elemental powers that governed ancient Tamil landscape (Ainthinai – ஐந்தினை) [16]. It is said that when Dan-Gun passed on his throne to the next King he became what is known in Korea as a San-Sin or Mountain God and many religious rites are still performed today to Mountain Gods as it is for Lord Muruga in Tamilnadu.

The myth further tells us that “*In those days there lived a she-bear and a tigress in the same cave. They prayed to Sin-ung (another name of Hwan-ung) to be blessed with incarnation as human beings. The king took pity on them and gave them each a bunch of mugwort and twenty pieces of garlic, saying, 'If you eat this holy food and do not see the sunlight for one hundred days, you will become human beings.'*

"The she-bear and the tigress took the food and ate it, and retired into the cave. In twenty-one days the bear, who had faithfully observed the king's instructions, became a woman. But the tigress, which had disobeyed, remained in her original form.

"But the bear-woman could find no husband, so she prayed under the sandalwood tree to be blessed with a child. Hwan-ung heard her prayers and married her. She conceived and bore a son who was called Tangun Wanggom, the King of Sandalwood.

It is not uncommon in Indian myths where animals transform into humans and vice versa. In fact, Bhagavatham, the well known Hindu chronicle on Krishna narrates a story where Krishna married a bear woman called Jambavathi, which matches well with this Korean myth. Thus it is important to note that the origin of Korean people is strongly linked to India.

2.2.4 King Suro and the questionable Ayuta

The legend of the Indian princess is narrated in Samguk Yusa [14]. It is set in the Kaya kingdom in the first century CE. It says that the area, in the south central Korean peninsula, was first ruled by nine elders, but there was no king. *One day, a voice spoke from heaven at a place called Kuji. A few hundred people gathered there, along with three elders. The voice instructed them to go to the top of the mountain, dig up some earth, dance and sing a song, now known as Kujiga. They did as instructed and a plum-coloured cord descended from heaven.*

At the end of the cord was a gold chest and when they opened it, they discovered six golden orbs. The elders brought the chest home and the next day they opened it to discover that the orbs had transformed into a baby boy.

The boy grew quickly and reached a height of nine feet. When the moon waxed to its fullest that month, the boy - who was now called Kim Suro (Kim means gold) - came to the throne of the land that was named Kaya. After two years he built his own palace and ruled from there. When the nine elders encouraged the king to take a bride he refused, saying that heaven had sent him to be king and heaven would take care of his marriage as well.

At that time in India, Huh Hwang-ok was a princess in 'Ayuta'. In Iryon's text, the princess says that she was 16 years old when she reached Kaya, that her family name was Huh and her name, Hwang-ok.

The princess narrates the circumstances leading to her marriage to King Suro thus: "In May this year, my father and mother said, 'We had a dream last night, in which we saw a God who said, I have sent down Suro to be king of Kaya. Suro is a holy man, and is not yet married. So send your daughter to become his queen'.

Huh is said to have arrived in Kaya, along with her brother Po-ok, on a ship with a red sail and red flag, bearing treasure and gifts. When she was presented to the king, she told him of the dream and the king knew immediately that this was heaven's chosen bride for him.

They were married in 49 CE and the queen was greatly loved by all her subjects. She is said to have lived to the grand old age of 156! The couple had 10 sons and two daughters. Two of the sons were named Huh after their mother's family name and the rest were called Kims, after King Kim Suro.

Looking at this story one finds several parallels in Tamil mythology. The 'Kuji' mountainside is referred in ancient Tamil literature [16] as 'Kurunji' and the prayer song "Guha, Guha" is practiced even today in Tamilnadu. Kujiga could mean Kurunji Ganam or the song of the mountains. It is not a simple coincidence that the first Kingdom of Korea is named after Gaya where Buddha attained Nirvana. Interestingly a venerated monk Jangyoohwasang narrates that King Suro constructed Chilbul Temple, or "The Temple of the Seven Buddhas," in celebration of his seven Buddhist monk sons reaching Nirvana. According to Professor Kim Byeongmo, these are pieces of evidence indicating that Buddhism reached Korea far earlier than many believe, as the Gaya Kingdom existed around the turn of the last millennium [1].

The Kaya kingdom's influence is still felt in modern-day South Korea. Kimhae Kims and Kimhae Huhs trace their origins to this ancient kingdom and Korea's President Kim Dae Jung

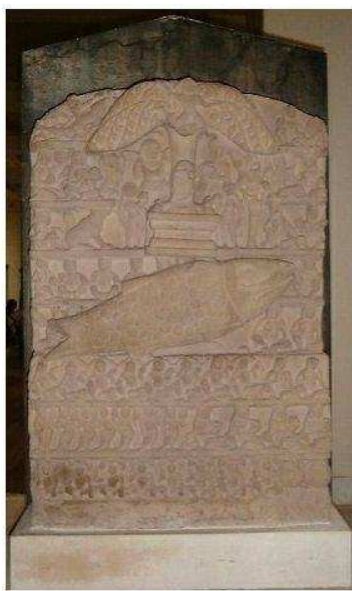
and Prime Minister Jong Pil Kim are Kimhae Kims. Therein lies the Indian Queen's importance in Korean eyes - she is revered as the progenitor of two powerful clans which have survived to this day.

Queen Huh's tomb still stands in the Gyeongsang (South) province of Korea. The tomb has a 5-metre high earthen mound. It was repaired in 1641, the 19th year of the reign of King Injo (1623-1649) of the Joseon Kingdom (1392-1910). Researchers in an archaeological survey at ancient royal tomb of Gimhae, found some evidence to support claims that Koreans have DNA traceable to South or South East Asian ethnic groups like Indian, Malaysian or Thai. Dr. Seo Jeong-sun of Seoul National University and Kim Jong-il of Hallym University conducted the research and decoded the entire genetic code of ancient Korean remains. They have presented their findings at a meeting of the Korea Genome Organisation in Chuncheon, Gangwon province [17].

The place of origin of Queen Huh needs further research. It is generally believed that Ayut refers to the city called Ayodhya in India. Mr Bimlendra Mohan Mishra, scion of Ayodhya's ruling family says "the Korean connection came as a major surprise to us". It all started in 1997, when a South Korean delegation headed by Prof. B.M. Kim, visited Ayodhya and informed Mr Mishra about the connection. The Ayodhya 'Raja' has since been invited to Korea and ties between the two cities have strengthened, with Rs 200-crore Korean grant on the anvil for Ayodhya.

Also bearing testimony to the Queen's Indian roots is the Pisa Stone Pagoda in the same province. The stones, with exotic engravings and red patterns are believed to have originated from India, brought by Princess Huh in her ship. The pagoda is also called Chimpungtap (Wind Calming Pagoda) because it is reputed to have a mysterious power to calm the stormy

sea. Another myth surrounding Huh's voyage is the Ssangeomun. The Ssangeomun refers to a design of two fish looking across at one another. The paintings of the pairs of fish drawn on the three gates standing before King Suro's tomb are such motifs. Not only at King Suro's tomb, but the motif also decorates Mt. Sineo's Eunha temple located in Gimhae city, the stone pagoda's of Hapcheon's Yeongam temple and remains in countless other ancient temples within the Karak kingdom's ancient territories. Korean historians found in Ayodhya paired fishes on the gates of Hindu temples, the gates of academies, government offices, military ranks, law enforcement helmets, and transportation registration centres and hence concluded that the state of Uttarpradesh could be 'the country of those (Gimhae) fish'.



British Museum Collection



Ssangeomun (Gimhae)



Coin Tamilnadu (A.D. 765?)

Unfortunately, Korean historians are not familiar with South Indian history and hence did not consider the possibility that Queen Huh might have come from South India rather than Uttarpradesh. For example, the ancient Pandiyas ruled the South with fish as their ruling symbol (in their flag). Silk Road by sea was dominated by Pandiyas in ancient times than Mishras of North India. A comparison of Ssangeomun with Pandiyan coins unearthed in Tamilnadu [18] will reveal the close similarity. A stone artefact (temple legend engraving)

sitting in the British museum (photo by the author) reveals that fish symbol was central to Pandiyas. Interestingly, in other regions of the Korean peninsula, namely those formerly occupied by Goguryeo, Baekje, or Silla, there is almost no such motifs. It is not a coincidence that a modern Korean province called 'Cholla' is situated close to Gimhae. Gimhae (Pandiyas) and Cholla (Cholas) suggest that these southern shores of Korea were visited by Pandiyas and Cholas from Tamilnadu in earlier times.

The name *Huh Hwang-ok* in ancient Chinese means jade, red. Additionally, Huh (Heo) is an uncommon family name in Korea which in Chinese means *permit* or *advocate*. The items of trade in Silk Road were spices, pearls, jade. In fact while explaining the word "விரை மரம்" as in "விரை மரம் உருட்டும் திரை உலாப் பரப்பு" in Manimegalai Prof. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer inferred it as Sandal wood. Sandal wood played an important role in Korean myths as well [11.2]. Thus, if a Pandiyan Queen of authority (to permit and advocate) travelled with a name *Chempavalam* (Red Jade) would have been called in ancient Korean as Huh Hwang-ok. The author while visiting Gyeongju (Kyongju), the ex-capital of Silla dynasty (BCE 57 – CE 935) heard an interesting folklore. A Korean mother explained to the author a belief that Queen Huh requested Korean citizens to refer to their parents as the way her children addressed them. Since that time, Koreans started calling their parents as *Amma* and *Appa*. This amazing story could not have existed if Queen Huh had reached the Korean shores from Ayodhya, a Hindi speaking country for, it is the Tamils who call their parents Amma and Appa! Myths play a vital role in every society in retaining communal memory over ages. A portrait of Huh is depicted at the royal tomb in Gimhae. The peculiar feature of that portrait is that Queen Huh had a long ear lobe like women of Tamil country side. From earliest times long ear lobes have been regarded as a sign of spiritual development and superior status.

Among the distinguishing marks of the Buddha, and a sign of his greatness, were his large ear lobes. The ear lobe has been referred in Tamil literature as Makarakuzhai.



Heo Hwang Ok



Kalabit Woman



Woman with Pambadam



Goddess Parvathi

The God of Tiruperaï in Tamilnadu is referred as the God of ear lobes (மகரநெடுங் குழைக்காதன்). The jewellery that goes with long ear lobes is called '*Pombadam*' in Tamil. It is interesting to note that the heroin of Silapathikaram, a classical Tamil drama, namely Kannaki had long ear lobes as well ["கொடுங்குழை துறந்து வடிந்து வீழ் காதினள்"].

Another point of interest is the stone that Queen Huh brought with her. This could be Ilavattakkal or a weight lift to test the strength of a man. A young girl of Tamil origin would ask her lover to lift it to prove his strength. These stones are still in palaces of Tamilnadu with the name 'young man's stone' (இளவட்டக்கல்) [19].

Assuming that Queen Huh hailed from Ayodhya of Uttar Pradesh, Professor Kim Byeongmo reconstructed her journey through Burma and China [1]. Instead if we consider that she travelled from Tamilnadu, a sea route needs to be reconstructed. Prof. Tstuomu Kambe of University of Tokyo has exactly done that by tracing the sea route of Bodhi Dharma based on Chinese chronicles. Accordingly, a journey from Tamilnadu might have

started at Nagapattinam or Mamallapuram, touching Sri Lanka, Nicobar Islands, Java (Bali) and finally reaching Guang-Zhou in China. He observes that this route was in vogue since Han Dynasty (BCE 206). It is likely that Queen Huh followed the same Oceanic Silk Road to reach Korea in CE 49. In fact, Manimegalai, a Tamil Buddhist epic, narrates the Oceanic Silk Road in the same way [11.2]. Unfortunately, folklores and written documents of a glorious Buddhist Tamil era have been destroyed or forgotten in Tamilnadu. At least now, researchers in Tamilnadu should dig up their past for substantial evidences to prove that Queen Huh hailed from Tamilnadu instead of Uttar Pradesh. When BBC contacted a senior official in Ayodhya regarding Queen Huh, they were told that no information was available about it in Indian history [20]. Some researchers believe that Ayut referred in Ilyon's 'Samguk Yusa' refers to Ayutthaya Kingdom in Thailand. But this kingdom came in to existence much later than Queen Huh's time, i.e. during CE 1351 to 1767. On the other hand, it is possible to trace names similar to Ayut in Tamilnadu and elsewhere. Kim Jung Nam [21] argues that the name Ayodhya existed in at least 4 places other than in Uttarpradesh, including one in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Ayothipattinam and Ayothikuppam are common names for villages in Tamilnadu. A proper search on names of villages and towns in Tamilnadu may bring new surprises!

3.0 Buddhism

Mahayana Buddhism was introduced to the Korean peninsula from China in the fourth century C.E. At that time the Korean peninsula was divided into three separate kingdoms: Koguryo, Paekje and Silla. Mahayana Buddhism arrived first in the northern kingdom of Koguryo and gradually spread to Paekje, in the southwest, finally reaching south-eastern Silla in the 5th century A.D. Thus, Fu chien, ruler of Chin dynasty of China sent in the year

CE 372 a monk called Maranatha(n) with an image of Buddha and scriptures in Tamil and Pali to the Kingdom of Sosurim of Korea. Maranathan(n) and another monk popularly known as Sundo in Korean (Sundhar?) came from Pandiya kingdom [22]. As in many countries that adopted Buddhism, the religion was first practiced and supported by elites, the royal courts and the aristocracy, but gradually it was adopted by all levels of society. By the late sixth century, Korean monks were travelling along the trade routes to China and even to India to receive training. They returned home bearing texts and images that played a decisive role in the formation of Korean culture and art. Towards the end of the Unified Silla Period, the Ch'an School (*Son* of Korean, *Zen* in Japanese) was introduced from China and this added a new dimension to Korean Buddhism. Meditation and direct experience were emphasized over concentration on studying the texts. Nine different schools emerged and they were known as the Nine Mountains of *Son*. Bodhi-Dharma, the founder of *Son* (*Zen*) was a Tamil Buddhist monk who came to China from Tamilnadu in the first quarter of the sixth century (CE 520). He brought Mahayana Buddhism to China. Chinese historical literature describes him as the third prince of a kingdom of south India at "Kang-zhi" in Chinese which in all probability means Kanchi of Pallava Kingdom. Bodhi-Dharma is well-known in connection with a story expressed by the phrase "Wall Contemplation Nine". His path of meditation in Japanese is known as *Zen*, which is derived from Chinese (Mandarin) *chán* that comes from Pali *jhna* and Sanskrit *dhyanam* and he is considered as the first Zu (first patriarch) of Chinese *Zen* Buddhism [13]. In later periods (CE 704-760) Bodhinesan of Tamil origin preached Buddhism in Japan and during that times several scriptures from South India was translated [22].

Buddhism flourished until the Choson dynasty (1392 – 1910), when Neo-Confucianism became the state ideology. Buddhism, however, remained a spiritual force in Korean society, and private devotional objects and works for monasteries and temples continued to be made throughout the centuries. Indian monks travelling to Korea to spread the Buddha's gospel and Korean monks making the assiduous pilgrimage to Buddha's birthplace were active agents in cultural collaboration. Foremost among these was Hyecho whose 73 volume book called Wang-o Chonchuk Kukj or "Record of a Journey to the Five Indian Kingdoms" is an invaluable historical document [23]. Hye Cho (Huicho, CE 704-787) was born in the capital city of Kyongju, Silla, in the early 8th century. He went to Tang China to study Buddhism, where he practiced Buddhist moral disciplines. Later, he visited India and Northwest Asian countries to see the original Buddhist culture. In CE 727, he returned to Tang China. He had mastered the Sanskrit language and translated Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. He also taught Tantric Buddhism for 54 years in China and his books were very popular in India. Hye Cho, unlike many previous Chinese Buddhist Monks did not mingle only with the upper class (elite) society but observed the common man and described people's history, custom, culture and religion as it was. This book was written 500 years before Marco Polo's book of Dongbang gyun-mun-rok (a book recording travel in Asia). Books like “Wang-o Chonchuk Kukj” need to be researched by Tamil scholars for possible Korean-Tamil links. They need to discover travelogues like that by ancient Tamil traders, monks and kings.

4.0 Hangeul and the Tamil Long Maths (தமிழ் நெடுங்கணக்கு)

Chinese writing has been known in Korea for over 2,000 years. It was used widely during the Chinese occupation of northern Korea from BCE 108 to CE 313. The Korean alphabet was

invented in CE 1444 and promulgated it in CE 1446 during the reign of King Sejong (r.1418-1450), the fourth king of the Joseon Dynasty. The alphabet was originally called Hunminjeongeum, or "The correct sounds for the instruction of the people", but has also been known as Eonmeun (vulgar script, like கொடுத்தமிழ்) and Gukmeun (national writing). The modern name for the alphabet, Hangeul, was coined by a Korean linguist called Ju Si-gyeong (1876-1914) [24]. Anybody familiar with Indian alphabetical system, especially Tamil long maths (தமிழ் நெடுங்கணக்கு) will not fail to notice that Hangeul is similar to Tamil in making a combination of vowel and consonant to derive a letter. Examples are given in the following table:

$\text{அ} + \text{ㅣ} = \text{அ}$ $\text{○} + \text{ㅏ} = \text{ㅏ}$	$\text{ம்} + \text{அ} = \text{ㅁ}$ $\text{ㅁ} + \text{ㅏ} = \text{ㅑ}$	$\text{ப்} + \text{அ} = \text{ㅂ}$ $\text{ㅂ} + \text{ㅏ} = \text{ㅓ}$
$\text{க்} + \text{அ} = \text{க}$ $\text{ㄱ} + \text{ㅏ} = \text{가}$	$\text{ல்} + \text{அ} = \text{ㄴ}$ $\text{ㄴ} + \text{ㅏ} = \text{ㄹ}$	$\text{இ} = \text{ㅇ}$ $\text{கி} = \text{ㄱ} + \text{ㅏ} = \text{ㄱㅏ}$

This table shows structural similarity between Tamil alphabets and their Hangul equivalents. For example, Korean “a” could easily be derived from Tamil “a”; Korean “ma”, “pa”, “ka” and “la” in a similar way. Is it just a coincidence that these letters look alike? In fact, Raju Poundurai [22] argues that both systems owe their origin to the ancient Brahmi script. The Korean “new” phoential system is modelled exactly after Tamil in combining vowel and consonant! Like in

old Tamil writing, agglutinated letters (கூட்டு எழுத்து) are possible in Korean as well. One could argue that King Sejong might have derived this system from the then popular ‘Siddha’ or Sanskrit writing systems? This can be disproved easily from the similarity in linguistic anomalies found in Hangul and Tamil. For example, there is no clear demarcation in writing ‘cha’ ‘ja’ – these sounds were represented by the same alphabet. This is true for ‘ga’ and ‘ka’ and ‘pa’ and ‘bha’ (many examples can be given but one is suffice. Koreans write Pusan or Busan alternatively as they can’t exactly differentiate between ‘pa’ and ‘ba’ using their phoenitical system, as in Tamil). Coffee can’t be written in Tamil and Hangul, instead only ‘kappi - காப்பி’ is possible as there is no letter ‘f’ in these languages. If Sweta needs to be written in Tamil and Hangul, it has to be written as ‘suveththa – சுவேத்தா. If King Sejong developed Hangul based on Siddha or Sanskrit he could have borrowed easily the necessary alphabets which are available in those languages. It is plausible that Buddhist monks from Tamilnadu or Korean monks familiar with Tamil were consulted during the development of Hangeul. There is an unspoken belief that Hangeul was developed essentially to accommodate proper rendering of Buddhist scripts that were written ancient Tamil [22].

The Hangeul alphabetical system has even used the concept of zero developed by ancient Indians in an ingenious way. When 0 is added before a vowel, it has no sound, except that it’s being used as a ‘spacer’ or ‘white space’. However, when 0 is added after a vowel, then it gains a sound (‘ang’), in a way similar to its mathematical usage (0 has no value before a number but gains value after a number). Considering the close cultural ties between India and Korea, it is just anybody's guess that Tamil scholars (Buddhist monks?) being consulted in developing a phoenitical lettering system for Korean language. History tells that King Sejong gave a phonetical lettering system to Korean language under secrecy. One would guess that the

introduction of Hangul might be taken as a challenge to the existing Royal Chinese rendering. Hence, King Sejong called his system as *Eonmeun* or vulgar script to appease the Chinese authorities or royalties. Probably he knew that Hangul was still in development and needed improvements. For example, unlike Tamil Hangul has no *kuril* or *nedil* (அ, ஆ, இ, ஈ) to denote ascending and descending sounds. Hangul does not differentiate sounds of ‘r’ and ‘l’. The same alphabet is used to represent two sounds.

Similarity between Tamil and Korean had been mentioned in history by Christian missionaries such as H.B.Hulbert in early twentieth century [25]. There is another view as proposed by Stephen A.Tyler of Tulane University in his abstract "Dravidian and Uralian: The lexical evidence" that both Korean and Tamil may belong to a super family consisting of Dravidian, Uralian and Altaic [26]. To quote him: "In conjunction with the present materials and with Collinder's materials for the relation between Uralic and Altaic can probably be taken as further evidence for a 'super family' consisting of Dravidian, Uralian and Altaic. As an item of historical interest, Uralic and Altaic are precisely the language groups Caldwell called 'Scythian'. In view of the probable inclusion of Korean in the Altaic family, it is also interesting to note that Hulbert attempted to demonstrate a relationship between Dravidian and Korean".

5.0 Cultural similarities

Tamil culture esteems woman's chastity very high. An epic called "Silapathikaram" was written in order to praise the value of virginity and chastity. The concept of "kaRpu" is an essential part of Agam (interior landscape) in Tamil poetry. It is interesting to note that the same value system existed in Korea until recently. The Korean equivalent for Tamil "Karppukarasi –

கற்புக்கரசி” will be “Yulnu”. It is not uncommon in Korea to erect a temple or monument for such chaste woman (Yulnyu Mun). Marriage in Korea, as in Tamilnadu is considered as a relationship between families rather than individuals as is so in the western system. Respect for elders or an audience (paNivu – பணிவு; adakkam - அடக்கம்) is valued high in Korea as in Tamilnadu. It is not uncommon in Korea to witness a younger passenger offering his seat to an elder. The elder son has the responsibility for the family in Korea after the father as in Tamilnadu. Ancestral worship is still a primary function in Korean families. Thiruvalluvar, a well known saint poet of Tamilnadu places ancestral worship next to divine worship in his “payiram” or invocation. The staple diet is rice for Koreans and Tamils. Hence several food items are similar in both cultures such as rice cakes, rice puff, lentil cakes etc. (கொழுக்கட்டை, பொரி உருண்டை, அடை, இட்லி). These habits could have arisen in these distant lands through constant interaction and cultural exchange.

6.0 Conclusion

We believe in 21st century that borders have no meaning as the whole world has shrunk to a global village. Cross cultural understanding and bilateral relationship are pivotal in political and economical development among nations. A recent political slogan in India is “Look east” to capitalize the growth potential in Asia. It is only appropriate under these circumstances that India and Korea look back to their history and fill the void of negligence or apathy. No need to emphasize that both nations will reap the harvest from such initiatives [27]. In order to achieve this Universities and Research Institutes in Tamilnadu should focus more on topics dealt in this article. Substantial research is due.

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மான மாகதர், மச்சர், மிலேச்சர்கள்,
ஏனை வீர இலாடர், விதர்ப்பர்கள்,
சீனர், தெங்கணர், செஞ் சகர், சோமகர்,
சோனகேசர், துருக்கர், குருக்களே

சீனர் = Chinese., துருக்கர் = Turks. Kambaramayana. Bala Kandam. Poems 47, 48, 49 (Ed. VAI. MU. Gopala Krishna Achaarya).

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11.1. Sangam Poetry: The following passage in Agananuru (149: 8-10), an anthology of 400 poems, describes that Europeans trade gold for spices.

(அகநானூறு 149: 8-10)

சுள்ளி-அம்-பேரியாற்று வெண் நுரை கலங்க
யவனர் தந்த வினை-மாண் நன்-கலம்
பொன்னொடு வந்து கறியொடு பெயரும்

11.2. Manimegalai (CE 550) a Buddhist treatise of post-sangam period mentions of sea voyages of Tamils in the Eastern seas. For example, Aputran a character in the story heard about famine in Java, Indonesia and sailed there for relief work.

அப்போது சாவக நாட்டிலிருந்து வந்த சில வணிகர்கள் சாவக நாட்டில் வறுமையால் மக்கள் பசிப்பிணியால் இறந்ததுபற்றிச் சொல்கிறார்கள். அதைக் கேட்ட ஆபுத்திரன் சாவக நாட்டுக்குச் செல்ல நினைத்துக் கப்பலேறுகிறான். அந்தக் கப்பல் மணிபல்லவத்தீவில் ஒரு நாள் தங்குகிறது. ஆபுத்திரன் அத்தீவில் இறங்குகிறான். தொடர்ந்த பயணத்துக்காக ஆபுத்திரன் ஏறாமலே கப்பல் புறப்பட்டுப் போய்விடுகிறது.

மணிமேகலை, 14: பாத்திர மரபு கூறிய காதை, வரிகள்: 68-86.

From: Rajam, V.S. Manimegalai - Original with notes (in Tamil). Dr.U.V.Saminatha Iyer publications Number 68, 7th Edition, 1981.

11.3. Tirumangai Alwar (early CE 800 or 900) mentions in Periya Tirumozhi (6.2.6) that trading ships with wealth sailed often the Mamallapuram shores:

புலன்கொள் நிதிக் குவையோடு
புழைக்கைமா கவிற்றினமும்
நலங்கொள் நவ மணிக் குவையும்
சுமந்தெங்கும் நான்றொசிந்து
கலங்கள் இயங் கும் மல்லைக்
கடன்மல்லைத் தலசயனம்
வலங்கொள்மனத் தார் அவரை
வலங்கொள் என மடநெஞ்சே

திருமங்கையாழ்வாரின் பெரிய திருமொழி. பாடல் எண் -6.2.6

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16. The following verse from Tholkappiam refers to Vishnu (Primordial being) as the guardian of Forests, Muruga as the guardian of Mountains, Venthan (lightening and thunder - Indira) as the Guardian of agricultural lands, Varunan (rain) as the guardian of coastlines.

மாயோன் மேய காடுறை உலகமும்
சேயோன் மேய மைவரை உலகமும்
வேந்தன் மேய தீம்புனல் உலகமும்

வருணன் மேய பெருமணல் உலகமும்
முல்லை குறிஞ்சி மருதம் நெய்தலெனச்
சொல்லிய முறையாற் சொல்லவும் படுமே. (தொல். அகத். நூற்பா 5).

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