

# Nepal-China Relation: Tea Horse Road to Belt and Road Initiative

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## Abstract

*Nepal- China relationship is the oldest in the diplomatic history of Nepal. It is hard to find the beginning point. However, the evidence proves that Manjushree arrived from China to Kathmandu, then cut open a rocky hill called Chobhar to let the water from the enormous lake out whose mud when caked offered itself a fit place to live and cultivate. It is also important to note that the Tea and Horse Road back to the period of the Tang dynasty 618-907 and the Tibetan (Tubo) regime is the next evidence of Sino- Nepal relations, the oldest one. The Lichchavi period, the Malla period, and the Gorkha Shah King dynasty are full of Sino- Nepal histories. The pilgrim trips from China and Tibet to Nepal and Nepalese trade with Tibet are the major sources of bilateral histories. The Military relationship is also very old, and it starts formally from the time of Kaji Bhim Malla's military expedition in Tibet. Also, many wars took place between the two countries. However, we have got the best relation up to today and the military relation has been strengthening according to our diplomatic relations. I also would like to mention that the Sino- Nepal relationship has been running more formal rather than people-to-people communication due to our language and geographical barrier in comparison to our southern neighbor. There are many rooms to be researched from Ancient Tea and Horse Road onward present Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).*

**Key Words:** Tea and horse road, Water diplomacy & People to people communication.

## Introduction

On the First hand, authentic evidence and history offer some base to believe that in ancient times a scholarly sage called Manjushree from China to Kathmandu cut open a rocky hill called Chobhar to let the water from the enormous lake out whose mud when caked offered itself a fit place to live and cultivate (Sangroula, 2018, pp.394-95). Secondly, in those times, the counties held a common practice of sending a religious envoy to each other. As per the practice, in 306 Tseng Tsai, an envoy from China arrived in Nepal and had an audience with the King. In succession to such practice, Fahien as a religious envoy in 406 came to Nepal (Basnyat, V. S. 2073, pp.24-27). Finally, Hiuen Tsang with the same status visited Nepal and was received well in the royal palace. He is probably the first foreign visitor to describe the exact size of Nepal at that time. He says Nepal had an area of 4000 square li (Sharma, et al., V. S. 2049, pp.10-13). Secondly, it is obvious to highlight that Cultural Exchange and People-to-People Communication is the foremost need for an

honest bilateral relationship between any two countries. In this regard, bilateral histories, cultures, civilizations, and heritages boost People-to-People Communication. Nepal – China relationship consists of several pieces of evidence of our cultural exchanges.

On the other hand, from a minute study of the age-old Nepal-China relationship, one finds it connected and begun with trade. Nepal then prospered from its trade of things from salt to gold and from that wool was imported from Mongolia, China, and Tibet, then a free country. The temples with gold-plated roofs in Kathmandu hint at a huge flow of gold into Nepal from those countries. Although it is not easy to give an exact date for the start of the relationship between the two countries, based on what little evidence there is, we find the relationship dated more than 2000 years back (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). During the Silk Road era too, Nepal gained its status as Tea and Horse Route and the two countries enjoyed social, economic, and religious ties (Pang, 2022). The history of Nepal-China ties is long and old. The story of Manjushree's arrival at Kathmandu and the passing of water to start a human settlement there is very popular in academia. The evidence says the relationship between the two countries started first at the individual level in the 4<sup>th</sup> century itself by which time it was already over hundred years when Buddhism entered China. Authentic evidence gives proof of the start of the relationship since the Tang Dynasty in China (Shrestha, P. 208).

Nepal–China Relation gets three folds, they are direct relations with Tibet, direct relations with China, and indirect relations with Tibet. However, presently Tibet is part of China and all the relation with Tibet has become the Nepal China relation. We could find several books, articles, and YouTube on this issue. But the Tea and Horse Road trade route under the Silk Road era of China has not been pointed out, so far. The research question for this paper stands as what is the importance of the Tea and Horse Road trade onwards in Nepal and China Relation? This paper aims to explore the importance of the Tea and Horse Road trade onwards in the Nepal –China Relation.

### **Methodology (Research Design)**

A qualitative research design has been applied in this article and secondary sources like published materials, books, journals, articles, newspapers, and electronic media have been used. Descriptive and analytical methods have been applied to analyze in depth.

### **Discussion and Result**

The Nepal-China relationship is the oldest in our diplomatic history. Especially the trade with Tibet enhanced Nepalese economic standards since the history of the Tea and Horse Road route trade. Many friendly events and disputes took place in between, bilaterally. However, the Sino-Nepal relationship has been running smoothly. To highlight the Nepal China Relation since Tea and Horse Road trade onwards in simple form would be the result of this paper.

## Ancient Tea and Horse Road

It is obvious to note that Tibetans brought to light tea in the 7th century, a part of their diet, originally from southwest China. But its origins in the 6<sup>th</sup> century in southwest China, and they started to trade it beyond China. (Freeman and Ahmed, 2015). In this regard, from the 6th century to the 20th century, people in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces traveled by foot and horseback with pack horses to exchange tea for horses with people in Tibet and thus the pathway was called the Tea Horse Road (Pang, 2022). One can trace the history of the Tea and Horse Road back to the period of the Tang dynasty 618-907 and the Tibetan (Tubo) regime. There were two different routes:

- a) **The Sichuan–Tibet Tea Horse Road:** It stretched from Ya'an in Sichuan to Lhasa via Luding, Kangding, Batang, and Chamdo in Tibet, and extended to Nepal, Burma, and India (Pang, 2022).
- b) **The Yunnan–Tibet Tea Horse Road:** It began from Simao (a major tea-producing area) and led to Lhasa, crossing Pu'er in Xishuangbanna, Dali, Lijiang, and Shangri-La, and continuing to Nepal, and India. It was thus the critical trade route connecting Yunnan to Southern Asia.
- c) **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**
- d) Nepal and China signed a BRI on 12 May 2017. BRI is a strategy initiated by the People's Republic of China that seeks to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks to improve regional integration, increase trade, and stimulate economic growth. The name was coined in 2013 by China's President Xi Jinping, who drew inspiration from the concept of the Silk Road established during the Han Dynasty 2,000 years ago, an ancient network of trade routes that connected China to the Mediterranean via Eurasia for centuries. The BRI has also been referred to in the past as 'One Belt One Road (Sangroula, 2018, pp. 459-61).
- e) Ancient history proves that in around 647 during King Narendra Deva's tenure of rule, Chinese envoys Lee Payo Chhen and Wang Huen Tse visited the palace of the king of Kannauz of India. The king, impressed by the visitors' greatness, gave them a good send-off with notable gifts. Shortly after the king was assassinated by his Chief of the Army Arunashwo took the gifts back unceremoniously, sending the visitors with dishonor. They thus entered Nepal and saved a life (Sharma et al., V. S. 2049, p.12). Once the king of China learned about the incident, he immediately approached Nepal and Tibet to set Arunashwo right 7000 cavalries from Nepal and 1,200 soldiers from Tibet marched for help, accordingly. The united troops reached Kannauz, attacked the king, held him captive, brought him to China, and later hanged him to death (Sharma et al., B. S. 2049, p.12). Nepal-China relations were very good during the Lichhavi period and are justified by the fact that king Amsuverma had arranged for his daughter Bhrikuti to marry Tibetan king Shrong Chen Gampo.
- f) At the request of the Tibetan king, Lichhavi king Jaya Bhimdev sent a team of 80 builders and carpenters led by Balbahu (Araniko) to Tibet (Shrestha, 2015, p.5). Chinese

Emperor Kublai Khan was impressed by the artistic Gumba built by the Nepali team of artists. He asked the team to visit China to build several similar Gumbas and Chaityas (monasteries). The Nepali team of artists 1262 reached Peking of China for that purpose. In 1271, they built a structure that we now call White Pagoda there. They built several other Chaityas. Even they built several monasteries in Mongolia too when the Chinese Emperor sent them Mongolia (**Aniko, Anige, or Araniko** -1245 - 1306, was one of the key figures in the arts of Nepal and Yuan Dynasty of China, and the artistic exchanges in these areas). Because Nepal-China relations remained cordial all through the Malla era, Nepal was able to have its influence over Tibet which eased the trade of salt and gold. The trade contributed to the sound economy of Nepal. This is the reason why the period is called the 'Golden Age'. Nepal is also called the "Country of Temples" with a golden roof, which was possible by Nepal – the China trade. Finally, the Shah King dynasty also kept smooth relations with China. However, Nepal and Tibet had two separate wars and the next was Nepal –Tibet-China war. China came to join with Tibet to liberate Tibet from the Nepalese occupation (Manandhar et al., V. S. 2077, pp. 265-66). All the disputes ended by 1856 with then Tibet and an honest bilateral relationship have been running with China.

### **Water Diplomacy with China**

It is true to note that the water crisis in South Asia including Nepal is directly connected with China. In this regard, Chinese water sources are very important for South Asian survival. This region, the world's most populous subcontinent, is also the most water-scarce continent after Antarctica. Water-related problems are particularly acute in this region and experts project that reduced access to fresh water will lead to a cascading set of consequences, including impaired food production, the loss of livelihood security, large-scale migration within and across borders, and increased geopolitical tensions and instabilities. Whosoever imposes its hegemony over Tibet will enjoy total control over the Himalayan bed and the one who controls the Himalayan bed will have the leverage to challenge entire South Asia. China alone is the source of origin of 40 international rivers 16 of which flow down to other countries whereas only 40 percent of water from the 11 rivers originated in China and flowed down from other countries to reach India. Out of the total water resources of India, the Tibetan source counts about one-third (Schneider, and Pope, 2008). Therefore, any agreement or disagreement between the two countries about water from the rivers flowing down from Tibet to India and those originating in Tibet, flowing through Nepal to India is a question of crucial importance for the country. One-third of the water from the rivers otherwise flowing down to India is now being brought to the water-scarce area of China which has constructed 20 huge dams and 40 others are in process of constructing its eight biggest rivers for water use.

If the water from the rivers originated in the Himalayas and flowed through Nepal and Bhutan were to be harnessed for long-term use and development, the rivers have the potential to bring stability and prosperity to entire South Asia. The hydro potential of Nepal, India, and Pakistan combined cross 20 million Mg. watt power generation but only a quarter

of it has been brought into use. The crisis of confidence among the countries is hindering the massive possibility. Nepal ranks as one of the water-rich countries in terms of its water resources. Not surprisingly, if the water released from the reserve system were to be reused for energy generation, Nepal has more hydro potential than one can imagine. Similarly, it would ease the supply, and drinking of clean water and energy generation in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh in collaboration could build large reserves to store water that would otherwise flow further down to meet the sea. Unfortunately, forget about water for irrigation, Nepal suffers from an acute shortage of clean drinking water. We in Nepal import electricity from India. Sound water management presupposes competent and accountable governance, but we in Nepal, unable to blend managerial competence with diplomatic deftness for the optimum use of water, are destined to suffer extreme poverty and instability, heading fast to a failed state. Sound water management is the need of the hour. The United Nations has raised voices to save the earth including water resources. Also in the global context, water diplomacy is utmost to save the entire human being, living creatures, and nature (Schmeier, 2018).

### **Evolution of Nepal China Relation**

It is true to note that Nepal constantly exists as an independent country if the facts revealed recently by google are anything to go by because it says there are hardly any countries other than Nepal so seasoned and so civilized. The facts show Nepal is 2,500 years old. Not just that; it never surrendered its independence to any of China, India, or any other countries. Of course, there appeared several princely states, and when it comes to the old Nepal beyond Mahakali, the history is even older. Before King Prithvi Narayan Shah came up with his Nepal unification campaign, there was no landmass so-called Nepal, but there already existed princely states Kantipur, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur in the valley, popularly called Nepal still nowhere so documented. There existed almost 53 separate princely states within the territory of what we now call Nepal, however, google collectively calls all that Nepal. Thus, Nepal has existed long since the remote past had its immediate neighbors China and India whereas Tibet waned and waxed in its rise and annexation in course of history. Nepal had its age-old relation of trade and diplomacy with Tibet in older times, and now because Tibet is part of China, the Nepal-Tibet relation shifts to Nepal-China relation.

History tracks down the dateless period in antiquity when Manjushree, a religious preacher/Guru came down to Kathmandu to cut open a hillock of Chobhar to let out the water of the huge lake of Kathmandu to drain it fit for settlement (Shrestha, p. 208). Accordingly, history documented a Chinese religious envoy visiting a king of Nepal in 306 A.D., and later in 636 another religious envoy Tsen Sai wrote of Nepal as a country with an area of 4,000 square lees (Sharma et al V. S. 2049, pp.10-13). That testifies to Nepal as much larger than what it is now. This is probably the first ever written evidence to ascertain the exact area of old Nepal. History records yet another year 618 CE when Nepal availed of the Chinese 'Tea and Horse Road' a segment of the Silk Road for its trade with China. Thereafter, several visits and correspondences at the trade, political and religious levels happened. In succession to Nepal Tibet relations expanded further when in 632 when

Tibetan king ShrongTsen Gampo came down to marry Nepali princess Bhrikuti. In 1232, Nepali consummate artist and culture expert Balbahu (Araniko) called Lachhime visited Lhasa, then Peking at the special request of the emperor of China. The Malla Era is called the 'Golden Age' because Nepal gained prominence from Patna-Tibet Trade when gold, wool, and salt found Nepal its transit point was to come from Magnolia and Tibet and go to Patna and Banaras. It earned Kathmandu a reputation as a country of temples with gold roofing'. 23 years after the Shah King won over Kathmandu, Nepal fought a battle against China and Tibet joint force which ended up on October 20, 1792, Betrawati Treaty, like Sugauli Treaty in its nature and effect, so said, because some of the clauses of the treaty are unfair to the defeated side. Although some writers in Nepal dubbed the battle a victory, the clauses therein believe it. Therefore, the Betrawati Treaty is probably the oldest authentic document ever in Nepal, 25 years older than Anglo – Nepal Sugauli Treaty and 158 years older than the 1950 Nepal-India Treaty.

The Betrawati treaty demeaned Nepal and Tibet as dependents and China as a patron because it required the King of Nepal to send a gift to Peking every five years without fail. Not just that. The King of Nepal would plead to the Chinese Emperor in the best of words in Nepali, Urdu, and Ranjana script, a language befitting a servant to his master, and the language of the response from the Chinese Emperor sounded command, like the one given by a master to his servant. Nepal's victory over Tibet in the battle of 1856 in command of Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana after about 65 years ended the practice of sending gifts to China. The reading of the records 'between the lines' speaks of Nepal being under influence of China for 65 years, as per the treaty of Betrawati (Manandhar, 2003., p. 130).

In the years after the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana, Anglo-Nepal relations strengthened while Sino-Nepal relations weakened as the former was caught up in the Taiping Rebellion. China even lost its status to notice much of Nepal and on the other hand, Nepal took the least notice of China while still the Betrawoti was in place and was never canceled. Thereafter on April 28, 1960, Nepal and China signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, and 178 years after the Betrawati Treaty, the two countries returned to cordial diplomatic relations. For about 1175 years from 618 till 1856 (the year of the Thapathali Treaty) Nepal and China under the Silk Road Trade Policy enjoyed smooth trade and transaction. After 161 years since 1856, on May 12, 2017, the two countries renewed the Silk Road Concept into Belt and Road Initiative, popularly called now BRI.

The latest dispute took place on 28, 1960 Chinese force gunned down one Nepal Army man Bom Prasad Baskota Upadhyaya, who along with others in plain cloth patrolled the border area of Mustang and others were taken captive. At that same time, many hundreds of Khampa army followers of the Dalai Lama were engaged in destructive and disruptive activities over the Nepal-China border areas. According to the Chinese say, the Nepal Army maybe by mistake walked far beyond the Chinese area where the Chinese army took military action on them misread as Khampa rebels. The issue was settled once and for all by both the Nepalese and Chinese Prime Ministers signing a document with a promise and payment of fifty thousand rupees as compensation to the family of the killed. Later in

1974 when trained by the Americans the Khampa combatants from Nepali soil started their raids and ambushes action over Tibet-China, it (China) corresponded with Nepal to settle it. It is documented as the 'Khampa Rebellion' in history.

Another incident concerns the time around 1990 when China sold Nepal Air Defense Weapons at a cost price. Around that time, Indian Fighter Planes openly breaching Nepal's sovereignty would frequently fly over the Nepali sky. When all channels to have India acknowledge Nepal's sensitivity about the breach of defense failed, King Birendra after long consultation with the then Chief of Army Staff - COAS General Sachit Shumsher Rana gave a nod to the purchase of the Anti-Aircraft Weapon with China. Dubbing Nepal's purchase of the Anti-Aircraft weapons as an open breach of the 1950 treaty, India sounded angry. Likewise, Nepal too on its part has tended to buy only small-scale weapons from China, negligible in volume compared to those bought from India and other countries. Subsequently, Nepal Army and Nepal Government have tended to give little importance to Chinese defense equipment. Reading between the lines in Nepalese Military History, one finds that King Prithvi Narayan Shah set the descendants of Kaji Kalu Pande and Shiva Ram Singh Basnyat to investigate the matters of China and India accordingly, and this legacy continued even after his expiry. In the years after the 1960s and yet, there is an understanding to have a military attaché, and the understanding has been honored so far all to keep the military diplomacy going. In the bilateral Sino – Nepal Military history and for the first time, a 10-day-long joint military exercise "Sagarmatha Friendship 2017" took place on the small scale and is a good start to that front (Das, 2017).

To turn the coin on the other side, the Nepal-China relationship does not seem to be that intense because although most Nepalese know China as their immediate neighbor, most Chinese have no idea of Nepal's existence and location. China invites people from the state head down to teachers and students and hosts them a warm welcome and send-off. Yet it does not seem to seriously discuss Nepal's problems. Several teachers, scholars, and professors occasionally visit Nepal, to participate in the seminars, and write about their impression of the country, its beauty, and hospitality. But the high-level leaders neither visit Nepal nor speak up when Nepal needs it most. This author wonders if China would ever know Nepal were there no Tibetan refugees here. Similarly, in Nepal also there is a trend to reach out to China only when India strangles it to suffocation. Unfortunately, Nepal-China relation remains just formal even as the southern immediate neighbor always casts an evil on it. There is one example of China's support, China assisted Nepal when King Mahendra removed the Indian military presence from Nepal in the 60s. There is nothing to blame other than Nepal's India-tilted policy over the years. There has been no significant difference between the British India era Nepal one-door foreign policy in the past and at present. Indian influence over Nepal enjoys the most even as there are embassies of Nepal in other countries. It is time Nepalese woke to the reality that both China and India are our immediate neighbors, and any closeness to one and distance from another is not in our interest. We do not want to provoke one to please another. There should be a relation of balance and equidistance, more so because Nepal's relation with India never softens until

some of the clauses of the 1950 treaty are canceled. On the other hand, Nepalese must attend to buttress Nepal-China relations to secure its existence and history without jeopardizing Indian national security. Nepal should take every care that such refinement of the relations must never pose any harm to either country. Finally, Nepal should make many Chinese know that there exists a country Nepal and it is their immediate neighbor too.

### Analysis

Nepal – China's relationship lacks people-to-people communication in comparison to India. People-to-people relations go far deeper than formal relations from country to country. Examples serve as evidence of individual-to-individual relations still serving as a link while the country-to-country relation remains strained. When it comes to Nepal-China relations, one finds it strong and consistent at this or that level. In the post-1814-16 years of the Anglo-Nepal War, Nepal passed through British hegemony in this excuse or that (Sharma, V. S. 2033, pp. 254-55). Because China was involved to settle its internal problems, it could not act as per the Betrawati Treaty. Nepal and China seem to take less notice of each other ever since. Nepal China relation experiences a fresh and pleasant turn in an exchange of goodwill and official visits after 144 years (after the Treaty of Sugauli) since the Sino-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship-April 28, 1960, this continues in the years thereafter (Shrestha, 2015, p.14). It is also true to note that since 1956, China has been providing a framework to Nepal in the field of irrigation, railroad, hydroelectricity, etc. (Adhikari and Sheng, 2022).

Firstly, the high Himalayas and a chain of difficult terrains with round the year cold climate in the region hinder people-to-people relations between the two countries. All Nepalese cannot afford to travel to and from China by airplane. If there were link roads and railway lines, then that would ease the Nepali people to visit China to learn the working discipline of the Chinese people. How much will the visit of Nepali political leaders, businesspersons, and government officials to China make a difference in the relationship? Not much. Therefore, the people in Nepal highly expect China to link Nepal with road, railway, and ropeway, which would make a difference in economic activities in Nepal. Understandably, road and railway links are the base for people-to-people communication between the two countries. The following measures are sure to enhance the relationship:

- a) Books and journals about Nepal-China relations in both Nepalese and Chinese would ease the people to learn about one another. Almost all Chinese do not know about Nepal. The publication of books and journals would set the stage for people-to-people communication.
- b) Similarly, the religious, cultural, political, and trade history of Nepal in Chinese would generate people's interest to learn about Nepal and visit it.
- c) Nepal is small but rich with places of tourist destinations and a center of pilgrimage for visitors because it is the birthplace of the ideal daughter Sita, Prince Bhrikuti, Lord Buddha. Besides, its temples, cultural shows, art, music, and tradition with climatic and vegetative diversities are sure to tempt Chinese tourists. If Nepalese visit China by cost-



effective effective transport means by bus or train, they would see the Chinese culture of hard work and other China's specific beauties. It would all contribute to further strengthening Nepal-China relations.

- d) Nepal is the birthplace of Lord Buddha with a significant number of Buddhists. There are Buddhists in China as well. That is enough reason to connect the two countries with religious affinity. History says about 3000 years ago, the Chinese set out on a tour to Nepal and India in quest of the Buddhist religion and lesson of peace (Tuladhar, 2022). That can serve as connecting glue to people-to-people relations.
- e) Nepal is an agricultural country with people literate in education competence but industrious at work. The farmers are so busy and poor that they cannot afford to travel to visit the parts of their country and forget about visiting beyond the borders. If they could visit China at affordable travel costs to see the agricultural farm, tools, and techniques, and working culture, they would apply the same back in Nepal, and it would be a great benefit to Nepal. Likewise, Chinese farmers would learn about the climatic and vegetative diversities and farming tools and techniques of Nepal. Farmer-to-farmer interaction would be fun and learning.
- f) Teachers and students visiting China would be of great benefit and learning Chinese teaching-learning techniques. They would share their teaching and learning experiences. University teacher and student exchange programs would help them to learn about each other's culture. It would help improve not just the relationship but teaching learning patterns too.
- g) If teacher and student exchange programs could start, those at high school and university levels would avail of the opportunity because until now only Master' Level students get scholars to study in China. If psychology is any guide, the teenage years are the most fertile period of learning. The students in their post-exam and pre-result period could learn the Chinese language which would allow them to learn about Chinese art, culture, science, and technology. It could be a turning point in their choice of career path.
- h) It is advisable that China would arrange for Nepalese journalists to visit China. If China could arrange for Chinese TV to air programs about Nepal, it would let the Chinese learn about Nepal. Clear enough, journalism is a very effective means of communication and transmission of news. In recent years, there has been an increase in Nepalese people wanting to know about China and its culture.
- i) Language works both as a bridge and a barrier to communication. It is the language through which humans express themselves and understand others' expressions. Because there is no proof for Chinese and Nepalese language teaching at the public level, there is a communication barrier too.

- j) Nepal-China trade relation brings the two countries and peoples even closer. The export volume of Nepal to China is nominal compared to import. China should take an initiative to increase Nepal's export to its country.

Finally, for the two countries to have closer ties, people-to-people friendship and a sense of immediate neighborhood are a must. Public relation saves the otherwise political and diplomatic misunderstanding and strain of relations. There should be attempts from both countries to learn about each other's history, culture, trade, and tradition if the relationship is to remain cordial and amicable. Leaders may die, and politics may change but history survives for centuries. It is the history that connects the countries. Therefore, they must preserve their history, culture, and tradition. It can work as a glue to bind the two countries as friends and immediate neighbors.

### Findings

The Sino-Nepal Nepal relation is the oldest in history. However, it started almost in shadowing after Anglo –the Nepal War of 1814-16 since China did not support military assistance as requested by the Nepal government. According to the treaty of Betrawoti – 1792 and Article number -4 confirms that any external threat against Nepalese sovereignty would be defended by Chinese military assistance (Manandhar, 2003., p. 130). After three decades of this war, the Rana rulers started a one-door diplomatic relationship with the British, and the Sino- Nepal relationship was almost ignored till 1955. Then after the trade, transit, pilgrim trips, and people-to-people relations were hindered and even the Sino – Nepal diplomatic communication gap was very wide. Nepal needs to regain its trade and transit flow on a larger scale and enhance Chinese tourist visits to Nepal. The Chinese Silk Road era helped to enhance our economic standard, it continued up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Presently, Nepal has entered into Chinese BRI. However, its implementation and implication aspects are uncertain due to internal and external frictions (Shrestha, 2023). Nepal should carefully determine its perspective of BRI without jeopardizing Nepalese sovereignty. The Nepal-China relationship is historical and needs to bloom with trade, culture, tourism, pilgrim trips, education, and in many more aspects.

### Conclusion

In the end, the Sino-Nepal relationship begins in the ancient period. The pilgrim trips and diplomatic visits have existed since many hundred years ago, which is from the Silk Road era to the present BRI. From the 6th century to the 20th century, people in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces traveled by foot and horseback with packed horses to exchange tea for horses with people in Tibet and thus the pathway was called the Tea and Horse Road. One can trace the history of the Tea and Horse Road back to the period of the Tang dynasty 618-907 and the Tibetan (Tubo) regime. There were two different routes to Sichuan–Tibet Tea Horse Road: it stretched from Yunnan in Sichuan to Lhasa via Luding, Kangding, Batang, and Chamdo in Tibet, and extended to Nepal, Burma, and India. And next was the Yunnan–Tibet Tea Horse Road: it began from Simao (a major tea-producing area) and led to Lhasa, crossing Pu'er in Xishuangbanna, Dali, Lijiang, and

Shangri-La, and continuing to Nepal, and India. It was thus the critical trade route connecting Yunnan to Southern Asia. In this regard, recorded Nepal–China bilateral histories have been kept running from Tea and Horse Road to the present time. Nepal and China have been linked with water resources too as other South Asian countries are linked in this issue.

It is also interesting to note that Nepal- China relationship is the oldest in the diplomatic history of Nepal. In the bilateral Sino – Nepal Military history and for the first time, a 10-day-long joint military exercise "*Sagarmatha Friendship 2017*" took place on a small scale and is a good start to that front. In the end, Nepal-China relations should be enhanced in a constructive form without hindering National integrity.

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