

## **India-Iraq Bilateral Relations**

**MEMOONAH BAIG**

Research Scholar (West Asian Political Science)

Department of West Asian and North African Studies, Faculty of International Studies  
Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (U.P.) India

### **ABSTRACT**

**Key Words :** Iraq relations, Gulf war, Indus valley, Mesopotamia

### **INTRODUCTION**

India and Iraq relations based on traditionally, friendly and collaborations. Both the nations Republic of Iraq and Republic of India have economic and culture interaction from the period of 1800 BCE, Indus Valley and Mesopotamia was the famous route, Both the nations have civilization and ancient ties the very famous Basra Iraqi port maintain a market which was related to food, grains, textiles, commodities of Arab world like spices, Pearl trade and jewellers who used those pearls in the jewellery, at the colonial period which Iraq proud because the Indian soldiers and railway workers did their work and provide the security for the region that was British India . Both the nations have agriculture relations from the time of Harun Al Rashid the breed of south Iraqi Jamus or water Buffalo, not only this but the religious factor also one of the major reason like Hasan Al Basri, Junaid Al Baghdadi and sheikh Behlul had such an impact on the spiritual movements in India, one of the very well known incident was when Guru Dev Nanak Saheb came personally to Baghdad and to deliberate on the ontological and epistemological questions with Sheikh Behlul who hosted him nearly for three months , highly spiritual personality Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Jelani who was a Iraqi religious leader has very much following in India , famous for the name of Dastagir Saheb or Ghous-al-Azam, Iraq famous for the Shrines of Sarai Khanas Islam's primeval martyrdom at Karbala, the Shriens of Imam Hussein and Imam Abbas in Karbala and the Shrine

of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jelani in Baghdad visited by the Indians (Mcevilley, 2002) Between the contemporary India and Iraq The 1952 Treaty of Friendship maintain the strength and trade relation and this bilateral friendship became more strong in 1970, in the Middle East region Iraq was one of the trusty allies, after the outbreak of war India has been supporting a free, democratic, pluralistic, federal and unified Iraq. (Heptullah, 1991). But due to passage of time this friendship face challenges because of the Iran-Iraq War, 1991 Gulf War and 2003 Iraq War. After the establishment of Democratic Government in Iraq these bilateral relations are normalised (Panagariya, 2008).

### **Ties between India and Iraq Shias:**

Iraqi city of Najaf canal Hindiyya funded by Indians Shia's (Alam and Alam, 2011) the very famous city Oudh which is known Awad from the North India state always provided funding to the Iraqi Shi'i shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf, (Mudiam, 1994) Until the end of 19 century this funding did not stop by India because the Western civilization did not go there side. (Yitzhak, 2003) different Iraqi Shias like Mir Jafar and Muzaffar Al-Nawab moved India and became famous personality of the country (Doughtery, 2013) After the independence 1947 Iraq was one of the country from the Middle East with which India establish bilateral relation not only in economic but culture and tradition also and at the embassy level which was very beneficial for both the nation (Cooper, 2004). Friendship treaty was signed by both the nations like

“Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship” in 1952 and a very important agreement of co-operation on culture affairs since 1954. Iraq almost remained neutral in Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 and the Baath Party led government recognise by the India (Brewster, 2014) Both the nation maintain very strong Military and economic ties Indian Air Force was training more than 120 Iraqi MiG-21 pilots it was the time of 1980. (Cooper, Arab MiG 19 and MiG 21 units in combat, 2004) Both the nation improves their security relation in 1975 when the Indian Army sent training teams and Indian Navy established a naval academy in Basra. In Iran-Iraq War India continued to provide military assistance to Iraq because of the close allies (Rohde, 2010).

But unfortunately trade and commerce decline between the two nations because of Iran-Iraq War which was continued for the eight years (Mudiam, 1994) In 1991 Persian Gulf War in which India against to use force and before the 1991 Persian Gulf War Iraq had been one of the India’s largest export market (Sassoon, 2011). India was also against the UN Sanction on Iraq. But the sanction effects the economic relations because in the period of war Iraq became Isolated. When India had tested nuclear weapons on May 11, and May 13 1998 Iraq had supported India’s right to conduct nuclear test. The Vice President of Iraq Taha Yassin Ramadan visited India in 2002 and President Saddam Hussein stated that “unwavering support” to India over Kashmir dispute with Pakistan. To promote extensive bilateral co-operation India and Iraq prepared joint ministerial committees and trade delegations (Woods, 2011).

#### **Oil-for-Food Programme:**

This programme was very famous during the UN sanction on Iraq because when UN imposed the sanction on Iraq India’s ties with Iraq suffered but India had immediately recovered of this situation by the policy of oil-for-Food Programme, this policy had permitted the Iraq to export oil for essential goods. Through World-Food Programme India supply milk powder, and provide training in diplomacy foreign Iraqi service and information and technology in other Iraqi officials India also provide fortified biscuits to Iraqi school children and Iraqi refugees in Syria which provide a lot of help to Iraq and Syria in this critical situation. Not only has this but In International Reconstruction Fund Facility in Iraq (IRFFI) India provided aid of US \$10 million for the development reconstruction and investment in the commodities which

contribute a relief for the region (Hephaestus, 2011).

#### **After the Saddam Hussein:**

When US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq, India had preserve its neutrality and criticising the lack of UN approval and sending troops to post war-Iraq to help maintain security and peace after the vote of UN Security Council, after the response of U.N. Security General’s urgent appeal India responded as a economic relief and India provided US \$20 in 2003 for the assistance of Iraqi people (Mudiam, India and the Middle East, 1994). After the protest of public and political parties which have been opposing US and try to make the circumstances normalise and after this entire thing had the normalized when In 2005 Iraq government wants to establish trade and co-operation. Iraqi Government also try to make good relations with India and the Indian Government start the reconstruction projects to the Iraqi government and currently the activities of Iraqi business in India have been growing rapidly and very fast and dynamic nature (Kumaraswamy, 2018).

Before and after the Saddam Hussein one thing which had been continuing the relation of both the nation is crude oil, Iraq supply crude oil to India. Indian’s Oil Corporation exporting 220,000 barrels oil per day. In 2013 June , Foreign Minister of India, Mr. Salman Khurshid visited Iraq regarding security and business issues, the first to do so since 1990 (Doughtery, 2013).

#### **Iraqi Kurdistan:**

India and Iraqi Kurdistan has been limited diplomatic relations. In very less quantity India purchases Kurdish Crude Oil which was sold by Turkish Companies. Many Indian citizens work in Iraqi Kurdistan region and beside this several Kurds travel to India for medical and education Purposes which denotes a healthy relations with this region Hemin Hawrani head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party’s international relation wing in July 2014 told the Hindu that he hoped for deeper political and economic ties with India, describing the country as an important partner he also invite Indian companies to invest Kurdistan. In November 2014, the Indian Government sent special Envoy Ambassador Suresh K. Reddy to visit Kurdistan and meet Kurdish government officials (Pradhan).

#### **High Level Visits:**

In recent years there have been high level visited

between the two nations which help to maintain political and diplomatic relations, such as on July 24-26, 2017 the Iraqi Foreign Minister Dr. Ibrahim Jaffrey visited India. In New Delhi for the bilateral, regional and global issues he had delegation levels dialogue with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj he also called Vice President Dr. Hamid Ansari and he also had a meeting with Minister of (IC) Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, for petroleum and natural gas.

On the other hand General Dr. V.K. Singh (Retd), he was the MoS of External affairs visited Iraq on July 12-14, 2017. Dr. V.K. Singh handed over a letter from EAM to Iraqi Foreign Minister Dr. Ibrahim Al Jaafari a letter which shows the greeting of congratulating the Iraqi government on liberation of Mosul from ISIS. He also met Secretary General of the Council Minister of Iraq head of the Crisis Unit Mr. Mahdi Al Alaqq, and also met the Foreign Minister Najar Al Hhairallah; and Mr. Faleh Al Fayyad these visits further strong the bilateral relation.

Deputy Speaker of Iraqi parliament Mr. Human Al Hamoudi visited India in 2017 and had a meeting with General (Retired) V.K. Singh, and also met the Ministry of External affairs and other leaders. In 2016 when India organised PETROTECH Programme in New Delhi Dr. Hamed Younis Saleh Deputy oil Minister of Iraq led a delegation in this Programme. On August 2016 Shri M.J. Akbar Minister of State for External Affairs visited Iraq; there he met the President of Iraq Mr. Faud Masum; Foreign Minister Dr. Ibrahim Jaafari; National Security Advisor Mr. Faleh Al Fayyad and Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Dr. Salim Al Jabouri, Visited the Holy city Karbala where he had met the Chairman of the Provincial Council of Karbala, religious leader and members of Indian community.

In New Delhi, Nov 2015; first round of India- Iraq Foreign Office Consultations the Indian side by Shri Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (west), Minister of External Affairs and from the Iraq side led by the Mr. Nazar Al Khairallah, Deputy Foreign Minister. In December 2013 Mr. Faleh Al-Fayyad, National Security Advisor of Iraq visited India at that time MoU on Cooperation between the Institute of Defence Studies Analysis (IDSA) and Nahraian Centre of Strategic Studies, Baghdad was signed which was very helpful and informative cooperation between the nations. In August 2013 Prime Minister of Iraq Mr. Nouri Al Maliki paid a state visit to India. Four MoUs signed at that period which are as follows (a) on cooperation in energy sector (b) on cooperation between the two foreign minister (c) on cooperation between the foreign service

institutes of both the side (d) and the last one is on cooperation in the field of water resources management, for these cooperation Mr. Nouri Al Maliki accompanied by large delegation Minister of Oil, Minister of Agriculture and leading Iraqi Businessman. External Affairs Minister Shri Salman Khurshid paid a visit to Iraq in June 2013; this was the first visit to Iraq by EAM from India since 1990. Although the last round of bilateral joint commission meeting was held in July 2013 in Baghdad. Iraqi side was led by Mr. Abdul Kareem Lauibi, Minister of oil and the Indian side by Veerappa Moily, Minister of petroleum and natural gas (Hirmis, 2018).

### **Parliamentary exchanges:**

Both the nations have healthy Parliamentary relations, in Iraqi parliament there is a Iraq-India Parliamentary Friendship group in which Council of Representative led by Mr. Helal Al Sahlani. There are seven members in the council and all the leaders of this council are highly profile political leaders from across the country. Speaker of Iraqi Parliament Mr. Osama Al Nujaifi had visited India in 2012 and had meeting with speaker of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. After this visit the Deputy Speaker of Iraqi Parliament Mr. Human Al Hamoudi visited India in April 2017. This visit specially belong to the Economic and Commercial relations because after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 the bilateral relation and economic and trade relation slowed down between both the nation so, this is very important to improve the relation. However, the total bilateral trade has grown steadily since 2010, and this was happen because of the crude oil imports.

The value of total trade increase from US\$ 5.7 billion in 2006-07 to US\$ 20.52 billion in 2012-2013, trade figures in subsequently years decline largely due to fall in the global oil prices, however bilateral trade is actually increased in quantity, both in export and imports. In FY 2016-17, bilateral trade with Iraq was US\$ 12.81 billion, accounting of about 1.95% of our total foreign trade. And after these trades and bilateral relations Iraq was our fifteen largest trading partners in 2016-17.

Details of India's bilateral trade with Iraq in the last five years are summarised below: (in \$ million)) Years India's Export to Iraq India's imports from Iraq total 2011-12 763.9718, 918.47 19,682.44 in 2012-13 1,278.13 19,247.31 20,534.44 2013-14 918.03 18,520.86 19,438.89 2014-15 the figure shows 829.32 14,247.66 15076.98 2015-16 1004.39 10,837.58 11841.97 2016-17 1,115.50

11,702.07 12,817.57 (Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India). Iraq has one of the largest crude oil suppliers to India. In 2016, Iraq supplied 37.81 oil and wroth of this crude oil are US\$ 11.63 billion. In the first half of 2017 Iraq was the largest supplier crude oil to India which strength the bilateral relation and the Indian Oil Corporation, HPCL and BPCL are the major importers which are very initial part of India's economy. Beside the imports of crude oil, India also import commodities like sulphur and wool from Iraq along these things India exports to Iraq cereals, iron, steel, meat product, Pharmaceuticals product, agro chemical, cosmetics, rubber, manufacture products, paints, gems and jewellery, ceramics, manufacture of metals, machine tools, electrical machinery and instrument, transport equipments, electronic goods, handicraft, sugar, tea, garments etc. In the post war era, there is some presence of Indian companies : M/S Mokul Shriam JV ha won US\$235 Million contract to rebuild the sewage system for Basra; Ms Shapoori Pollonji had won US\$85 Million contact to rebuild hotel in Basra and Ms Lanco Infratech had won US 81 Million EPC contract build the Akaaz power project. A mission organised by the Iraqi government in which Najaf-India trade show at the international trade Fair Ground in Najaf in September 2016 in which 34 Indian companies exhibited their products and this trade show was inaugurated by the Deputy Trade Minister of Iraq. And this Fair was followed by the B2B meetings between the businessmen of both the countries at Najaf and in Baghdad. Iraqi Pharmaceuticals companies actively participated in various trade promotion events organised by India. 80 Indian pharmaceutical companies supply medicines to the Iraqi market. A number of Indian hospitals are on the panel of Iraqi health ministry where the letter sends eligible Iraqi Patients. The First Master Class on Epilepsy Surgery between the Neurosurgeons of both sides was held in Baghdad on March 3-4, 2017. Contract between both the nations not only limited to parliamentary or political trades but the relations to contract each other people institution contracts also deep that today India has become the very suitable place for Iraqis specially those who seeking quality medical treatment. On self financing basis many Iraqi's send their children for higher education. Approximately 10,000 Iraqi students have been doing their Ph.D., Masters and undergraduate studies in India. There is hardly University in Iraq of which some faculty has not studied in India. According to India's Mission currently issuing around 200

visas per day going up to 350-400 during in summer. A huge majority of travellers visit India for Medical purposes, because India has a great identity at the Medical level in the International World this is the purpose to come India for the treatment on the other side, tourism, education and business play a major role for the Iraqi's attraction and their need. According to the calendar year 2016, a total of 42,135 visas of different categories have been issued by the mission and working on the bases of the rules and these rules and norms are flexible in nature because there is no hard and fast law about the numbers of coming this can be change with the passage of time. On June 17, 2017 International Yoga Day also celebrated there with very respectfully (Kassem, 2018).

### **Capacity Building Programme:**

Under the capacity building programme the Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) train the officials of the Government of Iraq and through this programme India providing assistance to Iraq. Under this programme in the year of 2017-18, a total 175 slots allotted to this. And under the "General Scholarship Scheme" which was organised by Indian Council of Culture Relation (ICCR) India has been providing opportunity to Iraqi students for higher studies. Under this Programme the Indian Oil Cooperation Limited (IOC) has provided training to the Iraqi officials in India related to different subjects in the downstream oil sector this give help Iraqis to know how to use the commodities and how to work (Kassem, 2018).

### **Indian Community:**

Various incident effects the civilians of both the side like, before the 1991 gulf war above 80,000 Indians were in Iraq many of them left country before the Gulf War started and most of them leave Iraq after the war. And after the 2003 US invasion in Iraq, many Indian Workers on contract base providing services on the military base but most of them leave the country of the lack of security and because of the unstable situation in Iraq Indian Advisory strictly against Indians travel to Iraq which was effected the bilateral trade of civilians from 2004-2010. Because of this situation the Indian traders and businessman search a safe side which is Kurdistan and numbers of Indian worker to reached in stable Kurdistan region in the compare of Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Dohuk governorates, for the hope of peaceful condition and healthy salaries and good working condition in Steel Mills,

oil companies and construction project which provide them suitable payment and along with this peaceful environment. As the above mention that Iraq is not a peaceful country after the invasion of 2003 and there is no stable government the ISIS took the opportunity and control over the large part of Iraq in 2014. Government of India played a very important role to protect their citizens and workers they evacuated thousand of Indian nationals from Iraq safely. At the current situation 10,000-12,000 many of them are located in Kurdistan region, after this they locate in Basra, Najaf and Karbala, almost 30,000-40,000 Indians visits Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf and Samarra in Iraq for the religious factor (Davis, 2019).

### **Conclusion:**

As we all know Iraq was one of the few countries in the Middle East from which India maintain political, bilateral diplomatic relation at the embassy level after the Independence both the nations signed treaties like “Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship” and the other one is “Agreement of Co-operation on Cultural Affairs” these treaties and agreement provide strength. India helped Iraq in many places when Iraq try to build themselves India provide lots of Military Equipments, India supported Iraq in Iraq-Iran War, India always against to use force against Iraq and also the inhuman UN Sanction which harm Iraqi’s soldiers and civilians. Although their relations suffer when Iraq was isolated by the sanction posed by the UN but India continuous aided Iraq by the Oil-Food-Programme, On the other side Iraq always support India rights to Nuclear Tests even Iraq supported India in Kashmir Conflict. However, Iraq-India has good and very understanding relation in the past. After the post-war circumstances India tries to maintain its ties with Iraq which was chord because of the political instability. Now India start to send his envoys to Baghdad and restart the full fledged bilateral relations and many officials’ visits have taken place in regular intervals of time.

### **REFERENCES**

- Alam, M. and Alam, M. (2011). *The Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.
- Brewster, D. (2014). Indian Ocean: the story of India’s Bid for

Regional Leadership.

- Cooper, T. (2004). Arab MiG 19 and 21 units in combat . *India and the Middle East*, 56.
- Cooper, T. (2004). Arab MiG 19 and MiG 21 units in combat. *Arab MiG 19 and MiG 21 units in combat* .
- Davis, A. (2019). India and the Alogosphere. In A. Davis, *Race, identity and Hierarchy in International Relations*. New York: Routledge,Oxon.
- Doughtery, B.K. (2013). *Historical Dictionary of Iraq*. Scarecrow press.
- Hephaestus (2011). Article on Bilateral Relation Iraq. *Hephaestus books* , 54.
- Heptullah, N. (1991). *Indo-West Asian Relations: The Nehru Era*. Allied Publisher.
- Hirmis, D.A. (2018). *The Economics of Iraq: Ancient Past to distant future*. Grovesson House Publishing Limited.
- Kassem, M. (2018, April 2). Iraq economy forecast to grow 1.5% in 201,. *N Busness* , p. 4.
- Kumaraswamy, P. (2018). *Persian Gulf India's relation with the region*. Singapore: Springer Singapore.
- Mcevilley, T. (2002). *The shape of Ancient thought*. greek: allwroth Communication INC.
- Mudiam, P.R. (1994). *India and Middle East*. British: British Academic Press.
- Mudiam, P. R. (1994). India and the Middle East. In P. R. Mudiam, *India and The Middle East* (p. 64). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Panagariya, A. (2008). India the Emerging Giant. In D. Kar, *India the Emerging Giant*. Oxford University Press.
- Pradhan, P. K. (n.d.). IDSA. Retrieved from IDSA: <https://idsa.in/askanexpert/presentstateofrelationshipbetweenIndiaandIraq>
- Rohde, A. (2010). State-Society Relation in Bathi’ist IRAQ. *State-Society Relation in Bathi’ist IRAQ; facing dictatorship* .
- Sassoon, J. (2011). *Saddam Hussein Ba’ath Party*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Woods, K.M. (2011). *The Saddam Tapes: the inner working of Tyrant Regime, 1978-2001*. New YORK: Cambridge University Press.
- Yitzhak, N. (2003). *The Shi’is of Iraq*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

\*\*\*\*\*