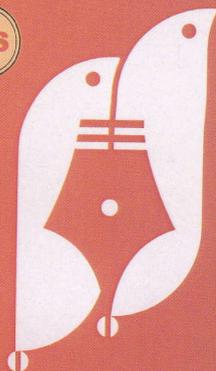


GOVT. OF INDIA RNI NO.: UPBIL/2015/62096

UGC Approved Care Listed Journal

ISSN  
2229-3620

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# SHODH SANCHAR

## Bulletin

An International  
Multidisciplinary  
Quarterly Bilingual  
Peer Reviewed  
Refereed  
Research Journal

**Vol. 11**

**Issue 41**

**January to March 2021**

Editor in Chief

**Dr. Vinay Kumar Sharma**

D. Litt. - Gold Medalist



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## CONTENTS

S. No.	TITLE	NAME OF AUTHORS	PAGE No.
1.	SYNTHESIS OF HYBRID CARBON QUANTUM DOTS BY MEDICINAL PLANT "FICUS RELIGIOSA (PEEPAL)"	Neetu Sharma Gaur Dr. R. C. Chippa	1
2.	WOMEN EDUCATION FOR WOMEN'S UPLIFTMENT IN INDIA	Dr. Vikash kumar	7
3.	IMPACT ON FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTMENTS DURING THE GREAT RECESSION	Nisha Malhotra	11
4.	TELEVISION ADVERTISING AND GENDER DIFFERENCE IN BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FMCG PRODUCTS.	Dr. C. M. Vinaya Kumar Ms. Shruti Mehrotra	17
5.	STUDY OF CREATIVITY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RELATION TO THEIR FAMILY CLIMATE	Poonam Yadav	21
6.	CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN HARYANA EDUCATION SECTOR	Dr. Umender Malik Richa Mishra	26
7.	A STUDY OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RELATION TO SELF-EFFICACY	Dr. Umender Malik Lena	32
8.	PEACE EDUCATION FOR THE PRESSURES AND PLEASURES OF LIFE	Dr. Manish Bhatnagar Keerti Rathore	37
9.	TROUBLE AT LAC: CHANGING DYNAMICS IN INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS	Dr. Surender Singh	43
10.	FINANCIAL LITERACY AND INVESTMENT DECISIONS IN A SELECT DEMOGRAPHY OF INDIA	Akhileshwaro Nath Dr. Ajay Dwivedi	48
11.	SWAMI VIVEKANAND AND INDIAN NATIONALISM	Dr. Michael Khindo	53
12.	AL-MERAJ AS INTERPRETED BY SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN	Dr. Sayyada Begum	57
13.	A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF GST ON INDIAN ECONOMY	Dr. Sanjay Singh Khatri Ayushi Tamta	60



## TROUBLE AT LAC: CHANGING DYNAMICS IN INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

□ Dr. Surender Singh\*

### ABSTRACT

*Struggle between the armies of India-China in Galwan Valley on the night of 15 June 2020, has a dangerous consequence not only for both the states, but also for entire Asian region in particular and world in general. After this incident the relations between India and China have reached the lowest level in last 58 years after the Sino-India war 1962. This standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Himalaya's border in Ladakh region emerged as a serious challenge for India's foreign and security policy towards China in the age of COVID-19. These ongoing confrontations along the borders indicate a far-reaching crisis, threatening the fragile framework that has formerly prevented Sino-India relations from converting into open enmity. This is a hard fact that India has recorded several hundred Chinese transgression across the de facto border annually, known as LAC, but this marks the second prolonged border crisis in last four decades after the Indo-China war in 1962. It is very pertinent that in one hand India-China have celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary to the establishment of their bilateral diplomatic relations in 2020; on the other hand the armies of both the countries are fighting one another in Ladakh as well as in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. But, it is not totally a new phenomenon in their relations. After the studied of a long history of their conflictual relationship, we can see a clear gap in their bilateral relations and both have faced lot of up and down in their affairs. Many conflictual issues are still working in their bilateral relations and contributing in their hostile relationship. For example the issues of Dalai Lama, 1962 war, Sikkim skirmishes in 1967, Sumdorong Chu Valley skirmish in 1987 and Doklam standoff in 2017 are in case of point. Beside, China security and economic cooperation with Pakistan including CPEC, BRI, China policy of expansionism and geopolitics of South Asia are also the main reasons for their antagonistic relationship. Thus the last one year, both have been involved in a series of conflicts along their disputed Himalayan borders in Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh that has become the worst crisis in Sino-Indian relations at present. However, it is not unprecedented for many scholars not only in India, but world also. Because it is part of a Chinese policy namely "two steps forward, one step back" to capture the land of their neighbours and extension of their own territory. In this research paper an attempt will be made to know changing dynamics in India-China relations. The main thrust here is to know what strategy should be adopted by the Modi Government regarding Chinese aggression along LAC. Why this type of standoff emerged again and again in their peaceful relationship? These and others related questions are the main thrust of present research paper.*

**Keywords:-** India, China, LAC, Ladakh, Galwan Valley, Kashmir, CPEC, BRI, COVID-19

### Introduction

China-India inheritors to ancient civilisations, have emerged today as the two most dominant and significant Asian countries in terms of their trade and industry, military capabilities and geopolitical

eminence. Both are not only raising giants of Asian continent, but also most populous countries in the world. The far-reaching growth and global diplomatic influence of both the states have also improved the consequence of their bilateral relationship. Both have

\*Assistant Professor - Department of Political Science, R.K.S.D. (PG) College, Kaithal

expansionist policy. Now China's strategic interest not limited to Asia, but it has extending up to Indian Ocean and African Continent. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointedly noted that 'territorial expansionism' was the biggest threat to humanity. He was alluding to China's arbitrary territorial claims on virtually all its neighbours, including Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and even Russia, where some Chinese are now reviving claims to the Russian port of Vladivostok, which has been a part of Russia since 1860. China's past actions, aimed at expanding its frontiers, will now meet greater opposition from its immediate neighbours, across the western Pacific Ocean.

Thus, India-China structural conflict is incompatible until and unless the two countries find a mutually agreeable compromise in their regional activities. However, in the age of great-power rivalry, such efforts would be extremely difficult. Indian strategic expert Shyam Saran has argued that, "In engaging China, India must understand the changed dynamic in the relations and adjust its own policies accordingly. To restore a semblance of equality in the relationship it is necessary to build up our own economic and security capabilities and begin to close the power gap with China. In the meantime, external balancing through closer engagement and security cooperation with other major powers, which share our concerns over Chinese predilection towards unilateral assertion of power, should remain a key objective". It may be imperative for India in the present situation to understand China's intentions and fundamental goals. It would also be in China's interest if it builds better and strong partnership with India in this century. Then definitely this century will become the century of Asia.

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