



INDIA - BHUTAN RELATIONS: PRESENT AND FUTURE

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ABSTRACT :

The year 2018 celebrates the Golden Jubilee of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan. Marking the completion of 50 years, Bhutan opened a Consulate in India's north-eastern city of Guwahati last month. The two countries also launched a special logo in New Delhi to celebrate their enduring partnership. A series of special commemorative initiatives, cultural activities, exhibitions and seminars will continue to take place throughout the year. A tiny landlocked state located in the Eastern Himalayas, Bhutan has historically shared deep religio-cultural links with India. Guru Padmasambhava, a Buddhist saint who came to Bhutan from India, played an influential role in spreading Buddhism and cementing traditional ties between people in both nations. Bhutan was a protectorate of British India and came under the British suzerainty in 1865. It signed the 'Treaty of Punakha' with the British in 1910, which set the stage for any future contact between the two countries after the British left the subcontinent. Throughout this time, India's relations with Bhutan were handled by a Political Officer based in Sikkim. This continued until 1948, when a Bhutanese delegation visited India and wished to revise the treaties previously signed with the British. Though the Anglo-Bhutanese treaties continued to guide the bilateral relations, Independent India signed a fresh treaty with Thimpu in 1949 - the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. This treaty formed the basis for the beginning modern relations between the two neighbors.

KEYWORDS : Golden Jubilee , diplomatic relations , modern relations.

INTRODUCTION

Bhutan has been maintaining its isolation from the outside world since historical times. But it is maintaining few bilateral relations and no relationship with global organizations. This country has a rich and unique cultural heritage that has largely remained intact because of its isolation from the rest of the world till the mid-20th century.

Now, Bhutan has diplomatic relations with 52 countries. The Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) maintains a close relationship with the Indian Armed Forces (IAF). Bhutan's official name is the Kingdom of Bhutan. It is the Buddhist nation, wedged between India and China, the size of Switzerland and with a population 750,000 has only recently emerged from centuries of isolation. In 2008, the nation, which made the transition from absolute monarchy to Parliamentary democracy and its first road, was built in 1962 and T.V. and the internet arrived in 1999. It is the world's first country to maintain Gross National Happiness (GNH) to coordinate the modernity and traditions.

Bhutan became a protectorate of British India and signed a treaty in 1910 accepting the British to guide its foreign policy and defense sector. Bhutan and India are maintaining a close relationship following traditional lines. This bilateral relationship made Bhutan a protected state, but not a protectorate of India. India exercised its influence on Bhutan's foreign policy, defense and trade. Butane

was one of the first to recognize India's independence in 1947 and both nations fostered good relationship, its importance augmented by the annexation of Tibet in 1950 by the People's Republic of China and its border disputes with Bhutan and India, which saw close ties with Nepal and Bhutan to be central to its 'Himalayan Frontier' security policy. India and Bhutan share a 605 kilometer border line. And, India is, it's the largest trading partner dealing for 98 percent of its exports and 90% of its imports. A thousand Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) is offering training for the Royal Bhutan Army on the basis of permanent lines. And other Indian military units regularly cooperate with the Royal Bhutan Army. In 1979, Bhutan applied its independent stance at the NAM summit conference in Havana of Cuba.

On August 8, 1949 Bhutan and India agreed and signed Treaty of Friendship following peace between the two nations and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. Bhutan accepted India to guide its foreign policy and defiance policy following mutual consultancy. This treaty also built a free trade and extradition protocols and made Bhutan a protected state. In 1958, the then P.M. Jawarhaarlal Nehru visited Bhutan and assured support for Bhutan's independence. China's acupation of Tibet made both nations closer. Also, Nehru said that any aggression against Bhutan would be seen as aggression against India. In 1958, Nehru stated in the Loksabha, 'the defense of the territorial uprightness and frontiers Bhutan was the responsibility of the Indian government'. This statement was denied immediately by then the Bhutan's Prime Minister and said that Bhutan is not a protectorate of India nor did the treaty (1949) involve national defense of any sort.

Bhutan traditionally traded with Tibet. Since 1959, when the borders with Tibet were closed, most trade has been with India. Bhutan was opened for tourists in 1974. Tourism soon surpassed the sale of stamps to collectors as the main source of foreign exchange. Direct trade links between Bhutan and Nepal were established in 1986. In Nehru's time, India increased economic, military and development assistance to modernize Bhutan. Despite good relationship, both nations did not complete a detailed demarcation of their borders till 1973 and 1984. Negotiations of Border demarcation between India and Bhutan generally resolved major disagreements. But this failed to solve disagreements of several small sectors such as the middle zone between sarapang and Geylegplung and Easter frontier with the India. Bhutan expressed a need to renegotiate parts of 1947 treaty following its sovereignty and joined the U.N in 1971. This revealed that Bhutan began to slowly assert its independent attitude in foreign policy. In 1972, Bhutan recognized Bangladesh and signed a new trade agreement with India. This agreement exempted Bhutan from export duties for goods from Bhutan to third world countries. India preferred regime stability in Bhutan. Relations with Thimpu were built on the basis of the treaty of perpetual peace and friendship between India and Bhutan in 1949 which was led by treaty of Punakha in 1910. Despite India regained guidance and advice from Punakha Treaty, in 2007, New Delhi altered guidance to cooperation. The defense of Bhutan in an important factor of the unwritten part of the 1949 treaty. And also this treaty reveals King's commitment to becoming a part of India's security strategy. In 1962, the Royal Bhutanese Army helped the remnants of the Indian army enunciating from Touang and Sela.

In 2003, the Royal Bhutanese Army and Indian Army launched a joint operation to eliminate Bodo and Ulfa insurgents numbering approximately 3,000. Anti Indian insurgent outfits, active in the northeast, regrouping and exploiting Bhutanese territory were ousted from the Bhutan in a military operation by Bhutanese Government in 2003. Till date Bhutan is the only neighbor country conducted such a military operation on its land against Indian insurgents. This move was called 'Operation All Clear'.

Project Dantak of the Border Roads Organization has done miraculous task in connecting Bhutan with roads and bridges. For this gigantic work, the BRA sacrificed 100 lives in the work for connectivity. This made Dantak as household word creating good will and developing GNH.

The border dispute has been the problem since historical times. After, approximately three decades and 19 rounds of border negotiations, in 2010, China agreed a package deal. This would trade 900 Sq.Km of territory in the north for 400 Sq.Kmin the west in Chumbi Valley. The 'Peoples Republic of China in establishing similar encroachment strategies utilizing graziers to proclaim over the strategic

Dolam Plateau, Sinchula and Draman in Chumbi Valley. Sinchula in the tri-junction which is the common borders' point of India, Bhutan and china for this, any adjustment in border alignment would become a trilateral issue leading to play of national interests.

Mutual benefit enjoyed by the Bhutan and India following the utilization of hydro power. Bhutan's current achievement of prosperity has trebled its PCI from \$600 in 2005 to \$2,200 in 2013 becoming the second highest in South Asia after Maldives. In 2007, a new treaty of friendship signed by both countries India and Bhutan after conducting re-negotiations on 1949 treaty. This treaty in 2007, paved the way for Bhutan for taking guidance only on foreign policy following its sovereignty. In 2008, India's then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Bhutan and announced support for Bhutan's move towards establishment of democracy. India accepted 16 entry and exit points for Bhutanese trade with other countries (the only exception being the PRC). India agreed also for development and importing a minimum of 10,000 megawatts of power produced by Bhutan by 2021. All this leading to exemplary bilatationship between the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan and Republic of India. Among South Asian countries, Bhutan achieved first rank in economic freedom, case of doing trade activities and peaceful conditions.

It achieved third rank in per capita income (PCI). And it is least corrupt country as of year 2016. However, now Bhutan is least developed nation. Government of Bhutan applies Gross National Happiness (GNH) as standard index for its development Bhutan and India home been maintain close relationship for decades. Bhutan is a protected state, but not a protectorate of India. India influenced Bhutan's external affairs, defence and trade. India is also helping in financial way and improving its financial assistance year by year. In 2012-13, India's budgetary assistance to Kingdom of Bhutan stood at US \$ 600 million. In 2015-16, Bhutan received the largest foreign aid of India. The Prime Minister of Bhutan, TsheringTobgay, received an additional aid package from Indian Government worth INR 54 billion (US \$819 million) for his nation when he came to India in 2013. Approximately 80% of this aid allocated for Bhutan's 11th Five year plan.

India - Bhutan Friendship Treaty or 2007 Treaty

The Indian - Bhutan Friendship Treaty, which was signed in New Delhi on 8th February 2007. This pact reaffirmed mutual respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and recalled the historical mutual relationship. This agreement committed to further strengthening this enduring and mutually beneficial relationship based on genuine goodwill and friendship, shared interests, and close understanding and cooperation. Following this pact, two countries shall cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other. This agreement provided full cooperation and assistance to each other in the matter of trade and commerce.

Relationship in Modi's Regime

The present Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi opted Bhutan as his first foreign destination, offering more priority for regional co-operation than global cooperation. Modi visited Bhutan on 15-16 June, 2014 which reflects India's priority for Bhutan's friendship and diplomatic ties. He had inaugurated the Supreme Court complex building funded by Indian Government. He promised help to Bhutan in I.T. and digital sectors and also sought to build trade relation which contains hydro-electric deal. Following this occasion, Modi said, "Bhutan is a natural choice for my foreign destination because of the 'unique and special relationship' the two countries shared. And I am looking forward and further strengthen India's special relations with Bhutan." He was further set to discuss about the 'insurgency in Northeast India' and 'china'. Two countries (India & Bhutan) have been pro-actively engaged in areas such as infrastructure, information and communication technology, health, agriculture, human resource development and tourism. Cooperation in the hydropower sector is a deep focus area for the two nations. Electricity constitutes bulk of Bhutan's export to India and cooperation in hydropower sector would peak by 2017-18 when Bhutan would be producing 10,000 megawatt power by India's help, much of which would be exported to its main neighbor country India. This led to

more improvement in bilateral trade by 2018. India has allocated an assistance package of Rs. 4500 crore to Bhutan for its 11th Five Year Plan (2013-2018).

India has helped Bhutan develop three hydropower plants with another three under construction. In April 2014, two countries signed an agreement on four major joint venture projects worth 2,120 megawatts, and Modi laid the foundation stone for a new project during his visit.

India exempted Bhutan from any ban on export of milk powder, wheat, edible oil, pulses and non-basmati rice. India is assisting Bhutan Rs. 463.3 Crore for double laning of the Northern East - West Lateral Highway. Modi doubled of the Nehru Wangchuck and the Ambassador's scholarships to Bhutanese students in India to Rs. 2 Crore each. Modi laid foundation stone for Bhutan's First Power Training Institute with pledge of Rs. 33.7 Crore assistance by India. Government of India assisted to Bhutan in setting up a digital library which will provide access to Bhutanese youth to two million books and periodicals Bhutan School Assistance Programme got a boost with Rs. 348.7 Crore rupees assistance from Indian Government. Bhutan signed the MoU on the establishment of Nalanda University. On June 15, 2015, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh (Four SAARC Countries) signed a landmark Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) for the Regulation of Passenger, Personnel and Cargo Vehicular Traffic among the four South Asian neighbors in Thimpu.

All this revealing Mod's Government commitment to ideal neighborhood with Bhutan following India's international relations

CONCLUSION

Trends of globalization established many changes in India's global relations and its economy. Following this Indian international relationships have adopted proactive initiatives. The year 2014 has witnessed further global acclaim for diplomatic endeavour. This task has taken a new beginning with the P.M. Modi's Invitation to heads of SAARC nations to his swearing in ceremony at New Delhi. The P.M's visit to nineteen countries within a short span of one year, inaugurated a new era in our diplomacy. The year revealed India's applied priority to our neighborhood and extended neighborhood and reinforcement of our strategic ties with all the major powers of the world. Part of this task of diplomacy following India's mission of maintaining peace of world, India has been maintaining exemplary relationship with Kingdom of Bhutan for many decades leading to the ideal neighborhood. In South Asia, Bhutan ranks first in economic freedom, ease of doing business, and maintaining peace. It ranks third in per capita Income (PCI). This country is the least corrupt country in the year 2016. But it is not a developed country having Gross National Happiness as its philosophy that guides the Government of Bhutan. Bhutan and India have been maintaining close relationship which made Bhutan a protected state, but not a protectorate of India. India's budgetary support for Bhutan improved year by year. Both India and Bhutan are mutual trusted and reliable friends following the development and economic ties.

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