

# UPSC

Shadab Ali Khan

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Riyasat IAS Mentorship

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How did ancient India influence the culture, religion & art of Asian countries such as those in South east Asia and East Asia? Explain with examples. (250 W)

India has had a Cultural Contact with South Asian & East Asian Countries since times immemorial. This contact plays key role in these regions art & architecture.

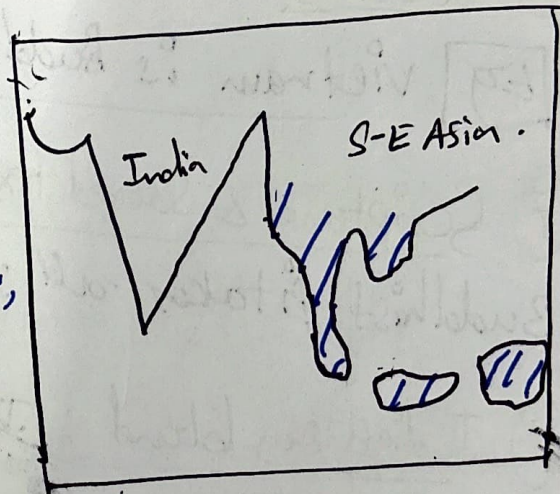
## Influence on South east Asia

### Art & Culture

#### ① Monuments design

Inspired by Indian design, especially Chola

[Eg] Angkor temple in Cambodia



#### ② Stupas & design of temples: [Eg] Myanmar

Stupas design inspired by East India

#### ③ Script: Inspired by traditional Indian

Scripts [Eg] Thai blend by Bhami Script

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④ Festivals: Buddhist & Hindu festivals are celebrated in South-East Asia.  
Eg Buddha's birthday in Sri Lanka.

## \* Religion

⑤ Hinduism: Practiced in countries like Indonesia.  
Eg Bali is Hindu majority.

⑥ Buddhism: Followed all across S-E Asia.  
Eg Vietnam is Buddhist majority.

⑦ Scriptures & Sacred text: Ramayana, Mahabharat, Buddhist Pitakas all found in the region.

⑧ Indigenous blend: Indigenous blend of Buddhist traditions.  
Eg Syncretic religion in Bali.

## East Asia

mostly Japan, North Korea & South Korea

## Art & Culture

① Stupas & monasteries: as follow Buddhist traditions & customs.

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② Paintings: Influence of Jataka painting is evident in schools. [eg] Japanese Buddhist Paintings

③ Similar greetings: folding hands, bowing head, family values etc.

④ Stories & tales: Tale of Indian princes marrying Japanese king & spread of Buddhism in the region.

## Religion

① Buddhism: majority follow Mahayana & Theravada form of Buddhism. [eg] Japan.

② Sacred scriptures: Influence of Indian ethos visible in scriptures. [eg] Sacred Theravada Sutra in South Korea.

③ Cremation: As a mean of disposal of dead inspired by India.

Asia is not one but India is in all Asia,  
Indian Culture heritage can help India  
become voice of Global South.

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Q "The architecture of ancient Buddhist sites reflects a blend of spiritual & functional design". Analyze the structural and symbolic significance of Buddhist architectural elements with examples.

India accounts for 95% of sacred Buddhist sites, these ancient sites are a blend of spiritual & functional design.

Architecture a blend of spiritual & functional design

① Buddhist philosophy is represented by these designs [Eg] Anda of stupas; world taking refuge in Buddha.

② Local & folk designs; Animal figures, local elements  
[Eg] Lotus, Swastik & Bell

③ Jataka Stories; Represent architectural carvings in the sites  
[Eg] Lion represents Son of Buddha.

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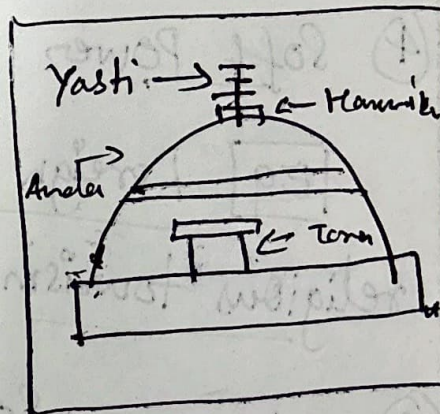
- ④ Structure of architecture; Representing  
the traditions & culture with philosophical basis  
Eg Stupa in Sanchi, local elements are  
seen

Structural significance of Buddhist  
architectural elements

## ① Representation of Buddhist philosophy

### Structure of Stupa;

- ① Harmika: Abode of  
gods
- ② Anda: world taking  
refugee in Buddha.
- ③ Yasti: Three Jewels of  
Buddha.



- ④ Carvings: Jataka stories  
& Buddhist traditions

Eg Dhamek  
Stupa, UP

### ⑤ Symbols:

Lotus => Padmapani;

Thunder bolt => vajrapani

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## Symbolic Significance

- ① Indian ancient past & heritage is represented.
- ② Indian philosophy of "Sarva Dharma Sambhav" being depicted by these sights.
- ③ Pilgrimage sites for Buddhists & monks.
- ④ Soft Power & Cultural diplomacy  
[Eg] Foreign tourist visit sites for religious tourism.
- ⑤ Act. as a source of motivation for Peace & Co-existence.

India's rich Buddhist culture & traditions

Plays key role in Cultural diplomacy.

Schemes like "adopt a heritage" can play key

role in keeping it intact