



CULTURAL TIES BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND INDIA: HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CONTEMPORARY EXCHANGES

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Abstract. Cultural cooperation represents a significant dimension of Kazakhstan-India bilateral relations, rooted in historical interactions along the Silk Road and further strengthened in the post-Soviet period through renewed political, diplomatic, and humanitarian engagement. This study examines the evolution, current state, and key trends of cultural relations between the two countries, focusing on historical and cultural ties, religious and philosophical discourse, education, literature, arts, and cinema. Attention is focused on the role of institutional mechanisms, such as bilateral agreements, cultural centers, academic partnerships, and people-to-people exchanges, in fostering cultural dialogue and mutual understanding. This study demonstrates that cultural cooperation plays a pivotal role in deepening bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and India and in fostering broad regional connectivity between Central and South Asia. Furthermore, it highlights the growing importance of cultural diplomacy and soft power as key instruments in contemporary international relations. Based on historical analysis and contemporary policy shifts, this study indicates that cultural ties have become a key pillar of the India-Kazakhstan partnership. Despite challenges such as limited direct connectivity and a lack of public awareness, the rise in digital engagement, educational mobility, and heritage-based tourism offers significant opportunities for deeper cooperation. The study also suggests that sustained cultural engagement can foster mutual trust, promote people-to-people connectivity, and create a favourable and conducive environment for long-term strategic cooperation.

Keywords: Historical Connectivity, Silk Road Heritage, Civilizational Linkages, Educational Cooperation, Cultural Exchange Programs.

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy is an essential tool for promoting international relations and bolstering ties between countries. Cultural exchanges constitute an important dimension of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and India. The shared richness of their historical legacies and cultural diversity provides a strong foundation for cultural diplomacy, which facilitates bilateral cooperation, enhances mutual understanding, and promotes sustained engagement across multiple sectors (Singh et al., 2023). The historical relationship between India and Kazakhstan extends back over two and a half millennia, reflecting a legacy of sustained interaction and mutual influence. Ancient trade

networks connected the peoples of the two regions, promoting not only economic exchange but also the transfer of knowledge, religious traditions, and cultural practices. The dissemination of Buddhism from India into Central Asia and the later spread of Sufism from Central Asia into India stand as enduring examples of these multidimensional exchanges. These deeply rooted connections remain clearly evident today in the similarities found in food, language, attire, and culture (Embassy of India, Astana, 2017).

When we examine the modern diplomatic maps connecting New Delhi to Astana, we are not merely observing a new architecture, but rather a civilizational history. The re-emergence of Kazakhstan in India's foreign policy since the end of the Cold War is often characterized as a 'strategic pivot', however, this description of the relationship between these two Asian nations is not entirely accurate. The history shared by India and Kazakhstan spans over two millennia, extending far beyond the geopolitical upheavals of 1991 (Bhat, 2025, p. 221). Both republics are multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious. They share deep cultural ties, evident in the popularity of yoga, Indian films, dance, and music in Kazakhstan (Embassy of India, Astana, 2017). This study shows that historical continuity and enduring civilizational engagement remain a significant foundation for the development of bilateral cultural cooperation.

Research methods

To analyse or examine the historical foundations and emerging trends in cultural relations between Kazakhstan and India, this study employs a qualitative, descriptive-analytical research methodology. The analysis of primary and secondary sources forms the basis of this study. Bilateral agreements, Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs), joint declarations, and official documents between the governments of Kazakhstan and India, particularly those related to diplomatic, cultural, and educational cooperation serve as examples of the primary material. Scholarly books and journal articles are examples of secondary materials. The growth of Kazakhstan-India cultural ties from ancient civilisational connections and interactions along the Silk Road to contemporary diplomatic and cultural cooperation is traced using the historical method.

The study of current cultural interactions in the domains of education, the arts, tourism, and cultural diplomacy is simplified by the descriptive-analytical method. The cultural policies, cooperative mechanisms, and soft-power tactics used by both nations are evaluated using a comparative method that highlights similarities and differences. Furthermore, the concepts of soft power and cultural diplomacy offer a robust theoretical framework for analysing the role of educational cooperation, cultural exchanges, shared heritage, and interpersonal interactions in enhancing mutual trust and deepening Kazakhstan-India bilateral relations.

Results and discussions. Historical and Civilizational Foundations

The relations between two republics are historical and ancient. In fact, in terms of their scope, content, and range, they can be characterized as 'civilizational.' The ties between these two countries date back over 2,500 years, to the time when members of the 'Saka' tribes traveled to India and built powerful empires in the northwestern part of the country. During the period spanning the 5th to the 12th centuries AD, the 'Great Silk Route' facilitated a continuous and regular flow not only of the trade of goods but, even more significantly, of the free interchange of philosophy, ideas, and thoughts. During this time, Buddhism was also brought to Kazakhstan from India, and Khwaja Ahmed Yassawi's teachings brought Sufism to India. Parallel to this, Mirza Haidar Dughlat left an indelible mark on regions like Kashmir, where they governed for many years (Sajjanhar, 2014, pp. 344-345).

Between the foundations of the ancient Bronze Age and the spiritual evolution of the subsequent Buddhist era lies a pivotal transitional phase- the era of the invasion and settlement of the Shakas and Kushanas in the Indian subcontinent, which commenced in the first century BCE. The Shakas were originally nomadic tribes from Central Asia; this region encompasses present-day Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and their neighboring countries. Their interaction with Indian society resulted in the emergence of a syncretic culture across various domains, including politics, art, religion, language, and social structure (Bhat, 2025, p. 223). The Sakas, also known as Scythians, originated in Kazakhstan. Around 1000 BCE, they moved south and conquered portions of northern India (Kakimzhanov et al., 2023). In the 7th and 6th centuries BC, the Saka people established a powerful kingdom in the Semirechye (Land of Seven Rivers) region of present-day Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Numerous spectacular landmarks of the Saka people can be found in the foothills of the Tian Shan mountains. For instance, the entire history of the Saka people can be observed at the Kurgan complex located near Issyk and Almaty (Stobdan, 2020, p. 167). After capturing Taxila

from the Indo-Greek king Apollodotus II around the end of the first century BCE, Maues became the first Shaka king in South Asia and converted to Buddhism. Buddhism then extended northward into Central Asia, traversing the vast steppe regions of Kazakhstan to reach China (Kakimzhanov et al., 2023).

There is a long history of Buddhism in the region. Buddhist sites can be found in numerous places in Kazakhstan, as well as in the highlands and valleys near the Chinese border and beyond (Mishra, 2012, p. 21). Numerous stones from this era have been discovered at Tanglaly-Tas in Semirechiye, at several locations close to Almaty, and at Zanka Gorge on Lake Issyk-Kul's south side. Buddhist monasteries can be found all around Kazakhstan's Balkhash Lake, including at Almalik, along the Ili River east of the lake near the Kazakh/Chinese border, Kyzyl-Kent near Dzhezkazgan, along the Sary Su River west of the lake, along the Irtysh River north of the lake near the Kazakh/Russian border, etc. The remnants of another Buddhist monastery have been discovered at Ablaiket, close to Ust Kamenogorsk, and there was a large Buddhist monastery at Semipalatinsk. Buddhist monasteries were located east of Almaty along the northern face of the Zailisky Ala Tau Mountains, which divide Kazakhstan from Lake Issyk Kul. Remains of these monasteries may be found in Talgar, which is close to Almaty, and Sumbe, which lies on the border in the Narynkol district. The most recent of them, a wooden monastery, was built in the early nineteenth century in Medeo, close to Almaty. Kashgar had hundreds of monasteries and 10,000 monks, while in Bactria the numbers were more modest (Mishra, 2012, p. 22).

However, there was a resurgence of Buddhism in the area. The second phase of the spread of Buddhism occurred from the 6th–7th centuries AD onwards in the Semirechye region (present-day Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), specifically around the Syr Darya, the Talas River valley, and the Chu Valley (Suyab and Navakat). Archaeological evidence indicates that Buddhism flourished in various forms until the 18th century and reached its peak in the Semirechye region during the 7th and 8th centuries AD (Aryal, 2025, p.196). The vast Silk and Spice Routes linked Kazakhstan with India during the Middle Ages. The two countries were constantly exchanging goods, concepts, and ideologies. The spread of Islam revealed yet another historical parallel in the cultural development of Kazakhstan and India. The main cause of this was the rise of Sufism in India, some of whose ceremonies are similar to our people's old religious beliefs, which are based on the idea that nature and humanity are one. Even today, some people in Northern India bear the surname 'Yasavi,' named after Khwaja Ahmed Yasavi, the founder of the Sufi school in Turkestan. In this context, mention may be made of the journey undertaken by Mullah Zaman from the city of Turkestan to India in 1500 AD, which facilitated the propagation of Sufism (his tomb/grave is located within the Qutub Minar complex in Delhi) (Kakimzhanov et al., 2023).

The city of Taraz in Kazakhstan is one of the most ancient continuously inhabited cities in Kazakhstan. Taraz sat at the crossroads where the foothills of the Tian Shan mountains gaze towards the broader Eurasian horizons. To read classical and medieval chronicles is to see a city that was a vivid, multicultural kaleidoscope. It was a place where merchants from the Indian plains bartered alongside traders from Persia and China (Bhatt, 2025, p. 226). It acted as a vital component of Eurasian prosperity.

Due to shifts in the geopolitical landscape of Asia during the 19th century, the relationship between India and Kazakhstan completely changed. Kazakhstan was part of Central Asia during a period of significant geographic discoveries that started a bit earlier and encompassed many regions of the world that were unknown to Europeans. Along with the customary trade-economic and social ties, the Indian-Kazakh relationship developed into a military and political one. The Russian attack against Kazakhstan and the rivalry between Russia and England in Central Asia were the primary issues. The military and political environment in the area, as well as the nature of India's relationship with Kazakhstan, were shaped by the ongoing conflict between British India and Russia (Abusitova, 2007, p. 54). We can discuss Indian visits to Central Asia within the context of relations, where they sought assistance in their struggle against the British. As a result, in November 1865, two Kashmir maharaja delegates travelled to Tashkent. An embassy of Raja Indor visited Turkistan in 1867, seeking friendship and offering assistance in the event of a conflict between Russia and England. In 1879, Baba Ram Singh travelled to Samarkand in search of assistance for the Singh's fight against the British (Abusitova, 2007, p. 55).

The onset of the British colonial era in Indian history caused a rift in these close ties—relationships that were only fully restored following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. During the period when Kazakhstan was under the colonial dominion of Tsarist Russia and India under that of the British Empire, there was a noticeable stagnation in the relations due to the unfolding "Great Game". Throughout these historical phases, both countries charted their

own distinct paths and struggled for independence. Following the attainment of independence, although India did not actively intervene in Central Asian affairs, its presence in the region nevertheless persisted. During the Soviet era, Indian films and music enjoyed immense popularity throughout Central Asia. Thus, during this period, the relationship between the two states remained largely confined to cultural linkages. Furthermore, in 1955, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, travelled to the Kazakh SSR with Indira Gandhi. Prime Minister Nehru met with the creative thinkers of the Kazakh SSR at the time, as well as Leonid Brezhnev, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (Supyaldiyarov, 2024).

According to Sajjanhar (India's former Ambassador in Kazakhstan), "the popularity of Indian films, culture, dance, and music in Kazakhstan over the past century has brought new aspects to our bilateral relationship. For the past few millennia, there has been a natural tie and affinity between Kazakhstan and India, which would not be an exaggeration. Our relationships are deeply ingrained, lively, and dynamic in the cultural realm. Kazakh people have a particular place in their hearts and thoughts for Indian feature films, dance, music, and culture since we share similar perspectives on life in general." He further states that, "It is not difficult to identify the reasons behind our strong and enduring ties. Both our countries are multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural societies, committed to upholding secular principles and combating radicalism, religious extremism, and terrorism. Our views align on all major domestic and international issues." (Sajjanhar, 2014, p. 345).

Contemporary Cultural Ties

The regular exchange of goods and services has been a defining feature of their connection, going beyond cultural exchanges. Notably, India was among the first countries to recognize Kazakhstan's independence. India opened an embassy in Almaty in 1992, and Kazakhstan opened an embassy in New Delhi in 1993, thereby strengthening diplomatic relations between the two countries (Pradhan, 2021, p. 148). Kazakhstan's foreign policy towards India is based on traditions of friendship and cooperation between the peoples and governments of both republics, and it reflects the desire to further develop and strengthen Kazakh-Indian relations (Chaudhury, 2009, p. 38).

The «Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Art, Education, Science, Mass Media, and Sports between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Republic of India» signed in New Delhi on February 22, 1992, is one of the key documents forming the foundation of cultural and educational relations between Kazakhstan and India. This agreement fosters or promotes mutual cultural exchange and encourages cooperation among the educational, scientific, cultural, sports, and research institutions of both countries. It also facilitates citizens of both countries in pursuing higher education, conducting research, and undergoing vocational training at the educational, cultural, scientific, and technical institutions of the other country, thereby strengthening bilateral ties in these sectors and fostering long-term cooperation (Nurdavletova, 2025, p. 231). Cultural centers, educational collaborations, and language-learning initiatives have played a significant role in fostering mutual understanding.

Based on this agreement (February 22, 1992), a cultural exchange program was formulated, which included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the organization of 'Cultural Days' in both countries. A significant achievement was the ceremony held in India to commemorate the 150th birth anniversaries of Abai Kunanbayuli and Zhambyl Zhabayev, as well as the 100th birth anniversary of Mukhtar Auezov. Collections of their literary works were published in Hindi. In parallel, the commemorative events organized in Kazakhstan on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's 125th birth anniversary—which included the issuance of a special postage stamp—were equally noteworthy (Nurdavletova, 2025, p. 230).

The Indian Cultural Centre was established in 1994, the primary objective of this cultural center is to promote cultural activities and educational cooperation that further strengthen the centuries-old ties between India and Kazakhstan. Through its various activities, the center strives to deepen mutual engagement between the people of both countries. Furthermore, India also offers scholarships to students from Kazakhstan in various disciplines under the ICCR scholarship programs (The Print, 2022). These mutual interactions contributed to the formation of a shared cultural consciousness and laid the foundation for contemporary people-to-people contacts.

Former Ambassador P. Stobdan, who worked as the Director of the Indian Cultural Centre in Almaty from 1999 to 2002 while on assignment in Kazakhstan, stated that Buddhism may still be employed in India as an ancient geopolitical weapon to address the challenges of the new millennium. During his stay in Kazakhstan, significant attempts were made to maintain the Buddhist heritage of India. Despite the widespread recognition of the importance

of Buddhist diplomacy, significant efforts have not yet resulted in full-fledged power. When travelling for business, the Indian government should do more to encourage citizens to visit Buddhist temples and shrines (Kakimzhanov et al., 2023).

In addition to the foundational agreement signed on February 22, 1992, between the 'Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan' and the 'Government of the Republic of India' regarding cooperation in the fields of culture, arts, education, science, mass media, and sports, educational cooperation has been further strengthened through a series of institutional agreements. In 2002, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and Jawaharlal Nehru University; subsequently, in 2005, another MoU was signed between the Faculty of International Relations at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and the research centers of Jawaharlal Nehru University. These agreements have made a significant contribution to the development of Kazakhstan-India educational relations by facilitating student and faculty exchanges, promoting joint academic and research initiatives, and fostering long-term institutional cooperation between the leading universities of both countries (Nurdavletova, 2025, pp. 231-232). Such educational interactions contribute not only to knowledge exchange but also to the development of long-term cultural understanding.

In 2005–2006, "Kazakh Culture Days" in India and "Indian Culture Days" in Kazakhstan were successfully organized, reflecting a mutual interest in cultural engagement and soft diplomacy. A significant turning point in the relationship between the two republics occurred in 2009 with the signing of the document titled "India-Kazakhstan: Vision for Strategic Partnership." This document marked a major step towards strengthening the cooperation agenda between the two countries, outlining a framework for collaboration in areas such as tourism, education, and the preservation of cultural heritage (Nurdavletova, 2025, p. 230).

In the twenty-first century, people-to-people contacts hold the key to the success of cooperation. India is widely admired in Central Asia for its humanitarian image and the popularity of Indian films. In Kazakhstan, many people are interested in exploring India's culture and civilization. This cultural engagement is supported by two Centres for Indian Studies and an India-Kazakhstan Friendship Association involving citizens of both countries. The first Symphonic Orchestra of India was founded with assistance from Kazakh musician Marat Bisengalieva, and a new Kazakh instructor was hired to teach the Kazakh language at Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi (Chaudhury, 2009, pp. 39-40). Kazakhstan is a popular travel location as well. Beautiful natural vistas coexist with contemporary towns and ancient sites. The country offered a variety of sights and experiences, including snow-capped mountains, singing dunes, deep and scenic gorges, flatlands and forests, rivers, and lakes. However, the warmth and friendliness of the Kazakh people is the most valuable firsthand experience one may have there. Almaty is closer to Delhi than certain places in South India because it takes just three hours to go there from Delhi. (Chaudhury, 2009, p. 40). Kazakhstan and India were dynamically progressing countries, making it inevitable for them to engage with each other more intensively.

In the keynote address delivered by Minister of State Shri E. Ahamed at the first 'India-Central Asia Dialogue' on 12 June 2012, he also stressed the importance of India-Central Asia cultural relations, and said, "India's cultural heritage is deeply rooted in the Eurasian past. Indian traders and travelers had actively traded along the Silk Route and Buddhism had flourished across the vast Eurasian steppe. History is full of friendly interactions between India and Central Asia, through movement of people, goods and ideas, including spiritual interfaces that enriched us both. The fondness for Indian culture is expressed in Central Asia's deep interest in Indian cinema, music, and art. This interest intensified further in Soviet times." (MEA, GoI 2012).

Shilibekova (2012) states that, generally, an examination of relations between any two countries reveals that an effective partnership functions only when the goals and interests of both states align. Consequently, if two countries move in the same direction, they are able to achieve their objectives more rapidly and effectively. In the foreign policies of both India and Kazakhstan—as well as in the foreign policy of Central Asia as a region—this subject has rarely been accorded top priority on the agenda. Nevertheless, in terms of mutually beneficial partnerships and cooperation across various sectors, these two nations continue to hold a significant position in relation to one another. (Shilibekova, 2012, p. 47). Additionally She highlights, during her address (at the First India-Central Asia Dialogue in Bishkek, 12–13 June 2012), Her Excellency Roza I. Otunbayeva (former President of Kyrgyzstan) mentioned that "if there is an 'idea' of India, there is also an 'idea' of Central Asia." But the most important factor which makes these ideas possible is human resources. The focus of the cooperation currently must be to bring people together and develop our own resources. (Shilibekova, 2012, p. 48).

Shilibekova (2012) emphasizes that there are several key factors that need to be addressed to develop successful and meaningful capacity building programmes and partnerships. Universities are actors who implement such programmes that contribute to capacity building on knowledge, innovation and technology. Universities and research institutions must be the locomotives that lead and foster development. Another aspect is the development of dual degree programmes, in which the national universities of both countries could act as drivers. A visit to the Jawaharlal Nehru University and meeting with the Vice Chancellor of the University revealed that there was great potential and desire from both sides to work together, but we talk the talk but don't walk the walk. Kazakhstan is exploring avenues for cooperation and striving to attract especially Indian - as well as other scholars - to our university. The Ministry of Higher Education of Kazakhstan this year gave us more than \$ 3 million (US) for VIPP (Visiting International Professor Programme) to attract academics and foster academic interaction. The first thing could be to launch a co-operative initiative based on long-term collaboration between Jawaharlal Nehru University and Eurasian National University. (Shilibekova, 2012, pp. 48-49). By further expanding, this model can create a network of universities not only between India and Kazakhstan, but also between India and Central Asia.

On July 7–8, 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the Republic of India made an official visit to the Republic of Kazakhstan at the invitation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Prime Minister Modi met with Prime Minister Massimov and President Nazarbayev during this visit. India-Kazakhstan relations have historically been characterised by a spirit of mutual understanding, which was evident in the pleasant and friendly mood of the discussions. The leaders of both countries acknowledged the importance of sustained cultural exchanges in the fields of arts and culture as an integral component of bilateral cooperation. They expressed their willingness to facilitate reciprocal cultural festivals and pledged support for organising cultural events in each other's countries. Both leaders also emphasised the importance of exploring their shared historical heritage and promoting tourism in India and Kazakhstan to strengthen people-to-people contacts. Prime Minister Narendra Modi further commended President Nursultan Nazarbayev for hosting Kazakhstan's first International Day of Yoga on 21 June 2015 and for supporting the United Nations resolution establishing the observance (MEA, GoI, 2015).

Cultural diplomacy has emerged as a significant pillar of India-Kazakhstan relations. The widespread appreciation of yoga, Indian films, dance, and music among the Kazakhstani public demonstrates the increasing influence of India's cultural outreach. The Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Astana plays a central role in this process by organising yoga, dance, and music classes throughout the year. Educational cooperation complements these cultural initiatives through the ICCR scholarship programmes, which give Kazakhstani students the chance to study in India across many disciplines. The observance of the International Day of Yoga in twenty-one Kazakhstani cities in 2024 and the allocation of fifteen scholarships to Kazakhstan under the ICCR General Scholarship Scheme highlight the sustained expansion of bilateral cultural and educational exchanges. Eligible Kazakh citizens are welcome to participate in this program. Renowned Indian institutions offer courses in fields such as: i) Agriculture, Food, and Fertilisers; ii) Artificial Intelligence; iii) Banking, Finance, Accounts, and Audit; iv) Cyber Technology; v) Education; vi) Engineering and Technology; vii) Hindi Language; viii) Environment and Climate Change; ix) Governance; x) Health and Yoga; xi) Human Resource Development and Planning, etc. One seat was utilised in 2022–2023, while five seats were utilised in 2023–2024. More than eighty musicians from Kazakhstan's Philharmonia Chamber Choir travelled to Delhi to participate in the 33rd Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival held in New Delhi. On January 5, 2024, Minister of State Meenakshi Lekhi launched 'Bharat Symphony'. (MEA, GoI, 2024).

A delegation led by Kanat Tumysh, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, visited New Delhi on February 13–14, 2023, to participate in the eighth round of political consultations between the foreign ministries of Kazakhstan and India. Sanjay Verma, the Secretary (West) of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, co-chaired the meeting. Mr. Tumysh emphasised that Kazakhstan considers New Delhi to be one of Astana's main strategic allies in Asia and places a high value on expanding its diverse cooperation with India. In terms of culture, there is a long history of interaction between the peoples of the two nations. Busts of Gandhi ji, an Indian political figure, and Abai Kunanbayev, a poet and thinker from Kazakhstan, were installed in New Delhi in June 2022 and Astana in October 2022, respectively, as a sign of respect and trust between the republics and their citizens. (Nurdavletova, 2025, p. 237).

On July 12, 2024, a meeting took place in Almaty at the «Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies» (KISI) – an institution under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan—with Mr. Swapnil Kothawade (Consul of India

in Almaty). The visit aimed to meet with experts, gain insight into KISI's operations – particularly its research on Asian affairs—discuss potential avenues for cooperation, and explore possibilities for joint programs and projects. Mr. Kothawade expressed a desire to foster connections between research and analytical centers in Kazakhstan and India, as well as among experts from both republics; this initiative would help deepen mutual understanding and strengthen bilateral relations. (KazISS under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024).

A Yeskarayev, the Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to India, met with Vivek Agarwal, India's Secretary of Culture, in New Delhi on August 27, 2025. During this meeting, both sides discussed the prospects for developing cooperation in the cultural sphere, as well as the possibility of implementing joint initiatives in this sector. The 33rd anniversary of Kazakhstan and India's diplomatic ties was given particular attention by Ambassador Yeskarayev. He added that Kazakhstan places a high value on its long-standing strategic connection with India, which is marked by strong people-to-people contacts and increased collaboration in the humanitarian and educational domains. Furthermore, the Head of the Kazakh diplomatic mission proposed considering the possibility of establishing a cultural center named 'Abai' in New Delhi or Mumbai – modeled after the 'Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre' located in Astana – and also suggested naming a street in New Delhi after this eminent Kazakh figure. Secretary Agarwal highlighted the potential for submitting joint nominations to secure the inclusion of historical sites from both India and Kazakhstan in UNESCO's 'World Heritage List.' At the conclusion of the meeting, both sides agreed to implement various measures aimed at further deepening cooperation between the two countries in the fields of museums, theater, and the film industry. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025).

The Kazakh diplomat, Ambassador Azamat Yeskarayev, mentioned during the April 9, 2026, meeting that the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of India commemorated their 34th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations on February 22, 2026. It was underlined that bilateral relations are based on strong historical and cultural links and go much beyond formal diplomacy. (Zhexenbekov, 2026). Simultaneously, tourism has become an increasingly important mechanism for cultural interaction, supported by improved connectivity, governmental initiatives, and growing public interest in cultural heritage.

Analysis reveals deep historical and cultural ties between Kazakhstan and India, predating the establishment of modern diplomatic relations. Historical exchanges via the Silk Road facilitated the sharing of goods, ideas, religious beliefs, creative traditions, and educational insights between the Indian subcontinent and the region that is now Kazakhstan. These exchanges laid the foundation for modern people-to-people ties and helped foster mutual cultural understanding. The study reveals that long-standing civilizational ties and shared historical experiences continue to serve as a crucial foundation for enhancing bilateral cultural cooperation. The results also show that since diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and India were established in 1992, cultural exchanges have grown in importance. The cultural dimension of India-Kazakhstan relations has expanded considerably through bilateral agreements, cultural festivals, exhibitions, artistic performances, and institutional cooperation. Academic partnerships, language-learning programmes, and cultural centres have emerged as important instruments for promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Indian culture has established a strong presence in Kazakhstan, largely through the popularity of Bollywood films, music, dance, yoga, and traditional medicine. Conversely, growing scholarly engagement and cultural exchanges have contributed to a greater appreciation of Kazakhstan's historical legacy, cultural traditions, and national heritage in India. Furthermore, one of the most dynamic aspects of modern cultural interchange is educational cooperation.

Despite these encouraging advancements, there are still several difficulties. Deeper cooperation is hampered, according to the study, by low public awareness, inadequate institutional coordination, language constraints, and comparatively low levels of cultural interaction relative to the relationship's potential. Increased government assistance, more academic and cultural collaborations, and improved tourism cooperation are all necessary to address these issues. The findings suggest that Kazakhstan-India cultural relations have progressed from shared historical and civilizational linkages to a broad-based framework of contemporary collaboration spanning cultural diplomacy, education, the arts, and tourism. A solid basis for future cooperation is provided by the persistence of historical links as well as increasing institutional involvement and interpersonal encounters. The long-term growth of Kazakhstan-India relations will be strengthened by enhanced cultural exchanges, targeted policy initiatives, expanded educational cooperation, and sustained cultural diplomacy.

Conclusion

Finally, it is important to focus on the potential of India and Kazakhstan based on commonalities between the two countries that bring us together on the platform of further cooperation. Today, India is viewed as a regional power with historical bonds with the Central Asian region. The same can be said of Kazakhstan, as it successfully implements a multi-vector foreign policy, promotes regional cooperation with a focus on diversification of industry and economy, all based on the pursuance of a strategy that stresses developing regional communication hubs and an active, vigorous policy that is based on industrial innovation and development. His Excellency, Ambassador Sikri mentioned (at the First India–Central Asia Dialogue in Bishkek, 12–13 June 2012) about the Silk Route today, which is seen not only as a route for trading in goods and services, but will also serve as a market for ideas, knowledge, experience and technology. In this regard, we can only underscore the significance of science, technology and innovation in achieving development goals and enhancing the economic well-being of our people, which is probably the most important goal and objective for all states in the world (Shilibekova, 2012, p. 48). Both countries are committed to enhancing educational cooperation, specifically through student exchanges and the development of joint academic programs; both play a pivotal role in fostering close ties between the younger generations of the two countries. Additionally, both sides regard tourism as an extremely essential aspect of cultural exchange. In essence, tracing the civilizational ties between India and Kazakhstan reveals not only a shared past but also a promising pathway toward a future of enhanced cooperation, closer collaboration, and stronger people-to-people relations.

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**Қазақстан мен Үндістан арасындағы мәдени байланыстар: тарихи негіздері
және қазіргі мәдени алмасулар**

Аңдатпа. Мәдени ынтымақтастық Қазақстан мен Үндістан арасындағы екіжақты қатынастардың маңызды бағыты болып саналады. Оның негізі Ұлы Жібек жолы бойындағы тарихи байланыстардан бастау алып, посткеңестік кезеңде жанданған саяси, дипломатиялық және гуманитарлық ықпалдастық арқылы одан әрі нығая түсті. Зерттеуде екі ел арасындағы мәдени қарым-қатынастардың қалыптасуы мен дамуы, қазіргі жай-күйі және негізгі үрдістері қарастырылып, тарихи-мәдени байланыстарға, діни-философиялық дискурсқа, білім беру, әдебиет, өнер және кино салаларына ерекше назар аударылады.

Мәдени диалог пен өзара түсіністікті дамытудағы екіжақты келісімдер, мәдени орталықтар, академиялық әріптестік және халықтар арасындағы алмасулар секілді институционалдық тетіктердің рөліне баса мән беріледі. Зерттеу мәдени ынтымақтастықтың Қазақстан мен Үндістан арасындағы екіжақты қатынастарды тереңдетуде, сондай-ақ Орталық және Оңтүстік Азия арасындағы кең ауқымды өңірлік байланыстарды нығайтуда шешуші рөл атқаратынын көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар қазіргі халықаралық қатынастардың негізгі құралдары ретінде мәдени дипломатия мен «жұмсақ күштің» маңызы артып келе жатқаны айқындалады.

Тарихи талдау мен қазіргі саяси өзгерістер негізінде жүргізілген зерттеу мәдени байланыстардың

Қазақстан-Үндістан әріптестігінің басты тіректерінің біріне айналғанын көрсетеді. Тікелей көлік қатынасының шектеулілігі және қоғамның өзара ақпараттану деңгейінің төмендігі сияқты мәселелерге қарамастан, цифрлық өзара іс-қимылдың, білім беру ұтқырлығының және мәдени мұраға негізделген туризмнің дамуы ынтымақтастықты тереңдетуге елеулі мүмкіндіктер ұсынады. Сондай-ақ зерттеу тұрақты мәдени ықпалдастықтың өзара сенімді нығайтуға, халықтар арасындағы байланыстарды кеңейтуге және ұзақ мерзімді стратегиялық ынтымақтастық үшін қолайлы жағдай қалыптастыруға ықпал ететінін тұжырымдайды.

Түйін сөздер: тарихи байланыстар, Ұлы Жібек жолының мұрасы, өркениеттік сабақтастық, білім беру саласындағы ынтымақтастық, мәдени алмасу бағдарламалары.

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Культурные связи между Казахстаном и Индией: исторические основы и современные обмены

Аннотация. Культурное сотрудничество представляет собой важное направление двусторонних отношений между Казахстаном и Индией, истоки которого восходят к историческим контактам, сложившимся вдоль Великого шелкового пути. В постсоветский период эти связи получили дальнейшее развитие благодаря активизации политического, дипломатического и гуманитарного взаимодействия. В исследовании рассматриваются эволюция, современное состояние и основные тенденции культурных отношений между двумя странами. Особое внимание уделяется историко-культурным связям, религиозно-философскому дискурсу, а также сотрудничеству в сферах образования, литературы, искусства и кинематографа. Анализируется роль таких институциональных механизмов, как двусторонние соглашения, культурные центры, академическое партнерство и межличностные контакты, в развитии культурного диалога и укреплении взаимопонимания. Результаты исследования показывают, что культурное сотрудничество играет ключевую роль в углублении двусторонних отношений между Казахстаном и Индией, а также в расширении региональных связей между Центральной и Южной Азией. Кроме того, подчеркивается возрастающее значение культурной дипломатии и «мягкой силы» как важных инструментов современных международных отношений. На основе исторического анализа и изучения актуальных изменений государственной политики установлено, что культурные связи превратились в одну из ключевых составляющих казахстанско-индийского партнерства. Несмотря на такие проблемы, как ограниченность прямого сообщения и недостаточная осведомленность общественности, развитие цифрового взаимодействия, академической мобильности и туризма, основанного на культурном наследии, открывает значительные возможности для углубления сотрудничества. В исследовании также отмечается, что устойчивое культурное взаимодействие способствует укреплению взаимного доверия, расширению контактов между народами и формированию благоприятных условий для долгосрочного стратегического сотрудничества.

Ключевые слова: исторические связи, наследие Великого шелкового пути, цивилизационные связи, сотрудничество в сфере образования, программы культурного обмена.

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