

SES'S L.S.RAHEJA COLLEGE OF ARTS AND COMMERCE

Course: History Paper VI

Unit: 4 Sem IV

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Spread of Indian Culture in South East Asia**Introduction:**

- From the 2nd century B.C. onwards
- India maintained cultural and commercial contact with Central Asia, West Asia and the Roman empire
- attraction for spices, minerals and metals for which it had been frequently referred to as Suvarnabhumi
- The voyages of Indian merchants across the seas for maritime activities.
- Hindu priests and Buddhist monks accompanied mercantile class
- Many Indian rulers even established Hindu kingdoms in some parts of South East Asia
- Indian religion, political thought, literature, mythology, artistic motifs and style, were absorbed deeply into local culture
- Yet India's cultural conquests were peaceful and without forced conversions.

Sri Lanka:

- Sri Lanka experienced a great cultural influence from India
- Buddhism survived in Sri Lanka
- (Zanzibar, Indonesia and the Maldives) converted to Islam
- Ashoka sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Sri Lanka to spread the message of the Buddhism.
- It is said that they carried a cutting of the Bodhi tree from Bodhgaya which was planted there
- Devanampiyatissa was the king of Sri Lanka
- The teachings of the Buddha were transmitted orally
- Sri Lanka became a stronghold of Buddhism and continues to be so even today.
- The Dipavansa and Mahavamsa are well known Sri Lankan Buddhist sources.
- Hinduism also influenced their culture
- Cholas built Shiva temple

- With Buddhism, Indian Art forms also reached Sri Lanka
- paintings, dance, folklores and art and architecture were taken from India.
- The famous paintings of Sigiriya weremodeled on the Ajanta paintings.

Myanmar:

- India's immediate eastern neighbour, Myanmar was greatly influenced by Indian culture.
- dates back to the period of Asoka, who sent his missionaries there to preach Buddhism
- Buddhaghosha went there to spread the message of Buddhism
- Chinese pilgrim Huen-Tsang has referred in his accounts to several kingdoms of Burma ruled by Hindu dynasties.
- Pali and Sanskrit were the languages of Burma till thirteenth century.
- The archaeological remains of Thatum, Pegu and Prome reveal close connection with Indian style of art.
- Bagan was a great centre of Buddhist culture in Myanmar
- It is still famous for its magnificent Pagodas.

China:

- Buddhism reached China in the beginning of the first century A.D
- Fa-Hien, I-Tsing and Huen-Tsang
- Two Indian teachers KashyapaMartanga and Dharmarakshita went to China
- Huien-tsang describes his stay at two very important universities— Nalanda and Valabhi.
- Traders to and from China regularly crossed the region despite hardships.
- later became famous as the Silk Route.
- There was a continuous flow of scholars
- Acharya Kumarajiva went to China, the king requested him to translate Sanskrit texts into Chinese.
- This contact with China continued even in the thirteenth century when the Mongols established their empire in China
- Chinese art had also been influenced by Indian art
- China began to build cave temples and monastic complexes - Dun-huang caves

Siam or Thailand:

- The original name of the Thailand was Siam.
- One of the most significant cultural contribution of India to Siam is 'Buddhism'.
- Thai script was developed with the help of Indian scholars.
- Indian cultural influences began to reach there in the first century AD.
- It was first carried by Indian traders, followed by teachers and missionaries.
- The traditional laws of that country were composed on the model of Dharmasastras
- Brahminical images and Buddhist temples began to be constructed in third and fourth century AD.
- More than four hundred temples at Bangkok
- contain many sculptures depicting the Ramayana and other Indian mythology
- The Thai kingdoms were given Sanskrit names such as Dwaravati, Shrivijay, Sukhodaya
- The earliest images found from Thailand are those of Lord Vishnu.

Cambodia (Kambhoja):

- The cultural relationship between India and Cambodia goes back to the first and second centuries AD
- Kaundinya dynasty of Indian origin ruled from the first century A.D
- Saivism and Vaishnavism made steady progress.
- There are plenty of Sanskrit inscriptions.
- Their kings bore Sanskrit names like Varmans. Yasovarman and Suryavarman II were well-known rulers.
- The temple is constructed on the Dravidian style
- sculptural representations of Shiva, Vishnu, Buddha and other divinities from Indian Epics and the Puranas
- The sculptures depict episodes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.
- Khmer Empire – King Suryavarman
- He built Angkor Wat Temple
- is a Hindu temple complex in Cambodia and is the largest religious monument in the world
- Originally constructed as a Hindu temple dedicated to the god Vishnu for the Khmer Empire, it was gradually transformed into a Buddhist temple towards the end of the 12th century.
- The Kambhoja kingdom declined only in fifteenth century.

Java, Sumatra and Bali:

- Java was one of the most important colonies of the Hindus in ancient India.
- around 132 A.D. a king named Deva Varman was ruling there
- The chief deities of the people were Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma,
- The largest Shiva temple in Indonesia is situated in the island of Java. It is called Prambanan built in the ninth century.
- The temples dedicated to Durga and Ganesh, numbering eight in all, surrounded by 240 small temples.

Questions:

1. Trace the spread of Indian culture in East Asian Countries with special reference to Sri Lanka, Myanmar and China.
2. Describe India's cultural interaction with the Siam and Cambodia.
3. Write a short note on India's relations with Java, Sumatra and Bali.