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# **Korea and India: Historical and Cultural Linkages and Contemporary Relations**

by  
**Sandip Kumar Mishra**  
**Department of East Asian Studies**  
**University of Delhi, Delhi**  
**India**

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### **1. Introduction**

Korea and India share many cultural and historical commonalities like the Asian values shared by the countries of the region. However the two countries interacted and got cognizance of each other primarily by Buddhism, legend of princess Ho of Ayut'a and some indirect trade through the Silk Road during their initial interactions. The historical and cultural relations between the two countries could be still significant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when both the countries have been searching their roles in the global politics. However, in the recent phase of interactions, it seems to be less an interaction of two old civilizations and more of two fast growing economies. Korea and India has recognized the place of each other in their mutual growth, given the strong complementarities between the two countries. A synergy of relationship exists between the two countries, in which successful alliance of Korean capital and technological advancement with Indian cheap and skilled labour power and vast market would be beneficial for both the countries. Similarly, cooperation between the technical expertises of South Korean hardware with Indian software would be beneficial for both the countries in the age of IT revolution. Whereas, India would get benefited from cooperating with the highly developed and matured manufacturing sector, Korean collaboration with Indian service sector looks to have good potentialities. When the world economy is moving from manufacture-based economy to service-based economy, there could not be denial of the importance of service sector in future of health of an economy.

In the post-Cold War era, not only economic cooperation between the two countries is possible but politically also they find themselves in agreement with each other on variety of issues related to global and regional politics. A cold relationship between Korea and India, throughout during the Cold War days, is being attributed to the international systemic reason, namely the bipolarity and India and Korea as being near to the opposite blocks. The same international systemic reason has got up-side down and both India and Korea find themselves in close relationship with the US. If the systemic reasons were deterministic for the cold relations between India and Korea, there should not be any doubt that they would press for a more close cooperation between the two countries in future. The historical and cultural linkages would also play a significant role of bridge in the process of growing political and economic linkages in future.

## **2. Historical and Cultural Linkages:**

In the ancient time Buddhism was the bedrock of relationship between the Korea and India. Buddhism was introduced to Korea in the second half of fourth century and Koguryo was the first among the three kingdoms of Korea, which received Buddhism. During the reign of Kim Sosurim (371-384), Buddhism was officially recognized in Korea.<sup>1</sup> Supposedly, Buddhism reached from India to Korea via China. However, there are some speculations which try to explore the possibility that Buddhism reached to Korea directly from India. Even if Buddhism reached Korea directly from India before its official route via China, more or less it was in a dormant form and there is hardly any evidence that it got any reference in the Korean cultural and social life. Without going into the debate of source of Korean Buddhism, it is safe to say that spread of Buddhism in Korea during the era of three kingdoms led to increase in interactions of two countries afterwards.

According to historical evidences, 'Korea's contacts with India commenced in the fourth century.'<sup>2</sup> Three monks from India visited three kingdoms of Korea respectively- Koguryo, Paikje and Silla via China. The three Indian monks who visited the three kingdoms were Ado, Maranant and Ado (Muk-ho-ja), who reached

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<sup>1</sup> Ahn, Kye-hyon, "Introduction of Buddhism to Korea," in Lancaster, Lewis R. and C. S. Yu (eds.), *Introduction of Buddhism to Korea: New Cultural Patterns*, California, Asian Humanities Press, 1989, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, Kwang-su, *Buddhist Ideas and Rituals in Early India and Korea*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1998, p. 30.

Korea via former Ch'in of China in 374, 384, and 417 respectively. There is mention of advent of three Indian monks in Korea during the reign of Kim Chik-pyong (579-631) in the book of Taisho named *Haedong-kosung-chon* or the Biography of Eminent Monks of Korea.<sup>3</sup> Buddhism in Korea got wide acceptance and being embraced by all the three kingdoms and further by unified Silla and Koryo. However, most of the time, the early interactions between the Korean and Indian monks was through China as Korea was closer to China in its cultural practices and Buddhist teachings and ideas coming via China were easier to adopt. However, Korean monks did understand the importance of India as a birthplace of Amitabh Sakyamuni Buddha. India was also considered to be one of the five original canthers of world civilization and as a repository of enduring human values and ideals. Moreover, there were some indirect trade relations between the two countries via famous Silk Road. Various exchanges between the two countries happened and India was the main source of luxury items owned by the Silla kingdom's aristocrats such as wool products, incense, spices, glass ornaments, peacock feathers and jewellery

The legend of princess Ho of Karak, an ancient Korean kingdom, depicted in *Samgukyusa* (a historical book of the three kingdoms) in the first century AD also considered to be an important chapter in the inter-Korean relations in the ancient time. According to legend, Kim Suro of Kimhae faction married to 16 year old princess from the 'Ahyuta' (which was most probably the capital of the ancient Indian kingdom Kosala, Ayodhya). After marrying, king and queen lived happily for around one and half century and had 10 sons and 2 daughters. The second and third sons adopted the mother's surname Ho (or Huh). When Kim Suro found princess Ho at the Southwest coast of the Korean peninsula, she was accompanied by 'more than a score of attendants and servants.'<sup>4</sup> She also brought with her a pagoda and Buddha statue to Korea. There are some archaeological evidences which prove that the 'double-fish' pattern discovered inside the mausoleum of Kim Suro were also prevalent during the same time in central India. There could be debate about the authenticity of the legend, but there could not be denial of the fact that Korea belief that the princess Ho Hwang-ok came from Ayut'a is significant enough to consider that India has a place in the mental map of Korea during that period. Korean scientists have recently established

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Lee Kwang-su, op. cit. p. 33

an inconclusive genetic relationship between Korea and India by corroborating DNA evidences.

It is also recorded that King Ayuk, which was identified as Indian king Ashoka of Mauryan dynasty sent iron and gold to Korea to make statues of Buddha. However, the tentative history of Korea-India relations increasingly becomes more authentic with the course of time. From the eighth century onwards, various Korean monks visited India. In I-tsing's account, *Biography of Eminent Monks Who Went to the Western Region in Search of the Law during the Great T'ang Dynasty* in 7<sup>th</sup> century as many as eight monks out of fifty-five went to India. Korean monk Kyomic was the first person from Korea who visited India and studied Buddhist texts. Various Korean monks such as Kyomic, A-nan-ya-bal-ma, Hye-op, Hyon-t'ae, (Sarvajnadeva) Hyon-gaki (Parampujya) and Hsuan-chao, Hyeryun (Prajnavarman), Taebom and Hyech'o visited India and studied at the Buddhist centres of learning in India. Brief account of lives and journey of these scholars could be found in *Samgukyusa, the Haedon Kosungjon, Yi Jing's Tatang xiyu qiufa gaoseng zuan* and other scattered sources. The noteworthy among them was Hyech'o who wrote his records by the name of *Wang-O-Chon-Ch'uk-Kuk-Chon* (Memoir of a Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India). In the interactions various Indian monks also visited Korea such as Devedatta (Pei-da-dua).

Interactions between and visits of monks from one country to the other one continued till the early Chosun period,<sup>5</sup> when state supported the Confucianism and Buddhist monks were not able to sustain the resources and interests needed to visit India. Around the same time, era of Delhi Sultant also starts in Indian history and somehow the Buddhism was not able to attract as many people as it used to be in India. The ebb of Buddhism in both the countries around the same time made it difficult to sustain the exchange of visits from the monks. According to the records, the last Indian monk who visited Korea was Chikong in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century during the Koryo period.

### **3. India-Korea after the end of Second World War:**

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<sup>5</sup> For a details about the Buddhism in Korea during the Chosun period, see, Lacaster, L. and C.S. Yu (eds.), *Buddhism in the Early Choson: Suppression and Transformation*, California, Asian Humanities Press, 2002.

During the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910) in Korea and in the last phase of Delhi Sultanat (1210-1526) and Mughal Dynasty (1526-1707) in India, there is almost no evidence of interactions between Korea and India. During the colonial rule in India from 1757 too, India was not in a position to think anything except its plight by the colonial power Britain. Similarly, Korea was also colonized by Japan and hardly there were opportunities and space for both the countries to think beyond their oppressor.

However, during India and Korean freedom struggles, there are evidences that a ‘distant and fading memory’ of each other kept on flashing in writing of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore and Rahul Sankrityana. Rahul Sankrityana, a noted Buddhist scholar of India, was amongst the few Indians to have traipsed the path to Korea in 1930s. Although, the Korea did not get any attention in the various Indian National Congress (INC) resolutions, the harbinger of Indian national movement, people like Gandhi did not criticized Korean patriot An Chung-gen when in 1909 he shot Ito Hirobumi, the architect of Japan’s protectorate treaty with Korea. He compared Japan role in Korea with British in India and did not approve the Japanese claim of Asia’s Co-prosperity Zone. Another important leader of Indian freedom struggle and first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru praised *Samil* Movement of Korea in March 1919. In a letter to his daughter on December 30, 1932, by appreciating the gallantry role of Korean youth in the movement, he wrote that Japanese colonial rule in Korea is a ‘very sad and dark chapter of history.’<sup>6</sup>

The often quoted quatrain of Rabindranath Tagore about Korea when he was asked about his understanding of *Samil* Movement of 1919 during his second visit to Japan in 1929, touched the cord of Korean popular sentiments. In his poem he gave Korea the title of ‘one of the lamp bearers of Asia’ and which needed to be illuminated again. The leading Korean language daily of that time *Donga Ilbo* published this poem in Korea. Even before that, Tagore sent a poem entitled ‘The Song of the Defeated’ to Choi Nam-sun, who was the main drafter of the Korean Declaration of Independence in 1919, before the *Samil* Movement. Understandably, from the Korean side, almost there is no reference of India during the colonial period,

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<sup>6</sup> Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Glimpses of World History*, USA, Oxford University Press, Reissue edition (January 1, 1990), p. 465.

except few reference of Indian freedom struggle in newspapers<sup>7</sup> like *Donga Ilbo* because of intensive operation under Japanese colonial rule.

#### **4. Indian Role in the Years of the Korean War:**

India took keen interest in Korea during 1947 to 1954. No doubt there were differences between the both countries about the policy and perception regarding issue pertaining to peninsular, regional and global issues. According to their perceptions, both countries conducted themselves in the Cold War days. However, it is no exception that India voted for all the resolutions on Korea, including its first committee from September 1947 to December 1948. Indian supported the claim that the Korean issue could be discussed in the UN. Indian ambassador to the United Nations, KPS Menon played a key role, as the chairman of United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTOCK). The commission was formed in 1948 to look at the political situation and possibility of general elections on the whole of the Korean peninsula. India supported Korea in her efforts to achieve full-fledged independence and emphasized the importance of realizing peaceful unification to the two Koreas.

The next phase of interaction between Korea and India began with the emergence of the Korean War on the peninsula. India supported the United Nations Security Council resolutions 82 and 83, which were passed on 25th and 27th June 1950 respectively and accepted North Korea to be aggressor. India even supported UNSC resolution 84, which was passed on 7th July 1950 and asked for sending military troops to help South Korea to counter the aggression, with one reservation. India, which just got independence, did not want to have military commitment overseas and so it agreed to send only its medical and humanitarian assistance unit

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<sup>7</sup> There is no denial of the fact that during the freedom struggle both countries resonated on same wavelength, knowingly or otherwise. There are few similarities between the concept of *swadeshi* and *Chajakhoe* set up in Korea in December 1922 and *Mulsan Chnagyohe* in February 1923. Like *Donga Ilbo* wrote on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1922 by supporting Gandhi's advocacy for *swadeshi* in these words, "It is well known that the Indian revolutionary leader Gandhi preached national unity and encouragement of cotton spinning, the greatest industry in India, as the only way to attain complete independence of India. Although Gandhi's advocating the revival of primitive industry may seem unmodern, we admire him for his sagacity in pointing out the way toward the eternal welfare and happiness of the Indian people... when reflect upon ourselves and think about the future, we desperately feel the necessity of devising means of self-protection.... It is unsympathetic who ridicule the Korea as lacking earnestness. Our only means of survival is to restrict foreign commodities and encourage (native) products."

under the UN command. Accordingly, the 60th Indian Parachute Field Ambulance of Indian Army Medical Core was sent to Korea.<sup>8</sup>

When the Armistice Agreement was signed in 1953, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit was the chairman of the 8th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. After the signing of the Armistice Agreement on the peninsula, the next thorny issue was the fate of around 23000 Prisoners of War (POW). To solve the issue, a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) was established by the UN and Indian representative KPS Menon was again assigned the role of 'Chairman, Executive Agent and Umpire' of the NNRC. To safeguard the POW and execute the actual repatriation of them, an Indian Custodial Force (CFI) was also organised. India played significant role during the Korean War years, though not taking a definite position in favour of South Korea. Indian neutral stand during the Korean War period was, though misunderstood by South Korea, the other major powers of the world recognised it by entrusting India to be the chairman of NNRC and organising CFI were clear evidence of recognition of Indian neutrality.

Indian stand during the Korean War was sited time and again by South Korea as it did not provide required support against North Korean aggression. However, Indian comprehension of the Korean problem was that it is as a civil war and the outside powers should keep themselves away from it. There is no denial of the fact that at the face value it seems to be a neutral stand, South Korea perceived Indian neutrality as tacit support for the North Korea regime. Anyway, after the return of around 3000 Indian army personal after successful completing the issue of POW, 'the phase of India's Close involvement in Korea during the most difficult fledging years of the Republic came to an end.'<sup>9</sup> Afterwards, South Korea has shown greater understanding for the 'unique, positive, humane, sincere, impartial and dignified role' of India from the second session of the UNGA to the Geneva Conference.

## **5. The Cold bilateral Relations during the Cold War era:**

After the conclusion of Geneva Conference in 1954, it seems that India and Korea both had almost no cognizance of each other for almost a decade. Their respective domestic and regional issues needed more attention of both the countries which were

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<sup>8</sup> For a detail reference to the India role in the Korea War, see, Kaushik, RP, *The Crucial Years of Non-Alignment: USA, Korean War and India*, Delhi, Orient Book Distributors, 1972.

<sup>9</sup> Krishnan, RR, "India-Republic of Korea Relations: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions," unpublished paper presented at the India International Centre, New Delhi.

going through the difficult phase of nation-building and competing with their neighbours and had wars with them. The Cold War politics and different positions, perceptions and priorities of both the countries also became a determining factor in their bilateral relations. India, official proclaimed to be a non-aligned nation in the bipolar Cold War world. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was a staunch supporter of Non-alignment policy and played a significant role in the establishment of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Unlike India, South Korea in the leadership of Rhee Syng-man signed the Mutual Defense Treaty with the US in 1954. South Korea which has to suffer heavily during the Korean War had the primary interest in addressing the requirement of its security concerns than the issue of neutrality.

Gradually the models of nation-building adopted by India and Korea also did not offer any point of convergence. Whereas, India opted for a 'socialist mode' mode of development, the Korean model, from the very beginning, was capitalist.<sup>10</sup> Indian adherence to socialism and its better relationship with the Soviet Union was perceived by South Korea as India being closer to North Korea and thus, the relationship between the two countries remained cold. India was an active member of the NAM from the very foundation of the organization and when North Korea was given admission to the NAM, even after the opposition of South Korea, Seoul's suspicion about India to be closer to North Korea further strengthened.

The most significant development in the India-Korea relations during the Cold War days was establishment of Consulate level relations between Korea and India in 1962, which was further raised to Ambassadorial level in December 1973. Noteworthy in this respect is that although there were allegations that India was closer to North Korea, India did not recognised or established diplomatic relations with North Korea before giving equal status to South Korea as well. India simultaneously established consulate and ambassadorial relations with South and North Korea both. Probably, it was another evidence, which proves that India was and remained to keep itself neutral on the issues related to Korean peninsula.

During the period, it was not that India and South Korea were having any contentious bilateral issue between them. Basically, both the countries were having different orientations and understanding of the international politics of the Cold War

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<sup>10</sup>For a detailed description of divergence of development models of Korea and India and their evolution, see, Mishra, Sandip Kumar, "The Process of Political Modernization: A Comparative Study of Korea and India," in Sushila Narsimhan and Do Young Kim (eds.), *Korea and India: A Forging Relationship*, New Delhi, Manak Publications, 2006.



days and almost there was no bilateral issue at all between the two countries. So, even if the consulate level relations were established and further enhanced up to ambassadorial level there was hardly any transformation in the relationship of the both countries. Basically, throughout the Cold War, there were differences between the two countries not about the strategies of development, patterns and processes of industrialization, place and role of the respective economies in the world economy but also differences in the nature and source of their security threats. The state of affairs in which there was no place of each other in the cognizance map of each other has also to do with closed economy of India.

#### **6. End of the Cold War and Liberalization of Indian Economy:**

The old cultural and historical relations of India and Korea entered into a new phase when the Cold War structure at the global level started crumbling in mid-1980s. The first evidence of this change could be felt in India-Korea relations, when in July 1985 a convention was agreed upon for the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income. In the changing environment, South Korea began reformulating and reorienting its foreign and especially its external economic relations. India also initiated Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) after a balance of payment crisis in July 1991. The economic reform in India after the crisis led to movement of Indian economic system in the direction of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG). Moreover, India also initiated its policy of ‘Look East’ which emphasized the role and significance of Southeast and Northeast Asian countries in further diversification of India’s economic relations.<sup>11</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and collapse of communism across the globe, the political barrier which kept South Korea away from a close tie up with India had also disappeared and South Korea tried to seize this new political and economic opportunities. Political and economic interactions between the two countries took a quantum jump in the 1990s. Indian Prime Minister PV Narsimha Rao visited Korea in September 1993 in the first ever visit of an Indian Prime Minister to Korea. In the new phase, the relations between the two countries did not only became deeper but also it became diversified. The visit of Indian Prime Minister was

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<sup>11</sup> For details about the India’s Look East Policy, see, Grare, Frederic and Amitabh Matto (eds.), *India and ASEAN: The Politics of India’s Look East Policy*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers & Distributors (in association with Centre de Sciences Humaine, New Delhi, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, and Centre for the Study of National Security Policy, New Delhi). 2001.

considered to be a turning point in the bilateral relations of India and Korea and could be considered to be the invitation to the first wave of Korean investment in India. On a return visit, South Korean President Kim Young-sam went to India in February 1996 and both countries agreed to set-up a Joint Commission at the Foreign Ministers levels for bilateral cooperation. In the next high profile visit, South Korean Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil visited India in February 1999 just after the stabilisation of South Korean economy after a serious financial crisis. The same year another notable development took place, Indian fifth Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) put the Korean satellite KITSAT-3 (*Unibyol*) into the geostationary orbit and thus initiating the cooperation of both the countries in space technology.<sup>12</sup>

A new thrust to India-Korea bilateral relation was given by South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, when he visited India in October 2004. During his visit, both the countries agreed to establish a ‘Long-term Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity.’ Both the countries agreed to enlarge their partnership beyond economy and develop a mutual understanding in the field of defence and maritime security also. In January 2005, the first meeting of India-ROK Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue was being held. In the changed environment when an understanding between India and the US on various security and defence concerns, including proliferation of WMD and international terrorism, has been emerging, and South Korea has already a close relationship with the US, there is no reason, why Korea and India bilaterally could not arrive at common understanding on the security and defence issues.

In the economic field, both countries setup a Joint Study Group to take comprehensive view about the present and future potentialities of economic cooperation between the two countries. Looking at the growth of bilateral relations between the two countries in last few years, there is no doubt that the bilateral trade between the two countries would easily cross the target of \$10 billion set for 2008. The Joint Study Group between the two countries has been looking at the feasibility of a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which would provide opportunity of free trade of goods, services and even investments between the two countries in near future.

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<sup>12</sup> Ramchandran, R., “The Science and Commerce of PSLV,” *Frontline*, Vol. 16, No. 12, June 05 - 18, 1999. Available at <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl1612/16120370.htm>

The next phase of engagement of between the two economies, which are among the fastest growing economies of the world, seems to be more in sense of depth and diversification. They have been trying to include science and technology, IT, infrastructure, textiles, petrochemicals, oil & gas into the ambit of their cooperation. Most importantly, given the cheap and skilled human resources of India, Korea has been considering to use India as an effective base for Korean exports like automobiles and shipbuilding to third countries. During President Roh Moo-hyun's visit to India also it was recognised that India could work as a "beachhead for Korean advances into Southwest Asian and neighbouring markets."<sup>13</sup>

The political and economic ties between the two countries have been further strengthened by the Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam's visit to Korea in February 2006. Korea and India have agreed to establish a Joint Task Force during the Indian President's visit and it would develop a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the two countries by 2007 and take the economic relationship between the two countries at a higher level. Two other agreements on the matters related to science and technology as well as custom duties have been also signed between the two countries.

Nothing could be more exemplary of the fact of growing relationship between the two countries than looking at the growth of bilateral business and trade relationship in recent time. Although the Agreement on Trade Promotion & Economic and Technical Cooperation between Korea and India was signed way back in 1974, the volume of bilateral trade was less than a billion dollar till the liberalisation of Indian economy. The bilateral trade which was a mere \$950 million in 1991 reached \$1.74 billion in 1994 and \$2.63 billion in 2002. Taking a spectacular surge in next three years, the bilateral trade between the two countries has increased around two and half fold in next three years and has reached at \$6.71 billion in 2005. In 2005, Indian export to Korea was \$2.11 billion and Indian import from Korea was \$4.60 billion. There is strong possibility that that bilateral trade would cross the mark of \$8 billion in the current year.

In 2003 itself, India was Korea's 13<sup>th</sup> largest export market, 19<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner and 27<sup>th</sup> largest source of import and Korea was India's 22<sup>nd</sup> largest export market, 5<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner and 9<sup>th</sup> largest source of import. India has

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<sup>13</sup> "The State Visit of President Roh Moo-hyun to India and Its Expected Outcome," *Korean Overseas Information Service*, October 2004. Available at [www.korea.net](http://www.korea.net)

been exporting primarily cotton yarn, fabrics, ores and minerals, oil meals, primary and semi-finished iron and steel to Korea, whereas Korea has been exporting electronic goods, machinery, iron and steel, transport equipment, artificial resins, plastic material, organic and inorganic chemicals, electrical machinery and machine tools to India. Korean investment in India has been focused in automobiles, electronics, FMCG and chemical sectors in the first phase of their venture in Indian market. In the pace of growing economic interactions between the two countries there is no surprise that the Korean major *chaebols* such as Samsung and LG Electronics are enjoying a combined share of around 35 percent in Indian electronic market. It is hard to find a household in urban India which does not have a product produced by the Korean *chaebols*. Not only big but even medium and small Korean companies are also doing better in the Indian market, however, largely they have been focusing on technical collaborations with Indian counterparts.<sup>14</sup> In the second of Korean venture in Indian market, the highest investment proposals have been in the power and oil refinery, transportation, construction and IT sectors. The Delhi Metro Project has also been helped by the Korean technology and assistance and few other Korean companies are willing to take part in other construction projects in India. The most important field of business cooperation between the two countries, which has tremendous potential for the future, would be IT. Korean expertise in the hardware and reputed Indian software credential could play a major boost of the two economies in the new age of IT revolution. Korean steel giant POSCO has proposed to invest \$12 billion in Orissa which would be the largest FDI in India ever and single largest overseas investment by a Korean company.<sup>15</sup> In return the only major Indian investment in South Korea has been acquisition of Daewoo Commercial Vehicle by Tata Motors Limited in which around \$120 million was being invested by the Indian company.

Korea and India have been also shown interest in people to people relationship and more and more people from each country are getting exposure of the other by their visits. The two countries have been working to increase cultural exchange by organising *India Week* and *Korea Week* in each other countries. King Kim Suro's

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<sup>14</sup> Mishra, Sandip Kumar, "Growing Relations between Korea and India," *Korea Times*, June 29, 2005. Available at

[http://search.hankooki.com/times/times\\_view.php?term=sandip++&path=hankooki3/times/lpage/opinion/200506/kt2005062816582654060.htm&media=kt](http://search.hankooki.com/times/times_view.php?term=sandip++&path=hankooki3/times/lpage/opinion/200506/kt2005062816582654060.htm&media=kt)

<sup>15</sup> Brooke, James, "South Korea's Shift to Foreign Investment," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2005.

legend is still live in Kimhae city and annual musical events and celebrations are being made to remember the legend of establishment of Kaya kingdom. In a significant development in 1999 Kimhae city and modern Indian city of Ayodhya were declared 'sister-cities' and in Ayodhya a monument in the memory of queen Ho was being erected in 2002 by the financial support of Korean government. There have been attempts to make film on the story of Kim Suro and Ho. Korean wave Hallyu<sup>16</sup> was being felt in the neighbouring countries of Korea in last few years however in India, it had a spectacular presence only in economic field. On July 2006, Delhi Doordarshan agreed to air the famous Korean television drama 'Emperor of the Sea' in India<sup>17</sup> also and it was supposed to be next steps in the direction of bringing the two countries closer with resumed cultural ties.

## **7. Future Thrust of Bilateral Relations:**

Above description of India-Korea relations are indicative of the fact that the relationship between the two countries seems to assume more depth and diversification in the future. In the recent phase of bilateral relationship both countries have recognised the economic significance of each other. The success story of Korean *chaebols* in India is also directly linked to the growing understanding between the two countries. There must be political spill over of close economic cooperation and it could be seen in the issues discussed at the various foreign ministers level talks between the two countries in which they deliberated on the issues pertaining to politics and security. Apart from issues related to bilateral trade, both the countries have started discussing issues such as the North Korean nuclear program, the expansion of the United Nations Security Council and the prospect of fostering new relationships among other BRICs countries. The need for a comprehensive understanding and cooperation on various issues, as well as their political and strategic implications, was emphasized even during President Roh's visit to India too.

Throughout the Cold War, India was, allegedly, tilted toward North Korea. However, it is notable that there has not been any Prime Minister level visit from India or vice-versa to North Korea till date. Going beyond its claimed policy of

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<sup>16</sup> For a detailed description of the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*), see information available at the website, <http://www.korea.net/korea/G08.asp>. In recent times, Korean pop music, television dramas and movies are getting more popular in not only the neighboring countries of Asia but also in the US and Europe as well.

<sup>17</sup> Kim, Seung-ho, "Emperor of the Sea' Embarks on Indian Journey," July 27, 2006, available at [http://www.hancinema.net/korean\\_drama\\_Emperor\\_of\\_the\\_Sea.php](http://www.hancinema.net/korean_drama_Emperor_of_the_Sea.php)

neutrality in respect to its relationship with North and South Korea, India has shown a clear pragmatic interest in South Korea more than North Korea. The facts and figures of North Korea and India trade volumes definitely vindicate this claim. In 2002-03, Indian export to North Korea was a mere \$183 million and import was \$4.7 billion. India has also not been happy with the fact that North Korea helped Pakistan in the development of ballistic missile, which is a security threat to India. There is strong possibility that North Korea got help from Pakistan in nuclear weapons development programme, whereas North Korea provided technological assistance to Pakistan in its missile programme.<sup>18</sup> The security threat from the neighbouring countries of South Korea and India, which have cooperated with each other in the development of WMD, also warrants that both the countries should derive common strategy to counter the threat posed by their neighbours.

Whereas there are vast potentialities of economic cooperation between the two countries, a special reference to IT is worthwhile. It is the fastest upcoming area of cooperation between the two countries, in which, by combining each other's strengths- hardware from Korea and software from India, the two countries could increase their presences in the world market. Both the countries have already in a process to draw up a specific plan for mutual collaboration with eight projects in the IT sector. The shortage of software experts in Korea in 2004 was around 18000, and in this scenario, it is significant that the Korean government has proposed to setup a Korea-India software coordination center, which will help in attracting software professionals from India. Many Korean IT firms, such as LG Electronics and Samsung Electronics have established their software development centers in Bangalore in 1996-97, and they are planning to increase the number of personals in the coming years. Korean IT exports to India touched the \$960 million mark in 2003 and it has a vast potential in the future too.<sup>19</sup>

In the process of diversification of business in India, Korea has recognised oil and refinery, construction, transportation, IT and BT industries as the business of the future. To support the small Korean investors in Indian market, Korea has shown its willingness to setup a committee to encourage them to enter into Indian market. For a

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<sup>18</sup> Squassoni, Sharon A., "Weapons of Mass Destruction: Trade between North Korea and Pakistan," *CRS Report for Congress*, Updated March 11, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Mishra, Sandip Kumar, "Growing Relations between Korea and India," op. cit. and Strydom, Peter W., "A Natural Synergy Evolves between Two Asian IT Powers," *Korea IT Times*, Vol. 20, February 2006, p. 60.

more specific and planned economic cooperation between the two countries both the countries are going to setup an Inter-Governmental Cooperation Committee.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, there have also been efforts by South Korea to encourage Korean banks to promote investment and grant loans for infrastructure development in India especially in the railways, roads, bridges, power, and communication sectors.<sup>21</sup>

## **8. Concluding Remarks:**

India and Korea had significant space in the mental cognizance of each other in past. However, more than material exchange, the mutual relations were based more on the ideational and cultural commonalities. The direct or indirect way of Buddhism, from India to Korea, along with legend of the princess Ho of Kaya kingdom were the initial routes of interactions between the two cultures. In the medieval period of history, both countries could not interact with each other as the main link between the two countries, Buddhism, could not remain dominant in both the countries. Even during the freedom struggles against the colonial powers, there were hardly any references of each other, with few exceptions such as Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru's few supportive words in favour of Korea. With the end of the colonial rule in both the countries, there emerged a possibility of revival of bilateral relations after a long time. However, the bilateral relationship of two countries was sucked into the vortex of the Cold War politics. India tried to take a neutral position in the wake of the Korean War but it was not well-appreciated by South Korea. After the end of the Korea War and unsuccessful end of Geneva Conference in 1954, again both the countries behaved as if the other did not exist.

The bilateral relationship of South Korea and India again got momentum with the beginning of economic cooperation between the two countries from the early 1990s. In this second phase of cognizance to each other, more than culture, economic pragmatism was the main bulwark. Both the countries have been able to partially tap the benefits of bilateral cooperation. However, there remains a vast potential of mutual economic cooperation between India and Korea in future. There have been efforts by the governments of both the countries to take the economic cooperation between both countries to a new level. Simultaneously, there has been a convergence

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<sup>20</sup> "Korea to raise investments in India," Business Line, August 27, 2006. Available at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2002/08/28/stories/2002082802310200.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

of political and security interests between the two countries in the post-Cold War and movement in right direction would make their bilateral relations more comprehensive and balanced. In the new emerging balance relationship between India and Korea, again the issue of cultural and historical linkages would be brought back to deepen the trust and understanding of each other. Though it is hard to determine the extent of influence of cultural and historical factors on the contemporary economic and political relationship of two countries, there is no denial of the fact that they would augment the growing relationship between the two countries and make it more sustainable.

[sandipmishra10@gmail.com](mailto:sandipmishra10@gmail.com)

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