



Exploring the Cultural Ties between India and Kazakhstan: A Comprehensive Review

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ABSTRACT

This comprehensive review explores the rich and evolving cultural ties between India and Kazakhstan, emphasizing the significant role of cultural exchanges in strengthening bilateral relations. Over the years, both countries have engaged in a variety of initiatives, including art exhibitions, music festivals, educational collaborations, and language programs, aimed at fostering mutual understanding and respect. These exchanges have facilitated a deeper appreciation of each other's traditions, from India's classical music and dance forms to Kazakhstan's folk arts and literature. This review also highlights how cultural diplomacy has not only enriched the societies of both nations but has also paved the way for enhanced cooperation in areas such as trade, tourism, and education. These initiatives have led to increased people-to-people contact, allowing both countries to share knowledge, develop common values, and encourage more global dialogue. By examining key cultural initiatives and their impact, this paper underscores the importance of continued cultural dialogue in building a solid foundation for future collaboration between India and Kazakhstan, reinforcing their shared values and aspirations for global peace and prosperity. This sustained cultural partnership holds the potential for addressing global challenges while enhancing the international standing of both nations.



Introduction

The cultural relationship between India and Kazakhstan is deeply rooted in shared historical connections and ongoing collaborations across various fields, including arts, education, and community engagement. Historically, both nations have been influenced by the Silk Road, a significant trade route that not only facilitated economic exchanges but also enabled the movement of ideas, art, and culture. This shared heritage is reflected in the increasing number of cultural events and initiatives that highlight traditional music, dance, and crafts from both countries. Indian festivals like Diwali have become a part of Kazakhstan's cultural celebrations, while Kazakh traditions such as Nauryz are increasingly embraced in India.¹ This exchange highlights the rich cultural interplay between the two nations, weaving a vibrant and dynamic tapestry of shared traditions. Furthermore, educational exchanges have become a cornerstone of their cultural relationship, with scholarships offered to students from Kazakhstan to study in India and vice versa.²

These initiatives not only enhance academic collaboration but also foster personal connections and mutual understanding among young people, laying the groundwork for future diplomatic ties. The establishment of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Astana plays a significant role in promoting cultural exchange and fostering a deeper understanding of Indian traditions, philosophy, and heritage in Kazakhstan. This dynamic exchange underscores the importance of cultural diplomacy as a means of reinforcing strategic partnerships, positioning Kazakhstan not only as a key player in India's energy security but also as a vital cultural ally. The cultural ties between India and Kazakhstan have fostered mutual respect and understanding, enriching both societies through ongoing exchanges. These initiatives lay a strong foundation for continued collaboration, ensuring deeper bilateral cooperation in the future.³

Strategic Importance of Kazakhstan for India

There are three factors which make Kazakhstan important for India. First, its geo-strategic location; second, its economic potential, especially in terms of energy resources; and third, its multi-ethnic and secular structure. Kazakhstan's geo-political existence between Russia and Asia, along with long borders with China, makes it a country of great strategic importance.⁴ Kazakhstan is the largest country of Central Asia and occupies strategically important place both geographical and geopolitical wise being neighbours with Russia in the north and China in the east. This geographical position makes Kazakhstan a centrally embedded country in the major trade and energy arteries such as the BRI espoused by China. Since Kazakhstan is a member of some prominent organizations like SCO and EAEU, it is an important player in international forums, and for this reason, important for India. Kazakhstan possesses one of the



biggest proved oil, natural gas & uranium deposits, which are critical for the energy starved India. India suffers nuclear with uranium from Kazakhstan for its civilian nuclear requirements since 2009. It has been identified that Kazakhstan plays a significant role for India in reaching out to Central Asia and Europe through fused evacuated connections. Kazakhstan is one of the countries through which India is actively building the International North-South Transport Corridor that would give easier access to markets of Russia, Central Asia, and Europe.⁵ Finally, despite active terrorism remaining a common problem for both nations, cooperation within the SCO has provided an opportunity for developing intensified counter-terrorism relations. The above strategies help to reveal the general cultural context of the relations between India and Kazakhstan. Thus, Kazakhstan is of significant value for India in terms of energy supply, geographical location, and security of the region. The strategic partnership with Kazakhstan serves the goal of diversifying the resources that India gets from Central Asia besides promoting favourable economic relations with the nations of the region to boost India's power in the area. These consistencies help India to fortify its cultural, economic, and diplomatic ties with Kazakhstan and maintain the country as a strategic partner on its geopolitical map.⁶

Historical Context of Cultural Ties

The history of bilateral relations between India and Kazakhstan in the cultural sphere dates to more than two and a half millennia. This has made their relationship shaped through various interactions, exchanges of goods, ideas, and philosophies through features such as the ancient trade routes, the silk road for instance. The great interactions between India and Central Asia during the early medieval period which include the exportation of Buddhism and the importation of Sufi influences.⁷ In period, the destiny of the two countries/regions has become even more connected with the influences from other ones for example with the influences from the kings of the Indo-Scythian Kingdom and then with the Mughal Empire whose roots have been traced back to Central Asia as well. The Relations between the two nations were sporadic, particularly under colonial involvement, but in recent years, diplomatic and cultural links have developed. Indian traders, scholars and merchants visited and interacted with this part and introduced the concept of Buddhism in Kazakhstan. During the medieval period Persian and Turkic origin which was supposedly dominant at the lifestyle of Kazakhstan for centuries helped spread into India particularly during the Mughals. Therefore, there are original architectural styles and the languages as well as music that originated in Central Asia belonged to India. He also addresses the relations by tracing it to interactions brought about by movements of nomadic tribes and interactions of traders. Thus, these historical connections have served a basis on which India and Kazakhstan could begin to forge more formal cultural relations in the new world. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the



two countries, educational exchanges have been activated by cultural interchange for art and cultures such as exchange of artistic shows, educational relations, and cultural fairs.⁸ The Indian community in Kazakhstan, as well as the Kazakh people in India, have made significant contributions to the development of this connection, since they are essential interconnectors that encourage cultural, artistic, literary, and other contacts today. The further development of bilateral relations and the people interest in their cultural connections make the history of interactions quite valuable. Nowadays India and Kazakhstan remain mutually friendly and develop the relations in various spheres, which indicates that there are a continuous friendly political and economic relations between these two nations.⁹

Diplomatic and Cultural Foundations

This analysis looks at the development of the diplomatic relationship of India and Central Asia's leading light, Kazakhstan when the former emerged as an independent nation in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991. Since then, both the countries have engaged in several regimes to enhance cultural and diplomatic relations. The Cultural Cooperation Agreement signed in the 1990s paved ways to organize cultures festivals, exchange of artists and scholars, and conducts exhibitions intending to spotlight the cultures of both the countries.¹⁰ The Indian and Kazakh embassies actively promote cultural connections. Indian classical music, dance, yoga, and film have been promoted in Kazakhstan in recent years by the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) in Astana, Kazakhstan.¹¹ However, Kazakhstan has been able to display its rich nomadic heritage in arts and crafts and cultural related exhibitions and fairs to India. A diverse mix of ethnicities such as Russians, Uzbeks, Ukrainians, and Tatars ("Tatar" refers to various Turkic-speaking ethnic groups primarily located in Russia, Kazakhstan, and parts of Eastern Europe) is found in Kazakhstan, and this has an added effect of making the nation a culturally diverse one to accept the India culture. This openness is evident in the acceptance of India related entities such as Yog, Bollywood, Classical Indian music, etc., in Kazakhstan. In addition, educational exchanges and tourism have also boosted the interaction of people of the two countries and have added on to the cross-cultural relationship between the two nations essential in today's global village.¹²

Cultural Exchange Initiatives

Cultural cooperation between India and Kazakhstan is an important aspect of the two countries overall relations, as both nations have participated in a variety of cultural events to assist improve diplomatic relations. These interactions have taken place in different areas such as art, music, writing, education, and religion. India's cultural diplomacy has been more effective; the Indian Embassy runs the Swami



Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Astana, where events are being held in the areas of language, yoga, classical dance, and music, and more. These initiatives have allowed the people of Kazakhstan to explore India's heritage and vice versa, thereby reinforcing the cultural ties between the two nations. Similarly, Kazakhstan has also exchanged its culture with India in terms of the organizing cultural events reflecting its folk music, painting, and dance as well. These friendly relations have been buttressed by educational intercourse in the form of exchanges of scholarships and collaborative academic programs to create awareness of cultural as well as historical and values systems. Other events that have been dedicated in breaking barriers and reducing the cultural differences include the yoga workshops and the Indian classical music festivals. Such exchanges are not limited to mere entertainment or educational functions but are a way to foster long-term people-to-people diplomacy and enhance diplomatic relations.¹³ These measures will help India and Kazakhstan expand the basis of cultural cooperation that goes beyond establishing diplomatic relations and, thus, will contribute to realizing the basic aims and objectives of the two countries in the 21st century. Cultural tourism has become one of the most popular interests between India and Kazakhstan, and the youth of India seeming to look for the steppes, mountains, and the lakes of Kazakhstan. The attractions that interest Kazakh tourists include the historical and cultural centres, and facilities for receiving spa treatments. The tourists increase the traffic of people between the two nations and improve the relations at every level by encouraging the understanding of the two cultures. Education ties have also improved the relations, now there are thousands of Kazakh students in Indian universities, their chosen directions are mainly medicine, engineering, and computer science. Students from India are also using the medical education system in Kazakhstan with standard education that is cheap and has international accreditation. Such exchange of students has fostered friendly relations besides nurturing a cultural belt that has helped in boosting diplomatic relations and formation of future relations.¹⁴

In conclusion, cultural exchange initiatives between India and Kazakhstan have proven to be a cornerstone in enhancing bilateral relations, fostering mutual respect, and promoting a deeper understanding between the two nations. These exchanges have played a crucial role in bridging gaps, not only in terms of culture but also in education, tourism, and trade. By sharing traditions, arts, literature, and music, both countries have created platforms for dialogue, encouraging greater people-to-people contact and collaboration. Such initiatives have allowed both India and Kazakhstan to celebrate their rich cultural legacies while also learning from each other's strengths. They have paved the way for joint cultural programs, educational exchanges, and collaborative projects that benefit both societies. The growth of these relationships provides fertile ground for increased strategic, economic, and diplomatic



cooperation, ensuring that the foundation laid today will continue to foster strong, meaningful connections for years to come.¹⁵

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the general development of the cultural cooperation between India and Kazakhstan, it is still possible to identify several issues. One of the major challenges that can limit the two countries to better appreciation of each other's cultures is geographical distance, language barrier, and relatively few smooth connecting links. Moreover, India's cultural diplomacy in Central Asia which comprises Kazakhstan also has fierce competitors with China and Russia in particular, both of which have historical relations with the country. However, these are minimized so much by the numerous opportunities which exist within the system to foster further synergism.¹⁶ The interest in Yoga, Ayurveda and wellness gives special importance to the Indian brands in the health-conscious population in Kazakhstan, and of course the movie fans, continue to remain an effective tool of major importance in the communication processes between India and Kazakhstan. Since both are the strategic partners looking for improvement in economic and strategic collaboration it can be expected that cultural relation would also grow further through more people to people contact and collaborations in tourism and education sectors. In this regard, one cannot overestimate the use of technology and social media. The access provided by technological advancements in social connections via phones and social networks is useful in building bridges for newfound relationships via the formation of reciprocal cultural exchanges employing rejoinders between the two countries.¹⁷ A webinar, virtual cultural festival and online art exhibitions are some of the ways of engaging the youths in promoting bilateral relations. Additionally, educational cooperation in form of active research partnerships, and exchange of students can also lead to improved cultural relations between the two countries. As both nations use technology to convey culture, there is a good chance that the environment created will allow for cultural interexchange in terms of ideas, customs, and other novelties, paving the way for much greater cultural synergy between the two nations. This adds qualitative variety to the experience of both citizens of the two countries and is beneficial to building up a diplomatic architecture to support cultural diplomacy as a permanent segment of the partnership of India and Kazakhstan.¹⁸

Conclusion

The relationship between India and Kazakhstan within the cultural domain is a relatively new story based on centuries of history, recognition, and gradual interdependence. Despite the commercial aspect of the relationship with an emphasis on energy security and the role of Kazakhstan regarding India's



connectivity to Central Asia, there is a rich and flourishing cultural relationship between the two countries. The popular movies, especially the Bollywood picture, the ever-rising popularity of yoga, the exchange of students and scholars have paved way for further cooperation. India's quest for a more strategic engagement in the Central Asia region is likely to make the cultural diplomacy with Kazakhstan an equally important component of its foreign policy in the region. It is evident that the cultural background of both nations is rich, and the two countries can easily cooperate in the spheres of art, music, education and, of course, in the sphere of diplomacy. India and Kazakhstan have reached the level where they can enhance their people to people contact and cultural exchange programs so that further strengthening of their historical relationship can be made. It deepens the bilateral relationship, and contributes to the general awareness of the concept of conveying cultural relations during globalisation towards positive change in the coming years.

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