



## A Study on Indo-Nepal cultural relations

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### ABSTRACT

India and Nepal share a deep and multifaceted cultural relationship that dates back centuries. This bond is rooted in historical, religious, linguistic and social ties that transcend modern political boundaries. The cultural relations between these two countries have been a significant factor in maintaining cordial bilateral ties and fostering mutual respect and cooperation despite occasional challenges, the cultural bond remains robust and continues to play a crucial role in fostering goodwill and cooperation. The shared heritage and continuous cultural exchanges ensure that the relationship remains vibrant and mutually beneficial. In summary, India and Nepal enjoy a complex relationship marked by deep cultural connections, significant economic interdependence and occasional political and border-related challenges. Both countries continue to work on strengthening their ties through diplomatic dialogues and cooperation on various fronts.

### KEYWORDS

Cultural Bond, Social Ties, Cooperation, Political Challenges

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Nepal is a land locked country and is sharing a large distance of boundary with India. Indian states such as Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Sikkim shares boundaries with Nepal. This results to heavily dependency on cultural and economic aspects. On the basis of language and rituals many communities from across borders have familiarity with one another. The relation between any of two countries is mainly based on government to government basis but in case of Indo - Nepal relations; it is cultural factor which is the foundation of their relations. The places like Lumbini, Muktinath, Jankpurdham and Pushupatinath in Nepal and Varanasi (including Sarnath), Kushinagar, Ayodhya and Bodhgaya in India are some places which are religiously very

important for the people of both the countries. These pilgrimages bind the people of the nation's together. The people of both the countries are related to each other in such a manner resulting to a strong cultural relation who is a never ending relation. The government of India has taken initiative to promote interaction of people of both the countries in the field of art and culture. In 1951, the first foreign library was opened in Kathmandu named Nepal Bharat library. It was the first milestone achievement for independent India which shows the cooperation between the two nations. Establishment of e-library system across Nepal by India establishes stronger bilateral relation between these countries.

## Cultural Centers

Establishment of Swami Vivekanand Cultural Centre in Kathmandu in August 2007-08 was an initiative of Government of India to promote Indian culture to Nepali people (Embassy of India, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2024). This centre is regulated by Embassy of India in Kathmandu (Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, 2024). Also the Nepal-Bharat Library which was the first foreign library in Nepal was founded in the year 1951 in Kathmandu. It is also regulated by Embassy of India in Kathmandu. This was established to enhance the cultural relations between India and Nepal. It also helped in transferring information between the two countries after establishment of political relation on 13 June, 1948 (Saroj Kumar Timalsina, 2019). Next, the B. P. Koirala India - Nepal foundation which was set up in 1991, was another foundation which works for the cooperation between India and Nepal. This foundation is also related to Indian Embassy in Kathmandu (B. P. Koirala Foundation, 2023). This foundation was established by MoU signed between government of India and Nepal. The aim behind this foundation was to promote educational, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation between India and Nepal (India-Nepal Bilateral relations, 2024).

## Deep Rooted Ties: A Shared Heritage

Populations of nearly 6 lakh Indians live on domiciled in Nepal (India-Nepal Bilateral relations, 2024). This diaspora mainly includes businessmen, professionals like doctors engineers, IT personnel etc. An Indian citizen's Association of Nepal was formed on 14 September 1990. This is the only association which deals with the Indian resident who are settled in Nepal. This association looks after their interests in Nepal, which is branched in Pokhara, Damak and Bharahwa. The foundation of India-Nepal relations lies in their profound cultural and historical connections. Hinduism and Buddhism, two dominant religions in both countries, bind them through shared pilgrimage sites like Pashupatinath in Kathmandu and Bodhgaya in India. Intermarriage, linguistic similarities (Hindi and Nepali share Sanskrit roots) and a vibrant exchange of art, literature and music further strengthen this people-to-people connect.

The open border policy, a legacy of the 1950 Indo - Nepal Treaty of peace and friendship facilitates this cultural osmosis, allowing for free movement and fostering a sense of kinship. Religion places an important role in the lives of Indians and Nepalese. Hinduism and Buddhism on the basis of karma, Dharma and spiritual have a similar path in Spiritual journey. Lumbini which is the birthplace of Gautama Buddha attracts the followers from India as well as from the world, identifies the spiritual connection. Pashupatinath, a revered Hindu temple in Kathmandu also attracts Hindu pilgrims from India. As well as Varanasi; the holy city of Ganga attracts pilgrims from Nepal too. These religious ties create a powerful sense of belonging and reinforce the deep rooted connection between the two nations.

Hinduism practiced by majority of people both the countries enhances a sense of kinship. The worship of Shiva and Vishnu, and the celebration like Dashain and Diwali and also the presence of countless number of temples and pilgrim sites in both the countries create a shared cultural landscape. Languages like Nepali and Hindi spoken in both the countries by majority of people have Sanskrit roots. It facilitates communication and artistic expression. Nepali literature has inspiration from Indian epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Other than this Indian music and dance forms have deep influence of Nepali artistic tradition. This constant cultural exchange strengthens the bond between the two nations.

Under collaborations between the governments to promote cultures across nations; MoUs/Agreements that have been signed between India and Nepal to promote cultural relations (Embassy of India, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2020) are Doordarshan, India and Nepal TV, Sahitya kala Akademi, India and Nepal Academy, Press Council of India and Press council of Nepal, Government of India and Government of Nepal for cooperation on youth affairs, Lalit kala Academy, India and Nepal Academy of Fine Arts, Government of India and Government of Nepal for twinning of sister cities Kathmandu-Varanasi, Lumbini- Bodhgaya and Jankpur-Ayodhya, Sangeet Natak Akademi, India and Nepal Academy of music and Drama etc.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Challenges

From political point of view we see a political unstable government in Nepal. As a result to this political differences border disputes occurred. This strains cultural relations. When we focus on economic point of view, inequalities something lead to a perception of cultural dominance by India. It needs a sensitive handling.

### Opportunities

Promotion of religious and cultural ties can enhance people-to-people contacts. Also, joint cultural programs and festivals may also strengthen the bonds between the two countries.

### Conclusion

This research article is an attempt to point out the people to people connection of India and Nepal. Indo- Nepal cultural relations are a testament to the deep rooted historical, religious and social ties between the two countries. Indo-Nepal relations also have always been important from the perspective of national security as well as region stability. Despite occasional challenges, the cultural bond remains robust and it continues to play a crucial role in fostering good will and cooperation. So, the cultural cooperation amongst people and governments creates trust between the two nations. In modern era, when both the countries focus on soft power, the better will be for the nations. India - Nepal diplomatic relations can be explored and experimented more due to the geographical and cultural proximities. Hence, both the governments and people of both the nations should be open for more cultural ideas and exchanges.

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