Chapter IV

THE PERSISTENCE OF INDIAN INFLUENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIA IN GENERAL AND THAILAND IN PARTICULAR

The close cultural interaction of the India with Southeast Asia may be traced back to ancient times. And the continuance of India cultural elements in the multifaceted contexts of Southeast Asian society can also be visualized in the contemporary scenario. As a result of this cultural interaction, Indian mythology, law, philosophy, religion, language, literature, folk lore, palaeography, art and architecture and other matters of cultural value are followed in Southeast Asia, the trace of which is still found in these countries after so many changes in its long history. The similarities in the physical environment besides the linkages in human environment shall enable India to understand more about Southeast Asia and to develop a mutual relationship based on trusted integrity and peaceful coexistence. The cultural features of early Southeast Asia provide a useful perspective for understanding much of what lay behind India—Southeast Asian relations in recent times. However, the Indian cultural heritage of Southeast Asia should never be conceived as the India cultural supremacy over Southeast Asia, as advocated by the protagonists of Greater India concept like R.C. Majumdar, H.B. Sarkar and P. Bose. India shall at the most make use of the age-old cultural contacts with Southeast Asian nations so as to foster mutual relationship with Southeast Asian region which, like

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1 In order to glorify this indelible Indian cultural influence on Southeast Asia, the Indian Scholars founded the Greater India society with justifiable pride to make such terms popular as Greater India, Farther India and Hindu colonies in the Far East.
southwest Asia is one of the pans of a balance weighing the in Indian interests. In this context, Jawaharlal Nehru has rightly observed that the security and stability of Southeast Asia is always a matter of much strategic importance to India. The magnificent architectural monuments, scripts of Indian languages, literary masterpieces based on Ramayana and Mahabharata themes, the retention of Indo-Sanskritic vocabulary, living Indian traditions in the Bali island and cherishing the names drawn from Indian mythology (like the Garuda Airlines of Indonesia, Sukarno, Megawati, Mahathir) speak of the legacies of the glorious Indian cultural influence. The people of Southeast Asia have acknowledged the persistence of Indian cultural influence in the region. Sukarno, Indonesia’s first president, too greatly acknowledged the cultural indebtedness to India:

"In the veins of every one of my people flows the blood of Indian ancestors, and the culture that we possess is steeped through and through with Indian influences. Two thousand years ago, people from your country came to Jawadvipa and suvarnadvipa in the spirit of brotherly love. They gave the initiatives to found powerful kingdoms such as those of Sri Vijaya, Mataram and Majapahit. We leant to worship the Gods that you now worship still and we fashioned a culture that even today is largely identical with your own. Later we turned to Islam; but that religion too was brought by people coming from both sides of the Indus".3

In modern times also the Indian people migrated to and settled in Southeast Asian countries, especially from the 19th century. Most of them were from south India. Hence

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3 The Hindu, New Delhi, 4 January 1946.
we find many Hindu temples in this area, especially in Malaysia, Singapore and Burma, built during recent colonisation moods. Of these, the most popular deities are Mariamman and Muruga. If fact, we find Mariamman temple even in Thailand and Indonesia. Celebrated yearly with pomp and Splendour by devotees of the Hindu faith is the birthday of Lord subbaramanya (Muruga). This religious fervor relating to Muruga we find among all the Hindus of Southeast Asia. These immigrants too have the values of life revered by the Southeast Asians referred towards the concluding part of pre-colonial time. This is the common legacy of all the Hindus of Southeast Asian as well as of all the rest, even if they believe in either Islam or Buddhism. Modernization, mass network and rationalism are the means for promoting such a common approach towards building a multicultural society. Even today, Indians in Southeast Asia do not pose any problem to their host – communities. Indians who have, by and large, adapted to the native environment do not antagonize the native people, nor do they nurture strong political stakes. Thus, India has always given a great deal more than she has received. Sir Charles Eliot (1862-1931), British diplomat and colonial administrator, says:

"In Eastern Asia the influence of India has been notable in extent, strength, and duration. Scant justice is done to India's position in the world by those European histories which recount the exploits of her invaders and leave the impression that her own people were a feeble dreamy folk, surrendered from the rest of mankind by their seas and
mountain frontiers. Such a picture takes no account of the intellectual
conquests of the Hindus".  

**Presence of Indian names:**

Indian culture, often in its pristine form, makes an appearance whichever way one
turns in this sprawling archipelago. The geographical names in many of the territories of
Southeast Asia where Indian culture spread, exhibit Indian influence very considerably.
Geographical place-names associated with the new religions were adopted: e.g., Ayuthia
the ancient capital of Thailand was named after Ayudhya, the capital of the Kingdom of
Rama, the hero of the *Ramayana*. Because Sanskrit or Pali became the language of
administration and culture in most of the Southeast Asian countries, it is quite natural that
a large number of them would bear Indian names or would at least have Indian names
side by side with indigenous ones. In some cases, the former are mere translations of the
latter. Thus Cambodia, as it is known now, was called Kambuja, which was a well-known
town in ancient India, in Gandhara or the Kabul Valley. This itself also indicates roughly
the period of Indianization of Cambodia, for at that time Gandhara (Afghanistan) must
have been an important part of Aryan India. The national language, Bhasa Indonesia, is
replete with Sanskrit words. So are names of people: Nirmala, Apsara, Rati, Devi and so
on. The given name of Abdurrahman Wahid’s wife is Sinta, which is Indonesian for
Sita. The mottos inscribed on Indonesian government buildings are equally revealing.

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5 Romila Thapar, op. cit., p. 165.
7 *Sita* means “furrow”, and the wife of Rama of the epic *Ramayana* has some of the attributes of an Indian
agricultural goddess. According to the story she was not the natural daughter of king Janak, but sprang
When one drive past the defence ministry—called the Yuddha Graha one come across the following inscription engraved in marble on the archway: Chatur Dharma, Eka karma. Further down the road is the ministry of sports known as the Krida Bhakti. The Indonesian government has also named its national airlines as Gauruda Airways (Garuda is the Sanskrit name for the eagle carrier of Lord Vishnu). The five cardinal points of the Indonesian constitution are also designated by the Sanskrit Word Panchashila.

The Indian custom of naming a town after a deity or a king or its builder was adopted in the countries concerned. In some cases, as in Champa and Kambuja, the Indian names appear to have been selected because the sound of indigenous names suggested them. Some important Indian names in Kambuja (Cambodia) are Dhruvapura, Jyesthapura, Sresthapura (the capital of Kambuja built by Sresthavarman). Like wise in Burma are Avanti, Varanasi, Gandhara, Mithila, Pushkara, Pushkaravati, Rajagriha and others. The sultan of Brunei (in Borneo) bore the title of Seri Bhagwan meaning Shree Bhagwan (Lord Almighty). Borneo’s capital, Bander Seri Begawan is a colloquialisation of Sri Bhagwan just as Aranya Prathet in Thailand is simply the jungle province or Aranya Pradesh. In Borneo a locality is given the name of Vaprakesvara while in Java we have Canals named after the Chandrabhaga (modern Chenab, tributary of the Indus) and Gomati. In Burma, the names of its rivers are Sanskrit names – Irrawadi, Brahmaputra and Chindwin. Her head of state is also known as Adipadi, which is the Sanskrit Adhaipati, referring to the chief executive. The name of the celebrated river Irrawadi reminds us of Irravati (modern Ravi), one of the great tributaries of Indus. The name from his plough while he was working in the fields. This story evidently looks back to a time when the tribal chieftain was ready to lend a hand with the work of the tribe.
Mekong river of Cambodia is said to be a derivative for Ma Ganga. In Bali, the streams are named after famous Indian rivers e.g. Ganga, Sindhu, Yamuna, Kaveri, Sarayu and Narmada.

The name Meru, in Indonesia as well as in India, was also given to a towering form of temple structure – the term is still used in Bali. Meru is the name of the Cosmic Mountain where the gods of the Buddhist dwell. It forms the center of the universe and is surrounded by seven concentric mountain ranges, separated from each other by seven ring shaped seas. Indra, the king of the gods of Buddhism, lives in his glittering, surrounded by similar golden mansions, smaller in size and grandeur, of the lesser gods. Mount Meru is situated imaginatively somewhere in the great Himalayan range. The Golden Meru is one of the Supreme architectural concepts of the Thai imagination. In Thailand, the royal crematorium is popularly called “Phra Mane Thong”, or the Golden Meru. The early habitat of the Thai people in Yunnan was known in Indo-China as Gandhara, a part of which was also called ‘Videharajya’ and the capital of the territory was Mithila. A group of Thai states united in a loose federation and occupying the region between Irrawadi and Salween rivers, was known as Kausambi Lopburi (Lavapuri). Ayutthaya, Srikshetra, Dvaravati too have their historical roots in India.

All the officers of the Indianized states bear old Sanskrit titles, and names and some of these titles and designations have continued up till now, not only in Thailand but

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8 Phya Anuman Rajadhon, Popular Buddhism is Siam and other Essays on Thai Studies, Bangkok, 1986, p. 85.
9 Ibid., p. 91.
in the Muslim states of Malaya also.\textsuperscript{10} A short list of some similar names in Thailand, related to education, is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Thai Language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vidyalaya (maha)</td>
<td>Vitthayalaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prathama (Primary school)</td>
<td>Prathom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madhyama (Secondary school)</td>
<td>Matthayom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pandit (graduate, maha)</td>
<td>Dussadi bandit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tusti Pandit (Ph.D)</td>
<td>Bandit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vichaya (collection, research)</td>
<td>Vicai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Siksadhikara</td>
<td>Siksadhikan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganpati (leader or dean)</td>
<td>Khanabody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhikarapati (Vice Chancellor)</td>
<td>Adhikanbody</td>
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</tbody>
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In Malaysia, if we take the name of Kuala Lumpur, we can see that the suffix 'Pur' is a Sanskrit term used to signify a township. A city in mountainous north Malaysia

\textsuperscript{10} Jawaharlal Nehru, op.cit.,p.207.
is called Sungei Pattani. Its ancient Sanskrit name was Shringa Pattan meaning ‘a mountain city’. Another town Seramban is ‘Shree Ram Van’ i.e. the bower of Lord Rama. In Malaysia, the Commannder-in-Chief is still called Lakshmana – a remnant of the role played by Rama’s brother in the battle of Lanka. The names of the rulers of the various states and empires that arose in Southeast Asia are purely Indian and Sanskrit. This does not mean that they were pure Indian, but it does mean that they were Indianized. For example, in Cambodia, some of its famous rulers bore names ending in Varman as in South India; examples are Jayavarman, Yasovarman, and Suryavarman.

Thus, the above mentioned evidences explicitly indicate towards the prevalence of Indian names in the contemporary Southeast Asia in general and Thailand in particular.

**Popularity of the Indian Epic; Ramayana**

The Indian epics have remained the perennial source of inspiration down the centuries not only in India but in the whole of Southeast Asian regions. “Few works of literature produced in any place at any time have been as popular, influential, imitated and successful as the great and ancient Sanskrit epic, the Ramayana”, says Robert Goldman. The epic, Ramayana has been retold in various countries of Southeast Asia adopting the local flavor. Sanskrit had been, for centuries, the only link language, well fixed by a regular grammatical teaching available throughout India and Southeast Asia, which enabled the propagation and popularization of the Ramayana. Message of Ramayana is of universal brotherhood and unity among people of the world. Malaysia

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11 Jawaharlal Nehru, op. cit., p. 207.  
might be Islamic, and Thailand Buddhist, the message of Ramayana is known and respected by one and all. The praise worthy spirit of toleration in the Muslim and Buddhist countries is not only reflected in the preservation of the great monuments of older days depicting the Ramayana scenes, but also in the maintenance of this beautiful story in their school curricula. Dussehra and Diwali, the two great Hindu festivals revolve around the epic Ramayana and are all about Rama, Sita and Ravana. Valmiki’s Ramayana is the oldest work of the legend. According to a legend, when Narada departed for heaven, Valmiki went to the banks of Tamasa River, not far from the Jahnvi (i.e. Ganga). The Ramayana started its journey from this place.

The earliest stream of the Rama Saga flowed towards Southeast Asia with the priestly class, the brahmana and the Kshatriya adventurers, traders and others, who sailed down the course of the river Ganga and the Coastal belt of the Bay of Bengal. Beyond the port of Tamralipti, the Voyagers went to Suvarnabhumī, as the Jatakas tell us, or further still, to Canton, across the Malay Peninsula, by sailing through what later on came to be known as the Strait of Malacca. Rama’s journey to the lands east of the sub-continent did not take only one span of time or to just one direction. It occurred at various climes and towards many a land and culture that at some point his identity had been absorbed in the cultures that had accepted him into their lives, some had obliterated him beyond recognition and some having preserved him to the point that he remains part of their

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13 H.B. Sarkar, Cultural Relations between Indian and Southeast Asian countries, New Delhi, 1985, p. 319.
living cultures. The Ramayana reveals some knowledge of the eastern regions beyond the seas; for instance Sugriva dispatched his men to Yavadvipa, the island of Java or Sumatra, in search of Sita.

Countries:

Thailand (Siam): At first glance, it perhaps seems unusual to classify a work of literature as a “social institution”, but in the case of the Ramakien (the Thai version of the Ramayana), it is worth mentioning. It is yet another example of how Hindu thought has been assimilated into Thai culture. Thai life and society carry on them profound impact of the Ramayana. In Thailand, nobles, princes and kings were the great patrons of the Thai literature and all of them were primarily inspired by the Brahmanical mythology and the Ramayana. Sometimes referred to as “the odyssey of Asia”, the Ramakien resembles just that: Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, not to mention the medieval Laneclot Cycles of Chretien de Troyes, and even George Lucas’s Star Wars. The Ramayana is embraced by the Buddhist culture of Thailand because it placed the monarchy as well as the nation into a relationship with the gods along with its emphasis on victory of good over evil.

This is also endorsed by J.M. Cadet who opines that

“The Ramayana was composed as .... a work designed to augment and perpetuate the transitory glories of the monarch’s origin, conquests and court by making them the subject of a work of literature. By the talismanic qualities inherent in a work of art, it was further to guarantee the king’s

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claim to identify with Rama, and through him the godhead. The Ramayana, in other words, was the ‘Great Seal’ of the king’s divinity”.

Even today, the kings of Thailand bear the royal title as Rama, a Hindu avatar. Hindu festivals such as Dassehara, commemorating the Victory of Rama over the demon king Ravana, are still observed in Thailand.

The Ramakirti or Ramakien is the first known Siamese version of the Ramayana which is still read throughout Thailand. According to Coedes, Ramakien was only partly composed by King Rama I and it was completed during the reign of his successor, king P’raya Chakri. Though adopting the Rama story from India the Thais have contributed much of their own to it. In the words of Manich Jumsai, an authority on the Ramakien, “The Version of the Ramayana was adapted to Thai sentiments and portrays the customs, beliefs and politeness and gallantry of Thai ways of life. True, the story is Indian, but the clothes they now wear are Thai of former days. The story is so made and adapted to Thai character that no Thai think of it as a thing originated from foreign origin. It so depicts Thai ways of life and sentiments that it has become a true masterpiece of Thai literature”.

The main text that Thailand uses for all the forms in which Rama figures, i.e. literature, dance-drama, sculpture, art, as well as songs, is based on the Valmiki original, but in some of major innovations like the multiplication of battle scenes and episodes featuring Hanuman, these would possibly have their influence from the Tamil version of great epic, e.g. Kamba Ramayan. According to D.R. Sardesai, Ramakien (or Ramakriti) differs significantly from its original inspiration, the Ramayana. It was written

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primarily for the stage performance and composed in Chanda verses, with specific
directions on how to set them to music.\textsuperscript{21} However, in spite of its certain deviation from
its original version, it has entered deep into the contemporary Thai culture.

In fact, the Thai identity themselves so much so with the Ramayana that they are
not interested to know whether the Ramayana was originally written in India. They
believe that Ramayana is their own creation and the Thai Ramakien is the original Rama
story. Many places in Thailand have been identified with the Ramayana episodes. For
example, the city of Ayutthaya i.e. Ayodhya has been mentioned as the capital of the
kingdom. It is believed that Rama, on his return to Ayodhya after defeating Ravana,
wanted to reward Hanuman for his services. He shot an arrow and where the arrow fell
would be identified as Hanuman's capital. The arrow fell at the town of Lopburi, a town
some 154 kms to the north of Bangkok. The story of Ramayana is depicted on the place
and temple walls of Bangkok. The central episodes of the Rama story are found depicted
in the bas reliefs in \textit{Wat Phra Jetubon}, the funeral temple of the royal dynasty and in the
mural paintings in the temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok. The most gorgeous
scenes of the Rama Saga were depicted in the temple of the Emerald Buddha in the 19\textsuperscript{th}
century. One has to pass today corridor after corridor, where the eyes feast on these
glorious scenes.\textsuperscript{22} Just outside the National Museum in the open stands a majestic statue
of Rama with a bow in hand. Inside it are several exhibits which depict the Ramayana
scenes.\textsuperscript{23} In Prasad Panom Rung in the walls outside are depicted such scenes as the
assumption of the deer form by Marica, the abduction of Sita by Ravana, the fight

\textsuperscript{22} H.B. Sarkar, \textit{op.cit.}, 1985, p. 315.
\textsuperscript{23} Satya Vrat Shastri, "Hindu Culture in Thailand", in N.N. Vohra and J.N. Dixit ed. \textit{Religion, Politics and
Society in South and Southeast Asia}, New Delhi, 1997, p. 57.
between Vali and Sugriva, the tying of Rama and Laksmana in Nagapasa with downcast monkeys around and the triumphant return of Rama to Ayodhya.\textsuperscript{24}

The life of Buddha, the Buddhist Jataka tales and episodes from the Ramayana mainly form the subjects of traditional Thai painting.\textsuperscript{25} The wall-painting of the outer gallery of Wat (Buddhist temple) Phra keo (in Bangkok) portrayed the scenes of the Ramakien are also of unique interest. They were first accomplished at the instance of Rama I and were later on renewed by King Rama III and King Mongkut. These paintings may be described as the result of the first Thai attempt to produce a complete picture of the Ramakien. The stories of Ramakien as described in these paintings occasionally differ from those of Indian Ramayana.\textsuperscript{26} The Siamese puppet theatre and shadow-play (or Nang Yai as it is called in Thailand) is also based upon the Rama sketch. The shadow-play is another kind of Thai classical performance which is becoming a dying art. The figures of the characters of the shadow-play are designed, drawn and painted artistically on large sheets of hides. A large screen of white cloth is setup at night with strong lights thrown on its surface. The figures are shown against the screen and are moved about by men who dance as they move. The story played is exclusively taken from portions of the Ramayana. The origin of the Thai shadow-play is no doubt the Chaya Nataka play of India.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, the shadow-play has been greatly responsible for the popularity of the Rama Saga in Thailand and the shadow-play is believed by many to have migrated from Southern India.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 57.
\textsuperscript{25} Phya Anuman Rajadhon, op.cit., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{26} D. Dawcwarn, \textit{Brahmanism in Southeast Asia}, New Delhi, 1982, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{27} Phya Anuman Rajadhon, op.cit., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{28} H.B. Sarkar, op. cit., 1985, p. 316.
From the above mentioned details, it is quite evident that the Ramayana in Siam allows great flexibility and catholicity in its treatment as well as mannerisms which paved the way for its deep embedding in the Thai culture. Beyond the Thai classical theater, the story appears in school texts and even in comic books. Its diverse characters – divine heroes, monkey warriors, and demons – serve as immediately recognizable icons in venues that extend from the formal visual arts to advertising media. Indeed, “Buddhism alone is a more pervasive religious influence, but even Buddhism takes second place to the Ramakien where the arts are concerned”.29

Laos: In Laos, which is closely connected with Thailand in language and other cultural matters, the story of the Rama Saga is called Phra Lak Phra Lam (Laotian Ramayana) is still very popular. Laos has evolved the Ramayana ballet like an institution. The story of the Phra Lak Phra Lam has been painted in 29 murals on the walls of the Vat Oup Muong temple.30 In the classical Lao theatre, gestures and movements remained one of Indian choreography and the scenes represented in general the episodes of the Ramayana.31 The movements and postures of dances of Lao people revoke Indian elements and the themes of which are taken especially from the Ramayana.

The Laotian version of the great epic is preserved in manuscript in the Library of Vat Pra Keo at Vientiane, but differs from the Cambodian and Thai versions, as well as the original Sanskrit.32 In Laos, the Ramayana is mixed with the didactic story literature Panchatantra (Nithan Nang Tantai). In a story of the frogs and a serpent, the serpent seeks shelter in the pond of the frogs. Frogs are not ready to admit the snake in the pond.

32 Juan R. Francisco, op. cit., p.20.
That time the Snake tells the story of Rama to the frog king, saying that Rama gave shelter to Bibhisana though he was the brother of his enemy. So, one should not deny help to other seeking refuge. Similarly the episode of the squirrels helping Rama build the bridge across the ocean, is cleverly used in Laos’s *Panchatantra* to stress the point that even the small and weak ones can accomplish a hard work. The writer of the fables certainly knew that his readers were familiar with the characters and events in the story of Rama; therefore he deliberately inserted them for both the instructive and entertaining purposes.33

*Myanmar* (Burma): In Burma, the legend of Rama goes back to the tenth century. The Ramayana was well known then in the form of sculpture. Rama and Parasuram’s figures are found in the sculptures of Vishnu’s incarnation in the eleventh century Vishnu temple built by Anawrahta (1044-1077 A.D.).34 Here, Rama has been described as a pious Buddhist king. It is interesting to note that the Buddhist Pagoda of Pagan built in the 11th century also depicts the legend of Rama according to the Dasaratha-Jataka.35 Images of Rama including a group of Visnuite images have been found on the Nat-hlaung Kyaung temple of Pagan, which is the only ancient Vishnu temple of Burma, perhaps dating from the eleventh century A.D.36 According to Juan R. Francisco, the Rama story was well received in Burma through its introduction as a dance-drama by king Hsinyushin when he defeated Siam (Thailand) in 1767 A.D.37 He brought with him from the Thai capital Ayuthia a troupe of actors of the Rama-play. But, as we talk of the Ramayana in Burma having originated from the Thai versions, the question may be raised, how come the

34 Juan R. Francisco, op.cit., p.20.
37 Juan R. Francisco, op.cit., p.27.
Ramayana version in Thailand became the source of the Burmese Ramayana, when we know that Burma is directly contiguous to India geographically, and at the same as the direct sea route from the east coast of India across the Bay of Bengal?

**Malaysia/Malaya:** The Malayan version of the Ramayana, known as *Hikayat Seri Rama*, offers fascinating material for a study of acculturation. Here, most of the manuscripts discovered were written after the advent of Islam. And are thus, subsequently altered in the light of Islamic tenets and believes. Because of this, in Malaysia King Dasaratha is said to be the great grand son of Prophet Adam and Ravana is shown having boons from Allah instead of Brahma. However, we find that advent of Islam did not make any difference on the popularity of the Ramayana, on the contrary, fresh vitality was conferred on the original by proper adaptation, assimilation and integration.

The Ramayana was spread through the medium of the shadow theatre, the *Wayang Kulit*, and remains a part of traditional Malay culture. Many stories under the category of folk romances have been influenced by the Ramayana. The Indian gods and epic heroes predominate here, but the outline of the story is generally indigenous, though some strongly remind one of Bengali folk romances, as for instance, the story of Malim Deman and a lady's tress of hair floating in a golden bowl. According to Ziesensis, the Malay text, the *Hikayat Seri Rama* "represents a popular form of the Rama Saga which was carried by word of mouth to Indonesia between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries, partly from western and partly from Eastern India, exists there in several versions, show an increasing degree of Indonesian levelling and alteration of the original

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40 H.B. Sarkar, *Cultural relations between India and Southeast Asian countries*, New Delhi, p. 295.
Sagas postulated”.41 It has been found that in Kelantan (a kind of shadow-play), the story of Rama is still projected on the screen.42 Sometimes at the opening of the shadow-play, the dalang or the puppet-master summons not only the prophet Muhammad, but also Hindu deities including the heroes of the Ramayana such as Rama, Ravana, Bibhisana, Indrajit and others.43 The dalang i.e. puppeteer displays great skill and versatility while narrating the story and linking contemporary topics with events that belong to Ramayana. It is true that the memory of the epic heroes have been kept alive by these shadow-plays from an era that has long passed away.

Cambodia (Kambuja): According to tradition, it was established by Kambu Svayambhuva after whom the country was named Kambuja. Both epigraphy and architecture bear eloquent testimony to the popularity of the Ramayana in Cambodia. S. Sarin has written that “the Cambodian, with its own language, know Sanskrit as well since the dawn of history and some learned scholars speak of Indo-Khmer culture, as the aspects of question are interconnected to one another. So viewed, the deep cause of the noble sense of gratefulness in Cambodian behaviour is firstly due to the Ramayana, which had been well-known, for example through the bas-relief of Angkor Temples”.44 The stories of Ramayana adorn the walls of Angkor Wat which was supposed to have been built by the Craftsmen guide by the Indian Brahman scholars and sculptors.45

The magnificent creation of Khmer art, Baphuon (Ba Puon) and Angkor Wat group of temples have given an enduring colour to the popular Rama Saga. The present remains of Baphuon temple consist of the usual pyramid of three receding terraces, the upper two with Mahabharata and Ramayana reliefs.\textsuperscript{46}

There are some folk-tales of Kambuja which closely resemble those of India in structure and details.\textsuperscript{47} There are also a few cosmological treatises known generally as Traiveda (Traipet) and the Ramakirti (Ramaker), of uncertain date, based on the Ramayana.\textsuperscript{48} According to Cambodian Ramaker, Ram was an incarnation of Vishnu and Akaingameso, doorkeeper of the God, was born as Rava, i.e., Ravana. The Ramaker, however, closely follows Valmiki’s Ramayana episodes of Ram’s friendship with the monkey chiefs, Hanuman. A number of Cambodian poems have also been affected by the legends of the Ramayana-cycle. Thus, Cambodia bore a deep impress of the Ramayana in the field of literature and art.

\textit{Vietnam} (Champa): Inspite of the constant warfare in which Champa had to engage herself for her very existence which in turn did not given her sufficient time for peaceful pursuits of life, epic works were extremely popular in Champa. We learn from an inscription of Prakasadharman, king of Champa (C. 653-679 A.D.), that an image of Valmiki (the author of the Ramayana) was installed at Tra Kien in champa.\textsuperscript{49} The Mi-son inscription of King Prakasadharman (seventh century A.D.) seems to refer to the epithet “Ekaksapingala” of Kubera, is also evidently based on the Uttarakanda of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{46} A.K. Coomaraswamy, \textit{History of Indian and Indonesian Art}, New Delhi, 1972, p. 190.
\item\textsuperscript{47} B.R. Chatterji, \textit{Indian Cultural Influence in Cambodia}, 1964, p. 245 ff.
\item\textsuperscript{48} H.B. Sarkar, \textit{Literary Heritage of Southeast Asia}, Calcutta, 1980, p. 125.
\item\textsuperscript{49} V. Raghavan, op. cit., 1975, p. 41.
\end{footnotes}
Ramayana. Like in India, in Champa, Rama as one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu probably claimed greater homage than the god himself. In Champa, an image of a standing archer is found, dating seventh century A.D. From its posture it is guessed of Rama. In the tenth century, on the temple of Bantai Srei, a bas relief representing Rama shooting at Valin during his fight with Sugriva, is found. Sometimes an isolated subject is used for decoration. Viradha carrying Sita, is depicted on a lintel.

*Indonesia*: The great Hindu epic, Ramayana has been one of the strong cultural influences in Indonesian history, especially in the history of Java and Bali. As recorded in Ramayana by Valmiki, Rama’s life story has undergone many transformations over the years. But one thing that persists throughout the recurrent transformation in Java and Bali is the perception of human values inherent in Ramayana’s characters and, most importantly, its philosophical concept that governs human relationships based on universal ideals. The great temple of Shiva (commonly called the Prambanan temple) at Lara Jonggrang in Indonesia is chiefly famous for its reliefs which narrate before our eyes the whole story of the Ramayana. We need only to mention a few particularly fine scenes from the principal series: that of Dasaratha saluting Visvamitra, with the noble, majestic figures of the old king: Rama drawing the bow of Shiva and thus winning the hand of the fair Sita the first of the scenes in which we see the hero in the elegant attitude of an archer, together with a Sita whose slender, undulating form reminds us of the

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daughters of Mara at Borobudur.\textsuperscript{53} Thus, the popularity of the Rama-legend is also reflected in the panelling of the story in relief on the Saivite temple of Prambanan in Central Java. Of all the versions of the Ramayana in the countries of Southeast Asia, the Ramayana \textit{Kakawin}, the old-Javanese poem holds a unique position. The Ramayana \textit{Kakawin} is one of the best and most famous works of Indo-Javenese literature. First version of Ramayana in old-Javanese is by Yogesvara in 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., a work of 2774 stanzas in manipravala style i.e. mixture of Sanskrit and Kawi languages of Java. The beautiful \textit{Kakawins} like the \textit{Sumanasantaka}, the \textit{Harisraya} and the \textit{Arjuna-vijaya} written in Kawi are the most interesting works which contain the Ramayana cycle of stories. The first mentioned \textit{Kakawin} deals with the love-story of Aja and Indumati. Indumati, the heroine of the poem, is no other than the mother of Dasaratha and grand-mother of Rama. The \textit{Harisraya Kakawin} based on the Uttarakanda, gives an account of the combat between Vishnu and demons like Vajramusti, Virupaksa, Mali, Sumali and others. The old-Javanese poem \textit{Arjuna-vijaya} is founded on the story of fighting between Arjuna Sahasravahu and Ravan.

The Balinese version of the Ramayana is known as \textit{Rama Kidung} (a later recension of the Ramayana in Indonesia). The distortion of the Ramayana story and the interpolations of some characters of Mahabharata are also found in this recession. The \textit{Ramakavaca} is the finest example of the Kavacas found in Bali. It contains twenty-two

\textsuperscript{52} Jean Filliozat, \textit{op.cit.}, p.xvii. \\
stanzas which are written in fairly good Sanskrit. Some of the verses of this are identical with the Valmiki's Ramayana. Even today in Bali island of Indonesia, we see assembly of people in the evening time listening to recitations or even readings from the Ramayana, recalling similar scenes in Modern India.

Rama-legend is considered as a popular subject matter of the Wayang (Puppet show) of Java and Bali. The Wayang is a derived word from a root meaning shadow. In this sense the origin of the theatre can be seen in ancestral worship, where the dalang (puppet-master) brings to life the shadows of the past and reaffirms their relevance to the present. The dalang undergoes a rigorous training on the religious and philosophical symbolism of the Wayang and its literary and oral sources and then only he studies puppet manipulation. The entire performance symbolically represents the micro-macrocosmic relationship. The oil lamp suspended overhead for illumination, represents the sun, the banana log at the bottom serving as stage for the stationary puppets. Before starting the performance, the dalang sits cross legged in front of the screen and recites some holy Suluka (Slokas) from the Ramayana. The present form of the Wayang or puppet show known to the Javanese is the synthesis of Javanese and Hindu Culture. The Wayang shows went from Java to Bali. Bali’s Wayang is called Wayang Purva. The Indian epic heroes are the chief actors of the poem written for Balinese Wayang performances. In the jargon of the modern science or mass communications, the Wayang shows would have been called the visual aids of a communicator. These shows are

56 Ibid., p. 66.
organized on auspicious and religious occasions in many parts of Southeast Asia along with Indonesia.

Thus, we may say that though India is the home land of the Ramayana, it now belongs to the most of Southeast Asian countries and is a unique, social, cultural, spiritual, philosophical and literary treasure of mankind. Differences in the ideological, political and religious setup of the countries influenced by the Ramayana have never been a hindrance in the progress and popularity of the epic. It is the fountain source of a great tradition of Southeast Asian culture. The traditional dance and Shadow-Puppet theatres in many Southeast Asian regions, in Thailand, Malaya, and Java for example, continue to fascinate their audiences with the adventures of Rama and Sita and Hanuman.\textsuperscript{57} “It is not merely coincidence that the Ramayana scenes are depicted in one form or the other in countries as far as Indonesia and as near as Burma, not to speak of Cambodia, Thailand etc.”\textsuperscript{58} It also provided one of the basic inspirations for the development of local culture of Southeast Asian people.

Flourishing of religion of Indian Origin:

The prominence of religion in the life of the Southeast Asian people is not so sequestered. It is much more public, in the sense that religion is not simply a question of one’s individual belief system but of an overall cultural character. The persistence of religion of Indian origin alongside competing new religious visions of modernity has, in many regards, been the hallmark of modern nation-states in Southeast Asia. We shall now have glimpse at the continuance of Indian religions (Hinduism and Buddhism) in Southeast Asia.


Hinduism

Hindu influence on Southeast Asia centers around Siva and Vishnu. The third of the Hindi Trimurti, Brahma, occupies a less prominent place in Southeast Asian Hinduism than Siva or Vishnu. Siva, the god of creation and destruction, is the incarnation of creative energy, and the Linga, or phallus, is his symbol. As in India so in Southeast Asia, his cult involved the veneration of stones dating from Neolithic times, thus long predating Hinduism itself. His Tamil version, common in Southeast Asia, shows one arm blessing, one with open hand, one with an axe and one with a small deer springing from it. The great number of Sivalinga discovered so far in Siam tells the influence of Saivism in Siam in 5th century and after. The findings of Muha lingas prove that there was a great impact of Saivism in Siam in Pallava period of 6th century A.D. An image of Siva with five heads and ten hands is displayed at the Museum of Ayutthaya. Dancing Siva with ornaments is seen at Kut Suen Teng temple in Thailand. Three Brahmin temples are discovered at Negara Se Thamma Raja. They are of brick structures dating to 11th century A.D. The majority of temples in Java confirm the popularity of Siva worship in Indonesia. The temples of Java are a standing monuments of the influence exercised by Indian thought and art in moulding the development of the entire art of Java (for example, temples at Prambanan known as Lara Jonggrang temple). These are considered as the greatest Hindu monuments of Java. Built in the 10th century, Prambanan is the largest Siva compound in Indonesia. Of the sculptures in Prambanan,

Stamford Raffles says:

"In the whole course of my life I have never met with such stupendous and finished specimens of human labour, and of the science and taste of ages long since forgot, crowded together in small a compass as in this little spot". ⁶¹

Ananda Coomarswamy is of the opinion that "the Prambanan relieves are, if anything, superior to those of Borobudur and certainly more dramatically conceived" ⁶²

Bali has been justly called the island of thousands of temples. Despite the loss of many temples due to earthquake, it still contains more than 4500 important temples. The island of Bali possesses the unique distinction of being the only Hindu colony in the Far East which still retains its old culture to a considerable extent. Islam has failed to penetrate into this island. In contrast to other Southeast Asian countries, Hinduism is still a living religion in Bali. The predominance of Siva in the Brahmanical pantheon is unquestioned, perhaps even in a far greater degree than in Java. The Balinese embraced Saivism in the form of Siva-Siddhanta, of which the usual form is called Monism with dualistic touch. ⁶³ Stamford Raffles while describing the island of Bali, situated towards the east of Java says that "here, together with the Brahmanical religion, is still preserved the ancient form of Hindu municipal polity" ⁶⁴

In addition to the above mentioned facts, the worship of Rishi Agastya, the sage responsible for the diffusion of Hindu culture in Java, the frequent occurrence of Ganesha

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⁶² Ananda Coomarswamy, History of Indian and Indonesian Art, New York, 1927, p.49.
⁶³ Ibid., p.53.
⁶⁴ Stamford Raffles, op.cit., p.21.
images, the shadow and puppet plays, Vedic hymns and rituals of Bali, all point to the extension of Indian religious influences in Indonesia.

The statues depicting Lingam and Yoni can be found in Hindu-influenced cultures across the entire Southeast Asian region. But the Cham religion in Vietnam has taken these images and fashioned them into a distinctive form. A Siva Lingam monument, a relic from the lost Champa Kingdom, stands proudly at the Mi-son site in Vietnam. Lingam and Yoni's presence in Vietnam is an evidence of the profound influence of Indian religion in the country. It is also proof of the strong sense of identity of the Cham people, who borrowed from Hinduism and created statues and temples with a style of their own. If we look into the Cham's Linga sculptures, we see that traditionally only one Linga is attached to Yoni (Linga and Yoni are usually constructed as one structure), but in some Cham sculptures many Linga can be found on a single yoni platform. The differences between Cham sculptures and those found elsewhere in the Hindu world demonstrate subtle changes from their origins.

Vishnu, the beneficent ruler over the destinies of mankind, is very popular in Southeast Asian myth and legend. His statues show him wearing a cylindrical mitre and with four arms holding a conch, a disc, a club and a lotus bloom. His avatars (incarnations) i.e. Ram and Krishna are prominent in Indian classical literature and religious thought. Rama is the hero of the epic poem, the Ramayana. Krishna's story is told in the vast collection of writings, the Mahabharata. These two great epics have inspired much of the finest Southeast Asian art and literature, besides providing themes for its drama and ballet.

65 Annanda Coomarswamy, op.cit., p.34.
66 Ibid.
India is a country of temples without equal but there is a certain irony in that one of the largest and most dramatic monuments to Hinduism rests not in India but in Cambodia (formerly known as Kamboja). Cambodia boasts one of the largest temple complexes in the world, named Angkor. It was built in the ninth century A.D. in honour of the Hindu god, Vishnu by King Suryavarman II. The complex extends over an area more than twice the size of Manhattan. About Angkor Vat, Amaury de Riencourt in his book “The Soul of India” has written that the envoys could hardly believe their eyes when they gazed at the splendid temple of Angkor Vat, a sublime work of art that was inspired by India but shaped by the genius of Khmer people. Angkor Vat is truly a wonder. The temple is 65 metres high, made up of three platforms, progressively smaller, with covered galleries defining the borders, and is a replica of the cosmos. The first level contains carved sandstone galleries illustrating scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This massive temple complex dedicated to Vishnu is an incredible testimony to the reach of Hindu religion which placed its indelible signature on a civilization that breathes to this day. It was said by Jawaharlal Nehru during his visit to Cambodia in 1954 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Buddha that “each blade of grass here breathes of Indian culture”. However, this observation of Jawaharlal Nehru can be treated as an exaggeration to glorify the nature of Indian influence in Cambodia.

In Cambodia, the confluence of Hindu cults and regional cultures is also evident. Most of the temple recreates the ancient concept of jambudvipa with Mount Meru at the centre, as a tall multi-tiered pyramid. The garbagriha at the top of Meru is a literal recreation of the womb of the Universe, and the deity within is the source of creation.

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The outside walls are decorated with the gods, dvarapalas and beautiful apsaras with whom the local women identify. The main object of veneration may be Siva or Vishnu or Buddha, but the walls would contain stories of Rama, Krishna and the ascetic Siva on a hill. The most popular motif is the Samudra Manthana, the churning of the ocean by the devas and asuras for the divine nectar, where the tortoise is the base on which Mount Meru is placed and churned, unlike later Indian literature where Vishnu is identified with the tortoise.

In Thailand, Vishnu occupied a prominent position. There is one Hindu temple in Thailand called San Phra Kal, which is situated in Lopburi in the central part of Thailand. The name would give the impression of its being a Saivite temple but actually it is a Vaisnava one.\(^6^9\) It has in it a four-armed idol of Vishnu. The Thai people worship it in large numbers and make offerings of coconut and fruits. Whenever the desire of the devotees is fulfilled, they arrange dance performances in the temple hall. Vishnu images are also found at Nakhon Sithammarat, Pimay, Bangkok and Takua Pah. According to Pier Dewpond, the Takua Pah Vishnu belongs to chola style of India. At present opposite the Erawan Hotel across the Rajaprasong Road is the President Hotel which has the image of Narayana (Vishnu) mounted on Garuda.\(^7^0\)

Numerous references to Vishnu worship have been found in Bali. In the modern times also, one can find Vishnu temples all over Bali. These are called pura puseh, which are seen in almost every village. Garuda is recognized, as in India, as the vehicle of Vishnu. The people of Bali are still proud of their Hindu connection. However, the Balinese concept of a temple varies from Hindu tradition. To the traditionalists a temple

\(^6^9\) Satya Vrat Shastri, op.cit., p.54.
\(^7^0\) ibid., p.55.
is the house of God. But to the Balinese Hindu, temple or shrine is a sort of "Guest House" or "Pasimpangan" for the gods. Hence, the Balinese temple is an open yard surrounded by a wall or fence.

Brahma, who is credited with the creation of the entire universe, is worshipped as the god of Fire, as the producer of four Vedas in the Bali Island. Almost every village in Bali has a temple called *Pura Desa* dedicated to Brahma. At present the Hindu god whose worship is most popular in Thailand is Brahma, a number of whose images in various buildings meet the eye. By far the most well known of these is the one at the corner of a square by the side of the Hotel Erawan. It is a common sight to see the Thais passing by the same folding hands in reverence in its direction. The famous Erawan shrine displays a four-faced image of Brahma.

Ganesha has been a major deity, since the 7th and 8th centuries, in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. It was Ganesha in his role as remover of obstacles that was primarily accepted in mainland Southeast Asia. Ganesha was extremely popular in the art of Indonesian islands, especially of Sumatra and Java. At Candi Sukuh in Central Java, a remarkable 15th century relief shows three figures, with a dancing Ganesha in the centre. It is from Vinayaka that the old Myanmar name for Ganesha, *Mahapinary purha*, was derived. Other names with a similar meaning occur frequently in Cambodian inscriptions, such as Vighnesha and Vignesvara, both of which mean "Lord of removing obstacles".

Even today in Buddhist Thailand, Ganesha is regarded as god of success. Ganesha is vibrantly present in Thailand whose benediction is sought by trader, travellers, artists and statesmen. As lord of business and diplomacy, he sits comfortably on a high pedestal

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71 ibid., p.54.
72 Timothy D. Hoare, op.cit., p.149.
outside Bangkok's World Trade Centre where people offer flowers, incense and a reverential sawasdee. Ganesha presides over the bustling charivari of lucrative tourism in the lobby of the Rama Hotel. Due to his capacity as a remover of obstacles, Ganesha (or as the Thais call him, \textit{Pra Pi Kanayt}) is very popular with high school and University students who are facing major exams.\textsuperscript{73} Ganesha has been adopted by the Department of Fine Arts as its emblem. Ganesha is the emblem of two other institutions also: one, the Silpakorn University and the other, the National Theatre. As for the National Theatre, at the very entrance to it, high on the front side, is a large figure of Ganesha in standing posture all in white.\textsuperscript{74}

In Indonesia, an image of Ganesha is printed on high denominational currency notes. Ganesha statues are seen everywhere, including a magnificent on at the entrance of the presidential palace. Even Indonesian Muslim reveres him and European Scholars call him the "Indonesian god of Wisdom". On almost every important occasion Ganesha is worshipped by the majority of the Balinese. Every Balinese offers Ganesha his humble prayers before undertaking any ceremony. In Cambodia, Ganesha (literally meaning "Lord of the Gana") is known as "Prah Kenes". Phnom Penh's National Museum of Art, forgotten for many years, is once again showing the world its true colours by displaying of statues of Ganesha, the elephant-headed Hindu god. The extraordinary collection of bronze and stone statues on display here is unmatched elsewhere in the world. There are also spectacular images coming from Myanmar, Malaysia, Laos and Vietnam – with both Hinduism and Buddhism intertwined and Ganesha appearing predominantly as a protector and guardian.

\textsuperscript{73} ibid., p.149.
\textsuperscript{74} Satya Vrat Shastri, op.cit., p.56.
Thus, from the above mentioned facts, it is quite lucid that Hinduism is still evident on the scene as familiar and secure facets of the Southeast Asian religious landscape.

**Buddhism**

Buddhism spans from the sixth century B.C. to the present, and it is one of the oldest religions practiced today. Throughout this period, the religion evolved as it encountered various countries and cultures, adding to its original Indian foundation. In its long history, Buddhism has grown from a tiny religious community in northern India into a movement that now spans the globe. The astonishing vitality and adaptability of Buddhism has transformed the cultures of Southeast Asian countries and has now become a lively component in the cultures of these countries. Today it is the religion followed by majority of the people in Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Even though Islam is the official religion in Malaysia and Indonesia, the impact of this universal religion is clearly noticed. Today it is estimated that there are some ten millions Buddhists in Indonesia.\(^{75}\) In Vietnam also, Buddhism maintains its predominance.

Buddhism is one of the significant cultural contributions made by India to Southeast Asia, which has had the deepest influence. Buddhism seems to have opened the door for Indian cultural penetration in Southeast Asia.\(^{76}\) A large number of Buddha statues found in Siam (Phong Tuk and Khorat), in Vietnam (Dong-duong), in Sumatra (Palem bang), and in Java mark, right from the start, the extreme limits of the domain reached by Indianization.\(^{77}\) The presence of these Buddha images attests the persistence of Buddhism in contemporary Southeast Asia. These Buddhas, usually represented

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\(^{77}\) G. Coedes, op.cit., 1968, p.64.
standing and dressed in clinging transparent robes, reflect a style the prototype of which has been found in Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh (India) and dated back to the early centuries of the Christian era. While doubts may be entertained as to whether India culture ever reached the lower strata of society during the flourishing of Hinduism, it cannot be denied that in the Buddhist states of Southeast Asia the entire population is steeped in Buddhism. The cosmogony, the belief in transmigration and in the retribution brought about by actions, and all the other basically Indian concepts contained in Buddhism are inculcated into them from childhood on, whatever their social status may be; and thus they continue to belong to the Indian cultural zone. However, its persistence raises some theoretical and empirical concerns. Does it still make as much sense now as it did thirty or forty years ago? Is it adequate to treat the forms and content of religious practices other than Buddhism under the authoritative banner of dominant Buddhism? How effectively can this religious paradigm of Buddhist-centered complexity and syncretism explain the realities, diversities and dynamism of religion in the new millennium?

Buddhism is characterized by the development of numerous movements and schisms, foremost among them are Theravada (Hinayana), Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, punctuated by contrasting period of their expansion and retreat. Out of these, Theravada Buddhism is quite popular in contemporary Southeast Asia. The Theravadins regard their religion as the purest form of Buddhism and their presence felt mainly in

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80 These people today object the term ‘Hinayana’ (Little vehicle); they call their Buddhism ‘Theravada’, the Buddhism of the Thavas (Teachers).
Burma, Siam, Cambodia and Laos. Mahayana Buddhism is deeply rooted in Vietnam. For the Vietnamese – even for those for whom the ideas of inward contemplation and renunciation are not attractive – the essential humanism of Mahayana Buddhism make it more readily accepted and absorbed. A popular saying of the times captures the early attraction of Buddhism over Vietnamese minds: ‘The soil belongs to the king, the pagoda to the village and the landscape to Buddha’ (aat vua, chua lang, phong canh but).82 Vietnam in the midst of Sinification, Westernization and Communist domination, preserved its Buddhist bonzes. Even today we can commune with the traditionalists, loyalists relating to the belief in seeing in one’s heart Buddha with the practice of tranquility, serenity, purity and spirituality with perseverance and total involvement in the Mahayana Buddhist beliefs. Many differences existed, of course, between Mahayana Buddhism in Vietnam and the Theravada version practiced in other Southeast Asian countries. It is here that we can most appropriately review the influence of Chinese Buddhism upon Vietnam, for the organization is most marked in Chinese tradition.83 Chinese tradition supplies an ideology that legitimizes state authority over all phases of life and justifies it in regulating the affairs of the Buddhist monks to a greater degree than is generally accepted elsewhere. This ideology is Confucianism.84 Confucianism in Vietnam is taken over from China as a form of state orthodoxy, providing a didactic literature that could serve to shape national culture to a considerable extent Vietnamese patterns of cultural borrowing from China structured the evolution of Buddhism in ways

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different from those at work in Theravada countries of Southeast Asia. One should not forget, for example, that this Chinese cultural pull meant that the Vietnamese read Buddhist scriptures and religious tracts written in classical Chinese rather than Sanskrit or Pali as is the case in other Theravada-minded countries in Southeast Asia. Thus, the Mahayana religious books, used by monks of Vietnam, are in the Chinese language. Mahayana monks are easily distinguished from Theravada monks by their orange jackets and trousers. Though dressed like the Chinese monks, Vietnamese monks are not subject to special dietary regulation and make daily morning food collections Mahayana monks are strict vegetarians, they eat only food prepared by their monasteries and are not required to be celibate. Even today more or less eighty percent of the Vietnamese are Buddhists. However, in the midst of foreign cultural flow including Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Christianity, Vietnam (a name given by Gia Long in 1804 to Dai Co Viet or Dai Viet as it was known earlier) managed to maintain its indigenous Vietnamese institutions and even today these are the under-currents of the nation.

In regard to Burma (Modern Myanmar), a close neighbour of India, we can say that since the time of its introduction Buddhism has permeated every aspect of Myanmar culture. Buddhism is the most dominant faith in the country. A great majority (89.28 percent) of the population profess it. Myanmar is metaphorically called “the Land of Pagodas”. This metaphor rightly bespeaks of the Buddhist influence in Myanmar art and architecture. Archaeological sites like Bago and Thaton where the Old Mon Buddhist edifices proliferate, Pyay where several Pyu stupas cluster, Bagan where more than three thousand ancient monuments stand, Mrauk U where old Rakhine stone temples still tower

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86 A report from the National Identity office under the office of the Prime Minister, Royal Thai Government.
See also http://www.thaigov.go.th/indexeng.htm.
the surrounding are only some of many Silent witnesses to Buddhism in tangible culture of the country.\textsuperscript{87} All these monuments are dedicated to Buddhism.

In the contemporary Myanmar, Theravada Buddhism is flourishing, which was firmly established in the middle of the eleventh century in pagan in upper Burma. King Anawrahta (1044-1077 A.D.), the historical founder of the Burmese empire, unified the country and adopted the Theravada Buddhist faith. The tradition is that he was converted to Theravada after his conquest of Thaton in 1057 A.D., influenced by the Mon teacher Shin Arahan who then became the court teacher for himself and subsequent kings.\textsuperscript{88} This initiated the creation of thousands of Buddhist temples at Pagan, the capital, between the 11\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} century. Around 2,000 of them are still standing. The power of the Burmese waned with the rise of the Thai, and with the seizure of the capital, Pagan by the Mongols in 1287 A.D., but Theravada Buddhism remained the main Burmese faith to this day.

However, in the contemporary scenario of Myanmar, we come across significant departures and modifications in the patronage of Buddhism. Supporters and opponents of the current regime are articulate critics of the decline of popular religiosity and ethics in contemporary society. They view a growing preoccupation in society with material wealth, modern consumerism, and foreign mass-media entertainment that spoil the "true" character of Burmese culture. Regardless of political affiliation, Burmese generally perceive of these circumstances as a cultural crisis brought on by foreign media and consumerism.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{87} Khin Muang Nyunt, \textit{Religion in Myanmar culture and History}, in N.N. Vohra and J.N. Dixit, (ed.) Religion, Politics and society in South and Southeast Asia, New Delhi, 1997,p.32
Buddhism as a religion for spiritual deliverance from all sufferings, as an education for imparting knowledge, and as a means of moral instruction, has taken a strong hold on a great majority of Myanmar people. Of the twelve traditional monthly festivals, two are Hindu Brahmanic, two are royal and eight are Buddhist or Buddhism related. In performing arts also we find Buddhist influence. Music, musical instruments, songs, dances, drama, marionette, and literature are echoed with Buddhist tenets and concepts. Buddhist philosophy inspires music and song, Buddhist mythologies provide theme and pattern for dance and design of musical instruments, whereas Jatakas are the main stories re-enacted in drama and marionette plays and depicted in frescoes and sculpture. Thus, till today Buddhism exercises profound influence upon Myanmar culture. But we must not permit this dominance to obscure the fact that a variety of other faiths i.e. Hinduism, Islam and Christianity are also receiving due recognition at the same time.

The religious history of Cambodia shows that Theravada Buddhism began to assume predominance there in the second half of the twelfth century A.D. This period witnessed Cambodia's political and cultural connections with Sri Lanka. At this time Sri Lanka’s fame as the foundation head of Theravada Buddhism reached this country. Even Theravada Buddhist orthodox Pali language and epigraphy began to appear from the beginning of the fourteenth century A.D. The Mon people and khmer settlers from Lopburi who fled away from that region during Siamese invasions in the thirteenth century, were instrumental to a certain extent in building the initial religious structure of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia. Even today Cambodia is a Theravada Buddhist nation within the flowing cultural stream of Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, Zen

90 Khin Muang Nyunt, Op.cit., p. 32
Buddhism and the withering Communism – a melting pot. There is evidence to show that in the fourteenth century, Cambodia played an important role in the development of Buddhism in Laos, when the kingdom of Lang Chang was founded by Fa-N gum, a sin-in-law of the Theravada king of Cambodia. Since then Cambodia and Siam made a valuable contribution to the progress of Buddhism in Laos, even though Laos is even today suspicious of their military might and political moods of expansion.

**Contemporary Thai Buddhism**

In order to acknowledge the persistence and continuity of Buddhism in contemporary Thailand, we can say in the words of Thomas kirsch that ‘Buddhism stands at the apex of the Thai religious system and forms a central part of Thai social values. Buddhism provides a coherent and integrated system of beliefs, practices and specialists – sustained by a codified orthodoxy of the Sangha (Buddhist monastic order), political authority, and the Thai masses. In other words, popular religion in Thailand has been subsumed under the formidable umbrella of state-sponsored Buddhism under various names: ‘Popular Buddhism’, ‘Village Buddhism’, ‘Magical Buddhism’, ‘Urban Buddhism’ and ‘Practical Buddhism’. In contemporary Thailand, Buddhism is the state religion of the country. Under the constitution, the king as a symbol of the nation must be a Buddhist, but monarchs are invariably entitled “upholder of All Religions”. Consequently, the government, through the Religious Affairs Department, annually

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allocates funds to finance religious education and to construct, maintain, and restore monasteries, mosques and churches. The crown and the state have always been involved in supporting and assisting the Ordained sangha and in promoting Buddhism among the people. According to the latest census, with a total population of 63 million, approximately 94% of Thais are Buddhist. As of 2002, there were 32,000 monasteries, 265,956 monks and 87,695 novices in the kingdom. Besides numerous forest monasteries where monks may go for extended meditation, there is a monastery in nearly every village and there are many more monasteries in the cities. Schools are often located on monastery grounds, and the Sangha is actively involved in the efforts of the state to raise the education level of the people as a whole. Buddhism and the Sangha, therefore, are deeply intertwined with the daily lives of the people of Thailand.

Although Thais shared common characteristics with the people of Southeast Asia, the "Thai" identity, along with its history, religion and other cultural components has developed into a distinctively complex civilization. Scholarship on Thai religion, which has developed primarily since the Second World War, has generally agreed that it should be considered as a syncretic and complex entity.93 Thai religion as a cultural system is indeed complex, syncretic and contingent on particular cultural and historical circumstances.94 In Thailand, religion is by and large synonymous with the dominant Theravada Buddhist tradition because today, Theravada Buddhism is the professed religion of more than 90% of the Thai people, and profoundly influences everyday life.95

95 Discussed in previous chapter.
The remainder of the population adheres to Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and other faiths – all of which are allowed full freedom of expression. Theravada Buddhism has played a predominant role in shaping the lives of the Thai people. Not only is it an essential pillar of Thai society but is a major force in Thai family and community life, and has contributed to the moulding of the people of the country for many centuries.\textsuperscript{96} In towns and villages, Buddhist temple with a monastery called \textit{Wat} in Thai is the heart of social and religious life. Meditation, one of the most popular aspects of Buddhism, is practiced regularly by Thai people as a means of promoting inner peace and happiness. Visitors, too, can learn the fundamentals of this practice at several centers in Bangkok and elsewhere in the country. Donald K. Swearer, in his \textit{The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia}, also endorsed in above mentioned information by saying that Theravada Buddhism provides the means for people to cope with the day-to-day problems of life and to justify worldly pursuits.\textsuperscript{97} All major Buddhist holidays are national holidays. These include \textit{Magha Puja} (commemorating the miraculous occasion when disciples gathered spontaneously to hear the Buddha preach); \textit{Visakha Puja} (commemorating the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment and final passing away); and \textit{khoa phansa} (the commencement of the annual three months Rains Retreat when all monks stay inside their monasteries to study and meditate). In this way Buddhism has proved to be a socially integrating force for Thai society. It has brought the people together in religious as well as social gatherings.

Therefore in conclusion, it can be stated that Buddhism is a flourishing religion – social activity in contemporary Thailand where religion is virtually non-existent outside

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{96} \textit{Thailand in the 1990s}, Published by the National Identity office of the Prime Minister, Produced by Krung Thai Bank Ltd., 1991, pp.77-79.
    \item \textsuperscript{97} Donald K. Swearer, \textit{The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia}, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, pp.5-7.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the Theravada cosmology and structure. S. J. Tambiah rightly points out that Buddhism in Thailand served as the “religion of the bourgeoisie as effectively as it does as the religion of the rural masses”. Today it is appealing to all class and sections of the Thai people. However, inspite of its uninterrupted continuance, contemporary Thai Buddhism has been facing crises of various kinds. The deeper threat to Buddhism is from within, from those monks who allow themselves to fall from the observance of the vinaya. The lapses of these monks corrupt the Sangha from within, corrode the authority of the Sangha among the laity, and give space for criticism to the enemies of Buddhism. Bhikkha visalo (Phra Phasan Visalo) criticizes the sangha for having ‘failed as a moral force’, noting that ‘the morality and behaviour of monks are increasingly questioned’ and that ‘moral decline is manifested in widespread crime, corruption, drugs, and various social problems throughout the country and in the wat themselves.....’

Charles F. Keyes has added other dimension to this crisis issue. Keyes sums up the current crisis of authority and faith as ‘Buddhist fragmentation’, meaning that in the new millennium it is possible for Thailand to embrace more than one official version of the Buddhist faith or even to undergo a transition to a post-Buddhist society. In addition to it, Keyes further pointed out misconduct in the Sangha i.e. sexual scandals, sectarian dissent and political resistance along with crisis of modernity in contemporary Thailand. And, of course, misconduct in the Sangha is exacerbated by the forces of globalization and of

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modernization. Phra Phaisan Visalo, further, contends that Thai Buddhism in the new millennium has been losing the moral and ethical grip necessary to lead its people out of the destructive globalizing forces of consumerism and materialism and it has entered a critical stage where a radical overhaul is urgently needed. So, in order to overcome this crisis, it is necessary to call for a return to personal morality and self-discipline. The fact that the decline in morality is precipitated by rapid changes in the social order indicates that calls for greater self-discipline are necessary. There are ample materials in the Theravada tradition that can be brought to bear on contemporary problems but one has to make the effort to rethink it, to interpret and apply the tradition to new situations. In response to globalization, Buddhist promotion must also build global networks of Buddhists working together for the benefit of the world. That is to say, perhaps, that one must enter into the globalization process itself in order to bring Buddhist values to it. The Sangha has weathered many storms and survived many difficulties since the Lord Buddha established this precious monastic order. By following the Dhamma-Vinaya which he gave, and applying it as he intended, intelligently, the Thai Buddhism will continue long into the future for the welfare of humanity.

The Efflorescence of Indian Language and Literature, Art and Architectural Monuments:

Language and Literature

Sanskrit

Employed as a language and a means of communication, Sanskrit has been a vehicle of civilizational transmission and evolution. Etymologically, Sanskrit means

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“elaborated”, “cultured”, or “civilized”, implying wholeness of expression. Thus, the word itself has a wider more general meaning in the sense of civilization. Today the role of Sanskrit is not merely as a language but also as a distinct cultural system and way of experiencing the world. The legacy of Indian Culture in contemporary Southeast Asia 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 forms of writing which ultimately contributed immensely to the stabilization and development of main languages among Cambodians, Burmese, Shans, Thais and Laotians. Even many of the regional languages of Indonesia have traditionally employed the scripts of Indian origin. From at least the beginning of the Christian era until about the thirteenth century, Sanskrit was the paramount linguistic and cultural medium for the ruling and administrative circles in Southeast Asia as far east as Pandurang in Annam (South Vietnam) and Prambanam in Central Java. Thus, Sanskrit facilitated a cosmopolis of cultural and aesthetic expressions that encompassed much of Southeast Asia for over a thousand years, and today also it persists and underpins the culture of Southeast Asia.

The most important evidence for the prevalence of Sanskrit language and literature is furnished by inscriptions. Only a few Sanskrit inscriptions have been found in Malaya Peninsula, Java, Borneo, but Cambodia and Annam (South Vietnam) have yielded hundreds of them. In Indonesia, the reference to Sanskrit works in the inscriptions is not so prolific as in Indo-China, but the physical existence of such works in Indonesia is surprisingly large.103 The earliest written record of Thailand is a set of archaic Mon inscriptions found from the neighbourhood of San Sung and at the gallery surrounding the great stupa of Brah Pathama. The inscriptions incised in South Indian

103 H.B.Sarkar, op.cit., 1985, p.278.
alphabets from the sixth or seventh century A.D. contain some Pali and Sanskrit words.\textsuperscript{104} The earliest specimen of Old Javanese language, as revealed in the Charters of Central Java, indicate the growing infiltration of Sanskrit words into their vocabulary. The authors of these compositions show high proficiency in Sanskrit and an intimate knowledge of classical works in Indian Sanskrit literature. References to famous Indian poets, writers, and scholars also occur in these inscriptions. A study of these hardly leaves any doubt that the scholars in these areas were in constant touch with their motherland. There are several references to learned Brahmins being brought from India to these kingdoms, and people going to India to study various subjects under great scholars. In one such case there is a mention of a Brahmin scholar from Kambuja (Modern Cambodia) who became the royal priest by learning the scriptures from Sankaracharya.\textsuperscript{105} In Kambuja, prolific references also occur in Sanskrit inscriptions regarding the subjects studied by her kings and others, and it would appear that the study was most extensive and intensive. These records thus provide us with authentic information about the level of Sanskrit Scholarship and diffusion of knowledge in various branches thereof. In fact, the general composition of these inscriptions is such that it would be difficult to distinguish them from their Indian prototype. The penetration of Sanskrit words into the vocabulary of individual languages of Southeast Asia must have covered many centuries and the phases must have been distinct in each case. Gradually, many of the words of Sanskrit origin were acculturated and adopted into the various parts of Southeast Asia fairly early and many of them have percolated down to recent year. Thus, these Sanskrit inscriptions bear testimony to the richness of the Indian legacy.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p.270.
\textsuperscript{105} R.C.Majumdar, \textit{India and Southeast Asia}, New Delhi, 1979, p.43.
Sanskrit was instrumental in transmitting and sometimes even transplanting most of the Indian cultural elements, including its customs and laws, Holy Scriptures and alphabets as well as social and religious establishment into this region. The continuing impact of cultural borrowings from India is, however, reflected in the use of Sanskrit conceptual vocabulary and the adoption of Sanskrit or Sanskritised names. There are several texts of ethical nature in Indonesia with a Sanskrit base. An important work of this category is the *Sarasamuccaya*. It has at least 517 Sanskrit *slokas*, of which 321 have already been traced to the *Mahabharata*, the *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadesa*. The words of Indian origin are very common in spoken Thai and Indonesian languages. The Kawi language of Java is a mixture of Sanskrit and indigenous Javanese, also called old Javanese. Wilhelm Von Humboldt, a German Indologist and the founder of the science of general linguistics, in his work "The Relation between India and Java", showed that the Kawi language is Javanese and contains a number of Sanskrit loan words which prove the literary and political superiority of the Hindus. He also showed that no Prakrit words are found in old Javanese and he deduced from this fact that the Indian immigrants must have come to Java at a time when the more recent Indian languages had not yet separated from Sanskrit. Similarly the earliest Laos literature is replete with Sanskrit and Pali origin and thus the prevalent language here has Sanskrit and Pali roots.

Sanskrit, Tamilised Sanskrit and the Javanese had their impact too on Malaysian language. The Sanskrit inscriptions discovered from the region of Trang, Kedah and Caiya in Indian script ranging from the fifth to the eighth century mark the first tangible

phase of the impact of Sanskrit language and literature on Malaysia. Sanskrit language influenced the development of Malay, giving it many words and concepts. Its well-known literature, such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, the stories of *Puranas* and the *Panchatantra*, was diffused widely and entered Malay literature.\(^{108}\) Though the Islamisation of Malaysia caused insertion of Islamic religious aspects, the Sanskrit terms are abundant. The oldest Balinese inscriptions are written in Sanskrit and old Balinese. In the course of centuries, a part of the Sanskrit heritage has been incorporated as loan words in the Balinese language. In Philippines, too, many Sanskritised words are found. The indigenous languages of the Philippines did not, as in the case of the countries of Southeast Asia in general, undergo syntactical or grammatical modifications on account of the intrusion of Sanskrit language and literature, but there is no doubt that they helped to enrich the vocabularies, as in the case of other Southeast Asian languages.\(^{109}\) Pardo de Tavera, a Filipino scholar has observed:

"It is impossible to believe that the Hindus, if they came only as merchants, however great in numbers, would have impressed themselves in such a way as to give to these islanders, the Philippines, the number and the kind of words, which they did give. These names of dignitaries, of high functionaries of the court, of noble ladies, indicate that these high positions, with names of Sanskrit origin, were occupied at one time by men, who spoke that language. The words of similar origin, for objects of war, fortresses and battle songs, for designating objects of religious

\(^{108}\) Sinnappah Arasaratnam, op. cit., p.6.
beliefs, for superstitions, emotions, feelings, show us clearly that the
religion and literature were at once time in the hands of the Hindus and
that this race was effectively dominant in the Philippines”.  

Pardo de Tavera and Paterno, a Filipino Scholar, have further concluded that about 25% of the Philippine vocabularies can be traced to Indian influence. For instance: bahagi (part, portion) in Philippines is bhag in Hindi; similarly Katha (story, fiction) is Katha in Hindi; diwata (god or goddess) is devata in Hindi; dukha (poor, destitute) is duhkha in Hindi; guru (teacher) is guru in Hindi; mukha (face) is mukha in Hindi; Yaya (nurse) is aya in Hindi and so on. Thus, Philippine literature is also traceable to India.

Sanskrit and Contemporary Thailand

Sanskrit has an established and obvious influence in Thailand, dating from fifteen hundred years ago to the present day. One Sanskrit inscription of fifth century A.D., discovered from Sithep in Siam, is displayed at Bangkok Museum. Such inscriptions also seen at Wat Maheyang and Sonkai Valley, explains the impact of South Indian Sanskrit in Siam – The Thai language has similarity with the Sanskrit language. Anyone visiting Bangkok can come across multitude of words in everyday speech which are derivatives from Sanskrit. In Thailand, Sanskrit is highly respected today as the medium of validating, legitimating and transmitting royal succession and instituting formal rituals. The Thai monarchy, though following Hinayana Buddhism of the Sinhalese type, still requires the presence of court Brahmans for the proper performance of its ceremonials. In linguistic terms, Sanskrit had the same cultural influence on Thai as Latin had on

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111 A short list of some similar words, related to education, is already given in this chapter.

English. In other cases, Pali influenced more than Sanskrit – for instance, a person who knows Pali can often guess the meaning of present day Cambodian, Burmese, Thai and Laotian languages. Basham points out that many Southeast Asian languages 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.\textsuperscript{113} In the \textit{Siamese-English Dictionaries} of McFarland, the total vocabulary now numbers about 40,000 of which 1362 are Pali and Sanskrit words.\textsuperscript{114}

Thus, the introduction and acculturation of Indian language and literature is a sort of cultural merchandize freely accepted by the inhabitants of Southeast Asia and is never imposed by force. This freedom of choice conditioned its growth on independent lines, according to the genius of each nation, making this cultural heritage as varied as a mosaic work, differing from region to region, but never losing the basic Indian identity of the whole.

\textit{Script}

It was from India that the people of Southeast Asia learnt the art of writing, which enabled the people of Southeast Asia to get equipped with Indian linguistic materials to develop their own vernacular works. The earliest surviving Southeast Asian inscriptions, found in Borneo, Java and Malay and dating from the fourth or fifth centuries, are in fairly correct Sanskrit and in a script resembling that of the early Pallavas.\textsuperscript{115} Khmer alphabet is also derived from Pallava or East Chalukya's alphabet of South India. However, no solid matrix has yet been laid regarding the history of the Thai alphabets prior to the time of King Rama Khamhaeng. This fact is also buttressed by Prasert Na

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{114} V. Thompson, \textit{Thailand, The New Siam}, New York, 1941, p.17.
\item \textsuperscript{115} A.L. Basham, \textit{The Wonder That Was India}, New Delhi, 1954, p.400.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Nagara.\textsuperscript{116} But, from the study of the various Thai scripts, it is revealed that these scripts owe their origin to India.\textsuperscript{117} The Indian scripts were also adopted in Cambodia, but then these developed on the soil and underwent similar modifications as in different parts of India.\textsuperscript{118} Scripts of Indian type have been used as far eastwards as the Philippine Islands.\textsuperscript{119}

Thus, 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 Scripts. And, by the use of Indian Script, the native languages of Southeast Asian countries have been enriched and stabilized to a great extent, which is still recognizable in divergent linguistic and literary milieu. Jawaharlal Nehru has rightly written that “for it was India that functioned here and exhibited her vitality and genius in a variety of ways. We see her bubbling over with energy and spreading out far and wide, carrying not only her thought but her other ideals also such as her art, language and literature”.\textsuperscript{120}

\textbf{Art and Architecture}

India left the indelible impress of her culture, not only upon religion, but also upon art and architectural monuments in Southeast Asia. Indian art was flexible and adaptable and in each country it flowered afresh in many new ways, always retaining that basic impress which it derived from India.\textsuperscript{121} “To know Indian art in India alone, says Sir

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Presented a paper entitled “A History of Thai Alphabet” at the \textit{First International Seminar on Indo-Thai Studies}, New Delhi, 1981.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} H.B.Sarkar, op.cit., 1985, p.176.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} R.C.Majumdar, \textit{Inscriptions of Kambuja}, Calcutta, 1953, p.xv.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} A.L.Basham, op.cit., 1954, p.400.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Jawaharlal Nehru, \textit{The Discovery of India}, Calcutta, 1946, p.207.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Ibid, p.204.
\end{itemize}
John Marshall, is to know but half its story. To apprehend it to the full, we must follow it to Central Asia, China and Japan; we must watch it assuming new forms and breaking into new beauties as it spreads over Tibet, Burma and Siam; we must gaze in awe at the unexpected grandeur of its creations in Cambodia and Java”. Although India is a country of temples for excellence but there is a certain irony in that one of the largest and most dramatic architectural monuments to Hinduism rests not in India but thousands of miles away from the Indian subcontinent in Cambodia (formerly known as Kambuja) – the Angkor Vat.\textsuperscript{122} The architectural monuments like Angkor Vat, Pagan and Borobudur are mute testimonies to the degree of Indian cultural diffusion and its persistence in the realm of Southeast Asian art and architecture.

Among the Indian 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 contemporary Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{123} The exported Buddhist images in Southeast Asia must have been considerable in number as the dimension of their persistence clearly attests. There is hardly any doubt that the korat image of Buddha found in Siam and now preserved in the National Museum, Bangkok, belongs to the Amaravati School of art. Another image of Buddha belonging to the same school has been found in the Southern Jember province of eastern Java, while still another has been discovered from the hill of Seguntang at Palembang in the eastern division of Sumatra. The impact of the Gupta art is felt widely in both architecture and Sculpture of Myanmar as well as in that of Central Thailand and Malaysia, but in Sumatra the relics of the Gupta art are meagre. In


\textsuperscript{123} H.B.Sarkar, op.cit., 1985,p.318.
Myanmar and Central Thailand, the impact of the Pallava art is rather faint, but in Southern Thailand, the beautiful Pra Narai group of three images belonging to the Saiva Pantheon, found at Le not far off from Takuapa undoubtedly disclose South Indian influences from the ninth century A.D. Stanely O’ Connor, in his book “Hindu Gods of Peninsular Siam”, considers that the ancient architectural and archaeological findings of Thailand dating from the fifth to ninth century A.D. are all Brahmanical and of South India. They are of either late Pallava or early Chola in Style.

In Myanmar, the influence of the Gupta art is rather small, that of the Pallava art is feeblener still. It is the Pala art which has an overwhelming influence on the architecture, sculpture and painting of Myanmar. The bulbous form of the Ngakye Nadaun Stupa at Pagan recalls the form of some stupas of Pala period. The earliest Burmese temples are no longer extant, but some idea of their forms can be made by studying their replicas on the votive tablets, with proto-Bengali or Nagari legends on them, which on Palaeographic grounds, may be dated between the sixth, seventh and the thirteenth centuries. These replicas indicate that the temples had Sikharas with bulging or straight sides, resting either on circular or square terraces, rising up in receding tiers. The style of Buddha sitting cross-legged in Vajrasana and Bhumisparsamndra at Bodh Gaya, which was then within the Pala Empire affected the style of similar images of Burma. Some images of Bodhisattvas in Burma, in gold, bronze and terracotta bear the influence of the Pala art. The images of Lokanatha and Manjusri at the Ananda Museum, Pagan, bear the influence of Pala art. Not only in Buddhist images, but also in Brahmanical images do we find the persistence of influence of Indian art. From the viewpoint of art and iconography,

Brahmanical element in Burma had its first impact at least in the sixth century and continued to influence the Hindu section of the population till today. Two reliefs of Vishnu in Anantasayana and two other images in the Rangoon Museum, the group of Vishnuite images of Nat-hlaung kyaun temple of Pagan and an image of Surya-Narayana depicted in the niches of the outer walls of the temple bear striking resemblance, in physiognomy, dress and ornaments, with the product of the Pala art. The bas-relief of Shiva-Parvati from Thaton and Ganesha-images of the same place and Brahma-reliefs of Nan-paya temple also bear the same influence. In Myanmar one of the finest temples is the Ananda at Pagan. There is no doubt of its derivation from India type. Temples of the same type existed in Bengal and which most probably have suggested the model of the Anand temple. Charles Duroiselle, pioneer of Burmese studies in France, who composed the Epigraphia Birmanica, says on the Ananda temple:

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

Regarding the efflorescence of Indian art and architectural monuments in Java, we can say in the words of Ananda Coomarswamy that “whether developed from the older school of western Java, of which nothing survives, or in connection with renewed

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immigration, the architectural forms show clear analogies with those of Gupta, Pallava and early Chalukya of India. Architecture and ornament are reserved, and in perfect correlation; and though we could not imagine these monuments in India proper, nevertheless they are more India than Javanese, and the local factor is only apparent, if at all, in a certain free development of the ornament itself, not in its motifs or application”. The temples and other architectural monuments of Java are, indeed, standing monuments of the Indian influence. The Candi (temple) Badut was constructed at the time when the Sailendra kings ruled in central Java around late eighth century. The Dinoyo inscription, which is written in Sanskrit, records the construction of this temple dedicated to Rishi Agastya by the son of a king named Devasingha ruling a kingdom called Kanjuru-han. The Shiva linga is found in Candi Badut, the oldest known temple in east Java. In Java, another important temple is Candi (temple) Arjuna which forms a part of the largest remaining architectural complex on the Dieng Plateau. The interior of Candi Arjuna houses a Siva linga and yoni. The shrine is equipped with a makara-headed spout which was meant to cannel the fluids from inside the shrine to the outside. In this way, commoners who were not allowed into the shrine’s interior could still benefit from the ceremonies held inside by collecting the water which flowed from this conduit, believed to be full of supernatural fertility and other qualities. This feature is common in Indian temples but in Indonesia only Candi Arjuna possesses such a sutasoma. Today the structure of Candi Arjuna is relatively complete except the pinnacle which has vanished. Furthermore, the architectural compositions of the monuments of Gedong Songo (in Java) clearly show how, despite variations and alterations, the architects wished to confirm to Indian texts which governed Javanese architecture.

128 Ananda Coomaraswamy, op.cit., p.201.
However, Ernest Binfield Havell has given different dimension to the Indian art in Java, who opines that "Indian art in Java has a Character of its own which distinguishes it from that of the continent from whence it came. There runs through both the same strain of deep serenity, but in the divine ideal of Java we lose the austere feeling which characterizes the Hindu sculpture of Elephanta and Mamallapuram". Bernet Kempers also, while assigning some bronze images of Manjusri, Maitreya and a few Bodhisattvas of central Java to the Pala art, has observed that "very many Hindu-Javanese bronzes exhibit no stylistic relation to the North-Indian school of art and Pala-influence appears to have had no share in the evolution of central Javanese art". This "Java-Centric viewpoint" to use a phrase coined by H.G.Q. Wales, is not shared by the general body of scholars and run counter to what we generally known about contemporary history, religion and epigraphy. There are no doubt deviations from the Pala art, but these deviations in the Sculpture of central Java are to be attributed to the response of this art to the indigenous development.

In Sumatra, traces of Pala influence are not as extensive as in Java. The geographical position of Sumatra marks it out as pre-eminently the earliest Hindu settlement in Indonesia. At the earliest, Hindu kingdom in Sumatra was Sri-Vijaya (Palembang). It rose to great eminence towards the close of the seventh century A.D. Stutterheim had already drawn our attention to the similarity of the malagai stupa of Sumatra with the well-known Giryek stupa of the Pala period. While discussing the palembang Budhisattvas, D.P. Ghosh observed that "their design and conception along with certain details, e.g. jatamukuta, the full squarish face, the necklace and uttariya

131 H.G.Q Wales, The Making of Greater India, London, 1951, p.44
(shawl) and lastly the swelling sensuous body fashioned with delicate touches are reminiscent of the Pala art of Bengal”\(^{133}\). Although some of the features of Sumatra’s art are of a general nature, we can safety assert that owing to more than a thousand year of close connection, it became an integral part of the Indian cultural zone. In Bali also, we find the continuance of Indian influence in the realm of art and architecture, which is evident from the construction of many temples. Here the most important temple is Pura Besakih, at the foot of the mountain Gurung Agung, which is associated with the Hindu Triunity. It said to have been founded by Warmadeva Keshari (Wira Dalem Kesari). Continuous commingling of Indian with the local people of Indonesia gave rise to a new type of art in Indonesia. We find in this country several art objects, which show a happy blending of both Indian and indigenous elements. It is astonishing that the greatest Buddhist temple is found not in India but in Borobudur in Indonesia.

India also influenced various aspects of Thai aesthetics such as art and architecture. Thai art is an amalgam of the fine cultural traditions of India, blended and stamped into unique forms instantly recognizable as Thai. Classical art encompasses Buddhist art as represented in religious architecture, decorative murals, and Buddha images. The art reflects the complex formal structure and etiquette of court culture, with its heavy Indian influences, and expresses both religious and intellectual impulses. The earliest surviving murals are characterized by earth colours made from natural pigments. They depicted excerpts from the Jataka stories, episodes from the Buddha’s life, and events from contemporary Thai life. The murals in Bangkok’s Wat Suthat and Thon Buri’s Wat Suwannaram are particularly fine examples. If we closely study the architectural forms of Ch’ieng Sen and Ch’ieng Mai of Northern Siam, we see that there

is quite similarity between these arts and the Pala art in the execution of the Buddhist images. These are modelled as sitting cross-legged in the vajrasana-attitude after the famous image of Bodh Gaya in the earth-touching attitude (bhumi sparsa-mudra). A.L. Basham rightly observes that Thai rulers sent, for example, agents to Bengal, at that time suffering from the disruption of Islamic Conquest, to bring back models upon which to base on official sculpture and architecture. Hence Thai architects began to build replicas of the Bodh-Gaya stupa (Wat Chet Yot in Ch’ieng Mai is good example) and Thai artists made Buddha images according to the Pala canon as they saw it.\textsuperscript{134} Thus contemporary Thai art and architecture, though modernized to some extent through improved technology, are still very much inspired by Indian traditions.

In Cambodia also, the magnificent art and architectural monuments owe their origins to India. The most famous example of the Kambuja art is the Angkor Wat which was built by king Suryavarman II to honor Lord Vishnu. It is a massive structure surrounded by a canal of two and half miles long and 650 feet broad. Three concentric squares from decreasing terraces, elevated one above another with long galleries of repeated columns crowned by the final towers, which soar up in the sky in one splendid sweep of graceful symmetry. The stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata adorn the walls of Angkor Wat which was supposed to have been built by the craftsmen guided by the Indian Brahmana scholars and sculptors.\textsuperscript{135} About Angkor, Osbert Sitwell, in his book “Escape with Me – an Oriental Sketch Book, 1941”, has written:

\textit{“Let it be said immediately that Angkor, as it stands, ranks as chief wonder of the world today, one of the summits to which human genius has aspired}

\textsuperscript{134} A. L. Basham ed., op.cit. 1975, p.450.
in stone, infinitely more impressive, lovely and, as well, romantic, than anything that can be seen in China. The material remains of a Civilization that flashed its wings, of the utmost brilliance, for six centuries, and then perished so utterly that even his name has died on the lips of man”.

Henri Mauhot, a French naturalist and explorer, who was mesmerized by what he saw at the temple of Angkor Vat. After gazing on the temple of Angkor Vat, Mauhot said that “at the sight of this temple, one feels one’s spirit crushed, one’s imagination surpassed. One looks, one admires, and seized with respect, one is silent. For where are the words to praise a work of art that may not have its equal anywhere on the globe? What genius this Michelangelo of the East had, that he was capable of concaving such a work”. James Ferguson, author of “History of Indian and Eastern Architecture”, has also written in praise of the architectural excellence of the temple of Angkor Vat. According to him, “to the historian of art the wonder is to find temples with such a singular combination of styles in such a locality — Indian temples constructed with pillars almost purely classical in design, and ornamented with bas-relief so strangely Egyptian in Character”. In the case of the temple of Angkor Vat, Indian influence and its persistence is clearly evident. Its splendid plan, the balance of its proportions, the elegance of its pillared cloisters and the beauty of its decoration make it one of the masterpieces of world architecture. Thus, it is rightly said that to know and understand India one has to travel far in time and space and to have glimpses of what she was and what she did in Southeast Asia.

136 Bruno Dagens, op.cit., p.43.
Conclusion

Thus, after analyzing these different strands of Indian cultural elements in Southeast Asian society, it is quite evident that these elements have permeated almost all the aspect of the native cultural lives. But, these elements were not accepted in totality; rather they were suitably amended to the local cultural needs. The vivid aspects of culture such as art, architecture, sculpture, script, language, pattern of naming, puppetry, dance and much more have left indelible imprints on the cultural diversity of the region at large. The Ramayana's presence in contemporary Southeast Asia reveals the many-sided flow of Brahmanism or what we prefer today calling as Hinduism. The acclaimed religions of the world like Buddhism, Hinduism and even Islam, which went from India to Southeast Asia has left a retinue of followers to practice, preach and propagate their belief system and shape native opinions. In this way Southeast Asia has become a microcosm of the macrocosmic global diversity.
SOME VISUAL EVIDENCE OF INDIAN INFLUENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Stone image of a seated Buddha on Vanaspati from Nakhon Pathom.

Bronze torso of Lokesvara, Pala style, Thailand

Stone Dharmacakra, inscribed with a Buddhist text, Lopburi.
Remains of a stūpa excavated at P'ōng Tuk

Ancient votive tablets from Nakhon Pathom
The principal image of the Pra Narai group with the newly restored ad (a Śaiva image with conical Jātāmukūṭa) from Southern Thailand.

Replica of the principal image of the Pra Narai group
Muang Boran (Ancient City), Thailand
A Rāmāyaṇa dance from Bali

Dancing figures from the balustrade of the Prambanan Śiva-temple

Temple dance at Chiang Mai, Thailand
Prambanan - slender and ethereal Hindu temples

The walls surrounding the compound – the oldest part of The Royal Palace – are covered with frescos depicting episodes from the Khmer version of Ramayana, the Reamker.
Statue of Visnu (pre-Angkor style)

Approach road to the Great Temple at Angkor
Statue of Viṣṇu (Angkor period)

Statue of Viṣṇu, pre-Angkor style (6th century)
THE BUDDHA WITH SNAKE BACKGROUND TO HEAD, ANGKOR

TEN-ARMED BODHISATTVA, ANGKOR
Decoration on the north gopura, second terrace (Angkor, the Baphuon), a Rāmāyaṇa scene
Sculptures of Campâ; *left*: statue of Śiva, Dong Duong style (end of the eleventh century); *right*: a dancer carved on a pedestal at Tra-kieu (tenth century)
Barabudur reliefs from the original base
An aerial view of the Pagan temple-complex, Burma

The Thatbyinnyu temple at Pagan (middle of the eleventh century), Burma
Bronze image of Buddha from Kota Bangun, Borneo/Kalimantan

Bronze standing Buddha, the late Amaravati style, Kedah, Malaya

Temples of the Dieng Plateau (Arjuna Group of Temples)
A typical central Javanese shrine (Chandi Ngawen) in which the kala head retains its orthodox Indian shape.

The Śiva temple of Loro Jonggrang

The principal image at the Śiva temple of Loro Jonggrang