

**INDIAN CULTURE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES****Dr. Ashok Kumar***Magadh University, Bodh Gaya, Bihar**Corresponding Author: Dr. Ashok Kumar***DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.14404562****ABSTRACT:**

India has played a very important role in forming the cultural tradition of Asia. The Indian colonies in the Far East must ever remain the high watermark of maritime and colonial enterprise of the ancient Indians. An awareness of the unity of all life, a love for the ultimate and the universal in preference to the immediate and the particular, tolerance, co-operation, and pacifism are some of the elements contributed by India to these countries. The Extension of Indian Culture Cultural institutions in Burma or Siam or Indonesia are just an extension of the Indian institutions. The territory stretching from Burma to Indonesia was known in the ancient days as the Land of Gold, and Indian merchants and princes settled there and founded their own colonies and spread Indian cultural influences. The Buddhist missionaries carried the torch of a new religion to these countries. All these people introduced Indian customs and manners, religion and philosophy, ritual, art and literature wherever they went. Indianised kingdoms soon came into being, either as a result of an Indian imposing himself on the native population, or else through a native chief adopting a foreign civilization. The spread of Indian influence was in the nature of 'waves'. There were five such waves extending from the second or third century to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries when following the Muslim invasion of India Buddhist monks and teachers were forced to seek shelter in these countries. As a result of the impact of these waves there was total 'Indianisation' of some parts, while in others Indian culture acted as a stimulus calling forth a response from the local genius. From this point of view we can put these countries into two zones—the Western and the Eastern. Ceylon, Burma, Siam, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra which fall in the Western Zone underwent a thorough-going Indianisation, whereas in the Eastern Zone comprising the parts of Indonesia and Indo-China the local genius was not completely submerged by Indian influence.

INTRODUCTION:

The Indianisation of Siam took place in the second century A. D., when a colony which flourished till the sixth century A. D. was established at Pong Tuk. Dvaravati, the Indianised kingdom of Siam, ruled from Cambodia to the Bay of Bengal till the tenth century and Gandhar, another such kingdom, for

three centuries till it was conquered by Kublai Khan. Buddhism became the official religion of Siam and in the thirteenth century the Thai king built a Buddhist temple which was a replica of the famous Bodh-gaya Temple. The Siamese language borrowed its script from India, and Pali deeply influenced its development. Indian Samskaras have

become a part and parcel of Siamese custom and ritual. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata have exercised a great influence on the Siamese literature and art.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS:

The Khmer kings were Hindus and had their names ending in varmana. King Yashovarmana founded the most glorious city of Angkor Thom in the heart of Combodia in the ninth century. The city was surrounded by a high stone wall which had five gates with five great avenues each a hundred feet wide and running straight from one end of the town to the other. These avenues converge on the temple of Bayon which is a masterpiece of Kambuja architecture. Fifty huge towers surrounded by two hundred faces identified with Avalokiteshwara the all-merciful Bodhisatva, still stand facing the vagaries of the weather. The most famous monument of the Khmers is Angkor Wat, the largest temple in the world. In combined magnitude and magnificence, it stands alone. It was built by Suryavarmana in the 12th century. An idea of the massive character of this temple may be had from its measurements. A two and a half mile long and 650 feet wide moat surrounds the temple. The broad paved avenue which runs from the western gateway to the first gallery is 1560 feet long. The first gallery measures about

800 feet from East to West and 675 feet from North to South. There are three such concentric galleries each double the preceding one in height. The central stone tower on the third stage rises to a magnificent height of 213 feet.

METHOD:

All this vast edifice has been chiselled into endless beautiful designs and patterns. Even the outer walls are sculptured. In the first gallery there are panels ninety or hundred yards long, depicting the stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Vishnu in all his incarnations reigns supreme at Angkor Wat. The religion of the Khmers was a curious mixture of the cult of Devaraya and Tantric Hinduism. There was a spirit of religious toleration and the king supported all the temples irrespective of the deity to whom they were dedicated. The Khmers patronised Sanskrit and their inscriptions were drafted in classical Sanskrit style. Very often these inscriptions excel in literary merits the inscriptions so far discovered in India. The Khmers had a higher and deeper spiritual view of life which is the true essence of all religions. Education was widespread in Kambuja and students went to ashrams which were on the model of Indian ashrams. These ashrams were powerful centres of Indian culture in Kambuja.

DISCUSSION IN THIS STUDY:

Like Kambuja, Champa was also a great centre of Hindu culture. The earliest colonists came from India and the Hindu king Sri Mara established a dynasty in the second century A. D. which lasted till the fifteenth century. The Chams created remarkable sculptures and a highly original type of brick temple architecture. The best known groups of temples are at Myson, Dong Duong and Po Nagar. The Myson group has about sixty temples ranging in date from the seventh to the twelfth centuries. The temple remains at Dong Duong date from the ninth and tenth centuries. The Cham figure sculpture closely followed Gupta models both in theme and technique. Shaivism was the official religion of Champa but Buddhism also flourished there. A fine standing image of Buddha has been discovered at the Dong Duong site.

The people followed a caste system similar to that in India, but the Brahmins, although holding a high position in the society, did not dominate the king. Hindu customs and festivals were prevalent and Sanskrit was the official language of the country. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata were widely studied besides Hindu philosophy and sacred texts of the Shaivites. Champa disappeared from history in the fifteenth century. The achievements of the Indian colonists in the South-East Asian countries have

been very great. They introduced Indian religions, literature, philosophy, social and political institutions and art to millions of people who readily accepted whatever ancient India had to offer. The Indian expansion was purely cultural and there was never a military conquest or annexation. This cultural conquest produced brilliant results of an abiding value. India, thus, played the role of a great civilizing force in the life of the people of South-East Asia.

CONCLUSION:

The Indianized states of Southeast Asia continued until medieval times. After Islam, there was a change in the situation. The spice and pepper trade by the Gujrati traders from India resulted in new Muslim settlements in Southeast Asia. From Gujarat and Indian Coromandel Coast, traders visited the region and helped in spreading Islam. As these Indian Muslims brought their religion, their practice of Islam was not as orthodox as the Islam of Arabia. The Indian Muslims before the coming of the Portuguese dominated trade in the Indian Ocean and there was a connection between India and Indonesia in the maritime trade of the region. The Southeast Asian ports like Melaka and Aceh had large settlements of Indian traders. Moreover, it was the Hindu-Buddhist kings and princes, who then converted to Islam and spread the doctrine. Consequently, Islam in

Indonesia was not of the orthodox kind and retained earlier traditions in a compromising spirit. It was the genius of local people, who chose those elements of an external culture that were either consistent with the indigenous culture or could be molded to its own beliefs. Southeast Asia has preserved many Indian cultural traits. Traces of India's past are found in the customs, religious life, and monuments of Southeast Asia. The age old contact between the two regions has become one of the important contributory factors in forging a new relationship in this age of globalization.

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