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INDIA AND SRILANKA RELATION; THROUGH THE LENS OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Siuli Mukherjee

I

India and Srilanka, the two countries of South Asia have nurtured a connection over centuries. They are tied by historical, geographical, cultural, religious and economical threads which have helped the relationship to prosper and flourish. There had been times and areas of cooperation as well as convulsions but the leadership of both the countries had been able to strike a balance over situations. Cultural Diplomacy has been a significant arm of foreign policy as well as public diplomacy and this 'soft power' device had been used by our political leadership and policy makers in diverse ways. It is a mechanism by virtue of which an influence and impact can be created in the minds of the people of other country. This can be done by exchange of ideas, information, language, culture, understanding and collaboration with each other. This in the long run creates faith, dependence and boost up the confidence about each other. They improve their perception and built a broader support for greater economic and political goals. According to Joseph Nye, the person who coined the term, 'soft power' is the ability to influence others to get the results one wants through 'attraction' rather than 'coercion' or 'payment'. If a country has substantial soft power, its actions will be seen as more legitimate and it will be likely to encounter less resistance from others. This form of power is becoming increasingly important in the post-Cold War era.¹ Precisely, it complements the issue of national interest. Cultural Diplomacy had been a positive factor which has helped to foster a synergic effect in the relationship between India and Srilanka. The successive political leadership of our country has continued with these measures. However, the present Prime Minister of our country Sri Narendra Modi had piloted his Cultural Diplomacy to a great height. He has aimed at a quantum jump in the partnership with Srilanka across all different fields. The aim of this paper is to investigate the role of cultural factors in evolving a close friendship between the two South Asian neighbours with an emphasis on the Cultural Diplomacy promoted under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Contents

| | |
|--|---------|
| Editorial Note | ... i |
| Section I | |
| SRI LANKA AND MALDIVES RELATIONSHIP AND ITS IMPACTS ON INDIA | |
| • China-Sri Lanka and Maldives Relationship and Its Impacts on India - K. T. Ganeshalingam | ... 1 |
| • Building Friendship with Sri Lanka and the Maldives - P. Sahadevan | ... 13 |
| • India's Relations with Sri Lanka and Maldives: Past, Present and Future - I. I. Mehrotra | ... 22 |
| Section II | |
| PARTNERS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN: SRI LANKA, MALDIVES AND INDIA | |
| • India-Maldives Bonhomie: Opportunities and Challenge - Saheli Bose | ... 33 |
| • India in the Indo-Pacific Region: Balancing with Sri Lanka and Maldives - Dona Ganguly | ... 43 |
| Section III | |
| THE OCEAN THAT BINDS: SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR SECURITY & TRADE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC | |
| • Peace and Security in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective - Suresh Rangarajan | ... 52 |
| • India's Relation with Sri Lanka and Maldives: the Security Dimension - Soham Das Gupta | ... 65 |
| Section IV | |
| CULTURAL FACTORS IN EVOLVING CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS: LANGUAGE, FAITH AND SOCIETY | |
| • Contributions of women across handicrafts and intangible cultural heritage (across India, Sri Lanka and Maldives) - Building up a model of economic sustainability and supplementary household income - Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai | ... 74 |
| • The Bengal - Singhal coalescence - Ritaja Mukherjee and Ritobhash Mukherjee | ... 90 |
| • Serpent Myth and Exotic Tree: Cross-cultural Study of Ecological Perspectives on Cultural Adoption of Cannonball Tree (<i>Couroupita guianensis</i>) in India and Sri Lanka - Shreyashi Choudhuri & Kuntal Narayan Choudhuri | ... 96 |
| • Religious Art and Cultural Influences of India on Sri Lanka - Padmini Tolat Balaram | ... 107 |

- India and Sri Lanka Relation; through the Lens of Cultural Diplomacy ... 119
- Siuli Mukherjee

Section V

- **SHARING DEVELOPMENT, GROWTH & PROSPERITY** ... 128
- The Great Game Centering 21st Century Maritime Silk Road
- Swagata Sarkhel
- Contested Relations: India-Maldives, a Study on Trade and Security ... 139
- Joydip Narzary

Section VI

RESOLVING ISSUES AMONG FRIENDS: OUTSTANDING ISSUES IN INDIAN RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA & THE MALDIVES

- Political Issues in India-Sri Lanka Relations: Challengers and Implications ... 146
- Samatha Mallempati
- Tied to the Ocean ... 159
- Bennmol Abraham

Section VII

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON "COMMON SECURITY THREATS" BETWEEN THREE NATIONS

- Does India Have a Democracy Policy towards Her Neighbours? ... 165
- Samir Kumar Das
- Building on Shared Perceptions ... 168
- N. Sathiya Moorthy
- Perceptual Gaps in India's Overarching Security Concerns Vis-à-vis Sri Lanka and the Maldives ... 179
- B.M.Jain

Valedictory Address

- India China Competition in New Delhi's Bilateral Relations in South Asia: Cases of Sri Lanka ... 183
- Baladas Ghosal

Acknowledgement

... 197