

Indian Studies in China: an Assessment

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Traditional Indology in China has a history of about two thousand years, focusing mainly upon Buddhism which was the main linkage between the two countries in ancient time. India studies in China started in modern times when the former became a colony of Britain. After Rabindranath Tagore won his Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, India and Indian culture again aroused considerable interest among Chinese intellectuals. With the independence of India and the founding of the People's Republic of China, India studies in China ushered in a short yet fruitful developing period. However, the 1962 war and the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976) disrupted this positive course. With the end of the "Cultural Revolution," China finally found her right road, began to carry out the policy of reform and door-opening, and launched her modernization drive in late 1970s, and the year of 1978 became a memorable historic turning-point not only in Chinese political and economic life, but also in China-India relations and Chinese studies of India. Since then, Indian studies in China have become much better organized, comprehensive, and prosperous. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988 brought about complete normalization of China-India relations and greatly promoted India studies in China. Now, there are a number of centers and institutes engaged in India studies in China. Several journals in the field of South Asian studies in fact lay stress on India studies. In the past twenty years, hundreds of works and translations, and thousands of academic papers and essays, with regard to various aspects of India, have been published in China.

Currently at least more than one hundred scholars at various institutions are making studies of India. The academic momentum is still developing. And the research work in the field of India studies in China in the past three decades is generally of

comprehensiveness, objectiveness and profoundness, has brought about better understanding of India among the Chinese elites and the people, and has made significant contributions to China-India relations.

Indology in Ancient China

The influence of Indian culture in China was powerful and successful in history. The Chinese and Indian peoples began to know and contact each other since ancient times. The cultural interflows between the two countries have covered many aspects, such as religion, philosophy, art, literature, folkways, medicine, astronomy, and so on. Ancient Chinese, because of the spread of Buddhism far and wide, always regarded India as a holy land and attached great importance to introducing Indian culture into this country.

As early as in 67 A.D., in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 A.D.), Buddhism was officially introduced into China. Since then, quite a lot of Indian Buddhist monks came to China to spread Buddhism and translate Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, including some well-known ones such as Guizabharman (462 A.D), Guizabhadra (394-468), Paramqrtha (499-569), Bodhiruci (508), Ratnamati (508). By the end of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), 415 Buddhist scriptures composed of 1919 volumes, had already been translated into Chinese and spread across the country. At the same time, a number of Chinese scholar-monks also went to India to make a pilgrimage and search for Buddhist scriptures. Meanwhile, a great amount of Buddhist scriptures were translated from Sanskrit into Chinese with the joint efforts of the monks of the two countries. The most famous Chinese one was Xuanzang, who flourished in the 7th century in the early Tang Dynasty (618-907). After staying in India for years, he came back to China and won generous patronage from the Emperor Taizong for his cause. Xuanzang organized an extremely large translation court, and in a period of 19 years, translated 75 Buddhist scriptures composed of 1335 volumes into Chinese. From 629 A.D. to 811 A.D. in the Tang Dynasty, there appeared altogether 26 great translators, and they had turned 372 Buddhist scriptures of 2159

volumes into Chinese. And from the Eastern Han Dynasty to the Kaiyuan period of the Tang Dynasty, China had altogether witnessed 176 translators and resulted in 2278 Buddhist scriptures composed of 7046 volumes in Chinese. In Tibet and Yunnan, lamas or monks have also kept thousands of volumes of Buddhist scriptures and other literature in local languages.

Change of India Image in the Early 20th Century

Chinese used to regard India as a “Paradise in the West”, and this was proved by the fact that Chinese scholarly monks had kept going to India to study and seek Buddhist scriptures for a very long period of time and the Chinese novel entitled *The Journey to the West* has been very popular for centuries. Nevertheless, the ideal image of India began to change and fall into a decline in modern times.

Misreading of India roughly began to occur in China in the early 20th century. The main context for this was the Chinese then learned the fact that India had been completely conquered by and was under the rule of the British.

About a dozen books were published in China in the 19th century with chapters focusing on India. Those books include *Haiguo Wenjian Lu* by Chen Lunjiong, *Hailu* by Xie Qinggao, *Haiguo Tuzhi* by Wei Yuan, etc.. The authors generally were sympathetic for India and warned the Chinese to be vigilant against invasion from the Western powers. Meanwhile, the image of India as an extremely blessed paradise was gradually shattered in the mind of Chinese. In Chinese notion, nothing was more dreadful and shameful than becoming a conquered people.

At the turn of centuries and in the early 20th century, Kang Youwei, a leader of the 1898 Reform, Zhang Binglin, a well-known scholar and revolutionary, Liang Qichao, also a leader of the 1898 Reform, and Sun Yat-Sen were very interested in Indian culture and concerned with the latest developments in India. They generally held an objective and friendly attitude towards India. Zhang Binglin made friends with Indian revolutionaries in Japan, and advocated the idea of China-India unity or alliance. He wrote quite a few articles in the *Minbao* under his editorship to cover and support the independence movement in India.

However, serious misreading of India occurred among some leading intellectuals who were more powerful and influential in China. Chen Duxiu and Lu Xun were leading figures in the New Cultural Movement (1915-1923), and none of them thought highly of India. Take Lu Xun for example. He misjudged modern India and

its literature. In his well-known long essay entitled ‘Moluo Shi Li Shuo’ (On the Power of Mara Poetry) written while he was in Japan and published in 1908, after praising highly ancient Indian literary works such as the Vedas, epics and the writings of Kalidasa, he turned very pessimistic about modern India and its literature, deeming that Indian civilization had declined thoroughly and hopelessly. In his opinion, colonized India had become a ‘shadow country’, namely, a defeated country, and therefore, it was impossible for India to produce great writers and works any longer.¹

As the first important modern Chinese man of letters and a thinker, who was very influential among the youth then, Lu Xun misunderstood and criticized Rabindranath Tagore severely. He had long learned the reputation of the Poet but did not know him very well. In an afterword written for a Chinese version of ‘A Narrow Cage’, a fairy tale with sati in the background by B. R. Epomehk (1889-1952), a blind Russian poet, on August 16, 1921, Lu Xun says:

Speaking of India alone, they are not sad at that they do not strive for man’s life, yet they are resentful at being banned from practicing sati by (the British) people; therefore, even if they have no enemies, they are still ‘inferior slaves’.

I love Epomehk, a naive and blind Russian who denounces another nation’s sati, far more than I love Tagore, the Indian poet-philosopher, a Nobel laureate, who glorifies his own country’s sati; I curse beautiful yet poisonous datura flower. ²

Lu Xun developed his negative opinion of the Indian further than what he had said in his ‘Moluo Shi Li Shuo’ just before Tagore’s visit to China in 1924.

In quite a few essays written after Tagore’s visit to China, until 10 years later, Lu Xun still mocked at the Poet contemptuously.

Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) was another typical representative in opposing Tagore’s visit to China. He was a leading figure in the New Culture Movement (1915-1923) and the May Fourth Movement (1919) for democracy and science. After the May Fourth Movement, under the influence of the Russian October Revolution in 1917, he gradually became an orthodox Marxist and began to disseminate Marxism in China. He was equally influential among patriotic youth. He organized the first communist group in Shanghai in May 1920 and then made some preparations to found the

¹ See *Lu Xun Quanji* (Collected Works of Lu Xun), Vol. 1 (Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House, 2005), pp. 65-66.

² *Lu Xun Quanji* (Collected Works of Lu Xun), Vol. 10, p. 218.

Communist Party of China. In the following year, the Party was formally established in Shanghai in July, and he was elected as its first general secretary and held the position successively till 1927, when he was removed of his leading position in the Party. Consequently, when Tagore reached China, the Poet was still himself, but Prof. Chen Duxiu had already transmuted himself from a writer and scholar into a staunch Marxist believing in the doctrine of class struggle and violent revolution. The first Chinese translator of Tagore's poems thus became a fierce critic against the Poet.

In early 1920s, Chen Duxiu was even more resentful at and continued to denounce traditional Chinese culture and Oriental culture as a whole. He knew that Tagore was an admirer of the traditional Chinese culture and a firm advocate of the Oriental culture. In 1923, learning that other writers and poets had translated more and more Tagore's works into Chinese, he expressed some different opinion: "Tagore is completely opposed to material civilization and science, and his benighted and disorderly thinking is inferior to our Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi in terms of the extent of confusion. Then, why should Tagore's works be painstakingly translated into Chinese? We have had enough of the benighted and disorderly thinking of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, plus the benighted and disorderly Buddhist thinking granted by Indians; therefore, it is unnecessary to add that of Tagore's!" He asserted, "we have no idea what sense it makes for the publishing circles to translate Tagore's works fashionably!"³

Chen Duxiu had also organized some other radicals to write articles to criticize Tagore, including Guo Moruo, Shen Yanbing and some others. They were not tolerant to other doctrines different from what they firmly believed in to be the only truth in the world.

Apparently, Chen Duxiu had misread and misinterpreted Tagore. It seems that he could not even tell a true friend of China as Tagore from a deadly enemy. As he was very radical in thinking, he could not even tolerate any opinions different from his. With deep-rooted prejudice towards the Oriental culture, including both Chinese and Indian cultures, he could only cherish various bias against the Poet and Indian

³ Chen Duxiu, 'Why Should We Welcome Tagore?', *Zhongguo Qinnian* (China Youth), No. 2, Oct. 27, 1923.

thinking. It was not fair for him to politicize Tagore and blame the Poet for misleading the Chinese youth then.

Tagore's visit to China aroused unabated interest in him and India among the Chinese people. The effect of his visit to China was more positive than negative. He has exerted considerable influence upon modern Chinese literature. From about mid 1930s, for more than half a century, Tagore has no longer been unfavorably criticized in China. More and more works and papers making studies of him have helped the Chinese understand him better and better. All misunderstanding has been cleared away by time. Up to now, the majority of his works has been translated into Chinese from both Bengali and English and enjoys high reputation among Chinese readers. Tagore has become a symbol of the friendship between China and India.

There was also some heated debate over Mahatma Gandhi in China in the early 20th century. Although he won respect from the majority of the people, some revolutionaries, like Sun Yat-sen and others, did not trust that it would do to resort to Satyagraha or non-violence, instead of violent revolution, for India to win her independence. Lu Xun held attitude towards Gandhi similar to that of his towards Tagore. Learning that it was possible for Gandhi to come to visit China, he made fun of him and predicted that dark clouds would rise and shadow his journey before he set his "bare feet" on the land of China.⁴ At the same time, he thought highly of the Soviet Russia. In a word, for Chinese intellectuals who believed in the doctrine of violent revolution and were determined to take to the road of Soviet Russia, Rabindranath Tagore and his humanitarianism, Mahatma Gandhi and his doctrine of nonviolence, could lead India to nowhere. Consequently, it was impossible for them to advocate or carry out serious studies of India.

Differences of ideologies formed a barrier for some leading figures in China to properly and holistically see India and her representatives. This kind of prejudice in the early 20th century was something new in the history of China-India cultural

⁴ See *Lu Xun Quanj* (Collected Works of Lu Xun), Vol. 3, p. 360.

exchanges, and we cannot deny that its influence still functions to some extent even today.

Nevertheless, some other writers and scholars showed great interest in Indian literature and culture. Xu Dishan (1893-1941), a well-known scholar and writer, studied Sanskrit and Buddhist scriptures both at home and abroad, having attended the Yenching University, Columbia University and Oxford University successively. After returning to China, he taught courses such as Indian philosophy and Indian literature at the Yenching University, Peking University and Tsinghua University. He wrote *A History of Indian Literature* (1930), brief yet insightful, and translated *Folk Tales of Bengal* by Lal Behary Day and a couple of volumes of *The Stories of India* by F. W. Bain into Chinese.

Meanwhile, some young scholars went to Germany or India to study Sanskrit and Pali. For example, Ji Xianlin (1911-2009) stayed in Gottingen for ten years (1935-1945), and became the first important Chinese Indologist at Peking University after returning to China. He was the founder of the Department of Oriental Languages and Literature, Peking University, and the first director of the Institute of South Asian Studies established jointly by Peking University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1978. Jin Kemu (1912-2000) studied Sanskrit and Pali at the Baranas Hindu University from 1941 to 1946. He joined the Department of Oriental Languages and Literature, Peking University in 1948. Their teaching and the wide influence of their works laid a solid foundation for the development of Indology and India studies in contemporary China. Xu Fancheng (1909-2000), another prominent Indologist at the CASS, studied and worked in India for more than 30 years (1945-1978) and left a good number of translations and writings on Indian philosophy and thinking.

The establishment of the Cheena Bhavan (Institute of Chinese Language and Culture) at Visva Bharati in 1937 was a groundbreaking event in China-India relations. Rabindranath Tagore invited Prof. Tan Yunshan (1898-1983) as its first chairperson. Chinese government donated a great number of books to the institute and made it one

of the most renowned libraries for China studies in India. Tan Yunshan also initiated and played a vital role in setting up the China-India Society which later became a bridge for academic exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. Xu Dishan, Xu Beihong, an outstanding artist, Wu Xiaoling, a Sanskrit translator and scholar of Chinese theatre, Tao Xingzhi, an educationist, all taught or gave lectures at Cheena Bhavan. On the other hand, Prabodh Chandra Bagchi (1895-1956), the best-known Sino-Indologist at Visva Bharati, served as a chair professor at Peking University in 1946 for a period of two years. His representative work *India and China* (1944, 1950, 2008) has since been regarded as a classic one.

The tradition of translation continued. During the period from 1920 to 1939, China published approximately 100 books with regard to Indian Buddhist philosophy, 40 Chinese versions of Indian history and more than 100 works on various aspects of India.

India Studies in China from 1950 up to Now

With the independence of India in 1947 and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the two countries established formal diplomatic relations in 1950 and ushered in a honeymoon period of friendly relations. In addition to Sanskrit and Pali, Peking University began to enroll students to study modern Indian languages such as Hindi and Urdu. In the middle of 1960s, the Beijing Broadcasting College began to enroll students of and teach Bengali. Some students were later trained in East Pakistan (Bangladesh today). The teaching of modern Indian languages was a necessary preparation for the development of India studies in contemporary China.

In the 1950s, India was considered and regarded as a very important friendly neighbor by China. The atmosphere of Hindi-Cheeni bhai-bhai promoted India studies in China. Scores of Indian books were translated into Chinese respectively by Ji Xianlin, Jin kemu and Wu Xiaoling, including Sanskrit works such as *Sakuntala* (1956), *Meghaduta* (1956), *Nagananda* (1956), *Mricchakatika* (1957), *Pancatantra* (1959). Well-known English, Hindi, Bengali and Urdu works were also translated into Chinese. Mulk Raj Anand, Premchand, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Krishan Chandar, K.

A. Abbas and their works became known in China. Needless to say, Tagore's works kept coming out and some of his poems were selected as texts for high school students. A 10 volume translation of Tagore's works was published in 1961 to mark the 100th birth anniversary of the Poet.

In the ten years of the 1950s, China published about three scores of translations of Indian literary works. Other aspects of India also aroused great interest and concern. Over 170 books regarding Indian learning such as philosophy, Buddhism, politics, art, history and so on were either translated or written.

Prof. Ji Xianlin became a leading figure. He wrote scores of papers discussing various aspects of China-India cultural exchanges and *A Short History of India*. Prof. Jin Kemu published *A History of Sanskrit Literature* in 1964, which in fact was a textbook for students at Peking University. Most translators and some other scholars wrote introduction, preface or afterword for the Chinese versions of Indian literary works.

Some research institutes were established to focus upon and make studies of Indian political, economical and social developments. A very limited number of Chinese scholars centered their studies on two domains: 1) Political and economic development in India; 2) China-India bilateral relations. However, generally speaking, the research level in this area of India studies was not very high.

Unfortunately, the Sino-Indian border dispute and the war in 1962 not only affected the relations of the two countries, but also overshadowed India studies in China for nearly two decades. During the years of the Cultural Revolution, India studies virtually came to a standstill further for about ten years. Universities had been shut down for about six years; even those scholars like Prof. Ji Xianlin who had managed to survive could not do any research or translation work in public. There were no academic contacts between China and India and between China and the rest of the world. China became a self-imagined center of world revolution.

With the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, Chinese academic work ushered

in a new time shortly while the country began to pursue economic reform and tried to open its door to the outside world in 1978. Consequently, China's India studies also ushered in a new era of rapid and progressive development. Both Chinese government and the people wanted to know the real situation in the rest of the world. The inauguration of the Institute of South Asian Studies, jointly sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Peking University in the same year, symbolized the beginning of comprehensive South Asian studies in China. The Institute consisted of sections such as politics and economy, literature, religion, philosophy, etc., and one special section making studies of Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Prof. Ji Xianlin made significant contribution for the establishment of the Institute and was made the first director. The Chinese Association for South Asian Studies with Prof. Ji Xianlin as its president was established shortly, becoming a national center under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to organize, coordinate and sponsor annual national symposium on South Asian studies. The first Chinese journal of *South Asian Studies* started publication in 1979. It is basically a quarterly and can publish about 60 research papers each year. So far it has published nearly two thousand papers on South Asia, and approximately three quarters of them haven't centered on India studies, namely, the majority of the papers have been on India, and only a small portion have been on the rest South Asian countries. The journal has won a key status among Chinese academic journals and made the latest developments in various areas in India much better known among its readers. In the same year of 1978, 17 graduate students on South Asian studies, including this author, were enrolled by the Institute. Almost all those students and those who followed later became the backbone of scholars in the area of India studies in China.

Some vital harvests during this period included the publication of the complete Chinese versions of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, two great Indian Epics. They were translated from Sanskrit into Chinese according to the original versions of the critical edition.

Ramayana was done individually by Prof. Ji Xianlin stealthily in verse in the later

phase of the Cultural Revolution and published from 1980 to 1984. He also wrote *A Preliminary Probe into Ramayana* (1979), discussing the epic's value and its relation with China. His translation and research work exerted a tremendous influence on the circles of literature in China, and given a great impetus to Sino-Indian cultural exchanges.

At the end of the year 2005, the Chinese version of *Mahabharata* in prose was also completely published in Beijing. This epic has a reputation of 'the fifth Veda' in India, and it has been regarded with other four Vedas as sacred scriptures by the Hindus. It is believed among the Indian academic circles that nobody can fully understand Indian culture without understanding this great epic. Therefore some Chinese scholars had long cherished an ambitious wish to translate it into Chinese. The initial attempt began in early 1950s. Prof. Jin Kemu put *Savitri*, one of the best known episode in the epic into Chinese. In 1982, Prof Zhao Guohua translated *Nala and Damayanti*, another important episode of the epic, into Chinese in poetic form. In 1987 the program of the translation of the entire epic was launched. This work in fact was a long-term academic work by relays, which had involved eight Sanskrit scholars. Unfortunately, two scholars passed away halfway. This monumental work has remained the first complete version of the epic according to the critical edition outside India in the world. The original text was critically edited by Vishnu S. Sukthankar, S. k. Belvalkar and P. L. Vaidya, published by Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.

Ji Xianlin and Jin Kemu had trained a number of Sanskrit students from early 1960s to late 1990s, including Huang Baosheng, Jiang Zhongxin, Zhao Guohua, Guo Liangyun, Wang Bangwei, Ge Weijun, and some others. They all became excellent Sanskrit scholars in China. Prof. Jiang Zhongxin published a critical edition of *A Sanskrit Manuscript of Saddharmapundarika kept in the Library of the Cultural Palace of the Nationalities*, and was also the translator of the Chinese version of *Manusmriti*. Prof. Zhao Guohua was the translator of the first Parvan of the Chinese version of *Mahabharata*. Prof. Guo Liangyun was the translator of the Chinese

version of *The Sutta_Nipata* from Pali. Prof. Wang Bangwei did a good job on the collation and textual criticism of some well-known Chinese classic works such as *Xi Yu Ji* by Xuanzang and *A Record of the Buddhist Religions as Practiced in India and Malay Archipelago* by Yi Jing. Prof. Ge Weijun was a translator of *Mahabharata*, and is now working on *Arthasastra*.

Prof. Huang Baosheng, former director of the Institute of Foreign Literature Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, played a vital role in organizing the translation team of *Mahabharata*. He has also translated the *13 Upanisads* from Sanskrit into Chinese. He was a major author of *A History of Ancient Indian Literature* and wrote a book on *Mahabharata* and another one on Indian poetics.

The Department of South Asian Studies, Peking University, has long been an important center for Indology and India studies. Other departments such as philosophy and history also have some outstanding scholars on India studies. For example, Prof. Yao Weiqun with the Department of Philosophy, Peking University, has written a number of books and scores of papers regarding Hinduism and Buddhism in addition to his work for training Ph. D. students. Prof. Lin Chengjie with the Department of History, Peking University, has written a dozen books and many a paper regarding Indian history from ancient times up to now.

Sanskrit program in Peking University has remained very strong. It has trained a good number of excellent young scholars such as Luo Hong, Fan Muiyou, Ye Shaoyong, Zheng Guodong, Yu Huaijin, Zhang Yuan and others. They now work in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences or Peking University or other research institutions.

From the end of 1970s up to now, China has published more than 1200 books in the field of Indology and India studies. In addition to translations, a striking feature is that Chinese scholars have written more and more books and papers. Another feature is that more and more scholars are putting their research interest and work on contemporary India, covering all the significant aspects of Indian politics, economy, social and cultural development, and so on and so forth. According to incomplete

statistics on the basis of the ‘Bibliography of India Studies with the National Library’ by Zhu Xiaolan published in *South Asian Studies*, China in the past decades has published 425 books on Indian philosophy and Buddhism, 57 books on Indian social sciences, 154 books on Indian politics, 55 books on Indian military affairs, 88 books on Indian economics, 35 books on Indian culture and education, 46 books on Indian linguistics, 350 books on Indian literature, 33 books on Indian art, 62 books on Indian history, 78 books on Indian science and technology, medicine, environment, etc.. Moreover, about 800 books as well as electron compact discs have been published in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

As a national think tank, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has about 20 scholars on India studies. They are scattered in the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, which took the place of the Institute of South Asian Studies more than 20 years ago, or other institutes, doing research work on India philosophy, religion, history, literatures as well as Indian politics, economy, and China-India relations.

Some other universities and research institutions in China have also set up and developed institutes of South Asian studies. Sichuan University, the Fudan University, Shenzhen University, the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, etc., all have their own institute of South Asian studies or center for India studies or programs on India studies. Some Chinese ministries also have their own research institutions offering policy-oriented consultative services.

Concluding Remarks

India has been known in China for more than two thousand years. In ancient time, Chinese used the term India to indicate the whole area. Therefore, to some extent, India was more than often a geographic term, covering a number of countries.

Traditionally, India studies or Indology in China had mainly focused on Buddhism and its literature. With the introduction of Buddhism into China through Central Asia around the beginning of the Christian era, Chinese Buddhist scholars, with the assistance of their counterparts from India and Central Asia, translated thousands

volumes of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese in the long course of history. They have become an integral part of Chinese culture. Together with the scriptures, books concerning mathematics, astronomy, medicine, etc., related with Buddhism, were also translated into Chinese. Buddhism, Hinayana Buddhism in particular, was introduced into Yunnan in South China through Myanmar. Buddhism was also introduced into Tibet and has been flourishing there. As a result, in today's China, in addition to a bulk of Buddhist literature in Chinese, we can also find a huge quantity of Buddhist scriptures kept in the Dai language and Tibetan. The Dais is an ethnic group living in Yunnan and is closely related with the Thai people in Thailand. Some Buddhist scriptures in the original Sanskrit or Pali, have also been preserved in both Yunnan and Tibet. Since ancient Chinese accepted Buddhism only, it was recognized as an orthodox religion in China, whereas Hinduism, the real orthodox religion in India, together with Jainism, was regarded as heretical religion. Consequently, none of the major Hindu holy scriptures, such as *Bhagavadgita*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, were noticed and translated into Chinese. Therefore, the knowledge of India among ancient Chinese intellectuals was generally one-sided or rather limited. In the mind of average people, because of their great respect and belief of Buddhism, India was imagined and cherished as a "Paradise in the West" until Chinese learned that India had been conquered completely by the British in the 19th century.

In modern times, Chinese intellectuals began to pay attention to social change and cultural development in India after it had become a colony under the British. Around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Chinese newspapers began to report and discuss Indian affairs. This should be regarded as the beginning of modern India studies in China. After Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, Chinese new literature gained great momentum and positive stimulation. A number of young talents started writing new poems and essays by imitating Tagore. Around Tagore's visit to China in 1924, there appeared a Tagorean craze among Chinese intellectual circles. However, there was also some voice against his visit and his messages regarding Oriental culture, especially after some leading and influential intellectuals

came to the conclusion that the road of the Soviet Russia was the only right road for China to follow. In the years of the Indian nationalist movement for independence, it was the first time for the Chinese to know some important developments of India.

In the short honeymoon period of friendly relations with India in 1950s, China witnessed an Indian craze and rapid development of India studies in the country. Nevertheless, the 1962 war cast shadow upon India studies, and the Cultural Revolution disrupted further any serious research work on India.

After Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988, China-India relations came back to their normal tracks, and after India launched its economic reform in 1991, more scholars and institutions in China began to notice and devote themselves to contemporary India studies. Now, quite a few institutions engaged in South Asian studies in Beijing, Shanghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and Shenzhen do research work on India. The Peking University so far has established the Center for India Studies in addition to its Department of South Asian Studies. Three Institute of South Asian Studies respectively under the Sichuan University, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences have become more and more active in recent decades. The Institute of South Asian Studies, the Sichuan University, also publishes a journal named *South Asian Studies Quarterly*, the second one in China. In some key universities, quite a few professors teach Indian languages and literature. In the whole country, more than 100 scholars are currently doing research work, covering almost all major areas in India studies. Their papers, investigation reports, works, including popular articles and books, and their TV talks are on the increase in terms of quantity and frequency. They have presented a more holistic and objective view of the development in various areas in India, can exert considerable influence upon the nation's understanding of, policy-making regarding, and public opinion towards India, and can help to maintain or promote the relations between China and India properly.

China-India relations have been a research subject of vital importance. Although the two countries have established strategic partnership, there are still some bilateral

problems. But, one must admit that current China-India relations are much better and more reasonable than in history. For the relations are now on some legal basis since both sides have signed some agreements restricting any blind or reckless actions. Chinese scholars have come to the common understanding that political dialogue and negotiation is the only way to solve any possible problems between the two countries. The major obstacle between China and India relations is the border dispute. But before this issue is finally solved, the two countries can carry out cooperation in other areas. With regard to the 1962 war, all scholars consider it was an unfortunate event. Some scholar even voiced that the war might have been avoided. It is clearly recognized that the two most populous countries must never resort to war any more. Personally, I define China-India relations for a long time in future as that of competitive cooperation since both of the countries are making efforts to rise rather rapidly.

Chinese scholars have also written some papers and works regarding Mahatma Gandhi's thinking of nonviolence. In the past, the doctrine of violent revolution was held just and influential. Now this universal value of nonviolence from India has basically been accepted by most people.

Hundreds or thousands of books with regard to various aspects of India have been written or translated into Chinese. It seems that while modern India studies is developing, traditional Indology in China is still gathering momentum and continuously bearing new fruits. A latest development is that the Center for Sanskrit Studies has been established in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Personally, I wrote a book entitled *Indian Civilization* with two colleagues of mine (2004). It was revised and published for the second time in 2008. I have also coauthored some other books such as *India* (2003; 1010), covering the major aspects of the country. As an executive deputy editor-in-chief of South Asian Studies, I have also witnessed the progression of India studies in China in the past decades. In a word, in the past 30 years, the team of Chinese scholars on India studies has expanded and they have achieved considerably in this area.

Nevertheless, scholars on India studies in China have also their limitations and problems. First, a number of scholars, the young and middle-aged ones in particular, are still short of independent or critical thinking and lack academic courage, and sometimes can not come to their own conclusions. Consequently, their research work lacks insights and depth. Secondly, unlike the elder generation of scholars who knew several foreign languages, most young scholars on India studies only know English, and therefore may come across problems while reading Indian literature. Some scholar do not even know English or classic Chinese well, and their papers can rely only on the second-hand materials in Chinese. As a result, their research work generally lacks academic value. Thirdly, in comparison with most scholars in the rest of the world, some Chinese scholars still use backward research methods, pay no attention to field work or do not know how to make use of archives both at home and abroad. Fourthly, the majority Chinese scholars generally write in Chinese, their voices can not be easily heard in the rest of the world, and their writings be sufficiently utilized by foreign academic circles. The last but not the least, some Chinese scholars lack experiences of international exchanges and cooperation.

How China and India will develop in future? How will their relations be? How will the two Asian giants manage their bilateral relations? The change and events related with the two countries may exert strong influence upon the rest of the world. Therefore, it is highly necessary for China to maintain and strengthen India studies.