

CHAPTER – 5
INDIA – NEPAL RELATIONS

- **Challenges in India – Nepal relations**
- **Irritants**
 - Territorial disputes
 - China in Nepal
 - Hydroelectric power
 - Nepal-India friendship treaty

INDIA – NEPAL: A brief Introduction

Nepal and Indo-Gangetic great plains form the geographical area representing the Indian subcontinent. The countries represent a cultural connection running from Lumbini to Bodhgaya and Pashupatinath to Kashi Vishwanath.

Cultural and Linguistic Homogeneity

Majority languages in Nepal - Nepali, Maithili and Bhojpuri have their origin in the Indian languages of Sanskrit, Pali and Hindi.

Nepal has a 22 million population, of which 6 million live and work in India. People of both these countries fought the colonial powers together. The Indian army has a Gorkha regiment that recruits Nepalis even today. Cultural homogeneity in terms of cuisines, worship of deities, dresses etc. is so much that there exist cross-border marital relations. Therefore, relations are referred to as "Roti Beti Ka Rishta".

The Shah kings of Nepal (1769-2008) were Sisodia Rajputs of Rajasthan. To highlight the importance of India in its foreign relations, Nepal's PM customarily visits India as his/her first foreign visit. The Army Commander of India is also given the customary title of Army commander of the Nepali Army as well.

India plays a pivotal role in development assistance in Nepal. Nepal has been one of the highest recipients of aid and grants from the Indian Government. India is actively supporting Nepal in its reconstruction post-2015 earthquake. Also, a major boost is being given to Nepal's hydroelectricity to make Nepal economically prosperous.

But despite such closeness, the relationship is fraught with challenges.

As in International Relations, geography determines a lot. Nepal, a small state between India and China, has constantly used one against the other. Nepal playing the China card is an acceptable terminology in international relations. Nepal's political elite and Nepali political leadership have sought to take advantage of the geostrategic location of Nepal landlocked between the two Asian giants. Founder of Nepal, Prithvi Narayan Shah, commented Nepal to be "a yam between two large boulders."

Reasons for the Challenges

i) Absence of Nepal policy

India's policy w.r.t. Nepal represents India's insecurity vis-a-vis China. India continues to take on Nepal through the prism of China. India's policy in Nepal is compared to Pakistan's policy on Afghanistan. India wants to micromanage affairs in Nepal.

Even Pandit Nehru, who articulated principles of non-alignment and Panchsheel, had no hesitation in declaring in the Indian Parliament (6th Dec. 1950) that India's security will enjoy primacy over Nepal's sovereignty.