The price for independence in August 1947 was the splitting of the sub-continent, leading to the creation of India and Pakistan as separate sovereign states. Although the Indian National Congress tried its utmost to prevent partition, the leaders of the Muslim League, and, in particular Mohammad Ali Jinnah, were determined to pursue the "Two-Nation" theory to its logical conclusion. The division took place on the basis of Muslim majority areas, leading to the formation of Pakistan, with a western and an eastern wing, separated by over a thousand miles of Indian territory.

At the time of partition of the Sub-continent in 1948, Pakistan had narrower base of state power than was the case with India. The situation has not changed much, since then. The core area of Pakistan has continued to be the Punjab and its centralisation has continued to be of a greater order. In the case of India, the federal structure, and the fact that the Congress leadership had gained experience in 1938-39 in running provincial governments in the country, gave it greater resilience. Moreover, in India the independence of the judiciary, the promotion of civil liberties and the presence of a free press inhibited authoritarian tendencies. Perhaps, it was this broader base of state power in India which made it initially less turbulent, unlike Pakistan where resentment rapidly grew amongst the Bangalis, Baluchis, Sindhis and Pathans against Punjabi domination. The leaders of the newly-established Pakistan also had little experience in governance, the demand for a separate state having been formally entertained only as late as 1940. Furthermore many of them had no "roots" in what became geographically Pakistan. "Islam in danger" became the main slogan,
accordingly, of the Muslim interest groups in Pakistan from the time of its very establishment.

Fundamentalism visualises itself as a rival of all other ideologies like socialism, communism, nationalism and liberalism. Islamisation in post-Bhutto Pakistan has been rapid. But even earlier, Bhutto himself had included in the 1973 Constitution such "Islamic" provisions like laying down that the Prime Minister and the President should be Muslims, or that any printing mistake in editions of the Quran is a punishable offence. The weekly holiday was also changed from Sunday to Friday.

The main effort of the leadership in Pakistan was directed towards developing and building up a separate distinctive identity, on the basis of religion. In contrast, India declared itself secular, with equal protection extended to all its citizens, irrespective of their religion.

As the American scholar Stephen P. Cohen has perceptively pointed out: "There is no escaping the fact that the identities of India and Pakistan confront each other. The very existence of Pakistan, an Islamic State, seems to challenge the existence of Pakistan itself. Thus, these two states merely have to be themselves to cause strain and suspicion in their relationship".

The emptiness of the Two Nation theory was proved soon enough, however, by the breaking away of East Pakistan in 1971. Bangladesh came about despite the common cementing bond of Islam, because of the inhuman atrocities perpetrated by the then military regime in West Pakistan against its own citizens in East Pakistan. India went to the assistance of the Mukti Bahani, which was fighting for the freedom of the Bengali-speaking people of East Pakistan, responding to the appeal of the Bangladesh Government-in-exile, which had been set up by that time. The first Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had estimated later the number of men, women and children killed by the Pakistani military during those months of ruthless repression as amounting to 2 million in all – a scale of killing of its own people matched only by the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea a few years later.

As a result of the birth of Bangladesh, the Muslim
population in India came to exceed the population of Pakistan, as well as of Bangladesh, exposing further the hollowness of the claims made by those advocating the Two-Nation theory.

From the very beginning the singularly obsessed leadership in Pakistan had persistently tried to assert itself by launching repeated military adventures against India. Shortly after partition, Pakistan had militarily attempted to annex Jammu and Kashmir, claiming the state on religious grounds, although it had legally acceded to the Indian Union, under the provisions of the Transfer of Power legislation passed by the British Parliament in 1947. Two more wars were to follow in 1965 and 1971 because of Pakistan’s blind pursuit of the objective of asserting itself against India. In each case, once the conflict was over, India had given up its territorial gains.

However, in the case of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, which remained partially occupied by Pakistan, under the terms of the UN Ceasefire of 1948, the latter advanced the absurd claim that the entire state should in fact belong to Pakistan because of the majority Muslim population in the valley. In recent years, this claim is being given a new twist by Pakistan’s describing Kashmir as the ‘unfinished agenda of partition’. India’s position on this question is crystal clear, namely, that if there is anything at all to be discussed concerning Jammu & Kashmir, it is the vacation of the aggression committed by Pakistan in Kashmir. The problem, perhaps, may not have continued to foster to the same degree if outside powers had not become involved in the dispute; but the Cold War decreed otherwise. One can only hope that with the end of the Cold War, it will be possible to find a peaceful solution to this question, based on international law and the existing ground realities.

The clandestine material and financial support extended by Pakistan to the terrorists in the Punjab and in Jammu & Kashmir State and the numerous training camps set up in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) and Pakistan for that purpose, bodes ill for the future of India-Pakistan relations, and needs to be addressed and set right urgently. So too the question of Pakistan’s secretive nuclear weapons programme
Despite Islamabad's much publicised calls for making South Asia into a nuclear-weapon-free-zone (NWFZ), Pakistan's call for a 5-nation conference to convert South Asia into an NWFZ totally lacks credibility on that score. Moreover, this is an issue for which regional solutions are not realistic and a global solution must be found.

Notwithstanding the on-going difficulties between India and Pakistan, regarding which they have so far been unable to find a modus vivendi, there is no doubt about the essential unity of the people of the sub-continent. They have a shared history and culture, but these very factors which unite them have, perhaps, spurred on the smaller countries of the region to accentuate and even exaggerate their separate identity in the urge to develop their own national identity. It has been truly said that quarrels between brothers are often more bitter and fierce than quarrels between strangers. This has indeed been the case with India and Pakistan. And because they are the biggest of the South Asian states, the repercussions of their differences have inevitably tended to spill over and involve other states in the region, one way or the other.

As regards Pak-India relations, no real improvement can be expected so long as Pakistan is obsessed with the urge to achieve military and economic parity with India. Having first sought to exploit her close relationship with the US for realising this aim, Pakistan is today left with only China to help her to achieve that purpose. But it is not the same thing and the leadership in Islamabad realises it.

The numerous political and diplomatic initiatives taken in the past have yet to show results. The Simla Agreement of 1972 is a dead letter and the latest understanding reached on non-attack on each other's nuclear installations has still to come into force. Nonetheless, what is needed the most is a concerted approach to address the issue of mutual suspicions and distrust through security environment shaping measures (SESM).

It is a fact of geography that none of the countries belonging to the South Asian region have common borders with any of the others, with the sole exception of India. Accordingly, the formation of SAARC, on the initiative of the
late President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh, holds out a promise for the future. However, for SAARC to function effectively it is imperative that India and Pakistan should be able to establish at least a normal working relationship.

So far, SAARC has not been able to put on its agenda the all-important subjects of economic, commercial and financial cooperation, without which it is just not possible to develop a healthy and strong regional organisation. Although one need not be disappointed by the slow progress made by SAARC, when compared with the ASEAN grouping of South Asian countries which also had taken many years before reaching its present level of cohesion, there is every reason for the member states to seek to accelerate the process.

Fortunately, India's relations with Bangladesh have recently shown distinct improvement, after democratic elections in that country in 1991. The Teen Bigha question has at last been settled, and it is hoped that the other outstanding issues like the problem of the Chakmas and the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) as well as the sharing of the river waters will also be similarly settled in the near future, to mutual satisfaction.

Similarly, with Nepal, the democratic elections there in 1991, with the establishment of a Constitutional Monarchy holds out promise of removing past irritants. The visit by Prime Minister Koirala to New Delhi in December 1991 was a very successful one and had helped to re-build the historically close and friendly relations which have always characterised the interaction between the two countries.

That leaves mainly Sri Lanka, where the controversy about the postponement of the 6th SAARC Summit scheduled to have been held on November 7, 1991, had coloured the perceptions on both sides. This, too, had been sorted out with the holding of a working summit on December 21 in Colombo, and the remaining problems mainly connected with the Sri Lankan Tamils will hopefully be resolved as well. India has done more to help the Government of Sri Lanka than could normally be expected of a neighbour, with the sending of the Indian peace keeping force (IPKF) to assist in overcoming the insurgency in that country. Although the IPKF had subsequently to be recalled before it could complete its task,
on the request of President Premadasa, the contribution made by it in containing the insurgents and the sacrifice it had entailed in terms of men and material is something which is bound to be appreciated sooner or later by the Sri Lankan Government.

In regard to Bhutan and Maldives, India’s relations have been consistently warm and cordial, and there are no problems of any kind. In fact, the help given by India in overcoming the mercenary invasion of Male and the speedy withdrawal of the Indian forces thereafter constituted a salutary example of how a neighbouring country can go to the assistance of another neighbour in distress.

There is no doubt that the relatively large size of India, as compared with its other neighbours, gives cause for concern to them, from time to time. It should, however, be evident by now that India has no territorial ambitions against any of them, and is prepared to extend whatever help it can, politically, economically and socially for their advancement. The only quid pro quo which India wants is that its security concerns are respected. Obviously, that is one area in which no country can afford to compromise. Subject to that consideration, the scope for cooperation between India and her neighbours is immense. That is the message which Indian diplomacy should effectively convey to these countries, in thought, word and deed.

The establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has lent a new dimension to the relations amongst the countries of South Asia. Although this regional organisation has still to develop its personality, particularly in the area of economic and commercial exchanges, there is no doubt regarding its future potential. The meetings of SAARC provide for Heads of Government of the member-countries to meet annually and to discuss informally such bilateral questions that they may wish to raise with each other. Similarly the Foreign Ministers and Foreign Secretaries meet more often each year. The importance of such meetings cannot be over-estimated. This is especially true of India and Pakistan where often the state of relations between them militates against high level visits to each other by their respective Heads of State/Government.
The last minute postponement of the 6th Summit in Colombo had caused more ill-will towards India amongst its members than any other single event since its inception. Whatever the facts may be, India is seen as the real culprit and not Bhutan which had regretted its inability to be represented at the level of the King due to "domestic compulsions. The postponement notwithstanding, the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and Pakistan as well as the President of Maldives had proceeded to Colombo and at the formal banquet hosted for them by President Premdasa, Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took the opportunity to blame India for the postponement. *The Daily Observer* of Colombo declared bluntly: "To put it mildly, the Indians sabotaged the Summit". The one-day SAARC Summit eventually held on December 21, 1991, in Colombo could not completely heal the scan left due to this gaffe on the part of India.

The South Asian region is amongst the poorest in the world and the per capita income of the people of the SAARC countries is pitifully low. With the growing move globally for greater cooperation in all spheres, it would be tragic if we should be moving in the opposite direction.