

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF BORDER
TRADE IN MIZORAM : A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS**

Abstract

BY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Today, foreign trade becomes one of the most important economic activities in the world. All nations, whether developed or underdeveloped, is covered by this phenomenon, because there is not a single nation who is self sufficient in its economy. So, nations have to depend on the foreign trade in one way or the other. Sometimes foreign trade is considered as an indicator of a nation's economic well being. However, the high volume of foreign trade does not always necessarily mean that the economy concerned is well advanced; rather the per capita foreign trade is a better indicator of economic development.

Methodology

In order to carve out the impact of border trade in Mizoram, the following methods have been employed:

1. In most of the cases data has been taken for traders and non-traders in order to portray the competitiveness between them and as a yardstick for the measurement of the impact that is being felt on any one of them.

2. The present study takes into account only the border trade between Mizoram and Myanmar.
3. The Mizo-Myanmar border trade doesn't reciprocate very well by Mizoram. Therefore, the study emphasizes mainly on the import from the Myanmar side.

Besides these, some cartographic and statistical methods have been applied to draw diagrams and maps to substantiate the study.

Statement of the problem

The present study attempts to highlight the Mizo-Myanmar border trade in the light of its causes and tracing its development till today.

Another crux in this research is to focus the ethnic-cultural affinities that have played in its role over the on-going border trade between Mizoram and Myanmar.

The research also attempts to bring out the impact of border trade on the economy of Mizoram like – distribution of market centres, hierarchical pattern of market centres, sphere of influence of market centres, per capita income of traders, contribution of the border trade in the economy of Mizoram.

The present study tries to highlight the social impact of border trade in Mizoram such as – growth and distribution of population, urbanisation, social change, social values, literacy percentages of traders and as well as non-traders.

Major Findings

Mizoram is one of the most backward states in the Indian Union in regards to socio-economic development. In spite of the rich natural resource endowments, she still lags behind in the economic development. This is because of the natural resources that have not been properly utilised, which is because of lack of technical know-how and financial assistance.

Mizoram is a hilly region where the topography is rugged with deep gorges and narrow valleys. The hills are aligned with north-south direction in a parallel ranges. The influence of the north-south trending mountain ranges can be observed in the drainage pattern, which is generally flowing towards north or south. The region is situated in the tropical belt; therefore the vegetations are tropical in nature.

Before the advent of the British, trade was carried on barter basis, whereas cash transaction was introduced only after the advent of the British. But the British did not show interests to develop the region.

After the Independence of India the Assam Government also have not taken steps for the development of the region to the contentment of the people. Due to non-implementation of developmental programmes, the people tilted towards Myanmar border in their vicinity for trade and other relations.

Mizos have close affinities with their neighbours in regards to ethnic and culture. All the tribes like, Kuki, Chin, Mizo, Paite, Hmar, Khyang, etc. were different names to denote the same people. All these tribes speaks the same language, Mizo, rather it is only a different dialects under the Mizo language.

There are 36 market centres in Mizoram. They all correspond to the administrative headquarters like District, R.D. Block, Sub-division, etc. At present each market centre has at least 19.41 settlements.

Application of Nearest Neighbour Analysis reveals that Mizoram accounts for an Approaching Random pattern with an R_n value of 0.84. This shows that market centres do not serve some settlements.

It is observed that a block through which trade items entered to Mizoram from outside the state, it accommodates more market centres. Khawzawl Block, the trade route of border trade from Myanmar accommodates three market centres. Besides this,

Tuipang Block, is also a trade route for Mizo-Myanmar border, accommodates two market centres.

The hierarchical analysis of market centres in Mizoram reveals that the existing hierarchical classes of central places in Mizoram are tied up with 'marketing norms' as $K=3$.

Application of Rank Size Rule shows that in the lower order centres the functional facilities were very weak, which is seen from the concavity of the distribution. This is because the lower order centres lack potentialities like the trade inlet facilities, so they have to depend on the higher order centres for their development.

The per capita income of traders in Champhai is Rs. 13562 and for non-traders is Rs. 9875, whereas the per capita income for traders in Saiha accounts for Rs. 12388 and for non-traders, it is Rs. 9570 during 1997-98. The per capita income for the state is Rs. 9570 during the same period.

The total value of items coming from Myanmar accounts for 4.11 percent of the total state's income, whereas it gave livelihood to 6.51 percent of the total population of Mizoram. Out of the total families of 98536 in Mizoram, at least 9

percent of them engaged themselves or earn their livelihood through the Mizo-Myanmar border trade.

Application of potential model reveals that maximum numbers of people are within reach of the places around Aizawl situated in the north central part of the region. The population potential ranges between 77 per kilometres in Tuipang Block to 460 per kilometres in Tlangnuam.

The actual density and expected density nearly corresponds to each other with the exception of Zawlnuam, Khawzawl, Tuipang, N. Thingdawl and Tlangnuam Blocks, where the actual density is higher than the expected density. This is because except Zawlnuam trading items coming from outside Mizoram influences all the four blocks.

Urbanisation in Mizoram has its beginnings since 1951 with a total population of 6950, which were concentrated in Aizawl town. By 1971, the number of urban centres increased to two, Aizawl and Lunglei with a total population of 37759. During 1971-81, it registered a rapid progress with 222.61 percent growth rate, with a total population of 121814 persons, which is distributed among 6 towns. In 1991, the total urban population accounts for 317040, which is 46.20 percent of the total population.

In regards to standard of living, the figure against traders registered a higher quality than the non-traders. The total trading families in Champhai who own houses accounts for 92.8 percent whereas for non-traders, the figure is only 70.8 percent of the total families.

The literature survey reveals that educated youth sought employment in this border trade because the highest percentage of literate traders are at the age group of below 30 in Champhai and Saiha.

In Saiha, the total trading families who own houses accounts for 97 percent while for non-traders, it is 82 percent of the total families for traders and non-traders respectively.

Again in Champhai, the total vehicles owned by traders are 209 by 74 families, whereas for non-traders, the figure is 44 vehicles by 38 families. In Saiha, total vehicles owned by traders' accounts for 71 vehicles in 37 families, and for non-traders, it is 28 vehicles in 25 families.

In Champhai, the cumulative percentage of the number of trading families who own luxury kitchen items is 355 families, whereas for non-traders, it is 235 families. In case of Saiha, the cumulative percentage is 356 whereas for non-traders it is 281 percent.

In regards to luxury items, the cumulative figure of trading families accounts for 355 percent while for non-traders it is 264 percent. In case of Saiha, the cumulative percentage for traders is 472 and for non-traders is 368 percent.

In Champhai, the trading families record a 96.01 percent literacy percentage and for non-traders, it is 94.85 percent. In case of Saiha, the trading families record a literacy percentage of 83 and non-traders registered 81.20 percent.

To conclude, it can be said that the Mizo-Myanmar border trade has contributed to the socio-economic development of Mizoram to a great extent, since 4.11 percent of the total income of the state comes from this border trade, and it also gave livelihood to at least 6 percent of the total population of Mizoram.

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