

**TRANS-HIMALAYAN TRADE LINKAGES  
A STUDY OF THE KALIMPONG-LHASA TRADE ROUTE**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**2017**



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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Trans-Himalayan Trade Linkages: A Study of the Kalimpong-Lhasa Trade Route**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

  
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We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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*Dedicated to  
my parents and Anna*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the near end of my thesis, there are many people whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Tsetan Namgyal for his extraordinary support in this dissertation process. His constant guidance and suggestions were a great source of motivation throughout these two years of my M.Phil in JNU.

I would also like to thank all my professors at the Centre for Inner Asian Studies whose insightful lectures during the coursework provided me an opportunity for building a strong foundation and interest in International Relations and Area Studies.

I am also greatly indebted to the Home Department, Government of Sikkim and the Indian Army for their support in my field trip to Jelep-La and Nathu-La, Sikkim. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Sebastin Pradhan for his enormous cooperation and support. I am also most grateful to Mr. Tshering Bhutia, Kalimpong Tourism Department, Mr Tshering Norbu, Mr. Sonam Tshering Bhutia, Pedong and Mr. Sonam Bhutia, Gnathang, Rev. Fr. Joseph Chettri, St George's School Pedong, Mr. Kitrey Sherpa, Rongli, Mr. Sanjay Agarwal, Ramsarup Prahlad Rai, Kalimpong and Mr. Sandup Dukpa, Darjeeling who warmly contributed their stories, histories and experiences.

Moreover, this work would not have been possible without the assistance and support from the dedicated staff of the libraries at JNU, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, the National Archives of India, New Delhi and the Documentation Cell in the Centre for Himalayan Studies, Siliguri, North Bengal; with special thanks to Professor Maitreyee Choudhury, University of North Bengal. Special mention is also due to Arpan Photostat for their assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank all my friends and family for their constant love and moral support which kept me going throughout these two years, especially Lhendup, Sonia, Prajita, Yangchenla, Sonam, Chiden Annu, and above all my parents.

Nonetheless, any mistakes and inaccuracies in this dissertation are solely mine own.

**Dechen Bhutia**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation
C.M.S	Church Missionary Society
DHR	Darjeeling Himalayan Railway
F.P.P	Foreign Political Proceedings
F.P.A	Foreign Department Proceedings, Political Branch, A category
F.S.E	Foreign Department Proceedings, Secret E Branch
GoI	Government of India
M.E.P	<i>Mission Etrangeres Paris</i>
M.E.A	Ministry of External Affairs
MDoNER	Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region
TAR	Tibetan Autonomous Region

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*“Over every mountain there is a path, although it may not be seen from the valley.”*

*Theodore Roethke*

Trans-Himalayan trade linkages refer to a network of overland trade routes across the Himalayas. Unlike the popular perception that the Himalayas evoke as being distant, isolated and impregnable, we find that since time immemorial the mountainous region was a highway of culture, civilization and trade. This dissertation intends to study the Kalimpong-Lhasa Trade Route in the Eastern Himalayan region, the historic Indo-Tibetan trade route from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until its closure after the Sino-India war of 1962. The advent of the East India Company and the British rule in the Indian subcontinent was a precursor to the frontier policies that shaped the course of history in this region. In this backdrop, the study argues the opening of the Kalimpong-Lhasa route was to a large extent, the British policy of using trade as an instrument of expanding their political and commercial interests along the Eastern Himalayan frontier. The study attempts to understand the context in which this policy was formed. Though the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route was closed in 1962, it also aims to highlight the securitization of border trade in the context of India-China relations in the recent times.

### BACKGROUND

Geographically, the Himalayas are the highest mountain ranges on earth. They were formed due to the collision of the Eurasian and the Indo-Australian plates some 60 million years ago north of the Indian subcontinent and covers modern day nation states like Bhutan, China (Tibet), India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Apart from being a natural barrier between Central and South Asia and the source of major rivers in the Indian subcontinent, the Himalayas, since ancient times have influenced the climate, religion, culture, politics and trade relations of the people inhabiting this region. Thus

the importance of geography in the determining the culture of an area cannot be overlooked.

Trans-Himalayan trade networks and commercial ties have characterized the region since the age of Augustus when Silk from China to Rome made its way through the trade route across the Himalayas (Lamb1960). Even Kautilya's Arthashastra mentions India's northern trade routes by which silk, horses, hides, ivory, gold and silver were traded. He also made comparisons with the trade route to the south (Kautilya 1992: 584). In spite of the rugged mountain terrain and harsh climate, traders, merchants, and caravans carried on trade through various mountain passes some of which are still in use.

In the Western Himalayas, India's overland trade with important trading towns of Central Asia like Xinjiang, Yarkand, Khotan, and Lhasa was carried on via Kashmir and Ladakh. In the Nepal Himalayas, the Gyerong and Kuti pass facilitated trade between Kathmandu and Lhasa, and in the Eastern Himalayas, the two principal passes Nathu-La and Jelep-La were used for trade with Bengal, Sikkim and Tibet and the Se La Pass connected Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh with Lhasa. It has to be noted here that the trade routes mentioned above in those days were often narrow passes where traders and merchants plied horses, ponies and even camels carrying their goods from one place to another, stopping at various points and were mostly subject to the vagaries of nature.

These networks to a large extent may have complemented the ancient Silk Road of China where goods, silk, ideas and cultural exchanges linked the people of the East and the West. The term "Silk Road" (*Die Siedenstrasse*) was given by Ferdinand von Richthofen, a German geographer in the mid-nineteenth century. Today the very connotation of "Silk Roads" have attracted popular imagination and as Xinru Liu (2012) puts it "anything that relates to these ancient trade routes becomes a tourist attraction, drawing people to both museums in cosmopolitan areas and caravan tracks of Central Asia." According to her, the first academic studies in the Silk Roads began with the efforts of archaeologists and art historians who studied the coins, manuscripts, inscriptions and the growth and extent of trade routes from China to the Mediterranean Sea.

The period between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is significant for this region because after the British had established their colonial power in India, they found themselves increasingly in contact with Tibet and small Himalayan kingdom's like Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim in the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent. The problem for the British like any other imperial powers of that time was determining the extent of its empire, most often where to begin and where to stop. Much depended on the need and exigencies of a particular period of time and the personality of people who actually determined and carried out the policy.

In this study, the period in consideration was characterized by the "Great Game" between Russia and Great Britain where there were contestations for more markets and colonies in Asia. Under these circumstances, Britain began to see Tibet as a "backdoor to China" in order to expand its markets into the latter when faced with obstacles at Canton. It also wanted to ensure that its position in the Indian subcontinent was not jeopardized by the Russian designs in Tibet.

The British who first came to India as merchants of the East India Company established their first factory at Bengal. After receiving the Diwani of Bengal in 1765, they began to encroach upon the politics of the Himalayan states lying north. They also began to prospect these trade routes in the hills for expanding commercial links to Tibet which was in their imagination a "forbidden kingdom" and of whose riches regarding gold and silver the Court of Directors of the East India Company had heard about from merchants and travellers. Subsequently, many missions were sent to Tibet to establish trading relations with the British starting with George Bogle, then followed by Hamilton, Turner, Manning<sup>1</sup> and finally by Francis Younghusband.

Among the many trade routes across the Himalayas, the Kalimpong-Lhasa Trade route via the Jelep-La Pass was one of the principal routes in the Indo-Tibetan trade in the Eastern Himalayas. Lhasa was the capital of Tibet and the seat of the Dalai Lama. It was also an important commercial center where merchants and traders from Turkestan, Kashmir, Mongolia, China, India, Nepal, and Bhutan carried on trade and commerce. These strong commercial links that had been built since ancient times proves that there were established trade routes and networks across the Himalayas and

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<sup>1</sup>Though Thomas Manning went in his own capacity, he was the only one to reach Lhasa in the early nineteenth century.

the advent of the British sought to expand control over these trade routes for their commercial benefit.

On the other hand, Kalimpong which today is a small town in the Darjeeling hills of North Bengal was ceded to the British by the Bhutanese with the signing of the Sinchula Treaty after the Anglo-Bhutanese war in 1865. Because of its proximity to the Jelep-La and Nathu-La Passes, it became an important trading town where a bustling entrepot trade once thrived between Bengal and Tibet. The principal commodities traded were gold, silver, musk, salt, silk, borax, yak tails, food grains, tobacco, cotton, etc. But apart from these items, the most important traded commodity was wool. Raw wool was imported from Tibet and reached Kalimpong where it was sorted and processed in the wool godowns finally to be sold to Bengal and other places in India and even to the mills in Manchester and Liverpool and North America. Furthermore, the British also contemplated exporting Indian tea to Tibet even though the latter was already flooded by the Chinese brick tea.

Trade flows along the Eastern Himalayas in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was not always smooth. They were influenced to a large extent by the underlying economic and political considerations of British colonialism. Trade was just one of the means of gaining influence into new territories, but their policies nonetheless affected the people living along the frontiers. The British colonial government no doubt introduced infrastructure development like railways, telegraphs and modern means of communications but at the same time, it was founded on the basis of their strategic and commercial interests.

In this context, it would be interesting to revisit the trade linkages between India and Tibet through the Lhasa-Kalimpong trade route. The advent of the East India Company in Bengal and its northward extensions in the Eastern Himalayas during the period of the eighteenth century will be the starting point for this study. The transition from the Company rule to Crown is considered after the Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858 but it should be noted that by the Regulating Act of 1773, the British Parliament had already been regulating the activities of the East India Company (Bandyopadhyay 2015). It is by no surprise that the first British Mission to Tibet under Bogle was sent in the year 1774.

By the first half of the nineteenth century, the British had already taken possession of Darjeeling and had established a de facto protectorate over Sikkim. These two areas would become very instrumental in determining British policy towards Tibet and establishing trading relations. It is in this backdrop that the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route was opened. Later in 1904, the same route was also taken by the Younghusband's expedition to Lhasa.

With regard to trade flows, a number of trade marts and trading agencies were opened along the route and the Indo-Tibetan trade grew in momentum. Wool was the main commodity traded. It was imported from Tibet and after sorting and baling in the godowns of Kalimpong, it was shipped from the ports of Calcutta to Europe and America. This is how Kalimpong emerged as a prominent commercial center and an entrepot for the British Indo-Tibetan trade.

Trade continued along this route until the Sino-India war of 1962. Borders were sealed and before this, thousands of refugees had migrated from Tibet to India due to the Chinese aggression of 1959. The wool trade stopped and Kalimpong lost its prominence as the "harbour of Tibet" as it used to be called back then.

Finally in 2006, after four decades, the Nathula Pass in Sikkim was opened for border trade between India and China. But the trade route is restricted only to Sikkim, bypassing the old route via Kalimpong. In the recent times, there have been demands for opening the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route through the Jelep-La Pass too. But the context in which the border trade is conducted in the present times between China and India, amidst high security and unsolved border disputes have to a large extent rendered the border trade mostly symbolic, hence the securitization of trade itself in the region.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The word "*Trans*" in the title of this dissertation "Trans-Himalayan Trade Linkages: A study of the Kalimpong-Lhasa Trade Route" is used as a prefix to denote the idea of mobility of people, commodities, and ideas "across" the Himalayan frontiers. The historical geography of any place on earth is often characterized by migration and mobility of people from one place to another. According to Chandra (1977) since the dawn of civilization, people have travelled far and wide in search of commercial

opportunities or otherwise. But such a mobility is not restricted to people. In fact as people move, “objects, images, ideas and knowledge” also become a part of this flow and forms part of the human “experience” (Jones 2012).

Hence in spite of the rugged mountainous terrain and inhospitable climate, the narrow passes and corridors facilitated human contacts and trade linkages since ancient times. Before the appearance of currency, it was the barter system that was the most predominant medium of exchange for centuries. The wool and salt from Tibet was exchanged for grain and agricultural goods from the Himalayan states of India, Nepal and Bhutan in the South (Haimendorf 1978).

But such a closely knit economic geography of the region was not immune to changes from forces operating thousands of miles away from the cold passes of the snowy mountain ranges. For most Europeans at that time, Tibet was a ‘forbidden land’ and an ‘isolated’ place on the roof of the world which was yet to be explored (Anand 2007). Such notions according to Said (2001) were a reflection of the stereotypical Western conception of the East or the “Orient” as it used to be called by them and how such a discourse was instrumental in subjecting the native people into their rule and reinforcing the notion of European power and supremacy.

According to Thomas (1926) the period of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was characterized by Mercantilism in England where the main emphasis was on increasing the nation’s wealth which also reflected Britain’s “economic side of nationalism”. He also argues that it was a policy aimed at enriching England and dealing with “foreign aggression”. Furthermore he states that, “the whole nation looked to the State, not only for protection against the foreign competition, but also for the regulation of conflicting commercial and industrial interests at home. Accordingly the government actively interfered in the details of economic life” (Thomas 1926 (1963: 3-4). Raw materials were imported cheaply and the finished products were sold overseas. It was in this contest that, the East India Company was incorporated by the royal charter, giving them “various privileges, including the monopoly of trade with distant territories” (ibid: 4).

The above economic policy complemented the imperial project of the Britain to a large extent. According to Griffiths *et al.* (2008), imperialism was a policy that controlled foreign people and their territories backed by “superior military and



economic force”. It was in this power asymmetry that various benefits and privileges were sought by the imperialists. These benefits could be in the form of “power, prestige, strategic advantage, cheap labour, natural resources, or access to new markets” (ibid: 155). According to the Marxist interpretation, imperialism is often viewed as a phenomenon created due to the pressure of finance capitalism. Lenin argued that imperialism was the ‘highest’ stage of capitalism. But some scholars are of the opinion that it was not only economic considerations that led to imperialism but political factors associated with “popular nationalism” also played a vital role (Heywood 2013: 246).

Though the words ‘imperialism’ and ‘colonialism’ are often used interchangeably a subtle difference exists between the two. According to Young (2016), *Imperialism* is about the expansion of a state’s power overseas whereas *Colonialism* is more often a “practice”. Hence the latter often involves the act of settling down in a natives land, forming laws to govern them and still retaining strong links with the home country. He also argues that colonialism involves “an extra-ordinary range of different forms and practices carried out with respect to radically different cultures, over many different centuries” thereby underlying the variation in the nature of colonies in different parts of the world (ibid: 17).

Bairoch (1989) opines that colonization as a phenomenon was not restricted to the nineteenth century but it was in this period that it acquired a “specific form”. He argues that it was due to the industrial revolution that Europe became economically and military powerful and such a scenario enabled it to maintain its political dominance as it endorsed a “dramatic expansion of trade” overseas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (ibid: 103).

The nineteenth century was also the period when the term ‘*Geopolitics*’ was coined for the first time by Rudolf Kjellen.<sup>2</sup> Geopolitics can be defined as the “study of the influence of geographical factors on state behaviour – how location, climate, natural resources, population and physical terrain determine a state’s foreign policy options and its position in the hierarchy of states” (Griffiths *et al.* 2008: 123). The works of

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<sup>2</sup>The term ‘geopolitics’ was coined by a Swedish political scientist named Rudolf Kjellen in 1899. Later in the 1930’s, Karl Haushofer, a German political geographer and Rudolf Hess popularized the term which was also associated with the concept of *Lebensraum* or ‘the living area’ to justify Nazi Germany’s expansionist policies (Griffiths *et al.* 2008).

the nineteenth century scholars namely Mahan, Mackinder, Ratzel and Blache contributed to the interest in geopolitics by policy makers. For instance Mahan's thesis on sea power asserted the importance of "naval power" in exercising control over international relations. In contrast to Mahan, Mackinder gave the "Heartland Theory" which focussed on territorial aspect of geostrategy. According to him, control of the 'pivot area' was the key to dominance in international relations.

Thus we see that geography plays an important part in conceptualizing international relations. Though geographical "spaces" are often understood as fixed and "immobile", Starr argues that it also "affects the changing perception of the possibilities and probabilities provided by environment" thus hinting at the capacity of human beings to affect the interactions across geographical boundaries (Starr 2016: 7).

In this context, it would be appropriate to analyse the significance of geographical boundaries and frontiers in the study of international relations. Firstly, to even conceive the word *Relations* in the term "*International Relations*", one has to presuppose the existence of some sort of distinction between two or more entities interacting with each other in an environment that is "*international*" or beyond the domain (domestic realm) of the entity. Benedict Anderson, opines that the nation is an "imagined" community having a shared identity involving some kind of "spatial imagination" (Anderson 1983; Jones 2012). Hence it is very difficult to conceptualize modern day international relations without nation states and one crucial marker of a nation state in the legal sense is the existence of a bounded territory within which sovereignty is exercised. It is here that borders and frontiers begin to define the limits of the nation state and being a human construct; it has never been so sacrosanct and has been the source of war and conflict in modern times.

According to Lamb (1968), the term 'boundary' and 'frontier' have different meanings. A boundary delimits the "sovereignities" of countries through lines drawn on the map. It may or may not be demarcated on the ground. Whereas, a frontier is a "zone" or a "tract of territory separating the centres of two sovereignties" (ibid: 6). Unlike a boundary which is a simple line on a map, marking a frontier is often a difficult exercise and it is a zone where interests meet and collide intermittently.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Mercantilism and Imperial Expansion**

Rothermund (1981) has provided a very useful account of the history of the evolution of European interests in Asia and how they were able to expand their interests in this part of the continent. This book is crucial in terms of understanding the nature of mercantilism as a pattern of thought and as a historical period. He discusses the phasing out of medieval merchant guilds to pave the way for modern corporations of merchants in Europe like the East India Company. According to him, the mercantilists saw international trade in terms of or contest for scarce resources and the state often intervened and provided external protection in capturing sources of supply of raw materials, threatening wars and fortifying trade routes.

This book is relevant as it draws parallel to the British East India Company's interests in the Himalayan frontiers in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It sought to revive and establish control over the traditional trade routes across the Himalayas at a time of its economic decline and reach out to markets in China, Tibet, and Central Asia whereas simultaneously shutting out Russian influences in the region. Furthermore increasing restrictions on the Chinese trade at Canton and the Napoleonic Wars brought them closer to South and South East Asia where it began to expand their influence into the frontiers. It was in these "new contact zones" that British knowledge of China was "shaped and transformed" (Hillemann 2009).

In this context, Cammann (1951) recounts the East India Company's preliminary contacts with the Himalayan kingdom's and its efforts to "open" Tibet in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the important role played by Bogle and Turner's mission for reviving the trans-Himalayan trade. This book shows the importance of a historical perspective in studying the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route as the route straddles the Himalayan states of Nepal, Bhutan, India, and Tibet where they have been historically influenced by one other.

The Treaty of Sinchula, 1865 becomes relevant as it led to the cessation of Kalimpong by the Bhutanese to the British as result of the Anglo-Bhutan War. According to the preliminary accounts of the British, Kalimpong was a sparsely populated hill when they first arrived but the later accounts show how it was soon transformed into a

bustling entrepot and an important commercial centre in a short span of time, one reason being it provided the shortest route to Lhasa. As Bell states “The most important of all the trade routes between India and Tibet takes off from Kalimpong in the district of Darjeeling, crosses south-eastern Sikkim, and enters the Chumbi Valley by the Jelep-La. Thence it proceeds up the Chumbi Valley to Phari. From Phari many of the caravans take a track along the eastern side of Hram Tso to Lhasa..... half the entire trade between Tibet and India traverses this Lhasa-Kalimpong route” (Bell 1924 (2000: 19).

The fact that it was once an important route in the Trans-Himalayan trade has not attracted much scholarly attention. This has also been acknowledged by some scholars who have studied this route from a geographical and anthropological perspective. Nonetheless, their work has been relevant in terms of seeing the trade route from different angles and gaining new insights. For instance, Schendel (2005) points out to a “spatial scale” in the Eastern Himalayas bordering Burma, Northeast India, Bhutan, China, Tibet and Bangladesh that stands ignored to a large extent but that this “spatial scale” still becomes significant for people who live in this area because of their economic, social and cultural complementarities.

### **Entrepots, Commercial Centres and Trade Flows**

According to Kindleberger (1988) up till the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Entrepots developed in Europe like Venice, Antwerp, Amsterdam, and London. “Quasi-monopoly” over information about what goods were available where and where they were in demand enabled them to act as nodal centers for facilitating trade. But when it was found that costs could be reduced by direct dealings between producing and consuming localities, direct trading took place. In an entrepot trade, goods that are imported by a country are re-exported or transhipped to another country. Here it should be noted that by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the import and re-export of wool from Tibet had made Kalimpong a major entrepot in the region. As the demand for the commodity grew, by 1940’s prices were at its peak (Harris 2013). Later, the entry of American merchants into the market in 1930’s, led to the wool being shipped directly to America (Dash 2011).

Harris (2008) mentions how Kalimpong a small town which earlier used to trade on a small scale with Bhutan and Tibet, transformed itself into a trading town as a result of

its growing trade with Lhasa. In fact, as mentioned earlier, being the shortest route to Lhasa, many Tibetan, Nepalese, Kashmiri and Marwari merchants began to use this trade route. Wool being the principal commodity of trade, led to Kalimpong being a place where it was sorted, processed and transported to Kolkata to be shipped to various mills in Europe and North America. Wool, salt, yak tails, etc. were carried by the mule caravans from Lhasa and brought down to Kalimpong via the Jelep-La Pass and on their return journey took rice, cotton cloth, silk scarf, watches, radio's, etc.

She also states that Tibetans then, referred to the word “Kalimpong” as “India.” “Thus, to go to Kalimpong was to go to India itself.” (Harris 2013). About Lhasa, "Barkhor" was an important trading place where she mentions the diversity of traders and traded goods e.g. raisins from Khotan, Brick tea from China, Lapis lazuli from Afghanistan and cotton from India, etc. But the 1950 Chinese occupation of Tibet led to the decline of trade until 1962 itself when trade through this route itself came to complete halt.

Datta (2014) discusses the importance of the Chumbi Valley bordering Sikkim as a gateway to Tibet and how “transborder” trade developed steadily making Nathu-La and Jelep-La as important Entrepots. She also gives a rich account of how after Kalimpong was ceded to the British in 1865, there was a diversion of the Indo-Tibetan trade from Darjeeling to Kalimpong via the Jelep and Nathu-La Passes that was en route to Chumbi. Furthermore, she points out to the importance of the Chumbi Valley in contemporary times in the light of China’s plan of extending the Qinghai-Tibet railway line from Lhasa to Yatung which brings the rail line near the borders of India.

Regarding the Trading agencies that were opened along the route, Mackay (1992) discusses the opening of the trading agencies after the following 1893 Anglo-Chinese Convention where Yatung in Tibet became the trading mart. Since the Tibetans were not party to the convention, they were hesitant to cooperate with the British. In fact, he says they were reluctant to open the trade routes to the British. He also mentions the immediate effect of the 1904 Younghusband expedition whereby Gartok and Gyantse were opened to the British trade agents.

Dash (2011) attributes the growth of Kalimpong as a business center because of its wool trade with Tibet. He states that over one lakh maunds of wool (3,846 tons)

arrived yearly in Kalimpong on mule caravans where it was sorted and baled and exported to Liverpool and America, the annual turnover being nearly Rs 50,00,000. Apart from wool, musk was another important imported commodity where it was sent to Punjab and even to Arabia via Bombay. Other imports were Furs, Yak Tails, Ponies and Mules besides Gold Dust and Silver. Some exports to Tibet from India along the route were Woollen and cotton piece goods, stationary, food grains, sugar, dried fruits, dyes and chemicals, kerosene, candles, lanterns, torches and batteries, brick tea, pearls, corals, cement, leather goods, cigarettes, and tobacco, etc. A look at the export items shows that some of these were necessities. Hence any disruption along the trade route would mean difficulties for people who depended on this exchange and also hamper the wool trade.

### **Geopolitical considerations in Frontier Policy**

At this juncture, it would be interesting to examine the rationale for the opening up of trade routes by the British in the first place itself. The British were interested in opening new trade routes to bypass the trading restrictions faced by them at Canton in China (Hillemann 2009). This could be one of the reasons for the British interest in this region, but at the same time, it overlooks the possibility that trade was not the end in itself for opening the routes for trade. On the contrary, trade could have been an effective instrument in accessing new territories and expanding their commercial and political interests and at the same time defining the frontiers of their empire.

For example, Francis Younghusband who led a military expedition to Tibet in 1904 used the same trade route from Kalimpong to Lhasa for effecting Curzon's "Forward Policy" tried to justify his invasion of Tibet by highlighting the intransigence of the Tibetans in opening up their country for trade and settling the Sikkim-Tibet border (Younghusband 2005). But more importantly, it was also linked to the "Great Game" between Britain and Russia that unfolded in this part of the continent. The idea of the Tibet as a "buffer" was achieved by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, three years after Younghusband's expedition.

Shaumian (2000) has observed that Great Britain and Russia often concealed their real "interest" in Tibet which she states was the strategic location of Tibet in Central Asia. She also mentions the role of Agvan Dorjiev, a Buriat Russian in the establishment of Russo-Tibetan Relations, which only strengthened Curzon's Forward Policy.

Rumours of Russia's secret treaties with China and Tibet also increased British suspicion. This book would be helpful for understanding the Great Game from the Russian perspective.

Furthermore there was a “multiple zoning” of Inner Asian Frontiers and a struggle for power among the Russian, Manchu empires and Great Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lattimore (2007) states “by the important Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 both countries agreed not to penetrate Tibet and rivalry over Afghanistan was eliminated”.

### **Impact of the Chinese Aggression on Tibet and the 1962 India-China War on the Kalimpong-Lhasa Trade Route**

Alexandrowicz (1953) has noted the changes in the geopolitical scenario due to China's aggression on Tibet immediately after 1950 which was followed by the Ministry of External Affairs' decision to close the Indian Mission at Lhasa and replace it with a Consulate General accredited to China. He analyses the change in India's Tibet policy by examining the history of Indo-Tibetan relations, the Simla Agreement of 1914 and power vacuum in Tibet that the British left after 1947, giving more space for China's aggression in Tibet.

Gupta (1978) gives a holistic account of all the agreements related to Tibetan Trade and intercourse. He says that the 1954 Tibetan Trade agreement is significant because hereafter India had given up all “extraterritorial rights” which the British government had in Tibet. But the agreement also specified India retaining its consulate at Lhasa besides the trade agencies at Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok. Also the agreement allowed the Chinese government to have trade agencies in New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong.

The significance of the 1954 agreement is that it reiterated Kalimpong too as a trading agency for future trade with China but it was soon followed by the India-China war of 1962 leading to the complete closure of trade through all the border passes between India and China including the Jelep-La and Nathu-La Passes. This eventually led to the closure of the Lhasa-Kalimpong trade route and the decline of Kalimpong as commercial center.

## **DEFINITION, RATIONALE & SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

In the context of Trans-Himalayan trade networks, the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route has been historically significant. As Charles Bell in his book “Tibet: Past and Present” notes about half the India-Tibet trade took place through this route. Furthermore, the route not only attracted traders and merchants but also British trade agents, pilgrims, refugees, Tibetan and Chinese diplomats, missionaries and even the 1904 Francis Younghusband’s expedition to Lhasa. At present, most of the information that seeks to revisit the trade route has been journalistic to a large extent after the Nathu-La pass was reopened in 2006 that hinted at the possibility of opening this trade route in the future.

In this backdrop, the proposed research would study the factors that led to the opening of the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route by the British in the late nineteenth century in the context of British India’s Tibet policy. It will also examine the rise and fall of once important commercial towns like Kalimpong and Lhasa due to the geopolitical changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most importantly it will try to analyze how the changes in global politics have significant effects on the most unlikely regions. And lastly the study seeks to contribute to the overall field of knowledge on the eastern Himalayas particularly through the prism of trade and commerce along this long forgotten trade route.

Today’s 21<sup>st</sup> century has been defined as the era of globalization where the world is more connected than ever before. Economic interlinkages between countries across continents have increased tremendously and so have people to people contacts. In fact, some scholars have noted that ‘globalization’ has eroded traditional state boundaries thereby challenging the concept of the state itself. But this may only be partially correct, for even today borders act as real barriers as much as they serve as bridges. As of today, the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route has largely become a historical footnote in academic papers and journals. The discourse on the nature of trade itself may have changed in this region for today we no longer talk about Indo-Tibet trade as such but “India-China Border Trade,” the success of which to a large extent depends upon the relations of these two powerful countries in Asia.



## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following are the main research questions that will be dealt in this study: a) What factors led to the opening up of the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? b) How did Kalimpong emerge as an important commercial centre and what factors led to its decline? c) What were the geopolitical imperatives of British Tibet Policy in this region? d) Has there been a transformation as to how we look at India-Tibet Trade today? e) How significant is border-trade in this era of globalization?

## **HYPOTHESES**

The hypotheses drawn from the study are as follows; firstly, the British used trade as a means of expanding their political and commercial interests which led to the opening up of the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route. Secondly, in the present context, a shift in the perception of “India-Tibet Trade” to “India-China Border Trade” has securitized the concept of trade itself in this region.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In the first phase, after conducting a background study of the research topic, the historical approach was used in order to collect more data on the history of the trade route. For this purpose, the archival materials at National Archives, New Delhi provided a great deal of information. In the second phase, more data was collected and analysed from secondary sources, mainly books, journals, and articles which complemented the primary archival sources. In the third phase, a field study was conducted along the portion of Kalimpong and Sikkim route wherein the passes mentioned in the study – Jelep-La and Nathu-La were also visited. Here, personal interviews of “semi-structured” nature were employed for the study.

Thus, the study was based on primary sources, mainly Government documents, archives, reports, interview’s. For secondary sources, books, articles, research journals, magazines, newspaper clippings and internet sources were referred. For collection of materials, besides using the JNU library, the National Archives of India, Nehru Memorial Library and the library of the Institute of Defence Study and Analyses and the Documentation Centre for Himalayan Studies of North Bengal University were also consulted.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE EASTERN TRANS-HIMALAYAN TRADE AND BRITISH GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The Eastern Himalayan region in the present day comprises of modern day nation states of India, Nepal, Bhutan, and China. In order to understand the context in which the trade took place along the Kalimpong-Lhasa route, it is imperative to consider the history of this region in the early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Europeans were steadily making inroads in this part of the continent. Doing so enables one to view and study this region more closely by conceptualizing it as a particular “area” whose unique history and politics were closely intertwined at a certain point of time and whereby such an area could become a unit of further analysis.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the region comprised of small kingdoms of Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim.<sup>3</sup> Tibet was a theocratic state under the temporal and spiritual rule of the Dalai Lama. China, on the other hand, was under the rule of the Manchu dynasty that began to establish its “protectorate” over Tibet.<sup>4</sup> With the geographic contiguity of these states, there was a considerable amount of religious, cultural and politico-economic linkages.

In this context, the Trans-Himalayan trade routes acted as primary nodes for the sustenance of the Himalayan economy and polity for an extended period and any changes in the status quo was to have profound repercussions among these states. These changes were to be brought about by new economic forces originating in Western Europe after the breakdown of feudalism by the end of the sixteenth century. This period in consideration was largely dominated by mercantilism which found its expression in the form of the East India Company in this part of the world.

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<sup>3</sup> Sikkim merged with the Indian Union in 1975. In 2008, Bhutan became a constitutional monarchy and Nepal, a democratic republic.

<sup>4</sup> The Qing dynasty also called the Manchu dynasty established its protectorate over Tibet on the basis of the priest-patron relationship “*Cho-yon*” (in Tibetan) and served as patrons of Tibetan Buddhism (Smith 2009: 93-99)

## **The British East India Company and the India-Tibet Trade**

According to Rothermund (1971), Mercantilism can be defined “as a pattern of thought and as a historical period.” As a pattern of thought, it reflected a particular understanding of the world economy that saw resources as being finite, and thus nations had to compete for these finite resources to survive. Moreover, as a historical period, it was the era of “phasing out of medieval merchant guilds” that finally paved the way for modern corporations of merchants in Europe like the East India Company. According to him, the mercantilists saw international trade as a contest for scarce resources and the state often intervened, provided external protection in capturing supply sources of raw materials, threatening wars and fortifying trade routes.

The East India Company played an important role in increasing British trade and forging territorial expansion from the eighteenth till the mid nineteenth centuries and in addition “company resources were fuelling the growth of Britain's armed forces, public finances, and money markets, as well as the wider domestic economy” (Bowen 2005:29). After all, the East India Company did not just confine its activities only to trade and commerce. In fact, we see that “territorial conquests and acquisitions” (Martin (1837) (2005: 5) took place at the same time.

In 1600, the East India Company was incorporated by a royal charter for “exclusive trade of the Indian seas” (ibid: 4). Such a position naturally gave certain prerogatives for the company in terms of making its commercial decisions which were to be augmented with political considerations after it received the *Diwani* of Bengal in 1765. In the context of the Indo-Tibetan trade or the Trans-Himalayan trade, this event was to be a watershed moment. One of the reasons being, the company’s territories in Bengal did not just border the hill kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim but also Tibet which it began to see as a “backdoor”<sup>5</sup> to China. (Norbu: 165). Furthermore, as Tuttle (2005) notes, these preliminary contacts were to “set the precedent for British interest in Tibet.”

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<sup>5</sup>The origins of the metaphor of the “backdoor” can be ascribed to the East India Company which saw the importance of Tibet in providing an alternative passage- an overland route to reach China, especially at a time when the Company faced problems at Canton (Guangzhou).

## **Situation at Canton and the case for an alternative route**

According to Greenberg (1951), the problems at Canton were mainly twofold. Firstly, China's foreign trade was confined to Canton<sup>6</sup> and secondly, the presence of an enormous influence of the "central institution in Canton" called Cohong<sup>7</sup> controlled the foreign trade.

The Cohong can be understood as a kind of merchant guild that existed in Canton and had practically become the "only legal means of carrying on foreign trade" in China. All the foreign traders had to follow its rules and regulations which were found to be too "restrictive" by the company merchants of the East India Company.

Notwithstanding the Company's problems at Canton, and the need to find alternative routes to reach the Chinese markets, the company also showed significant interest in the natural resources of Tibet. "Borax" was a major commodity of export from Tibet, and as Cammann (1951) shows, the Court of Directors were well aware of this fact as early as 1644 since the Company had a further monopoly of its export, having traced its supply from Tibet. Furthermore, with the extension of the company's territory northwards in the Himalayas, the additional advantage of such a pre-existing trading network would be a flow of specie (gold and silver) from Tibet as it "bought more from India than it sold" (Lamb 1986:3).

In February 1768, the Court of Directors of the East India Company wrote to the Bengal Government saying,

*....."We desire you will obtain the best intelligence you can whether trade can be opened with Nepaul, and whether cloth and other European commodities may find their way, thence to Tibet, Lhassa and the western parts of China"* (cited in Chakrabarti 1990:28).

However, if on the one hand, the coming of the East India Company saw numerous attempts at opening Tibet to British trade and commerce, on the other, such an endeavour heralded the decline of the "age old and traditional trade" (ibid 1990:13) in the region. As we shall see, there were numerous attempts at confronting European

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<sup>6</sup> The two exceptions being Macao and Amoy, of which the former's trade was controlled by the Portuguese and the latter by the Spanish.

<sup>7</sup> Cohong was the corruption of the Chinese word "Gonghang", a term used for described "officially authorized merchants" of the Qing dynasty.

expansion and commercial ventures of the British by the native inhabitants in various ways often at the cost of wars or frontier skirmishes.

Hence six years after the Court of Directors of the East India Company had written to the Bengal Government showing interest in establishing a foothold in the Trans-Himalayan trade, George Bogle was chosen to lead the first British mission to Tibet in 1774.

Before delving into the consequent missions sent by the Company in its attempts to open Tibet, it would be relevant at this stage to consider the various sources of information about the Tibetan frontiers and the Trans-Himalayan trade for the Europeans and their trade agencies, particularly the East India Company before the 20<sup>th</sup> century of which the accounts of the Christian missionaries are often found indispensable.

### **Missionaries and their Influence in knowledge formation and dissemination about the Himalayan frontier**

To a large extent, it has been rightly remarked that the first European scholars on Tibet were the Christian missionaries for they were the first ones to study its religion, language, culture, ethnography and physical geography. The accounts of their travels and the knowledge they gained were to be a valuable source of information not just for the traveller or the adventurer but also for the mercantile interests and great power in Europe at that time.

As early as 1624, a Portuguese Jesuit named Antonio de Andrade reached Tsaparang in Western Tibet and founded a Christian mission (Wessels (1924) (1997:43-70). Though he did not reach Lhasa, he brought with him valuable information regarding the people's religion, culture, houses, and monasteries. He also witnessed the country's trade with some merchants carrying "porcelain, tea and other merchandise" from China. (ibid: 70).

Later in 1661, Fr. John Grueber and Albert D'Orville journeyed from Peking to Koko Nor and are said to be the first missionaries and Europeans to reach Lhasa (ibid: 187-190). At a time when photography was not invented, Grueber's sketch of the Potala in Lhasa would have certainly been a cynosure of all European adventurers and travellers in the seventeenth century who wanted to explore Tibet. Furthermore, Fr.

Hippolyte Desideri's and other Jesuit accounts of the abundant gold and silver reserves of Tibet gave an idea of the untapped natural resources of Tibet which were enough to spark mercantile interests in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe (ibid:228).

However, it was not just the Jesuits who wanted to spread their Christian missionaries in Tibet; the Capuchins, Franciscans<sup>8</sup>, Lazarists,<sup>9</sup> Moravians, Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) and later the M.E.P (*Mission Etrangeres de Paris*) or Foreign Mission Society of Paris were also interested in spreading the Christian faith in Tibet. It is the latter i.e. the M.E.P or the Foreign Mission Society of Paris that would be of considerable importance in studying the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route.

For a greater part of the nineteenth century, missionary activities in Tibet came to a standstill after the Capuchin's left Lhasa. This might have been a result of greater control over Tibet by the Manchu's as Bray argues that such a "control over Central Tibet resulted in the closure of the country's borders to all Europeans, whether they were officials, merchants or missionaries" (Bray 2014:15) However, in the mid-nineteenth century, an attempt was made to reach Tibet once again by a missionary and this time from the foothills of Eastern Himalayas. Such a mission was led by Father Auguste Desgodins of the M.E.P (*Mission Etrangeres de Paris*) or the Foreign Mission Society of Paris.

### **Fr. Auguste Desgodins and The South Tibet Mission**

In 1846, the task of spreading the Catholic faith in Tibet was handed over to the *Mission Etrangeres de Paris* (MEP) from the Capuchins by the Vatican. In the following years, the M.E.P had set up its missions in Kham near the borders of Sichuan, and Pedong - a small village which lies in Kalimpong, North Bengal.<sup>10</sup>

In 1880, Desgodins came to India with the aim of finding a passage to Tibet from its southern borders in the eastern Himalayas. In the past, attempts by Fr. Desgodins and Fr. Benard to reach Tibet via Nepal and Sikkim were not met with success. After he

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<sup>8</sup> There has been a considerable amount of debate over the Franciscan, Oderic de Pordenone, being the first missionary to visit Lhasa in 1327 which has been disputed in B. Laufer's book "*Was Odoric of Pordenone ever in Tibet?*"

<sup>9</sup> The two French Lazarists-Huc, and Gabet reached Lhasa In 1846.

<sup>10</sup> Foreign Mission Society of Paris (2016), *The South Tibet Mission: 1880-1937*, Mani Printing Press: Kalimpong, p. 2.Script by Remi Reginoux.

arrived in Bengal and reached Darjeeling, he chose a suitable place from where he could embark on his journey towards Tibet.

On his arrival in Kalimpong, he found that this particular area had still not been designated to any “ecclesiastical jurisdiction” (ibid: 2). Furthermore, this particular area lying east of the Teesta River (i.e. east of Darjeeling District), south of Sikkim and west of Bhutan had been detached from Bhutan by the Treaty of Sinchula on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1865 and was also known as the British Bootan. Hence the MEP fathers saw this area as a favourable opportunity for laying the foundations for the mission.

Thus he finally decided to settle down in Pedong on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1882 and along with his colleagues began working in the South Tibet Mission for fifty-seven years and established presbyteries, churches, schools, and orphanages. Apart from this, he spent a considerable amount of time learning Tibetan and even translated religious works into Tibetan which he passed on to the Tibetan traders so that in turn they would send the message to others in Tibet (ibid:12). Most importantly, his accounts on the Indo-Tibetan Trade as he witnessed it from his station in Pedong provides a valuable source of information which we shall dwell upon in more detail in the third chapter.

Besides this, he also contributed articles to a Catholic newspaper in Calcutta, *The Indo-European Correspondence* about Tibet and the geography of the Himalayas but it was his articles on “tea production and tea-trade” that caught the special attention of the Bengal governor in those days (ibid:2).

Fr. Desgodins came at a time when the British had successfully laid tea plantations in Darjeeling and other parts of North Bengal. It was also a period when the British wanted to find new markets for its tea production. Tibet, which now bordered the British frontier, was seen as a lucrative market for its huge tea consumption. Thus, it was quite obvious that the British would have desired its Darjeeling tea to find its way into Tibet.

For Desgodins, a passage into Tibet for establishing his Christian mission could be hastened if the established power of that time – the British could be convinced of the commercial opportunity of exporting Indian tea into Tibet (Bray 2014). In his seminal

article titled “*A Tea Trade With Thibet*,” he laid down the advantages of such a venture and in particular the kind of tea which was suitable to Tibetan tastes – “the brick tea”, from his observations of its manufacturing technique in Sichuan. Such views of “trade and missionary endeavour in Tibet” also found favour with other contemporary missionaries like the Protestant Church of Scotland and the Tibetan Pioneer Mission in Kalimpong (ibid: 22). Though his proposals found general concurrence among the British officials in Bengal, especially by the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal- Sir Ashley Eden, it did not materialize in the face of either-competition from Chinese tea, Tibetan preference for Chinese brick tea or the already well established Indian tea market abroad (ibid:22-23).

In the end, Fr. Desgodins never reached Tibet from his base in Pedong near the southern border of Tibet, though ironically Tibet was merely forty miles away. Nor did Indian tea find its way so easily into the Tibetan markets. However, for the rest of his life, he chose to remain in Pedong (Kalimpong) and continued his charitable work amongst the natives. After he died in 1913, he was buried in Pedong itself near the school he founded –“St George’s School” and as a reminder of his unfinished mission; a wooden cross still stands on a hill<sup>11</sup> overlooking the Jelep-La Pass that leads to Tibet, a reminder of his unfinished mission.

Thus we see that, apart from their religious pursuits, European missionaries working in Tibet or along the frontiers were closely intertwined in the process of knowledge formation and dissemination for the western world. For instance, it was on the basis of the journeys, surveys of the “Jesuits and Lamas” that Jean Baptise Bourguignon D’Anville made the first map of Tibet. D’Anville’s map was later used by George Bogle on his first mission to Tibet (Markham 1876 (1971): cxxix). Lastly, their accounts had something valuable to provide to one and all - whether it was a lay traveller, an adventurer, a merchant looking for commercial opportunities or the imperial powers that be at that time.

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<sup>11</sup> The Cross Hill, locally know as the “*Crus Dara*” is named after the prominent cross on the hill of Pedong which still stands facing Tibet and the Jelep-la Pass which was placed by Fr. Auguste Desgodins in 1882.



## **British Commercial missions to Tibet**

As mentioned earlier, in the 17th and mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, mercantilism was the dominant economic thought in Europe. With the success of the Industrial revolution and the surplus production, there was a search for new markets or outlets. This was complemented by their technological advancements in European sea navigation and superior navy. Besides we also saw how Christianity often played a major role in bridging the knowledge gap between the West and the East.

Most of the companies that operated in this period, often backed by the rulers of their countries, established their influence in Asia where commercial activities along with colonization gradually took place. In other words, colonialism and imperialism complemented each other. Such a desire for new markets led the British East India Company to send various commercial missions to Tibet and as we shall see in the later century the very nature of the mission changed from commercial to political in the context of the geopolitical rivalry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Furthermore after 1776, when Adam Smith sharply critiqued<sup>12</sup> the trade monopoly of the mercantilists, the need for the East India Company to sustain its commercial interests was all the more urgent. Hence as argued, the Company wanted to find a market that could be its sole monopoly.

As the company's position in Bengal grew stronger, its involvement along the frontiers began to take shape. Prior to this, they did have a fair knowledge regarding the presence of the "traditional trade routes between the Gangetic plain and Tibet, the most important of which having its Indian terminus at Patna" (Lamb 2005:4). At a time when the Company needed more gold and silver to finance its China trade, Lamb points out that the Court of Directors "appreciated that to the north of its Indian subcontinent lay a means of access not only to the local trade of Tibet and the Himalayan hill states but also to the fabulous markets of the Chinese empire. A land route to China in the exclusive possession of the Company had obvious advantages both as a way round the restrictions at Canton and as a source of specie for remittance home from India" (ibid).

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<sup>12</sup>Adam Smith's work titled "*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*" was a sharp critique of the mercantile system. His most important contribution is the principle of *laissez faire* which envisaged a free market economy with limited government intervention, a precursor to modern capitalism.

But the problem arose when the Gurkha conquests of the Nepal valley had led to disturbances in the long standing trade routes to Tibet. In fact, since the trade was soon brought to a grinding halt, the Court of Directors of the East India Company began to look at Bhutan and Assam for alternative routes (Chakrabarti 1990:62). This was the situation at the beginning of company rule in Bengal, and it should be noted that the route from Sikkim was yet to be explored. Before this, Company tried to find its way through Bhutan, Nepal, and Assam but the desire of opening a regular intercourse with the Tibetans had still not been achieved.

Such an opportunity came with the Anglo-Bhutanese war of 1774 and the Nepalese request for Tibetan mediation on behalf of the Bhutanese (Cammann 1951: 27-28). Warren Hastings who was the first Governor-General of India therein “conceived the plan of opening friendly commercial intercourse” between the people of the British India and Tibet (Markham (1876) (1999: xxi). Thus, he appointed George Bogle to lead the first British mission to Tibet in 1774. Besides, a surgeon named Alexander Hamilton was also sent to assist him on his mission.

The purpose of the mission was quite clearly stated in Hastings letter to Bogle. Most important of which was– “to open a mutual and equal communication of trade” with Tibet, to enquire about the kinds of goods which could be traded and the articles which were imported from other countries. He also asked to note the conditions of the roads between the Bengal and Lhasa and the “communications between Lhasa and the neighbouring countries, their government, revenue and manner” (ibid: 7). Thus, it can be noted that though Hastings was primarily interested in the commercial aspects of the mission, he was also curious to know more about the country's territory and the nature of its foreign relations.

Bogle stayed at Tashilumpo for five months and was successful in establishing friendly relations with the Tashi Lama. Regarding the commodities traded between Bengal and Tibet Bogle listed the following: “broadcloth, otter skins, nil (indigo), pearls, coral, amber, and other beads; chank shells, spices, tobacco, sugar, Malta striped satins, and a few white cloths, chiefly coarse” (ibid: 128). But any such trade would have been feasible only if the mission was successful in securing a transit route through Bhutan; something, the mission failed, but though the mission was not successful in getting a transit route via Bhutan, Bogle on his return to Bengal

provided Hastings with vital inputs for the future British policy in the Himalayan frontier (Lamb 1986).

Hastings, who had initiated the first commercial mission to Tibet sent two consecutive missions under Alexander Hamilton in 1775 and 1777, but both the missions could not proceed beyond Bhutan.

In 1779, George Bogle was deputed to be sent on a mission to Tibet for the second time, and in this mission he was specifically instructed to find a passage to Peking with the help of the Tashi Lama. However, his journey was postponed on receiving the news that the Tashi Lama was scheduled to visit Peking.

The relationship with the Tashi Lama of Tibet that Warren Hastings had cultivated all through these years with Bogle's effort to open up commercial relations was unfortunately affected by the sudden demise of both Tashi Lama and Bogle.

However, such a scenario did not deter Hastings from sending a mission again. This mission was to be led by Samuel Turner in 1783. At a time when the international scenario was favourable for trade and commerce especially after the end of the American Revolution and also the war with France, Hastings wanted to seek the opportunity of finding new markets in the east (Cammann 1951).

Like Bogle and Hamilton, Turner too undertook his journey from Bhutan. His account of Tibet's trade and commerce is even more detailed than Bogle's (ibid: 96). He notes that Musk was exported to Northern India and the kingdom of Mahrattas by way of Nepal and Benaras, some of it finding its way to Europe (Turner (1800) (1991). Tincal was exported to Nepal, Bhutan, and Bengal whereas Kashmir was supplied with the Pashmina wool. Salt was mainly supplied to Nepal and Bhutan (ibid: 381-383). Turner also mentions Tibet's trade with China which took place at Sining (Xining) where the merchants from Tibet exchanged gold dust and articles from Bengal for tea, silver, fruits, and brocades (ibid: 372-373).

In the British quest of finding a backdoor to Tibet, none of the missions, be it Bogle or Turner actually succeeded in proceeding thither to Peking. But such a scenario did not deter them and can be rightly summed up in Turners words as he wrote, "Whenever a regular intercourse takes place, between the agents of the government of Bengal and the Chiefs of Tibet, I shall consider it as the sure basis of an intercourse

with China; and it will be probably, by the medium of the former, that we shall be enabled to arrive at Peking” (ibid: 375).

Apart from the continuation of the relations with Tashilumpo, Cammann states that Turners, “investigations of Tibetan trade added a great deal to the Company's knowledge of Inner Asian commerce in general, as well as giving a better idea of what might be expected when trade relations with Tibet were eventually worked out” (Cammann 1951: 96). In fact, after he returned back to Bengal, he was a strong votary of starting a favourable trade, and Hastings too backed his proposition.

All the aforementioned efforts should have been brought to a standstill with the departure of Warren Hastings, but we find that his departure did not completely diminish the British interests in the frontiers of the Himalayas, on the contrary, Lamb argues that “continued interest in the land beyond India's northern mountain border was to play a part in the advance of British influence in the Himalayas, into Kumaon, Garhwal, the Sutlej valley, Spiti, Lahaul and to some extent Kashmir in the west and into Sikkim, Bhutan, Assam Himalaya in the east” (Lamb 1986: 22-25).

It may seem at the outset that trade was the sole and only consideration of the East India Company, but with the passage of time, its powers increased along with its territorial acquisitions and so did its “political role” (Pommaret 2003) As for the hill kingdoms, the British conquest of India, Cooch Behar’s annexation, the war with the Gurkha Raja and the Bhutanese expedition “made the people of the Himalayas understand that trade in the hands of the English became a vehicle of imperialistic activities” (ibid: 52).

### **East India Company and the Tea Trade**

One of the major components of the company’s trade with China was Tea. In order to finance its tea trade, the company had to pay in terms of specie i.e. gold and silver. The balance of trade was heavily tilted in China's favour as it had little demand for European goods. Such a transaction was certainly against the mercantile principles of the company and was to be a heavy drain on its bullion reserves.

One way out of this precarious situation was to become less dependent on Chinese tea by having its own plantations. To this end, the possibility of procuring tea plants from the tea growing areas in Western China mainly Sichuan added to Tibet’s strategic

advantage for the company. Moreover with the knowledge of tea being a widely popular beverage among the Tibetans, the company began to speculate on the future export of tea from India (Lamb 1986).

### **Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong**

After the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814, the territories which were annexed by the Nepalese were returned to the Raja of Sikkim and in 1817 by the Treaty of Titalya, Sikkim was made a buffer state between Nepal and Bhutan (O'Malley 1907 1999). Furthermore, the treaty placed the Company in a powerful position with respect to Sikkim. After a few years, the territory of Darjeeling was sought by the Company for the purpose of establishing a sanatorium<sup>13</sup>. Since it was strategically located on the Nepal-Bhutan and Tibetan border Captain Lloyd and Herbert also found that besides making an excellent sanatorium, the "possession" of Darjeeling would also endow "considerable political benefits on the British government" (Lamb 1986: 69), In 1835, the Raja of Sikkim ceded the territory of Darjeeling to the East India Company as a gift (O'Malley 1907 1999).

The possession of Darjeeling by the East India Company placed it in an advantageous position. Firstly, it would provide the Company with one of the shortest possible routes to Lhasa in Tibet along the entire Himalayan frontier which meant that the possibility of having a backdoor to China was now in the Company's reach. Secondly, since Darjeeling bordered the kingdoms of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan, the company could now keep a watch on the politics of these Himalayan states and ensure that a situation did not arise that would jeopardize the position of the British in the Eastern Himalayan frontier. Thirdly, the already existing Trans-Himalayan trade linkages were sought to be revived by the British for their commercial expansion of which tea and gold were of particular interest to the Company.

Brian Houghton Hodgson had always been an important proponent of the Trans-Himalayan trade from his vantage point in Kathmandu. In fact, he had already done a considerable amount of work related to Himalayan studies. It was quite natural that when he came to Darjeeling in his later years, he would be instrumental in extending the Trans-Himalayan trade from the Sikkim Route (Lamb 1986).

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<sup>13</sup> Captain Lloyd and Mr Grant found Darjeeling to be an ideal place for building a sanatorium for the British soldiers.

## **Building infrastructure**

The Sikkim expedition of 1861 had led to a strategic victory for the British India Government for hence onwards, as Lamb argues, “Sikkim was to become the main channel through which the Indian government was to carry out a British policy” (ibid 1986: 68). Immediately after the expedition, the proximity of the British India’s frontier with Tibet, besides having an overriding influence over the Kingdom of Sikkim, the case for building new infrastructure along the borders especially roads and its aim of opening Tibet to British commerce was now to take the centre stage of British India’s frontier policy in the eastern Himalayan region. As we find, the provision for road building was stipulated quite clearly in the 1861 Treaty by Ashley Eden in which Article XIII, stated, “the Raja should afford aid and protection to the Party engaged in opening out a road through Sikkim, should the British government desire to do so”.

It should be noted that the treaty of 1861 also came at a time when there was much clamour for opening the India-Tibet trade in the British formal and informal circles along with the recognition of the “potentialities of the markets of the Chinese interior” by the English Chambers of Commerce (Lamb 1986:89).

Now only a proper road was required to materialize the prospects of carrying out the desired trade between India and Tibet, which had been fostered since the time of Warren Hastings and the first commercial mission of George Bogle in 1774.

In 1863, there had been a proposal to construct a road to Tibet through Sikkim and the Bengal government was asked to undertake a survey to build “a good carriage road”.<sup>14</sup> H.C Wake, the Superintendent of Darjeeling, wrote to the Bengal government saying, “...the time has now arrived when it would be well, at any rate, to prepare for the commencement of this important undertaking”.<sup>15</sup> He also underlined the fact that since the Tibetan traders were already bringing their goods in “sufficient quantities,” improving the existing communication lines could further facilitate trade.<sup>16</sup> This was the beginning of the exploration of routes to Tibet from Bengal by the British and we

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<sup>14</sup>F.P.P., August 1863, 2-4.

<sup>15</sup>Letter of H.C. Wake to the Government of Bengal, 26th February 1863 , F.P.P., August 1863, 3.

<sup>16</sup>*ibid.*

shall see how the route via the Jelep-La Pass was finally chosen to be the most suitable.

The British attempts to control the trade networks after the 1861 treaty also met with stiff resistance at the frontiers where trade was often disrupted. One of the immediate results of the treaty was the deterioration of relations between Sikkim and Tibet concerning the issue of “grazing rights” along the Tibetan frontier (Lamb 1986).

The apprehension of British moves in this region could have stemmed from three reasons. Firstly, the hitherto trade monopoly of the long established Sikkimese and Tibetan traders would be affected by British competition. Secondly, after the 1861 treaty by which Sikkim was made a “de facto protectorate” of British India, the latter secured rights to undertake surveys and build roads along the frontier (Rao 1968). This was viewed by the Tibetans with suspicion. Developments such as these would later strengthen Tibet “closed door policy”, as Norbu (2001) argues that “the fear of British colonialism which was alien to the lamaist conception of international relations compelled the lamaist regime at Lhasa to cut off all contacts with and refuse any communication from the British government in India”. Thirdly, such a view could have been further reinforced by the insistence of the Manchus to check British influence in the Himalayas after the debacle of two opium wars of 1839-42 and 1856-60 (Mullard 2012).

Thus the disturbances in the Indo-Tibetan trade underlined the “political tensions” along the frontier (Lamb 1986: 107). Subsequent visits by Macaulay and Edgar were sent to report on the conditions of the frontier besides investigating the opening of the trade through Sikkim. Edgars report had pointed out that trade could be carried out through the route via the Jelep-La Pass and suggested that Gnatong could be established as trade mart where traders could meet and sell their goods (Edgar 1873).

In 1875, the Bengal government had collected data regarding the trade between India and Tibet through Sikkim and had estimated the amount to be around four and a half lakh rupees per annum. It was also stated that “some increase may be got from the import of Tibetan wool; and the Darjeeling planters may ultimately obtain an outlet for their tea, which is at present contraband in Tibetan markets”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Letter from the Secy. To Govt. of Bengal, November 1875, F.P.A., November 1875, 92-103.

At this juncture, it should be noted that by the 1860's Tea plantations in the foothills of the Himalayas had been quite successful especially in Darjeeling and Assam and the British were looking for possible markets to export their surplus produce. The market for tea was quite substantial in Tibet of which the "brick tea" was consumed in great quantities. Tea was one of the principal items of trade between Tibet and China and the latter virtually had a monopoly over this trade which was zealously guarded by the Chinese.

Thus, in the event of opening the trade route, the tea planters of Darjeeling could also export their tea to the Tibetan markets and open commercial relations with Tibet. In this context, the road from Darjeeling to Tibet via the Jelep-La Pass was surveyed by the British. A road from Pedong to Jelep-La and construction of a bridge over the Teesta River was found particularly necessary as had already been suggested by Edgar's visit.<sup>18</sup> Such a road was completed by 1879, and in 1881, a railway line (narrow gauge) now called the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway was opened which connected Siliguri to Darjeeling.

The 1880's were a rough period in the history of Indo-Tibetan trade as tensions on the frontier began to escalate. The political relations took a complex turn among the British, Chinese and Tibetans in the backdrop of the Russian threat to the British Empire in Central Asia. Invoking the Chefoo Convention of 1876, the British government decided to send Colman Macaulay on a mission to Lhasa with concurrence from Peking.

In 1886, the mission was set to begin from Darjeeling and onwards to the frontier for which they were well prepared, but the Tibetans vehemently opposed Macaulay's mission, and the mission was called off unexpectedly by wholly unconnected events.

Lord Dufferin had recently annexed upper Burma in 1885 to placate the British merchants in Rangoon and prevent the French from expanding their influence in this area. This had unsettled the Chinese, and therefore he wanted to ensure that the Chinese recognize the annexation of Upper Burma, an area which the Manchus considered to be their sphere of influence. Thus an agreement was tacitly made between Britain and China where Britain stopped the Macaulay's mission from

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<sup>18</sup>*ibid.*



proceeding to Lhasa and China's tacit recognition of British Upper Burma (Lamb 1986).

Though the mission was called off, the Tibetans anticipating Colonel Macaulay's advance descended on the Sikkimese village of Lingtu<sup>19</sup> where they built a garrison. Even after they were informed that the mission was aborted, they refused to withdraw. This led to a frontier skirmish between the Tibetan and British forces in the area around the Gnathang valley and a battle was fought atop the Tukla ridge, later known as the Battle of Tukla.<sup>20</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1888, immediately after this episode, the Tibetans withdrew their forces and retreated to the Chumbi Valley.

This episode was a turning point in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations. The British now began to have suspicions regarding the actual status of China's suzerain powers on the ground for "it had become abundantly clear that Chinese had no longer the power to oblige the Tibetans to obey their wishes in matters of this kind. The British discovered that the only way to get the Tibetans out of Sikkim was by force" (Lamb 1986). But the incident did not immediately change the British policy as trade with Tibet was not that large "to risk antagonizing China and jeopardize its commercial interests in the rest of country" (Phanjoubam 2015).

This may have been true to a certain extent in the 1890's but with the shift in the geopolitical scenario in this region by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the arrival of Lord Curzon as the viceroy of British Empire, British policy towards Tibet and China were to undergo a significant change.

The geopolitical rivalry between Britain and Russia had been intensified by the end of the nineteenth century. Central Asia became an arena for the unfolding of power politics among the imperial powers of that time, aptly pictured by the metaphor of "the Great Game" by Rudyard Kipling in his book titled "Kim". Britain and Russia contested for influence in the Middle East, Central Asia, Afghanistan and Tibet often forgoing privileges in one region for another (Lamb 1986).

In this context, the objectives of the British in the Eastern Himalayan frontier were mainly twofold. Firstly, they wanted to establish commercial marts in Tibet and

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<sup>19</sup>Lingtu or Lungthu is a village in Sikkim en route the Kalimpong - Lhasa trade route

<sup>20</sup> The memorials of those British soldiers (88<sup>th</sup> Connaught Rangers -1<sup>st</sup> Battalion) who died in the battle are located on a hilltop at Gnathang valley in Sikkim.

establish the trans-Himalayan trade on a stable footing and thereby tap the markets in Tibet and China and thence on to Central Asia. Secondly, they wanted to ensure that the Tibetans did not ally themselves with the Russians and endanger the future of British Empire, a suspicion they harboured which led to the culmination of the Younghusband's expedition.

The need for new markets for the British seemed even more urgent during the 1880's as the period also witnessed depression in world economy and fall in prices. The Dewsbury Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Foreign Secretary for "opening the Tibetan markets to British commerce" and to secure "an outlet for British manufacturers in return for Tibetan wool and gold" (Lamb 1986: 127). Furthermore, the Indian Tea Association also, affected "by overproduction" and a fall in prices now began to "take a more active interest in the Tibetan question" (ibid: 160).

Thus there was a demand for including Tea as one of the commodities for export in the trade regulations of 1893, but it was not an easy item to negotiate. The following paragraph which is an extract from the letter of Captain Bower, concerning the "*Negotiations with China leading up to the Sikkim-Tibet Regulations*" shows quite clearly:

*.... "The only objection I see to insisting on Tibet being opened to Indian Tea is that it would almost indefinitely postpone a settlement of affairs, but I believe the benefit to be derived from it would be ample compensation. The Chinese would oppose it most strongly as not only would the loss to their trade be enormous, and it must be remembered that many Mandarins of high rank are personally interested in trade but it would also damage their political position as the bond at present slight would almost entirely be severed should the trade at present going to Ta-chen-lu be diverted to Darjeeling. A number of Lhasa officials are also interested in the China trade, so from them also opposition may be expected."*<sup>21</sup>

The Trade regulation of 1893<sup>22</sup> finally gave a shape to the contours of the Indo-Tibetan trade. Some issues which had been unsettled in the 1890 agreement, most importantly the question of situating the trade mart was decided. Contrary to the British choice of making Phari as a trade mart, Yatung became the agreed site (Article 1). There was also a provision for British subjects to rent houses and godowns for accommodation and storage of goods (Article 2). On the question of Indian tea, Article IV stated, "Indian tea may be imported into Tibet at a rate of duty not

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<sup>21</sup>F.S.E. August 1893, No.1

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix – I , p.77

exceeding that at which Chinese tea is imported in England; but trade in Indian tea shall not be engaged in during the five years other commodities are exempt". Thus the contentious issue of Indian tea was sought to be addressed by deferring its exports for five years after which it would be allowed.

At this juncture, an important point to be noted is that in neither of the agreements of 1890 or 1893 were Tibetans made a party to the negotiations which resulted in the final agreements. This was to backfire for the British who later realized that it would be practically impossible to carry on trading smoothly without the cooperation of the Tibetans.

Lamb argues that it was one of the reasons for British opening up "direct relations with the Tibetans which it had abandoned in 1898" (Lamb 1989: 178). Moreover, he states "from the end of 1898, British policy towards Tibet was being provided by events not on the Sikkim-Tibetan frontier but by apparent developments of Tibet into another field for that Anglo-Russian competition which had dominated so much of the Asian history in the nineteenth century" (ibid: 178).

### **Curzon's Frontier Policy**

Curzon in his Romanes Lecture of 1907 had pointed out that "Frontier policy is of the first practical importance, and has a more profound effect upon the peace or warfare of nations than any other factor, political or economic" (cited in Lamb 1968: 4).

Lord Curzon's frontier policy was guided to a large extent by the prevailing atmosphere of hostility between Russia and Britain, two great imperial powers of the nineteenth century. Thus threats – suspected or real, of imperial expansion were harboured by both the Russians and the British. Russia's contacts with Tibet were primarily through the Buriats who were Russians of Mongol origin. Since they were the followers of Tibetan Buddhism, many of them came to the monasteries of Lhasa to ordain as monks (Kawaguchi 1909 (1979: 495).

One such monk who is frequently mentioned by the British was a Russian Buriat named Agvan Dorjief. The Foreign Office in London had reported that a delegation of Dalai Lama had reached Russia under the aegis of Agvan Dorjief (Addy 1984). The news of this mission rang alarm bells to the British who tried to confirm the news

from Sarat Chandra Das and Sherab Gyatso but both denied any knowledge of such a mission while they were in Lhasa (ibid: 69).

What added fuel to the suspicion was a visit of a person named Norzunhoff to Darjeeling, who also identified himself with the name of Obishak or Hopityant. He had journeyed from Marseilles with the intention of travelling to Tibet for both religious and commercial purpose besides going to meet a Mongolian monk in Lhasa (Lamb 1986: 207). The monk he wanted to meet was none other than Agvan Dorjiejef.

Shaumain (2000) points out that Dorjiejef arrived in Russia at a period when “Russia had launched an active policy in the Far East” and his arrival may have sparked interests of those who supported this Tsarist policy of expansion mainly Sergei Witte and Prince Ukhtomsky, the latter having written considerably about Russia's views on Tibet.

Rumours of secret treaties between Russia and China over Tibet and a treaty between Russia and Tibet also circulated widely. Furthermore, it was also alleged as per the “*Haiphong Courier*”<sup>23</sup> that there a proposal for extending the Russian railway line from Osh in Russian Turkestan to the borders of Gansu in Tibet.<sup>24</sup> Curzon feared that Russian influence in Tibet would have “unsettling effects on Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan” (Lamb 1986). In other words; he anticipated a threat along the entire length of the Himalayan frontier in the event of a Russian advance in Tibet.

In this context, Curzon's' “forward policy” took shape when all attempts to get a clearer picture of the events transpiring beyond the Himalayas using the conventional sources was no longer effective. Tibet was sought to be made a buffer between Russian and British empires and ensure that the balance of power was maintained between the two.

Lamb writes that after Avghan Dorjiejef's' second mission to Russia, “Curzon was of the opinion that only a direct Anglo-Tibetan discussion could give a solution” (Lamb 1986: 210). By taking up the issue of frontier demarcation between Tibet and Sikkim

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<sup>23</sup> *Le Courier d'Haiphong* was a French letter obtained by the British where it is mentioned that the Russians had attained Chinese authorization to extend the railway line from Lake Baikal to Mongolia and Tibet and the Burmese frontier.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Ralph Paget to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1903. F.S.E., February 1904, 6-7

and the opening of direct diplomatic and trading relations with Tibet, a mission was sent in 1904 under the command of Sir Francis Younghusband. It was laid out that

.....“negotiations should cover not merely the small question of the Sikkim frontier, but the entire question of our future relations, commercial and otherwise, with Tibet, and we think that they should culminate in the appointment of a permanent British representative Consular or Diplomatic, to reside at Lhasa” (cited in Addy 1984: 91).

### **The Younghusband Mission**

In this backdrop, it was decided that “a pacific mission to Lhasa spearheaded by an armed escort” under Major Francis Younghusband would be undertaken. (Mehra 2005: 183) Curzon personally chose Younghusband who before this mission had travelled widely to Central Asia and whose experiences at the North West Frontier could be utilized.

The mission journeyed from the plains of Bengal to Darjeeling and Sikkim and crossed over to the Chumbi valley via the Jelep-La Pass<sup>25</sup>, situated at the height of 14390 ft on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1903. After crossing Yatung and Phari and the breakdown of negotiations with the Tibetans at Khambadzong, they decided to march further into Gyantse which was the nearest and largest outpost to Lhasa. Finally, on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1904, the mission reached Lhasa. It was here that the Treaty also known as the “Lhasa Convention” was signed on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1904.

One important aspect of this convention is that it was for the first time that Britain signed a convention that included Tibet as a party as suggested by the title of the convention –“*Convention between Great Britain and Tibet, signed at Lhasa on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1904*”. Regarding the problem of trade issues which had cropped up by the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890 and the Trade regulations of 1893, the new convention stipulated that “the Tibetan government undertakes to open forthwith trade marts, to which all British and Tibetan subjects shall have the free right of access at Gyantse and Gartok, as well as Yatung” (Article II).

There were a lot of loopholes in the way the mission was conducted, and how it progressed, besides the unfavourable international opinion, the British parliament themselves were divided over its outcome. Furthermore, neither the speculations nor

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<sup>25</sup> It is also called the Younghusband track as the Lhasa expedition proceeded to Tibet through this route.

rumours of Russian involvement in Tibet were proved outright. Nonetheless, in 1907, Britain and Russia signed an Agreement<sup>26</sup> on the Tibet question which made Tibet a 'buffer' zone. This was done keeping in mind the intensification of geopolitical rivalry between these two empires in the nineteenth century.

Thus, it was in the above context that the Kalimpong-Lhasa route was opened to Anglo-Tibetan trade and commerce. We see that trade was not the only concern for the British but instead how effectively it could be used for furthering its geopolitical interests in this part of the continent. Moreover, it was also a reflection of British colonial policies in the Himalayan frontiers and how subsequent events would be shaped by it.

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix – II, p. 81

## CHAPTER 3

### ENTREPOTS, COMMERCIAL CENTRES, AND TRADE FLOWS ALONG THE ROUTE TILL 1962

#### **Kalimpong**

The origin of the term “Kalimpong” can be traced to at least four sources. First, a Tibetan origin derived from two words- *Kalon* meaning King’s ministers and *Pong* meaning stockade or “a stockade of King’s ministers”. A second source is from the Lepcha word *Kalenpung* which can be also be translated as “ridges where we play.” And the third could be a reference to the *Kalebong* or “the black spurs” and the fourth derived from a fibrous plant called *Kaulim* which is found abundantly in the area.

At the time of 1864, Kalimpong was a part of Bhutan. In 1862, the Anglo-Bhutanese tensions had increased on the frontier which led to British apprehensions that the Bhutanese would mount an attack on Darjeeling. In such an atmosphere, the British dispatched a peace mission under Sir Ashley Eden in 1863. On the contrary, apart from the mission being a failure to bring peace between the two parties, the British were angered at the way Eden had been treated in Bhutan, who had somehow managed to escape to Darjeeling in April 1864 (Malley 1907 1999).

In the words of Malley “After further fruitless negotiations, the Government of India determined to annex the Bengal Duars and so much of the hill territory, including the forts of Dalingkot, Pasaka and Diwangiri, as might be necessary to prevent the hostile or predatory incursion of the Bhutanese into the Darjeeling district and plains below, a military force of sufficient strength was accordingly despatched into Bhutan in the cold weather of 1864”. (Malley (1907) (1999:26-27).

The above scenario culminated in the Anglo-Bhutanese war of 1865. The outcome of the war was the “Treaty of Sinchula” whereby the Duars and the present day territory of Kalimpong were ceded to the British. In 1866, this territory which lay on the east of River Teesta and located between Bhutan and Sikkim was added to the Darjeeling district (Malley (1907) (1999: 27).

At this juncture, it should be noted that Kalimpong was also the last addition of territory to the district of Darjeeling. The significance of this event was that henceforth, the British project of laying a road to facilitate the Indo-Tibetan trade would receive a significant impetus as the main portion of the cart road from Darjeeling could be connected to the Jelep-La Pass in Sikkim through the Kalimpong route. Later, as we shall see, Kalimpong would then go on to become the main centre of the Indo-Tibetan trade.

## **Lhasa**

The term *Lhasa* also means “Place of the Gods” (ancient name “*Ra sa*” or “place of the goats”) is the capital of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), China (Powers and Templeman 2012: 403). It is believed that Songtsen Gampo, a Tibetan King founded the city of Lhasa and since the seventh century, it was the capital of Tibet (Blondeau and Gyatso 2003). Later in the seventeenth century, the fifth Dalai Lama made Lhasa the “seat of his government” (ibid: 15). According to Pommaret, the seventeenth century was very important for Lhasa’s history as it was “in this period that the most important buildings were constructed and the government structures and rules that governed festivals and social life were fixed” which remained largely unchanged till 1959 (Pommaret 2003: xiv).

The *Jokhang* also called the “Mecca of Lamaism” was one of the “holiest buildings” in Tibet where pilgrims from far and wide flocked to the city of Lhasa (Chapman 1940:147). According to the description left by Jesuit travellers, Lhasa was “a very populated town, inhabited not only by Tibetans but also many foreigners: Mongols, Chinese, Muscovites, Armenians, Kashmiris, Hindus and Nepalese” (Buffetrille 2003: 159).

Moreover, besides being a holy city, Lhasa was also a great commercial centre. For a long time, a system of barter trade took place between Lhasa and the neighbouring countries until the appearance of silver coins by the end of the sixteenth century, which were minted in Nepal (Boulnois 2003: 137).

Tibet exported musk, gold, yak tails, wool and other commodities and imported food products from its neighbouring states mainly rice, sugar, tea and precious and semi-precious stones. The *Barkhor* was a central market place where a variety of goods



were bought and sold. Besides, there were a number of shops run by Tibetans, Nepalese, Indians and Muslims (Shakabpa 2010: 51). Furthermore, Lhasa also housed the Capuchin missionaries, a Chinese Muslim mosque, Kashmiri temple, embassies of the Nepalese, Chinese and the Mongolians (ibid: 52-53).

### **Frontier Roads- Darjeeling and the Trade route to the Jelep-La Pass**

The Darjeeling Cart Road or the “Hill Cart Road” was an important artery in the network of frontier roads that connected the plains of Siliguri to the hills of Darjeeling. This road was complemented by the Teesta Valley Road which Malley (1907 1999) describes as “the highway for travellers and merchants going to Sikkim and Tibet”. This was made possible by constructing a bridge<sup>27</sup> over the Teesta River and further connecting the road to Pedong and beyond to the Jelep-La.

A stretch of this route which connected Kalimpong and Tibet was also called the Rishi Road. This road of nearly 26 miles reached the Sikkim frontier connecting it to the Jelep pass and Phari Jong and Lhasa was an important trade route (Dash 1947 (2011: 182).

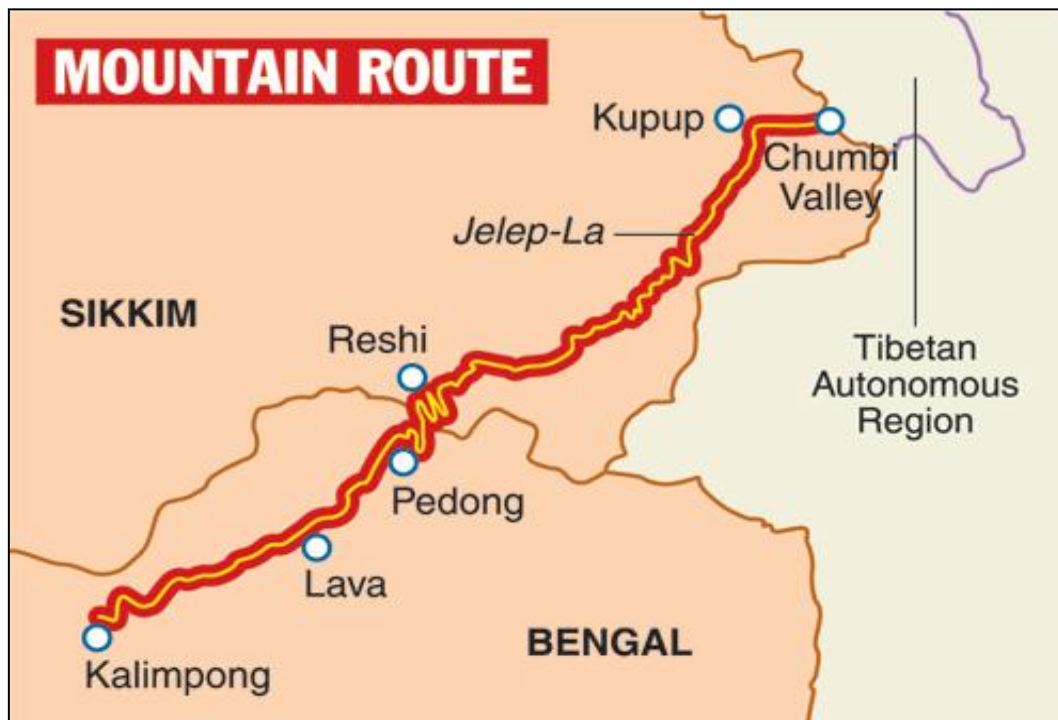
In addition to the roads, the Teesta Valley Line, an extension of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway was also extended to the Kalimpong Road Station at Gielle Khola. It operated for nearly 36 years (1915 to 1951) before being washed away by a severe flood in 1951. According to Dozey, this particular stretch of the railway line had been laid specifically to “tap the resources of Sikkim and incidentally that of Tibet, through the mart at Kalimpong” (Dozey1916 (2011:295).

The stretch of the trade route from Kalimpong to Jelep-La is shown in the map given below. The road from Kalimpong to Lhasa roughly followed the following stages as shown in the map above. The following table below shows the variation in altitude of the various points along the route. In those days, trade with Tibet was usually registered at Pedong in Kalimpong, Gangtok in Sikkim and Shasema in Chumbi Valley (ibid: 220).

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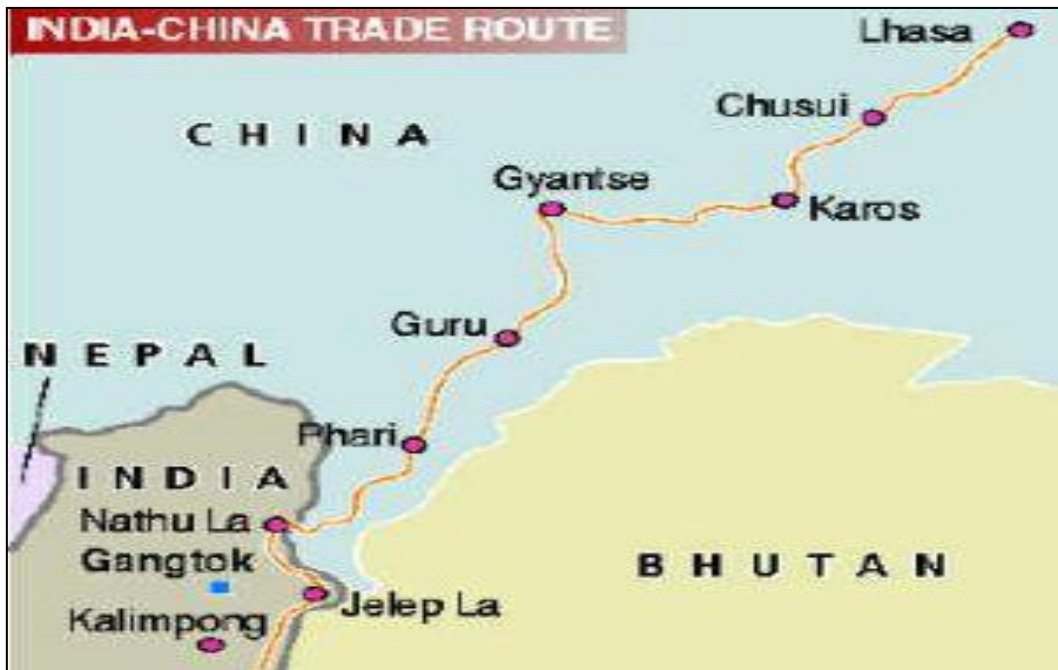
<sup>27</sup>The Teesta bridge was an old suspension bridge that connected the Teesta Valley Road with the Rishi Road. Later in 1933-34, it was replaced by a concrete bridge, also known as the Anderson Bridge.

**Map 1(a): The stretch of the trade route from Kalimpong to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) Border, China.**



**Source:** Jelep-La reopen push from Gurung, 2014 (August), *The Telegraph*, Retrieved from: [https://www.telegraphindia.com/1140808/jsp/siliguri/story\\_18698581.jsp](https://www.telegraphindia.com/1140808/jsp/siliguri/story_18698581.jsp)

**Map 1 (b): The route from the Jelep La and Nathu-la Pass to Lhasa in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.**



**Source:** Routes of Promise, 2003 (July), *Frontline*, Retrieved from: <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2014/stories>

Before the 1893 Trade regulations which had given a formal shape to the proposed trade between India and Tibet, a small trade was already existent on both sides of the frontier. The following figures are of Mr J. Ware Edgar, who had been sent to the Sikkim-Tibetan frontier to study the prospects of opening trade between British India, Sikkim and Tibet in 1873. The following figures are given for the year 1875.

**Table 1(a): Annual exports from Darjeeling to Tibet**

<b>Present annual exports from Darjeeling to Thibet</b>	<b>Value in Rupees.</b>
Broadcloth, 500 pieces	25,000
Flannels and similar cloth, 15000 pieces	45,000
Chintz and cottons, 7000 pieces	30,000
American Drill, 4000 pieces	28,000
Tobacco	8,000
Indigo	14,000
Catechu	800
Umbrellas (Gingham)	1,750
Iron hooks and pots	500
Brass Utensils	2,200
Looking glasses	1,000
Goor (molasses)	500
Hookahs (smoking pipes)	800
Miscellaneous	7,000

(A) Total Rupees: 1,64,550

**Table 1(b) Annual imports from Sikkim to Tibet**

<b>Present annual imports by this route from Sikkim to Thibet</b>	<b>Value in Rupees</b>
Muriva (Millet)	500
Rice	1,000
Oranges	250
Madder	4000
Miscellaneous	1,000
(B) Total Rupees	6,750
(A) +(B) Grand Total Rupees	1,71,300

**Table 1(c) Annual imports from Tibet into Sikkim and Darjeeling**

<b>Present Annual imports from Thibet into Sikkim and Darjeeling</b>	<b>Value in British Rupees</b>
Ponies 300	39,000
Blankets, coarse (450)	900
Blankets, good (75)	500
Salt, 3,000 maunds	24,000
Jewellery	200
Yaks' tails	5,000
China Caps	150
Musk	1,000
Silk	1,500
Tea	300
Sheep	2,500
Total Rupees:	75,050

**Source:** The above tables 1 (a), (b) and (c) are drawn from the data provided in F.P.A., November 1875, 92-103 in the *Minute by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, dated 28<sup>th</sup> June 1875*).

The above mentioned data gives us a rough idea of the nature and the extent of trade in the 1870's. As Tibet imported more than it sold such a scenario was quite favourable for the British. Edgar also mentions that the balance was paid by the Tibetans in British rupees, after their income earned from exports with Assam and Nepal. In addition, a part of the exchange also took place en-route which was valued around Rupees 85,650, thus bringing the total value of the trade around nearly four and a half lakh rupees per annum.<sup>28</sup>

A closer look at Tibet's export basket in Figure 3 shows the absence of wool trade. This point is significant because, export and import of wool would later forms the principal trade commodity making Kalimpong a major entrepot of the wool trade. Such a sentiment is echoed in the correspondence of the Bengal government where it states, "...that the total trade with Thibet including imported British coin , and merchandise which enters the principle route at various points, is believed to amount to about four and a half lakh rupees per annum. Possibly some increase may be got

<sup>28</sup>F.P.A. November 1875, No. 92-103.

from the import of Thibetan wool; and the Darjeeling planters may ultimately obtain an outlet for their tea, which is at present contraband in the Thibetan markets.’<sup>29</sup>

The following table shows the statistical data for Trade between Tibet and Bengal from the year 1876 to 1885.

**Table 2: Bengal’s Import and Export with Sikkim and Tibet (1876-85)**

Year	Value in Rupees	
	Imports to Bengal from Sikkim and Tibet	Exports from Bengal to Sikkim and Tibet
1876-77	8,02,657	1,41,647
1877-78	18,222	16,589
1878-79	1,20,841	60,184
1879-80	2,51,491	48,085
1880-81	1,67,960	80,898
1881-82	1,67,533	86,011
1882-83	2,00,148	1,16,294
1883-84	2,21,523	1,12,711
1884-85	3,75,987	2,04,735

**Source:** Lamb (1960), *Britain and Chinese Central Asia: The Road to Lhasa 1767 to 1905*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.342.

As shown in Table 2, Lamb (1960) argues that, even though the road to Jelep-La was opened in 1879 and the Darjeeling railway in 1881, trade did not increase drastically as expected. But as we shall see in the years that follow, there was a significant rise in trade along the frontier especially after the signing of the Trade Regulations of 1893. It should be noted that till 1884, there were no separate figures for Bengal’s Tibet trade. It was only from 1885 that trade with Tibet was recorded separately, as compared to the previous convention of merging the records of its Sikkim and Tibetan trade under a single head (ibid:345).

The following Tables 3a and 3b shows the trade figures between Tibet and Bengal from the year 1885 till 1892 i.e. the period before the signing of the Trade regulation of 1893 and from 1893 till 1905 i.e. till the Younghusband’s expedition to Lhasa.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

**Table 3(a): Bengal's Import and Export with Tibet (1885-92)**

Year	Value in Rupees	
	Imports to Bengal from Tibet	Exports from Bengal to Tibet
1885-86	3,72,735	2,45,714
1886-87	2,13,385	2,96,026
1887-88	1,90,427	1,74,799
1888-89	3,168	4,181
1889-90	1,49,254	1,31,458
1890-91	1,80,893	1,99,788
1891-92	6,18,146	2,03,131

**Source:** *ibid.*

**Table 3(b): Bengal's Import and Export with Tibet (1892-1900)**

Year	Value in Rupees	
	Imports from Bengal to Tibet	Exports from Bengal to Tibet
1892-93	3,51,519	2,29,117
1893-94	3,58,799	3,31,613
1894-95	7,01,348	4,47,802
1895-96	6,25,543	3,48,895
1896-97	5,89,181	3,11,194
1897-98	4,98,125	1,88,280
1898-99	11,21,019	10,17,685
1899-1900	11,54,014	10,52,301
1900-01	6,20,000	6,67,000
1901-02	7,93,000	7,24,000
1902-03	9,63,000	8,11,000
1903-04	3,56,800	3,92,400
1904-05	4,10,800	7,39,000

**Source:** *ibid.*, p 343.

As shown in Table 3a, the year 1888-89 saw a drastic decline in trade due to the Anglo-Tibetan skirmish at Lingtu, near the Sikkim-Tibet border. From 1893, there

was a steady increase in trade after a Trade Mart at Yatung was opened for the first time.

### **Kalimpong – Entrepot for Wool Trade**

Arthur Jules Dash, the author of the Bengal District Gazetteer published in 1947, describes Kalimpong in the following words which give us a glimpse of the Trade route in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He writes,

*.....“Wool is the most valuable commodity imported from Tibet and it is the wool trade which has been mainly responsible for the importance of Kalimpong as a business center. Over one lakh maunds of wool (3,846 tons) arrive annually in Kalimpong on caravans of mules conducted by Tibetans and in addition about 19,000 maunds are carted from Gangtok to Kalimpong. Practically none of the wool is consumed locally; it is all sorted and baled in warehouses in Kalimpong bazaar and then exported to the plains. Formerly Kalimpong was only a receiving centre and all the wool received was despatched in its original state to Calcutta where sorting and baling was carried out for export to Liverpool. Sorting and baling in Kalimpong ready for shipment was encouraged by the entry of Americans merchants into the market. Since 1930 Kalimpong balers have shipped directly to America.”*  
(Dash 1947 2011: 167).

At this juncture, it would be interesting to note that, in the vast grasslands of the Tibetan plateau was found the best breeds of sheep and goats that produced one of the finest qualities of wool in the world. It can rightly be called the “merino of the east”. Most of the wool was sourced to numerous shawl and carpet industries in the areas adjoining the Himalayan region where the local economy flourished. For instance, Kashmir, Ladakh, Rampur and Bashashr once thrived on the lucrative shawl-wool trade. In fact before the opening of the Sikkim route in 1860’s, the trade between Punjab and Western Tibet was the principal trade route in the Himalayas (Lamb 1986:349).

As mentioned earlier, with the increasing demand for wool by the textile mills of Manchester and Liverpool, the British wanted to gain a foothold in this wool trade so that they could import the raw material and ship it to their home country to support their numerous textile mills. Thus, after the opening of the Jelep-La trade route, with Lhasa, the major commercial centre of Tibet being around 250 miles from Darjeeling, a wool trade flourished quite naturally in the Eastern Himalayas between Britain and Tibet through Kalimpong, the latter emerging as a major entrepot on the Indo-Tibetan trade route.

The major wool producing areas were located in Changthang or Ngari in Western Tibet from where it was brought to the Lhasa. After loading them on the pack-mules, it would take nearly a month for the caravans to reach Kalimpong halting in various stages of the journey traversing through Gyantse, Phari, Yatung and entering the Sikkim frontier through the Jelep-La Pass (Harris 2008:207).

### **The Jelep-La**

In the Tibetan language “*La*” means a mountain pass. “Jelep-La” also means “the lovely level pass” since it was the most level of all the passes between Tibet and Sikkim (Malley 1907 (1999: 125)). This pass is significant from a historic point of view for mainly two reasons. Firstly, it was the main pass that facilitated the Indo-Tibetan trade opened by the British and secondly, it was also used by Sir Francis Younghusband while leading a military expedition to Lhasa also known as the Younghusband mission.

From the Jelep-La pass, which is situated at an altitude of 14,400 ft, the road descended on a stony path where the traders along with their caravans of mules laden with wool and other commodities from Tibet made their way, halting at various places along the route namely at Gnathang, Zuluk, Lingtam, Pedong and Algarah where they were provided with food and shelter at the wayside inns.

After the caravans reached Kalimpong, the wool was taken to the wool godowns or warehouses where it was sorted and baled for transshipment to the ports of Calcutta and thence to Europe and America. Besides wool, other relevant articles that were imported were Musk, Furs, Yak tails, Silk and Gold Dust.

Musk was the second most valuable product after wool and most of the trade was controlled mainly by the Nepalese traders who bought the commodity from Kham and sourced it to Calcutta. From Calcutta it was sent to markets in Punjab, Bombay and Arabia. Furs were also traded by the Tibetans, Nepalese, Chinese and Kashmiris which found markets in America and England (Dash 1947 (2011: 168)).

With regard to the trading communities, though the wool trade was mainly controlled by Tibetan and Marwari merchants, Harris (2013) writes that, “Merchants and traders who worked along the Lhasa-Kalimpong trade route were not just ethnic Tibetans, but also Marwaris, Newars and Kashmiris who moved between and settled in Lhasa,



Kalimpong and Katmandu.” Thus, it shows a cosmopolitan nature of the society along the trade route and of Kalimpong itself. Besides, thousands of natives were employed in the wool godowns for sorting and baling of the wool. In normal times about 3000 persons were employed and in peak times employing nearly 6000 people (Dash 1947 2011: 167).

As trade along the route prospered, a few private banks based in Kalimpong like Kuber Bank and Das Bank had also operated their branches in Tibet before the 1962 war.

On their return journey, from Kalimpong to Lhasa, the caravans would take back food grains, sugar, cotton and woollen goods, iron and steel, copper, brass ware, stationary, food grains, molasses, sugar, kerosene, candles, torches and batteries, brick tea, porcelain ware, precious stones, cement, leather goods, cigarettes, tobacco and medicines (ibid: 68).

Apart from the above mentioned commodities, in the course of my field work along the trade route, many of the interviewees, who were part of the trade or saw it firsthand also, mentioned that bicycles and motor vehicles dismembered into parts were carried along the route which was later assembled in Tibet. Besides hundreds of Rolex and West End watches were also carried along the route by the mule caravans on their return journey to Lhasa.

Another interesting feature of the Kalimpong-Lhasa route was the trade in silver coins also called “*Dayangs*”. An old trader, who now runs a cloth and Tibetan goods business in 10<sup>th</sup> Mile, Kalimpong mentioned his days as a child and how his father was actively involved in the Tibet trade. Silver coins rained in Kalimpong. Huge quantities of *Dayangs* were carried by these caravans. So much so was the silver flow that in fact one trader mentioned that it was a time when ‘Kalimpong determined the silver bullion market in India’.

In the heydays of the Indo-Tibet trade, Kalimpong was also the place where the first Tibetan language newspaper in the world was issued titled the “*Tibet Mirror*” or “*Yulphyogs so so'igsar gyur me long*” (in Tibetan). The newspaper (1924-62) was the brainchild of Mr Gergan Dorje Tharchin, a Tibetan Christian pastor from Spiti in Himachal Pradesh who started a printing press in Kalimpong (Hackett 2008). Initially

starting out with a few subscribers in Kalimpong, Sikkim and Tibet, its popularity spread to other parts of the world. The newspaper reported on a range of topics - politics and world affairs to trade along the Indo-Tibet trade route. For instance, price list for the commodities traded on the route like wool, yak tails; matches etc. were listed regularly in the paper (Harris 2008: 207).

Now let us look at the figures of Bengal's trade with Tibet for the year 1916-1917.

**Table 4 (a): Bengal's import from Tibet (1916-1917)**

Imports from Tibet (1916-1917) (in Rupees)	
Fruit	10,416
Skins	1,62,071
Musk	4,420
Grease	10,375
Wool	2,102,803
Silver Coins	3,15,083

**Source:** Dash (2011), *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Siliguri: N.L. Publishers, p. 220-221.

**Table 4(b): Bengal's exports to Tibet (1916-1917)**

Exports to Tibet (1916-17) (in Rupees)	
Apparel	1,04,354
Yarn	13,952
Piece-goods (F)	1,70,240
Fruit	41,465
Piece-goods (I)	1,32,220
Oil	2,535
Lubricants	557
Silks	101,872
Silver Coins	60,100
Sugar	38,068
Tobbaco	61,048
Woollen Fabrics	81,371

**Source:** *ibid.*

It is clearly evident by looking at the figure in Table 4(a) that by the turn of the twentieth century the wool trade had become the most important commodity imported from Tibet. An interesting observation in Table 4 (b) show that silk was also exported from India to Tibet. This point is significant because there has been a considerable debate over the terminology used in popular imagination to describe the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route as the old silk route. This is not to deny that Silk wasn't exported from Tibet for a quick glance at Table 1 which is based on Edgars estimates in 1875 show Silk as one of the export items from Tibet to Bengal. In fact according to the International Sericulture Commission, after China discovered the art of sericulture the industry was passed on to Tibet though a Chinese princess who was married to a Tibetan King and from there, it was passed on to India and Persia.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Silk was a major item of trade between China and Tibet since time immemorial; hence it is possible that some amount of the commodity made its way through the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route. Nevertheless, historically, Bengal and Assam also were major producers of Silk (Chandra 1977). Hence we can say that the silk trade along the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route was in the sense a two way trade. But most importantly, it was the wool trade which represents the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route after the advent of the British in this part of the continent.

### **Trade Agencies and Trade Marts**

The development of trade agencies and trade marts were very instrumental in facilitating the trade along Kalimpong-Lhasa route and it was also an effort on the part of Britain to throw open the gates of Tibet for trade and commerce. The following table shows the year and the places where the trade marts were open.

In his survey of the British trade agencies in Tibet, McKay (1992) points out that in spite of the British efforts to increase the magnitude of the Tibet trade; it did not see much success firstly, due to the natural problems of communication and topography and secondly due to the trade marts being inconveniently located; for instead of Yatung and Gyantse he points that Phari and Shigatse would have been more ideal for a trade mart as the real markets was located here.

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<sup>30</sup> International Sericulture Commission [Online Web], Accessed on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017 URL: [http://inserco.org/en/evolution\\_of\\_silk](http://inserco.org/en/evolution_of_silk)

**Table 5: Treaty and Trade Marts**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Trade Mart</b>	<b>Treaty</b>	<b>Related Articles</b>
1893	Yatung	Trade Regulations, 1893 (appended to Anglo-Chinese Convention, 1890)	Art 1
1904	Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok	Lhasa Convention	Article 2 and 5
1954	India to establish trade agencies at Yatung, Gyantse, Gartok and Phari and China to establish trade agencies at New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong.	Agreement on trade and intercourse between Tibet region of China and India. (Panchsheel Agreement) <sup>31</sup>	Article 1& 2

Hence a closer look at such issues points out to the discrepancies in the attitude of the British, Tibetans and Chinese pertaining to matter on the frontier trade. For instance, locating the trade marts in an inconvenient location was done to thwart trade itself in the first place by the Chinese. For the Tibetans who viewed the British with suspicion alongside the Chinese for frequently entering into treaties with a foreign power regarding Tibet without making them a party, for the British, without having any kind of commercial intercourse with Tibet it was quite impossible to know just what was happening beyond the mountain passes in Tibet and China now that they had shared a long frontier. At a time when the Tsarist expansion in Central Asia was looming large, even a semblance of trade sufficed.

Hence it was in the above context that the Tibetan trade took place. But notwithstanding the above scenario, the Kalimpong-Lhasa route was still the main highway for Britain's commercial relations with Tibet. Furthermore Harris states, "Due to the growing international demand, wool prices were at their peak in the 1940's. During the period from April 1, 1946 to March 31, 1947, the export of wool from Tibet to Kalimpong amounted to 106,615 maunds (approximately 8,724,430 pounds), at 55 rupees per maund" (Harris 2008: 207).

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix III p. 83

Later, there were three main events that changed the course of the trade history in this region. Firstly, India's independence from the British rule, which also meant that hitherto India's frontier policy, would no longer be determined by Britain. By 1954, the Panchsheel agreement had then defined independent India's foreign policy towards China. With respect to trade, Article 2 of the Agreement on trade and intercourse between Tibet region of China and India had stated that "The government of China agrees to specify Yatung, Gyantse and Phari as markets for trade. The government of India agrees that trade may be carried on in India, including places like (1) Kalimpong, (2) Siliguri and (3) Calcutta, according to customary practice".

Secondly, after the Chinese aggression on Tibet in 1950s and with the advent of the Communist rule, the trade slowly passed into the hands of "Chinese State Trading Company, cutting off the business of long established Newari and Marwari traders in Lhasa" (ibid: 208). Thirdly, the Sino-India War of 1962, which entirely stopped the trade itself in the region.

### **The Sino-India War of 1962 and its aftermath**

In one of my interviews with an elderly man in his 80's mentioned that he had transported batteries and petrol too along this route. But he also told me that this trip of his was different than the previous ones as he saw new people – men and women, who looked different, wore caps and dressed the same and couldn't speak the Tibetan language. Little did he know that winds of change were blowing in Tibet with the Chinese slowly making their inroads. This can be corroborated with Harris's article where she mentions, "the presence of the Chinese army in Tibet ended as a boon for some traders, who quickly switched from selling wool to selling more lucrative commodities that were in demand by the soldiers, such as batteries and petrol" (ibid). The "new people" he had seen were in fact people of Chinese army.

The immediate effect of the Sino-India war was not just the closure of the route itself but the trade agencies along the route and also the Indian consulate at Lhasa. Trade then came to a complete halt, the Jelep-La pass was closed, the wool trade stopped, the border was militarized on both sides of the frontier and the age old customary trade that had once defined the region came to a grinding halt. It was only in 2006 when the border trade was reopened, through the Nathu-La Pass in Sikkim but this time in a completely new environment.

## CHAPTER 4

### **BORDERS, BORDER TRADE AND THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE KALIMPONG-LHASA TRADE ROUTE**

#### **Borders**

It is often difficult to envisage the study of international relations or area studies for that matter without having a proper definition of what and who exactly we are studying and why. This brings us to the question of “How do we decide what our subject matter is?” For most of us, the map of the world may be a convenient place, to begin with as the whole world is neatly divided by lines that give us an impression of an easily solved jigsaw puzzle. By this logic, one can infer that the world can be divided into a distinct set of territories with defined boundaries and where bounded homogeneous identities exist. Thus we can decide what we want to study.

But a deeper scratch on the surface shows us that such a way of looking at the world may be but an ideal. One of the reasons is that such a fixed and static conception of the world does not account for the complex realities that confront us on the ground where we find that people, place, and things can be hardly bounded and where mobility always challenges fixity. And yet out of this chaos, we look for some “order.”

Therefore, such lines on the maps are also a representation of ordering the world around. These lines are also called “borders.” The Oxford dictionary defines the word “border” as a “line separating two countries, administrative divisions, or other areas.” Here it would be apt to highlight the two words in the definition – “separating” and “other” to examine how borders are understood and what they mean to us.

The idea of “the other” is very intrinsic to how a nation defines itself. In other words, in the process of defining one's identity, it also becomes necessary to define what one isn't- that is the so called “other.” Therefore, by making the distinction that the "other" is different from “us,” a line of “separation” becomes even more essential to reinforce one's own identity.

In this context, borders as seen as lines where the so called “other” starts and “us” ends. Such an understanding of the term –*Border* is also an act of “Representation” which in Hall’s words “connects meaning and language to culture” (Hall 1997: 15). Our understanding of modern nation states with defined borders is also a reflection of how we collectively conceptualize ourselves or in Saussure’s words the *signifieds* and give meaning to these concepts through such codes – lines or points on a map referred to as *signifiers* which “could be used to reference objects (in this case- border walls, barriers, fences), people and events in the real world” (ibid: 117).

According to Malcolm Anderson (who uses the term *Frontiers* instead of Borders), since time immemorial we humans have always had a “sense of territory.” As for states, the purpose of frontiers was “to establish absolute physical control over a finite area and to exercise legal, administrative and social control over its inhabitants” (Anderson 1996:189). The above analysis is true to a large extent because any individual in today's world belongs to a particular place of which she or he is a “citizen.” This so called “particular place” is often backed by the existence of a defined territory, state or country where the proof of being a citizen is often backed by a legal document – a voter identity card or a citizenship card. Without this legal document, the state identifies such persons as either “foreigners” or “aliens” and hence doing so enables it to exercise control over who should be included and excluded in its government schemes and programs. Hence using this logic, stateless persons, refugees, and illegal immigrants and aliens are often excluded from such programs which are otherwise provided to its citizens.

Thus, ever since the French Revolution and the birth of modern nation states, frontiers have a defined “sovereign authority” from a legal perspective. This also means that before this; such “linear and exclusive” state frontiers hardly existed (ibid: 1). Places now considered as frontiers could have been a heartland at some point of time. Hence the question now arises as to what such “bordering practices” entail for people living in the borderlands.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Though the terms boundary, border, frontiers, and borderlands are often used interchangeably, there are slight differences among these terms. Prescott has defined a *boundary* as a line which demarcates one state's territory from the other. *Frontiers*, on the other hand, are zones of divisions between two countries –political or demographic. *Borders* are the areas adjacent to the boundary, while *Borderlands* refer to “transition zone within which the boundary lies” (cited in Donnan and Wilson 1999: 45).

Donnan and Wilson point out to the notion of “border culture”. Border Culture refers to the totality of linkages and networks between border people and their state and also between the people on the other side of the border. They also point out that border cultures are not just determined by national centers. In fact “in their (border people) proactive role, they affect policy formation, representation, and reception, at the borders and elsewhere. In fact, our emphasis on culture at borders is a reminder that state policies which encourage cooperation or conflict along international borders not only involve many aspects of national life, in terms of state administration, economics and politics, but they involve just as much of a commitment from the regions and localities that straddle the borderline” (Donnan and Wilson (1999:11-12).

Thus borderlands are not static, and fixed sites for state centric policies where the border people are passive recipients, they too influence the state’s policies and at the same time are influenced by it. For instance, demands by border people to open erstwhile trade routes connecting two countries, economic and development demands and issues of identity and mobility.

### **Globalization and Borders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Globalization can be defined as “the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual” (Held et al. 1999: 2). The 21<sup>st</sup> century has often been termed as the era of “globalization” and the conception of the world as a ‘global village.’ The theme of “interconnectedness” is one of the main features of globalization but skeptics argue that globalization is not a new phenomenon. They point out that even in the nineteenth century the world was connected and there was economic growth, migration in large numbers and capital moved freely.

Then what exactly do we understand by the term “Globalization” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? According to Knox and Marston (2013), there are four unique features that distinguish the interconnectedness of the nineteenth century to that of the twenty-first century. They are – *speed* (faster connectivity), *scale* (globalization operates on a much larger scale), *scope* (myriad dimensions – economic, technological, legal, political and socio-cultural), and *complexity* (in the relationship between places and regions).



Furthermore, one common thread that ties together the proponents of globalization is the overarching importance of “economic issues.” For many liberal and pluralist scholars of international politics, “economic issues, for a variety of reasons, were seen as more important for large numbers of states and non-state actors” (Starr 2016: 63). In this context, questions were raised on the traditional concepts of sovereignty and territoriality or even the rationale for borders in such a globalized and interdependent world. The development of communication technologies that compress time and space – the internet and the world wide web, the improvements in outer space, navigation and satellite systems and also the increasing porosity of borders might beckon us to the inevitability of a “borderless” world (ibid:64).

But as mentioned earlier, borders provided a semblance of “order.” According to Starr, “borders remain an important component of possibilism and opportunity: they both help enable and constrain the flow of people, goods, and ideas” (ibid). David Newman (2006) underlines two discourses of borders – a “security discourse” and a “borderless world discourse.” In the first discourse, he focuses on the why borders are essential for the security of the nation and in the second discourse he emphasizes on interdependency. In the following paragraph, he succinctly states how the impact of globalization on borders is varied across the world. He writes:

*“The globalization impact on borders is as geographically and socially differentiated as most other social phenomenon- in some places, it results in the opening of borders and the associated created or transition zone borderlands, while in others, the borderland remains a frontier in which mutual suspicions, mistrust of the other and a desire to maintain group or national exclusivity remain in place.” (cited in Starr 2016:70).*

### **Border Trade**

According to the website of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India, border trade is defined as an “over-land trade” by way of ‘exchange of commodities’ from a bilaterally agreed list by people living along both sides of the international border.<sup>33</sup>

In monetary terms, as compared to other forms of trade through air, land and sea ports, the value of border trade at any given time may be insignificant. But in spite of

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<sup>33</sup> “What is Border Trade,” “Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India, at <http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade> (Accessed July 1, 2017).

this, it still forms an important instrument for improving the goodwill between two countries lying adjacent on the border. Das (2014) argues that in spite of the above limitations, border trade is significant from three levels – international, bilateral and local.

At the ‘international level’ it sends a message to the world that the two countries are committed to peace and are “mature political entities.” This is true because conflicts tend to deter the flow of capital and investments as investors may not be willing to invest their capital in a risky environment. Secondly, at the ‘bilateral level,’ border trade can be instrumental in acting as a “Confidence Building Measure” (CBM), and removing the “trust deficit” existing between countries and also giving “a legal basis to hitherto disputed international borders”. And thirdly, at the ‘local level,’ border trade is a boon for the people living along the borderlands as it provides them an opportunity to boost their local economy and incomes. Besides, it also entails the state to manage better and regulate its borders (ibid: 1).

### **Rationale for Border Trade**

Geographically, border regions are often located at great distances from the main commercial centers of the country. In such a scenario, people inhabiting the border areas often do not have easy access to these commercial markets to “sell their products and buy items of daily necessities within the national borders” (ibid: 4) Hence it is not surprising that some of the most backward areas of the country are also the border areas. This tyranny of distance, when ignored by the policy makers at the center often translates into marginalization and underdevelopment of the border areas.

Hence in this context, border trade can be an outlet for selling their local produce, most often perishable and in small quantities. The concept of *Border haats* in the India-Bangladesh and India-Myanmar border are notable examples in this regard.

But such cross-border consumption may not just be restricted to buying the necessities for daily survival. In fact, as Donnan and Wilson argues, “it is also about buying things which are not available on your own side of the border, or not in the quantity or at the lower price” (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 117)

Another rationale for border trade as Das (2014) states is “socio-cultural ties and economic complementarity” which is often shared by people across the borders. Some

customary border trade is always prevalent in the border areas because of sociocultural similarities and economic complementarities. The case for reviving such a trade is decided by states through bilateral agreements. For instance, India and China revived the border trade through the Lipulekh pass in 1991 and trade through Nathu La was revived in 2006.

In recent times, with improvements in transport and infrastructure facilities, tourism has seen a phenomenal rise in the border areas. Border trade then becomes an important component of promoting tourism and enhancing the overall experience of the tourist in a border trade environment.

### **Challenges to Border trade**

Some of the challenges to border trade are as follows: Firstly, border regions are also some of the most securitized regions in the world. The overarching concern of security often trumps the viability of border trade. In fact, in the event of a border skirmish or even some small incident at the border, trade is halted at short notice. Hence the element of risk is always present in the context of border trade.

Secondly, since India shares a lengthy land border adjoining the Himalayas, the treacherous topography becomes a serious impediment for conducting border trade. The frequent landslides and heavy rains destroy roads and bridges, which are a lifeline not just for border trade but also for the people inhabiting these areas. It usually takes a lot of time to rebuild these roads and thus bringing not just trade but daily life at the borders to a grinding halt.

Thirdly, we find that unlike other forms of trade, the nature of the border trade is structured in such a way as though to limit it. Given the above challenges, a look at the commodity basket reveals why. We find that generally in border trade, the articles decided by both nations are generally of low value and few in number. Besides, there are restrictions on the quantities and value of goods to be traded apart from other rules and regulations that have to be followed by the trader on both sides. This often leads to another problem most seen in border trade which is smuggling of goods.

## **India-China Economic Relations in Recent Times**

The era of 1980's was a new chapter in the history of India-China relations. It was also a time when both the countries were experimenting with new economic programs. After the balance of payments crisis in 1991, India had to open its once regulated economy with the outside world. China, on the other hand, had also been experimenting with Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms of 1978. Besides, the thick fog of cold war politics had also begun to settle down.

In the above scenario, Deng Xiaoping in 1982 had stated, *“We cannot afford not to understand each other and promote the friendship between us. The problem between China and India is not a serious one. Neither country poses a threat to the other. The problem we have is simply about the border. If we want to change the international economic order, we must, above all, settle the question of relations between the South and the North, but at the same time we have to find new ways to increase South-South cooperation”*(cited in Holslag 2010: 45).

According to Holslag, such thinking “was to a large extent the consequence of the *economization* of foreign politics.” At the outset, trade and commerce between the two countries were not very significant, but it was felt on both sides that some “mutual trust” should be fostered and one way of doing so was through “Border Trade.” It was not a decision based on sheer idealism but one that was politically and economically rational for both the parties to earn the goodwill of prospective foreign investors. Thus “economic security rather than military or territorial security became a core principle of the two countries strategic planning” (ibid: 46).

## **Trans-border Linkages**

In spite of India's once held apprehensions regarding the development of frontier roads, the role played by local and sub-regional voices in influencing the economic geography of the Himalayan frontiers on both sides cannot be ignored. Holslag (2010) rightly states, “in both China and India, provinces and major cities had a leading role in promoting opening up.” For instance the important role played by the Yunnan province in Southeast China in launching the Kunming Initiative ; the role played by Yunnan and the Northeast Indian states to revive the Stillwell Road (also known as the Ledo Road); promoting direct air connectivity between Kolkatta and Yunan; and

also the demands for opening up the Sikkim Nathu-La Pass for border trade in 2003 and the consequent widening of roads by both Chinese and Indian sides to facilitate this border trade (ibid: 58-60).

At this juncture, it would be interesting to note that such sentiments above were not just echoed by the local and sub-regional voices but in fact complement the macro development goals of both the states. For instance, the “Western Development Programme” in China’s case regarding the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and India’s policy of “Look East” along with the development of the north-eastern part of the country (Kurian 2005).

Presently, border trade along the India-China border is conducted through three main passes in India. The following table shows the name of the pass, the year it was opened and the places it links on both sides of the border.

**Table 6: India-China Border Trade Passes.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Border Trade Pass</b>	<b>Linkage</b>
1991	Lipulekh Pass	Gunji in Uttarakhand and Pulan in TAR
1993	Shipki La Pass	NamgayaShipki-La in Himachal Pradesh and Juiba, Ngari Prefecture in TAR
2006	Nathu La Pass	Sherathang in Gangtok and Renqinggang in TAR

**Source:** Prepared with data extracted from Das (2014), *Status of India’s Border Trade: Strategic and Economic Significance*, New Delhi: IDSA.

The Nathu La Pass also lies along the Kalimpong-Lhasa route. Like the Jelep-La pass, it is also situated in the Chola mountain range of the Himalayas in Sikkim. But due to its treacherous topography in the past, it was seldom used, the Jelep-La being more frequented by traders and travelers as discussed in Chapter 3.

But in the present scenario, Nathu-La is a major trade route along the India-China border after it was opened in the year 2006. Besides, it is also one of the two passes agreed upon by India and China for passage of the annual Mansarovar Yatra.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The Mansarovar Yatra is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs every year from June to September. There are two routes – Lipulekh in Uttarakhand and Nathu-La in Sikkim.

## **India-China Border Trade through Nathu-La in Sikkim**

On 6<sup>th</sup> July 2006, the Nathu La Pass in Sikkim was opened for border trade after nearly four decades. A skim through the newspapers and articles that covered the issue mentioned few recurring words – “historic” “reopening,” “old silk route” and “symbolic.” But years before the actual opening of the trade route, a preparatory groundwork had been successfully undertaken.

In April 2003, the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Pawan Chamling had submitted a memorandum for opening the Nathu-La Pass to the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on the latter's visit to the state. Later in June 2003, when PM Vajpayee visited China, an agreement was signed between India and China to reopen the Nathu La Pass for border trade. This was said to be a “historic” moment between the two nations, but more importantly, it was the ‘symbolism’ of the agreement itself.

There are two reasons why the agreement was significant for both India and China: Firstly, a trade route which had been closed for nearly forty-four years after the India-China war of 1962 was being reopened. Secondly and most importantly, China’s earlier stance of Sikkim being a contentious territory would be put to rest by the very fact of having a border trade with India straddling its 22<sup>nd</sup> State (i.e., Sikkim) hence “explicitly” recognizing it. Article 1 of the agreement stated, “The Indian side agrees to designate Changu of Sikkim state as the venue for border trade market; the Chinese side agrees to designate Renqingnag of the Tibet Autonomous Region as the venue for border trade mart.” As a quid pro quo, Vajpayee had also affirmed that Tibet was a part of China.<sup>35</sup>

After the agreement had been signed, the “Nathu La Trade Study Group” led by Professor Mahendra P. Lama who was also the chief economic advisor to the Chief Minister of Sikkim was formed in June 2005. The work done by the group is noteworthy as it conducted field visits in India, Nepal and the Tibetan Autonomous Region in China and consulted a wide array of stakeholders. The group submitted its

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“Kailash Mansarovar Yatra”, Ministry of External Affairs, [Online Web] Accessed on 6 July 2017, URL: [http://kmy.gov.in/kmy/noticeboard.do?lang=en\\_US](http://kmy.gov.in/kmy/noticeboard.do?lang=en_US)

<sup>35</sup> The Hindu Business Line (2003), “Vajpayee Visit – Foreign Policy Lessons from China”, [Online Web] Accessed July 9 2017, URL: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2003/07/18/stories/2003071800030800.htm>

report and in July 2006 and the Nathu La was finally opened to trade (Kiran 2009: 39).

### **Present Scenario of India-China Nathu-La Trade**

Every year for roughly seven months (usually May to November), the Nathu-La Pass is opened for border trade. Registered traders from both sides of the border<sup>36</sup> bring their goods escorted by the border security personnel on both sides at the designated trade mart - Sherathang on the Indian side and Renqinggang, in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), China. At present India allows the import of 15 items and export of 29 items through the Nathu-La Trade route. Also, a permit fee of Rupees 50 is levied for every vehicle entering Sikkim from the China, and similarly, a fee of 5 yuan is levied for those vehicles crossing over to the Chinese trade mart at Renqinggang.<sup>37</sup>

The following table shows the agreed commodity basket on both sides for import and export.

**Table 7: Articles of Import from China through Nathula**

1. Goat Skin	11. China Clay
2. Sheep Skin	12. Borax
3. Goats	13. Szaibelyite
4. Horses	14. Goat Cashmere
5. Sheep	15. Common Salt
6. Wool	
7. Raw Silk	
8. Yak Tail	
9. Yak hair	
10. China Clay	

**Source:** Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, GoI, “Trade between India and China Through Nathu La Pass (Sikkim),” [Online Web] Accessed on 9 July, 2017, URL: <http://mdoner.gov.in/content/items-border-trade-%E2%80%93-nathu-la>

<sup>36</sup>At present, only traders from Sikkim are permitted to trade.

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, GoI, “Trade between India and China Through Nathu La Pass (Sikkim),” [Online Web] Accessed on 9 July, 2017, URL: <http://mdoner.gov.in/content/items-border-trade-%E2%80%93-nathu-la>

**Table 8: Articles of Export to China through Nathula**

1. Agricultural implements	12. Dry fruits	23. Spices
2. Blankets	13. Dry and fresh vegetables	24. Watches
3. Copper Products	14. Vegetables	25. Shoes
4. Clothes	15. Gur and Misri	26. Kerosene Oil
5. Textiles	16. Tobacco	27. Stationary
6. Cycles	17. Snuff	28. Utensils
7. Coffee	18. Cigarette	29. Wheat
8. Tea	19. Canned food	
9. Barley	20. Agrochemical	
10. Rice	21. Local herbs	
11. Flour	22. Dyes	

**Source:** *ibid.*

A comparative study of the above (i.e. present) commodity basket and that of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century given in the previous chapter, shows that there has been no drastic or significant change in the nature of articles imported and exported. In other words, we find that reviving the so called “customary trade” has actually stood by its real meaning. One reason could be that, when Nathu-La trade started, it was deliberately done on a small scale. Furthermore, one best way of reviving the trade was by bringing the element of ‘familiarity’ in this trade route.

Though in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jelep-La used to be the principal trade route, some amount of trade (though less in quantity) did take place across Nathu-La. Furthermore, Jelep-La lies just adjacent to Nathu-La in Sikkim. Therefore, the memories of the historic Indo-Tibet trade route was sought to be revived through the opening of the Nathu-La. And for the traders and inhabitants along this trade route, this sense of ‘familiarity’ becomes quite essential, to begin with.

This brings us to the question of whether the present list is redundant or not. Recently, this issue has been put to light by various stakeholders of the Nathu-La border trade. For instance, the request for revising the present items for trade was demanded by the



Indo-China Traders Association of Sikkim (ICTAS) in 2007.<sup>38</sup> But this sentiment is not just shared by the traders on the Indian side. For instance, in 2016, a Chinese official also agreed that the list should be increased and also the volume of trade.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the above, some other challenges faced by traders in the Nathu-La border trade are - Firstly, the issue of the restrictive and redundant list of items for trade as mentioned above. Secondly, there is a ceiling on the value of import or export for each trader. Till 2014, it was Rs. 25,000 per day. It was only in May 2015 when it was raised to Rs. 1 lakh per day.<sup>40</sup> Thirdly, the trade timing is also found to be a problem. Since it is fixed open four days a week from 7.30 am to 3.30 pm (Indian Time) and 10.am to 6.00 pm (Chinese time), the traders often take more time to travel from Gangtok and complete the formalities than trade on the mart due to the “poor road conditions” (Elumalai 2009 :53).

In spite of the above problems and limitations discussed above, let us see the recent figures for the India-China Border trade through the Nathu-La Pass. The following table shows the figures for the past three years – 2013 to 2016.

**Table 9: Value of India’s import and export through the India-China border trade at Nathu-La.**

*Value in Indian Rupees*

Year	Import	Export	Total Trade
2013-2014	1,16,70,489	7,75,26,935	8,91,97,425
2014--2015	12,36,20,000	16,04,43,830	28,40,63,830
2015-2016	11,04,86,636	60,25,69,967	71,30,56,603
Total	24,57,77,125	84,05,40,732	1,08,63,17,857

*(Source: DoR/CBEC)*

**Source:** Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce.

<sup>38</sup> The Hindu Business Line (2007), “Nathula: Local traders seek revision of obsolete list of items,” [Online Web] Accessed on 9 July 2017, URL: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-economy/nathula-local-traders-see-revision-of-obsolete-list-of-items/article1669826.ece>

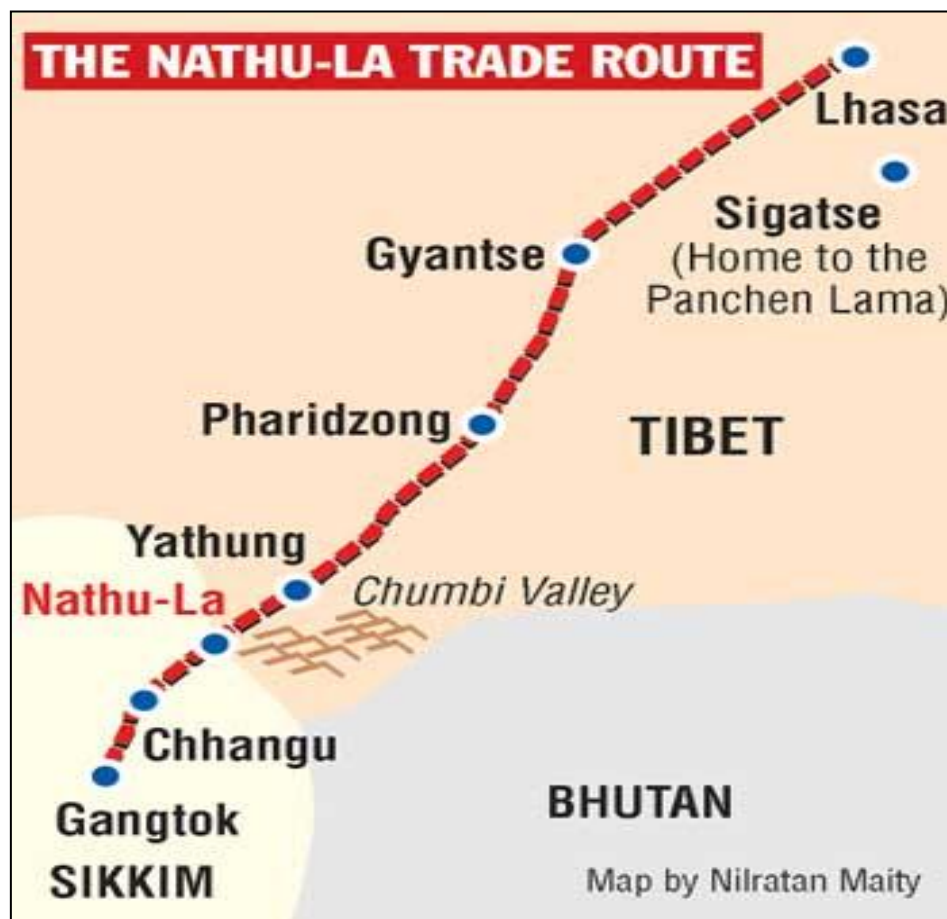
<sup>39</sup> Hindustan Times (2016), “New List of goods needed to increase trade at Nathu La”, [Online Web] Accessed on July 10 2017, URL: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/new-list-of-goods-needed-to-increase-trade-at-nathu-la-pass/story-BUU8vW3uqx14sBDFSjxCXM.html>

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Commerce & Industry (Department of Commerce), GoI, Answer to Unstarred Question No. 3605 by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Independent Charge), “Trade With China Through Nathula Pass”, [Online Web] Accessed 15 July 2017, URL: [http://commerce.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadedFile/MOC\\_636062753423971544\\_LS20160808.pdf](http://commerce.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadedFile/MOC_636062753423971544_LS20160808.pdf)

Concerning the above figures, it is quite interesting to note that even though China has a huge trade surplus in the overall trade with India, a micro study of border trade statistics and more specifically on the India-China trade route through Nathu La show India exports more than it imports from China. This observation is significant because it points out to the overall unique characteristics of border economies vis-a-vis the discourse of mainstream economy often centered around major financial centers of the country. Though border trade is a small portion of a country's bilateral trade with another country, its importance cannot be undermined from the perspective of border regions as a whole.

The following is the map of the Nathu-La Trade Route.

**Map 2 :The Nathula Trade Route**



**Source:** The Telegraph (2003),“Ears cocked for trade tinkle”, June 30, 2013 [Online Web] Accessed 5 July 2017, URL: [https://www.telegraphindia.com/1030630/asp/frontpage/story\\_2117709.asp](https://www.telegraphindia.com/1030630/asp/frontpage/story_2117709.asp)

## **Challenges and Prospects for India and China in the Eastern Himalayas**

In the recent times, foreign economic relations of countries is not just restricted to bilateral trade but regional and sub-regional economic initiatives have also formed a part of country's foreign policy. In this context, the Eastern Himalayan region is also slowly figuring in the initiatives of both India and China. For instance, India's "Look East" policy has now been transformed into "Act East" policy with respect to the Southeast Asian and ASEAN counterparts. Herein, the North-eastern region of India is thus seen as a pivotal link for connecting India to Southeast Asia. China on the other hand, has already begun its "Western Development Programme" by which it aims at integrating the central and western parts of the country with the mainland economy.

Two initiatives which could have far reaching effects in the eastern Himalayan region are:

1. China's expanding road and rail linkages in the region and,
2. The BCIM corridor.

China's economic development in the initial years of Deng Xiaoping's 1978 reforms was mainly concentrated in the Eastern part of the country- especially the coastal regions. In 1998 Deng Xiaoping had stated, "The coastal areas, which comprise a vast region with a population of 200 million, should accelerate their opening to the outside world, and we should help them develop rapidly first; afterward they can promote the development of the interior" (cited in Lai 2002: 432)

Hence, after nearly two decades of rapid development along the coastal regions, China is now set to develop its 'interior.' In this backdrop, it has launched its "Western Development Programme" wherein regions like Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Sichuan, Chongqing, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Tibet will come under massive state led development programs. This entails billions of dollars in infrastructure for building a network of roads, railways, airports and gas pipelines in these areas.

According to Lai, the rationale for China's Western development program mainly stems from the following reasons:

- To tackle the regional inequalities and growing discontent.
- To increase the aggregate domestic demand.
- Safeguarding China's national security and unity. (Lai 2002:436-447)

It is in this context that, China's extension of railways along the Qinghai-Tibet Route should be seen. The Qinghai-Tibet railway is a high altitude route that connects Xining in the Qinghai province to Lhasa. With China's emphasis on its 'One Belt, One Road Initiative,' the extension of this road at proximity to the Himalayas is seen as a threat to India's national security interest. The railway line is also set to link the proposed China-Bhutan-Nepal highway (linking Qinghai-Tibet-Kathmandu) (Bhattacharyya and Chakraborty 2011).

India, on the other hand, is the largest economy and has a considerable influence in the South Asia. Its leadership role in the region and the importance that it attaches to its relations with its neighbouring countries in South Asia has always been evident. Therefore, the increasing inroads made by China along the Himalayan region have brought the two Asian giants – India and China into a precarious geopolitical situation, which could transform either into cooperation or conflagration. The problem is even more confounded due to the longstanding border dispute.

It should be noted that in the 90's, China's "connectivity linkages" in South Asia was not a "priority" nor could India focus on this issue due to its economic limitations (ibid: 120). According to Bhattacharyya and Chakraborty, it was "only during the last decade" that "both countries started to allocate resources for infrastructure diplomacy in South Asia" (ibid). Hence, in this scenario, China's Western Development Programme and India's Act East policy would determine the changes along the Himalayan region in the coming years.

### **BCIM corridor**

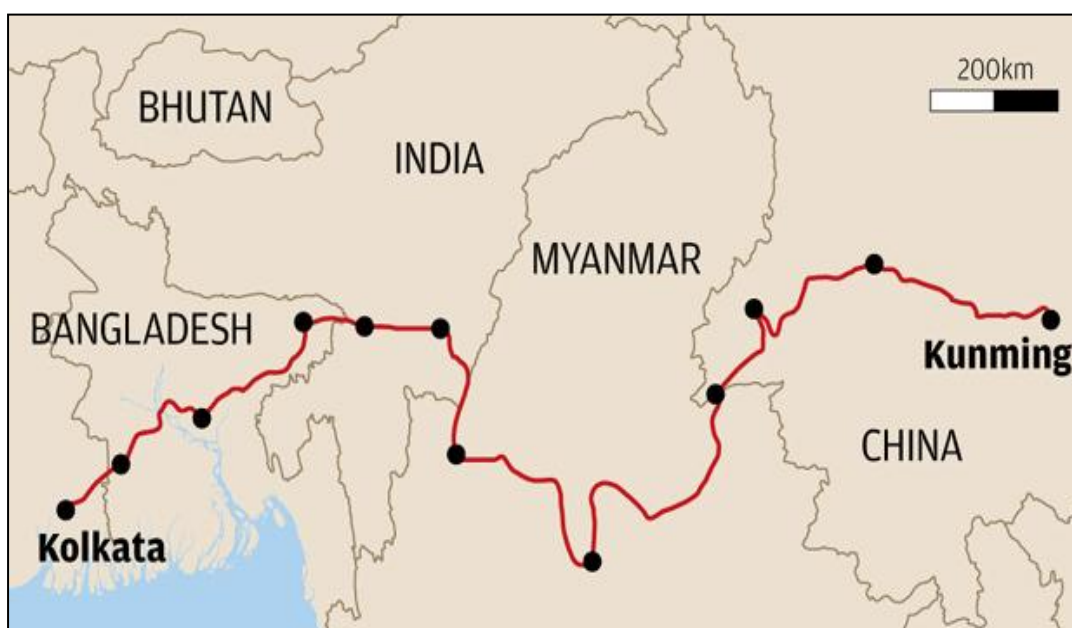
Another important development is the proposed BCIM corridor. It is also called the 'Kunming initiative' as the first BCIM conference was conducted at Kunming in 1999 with the participation of scholars from all the four countries. This is a unique situation where apart from Bangladesh and Myanmar, India and China have proposed to build a

trade corridor to facilitate economic cooperation between China's Southwest region and South Asia.

Seen as a sub-regional economic cooperation, it plans to construct a 2,800 kilometres economic corridor from Kunming, the capital of China's South West Yunnan province to Kolkatta in India via Mandalay in Myanmar, Silchar in India and Dhaka and Jessore in Bangladesh.<sup>41</sup>

For India, BCIM is a practical component of its Act East Policy as it seeks greater regional connectivity in the region, 'be it SAARC, ASEAN or BCIM'.<sup>42</sup> As for China, according to Jidong, the 'opening of neighbouring South Asian and South East Asia regions by utilizing favourable conditions in the bordering provinces and autonomous regions of southwest China is one of the important components of China's open-door policies and the Western Development Programme' (Jidong 2013: 327).

### Map 3: The proposed BCIM corridor



**Source:** Deccan Chronicle (2014), "BCIM economic corridor beneficial for 'North-East economy' says survey", November 25 2014 [Online Web] Accessed on 10 July 2017, URL: <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/141125/nation-current-affairs/article/%E2%80%98bcim-economic-corridor-beneficial-north-eastern-regions>

<sup>41</sup> The Hindu (2017), "China for govt-level talks on BCIM economic corridor", April 26 2017 [Online Web] Accessed on 5 July 2017, URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/china-for-govt-level-talks-on-bcim-economic-corridor/article18215048.ece>

<sup>42</sup> The Diplomat (2015), "BCIM: Can India Be a Driving Force?", January 01 2015 [Online Web] Accessed on 5 July 2017, URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/bcim-can-india-be-a-driving-force/>

## **Securitization of Economic Cooperation**

According to Alexander Wendt in his seminal article “Anarchy is what states make of it,” he argues that “all theories of international relations are based on social theories of the relationship between agency, process and social structure” (Wendt 1992: 422). He emphasizes the role of “interaction” among the states and how it constitutes their “identities and interests” and therefore instead of focussing on the overriding theme of anarchy in the realm of international politics, the influence of myriad factors such as “individual, domestic, systemic and transnational” could transform the “identities and interests” of states (ibid: 424). Therefore, a “competitive security system” can be converted into a “cooperative one” (ibid: 400).

Wendt's reasoning is especially relevant to understanding India-China relations in recent times. One reason is that even though the two nations are at loggerheads with their unresolved border disputes, there has been an effort on both sides to engage each other through economic diplomacy, either through bilateral trade or sub regional economic cooperation. Hence it is an effort on both sides to transcend their limitations posed by realpolitik thinking as focussing only on the intractable nature of border disputes would hinder the benefits of having stable relations between these two countries.

Notwithstanding the above arguments, the relationship between security and economic issues should not be overlooked. According to Barry Buzan, “international anarchy, especially when pressured by differential rates of economic developments, creates the pervasive unease of the power-security dilemma” (Buzan 1994: 90). This is quite relevant to understanding the economic rise of China and the modernization of the Chinese PLA and its power projections on the Asian subcontinent. Such a scenario has, in turn, created a security dilemma for other countries in the neighbourhood such as India where any Chinese manoeuvres along the Himalayan region are bound to be looked with suspicion. For instance, infrastructure building in the China-Pakistan Economic corridor in the Pakistan occupied Kashmir area, and also the recent road building activities in the Doklam plateau by China, an area claimed by Bhutan and its proximity to Sikkim and the strategic Siliguri corridor in India, had been a cause for concern.

According to Chellaney, China's "connectivity diplomacy," is then seen "as a strategy of limiting India's strategic influence from three sides – Tibet, Pakistan, and Myanmar." One reason being, there would be "multiple strategic benefits vis-a vis India; enhanced power projection force capability (through greater mobility option); the option to put direct military pressure (on India), superior transport links with states like Nepal and Bhutan, which are part of the Indian security system" (cited in Bhattacharya and Chakraborty 2011: 121).

### **Present status of the Kalimpong-Lhasa Trade Route**

At present, the historic India-Tibet trade route - the Kalimpong-Lhasa route through the Jelep La stands closed. The road was instrumental during the British era in opening commercial relations with Tibet and the wool trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century led Kalimpong to flourish as a bustling entrepot in the Trans-Himalayan trade.

But after the India-China war of 1962, trade along the route came to a complete halt. The stoppage of the Indo-Tibetan trade, especially the wool trade crippled the local economies of Kalimpong and the surrounding areas. After the Nathula Pass had been opened for border trade in 2006, there had been similar demands by the traders and residents of Kalimpong to open the Jelep-La trade route too.<sup>43</sup> According to Professor Mahendra P. Lama, "given the monsoonal vulnerability of the 50.6 km road between Gangtok and Nathu La, and the pivotal role played by Kalimpong, which was the focal point of all trading activities in the eastern Himalayas till 1962, the most viable option was would be the reopening the Jelep La trade route that connects north Bengal and the Northeast with various Chinese trading centres."<sup>44</sup>

Though at present, no border trade takes place through the route, its historical importance still attracts a large number of tourists and is popularly referred to as "the

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<sup>43</sup> The Telegraph (2003), "Focus on Jelep-La after silk route pact" June 26 2003 [Online Web] Accessed on 12 July 2017, URL:

[https://www.telegraphindia.com/1030626/asp/siliguri/story\\_2103962.asp](https://www.telegraphindia.com/1030626/asp/siliguri/story_2103962.asp)

The Economic Times (2017), "Closed Sino-India trade route Jelep-La deserves opening", January 25 2017 [Online Web] Accessed on 12 July 2017, URL:

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/closed-sinoindia-trade-route-jelep-la-deserves-reopening/articleshow/56778794.cms>

<sup>44</sup>The Indian Express (2015), "Old route, new journey: Kailash-Mansarover initiative reconnects the cultural heritage of two civilizations" June 23 2015 [Online Web] Accessed on 12 July 2017, URL:

<http://indianexpress.com/profile/columnist/mahendra-p-lama/>

old silk route.” The “silk road” epithet has been successful to a large extent in promoting tourism along the route and has helped in generating incomes for the people living in the border areas. Since the Kalimpong-Lhasa Trade route is an all weather route unlike the one via Gangtok in Sikkim and with its experience as a major Indo-Tibetan trade route historically, there is a possibility that this route could complement the present India-China Border trade in the future, thus changing the economic geography of this region. Nonetheless, the success of India’s border trade with China is largely contingent on the nature of bilateral relations between the two countries.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In the Asian landmass, the Himalayas form a geographical barrier between South and Central Asia. It exercises an enormous influence in the lives of people living in the Indian subcontinent and the Tibetan plateau region. Besides being a major source of rivers and glaciers, it has a cultural, spiritual and ecological role. Apart from the diversity of landscapes, the region is also a home to many different cultures and nationalities. Because of its relative continentality, local economies were concentrated along the overland trade passes which transported caravans of goods across the Himalayas in spite of the long and arduous journey and the treacherous climate.

One such pass was the Jelep-La which facilitated the Indo-Tibetan trade from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century through the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route. In fact, it was the major highway for Trans-Himalayan trade in this period. The opening of this route coincided with the advent of the East India Company in the Indian subcontinent and the increasing British inroads north of the Bengal province.

In this dissertation I have tried to underline two major themes; firstly, the considerations of British foreign economic policy and the context in which it was carried out. I have also tried to show how such policies changed the course of history in this region leaving an indelible impact. Secondly, I have tried to analyze the changed geopolitical scenario after the British left India and how the new political reality confronted India, Tibet, and China after 1959. The Himalayan borders were now, not shared anymore between 'British India and Tibet' but 'India and China.'

Such a drastic change in the political scenario unsettled the Himalayan frontiers which had for a long time remained peaceful. Borders were contested, and matters deteriorated to the point that in 1962, India and China went to war. Since then, the nature of the old Trans-Himalayan trade linkages has undergone a significant change. The changed perception of the Indo-Tibetan trade to "India-China border trade" amidst the background of unsolved border disputes and sporadic incidents along the border have securitized the concept of border trade itself in the region.

In dealing with the first theme i.e. British foreign economic policy, we find that the economic and political changes in Britain were a result of the industrial revolution and growth of liberalism by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The economic scenario in this period was dominated by mercantilism. The surplus production and the search for new markets, raw materials and the accumulation of gold and silver bullion was the predominant consideration of the mercantilists.

The mercantilists were often supported by the state which granted them trading privileges whereby they established virtual monopolies over trade in various parts of the world. It was in this context that East India Company came to India and began to set up their commercial empire. It should be noted that one of the main components of the East India Company's trade was the 'Tea Trade' with China.

The demand for tea in Europe and especially in Britain had led to a lucrative tea trade which the East India Company had a virtual monopoly until 1813. In fact, one way of financing this tea trade was through the opium export from India after it realized that Tea was draining its gold and silver reserves as China did not have much demand for European goods. Besides, the problems that the company faced at Canton due to the trading restrictions led the company officials to find an alternative route to Peking.

It was in this context that after receiving the Diwani of Bengal in 1765, a passage to China or "backdoor" was sought by the company. Since Tibet lay between China and British India, the company officials wanted to use its mediation to reach the court in Peking. Various commercial missions from 1774 were sent to Tibet. Bogle's mission was the first followed by Hamilton, Turner, Manning (though he went on his own capacity) and Younghusband.

By this time, the British had advanced on the Himalayan frontiers. The Court of Directors of the East India Company began to take an active interest in the trade routes and how it could be used to its own advantage. Besides this, it also started to interfere in the politics of the Himalayan kingdom's at that time- Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim to ensure that its position was not jeopardized by the conflicts and rivalries among these states.

It was in this context that Darjeeling was ceded to the British by the kingdom of Sikkim in 1835 on the former's request. The British had appreciated the importance of

Darjeeling not only as a place for a sanatorium but also a frontier post to oversee the politics of the other Himalayan states since it bordered them. Furthermore, it was a constant reminder of the possibility of establishing commercial relations with Tibet and China.

The Treaty of 1861 or the Sikkim treaty was a crucial event because it was through this treaty that the British secured a right to build a road connecting Tibet, passing through its territory. Along with the annexation of Kalimpong from Bhutan after the Anglo-Bhutanese war by the Treaty of Sinchula, the possibility of extending the road from Darjeeling to Tibet via the route through Kalimpong and Sikkim was now a possibility. By the 1870's a cart road was constructed, and by the Trade Regulation of 1893, the trade mart was decided to be situated at Yatung, and the route was opened for British trade.

By the end of 1860's the British were quite successful with tea plantations in Darjeeling, and there was a demand for exporting Indian tea to Tibet as they were aware of the huge tea market in Tibet which was monopolized by China. The fact that, the import of Indian tea was fiercely resisted by the Chinese authorities, made this proposition largely unsuccessful.

We see that by the 1880's British efforts to establish stable commercial ties with Tibet as per the regulations was not welcomed openly by the Tibetans. In 1888, the Tibetans anticipating the Macaulay mission laid siege to Lingtu in Sikkim. A battle was fought near the Gnathang valley where both sides lost many lives. In the end, the Tibetans retreated via the Chumbi Valley.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Britain had found a new threat along the Himalayan frontier – Tsarist Russia. It was in the context of the geopolitical rivalries often termed as the “Great Game” that a forward policy was envisaged by Lord Curzon, the viceroy who was “obsessed” with frontiers and the Russian threats to the British Empire. For it had been widely speculated that Russia was making secret alliances with Tibet through the mediation of a Mongolian Buriat, Agvan Dorjief and Curzon anticipated a real threat along the Himalayan frontiers.

It was in this backdrop that Francis Younghusband, another proponent of the Curzonian Forward Policy and with wide experiences along the North West Frontier

was sent on an expedition to Lhasa in December 1903. They started from Darjeeling traversing through the Kalimpong-Lhasa route via the Jelep-la Pass. Hence this route is also known as the 'Younghusband track'.

Younghusband's mission was designated to be a commercial one with the aim of settling the Sikkim-Tibet frontier and establishing trading relations with Tibet. But a cursory glance at the number of troops that went along with him often defies the logic of a peaceable commercial mission. The main outcome of the mission was the Lhasa Convention of 1904.

Later, many in the British parliament criticized the mission and Younghusband himself wrote a book to justify his actions later on. Nor were the rumours of secret treaties with Russia or the Russian presence in Tibet proved right.

After the Younghusband expedition in 1904, for the next four decades, trade along the Kalimpong-Lhasa route saw a significant increase. The wool trade began to grow steadily, and Kalimpong became a major commercial town and an entrepot in this wool trade. The wool was brought down to Kalimpong from Lhasa through mule caravans where it was sorted and baled in the warehouses. It was then sent to the port of Calcutta from where it was exported to the mills of Liverpool, Manchester, and America. By the 1930's, America shipped directly from Kalimpong.

After the British left India, and Communist China had established its control over Tibet, the two countries India and China decided to continue this customary trade according to the Panchasheel Agreement<sup>45</sup>. But as the relations between them deteriorated a war took place in 1962. The route was abruptly closed, and trade stopped flowing. All was quite on the frontier, and Kalimpong lost its sheen as the once bustling commercial centre of the Indo-Tibetan trade.

After the 1978 Deng Xiaoping's, economic reforms and India's experiment with neo-liberal economic policies of Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization (LPG) in 1991, there was a fresh outlook regarding bilateral relations between the two countries. It was a period when the two countries began to emphasize on their foreign economic policies.

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<sup>45</sup> See Appendix III. p.83.

It was in this context that, after nearly four decades that the Nathula pass was opened for India-China Border Trade in 2006. Since then trade takes place annually from June to September (roughly four months). After the Nathula pass was opened, Kalimpong also demanded that Jelep-La be opened for trade or at least the route to Nathula through Kalimpong via Rongli and Gnathang in Sikkim.

Some question the larger issues of the logistics involved and ecological limitations of such a project along the fragile Himalayan ecosystem citing that the present road through Gangtok via the Nathula is often disrupted by landslides. Others question the logic of border trade itself showing the economic insignificance in monetary terms and the possibility of going to the major commercial centres of China itself by taking a few hours flight, for this is what globalization truly means –compress of space and time.

So this brings us to the question of why “border trade”? This study shows that the act of border trade itself has many layers. Firstly, it is a symbolic act on the part of the two countries to create goodwill and engage each other positively. Secondly, border trade cannot be compared to the trade that takes place along the coasts and the major commercial centres. The logic of border trade only makes sense in an environment that is far away from the main commercial centres of the country and where access to these markets is either difficult or time-consuming. Border trade then becomes a market platform for the people living in the frontiers on both sides of the border to build their local economies and sustain their livelihoods.

The future of the Himalayan region would be shaped to a large extent by the policies of China and India. In recent years, China’s Western Development Strategy and India's Act East policy aims at greater sub regional economic cooperation. But the development project along the borders and disputed frontiers complicates the situation even further. The recent road building by China on the Doklam plateau, in an area contested by China and claimed by Bhutan along with India's strategic concerns as it lies close to the Siliguri corridor, is an example.

According to E.H Carr, in his seminal essay “What is History?” he defines history as an unending dialogue between the present and the past. Hence to understand one’s present it is necessary to have a meaningful dialogue with the past. In this dissertation, I have looked at history to understand the underlying motives of British frontier

policy by studying the Kalimpong-Lhasa Trade route. In the course of the study, we see that the British used trade as a means of expanding not just their commercial but also political interests in the region. And given that the trade route was closed after the 1962 war, a shift in the perception of “India-Tibet Trade” of the nineteenth and early twentieth century to present “India-China Border Trade” in the backdrop of the unsolved border disputes has securitized the concept of trade itself in the region.

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## APPENDIX -I<sup>46</sup>

### **REGULATIONS REGARDING TRADE, COMMUNICATION, AND PASTURAGE (TO BE APPENDED TO THE SIKKIM-TIBET CONVENTION of 1890), 1893.**

#### **Article I**

A trade-mart shall be established at Yatung on the Tibetan side of the frontier, and shall be open to all British subjects for the purpose of trade from the first day of May 1894. The Government of India shall be free to send officers to reside at Yatung to watch the conditions of British trade at that mart.

#### **Article II**

British subjects trading at Yatung shall be at liberty to travel freely to and fro between the frontier and Yatung, to reside at Yatung, and to rent houses and godowns for their own accommodation and the storage of their goods. The Chinese Government undertake that suitable buildings for the above purposes shall be provided for British subjects, and also a special and fitting residence shall be provided for the officer or officer appointed by the Government of India under Regulation I to reside at Yatung. British subjects shall be at liberty to sell their goods to whomsoever they please, to purchase native commodities in kind or in money, to hire transport of any kind, and in general to conduct their business transactions in conformity with local usage, and without any vexatious restrictions. Such, British subjects shall receive efficient protection for their persons and property. At Lang-jo and Ta-chun, between the frontier and Yatung, where rest-houses have been built by the Tibetan authorities, British subjects can their journey in consideration if a daily rent.

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<sup>46</sup> Aitchison, C.U. (1909), *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries: Vol. XII: Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Assam & Burma*, Delhi: Mittal Publications, reprinted in 1983, pp.67-69.

### **Article III**

Import and export trade in the following articles:-

-arms, ammunition, military stores, salt, liquors, and intoxicating or narcotic drugs,

May at the option of either Government be entirely prohibited, or permitted only on such conditions as either Government on their own side may think fit to impose.

### **Article IV**

Goods, other than goods of the descriptions enumerated in Regulation III, entering Tibet from British India, across the Sikkim-Tibet frontier, or *vice versa* whatever their origin, shall be exempt for duty for a period of five years commencing from the date of opening Yatung to trade; but after the expiration of this term, if found desirable, a tariff may be mutually agreed upon and enforced.

Indian tea may be imported into Tibet at a rate of duty not exceeding that at which Chinese tea is imported into England, but trade in Indian tea shall not be engaged in during five years for which other commodities are exempt.

### **Article V**

All goods on arrival at Yatung, whether from British India or from Tibet, must be reported at the Customs Station there for examination, and the report must give full particulars of the description, quantity, and value of the goods.

### **Article VI**

In the event of trade disputes arising between Britain and Chinese or Tibetan subjects in Tibet, they shall be enquired into and settled in personal conference by the Political Officer for Sikkim and the Chinese Frontier Officer. The object of personal conference being to ascertain facts and do justice; where there is a divergence of views the law of the country to which the defendant belongs shall guide.

### **Article VII**

Despatches from the Government of India to the Chinese Imperial Resident in Tibet shall be handed over by the Political Officer for Sikkim to the Chinese Frontier Officer, who will forward them as quickly as possible.



### **Article VIII**

Despatches between the Chinese and Indian officials must be treated with due respect, and couriers will be assisted in passing to and fro by the Officers of each Government.

### **Article IX**

After the expiration of one year from the date of opening of Yatung, such Tibetans as continue to graze their cattle in Sikkim will be subject to such Regulations as the British Government may from time to time enact for the general conduct of grazing in Sikkim. Due notice will be given of such Regulations.

## **GENERAL ARTICLES**

**I.-** In the event of disagreement between the Political Officer for Sikkim and the Chinese Frontier Officer, each official shall report the matter of his immediate superior, who, in turn, if a settlement is not arrived at between them, shall refer such matter to their respective Government for disposal.

**II.-** After the lapse of five years from the date on which these Regulations shall come into force, and on six months' notice given by either party, these Regulations shall be subject to revision by Commissioners, appointed on both sides for this purpose who shall be empowered to decide on and adopt such amendments and extensions as experience shall prove to be desirable.

**III.-** It having being stipulated that Joint Commissioners should be appointed by the British and Chinese Governments under the seventh article of the Sikkim-Tibet Convention to meet and discuss, with a view to the final settlement of the questions reserved under articles 4, 5 and 6 of the Convention; and the Commissioners thus appointed having met and discussed the questions referred to, sign the agreement in nine Regulations and three general articles now arrived at, and declare that the said nine Regulations and the three general articles form part of the Convention itself.

In witness whereof the respective Commissioners have hereto subscribed their names.

Done in quadruplicate at Darjeeling this 5<sup>th</sup> day of December, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety- three, corresponding with the Chinese date the 28<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> moon of the 19<sup>th</sup> year of Kuang Hsu.

Ho CHANG-JUNG

A. W. PAUL

*British Commissioner.*

JAMES H. HART,

*Chinese Commissioner.*

*The 5<sup>th</sup> December 1893.*

## APPENDIX –II<sup>47</sup>

### CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITIAN AND RUSSIA, 1907

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias, animated by the sincere desire to settle by mutual agreement different questions concerning the interests of their States on the Continent of Asia, have determined to conclude Agreements destined to prevent all cause of misunderstanding between Great Britain and Russia in regard to the questions referred to, and have nominated for this purpose their respective Plenipotentiaries, to wit:

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, the Right Honourable Sir Ashley Nicolson, His Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias;

His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias, the Master of his Court Alexander Iswolsky, Minister for Foreign Affairs;

Who, having communicated to each other their full powers, found in goods and due form, have agreed on the following:

#### ARRANGEMENT CONCERNING TIBET

The Government of Great Britain and Russia recognizing the suzerain rights of China in Tibet, and considering the fact the Great Britain, by reason of her geographic position, has a special interest in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the external relations of Tibet, have made the following Arrangements:

**ARTICLE I.** – The two High Contracting Parties engage to respect the territorial integrity of Tibet and to abstain from all interference in the internal administration.

**ARTICLE II.-** In conformity with the admitted principle of the suzerainty of China over Tibet, Great Britain and Russia engage not to enter into negotiations with Tibet

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<sup>47</sup> Younghusband, Francis (2005), *India and Tibet*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, reprinted 2005, pp. 444 - 445.

except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government, This engagement does not exclude the direct relations between British Commercial Agents and the Tibetan authorities provide for in Article V. of the Convention between Great Britain and Tibet of the 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1904, and confirmed by the Convention between Great Britain and China of the 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1906; nor does it modify the engagements entered into by Great Britain and China in Article I. of the said Convention of 1906.

It is clearly understood that Buddhists, subjects of Great Britain or of Russia, may enter into direct relations on strictly religious matters with the Dalai Lama, and other representatives of Buddhism in Tibet; the Government of Great Britain and Russia engage as far as they are concerned , not to allow those relations to infringe the stipulations of the present Arrangement.

**ARTICLE III.** - The British and Russian Governments respectively engage not to send Representatives to Lhasa.

**ARTICLE IV.** - The two High Contracting Parties engage neither to seek nor obtain, whether for themselves or their subjects, any Concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, and mines, or other rights in Tibet.

**ARTICLE V.** - The two Governments agree that no part of the revenues of Tibet, whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to Great Britain or Russia or to any of their subjects.

## APPENDIX III<sup>48</sup>

### AGREEMENT ON TRADE AND INTERCOURSE WITH TIBET REGION

#### AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TRADE AND INTERCOURSE BETWEEN TIBET REGION OF CHINA AND INDIA

**Peking, 29 April 1954**

The Government of the Republic of India and The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, Being desirous of promoting trade and cultural intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India and of facilitating pilgrimage and travel by the peoples of China and India, Have resolved to enter into the present Agreement based on the following principles :

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 benefit, and
5. peaceful co-existence.

And for this purpose have appointed as their respective Plenipotentiaries:

The Government of the Republic of India,

H.E. Nedyam Raghavan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India accredited to the People's Republic of China;

The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Chang Han-fu, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Central People's Government, who,

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<sup>48</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Media Center/Documents, *Agreement on Trade and Intercourse with Tibet Region*, "Agreement Between The Republic Of India And The People's republic Of China On Trade And Intercourse Between Tibet Region Of China And India", Peking, 29 April 1954, [Online: web] Accessed 29 May 2017, URL: <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7807/Agreement+on+Trade+and+Intercourse+with+Tibet+Region>

having examined each other's credentials and finding them in good and due form, have agreed upon the following :-

## **Article I**

The High Contracting Parties mutually agree to establish Trade Agencies :

1. The Government of India agrees that the Government of China may establish Trade Agencies at New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong.
2. The Government of China agrees that the Government of India may establish Trade Agencies at Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok. The Trade Agencies of both Parties shall be accorded the same status and same treatment. The Trade Agents of both Parties shall enjoy freedom from arrest while exercising their functions, and shall enjoy in respect of themselves, their wives and children who are dependent on them for livelihood, freedom from search. The Trade Agencies of both Parties shall enjoy the privileges and immunities for couriers, mail-bags and communications in code. Article II The High Contracting Parties agree that traders of both countries known to be customarily and specifically engaged in trade between Tibet Region of China and India may trade at the following places
3. The Government of China agrees to specify (1) Yatung, (2) Gyantse and (3) Phari as markets for trade. The Government of India agrees that trade may be carried on in India, including places like (1) Kalimpong, (2) Siliguri and (3) Calcutta, according to customary practice.
4. The Government of China agrees to specify (1) Gartok, (2) Pulanchung (Taklakot), (3) Gyanima-Khargo, (4) Gyanima- Chakra, (5) Ramura, (6) Dongbra, (7) Pulang-Sumdo, (8) Nabra, (9) Shangtse and (10) Tashigong as markets for trade; the Government of India agrees that in future, when in accordance with the development and need of trade between the Ari District of Tibet Region of China and India, it has become necessary to specify markets for trade in the corresponding district in India adjacent to the Ari District of Tibet Region of China, it will be prepared to consider on the basis of equality and reciprocity to do so.

### **Article III**

The High Contracting Parties agree that pilgrimage by religious believers of the two countries shall be carried on in accordance with the following provisions:-

1. Pilgrims from India of Lamaist, Hindu and Buddhist faiths may visit Kang Rimpoche (Kailas) and Mavern Tso (Manasarovar) in Tibet Region of China in accordance with custom.
2. Pilgrims from Tibet Region of China of Lamaist and Buddhist faiths may visit Banaras, Sarnath, Gaya and Sanchi in India in accordance with custom.
3. Pilgrims customarily visiting Lhasa may continue to do so in accordance with custom.

### **Article IV**

Traders and Pilgrims of both countries may travel by the following passes and route: (1) Shipki La pass, (2) Mana pass, (3) Niti pass, (4) Kungri Bingri pass, (5) Darma pass and (6) Lipu Lekh pass. Also, the customary route leading to Tashigong along the valley of the Shangatsangpu (Indus) River may continue to be traversed in accordance with custom.

### **Article V**

For travelling across the border, the High Contracting Parties agree that diplomatic personnel, officials and nationals of the two countries shall hold passports issued by their own respective countries and visas by the other Party except as provided in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this Article.

1. Traders of both countries known to be customarily and specifically engaged in trade between Tibet Region of China and India, their wives and children who are dependent on them for livelihood and their attendants will be allowed entry for purposes of trade into India or Tibet Region of China, as the case may be, in accordance with custom on the production of certificates duly issued by the local government of their own country or by its duly authorised agents and examined by the border check-posts of the other Party.
2. Inhabitants of the border districts of the two countries who cross the border to carry on petty trade or to visit friends and relatives may proceed to the border

districts of the other Party as they have customarily done heretofore and need not be restricted to the passes and route specified in Article IV above and shall not be required to hold passport, visas or permits.

3. Porters and mule team drivers of the two countries who cross the border to perform necessary transportation services need not hold passports issued by their own country, but shall only hold certificates good for a definite period of time (three months, half a year or one year) duly issued by the local government of their own country or by its duly authorised agents and produce them for registration at the border checkposts of the other Party.
4. Pilgrims of both countries need not carry documents of certification but shall register at the border checkposts of the other Party and receive a permit for pilgrimage.
5. Notwithstanding the provisions of the foregoing paragraphs of this Article, either Government may refuse entry to any particular person.
6. Persons who enter the territory of the other Party in accordance with the foregoing paragraphs of this Article may stay within its territory only after complying with the procedures specified by the other Party.

#### **Article VI**

The present Agreement shall come into effect upon ratification by both Governments and shall remain in force for eight (8) years. Extension of the present Agreement may be negotiated by the two Parties if either Party requests for it six (6) months prior to the expiry of the Agreement and the request is agreed to by the other Party.

DONE in duplicate in Peking on the twenty-ninth day of April, 1954 in Hindi, Chinese and English languages, all texts being equally valid.

Plenipotentiary of the Government of India- NEDYAM RAGHAVAN

Plenipotentiary of the Central People's Republic of China - CHANG HAN-FU.



## APPENDIX IV<sup>49</sup>

### TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

**New Delhi, 14 October 1954**

The Government of the Republic of India and the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, animated by the common desire to develop trade between the two countries and to strengthen further the friendship that already exists between the Governments and the peoples of India and China have, on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, reached agreement as follows.

#### **Article I**

The two contracting parties being desirous of adopting all appropriate measures for the expansion of trade between the two countries agree to give the fullest consideration to all suggestions for the promotion of such trade.

#### **Article II**

The two contracting parties agree that all commercial transactions between the two countries shall be carried out in accordance with the Import, Export and Foreign Exchange Regulations in force from time to time in their respective countries.

#### **Article III**

The two contracting parties agree to accord, subject to the laws and regulations of the two countries for the time being in force, facilities for the import and export of the commodities mentioned in the attached Schedules "A" and "B".

#### **Article IV**

The present Agreement will not preclude the two contracting parties from facilitating trade in commodities not mentioned in attached Schedule 'A' and 'B'.

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<sup>49</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Media Center/Documents, *Trade Agreements*, "Trade Between the Republic of India and The People's Republic of China", New Delhi, 14 October 1954, [Online: web] Accessed 29 May 2017, URL: <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7721/Trade+Agreement>

## **Article V**

The Trade between the Republic of India and the Tibet Region of the People's Republic of China will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between Indian and the Tibet Region of China signed in Peking on the 29th April, 1954.

## **Article VI**

The Government of the Republic of India agree that on request by the Government of the People's Republic of China, they will, subject to the regulations in force, accord reasonable facilities for the entry into the Port of Calcutta, and subsequent movement to the Tibet Region of the People's Republic of China, of such commercial goods as cannot be obtained in India. These facilities will be accorded only to goods of Chinese origin.

## **Article VII**

All commercial and non-commercial payments between the Republic of -India and the People's Republic of China may be effected in Indian rupees or in pounds sterling as may be mutually convenient. For the purpose of facilitating such payments, the People's Bank of China will open one or more account(s) with one or more commercial bank(s) in India authorised to deal in Foreign Exchange to be called account(s) "A". In addition, the People's Bank of China will, if necessary, open another account with the Reserve Bank of India to be called account "B". All payments between the two countries will be made through account(s) "A". Account "B" will be used only for replenishing the balance(s) in account(s) "N" whenever necessary. Payments to be made by residents of India to residents of the People's Republic of China will be effected by crediting the amounts of such payments to the above-mentioned account(s) "A". Payments to be made to residents of India by residents of the People's Republic of China will be effected by debiting the said account(s) "A". The account(s) "A" will be replenished as and when necessary by one of the following methods, namely

(i) by transfer of funds from another account "A" of the People's Bank of China with another commercial bank, or from account "B" with the Reserve Bank of India;

(ii) by sale of sterling to the bank concerned. Account "B" will be replenished either by sale of sterling to the Reserve Bank of India or by transfer of funds from account(s) "A".

2. **Article VII** of this Agreement covers the following payments (i) Payments for the commodities imported or exported under the present Agreement; (ii) Payments connected with commercial transactions and covering insurance, freight (in case of shipments of goods by the ships of either country), port charges, storage and forwarding; (iii) Payments for distribution of films, for incomes and expenses of cultural performances and other exhibitions (iv) Payments of expenses on account of tours of delegations of commercial, cultural, social or official nature; (v) Payments for the maintenance of the Embassy, Consulates and Trade Agencies of the Republic of India in China and for the maintenance of the Embassy, Consulates and Trade Agencies of the People's Republic of China in India; (vi) Other non-commercial payments on which agreement is reached between the Reserve Bank of India and the People's Bank of China.

3. Any balances on the credit side of the account(s) "A" or Account "B" maintained by the People's Bank of China will be convertible on demand into sterling at any time at the usual Bank's selling rate for sterling as fixed from time to time by the Indian Exchange Bank's Association. The above mentioned balances will be convertible into sterling even after the expiry of this Agreement.

Payments for Border Trade between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China, however, will be settled according to the customary practice.

### **Article VIII**

The two contracting parties agree to consult with each other on questions that may arise in the course of the implementation of the present Agreement.

### **Article IX**

This Agreement will come into force from the date of its signature and will remain valid for a period of two years. This Agreement can be extended or renewed by negotiation between the two contracting parties to be commenced three months prior to its expiry.

DONE in duplicate in New Delhi on the fourteenth day of October 1954, in Hindi, Chinese and English languages, all texts being equally authentic.

(Sd.) KUNG YUAN.

On behalf of the Government of the Peoples

Republic of China

(Sd.) H.V.R. IENGAR.

On behalf of the  
Government of

Republic of India

## **SCHEDULE A**

### **GOODS AVAILABLE FOR EXPORT FROM CHINA TO INDIA**

1. Cereals- (1) Rice. (2) Cereals other than rice. (3) Green beans. (4) Soyabeans--green and black.
2. Machinery- Including Planning and shaping machines, Drilling Machines, Other machine tools, inclinable notching press, Steam Engines, Harvester, Road Roller (Road Marshall), Electric Pump, Air Compressor, Concrete Mixer, Rock Crusher, Printing Machinery, Moulding Machine, Trandormers, Pump, Motors Electric, Sowers, Gear Grooving machines, Cotton Textile Machinery, Jute Textile Machinery, Telephone Exchange Control, Rubber Insulated Wire, Ventilator, Equipments for Steam Generator, D.C. and A.C. Welder, Medical Apparatus.
3. Minerals-- (1) Antimony, Crude and Regulus. (2) Gypsum. (3) Graphite. (4) Fluorspar. (6) Sulphur. (6) Realgar (Munsell). (7) Orpiment. (8) Borax. (9) Naphathalene Refined. (10) Clay. (11) Arsenolite (Arsenic Oxide).
4. Silk and Silk piecegoods- (1) White and Yellow Raw Silk, Steam Filature. (2) Spun Silk. (3) Tussah Silk (Wild Silk). (4) Douppion Silk. (6) Silk piecegoods. (6) Fuji Silk piecegoods. (7) Tussah Silk piecegoods.
5. Animal Products- (1) Wool. (2) Skins and Hides, (3) Duck Feathers, Goose Feathers. (4) Woollen Yam. (5) White Wax. (6) Honey.

6. Paper and Stationery. (1) Newsprint. (2) Mechanical Pulp free printing paper. (3) Packing paper. (4) Stencil paper. (5) Blotting paper. (6) Fountain pen. (7) Pencil. (8) Ink. (9) Printing ink. (10) Numbering machine.

7. Chemicals- (1) DinitrochlorD-Benzene. (2) Sodium Phosphate. (3) Carbolic Acid (Phenol). (4) Potassium Carbonate. (5) Mono-chloro benzene. (6) 666 Insecticide. (7) Bleaching Powder.

8. Oils- (1) Tung Oil (Wood oil). (2) Cinnamon Oil (3) Peppermint Oil. 9. Miscellaneous- (1) Camphor. (2) Cassia Laignea. (3) Musk. (4) Nutgall. (5) Aniseed start (start anise). (6) Menthol Crystal. (7) Apricot Kernel. (8) Galangal. (9) Resin. (10) Vegetable Medicinal substances. (11) Hair not. (12) Fluorescent tubes. (13) Paint. (14) Bicycles. (15) Sports goods. (16) Porcelain. (17) Glass and glassware. (18) Printed matter and books. (19) Canned goods. (20) Torch lights. (21) Vacuum flasks. (22) Buttons. (23) Lacquer ware. (24) Fire crackers. (25) Hosiery needles. (26) Stitching needles. (27) Fish and sea products. (28) Dried fruits. (29) Vegetables and vegetable products. (30) Garlic. (31) Vern-deelli. (32) Chinese film (exposed).

## **SCHEDULE B**

### **Part I**

#### **GOODS AVAILABLE FOR EXPORT FROM INDIA TO CHINA INCLUDING TIBET FOOD PRODUCTS AND TOBACCO**

(1) Grams, Rice and Pulses. (2) Kyanite Ore.

(3) Tobacco unmanufactured.

Raw materials and articles mainly unmanufactured Ores and Concentrates- (1) Chrome Ore. (2) Kyanite Ore. (3) Manganese Ore. (4) Tin and Zinc concentrates. Oils, Vegetable- (1) Groundnut oil. Oils, Essential-- (1) Lemon grass oil. (2) Sandalwood oil. Textile fibre &-- (1) Cotton raw. (2) Wool raw.

Wood and Timber- Sandal wood. Hides and skins- Raw goat skins and sheep skins of heavier variety and hides and skins tanned. Miscellaneous- (1) Myrobalan and Myrobalan extracts. (2) Paraffin wax. (3) Art Shellac.

Articles mainly manufactured Chemicals, chemical products and drugs and medicines-

(1) Chemicals (Bichromates, Calcium Chloride, Chromic Acid, Glycerine, Magnesium Chloride, Magnesium Sulphate, Naphthalene, Potassium Bromide, Potassium Nitrate, Sodium Bromide, Sodium Sulphide, Sodium Sulphite). (2) Electric lamps. (3) Processed dyes. (4) Shark liver oil. Instruments, apparatus and appliances- (1) Clinical thermometers. (2) Electric lamps. (3) Electric insulating materials. (4) Electro-medical apparatus. (5) Mathematical instruments. (6) Surgical instruments. (7) X-Ray equipment. (8) Telephone. (9) Electric Fans. Machinery-(1) Ball and Roller bearings. (2) Generators. (3) Motors. (4) Textile Machinery including Spindles, ring frames, carding engines, looms and finishing machinery. (5) Boilers. Machine Tools: including Centre Lathe, Drilling Machine, Shaping Machines, Slotting Machines, Planing Machines, Hack sawing machines, Mechanical Power Presses, Lathe Chucks, Drill Chucks, Lathe Centres and Lathe mandrills, Machine Vices, Plain Drill Sleeves, Wood Thickness Planers, Round Collects, Acetylene Generators, Round seaming machines, Power operated belt driven guillotine shearing machines, Live Centres, Hand Presses and Foot Presses, Treadle guillotine shearing machines, Plan Milling Machine. Metal manufactures- (1) Aluminium, brass and copper wares. (2) Iron and Steel manufactures excluding containers. (3) Non-ferrous metal products. Textiles- (1) Cotton piece goods and cotton manufactures. (2) Cotton twist and yarn. (3) Flax manufactures. (4) Sisal ropes and twine. (5) Jute manufactures.

Vehicles- (1) Bicycles. (2) Motor Cars. Miscellaneous- (1) Indian films exposed. (2) Light engineering goods: centrifugal pumps, G.I. buckets, hurricane lanterns, sewing machines. (3) Plastic manufactures. (4) Shellac. (5) Mica. (6) Asbestos cement sheets. (7) Cement. (8) Hume pipes. (9) Builder's hardware. (10) Tyres and tubes. (11) Belting for machinery. (12) Paper. (13) Bituminous composition. (14) Agricultural implements. (15) Disinfectants.

### **Part III**

#### **GOODS AVAILABLE FOR EXPORT FROM INDIA TO THE TIBET REGION OF CHINA FOOD PRODUCTS AND TOBACCO**

(1) Confectionery.

(2) Hydrogenated Oil.

(3) Tinned fruits and vegetables. (4) Cigarettes.

Raw materials and articles mainly unmanufactured Oils, Vegetable- (1) Castor oil. (2) Kardiseed oil. (3) Linseed oil (4) Mustard oil. (5) Nigerseed oil. (6) Rapeseed oil. Textiles- Apparel.

Miscellaneous- Gums other than gum arabic.

Articles mainly manufactured

Instruments, apparatus and appliances,- (1) Accumulators. (2) Electric wires and cables. (3) Scientific instruments. (4) Transmission line equipment. (5) Wireless instruments.

Machinery- Control and transmission gear.

Metal manufactures- (1) Bolts and nuts. (2) Enamelware. (3) Wood Screws. Stationery including paper- Paper and stationery. Vehicles-(1) Trucks. (2) Carriages and carts. (3) Wheels and shafts for carts. Miscellaneous &- (1) Candles. (2) Clocks. (3) Coral manufactured. (4) Matches. (5) Soaps and washing powders. (6) Toilet requisites. (7) Lard. (8) Pork. (9) Sugar. (10) Rain coats. (11) Rubber shoes. (12) Reinforcement steel bars. (13) Galvanised iron wire. (14) Barbed wire. (15) Steel plates and sheets, (16) Road Rollers. (17) Gasoline, Kerosene, Diesel and Engine Oils. (18) Galvanized iron sheets, plain and corrugated. (19) Leather and leather goods. (20) Safety razor blades. (21) Biscuits. (22) Rubber manufactures other than tyres and tubes. (23) Sheet glass and glasswares. (24) Sports goods. (25) Hard wood.

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