CHAPTER - 5

INDIA AND THE INDO-NEPALESE

Introduction

Indian diaspora forms a vital component of India’s foreign policy towards the countries where the diaspora have settled. In no case has the issue been amicably resolved in South Asia. The issue of Indo-Nepalese has been drawing the attention of the Indian policy-makers since the late 1960s. Issues related to citizenship, work permits, etc, have been some of the foremost concerns of the Indian establishment. This chapter attempts to examine India’s approach and its complexities towards the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal. Some of the questions that the chapter attempts to answer are: How the Indo-Nepalese as a factor affects India-Nepal relations? How India-Nepal relations impact on the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal? And what role does the Indo-Nepalese play in the bilateral relations between India and Nepal.

There is a direct relationship between India’s concern for the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal and its relation with the Nepali state. There is also a relationship between Nepal’s policies towards the Indo-Nepalese and its relations with India. The chapter attempts to establish these points and explain how India-Nepal relations affect the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal. The Indo-Nepalese as a factor in the bilateral relation between the two countries has not assumed as critical an issue as with Sri Lanka. This chapter also explains why it has not been so?
India’s Approach to the Indian Diaspora

Jawaharlal Nehru’s policy that ‘Indians’ settled abroad should learn to live with the native people and that the Government of India would not interfere in the internal affairs of another country¹ has determined India’s traditional approach towards the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal. Nehru’s statement on the government’s policy towards ‘Overseas Indians’ illustrates this point:

> It is the consistent policy of the government that persons of Indian origin who have taken foreign nationality should identify themselves with and integrate in the mainstream of social and political life of the country of their domicile. The government naturally remains alive to their interests and general welfare and encourages cultural contacts with them. As far as Indian citizens residing abroad are concerned, they are the responsibility of the government of India.²

The Indian government policy of ‘studied indifference’ towards the ‘PIOs’ remained dominant till 1990.³ In June 29, 1971, the Deputy Minister for External Affairs, Surender Pal Singh emphasized this approach towards the PIOs.⁴ India’s

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² Quoted in K. Sinha – Kerkhoff and E. Bal, ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ He said, ‘as far as the problem of the people of Indian origin is concerned, it would not be solved till our people wherever they are; wherever they may settle down, do not become full citizens of that place and merge their identity fully with those people. As long as they keep their cultural links or other types of links with another country, naturally they will be looked with suspicion. Wherever they have settled they should merge their identity with that place and become their citizens so that the indigenous people have no complaints about them, that they are not part and parcel of their lives’. See ‘Anti-Indian riots in South Nepal’, Lok Sabha debates, June 29, 1971 in Avtar Singh Bhasin, ed., *Nepal’s Relations with India and China: Document 1947-1992*, Vol. I (Delhi: Siba Exim Pvt. Ltd., 1994), p. 240.
approach towards its diaspora community has been changing particularly, after 1990.\(^5\)

Baladas Ghoshal points out that till the 1990s:

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\text{...the policy of successive governments in India has been to encourage full participation and identification (of the Indian Diaspora) with their respective countries of diaspora’s citizenship, (therefore) the linkages of the diaspora with the government of India of the day are much less than with the Indian society with which it had always maintained strong emotional and other bonds.}\(^6\)
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The traditional approach has undergone radical change. Pointing out the change in the Indian approach, Ghoshal argues that because of India’s weak position in the global political and economic sphere, neither India nor its diasporas could yield benefits from each other. It was when India opened its economy and the realization of the diasporas that a ‘strong and resilient’ India stands in their interests. As a result, the relations between India and its diaspora has been gaining momentum.\(^7\)

A major initiative in this direction was the setting up of a High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora by the Government of India in September 2000 under the Chairmanship of Dr. L. M. Singhvi. The aim of the Committee was to

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\(^7\) Ghoshal points out that there has been ‘a sudden change in the perception of India among the diasporas after 1991 when it decided to open its economy to global competition; and more so after 1998 when India joined the select nuclear club. On its part, India is aware that the diasporas is in a position to assist in providing necessary ideas, contacts, technology, and finance, marketing and Western management know-how.’ Ibid., p. 119.
prepare a comprehensive report on the Indian Diaspora. Some describes this step as 
'a mammoth and extremely interesting sea change in official Indian policy towards 
foreign citizens of Indian descent settled in various countries all over the world'.

The Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora was presented to the 
Prime Minister on January 8, 2002. In a press release, the Ministry of External 
Affairs said that the report was to make recommendations for constructive 
relationship with the diasporic community.

The report of the Committee has recommended, inter alia:

- Dual citizenship to foreign citizens of Indian descent residing in 
certain countries, within the rubric of the Citizenship Act.
- The reduction of fee in the PIO Card Scheme, celebration of 9th 
January every year as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and institution of 10 
Pravasi Bharatiya Sammam Awards.
- The creation of a single window dedicated organization to interact 
with the Diaspora.
- Engaging Indian Diaspora in the field of Culture, Education, Health, 
Media, Science and Technology, Economic Development, 
Philanthropy, etc.
- In order to enhance their connectivity with India, improvement of 
facilities at the airports, problem of overseas Indians, etc.
- Setting up of a Pravasi Bharatiya Bhavan.

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9 It may be noted here that a resolution was passed at the 6th Convention of the Global Organisation 
of Persons of Indian Origin held in Delhi on 6th and 7th January, 2001 observes that the issuance of 
the PIOs card by the Government of India is an important measure for facilitating PIO’s 
involvement in India’s economy and PIO’s continued nurturing of their Indian cultural heritage. 
GOPIO also urged the Government of India to revise the fees for the PIO cards to US$ 100 instead 
of US $1000 and that their eligibility is not limited to four generations lineage. See ‘Protection of 
Interests of PIOs’, Lok Sabha debates, Question no. 2478 [Online: web] Accessed on 26 July 2005, 
URL: http://meadev.nic.in/govt/parl-qa/loksabha/mar14-2478.htm
10 See the full report is online at the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India at URL: 
http://indian Diaspora.nic.in/contentss.htm
Realizing the importance of the diaspora community, the Government of India took no time to accept some of the recommendations as early as March the same year. On March 6, 2002, Omar Abdullah, the Minister of State for External Affairs, said in Lok Sabha that the government has accepted three recommendations of the High Level Committee. They were: (i.) Celebration of 9th January every year as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. (ii) Institution of Pravasi Bharatiya Sammam Awards and (iii.) Revision of the Person of Indian Origin (PIO) Card Scheme. The Minister also said that the government was studying the relevant recommendations.11 Referring to the Singhvi’s report, said:

The Report, among other things, has taken into account the vast potential the NRIs/PIOs possess in several fields including education, science and technology, industry and trade. The Report has recommended several measures to utilize their expertise for the development of the country. These recommendations are presently under examination of the Government.12

In response to the Global Organisation of Persons of Indian Origin (GOPIO)’s appeal for the revision of the fee for PIO card, on December 4, 2002, Digvijay Singh, the Minister of State for External Affairs informed the Lower House that the PIO Card Scheme was modified. In reply to a question on the issue of PIO Cards, he said:

The Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) Card Scheme was originally introduced with effect from 30-03-1999. Based on feedback-received from the various quarters, the modified PIO Card Scheme has come into effect from 15-09-2002. Under this scheme the fee is Rs. 15,000

and the PIO Card is valid for 15 years. Benefits available to PIO Card holders are as follows:

- A PIO Card holder shall not require a separate visa to visit India.
- A PIO Card holder will be exempt from the requirement of registration if his/her stay on any single visit in India does not exceed 180 days.
- In the event of continuous stay in India of the PIO Card holder exceeding 180 days, he/she shall have to get himself/herself registered within 30 days of the expiry of 180 days with the concerned Foreigners Regional Registration Officer/Foreigners Registration Officer.
- All PIO Card holders shall enjoy parity with NRIs (Non-Resident Indians) in respect of all facilities available to the latter in the economic, financial and educational fields. In matters relating to the acquisition of agricultural/plantation properties. No parity shall be allowed in the sphere of political rights.13

The Indian government has taken an important political decision on granting dual citizenship to the PIOs in 2003. On February 19, 2003, the Minister of State for External Affairs informed the Lower House that the Government of India has decided to grant dual citizenship under the Citizenship Act, 1955 to ‘persons of Indian origin’ who have acquired the citizenship of certain countries.14 However, this privilege was extended only to PIOs in Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Republic of Cyprus, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and the US. On June 29, 2005, the Indian government promulgated an ordinance to grant citizenship to all the PIOs, except nationals of Pakistan and Bangladesh, by amending the Citizenship Act

By extending the facility beyond the 16 countries, the Indian government has fulfilled a longstanding demand of the GOPIO. It should, however, be remembered that the facility would be applicable to PIOs whose countries of residents accepts dual citizenship. In this context, it may be mentioned that the citizenship laws of most of the South Asian countries, including Nepal, do not allow dual citizenship for its citizens and hence, the PIOs in these countries would not be eligible for the facility provided by India.

This was the first time that the government had taken concrete measures to strengthen its relations with the diasporic community. Considering the growing interests shown by the diaspora community to strengthen its ties with India and India’s own interests to involve the community in its development agenda. It is certain that the Indian diaspora would gain importance in India’s foreign policy-formulations and the relations between India with its diaspora would grow in the future.

Nepal’s Policy towards Indians and the Indo-Nepalese

In 1950, India and Nepal had signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship that became the basis of their relationship. The treaty encompasses the entire aspects of the relations between the two countries. Relations between the two countries were further strengthened when India played an important role in stabilizing Nepal in an internal political crisis. With this background, the relations in the 1950s between

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15 The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 30 June 2005.
India and Nepal were determined. The cordial relationship enjoyed between the
two countries during this period has been described as a ‘special relationship’.\textsuperscript{16}

Nepali politics in the 1950s was a period of restructuring, both internal and
external. However, much of the changes were a continuation of the past. The
traditional ruling elites – Bahuns, Chhetris and Newars remained to run the entire
political helm. In as far as the Indo-Nepalese population of the Tarai was
concerned, the conservative policy of the state was not changed. The continuation
of the permit-system for the Indo-Nepalese to visit Kathmandu till 1951, which
was not abandoned entirely until 1958 and the restrictive laws of the period amply
testifies the state’s traditional mindset.\textsuperscript{17} However, the Indo-Nepalese as a factor in
bilateral relations between India and Nepal has not assumed a critical issue, then.\textsuperscript{18}
The reasons for Nepal’s indifferent attitude towards the Indo-Nepalese could be
because, from Nepal’s point of view, the signing of the 1950 treaty with India has
made the Indo-Nepalese of the Tarai non-bilateral issue. It may be mentioned here
under the treaty the two countries had agreed to allow its citizens to enjoy the
privileges of the other country. During the time, the Nepali elites perhaps thought
it wise not to raise the Indo-Nepalese issue in their relations with India because the


two countries had a close friendship and also there was the question of Nepalese in India. The special relationship that India enjoyed with Nepal till the mid-1950s and the policies of Nepali government towards the Indo-Nepalese till the mid-1950s were important factors that determined India's policy towards the Indo-Nepalese.

India's Policy towards the Indo-Nepalese in the 1960s

India's efforts to define its relation with the Indo-Nepalese can be found in the statements of parliamentary debates. India's concern began with the restrictive policies adopted by the Nepali government since the late 1950s, which also marked the beginning of deteriorating relations between India and Nepal. There were various factors that had adversely impacted on the bilateral relations. In 1960, King Mahendra dissolved the democratically elected government and took over power to himself. India criticized the king's action. This was the beginning of India's deteriorating relations with the king's regime that ruled till 1990. The policies adopted during the Panchayat period were 'discriminatory' against the Indo-Nepalese; partly because a number of Indo-Nepalese supported the democratic movement against the king's regime by taking shelter in India. India's overwhelming presence in Nepal in the 1950s, on the one hand and King Mahendra's consolidation of Nepal's nationalism based on 'anti-Indianism', on the other, had a deep impact on the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal. Anti-India bashing has

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19 Gaige, n. 17, p. 106.
soon become part of Nepali politics since then. Mahanth Thakur further said that in this kind of politics, 'pro-Nepalese is always anti-India' and the Indo-Nepalese were at the receiving end.

From available information, it is evident that India's concern for Indian nationals and Indo-Nepalese in Nepal began when reports of 'discrimination' against these people started in the mid-1960s due to the introduction of new legislations pertaining to citizenship, land reforms, and civil code (Mulki Ain) that were enacted by Nepali government. India's attention was first caught by the Nepalese government's orders in October 1957 that made citizenship mandatory for all school teachers in Nepal. This affected a large section of 'Indians' working as teachers. As a result of India's protest the 'Indians' were exempted from this order. During the visit of the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi to Nepal in October 1966, the subject of the rights and privileges of 'Indians' living in Nepal as provided under the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 between India and Nepal also figured. Speaking at a press conference in Kathmandu on October 7, Mrs. Gandhi said, 'I am assured that there would be no discrimination against Indians', but added that certain policies initiated by the Nepalese Government would apply to Indians in Nepal as well 'but that cannot be helped'. Presumably, the Prime Minister had deliberately talked only of the Indian nationals living in

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20 Personal interview with Mahanth Thakur, Kathmandu, 30 July 2003.
22 Ibid.
23 Cited in A. S. Bhasin, n. 4, p. 162.
Nepal because the issue of Indo-Nepalese had not assumed critical from India’s point of view, as it had treated the Indo-Nepalese of the Tarai as ‘Indians’.

However, after two months or so, Dinesh Singh, the then Minister of State for External Affairs, talk about both Indian nationals and ‘persons of Indian origin’ in Nepal in a statement, listing certain ‘discriminatory’ legislations adopted by Nepali government. The Nepali Government passed several legislations that had put the Indo-Nepalese and Indian nationals in difficulties as requirement of citizenship documents was made compulsory for foreigners including ‘Indians’ national. These legislations include: Land Reform Act, 1964; the Ukhada land-Tenure Act, 1964; Mulki Ain Act, 1963; Nepal Citizenship Act, 1964; Food grains (Controls) Order; and Facilities to Industrial Enterprise Act, 1961.24 Singh had spoke of the category of PIOs or the Indo-Nepalese of Nepal, and based his argument under the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 that provides for equal treatment to the nationals of the other country as with their own nationals. He said, ‘...the Government of Nepal have taken measures which place certain disabilities on foreigners including Indians and are in conflict with the provisions of the Treaty...’25

In a reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on November 28, 1967, the Minister of State for External Affairs, B. R Bhagat said that the Nepal Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1967 would not adversely affect ‘Indian citizens’ as the Act

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25 Ibid.
merely liberalises the existing legislation and extends the time limit for choice of citizenship'.

He also informed the House that the Government of India did not receive any representation from Indians of being adversely affected. The debates in the Indian Parliament suggest that India’s concern for the Indo-Nepalese became evident in 1967. Although members of Parliament rarely distinguish between Indian nationals and the Indo-Nepalese of Tarai, their reference to the people who had settled in Nepal for over fifty years clearly imply their concern for the Indo-Nepalese of Tarai. However, the perceptions of the parliamentarians continued to remain trapped in the traditional mindset. For instance, speaking at the discussion, A. D. Mani, a Member of Parliament, said, ‘...so far we have always regarded Nepal and India as part of the same community in this sub-continent’.

The approach towards the Indo-Nepalese of Tarai and the role India can play has been clearly stated by Bhagat, when he said that ‘we have a very limited field to operate because we cannot interfere in the internal and other matters of sovereign Government’. This statement had defined the Government of India’s relation with that of the Indo-Nepalese. The Indian government had taken a stand that the Indo-Nepalese are Nepali nationals and India has ‘limited’ role to play in the internal matters of another country. Bhagat further clarified the point by saying that ‘...those people who have gone to Nepal and who have been Nepalese citizens for hundred years do not come in. They (Indian nationals) are only about a small

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., p. 173.
percentage of the population and even about those who have gone to Nepal during the last ten years there is no precise figure.\(^{29}\) In the same debate, Raj Narain, a Member of Parliament, claimed that ‘about 20 lakh Indians living there (Nepal) have neither got Nepalese citizenship nor Indian’.\(^{30}\) Narain asked, ‘...whether the people living in the ‘Madhesh’ area of the Tarai will get their citizenship like the people from Kathmandu and hill areas have been granted. If not, are they Indian citizens or Nepalese citizens or they are hanging in the balance’.\(^{31}\) A number of Indian press carried reports of the difficulties faced by ‘Indians’ in Nepal because of citizenship. The \textit{Times of India} reported on September 5, 1967 that:

> Indian farm workers, ousted under the drive to send aliens away, are returning to their holdings to apply for citizenship and tenancy rights. They or their ancestors had lived on the land for more than 50 years and were more Nepalese than Indian. The immigrant farm hands do not possess any organization of their own which might provide them with legal aid. Some are bringing lawyers from the Indian side of the border, paying heavy fees, to appear for them in the Nepal Tarai revenue courts.\(^{32}\)

The citizenship requirement had caused tenants the most hardship because ‘the process of obtaining certificates often involves months of bureaucratic delay and sometimes considerable financial outlay, when landowners files claims in local land-reform offices alleging that their tenants were not Nepalese citizens, large numbers of tenants, most of whom had lived in the tarai for longer than twelve


\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 173.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 174.

\(^{32}\) \textit{The Times of India}, 5 September 1967.
The growing concern for the Indo-Nepalese of Tarai in India can be seen from Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s statement in the Lok Sabha on December 4, 1967 to clarify the government’s stand on the issue. Mrs. Gandhi in her statement said:

A very large number of persons resident in the Tarai area did come from India, but they have been resident in Nepal for such a long period that for all practical purposes, they are considered to be Nepalese nationals. They have in any case not registered in the (Indian) Embassy as Indian nationals. As such the Government of India could not directly concern itself with their affairs, since they reside in a foreign country and are to be assumed to be nationals of that country (Nepal).  

It is important to note the term used in the statement to refer to the Indo-Nepalese. They were not referred to as ‘Indians’ but as ‘persons resident in the Tarai’. Secondly, the above statement made it very clear that the Indo-Nepalese were ‘considered’ Nepali nationals and not Indian nationals. Thirdly, it had become very obvious what India’s policy would be towards the Indo-Nepalese of Nepal. On the other hand, Mrs. Gandhi in her statement also said:

The Government of India, through their Embassy exercise general supervision over the interest of Indian nationals resident in Nepal. Whenever a complaint is received by the Embassy from an Indian national, appropriate steps are taken in the context of Embassy’s Consular jurisdiction to render assistance to the Indian national concerned or to seek redress from the local Government of his legitimate grievances. The Embassy’s main concern is to ensure that the Indian nationals enjoy full and equal protection of the law and are not discriminated against by the Government of the country concerned or by the judicial system.

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33 Gaige, n. 17, p. 97.
35 Ibid.
Mrs. Gandhi supported her statement with the provisions of Article 7 of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in 1950 between India and Nepal that provides equal treatment to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other. The statement also carried a list of some of the restrictions that apply to foreigners including Indian nationals. They are:

i. In matters of profession and business, several professions and business activities are barred to Indian nationals.

ii. In matters of free movement within Nepal, Indian nationals are not permitted entry from the northern frontier of Nepal.

iii. Land ownership for agricultural purposes is no longer freely open to Indian nationals, which was the case in the past.36

It is apparent that although India had maintained that the Indo-Nepalese were Nepali citizens and therefore had limited role for direct intervention, India had, in many occasions, shown its concern known to the Nepali government for the well-being of the Indo-Nepalese of Nepal Tarai.

On June 10, 1971, anti-Indian riots broke out in the Nepal Tarai. The troubled started when a clash took place between two groups of ‘Pahari’ and ‘Madhesi’ students that later spread to the town when the students attacked some shops.37 Speaking on the incident in the Indian Parliament, B. R. Shukla asked the government’s action in regard to thousand of ‘Indians’ leaving Nepal for Purnea district of Bihar as a result of the anti-Indian riots, citing news reports.38 Surendra Pal Singh, the Deputy Minister of External Affairs said that ‘owing to the

36 Ibid., p. 179.
38 Ibid.
prevailing tension, a number of persons of Indian origin have taken shelter in Purnea district of Bihar. It is our expectation that normalcy will be restored and these people will return soon to their homes'.

Singh further said that during the riots:

...all the shops, which were looted on that occasion, belonged to people of Indian origin. It is difficult to say how many shops there were. As regards the number of persons who have crossed the Indian boundary, the number is round about 1300. Various figures are quoted from 500 to 1300; the maximum is about 1300, they are mostly dependents of persons who have remained behind in Nepal. All of them have not come over. Some fearing further rioting, have sent their women and children; the menfolk have remained in Nepal.

While India had shown its concern to the problems of the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal, admitting its limited role and continuing its traditional policy towards the PIO, maintained that the 'person of Indian origin should merge their identity with the place' they had settled.

India's Policy in the 1980s

The 1980s was a phase of deteriorating relations between India and Nepal. Several factors were responsible, ranging from Nepal's arms purchase from China; question of citizenship of the Indo-Nepalese; the introduction of Work Permit system to foreigners including Indians; the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship; to

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
the India–Nepal Trade and Transit Treaty.\textsuperscript{42} Here, Indians and Indo-Nepalese in Nepal as an issue in the relations between India and Nepal is examined.

\section*{Citizenship Issue}

The citizenship issue had become a critical issue in the bilateral relation between the India and Nepal since the early 1980s. The deteriorating relations between the two countries had increased India's concern for the Indo-Nepalese and Indians in Nepal. In 1980, the Minister for External Affairs, P.V. Narasimha Rao in a reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha relating to the rights of 'Indians' in Nepal said:

\begin{quote}
Persons of Indian origin domiciled in Nepal, who have obtained Nepali citizenship, have got the right to vote and enjoy other freedoms as provide for in the Constitution of Nepal. In response to our approaches in this matter, the Nepalese Government has repeatedly assured us that we need not have any apprehensions regarding the treatment of person of Indian origin in Nepal.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

He further said in 1971, the number of 'persons of Indian origin' in Nepal was 32,66,298, out of which twenty lakh 'persons of Indian origin' in Nepal have obtained citizenship of that country. The number of Indian citizens in Nepal according to the 1971 census was 1,16,818.\textsuperscript{44} On April 30, 1981, the Minister said in the Parliament that the number of 'persons of Indian origin' who had obtained Nepalese citizenship certificate to that date was estimated to be 24 lakh. This claim

\textsuperscript{42} For a discussion on the period of stalemate between India and Nepal in 1989-90 see S. D. Muni, n. 21 and Dinesh Bhattarai and Pradip Khatiwada, Nepal India: Democracy in the Making of Mutual Trust (New Delhi: Nirla, 1993). Also see The Economic Times, New Delhi, April 1989.

\textsuperscript{43} See 'Denial of human rights to Indians in Nepal', Rajya Sabha debates, December 5, 1980 in A. S. Bhasin, n. 4, p. 391.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
of the Indian Minister created a serious controversy in Nepal on the issue of ‘Indian’ migration to Nepal.45

In a statement on the issue of citizenship, the Chief Spokesman of His Majesty’s Government, Radheyshyam Bista said on April 15, 1989, that the citizenship certificates drive was to ensure the citizenship to nationals in all parts of Nepal.46 However, the Indian government had taken a strong exception to the Nepalese government policy. The Minister of External Affairs, P. V. Narasimha Rao said in the Lok Sabha on April 26, 1989:

Unfortunately, the vision of 1950 has been eroded over the years. Its spirit has been weakened, its content whittled away practically in every sphere of the Indo-Nepal relationship. Sadder still has been the systematic discrimination against relatively small community of Indians in Nepal, who numbered only about 150,000 in the important areas of their day-to-day existence. In contrast, the number of Nepalese in India are anywhere between 3 and 4 million, who continue to enjoy all rights.47

Anirudha Gupta argues that although India’s complaints of ‘systematic discrimination’ against the ‘Indian community’ in Nepal hold some basis. Gupta gave three reasons why it should not gain prominence because that would further ‘complicate’ India-Nepal relations:

45 V.B.S. Kansakar told to this researcher during an interview.
46 He further said that ‘apparently it is India’s view that Nepal has violated Nepal-India Treaty. It is not Nepal’s judgment. We have told India, under these circumstances, that Nepal is ready to sit across the table, and have direct and detailed talks on the whole gamut of relationship between Nepal and India.’
(i.) Nehru’s ‘warning against any overt involvement on India’s part in the affairs of the Indian communities abroad’.

(ii.) For any underdeveloped country the issue of foreign nationals tends to get politicised as local aspirations for jobs and economic opportunities grow.

(iii.) Any generalized backing of the ‘Indian communities’ in Nepal may have a negative impact on Nepal’s efforts for national integration – which in itself has become a controversial subject.\(^{48}\)

Gupta’s argument has a basis in the context of Nepal’s domestic politics, which have centered on the issue of ethnicity and identity particularly after 1990.

**Work Permit issue**

The introduction of work permits and identity cards by the Nepalese Government in the 1980s triggered another controversy. Indian Press reported that the Work Permit and Identity cards introduced by the Nepalese Government in organized sector on a limited scale have deprived many ‘Indian nationals’ of employment opportunities in Nepal. In April 1987, it was made mandatory for ‘alien workers’ in Nepal to obtain a ‘green card’ issued by the Nepalese Government and an identity card issued by the respective employers against risk of deportation. Reports of ‘Indian workers’ forcible ‘deportation’ to India were vehemently protested by India.\(^{49}\) Justifying the measures, Nepal’s Minister of State for Labour and Social Welfare, Ramesh Nath Pandey said that the decision has been reached

\(^{48}\) Anirudha Gupta, n. 1, p. 9.

\(^{49}\) S. D. Muni, n. 21, p. 49.
in view of security requirements for the coming SAARC Summit, in the larger interest of Nepali labourers and to ensure job security and welfare of non-Nepali workers.\textsuperscript{50} Nepal’s contention was that the news reports were ‘false and misleading’. The Chief Spokesman of His Majesty’s Government of Nepal, Radheushyam Bista said, on April 15, 1989, that ‘the provision of Work Permit and Identity Card is neither aimed against the Indian nationals nor against the SAARC objectives’.\textsuperscript{51} The Nepali government gave the following explanations for the introduction of Work Permits and Identity cards:

Work Permits and Identity cards were brought into use for the well being of the Nepalese and non-Nepalese labourers in the organized and unorganized sectors in Nepal and to see to it that they get the facilities they are legally entitled to. This arrangement is not just made recently with Indian workers as target but it is part of the process of adding effectiveness to Nepal Factory and Factory Labour Act 2016 B.S. (1960 A.D.) the Regulation 2010 under this Act, and the Industrial Enterprise Act, 2038 B. S. (1982 A. D.) .... Indeed, no Indian national has lost employment or the opportunity of employment as its result.\textsuperscript{52}

India’s contention was that Nepal’s demand for work permits from ‘Indians’ was a counter to the 1950 treaty that provides equal national treatment,\textsuperscript{53} which the Nepalese have enjoyed such privileges in India.\textsuperscript{54}

Indian External Affairs Minister Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao told the Rajya Sabha that ‘the government would remain vigilant’ to ensure that the introduction


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{53} The Times of India, New Delhi, October 7, 1988.

\textsuperscript{54} S. D. Muni, n. 21, p. 49.
of work permits by the Nepalese government for all foreign nationals working in
the organized sectors ‘does not cause undue hardships to or discrimination against
Indian nationals’. India’s position has been strongly conveyed by the Official
Spokesman of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs who said on May 5, 1989 in
New Delhi:

The work permits that were being insisted upon, and the citizenship
certificates that were being demanded by the Nepalese authorities
were leading to enormous hardships. Many people, whose families
were living in Nepal for 200 years, have been asked to leave. Many
teachers and other professionals have been thrown out of their jobs.
People of Indian origin were being discriminated against, in the
matter of employments and were being treated as third-class citizens.
Because of this situation, the people of the Tarai region were most
supportive of Government’s principled policy towards Nepal.

On May 5, 1989, Indian External Affairs Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao and
the Minister of State for External Affairs, K. Natwar Singh told the Parliamentary
Consultative Committee attached to the Ministry of External Affairs that India would
take into account ‘the interests of its citizens and the people of Indian origin living in
Nepal’. The issues related to Indians and Indo-Nepalese formed a serious
controversy for the deterioration of the relationship between India and Nepal in the
late eighties. The statement made by the Indian Official Spokesman gives evidence
to this fact. It said:

55 The Times of India, New Delhi, 3 November 1988.
56 Statement of the Official Spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs on May 5, 1989 in New
   Delhi in A. S. Bhasin, n. 4, pp. 447-49.
57 The Times of India, New Delhi, 6 May 1989.
58 In a statement, the Official Spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs said, ’India viewed
   relations with Nepal in a balanced and matured fashion and that India would, while formulating its
   policy, take into account its paramount security interests, the interests of its citizens and people of
   Indian origin, as well as often stated and firm objective to have friendly relations with Nepal and
A matter which has aggravated the situation in recent weeks and which is of particular regret to India is the unnecessary and unjustified harassment of Indian and persons of Indian origin living and working in Nepal. They number around 150,000, or approximately 1/30th of the Nepalese community in India. In recent weeks, stringent restrictions have been placed on even the pursuit of their vocations and professions. Even though they are prohibited from buying property of businesses, this small and industrious community is being projected as a threat to the Nepalese economy. It is ironic that Indians who have been working in Nepal for decades and whose families have been living in that country for generations, are now being harassed and are required to obtain work permits even to continue their residence in Nepal. Those problems have come up during the last year and half.59

The above discussions clearly indicate that the Indo-Nepalese and Indian nationals in Nepal have been a crucial factor in determining the bilateral relations of India with Nepal during this period.

Migration issue

Leo E. Rose has observed that 'the pattern of migration into, within and out of Nepal is another important factor in its relations with neighboring states, particularly India, Sikkim, Bhutan and Burma'.60 Since 1980, Nepal had been raising the issue of 'Indian' immigration to Nepal. Nepal took up the issue in the bilateral meetings with India when Nepalese Prime Minister, Surya Bahadur Thapa had said on July 6, 1983 that Nepal would start 'appropriate talks' with India in the near future on the problem of Indian migration to Nepal. He said the issue could

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60 Leo E. Rose, n. 16, p. 19.
not be solved unilaterally. A survey carried out by a private agency had put the
number of ‘Indian immigrants’ at 5.8 million, more than one third of Nepal’s
population of 15 million.\(^{61}\)

The Nepali Foreign Minister, Padma Bahadur Khatri said in an interview
that closing the frontier would be too drastic and that the question of ‘Indian
immigration’ had been taken up with the Indian Government.\(^{62}\) The largest number
of foreign workers in Nepal is from India numbering over 53,53,000. The president
of the Rashtriya Samaj Sudhar Sansathan (National Social Reforms Forum),
Majur, based his estimate on the official Indian figure of 3.8 million ‘Indians’
being in Nepal in 1977 and an annual influx of 3,00,000 ‘Indians’. Of the
53,53,000 ‘Indians’ in Nepal 28,20,000 have acquired Nepali citizenship. The
largest ‘influx’ of Indian workers was in 1980 at the time of the national
referendum when the people were asked to choose between a reformed partyless-
Panchayat system and the western style of multi-party democracy. The Sansathan
alleges Indian Government’s hand in the massive ‘influx’ of Indians into Nepal.\(^{63}\)
The allegations have been totally denied by India.\(^{64}\)

Migration between India and Nepal is a two way process. Many Nepalese
migrate to India to earn in various types of jobs and Indians from the bordering
states go to Nepal for work. The alleged ‘influx’ of Indians by the Nepali
government and other sources could be for two reasons. First, the anti-foreigners

\(^{61}\) Cited in A. Singh Bhasin, n. 4, p. 413.
\(^{63}\) Ibid., p. 5.
\(^{64}\) S. D. Muni, n. 21, p. 51.

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movement in India’s Northeastern states in the 1980s and the ‘hardships’ endured by the Nepali returnees to Nepal. Secondly, while on the one hand, it justified the discriminatory measures adopted by Nepal against ‘Indians’ and on other hand, it was sought to restrict Indian ‘influx’ to Nepal. Nepal’s alleged ‘influx’ of Indians to Nepal may have some truth but it has not seriously measured the impact of a situation when India takes such policies towards Nepalese in India and secondly much of the figures of ‘Indian immigrants’ include the Indo-Nepalese who are Nepali nationals.

On the issue of ‘Indian nationals’ obtaining Nepali citizenship that is often been alleged by Nepal, it is known that some Indian nationals had obtained Nepali citizenship by forgery. This has complicated the citizenship issue of the Indo-Nepalese of the Tarai. Although there are few evidences to support, many Nepali intellectuals hold the view that some rich Indian nationals have both Indian and Nepali citizenship. Parmanand has commented that:

...all is not well with the members of the Indian community. Some have been found to be indulging in many objectionable practices sufficient to bring a bad name to India, such as forgery, smuggling, manipulating admissions into various medical and engineering colleges by fraudulently becoming Nepalese citizens and getting recommendations from the Indian Embassy. There have been instances of Indian citizens being elected to various tiers of the Panchayat polity through unfair means. These practices must be abandoned.

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65 Ibid.
66 In an interview Krishna Khannel said that there are many cases of ‘Indian nationals’ obtaining Nepali citizenship.
India’s policy in the 1990s

The visit of Indian Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar to Nepal after the political change in Nepal in 1990 and the formation of Interim Government under the Prime Ministership of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in February 13, 1991 marked the improvement of relations between the two countries after the long political deadlocked triggered by the issue of ‘economic embargo’ by India. At a Press Conference in Kathmandu, Shekhar was asked to define his mission to Nepalese Tarai. In his reply, Shekhar said ‘he was not apologetic about his visit to Tarai region’. He further said that he was invited to visit the region by the people of Indian origin, who inhabited the region. It should be noted that there had been criticism in some circles about Shekhar’s visit as it was seen as trying to help the Nepali Congress on the eve of the elections.

During a three-day state visit to India by Nepali Prime Minister, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai on June 8-10, 1991, it was inter alia agreed that Nepal would remove the Indian nationals from the ambit of work permit scheme. This was mentioned in the Indo-Nepal joint communiqué signed by the Indian and Nepalese Prime Ministers. The labour Department of the Nepalese Government issued a notification in June that ‘it is not mandatory for the Indian citizens to obtain work permit, in the three districts of the Kathmandu Valley.’ The notification, however, did not mention whether Indian nationals would have to obtain any ‘work permit’

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69 Annexure in S D. Muni, n. 21.
elsewhere outside Kathmandu. Much to the surprise of New Delhi and Indians in Nepal, the Nepalese government has not removed this decision from its files, as it had become mandatory after the issuance of the joint official communiqué.70

**Maoists violence and the Indo-Nepalese**

The Maoists' violence in Nepal had adversely affected the normal life of the people in Nepal since it took up arms in 1996. India has shown concern about the Indian citizens living in Nepal and the Indo-Nepalese. On December 12, 2001, the government was asked in the Parliament whether Indians were assaulted and their property been damaged in the violence. And what Indian government had done in the matter. Replying to the question, the Minister said:

> Abductions, extortion and intimidation of members of the business community in Nepal, including those of Indian origin, have been resorted to in the past by Maoists in Nepal. However, targeting of any specific group or community, including Indians, has not come to our notice. The Governments of both countries are in touch with each other in this regard and government of India has also extended its support to Government of Nepal for steps taken by it to maintain peace and security in the country.71

India's concern remains with reports of Maoists violence affecting Indians and Indo-Nepalese's interest. However, there has been no report of the Maoists targeting Indians and Indo-Nepalese. Although the Maoists have, from time to

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time, criticized the Indian establishment, it has not made Indians in Nepal a target in their violence.

**December 2000 Riots and the Aftermath**

Since the 1990 political change, the most serious occasion for Indians and the Indo-Nepalese was the Hrithik Roshan episode of December 2000. The *Himal* magazine on its January 2001 issue comments, '(i)n the subsequent political encashment of the situation, neither India nor Indians figured even remotely on the agendas of the various parties'. It also blamed the Indian media for exaggerating the trouble without paying attention to 'the events in their unfolding detail'. It reads: '...the Indian media found it unnecessary to report the change in situation from day to day. With its one-sided emphasis on the anti-Indian angle and its exaggeration of the magnitude of the trouble, it only contributed to adding to the tension in Nepal and keeping alive the antagonism towards India'.

Hulas Chand Golcha, a Nepali Marwari businessman blames 'the overbearing attitude of Indian officialdom, as do most of the diaspora transnational communities here'. The 6th Convention of the Global Organisation of Persons of Indian origin (GOPIO) held in Delhi on 6th and 7th January 2001 in its resolution has appealed:

...to the Government of Nepal to restore and maintain the century old peaceful and harmonious relations among PIOs and various other

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72 See 'Riots, Rumours and Refugees', *Himal*, vol., no. 1, January 2001, p. 3.
73 Ibid.
communities in Nepal. It deplores the recent violence in Nepal by some anti-social elements in December 2000 generated to create a rift between India and Nepal. GOPIO urges all concerned parties not to be misled by such malicious designs and to take strong steps to check them and to maintain the friendly relations among various communities. 75

The Hrithik Roshan violence in Nepal again brought the issue of Indians and the Indo-Nepalese on the forefront in the bilateral relations between Indian and Nepal. On 16 August, 2001, Ramdas Agarwal, a Member of Rajya Sabha, asked the government whether the Indo-Nepalese were denied Nepali citizenship rights and were discriminated in employment, land ownership and admission of children in the State-run-schools. Answering these questions, Omar Abdullah, the Minister of State for External Affairs said:

A number of people of Indian origin are settled in the terai region in Nepal. Some of them have been living there for generations. Many of them do not possess Nepali citizenship Certificates as a result of which they do not enjoy facilities like land ownership, employment, etc. in Nepal. There are, however, no reports of discrimination in regard to admission of their children in state run schools. 76

In another question, whether the Nepal Supreme Court’s judgment denied citizenship rights to over 3,00,000 ethnic ‘Indians’, Abdullah said:

On July 23 2003, the Hon. Supreme Court of Nepal declared 30,000 (not 300,000 as reported by The Hindustan Times) of the 34,090 citizenship certificates issued under the aegis of a one man Commission appointed in 1997 by the then Government of Nepal as invalid. These citizenship certificates issued to applicants in 20

75 See ‘Protection of Interests of PIOs’, Parliament Questions and Answers – Lok Sabha, Question no. 2478, n. 9.

Districts of the Nepal terai belt were declared null and void on grounds of procedural deficiencies. Mr. Khum Bahadur Khadka, Home Minister of His Majesty’s Government of Nepal, has informed the House of Representatives on August 5, 2001 that the Government of Nepal would follow the right procedures and provide the certificates, within one month, to all those whose citizenship papers the Supreme Court citing procedural mistakes while issuing them. The problem of state-less terai Nepalese is a complex and sensitive issue in Nepal and has remained unresolved for a long time. An attempt to get an amendment incorporated into the Nepali Citizenship Act of 1964 through a Finance Bill earlier this year by the Government of former Prime Minister G P Koirala also failed as the Supreme Court declared it to be unconstitutional.77

The issue was also discussed in the Lok Sabha. In reply to questions relating the citizenship of the ‘PIOs’ in Nepal, Jaswant Singh, the Minister of External Affairs said:

On July 23, 2001, the Supreme Court of Nepal declared 30,000 out of 34,090 citizenship certificates issued under the aegis of a one man Commission appointed in 1997, by the then His Majesty’s Government of Nepal, as invalid on grounds of procedural deficiencies. The Home Minister of Nepal has however stated in the Nepalese Parliament on August 5, 2001 that the procedural deficiencies would be made good and the Citizenship Certificates would be issued afresh to those whose citizenship had been revoked by the Supreme Court.78

He added that ‘though, the issue of Citizenship Certificates to Nepali citizens is entirely internal matter of Nepal, our concerns in this regard have been made known

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77 Ibid.
India's current approach

India’s efforts to maintain its ties with the Indo-Nepalese for a constructive relationship can be seen from the initiatives of the Government of India towards this course in the last few years. The setting up of a new Consulate office in Birgunj was one such initiative on the part of the Indian government. However, the India’s policy has been very clear towards the Indo-Nepalese on the question of their nationality. Clarifying this policy of the Indian government, an official at the Embassy of India at Kathmandu said that ‘India treats the Indo-Nepalese as Nepali nationals and are therefore foreigners like any other foreigners.’

According to a press report, an Indian official at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu said that setting up an office at Birgunj was a long-standing request of more than 10 years. The need for such an office was felt because Birgunj customs alone accounts for more than 50 per cent of Nepal-India trade and it is also the busiest transit point. The Indian official emphasized that India’s desire ‘to provide a range of services to the people living in the area, like permit for vehicles, so that they don’t have to come all the way to Kathmandu’, 79 highlights India’s efforts.

The then Ambassador of India to Nepal, Shyam Sharan has explained the role of newly established Consulate General of India in Birgunj thus:

This is an extremely important development, long overdue and will be a contribution to the strengthening of cross-border links between our countries. It will be able to provide a wide range of facilities for people residing in the border areas. We look upon the Tarai and the people living in the Tarai as a natural bridge between our two

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79 See ‘India to set up consulate-General in Birgunj’, Public Opinion Trends (POT) - Nepal, June 25, 2003, p. 428

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countries. We should pursue programmes that benefit the people on both sides of the border. An integrated border development strategy will benefit the people of both countries. The projects we are considering for cross-border highway development, rail links and upgradation of major checkpoints, will be a major contribution in that direction.80

The above statement lays a lot of emphasis on the people living in the Tarai region, indicating India’s concern for the Indo-Nepalese. According to a press report quoting, Gururaj Rao, then the First Secretary at the Embassy of India in Kathmandu said that the new office would facilitate the Tarai region of Nepal in different ways and it would also make businesses between the two countries easier.81

India has also shown keen interests in the development of the Tarai region. According to a press report quoting Shyam Sharan said that ‘India will build around 1500 kilometers road in the Tarai area of Nepal within next five years which would include 22 links roads and 14 bridges’.82

Of late, India has been focusing on the development of the Tarai region on all fronts. Explaining India’s efforts in developing the Tarai region, the Consulate General at Birgunj, Gururaj Rao said that ‘much of the Indian economic assistance in the past went to the Hilly areas, so India is now focusing in the Tarai to assist in

82 Ibid.
their development'. He further said that 'India's assistance is only a supplement and not to substitute the Nepalese government'.

Some of the initiatives of the Government of India focus on rural electrification and education of the region. Till July 2004, India has signed four Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with Nepal in the field of education and electrification projects in different districts in the Tarai region. In several press releases, the Embassy of India in Kathmandu has stated that the implementations of the projects would go a long way in improving the education of the people and electrification of the region. Through these efforts, India reaffirms its commitment to the people living on the other side of the porous border and would certainly hope that its relationship with the Indo-Nepalese is strengthened.

India's Role and the Indo-Nepalese

The Indo-Nepalese are not a homogenous group and as such they hold different viewpoints on India. Some feel that India is committed to 'protect their interests', and hope India to extend more support in terms of providing jobs and development activities. Some are also of the view that India is yet to employ Indo-Nepalese into Indian army. Hari Bansh Jha writes that 'the government of India should stop discrimination with the Madhesi community, particularly while recruiting the

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83 Personal interview with Gururaj Rao, Birgunj, 9 June 2005.
Nepalese in Indian army.\textsuperscript{85} Jha feels that India should set up a Madhesi regiment to recruit Madhesi people of Nepal in the Indian army.

Banwari Lal Mittal, a Nepali Marwari, said that India should act ‘more maturely’, indicating a certain element of India contributing to the problems of the Indo-Nepalese. But he also pointed out that the Indo-Nepalese should also be ‘responsible, credible and honest not only for their interest but also for India’s interest’. He was of the view that ‘if India-Nepal relations deteriorate, the interest of the Indo-Nepalese will not be protected.’\textsuperscript{86} On whether India should play any role in the Indo-Nepalese issue in Nepal, some of the Indo-Nepalese feel that India should look after the interests of the Indo-Nepalese.\textsuperscript{87} R. K. Shah, an Economics lecturer at Mahendra Multiple Campus in Nepalgunj district opines that India should take more interest on Indo-Nepalese. He also said that ‘the Indian government should encourage the Madhesis by providing facilities in education, jobs, scholarships, etc.’\textsuperscript{88} However, some of the Indo-Nepalese are critical of India’s role. Rajit Ram Pathak, a History lecturer at Mahendra Multiple Campus in Nepalgunj district, said that ‘India’s role has been negative as it only work for its national interest’.\textsuperscript{89} This view suggests that the Indo-Nepalese want lesser role for India in as far as the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal are concerned.

\textsuperscript{85} Hari Bansh Jha, \textit{The Tarai Community and National Integration in Nepal} (Kathmandu: Centre for Economic and Technical Studies, 1993), pp. 67-68, 75.
\textsuperscript{86} Personal interviewed with Banwari Lal Mittal, Kathmandu. 5 August 2003.
\textsuperscript{87} This information was gathered during interactions with a number of Indo-Nepalese during the field study.
\textsuperscript{89} Personal interview with Rajit Ram Pathak, Kathmandu, 11 August 2003.
Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) emerged in 1980s with the stated objective to fight for the cause of the Indo-Nepalese of Tarai. NSP is sometime criticized in some political circles in Kathmandu of being a ‘stooge’ of India. This view seems to gather support from statements made by the NSP leaders. In its first conference in Janakpur, presided over by party leader Gajendra Narayan Singh, the party asserted that it wants a ‘special relationship’ with India.\textsuperscript{90} The following view of G. N. Singh, the then President of NSP in an interview with a local newspaper, \textit{Jana Aastha} on 24 January 2001 is a case in hand. Answering a question why Indian newspapers often reports of his party’s support to India. He replied, ‘the Soviet flag was the flag of all communist parties in the world. The Soviet Union felt that communist parties across the world were its supporters, but this was not true. The NSP flag too is similar to the flag of India. That is probably why they must be saying that’. When questioned about their actions and thoughts in that direction, he said, ‘Yes, even today we see no fault with India. We will never oppose India. Right from 1951, without Indian support we would not have been able to overthrow the Rana regime and the monarchy could not have been saved. In fact our membership at the UN would not have been easy if India had not supported us’.

He further replied to a question saying that ‘the valley-based papers have never wanted the advancement of Tarai-based people. That is why they always write against us. There may be small faults with India too, but we will be the losers

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{The Hindustan Times}, New Delhi, 30 June 1990.
if we oppose India.\textsuperscript{91} The close proximity of Nepal Tarai with Indian bordering states that has been bonded by social ties and economic interdependency of the people on both the sides of the India-Nepal border, the NSP’s views on relations with India is understandable and perhaps this reality gives the impression that the party maintains certain biasness towards India.

India has been showing its concern for the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal since the 1960s. However, occasionally, some section in Nepal has seen this differently. The Indian government policy has been accused of widening its diplomatic and political maneuverability against the state of Nepal.\textsuperscript{92} Even if this argument holds any truth, it does no good to the Indo-Nepalese communities. It only gives a ground for accusations and counter-accusations. The focus should rather be on whether or not the establishments in India and Nepal make enough efforts for the well being of the people, whether Indian nationals and Indo-Nepalese in Nepal or Nepali Indians and Nepalese in India. The issues related to the Indo-Nepalese of Tarai are sensitive and has become politically explosive. Hence, it is in the interests of the Indo-Nepalese that India continues its policy of maintaining additional care in its approach towards the Indo-Nepalese. The current initiatives of the government of India would go a long way in strengthening its relation with


\textsuperscript{92} Chaitanya Mishra, Laya Prasad Uprety, and Tulsi Ram Panday, \textit{Seasonal Agricultural Labour Migration from India to the Nepal Tarai} (Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, 2000), p. 13.
the Indo-Nepalese and promote India’s image in Nepal, in general and the Indo-Nepalese, in particular.

Conclusion

In the early 1950s, during the honeymoon period of India-Nepal relations, the Nepali government policies towards the Indo-Nepalese were non-discriminatory and India respected Nepal’s policies. However, India’s support for the democratic movement had a great impact on the King’s government in framing its policies towards the Indo-Nepalese in the 1960s. During the Panchayat period, India had raised the issue of ‘discrimination’ against the Indo-Nepalese in the bilateral meetings. Issues related to citizenship and work permits became major issues in bilateral relations during the 1980s. The 1990s saw a new era in the relations between the two countries. However, the anti-India violence witnessed in December 2000 and the citizenship controversy in Nepal in early 2001 has brought the Indo-Nepalese issue in the bilateral relations between India and Nepal. India has made its concerns known to the Nepali establishment of the interests of Indians and Indo-Nepalese in Nepal, especially after the Maoists violence that has been affecting Indian interests in Nepal.