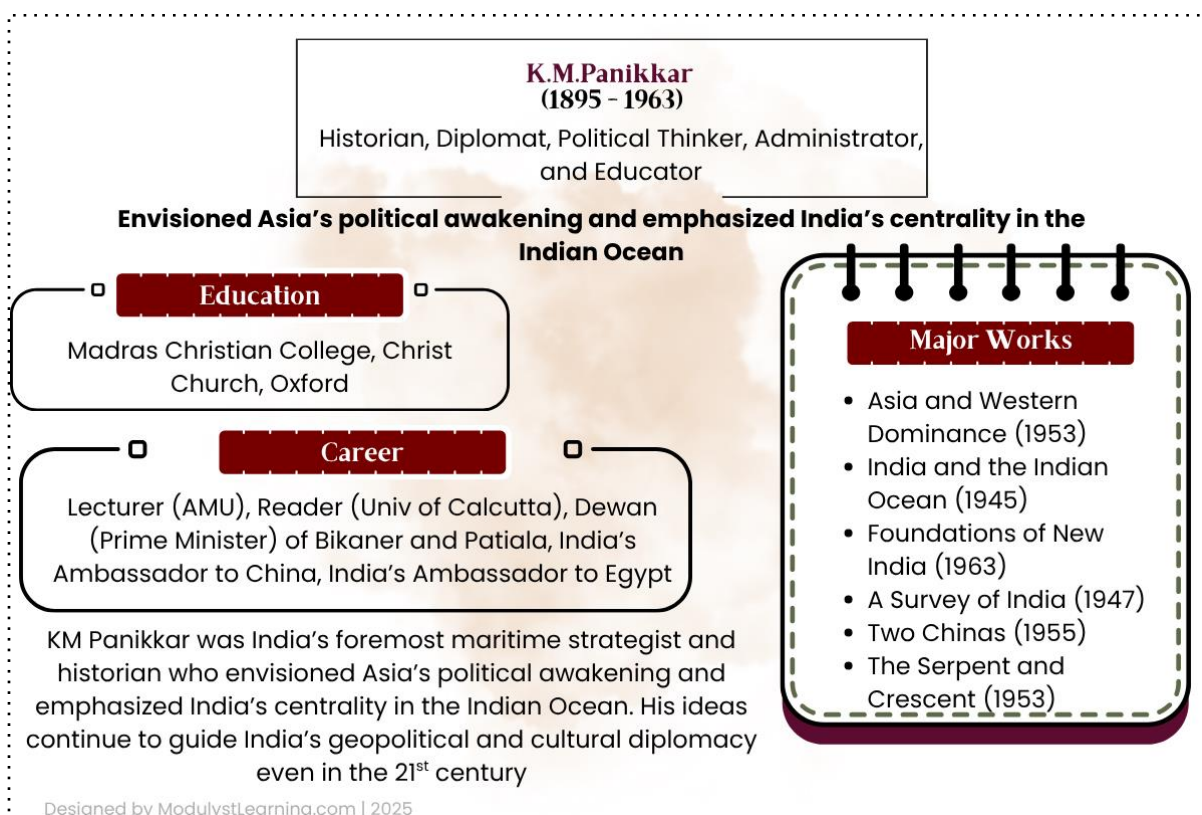


## KM PANIKKAR



1. Kavalam Madhava Panikkar was born on June 3, 1895, in Kavalam, Kerala, and passed away on December 10, 1963, in Mysore. He was a historian, diplomat, political thinker, administrator, and educator. His primary interests included Indian Ocean geopolitics, Indian history, colonialism, and India's maritime heritage. His ideas significantly influenced India's foreign policy during Nehru's period after independence.
2. Pannikar attended Madras Christian College and later studied law and history at Christ Church, Oxford. His intellectual development was significantly influenced by the political and international relations theories common in early 20th-century England, especially the imperial and realist schools.
3. Career Overview –
  - He taught at Aligarh Muslim University from 1919 to 1922 before becoming a Reader in History at the University of Calcutta. In 1925, he became the first editor

of the Hindustan Times, where his editorials often highlighted themes of national self-reliance and Asia's increasing political consciousness.

- He held several administrative and political roles, including being Dewan (Prime Minister) of Bikaner from 1944 to 1947. Later, he served as Dewan of Patiala and played a part in establishing the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PESU).
- After India's independence, Panikkar became one of the country's first diplomats, appointed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He served as India's Ambassador to Egypt from 1952 to 1954, focusing on enhancing India's role in Afro-Asian solidarity and the Non-Aligned Movement.

#### 4. Diplomatic and Political Thought –

- Panikkar's and Nehruvian foreign policy focus on a common goal of Asian revival and non-alignment. It advocates for Asian unity and an independent foreign policy, unconstrained by Cold War alliances. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of India's maritime security for its geopolitical prospects.
- Pannikar's perspectives on China, as conveyed in his writings, praised China's rich civilization but cautioned about its increasing strategic assertiveness. While serving as Ambassador to China, he played a key role in drafting the 1950s India-China Treaty, which acknowledged Tibet as part of China—a decision that drew criticism after the 1962 Sino-Indian War.

#### 5. Important Works –

- Asia and Western Dominance (1953) provides a historical examination of European imperial expansion in Asia, highlighting both the period of subjugation and the subsequent revival of Asia.
- India and the Indian Ocean – An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History, 1945, offers a seminal analysis of Indian maritime strategy, highlighting that control of the Indian Ocean is essential for India's security.
- Published in 1963, 'Foundations of New India' explores India's political and economic rebuilding following colonization.

- A Survey of India (1947) provides a brief overview of India's civilizational development and the influence of colonial rule.
- In \*Two Chinas\* (1955), the author reflects on his experiences as India's ambassador during China's transition under Mao.
- The Serpent and Crescent (1953) explores how Islam has shaped Asian politics and its relations with other civilizations.

#### 6. Significant Ideas and Contributions –

- Maritime Realism and the Indian Ocean Thesis –

Panikkar's key contribution is his work in maritime geopolitics, where he argued that –

“Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia.”

It was argued that India's independence and security depend on establishing naval superiority and controlling maritime routes linking East Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

- Asian Resurgence –

He argued for revitalizing Asia's political and cultural identity. Recognizing colonialism as an anomaly in Asia's extensive history of civilization and trade, he highlighted the importance of restoring Asia's confidence and political vigor to regain its rightful place globally.

- Historical Perspective on Western Dominance –

In 'Asia and Western Dominance,' he described how Western powers established their strength through naval power, industrial growth, and imperial exploitation. He viewed the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a critical period marked by the decline of Western imperial dominance and the emergence of Asian influence.

- Civilisational Diplomacy –

Pannikar's perspective on diplomacy focused on civilizational understanding rather than on power dynamics alone. He promoted cultural diplomacy as a valuable tool to enhance global peace and encourage mutual understanding, particularly among Asian nations.

## 7. Criticism –

His involvement in formulating Tibet policy as the Indian Ambassador to China was criticized for being too trusting of Chinese motives. Some historians argue that his “Pan-Asianism” idealism failed to account for the complexities of Cold War power dynamics. However, his strategic analysis and forward-looking approach to maritime issues remain highly respected today.

## 8. Legacy –

He is acknowledged as a trailblazer in Indian strategic thought, and his writings continue to influence –

- India's naval strategy and Indo-Pacific policy
- International relations scholarship on Asia

The KM Pannikar Memorial Lectures are held every year in India to honor his contributions to diplomacy and history.

## 9. Two Line Summary –

KM Pannikar was a prominent maritime strategist and historian in India, focusing on Asia's political rise and emphasizing India's significant position in the Indian Ocean. His ideas continue to shape India's geopolitical and cultural diplomacy today.

# K. M. PANIKKAR

## (1895 – 1963)

Historian, Diplomat, Political Thinker  
Administrator, and Educator

Envisioned Asia's political awakening and emphasized India's centrality in the Indian Ocean



### EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Madras Christian College  
Christ Church, Oxford

### MAJOR WORKS

|                                                 |      |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|
| <b>Asia and Western Dominance</b>               | 1953 |
| <b>India and the Indian Ocean</b>               |      |
| Influence of Sea Power on                       | 1945 |
| <b>The Foundations of New India</b>             | 1963 |
| <b>A Survey of Indian History</b>               | 1947 |
| <b>In Two Chinas</b>                            | 1955 |
| Viewed on his Experiences as India's Ambassador | 1953 |

### ASIAN RESURGENCE

Championing revival of Asia's political and cultural identity

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON WESTERN DOMINANCE

Viewing 20th century as the end of Western imperial control and beginning of Asian reassertion

### CIVILIZATIONAL DIPLOMACY

Advocating cultural diplomacy as a tool for among Asian nations

### CAREER OVERVIEW

- Lecturer, Aligarh Muslim University
- Reader at University of Calcutta
- Dewan (Prime Minister) of Bikaner and Patiala
- India's Ambassador to China
- India's Ambassador to Egypt

### KEY IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

#### MARITIME REALISM AND THE INDIAN OCEAN THESIS

India's naval supremacy accrued on sea routes as crucial to security

#### ASIAN RESURGENCE

Viewing revival of Asia's political and cultural identity

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON WESTERN DOMINANCE

Viewing India's century as during the 21st century as turning up the end of Western imperial control and beginning of Asian

**K. M. Panikkar** was India's foremost maritime strategist and historian who

envisioned Asia's political awakening and emphasized India's centrality in the Indian Ocean. His ideas continue to guide India's geopolitical and cultural diplomacy even in the 21st century."

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