



## INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

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### Abstract:

India is an important and influential country in South Asia. It shares borders with Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. India's relations with these countries are very important from a historical, cultural, economic and political perspective. India's relations with Pakistan have always been turbulent. Although tensions have arisen due to the Kashmir issue and terrorism, India has focused on resolving differences through peaceful dialogue. Relations with China have also been complicated by border disputes. However, both countries maintain dialogue through trade and international cooperation. Nepal is a country close to India culturally and religiously. The two countries have close relations based on open borders, trade, and employment and people-to-people ties. Bhutan is a trusted neighbour of India and India has friendly relations with Bhutan in the areas of development, energy projects and security. India's relations with Bangladesh have strengthened in the last few years. The two countries work together in the areas of border agreements, trade, water management, cultural exchanges. India is increasing cooperation with Myanmar in the areas of security, India's maritime security, trade, cultural relations and development projects with Sri Lanka have maintained friendly relations. Overall, India pursues a policy based on peace, mutual development and cooperation with its neighbours. India is constantly striving for stability in the border areas, increased trade and regional peace. It is expected that India's relations with its neighbours will further strengthen in the future, considering the shared history, culture and mutual interests.

**Keywords:** *India's relations with Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka*

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### Introduction:

India is considered to be the center of South Asia in terms of geography, politics and culture. Surrounded by a vast land and maritime border, India has multifaceted relations with countries such as Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Various factors such as history, culture, trade, security, border disputes, water management, migration, regional stability and international politics make India's relations with its neighbours complex and important. After independence, India has tried to achieve peace and development in South Asia by relying on the policy of 'neighbourhood first' and regional cooperation. However, tensions have arisen with some neighbouring countries due to historical and political reasons, while friendly and cooperative relations with some countries seem to have strengthened. In the era of increasing globalization, the scope of these relations is increasing due to the areas of trade, energy security, anti-terrorism cooperation and

infrastructure development. The purpose of this research is to study India's relations with its neighbouring countries holistically in terms of their historical background, current status and future prospects. The main motivation for this paper is to understand India's role in enhancing stability and cooperation in South Asia, taking into account various diplomatic agreements, geo-regional challenges, economic cooperation and people-to-people cultural ties.

This introduction presents a broad picture of India's relations with its neighbours and sets the direction for the in-depth analysis in the following sections.

### **India-Pakistan Relations:**

India and Pakistan were formed as independent nations in 1947, but the violence of the partition period, the migration of people and the Kashmir issue created differences between the two countries from the beginning. After the merger of Jammu and Kashmir with India, Pakistan claimed it, leading to the first war between the two countries in 1947-48. Later, two major wars in 1965 and 1971 also created serious tensions in the relationship. In the Shimla Agreement signed after the 1971 war, both countries agreed to take steps towards resolving the issue peacefully. The Lahore Declaration in 1999 was an important attempt to improve relations, but the Kargil conflict that followed immediately interrupted the process of dialogue. After 1990, India-Pakistan relations deteriorated further due to Pakistan-sponsored terrorist activities.

After the 2001 Parliament attack, the 2008 Mumbai attack and several subsequent incidents, India took a tough stance against terrorism and adopted a policy of "no dialogue until terrorism stops". Despite differences on ideological, political and security issues, the two countries continue to have limited trade, cultural ties between peoples and people-to-people exchanges. Although there have been occasional attempts at bilateral talks, they have not been long-lasting.

Overall, India-Pakistan relations since independence have been a mixed story of conflict and dialogue. Maintaining stability and peace requires mutual trust, counter-terrorism cooperation and sustained dialogue, which can lead both countries towards regional peace in the future.

### **India-China Relations:**

India and China are two of the world's oldest and most populous countries. The two nations have had relations since ancient times due to history, trade and cultural exchanges. However, modern-day India-China relations have been marked by cooperation as well as competition and border tensions. After 1947, the two countries tried to establish friendly relations. The slogan "Hindi-Chinese Bhai-Bhai" became popular during that period. But the relations between the two countries suddenly deteriorated due to the border war in 1962. Disagreements over the border in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh escalated into conflict. Although trade and diplomatic exchanges increased in the following decades, the border issue remained a persistent issue. Several agreements in 1993, 1996 and later were signed to maintain peace along the border. During this time, China became one of India's largest trading partners, although the trade deficit is at India's expense. The Galwan Valley clash in 2020 again raised tensions. Since then, both countries have taken several rounds of troop withdrawal, talks, and reconciliation, but a full resolution has not yet been reached.

India-China relations are influenced by issues such as strategic competition, political equations in the Indo-Pacific region, the Tibet issue, trade, and technology.

#### **India-Nepal Relations:**

India and Nepal are friendly nations with inseparable ties to each other geographically, historically, culturally and religiously. The Himalayas, rivers, mountains and rich traditions are visible within the borders of both countries. Hindi, Sanskrit and many other cultural threads have given special importance to India-Nepal relations. The influence of Hinduism and Buddhism is equally visible in both countries. After independence, India provided Nepal with great cooperation in the fields of infrastructure, education, health, energy and trade. According to the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950, both countries provided open channels for mutual travel, trade and investment. According to this treaty, the unique facility of citizens traveling to each other's countries without visas is still in force. India is helping Nepal in infrastructure development, hydro projects, roads, railways and hydroelectric power generation. Indian investments and projects have a large share in Nepal. Nepal is considered a culturally friendly country with 'friendship of brothers and sisters' for India. Personal, social and religious ties remain strong between the citizens of both countries. However, sometimes border disputes, trade disputes and political developments cause temporary tensions in the relationship; but both countries have maintained their stance of resolving issues through dialogue.

#### **India-Bhutan Relations:**

India and Bhutan are two friendly countries in South Asia, and their relations are based on mutual trust, respect and cooperation. Bhutan is a small but culturally and environmentally rich country. India has consistently assisted Bhutan since independence in all areas of development, defense and diplomacy. The India-Bhutan Treaty of Friendship in 1949 formally began cooperation between the two countries. Later, in 2007, this treaty was amended to grant Bhutan greater political autonomy. India is Bhutan's largest trading partner and India invests significantly in hydropower projects. Hydropower generation has become the backbone of Bhutan's economy and a large part of it is exported to India. India's contribution is also notable in the fields of education, health, infrastructure, defense cooperation, tourism and information technology. The two countries have strong cooperation in terms of security. Both countries place special emphasis on peace, environmental protection and preservation of cultural values. Despite some minor differences, relations have remained strong due to the tradition of dialogue and trust. Overall, India-Bhutan relations are one of the most successful and friendly relations in South Asia. This relationship is likely to continue to grow stronger in the future on the basis of mutual development, stability and friendship.

#### **India-Bangladesh Relations:**

India and Bangladesh are two countries in South Asia with close and historically friendly relations. India's assistance in the 1971 war of independence played a significant role in the formation of Bangladesh. This laid a strong foundation of trust, cooperation and affection between the two countries. After independence, cooperation has increased in many areas including trade, cultural exchange, security, energy, border management and river water sharing. The long-pending enclave issue was resolved with the signing of a border agreement in 2015,

providing stability and protection of citizenship to the people of the border areas of both countries. India is a major trading partner of Bangladesh and has made significant contributions to the development of railways, roads, ports and power projects. Security and counter-terrorism cooperation have made the border area more stable. The cultural ties between the two countries are also close, with similarities in language, literature, music and traditions. Sometimes, there are differences in the sharing of river water, migration and trade; but both countries seem to be trying to resolve these issues through dialogue.

#### **India–Sri Lanka Relations:**

India and Sri Lanka are close neighbours in South Asia, connected by a maritime route. The relations between the two nations have been based on cultural, religious and trade exchanges since ancient times. The teachings brought to Sri Lanka by Indian monks in the spread of Buddhism are a great example of the spiritual bond between the two countries. After independence, India has increased cooperation with Sri Lanka in the political, economic and security sectors. India has taken a moral stand and supported the peace process, especially on issues related to the Tamil community. India has contributed to Sri Lanka in trade, health, fisheries, education, technology and infrastructure development.

The two countries work in close coordination on issues of security, counter-terrorism cooperation and maritime stability in the Indian Ocean region. Although there have been temporary tensions over fisheries resources, border disputes and political decisions, the relationship has been sustained through dialogue and diplomacy.

#### **India-Myanmar Relations:**

India and Myanmar are close neighbours in terms of geography and culture. The two countries share a border in the northeast of India and share many similarities in history, religion, language and traditions. The exchange of Buddhist culture has created a sense of intimacy between the two societies. India has maintained friendly relations with Myanmar since independence. Cooperation has increased in the areas of trade, energy, agriculture, health, transport, infrastructure and culture. Myanmar is considered a strategically important link for India under the Act East Policy. It helps in increasing connectivity and trade with Southeast Asia through Myanmar. Security and counter-terrorism cooperation are important areas of the relationship. The two countries coordinate for security in the border areas. Although the political situation in Myanmar, the refugee issue and border disputes pose some challenges, the role of dialogue remains intact. Overall, India-Myanmar relations are based on cooperation, strategic interests and regional development and are likely to strengthen further in the future.

#### **Conclusion:**

India's relations with its neighbouring countries are based on historical, cultural, economic and security interdependence. Despite some tensions and border disputes, India's role in maintaining regional stability through dialogue, cooperation, trade, development and peace is positive. These relations are expected to strengthen further in the future.



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