

Report on Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series on
"An Inspiring Heritage of Ship Building in India" dated, January 14, 2025



A Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series, has been started by RIS in collaboration with India Habitat Centre (IHC) as a public talk series to bring together stake holders for driving India's growth objectives and also motivate youth to pursue maritime career and research.

The first talk in the series was held on January 14, 2025 on the topic of, "An Inspiring Heritage of Ship Building in India". The event brought together a distinguished panel of experts and an audience of over 60 attending in person, along with a large number of viewers joining virtually on the You-tube channels of RIS and IHC. The event highlighted India's rich maritime legacy, her shipbuilding traditions, and the evolution into a modern naval shipbuilding nation.



The program began with a welcome address from Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, DG RIS, who emphasized the importance of maritime history and India's glorious legacy and our nation's current significance in shaping global trade routes. In his remarks, the DG, RIS reflected on India's position at the crossroads of ancient maritime routes and its enduring contributions to shipbuilding and maritime connectivity. He also highlighted the Maritime lecture series potential to inspire young minds to explore this often-overlooked dimension and the Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC) at RIS, role in promoting research on topics related to maritime growth.

The keynote address by Dr. Sanjeev Ranjan, Former Secretary MoPS&W, traced India's maritime legacy to the Sindhu Saraswati civilization, which flourished over 4,000 years ago. The ancient dockyard at Lothal, one of the world's oldest, was spotlighted as a testament to India's early maritime prowess. Dr. Ranjan emphasized how the Indus Valley Civilization maintained extensive trade networks with Mesopotamia, the Roman Empire, and Southeast Asia, underscoring India's critical role in ancient global commerce.

Cmde Ajay Agarwal (Retd.) from Maritime History Society, India, expanded on the technical sophistication of ancient Indian shipbuilding. He delved into the 12th-century text *YuktiKalpataru* by Raja Bhoj, which detailed shipbuilding techniques, wood classifications, and vessel types, reflecting India's advanced understanding of material science and naval architecture. Cmde Agarwal highlighted how Indian shipbuilders

crafted Dhows, known for their flexibility and durability, enabling long voyages across the Indian Ocean.

The lecture also explored the Maratha Navy's contributions during the 17th and 18th centuries. Under the leadership of leaders like Shivaji and Kanhoji Angre, the Marathas built maneuverable warships like the Ghurab and Pal, which were pivotal in coastal defense and naval warfare. The Maratha dockyards at Vijaydurg and Alibaug were recognized for their innovative shipbuilding techniques, blending indigenous practices with lessons learned from European counterparts.

The last speaker, Cmde Vineet Tiwari (Retd.), Former Principal Director Warship Design Bureau, Indian Navy, provided insights into India's post-independence shipbuilding journey. He highlighted the establishment of the Directorate of Naval Design (DND) since 1970, which spearheaded indigenous warship designs. Milestones like the Godavari-class frigates, the Delhi-class destroyers, and the Shivalik-class stealth frigates demonstrated India's growing expertise in designing and building advanced naval platforms. The commissioning of INS Vikrant, India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, in 2022 marked a pinnacle achievement, showcasing the nation's capability to develop complex naval systems with a high degree of indigenization. The speaker also emphasized that the expertise gained over naval vessels should be leveraged for commercial shipbuilding.

The panelists discussed the current challenges faced by the shipbuilding industry, including high capital costs, limited funding and insufficient infrastructure. They advocated for policy reforms, increased investments in research and development, and enhanced public-private partnerships to strengthen India's shipbuilding capabilities. The importance of aligning with global sustainability standards was also emphasized, with opportunities identified in the green shipping sector.

The event underscored the growing strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region and the Indo-Pacific in global maritime trade. With 60% of global maritime trade passing through these waters, India's shipbuilding industry has a crucial role in bolstering regional connectivity and economic growth. Initiatives like the Sagarmala project and Maritime Amrit-kaal Vision 2047 aim to revitalize India's maritime infrastructure, fostering a robust ecosystem for shipbuilding and trade.

The event concluded with a call to action for regaining India's maritime supremacy. The talks celebrated India's maritime past while envisioning a future where the country leads in innovation, sustainability, and global requirements of shipbuilding.

