Acknowledgement

In writing this thesis, I have invaluable guidance and constant encouragement from my Supervisor Prof. ManMohini Kaul. At every step during my study since my M.A. days, I have benefited from her ideas, professional knowledge and research skills. She has been a great and constant source of inspiration and encouragement for me. In addition her ‘humane’ nature with a blend of cooperative source of attitude has been very helpful to me. She has painstakingly revised and corrected the draft of the thesis till it was made into coherent, concise and academically contributive one. To, her I have no words to express my gratitude and I remain indebted to all she has done for me.

Besides, I would also thankful to Prof. Ganganath Jha, whose insightful inputs and constructive suggestions were precious during my research work.

I would also like to thank our division faculty Prof. GVC Naidu his constant support and co-operation. I am also indebted to other members of the division Dr. Shankari Sundararaman. I am also thankful to the staff of our centre Mrs. Ashaji, Ushaji and Dheer Singhji.

The thesis would also not have been possible without the support of my friends, who provided much needed understanding and company in times of stress and keeping my spirits shored up throughout this difficult task. I thank Amba Shanker Bajapai, Vijay Badetia (Kandi Baba), Ramnarayan Meena (Ramu), Rocky (Pahadi Dost), Subodh Kumar (Mandu Wale), Rajib Sutradhar (Sutru), Dhirendra Khadkhada (Bada Kalu), Shankar Raimedhi (Calculator Boy), Roshan (Shahenshaah), Ashish (Chota Kalu), Zara (My Boy), and Pritam (Bengoli Babu).

I would also like to acknowledge the institutional support of different libraries, particularly the JNU library, the Nehru Memorial Library and IDSA.

I am very grateful to my parents, and my brothers, who continued to be constant source of inspiration. And, above all I thank God for obliging me to serve the mankind through my work.

21st July, 2010

Asok Nimesh
objective of study i.e. to understand the meaning of human rights in the context of various political regimes in Southeast Asia and the dichotomy that is attached to the theory of ‘ASEAN Way’ as propounded by the ASEAN States.

The second chapter exclusively deals with the role of norms, institution and socialization in formulation of the ideological construct of ‘ASEAN Way’. It will focus on ASEAN’s policy of both traditional and non-traditional concept of security, and the radical transformation that induced the change in path of ASEAN’s policy. While presenting the theoretical construct of illiberal democracy, this chapter will also focus on the international scenario of Asian Financial Crises and its impact at the regional level.

Taking the case study of Myanmar, the thesis will cover a wide area of human rights affairs which are prevailing in the country in chapter three. Also, it will chart out the role of authoritarian government in degrading those rights of the people while containing the forces of democratic opposition. The chapter is meant to understand the factors that enable the authoritarian regimes to persist in Myanmar for a long period of time. Hence it analyze the hypothesis that the membership of ASEAN has given Myanmar’s military junta a recognition which otherwise would not have happened. Also it will attempt to test the hypothesis that only international forces will be able to pressurize for democratic openness and human rights in Myanmar.

The fourth chapter will exclusively deal in with the ASEAN perspective on the human rights scenario in Myanmar. From the policies of constructive engagement to the one of flexible engagement were all dealt in the study. Nevertheless it will attempt to chart out the role of various regional and international powers will deal with the Myanmar. In this chapter the prime concern will be on analyzing the efficacy of those policies.

Overall the study is based on the theoretical construct of ASEAN Way and its implications on both the traditional and nontraditional security aspects of the Southeast Asian countries. The prime focus of study is to analyze the impact of this theoretical concept and other such policies on the state of human rights in the region and particularly in the Myanmar.
ASEAN’s approach towards human rights is manifested through various policies, declarations and treaties. These are the instruments which together encompass in construction of the 'ASEAN Way'. It is a doctrine which was constituted on certain principles that ensured the physical security of the State. Based on the traditional security paradigm the concept of ASEAN Way has contributed in establishing order, peace and stability in the region. And it owes to the norms which were enshrined in the different documents which were established by the regional states. Since they are cherished under the auspicious of ASEAN, they were all established as the principles of ASEAN Way.

While ensuring the traditional security concept, ASEAN Way has justified the political regimes which had discarded the norms and values of democracy. Hence what came in existence were all the non democratic illiberal democracies. And further when these countries achieved an enormous economic success, they ardently criticised the Western societies and the democratic ethos of their being culturally dominant.

But, the doctrine of ASEAN Way which was based on the theoretical premise of cultural relativism in the name of Asian Values has come to an end when the Asian Financial Crises has stuck in the region. It has vanished, the ASEAN Way debate from the arena of Southeast Asia. So the impact has some mixed responses on the political behaviour of the States of the region.

Hence it left a number of queries, like the survival of authoritarian regimes in Myanmar even at the advent of globalisation, the cultural relativist claim against universality principle of human rights, the disapproval of traditional hypothesis that political change precedes the economic development and alike. This thesis is an effort to understand those dynamic of events which are exclusive distinct to the ones which prevails in other parts of the world.

The first chapter will explore the theoretical basis of the Asian Values particularly the Cultural relativism that challenge the basic principles of human rights and liberty. While explaining the concept of human rights from its origin, the kinds, and the various principles, it will deal with development of human rights in the international scenario. So it will cover two