

Asian Cooperation and the Visions of Panchasheel and Bandung
(Abstract)
Manoranjan Mohanty

Twenty first century is witnessing the unfolding process of the age of self in which oppressed groups, communities, individuals, nationalities and regions seek to realize their creative potentiality more than ever before. However, the contemporary process of globalisation attempts to push the world in the reverse direction. The Panchasheel (Five Principles) Declaration of 1954 and the Bandung Declaration of Afro-Asian nations in 1955 whose golden jubilees were observed recently had emphasized the values of self-determination, equality and mutual benefit as governing principles for a new world order whose significance is even more relevant today. Asian countries have been active in the recent years trying to forge groupings for mutual cooperation at regional, continental and global levels to pursue these values.

ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) is ahead of all the others having set up the initial structure of a Free Trade Area in 1992 and aiming at forming an ASEAN community in 2020. SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit of 2004 had adopted a Framework Treaty for SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Area) aiming to have a full fledged FTA by 2015. The ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation), the GCO (Gulf Cooperation Organisation), the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation), BIMSTEC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation), MGC (Mekong-Ganga Cooperation), BCIM (Bangladesh, China , India ,Myanmar) are at various stages of development. India-China-Russia Trilateral has also made a beginning. At the pan-Asian level three efforts – CICA (International Convention on Confidence-building measures in Asia based in Almaty, Kazakhstan), ACD (Asian cooperation Dialogue originating as a Thai initiative) and the BFA (Boao Forum for Asia modeled more or less on the World Economic forum) are at preliminary stages of formation to which Asian countries are committed in varying degrees. These efforts aim at taking Asian economic cooperation ahead despite political divergences in the region. But they have to go a long way to achieve the goal of Asian Economic Community though ASEAN is moving fast on its East Asian agenda.

The efforts at Asian cooperation currently experience two contradictory pulls. One set of forces led by state leaders and big entrepreneurs promote these organisations as facilitators and accelerators of globalization. On the other hand, people's movements challenge them to respond to the growing mass consciousness for realising people's rights along the lines of Panchasheel and Bandung which have now become the essential part of the global movement for alternatives to globalization.