Chapter II

MODES AND PATTERNS OF INDIANIZATION OF SOUTHEASTASIA

Many points of Indian history and culture can be better understood if we study the vestiges of Indian culture evident from Southeast Asia. Located in the monsoon zone of Asia, Southeast Asian region represents a civilization of its own. The process of the making of this civilization was marked by its unique geographical features, which saw the evolution of a cultural zone unique in itself. The internal diversity of this cultural zone may be comprehended from numerous ethnic groups inhabiting the region and contributing their share to the making of the Southeast Asian identity. Malays, Mons, Shans, Karens, Chins, Kachins, Burmans, Khmers, Javanese, Laos, Filipinos, Thais, Vietnamese, Chams, Dayaks, Melanesians, Sabahinese, Highlanders, Indians and Chinese are some of the major ethnic groups that constitute the population of the region. These ethnic groups migrated to the region at different points of time and settled there, evolving their own cultural contours in accordance with the unique geographical features of the area and in the process initiating complex socio-cultural environment enriched by adaptation, mutual exchange and assimilation.

The indigenous culture that evolved as a result of the interface and interaction of numerous ethnic groups was later moulded and fashioned under the influence of Chinese and Indian cultures at the inception of the Christian era. The Indian and Chinese cultures began to influence the indigenous cultural patterns of Southeast Asia at least from the times of Shih Wang Ti in China and Ashoka Maurya in India. Emperor Ashoka sent the Buddhist monks, Sona and Uttara on the religious mission to suvarnabhumi, the ‘land of

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1 H.B. Sarkar, Cultural Relations Between India and Southeast Asian Countries, New Delhi, 1985, p. 399.
2 D.R.Sardesai, South East Asia: Past and Present, New Delhi, 1981, p.14
gold', in the third century B.C.\(^3\) Thus, the indigenous cultural identity was enriched by both Indian and Chinese influence. Cultural contacts with China and India were initiated at least 2,000 years ago mainly via sea routes, and trade played the catalytic role in accelerating and strengthening the relations. Cultural influences – whether from India or China – were also presented in religious forms – like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam\(^4\) from India and Confucianism from China.

While the Indian and Chinese influence affected the indigenous Southeast-Asian cultural zone, yet the Chinese and Indian cultures were not in conflict or competition. There was a Sino-Indian cultural demarcation as noted by a French Scholar diplomat, Reginald Le May who states:

"On the map of Asia, there is a range of mountains running down the spine of Annam, and this range makes the boundary or dividing line between Chinese and Indian culture. Everything north and east of this range is culturally based on China, which everything west and south is based on India, and the two neither overlap nor clash".\(^5\)

Evidently, there was no clash for dominance between the two great Asian People in Southeast Asia.\(^6\) One reason was that the Chinese themselves adopted Buddhism introduced from India via Central Asia at the court of Eastern Han Emperor in the first century A.D. The first Century A.D. also saw the thronging of scholars and pilgrims from China and Southeast Asia in India who visited several holy places and centers of learning on their way. Many scholars stopped half way in Borneo or Sumatra to learn Sanskrit and

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5 Reginald Le May, The Culture of South East Asia, New Delhi, 1962, p. 9
6 Sardesai, op.cit. pp.16-17.
Pali before proceeding for advanced study in India. The desire of Chinese Buddhists to refresh and purify their scriptural traditions stimulated many of them to make journey to India. Fa-Hsien, a Chinese Buddhist visited India at the beginning of fifth century A.D. It may be therefore said that the Indian religious influence had a remarkable impact on both China and Southeast Asian region.

Southeast Asia, a great historic marchland between India and China, became the confluence area of Indian and Chinese cultures. However, Southeast-Asian peoples are more culturally closer to India than to China. Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, to a larger extent, has remained culturally segregated from the native communities. Despite the close geographical proximity of China to Southeast Asia and Chinese over lordship over Southeast Asian polities which used to remain as vassal or tributary states, the Chinese cultural influence on Southeast Asia was insignificant. Even in the case of Vietnam, Chinese influence was accomplished by conquest and annexation, repugnant to peaceful penetration of Indian culture.

The spread of Indian Culture was never in the form of mass migration of Indians to Southeast Asia, unlike the Chinese of Mongoloid stock that migrated in Southeast Asia in the masses at different points of time in the history. Southeast Asian peoples became so responsive to the Indian cultural elements that they imbibed and well adapted these to the native environmental conditions. True, they have time and again acknowledged their cultural indebtedness to India by looking up to it as “a holyland rather than a mother land, as a region of pilgrimage rather than an area of jurisdiction”. However, their cultural indebtedness is in no way a deterrent for their sensitivity to any claim of Indian

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cultural supremacy over Southeast Asia. It is true that by the fifth century A.D., Indianized states, that is to say states organized along the traditional lines of Indian political theory and following the Buddhist or Hindu religions, had established themselves in many regions of Burma, Thailand, Indo-China, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The survival of Indian cultural patterns in Southeast Asia had induced a sort of jingoism among some Indians who propounded the concepts like greater India, farther India and Hindu colonies in the Far East. But, these references are more or less exaggerations. In fact, the process of Indianization was accomplished not by means of physical prowess, but by intellectual approach that too peacefully. This peaceful penetration of Indian culture was carried out by traders, Brahmin priests, Buddhist monks and Kshatriya adventurers all along the maritime trade routes.

**Definition of Indianization:**

The relations between India and Southeast Asia date back to prehistoric times. But from a certain period, these relations resulted in the founding of Indian Kingdoms in Southeast Asia. It was the resultant effect of the sporadic influx of traders and immigrants practicing the arts, customs, and religions of India and using Sanskrit as their sacred language. According to H.G.Q. Wales, Indianized kingdoms came into being, either as a result of Indian imposing himself on the native population, or else through a native chief adopting the foreign civilization. In Greater India there was never a fusion of cultures except as an initial stage in the replacement of the local by the Indian. There was in fact Indianization. However, Indianization did not mean there was a mass migration of

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Indian populations into Southeast Asia. Rather, a relatively limited number of traders and priest-scholars brought Indian culture in its various forms to Southeast Asia where most, but not all, of this culture was observed by the local population and joined to their existing cultural patterns\textsuperscript{10}.

If the Indianization of Southeast Asia around the beginning of the Christian era seems to be a new development, it is because the Indians – who were not on their first voyage, but were arriving in numbers – were accompanied for the first time by educated elements capable of spreading the religions and arts of India and the Sanskrit language. The Indianization of farther India is the continuation overseas of a “Brahmanization” that had its earliest focus in Northwest India and that “having begun well before the Buddha, continues to our day in Bengal as well as in the South.”\textsuperscript{11} Historians agree that, under an Indian veneer, most of the population preserved the essentials of their own culture. This at least is the view of Nicholas J. Krom with regard to Java; and with regard to Bali, W.F. Stutterheim tells us that “Hinduism has always been and still is the culture of the upper classes, but never became completely that of the masses, who were attached to Indonesian animism and to the ancestor cult.”\textsuperscript{12} However, Monica L. Smith has given different approach to the concept of Indianization. The use of the term “Indianization” to describe the contacts between Indian and Southeast Asia, according to Monica L. Smith, conceals the complexities of Socio-political organization in the early first millennium A.D., when the Indian subcontinent consisted of a mosaic of cultural and political entities.

\textsuperscript{11} G.Coe de s, \textit{op.cit.}, 1968, p. 15.
And, within the phenomenon of “Indianization” there were developments not only on the part of the recipients, but on the part of the “senders” as well.\(^{13}\)

Looking into the views of scholars of different hues, we see that Indianization can be understood essentially as the expansion of an organized culture that was founded upon the Indian conception of royalty, was characterized by Hinduist or Buddhist cults, the mythology of the Puranas, and the observance of the Dharmasastras, and expressed itself in the Sanskrit language. And, in fact, it is quite lucid that Indianization took place in the realm of Southeast Asian culture.

**Sources Indicating the Historical Linkages between India and Southeast Asia:**

Indian literary sources have no concrete indication identifying or accounting for the Southeast Asian region, but vaguely give an idea of an ‘El Dorado’ eastward across the ocean. Literacy in the very early States of Southeast Asia - beside from the portion of north Vietnam annexed by China-began with the importing, by local rulers, of modified cults of Buddhism or Hinduism, and the adoption of Sanskrit or Pali language for the writing of religious texts. Terms like Yavadvipa, Swarnadvipa, Suvarnabhumi, Yamadvipa etc, find mention in texts like the *Ramayana*, the *Vayu Purana*, the Buddhist *Jatakas* and so on\(^{14}\). The *Ramayana* speaks of Java and Chinese records testify to the existence of Indian kingdoms in Champa, Cambodia and Annam, as early as the first century A.D.\(^{15}\) The Buddhist *Jatakas*, or birth-stories of Buddha, which enshrine folk tales of early India, often tell of voyages to *Suvarnabhumi*, land of gold. Sir Roland Braddell, a historical geographer, interpreted *Yavadvipa* as a regional name for Java-cum-

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Sumatra. A statement in Kautilya’s Arthashastra, recommending a king to people of an old or a new country, about seizing the territory of another or deporting the surplus population of his own, has been taken to indicate an early wave of Indian migration to Southeast Asia before the Christian era. However, D.G.E. Hall negates the application of Kautilya’s theory in this case, as it is lacking historicity and is nothing more than an imaginative interpretation.

The inscriptions written in Indian languages and scripts abound in Southeast Asia. The Tamil-language inscriptions dating from the mid ninth to late thirteenth centuries, written on stone wholly or partly in Tamil language and using Tamil script, have so far come to light in Southeast Asia: one is in Burma (Present Myanmar), two in peninsular Thailand, four in Sumatra. The earliest of these overseas Tamil inscriptions was found on the hill Khau Pra-Narai (Brah Narayana), about ten miles upstream on the Takuapa River, on the west Coast of peninsular Thailand. It was associated with the remains of a small structure and three large stone figures – Siva and two companions – of apparent South Indian inspiration or origin. The Takuapa inscription was written entirely in Tamil language, in south Indian script of about the ninth century.

Even in the indigenous Southeast Asian writings or Chinese sources dealing with early period we find very little information about Indian cultural influence. Chinese sources do give earliest glimpse of a Hindu court, that of Funan the precursor of Cambodia, and they mention the story of the Brahman Kaundinya. They also mention states in the Malay Peninsula with apparently Sanskrit names. From Chinese sources we hear of the existence of an Indianized kingdom of Langkasuka in the eastern part of the

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18 D.G.E. Hall, op.cit., p-14
Malay Peninsula dating from the second century A.D. Apart from these Chinese tradition, there is no evidence of strong political power in the Malay Peninsulas until the kingdom of Sri Vijaya in the eighth century, and this was a maritime rather than a territorial power. This lends support to the prevailing view that the Malay Peninsula did not witness Indianization on such an extensive scale as compared to other Southeast Asian countries. The European works like the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, the Geography of the Alexandrine geographer Ptolemy, etc. too give very few accounts of the region in regard to the diffusion of Indian culture. Though Ptolemy in his Geography written in the second century A.D. refers to the ports of Malaya Peninsula, Java, and Sumatra and the Indian port of Palura from which voyages were directly made to Malaya Peninsula. Both Chinese records and Ptolemy record the existence of Indian colonies at the beginning of the Christian era in the present territory of Indo-China. The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, compiled in about 70-71 A.D., is the earliest text to mention trade between Indian ports and the countries further east. The earliest inscriptions from Myanmar include a stone slab with early Pyu language in Brahmi (an Indian script) from Hmaingmaw, datable to the late fourth or early fifth century A.D. Contemporary activities include the issue of local coinage, based on Indian iconography and weight standards, by the kings of Arakan on the west coast of Myanmar. The adoption of Buddhist architectural styles also began around the sixth century in this region. The oldest Sanskrit inscription from Java, recovered in the western part of the island, is

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20 Ibid.
21 For detail accounts of this work, see W.H. Schoff (trans), *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, London, 1912.
23 Ibid., p. 14
estimated to date from the fifth century. In Borneo, there are inscriptions dated to 400 A.D. describing a ruler who offers cows to Brahmans and indicates Shiva-worship; in western Borneo there are eight Sanskrit inscriptions from the sixth century that show Buddhist influence. The sources on the Indian contact with Southeast Asia before 4th century B.C. or the appearance of earliest Sanskrit inscriptions are apparently obscure. From Cambodia, the earliest inscriptions also combine Sanskrit with archaic Khmer. The earliest image-shrines in Southeast Asia with Structural affinities to the Indian Gupta style date to the sixth and Seventh Centuries.

It was in the late nineteenth century when the study of the Southeast Asian antiquities was initiated by the European scholars that the large scale influence of the Sanskrit culture upon the religion, art and architecture of the area was began to be realized. Soon there was evidently a tendency to attribute these influences to a movement of Indian expansion eastward. As a result, Southeast Asia passively stood at receiving end and Indian influences began to be considered paramount. Indian scholars, who were partly moved by the intellectual quest and mostly by the nationalistic ardour of the day at the dawn of the twentieth century, highlighted the Indian influences in fascinating ways. Given the importance of religion in spearheading the development of indigenous literacy in Southeast Asia, it is not surprising that the Indian languages of Sanskrit and Pali have had considerable impact upon the linguistic and intellectual cultures of Southeast Asia.

In the absence of the historical document showing from what parts of India the cultural influences flowed into Southeast Asia, the evidence has to be sought from the

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24 Monica Smith, op.cit., p.15
26 R.K. Mukherjee, RC Majumdar, Phavindranath Bose and others talk about a greater India and Southeast Asian Countries as 'ancient Indian colonies'.
available primary and secondary sources. The Indian writers who have pronounced upon the subject have been tempted to stress rather too much the claims of their own localities. For example, while R.C. Majumdar thinks that the oldest Sanskrit inscription in Funan uses Kushana Script from north India, K.A. N. Sastri argues that all the alphabets used in Southeast Asia have a south Indian origin, and that Pallava script has a predominant influence. However, regarding the origins of the Indians who left for Southeast Asia, and examination of the sources at our disposal (Indian sources concerning navigation, accounts of Chinese and Mediterranean travellers and geographers, and topographic, palaeographic, and archaeological evidence) show that the south of India, and in particular the region of Kanchipuram, played a preponderant part in Indianization; besides, it also indicates that all the other regions of India, including the Deccan, the Ganges plain, and even North Western India, contributed in varying degrees towards the diffusion of Indian culture.

Approaches to Indian Expansion in Southeast Asia:

Scholars have come to various conclusions on Indian expansion in Southeast Asia. Some assume that it arose out of disturbed conditions in India, which caused large number of refugees to seek new homes across the sea. Others attribute it to the bloody Kalinga war in the third Century B.C. whereby the conquest by Ashoka, the Mauryan emperor, led to a wide-scale exodus of population. But so far, historical evidence fails to suggest such large scale movement, and it appears that at the most the fugitives, if there were any, opened the way to a more important later emigration.

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There are some scholars who link the Indian expansion to movements of tribes in China to India, which had a cascading effect on India. The movement of Yueh-Chi nomads in the first century A.D. led to the foundation of Kushana Empire which dominated India through the illustrious ruler like Kanishka. He ascended the throne in 78 A.D. and ruled from his capital, Peshawar. However, there is no historical evidence regarding such a movement resulting in emigration of Indians overseas. The assumption held by some scholars, that the exodus from India to Southeast Asia was caused by Samudragupta’s expeditions, lacks historical evidence and the hypothesis that high caste adventures were allowed to seek their fortunes overseas can be substantiated by historical facts.

It has been often stressed that the Indian expansion was largely commercial in origin by some scholars. The earliest overseas activities of the Indians in pre-Christian centuries seem to have been organized through the port of Tamralipti, the oldest recorded port of India. It is through Tamralipti that traders from Champa, Varanasi, Kausambi, etc., sailed for the Far East. Coedes says that the intensification of Indian trade to Southeast Asia in early Christian era facilitated such expansion. He emphasizes that the settlements of Indian traders in the ports created an ambience for the arrival of more cultured elements like priests and literati from India, who made it possible for the dissemination of Indian Culture. He attributes the intensification of Indian trade with Southeast Asia to the crisis in India’s trade with the Western world. According to Coedes, Indian trade in luxury items with West had increased in the era following Alexander’s

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30 D.G.E. Hall, op.cit., p.15.
32 G. Coedes, op.cit., pp.69-79
campaign, foundation of Mauryan and Kushana Empires in India and the rise of Seleucid and Roman empires in the West. However, this very trading link between India and West was disrupted owing to the movements of nomads passing through Bactria en route to Siberia. Emperor Vespasian sought to stop the exodus of precious metals from Roman Empire to India to safeguard his imperial economy. Indians were compelled to look for an alternative source for precious metals. They turned, Coedes says, to the Golden Khersonese, and their use of Sanskrit names, such as Suvarnabhumi and Suvarnadvipa, which they gave to the parts of Southeast Asia, indicates their fame among Indians mainly as sources of Gold.

Many scholars have described the eastward spread of Indian civilization in terms of a series of “waves”. H.G.Q. Wales has mentioned four phases of this important movement:

a) Amaravati: 2nd – 3rd Centuries AD.

b) Gupta: 4th – 6th Centuries AD.

c) Pallava: Middle of the 6th to the middle of the 8th C A.D.

d) Pala: Middle of the 8th to the end of the 9th A.D.

But, this concept has limited data and difficult to corroborative.

The description of Indian expansion in Southeast Asia through the theories which presupposed one-way traffic kind of relationship too has been criticized. “To what extent Indonesian shipping played an active role is a question never raised’. D.G.E. Hall has also criticized Coedes’ theory by saying that the same kind of defects may be found in his theories which assumes a relationship between India and Southeast Asia wherein

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Southeast Asia remained a passive player while India being the active player. Such theories have found acceptability even in the face of ample evidence suggesting that the Malays of Sumatra were primarily responsible for developing an all-sea trade route to China, and that Malay seaman and ships played every bit as important a part as Indians in the trade of Southeast Asia with India and Ceylon. In the case of the diffusion of Indian culture, Van Leur advances same kind of arguments. He rejects the ideas representing traders as the disseminator of Indian culture. To him, it appears impossible for the traders belonging to lower social groups and ships' crews comprising African blacks and slaves to have been able to disseminate the elements Indian culture in the region. Such people, he says, could not have been administrators of ritual, magical conservation and disseminator of rationalistic, bureaucratic written scholarship and wisdom. To him Brahmins were the main proponents of such dissemination. He does not discount the role of trade in facilitating crucial links at court level for the rulers and nobles, who were main participants in the foreign trade. Van Leur further argues that the Brahmin priests were brought to Southeast Asian courts and the arrival of the Brahmins in the courts resulted in transmission of Indian culture at the court level. Thus, Van Leur has emphasized the role of the Brahmins against the Indian colonization theory of cultural diffusion.

In the light of the distinct categories of the agents and subjects of the cultural diffusion, Coedes enumerates four kinds of nature of the cultural elements transmitted from India to Southeast Asia:

a) A conception of royalty characterized by Hindu or Buddhist cults;

b) Literary expression by means of the Sanskrit language;

c) A conception of caste and a criminal code of law;

d) Indian art and architecture;

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35 D.G. E. Hall, op.cit., p.34.
36 Ibid., pp.98-99.
37 Ibid., p.99.
38 quoted in D.G.E.Hall, ibid, p.19.
c) A mythology taken from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* and other Sanskrit texts.

d) The observance of the *Dharmasastras*, the sacred law of Hinduism, and in particular the *Manava Dharmasastra* or 'laws of Manu'.

It may also be surmised from the nature of the cultural elements transmitted from India that the diffusion was mainly limited to courts and rulers; thus, making it possible to say that it was the work of court functionaries and not the missionaries.\(^{39}\) The cultural diffusion at court level was mainly drawn from the grandeur of Indian courts as it may have inspired the Southeast Asian rulers to imitate the style of Indian courts and get them consecrated by the Brahmins in the manners prescribed by the Indian classics, customs and rituals. It was essential, when forcing other rulers into a state of vassalage, to have conservation of this sort whereby the worship was established of a *linga* as the king's sacred personality and he himself was identified with Siva.\(^{40}\)

For example, a Cham (today Central and Southern Annam) king in the twelfth Century chose to legitimize his accession to the throne by writing a Sanskrit text which resembled a *Smriti*, or an Indian text with the prestigious status of a *Sutra* or *Sastra*. He was doing no more than protecting himself under the umbrella of a statement that exhibited the aura of an Indian text on good government. Again, an inscription states that the Javanese king Erlangga in the eleventh Century subverted his enemy's power 'by the application of the means taught by' the author of the *Arthasastra*, the most famous of all Indian texts on the polity.\(^{41}\) The *Arthasastra* contains many percepts for a would-be conqueror. It recommends that a conquering king should ally himself with the king whose

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\(^{39}\) Hall, ibid., p.19.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p.19.

territories lay at the rear of his own enemy. In Malaysia also, the institution of kingship was perceptibly changed under Indian influence; tribal polities were raised in status to kingdoms, and the paraphernalia of court ritual and ceremony adopted. Hindu concepts of kingship and Hindu administrative institutions and ceremonial became so deeply embedded in Malayan courts that even after these states were Islamized many of these practices remained. Thus, it is evident from the above mentioned examples that the Hindus introduced court customs and ensured their proper observance. They also underlined the divine nature of monarchy through a variety of ritual sacrifices and ceremonies, thereby enhancing the prestige and power of the Southeast Asian rulers in the eyes of their subjects. Both administrative organization on the Indian pattern and laws based on Manu’s code were welcomed.

F.D.K. Bosch has done a detailed study of the question of the transmission of Indian culture to Southeast Asia. He took into consideration the hypotheses extended by Dutch scholars naming them as “Kshatriya hypothesis” and “Vaisya-hypothesis. “Kshatriya – hypothesis” was propounded by C.C. Berg, who based it on the readings of Javanese – Panji cycle of narratives which described Indian warrior immigrants as the robber barons and linked the introduction of Indian culture to the activities of Indian warrior immigrants who married native women thereby breeding a Kraton (royal palace) society of mixed blood. Moens, extending the same idea, linked the expansion of Indian culture to the downfall of dynasties in India and accession of new Indonesian dynasties by the (hypothetical) emigration of the scions to the region. The Vaishya–Hypothesis, expounded by N.J. Krom, explains that Indian penetration was peaceful as it was the

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42 Sinnappah Arasaratnam, op.cit., p.5.
43 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
result of the traders marrying native women.\textsuperscript{46} His hypothesis suggests that the expansion of the Indian culture was based on voluntary acceptance of Hindu civilization which resulted in 'Hinduization' or 'Indianization' of the region.

Bosch has shown his disinclination in accepting these hypotheses due to several reasons.\textsuperscript{47} He emphasizes that the elements of Indian culture were mainly ascribed to royal paraphernalia, where it was blended with native components. He further states that elements of Indian culture were present in forms of learned manuscripts, the code of law, the cell of the recluse and the monastery which mainly belonged to the sphere of religion. The practitioners of such cultural components, was according to him, akin to the scribes and scholastics of medieval Europe, 'clerks'.\textsuperscript{48}

**Factors Facilitating the Process of Indianization:**

Most of the scholars consider Commercial relations between India and Southeast Asia as the most important factor contributing to the Indianization of the region. In the Southeast Asian region, a number of maritime people like the Mons, the Funanese, the Chams, the Javanese, the Sumahans, the Bugis and others participated in the lucrative trade between China, India and the Western world. The aversion of the Chinese towards sea left this maritime zone open for the Indians who participated in the East-West trade and as a result a large numbers of Indian seamers and merchants reached Southeast Asia, where the rulers were the principal traders. Coedes indicates that the Indian merchants were instruments in spreading the fame of Brahmins and their magical powers in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{49} Probably this contact between Southeast Asian ruling elite and Indian

\textsuperscript{46} Nicholas J. Krom, Barabudur, Archeological Description, vol.1, The Hague, 1927, p.38.
\textsuperscript{47} For a tabulation of Bosch's criticisms of the Dutch hypotheses, see D.G.E.Hall, op.cit., pp.19-20.
\textsuperscript{48} Bosch, op. cit., p.11.
\textsuperscript{49} Quoted in H.B. Sarkar, *Cultural Relations between India and Southeast Asian countries*, New Delhi, 1985, p.77
merchants brought Indian culture to the region and gave it a firm ground. Indian Cultural' influence arrived in the wake of expanding international trade in the first centuries of the Christian era. Indian culture also presented an assimilative approach with zeal to accommodate and adjust. Except from an instance of invasion of Srivijaya Kingdom in the eleventh century by Rajendra Chola, Indian princes had neither political ambition in the region nor did they appear as a hoard of invaders. The coming of Indian culture without any political string attached or proselytizing project allowed the scope of its further consolidation.

Moreover, the geographical commonness, as India and Southeast Asia are located in the Monsoon zone, created ample similarities where cultural commonalities were traced, sustained and nurtured. India and Southeast Asia have many things possessing a greater degree of Commonality. The tertiary folds in Southeast Asia are the extensions of Himalayas, and hence there are similarities in geomorphological features and the resultant land forms. The perennial rivers like Irrawaddy, Salween and Mekong have their sources in the Himalayas. Of much relevance are the similarities in climatic conditions between India and Southeast Asia on account of their being part of the tropical monsoon belt. Monsoonal rhythm by imposing similarities in the ways of life has been one such factor that fostered cultural affinities in the India – Southeast Asia cultural enclave.

In a logical sense, affinities based on cultural history could have become possible on account of the linkages having their roots in natural history. Even the pre-historic trading ties between these regions seem to have largely been governed by the rhythm of monsoon winds. The halting places, where the sailors waited for change of winds, had

subsequently become the entrepots/market places and eventually the centers of exchange of ideas or the zones of confluence. Thus, it was the nature, in the first instance, that facilitated the spread of Indian culture into Southeast Asia, though inhabited by biologically dissimilar race. Hence, the famous cultural anthropologist, A. L. Kroeber, termed this entire region as one cultural zone or culture area, in other words, "Indian – Southeast Ethnic Enclaves".\textsuperscript{52}

But it may be said that the harbingers of the Indianization of Southeast Asia were undoubtedly the Brahmins. It is true that Indian traders and sailors, probably belonging to Vaisya and Sudra class of Indian social order, came in a series of waves in this region and settled down there, but the priestly class, the Brahmins were the most effective component who influenced the Southeast Asian society intellectually and cultivated an environment where emulation of Indian ways, manners and customs was sought mainly by the South east Asian ruling elite. The Brahmins were invited by the ruling elites at their courts as priests, astrologers and advisors. The Brahmins were able to acquire the status of an important component in the administrative structure by virtue of their knowledge of sacred lore, the rites and rituals, customs and laws. The Indian priesthood was used for the magical, sacred legitimation by dynastic interests and the domestication of subjects, and probably for the organization of the ruler's territory into a state.\textsuperscript{53} The Brahmins, through the introduction and legitimization of rituals, customs and sacrifices akin to Indian royal practices, helped in emphasizing the divinity of the kingship. Indian pattern of administrative structure derived from laws based on Manu’s code were

introduced and gained legitimacy.\textsuperscript{54} The process of Indianization also included the alphabetical basis (except for Vietnam) of the Southeast Asian scripts; importance of Sanskrit in the vocabulary; introduction of the Indian epics, \textit{Ramayana} and \textit{Mahabharata} and also works on a variety of subjects like philosophy, astrology, medicine and mathematics styles of art, dance, architecture and sculpture; and the religious lore, Brahminic, Buddhist or a combination of both.\textsuperscript{55}

The accommodative and assimilative nature of Hinduism was the most striking element which initiated and sustained the expansion of its influence in the Southeast Asian region. The syncretic character of Hinduism gave it ample opportunities to encompass diverse ethnic groups of the region in its broader cultural space. Hinduism was accepted because it, to a certain extent, helped the ancient and Medieval Southeast Asians to continue their pre-Hindu traditions, to improve their understanding of world as well as divine life. Both the principles of life – negation and life affirmation – were favoured by the Hindus everywhere. And these opposite ideas merged in the Hindu Ashrama system, adopted by the Southeast Asians also. Even today the Balinese believe in four – Ashramas of life: Brahmacharya (studentship), Grihastha (married family life), Vanaprastha (hermit life) and Sanyas (ascetic life). May be because of this balanced view of self-indulgence and self-denial approach, the Hindus were well known. Numerous ethnic groups allowed the cultural influence of Hinduism to spread and enrich without apprehending any possible loss of their own identity. The acceptability of Indian culture in the region is also attributed to the absence of any political ambitions in the region by the Indian princes, commercial inter-linkages and geographical commonness. It is also a

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p.117.
matter of further enquiry as to what were the elements which contributed to the process of Indianization and the mechanism of implementation of such processes". In this context, Ian M. Mabbett has opined that the process of Indianization is nowhere reliably portrayed, what is portrayed by the earliest evidence is the operation of kingdoms already Indianized.

D.G.E. Hall argues in contravention to the widely held belief that the Indianization was the outcome of Indian enterprise alone. He stress that the Malays (Indonesians) were panr-excellence a sea-going people, and indications are that they resorted to the ports of India and Ceylon as much as the shipmen of India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to the ports of Southeast Asia. Coedes also ascribe some importance to the part played by the Southeast Asia people of Indonesia who visited India. In his inference they were also by reason of their visit to Ancient India became the source of Indianization of Southeast Asia. J.C. Van Leur, for example, confirms that the Southeast Asian people were also sea-faring people well before the coming of the Hindus. They, during such pre-Hindu Age, visited India and were the inspiring figures for the Indianization of Southeast Asia. As it is very much evident, that relations between the western part of Southeast Asia and India may be traced to pre-historic period. The discovery of monsoon winds had led to the trading through ships to thrive, and traders and shippers from both sides were engaged in the trading with the ships appearing regularly on the ports. The off season period, when the monsoon winds were not available for sail, the traders and shippers had to wait in different settlements which became focal points in promoting

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., pp. 16-17
\textsuperscript{59}J.C. Van Leur, op.cit., p.92.
trade from both sides. Such relationship, no doubt, created the backdrop of Indianization of the region but as it has already been said, these enterprises alone were not responsible for widening and deepening Indian cultural influence.

Buddhism, like Brahmanism, played an important role in the spread of Indian culture in Southeast Asia. At the same time, Buddhism has served as one of the main socializing and unifying forces in Buddhist societies of Southeast Asia.60 Buddhism, with its universal values, came to be embodied perhaps more than Brahmanism in the teachings of pilgrims and wandering scholars. Certainly, in the first seven or eight centuries A.D., there was a cosmopolitan spread of Buddhist culture disseminated across Asia by traveling monks. Most of the monks were scholarly, actuated by the desire to disseminate the Dharma embodied in Holy Scriptures, or to find and study such scriptures in foreign lands.61

Though Buddhism has different schools of thought, the well known ones are Hinayana (Theravada) Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism; it was Theravada Buddhism which had enjoyed greater popularity is Southeast Asia. We may have some archaeological and even epigraphical proof relating to the popularity of Hinayana Buddhism around Sixth Century A.D., but the real gain was from the later part of the eleventh century A.D. Before Indianization of Southeast Asia, as for example in Burma, Siam (Modern Thailand) or Indo-China, there was no systematic understanding of the meaning of life including of the divine etc. However, indigenous cult only fulfilled immediate emotional ideas of life. Thus, this limitation paved the way for the popularity of Theravada (Hinayana) Buddhism, a more comprehensive concept of men’s relations with the unseen, unknown etc. Inscriptions on gold plates from Maungan near Prome,

61 Ibid., p.xiii.
probably datable to the seventh century, reflect the Pali tradition and thus represent the earliest Southeast Asian evidence of Theravada Buddhism; which gradually, especially from the eleventh century, became the prevalent religion of Burma and, a few centuries later, of most of mainland Southeast Asia. Today we know that Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia are observing the Theravada form of Buddhism. Juxtaposed to this, one can’t deny the existence of Mahayana Buddhism in Southeast Asia. There is much evidence for Mahayana Buddhism in Pyu (South-central Burma) art, which includes various representations of the Bodhisattvas (future Buddhas), Avalokitesvara and Maitreya, as well as of the Buddha Dipankara, who was thought to calm the waves. The Mahayanist worshipped galaxies of god like Buddhas and added to them a type of deity, the Bodhisattva, one who has attained enlightenment but remains in the world on the brink of Buddhahood in order to help mankind gain salvation. In support of this doctrine the Buddha was said to have undergone a long series of previous existences as a Bodhisattva during which he performed acts of compassion. The most popular Bodhisattva in Southeast Asia was Avalokitesvara, who under the name of Lokesvar adorns the many towers of the Bayon temple at Angkor Thom. He shows pity on suffering humanity. In art, he is shown bearing on his chignon the image of Amitabha, the Buddha of meditation. But there were others also, such as Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of thought and knowledge, holding in one hand a naked sword and in the other a book, and Padmapani, the Lotus-bearer. In Champa, Mahayana Buddhism continued to exist till the beginning of the fifteenth century A.D.

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63 Ibid. p.293
64 D.G.E. Hall, op.cit., p.46.
65 H.B. Sarkar, op.cit., p.93.
Coedes even says that the influence of Buddhism preceded Brahminism in Southeast Asia. Such suggestions are based on the archaeological findings of significant number of Buddha images representing Amravati school of sculpture. Number of Buddha statues, found in various parts of Southeast Asia both on the mainland, especially at Dong – Duong (near Danang in central Vietnam), Korat (Northeastern Thailand), Vieng – Sra (Peninsular Thailand), and in the archipelago at Jember (east Java) and on the Bukit Seguntang near Palembang (South Sumatra). These Buddhas, usually represented standing and dressed in clinging transparent robes, reflect a style the prototype of which has been found in Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), India. Amravati school of Arts flourished in India during 150 to 250 A.D. on the Krishna River about eight miles from east coast of India. Bosch also attributes the spread of Buddhism to the Buddhist pilgrims who flocked eastward to propagate the Buddha ideal. Buddhism was mainly propagated by Buddhist missionaries. They would appear at the royal courts of Southeast Asia, preach the law, convert the ruler and his family, and found an order of monks. Bosch says that such kind of Buddhist missionaries' activity resulted in a streams of Buddhist devotees and monks towards the holy land of India who often made lengthy stay there.

The Nalanda Monastery, near Rajgriha in the old Kingdom of Magadha, was the centre of attraction for a vast numbers of pilgrims from abroad for being the largest Buddhist pilgrimage of Mahayana School where they flocked in search of sacred manuscripts, relics and images. It is evident from an inscription Nalanda(Bihar) that deals with a monastery built there by order of the Sailendra King, presumably on behalf of Indonesian students and pilgrims staying at or visiting Nalanda, one of the greatest centres

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66 Ibid, p.291
of Buddhist learning at that time. The epigraphic record known as “Balaputra’s charter” refers to a village donated by the Pala kings for the upkeep of a monastery founded to cater to the large number of pilgrims from Southeast Asia. According to Bosch, these pilgrims were instrumental in propagation of Buddhist art in their homeland in the form of architecture, sculpture, painting and poetry which flourished astonishingly in the regions. Bosch opines that Buddhism had few greater appeals than Hinduism, which was an ‘esoteric doctrine transmitted from guru to pupil’ and confined to the Brahmana caste. It was in the fourth and sixth century A.D. that the Hinduism made great impact when it was revived under the protection of Gupta rulers. Fa Hsein, a Chinese Pilgrim on his homeward journey back from India, records the flourishing influence of Brahminism in Java. Bosch says that the gurus of Saiva Siddhanta sect brought Hinduism to Indonesia which made a great impact on the ruling class at the Kraton (royal palace) owing to its claim of being invested with supernatural powers. Brahmins were believed to be having the power of various divine instrumentations. They were the medium through whom Siva could enter the king, immortality could be conferred to them, divine omnipotence could be invoked to maintain world order and the consecration of kings by Brahmins gave a higher sanctity to all the festivals of the popular religions. Such beliefs created a demand for Siddhanta initiates in Southeast Asia. Messengers were sent to India to invite them and on their arrival they were given influential offices at the Kratons (royal palace). Bosch even took a different view on the question of Indian cultural expansion. He attributed the spread of Indian cultural expansion to the local initiatives, which assimilated apparently attractive Indian cultural elements, rather than a result of Indian

68 Ibid., p.320.
69 F.D.K. Bosch, op.cit., p.17.
70 D.G.E.Hall,op.cit., p.21.
efforts at the same. His argument is based on the evidence of a large number of Southeast Asians in general and Indonesians in particular visiting Indian sacred places and studying there under Indian teachers.

During the formative period, the Indian influence came in a number of overlapping waves extending over many Centuries. While being thoroughly acculturated, the people responded to this influence in the light of their local genius. In conditioning the response to the Indian influence, local genius provides the active agency which moulds the borrowed material, giving it an original twist and at the same time preserving and emphasizing the distinctive character of the evolution. For example, the local genius actuating Khmer religious development. The conception of the monuments of Cambodia derives from the religions thought of India, but it is none the less certain that their realization is the work of native artists who had their traditions inherited from a distant past, prior to the diffusion of Indian culture in Southeast Asia. H.G.Q. Wales, further, opines that local genius is not responsible for every vicissitude in cultural evolution. It is sufficient if local genius gives direction to evolution. Thus, we see that the local genius was not totally faded away; and in fact, in coming to terms with the indigenous cultures the Indian religions were compelled to change their character to a marked degree.

Coedes has described the old civilization of Cambodia and Java as an Indian superstructure upon an indigenous substratum.

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71 Ibid.
72 H.G.Q. Wales, op. cit., p. 111.
73 Ibid, p.127
74 Coedes, op.cit., pp.30-35.
Coedes envisaged:

"When I spoke of a super structure, or referred in a more general way to Indian civilization in Cambodia or some other Indianized kingdom, what I had in mind was, of course, the civilization revealed by inscription and archaeological evidence. This civilization was that of elite, and only included such special spheres, such as religion, art, philosophy and literature, as well as the concept of the state and of the monarchy."  

He suggested intensive study of inscriptions in native language etc. to find out the quantum of native elements, so as to judge, "Whether the indigenous societies retained the essential part of their original features, whether they became integrated into a society fundamentally Indian in type". According to Hall, Bosch appears to be covert when he describes the old Hindu Southeast Asian culture as the product of the 'fecundation (impregnation)' of the 'living matter' of the native society by the Indian spirit, and goes on to explain that a new life was procreated which was to develop into an independent organism. But Hall appears cautious in estimating the impact of Indian culture as he argues that a distinction be made between the Indian influences on court culture and that of the people. Further, he opines that dissemination of Indian cultural elements to the masses took a much longer time. It appears that the traditional culture of the region continued to prevail and the Buddhist and Hindu cultural elements were imported and incorporated in accordance with the space provided by the local environment with skilful modes of adjustment and accommodation in the local cultural pattern.

The interactions between India and Southeast Asia in the early historic period (i.e. from third\textsuperscript{rd} c B.C. to fourth\textsuperscript{th} c A.D.) have in the past been interpreted as relationships of

\footnotesize{\cite{52} G. Coedes, The Making of Southeast Asia, California, 1966, p. 56
\cite{53} Ibid., p.61.}
influence. Later, archaeological evidence for the indigenous development of social complexity has prompted a re-evaluation of these relationships, with the suggestion that local elites in Southeast Asia adopted “Indianized” customs as a means of increasing their political legitimacy. For example, the ‘Varman’ title of the Pallava kings had been adopted by the Khmer kings at the time of the coronation. As archaeological work has proceeded in Southeast Asia, it is increasingly apparent that these regions sustained a long period of indigenous development. More recently, investigations indicate that rather than a process of cultural colonization, “Indian influences were selectively assimilated into a pre-existing, well-developed culture base.

The simultaneous adoption of Indian cultural systems such that the concept of monarchy (kingship), the use of Sanskrit as a bureaucratic lingua franca, a renewed attention to the iconography of the Vedic tradition, and rulers taking Indianized names such as Gangaraja and Bhadravarman, religious iconography – is seen throughout Southeast Asia as varied response to local needs and circumstances. The adoption of Indian cultural systems may have been undertaken by local leaders desiring to impress and govern their populations by reference to powerful but distant outside authorities. And in many parts of mainland Southeast Asia, the adoption of such traditions may have included the additional motivation to maintain cultural autonomy as a reaction to the spectre of Chinese expansion.

Conclusion

Thus, it may be said that the spread of Indian culture in Southeast Asia was the result of the endeavours and initiatives taken by the people from both sides and was

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79 Ibid., p.19.
multifaceted, all-encompassing and enduring. Lure of trade and riches, the desire for sanskritising elements (like the Brahmins), the desire to spread religion and artefacts created space of these elements in the Southeast Asian socio-cultural landscape. Coedes in second half of the twentieth century stated that the people of India from different walks of life and different provinces – Brahmanas, Kshatiriyas, Vaisyas and others – were in some way or other connected with the main process of Indianization of Southeast Asia.80 Hence, no single yardstick can be used to measure the method or identify the agency for the Indianization of Southeast Asia. The most important feature of this transmission of Indian culture was its peaceful nature and assimilative content, thereby, finding wide acceptance among the ruling classes. However, the Indian social structure with its caste system was less thoroughly absorbed than was the religion.81 It was in the sphere of religion that the impact of Indian influence was more striking. And, due to this cultural diffusion, Indianized kingdoms in Southeast Asia soon came into being.82

81 H. G. Q. Wales, op.cit., p. 110.
82 A brief history of the Indianized kingdoms in Southeast Asia has been discussed in Pankaj Kumar Sinha, Impact of Indian Culture on Southeast Asia: A Case Study Of Indo-China ( M.Phil. Dissertation, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2002).