Changing nature of Indian foreign policy in the context of South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation

*Zarina Khatoon

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Veer Kunwar Singh University, Ara, Bihar

**Abstract**

In South Asia, India is seen as a dominant power, with a sense of hegemony or leadership. In the view of American scholars, "dominance" or "hegemony" has been defined as - such a leadership of a country or group of countries that plays a special role, enjoys special facilities, and enjoys a special position in the political or economic sphere. Takes special responsibility for the success of the systems. According to some thinkers - "The dominant power can make changes in its accepted policies. Analyzing these two definitions, India can come to this definition with difficulty, because India neither plays a special role in South Asia, nor takes advantage of special facilities, nor does any regional politics or economic system. There is no specific responsibility in the operation. Nevertheless, if a comparative study of the "SAARC" countries is done, then India is definitely considered a big country to play a big role in size, population, technological development, economic development and international relations.

**Keywords:** South Asia, International Relations, SAARC, Transit Treaty

**Introduction**

After India, the place of Pakistan comes, which can be said to be second in terms of influence. In the political field, it is believed that if the relations between these countries improve, then the fate of 'SAARC' can be easily determined. The feeling of doubt against India in all SAARC countries from the very beginning about its leadership or hegemony will be said to be baseless, because neither India can become dangerous for all member states nor all member states. Together we can unite against India. It is clear that India’s importance in this area is acknowledged whether or not it is. Whenever there have been problems between India and Pakistan, the moderate powers Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives have exercised their influence to rectify them. The potential for greater cooperation in smaller states can be seen because they depend on neighboring large, industrialized countries, from which their economies cannot develop. India holds regional importance in its natural resources, mineral wealth, manpower, technical knowledge, trade etc. India can take advantage of this power to the neighboring countries.

To improve the economic condition of the region, it is necessary that the production of essential commodities should be divided, that is, the goods which are produced in one state should not be produced in another state. With this policy, economic development and trade conditions in the region can be easily improved, and good yield can be increased by providing agricultural facilities in Bangladesh. India is an attractive focal point of Asia, under whose guidance SAARC can achieve good success. It should make its role more cooperative and broader in the interest of smaller states, so that they accept it easily. It becomes a dilemma for India that if it provides its cooperation effectively in the area, then other member states will start considering it as a "prime-setting" country, which will not be proper in the interest of India. On the other hand, India cannot walk behind even small states, it has to increase

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its power by developing itself. Therefore, it can be said that it will be more useful for India to adopt a diplomatic method and use a medium level policy in the region, because if India develops rapidly, then small countries can understand its trick, if India sits peacefully. So it will be called ultranationalist, and if it remains neutral then development will not be possible with regional cooperation. To maintain a balance in these problems, India must establish its cooperation between enthusiasm and stability, and between desire and practicality.

It can be said that the middle path is not fair for India. He should actually play a dynamic role, that of a giver, not a taker. It can be understood as follows: - In the rule of Janata Dal established in 1979, India's relations with its neighbors were improved, there was a partial change in foreign policy, that is, adjustment and harmony was established in its policy. Trade and transit treaty was signed with Nepal, due to which there was a favorable response in Nepal towards India. Bangladesh was satisfied with the Farakka Dam Agreement. Similarly, Sri Lanka’s relations also improved through peace agreement. Therefore, in the policy of reconciliation, neither the weak states are exploited, nor is there a feeling of hegemony over the smaller ones in the big states. Such behavior in inter-state relations enhances cooperation, and brings trust in place of mutual distrust, fear in place of fear and openness in place of doubt.

There are some problems in the "Organization of South Asia Regional Cooperation", which have been kept out of the constitution of SAARC. These problems include bilateral issues and contentious matters, which cannot be raised on the forum and India is also not in favor of any amendment to the SAARC Charter by which these problems can be raised on the forum. It seeks to rectify such matters in India through mutual dialogue, friendly behavior and cooperation. It is also true that neighborhood relations cannot be problem-free, yet common problems related to the area are more important than individual problems, which should be rectified together. Bilateral matters also fall in this category, which can be resolved through joint agreement, and can increase regional unity. The Bangalore summit emphasized on treating such problems as "like situations" which were talked about to be solved together. At the time of the resolution to accept the recommendations made against terrorism and narcotics, there was a strong demand to bring bilateral matters under SAARC, with special approval by the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, remarking that if we If we do not do this, then SAARC will become blind, deaf. So we have to find some way to solve these problems and we have to solve them among ourselves without any outside interference. According to the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, all this should be in accordance with the SAARC Charter. The SAARC principle was also approved by the Foreign Minister of Nepal, and suggested to resolve bilateral and multilateral issues on the principle of equality. But it is believed that keeping bilateral matters separate from SAARC helped SAARC to establish its footing. But it was opposed by some, and it was considered as to how long such problems could be kept out of SAARC. The fact is that bilateral and disputed issues are resolved, which will allow regional cooperation to become closer. It is a definite principle that the settlement of non-political areas is based on political relations. Therefore, instead of keeping the regional mindset separately, it can be made effective if it is brought together openly in the realm of thought. In order to move forward it is necessary that the political conflicts are first settled.

This topic was discussed in the Lok Sabha after the Bangalore Summit, in which the External Affairs Minister Shri Narayan Dutt Tiwari reminded the members about the statement made by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi after the Bangalore Summit. The External Affairs Minister also discussed bilateral matters separately with the Foreign Secretaries of SAARC countries.

In the discussion with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, serious issues like nuclear weapons program, aid to terrorists and supply of weapons to them were discussed. In the meeting between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, it was decided that both the nations would explore ways of cooperation to prevent illegal border violation, drug trafficking, smuggling and terrorist activities along the border. The deliberations reflect India's efforts to create a normal environment. The Prime Minister met the President of Sri Lanka, J.R. Jayawardene also discussed in detail, and it was decided that the problem of Sri Lanka should be solved without compromising on terrorism and this should be done under the Constitution of Sri Lanka. Useful thoughts on this problem Sri Lankan Foreign Minister A.C.S. Hameed continued with the Indian delegation as well. It was decided that K. Natwar Singh
and P. Chidambaram will visit Colombo, and will receive a response from the Government of Sri Lanka after further talks with Mr. Jayawardene.

In the talks of the Prime Minister with the President of Bangladesh, the development of bilateral relations between the countries was looked into and it was decided that the Joint Committee on River Water of India-Bangladesh should be extended for the next six months i.e. till 21 May 1987 with the mandate be given, and will be completed within the stipulated period. The Prime Minister discussed bilateral and international matters of traditional relations in warm and friendly discussions with the King of Bhutan. The Prime Minister's meeting with the King of Nepal took place in a cordial atmosphere and discussions were held to bring the relations and mutual understanding between the two countries closer. Prime Minister's meeting with the President of Maldives provided an opportunity to look at our bilateral cooperation and SAARC matters. Thus the Prime Minister's discussions with the Heads of State of Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives helped in expanding the area of mutual understanding and strengthening the traditional and friendly relations between India and these nations in future.

SAARC has been a hotbed of bilateral problems. The problem of Tamils in Sri Lanka, the problem of trade and transit treaty between India and Nepal and the problem of military conspiracy to change power against Maldives can be given examples in this context, and all these problems were resolved with India's cooperation and assistance. Could go the need was that SAARC should not remain silent on these developments and bring them on its platform, which would have created a conducive environment among the member states in resolving such problems. Not only this, in the Kathmandu summit of November 1987, Shri Rajiv Gandhi mainly emphasized on terrorist activities and for its prevention.

In this regard, when asked in Lok Sabha by Shri Satyendra Narayan Sinha, Shri Sharad Dighe and Vardh Chander Jain, whether there are many legal problems involved in the implementation of the resolution related to the elimination of terrorism in the SAARC Summit? If yes, then what are their details and the government is considering some changes in them soon? Answering the question, Minister of State K. Natwar Singh replied that "some amendment will be necessary in our law, and the government is evaluating necessary amendments in this regard, and a decision can be taken on this change only after necessary investigation."

Along with this, on the proposal of food storage for SAARC countries in the Lok Sabha, Shri Prakash V. Patil asked whether the Minister of Food and Civil Supplies should tell that in the soon-to-be-concluded summit in Kathmandu, members during drought and floods. Was there any controversial discussion on the proposal regarding the distribution of food items for the use of countries? If yes, then whether the scheme was stopped, and when will it be implemented legally, Parliamentary and Food and Civil Supplies Minister Shri H.K. Ale Bhagat while answering the question said that “The agreement on SAARC Food Stock Security was signed by SAARC members on 4th November, 1987 at the quickly concluded summit of Kathmandu. To provide food grains in this storage, India had earmarked 153,200 tonnes of food grains and Nepal had earmarked 3600 tonnes of food grains. This agreement regarding food storage and distribution will be effective from the date fixed by the Council of Ministers of SAARC. Apart from this, India's role in SAARC is clearly visible from the important subjects on which the agreement was reached in the Islamabad summit of December 1988 between India and Pakistan. The nature of this role becomes more influential at the Male Summit of November 1990, when it attracted the attention of the seven heads of state with two of its important resolutions, and agreed to accept them.

In addition to the above role, if seen in general terms, India is such a member state in the South Asia region that the remaining six member states of SAARC together do not even equal one-third of India's area. India is centrally located. It holds special importance in all areas like its manpower, natural wealth, military capability, mineral resources, technical and industrial base etc. Therefore, the member states of the region express their apprehensions naturally through the ideas of “why, what, why” etc. to any plan made by India. Although the principle of "unanimity" is enough to remove all doubts for any decision in SAARC, yet India being a powerful country will have to make efforts to bring regional countries into its confidence. The political side of India considers the Indian
security principle to be very strong and other states also recognize its power. In this situation, there is a perception of the critics that India must be a great country but not an invader.

Of. In Subramaniam's view, India should emerge as the great power of the region, and show its power in regional work. So that the powerful countries of the world, America, Russia, China and Western Europe cannot ignore India on questions related to South Asia. R. Of. According to Hazari, economic and military power protects and strengthens each other's interests. India should be great as such. According to him, India should strengthen its fleet in the Indian Ocean and establish its dominance on its vast ocean coast, so that no other power can establish its dominion over it. R. Of. According to Abraham, India has been the great country of this region, according to him America also considers India's fleet powerful, while Pakistan wants to improve its deteriorating economy with the help of America and become powerful on the strength of military assistance. But the fundamental difference between these two countries is that India can become powerful with its own support, whereas Pakistan can falsely boast of becoming powerful with the help of others. Therefore India should maintain its military supremacy. US Secretary of State George Schulz has justified India's regional power in the region of South Asia. There is also a fact that in the absence of mineral wealth or natural resources, Pakistan can never become powerful. Therefore, it is the responsibility of India to contribute to the maintenance of 'SAARC' by benefiting the member states through 'SAARC'.

India should also support 'SAARC' from the point of view of its own interest, for the purpose of economic benefit, India can send its produced goods to all the markets of the region, it can also benefit other states with its technical knowledge and industrial knowledge. Is. There are many possibilities of capital investment in the area. In this way 'SAARC' can be helpful in the building of nations. This will raise the standard of living of the people, increase stability in the neighboring states, soften the bilateral affairs etc. which will be in the interest of India.

Many problems can be solved by the power of India and the faith of small states in it. India itself wants to maintain the unity of this region, but it should remain outside the political and protective sphere. India can also formulate an independent policy like the Simla Agreement, in which a long-term policy for South Asia can be followed. But this policy should be different from SAARC. This work can be done in two ways. First, India should make a political protective policy to fulfill the role of a powerful country. Secondly, on the basis of democratic principle, make economic and cultural plans, which are under 'SAARC', so that it can benefit more and more SAARC countries. India's policy regarding allegiance to 'SAARC' became clear when it participated in the E.E.C., I.M.F. and I.T.U. At the time of getting foreign financial aid to 'SAARC', it had displayed its opposite process. India wanted to keep the interference of foreign powers away from the programs of 'SAARC'. In his view, due to the interference of foreign powers, 'SAARC' could not independently cooperate economically in the South Asia region. Political instability would have increased, terrorism would have been encouraged and it would have become difficult to establish regional cooperation. India has been in favor of solving its problems through regional means and developing programs of cooperation, so that rapid economic development can be achieved and all member states can get its benefits equally.

For example, the Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, at the Dhaka summit in April 1993, laid special emphasis on regional cooperation for economic development. His clear statement was that India, despite being a large country in this region, does not wish to establish its dominance over anyone. SAARC is an economic organization and all member states have equal rights in it, because any regional resolution can be passed only with the consent of all. Nevertheless, India's special cooperation cannot be denied. For example India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan etc. are all agricultural countries. Water is a special requirement for agriculture. Rainfall in this region is sometimes less and sometimes more due to monsoon based, due to which the problem of flood and famine persists every year in one area or the other. No small country can be able to overcome this problem. Therefore, if India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan together collect the rain water received from the Himalayan mountains by making big circles and use this water after the end of the rain, then the problems of flood and famine can be dealt with, But no one state can build these reservoirs. Also, this work cannot be done without Indian cooperation. It is clear that India's cooperation in
regional cooperation is of special importance. In the absence of India's cooperation, other states will suffer more than India. At the same time, for the success of any work for India, matching of huge cooperation is necessary. India should play such a role in regional cooperation and development, so that the member states do not feel that India wants to dominate them. It is also true that if India breaks its relationship with 'SAARC', then the power of SAARC will also gradually decrease and it will move towards its decline. The importance of India in SAARC can be gauged from the fact that it is considered one of the first ten industrialized countries of the world.

Conclusion

Therefore, it can be said that while playing its role in the development of 'SAARC', India should keep in mind that the weak states should not be exploited, they should feel that they can become a big nation despite being independent. You can get help without any fear. Such behavior of India would be an ideal behavior, because all the member states of SAARC are sovereign and entitled to conduct their independent policy. Therefore, it can be said that there should be an agreement of "no war" among all the member countries of 'SAARC', so that no foreign power can get the facility of any military base in South Asia. Also, if there is an external attack on any member state, then it should be considered as an attack on the whole 'SAARC', and all the member states should face it together. With such cooperation, military expenditure can be reduced significantly, and the remaining money can be used for the development of 'SAARC'. This is a good example in front of the SAARC countries that when the cold war between the world's superpowers can be ended and the possibility of war can be avoided by changing the harsh policies by mutual dialogue and reducing the production of weapons, then South Asia Why bilateral and multilateral issues of member states of regional cooperation cannot be resolved. Care has to be taken that there should be no interference of external powers in the solution of regional problems and India should come forward with great care in this work.

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