



Research Paper

India -Pakistan: Redefining Relations

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Abstract

Since 1947, India and Pakistan have had a tense relationship; Kashmir is a major divide. Though their governmental systems differ, both nations have similar cultures, linguistic, clothing, weather, celebrations, and customs. With Indian music and films making great development, media can aid to strengthen relations. Joint projects allow one to exploit the trade possibilities in the entertainment sector. Both nations must lower political divisions and create a proper climate for bilateral ties if they are to be felt in international trade. Projects like educational cooperation, healthcare and cooperative ventures amongst daily newspapers—Aman Ki Asha—can help to mend tensions. Both countries have chances from healthcare services; hence, both countries need to unite their relations in many spheres, including trade, cultural interaction, and security in order to restore stability.

Key words- India, Pakistan, Partition, Trade, Bilateral Ties, Media, Cricket, Health care

I. Introduction

An increasingly globalised world has created an environment for all the countries to cooperate with each other. Notwithstanding the era of increasing global friendship the relationship between two important countries of South Asia are under constant stress and strain. South Asia forms geographical entity. Geographically South Asia is a contiguous land mass without any natural frontiers except for narrow water corridors between India on the one hand and Maldives and Sri Lanka on the other hand. It is bounded by the Himalayan Mountains on the north, by Indian Ocean and its off shoots-the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea -on the south and by mountains and jungles on the east. Only in the North West, where Afghanistan stands astride the junction of south Asia, West Asia and Central Asia do the external geographic and political frontiers fail to coincide.¹ Thus south Asia's well defined external boundaries provide one of the pre-requisites for regional cohesion. But the relations among the various countries of the south Asia have gone through many ups and downs especially the relations between India and Pakistan.²

India and Pakistan are two major countries of South Asia. They emerged on the world map as independent countries in August 1947, when the partition of the Indian sub-continent took place.³ Since then the relations between two countries have remained strained. The issue of India and Pakistan is one which has been accompanied by tension, resentment and lack of cooperation ever since its inception. Numerous efforts to resolve differences and create mutual respect and coordination have borne the fruit of futility owing to the unwillingness of one of the parties concerned therewith. Various issues and problems that weakened their links were the transfer of population, Canal water dispute; boundary dispute etc occupied the prominent place in creating a rift between them. The most difficult problem in relations between India and Pakistan since partition has been their dispute over Kashmir. The heated discussion over Kashmir and other issues were intensified when India and Pakistan conflict got entangled with the international politics of the Cold War at the time of independence of the two countries.⁴ The Cold War, ideological conflict between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, forced both the countries to take opposing sides in the dispute between India and Pakistan. However, after the end of the Cold War and with the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991, the growth of terrorism and the proliferation of the nuclear weapons, has further added to the consequences of the conflict between the two countries and have given a new dimension to the bilateral conflict from an international perspective.⁵ The association between India-Pakistan remained troubled despite bilateral efforts and changes in the international environment. With a view to internationalize the bilateral issue at international forum like UNO, Pakistan has tried to raise Kashmir issue at international forum a number of times, but India has successfully countered this nefarious attempt by taking a clear stand that the Kashmir being an issue between two countries only, no third intervention is acceptable and the issue should be settled mutually and bilaterally by both the countries. This is possible only if Pakistan shows

a positive attitude in disputes solving process. This stand has been duly endorsed by UNO during the latest attempt of Pakistan to again involve UNO in this matter.

Despite all the political differences, the citizens of both countries remain strongly interrelated and interconnected with each other through the (somewhat) same culture, same language, same dress, same weathers, same festivities and same traditions which are bonding them together despite the diplomatic differences promoted by the states.⁶ It is, of course, in the mutual interest of both India and Pakistan that these issues along with several others are solved amicably and with as little dissent as possible. Below we explore the various avenues through which bilateral cooperation between the two nations can be developed and sustained.

Media

Media can prove an effective tool in improving their relations. Indian cinema and Music had made a tremendous progress in the present day world. India is the second largest producer of movies in the world, while Pakistan produces very few movies. Pakistan had imposed a ban on screening of Indian films in 1965 following the Indo-Pak war. The purpose of the ban was largely to protect the domestic film industry.⁷ However, despite the ban the Pakistani film industry has not done well. The ban was lifted in 2008, but since then there has been uncertainty in the policy as several ad-hoc steps have been taken to ban Indian movies on a case-by-case basis. Through the years, the ban has been practically ineffective as the demand for Indian movies in Pakistan is met through pirated DVDs and satellite cable broadcasts of Indian films.⁸ There is an interest in India and Pakistan for each other's music- both audio and visual. The trade potential in the entertainment industry particularly in films, television and music can be tapped by encouraging joint productions. Removing the ban on screening movies would benefit both the countries. Exchanging broadcasting rights to telecast each other's programmes on television is yet another trade opportunity for India and Pakistan. The artists and singers of Pakistan are working in the Indian films and dramas and the Indian films are also popular in Pakistan. Rahat Fateh Ali Khan-a Pakistani singer is considered as a success symbol for films in India. These days the heroes of Indian film industry are praised and loved by Pakistanis long before the state gave permission for the broadcasting of Indian channels officially.⁹ The songs of Indian films can be heard in almost every household of Pakistanis and even the shopping malls, in common day transportation vehicles and also in rural areas of Pakistan.¹⁰ Pakistani actors and actresses have worked in Indian movies, to name few like Mohsin Khan, Zeba Bakhtiar, Meera, Veena Malik, Javed Sheikh and latest to join is Fawad Khan in Khoobsurat.

Television

At the same time Pakistani stage performances were very popular in 1980s and at present with Zindagi channel the serials of Pakistan have once again made a special place in Indian household. The reason being its stories are realistic in nature and portray the simple life of a common man of the region.¹¹

Cricket

Cricket is another form of diplomacy seen between the two countries which have brought them together. The first test series was played in 1951-52 when Pakistani team went to India and in 1954-55 Indian team came to Pakistan to play cricket.¹² The political leaders of both the countries also goes to stadiums if both countries are playing with each other and buck up their respective teams. Cricket should be a strong bond to enhance the bilateral ties between both the countries. Both the countries allow the common people to watch the match in their respective countries. This is a positive sign to bring peace and harmony between the two nations.

Trade

Trade is another sphere where both countries could cooperate with each other. No doubt trade exists between India and Pakistan but it has not flourished as it should have been. Political relations have over shadowed this aspect. Both countries have trade relations with other countries but the regional coexistence is lacking which is not healthy for their survival. Today is the age of globalisation where it has become necessary for each country to cooperate with each other to survive. In such a scenario to make their presence felt in trade and commerce at international level, both India and Pakistan are required to reduce political differences between each other.

Suitable environment should be created for bilateral ties because climatic conditions and environment is same in South Asia. The products which are manufactured in both the countries will find its way in each other market and the surplus generated will be circulated in other countries of south Asia. There are examples across the globe of trade playing a positive role in conflict resolution between neighbouring countries. The EU, Asean and Mercosur¹³ are often cited as venues for improved political-military relations. The evolution of European Union over almost 50 years has proved to a peace-dividend generator. Liberalised trade, stronger commercial links and deeper bilateral economic investment would strengthen moderate forces in Pakistan's government, political parties, business community and civil society. Yet, an effective integration of the two economies would only be possible if Pakistani and Indian traders, business representatives and average citizens could travel more freely across borders. For this, the stringent visa regime must be relaxed, by significantly reducing processing

times, granting multiple-entry visas, eliminating police reporting requirements and removing limits on cities authorised and the obligation for entry and exit from the same point.¹⁴

Internal trade as well as international trade will flourish not only in south Asia but other countries of the Middle East like Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq etc and it will be much cheaper than water and air. The opening of the road route between India and Pakistan after 58 years was a historic move. India and Pakistan share a 2912 kilometre long border.¹⁵ Amritsar and Lahore are the two major cities on either side of the border separated by a distance of only 54 kilometres. Hence, the transport costs for goods moved via land route between northern India and northern Pakistan could be substantially lower than the sea route.¹⁶

Major advantages for the Pakistani as well as the Indian economy include cheaper transportation costs due to shorter distances, making it unnecessary for industries to carry large inventories of raw materials and intermediate goods, thus reducing operational costs. State revenues would also increase if the estimated annual \$1.5 billion smuggled goods were flow through official channels.¹⁷ In the longer term, there is potential for enhanced investment, including in joint ventures. The advantages for the Pakistani economy are quite obviously greater than for its larger and more prosperous neighbor.¹⁸ The normalization of trade relations with India would “open up a hitherto stalled growth node for the Pakistani economy”, said political economist Asad Sayeed. “Economic growth can take place either through major structural transformation or through trade. Since Pakistan’s economic structure has remained the same for at least the last 40 years, the only way to ensure growth is regional trade and investment”. Following trade liberalization with India, Sayeed maintained, Pakistan’s two largest industries, textiles and food processing, could penetrate the huge north Indian market, while energy-deficient India would benefit, for instance, by tapping the world’s second largest coal reserves, in the Thar region of Pakistan’s Sindh province.¹⁹ The governments and business communities on both sides should foster more contacts between potential traders and investors by organizing regular trade fairs and exhibitions in India and in Pakistan that could facilitate access, interaction, information sharing and exchange of goods.

India’s Punjab-based business houses are especially keen to expand trade with Pakistan, viewing it as an opportunity to tap a market with similar consumer patterns and tastes, as well as a way to open the borders of their landlocked state.

Diplomacy

As India’s relations with Pakistan are improving after Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s invitation to his counterpart Nawaz Sharif for his swearing-in ceremony. In addition, the Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal has written to Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to open up two additional land routes for increasing trade namely Hussaini Wala border in Ferozepur district and Sulemanki border in Fazilka district, “As the volume of trade is rising, it is high time that more land route trade is allowed with Pakistan. The Punjab Chief Minister has also sought necessary facilities like integrated check posts at both these points to facilitate the trade. Not only will this enhance trade ties, it will also provide employment to youths of the state,” said an official privy to the development but requested anonymity as he is not authorised to speak on the issue.²⁰ With the NDA government coming to power at the Centre, its long-term ally Shiromani Akali Dal in power in Punjab is confident of fulfilling the promise it made in its Lok Sabha poll manifesto of making efforts to open check-points at Ferozepur and Fazilka for trade with Pakistan and Central Asia. Around two weeks ago, Badal had met Sitharaman and raised the issue of increasing the number of products traded through Attari-Wagah border.²¹

Currently, only 137 products are traded through the border. In 2012, while Pakistan allowed India to export all products barring 1,209 items into the country, it allowed import of only 137 items through the Attari-Wagah land route. During that year, India had also inaugurated an ICP at Attari, with state-of-the-art facilities and dedicated terminals for cargo and passengers to facilitate trade through land route. According to the estimates, the total volume of trade between India and Pakistan via Attari-Wagah land route is about Rs 2,500 crore.²²

Every year thousands of Sikh *Yatrees* (Pilgrims) go to Pakistan from India to pray at their Holy Places in Punjab Province of Pakistan by a special train service named Samjhota Express that runs between India and Pakistan. Pakistani government welcomes them and shows hospitality and thus creating mutual goodwill between two communities necessary for normalising relationship between two countries.²³

Civil Society and Peace Activists

A number of civil society organizations and NGOs are working to promote peace and harmony between two nations. They include among others South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), Pakistan, Green circle Organization (GCO), Pakistan, Institute for Secular Studies and Peace (ISSP), Pakistan and Aman Ki Asha (Hope for Peace) a joint venture of two daily newspapers of India and Pakistan.²⁴ launched by two leading Indian and Pakistani media enterprises in January 2010, The Times of India and the Jang Group respectively, the Aman ki Asha (Hope for Peace) initiative promotes a range of activities, from closed-door discussions on political issues such as Kashmir, intelligenc and water sharing to cultural programs such as concerts and literary shows.²⁵ GCO has launched a project where they take citizens of one country to their homes in another country which they left

behind after partition in 1947. The people went back to meet their neighbours, their families and to see their homes where they had spent life in the early days of their lives. ISSP has launched a signature campaign in Pakistan to have soft visa procedures for the people of both countries. Their campaign named "Signatories for Peace" was successful to gather twenty-two thousand (22,000) signatures which they collected from ordinary people of the Pakistan at different schools and colleges and from the public bus stations.²⁶

Aman Ki Asha (Hope for Peace) is a joint venture of Daily Jang Group, Pakistan and The Times of India which was launched in 2010. The initiative was the outcome of the struggles made by an International NGO named "Friends within Borders" with which these dailies were partners. The programme launched many small projects to promote peace between two nations along with an anthem which says,

"You live within Sight but remain Unseen" and

"These tunes bring us Together, even when we are Apart."²⁷

There are peace activists, human rights organizations and activists, individuals, journalists, scholars, historians, academicians who are all advocating for better ties between India and Pakistan.

Educational Cooperation

India and Pakistan can do much in the educational sector also. Most of the students of South Asian countries go to West for higher foreign education. This involves lots of money and immigration problems along with the chances of militancy and terrorism in the host countries, and because of this factor the visa process is quite complicated and strict for Asian students. but India's educational institutions are producing better stuff than the Pakistanis. So, both countries can have bilateral process for educational cooperation and should learn the positive things from each other. This would reduce the economic pressure on the student's seeking admission in West and they would be better adjusted due to the somewhat similarity of cultures and languages.²⁸

The literature and syllabus books should not contain hatred to each other and both governments should revise and rewrite the history without depicting hostility to each other. There should be cultural exchange programs between India and Pakistan. There should be inter-cultural dialogue between the activists, students, writers, scholars, historians to promote peace and harmony between two nations.²⁹

Healthcare

Healthcare service is another area in which there are opportunities for both countries. India has emerged as an important destination for provision of medical services due to affordable cost of treatment and advancement in the field of medicines. Several Pakistani patients have been visiting India for medical treatment like liver transplant, open heart surgery and kidney transplant. Other specialty treatment is also being offered to Pakistani patients. For instance, the Mumbai Obstetric and Gynecological Society is providing treatment for infertility to Pakistani couples. Despite a relatively tight visa regime, the number of patients coming from Pakistan to India is on the rise. According to a report, the Indian High Commission in Islamabad issued 1,992 medical visas to Pakistani citizens during 2008-2010. In addition, 2,917 visas were issued to medical attendants during the same period. There is a vast scope for cooperation in the health sector. In February 2012, a group of Indian and Pakistani doctors jointly performed a complicated liver transplant procedure in a Lahore hospital for the first time thereby opening new avenues for co-operation in the area of healthcare services.³⁰

II. Conclusion

The two nations must attempt to consolidate relations in various fields expectable to both the sides. Mutually exchanges in the field of art and literature can go a long way in creating goodwill between two countries. The need of the hour is to appreciate the over aspects such as trade, cultural exchanges and security. They must also find it within their respective capacities to enter into agreements that promote and nurture cross border relationships. It's is only through concentrated and integrated efforts that a certain amount of stability and amicability can be restored in Indo-Pak relations.

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