

MANKIND OCCASIONAL PAPER 4

SAARC & ASEAN SHOULD BUILD 10° N KRA CANAL

Vinayak Purohit

Published from
5, Hansali,
Damle Path,
Off Law College Road,
Pune - 411 004.
Tel. : 2546 6557

July 2005
For Private Circulation Only
Suggested Price : Rs. 10/-

MOP-04

SAARC & ASEAN SHOULD BUILD 10° N KRA CANAL

CONTENTS

	Pages
1. The Tri-Polar world	1
2. The 10° N Kra Canal	2
3. British Imperial Interests of 1946	4
4. Indian National Interests Demand Overthrow of British Imperial Stranglehold	4
5. Conclusion	10

DTP By :

Khadilkar Process Studio
461/1, Sadashiv Peth,
Tilak Road, Pune - 411 030.
Tel. : 2447 7059

Printed By :

Rational Printers
216, Narayan Peth,
N. C. Kelkar Road,
Pune - 411 030.
Tel. : 2445 4664

SAARC AND ASEAN SHOULD BUILD THE 10° N KRA CANAL

Vinayak Purohit

1

THE TRI-POLAR WORLD

From the time that we revived *Mankind* in October, 1995, the 10° N Kra Canal has formed a *leitmotif* of our writings, along with the topic "Emergence of the Tripolar World after 1975."

Our contributions to the emergence of the tri-polar world after 1975 have been cited in *Mankind Occasional Papers : 3 The Emergence of the Tri-Polar World after 1975*, published in June 2005 (pp. 19-20)

Similarly, some of the more important contributions to the theme of the Kra Canal in *Mankind* may be adduced here : First editorial, "10° Canal" in Sept. 1998, pp. 3-4, which is reproduced hereinbelow; again first editorial on "10° Canal" in April 1998, "Eleven Roads to Indo-Pak Amity" May 1999, p.18; and of course, there were many more.

Let us first state the wider world perspective as shown in Table 2 of our "Emergence of the Tri-Polar world after 1975", p.19. The same will bear repetition here :

Table 1

TRIPOLAR DISTRIBUTION WORLD ECONOMIC POWER : 1960 - 2020

WORLD GDP-PPP US\$ Trillion		(Per Cent of World Total) GDP-PPP			
	PRA**	EU	USA	INDIA	
1960 6.5	14	36	28	4	
1994 23.0	25	31	22	4	
2003 51.5	26	26	21	6	
2020* 90.0	32	28	19	8	

(Source: *Mankind*, same as above)

* Projected on the basis of 1994 to 2003 trend line.

** Pacific Rim of Asia consists of 14 countries : South Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, plus 10 ASEAN members : Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesia.

The Pacific Rim of Asia consists of some 14 or 15 nations abutting on the Pacific Ocean, viz., South Korea, China, Taiwan and Japan (We omit North Korea from consideration here as it is an exceptional case of an extremely distressed state capitalist economy, which is trying to leverage itself out of dire economic distress by nuclear blackmail.)

In addition to the four countries named above, there are the following ten members of the ASEAN : Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei.

On the western side of the projected 10° N Kra Canal are the seven countries of the SAARC : India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

The interested reader may refer to the map appearing in this paper as the centrespread.

Beyond the SAARC nations of South Asia are the oil-reach countries of the Middle East from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. Quite a large proportion (30 to 40%) of the world's petroleum products originate in these OPEC members.

Let us also note that the latest *World Development Report* of 2005, already classifies quite a few of these PRA and oil-exporting Middle Eastern economies as "High Income" entities : Japan, South Korea and Brunei have been placed in the High Income group; and Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore and Taiwan, as also Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates of the Middle East have been similarly identified (p.255 of World Bank's *World Development Report 2005*).

2

THE 10° N KRA CANAL

We reproduce below our September, '98 *Mankind* editorial on this subject.

"We had written in our issue of April 1998 that the Government of India is not bound by British Imperialist interests and should therefore proceed with the construction of the Ten Degree Canal across the Isthmus of Kra.

We shall reproduce the first few lines of our April 1998 notice.

One of the last secretive acts performed by the colonial government of India was the signing of a peace treaty with Siam. It is a strange and fascinating document.

“A peace treaty between H. M. Government and the Government of India on the one hand, and the Kingdom of Siam on the other. the first instrument bringing the state of war with an ex-enemy country to an end, was signed on Jan. 1, 1946, at Government House, Singapore. The signatories were for Great Britain. Mr. Moberly Denning, political advisor to Lord Louis Mountbatten : for Government of India, Mr. M. S. Aney; and for Siam. Prince Viwat Anajai Jaiyan, Lt. Gen. Phya Abhai Songgram, and Nai Serm Vinichayakut. The treaty contained 24 articles.

“Art 1 : Siam repudiates all measures taken in pursuance of the declaration of war on the British Empire on Jan 25, 1942.

“Art 7 : Siam undertakes to construct no canal linking the Indian ocean and the Gulf of Siam i.e. across the Kra Isthamus without British consent” (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-48. Vol VI p. 7695*)

How keen British imperialism was to impose the prohibition upon Siam-Thailand can be gauged from a further news item which we have gleaned from the same volume of *Keesing's Archives* :

“C. INDIA - Loan to Siam

It was announced in New Delhi on July 14, one year and one month before the pseudo - independence of Aug. 14-15, 1947, that the Government of India has granted to the Siamese Government a 20 year credit of Rs. 50,000,000 (\$ 3,750,000) carrying interest at the rate of 3 per cent and repayable by annual instalments of Rs. 3,400,000 (\$ 255,000) commencing in August 1947. This was the “first loan” ever made by the Government of India to a foreign country - (*The Statesman, Calcutta - Times. (London). Keesing's Contemporary Archives. Vol. VI. 1946-48. p. 8129*)

As the above extract reveals, Britain actually bribed Siam-Thailand with a loan of Rs. 5 Crores in order to make it sign the treaty. We must remember that Siam-Thailand was an ‘enemy country’ for the British, and an ally of Japan, in W. W. II.

Of course it suited the cunning and miserly Britishers to pursue their own imperial interests at the expense of the Indian treasury. The loan was given by India for a purpose which was to hurt India's own long-term interests !

Perfidious Albion, you are true to your nature !

3

BRITISH IMPERIAL INTERESTS OF 1946

Let us consider the scene immediately after the end of World War II.

Topmost priority was given by British imperialism to the task of rebuilding its empire in the Far East. i.e. to recapture Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Hong Kong.

Secondly, Suez was the pivot. It was firmly in British hands in the late '40s. It was not lost till 1956, when Eden launched his misadventure in collusion with France and Israel. Egypt finally took over in 1956 with American and Russian help, nationalised the Suez Canal Authority, and kicked out British troops from the Canal Zone.

Back in 1946 the Ten Degree Canal would have reduced the importance of Suez Canal and elevated Thailand's status in world affairs.

Further, Britain wanted to preserve the profitability of its sea links with Australia and New Zealand. Intermediate cargoes to Malaya, Singapore and Indonesian islands helped to lower the cost of traffic on the England-Australia and England-New Zealand trade routes and also helped develop Singapore and Hong Kong as important transshipment points.

4

INDIAN NATIONAL INTEREST DEMANDS OVERTHROW OF BRITISH IMPERIAL STRANGLEHOLD

As we had argued in our April issue of *Mankind*, India must break out of the straitjacket imposed by neocolonial powers upon India's foreign policy.

We care nothing about British reconquest of its Far Eastern empire, which in any case has disappeared long ago. We do not care whether cargo traffic between England and Australia-New Zealand becomes more expensive or less. We are not concerned with the development of Singapore and Hong Kong as great transshipment points.

It is in the interests of Indian and world shipping to cut the canal across the Isthmus of Kra where the Isthmus narrows to just about 30 miles and to develop this canal vigorously so that a detour of a thousand five hundred nautical miles down the Malayan coast via the Straits of Malacca and up the Gulf of Thailand in the South China Sea is avoided.

The proposed Ten Degree Canal will be an extension of the Ten Degree Channel lying between Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In a few years, it will save millions of tonnes of fuel for world shipping.

Mediterranean is no longer the all important trade route of the world. In fact world trade has shifted to the Pacific and the Indian Oceans where over 40 per cent of the world GDP is being currently generated (See our studies of the tri-polar world in *Mankind* issues Aug./Sept. 96, pp. 3-5 : Nov. 96, pp. 56-66, Oct. 97 pp. 32-37).

We have suggested that this canal should be jointly owned by SAARC and ASEAN with 50 per cent share to be held by each side.

We may distinguish two clear divisions among the ASEAN nations Malaya, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei may be said to form the Southern Tier of ASEAN. This Southern Tier is made up of Islamic nations with Singapore as an exception under the control of mainly overseas Chinese.

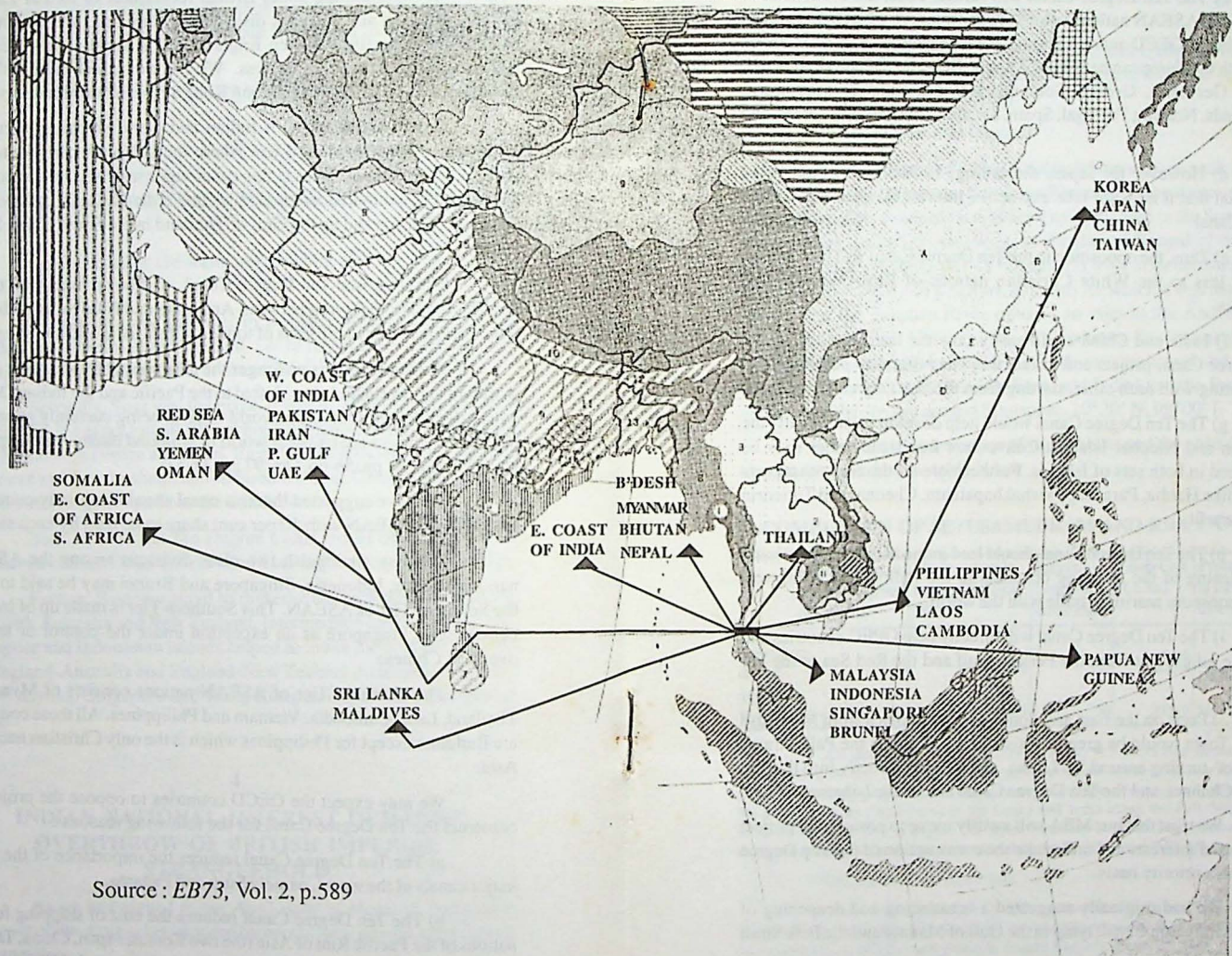
The Northern Tier of ASEAN nations consists of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Philippines. All these countries are Buddhist except for Philippines which is the only Christian nation of Asia.

We may expect the OECD countries to oppose the project to construct the Ten Degree Canal for the following reasons :

a) The Ten Degree Canal reduces the importance of the other major canals of the world, namely Suez and Panama.

b) The Ten Degree Canal reduces the cost of shipping for the nations of the Pacific Rim of Asia (the two Koreas, Japan, China, Taiwan and ASEAN, Hong Kong has already been taken over by China.)

SHIPPING LANES AROUND 10°N KRA CANAL



Source : EB73, Vol. 2, p.589

c) The Ten Degree Canal will further boost the economies of SAARC and ASEAN nations, which are competitive with OECD (Japan is a member of OECD as are Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A. and Canada along with the European nations of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and U.K.)

d) However for Japan, the savings in fuel cost would be so substantial that it may not take any active interest in opposing the Ten Degree Canal.

e) Thus, the opposition to the Ten Degree Canal will be confined more or less to the White Christian nations of Euro-America and Australasia.

f) India and China could easily take the lead in pursuing the Ten Degree Canal project and in fact they may discover other ways of co-operating with each other, starting from the Ten Degree Canal.

g) The Ten Degree Canal would help develop economically the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Convenient free trade zones may be established in both sets of Islands. Furthermore all the east coast ports of India like Haldia, Paradeep, Vishakhapatnam, Chennai and Tuticorin would benefit.

h) The Ten Degree Canal should lead immediately to a deepening and widening of the shipping channels in the Palk Straits. This will further boost our maritime trade with the world.

i) The Ten Degree Canal will directly help OPEC countries and stimulate oil exports from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea to the Far East.

j) Ports on the East and South coasts of Africa from Mombasa to Cape Town would be greatly assisted by sailing via the Palk Straits, instead of turning around Sri Lanka, and moving directly into the Ten Degree Channel and the Ten Degree Canal across the Isthmus of Kra.

We trust that our MEA will swiftly move to protect and project our national interests and undertake the construction of the Ten Degree Canal on a priority basis.

We had originally suggested a broadening and deepening of the Setusamudram Canal, lying in the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait

between Sri Lanka and India, as a corollary to the construction of the 10° N Kra Canal by SAARC and ASEAN.

We may note here that the proposed Kra Canal would be less than 50 kms. in length (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, hereafter referred to as *EB*, 1983, *Micro*, Vol. 5, p. 907.)

We quote from this source :

“Kra, Isthmus of : Thai Khokhok Kra, narrow neck of South western Thailand connecting the Malay Peninsula to the Asian mainland. The isthmus lies between the Gulf of Thailand (East in the South China Sea) and the Andaman Sea (West, in the Bay of Bengal of the Indian Ocean). It is 25-30 miles (40-48 kilometers) wide at its narrowest point, between Chumphon and Kra Buri. Kra Buri for which it was named, is at the head of the Pakchen River estuary, an inlet in the Andaman Sea. Since the late 19th Century, the Kra Isthmus has frequently been proposed for canalisation with the aim of decreasing travel and shipping time between Europe and Middle East (and India) and the Far East by eliminating the voyage around Singapore. 10° 20' N, 99° 00' E”

Some further particulars of the benefits and the costs involved may be displayed in the table below

COMPARISON OF SETUSAMUDRAM AND KRA CANALS

	Likely savings in terms of Degrees of Latitude	Likely savings in terms of Nautical Miles	Approx. Length of canal (kms.)	Likely Cost (Cr. Rs.)	Probable saving in Turnaround time (hours)
Setusamudram*	4	400	152	*** 2427.4	36 (i 1/2 days)
10° N Kra Canal**	18	1800	50	2000.0	162 (about 7 days)

* All data from *Indian Express*, Pune, 9.3.05, I had demanded the construction of the 10° N Kra Canal in a series of articles in *Mankind*, cited elsewhere and suggested as a necessary corollary, the widening and deepening of the Setusamudram Canal between Sri Lanka and India along the Palk Strait, which is about 19 to 36 feet in depth. The latter corollary is under implementation. The main proposition should now be undertaken by SAARC and ASEAN.

**Calculated from above data.

***Setusamudram Canal is to be constructed in a shallow sea, with 19 to 36 feet depth. 10 N Kra Canal will be on land. Excavation costs are conjectural, based on Setusamudram data given in *Indian Express*, Pune, 20.5.05

CONCLUSION

It must be recognised that the Kra Canal which further boosts the already booming economies of the Pacific Rim of Asia (PRA) will be stoutly opposed by both the USA and the newly emerging EU, since it further tilts the world balance of power in favour of PRA.

We may notice the grand geopolitical shifts in world trade and international balance of power.

Originally, since times immemorial the Indian Ocean was the focus of world trade, as Peter I, Czar of Russia put it in c. 1715 : "The commerce of India is the commerce of the world and ... he who can exclusively control it, is the dictator of Europe."

Vinayak Purohit, (*A Non-Comprador Account of British Conquest, Subjugation and Loot of India*, Nov. 2004, p.30, quoted from Tara chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. 1 1961, p.150.)

Thereafter, world trade underwent several vicissitudes.

First, there was a diversion to the Atlantic, since at that time, Europe did not possess the wherewithal to trade with India. A gigantic genocidal campaign against the Red Indians, or the Native Americans of the New World, had to be carried out by the Iberian monarchies of Spain and Portugal from 1492, when Columbus commenced his buccaneering and privateering activities in the Caribbean and Latin America. We may state that this phase of genocide, piracy and banditry lasted from about 1492 to 1815 - 75, when L America liberated itself from Portuguese and Spanish control.

The Spanish and Portuguese genocidal massacres and other acts of piracy and banditry did not go entirely unchallenged. The British, the Dutch, the French, the Danes and, the Central Europeans carried out both primary and secondary depredations across the Atlantic and soon dominated the slave trade, which aimed to replace the massacred Red Indians with Black African Negro slaves in the slave marts of the New World, extending from Canada in the North to Chile and Argentina in the South (see Vinayak Purohit, *Planetary Land Grab by Whites*, Jan 2004, p. 5)

Once gold and silver had been looted from the Native Americans, mistakenly termed Red Indians, the Europeans entered into

the Indian Ocean trade beginning with the East Coast of Africa and gradually extending their predatory tentacles into the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian littoral of the Arabian Sea. First the Portuguese and the Dutch, and then the English and the French began to dominate the commerce of the Indian Ocean. (See Mankind Occasional Paper 2, *A Non-Comprador Account...* etc. quoted above)

Suddenly, at the end of the 19th century, with the building of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Mediterranean once again leaped into pre-eminence. Great Britain with its strategic basis in Gibraltar, Malta, Crete, Cyprus and Rhodes commanded the shipping lanes to and from India.

In the meantime, the power of the United States of America was growing by leaps and bounds. The Panama Canal was constructed in 1905-14 across the Isthmus lying between the land masses of North and South Americas. It was an Isthmus slightly wider than the Kra Isthmus. Columbia which owned the Isthmus was partitioned and a small state of Panama was carved out, in order that the USA may become the owner of an International Panama Canal Zone.

Just as the Suez stimulated a rapid economic growth of Western Europe in the late 19th century; and just as the Panama Canal stimulated economic development of the emerging super power, United States of America, similarly the Kra Canal will immediately boost the economic development of SAARC, ASEAN and the Pacific Rim of Asia.

We may say that world history has drawn a full circle. Beginning with the Indian Ocean, it diverted to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and is now once again returning to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

Vinayak Purohit

* b. 1927, Kolkata

*Freedom fighter, 1942 August Movement; compound fracture of the-skull due to police lathi, 9.9.42 at Shivaji Park, Mumbai; thrice arrested : once on charge of attempting to burn a policeman alive; again for production, distribution and possession of illegal literature; third time detention without trial, Worli Jail, Mumbai. Trade unionist, 1948-52, as General Secretary, Bombay Press Employees' Union; rejoined Socialist Party, 1956, as Lohia founded the party in Dec. 1956

*Graduation in B.A. (Hons.) with History, Economics and Politics, Mumbai University, 1948; Ph.D for *Arts of Transitional India, 20th Century* Published by Popular Prakashan in 2 Vols; 1986-88, Senior Fellow, ICSSR and UGC 1976-80; Visiting Professor, Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, 1976-85, Visiting Professor, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1980-82; Visitor, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1981-82. Visiting Professor, Chalmers Institute, Gothenberg, and Royal Institute Stockholm 1982; Visting Scientist, CSIR 1980-82. Consultant ILO Project, Maharashtra, 1983-85.

*Art, Architectural, Music, Dance, Drama, Film, and Literary critic from mid-fifties for *Sanskriti, Design, Times of India, Free Press Journal, Hindustan Standard, Dharmayug, Samakaleen* etc.

*Designed monumental *Gitai Mandir*, Wardha, 1965-75

*Revived Lohia's *Mankind*, 1995-2000

We propose to serialise our Work-in-Progress on History of Capitalism
ERA OF DARKNESS : 1098 - 2005
FROM CRUSADES, COLUMBUS AND COLONIALISM
TO HOLOCAUST, HIROSHIMA AND OZONE-HOLE
As also our Autobiography :
A LIFE OF SURFEIT & OVERFLOW : 1927 - 2005
in this series of Occasional Papers.

MANKIND

was founded by Rammanohar Lohia
in 1956 from Hyderabad
and edited by him from there.
A shift to Delhi occurred in 1963 on his
election to the Lok Sabha,
and the journal continued till his death in 1967.

It was revived by
Dr. Vinayak Purohit and
Dr. Sharayu Mhatre-Purohit
as Executive Editors
from Pune
in 1995 and published by them
till 2000

Limited number of copies of
Bound Volumes of MANKIND, 1995-2000 in
Nine Hardbound Volumes, one for each half year,
in A4 size, 8 1/2" x 11", Rs. 250 each.
are available from
5, Hansali,
Damle Path,
Off Law College Road,
Pune - 411 004.
Tel. : 2546 6557

In the revival of *MANKIND*, the Purohiths were associated with Dr. V. V. Gopalakrishna, George Gomez, Devilal Patidar, MPR Reddy, U. K. Sengottaian, Julia Zimmerman, Vinod Payyade, T. Pathbhi Rama Reddy, Dr. Vidya Pitre, Dr. Anant Marathe, Dr. N. H. Anita, Dr. Peter Manuel, M. P. Prakash, Devraj Chauhan and late Kishen Pattnayak (Former Editor of *MANKIND* for a few issues after Lohia's death.)

Titles Published :

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Planetary Land Grab by Whites | Jan. 2004 |
| 2. A Non-Comprador Account of
British Loot of India | Nov. 2004 |
| 3. Emergence of Tri-Polar World After 1975 | June 2005 |
| 4. SAARC & ASEAN Should Build
the 10 ^o N Kra Canal | July 2005 |

Forthcoming Titles in the Series

5. A Life of Surfeit & Overflow : 1927 - 2005
6. Herring and Cod Fisheries, Sea Power and Rise of Europe

Order of publication subject to change

Also by Vinayak Purohit :

The Arts of Transitional India, 20th Century, 2 vols,
Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1986-88

Steel Frame (a play in Gujarati), 1981

Tribheto (a play in Gujarati), 1994

Sociology of Art and Politics : a set of 10 booklets, 1989-92

Sociology of Indian Film, 1990