

## Conflict in Manipur: A Study of Perceptions – Part 1

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### Introduction

This article seeks to understand how people view the ongoing conflict in Manipur. It explores the factors beyond the ethnic conflict between the Meitei and the Kuki, like drugs, illegal migration caused by the conflict in Myanmar, etc., and how people view these factors.

The Manipur conflict which escalated on 3rd of May 2023 is still not resolved. President's Rule has been imposed on Manipur on 13th of February 2025 few days after N. Biren Singh resigned as the Chief Minister of Manipur. According to the data, as of 3rd of May, one year after the violent clashes erupted, more than 220 people have lost their lives. More than 60,000 people have been displaced, and more than 1,000 people have been injured. Around 32 people are missing. More than 4,700 houses are burned, and more than 380 religious structures were vandalized during these violent clashes.

Manipur's geography is such that the Imphal Valley which is in the centre constitutes only 10% of the geographical area but is home to 57% of the Manipur's population – predominantly Meitei. The surrounding hill area constitutes of 90% of the States's geographical area with only 43% of the population belonging to 34 tribal groups, broadly categorized under two, that is Nagas and Kukis; and having Scheduled Tribe status. Most of the state's administrative work is done in the Impal Valley. Of the 60 assembly constituencies in the state, 40 are in the valley and 20 are in the hill districts. Historical grievances, unresolved claims over land and political recognition have fuelled prolonged conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities.

The starting point of the ongoing conflict can be traced back to the Manipur High Court's 2023 order granting scheduled tribe status to the Meitei community. The court's order brought the historical tensions between the Meitei group and the tribal groups again to the forefront. A tribal solidarity process was organized by All Tribal Students Union of India. The Meiteis want ST status to preserve their community and to save their ancestral land, tradition, culture and their language. Land laws allow hill tribes to buy land in the valley but restrict Meiteis from owning land in the hills which is a point of clash between the two. One more factor adding fuel to the fears of the Meiteis is the free movement of Kuki-zo across the porous border between Manipur and Myanmar. Meiteis are worried about demographic change in the State.

The demand for ST status of the Meiteis was strongly opposed by the Kukis and other tribal groups. They feared it would dilute their access to job reservations and education quotas. They argue that Meiteis are demographically, academically and politically at a very advantageous situation with official recognition of their language and culture.

Most of the budget and development work is focused on Meitei dominated Imphal Valley. The tribal groups argued that if ST status is accorded to the Meitei people, it will result in increased inequality between the ethnic groups and between the two regions in Manipur.

Two more factors require attention in the context of the conflict in Manipur. One, the state government's anti-drug campaign. And second, refugees from Myanmar. In February 2021, a coup in Myanmar toppled the democratic government, and it led to a refugee crisis in the North-Eastern of India. Meitei leaders have alleged that there has been a sudden increase of new villages in the Churachandpur region. Even the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh repeatedly said that the presence of refugees from Myanmar in Churachandpur and has linked them to poppy seed cultivation and narcotics trafficking. Manipur is one of the four states which share international border with Myanmar. It is claimed that it serves as a crucial transit hub for trafficking activities in the region. Consequently, the situation presents complex geopolitical risk for our country that requires the focus on the border of Manipur with Myanmar to ensure national security of India.

This article follows an exploratory descriptive research design. It comprises survey-based data collection. This approach allows to describe general patterns and explain how the individuals and different communities view this conflict. The data was collected using a Google Form which was shared across various groups through different social media platforms to ensure diversity in participation. Initially it was proposed to conduct recorded interviews to capture detailed information. However, most of the respondents expressed discomfort with being recorded, citing concerns over privacy and sensitivity of subject. Thus, decision to adopt a questionnaire-based approach was influenced by the ethical need for anonymity and respondent comfort.

There were total 20 questions out of which 17 were objective (close ended) questions and the remaining 3 were descriptive (open ended) questions. There were total 34 respondents from the age group of 18-29 years (majority of 22 years). Many respondents were primarily postgraduates, followed by undergraduate students. Majority of them were from Manipur. The respondents belonged to different communities. This research adhered to strict ethical standard. All participation was voluntary and no personal information was collected.

	Reply	Reply	Reply	Reply
<b>Question 1:</b> Are you aware of the ethnic conflict in Manipur	Yes 100%	No 0%		
<b>Question 2:</b> Are you aware of the Manipur High Court's directive on granting ST status to the Meitei's?	Yes 79.4%	No 20.6%		
<b>Question 3:</b> Do you think it is one of the reasons for the conflict?	Yes 88.2%	No 11.8%		
<b>Question 4:</b> Are you aware of anti-poppy seed cultivation efforts in Manipur?	Yes 79.4%	No 20.6%		

<b>Question 5:</b> Do you think in any ways it has also contributed to the erupt of the conflict?	Yes 70.6%	No 29.4%		
<b>Question 6:</b> Have you seen or heard anything on social media related to this ethnic conflict?	Yes 91.2%	No 8.8%		
<b>Question 7:</b> Comment on the impact that social media had on the Manipur Conflict?	Positive 8.8%	Negative 91.2%		
<b>Question 8:</b> The government's role in addressing or escalating the conflict	Very effective 2.9%	Somewhat effective 0%	Neutral 14.7%	Ineffective 82.4%
<b>Question 9:</b> Many young people have become actively involved in various ways during the conflict. What kind of youth-led efforts have you noticed?	Community Safety 18 People	Helping displaced people 19 People	Awareness campaign 17 People	Other 3 people
<b>Question 10:</b> In your opinion, what motivates young people to take part in such efforts?	Sense of responsibility 19 People	Lack of Gov. Presence 20 People	Concern of family and friends 18 People	Desire to protect the community 22 People
<b>Question 11:</b> What are the biggest obstacles to peace in Manipur today?	Political 27 People	Ethnic 16 People	Both 1 People	Other 4 People
<b>Question 12:</b> Do you think President's rule will help resolve this conflict?	Yes 8.8%	No 50%	Maybe 41.2%	
<b>Question 13:</b> What kind of future do you want to see in Manipur?	Reunified state 61.8%	State with many autonomous Reasons 17.6%	Separate State 17.6%	Others 2.9%
<b>Question 14:</b> Do you think that many refugees from Myanmar have entered Manipur in last two years?	Yes 79.4%	No 20.6%		

<b>Question 15:</b> Do you think the Free Movement Regime (FMR) between Manipur and Myanmar should continue?	Yes 35.5%	No 64.7%		
<b>Question 16:</b> How do you think the conflict has affected education and employment?	Adversely affected 23.5%	Very adversely affected 76.5%	Unaffected 0%	
<b>Question 17:</b> How do you think the conflict has affected the mental health of the people in Manipur?	Adversely affected 14.7%	Very adversely affected 85.3%	Unaffected 0%	

**To be Continued in next Issue**

## **Eighty Years (1945-2025) The Snapshot of History -The Meetings Between U.S. Presidents and Leaders of USSR-Russia**

**By Dr. Nitin S. Kulkarni**

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The recent meeting (August 2025) between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska attracted immense global attention, particularly in the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. President Trump remarked that both sides had made “great progress,” although no concrete deal emerged on the war in Ukraine. To fully grasp the significance of this dialogue, it is important to place it within the long continuum of high-level engagements between American Presidents and Soviet or Russian leaders. Over the last eighty years, these meetings have evolved from cooperative wartime summits to tense Cold War confrontations and, eventually, to complex post-Soviet exchanges. Together, they provide a historical arc of how diplomacy, rivalry, and strategic calculation have shaped U.S.-Russia relations and, by extension, international politics.

The first significant encounter took place in 1945, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Joseph Stalin at Yalta, alongside Winston Churchill, in the final stages of World War II. This meeting was decisive in charting the post-war order in Europe, establishing spheres of influence, and laying the groundwork for the United Nations. While the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union remained intact, seeds of mistrust began to surface, foreshadowing the ideological confrontations of the Cold War. A little more than a decade later, in 1959, President Dwight Eisenhower hosted Nikita Khrushchev in Washington, D.C., and at Camp David. This was the first visit of a Soviet leader to the United States, a moment rich in symbolism and initial optimism. Yet, the promise of cooperation was short-lived. Within a year, the U-2 spy plane incident shattered trust and pushed relations back into confrontation, exemplifying how fragile diplomatic openings could be.

Tensions reached a critical point when President John F. Kennedy met Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna in 1961. These discussions were tense and ill-fated, with Khrushchev pressing hard to assert Soviet strength.

The uneasy outcome not only humiliated Kennedy but also set the tone for the Cuban Missile Crisis the following year, underscoring how summitry could both reflect and exacerbate geopolitical rivalries. Yet even amid these fraught exchanges, the practice of summit diplomacy became an essential tool for managing superpower competition.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson met Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin at the Glassboro Summit in New Jersey. Although the talks did not yield concrete agreements, they demonstrated the value of candid dialogue during a volatile period shaped by the Vietnam and the Arab–Israeli Six-Day War. The symbolism of “reasonable men seeking reasonable solutions” helped create a more constructive environment for subsequent leaders. This spirit of cautious engagement was carried forward in 1972 when President Richard Nixon made his historic visit to Moscow to meet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. The summit produced landmark achievements, including the signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, marking the first formal steps toward managing the nuclear arms race.

President Gerald Ford reinforced this trajectory when he met Brezhnev at the Vladivostok Summit in 1974, laying the groundwork for a second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II). His efforts highlighted how arms control had become central to U.S.–Soviet relations, even as ideological and geopolitical rivalries endured. Ford’s diplomacy also coincided with the broader Helsinki process, reflecting the growing significance of human rights in East–West relations. His successor, President Jimmy Carter, built on this framework with a mix of idealism and strategic calculation. In 1979, Carter and Brezhnev met in Vienna to sign the SALT II treaty, seeking to impose further discipline on the nuclear competition. While the U.S. Senate declined to ratify the treaty after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan later that year, the summit nevertheless symbolized the high-water mark of *détente*, embodying the attempt to institutionalize restraint in the midst of persistent mistrust.

By the 1980s, however, the Cold War entered a new phase, one defined not only by renewed tensions but also by opportunities for transformation. The meetings between President Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, particularly the 1987 Washington Summit, became historic milestones. Their engagement led to the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the first agreement to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons. Beyond arms control, the Reagan–Gorbachev summits addressed regional conflicts in Afghanistan, Central America, and Southern Africa, as well as the broader agenda of chemical and conventional arms, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), and human rights. Collectively, these encounters marked a decisive shift in Cold War diplomacy, signalling the move away from confrontation toward dialogue, trust-building, and an eventual thaw in superpower relations.

The post-Soviet era introduced a new dimension to U.S.–Russia summits. In 1993, President Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin met in Vancouver to strengthen bilateral ties in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse. Their discussions emphasized democracy and free-market reforms, representing a period of cautious optimism. However, this warmth proved difficult to sustain as Russia struggled with political and economic instability. A decade later, President George W. Bush met Vladimir Putin in Slovenia in 2001. At that moment, relations appeared promising—Bush famously declared he had looked into Putin’s eyes and “seen his soul.” In the wake of 9/11, there were hopes of counterterrorism cooperation, but as disagreements over NATO expansion and regional conflicts resurfaced, the relationship cooled significantly.

By the time of the Obama presidency, relations had deteriorated further. In 2016, on the side-lines of the G-20 summit in Hangzhou, President Barack Obama held his final meeting with Putin. The discussions were dominated by disputes over Syria and accusations of Russian interference in the U.S. elections. The atmosphere was tense, reflecting a severe erosion of trust and underscoring the increasingly adversarial nature of bilateral ties.

Taken together, these meetings reflect the ebb and flow of U.S.-Soviet and later U.S.-Russia relations, oscillating between cautious cooperation and deep mistrust. From Roosevelt and Stalin’s efforts to shape the post-war order, to Reagan and Gorbachev’s success in arms control, to the tentative partnership between Clinton and Yeltsin, and finally to the confrontational exchanges between Obama and Putin, each encounter has mirrored the broader dynamics of the international system at the time. They serve as historical markers of both opportunity and peril—moments when dialogue had the potential to reshape global security, but also when missteps deepened hostility.

**Eighty Years (1945-2025): Snapshot of the Meetings between Leaders of USA & USSR/Russia**

Sr. Nos.	Year	Context	Place	Leaders
1	1945	Wartime cooperation	Yalta	Roosevelt– Stalin
2	1959	First Visit of Leader from USSR	Washington	Eisenhower - Nikita Khrushchev
3	1961	Nuclear brinkmanship	Vienna	Kennedy Khrushchev
4	1967	Cold-War era	Glassboro , New Jersey	Lyndon B. Johnson - Alexei Kosygin
5	1972	Signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty	Moscow	Richard Nixon - Leonid Brezhnev
6	1974	Laying the groundwork for a second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty	Vladivostok	Gerald Ford - Leonid Brezhnev
7	1979	Signing of the SALT II treaty	Vienna	Jimmy Carter -Leonid Brezhnev
8	1987	Signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Arms control breakthroughs	Washington	Ronald Reagan - Mikhail Gorbachev
9	1993	Post-Cold War, Post USSR optimism & Strengthening the bilateral ties	Vancouver	Bill Clinton - Boris Yeltsin
10	2001	Counterterrorism Cooperation	Slovenia	George W. Bush - Vladimir Putin
11	2016	Renewed rivalry in the 21st century	Hangzhou	Barack Obama- Vladimir Putin
12	2025	Ukraine Crisis	Alaska	Donald Trump - Vladimir Putin

These high-level meetings encapsulate the evolving trajectory of U.S.–USSR/Russia relations—shaped initially by the pragmatic cooperation of World War II, transformed into ideological confrontation during the Cold War, recalibrated in the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s dissolution, stabilized through efforts at partnership in the 1990s, and once again unsettled in the 21st century by renewed rivalry and geopolitical competition.

The Trump-Putin summit in Alaska must therefore be seen as part of this longer continuum. Like earlier meetings, it occurred at a moment of heightened global tension. It revealed the persistence of unresolved disputes, yet also the enduring necessity of dialogue, however inconclusive. The history of eighty years of U.S.-Soviet and U.S.-Russian summitry illustrates a critical lesson: diplomacy between these two great powers has rarely resolved conflicts outright, but it has provided channels to manage rivalry, reduce risks, and occasionally achieve breakthroughs of historic proportions. As the world watches the unfolding trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the legacy of past summits reminds us that the stakes of U.S.-Russia engagement extend far beyond bilateral ties—they shape the balance of global peace and security itself.

# Trump's Nobel Dream and India's Wise Refusal

**By Dr. Santhosh Mathew**

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“History does not move in straight lines; it bends, twists, and contradicts itself, often leaving us with ironies sharper than truth itself.”

Contradictions have always defined leaders and institutions alike. Just as individuals are measured by their ideals, they are also judged by the paradoxes that surround their actions. Facts often reveal these contradictions with startling clarity, making us realize that human ambition, like politics, thrives on vested interests rather than moral consistency. And when we bring the Nobel Peace Prize into this arena of paradoxes—along with the ambitions of Donald Trump and the choices of India—it becomes a perfect theatre of irony.

The Pulitzer Prize is considered the pinnacle of journalism, yet Joseph Pulitzer himself was a master of sensationalism and yellow journalism. He founded the New York World and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, filling columns with investigative brilliance but also scandal-driven headlines. A man who laid the foundation of modern journalism also created the template for tabloid excess. Similarly, Alfred Nobel, the man behind the Peace Prize, built his fortune by creating dynamite and contributing to the arms industry. The contradiction is too glaring: the merchant of death became the patron saint of peace.

Nations, too, walk this double-edged path. Take Ethiopia. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for his peace deal with Eritrea, soon after led his country into one of the bloodiest civil wars in the Horn of Africa. The same award that crowned him as a peacemaker became a haunting reminder of how peace can turn into a battlefield overnight. The Nobel Committee itself has learned bitter lessons—whether in the case of Abiy Ahmed, Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar, or even Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh, who faced severe allegations back home after being celebrated abroad.

The United States presents another set of contradictions. The American Constitution is hailed as the cornerstone of modern democracy, with the Bill of Rights enshrining liberty in 1791. Yet Thomas Jefferson, one of its architects and later the President, was a slave owner who spoke eloquently of freedom while denying it at home. Even his acquisition of Louisiana, celebrated as a bold move of statesmanship, was laced with contradictions of democracy and imperial ambition. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, hailed as the founder of Pakistan, lived a secular, cosmopolitan life far removed from religious orthodoxy, yet went on to establish the world's first Islamic republic. His personal life reflected liberal choices—his second wife was a Parsi, his daughter married into a Parsi business family—yet his political legacy carved a deeply religious boundary in South Asia.

India, too, has lived with its own ironies. Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of democracy and peace, refused to accept the duly elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1939. He insisted on his nominee Pattabhi Sitaramayya, but when Subhash Chandra Bose won, Gandhi openly declared that “Pattabhi's defeat is my defeat.” Bose, sidelined, went on to form the Forward Bloc and later raised the Indian National Army. Today, Gandhi is remembered as the global symbol of peace, while Bose is revered as a fierce nationalist. The contradiction is not just historical—it continues to echo in India's political and strategic choices.

It is in this larger theatre of contradictions that Donald Trump's aspiration for the Nobel Peace Prize enters the stage. Trump, flamboyant and unpredictable, often declared that he deserved the Peace Prize more than anyone else—whether for his talks with North Korea, his Middle East initiatives, or simply for being “tough.”

Pakistan, in a dramatic twist, nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India chose not to. Modi's refusal was not a slight but a statement—India had to weigh its long-term interests above momentary diplomatic theatre.

On the surface, it may appear that Pakistan's gesture rewarded Trump while India denied him recognition. Pakistan even gained certain trade relaxations, with tariffs kept low, while India was penalized with record-high tariffs and a historic fall in the rupee. But beneath the numbers lies a deeper calculation. The Nobel Peace Prize has embarrassed the committee many times. Aung San Suu Kyi was once the icon of freedom and peace, celebrated globally, only to later be accused of justifying violence against the Rohingya. Abiy Ahmed turned from peacemaker to war commander. Even Muhammad Yunus, once celebrated as the architect of microfinance, faced backlash in his own country. Gandhi himself, the greatest apostle of peace, was never awarded the Nobel. If Gandhi did not receive the honour, why should India push Trump's name? History tells us that such premature glorifications often end in regret.

India's refusal was not weakness but foresight. International politics is not a morality play; it is about permanent interests. As the old dictum goes, there are no permanent friends or permanent foes—only permanent interests. Today, India tilts towards BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, not as a rejection of the West but as a message to balance power, assert autonomy, and remind leaders like Trump that India does not play second fiddle. An enemy's enemy may sometimes become a friend, but such friendships are temporary. What remains constant is the careful pursuit of national interest.

Trump's aspiration for the Nobel is, in itself, a paradox. A leader known for his brash rhetoric, his "America First" unilateralism, and his dismissal of global institutions now seeks validation from one of the most symbolic global institutions of all. For a man who questioned NATO, berated the United Nations, and imposed trade wars on allies and rivals alike, the pursuit of a Peace Prize reflects not consistency but contradiction. And it is here that India's stance becomes crucial. By refusing to nominate Trump, Modi demonstrated that India would not bend to political theatre. Instead, India absorbed the short-term costs—tariff hikes, currency pressure—choosing long-term credibility over fleeting headlines.

The Nobel Peace Prize itself has become a mirror of contradictions. Sometimes it crowns the right leader at the wrong time, other times it overlooks the greatest advocates of peace. Gandhi's absence from the laureates' list remains the greatest irony. Meanwhile, some recipients, celebrated in their moment, later fall from grace, leaving the committee to regret its choices. Trump's case could easily have been another regret. By not nominating him, India avoided being complicit in that mistake. History rewards patience. India may have suffered immediate economic pain, but it gained moral strength and strategic autonomy. The tilt towards BRICS and SCO is not just diplomacy; it is a reminder that global politics cannot be defined by one man's ambitions, whether Trump's Nobel dream or Pakistan's theatrics. Instead, it is defined by balance, contradictions, and the ability to play the long game.

As contradictions unfold across time—from Pulitzer's journalism to Nobel's dynamite, from Jefferson's liberty to Jinnah's secularism, from Gandhi's peace to Bose's nationalism—they remind us that leadership is not about purity but paradox. Trump's Nobel dream is yet another chapter in this book of ironies. And India's refusal to join the chorus is not a mistake—it is a deliberate choice, one that future history may well judge as wise.

In the end, contradictions are not failures; they are the fingerprints of history itself. They remind us that even the loftiest prizes, the grandest ideals, and the most powerful leaders are bound by human paradox. And sometimes, saying "no" is the most powerful affirmation of principle.

# India–UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA): Impact Analysis of Sectors & Businesses

**By Savio Rodrigues**

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After 3 years of negotiations, India & the United Kingdom signed a Free Trade Agreement, officially known as the India–UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). The agreement has the potential to reshape trade worth billions of dollars and affects almost all of the goods traded between the two economies. It comes with a 10-year implementation plan.

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The agreement is based on four pillars:

- Reduction in Tariffs
- Improved Market Access
- Boost Bilateral Investment
- Ease in Visa Restrictions

Both sides have agreed to make huge concessions in tariffs, thereby significantly increasing the volume of trade between the two sides, thereby creating new jobs, increasing production, boost in investment and larger economic prosperity. The agreement is projected to expand bilateral trade volumes by an estimated \$34 billion annually and hence reach to \$120 billion by 2030 & \$160 billion by 2040.

## **Which side gave what?**

### **-UK Gains**

Owing to concessions from the Indian side, one of the biggest gains for the UK's businesses was the alcoholic beverages sector. India agreed to immediately halve the import duties on products such as scotch whisky and gin from the current 150% to 75%, which would be brought down to as low as 40% steadily, over a period of 10 years. According to trade assessments by analysts & experts, owing to India's layered tax structure, the effective price reduction per unit is estimated at approximately ₹300, reflecting a modest but significant consumer impact, which will still benefit a lot of UK's alcohol companies, due to a large surge in demand from the Indian markets.

The current Indian tariffs on the Automobiles imported from the UK exceeds 100%, which is agreed to be brought down to 10% under a tariff rate-quota system. India currently imports many British luxury vehicles, which will now enter the Indian market at much lower rates owing to a lower tariff-quota system. Luxury UK vehicle brands are projected to gain significant price competitiveness. India's mass automotive market isn't expected to benefit a lot, but only that of luxury vehicles.

A wide range of consumer goods are projected to be affected. India is expected to phase out its 22% duty on cosmetics and 11% on soaps over 10 years. Duties on shaving creams, gels, and detergents will be removed immediately.

Concerning medical devices & equipment like diagnostic tools, surgical devices, etc, tariffs are expected to be slashed completely, over a period of time and also on electronic goods such as such as smartphones, optical fibre cables, inverters, and electrical machinery.

Overall, the average tariff rate of India on the UK will be reduced from 15% to just 3%, a five-fold decrease over the 10-year period of the deal. This would make UK exporters of cosmetics, medical gear, and electronics will become more competitive, likely leading to notable volume increases.

### **-India Gains**

The agreement opens many doors for Indian exporters. Almost 99% of Indian goods will get duty-free access to the UK market. One of the major boosted sectors would be the textile & apparels sector. Currently, the UK imposes an 8-16% tariff rate on Indian exports, which is agreed to be eliminated under this new deal. This is expected to boost exports from key textile hubs like Tiruppur, Surat, and Ludhiana. Zero-duty access to footwear made in India will benefit manufacturers in Agra, Kanpur, and Chennai.

A sharp removal of tariffs is expected to be made in the UK's Gems & Jewellery sector. Owing to pre-existing demand for Indian-made jewellery and the UK importing \$3 billion worth of jewellery every year, Indian exports here are projected to double in 2-3 years.

For Indian engineering goods, a whopping 1,659 tariff lines were under consideration in the FTA, making it the largest category in the deal. India's engineering exports to the UK grew 11.7% in 2024-25 and are expected to accelerate. Machinery, equipment, and auto components will see higher demand with duty-free status. Even here, Indian exports are projected to double in 2 years.

With regard to India's exports, the pharmaceutical sector plays a pivotal role. Out of India's \$23.3 billion worth of pharmaceutical exports, only less than a billion dollars go to the UK. However, this deal, though considers only 56 tariff lines, opens the UK's \$30 billion market of pharmaceutical products to Indian exporters.

The automobile sector, EV & Hybrid carmakers will benefit from reduced import tariffs and preferential quotas. Besides this, zero tariffs on Auto components and engineering goods are likely to benefit Indian companies and reduced or almost zero tariffs on consumer goods like furniture, toys, sports goods, chemicals, and machinery will also provide an export boost to these sectors.

### **Overall Major Business Wins**

- o Airbus and Rolls-Royce: Over GBP 5 billion in aircraft contracts with Indian carriers.
- o Carbon Clean: GBP 7.6 million investment in Mumbai innovation centre.
- o Zerowatt Energy: GBP 10 million investment to set up a UK headquarters.

### **Indian Businesses Expected to Benefit**

- o Apparel Sector: Welspun India, Arvind Ltd, Raymond, etc
- o Footwear Sector: Bata India, Relaxo, etc
- o Automobile Sector: Tata Motors, Mahindra Electric & Bharat Forge

### **UK Companies Expected to Gain**

- o Alcoholic beverages Sector: Diageo, Chivas Brothers, etc
- o Automobile Sector: Jaguar Land Rover, Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Aston Martin, etc

This agreement will take around a year to come into effect. In the meanwhile, businesses of both the countries, can take proactive & effective steps in order to reap maximum benefits which the deal has in place to offer. It offers numerous new opportunities for businesses in each other's countries which makes it strategically imperative to be prepared for it. Businesses engaged in exporting goods on both sides need to open new supply chains, making their prices competitive, engage in diversification of products & services offered, have strategies to exploit niche market opportunities and thereby establish a long-term presence in the new market.

## Conclusion

As India strengthens its global economic role and the UK seeks to redefine its trade footprint, this agreement has the potential to serve as a benchmark for mutual economic growth of businesses and industries of both economies. Projections indicate annual growth of about 0.5-0.7% to India's GDP and 0.3-0.5% for the UK.

- India gains in labour intensive industries and export-oriented sectors, which could experience massive gains in revenue.
- Majorly, UK businesses stand to gain from entry into large Indian markets for its premium goods, infrastructure and services sector.
- Thus, MSME's on both sides are projected to reap significant advantages.

The major Indian products & sectors poised to benefit are Gems & Jewellery, Textile & Apparels, Pharmaceutical products, Engineering goods, Seafood, etc whereas the UK is expected to gain primarily in the Alcoholic beverages and Automobile sector. The interim period before full implementation offers businesses the time to build resilience and position themselves competitively.

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## India is Proud of:

### Poornima Arvind Pakvasa

#### A quite Gandhian (05 October 1913-25 April 2016)



A woman of immense charm, she was stoic, resolute, decisive and lived life more intensely than most, at Dangs, her home for several decades. Born in 1913 in Ranpur near Limbdi in Saurashtra to a family of freedom fighters, Poornima met Gandhi when she was barely eight. It was an epiphanic moment that defined the rest of her life.

She joined the freedom struggle at a turning point in India's fight for independence. She was one of the Satyagrahis who joined the Dandi March that Gandhi initiated as part of the mass civil disobedience movement launched on March 12, 1930.

Wading into the sea to break the salt monopoly law was not only an act of defiance for the spunky young adolescent, it spelt the beginning of a new phase of a politically and socially committed life governed by her own script, her own choices.

The Salt March resulted in the arrest of Gandhi together with 60,000 satyagrahis of whom more than 17,000 were women. Poornima was jailed in Rajkot in the same prison cell where Kasturba Gandhi, Manibehn Patel and Mridula Sarabhai were also incarcerated.

Poornima spent her time teaching writing skills to Kasturba and other prison inmates. Over time their relationship grew close and intimate. Poornima lost her mother when she was 16, she treated Kasturba like her mother and received from her the love, tenderness and care that every daughter covets.

Poornima Pakvasa's political involvement manifested itself during the 51st session of the Indian National Congress at Haripura in 1938. This session was significant because it was headed by Subhas Chandra Bose as president and threw open the differences between Gandhi and Netaji.

Poornima's role as a volunteer was a tough one. The crowd was mammoth, estimated at more than half a million! A feature-length documentary of the session made by JBH Wadia of Wadia Studio documents the feverish pitch of the historical drama of which she was a part.

Married to Arvind Pakvasa the same year, Poornima stepped into another very important political family. Her father-in-law Mangaldas Pakvasa was a close confidante of Gandhi who left his robust practice as a successful solicitor during the Dandi March and never looked back. He was later one of the first five governors of independent India. After her wedding, Poornima Pakvasa left the maelstrom of active political life to focus on nurturing her three children Arti, Sonal and Anuj. An accomplished Manipuri dancer and classical vocal singer, Poornima also began to support the development of classical arts traditions.

Poornima's passion for social issues brought her centre stage again in 1954. She started an organisation called Shakti Dal and for many years worked as chief of a military school in Nasik bringing into her work an incredible, incandescent energy.

Her commitment to a lifetime's struggle to improve the lives of tribal girls led to the establishment of the Ritambhara Vishwa Vidyapeeth in the Saputara region of the Dangs district of Gujarat in 1974.

Poornima Pakvasa's life and work at Ritambhara had an unstoppable momentum. She tried to inculcate in all the young girls mentored by her a love for education, physical training, the classical arts and strong values.

Her work in the field of education was complemented by developmental work done through a Gamin Vikas Trust. She received many accolades including the Padma Bhushan in 2004 in recognition of her trailblazing work.

For the simple tribals of the Dangs region she was quite simply "Didi of the Dangs" - their mentor and protector.

When she lived Poornima Pakvasa touched thousands of lives. She will continue to live through her legacy and work. Hers was a life that inspires legends.

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