

CHAPTER - ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem/ Theoretical Framework

Since the World War II, regional and sub-regional economic arrangements have come into being in different parts of the world.(1) Their aims and purposes have included providing a forum for regular consultation, making better use of resources and expertise and improving bargaining position of the member states vis-a-vis the outside world. Increasingly regional organizations are being perceived as a necessary response to adverse international economic environment which member states are unable to face individually.(2)

In South Asia, it took time for the idea to take roots. The historical inhibitions and other constraints had to be overcome before the feasibility of regional cooperation could be established.

Historical Background

In almost five millennia since the dawn of civilization in South Asia, the region has never been a single political unit.(3) Geographical barriers as well as differences in race, language and religion have been major obstacles to periodic efforts at political unity. The vast empires of the Mauryas or the Mughals or even of the later day, British did not succeed in bringing the parts of the region under a common political authority. Although it should be added that the absence of political unity have been significant

impediment to the free movement of people and governments and more importantly of ideas throughout the length and breadth of the region. (4)

SAARC, as per its organisation may be a smaller forum, Confined to a region only. But, this fact does not limit its importance and weightage for Asia, in particular and the world in general, by all counts. This body is perhaps most important for the Third World after NAM.

Following the successful experiences of regional organisations like European Union, Gulf Cooperation Council and ASEAN, regional co-operation has gained new significance, over the past couple of years.

The new world order has come with its plus and minus points and, of late, there has been increasing competition among the developing countries. In the present day context, emerging economies, like India, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand have to play an important role in the development of fellow nations and in particular, of the lesser developed or smaller countries.(5)

With the end of the cold war era and with the disappearance of the Soviet bloc, which is now part of history—and with the rise of USA as the sole economic and military power in the world, responsibility has been cast over big players in each region. For instance, India in South Asia, Iran in Middle East and Malaysia in Far East. (6)

Gone are the days when the G-8 ruled the world and North-South dialogue was considered the only way out for the salvation of developing or non-developed countries. Now, greater emphasis is placed on South-South dialogue and cooperation.

As soon as the regional players recognised the importance of

one to one and all-nation cooperation in a particular region—South Asia, Middle East or Asia-Pacific, for instance—they began efforts for promoting regional cooperation and evolving new platforms. (7) SAARC was the result of the same quest—quest for cooperation and quest for national progress, without harming anyone's interest.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is confined to South Asia only and its membership is limited to a very small number of nations namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Maldives. SAARC's establishment is a revolutionary step and an extraordinary event, in the history of the region, known as South Asia.(8)

South Asia is different from other regions in the world. For example, Western Europe is a unit in itself— a common culture, a common religion, a common history, a common climate and common eating, dressing and other living habits make it one country or one nation, in a non —political manner. No doubt, there are different nations and a sense of nationalism, but despite all differences, European continent is more or less a large country.(9) (Incidentally, India is almost equal to Europe, without Russia) The same is the case with the Arab World, Central Asia or South America. But the case of South Asia is quite different. It is, in fact, a complex region, with a lot of similarities as well as contradictions. In this region, the component countries, share a common history (in a broader sense) and a sort of similarity in culture and languages. Still there are great differences and sharp distinctions between every two nations and among all nations. For instance, India and Pakistan were one country only 55 years ago. The two have common past and history. Still the two are quite different from each other on many levels.(10)

Today, these are two different nations, with their own marked identities. Pakistan and Bangladesh were one country only 31 years ago. But today, in spite of religious bond are wild apart.(11) Nepal and Bhutan are as good as a part of India, yet these are two different nation states. India and Sri Lanka have been under British rule together, however, now these are two independent democracies. Maldives, a part and parcel of SAARC is a distant nation, yet it is quite close to India and other countries of the region. (12)

In the context of new world order, some years ago, all the nations of South-Asia decided to form a platform for close cooperation and a united effort for the overall development of the whole region. Thus, SAARC was born, as a regional body, since, and then it has worked well. (13)

Interestingly, all the members of SAARC have different political systems, different economies and strategic perceptions. India is a successful democracy, Pakistan is a failed democracy, and Bangladesh has also been the site of undemocratic assaults on democracy.(14) Nepal and Bhutan are monarchies. Sri Lanka and Maldives, despite odds have maintained their democratic s^ystems. But, in spite of all the differences and dissimilarities, all these nations and countries have a common heritage and a rich past to share. Above all, they have common goal, common economic endeavours and common problems to face and solve.(15)

In fact, due to different approaches and complexity of the region, SAARC has moved quite slowly. The speed of cooperation in the region was very slow and the growth naturally got a bit restrained.

It should be pointed out that SAARC is comparatively a

latecomer on the international scene. It was evolved in mid- 1980s. Though, a small organisation, with a membership of seven only really small, when compared to NAM or Arab League—yet its deliberations are watched by the strategists and the planners, the world over. People in Asia and particularly in South Asia, have cherished hopes on this forum and they think that it can play a vital role in trade and commerce, but on academic, cultural and intellectual fronts also.(16)

Notably, various regions, all over the world witnessed the evolution, organisation and functioning of many regional cooperative bodies in the postwar era. But, South Asia—an important region, with a sizeable chunk of land area and around one-fifth of the global population remained inactive in that regard. (17) India, no doubt, was active in NAM and participated in all programmes of United Nations, but there was no effort, collective or individual, not even at India's part, to mobilize, the regional nation-states and form a platform for looking after issues of common interest. Almost all countries in the region were undeveloped or underdeveloped, economically weak and poor by western standards, but, there was no serious inclination to sit together and think over the issues and problems faced by all the countries in the region. There was no concrete effort till 1980s.(18)

Ironically, India and Sri Lanka had played a vital role in the establishment and evolution of an organisation like NAM, but even these two democratic countries did not or could not play a decisive role, as far as the creation of a new regional forum was concerned. India, being the core state in the region should have played a leading role. Of course, it did, but in mid 80s only.

At last, reason prevailed and the South Asian nations recognised

the importance of cooperation, unity and a common platform. Thus, SAARC was born. The precursor of the organisation—later to become SAARC—came into existence in 1983. And finally in December 1985, all the Heads of governments met together at a summit at Dhaka. Then SAARC was launched in a formal manner.(19)

Since, it's very beginning, SAARC has generated interest not only among the people in South Asia, but in Western countries, including US also. It was quite natural, as South Asia, being a vast region was always important for trade and commerce and also by strategic standards.(20)

Now, in the new millennium, the situation has changed a lot. In the post-cold war era and in a Unipolar world, all developed and rich nations have greater emphasis on business, in selling their products. Needless to say that South Asia is a big market for all sorts of goods. Following the creation of WTO, the world is shrinking almost every day. Beyond national boundaries now there is talk of global trade and global cooperation. Hence, the importance of the region, known as South Asia has increased greatly.

Today, SAARC has a challenge ahead. The organisation has an unenviable task of achieving its objectives in a region, which is never free from internal conflicts and tensions. Now, in a collective manner, leaders of SAARC countries have the heavy responsibility of sorting out the real issues and solve the problems, faced by the region, as an entity. India is the biggest player in the arena of SAARC. In this study, efforts have been made to understand the basic Issues and problems of various SAARC nations and analyse the factors working behind different developments in the region.

1.2 Objective of the Study/ Research Questions:

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To make an analysis of the concept of regionalism.
2. To discuss in brief regarding some of the leading regional organisations of the world.
3. To analyse the aspects of colonialism.
4. To discuss in brief the Economic background of the SAARC.
5. To analyse the aims and objectives of the SAARC
6. To discuss about proceedings of all the SAARC meetings.
7. To make an evaluation of this new born regional organisation
8. To analyse the problems and prospects of SAARC.

1.3 Methodology:

The data for the present study have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source data have been collected from government documents and the secondary source data have been collected from books, journals and periodicals.

1.4 Review of Literature

Apani, M.S. and others in their book South Asia: Stability and Regional Cooperation has tried to analyse the security part of the south asian nations in general. The book has also undertaken other dimensions of the problems of South Asian nations.

Ali, Tariq in his excellent analysis on *Can Pakistan Survive: The Death of a State*, has depicted the problems of Pakistan and the role that SAARC can play in bringing about peace in the South Asian region.

Ayoob, Mohammad (ed.) 1980. *Conflict and Intervention in the Third World* is a book which covers the conflict and intervention by other states which has jeopardised the peace in the Third World countries.

The issue of regional security has been well taken up by Ayoob, Mohd in his book *India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*. Since India Bangladesh and Pakistan are neighbouring countries, the security question and the role of SAARC has been excellently dealt with in this book.

Azam, Koushar J. (ed.) in the edited book has taken up the affairs of SAARC from the point of view of ethnicity in the book *Ethnicity, Identity and the States in South Asia*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi.

Babu, Ramesh B. (ed.) 1998. in his book *Globalization and the South Asian State*, has discussed the issues with reference to globalization.

Bara1, Lok Raj in his work *Regional and Extra-Regional Links and South Asian Cooperation*, has beautifully taken up the roots of cooperation and he has also suggested some guidelines for further improvement of the situation.

Ghosh, Partha S. *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, has dealt with the basic issues of conflict among the south Asian nations. He has also pointed out the major areas of cooperation that can minimise the problems.

Ali, Akhtar in his work on *South Asia: Nuclear Stalemate of Conflagration*, Research on Armament and Poverty, (Karachi, Pakistan 1987) has very carefully discussed the nuclear strategies of the South Asian countries which led to the problem of regional security.

Azam, Koushar J. (ed.) 2001 in the edited volume *Ethnicity, Identity and the States in South Asia*, (South Asian Publishers, New Delhi.) has excellently discussed the ethnic problems of the South Asian nations.

Babu, Ramesh B. (ed.) 1998. *Globalization and the South Asian State has taken up the aspects of the impact of globalization on the South Asian nations.* (South Asian Publishers, New Delhi.)

Buzau, Barry and Rizvi Gowher (eds.). in the edited volume, *South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers*, has taken up the issues of the background causes for the formation of SAARC which is nothing but the fear psychosis of insecurity (London: Macmillan 1986.)

Ghosh, Partha S. in his book entitled *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, has taken up the issues of cooperation and conflict amongst the nations of this region. This is very much essential for the success of any regional organization. (New Delhi, Manohar 1989.)

Agarwal, Govind R. 'SAARC quest for a New Political and Economic Order' in Dharmadasani, M.D. (ed.), *South Asian Original Cooperations*, Shalimar Publishing House, Varanasi, India. This book has very brilliantly discussed the new political order that is in the emerging stage after the formation of SAARC.

Agwani, M.S et al. *South Asia: Stability and Regional Cooperation*, Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CPRID), Chandigarh, India, 1983. This book has touched upon the aspect of

stability at the South Asian region which is based on regional cooperation.

Ahmad, Emajuddin. SAARC: Seeds of Harmony, This work has undertaken a very important dimension that the regional organisation can be a mechanism for regional cooperation which will be in a position to resolve the regional crisis.(Dhaka, UPL, 1985.)

Attaerchand. India and Asia Pacific Security, has greatly concentrated on the role of India in the matter of Asian security. Infact, this work highlighted India as a leading nation in this region.(2 Vols. Delhi, Amar Prakashan, 1991.)

Azam, Koushar J. (ed.) 2001. Ethnicity, Identity and the States in South Asia, This is another important work in the dimension of ethnicity and regional problems. The major source of conflict in all the areas cover the ethnicity problems.(South Asian Publishers, New Delhi.)

Baral, Lok Raj. Regional Migration, Ethnicity and Security: The South Asian Case. Prof. Baral is a leading political scientist. He has also taken up the issues of ethnicity which disturbs the security aspect and hence much care should be given to the problems of ethnicity.(New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1990.)

Chatterjee, Rakhahari. 'Security, Ethnicity and Conflict in South Asia: A Study of Two Cases' in Kanti, P. Bajpai and Harish C. Shukla (eds.) Interpreting World Politics, New Delhi, Sage, 1995. This book also has taken up the issue of security and ethnicity amongst the South Asian nations.

Das, Debendra K. SAARC: Regional Cooperation and Development, New Delhi, Deep & Deep, 1992. This book has discussed

the aspect of development which can only be achieved if there is regional cooperation.

Devi, T. Nirmala 1994. *Socio-Economic Profile of SAARC Countries*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi. This book has drawn a picture of the socio-economic profile of the SAARC countries.

Dharmadasani, M.D. *South Asian Regional Cooperation*, This book has highlighted on the aspect of regional cooperation. It has been categorically pointed out by the author that regional cooperation is the only way out to resolve all conflicts. (Shalimar Publishing House, Varanasi, India, 1985.)

Douglas, Haynes and Gyan Prakash. *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1991. This book has highlighted the aspect of contesting psychology amongst the nations which is mainly responsible for disturbance.

George, Sudhir Jacob (ed.). *Intra and Inter-State Conflicts in South Asia*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi 2001. This work has highlighted the aspects of inter state and intra state conflict cases amongst the nations of the south asia.

Prasad, Bimal, 1989 (ed.). *Regional Cooperation in South Asia – Problems and Prospects*. Prof. Prasad has pointed out the problems and prospects of regional cooperation. (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi.)

Rehman, Sobhan. *Political Dimensions of South Asia Cooperation*, Macmillan India Ltd. 1991. The author has taken up the issue of political aspects of cooperation among the south asian nations.

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5. Ibid
 6. Thomos Raju, G.C., 'Security Relationship in South Asia: Differences in Indian and American Perspective', *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXI, No. 7, July 1981, P. 701.
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9. Ujan, Zafar Ali, 'Approach to Indo-Pak Relations: Who Matters: Zia or people?', *Secular Democracy*, 14 (3) March 1986, pp. 35-38.
10. Upadhyaya, S.K., 'The Future of SAARC depends on Economic Cooperation', *South Asian Survey*, 3, 1-2, 1996, January-December, pp. 151-154.
11. Varshney, R.L. and Raj Kumar, 'India and Economic Cooperation in the South', *Foreign Affairs Reports*, January-February 1990.
12. Varshney, R.L. and Raj Kumar, 'India and Economic Cooperation in South Asia', *Foreign Affairs Report*, 39 (1-2), January-February 1990, pp. 1-28.
13. Varshney, R.L. and Raj Kumar, 'SAARC: Need for Economic Cooperation', *Foreign Affairs Report*, 38 (1), January 1989, pp. 1-13.
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15. Viswam, S., 'Lots of Hope in SAARC', *World Focus*, 7 (11-12), November-December 1986, pp. 42-44, 47.
16. Viswam, S.; Ali, Salamat, 'Vale of Tears: Kashmir violence source Indo-Pakistan ties', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 147, pp. 19-21, February 8, 1990.
17. Viswas, S., 'Lots of Hope in SAARC', *World Focus*, 7 (11-12), November-December 1986, pp. 42-44.
18. Wagle, Narad, 'SAARC for Cooperation in New Areas', *Royal Nepal*, 1998, July 29, p. 4.

19. Waqif, Arif A., 'Reflections of Employment Implications of GATT-94', RIS Digest, Vol. II, Nos. 1&2, March-June 1994.
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