India is the core of South Asian subordinate system. It is not only the largest state of the region in terms of size and human and material resources but also the only one with common land boundaries and Maritime linkages with all her neighbours. Such a dominant position in South Asia and the Indo-Centric nature of the region substantially determines India’s policy and relations with her neighbours and vice-versa. Also, India perceives its security interests as conterminous with those of the region as a whole. Accordingly, any threat to the security or stability of neighbouring countries is viewed as a direct threat to India’s security as well.

It is also a common phenomenon of international politics that a small neighbour quite often suffer from an innate fear-psychosis with regard to its big neighbour, particularly if there are unresolved and complicating factors in their bilateral relations. Such is unfortunately the case with regard to India’s relationship with these neighbours. This threat perception has led the neighbouring countries to forge strong links with the extra-regional powers. Moreover, the ruling elites of these countries keep on exploiting the fear of India in order to maintain stability within the country. A central issue for all the neighbours is how to relate to India, the core power in the region. As a matter of fact, almost all of them have at one time or the other shown the
remarkable resistance to too close with India. This remains a focal point of their apprehensions and threat perception.

At the same time India has the aim to secure credibility for its desire to foster relations of sovereign equality among its neighbours. India also disabuse them to the suspicion that it aspires for a “hegemonistic” role in the region. Therefore, India’s policy in South Asia is likely to minimise scope for intrusion of extra-regional powers in the region without limiting the options open to neighbouring countries to diversify their links with other countries.

Moreover, the core of India’s ‘neighbourhood diplomacy’ consists ‘confidence-building’ exercise in the states of the region which has become essential in the context of Indo-centric power complex of the regional sub-system. Accordingly, India wants strong and independent neighbours, though inclined towards her in friendly relations. However, India’s role in creating and maintaining friendly relations with the neighbours also depend on the regional and international situations within the broader framework of India’s national interest.

In this context, the study of India’s policy towards neighbouring countries in general and towards Sri Lanka in particular, has acquired significance in recent years. India-Sri Lanka relations can be seen in a long historical perspective. In its historical setting, the geographical proximity,
cultural and ethnic linkages and political bonds have been compulsive factors in relations between the two countries. In post independence era the relations started in an aura of suspicion due to Sri Lanka’s close ties with the United Kingdom, particularly its defence agreement with it, and its economic ties which were controlled by British commercial interests. However, commonality of views did emerge on euphoric themes such as Asian solidarity and the right of self-determination of colonial people. Both India and Sri Lanka expressed identical views on many international issues such as Suez, Lebanon, Jordan and Congo. Sri Lanka also supported liberation of Goa in 1961.

In the decade of 60’s and 70’s things changed perceptively. Sri Lanka opted for a neutral posture in respect of Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 and sub-continental wars of 1965 and 1971. The economic constraint of small country like Sri Lanka was the guiding factor for its action. Such a divergent attitude on regional issues, without hampering smooth relationship, was balanced by the shared attitudes towards a number of issues of mutual concern at the global level, like the non-aligned movement, India ocean as a zone of peace, and the new international economic order.

Moreover, India’s preponderant power-structure in the region did generate a fear-psychosis in the states of the region and Sri Lanka was not an
exception to it. India, on the other hand, always tried to develop intra-regional pattern of relationships on the credible basis of equality of status. Adhering to this policy and showing full respect to Sri Lanka, India peacefully resolved many bilateral problems, like Kachchativu, Maritime boundary issue etc., which were existing for a long time.

An analysis of foreign policy of India toward Sri Lanka during 1977-87 reflects both the element of continuity and change. However, except some melodramatic cases, the element of continuity seems to be more apparent than change. Throughout this period the force of continuity maintenance of status quo and consensus has constantly interacted with personality factor. In fact, each succeeding Prime Minister has tried to add a new direction to India’s foreign policy but within the broad framework worked out by Nehru. As far as India’s Policy towards Sri Lanka is concerned, the period 1977-87 has witnessed some basic continuity as well as remarkable changes in such policy. The three successive governments led by Morarji Desai (1977-79) Indira Gandhi (1980-84) and Rajiv Gandhi (1985-87) have their own style foreign policy with respect to Sri Lanka added to this, the impact of situational factor (which was not identical throughout the period of study can not be underestimated).
After the Rajiv Gandhi’s regime, none other Prime Minister of India has not taken any keenness. India has maintained a somewhat neutral posture. The advent of Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Chandrika Kumaratunga, who got elected on Aug. 1994, can be seen in the backdrop escalating terrorism, both by militants and the government, which resulted in the tragic assassination of Premdasa, Ranajan Vijayartana and Lalith Athulathmudali.

As a matter of fact, the changing role of Chandrika from a dedicated peace maker to a determined fighter can be seen as an outcome of terrible disappointment in her peace efforts.

In short, the work is a humble attempt to present a comprehensive picture of India’s policy towards Sri Lanka during the period 1950 to 2000.

The present study has been divided into six chapters, the first chapter deals with the Historical background of the Indo-Sri Lankan relations. The general overview in which an effort has been made to study the Indo-Sri Lanka bilateral relations.

The second chapter explores the interrelationship between the policies pursued under S.W.R. Bandaranaike between 1950-1960 the common political outlook which Nehru and Bandaranaike shared on various international issues worked towards creating mutual trust and confidence between the two countries.
The third chapter is based on the year during 1960 to 1980 enjoyed cordial relations and shared common strategic interest. As mentioned earlier, India was not perceived as a threat to the Island's security, but a great help in times of crisis.

The fourth chapter concentrate on India's policy towards Sri Lanka during Indira Gandhi Period (1980-84), the period is to develop any durable trend of India's policy towards Sri Lanka.

The fifth chapter (1985-90) describes the demand for a separate Tamil State and its impact on Indo-Sri Lankan relations. This chapter examines the Indo-Sri Lankan Mediator efforts at the bilateral level, this shows the bilateral implications of the countries have been able to solve the Tamils problem by formulating mutually acceptable solutions, the Sixth chapter (1990-2000) highlights the departure of IPKF and some tragically incidence, Tamil area were again stained with conflict, chao's and disordered and enjoyed cordial relations and shared common strategic interest. In the last, thesis contains concluding observations.

The present study has taken a descriptive and analytical method. Also, the describe of continuity and change in present throughout these chapters.