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## JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE

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### ABSTRACT:

India and China, the two Asian giants went to war in 1962 over the border issue. The serious differences between the two countries over the border issue were the main reasons for the armed conflict. The differences between these two countries over the boundary demarcation were acute in the western and the eastern extremities of the Himalayas and as they could not resolve the issue across the table, they resorted to settle the issue through force. For the sake of

understanding, the boundary between these two countries has been classified as Western Sector, Middle Sector and the Eastern sector.

Though India and China are two ancient civilizations divide by the Himalayas, there was not much of political interaction between them, save for intermittent overland trade activities and the occasional exchange of the Buddhist scholars. After India became independent in 1947 and China became a communist country in 1949, there was initially a lot of bonhomie and harmony in the relations between these two countries. However this did not last long and the harmonious relations between them gave way to embitterment and the main reason being the difference over the border. China, initially, did not raise any issue with regard to border even during the time of signing of the Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954, where 'Panchsheel', the five principles for peaceful coexistence was enunciated. However, later, it started depicting large slices of Indian Territory as belonging to it and when India raised objections to these depictions; it merely stated they were old maps which needed correction. However, as the time rolled on the border issue became more serious and proved to be intractable and China, with an intention to unilaterally settle the issue, waged a war against India in 1962.

**KEYWORDS:** Sino-Indian border dispute, Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954, Sino-Indian war of 1962, Panchsheel Agreement, Western Sector, Middle Sector, Eastern Sector.

### INTRODUCTION

India and China are the two Asian giants which are separated by Himalayas. The relations between these two countries have been frosty at

best and chilly at worst. The main reason for this state of affairs is the border problem which has existed between these two countries though there were also other problems. There was only a brief bonhomie between these two nations and much of the time these countries spent countering one another. In spite of the fact that these two countries had very ancient civilizations and despite the fact

that these two countries are neighbors, there is hardly any historical evidence to say that there was political interaction between them. There is abundant proof of the fact that there existed both exchange of ideas and continuous overland trade and these took place in spite of the absence of cooperation between these two countries. China has been creating many problems in the world to its

neighbors because of its hostile and belligerent attitude towards other countries.

China was influenced by Buddhism which travelled to that country from India through Tibet. Buddhism left a lasting imprint on the minds and lives of the Chinese people. However, the present political dispensation in China has been reversing this process and the great Buddhist temples that were built during the earlier times were not allowed to function. China, for giving a go bye to the Buddhist principles, is leaving no stone unturned to root out the religion completely from China.

The contacts between these two nations since the early times were few and far between and they were limited only to exchange of scholars and pilgrims. Many Buddhist missionaries travelled from India to China to spread the principles and philosophy of Buddhism. The main among them were Kashyapa Matanga, Dharma Kshema, Kumara Jiva, and Paramartha. Many Chinese scholars, influenced by the principles of Buddhism, also visited India and the prominent among them were Hiuan-t-Sang, Fa-Hien and I-tsing. <sup>1</sup> Trade flourished between these two countries over the Silk Route and the sea route during the seventh and ninth centuries A.D. However these contacts faded away after India got exposed to foreign invasions. <sup>2</sup>

There was sea trade between these two countries intermittently. On the whole, there was not much of contact during the mediaeval period. There was renewal of contacts between these two countries subsequently under British rule. However, this took place, rather under unfortunate circumstances. It was during this time that China was exposed to invasions from many foreign countries and the main among them were Great Britain, Japan, USA and Russia. These countries imposed the regime of extra-territoriality on China. It was also during this period that Great Britain fought many Opium Wars with the Chinese using the Indian troops and forced the Chinese people to continue their addiction to Opium which was cultivated in India and exported to China. This had created a kind of hatred towards Indians in Chinese minds. The British practice of using Indian troops and Indian policeman in cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai against the Chinese did not endear the Indians to the Chinese. <sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the Indians also did not have any pleasant opinion of the Chinese and they had a negative opinion about them that they ran laundries, shoe shops and cheap restaurants and sell silk of doubtful quality at reduced rates. <sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is abundantly clear that the relations between these two countries were resting on weak, insecure and suspicious foundations in spite of the fact that these two countries enjoyed a short bonhomie during the early 50s of the last century where one addressed the other as 'BhaiBhai'.

Though the rivalry between these two countries was mainly with regard to the unsettled borders, there were also many other reasons which stroked the rivalry between these two Asian neighbors. The political systems in these two countries were contrastingly different and divergent. While India adopted democratic methods of governance, China embraced totalitarian system of government. While the Indian system was an open one, the Chinese system was a closed one. Similarly, while India adopted the non-violent method to achieve independence, China established the new government by overthrowing the incumbent government through violence. Hence, to suggest, as has been suggested by many that there is much in common between these two countries is to misrepresent and misunderstand the basic differences between these two countries.

The border dispute between these two Asian giants starts in the North-Western Frontiers-Ladakh region of India and ends in the North-East in the present day Arunachal Pradesh. Both the countries always maintained that there existed a traditional boundary between these two nations. However, this traditional boundary was never defined unambiguously. In 1892, the Chinese declared that the Karakoram Range in the Himalayas was the boundary in the North-West. The British rulers of the country did not object to this boundary between their territories in India and that of China. However, when the British, suggested the continuation of this line as far as Demchok, the Chinese refused to ratify. In 1913-14 the Chinese, British and Tibetan plenipotentiaries tried to work out a boundary in the Eastern Sector, the Chinese government refused to ratify the boundary. In 1914, the British colonial masters in India drew the McMahon line which differentiated the Indian territories from the Chinese in the north-eastern region but this was not accepted by the communist government

of China. These two regions namely, the north-west region in Ladakh and the north-eastern region in the Arunachal Pradesh became the flashpoints and resulted in the war between these two countries in 1962. The war resulted in the defeat of the Indian Army and has left continuing tensions and distrust along the borders between these two countries and each side continues to maintain that its territory has been unlawfully occupied by the other.

It is highly essential at this point of time to go back into history and try to trace the origins of this border dispute. While settling the boundaries between India and China, the British colonial masters in India always took into cognizance the Russian factor. The British rulers of India always suspected that Russians had evil designs on Central Asia and it was only a matter of time before they occupied Central Asia and marched towards the warm waters of the Indian Ocean by trampling over their territories in India. As a result, they wanted to make China a buffer, an impediment to stymie the march of Russian forces and curtail its expansion towards the south.

There are two principal schools of thought with regard to the frontier policy and for containing the Russian expansion towards the South. The first was the forward school which envisaged that the British forces must advance and take the Russian threat head on as far away as possible from the plains of India. The second school of thought on the other hand, which was a moderate school, cautioned the British authorities about the immense cost and risk involved in trying to maintain and establish boundaries in the remote and mountainous areas of the country and instead suggested that the limits of the British power should be expanded and set where the boundary could be easily protected and supported and that the best way to put a check on the Russian ambitions is through juxtaposing a third power between these two countries and accordingly it conceived of China to be the best player which suits their requirements. However the Chinese distrusted the British authorities and believed that the British were using clever ploys to hack away its territories and as a result the Chinese shied away from the British efforts to establish boundaries between India and China.<sup>5</sup> Despite the fact that the British authorities in India made relentless efforts for the creation of a linear boundary between its Indian territories and those of China, the efforts were futile. Though the concept of a linear boundary is highly essential to modern States, it was not appreciated by the Chinese authorities because they suspected the intentions of the British.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, the need for translating the no man land that existed between these two countries into formal boundaries resulted in the war between the two nations because these two nations failed to come to an agreement over the boundary issue.

### **The Boundary Problem**

The boundary between China and India can be broadly compartmentalized into three segments and they are: Western Sector, the Middle Sector and Eastern Sector.

### **The Western Sector**

The boundary in the Western Sector between the Sinkiang and Tibet provinces of China and the Jammu and Kashmir State of India is around 1770 km in length.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the length of the frontier between the Pakistan occupied Kashmir and the Sinkiang province of China is around 480 km and involves a disputed territory which is to an area of 15,500 km<sup>2</sup> and the rest of the border is between the Ladakh, the union territory of India and that of Tibet in China. The boundary between India and China runs along the watershed between the Indus system in India and Khotan system in China.<sup>7</sup>

It is highly essential to know and explore the history of Ladakh in order to have a vivid understanding of the border problem that has persisted between India and China in the Western Sector. The territory of Ladakh lies in the valley of the Upper Indus which is at an attitude of 12000 feet and is sparsely populated. The topography of the area is quite unique with a large number of very high mountains, scattered plains and intervening valleys. Very few people knew about it and there was hardly any mention in the World press before the people of Tibet rose in rebellion against the Chinese

communist masters. It was in this place, which was desolate, that China and India fought a war over Aksai Chin, a high alkaline plain where the frontiers of Ladakh, Sinkiang and Tibet meet.

Ladakh constituted a part of Tibet till the 10<sup>th</sup> A.D. when it became an independent entity, taking freedom from Tibet subsequent to the dissolution of the Tibetan Empire.<sup>8</sup> Ladakh became a subsidiary State of the Muslim kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Though it became independent in the last decade of 15<sup>th</sup> century, it lost its independence to the Mughal Empire and became its tributary State in 16<sup>th</sup> century. With the decline of Mughal Empire in India, Ladakh got back its independence. However, because of the Lhasa's political and cultural pull, Ladakh went into the orbit of Tibetan overlordship in the absence of Conquerors who were strong enough to wean it away.

Ladakh, during this time, like some of the small principalities that were located in the valleys of Tibetan Plateau owed some sort of allegiance to Tibet. Tibet, at that time, was under the control of China. Ladakh, however, was not a part of China and it was not in any way a subordinate State of China and nothing in correspondence between the kings of Ladakh and the Chinese Resident at Tibet gives any indication that Ladakh was politically subordinate to Tibet. Hence it can be understood that both the Chinese and the Tibetan policies treated Ladakh to be a political entity with its own independence.<sup>9</sup>

Ladakh was able to maintain the status of an autonomous State very precariously during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and it only owed a nominal political allegiance to the kings of Kashmir and enjoyed both religious and commercial relations with Tibet.<sup>10</sup> Infact, the internal political dissensions that existed in Ladakh proved to be a greater threat to its existence than any other external power.

The external conditions that allowed the people of Ladakh to indulge in infightings did not last long and they became victims of aggression by the Sikhs. The Sikhs describing themselves as the heirs to the former Kashmir rulers laid claim to the territories of Ladakh and expected tributes from it. However, the rulers from Ladakh refused to abide by the wishes of the Sikh rulers. The Sikhs could not take aggressive action against the people of Ladakh because they were busy with their wars against the Afghans.

Dogra, the Jammu feudatories of the Sikh rulers proved to be a bigger threat to the territories of Ladakh than the Sikh rulers of Punjab. Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler of Kashmir manifested his ambitions to conquer Ladakh. The internal dissensions among the Ladakhis provided an appropriate opportunity to the Dogra ruler, Gulab Singh to defeat the armies of Ladakh and made it to conclude a humiliating Treaty with him. Though the Kashmiri ruler had to face dissident activity and revolts within Ladakh, he could successfully suppress them and by 1840 he established his authority over Ladakh very firmly.

In 1841 and 1842, Tibet made attempts to liberate Ladakh from the grip of Kashmir rulers. However, all the efforts of Tibetan rulers proved to be futile. In 1842, both the parties concluded a treaty-a non-aggression pact, which made the Tibetans to accept the Kashmir rulers as the legitimate rulers of Ladakh. However, the treaty did not specify any boundary between Ladakh and Tibet but it only mentioned that the boundary lies at the established frontiers.<sup>11</sup>

Gulab Singh, the Kashmiri ruler, in the year 1846, became independent from the Sikh control because of the inability of the Sikh rulers to pay huge indemnity which was demanded by the British colonial masters. The Sikh rulers of Punjab, expressing their inability to pay indemnity, gave the territories between the rivers Indus and Beas to the British. These territories included Kashmir, apart from others. The British East India Company, in turn, transferred these territories to Gulab Singh, the ruler of Kashmir and collected indemnity from him. This arrangement was of mutual benefit to both the East India Company and the Kashmiri ruler because the ambition of the Kashmir ruler, Gulab Singh to create an independent kingdom for himself was fulfilled and at the same time the British, apart from getting huge financial benefit, were also ensured of the safety of the territorial possessions that were placed in the hands of the Kashmiri ruler, a powerful ally who was capable of defending his territories and acting as a buffer State for the British for preventing the aggressors from Central Asia.

The eastern boundary of the Kashmir with Tibet was not formally demarcated and as per the Treaty of 1842 it was stated to be established by tradition and no formal demarcation was treated to be necessary. However, the British, anticipating trouble in the future, considered it to be imperative to have



a formal demarcation of the boundary. The British colonial master suspected the designs of the Kashmiri rulers towards Western Tibet and which if materializes might involve the East India Company in a dispute with China because Kashmir happened to be a feudatory state of the British.

The British informed the Chinese Government regarding the necessity of having a formal boundary and proposed boundary demarcation and invited the representatives from both Tibet and China to participate in the demarcation process of the boundary.<sup>12</sup>The Chinese officials replied that the boundaries between Ladakh and Tibet have been well established and distinctively fixed and hence it would be better for both the parties to stick to the arrangement. However, the Chinese officials said that they would be sending a delegation to join in the marking of the boundary. The British boundary commissioners, however, failed to find any Chinese representative awaiting them when they went to mark the boundary and they could only witness active hostility from the Tibetans. No demarcation of the Ladakh-Tibet boundary could take place in 1846 because neither the Tibetans nor the Chinese cooperated with the British for establishing a clear cut demarcated boundary. With the intention to curtail the expansionist designs of the Kashmiri rulers into the Western Tibet, the British colonial masters decided to unilaterally demarcate the boundary.<sup>13</sup>

In 1846 and 1847 the British tried to demarcate the boundary between Ladakh and drew the line from a little north of Pangong Lake to the Sipti river.<sup>14</sup>They stopped there and did not proceed further. The territory to the north and between the Karakoram Pass and the Pangong Lake was treated to be a territory terra incognita and was not defined. It was believed that there was no need of any boundary demarcation in that area because it was uninhabited. It was in this area that the dispute between China and India arose over the boundary issue just 100 years later.

W.H. Johnson, who was working as an officer in the Survey of India Department, provided a boundary between Karakoram Pass and Pangong Lake.<sup>15</sup> According to him, Aksai Chin Plateau along with a big piece of territory which was lying to the north of the Karakoram Pass was shown to be as belonging to the kingdom of Kashmir. It was this plateau which was to become a bone of contention between India and China in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Aksai Chin, which means 'a desert of white stones', is a high and a desolate plateau with an area of 10,000 mi<sup>2</sup> approximately. Though this place is inhospitable and is not fit for human habitation and has been described by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, as a land where no people live and not a blade of grass grows, has its own importance. An ancient trade route passes through this territory during the summer when the snow melts trade between Ladakh, Tibet and Sinkiang takes place. Similarly, the importance of this trade route was once again recognized in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was essential for the Chinese authorities to suppress the revolt that was taking place in Tibet and to gain control over it.<sup>16</sup>

The Chinese authorities, after acquiring knowledge of the border between the Pangong Lake and Karakoram ranges, claimed that the Aksai Chin Plateau as belonging to them. They raised objections to the Johnson's version of the boundary line which gave Aksai Chin to be included in the territory of Kashmir. An influential strategist who belonged to the forward school, Mr. Ardagh, meanwhile in London, advocated the inclusion of not merely Aksai Chin plateau but also the entire area which was recommended to be included by Mr. Johnson. The main aim behind this viewpoint is to contain the Russian expansionist design towards India. It was predicted that Russia, after annexing the eastern areas of Sinkiang, would push further south and would enter India. As a result, setting the Karakoram ranges as a natural boundary would prevent the Russian aggression.

The British Government, in 1899, came up with a new proposal for settling the boundary arrangement between Kashmir and Tibet. As per this proposal, Aksai Chin was to be surrendered to China and this proposed boundary agreement would have entailed major territorial concessions by the British authorities in India. In fact most of the territory that is at present an issue of dispute between India and China would have been ceded to China.<sup>17</sup>The Chinese did not respond to this boundary demarcation and as a result lost an excellent opportunity for settling the boundary question once and for all. The British never repeated this offer and the subsequent maps which were drawn by the British authorities included Aksai Chin in Kashmiri territories.

Thus, it could be very clearly understood from the above narrative that Ladakh region which was ruled by different rulers during different periods of history eventually became a part of the Jammu and Kashmir Kingdom under Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler. Subsequently, Ladakh came under the influence of the British rulers when Jammu and Kashmir became an ally of the British. The British Government made several efforts for proper border demarcation between Kashmir and China with the fear that an undemarcated boundary would result in a war between Kashmir and China and the British India would be inadvertently dragged into the war. However, this offer by the British authorities did not bear any fruit. And when India became independent and China became a Communist country, this undemarcated border in the Western Sector became a bone of contention between these two Asian nations and resulted in the war in 1962.

### The Middle Sector

In the terminology of Sino-Indian border dispute, the region between Aksai Chin and Nepal is known as the Middle Sector. The Sino-Indian border in this region runs along the watershed from Ladakh to Nepal. 625 km in length, this boundary line runs along the boundary of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.<sup>18</sup>In this sector, the Chinese Government lays claim to nearly 2000 km<sup>2</sup>. In this region a number of small states existed and these were under the de facto control of the Tibetans and the British Government found it difficult to annex them. After India gained independence in 1947, the Indian Government consolidated its hold over these territories by excluding the authority of Tibet and this led to protests from Tibet and China.

Between the Middle Sector and the Eastern Sector in the Sino-Indian border, three states namely, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan form a kind of frontier between China and India. All these States to a varying degree were either depending on China or owed allegiance to it. The British colonial masters could understand the danger of Chinese influence over these States and considered it to be a threat to their own possessions in India. The British made relentless efforts to make these Himalayan States subservient to their interests, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by making them owe their allegiance to the British authorities and they could succeed to a great extent.<sup>19</sup>

### The Eastern Sector

The boundary in the Eastern Sector which is a part of the Sino Indian border dispute is nearly 140 km long and runs from the eastern limit of Bhutan to a point at the trijunction of Burma, Tibet and India.<sup>20</sup> This line is called the McMahon Line and it takes the name of Henry McMahon, the British representative who was instrumental in the drawing of this boundary line and in the signing of the 1913-14 Simla Convention. The boundary was established along the Himalayan crest of the northern watershed of the Brahmaputra River.<sup>21</sup>

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the British colonial masters once again feared the dangers from Russia to its territorial possessions in India because they feared that the Russians were marching menacingly towards Tibet. The British Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon believed that Tibet has also become a board for the 'Great Game'<sup>22</sup> like the North West Frontier. With the intention to prevent Russia from occupying Tibet, the British started staking claims over Tibet. The Lhasa Convention which was signed between the British and Tibetan authorities in 1904 made it mandatory for the Tibetans to refuse entry to any agents or representatives of any foreign power, except the British.

In 1907, the British once again made efforts to keep Tibet free from occupation by any foreign power in general and Russia in particular and as a result it signed the Anglo-Russia Treaty. The main focus of this treaty was to make both Britain and Russia not to enter into any negotiations directly with Tibet and instead do it through the intermediary of China. Thus British India, like Afghanistan, made Tibet a buffer State between the British territories in India and Russia.<sup>23</sup>

Great Britain always considered China to be a non-entity in the struggle for power and territorial acquisitions which were indulged in by British India and Russia along the northern boundary of India. In fact, the British colonial masters wanted China to be a kind of a buffer State between Russia

and India. As a result, the British in India had no reason to worry regarding China's claims of suzerainty over Tibet.

There was a drastic change in the situation in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as China decided to embark on a kind of aggressive foreign policy towards Central Asia in general and Tibet in particular and wanted to bring the loosely controlled protectorates and the provinces directly under the control of the Chinese Empire.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, the Chinese army marched against Tibet and captured its capital city, Lhasa. It in fact made plans to enlarge its Sinkiang province to incorporate eastern Tibet into it. Along with it, the Chinese authorities wanted to press for their own claims over Nepal, Bhutan and Assam. All these developments created an alarm in the minds of the British authorities. The main fear of the British authorities was that the latest attempts that were being made by the Chinese would not only deny a buffer State between India and China but would also expose the British territories to aggression. The advocates of the forward school wanted the British authorities to march forward to check the movements of Chinese. However it was not acceptable to Lord Hardings, the viceroy of India.

In 1911, an expedition was sent for punishing the tribesmen who were responsible for the death of Noel Williamson, an English official and at the same time it was also asked to survey the country for acquiring knowledge for setting up a boundary between China and India.

There was a revolution in China in 1911 which result in the over throw of the royal Manchu Dynasty from power and brought a republic form of government to power in China. The effect of the revolution was immediately felt in Tibet and the Tibetans drove out the Chinese and brought Dalia Lama to power. Dalia Lama, in turn, declared the independence of Tibet from China.

The collapse of the Chinese power in Tibet provided an opportunity for the British to reassert their power and avert future threats from the Chinese along the North-Eastern border. The British in India were of the opinion that their interests would be best protected and promoted if they could effectively exclude the Chinese power as well as their presence from Tibet. They wanted to make Tibet a buffer State between India and China as it was earlier, between India and Russia, as per the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.<sup>25</sup> The Shimla Conference was convened in the year 1913, with that attitude in mind. The conference was attended by Chinese with a lot of constraint and by the Tibetan representatives with a lot of alacrity.

The main intention of the British was to make China accept to the division of Tibet into two entities namely, the Outer Tibet and the Inner Tibet as was the case with Mongolia which was divided into two between Russia and China.<sup>26</sup>

Henry McMahon led the team of the British to represent at the conference and the negotiations continued for six months as to where the boundary between Tibet and China should be set. The British proposed that Tibet should be divided into two namely, the Outer Tibet and the Inner Tibet. The Outer Tibet was designated as the area which has been traditionally under the control of Lhasa and it would be controlling the internal affairs and the administrative matters pertaining to that region and it would effectively serve as a buffer State between China and India. The Inner Tibet, on the other hand, which was an integral part of the China, would act as a buffer between the Outer Tibet and the Russian-dominated Outer Mongolia. The British were immensely happy with this arrangement because they perceived that this formula will protect their territories in India from both the Chinese and the Russian invasions and at the same time it enabled Tibetan authorities to control the farthest reaches of ethnic Tibet. The Chinese could see through the game of the British in trying to separate Tibet from China. However, the opposition of the Chinese to the proposal was not regarding the division of Tibet as such, but as to where the division should run. This was the contentious issue and this led to the breakdown of conference.

The Simla Convention was signed by both the Tibetan and British representatives on 3 July 1914.<sup>27</sup> The Chinese Government refused to ink the Simla Convention in spite of the fact that the Chinese representative had in fact prepared a draft agreement, and it signifies that China has informally conceded to the agreement. The British subsequently made many bids to procure acceptance to this Convention by China but all their efforts turned out to be fruitless.

As per the proposal at the Simla Convention, the India-Tibet boundary line runs along the crest of the Himalayan watershed in the North Eastern Frontier area of India. The Chinese authorities never raised any objection with regard to this McMahon Line either at the Simla Convention itself or in the subsequent years of the conference. This made the British entertain fond hopes that China will someday agree to this border agreement. It was only when the differences between China and India became very acute over the border issue in the late 1950s and in early 1960s that China started questioning the validity of the Simla Convention and the subsequent drawing of boundary line by the British which famously came to be called the McMahon Line.

Though the relations between these two Asian giants started with a friendly note after India became independent and China became a country that was run by the communist government, the relations between these two great nations were destined to be strained in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of the consistent refusal by China not to abide by the existing boundaries and claiming those existing boundaries as handiwork of British imperialists which were done to protect and promote their own interests and jeopardizing the interests of China.

By 1950s, the Chinese Government started focusing its efforts over reclaiming suzerainty over Tibet. China had never accepted the independence of Tibet as a separate entity although it had bowed to the expulsion of the Chinese Mission in 1912.<sup>28</sup> On 7 October 1950, China launched an invasion against Tibet with the intention to recapture it. An old and forgotten trade route which ran through Aksai Chin in Ladakh facilitated the easy movement of troops and ultimately helped in the conquest of Tibet.

The Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950s created new problems and a lot of discomfort for India on a number of counts. The main worry was the discrepancies and disparities that exist between the maps that were adhered to by China and India, particularly with regard to the boundary between the India's North East Frontier Province and Tibet. Another issue of concern was that the Indian Mission which was located at Lhasa was not founded on any treaty between Tibet and India. For many years, the Indian Mission which was located at Lhasa was functioning on the basis of the goodwill of Dalia Lama and the tolerance of Tibetans. The situation had abruptly changed with the conquest of Tibet by China. It became necessary for India, for converting the Indian Mission at Lhasa into a Consulate General through an agreement with the Chinese. In turn, it became incumbent upon India to provide access for the opening of the Chinese Consulate General in Bombay in India. This agreement, as a result, gave implicit recognition to the rights of China over Tibet and this also gave no written guarantee of the autonomy of Tibet.

There was a lot of bonhomie between China and India in the decade which led to the creation of People's Republic of China in 1949 and the relationship between these two countries was harmonious. Both these countries signed the Sino-Indian Treaty on 29 April 1954 with the intention to settle the issues pertaining to their interests in Tibet. The treaty mostly focused on economic relations between Tibet and India and especially with regard to the improvement of facilities for the pilgrims and merchants in both the countries.<sup>29</sup> The Panchsheel or the 'Five Principles of Peaceful coexistence' was declared to form the foundation for the establishment of harmonious relations between China and India.

Though the treaty was welcomed by one and all in India, it drew a lot of flake subsequently in India because of the developments which took place in Sino-Indian relations. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India was subjected to a lot of bitter criticism by both the press and the leaders in India for lacking the vision to include the boundary provisions in the 1954 Agreement.

Nehru's contention was that as the boundaries between the two nations were quite explicit and clear there was no need for raising the issue of boundary with China. Secondly, the Chinese Prime Minister's Chou-En-Lai had himself assured India that there existed no territorial dispute between these two nations and as a result Nehru did not see any necessity of raising and discussing an issue that did not exist because it was not a pertinent thing to do. However, the issue of the Indo-Tibetan border did crop up indirectly in the negotiations that took place with regard to the 1954 Agreement. The Chinese discussed the issues pertaining to the Middle Sector of the boundary, West of Nepal and East of Ladakh. The Chinese laid claim over the passes that are present in the Middle Sector and India refused to



concede the claims made by the Chinese. Subsequently it was accepted by both China and India that these passes were present at their borders.

The initial disagreement over the boundary issue which took place between China and India was with regard to the passes that are present in the Middle Sector. The Chinese Government by signing the Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954 had accepted that the passes that existed in the Middle Sector region namely, Mana Pass, Shipki Pass, Dharma Pass, Kungribingri Pass, and Lipulekh Pass as lying in the border between the two countries. However, on 17 July of the same year, Chinese protested the stationing of Indian troops at Barajhoti (Wu-Je to the Chinese) an area which was lying south-east of the Niti Pass which was actually a territory which was lying in India. It was the first time that China laid claims to Indian Territory lying south of the great Himalayan barrier. Talks were initiated to resolve the issue in 1955. However, no agreement could be reached by them.<sup>30</sup>

Another boundary disagreement between these two nations occurred with regard to the border of Ladakh with Sinkiang and Tibet. The Chinese Government, in 1957, laid a road across Aksai Chin plateau, an Indian Territory, connecting Sinkiang and Tibet. India was in dark regarding the laying of road across Aksai Chin until the Chinese announced the completion of the road. It was subsequently, substantiated by the Chinese newspapers which published the miniature maps of the region where the road was laid. The Indian Government protested strongly with the Chinese Government regarding the laying of the road through Aksai Chin when Indian Government came to know of its existence through one of the reconnaissance parties that was sent to the region to check the veracity of the claims made by the Chinese. The Chinese Government, reacting to the protest made by the Indian government, for the first time stated, both positively and publicly, their rights over the Aksai Chin area on 3 November 1958. In 1959, the Tibetans revolted against the Chinese authority in Tibet and this further aggravated the Sino-Indian border dispute. Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetans escaped to India. The guerrilla warfare was spreading across the length and breadth of eastern Tibet and the only approachable road that was available to Chinese communist government was the one that was laid through Aksai Chin. The hopes of the people of Tibet regarding the attainment of eventual freedom were kept alive because of the escape of Dalai Lama to India and in major propaganda war, defeat was inflicted on Chinese.<sup>31</sup>

The relations between China and India further nosedived because of the events that unfolded in Tibet and the subsequent escape of Dalai Lama to India. The Chinese were very angry with India because it gave refuge to Dalai Lama and was helping the Tibetans in their fight against the Chinese Government. The Chinese Government stopped giving evasive replies to boundary issues and started challenging the very veracity of Sino-Indian boundary as was conceived by India. The Chinese Government started challenging the very legitimacy of the Sino-Indian boundary and stated that the boundary was a product of aggression of the former British colonial masters against China.

The flow of communication between the two governments of India and China continued uninterrupted in spite of the fact that the relations between the two countries were greatly strained. It was felt in both countries that a formal meeting between the Prime Ministers of the two nations was highly essential to defuse the situation and resolve the dispute. As a result, a meeting was organized between the Prime Ministers of India and China in April 1960 at New Delhi.

As both the parties maintained contradictory stands, the outcome of the meeting was neither satisfactory nor encouraging. The stand of the Chinese Prime Minister was that although Mc Mohan Line was absolutely unacceptable to the Chinese Government, it was willing to accommodate and respect the views of Indian Government in the Eastern Sector provided India conceded the claims of the Chinese Government in the Western Sector by bartering away Aksai Chin to China. Nehru refused to concede to the demand of China because he was convinced and was of a firm belief that Aksai Chin rightfully belonged to India and the boundary line between India and China in the Eastern Sector was represented by the McMahon Line.

It was, however, accepted by the Prime Ministers of both the countries that it was highly essential for the officials of the two nations to meet and discuss the evidence that was available with

each of them on the basis of which they were substantiating their claims. The meeting started from the beginning of June 1960 at the Chinese capital, Peking.

The team of officials representing both the nations had three rounds of talks which were conducted in New Delhi, Peking and Rangoon. There was no substantial outcome as a result of these talks because both the parties were uncompromising and took a very hardened stand. The contention of the Chinese Government was that there was no formal delimitation of the Sino-Indian boundary and there were serious differences between the stand taken by the two parties over the boundary issue. The Chinese Government stated that it did not raise the issue of the boundary during the time of the Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954 because the conditions were neither conducive nor appropriate for the settlement of the border dispute. It further added that McMahon Line was never recognized by the Chinese Government. It further said that China was the rightful owner of the Aksai Chin plateau in the Western Sector, Barahoti village in the Middle Sector and Longju village in the Eastern Sector. India refused to acknowledge the claims that were made by China and strongly reiterated that the aforementioned territories claimed by China in fact belonged to India. As the two governments failed to settle the boundary issue peacefully and amicably sitting across the table, they resorted to war in 1962.

### CONCLUSION:

It can be clearly perceived from the aforementioned narrative that the two Asian giants namely, India and China are ancient countries with rich cultural heritage and hoary past. India became independent in 1947 and China became a Communist Country in 1948, there was a lot of bonhomie and euphoria between these two countries and the same was reflected in the Sino Indian Treaty of 1954 which spoke about 'PanchaSheel', the five principles of coexistence that was to form the foundation between the relations of these two countries. However, the harmonious relations between these two nations turned out to be acrimonious because of the boundary dispute between the two countries. The border dispute between these two countries was very acute in the Western Sector and the Eastern Sector which are represented by the Western and Eastern extremities of the Himalayas and they were separated by over 1000 miles. No doubt the Sino-Indian boundary issue is a problem left over by history and is a problem which has been inherited by these countries. The problem is also the result of the events which took place subsequent to the signing of the Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954 and more particularly with regard to the uprising in Tibet in 1959 and the subsequent escape of the Buddhist spiritual leader of Tibet namely, Dalai Lama to India in 1959. The two countries resorted to war in 1962 as they could not solve the border problem amicably.

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- 19) Maxwell, Neville, No.5, Op.cit., p.37.
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- 21) Aborigines like the Akas, Daflas, Apo, Manis, Miris, Abhors and Mislunis, occupied the hills of Assam.
- 22) Rowland, John, A History of Sino-Indian Relations: Hostile Co-existence, Princeton: D.VanNostrad Company, 1967, p.63.
- 23) 'Great Game' was the name given by Indian Army Officer Captain Arthur Conolly to describe British-Russian political fencing in Central Asia.
- 24) Maxwell Neville, Op.cit., No.5, p.41.
- 25) The British and the Russians in 1907 came to an agreement that both would keep out of Tibet and would not enter into negotiations with the Tibetans except through the intermediary of China. This came to be known as Anglo-Russian convention of 1907.
- 26) Mongolia was divided into outer and inner Mongolia. Outer Mongolia later became free from Chinese hold and was recognized even by China as Mongolian People's Republic.
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