

**ROOTS OF INDIA'S CULTURAL
DIPLOMACY
IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled **ROOTS OF INDIA'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA** submitted by Sarita Dash in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this university is her own work and has not been submitted for any other degree to this university or any other university.

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*To Those
For
Why I Am – I Am*

CONTENTS

		<i>Page No.</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>		
<i>Preface</i>		i-ii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>		
Chapter-I	Introduction	1-18
Chapter-II	Trade as a Vehicle of Cultural Transmission	19-33
Chapter-III	Religions of Indian Origin in Southeast Asia	34-50
Chapter-IV	Arts, Architecture and Literary Heritage	51-66
Chapter-V	Overseas Indians in Southeast Asia	67-79
Chapter -VI	Conclusions	80-92
<i>Bibliography</i>		92-104

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PREFACE

The intensity and complexity of present day cultural and social phenomena calls for a new understanding of the interaction between cultures, nation-states, regional markets and emerging global information and communication system. Cultural thresholds are being crossed as migration, demographic change, ethnic claims and interpretations of global cultural process changes the reference domains in which people define their identification and behavior pattern.

India's relationship with Southeast Asia is unique in that not many regions in the world can claim such age old, un-interrupted and multifaceted ties. Millenniaold close cultural interaction between the regions has led to a shared legacy of strong neighbourliness. This study is based on the assumption that cultural unity and commonality can be a better way towards forging cooperation .The establishment of cultural communications can help in creating a platform which could bring about greater understanding and peace in the region.

The study seeks to analyse the historical roots of India's relationship with Southeast Asia especially in the cultural domain. It also makes an investigation into the changing paradigms of Indo-Southeast Asia relation particularly in the cultural field. A historico-analytical methodology has been used in analysing the relation between the two regions by making use of primary and secondary sources.

The first chapter deals into the context, pattern and framework of cultural diplomacy in general. Besides it also deals with India's cultural diplomacy in a global perspective in the post-independence era. The second chapter focuses on the study of trade relationship that facilitated cultural intercourse between India and Southeast Asia. The third chapter is based on the study of religions of Indian origin on Southeast Asia. It deals with their historical as well as contemporary implications for better relations. In the fourth chapter, the Indian impact on Southeast Asian art and architecture as well as on the literary heritage have been discussed. The fifth Chapter deals with the study of Indian communities in Southeast Asia and their role in enhancing Indo-Southeast Asia relations.

The sixth chapter deals with Indian efforts towards improving cultural relations with Southeast Asia besides exploring the roots, and the ways and means of utilizing those for promoting greater cooperation

Sarita Dash

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	:	Association Of South East Asian Nations
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization
ICCR	:	Indian Council For Cultural Relations
ARF	:	ASEAN Regional Forum
BBC	:	British Broadcasting Corporation
IIL	:	Indian Independence League
PIO	:	Peoples Of Indian Origin
NRI	:	Non Resident Indian
FDP	:	Full Dialogue Partner
MGC	:	Mekong Ganga Cooperation
JCC	:	Joint Cooperation Council
USSR	:	Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand and appreciate the conduct of states in their relations with one another, an understanding of their cultures and civilisations can be of immense help. Cultures and cultural backgrounds do reflect the values, outlooks, intentions, inner aspirations even interests of countries. Surprisingly, though for several decades, the topic of culture in international relations has largely been ignored, only recently an increasing interest has re-emerged in how world politics is affected by cultures i.e., by collectively shared perceptions, norms and beliefs. The reasons may lie with unipolarity/multipolarity, globalisation, reassertion of indigenous cultures or even theories like 'clash of civilisations'. In a keynote address on *Cultures in the 21st Century: Conflicts and Convergences*, Samuel P. Huntington says:

Now, while we have not had the end of history, we have arrived, at least for the moment, at the end of ideology. The twenty-first century is at-least beginning as the century of culture, with the differences, interactions, and conflicts among cultures taking center stage. This has become manifest, among other ways, in the extent to which scholars, politicians, economic development officials, soldiers and strategists are all turning to culture as a central factor in explaining human social, political and economic behaviour. In short, culture counts, with consequences for both good and evil.¹

Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' theory may not be applicable worldwide, but one cannot deny the growing significance of culture in contemporary world politics.²

¹ Samuel P. Huntington "Cultures In The 21st Century: Conflicts And Convergences", *Keynote Address delivered at Colorado College's 125th Anniversary Symposium*, Feb. 4, 1999, p.1

² Fareed Zakaria, "Culture Is Destiny A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew" in *The New Shape of World Politics Contending Paradigms in International Relations* (New York, Foreign Affairs, 1997) p. 232.

Culture can be the glue that binds civil societies, it can provide for the common assumptions which undergirds markets, laws and regulations. Conversely, cultural divisions can tear a society apart and make the same systems unworkable; at least partially. Thus, the configuration and evolution of culture is a legitimate concern of public policy, for it comprises both public and private goals. Significantly, understanding the culture of other peoples and nations is essential to international cooperation and successful commerce in today's increasingly global markets. Cultural exchanges are certainly not designed to boost the economy, but economic advantages flow as a natural bi-product.

While differences in cultures and civilisations divide people, cultural similarities bring people together and promote trust and cooperation. Even though, many efforts at regional economic integration are going on in the world, their relative success varies directly with the extent to which the concerned countries have a common culture. Throughout the world countries are regrouping politically along cultural lines with peoples and governments talking in terms of cultural communities transcending state boundaries.³

It is accepted in many countries that cultural relations are an essential third dimension in relation between states: third because they accompany politics and trade. It was Willy Brandt, a former German Foreign Minister who first gave currency to the term "third pillar of

³ Harvey B. Feigenbaum, *Globalization and Cultural Diplomacy, Issue Paper of Center For Arts And Culture* (Washington, D.C., 2001) p. 7, available at www.culturalpolicy.org.

foreign policy".⁴ Senator Full Bright after whom one of the most popular cultural exchange programmes is named wrote in 1964:

Foreign policy cannot be based on military posture or diplomatic activities alone in today's world. The shape of the world a generation from now will be influenced far more by how well we communicate the values of our society to others than by our military or diplomatic superiority.⁵

According to Norman J. Padelford and George A. Lincln "the information and cultural relations programmes have added what may be called a fourth dimension" to foreign relations in providing additional avenues of contact among peoples and states. They are not to be reviewed as end in themselves, but as one among other forms of implementing policy or fostering understanding across borders.⁶

1. 1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

There is a general tendency among the existing theories of International Relations to exclude cultural issues. However, with the increased use, variety and sophistication of cultural studies within social science, political science and literary studies in recent times. International Relations' neglect of the issue of culture is disappearing. On the other side, with identities and their related issues emerging all over the world, the importance of culture in influencing world affairs has been recognised.

⁴ J.M. Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations* (London, Allen And Unwin Publication 1986), p.1.

⁵ P.H., Coombs, *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy, Educational and Cultural Affairs* (New York, Harper & Row), p. IX.

⁶ Norman J. Padelford & George A. Lincln, *International Communication as an Instrument of Policy The Dynamics of International Politics* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1962), p.401.

For realists every state as such represents a particular culture, while for the liberals the world is generally divided into states with a liberal culture and states representing non-liberal cultures.⁷ But in reality states generally possess more than one culture even though they sometimes represent only one of them. For example, a country like Indonesia possessing multiple cultures declares itself as an Islamic state. In this context, it is the duty of the state to provide equal opportunities to all cultural groups without any bias. The state should not represent any culture. Ultimately, it is the people who possess different cultures.

Most existing models of world politics analyze how the interests and power resources of groups of people influence the international system. Cultural approach tries to surpass these analyses, as it (cultural approaches) tries to demonstrate how group perceptions or interests and power shape the international system. It also seeks to clarify to which groups individuals feel they belong and how shared perceptions of interests and power themselves are shaped. These approaches attempt to show that the perceptions of interests, power and group identities that international actors have, are tied to their preferred way of organising social relations, their conceptions of time and space, their system of allocating honour and blame, their favoured way of dealing with conflicts and so on.⁸

⁷ Beate John, *The Cultural Construction Of International Relations: The Inventions of the State of Nature* (New York, Palgrave Publication, 2000), p.29.

⁸ Ibid, p. 29

In doing this, cultural perspectives also emphasise the immense variety (both in time and space) of the ways in which people can think and perceive. This indicates the possibilities for misconception between people from different backgrounds and the adverse social consequences thereof. For instance, the negative social effects of cultural blindness on the part of states that are militarily and economically superior.⁹

According to Huntington, the end of the cold war marks the beginning of a period in which clashes of civilisations will be the major form of international conflict. He then identifies civilisations, ideologies, belief systems as some major sources of conflict. Unlike Fukuyama, he insists that the discipline of International Relations should pay more attention to the cultural and religious beliefs, sensibilities and interests of other civilisations.¹⁰ On the one hand, both (Huntington and Fukuyama) identify cultural differences as a major source of international conflicts in the contemporary world and on the other hand, neither of them concludes that international relations have to concern itself thoroughly with the role of cultural differences in international politics. A thorough investigation of liberal and realist theories of international relations shows that both strands of thought identify cultural diversity as a major, if not the major, problematic of international politics.¹¹

⁹ Dominique Jaquin Berdal (ed.) *Culture in World Politics*, p. 677.

¹⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash Of Civilizations and the Remaking Of World Order*, (New York, Simon And Schuster, 1996), p.49.

¹¹ John, n.7, pp.1-2.

1.2. CULTURE

Culture refers to 'the entire gamut of human activity and achievement'.¹² It may also refer to the products of a society. Anthropologists speak of culture in a much broader sense to mean the entire way of life of a society, its institutions, social structure, family structure and the meanings people attribute to these. For political scientists like Huntington, culture is something subjective, meaning the beliefs, values, attitudes, orientations, assumptions and philosophy of a particular group of people. At the broadest level civilisation is the largest cultural entity with which people identify.¹³

UNESCO defines culture as the "whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or a social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs"¹⁴

Culture in the context of nation-states results in acquiring a personality of their own. Each nation thus has a distinct personality and a national stereotype. Sometimes such stereotypes are at variance with reality and sometimes they are politically motivated to promote certain interests of the state. Generally, it is the perceptions that matter in

¹² B.P Singh, *India's Culture: The State, The Arts And Beyond*, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 52.

¹³ Huntington, n. 1, p.1

¹⁴ Utpal K. Banerjee, "Role of Cultural Diplomacy", in Lalit Mansingh (ed.) *Indian Foreign Policy: Agenda for the 21st Century*, (New Delhi, Konark Publications, 1997), vol.1, p.397.

creating such stereotypes.¹⁵ For instances, we hear of the Ugly Americans, the Russian Bear, the ASEAN Tigers, the Indian Elephant, the Hindu Rate of Growth, even the working of the ASEAN way of development.

Culture constitutes a balancing and driving force of development and also an objective of development.¹⁶ It is generally agreed that culture has become an indispensable form of communication within societies and between societies. Cultural conventions and agreements between states are now a common feature of their relations and obviously this leads to convergence rather than do the inherent divisiveness of politics or the competitiveness of trade.¹⁷

Culture is a living phenomenon and is dynamic in nature.¹⁸ Cultures are no longer the fixed, bounded crystallised containers they were formerly accepted to be. Instead, they are transboundary creations exchanged throughout the world via the media and the Internet. Rather than being a finished product, now culture has become a process in itself.¹⁹

1.3. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Sir Earnest Satow defines diplomacy as the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the

¹⁵ P.S Sahai, "Cultural Diplomacy: India in Singapore", in N.N . Vohra (ed.) *Emerging Asia Challenges For India And Singapore* (New Delhi, India International Centre and Manohar Publishers, 2003), pp. 134-35.

¹⁶ B.P. Singh, n.7, p. 52.

¹⁷ Mitchell, n.4, p.8

¹⁸ Sahai, n. 10, p. 135.

¹⁹ *World Culture Report, Cultural Diversity, Conflict And Pluralism* (Paris, UNESCO Publication, 2001), p.i.

governments of independent states.²⁰ Professor Hans J. Morgenthau's definition of diplomacy seems to encompass all of the activities pertaining to a state's external affairs, i.e., "the formulation and execution of foreign policy at all levels, the highest as well as the subordinate" ²¹

Cultural diplomacy can be simply defined as the involvement of culture in international engagements or even the application of culture to the direct support and its consequences on a country's political and economic diplomacy.²² Diplomatic relations between governments do impinge on the lives of the people in diverse and multiple ways, although everyone can be disastrously affected when they go wrong. Governments whether elected or not, carry out a political will which is determined mainly by present necessities and governed by past events. Governments are normally pre-occupied with relatively short-term policies to meet immediate crises and not with the long-term future. It is in this context that cultural diplomacy has a role to play. In this era of globalisation, information and technological revolution, there is a growing need to find out alternative forms of international relations. It is in this area, that cultural diplomacy works. The time is opportune to capitalise on the potential it yields for world stability, peace and prosperity today and the promise it holds for the future.

Cultural diplomacy has two levels of application. One applies to the inter- governmental negotiations of cultural treaties, conventions,

²⁰ Mitchell, n. 4, p.1

²¹ Hans. J., Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, (New York, Kroft Publication, 1960), 3rd ed., p.139.

²² Mitchell, n. 4, p.8.

agreements and exchange programmes. The other application refers to the conduct of these agreements and the conduct of cultural relations either as the extended responsibility of the governments or as something delegated by governments to agencies and cultural institutions.²³ Cultural diplomacy, indeed is an attempt to conquer and control men's minds. Through cultural diplomacy people-to-people contacts can and are being enhanced so as to bring diverse cultural modes to learn from each other. Even it can be used as an instrument for changing the power relation between nations. This can ultimately create stake-holders in each other's territory who can help in facilitating positive political relation. Cultural diplomacy can even be used in reinforcing cultural identities of domestic political constituencies.

The basic presumption of cultural diplomacy is that the relation between nations is not merely political. Cultural ties are formed or historically determined and they continue not because of political commandment or commitments, but despite these.²⁴

Another point of view suggests that political relations are not adequate if not backed by functional relations. In other words, political cooperation is either founded on or results in functional cooperation between peoples and nations. Thus functional integration of regions often follows intense political and durable cultural exchanges.²⁵

Soedjatmoko and K.W. Thompson have described three areas in which cultural diplomacy is important. First, with the new pattern of

²³ Mitchel, n.4, p.4.

²⁴ Ranbir Samddar, "Culture As A Critical Factor In Indian Foreign Policy", *Asian Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1999, p.47.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp.47-48.

cooperation in trade and economic relations among nations, more is needed than commerce alone and the calculus of economic advantage. New cultural affinities must be built. Nations which have known little or nothing about one another must discover each other and nations which have known one another but not well must proceed to know one another better. Secondly, nations must seek the establishment and growth of non-security networks of relationships across the globe for scientific, educational and cultural purposes, ultimately leading to the development of new arrangements and coalitions for specific goals. Thirdly, cultural diplomacy can be a major force in the shaping of new international systems and regional and sub-regional groupings. The new international system requires cultural policies that affect the innermost notions of societies; their concepts of human rights, fundamental goals and values, notions of themselves and of the human community.²⁶

1.3 (a) Historical Background

Since ancient times, dialogues took place among cultures leading to profound give-and-take and true exchange of values as well as artistic objects and expressions. This in turn led to 'shared systems' in the best sense of the term, without the least self-conscious dominance by one culture or civilisation over the other. Until the renaissance and the post-renaissance era, diplomacy in the ancient past was in the nature of packaged dialogues among countries (not so much nation states) and was irrespective of any political motivation. Such dialogues mainly had

²⁶ Soedjatmoko and Kenneth W. Thompson, "Cultural Diplomacy", in *World Politics: An Introduction*, (New York, The Free Press A Division Of Macmillan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 405-06.

two features. First, they largely followed trade routes on land and sea and took place along with the exchange of goods and material. Secondly, these dialogues led to cross-fertilisation of (a) religious and philosophical thoughts (b) literary ideas and (c) artistic styles and expression. The last one has manifested itself through monumental architectures. ²⁷

However, one has to acknowledge that 'culture', since the latter half of the fifteenth century, was not consciously conceived of as an instrument of politics or diplomacy. Rather, it was inherent in the process of exchanges between states and societies. The flow of ideas, the cross-fertilisation and syntheses of values was an unconscious, endemic part of intercourse between nations and peoples. In the aftermath of the Second World War, 'culture' emerged as an important instrument of external policy of various states. With the decline and gradual disappearance of the colonial framework of international relations, states attempted to devise new means to diversify their relations. The impact of cultural, educational and scientific orientations on the economic and political policies of countries was recognised. Thus, cultural diplomacy got its due recognition by providing the basic framework for continuing relations among countries particularly between the former colonies and their former ruling powers. ²⁸

At the founding of the American Republic and even before, the thirteen colonies sent cultural envoys aboard to express their goals and aspirations. The Marshall plan, described as the most unselfish act of

²⁷ Banerjee, n. 14, p. 397-98.

²⁸ J.N. Dixit, "Culture As An Instrument Of Diplomacy", n. 14, pp. 420-21.

any nation in the history of world by Winston Churchill, was fundamentally an act of cultural diplomacy. Significantly, this plan expressed the best instincts of the American people and brought them the respect of nations around the world.²⁹ Even the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance itself was based on cultural roots. The French, who pioneered cultural relations, consider representation of their culture abroad to be virtually a sacred mission and spend half their budget for foreign relations on it.³⁰ Even the United Kingdom considers cultural relations as something very important and the British council has been actively promoting its culture and ideas to enhance understanding and cooperation throughout the globe. Similarly, countries like Japan, China, German, Spain, etc. use the cultural offices of their missions abroad staffed by career diplomats for whom cultural relations (blended with commercial and political relations) are part of their life-time's general diplomatic activity. The country which uses its culture to further politics in any relationship, is Russia (the erstwhile USSR). It does not differentiate cultural relations from any other diplomatic activity and pursues them with considerable efficiency in all parts of the globe.³¹

1.3 (B) Goals/Objectives

The goals of cultural diplomacy goes far beyond the exchange of cultural artifacts and manifestations. They include the changing

²⁹ Soediatmoko & Thompson, n. 26, p. 406-07.

³⁰ Mitchell, n. 4, p.2.

³¹ Banerjee, n. 14, pp. 404-405.

perceptions that countries hold of themselves and of others and the influences this has on the behaviour of other countries. Another goal of cultural diplomacy lies in the building of new constituencies of knowledge and sensitivity, in other countries for the sake of more stable relationships and affinities between peoples and nations. Only through such ties and understanding, the stability of their relations can be undisturbed by the vagaries of international politics. Thirdly, its objective is to deliver deeply into the cultural and social roots of a country for better understanding.³² The other motivations of cultural diplomacy could be: to ensure the flow of ideas, information, scientific and technological exchanges, to ensure international cultural and intellectual cooperation to meet certain common economic and social problems those affect more than one country; to create a climate of understanding and to influence the decision making sections of other societies in one's favour. Promoting artistic and literary activities that would contribute to friendship and good will between countries is another objective. The overall objective is to create a favourable political climate, which would contribute to the fulfillment of mutual interests, friendship and intelligence.³³

1.3 (C) Methods

The methods devised to meet these motivations are: ad-hoc cultural exchange programmes covering a wide range of artistic, academic, scientific and technological activities which include

³² Soedjatmoko & Thompson, n.26, pp. 406-7.

³³ Dixit, n. 14, p.420.

leadership-exchange programmes, scholarship programmes, projects involving visiting professors, academies and so on; the establishment of bilateral friendship societies or association with the object of fostering people-to-people contact, the establishment of international organisations and allied agencies to deal with the larger issues of international educational, scientific and cultural cooperation; the establishment of specialised institution and societies dealing with religious or intellectual, artistic or scientific themes; the establishment of governmental organisations or agencies of autonomous nature dealing exclusively with foreign cultural relations; the creation of specialised cultural and scientific wings or sections in the foreign offices and diplomatic mission by each country.

All these arrangements indicate diversity and the complexity involved in conducting cultural relations in the modern world. The main purpose of this is "to reach out to the maximum number of people in any society, especially among its decision making elite, to influence them in favour of the country engaged in cultural diplomacy." The general assumption is that successful cultural diplomacy will lead to linkages and cooperation in the more tangible fields of economic, technological and, at the highest level political affairs. ³⁴

1.4. INDIA'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The Indus valley civilisation from around 2800 BC to 1800 BC was having inter-civilisational exchanges. Even later, these cultural

³⁴ Ibid, p.422.

exchanges continued. The most successful means of cultural diplomacy can be traced back to the fourth century B.C., where emperor Ashoka sent cultural emissaries to different parts of Asia. Similarly, the Kushana era was marked by the spread of Indian culture to its neighbours and the active intercourse lasted from the first century A.D. for about one thousand years. Beginning in 217 B.C, the influence of Buddhism on Chinese life and culture was tremendous and unmitigated. Many centuries of exchange of scholars between India and china, apart from trade and commerce, included well known Chinese traveler scholars like Fahsien (5th century A.D), Hsuantsang and Yijing (both in the 7th century, A.D.). Buddhism travelled to Korea from China in the fourth century A.D. in all its glory and into Japan as a gift from the King of Korea in the sixth century A.D.³⁵ The Indian influences on Southeast Asia can be traced back to the first century A.D. Medieval India did have cultural contacts with all those concerned regions whereas colonial India's cultural diplomacy became a handmaiden of British political diplomacy.

Independent India's cultural diplomacy at the outset was the brainchild of Nehru. In 1946, Asian Relations Conference foresaw "strengthening the ties of cultural cooperation between India and other Asian countries" and in 1955, Bandung Conference saw the culmination of such movement. This mandate was even widened while establishing the ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) in 1950, to include participation in cultural policy formulation, fostering cultural relations

³⁵ Banerjee, n.14, pp. 398-99.

abroad, promoting cultural exchanges and developing links with various cultural organisations on India and abroad.³⁶ In the early years after independence, activities were limited to exchange programmes envisaged on an adhoc, year-to-year basis with particularly West and Southeast Asian countries. With the passage of time and with the growing interest towards the Indian diaspora on part of the Indian Government, external cultural activities have become diversified. Though due emphasis on cultural cooperation was placed by India in her perceived Asian Relations organisation and Asian resurgence strategy, these early initiatives did not succeed due to cold war and intra-Asian conflicts and tensions. Since the cold war frustrated India's early efforts, its end has re-awakened India towards Asia.

It is against this backdrop that we find the revival of India's cultural diplomacy in Southeast Asia in the recent times. India's relationship with Southeast Asia is unique in that not many regions in the world can claim such age old, uninterrupted and multifaceted ties. India's strong cultural imprints in the form of religious, artistic and intellectual expressions or even the presence of the migrant Indian communities in different parts of Southeast Asia; architectural designs and motifs from Borobodur to Angkor-vat and to Ramayana still convey the story of India's cross cultural interaction with southeast Asia much before the age of globalisation and communication technology. Significantly, even today these holds roots of India's interaction with the region.

³⁶ Ibid, p.405.

On the eve of India's independence in 1947, Indian contacts and knowledge about Southeast Asia were vague, illusory and uncertain. Except for a small number of area specialists and those closely related to the Indian immigrants in the area, very few Indians know as much about their neighbours in Southeast Asia as they knew of Europe or America. A vague memory of the ancient trading activities with Southeast Asia and the close cultural contacts between the two regions was all that an average educated Indian's awareness of this region.³⁷

Even though, the anticolonial movement provided an impetus for both India and Southeast Asia to come closer, this phase was a short one. The Bandung Conference of 1955 marked both the peak and the beginning of the decline of interest between the two regions. The cold war again played a critical role in ensuring that both India and Southeast Asia drifted apart- with the two sides often being on opposite sides of the cold war divide as did the different economic models that were adopted. It was only during the early 1990's when the end of cold war together with India's own liberalised economic policies compelled New Delhi to look east. At the tenth ASEAN Summit in 1992, India was accepted as a sectoral dialogue partner, a status that enabled it to participate in areas such as trade and investment, joint ventures, science, technology, tourism and human resource development. In December 1995, India was admitted as a full dialogue partner of ASEAN and the following May, 1996, New Delhi was admitted into the ASEAN

³⁷ D.R.Sardesai, "India And Southeast Asia", In 'B.R. Nanda (ed.) *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1996), p.78-79.

Regional Forum (ARF). The launching of Ganga-Mekang cooperative initiative and the Ministry of Culture's efforts to collect and organise the variants of *Ramayana* from Southeast Asia shows some further steps in this regard.³⁸ Against this backdrop, the present study is aimed at finding out and analyzing the roots of India's cultural relations in the region.

³⁸ G.V.C Naidu, "India And ASEAN" *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi, Institute of Defence And Strategy Analyses, 1998) ,October, p.28.

CHAPTER - II

TRADE AS A VEHICLE FOR CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

Inter-regional trade facilitates close cultural relations between two regions. In fact, trade brings greater people to people contacts. On the other side, cultural commonalities and linkages between regions facilitate trade. To quote, Sir Anthony Parsons in his British Council Fiftieth Anniversary Lecture:

If you are thoroughly familiar with someone else's language and literature, if you know and love his country, its cities, its arts, its people, you will be instinctively disposed, all other things being equal or nearly equal, to buy gavel from him rather than from a less well known and well liked source, to support him actively when you consider him to be right and to avoid punishing him too fiercely when you regard him as being in the wrong.¹

This chapter is based on a brief study of India's ancient trade with Southeast Asian countries and its impact on cultural relations between the two regions. It also highlights the relevance of this particular aspect of trade relations for greater regional cooperation in the contemporary period.

2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Much before the advent of colonialism, there was a flourishing trade network (both overland and maritime) in Asia ultimately leading to close economic and cultural linkages in the region. Recent recognition by the new historiography that the Indian ocean economic system had reached a high degree of development even before the arrival of the

¹ J.M. Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations*, (London, Allen and Unwin Publications 1986) , pp. 19-20.

Europeans has led to a reconsideration of the latter's role and influence in the region. The traditional view that the Indian Ocean economic system was a colonial creation was the result of the Euro-centric bias of the British historiography upto the last World War.² The question still remains whether the recent developments of Asian capitalism is a reproduction of western capitalist system or an act of growth of an independent stand taken with regard to them. It seems although western influence is undeniable, it is not the only factor.³

India and Southeast Asia are two examples in the Asian region where the ancient trade network ultimately led to close cultural relationships and even the formation of 'Indianised states' in Southeast Asia.⁴ Coedes, one of the pioneers of Southeast Asian history opines that there was a continuity of trade and cultural interaction between India and Southeast Asia since prehistoric times.⁵ More recent writings on the subject accept the regularity of the sailing network but doubt if it could be described as trade. Glover in *Early Trade between India and Southeast Asia* writes: "it is unclear whether we can refer to this as trade, specifically a commercial exchange entered into for financial profit or an extension of the 'big man' prestige goods type of economy."⁶ Recent archeological findings in different sites of Southeast Asia reveal

² Giorgio Borsa (ed.) *Trade and Politics In The Indian Ocean* (New Delhi, Mahohar Publication 1990) p.8

³ Denys Lombard & Jean Aubin (ed.) *Asian Merchants and Businessmen In The Indian Ocean and the China Sea* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2000) p.7.

⁴ G. Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, East West Publication, 1968) (ed.) by Wolter F. Vella, trs. by Susan Brown Coming, p. 14.

⁵ *Ibid*, p15.

⁶ I.C. Glover, *Early Trade Between India And Southeast Asia* (Hull, 1989) p.4, cited In H.P. Ray *The Winds Of Change Buddhism And The Maritime Links Of Early Southeast Asia* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998), p.90.

that there was a well organised trade network continuing between Indian and Southeast Asian countries carried out by autonomous trade guilds.⁷ Even though, there is no unanimity either on the nature of the contacts or their frequency, the regularity of the sailing network between India and Southeast Asian countries is an accepted fact. Coedes assumes that the priests who consecrated the first Brahmanic or Buddhist sanctuaries and the scholars who composed the first Sanskrit inscriptions were preceded by seamen, traders or immigrants.⁸ Himanshu P. Ray traces the intensive trade relations from the Mauryan period onwards.⁹

2.2 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR BEGINNING OF TRADE

The interruption of the land-trade routes of Central Asia was ultimately responsible for the growth of maritime intercourse between Western and East Asia which brought Southeast Asia in the world history in the beginning of the Christian era. The fall of the Roman empire, the consequent dislocation of market and trade pattern of the western Mediterranean and the Near East gave rise to a situation where India was encouraged to venture into trading with the east on its own account. This was a venture which conditions in India under the Guptas made both possible and profitable.¹⁰



⁷ K.V. Ramesh, "Texts and Translations of Indian Inscriptions in Southeast Asia" in Noburu Karasimha (ed.) *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions and Ceramic-shreds* (Tokyo, Taisho University, 2002), pp.210-23.

⁸ Coedes, n.4, p.14.

⁹ Ray, n.6, p.8.

¹⁰ Upendra Thakur, *Some Aspects Of Asian History And Culture* (New Delhi, Abhinav Publications, 1986), p. 15.

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The development of Indian and Chinese navies, the technological innovation in boat-building and the development in art of navigation were the material factors that led to increased maritime commerce.¹¹

Added to it, the other factor of a moral nature was the spread of Buddhism. By abolishing caste barriers and exaggerated concern for racial purity, it removed the restrictions imposed on crossing the seas. Unlike the Brahmanical ethos, which had its beginnings in agrarian expansion, Buddhism developed at a time of growing urban centres and expanding trade routes. As a result, it provided a suitable environment for usury and the investment of wealth in trade. Also, it was the only religion organised into a monastic establishment i.e., Sangha. This institutionalisation paved the way for close interaction with lay devotees and made the Sangha sentient to the needs of the society. The Buddhism ideology internalised seafaring activities within its precepts, thus providing active support to it.¹² A good example of this was the development of the idea of the Boddhisattva Avalokitesvara as the saviour of seafarers and travelers. Equally significant were the locations of Buddhist monastic establishments at strategic points along the trade routes and the adoption of Buddhist symbols for coinage, seals and pottery.¹³ Highlighting the same point, Coeds writes:

We are thus led to represent the eastward expansion of Indian civilisation at the beginning of the Christian era as the result; at least to a considerable degree; of commercial enterprises- as the result of a continual outflow of seamen, originally recruited from among 'merchants of the sea', of whom many types are depicted on ancient Buddhist literature and who seems to have a particular devotion to Buddha.¹⁴

¹¹ Ray, H.P. , n. 6, p. 8.

¹² *ibid*, p.8.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 8

¹⁴ Coeds, n.4, p.20

2.3 ROUTES

Regarding the connecting routes between India and Southeast Asian countries, Le May proposes three possibilities. First, it seems as if the earliest settlers started their journey from the port of Amaravati and landed probably at the part of Martaban in Burma. Coomarswamy quotes Ptolemy as saying that the chief port of embarkation in India for "the land of Gold" was Gudura (Kaddura) at the mouth of the Godavari river. Some would settle in the region of Thatan and that of the Salwin river delta later on to move to the trawadi round about Pegu. Others would southwards through the "three pagodas" pass finally resting in the fertile rice plains of Siam.¹⁵

Secondly, during Gupta period, when the capital of India was at Pataliputa (Patna), it is likely that missionaries and traders traveling to Indonesia used the part of Tamralipti (Tamluk) on the Hugli river on the Orissa-Bengal coast, even as the Chinese pilgrim, Fa-Hien, did when he returned China in the early years of the fifteenth century A.D.

Thirdly, during Pallava times, the southern route from Kanchipuram either straight across to Margui and Tanasserim or, slightly southwards to Taku-pa and Phuket Island (Junk Ceylon) or, Trang in the Siamese portion of the Malaya peninsula or again southwards through the straights of Malacca to Java, Sumatra and Borneo would have been used by the traders and travelers.¹⁶

¹⁵ Reginald Le May, *The Culture of South East Asia* (Delhi, National Bank Trust, 1962) pp. 12-13.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 12-14.

The great advantage of lying on the maritime belt of the Bay of Bengal and South China sea was shared by both India and all the states of Southeast Asia. Java, Sumatra, Malay enjoyed this advantage in a greater degree than Burma and other Indo-Chinese states. The latter states on the other hand enjoyed over land trade with India through the northeastern states. This route was connecting India and China through Assam, upper Burma and Yunnan. There is clear evidence that this route was used from the beginning of the second century A.D. Ships from eastern India generally sailed from Tamralipti to Malaya by way at Nicobar, while those from Western Asia and peninsular India crossed the bay of Bengal at Kaveri Pattanam and through the ten degree channel entered into Isthmus of Kra (Malayan waters) and then after calling at local ports sailed through the sea-lane between Singapore and Malay for onward non-stop journey to China.¹⁷ Regarding this maritime trade Vergese writes:

The seasonal monsoon winds carried ships across the Bay of Bengal and Andaman sea to the Malay peninsula and Sumatra. The Kra Isthmus long offered convenience- transshipment across this narrow neck at territory to the Gulf of Siam where other merchantmen would be available for onward shipment. The use of Melaca part after 350 AD led to the opening up of the Java and South China seas.¹⁸

2.4 COMMODITIES OF TRADE

In this context the question arises what was the urge for this adventure into the land of southeast Asia. In the early centuries of the

¹⁷ H.B Sarkar, *Cultural Relations Between India And Southeast Asian Countries* (Delhi, ICCR & Motilal Banarsidas Publications, 1985), p. 248.

¹⁸ B.G.Vergese, *Reorienting India: The New Geo-Politics of Asia* (New Delhi, Konark Publishers, 2001) p.14.

Christian era, India was not over populated, nor were war or religious persecution or even racial displacements of such dimension as to drive away thousands of Indians from their home country.¹⁹ The names like Suvarnabhumi (the land of Gold), Takkala (the land of sent aromatic plants), Narikeladvipa (the island of coconuts), Karpuradvipa (The island of Camphor), Yavadvipa (The island of Barley) and Argyre (the land of Silver) show the materials those attracted the Indians to this part of Asia.²⁰ The terms Suvarnabhumi and Suvarnadvipa used in early Sanskrit and Pali texts to refer to Southeast Asian countries indicates that gold was the principal attraction. According to Sylvian Levi "it was gold that attracted India to the Eldorado of the far east."²¹ The most important item in the trade network with India would have been tin. The relatively abundant use of high-tin bronze in the past Mauryan period coincides with the maritime networks to Southeast Asia. The most likely source of tin might be Malay peninsula.²² The other important economic enterprises were of spices and aromatics. Lying on the ancient spices Southeast Asia attracted not only Indian traders but also global merchants.²³ There was also the trade of ceramics, beads and even horses.²⁴ It deserves to be mentioned here that goods were not simply imported; there was also export trade of Indian textiles, sugar and agrarian products. History of sung dynasty (470-78 AD) refers to the export of Indian export of Indian textiles by envoys from Holo-tan, a

¹⁹ Sarkar, n. 17, p. 248.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 248, Also See Coedes n.4, pp. 14-15.

²¹ Coedes, n.4, p.20.

²² Ray, n.6, pp. 116-17.

²³ M.N. Pearson (ed.) *Spices In The Indian Ocean World An Expanding World Volume II*, (Hampshire, Ashgate Publication, 2000) pp. IX-X.

²⁴ Ray, n.6, p.110.

locality perhaps lying in Sumatra.²⁵ Even Marco Polo refers to the shipment of large quantities of cotton cloth from the parts of the west coast.²⁶ The *Periplus of the Erithrean sea* written in the first century mentions the trade in textiles between Kalinga (Orissa) and Southeast Asia. This trade in textiles, spices and aromatics continued till the fifteenth century. Merchants from Bengal, Orissa, the coromandal coast, Malabar and Gujarat had their trade guides through which they conducted trade on the Southeast Asian land.²⁷ The Cargos included Cambay stuffs, scarlet cloths, saffron, cornels, many stuffs of pulicate, coloured cotton, vermilion, quick deliver, opium, drugs and other merchandisers. On the other side the commodities they import involved aromatic aloes (agil), silk, candy, scents, salts, sandal, spices and camphor.²⁸

2.5 THE IMPACT OF TRADE ON CULTURAL EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT OF STATES

A historiographical survey of writings on contacts between India and Southeast Asia illustrates different views. Indian scholars like R.C. Majumdar, in a series of lectures given in 1941, concluded:

Intercourse in this region first began by way of trade, both by land and sea. But soon it developed into regular colonisation, the Indians established political authority in various parts of the vast Asiatic continent that led to the south of China and to the east and south east of India. The Hindu colonists brought with them the whole framework of their culture and civilisation and this was transplanted in its entirety among the people who had not yet emerged from their primitive barbarism.²⁹

²⁵ Sarkar, n.17, p.252.

²⁶ H. Yule (ed.) H. Cordier (Trs.), *The Book Of Ser Marco Polo* (Amsterdam, 1975) Vol. II, pp. 393-398.

²⁷ Vergese, n. 18, p. 13.

²⁸ Sarkar, n.17, p. 258.

²⁹ R.C. Majumdar, *Greater India* (Lahore, Sain Dass Foundation Lectures, 1941) p. 109.

A slight modification to this large scale colonisation hypothesis of Southeast Asia was postulated by N.J. Krom. He suggested that the spread of Indian culture was the result of the initiative of a few traders who impressed the local populace with their cultural achievements, intermarried and transferred their culture to an indianised elite. It was from this trading settlements Indian culture spread to other parts of Southeast Asia.³⁰

Further debate on this issue comes from Van Leur who rejected the hypothesis of Indian colonisation and cultural influence carried out by trade. He advanced instead the idea of deliberate Southeast Asian borrowing of knowledge, artistic styles and modes of politics. He argued that the vast majority of Indian traders were pedlars and could not be the agents for cultural influences. Instead he suggests the chief disseminators of Indian high culture- art, literature, ideas of power, sovereignty and kingship could only have been the Brahmanic. Secondly, he emphasised the idea of Southeast Asian local initiatives tracing the Indian influence to be superficial outer cover.³¹

Similarly, Mabbett, another scholar of Southeast Asian history laid emphasis on the role played by Brahmans as advisors and ritual specialists in the courts of Southeast Asia in addition to the ongoing trade contacts between the two regions.³²

³⁰ Nicholas Tarling, *The Comprehensive History Of Southeast Asia* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1992) vol. I, p. 8.

³¹ Ibid, p.8.

³² I. W Mabbett, "The 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia: Reflections on the Historical Sources" *Journal Of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. III, no.2, pp. 1-14.

In spite of these contradictory views, the idea of Greater India had considerable staying power and was reaffirmed in the synthesising work of Coedes in 1964. He traced Indian influence as manifested not through conquest or colonisation, but initially through trade. This led the foundations for the subsequent transmission of the higher culture associated with the development of indigenous kingdoms able and ready to receive, Indian conceptions of royalty, the sacred language of Sanskrit and the prescription of Hinduism and Buddhism. Emphasising the Indian cultural influences he even termed the concerned states as 'Indianised states' of Southeast Asia.³³

In this context, Vergese says: "Indian influence, brahmanic and Buddhist, followed trade except where direct missionary effort was involved in spreading Buddhism. In consequence and in contrast, Indian culture and religious teaching offered an attractive civilisational bonding, lending strength and sophistication to native communities. There was virtually no conquest and little colonisation if any; but inter-marriage perhaps and certainly a cultural osmosis that gradually brought Indians to positions of respect and even authority. High culture and religion came to be associated with a certain idea of India to which grafted aspects of political theory and technology."³⁴

The Indian languages (Sanskrit, Pali), Hindu-Buddhist art and architecture (Angkor vat, Borobodur) the Indian style of writing, the great Indian epic Ramayan installed in arts and as a living culture in Java-Bali and Thailand are the proudest examples of India's cultural imprints in Southeast Asian soil. It is equally important to mention that all the above elements were inspired by Indian traditions but developed with more than a touch of local genius.³⁵

³³ Tarling, n.30, p.8 Also see D.G.E. Hall *History of Southeast Asia* (New York , St. Martin's Press, 1981) p. 18.

³⁴ Verghese, n.17, pp. 14-15.

³⁵ Lee May, n.15, p.14.

Along with these elements and ideas of Indian culture also went traders, priests even travelers to Southeast Asia in different periods. In those concerned countries, still lives an important community of Indian origin who acts as the bearer of Indian culture in the concerned lands. They are mostly merchant communities like Chettiyars, Klings, Gujratis, Chulias etc.³⁶

In later period, when Islam went to Southeast Asia it went through Indian merchants. So Muslim merchants of Gujarat area are even present there. All these interactions in the economic and cultural spheres were disconnected by the advent of colonialism. Except the migration of some plantation workers and indentured labourers, there was virtually no communication between the two regions.³⁷

Post independent India and Southeast Asian countries, tried to revive the age old relationship through Asian Relations Conference and Bandung Conference during the early fifties. But nothing significant happened till 1990. In the post ninety period, India realised the significance of deepening relationships and has started improving it through its 'look East Policy'.³⁸ A brief note regarding this is provided in the first chapter.

At this juncture, among other aspects of bilateral and multilateral relationships with Southeast Asian countries, India realised the importance of improving cultural relation and greater people-to-people contact.

³⁶ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Lakshmi Subramaniam, *Politics And Trade In The Indian Ocean World* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998) p.5.

³⁷ G.V.C Naidu, "India And ASEAN", IDSA, New Delhi, October, 1998, P.8

³⁸ *ibid*, p.8.

2.6 TRADE AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY RELATIONS

Trade and culture are two inter-related issues. On one side, trade facilitates greater people-to-people contact allowing cultural elements to migrate with it. On the other side, cultural cooperation between regions facilitates trade. Economic activity is determined not only by the economic structure but also by cultural values. The conviction that trade benefits flow from cultural relations is strongly argued in Britain than elsewhere. In fact, it was one of the prime reasons for the creation of British Council in 1934 and for the financial support it received from industry. On his trade mission to South America in 1929, Lord D'Abernon wrote in his report:

To those who say that this extension (of cultural influence) has no connection with commerce, we reply that they are totally wrong, the reaction of trade to the more deliberate inculcation of our own culture which we advocate is definitely certain and will be swift³⁹

Duncan, with a more trade-related brief on behalf of the British Council said:

As Britain turns from politico-military relations towards other ways of asserting her presence known to other countries, especially outside Western Europe and the North Atlantic Area, it will be necessary to develop more fully the other forms of contact with governments and peoples... the British Council (and the BBC) will enable Britain to make direct contact with overseas peoples, and to present herself to them as a future trading and cultural partner of major importance, rather than in the role of a leading world power⁴⁰

Several official reports have also emphasised the trade benefits from British Council work. Drogheda said, "although the method all

³⁹ Mitchell, n.1, p.19.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.19.

through as strictly non-political, at the end of the process a considerable political and commercial benefit is likely to be received".⁴¹

Like Britain, the United States of America is also promoting trade through its external cultural relations. All over the world it is acknowledged that the US is propagating certain cultural values and ideas thereby creating market space for her cultural products. These products include all type of commodities from McDonald's food to Hollywood movies. By expanding its her cultural sphere of influence the US has become successful in expanding her trade relations all over the world.⁴²

It is fully understood that economic ties between nations are closely associated with cultural ties. Such ties are even more durable and effective than the ties of political expediency. For example, it is relatively easy to explain why Scotch whisky is the largest single items of Britain exports to America and why Britain has lately received the largest volume of US investments among European countries. It is simply because American businessmen have found it easier to communicate with British staff and workers (who share a common language and similar social values although the British may not be the most efficient in terms of labour costs.⁴³

The principal Indian investments in Southeast Asia are concentrated in a few countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore,

⁴¹ Ibid, p.20.

⁴² Harvey B. Feigenbaum, *Globalization and Cultural Diplomacy* Paper Presented at The Centre For Arts And Culture, Washington 2000, pp. 20-25 available at www.culturalpolicy.org.

⁴³ Ayub Mohammad, *India and Southeast Asia Indian Perception and Policies* (Singapore, Routledge, 1990) p. 15.

Thailand etc. in a few industries like textile, paper, oils etc. In these countries there is an important merchant community of Indian origin, a factor that has contributed to the attraction of Indian capital. Unfortunately, the existence of Indian commercial networks or the presence of important consumer markets in these countries has not played any decisive role in India's trade and economic relations with Southeast Asia. Even though some steps are taken in this regard in the post 1990's, it is difficult to deduce any objective conclusion.

In this context Huntington says:

In the past the pattern of trade among nations have followed and paralleled the pattern of alliances among nations. In the merging world, pattern of trade will decisively influenced by pattern of culture. Businessmen make deals with people they can understand and trust- states surrender sovereignty to international associations composed of like minded states they understand and trust. The roots of economic cooperation are in cultural commodity.⁴⁴

2.7 CONCLUSION

India-Southeast Asia trade relations extend much before the advent of colonialism and predates even the beginning of the Christian era. Infact, trade acted as a vehicle for cultural transmission leading to the development of 'indianised' states in Southeast Asia. In today's world while states are trying to capture foreign markets for expansion of trade and economy by propagating their values, ideas, ways of life and culture in the other's space, India already has a rich legacy of this since ancient times. Therefore, contemporary India needs to learn a lot from her own past.

⁴⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash Of Civilizations And The Remaking Of World Order* New York, Simon and Schuster Publication, 1996) p.135.

The issue of culture and trade has now acquired strategic significance. Cultural goods and services have become an important part of the new patterns of production, consumption and trade. Cultural markets are increasingly going global. Trade in cultural goods has multiplied by five between 1980 and 1998. Cultural sector will become the leading edge of most economies in the twenty first century. In fact, cultural (content) industries are expected to become a central pillar of the information society; also referred to as the knowledge society. Cultural goods and services convey and construct cultural values, produce and reproduce cultural identity and contribute to social cohesion.⁴⁵ At the same time, they constitute a key free factor of production in the new knowledge economy. This makes negotiations in the cultural field extremely controversial and difficult. As several experts point out, no other industry has generated so much debate on the political economy as that of the culture industry.⁴⁶

India is having an emerging culture industry with a growing global appeal for its cultural goods, products even services. From Indian dance, drama, music to Hindi movies even to Indian tourist destinations, fashion and cosmetics, there is an array of cultural potentials bestowed upon India. It is high time she must exploit the potential. In case of Southeast Asia, India has already created a cultural presence in ancient times. Even though, it had not been properly utilised for furthering cooperation and trade benefits, of late; India has taken some initiatives in this regard.

⁴⁵ Culture, Trade And Globalization: Questions And Answers, (Paris, UNESCO, April, 2000) p.7

⁴⁶ Ibid, P. 8

CHAPTER - III

RELIGIONS OF INDIAN ORIGIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Religion and socio-cultural processes in the civilisational sense affect inter-state and inter-societal relations. Religion played and still plays a pervasive role in virtually every aspect of culture and society in Asia. India or Southeast Asia is no exception to this. Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam- the three dominant ancient religions of the region; have for centuries influenced the social, moral and intellectual lives of the concerned people ultimately leading to the evolution of society and politics in these regions. The pervasive role played by these religions integrating each of these civilisations, turns them into a rewarding object of inter-disciplinary studies. In this chapter, attention is focused on the influences of religions of Indian origin i.e., Hinduism and Buddhism, even Islam on Southeast Asia.

There is no clear evidence suggesting the exact period of spread of these religions to Southeast Asia. Both Hinduism and Buddhism are supposed to have gone there nearly at the same time i.e., in the first-century A.D. through traders, priests or even monks. Later, they got patronised there by various rulers and had profound influences on the Southeast Asians.¹ However, after the eleventh century conversion of a Burmese monarch Anawratha, to Theravada the latter spread rapidly in

¹ A.L. Basham, *The wonder that was India; survey of the history and culture of the Indian sub-continent before the coming of the Muslims* (London, Sidgwick Jackson, 1954), p.451-52.

mainland Southeast Asia. This became the dominant faith of the people of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia while most of the Vietnam followed a modified form of Mahayana Buddhism.² Islam came to Southeast Asia later in thirteenth century A.D. and was adopted mainly in the maritime part of Southeast Asia. Today, Indonesia (except Bali which still follows Hinduism), Malaysia, Brunei and southern Philippines are overwhelmingly Muslim while except Vietnam (which follows Mahayana Buddhism) other mainland Southeast Asian countries follow Theravada Buddhism and the Philippines is predominantly a catholic country.³

3.1 SOURCES OF INDIAN INFLUENCE

Regarding the sources of Indian religious influences there are different views by South Indian and Bengali historians. Historians like R.C. Majumdar traces the Bengali influences whereas K.A. Nilakanth Shashtri highlights the Pallava and Chola, (South Indian)) influences on Southeast Asia. Infact there can be various possibilities. Missionaries sent out by Asoka in the third century B.C. carried Buddhism to Ceylon and to the land described as Suvarnabhumi that may be identified with Sumatra and Java.⁴ In the later period, Amaravati was a great centre of Hinayana teaching in the Krishna delta in the second century A.D. A century later, the Pallava rulers started a Brahmanical wave across the sea to Malay lands and Funan in the Mekong delta and central Siam.

² Sardesai, D.R., *Southeast Asia: past and present* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1997), pp. 19-20.

³ G. Coedes, *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, Hawaii University Press, 1968), p.252.

⁴ B. G. Verghese, *Reorienting India: The New Geo-Politics of Asia* (New Delhi, Konark Publishers, 2001), p. 15.

Both these regions left an imprint on architectural forms in the host region.⁵

The 5th century saw another Hinayana Buddhist surge in Kanchipuram under the later pallavas and witnessed the high water mark of the Gupta school of art in upper India. Both these influences were manifest in Burma and the latter in Siam, Funan, Java and Sumatra.⁶

In the 7th and 10th centuries, Mahayana Buddhist architecture climaxed in the great temples of Barobodur built by the Sailendra rulers. These speak of influences from the Pala tradition of Bengal and the eastern Gangas of Orissa.⁷

Finally, Pala styles of the 11th century left their impression on the Burmese rulers in Pagan who developed a new form of Buddha image, a product of the relationship established with Nalanda and Bodhgaya.⁸

Indian influences, Hindu and Buddhist followed trade except where direct missionary effort was involved in spreading Buddhism. The establishment of small trading outposts allowed opportunity for wider and more leisurely interaction with the local population. The simple and scattered tribal people living along these coasts were attracted by the Indian socio-cultural tradition that would give them political cohesion. In consequence and in contrast, Indian culture and religious teaching offered an attractive civilisational bonding, lending strength and

⁵ ibid

⁶ ibid

⁷ ibid, p.16

⁸ ibid

sophistication to native communities.⁹ At the same time, expressions of higher culture and religious symbolism hinting at royal attributes and the construction of great monuments were all used to unite scattered tribes or other desperate peoples. Freely adopted Hindu Buddhist traditions played this role by facilitating Indian cultural presence in the region. Present trading communities in Southeast Asia carry this cultural presence even to this day.¹⁰

3.2 HINDUISM

Hinduism went to Southeast Asia with all its different sects and the whole pantheon. The main different sects those went were Brahmanism, Saivism and Vaishnavism.

3.2(a) Brahmanism

On the mainland Southeast-Asia, it was ultimately Buddhism that dominated, but it is important to recognise that, from early times, Brahmanism and Buddhism mingled in the cultural legacy bequeathed to all the 'indianised' states. Just as ancient Southeast Asian traditions mingled freely with the traditions of imported religions, so did the different imported religions mingle with each other. Some of these got patronised by kings, still others persisted. Even though, there was the dominance of Buddhism, the different cults and sects of Hinduism (Vaishnavism, Saivism, Devaraja cult etc.) persisted to a significant level.¹¹ From the beginning till recent times, there is the continuing importance of Brahmins; even the Buddhist courts have engaged

⁹ *ibid*, p. 14

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 15

¹¹ *coedes*, n.3, p 250-57.

Brahmins in astrological and ritual functions. As they had access to the sacred texts, the law books and other literature in Sanskrit, they were employed as priests, teachers, ministers and counsellors: the principal advisers of the kings. The epigraphic record of the mainland kingdoms demonstrates the powerful influence of 'purohits', notably in Burma and Cambodia, where they often served under several successive rulers and provided continuity to the government in troubled times.¹²

Not only in the Hindu courts, such as Angkor, but also in Buddhist courts, such as those of Pagan in Burma and Sukhothi in Thailand, the Brahmins conducted the great ceremonies, such as the royal consecration and functioned as ministers and counselors and had to share their influence with that of the Buddhist monks. From these functions it can be spoken of Brahmanism as distinct from the specific cults of Shiva or Vishnu, or any of their innumerable kin.¹³

On maritime Southeast Asia it was Brahmanic Hinduism especially Saivism, and at a later stage Mahayana Buddhism that prevailed. The impact of Hinduism on Southeast Asian life even today can be felt significantly even to this day in maritime Southeast Asia even though most part of these regions (Except Bali) is now Muslim.¹⁴

3.2(b) Shaivism

Cults of Shiva were strong in the ancient kingdoms of Cambodia, Champa and Majapahit. Two major roles played by Shiva were the political and the devotional. The political role was as the focus of linga

¹² *ibid*, p.205.

¹³ *ibid*, p.253.

¹⁴ Sardesai, n.2, pp. 20-21

cults: the linga, originally the 'phallus', was the emblem of Shiva as God of creation and fertility for his devotees. Such cults were sponsored by rulers at the central shrines that constituted the ritual hub of their kingdom. State sponsored Shiva cults were maintained in Cambodia till the twelfth century.¹⁵

Shaivism as we find it in India with its numerous sects like (Pasupatas, Kalamukhas etc.) are also found in both maritime and mainland Southeast Asia. Saivism flourished in east Java and Bali upto the middle of the thirteenth century as it appears from the Shaiva sites of Singashari and Ranataran.¹⁶ In course of conversation, Prof. S.D. Muni once told that there are number of shivalingas found in Laos even to this day.¹⁷

3.2(c) Vaishnavism

Unlike Shiva, the dominion of the God Vishnu was never conspicuous or constant in Southeast Asia. Still in both maritime and mainland Southeast Asia we find references of Vaishnav cults and evidences of Vishnu worship. In Southern Burma, the very name of one of the early cities of the Piyu, an ancient people closely related to the Burmans, i.e., Vishnupur (modern Beikthana), emphasises the cosmic aspect of Vishnu as the heavenly king of the universe. The religious observance at Srikshetra (modern Hmawza near Prome in Myanmar) had a place for images of Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi, goddess of

¹⁵ Nicholas Tarling, *Comprehensive History of Southeast Asia* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 278.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.280.

¹⁷ View Expressed by Prof. S.D. Muni, Former Indian Ambassador to Laos in a Personal Conversation.

royal majesty and fortune. It is only in Burma, incidentally, that we find statues portraying the God standing on his mount, the mythical eagle Garuda.¹⁸

In Angkor, several rulers gave honour to Vishnu, but by far the most conspicuous success of Vaishnavism in gaining state support was embodied in the construction of Angkor Vat by King Suryavarman-II (1130-50 A.D). The ritual and cosmological symbolism of the monument is richly embodied in every detail of Angkor Vat's art and design, but it has also been claimed to represent a devotional form of Vishnu worship. Such cults were strongly developed even in India (especially that founded by Ramanuja) and to some extent, in Java where most kings. Statues of the God, easily identifiable by his main emblems, the wheel (Chakra) and the Conch (sank) were quite common in Java. As a divine prototype of kings, especially in his incarnations as Krishna and Rama, his cult was probably closely associated with the royal courts. Vishnu's spouse, Lakshmi or Shree, not only symbolised royal sovereignty but especially became a rich goddess whose activity promoted the fertility of the ricefields. As such she is still worshipped, in particular in West-Java under the name Nipohaci Sangyang Sri.¹⁹ More even than the goddess, Vishnu's mount, the heavenly bird Garuda is quite popular in Southeast Asian temples. In addition, Garuda is prominently represented in the coat of arms of the republic of Indonesia and in the name of its national airline.

¹⁸ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma-Early Pagan* (New York, 1969) p.216.

¹⁹ Tarling, n.15, pp.291-99.

In addition to the worship of Shiva and Vishnu, we also find the traces of worship of Durga, Ganesha, Indra, Brahma and most of the other deities of Hindu pantheon. This reveals the intensity of Hindu influence on the religious life of Southeast Asia. It is not only the mainstream Hinduism or Brahmanism that was adopted by Southeast Asians even the animistic cults and rituals like that worship of mountains as abodes of gods, Snakes (Naga Cult) and animals developed into important events.²⁰

Hinduism not only provided a way of life giving a particular belief system but also offered them certain related ideas on kingship, deification and divinity of the ruler along with law and administration. Hindu mythology based on Ramayana, Mahabharat and Puranas have a profound influence on the Southeast Asian minds. All these epics are still prevalent in all the countries even though in different forms. Hinduism with its mythology, epics and tradition and rituals had helped considerably in making a common psychological make up of the peoples of the regions.²¹

3.3 BUDDHISM

Buddha images and motive seals attest the introduction of the religion since early times. The record begins with a number of Buddhist statues found in various parts of Southeast Asia; both in the mainland and in the archipelago. Buddhism, with its universal values, came to be

²⁰ Ibid, pp 299-314.

²¹ H.P. Ray, *The Winds of Change Buddhism and the Maritime Links of Early Southeast Asia* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.142-162.

embodied even more than Brahmanism; in the teachings of pilgrims and wandering scholars and monks from India. A Thai or a Burmese most likely thinks of the Buddhism of his country as a continuation of the Theravada tradition, which was allegedly brought to the Golden Peninsula (Suvannabhumi) by Asoka's Missionaries Sona and Uttara in the third century B.C. Modern scholarship explains that prior to the development of the classical Southeast Asian states (Champa, Srivijaya, Majapahit, etc.) which occurred from the tenth or eleventh century to the fifteenth century A.D., Buddhism was a prevalent religion in Southeast Asia; mainly in present day Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. This early period of Buddhism in Southeast Asia was diverse and eclectic, infused with elements of Hindu Dharmasastras and Brahmanic deities, Mahayana Buddhas and Tantric practices, Sanskrit sarvastivadin texts, as well as Pali Theravada tradition.²²

During these early centuries, Buddhism competed successfully with indigenous terms of magical animism and Brahmanism and got transformed in the process. Its propagation probably followed the same pattern that was seen in Central and East Asia. Monks like Padmasambhava would have accompanied traders and brought in objects of power and protection such as relics and images as well as literary tradition in the form of magical chants in sacred languages also written texts. The Buddhist chronicles in Pali and Southeast Asian vernacular languages, associate Buddhism with a high continental way of life in contrast to the less developed life of tribal peoples. Buddhism

²² Ibid, pp. 243-262.

abetted the development of an urban culture, provided symbols of translocal values and articulated a worldview in which diverse communities could participate and find a new identity, a language in which they could communicate and institution in which an organised religious life could be pursued and systematically taught.²³

Apart from general characters, there was the establishment of identifiable Buddhist traditions in the region. Pali inscriptions found in Hmawza, the ancient Pyu capital at Sriksheetra in lower Burma, indicates the existence of Theravada Buddhism by the fifth century. Their Andhra-Kadamba script points connections with Kanchipuram, Nagapattanam and Kaveripattanam in south India. The Chinese traveler I-Ching who visited shih-li-cha-to-lo (Sriksheetra or Prome in Myanmar) in the seventh century, mentioned the presence of certain other schools of Buddhism excluding Theravadins which were associated with important Indian Buddhist centers like Mathura and Sarnath. As part of the Indian cultural expansion into "greater India", Mahayana, Hinayana and Tantric forms of Buddhism were established in different parts of mainland and insular Southeast Asia from the fifth century onwards.²⁴

Gunavarman is respected to have taken the Dharmaguptaka traditions from Northern India to Java in the in the fifth century. By the seventh century Buddhism was apparently flourishing in Sumatra of Shrivijaya. I-Ching indicates that Indonesia was visited by Dharmapala

²³ Joseph.M. Kitagawa *The Religious Tradition of Asia* (London, 2002), p.119.

²⁴ Available at <http://buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/southeast.htm>. pp. 1-3.

of Nalanda University and by two prominent South Indian monks; Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, both adherents of a Tantric form of Buddhism. The rulers of Champa in southern Annam (Vietnam) also patronised Buddhism. Although Hinduism was initially the dominant religion in Cambodia, there is some evidence of Buddhism from the fifth century C.E. The evidence cited supports the contention that throughout much of Southeast Asia Buddhism was present as a part of the larger Indian cultural influence.²⁵

The relationship between Buddhism and the rise of the monarchical states in the classical period of Southeast Asian history is generally referred to as symbiotic, i.e., one of mutual benefit. Rulers supported Buddhism because it provided a cosmology in which the King was accorded the central place and a view of human society in which the human community was dependent on the role of the King. Ideologically, Buddhism legitimated kingship, providing a metaphysical rationale and moral basis for its existence. The Buddhist Sangha, in turn, supported Southeast Asian monarchs because the material well being, success and popularity of institutional Buddhism depended to a significant degree on the approval, support and largesse of the ruling classes.²⁶

Buddhism's contribution to the classical conception of Southeast Asian kingship is particularly noteworthy in its emphasis on Dharma and on the role of the ruler as a moral exemplar. The King is a Cakkavarti, one whose rule depends upon the universal Dharma of

²⁵ DGE Hall, *History of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, Hawai University Press, 1981), p. 256.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 256-271

cosmic, natural and moral law. This symbiotic relationship between political and religious leadership roles takes a particular mythic pattern in many of the classical Southeast Asian chronicles. Architecturally it manifests itself in the great (Ceitya or stupa) monuments of Borobodur, Angkor, Dagan and other ancient capitals.²⁷

From the late eleventh century to the early thirteenth century Southeast Asia experienced a shift to Sinhala Theravada Buddhism which has been a major component of the religious life of Southeast Asia since then. The foundation of Mahayana, Tantricism and Hinayana concepts still prevail on the substratum at Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand even to this day. Even though, in the colonial and post-colonial phases Buddhism in those countries has undergone significant modification still it has been a critical component in the identity of the Burmese, Thais, Laotians, Cambodians and Vietnamese also contributing much to world culture.

3.4 SYNTHESISATION OF INDIAN RELIGIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The term 'Hinduisation' has been generally applied by scholars to the impact of Indian culture upon Southeast Asia. Coedes goes so far as to term the states which developed under its influence *les e'tats hindouise's*. Even R.C. Majumdar uses the terms *Hindu colonies in the Far East* inspite of the fact that Buddhism played an important role in the movement and Theravada Buddhism ultimately became the dominant faith of Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. Whereas Hinduism disappeared before Islam in the Malay peninsula and

²⁷ Tarling, n.15, pp. 273-279.

Indonesia at the end of the European middle ages, Buddhism continued to receive the staunch allegiance of the countries it has concurred.²⁸

The application of so extended a meaning to the word 'Hindu' is not without dangers. In the ordinary use of the terms, 'Hindu' and 'Buddhist' there is a clear distinction based upon the real points of difference. In the history of the two religions in Southeast Asia, however, it is not always easy to draw a clear dividing line between them.²⁹ This is true especially in the case of Tantrayana Buddhism, which shared marked Hindu features. Moreover, in states where Hinayana Buddhism prevailed, Brahmins played an important ceremonial part, especially at court and still do so in Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, though themselves strikingly different from their counterparts in India.³⁰

Thus, some of the most significant synergetic developments in Indian religions took place on the soil of Southeast Asia. In Java, there is the composite image of Trimurti; Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva combined together as in India. One witness also a profound admixture of Brahmanical and Buddhist worship and doctrine outside India, in Java and Cambodia. The syncretism of Hindu and Buddhist cults was promoted by the mystical doctrines of Tantricism. In Java, it was discernible from the second half of the ninth century A.D. In the last phases of the Indo-Javanese period, we find the conjoint worship of Shiva and Buddha. O.C. Ganguly also refers to the amalgamation of the

²⁸ N. Jayapalan, *History of Southeast Asia* (New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers, 1999), p.4

²⁹ Niels Mulder, *Inside Southeast Asia Religion Every day life Cultural Change* (Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 200), pp. 7-13.

³⁰ Jayapalan, n. 28, p.5.

two cults of Shiva and Buddha in Java under a common unified Shiva-Buddhist term of worship illustrated in the temple of Chandi Jawi. Here the main sanctum enshrines a Shiva image with the Buddha above it. An old Javanese Mahayanist text refers to the assertion that Shiva is identical with Buddha. The inscription of Singasari uses the composite word Shiva-Buddha, acknowledged as the national deity of Javanese empire. The Majapahit empire Krtanagar assumed the title of Siva-Buddha. Even the Airlangga inscription (1034-1041 AD) expresses the amalgamation of the two religions.³¹

In Balinese theology Buddha is the younger brother of Siva. Thus a unification which could not take place on the soil of India was quickly achieved in Java. May it be that it might be desired from the composite Siva-Buddha worship of Pala-Bengal that could not articulate further spread to other parts of India. This is a replica of assimilation of Vishnu and Buddha through the acceptance of the latter as one of the Ten Incarnations of Vishnu and also the amalgamation of the worship of Vishnu and Shiva in the cults of Trimurti and Harihara.³²

In the Jago temple at Mullam, Java, we have reliefs illustrating the Krishna legend in a Buddha Shri. Here we find a rapprochement between Krishna Bhagavatism and Buddha and Dattatraya in northern and southern India, and of the assimilation of the cults of Vishnu and Brahma in Bengal. Evidence refer to the Javanese concept of Mahakala, half Brahmanical and half Buddhist, with a sphinx like smile of timeless

³¹ Hall, n.25, pp. 80-83.

³² Coedes, n. 3, p.250-54.

wisdom, hands folded in yogic mudras and Buddhistic headgear and a number of human skills at the base of the figure. There is the image of Amoghapasa primordial goddess of destination with her attendants, while there are also the Avalokitesvaras in Thailand closely embracing their shaktis or Taras, the latter being associated with Tantric Buddhism.³³ In Champa, corresponding to Indian image of Harihara, the amalgamation of the cults of Vishnu and Shiva is represented by the composite form Shankara-Narayan. In Cambodia, as well we find mention of Hari-Hara and of Vishnu-Chandesvaresana linga and also the inclusion of the Buddha in a Trimurti along with Brahma and Vishnu, the whole together with a linga being dedicated to Shiva (1067 AD). The Cambodian Trimurti marks, accordingly a greater integration than the Trimurti at Elephanta and elsewhere in India.³⁴

3.5 LIVING TRACES

Both Hinduism and Buddhism are still living religions in the island of Bali and some parts of Lombok. Not to speak of ancient and medieval times even now modern Balinese authors who write on religious philosophy or ethics, worship, meditation and yoga exercises, couch their works in the Hinduistic vein, quoting scriptures and verses in Sanskrit.³⁵ The Balinese believe themselves to be the descendant's of the Aryans who came from Jambudvipa to liberate the island from the brutal tyranny of the demon king Mayadanava. These Aryans were

³³ Hall, n.25, p. 85.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 114-20

³⁵ cited in http://balidream.com/about_bali.html, pp. 1-3.

considered as divine beings or as incarnation of the Gods.³⁶ Hinduism and Buddhism are therefore matters of living faith in terms of mythology, tradition and history. Though certain phases of Balinese religious link them up with pre-puranic Hindu religion, ancient Indonesia and modern Balinese religions mainly bear the stamp of puranic Hindu religions. Indeed, all known Gods of any importance in the Hindu and Buddhist pantheon of India had their heyday in Bali.³⁷

3.6 CONCLUSION

The mysticism and magic of Indian religion, the aura of supernatural power appears to have been the chief attraction of Southeast Asians steeped in animism. Buddhist monks, Brahmans and indianised laymen alike opened paths to and indianised laymen alike opened paths to greater emotional security on earth and the possibility of release from fear of what followed. Moreover, a cosmic explanation of the universe and of man's place in it was offered to supplant the patchwork of animist practice and belief.³⁸

Also important is the adaptability of Indian religions to the prevailing social environment, unlike Islam or Christianity which are ideologically monastic. On the one hand, both Hinduism and concept of heterodoxy, on the other, Southeast Asians doubtless of their diversity and their geographical location at the discourse of cultural

³⁶ R. Mukherjee, *A study of Indian civilization, Ancient and classical tradition*, Vol.1, Hind Kitab Limited, Bombay 1956, pp. 398-400.

³⁷ Upendra Thakur *Some aspects of Asian History and Culture* (New Delhi, Abhinav Publications, 1986) p.15.

³⁸ H.B. Sarkar, *Some contribution of India to the Ancient civilization of Indonesia and Malaysia* (Calcutta, Punthi Pustak, 1970), pp. 19-20 also see Tarling n.15, p.280.

currents, had tremendous absorptive and adaptive facility. There was no dogmatic rigidity in the Indian tradition to preclude the accommodation within Hinduism or Buddhism of local ideas and institutions. Similarly, the comforts of the old animistic ways were not denied but Indianised. Correspondingly, adding Vishnu or Maitreya to the pantheon enhanced rather than limited the strength of familiar spirits.³⁹

A study of the religions of Indian origin in Southeast Asia reveals that ultimately it was the accommodative and synergetic quality of Indian religions with its tremendous adaptability that has found much appeal in the countries of Southeast Asia. Unlike Christianity and Islam, which are monastic Buddhism and Hinduism with their diverse pluralistic characters, were successful enough in influencing peoples even of different civilisations. Unfortunately, today both these religions are moving towards the fundamentalist way losing their ancient legacy of tolerance and universal adaptability.

³⁹ Lea E. William, *Southeast Asia: A History* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1976), p.28.

CHAPTER - IV

ARTS, ARCHITECTURE AND LITERARY HERITAGE

Close religious affinity that provides a strong basis for friendly relations between India and Southeast Asia is further reinforced by their commonalities in arts, aesthetics and literary heritage. India has made significant contributions to Southeast Asia in the areas of arts, architectural styles, languages, literature and writing scripts. Highlighting the Indian contribution in these areas a former Indian diplomat S.R. Sehgal writes:

Even today anyone visiting the countries of Southeast Asia would be struck by the enduring signs of this influence in the facts of linguistics, semantics, common customs, dancing, costumes and religious beliefs. Perhaps Professor Rawlinson, an eminent British scholar had this influence in mind when he said that India suffers today in the estimate of the world more through the world's ignorance of her achievements than in the absence of, insignificance of her achievements.¹

An attempt is made in this chapter to trace the abovesaid affinities between India and Southeast Asia.

4.1 ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

Sir John Marshall, a noted connoisseur, rightly opines:

To know Indian art in India alone is to know but half its story. To apprehend to the full we must follow it in the wake of Buddhism to Central Asia, China and Japan; we must watch it assuming new forms and breaking it into new beauties as it spread over Tibet, Burma and Siam; we must gaze in awe at the unexampled grandeur of its creations in Cambodia and Java. In each of these countries Indian art encounters a different racial genius, a different local environment and under their modifying influence it takes on a different garb.²

¹ S.R. Sehgal, *India And Laos: A Study of Cultural Relations*, (New Delhi, Navyug Publication, 1969), p.1.

² O.P. Sharma, *Indian Culture: Ancient Glory and Present Gloom* (New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1993), p.86.

According to D.G.E. Hall, a prominent historian of Southeast Asia; “under the stimulus of Indian influence, especially during the period of middle age in Europe, art and architecture developed to a pitch which bears comparison with anything the rest of the world can show”.³ Except Vietnam and Philippines, in all the other countries of Southeast Asia, we find strong Indian influences even today. Along with the spread of Hinduism, Buddhism and their different composite sects, also went the arts, architectural styles of different parts of India. The erection of those monuments took place in areas where wet-rice cultivation had existed long enough for a leisured class to arise, supported by the taxes and services of the peasant communities who were interested in Indian culture.⁴ A brief note on India’s cultural transmission has been provided in the second chapter.

Of all the aspects of ‘Indianisation’, the nature and extent of the evolution of arts particularly sculptures and architecture have been the most fully studied. This is because of the availability of evidences as shown on those monuments. Infact, except inscriptions, these monuments are the solid proof of India’s cultural impact on Southeast Asia.⁵

Some of the most important monuments that depict religious and mythological themes of India in a splendid way refer to Bantei Sree (late 10th century), Phimeanakas (early 11th century), Baphuon (third quarter

³ D.G.E Hall, *History of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, Hawaii University Press, 1981), p.60.

⁴ Ibid, p.62.

⁵ D.R. Sardesai, *Southeast Asia: A History* (Boulder, Routledge, 1986), p.95.

of 11th century), Angkor Vat (12th century), Angkor Thom (end of 12th century), Bayon (12th century) and Borobodur (ninth century A.D.)

4.1(a) Important Indianised Monuments

Lack of space does not provide a thorough study of the different Indianised architectural sites of Southeast Asia. Still, a brief description of the important ones is provided here.

Angkor Vat and Angkor Thom in Cambodia are the most important temple complexes that show a high Indian influence. Of all the Khmer monuments these are the best preserved. Angkor Vat is the largest religious building of the world. Of late, Indian government has realised her cultural linkage with this Hindu temple. The Archeological survey of India with UNESCO support has undertaken the charge of its restoration. Recently the ASI has taken charge of restoring another Hindu temple in Cambodia, i.e., Ta Prohm.⁶

The Borobodur (Indonesia) which represents the highest expression of the artistic genius of the Indo-Javanese art is unlike any of the Javanese monuments.⁷ It is one of the famous World Heritage monuments declared by UNESCO. Even though it has been fashioned of a rock, in design, execution, massiveness and grandeur, it is a phenomenon by itself. Built by the Sailendra rulers of Java, it reminds the visitors of the finer aspects of the Gupta sculpture.⁸

⁶ "Angkor : A temple town awaits Indians" *The Hindu*, May 13, 2003.

⁷ *ibid*, p.53.

⁸ Le May, *The History of Southeast Asia Heritage of India* (New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1948), p. 4.

The great temple complex at Prambanan (Indonesia) is often known by the name of one of its Chandis, Lara Djongrang, dedicated to Sivas Consort, Durga. Founded by King Pikatan of the Sanjavarma in 856 AD, this temple complex offers a beautiful example of Indianised art and architecture in Southeast Asia.

The Ananda temple in Burma, is the finest example of India's imprint.⁹ Emphasising the Indian influence Duroiselle who has made a special study of the subject in recent times writes:

There can be no doubt that the architects who planned and built the Ananda were Indians. Everything in this temple from Sikhara to basement, as well as the numerous stone sculptures found in its corridors and the terra-cotta plaques adorning its basement and terraces, bear the indubitable stamp of Indian genius and craftsmanship. In this sense, we may take it, therefore that the Ananda, though built in the Burmese capital, is an Indian example.¹⁰

Except Vietnam and the Philippines in all other countries of Southeast Asia, a strong Indian influence on art and architectural designs can be seen. There are numerous monuments of both Hindu and Buddhist icons in most of these countries which bear this testimony even today.

Regarding the Indian art Coedes writes:

Indian art was mostly formal, external, that is why from the very first, it is more striking than the internal ties that unite the plastic arts of farther India to India—we know no monument in India resembling even remotely the Bayon or Angkor Thom or Berobodur. And yet the monuments are the pure production of

⁹ R.C, Majumdar, *Hindu colonies in the Far east* (Calcutta, Firma KL Mukhopadyay Agency, 1962), p. 254.

¹⁰ Cited In Majumdar, n.9, p.257.

the Indian genius, the deep meaning of which is apparent only to the eyes of the Indianist.¹¹

Among the Indian schools of art, those of the Amaravati, Gupta, Pallava and Pala phases of art have left their impact in varying degrees on the specimens of the art and architecture of Southeast Asia.¹² Mainly it was the Gupta style, bulky and round, emerging in India after several centuries of development, that became adopted by most of the other peoples of Asia, including the Mons and Khmers. The individuality of the major art styles of Southeast Asia is, to a great extent- the result of interaction between Indian and pre-Indian indigenous Southeast Asian component in this central equation is far or more difficult to define than the Indian.¹³ R.C. Majumdar after discussing the controversy regarding the origin of Khmer art and architecture, suggests that though the art had its Indian origin it developed indigenously. It must have undergone a process of evolution that we notice in different parts of India in different ages.¹⁴

During the late Gupta and the Pala-Sena periods many parts of Southeast Asia were greatly influenced by developments in Indian religious field, especially in the Buddhist-field. Therefore, it is at no surprise to find a strong late Gupta and Pala influence in many manifestation of art and architecture of Southeast Asia. Inscriptions show that there was also a very close contact between many Southeast Asian regions and the Tamil Kingdoms, particularly during the period of

¹¹ G. Coedes *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, East West Press, Hawaii University 1968) p. 252.

¹² H.B. Sarkar *Cultural Relation Between Indian and Southeast Asian Countries* (Delhi, ICCR And Motilal Benarasidas Publications, 1985) p. 325.

¹³ A. L. Basham (ed.) *A Cultural History of India* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 448.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 449

the chola dynasty (ninth to thirteenth century A.D). This finds explanation for the presence of a Chola element in many areas of Southeast Asian art and architecture.¹⁵ Highlighting such Indian influence R.C. Majumdar writes:

If we remember that the Indians from the eastern part of India played a prominent part in the colonisation of the far east, and also the great extent to which Indian civilisation had influenced that of Champa we need not hesitate to trace the origin of Cham style to Indian temples at Badami, Canjee Varam and Mamallapuram, particularly as this part of India was the nearest by way of sea to the kingdom of Champa. It is quite true that Champa did not blindly imitate the Indian prototypes and added new elements of their own, but the fact that their style was throughout based upon the essential characteristic features of Indian style, seems to be beyond question.¹⁶

4.1(b) Affinities

The art in Southeast Asia, like its parent art in India may be described as the hand-maid of religion. All the monuments of the art, so far discovered, are religious structures. Religion provides sole aim and inspiration from beginning to end. Although most of these monuments are now in ruins, the few Javanese temples that are still present intact constitute the greatest and most durable heritage of the Indian culture and civilisation in these far off region.¹⁷

Thus the basic elements of Indian art i.e, art associated with spirituality, symbolism, rhetoric, sensuality etc. are all reflected in its Southeast Asian counterpart. This implies that the latter did not go beyond that. This is where the similarity exists. Through art,

¹⁵ R. C. Majumdar, *Hindu colonies in the Far East* (Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay Agents, 1963), p. 174.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 174-75.

¹⁷ Majumdar, n. 9, p. 102.

architecture and aesthetics a certain type of high cultural value spread to Southeast Asia, got accepted by its elite and took a modified shape in the different monuments.

4.2 ART OF WRITING, LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Apart from arts, architecture and aesthetics, India contributed profoundly to the literary heritage of Southeast-Asia. The art of writing; undoubtedly one of the greatest inventions of humanity, was introduced to Southeast Asia by India. It opened up the eyes of the peoples of the former to the perennial joys of reading and writing. By introducing India, this art of writing enabled the Southeast Asians to get equipped with Indian linguistic materials to develop their own vernacular and compose many beautiful original works.¹⁸ Highlighting the Indian influence in this regard, H.B.Sarkar writes:

There is hardly any doubt that much of the cultural heritage of Southeast Asia would have been lost forever if its people had not adopted at an early stage the Indian art of writing. It is indeed very difficult now for the uninitiated people to discern that all the major scripts of Southeast Asia, which today look very much different from those of India, owe their common origin to the late variety of the Indian brahmi scripts¹⁹

It needs to be mentioned here that unlike India, China could not be successful in influencing Southeast Asia in the cultural sphere. The writing system is supposed to be the chief cause. Even though, the Chinese calligraphy was aesthetically admirable, it was too cumbersome to be learnt. The absence of alphabets or syllabery, more importantly the pictographic character of Chinese script could not attract the

¹⁸ Sarkar, n. 12, p. 168.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 169

Southeast Asians. Outside China only the Koreans and the Japanese, neither of whom had another model to study, and the Vietnamese, who were under Chinese rule for a millennium, adopted Chinese writing. As far as Indian system is concerned, even the Mongols and the Tibetans, long in close contact with China, opted for Indian alphabets. The matter of writing system is emphasised because it helped in transmitting ideas, beliefs, values and even literary expressions to the Southeast Asia from Indian side. It is for the absence of the same reason that the Chinese ways (Confucianism, political institution etc.) could not have any significant impact on Southeast Asia.²⁰

In *The Saga of Indian Culture in Southeast Asia retrospect and prospect*, Dr. Y. Yagamma Reddy writes:

The legacy of Indian culture can be better understood from the linguistic evolution. It enriched vernacular speech through new words and grammatical forms of Sanskrit origin and through introducing the first form of writing which ultimately contributed immensely to the stabilisation and development of main languages among Cambodians, Burmese, Siam, Thais and Laotians. Even many of the regional languages of Indonesia have traditionally employed the scripts of Indian origin.²¹

Regarding the introduction of the art of writing, the credit goes to the 'Brahmana migrants'.²² It is supposed that through these Brahmans went Sanskrit; the language of high culture and, Pali went through the Buddhist preachers and other followers. Regarding the original homeland of these scripts, scholars are not of one opinion. They

²⁰ Sardesai, n.3, p. 37.

²¹ Reddy, Y.Y., "Need of Developing a New Outlook at Greater India Concept" in *The Saga of Indian Culture in Southeast Asia Retrospect and Prospect* Centre For Studies on Indo-China and South Pacific, Sri Venkateswar University, Tirupati, Monograph Series No. IX, 1998, p. 17.

²² Sarkar, n. 12, p. 168.

variously affiliate these scripts to the central, western and southern parts of India. Here difficulty arises from the fact that in their earliest forms, the different types of Indian writing show their fewest divergences. Therefore, while R.C. Majumdar opines that the oldest Sanskrit inscription in Funan used Kushana script from North India, K.A. Nilakantha Sastri argues that all the alphabets used in Southeast Asia had a South Indian origin and that Pallav script has a predominant influence. Coedes, however, points out that the use of a pre-Nagari script for a short time at the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth centuries is the implication of a wave of Bengali influence.²³

It is generally agreed that the earliest specimen of the Indian art of writing in Southeast Asia is provided by Vo-canh inscription of Funan, which had been written in the late Brahmi script. Some scholars have assigned it to the second or third century A.D. D.C. Sircar thinks it to be of a later period. This is because in the second or third century, Prakrit was used in the contemporary charters of India instead of Sanskrit (which came into vogue only in the Gupta period).²⁴

4.2(a) Indian Sources

Regarding the sources of the early scripts of Funan, Cambodia and Champa (Vietnam), there are contradicting views. R.C. Majumdar stated in 1932 that the oldest Sanskrit inscriptions of Indo-China i.e., the Vo-canh inscription is derived from the writings of the Kushana inscription prevalent in the central parts of northern India. In fact, most

²³ Sarkar, n.12, p. 169.

²⁴ G. Coedes, *Indian History Quarterly*, Vol. XVI, p. 48

of the circumstantial evidences point towards central-India as the cradlebed of the early scripts of Indo-China. But K.A. Nilakarthasastrri and some other scholars following him trace south Indian origin of the alphabets of Indo-China.²⁵

From the viewpoint of paleography and chronology of the early inscription of Southeast Asia, A. Christie has expressed a different view. From his analysis it can be drawn that the people of the Gujrat-Malabar region dominated in matters of immigration from fourth century AD to four-fifty AD, but from fifth century AD to sixth century AD the people of South India took the lead in overseas activities. Even though he has traced the pallava, west chalukyan and Mulava styles of writing, he has not explained what he meant by south Indian style distinguished from the above styles.²⁶

H.B. Sarkar emphasises the role played by the ports of Tamralipti and Palura in influencing the writing style of Southeast Asia. According to him, the paleography of the lower Gangetic valley and that of the Vidarbha-Kalingan tracts, which provided the first and second impulse for the emigration of the Indians to Southeast Asia, have not been adequately studied from the perspective we have in view". Regarding the K'oyen lower (Kun-lun) script of Malaysia, Sarkar says, "there is hardly any doubt that refers to the Kalinga script and the Kalinga people, constituting an ethno-linguistic entity".²⁷

So far as the paleography of the inscriptions of maritime Southeast Asia (Java, Borneo, Bali, Sumatra) are concerned, Purnavarman's

²⁵ Ibid, p. 169.

²⁶ Sarkar, n. 12, p. 170.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 172.

inscriptions reveal, affinity with the alphabets used by the Pallavas, the Kadambas, the Western Gangas. The inscriptions found in Java, Sumatra and Bali inevitably draw our attention to the pre-nagari proto-Bengali scripts of Bengal-Orissa-Bihar region.²⁸ Even in mainland Southeast Asia, the scripts of Burma, Siam, Cambodia etc owe their origin to the latest Brahmi scripts of central India. The scripts of Rama Khambaeng of Thailand now used by the Thais in Lanna, Laos, Mengtung and Tongking owe their origin to India.²⁹

To sum up, most of the scripts and writing styles of Southeast Asia which eventhough have been modified in the present times, owe their origin to Indian influence of Sanskrit, Pali and Tamil.

4.2 (b) Languages

Regarding the influence of Sanskrit language on the languages of Southeast Asia. H.B. Sarkar writes:

The numerous inscriptions discovered in Kambuja and other countries prove that Sanskrit was highly cultivated all over the region and formed the court language and the language of the learned. Under its influence, local native languages also were sufficiently developed and in some cases,, as in java, produced in course of time a high class of literature, based on the models of Sanskrit.³⁰

In this regard Alistair Lamb, a reputed Historian writes:

Many South-east Asian languages (Malay and Javanese are good examples) contain an important proportion of words of Sanskrit or Dravidian origin. Some of these languages, like Thai, are still written in scripts which are clearly derived from Indian models.³¹

²⁸ Ibid, p. 173.

²⁹ Sarkar, n.12, p. 175-6.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 179

³¹ Basham, n.13, p. 442.

Sanskrit language and literature has made deep inroads into the vocabulary of large part of Southeast Asia. A large percentage of Balinese vocabulary in the classical literature reflects the use of many Sanskrit words, as any Balinese dictionary would testify. The Balinese gloss or annotation of Sanskrit words have kept the Balinese scholars and priests, somewhat abreast at the intent of the Sanskrit texts they read, write and chant. Similarly Sanskrit words are also found in the vocabulary of the Celebes, the Philippines and the Papua-New Guinea.³² In Indonesia, there is a lot of use of Sanskrit words both in written and spoken language. According to Dr. Poerbatjoroko, a well-known Javanese scholar: "between seventy and eighty percent of the words of Javanese language are either pure Sanskrit or of Sanskritic origin."³³

Bahasa Indonesia has got twelve percent of the Sanskrit vocabulary. The very word bahasa has its Sanskritic origin from Bhasa.³⁴ Highlighting the importance of Sanskrit in Indonesia Prof. Lokesh Chandra writes:

The roads of Indonesia are a paradise of Sanskrit words. The signboards of shops unfurled a wonderland of Sanskrit names, which may hardly observe in our own metropolis of Delhi. The Life Insurance Corporation of Indonesia has the name of Jivanashraya.³⁵

In the mainland Southeast Asia, use of Sanskrit language is still prevalent in countries like Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. In

³² H.B. Sarkar, *The Indianized Literature Of Southeast Asia*, Pp. 88-9.

³³ Quoted in *Hindustan Standard* Calcutta, 30 December, 1962 cited in A.K. Majumdar, *South-East Asia in Indian Foreign Policy*, (Calcutta, Naya Prokash, 1982), p. 21.

³⁴ C.D. Paliwal, "India-Indonesia- A Cultural Exchange", Indonesian Independence Day Souvenir, 1951.

³⁵ Lokesh Chandra *Cultural Horizons of India* Vol. 4, (New Delhi, International Academy Of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakasan, 1995) vol. 4, p. 9.

the words of Dr. William J. Gurney who made an in-depth study of spoken Thai from the point of Indian influence on it; "there are as many words of Indian origin in spoken Thai as are Greek and Latin words in spoken English".³⁶ The Thai language has incorporated a large number of polysyllabic words of Indian origin, at first through the intermediary of words borrowed from Cambodian, and later by the creative use of Sanskrit and Pali roots.³⁷ In fact, Sanskrit and Pali words have enriched Thai vocabulary considerably, and their use is to some extent a mark of upper-class status in Thailand.³⁸ It is in line with this that a big corpus of individual names and names of cities, towns and villages in Thailand is found to be of India origin.

Similarly, the Lao script and language are derived from Sanskrit and Pali. There is also a great similarity between Sanskrit and Lao words. For example, the names of some Indian flowers like Gulab, Champa are exactly the same in Lao language. The words Dharmasla in Sanskrit and Sala Dham in Lao language have exactly the same meanings.³⁹

The knowledge of Sanskrit was cultivated in Burma since the early centuries of the Christian era. In spite of the dominance of Buddhism and Pali, Sanskrit language and literature had not vanished completely from her soil. As a matter of fact, the Burmese Pali

³⁶ Vohra N.N, *Religion, Culture and Politics in South and Southeast Asia* (New Delhi, India International Centre, p.51.

³⁷ Sarkar, n. 32, pp. 109-15.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 114-19.

³⁹ Upendra Thakur, *Some Aspects of Asian History and Culture* (New Delhi, Abhinav Publication, 1986), p. 136.

literature on law-Dhammasathas was based on Sanskrit originals and did not owe anything to Ceylon which inspired its other branches.⁴⁰

Apart from Sanskrit, we also find references of Pali and Tamil in Southeast Asian countries. Pali is supposed to have gone from India through the Buddhist priests and merchants. It is difficult to realise fully the part played by Pali literature in developing the intellectual, moral and social life in Burma. As a foreign critic has observed:

Burma shows how the leaves of Indian thought worked in a race and idiom having no close relationship with India. We may say that the essentially Indian genius, the psychological subtleties the high thoughts of Buddhism have forced the Burmese language to grow, deepen and expand continually when Burmese was at last raised (in or about the fourteenth century) to the level of a literary language, it was by the addition of a great body of Indian words necessary to express ideas beyond the scope of that picturesque vernacular.⁴¹

Similarly words of Dravidian origin, mainly Tamil, have also entered into the vocabulary of Southeast Asia. Their number has grown larger in and around the periphery of Malacca since the fifteenth century. This was mainly due to the commercial activities of Muslim traders from Gujrat and Tamil lands.⁴² In the present time, Tamil is the only Indian language that enjoys the official status both in Singapore and Malaysia.

4.2(c) Literature

Apart from languages, Indian grammar contributed in the field of grammatical politics an euphonic combination making some of the

⁴⁰ Sarkar, n. 12, p.248.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 249.

⁴² Sarkar, n.31, p.90-91.

native languages richer. The vocabulary was considerably strengthened in all the countries of Southeast Asia and Island Asia by the introduction of Sanskrit words. This was significant in the field of abstract ideas, technical terms and many material objects.⁴³

India also contributed largely by providing her Puranic literature (Ramayana, Mahabharat), Jatak stories etc. to Southeast Asia, thereby giving her mythology, morals, and values to the concerned people. These literature made a tremendous impact on Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia to judge by inscriptional references and existing monuments. Episodes from the Puranas are not only handled in classical Indonesian texts and referred to in the inscriptions of Indo-China, but have also been portrayed in the art and architecture of Java and Cambodia.⁴⁴ The vast collection of literary compositions, by various scholars at various times, known as the Mahabharat had an immense influence upon the old Javanese literature in particular.⁴⁵

After a brief review of the story of the introduction of Indian art of writing, language and literature to Southeast Asia, we can quote G. Coedes:

The native languages have not only been enriched and made more flexible by India, they have above all been stabilised, thanks to the use of Indian scripts. The common origin of the Mon, Burmese, Thai, Khmer, Cam, Javanese and Balinese systems of writing is still recognisable in an astonishingly divergent linguistic and literary milieu, which is hard to realise at first sight.⁴⁶

⁴³ Sarkar, n. 31, p. 244.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 244.

⁴⁵ Hall n.3, p. 43.

⁴⁶ Coedes, n.11, pp. 254-5.

A study of arts, architecture and literary heritage of Southeast Asia reveals the strong Indian influence even to this day. In the past it was through the visual and literary media that India was successfully sending her idea, values even knowledge. In the contemporary times while states are promoting cultural diplomacy through various media India has an age-old legacy in this regard. Promotion of these ancient arts and even restoration of the same in Southeast Asia would help India in reviving the ancient cultural glory.

CHAPTER - V

OVERSEAS INDIANS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

If material elements of culture i.e. arts, architecture, literature etc. in Southeast Asia trace their Indian origin, the Indian Diaspora testifies to this linkages even to this day. The overseas Indians in Southeast Asia are deeply conscious of their rich cultural heritage. They are aware that they are the inheritors of the traditions of the worlds oldest continuous civilization. Being part of such a rich legacy they are naturally keen to maintain that cultural identity¹.

5.1 INDIAN EMIGRATION TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

As far as migration of Indians to Southeast Asia is concerned, early Indian migration is a subject of debate among the scholars. There is, however, a general agreement that it took place both by land and sea routes. Different views have been expressed about the causes of Indian migration to Southeast Asia. It is generally agreed that the primary motive for migration was economic. Initially, the mineral wealth of Southeast Asia seems to have been a major attraction for the Indians². The deep imprint of their intense interaction is visible even today in language and literature, religion and philosophy, art and architecture,

¹ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Report of the high level committee on Indian Diaspora*, 2003.p.251. Available at www.Indiandiaspora.com

² H.P.Roy, *The Winds of Change Buddhism and the Maritime Links of early South Asia*, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.116-7

custom and manners of the whole indo-China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and the Malaysian peninsula³. Indian cultural influence in these spheres have been discussed in the previous chapters.

Even though there are evidences of pre-historic, even later migration, there is no precise information regarding that. Countries like Thailand, are supposed to have possessed descendants of Indian immigrants of early centuries. Evidence of the presence of a sizeable number of Indians during the Sukhothai and Ayuttaya periods have been mentioned by a number of western travelers to Thailand.⁴ It must however be empahsised that large scale migrations have only taken place as a result of colonial connections mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries⁵.

5.2 INDIAN EMIGRATIONS DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

There was a high level of Indian emigration during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the British, French and Dutch colonies of Southeast Asia. This emigration was mainly of two types, namely (a) "emigration of contract labourers under the 'indenture' system or 'Kangani' system" and (b) a " 'free' or 'passage' immigration of traders clerk, bureaucrats and professionals".⁶ The abolition of slavery, particularly in the British Empire and the French and Dutch colonies in

³ 'Friends and Neighbours, India and ASEAN dialogue partnership', (Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 1997), cited in *Strategic Digest*, September 1997, vol 27, No. 9, p.1365

⁴ Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, n.l.p.268

⁵ n.l, p.251

⁶ *ibid.* p 251

1834, 1846 and 1873 respectively led to a severe shortage of labourers working in sugar, tea, coffee, coca, rice and rubber plantations in their colonies. In that case, India and China became the obvious attractive sources of labour. During the period 1852 to 1937, approximately two million Indians supposed to have gone to Malaya and Myanmar.⁷

The second type of migration, namely, 'free' or 'passage' migration of traders and artisans took place to Myanmar and Malaysia during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. They included Banias (petti traders) from the former United Provinces (modern U.P.), Marwaris from Rajasthan, Chettiyars from Madras, Gujratis, Maharashtrians and Punjabis.⁸

5.3 CONCERN FOR INDIA

Prior to the World War II, overseas Indians in Southeast Asia Specially in Malaysia and Singapore had little political interest in their country of residence. Their activities were largely oriented towards the mother country with which they maintained strong economic, sentimental and political links. The orientation of the Indians in Malaya was strengthened by periodic visits by Indian leaders like Pt. Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore and Srinivas Sastri. It was finally brought into limelight with the establishment of the Indian National Army (INA) in Malay. Between 1942 and 1945, thousands of Indians volunteered to join the INA for the purpose of fighting for independence of India. in addition,

⁷ Ibid, p. 252

⁸ Ibid

Indian independence League (IIL) organization were established in all leading centers in Southeast Asia to recruit men, collect funds and generally to coordinate the independence movement. Men and women poured into the independence movement in an unprecedented level from all sections of overseas Indians in Southeast Asia. After independence small numbers of Indians have continued to migrate to Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. There have been mainly professionals working for Indians joint ventures and others institutions. In recent times many local companies have also engaged Indian professionals.⁹

5. 4 INDIAN APPROACH TOWARDS DIASPORA

Because of the nationalistic heritage and the keen interest that the Indian leaders took in the welfare of the Indians overseas during the struggle for freedom, it was expected that the independent India would adopt a meaningful and realistic approach towards the overseas Indians in Southeast Asia. This would enhance the status and dignity of these people and India's standing among them. In a message to the Indian National Congress in 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru said:-

India is weak today and cannot do much for her children abroad. But she does not forget them and every insult to them is humiliation and sorrow for her. A day will come when her long arm will protect them and her strength will compel justice to them.¹⁰

⁹ V. Suryanarayan, "India and Indians Overseas" *World Focus*, 1999 (Oct-Nov-Dec), vol.17, No.(10-12)p.49

¹⁰ Speech delivered by Pt.Jawaharlal Nehru in a meeting of Indian National Congress,1939.cited in Suryanarayan, n.9. p.49.

The hope that India would adopt a meaningful policy has been belied. Even Nehru admitted – “I entirely agree with any criticism that may be made that we have not been able to do anything substantial in regard to the Indians in the British Commonwealth”.¹¹

Has India succeeded in protecting and fostering the interest of the Indians overseas? During the colonial era, the Indian National Congress repeatedly emphasized that the Indians overseas, who were British Indian subjects, should be treated as a completely equal with the native subject of the British Crown. Both Gandhi and Nehru underlined the fact that most Indians were born in the countries of their residence and have also rendered sufficient services for the economic development of these countries. They also exhorted the Indians to identify themselves with the political aspirations of the indigenous peoples and not be a party to their exploitations.¹²

With the attainment of independence, the problems of overseas Indians ceased to be an internal issue of the British Empire. The newly independent countries enacted their constitutions and introduced citizenship laws. As a result overseas Indians fell into three categories—those who took citizenship of newly independent countries; those who had British Passports, but without citizenship; and stateless persons.¹³

¹¹ Ibid

¹² V Suryanarayan, “Overseas Chinese and Overseas Indians in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Study” *Strategic Analysis*, December 1995, p.1211.

¹³ Suryanarayan, n.9, pp.50-51

In most of the cases, whenever there are problems of Indians in the country of their residence, India kept silence. In fact New Delhi failed to consider the fact that the Indians constituted the predominant alien population in countries like Burma, Singapore etc.¹⁴

In case of Burma soon after the independence, the Burmese Government initiated radical land reforms, which affected the interest of the Indian Chettiayar community. A total of twenty seven lakh acres of land, 14% of the cultivable land of Burma was nationalized. The market value of the land was estimated at Rs.70 crore. Despite excellent equations between New Delhi and Yangon, India could not persuade the Burmese Government to pay adequate compensation to the landowners. It is assumed that by the end of 1961, only Rs.1.75 Crore had been paid as compensation. During the second wave of nationalization in the 1960s under General Ne Win, in furtherance of "Burmese way of Socialism," Burma nationalized petty retail shops owned by the Indians - 12,000 shops with assets worth Rs. 15 crore were taken over by the Government. What was more tragic, the Indians were not even allowed to repatriate their meager savings. The repatriates complained of demonetization of currency notes, expropriation of properties, confiscation of valuables and unimaginable humiliation. According to a policy note issued by the Tamil Nadu Government, from June 1963 onwards, 144353 repatriates had return to India from Burma. Even after

¹⁴ ibid.

a lapse of forty years the compensation due to those people has not been settled. India's official stand has been that nationalization was strictly a matter of domestic jurisdiction.¹⁵

Similarly a crisis in Malaysia on the question on work permit of the non citizens was averted by New Delhi thanks to behind scenes diplomacy of the Indian Government. In order to solve the acute problem of unemployment, the Malaysian Government in 1968 introduced the system of work permits for non citizens in specialized categories. In 1969, Kuala Lumpur announced that the work permits would not be renewed, which was indirectly a warning to non citizens to quit their jobs. If the Malaysian Government had strictly enforced the rules, 55,000 Indians laborers would have lost their jobs. The Government of India and representatives of Malaysian Indians were able to persuade the government to make modifications in the regulations. Kuala Lumpur agreed to speedily dispose of applications for citizenship of those who applied for citizenship would be given employment passes. Those who were eligible for citizenship could also apply for it during the work permit period. If the citizens were not forth coming, non citizens would continue in their jobs. As the Malayas were at that time unwilling to work in the plantation, the last concession became a boon for the Indians. A few months later, the Malaysian Government extended the work permits of all those who had applied for citizenship. However, the communal

¹⁵Suryanarayan, n.12. p.1218 Also see B.G. Verghese, *Reorienting India The New Geo-politics of Asia* (New Delhi, Konark Publishers, 2001) pp. 20-27.

violence which took place in Malaysia in May 1969 had traumatic impact on the Indian community. Nearly 60,000 Indians voluntarily returned to India during this period.¹⁶ Both the Burmese and the Malaysian problems showed the important role Indian has to play for the betterment of Indian diasporas in Southeast Asia.

With the liberalization of Indian economy and the greater interest on the part of the Indian Government to attract investments from the non resident Indians, New Delhi's attempt to cater to their capital and technology has recently begun. The widely publicized and high profile celebrations of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in New Delhi held during 9-11 January 2003 is an important historical event in this direction.¹⁷ It has both positive and negative implications, inside as well as outside India, because of the complexities of issues involved. Still, it is definitely a daring step by the Indian Government. The introduction of the privilege of dual citizenship for people of Indian origin (PIO) in US, UK Canada, Australia, New Zealand and couple of other prosperous country has become a major concern. Except Singapore the PIOs of other Southeast Asian countries are still excluded from this opportunity.¹⁸

In the course of a visit to Thailand in 1993, the former Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao referred to "insurmountable difficulties" on the issue. He however, clarified that a system was being worked out

¹⁶ Suryanarayan, n.12, pp. 1218-1219.

¹⁷ Sudananda Sahoo, "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Aftermath Issues and Concerns over Indian Diaspora".pp.1-4, available at <http://www.Geocities.com/husociology/pvd.htm>

¹⁸ *ibid.*

through which the non-resident Indians would be entitled to all benefits of citizenship without being actually granted one.¹⁹

The following table presents a comparative picture of Indian community in different Southeast Asian countries.

Country	Populations	NRIs	PIOs	Stateless	% of the Population
Brunei	331000	7000	500	100	2.3%
Cambodia	11340000	150	150	Nil	Negligible
Indonesia	200000000	500	50000	Nil	-Do-
Laos	5100000	107	18	Na	-Do-
Malaysia	22890000	15000	1600000	50000	7.3%
Myanmar	46500000	2000	2500000	400000	5%
Philippines	76000000	2000	24000	12000	Negligible
Singapore	3160000	90000	217000	Negligible	9.7%
Thailand	62000000	15000	70000	NIL	.07%
Vietnam	78000000	320	Nil	10	Negligible

Source: Report of the high level committee on Indian Diaspora, Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India, 2003.

Except in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, the Indian diaspora is present in most of the other Southeast Asian countries as a significant minority. Unfortunately India has realized the importance of the overseas Indians very recently. A high level committee on the Indian diaspora has considered certain factors relating to the Indian diaspora.

¹⁹ Suryanarayan, n. 9, p.52.

Every component of the diaspora has major expectation from India to assist in realizing its aspirations of bonding, with it, and remembering its cultural roots with pride. Most of them even regard this as intrinsic to their development; both material and spiritual. NRIs and PIOs are unanimous in their belief that handing down India's rich culture to their descendants is *sin qua non* for the forging of ties between future generations of the diaspora and India. The committee also considered the questions from the perspective of national interest. India should initiate constructive measures to ensure that our relationship with diasporic community is properly nurtured so that it can blossom into an abiding phenomenon. Keeping alive the interest in Indian culture of future generations of NRIs and PIOs would be essential if there is to be continuity in their emotional bonding with India. Such a meaningful relationship would enhance diaspora's pride and faith in its heritage, and consequently its confidence in itself would revitalize its interest in India's development.²⁰

In this context Vishal Singh writes:

We also need to do some serious thinking about our policy regarding Indians in Southeast Asia this can be dealt with in two parts: a) our attitude to overseas Indians in general and b) our policy towards Indians in Southeast Asia. There is at present no Indian policy towards overseas Indian except to advice them to identify themselves with the local people. Not only is this advice very off hand but it also indicates a desire to forget them as a bad dream.²¹

²⁰ Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, n.1, pp. 253-71.

²¹ Vishal Singh, "India And Southeast Asia" in Bimal Prasad (ed.) *India's Foreign Policy Studies in Continuity and Change*, (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1979), pp. 221-222

Indian overseas cannot be dismissed easily. They are there and they retain considerable ties with, and affection for, the mother country. While encouraging and educating Indians in Southeast Asia to coexist and cooperate with the local people, India should also stand by them in their problems.²² Unlike Chinese overseas, the Indian diaspora does not have any serious conflict in Southeast Asian countries. Most Indians settlers in Southeast Asia know the local languages well; they already know how to coexist with the local people. India should take interest in their legitimate economic and cultural interest. They can provide an effective link between India and the region.²³

5.5 DEMANDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The demands and the expectations of the Indian community in Southeast Asia are as follows:

1. Assistance from the Government of India in consular matters like
 - (a) Faster issuance of passports through quicker verifications of passport particulars.
 - (b) Issue of a large passport booklet than the present sixty page one.
 - (c) Issue of new passport before one and half years of the expiry of its validity since regulations of many countries requires that a passport should be valid for more than one year before they can issue residence permit/ visa.

²² *ibid.*, p. 222.

²³ Suryanarayan, n.12, pp. 1209-19.

2. Grant of dual citizenship.
3. Voting rights in the respective home town constituencies even for the Indians permanently residing abroad.
4. Introduction of direct Air India flights between India and their place of residence.
5. Establishment of NRI welfare fund to cater the welfare of the Indians citizens when they run into problems while staying in foreign countries. A 50-50 contribution, i.e., 50 percent of the fund to come from the Government of India and rest 50 percent to be provided by the NRIs has been suggested.²⁴

5.6 CONCLUSION

In all these countries the Indian community makes conscious efforts to preserve its cultural identity and carry on with its cultural traditions. They relieve, with sentiments and nostalgia, this treasure of cultural traditions and values, which in most cases is their only legacy.

The persons of Indian origin can play a major role in promoting cultural and commercial links. Their role in Singapore and other countries has been seen in a new light in the changed international scenario. They should be treated as conduits for promoting bilateral relations, as the cultural factor is in their favour when the Southeast Asian countries deal with India.²⁵ Emphasising their role former Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral said:

²⁴ Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, n.1, pp. 254-71.

²⁵ P.S. Sahai, "Cultural Diplomacy : India in Singapore" in N.N. Vohra (ed.), *Emerging Asia: Challenges for India and Singapore* (New Delhi, Manohar Publications, 2003), p. 152.

... enlightenment about ASEAN in India and about the new India in ASEAN. They can be initiators as well as effective channels for trade and investment flows between India and ASEAN. While Non-Resident- Indians are an additional and special factor and source for augmentation of ASEAN -India trade and investment, contribution of all communities of all ASEAN will find a warm welcome in India.²⁶

Even though it seems complicated, still a full-fledged approach is needed on the part of Indian Government for its overseas Indian in Southeast Asia. If properly considered they can become an important stakeholder in the concerned states of Southeast Asia for Indian interest.

The major challenge before the Indian government and her Southeast Asian diaspora is how to send positive signals to the concerned countries through cultural diplomacy and other media. Officially, of course, the celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is expected to help create a policy framework for a sustained and productive interaction with the Indian diaspora. Apart from a lot of home work it needs a healthy political, economic and cultural relationship among India and Southeast Asian countries. Even though, it is a big mission to integrate Indian diaspora in the developmental process of India it can be achieved through careful planning in economic, political and socio-cultural sphere.²⁷

²⁶ I.K. Gujral, *A Foreign Policy for India* (New Delhi, External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, 1998) p. 242.

²⁷ Sahu, n. 17, pp. 3-4.

CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSIONS

India and Southeast Asia have been close neighbours and friends in time, space and existence for as long as history can recount. From myths and legends, to religion and culture, arts and crafts, the languages the people speak and scripts they write, even the adventurous trade that continued for centuries all stand testimony to a shared legacy of strong neighbourliness that existed in the past.

Long before the advent of European capitalism, even much before Indian industry took shape or Chinese entrepreneurs began to spread their products through Asia, traders and merchants between India and Southeast Asia established close relation. Inter-regional trade in this part of Asia led to a continuous exchange of men, material, knowledge, ideas, beliefs even religions across the Bay of Bengal. The silk route, the spice trade and adventure of kings, merchants, traders, religious clergies even commoners provided a matrix of complex historic ties. The advent of Hinduism, Buddhism and even Islam, and its spread to Southeast Asia can be a chapter by itself in counting the ancient and historic ties between the Indian sub-continent and Southeast Asia.¹

Considerable literature is available on India's historical and cultural links with Southeast Asia. There is, however, scarcity of material on India's present day cultural links with these countries. Even

¹ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Friends And Neighbours In India And ASEAN Dialogue Partnership* (New Delhi, 1997), cited in *Strategic Digest* September, 1997, p. 1365.

not much work has been done by Indian scholars on the impact of culture on foreign policy. As far as Southeast Asia is concerned the general tendency to look at the region as an extension of India- "Greater India"- has been resented by Southeast Asian scholars. It is at this context that a new approach to look at Southeast Asia as an area of 'confluence', is needed. Infact, a balanced approach taking into consideration the tremendous Indian influence along with the indigenous and non-Indian external influences in the cultural sphere of Southeast Asia can provide the proper basis.²

Historians and political leaders have acknowledged Southeast Asia's cultural indebtedness to India. For example, Norodom Sihanak, inaugurating the Jawaharlal Nehru boulevard in Prom Penh in May 1995 remarked.

When we refer to two thousand years old this which unite us with India, it is not at all a hyperbole. In fact, it was about two thousand years ago that the first navigators, Indian merchants and Brahmins brought to our ancestors their Gods, their techniques, and their organisations. Briefly, India was for us what Greece was to the Latin Orient.³

Inaugurating a seminar on India's cultural relations with Southeast Asia in 1966, M.C. Chagla, a former Indian Foreign Minister said:

They (the delegates)from Southeast Asian countries must look upon India as their second home because there is lot indeed which unites India with the Southeast Asian countries and for want of expression I would rather call it a bond — the bond of Sanskritic culture.⁴

² V. Suryanarayan, "India's Look East Policy", *World Focus* , Oct-Dec., 1999, vol. 20, No. 11-12, p. 55.

³ Ibid, pp. 55-57.

⁴ Cited in Bidyut Sarkar (ed.) *India and Southeast Asia Proceedings of a Seminar on India and Southeast Asia* , (New Delhi, ICCR, 1968), p. 7.

want of expression I would rather call it a bond — the bond of Sanskritic culture.⁴

India's first attempts into foreign policy domain were in Southeast Asia in support of anti-colonial movements in that region. The convening of Asian Relations Conference in 1947, a special conference on Indonesia in January 1949, also support to Burma in 1948-49 in internal conflict, chairmanship of the international control commission on Indo-china in 1954 and co-sponsorship of the famous Bandung Conference in 1955 were some of the important initiatives taken by India towards Southeast Asia for better relations. Unfortunately, a country like India which had shown such an extra-ordinary interest and commitment in a region (with which it had a past and definitely a future), just abruptly cut off its ties. Surprisingly, India withdrew from Southeast Asia at the time when China and Japan were trying to penetrate the region.

Since the cold war frustrated India's early efforts its end has reawakened India towards reviving her cultural diplomacy in Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular. India's growing recognition of the prospects of increased economic and commercial links with Southeast Asia consequent to the former's liberalised economic policies and acceptance as ASEAN's Full Dialogue Partner (FDP) has forced her to formulate a specific policy initiative towards Southeast Asia in the cultural sphere.

It is in accordance with this that Indian initiatives taken towards cultural exchange programmes, conferences and seminars, even steps

⁴ Cited in Bidyut Sarkar (ed.) *India and Southeast Asia Proceedings of a Seminar on India and Southeast Asia*, (New Delhi, ICCR, 1968), p. 7.

Indian Efforts towards Promoting Cultural Relations

At the governmental level, India signed cultural agreements with the Philippines (06.09.1969), Vietnam (18.12.1976), Thailand (29.04.1977), Malaysia (03.03.1978), Laos (17.08.1994), Indonesia (29.12.1995) and Cambodia (31.01.1996). A memorandum of understanding was signed with Singapore on 5 February 1993.⁵

Cultural Exchange Programmes (CEPs) also exist with Cambodia (2001-2), Indonesia (2001-3), Vietnam (2001-3) and Malaysia (2000-2). An executive programme exists with Singapore for the years 2000-2. Cultural exchange programmes with Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia are intensive in nature, covering various fields under the sub-heads of education, health, culture and arts, youth affairs and sports and mass media.⁶

A former foreign minister of Singapore and ASEAN's former coordinator for India, Professor S. Jeykumar highlighted the importance of improving cultural relations when he made a statement in Jakarta on 24 July 1996. He said that:

As we focus on developing economic and political links, it is important that we continue to strengthen our cultural links. We would reap long-term gains, if we start, investing in strengthening our bridges now. This could be done through developing tourism, cultural, educational and other institutional links⁷

⁵ Cited in P.S. Sahai, "Cultural Diplomacy: India in Singapore" in N.N. Vohra (ed.) *Emerging Asia Challenges for India and Singapore* (New Delhi, Manohar Publications, 2003), p. 143.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp 143-44

⁷ Statement by S. Jey Kumar, Former Coordinator of ASEAN For India, Jakarta, 24 July, 1996, produced in n.5, p.145.

In the same forum, former Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral stated:

The tremendous cultural capital that India and ASEAN have invested in each other over centuries has not been used to compliment and embellish our substantive economic and political relation. This must change. We must in the next four years undertake both high profile episodic cultural initiatives like festivals of India and ASEAN as well as establish more durable institutions for continuous cultural osmosis through the setting up India centers on ASEAN countries and ASEAN centers in India on the models of Nehru Centre we have in the UK, for example, in the matter of culture, we must emphasise the classical as much as the popular modern manifestations of music, films and television programmes.⁸

He even promised to strengthen India-ASEAN academic and intellectual contacts, through the “establishment of chairs in universities, student and faculty exchange schemes between centers of educational excellence, scholarships and fellowships, even for setting up of an eminent persons group.”⁹

Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC)

India and ASEAN have recently established the Mekong Ganga cooperation comprising India and five members of ASEAN, namely the riparian states of the Mekong (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam). In its inaugural Ministerial meeting taking place in Vientiane, Laos, in November, 2000: in the Vientiane declaration, the MGC Ministers, identified several key areas for cooperation, such as culture, education, tourism, transport and communications.¹⁰

In January 2001, the Senior officials for MGC met to finalise the five experts working groups in the areas of culture, human resource

⁸ I.K. Gujral, *A Foreign Policy For India* (New Delhi, External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, 1998), p.233 cited in n.5, p.146.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Government of India, *Ministry of External Affairs Annual Report, 2000-01*, p. 114.

development, transport and communications, tourism, and programme of action. The establishment of the Experts working groups was to focus on key areas where the MGC member countries could cooperate i.e., mainly in areas of culture, education, tourism and transport and communications. Given the inter-related Mekong and Ganga development initiatives it is hoped that – India will be interested in the development of the same as well as its various schemes and projects.¹¹

In the sixth meeting of the ASEAN-India working group held on 6-7 February 2003 in New Delhi, India has expressed interest in supporting the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) committing to undertake four projects, namely (a) Railway training programme for CLI instructors; (b) English training programme for selected English teachers training colleges CLMV; (c) India-Singapore joint-training programme for CLMV; and (d) High-end computer networking courses. ASEAN and India are working through their think tanks at research institutions to develop on ASEAN-India vision 2020.¹²

In the fifth ASEAN-India Joint Cooperation Council (JCC), held on 22-23 April 2003 in New Delhi, India expressed interest to promote cooperation with ASEAN in the areas of science and technology, space technology, biology and agriculture India has also proposed the setting up of an ASEAN-India science and technology digital library at the ASEAN secretariat with the help of the ASEAN-India Fund.¹³

¹¹ "ASEAN- India Summit Partnership Challenges And Prospects" Address By H.E. Mr. Hor Namgong, Senior Minister And Minister of Foreign Affairs And International Cooperation, Kingdom of Cambodia (New Delhi, 14, March 2002, P.2)

¹² Available at <http://www.atimes.com/reports/CB21Ai03.html>, pp.7-8.

¹³ Ibid, p.9

In a seminar on India and Southeast Asia held at New Delhi in 1966, M.C. Chagla, former Foreign Minister of India said:

In each of the Southeast Asian countries, there should be chairs of Indian studies and Southeast Asian studies and in every University we should have provision for the study of Southeast Asian studies.¹⁴

The Rapporteur's report on the discussion on development of cultural relation provided three different categories of suggestions. Those were: first collaboration between universities in the academic field; secondly, collaboration between institution within the region which are active in cultural work; and thirdly, greater exchange of information in terms of books and other material.¹⁵

This seminar made a number of recommendations on cultural cooperation between India and Southeast Asia. Some of the important recommendations included 'the setting up of the Institute of ASEAN studies through the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), establishing of its branches in various Southeast Asian capitals, development of Institutional links, exchange of scholars, exhibitions of art and great flow of information on contemporary India.¹⁶

Similarly, recommendations of a seminar organised by India International Centre on *India and Southeast Asia-Challenges and Opportunities* at New Delhi in 1994, focused on:

¹⁴ Bidyut Sarkar, n.4, p.8.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 114

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 123-24.

Gathering of data on current work being done on Southeast Asian scholars, conducting joint research projects, training of a sufficient number of language experts, establishing an institute of Southeast Asian studies and setting up of Indian studies programmes on leading Southeast Asian universities.¹⁷

A Seminar on *India and ASEAN: The Growing Partnership for the 21st Century* organised at Kuala Lumpur on 12 November 1997 recommended; organising of cultural festivals, film festivals, setting up ASEAN centers and Indian centers, promotion of tourist links through ASEAN-India Tourist Information Centre, creation of an ASEAN fund, establishment of chairs in universities, provision for student and faculty exchange programmes, focusing on Southeast Asian studies programme and linking of Indian universities with the ASEAN university network.¹⁸

In the previous chapters we have discussed the various roots of India's cultural linkages in Southeast Asia in different times. Can these roots be revived for greater cooperation? Do these roots have anything to play in enhancing India's relations with Southeast Asia? The concluding lines are an attempt towards answering these questions.

In the recent times, Thailand happens to be a Hindu-Buddhist country. Malaysia and Singapore have a large number of people of Indian origin. Most of these countries have uninterrupted trade relations with India since ancient times. There are Hindu-Buddhist temples in Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos even Vietnam. Bali in Indonesia is still Hindu-Buddhist. There is a strong trace of Sanskrit

¹⁷ Arun Dasgupta, "Intellectual And Academic Cooperation Between India And Southeast Asia", In Baladas Ghosal (Ed.), *India And Southeast Asia-Challenges And Opportunities* (New Delhi, 1996) p. 81-94.

¹⁸ K.S. Nathan (ed.), *Indian and Asean: The Growing Partnership for the 21st Century* (Kuala Lumpur, Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, 2002) p.97-114.

language in countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Laos etc. even to this day. Thus it can be safely said that Southeast Asia is one region with which India has every reason to strengthen the ancient ties.¹⁹

India already has the foundation of strong commercial relations with Southeast Asia. In the contemporary era of globalisation integrating markets, India should exploit the ancient cultural sphere in Southeast Asia in a positive direction. Trade in both cultural products and services between India and Southeast Asia will open up new avenues for mutual development.

Religion has become a topic of renewed interest in Asia. Both India and Southeast Asia have a rich legacy of cultural pluralism for centuries. Unfortunately, incidents of religious fundamentalism attacking pluralistic ideas and beliefs have become a common feature in both the region. The commonality in religious, philosophical and emotional sphere between the two regions can help them find out solutions collectively.

The strong linkages in arts, architecture, languages, scripts, literature, even mythology between India and Southeast Asia have made them known each other well. The same attributes if utilised properly can create a positive sphere of influence in both the regions for each other.

India has a large number of people of Indian origin in Southeast Asian countries. There is hope that they can play a very influential role in bridging the cultural gap between the regions. In this context it can be

¹⁹ S.Viswam, "India's Look-East Policy" *World Focus* Sept. 97, vol. 18, no.9, p.4

said that India's relationship with Southeast Asia is unique in that not many regions in the world can claim such age old, uninterrupted and multifaceted ties.

There is need to protect the bond interwoven with religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic and professional strands. India, under the auspices of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has to adopt a 'Performing Arts Plus' approach and pay more attention to activities other than sending cultural troupes.²⁰ ICCR has already made a move in this direction as we have seen an increase in the exchange of number of distinguished scholars, academicians and visitors between India and Southeast Asia over the years.²¹

Economic liberalisation and growing partnership with ASEAN has given India a new image abroad regarding the understanding of Indian culture. It is expected that culture and commerce collectively will provide a new boost to India-Southeast Asian relationship. Through the Ganga-Mekong cooperation initiatives we may see a reinvention of the old Silk Route phenomenon.

The push to the promotion of cultural activities can be enhanced through the direct or indirect participation of the business community. It is here the Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia has a role to play. They will have to become icons of Indian culture promoting cultural activities of their mother country abroad. In that case, the government or its institutions can play a limited role as catalysts or strategists through

²⁰ Sahai, n.5, p.150.

²¹ *ibid.*

the creation of a broad framework for cooperation in the form of cultural agreements or exchange programmes. India needs to formulate rules and regulations, which encourage rather than hinder participation by sponsors of cultural activities.²² India needs to ensure a balanced interaction with the region by making special efforts to re-discover her own identity and past; through transformation that Indian cultural trends have undergone in the area.²³

Since perceptions do matter in cementing or severing ties, Indian policy must address this concern more effectively if it is to further relations with Southeast Asia.²⁴

In order to convey messages and enhance linkages with the diaspora, India should promote festivals of India in Southeast Asia. Cultural activities towards temples, mosques and other religious institutions linking Indian culture should be promoted. Keeping in view the growing interest of the Indian diaspora restaurants providing Indian food items can be set up. Indian dress materials and clothes have a special appeal for the diaspora. Similarly, Indian film, music and other art forms have largely attracted both the diaspora and the foreigners. Greater export of these cultural elements needs a flexible trade policy on part of India in relations with Southeast Asia. In the entertainment field

²² Sahai, n.5, p.150-51, pp. 150-51.

²³ J.N. Dixit, "Culture as an Instrument of Diplomacy" in Lalit Mansingh (ed.) *Indian Foreign Policy: Agenda for the 21st Century* (New Delhi, Konark Publishers, 1996) p. 427.

²⁴ Kripa Sridharan, "Regional Perceptions of India" in Amitav Mator and Frederic Grare (ed.) *India and ASEAN The politics of India's Look-East Policy* (New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 1998) p. 86-87.

greater cultural exchanges even sending of cultural troupes will promote close relations.

Tourism is both an economic and cultural activity. It is an area where India should be keen to link up with ASEAN to promote two-way traffic between the regions. Specific Indian destinations those attract Southeast Asians even the diaspora should be identified and promoted. Leverage in visa regulations would enhance greater people-to-people contact among the regions.

Greater attention should be paid by India towards media representation in Southeast Asian countries. Both print and visual media representation is crucial to direct cognition and empirical understanding of each other.

India should promote greater academic exchange programmes taking into account students, research scholars and academicians. Indian studies programme abroad should be arranged. Academic and intellectual cooperation between India and Southeast Asia would derive a great deal of benefits in the political sphere. This contact between the regions if consolidated can make them intellectual neighbours in the years to come.

As both the regions have close linkages in folk forms of art i.e., puppet theatre, handicrafts, folk dances etc, folk artists from both sides should travel and communicate with each other. India's cultural relations with Southeast Asia included participation of the whole subcontinent in the past. Her present diplomatic approach should allow

the whole region to participate in cultural activities with Southeast Asia equally.

Though India's cultural impact with the Southeast Asian countries has a long historical tradition, Indian influences have undergone qualitative changes in these countries and become integral elements of the psyche and ethos of these societies. So, any assertive attempts at cultural diplomacy on the part of India in relation to these countries can and does, affect their sensitivity. Thus, there is the need for a balanced interaction with this region, making a special effort to re-discover India's own identity and past through transformation that Indian cultural trends have undergone in the area.²⁵

At the end, one can safely conclude that the ongoing cultural relationship between the two sides generates much scope for further expansion and concretization of India- Southeast Asia cooperation in various sectors. Hence, India should pool her energies in reviving the cultural diplomacy in Southeast Asia for the betterment of her people.

²⁵ J. N. Dixit, "Culture as an Instrument of Diplomacy" in Lalit Mansingh (ed.) *Indian Foreign Policy: Agenda for the 21st Century* (New Delhi, Konark Publications, 1997), p.427.

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