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ROLE OF CROSS BORDER TRADE TOWARDS RURAL DEVELOPMENT: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCES FROM BLEETING TRADE POINT IN TAWANG, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Bleething- the last village of Tawang District bordering Bhutan. Infact, it is a strategic trade point where the local people of both Bhutan and Tawang carry out cross border trade since time immemorial. Having felt its socio-economic significance, an agreement was signed in between the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan and the Government of Republic of India on 28th February, 1995 with identification of 12 more trade routes being declared as Free Trade Routes. Fascinatingly, most of the local people of Tawang district who inhabit along border line prefer to go into Bhutan for shopping than coming to Tawang town due to locational advantages. Perhaps, it has simply increases greater proximity of trading along the people of international boundary sharing Bhutan. Again, the cross border trade cherished between Bhutan and India is seen as an effective catalyst of socio-economic development in the rural areas of Bleething. With this background, this paper shall make a modest attempt to discuss role of cross border trade in socio-economic development in rural patches of Bleething areas covering different aspects like- income, employment, trading items, development in health & education so on and so forth.

KEYWORDS

Arunachal Pradesh; Bleething; Bhutan; Cross Border Trade; Tawang.

INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh- the land of rising Sun is the home land of some 25 tribes and double or so number of sub-tribes/groups. Each tribe/sub-tribe has distinctive Culture, Custom, tradition and language of its own. Bleething is the last village of Tawang District bordering Bhutan. It is through this trade point, most of the cross-border traders from Bhutan come to Tawang (India) for trading purpose. Bleething is around 80 kms away from Tawang. The road construction is going on to connect the capital of Bhutan.

Trade intercourse in *Bleething* Trade Point in between the local people of both Bhutan and Tawang has been carried on in traditional way since time immemorial. However, in order to facilitate the traders of both side and to boost the trade & commerce activities, an agreement was signed in between the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan and the Government of Republic of India on 28th February, 1995 which identified 12 more trade route as Free Trade Routes. Most of the local people inhabiting in the border areas of India- China border generally prefer to go to Bhutan for shopping to meet their daily requirements instead of coming to Tawang due to distant factor. The cultural, social, racial and religious affinity of both the local people of Bhutan and Tawang and West Kameng (India) help social intercourse and intermingling which directly encourage growth and development of border trading activities in the region. During 'TORGYA' and 'GORSAM' festivals, thousands of Bhutanese pay visit to Tawang Monastery through *Bleething* Trade Point every year and similarly, thousands of our local people also pay visit to Bhutan through the same Trade Point during 'CHURTEM KORA' and 'GOMBEY KORA' as Buddhism is followed in both sides.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous research as well as general studies have been conducted over the years with regard to the Cross-Border Trade and its corresponding impacts on the socio-economic development across the World. But no study pertaining to the Cross-Border Trade in Arunachal Pradesh has been conducted so far. An effort has been made to review some of the important works having a great bearing on the present study.

Dr. N. Tejmani Singh in his research paper "Border Trade Vis-à-vis India's Look East Policy" (2012) made a case study on the importance of India-Myanmar trade relations and it is found that India's overriding "security" concerns have always played spoilsport in Manipur and the North East. The study concluded that significant changes have taken place in commodity composition and India's failure to monitor its border effectively.

S. Peberby & J. Crush in their research paper "Invisible Trade, Invisible Travellers: The Maputo Corridor Spatial Development Initiative and Informal Cross Border Trading" (2001) examined the activities and patterns of trade of small entrepreneurs involved in informal cross-border trade between South African and Mozambique and they found that no informal sector Cross-Border traders in policy documents and analysis and they suggested the policies might affect the small and medium enterprises.

Anushree Bhattacharyya & Debashis Chakraborty in their research paper "India's Cross-Border Infrastructure Initiatives in South and Southeast Asia" made an exploratory research on the development of Cross-Border Initiatives by India and China and they found that China has good infrastructure extension for cross-border trade and India's cross-border connectivity is still quite modest compare to China's achievement.

OBJECTIVES

This paper makes an attempt to:-

1. Identify the Trade Items in *Bleething* Trade Points.

2. Ascertain income earned by traders in the study area.
3. Ascertain employment generation in the study area due to the trading.
4. Assess development in health & education in rural sector of the study area due to CBT.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHOD AND TOOLS

The present study is purely based on field study. Again, personal interview, internet social networking, telephonic contacts and observation method are used during the field study. Structured schedules, digital camera, telephone, internet and other stationeries were widely used to collect field data during interview.

SOURCES OF DATA

In this study an effort is made to make the study an empirical. The present study in its entirety is mostly based on primary data. However, the same has used secondary data for better analysis of current topic. For primary data, scholar has used both interview and observation method over 17 respondents. As regard to secondary data, reports and publication of Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh have been used extensively for the present study. In addition to this, various published books, research papers and articles on cross border trade have been referred to for better understanding of the research problem. However, internet has been one of the most used sources of secondary data for the present study.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES & SIZE

For the present study, scholar has used convenience sampling under non-probability sampling technique. Altogether, 17 respondents from the study area are selected for the present study to represent the population parameter. The respondent includes both traders and villagers.

UNIVERSE OF STUDY

The present study is carried in and around *Bleething* Cross Border Trade Centre which is otherwise called as Study Area. It is one of the most western most areas of Arunachal Pradesh which falls under *Tawang* district, Arunachal Pradesh, India. In addition, the reference period of the present study is 2011-12 to 2012-13. Field data over these two years is used for analysis for the present study.

TOOL OF DATA ANALYSIS

For analysis of data, bar chart, frequency distributions are used to draw inferences for the universe. Moreover, statistical packages like SPSS and Minitab have been used to analyze field data.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

MAJOR ITEMS OF IMPORT AND EXPORT IN THE BLEETHING TRADE POINT:

Bleething being the last village of Indian Territory touching Bhutan international border will be one day a very prosperous trade routes provided the infrastructural facilities be put in places where it is required and the construction of the road to *Thimpu*, the capital of Bhutan is completed. It is from this trade point, most of the traders pass to Indian Territory for trading purpose from Bhutan. From the field survey carried out by the researcher, the following items of import have been identified.

TABLE 1: MAJOR ITEMS OF IMPORT IN THE STUDY AREA

Items	Rank	Items	Rank
Utensils	10	Dry Chilly	06
Clothes	05	Local Popcorn	11
Senka (Cloth)	13	Vegetables	07
Dry Fish	04	Chilly Powder	15
Orange	01	Dry Vegetable	14
Groundnut	02	Dry Meat	08
Powder Maize (Corn Flakes)	03	Dry Fruits	16
Local Bags	09	Religious Items	12

Source: Field Study

From the above table 1, it is pertinent to mention here that there is no export item from Indian Territory to Bhutan. It implies that the people of area from India side are not engaged in trading activities with Bhutan counterpart. It is also observed from table 1 that 16 items are imported to India via this trade point namely- utensils, dry chilly, clothes, local popcorn, *Senka* (cloth), vegetables, dry fish, chilly powder, orange, dry vegetable, groundnut, dry meat, powder maize (corn flakes), dry fruits and religious items respectively.

Tawang is one of the coldest places in Arunachal. Keeping this in mind, Bhutanese merchants do trade in most of those items which can be stored for long period such as all dry items like Dry fish, Dry chilly, Dry vegetable, Dry Meat, Dry fruit etc. Most of the items are local products and hand made only. In addition, it is evident from same table that most item of import is orange being ranked one. On the contrary, dry fruits are least trade item by Bhutanese. Moreover, it is reported during field study that prices of these imported items are not fixed. It remains at the bargaining power of either merchant or customer.

TABLE 2: AMOUNT OF IMPORT/EXPORT AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION THROUGH BLEETHING TRADING POINT

Year	Average Household Import (in Rs)	Average Household Export (in Rs)	Employment (in Person)
2011-12	15250	NIL	42
2012-13	19667	NIL	60

Source: Field Study

It is clear from table 2 that average household on Indian side have made an import worth Rs15250 in 2011-12. To the great dismay, it has grown up to Rs 19667 registering 28.96 percent growth rate. Since there is no incidence of export, India suffers negative balance of trade in this trade point that is not a healthy sign for Arunachal Economy in particular and Indian economy in general. Nevertheless, employment figure rose to 60 persons from 42 persons during the reference period registering 42.85 percent growth rate. Person who are found employed in an around the trade point are merchants from Bhutan in one hand and luggage carrier, villagers, transport facilitators from India in other hand.

TABLE 3: PUBLIC' LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON THE STATEMENT- 'CROSS BORDER TRADE HAS DEVELOPED EDUCATION IN THE STUDY AREA'

Types of Agreement	No of Respondent	Percent
Strongly disagree	6	35.3
Disagree	7	41.2
Neither agree nor disagree	1	5.9
Agree	2	11.8
Strongly agree	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Source: Field Study

DIAGRAM 1



It is evident from table 3 and diagram 1 that 41.2 percent of respondents have shown dissatisfaction over contribution of cross border trade in educational development in the study area. Followed by 25.3 percent of the respondents have rather felt strongly dissatisfied on the same. Only, 5.9 percent of the sample respondents have strongly agreed upon this.

It is revealed from table 4 and diagram 2 that 41.2 percent of total respondent are satisfied with cross border trade as a catalyst of public health. Improvement in health facilities is found better than as in educational sector triggered by cross border trade in and around rural areas of the study area. Cross border trade is also found to have influenced on pursuing higher education in some case of rural folks. Income earned from trading and its allied activities have helped children of rural folks in pursuing higher education.

TABLE 4: PUBLIC' LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON THE STATEMENT- 'CROSS BORDER TRADE HAS IMPROVED PUBLIC HEALTH IN RURAL PATCHES OF THE STUDY REGION'

Types of Agreement	No. of Respondents	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	11.8
Disagree	5	29.4
Neither agree nor disagree	2	11.8
Agree	7	41.2
Strongly agree	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Source: Field Study

DIAGRAM 2



Fascinatingly, both Bhutanese and Indian inhabiting along border line prefer to buy medicines from those places which is nearest and found in low price irrespective of nations. *Khengey* in Bhutan is the nearest place for health care where there have been instances of people from India being availed medical treatment and attention.

TABLE 5: PUBLIC' LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON THE STATEMENT- 'CROSS BORDER TRADE HAS INCREASED INCOME OF RURAL FOLKS IN THE STUDY REGION'

Types of Agreement	Respondents	Percent
Disagree	4	23.5
Neither agree nor disagree	2	11.8
Agree	8	47.1
Strongly agree	3	17.6
Total	17	100.0

Source: Field Study

It is unveiled from table 5 and diagram 3 that this trade point has been a source of income to the rural folks of the study area. 47.1 percent of total respondent has the consensus that it has increased their day to day earning. Only, 23.5 percent of the respondents have strong disagreement on the same.

DIAGRAM 3



TABLE 6: PUBLIC' LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON THE STATEMENT- 'CROSS BORDER TRADE HAS CREATED EMPLOYMENT TO RURAL FOLKS OF THE STUDY REGION'

Types of Agreements	Respondents	Percent
Disagree	6	35.3
Neither agree nor disagree	3	17.6
Agree	7	41.2
Strongly agree	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

Source: Field Study

It is clear from table 6 and diagram 4 that most of the respondents hold view that cross border trade relation between Bhutan and India has created employment opportunities in the study area. 41.2 percent of the respondents have agreed upon this. However, 35.3 percent of the respondents are found to have disagreed on it.

DIAGRAM 4



TABLE 7: PUBLIC' LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON THE STATEMENT- 'CROSS BORDER TRADE HAS HELPED RURAL FOLKS OF THE STUDY AREA TO ACQUIRE CONSUMER DURABLES'

Type of Agreements	Respondents	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	17.6
Disagree	7	41.2
Agree	4	23.5
Strongly agree	3	17.6
Total	17	100.0

Source: Field Study

DIAGRAM 5



It is evident from table 7 and diagram 5 that maximum of the respondents felt dissatisfaction over acquisition of consumer durables due to cross border trade. 41.2 percent of the total respondents are found to have dissatisfied over this. On contrary, 23.5 percent of the respondents simply agreed on the same.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Cross border trade at *Bleething* point has been a corner stone of rural development. However, traders as well as local folks of the study area often encounter common problems that restrict them from going full-fledged trading. Like, lack of information & skill on trading, lack of time, and lack of capital are worth mentioning. Moreover, there is a road problem, shortages of vehicles, non-availability of modern communicating network. Again, most of the rural folks of the study area do not understand Bhutanese language which eventually, delimits scope of this trading.

Interestingly, rural folks and traders of the study area do face a little problem as regard to security concern and visa related matters as compared to other predicaments.

Given that, there is complete construction of *Namtsering* (India) to *Warangdi* (Bhutan) road, operation of transport agencies and improvement in modern communication network, the study area would go a long way in developing its rural sectors- education, health, income, agriculture, industry and employment etc.

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