

Chapter-5

Contemporary South Asia

1. South Asia is referred to as a group of seven countries namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka which stand for diversity in every sense and constitutes geo-political space.
2. The various countries in South Asia do not have the same kind of Political system .Despite many problems and limitations.Sri Lanka and India have successfully operated a democratic system.Pakistan and Bangladesh have experienced both civilian and military rules.Nepal was a consitutional monarchy with the danger of the king taking over executive powers.Bhutan is still a monarchy but the king has initiated plans for its transition to multi-party democracy.Democracy strengthened in the Maldives after the 2005 elections.
3. The Awami League led by Sheikh Mujib won all the seats in east Pakistan and secured a manjority in the proposed constituent assembly for the whole of Pakistan in the 1970,elections.
4. Bangladesh was a part of Pkistan from 1947 to 1971.During Yahya's Khan military rule Pakistan faced the Bangladesh crisis and after a war with India in 1971,East Pakistan broke away to emerge as an independent countary called Bangladesh.
5. In Pakistan, military rule and democracy are two sides of the coin because during implementation of first constitution, General Ayub Khan took the command by elections, but thrown away by military due to dissatisfaction of his rule. After 1971, an elected government was formed under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, removed by General Zia-ill-Haq in 1977.
6. Again in 1982, in Pakistan, by a pro-democracy protest, democratic government was established in 1988 under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. Later on the history repeated and General Pervez Musharraftook the command in 1999 and got elected in 2005 to be continued till date.
7. Several factors have contributed to Pakistan's failaure in building a stable democracy.The social dominance of the military ,clergy and landowring aristocracy has led to the

frequent overthrow of elected government and the establishment of military government. The lack of genuine international support for democratic rule in Pakistan has further encouraged the military to continue its dominance.

8. Bangladesh drafted its own constitution declaring faith in secularism, democracy and socialism. In 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman formed presidential set up, but was assassinated in a military uprising. The new military ruler Ziaur Rahman, formed his own Bangladesh National Party and won elections in 1979. He was assassinated and another military take over followed under the leadership of Gen. H.M. Ershad. Since 1991, representative democracy has been working in Bangladesh.
9. Nepal was a Hindu Kingdom and became constitutional monarchy in modern period. The struggle for restoration of democracy began in 1990 and 2007, when king restored house of representatives. Even today Nepal is demanding the formation of constituent assembly.
10. Ceylon, presently known as Sri Lanka experienced an ethnic conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils for power sharing. LTTE demanded a separate state for Tamil 1983 onwards with the support of Indian government who sent Indian Peace Keeping Forces there which was not liked by Sri Lankans.
11. Sri Lanka has maintained a democratic political system with a considerable economic growth i.e. one of the first developing countries to control population growth rate, liberalized economy, and bears highest per capita gross Domestic Product despite the ongoing conflicts. Sri Lanka has retained democracy since its independence in 1948.
12. India-Pakistan conflicts in South Asian region is most important to be sorted out. The wars between these countries took place in 1947-48, 1965 and 1971 on the issues of Pak Occupied Kashmir (POK) and Line of Control (LOC). Except, other issues of conflicts are control of Siachin glacier, acquisition of arms and sharing of river water.
13. Both the governments are suspicious to each other on the ground of Pakistani strategy to help Kashmiri militants and ISI to be involved in Anti-India campaign. Pakistan blames India for making trouble in Sindh and Baluchistan.
14. India conducted nuclear explosion in Pokaran 1998.
15. India and Bangladesh experienced differences over the issues of sharing of Ganga and Brahmaputra river water, illegal immigration to India, support for anti Indian-Islamic fundamentalists, refusal to allow Indian troops and not to export natural gas to India. It is the main link of India's 'Look East' Policy.

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16. India and Nepal also bear differences on the issues of Nepal's relations with China and inaction against anti-Indian elements i.e. Maoists. But still both the countries signed the treaty of trade and commerce in 2005 and friendship in 2006 to provide financial and technical assistance and to allow citizens to move without visas and passport.
 17. A treaty between the two countries allows the citizens of the two countries to travel to and work in the other country without visas and passports.
 18. India and Bhutan do not share any major conflict, but attached on the issues to need out the guerillas and militants from North-eastern India and involvement of India also in big hydroelectric projects in Bhutan is the biggest source of development aid.
 19. India is supportive to Maldives in their economy, tourism and fisheries. In November 1988, India reacted quickly against an attack from Tamil Mercenaries on Maldives.
 20. In spite of the above mentioned conflicts and differences, states of South Asia recognise cooperation and friendly relations among themselves. Hence, a major regional initiative has been taken in the form of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1982. SAARC members signed South Asian Free Trade Agreements (SAFTA) to form free trade zone for the whole South Asia.