



Soul connect: Indo-Korean project traces journey of 'migrant' Queen from South

■ TUBA RAQSHAN

CHENNAI: Researchers from Korea, Canada, Malaysia and other parts of the country came together here for a three-day workshop on Thursday to participate in 'The Turtle Trail', a preliminary attempt at exploring the linguistic, culture and historical links between South India and South Korea, through academic research.

The focus is on southern South Korea (particularly the Gaya Kingdom, which is present day Gimhae region)

and South India (the Ai Kingdom, the current stretch between Kanniyakumari to Thiruvananthapuram), where Princess Heo Hwang-ok, Queen of Gaya, supposedly hailed from, before she married King Suro and created the Gaya kingdom.

Rathi Jafer, Director of InKo Centre, which is spearheading this project supported by the Academy of Korean Studies, Korea, said that though it is commonly believed that the princess travelled from Ayodhya, a different perspective shows that she could have hailed from the Ai Kingdom (a maritime power), thus arriving by sea, through the

Turtle Trail. "Before the innovation of the compass, sailors had followed the turtle trail to reach their destination, which is the name of our project. We need to first establish if the princess did indeed travel from north or south India," said the director, adding, the eventual goal is publishing a compilation of critical essays on this subject.

The research will be spread across six major areas: historical links, language and linguistics, Buddhist connections, anthropological and cultural links, maritime and trade links and contemporary links.

Professor Kannan Narayanan,

Founder, Tamil Heritage Foundation, said Koreans call their father and mother 'oppa' and 'omma', which is similar to 'appa' and 'amma' in Tamil. "But in Japanese (a region closer to Korea), it translates to Oto san (father) and Oka san (mother). This Tamil link can be connected to the legend of the princess."

Historian S Balasubramani, founding president, Integrated Ocean Culture Research Foundation, said that the princess had travelled through a ship with a red sail - a feature similar among south Indian sea farers.



The tomb of Princess Heo Hwang-ok in Gimhae

Legends say Princess came from Ayodhya

CHENNAI: The legend of Korean Queen Heo Hwang-ok, mentioned in the 13th century chronicle Samguk Yusa by Buddhist monk Iryeon, states that the Princess came from a distant land, Ayuta (believed to be Ayodhya) by boat, who later married King Suro in the 48CE and created the powerful kingdom of Gaya. Many researchers said that Ayuta could be a reference to the Ai Kingdom (present day Tamil Nadu and Kerala) or Ayukta, which is no longer on the map. The Princess who became queen was believed to have introduced a new culture to King Suro's kingdom, including Buddhism.