

INDO-MYANMAR RELATIONS SINCE 1991

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List of Abbreviation

<i>AIR</i>	<i>All India Radio</i>
<i>AITGA</i>	<i>ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement</i>
<i>ARF</i>	<i>ASEAN Regional Forum</i>
<i>ARNO</i>	<i>ArakanRohingya National Organisation</i>
<i>ARSA</i>	<i>ArakanRohingya Salvation Army</i>
<i>ASEAN</i>	<i>Association of South East Asian Nations</i>
<i>ASIDE</i>	<i>Assistance to States for Developing Export Infrastructure and other Allied Activities</i>
<i>BCE</i>	<i>Before Christ Era</i>
<i>BCM</i>	<i>Billion Cubic Meter</i>
<i>BGP</i>	<i>Border Guard Police</i>
<i>BIMSTEC</i>	<i>Bay of Bengal Initiatives for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation</i>
<i>BJP</i>	<i>Bharatya Janata Party</i>
<i>BRICS</i>	<i>Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa</i>
<i>BRO</i>	<i>Border Roads Organisation</i>
<i>BSF</i>	<i>Border Security Force</i>
<i>DFTP</i>	<i>Duty Free Tariff Preference</i>
<i>FDI</i>	<i>Foreign Direct Investment</i>
<i>FTA</i>	<i>Free Trade Agreement</i>
<i>ICCR</i>	<i>Indian Council of Cultural Relation</i>
<i>INA</i>	<i>Indian National Army</i>
<i>IT</i>	<i>Information Technology</i>
<i>JCC</i>	<i>Joint Trade Committee</i>
<i>JTC</i>	<i>Joint Trade Committee</i>
<i>KCP</i>	<i>Kangleipak Communist Party</i>
<i>KYKL</i>	<i>KanglaiYawolKannaLup</i>
<i>LCS</i>	<i>Land Custom Station</i>
<i>LEP</i>	<i>Look East Policy</i>

<i>MOGE</i>	<i>Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise</i>
<i>MoU</i>	<i>Memorandum of Understanding</i>
<i>NAM</i>	<i>Non-Aligned Movement</i>
<i>NDA</i>	<i>National Democratic Alliance</i>
<i>NEC</i>	<i>North Eastern Council</i>
<i>NHPC</i>	<i>National Hydro Power Corporation</i>
<i>NSCN-K</i>	<i>National Socialist Council of Nagaland- Kaplang</i>
<i>ONGC</i>	<i>Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and gas Authority of India Limited</i>
<i>PIOs</i>	<i>People of Indian Origins</i>
<i>Rs.</i>	<i>Rupees</i>
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Rohingya Solidarity Organisation</i>
<i>SAARC</i>	<i>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</i>
<i>SPDC</i>	<i>State Peace and Development Council</i>
<i>TCF</i>	<i>Trillion Cubic Feet</i>
<i>TCM</i>	<i>Trillion Cubic Meter</i>
<i>UN</i>	<i>United Nations</i>
<i>UPA</i>	<i>United Progressive Alliance</i>

CHAPTER-1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

A study of the relations between two or more nations requires an understanding of their foreign policies. Whether the relationship is one of conflict or of cooperation, it has one thing in common, it is, in the ultimate analysis, determined by national interest.¹ They are actively involved in certain activities to meet their national interest in their relations to others, as such, the foreign policy of each nation has been formulated on the basis of these national interests. Foreign policy plays an important role in the reconciliation and improvement of each country with one another. Today, every nation is seeking for independence. However, a country needs to formulate its own policy with other countries which clearly indicated that mutual cooperation among the countries is an important factor which eventually lead to international relations.

India and Myanmar are the two neighbouring countries situated in the South and South East Asia. Both the countries share a land border covering around 1600 kilometres long.² Being a neighbour, India and Myanmar are trying to maintain their relations in order to meet their national interest which help in promoting the economic and socio-political status. As India is looking for power to play an active role in the international relations as well as in the region, it is imperative to promote peaceful cooperation with its neighbouring countries.

The history of Indo-Myanmar relations can be fruitfully traced since 1948, the year in which Burma became an independent sovereign state. The importance of Myanmar for India has been well-defined which are mostly referring to the common past, ethnic, cultural and

¹ B. Pakem (1992), *India and Burma Relations*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications, p.25

² Pramod Kumar, "India-Myanmar Economic Relations: A Road to Heal Political Relations", *World Focus*, Vol. 34, No. 10 (October, 2013), p. 16

religious relations.³ With the strong nationalist movement which emerged in India and Burma after the Second World War led to the struggle for independence from their colonial ruler. As such, both the countries were engaged in the anti-British movement and struggle for independence.

The relationship between India and Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) during the nationalist movement were quite close in the sense that Burmese nationalism was greatly influenced by Indian national movement. During this time, it was India that served as a source of inspiration and strength for millions of Burmese who raised their voice against the British colonial rule. Indian nationalists set the pace for reforms on various stages in Burma and demonstrated methods of political action aimed at gaining freedom from British colonial rule. The boycott, hartal and the legislative walk-out were the techniques of political agitations which spread the Burma from India.⁴ The nationalist movement of both countries realized the need for mutual understanding and collaborations for attaining their common British imperialists. Opposition to the common enemy i.e. the British strengthened the bond of cooperation between the nationalist movements of both the countries. But an important feature of the nationalism of Burma was its anti-foreignism directed against the British but at the times against the immigrants from India as well.⁵ The presence of a large number of ethnic Indians in Burma, their growing economic position, their transitory character and the growth of aggressive nationalism in Burma created bitterness against Indians in the minds of the Burmese people.⁶ However, despite this bitterness on the part of Myanmar, people of the two countries cooperated with one another. Moreover, nationalist leaders of India advised the

³Anil Kamboj, "India's Engagement with Myanmar", *World Focus*, Vol. 34, No. 10 (October, 2013), p.3

⁴ Albert D.Moscotti (1974), *British Policy and the Nationalist Movement in Burma: 1917-1993*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, p.20

⁵Bipendra Prasad, "Indo-Burmese Relations: A Study in Contradiction", *Modern Review*, Vol. 140, No.5, (November 1976), p.273

⁶ Ibid.,

Indians who had settled in Burma to cooperate with the Burmese government thereby promoting peace and integrity in the country.

The close relationship between the two leaders of the countries during their struggle continued when India and Burma attained independence from the British colonial rule on 15 August 1947 and 4 January 1948 respectively. As such, the ideological relationship between the leaders of the two states in their fight for independence had led to a good relation between the two them in the years following the independence.

After India got independence, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru formulated India's foreign policy towards the outside world. During that time, India's relations with Myanmar was friendly and cordial. The influence Jawaharlal Nehru was so great on Myanmar as Myanmar Prime Minister U Nu considered India as a role model during Myanmar first experiment with democracy. During the period following Independence, India was seen as Myanmar's most helpful friend in the regional neighbourhood.

After its independence, Myanmar, like India also decided to base its foreign policy on the principle of Non-Alignment and Peaceful co-existence and to fight the forces of imperialism, colonialism and expansionism which posed a great threat to the world peace. It also devoted to support fully the national liberation movement in other Asian countries against imperialism and colonialism. The foreign policy of Burma was more or less the same with the foreign policy principles of India. This similarities of the foreign policies between the two countries has led to the development of cordial relationship after independence. As such, the two countries found it quite convenient to embark upon the path of developing friendly and cooperative relation between them. The historical, cultural and economic link further provided a helpful base for the development of Indo-Myanmar friendship and cooperation.

When the Portuguese attacked Indonesia for the second time in 1948, the government of Burma called upon Prime Minister Nehru to try to convene a conference of Asian countries for expressing opposition to this aggression against Indonesia. This marked the same ideological stands which India and Myanmar developed just after their independence. Since that time both the countries have been cooperating for promoting unity among the Afro-Asian nations and to help the Third World countries who were suffering the colonial suppression by their rulers.

The period between 1948-1962, the relationship between India and Myanmar were warm and close during the period Indian Prime Minister, Nehru and his counterpart of Myanmar Prime Minister U Nu. During that time, as a sign of its friendship, India had provided certain economic and military assistance to Myanmar to help Myanmar to rebuild its economy. Besides, both the countries actively participated in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).⁷ Initially, with the achievement of independence on 4 January 1948, Myanmar adopted parliamentary democracy under the leadership of U Nu. Relationship with India was quite remarkable. However, from 1962 onwards, the military junta with General Ne Win at the head took control over the administration and introduced socialism as a way of life for the people. Consequently, the friendly relationship between the two countries began to weaken. The military junta took control over all the administrations and adopted a close economy which it refused to expose to the global world. The military junta had ruled the country for almost three decades. During this time, not much relations was found between India and Myanmar.

When the mass movement for democracy broke out in August 1988 and the consequent repression followed in the subsequent months, India obviously was the first country to come

⁷ C.S. Kuppaswamy, "Indo-Myanmar Relations-A Review", *South Asia Analysis Group*, Working Paper 2043, November 30, 2006.

out strongly against the ruling junta in support of the movement. Regardless of the need for developing relations with Myanmar for security and economic considerations, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was condemning the brutality of the military dictatorship with which the people of Myanmar were suppressed in the country for democratic movement. It was India who became the first country to support the genuine aspiration of the people of Myanmar for restoration of democracy on.

India, being the largest democratic country in the world, could not tolerate the suppressive nature of the military junta in Myanmar. India extended full support for the liberation of Myanmar during the movement. It was from 1988 that their relations began to improve as a result of the compassion of the Indian Government to the pro-democracy undertaking which was in progress during the 1980s. Economic and security compulsion compelled the government of India to move closer towards the Myanmar regime.

However, the friendship bond between the two nations saw a new change in the early 1990s. India initiated economic reform in 1991 followed by its Look East Policy (LEP) directed towards the countries of South East Asia, and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a whole and Myanmar in particular. However, Myanmar remains a top priority in the optimal success of India's new foreign policy of engaging with its distant and immediate neighbour, taking into consideration of Northeast India. As a means of supporting Myanmar democratic movement, the All India Radio (AIR) programmes were criticising the military rule. India reversed its standpoint with a more truthful and reasonable policy and started engage in the military government. Since then, the relationships between India and Myanmar have been growing steadily as Myanmar and India looked each other as an important counterpart towards each other.

Indeed, India's attempt in maintaining relationship with Myanmar was two folds. One is maintaining economic, political and cultural relations with Myanmar. The other is to get access to the ASEAN countries through Myanmar as Myanmar provide the only gateway to this grouping. India was trying to maintain multilateral relations with the ASEAN groupings for which Myanmar itself was a member. In order to have access to the South East Asia, India has to make a cordial relationship with Myanmar first since the country is the only land bridge country from amongst the ASEAN nations. As such, India, for its first initiatives introduced its Look East Policy which clearly emphasis its economic policy towards the ASEAN nations.

1.1. Review of Literature

The study of the relationship between India and Myanmar has been increasingly important for both the country to understand their actual relations in reality, to foster the linkages between the two countries and to find out solution to the problems that arise between them. Since Myanmar has a critical importance for India to enter into the Southeast Asian nations, maintaining good relations with Myanmar is an imperative.

A number of works can be found relating to Indo-Myanmar relations in N. Jayapalan's book, *Foreign Policy of India*.⁸ He attempts to analyse the spirit underlying the principles of India's foreign policy which can be best appreciated. The main foundations of Indian foreign policy, the elements and determinants of Indian foreign policy towards the outside world are also discussed in this book.

India-Burma Relations, by B. Pakem provides an in depth understanding of the relationship between India and Myanmar by providing information about the relationship between India and Myanmar before independence, after independence, their economic relationship, border

⁸ N. Jayapalan (2001), *Foreign Policy of India*, New Delhi: Atlantic publishers and Distributors.

disputes and also the China factor in Indo-Myanmar relations.⁹ To understand the basic factors which have determined the shifts in Indo Myanmar relations since independence. This book also proposed the political, economic and cultural co-operations between the two countries and also the problems which requires understanding between the two countries.

Another important book which deals with Indo-Myanmar relations is Dhiraj Srivastava's work, *India's Foreign Policy and Its Neighbour*.¹⁰ This book describes the political history of India and its neighbours and also talks about the changing dimension of foreign policy of India after independence towards the outside world and towards its distant neighbours. It also concerns with how India maintain its relations with the neighbouring countries in the sphere of economic, political and cultural.

Indian Foreign Policy by AbhaySrivastav, provides the topographical significance of Myanmar for India as Myanmar shares around 1600 kilometres border with India in the North-eastern part.¹¹ We also see a political transition of Myanmar from military junta to democracy and the active efforts of India for helping Myanmar for the achievements of democratic status and also Indo-Myanmar friendship through regional groupings like BIMSTEC, MGC, etc.

India's Foreign Policy in a Changing World written by V.P. Dutt, explores the present universal condition of India and the domestic interaction with it.¹² It takes account of all the twist and turns, the paradoxes and the currents situations in international politics and recommends that Indian foreign policy should be sensitive to the developing worldwide development. It recognizes the importance of the economic struggle in the world today and discusses it in detail in relations to India's foreign policy.

⁹ B. Pakem (1992), *India-Burma Relations*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications.

¹⁰ Dhiraj Srivastava (2007), *India's Foreign Policy and Its Neighbours*, Jaipur: ABD Publishers.

¹¹ AbhaySrivastav (2011), *Indian Foreign Policy*, New Delhi: Mohit Publications.

¹² V.P. Dutt (2003), *India's Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

K. Raja Reddy's edited book *India and ASEAN: Foreign Policy Dimensions for the 21st Century*, highlighted India's relations with the Southeast Asian nations.¹³ Looking towards the East is an important foreign policy of India since 1980s started by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, which was again revitalized by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in the early 1990s concentrating on forging links and enhancing cultural, economic, political and strategic cooperation with the Southeast Asia. He transformed this important need into India's Foreign Policy initiative which was culminated in 'Look East Policy'.

Another book which contributes much to the understanding of Indian foreign Policy is S.R. Sharma's book *Foundations of Indian Foreign Policy*.¹⁴ This book provides us with certain information about the basic principles of India's foreign policy, discussing the foreign policy during the cold war period based on complete neutrality. During that time Indian foreign policy had seen ups and downs and it made various adjustments as she was trying to survive between the ideological war between the East and the West. We have several information about the survival of Indian foreign policy from any outside interference.

An article *Reconciliation and Redefinition of the Indo-Myanmar Relations* by RimliBasu, is also an interesting article on the issue of Indo-Myanmar relations.¹⁵ This article deals about India's attempt to engage with the Southeast nations with Myanmar as the gateway to it. It also traces the political relations between India and Myanmar since independence and the changing political relations in the subsequent years. It also covers the possible future possible relations and the problems that are likely to occur between them in future.

¹³ K. Raja Reddy (2005), *India and ASEAN- Foreign Policy Dimension for the 21st Century*, New Delhi: New Century Publication.

¹⁴ S.R. Sharma (2002), *Foundation of Indian Foreign Policy*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications.

¹⁵ RimliBasu, "Reconciliation and Redefinition of the Indo-Myanmar Relations", *The Indian Journals of Political Science*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (April- June, 2010), pp.663-676

A book, *Looking East Policy: Impact on Northeast India*, Edited by Charles Reuben Lyngdoh and Merostar Rani¹⁶ provides a significant information about the impact of Look East Policy, launched by the Government of India to enhance its bilateral relationships with the Southeast Asian countries via Myanmar. Since Look East Policy is a proposal initiated to address the North-eastern part of India for economic improvement, it has played a vital role for the development of the North-eastern states of India economically. The book has put up certain important issues like the role of North-eastern states for implementing the Policy, border trade relations, promotion of tourism in Northeast and even regional cooperation.

A Journal, *India and the Quest for Democracy in Myanmar: Rethinking India's Myanmar Policy*, by LangpoklakpamSuraj Singh¹⁷ analyses the relationship between India and Myanmar in the global perception and examines various dimensions. This article provides the relations between India and Myanmar historically, economically and politically. The article also provides how India and Myanmar maintain their relationship, how the economic relations boosts its political relations and what are the changing relations between the two countries.

Challenges and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy, a book, by Rajiv Sikri¹⁸ scrutinizes India's recent and future foreign policy challenges from a deliberate and policy-oriented viewpoint. It analyses the long-term factors and developments that should regulate the country's foreign policy making. The author urges a reconsideration of India's approach if it is to become a major player in the composite and fast evolving 21st century world. The book also focuses on India's instant and strategic neighbourhood. It also looks at the

¹⁶ Charles RerubenLyngdoh and Merostar Rani (2008), *Looking East Policy: Impact on Northeast India*,(ed),New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.

¹⁷LangpoklakpamSuraj Singh, "India and the Quest for Democracy in Myanmar: Rethinking India's Myanmar Policy", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.71, No.3 (July-Sept 2010), pp.1003-1016

¹⁸ Rajiv Sikri (2009), *Challenges and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy*, New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd.

interaction between defence and diplomacy and foreign policy institution. It is a combination of the perspective of a historian, a diplomat and a scholar and it makes a valued input in the ongoing debate on foreign policy inside India's strategic community.

The edited book, *Looking East Policy & India's North East: Polemics and Perspectives*, by ThingnamKishan Singh¹⁹ provides lots of information about India's Look East Policy (LEP). The book emphasises the origin and Concepts of LEP which India adopted as a mechanism to enhance its collaboration with the South East Asian nations. The book mainly focuses on the impact of LEP on the North East Region of India which is a gateway to enter the South East countries. Its main emphasis is how Northeast states of India would benefit the LEP or would it be a great threat to the people of north east. It also discusses the LEP's ecological and environmental implications, underdeveloped nature of Manipur's sociological landscape, effect of LEP on the economy of the Northeast. In the later part of the book, we find the role played by Myanmar to the enhancement of its relations with India.

Besides the above books, several other books and journals and articles have been gone through which helps in understanding the exact relations between the two countries. Although, several works have been done relating to Indo-Myanmar relations, there is not much work which specifically focus on Indo-Myanmar relations after 1991, which examine the paradigmatic shifts between India and Myanmar relations. Hence, it is imperative to make a scientific study of this transformation as there is hardly any substantial work on the issues of India's re-engagement with Myanmar in terms of the problems and challenges which have emerged between India and Myanmar. Therefore, an attempt to study Indo- Myanmar relations in this regard is imperative.

1.2. Statement of the problem

¹⁹ThingnamKishan Singh (2009), *Look East Policy & India's North East: Polemics and Perspective*, (ed), New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

The relationship between India and Myanmar was once marked by friendly and cooperative relationship. However, due to internal problems that arose in Myanmar as result of undemocratic activities which culminated in the overthrow of the democratic system by the military coup. Since then, the relationship had undergone paradigmatic changes vis-à-vis the political, economic and cultural relations that existed in the initial stages of their independence. It was from the late 1980s that the process of normalization between the two countries started with the end of military decade by the General election in 2010. The democratization of Myanmar encouraged India to pursue its policy more proactively.

Myanmar is the only land bridge between Southeast Asian nations and therefore, the country has the potential to be a vital player in shaping the future economic, security and political environment in the region. In the changing economic architecture of South and Southeast Asia, India's engagement with Myanmar has become an imperative. As the only Southeast Asian Country sharing land border with India, it could provide the right connection to the rest of Southeast Asian countries.

Besides, the importance of Myanmar can be seen in the context of India's strong and active initiatives in sub-regional groupings like Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Mekong-Ganga-Cooperation (MGC), Kunmin Initiatives, etc. for achieving the objectives of Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a common development of infrastructure and integration of national economies in the global economy. However, besides Myanmar's significance for India, the government of India still neglecting the enhancement of its relations with Myanmar. As Myanmar is the only gateway to ASEAN nations, India has to take more and more effective efforts in order to enlarge its relations in different spheres.

India's engagement with certain sub-regional groupings are obviously to merge with the Southeast Asian nations for trade relations. Various developmental activities have been undertaken with the initiatives of Indian government like Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo Highway, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Kaladan Multimodal Transit Route, etc. All these projects are to foster the link roads between the Southeast Asian nations via Myanmar, however, all these projects are still not finished as the proposed plan. This clearly shows the negligence on the part of Indian government to maintain or foster the relationship between its neighbouring countries especially Myanmar. So, instead of just rhetoric about its Look East Policy India needs to act so as to realise the full potential that can be accrued in its relations with Myanmar in terms of economic, political and cultural co-operations. If, not all of the attempts to maintain cordial relations might not lead to what has been expected to be with the Myanmar's government.

1.3. Objectives

The proposed work has the following objectives.

1. To examine the cultural ties vis-a-vis person to person contact between India and Myanmar.
2. To evaluate the bilateral trade relations as a factor for the growing strategic relations.
3. To analyse the evolving political relations between India and Myanmar since 1991.

1.4. Research questions

1. Is India and Myanmar maintaining cultural relations to enhance their economic and political relations?
2. Has there been a significant increase in the bilateral trade between India and Myanmar which implies the strategic importance of Myanmar as a gateway to Southeast Asia?

3. In recent decades has there been a gradual enhancement of politico-strategic link between India and Myanmar?

1.5. Methodology

The research work is an analytical and descriptive in nature. It adopted both historical as well as empirical approaches. It is based on both primary and secondary source. The primary sources include documents and publications of Government, etc. Secondary sources include both published and unpublished works apart from journals, newspaper and other relevant materials.

An empirical analysis of data is conducted by undertaking interviews of some selected political leaders and government officials who are directly or indirectly involved in the activities. In order to collect data, the Questionnaire method and random sampling survey method is also adopted.

1.6. Chapterization

CHAPTER-1 : Introduction: The first chapter covers the problems, objectives of the study, hypotheses, research method and chapterization of the study.

CHAPTER-2 : Ideological Relations: This chapter discusses the ideological factors that contributed to the development of political relations between India and Myanmar before and after independence.

CHAPTER-3 : Cultural Relations: This chapter look into the background of cultural ties, people to people contact, problems arising out between the two countries which contributed to the development of Indo-Myanmar Relations.

- CHAPTER-4 : Economic Relations: This chapter covers the economic significance of Myanmar for India, by taking into account the bilateral trade relations, and related developmental activities that have been undertaken to connect the Southeast Asian countries via Myanmar.
- CHAPTER-5 : Political-Strategic Relations: A New Dimension: This chapter analyses the changing political-strategic relations that occurred as a result of democratic movement in Myanmar and also of changing foreign policy on the part of India towards Myanmar and the Southeast Asian nations.
- CHAPTER-6 : Conclusion: This chapter contains the summary of the findings of the research.

CHAPTER -2: IDEOLOGICAL RELATIONS

Introduction

India and Myanmar represent two important area of the world in South and South East Asia respectively. These two countries are neighbours to each other because of the facts of geography. Historically too, the two countries had a very long period of mutual contact with each other in the realm of trade, religion, law, culture and even in the sphere of commerce.¹ There was not much administrative affairs between India and Myanmar in the pre-British period. The infiltration of British power in both the countries in the eighteen and nineteenth century formed the conditions which carried the two countries into administrative or political relationship. A proper relationship, which was influenced by external and internal factors developed only after the two countries became an independent actor after 1947.

2.1. Ideological Relations in Pre-Independence Period

India and Myanmar had similar historical experiences, the influence of which was felt in Myanmar since the ancient times. Both India and Myanmar were under the British imperial authority. The relationship of the two states under British rule had developed a common understanding and they began to cooperate in their fight for independence from the British power.² Even after the separation of Myanmar from the British India, the leaders of both the countries supported each other in their struggle for independence against the British rule. The common historical experience had its impact on the formulation of its foreign policy between India and Myanmar. The result was the common foreign policy between them in the period after independence.

¹ B. Pakem (1992), *India-Burma Relations*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications. p.1

²<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/jspui/bitstream/10603/183421/7/7%2520chapter1.pdf&ved=2ahUKewjvhZO0nabfAhWHwI8KHeDgClwQFjAAegQIBxAB&usg=AOvVaw1C4vr-yvOUsImjh9Q7ODGM&cshid=1545028042205> accessed on 23.09.2018 07:13 p.m.

The relations between the two countries during nationalist movement seem to be good because Burmese nationalism was influenced by Indian national movement. It was India that served the source of inspiration for millions of Burmese who raised their voice against the British colonial rule. Indian nationalists set the pace for reforms on the various stages in Burma and demonstrated methods of political action aimed at gaining freedom from British colonial rule. Nationalist movement of both countries realised the need for mutual understanding and collaborations for attaining freedom from their common British imperialism. Opposition to this common enemy strengthened the bond of cooperation between the nationalist movements of both countries.³ The strong bond of cooperation that had been prevailed between the two countries greatly influenced the foreign policy after independence. Therefore, the ideological similarities and dissimilarities of the foreign policy of India and Myanmar after independence can be analysed in the followings:

2.2. Ideological Relations in Post-Independence Period

The Foreign Policy of India came to have its independent character only after the dawn of independent in 1947. However, it must be admitted that even under the British rule India had been engaged in the international politics and developed a sort of foreign policy of her own. India has participated in international affairs ever since before her independence.⁴ When India became independent from the British rule, India was trying to be isolated from the external affairs after her independence because of her poor economic status and adopted a close economy in the international affairs.

However, despite its closed economy, India had to maintain relations with other countries, especially to its neighbour states. As such, India was maintaining a limited scope of relationship with other countries in order to improve its economic and political status in the

³Birendra Prasad, "Indo-Burmese Relations 1937-1947: A Study in Contradiction", *Modern Review*: Calcutta, Vol.140, No.5 (November 1973). p.273

⁴U.R Ghai (2011), *Foreign Policy of India*, (ed), Jalandhar: New Academic Publishing. p.37

world. It can be stated that in its administrative structure for constructing diplomacy and formulation of foreign policy, in some of its definitions of the national interest and formulation of policies on some important subjects and its style of diplomacy, the Government of India led by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru followed some of the precedents of the British Indian Government.

The ideological commitment of the concerned leadership has played a significant role in the shaping of foreign policy.⁵ India is also no exception. However, the foreign policy of India was not committed to any thrilling ideology as the framers of the foreign policy were following a policy of neutrality to a large extent which play a momentous role in the making of Indian foreign policy. Jawaharlal Nehru, the founder of India's foreign policy was intensely impressed by liberal democratic ideology of the Western states, and at the same time he was also influenced by the economic policies of the Soviet Union. He wanted to keep away from the extreme factors of the two ideologies. However, he also wanted to incorporate the synthesis of the virtue of these ideologies. He, then, decided not to blindly follow the foreign policy of either of the two ideologies while at the same time incorporate the positive points in its foreign policy.⁶

India-Myanmar relations in the post-independent era was marked by two astounding leaders on either side, viz. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his counter prime Minister of Myanmar, U Nu. The spirit of friendship between the two leaders had transformed Myanmar joining the Non-Aligned group which India was the founding member. India and Myanmar were close allies in the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) in the 1950s and the several years preceding that. During the 1950s, the relationship between the two states experienced a remarkable friendship as Myanmar's Prime Minister U Nu considered India as its source of strength and

⁵V.N Khanna (2010), *Foreign Policy of India*, (ed), Delhi: Vikash Publishing House Pvt Ltd. pp. 23-24

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.24

foreign policy. India was seen as the most helpful friend in the regional neighbourhood by Myanmar government during this period.

However, the political instability of Myanmar arose out of the communists in the north-western sector, did compel military intervention at the invitation of U Nu, thereby allowing the military to remain as a caretaker government in Myanmar for the next two years. The military intervention, although it was initially invited one, ultimately culminated a coup-d'état of 1962 by General Ne Win.⁷ This led their relations in a negative way as the military took control over Myanmar. With the military intervention of Myanmar, India's relations with Myanmar stagnated and began to deteriorate.

Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India had played a crucial role in the shaping of our foreign policy, even with the neighbouring countries. The charisma of Nehru and his governance left its impact both on domestic and on foreign policy. In internal policy and administration, he built essentially on the prevailing system that had developed during the British period. He built up contacts with sovereign states, created a foreign service and formulated foreign policy. He promoted collaboration with the peoples of the countries of Asia and Africa who were still under colonial masters.⁸ His works had been playing a significant role in the maintenance of India's relations with other countries, even with its neighbouring countries. Being the largest democratic country and because of its ideology, many of the developing countries saw India as friend and maintained diplomatic relations with India.

2.2.1. Indian Foreign Policy

Like the foreign policy of each nation, Indian Foreign Policy also has its source of strength in some recognized and well-known ideologies. The foreign policy of India derives its source of

⁷RimliBasu, "Reconciliation and Redefinition of the Indo-Myanmar Relations", *The Indian Journals of Political Science*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (April- June, 2010). p.666

⁸V.N Khanna, op.cit., p.25

strength from several ideologies like Gandhian ideology, Liberalism, Democratic Socialism and Internationalism as well as from several particular ideologies. Besides, it is also determined by a sum of historic and domestic factors. Several such factors have been responsible for the shaping of philosophies and ideas of the foreign policy.⁹ Thus, the foreign policy of India is shaped and determined by various factors like history, culture, geography and economy. Preservation of national interests, achievements of world peace, disarmament, independence for Afro-Asian nations and good neighbourly relations has been important objectives of India's foreign policy at the time of Independence. The first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru gave a definite shape to the country's foreign policy which are sought to achieve through certain principles.

2.2.1. (a) *Panchsheel*

One of the important ideologies that influence the foreign policy of India is the Panchsheel which means a principle of peaceful co-existence with other nations.¹⁰ It is regarded as one of the fundamental principles as the way to peace, harmony, friendship and co-operation against the negative ways of armament race and preparation for war as a means of peace. The term Panchsheel is a composite of two Sanskrit terms 'Panch' meaning five and 'Sheel' meaning code of behaviour or conduct. As such, Panchsheel means five principles of code of conduct which India should follow in its relations with the neighbouring countries. It stands for five principles which are designed to guide the mutual relations among nations. The relationship between India and her neighbour countries were guided by these principles which was designed to shape and control mutual relations with other countries.

Nehru, who was the strong believer of brotherhood and mutual cooperation among the nations and believed the strong bonds of relations between peace for development and existence of human being. He saw the devastation which was caused by the First World War and the

⁹V.N Khanna, *op.cit.*, p.28

¹⁰U.R Ghai, *op.cit.*, p.56.

Second World War, therefore, he was of the opinion that for the growth and development of a nation a long lasting of peace was needed. Hence, he gave highest importance to world peace in the formulation and planning of foreign policy. India and China signed an agreement on April 28, 1954. As such, India advocated obedience to five administrative principles which guide its foreign policy known as *Panchsheel* for the conduct of its relations with other countries. Panchsheel includes the following:¹¹

- 1) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- 2) Mutual non-aggression
- 3) Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- 4) Equality and mutual benefits, and
- 5) Peaceful co-existence

This Agreement between India and China enumerates best the principles of peaceful cooperation which India has been maintaining with its neighbouring states. It is one of the most important components of India's foreign policy.

India has always welcomed friendly diplomatic relations with countries all over the world, mainly with the powerful countries and in particular, with the neighbouring states. These are ideologies of each independent states in their foreign relations in order to respect the territorial integrity of others and not to commit violence against other sovereign states. The principles contained in Panchsheel were, according to Nehru, a consequence of democratic outlook. He argues that the person who rejects the idea of co-existence rejects basically the

¹¹AbhaySrivastav (2011), *Indian Foreign Policy*, New Delhi: Mohit Publication.pp.2-3

democratic outlook.¹² Hence, the principles of Panchsheel had been playing a major role in its foreign policy formulations with other countries.

As the most important aspect of Panchsheel, is peaceful co-existence. It played a vital role during the period when ideology had often caused tensions, conflicts and wars. Hatred was spread among the countries in the name of ideology which led to war, aggression and annexation. In order to demise these kind of evil practices, following the path of peaceful co-existence is very crucial. As such the idea of peaceful co-existence is morally correct for India as it allows the country to follow her ideology without any outside interference.

It is pointed out that the principles of Panchsheel can never be put into practice. However, it has been rightly pointed out that in spite of conflicts in the past, the conflicting parties have survived. It is considered that Panchsheel is at best an abstract conception like equality, freedom, discipline, respect for law, etc. However, its mere enunciation does not solve our problems.¹³ A tremendous effort has to be made in order to create the conditions which should facilitate its practice. Peaceful co-existence can be possible only when certain essential conditions are present. For this, the ideology of Panchsheel has been playing a crucial role in the development of relations between the countries.

2.2.1. (b) *Non-Alignment*

Non-Alignment can be regarded as one of the most important feature of India's foreign policy.¹⁴ The main objective of Non-Alignment was maintaining national self-determination in external activities by keeping distance from either of the alliances formed by the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War period in the aftermath of the Second World War. Non-Alignment was adopted by India as mechanism of foreign policy in order to ensure

¹² V.N Khanna, *op.cit.*, p.35

¹³ K.R Gupta and Vatsala Shukla (2009), *Foreign Policy of India*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher and Distributors(P) Ltd., p.107

¹⁴ *Ibid.*,

the meaning and content to the newly achieved political status from the colonial rule. It was well thought out and well planned policy by the founding member countries which India was a part of it. The ultimate objective of Non-Alignment for India was to promote the national interest that include not only security of India's independence and regional integrity, but also socio-economic progress of the Third World in general and India in particular, and international peace and security. So, India was actively engaged in maintaining peace in the Third World countries who are economically backward and vulnerable to the powerful countries.

As the Non-Alignment was a group of newly independent states who refused to join the power blocs and decided to act according to their own will and judgement on issues of international concern. Non-Alignment is in fact, an anti-imperialist approach which prevailed during the Cold War period. It provided all members countries, irrespective of their size and status, an opportunity to contribute in international decision making and world political affairs.

While adopting the Non-Alignment, Nehru justified it as an essentially a principle of world peace and independent foreign policy based upon self-respect and national interest.¹⁵ He felt that involvement or alignment with any one bloc or superpower would endanger world peace. He also argued that the alignment with these superpowers will limit ability of India to work for world peace, friendship and cooperation with other countries. Further, Nehru also believed that it will also limit India's freedom to express her opinion freely on international issues and problems. Non-alignment has helped India to secure the goals of her national interests. It has fruitfully helped India to act as an independent actor in international relations.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 46-47

Since NAM emerged as one of the products of Cold War, there have been continuous questioning on the relevance of NAM after the Cold War with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, till today, NAM has been playing an important role to play in terms of changing global environment with the advent of new challenges for the global peace and safety. The principles of NAM were not only limited to keeping away from the Cold War politics, it was also to maintain peace and integrity in the international politics. As such, NAM can act as a balancer of the world politics. It still remains a very significant forum for the Third World states in order to deal with the developed nations in a productive dialogue.

2.2.1. (c) *Opposition to Imperialism, Colonialism and Racism*

Having suffered under the yoke of British imperialism, India fully realised the anti-human, anti-liberal and highly exploitative character of imperialism, colonialism and racialism.¹⁶ As a victim, opposition to these evils has been a fundamental principle of the Indian foreign policy. Imperialism and colonialism are regarded by India as the instrument of oppression and exploitation which constitutes the biggest dangers to world peace. As such, to fight these evils is a fundamental objective of Indian foreign policy. All such countries who were the victim of imperialism received full support from India in their struggle for freedom from the colonial rule. India extended its full support to these countries even after their independence from the neo-colonialism efforts of the powerful countries.

India also believes in the equality of all races and totally opposes discriminations against the people of any race. Even before her independence, India strongly opposed racial discrimination that took place in South Africa. The Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi were an active supporter of equality of all races. The foreign policy of India was also determined by this ideology. After her independence, India had become the most outspoken critic of racialism that posed a great threat to world peace. India opposed and rejected the doctrine of

¹⁶ Ibid.,

white supremacy. It has always been active in fighting against the evil of apartheid. India has been committing to eradicate this kind of evils in its attempt to maintain world peace.

2.2.1. (d) *Support for United Nations and World Peace*

India has been one of the original members of the United Nations (U.N). It participated in the San Francisco Conference and signed the Charter of the United Nations.¹⁷ Since that time, India has been actively engaged and participating in the activities of the United nations. India has always viewed U.N. as a means for promoting peace and integrity in world politics. Being the lover of peace, India has always expected U.N. to actively involved in the affairs of the world politics to moderate the problems that arose among the nations through dialogues or negotiations. Further, India has strongly supported an active role which U.N has been playing for the development of the Third World countries. Indeed, the U.N has been playing an important role in protecting world peace by helping the Colonial countries in the decolonisation process, through providing humanitarian and developmental support and negotiation.¹⁸ Thus, besides her engagement in the world politics, India has been the main actor in uplifting the status of the Third World by providing help for their economic and political development.

When Cold War ended in the early 1990s, keeping an old relationship and looking for new friends is another challenge of Indian foreign policy. India has been trying to maintain its relationship and deepen such relationship for her economic and political interest. She finally realised the significance of economic aspects for her external policy. As such, India has been trying to establish a new basis for its relationships with the neighbouring states besides the its global policies.

¹⁷U.R Ghai, *op.cit.*,p. 49

¹⁸SumitGanguly (2010), *India's Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p.2.

2.2.2. Myanmar's Foreign Policy

When Myanmar got independence status from British in 1948, like India, the overall foreign policy orientation of Myanmar was that of neutrality and adherence to the five doctrines of coexistence, with ready acceptance of NAM membership.¹⁹ However, from 1962 onwards, with the military takeover of General Ne Win and Myanmar closed economic policy, the relationship between India and Myanmar remain well but not good. During the period of military rule, the military government of Myanmar followed the policy of isolationism from the international politics leading to the withdrawal even from its NAM membership in the year, 1979.

Foreign policy of Myanmar is largely an outcome of its own perception of the global and regional strategic environment. Like the foreign policy of other countries, Myanmar foreign policy is based on certain principles or factors, which are discussed as under.

2.2.2.(a) *Non-Alignment*

Since her independence in 1948, Myanmar also adopted Non-Alignment as the basic source of her foreign policy. The commitment of Myanmar to Non-Alignment was basically determined by two factors. Firstly, the desire of Myanmar remain free from any external control either direct or indirect, and secondly, the need for socio-economic development.²⁰ As the basic feature of the Non-Alignment is being friendly with all the nations, refusal of foreign economic assistance with any string attached and denial of alignment with any power bloc. Myanmar, being the victim of the colonial rule, support for anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist attitude realising the evil effect of these apartheid. Myanmar's economic potential had been damaged by the war and what Myanmar needed after independence was the reorganisation of its economy.

¹⁹RimliBasu, *op.cit*, p.666

²⁰J.S Furnivall, "Burma: Past and Present", *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol.22, No.3, (25 February 1953), p.23

2.2.2.(b) *Isolationism*

Traditionally, Myanmar has been an isolationist nation. The country's century old isolationist attitude from the rest of the world was mainly due to its geography and belief in Buddhism. Otherworldliness was revived once again when the General Ne Win came to power in 1962.²¹ The Myanmar government adopted closed economy and paid interest to domestic affairs rather than the international. It tried to be strictly neutral in foreign affairs even to the point of isolating itself. Myanmar had decided to be isolated from the world economy. Furthermore, the country ceased to play an active role in the Non-Alignment.

As Myanmar has stopped most links with the outside world, its economy operated in a very secluded and autocratic way. Most of the foreign cultural institutions and practices were forbidden. Under the isolationist ideology the military junta restricted diplomatic activities to a bare minimum. It opted a policy to follow a dogmatic bilateralism grounded on personal, high level diplomacy in relations to other countries. So Myanmar, under the military leadership of Ne Win ensured deprived of the economic aids of engaging with other states. At the same time, all the property and business of the foreign nationals were nationalised and foreigners were asked to leave Myanmar. Freedom of the press was restricted and the military government also operated vehemently to curb publicity and information activities of external political duties. The freedom of the people to have direct contact to the world affairs was also denied by the government. Activities of the foreign representatives were strictly monitored, and even the government representatives were not allowed to deal with the foreign diplomats without the prior authorisation of the military junta. The nationalisation programme of Myanmar directly affected the diaspora in the country and thousands of these people were forced to flee the Myanmar. The effort was indigenisation of the Myanmar economic

²¹NiluparChoudhary (2000), *Burma's Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change*, New Delhi:Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd., p.420

activities by replacing the private foreign maintained enterprises in the hands of the society of Myanmar.

2.2.2.(c) Policy of Neutralism

Neutralism has been the basic principle of Myanmar foreign policy for a long time. This principle protected the country from conquest, dismemberment and political domination by the foreign powers. It was because of this principle that Myanmar was famous in a dynamic world. For this, the personality or charisma of the concern leaders play an important role in the formulation of Myanmar's neutralist policy. It was developed by U Nu during the years following independence and was based on considerable freedom of action in extension to their political and economic relations with different countries of the world.

The leader of Myanmar argued that the policy of neutralism was not a negative policy towards the world affairs. It was rather a positive concept because it was a policy of seeking peace and friendship with all countries. Further, it was a policy of actively seeking to discover new cooperation with other countries through negotiation and compromise. Thus, this policy was an attempt to stay away from the cold war politics as a means of maintaining world peace and to strengthen mutual relations with other countries.

2.2.2.(d) Panchsheel

Like India, the principle of Panchsheel has played a significant role in Myanmar's foreign policy. This five principle of peaceful coexistence were adopted by India, China and Myanmar as it was signed on 28 June, 1954 and 29 June, 1954 in Delhi and Yangon respectively. Myanmar too, has been trying to maintain these principles to meet friendly relations with its neighbouring countries. As such Myanmar has acted to achieve these principles by constantly supporting disarmament, national liberation movement,

decolonisation and opposing arms race, production and sale, supporting, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid, racial discrimination to ensure international peace and security.

2.3. India and Myanmar: Ideological Interface

The foreign policy of India also stands for the objective of free and friendly co-operation among the nation-states. It opposes tooth and nail, imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racial discrimination, other unnatural inequalities and war in international relations. The faith in the sovereign equivalence of countries, the right of national independence, the right to an independent foreign policy and a firm commitment to spirit of the Charter of the United Nations is an important valued feature of Indian Foreign Policy.²² All these principles are based upon the ideology of liberal internationalism. This idea is clearly mentioned in Part IV- Directive Principle of State Policy, under Article 51 of the Indian Constitution. Thus, the ideology of international liberalism is also another source of Indian foreign policy.

The Indian national leaders were highly influence by the principles of Socialist Revolution of Russia, 1917on which the ideology the revolution was grounded. However, along with this they were influenced by the idea of Fabian Socialists. Their affection and admiration for democracy and the value of Indian philosophy were influenced by these two ideas. The result come up in the form of assurance to democratic socialism.²³ In the realm of foreign policy, these ideas has led to the struggle for securing the rights of the third World. The Indian commitment to work for friendly and cooperative relations with both the communist and non-communist countries also shows commitment to democracy and socialism. Thus, the ideology of democratic socialism too is a source of Indian foreign policy.

The historical development of India as a casualty of British imperialism, and her non-violent freedom struggle under the headship of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and others were

²²K.R Gupta &Vatsala Shukla, *op.cit.*, p.29

²³ Ibid., p.30

destined to have a stake in the formulation of Indian foreign policy. Besides this, the inheritance of an prehistoric civilisation and culture also facilitated in the formulation of Indian foreign policy.²⁴ Nehru was of the opinion that the constructive features of peace and the desire to promote a greater degree of collaboration among nations were partly due to India's traditional values and past thinking. As such he followed a policy of peaceful coexistence with other countries as its foreign policy.

Another important factors which contributed to the development of relations between India and its neighbouring countries is the 'Gujral Doctrine' which was formulated by I.K. Gujral, the Foreign Minister in Deve Gowda Government, who became Prime Minister of India in the later year. The core of Gujral Doctrine is that 'being the largest country in South Asia, India decided on extension of unilateral concession to neighbours in the sub-continent'.²⁵ It is the policy which provides for friendly relationship to neighbours and supporting people to people communication which was intended at improving relations by kindly gesture. This Doctrine presented India as a big country eager to help a small neighbouring countries by developing and maintaining cordial relationship. It was mostly cheered and cherished not only within the India, but also by most of the neighbouring countries.

The correlation between India and Myanmar just after independence was quite friendly as the two top leaders, Nehru and U Nu shared the same ideology in their relations. U Nu saw Nehru as a great leader and learned many things from him. It was because of their efforts as the two actors were actively involved in the Non-Aligned Movement which aimed at maintaining distance from the two superpowers. The two countries were the supporter of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and opposed racialism. Having suffered the colonial rule, the two countries always stand together in fighting against colonial expansion, provided help to

²⁴V.N Khanna, *op.cit.*, p.19

²⁵Ibid., p. 41

those countries struggling to achieve independence from their colonial ruler mainly of the Third World countries.

In 1962, the armed forces led by General Ne Win had taken up the administration of Myanmar's government. The junta opted for the policy of isolationism which lasted almost three decades. During this time, India and Myanmar relations were disturbed and Myanmar tilted towards China. Myanmar also left the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979.²⁶ The economic relationship between the two countries, especially, border trade has suffered from lack of clear and consistent policy on both sides. High tariff from the Indian side also make the country an unattractive market for Myanmar exporters.²⁷ The relationship between them during this time was marked by cold relationship.

The military junta had set Myanmar's foreign policy closed to the world politics. All the administration of the Myanmar government was restricted to the minimum and was given to the military rule. Several foreign trade and business undertakings were nationalised and contacts with foreign diplomats were strictly forbidden. People of Indian Origins (PIOs) were forced to flee from their residence and they suffered suppression under the military rule. India, too, had stopped its relations with Myanmar to a large extent since India realised that trying to maintain a cordial relationship with the military rule would not matter much. So, India decided to a loop from the military junta.

Economically, the Indo-Myanmar relations since 1948 can be considered as cordial and friendly, but frozen or strained from 1962-1988 and flourishing from 1988 till date. Myanmar's economy is heavily controlled by the state sector which trade mostly in raw material, precious metals, stones and energy. All the foreign exchange generated through

²⁶ Satish Kumar, "Domestic Problems in Myanmar and India-Myanmar Relations", *World Focus*, Vol.34, No.10, (October 2013). p.41

²⁷ <https://www.civildserviceindia.com/current-affairs/articles/india-engagement-with-asean.html> accessed on 22.09.2018, 06:30 p.m.

trade and through other means is completely concentrated in the hands of military rulers. However, the conditions of Myanmar's economy summons a radical change in its management and in the outlook also.²⁸

The Cold War ended in the early 1990s. Also, there was a pro-democratic movement in Myanmar which set out a new dawn in their relations. This meant that the major impediment to India and South East Asia relations that had prevented closer and deeper interaction between them since 1960s become a history. A new dawn come up and India needed to construct new relationships to have a better economic and political relations with the South East Asia nations. South East Asia emerged as a natural option for India for new economic relationship. ASEAN being the rapid growing regional grouping, would indeed, provide India's economic needs in the future to come.

The Indian government has recently started to engage with Myanmar's dispensation which fall under its Look East Policy which was launched in 1991. India's Look East Policy (now Act East Policy) has been the main powerful strength for upgrading their relations. Myanmar is a gateway to ASEAN for India as it is the only neighbouring state of this grouping which shares a land and sea border with India. Myanmar is the second largest country which India shares its land border. Since India and Myanmar share a 1,643 kilometres land border and has a long history of economic linkages. The economic relationship between the two countries, especially, relationship in the border areas has suffered from absence of vibrant and reliable policy on both flanks. High tariff from the Indian side also make the country a repellent market for Myanmar exporters.²⁹ For maintaining smooth economic flow, both the country extended their cooperation with the inception of Look East Policy.

²⁸Pramode Kumar, "India-Myanmar economic Relation: A road to Heal the Political Relations", *World Focus*, vol. 34, No.10 (October 2013), p.18

²⁹[https:// www.civilserviceindia.com/current-affairs/articles/india-myanmar-trade-relationship.html](https://www.civilserviceindia.com/current-affairs/articles/india-myanmar-trade-relationship.html) accessed on 22.09.2018, 06:30 pm.

Conclusion

India and Myanmar are the two important neighbours in Asia. The two countries play an important role in the international world politics. Myanmar is located just next to the North Eastern part of India bordering four Indian states. As such, maintaining a cordial relationship with regard to economic, political and cultural aspects would have been a major task of India. In fact, the two states had a very long history of relationship which can be sketched back to the pre-colonial times in the sphere of trade, commerce, religion, culture, etc. However, there was not much political relations to be found before the British period.

The two countries were under the British rule for a long period of time. It was only in 1947 and 1948 that India and Myanmar got their independence from the British rule respectively. As such the foreign policy of the two countries began to have its independent character only after the independence. During the period following the independence, both India and Myanmar maintained cordial relations which was rooted in their shared common foreign policy. The then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru and U Nu played a significant role in the development and smooth functioning of their close relations.

India and Myanmar, having suffered from the colonial suppression, formulated their foreign policy independent from the international politics. However, this did not mean they were completely separated from the international politics, rather, they were actively engaged in world politics by way of supporting anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and strongly opposed racialism that prevailed during that time. The two countries were working together to support those countries who were struggling for independence from their colonial ruler. They were actively engaged in the liberation of the Third World countries who had suffered colonial suppression.

Meanwhile, India and Myanmar were an active member of the Non-Aligned Movement. In fact, India was the founding member of this movement. The Non-Alignment was a policy to maintain distance from the Cold War politics. It was not an ideology of neutrality; it was just a policy of not joining either of the superpowers which caused severe dangers to world peace. India and Myanmar were an active supporter of NAM and their main intention being a member of this movement was to help the newly independent country from a policy of neo-colonialism of their former colonial ruler. Hence, they played a pivotal role in helping the poor countries, especially the Third World countries, to become a freely independent actor in the world politics.

However, the relationship between India and Myanmar had undergone certain changes when the military junta led by General Ne Win intervened domestic politics of Myanmar. The military junta seized power with the overthrow of the sovereign democratic government in Myanmar. With the coming of the military, there was a tremendous change in the foreign policy of Myanmar which deeply affected its relations with India. The ideological similarities that they enjoyed with regard to the foreign policy was greatly diminished. Subsequently, the military rulers adopted the isolationist policy and announced the Burmese way of Socialism. All activities of the military diplomats, personnel and even the movement of the people were restricted. During this period, India and Myanmar relations had experienced its lowest point as Myanmar closed foreign policy.

A new beginning in their relationship again began in the late 1980s when the pro-democratic movement took place in Myanmar. India strongly supported this movement and helped the activists by way of providing assistance and motivating their leaders. From the early 1990s, the military leadership began to soften its stance and eventually India started rebuilding its relation with Myanmar. The government of India launched its Look East Policy in 1991

under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao which significantly play a vital role in regaining their old friendship.

Thus, Indo- Myanmar relations in the sphere of ideology can be divided into three phases- Firstly, the period which followed just after independence with the leadership of Nehru and U Nu. During this time, their relation was quite remarkable as both the countries work together in the spirit of brotherhood and mutual cooperation. The second phase may be said to have started which started with the military takeover architecture of the government of the Myanmar government which changed the foreign policy of the two countries. This greatly effects the relations with India as it posits a direct challenge in the overall framework of the democratic principles of India's foreign policy. The third phase began with the opening of new policy to one another in the early 1990s. India launched Look East Policy and Myanmar had been trying to open up its economy. As such, the two countries started re-engagement in the field of economic, political and even in the culture also.

CHAPTER-3: CULTURAL RELATIONS

Introduction

Culture plays an important role in the foreign policy of every nation. It represents the characteristics of people in the society which are symbols of their own uniqueness. Today, culture became an important factor which influence the foreign policy followed the country. Culture encompasses ideas, values, traditions, practices, religion, language, etc. of the people in the society. Culture are the product of long-term process of thoughts and actions and they prove to be a standard for generations to come. They provide the guiding principles for the formulation of the foreign policy which will have a long term impact on its relations with other countries. Hence, the importance of culture for in foreign policy is self-evident.¹ Culture also develops ideas, works, planning, values and achievement of its domains. Culture plays a crucial role in maintaining relations between countries.

Culture is something which is not time bound and which is especially beyond the border.² It provides the easiest way for the countries to have a closer relation to cultivate linkages including cultural exchanges and people to people contact. India and Myanmar is no exception as both the countries has a very long history of cultural relations which play a significant role in their economic and political relations. A nation's culture radishes in the hearts and in the soul of its people. So, cultural linkage of two different countries also binds strongly with common ideas and common thinking of the peoples of the countries. In this chapter, we are going to analyse the relationship between India and Myanmar in the context of culture. As the people of Myanmar share close proximity in terms of culture, therefore,

¹ThongamSomola Devi, "Cultural Bond between India and Myanmar: Perception from the Past", *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 22, Issue 10, (October. 2017), p.26

² Cultural Linkage: Beyond the Border-India & Myanmar, *Youth Ki Awaaz*, <https://www.youthkiawazz.com>>... Accessed on 27.08.2018 10:45 p.m.

even in the contemporary bilateral relations, the significance of culture plays a vital role in the relations between the two states.

In order to comprehend the significance of the role of culture in the relations between the two states, a brief study of culture and ethnicity is discussed below:

3.1. Ethnicity

Ethnicity is understood as an ancestry while some perceived it as physical attributes. It may be defined as a membership or identification of a person with an ethnic group. Ethnicity is subjective in nature since it is the creation of the human mind and human attitudes. It is a matter of belongingness or identification to a particular section of the society. On the other hand, ethnicity objective because it is based on some objective characteristics constructed by societal forces and power relations. It is, to a large extent, independent of individual desires.³

Two important theories have been adopted in this research, they are- The Primordialism and the Constructionism.

3.1.1. Primordialist School

This theory has been playing a vital role in the study of ethnicity. There are three arguments provided by this school of thought.⁴ First, ethnicity is an ascribed identity or assigned status which is inherited from ancestor. For example, if our ancestors are Indians, then by birth we are also Indians because of our inherited culture and characteristics. Second, Ethnic boundaries are fixed or immutable. This means ethnicity is static. We cannot change our membership of one's ethnicity. Third, common ancestry regulates ethnicity. In other words, people belong to an ethnic group because member of that group all shares common biological and cultural origins.

³Philip Q. Yang (2000), *Ethnic Studies: Issues and Approaches*, New York: State University of New York Press. p. 40

⁴Ibid., p. 42

3.1.2. *The Constructionist School*

This school of thought began to ascend in the 1970s in the sphere of the ethnic studies. Constructionists have an advanced three major arguments.⁵ First, ethnicity is a socially constructed identity which is created not inherited. Second, it an extension of constructed identity which are flexible or changeable which meaning that ethnicity is dynamic. Third, ethnic relationship or identification is determined or built by society. It is a reaction to changing social environment.

The main emphasis of the constructionist school of thought is that ethnicity is not only an ascribed status, but it is also created by the member of the society. Besides, the ethnic boundary is a flexible one which can be extended with the interest of the members. The theory witnessed that society is dynamic and changeable as a result of social environment.

Thus, taking into account the two theoretical concepts of ethnicity, we can safely assume that that the two neighbouring countries are intricately connected to each other. In the same context, if we look into the realm of culture which is an important element in the history of ethnicity, we can realise the significance of this factor. In this regard, the theoretical concept of culture is further discussed below:

3.2.Culture

The term culture refers to the ways of life of the people or groups within a society. It is expressed in group norms, customs and values and in the shared history along with language. Culture is also reflected in the dress pattern, way of cooking and eating, birth, marriage system family life, patterns of work, religious ceremonies, festivals and many other

⁵ Ibid., p.43

things.⁶ In brief, culture is the sum of learned socially transmitted behaviour. It encompasses all human phenomena that are not the products of biological inheritance.

The classic definition of culture was given by Sir Edward Tylor in 1871 which has been widely accepted which has been accepted. According to him, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".⁷ Thus, it is clear that culture is not something which is inherently determined but, socially transmitted through the process of communication. Social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski called culture a social heritage which consists of both material and non-material things.⁸

By summarizing the above definitions of culture, we may put it in a very simple terms as culture is what we are, what we do and what we have. It is the way of life which characterised the behaviour of the people living in it. It provides a source of strength for the society. Thus, it can be understood that culture is a social phenomenon which is shared by the members of a society. It is learned as well as acquired from the ancestors and is not inborn and instinctive like racial characteristics which are genetically transmitted. Culture is transferable which is transmitted from generation to generation through the process of communication and interaction or historically derived.

Hence, no society is devoid of culture. Even the primitive societies had some or the other form of culture. But it differed in content and form, quality and quantity from societies to societies. As a source of social heritage, it helps in maintaining social order, control the behaviour of people and establish uniformity in the behaviour of people. All societies in the world have attempted to solve their basic human needs by developing aspects of shared and learned behaviour known as cultural universals. A common culture is developing across the

⁶H.K. Rawat (2013), *Contemporary Sociology*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, p.12

⁷<https://ocw.mit.edu>> course > readings accessed on 12.07. 2018 11:02 p.m.

⁸ Ibid.,

world.⁹ Hence, the word culture is used to mean the total way of life to include economic, political and social norms, values and behaviour.

The practical nature of the theory of ethnicity and culture thus discussed may be analysed in history of interaction of the two neighbouring countries since ancient times.

3.3. Historical Cultural Linkages

The history of India and Myanmar relationship can be sketched back to the pre-colonial times. It is also a fact that the governments of these two countries took up ambitious deliberation to build up the cultural relation between India and its neighbour Myanmar. The two countries are the land of magnificent cultures. The mutual relations between India and Myanmar are based on deep rooted cultural, religious and close friendship between the people of the two countries. The shared heritage of Buddhism and the idea of sympathy, tolerance, non-violence and harmony have laid strong bases of this relationship.¹⁰

Hinduism and Buddhism entered into Myanmar from India by 7th century. The earliest law book in Myanmar was ‘*The Wagaru Dhammathat*’ of India. Pali, was the source of many Burmese words which was originated in India.¹¹ The culture of Myanmar was enriched by the Indian culture with the work of King Ashoka, who tried to maintain relations with the neighbouring countries by spreading the word of Lord Buddha. During this times, the Indian traders had also established permanent settlement in Myanmar. The Great Ashoka, sent two of his representatives, Sona and Utra, in 228 BCE to Burma to spread the word Buddhism. As such, Buddhism acquired new dimension to the culture of the people of Burma which deeply affected socio-religious life of the region.¹² This can be evident from presence of a number of

⁹H.K. Rawat, (2013), *op.cit.*, p. 15

¹⁰ Ibid.,

¹¹Keshab Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra, “India and Myanmar: Exploring New Vista of Relationship”, *World Focus*, Vol. 34, No.10 (October 2013), p.30

¹²Ravindra Kumar, “Common Features of the Cultures of India and Myanmar: Binding the Two Bilaterally”, *Mahatama Gandhi Community Forum*, Gandhi Topia, 2014.

the Buddhist monks and nuns and the Buddhist temple in the present day Myanmar. The cultures of both the countries have contributed largely in increasing mutual hip between the two states. The cultural relationship between India and Myanmar could be evident from their shared social, economic and cultural relations that the two countries have been maintaining to deepen their close relationship.

In fact, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar which was hitherto known as Burma, the nomenclature of which emerged from the Bamar ethnic group, is one of the oldest country of the South Asian region with old and wonderful history and civilization. The present day Burmese name of a city, is again derived from Pukam origin which was found in the Pali word Arimaddana-Pura, the city of temples. It is also believed that the word Bamar is derived from the Vedic-Hindu word Brahmin, related to priestly class. Therefore, it can be assumed that Burma is itself a variation of the word Brahmin originated from India.¹³

And national epic of Burma, the Yama Zatdaw is an adoption of Indian's Ramayana. The traditions and social practices of Myanmar could also be equated with those practiced in the present India. Like India, convention of faith and devotion, mutual respect and goodwill too are the vital features of the culture of Myanmar.¹⁴ There is similarities in the practices between India and Myanmar most of which were inherited from India by Myanmar in the ancient times.

We found the spirit of mutual sympathetic, coherence, cooperation and coordination, which is self-proved from unprecedented amalgamation and unity of tribes within the society of Myanmar. This eventually approves the presence of a culture in Myanmar of which harmony, cooperation, coordination and acceptability were the leading features, which were somewhat similar to the qualities of Indian culture. Hence, it can be said that there are some cultural

¹³ThongamSomola Devi, *op.cit.*, p. 27

¹⁴ Ibid.,

linkages between India and Myanmar from the ancient times. Along with this, the main features of the culture of Myanmar, like those of Indian culture, have remained ideal for others. Besides, established art and method of music, singing and dancing which we found in Myanmar has its roots in Indian culture to some extent.

Along with other elements, the Indian philosophy have played an important role in the development of the culture of Myanmar. It is totally true that the basic source of cultures of India and Myanmar rooted to the Indian philosophical tradition, the way of life and values. The Vedic- Hindu philosophy, traditions and values have contributed to the development cultures of both the countries. They left a profound impact on the life and works of people of the region, which could definitely be perceived even today from day-to-day practices of people of Myanmar.

4.4. Cultural Linkage in Colonial Era

The pre-colonial situation experienced a major transformation during the colonial period when the two countries related with each other at the political and administrative level. During this period, this British government ruled Burma as part of British India with Calcutta as the seat of government. Even the educational institutions of Rangoon were affiliated to Calcutta University at the time. As part of the administrative functioning, the British government brought Indians to help them govern Burma. As such, more than 60 per cent of the population Myanmar was constituted by Indians.¹⁵ The influx of Indians during the British period became a new linkage and at the same time, a cause of tensions and trouble in later years.

During the British rule, was a part of British India. The father of modern Burma, Aung San (father of Aung San Sun Kyi) had maintained good relations with Indian freedom fighters

¹⁵ Rajiv Kumar Bhatia, "Myanmar-India Relations: The Way Forward", *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, Vol.6, No.3, (July-September 2011), pp.315-326

like Jawaharlal Nehru. The prominent leaders of India's freedom struggle such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were imprisoned in Myanmar during the freedom struggle against the British colonial rule. Subhas Chandra Bose raised money and men in Burma for the Indian National Army (INA), which fought courageously though unsuccessful, for the independence of India.¹⁶ Hence, India extended its full support to Burmese freedom struggle and rejoicing immensely when it finally attained on 4 January 1948.

The two countries were trying to maintain a peaceful and close cooperation in the decade following the independence by looking forward to cultural relations. However, several problems arose which hindered their attempt to construct a strong bonds of linkages including the separation, various insurgent activities in the border regions, the establishment of relationship with the world powers as well as with China. However, during the Ne Win era, the relationship between India and Myanmar is correct but not close. It has been often said that relationship between Indira Gandhi and Ne Win remained good, although they were not up to the marked as expected.

The cultural relationship was however crushed with the coming of military junta in Myanmar in the early 1960s. The military government started the policy of nationalising the Indian enterprises in Myanmar and expelled people of Indian origin from Burma. During this period their relationship had experienced unpredictable problems as the Burmese government was took control over by the military junta. It was a problem for both the countries to maintain closer cooperation as Myanmar had adopted closed economy. This resulted in the fading of their relationship in the economic, political or cultural. However, we cannot say that the two countries did not engaged in the maintenance of cooperation. An attempt was made to foster their ties even this worst period.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

The relations between the countries during this period is often described as a period of cold relations as an undemocratic regime had taken over in Myanmar. India started ignoring its strategic engagement towards the Myanmar government. Moreover, Myanmar showed a neutral stand on the Sino-Indian border conflict which broke out in 1962. It is believed that the silence of Myanmar was a pro-Chinese activity and naturally, India-Myanmar relations was disturbed. It was only in the 1970s and 1980s that the relationship between the two states had improved with the visits of the high officials from both side.

3.5. Contemporary Cultural Relations

The period between 1988-90 in Myanmar may be discussed as a period of transition as their relationship undergone tremendous change. At this moment, India has extended strong support to the pro-democratic movement. The foreign policy of India at this time was determined by the intention of extending relations with Myanmar expecting that the 1990 elections would end the military rule and open an opportunity for democratic government, which eventually opening a new beginning in the history of Myanmar.¹⁷ However, in spite of its gestures, the two governments experienced serious tensions in their relations. This could be regarded as the lowest point in their relationship as it was marked by open mutual recrimination.

It was only in 1990s that the two government established their renewed interest. India adopted idealism and adopted a realistic approach towards Myanmar in order to develop relations between India and Military Government of Burma. India viewed Myanmar not only as a gateway to South East Asia and ASEAN, but also as an important economic partner for future to come. In order to strengthen the cultural relations, the platform for Indian cultural troupes have been organised in Myanmar on regular basis since 1997.¹⁸ Hence India and

¹⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁸ Keshab Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra, *op.cit.*, p.30

Myanmar set the tone of a new beginning in which old differences are transformed into new cordialities to enhance cultural ties bilaterally.

The presence of more than a million People of Indian Origins (PIOs) represents the historical relationship between India and Myanmar. As India and Myanmar entered a new era, there is a hope for the development of improved cultural relations which is essential for the establishment of strong economic and political relations.¹⁹ To do this, an outreach programme was needed so as to strengthen People-to-people contacts. As a sign of gesture, India has been extending courtesies to Buddhist pilgrims from Myanmar and tried to encourage more tourist visits by extending our tourist visa on-arrival scheme to Myanmar nationals. Myanmar on its part, made a request to set up monasteries and helped the Archaeological Survey of India in the restoration of their monuments. This kind of openness to each other's nations has strengthened the soft engagement and good will among the two nations.

The period between 1991-2010, saw remarkable improvement, growth and expansion of the bilateral relations. The growing relation was coincided by the introduction of Look East Policy and the subsequent efforts being taken up by the government of India to promote this policy.²⁰ It has been observed that the relationship during this period has two distinct phases. The first phase started from 1991 to 1999, and the second phase began with the visit of General Maung Aye, the Vice Chairman of State Peace and Development (SPDC) to India in 2000 which culminated the second visit by Chairman SPDC Senior General Than Shwe to India in July 2010. The first phase saw the adoption of the two track policy of the Indian government by supporting the military government while continuing its support for the cause

¹⁹ India's Moment in Myanmar- The Promise and Challenges of a New Relationship, *A Report*, Aspen Institute India, Haryana, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=http://www.anantaaspencentre.in/pdf/India_moment_myanmar.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjJzaG_haXfAhWMtY8KHdNICyEQFjAAegQIBBAB&usg=AOvVaw0n2EYvNpd6mDIEE2Bb5_TI accessed on 06.08.2018 11:36 p.m.

of democracy.²¹ During this period, there had been several socio-economic programme which help the cultural bonds were conducted to encourage people-people contact between the two countries.

Since the adoption of India's Look East Policy, both the countries tried their best to have a closer cultural relation by conducting cultural exchanges and people to people contacts. The culture of Myanmar was enriched by Indian culture which have their roots in ancient Indian history. The Myanmar Cultural Minister, U Sin Win visited India from January 24 to February 2, 2000 at the invitation of the Minister of Cultural and tourism. The two ministers signed the India-Myanmar Cultural Exchange Agreement, which would provide the framework for further cultural exchanges between the two countries.²²

A bilateral Cultural Co-operation Agreement was signed in 2001 and which was followed up with subsequent cultural exchange program, during 2004-2006. Between November 28 and December 7, a 15 member of cultural troupe from Myanmar visited India's north eastern region, particularly Nagaland, Manipur and Assam. The programme was organised by Union Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region in collaboration with India Embassy at Yangon, the Myanmar embassy in New Delhi, Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), North Eastern Council (NEC) and the North eastern state government.²³ The main objectives of this event was to promote close cultural relations along with trading partnership between North East Indian states and Southeast Asian countries as part of Look East Policy.

Various cultural exchange programmes have been conducted between the two countries to encourage cultural ties which will significantly improve their political and economic relations. In November 2009, a 13 member student group from Myanmar attended South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) cultural festival held in India. In

²¹ Rajiv Kumar Bhatia, *op.cit.*,

²² Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2000-2001

²³ Keshab Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra, *op.cit.*, p.30

December 2009, a popular Myanmar music band ‘Emperor’ visited India to participate in South Asian Bands festivals, organised by ICCR. They also performed in Shillong and Meghalaya.²⁴ Both countries has actively engaged in these cultural programmes to deepen their mutual relations.

In January 2010, the Embassy organised the annual “Indian Film Festival” at Yangon. This event has become a highlight of Yangon cultural calendar. In March 2010, a famous landscape artist from Myanmar went to Puduchery, India to participate in South Asian Artists Camp organised by ICCR and SEHER. The paintings which emerged from the camp were exhibited in the Embassy auditorium in November 2010. The exhibition received an outstanding response from the local community.²⁵ Besides, classes in yoga have been started in the Embassy since December 2010 which marked the closer and closer cultural ties between the two states.

A Quwali Group of India performed at Yangon and other cities in January 2011. Various events were also organised at Yangon in commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore with the support of ICCR during the year, including dance, drama, seminar, artist’s camp, film festival, etc.²⁶ These events were well received by the Myanmar government, public and even media also.

Thus, India and Myanmar cultural relations were very close since ancient time till present. The history of Buddhism in India binds the people of the two country. An important landmark occurred when Minister of External Affairs Shri Salman Khurshid visited Myanmar from 14-16 December 2012.²⁷ He inaugurated the International Conference on Buddhist Cultural Heritage, which was jointly organised by India and Myanmar. The Minister also

²⁴ Ibid.,

²⁵ Ibid.,

²⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2011-2012

²⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2012-2013

revealed the 16-foot replica of the Sarnath Buddha Statue gifted by the people and government of India and installed in the precincts of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon and opened an exhibition on Buddhist cultural Heritage.

Various troupes and artists from Myanmar have participated in South Asian and ASEAN cultural events in India. India responded to the interest of Myanmar in restoring and rebuilding the two historic temples in Bodh Gaya built by Myanmar rulers King Mindon and King Baygyidaw. These temples and inscriptions will now be restored with the assistance of the Archaeological Survey of India as a bilateral friendship project.

India and Myanmar share close cultural relations and a sense of deep kinship given by India's Buddhist heritage. India has been working on the building up this cultural ties, India is undertaking some key initiatives which includes renovation of the Ananda Temple in Bagan. The 'Samvad-II' Interfaith Dialogue was held on 6-7 August 2017, Yangon. The event was graced by Shri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Minister of State Home Shri KirenRejiju. The presence of various leaders marked the improvement of cultural relations.

India is initiating at all levels to increase closer relations between India and Myanmar.²⁸ The cultural relationship of both the states have contributed significantly for the development of mutual economic cooperation, besides social relation. This process of relationship has continued to grow and can be observed from present economic and commercial relations between India and Myanmar. Currently, India is the 4th largest trading partner of Myanmar after Thailand, China and Singapore.

India and Myanmar not only share the common land border, but also the people of the two countries somehow shared blood relationship. As such, it can be observed that India and

²⁸DebidattaAurobindaMahapatra, "India needs Myanmar, and Myanmar also needs India", *Centre for South East and Central Asia Studies*, Central University of Punjab, India, 2012.

Myanmar cannot be separated. Further, the two countries have been connected by the strong cultural bonds. Even the land of Myanmar too has a name in Sanskrit, Suvarnabhumi, which means land of gold or golden land.²⁹ Because of their shared cultural relationship, the interests of the people of India and Myanmar are indeed common and they are like inseparable from one another. This relationship paved the way to the common welfare and progress of people of both the countries.

To foster people-to-people contact, it is essential for both the countries to undertake different levels programmes in order to maintain bilateral relations. Along with tourism, there is a need to revive an academic exchange, exchanges among political leaders, and so on. Misconceptions regarding each other would have a greater scope of being rectified in the wake of increased interaction. As such, there is a need to promote mutual respect and understanding of each other's ways of life between India and Myanmar.

Conclusion

Thus, it is clear that both India and Myanmar share a common cultural links since the ancient times. Through the primordialist approach we can discern that the people of North east India shared a common ethnic trait both culturally and racially of the mongoloid stock. As of which the language, religion, tradition, custom, etc. play a significant role in the improvement of the mutual relationship between the two countries.

India's relation with South East Asian countries including Myanmar is an age-old phenomenon. Historically, it has its origin in culture and trade. The Mauryan Emperor, Ashoka sent his representatives to various countries in South East Asia and helped to spread Buddhism in these countries. Even today, Myanmar is culturally and predominantly Buddhist in nature. Culturally, Myanmar as country of South East Asia is in close proximity with India

²⁹ThongamSomola Devi, *op.cit.*, p. 27

and after independence, India had lost its connectivity with South East Asia to a certain extent. In the year 1967, the association of South East Asia Nations had been set up as a common platform for some South East Asia countries. Now it has 10 full members which geographically exist in the South East Asia region.

The relationship between India and Myanmar is in fact very old, which can be traced back to centuries even millennia. Myanmar, too has its name in Sanskrit, Suvarnabhumi meaning land of gold or golden land. The cultural linkage was strengthened by the spread of Buddhism from India to Myanmar, and settlement of large number of people of Indian origin in Myanmar. Since India and Myanmar share a huge land border in the North Eastern part of India which play a vital role in their relations culturally. The people of Northeast India are said to have the same origin with the people of Myanmar and their origin is believed to be from the Mongoloids. As such, there are close similarities between people of Northeast India and Myanmar in their looks, their culture, traditions, custom, religious practices, languages, etc. Even today some people in Myanmar speaks the same language with some of the people in the north eastern part of India. Moreover, it is difficult to identify as to who is from Myanmar and who is from North east India when they stand together. Thus, with no doubts, India and Myanmar have the same ethnic origin and share the same culture.

Culturally, India has had a close cultural affinity with Myanmar through its export of Buddhism. With the initiative of Ashoka, Buddhism spread to Myanmar. As such, Buddhism gained popularity in the culture of Myanmar as the people of Myanmar accepted Buddhism whole-heartedly which deeply affected the socio-religious life of the region. Till today, this can be evident from the presence of various Buddhist temple, nuns and monks in Myanmar. In this regard, both India and Myanmar has indeed, some cultural linkages for thousands of years which contributed mainly for the development of cordial relations between the two states.

As Buddhism spread to Myanmar from India with the action of the great king Ashoka, India became a mother of Buddhism in Myanmar. Being the mother of their religion, the people of Myanmar always visit the pilgrimage places in India every year. In this regard, India is extending her friendship to its neighbour by easing the visa restriction and also reducing the visa fees for the people of Myanmar. This kind of behaviour of both the country has helped in promoting better relationship for future to come.

It is indeed, a fact that both the two countries took up an ambitious deliberation to strengthen their cultural relations. Since the two countries are the land of magnificent cultures, there is a bilateral mutual relationship which is based on deep rooted culture, religion and neighbourly friendship between the people of the two countries. Besides this, the traditions and social values in Myanmar is similar to that of those practice in India. The shared cultural heritage of Buddhism and the philosophy of sympathy, open-mindedness, non-violence and peace have laid strong emphasis in their relationship.

Both the countries are trying to keep their friendship by organising various cultural programmes that enables people to people contact which again foster their relationship in political and economic respectively. Myanmar, being a neighbour, played a significant role in the spread of Indian culture, trade, commerce, philosophy, custom, religion practices and belief system through the land to Southeast Asian countries. Culture is something which not time bound and which is especially beyond the border. The culture of Myanmar is enriched by India. Four North-eastern states viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram share international boundary with Myanmar. Both the region shares a common heritage of religious, linguistic and ethnic identities due to the proximity of ethnic and cultural relation of the people of India in general and the people of north-eastern India and Myanmar.

Cultures of both the countries have contributed considerably in for the development mutual economic cooperation, besides social relations. This process continues to grow which can be observed from the present day economic and commercial relations between India and Myanmar. India and Myanmar not only shares the same border, but the people of both the countries have somehow enjoyed blood relationship. Further, they have been connected to one another on the strength of a combine culture-values, traditions and rituals. Thus, it can be said that both India and Myanmar have been enjoying the common cultural practice from the ancient times and that various cultural programmes have been organised between the two countries to strengthen people to people contacts which will significantly help in fostering economic and political ties that exists between India and Myanmar. Thus, it is also a fact that the governments of these two countries took up an ambitious deliberation to strengthen the cultural relation between India and its neighbour Myanmar. The two countries are the land of magnificent cultures.

CHAPTER -4: ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Introduction

India and Myanmar had trade relations between themselves for a number of centuries. The coming of the British simply accelerated the economic importance of India and Burma to each other. The trade relations which had been established continued even after independence.¹ Today's Myanmar was part of British Empire during the British period. India and Myanmar shares a huge land boundary, covering around 1600 kilometres and its culture, tradition and even the appearance of the people is so similar to that of the people of the Northeast people of India. Economic plays a crucial role in present India relations with Myanmar. Since Myanmar shares a long border with India, it provides a gateway to ASEAN countries. The country's vitality for India has been increasing in recent decades.

There has been constant political, economic, trade and cultural interaction between the two countries throughout the history. During the period, a large Indian population had settled in Burma and they established trade relations, financial services and transportation systems. It has been argued that emergence of Myanmar as a major rice producer and exporter owes its backgrounds to Indian settlers.

4.1. Economic Relations- A factor for Political Relation

Economic cooperation between India and Myanmar is another factor that determined Indo-Myanmar relationship. As both the country came from the same economic background with the colonial economy. They experienced colonial exploitation by the British resulted in immigration and trade which play a significant role in shaping their economic relations. Trade has been the vital aspect of Indo-Myanmar relations. After independence, India and Myanmar were faced with enormous economic problems. Partitioned of Indian subcontinent

¹ B. Pakem (1992), *India Burma Relations*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications, p.51

into India and Pakistan meant great loss fertile areas for India. It forced her to depend upon foreign supplies of food grains like rice, as well as on Industrial raw materials like jute and cotton and this mark the historic trade relations between the two countries.

India and Burma signed a Treaty of Friendship in 1951, which was intended to promote peaceful cooperation between the two states.² Throughout the decade, the bilateral relationships between India and Myanmar continued to remain stable because of their shared interest within the Non-Aligned Movement. In the form of development cooperation, India granted a loan of 46 million USD in 1958.³ Their close trade and economic relations were interrupted when an insular Burmese Government was introduced in the 1960s. The military coup in Burma changed the nature of the two nations' political as well as economic relations. The twin policy of Burmanisation and nationalisation led to the decline in their economic relationship. Hence, a long lasting mutual indifference developed that was helped by the Burmese's self-imposed isolation.

Myanmar's economy is heavily controlled by the state sector which trade mostly in raw materials, precious metals, stones and energy. All the foreign exchange generated through trade and through other means is completely concentrated in the hands of the military rulers.⁴ A very long military rule has drained its resources only for the military purpose and almost nothing has been allocated to the capacity building and reconstruction of the state. As such the economic status of Myanmar was not up to the mark and many of the foreign countries refuse to engage with the unstable Myanmar economy. However, the conditions of Myanmar economy recently experienced a radical change in its outlook and management which consequently attracts the foreign countries to invest in Myanmar economy. India, too, is no

² Pierre Gottschlitch, "New Development in India-Myanmar Bilateral Relations", *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol.34, No.2, (2015), p. 142

³ Ibid.,

⁴ Pramod Kumar, "India-Myanmar Economic Relations: A Road to Heal Political Relations", *World Focus*, Vol.34. No.10 (October 2013). p.18

exception. Myanmar's Government is trying to connect itself to the global market and showing some seriousness to the outside world.

Myanmar provides India's gateway to ASEAN as it is the only country of this regional grouping which has a land and maritime border with India. India became a summit level partner of ASEAN and a member of the East Asia Summit, as such developing relations with Myanmar will be advantageous in many respects. Besides this, India and Myanmar are also members of sub-regional groupings such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC). Since India wanted to have a multilateral trade with these grouping, India has to look upon Myanmar's importance and maintain a closer tie with the country.

After a long military rule followed by the pro-democratic movement in Myanmar, India began to change its policy in order to engage with the Myanmar government in the mid-nineties. With the improvement in trade and economic relations, Myanmar began to emerge as a key supplier of pulses to India. India, on the other hand, began to provide the needful assistance to develop Myanmar's infrastructure and provide training to its people. However, trade and economic relationships have continued to be at the modest levels.

The Indian Government has recently started to engage with the Myanmar's dispensation which fall under its Look East Policy (LEP). India's this policy brought these two neighbouring countries out of doldrums which they were languishing in for a long period.⁵ Hence, a smooth functioning of economic cooperation between India and Myanmar had become an imperative when India introduced its Look East Policy. It was in 1991 that the Government led by Narasimha Rao launched this Look East Policy, which was intended in getting closer relations to the booming economies of the South East Asian nations. As the only country sharing border with India, Myanmar provide the right linkage between India and

⁵ Ibid.,

the rest of the South East Asian economies. The strategy of India has been focussing on forging close economic and commercial relations, developing strategic and security cooperation and emphasis of cultural and ideological relations.

The relationship between India and Myanmar changed over the years because of various reasons like the economic development of the North-east region, India's increasing trade with ASEAN, the search for energy security, the increasing Chinese influence in Myanmar and the security implications because of militant activities in North-East India.⁶ Myanmar is strategically important for India for the success of its Look East Policy. It gained prominence since India followed this policy which would help India to pursue its foreign policy with the ASEAN nations.

The main objectives of the Look East Policy of India were three folds- to institutionalize relations with the ASEAN and its members countries, to toughen the bilateral connections with member states of ASEAN and to carve out a appropriate place for itself to prevent Southeast Asia sinking under the Power of any one major bloc.⁷ India is looking for an economic collaboration with the South East Asian nations whose economy has been flourishing on the world economy. India's intention was to have a closer economic relation with the ASEAN nations despite its maintain relations with Myanmar. The introduction of the Look East Policy has opened up a new chapter for India to engage with its neighbouring countries particularly to the Southeast Asian countries.

Through Look East Policy, India made a conscious effort to go near ASEAN and as a reciprocal gesture, India received a further support from ASEAN along with the Accord of dialogue partnership in 1996. At the beginning, India intended to get its relations with the

⁶Chanchal Kumar, "Bilateral Trade Relations Between India & Myanmar: In search of Strategic Partnership", *World Focus*, Vol.34. No.10 (October 2013). p.53

⁷GVC Naidu, "Wither the Look East Policy: India and Southeast Asia", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 28, No.2, (April 2004), p.332

ASEAN politically and commercially deepened. Afterwards, India sought to enhance its trade and investment through bilateral, regional and sub-regional. To do this, India has to maintain a peace and cordial friendship with Myanmar government. For India, Myanmar is advantageously vital because of its geostrategic locations. Moreover, Myanmar has the potential to emerge as an important economic player in the region as it is rich in natural resources.

Myanmar had opened up its economy in the mid-1990s by welcoming the foreign investment mainly in its oil and gas sectors. Myanmar was admitted to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 1996 and then as a full ASEAN member in July 1997, as such, India began to share a common land border with the members of ASEAN.⁸ The government of India is conscious of the prospective for developing trade relations with Myanmar which will open up its economic market in the late 1990s. The main intention of India was to develop its shared land border with Myanmar to lessen poverty and to improve the status in the region so as to enhance its relations with Myanmar.

4.2. Bilateral Trade

India and Myanmar are geographically proximate countries with strong historical, cultural and economic linkages. With recent economic dynamism and changes in their respective political regimes, the overall bilateral relations between India and Myanmar are poised to be taken up to its next higher level.

Trade and commerce between India and Myanmar have been rapidly growing in the recent years. Today, India became the 4th largest trading partner of Myanmar after Thailand, China and Singapore and the 2nd largest export market for Myanmar with 25% of Myanmar's total export. Besides, India is in fact, the 7th most important source of imports for Myanmar from

⁸ Faizal Yahya, 'India and Southeast Asia: Revisited', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol, 25, No. 1 (April 2003), p.93

those countries.⁹ The major items that India export to Myanmar includes wood, pulse , charcoal, ginger, turmeric roots, nuts, etc. while Myanmar imports iron and steel, pharmaceutical products, machinery and mechanical appliances and their parts. India has been taking measures to extend air, land and sea routes to strengthen trade links with Myanmar. Myanmar is also trying to seek the support of Indian entrepreneurs and investment in areas like pharmaceuticals, cement, steel, fertilizers, It and food processing in major ways.¹⁰

The economic cooperation has been a major driving force for the closer relationship between India and Myanmar. They are looking at collaboration in the host of areas, including agriculture, IT, automobiles, textile, telecommunications, oil and gas.¹¹ The bilateral trade has been growing steadily since the beginning of the Look East Policy by the Government of India. Myanmar has gained prominence in the foreign policy of India. India is also becoming one of Myanmar largest investors on various items like oil and gas, agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, mining and tourism, etc. With India's unilateral Duty Free Tariff Preference(DFTP) Scheme and ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITGA) which is now put in place, the bilateral trade and economic relations face a new reality, especially with important changes in the policy framework relating to Border Trade Agreement.

Jaswant Singh, The External Affairs Minister of India paid a visit to Myanmar in February 2001. The Minister said that India needed for India to access to the eastward and that Myanmar has played a vital role for this attempt on the part of India.¹² This visit marked the first important Indian Minister to visit Myanmar, since 1987 the late Prime Minister Rajiv

⁹ K. Yhome, "India-Myanmar Relations (1998-2008): A Decade of Redefining Bilateral Ties", *Observer Research Foundation*, Occasional Paper, No.10, (2009), p.6

¹⁰ Keshab Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra, "India and Myanmar: Exploring New Vista of Relationship", *World Focus*, Vol. 34 No. 10 (October 2013), p. 32

¹¹ Chanchal Kumar, *op.cit.*, p.53

¹² Amit Baruah, "World's biggest democracy gives a Valentine's Day gift to Myanmar junta", *Indian Express*, 15 February 2001.

Gandhi visited the country. The emphasis of India in developing eastward trade through Myanmar demonstrates the intention of Indian government to improve and to boost its relations with Myanmar.

The mutual relationship between India and Myanmar, even under military rule, has many positive impacts as it did prevent a situation where the country became extremely secluded under Western sanctions. As such, the Indo-Myanmar trade relations except in the strategic arena of energy has been increasing during the last decades. The bilateral trade grew from US\$87.4 million in 1990-91 to US\$323.43 million in 2001-2002. The export of India worth US\$37.57million and imports worth US\$285.86 million.¹³ It is so obvious that in the backdrop of improving political relations between the two states, cooperation in the field of economic has also made significant progress. According to some observers, since 2000, Indian products-particularly medicines-have made their presence in the markets of Myanmar, bilateral trade has risen to US\$ 995.37 million in 2007-08 and investment have also increased.

Bilateral trade has been growing steadily to reach US\$ 2178.44 million in 2016-2017, of which Indian export amounted to US\$1111.19 million and Indian imports to US\$1067.25 million. India become the 4th largest trading partner of Myanmar, however, trade still remains quite small. Agriculture sector still governs trade activities, particularly supply of beans and pulses to India which amount US\$ 809 million in 2016-2017 and timber (\$ 156 million). India's export to Myanmar includes sugar which amount US\$ 424 million, pharmaceuticals (\$184 million), etc. Presently, India became the 10th largest investor in Myanmar with an approved investment of US\$740.64 million by 25 Indian companies as of 30th June, 2017. Most Indian investment has been in Oil and gas sector. The Indian companies have shown

¹³ Marie Lall, "Indo-Myanmar Relations in the Era of Pipeline Diplomacy", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.28, No.3 (December 2006), p.434

interest in investing in Myanmar economy and even the major contracts have been won by these companies. This marked the deepening economic cooperation between the two countries. A compilation of the bilateral trade volume between India and Myanmar is given below:

Bilateral trade (in million US\$)

YEAR	EXPORT	IMPORT	TOTAL
1980	4.77	7.62	12.39
1990	1.435	90.144	91.579
2000	48.05	179.175	227.225
2001	53.047	197.809	250.856
2002	71.528	345.639	417.167
2003	86.001	390.768	476.769
2004	104.705	400.052	504.757
2005	111.322	495.952	607.274
2006	132.717	718.395	851.112
2007	174.02	802.793	976.813
2008	212.23	893.916	1106.146
2009	209.778	1195.26	1405.038
2010	207.972	1289.801	1497.773
2011	320.621	1017.678	1338.299
2012	535.382	1381.151	1916.533
2013	544.625	1412.69	1957.315
2014	787.01	1395.67	2182.68
2015	773	1231.54	2004.54
2016	1068.2	984.27	2052.47
2017	1111.19	1067.25	2178.44

In order to review the objectives of the bilateral trade between India and Myanmar, the mechanism of the Joint Trade Committee (JTC) was set up in 2003. The Committee is chaired by the respective Commerce Ministers and has met many a times and play a vital role in the successful growth of commercial relations between the two countries.¹⁴

4.2.1. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Myanmar

Investment in basic infrastructure is the necessity not only for economic development but also to boost trade. This is required to be undertaken for the border region as a whole. India

¹⁴ Sudhanshu Tripathi, "India-Myanmar Relations: Pragmatism Prevails", *World Focus*, Vol. 34 No. 10 (October 2013), p.50

and Myanmar is no exception. Investment in basic infrastructure like roads, telecom, and electricity is the basic requirement for smooth functioning of business between the two countries. The lack of same could hinder business despite presence of potential in a specific region.

The period between April 1996 to March 2014, the collective approved Indian FDI in joint ventures and exclusively owned subsidiaries (FDI outflow) including equity, loan and guarantee issued in Myanmar stood at US\$ 217.7 million. In 2013-2014, approved FDI outflows from India to Myanmar were US\$ 16.2 million. On the other hand, cumulative inflows into India from Myanmar during April 2000- March 2014 amounted to US\$ 8.9 million.¹⁵ Till December, 2015 the major part of the Indian investment in Myanmar i.e. around 77 per cent was in the manufacturing sector followed by agriculture and mining, transport, storage and communication services and financial, insurance and business services.

4.2.2. Border trade

Economic interest plays a crucial role in present India-Myanmar relationship. Myanmar is a bridge between India and Southeast Asian markets. On 21 January 1994, India-Myanmar signed a Border Trade Agreement to legalize the trade that had been going on for centuries along border areas of the countries. They have two operational border trade points: Moreh-Tamu and Zokhawthar- Rhi on the 1643 km long border. With 22 items of trade, the opening of the moreh-Tamu trade post in April 1995 was an attempt to kick-start border between the two countries. Border Trade Agreement between the two countries provides a three tier system of trade for cross-border trade at Moreh. They are:¹⁶

¹⁵ Ram Upendra Das, (2016), *Enhancing India Myanmar Border Trade: Policy and Implementation Measures*, New Delhi: Department of Commerce Ministry of Commerce and Industry Government of India, p.36

¹⁶Pramod Kumar, *op.cit*, p.20

1. Locally produced items that were traditionally exchanged between the indigenous people residing within 40 km on either side of the border would be traded under simplified documents up to a maximum value of US\$1000.
2. Barter trade of 22 agreed upon exchangeable items up to a maximum value of US\$20,000. The items that can be traded under this category are locally produced commodities consisting of agricultural and minor forest products.
3. Normal or regular trade under the Letter of Credit System as per Export-import Policy and guidelines.

This Agreements marked a great shift in the economic cooperation between India and Myanmar and paved a way for the future economic engagement between the two nations.

Two remarkable developments had taken place since the operation of border trade agreement which include a shift from Barter to Normal Trade and a shift from Border Trade to Normal Trade that can take place through land border. Implications of both these policy shifts need to be understood as they could be somewhat confusing. The barter system of trade which was allowed as a part of border trade between India and Myanmar was abolished by the RBI vide its circular no. RBI/2015-16/230 dated November 05, 2015.¹⁷As the barter system of exchange was originally permitted to facilitate exchange of locally produced commodities, the transactions were not captured in the banking system or reflected in the trade statistics. However, over a period of time the border trade relation has expanded and suitable banking system is now available support normal trade with Myanmar. The introduction of the banking system provides a more secure transaction of the border trade system. See figure below:

¹⁷Ram Upendra Das, (2016), *op.cit.*, p. 10

Trends of bilateral border trade (in US\$ millions)

Year	Myanmar Export	Myanmar Imports	Total Trade
2012-2013	8.857	3.17	12.027
2013-2014	27.971	17.164	45.135
2014-2015	42.613	18.113	60.726
2015-2016	53.027	18.617	71.644
2016-2017	63.461	24.435	87.896

(Source: Ministry of Commerce, Myanmar)

In order to improve border trade relations, Land Custom Stations (LCS) were established to maintain security which enables both the countries in their trading activities. Land Customs Stations plays a significant role as a gateway for transporting goods and services and even the human being neighbouring states. These are notified under Section 7 of the Customs Act, 1962 by the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance. The development of trading services in the Land Custom Stations is mostly done by the State Governments typically with funds from the Central Assistance to States for Developing Export Infrastructure and other Allied Activities (ASIDE), the Department of Commerce.

Presently, there are two LCS on the international border adjacent to Myanmar, which are functional. The first one is Moreh in Manipur with the corresponding LCS in Tamu in Myanmar. The second LCS which was recently launched and became functional is Zokhawthar in Mizoram with the corresponding LCS in Rih in Myanmar. It is worth mentioning that presently the Tiddim in Myanmar is also functioning as LCS, which is around 75 kms from the village of Zokhawthar. As such, Government of India is intending to help Myanmar to build the Rih-Tiddim Road. Further, the Government of Mizoram has

continuously requested the central government to ask Myanmar open a counterpart LCS near the border in Tiau or Rih in order to facilitate the proper functioning of border trade. The initiation of third LCS Avangkhu in Nagaland with the corresponding station Somara in Myanmar has been bilaterally agreed but it has not been notified yet by the Govt. of India.¹⁸

The following table shows the status of Land Custom Station between India and Myanmar:

Indo-Myanmar Land Custom Stations:

Sl.No.	LCS in India	Indian State	LCS in Myanmar	Status
1	Zokhawthar	Mizoram	Tiddim	Functional
2	Moreh	Manipur	Tamu	Functional. Being developed as Integrated Check Post in Phase- I
3	Nampong (Pangsau Pass)	Arunachal Pradesh	Pangsau	Notified but not Functional
4	Avangkhu	Nagaland	Somara	Bilaterally agreed to open new LSC but not yet notified

Source: Based on data available from Department of Commerce, Government of India.

India-Myanmar border trade stands at around US\$ 50 million. Border trade grew from US\$ 15 million in 2005-06 to US\$ 48.63 million in 2013-14, registering 215% increase during this period. However, it should be keep in mind that statistics on India-Myanmar border trade differ across sources. The official statistics available at Embassy of India, Yangon, Myanmar website differs significantly from the statistics available at Moreh LCS. This could be due to accounting for seizure of illegal items at Moreh LCS.¹⁹

It has been observed that the North-eastern states of India have been urging the central government to expand border trade with the neighbouring countries including Myanmar. There are proposals to open trade centers in all the bordering states, namely Avangkhu and

¹⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁹Ibid., p.14

Lungwa in Nagaland, Pangsau Pass in Arunachal Pradesh and Behiang, Skip and Tusom in Manipur. Bilateral talks have been done for opening the historic Ledo road that will link India with China's Kunming via Myanmar. However, India is chary of opening a direct route between its Northeast and China as it may swamp the region with Chinese goods.²⁰ Besides this, there are various border trade issues which India and Myanmar have been working on to foster border trade relations.

4.2.3. Infrastructure Development

India's policy of engagement with Myanmar does not stop with just trade and investment but it extends to providing aid for developmental projects too. India has ventured into joint projects in Myanmar particularly in the sectors of infrastructure, telecommunications, hydroelectric generation, education and culture. It has been funding some of these projects under its technical and economic cooperation programme. Some of the ongoing projects are infrastructure development for improved connectivity, cooperation in remote sensing, the Thamanthi hydroelectric project, IT projects, and cooperation in education and culture.²¹ India is trying to capture the attention of the Myanmar government through these projects and plans which will pave a way for its access to the ASEAN nations.

4.2.4. River and Land Based Communication Projects

According to the data available from the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India's Annual Report, India has so far extended an amount of over Rs.100 crores to Myanmar since the year 2000. India is engaged in several river and land based projects in Myanmar.

²⁰ Rajiv Sikri and Marie Lall, "Whither India Myanmar Relations", *South Asia Analysis Group*, paper No. 2341, 22 August, 2007.

²¹ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2007-2008, p.161

4.2.4(a) Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo Project

The Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo project, a highway which is under construction vide India's Look East Policy which will connect Moreh, India with Mae Sot, and Thailand via Myanmar. It was inaugurated on 13 February 2001 between India and Myanmar for the 160 kilometres long Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo highway, which came to be called Indo-Myanmar friendship Road.²² Originally, this road was mainly constructed and maintained by the Indian Army's Border Roads Organisation (BRO) aiming to offer a major strategic and commercial transport route connecting Northeast India with the ASEAN nations through Myanmar.

4.2.4 (b) The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project

The \$120 million Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project is the largest communication project which was initiated for the acceleration of the economic activity between the two states. It was intended to provide an alternative access to the north-east through Myanmar.²³ This project is the result of the signing of the long-awaited Kaladan project between India and Myanmar on 2nd April 2008. Through this project, India has gained an important base in Southeast Asia. This is a concrete step on the part of India which will contribute development to its much publicised Look East Policy. The project is connecting the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport in Rakhine state, Myanmar sea. In Myanmar, the road then links Sittwe seaport to Paletwa, Chin state via Kaladan river boat route, and from Paletwa, it will again connect to Mizoram state in Northeast India by road. Originally, the project was scheduled to be completed by 2014, but still the project has not been finished as the proposed plan. This project provides an alternative route to India for ship goods to the landlocked north eastern India. It also lowers the cost of movement of goods between the two states. The

²² Anil Kamboj, "India's Engagement with Myanmar", *World Focus*, Vol. 34, No.10 (October 2013), p.7

²³ Chanchal Kumar, *op.cit.*, p.54

Project has the prospect of transforming trade and commerce in Rakhine and Chin states as well as the north Indian states.

4.2.4. (c) Hydro Power Projects

India has been involved in hydropower projects in Myanmar, which has a potential about 1,00,00 MW. Earlier, India had undertaken the designing and engineering work for the Sedawgyi hydroelectric project which also has a potential of 25MW. In 2004, India signed an agreement to build the Tamanthi project on the Chindwin river near the border, but however, the project has been stalled for the present. The state-run National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) signed MoU with Myanmar on 16 September 2008 for joint ventures in the Chindwin River basin.²⁴ The projects will be financed by the government of India and in turn, a transmission line will be laid to carry electricity from the plants to the state of Manipur in India.

4.3. Oil and Gas

The cooperation between the two states in the field of oil and gas can be considered as one of the biggest result of the improved Indo-Myanmar relations. India has always wanted to import gas from Myanmar.²⁵ However, this relationship has been accelerated by the negative response from the Bangladesh government as they are trying to export gas to India. When Jaswant Singh visited Myanmar in 2001, India and Myanmar started negotiations about buying of gas. The exploration of oil and gas supplies were discussed as a part of negotiations with General Than Shwe regarding infrastructure development projects such as joint construction of roads.²⁶ The visit of U Win Aung to India in January 2003 also further

²⁴ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report, 2007-2008*, p.11

²⁵ Marie Lall, "Indo-Myanmar Relations in the Era of Pipeline Diplomacy", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.28, No.3 (2006), p.437

²⁶ *Ibid.*,

boosted their collaboration in the field of hydrocarbons, power and energy sector, mainly with India's role in the onshore oil and gas reserves.

It will be a great advantage for Indian economy if it could get supply of gas from Myanmar. In fact, there have been some initiatives between them in laying pipelines for importing gas from Myanmar. Since, the early initiatives of laying pipelines through the Bay of Bengal is likely to be far more expensive than through land, it is alleged that it should be laid through the North-eastern region. The construction of pipeline connection from Tripura would enable the country to use the Tripura gas reserves too. For India, the imported natural gas and the existing natural gas from Tripura can be used for generating thermal power and other industrial uses in the North-eastern region and even the rest of the country.²⁷ Most of the North East states still depend on the hydel power for electricity requirements. However, though the region has huge unexploited potential for hydel power, the proposed construction of dams for utilising such potential has run into controversies. Further, the supply from existing hydel power projects become insufficient and unreliable in dry winter months, especially in the years of deficit monsoon. As such, supply of power from gas based thermal stations can be useful to solve the power supply problems in the region. Overall, this would be critical not only for economic activities in the border region but also for border trade.

Oil and Gas is a particular sector, as Myanmar possesses a large untapped reserves of both. Natural gas could be extremely important to address India's insecure electricity supply. As such, the oil and gas sector of Myanmar has attracted the largest foreign investment with over 21 companies from 13 countries who are involve in this sector. Myanmar has an abundance of natural gas resources with three main large offshore oil and gas fields and 19 onshore ones. According to some estimates, Myanmar has proven recoverable reserves of 18.012 trillion cubic feet (TCF) or 510 billion cubic meters (BCM) out of 89.022 TCF or 2.54 trillion cubic

²⁷ Ram Upendra Das, *op.cit.*, p. 17

meters (TCM) reserves of offshore and onshore gas.²⁸ India is trying to have access to these natural resources possess by the Myanmar. Three Indian companies are involved in this sector. The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and Gas Authority of India Limited, have been involved in the Shwe gas field with 20 per cent and 10 per cent stakes, which have combined reserves of 4.53 TCF.²⁹ On September 24, 2007, the ONGC's subsidiary ONGC Videsh Limited, signed a deal with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) to explore for gas in three more offshore blocks. Under the deal, ONGC pledged to invest US\$ 150 million. With this deal, India's total tally of blocks in Myanmar is now 7.

4.4. Multilateral Relationship

As far as the multilateral relationship between India and Myanmar is concerned, the two states shares a common land border of over 1600 kilometres. In addition, they also share a marine boundary in the Bay of Bengal. The relationship between the two country is deeply influence by the growing mutual engagement in the land and maritime border. Besides the membership of Myanmar in ASEAN has played a significant role in India's engagement with the South East nations as being the only ASEAN country sharing a land border with India.³⁰ As such Myanmar being the land bridge between India and ASEAN played a vital role for the development and implementation of India's Act East Policy, its neighbouring policy and also in competing with China over the neighbouring countries. Furthermore, India and Myanmar are signatories to the BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement which provides free and fair trade relations in the region. In the changing times, India is continuously engaged in improvement its trade relations with Myanmar and Thailand within the BIMSTEC region.

²⁸ People's Daily, 11 March, 2007.

²⁹ Keshab Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra, *op.cit.*, p.33

³⁰ Biswajit Mohapatra, "India-Myanmar Relations and India's Act East Policy Challenges and Perspectives of Securing the Sub region", *Conference Report*, 28-29 November 2015, New Delhi, India, p. 37

The India's Look East Policy which was introduced in 1991 to liberalise the economic relations with the South East nations too has its implication on Myanmar as well. The Policy was opened to South East Asia as India was looking at South East Asia to get more business to in order to strengthen its economy. The Look East Policy, which was initially economic oriented was now re-designated as 'Act East Policy' under the new regime of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The renewed policy has taken into account the number of developments that are taking place in the region and worldwide. The Act East Policy has now more focused on the North eastern region of India and had stretched towards South East Asia. The growing relationship has been improving with the introduction of quasi-democratic government in Myanmar in 2011.³¹ Today, there is much opportunity in Myanmar as the country is not only changing politically, but also economically and socially. As such, there has been a great hope for foreign countries and as Myanmar has been following the path of full democracy. As a result of change in political in Myanmar, change in the economic has been initiated under the new economic laws.

The top leaders of India and Myanmar has often promised to strengthen relations in all areas including defence and security. However, the present situations of ethnic conflicts in Myanmar and the recurrence of the militant extremists' activities across the borders often posed a great threat to the improvement of the relationship between India and Myanmar in their attempt to deepen their relations the ASEAN.

It is believed that the development of close relationship between Myanmar and India has contributed enormously to India's relations with the South East Asian nations. Perhaps it has a wider strategic importance beyond the Southeast Asia to the outside world. As Myanmar is the only land bridge to the South East Asia, it provides India's gateway to South East Asia.

³¹ Udai Banu Singh, "India's Policy challenges in Myanmar", *Conference Report*, 28-29 November 2015, New Delhi, India, p.35

Further, India has essentially required Myanmar to realize its Look East Policy as the country is located to the south of the states in Northeast India, viz., Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh etc. It was only after the introduction of Look East Policy that Myanmar emerged as an important player for India in the strategic and economic context.

An important landmark occurred with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Naypyidaw from November 11-13, 2014 to attend the 12th ASEAN-India Summit and 9th East Asia Summit. He held meeting with U Thein Sein, the President of Myanmar discussed matters of bilateral interest. This visit was and indicative of India's objectives of re-initiating an outreach towards Myanmar in a spirit of rediscovering and re-stating their deep understanding in the current political climate. The visit also intended at more active engagement with Myanmar which focused on the need for India to have a bigger economic role in the region and to increase her projects on to rivers of the country that are so critical for its regional connectivity and to increase her cultural and educational partnership.³²

Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister also paid a visit to Naypyidaw from August 8-11, 2014 to attend the 4th East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers Meeting and the 21st ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting and paid an official bilateral visit to Myanmar on August 11, 2014. Bilateral meeting was held with the Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin and they proposed to establish a Joint Consultative Committee between the two states. They also discussed the possible cooperation to enhance connectivity, increasing trade and commerce, security cooperation.

The first meeting of Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) aimed at strengthening ties in the entire expanse of their relationship. Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the visiting Myanmar's Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin in New Delhi. Modi told Maung Lwin that India attached highest priority to its relations with Myanmar and conveyed that India's to

³² Biswajit Mohapatra, *op.cit.*, p.40

deepen the bilateral relationship in all areas including political, economic, security and people to people contact.³³ As India was one of the few countries that maintained relation with Myanmar even when it was under military regime. Despite India's concern about the insurgent activities who launched number of attacks in the North Eastern region of India taking shelter in Myanmar. The growing bilateral relationship between India and Myanmar would not only increase border security in the North Eastern region, but would usher in peace and stability in the region and unanimity of views on regional and global issues.

4.5.Implications of Indo-Myanmar Relations in Mizoram

Mizoram constitute one of the North East states of India. Being a state, bordering Myanmar, Mizoram has been playing a vital role in Indo-Myanmar relations. It shares around 404 kilometres long international border with Myanmar. Further, the people of Mizoram and Chin communities in Myanmar also share common culture and traditions.³⁴ The geographical location of Mizoram has played a crucial role in Indo-Myanmar relations as the state share a long border with Myanmar. Mizoram provides one of the gateway to Myanmar and as such, it has been playing a significant role for the implementation of India's foreign policy toward Myanmar.

4.5.1.Border Trade Relations

Mizoram shares long international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh. With India, in its attempt to enhance its economic activities in the South East Asian countries, introduced Look East Policy (Act East Policy). For this, the North Eastern states of India, particularly Mizoram has a strategic importance and a key role to play for the success of this policy. Bordering Myanmar, Mizoram has been the main actor in Indian foreign policy to bridge

³³ Ibid., p.41

³⁴C. Lalremruata, "India-Myanmar Relations: Looking from Mizoram Border", *Conference Report on India-Myanmar Relations Looking from the Border*, 28 -29 September 2015 New Delhi, India, p.22

Myanmar and to foster Indian economy. It has been occupying an important place in India's search for power in the region through its economic strategy.

Development of border trade is one of the clauses enshrined in the Mizoram Peace accord of 1986. But there was considerably delay in initiating proactive measures to encourage official border trade.³⁵ However, because of the geographic location of Mizoram, border trade has come to occupy an important place for the state. With the signing of Border Trade Agreement between India and Myanmar in 1994, the border area of Zokhawthar and Rih in Mizoram constitute an important point between the two countries.

The trade between Mizoram and Myanmar, according to available information is at least one and a half-century years old. But owing to lack of adequate information and records, it is impossible to ascertain the exact time when it was started. The Mizo-Myanmar border trade has its uniqueness in regards to its causes, because apart from an incentive of profit, the ethnic-cultural affinities, political, social and economic also an imprint in these activities.³⁶ As such, even before the introduction of India's Look East Policy, trade between Mizoram and Myanmar had not been a new issue. Border trade between the two countries could be found with certain items.

The people of Mizo and the people of Myanmar always has close contacts in the border areas. The Mizo's have a close cultural affinity with the neighbouring tribes. This has resulted in the feelings of brotherhood between the people of the two countries as both enjoyed the same ethnic origin which is believed to be mongoloids. As such, the bilateral relations between Mizoram and Myanmar occupy an important place in the relations undertaken by India and Myanmar.

³⁵ Jagdish K. Patnaik, (2008), *Mizoram: Dimensions and Perspectives, (ed)*, New Delhi:Concept Publishing Company, p.162

Trade between Mizoram and Myanmar is believed to be as old as more than a century. Trade has always been in existence prior to the British annexation of the areas. This trade relation continued even after independence from the colonial rule. When India launched Look East Policy in 1991, the relationship between the two particular areas considerably improved in a more systematic way. As Mizoram constitute one of the gateway to the South East Asian nations, promoting relations with Myanmar and Mizoram under Indian foreign policy was of great importance for both the countries.

Thus, there is a big difference of trade balance in favour of Myanmar. The reason being that the trading capacity of Mizoram is quite too low with less items to export.³⁷ As the main economic activities of the region is agriculture due to unfavourable soil conditions of the area, the yielding capacity is too low and mostly consumable items are bought from across the border. Because of the economic backwardness of Mizoram, the products imported from Myanmar are more in number. In order to address the issue, an opportunity for economic development for Mizoram should be created like the development of tourism and indigenous crafts which will contribute much economic development for the region.

In the case of Mizoram, though in spite of its infrastructural disadvantages, the volume of the informal trade has greatly increased. The main reason for the increase in the informal sector in Mizoram is that the state has become a peaceful state, and as such political and social stability has turned business environment conducive for economic and business activities in Mizoram.³⁸ The political environment of Mizoram foster the border trade activities between India and Myanmar. Further, the common cultural background of the people has also contributed to the growth of trade relations between them.

³⁷Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury and Pratinashree Basu, "India-Myanmar Connectivity: Possibilities and Challenges", *Observer Research Foundation*, Kolkata, p.92

³⁸M.P Besbaruah, "Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: The Stakes for North East India", *Dialogue*, Vol. 9, No. 1, (July-Sept 2007), p.3

Zokhawthar which is located only 28 km ahead of the border has excessively large and booming marketplace with stores, selling a wide range of household appliances, electrical wares, medicines, smartphones, footwear and other goods. Besides, Champhai the highest town in Mizoram is one of the largest trading centres after the state capital Aizawl. Champhai has been playing a significant role in the development and maintenance of border trade between Mizoram and Myanmar. The status of trade in the border area is imbalance while demand for some goods is extremely low on both sides of the border but very high on some other items.³⁹

Border trade at Zokhawthar similarly presented a dull picture, with total trade volume remaining extremely low. For example, in 2009-10, the total trade was valued at only Rs.1.2 lakh, which increased to Rs.1.85 lakh in 2012-13 but then decreased to Rs.1.24 crore in 2013-14.⁴⁰ Some report reveals that there are around 50 registered importers at Champhai, but few of them are active.

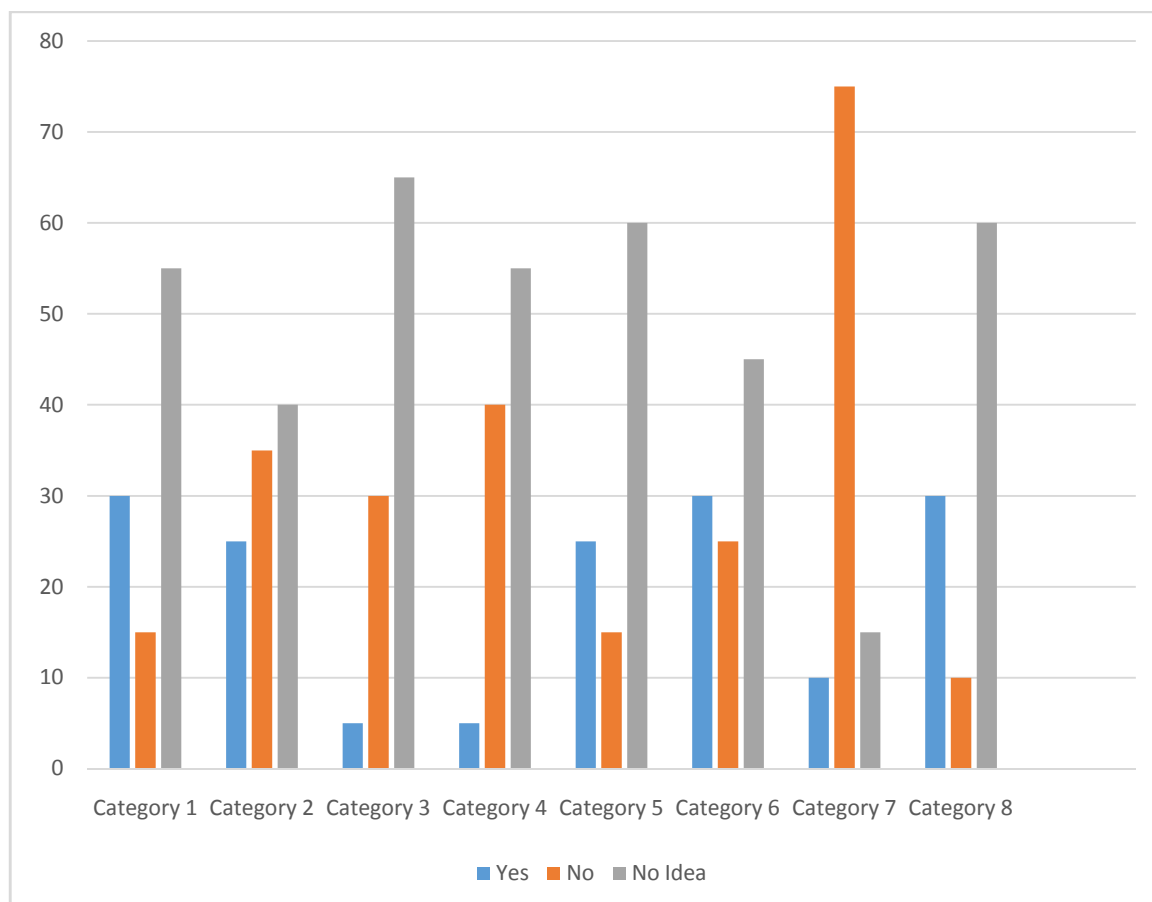
The introduction of border trade has led to the rise of several petty crimes and violation of law and order as a result of poor security provision. India and Myanmar have an agreement which allows the free movement of people from either of the country for up to 15 km inside each other's territory. The ethnic similarities between the people of Mizoram and the people inhabiting the Chin state of Myanmar resulted in the easy movement of the people across the border to do petty jobs, earn some income, and go back home. The practice of this movement has very long story which continued till date.⁴¹

³⁹Rajiv Bhattacharyya, "Border trade in Rhi-Zokhawter: wide gap between goals and realities", *Report of the Field Trip (Unpublished)*, The Jadavpur Association of International Relations, 20th July, 2015, pp.1-4

⁴⁰ Pushpita Das, "Status of India's Border Trade: Strategic and economic Significance", *IDS Occasional Paper No.37*, IDSA, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 18-19

⁴¹Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury and Pratinashree Basu, "India-Myanmar Connectivity: Possibilities and Challenges", *Observer Research Foundation*, Kolkata, (November 2015), p.93

A study/survey conducted on the impact of Look East Policy (Act East Policy) on Mizoram with regards to the development of infrastructure so as to facilitate border trade between Myanmar and Mizoram was undertaken with respondent from Zokhawthar and other adjoining areas. The highlights of the survey are presented below:



- 1) Category 1: Has there been an economic development in India after the Look East Policy?
- 2) Category 2: Has there been an economic improvement in Mizoram with the introduction of the Policy.
- 3) Category 3: Do you think the border trade between Mizoram and Myanmar has been implemented properly?
- 4) Category 4: Has there been any improvement in the transportation road?
- 5) Category 5: Do you think the border trade has improved between Mizoram and Myanmar?
- 6) Category 6: Are you satisfied with the performance of Zokhawthar Land Custom Station?
- 7) Category 7: Do you think the Government of India is taking interest in Mizoram and Myanmar border trade relations?
- 8) Category 8: Do you think the border trade has increased the illegal migration in the state?

An analysis of the outcome of the survey of with regards to the development of infrastructure for the improvement of border trade, majority of the respondents are of the opinion that road transportation between Mizoram and Myanmar has been neglected by the Government of

India. The result of which can be seen in the border trade relations being undertaken at the border areas still not up to the mark as it was expected. The construction of roads and other infrastructural development in the border areas have been underrated which mark the negligence on the part of India to improve border trade with Myanmar through Mizoram.

Many of the respondents argued that the Government of India does not give interest for the enhancement of the border trade in this areas as it was provided in its Policy. Since the introduction of the Look East Policy, it is believed that border trade with Myanmar should improve considerably. However, besides several improvements, many of the respondents are not satisfied with the efforts taken up by the Government of India to enhance border trade with Myanmar. Some of the respondents are of the opinion that even the Policy is to foster Indian economy, the surrounding areas and Mizoram as a whole did not get much profit from the border trade. Rather, they it has created problems for the state as illegal drug trafficking, import and export of goods and services have been prevalent in the area which cause a serious problem to the Mizo society.

With regard to people to people contact, the people of the border areas in Myanmar and Mizoram share common ethnic affinity. They do speak the same language, and even their looks are quite similar which indicates the presents of ethnic similarity. Due to this close ethnic affinity, crossing of border among the people of these areas are sometime looks easy. There is provision which allow to cross border freely as far as 40 kilometres of the respective states. Because of this provision, many of the people crossing border, in spite of obeying, there is an illegal migration from either of the states. As such, the majority respondents are of the opinion that there are much illegal migrations which need to be checked by the government of both the states. Further, they also argued that the government did not take a serious control of this illegal practices. Hence, they suggested that the government of either of the states should take effective measures to check illegal migrations from both the states.

Based on the survey conducted, various suggestions have been made as per the opinion of the respondents, which are:

- 1) In order to maintain free and fair trade relationship, the government of both the country should take effective measures by improving the border check gate which is responsible for checking the illegal migration from either side of the states. As the government is the all in all authority in the border trade, more efforts should be taken in order to improve border check gate.
- 2) The existing link road should be upgraded. Besides the construction of several infrastructural projects, the government should also upgrade the existing road in order to have an improved border trade relation.
- 3) Illegal drug trafficking and its apartheid should be carefully checked at the border check gate. Though there is Land Custom Station at the border areas, this kind of illegal trafficking still prevalent which cause a serious problem for the people of Mizoram. So, an effective effort is to be taken to eradicate or at least lessen the evil practices.
- 4) Maintenance of law and order in the border area has been unsatisfactory, as such Border Security Force (BSF) should be put in place in the border areas in order to maintain law and order and to check the business that has been taken up at the areas. By doing this, the illegal migration, illegal drug trafficking, etc. could be checked to maintain free and fair relations.
- 5) The international standard bridge is needed as the border between the two states is bordered by the river Tiau. So, the existing old iron bridge could not facilitate the border trade activities. As such, a more technological advanced international standard bridge is a need for a more effective border trade between the two states.

4.5.2. *People to people contact*

Due to the political instability, the military rule and hardship in Myanmar, a large number of Myanmar people have arrived the North East states of India, particularly Mizoram. The people of Myanmar come and settled in Mizoram because of certain reasons which have its implications in Mizoram. Mizoram have become a home for illegal immigrants from Myanmar because of the congeniality of the state due to its similar ethnic and cultural affinity with them. Mizoram, one of the most peaceful state in India, bordering Myanmar become a fertile land for the people of Myanmar to vent their feelings away from the military regime in Myanmar. Even the Government of Mizoram looked them as brothers and understands their problems and extended its tolerance towards these people. However, the Government and the people of Mizoram are against the ant-social activities of the migrant Myanmar people inside the state.

The movement of people on both sides flows freely with even Myanmar students receiving education from a school on the Indian side of the border. Such movement, while aimed at establishing goodwill, has at times also led to incidents of petty crimes. It is therefore necessary to revisit the existing agreement and require some form of identification to be put in place to enforce a general check on such movement.⁴²

The indigenous people dwelling on either side of the Indo-Myanmar border were allowed to cross over the other side up to 40 km on either side of the entire stretch of the Indo-Myanmar border, covering a distance of 1643 km international border. Tribal of these areas continuously cross over to other side to meet their needs. There has been tacit understanding between the two countries that there would be free movement of people, which have been continuing for the past many years due to close economic and cultural links.

⁴²Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury and Pratinashree Basu, *op.cit.*, p.94

There is an exemption from Pass Port requirements to the people belonging to the border areas if they were hill tribes dwelling in the border areas and did not proceed beyond 40 km across the land border. Tribal from both the countries crossed the Indo-Myanmar border through the bordering areas of the respective states. Even today, people have come from Myanmar for shopping and marketing at Champhai in Mizoram. With mutual understanding between Mizoram and Myanmar people come and go back. The same is the case with the people living in the border in the Mizoram side. People from the State, particularly, in the border areas of Champhai District, go to the Tiau in Myanmar to fetch their needs and used to come back.

People to people contact is quite evident in the case of the relationship between Myanmar and Mizoram. The fact is that most of the Myanmarese nationals who come over to the State of Mizoram belong to the people of Chin Hills who have a strong ethnic link with the Mizo, and as a result the Chin people consider the State of Mizoram as part of their home. The Chins of Myanmar have engaged in different types of works in the State along the Mizos. Moreover, the political situation in Myanmar being unhealthy for these people, with lot of forced labor being practiced by the Myanmar military junta, and human right violations in Myanmar make the Myanmarese sympathized by the people of Mizoram.

There are two check-gates, one in Mizoram side and one in Myanmar side across the Iron Bridge of river Tiauinternational boundary of India and Myanmar. The people coming from Myanmar before crossing the international boundary deposit their identity cards to the Myanmar officials at border check gate, and then arrive in Mizoram. The period of their stay in Mizoram depends on their will.

It is to be noted that the movement of people take place through all the gates and all along the Indo-Myanmar international border. The reason is not far to seek as the boundary between

India and Myanmar is porous. In the case of the Mizoram sector the gate at the entrance of Iron Bridge at Zokhawthar-Rih sector is manned by the Mizoram Armed Police, and on the Myanmar side the gate is manned by Myanmar customs and immigration personnel. The gate is kept open at 7:00. A.M and is closed at 5:00 P.M, during the time of the opening of the gate people go to and fro across the international border. Traders also often pass through other directions other than through the main check-gate at Zokhawthar-Tiau.

Thus, for Mizoram, the Indo-Myanmar relations through its Act East Policy is beneficial on the one hand as it provides economic prosperity and development in the region. It also brings unity among the people of Myanmar and the people of Mizoram as they have common cultural ties which needs to be promoted. However, on the other hand, the relations bring negative impact for Mizoram as it increased illegal migration, illegal drug trafficking, etc. which brought a serious dangers and problems to the Mizo people. As such, it is alleged that the Government of both the states must take a more effective measures to improve this relationship

Conclusion

The bilateral trade relations between India and Myanmar has a long history which can be traced back to the precolonial period. Both the two countries were undertaking economic relations since the ancient times. This relation was further fuelled when the British annexed India and Myanmar and ruled for a long time. During the British period, their economic relation began to increased and many Indian traders moved to Myanmar and developed business activities and many of them settled there. The two countries maintain economic ties by exchanging small goods items like agricultural product and raw materials.

When India and Myanmar attained their independence in 1947 and 1948 respectively from the British colonial rule, India faced a severe economic problems and it seek help from

Myanmar for rice and other items. The landmark of the economic relationship between India and Myanmar is the signing of Treaty of Friendship in 1951. During this period, the economic relations remained stable as the two leaders of both the country had similar view and interest. As such, India donated US\$ 46 Million to Myanmar for developmental purpose in 1958.

However, things were changed when the military junta came and took control over the Myanmar government. The government had lost all its privileges and the new government adopted closed economy which deeply shook the economic relations of the two countries. The economic policy was completely controlled by the military which hindered the progress of their relations. The military power had drained the economic prosperity of Myanmar and even her economic relations with other countries also stagnated.

There was a pro-democratic movement in Myanmar in the late 1980s, which started to open new dawn in the Myanmar foreign policy. At the same time, India had introduced its Look East Policy in 1991 which aimed at the better economic relations with the South East Asian countries. Myanmar, being the only country which bridge India and Southeast Asia, play a significant role for India's attempt to promote the trade relations with the ASEAN nations. By introducing this Policy, India is maintaining relations with Myanmar as well as the ASEAN nations.

The real intention of India for maintaining relations with Myanmar was her attempt to get access to the Southeast Asian nations for economic purpose. As such India has been engaged in various economic activity. The bilateral relations between India and Myanmar started growing as a result of the membership of Myanmar to ASEAN in 1997 and the introduction of the Look East Policy. India is now becoming the 4th largest trading partner of Myanmar and the 2nd largest export market for Myanmar.

Border trade has played an important role in the economic relations as many of the activities have been done through the border trade. Land Custom Stations were established for the smooth functioning and checking the illegal trade practices. The major items that India export to Myanmar includes wood, pulse, charcoal, ginger, turmeric roots, nuts, etc. while Myanmar imports iron and steel, pharmaceutical products, machinery and mechanical appliances and their parts. India has been taking measures to extend air, land and sea routes to strengthen trade relations with Myanmar. The border trade volume has been increasing during the last decades.

India is engaging in the land and river based infrastructure development so as to strengthen the bilateral relation with Myanmar. Several infrastructure projects have been constructed to bridge Myanmar through land and water. The reconstruction of Sittwe Port in Myanmar, the India Myanmar Thailand Trilateral Highway Projects are some of the projects. As a result of the Myanmar's government failure in upgrading the existing developmental works, that had been done by the government of India, in May 2012, India announced that it would invest US\$100 million to repave the existing highway and upgrade all the 71 bridges that Myanmar had failed to build. The road is expected to boost trade and commerce in the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area, as well as to the rest of South Asia.

The Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo highway, the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project are the two major projects which India have been constructing to foster economic activity. Besides this, India is actively engaged in providing developmental projects in Myanmar like provide assistance in Hydro power projects, Tibet. Further, Indian Company has huge investment in Myanmar oil and gas stock which marked the close cooperation in the field of Economy. Thus, India and Myanmar economic relationship has been improving as both the countries are working to enhance the economic relations by providing mutual help to each other. This results in the increasing bilateral trade between the two countries.

CHAPTER-5: POLITICAL- STRATEGIC RELATIONS - NEW DIMENSION

Introduction

The foreign policy of India experienced a major shift in the early 1990s especially to its neighbouring countries. India looked Myanmar as a major actor which can open up opportunity for India to get access to the ASEAN nations. As such, India had been trying to maintain close relationship with its neighbouring country i.e., Myanmar. India's relations with Myanmar was also marked by this pragmatic change. It was by 1992 that India had decided to jump with a policy of positive engagement with military administration. Myanmar also wanted to collaborate with India in taking joint action in order to meet the security and strategic welfare of the two countries.¹ Their relations during the early 1990s displays a change in Indian policy towards Myanmar. Though India supported the democratic movement in Myanmar, yet it had adopted a policy of proactive commitment with military government. It extended its willingness to increase its economic and technological support to Myanmar. They realised that they no longer needed to worry about India. Myanmar was now ready to expose herself to the outside world. The country has started maintaining cordial relations with the neighbouring countries.

5.1. Indo-Myanmar Relations Prior to 1990

Much has been written on the foreign policy of India and Myanmar but less understood about the cause and the process by which these two policies were evolved. Many writers are of the view that both India and Myanmar followed a policy of Non-Alignment since their independence.² Since independence, India tried her best to remove suspicion by extending certain help to her during the communist resurrection in Myanmar. The bilateral relations

¹ Anil Kamboj, "India's Engagement with Myanmar", *World Focus*, Vol. 34. No.10 (October 2013), p.4.

² B.Pakem (1992), *India-Burma Relations*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications.p.25

between India and Myanmar began to improve extensively since 1991 overwhelming the strains related to dominance of democracy and the military rule in Myanmar.

The military rule in Burma had suppressed the peaceful protest for democracy. It led to the displacement of people, deaths and killing of immense souls. In this regard, India became the first country among its neighbours to stand firmly on the side of democratic movement in Myanmar. All actions of India displayed the strong backing for the democratic effort in Burma. This became an important gesture on the part of India to lessen the tension between the two countries.

5.2. Factors Influencing the Growth of Indo-Myanmar Relations

There are several factors which influence the relationship between India and Myanmar. The first being the increasing Chinese influence in Myanmar, which deeply shook India's relations with Myanmar. China has raised up its economic outline in South East Asia, mostly in Myanmar in spite of the sanctions imposed by the west. India should not be left behind especially in vision of the large oil and gas resources available in Myanmar. The close economic policy of Myanmar and defence cooperation with China are the main cause of concern to India. Through Myanmar, China gets easy access to the river of Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea which become a major cause of concern from India. As China has been providing almost 80 per cent of defence equipment to Myanmar, it has established its naval listening and weather post on Myanmar which is also a big challenge to India. The second Factor includes various land based military insurgencies in the Indian North-Eastern states, which pose internal security challenge to India. Indian interests, even though quite hasty and fragmentary, did lead to some progress in border management, border trade, security discourse and inspection of traffic in narcotics and arms. ³ If we look at the north

³ Rimli Basu, "Reconciliation and redefinition of the Indo-Myanmar Relations", *The Indian Journals of Political Science*, Vol.71. No. 2 (April-June 2010). p.668

eastern states of India, insurgencies, separatist movements have been a mundane feature. Myanmar can also extend its co-operation in combatting anti-Indian insurgencies in North-Eastern states and crack down heavily on the insurgents taking place in the other side of the border. If India's North East is calm and peaceful domestically, it can have no major hurdles in carrying forward its policies towards its neighbour. The further alienation of India's North East from the rest of India will result in domestic constraint in the foreign policy. Therefore, India needs Myanmar's support in dealing with the separatist militant groups active in the northeast border areas. Thirdly, another important factor which led India to engage with Myanmar is that of India's Look East Policy, with an emphasis on developing closer ties with the Southeast Asian countries, with the regional grouping called Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The relationship receives special impetus with the enactment of the '*Look East Policy*'. As Myanmar is a member of this regional grouping, it provides a strategic linkage to the East and Southeast Asian countries and therefore improvement of the relations with Myanmar come to be an important requirement for India.

India's march towards globalisation and its Look East Policy made a substantial change in Indo-Myanmar relation. For instance, the broadcast of All India Radio in Burmese language was discontinued since 1991. In the following year, 8 member's delegation of Myanmar headed by U Aye, Director-General of the Political Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited India between 11 to 14 August, 1992. He met a senior official in the ministries of External Affairs, Home, Defence, and Commerce of the Government of India. This was the first ever official Indo-Burmese senior-level meeting since Rajiv Gandhi visited Myanmar in 1987.

Under Narasimha Rao, the government of India decided to engage the military regime which led to a low level visit of Myanmar vice Foreign Minister, U Baswa in August 1992. The Burmese delegations made three arguments during this visit. First, it appreciated India's

support to democratic movement and hoped for the patience of India about the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. Second, Myanmar accepted that common security and political concern existed between the two countries. Therefore, Myanmar was willing to collaborate with India in taking cooperative action. Finally, Myanmar would be ready to upsurge economic and technological cooperation.⁴ This became an important initiative which marked the beginning of the new changes in Indo-Myanmar relations.

5.3. Indo-Myanmar Relations: A New Thaw

The political scenario in India meanwhile had undergone tremendous changes. As such, Vatsala had also opined that there is a slow but gradual evolution of political consciousness. The framework of Indian foreign policy began to change in a subtle but definite way in the 1990s. A combination of both external and domestic factors shaped these changes.⁵ In the context of the improved interest in its growing relationship with Myanmar, India faces the moral problem in building up of a close connection for the long term with an anti-democratic military tyranny, which will not hesitate to use it to maintain its rule. India has been following the ASEAN model of building a relationship with the military junta, without going into the regime's moral right to rule, so that it has a base in the geo-strategically vibrant area.⁶

In this context, India followed dual strategy of engagement with the Myanmar government. In the first instance, it supported the pro-democratic movement of the Myanmar people while simultaneously engaging with the military regime. The relationship of both the countries has increased the political relationship both inside and outside the country. For instance, Indian Embassy in Myanmar openly supported the democratic activities which come up during the nation-wide uprising in 1988. Various political leaders of India, including

⁴ Tony Allison, "Myanmar shows India the road to South Asia", *Asia Times*. 21 February, 2001.

⁵ K.R Gupta and Vatsala Shukla (2009), *Foreign Policy of India*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributor(P) LTD. pp.108-109

⁶ Dhiraj Shrivastava (2007), *Indian Foreign Policy and Its Neighbours*, Delhi: ABD Publishers. pp.179-180

the statesmen expressed solidarity with struggle for democracy in Myanmar at the meeting of India-Myanmar friendly society held at New Delhi on June 20th,1990.⁷ As a result of the compassion of the Indian government to the democratic government, India showed her full support to the activists involved in the movement. The All India Radio programmes were criticising the military rule in Myanmar. India reversed its attitude with a more convincing and realistic policy and began to start engage in the military government. As such, the relationship had been developing progressively towards peaceful relations.

5.4. The Growing Political Relations

The development in their relationships began to start in 1993 with the visit by the then Foreign Secretary, J.N Dixit to Yangon.⁸ India and Myanmar signed agreements to improve boundary trade and for monitoring illegal drug trafficking. This visit was regarded as misunderstanding-managing exercise for both the countries. India asked the government of Myanmar to release all political hostages and affirmed that India would continue its support for re-establishment of democracy in Myanmar. The Deputy Foreign Minister of Myanmar, U Nyunt Swe visited India in January 1994. During this visit, he held a series of consultations with the ministerial officials of India and discussed extensive issues to increase and develop their relationships. Both the countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 21 January,1994 to increase collaboration between the civilian border authorities and to prevent illegal insurgent activities between the two countries.

The joint military operation named ‘Operation Golden Bird’ between India and Myanmar was launched against several North Eastern rebels active across at the Indo-Myanmar border in the year 1995. The two countries also concluded a border trade agreement in the same year and by that agreement, two border trade posts were opened at Moreh in Manipur, India and

⁷ Keshap Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra, “India and Myanmar: Exploring New Vista of Relationship, *World Focus*, Vol. 34, No.10 (October 2013), p.31

⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 1993-1994

Tamu in Sagaing Division in the Myanmar region.⁹ In the same year in 1995, Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nehru Peace Prize for International Understanding as a gesture for supporting her democratic commitment. Unfortunately, it had a wrong affect. The Burmese military government reacted by ending the Golden Bird Operation in the North East India as an expression of their disappointment with India. Basically, the foreign policy of India was still uncertain between an open support to the democratic movement against the reigning government on the one hand and cordial relations with the military government on the other.¹⁰

In the following year, the Deputy Minister for Home of Myanmar visited India at the National Level meeting held in New Delhi in October 1996 to discuss matters like checking illicit trade, guerrilla's activities and general border administration. Before this visit, collaboration between the defence services was discussed throughout the visits of Chief Air Staff to Myanmar from 30 April- 2 May, 1996 and Commander-in-Chief(Air) of Myanmar to India in December 1996.¹¹

However, the relationship between the two countries had not develop to its full potential. It was only in 1998 when the Bharatya Janta Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came in to power. As a result, the a real renovation began to start between India and Myanmar.¹² Thus, the real swing in their relations come when the BJP led government gained power in 1998. New political commitment was made to attain the objective of Indian foreign policy in the early 1990s.

⁹ Sampa Kundu, "Indo-Burma Relations: A historical Overview", *Mainstream Weekly*, Vol. L, No.24, (June 2,2012)<http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article3478.html> accessed on 21.09.2018 11:09 p.m.

¹⁰ EGRETEAU Renaud, "India and Myanmar Relations: From Idealism to realism", *Paper Presented in Conference*, 11th September, 2003, India International Center, New Delhi.

¹¹ Rimli Basu, *op.cit.*, p.668

¹² Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism", *Jindal Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.1. No. 1, (2011), p.89

Under Prime Minister A.B Vajpayee, bilateral relation began to improve between the two neighbouring countries. A joint meeting was held in New Delhi on 8th August, 1998. In this meeting, six political parties of India recommitted their support for Myanmar in its fight for Independence. Further, more than 75 MPs signed a letter in the same month urging the Burmese government to bring back democracy in Myanmar. On 17th February, 1999, Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh has confirmed that India is devoted to the safety and liberty of the people of Myanmar who are taking shelter in India.¹³

In the late 1990s, Myanmar on its part started relaxing its isolationist stance and diversify its foreign policy. Myanmar had joined the most dynamic grouping of the region, Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997 and subsequently, other sub-regional groupings like Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in December 1997 and the Mekong-Ganga-Cooperation in 2000.¹⁴ All this actions being undertaken by Myanmar government opened up an opportunity for India to take initiatives in order to improve its relations in a more concrete manners.

When George Fernandes became the Defence Minister under the NDA government, he strongly supported the democratic movement of the Myanmar people. He had allowed the Burmese student organisation to function from his residence. In January 1996, he organised an International connection for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar in New Delhi to bring together supporters of the Burmese people from all over the world.¹⁵ This clearly shows that India was one of the leading supporters of Burmese independence and established diplomatic relations. India also provided supports to Myanmar in its struggle with regional insurgencies for many years.

¹³Keshab Chandra ratha and Subanta Kumar Mahapatra, *op.cit.*, p.31

¹⁴ K Yhome, "India-Myanmar Relations (1998-2008): A Decade of Redefining Bilateral Ties", *Observer Research Foundation*. Occasional Paper 10, 2009.

¹⁵ Keshab Chandra and Subanta Kumar Mahapatra, *op.cit.*, p.31

The policy of engagement with Myanmar underwent a renewed thrust when Jaswant Singh was appointed as the new Indian Foreign Affairs Minister, he restructured the foreign policy of India by attaching a realist approach. He wanted to increase a strong base in Asia through Myanmar, taking advantage of the strategic position of the country. The strategic importance of Myanmar led India to reshape its foreign policy towards the Asian nations. Thus, India began to weaken its strong commitment to the rebuilding of democracy in Myanmar and chose to engage in the military junta in order to establish a close cooperation.

5.5. Indo-Myanmar Relations in the New Millennium

The new millennium took India's Myanmar policy to a more pragmatic and cooperative track. The Vice Chairman of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), Maung Aye, the next most powerful leader in the military government visited India in November 2000, which facilitated the opportunity to develop relations between the two states. As a result of this, there has been all round development in the political, economic and military relations. Besides, there has been improvement in certain areas like technology, infrastructure development, education, space, health and other fields. The Foreign Minister of India, Jaswant Singh made a visit to Myanmar in 2001 and signed a number of agreements. He inaugurated the 165 long Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo Road which consequently named the Indo-Myanmar Friendship Road, which was entirely funded and built by India as a symbol of friendship.¹⁶

India's engagement policy with Myanmar was strengthened during the early 2000s the exchange of high level meets between the two states. Another important visit from India was the visit of the Vice President Bhairon Singh Sikhawat who visited Myanmar in November 2003 which marked the continuation of the high level visits from India. It reveals the

¹⁶ Langpoklakpam Suraj Singh, "Emerging Scenario of India's Myanmar Policy: The Manipur Dimension", *Asian Profile*, Vol.36, No.1 (2008), p.54

evolving relationship and understanding between the two states. This visit was headed by the visit of Shri Arun Jaitley, Minister of Commerce & Industry in July 2003 and Shri Arun Shourie, Minister of Communication & IT in August 2003.¹⁷ During the visit of Sikhawat, two important agreements and MoU were signed. An Agreement for the exemption official and diplomatic passport holders from Myanmar and MoU between Human Resource Development Ministry of India and Education Ministry of Myanmar were signed between the two countries. Myanmar reciprocated the Indian gesture with the official visit of General Than Shwe, Senior general of SPDC in New Delhi in 2004. Eight agreements in the ream of commercial and strategic issues were signed. The government of Myanmar expressed her full support for India's claim for permanent membership of the United Nations (UN) Security Council.¹⁸ The visit was considered as successful as it generated abundant friendship cooperation between Myanmar and India. The visit also resulted in expanding co-operation in domain of Science and technology, industry, energy, rail transportation, communication and health.¹⁹

Indian diplomacy took a massive turn during the Manmohan Singh's regime in UPA-I and UPA-II. Although it had an economic dimension, it also has political and strategic orientation. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh held dialogues meeting with his Myanmar counterpart, Soe Win on the side-lines of 11th Asian Summit in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005. Dr. Singh advised his counterpart to work for restoration of democracy in Myanmar.²⁰ As a continuation high level exchanges, the President of India, APJ Abdul Kalam visited Myanmar in March 2006. This visit was the first visit by the President of India to Myanmar since after independence. During his visit, new vista of co-operation was initiated in Information Technology (IT), automobiles, textiles, agro-based industries, river

¹⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2003-2004.

¹⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2004-2005.

¹⁹ Keshap Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra, *op.cit.*, p.32

²⁰ *Ibid.*,

and land-based transport system.²¹ He assured all support to Myanmar in the institutional building procedure and democratic system of governance.

As such the development of Indo-Myanmar relations continue to grow exponentially. The regular exchange of high level visits between the two countries marked the growing relationship between the two countries. The Chief of Joint Staff of Myanmar, General Thura Shwe Mann, and the Home Minister of Myanmar, Major General Maung Oo, India in 2006 and talks with their counterparts. The External Affairs Minister of India, Pranab Mukherjee visited Myanmar in January 2007 which marked the growing political relationship between them. India and Myanmar have been continuously working on border infrastructure development projects, which includes the construction of the Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo Road.²² The construction of these link roads will further facilitate the political relationship between the two nations for the years to come.

The relations between India-Myanmar had been strengthening over the years with the continuous bilateral visits at several levels. On 14 October, 2007, the Minister of Culture and Tourism Ambika Soni visited Myanmar and attended the state funeral of late Prime Minister General Soe Win. India's relations with Myanmar continued to develop during this period and truly developed into multidimensional. Further, India has provided emergency relief assistance to Myanmar in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in May 2008. In February 2009, the Vice President of India Hamid Ansari visited Myanmar. During his visit, an agreement was signed for setting up an Industrial Training Centre by HMIT(I) and a Centre for English Language Training.²³ At the same time, commitment in the economic and commercial sphere also strengthened substantially.

²¹Langpoklakpam Suraj Singh,*op.cit.*, pp.41-42

²² Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2006-2007.

²³ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2008-2009.

India and Myanmar continued to develop their multi-dimensional relations. The exchange of high level visits has been maintained by the two states. The External Affairs' Minister of India, Shri S.M. Krishna visited Myanmar for the BIMSTEC Meeting in December 2009 and met Prime Minister of Myanmar General Thein Sein. The Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo stretch of roads, which was built with assistance of India was given to the Myanmar Government in October 2009. In December 2009, Vice Admiral Soe Thane, Myanmar's Minister for Industry visited India.²⁴ Both the countries were trying to continue their cooperation in certain areas to develop mutual cooperation in their strategic cooperation.

Delegation level talks were held between the Foreign Minister of both the countries Mr. Maung Lwin and Mr. S.M Krishna. Both the countries discussed measures to enhance mutual co-operation in the field of trade and commerce, health, culture, science, technology, human resource development and capacity building. the government of India reiterate its constant support for the development of infrastructure and co-operation schemes for the advantage of people of Myanmar. The foreign Ministers highlighted the significance of subjects which could develop the connectivity between India and South East Asia via Myanmar.²⁵ During this talks, Krishna conveyed to his counterpart that India has been continuously supporting Myanmar to play its due role for the welfare of nations. India welcomed the efforts being taken up by the government of Myanmar on the way to the national reconciliation and democratic transition.

Relations between India and Myanmar has been developed and diversified satisfactorily and gained an increased momentum during the period of 2010-2011, which saw the state visit of the President of Myanmar to India in October 2011, the visit of the External Affairs Minister to Myanmar in June 2011 and the visit of the Foreign Minister of Myanmar in January

²⁴ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2009-2010.

²⁵ Keshab Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 34

2012.²⁶ During this period, the relationship between the two countries was marked by the renovation of the political structure in Myanmar, as it was moving to a parliamentary democratic system. As such, Indo-Myanmar relations continued to be reflective of the two countries' common aspiration to attain sustained economic development, fostering people-to-people contact and to work for achieving common goal in the regional, sub-regional and global environment.

The multidimensional relations between India and Myanmar was established on strong bonds of common culture, belief and traditions which congregated further momentum during 2012-13 with a new initiatives and agreements. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh made a visit to Myanmar in May 2012 which was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 25 years, which was followed by the bilateral visit by the Minister of External Affairs to Myanmar in December 2012.²⁷ Thus, in the regime of The UPA government, the political relations between the two government developed satisfactorily even in the economic and the strategic areas.

The cordial relations between the two countries were further reinforced during the period of 2013-14 through exchange of high level visits. Of particular significance was the visit of the Speaker of the Upper House of Myanmar's Parliament Mr. Khin Aung Myint to India in December 2013 and the visit of Indian Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Anand Sharma to attend the World Economic Forum held in Myanmar in June 2013. The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs Shri Jitendra Singh also represented India at the Opening Ceremony of the South East Asian Games held on 11 December 2013.²⁸

5.6. Border Surgical Strike

²⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2011-2012.

²⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2012-2013.

²⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2013-2014.

In 2015 an important incident took place in the border between India and Myanmar in the Indian state of Manipur. This incident was a military operation carried out by the Indian army to flush out the militant outfits in the region which has taken shelter across the border in the territory of Myanmar. A convoy carrying 46 soldiers of the Indian Army was ambushed in the Moltuk valley in Chandel district of Manipur bordering Myanmar on June 4, 2015. Eighteen soldiers of the 6th Battalion the Dogra Regiment were killed in this deadly ambush. It was reported that the ambush was carried out by a combination of the two teams of cadres drawn from Manipur-based outfits like the KYKL (Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup), the KCP (Kangleipak Communist Party) and the Khaplang group of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-K).²⁹ The extremists immediately after the attack, the extremists retreated into Myanmar immediately after the incident and it is believed to have their camps inside Myanmar.

The Government of India thought that the death of the soldiers had to be avenged. As such, to counter the militant activists in the border areas, 70 commandos of 21 Para regiment, equipped with assault rifles, rocket launchers, grenades and night vision goggles were sent on 9 June from Dhruv helicopter, inside the territory of India near to the border area of India and Myanmar. The operation took about 45 minutes. An army commando walked through the dense forest and carried out the strike. The government of Myanmar was informed about the surgical strike, but only after the strike began. However, the government of Myanmar did not send even its military troops to counter Indian Army. The operation was guided by specific intelligence and precise input from the Indian side.

According to some official records, over 20 suspected militants were killed in the operation. The operation seemed to be a more aggressive Indian military strategy aimed at weeding out

²⁹ www.indiandefencereview.com/news/understanding-the-manipur-ambush-that-killed-18-indian-soldiers/ accessed on 05.09.2018 12:28 a.m.

terrorist threats. The operation was carried out inside Myanmar territory with the cooperation of the local authorities of the states of Manipur and Nagaland.³⁰ Although this act of the Indian Army is a direct incursion into the sovereign territory of Myanmar however there was no official reaction and condemnation on the part of the government of Myanmar. This clearly indicates the level of trust and cordial relationship that the two sides had achieved. Major General Ranbir Singh, Additional Director General Military Operations of the Indian Army said, "Any threat to our security, safety and national integrity will meet a firm response" while ensuring peace and tranquillity along the border and in the border states.³¹ The Government of India is taking this kind of action so as to safeguard its security. Particularly, the north Eastern states of India is being haunted by various armed rebellion who wanted to draw the attention of the central government. The central government has been extending more interests to these areas to eliminate militant groups in the border areas with the help of the Myanmar government.

India and Myanmar, being the close neighbouring countries, have been in the same stand with regard to the issue of cross-border terrorism. During the military attack of Indian government inside Myanmar to retaliate against the militant groups, the Myanmar government was informed. However, in spite of countering the Indian forces, the Myanmar government act like she did not know the incident. This means that Myanmar has extended its support to the military attack by the Indian Government. Hence, India and Myanmar, being actively involved in eliminating cross-border terrorism, they are supporting each other and they sometimes operated joint fights against these insurgent activities.

in their relation.

³⁰http://www.m.chinadaily.com.cn/en/2015-06/10/content_20957856.htm accessed on 02.09.2018 08:43 p.m.

³¹http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-06/10/content_20957856.htm accessed on 07:09 p.m.

A similar kind of surgical strike was conducted again by the Indian government against the same militant groups along the Indo-Myanmar border. In the early morning of September 27, 2017, a column of Indian Army while operating along the Indo-Myanmar was fired upon by unidentified insurgents. The Indian troops reacted swiftly and brought down heavy retaliatory fire on the insurgents.

The exchange of high level personnel supplements the areas where the two countries were seeking a more realistic relationship which will further pave a way for access to the ASEAN nations. President U Htin Kyaw visited India from 27-30 August 2016. State Councillor of Myanmar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi paid a bilateral visit to India from 17-19 October 2016, after attending the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit on 16 October 2016.³² India on its part, strongly dedicated to meet the developmental requirements of Myanmar through expansion various projects which includes training and provision of expertise.

Even under Modi's Government, India and Myanmar has been embracing their close relations by changing the term *Look East Policy* to *Act East Policy* which was meant to foster their relationships. From 5-7 September, Narendra Modi visited Myanmar for the first time which marked the real initiative on the part of India to engage with the government of Myanmar. Before this visit, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas of India visited Myanmar in February 2017. India demonstrated strong commitment towards Myanmar to meet their needs through implementation of several projects.

India, in fact, has been actively involved in the affair of Myanmar. India has been implementing various developmental projects and activities in Myanmar in order to strengthen the bilateral correlation. Both the countries wanted to cooperate with each other in various regional and sub-regional initiatives. Myanmar and India share common interest in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and even in the South Asian Association

³² Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 2016-2017.

for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which Myanmar become an observer.³³ Sharing of common platform with other regional countries has enabled both India and Myanmar in making their relationship closer and more intimate. The bilateral visits by the respective high level dignitaries to the other country have created a space where both the nation-states have got to reduce mistrust and build an environment of engagement.

5.6. Rohingya Issue in Indo-Myanmar Relations

The term Rohingya represents an ethno-religious character of Muslim in the Rakhine State in Myanmar. The term became popular only in the late 1950s. The Rohingya are an ethnic group comprising of the Muslims who are mostly living in the Western Myanmar province of the Rakhine state. They usually speak the Bengali dialect which was opposite to the commonly spoken Burmese language.³⁴

The Rohingya are reflected as the most ill-treated, defenceless, and oppressed minorities in the world. The persecution on the Rohingya Muslims has increased in recent years due to the Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar. As such, the Rohingya continued to suffer restrictions and the violation of human rights in Myanmar as being denied of Myanmar citizenship.³⁵ Due to the increasing violence against the Muslim community in the Rakhine state in Myanmar, problems arose between the Buddhists and the Muslims which caused the fleeing of number of Muslims to the neighbouring states. The Muslims are seeking for their security to live a peaceful life in the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, India, etc.

The conflict between the Rohingya and the Government of Myanmar can be traced back to the period of independence with the introduction of The Union of Citizenship by the

³³ Sampa Kundu, *op.cit.*,

³⁴ <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehinflu.com/news/international/for/-rohingyas-there-is-no-place-called-home/article19620567.ec/amp/> accessed on 12.09.2018 11:14 p.m.

³⁵ Haradhan Mohajan, (2018), "History of Rakhine State and the Origin of the Rohingya Muslims", *The Indonesian Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.2, No. 1, (25 July 2018), pp.19-46

Government of Myanmar. With the enactment of the Union Citizenship Act of 1948 which defined the national races of Myanmar as those groups who lived permanently in the country before the First Anglo-Burmese War i.e. before 1824. This had led to the rise of ethnic identity between the people of Myanmar and other ethnic minorities. During this time, the Rohingyas, unlike other groups, have been dropped out by unfair treatment by the state government.

Buddhist nationalism emerged in Myanmar with the influence of Japanese fascism. The Rohingya crisis is not only a religious base, but also of the economic and political issues. The Buddhist of Myanmar claimed that the Rohingya are economically advanced and their culture has been growing in the region. As the Myanmar is surrounded by the Muslim majority country like Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia, the Buddhist majority Myanmar government was of the opinion that the increasing Muslim community would be a great danger to the security of Myanmar. They think the Rohingya will fight against Myanmar if the Islamic states attacks Myanmar. As a result, the Rohingya are discriminated, exploited economically, politically and culturally by the government of Myanmar.

The issue of Rohingya emerged as a claim for regional Muslim sovereignty in Myanmar during the Second World War which led to the rise of the Muslim nationalist movement in the region. After independence, the Burmese government regarded the immigration that took place during the British rule as illegal. As a result, the Myanmar government refused to accept the citizenship to the Rohingya ethnic group in Myanmar. The reason behind the emergence of this ethnic identity was the civic exclusion and harassment of the Myanmar government under the military rule during the period started from 1962 which led to the ethnic recognition of the minority groups in the state.

When the military junta came into power in Myanmar, things have changed for the Rohingya. As such, it is obligatory for all inhabitants of Myanmar to obtain their national registration cards. However, during this time, the Rohingya were not given the permanent citizenship while they were given only a foreign identity cards. Thus, they were deprived of the government jobs and educational opportunities they were expected to pursue. This had led to the feelings of minority among the Muslims in Myanmar leading to the outbreak of ethnic violence in Myanmar.

Though the Rohingya have been living in the South East Asian country for generations, the government of Myanmar cannot consider them as a citizen of Myanmar. Till today, the government of Myanmar has not granted a full citizenship to the Rohingyas. According to the Citizenship Law, a Rohingya is eligible for citizenship only if he/she provides proof that his/her ancestors have lived in the country prior to 1823. Else they are classified as 'resident foreigners' or as 'associate citizens'. As such, majority of the Rohingyas in Myanmar have been considered as the foreigners by the Myanmar government and they have been deprived of enjoying certain rights that are enjoyed by the people of Myanmar. Since they are not considered as a permanent citizen, they are denied of the rights to be a part of civil service. Even the movement of the people have been restricted by the Myanmar government in the Rakhine state.

The Government of Myanmar passed a law that required all people in Rakhine state to gain permission before obtaining marriage licences as the Government of Myanmar claimed that the population of Rohingya has increased faster than international standards. To obtain marriage licences, all men have to shave their beards for their licence photograph and women are forbidden to wear religious coverings. Moreover, it is mandatory for the Rohingya

women to take pregnancy tests before issuing marriage permits.³⁶ Thus, it can be said that most of the documents under Myanmar government abuses the rights of the Rohingya which also includes extra-judicial killings, torture, rape and sexual violence, two-child rule, etc. This abuses of the government have created tensions among the Muslims living in the Rakhine state.

The main reasons behind the upsurge of Rohingya crisis is that a few Rohingya organisations such as the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) are believed to have a close connection with the leaders or members of AL-Qaeda and the Taliban. It is also because of the rapidly increasing population of the Rohingya which pose certain problems in Myanmar. This factors made the Buddhist feel anxious because they fear that the Muslim population would overcome the Buddhist community.

Several factors have led to the Rohingya movement in their attempt to gain a better place under the government of Myanmar. However, their efforts had not guaranteed them a better status. Although the Rohingya nationalist movements unsuccessful to gain political acknowledgement among the ethnic and religious group in Myanmar, however, they increasingly attracted the attention of the world. When the new system of government has come, the issue of Rohingya remain a big problem for the country.

The year 2012 manifest the beginning of a series of humanitarian crises in Rakhine state which was caused by the rape and killing of a Buddhist woman which was followed by the murder of a group of Muslims who visited the south Rakhine from another region. As a result, a more violent erupted in the Muslim majority area which was again followed by attacks in the capital of Sittway. An emergency was declared which resulted in the outbreak

³⁶ Haradhan Mohajan, (2018), *op.cit.* p.15

of violence among the marginal people of the state. Until mid-July,2012, more than 100,000 people were reportedly displaced, eighty people were killed and more than 4,000 houses were destroyed. A second wave of violence in October spread over a much wider area in central Rakhine which led to the dead of 80 people. More than 22,000 people were displaced and many more households were damaged. During this incident, more than 80 per cent of the victim were Muslims. Hence, ethnic violence had been growing in the state with Muslim minority as the main victim of the ethnic violence.

The Rohingya militants, about 400, armed with knives and slingshots attacked on three Border Guard Police (BGP) post in Maungdaw and Rathedaung on October 9,2016. They killed 9 Police officers and stole 10,000 rounds of ammunition and 62 firearms. They also killed 4 Myanmar soldiers during 10-12 October 2016.³⁷ In response to this attacks, the Government of Myanmar blocked all the humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya on 10 October 2016. Another incident occurred with the killing of a lieutenant colonel on November 12 by 60 armed Rohingya militants. Many others were injured during this incidence. After this incidence, more than 1,500 Rohingya buildings were destroyed by the security forces, and the helicopters fired extensively into Rohingya villages. It is reported that around 100 Rohingya have died, and more than 90,000 have fled from Myanmar.³⁸ As such, with the increasing violence against the Rohingya, they feel insecure in the country and many of them have been continuously fleeing from Myanmar.

The recent Rohingya issue began to start on 25 August, 2017 when the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked 30 security outposts along the border with the Bangladesh, killing of over a dozens of Burmese police officers and one Tatmadaw soldier. In response,

³⁷ International Crisis group (2016), "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State". Brussels: December 15, 2016

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/283-myanmar-new-musliminsurgency-rakhine-state> accessed on 14.09.2018 08:32 p.m.

³⁸ Ibid.,

the government of Myanmar declared ARSA as a terrorist organisation, the first time Myanmar used such a declaration for an insurgent group. More than 70 battalions were deployed from Tatmadaw into Rakhine State.³⁹ Consequently, more than 620,000 Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh and seeking for shelter in the established camps. This has created serious refugee problems in the neighbouring countries.

The Rohingya who are living in the Rakhine state of Myanmar is estimated around 1 million Rohingya living in Myanmar before 2016-17 crisis. Among the countries, India also has been facing a big problem with regard to this Rohingya issue. In 2012, big displacement of Rohingya took place with the arrival of many of them in India. It is believed that around 14,000 Rohingya are spread across six locations in India including Jammu, Nuh in Haryana, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur and Chennai. Refugee Status certificates has been given to about 11,000 Rohingyas in India.⁴⁰ Around 40,000 Rohingya refugees have been registered in India living in different places in the country. They are scattered throughout India living in dreary camps and many other places.

India's reaction to the Rohingya issue has been evolving swiftly. With regard to its response to the issue, three phases are identified. The first phase started with the outbreak of vehement encounters between Buddhist and Rohingya Muslim in Rakhine state in 2012.⁴¹ India showed sympathy to Myanmar though it considers the issue as an internal affair. Salman Khursid, the then External Affairs Minister of India paid a visit to Rakhine state and announced a US\$1 million package of relief assistance to Myanmar.⁴² As a gesture of support, India also allowed

³⁹ M.F Martin, "Burma's Brutal Campaign against the Rohingya", *Congressional Research Service*, September 2017.

⁴⁰ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/the-most-unwanted-a-gripping-account-of-rohingya-refugees-living-in-india-4464103/> accessed on 21.08.2018 09:32 p.m.

⁴¹ Max Beauchamp, "Beyond bigotry: Unravelling ethnic violence in Rakhine", *New Mandala* (December 19, 2013), <http://www.newmandala.org/beyond-bigotyr-unravelling-ethnic-violence-in-rakhine/> accessed on 21.08.2018 09:45 p.m.

⁴² Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report, 2012-2013*, p. 8

to enter the Rohingya to its territory and did not make it an issue in its domestic politics or bilateral relations with Myanmar.

In the first phase, India took the side of Myanmar government because of her foreign policy. India was afraid that the issue might push Myanmar towards China as India was building relations with the newly quasi-democratic government. Besides, India has been constructing various developmental projects in Myanmar to connect the ASEAN nations which even connected the Rakhine state. As such India was aware that the political instability in the Rakhine state would have an adverse effect on these developmental projects. The growing security cooperation which the two countries has maintained in tackling cross-border ethnic insurgency in their shared border regions has led to provide assistance to Myanmar.

The second phase began in the mid-2017 with the declaration of the government strategies to deport the Rohingyas in India. India launched “Operation Insaniyat” on 14 September 2017 to deliver certain relief help to the refugee camps in Bangladesh.⁴³ In the Second phase India approach was dominated by two important factors including the increasing security concerns and the requirement for diplomatic balance between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The third phase of India’s stance on Rohingya was marked by India’s role for finding a resolution to the issue by consolidating its diplomacy. On 20 December,2017, India and Myanmar has signed MoU on Rakhine State Development Programme on 20 December, 2017 with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement of Myanmar which aimed at the socio-economic improvement and livelihood initiative in Rakhine state including the projects to build housing in Rakhine State in order to meet the basic needs of returnees.

⁴³“Operation Insaniyat - Humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh on account of influx of refugees”, *Press Releases*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (September 14, 2017)

Under the MoU, India promised US\$ 25 million for a five-year development project in Rakhine state.⁴⁴

5.6.1. Implication on Indo-Myanmar Relations

The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar has also affected India which eventually has its effect on Indo-Myanmar relations as the refugees also fled to India seeking shelter in the state. The two countries have been maintaining cordial relations by initiating various developmental activities. India is also extending its sympathy to Myanmar by providing assistance to the government, providing the refugees a place to stay in the country. India is trying to maintain distance to this issue, but did not neglect this. As far as Myanmar is concerned, India is extending certain help because of her economic activity as its attempt to connect ASEAN nations, Myanmar plays a vital role for this connection. However, certain impact or challenges emerged due to the Rohingya issue, which are:⁴⁵

First, since India and Myanmar have been fighting against cross-border militant activities in the border area, the Rohingya issue might pose a great danger to the security of the two countries. As the Rohingya crisis is backed by the Muslim militant group called ARSA which might add a new flavour to the current conflict. It is believed that the cooperation between the ARSA and the northeast militant group of India might lead to increasing border conflicts in the boundary areas.

Second, India has huge investment in Myanmar which includes various projects like Kaladan Multi-Modal Project, the Tri-lateral highway and many more. In most cases, these developmental projects pass through the Rakhine state which is crucial for India. The Kaladan project, which is to connect Mizoram to Sittwe port in Myanmar through Rakhine

⁴⁴ K. Yhome, "Examining India's Stance on the Rohingya Crisis", *ORF Issue Brief*, Issue No.247, July 2018, p.5

⁴⁵ www.indiandefencereview.com/rohingya-crisis-security-implications-for-myanmar-india/ accessed on 23.08.2018 11:25 a.m.

state. If India expatriates a large number of Rohingyas, it could be a serious problem in its projects in Myanmar which could prevent their completion, which could eventually lead to the failure of Act East policy of India.

Thus, it is clear that the issue of Rohingya refugees has its implication in Indo-Myanmar relations. As the issue is backed by various militant groups which could pose a serious problem to the country. Further, both the country has been undertaking various developmental projects which passes through the Rakhine state. As such, it has been a major hindrance for the developmental activities which would provide a better link road between the two countries. Hence, if both the countries could not handle the issue, it could be a serious problem in their relation in the future to come.

Conclusion

Thus, there is no doubt that India's relations with Myanmar saw a new change in the early 1990s with the introduction of Look East Policy by during the period of Narasimha Rao that opened up an opportunity to extend close relations with the neighbouring countries. The pro-democratic movement which was prevailed in Myanmar had fostered the political relation as India being the major supporter of this movement. During this time, India had been involved in rebuilding itsage old relationship with Myanmar. The introduction of the Look East Policy led to the improvement of India's intention to maintain political relations with Myanmar.

Prior to the introduction of this Look East Policy, there was a nationwide uprising in Myanmar against the ruling military junta. During this time, India followed dual strategy of engagement with the Myanmar government. In the first instance, it supported the pro-democratic movement of the activists while simultaneously engaging with the military regime. The relationship of both the countries has increased in the administrativeboth inside and outside the country. For instance, during the warmth of nation-wide rebellion in 1988,

Indian Embassy in Rangoon openly supported the democratic movement in Myanmar. Various political parties, leaders and statesmen of India also expressed solidarity with the struggle for democracy.

The introduction of the Look East Policy brought a tremendous change in the foreign policy of India and Myanmar. Not only India opened up its foreign policy, Myanmar also took a new chapter in its policy for opening up to the world and particularly for India. As part of their political relations, the Indian military and Myanmar military launched a joint military operation named 'Operation Golden Bird' in 1995 against several North Eastern rebels active across the Indo-Myanmar border. In the same year, both the countries concluded a border trade agreement and by that agreement, two border trade posts were opened, one at Moreh in Manipur, India and the other in Tamu in Sagaing Division, Myanmar.

To improve the growing political relations, both India and Myanmar had come up with various constructive engagement to one another. Several high level meetings were held between the two states which was followed by the exchange visit of the top level diplomats. Various developmental projects, agreement and Memorandum of Understanding (MUs) have been concluded at these meetings. All these initiatives were meant to develop the bilateral relations between the two states. India largely extended its continuous support to Myanmar government as a gesture of supporting democratic movement.

The relations between India and Myanmar has been improving even in the new millennium which saw a number of changes in the field of political relations. India has been actively involved in various developmental works in Myanmar to foster its political relationship with the neighbouring country. When Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India in 2016, the priority of the foreign policy takes a new turn in order to keep pace with the new circumstances. Modi's government adopted Act East Policy in place of Look East Policy

which emphasizes on the prolonged neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific regime. The policy which was initially regarded as economic initiative has gained political, strategic and cultural dimensions for better cooperation.

CHAPTER-6: CONCLUSION

India and Myanmar are two important neighbouring states with a history of interaction since ancient times. As both the countries are situated in South and South East of Asia. They share a huge land border spanning across 1600 kilometres. As such, the bilateral relations between India and Myanmar are based on deep rooted culture, religious and neighbourly association between the people of the two countries. Buddhism in Myanmar had its origin in India. Buddhism spread to Myanmar during 273-232 BCE when the Mauryan emperor Ashoka sent his representatives to spread the word of Lord Buddha. As Buddhism spread rapidly in the country, majority of the people of Myanmar become Buddhist. Thus, for Myanmar, India is the home of her religious beliefs. Myanmar too has a name in Sanskrit, Suvarnabhumi meaning land of gold or golden land. This clearly indicates the historical relationship between the two country since the ancient times.

India and Myanmar has maintaining cultural relations to enhance their economic and political relations. An important element which play a significant role in the development of relations between India and Myanmar is culture. Cultural relationship between India and Myanmar is in fact, a very old which can be traced back to centuries even millennia. Even Myanmar has a name in Sanskrit, Suvarnabhumi which means land of gold or golden land. This means that the Brahminism had once spread to Myanmar in the ancient times.

India has had a close cultural affinity with Myanmar through its export of Buddhism. Ashoka, the great king had sent his representatives to Myanmar in 228 BCE to propagate and spread Buddhism there. The spreading of Buddhism accorded a new dimension to the culture of Myanmar since the people of Myanmar accepted Buddhism whole-heartedly. As such the lifestyle of Myanmar was deeply affected by the spirit of religion from India. For the people of Myanmar, India is a place of pilgrimage place for being the motherland of their religion.

An important aspect in this regard is the people of North East region. Cultural linkages between India and Myanmar continued even after they came under the British colonial rule. The British had ruled for a long period of time and demarcated border for their administrative purpose. When the two countries got independence from the British rule in the late 1940s, people of the same ethnic origins were separated due to the demarcation of border. Still there are lots of Indian origins who settled in Myanmar. The people of North East share the same ethnic traits and identity with that of Myanmar. Many of the people of North East India speaks the same language. The custom, tradition, culture, religious practices, etc. in North East India have some distinct similarities with those practice in Myanmar.

In this regard, both the countries are trying to promote their cultural linkages by organising various cultural programmes which enables people to people contacts between them. Myanmar, being a neighbour, played a significant role in the spread of Indian culture, philosophy, custom, religious practices to the Southeast Asian nations. Various cultural programmes have been conducted between the two countries with the initiatives of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Myanmar government. The main objective of this programme is to advocate a closer cultural link between the people of India and Myanmar. With the initiatives of the Myanmar government, performance by Indian cultural troupes have been organised in a regular basis since 1997.

Taking into account the above arguments, it can be said that both India and Myanmar have been trying to maintain and enhance their relations through the prism of culture. Various cross cultural programmes and high level meets are held to enhance their cooperation. India, being the motherland of Buddhism for Myanmar, India extended its attitude towards Myanmar by easing of visa restrictions or lowering vis fees for Buddhist monks from Myanmar. Hence, both the countries have been doing their best in order to promote their

cultural ties which significantly help in developing economic and political relations between the two states.

Secondly, there has been a significant increase in the bilateral trade between India and Myanmar which implies the strategic importance of Myanmar as a gateway to Southeast Asia. The bilateral economic relations between India and Myanmar has a very long history which can be traced back to the precolonial period. Trade in agricultural products, handicrafts and other items were carried on between the two states. This economic relationship continued during the British period as India and Myanmar were under the British colonial rule. During the British period, many Indian traders moved to Myanmar and settled there undertaking small business mainly of agricultural products and raw material.

Even after independence, India and Myanmar economic relations continued to flourish. The landmark of their economic relation was the signing of the Treaty of Friendship in 1951. During this period, the economic relation was quite stable and India, as a friendly gesture donated US\$ 46 Million to Myanmar for developmental purpose in 1958. However, with the military intervention in Myanmar, the cordial relations in the initial stage of independence came to an abrupt halt. The new military government adopted closed economy which had its direct impact on their economic relations. The military junta had drained the Myanmar economy and that its relations with other countries also remained stagnated.

New beginning in their economic relations started when India launched the Look East Policy in 1991. The main objective of this policy was to promote economic relation with the South East Asian nations. Due to its strategic location, Myanmar provide linkage to the ASEAN countries. Moreover, Myanmar became a member of ASEAN in 1997. In this regard, the country plays a significant role in India's attempt to integrate its economy with the ASEAN groupings as a whole.

With the introduction of Look East Policy, the bilateral trade relations between India and Myanmar has been growing rapidly. Now, India is today, Myanmar's 4th largest trading partner after Thailand, China and Singapore. It is the 2nd largest export market for Myanmar absorbing 25% of Myanmar's total export and Myanmar is the 7th most important source of import for India. Bilateral trade has been growing steadily to reach US\$ 2178.44 million in 2017, of which Indian export amounted to US\$1111.19 and Indian imports to US\$ 1067.25 million as compared to the bilateral trade volume in 1990, that amounted only US\$91.578 million of which India export volume was only US\$1.435 million and import from Myanmar amounted US\$ 90.144. India became the 10th largest investor in Myanmar economy.

In the economic relations between India and Myanmar, border trade has occupied an important place. Most of the bilateral trade between the two countries have been done through border trade. On 21 January, 1994 India and Myanmar signed the Border Trade Agreement to legalise the trade that had been going for centuries along the border. To maintain free, fair and secure trade relations, land Custom Stations were established for the smooth functioning and checking illegal trade practices. Presently, there are two Land Custom Station on the international border adjacent to Myanmar which are functional, one at Moreh in Manipur and Zokhawthar in Mizoram.

To improve its linkages with the ASEAN, India has been actively engaged in building land and river based infrastructure development projects. The major projects include the construction of Tamu-Kalewa- Kalemmyo project, popularly known as Indo-Myanmar Friendship road, connecting Moreh, India with Mae Sot, Thailand via Myanmar. The other one is the Kaladan Multi-Modal transport Project which was initiated for the acceleration of the economic activities aiming to connect ASEAN countries through Myanmar.

Besides, India is engaged in providing various developmental projects in Myanmar including assistance in the construction of hydro power projects, conducting programmes for training, etc. Further, Indian company has a huge investment in Myanmar oil and gas stock which marked the closer economic relationship. Hence, it can be assumed that there has been a significant increase in the bilateral trade relationship between India and Myanmar which eventually foster India's economic policy towards the ASEAN countries as well.

The British colonial rule had its deep impact on the Indo-Myanmar relationship. The relationship between India and Myanmar was deepened during the colonial period as both India and Myanmar were under the British colonial rule. During this time, many of the Indians moved to Myanmar to start their business and many of them settled there. They constitute a large portion of the Myanmar population. As such, the two countries had maintained a close contact under the British rule which eventually culminated into a cordial relationship just after their independence. Both the countries were engaged in a struggle for independence from the British rule. In this regard, the two countries were supporting each other in their struggle for independence against the common enemy. The influence of Indian leaders had a deep impact on the people of Myanmar as they were spiritually motivated in their struggle for independence. The father of modern Burma, Aung San too had good relations with the Indian leaders like Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, and other Indian leaders. Moreover, prominent leaders of Indian freedom struggle like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were imprisoned in Myanmar during the freedom struggle. The nationalist spirit of these great Indian leaders has helped in motivating the Burmese way to independence. During the struggle for independence, India extended its full support to the Myanmar freedom struggle. India and Myanmar achieved their independence from the British colonial rule in 1947 and 1948 respectively. Eventually, their relation was marked by mutual understanding and friendly cooperation. The relationship between India

and Myanmar after independence was marked by the efforts taken up by the Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and the Myanmar Prime Minister U Nu. The two leaders were close friend who believed in the peaceful coexistence, mutual correlations and brotherhood among nations. The foreign policy of both the countries were set out to meet these goals. During this time, the relationship was friendly and they enjoyed a mutual partnership in the economic, political and cultural relations.

Thirdly, there has been a significant increase in the bilateral trade relations between India and Myanmar. In the period after independence, India and Myanmar followed the same policy which was based on peaceful coexistence, opposition to colonialism, imperialism and racialism, promoting the welfare of the Third World countries, etc. The two countries were an active member of the Non-Aligned Movement. The main intention of India and Myanmar for being a member of NAM was to maintain peaceful coexistence among the nations, to help the countries who were struggling for independence from the colonial power and to keep them away from the Cold War politics.

Things were changed in the early 1960s when the military junta led by General Ne Win took control over the administrative machinery. Subsequently, Myanmar withdrew from the Non-Aligned Movement. It marked a turning point in the relations between the two countries as their difference in ideology began to emerge. Eventually, Myanmar started adopting a closed economic policy towards the west and at the same time, it started engaging with China. It therefore, restricted the movement of the government diplomats, personnel and even the people also. Further, the free flow of the foreigners who were undertaking trade and business and government officials were also restricted. Any interaction with the foreign diplomats could not be done without the prior approval of the military government. As such the people of Myanmar had suffered the autocratic nature of the government under the military rule. Thus, because of Myanmar's openness toward China and its closed policy to India, it was

difficult to maintain and promote a friendly relation. Therefore, their relations gradually declined. In fact, this decade can be described as a period of cold relations between the two states.

However, a new dawn in the relationship came up with the beginning of the pro-democratic movement that took place in Myanmar in the late 1980s in order to overthrow the military rule. This movement had opened up a new shift in the relationship between India and Myanmar. India obviously was the first to come out strongly against the ruling junta in support of the movement. Regardless of the need for developing relations with Myanmar for security and economic considerations, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was outright in condemning the brutality with which the people's movement was suppressed in the country. Indeed, on 10 September, 1988, India became the first country to support the genuine aspiration of the people of Myanmar for restoration of democracy. India was actively supporting the pro-democratic movement by providing the needful assistance and motivation to the activists. The All India Radio (AIR) had severely criticised the suppressive nature of the military rule and pleaded for the democratic way of Myanmar. As such India extended its support for the pro-democratic movement in Myanmar in order to restore democracy in Myanmar.

The early 1990s marked the new beginning in their relations as the military government softened their control over the country. Further, the democratic movement had seen some fruitful result that paved the right way to democracy. The foreign policy of Myanmar had started to overcome its old closed system. Moreover, India had launched its Look East Policy in 1991 under the leadership of Prime Minister of Narasimha Rao. The introduction of this policy marked a new beginning in their relationship. Myanmar, on its part, started opening up its economy to the global world. During this period of transition, India and Myanmar were

engaged in rebuilding their old friendship and mutual understanding to promote a peaceful and cordial relationship.

Several high level meets were undertaken to promote the bilateral relations between the two states. The breakthrough in their relations began in 1993 with the visit of the then Foreign Secretary, J.N Dixit to Yangon. India and Myanmar signed an agreement to enhance border trade and for controlling drug trafficking. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 21st January, 1994 to increase cooperation between the civilian border authorities of the two countries and to prevent illegal and insurgent activities. Yet, another important landmark of the political relation was the joint military operation named 'Operation Golden Bird' which was launched against the rebels in the Indo-Myanmar border in 1995. In the same year, Aung San Su Kyi was awarded the Nehru Peace Price for International Understanding as a gesture for the support of democratic movement in Myanmar.

The Government of India showed its continuous support of the democratic movement in Myanmar. Under Prime Minister A.B Vajpayee, a joint meeting was held in 1998, among the six political parties of India for recommitting their support of democratic movement. More than 75 MPs had signed a letter urging the Burmese government to restore democracy in Myanmar. Even in the new Millennium, India had not stopped its continuous support for democracy, Vice President Bhairon Singh Sikhawat visited Myanmar in November 2003. This visit reflects the growing friendship and understanding between the two countries. Two important agreement was signed which provide exemption on visa for official and diplomatic passport holders. Also, both countries signed a protocol to establish bilateral ministerial consultation and agreed cooperation in the field of infrastructure, energy and information technology.

As such, the development of Indo-Myanmar relations continue to grow exponentially. There was a regular exchange of high level visits between the two countries. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made a visit to Myanmar in May 2012 which was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 25 years. This visit helped much in fostering the bilateral relations.

Another important landmark in the development of political relation is the issue of border surgical strike conducted by India to eliminate the militant groups in the border areas. When India launched surgical strike against the militant groups settled in Myanmar, the government of Myanmar, though aware of this operation, did nothing in response to the attack. This clearly indicates the growing political relationship between the two countries. Moreover, when the issue of Rohingya broke out, India extended its support by providing shelter, assistance and humanitarian aid to the refugees and to the Myanmar government. This effort taken up by the Government of India has resulted in the development of good relations between the two nations.

When Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India, he started embracing the relations with Myanmar by changing the Look East Policy to Act East Policy which was a policy to complement their close relation. He made a visit to Myanmar from September 5-7, 2017 which marked the real initiative on the part of India to engage with the government of Myanmar. Thus, it can be observed that there has been a gradual enhancement of politico-strategic relations between India and Myanmar.

The relationship between India and Myanmar is bilateral on the one hand, as both the countries have been involved in various economic, political and cultural relations concentrating between them. The relationship is multidimensional on the other hand, as the real intention of India in maintaining mutual relations with Myanmar is to bridge the ASEAN

nations economically and politically in its search for power in the world politics. Besides, India is attempting to increase its economic and trade activities in the region also.

We can conclude by saying that the relations between India and Myanmar has greatly improved in recent times. The volume of bilateral trade between the two countries had significantly increased from US\$91.578 million in 1990 to US\$ 2178.44 million in the year 2017. This clearly indicates the strategic importance of Myanmar in India's foreign policy as a gateway to South East Asia. The improvement in the field of connectivity by the sanctions and construction of major project is an important indicator in this regard. Moreover, the increasing frequency of the high level visits and the accompanying political commitments and proclamation is indeed an important characteristic feature of the increasing enhancement of politico-strategic links between the two countries.

The multilateral dimension of the relationship can also be discussed. The strategic significance of Myanmar as an important gateway into the South East Asian countries play a vital role. In this regard, the development of close economic, politico-strategic relations with Myanmar is an important landmark so as to bring the North East region out of its underdevelopment, thereby making the North East region as an important economic hub even for the rest of the country. Therefore, in the realm of the relations between India and Myanmar, the bilateral trade, vis-à-vis culture has played a significant role in the development of politico-strategic relations between the two countries.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON INDO-MYANMAR RELATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON MIZORAM

Name:

Village/Town:

Age:

1) Have you ever heard of India's Look East Policy?

Yes/ No

2) Has there been any improvement in Indian economy with the introduction of the Policy?

Yes/No/No idea

3) Do you know Mizoram is one of the important gateway to Myanmar?

Yes/No

4) Do you think that Indo-Myanmar relations has an economic improvement in Mizoram?

Yes/No/No idea

5) Are you satisfy with the Mizoram-Myanmar border trade relation?

Yes/No/No idea

6) Are you satisfy with the implementation of border trade?

Yes/No/No idea

7) Do you think Indo-Myanmar relations has improved the relationship between Mizoram and Myanmar?

Yes/No/No idea

7) Has there been any improvement of the road transportation between Mizoram and Myanmar?

Yes/No/No idea

8) Do you think Indo-Myanmar relations has increased problems in Mizoram and Myanmar relationship?

Yes/No/No idea

9) Has there been any improvement in the border trade?

Yes/No/No idea

10) Do you think there is any political improvement in Mizoram?

Yes/ No/No idea

11) Are you satisfied with the performance of Zokhawthar Custom Station?

Yes/No/No Idea

12) Do you think illegal trade practices still present in the border area

Yes/No/No idea

13) Do you know India has changed Look East Policy to Act East Policy?

Yes/No

14) Are you satisfy with the efforts of India in taking care of border trade?

Yes/No/No idea

15) Do you think the government of India has given special interest to the transportation networks

Yes/No/No idea

16) Do you think the border trade has increased illegal migration in the state?

Yes/No/No idea

17) Are you satisfied with the initiatives taken up by the Government of India in checking illegal migration?

Yes/No/No idea

18) Any Suggestions:

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

I rintlak,
Laltluangliana Khiangte
M.Phil Scholar,
Dept. of Political Science
Mizoram University
Contact No. 8257899198

Appendices

i) Questionnaire

ii) Kaladan Multi-Modal transport project

iii) Indo-Myanmar border map

1. QUESTIONNAIRE ON INDO-MYANMAR RELATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON MIZORAM

Name:

Village/Town:

Age:

1) *Have you ever heard of India's Look East Policy?*

Yes/ No

2) *Has there been any improvement in Indian economy with the introduction of the Policy?*

Yes/No/No idea

3) *Do you know Mizoram is one of the important gateways to Myanmar?*

Yes/No

4) *Do you think that Indo-Myanmar relations have an economic improvement in Mizoram?*

Yes/No/No idea

5) *Are you satisfy with the Mizoram-Myanmar border trade relation?*

Yes/No/No idea

6) *Are you satisfy with the implementation of border trade?*

Yes/No/No idea

7) *Do you think Indo-Myanmar relations have improved the relationship between Mizoram and Myanmar?*

Yes/No/No idea

7) *Has there been any improvement of the road transportation between Mizoram and Myanmar?*

Yes/No/No idea

8) *Do you think Indo-Myanmar relations have increased problems in Mizoram and Myanmar relationship?*

Yes/No/No idea

9) *Has there been any improvement in the border trade?*

Yes/No/No idea

10) *Do you think there is any political improvement in Mizoram?*

Yes/ No/No idea

11) *Are you satisfied with the performance of Zokhawthar Custom Station?*

Yes/No/No Idea

12) *Do you think illegal trade practices still present in the border area?*

Yes/No/No idea

13) Do you know India has changed Look East Policy to Act East Policy?

Yes/No

14) Are you satisfy with the efforts of India in taking care of border trade?

Yes/No/No idea

15) Do you think the government of India has given special interest to the transportation networks?

Yes/No/No idea

16) Do you think the border trade has increased illegal migration in the state?

Yes/No/No idea

17) Are you satisfied with the initiatives taken up by the Government of India in checking illegal migration?

Yes/No/No idea

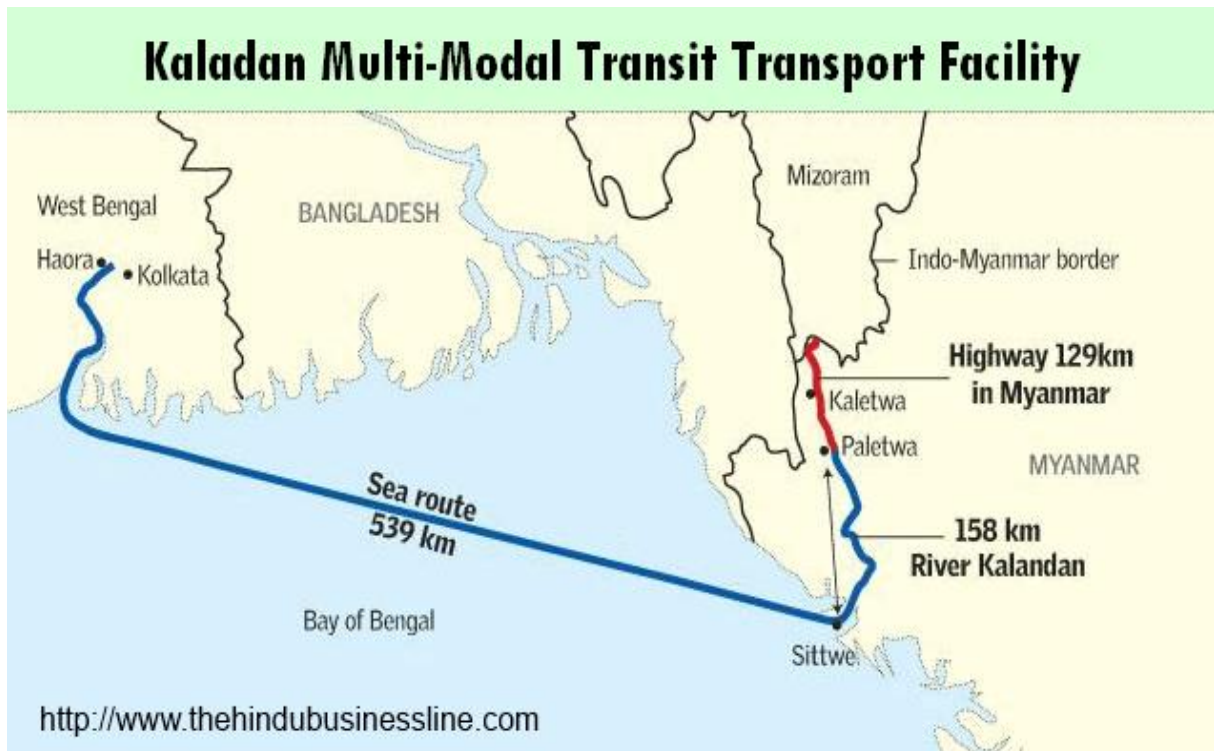
18) Any Suggestions:

i) _____

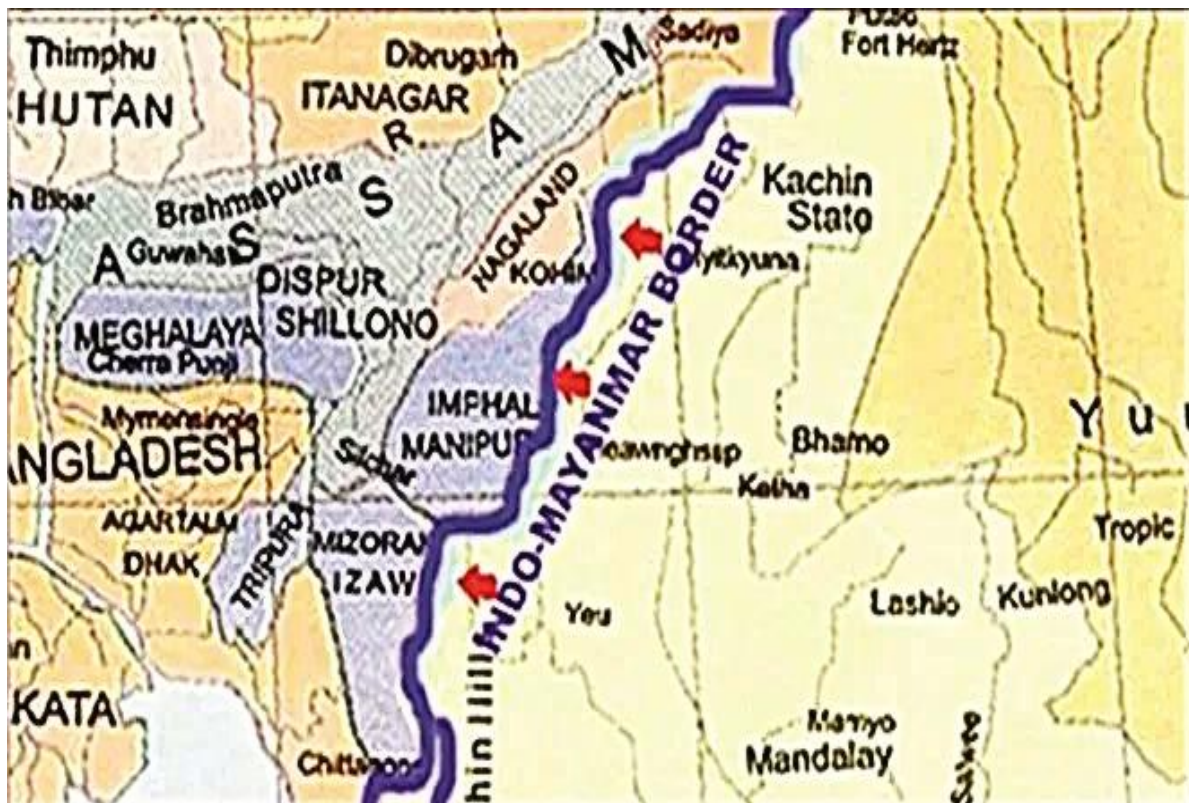
ii) _____

iii) _____

2. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project:



3. Indo-Myanmar Border:



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