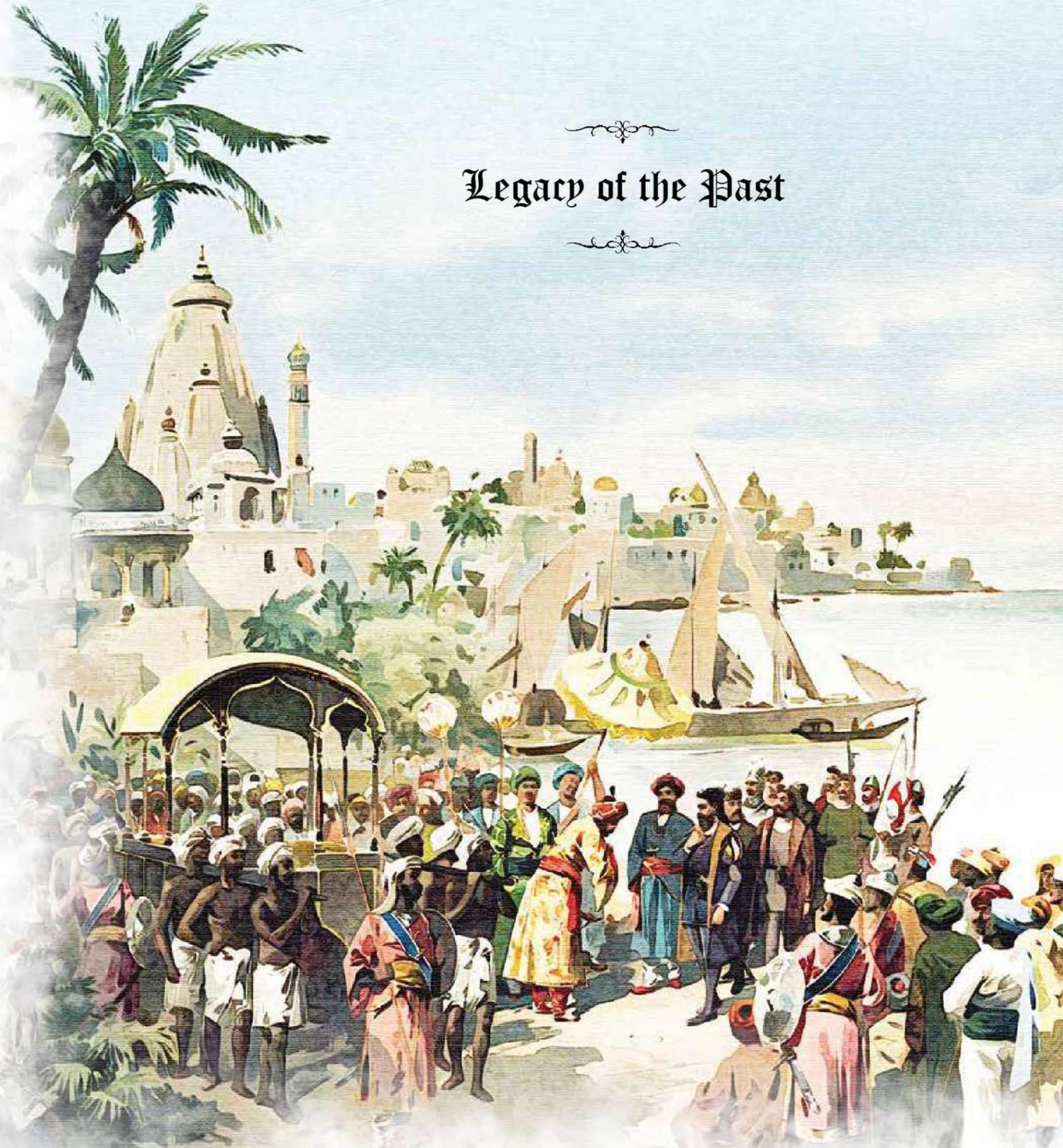




*Jalasya Rakṣā, Janasya Surakṣā • Shikṣita Nāvikaḥ, Saśakta Saṁsthānam, Surakṣita Samudraḥ • Samudra Śuddhiḥ, Rāṣṭrasya Vriddhiḥ*

## Legacy of the Past





*Once, the gods churned the ocean wide,  
From venom's dark, hope did abide.  
Varuna watched, the stars aligned,  
A compass burned in the sailor's mind.*

*From Harappa's docks where rivers kissed,  
To Chola fleets in monsoon mist,  
From pepper winds to Roman gold,  
India's seas her story told.*

*But sails of conquest scarred the sky  
Cannons thundered, chains drew nigh.  
Yet teakwood ships with iron will,  
Bore India's spirit, unbroken still.*

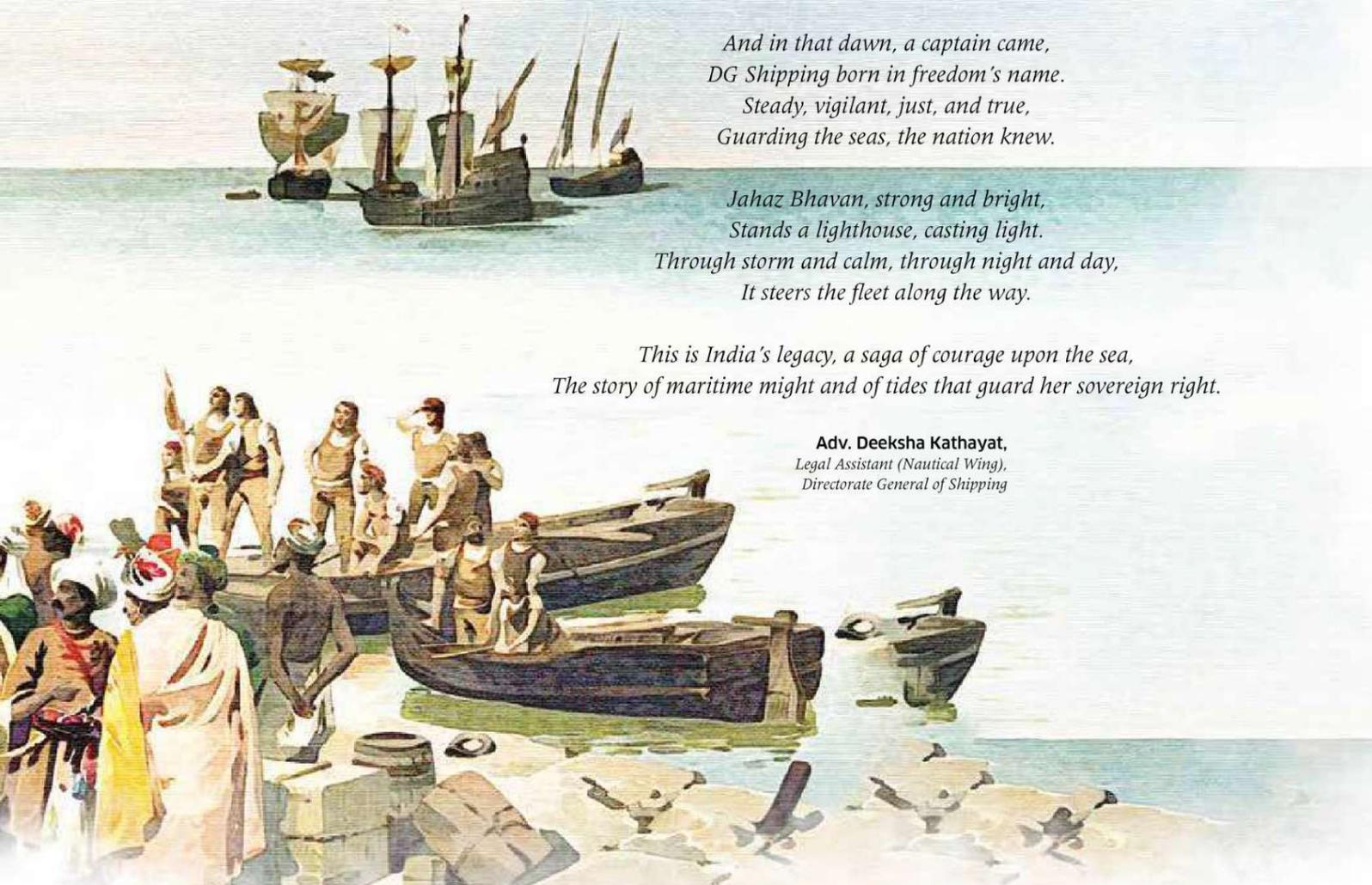
*Then rose the cry, the Swadeshi flame,  
Freedom's horn the oceans claim.  
A tricolor dream upon the foam,  
A nation's call the seas her home.*

*And in that dawn, a captain came,  
DG Shipping born in freedom's name.  
Steady, vigilant, just, and true,  
Guarding the seas, the nation knew.*

*Jahaz Bhavan, strong and bright,  
Stands a lighthouse, casting light.  
Through storm and calm, through night and day,  
It steers the fleet along the way.*

*This is India's legacy, a saga of courage upon the sea,  
The story of maritime might and of tides that guard her sovereign right.*

**Adv. Deeksha Kathayat,**  
*Legal Assistant (Nautical Wing),  
Directorate General of Shipping*





*Jalasya Rakṣā, Janasya Surakṣā • Shikṣita Nāvikaḥ, Saśakta Samsthānam, Surakṣita Samudraḥ • Samudra Śuddhiḥ, Rāṣṭrasya Vridhhiḥ*

# INDIA'S MARITIME VOYAGE HERITAGE, LEADERSHIP AND A FUTURE AT SEA

BORN OF THE SEA –  
MYTHS, LEGENDS & THE FIRST COMPASS OF THE STARS



Rigvedic Ships - "A hundred oars at dawn."

**T**he ocean has always been more than water and waves for India; it has been a source of myth, faith, and imagination, shaping how people understood life, survival, and destiny. From the earliest hymns to local folklore, the sea was not just a route for travel or trade but a living force, powerful, generous, and unpredictable.

The Rigveda, one of the world's oldest texts, offers some of the earliest references to Indian seafaring. It speaks of ships with "a hundred oars," vivid proof that the sea was already central to the imagination of ancient communities. These were not merely vessels of timber but symbols of courage and exploration, suggesting that from the very dawn of civilization, India looked to the ocean as a pathway of opportunity and destiny.



Samudra Manthan – Churning oceans, birthing gods.

One of the most striking myths connected to the sea is the story of the Samudra Manthan, the churning of the ocean by gods and demons. Using Mount Mandara as a churning rod and the serpent Vasuki as a rope, they shook the ocean until it thundered. From its depths emerged priceless treasures, gold, jewels, and the radiant goddess Lakshmi, symbols of prosperity and abundance. But along with these came Halahala, a deadly poison capable of destroying the world. Only Lord Shiva's intervention saved creation. The story carried a timeless lesson: the ocean can enrich and bless, but it also tests and threatens. It is both a giver and a destroyer.

The sea was also personified in the god Varuna, revered as the Lord of the Waters. Mariners looked to him as a divine guardian. Before embarking on a voyage, sailors rang temple bells, their echoes blending with the sound of the crashing waves, to seek Varuna's protection. To pray to him was to trust that the sea was not chaos but harmony; that tides and winds carried meaning, and that the stars above were not silent, but guides placed by the divine.

Along India's southern shores, especially in Kerala, another belief shaped the lives of fishermen, the legend of the Naga Kanya, the serpent maiden of the sea. She was said to appear in the night sky as an omen of good fortune and abundant fish. Some thought of her as a goddess, others as a celestial star, or perhaps a dream woven into the lives of those who depended on the waters.

Whatever her form, she reminded fishing communities that survival itself meant listening to the language of the sea and respecting its signs.

The ocean's myths did not remain within India's borders. They echoed far beyond, shaping imaginations across deserts and kingdoms. In the tales of the One Thousand and One Nights,



the voyages of Sindbad the Sailor spoke of monstrous birds, enchanted islands, valleys of diamonds, and strange creatures of the deep. While layered in fantasy, these stories reflected the lived experiences of Indian and Arab sailors who faced violent storms, uncharted coasts, and dangerous voyages. Even Sindbad, in these tales, looked to the stars for guidance, the same stars that had long been the companions of Indian mariners.

For the seafaring communities of the Malabar Coast, the sky itself was a map. Sailors in Kochi studied the heavens as carefully as scholars studied scripture. Orion pointed their direction, Sirius announced the seasons, and the unwavering “Dhruv Tara” North Star was their constant anchor. These mariners mastered the monsoon winds, riding them westward in summer and eastward in winter, and built teakwood ships strong enough to carry ivory, cotton, and spices across the Arabian Sea to Africa and Arabia.

Astronomy was not left to memory alone; it was written down with remarkable precision. The Surya Siddhanta, among the world’s oldest astronomical treatises, mapped the movement of the sun, moon, and stars. For sailors, this was more than scientific curiosity, it was survival. When storms blackened the skies, the North Star remained their guide, a permanent promise that one direction would never fail.

These traditions merged into culture and ritual. In Kerala, during the festival of Makaravilakku, families lit lamps along the coast while sailors prepared their ships. The glow of the lamps stretched across the waves, as if the land itself was guiding its children home. Here the ocean was not seen as a boundary but as a bridge, carrying gods and goods, myths and memories across vast waters.

In these myths, rituals, and early practices lies the first chapter of India’s maritime soul. The ocean was not only a force of nature but also a teacher, a guide, and an inspiration. It shaped faith and science alike, linking survival to the stars and courage to the tides. These stories remind us that long before organized ports and powerful navies, India’s relationship with the sea began in the imagination of its people. It was this imagination that prepared the ground for the world’s first great seaports, like Lothal, where myth would meet history and the ocean would become the stage for civilization itself.

#### **Classical Tides: The Empires of Waves**

The story of India’s maritime heritage begins far before written records of dynasties and empires, in the Bronze Age civilization of the Indus. Archaeological excavations at Lothal, in present-day Gujarat, revealed what is considered one of the world’s oldest dockyards, dating back nearly 4,000 years. At its height, this dock is believed to have held nearly thirty ships of sixty tons each, a staggering achievement for its time. Alongside it were unearthed terracotta models of boats and depictions of Bronze Age vessels, offering the earliest evidence of India’s organized maritime trade. These discoveries testify that the Indus Valley was not isolated inland but actively engaged with the wider world, sending out goods and ideas through the sea.

Centuries later, during the Mauryan Empire, ports became powerful gateways of commerce. Nallasopara, near modern Mumbai, flourished as a maritime hub, and an inscription of Emperor Ashoka was found at the site. The script was Brahmi, the ancestor of Devanagari used today, and its presence by the sea shows how communication, governance, and maritime exchange went hand in hand. Sopara connected India not just with coastal trade but with the vast Indian Ocean network.

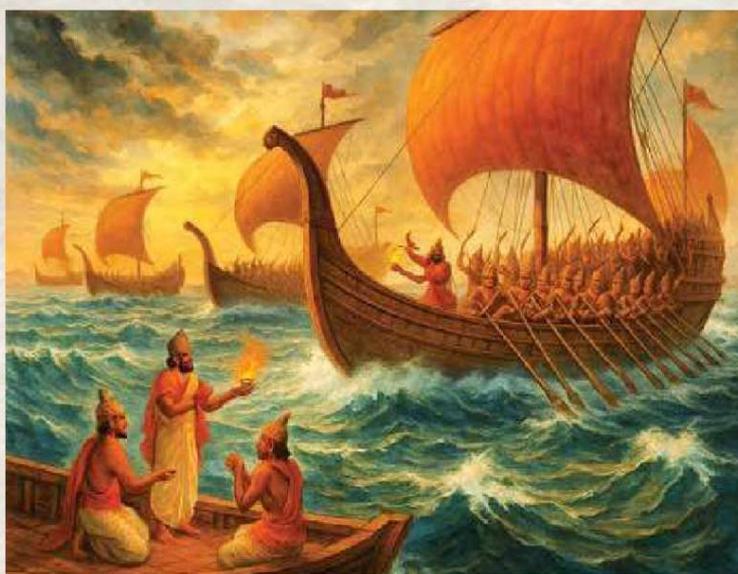
Evidence from the post-Mauryan period further illustrates this thriving trade. Coins of the Andhra rulers depict ships, marking the importance of maritime commerce. Sculptures and murals, such as depictions of boats at Ajanta, also reveal how ships were central to both economy and imagination. Sangam literature from Tamilakam sings of Yavana ships (Greek and Roman traders) arriving laden with amphorae, while departing with pepper, pearls, muslins, and silk.



Muziris Port - "Pepper for Caesar's gold."

By the early centuries CE, India's western seaboard had become the beating heart of world trade. The port of Muziris in Kerala was legendary. Roman ships crowded its waters, unloading wine, glassware, and gold coins stamped with Caesar's profile, and departing with pepper the "black gold" of the ancient world ivory from the forests, pearls from the Gulf of Mannar, and fine muslins. The Roman historian Pliny the Elder lamented, "India drains us of our gold!" Yet despite his disapproval, the lure of the East remained irresistible, and ships kept coming.

If the west connected India to the Roman world, the east connected her to Southeast Asia. Across the Bay of Bengal, the mighty Chola dynasty built an empire on both land and sea. Between the 9th and 12th centuries, their fleets dominated the waters. In 1025 CE, Rajendra Chola I launched a massive naval expedition against the Srivijaya Empire in Sumatra. Warships bristled with archers, priests blessed the fleet, and merchants awaited the opening of new markets. The campaign shook Southeast Asia, but the Cholas were not merely conquerors; they were also carriers of culture. Their ships bore sculptors, scholars, and monks. Across Cambodia, Java, and China, Indian art, Sanskrit texts, and Buddhist philosophy found new homes. Temples such as Angkor Wat still echo with these influences. The sea was no longer only a marketplace but a corridor of diplomacy and culture.



Chola Navy - "Empire sails beyond horizons."



Meanwhile, other powers contributed to India's maritime legacy. The Satavahanas of the Deccan controlled western ports that connected elephants, gems, and spices to Mediterranean markets. As early as the 7th century, Arab traders came to dominate long-distance commerce across the Arabian Sea. Their graceful dhows, with their distinctive lateen sails, became icons of Indo-Arab trade, ferrying not only goods but also ideas and technologies between East and West.

The tides shifted again when Europeans entered the Indian Ocean. In 1498, Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut, altering the course of maritime history. The Portuguese introduced caravels and galleons like the *São Gabriel*, ushering in an age of naval dominance backed by cannon fire. They held sway along India's coasts for more than a century. Soon after, the English, Dutch, and French followed. The English galleon, once a fishing vessel but later converted into a warship, became a symbol of European naval power. Coastal forts and battles became part of India's maritime landscape.

Inland, riverine trade remained vital. Paintings from the Mughal period depict boats such as the *patella*, used for river transport, and the *purgoo*, built for coastal voyages. Images of Babur crossing the Son River capture how rivers were lifelines of movement and strategy. The maritime story was thus not only about oceans but also about India's vast river systems.

On the western coast, the rise of the Maratha Navy in the 17th and 18th centuries marked a fierce indigenous resistance to European and Portuguese dominance. Led by the legendary Kanhoji Angre, the Maratha fleet turned even humble trading vessels like the *Phatemar* into warships, cleverly disguising them to deceive enemies. Fortresses such as Vijaydurg became naval bastions, and for a time, the Marathas controlled vast stretches of the Konkan coast.

With the advent of the British Empire, maritime technology in India entered a new phase. The first paddle steamer, built by Henry Pickett, was used as a pleasure boat by the Nawab of Oudh. Soon after, the *SS Hindostan*, the first regular mail steamer between India and Britain, symbolized the industrial age of shipping. Steam replaced sails, and modern shipbuilding set the stage for India's integration into a globalized maritime world.

From the dockyards of Lothal to the fleets of the Cholas, from Arab dhows to Portuguese galleons, from Maratha forts to British steamers, India's maritime history is a saga of continuity and change. The sea was never a boundary but an empire of connection a highway where commerce met culture, where foreign coins bore emperors' faces but Indian temples still carried their gods, and where tides carried not just goods, but also stories, science, and civilization.



Kunjali Marakkar Ambush - "Swift boats defy empire."

#### **From Cannons to Charkhas: The Colonial Tide and Freedom at Sea**

The arrival of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in 1498 was a turning point in India's maritime history. Guided by a Gujarati navigator who knew the monsoons and currents intimately, da Gama's fleet symbolized not discovery but intrusion. The seas that had carried Indian ships for millennia now bore foreign sails armed with cannon. Within a few decades, forts rose at Goa and elsewhere, their stone walls and booming guns announcing the arrival of Europe's naval empires.

Yet India did not submit easily. Resistance came swiftly from the Kunjali Marakkars, admirals of the Zamorin of Calicut. From the labyrinth of



Malabar's backwaters, they launched swift ambushes, pioneering a form of naval guerrilla warfare that unsettled Portuguese fleets. Their small, agile craft darted in and out of creeks, striking suddenly and vanishing into familiar waters. For coastal communities, the Marakkars became legends of defiance, proof that local seafaring knowledge could challenge empire.

By the 17th century, the struggle widened as the Dutch and English entered Indian waters. Rivalry among European powers made the Indian Ocean a theater of global competition. Yet Indian skill in shipbuilding remained unmatched. The Navigation Act of 1651, passed in England, sought to curtail the use of Indian-built vessels precisely because they were superior in durability and design. Despite restrictions, Indian yards continued to thrive. In Bombay, the Wadia family, master shipbuilders of Parsi origin, constructed between 200 and 300 ships for the British. Under their supervision, the Bombay Dockyard became one of the greatest in Asia. Among their creations was the HMS Trincomalee, launched in 1817, which still survives today as one of the oldest warships afloat. Another vessel, the HMS Cornwallis, built in Indian yards, hosted the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, marking China's defeat in the First Opium War. And it was on the quarterdeck of yet another Bombay-built vessel, the HMS Minden, during the bombardment of Fort McHenry at Baltimore in 1814, that Francis Scott Key wrote the poem which became the U.S. national anthem, The Star-Spangled Banner. These ships, though built for empire, remain monuments to Indian craftsmanship.

Parallel to the British navy, Indian entrepreneurs began asserting their place in commercial shipping. The Bombay Steam Navigation Company (BSN Co.), established in the 1880s by Haji Hasham Yusuf and Captain Augustus Shepherd, provided ferry and cargo services across the western coast from Karachi to Mangalore. One of their most famous ships, the SS Vaitarna, electrified and nicknamed Vijli, connected Mandvi to Bombay. Tragically, it sank in



The office of Bombay Steam Navigation Company (BSN Co) in present day Ballard Pier, Mumbai.



a cyclone off Gujarat in 1888, with no survivors a disaster remembered locally as the “Titanic of Gujarat,” predating the Titanic by 24 years. The BSN Co. also left behind instruments of maritime navigation magnetic compasses, sextants, patent logs, telescopes artifacts that reveal how modern Indian shipping combined indigenous enterprise with global technology.

As nationalist currents grew stronger, the seas also became a stage for the struggle for freedom. In 1906, in Tuticorin, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai founded the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company. His ships, S.S. Gallia and S.S. Lawoe, directly challenged the British India Steam Navigation Company’s monopoly. Though the British crushed the company and imprisoned Pillai, his defiance inspired a generation to imagine the seas as a frontier of independence.

The most celebrated moment of Indian maritime nationalism came on April 5, 1919, when the Scindia Steam Navigation Company’s ship, the S.S. Loyalty, sailed from Bombay to London. It was the first Indian-owned vessel to cross the seas under its own flag. The voyage marked a milestone of pride and resistance, proving that Indians could once again command the oceans. The company’s later vessels, such as Jalabala and Jalusha, were inaugurated with patriotic fervor, often in the presence of freedom leaders. Images of Mahatma Gandhi at sea, spinning the charkha or holding a sextant, captured the symbolic connection between swadeshi ideals and maritime independence. To this day, April 5 is commemorated as National Maritime Day in India.

At independence in 1947, India inherited only fifty-nine ships, amounting to 0.19 million gross tonnage a modest fleet for a civilization that had once dominated the seas. Yet it symbolized determination: to rebuild, to reclaim maritime heritage, and to steer a sovereign course once again.



Arthur S Lal,  
First Director General, DGS

#### **A New Captain - Birth of DG Shipping**

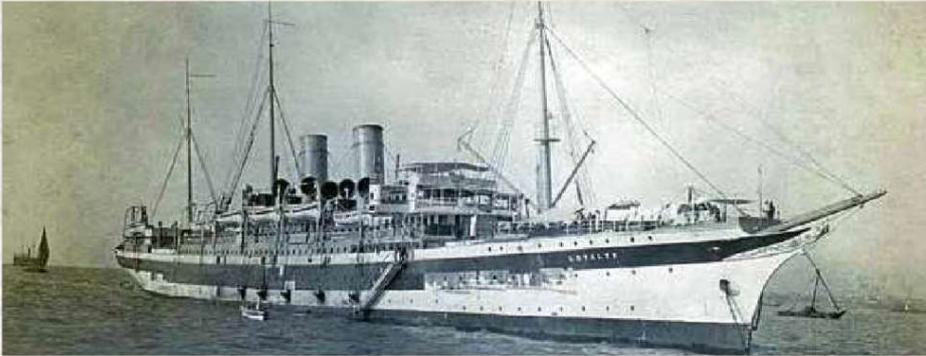
In September 1949, the Directorate General of Shipping was born within Commerce House, Bombay, through Memorandum No. 164-M.I.(20)/49, GOI, Ministry of Commerce dated 1st September, 1949. A. S. Lal, ICS, became the first Director General of Shipping. His office was modest, but his vision was immense: to give newly independent India command over its own seas.

The Merchant Shipping Act of 1958 provided the Directorate with statutory authority, defining its role as guardian of the seas. Its mandate was wide-ranging: to ensure the safety of life at sea, to enforce international conventions, to train and certify officers and seafarers, to safeguard their welfare, and to guide the growth of Indian shipping.

Progress came swiftly. In 1961, the Shipping Corporation of India was founded, consolidating Indian shipping into a national asset. Training ships such as T.S. Dufferin, T.S. Rajendra, and T.S. Chanakya nurtured generations of mariners, whose professionalism was recognized across the world. India’s merchant fleet, which had been less than one million gross tonnage in the 1950s, expanded to over eleven million tons in the decades that followed.

Global recognition followed. Dr. C. P. Srivastava, a product of India’s maritime tradition, was elected Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization, a moment of national pride that affirmed India’s leadership on the global stage. Institutionally, the Directorate gained its own home with the inauguration of Jahaz Bhavan in Mumbai in 1969, a symbol of permanence and authority that came to embody India’s maritime governance.

Welfare of seafarers, the human core of maritime strength, was institutionalized through the creation of the Seafarers’ Welfare Fund Society and the Seamen’s Provident Fund Organisation in 1966. These institutions ensured pensions, education, and family support, affirming that the dignity of seafarers was as important as the tonnage of ships.



SS Loyalty, the first ship owned by two Indians - The Scindia Steam Navigation Company, Ltd marks her journey to London from Mumbai via Marseilles.

Today, India stands proudly among the great maritime powers of the world. Its fleets span global waters, its seafarers are respected in every port, and its voice is heard in every international council. India's strength is not only measured in ships and containers but in something deeper the enduring bond between the nation and the sea. This bond is ancient. It was written in the myths of the Rigveda, measured by the stars studied on the Malabar Coast, carved into stone at Lothal, tested by the storms of colonial conquest, and renewed in the spirit of freedom with the sailing of the S.S. Loyalty. Today, it lives on in the vigilance of the Directorate General of Shipping and the pride of India's seafarers.

Seventy-five years since independence, India sails forward with clarity of vision and strength of purpose. The seas that once carried invaders now carry ambition. The ships that once bore foreign flags now sail proudly under the tricolor. The Directorate General of Shipping, born at the dawn of freedom, continues to steer the nation's maritime destiny with resolve, ensuring safety, sustainability, and strength on the oceans.

#### **Bharat: Forever Sailing, Forever Rising**

Bharat's maritime story is not just history it is a living journey. From the chants of Rigvedic sailors to the voices of cadets on India's training ships, the sea has always been a teacher, a guide, and a guardian. Seventy-five years of the Directorate General of Shipping stand as a testament to resilience, vision, and the unbroken bond between the nation and the sea. Today, as India looks to the horizon of the next seventy-five years, the tricolor sails across oceans not as a memory of struggle but as a symbol of strength an ode to our seafarers, our seas, and our sovereign spirit.

This voyage now enters a bold new chapter with the transformation of the Directorate General of Shipping into the Directorate General of Maritime Administration (DGMA). More than a change in name, it marks the widening scope of India's maritime mission from regulating ships to shaping an entire maritime ecosystem built on safety, sustainability, and global leadership. The shift is real, and the journey is only just beginning. With DGMA as its compass, India sets sail toward a future where innovation guides the fleet, green seas shape destiny, and the nation's legacy is written not only upon the waves but upon the very course of the oceans themselves.

**Capt. Anish Joseph,**

*Deputy Nautical Advisor-cum-Senior Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS*

**&**

**Adv. Deeksha Kathayat,**

*Legal Assistant (Nautical Wing), Directorate General of Shipping*



*Jalasya Rakṣā, Janasya Surakṣā • Shikṣita Nāvikaḥ, Sasakta Samsthānam, Surakṣita Samudrah • Samudra Śuddhiḥ, Rāṣṭrasya Vriddhiḥ*

# CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF A VISIONARY INDIAN



**Dr. C.P. Srivastava,**  
First Asian & Indian Secretary-General,  
International Maritime Organization (IMO)

## Trivia

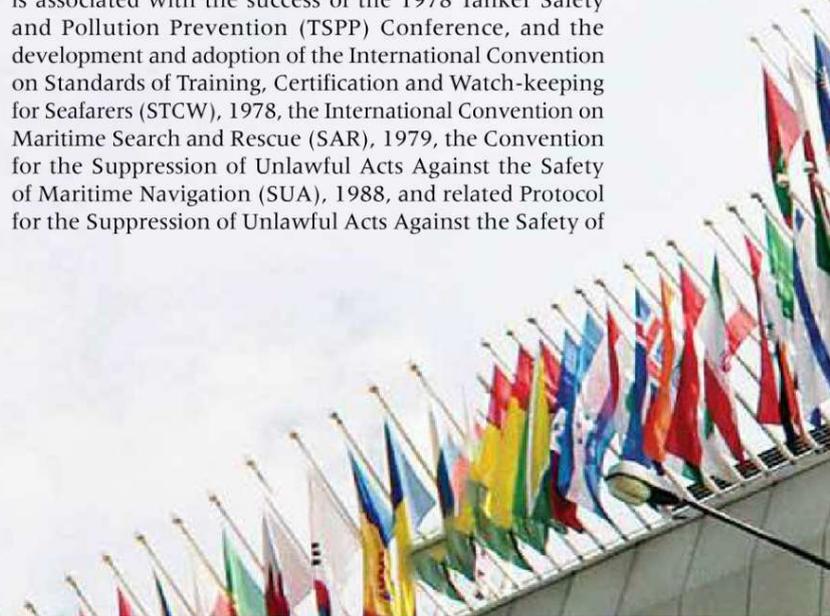
### Dr. C.P. Srivastava – Indian at the IMO Helm (1973)

In 1973, Dr. Chandrika Prasad Srivastava became the first Asian, and the longest serving Secretary-General of the IMO. Serving until 1989, his tenure transformed the IMO into a truly global body, expanding membership and strengthening safety and pollution-control conventions. His leadership put India firmly at the heart of world shipping governance.

As the Directorate General of Shipping commemorates 75 years of service to India's maritime sector, we pay homage to one of its most distinguished torchbearers, Dr. Chandrika Prasad Srivastava, the first Indian to serve as Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Dr. Srivastava assumed the role in 1974 and went on to serve four consecutive four-year terms, retiring on 31 December 1989, making his 16-year tenure one of the longest and most transformative in the organization's history. Upon retirement, he was honoured as Secretary-General Emeritus.

Born on 8 July 1920 in Unnao/Lucknow and graduated in Law and Arts at Lucknow University, Dr. Srivastava joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1949. He served as Joint Secretary to Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964–1966) and later led the Shipping Corporation of India as its founding Member, Chairman, and Managing Director.

At IMO, Dr. Srivastava was a global statesman who championed the cause of developing nations, ensuring that maritime safety, environmental protection, and equitable access to shipping resources were not privileges of the few but rights of all. Dr. Srivastava's leadership of IMO is associated with the success of the 1978 Tanker Safety and Pollution Prevention (TSPP) Conference, and the development and adoption of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch-keeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR), 1979, the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA), 1988, and related Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of





*“The sea is not the boundary of nations; it is the bridge of humanity. Let maritime cooperation be the compass that guides us toward peace and prosperity”*

**Dr. C.P. Srivastava**

Fixed Platforms located on the Continental Shelf, and many other treaties and Codes.

His most enduring legacy may be the founding of the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden, in 1983. Conceived as a centre of excellence for maritime education, the university has since trained thousands of professionals from across the globe, including many from India, furthering its vision of inclusive and informed maritime leadership.

In recognition of his service, he received the honorary knighthood (KCMG) from Queen Elizabeth II in 1990, the International Maritime Prize in 1991, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2009, among many other global honours. He remained deeply rooted in Indian values, guided by the spirit of service. Married to Nirmala Srivastava (founder of Sahaja Yoga) and father of two daughters, he passed away on 22 July 2013 in Genoa, Italy.

As we celebrate 75 years of DG Shipping, his legacy reminds us that India's maritime journey, rooted in wisdom and humility, continues to inspire global leadership at sea. His legacy continues to inspire maritime professionals, policymakers, and diplomats, reminding us that India's maritime journey is both ancient and dynamic.

In tribute to Dr. Srivastava, we recommit to his vision of cooperation, sustainability, and shared responsibility for the oceans and for humanity.

**Adv. Yukta Matlapurkar,**  
*Legal Assistant (Nautical Wing),  
Directorate General of Shipping*

#### Trivia

##### India's Early Role in the IMO (Since 1959)

India became a member to the IMO in 1959, just a year after the body was established. Since then, India has almost continuously served on the IMO Council, occupying a Category B seat representing nations with the largest interest in international seaborne trade. This long-standing presence has allowed India to shape global maritime policies on safety, security, and environmental protection.

