

Kalapani issue

January 23, 2020

Source: *The Hindu*

Manifest pedagogy: India and Nepal are historical friends with common culture and interests. But in recent decades with the fall of the Monarchy in Nepal and emergence of communists and other forces the relations have been a little rough. In the context of China's overbearing attitude in Indian neighbourhood we need to resolve all the issues amicably with our neighbours. In this context we need to concentrate upon some of the important issues like the Kalapani Issue.

In news: India, Nepal to hold talks on Kalapani issue

Placing it in syllabus: India-Nepal relations

Static dimensions:

- Kalapani historical aspects of conflict
- Agreements signed to solve the issue

Current dimensions:

- Why is the conflict lingering?
- Solutions

Content:

Kalapani historical aspects of conflict:

- In **1816**, the **East India Company and Nepal signed the Treaty of Sagauli** under the conclusion of the Anglo-Nepalese War and Nepalese territories including Darjeeling were handed over to the British East India Company as concessions.
- The treaty defined **river Mahakali** as the **western border of Nepal**.
- Several **tributaries** of River Mahakali **merge at Kalapani**.

- **India claims** that the river begins in Kalapani as this is where all its tributaries merge.
- But **Nepal claims that the river begins from Lipulekh Pass**, the origin of most of its tributaries.



- Hence **Nepal has laid claim to all areas east of the Lipu Gad** – the rivulet that joins the river Kali on its border.
- According to Nepal, the Kalapani area was **included in the Census of Nepal until 58 years ago**.
- According to some sources, the late Nepalese **King Mahendra had “handed over the territory” to India in 1962** in the wake of the India-China war.
- Nepal has claimed that India had occupied an additional 62 sq km land.
- However a **map of 1879 shows Kalapani as part of British India** and India on its part has presented administrative and tax records dating back to 1830s to back its claims.
- Nepal has also raised concern over **Lipulekh Pass**, which has been made a **trading tri-junction route between India and China**, reportedly without Nepal’s consent, since 2015.
- However the **Indian side claims that Lipulekh pass has been referred to as a border trading point since 1954**.

Though in 1981, a Joint Technical Boundary Committee was formed, no final settlement could be reached. In 2014, joint commission meeting was led by the foreign ministers. In 2016, an Eminent Persons Group was formed to look into several bilateral issues.

Why is the conflict lingering:

- As the Indian government released the new map of India on November 2, 2019, following the reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir, the **bone of contention now is a 35-**

square km area within Uttarakhand.

- **Nepal claims that the Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani areas shown in India's maps lie within its territory.**



- Nepal's Supreme **court has ordered the government to submit the original map** exchanged with India during the signing of the Sugauli treaty in 1816.



- It has also asked the authorities to **furnish other official maps either exchanged** with various countries or with international organisations including the United Nations.
- It has directed to submit the original map exchanged while signing a Boundary Treaty with India in 1960, the map published by the East-India Company on February 1, 1827 and a separate map published by the British Government in 1847.
- However India has rejected allegations and has said that the map accurately depicts the sovereign territory of India and has in no manner revised its boundary with Nepal.
- With Kalapani dispute, the **Susta territorial dispute** has arisen as a result of the **shifting of the course of the Gandak river.**
- The Treaty of Sagauli defined Gandak as the international boundary between India and Nepal and at that time Susta was on the right bank of the river Gandak which falls in Nepal territorial control.
- But, in due course of time, the **river has changed its course and Susta now falls on the left bank of the Gandak, which is controlled by India.**

Importance of Kalapani:

The 35-square kilometre region plays a **strategic role** in this tug-of-war. Kalapani is a **trijunction meeting point of India, Tibet and Nepal borders**. Since 1962, it has been manned by the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**.

Lipulekh Pass in Kalapani serves as an important vantage point for India to keep an eye on Chinese movements. **India's surveillance of Chinese movements** are aided by the height of the Lipulekh pass.

Solutions:

The latest maps have nothing to do with Nepal and were published to reflect the recent bifurcation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). According to **There is no change in the depiction of India-Nepal boundary**.

Though in the past, Nepal had claimed territory in the Kalapani area and Susta (in Uttar Pradesh) as its own, both sides had agreed that **these differences should be resolved through friendly negotiations** and their foreign secretaries were mandated to undertake this exercise.

In recent years, Nepal has blamed India for interfering in its internal matters. The relationship deteriorated considerably after the unofficial 135-days trade blockade of Nepal in 2015.

Despite this, **India still enjoys great leverage with Nepal**. India is **Nepal's largest trading partner** and the two countries are **culturally intertwined**. In the past, India has played a considerable role in **maintaining stability and development in Nepal**.

Since the free movement of people is permitted across the border, **Nepal enjoys immense strategic relevance from India's national security point of view**. Therefore, stable and friendly relations with Nepal is one of prerequisites which India can't afford to overlook.

Nepal has proposed **foreign secretary-level talks with India in mid-January** on the boundary issue. It is therefore imperative to resolve the issue by peaceful negotiations which will be a win-win situation for both the countries.

The existing bilateral treaties between India and Nepal have not taken the shifting of Himalayan rivers into consideration. Hence both nations should try to resolve the dispute by **taking into account all shared environmental characteristics.**