CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The present study is a case study on a borderland society along the Indo-Myanmar borderland in the state of Nagaland. Though, there are many border villages inhabited by various Naga tribes straddling along this Indo-Myanmar border, Longwa village has been chosen as the field of inquiry for this study. Therefore, this study deals with the society and politics of a borderland village called Longwa in Mon district of Nagaland. Longwa is located at the tri-junction of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar. It is also the intersecting space between the nation-states of India and Myanmar. Moreover, it is also a village that joins and at the same time divides the two regional blocks, namely the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Longwa is a Konyak Naga village, falls under Phomching sub-division of Mon district in Nagaland, and is 41 km away from the district headquarters and 357 km from the state capital of Nagaland and 2655 km approximately from New Delhi, the capital of India.

This thesis entitled “Society and Politics in the Borderlands: A Case Study of a Konyak Naga Village Located at the Indo-Myanmar Border” contains six chapters. The concluding chapter summarises the major analysis and findings of the present work from the preceding five chapters. The previously discussed five chapters cover various aspects of a borderland village and its people - the borderlanders, and thus formed the substance of the work. Apart from summarising the major research findings, suggestions, limitations of the research and scope for further research are dealt within this concluding chapter.
6.1. Main Findings

The summary of the research findings is given in the following:

1. Like some other borders across the world, the Indo-Myanmar borderland remains as a contested space. The study shows that this borderland is perceived differently by different people through different prisms. For the governments of India and Myanmar, this is an international boundary that delimits the states of India and Myanmar as per the India-Burma Boundary Commission of 1967. Therefore, both the states employ different mechanism to guard and control this border. Contrary to this perception, the local borderlanders do not recognise this border since they were not consulted regarding the demarcation. As the real owners of the land, they continue to claim their rights on their ancestral lands. However, in reality they have lost a huge tract of land to the state of Myanmar due to this demarcation which threatens their means of livelihood as they are mostly agriculturalists. Besides the borderlanders, this boundary between India and Myanmar is also not recognised by the frontal Konyak organisation called the Konyak Union in particular and the Nagas in general. In fact, the Nagas want integration of all the Naga inhabited areas of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India and Kachin and Saigaing divisions in Myanmar. However, this is not without opposition from other communities in Northeast India.

2. Besides the non-recognition of the international border, the people on the Indo-Myanmar borderland have their distinct and unique identity. Most people in the borderland do not identify themselves neither with India nor Myanmar.
Rather, they have a sense of unique identity among themselves. In fact, there are several layers of identity, starting from their clan identity, *morung* identity, village identity, Konyak identity, Naga identity, Indian and Myanmarese identity. Moreover, sometimes these multiple identities overlapped as well as contest one another. Loyalty and allegiance of the people towards both the Indian and Myanmarese states is very hazy and sometimes overlapped. Thus, in borderlands identity and loyalty of the people are often blurred and fluid.

3. Like most of the international borders worldwide, the Indo-Myanmar border was demarcated arbitrarily without the knowledge of the local populace. The local people and their chiefs were neither consulted nor informed about this demarcation. It was in 1967, the first bilateral agreement on border was signed between India and Burma at Rangoon, which delimits the Indo-Burma border based on the watershed of Brahmaputra and Chindwin rivers. This shows how the Indo-Myanmar border had been carved out on the tables of bureaucrats and officials without the participation of the people living therein. After a series of meetings, the actual physical demarcation of the boundary commenced on the 1st December 1968 (Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Report 1968-69). Subsequently, several boundary pillars were planted along the boundary. This arbitrary and imposed border is not accepted by the people who are living in the area for centuries. Thus the borderlanders do not recognised the sanctity and legality of such border demarcation.
4. In order to safeguard the sanctity of its territorial border, India and Myanmar governments have employed various tools of territorial control such as security forces like Myanmarese Army, Assam Rifles, Special Intelligence Bureau and Village Guards, boundary pillars, watch towers and helipad. However, unlike the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh, there is no fence and barbwire along the Indo-Myanmar border. This porous nature of border facilitates the free passage of local people across the border up to 40 km or 25 miles without passport as per the Myanmar Passport Rules, 1948 and the Government of India Notification dated 26th September, 1950 (Das 2005:44-46). Therefore, there is vibrant cross-border linkage and relationship sustained by kinship and tribal ties, marital alliance and friendship.

5. Notwithstanding the porous border, free movement of people across the border, vibrant cross-border relationship and the refusal or non-acceptance of the imposed border by the locals, the Indo-Myanmar border has created a sort of contestations among the people. This is done through the mechanism of citizenship along with guaranteed rights and privileges through the governmental institutions, schemes and programmes. This is clearly visible in the field area-Longwa village, which is roughly divided into two by the Indo-Myanmar border. The village under the Indian territory gets the basic facilities such as electricity, water and schools which are not present the other side of the village i.e. the Myanmar side. Though there is no visible borderline, the socially and politically constructed notion of border has indeed created a border among the people, especially when it comes to entitlement of the governmental welfare
measures. This also shows that the presence of the Indian state apparatus is stronger as compared to Myanmar.

6. The Indo-Myanmar borderland is inhabited by various Naga tribes and sub-tribes such as Chirr, Konyak, Khiamniungan, Yimchungrü, Tikhir, Pochury, Longphure, Makury, Tangkhul, etc. In this research, the Konyaks of Longwa village have been taken up as the subject of study. The analysis of the field data shows that the Konyaks, like the other Naga tribes, have been going through a transitional phase from traditional to modernity. Though there is tremendous change in all aspects of life; they still retain some traditional features such as the joint family system, strong kinship system, clan exogamy, morung, age-grade, Ahng system, customary laws and traditions. Thus we may say that the Konyak society, especially that of Longwa is on transition.

7. The study of governance in this borderland reveals that there exist multiple actors of governance, sometimes contesting and overlapping one another. These are- the Ahng who is the oldest governing actor in the borderland, whose jurisdiction transcends and predates the present nation-state boundary. Among the Nagas, the Konyak kings, chiefs or Ahngs are considered as the most powerful person within their jurisdiction, which extends over a large number of villages. Being a Pongyin Ahng or coronated king, the Longwa Ahng rules over several villages, both in India and Myanmar. The chief Ahng is assisted by a deputy Ahng and the seven Ahngs of the seven morungs. Along with the traditional governing actor, there exist other modern institutions such as the
Goanbura, Dobashi, Village Council, Village Development Board and other committees under the communitisation programme. It is also interesting to note that the members of the royal clan are the ones dominating both the traditional and the modern democratic institutions. This shows that the primordial and traditional values such as kinship and clan ties still dominate the people in a new form.

8. Besides the civil administrative structure, there are various military set up such as the Assam Rifles, Special Intelligence Bureau and the Village Guards, safeguarding India’s territorial integrity in this borderland. The Myanmarese army also man this border and conduct patrolling along with the Assam Rifles. Along with these, we cannot rule out the fact that the Naga insurgent groups, especially the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang have its strong presence. This is evident in the regular collection of taxes from the villagers and also forced labour enforced on the villagers especially as porters in carrying the commodities across the border. Due to the involvement of multiple actors, there are instances of frictions and conflicts among these structures of governance.

9. The analysis on border economy reveals the status of livelihood in this underdeveloped borderland. The economy along the Indo-Myanmar borderland and specifically in Longwa village is primarily agrarian in nature. Most people depend on Jhum cultivation for sustenance. Besides agriculture, they also engage in kitchen garden, animal husbandry and handicrafts like basketry, blacksmithy, gun making, brasswork, woodcarving, weaving, etc. Primitive
means of hunting and fishing also supplement their livelihood sources. Located at the extreme end of the Indian state, this borderland does not have any formal cross border trade despite having an International Trade Centre. However, there are several tuck shops and Assam Rifles’ canteen, providing basic commodities to the borderlanders. Informal tourism is emerging as a budding industry but yet to take its organised form.

While analysing the various governmental schemes and programmes such as *Indira Awaas Yojna* (IAY), *Mahatma Gandhi* National Rural Employment Guarrantee Act (MGNREGA), Grant-in-Aids (GIA), Border Region Grant Fund (BRGF) and Border Area Development Programme (BADP), it is found that these programmes have shown their impacts on poor villages, especially in sectors like housing, electricity, sanitation and drinking water. Thus we may say that miniscule portion of the schemes could percolate down to the deserved beneficiaries, though not in totality.

10. It is often found that culture transcends over politico-legal borders. In the same way, this research shows that along the Indo-Myanmar borderland, the cultural practices and religious beliefs cross and defy the territorial border. Along this border, we find the existence of a common cultural space as people practice common culture and speak common language. For instance, people from both sides of the border participate in the festivals and marriages. Moreover, the Konyaks on the Indian side initiated the evangelistic works among their people in Myanmar. Besides these, the Konyaks from Nagaland also conduct sanitation and health camps, educational tour and meetings amongst the Konyaks in
Myanmar. It also interesting to note that though most people in this borderland have adopted Christianity today. However, they still retained some of the traditional beliefs and practices. Thus there exists dualism of traditional religion and Christianity.

11. Finally, the field study analysis also speaks volume about the issue of development in the Indo-Myanmar borderland, covering both infrastructural and human development. Being a periphery of India and Myanmar, this borderland is often neglected or not treated equally with other parts of the country, by both the nation-states as compared to the other parts of the country. As regards to human development in the field area, it is found that the educational status, income, purchasing power parity, health security of the borderlanders, etc., is very poor. Moreover, there is livelihood insecurity, since half of the agricultural fields are under the territory of Myanmar. Should the Myanmar government in future prohibit the cultivation in its territory or comes up with any developmental projects like dams, mines, etc., these poor borderlanders will lose their ancestral land which would threaten their livelihood, since most of them depend on agriculture for sustenance. Therefore, we may conclude that human security of these borderlanders is very fluid and complex.

6.2. Suggestions

After stating the main research findings, the researcher proposes to suggest some measures for improving the conditions of the borderlanders. The following suggestions arrived in this research are given below:
1. More academic research should be conducted in this borderland which would help the policy makers, government officials, security forces, academia and common people to understand the life conditions of these borderlanders. This scholastic inclusion would hopefully create inclusive and participatory environment, whereby the borderlanders will be taken into confidence in the decision making and implementation process, especially in areas relating to their lives such as border management, fencing, development, regulation of flow of goods and people across border, etc.

2. As mentioned above, most of the local populace do not accept this arbitrary, undemocratic and imposed border, and therefore, they do not recognise themselves with either India or Myanmar. In other words, psychologically and emotionally, these borderlanders do not have the sense of belongingness to either of the nation-states that halved their ancestral land. This is further exploited by various forces in creating rift and misunderstanding in the minds of the borderlanders which facilitate the illegal activities across the border. Therefore, it is the need of the hour for both India and Myanmar to rethink their past mistakes and integrate these borderlanders. Both the countries must shift their state-centric security paradigm towards these people by adopting human-centric approach and develop this region by providing the basic minimum necessities of life to these marginalised borderlanders.

2. Driven by state security paradigm and territorial epistemology, both India and Myanmar have neglected its borderland and borderlanders for decades. Development of the border region in terms of road connectivity, infrastructural
development, trade, etc., is vital. The Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in his last visit to Myanmar on 25th May 2012, concluded 12 points Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Myanmar government. This includes two points concerning its borderland, namely to initiate India-Myanmar Border Area Development and to establish Border Haats across the border between India and Myanmar (Singh 2012: 3-4). These are positive steps, if taken seriously, would develop the Indo-Myanmar borderland to a great extent. The implementation of these would reveal how committed the Indian and Myanmarese governments are towards its citizens located at the border. Otherwise, it would be like the International Trade Centres which have turned into cowsheds without realising its potentials.

3. The Indo-Myanmar borderland has huge resources, both natural and human resources. If these are tapped and used properly, these would do a great whole in making the borderlanders self-reliant and self-sufficient. For instance, in Longwa village, there are many talented brass workers, gun-makers, carpenters, woodcarvers, weavers, etc. If they are provided with better equipments and access to market, they would easily earn their livelihood without depending much on agriculture. Moreover, this village has rich tourism potentials, especially rural tourism, ethnic tourism and community-based tourism. With proper planning, training and exposure to the outside world, the villagers can develop this budding industry. This way the village can become a model tourist village. Being a cross-border village, Longwa can be developed into a border trade centre like that of Moreh in Manipur. But this needs proactive
engagements of both India and Myanmar to take care of road connectivity and other infrastructural facilities.

4. In every society, the presence of a vibrant civil society led by public-spirited leaders is essential for the overall progress and development of the society. Even in this borderland, such a vibrant and effective civil society is vital. Civil society must actively engage with the government in discussion, decision making and implementation of policies, keeping in mind the best interests of these borderlanders. Civil society groups must initiate or create such an environment whereby the local people can participate freely with both the states.

4. A vibrant civil society can exist only in a democratic society. However, in this region, the society suffers from democratic deficit. This is because the traditional practices and customary laws based on monarchical system still regulate the lives of the villagers. Moreover, there is division of society into two classes of people viz. the ruling class and the commoners. The dominance of the ruling class in all aspects of village administration contradicts and negates the essence of democracy based on equality and justice. Further, the discriminatory position of women in such a patriarchal society where polygyny is widely practiced goes against the values of democracy. It is also found that there is widening of gap between the rich and the poor due to inherent inequality in the society. Therefore, it is vital to democratise the whole society in order to have a vibrant civil society and democratic government.
5. The researcher proposes for continuation of a soft border approach in this borderland for all time to come. Till today, both the Indian and Myanmarese governments have been following this approach allowing the locals to go upto 40 km or 25 miles without passport or visa. Moreover, the locals are allowed to cultivate their fields across the border. However, the Government of India is planning to replace the Assam Rifles (AR) by stationing the Border Security Force along the Indo-Myanmar border (PTI News, February 15, 2011). This may have a strong repercussion on the locals since they have already developed a good rapport with the AR. On the other hand, the AR has also gathered deeper understanding of the borderland societies based on their long experiences. Besides, the BSF may plan to fence the border or put restrictions on the movement of local populace as in other borders of India like the Indo-Bangladesh border and Indo-Pakistan border. While managing the border and safeguarding the territorial integrity of the nation, it is very crucial to heed to historical continuity which has witnessed continuous flow of people and goods across border.

6. Finally, the researcher also supports the novel idea of border dialogue as pointed out by Rita Manchanda and others in the book entitled *When the Home is the Edge of the Nation: Dialogue with 'Border' People of Rajasthan, West Bengal and Bangladesh* (2012). Border dialogue involving all the stake holders from both sides of the border would bring better understanding and cooperation. It was learnt that the Indian and Myanmarese governments conduct border meetings from time to time. However, if there is border dialogue involving all
the stakeholders including the villagers, representatives of the people and security forces of both the countries, this will surely lead to democratisation of borderlands and borderlanders.

6.3. Epilogue: Limitations of the Present Study and Scope for Further Research

This research along this neglected research site of Indo-Myanmar border has its own lacunae. Despite the best efforts put by the researcher, it is undeniable that this research has its own limitations. The researcher being very new to this genre of border studies faced a lot of problems, especially due to dearth of books and research materials on Indo-Myanmar border. Since very little research work has been done along this border, the researcher had difficulty getting secondary data on this border. Another limitation of the present research may be its not so strong theoretical orientation. However, this was inevitable since there are not many theories adopted regarding the study of this border and borderlanders. Following the anthropological and non-statist approach, the researcher attempted to study this border village by focusing on how borderlanders negotiate with the question of political and legal borders of nation-state.

Moreover, being a broad study on Longwa village, this research could give us only general conclusions. Every aspect of the village needs indepth research which would help in understanding the village in a deeper and better way. Furthermore, being a non-Konyak, the researcher, despite the efforts, could not give the perspective of the natives in toto. The field work itself was a great challenge since the researcher does not know the local dialect and had to communicate through the interpreters. It was time consuming and difficult to interpret every single word. Though the interpreters have
given their best, yet the researcher feels that this research would be more insightful if the researcher could understand the tunes and nuances used by the villagers.

Another problem encountered with the Assam Rifles and Special Intelligence Bureau was that they excused themselves from answering some queries stating the protocol and issue of national security, though they provided some important data useful for this research. The researcher got the best cooperation of the respondents; however it was difficult to meet the respondents since most of them go to field during day time and return only late in the evening. The researcher could meet them only late at night which was not very convenient for both the parties. Thus these are some of the limitations and challenges faced by the researcher during the course of this research.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the present research, the researcher firmly believes that this piece of work has initiated the genre of border studies along this neglected Indo-Myanmar border in Nagaland. The modest attempt made in this research is hopeful to open the vista for other scholars interested in the borderland and borderlanders. It is also expected that this research would bring the issue of borderlanders and their lives into greater forum of discussion and debate, thereby inviting the attention of academia, policy makers, NGOs and governmental leaders towards these borderlanders.