CHAPTER- FIFTH.

Indian Culture In East And South – East Asia.

India has a long history of foreign invasions. Many foreign countries ruled India for many centuries. Even when there was no Indian union the provinces were ruled by foreign powers like French, Portuguese and others. Muslim, British and other rulers of foreign origin while leaving India carried with them Indian cultural and religious heritages not for the purpose of following the same but for establishing better cultural interactions with a great country like India by their posterity. Every nation or country has its own cultural tradition. It is but natural that each country honours the cultural and religious traditions of other country. Even in case of foreign rule it is necessary for the ruling country to get accustomed with the socio-cultural and religious beliefs of the country they ruled. This apart, every country has the urge for establishing trade relations with other countries. Accordingly, the trade relations opened the flood gates for establishing cultural relations among different countries. India is no exception to that. From early days of civilization India was the place of wonder and interest for many other countries. The rich tradition of Indian cultural heritage has attracted many foreign countries, especially the Asian countries.¹

In this connection it would not be out place to mention that in ancient times, the great Indian travelogues like Atish Dipankar and Agyastha travelled extensively many places in Indian sub-continent to acquaint people of those regions faith with the Indian cultural traditions. Those Goodwill Ambassadors of India sailed to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to represent India. Following their trips to Ceylon a cultural relationship developed between the two countries. The Ceylonese culture was very much similar to those of Indian. Following regular interactions with India, the cultural trends of India have left a mark on the cultural traditions and educational affairs of the Ceylonese people.²

Thailand is another country where India has established its own culture. There being a similarity in the life style of the Thai people with Indians, they have adopted many social practices and culture of India in their society. The great Indian epics like the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata have greatly influenced their cultural and educational
affairs. Their leanings on Indian culture have been exemplified by their construction of temples of the “Rama” and “Sita”, the god and goddess of Indian people. The great Indian language “Sanskrit” has found place in Thai literatures. During Mughal rule in India the artistic and architectural compositions of its monuments and tombs had great influence on the designs adopted by the rulers of Middle East and central Asia. India’s long heritage of Ayurvedic method of physical treatment has been adopted by many Asian countries.

The astronomy culture of India was very old. The learned astronomers like “Arya Bhatta” have earned a place for India abroad by their calculation of the celestial and planetary positions. Many foreign countries including western countries have followed the Indian method of astronomical study.

Indian study on medicine, astronomy, grammar and literature in ancient times has made a lasting impact on Tibetan, Nepalese and other foreign cultures. Tibetan books have incorporated compilation on Indian traditions and cultures on various fields.

Since the days of Fa Hien and Huen Tsang, the Chinese historians and travellers, India’s value based culture has made inroads into the customs and traditions of China. Indian heritage of art literature, philosophy and science has made its presence felt in cultural heritage of mainland China. China and Tibet have adopted the religious teachings of the great saints of India like Gautam Buddha in their way of life.

Indian religious beliefs have been adopted by many countries of Asia. The countries of south East Asia and Far East have followed Indian tradition of worshipping the Lord Ganesha. Many people of those countries have shown their faith in Hindu method of pursuing religious activities.

During the 19th century, the great Indian spiritual leader and philosopher Swami Vivekananda made a sensational awakening among the learned and erudite sections of Western societies about true meaning of religion and India’s liberal approach towards religion and to its attending rituals. In a simple and lucid language, the great sage of India had addressed many gatherings on religious discourses. People of western culture were so moved with the messages underlined the deliberations of Swami Vivekananda that they started to show their interest on Indian social and spiritual culture for understanding. Many western people duly encouraged by the philosophy of life explained by great Indian sages
over centuries changed their way of life and emulated the principles advocated by the Indian sages.\textsuperscript{5}

India made a dent in foreign countries during 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries to spread its cultural values through the literary works of poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. The establishment of Santiniketan by Tagore’s father Debendra Nath Tagore was intended to welcome teachers and students around the globe to teach and learn East’s philosophy of life. Rabindra Nath Tagore made it a International University and modulated its study courses and inter-face among teachers and students with basic objective of transporting values of oriental culture of India to other foreign countries. The initiative made by Tagore to build up international relation with India at focal point was very much successful. Major European countries invited Tagore for cultural discourses. His addresses and lectures in different fora in foreign countries drew interests from knowledgeable sections of the society on different cultural traditions of India and their universal appeal.

India’s performing arts like dance, drama, music etc, have their shares in rooting for India’s cultural traditions abroad.\textsuperscript{6}
Reference

1. Valarmathi, M. “Socio-Cultural Aspects”. Pg – 211.