STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What is Ayodhya's South Korean Connection? Who are the Members of Korea’s Karak?

International Relations

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More than 2,000 years ago, a princess from Ayodhya, Suriratna, married Korea’s King Kim Suro and went on to become Queen Heo Hwang-ok. Today, around seven million Koreans trace their lineage to this royal union, preserving their ancestral connection through traditions and heritage. They belong to the Karak dynasty and visit Ayodhya every year to pay their respects at the memorial of Queen Heo Hwang-ok.

1. Queen Heo Hwang-ok (Suriratna)

Queen Heo Hwang-ok is believed to be the central figure connecting Korea’s ancient history with India. According to the Samguk Yusa, a 13th-century Korean historical text, she was a princess from a distant land called Ayuta, which many scholars associate with Ayodhya in present-day India. She is believed to have travelled to Korea around 48 AD to marry King Kim Suro.

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2. King Kim Suro

King Kim Suro was the founder of the Garak (Gaya) Kingdom, located in present-day South Korea. His marriage to Queen Heo Hwang-ok is considered a foundational event in Korean history, symbolizing the beginning of the royal lineage of the Garak dynasty.

3. Descendants and Clans

The descendants of Queen Heo and King Kim Suro formed major Korean family lineages, especially the Gimhae Kimand Heo clans. Today, millions of Koreans trace their ancestry to these clans, and it is believed that nearly 10% of South Korea’s population has ancestral links to this lineage.

4. Cultural and Historical Significance

The story of Queen Heo forms the basis of deep cultural ties between India and South Korea. A memorial dedicated to her exists in Ayodhya, and cultural exchanges between the two regions continue to honor this historical connection.

5. Historical Debate

While the story of Queen Heo is deeply respected in Korean tradition, historians note that concrete archaeological evidence linking her directly to Ayodhya is limited. Nevertheless, the legend remains a powerful symbol of ancient Indo-Korean relations.