



India China Relation: Past, Present and Future

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Abstract

The rise of Asia and growing global interconnectedness are reshaping the world as never before. China is central to this revolution. An ancient civilization, rapidly growing economic and political power and home to one fifth of the world's population, China presents both opportunities and challenges. The country is an important neighbour of India and at the same time is considered one of the rising economic giants in Asia.

Year 2020, has exposed the ability of developed as well as developing nations to counter any unprecedented eventuality, such as ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The extreme measures of lockdown to contain the Covid-19 virus has left many people stranded across the globe. Apart from the Pandemic caused due to the spread of Covid-19 Virus, India and China is currently witnessing worst 'border standoff' where 15 Indian soldiers including commanding officer has been martyred and many casualties from the Chinese side. This is first casualties reported after war of 1962. It was widely believed and respected that India and China border is very peaceful as not a single bullet was fired at the border between India and China, in spite of minor scuffles that had taken place from time to time in the past. India and China both believe that era of 摸着石头过河 (crossing the river feeling the stone) the concept is over and both want to exert their dominance in the world.

India and China both had a very great tradition of learning from each other during period of Buddhism. Indian and Chinese Buddhist scholars has tried their best to understand each other through the teaching of Buddhism by mutually translating its text, which talks about the mutual respect and harmony. Both countries quotes and boast their glorious past to cement its present relation.

I have been wondering at the juncture where both India and china has crossed more than Seven decades of establishment of diplomatic relation between India and China, has come to a situation of "hostility" direct military confrontation and standoff. This paper is trying understand China through multi-disciplinary approach.

This paper will approach these development in the framework of cultural engagements existing between the two living oldest civilisation existing on this earth.

This paper will try to answer the following :

1. What happened to the Hindi 'Chinni Bhai Bhai diplomacy' ?
2. What is the future prospects of 'The Elephant and the Dragon dancing together' in post-post-covid era.

Key words : Diplomatic Relation, Cultural engagements ,Hindi Chinni Bhai Bhai , Post Covid Era

Historical Overview of India China Cultural Engagements

First Phase of Cultural Exchanges: 1949 to 1962 :

(it is also marked as phase when China was taking a very aggressive attitudes towards the border problems between the two countries , and when china stills considered India's Independence not a "true" one and the replacement Of the ' bourgeois nationalist leadership " as the order of the day) ¹

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was established on October 1, 1949, and India was the first non-communist country to establish an Embassy in PRC. On April 1, 1950, India and China established diplomatic relations. The two countries also jointly expounded the Panchsheel (Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence) in 1954. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited India in June 1954 and Prime Minister Nehru visited China in October 1954. Premier Zhou Enlai again visited India in January 1957 and in April 1960. Indian and Chinese sides witnessed many cultural exchanges and visit by various theatres and musical troupes in these period.

ICFA(India China Friendship Association) was formed in 1952 , with Tripurari Chakravarty , Professor of Chinese history Calcutta University , as secretary of the organising committee. This phase witnessed lot lots of exchanges both official and un official visit between India and China. Lots of Mao Zedong works were translated into English and into Indian languages . There were lot of exchanges started to happen between India and China .In 1952 , hundreds of Indian went to China on a wide variety of delegation, to quote few were : trade unions delegations for the May Day celebrations, ' cultural good will mission , led by the Prime minister 's sister Ms Vijaylaxmi Pandit, and the sixty- member delegation to the Asian -Pacific Peace Conference in September 1952 apart from these there were many individual visits undertaken by the Indian and Chinese People.²

¹Passin Herbert, " Sino- Indian Cultural Relation" *The China Quarterly*, July-Sep.1961 No.7.p.1

² ibid.p.2

The climax of the friendly phase was the incidents surrounding the Bandung conference in the spring of 1955. An expanded agreement on the exchange of scholars was included in the new arrangements that followed the euphoric post-Bandung mood. The year saw scores of cultural events and delegation. In October, the Indian film festivals held through out the China and it attracted million of Chinese people. An eleven-member Indian Film delegation, led by P.R Kapoor and B. N Sarcar, visited as China's guest. It was followed by the vast of Jurist, officials and scholars to china. This was the phase when both countries considered it as this period a whole is "Hindi Chinni Bhai - Bhai"印度中国兄弟期间"period. However, The Bhai-Bhai Period could not last for long as it was political formulation not the cultural formulation between the two neighbours. It ended with sorry note inform of the outbreak of Sino-India War of 1962. The Scar of this war can be still feel fresh in the mind and the heart of the common men in India.

Second phase :1962-76

This phase is characterised by animosity and bitterness and is commonly known as 'the phase of pessimism' this phase witness China's Internal domestic turmoil in the form of 文化大革命 (Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution), which ended with the death of Mao Zedong and Chou-Wenlai. Its also marked the end of 站起来 and China Ushered in new phase of 富起来 (对外开放) Economic reform and Opening up phase, where Ideology took the back seat and economic revival became the main objectives of China Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping.

Third Phase : 1976-2020 The Period of Re-Engagement

India and China restored ambassadorial relations in August 1976. Higher political level contacts were revived by the visit of the then External Affairs Minister, A.B. Vajpayee in February 1979. The Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua paid a return visit to India in June, 1981.

Deng Xiaoping stated "China and India should for the moment put dividing issues on side and do some actual work to improve climate to go about the problem. Neither countries poses a threat to the other, how can India and China not be friends?"

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China in December 1988. During this visit, both sides agreed to develop and expand bilateral relations in all fields. It was also agreed to establish a Joint Working Group (JWG) - to seek fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution on the boundary question - and a Joint Economic Group (JEG).

Deng Xiaoping during the Rajeev Gandhi historical visit expressed his will, "Let both sides forget the unpleasant events in our past relation and let us treat everything with an eye on Future" (The statesman, 20 December 1988)

Then PM three Manmohan Singh and India china relations witness the Modi Xi Home town diplomacy

The broad contours of the India-China cultural cooperation was laid down in the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation signed in May 1988, which provides for an executive Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for implementation. The latest CEP signed in Dec 2010 during the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India provides for cooperation in a gamut of cultural fields including exchanges of visits of performing artists, officials, writers, archivists and archaeologists, organizing cultural festivals, film festivals and exchanges in the field of mass media, youth affairs and sports.³

It started with the 100 members youth delegation visit to china and vice versa from 2006. Leaders of both side celebrated 2011 as the "Year of Exchanges" and both countries had resolved to further strengthen cultural exchanges between our peoples. Youth exchanges have been encouraged. While young China expresses great desire to know Buddhism, Bollywood and Yoga, young India admires the Chinese economic miracle. A 500 member Indian youth delegation, led by the Hon'ble Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs, Sh. Ajay Maken, visited China in September 2011.

India and China both are collaborating on various multilateral forum such as BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisations etc. Not only, the cooperation is taking place between two central governments of both countries, local and State government are directly fomenting business relation with each other.

"The year 2011 saw a series of exchanges in diverse fields. PM Shri Manmohan Singh visited Sanya from April 12-15 to participate in the BRICS Summit. On the sidelines, PM also had a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao. Chief Ministers of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat visited China in June, September and November respectively. Similarly Chairman of Xinjiang Autonomous Region and Party Secretary of Gansu also visited India as part of the MEA-ILD exchange and Distinguished Visitors Programme of MEA. One of the highlight of the "Year of Exchanges" was the visit of a youth delegation to China, which was increased from 100 to 500. Premier Wen Jiabao met and addressed the Indian youth. Several Ministerial/Official visits to China were made to participate in BRICS activities. For the first time, India-China Consultations on UNSC issues was held in March."⁴

With of all this positive and constructive engagements between India and China, the relation was marred 'The War of 1962', at Present Galwan Valley standoff and bloodshed. How and where this phenomenon of 'Mistrust' re-appeared between India and China? As per our Minister of External

³https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/China_September_2014.pdf downloaded at 12:21pm on 12/7/2022

⁴<https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/China-January-2012.pdf> downloaded at 12:23 pm on 12/7/2022

Affairs statement that “ It won’t be an usual business with China without peace at the border”. Indian people are badly hurt by the action in Galwan take by China.

The question arises where are we going wrong??Where are we lacking??:

I think mis-reading of the Chinese Mindset and their culture putting our relation on bumpy and inconsistency in India China relation . The below analysis of Initiatives taken by India and China could further help us in understanding and decoding the mysteries:

India has never wholeheartedly promoted China studies in India:

The bumpy and inconsistency in India China relation deeply impacted Cultural interaction and exchanges between India and China.. Due to the differences in mainstream ideology between China and India, translation activities aimed at promoting the culture of primitives often fail to achieve the desired results. Communist Party under Mao formulated policies on Literature at Yanan in 1942 and comprehensively laid down the guidelines about the purpose and motive of literature , which in nutshell can be summarise that the focus of Chinese literature was inward and not outward . There is no doubt that the guideline helped the party to achieve its ultimate goal to serve the people and Party. however, the literature produced during that time failed to attract Indian people as a whole .It might happened due to following reasons ; 1. India was under the British rule Indian were more inclined to understand Britain and other western nations. 2. ‘Machiavellian model” of education in India that made learning English as mandatory for Indians ,in order to produce more clerks for their business. 3. China and Chinese Condition were much similar to India as both were being exploited by the imperialist powers .Therefore, two similar plight of the people unable to attract each others attentions.4. The difficulties of learning Chinese language due to its phonetic and pictographic nature too stopped scholars in venturing in the field of Chinese literature and culture.

4. There was no genuine efforts by the Indian academia to understand China and its culture as it all ended with the end of Buddhism in India. India adopted British Political structure and education system which has always demonise Chinese people since the establishment of People’s Republic of China.

5. Translation of foreign text were more west centric, huge chunks of western literature has been translated into Indian languages , therefore has huge readers in India .The reasons can be the Indian scholars feel more comforts in accessing English language due to its colonial past. If one talks about the asian Literature and especially East Asian , Japanese literature has wider audience than the Chinese literature in India. Indian people know more about the Japanese society and culture .It happened due to the wider translation of Japanese literature into Indian languages especially in Hindi.⁵

⁵ 中国当代文学在印度 in 孙宜学 , 摆贵勤 , “一带一路”与中国文学走出去, 同济大学出版社, 上海, 中国, 2019 pp.32-40

78. The bumpy and inconsistency in India China relation deeply impacted literary and cultural interaction and exchanges between India and China. Fellowships and grants were more coming as supports from western countries that made Indian scholars to travel to western countries especially to England for higher studies. Many of our leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and others were the graduate of British universities. They were trained in western philosophy and after returning to India imparted western teaching among the masses. None of the Indian scholars visited China to study Chinese culture and philosophy. Some of the work which got translated were from ancient and modern china such as , 道教, 医药, 丝绸, 孙子兵法, 鲁迅短篇小说, 巴金 等 modern period⁶. China only opened itself after 1978 to outside scholars. There are nearly 20,000 to 25,000 Indian students are studying in China at present.⁷ However, this number is still very less as compared to Indian students opting for US and European countries for their studies.

9. There were very few language teaching centres which used to impart Chinese language teaching in India since 1917. One can count name of the universities on fingers such as , Mumbai University, Shantiniketan (Cheena Bhavana), Delhi university and Jawaharlal Nehru University Center for Chinese and Southeast Asian studies to the forefront. There were more centres of Chinese language teaching opened in newly established central and state universities but that numbers too are not enough to alter to the rising demands of learners in India.

10. There were not a single joint collaboration between Indian and Chinese Publishing houses before 2008. It was only in Year 2008, one of the Indian publishing house General Book Depot (GBD) took initiative to collaborate with Chinese Publishing house and got right to reproduce and publish Chinese language teaching material in India. GBD Publishing house is pioneer in making Chinese language study material and other reference book easily available to the common people of India.

11. The Present on going Galwan crisis , people look various think tanks and fellowship with suspicion . A recent article published was categorically accusing these thin tanks are funded by Chinese government.

Initiatives from China to Promote India China relation

Chinese Culture Going global and India (中国文化走出去世界时期 (1996-2019) 和印度):

However, it can not be ignored that Chinese Government too did not take any concrete steps to promote Chinese culture /Chinese studies in India. Western countries and America indeed put efforts to understand and jointly worked in understanding each other culture. Lots of translation of Confucian

⁶ Ibid pp.34-35

⁷ Anjali Venugopalan, Prachi verma ,” Indian students may reassess China option” at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/indian-students-may-reassess-china-option/articleshow/73997547.cms?from=mdr> accesses at 1:33am on June22,2020

text of Confucian Classics , and Daodejing were undertaken between these nations in 1980-2015. In these efforts , India does not figure anywhere.

Ji Xianlin in the preface of the first Academic Journal to Study Overseas Chinese Studies observed that China has not seriously paid attention in promoting Overseas Chinese studies and further ignorance will not be conducive in developing friendly relation with other countries of the world.

“我们对外国中国学的工作太不注意，一些人根本不知道什么是中国学，有一些学者也漠然处之。这既不利于增进中外人民友谊，也不利于加强中国人民对外国的了解。这种情况再也不能让它继续下去了。”⁸ ("We are too inattentive to the work to promote Overseas Chinese studies. Some people simply do not know what Chinese studies are, and some scholars are indifferent to it. This is not conducive to enhancing the friendship between the Chinese and foreign people, nor is it conducive to strengthening the Chinese people's understanding of foreign countries. This situation can no longer allow it to continue)

China has never seriously promoted and introduce its rich culture to the outside since its existence as nation state. Professor Sun Yixue of Tongji University ,Shanghai argues that China had never consciously promoted its culture to other countries , even Zheng He Voyage to southeast Asian nations was not part of the 主动文化交流 (active cultural exchange).

China has vigorously pushed China Studies in Western Countries and other developed Asian countries. Presence of well developed Centre for China Studies especially Germany , France ,England etc can be the testimony of that.

Before President Xi Jinping Coming to power in 2013, The mission of promoting overseas Chinese studies had already begun with the establishment of Overseas China study Center at CASS and later on Peking University 1977 , Qinghua University established Center for International Sinology Studies i.n 1992

Future Prospects:

Third Phase : 2020 Galwan Standoff / Post Covid era:

With the Galwan standoff where Indian soldiers including the commanding officer has laid their life has not gone well in the minds of Indian people. This Incidence have have not gone well in the impact on the India china Relation in future. Indian people were almost forgetting the bad experiences caused due to the War of 1962. It will not be easy to forget that easily, both countries have to re-engage with each other in time to come.

The role of Indian and Chinese media and their reporting too has left great misunderstanding in the minds of Indian people. Chinese people has very less or are unaware about the Galwan standoff.

Banning of Chinese apps might solve the security issues too some extent, however, it has narrowed/reduced the opportunities of information exchange between Indian and Chinese scholars even between the common Chinese and Indian citizen. Baidu /wechat were great source of information about China first hand research materials. There are instances where Chinese youths are promoting India Cultures especially the Bollywood movies in China and forming Indian Film Lovers group on WeChat and other social media platform. Social media has given some hope that it can bridge the gap between common people of both countries. Academic and cultural exchanges will have great impact in near future.

Way Forward

India should compile a details report of the various negations visiting China. The experiences of the youth visiting china should be studied and publish as book/ volume that can make India people aware first hand knowledge about China to the Indian people and especially Indian Youth.

Our government and others Non Governmental Organisation should come out with fellowships and research grants to study various aspects of China including culture and internal politics, policies etc. This could be an encouraging factors for the young scholars to study and understand China comprehensively. This study is the need of the hour as China is growing its dominance across the globe and India might lag behind.

More and more Cultural Engagements with China and Chinese speaking countries need to be promoted and supported to understand the Culture both within and outside China.

India should come out with National Level Award to appreciate and recognise scholars working on China or contributing towards promoting friendly relation between India and China at a par with other foreign language studied in India.

India should promote more and more India Studies Centre in China . At Present , most of the India Studies Centre in China are Chinese government funded to understand India.

Conclusion:

I would like to describe current situation of the India China relation through one of the Poem by Khalil Gibran . Here it goes;

Fear – Khalil Gibran

It is said that before entering the sea
a river trembles with fear.
She looks back at the path she has traveled,
from the peaks of the mountains,
the long winding road crossing forests and villages.
And in front of her,
she sees an ocean so vast,
that to enter
there seems nothing more than to disappear forever.
But there is no other way.
The river can not go back.
Nobody can go back.
To go back is impossible in existence.
The river needs to take the risk
of entering the ocean
because only then will fear disappear,
because that's where the river will know
it's not about disappearing into the ocean,
but of becoming the ocean.

Khalil Gibran

The Bhai-Bhai Period also could not last for long as it was political formulation not the cultural formulation between India and China. It ended with the outbreak of Sino-India War of 1962. It has been argued by many scholars that Real India China 'Hindi-Cheene Bhai-Bhai' Phase is yet to come.

Time has changed India and China too has changed . Both are Asian economic giant , however China has developed very rapidly in comparison with India. I came across a book “ Twilight in China by KPS Menon , India’s first ambassador to China where it is mention that in Year 1943 , the the value of 1 INR was equal to 12 RMB (Chinese Currency), now after almost after 80 years the Value of 1 RMB has become almost 12 INR. China has come long way from 站起来 时期-富起来-富强起来时期。Under this changing backdrop

Dream of the Elephant and The Dragon dancing together and realisation of Asian Century could only become true , if India & China both shade away the fear and invest its resources in understanding each others Culture . India need to work more on this front. I don’t think that Covid-19 will have any implication on India China relation per say in future, its the will of India and China and especially India’s willingness can make it possible.Bhai -Bhai Phase / Asian Century could only be possible if both sides jointly strive together to solve the mistrust or to be precise “Fear syndrome” between India and China. Without this there will be only dance rehearsal not the final performance, where world will witness The Elephant and the Dragon Dancing Together.

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