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INDO-NEPAL RELATIONS AND CULTURAL COMPATIBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

India and Nepal are only two countries in the entire world which are inter-linked historically, culturally, politically, socially and economically. Both are peacefully reconstructing themselves on modern lines having thrown off the yoke of domination – India from the British and Nepal from the feudal autocracy. The dominant faith of the majority of people in both Nepal and India is Hinduism. The monarchs of Nepal have always been true devotees of “Pashupati and Vishnu” and worshippers of Shakti and admirers of lord Buddha. So there budded a sense of religious co-ordination and deep harmony. Gorkhali also called Nepali, the official language of Nepal is like several Indian languages. Even the other dialects and languages spoken and understood in Nepal bear close resemblance to Indian states. Hindi is universally understood in Nepal. In view of the common dietary habits, social customs and way of life both countries have periodically acknowledged each other’s value and importance. The Nepalese in India and the Indians in Nepal do not feel themselves alienated. There are so many fellow-feeling in so many items due to close and neighbourly relations. As close neighbours Nepal and India share unique relationship of friendship characterized by deep rooted people to people contacts and culture. Cultural bond provides moral strength to the relationship, while respect for each other’s political identity. Due to cultural proximity Nepal recognizes and admires India’s position as the largest democracy and as an emerging economic and strategic power that is striving to find its rightful place. This paper will intend to analyze that culture retains the potential to promote harmony between two neighbours. Further, it will also seek to examine how cultural proximity remains helpful in bridging several social bifurcation between any two neighbours. Keywords: Nepal, India, culture, people, relations



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INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a sovereign state in South Asian countries and located between two emerging Asian giants. Himalayan range in North separate Nepal from China and the rest is surrounded by India. Until Nepal becoming a Republican state in May 2008, it had been ruled by monarchs for most of its modern history in relative isolation. The movement for the restoration of democracy 1990 paved the way for the first democratic election in 1991. India played a very constructive role in the peace process and took keen interest in Nepal for the establishment of democracy. Indo-Nepal friendship is formed and shaped by the geographical location and socio-cultural identities influenced by 1750km of open border. There has been a tradition of free movement among the people only because of open border between Nepal and India which made communication easier and possible. Therefore Indo-Nepal have strong political and security relations. India and Nepal share strong bilateral relations. In 1950 Indo-Nepal started friendship by ratifying the Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Although the tradition of friendship between these two is, as old as history itself but the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 established formal relations which provided special privileges and opportunities to the Nepalese citizens to enjoy in India. India's cooperation especially in the field of bilateral trade, investment and transfer of technology has been instrumental in accelerating the pace of economic development in Nepal in recent years. Without an outlet to the sea, Nepal's International trade and transit facilities are dependent on India. Both India and Nepal have periodically accept each other's value and importance, and have also portrayed their relationship as 'special' on various occasions.

Indo-Nepali relations in cultural context

In the history of subcontinent, the relations between Nepal and India are interlinked into a fabric by the religious proximity, similar traditions, and linguistic threads and cultural closeness since long. In rest of the

world no other two countries can have such similarities as in Nepal and India. Cultural commonalities of these two countries doing some influence in the process of moulding Nepal and India's bilateral relations. Geographical realities, cultural commonalities, matrimonial linkages and similar socio-religious factors are pretty important in forging bilateral relationship between any two countries. Nepal is situated between two great Asian giants Nepal and china that's why it has been described as a yam between two boulders. It is geopolitically a landlocked country. Its geopolitical situation has sought to maintain cordial relations with either of two countries i.e. China and India. Immensely, it can be said that China is a distant dream for Nepal but the conditions and factors like culture, religion and economic ties with India suggested Nepal to stay much closer than china. History has also revealing the fact that Nepal was much closer with India than any other country. Nepal is much dependent on India as the source to access the sea through major ports of India. Nepal, due to geographical barrier the northern border limits Nepal's access to china.

On Southern side and on north part of Nepal there are two world's biggest and different nations which are having their own doctrine to administer. One is world's biggest democratic country while the other one is world's biggest communist country China exists. Nepal exist between these two countries China and India which are having distinguished political ideologies. Nepal has to manage its all affairs with two different neighbouring countries in such a way to walk in between. But it's India which stood always for Nepal to play its vital part in all most in all important stuffs. India wants its small neighbour to grow at larger speed and to prosper at highest rate. It is only due to having similar kind of geopolitical structure and similarities of Indo-Nepal's culture, socio-economic, religion, language etc. that inevitably makes both countries relation closer than any other country. India also played a very positive role in Nepal's politics whenever it was needed. Himalayan kingdom ties with India shows its deep and direct connection in spheres of history, geography, culture,



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religion, social system, values, beliefs, customs, conventions and many more. As in several religious texts it is mentioned that the pre-Vedic Shiva who resided in the eternal city of Banaras was married to Parvati the daughter of Himalayas. Shiva and Parvati stayed at Banaras during day time but left for Mansarovar in every evening and again returned to Banaras at next morning. Shiva also became the Pashupati Nath, Lord of all animals of the Kirati rulers of the Kathmandu valley. These were the early social links between the people of Nepal and India. The most bonding factor between any two nations could be the religion and it is the strong common bound between Nepal and India that both nations are having common faith 'Hinduism'.

In history it is found that the cultural links between Indo-Nepal have existed since the dawn of civilization. The Pashupatinath temple is located on the banks of the Bagmati River in Deopatan, a village 3 km northwest of Kathmandu and within this temple there is a tradition of keeping four priests and one chief priest at the temple from among the Brahmins of south India for centuries. Large number of Indians have strong belief in Pashupatinath Temple and people often visit there because of the belief that it is a very holy place. The same belief is felt by Nepalese, when they visit holy temples in India like Badrinath, Kedarnath, Jagannath, Dwarkapuri, Ayodhya, Mathura etc. during their pilgrimage. This tradition still shines out as the most precious cultural link between Nepal and India. The king of Nepal also enjoys some phenomenal privileges in India's Lord Jagannath Temple (Puri, Orissa) and Rameshwaram temple in India. In Jagannath temple, there's "Garbha Griha", a sacred place where only King of Nepal and some priests can perform the ritual and no one else is allowed. It also shows that the socio-cultural roots of these two countries are very strong. Coming to the fact that Lord Gautam Buddha was also born at Lumbini in Nepal. He was also among some early linkages between Nepal and India. Lord Buddha came to Bihar after abandoning his state Kingship and there he started meditation for several years. He also tried to

strengthen cultural ties and linkages between Indo-Nepal. After the demise of Gautam Buddha the followers of Buddhism rapidly increased in the entire South Asian countries as well as in some other parts of world. It is generally accepted that the king Ashoka the great emperor of Indian Maurya dynasty was also one among who embraced Buddhism and whose daughter Sanghmitra dedicated her life to the spread of knowledge and power of the Buddhist faith amongst the people of Nepal. King Ashoka himself visited Kapilvastu and established his writings, which resulted in strong bonding between India and Nepal. That's why cultural relations of both these countries deepened more. Rituals, customs, temples, priest, marriage etc. play special roles between two countries to maintain special ties and bonding between them. All these considerations rapidly expanded the interactions between Nepal and India since the dawn of civilization and still these social ties playing a positive and enlarger role to bond Indo-Nepal. Friendly relations in Gupta period between two countries were also very close and bonding. It is said that the cultural and political relations became stronger when King Samudra Gupta expanded its sphere of influence in Nepal but he did never intervened in the internal freedom of administration there. During Muslim period, many Turks, Afghans and Mughal rulers used to rule over Nepal but they cannot make it to rule over there and despite of all these attacks, the process of give and take for religion, culture, art and literature was continued. In 18th century, a powerful ruling system was established in Nepal. Prithvi Narayan Shah, after conquering the valley in the mid-18th century, moved his ruling state to Nepal. Prithvi Narayan Shah was from Sisodia family in Rajasthan India. His ancestors took asylum in Nepal. King Prithvi Narayan Shah also followed the policy of friendship with the neighbouring countries. Due to Nepal's geo-political structure and similarities between socio-economic, culture and language which makes Nepal and India closer than Nepal and China. When there was Rana regime in Nepal most of the Nepal's leaders were in India and started revolution from there. They also took part in the process of independence of the India. Due to the fact that Nepal's politician are very



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much influenced by the Indian political mentality. Those things knowingly or unknowingly can be seen in the Nepal's politics. Leaders task is always keep the country in safe and assure their citizen they are always being protected. National interest has always to be in the top priority. Nepal's political leaders are traditional and influenced by the Indian political back ground that is why national interest is always in the shadow and in dilemma. While making the policy leaders has to give the prime focus on national interest. Policy has to be in the favour of the national interest and should not be influenced by the foreign power. Within very short period of time India became an independent country, they make a significant progress in the field of development and turn from the periphery to semi periphery and core. The leaders of both Indo-Nepal are always putting the national interest in the top and according to that they are making policy. After 1991 when king's regime was abolished and democracy was established since then to till now many governments has been formed. Always India's involvement has been seen while forming the new government in Nepal. Due to that in 1996 Maoist movement was launched. Their focal point is to marginalize India's influence in Nepal and set the national interest in the primary focus. Due to open border between India and Nepal security problem remained in their top priority. Nepal have open border with India from south, east and west. Nepal's sovereignty is nowhere in problem due to India's involvement in Nepal's politics. India being a powerful nation has to play a big brother role in security and survival's point of view not only in Nepal but in the whole of south Asian region. The Nepalese and Indian citizens respectively, their national interest is to build a sound and smooth foreign relation with their both neighbours. Peace is the prime concern in the minds of sensitive people from both sides of border. There are no border dispute with Nepal in the past and till now it is working peacefully. Geographically, socially, culturally and historically, the two countries are linked most intimately. Cultural ties between India and Nepal have existed since long ago. To quote a Nepalese author "there are possibly no two countries in the world whose

histories, cultures and traditions have been so closely interlinked for such a long time." Nature seems to have ordained that Nepal and India live in amity sharing common problems of economic and social development.

In this era of globalization and a multi-polar world no single country can deal with challenges without the support and cooperation of any other countries. In this context, India believes that all its neighbours, big or small are important for its economic growth and stability. As in the case of any other country, India's foreign policy too is "dedicated to the furtherance of national security and developmental priorities in a globalized and interdependent world." At the same time, India's priority has been to "ensure a peaceful, secure and stable neighbourhood" through cooperation and friendship. As for as Nepal is concerned, it is an important neighbour of India and occupies special significance in its foreign policy because of the geographic, historical, cultural and economic linkages that span centuries. The Nepal-India relationship is determined more by geography, culture and history than any other considerations. That's why Nepal is the only country in South Asia whose citizens are given national treatment in India.

CONCLUSION

India and Nepal share a unique relationship of friendship and cooperation characterized by open borders and deep-rooted people-to-people contacts of kinship and culture. India continues to be Nepal's largest trade partner, source of foreign investment and tourist arrivals. India had played a leading role in helping Nepal from long ago. Although at some point of time relationship between Indo-Nepal has got embittered by any means but due to change of power and exchange of many high level visits paved them a path to cultivate their relations in friendliest manner. India and Nepal are both very important neighbours for each other.

In the context of culture the Government of India took some initiatives in such a way to promote people-to-people contacts in the fields of art and culture,



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academics and media and some cultural programmes, symposia and events organized in partnership with Nepal, as well as conferences and seminars were also conducted. Financial Assistance has also provided to several Indo-Nepal Friendship Organizations particularly which are working to promote Indian culture and Indo-Nepal bilateral relations. An Indian Cultural Centre was established in Nepal in August 2007 aiming to exhibit the best of Indian culture in many small and big cities of Nepal. The Indian Cultural Centre in Kathmandu has generated considerable goodwill through various cultural events it has undertaken in the past. The Nepal–Bharat Library was set up in 1951 in Kathmandu. It was the first foreign library in Nepal. Its objective is to enhance and strengthen cultural relations and information exchange between India and Nepal.

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