

Border trade at Pangsau pass and its relation with the Tangsas of two Nations

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Trade is a natural economic activity it is the transaction of goods/ products or exchange of things for the purpose of earning and meeting needs. Trade is a flow of commodities from products to consumers. The commodities can flow between persons, human groups, and countries. The exchange of things can take place in kind or cash. If such exchange of goods is done on the international boundary line or in the vicinity of it by the people living there it is known as border trade. Goods produced in small scale in places nearer to border area will get a market nearby across the border. In many interior villages, horticultural crops do not find a market nearby.

The type and level of border trade – the first and most important is the transaction of surplus goods especially agricultural and horticultural products between the people of two adjacent borders. This is done at regular interval at the suitable places on international boundary. Boundary becomes a place of meeting instead of the line of separation. The people trade in products is mostly hand made products. The distance of trade is usually one day march. Trade takes in the border area of Assam, Meghalaya Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura with Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The second level of border trade exists among the people villages on both sides of the boundary line at more than one day's march. They trade in goods produced by themselves in their respective habitats. It takes place daily and weekly market on borders as well. This is a slightly higher level of border trade but with lesser frequency and found almost in the border area of north east region.

The third level of border trade includes the sell and purchase of those commodities which are not only produced by the border people in their habitats but also at production centers in the mainland of their respective country. Trade is done once or twice a year at hatt which is called Trans mountain flow of commodities.

In this level of border trade people not living in border area can take part. Thus the level and dimensions of border trade go higher but the frequency is further reduced. It may happen that

the products and people involved in such trade are faraway places than the border. The role of border dwellers becomes secondary.

The level and amount of transactions are very high which allow the government to place through main trade routes.

The flow of goods across the border on a few routes is actually a case of international trade in which goods produced far away from the border and even in foreign countries.

North East India and Border Trade

The North East of India become a land locked or blocked land in course of time due to formation of historical Indo Bhutan boundary, Indo Burma boundary in 1826, Indo Tibet in 1914, Indo Pak in 1947. 98% of its boundary is international touching neighboring countries Bhutan, Tibet, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

A narrow belt of land connects the region with the rest of India. This piece is called umbilical cord or Siliguri neck. It connects North East with rest of India. Border trade can be between more or less similar people or dissimilar groups. Border trade practiced by the Monpa, Memba, Khamba, Tangsa, Naga Kuki, Garo, Khasi and Jaintia is generally between more or less similar groups living across the boundary. The nature of human groups has profound influence on border trade and economy of people.

Border trade is more strong and necessary where borders lie in different ecosystems. This is because things are produced in two distinct ecosystems. This lead to exchange of surplus goods of one ecosystem with another. Total length of international boundary of NEr is 5211km. 98% 164 km is with Myanmar along boundaries of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland. Arunachal Pradesh is the largest state of NE India. It lies between latitude 20'28'N and 29'30'N and longitude 91'30E and 97'30E.

The border trade in the state could be expedited and subsequently the economic development of the region could be enhanced if proper road is constructed up to the border as identified earlier. The stillwell road which was from Ledo in Assam to Pangsau pass in Tirap Myanmar border could be opened again by the government of India. This will facilitate access up to Wauling of Mongya china. In order to boast trade with neighboring countries and to contain illegal trade along the border a comprehensive policy should be taken by the government. This will improve the living condition of the people in the border areas and relationship with neighboring countries will improve.

Compare to pre independent era the communication network is far better. The improvement of roads, hotel, and other basic amenities the state can have border trade with the neighboring countries.

As per SAARC nations decision towards a south Asian free trade area (SAFTA) by the end of 2000 AD we can expect that Arunachal Pradesh will have immense scope of border trade with Bhutan. The relation with Myanmar and China has improved and friendly relation with South Asian countries has brightened the prospects of border trade in the state.

Tribal Communities of N.E hills namely the Khampas, Nishis, Mishings, Mishimis, Khamptis, Singphos acted as intermediaries between the different groups of traders. This system enabled Assam to procure goods produced in Tibet China and Burma by barter system. Networks of markets in the foothills of Assam, bordering the Khasi, Jantiyia and Garo hills, Naga Hills, Mizo Hills, Karbi Hills and North Cachar Hills. In these markets hill men and the Assamese exchange their respective surplus produced and stock of goods.

The British encountered resistance from the Mismis, Adis, and Singphos in opening trade routes through their respective areas. They therefore followed the policy of fostering friendship with the tribal people. They continued the Ahom system of paying *posa* but in cash to several tribal communities. Regular markets were established in the foothills areas where the people of Assam plains and the professional commercial class take part in exchanging goods with those brought by the hill dwellers. Border communities can often identify more with the state and national project despite the existence of ethnic similarities across borders.

The border narratives of state and community can also occasionally reinforce each other and at present get another instance of how border ethnographies obey easy categorizations. The border community has traditionally used *kheal* or the practice of mandatory labour to consciously symbolize affiliation to particular village. The goods are needed to be exchange at border areas.

The goods exchanged include vegetables, some items of traditional significance. People along the border on both sides had the tradition of border trade and cultural ties because of cultural homogeneity. This could be the basis for opening up trade for greater mutual benefit to all. Once the conventional type trade takes places unconventional trade will follow suit.

It said that Arunachal Pradesh could transform the economy of North East region if indo Myanmar border trade opened through Pangsau pass. Deputy Chief Minister Chohan Mein of

Arunachal Pradesh had said that government has taken steps to bring Pangsau Pass and still well road back to track to boost border trade between India and Myanmar. Mein also pleaded to steps to upgrade the currency exchange office and trade Centre at border point to facilitate the movement of people and border trade with the government of India. For strengthening the trade and cultural exchange between the people of Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar, Mein suggested for the selection of sister town one each in Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar. These sister towns will act as center of cultural exchange between two regions and cultural exchange program will held twice in a year, one in Arunachal Pradesh and another one at Myanmar.

It was found that land customs station at Nampong built by the government of India and Trade and commerce department seen to be laying dysfunction due to less border trade activities from Myanmar side. The matter had been discussing with the government of India and Myanmar for the meaningful and consistent trade which will economically benefit the people of North East region and Myanmar as it will give ample scope for the border trade to grow. While highlighting the tourism potential of Arunachal Pradesh the deputy chief minister said that the reopening of Pangsau pass and still well road would boost the development of tourism industry in the state. The former Governor of Assam P.B. Acharya made a statement in relation to India and Myanmar that India and Myanmar can be purposeful and natural friend as they share common traditions and religious practices. The best way to maintain the friendly relation between India and Myanmar through the northeast region. Governor also mentions that prime minister Narendra Modi's vision for the development of northeast through Act East policy and said that people must also emphasis on the development of the region by coming up with personal views, social empowerment, proper road communication facilities and more to more people interaction must be established.

Myanmar and Its Border Trade with Arunachal Pradesh and Its People

Myanmar the rice bowl of the Far East had far long been major supplier of rice to the growing Indian population until 60s'. The Indo Myanmar border runs along the four states of the North Eastern region AP, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland.

Though Myanmar regarded as rice bowl of far east but one thing it was clear that after opening of Indo Myanmar border trade the impact of heroin (drugs) gradually felt in India. In

Manipur the number of drug addicts has risen from 600 in 1988 to an estimated, 5000 in 1991 (age group of 15 to 25).

The restriction of exchangeable trade items to 22 items has become crippling impediment in the trade imbalance with trade deficits in favour of India. Exports items- fabrics, steel nail utensils, bicycles are major export item.

Import items – handmade forest products, house hold items electronic goods.

Government of India and Government of Myanmar signed an Indo Myanmar border trade agreement on January 21, 1994 under the agreement barter trade through the land route would be allowed under following guidelines.

Export from India the precede imports from Myanmar. Non-monetary transaction to be allowed. Consignments to be involved in US dollar with value not exceeding, 20,000 dollar per transaction. Value of goods imported from India to be treated as advance payments for imports into India.

The Border Trade Agreement besides attempting to improve India's market share in Myanmar aim at strengthening the economics of north east states by leading to establishment of export oriented industrial infrastructure facilities in the region.

Thus, Reopening of Stillwell road for commercial purposes it will clearly show trade relation between India and Myanmar. Research and Analysis Wing of Ministry of Home Affairs agreed in principle to allow border trade between India and Myanmar for economic growth and commercial purposes for the development of north east. The border trade with Myanmar through Pangsau pass will transform the economy of North-East by reducing time and distance involved in the trade. Myanmar has established an administrative and immigration post as well as market complex on the border with the help of India Government. On 20th January 2020 in the presence of people from the both the country along with deputy chief minister Chowna Mein the governor of Arunachal Pradesh B.A.Mishras inaugurated the border hub or market at Pangsau Pass for the traders of India at Pangsau Pass.

There is no Myanmar custom post at Pangsau. However custom station is located at Tenai at the distance of 160 km from pangsau pass. The center, as well as the state government in order to facilitate border trade with Myanmar border trade center, was constructed at Nampong. Union minister of state for minority affairs Nong Ering said that center had full

support to develop Nampong as the international hub for trade and commerce purposes and India's gateway to ASEAN.

In order to bring the people of Northeast and Myanmar together in the pangsau pass border area of Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar border trade take place. This trade is celebrated as a trade festival in Nampong at Arunachal Pradesh form last 10 years in the month of January for three days. The door of famous pangsau pass that connects the last town of Arunachal Pradesh Nampong and Myanmar was opened for three days at the festival. During these three days, the area turns into global village breaking all social barriers. The border gate is not only open for Pangsau pass festival but its gate is open for three days in each month on 10th, 20th, and 30th. During these days not only buyers and sellers meet but also a mingling point for the tribal population living on either side of the border and a major tourist destination where people from India get an opportunity to get a glimpse of life across the border without a passport or visa. As we are talking about Myanmar and its connection with Arunachal Pradesh and its people we can talk about the Tangsa community that play major role in bringing the people of the both the countries together.

Tangsa is tribal community that migrated India from Myanmar, most of them within the last couple of Centuries. And have settled in Northeastern Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. If we see Tangsa is an umbrella term for the collection of the small ethnic group that migrated from Myanmar. In Myanmar, Tangsa is known as Rangpang, Pangmi, and Heimi/Haimi. Tangsa in Myanmar and Tangsa in India regard themselves as Naga tribes. Today they are living in the foothill of Patkai range and in the plains of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Tangsa had a huge impact on the Pangsau Pass and border trade. Tangsa living in India and Tangsa living in Myanmar had the relationship with each other, though they have language religious and cultural difference. If we see the relationship between the Tangsa of both the countries, it was observed that most of the Tangsa living in India they grandparent or they maternal grandparents are living in Myanmar. While some are related by blood and some are related through marriage. In pangsau pass were the border market set up most of the people are Tangsas. In pangsau pass not only goods are bought and sold but cultural exchange between the tangsa are seen and observed.

Visit to Border Market

If we talk about border trade between India and Myanmar at Pangsau Pass, The trade that takes place every three days of a month, were people from both the countries come together and mingle their old traditional cultural. The meeting of the people on these days is known as “India Day” As most of the people from India goes for trade at Pangsau Pass. On these days not only the traders are allowed but tourists are also allowed to visit the border trade. To visit the pangsau pass market and Lake of No return we need to take inner line permission from the Arunachal Government that is from the SDO (Sub-divisional Officer) of Nampong along with that we also required taking permission from District Commissioner of Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh.

It was observed that most of the goods that are brought to sell by Indian traders are not found in Myanmar, for which goods are sold at the very high price to Myanmar traders. The goods like salts an essential commodity for the people of Myanmar along with eggs, noodles packets (Maggie), utensils, wooden furniture, potato sacks, rice bags, onions sacks, edible oils and another foodstuff.

If we see the price of the Goods in India and the same goods that are sold to Myanmar traders, there are huge differences between the prices. As it was observed that the price of salts at India was Rs 250 per sacks but it was sold at double the price of salts compares to the price at India, which is Rs 1000 per sacks. In the same way, other goods like eggs are also sold that very high price that in India the price of eggs is Rs 900 but it was sold to Myanmar traders at Rs 1500.

The reason behind the hike in the price of goods while selling to Myanmar traders, in this regard different traders from India gave different opinions and views. Women traders from India said that as Myanmar traders used to sell the goods at very high price and never lower the price of the goods for which according to them by hiking the price of the goods it does not affect much in selling the goods. One thing to be remembering that do the price of the goods is very high; the price is all maintained by members of a market committee. A market committee was found by the Arunachal government and Myanmar government to look after the traders fare. At first, the prices of the goods are maintained by the traders themselves according to the will and wishes, but after the formation of the market committee, the price of the goods are given by committee members according to the will of the traders. In the same

way, other goods and products are sold at the very high price by the Indian traders to the Myanmar traders.

As the market used to be opened only on three days of every month. During these days not only market committee look after the trade along with them Indian army and Myanmar army used to do patrolling of the market area.

It was also seen that for the trade purpose people engaged mostly are Tangsa, Nepali, Chakma and other tribal communities living in the border area of Pangsau Pass. These people had a huge impact on the Pangsau Pass trade and connectivity with the people of Myanmar.

It was observed that in the trade not only the Indian traders used to sell goods but it was seen that Myanmar traders used to bring goods to sell in the Market. The goods that are brought by them are traditional foods stuff like dry fish, local vegetables, spices (elaichi), bamboo smoke tea, local Myanmar beverages and most famous sticky rice of Myanmar. The sticky rice is very famous in the border areas of Myanmar (Pangsau Pass) and Arunachal Pradesh. Along with the foodstuff, other things like the traditional dress of Myanmar are also sold. But these things are sold at a very high price to Indian traders and other people who all go to visit the market as tourists.

Conclusion

As the Pangsau Pass far away from both countries like few kilometer away, for which people from Myanmar used to come for trade by foot and some used to come with the help of rickety motorbikes. For the Goods to carry the Myanmar goods carriers' trucks are brought. It was observed that these goods carriers truck are quite different from the Indian goods carriers' service trucks. Along with the foodstuff, traditional dresses other things like Myanmar vehicles like the bicycle, motorbikes are sold by the Myanmar trader to Indian people, but vehicles are sold through some rules and regulations. Men roam in longyi (male attire), trying to sell their products. Women and children wear bright patches of thanaka on their faces, a yellowish-white cosmetic paste, made from ground bark, a common sight in Myanmar, which become easy to differentiate people belong to which country.

The communication with the people of Myanmar was quite difficult as they don't know any other language other than local languages of Myanmar. It was also seen that Tangsa living in both countries speak quite differently in terms of speech variety. It was also observed that the

people come from Myanmar are mostly Tangsa people living in Myanmar and some were connected with the Tangsa of India. Along with Tangsa from Myanmar Burmese people are also seen, who are the local people of Myanmar. The border trade brings the people of two nation's together and turned Pangsau Pass into a global village.

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