

CONJURING KUALALUMPUR (MALAYSIA) – THE TREASURE TROVE OF INDIAN ESCAPEDE

Dr. PRABHU KUMARI VANAMA

Assistant Professor

Department of Historical Studies

Bharathi Women's College (A), Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Key Concepts: Apparels, Classical Dances, Customs and Rituals,
Palatte, Religious Religare

Kualalumpur, Malaysia , the gateway to the cluster of distinctive cultures and heritage, is if conspicuous to witness the rise and fall of dynasties of various regions at the one end of the pendulum, is no doubt more perspicuous in sustaining the Indian tradition in tact till date on the other.

Here comes an attempt to portray the same age old Culture and History of India that is still prevailing at Malaysia in general and Kualalumpur in particular. This paper showcases Kualalumpur as the destination by and for of Indian interest. It not only explores into the Indian impact at Malaysia successfully, but provides an exposure how Indian existence in the past led to the development of a mixed Malay-Indian culture at Malaysia without hindering their peaceful survival.

The Objectives

This heart throbbing study

1. Establishes Kualalumpur as a peaceful abode of Indian domicile
2. Familiarizes with the History of Indian discovery of Malaysia and migration
3. Identifies the Indian and Hindu influences
4. Portrays the existence of Indian Culture and
5. Narrates the characteristic features of each destination developed for Indians

The Sources

Both Primary and Secondary sources have been consulted with utmost care during the preparation of this research paper. Primary Sources include – Field Visits to the said destination and its' sites of tourist interest that brought to foray the Indian cultural influences, Publications of the Ministry of Tourism; Periodicals of the Malaysian Airlines, Malaysia; Issues of Sunway Lagoon and Royal Summit Malaysia, Government of Malaysia, Books consulted from the National Library of Malaysia; published by various publishers; Periodicals of TEG – The Expat Group and so on. Apart from referring to these sources, field visits in the recent past to the said sites of interest at Kualalumpur i.e., during the months of November and December 2012 made it feasible to experience and place the same on record vivaciously.

A Sneak Look Into Its' Interesting History

A multicultural land, where people of variegated groups such as Malays, Chinese, Indians and even ethnic groups survive together with great peace and harmony. The diversity of cultures

makes this place as a land of year round celebrations, religious festivals and colourful events. As such this destination balances heritage with modernity (Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board n.d.).

Going back into its' historical background this destination was considered as a safe stopover point for trade routes between India and China because the sea here is free from pirate attacks and so the Indian traders chose to transport their goods overland through Malay Peninsula. As a consequential impact, innumerable Indian settlements were established along the West Coast (Wijeysingha 1989, 10). Ensuing years witnessed the development of Hindu-Buddhist trading kingdoms (Dorai 2000, 18).

The Cultural Activities

Interactions and inter-marriages of the Indians with the local residents led to the spread of Hindu Beliefs and Customs. This impact can be clearly experienced in the language, literature, architecture, social rituals, government ceremonies and so on. The traditional religious festivals of the Indian Hindus are not only being performed with great interest here but grand events are also organized in a pompous manner by the Government of Malaysia every year. A justifying example for this is *Deepavali Open House Celebrations* that are being celebrated every year by the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture (Ministry of Tourism n.d.).

The Christening Of Indian Names

Wedding Customs and Brahministic court rituals, and in many words, the prevalence of Indian Culture and words that are of Indian and especially Sanskrit origin (With 1988, 2) can be still construed from the christening of several alluring destinations like the Putra (Tourism Malaysia n.d.) World Trade Centre (Anon. 2012) stands as a testimony to the impact of Indian Diaspora. Putra is a term that traces its' origin to Sanskrit language. The first General United Malays National Organization (UMNO) assembly has been staged there. Since then UMNO general assemblies as well as International Quran Reading Competitions (Anon. 2012) are taking place every year here.

The Malaysia's Garden City was christened as Putrajaya and since this is the administrative centre of the Government of Malaysia, this city is now being fondly called by everybody as The Malaysia's Intelligent Garden City (Anon. 2012).

The Religious Religare

Hindu temples can be found throughout the Kuala Lumpur city. They are characterized by open design and extremely intricate statues with bright colours. The Sri Mahamariamman Temple¹⁰ is the oldest and richest Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Founded in 1873 by built by a Pillai family, it is situated at edge of Chinatown in Jalan Bandar (formerly High Street). In 1968, a new structure was built, featuring the ornate 'Raja Gopuram' tower in the style of South Indian temples. Its' magnificent 22 metre high gate tower and portico are adorned with intricately carved images of Hindu deities. The central deity Maha Mariamman is embellished with gold and precious stones (Ministry of Tourism 2012).

Little India & Brick Fields – A Pleasure Paradise By and For The Indians

The bustling and vibrant Little India enclave is very near to the city's transportation hub. This place is decorated with Indian lamp posts and a beautiful fountain. The perfect place to

experience the assortment of social, cultural, educational and religious establishments of the Indians. The landmarks here include –Vivekananda Ashrama Building constructed in 1904, the YMCA building founded in 1905, Indian shopping centres, schools and a centre for Indian Arts (Ministry of Tourism 2012, 13).

Thriving Of Indian Classical Dances

The founding of Temple of Fine Arts by His Holiness Swami Swami Shantanand Saraswathi at Kuala Lumpur glimpses the blossoming and booming of Indian traditional arts in this part of the country. It is located right in the centre of the crescent shaped Jalan Berhala in Brickfields, facing the 100 year old statue of Mahavira. This Centre is a 5 storied building with dance studios, music rooms, spacious rehearsal hall, library and a cafeteria. The Annalakshmi restaurant here is the right dining place who crave for traditional Indian palatte (Anon. 2012).

Indian Etiquette and Apparels

Etiquette in following Indian hair style is gaining popularity day by day in the city. The siblings, young as well as the adults are showing added interest in Indian style. So, Thangayya, the Ex-Chairman of Indian Barber Association has opened *Indian Style Barber Shop* in 1940. Generations passed and now the same barber shop is being run by Thangayyah's son Madhirajah and the crowds are also increasing year after year though the road fronting at Brickfields changed the facing of the shop (Arch. n.d.).

One can experience the pervasiveness of Indian culture here because most of the traditional customary activities can be performed here. Sweet smelling jasmines and flower garlands are available here. Indian traditional as well as fashion wear and accessories too can be purchased here (Ministry of Tourism n.d. 2013).

Mouth Watering Indian Palatte

Malaysia especially Kuala Lumpur is a hub where one can witness the flocking and intermingling of Indian people and their cultural activities. Tamilians, Punjabis, Malayalees and even Bengalees arrived and migrated during the rubber boom. These Indians added their own cooking styles to the savour of the restaurants throughout the city. Indian food can be found all over the city and there are even hawker stalls to suit the purse of the people. The three main types of Indian food in here are North Indian, South Indian and Indian Muslim (Tourism Malaysia n.d. 52-3). For instance, at hotel Royal Summit, the Andhra, Hyderabad Food Festival was organized with a great variety of combos during the Christmas eve of 2012, which attracted a good number of people from even far off places (Prabhu Kumari 2012). One can even relish the South Indian palatte at Saravana Bhavan (Prabhu Kumari 2012) which is a quite popular group of hotels in Tamil Nadu. Hence, a glimpse into all these activities of the conjuring Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) reveals the Indian Diaspora in every nook and corner of the said destination which is not only a treasure trove for sight-seeing but is a pleasure paradise of Indian Escapade.

REFERENCES:

1. Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, no date. *Tourism Map of Malaysia*. Putrajaya: Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board
2. Wijesingha, Molly. 1989. *Malaysia on 4 Wheels*. Singapore: Wijesingha
3. Dorai, Francis. 2000. *Malaysia*. Singapore: Insight Guide

4. Ministry of Tourism. 2012. *Major Events & Festivals 2012-14*. Putrajaya: Ministry of Tourism
5. Lynn, Witham. 1988. *Malaysia A Foreigners Guide*. Verment: Hornbill Books
6. Ministry of Tourism, *Kuala Lumpur City Map Central Market*. Putrajaya: Tourism Malaysia
7. Anon. 2012. *Visitors Malaysia Shop.Dine.Explore*. 28 November 2012
8. Anon. 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Putra_World_Trade_Centre. 29 November 2012
9. Anon. December 2012. *Vision KL*, Kuala Lumpur: Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur
10. Anon. 2012. *Map of Kuala Lumpur Malauysia Truly Asia* n.k.
11. Ministry of Tourism, 2012. *Kuala Lumpur Malaysia's Dazzling Capital City*. Putrajaya: Tourism Malaysia
12. Ministry of Tourism, *Dine. Shop. Chill Out. Live it up! Central Region Kuala Lumpur Selangor Putrajaya*. Putrajaya: Tourism Malaysia
13. Anon. <http://tfa.org.my/bday/pagebuilding.htm>. viewed 30 November 2012
14. Arch, n.d., *Kuala Lumpur Walks & Tours Map*. Kuala Lumpur: Kuala Lumpur City Gallery
15. Ministry of Tourism, *Dine. Shop. Chill Out. Live it up! Central Region Kuala Lumpur Selangor Putrajaya*. Putrajaya: Tourism Malaysia
16. Tourism Malaysia, n.d. *KL Welcome Guide*. Kuala Lumpur: Kuala Lumpur City Hall
17. Vanama Prabhu Kumari, 2012. *Hotel Royal*, [Field Study] Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia. 25/12/2012
18. Vanama Prabhu Kumari, 2012. *Saravana Bhavan*, [Field Study] Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia. 1/12/2012