

# **Soft Power in India's Foreign Policy: A Study on the role of Buddhism in relations with Japan and Mongolia**

A Thesis Submitted

To

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the

**Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

By

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## DECLARATION

I, **Bhaswati Sarmah**, do hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the content of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/institution.

This is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in the Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University.

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “Soft Power in India’s Foreign Policy: A Study on the role of Buddhism in relations with Japan and Mongolia” submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science is the result of bonafide research work carried out by **Bhaswati Sarmah** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associateship and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

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*Jatay*  
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Dedicated

to

*Deuta and Maa*

for supporting me always...

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## **Abbreviations**

AAGC- Asia-Africa Growth Corridor

ABCP- Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace

ACMECS- Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy

ACSA- Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement

AD- Anno Domini

AIACBL- All India Action Committee for Buddhist Law

AMC- Advance Market Commitment

ARF- ASEAN Regional Forum

ATLA- Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency

AYUSH- Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy

BC- Before Christ

BJP- Bharatiya Janata Party

BRI- Belt and Road Initiative

BSF- Border Security Force

CE- Common Era

CEP- India-Japan Clean Energy Partnership

CEPA- Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

CIJWS- Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare Training School

COD- Communities of Democracies

CSIR- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research

CTBT- Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

DAE- Department of Atomic Energy

EAS- East Asian Summit

EEPC- Engineering Exports Promotion Council

ESD- External Services Division

FDI- Foreign Direct Investment

GABP- General Authority for Border Protection

GCI- Good Country Index

IAF- Indian Air Force

IAPD- Indian Agency for Partnership in Development

IBEF- India Brand Equity Foundation

ICCR - Indian Council for Cultural Relations

ICD- Institute for Cultural Diplomacy

ICWA- Indian Council of World Affairs

ICWF- Indian Community Welfare Fund

I-JDP- India-Japan Digital Partnership

IMJCC- India-Mongolia Joint Committee on Cooperation

IPOI- Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative

ISA- International Solar Alliance

ISRO- Indian Space Research Organisation

ITEC- Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation

ITI- Industrial Training Institute

JASDF- Japan Air Self-Defence Force

JAXA- Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency

JBIC- Japanese Bank for International Cooperation

JCM- Joint Crediting Mechanism

JEC- Japanese Endowed Courses

JETRO- Japan External Trade Organisation

JGSDF- Japan Ground Self Defence Force

JICA- Japan International Cooperation Agency

JIM- India-Japan Institute for Manufacturing

JIN- Japan Innovation Network

JMSDF- Japan Maritime Self Defence Force

KIP- Know India Programme

LOC- Lines of Credit

LUPEX- Lunar Polar Exploration Mission

MAHSR- Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail

METI- Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

MFN- Most Favoured Nation

MNCCI- Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry

MoC- Memorandum of Cooperation

MOFA- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MOM- Mars Orbital Mission

MoU- Memorandum of Understanding

MSDE- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

NAM- Non-Aligned Movement

NCRWC- National Commission to review the working of the Constitution

NDIC- National Development and Innovation Committee

NDMA- National Disaster Management Agency

NEMA- National Emergency Management Agency

NRI- Non-Residential Indian

OBOR- One Belt, One Road

OCI- Overseas Citizens of India

ODA- Official Development Assistance

OECF- Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund

PBBY- Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana

PBD- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

PDD- Public Diplomacy Division

PIO- Persons of Indian Origin

PPE- Personal Protective Equipment

PTDY- Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana

QUAD- Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

R&D- Research and Development

RAN- Royal Australian Navy

ReCAAP- Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed  
Robbery against Ships in Asia

RIS- Research and Information System for Developing Countries

SSW- Specified Skilled Worker

S-VYASA- Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana

TERI- The Energy and Resources Institute of India

TITP- Technical Intern Training Program

UN- United Nations

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USD- United States Dollar

USIA- United States Information Agency

USN- US Navy

VCC- Vivekananda Cultural Centre

VIF- Vivekananda International Foundation

XPD- External and Public Diplomacy Division



# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

## **1.1.Introduction**

A State's foreign policy is a set of objectives it pursues in order to interact with other nations, and there are many different instruments it might use to achieve these objectives. One of the most crucial weapons of foreign policy is considered to be Diplomacy. Soft power has a big impact in this aspect. Soft power is a crucial element of a nation's foreign strategy. It permits a country to exert influence over others without resorting to coercion or other coercive measures. It suggests using charm and persuasion to further foreign policy objectives and gives a country the ability to positively influence others. Today, many nations around the world support the use of soft power and the fostering of close diplomatic ties with other countries.

India has been investing in soft power after realising its significance for boosting its standing among other nations. A state's soft power is based on three things: its culture (when it is appealing to others), its political values (when they are upheld both domestically and abroad), and its foreign policies (when legitimate and moral authorities). The set of beliefs and customs that give society its meaning is known as culture (Nye, 2004). It depicts the traditions and principles that a nation or people represent. Buddhism has emerged as a valuable component of India's cultural history, aiding the country in developing steadfast foreign policy and effective diplomatic ties. Buddhism has allowed India to establish its presence, particularly in Asian nations. In this paper, a thorough study is made into how India uses soft power strategies in general and Buddhism specifically as a diplomatic tool for its foreign policy. This study also examines how Buddhism has been bringing Japan and Mongolia closer to India.

To keep up with changing times, the international community need to design their foreign policies which should be able to face uncertain times ahead (CPD, 2017). In

this regard, the importance of Soft Power in a country becomes inevitable to enable positive collaboration and to stand as a crucial part of foreign policy. Starting from culture, spirituality, arts and crafts, music, etc., India has a lot of potentials. The diverse cultures, religions, art, and music of India have given a unique identity to the country around the globe. The soft power of India is strong from long before the concept of soft power has been made popular by Joseph Nye. The Government of India is also giving specific importance to soft power areas. Various initiatives have been taken in this regard including the creation of the Public Diplomacy Division under the Ministry of External Affairs in 2006.

After forming the Government in the 2014 General Elections, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi formulated a new pillar of foreign policy, '*Panchamrit*'<sup>1</sup> which has substituted Panchsheel that was adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru. The five pillars of '*Panchamrit*' are '*samman*' (dignity), '*samvad*' (dialogue), '*samridhi*' (shared prosperity), '*suraksha*' (regional and global security) and '*sanskriti evam sabhayata*' (cultural and civilizational links) ("*Panchsheel Gives*", 2019). The fifth principle of Panchamrit, cultural and civilizational links clearly indicates India's desire to establish links with other countries through India's rich cultural heritage as a part of its soft power strategy (Kishwar, 2018). Modi government's soft power tools include the century old ideals and culture of India which can be categorised into four broad areas- Ancient Heritage and Civilizational Ties, Diplomacy, Economic Aid, and Bollywood. Where

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<sup>1</sup> Panchamrit is a sweet mixture used in Hindu worship and in the prayer, rituals known as pujas. This is a Sanskrit name where pancha means 'five' and amrit means 'immortal' or 'nectar of the Gods'. Panchamrit is made up of raw milk, curd (yogurt), honey, sugar and ghee (clarified butter). ("*Panchaamrit*", n.d.).

Buddhism, Yoga, Sanskrit, Ayurveda, and the Power of Zero<sup>2</sup> can be put under Ancient Heritage and Civilizational Ties (Lahiri, 2017).

Buddhism, on the other hand, has been a tool of the foreign policy of India for a long period. The earlier governments also worked on the lines of Buddhism to make Indian foreign policy more effective. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) organised various conferences on Buddhism in different Asian countries like Thailand, Japan, Mongolia, and South Korea including India. The Nalanda University which was supported by members of the East Asian Summit (EAS), was set up to establish civilizational links during Manmohan Singh's government. India has used Buddhism in relation to the neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and other South East Asian and East Asian countries. Buddhism is used as a tag for the visit of PM Narendra Modi to almost all Asian countries after he came to power and also to the Act East Policy. Even during his visit to other countries, one day is kept back to visit Buddhist temples wherever possible (Lahiri, 2015).

Although in India the Buddhist population consists of around 10 million of the total population, yet, India is in a position to use Buddhism as a soft power strategy because of reasons like Buddhism originated in India<sup>3</sup>, also there are many places of Buddhist importance like Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, etc. and India acted as a protector of The Dalai Lama in the wake of Tibetan uprising (Kishwar, 2018). Based on India's position regarding Buddhism, the proper use of it in relation to Indian foreign policy could

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of zero was first formulated by Indian Mathematician Brahmagupta during 628 AD. The development of the concept of zero is the most important discovery in the history of mathematics. Because zero is a very strange number and it means both nothing and everything. (Nath, n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama in India in the late 6th century B.C.E. in the city of present-day Bihar more particularly in Bodh Gaya. Siddhartha or the Buddha was born on 563 B.C.E. in Lumbini, the present-day Nepal but it is stated that he got his enlightenment in India. (Vail, n.d. and Fisher, n.d.).

contribute to better policy making and maintaining peaceful diplomatic relations among nations.

## **1.2. Buddhism as India's Foreign Policy Tool**

Among the oldest continuing religions originated in India including Hinduism and Jainism, Buddhism is undoubtedly one of them. It was founded almost 2600 years back by Gautam Buddha in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century CE (Thussu, 2008). Buddhism has provided a strong foundation for India's cultural links to South Asia, South East Asia, and East Asian countries. In the early period, the priests and scholars of India travelled in order to spread Buddhism across the world, particularly through Tibet and China, and then on to Japan and Southeast Asia via Sri Lanka (Ranade, 2017). The Silk Route was the main corridor through which the Buddhist philosophies and ideas transferred to China and other Asian countries, irrespective of the races, religions, ethnicities, languages, genders, and cultures across these countries (Stobdan, 2016).

In aftermath of the World War II, Buddhism comes about as a means of establishing cooperation among various nations. Different organisations were formed to convene several councils and conferences on Buddhism. In the first conference held in the newly independent country Sri Lanka, the 'World Fellowship of Buddhists' was founded. During the Jawaharlal Nehru government, in 1952, India hosted the 'International Buddhist Conference' in Sanchi which was attended by more than 3000 Buddhist monks, nuns, and historians making it one of the largest gatherings of Buddhist preachers and followers. In 1954, the Sixth Buddhist Council was organised at Kaba Aye Pagoda in Yangon, Burma (Kishwar, 2018).

The influence of Buddhism on Indian art, culture, and architecture is still present. It is apparent from the fact that around 10 million people still practice Buddhism in India.

The influence of Buddhism can also be found in the Ashokan pillar which is considered the national emblem of free India (Ranade, 2017). At present total of 97 percent of the world's Buddhist population resides in Asian countries like Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, etc., and they consider Buddhism an integral part of their lives (Stobdan, 2017). That is why, there is significant importance of Buddhism as a soft power tool of Indian Foreign Policy concerning Asian countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave specific emphasis on using the rich tradition of Buddhism as a Soft power aspect of Asian geopolitics. Apart from Japan and Mongolia, PM Modi has established links with China on the lines of Buddhism to revive the diplomatic relationship between the countries and had also visited the ancient Buddhist temple of China Da Xingshan in Xi'an for the cause (Stobdan, 2016).

In the past years, the Indian government has organised various conferences, conventions, and Buddhist cultural festivals to gather Buddhist leaders from different parts of the world (Stobdan, 2016). In 2011, in the 'Global Buddhist Congregation', which was held with the help of the Government of India in New Delhi, almost 900 patriarchs<sup>4</sup>, supreme patriarchs, and high ranked monks of various Buddhist traditions from all over the world attended making it one of the largest gatherings of Buddhist leaders. In September 2015, the organisations of the International Buddhist Confederation, the Vivekananda International Foundation, and the Tokyo Foundation came together and organised one joint Buddhist and Hindu conclave for three days in New Delhi and Bodh Gaya to discuss the issues of conflict avoidance and environment consciousness (Ranade, 2017).

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<sup>4</sup> Patriarchs are the highest-ranking leaders.

PM Modi has made Buddhism a basic feature of his diplomatic visits. In his speeches delivered in Sri Lanka and China as a part of his official visit, Modi has made efforts to highlight the shared heritage of Buddhism (Kishwar, 2018). Modi's visit to Kathmandu, after becoming the PM, was characterised by agenda of '4C' - cooperation, connectivity, culture, and constitution and even he gifted a Bodhi sampling as a recurrence of cultural ties (Pethiyagora, 2015).

Buddhism has also been used by the Modi government to enhance the India-China diplomatic relationship. On 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2015, India hosted and organised '*Buddha Purnima Diwas*' on the occasion of Lord Buddha's Birth Anniversary (Nandy, 2015 & Lahiri, 2015). On the other hand, the Chinese government has given importance to the birthplace of Buddha in Lumbini of Nepal from the view of religious tourism and the Indian government has given prominence to Bodh Gaya where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment and that is why offered visa-on-arrival to Buddhist tourists who came for religious tourism (Nandy, 2015). Apart from these countries, on his Japan tour, Modi made Buddhism a prime tool. During his visit to Japan, Modi preferred to land in Kyoto and not in the capital city of Tokyo, as Kyoto is considered the meeting ground of Indian and Japanese civilizational heritage.

### **1.3. India's Buddhist ties with Japan and Mongolia**

The period between the first and the tenth centuries AD witnessed the expansion of Buddhism in the religious and cultural life of people throughout the world including Japan (Kitagawa, 1962). India and Japan started exchanges between them with the introduction of Buddhism in Japan in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century CE. The introduction of Indian culture to Japan through Buddhism has marked the close relationship between the two. Buddhism in Japan, after its introduction, developed through many stages. At present,

there are nearly 84 million people in Japan who consider themselves Buddhist. After World War II, India helped Japan to recover from the defeat and to rebuild their economy by signing a 'Peace Treaty' with Japan on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1952 and by giving India's iron ore. Both the countries celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between them in 2012 and various cultural events took place in different places of India and Japan under the themes of 'Resurgent Japan, Vibrant India: New Perspectives, New Exchanges' (MOFA, 2018). Kenji Hiramatsu, former Japanese Ambassador to India in his speech at Andhra University said that India is Japan's closest ally after Russia, and Buddhism is India's greatest gift to Japan ("Buddhism is", 2018).

Buddhism has also contributed to India and Mongolia relations. Historically, India shares significant links with Mongolia. The spread of Buddhism from India to Mongolia can be seen in different phases and was led by different rulers like the Ashoka, Mongol ruler Chinggis Khan,<sup>5</sup> etc. It was said that Mongol ruler Altan Khan gave the title of Dalai Lama to the Geluk Monk Sonam Gyatso in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. The then Mongolian Prime Minister A. Amar in 1920 stated in his brief history of Mongolia that Mongols originated in India. In recent times, the Indian government has also been trying to go forward in its relationship with Mongolia through Buddhism. Narendra Modi in his visit to the Mongolian Parliament and Gandantegchinlen Monastery in May 2015 mentioned about Buddha and Buddhism (Ranade, 2017). The External Affairs Minister of India Sushma Swaraj paid an official visit to Mongolia on April 25 and 26, 2018. Addressing the birth centenary celebration of Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, the longest serving Indian

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<sup>5</sup> Chinggis Khan, also known as Genghis Khan, was the most popular Mongol ruler who have seized almost all the places of Asia and established his empires. But he has not invaded India although he had every chance to do that. There is no rational explanation of this. Chinggis Khan was involved in the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia and this can be understood from his various activities. He adopted Uyghur script for Mongolia which was rich in Sanskrit and Buddhist philosophy. He also exempted Buddhist monasteries from taxation, etc. (Stobdan, 2016).



Ambassador to Mongolia and a highly admired Buddhist leader and monk from Ladakh, Swaraj said that “Buddhism has been a great connector of civilisations for millennia”. Swaraj also expressed about India’s wish to provide a statue of Buddha to the Gandan Monastery of Mongolia as a mark of friendship between the two countries and was also keen to invite Buddhist scholars and students from Mongolia to discover the cultural heritage of India (“India Revitalising”, 2018).

The study facilitates the role of Buddhism in Indian foreign policy and the efficiency of Buddhism as a tool of soft power that enables India to maintain a peaceful relationship with other countries. It also signifies the role of Buddhism in maintaining a strong diplomatic relationship of India with Japan and Mongolia. The study is an aid to the foreign policy decision making of India in relation to other countries in general and with Japan and Mongolia in particular through enhancing Buddhist ties.

#### **1.4. Statement of the Problem**

Power generally denotes hard power which is the military power or use of any coercive means by a country. Based on military strength a nation’s power position can be measured. The power position of a country is also based on the level of economic development of the country. Economically developed countries are regarded as more powerful than economically underdeveloped. But using the military can lead to the drain of the economy of the country and can deteriorate the relations between and amongst the nations. Because of the negative and reverse impacts of hard power emphasis has been given more to soft power as a tool of foreign policy. As India is rich in its soft power resources, through the use of these assets India can maintain friendly relations with other countries. Also, Indian cultural heritages have found their places in

the entire globe and the government of India has been focussing more on the use of soft power assets to make a stronger foreign policy of the country.

Buddhism is one of the aspects of the soft power stockpiles of India and presently India has been using Buddhism extensively with other Asian states like Bhutan, Japan, Mongolia, Taiwan, etc. Most of these states have adopted Buddhism as a mainstream religion of them and as the birthplace of Buddhism, if India can maintain its relation in the future also with these countries and with other Asian countries like Hong Kong, South Korea, North Korea, and Macau then it will be a great success for Indian foreign policy. It is also to be mentioned here that though India has a rich soft power stock, because of certain drawbacks and lack in its use, India is not included among the top soft power nations. There is a need for proper use of soft power so that India could also be counted amongst the top soft power nations.

The study highlights India's use of soft power in general and the use of Buddhism as a soft power tool in particular. It also does a comprehensive analysis of how Buddhism has been used by India with the Asian countries specifically Japan and Mongolia. How Buddhism is helping to mark a strong relationship between India with Japan and Mongolia? How the role of Buddhism will help India to strengthen its foreign policy? This is a comprehensive study of the above-mentioned aspects and analyses Buddhism as a soft power tool of India with Japan and Mongolia and it also tries to give recommendations to make a strong foreign policy for India along the lines of Buddhism with these two countries.

### **1.5. Review of Literature**

Chandan Nandy (2015) in his article *For Modi Regime, Buddhism is a Soft Power Approach for Hard Power* published in the Quint discussed how Buddhism as a foreign

policy approach has gained prominence during the Modi government in relation to China and other ASEAN countries. During Modi's visit to China after becoming the Prime Minister of India, the Ministry of External Affairs realised the political and social values of Buddhism could be used as soft power to increase the diplomatic power of India. India has used Buddhism in relation to China also as a foreign policy tool to revive the diplomatic relationship between the two. For the first time on the day of Buddha Purnima Diwas, Modi joined the Chinese microblogging site Weibo. The Indian government has provided visa-on-arrival to the Buddhist tourist for religious tourism to Bodh Gaya. In the article, India's relationship with other Asian and East Asian countries which have been maintained under the Modi government along the lines of Buddhism was also discussed. For example, during his visit to Japan, Modi used Buddhism as a tool in making India-Japan strategic partnerships in particular and defence and nuclear cooperation in general.

Daya Kishan Thussu (2013) in his book *Communicating India's Soft Power: Buddha to Bollywood* has portrayed and critically examined India's soft power and how has India been using these in communicating with the world. This book discusses the soft power tools of India from ancient to contemporary times, i.e., from Buddhism to Bollywood, and all other factors that have helped in the growth of India's soft power. The author is of the view that, though the concept is of American origin, India has been using these powers from earlier times. He even cites the influence of a few great Indian thinkers in this regard. In the book, the author has made a brief, yet a very fruitful, study of the contribution of India to the soft power discourse. The book is a very helpful handbook for people seeking to know about soft power in the Indian context.

Hendrik W. Ohnesorge (2020), in his book titled *Soft Power: The Forces of Attraction in International Relations*, gives a comprehensive conceptual understanding of soft

power in international relations. The book classifies soft power in different component areas like resources, instruments, reception and outcomes and gives a detailed examination of the subject from theoretical as well as empirical perspectives. The author has written the book in the American context and stated that the concept of soft power needs re-examination as the concept suffers from a certain degree of vagueness. The book is the result of an extensive work by the author and his thought-provoking notions on the concept. He suggests for more empirical researches in the field.

Joseph S. Nye Jr. (2005) in his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* discussed the role of Soft Power in the state politics of the United States. The author is the originator of the concept of Soft Power and is among the first to examine the fact that relying only on military power deteriorates the relationships among nations. He is, hence, of the opinion that States should instead emphasise on soft power aspect to maintain their power positions. Soft power can be developed through cordial relations with ally countries, economic assistance, and cultural exchanges with other countries. Although the author has discussed the soft power sources of many different countries in his book, the book is based extensively on the American perspective of using soft power in foreign policy.

Joseph S. Nye Jr. (1990) in his article *The Changing Nature of World Power* published in the *Political Science Quarterly* has done a detailed study on the changing dynamics of power from the conventional to the rise of co-optive power. The author has made distinctions among power, balance of power, and hegemony to understand the possible hegemonic decline, particularly concerning the United States.

Oliver Banett (2019) in her first volume of book series *Cultural Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations* has portrayed cultural diplomacy as the subdivision of

public diplomacy. The book is a compilation of journal papers published in 'International Journal of Cultural Policy'. The chapters of the book contain an exploration of the inclusion of cultural diplomacy as a means of establishing communication and relationships by different countries including Slovenia, EU, India, Qatar, Japan, Canada, etc. The book provides a comprehensive knowledge of cultural diplomacy and its role in international cultural arena. In an era when nations are investing in promoting their cultures abroad, this book is a useful guide to understanding cultural diplomacy.

Parama Sinha Palit (2017) in her book *Analysing China's Soft Power Strategy and Comparative Indian Initiatives* discussed about China's efforts to engage soft power through different means in the contemporary times. The book has discussed in details China's promotion of soft power in Southeast Asia to Latin America, the US and Canada. The author has divided the book into three parts, first two parts deal with Chinese soft power in different areas and last part deals with Indian soft power in comparison to that of China. Both China and India employ similar soft power assets and put emphasis on achieving similar goals. This book has a different subject matter, i.e., its emphasis is on the rising soft power nations rather than the superpowers.

Paramjit Sahai's (2019) book *Indian Cultural Diplomacy: Celebrating Pluralism in a Globalised World* is set against the backdrop of the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' meaning World is a Family. This book does an in-depth study of Indian cultural diplomacy and its evolution over the years and how it is different from soft power and public diplomacy is also discussed in the book. This book deals with the various aspects of cultural diplomacy like art and literature, media, yoga, diaspora, and Bollywood. The roles and working of different government organisations like the Ministry of Culture, ICCR, and Ministry of External Affairs, who are involved in

cultural diplomacy, are also discussed. Further, the history of cultural agreements between India with other countries is also included in the book.

Patryk Kugiel (2017) in his book *India's Soft Power: A New Foreign Policy* has done a comprehensive study about the soft power sources of India and soft power in India's foreign policy. Kugiel started the book by discussing the concept of soft power as proposed by Joseph Nye and the evolution of power from the time of India's independence. This study evaluates how the Indian government is trying to use the potential of its soft power sources to accomplish its national interests. It also focuses on the areas of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy, diaspora, and foreign assistance. Further, the book also covers the reforms and initiatives undertaken in this field by the new Indian government formed after the 2014 General Election.

Philip Seib's (2013) book *Religion and Public Diplomacy* is a collection of nine essays relating to the religious aspects used in diplomacy. The first chapter of the book deals with the importance of religion in public diplomacy and how it helps in formulating secular policy goals. The next two essays of the book examine the faith diplomacy tactics adopted by the Catholic Churches in Poland and the Polish section of Radio Free Europe to encounter the influence of the communist regime. Further, the Vatican diplomacy over communist China and Vietnam for gaining autonomy and freedom of worship for the Church are also discussed in these chapters. The next chapter deals with China's faith diplomacy, which started when Buddhism was first introduced in the country. The following chapter deals with ten practices related to blasphemy that are to be deployed as negotiation strategies. Focus is mainly given to the American efforts in international cases, particularly the attacks on US Embassies in different countries. The seventh chapter deals with faith-based diplomacy and the role of religion in politics and

conflict resolution. Special emphasis has been given to online Islamic diplomacy in combating tensions between Islam and the West, particularly after 9/11. The last two chapters deal with Switzerland's Public Diplomacy and Buddhist media diplomacy of Myanmar against the military rule and the killing of Rohingyas, respectively. To conclude, the book talks about the issue of religious freedom as interpreted by the Americans.

Rahul Das (2020) in his book *The Blue Elephant: Why India Must Boost its Soft Power* has described the potential of existing Indian soft power resources which he explored personally. The book covers diverse areas such as sport, cuisine, narratives, tourism, arts, diaspora, Bollywood, etc. and argues that by harnessing soft power in these areas, India can definitely become a global power. The author includes here his personal experiences along with the brief explanation of the subjects. The book also covers some contemporary issues like CAA and the outbreak of Covid-19 and beautifully explains India's role in handling and combating the situations. This book can give readers the idea of soft power and India's potentials in an easily understandable language.

Robert Winder's (2020) book *Soft Power: The New Great Game for Global Governance* covers a detailed description of soft power assets of states covering the USA, UK, France, Southern, Central and Northern Europe, The Gulf, Russia, India, Africa, South America and Australasia, China and Japan. This book tries to describe how soft power helps a country to change its perception in front of others. The author says that although soft power impact is mostly affected by the events from history, the development of the recent period can also be similarly effective. Here, the author gives examples of Brexit and the Coronavirus outbreak. The book contains twenty chapters and each chapter is based on informative case studies.

Shamshad Ahmed Khan (2017) in his book *Changing Dynamics of India-Japan Relations: Buddhism to a Special Strategic Partnership* deliberates about the growing India-Japan relations in the fields of economy, trade, culture, security, etc. The book discussed how Buddhism started the bilateral ties between the two nations when there were no political and economic relations prevailed in the early times. Starting from the arrival of Indian missionary Bodhisena to Japan, the role of Prince Shotoku, who gave the first patronage to Buddhism in Japan, the roles of Okakura Tenshin, Rabindranath Tagore, and justice Pal's historic judgement are also discussed in detail in the book. The book also sees how Indian revolutionaries were helped by the Japanese government during the freedom movement in India. Further, the role of China as an important factor in the bilateral relations between the two countries is also analysed in the book. The nuclear testing of India and how it deteriorated the relationship between the two countries and from there how India and Japan became strategic partners helping each other in every possible way is beautifully portrayed in the book.

Shashi Tharoor (2008) in his article *India as Soft Power* has discussed the soft power potential of India, and how the improvement in leadership qualities of the country would facilitate the extensive use of these power sources. Tharoor says that military power is important, as, without defence, no country can survive and defend itself. But at the same time, he also points out the importance of soft power in the development of a nation. India has a lot of potentials to grow as a soft power nation, but there are certain challenges that India faces in the utilization of these assets, the ever-increasing population being one of them. He opines that India needs proper channel and leadership to grow in the field of Soft Power.

Shashi Tharoor's (2012) book *Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, where Pax Indica means Indian Peace, is an attempt to bring into focus the fact that



through trade powers, population size, and soft power, India can construct a modern nation. Tharoor is of the view that India can exploit its soft power resources for peace and progress, and argues that India should adopt a policy to be a friend to all. This book offers a vision of a modern India which is capable and more responsible to handle global responsibilities in the current times.

Shashi Tharoor (2009) in his speech *Why Nations Should Pursue Soft Power* in TEDTalks India Conference stated about India's soft power stock, which is present there from the very beginning, but was not taken into proper consideration. He stated that population size, military strength, and the economy can't make India powerful but the attraction of India's culture can make it. Giving a set of examples of various soft power assets of various nations in his speech, Tharoor also stated that India has also its credibility over other countries for decades. E.g., the television series of India were so famous in Afghanistan that they were telecasted on their channel and dubbed in Dari Language and every Afghan family wanted to watch that. Likewise, in Indian Restaurants of Britain, there are more employees than in coal mining, shipbuilding, and iron and steel industries combined. Even people in Silicon Valley admire it the same as the MITs. He further stated that India has embraced all religions and that is why those religions have found a place in India. According to Tharoor, India emerged from ancient civilisations, the country is united by shared history and has the largest democracy and those make the country unique and that is why the country can make full use of these which can be termed as soft power. The point to be noted here is that India has a lot of problems to overcome starting from its infrastructure to poverty. India has been at the same time called 'super poor' and 'superpower' but it cannot be both at the same time and that is why India has to overcome the problems first and only then it can be powerful in terms of its soft power.

Shantanu Kishwar (2018), in his article *The Rising Role of Buddhism in India's Soft Power Strategy* published in ORF Issue Brief, has contemplated the projection of India's soft power through Buddhist faith and principles. The author believes that India has abundant soft power stocks as it originates from the rich Indic Civilisation. India has been promoting Buddhism right from the time of independence by organising various international conferences and by involving various countries in them. India, as the birthplace of Buddhism, has many sites of the Buddhist faith, and as the protector of The Dalai Lama, continues to successfully use Buddhist Diplomacy in international relations. The article also discusses about the new pillars of Indian Foreign Policy, as introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the inclusion of India's rich cultural and historical faiths and linkages with other countries through it.

Swaroop Lahiri (2017), in her article *Soft Power: A Major Tool in Modi's Foreign Policy Kit* published in the Journal of South Asian Studies, talked about how the Narendra Modi-led government has started using soft power as a cornerstone of the foreign policy of India. She further ponders on the introduction of the new pillars of India's foreign policy, 'Panchamrit', by Modi government to increase the effectiveness of the foreign policy, which are more assertive than the existing pillars, i.e., 'Panchsheel', introduced by Jawaharlal Nehru. The article includes the basic doctrines of soft power and their usage to enhance India's relations with other countries. Though the Modi government has been working to enhance the soft power tools of India, it has not yet been able to replicate the success of other countries.

Tansen Sen (2016) in his book *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400* has discussed about the changes in the relationship between China and India over the aforesaid years. Earlier, the relationship between these two countries was based on military and strategic motivations. But with the advent

of Buddhism during the 7th and 9th centuries, the links between these countries were established through trade and movement of monks, relics, manuscripts, and longevity physicians. However, by the end of the 10th century, both the countries developed Buddhism in their ways. This was one of the factors in the reconfiguration of Sino-India relations through trade. By the mid-11th century, with the spread of Islam to China from India, Muslim traders dominated the trade, whereas earlier it was dominated by the mercantile outlook.

T.V. Paul (2014) in his article *Indian Soft Power in a Globalising World* published in the journal *Current History* discussed the numerous soft power sources of India including cultural, diplomatic, civilisational, etc. The article discusses how these soft power sources of India can give the world different ideas than western ideas. Indian soft power sources convey the values of inclusiveness and unity in diversity which are essential for the world to avoid violence and conflicts. Paul stated, that for a peaceful world order, new ideas from India are essential.

## **1.6. Research Gap**

The above reviewed literatures are not enough to understand India's role in the arena of Soft Power. As the concept is of American origin, till now the majority of the work has been done vis-a-vis America, whereas the study of soft power in other conglomerates, particularly the third world countries, is presently found lacking. India has, until now, not been included in the Global Ranking of top 30 soft power countries, whereas it undeniably has enough resources to be one amongst them. There is a need for more work on soft power aspects of India to explore its true potential and make it one of the world's top soft power countries. India can use Buddhism as a tool for establishing healthy relations with other countries. It was, in fact, in India where

Buddhism originated and then gradually spread to other parts of the world. But till now, not much work has been done in this area, and through this research, an attempt is made to do a detailed study in this regard.

### **1.7. Conceptual Framework**

Power in International Relations is commonly known as the ability to alter the behaviour of others as one wants (Tharoor, 2008). Joseph Nye has stated, Power is the ability to alter the behaviour of others to get what you want, and there are basically three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payment (carrots), and attraction (soft power) (Malone, 2011). Power traditionally is known as or can be defined in terms of 'hard power', which is usually understood in the context of military power and economic sanctions, which many times become negative. Where 'soft power' stands for the use of positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy goals (CPD, 2017). The most widely accepted definition of power is what Robert Dahl has provided. According to him, "A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something which B would not otherwise do". Michel Foucault, on the other hand, reconceptualised the idea of power by saying that Power is not repressive but it is productive. It produces identity and subjectivity (Menon, 2016).

Foreign policies are undertaken by a country for making interactions with other countries and to give safeguard the national interest along with promoting economic growth. As every country has to depend upon other countries for many things and to maintain a friendly relationship, although each country wants to be independent, diplomacy helps the counties to uphold these relations effectively (Gupta & Shukla, 2009). Soft power is one of the major diplomatic tools that a country possesses, it is the method through which peaceful relations can be maintained.

The concept of Soft Power is of recent origin. It was formulated by Joseph S. Nye Jr. in the book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, 1990. Further in his later work *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* he developed the concept (Gupta, 2008). Joseph S Nye Jr., defined the term ‘soft power’ as the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without force or coercion. Nye argues that a successful country needs both soft and hard powers to pressure others and to achieve their long-term attitudes and preferences (Nye, 2004).

Joseph Nye has given three dimensions of power. First is coercion by using military threats, second is influence by offering economic initiatives, and lastly the ability to co-opt other states or what according to him is soft power. Nye said co-optive power is “the ability of a nation to structure a situation so that other nations develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with one’s nation”. Nye said co-optive power emerges from soft power and other insignificant sources like cultural and ideological attraction and rules and institutions of international regimes. As a result, the difference between hard and soft power is based on their relative materiality, and soft power is based on intangible or immaterial sources (Blarel, 2012).

Soft power is based on the tangible indicators of a nation like culture, civilisation, literature, philosophy, involvement in global institutions, diplomacy, political organisations, and state capacity. A country’s unique culture which is portrayed in the country’s art, literature, and civilizational assets can also be an influential facet of soft power (Paul, 2014). Soft power helps to enhance diplomatic relations among nations.

Diplomacy, on the other hand, is the act of conducting negotiations between and among nations. Among the different functions of Diplomacy, prevention of war and violence and sustaining peace is an important one (Amacker, 2011). Quincy Wright stated,

“Diplomacy in the popular sense means the employment of tact, shrewdness and skill in any negotiations or transactions”. India, being the birthplace of Buddhism, has been successfully incorporating its philosophies into the foreign policy of the country leading to the spread of Buddhism throughout the world.

### **1.8. Scope**

The study covers Soft Power as a foreign policy tool on the part of India and how India has been utilising its soft power resources to make its imprint on international relations. Special emphasis is given in the study on Buddhism as an aspect of soft power and India’s use of it. In recent times India has been focussing more on the soft powers to maintain strong diplomatic relations with other nations and to make a resilient foreign policy. The earlier governments had used Buddhism as a tool of India’s foreign policy and worked to take hold of the international attention through it. The primary focus of the study is on India’s use of Buddhism in relation to Japan and Mongolia. India shares a strong relationship with Japan and Mongolia and history has also certain traces of it. India has again started working with these countries through Buddhism and undertook many events in this regard. Whereas, Mongolia is the last frontier of the northeast of Asia where Indic cultural imprints<sup>6</sup> are still very strong. To maintain an independent status in international affairs, Mongolia adopted the ‘third neighbour’ policy to improve overseas partnerships with the United States, Japan and India. These relationships are important to nurture the future common interests of all these countries. That is why, the emphasis is given more on these two countries than on other East Asian countries. The study includes how India has been using Buddhism with the East Asian countries and

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<sup>6</sup> According to Merriam Webster dictionary, Indic means which is related to the subcontinent of India and imprint is to mark by pressure. Indic Cultural Imprint means the cultural marks of Indian Civilisation which are present for so long.

specifically Japan and Mongolia to make their relationship stronger and how India can develop its diplomatic relationships with these countries through Buddhism in the long run.

### **1.9. Objectives**

The primary objectives of the study are-

- To analyse the relevance of soft power as an aspect of the foreign policy of India.
- To examine the role of Buddhism as a soft power tool.
- To analyse how Buddhism has connected India with Japan and Mongolia.
- To explore what will be the results of employing Buddhism by India with Japan and Mongolia.

### **1.10. Research Questions**

The primary research questions are-

- What is the relevance of Soft Power as an aspect of foreign policy?
- How Buddhism has been working as a Soft Power tool?
- What is the role of Buddhism in maintaining relations of India with Japan and Mongolia?
- What will be the results of using Buddhism by India with Japan and Mongolia?

### **1.11. Research Methodology**

The primary research method of this study is descriptive and analytical. To accomplish the objectives of this research, the study concentrates primarily on the qualitative method of data collection. Qualitative, i.e., Secondary Data is collected from secondary sources which are predominantly books, journals, publications, newspapers, various

articles, and other related materials. To collect the available data libraries of Gauhati University and Cotton University are visited.

To fulfil the purpose of the research, besides the Qualitative data, Quantitative data is also collected from various official reports and statements issued by the government, from official websites of government and government agencies. Indian Council for Cultural Relations regional office, Guwahati, is also visited for the purpose. Along with it, perspectives of a few government officials including Ambassadors are also collected related to the research topic.

### **1.12. Significance of the Study**

In today's world, hard power doesn't facilitate developing and maintaining friendly relationships between and among States, and, as such, nations have started adopting Soft Power as an alternate means of maintaining their power positions. Soft Power has overshadowed hard power because of the positive attraction that it builds toward a country. In the coming years, Soft Power will act as a guiding principle for a nation's foreign policy decision making. This research has shed some light on the same and is, hence, expected to be relevant and useful for the times to come.

Since the concept is of a relatively recent origin, not much research work has been conducted in this area till now, and therefore, very fewer literature can be found on related topics at present. This research is expected to help in combining the scattered literature and will open a pathway for further research on similar issues associated with it.



Finally, the research is likely to bring the attention of policy makers in making new policies to meet the needs of India in this field, besides adding to the existing body of knowledge.

### **1.13. Chapterisation**

The study is divided into six chapters

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The first chapter introduces the topic and deals with the primary objectives, statement of the problem, review of related literature, research questions, scope, and methodology of the topic.

#### **Chapter 2: Understanding Power and Diplomacy: Their Roles and Changing Natures**

The ideas of power, soft power, relationships between hard and soft power, diplomacy, public diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy—as well as their functions—are all thoroughly examined in the second chapter.

#### **Chapter 3: Soft Power in India's Foreign Policy with Special Emphasis on Buddhism**

This chapter provides a thorough analysis of India's numerous soft power assets. Additionally, the function of cultural and public diplomacy in India is examined. Finally, a focus on Buddhism, its historical foundation, and its place in Indian foreign policy is highlighted in this chapter.

#### **Chapter 4: Buddhism as a Soft Power Tool in India and Japan Relations**

The fourth chapter explores how Buddhism has been used in diplomatic exchanges between India and Japan. The history of Buddhism in Japan and its connection to India are covered in the same chapter. The bilateral ties between India and Japan as well as areas of international collaboration are covered in this chapter.

#### **Chapter 5: Buddhism as a Soft Power Tool in India and Mongolia Relations**

The fifth chapter examines how Buddhism is used in diplomatic exchanges between India and Mongolia. Buddhist influences on India and Mongolia's bilateral ties as well as their historical connection to Buddhism are also examined. The same chapter discusses the contribution of Monk Ambassador Kushok Bakula Rinpoche to bettering relations between India and Mongolia.

#### **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The final chapter brings the entire study to a close, summarises the key findings, and offers potential recommendations based on the findings.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Understanding Power and Diplomacy: Their Roles and Changing Natures**

## **2.1. The Concept of Power**

Power holds a very crucial role in world politics. This can be gauged from the fact that National Power is the most convenient way to categorize States, although this categorization excludes implications of superiority or inferiority in levels of culture and civilisation (Ahmed & Fatmi, 1971). In the past decades, the subject of power has been an interest for many social scientists, and there still exist many academic debates over the subject, its definitions and features (Raimzhanova, 2015). In general, power indicates one's ability to influence others according to their needs, and this influence can be made through different means - by coercion, by inducement or by co-opt or attraction (Nye, 2004). Power is like weather; everyone depends on it but only a few understand it. It can be experienced, but is difficult to measure or define (Nye, 2004).

People, including politicians, often define power on the basis of the possession of capabilities or resources that influence outcomes. In earlier times, a great power in international politics was defined in terms of 'strength for war' (Nye, 2004). In international relations, Power is defined on the basis of the possessions that the countries have. Those countries are considered powerful which usually have a larger population, territory, natural resources, military force, strong economy etc. However, it is not a given that countries possessing a higher number of resources will necessarily always be successful in holding their power position. Case in point being the example of the United States, which, despite being a Superpower, failed to prevent the attacks of 9/11 (Nye, 2004).

Robert A. Dahl defines power as the ability of 'A' to overcome the resistance of 'B' in pursuit of 'A's goals – "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do." In international relations, peaceful

coexistence is not present among the States due to various ideological differences between each State. For this, Power is a necessary and important factor for every State. It is the pre-requisite for resisting any kind of unwanted external influence and also for the security of each State. Power is also seen as a psychological relation between the one who holds it and the one over whom it is being exercised. Leslie Gelb wrote, “power is mental arm wrestling” (Rostoks, 2015, p.10).

Hannah Arendt in her book *On Violence* (1970) defined power not as a property of an individual, but rather as a possession of a group, and opined that it remains in existence as long as the groups keep together (Raimzhanova, 2015).

Max Weber is regarded as one of the first sociologists to define power; he gave his idea of power in relation to society and the state. Weber, in his work, *Politics as Vocation* (1919), defined power as “the chance of a man or of a number of men to realise their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action” (Little, 2013). From his idea of power, it could be stated that power can be both authoritative as well as coercive. Authoritative power is the process of exercising power and is, hence, legitimate. But coercive power involves force; it means forcing someone to do something against his/her will. Weber gave three types of Power - Traditional, Charismatic and Coercive Power. Traditional power is that power which somebody obtains because of the traditions and customs, like the King, who inherits power because of being born into a royal family. Charismatic power is when somebody gains power because of their personal qualities, like the great leaders who are admired by the people because of their charisma and personality. Coercive power is gained by using fear, threats and abuse, like the dictators, who use their position and power to frighten or intimidate others, e.g., Adolf Hitler (Thompson, 2013). However, with regards to Weber’s concept of Power, Roderick Martin has stated

that he has provided the basis for comparison between the attributes and actors of power instead of defining the concept of power (Martin, 1971).

Talcott Parsons viewed power as being generated by a social system and mooted that the amount of power in a system can be expanded. Power, for Parsons, is a circulating medium in the political subsystem. Power, according to him, is a “generalized capacity to serve the performance of binding obligations by units in a system of a collective organization when the obligations are legitimized with reference to their bearing on collective goals.” Anthony Giddens, with regards to this, stated that Parsons, while giving the definition of power, deliberately tried to bring legitimation to the concept of power and that, for him, there is no such thing as illegitimate power (Giddens, 1968).

This short discussion on Power shows that it is one of the most highly discussed, yet debatable concept and thus, there exists no universally-accepted definition of it and those definitions that are available suffer from major drawbacks and criticisms.

### **2.1.1. Faces of Power**

Robert O. Keohane stated that there is need to distinguish between definitions and aspects of power. The faces of power have improved with the help of contributions from different scholars like Peter Bachrach & Morton S. Baratz (the second face of power) and Stephen Lukes (the third face of power). These faces of power and various other forms are just different ways in which ‘A’ can make ‘B’ do things which ‘B’ would otherwise not have done (Rostoks, 2015).

The first face of power describes A’s ability to issue threats or provide positive material incentive in order to obtain B’s acquiescence. This is how power is perceived at large in world politics. The world actors which are stronger materially or have superior military and economic powers are considered as more powerful and they are used to

getting their ways over materially weaker actors. Nevertheless, it is not always that the materially superior powers make their way towards victory; e.g.- the Soviet Union, in spite of being a Superpower, failed to prevent its breakdown at the end of the Cold War (Rostoks, 2015).

The second face of power refers to the ability of A to distinguish between those issues which are to be kept for decision-making agenda and those that are to be kept away from the same. This face of power has been defined by Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz. It states that the ability to control the decision-making process is an important aspect of power. Most of the States are now members of different international organisations and it is important for them to exercise power through these organisations (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962 & Rostoks, 2015).

The third face of power refers to the ability of one actor to impact the other's behaviour, interests and preferences. Stephen Lukes argues that the third dimension of power is about the 'imposition of internal constraints'; its aim is to change the interests of those against whom power is being exercised. (Rostoks, 2015).

### **2.1.2. Theoretical Debate on Power**

Theories make available a systematic way to understand a phenomenon or an event. In international relations, there are several theories which deal with Power and have put forward the concept of Power differently. Realist Theory, which is one of the most dominant schools of thought in international relations, claims to explain the reality of international politics. Realism interprets world politics in terms of power. According to Realists, the principal actors in the international field are States, and each of them acts according to their national interests (Khanna, 2013). They believe that the International State System is anarchic and that there is no sovereign authority to control the actions

of these States. Hans J. Morgenthau, a prominent scholar of the Realist school, states that international politics is governed by certain universal laws based on national interest, and objectives, defined as Power. In the struggle for power, policymakers often adopt various tools which include diplomacy, economic power and even military power, in order to accomplish the goals of foreign policy (Basu, 2012).

After the Cold War era, the Realists reinvented themselves and came to be known as Neorealists or Structural Realists. Neorealists also put power in a dominant position of their theory and pointed out that the Cold War failed to control armament, and the central focus of the States remained on enhancing their power and security. Kenneth Waltz, the foremost Neorealist, stated that the post-Cold War world order was anarchic, although it was characterised by democracy, international organisation etc. Neorealists were of the view that the causes of conflict lie within the basic framework of anarchy, and not in human nature, as suggested by the Realists; and in anarchy, a balance of power would prevail which is often a balance of capabilities and not of power (Basu, 2012).

With the emergence of diverse theories of international relations like liberalism and constructivism, the 'softer' side of power has come up. The liberals underline the importance of strong economy in making a peaceful and stable international system whereas the constructivism emphasizes on ideas and perceptions, both the schools put emphasis on the other dimensions of power instead of giving importance to military and economic side of it (Kugiel, 2016).

Constructivism, another important theory of international relations, can also be referred to in this connection. After the end of the Cold War, in the 1980s, Constructivism came up as a new approach in international relations, and became a part of the interpretivist



family of social sciences (Guzzini, 2010). Contrary to the Realist school of thought, Constructivists pursue a different perspective regarding power. Constructivists see the world as socially constructed and go beyond material reality by including ideas and beliefs in international politics; it also encompasses that reality is under construction, which always opens prospects for changes (Theys, 2017).

Constructivism cannot perceive power in terms of resources, because people often act towards an object on the basis of the meaning of that object as given by them, whereas objects don't fix their meanings themselves. Constructivism redefines power at the systemic level in international relations and analyses it in terms of consent, which is implicit legitimacy; it is interested in intersubjective practices of power, i.e., what authorises, legitimates or empowers an entity, rather than formal or institutional authority (Guzzini, 2010). According to Constructivists, it is not anarchy, but rather actors, who play an important role in the international system. Alexander Wendt explains that States in international relations act differently both towards friends and enemies as friends are safe whereas enemies are not (Ouchenane, n.d.).

There also exists a fourth group called Neoliberals, who have a different perception regarding power altogether. According to Neoliberals, human welfare can be advanced by liberating individual freedom, free market, free trade, private property rights etc., and it is the duty of the State to create and preserve an institutional framework for these practices. Neoliberalists have also emphasised on the establishment of military, defence, police and legal structures, which are required to secure these aspects. After the 1980s, Neoliberalism, which was earlier used only by the economists, has also been adopted by Social Science disciplines (Mammadov & Hasanov, 2016). Neoliberalists such as Joseph S Nye Jr. have introduced the concept of Soft Power, which is the power of attraction, and an alternate to military power. Neoliberalists also agree that economic

power is based not only on tangible resources, but also on intangible resources, which are equally important.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of 'Cultural Hegemony' has also given an idea of power which is not based on coercion. Gramsci used the term cultural hegemony to mark the relationship between culture and power in a capitalist society. He stated, the dominant class or the ruling class controls the subordinate classes through not only force or threat of force, but also through ideas and thoughts. Cultural hegemony is all about what we perceive as beautiful and comfortable and that is why power in cultural hegemony is an invisible aspect (Ramirez, 2015 & Duncombe, n.d.).

All being said, Power has always been a debatable concept and, as can be seen from the above discussion, has been put forward by different schools of thought in different ways. Nevertheless, in international relations, Power has acquired a central position and yet, has faced severe criticisms and deliberations because of which the entire subject of Power and its role have changed from time to time.

### **2.1.3. Approaches for measuring Power**

The entire concept of Power is subjected to many discussions and deliberations; that is also because there is even disagreement as to how it should be measured. In international relations, there are three prime approaches through which power can be measured - a) control over resources, b) control over actors, and 3) control over events or outcomes. Among these, 'control over resources' is the most widely accepted approach, in which the size of armed forces, military expenditure, gross national product and population are used as indicators of national power. Nations which have high scores on some indicators and low scores on others will have a tendency to act in a hostile manner towards other nations (Hart, 1976).

The 'control over actors' approach is familiar among those political scientists who belong from backgrounds other than international relations. The use of economic sanctions by a State over others falls in this category. Robert A. Dahl's widely accepted definition of power essentially defines this approach, where he said that Power is the ability of A to get B to do something which he would otherwise not have done. To gain power over others, the actors need not always be more influential or stronger; it is possible for the weaker actors as well to exploit the weakness of a stronger actor to gain power over it even in an asymmetrical power relationship. The Game Theory, however, suggests that this approach is a complicated one, involving both objective and subjective factors (Hart, 1976).

Power as a 'control over events or outcomes' approach was first developed by James S. Coleman, and is based on the rational choice theory of power, in which the reasons for controlling resources or other actors arise from the desire to achieve outcomes. Desired outcomes result in an increase of an actor's utility which functions as the actor's preferences over the outcomes. Coleman establishes a link between actions and events, and between events and outcomes, instead of establishing a direct link between actions and outcomes. Each event is associated with minimum one outcome for each actor and each outcome is associated with a net impact on the actor's utility, and those events which are associated with more than one outcome will be associated with expected utility (Hart, 1976).

Among these three approaches, the 'control over events or outcomes' approach is regarded as the best approach for measuring power in international relations, because it calculates the possibilities of interdependence between the actors and their collective actions. This approach is also capable of dealing with new types of actors and the changing nature of different goals and techniques (Hart, 1976).

#### **2.1.4. Changing Nature of Power**

The world, in the present century, has undergone a critical transformation as the nation-states have been facing serious political and socio-economic challenges. The nature of these challenges is global and these challenges affect the policies of many countries. In today's world, due to the growing geopolitical tensions, the nation-states are concerned more over their power position and influence than other aspects (Raimzhanova, 2015).

Moises Naim termed the current transformation in world politics as the 'decay of power'. He stated that "In the 21st century, power is easier to get, harder to use, and easier to lose ... battles for power are as intense as ever, but they are yielding diminishing returns." In other words, coercive powers are now hard to use and they will bring only short-term results (Naim, 2003).

With the transformation of world politics, according to some observers, the sources of international power have been moving away from military force to other factors like technology, education and economic growth, rendering geography, population and raw materials, etc. (Nye, 1990). Power in the developed countries has become less violent and less coercive in the present times. But, because of a diverse world, where less developed countries (which are based on preindustrial economies), failed States and developing countries co-reside, the global transformation of power becomes impossible. This is why all the three sources of power - military, economic and soft - remain relevant in different relationships and in different degrees. However, considering the information revolution and the current economic and social trends, soft power is the most important among all the three sources. Information revolution and the globalisation of economy have made the world a global village and have created virtual communities and networks that cut across national borders. Many transnational

corporations and NGOs have a soft power of their own, and attract citizens across national borders into coalition. Politics, in part, becomes a competition for attractiveness, legitimacy and credibility, and the ability to share information acts as an important source of soft power (Nye, 2004).

## **2.2. Soft Power**

Soft power is an important aspect of statecraft as it rests with an intangible attraction which determines the behaviour of others. It is not based on any other thing besides attraction or co-opt such as force or money. Soft power is an important agent for countries in engaging with one another especially in these times when maintaining cordial relationships has become increasingly important. It also acts beneficial in governments trying to compete for gaining attention of other countries. Soft power results in the effective deployment of domestic assets which includes cultures, ideas and values, rather than international policies. Some countries emphasize on soft power as a tool for addressing concerns related to domestic policy (Singh & MacDonald, 2004). That being said, it is hard to conceptually define soft power or prove its empirical validity.

The concept of soft power is rooted in the Neoliberal and Constructivist visions of power, the significance of which was first recognised by E.H. Carr in 1939. He classified international power into three categories - military, economic, and power of opinion, where the power of public opinion reflects the power of attraction of nations for conditioning the opinions of others. Other social science thinkers such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Gramsci and Habermas have also articulated about soft power, but it was Joseph S Nye Jr. who first advocated the concept in modern strategic discourse (Palit, 2017).

Soft Power primarily rests in three resources of a state - culture, political values and foreign policies. Culture is a set of rules and values which give a definite meaning to a society. Culture includes all the aspects of society starting from literature, art and education to mass entertainment. When culture includes universal values, and its policies endorse interests that others share, it creates attraction and helps in achieving the desired outcomes. Narrow values and cultures contribute negatively to soft power. Popular culture is a resource that does produce soft power, but it always depends on the context. For example, if a country lacks in industrial base, raw materials will not be a major source of soft power. Similarly, Hollywood movies may not attract countries like Pakistan in the same way it attracts India or China (Nye, 2004). A country's soft power varies towards different public - it can be high towards the elites and low towards the general public. It can grow from governments or non-governmental actors, businesspeople or music stars, and even from politicians or leaders.

Commerce - in the form of personal contacts, visits and exchanges of ideas and values - is one of the ways through which culture transmits. The ideas and values that a state exports through its foreign students or entrepreneurs reaches the other side with soft power. Various government policies, both domestic and international, and foreign policies can reinforce the soft power of a State. However, if such policies appear to be hypocritical or indifferent in the opinion of others or are based on narrow national interest, they can undermine soft power (Nye, 2004). Soft power emphasizes on people-to-people communication, it allows a nation to connect with people in other countries for building bridges (Palit, 2017).

Institutions can enhance a State's soft power. If a state can create international rules which are consistent with the interests and values of others, then its actions appear to be legitimate in their eyes. For example, Britain, in the nineteenth century, and the US,

in the late twentieth century, created different sets of international rules and institutions which were consistent with the liberal and democratic nature of the economic systems of both the States. For Britain, it was free trade and gold standard and in the case of the US, it was the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations, etc. (Nye, 2004).

There are some who think of power in terms of commands or active control only, and for them, imitation and attraction are not forms of power because not all attraction or imitation can produce positive power. For example, armies frequently imitate and, therefore, nullify the tactics of their opponents, resulting in difficulty in achieving the desired outcomes. Culture attracts people and produces soft power. Whether it can act as a positive source of soft power or not depends on the willingness of the receivers. There are yet some others who are against the use of the term soft power in international politics as the governments are not in full control of the attractions. The firms, universities, foundations, churches and other non-governmental groups of a nation develop soft power, which help in reinforcing its official foreign policy goals (Nye, 2010).

### **2.2.1. Understanding Soft Power**

#### **a) Joseph Nye's views on Soft Power**

According to Nye, the creator of the concept of soft power, soft power is an important way to gain international support by means of cultural and political values and foreign policies that other countries see as legitimate, and which have moral authority (Nye, 2004). Soft power is the power of attraction, and the concept of attracting others is drawn from the early childhood socialisation process, where parents shape a child's interests through attractive ideas. This results in a greater and long-lasting power over

the children, which would otherwise not have been possible through active control (Nye, 1991).

Soft power resources are difficult to control. Several resources of soft power are outside the control of the governments and their effects depend upon their acceptance by the recipients. These resources work indirectly to shape the environment for effective implementation of a policy and sometimes it takes long enough to produce the desired outcome (Nye, 2004). Nye states that it is necessary to understand the circumstances under which attraction leads to the desired outcome and under which it does not (Nye, 2010).

Sometimes, some States enjoy a political clout over others which is greater than their economic and military resources because their national interest is to include attractive causes such as economic aid or peace-making. Nye, in this regard, cites the example of Norway, which was involved in peace talks for two decades with several countries such as the Philippines, the Balkans, Colombia, Guatemala, Sri Lanka and the Middle East, which ultimately resulted in the enhancement of soft power for Norway (Nye, 2004).

Nye explains the growing importance of power of attraction through four paradigm shifts. First, the destructive power of nuclear weapons, for which the human society had to pay a high price; but after the Cold War, due to the lack of actual battlefields, these weapons lost their strategic significance. Secondly, the rise of Nationalism in Europe's overseas territories, which put an end to the imperialistic expansion and colonial rule and the era of divide-and-rule by military superiority. Thirdly, a shift from the role of military capabilities in international politics occurred within the societies of the great powers - after the destruction caused by the two World Wars, the traces of the formerly-dominant warrior ethics disappeared from the Western societies only to be



replaced by the primacy of civic interaction among societies. Lastly, in an economically interdependent world, the use of military force regularly collided with global business interests of the great and middle powers (Poppen, 2006).

Nye is not against Hard Power and, in fact, even agrees that the military capabilities are still operating in the States. He is also aware of the development of information technology and internet revolution, and the free access of capital, but argues that these are yet to reach and, thereby, affect most parts of the world. He asserts that the world still witnesses the menaces of civil wars, ethnic conflicts and international terrorism, which challenge the very idea of peaceful co-existence of human civilisation which, according to him, can be protected through Soft Power (Poppen, 2006). The concept of soft power, however, suffers from certain criticisms and Nye, himself, acknowledges this. He admits that soft power alone cannot stand as a strategic orientation without the help of military and economic powers (Hayden, 2012).

#### **b) Alternate views on Soft Power**

Several other scholars, besides Joseph Nye, have contributed towards the definition of soft power from different perspectives. Steven Lukes states that it is not necessary for power to be blunt, and that it can influence one's preferences according to its needs (Palit, 2017).

Steven B. Rotham describes success as a dimension of soft power and argues that the reason that nations compete with other cultures and systems is because of the instinctive attraction based on success, and not solely because of attraction itself (Palit, 2017).

Giulio Gallarotti puts forward the theory of Cosmopolitan Power, combining the views of Realism (power), Neoliberalism (cooperation) and Constructivism (norms), and speaks of soft empowerment as a by-product of cosmopolitan power (Palit, 2017).

Craig Hayden, an ex-coordinator and Chair for the Diplomatic Mastery Program at the U.S. Department of State, is of the view that that the traditional system of measurement of power in international relations should be inclusive of ideational factors like people's beliefs, which can shape the agency of political actors and their ability to affect others, and therein lies the importance of soft power. In other words, it puts communication as the central factor of international strategy (Hayden, 2012).

### **2.2.2. Sources of Soft Power**

As stated earlier, Soft Power relies on an intangible attraction, so its sources are different from that of hard power. In the present times, most of the States have started using their different soft power resources as an alternate means to hard power. The term 'Soft Power' itself was first introduced by an American scientist only in the context of the United States, which has many resources that can provide soft power. It is the world's largest conglomerate with various top global companies, global brands, business schools, highest published books as well as a large number of foreign students and immigrants being a part of its economy. Almost twenty-eight percent of the worldwide students studying outside their home country are in the US, sixty-two of the top 100 global brands are American, it is amongst the largest number of internet website hosts, and publishes the maximum number of scientific journals and articles (Nye, 2004). The American culture produces soft power for the country. According to a report of an international education group, the foreign students of America return to their homes with a great appreciation for the American culture, values and its institutions.

It is to be noted here, however, that the United States doesn't rank at the top of soft power nations, although it has an ample amount of attractive power sources. According to the Soft Power 30 report of 2019, France, the United Kingdom and Germany hold

the top three positions among the global soft power nations, respectively, followed by Sweden and then the United States. The Soft Power 30 index combines objective data and international polling to measure the soft power resources of nations. The polling is done in different regions and is based on seven categories including culture, cuisine and foreign policy (McClory, 2018).

France's culture, art, film, food, sport and tourism have contributed in making it a top soft power nation. France's iconic monuments like the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, different museums, galleries, international tourists and UNESCO World Heritage Sites are some of its valuable soft power assets. It has the highest number of Michelin-starred restaurants in the world and French cuisine is recognised as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. Various iconic cultural and sporting events like the Cannes Film Festival, Tour de France and Bastille Day are celebrated and participated in by people from around the world. The country's global engagements like the memberships of multilateral and international organisations, along with others, pose to be great assets of its soft power (McClory, 2018 & 2019).

After France, the United Kingdom, with its valuable resources, has been able to be recognised as one of the top soft power nations. European art, literature, music, designs, food and cuisines, etc. have a strong attractiveness in the world. Half of the top ten widely-spoken languages in the world are European. British music has a great fan following around the world, thanks in large part to the global success of artists like Adele and Ed Sheeran. Apart from these, tourism and English Premier League have been attracting the masses and have proven to be vital assets of soft power for the country. Above all, the great Royal Wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle turned out to be a major soft power event of 2018, with almost around two million people around the world viewing the wedding (McClory, 2018). Europe, apart from its

culture, has also gained soft power through its foreign policies in the fields of climate change, international law, human rights treaties, etc. The European Union provides 70 percent of overseas development assistance to the poor countries which is significantly more than that of the US (Nye, 2004).

France and the United Kingdom, along with Germany, have also attracted the international community through Nobel Prizes for literature, book sales, internet web hosts, and sports like football and basketball (Nye, 2004). Germany, with its advanced manufacturing goods, engineering expertise, high-end automotive and machinery industries, has also utilized its soft power resources well. Sweden, the United States, Switzerland, Canada, Japan, Australia and the Netherlands are counted amongst the top soft power nations after France, the UK and Germany because of their rich sources of soft power like culture, cuisine, tourism, manufacturing hubs, education, etc. (McClory, 2019).

### **2.2.3. Relation between Hard Power and Soft Power**

Both hard and soft power facilitate one in achieving what they want; however, both the powers have different natures and depend on different resources. Hard power rests with inducements and threats, which is not always favourable. But power has another face which acts as an indirect way for one to achieve any desired outcome as one wants. This second face of power is known as Soft Power and its resources are based on co-opt behaviour, whereas hard power resources are based on command behaviour (Nye, 2004). Nye stated that hard power is generated by sophisticated armoury or by monetary inducements, but soft power is based on political ideals or policies (Poppen, 2006).

In international relations, when a country admires and adopts another country's cultures and ways of living, this is nothing but soft power of the latter, which is a co-opt power

rather than power based on coercive means (Nye, 2004). The concept of hard power, as defined by Nye, is similar to the first face of power, which is related to inducements and threats, whereas soft power has the elements of the second and third face of power as defined by Bachrach & Baratz, and Stephen Lukes, respectively (Rostoks, 2015). In general, though, soft power resources are slower, diffuse and comparatively difficult to employ than hard power resources (Nye, 2004).

Nye states, if a State suffers through economic and military decline, it loses not only its hard power resources, but also some of its attractiveness. Some States might still be attracted to others with hard power by the myth of strength or likelihood, but soft power doesn't depend on hard power. Citing the example of the Soviet Union, he opines that the Soviet Union once had an ample amount of soft power, but lost much of it after the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Though it possessed a strong economy and military power, the Soviet soft power ultimately declined (Nye, 2004). Sometimes hard power can have an attractive side too. To quote Osama Bin Laden, "when people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse" (Nye, 2004, p. 26). Some of the features of the powers are so intermingled that it becomes difficult at times to separate the elements of soft, hard, military or security power (Kurlantzick, 2007).

Nye cites what Niccolo Machiavelli had advised more than four Centuries ago to the princes of Italy that it is important to be feared than to be loved, but argues that, in the present circumstances it is best to be both. To conquer both the heart and the mind has become ever so important in today's world than it was ever before (Nye, 2004).

It is to be noted here that, soft power can't always alone affect the foreign policy of a nation. Therefore, there is a need to combine the elements and tools of both hard and

soft power. In this connection, Joseph Nye, in the year 2003, developed the term ‘Smart Power’ to counter this misinterpretation of soft power (Nye, 2009). The ‘Centre for Strategic and International Studies’ Commission on Smart Power states, “Smart power means developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to achieve American objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power” (Kennedy, 2013, p. 67). Smart power is the skilful combination of both hard and soft power to reach the desired outcome and is extremely useful, as soft power is not always the solution to every problem. For example, the North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un is fond of Hollywood movies, but this doesn’t affect the country’s nuclear weapon program. Similarly, the US was unable to break the alliance of Taliban and Al-Qaeda using soft power, but could finally end it in the year 2001 only with the use of military power. That being said, broader goals like protecting human rights, developing civil society, etc. can’t be achieved through fear or military power (Nye, 2009).

Although the concept of soft power itself suffers from many misinterpretations, yet it has continued to be an essential element of foreign policy. As a diplomatic tool, soft power has successfully contributed in improving diplomatic relations of many nations without using any kind of force or fear, and in the near future as well, soft power will be continued to be considered as an essential and irreplaceable element of diplomacy and will help in positively affecting the nature of diplomatic relations between and amongst the nations.

### **2.3. Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is a well-used term in international relations whose meaning is understood by everybody. Diplomacy stands for the management of international relations which is primarily related to the settlement of disputes, and differences and which should be

achieved by negotiations (Chatterjee, 2010). It was originally an instrument of states to deal with the other states. The main focus of diplomacy is communication, it is used to manage the goals of foreign policy of a state. It is an organised pattern of communication and negotiations; negotiation is a special form of communication which try to reach an understanding by discussion or sometimes through an agreement. It is based on an established body of rules and practices for communication (Kleiner, 2010).

The Oxford English dictionary defines diplomacy as “The management of international relations by negotiations; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys: the business or art of the diplomatist, skill or address in the conduct of international intercourse and negotiations.”

Diplomacy stands for an art or technique to maintain friendly relations between states. It has two aspects- Creative and Preventive. Sometimes diplomacy is closely related with Power. In fact, without power diplomacy has no use. Friedrich the Great once stated that diplomacy without power is like an orchestra without a score. In the international system, there is no common authority or government to speak or act like it is inside a state whereas states speak with such authority and this ability derives from Power (Kleiner, 2010).

In times, when the actions of different states affect each other, it becomes tough for those states to function alone or in vacuum. Jean Jacques Rousseau in his *The Body Politic* defined a state as “is forced to look outside itself in order to know itself; it depends on its whole environment and has to take in interest in everything that happens.” Every state in the international system depends not only on themselves but on its whole worldwide environment. Independent states meet each other in the international arena to resolve their conflicts and history has full of example of conflicts

and duplicity between and among states. States which are aware that their domestic policies are affected by actions of other states, they enter into one dialogue with each another and this dialogue is the substance of Diplomacy. A diplomatic dialogue is the instrument of civilised process based on which states respect for each other's view. Thus, the essential component of diplomacy is plurality, it arises from the co-existence of multiple independent states (Watson, 1982).

Diplomacy should be learned at three levels- Bilateral, Multilateral and International. Bilateral diplomacy stands for diplomatic affairs between two states and Multilateral between and among many states. Bilateral diplomacy between two developing states is often based on historical and cultural basis aiming at developing friendly mutual exchanges, economic gains are given less importance. Whereas bilateral diplomacy between two developed and rich states is often based on commercial and military considerations. International Diplomacy is to be carried out at international platform like United Nations. Regional Diplomacy is of limited type which concerned mainly with the regional interests. It is to be noted here that regional diplomacy may give rise to conflicts with respect particularly to economic issues when they effect adversely the interests of the non-members (Chatterjee, 2010).

The role of diplomacy between and among states cannot be overruled. The root cause of bilateral diplomacy can be stated as economic interdependence. It was stated that the rulers of the Middle Ages interact with each other for trade and this became the base for the establishment of the relations between states. Traditional diplomacy concerned primarily with developing friendly relations among nations through trade. Whenever there was need for trade, bilateral diplomacy becomes stronger. The nature of economic relations between states decides the allies and unfriendly relations for states. If



diplomatic relations are withdrawn from a state, then trade relations will automatically be withdrawn (Chatterjee, 2010).

Diplomacy is meant for developing international co-operation and resolving and limiting the differences between States on the basis of political, economic, social, attitude etc. It should not be power based or it must not use power as a tool. If states are not friendly then diplomacy should be initiated by a third party, either UN or by any other ally state as a step forward to re-establish diplomatic relationship between the states and to end their strained relationship (Chatterjee, 2010).

Article 2 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations states that the diplomatic missions depend on mutual consent of the states and no state is obliged to take up diplomatic relations with other states against its will as all states enjoy sovereign equality. To establish any diplomatic relations, no special form of document is needed and it is not necessary to maintain permanent diplomatic relations. Not every state is willing to maintain any permanent diplomatic relations with other states as it may sometimes affect the national budget and human resources (Kleiner, 2010).

### **2.3.1. Changing Nature of Diplomacy**

Diplomacy, over the past few decades, has been changed in different ways. In the earlier times, diplomacy was concerned primarily with managing colonisation for the colonial powers and searching for peace. But in the contemporary period, particularly after the World War II and with the establishment of the United Nations, the role of diplomacy has changed as there was change in the nature of the warfare. After the de-colonisation period, diplomacy was concerned primarily with implementing de-colonisation policies advocated by the UN. This period witnessed the beginning of the Military Diplomacy or Power Diplomacy and Diplomacy of Economic domination. Power Diplomacy

becomes conscious about its power and it becomes prone to use it whenever an opportunity arises (Chatterjee, 2010).

But after the Vietnam War it was proved that the military domination may not always achieve the objectives of the militarily powerful state. Military or Power Diplomacy is limited for two reasons. First, it creates rivalry between and amongst the states and second, its objectives are to conquer the enemy with no other ethical objectives (Chatterjee, 2010).

The use of technology in present times becomes essential element to operate diplomacy. It makes diplomacy easier, speedier and helps in resolving problems urgently. Technologically advanced countries can dominate the less advanced countries, it is for the diplomats that friendly relations between and among states can be enhanced (Chatterjee, 2010).

In the present times, a part of international community has been moving from war to peace but some others are still remaining the same. The diplomats have to do this task of transforming the entire international community from involving into warfare to maintaining peace among themselves. As the main notion of diplomacy is to protect the national interest of the States so the duty of the diplomats is to develop international framework which can help in the disappearance of warfare and the division between North-South (Chatterjee, 2010).

The role of diplomacy has been changed to a great extent from traditional form to that of the present time. Traditionally, diplomacy was confined to government-to-government interactions only but diplomacy in present times has now involved the public as well in the government activities and decision-making process. With the establishment of new democracies, shaping public opinion becomes important for the

states and in such circumstances, diplomacy aimed at including public opinion as an important instrument of diplomacy. Today many countries have started adopting communication centric policies such as public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, broadcasting and different other forms of strategic communication to improve their credibility among the international community and to build ties with foreign public (Singh & MacDonald, 2004).

Public diplomacy involves activities in various fields like information, education and culture and aimed at influencing the foreign government through persuading the citizens of that country. It is considered as a crucial tool of post-modern statecraft which generated legitimacy. Public diplomacy identifies that new communication technologies offer different new opportunities to establish interactions with the foreign public (Ham, 2005).

### **2.3.2. Public Diplomacy**

Public Diplomacy, as a term, was first coined by a former US diplomat Edmund Gullion in 1965 (Thussu, 2013). The term was developed from the word propaganda, to partly distance the overseas governmental information activities. Later on, public diplomacy has developed different meanings from the terms like public affairs which refers to governmental activities and programs undertaken to communicate policy messages to its own citizens (CPD, n.d.). The United States government refers Public Diplomacy as government sponsored programs which intends to influence public opinion in other countries. The prime instruments of public diplomacy are publication, motion pictures, cultural exchanges and radio and television (Thussu, 2013). Over the years, public diplomacy has developed itself as a transparent means through which a sovereign nation communicates with foreign publics for the purpose of promotion of national interest

and thus it includes various activities for the same such as educational exchange programs for students and scholars, visitor programs, cultural exchanges, television and radio broadcasting, etc. Such initiatives improve the reputation of the sender countries which helps in the shaping of foreign policy towards the receiver country CPD, n.d.).

Edward R. Murrow, a noted broadcaster and an ex-director of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in Kennedy administration, defined public diplomacy in the year 1963 as interactions not only aimed at foreign governments but primarily with nongovernmental individuals and organisations. Public diplomacy is not merely about public relations, it aims at building long-term relationships which helps in the formulation of government policies (Nye, 2004). Public diplomacy has the power to inform and influence the way in which publics respond to their rights and responsibilities as citizens (Walker, 2018).

Former Public diplomacy practitioner Bruce Gregory points out the interplay of time, policy goals and methods involved in the process of public diplomacy. He stated-

Public diplomacy operated through actions, relationships, images, and the words in three-time frames: 24/7 news streams, medium range campaigns on high value policies, and long-term engagement. Its tools range from electronic media to cultural diplomacy to ‘the last three feet’ of personal communication (Hayden, 2012).

Public diplomacy has three main dimensions. The first dimension is daily communications which involves explaining the context of policy decisions, both domestic and foreign. The government officials and spokespersons pay good attention in addressing the press and domestic audience after taking policy decisions which indirectly targets the foreign public and thus effects in building a positive image of

one's country in international level. Second is strategic communication where a set of themes like that of the advertising campaign is developed. These plan to work on developing symbolic events and communication to brand or for advancement of any government policies. The third dimension related to the development of lasting relationships with individuals through scholarships, exchanges, conferences, training, seminars and access to media programs. These three dimensions of public diplomacy works for building of an attractive image of a country which will help in the attainment of the desired goals (Nye, 2004).

Effective public diplomacy works on a two-way basis, which involves listening and talking because soft power rests on some shared values and that is why exchanges are more effective than broadcasting (Nye, 2004). For public diplomacy it is not what one nation says but what others hear is more important (Ham, 2005). Public diplomacy can be a powerful tool in the advancement of national interest of a nation (Kennedy, 2013). To get the outcomes as one nation wants, it required the understanding of receiver's reaction and messages on the same. It is important for a nation to be careful while communicating with the public, as foreign public may react to the same things negatively on which the domestic audience might react in a positive way (Nye, 2004).

Public diplomacy, according to Nye, is an instrument through which the governments try to mobilize the soft power resources which include culture, political values and foreign policies to communicate and attract the foreign public rather than interacting with their governments only. That is why, it is inevitably linked to power and Soft Power is the mostly referred term in Public Diplomacy. It is closely related with soft power; it helps in the implementation of the soft power resources by the government. It tries to attract the attention towards the soft power resources through broadcasting, cultural exports and exchanges etc. (Singh & MacDonald, 2004).

Along with Public Diplomacy, another commonly used term is Cultural Diplomacy which is a sub-set of public diplomacy and it is used interchangeably with soft power more often and hence has become an important term in this field (Singh & MacDonald, 2004).

### **2.3.3. Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power**

Cultural diplomacy appears to be an important term of foreign policy while discussing about public diplomacy and soft power, it is a process of mobilising cultural assets as attractors. Cultural diplomacy is an activity of governments and the term has been used extensively over the years to indicate international interactions among citizens and non-state organisations (Singh & MacDonald, 2004). In the traditional sense, it means using of one's culture in fulfilling their national interests through diplomatic channels or through the involvement of the government. Other than the government, private groups can also promote cultural diplomacy like musical concerts, film festivals, art exhibition, etc. (Sahai, 2019). It is a long-standing process which involves policies, initiatives and activities for achieving national interest specifically in three areas- cultural identity (social), soft power (political) and creativity economy (economic) and these areas are primary basis of policy approaches of cultural diplomacy (Kang, 2013).

Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD) declared that the goal of cultural diplomacy is to promote peace and stability through intercultural relations. It is the 'soft' alternative to the most 'belligerent' diplomacy (Norrman, 2013).

Walter Lacquer defined cultural diplomacy as "The use of creative expression and exchange of ideas, information and people to increase mutual understanding". Milton Cummings defined cultural diplomacy as "Exchange of ideas, information and other

aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding” (Sahai, 2019, p. 24).

UNESCO defines cultural diplomacy as cultural soft power and states that it “is a form of soft power that strives to foster the exchange of views and ideas, promote knowledge of other cultures and build bridges between communities”. The ultimate goal of cultural diplomacy is to promote positive vision about cultural diversity and use it as a source of innovation, dialogue and peace.

The history of cultural diplomacy is related with early travellers, traders, religious preachers, artists and teachers, sea-traders who used to carry their cultures wherever they went and thus they could be termed as ‘cultural ambassadors’. By way of promoting culture, cultural diplomacy promotes a country’s image in front of others and which ultimately helps in the promotion of national interest of that country. It acts as a vehicle or connecting bridge which paves the way for developing friendly relations between and amongst nations through culture (Sahai, 2019).

In the modern context, cultural diplomacy appeared in the year 1930s during the time of US President Roosevelt and the origin of the concept of soft power is very recent, even though both the concepts are used interchangeably. The central idea of cultural diplomacy is to establish connectivity and that of soft power is to co-opt others (Sahai, 2019). Culture is an element of soft power as said by Nye and one of the primary concerns of soft power is the cultural influence through foreign policy objectives. Understanding one’s culture can improve international cooperation and can help in establishing successful trade and commerce with different nations and through culture nation branding becomes possible (Kang, 2013).

Cultural diplomacy is the promotion of nations through culture- ideas, art, history, a system of values and tradition; it helps to cultivate mutual understanding between nations (Kieldanowicz, 2009). Soft power has been projected by many nations through their national culture, for e.g.- China expanded the Confucius Institutes around the world; Japan and South Korea relied on soft power in formulation of their cultural diplomacy policies. Soft power also involved in enhancing cultural competition between and among nations (Ang, Isar & Mar, 2015).

Soft power and cultural diplomacy are used interchangeably and both the terms are linked with each other. One of the three elements of soft power is culture and that is why cultural diplomacy is used identically with soft power as both the terms are related with culture itself. Therefore, while discussing soft power, cultural diplomacy will always come in.



## **Chapter 3**

# **Soft Power in India's Foreign Policy with Special Emphasis on Buddhism**

### **3.1. Introduction**

India, has been actively working in the spheres of soft power (Maini, 2016) and has been deploying various tools to project its soft power to influence the behaviour and preferences of other states towards it (Kugiel, 2016). Blarel (2012) opines that India has potential to advance its soft power through public diplomacy as it already has received ample amount of goodwill from other nations.

India is very much acclimatized with the concept of soft power, so much so that it is proving out to be a tough competitor to the United States in this field. Soft power is not a new phenomenon for India and, in fact, the application of soft power has been there in India's political context from the ancient times (Kugiel, 2016).

Joseph Nye, in his analysis, didn't pay much attention to India and its potentialities while discussing soft power, despite the fact that India fulfilled most of the requirements of becoming a soft power nation. However, he did acknowledge that India could have been counted amongst the top soft power nations if the concept existed during the cold war era. Besides, he also observed that the Asian countries had notable sources of soft power, although they were still considerably behind the U.S. and Europe in this sphere, and stated that these sources of soft power were likely to increase in future (Kugiel, 2016).

With the establishment of Public Diplomacy Division in 2006, the Government of India has been working towards enhancing soft power of India. After coming into power in the year 2014, the Narendra Modi-led Indian government has made soft power an essential component of its foreign policy and has been trying to utilize these power sources, amongst which Buddhism occupies an important position, in realising the country's national interest (Maini, 2016).

### **3.2. Categorical Division of India's Soft Power**

Shashi Tharoor says, soft power is not about conquering others, but is rather about being yourself (Tharoor, 2012). It is a nation's own resources, which make it worthy and capable. India, too, has an ample amount of soft power resources, which can be categorised into different groups. First, India's spiritual and cultural heritage, which has been playing an important role in establishing diplomatic relations with other regions, including East Asia and South East Asia. Second, the political and ethical legacies of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, etc., whose philosophies have a worldwide following even today. Third, India's film industry, more particularly Bollywood, and its television soaps, which have gained widespread popularity, not only in its neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, but all over the world (Maini, 2016).

Apart from these broad categorical divisions, there are many other sources of soft power which have been playing a vital role in international relations, making India a rich soft power nation, such as Indian Diaspora, Sports, Sanskrit language, Policies towards foreign nations, Indian Discoveries and Inventions, etc. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, which has been in power in India since 2014, has been focussing more on promoting soft power, primarily through Ayurveda, Yoga and Buddhism, as well as through the diverse Indian Diaspora. A detailed overview of these categories and various other branches and sources of soft power follows.

#### **3.2.1. Cultural Heritage**

Ali A. Mazrui, a Ugandan scholar, argued that Culture forms the heart of soft power in international relations. He cited culture as a mode of communication which can take numerous forms, besides language, music, performing arts and ideas, etc. (Thussu,

2013). Culture, in a broader sense, comprises the material and spiritual wealth created in human society and, in a narrower sense, is composed of social ideologies, systems and institutions encompassing ideas, art, religion, morality, political thoughts, science, etc. A nation's culture is capable of determining the values, rules and norms which govern its international behaviour (Hanes & Andrei, 2015).

The diverse culture of India has become popular and is admired and celebrated all over the world. Indian arts, culture and spiritualism have found many takers across the globe. The attractiveness of Indian culture resides in the diversity of its various racial, religious, ethnic and linguistic groups. From time immemorial, India has been sharing cultural and civilisational ties with several Central Asian, South-East Asian and Middle-Eastern countries, apart from attracting traders and travellers for thousands of years (Blarel, 2012 & Kugiel, 2016).

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Education Minister of independent India, was established to enhance India's cultural relations. The primary objectives of ICCR are to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes related to India's external cultural relations, to foster cultural ties and mutual relations between India and other countries, and to promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people. The ICCR has set up 36 cultural centres and one sub-centre around the world and has conducted various programmes like film fests, book fairs and arts and crafts exhibitions in these countries, thereby trying to promote the image of a multicultural Indian society (Mishra, 2017).

Among Indian cultural heritages, Indian classical music, art, literature, traditional attires, and different classical and traditional dance forms, etc., have become

exceedingly popular in many nations. To cite an example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, people around the world have whole-heartedly embraced and used *namaste*, an Indian gesture of greeting, for greeting others instead of the usual handshake. Moreover, India is one of the most ancient civilisations of the world and it was influenced by both Eastern and Western countries, particularly by Islamic and European cultures (Thussu, 2013). The impact of Islam and Christianity as well as the British colonial rule, in addition to the ancient Hindu traditions, together shaped Indian culture. Today, Indian culture is incomplete without *Qawwali* and the poetry of *Mirza Ghalib*, both of which were derived from the Islamic culture. When it comes to sports, *Cricket*, which was inherited as a part of culture during the British colonial rule, is today India's de facto national sport. Indians (men) traditionally wear variants of *Sherwanis*, which came to India only after the Muslim invasion (Tharoor, 2012).

Indian classical music has been popularised by many artists like *Sarod* virtuosos Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and Amjad Ali Khan, *Sitarist* Pandit Ravi Shankar, *Tabla* player Zakir Hussain, *Flautist* Hariprasad Chaurasia, *Shehnai* player Ustad Bismillah Khan, *Carnatic* music singer M.S. Subbulakshmi, *Santoor* player Shiv Kumar Sharma, etc. By the same token, India has many dance forms encompassing people from different regions and communities. Several Indian classical dance forms such as *Kathak*, *Kathakali*, *Bharatanatyam*, *Kuchipudi*, *Odissi*, *Mohiniyattam*, etc., have earned international recognition, and people all over the world have been learning and acquiring these dance skills (Kugiel, 2012). *Kalarippayattu*, a martial art form of Kerala, is recognised as one of the oldest and most scientific of all martial arts in the world, and it has been attracting many international trainees.

The Hindu epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are still widely followed even in today's world, so much so that they are often compared with the legendary Greek poems *Iliad*

and Odyssey (Mahapatra, 2016). Saudi Arabia, on April 15, 2021, included these two epics in their school curriculum as part of their ‘Vision 2030’. They believe this new curriculum will help the new generation in learning to become more coexistent, moderate and tolerant (Sharma, 2021). In Philippines, a pop dance ballet was produced on Rama’s quest for his wife, Sita, who was kidnapped by Ravana. The Indonesian national airlines’ name is Garuda; Garuda, in Hindu mythology, is regarded as the Vahana or vehicle of Lord Vishnu, having a mixture of features resembling a human and an eagle (Tharoor, 2008).

Apart from these, modern Indian literatures (in English medium) are also popular amongst international readers. The works of Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga, Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh and V.S. Naipaul (winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001), to name a few, are highly revered all over the world (Paul, 2014).

Likewise, Indian foods and cuisines, too, have been able to make a mark in the international arena. Indian restaurants and dishes are very much popular and are widely loved in many Western nations. In England, the Indian curry houses today employ more employees than the iron and steel, coal and shipbuilding industries combined (Tharoor, 2012); Indian restaurants in Britain serve, on an average, around 2.5 million customers every week (Mahapatra, 2016). The Australian PM, Scott Morrison, on May 31, 2020, took to his Twitter account to share a picture of a plate full of *Samosas* and *Mango Chutney* made by him, prior to his video meet with the Indian PM, Narendra Modi. Respecting the fact that the Indian PM was a vegetarian, Morrison prepared a popular Indian vegetarian snack and expressed his desire to share the same with the Indian PM. Modi humorously replied to the post, joking that the two countries are “connected by the Indian Ocean, united by the Indian Samosa!” (Kumar, 2020).

As stated earlier, India is a country rich in culture, and each and every aspect of its culture can be a soft power asset for the country. It must be mentioned here that Indian culture includes almost all the spheres of soft power, including spiritual heritage as well.

### **3.2.1.1. Spiritual Heritage**

India has always been regarded as a place of spirituality; in fact, Indian ancient tradition was itself based on spirituality. This country has given many popular spiritual leaders or gurus to the world, such as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, etc. In a roundtable organised by The Centre for Soft Power Studies, Chennai, on October 1, 2018, Dr. David Frawley, who is also known as Pandit Vamadeva Shastri, stated that India has always been a ‘Vishwaguru’, or a trendsetter, in the fields of art, education, literature, etc. (Ramabadran, 2019).

Many Indian spiritual saints and leaders have attracted or inspired people from the Western nations, who have subsequently gone on to establish spiritual links in India. In 1895, an Irish lady, Margaret Elizabeth, who later on became to be known as Sister Nivedita, met Swami Vivekananda in London and became his disciple. Likewise, Mirra Alfassa, a lady from France, worked with Sri Aurobindo and became popular as The Mother (Ramabadran, 2019).

India is a place where some of the world’s oldest religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism - emerged. It is to be noted here that Christianity reached India in AD 52, well before it was accepted by Europe. Islam came to India through the Muslim invaders and Arab traders, and spread in a peaceful way. India is an example of peaceful coexistence of all these religions; moreover, people from the persecuted religions such as the Zoroastrians, the Jews and the Bahais have found a safe haven in India (Paul,

2014). India's Buddhist and Hindu cultures have influenced South East Asia in such a way which has helped in establishing links with those nations.

Medieval India produced the *Bhakti* (devotion) movement and helped in spreading Sufism, which was aspects of Hindu and Muslim religions, respectively (Paul, 2014). India's *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy is arguably the most logical description of spirituality in the world. It is a place which has preached principles such as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is my family) and *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu* (let there be peace in the whole world). India's message of secularism and peaceful coexistence of all religions to the whole world is invaluable in this day and age where there is so much aggression and communal violence amongst the people in different parts of the world (Purushothaman, 2010).

While talking about spirituality, there is nothing that can match India's development of spiritual tools such as Yoga and Ayurveda. Today, *Yoga* is practiced all over the world, both for mental as well as physical well-being, and people, particularly in the West, have embraced Yoga, as a part of their daily lives. In view of the growing popularity of Yoga, the United Nations General Assembly, on the proposal of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, recognised June 21, the longest day of a year, as the International Yoga Day (Gupta, 2008 & Purushothaman, 2010). Modi asserted that Yoga helped in the peaceful harmony of body and mind; that it was not an exercise, but a way to discover a sense of oneness with nature and the world, and argued that it was India's invaluable gift, from its ancient heritage, to the world (Mohan, 2014). Yoga was practiced even in sub-zero temperatures at the highest battlefield of the world, the Siachen Glacier, by the Indian soldiers. The Navy personnel, too, practiced Yoga as a part of the 'Yoga Across Oceans' initiative, from the Mediterranean Sea to the South China Sea (Martin, 2015).



*Ayurveda* is regarded as one of the branches of the Vedas and is very often seen in conjunction with Yoga. Ayurvedic healthcare, treatments and massage therapies are believed to heal diseases without any side effects. This is the reason why the 3000-year-old Ayurvedic treatments have been adopted in different parts of the world. Today, there are about 2000 Ayurvedic Retreat centres all over the world and around 100 of these are situated in the United States alone (Mahapatra, 2016 & Sridhar, 2019). ‘Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana’ (S-VYASA) University, located in Bangalore, India, witnesses over 200 non-Indians studying in its campus every year, and has branches in over 30 countries worldwide. Another significant development in the field of Ayurveda is Hungary accepting Ayurveda as a part of their medical system and introducing it as an obligatory postgraduate degree course subject in its universities since 1997 (Sridhar, 2019). In India, the Modi-led government has set up a separate ministry called AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) to institutionalise India’s ancient heritages, including Yoga and Ayurveda (Martin, 2015). On 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, The Centre for Soft Power Studies, India brought together more than 26 countries to celebrate World Ayurveda Day around the world (Sridhar, 2019).

### **3.2.2. Legacies of Great Leaders**

India has produced some great leaders, whose charismatic leadership has influenced the international arena and whose ideologies are still relevant even today in many contexts. These thinkers and leaders emphasized on the role and importance of the diverse Indian values and cultures in the rise of the country. *Jawaharlal Nehru* underscored the concept of ‘Unity in Diversity’, which theorises the synthetic character of India’s soft power (Mahapatra, 2016). Nehru developed an image of India based on its age-old civilisation, making India a voice of the marginalised and the oppressed against the hegemonic power blocks. This decision helped in strengthening India’s self-respect,

placing India in a prestigious position for quite some time (Tharoor, 2012). Jawaharlal Nehru is regarded as the architect of Indian foreign policy and his policy of Non-Alignment, which was supported by 118 Third World Nations and is still remains one of the most successful aspects of Indian foreign policy (Sharma & Kumar, n.d).

India has had some eminent personalities who have shaped the modern world with their great vision of non-violence, respect for other's views, tradition, religion and culture. Prince Siddhartha, who became *Gautama Buddha* after the attainment of enlightenment, was the first figure who advocated non-violence and, in doing so, shaped the entire Asian history. His followers spread Buddhism in different parts of Asia, which had a great influence over the societies. King *Ashoka* from the Mauryan Dynasty was a great figure who was known for his kindness and generosity. He was a prominent ruler of his times and was known, at first, for his aggressive foreign policy. Later on, however, after the culmination of the Kalinga War, he renounced violence and turned into a cultivator of soft power from a hostile ruler. He converted himself to Buddhism and helped in the promotion of the religion across ancient Asia. Along the same vein, *Akbar* the Great, from the Mughal empire, married a Hindu princess and founded Din-e-Ilahi<sup>1</sup>, a new religion based on the syncretic traditions of India (K, 2011 & Mahapatra, 2016).

One of the most famous ambassadors of soft power for India was *Mahatma Gandhi*, who fought against the injustices done on the basis of race in South Africa, during his stay as a lawyer in that country. He was a prominent personality of the Apartheid

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<sup>1</sup> Din-e-Ilahi or the 'religion of God' was a system of religious beliefs introduced by Great Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1582. It was known as Tawhid-i-Ilahi or 'divine monotheism' during its time. It was a synthetic religion which consist of some of the elements of the Islam, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism and some others from Christianity and Jainism ("Din-I Ilahi", n.d.).

Movement<sup>2</sup> in South Africa. Gandhi's principles and teachings of non-violence and truth became very popular, not only in South Africa, but also in India as well (Mahapatra, 2016). Shashi Tharoor (2012) argued that Mahatma Gandhi offered India its independence through non-violence and Satyagraha, which were examples of the classic use of soft power, before the term was even coined. Ex-American President Barack Obama, in a joint session of the Indian Parliament in 2010, stated "I might not be standing before you today, as President of U.S., had it not been for Gandhi and the message he shared with the U.S. and the world" (K, 2011).

The legacies of these leaders have guided the new leaders to work in such a way so as to make India a soft power nation. Indian Prime Minister *Narendra Modi*, after coming to power in the 2014 General Elections, redefined the arena of India's foreign policy by the use of soft power. Modi put emphasis on different aspects of soft power in order to meet the objectives of foreign policy and to bolster India's position among the top powers in global politics. The principle of 'Panchamrit', which was a substitute of Panchsheel (five principles of peaceful coexistence), was introduced by him as the guiding principle of Indian foreign policy. Modi has organised many events embracing the Indian diaspora in different parts of the world and delivered strong messages to make the diaspora a core component of the India's foreign policy. On October 2, 2016, he inaugurated the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra (Indian Diaspora Centre) in New Delhi on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti and urged to consider Indian diaspora not as number but as power. Modi stressed more on public diplomacy and used digital platforms actively to establish connections with people around the world. The vision of his government, together with the development of all, is welcomed by many state heads. Modi, through

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<sup>2</sup> Apartheid was a system of legislation of racial segregation in South Africa. Mahatma Gandhi during his stay in South Africa as a law practitioner experienced racial discrimination and urged the people to fight for their rights and he led a peaceful movement against the legislation (Singh, 2018).

his works, has not only become very popular among the Indian citizens but has also been able to collect fame among the international masses as well (Heng, 2016 & Mahapatra, 2016).

### **3.2.3. India's Film Industry**

Indian films have made a great impact in the global arena. The primary Indian movie industry, known popularly as *Bollywood*, produces the highest number of movies in a year and is regarded next to Hollywood in terms of global reach. The number of followers of Indian movies throughout the entire world might not be humongous, but they are still very much popular in Asia, Middle East, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, Central Asia and Australia (Paul, 2014). Bollywood has made India attractive, exotic and colourful, and a destination for international investment and tourism. One of the primary reasons that makes Indian cinema popular among the developed countries is the presence of melodrama, songs and dance sequences (Thussu, 2013).

Bollywood refers to only the Hindi film-making industry based out of Mumbai, but by default has become a brand name for all Indian movies. Apart from Bollywood, there are other Indian language film-making houses too, which produce an equal number, or sometimes even more movies than Bollywood, and which are equally popular in many places. In the year 2012, the highest number of movies produced in India were in the Tamil language (*Kollywood*) followed by the Telegu language (*Tollywood*) and then Bollywood (Kugiel, 2016). 'Baahubali', a Telegu movie whose storyline is inspired by several patches of Indian history, is enjoyed by audiences across the world (Challagalla, 2019).

Indian movies are quite popular in other nations too. Shashi Tharoor shared, when he met top officials and state heads of Africa, they spoke about their love for Indian movies. The Senegalese are also fond of Indian movies and they watch them even if they don't understand the language or can't read the subtitles (Tharoor, 2012). Tanzania got their first permanent theatres namely 'Bharata and Krishna Cinemas', which opened in the Indian quarters. Soon after, an Indian entrepreneur Hassanali Adamali Jariwalla opened a major theatre 'Empire Cinemas' in Tanzania, pioneered the first cinemas in Tanzania and Zanzibar, and released Indian movies in the prime days of Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays. In South Africa, Bollywood movies are released every week. Countries such as Senegal, Nigeria, Russia, Japan and Peru, even without prevalent presence of Indian diaspora, show high interest in Bollywood movies (Challagalla, 2019).

Furthermore, there are many Indian actors who have their fans in every part of the world. Raj Kapoor had a huge fan following in Russia; Japan loves Rajnikanth; Kamal Hassan, whose movies are widely popular in the UAE, the USA and the UK, was also a United Nations Ambassador for HIV/AIDS. Bollywood actors such as Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, Salman Khan – all have their fan followings around the globe, including countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, France, Hong Kong, Germany, Poland, etc. Aamir Khan's movie 'Dangal', which was released in China as 'Let's Wrestle, Dad!', is amongst the top grossing movies of China, where the popularity of Indian movies had otherwise begun to decline (Challagalla, 2019). In the same vein, Indian actors like Irrfan Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Deepika Padukone, Freida Pinto, Ali Fazal, Anil Kapoor, Naseeruddin Shah, Anupam Kher, Amrish Puri, Om Puri, Shabana Azmi, etc. have featured in different Hollywood movies and series, a fact which signifies the popularity and demand of Indian actors in Hollywood.

Indian cinema is not only popular in the Asian and African continents, but has also influenced the West as well. In the Netherlands, the demand for Indian movies is very high, especially among the diasporic Indians belonging from Suriname. The famous Bengali film 'Pather Panchali' (1955), which was directed by Satyajit Ray, won international critical acclaim and was screened in New York theatres for more than seven months (Thussu, 2013). A popular Indian film of the yesteryears 'Mother India', which was based on the dignity of labours, resonated with the audiences of Africa, South East Asia and the Middle East; the movie was also nominated for an Oscar in the year 1958 (Challagalla, 2019). The Hollywood movie 'The Man Who Knew Infinity', released in 2015, was based on the life of Srinivasa Ramanujan, a famous Indian mathematician. The movie portrayed a correlation between science and religion, a characteristic trait of Indian culture and identity (Mahapatra, 2016).

In addition, Indian television soaps are also popular amongst the Indian diaspora and other foreign audiences. Tharoor revealed, the Indian TV soap, 'Kyuki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi' was the most popular television show in the history of Afghanistan till 2009, which was dubbed into the Dari language and telecast on Tolo TV, a privately run channel (Tharoor, 2012). Singapore airs an Indian television channel 'Vasantham', which broadcasts Indian cinemas from different regions. In Malaysia, Adlabs Film Company of India has formed a joint venture with the local Lotus Five Star Cinemas to operate a 51-megaplex chain in the nation (Thussu, 2013). Many popular Bollywood movies have been granted permission to complete their shooting in famous locations of Malaysia.

Many countries have introduced Bollywood-themed dance classes and use Bollywood music in parties, weddings, fashion shows and even in school dance contests. Bhangra, a Punjabi folk dance, was a part of the closing ceremony of the 30<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games in

London. In the figure skating competition of the Winter Olympics 2010, Charlie White and Meryl Davis used Indian costumes, danced to the beats of a Bollywood song and brought home the Silver medal in the process. Popular Indian cinema is being taken up as a course of study by various foreign universities as part of internationalising cultural studies (Thussu, 2013).

### **3.3. Other Aspects of India's Soft Power**

The three categories of soft power discussed above cover most of the soft power aspects that India has. However, there are other aspects which are not included in these categories but are equally essential components of India's soft power and are discussed below.

#### **3.3.1. Sanskrit**

India is a multilingual nation where every community has its own language; some languages have been newly recognised while many others have been present from the ancient times. Sanskrit is a language which is related to the Vedas and has been in use since the Vedic period. The language has played an important role in formulating the character of India and is a prominent asset of India's soft power. It has provided a special identity to India and to its civilisational history.

Moreover, Sanskrit also has a great influence in many parts of the world. The Indonesian language is very much influenced by Sanskrit and, in fact, certain words of Sanskrit are used as it is in Indonesian. Mongolian rulers wrote their names in Sanskrit, rather than their own language, and this practice has continued till the present as well (Silva, 2015). It is mentionable that, Indian scholars have assembled around 160,000 texts in Sanskrit till date (Mahapatra, 2016).

In June 2015, the World Sanskrit Conference was held in Bangkok, where the then External Affairs Minister Late. Sushma Swaraj spoke about the universality of the Sanskrit language and underlined its relevance, besides opining that proficiency in the language would help in solving many global issues of the current times such as poverty, unsustainable consumption, global warming, terrorism, etc. as Sanskrit ‘purifies the minds of the people and thus sanctifies the whole world’ (Pant, 2015). On 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2020, Dr. Gaurav Sharma, a newly elected Indian-origin member of Parliament in New Zealand, first took oath in the Maori language (New Zealand’s indigenous language) and then the Sanskrit language, showing respect for the cultural traditions of both the nations (“Indian Origin”, 2020).

In the West as well, thousands of students have benefited from the knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian literature. Mr. Oscar Pujol, an Indologist from Spain, claimed in the Conference on Soft Power held in New Delhi, 2018, that a second renaissance of Sanskrit took place in Europe, which influenced many modern linguistics. He also spoke in favour of a need for a third Sanskrit renaissance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Nair, 2019).

### **3.3.2. Indian Democracy**

India is the world’s largest functioning democracy, where millions of people enjoy their power to choose, elect or change the government and, in doing so, take part in the decision-making process, a fact which appeals to many people across countries. In the post-Cold War era, Indian democracy inspired many nations to opt for a democratic form of government. This system of government can be termed as a peaceful way of transferring power from one party to another, without bloodshed, and India has been testimony to this from the time of independence (Paul, 2014).



John Keane stated that Nehru's vision of democracy was different from the Western version and that India was the first country to experiment in creating national unity, economic growth, religious toleration and social equity through democracy, where the social reality resided in the caste system, language, hierarchy, etc. (Thussu, 2013).

Democracy is one of the key principles of India's international engagements and it was Atal Bihari Vajpayee who first started using democracy as a tool for the same (Mohan, 2014). The successors of Vajpayee also worked towards including democracy as a core component of international relations. India was the founding member of the 'Communities of Democracies' (CoD), which is a global inter-governmental coalition formed to support common democratic values and standards outlined in the Warsaw Declaration. It also joined the United Nations Democracy Fund in 2005 and was its second major donor after the US (Lahiri, 2017).

India has supported many Asian countries including its neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Mongolia to opt for democratic form of government. Prof. S.D. Muni, former Indian Ambassador, has stated that India always supported inclusive democracy and without India South Asia would not have been converted to democratic space which it is today. According to Prof. Muni, "efforts to impose democracy pro-actively will certainly boomerang, but when a society is ready, we should support and encourage democracy" (ORF, 2019).

The democratic safeguards and the concept of 'unity in diversity' have brought the diverse Indian groups in terms of race, religion, caste, ethnicity and language, together within a same framework. The model of Multiculturalism, as well, has been successful in managing the diversity of India (Kugiel, 2016).

### 3.3.3. Indian Diaspora

India's Diaspora is one of the major sources of soft power for the country. The Indian Diaspora is highly skilled and has a high level of education and income as well (Kumari, 2016). It has the capability of positively influencing people all over the world with its peaceful quality and character. In his article, 'The Great Indian Diaspora', Sreeram Chaulia states that, "For the most part, an average American, Canadian or Dutchman does not see Indian immigrants as national security or economic threats, thanks to their humble, flexible and endearing qualities" (Gupta, 2008).

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, a separate Ministry established by the Government of India dedicated to its diaspora, reported that Indian diaspora has a size of about 25 million, including Non-Residential Indians (NRIs), Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs)<sup>3</sup> and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs)<sup>4</sup> in more than 75 countries. Of these, over 5.5 million are in the Gulf, 2.2 million are in the US, 1.7 million in the UK and over a million in Canada (Gautam, 2013 & Singh, 2017). Millions of others are spread over countries like Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, etc. (Blarel, 2012).

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<sup>3</sup> If a foreign national, who was eligible to become citizen of India or was a citizen of India on or after the commencement of Indian Constitution or belonged to a territory that became part of India after India's independence, is eligible for availing OCI card. Minor children of such person are also eligible for OCI. If the person had ever been a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh, that person will not be eligible for OCI. OCIs are allowed to a multipurpose, multiple entry, lifelong visa allowing them to visit India at any time and for any length and not required police reporting. They enjoy all rights in the economic, financial and education fields with some exemptions (MEA, n.d.).

<sup>4</sup> If a foreign national (except from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal) who held an Indian Passport at any time or if either of that person's parents/ grandparents/ great grandparents was born and are permanent resident in India as per Government of India Act, 1935 and other territories that become part of India after that or who is a spouse of a citizen of India or a PIO is eligible for PIO card. PIO card holders not required visa to India for 15 years, exempted from registration at Foreigner Registration Office for 180 days stay, enjoys certain economic, financial and education benefits (MEA, n.d.).

The Indian Diasporic community is helping India economically in the alleviation of poverty through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and by sending remittances. The World Bank report of 2014 stated that, remittances sent by the Indian overseas community were the highest in the world that year, which counted at \$70 billion, followed by China at \$64 billion and the Philippines at \$28 billion (Singh, 2017). In 2016, the total amount of remittances sent by the diaspora was \$62 billion, which was again the highest in the world (Challagalla, 2017), and it retained the top position in the year 2018 as well, with a count of \$79 billion, according to the World Bank report (“India Highest”, 2019).

The Government of India has, at different times, unveiled various measures to engage the Diaspora, such as appointing a High-Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, launching the PIO card scheme, organising annual Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award and offering Dual Citizenship to its overseas citizens, among others (Mahalingam, n.d.).

Diaspora is not only a soft power source for India, but also plays a specific role as an agent of soft power; the members of the Indian Diasporic community can be regarded as unofficial Indian ambassadors. Wherever they go, the Indian diaspora always carry along with them the rich cultural heritages of India and its diverse cultures, festivals, music, art, spirituality, cuisines, handicraft and different cultural values and beliefs, as well as customs and practices. It is because of the Indian diaspora that Yoga has been adopted and embraced by many nations around the world. The Bollywood movies and various Indian television serials have become famous in more than 90 countries through the diaspora.

Apart from culture, the diaspora also carries with it, knowledge. India is regarded as a knowledge hub, and for this reason, there is a high demand of Indians in the developing

countries. Sundar Pichai, Satya Narayana Nadella, Leena Nair, Shantanu Narayen, etc., to name a few, have been serving in the top positions of some world-class MNCs (Kumari, 2016 & Challagalla, 2017).

The role of diaspora can also be seen in the policy making process of India. Diaspora is helping shape India's foreign policy; one important and successful event that can be cited in this regard is the passing of the India-US Nuclear deal in 2008. Also, the Indian community abroad is helping in returning the stolen artefacts of the country. The 'Indian Pride Project' was successful in bringing back home the famous Nataraja from Australia, and the sandstone Yakshi from the British Museum, London, etc. (Kumari, 2016 & Challagalla, 2017).

#### **3.3.4. Further Assorted Soft Power Assets**

India has more than 700 Research and Development (R&D) centres, besides having one of the largest pools of *skilled manpower* in the world. In modern computing, many Indians have reached the top positions, e.g., the inventor of the Pentium Chip, Vinod Dham. Indian IT companies such as TCS and Infosys are providing software solutions to the world. The eminence of the Indian space program can be gauged from the success of Mangalyaan, or Mars Orbital Mission (MOM), and Chandrayaan, India's lunar probe (K, 2011).

India's *tourist* destinations, be it beaches, hills or heritage sites, attract a huge number of tourists every year from different parts of the globe. India has as many as 38 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which is the sixth-highest in the world, and the list is expanding. The country is ranked 44<sup>th</sup> out of 160 countries in the Good Country Index (GCI) (Gupta, 2020). India is regarded as a holy place and tourists visit the country to explore these places and to attain peace and tranquillity. The holy places, including

Ajmer Sharif Dargah, Amarnath, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Vaishno Devi Dham, Kedarnath, Golden Temple, Shirdi, Bodh Gaya etc., besides the Maha Kumbh Mela, which is held every 12 years in Prayagraj (formerly known as Allahabad), attract a large number of foreign tourists (K, 2011). The ‘Incredible India’ tourism campaign is an initiative adopted by the Government of India to brand Indian tourist destinations and to attract tourists.

India has offered *refuge* to a large number of refugee communities from around the globe, in spite of the fact that it doesn’t have any specific refugee law till date. By the same token, India has provided religious and cultural freedom to Jews, Parsis, Muslims and some sects of Christians, among others (Tharoor, 2012). The Dalai Lama has taken refuge in India since 1959, and owing to the presence of the Tibetan spiritual leader, India continues to attract visitors and supporters from around the world (CPD, 2018).

India’s innovation in the field of *mathematics* is unparalleled. The invention of Zero and the decimal system are among the greatest gifts India has offered to the humankind. Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Hon’ble Vice President of India, at the Conference on Soft Power 2018, held in Delhi, quoted the saying of the great scientist, Albert Einstein, who said, “We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made” (Naidu, 2019, p. 4).

Indian loves to play, and there are some major international sports in which India has been able to grasp the top positions. Viswanathan Anand (Chess), Sachin Tendulkar, Virat Kohli, MS Dhoni and Mithali Raj (Cricket), Mary Kom (Boxing), Pankaj Advani (Billiards), Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu (Badminton), Sunil Chhetri and Bhaichung Bhutia (Football), Dhyan Chand and Dhanraj Pillay (Hockey), Sania Mirza (Tennis) and Neeraj Chopra (Javelin throw) are some of the Indian sporting stalwarts who are

not only popular, but are counted amongst the top international players and have represented India in different international tournaments, winning laurels and medals alike for the country. The country has adopted many initiatives to popularise Indian sports among the world and to use sports as a soft power. A prime example of this is the Indian Premier League (IPL), a professional Indian cricket league inaugurated in 2008, where a number of international players take part, and which has surged a new-found excitement among the cricket fans of the world. Likewise, other professional leagues like the Pro Kabaddi League (launched in 2014), the Indian Super League (Football) (launched in 2014), the Premier Badminton League (launched in 2016), etc., have helped in projecting India's image as a sporting nation on the world stage. Besides, the organisation of the Commonwealth Games 2010 in Delhi, the inauguration of Indian Grand Prix in Formula One Racing in Noida in 2011, etc., are examples of sports becoming an excellent outlet for India and its soft power (Kugiel, 2016).

In addition, India is amongst the top contributors to the United Nations Peacekeeping forces in the world, and is also an avid supporter of multilateral diplomacy and international law (Kugiel, 2016). It also provides financial assistance to various countries for strengthening their democratic institutions and for capacity building. A *foreign aid* agency called 'Indian Agency for Partnership in Development (IAPD)' has been created in India in relation with foreign aid assistance. India has provided financial assistance at different times to different countries, in general, and to the South Asian countries, in particular. It provided assistance to Bhutan's hydropower sector, to Afghanistan to construct a new Parliament building, which was inaugurated in the month of December, 2015, and also to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Maldives and a few African countries. In Africa, India has been providing aid for infrastructural projects and helping in the field of Information Technology and the

development of E-network. Further, India has been providing scholarships to foreign students and scholars, thereby gaining national interest, and institutions like the ICCR have been actively working towards this. In this regard, India sanctioned 25,000 scholarships for African students in the India-Africa Summit, 2011, and in 2016, raised it to 50,000 (Maini, 2016 & Lahiri, 2017).

India has also launched a bilateral assistance program called the 'Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation' (ITEC) Programme, instituted by a decision of the Indian Cabinet on 15 September 1964. Under ITEC, 161 countries from Asia, East Europe (including USSR), Latin America, the Caribbean, Pacific and Small Island countries are invited to share in the Indian developmental experience. ITEC program has various components- it organises training courses for civilian and defence personnel, deputation of Indian experts abroad and study tours and consultancy services (ITEC, n.d.).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, India stood as a saviour to many nations and contributed in the global *pharmaceutical* and wellness sector by providing hydroxychloroquine (an antimalarial used for coronavirus treatment), Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits and test kits to 100 countries, besides expediting R&D efforts for vaccine development. Although India itself struggled during the pandemic, yet it helped others in fighting the same. Free vaccines were sent to around 37 countries, 17 received the vaccines through Covax mechanism, and the remaining 17 through the combination of both or by commercial sales. While also keeping in mind the domestic requirement of vaccines, India has sent vaccines to each and every country which has asked for it, whether developed, developing or under-developed, and will continue to do so. On account of these contributions, India has been termed as the Pharmacy of the World. Furthermore, India is also a part of the Quad Vaccine Initiative, via which the UK, the US, Japan and Australia have joined hands for the purpose of vaccine

development. India's vaccine assistance program and 'vaccine diplomacy' have helped it in establishing cordial diplomatic relationships with other countries; an important example in this regard being Canada, with whom India's diplomatic relations have come to a normalcy, which was not the case during the preceding months (Dhar, 2021 & Roy, 2021). Till April 2022, India has sent over 229 million vaccines as gift and as part of Covax mechanism under the aegis of the 'Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation' (MEA, 2022).

### **3.4. Soft Power and Indian Foreign Policy**

There are several other resources that India has, which contribute to its soft power; however, only possessing these assets will not make India powerful, there is a need to transfer these resources into influential policies and strategies (Thussu, 2013). Even though the use of soft power is apparent in Indian diplomacy in the post-Cold War period, how India converts these assets extensively into strategies or capabilities will determine the success of India's foreign policy. The Indian government, however, has undertaken some initiatives in this perspective. One significant move in this regard is the establishment of the Public Diplomacy Division under the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in the year 2006. Public Diplomacy is a key instrument of a country's foreign policy, with regards to its soft power, in aiming to influence the foreign public (Kugiel, 2016).

#### **3.4.1. Public Diplomacy**

Right after the Cold War period, the entire world order had changed, and by observing that the other great powers were using public diplomacy extensively and beneficially, India, too, invested in the arena. India wanted to popularize its image and employed new initiatives, in place of traditional diplomatic practices, to enhance its global



influence. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, External Publicity Division (within the MEA), and the ICCR are the leading organisations which have been working towards promoting India's image on the global platform. The External Publicity Division is entrusted with working for various press coverages of India's overseas visits and inbound VVIP visits to India, organising briefings, conducting background interactions with the Media, etc. (Kugiel, 2016).

Apart from these, the Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) was established in order to promote India's positive image to the international as well as domestic audiences; in short, the PDD was set up for projecting India's soft power identity. In 2014, the External Publicity Division merged with the Public Diplomacy Division, to be jointly known as the External and Public Diplomacy Division (XPD) (Kugiel, 2016). This Division is an intermediary between the Ministry and the Media, authorised for the publicity of India's foreign policy through briefings, press interactions and other media events. It is also responsible for the maintenance of the official website of the MEA and its social media platforms, publications, facilitation of foreign media based in India and documentary of films, and other publicity measures aimed at projecting India's soft power.

At the first Indian Public Diplomacy International Conference (2010) in New Delhi, the then Foreign Secretary of India, Smt. Nirupama Rao, remarked that the voice of India must be heard by diverse audiences and in multiple situations. Public Diplomacy is a real-world phenomenon and the projection of India's soft power is a part of its public diplomacy (Thussu, 2013).

There are some public bodies, apart from the government, which have an important role in public diplomacy, like the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA). The ICWA was established as a think tank in 1943, and in 2001, it was converted into a semi-autonomous agency under the MEA via an Act of Parliament. ICWA has signed 53 MoUs with partner institutions of different countries. The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a semi-autonomous think tank, plays an auxiliary role for the MEA in external relations with developing nations. The External Services Division (ESD) of All India Radio (AIR), which was established in 1939 by the Government of India, broadcasts in more than 100 countries in 27 different languages to disseminate the Indian perspective abroad (Kugiel, 2016 & Hall, 2012).

The Public Diplomacy of India has two primary objectives – firstly, to alleviate active or inactive fears about India's rise within the international community and secondly, to enable the country in branding itself as a popular destination for tourism and foreign direct investment (Mazumdar, 2020).

India has adopted 'destination branding' as a part of 'Brand India' or 'Nation Branding' to attract foreign tourists and investments. The establishment of a Trust called the 'India Brand Equity Foundation' (IBEF) in 1996, jointly by the public and private elites under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with the objective to promote the 'Made in India' label in the overseas markets, can be viewed as one of the earliest efforts in this regard. The IBEF launched the 'India Everywhere' campaign in 2006 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, to portray the transformation of a relatively closed economy to an open one that welcomed international trade, investment and commerce (Thussu, 2013). Like IBEF, the Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) was also established under the -Ministry of Commerce and Industry as a trade

and investment organisation of India with its sole focus on the Indian Engineering Sector (Mazumdar, 2020).

In the year 2002, India launched a tourism promotion campaign, 'Incredible India', under the Ministry of Tourism, to attract international tourists, and this campaign was successful in increasing the number of tourist arrivals in India. In 2014, the 'Make in India' campaign was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to encourage foreign companies to manufacture their products in India and to promote India as a global manufacturing hub. This campaign was launched to facilitate investment and innovation opportunities in the country, enhance skill development and protect India's intellectual property. Under this campaign, foreign investments and new companies began to rise in India, which has resulted in an upswing in India's GDP and its overall economy. A prominent feature of this campaign was that 100 percent Foreign Direct Investment was permitted in 25 sectors, which, aptly, didn't include Space, Defence and the Media. In 2015, the EEPC and Make in India campaigns were showcased in one of the largest trade fairs of the world, the Hannover Messe or Hannover Fair, in Germany, where India was, additionally, designated as an official partner country too (Mazumdar, 2020).

In addition, India has provided concessional Lines of Credit<sup>5</sup> (LOC) for various development projects in Africa, South East Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and in India's neighbouring nations. The projects include, among others, the Irrigation Project in Senegal, which helped in doubling its rice cultivation, setting up of the regional

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<sup>5</sup> Concessional Line of Credit (LOC) is a pre-set borrowing limit which can be tapped into at any time. The borrower can take money until the limit is reached, and after the repayment, it can be borrowed again in the case of an open line of credit (Hayes, 2021). The Government of India under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) granted development assistance to more than 300 LOCs worth US\$ 30.66 billion which have been extended to 64 countries through the Exim Bank of India (MEA, 2021).

centre for excellence in information technology in Ghana, Power Transmission System in Mali, Urban Transportation System in the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. (Suri, 2011).

Moreover, the Public Diplomacy Division of India has been helping in organising Indian Film Festivals in various countries like Brazil (Brasilia and Sao Paulo), Mexico (Mexico City), Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur), etc. The Division has also produced packaged selections of Indian music of different genres, like ‘Six Decades of Bollywood Music’ and ‘Music as Therapy’. Six Decades of Bollywood Music was, in fact, used as a gift during a high-level Indian visit to Pakistan (Suri, 2011).

Furthermore, the Government of India has undertaken different initiatives to acknowledge the contribution of overseas Indians towards India’s development and in fostering India’s soft power abroad. Since 2003, the flagship event of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), has been organised on 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> January every year, in which the contributions of deserving overseas Indians towards India are recognized. In 2010, an amendment of the Representation of People Act allowed NRIs to be included in India’s voter list, which was not the case earlier; however, it needed the NRIs to be present physically to cast their votes (Naujoks, 2020).

Under the Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children, the Indian government has been providing scholarships to the tune of USD 4,000 per annum to around 100 to 150 PIO and NRI students for various undergraduate courses (Naujoks, 2020). To familiarize the Indian-origin youth belonging to the age group 18-30 years with the country, the Indian government has initiated the ‘Know India Programme’ (KIP), which includes a 25-day course enabling the participants to trace their origin and roots back in India. For the program, preference is given to the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO)s

from the Girmitiya<sup>6</sup> countries like Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, South Africa, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and Reunion Island.

Another initiative undertaken by the Indian government is the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana (PTDY), introduced in the financial year 2018-19, for the elderly diaspora (45-65 years of age) of the aforementioned seven Girmitiya countries, belonging to the lower income group. Other welfare schemes adopted by the Indian government for the diaspora include Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY)<sup>7</sup>, Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF)<sup>8</sup>, etc. (Naujoks, 2020).

On 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2010, the PDD launched the Digital Diplomacy campaign by utilising the full range of Web 2.0 (Palit, 2018). Web 2.0 offers the government different channels to communicate with the overseas and domestic audiences through an interactive media. It also acts as a means to counter the negative narratives propagated by various militant organisations and NGOs, who are well adept at using technology for their sinister means (Hall, 2012).

The External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division of the MEA, in 2018, launched the *Bharat Ek Parichay* initiative to establish Bharat Ek Parichay corners in distinguished educational institutions globally. These corners are single-point locations

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<sup>6</sup> Girmitiyas are known as the Indian indentured labours who left India to serve as labourers in the sugarcane fields of British colonies during the middle and late 19<sup>th</sup> century. GIRMIT is a corrupt form of English word 'Agreement'. A labour emigrating under an Agreement or Gimit was called a 'Girmitiya' ('GIRMIT.org', n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> PBBY is a mandatory insurance scheme for safeguarding Indian emigrant workers falling under Emigration Check Required (ECR) category going for employment in ECR countries. ECR is a special passport required by the Indians to travel to certain countries (MEA, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> ICWF was set up in 2009 to assist overseas Indian nationals in the times of emergency in deserving cases or on the basis of means tested. ICWF supports emergency evacuation of Indian nationals from conflict zones, natural disaster hitting zones and other challenging situations (MEA, 2019).

for disseminating information and knowledge about Indian art, culture, religion, philosophy, etc., through selected books which are sent from India.

It is observed that Public Diplomacy is often used interchangeably with Cultural Diplomacy, but both the terms have different connotations. Public Diplomacy deals with unilateral communication, which includes the public or general masses, whereas Cultural Diplomacy is solely related to a nation's culture and cultural exchanges. Like Public Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy has also been a diplomatic tool of India for years and has played a crucial role in influencing the preferences of other nations towards India.

### **3.4.2. Cultural Diplomacy**

Culture can be termed as the prime source of a country's soft power and India is no different; it has been an essential tool of foreign policy for the country. Cultural Diplomacy involves the use of culture, art, music, etc., in establishing and fostering cooperation with other countries. In India, the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Culture have been engaged in setting up a legal framework and directions through which cultural cooperation with different countries can be established. The Ministry is also involved in the translation of literature in Indian languages into five UNESCO languages through the 'Indian Literature Abroad' project (Kugiel, 2016). The Ministry, in the financial year 2020-2021, sanctioned Rs. 289.07 lakhs to 32 Indian Missions abroad for 209 Cultural Societies.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) is the principal public institution which has been working in the field of culture by formulating and implementing policies relating to India's cultural relations and cultural exchanges between India and other countries. It is a semi-autonomous agency which works under the Ministry of

External Affairs (Kugiel, 2016). The primary objective of the ICCR is to encourage people-to-people interactions between India and the other countries and to project India's diverse cultural identity all over the world. The ICCR provides a platform to promote Indian culture through art, folk art, theatre, instrumental and vocal music of Carnatic and Hindustani genres to foreign audiences. The agency also assists cultural troupes and delegations coming from foreign countries to India (ICCR, 2020).

There are 38 cultural centres of the ICCR all over the world which work in coordination with the Indian Embassies. These centres organise various Indian events and festivals like the Gandhi Jayanti, Guru Nanak Jayanti, Independence Day, Republic Day, International Yoga Day, Holi, Diwali, etc., in the foreign countries. In the financial year 2019-20, the ICCR organised cultural festivals like the Ramayana Festival with participation from eight countries, the Latin American Festival, Egypt by the Ganga, the International Folk Dance and Music Festival and Symphony Orchestra of Castile and Leon, etc. (ICCR, 2020).

The ICCR has set up chairs of Indian Studies at many leading universities of different nations for the purpose of teaching, higher studies and research; it also provides scholarships and fellowships to foreign students. In the academic year 2019-20, it offered 2069 scholarships to newly admitted foreign students interested to study in India. Further, in the same year ICCR administered 26 scholarship schemes to foreign students, out of which 16 were administered on behalf of the Ministry of External Affairs, 03 on behalf of the Ministry of AYUSH and the remaining 07 were their own scholarship schemes (ICCR, 2020). Additionally, the ICCR is also running programmes to popularise Hindi, Sanskrit and Yoga overseas.

The Government of India, as a part of its cultural diplomatic practice, has organized different cultural conferences and events. For example, India organised the Sufi Conference in New Delhi from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2016, which was attended by a number of Sufi leaders from countries around the globe, including Pakistan (Maini, 2016).

Indian culture, besides art, music, dance, movies, theatre and literature, includes religion as well. Of all the religions that India has, Buddhism has given India a unique identity. Through Buddhism and Buddhist culture, India has been able to strengthen its place among the leading soft power nations. Although Buddhism originated in India, Nepal claims it as its own due to the fact that the birth place of Buddha lies in present-day Nepal.

### **3.5. Buddhism**

#### **3.5.1. A Historical Context**

Buddhism originated in India as an anti-caste, anti-Brahmin and anti-Vedic tradition (Scott, 2016). As a matter of fact, many recognize Buddhism as Hinduism's child. Although Buddhism developed as a religion, many people see it as a way of life to attain peace. In fact, Buddhists are known not as followers of the religion, but as the followers of Buddha and his teachings (Smith, 2006 & Morgan, 2010).

The Buddhist Lamas don't consider Buddhism as a religion in the truest sense of the term, the reason being that, in Buddhism, they don't focus on any supreme being, but rather, they study about their own selves and about the nature of their minds. Lama Thubten Yeshe stated that Buddhism, according to the Lamas, is more practical and emphasizes on matters such as how to lead lives, how to be peaceful and healthy, etc.; Buddhist teachings are more into philosophy, science and psychology (Ribush, 1998).



Buddhism encapsulates Buddha's teachings and the inner experiences and realisation of these teachings. Buddha imparted as many as eighty-six thousand teachings, and all these teachings and their inner realisation together constitute Buddhism. Buddhism can be divided into two divisions – 'Basic Buddhism' and 'Advance Buddhism'. Basic Buddhism deals with the basic teachings of Karma, Mind, Meditation, past and future lives, etc., and Advance Buddhism includes teachings related to the path to liberation, path to enlightenment, etc. (Gyatso, 2002).

There are no official biographies of Buddha, and even his date of birth is a controversial subject. His life story was written after many hundred years of his demise, but some events included in these biographies were not present in the earlier tales concerning Buddha. The most well-known of these biographies are the *Mahavastu* (The Great Story) and the *Lalitavistara* (Graceful Description or Pleasurable Biography), both written in the first century CE. The first formal biography of Buddha, however, was the *Buddhacharita* (Acts of Buddha), written in the second century CE by Ashvaghosha, a popular Indian philosopher, monk, poet and playwright. It comprised 28 classical Indian songs, 13 of which have been preserved in Sanskrit (Morgan, 2010).

Buddha, in general terms, signifies the 'awakened one'; it means someone who has awakened from the sleep of ignorance and who sees things as they really exist. Buddha is a person who is free from any kind of mental barrier and from faults. The founder of the Buddhist religion is known as the *Buddha Shakyamuni*, where 'Shakya' means the royal family in which he was born, and 'Muni' means the Able One. He was born as a prince in Lumbini, which was located at the northern edge of the plain of the Ganges, just below the Himalayas, and which was situated in India, but is now a part of Nepal (Gyatso, 2002 & Smith, 2006).

The traditional date of Buddha's birth is given as 560 BCE, but the Theravada Buddhists put it as 543 BCE. Other sources state that Buddha was born either 100 or 218 years before the sanctification of King Ashoka, the third emperor of the Maurya Dynasty; it is to be noted here that both the numbers (100 & 218) are highly symbolic in Buddhism. His birthday is celebrated in India on the full moon day of the fourth month of the Indian calendar, i.e., Vaishakha, whereas Japanese Buddhists celebrate it on 8<sup>th</sup> April every year. His name was Siddhartha, which literally means one 'who has attained his goals', and his family name was Gautama (Morgan, 2010).

At the age of 29 years, Siddhartha left his palace in search of enlightenment and found his suitable site for meditation in a place near Bodh Gaya in India. He continued meditation there and the next morning, became the fully enlightened one, or the Buddha (Gyatso, 2002), and the place where he attained enlightenment came to be known as the *Diamond Seat* or *Diamond Throne* (Morgan, 2010).

Neither Buddha nor his followers saw him as a God, in fact, he didn't even demand his followers to accept his teachings or make any claim to the unalterable truth. The Buddhists are bonded in one community, or Sangha (community of monks), through three elements, which are known as the 'Three Jewels of Buddhist Beliefs'. The first is mutual tolerance, which is also known as Spiritual Friendship; Buddhists are free from all kinds of violent schisms and religious battles. The second element is their respect for Buddha and his journey towards spiritual truth, and the third element is expressed through the word *Dharma* (in Sanskrit) or *Dhamma* (in Pali). In the word 'Dhamma', the orbs of the words, 'truth', 'teaching' and 'law', can be found (Smith, 2006). Dharma is the absolute objective truth and it consists of the teachings of Buddha (Williams, Tribe and Wynne, 2012).

### 3.5.2. Sects of Buddhism

The three prime schools of Buddhism- *Mahayana* (The Great Vehicle), *Theravada* (The School of the Elders) and *Vajrayana* (The Way of the Diamond), are operating throughout the world with the vision of spreading Buddha's teachings. These schools of Buddhism believe in Four noble truths and the Eightfold path as preached by Buddha. The Four Noble Truths which are the basis of Buddha's Teachings are 1) Suffering, 2) The Cause of Suffering, 3) The End or Cessation of Suffering and 4) The Path that leads to the end of suffering. The Eightfold Path of Buddhism that leads to the end of sufferings are- Right to Understanding, Right to Thought, Right to Speech, Right to Action, Right to Livelihood, Right to Effort, Right to Mindfulness, and Right to Concentration (McLeod, 2018 & Mark, 2020).

Mahayana Buddhism formed after almost 400 years of Buddha's death. This school of Buddhism follows the love and compassion message of Buddha and respects Buddha as a cosmic Dharmic force than a specific historical person. They also believe in presence of a number of Buddhas in ten different directions of the present world. Mahayana Buddhism is believed to be the largest school of Buddhism as it is prevalent in countries with large Buddhist populations like China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam (Nakamura, 2007 & Morgan, 2010).

Theravada Buddhism, the second largest branch, put emphasis on Buddha's message of wisdom and regard Buddha as a human being. They believe Buddha's influence will last for 5000 years after his death and at that time his relics will magically gather at the Bodhi tree root, where Buddha attained enlightenment, and will vanish in a flash of light. Theravada Buddhism believes in meditation as the way to enlightenment. Theravadins work for their own salvation whereas, Mahayanists work for the salvation

of all. 'Tripitaka' or the 'Pali Canon' is the collection of scriptures of the Theravada Buddhism. This branch of Buddhism is practiced in countries like Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Laos and Cambodia. This sect of Buddhism is also known as 'Southern Buddhism' (Morgan, 2010 & "Buddhists", 2012).

The smallest among the prime branches of Buddhism is the Vajrayana School or Tantric Buddhism. This form of Buddhism is practiced in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and Mongolia. In Vajrayana, Buddha is regarded as the mirror to our own minds. This branch of Buddhism is also termed as esoteric and involves mystical practices. 'Vajra master' or teacher plays an important role in Vajrayana, as the teacher has the authority to give access to tantric practices. In Vajrayana, predominantly the female deities are worshipped (Morgan 2010 & Williams, Tribe & Wynne, 2012).

Apart from these prime schools of Buddhism, *Zen* Buddhism of Japan has been also gaining prominence in the Western countries. Besides, the Buddhists who don't accept the vision of Mahayana Buddhism, are termed as *Hinayana*, which means The Inferior Vehicle. This is the most conservative form of Buddhism and it works for individual salvation through meditation. Hinayana Buddhism has two subdivisions- 1) the Sravakas and 2) the Pratyekabuddhas, these two subdivisions are further divided into different parts. The Sravakas are divided as- a) emanated Sravakas, b) independent ones, c) those who have reached peace and d) those who have adhered to philosophical tenets. The Pratyekabuddhas have only a single category divided into four topics- a) their view, b) their samadhi, c) their conduct/practice and d) the result they obtain (Williams, Tribe & Wynne, 2012 & Cabezon, 2013).

On October 14, 1956, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar converted to Navayana (the new vehicle) Buddhism founded by him by rejecting Mahayana, Theravada sects along with

Hinduism. The concept of Navayana Buddhism is based on twenty-two vows directed by Ambedkar to his followers (darokar, et.al, 2021). The motto of Navayana is based on the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity which were drawn from the French Revolution, rather than the concepts followed by traditional Buddhism like karma, rebirth and other supernatural elements (Oliver, n.d.). *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, a book written by Ambedkar is regarded as the holy book of Navayana Buddhism. Navayana Buddhism is radical in nature and is also known as Neo-Buddhism, Ambedkarite Buddhism and Bhimayana (Mukerji, 2020).

From India, Buddhism started to spread in the countries towards the South, Southeast and West of India. After reaching China, it was influenced by the Chinese culture and from thereon, made its way to Japan and the Tibetan region. It gradually became modernised with the contact of the West, before entering into Europe and North America. The objective of the religious tradition of Buddhism is to unite the diverse ideas and practices of various communities throughout much of Asia and the West. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Western world thought of Buddhism as an idea that existed only in the far East, with limited exposure.; it became to be stereotyped with the phrase, 'Far East'. It was only later that the Western world got access to the knowledge and ideas of Buddhism in the form of texts and manuscripts in libraries and institutes of Europe, after which the history of Buddhism began to be systematically investigated by them (Berkwitz, 2006). Thus, Buddhism became popular among the people of the West, besides Asia.

It is to be noted here that, the Buddhist groups in India are demanding for separate religious status of Buddhism in India. They are demanding for the amendment of Article 25 (2) (b) of the Indian Constitution as per the recommendations of the 'National Commission to review the working of the Constitution' (NCRWC) or Justice MN

Venkatachaliah Commission, 2002. Explanation II of Article 25 (2) (b) reads “the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly”. According to the followers of Buddhism, the Article is a controversial one as it doesn’t clearly mention whether Buddhism and Jainism are separate religions or parts of Hinduism. The members of the ‘All India Action Committee for Buddhist Law’(AIACBL) stated that the Buddhist population in India is higher than what census says because many of the Buddhists are included in the Hindu category and for the same reason, they are demanding for the separate religion status for Buddhism (Jain, 2004 & Kumar 2018).

Over the years, Buddhism, as a religion, has transformed itself with the changing times. In the contemporary period, Buddhism reflects broader social realities; its practice is particularly affected by the modern trends like globalisation, secularism and humanism. Many believe Buddhism to be the most progressive religion in the world, and that is why, many people and nations around the world have been adopting Buddhism, along with Buddha’s teachings, as an integral part of their lives, irrespective of their diverse cultures. The chanting of Buddhist treatises (sutras) is also popular among the Buddhist communities, as it is believed that it has the power to purify and calm the body, mind and the soul (Berkwitz, 2006).

For various such reasons, Buddhism has been becoming a popular religion among different communities of the world, and many nations have adopted Buddhism as one of their top State religions. To cite an example, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, countries like Myanmar and Sri Lanka declared Buddhism as their State religion. Such widespread popularity of Buddhism makes it an important aspect of soft power for India, and since

Buddhism originated in this country, it can be an important asset for India to achieve its national interest.

### **3.5.3. Buddhism in Foreign Policy of India**

India, traditionally, has been a peace-loving nation and it follows the path of non-violence, and this notion is reflected in India's foreign policy as well. India has been promoting Buddhism as a soft diplomatic tool to establish cultural and spiritual relations with other countries and to revive its millennium-old connectivity with other Asian countries. It was a prime source for interaction between India and the East as well as Southeast Asia during the early centuries of the Christian Era and with the help of it, India shared a strong cultural relation with the rest of Asia (Thussu, 2019).

The presence and impact of Buddhism in India, during the latter part of the Gupta empire, started to decline with the revival of Brahmanism. Along with it, the destruction of Buddhist monasteries by invaders in various parts of India during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, and the emergence of Vajrayana Buddhism, or tantric Buddhism, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, led to the further decline of Buddhism. With the demolition of the Nalanda Monastery by the Muslim invaders in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhism all but died out in India (Zhang, 2012).

It was only after World War II, that Buddhism started to be again slowly revived in India. The conversion of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to Buddhism in 1956, along with many thousands of his followers, played a great role in this regard. In 1959, India gave shelter to the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who was forced to flee from Tibet due to an uprising. It helped in the revival of Buddhism, besides also strengthening India-US relations during the Cold War by virtue of the then Indian PM Jawaharlal Nehru aligning India with the US on the Tibetan issue. Nehru also supported the Cambodian

monk, Ven. Dharmavara Mahathera, in his quest to form The Ashoka Mission in 1948. This Mission organised a series of international Buddhist Conferences, which were attended by scholars and monks from other Asian countries like Bhutan, China, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam (Zhang, 2012).

After the 2014 General Elections, the government put much emphasis on Buddhism and included it in its foreign policy in order to promote India's image globally. The elected PM Narendra Modi's first official foreign visit in 2014 was to the neighbouring country Bhutan, which is a Buddhist country. Modi has repeatedly invoked Buddhism in his official visits to other Asian countries like China, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, Nepal, etc. (Thussu, 2019).

Modi, after coming to power, took a prime role in promoting Buddhism. In fact, even before becoming the Prime Minister of the country, he was involved in the rediscovery of Buddhist sites of ancient times during his tenure as the Chief Minister of Gujarat. After becoming PM, he took personal interest in Buddhism and has publicly embraced Buddha as a reformer. Moreover, he transformed the Indian holy sites associated with Buddhism into international assets like the Sarnath, Bodh Gaya etc. (Scott, 2016).

India organized the inter-religious conference, 'SAMVAD – Global Hindu Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness', which was held simultaneously in New Delhi and Bodh Gaya, Bihar from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2015. SAMVAD came into existence as a product of a dialogue between the Indian PM Modi and the then Japanese PM Shinzo Abe, to implement the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism to address modern-day issues related to human civilisation. This conference was hosted by the BJP-aligned think tank, the Vivekananda International Foundation



(VIF), sponsored by the Japanese Tokyo Foundation and attended by representatives from Japan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka (Hall, 2019). The second chapter of this conference, ‘SAMVAD II – Dialogue for Peace, Harmony and Security’, was organised in Yangon, Myanmar from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2017, and the third chapter, ‘SAMVAD III – Dialogue for Peaceful Co-Existence, Inter-religious Understanding and Interdependent Sustainability’ was held at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2019.

Buddhism has gained prominence in boosting India’s deeper engagement with the ASEAN countries as part of its Act East Policy (Stobdan, 2016). ASEAN members such as Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam have been deeply influenced by Indian culture, and Buddhism unquestionably, has played a great role in it (Ha, 2019). A testimony to this fact is that Buddhism was the common thread that linked PM Modi’s visit to China, South Korea and Mongolia (Haidar, 2015).

The Indian Ministry of Tourism is engaged in the promotion of Buddhist Tourist Circuit to enable India’s civilisational connection with its neighbours. This initiative has resulted in the advent of international tourists to famous sites of Buddhist faith, like Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Sanchi Stupa, etc. (Ramabadran, 2019). Earlier in 2007, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) launched a Buddhist Circuit special luxury train to boost India’s religious tourism. Aided by these initiatives, the tourist influx from East Asia and Pacific to India had more than doubled in 2007, as compared to 2003 (Malone, 2014).

In this regard, on October 20, 2021, PM Modi inaugurated the Kushinagar International Airport in Uttar Pradesh. Kushinagar is included in Buddhist Tourist Circuit and this place is believed to be the one where Buddha attained his *parinirvana* (final rest or

death). On the inauguration day, a large contingent of Buddhist monks and other ministers of Sri Lanka along with Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa landed at the airport on a Sri Lankan Airlines flight. Moreover, diplomats from Mongolia, Japan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Nepal, Republic of Korea attended the inauguration ceremony. The airport will help to connect the prime Buddhist heritage sites (Chandra, 2021).

Buddhism has been an integral part of India's foreign policy since the country gained independence, and over time, has turned out to be an indispensable soft power asset for India. As the birth place of Buddhism, India has been able to influence other countries, primarily the Asian countries, where Buddhism has been present from the very early stages. Today, the ever-expanding Buddhist population makes Buddhism the fifth largest religion in the world. India's relationship with the Asian countries through Buddhism has been flourishing, but there is much that India needs to work on, to make Buddhism a successful soft power asset.

In the further chapters of this thesis, a detailed study of India's relation with Japan and Mongolia, through the lines of Buddhism, is analysed in order to understand the role of Buddhism as a tool of India's foreign policy in relation to these countries, besides trying to explore how India will be benefitted from such relations, and what is the future of Buddhism in India.

## **Chapter 4**

# **Buddhism as a Soft Power Tool in India and Japan Relations**

#### 4.1. Introduction

As stated in chapter one, Buddhism was made a tool of bilateral diplomatic agenda by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi after taking office in 2014; the noticeable bilateral interaction India established was with Japan and Mongolia, specifically. During his visit to Japan in 2014, Modi visited the ancient Buddhist temples of Japan, Toji and Kinkakuji, in Kyoto. In November 2016, the Buddhist connection was emphasized on the joint statement between India and Japan (Ranade, 2017). Modi opined that it is Buddhism which holds the Asian countries together and that Buddhism is the force that can make the 21<sup>st</sup> century Asia's. The Act East Policy of India is playing a vital role in strengthening India's relation with the East and South East Asian Nations. Also, the focus on soft power is helping India to develop its relations with other countries, and eventually boost its economy (Sharma & Kumar, n.d.).

Buddhist ties between India and Japan date back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, when Buddhism was first introduced in Japan. Since then, Buddhism has been embraced, nurtured and preserved by the Japanese people along with their indigenous religion, *Shinto*<sup>1</sup>. Japan's efforts to preserve Buddhism and Buddhist heritage sites throughout Japan and other parts of the world, including India, clearly indicate their respect for the religion (Narsimhan, 2019). There are more than 75,000 Buddhist temples and around 84 million Buddhist followers in Japan, whereas, India has around 10 million Buddhist population (Chilson, 2011 & "Japan 2020", 2021).

India and Japan share friendly relations, even though they are not neighbouring countries. Both cooperate with each other in many fields like economy, infrastructure,

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<sup>1</sup> Shinto or 'the way of Gods' is the religious belief and practice originated in Japan. Shinto incorporates the worship of natural forces and ancestors; the Shinto Gods are known as *Kami* ("Shinto", n.d.).

culture, development, etc. The then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, donated an elephant to the Ueno Zoo of Tokyo, Japan, in 1949 to extend a friendly hand to a country which was on the process of recovery from the devastating World War II. At that time, Nehru also gave iron ore to Japan to help it in its reconstruction (MOFA, 2021).

Japanese animated movies, popularly known as Anime, are very much popular among Indian teens. The Tamil language movies of India are popular in Japan; in fact, the Tamil superstar Rajnikanth has a huge fan following in Japan (Thussu, 2013). Japanese dishes like *sushi*<sup>2</sup>, *tempura*<sup>3</sup>, etc. are very much popular among Indians and several restaurants in different parts of India serve these dishes. Similarly, Japan also has Indian restaurants which serve the delicacies of India. Various Indian dance forms have been loved by the Japanese (Chand, 2014).

The Hindu Goddess ‘Saraswati’ has many shrines and temples in Japan. Further, a town of Japan *Kichijoi* is named after the Hindu Goddess ‘Lakshmi’ (Patel, 2018). Above all, Buddhism and the essence of other Indian cultures have been embraced by the Japanese people and they respect India as the wonder land where Buddhism originated.

The ICCR sends performing arts troops every year to different Asian countries to participate in various festivals, and in the year 2007, around 400 events were organised in India and Japan and the year was subsequently declared as the ‘India-Japan Friendship Year’ (Malone, 2020). ICCR has one cultural centre in Tokyo, Japan. The Vivekananda Cultural Centre (VCC) is situated within the premise of Embassy of India

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<sup>2</sup> Sushi is a popular rice dish of Japan consists of cooked rice, variety of vegetables and egg or raw seafood (“Sushi”, n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> Tempura is a type of cooking where various food items are dipped in a batter and deep fried. It is an age-old Japanese art of deep frying of food items (Micu, 2021).

in Tokyo and this centre organises cultural programmes, cultural workshops, seminars, trainings to promote bilateral cultural linkages between India and Japan (ICCR, n.d.).

#### **4.2. India-Japan Relations: From a Historical Perspective**

Japan and India came into contact with each other during the reign of Emperor Kimmei. Although Buddhism did not directly reach Japan from India, it did become the reason for the first common link between the two countries. It was in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE when Buddhism travelled to Japan from Korean kingdom of Baekje, as part of a diplomatic mission. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, Buddhist scholars from India travelled to Japan and Japanese students travelled to India. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, Bodhisena travelled to Wutai Mountain of China to pay homage to Bodisattva Manjushri. In China, Bodhisena met Japanese ambassador to the Tang court and went with him to Japan on the invitation of Emperor Shomu. Buddhism has a great impact on Japanese art and culture (Mathur, 2012, Lynch & Przystup, 2017 & Aiyar, 2018). Hajime Nakamura, a Japanese orientalist, Indologist and philosopher, stated that without the influence of India, Japanese culture would not be the same as what it is today as those who profess Buddhism in Japan, many of them have been influenced by Indian ideas (Nakamura, 1992).

Swami Vivekananda visited Japan in 1893 and was highly impressed by the Japanese nationalism. He advised Indians to emulate the Japanese in respect of their work culture. In 1900, a platform named 'Oriental Youngman's Association' was formed to interact with the Japanese, Indian and other Asian students in Japan, and this organization became the conditioning ground for many Indian students to condemn the British colonialism. Seeing this, the British government introduced a rule for the Indian

students to produce a certificate of identity, signed by a responsible officer, in order to visit Japan (Mathur, 2012).

India was influenced by the Japanese war with Russia in 1903 and there was vocal admiration for this victory in India. Indian freedom movement leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant were also inspired by the Japanese success and they admired Japan for the same. In 1903, an Indo-Japan Friendship Association was formed, and under this collaboration, in 1906, 54 Indian students travelled to Japan. Moreover, during the time of the Swadeshi Movement in India, the Japanese goods were excluded from the category of banned goods, and 'Kesari', a popular Indian newspaper of that period, urged the people to use Japanese goods and to boycott other foreign products (Mathur, 2012).

Japan supported and helped India in its anti-colonial struggle during the time of the Indian freedom movement. In the 1920s, Indian nationalists like Rash Behari Bose and A.M. Nair were helped by the Japanese government. Bose, who took political asylum in Japan, had access to the highest levels of Japanese establishments. He spent the rest of his life till 1945 in Japan and married a Japanese woman too. During his stay, he wrote extensively about the Indian struggle for freedom in Japanese papers and magazines and helped in influencing public opinion in India's favour. Impressed by Bose's writings, some prominent journalists of Japan like Minetaro Yamanaka projected the revolutionists of the Indian freedom struggle as 'an intelligent group from a civilised country'. Rash Behari Bose became popular in Japan as 'Bose of Nakamura'. On the other hand, Japan offered citizenship to Nair and was honoured by the Japanese Emperor Hirohito in 1984 as the 'Order of the Sacred Treasure' (Kun zuihosho) (Mathur, 2012 & Thussu, 2013).

Another Indian nationalist, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, went to Japan on the invitation of Rash Behari Bose to seek help for the Indian freedom struggle. During World War II, Subhas Chandra Bose sought military support and diplomatic help from Japan. Japan helped him by allotting soldiers to invade Northeast India and to snap the supply route to China. Japan also participated in the Battle of Imphal, although they had to withdraw after many casualties and because of lack of food and malaria. Moreover, Netaji Bose had his organization, the *Azad Hind Fauj*, headquartered in the Japan-occupied Singapore. When Japan surrendered after World War II, Bose went to seek support from the Soviet Union on August 15, 1945. While returning to Japan from the USSR, his aircraft apparently met with an accident in Taiwan, resulting in his death. The Japanese officials posted in Taiwan cremated him and his ashes were brought to a Buddhist temple 'Renkoji' in the Suginami city of Tokyo. Every year, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, Bose's ashes are enshrined in his memory in Renkoji in the presence of the descendants of the Battle of Imphal, the members of Japan-India Association and other enthusiasts (Hirabayashi, 2021 & Thussu, 2013).

Political contact between India and Japan started in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, but it was only during the period of the Meiji Restoration<sup>4</sup> that direct political exchanges started between the two. The period of Meiji restoration refers to the journey of Japan's modernisation. It was this period when Japan became a parliamentary form of government and a military power (Sumikawa, 1999). Commercial activities started between the two countries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the period many Indians emigrated to Japan as temporary workers (Malone, 2020). India became a source of raw cotton for Japan and a market for other finished Japanese goods. The most significant

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<sup>4</sup> The feudal ruler Tokugawa Shogun of Japan lost his power in 1868 and the emperor was restored as the supreme head. The emperor took the name as Meiji and that is why the event was known as Meiji Restoration (Asia for Educators, n.d.).



trade contact between the two countries started with the visit to Japan by the Indian industrialist, Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, in 1893. Tata set up an office in Japan, and in reciprocity Japan established the Japanese Consulate Office in Bombay and the Consulate General Office in Calcutta. Additionally, to mark the beginning of regular oceanic transport, both the countries signed an Indo-Japanese Trade Convention in 1894 (Mathur, 2012).

Cultural link between the two countries was established during the time of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore became a cultural ambassador of India in Japan. During his period, the Japanese scholar and art critic, Okakura Tenshin (Okakura Kakuzō), visited India in 1902. He came to invite Swami Vivekananda to Japan for the Parliament of Eastern Religions. He also visited India to study the art and architecture of the country as well as to inspire young Indians who were involved in the freedom struggle (Mathur, 2012).

While discussing India-Japan relations, Justice Radhabinod Pal's judgement is especially mentionable. His judgement in 1948 at the Tokyo International Military Tribunal for the Far East was appreciated by Japan. It was an 11-nation tribunal where trial was conducted for the major leaders of World War II, both military and civilian. In the trial, 28 Japanese leaders were found guilty, of them 16 were given lifetime imprisonment and 7 were sentenced to death. Justice Pal was the only judge who voted against the judgement, stating that all the 28 leaders were not guilty. For this judgement, Justice Pal continues to get a prominent mention in India-Japan relations (Mathur, 2012).

### 4.3. Buddhist Link between India and Japan

Buddhism spread to Japan through China and Korea. It was believed that the Emperor Ming of the Han Empire of China dreamed of a golden man, who according to his minister, was the Buddha. Thereafter, the Emperor sent a delegation of 18 people to spread Buddhism to the Western Region and the delegation carried with them images of the Buddha, foreign monks and Buddhist texts. Emperor Ming then ordered to build Buddhist temples in Luo Yang, the capital of the Han Empire, after which Buddhism started spreading in China. Moreover, Buddhist monks from South Asia and Central Asia were also invited, while some went on their own to propagate Buddhism in China. In AD 382, Emperor Pu Jian of the Qin Dynasty ordered his general L üGuang to conquer *Kucha* and bring the highly reputed Kuchean monk 'Kumarajiva' to China. By the time L üGuang could bring the monk, Pu Jian was overthrown as Emperor by one of his generals. L üGuang then housed Kumarajiva in his own kingdom, established by him in northwest China, for 16 years, and during that time, Kumarajiva translated Sanskrit Mahayana Buddhist texts into Chinese. Emperor Pu Jian had also sent a Chinese monk for the first time to the royal court of the Koguryo Kingdom in the Korean Peninsula with Buddhist texts and icons in AD 372. Thereafter, Buddhism spread in the Korean Peninsula and then to Japan (Zhang, 2013).

In Japan, Prince Shotoku, regent to the female Emperor Suiko, gave the first patronage to Buddhism and started cultural exchanges with China. Later on, under the rule of Prince Umayado, Buddhism became the state religion of Japan. After the introduction of Buddhism in Japan, a number of Buddhist Sanskrit words were introduced in the Japanese language and these words are still considered significant for the Japanese lifestyle and culture. Some of the Buddhist Sanskrit words which still exist are Butsuda or Buddha, Bosatsu or Bodhisattva, Ashura or Asura, Daruma or Dharma, Sotobha or

Stupa, etc. Many Indian legends and Gods were also introduced into Japan and Japanese literature. For example, Indra, the God of thunder, was known as Taishakuten, meaning the Emperor of Gods; Lord Ganesh, the Indian God of wisdom, was worshipped as Sho-ten or the Holy God; Kubera is similar to Bishamonten or the God of Fortune. Similarly, the Mahabharata legend Rishyasringa was incorporated into Buddhist scriptures and then transmitted to Japan (Furuta, 2006 & Mathur, 2012).

Bodhisena, an Indian missionary and spiritual master, travelled to Japan from Kanchipuram in South India and became Japan's Buddhist Bishop until his death in 760 AD. In Japan, Bodhisena was called Daruma and his meditation or Dhyana was called Chan and then Zen. Bodhisena taught the martial arts form, which is regarded as the power of the mind and body, to the monks. The Japanese martial art 'Jujutsu' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yuyutsuhu' which is again derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yudh'. The meaning of Yuyutsuhu is the desire and mentality to fight (Art of Living, n.d.). Bodhisena also introduced 'Bugaku' and 'Gagaku', unique Buddhist dance and music forms, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, to Japan and till date, these are preserved in their original form, whereas they are long lost in India. Japan uses this art as the ceremonial dance performed in the Imperial Palace during special occasions like national celebrations, for visiting foreign diplomats, etc. (Furuta, 2006 & Mathur, 2012).

Indian culture, scripts and languages had travelled to the South and East Asia through the missionaries, travellers, traders and messengers at different periods of time. Some scripts are still used in those countries, which are long lost in India. The script of Siddham or Siddhaam is still used to write Sanskrit verses in Japan, whereas the script is lost in India, the country of its origin. The Sanskrit alphabets of Siddham are used to

respect the dead, even if the Japanese themselves cannot read them. In a school of Koyasan<sup>5</sup>, the script of Siddham is used to teach Sanskrit (Patel, 2018).

It is to be noted here that the Buddhists started writing their texts only after King Ashoka started the tradition of writing. Traditionally, Indians used verbal or oral means to convey spiritual information and listeners registered them in their memory. The concept of writing was first brought by the Persian merchants and traders, after which, King Ashoka spread his messages in the written form and the Buddhist textual tradition was developed afterwards. In the second century CE, the *Aśokāvadāna* (Ashokavadana) and the *Mahāvāsa* (Mahavasa) were written in the Pali language and stories about King Ashoka were also written in other Asian languages like Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Thai, etc. Ashoka was the first king whose edicts were inscribed on pillars and in the post-Ashokan period, his pillars became part of monastic architecture. After Ashoka, the Buddhists started writing their scriptures mainly during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC. King Ashoka used Kharosthi, Aramaic, Greek, and primarily the Brahmi script, to write his messages (Patel, 2018 & Ray, 2014).

*Siddham* is a descendent of the Brahmi script and the Indian missionaries used this script to propagate Buddhist texts along the Silk Road to China. The Chinese script couldn't pronounce Buddhist verses and so they used the Siddham script to spread Buddhist tantra texts. The Japanese Buddhist monks, *Kukai* and *Saicho*, who went to China to study the Siddham script and the Sanskrit language, were later involved in bringing the Siddham script and Buddhist scriptures to Japan. Later on, 'Kukai' founded the *Shingon* sect of Buddhism and 'Saicho', who was sent to China by the

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<sup>5</sup> Koyasan or Mount Koya is a sacred land of Japanese Buddhism which was founded by the Buddhist monk Kukai over 1200 years ago. Kukai founded the Shingon Sect of Buddhism. In 2016, Koyasan was registered as a World Heritage Site ("Guide to Koyasan", 2020).

Japanese Emperor to study doctrines and to bring back texts, founded the *Tendai* sect of Buddhism after returning to Japan (Patel, 2018).

Many Japanese homes prefer to keep the Seed Syllables or 'Beejaksharas' (a powerful Sanskrit mantra written in the Siddham script) and consider them holy, although they can't themselves read them. When in China, Kukai combined the Chinese and Japanese language characters and invented the *Kana* language, a Japanese syllabic script, and for this reason, many Sanskrit- Japanese words can be found. For example, the Japanese food dish Sushi is associated with the word *shari*, which comes from the Sanskrit word *zaali*, meaning rice (Patel, 2018).

In India, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD, King Meghavanna provided lodging facilities for the first time to the Sinhalese Buddhists. Meghavanna built a Buddhist monastery in Bodh Gaya named Mahabodhi Mahavihara, which subsequently became a renowned centre for academic studies. The Mahabodhi Mahavihara was dominated by Sinhalese monks till the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, after which it was demolished by the Muslim invaders. Hiuen Tsang had also included a detailed description of this temple when he visited Bodh Gaya in 637 AD. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Anagarika Dharmapala, a Sinhalese Buddhist missionary and writer, with the help of the British author and journalist, Sir Edwin Arnold, and his Japanese wife, Tama Kurokawa, procured funds to build a guest house for the visiting monks in the Mahabodhi temple (Narsimhan, 2019).

Japan gave a secured shelter to Buddhism, but with the arrival of Meiji era in 1868, Japan wanted to eradicate Buddhism, portraying it as a corrupt and anti-social doctrine, which was not friendly for Japan's technological advancement. During that time, the Buddhist principles and laws were violated and monks were allowed to marry and eat meat. But soon after, the Japan's Consul General was recalled, and the scholar Suzuki

Daisetsu observed that if Buddhism were to be excluded from Japan, then there would not be much left of the Japanese culture (Ray, 2014).

Today, Buddhism has become an integral part of the Japanese culture and their way of life. Japan always shows its gratefulness to India as the country of origin of Buddhism as well as for being a friend in need. Both the countries have, till date, cooperated with each other in many ways and have also been maintaining a healthy relation with each other.

#### **4.4. India-Japan Bilateral Partnership**

##### **4.4.1. Diplomatic**

Bilaterally, both India and Japan have been very much active in maintaining their friendly relations and supporting each other in international affairs. India didn't sign the San Francisco Peace Treaty<sup>6</sup> of 1945 after World War II, but signed a separate bilateral peace treaty with Japan in 1952, and this led to the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the two nations. According to bilateral peace treaty, India and Japan terminated the state of war between them and agreed to cooperate each other to promote common welfare and maintenance of peace and security (MEA, 1952 & 2020). Soon after that, several high-level exchanges took place between the two. In 1957, the Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi visited India; to reciprocate his visit, in the same year the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Japan, and in 1958, the Indian President Rajendra Prasad too paid a visit to Japan. In 1958, Japan started giving 'Yen Loans' to India. Besides, Japan was one of the countries which

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<sup>6</sup> San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed in September 8, 1951 and implemented on April 28, 1952. This treaty officially ended the imperial power position of Japan and provided compensation to those suffered in Japan during the World War II. The treaty was signed by total 48 nations (Kodansha, 1993).

helped India to come out of the ‘balance of payment’ crisis in the year 1991 (MEA, 2020).

Some years later, both the countries experienced a period of strained relationship. The nuclear test conducted by India in Pokhran, Rajasthan, in 1998 was the main reason behind this. Japan suspended its ODA (Official Development Assistance) to India, which it was lending in the form of Yen Loans. Japan also opposed the financial support from multilateral institutions to India and stated that until India signed the ‘Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty’ (CTBT), the situation between them wouldn’t be normalized. Nevertheless, the situation remained tense only for a while as in the year 2000, the Japanese Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro visited India and soon after that, the Defence Ministers of both the countries exchanged their visits (Malone, 2020).

The former Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, visited India several times during his tenure. During his visit to India in 2007, Abe, in his speech at the Indian Parliament, shared his views on the future of India-Japan relations, quoting Swami Vivekananda and the Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh. He asserted that both the countries shared the same values and interests and that it was important to work with like-minded countries to form a ‘broader Asia’. Abe visualized the growing Indo-Japan relations as the union of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean and reimagined it as a *Confluence of the Two Seas*, the title of a book authored by Dara Shikoh. Shinzo Abe also stressed that the bilateral relationship between India and Japan was for the best of interest for the both (Shiotani, n.d.). In October 2008, during the visit of the then Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, both the sides issued a ‘Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India’ (MOFA, 2021). In the year 2011, India and Japan signed the ‘Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement’ (CEPA), a trade agreement which helped India to import duty free products from Japan (Leake, 2014).

Former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe visited India and was present at the Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 2014 as the Chief Guest - India's highest Diplomatic Honour. While doing so, Abe became the first ever Japanese Prime Minister to be invited and honoured as the Chief Guest in the Republic Day celebrations of India (Lynch & Przystup, 2017 & MEA, 2020).

Narendra Modi also visited Japan thrice, in 2014, 2016 and 2018, during his first tenure as the Prime Minister of India. In August-September 2014, Narendra Modi visited Japan for the first time to attend the Japan-India Annual Summit. During the visit, Modi and Shinzo Abe signed the 'Kyoto-Varanasi Partner City Agreement' to transform the Indian city of Varanasi into a Kyoto-style smart city. During the same Summit, the India-Japan relationship was upgraded from a Strategic and Global Partnership to a *Special Strategic and Global Partnership*, and both the sides expected more opportunities to open up from this partnership (Shiotani, n.d. & MEA, 2020).

In 2016, when Modi visited Japan, both the sides had signed 10 different agreements and MoUs. Significant among them is the 'India-Japan Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy' which came into effect on July 20, 2017. Likewise, during his visit to Japan in 2018, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit, Modi stated that both the countries were looking forward to expand their bilateral ties in order to promote peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. During that visit, India and Japan signed 32 agreements, Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC)s and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)s including-

- Japan's joining of the International Solar Alliance<sup>7</sup> (ISA);

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<sup>7</sup> ISA is a collaborative platform of its member countries with focus to ensure cost effective energy access and energy security by deploying solar energy technologies. There is total 107 signatory countries and 86 countries are the members of this alliance; these countries mostly lie partly between Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn. Its headquarters are located in Gurugram, India (ISA, n.d.).



- Exchange of Notes concerning the provision of seven Yen loan projects including the Project for the Construction of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR);
- India-Japan Digital Partnership and Implementing Arrangement for deeper cooperation between Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force and Indian Navy;
- Currency Swap Agreement of USD 75 billion;
- Project for Renovation and Modernization of Umiam-Umtru Stage-III Hydroelectric Power Station;
- North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project;
- MoC on Healthcare and Food Processing Sector;
- MoU between the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of India and Hiroshima University of Japan for Research Partnership, etc.

Modi became the first foreign leader to be invited to a private dinner party hosted by Shinzo Abe in his ancestral home in Yamanashi. In the same Summit, it was declared that 57 Japanese companies will invest USD 2.5 billion in India and 15 Indian companies will invest in Japan (Shiotani, n.d. & MEA 2017 & 2020).

The historical ties shared by India and Japan lead to the engagement of both the countries in various bilateral projects. In November 2016, during ‘India-Japan Annual Summit’, Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe came up with ‘Asia-Africa Growth Corridor’ (AAGC) to improve ties between the Asian and African regions and complement each other in development. AAGC’s primary objective was to bring economic prosperity to the African region through its involvement with India, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania. AAGC aimed at four pillars of cooperation- Development and Cooperation Projects, Quality Infrastructure and Institutional Connectivity, Enhancing

Capacities and Skills and People-to-People Partnership (AAGC, n.d. & Prakash, 2018). AAGC also represented as a response to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China because it offers an alternative to the regional connectivity on state-to-state level (Lasius, 2017).

Additionally, for boosting up bilateral cooperation in the field of outer space and information exchange, the first 'India-Japan Space Dialogue' was held on March 8, 2019 in Delhi and second Dialogue was held virtually on November 2, 2021. Earlier, in 2016, 'Indian Space Research Organisation' (ISRO) and 'Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency' (JAXA) signed an MoU in this regard to cooperate with each other in future (MEA, 2019 & 2021). ISRO and JAXA, as part of their moon mission, are going to launch 'Lunar Polar Exploration Mission' (LUPEX) after 2023 which will be based on the performance of the Chandrayaan-3. The mission with Indian lunar lander with Japanese rover will work in the moon surface (MP, 2021).

Besides, the President of India, Mr. Ramnath Kovind, attended the Enthronement Ceremony of His Majesty Naruhito, the Emperor of Japan, in October 2019. During the same visit, President Kovind planted a Bodhi Tree sapling in the Tsukiji Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. In the same year, several ministerial level meetings between India and Japan were held in India. A two plus two (2+2) meeting comprising the Foreign and Defence Ministers of the two countries was held for the first time in India in November 2019, which was attended by Japan's Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Motegi Toshimitsu, and Defence Minister, Mr. Kono Taro (MEA, 2020). It was believed that the meet would open a new gateway in the field of bilateral and defence cooperation of the two nations. In the dialogue, both the sides exchanged their views on the security situation in the Indo-Pacific region. Japanese side also acknowledged the launching of 'Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative' (IPOI) by Indian PM Modi in the 14<sup>th</sup> East Asian

Summit held at Bangkok. They also emphasized on the need of a strong international counter terrorism partnership including information and intelligence sharing (MOFA, 2019).

India-Japan cooperation can be seen in the environment front as well. On September 7, 2021, the First India-Japan High Level Policy Dialogue on Environment was held virtually. Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of India Mr. Bhupender Yadav and Minister of the Environment of Japan Mr. Koizumi Shinjiro, attended the dialogue and discussed various issues related to Air Pollution, Climate Change, Marine Litter, Sustainable Technologies and Transport etc. (MEA, 2021).

Some other dialogues that held virtually in the same year are- Sixth Maritime Affairs Dialogue, First India-Japan Intergovernmental Consultation and Public-Private Workshop in the field of 5G and the 2nd Space Dialogue, etc. The Sixth Edition of Indo-Japan SAMVAD Conference also held virtually in Tokyo on December 20, 2021 (MEA, 2021).

#### **4.4.2. Defence**

One of the most important elements of India-Japan relations is maritime security, on which both the countries have put much emphasis. The international trade of both the countries is conducted primarily through sea, and more than 50 percent of India's trade and 80 percent of Japan's oil (Malone, 2020) travel through the Straits of Malacca. These straits have, however, been a hotspot for the pirates since long. In some areas, the passages become small, and sometimes even less than one mile wide, which helps the pirates to find and exploit targets easily. By 2003, the International Maritime Bureau-Piracy Reporting Centre received 172 reports of pirate attacks in the Southeast Asia (Leake, 2014).

Because of the increasing number of piracies in the South China Sea and the Straits around it, both India and Japan joined hands to cooperate with each other in this regard. The Indian Navy and Coast Guard, in 1991, recovered a hijacked Japanese merchant ship, MV Alondra Rainbow. In the year 2000, India and Japan's Coast Guards conducted an anti-piracy exercise together. Since then, the Coast Guards of both the countries have been conducting bilateral exercises on yearly basis. They are also involved in 'Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia' (ReCAAP) since 2006 (Borah, n.d).

In February 2019, the Commissioner of the 'Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency' (ATLA), Mr. Nobuaki Miyama, and the Commander of Air Development and Test Command, Lt. Gen. Hirohide Inoue of Japan attended the 'Aero India' and the 'India-Japan Defence Industry Business Forum' held at Bengaluru, simultaneously. Aero India is a biennial air and aviation show and exhibition organised by the Defence Exhibition Organisation, Ministry of Defence, Government of India. In the same year, the 3rd Air to Air Staff Talks and the 8th Navy to Navy Staff Talks were held at Tokyo, and the 5th Army to Army Staff Talks were held at New Delhi. Moreover, *Dharma Guardian*, a bilateral military exercise conducted by the 'Indian Army' (IA) and the 'Japan Ground Self Defence Force' (JGSDF), is being organised since 2018. In October 2019, the 'Japan Air Self-Defence Force' (JASDF) conducted *Shinyuu Maitri 19*, a bilateral exercise with the 'Indian Air Force' (IAF) (MEA, 2020). In September 2020, both the countries signed an agreement concerning 'Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services' between the Self-Defence Forces of Japan and the Indian Armed Forces, named the 'Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement' (ACSA), which came into force on July 11, 2021 (MOFA, 2021).

In 2015, Japan participated as a permanent member in the ‘Malabar’ naval activity, although it had participated for the first time in Malabar in 2007. ‘Malabar’ started as a bilateral war-gaming naval exercise in 1992 between the Indian Navy (IN) and the US Navy (USN). With the joining of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) in 2007, it became a multilateral naval exercise of the ‘Quadrilateral Security Dialogue’ or the ‘QUAD’ (Kaushik, 2021 & Peri, 2022). In 2007, twenty-seven warships from India, Japan, USA, Australia and Singapore participated in the Malabar exercise (Malone, 2020,). In 2019, Japan hosted Malabar for the first time and it was held in the Sea of Japan where the IN P81 aircraft was deployed for the first time by India to participate in the exercise (MEA, 2020).

Japan, for the first time, participated in India’s biggest biennial multilateral naval exercise ‘MILAN’ in 2022. MILAN was initiated by the Indian Navy in 1995 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands with the participation of littoral Navies of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Singapore. The 11th phase of MILAN was conducted in 2022 with the participation of 42 countries, 26 ships (13 of Indian Navy and 13 Foreign), one submarine and 21 aircrafts (MEA, 2022 & Singh, 2022).

Apart from Malabar and MILAN, India and Japan have participated together in the ‘Team Challenge’ multinational naval exercise in 2002 with Korea, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, etc., in the Philippines, which was the Indian Navy’s first ever naval exercise in the East Asian region (Mathur, 2012).

#### **4.4.3. Economic**

In the economic field as well, both the sides depend on each other and their cooperation has been expanding with time. In the year 2010, the total import from Japan to India was USD 9,052 million and the total export from India to Japan was USD 5,683 million.

In 2018-19, the trade between India and Japan was USD 17.63 billion, of which India imported USD 12.77 billion and exported USD 4.86 billion. In the year 2020, India exported USD 4.36 billion to Japan and imported USD 9.34 billion. Refined petroleum, crustaceans and diamonds were among the main export products of India; on the other hand, refined copper, precious metal compounds, vinyl chloride polymers, etc., were the primary import products from Japan (Mathur, 2012; MEA, 2020 & OEC, n.d.).

In 2020, Japan became the 12th largest trading partner and the 4th largest investor for India. Currently, around one thousand four hundred fifty-five Japanese companies have their branches in different parts of India. India, on the other hand, became the 18th largest trading partner for Japan in 2020. Japan's primary exports to India contain machinery, iron and steel products, motor parts, plastic material, organic chemicals, etc., and India's primary exports to Japan include petroleum products, non-metallic mineral ware, chemicals, fish and fish preparations, fabrics and machinery, etc. Japan has been providing the highest ODA loans to India for the past decades (in 2010-2020, India received USD 26 billion ODA from Japan) for various infrastructural and other development works. One such example is the Delhi Metro, which India had successfully completed utilising the ODA. Besides, the flagship project of India-Japan relations, the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail, is under construction and it is believed that this will give a new impetus to their bilateral relationship (MEA, 2020 & MOFA, 2021).

India sent ITI trainees, care givers, nurses and blue-collar workers to Japan to undergo on-the-job training programs for a period of three years. At the behest of Japan, India is also supplying skilled manpower to work in different Japanese companies. Likewise, Japan is also helping in the connectivity sector of northeast region of India by building bridges and highways. In the same vein, the 'Japan International Cooperation Agency'

(JICA) is working for sustainable agriculture in the northeast India (Shiotani, n.d.). Japan is also providing developmental support to the Smart Cities Mission of India through which Ahmedabad and Chennai, along with Varanasi, will be converted into smart cities.

In the field of advanced skill development in India, Japan is contributing by establishing ‘India-Japan Institute for Manufacturing’ (JIM) and Japanese Endowed Courses (JEC) in different locations of India. At present, there are 13 JIMs and 5 JECs are operational in India. A MoC was signed between Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) of India on November 2016. METI certified two human resources development institutes established by Maruti Suzuki India Limited and seven Japanese-affiliated companies headed by Kobelco Construction Equipment India Private Limited as the JIMs (METI, 2019).

India and Japan signed a MoC on a basic framework for partnership for proper operation of the system relating to ‘Specified Skilled Worker’ (SSW). Under the MoC, the eligible skilled workers of India would be eligible for jobs on contractual basis in Japan. This scheme covers total fourteen categories of skills including electric and electronic information, industrial machinery manufacturing, automobile maintenance, construction, shipbuilding and ship-related industry, lodging, agriculture, fisheries, etc. (MEA, 2021).

India and Japan joined hands for partnership in the digital and startup fields as well. In October 2018, during the visit of PM Modi to Japan, the ‘India-Japan Digital Partnership’ (I-JDP) was launched. To enhance digital economy, India and Japan came together under I-JDP to promote joint projects for digital transformation, provide

opportunities to highly skilled Indian IT professionals to work in Japanese companies and to contribute to the Japanese IT sector. Previously in the month of May of the same year, both the sides signed the ‘Joint Statement on India-Japan Startup Initiative’ and set up the first Startup Hub by the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) in Bangalore to classify Indian startups for Japanese investors and market. In June 2018, an MoU was signed by Startup India and Japan Innovation Network (JIN) to collaborate in innovations with focus on Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG). On January 20, 2020, MeitY Startup Hub of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and JETRO signed an agreement to reinforce the Indian and Japanese Tech Startup ecosystem (MEA, 2022 & 2020).

#### **4.4.4. Others**

Apart from the fields discussed above, the India-Japan cooperation can be seen in several other sectors as well. Their cooperation in the ASEAN is especially noteworthy. Japan has been a part of ASEAN for a long period of time but India became a dialogue partner of ASEAN only in 1994 and, in 1996, India became a part of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Japan was in favour of including India in the East Asia Summit (EAS) and when the Summit was eventually formed in 2005, India did become its member (Leake, 2014).

In 2017, the ‘Act East Forum’ was established as a platform to integrate the ‘Act East Policy’ of India and the ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision’ of Japan. In 2018, during the second meeting of this Forum, both India and Japan agreed to expand the Japanese language in the northeast India, besides training of caregivers under the ‘Technical Intern Training Program’ (TITP) of Japan, capacity building in disaster management, etc. (MEA, 2020).



In the area of healthcare, a MoC was signed between the ‘Ministry of AYUSH’, India and the ‘Kanagawa Prefectural Government’ of Japan in the healthcare and wellness sector in October 2018. Promotion of the Indian traditional medicine system, Ayurveda, and Yoga in Japan was initiated under this agreement (ANI, 2018). The two parties conducted AYUSH seminars in Japan on the theme ‘Healthy Aging with Ayurveda’ in the first week of December, 2019. Besides, India consulted Japan to identify and formulate projects under the Indian healthcare policy ‘Ayushman Bharat’<sup>8</sup> (MEA, 2020).

In order to promote Japanese language education in India, ‘Japanese Language Teachers’ Training Centre’ was inaugurated in July 2018 in New Delhi. The centre is set up with Japanese collaboration and is temporarily located in the Human Resource Development Centre of Jawaharlal Nehru University until a permanent campus of the centre is created (MEA, 2019).

Japan generates a significant number of tourists to India, especially to the Buddhist sites. In India, a special train commenced in 2007 named the ‘Mahaparinirvana Buddhist Circuit Train’, which gained much popularity among Japanese tourists. The ‘Buddhist Circuit’<sup>9</sup> is a popular tourist destination among the Japanese people, specifically among the senior tourists from Japan. Such tourists almost compulsorily include the Buddhist Circuit in their itinerary while travelling to India (Narsimhan, 2019).

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<sup>8</sup> Ayushman Bharat is a National Health Protection Scheme covering 10 crore poor and vulnerable families and which provides up to 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalisation (“Ayushman Bharat”, n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> Buddhist Circuit covers the Holy Sites with high significance to Buddhism; where Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, preached first Sermon and reached Nirvana. These sites include Lumbini of Nepal, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar of India. Apart from these four places, Vaishali, Rajgir and Nalanda University, Shravasti is also included in the Buddhist Circuit (“What is Buddhist Circuit”, n.d.).

The Government of India has undertaken several projects to provide travel and tourism infrastructure at the sacred Buddhist sites of India. For e.g.- ‘Swadesh Darshan Scheme’, which is the flagship project of Ministry of Tourism, project for Buddhist circuit development in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, etc. Government is also building a Cultural Centre in Bodh Gaya. In Varanasi, sound and light show at Dharmak Stupa and a Buddha Park Theme are completed. Religious or spiritual tourism, which is similar to pilgrimage, is growing in India and is also helping in the growth of the travel and hotel industry. On the other hand, Japan has funded for the revitalization of Buddhist tourism cum pilgrimage circuits and in various projects which deal with the conservation of ancient Buddhist heritage sites in India (Thussu, 2013).

The historical connection between India and Japan has made the bond between them stronger. Both are helping each other in every possible way. India is helping by providing soft infrastructure for the schools in Rakhine state of Myanmar being built by Japan. Moreover, India is one of the early responders of the oil spilling crisis of Japanese bulk carrier ship, MV Wakashio, in the south-eastern coast of Mauritius on July 25, 2020 (MEA, 2021).

In July 2019, India joined the ‘Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy’ (ACMECS) along with Japan, China, Australia, Republic of Korea and the USA. India and Japan are also members of ‘G-4’ along with Brazil which was formed to support each other for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. They both are members of ‘G-20’ as well which aims at addressing the issues relating to global economy (MEA, 2021).

In March 2022, the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Fumio Kishida visited India, which was his first bilateral visit as Prime Minister. Kishida concentrated on working towards realisation of a ‘new form of capitalism’ in order to revive the post Covid-19 economy of his country through a righteous cycle of growth and distribution and opined that India would be the best partner to attain this goal. He also suggested that Indian initiatives like the Aadhaar card, measure for supply chain resilience, International Solar Alliance and, most importantly, India’s response to the global health crisis during the Covid-19 would best serve his goal (Kishida, 2022).

During his visit, both the Prime Ministers welcomed the initiative of ‘India-Japan Clean Energy Partnership’ (CEP) towards ensuring energy security and sustainable economic growth, combating climate change by investing in areas like solar energy, electric vehicle and vehicle charging infrastructure, wind energy, energy efficiency, carbon recycling, etc. Both parties also made commitments to establish a ‘Joint Crediting Mechanism’ (JCM) between them for implementing Article 6 of the Paris Agreement<sup>10</sup>. They also welcomed the signing of MoC on Sustainable Urban Development and MoC for Cooperation in Decentralised Domestic Wastewater Management (MEA, 2022).

India and Japan’s historical connection resulted in making the countries work together and to cooperate with each other in every field possible, viz. economy, defence, culture, automobile, healthcare, education, infrastructure, etc. Furthermore, to combat Covid-19 and to protect the lives in the Indo-Pacific region, both the countries have agreed to contribute to the global efforts for eradicating Covid. They are also working towards

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<sup>10</sup> Article 6 of Paris Agreement reads, Parties recognize that some Parties choose to pursue voluntary cooperation in the implementation of their nationally determined contributions to allow for higher ambition in their mitigation and adaptation actions and to promote sustainable development and environmental integrity (“Paris Agreement”, 2015).

the Quad Vaccine Partnership to enhance effective and safe vaccines in and beyond the Indo-Pacific region.

QUAD was formed as a strategic forum of the USA, India, Japan and Australia. Since its formation in 2007, the QUAD has been working for the development of Indo-Pacific region in the field of sovereignty and territorial integrity, democratic values, rule of law, peaceful settlement of disputes, infrastructure, climate, cyber security, critical and emerging technologies, space, maritime domain awareness, etc. In order to combat Covid-19, the QUAD members initiated approximately USD 5.2 billion to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC). COVAX AMC is a mechanism through which the vaccines are provided to the lower income countries. Under this mechanism, till now 670 million doses have been delivered worldwide including around 265 million doses to the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, World Health Organisation approved Made in India vaccines are delivered in different countries like Cambodia and Thailand, etc. (The White House, 2022).

During his recent visit to Japan from May 23rd to 25th, 2022, Narendra Modi attended the QUAD Summit, met the CEOs of various companies and addressed the Indian diaspora of Japan. Modi, during the QUAD summit, highlighted India's role in combatting Covid-19 and wished for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. On May 23, 2022, Modi met with the business leaders and CEOs of 34 Japanese companies including Suzuki Motor Corporation, Uniqlo, Soft Bank (which has invested in the top unicorns of India), NEC Corporation, etc., and invited them to join the 'Make in India for the World' campaign. Modi stated that Japan is a key partner for India's journey of development and proposed a 'Japan Week' to celebrate the India-Japan friendship. Besides, a large Indian diaspora is engaged in different sectors of Japan including IT, finance, business, academics, etc. Modi also urged the diasporic community of Japan

to engage themselves towards making India-Japan relations even stronger than they are today (Chaudhary, 2022). The current size of the Indian diaspora in Japan is over forty thousand (MEA, 2022).

It must here be pointed out that it was with Buddhism that the relationship between the two countries had actually started. With the passing of time, Buddhism has become a core part of Japanese tradition and culture and it still remains a vital aspect of Indo-Japan relations. Although India has been using Buddhism as a diplomatic tool for a long period, Japan is also now working aggressively along the same lines. Buddhism has become an important aspect of Japan's soft power diplomacy as well. It is to be noted here that Japan is among the top soft power countries in the world and hence the role of Buddhism here can't be ignored.

#### **4.5. Japan's Buddhist Diplomacy**

Japan has been practicing Buddhism for more than 1500 years but Buddhism has now become an integral part of its cultural and religious life and has turned into a strong pillar of soft power diplomacy of Japan. As stated earlier in the chapter, Mahayana Buddhism travelled to Japan through Korea as part of a diplomatic mission, which included several Buddhist texts and images of Shakyamuni Buddha as gifts. Vajrayana Buddhism and its deities and rituals were introduced in Japan in the early Heian period by some Japanese priests including Kukai and Saicho. In the late Heian period, Pure Land Buddhism became popular and later on Japan developed their own sect, viz. 'Zen Buddhism' which is a developed form of the Mahayana Buddhist school (Hammer, n.d.).

Japan is funding various projects to restore Buddhist relics and develop the Buddhist heritage sites of India to facilitate India's cognizance as the birthplace of Buddhism

(Narsimhan, 2019). The Japan Foundation and the Japanese Trust Fund for the Preservation of World Cultural Heritage are two government backed organizations working in this field. Buddhism has also been used by Japan to promote bilateral relations with other countries and Japan engages itself in various international affairs related to Buddhism. It is to be noted here that Japan, and not India, was probably the first Asian country to engage Buddhism for diplomatic purposes. In the 19th century, Japan introduced Zen Buddhism, which is based on the Soto and Rinzai School, to the West. During World War II, the Buddhist Sects of Japan used militarism, nationalism and racism for invading other countries. Besides, Buddhist monks were sent by the government to the occupied areas as a part of their colonization program (Zhang, 2012). Japan was engaged in portraying its peaceful image among the international community even before the concept of soft power was formed. Japan's traditional art forms, which are inspired by Zen-Buddhism, like Noh Theatre<sup>11</sup>, Bunraku Puppet Play<sup>12</sup>, Kabuki Opera<sup>13</sup>, Judo, Karate, Suibokuga (black-ink painting), Shodo (calligraphy), Ikebana (flower arrangement), Bonsai (miniature tree-cultivation), Kare-Sansui (rock garden), Chanoyu (tea ceremony), etc., were showcased in countries with whom it had diplomatic relations (Narsimhan, 2019).

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<sup>11</sup> Noh Theatre is the ancient living theatre forms of the world. Noh in Japanese means Talent or Skill. Noh plays are based on stories of Japanese classical literatures and the performances include acting, dance, music, comedic skits, acrobatics and other abilities. Mask is an important part of Noh Theatre. The UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list has included Noh Theatre (Larsen, n.d.).

<sup>12</sup> Bunraku is a classical Japanese puppet theatre based on rhythmic chanting and traditional music, began in the 1600s in Osaka, Japan. In Bunraku visuals and sounds are used to tell stories and therefore, people without knowing Japanese language can also enjoy the plays. Stories are based on the themes of heroism, tragic love and supernatural. Bunraku is recognised as the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (McElhinney & Larsen, n.d.).

<sup>13</sup> Kabuki is a world famous Japanese traditional performance art, performed with music, dance and mime. Kabuki in Japanese means art of song and dance. Izumo no Okuni, a Shinto priestess began the performance of Kabuki in 1600 in different locations of Kyoto. Today Kabuki actors are consisting of only males. Kabuki is an UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (McElhinney & Larsen, n.d.).

On December 5, 1960, the royal guests of Japan, Crown Prince Akihito and Crown Princess Michiko, visited Bodh Gaya on their trip to India, an event which stimulated the Buddhist Diplomacy of both the countries. After Bodh Gaya was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002, the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OEFC) and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) were involved in the developmental tasks of the site. Seeing this, other Buddhist organizations from countries like China, Japan, Myanmar, Tibet, Bhutan, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia started building rest houses, temples and monasteries in Bodh Gaya which reflected the unique architectures of their countries. Japan built the Indosan Nippon Temple and the Daijokyo Buddhist Temple in Bodh Gaya, and the Nichi Getsu San Temple in Sarnath. They also placed a Buddha statue similar to the Kamakura Daibutsu of Japan in the Daijokyo temple on November 18, 1989, which is now a major tourist attraction among the Buddhists (Narsimhan, 2019). Japan invested USD100 million for the reconstruction of Nalanda University as a part of the 'Japan-Indian Global Partnership' signed in 2006. Moreover, the Japanese Government, under their 'Grant Assistance for Gross Projects', built forty-two tube wells for the local people in the villages of Nalanda (Zhang, 2012).

To promote the Buddhist heritage of Japan, the Japanese government nominated to include the Hiraizumi temples, gardens and archaeological sites and Buddhist buildings in the Horyu-ji area in the World Heritage List. The Japanese government also built a Zen rock garden in Washington DC to mark the 100th anniversary of the first Japanese cherry tree plantation. Earlier, Japanese government has also tried to prevent the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha Statue in Afghanistan by the Taliban in 2001. Japan also urged the Myanmar government to engage in 'genuine dialogue' with the Buddhist monks who were protesting against Myanmar's military junta in 2007 (Zhang, 2012).

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

Buddhism has been the driving force behind the onset of India-Japan relations. Japan and the Japanese people have great faith on Buddhism, because of which it has become the second largest religion of Japan after Shinto. Today, Japan has more Buddhists than in Buddhism's place of origin, India. Nevertheless, India has been working towards making Buddhism a strong tool of its foreign policy.

The relationship between India and Japan is growing with time and both are working together to form a broader Asia. Japan depends on India because of its growing market and human resources. The Indian market is a great place for a number of Japanese goods. Similarly, there is a high demand for Indian skilled manpower and IT professionals in Japanese companies and technology hubs. On the other hand, India relies on Japan and its technology for the development of its economy and infrastructure. Whether it be investing in various developmental projects or providing support in international meets to respecting its rich culture and civilisation, Japan has been backing India since the two democracies established formal diplomatic relations. India, too, has been providing a helping hand to Japan whenever needed. Dr. Takakusu Junjiro, a Japanese academician and an internationally renowned Buddhist scholar, stated "...I should like to emphasize the fact that the influence of India, material and intellectual, must have been much greater in an earlier period that we at present consider to be the case".

The Buddhist heritage site Bodh Gaya, which is the most preferred tourist destination among the Buddhist tourists in India, is not only a spiritual tourist place, but also a meeting hub of different cultures and transnational marriages. There are several men and hoteliers from Bodh Gaya who have Japanese wives, some of whom are still staying



in India while some have settled in Japan along with their Japanese wives and have opened travel agencies and hotels to assist the Indo-Japanese tourism (Narsimhan, 2019).

India and Japan share a beautiful bond which is reflected in their similar customs and traditional practices; they even worship similar deities and idols. The Hindu Goddess of knowledge, Saraswati, is similar to the Japanese Goddess Benzaiten. The Japanese God Daikukoten is similar to the Hindu Lord Shiva. Likewise, Naraenten is Narayana, Kisshoten is Goddess Lakshmi, Bonten is God Brahma and Umahi is Goddess Uma. The Indian 'Rath Yatra', a ceremonial procession, is similar to the Japanese 'Mikoshi', where deities are carried out in a chariot (Hari & Hari, n.d.).

Besides, both the countries celebrate many similar festivals. For example, the agrarian societies of India and Japan celebrate the harvesting season to thank Mother Nature. This festival has different names in different parts of India but in Japan it is known as 'Tori No Ichi'. The ritual of fire-walking conducted in Sakura Bloom (thanksgiving festival of Cherry Blossom trees) in Japan is similar to the one held in Tamil Nadu's Panguni Uthiram and also in some other festivals in different parts of India. The Hindu festival Navratri, celebrated to cherish the victory of good over evil, is similar to the Japanese festival Hina Matsuri (Hari & Hari, n.d.).

Apart from festivals, food is also an important part of a culture and there are many similarities in the food items of India and Japan. Japan's most popular dish 'Kare Raisu' is very much similar to the Indian Curry Rice. The favourite Indian snack of the monsoon season, tea and Pakora, is similar to the Japanese Tempura and green tea, which they prefer to have in their own way (Hari & Hari, n.d.).

Before its demolition by the invaders, Nalanda University used to be a hub of scholars from different parts of world including Japan. The revival of Nalanda University by the Indian government was an initiative to intrigue East and Southeast Asian countries and to attract foreign direct investment in India. Japan, on the other hand, wanted to reach the Buddhist world and to try and engage India in the politico-strategic equation of Asia-Pacific. Nalanda gave India and Japan the platform through which both of them engage in various cooperative ventures of the Asia-Pacific region (Narsimhan, 2019).

In the year 2011, when Japan was dealing with a triple tragedy i.e., earthquake, tsunami and the Fukushima Nuclear Plant disaster, India sent an Emergency Rescue Force to the affected areas of Japan. Furthermore, India has agreed to extend its support to Japan for a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council for the term 2023-24 (MEA, 2022).

A virtual conference titled 'Relevance of Buddhism in the Time of the Pandemic' was hosted on May 21st, 2021 by the Indian Embassy in Tokyo in collaboration with the 'Discover India Club'. A special presentation showcasing the value of Buddhist teachings during the unprecedented period marked by the ongoing pandemic was organised by prominent personalities representing many sects of Buddhism in Japan, specialists from India and Japan, and artists of classical Indian dance forms (Singh, 2021).

The India-Japan friendship is one of the fastest growing relations in Asia. Japan is one of those countries with whom India conducts 2+2 ministerial level meeting and Annual Summits. The two great civilisations have been sharing a strong cordial bond which is protected by their spiritual beliefs and shared cultures. From the period when Buddhism was first introduced in Japan till today, their relationship has only grown stronger and

older. It is to be noted here that Buddhism was and will always be the prime reason for the commencement of their relations and, it is hoped that, this relation will sustain in the future as well. Shinzo Abe in his book *Utsukushii Kuni E* (Toward a Beautiful Country) written in 2006 expressed that “it would not be a surprise if in another 10 years, Japan-India relations overtake Japan-US and Japan-China relations” (Pant, 2021) and it seems this dream of Abe is going to become a reality very soon in the coming days.

## **Chapter 5**

# **Buddhism as a Soft Power Tool in India and Mongolia Relations**

## 5.1. Introduction

India and Mongolia, two ancient civilisations of Asia, have been sharing a cordial relationship that has been built across several fields including language, literature, religion, medicine, culture and traditions.

The modern-day Indo-Mongol relationship started just prior to India's independence, when a Mongolian delegate came to New Delhi to attend the first Asian Relations Conference initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru in March 1947. The leaderships of these two countries have been in constant contact since then and this relationship was further formalised by an Indo-Mongol communique issued on December 24, 1955. India became the first country, outside the Soviet Bloc, to establish diplomatic relations with Mongolia, the then Mongolian People's Republic (Gupta, 2005 & Ananth, 2015).

The first distinguished visit from India to Mongolia was in 1957 by the then Vice-President of India, S. Radhakrishnan. In 1959, the then Prime Minister of Mongolia, Yumjaagin Tsedenbal, reciprocated the visit of Radhakrishnan. Since then, the Mongolian Presidents, Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat (1994), Natsagiin Bagabandi (2001) and Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj (2009) have also visited India. From the Indian side, former Presidents, R. Venkataraman (1988) and Pratibha Patil (2011) visited Mongolia, and in 1965, Indira Gandhi visited Mongolia when she was the Information and Broadcasting Minister in the Lal Bahadur Shastri cabinet (Ananth, 2015).

India and Mongolia have a wide-ranging area of cooperation starting from agriculture to education, defence, information technology, security, regional and international issues, etc. India supported Mongolia while getting membership in key international forums including the United Nations; in 1961, Mongolia was admitted to the UN despite opposition from China and Taiwan. In 1972, Mongolia, along with Bhutan,

stood with India and co-sponsored the UN resolution for the recognition of newly-formed Bangladesh. India supported Mongolia's bid for membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and in 1991 Mongolia became a full member of NAM. Mongolia also extends its support for India's permanent membership in the proposed extended UN Security Council and on issues such as terrorism and Jammu and Kashmir (Gupta, 2005; Ananth, 2015; Khatik & Bhandari, 2021).

Today, the connection between India and Mongolia exists on different levels. Mongolian people often visit Indian Buddhist sites; they are fond of Hindi movies, and the Indian television series Mahabharat, which was dubbed in Mongolian, was once a great favourite in the country (Singh, 2015).

## **5.2. India and Mongolia Relations: A Historical Perspective**

India and Mongolia have a deep-rooted link which can be traced back to 10,000 years. It is believed that Indians from the Kangra Kingdom migrated from the Himalayan foothills to Mongolia, and after staying there for around 2000 years, a majority of them came back to India. Their descendants still live in Himachal Pradesh and earlier headed the Katoch dynasty. There are many other pieces of evidence which prove that India-Mongolia links are very old. In Chhattisgarh, there are rock paintings in the dense forests of Chitwa Dongri (Leopard Hill) depicting the presence of Mongolian settlers in the central part of India. Moreover, the Dravidian language, which is used in the Southern part of India, has many similarities with the Mongolian language and, in fact, there are many Mongolian words which are used in the former (Nyamdavaa, 2015).

Oidov Nyamdavaa, Mongolia's former ambassador to India, stated in one of his articles that after various Mongol invasions of India over time, several Mongols stayed back and settled down in different parts of India and adopted Indian culture. Alghu, a Mongol

general and the grandson of Chinggis Khan, converted to Islam and married the daughter of Delhi's Sultan. Some of Alghus's followers left India and some stayed back; those who settled in India adopted Islam and came to be known as 'new Muslims'. The new Muslims, who numbered around 40000, were kept in poverty by the Sultan. However, they eventually turned out to be a danger to the State and seeing this, the Sultan ordered their killing. Mughalpur or Mongolpur, a place in present Delhi, has links with the Mongols and is said to have existed since the times of Jalaluddin Khilji (Nyamdavaa, 1996).

Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan's great-grandfather's grandmother had blood links with the great Mongol emperor Chinggis Khan, who lived about 450 years before Shah Jahan. Furthermore, Babur's father, Umar Sheikh Mirza, belonged to a lineage of Turkic-Mongol warlords who had governed a vast region, including India. Babur's mother's name was Qutlugh Nigar Khanum, where 'Khanum' in Mongolian means 'the great Princess', and 'Khan' in Mongolian means 'King' or 'lord'. (Gopal, 2019).

During the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Mongol Chagatai Khanate invaded Delhi through central Asia and Kashmir and the Mongol-Yuan Kingdom attacked Myanmar. Myanmar lies around 2000 km east of present-day Delhi, and there exists a strong possibility that some of the invaders stayed back in India (Gopal, 2019). In 1991, Lal Thanahawla, the then chief minister of Mizoram, stated that there were around 30 million people of Mongol origin residing in the north-eastern part of India, specifically Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, and in the Himalayan valleys, who were among members of around 29 tribal groups. Several Manipuri traditions, like hair cutting ceremony of children aged three to five years, the Manipuri form of wrestling, etc., are similar to those of the Mongolians. Besides, the Manipuri musical instrument 'Pena's' sound is also very similar to the Mongolian 'Morin Khuur'. These connections and

similarities indicate an undated close link between India and Mongolia (Nyamdavaa, 1996).

Mongolia is the last Asian frontier where traces of Indic culture can still be found (Stobdan, 2015). Both India and Mongolia share a historical tie and there are evidences of this, because of which both the countries are known today as ‘Spiritual Neighbours’. The most significant among these ties relate to religion and culture, in general, and Buddhism, in particular.

### **5.3. Buddhist links between India and Mongolia**

Before the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia, the traditional religion of the country was believed to be Shamanism<sup>1</sup>. According to some, Chinggis Khan interacted with the lamas of the Tshal pa Kagyupa<sup>2</sup> and Sakyapa schools<sup>3</sup> of Tibetan Buddhism during the reign of the Tangut Empire. The Mongol army captured seven people of Tangut, who had gone to Mongolia for meditation, and sent them to Chinggis Khan, sensing their magical power. Those seven people headed by lama Gtsang pa dung khur ba of Tshal pa Kagyupa explained Buddhist doctrines to Chinggis Khan and when Chinggis Khan fought with Tangut, Gtsang pa dung khur ba begged Chinggis Khan to stop the despoilment of monasteries. Paying heed to his request, Chinggis Khan ordered to exempt the monks from taxes and services to the state, and repaired the monasteries

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<sup>1</sup> Shamanism is an ancient healing tradition, a way to connect with nature and its creations. It is a universal spiritual wisdom which is inherent in all indigenous tribes. D. Joralemon (2001), in the International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, explained Shamanism as a tradition where the part-time religious specialists establish contacts with spirits through controlled and culturally scripted Altered States of Consciousness (ASC). Certain tribes in Mongolia still practice Shamanism (“What is Shamanism”, n.d.).

<sup>2</sup> It is one of the four major Dagpo Kagyu traditions of Tibetan Buddhism founded by Zhang Yudragpa Tsondru Drag-pa in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century this tradition was engrossed by the Geluk school and their monasteries were also converted (“Tselpa Kagyu” n.d. & “Tsalpa Kagyu”, n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> The Sakyapa or Sakya School is one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The important source of Sakya school is Indian yogi Virupa through Gayadhara to Tibetan disciple Dromi Lotsawa Shakya Yeshe (“The Sakya School”, n.d.).



and temples; he also conferred the title ‘Teb Tengri’ (Wholly Heavenly) to Gtsang pa dung khur ba (Ujeed, 2009). Chinggis Khan was recognised as the reincarnation of ‘Buddhisattva Vajrapani’ by the Mongolian Buddhists, and for this reason, his cult became to be associated with Buddhism. Moreover, after the expansion of his cult, he was worshipped as a ‘Chakravartin’, the universal ruler, in the Buddhist tradition. His titles also have ‘Devaditya’ and ‘Arya’ words, which are mentioned in some of the Kanjur<sup>4</sup> volumes (Soni, 2016). It was then after the death of Chinggis Khan that the Buddhist influence on the Mongol Empire started growing even more significantly.

On the other hand, some other scholars have stated that Buddhism became the Mongolian state religion only towards the end of 1600 AD, before it reached Tibet. It was believed that Buddhism was developed in Mongolia in around the first century CE by a Kashmiri scholar ‘Vairochana’, who was the first missionary to take Buddhism to Central Asia, and that he also built the first monastery in Khotan<sup>5</sup>. The spread of Buddhism in the Central Asian region influenced its neighbours who had links with the region. ‘Xiongnu/Hunas’, an ancient Mongolian tribe, came to know about Buddhism, and over the years, Mongolian monks travelled to India across the Himalayas and received free learning at the Nalanda University. Nalanda, in ancient times, had foreign scholars from countries like Mongolia, Korea, China, Tibet, etc. Mongolian records and Chinese pilgrim accounts have shown the spread of Mahayana and Hinayana schools of Buddhism in the state of Huna or Khunnu of Mongolia. The ‘Hunas’ were divided

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<sup>4</sup> Kanjur consists of the sutras and tantras of Buddha. Its means it consists of the sayings of Buddha in concise order. There are 108 volumes of Kanjur. (“Kanjur”, n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> Khotan (also spelled as Hotian or Hetian) - Khotan was the capital of the Yutian Kingdom and is located in the present Xinjiang Province of China. It was one of the major oasis cities on the Silk Road, a trade network that connected Europe, China and India. Historical records say, Khotan was a double colony, the first of which was established in the third century BC by an Indian Prince, who was one of the sons of King Ashoka, who were expelled from India after Ashoka converted to Buddhism, and the other by an exiled Chinese king. The two colonies merged after a battle (Hirst, 2020).

into two groups, and those with white skin came to India. The Huna kings, Toramana and Mihirakula, kept invading India during 458-470 AD, and later on, after their defeat in the hands of Skandagupta, stayed back in Kashmir and assimilated with the local people. Kalhana's *Rajtarangini*, a Sanskrit language historical chronicle of the kings of Kashmir written in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, had the names and way of life of the Huna kings (Nyamdavaa, 2015 & Gopal, 2019).

After the destruction of Buddhist learning centres in India, including the Nalanda University, by the Turkish and Afghan invaders, the Great Khan Ogedei of Mongolia started building monasteries in the city of Karakorum, which, in the year 1220, had been proclaimed as the capital of Mongolia by his father Chinggis Khan. Ogedei Khan's successor Monkhan Khan later strengthened the religious and cultural links between India and Mongolia. He appointed a Kashmiri monk, Namu, as the 'State Teacher', a newly created position, and used the Sanskrit word 'Guru' for the same (Nyamdavaa, 1996 & Gopal, 2019).

In Mongolia, Buddhist influence and ties with Indian culture reached a peak point during the reign of Kublai Khan, the grandson of Chinggis Khan. During his period, translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit, Tibetan and Uyghur to the Mongolian language was done and by the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, all major Buddhist works had been translated to and printed in the Mongolian language. Finally, during the reign of the last Mongol ruler, the Great Khan Ligdan, the largest single translation project was undertaken with the creation of 'Ganjur' and 'Danjur', which consisted of 333 large volumes translated from different Indian languages to Tibetan and Mongolian. Ganjur is attributed to Buddha and his words and Danjur is a collection of works by various other Indian pandits and saints. The Danjur of Mongolia is richer and more elaborated

than its Tibetan counterpart as it consists of comparatively more Indian texts translated from Sanskrit and Chinese (Nyamdavaa, 1996).

Buddhism in Mongolia expanded also because of the contacts between the people of India and the Nirun State of Mongolia. In the fifth and sixth centuries CE, Nirun was a centre of Buddhism. In 475 CE, Fa-Hsien, a Chinese monk, travelled to Khotan through Nirun and brought a tooth of Buddha, which was from Udyana of North India. Later on, in 552 CE, Narendra Das, a monk from Udyana, travelled to Nirun along with his five friends. The policies of a unified state and religious administration of Ashoka and Kanishka became a part of the Mongolian political tradition during the time of the Nirun State (Nyamdavaa, 2015).

A Mongolian Scholar, Lozenge Tamdrin in his work 'Origins of Dharma in the Hor Regions', explained that Buddhism came to Mongolia in three waves. The first wave was during the time of the Indian Emperor Ashoka in the third century BC, three centuries before Buddhism was established in China and some eight centuries before it was established in Tibet. Ashoka extended his empire to the Silk Road and then captured the Khotan city; from Khotan, Buddhism gradually spread to other regions of Mongolia. The second wave began with Chinggis Khan and his sons and, in particular, by Chinggis Khan's relation with the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism. Lastly, the third wave started with the arrival of the Dalai Lama School of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia in the 1570s and its subsequent adoption as the national religion of the country by Chief of Eastern Mongol, Altan Khan (Mullin, n.d.).

Several famous Indian literary works have also found an abode in Mongolia for centuries. The Indian 'Panchatantra', a famous collection of fables, was translated into multiple versions and it reached Mongolia centuries ago. The great Indian epic

‘Ramayana’ has more than five versions in Mongolia. Many other such fables of Indian origin are part of Mongolian folklore. A Sanskrit manual ‘*Alikali*’ (vowels and consonants), with Tibetan and Mongolian translations, was used for centuries as a textbook in Mongolian monasteries (Nyamdavaa, 2015).

In 1955, before the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Mongolia, Raghu Vira, an Indian linguist, scholar and politician, visited Mongolia. He was presented with 105 volumes of Ganjur and 220 volumes of photocopied Mongolian Danjur, as well as stories of Meghaduta<sup>6</sup> and Vikramaditya<sup>7</sup> in the Mongolian language, on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1955 by Yu Tsedenbal, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (Chandra, 2013). Several other Mongolian scholars have translated great Indian epics and religious texts into the Mongolian language. Prof. Gandendarama translated the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as well as the works of Kalidasa and about 30 other books into the Mongolian language. Likewise, Dr. Shrindev translated 8 volumes of the Dhammapada from Pali language to Mongolian language and highlighted the close historical connection between the two countries (MEA, 2021).

#### **5.4. Role of Kushok Bakula Rinpoche in India-Mongolia Relations**

Kushok Bakula ‘Rinpoche’ was an Indian ambassador to Mongolia appointed in the year 1989. A Buddhist monk, statesman and international diplomat, Kushok Bakula was the 19<sup>th</sup> incarnation of Arhat Bakula. Arhat is considered as one of the 16 great direct disciples of Lord Buddha. Kushok Bakula was born into a Ladakhi family.

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<sup>6</sup> Meghaduta is lyric love poem composed by Kalidasa written in around 115 verses, based on the hymn or lament of an exiled yaksha (Meghaduta, n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> Vikramaditya was an ancient Indian legendry King hailed from Ujjain. There is no concrete data of his birth and dynasty. According to Katha-sarita-sagara of 12<sup>th</sup> century, he was the son of Mahedraditya of the Paramara dynasty. His name can be found in different Sanskrit and regional language stories (Vikramāditya, n.d.).

During his lifetime, he held many government positions including a member of the J&K Constituent Assembly, a minister in the J&K Government, a two-term member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), a member of the National Commission on Minorities as well as India's Ambassador to Mongolia. He was called 'the architect of modern Ladakh' by the former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (Wangchuk, 2017).

Earlier, during the time of the 8<sup>th</sup> 'Bogd Gegeen Jebtsundamba'<sup>8</sup> Rinpoche, a Mongolian monk, whose name remains unknown, predicted that Buddhism will be assaulted in Mongolia by hostile forces, sometime after which Arhat Bakula<sup>9</sup> will restore Buddhist tradition in the country (Malhotra, 2018). It was Kushok Bakula who contributed to the revival of Buddhism in Mongolia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He was recognised as the reincarnation of Arhat Bakula by the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (Wangchuk, 2017).

After joining his duties in Mongolia, Kushok Bakula presented his diplomatic credentials to the then Chairman of Great People's Khural (Mongolian Parliament), Jambyn Batmunkh. During that occasion, Kushok Bakula attended the meeting in his monastic robes and expressed his views on Buddha Shakyamuni. He also presented the officials with Buddhist white silken scarfs, known as 'Khada'. When Mongolia witnessed the establishment of a new political system which supported freedom of religious expression, Kushok Bakula openly assisted the Buddhists of Mongolia in reviving their Buddhist knowledge and practice, and in rebuilding their monasteries (Malhotra, 2018).

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<sup>8</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> Bogd Gegeen Jebtsundamba became the de facto leader of Mongolia when outer Mongolia was declared independent from the Qing Dynasty of China in 1911. He was a Tibetan spiritual leader and hold the position of third important person in Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy (Rinpoche, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> According to Tibetan Buddhism, Buddha had 16 principal disciples known as the Arhats and Bakula means the Elder (Shakspo, 1999).

Apart from these, Kushok Bakula travelled across Mongolia and imparted Buddhist teachings in the rural areas, and performed rituals of blessings and empowerment (Malhotra, 2018). During his tenure as ambassador in Mongolia, devotees from the Mongolian countryside came to seek his teachings and blessings. In Mongolia, he is remembered as 'Elchin Bagsh' (Ambassador Teacher). He was also conferred with the 'Polar Star', the second-highest civilian award in Mongolia, in 2001 (Wangchuk, 2017).

On May 29, 1991, Kushok Bakula initiated the celebration of Buddha's birthday in Mongolia, which was attended by thousands of people including the then President Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat and other political leaders. The event became the first public religious ceremony which marked the presence of Mongolian political leaders after almost seven decades of religious oppression during the time of communist rule in the country (Malhotra, 2018).

Kushok Bakula was the first Buddhist monk to hold an ambassadorial position and to take part in the development of bilateral relations between India and Mongolia. He helped in obtaining Indian visas and funding for Mongolian monks to study in Indian Tibetan monasteries like Gomang, Sera, the Buddhist School of Dialectics in Dharamshala, the Central Institute for Tibetan Higher Studies, etc. In 1999, in order to rebuild the 'Sangha' or the community of monks in Mongolia, Kushok Bakula built a monastery in Ulaanbaatar named 'Pethub Stangey Choskor Ling Monastery', which the Mongolians commonly referred to as Bakula Rinpoche's Monastery (Wallace, 2014). The monastery was inaugurated by the then Vice-President of India, Krishan Kant, on August 26, 1999. When the monastery construction was going on, Kushok Bakula opened a school in Ulaanbaatar in a rented portion of the Natsigdorj City Library on September 9, 1992, which was inaugurated by Dr. Karan Singh, the former Maharaja of J&K, with a jar of holy water from the river 'Ganga' (Wangchuk, 2018).

Until recently, the Pethub monastery was the only teaching monastery in Mongolia that provided room and boarding for the young monks. Highly qualified monks from Ladakh and Sikkim were brought to teach in Bakula Rinpoche's Monastery and some students came to India for obtaining the highest level of monastic education. Kushok Bakula encouraged the creation of the 'Lay Women Buddhist Organisation' and gave monastic ordination to women for the first time in Mongolia as a mark of respect for the spiritual needs and the contribution of Mongolian women to Buddhism (Wallace, 2014).

Kushok Bakula dedicatedly worked for the revival of Mongolian Buddhism and culture. One such activity was to convince the Indian government to allow bringing the relics of Buddha that were kept at the National Museum in New Delhi to Mongolia. Accordingly, in August 1993, the Indian Deputy Minister of Culture brought the relics of Buddha to Ulaanbaatar. The relics were displayed at the Central Cultural Palace for one month and thousands of devotees came to worship them. Citing the event, Mr. Nambaryn Enkhbayar, former President of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and Minister of Culture, expressed that the arrival of the relics was like the arrival of Lord Buddha Himself to the land for the Mongolian people, who had suffered from cultural persecution and were denied the practice of their faith for many years. Kushok Bakula also encouraged Mr. Enkhbayar to translate 'The Teachings of Buddha' from English to Mongolian and this book was published in 1995 in Japan and was distributed to the Mongolian Buddhists free of charge. Moreover, he established the International Buddhist Institute in Mongolia in order to allow international scholars to do research on Mongolian Buddhism. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama visited Mongolia in 1992 and gave public teachings and the Kalachakra initiation (Wallace, 2014 & Malhotra, 2018).

During his tenure, Kushok Bakula created new educational opportunities for the young Mongolian people. He set up a well-equipped Indian Cultural Centre with audio-visual materials, books, a performance space and artwork. The centre provides courses on Indian languages and different classical dance forms of India. He also initiated various student exchange programs under which more than 50 Mongolian students came for training in Indian colleges and universities (Wallace, 2014). Besides the above, as a member of the Parliament, Kushok Bakula led efforts to establish the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP), with its headquarters in Ulaanbaatar (Wangchuk, 2018).

The first democratically elected President of Mongolia, Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat, during his visit to India in 1994, signed the ‘Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship’ with India and personally emphasized the efforts of Kushok Bakula which made the signing of the historic treaty possible (Wangchuk, 2017). This treaty consisted of a total of 12 articles which were the continuation of principles of the Joint Declaration of 1973 (Miliate, 2009), viz. politics, economics, trade, science, technology, culture, agriculture, health, education, ecology, communication and terrorism (Khatik & Bhandari, 2021). Kushok Bakula also helped in the establishment of the ‘Mongolian-Indian Friendship Farm’ in the city of Darkhan and the ‘Training and Industrial Centre’ in Ulaanbaatar, which was named after Rajiv Gandhi (Wallace, 2014).

Kushok Bakula’s great deeds toward the Mongolian people and his dedicated work towards the strengthening of India-Mongolia ties are admirable. For his invaluable contributions, Kushok Bakula was awarded with the Padma Bhushan, the third-highest Indian Civilian Award, in 1988. In his honour, the Indian Government renamed the Leh airport as the Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Airport. Kushok Bakula was the ambassador of India in Mongolia till 2000 and he breathed his last on November 4, 2003, in New Delhi, India. Recently, a biography of Kushok Bakula Rinpoche was launched in Russia



in a meeting hosted by the Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Mr. D.B. Venkatesh Verma. The book named *The Architect of Modern Ladakh* is authored by Sonam Wangchuk Shakspo, who was Kushok Bakula's secretary for more than 35 years. The book was translated into Russian, Mongolian and French and work on the Chinese translation of the same is going on (Indian Embassy in Moscow, 2021).

## **5.5. India-Mongolia Relations**

### **5.5.1. Bilateral Ties**

A paradigm shift in India-Mongolia bilateral relations was brought about in the year 2015. The year 2015 marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Indo-Mongol diplomatic relations and the same year witnessed the first-ever visit of Mongolia by an Indian Prime Minister. In May 2015, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, visited Ulaanbaatar, which paved the way for India to become a 'Strategic Partner' for Mongolia from a 'Comprehensive' one. Thirteen G2G (Government of Government) agreements and four B2B (Business to Business) agreements were signed to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries. During this visit, for the first time in Mongolian history, the Parliament was convened on a holiday for a foreign dignitary (Soni, 2016 & MEA, 2021).

Before that, during her visit to Mongolia in July 2011, the former President of India, Pratibha Devisingh Patil, announced a Line of Credit of USD 20 million for setting up the 'Centre of Excellence for IT, Communication & Outsourcing' in Ulaanbaatar. The centre was, later on in May 2015, named after the former Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Bajpayee. The ground-breaking ceremony for the centre was held on August 16, 2021, and the centre is scheduled to be opened in 2022. India also upgraded the Rajiv Gandhi Polytechnic College for Production and Art and the Centre for Excellence in

Information & Communication Technology Education in Ulaanbaatar by spending USD 2.84 million for the same in November, 2016. During the same visit of the President in July 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation between the erstwhile Planning Commission of India and the National Development and Innovation Committee (NDIC) was ignored. An MoU on Media Exchanges and a bilateral Defence Cooperation Agreement were also signed by the two countries (MEA, 2021).

The historic visit of Narendra Modi to Mongolia was primarily influenced by various factors, including India's 'Act East' Policy; Buddhist ties and the China factor. Modi launched the 'Act East' Policy in 2014 to intensify economic, strategic and diplomatic relations with the Asian countries which share common concerns with India on China's growing military and economic strength and its implications on the evolving regional order. The 'Look East' Policy, which is the earlier model of 'Act East', had a similar manifestation. These are two different but continuing phases of India's policy toward Asia-Pacific. The belief behind the launching of these policies is that developments in East Asia will have direct consequences on India's security and development. As such, India started creating friendship ties and cooperation with East Asian countries. During his visit, PM Modi stressed that Mongolia was an integral part of India's Act East Policy. He opined that the destinies of both the countries were linked closely with the future of the Asia-Pacific Region and they could work together for the advancement of the region (Soni, 2016 & Kesavan, 2020).

Narendra Modi, on his visit to Mongolia, announced a USD 1 billion Line of Credit (LoC) for the infrastructure development of Mongolia, besides an additional LoC of USD 236 million for the ongoing petrochemical refinery project which would ensure Mongolia's energy security. Accordingly, both the countries signed a 22-point Joint

Statement. India has also announced an Exim Bank LoC of USD 1.236 billion for an Oil Refinery Project, the construction of which has already begun. This refinery will be capable of refining 1.5 million metric tonnes of crude oil per year, which is equivalent to approximately 80% of the Mongolian oil consumption (Trigunayat, 2019 & MEA, 2021). During his visit, Narendra Modi presented one sapling of Bodhi Tree to the Gandan Tagchilen Monastery and also pledged to help in building a statue of the Buddha and His two disciples there. In 2019, Narendra Modi and the Mongolian President, Khaltmaagiin Battulga, virtually unveiled the Buddha statue gifted by India (Stobdan, 2015 & MEA, 2019).

On the bilateral front, India and Mongolia have an 'India-Mongolia Joint Committee on Cooperation (IMJCC)', which is chaired at the ministerial level. The fifth session of the IMJCC was held in New Delhi in April, 2016 and was jointly chaired by L. Purevsuren, the then Foreign Minister of Mongolia and the Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen (Retd.) V.K. Singh. The sixth session was held at Ulaanbaatar in April, 2018, co-chaired by Sushma Swaraj, the then External Affairs Minister of India and Mr. Damdin Tsongtbaatar, the Foreign Minister of Mongolia. The seventh meeting of the IMJCC was held virtually, due to the COVID situation, in December, 2020, co-chaired by Dr. S. Jaishankar, the External Affairs Minister of India and Mr. Oyun-Erden, the Chief Cabinet Secretary of Mongolia. During this session, both the ministers acknowledged that the year 2020 marked the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. To mark the occasion, Mongolia released a special stamp issued by Mongol Post. Besides, S. Jaishankar virtually handed over 25 volumes of Mongolian Kanjur, printed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, under the 'National Mission for Manuscripts'. Both sides agreed to establish

an ‘AYUSH<sup>10</sup> Information Cell’ in Ulaanbaatar. During the same meeting, India also appreciated Mongolia’s move for allowing ‘visa on arrival’ status for Indian citizens (MEA, 2021).

In the defence sector as well, India and Mongolia have cooperated. In 2011, during her visit to Mongolia, Indian President Pratibha Patil signed a defence cooperation agreement which included an annual joint defence exercise by both the country’s military, code named ‘Nomadic Elephant’. Nomadic Elephant is an initiative which aims at training troops in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations under the mandate of the United Nations. India has also provided training to the Mongolian military officers in Indian establishments. Mongolia has sent its army officers for anti-terrorist training to India’s Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare Training School (CIJWS) in Vairengte, Mizoram, India. Both the countries participated in the joint peacekeeping operation in Mongolia in October 2004 during the first decade of the defence relationship. India is an active participant of ‘Khaan Quest’, an annual week-long joint military training exercise hosted by Mongolia (Ananth, 2015 & “Foothold in”, n.d.).

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) has been training the Mongolian General Authority for Border Protection (GABP) in the area of border patrolling and related subjects since 2014. An MoU was signed by both the countries during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Mongolia in 2015 and, for furthering this cooperation, a Joint Steering Committee was also constituted in the same year (MEA, 2021).

In January 2001, Mongolia and India signed several new bilateral agreements during the visit of the then Mongolian President Natsagiin Bagabandi to India. The areas

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<sup>10</sup> AYUSH Information Cells are set up by the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India to disseminate authentic information about the AYUSH system of treatment and medicines (Ministry of AYUSH, 2021).

included information technology, defence and legal matters. In 2005, both the countries agreed to launch a joint project to establish a satellite-based e-network for tele-education and tele-medicine in Mongolia. Under this project, Mongolian educational institutions and a few hospitals have been connected to Indian educational institutions and medical institutions, respectively. This has enabled the Mongolian institutions to have direct access to the modern technologies of education and healthcare of India (Krishna, 2020).

In 2018, Sushma Swaraj, the then External Affairs Minister of India, visited Mongolia at the invitation of the Foreign Affairs Minister of Mongolia, Mr. Damdin Tsogtbaatar. Swaraj's visit was the first visit of Mongolia by an Indian External Affairs Minister in 42 years. During her visit, both the countries agreed to continue to cooperate with each other in the fields of energy, trade and economy, information technology, capacity building, infrastructure development, healthcare, education, animal husbandry and other developmental sectors. Besides, they also agreed to work towards removing institutional and logistical impediments to increase tourism, trade, and people-to-people contact (MEA, 2018).

### **5.5.2. Third Neighbour Policy of Mongolia towards India**

As Mongolia's geographical location is between Russia and China, it could not escape the Sino-Russian rivalry, and to maintain an independent status, Mongolia articulated the 'third neighbour' policy for developing overseas partnerships with the United States, Japan, and India, etc. (Stobdan, 2015). The third neighbour policy was a result of a remark made by the then US Secretary of States, Mr. James Baker, during his visit to Mongolia in the early 1990s. During the visit, he had said that the US would be a third neighbour to Mongolia. Subsequently, the political establishment of Mongolia

focussed on developing friendly relations with countries, beyond its immediate neighbours, through the third neighbour policy (Miliate, 2009). This policy came into being from the close historical and cultural ties that countries share, and also from the concept of friendliness with other countries which are based on shared values, common interests and societal sympathy (Soni, 2016). With the help of this policy, Mongolia enjoys friendly relations with countries like the USA, Japan, South Korea, India and the Southeast Asian countries (Miliate, 2009). The third neighbour policy of Mongolia is an opportunity to have broad international economic relations and cooperation for future development with countries which are not its immediate neighbours (Sanalkhundev, 2021).

Mongolia preferred to depend not only on its neighbouring countries but also on as many countries and international institutions as possible (Soni, 2015). In Mongolia's revised foreign policy perspective of 2010, India was declared as one of Mongolia's third neighbours for the first time. Ever since India became a third neighbour of Mongolia, the two countries started working together aggressively to enhance their bilateral ties. After the aforesaid declaration, the first high-level visit to Mongolia was undertaken by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015, as already discussed above. As a third neighbour, India has, till now, extended its support to Mongolia in many ways possible, including financial, spiritual, academic, etc. (Soni, 2016).

Gonchig Ganbold, the Mongolian envoy to India, stated in one of his interviews that the Mongolians know India as Bharat as well as the land of the Buddha, and all the people of Mongolia have high regard for India. He also stated that the relationship of Mongolia with India is based on '3 Ds'- Dharma (pointing to Buddhism), Democracy and Development (Sibal, 2020). It is pertinent to mention here that when Mongolia

adopted democracy, the Indian parliamentarians helped in the drafting of their democratic constitution.

The third neighbour policy of Mongolia aimed at securing the country's overall security, including economic and strategic. Mongolia acknowledges India's positive influence on them and, through this policy, wants to make this relationship stronger. This policy approach of Mongolia emerged as a new dimension to India-Mongolia relations; the bilateral ties between the two countries have been transformed into a comprehensive partnership, which is reflected in the ways that the countries have redefined their geostrategic interests (Soni, 2015).

### **5.5.3. Other Areas of Cooperation**

Apart from the areas discussed, India and Mongolia have been cooperating in multiple other areas. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Mongolia and the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) of India have been cooperating with each other and in September 2019, an MoU was signed between the two agencies for future cooperation. In the field of nuclear energy as well, a working group for cooperation between the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) of India and the Nuclear Energy Agency of Mongolia has been in operation (MEA, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, between October 2020 and February 2021, this working group organised six virtual webinars on Mining and Mineral Cooperation, Healthcare and Pharma sector, Smart Cities, IT and related technologies, Dairy, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry sectors (Khatik & Bhandari, 2021).

After becoming a democratic country in 1990, the National Development Board of Mongolia signed two MoUs with the Planning Commission of India to establish a Joint Trade Sub-Committee and Co-Operation in 1994 during the visit of Mongolia by the

then Minister of Commerce of India, Pranab Mukherjee. In September 1996, an Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation for providing MFN (Most Favoured Nation) status to each other in respect of customs, duties and all other taxes on imports and exports, as well as an MoU on cooperation in the field of Geology and Mineral resources came into force. In 2001, during the visit of the Mongolian President to India, an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement was signed by both the countries, which is currently under review. In 2019, during the visit of President Khaltmaagiin Battulga and a 40-member Mongolian business delegation to India, the three main Chambers of Commerce of India, CII, FICCI and ASSOCHAM, organised a Business Meeting where two B2B agreements were signed by both the sides (MEA, 2021).

The Embassy of India in Ulaanbaatar, in collaboration with the ‘Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry’ (MNCCI), organised a commercial event named ‘Trade and Investment Opportunities in India’ in December 2018, in order to promote Indian pharmaceutical, agriculture, dairy, spice, tea, coffee, tourism and educational sectors in Mongolia. On May 13, 2019, the First ever India-Mongolia Oil and Gas Exhibition was jointly organised by the Embassy of India in Ulaanbaatar, the Mongolian Ministry of Mining and Heavy Industry, the Mongol Refinery and Engineers India Ltd., in which 32 leading Indian companies and 3 Mongolian companies showcased the products and services that they provide. On the occasion of 65 years of India-Mongolia diplomatic relations, the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised a business event on January 20, 2020, named ‘India: Land of Business Opportunities’, which highlighted Make in India, Skill India, Digital India and other projects (MEA, 2021). In February 2021, the Policy Times of India organised a virtual meeting on ‘Unleashing India’s Potential’ to promote bilateral trade



and commerce and to disseminate information between the two countries (Khatik & Bhandari, 2021).

During Sushma Swaraj's visit to Mongolia in 2018, while addressing the gathering during the birth centenary celebrations of Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, she opined that both the countries are connected through Buddhism and also that the teachings of Lord Buddha act as a guiding principle for the countries ("India, Mongolia", 2018). Swaraj also focussed on treating radicalism in religions, through which, according to her, terrorism may flourish in the entire region, and stressed that India and Mongolia, with strong Buddhist connections, can counter this trend of radicalism ("India Revitalising", 2018).

As a part of soft power policy, the Government of India has introduced 'Aid to Mongolia' scheme to assist the students of the country. The ICCR has been offering scholarships to Mongolian students for studying in Indian institutes in the fields of General Language, Science and Humanities, Engineering, Architecture, Fine Arts, Performing Arts (dance/music), etc. India offers around fifty ICCR scholarships to Mongolian students under Aid to Mongolia, General Cultural Scholarship Scheme and Cultural Exchange Program. In addition, ten ICCR Scholarships have also been offered to students to undertake Buddhist studies in institutes situated in Varanasi and Leh. Mongolia has offered two such scholarships to interested Indian students to undergo Mongolian Studies (MEA, 2021).

From 2009, India has been offering 120 slots for training per year to Mongolia under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC). From 2011-12, the slots for civilian training were increased to 150 per year. In 2015, it again increased to 200, but after 2016, it was reduced to 150. In 2019-20, India approved 200 slots, including 40

for group training of Mongolian professionals, engineers, and technicians for the Mongol Refinery, but all the slots have not been utilised because of the COVID-19 pandemic (MEA, 2021).

The India-Mongolian Agreement on Cultural Cooperation was signed in 1961 to ensure cooperation in the fields of education through scholarships, exchange of experts, participation in conferences, etc., and this agreement is renewed periodically. In 2015, to mark the completion of 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, 'Festival of India' was organised in Mongolia in the month of November. Furthermore, traditional dance troupes of both the countries performed at different places in each other's land. A Ladakh mask dance, known locally as Chams, was performed by a troupe at the Asian Buddhist Conference on Peace in June, 2019. A pan-Mongolian Indian dance competition 'Melody of Ganga' has been organised for the last 20 years among school children with the help of the Indian Cultural Centre of Mongolia which was established in January 20, 1992. Mongolia has also been organising Hindi Language classes and, each year, four students are granted scholarships to study in Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra (MEA, 2021).

Mongolia voted for India's proposal for the inscription of 'Yoga' into UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage; likewise, India also voted for the inclusion of the Mongolian legacy on 'Mongolian Traditional Custom to Worship Mountain and Owoo<sup>11</sup>' into the same. Both the countries agreed to support each other for the UNSC non-permanent seats for 2021-22 and 2023-24 terms, respectively. Besides these,

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<sup>11</sup> Owoos are the stone heaps or piles used to worship the deities of nature. They can be made of wood as well. Owoos are located on hilltops or riverside areas. They can be of different sizes and shapes depending on the importance of the deities (Owoo, n.d.).

Mongolia has been supporting Indian candidature to a number of organisations since 2017, including, (MEA, 2021) -

- International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS),
- World Customs Organization (WCO),
- Council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in Category ‘B’ during the 30th session of the IMO Assembly in 2017,
- Advisory Committee membership election for Human Rights Council during the 36th meeting of HRC in Geneva in 2017,
- International Court of Justice (on reciprocal basis),
- UNESCO Executive Board at the 39th General Conference for the term 2017-2021,
- 3rd group of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) during the 40th Assembly, 2019,
- World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) for the term 2020-2022,
- Council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in Category ‘B’ during the 31st session of the IMO Assembly in 2019,
- Asia Pacific Group seat of the UN Security Council for the term 2021-2022,
- Inter-governmental Committee for the Safeguard of Intangible Cultural Heritage,
- UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in November 2020.

Mongolia is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and since 2011, it has been experiencing double digit growth, boosted especially by the mining sectors like uranium, gold, coal and copper. Mongolia is listed among the world’s top ten countries

in respect of natural resources. But the growth in mining sector also calls for sustainable and effective management of these resources and Mongolia has been seeking external support from countries like India to overcome these challenges (Soni, 2016).

India, on the other hand, has been supporting Mongolia since the beginning of diplomatic relations between the two. Mongolia is rich in coking coal reserves, but they did not have any plant to mine it. Coking coal is also known as metallurgical coal, a raw material which is used in the production of iron and steel. This is more expensive than other types of coal like steam coal, etc. For India, Mongolian coking coal is a cheaper option than the highly priced Australian coal which India had imported earlier to meet its need for quality coking coal. In 2012, India established the first steel plant in Mongolia with the aim to acquire the mine and use coal for the steel plant first and export the rest to India through Chinese ports (Krishna, 2020). Since 2007, Indian companies have competed in the bidding process of mining developers for one of the world's largest coking coal deposits in Tavan Tolgoi in Mongolia. In 2009, India signed an MoU with Mongolia on the peaceful use of radioactive minerals and nuclear energy in the hope of involvement in uranium development (Bayasgalan & Jargalsaikhan, 2021).

Apart from the areas of cooperation as discussed above, the two countries have also been extending their cooperation in many other areas. India executed the first solar energy electrification project in the Dadal district of Mongolia, which was inaugurated in April 2006, and the training of Mongolian experts in solar energy was also organised by India. India also approved a solar project for the Mongolian Foreign Office in 2018. Moreover, India provided humanitarian assistance of USD 20,000 to children in Sukhbaatar who were affected by winter Zud and USD 50,000 to the flood affected Provinces of Mongolia, including Bayan Ulgii, Arhangai and Huvsgul in August, 2018.

Different medical missions have been conducted by India where the Indian doctors conducted surgeries (neuro, heart, micro, plastic etc.), donated medical equipment and medicines, and trained Mongolian doctors (MEA, 2021). India also assisted Mongolia in the establishment of the Cyber Security Training Centre and in capacity building and infrastructure development in the cyber security arena. They both cooperated in the field of traditional systems of Medicine and Homeopathy as well.

Mongolians respect the Buddhist tourist places of India, like the Buddhist Circuit. Along with it, the Taj Mahal is also at the top of the list of their travel destinations in India and a primary reason for this is the link between Mongolia and the ancient Mughal rulers of India. To mark this respect of Mongolians towards Ta Mahal, on January 18, 2022, on the occasion of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, an ice sculpture of the Taj Mahal was installed at the Sukhbaatar Square of Ulaanbaatar by the Indian government.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

As is evident, Buddhism, along with Buddhist heritage, is one of the strong aspects of the multifaceted India-Mongolia relations. In Mongolia, Buddhism is regarded not only as a religion, but also as a philosophy of contentment. Today a majority of the people of Mongolia practice Buddhism and they see India as a sacred land of Dharma and a source of wisdom and knowledge (Buddhism is thriving in Mongolia, 2021).

Mongolia is a small but geostrategically significant country for India. Both the countries share historical and cultural ties and that is why they are still trying to maintain their friendship in all possible ways. Moreover, the China factor also plays an important role in India-Mongolia relations. India has been trying to strengthen its influence on Mongolia, the backyard of China.

In September 2019, the Mongolian President Khaltmaagiin Battulga had been invited by the Indian President to pay a visit to India. During his visit, the Mongolian President participated in the India-Mongolia Business Forum. It is of note here that Mongolia hopes to be a hub of Indian companies to get benefitted from rural communication and technology, which will be able to connect the sparsely populated people of the country (MEA, 2019).

Gonching Ganbold, in an interview, stated that the main export commodities of Mongolia are minerals and agricultural products, which constitute almost 80% of the total exports. Besides, there are around 80 million animals in Mongolia which are a source of ecologically clean hides, dairy, cashmere and wool. Mongolia has also pursued policies to export processed goods and produce value-added products, not only just raw materials. India can invest in providing the latest technology machineries to Mongolia for producing various export commodities and, while doing so, can acquire the commodities, and even the raw materials, at a cheaper price.

The Mineral Resources Authority of Mongolia, in one of their reports, showed that during 2012-13, there were tonnes of undiscovered minerals present under the grasslands of Mongolia. They estimated approx. 2712 tons of silver, 163 million tons of phosphorus, 1104 tons of uranium, 6.4 billion tons of coal, 46.6 million tons of copper, 1801.1 tons of gold and 564 million tons of lignite to be present there. These resources have, however, not been fully discovered to date. Till now, 8000 deposits of 440 different varieties of minerals have been discovered, and around 600 deposits are yet to be exploited. India can assist Mongolia and can simultaneously be benefitted from these mineral resources.

Mongolia, as a mark of their respect for India, celebrates Ayurveda Day, Guru Nanak Jayanti and Gandhi Jayanti in Mongolia. On the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, a commemorative stamp was issued by the Mongol Post on October 2, 2019, and next year on the same day, specially minted gold and silver coins on Gandhi were released by them (MEA, 2021).

As discussed before, Mongolians are fond of Hindi movies and TV series, and an 'Indian Film Festival' was organised in 2019 where Bollywood movies were showcased in Mongolia (MEA, 2021). To boost the tourism sector of Mongolia, the Mongolian company Hunnu Air has launched direct flights to New Delhi from their new international airport at Khoshigt Valley. On October 20, 2020, the first flight was operated by the airline to India to repatriate Mongolian citizens from India and also to carry construction engineers to work in the oil factory (Ganbold, 2021).

India and Mongolia share several symbols, a fact that signifies the good relationship between the two countries. Ulaanbaatar has a street named after Mahatma Gandhi which features a statue of Gandhiji; likewise, in India, there exists an Ulaanbaatar Street in New Delhi. A Mongolian Buddhist Monastery is constructed in Bodh Gaya, India; similarly, an Indian Buddhist Monastery is also there in Mongolia. Sanskrit and Hindi are taught in Mongolian universities, and Mongolian in Indian universities (Nyamdavaa, 2015). These similarities make the relationship between the two nations strong and there is a need to create more such symbols of solidarity between them to make this relationship stronger.

During the COVID-19 wave, Mongolia received their first vaccines from India. On February 22, 2021, India sent 1,50,000 doses of made-in-India Covishield AstraZeneca vaccines, granted by the Government of India under the Vaccine Maitri initiative.

Mongolia marked the day as a historic one as they received their first vaccines from a spiritual neighbour.

Mongolia and Mongolian people have a deep regard for India as the birthplace of the Buddha and they respect all the Buddhist heritage sites of India like the Sanchi Stupa, Bodh Gaya, etc. Thus, with the Buddhist connect in mind, Mongolia and India have put forward a future framework for cooperation and have signed bilateral documents in various fields like energy, air services, cyber security, trade, border guarding, policing and surveillance, etc. These bilateral ties will help in maintaining a close relationship between the two countries.



## **Chapter 6**

## **Conclusion**

## **6.1. Introduction**

As discussed, the concept of soft power has been used by the countries as an alternate form of power and based on the concept the countries are building their strategies to fulfil their interests. The developed countries of the West have already adopted the concept as an important tool in their foreign policies soon after the concept was coined in the 1990s. India and other countries too have entered the game of enhancing their intangible standing on the international platform and are using soft power as a tool to improve bilateral and multilateral ties on the international platform.

In this regard, India's deep historical connection with Buddhism and India's age-old civilization has provided a foundation to establish diplomatic links of India with Asian and all other countries around the world. India has already incorporated Buddhism as an important aspect of its foreign policy tool and its influence can be seen in the growing relations of India with South East and East Asian countries over the years. Japan and Mongolia, the two important geopolitical regions for India, constitute an important part of India's Act East Policy. The two countries have great faith in Buddhism and both of them have adopted and preserved Buddhism since it was introduced in their respective lands. Although there is an ancient historical link between India with Japan and Mongolia, modern-day diplomatic relations between them started soon after India got independence from the colonial power.

India's relationship with Japan witnessed ups and downs, but today the diplomatic ties between the two have come a long way and both of them have become strategic partners from global special partners. The present relationship between India and Japan is not a result of short-term policies, rather it has grown gradually and specifically since the year 2000. India is an emerging economy and it needs an ally like Japan which can help

India in economic and infrastructural upliftment. Moreover, India and Japan are part of different multinational forums through which both the countries are connected and a good relationship between the two will result in more productive outcomes.

As mentioned before, Japan has a deep respect for India as the land of Buddhism. Although, Buddhism was introduced in Japan in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, but in the present times too, Buddhism happens to be the most important aspect of India and Japan relations. Several diplomatic meets that were conducted, many bilateral agreements and ties, infrastructural development projects, etc., that India and Japan are working on, have become possible because of the two country's shared culture and civilizational links and their mutual respect. The significant among the developmental projects that India and Japan have been working on together are the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), India-Japan Digital Partnership (I-JDP), Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) start-up hub etc. Besides, in the field of energy, environment, climate change etc., The Energy and Resources Institute of India (TERI) has been working in collaboration with Japanese organisations (Dave, 2013). These two countries are strategic partners in the Asian continent and they want to play a greater role in the international as well as the regional affairs, for which they look forward to extending their support for each other in all fields possible in the coming days.

Mongolia too, like Japan, has been a Buddhist state where Buddhism reached from India through China. History speaks about some ancient trails of India-Mongolia interactions and in the present times too, both the countries have been maintaining their friendly relations. Mongolia has declared India as a third neighbour and a spiritual neighbour and India too regards Mongolia as a strategic partner. Buddhism is the primary religion of Mongolia and keeping that in mind, India has initiated several

developmental projects in Mongolia including infrastructural, educational, healthcare, space, telecom etc. In the diplomatic field as well, different ministerial level meets and visits, from time to time, are held between the two nations. Moreover, India is one of the favoured tourist destinations for Mongolia, specifically the Buddhist tourist places of India.

India and Mongolia practice many similar traditions which signify their age-old cultural and civilisational links, which were established with the establishment of Buddhism in Mongolia. It was also believed that India-Mongolia relations started during the time of Mongol ruler Chinggis Khan and after that, at different points of time their relationship flourished. In the modern period, after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Indian monk Ambassador Kushok Bakula Rinpoche played a great role in enhancing India-Mongolia relations. Kushok Bakula helped in the revival of Buddhism in Mongolia and also in the democratic transition of the country in a peaceful way. Bakula also played important role in the formulation, signing and ratification of different bilateral agreements and ties between India and Mongolia during his tenure.

The undiscovered mineral deposits of Mongolia, which make it a highly demanded natural resource state, attract different nations around the world to extract raw materials from those resources. In this regard, citing mutual benefits, India has put forward its helping hand. Additionally, like Japan, Mongolia also pays high regard to India as a sacred land of Dharma and knowledge. Mongolia prefers to maintain good relations with India as a spiritual neighbour and also to get benefitted from India's investments in different sectors of their country. India, too, wants to keep a spiritual ally in the form of Mongolia and to indirectly make the most usage of its natural resource stock in the country.

India's relations with Japan and Mongolia are being driven by a few aspects, but the important among them is the China Factor, mentioned in the previous chapters as well. China's increasing global economic influence and 'debt-trap diplomacy' has been a matter of concern for most of the countries and hence, China has become a big factor for India along with Japan and Mongolia for their bilateral and multilateral relations. China's investments in African, North East and South East Asian countries, its increasing foreign policy, etc., are the areas of apprehension for India. The 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) formerly known as 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) of China, through which China builds infrastructural projects including ports around the Indian Ocean is also bothering India and therefore, India needs to keep a strong ally in the backyard of China to check and balance the economic growth of the later (Shiotani, n.d.).

Moreover, India and Japan have an unresolved territorial border with China. China often involves in clashes over territory in the North-East and Eastern parts of India. Besides, China extends its support to India's neighbouring country Pakistan with whom India has longstanding territorial issues. Japan has also been facing a territorial dispute with China over the Senkaku islands, which are situated in the East China Sea and administered by Japan. Mongolia, as well, after the post-cold war era, lost the security coverage of the USSR and became a part of North-East Asian countries (Shiotani, n.d.). Moreover, India along with Japan and Mongolia are dependent on China for their market and there is a need for all of them to enhance their bilateral ties to reduce dependence on China.

Takenori Horimoto, an eminent scholar and professor of Japan, stated about China's role in growing India-Japan relations and how these two countries have prioritised dealing with China's evolving power status. Japan believes that in the coming decades

China will become anti-Japan and for the same reason, Japan wants to keep India as an important ally to confront such situations. India has carried out various developmental works like making ports, roads, etc., in Central Asian countries like Iran and Afghanistan. Japan has also become an investment partner in these Indian projects. Japan sees these developmental projects of India as a strategic step to dodge Chinese investments in Central Asia (Lynch & Przystup, 2017).

Although the China factor is an important driving force in India's bilateral relations with Japan and Mongolia, yet, all these countries' focus remains always on Buddhism as the primary factor of their bilateral ties. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, under whose leadership these relations are enhanced in recent times, has been trying to include Buddhism in his bilateral policies with these two countries. Modi visited Buddhist temples in Kyoto while on an official tour to Tokyo. He offered a Buddhist statue and one sapling of the Bodhi Tree in Gandan Monastery of Mongolia. Likewise, on June 14, 2022, the Holy Buddha relics were installed in the Battsagaan temple Assembly Hall of the Gandan Monastery in the presence of Indian Minister of Law Mr. Kiren Rijiju, Speaker of Mongolian Parliament Mr. Zandanshatar Gombojav, Mongolian Minister of Culture Mr. Nomin Chinbat, his eminence Khamba Nomun Khan, incarnate lamas and others. The relics reached Mongolia after 29 years i.e., after 1993 and they were kept for display for the general public for 11 days, i.e., till June 24. On June 16, 2022, a commemorative Stamp on 19<sup>th</sup> Kushok Bakula Rinpoche was released by Mongol Post at a ceremony attended by Kiren Rijiju, Khamba Nomun Khan, Former Mongolian President Nambaryn Enkhbayar etc. India also has given its word to Mongolia to extend support in the space and telecom sector; India will also support Mongolia as well as Japan in international forums like United Nations in the coming days.

## **6.2. Essential Findings**

This study helps in understanding the role and importance of Buddhism as India's diplomatic tool in Japan and Mongolia. The study is primarily based on secondary sources, which have limited the data to derive on a definite conclusion. However, an in-depth study is carried out on the stated topic covering every possible aspect of it.

Buddha and Buddhist heritage has made India a sacred land for which other Buddhist countries like Japan and Mongolia have great regard for India. Although, Buddhism reached Japan and Mongolia via China, yet, India is trying its best to establish relations through Buddhism with these countries and it has succeeded to a great extent. India has been able to receive funds from Japan for the development and conservation of Buddhist heritage sites of India for tourism and pilgrimage. Japan has also granted funds for the reconstruction of Nalanda University as well, which was a hub of students and scholars from Japan in the ancient times. Japan and India have become members of different multinational forums like QUAD, G4, etc., and extend support for each other in different international platforms as well.

The Indian Monk Ambassador, Kushok Bakula Rinpoche helped in the revival of Buddhism in Mongolia after it was assaulted by some hostile forces. It was from then, that the relationship between India and Mongolia was upgraded to spiritual neighbours and later on Mongolia recognised India as one of its third neighbours. In recent times, the Indian Prime Minister, and External Affairs Ministers paid their frequent visits to Mongolia and made Buddhist links between the two countries stronger. The developmental projects undertaken by India in Mongolia helped in portraying a positive image of India in front of the latter. India has already started mining coking coal in Mongolia which is an important raw material for Indian steel industries. Mineral-rich

Mongolia will become a worthwhile country for India in future as well, if India continues to successfully employ its Buddhist diplomacy.

There are certain voices which have raised concerns about India's Buddhist diplomacy and the future of Buddhism in India. While conducting a telephonic interview with a few resource persons and experts who have knowledge in the study area, some respondents raised questions about the efficacy of Buddhist diplomacy in India. According to one of the former Ambassadors of India who as a part of a discussion with me highlighted that, "Buddhism is withering away because of Hinduism, Hindutva and Lora Ram and only a small population including Dalits and Kshatriyas are practicing Buddhism in India. The Hindu Brahmins don't prefer Buddhism as a religion". The Ambassador further added, "China, Japan, Nepal etc., are the countries that are worshipping Buddha and not India. Moreover, Pakistan, a Muslim majority country, in the coming days is planning to organise a seminar on Buddhism." He further added that, "India is only using Buddhism as a diplomatic tool to counter Chinese Buddhist diplomacy and indirectly reduce Chinese influence in the South East and East Asian region". These views of the Ambassador are quite worrisome for India's Buddhist heritage and its future.

Despite all, Buddhism has enhanced the diplomatic relations of India with Japan and Mongolia in a positive way. Today these countries respect each other and support each other in international forums. India, too, has gained a lot from these two nations and in future as well, Buddha and Buddhism will help India to fulfil its interests and grow diplomatic and bilateral ties with these countries.



### 6.3. Recommendations

Buddhism and the Buddha have aided India in fortifying its cordial ties with Japan and Mongolia. India still has room to improve in this area if it wants to use Buddhism as the cornerstone of its foreign policy in future as well. If we compare India's relationship with Japan to its long-standing connections with Mongolia, it is relatively recent. But throughout the past two decades, India has continued to retain strategic ties with Japan and Mongolia. The current study demonstrates that India has the potential to strengthen its diplomatic and Buddhist ties with these nations to the point where India may benefit the most. India may and ought to choose specific actions to strengthen these ties.

- The Buddhist Circuit and other Buddhist heritage sites in India can be connected through a variety of trip plans that India may present. To promote people-to-people contact and to draw in more tourists, direct flights to and from Japan and Mongolia could be provided. In order to reach a wider audience, various cultural performances about the life cycle of Buddha can be organised in popular Buddhist tourist locations.
- In order to promote a variety of cultural events and mark Buddhist holy days, India can develop more and more Buddhist cultural centres in Japan and Mongolia. Buddhist holy days can also be honoured in the existing ICCR Cultural Centres. The sacred writings of Buddhism can be translated into the Japanese language and the Indian government can gift them to their counterparts in Japan so they can maintain them and use them to spread monastic education.
- India exports to Japan less than it imports in bilateral trade. After undertaking a pilot survey of those markets, a variety of items including Buddhism related souvenirs of Indian origin and 'Make in India' certification can be exported to Japanese markets. Japan remains India's 12th-largest economic partner, but this

gap might be narrowed if both nations increase imports and exports at a lower cost. Every year, the Indian textile industry's export rate rises. In order to improve relations between Japan and India, India should begin producing the monk robes known as 'Kasaya' in Sanskrit and 'Kesa' in Japanese, which are worn by monks in Mongolia as well as Japan.

- India should invite scholars from Japan and Mongolia to study and do research in Buddhist studies at various government-sponsored and government-run institutions. To impart Buddhist knowledge and provide instruction in monastic education, Buddhist monks may also be invited from these nations. In order to spread Buddhism among the citizens of these nations and other nations as well, timely Buddhist conferences should be organised by the government.
- India should prioritise its own issues as a first step toward the cause. Despite having its roots in India, Buddhism is now more prevalent in other Buddhist countries than it is in India. To preserve Buddhism and its practice among Indians, India must first preserve all the Buddhist pilgrimage places like Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, Nalanda, etc. and build infrastructural connectivity to the holy sites. In this regard, the Government of India may also need to make amendments to Article 25 (2) (b) and officially recognise Buddhism as a separate religion.
- Buddha was a great teacher who wished to enlighten people with his teachings, and his followers view him as a teacher rather than a God. India is the only country with the sole authority over the sacred Buddhist texts. To promote Buddhist customs and rituals among Indians, the Indian government should take a variety of steps, such as organising Buddhist conferences, inviting Buddhist lamas to share their knowledge, establishing Buddhist study centres in all Indian

universities, encouraging domestic research in Buddhism, commemorating Buddhist holidays, etc.

- The people should also have access to the Buddhist sacred scriptures in all major languages. It is important to educate Indians about the benefits of Buddhist prayers. Here, the construction of monasteries in all major cities, etc., can also be undertaken as significant action by the government. Buddhism is revered around the world for its teachings on love, compassion, peace, equality, and respect for nature. Even if a person practices another religion, they can still be a follower of Buddhism.
- Every year, the USC Centre for Public Diplomacy rates the top 30 soft power countries in the world according to a ranking system developed in Portland. The developed countries of the West and only a few Asian nations make it to the top 30 ranks. India has not been able to form a part of the list because of multiple challenges that exist in the form of poverty, corruption, crime rates etc. There is thus a need to work in this field extensively and address the challenges that India faces.
- Indian restaurants, for instance, are popular in developed nations and serve Indian food. However, just a limited number of dishes are offered in those establishments. The promotion of Indian cuisine from various parts of the world can be done through eateries, food festivals, processed foods, etc. Moreover, steps can also be taken to popularise Buddhist cuisines in various regions of the world.

In India's relations with Japan and Mongolia, Buddhism has developed into a promising soft power strategy. Even though India shares historical ties with these two countries,

the relations in the contemporary time are promoted by using Buddhism as a tool of diplomacy.

It should here be highlighted that Soft Power is intangible, making it challenging to demonstrate how it actually affects India's bilateral relations with Japan and Mongolia. However, it must be noted that Buddhism is one of the essential pretexts on which the links between India, Japan and Mongolia are established. Buddhism is, thus regarded as a key tenet in the official negotiations and joint declarations between these nations.

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