Borderlands as Arenas of Peace: Lessons from Bhutan-Arunachal Pradesh Border

Abstract

Borders are the most obvious political geographic entity in the lives of human beings as they create and signify varied legal obligations, social categories and behavioural expectations for different areas. They can be at once gateways or barriers to the outside world, site for interaction or conflict, zones for ambivalent identities or aggressive assertion of differences. Borderland communities generally tend to be prime sites of inter-state conflict in instances of faulty territorial demarcation or identities spilling across the borders. Here daily life gets determined by the dynamics of inter-state conflict. Regions with mutually agreed boundaries not only foster healthy border exchanges but incentivise governmental focus on social services. In India and Bhutan's case, agreed boundaries is complemented by a mutually interdependent relationship and absence of competing interests. Such a 'no-conflict' border has given rise to mutually trustful relation, in which borderlands are not sites of contention but rather home to steady movements of people and goods. While Bhutan’s borders with the states of West Bengal and Assam have previously been sites of sporadic violence, border with Arunachal Pradesh betrays calmness unmatched in entire South Asia. As both a maximalist as well as interdependent borderland, Arunachal-Bhutan border is a syncretic space of inter-border linkages and networks. The close ethnic, linguistic and cultural affinities have fostered an amicable and mutually dependent border, which is beneficial to both the communities. Sharchops in Eastern Bhutan and Monpas in Arunachal share resemblances in language, dress, manners, appearances, customs, cultures and pattern of lifestyle. Their method of housing and pattern of agriculture too shows similarities. Both follow the same religious sect- Mahayana Buddhism. Similar socio-religious and matrimonial ties stimulate increased cross-border interaction which has facilitated mutual cooperation in the trade and economic development for both the regions such as the hydropower projects on the Tawangchu rivers and road constructions in the border areas which might prove advantageous in future for legal trades. These border roads constructions help promote tourism sector for both the countries. With Bhutan-Arunachal Border as reference, this paper argues that closer cross border linkages and people to people contacts not only discourage border securitisation but contribute to fostering of amicable Indo-Bhutan relations.

Borders are the most obvious political geographic entity in the lives of human beings as they create and signify varied legal obligations, social categories and behavioural expectations for different areas. They can be at once gateways or barriers to the outside world, site for interaction
or conflict, zones for ambivalent identities or aggressive assertion of differences. The paradoxical nature of border gives it a contradictory role of being both the source of conflict and the source of peace and prosperity. The open border enhances trade and interaction which paves the way for amicable cross border relations, on the other hand closed border curtails cross border movements by raising physical barriers for interactions.

Borderland communities tend to be prime sites of inter-state conflict in instances of faulty territorial demarcation or similar identity groups spilling across the borders. Daily life on the border gets determined by the dynamics of inter-state relations. Regions with mutually agreed boundaries not only foster healthy border exchanges but incentivise governmental focus on social sectors. In India and Bhutan's case, agreed boundaries is complemented by a mutually interdependent relationship and absence of competing interests. Such a ‘no- conflict’ border has given rise to mutually trustful relation, in which borderlands are not sites of contention but rather home to steady movements of people and goods.

Borderlands are spaces where the everyday realities of boundaries are played out. They are the proximate spaces of flows across the dividing line. They are spaces where cultural identity sheltered by the boundary, becomes blurred, mixed and creolized. Borderlands can either be a fount of amicability or a perennial source of contention, depending on the nature of borders the host states share. Momoh C.S. divides borderlands into three zones—minimal, zero, and maximal borderlands. Minimal borderlands display neither cultural nor ethnic affinity. “Zero borderlands are where people on the opposite sides of the boundary are diametrically opposed, ideologically and even religiously, creating a zone of friction. Maximal borderlands are where residents have ethnic, cultural, linguistic or even ancestral affinities.” Martinez on the other hand, identifies three types of borderlands: alienated, co-existent and interdependent. In alienated borderlands, borders are functionally closed due to which there is no cross border movement or

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interaction. This makes the border landers totally cut off from each other. In this kind of border, tension prevails most of the time. Co-existent borderland is characterised by slightly open border marked by limited interactions. Here states reduce their border issues resulting from an unfavourable internal condition to some manageable extent so as to allow developments to take place among them. Residents of each country deal with each other as casual acquaintances, but border landers develop closer relationships. Here, stability follows an on and off proposition. Lastly, Interdependent borderlands are the ones where stability prevails most of the time. Economic and social complementarity prompts increased cross-border interaction, leading to expansion of borderlands. Border landers carry on friendly and cooperative relationships. Bhutan and Arunachal’s border relations in Momoh’s and Martinez’s classifications can be categorised as Maximal and Interdependent respectively where stability and peace prevail most of the time with communities across the borderlands sharing close ethnic, cultural, linguistic and ancestral affinities. It can also be categorised as a maximal borderland since the border is open and marked by peaceful and friendly relations. There are no cases of illegal trades, illegal migrations and incursions from the insurgents in spite of free cross border movements. The State of Arunachal Pradesh shares a fairly long open border with Bhutan intersecting at the twin districts of Tawang and West Kameng. Both these districts exhibit strong cross border linkages with Bhutan. However this paper would mostly focus on the Tawang border alone where the author has undertaken several field visits.

The Borderland Communities of Eastern Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh:

In terms of ethnic identities, there are at least three main types of border population well identified by Wison and Donnan: (i) those who share ethnic ties across the border as well as with those residing at their own state's geographical core; (ii) those who are differentiated by cross-border ethnic bonds from other residents of their state; and (iii) those who are members of the national majority in their state, and have no ethnic ties across the state's borders. Bhutan and Arunachal’s border population fits in the second category where the borderland communities have similar ethnic ties and affinities with each other.

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People belonging to several communities in Bhutan inhabit the region bordering the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The villages bordering this part of Indian side can be enumerated as Jangphu, Thrandrang, Manam, Chemkhar, Phetdi, Omba and Merak Sakteng and the people inhabiting these areas are referred to as *Sharchops*. The Borderland Communities of Arunachal Pradesh include Buri, Bletting, Dangmarin, Lumsang, Zemithang, Mukto, Bomdila, Dirang, Tenga, Kalaktang. The people inhabiting this side of the border are known as *Monpas*.

Buddhism is dominant in all these borderland communities. While Agriculture remains their primary occupation. The villagers are mostly farmers, peasants or agro-pastoralists who still believe and engage in barter system, trading cheese, butter and dried meat for grains and other goods that are not readily available to them. These villages do not have any proper roads due to which they face problems accessing main markets.

It is believed that in the long past, Monpas had migrated from Eastern Bhutan. They resemble each other in language, dress, manners, appearances, customs, cultures and methods of housing and pattern of agriculture. They both profess the same religion— Mahayana Buddhism. The religion emphasises on Bodhisattva practice, which signifies a means to attain enlightenment for self and help others attain it as well. It does not believe in idol worships, instead believes in living soul such as Dalai Lama. Buddhism was introduced in both the regions by the same founding father- Guru Padmasambhava.

Besides socio-cultural similarities, they have got matrimonial and trade relations as well. They also share the same legends and myths. These affinities and connections have always helped them in maintaining good relations across the borders till date.

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6 The word is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning great vehicle which can carry a great number of people to a level of great enlightenment.

7 Dutta, P C and D K Duarah (1990), *Aspects of Culture and Customs of Arunachal Pradesh*, Itanagar: Published by Directorate of Research, Government of Arunachal, pp-39
The border between the two regions is separated by a rivulet known as ‘Warangdi’. Although there is a free flow of movements across the borders, the citizens are required to carry a pass permit known as the ‘Journey Permit Pass’ to cross the borders. The movements across the borders are mostly for the religious purposes, i.e. holy scripture reading and religious pilgrimage and to some extent minimal local trading which hardly affects the economy as the nature of trading system are very much local in nature( village to village) hence, not legally commercialised. For instance, the day-to-day affair includes minimal trading of items such as kitchen wares, dry fruits, red chillies, vegetables, dry fish and oranges from the Bhutanese sides and rice, salt, vegetables, tobacco and cigarettes from the Tawang side. Tawang is the main market for Eastern Bhutan and the main trade routes from Eastern Bhutan to Tawang are Bletting, Dangmarang, Manam and lumla.

**Socio-cultural Relations:**

The Sharchops of Eastern Bhutan and Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh share a very cordial relation because of close socio-cultural affinities. The Sharchops speak Dzongkha and these communities are found in the districts of Eastern Bhutan. Whereas Monpas reside in the Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh and their language is known as Monpa. The language of Sharchops and the Monpa language of the Dirang have the same dialect. The language of Sengayzong, a village in Sela Pass in Bomdila district of Arunachal Pradesh is identical to the language of Merak Sakteng village in Bhutan. On the other hand, the borderland communities of Tawang and Eastern Bhutan can understand and speak each other’s language. The Monpas from Tawang, which are the Northern Monpas, are very similar to the ethnic group of Merak and Sakteng and they speak the same language, which belongs to the “East Bodish” group. Both groups are sometimes called Dagpas/ Dakpas.

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9 Interview with local residents in Tawang, on 28.10.2013, during the author’s field visit, names withheld on requests.

The regions also share the same culture and tradition. Both profess Mahayana Buddhism although their sects are different. Monpas belong to the Gelugpa sect and the Bhutanese the Kagyu and Nyingma sect. For an ordinary person, the simplest way to understand the difference between the Nyingma and Gelug sect is that the former wears the red hat during pujas whereas the latter wears the yellow hat. The Nyingma monasteries practices lot of tantric rites compared to the Gelugs. Whereas the Nyingmapa lamas are allowed to marry, the Gelukpas are not.\textsuperscript{11}

Similarities are found in the lifestyle and food habits also. The only difference seen in their food habit is that in Bhutan maize is the staple diet, whereas in Tawang, it is rice. The housing patterns are similar in the bordering villages of the Eastern Bhutan, which is a cluster settlement except for the differences in banners and windows of the houses, which have different designs. Agriculture and cultivation are seen as the main source of income for the borderland communities of both the regions. The pattern of agriculture is the same—the terrace cultivation, and the shifting cultivation commonly known as Jhum cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh and Tseri cultivation in Eastern Bhutan. The terrace cultivation are the piece of sloped plain that has been cut into steps like shapes where as the shifting cultivation is kind of slash and burn type of rotational cultivation where they clear the bush by burning the vegetation and cultivate the crops there for three to four years and again move to another patch of forest for the same. By a recent order, the shifting cultivation was prohibited and the marginal farmers were being settled on permanent village sites. Some of the common cultivations’ are rice, maize, millets and vegetables.

Similarities are also seen in their dance, which is called as “Jabdro” but the songs of the dance differ. Close resemblances are seen in their dressing and appearances. Resemblances in appearances are because of the fact that the hill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are considered as the offshoots of the Indo-Mongoloid race that originally belonged to the non Chinese Chian tribes of the Central Asia. These tribes came first to the North East border of China in late B.C. and later on spread all over China, Indonesia, Philippines, Bhutan and Burma. It is also believed that these hill tribes of North East India belong to the same blood and race which is found in the people of

Bhutan and Burma. The traditional dress of the men is known as “Chubas”—a short cloak made of coarse wool or silk dyed red with madder, whereas “Thare” is the traditional dress of women in Bhutan, except in Bumthang area of Bhutan, where the dress is known as Shingkha, identical with the name “Shingka” in Tawang area. “Women wear a knee-length cotton or raw silk dress red with white stripes, cut like a poncho and fastened at the waist, a red, patterned jacket and boots.” The dress is called shingkha as mentioned above. However, they differ only in quality, as wool is preferred in Tawang; whereas silk and cotton is preferable in Bhutan. The traditional dress of the Monpas of Tawang and the people of Merak and Sakteng valleys of Bhutan are very much identical called as Chubas. “Both men and women wear a yak-hair felt hat with protruding tassels to channel away the rain and carry in the back a sort of hard small cushion suspended at the waist. Men wear a short red woollen jacket which is made of raw silk and usually is in the pattern of rows fastened at the waist, sometimes worn like a poncho, breeches or trousers, and boots.” These jackets are now days worn in Kameng districts too by the Monpas, Sherdukpen and the Aka tribes which portrays their close cultural linkages.

Cross Border Movements:

The type of border system between Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh is an open and porous border which facilitates free movements and flow of goods across the borders without any barriers. This had resulted into their close cross border relations such as trade and cultural relations and also matrimonial relations to some extent. In the past, people from Bhutan would travel across the borders to work as paid labourers for their daily wages and also for trade. In the Dirang region, owners of yak keep their animals for four to five months on high pastures, where the herdmans stay in stone huts or the tents. Most yak owners employed herdmens who came either from Bhutan and Tawang and were paid an annual salary of rupees 200-300 and 60 kg of un-husked rice, food and beer in addition.

The trade items which were imported from Bhutan were mostly the jewelleries, clothes and the fruits. However, the scenario has changed now, the movements across the borders are now

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13Ibid
14Ibid.
15Haimendorf, Christoph Furer Von (1982), pp-153-59
mostly based on religious purposes i.e. pilgrimage and Holy Scripture readings.\textsuperscript{16} The local trade from village to village still continues to some extent. Besides the borderland villagers of Tawang mostly go to Bhutan for medical treatment as it is free of cost there, and also easily accessible. The local people from Bletting and Buri villages of Tawang quite often go to Bhutan village named Jangphu for the medical facilities available there in its free basic health unit.\textsuperscript{17}

Earlier when there were no road in the border areas, horses were the main means of transport and were used as pack animals in their trade.\textsuperscript{18} At times, people of Bletting village were seen wearing Bhutanese clothes due to easy accessibility since there were no roads then, and it was difficult for the bordering villages to travel to the mainland town of Tawang.

Presently, the construction of the motor road transport has made their life much easier. However the development in the road sector is more advanced towards the Indian side as compared to the other side. Around 11 kms of road construction is yet to be completed- 3 kms from the Indian border and 8 kms from the Bhutan border.\textsuperscript{19} The Indian side of border is guarded by Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)\textsuperscript{20} which is located in Bletting and the Bhutan Royal Army check gate is near Jangphu. Bletting is considered the easiest route for all the purposes. Although the people travelling across the border from Tawang region are required a permit pass to enter Bhutan known as ‘Journey Permit Pass’\textsuperscript{21} but at times it is notmandatory for the kind of close relation they share, which naturally enhances mutual understanding among them. There are hardly any illegal movements across the borders.

Another interesting factor of borderlands concerns the currencies and the Mobile networks of the two regions. The Bhutan currency known as Ngultrum and Indian currency known as Rupee

\textsuperscript{16}Interview with the local residents in Tawang on 29.10.2013, names withheld on requests.

\textsuperscript{17}ibid

\textsuperscript{18}Haimendorf, Christoph Furer Von (1982), pp-153.

\textsuperscript{19}Interview with the SSB Officials on 30.10.2013 in Tawang, Names withheld on requests.

\textsuperscript{20}Sashastra Seema Bal, Indian security force along the Indo-Bhutan border was formed in 1963 under the Ministry of Home Affairs in the wake of the India-China war of 1962 to promote sense of national belongingness among the borderland communities by making them a part of the mainstream by providing securities and facilities to the borderland communities and also with the foremost duty to check unauthorised entry and exit across the borders.

\textsuperscript{21}The pass is issued by the custom office to the Indian citizens for a period of one week to fifteen days which could be extended on request.
works both in Bhutan and Tawang. It is important to note that though the Indian currency has more value than the Bhutan currency, the value is considered equal in the bordering villages but not in the mainland towns of both the regions.\footnote{Interview with the local residents of Bletting (Tawang) and Jangphu (Bhutan) villages on 31.10.2013. Names withheld on requests.} There are two mobile networks in Bhutan—B Mobile (govt) and Tashicell (pvt) as against Airtel and Vodafone in India.\footnote{Ibid.} The Bhutan network is available up to Tawang and so does the Indian network which is available in the bordering villages of Bhutan without any ISD charges. Many people from the border villages of Tawang are seen using Bhutan mobile connection and same goes for the Bhutanese also.

**Cross Border Trade:**

Besides socio-cultural similarities, Bhutanese people and Monpas have got trade relations as well. These cross border trade relations are very much local in nature between border villages hence it is not commercialised. The main trade routes from Bhutan to Tawang are Bletting, Dangmarang, Manam and lumla. Tawang is the main market for Eastern Bhutan because the market value and currency value is higher in the Tawang side hence it is more preferable to trade in the Tawang areas. In addition, the cultural, social and religions affinity of both the local people of Bhutan and Tawang and West Kameng help social intercourse and intermingling which directly encourage growth and development of trade and commerce activities in the region.\footnote{Government of Arunachal Pradesh (n.d.), Indo-Bhutan Border Trade, Department of Trade and Commerce, [Online: Web] Accessed on 12 January 2014, URL: http://arunachalpradesh.gov.in/trade/html/indo_bhutan_trade.htm}

Earlier when one talked about the trade relation between the Bhutanese and the Monpas, cattle trading were regarded of utmost importance because then breeding of cattle formed an integral part of the Monpa farming economy. Cows and *Mithuns* (domesticated cattle of hilly regions) were crossed with other cattle’s, the resultant hybrids being used for traction and traded to Bhutan. Horses were bought from the Dirang area and were widely used as pack animals in the trade with Bhutan.\footnote{Ibid.} However in the recent times, the cattle-trading has decreased considerably.
On the other hand, there has been increase in the flow of other trade items from the Bhutan bordering villages because of the differences in the market value. These items includes kitchen wares such as dinner sets and rice cookers, bags, maize, rice, dry fruits like walnuts, dry fish, chillies, vegetables like mushrooms and potatoes and fruits like oranges. Illegal Chinese items are also brought through the border route from Bhutan to Bletting such as Chinese blankets and kitchen wares. The illegal trade items from Indian bordering villages include tobacco, Cigarettes and Nevla (chewing tobacco).

At times, border villagers of Bhutan go to the nearest market areas of Tawang due to easy accessibility and distance factors which holds good for the Tawang bordering villages as well. For example, Jangphu people go to Buri, Bletting and Tawang to shop and likewise Bletting people go to Khiney village of Bhutan to buy household materials. Jangphu people depend on Tawang for trade. They go to Tawang for trading purposes, to sell foods and materials as Tawang being the nearest market area and in addition have more market value than Thimpu.

Matrimonial Relations:

According to Dutta and Duarah (1990), there existed matrimonial relations between the Bhutanese and the Monpas, they state that cross marriages were very common among them without any objection as they belonged to the same custom, culture and religion. For instance, earlier people from Jangphu migrated to Bletting as a result of the cross marriages due to which these two villages have very good relations and can understand and speak each other’s language. Although matrimonial relations in the mainland no longer exist now, but now very few inter marriages are witnessed in the bordering villages which are off the records. The Monpas view that cross marriages were mostly from the Bhutan side of the border because of the incentives like Scheduled Tribes status (ST status) under which they would be recognised as a ST.
(however there needs to be more findings regarding this statement). Therefore granting of this status was a big benefactor for them. But the scenario has changed now. There are very less cross marriages and even if there are few, the granting of citizenship has become a very strict process which might prove a very big disadvantage for them.

**Religious Connections:**

Presently, the religious affinities between Bhutan and Tawang are very strong. Bhutanese and Monpas both practice Mahayana Buddhism - Bhutanese belong to the Kagyu and Nyingma sect and the Monpas to the Gelugpa sect. Both received Buddhism at the hands of the great saint named as Guru Padmasambhava during the 8th century, who is believed to have spread Buddhism in the whole of Tibet, Bhutan and Tawang.

The cross border movements are mostly based on religious purposes i.e. for Holy Scripture reading, religious pilgrimage and involvement in the religious festivals of both the regions. The main passing route for the lamas for crossing Bhutan-Tawang borders are Nyingsangla for Sakteng in Bhutan, Bomdila and Bletting. There are many such pilgrimage sites in Eastern Bhutan where Dakpas (Tawang Monpas) participation is witnessed in huge numbers. There are the ChortenKora (March) and the GomphuKora (April) festivals which are held once in a year. Gomphu means the meditation place (of Guru Rinpoche) and Kora means the circumambulation. The festivals are held in the honour of Guru Padmasambhava also known as Guru Rinpoche, who was responsible for subduing an evil dragon on the rocks there. In these, festivals mostly the devotees circumambulate around the stupa or the temple.

Likewise, Bhutanese people’s equal participation is seen in Tawang religious festivals such as the “Torgya festival which is celebrated by the Monpa Buddhist tribes of Tawang in the Tawang Monastery to drive off forces of evil spirits and natural calamities. It is a three day festival where monastic dances are performed in the Tawang monastery and lamas perform some rituals and recite religious texts. This festival is held once in a year and this festival is known as Dungyur.

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31 Bid.
which every third year is celebrated in grander style. Torgya Festival is a monastic festival celebrated in the month of January which signifies the destruction of evil spirits and harmful forces and fulfilment of spiritual aspirations. It seeks to promote prosperity and happiness amongst the people and crops.”\textsuperscript{33} During Tawang festivals, local traders from Bhutan get various trade items for sale such as fruits, vegetables, chillies, dry fish, bags and clothes.\textsuperscript{34} One festival which is common in their celebration is Losar- (Lo holds the semantic field “year, age” and Sar “the new, fresh”) the new year festival which is also celebrated every year in both the regions. Bletting and Jangphu, close knitted bordering villages of Tawang and Bhutan respectively, celebrate a common festival during August- September month known as Chokor festival.\textsuperscript{35} Chokor in Buddhism means turning of the wheel of dharma and commemorates the Buddha’s first sermon and teachings of “four noble truths—truth of suffering (dhukha), truth of cause of suffering (samudaya), truth of end of suffering (nirhodha), and truth of the path that frees us from suffering (magga).”\textsuperscript{36}

Although Bhutan and Monpas belong to different sects of Buddhism, as such there is no conflict over religious supremacy against each other. Instead, they live and practice their preaching in peace and harmony without any interference. This can be illustrated by taking an example of Khimey Gompa (monastery) in Tawang which is about 600 years old. This Gompa is run by the Bhutanese monks who have arrived in Tawang as disciples of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama who had his incarnation in Eastern Bhutan. They preach Nyingma sect of Buddhism practiced in Bhutan which is different from Gelug sect of Tawang. Because of this connection Gompa is often visited by Bhutanese monks as one of their important religious site.

Since Bhutanese and the Monpas share similarities in their socio-cultural life, people to people contact and interactions have been highly developed among them. This people to people contact


\textsuperscript{34}Interviews with the local residents of Bhutan (Paro) on 28.10.2013 who had come to Tawang for the purpose of Visit. Names withheld on requests.

\textsuperscript{35}Interviews with the local residents on 31.10.2013, Jangphu Village (Bhutan).

has further enhanced the bilateral relations between India and Bhutan. The cordial relation has facilitated mutual cooperation in the trade and economic development for both the regions such as the hydropower projects on the Tawangchu rivers and road constructions in the border areas which might prove advantageous in future for legal trades. These border roads constructions might help promote tourism sector for both the countries.\textsuperscript{37} For instance, the governments of both the regions have proposed a direct road construction from Tawang through Lumla to Namtshering to Bletting to Tashigong in Bhutan.\textsuperscript{38} This road construction is a sign of positive approach in their bilateral relations. Three kms of the road construction is yet to cover from Bhutan’s part. Once completed, this road would facilitate legal border trade and promote tourism for both the regions and would also give a boost to their national economies. Therefore, Bhutan-Arunachal border can be referred to as an “Interdependent Borderland” since stability and peace prevail most of the time with communities across the borderlands sharing close ethnic, cultural, linguistic and ancestral affinities thereby also making it a maximal borderland.

**Cross Border Migrations:**

The free flow of movements across the open borders has resulted in cross border migrations. The main cause for the migration was the “1962 Indo-China War” where Tawang was vitally affected by China. The main pretext of the war was the disputed Himalayan borders. Although China withdrew its armies and declared ceasefire, yet it still does hold its claims on the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. China have never recognised the “McMohan line,” drawn accordingly in the “Shimla Convention Act of 1914” as an international boundary between Tibet and India. In this act, Tibet ceded Tawang to the British India as a part of India.\textsuperscript{39} However China never recognised this because according to China, Tawang was once part of Tibet so after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, Tawang automatically becomes a part of China. The 1962 war resulted in cross border migrations in a large scale. It was convenient for the Monpas to settle in Bhutan due


\textsuperscript{39}Singh, Chandrika (1989), Emergence of Arunachal Pradesh as a State, Delhi: Mittal Publications.pp-60-65.
to the similarity in language, culture and religion. The entire people of Yangche district in Tawang fled to Bhutan due to the fear of the Chinese troops during the 1962 India-China War. Ultimately, those people got Bhutanese citizenship there and are now settled in Bhutan.\textsuperscript{40}

The other cause for the migration was the then existing feudal system in Bhutan where the locals had to pay huge amount of taxes to their kings. This led to fleeing of Bhutanese people to the Monpa regions of Arunachal Pradesh for better livelihood because Arunachal Pradesh was then a free state after it got separated from Tibet by becoming a part of India. It is believed that Bletting in Tawang was once upon a time a locality situated in Bhutan named Lhuentse. The people from there migrated to Tawang and named it Bletting.\textsuperscript{41} There are two villages in the Kalaktang area of West Kameng district named Samdrung and Warangoam which has a mixed population of Monpas and Bhutias. The Bhutias had migrated there few decades ago from Eastern Bhutan. They have close relation with each other, sharing common interests in socio-cultural and religious fields and have assimilated themselves with the local population there.\textsuperscript{42}

Some villages in Tenga area of Bomdila had around 30-35 migrant families from Eastern Bhutan. In the late 60’s and 70’s, King of Bhutan passed a circular for the migrants to come back to Bhutan or else they would not be granted Bhutanese citizenship later. This made those families go back to their country land. However people from Samdrung and Warangoam villages did not return back to Bhutan. They have got Indian citizenship and have become a part of the Monpas of Kalaktang region.\textsuperscript{43}

**Conclusion**

As an interdependent and maximalist border Arunachal-Bhutan border is a rarity in South Asia, where borders engender more violence than cooperation. Continuous socio-cultural and economic exchanges have produced mutually reinforcing ties that have added vigour to the existing cross cultural bonds. Matrimonial ties and similar religious traditions have incentivised amicable relations. Such a ‘no-conflict’ peaceful border has given rise to mutually trustful

\textsuperscript{40} Interviews with the Local Residents on 28.10.2013, Tawang, Names Withheld on Requests.

\textsuperscript{41} Interviews with the Local Residents of Bhutan (Paro) on 28.10.2013 who had come to Tawang for the purpose of Visit. Names Withheld on Requests.

\textsuperscript{42} Dutta P.C. and D.K. Duarah (1990), *Aspects of Culture and Customs of Arunachal Pradesh*, Itanagar: Published by Directorate of Research, Government of Arunachal, pp-38-41

\textsuperscript{43} Interviews with the Local Residents on 29.10.2013, Tawang, Names Withheld on Requests.
relation, in which borderlands are not sites of contention but rather home to steady movements of people and goods. Since Bhutan Arunachal Pradesh border is marked by peaceful border having many social-cultural affinities and linkages, the government of both the regions need not worry about the tight security issues along the border. Unlike other disturbed borders like India-China or India-Pakistan, where the country spends maximum of its expense on forming strong defence and strict surveillance apparatus along the borders, the presence of peaceful borders has incentivised Bhutan’s maximum expenditure on social sectors. Since there are no cases of illegal trade, smuggling of arms, human trafficking or violent activities along the borders, the respective governments are focussing on establishing closer border relations by promoting trade and tourism. The cultural and religious linkages have promoted investment in development sectors such as road constructions and hydropower projects on Tawangchu river, besides fostering exchanges in cultural tourism and trade. The involvement and the active participation of Bhutanese and the people of Tawang in each other’s religious festivals have further encouraged the promotion of cultural tourism which is beneficial to the national economies of both the regions. Keeping in consideration the local trade exchanges that are prevalent among the bordering communities, both the governments have even proposed a road construction from Trashigang area of Eastern Bhutan to Lumla area of Tawang which would help facilitate legal trade between Bhutan and Tawang, with potential to generate revenues to the bordering communities.

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Interview with the local traders in Buri and Jangphu on 31.10.2013. Names withheld on requests.

Interview with the local officials of Lumla District, Tawang on 30.10.2013. Names withheld on requests.

Interview with the SSB Officials on 30.10.2013 in Tawang, Names withheld on requests.

Interviews with the Tawang Monastery Lamas on 28.10.2013.


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