



Evolution of Indo-ASEAN relations (With special reference to socio-cultural and economic factor)

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Abstract

India and South-East Asia were maintaining political, economic, social and cultural relation even in Before Christ era. The seals of Indian traders have been discovered from Mesopotamia. There seals were discovered from between 2400 B.C. to 1700 B.C. As a result of propagation of Buddhism by India, India's relations developed with Srilanka, Burma, China and Middle East. During the regime of Ashoka, Buddhist works were sent to Srilanka. During the regime of Kaushika, India tried to spread Buddhism in South-East Asia etc. Buddhism reached to Korea and Japan from China. The traders from Bharooch, Varanasi and Bhagalpur had traded with Burma. From the very beginnings India traded with Indonesia (Java). Indians setup two powerful states in Kamboj and Champa. The powerful kings of Kamboj (Kambodia) were Shaivaites. It is also an established fact that the kings of Bihar were having relations with Java0Sumatra. The rulers of Pallav dynasty expanded their empire in South-East Asia. The implement of Chole dynasty can also be witnessed in South-East Asia. In the later part of 8th century A.D. Pala kings were having very good trade relations with South-East Asia. During medieval period. India was having very good relationship wit South-East Asian Countries.

Keywords: India, ASEAN, social, culture, economy

1. Introduction

India and South-East Asia were maintaining political, economic, social and cultural relation even in Before Christ era. The seals of Indian traders have been discovered from Mesopotamia. There seals were discovered from between 2400 B.C. to 1700 B.C. As a result of propagation of Buddhism by India, India's relations developed with Srilanka, Burma, China and Middle East. During the regime of Ashoka, Buddhist works were sent to Srilanka. During the regime of Kaushika, India tried to spread Buddhism in South-East Asia etc. Buddhism reached to Korea and Japan from China. The traders from Bharooch, Varanasi and Bhagalpur had traded with Burma. From the very beginnings India traded with Indonesia (Java). Indians setup two powerful states in Kamboj and Champa. The powerful kings of Kamboj (Kambodia) were Shaivaites. It is also an established fact that the kings of Bihar were having relations with Java0Sumatra. The rulers of Pallav dynasty expanded their empire in South-East Asia. The implement of Chole dynasty can also be witnessed in South-East Asia. In the later part of 8th century A.D. Pala kings were having very good trade relations with South-East Asia. During medieval period. India was having very good relationship wit South-East Asian Countries.

The cultural relations between India and South-East Asia are still very strong, Archaeological Survey of India (A.S.I.) is helping in the maintenance of ancient Hindu temples of Vietman, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. Further in 2012, Indian Study Centre was set up in a University of Thailand, Thailand, Japan and Singapore have helped India in the renovation of Nalanda University of Bihar.

When Indian President visited Laos and Combodia in 2010, She signed cultural pacts, cultural exchange programmes were

accepted. When India Prime Minister Modi visited Japan, a pact was signed to clean Ganga in India (Gang Purification Plan). thus the cultural factors are still helping the two areas to develop clarities between India and ASEAN.

2. Economic and Trade Factors

In the age of globalization and liberalization, India realized this importance of economic diplomacy for its foreign policy. According to former foreign secretary Nirupama Rao, Economic diplomacy is also called as diplomacy out-side government, corporate diplomacy, trade diplomacy, NGO diplomacy and track-II diplomacy.

There were two main reasons for the changing economic diplomacy of India:

1. Disintegration of Soviet Union and End of Cold War.
2. Globalized economy band on the ideologies of free-market and neo0liberalism was a failure as the trade was being obstructed because of cold war.

Thus Indian economic diplomacy can be divided into two parts:-

1. Economic diplomacy till 1991.
2. Part 1991 economic diplomacy.

There were more worries before the period of 1991 i.e. problem of securing better conditions for trade export incentives, grants on concessionary rates, to secure loans import of friendly technology, collective elf reliance, south-south dialogue, to oppose neo colonial behaviour, reforms in international financial institutions etc.

Economical diplomacy witnessed many changes after 1991. The economic progress of India provided an important role to

India in global economic matters. Now India has its say in W.T.O. discussion, G-20 summits and participation in G.8 summits as outreach nations. In fact Indian economic diplomacy has secured a new direction and speed through its participation in the proceedings of IBSA, BIMSTEC, BRICS, SAFTA, India-E.W. Conference, India-ASEAN conference etc.

India put into action its economic diplomacy through LEP towards East and South-East Nations. This has paved way for India's improved political, economic and strategic position.

The assessment of economic diplomacy of India can be done on the basis of following factors:-

1. To encourage trade.
2. To encourage double investment.
3. Participation in development.
4. Multi-lateral economic diplomacy.

Through its multi-lateral economic diplomacy India has established closer links with ASEAN like regional economic organisations. Thus India is playing an important role in the regional economic integration of South Asia and South East Asia. This role is being played through ASEAN, SAARC, BIMSTEC, Making Ganga Co-operation, East Asia Conference etc.

The decade of 1990 was very important for one part of the world which included former Soviet Union, ASEAN and India. In fact the economic crisis of India had started in the decade of 1980 as Indian economy was a controlled economy which had resulted in the shortage of foreign currency. So India was trying to seek new friendship so that India may expand its trade area. By chance, even Indonesia was also facing economic crisis at that time. At that time India introduced economic reforms programme and adopted LEP to implement its liberalisation move. At that time emergence of China and India as economic powers was also taking place. So ASEAN was motivated to come closer to India.

During the rule of P.V. Narsimharao these historical decisions were taken which brought drastic changes in domestic and foreign policies of India. These decisions were:-

1. Economic Reforms.
2. Look East Policy.
3. Two recognise Israel.

Prime Minister Rao sent his Finance Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh on a tour of South East Asia. After getting positive feedback from this visit. Prime Minister himself decided to visit that region. He visited Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia during 1992-93 and setup personal relationship with these nations. Gradually India's position became stronger in this region.

Soon Indo-ASEAN partnership took bold steps the relationship of India was strengthened with Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar and Philippines. In 1992 India became Regional Dialogue partner and in 1995 ASEAN gave to India the status of Full Dialogue Partner. In 1996 India got the membership of Asia Regional Forum. Since then India is participating in its annual meetings.

On the other hand it was decided in 4th ASEAN conference in 1992 to setup A-FTA (ASIAN-Free Trade Association). The main object was to setup a collective market within next 15

years. The first step towards the establishment of AFTA was taken in Jan. 1993.

The year 1997 was very significant from the point of view of Indo-ASEAN relationship. Myanmar and Laos were given full fledged membership in 1997. Myanmar is gateway of India for South-East Asia and is also very important for economic development of North-Eastern states of India. Through the Bangkok declaration BIMSTEC was set up in 1997 which is acting as a bridge between India and ASEAN. In 1997 Thailand adopted the Look West Policy (LWP). It resulted in close trade ties between India and South East Asian nations of Making region. Bilateral relations improved as a result of India's LEP and Thailand's LWP. This relationship gave some very fruitful results. Now the two sides are co-operating in the fields of trade investment, science and technologies, energy and technical co-operation and living partnership in cultural field.

In the post-cold war era, economic factors have gained primary over political factors. India looks towards South-East Asia for this exchange of trade, capital investment technology, availability of market etc. ASEAN members were fast growing countries. They have 620 million population. India may provide better opportunities for export. In 1989 trade was only upto 4% between the two sides and it grew to 7% in 1994-95. In 1980 India's trade with ASEAN was only upto 1.1 Billion dollar and in 2000 this figure reached to 7 Billion dollar and it grew to 22 Billion dollar in 2005-06.

In November 2002 8th ASEAN Summit was held at Phnom Penh. Here first India-ASEAN Summit conference was also held. India was given equal status and is given to ASEAN + 3. Since then every year ASEAN + 1 summit conference is held. In this first summit main emphasis was given an abolition of terrorism and trade relations.

Indo-ASEAN relations got a high jump in 2005 when India became a member of EAS (East Asian Summit) which is regarded as the biggest institution of South-East Asia and East Asia. Thus on the occasion of 11th ASEAN Summit, the first East Asian Summit was also held. Besides 10 members of ASEAN this summit was also attended by India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

In 2006 12th ASEAN Summit was held at Cebu and Cebu declaration was issued which provided for the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015. It was further declared that the ASEAN region should be converted into an area by 2015 where goods services, investment, skilled workers and free access of capital will be available.

In November, 2007 on the eve of 40th anniversary of ASEAN, 10 members adopted the blue print of ASEAN Economic Community and all the members accepted to adopt it by 2015. The main goal of AEC will be to achieve higher level of economic dynamism, continuous prosperity "Common growth and integrated development in fact ASEAN has dual work policy for the establishment of AEC to encourage the integration of economics of ASEAN and to develop construction of ASEAN in global economy.

Sixth Indo-ASEAN summit was held on 21st November 2007 at Singapore. The aim of this summit was to draw the blueprint of ASEAN-India co-operation, exchange of views of two our regional and international issues. It was also decided to further increase the relationship between the two. In 2011

ASEAN-India relations got a new direction when 11 countries signed a pact for the setting up of FTA (Free Trade Agreement).

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