

**NEWS FROM CHINA**

# **CHINA-INDIA REVIEW**



**CHINA INDIA RELATIONS**

## **A Dragon-Elephant Tango**







**H.E. Xu Feihong**

## Together for a Shared Future

I am very delighted to have the opportunity to work and live in India. Since I took office ten months ago, I have visited Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. I traced the footsteps of President Xi Jinping's state visit to India ten years ago. I also visited the places where envoys of China-India friendship such as Xuanzang, Tagore and Dr. Kotnis once studied and lived. And I felt the pulse of India's rapid development and the vitality of its cultural diversity.

I firmly believe that China and India not only have close historical and cultural connections, similar social values and common development goals, but also have a solid foundation of people-to-people friendship. This further strengthens my confidence in the future development of China-India relations.

### Partners, not Rivals

India was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China and the first non-socialist country to establish diplomatic relations with China. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India. Over the past 75 years, China-India relations went through ups and downs, nevertheless, they have generally maintained the momentum of moving forward. No matter how the international landscape evolves, the fundamental reality that China and India as the two largest developing countries remain unchanged. The shared goal of development remains unchanged. The

fundamental judgment that China and India are cooperation partners rather than competitors, and each other's development opportunities rather than threats, remain unchanged. A sound and stable China-India relationship meets the expectations of the two peoples and the international community.

### Re-booting China-India Relations

Last October, President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi successfully held a bilateral meeting on the margins of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia. They agreed to view and handle China-India relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, strengthen strategic communication, enhance strategic mutual trust, ensure peace and tranquility in the border areas, and bring the relationship back to the track of sound and steady development at an early date. The 23rd Special Representatives' Meeting on China-India Boundary Question and Vice Foreign Minister-Foreign Secretary Dialogue were successfully held in Beijing, and reached a series of common understandings on the boundary question and practical cooperation. This creates an important opportunity for the reboot of China-India relations.

China stands ready to work with India to implement the important consensus reached by the two visionary leaders, view each other's development as an opportunity, encourage exchanges and visits in various fields and at different levels, work together to achieve common development and rejuvenation!

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(H.E. Xu Feihong is Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to India.)



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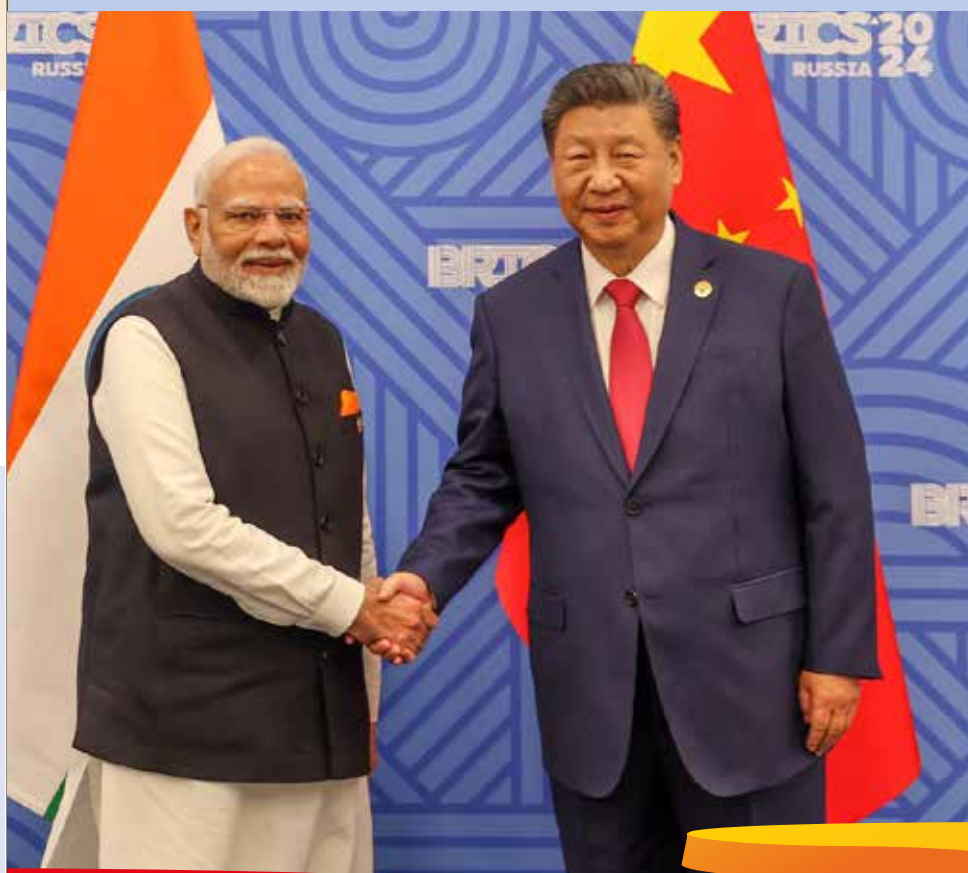
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# Wang Yi: A Cooperative Pas De Deux of the Dragon and the Elephant is the Only Right Choice for China and India



**A**t the press conference on March 7, 2025, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi talked about China-India relations.

Wang Yi noted, China-India relations have made positive strides over the past year. The successful meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kazan last October provided strategic guidance for the improvement and development of the bilateral ties. Both sides have earnestly followed through on the important common understandings of our leaders, strengthened exchanges and practical cooperation at all levels, and achieved a series of positive outcomes.

Wang Yi said, China and India are each other's largest neighbors. China always believes that the two should be partners that contribute to each other's success. A cooperative pas de deux of the dragon and the elephant is the only right choice for both sides.

As the two largest developing countries, China and India have a shared task to accelerate our countries' development and revitalization. There is every reason for us to support each other rather than undercut each other, work with each other rather than guard against each other. This is the path that truly serves the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples.

As two ancient civilizations, we have enough wisdom and capability to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas pending a fair and reasonable solution. We should never allow bilateral relations to be defined by the boundary question, or let specific differences affect the overall picture of our bilateral ties.

As important members of the Global South, we have the responsibility to take the lead in opposing hegemonism and power politics. We must not only safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of our countries, but also uphold the basic norms governing international relations. When China and India join hands, the prospects for greater democracy in international relations and a stronger Global South will improve greatly.

Wang Yi said, this year marks the 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations. China stands ready to work with India to sum up past experience, forge a path forward, and advance China-India relations on the track of sound and stable development.

**QR code of full text of Member of  
the Political Bureau of the CPC  
Central Committee and Foreign  
Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press**



# China Lauds PM Modi's Positive Remarks On Forging Stable Ties Through Dialogue

China has expressed appreciation for positive remarks made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a recent interview in which he has stressed building “a stable cooperative relationship” through dialogue.



In this interview, PM Modi underlined that competition should never turn into conflict and both countries are working to restore the relations after his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Kazan, Russia, in October last year. “When two neighbouring countries exist, occasional disagreements are bound to happen. But our focus is to ensure that these differences don’t turn into disputes. That’s why we have actively worked towards dialogue instead of discord,” said PM Modi. “We stress dialogue because only through dialogue, we can build a stable cooperative relationship that serves the best interest of both countries,” said PM Modi.

Responding to PM Modi’s remarks, Mao Ning, the spokesperson of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that China appreciated Prime Minister Modi’s recent positive statements on China-India relations. “The successful meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kazan last October provided strategic guidance for the improvement and development of the bilateral ties. Both sides have earnestly followed through on the important common understandings of our leaders, strengthened exchanges and practical

cooperation at all levels, and achieved a series of positive outcomes,” the spokesperson said.

## Shared Development Goals

“Let me stress that in the two-thousand-year-plus history, the mainstream of China-India interactions has been friendly exchanges and mutual learning. This contributes to the progress of civilizations and humanity. As the two largest developing countries, China and India have a shared task to achieve respective development and revitalization, and should understand and support each other, and help each other succeed.”

**“We stress dialogue because only through dialogue, we can build a stable cooperative relationship that serves the best interest of both countries,” said PM Modi.**

“This serves the fundamental interests of over 2.8 billion people in the two countries, meets the common aspiration of regional countries, follows the historical trend of the Global South growing stronger, and is conducive to world peace, stability, development, and prosperity. The two countries should be partners that contribute to each other’s success,” said Mao. “A cooperative pas de deux of the dragon and the elephant is the only right choice for both sides,” she said while alluding to recent remarks made by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi describing the trajectory of China-India relations.

“China stands ready to work with India to implement the important common



understandings between the two leaders, take the 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations as an opportunity, promote exchange and cooperation in various fields and at all levels, and advance China-India relations on the track of sound and stable development,” said the spokesperson of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Global Times also lauded PM Modi’s call pragmatic approach towards strengthening ties with China. Global Times reporter Liu Xin notes that not only did he underscore that India and China can engage in “healthy and natural competition,” but he also highlighted the deep historical and cultural ties between the two.

“His remarks align with the broader trend of bilateral ties returning to a path of stable and healthy development,” the article says, quoting Tsinghua University academic Qian Feng.

**“China stands ready to work with India to implement the important common understandings between the two leaders, take the 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations as an opportunity, promote exchange and cooperation in various fields and at all levels, and advance China-India relations on the track of sound and stable development,” said the spokesperson of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.**



India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke about China-India relations in a podcast with Lex Fridman.



# Chinese, Indian FM's Meet on Bilateral Relations

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on February 21, 2025, to discuss bilateral ties on the sidelines of the Group of 20 (G20) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, recalled the successful meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kazan, Russia last year, which set the general direction for the improvement and development of bilateral relations. During the meeting, the two sides agreed that China and India, as two ancient civilizations and neighboring countries, should trust and support each other and help each other succeed.

Exchanges at all levels between the two countries have resumed in an orderly manner, while the special representatives on the boundary question have reached consensus on properly handling specific differences, said Wang.

He noted that restoring mutual trust and achieving win-win cooperation align with the common expectations of the two peoples. Both sides should fundamentally adhere to the consensus reached by their leaders and ensure that bilateral relations remain on the right track.

China is ready to work with India to plan commemorative activities for the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, injecting new impetus into the development of bilateral relations, Wang added.

Jaishankar, for his part, said that the Kazan meeting between Modi and Xi has provided crucial guidance for the improvement of India-China bilateral relations, leading to the gradual



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, met India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on the sidelines of the Group of 20 (G20) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, on February 21, 2025.

resumption of bilateral exchanges in various fields and yielding remarkable results.

Noting that the establishment of mutual trust between India and China serves the interests of both sides, Jaishankar said India cherishes the hard-won achievements in improving bilateral relations and stands ready to work with China to speed up the resumption of cooperation mechanism, enhance people-to-people exchanges, facilitate cross-border travel, and jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in the border areas.

As both India and China are members of the G20, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and BRICS, it is particularly important for the two countries to strengthen their coordination. India is willing to strengthen communication and coordination with China in this regard, Jaishankar added.

# Wang Yi to FS Misri: Let's Develop Mutual Understanding

**O**n January 27, 2025, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi met with Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in Beijing.

Wang Yi said that since the meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi last year in Kazan, the two sides have earnestly implemented the important consensus reached by the two leaders, engaged in active interactions at various levels, and accelerated the improvement of China-India relations. The two sides should seize the opportunity, meet each other halfway, explore more substantive measures, and commit to mutual understanding, mutual support and mutual accomplishment, rather than mutual suspicion, mutual alienation and mutual attrition. The improvement and development of China-India relations are fully

in line with the fundamental interests of the two countries and two peoples, conducive to safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the Global South countries, and help to make contributions of the two ancient civilizations to peace, stability, development and prosperity in Asia and the world.

Misri said that India and China have carried out a series of beneficial dialogues and communications in accordance with the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries during the meeting in Kazan, properly managed and resolved differences, and promoted the resumption of practical cooperation in various fields. India is willing to work with the Chinese side to jointly celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and will extend full support for Chinese presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.





# China-India Vice Foreign Minister-Foreign Secretary Dialogue held in Beijing



**O**n January 27, 2025, Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong held China-India Vice Foreign Minister-Foreign Secretary Dialogue with Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in Beijing, focusing on pushing forward the implementation of the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries during the meeting in Kazan and discussing the measures for the improvement and development of China-India relations. The two sides reached consensus on the following specific measures:

1. The Indian side will extend full support for Chinese presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and will actively participate in the meetings under the SCO umbrella.

2. The two sides agreed to carry out active interactions at all levels on bilateral and multilateral occasions, strengthen strategic communication, and enhance mutual political trust.

3. The two sides agreed to jointly commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India in 2025, and carry out media and think tank exchanges, Track II dialogues and other people-to-people exchanges.

4. The two sides agreed to resume direct flights between Chinese mainland and India, support

the competent authorities of the two countries to coordinate and push it forward, and take measures to facilitate personnel flows and exchanges of resident journalists.

5. The two sides agreed to resume the Indian pilgrims' visit to Kailash Mansarovar in Xizang Autonomous Region, China in 2025, and will discuss relevant arrangements as soon as possible.

6. The two sides agreed to advance trans-border river cooperation, and maintain communication on holding a new round of meeting of the China-India Expert Level Mechanism on Trans-border Rivers at an early date.

The Chinese side stressed that both sides should view and handle China-India relations on the basis of the fundamental interests of the two countries and two peoples and from a strategic height and long-term perspective, actively advance exchanges and practical cooperation with a candid and constructive attitude, guide the public opinion in a positive way, enhance mutual trust, and properly handle differences, so as to promote the development of China-India relations along the sound and stable track. The two sides also had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on issues of respective concern.

# Ambassador Xu: Youth is the Future

The Chinese Embassy in India and Confederation of Young Leaders of India (CYL) co-hosted the third China-India Youth Dialogue on February 25, 2025. Representatives of youth, media and think tanks from the two countries attended the event.

Ambassador Xu Feihong said in his keynote speech that the youth is the future of a country and the hope of a nation. The opportunity for the reboot of China-India relations has provided a broader platform for the exchanges and cooperation between the youth. It is hoped that the youth of two countries should be promoters of bilateral relations, bearers of China-India friendship and envoys of the correct perceptions, contributing wisdom and strength to China and India ties. We warmly welcome Indian youth to participate in people-to-people exchanges and

mutual learning among civilizations through concrete actions under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Mr. Xu Xiao, President of the All-China Youth Federation, sent a congratulation video, introducing the involvement of youth in Chinese modernization process. He hoped that the young people of two countries will strive to inherit their brilliant traditional culture, promote common development and participate in Global South cooperation. He exhorted them to contribute to building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Mr. Himadrish Suwan, Chairperson of CYL of India, said that India-China Youth Dialogue is an important Track II engagement between two countries, which has been well received at the highest level of the Indian government.





**The opportunity for the reboot of China-India relations has provided a broader platform for the exchanges and cooperation between the youth. It is hoped that the youth of two countries should be promoters of bilateral relations, bearers of China-India friendship and envoys of the correct perceptions, contributing wisdom and strength to China and India ties.**

As two ancient civilizations and emerging global powers, China and India should work towards a stable, predictable and resilient relationship. Our youth should bear the historical responsibility.

Youth representatives exchanged views on China-India cooperation in the fields of politics, economy, culture, education as well as under the framework of the SCO. Their wonderful performances win warm applause from the audience.

## YouthSpeak

*From the ancient Silk Road to the present day, India and China have been connected through a rich tapestry of cultural, economic, and philosophical exchange. Today, as we look to the future, it is more important than ever that we nurture and strengthen our cultural ties. Through such exchanges, we can promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, and create a new generation of cultural ambassadors who can help strengthen the bonds of friendship between our two nations.*

*Let us work together to create opportunities for our young people to engage with each other's cultures. Let us promote music, dance, art, and dress as a universal language that can bring us closer together. Together, we can build a brighter future for India-China cultural relations, and create a world where our young people can thrive and flourish through the power of art and culture.*

**SONIA KHAN**

Managing Director, India National Youth Orchestra & Chorus,  
Cultural Director & Curator of the BRICS Alliance

*Education has always been a powerful bridge between our nations. As Confucius once said, "Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace." More than 1,500 years ago, the travels of scholars like Xuanzang and Bodhidharma laid the foundation for a remarkable intellectual and cultural exchange between India and China.*

*We are eager to work hand in hand with China to explore emerging fields such as AI, green technology, healthcare innovations, and business leadership. Through these partnerships, we aim to not only exchange knowledge but also co-create solutions that will benefit the entire world.*

*As leaders of Asia and global economic powerhouses, India and China have the potential to shape the future. Our cooperation in education will foster greater understanding, mutual respect, and shared prosperity. By investing in youth and intellectual partnerships, we lay the foundation for a peaceful, innovative, and inclusive world.*

**SANYA BHALLA**

Executive Director, Manav Rachna Educational Institutions

*I recently had the opportunity to visit China as part of a youth delegation. One of the most memorable experiences during my visit was an impromptu dance session that turned into a celebration of unity. Without rehearsal or planning, we all swayed to the beats of Bollywood music — each of us laughing, smiling, and moving to the rhythm. I realized something truly special: music and dance have no borders. They speak a language that everyone understands. It is a reminder of the cultural bridge that already exists between our two nations.*

*Both India and China place immense importance on family, community, and respect for elders. We believe in the power of shared meals, of caring for parents, and of living with humility. These shared values have been passed down for generations and continue to shape the way we live today.*

*But these commonalities are not limited to culture. They extend to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. As young people from two of the world's largest economies, we are both inheriting and shaping a rapidly changing world. Climate change, technological transformation, and the call for sustainable development are issues that affect us all. The youth of India and China must see each other not as competitors but as partners.*

*During my visit to Beijing, I witnessed China's remarkable progress in technological advancement and sustainable development. Their smart cities, green technology, and digital infrastructure are awe-inspiring. But what impressed me even more was the humility and warmth of the people. My Chinese friends were eager to learn about India, our culture, and our perspectives.*

*As youth, we have the power to break down barriers, foster understanding, and lead the way toward a brighter tomorrow.*

**ARNAVI NAKHATE**

Research Assistant at Oxford University

*From the marvels of smart cities and high-speed rail networks to the cutting-edge innovations in artificial intelligence and green technology, it is clear that China is a leader in shaping a sustainable and inclusive future for the world.*

*As young people from India and China, we share a common responsibility—to deepen our understanding of one another and to nurture this spirit of partnership. Despite our differences, our ideas often converged. It was a reminder that the hopes, dreams, and challenges of youth are universal.*

*My recent visit to China was not just about discovering China; it was about discovering a shared humanity. It reinforced my belief that youth have the power to transcend borders, bridge divides, and create a future that is more inclusive, just, and sustainable.*

*As young people, we are not just witnesses to this journey—we are co-creators of it. Let us not just be dreamers but doers. Our two nations have a shared destiny, and as youth, it is our responsibility to carry forward this torch of unity. If one person alone can change their future, imagine what the youth of India and China—together—can achieve for the world.*

**GOURI REDDY**

Postgraduate Student, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras



# Ambassador Xu Feihong's Wife Tan Yuxiu Visited the National Gallery of Modern Art

**O**n March 7, 2025, Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong's wife Tan Yuxiu and representatives of the embassy visited the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, accompanied by director Pooja Hali.

Madame Tan said that Today's visit was a rewarding experience. It not only provided us with insights into the development of Indian modern art, but also allowed us to appreciate the beauty of Indian diverse culture. This cross-cultural exchange proved that art can transcend borders and cultivate mutual understanding and friendship, regardless of different development

paths of China and India. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India. It is hoped that culture and art will serve as a bridge to facilitate exchanges between two ancient civilizations, and build a shared future.

Director Pooja Hali warmly welcomed Madame Tan to visit the Gallery. She said that China and India had a long history of cultural exchanges. India is willing to strengthen cooperation with China and promote people-to-people friendship.





# Chindia: The Great China-India Harmony

**China and India share a long history of diplomatic and cultural ties, from Nehru's admiration for China to economic cooperation and mutual learning. Eminent Historian Tan Chung highlights their journey towards global prominence and envisions "Chindia" as a future of shared prosperity and unity.**



**TAN CHUNG**

**M**y father, Tan Yunshan, came to India in 1928, lived there for 55 years, and passed away in 1983. I arrived in India in 1955 and left for the United States in 1999. I spent 45 years in India, so I get excited whenever I talk about China-India relations. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's founding Prime Minister, had great admiration for Chairman Mao Zedong. During his visit to China in 1939, he wanted to visit Yan'an, which was the Chinese Communist Party's base at the time. However, World War II broke out in Europe, and he had to rush back to India without visiting Yan'an.

### **Nehru and China: Mutual Respect**

Prime Minister Nehru enthusiastically supported the New China. India became the first non-socialist country to recognise the People's Republic of China after its founding. In 1954, Nehru visited China with his daughter, Indira Gandhi, who would later become the

Prime Minister of India. According to Indian media, when they arrived in Beijing and were accompanied by Premier Zhou Enlai in a convertible, more than 5,00,000 Chinese citizens warmly welcomed them along the way from the airport to the hotel. During that period, China-India relations were particularly friendly. Both countries were developing nations, and they supported, cared for, and learned from each other.

### **The Golden Years**

In 1954, the governments of India and China issued the "Agreement on Trade and Intercourse with the Tibet Region of China and India." It included the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which India called Panchsheel. It was the crystallisation of the wisdom of both China and India.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations, India-China relations entered a honeymoon phase. In 1955, an Indian cultural delegation of more than 100 people, led by Deputy Minister of External Affairs Anil Kumar Chanda, visited China. At Nehru's behest, they brought some mango saplings. Mangoes are known as the "king of fruits", and India is the world's largest producer of them. Sweet mangoes can be found all over India. Nehru hoped that



the Chinese people would enjoy the sweetness of mangoes, just like the Indian people.

Nehru was also very enthusiastic at the Bandung Conference in 1955, where he introduced Premier Zhou Enlai to the leaders of some important countries, such as President Sukarno of Indonesia, President Nasser of Egypt, and President Tito of Yugoslavia. This helped China make significant strides in diplomacy.

**Prime Minister Nehru enthusiastically supported the New China. India became the first non-socialist country to recognise the People's Republic of China after its founding. In 1954, Nehru visited China with his daughter, Indira Gandhi, who would later become the Prime Minister of India.**

In 1994, the Indian government invited me to guest-edit a special issue of the Ministry of External Affairs' public publication *The Indian Horizon* to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The issue was thick, with more than 500 pages. According to the usual practice, 3,000 copies were initially issued, which sold out immediately. Another 3,000 copies were printed, but the demand still wasn't met, so another 3,000 copies were printed. In total, 9,000 copies were issued, setting a record.

India has launched a series of agricultural revolutions such as the Green Revolution, which focused on food grain production; the White Revolution, which aimed to boost milk production; and the Golden Revolution, which focused on horticulture and honey production. At the end of the last century, learning from China's reforms and opening up, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, then Finance Minister, introduced economic reforms in India.

Today, both countries are developing rapidly and are among the most populous nations and major economic powers.

Both nations have transitioned from being poor and underdeveloped to emerging as major powers. In the future, the world will have three

major powers: the United States, China, and India. The latter two may even surpass the United States to become the world's largest economies.

## A Shared Future

My Indian friend, former Indian Minister of Rural Development Jairam Ramesh, blended the two English words "China" and "India" to create a new word "Chindia", which is an adjective for China-India friendship. It has been internationally recognised and included in English dictionaries. I translated it into "The Great China-Indian Harmony" or "China-Indian Community of Shared Future". Recently I wrote a poem as follows:

*China's progress scales new height,  
Indian ascends, proud in its might.  
Rivers roar, peaks gleam with Golden Land's embrace  
Neighbourly brothers, kinship binds this space.*

Rivers refer to the four great rivers of civilisation in China and India: the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, the Indus River, and the Ganges River. Peaks refer to the snow-capped Himalayan mountains.

**In the future, the world will have three major powers: the United States, China, and India. The latter two may even surpass the United States to become the world's largest economies.**

In the past, India was often referred to as "Sone ki Chidiya", meaning "Golden Land", a term that was introduced to China during the Tang Dynasty. The phrase "Golden Land" appears in a poem by Li Bai, a great poet of the Tang Dynasty, reflecting India's long-standing reputation for prosperity. The renowned Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore described the Golden Land as his homeland, West-Bengal. He wrote a song in Bengali called *Amar Sonar Bangla* (Our Golden Bengal), which later became the national anthem of Bangladesh. Tagore is the only writer to have composed national anthems for two countries: India and Bangladesh.



On June 8, 1955, an Indian cultural delegation led by Deputy Minister of External Affairs Anil Kumar Chanda arrived in Beijing and received warm welcome.

**In the past, India was often referred to as "Sone ki Chidiya", meaning "Golden Land", a term that was introduced to China during the Tang Dynasty. The phrase "Golden Land" appears in a poem by Li Bai, a great poet of the Tang Dynasty, reflecting India's long-standing reputation for prosperity.**

The poem I wrote also summarises the development of China-India relations over the past 75 years. China and India are among the fastest-growing countries, and it is evident that we will become more prosperous and developed nations in the future. It is my sincere vision

that China and India will establish Chindia at an early date and unite all nations to build a community with a shared future for mankind — one that fosters development, peace, and common prosperity.

---

(Professor Tan Chung is a renowned historian and an authority on China-India relations and cultural exchanges. He is a doyen of Chinese cultural studies in India. His father, Tan Yun-Shan (1898-1983), was the founder of Cheena Bhavana at Santiniketan and an Indian-Chinese sinologist. This article has been compiled and translated based on the author's oral narration. The views expressed are personal.)

# Looking Back, Seizing the Present

**India-China relations warmed up in 2013 with high-level visits and diplomatic gestures. Yet, a decade later, they went downhill.**

**As 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between India and China, Lin Minwang, Deputy Dean and Professor at Fudan University, reflects on what changed — and why.**



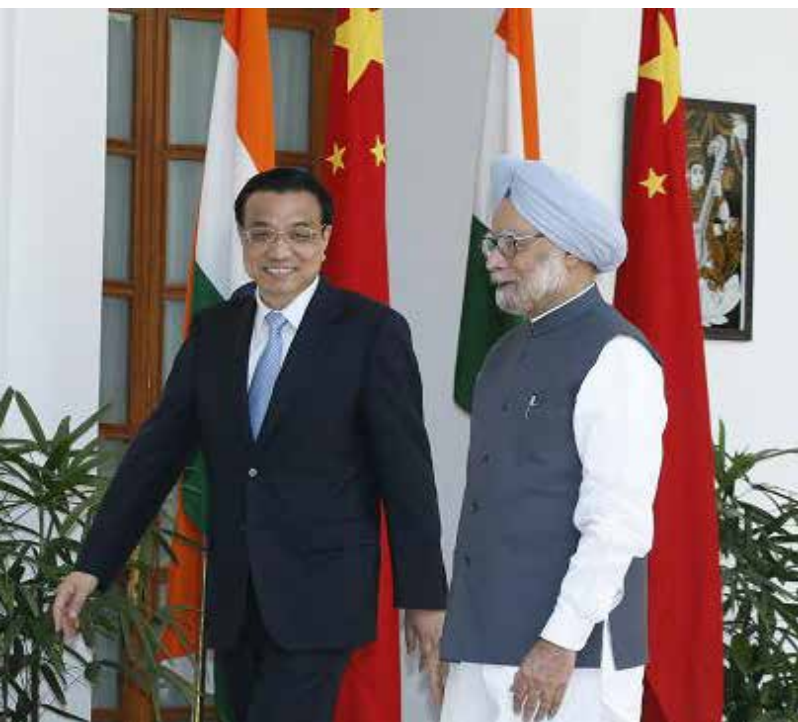
LIN MINWANG

In March 2013, I was fortunate to move from university to work in a Chinese institution in India. It was my first time in India, and I was filled with curiosity and anticipation. I remember that after my flight arrived in Delhi late at night, the car picking me up was stopped by roadblocks in the embassy area. Two Indian soldiers carrying rifles approached and asked both me and the driver to undergo a security



On October 23, 2024, President Xi Jinping met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the margins of the BRICS Summit held in Kazan, Russia.





On May 20, 2013, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang held meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi.

**In 2013, a new leadership took power in China, bringing increased attention to China's diplomacy towards India. In March 2013, after Li Keqiang was elected Premier of China, he swiftly called then-Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and chose India as the destination for his first official visit – a departure from the usual practice of Chinese Premiers prioritising visits to Southeast Asian countries. The Indian government quickly recognised this gesture and responded warmly and positively.**

check. Having lived in Beijing for ten years and spent time studying and living in several European countries, I had never encountered such a situation before. It was the first time I directly experienced the security environment in India.

Although China and India have highly similar national conditions, there are huge differences between the two countries.

## **A New Era**

In 2013, a new leadership took power in China, bringing increased attention to China's diplomacy towards India. In March, after Li Keqiang was elected Premier of China, he swiftly called then-Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and chose India as the destination for his first official visit – a departure from the usual practice of Chinese Premiers prioritising visits to Southeast Asian countries. The Indian government quickly recognised this gesture and responded warmly and positively.

In May, during Premier Li Keqiang's visit to India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh remarked, "The Indian government and people

are deeply honoured that Premier Li Keqiang has chosen India as the first stop of his first visit after taking office."

## **Rise of India & China**

During his final visit to China in October 2013, Prime Minister Singh delivered a speech at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee of China, leaving a lasting impression with several key remarks. First, he stated, "India welcomes the rise of China, and China also welcomes the rise of India. There is enough space in Asia and the world to accommodate the development of both countries." Second, he emphasised that the old theories of alliance and containment were outdated, asserting that "India and China will not be contained, nor should they seek to contain other countries." Third, he rejected the notion that China and India were destined to be opponents, stressing that both nations should have the resolve to become partners and shape their future through cooperation rather than confrontation.



Looking back at China-India relations during that period, they were marked by warmth and mutual understanding. China's positive stance was met with a timely and enthusiastic response from India, with both sides making efforts to respect each other's sensitivities and concerns.

## Managing Differences

In April 2013, ahead of Premier Li Keqiang's visit to India, a standoff occurred along the border. However, the Indian government handled the situation with a rational and professional diplomatic approach. In response to media uproar, then Indian Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid downplayed the incident, calling it "just a small pimple on the beautiful face of China-India relations."

**During his final visit to China in October 2013, Prime Minister Singh delivered a speech at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, leaving a lasting impression with several key remarks. First, he stated, "India welcomes the rise of China, and China also welcomes the rise of India. There is enough space in Asia and the world to accommodate the development of both countries."**

Similarly, during the 17th meeting of Special Representatives for the China-India Boundary Question, held in Delhi in February 2014, China introduced the Belt and Road Initiative and invited India to participate. Senior Indian officials spoke highly of the initiative and made positive statements regarding potential collaboration. Despite differences on various issues, both nations consistently sought to resolve them through dialogue, mutual consultation, and compromise.

## Lessons From Past

Looking back at China-India relations at that time, it is worth considering why relations between the two countries have fluctuated over the past decade, ultimately reaching their lowest point since the Cold War.

**As 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and India, it becomes even more crucial to draw lessons and wisdom from history.**

As 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and India, it becomes even more crucial to draw lessons and wisdom from history. India's Foreign Minister S Jaishankar emphasised that "China and India are two rising powers with different histories and cultures" and that "India must understand the Chinese way of thinking." While mutual understanding is indeed important, what matters even more is handling differences and conflicts with goodwill and sincerity. Communication without genuine heart-to-heart exchange remains a superficial connection.

(The author is Deputy Dean and Professor, The Institute of International Studies at Fudan University. The views expressed are personal.)



The author visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

# China and India Should Strengthen Mutual Understanding through Dialogue among Civilizations

**Following the official meeting between the leaders of China and India in Kazan in October, 2024, bilateral relations have gradually warmed up, albeit at a slow pace. As a long-term observer of Sino-Indian relations, the author believes that the current state of relations is normal.**



LIU ZONGYI

Since the author's visit to India in November 2023, the Indian side has proposed that there should be enhanced think-tank and cultural exchanges between China and India, the reinstatement of direct flights between the two countries, and the relaxation of visa restrictions for Chinese nationals. To date, these proactive commitments by India have not been realized. The issues of direct flights and visas pertain to the economic interactions between the two countries, and India seems reluctant to strengthen economic ties with China. However, think-tank and cultural exchanges are crucial for enhancing mutual understanding and preventing misunderstandings and erroneous perceptions between the two nations. I have always advocated that China and India should strengthen mutual understanding through civilization dialogue.

## Global Civilization Initiative

On March 15, 2023, President Xi Jinping presented a novel concept of Global Civilization Initiative and dialogue among civilizations at the High-Level Dialogue between the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties in Beijing. The Global Civilization Initiative, akin to the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, represents a novel philosophy and concept on global governance put forth by Chinese leaders during a period of global turbulence and transformation. The diverse political systems, developmental models, and religious cultures among countries of the East, West, and South-North contribute to the prevalence of contradictions and conflicts. China aspires to bridge the gaps between civilizations through equitable dialogue, fostering mutual understanding and inclusiveness among nations and civilizations. Through exchange and mutual learning, it aims to promote collective growth, progress, and innovation. The Global Civilization Initiative is not merely a macro-level concept addressing global governance and world peace; it also embodies specific strategies



and pathways. “Respecting the diversity of world civilizations” constitutes the essence of the initiative, “promoting the common values of all humanity” is its core objective, “emphasizing the inheritance and innovation of civilizations” is its practical approach, and “strengthening international cultural exchange and cooperation” serves as its implementation mechanism.

The rationale behind China’s proposal of the Global Civilization Initiative is rooted in the historical experience of the development and growth of Chinese civilization. The reason why Chinese civilization has endured for 5000 years, creating the flourishing ages of the Han and Tang dynasties, and maintaining a long-term lead over Western civilization, is primarily due to the dialogue and integration of civilizations. This encompasses not only the exchange and mutual learning among different civilizations but also the dialogue and fusion of diverse ideological schools within the civilization itself, reflecting the open and inclusive attitude of the Chinese people towards the outside world. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the contending of a hundred schools of thought led to the unification and strength of the Qin and Han dynasties; from the Wei and Jin dynasties to the Sui and

Tang dynasties, the spread of Buddhism and Persian-Arab culture helped to foster the Tang Dynasty’s flourishing age; during the Song and Ming dynasties, Confucian culture underwent a transformation towards Neo-Confucianism based on the absorption of Buddhist thought. Generally speaking, periods of openness in history have coincided with China’s periods of prosperity, while seclusion has led to China’s modern-day backwardness and vulnerability. China proposes to construct a “Chinese path to modernization”. “Modernization” is a process, and the Chinese path to modernization is one of continuous improvement and development, requiring constant learning from the advanced experiences and practices of other countries.

## Mutual Learning

The exchange and mutual learning among civilizations have been a common phenomenon in human history. Modern archaeological discoveries demonstrate that the Chinese civilization grew and flourished through continuous interaction and mutual learning with other civilizations from its inception. Wheat, cattle, and sheep all originated from the Middle East. Conversely, millets and rice cultivated by ancient Chinese people also spread to other civilized regions. I was invited to participate

in the “International Millet Festival” organized by the Indian Consulate General in Shanghai. The Indian Consul General proudly presented seven different varieties of millet to us Chinese scholars, noting that remnants of millet had been discovered dating back over 5,000 years to the Harappan civilization, making it sound to the uninitiated as if millet originated in India. However, in reality, all the millet varieties they displayed can also be found in China, as China is the birthplace of millet. The cultivation of millet and broomcorn millet at the Cishan site in Hebei and the Xinglongwa site in Inner Mongolia dates back 8,000 years. It can be inferred that there were direct or indirect cultural exchanges between prehistoric Chinese and Indian populations before the arrival of the Aryans on the Indian subcontinent.

In ancient times, the Indian civilization served as a primary subject of exchange and mutual learning for the Chinese civilization, playing a profoundly positive role in the development and expansion of the latter. Numerous eminent Indian monks visited China to disseminate their teachings, while prominent Chinese monks such as Faxian and Xuanzang traveled to India to acquire Buddhist scriptures. These historical narratives have become widely circulated.

Direct exchanges between ancient China and India facilitated the accurate understanding of ancient Indian thought and society by the Chinese ancestors, leaving us with historical classics such as “Records of the Buddhist Kingdom” and “Records of the Western Regions,” providing precise firsthand materials for modern people to understand ancient Indian history and society. Beyond direct exchanges, there were also indirect ones. After the Tang Dynasty, the Tamil region in southern India, during the Chola Dynasty, had virtually no direct political relations with the Song Dynasty. Many transactions between the two sides were conducted through Samboja kingdom (also known as Sri Vijaya) located in present-day Sumatra. During this intermediary process, the status of the Chola Dynasty was deliberately downplayed by Srivijaya, affecting mutual understanding and cognition, as well

as trade relations between the two parties. This situation still carries strong implications for today.

## **Bridging Information Deficit**

To a large extent, the understanding and cognition between the elites and the public of China and India today still rely on the perspective of a third party, a situation that is more severe on the Indian side. On one hand, India denies entry to Chinese journalists and blocks genuine information about China, creating an information cocoon specific to China. On the other hand, Indian social elites primarily learn about China through the West and its media, a situation that has significantly deepened the misunderstandings of the Indian public towards China.

Like China, India is a civilization-state distinct from Western civilization, and it aspires to become a global power, realizing national rejuvenation and reviving ancient glory, which is understandable. However, to achieve its rise as a great power and the revival of its civilization, India should not adopt a strategy of joining forces with other major powers to contain China and replace its position in the global supply chain. Instead, it should seek a path of mutual learning and common progress with China.

## **Asian Century**

China and India are neighbors, which cannot be moved away. As Prime Minister Modi recently said in an interview with Lex Fridman, “If we look back centuries, there’s no real history of conflict between us. It has always been about learning from each other and understanding one another. Our cooperation isn’t just beneficial, it’s also essential for global stability and prosperity. And since the 21st century is Asia’s century, we want India and China to compete in a healthy and natural way. Competition is not a bad thing, but it should never turn into conflict. Instead of discord, we emphasise dialogue, because only through dialogue can we build a stable, cooperative relationship that serves the best interests of both nations.”

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(The author is the Director of Center for South Asia Studies, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies. The views expressed are personal.)



# Development of China-India Relations: From Historical Evolution to Future Paths



ZHANG JIADONG

China-India relations, as one of the most influential bilateral relationships in the world today, have undergone a complex and multifaceted development process. From the friendly cooperation against colonialism in the early Cold War period, to the strategic confrontation following the 1962 border conflict, to the gradual shift towards a development partnership after the Cold War, and now to the current situation where strategic competition and development cooperation coexist, the historical evolution of China-India relations reflects the strategic demands and changing international environment of both countries in different periods. Today, China-India relations have transcended the traditional positioning as neighboring countries, major powers, and developing nations, becoming a relationship between two global powers. Its influence extends beyond the bilateral and regional levels, carrying profound global significance. However, the rapid growth in the power and influence of both China and India starkly contrasts with the relatively lagging development of their bilateral

relations. This asymmetry is undermining mutual perceptions between the peoples of the two countries and threatening the healthy development of China-India relations and global stability.

In light of this situation, this article begins with a historical overview, analyzes the importance of China-India relations and the challenges they face, and proposes specific suggestions for improvement, aiming to provide a feasible path for the future development of bilateral relations.

## The Evolution of China-India Relations

The evolution of China-India relations is a tortuous process that reflects the interests and strategic considerations of both countries at different historical stages.

### Anti-Colonial Partners in the Early Cold War Period

In the 1950s, China and India jointly opposed colonialism and imperialism, advocating the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. During this period, bilateral relations were relatively friendly, with a strong willingness to cooperate. For example, the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” proposed by both countries in 1954 became an important norm in international relations. However, border issues gradually emerged, particularly disputes over Xizang and the McMahon Line, laying the groundwork for future conflicts.



On May 16, 2015, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Fudan University in Shanghai and inaugurated the Center for Gandhian and Indian Studies.

## Strategic Competitors After 1962

The 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict marked a turning point in bilateral relations. This brief but intense armed conflict led to a sharp deterioration in relations, with mutual trust completely eroded. After the conflict, China and India engaged in a long-term military standoff along the border, viewing each other as threats to regional security.

## Development Partners After the Cold War

After the end of the Cold War, the global political and economic landscape underwent profound changes, and China and India began to seek improved relations. Starting in the 1990s, high-level visits between the two countries became frequent, and economic cooperation gradually warmed. Although India's nuclear tests in 1998 temporarily interrupted the improvement of China-India relations, the relationship soon returned to a normal track. However, border disputes and geopolitical differences persisted, limiting the comprehensive deepening of China-India relations.

## The Current Situation of Coexisting Strategic Competition and Development Cooperation

Currently, China-India relations present a

complex picture. On one hand, competition has intensified in areas such as the border regions, strategic rivalry in the Indian Ocean, and global governance. On the other hand, cooperation in trade, climate change, and counter-terrorism continues to advance. This state of "competition and cooperation coexisting" requires both countries to be more cautious and pragmatic in handling their relationship.

## The Importance of China-India Relations

The importance of China-India relations has transcended traditional positioning and become a key factor influencing the global landscape.

## Rising Influence in the Global Economy

China and India together account for nearly one-third of the world's population and are important engines of global economic growth. Their combined economic output continues to rise as a share of global GDP, with China and India being the second and fifth largest economies, respectively. They play crucial roles in global supply chains, trade, and investment. Fluctuations in China-India relations could trigger chain reactions in the global economy.

## Increasing Influence on Regional Security

The strategic interactions between China and

India in South Asia and the Indian Ocean directly affect the regional security landscape. Military confrontations in border areas, naval activities in the Indian Ocean, and competition for influence in neighboring countries are all focal points of regional security. The stability of China-India relations is crucial for peace and stability in South Asia and the northern Indian Ocean region.

### **Growing Influence on Global Governance**

In the global governance system, the status of China and India is increasingly prominent. Their positions and cooperation in multilateral platforms such as the United Nations, G20, SCO and BRICS influence the direction of global issues like climate change, international trade, and counter-terrorism. For instance, China-India cooperation in the Paris Agreement is vital for global emissions reduction, while differences in trade rule-making could affect the reform process of the WTO.

### **Challenges Facing China-India Relations**

Despite the undeniable importance of China-India relations, their development level is severely asymmetrical with the power and influence of both countries, and this asymmetry has a negative impact on bilateral relations.

#### **Negative Public Perception**

There is a significant imbalance in public perception between China and India, with negative sentiments prevailing. In China, India is sometimes seen as a backward developing country by a few people. In India, China is frequently portrayed as an expansionist nation, raising security concerns. This negative perception exacerbates misunderstandings and hinders the healthy development of China-India relations.

#### **Low Level of People-to-People Exchanges**

As ancient civilizations, China and India historically established deep cultural ties through Buddhism and the Silk Road. However,

the current level of people-to-people exchanges is extremely low, disproportionate to their status as major global powers. According to statistics, in 2024, the number of Chinese students in India does not exceed 30, while there are 300,000 Chinese students in the United States. Indian students in China number only around 10,000, accounting for just one percent of India's overseas students.

### **Fragile Economic Ties**

Although bilateral trade between China and India has been growing annually, it remains insufficient compared to the economic scales of both countries. China's trade volume with India is far lower than that with Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam. Additionally, cooperation in investment is limited, lacking deep economic bonds. These fragile economic ties leave China-India relations without a solid foundation of interests, making it difficult to withstand political fluctuations.

### **Suggestions for Improving China-India Relations**

To address the above challenges, China and India need to take pragmatic measures to gradually improve their relationship, reduce misunderstandings and conflicts, and jointly contribute to regional and global stability.

#### **Promote People-to-People Exchanges and Build a China-India Cultural Community**

China and India share a long history of cultural exchanges, with Buddhism spreading from India to China and Chinese silk and porcelain influencing Indian culture. However, the current level of people-to-people interactions does not reflect their status as ancient civilizations. To promote people-to-people exchanges, both countries should take the following measures:

- **Ease Visa Restrictions:** Both sides should reach agreements on visa facilitation, simplifying the visa process for scholars, students, and cultural workers to reduce exchange costs.
- **Expand Educational Cooperation:** Encourage mutual assistance projects between





On November 29-30, 2024, the Center for South Asian Studies of Fudan University and the India Foundation held a China-India dialogue in Lhasa.

universities, such as establishing China-India joint scholarships and increasing the number of exchange students.

- **Organize Cultural Events:** Regularly hold China-India cultural festivals, film weeks, art exhibitions, etc., to showcase the cultural charm of both countries and enhance public goodwill.
- **Promote Tourism Development:** Develop historical and cultural tourism routes between China and India, such as Buddhist and Hindu pilgrimage tours, to facilitate people-to-people contact.

### Promote Economic and Trade Cooperation and Investment Activities to Build a Closer Community of Interests

China and India have strong economic complementarities, with China leading in manufacturing and infrastructure and India

excelling in information technology and services. China and India should take proactive measures to advance bilateral economic cooperation:

- **Deepen Trade Cooperation:** Optimize the trade structure, reduce trade barriers, facilitate exchanges for business and industry personnel.
- **Encourage Two-Way Investment:** promote development of China-India economic cooperation zones, provide tax incentives and policy support for enterprises, and attract more two-way investment.
- **Strengthen SME Cooperation:** Establish a platform for China-India small and medium enterprise (SME) collaboration, promoting technology transfer and industrial chain integration.

### Establish a Joint Research Mechanism to Find Consensus and Solutions

Many issues in China-India relations, such as border disputes and geopolitical competition,

stem from a lack of deep understanding and communication. China and India should take the following measures:

- **Establish Joint Research Centers:** Focus on common concerns such as border issues, climate change, water resource management, and global governance, and conduct transnational research projects.
- **Hold Academic Forums:** Regularly organize seminars for Chinese and Indian scholars, inviting government officials and business representatives to participate and promote multi-party dialogue.
- **Publish Joint Reports:** Release research findings on pressing issues to provide policy recommendations for both governments and peoples.
- **Cultivate Young Scholars:** Fund mutual visits for young scholars from China and India to nurture a new generation of researchers focused on bilateral relations.

## The Road Ahead

The development of China-India relations not only concerns the well-being of the peoples of both countries but also has a profound impact on regional and global peace and prosperity. Currently, despite challenges such as negative public perception, insufficient people-to-people exchanges, and fragile economic ties, China and India are fully capable of gradually improving their relationship and reducing misunderstandings and conflicts by promoting people-to-people exchanges, deepening economic and trade cooperation, and establishing research mechanisms. Such improvements will not only enhance the stability of bilateral relations but also inject positive energy into global governance.

(The author is the Director of the Center for South Asian Studies, Fudan University. The views expressed are personal.)



In November 2023, a delegation from the Center for South Asian Studies of Fudan University visited the Gorakhnath Math Temple in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.



# China and India: Revitalizing Track II



WU LIN

After President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting in Kazan, China-India relations were restarted. To implement the leaders' consensus, the two countries quickly launched intensive intergovernmental dialogue, and reached consensus on some specific improvement and development measures, including jointly commemorating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India in 2025, carrying out media and think tank exchanges, track II dialogue and other people to people and cultural exchanges.

Compared with political detente, Track II dialogue and people-to-people exchanges are the top priorities for China-India relations. Now we are in the era of "Grand Diplomacy", which refers to a broad, overarching approach to diplomatic strategy, often involving multiple layers of engagement. While the government officials and military personnel continue to negotiate on sensitive issues within a tense diplomatic setting, a side channel of communication, namely track II consisting of non-governmental actors such as academics, entrepreneurs, journalists and stakeholders, is opened to foster dialogue, build relationships and resolve conflicts through unofficial and informal interactions. Among them, think tanks are emerging as key facilitators of these conversations.

## Current Development

It hasn't been long since India and China have begun to engage in track II dialogues. The



The 7th CPIFA-ICWA Dialogue on April 15, 2021.



foundations of these dialogues were laid in April 2005, when the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to seek bilateral cooperation. The first structured dialogue, however, only began as late as November 2013. In the following year, an MOU was signed between the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and India's Ministry of External Affairs during PM Modi's visit to that kicked off a series of think tank dialogues between the countries. Further ahead, during the Wuhan Summit, where strategic talks were held between the Indian Prime Minister Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in April 2018, a consensus was reached to accelerate people to people and cultural exchange between the countries. Think tanks were recognised as important agents to implement the consensus reached by their leaders.

Since then, frequent track two dialogues facilitated by the leading think tanks between the two countries have taken place to augment the overall engagements, including the "China-India Think Tank Dialogue" conference co-organized by China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU) and Observer Research Foundation (ORF) of India, which went on for years but has halted after the Covid-19 outbreak.

Some of these talks are technically track 1.5. Retired diplomats and security advisors, who no longer hold official positions play a crucial role in mediating between the official and the non-official circle. For instance, a high-level track-2 dialogue at Manesar organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) and Sichuan University in March 2019, was led by Shivshankar Menon, former National Security Adviser of India and Special Representative for India-China Boundary Question, and Dai Bingguo, former State Councillor of China.

In recent years, Chinese think tanks have made remarkable progress in the fields of Indian studies and China-India relations. In addition to traditional national research institutes, more universities have set up Indian research think tanks. For example, institutions such as the Belt and Road Strategy Institute at

Tsinghua University and the Qianhai Institute of International Affairs at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen) provide intellectual support to China-India relations through interdisciplinary research and international cooperation.

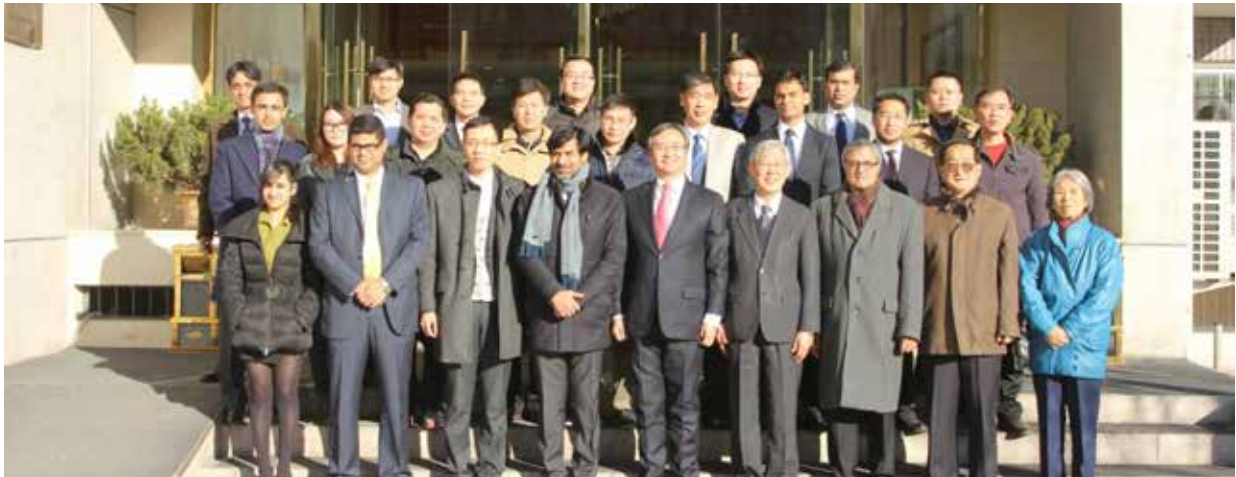
The exchanges and cooperation with Indian think tanks are also strengthened. For example, Yunnan University has held 15 sessions of the Southwest Forum since 2010, and Indian scholars have been invited. In addition, the China-India Think Tank Forum has become an important platform for exchanges between think tanks of the two countries.

After 2020, the exchange of Chinese and Indian think tanks has decreased due to political relations, but the exchange of scholars has not stopped, and the dialogue has continued through emails and online meetings. In 2024, when relations between the two countries warmed up, Fudan University hosted a seminar on the Indian Ocean in Shanghai, inviting scholars from India and other South Asian countries to attend. The dialogue was very candid and in-depth. In February 2025, the CCG met with the Indian Counsellor in China to discuss the latest developments in China-India relations and cooperation between think tanks.

## The Way Forward

Currently, the trust deficit is a critical issue in the bilateral relations that cannot be ignored. In order to solve this problem, track II can play a more active role. The focus needs to be on expanding "trust society" with "high trust" by facilitating personnel exchanges at all levels and in all fields of society. Only when this part of the population grows up, can it be possible to weaken the influence of the "low trust" population and solve the problem of mutual trust deficit.

As a way forward, it must be recognised that dialogue needs both a foundation and a breakthrough. Foundation means consensus. Both countries share consensus on many issues, including regional and global issues. While breakthroughs are based on recognition of the lack of knowledge and differences in understanding, and the need to further



The 3rd China-India Think-tanks Dialogue on January 8-9, 2016.

communication through multiple levels, including track II dialogues.

We should take the opportunity of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India to further strengthen the Track II dialogue and people-to-people exchanges.

First, we need to deepen Track 2 dialogue on existing and new mechanisms and platforms. Some mechanisms may need to be restarted, such as “China-India Think Tank Dialogue” co-organized by CFAU and ORF. Some may continue, while the topics should be renewed and expanded, covering artificial intelligence (AI), climate change, multilateralism, etc. Besides, as big powers of the world, China and India should also co-build track 2 platforms together, and promote China-India cooperation in multilateral mechanisms (such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS) to jointly address global challenges. As AI is becoming a common issue related to the future of mankind, think tanks of China and India could hold a “Global South Think Tank Summit in the field of AI” to share knowledge and exchange ideas among countries in the Global South.

Second, we should attach importance to the role of youth in people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two countries. As India becomes more visible on the international stage, more and more young Chinese are interested

in India, especially its culture. The number of doctoral students choosing Indian studies as their research field is increasing. However, the level of academic exchange and cooperation between China and India has not increased accordingly. In the future, the education departments of the two countries should promote student exchange programs between universities of the two countries, and increase the number of students sent to each other. There should be more youth summits, academic seminars, joint research programs and other public goods to be produced and provided, which will not only promote mutual understanding between the youths, but also lay the foundation for the future of bilateral relations. After all, the future is in the hands of young people.

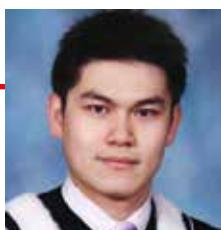
All in all, the improvement of the India-China relations requires rational voices, and scholars and youth are the ones who make rational voices. There is a need to cultivate expertise on India and China in the academic institutions and through a robust educational exchange such as visiting scholar and student exchange programs. China and India, both ancient civilizations of the Global South, share the vision and aspiration to benefit the world at large. Against the backdrop of changes in the global order, the two countries should play a positive role in Track II dialogue and contribute more Oriental wisdom to the world.

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(The author is Associate Professor, Institute of Asian Studies, China Foreign Affairs University. The views expressed in this article are personal.)

# Recalling Nehru's Admiration for China's Economic Model: Lessons for Today

**In the 1950s, India closely studied China's economic model, with Nehru drawing insights from economist Chen Hansheng. Influenced by China's agricultural and industrial strategies, India attempted similar reforms. Mao Keji, an assistant researcher at China's NDRC, revisits this overlooked history.**



**MAO KEJI**

**I**n the winter of 1955, the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi welcomed a distinguished Chinese scholar. For a fortnight, he lived under the same roof as Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi – sharing breakfast and dinner each day and engaging in long, meandering walks and conversations afterward. The camaraderie was so profound and intellectually stimulating that Nehru even highlighted the scholar's incisive insights in his fortnightly letters to the chief ministers of India's states.

What, one might ask, could have prompted the Indian Prime Minister to extend such extraordinary hospitality to a Chinese scholar? The answer lay in the identity of the guest – none

other than the renowned Chinese economist Chen Hansheng. Nehru's insistence on hosting Professor Chen and engaging in repeated, in-depth discussions stemmed from a keen desire to absorb the latest lessons in economic development emerging from China.

## **Shared Struggles, Shared Aspirations**

The memory of Rabindranath Tagore's slogan, "Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai" (Indians and Chinese are brothers), often evokes images of the close coordination during the Bandung Conference and the joint advocacy for the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Yet few recall that, over seventy years ago, India was swept up in a wave of enthusiasm for "learning from China" in the realm of economic development.

In November 1954, on the eve of India's implementation of the second five-year plan, Nehru learned of the groundbreaking achievements of China's first five-year plan. His reaction was twofold: a genuine elation at the remarkable progress of a fellow Asian giant,





Indian statistician P.C. Mahalanobis and Zhou Enlai at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, December 9, 1956.

coupled with an acute sense of competitive urgency. “These Western countries have had 150 years or more of industrial growth... We are not going to have 100 years to catch up,” he remarked. “Our problems, therefore, are essentially similar to those of other underdeveloped countries in Asia. It is for this reason that I was particularly interested in what was happening in China, and I said that the most exciting countries for me today were India and China.”

Privately, Nehru also expressed his determination to prevail in this developmental contest with China: “We differ, of course, in our political and economic structure, yet the problems we face are essentially the same. The future will show which country and which structure of government yields greater results in every way.”

For India’s top officials, China was the only nation that shared many of India’s own

characteristics. Both countries had been victims of imperialist and colonial exploitation, both grappled with acute human-land resource tensions, widespread unemployment, and stagnating productivity, and both faced the daunting challenge of amassing surplus capital to fuel rapid industrialisation. Most importantly, both aspired to a similar political ideal — the pursuit of economic equality and social justice.

### **Agricultural Lessons from China**

For developing nations, the greatest challenge in achieving rapid industrialisation lay in securing sustainable financial backing, cultivating a sufficiently large market, and keeping inflation in check — all of which required a deeper exploration of agricultural potential. India’s most pressing obstacle at the time was a “resource constraint”: while the push for rapid industrial growth demanded an unprecedented

increase in agricultural output, agriculture itself could not meet soaring industrial needs without diverting critical investment away from industrial development.

**For India's top officials, China was the only nation that shared many of India's own characteristics. Both countries had been victims of imperialist and colonial exploitation, both grappled with acute human-land resource tensions, widespread unemployment, and stagnating productivity, and both faced the daunting challenge of amassing surplus capital to fuel rapid industrialisation**

At this juncture, the Chinese model emerged as a beacon of hope. It was Professor Chen who revealed to Nehru that after completing its socialist transformation of agriculture, China had dramatically boosted the efficiency of human labour, animal power, agricultural inputs – and even the use of manure. This revolutionary drive propelled China's agricultural output to surge by as much as 35 to 40 per cent over five years, all without a noticeable increase in resource input. Such results offered India a promising solution to its most intractable resource dilemma.

## India's Efforts to Replicate China's Success

Throughout the mid-1950s, dozens of Indian officials from the Congress Party, both houses of Parliament, the Ministries of Food and Agriculture, and the National Planning Commission visited China. They sought counsel from China's top governmental bodies, including the Communist Party's Central Committee, the State Council, and the National Planning Commission. Both Nehru and India's chief economic planner, PC Mahalanobis, were so impressed by China's socialist development that they were deeply moved.

Even at a time when Sino-Indian relations were strained, Mahalanobis acknowledged in interviews that "China provided a better model

of development for India than the advanced Western countries." China's experience – demonstrating that even subsistence agriculture, when reorganised through land reform and rural restructuring, could support a leap in industrial development – was nothing short of remarkable.

Nehru himself, after returning from China, frequently spoke of the rapid growth of industrial and agricultural cooperatives there. His admiration and curiosity were such that he immediately commissioned several study delegations to investigate the causes behind China's agricultural boom. In 1956, the National Planning Commission dispatched an Agricultural Cooperative Study Group to China to examine, in detail, the strategies behind its cooperative model – a mission that would later evolve into the well-known Patil Committee. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture sent a separate Agricultural Planning and Technology Study Group to uncover the "secret" behind China's dramatic productivity gains.

**Nehru himself, after returning from China, frequently spoke of the rapid growth of industrial and agricultural cooperatives there.**

Both delegations arrived in China in mid-July 1956, spending two months travelling across eight provinces and visiting at least twenty rural cooperatives. The Ministry group engaged in in-depth discussions with experts from China's Ministry of Agriculture and the National Planning Commission. VT Krishnamachari, then vice-chairman of India's National Planning Commission, observed that China's rural reforms had increased agricultural output by 15 to 30 percent in just two to three years. Sweeping land reforms – redistributing land equally – had spurred farmers to embrace collective projects with renewed zeal, from reclaiming wasteland to constructing dams and digging wells. In one province, within a single season, 300,000 wells and 100,000 dams were built, effectively doubling the irrigated area.

Even in the laborious and unglamorous task of collecting farmyard manure, the Chinese masses displayed extraordinary enthusiasm, gathering 70 percent of the required quantity well before the next fertilisation season.

**Inspired by this Chinese experience, Nehru, in 1958, launched what was perhaps the most progressive and historically significant land reform in India's history—the Nagpur Resolution.**

The Ministry group reached a similar conclusion: “China’s experience shows that, given certain conditions, it is possible through cooperatives to organise rural manpower resources in a way that ensures a higher level of employment for all members of the community, not just those with fair-sized agricultural holdings. This is significant for our future development.”

### **Revisiting India-China Cooperation Today**

Inspired by China’s achievements, Nehru became convinced that land reform could significantly improve the efficiency of existing resources, enabling increased agricultural output without additional investment. He even cited China’s example to rebuke the Ministry of Food and Agriculture for its complacency in assuming that only additional resource inputs could boost production. In one of his letters to the chief ministers, he wrote:

“China, where millions of cooperative farms have sprung up — how then are we to increase this agricultural production? We know for a fact that some other countries have rapidly increased their food production in recent years without any tremendous use of fertilisers. How has China done it? China’s resources in this respect are no greater than ours. At the same time, China is placing far greater emphasis on industrial

development and heavy industry than we are. Yet, they are succeeding in increasing their agricultural production at a faster pace than we are. Surely, it should not be beyond our powers to achieve something that China can.”

Inspired by this Chinese experience, Nehru, in 1958, launched what was perhaps the most progressive and historically significant land reform in India’s history—the Nagpur Resolution. The resolution pledged to complete comprehensive land reforms, including imposing ceilings on land holdings, by the end of 1959. It also vigorously promoted the movement towards rural cooperatives: surplus rural land was to be collectively owned by the village community rather than by individuals, and cooperatives composed of landless labourers would manage its use.

Although the ambitions of the Nagpur Resolution — and the broader big-push industrialisation strategy that India wholeheartedly embraced — ultimately fell short due to a host of internal and external challenges, the spirit of mutual assistance, reciprocal learning, and cooperative exchange between China and India, born out of that fervour for “learning from China,” continues to resonate powerfully today.

**China and India remain the only two nations in the world with populations exceeding one billion. As each other's largest neighbours, they are uniquely positioned to rekindle that cooperative spirit and become true partners in development**

In an increasingly uncertain world, revisiting India’s “learning from China” episode serves as a potent reminder: China and India remain the only two nations in the world with populations exceeding one billion. As each other’s largest neighbours, they are uniquely positioned to rekindle that cooperative spirit and become true partners in development.

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(The author is an assistant researcher at the International Cooperation Center of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). He is also a visiting fellow at the Harvard-Yenching Institute. The views expressed are personal.)



# How Best to Commemorate 75th Anniversary: Minimise China-India Differences, Maximise Friendliness

**History shows that the cultural and civilizational bonds between China and India are far older than the 75 years of diplomatic relations. It's time to learn from history and celebrate the 75th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries by minimising our differences and maximising our friendliness and all-round cooperation, says Sudheendra Kulkarni.**



**SUDHEENDRA  
KULKARNI**

**T**wo world-changing developments took place towards the end of the first half of the 20th century. India gained independence from the British colonial rule in 1947. The People's Republic of China was born with the triumph of the communist revolution in 1949. The rebirth of two ancient Asian nations in the modern era paved the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations between them in 1950. Hence, this year marks the 75th anniversary of that milestone event. The two governments have decided to commemorate this landmark with befitting programmes in both countries. This decision, and other bilateral agreements in recent months, are most welcome since they will surely bring our bilateral relations back on the normal track.

However, it is important to remember that the relations between the peoples of India and China, and the cultural and civilizational bonds between our two great Asian nations, are far older. As against the 75 years of diplomatic relations, these are several thousand years old. Over the years, innumerable representatives of common people — monks, traders, travelers, scholars, scientists, innovators, teachers, students — interacted with each other. Of course, there are also records of the kings in ancient India and ancient China sending their envoys on diplomatic missions. But history provides far greater evidence of the travels and interactions of those who were neither kings nor diplomats. Most of them were common people, and many of them were renunciants. Each of these people-to-people interactions contributed to mutual discovery, mutual understanding, mutual learning, mutual influence and mutual enrichment, which forms the main story of India-China relations in the long sweep of history.

## People-to-People Bridge

The point to note is that people are the masters of the destinies of their respective nations. People are the true custodians of the cultural traditions, civilizational heritage, value systems and even the very identity of their nations. Therefore, people-to-people contacts and cooperation are far more important than government-to-government conversations conducted by diplomats in the modern as well as in pre-modern eras.

In saying this, I do not in any way wish to belittle the importance of diplomats. Indeed, diplomats are high-caliber professionals who are trained in the delicate task of improving government-to-government relations and facilitating people-to-people relations. And the best among diplomats are those that open new doors, and create new opportunities, for India-China people-to-people cooperation and friendship. Such diplomats deserve our highest respect and appreciation.

### Friendliness Outweighs Differences

There is another reason why both diplomats and common people in our two countries should pay far greater attention to India-China relations in the pre-1950 era than to what has happened in the past 75 years. Wen Jiabao, China's former Premier, had once perceptively said, "Friendliness accounts for 99.99 per cent of the 2,200-year-old Sino-Indian exchanges and misunderstanding merely 0.01 per cent. It's high time we buried that 0.01 per cent and re-established the 99.9 per cent." The "99.9 per cent" part of friendliness belongs to the pre-1950 era, whereas the "0.01 per cent" part of differences and disputes belongs to a small segment of the past 75 years.

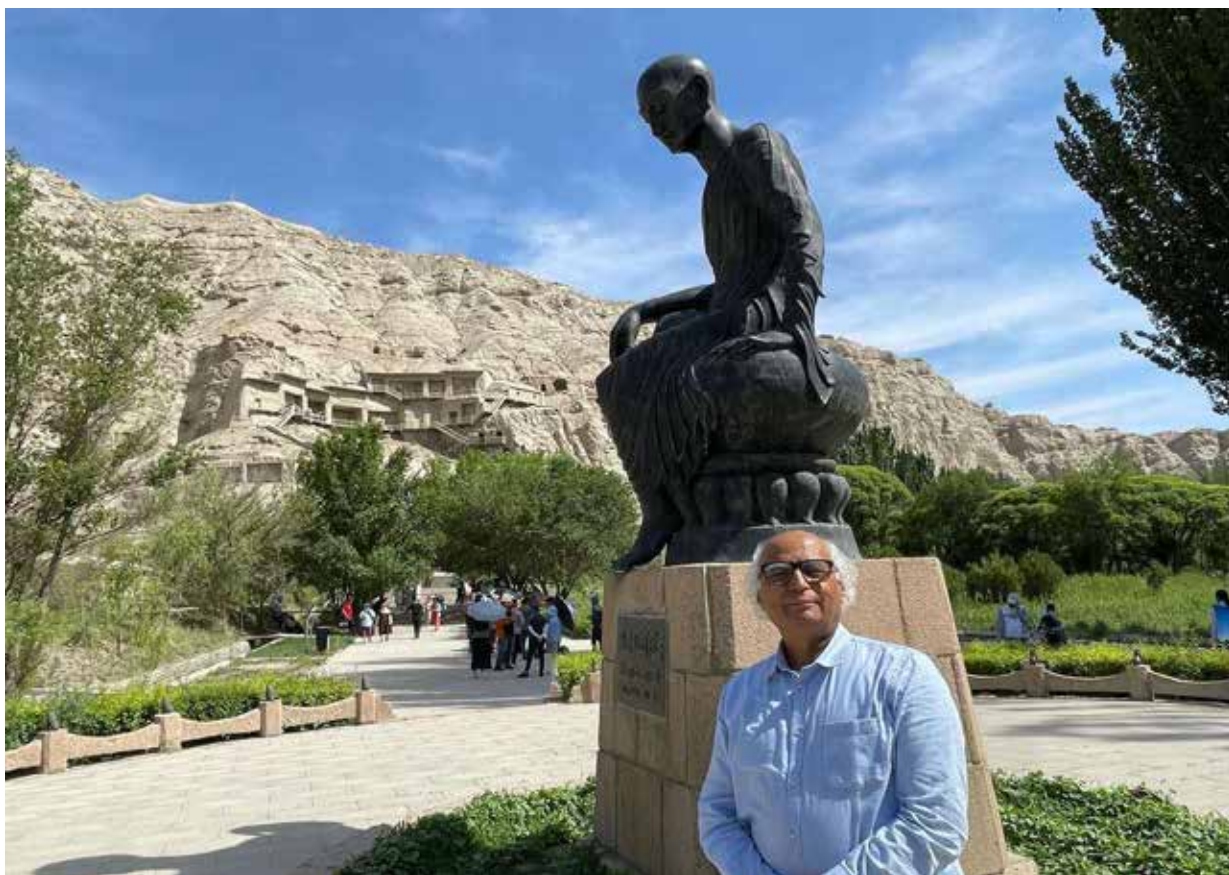
The more we study how India and China forged friendly relations for the longest period in human history, the greater will be our hope, confidence and determination that the differences that have cropped in recent times are not insurmountable. These differences can be easily overcome if our two governments and peoples choose to be guided by the enormous wealth of wisdom gained through mutual interactions between our ancestors.

A study of the long history of interactions between India and China provides not only

President Xi Jinping and PM Modi visited the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi'an on May 14, 2015.







The author standing in front of the statue of Kumarajiva at historic caves in Kucha in Xinjiang.

education but also hope and inspiration to overcome our differences. When we read about the lives of travellers and teachers who came from China to India, and went from India to China more than a thousand years ago, we are wonder-struck by their limitless courage, their profound quest for knowledge, their willingness to share their spiritual gifts with their neighbours, and their noble dreams for the life of humanity guided by justice, virtue, fraternity and peace.

### From Xuanzang to Tagore

Let us ask ourselves: What prompted Xuanzang to undertake the hazardous pilgrimage to India 14 centuries ago, spend nearly two decades criss-crossing the length and breadth of India, study at Nalanda and also become a most revered professor at the famed university, then go back to his native city Xi'an (then called Chang'an, the capital of Tang dynasty) and finally write a detailed account of his travels? What made Kumarajiva, the son of a Kashmiri Pandit

and a Kucha princess, to devote his life in the 4th century to translating the most important sutras of Buddhism from Sanskrit into Chinese, translations that have stood the test of time?

**"Friendliness accounts for 99.99 per cent of the 2,200-year-old Sino-Indian exchanges and misunderstanding merely 0.01 per cent. It's high time we buried that 0.01 per cent and re-established the 99.9 per cent." The "99.9 per cent" part of friendliness belongs to the pre-1950 era, whereas the "0.01 per cent" part of differences and disputes belongs to a small segment of the past 75 years.**

Many Indians have a misconception that only Chinese travellers came to India. As a matter of fact, hundreds of Indian monks and scholars also travelled China. Prof Prabodh Chandra Bagchi



(1898-1956), one of the greatest Sino-Indologists of the 20th century and the third vice-chancellor of Visva Bharati University founded by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, has given a fascinating account of these intrepid Indian missionaries to China in his book 'India and China — A Thousand Years of Cultural Relations'.

**Chinese monasteries, libraries, archives and universities have done a much better job of preserving manuscripts and other historical records than their Indian counterparts.**

For example, there was Gunavarman, a prince-turned-monk from Kashmir who travelled to Ceylon, from there to Java, and from there to Nanking in China in 431 AD. He translated numerous spiritual texts from Sanskrit into Chinese. There was Bodhiruci, a monk from Southern India who went to Chang'an in 706 AD and completed the translation of some of the manuscripts Xuanzang had brought with him from India. There was Vajrabodhi from Central India who went to Ceylon and from there to China. He translated a number of mystic Buddhist works and died in 732 AD in Luoyang, the very place where Dharmaraksa and Kasyapa Matanga, two of the earliest Indian missionaries, had gone in the first century. The famous White Horse Monastery in Luoyang commemorates their travel to China. Vajrabodhi's disciple Amoghavajra also came to China and authored books on Yoga.

We only know some names of such Chinese and Indian travellers. Many other names have vanished into the dark depths of history. Many of their works and travelogues have also been lost. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned here with gratitude that Chinese monasteries, libraries, archives and universities have done a much better job of preserving manuscripts and other historical records than their Indian counterparts.

Be it the Chinese travellers to India or Indian travellers to China in ancient times, they had no buses and trains for transportation, no telephones and the internet for communication,

and none of the other comforts of modernity. All they had was their indomitable resolve. They crossed the Himalayas, they trekked across vast deserts, they sailed the choppy seas, and they risked everything including their lives in pursuit of their mission. What was their mission? It was not to mount attacks with armies, not to conquer land, nor to colonise alien people. Rather, it was to gain knowledge, spread knowledge, promote friendship and harmony, and to contribute to the welfare and progress of humanity.

The same mission was continued in recent centuries by poets, philosophers and scholars such as Rabindranath Tagore (who visited China three times), Kang Youwei (Chinese reformist scholar who came to India twice in the first decade of the last century and wrote extensively about the "striking similarities" between India and China), Prof Ji Xianlin (who translated the Ramayana into Chinese), Xu Fancheng (called the "Modern Xuanzang", he lived in the ashram of Maharshi Aurobindo in Pondicherry for 27 years and translated several sacred Indian scriptures into Chinese), Prof Tan Yun-shan (who came to India and founded Cheena Bhavan at Tagore's Shanti Niketan) and, of course, Prof Bagchi and many others.

**The Indian National Congress sent a medical mission to China as a mark of solidarity with the Chinese people. Five Indian doctors went "as ambassadors of service, goodwill and love". One of them, Dr Dwarakanath Kotnis, died in December 1942 while serving Chinese soldiers. He remains an eternal symbol of India-China friendship.**

History is witness to the fact that when Japan invaded China in 1937 and committed unspeakable crimes against Chinese people, the leaders of India's freedom movement, including Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, condemned the aggressor. Indeed, Tagore did not mince words in telling the Japanese: "I have deep love for you as people, but when

as a nation you have your dealings with other nations you can also be deceptive, cruel and efficient in handling those methods in which western nations show such mastery.”

**What is the best way to commemorate the 75th anniversary of our diplomatic relations? It is by resolving to minimise our differences and maximise our friendship and all-round cooperation. This is principally the responsibility of our two governments.**

The Indian National Congress sent a medical mission to China as a mark of solidarity with the Chinese people. Five Indian doctors went “as ambassadors of service, goodwill and love”. One of them, Dr Dwarakanath Kotnis, died in December 1942 while serving Chinese soldiers. He remains an eternal symbol of India-China friendship.

### **Best Way to Commemorate 75th Anniversary**

The tales of all these Indian and Chinese seekers of the higher purpose of life proves one thing. In the annals of humanity, there are not many examples of two large neighbouring nations that never had a dispute or a quarrel and never fought wars against each other for the longest period in their history. Whatever differences and disputes India and China have, are of recent vintage and even these were created mainly by British imperialists at a time when neither Indians nor Chinese were free to deal with their own affairs. Once we are guided by this historical awareness, it is not difficult to resolve our differences, including the boundary dispute, through mutual compromise and by keeping in mind our common obligation to the larger humanity.

Finally, this begets one question for both Indians and Chinese. What is the best way to commemorate the 75th anniversary of our diplomatic relations? It is by resolving to minimise our differences and maximise our friendship and all-round cooperation. This is principally the responsibility of our two

governments. To perform this responsibility, leading officials of our two governments must come to a firm consensus that India and China are not a threat to each other, but rather reliable partners to achieve common progress. We are not rivals who pose obstacles to each other’s rise, but rather providers of opportunities for each other’s development, success and national rejuvenation.

We should resolve to build our relationship on the firm pillars of equality, mutual respect, mutual goodwill and sensitivity to our legitimate mutual concerns — and never to bring suspicion and intrigue in the way we deal with each other. Most importantly, our two countries must never allow any external power to play one against the other. We have enough wisdom to discuss, and overcome, our differences peacefully on our own. All this is possible if we learn from how the noble representatives of our two great civilisations behaved with each other in the past.

**When the governments and peoples of our two countries work together with a common understanding and a lofty common purpose, no power on earth can sabotage the partnership of India and China to shape a new and better world order for the benefit of the entire humanity.**

But all this is not the responsibility of government leaders alone. It is equally the duty of the leading non-governmental representatives of our two peoples — scholars, socio-cultural leaders, business leaders, scientists, artists, academicians, mediapersons and so on. When the governments and peoples of our two countries work together with a common understanding and a lofty common purpose, no power on earth can sabotage the partnership of India and China to shape a new and better world order for the benefit of the entire humanity.

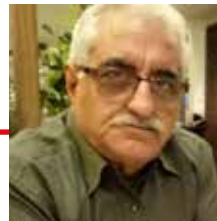
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(The author is founder of the Forum for a New South Asia and a close aide to the late Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The views expressed are personal.)

# Celebrating Dr Kotnis' Legacy: Friendship and Healing



**Dr Inderjit Singh recalls his struggle to set up Dr Kotnis Acupuncture Hospital in Ludhiana, which has become an enduring symbol of India-China friendship. He also argues for enhancing people-to-people contacts and collaboration in health sector.**



**INDERJIT SINGH**

**T**he year 2025 marks a significant milestone as India and China commemorate 75 years of diplomatic ties. A new chapter in their relationship unfolds with the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra this year, symbolizing renewed efforts to enhance cultural coordination, education, and trade. Encouraging student exchanges, tourism, and healthcare collaborations will play a crucial role in strengthening people-to-people relations, fostering deeper understanding and mutual respect.

## **Dr Kotnis: A Symbol of Friendship**

Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis, a physician from Solapur, Maharashtra, was a key figure in strengthening India-China relations. In 1938, he traveled to China as part of a medical team of five Indian doctors to assist during the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese



Aggression. His unwavering commitment to treating Chinese soldiers led to his ultimate sacrifice, making him a revered figure in China-India friendship.

Established in 1975 under the leadership of Dr. Inderjit Singh, the Dr. Kotnis Acupuncture Hospital in Ludhiana continues to honor his legacy. Dr. Bejoy Kumar Basu, a member of the Indian Medical Mission to China, played a pivotal role in keeping Dr. Kotnis' memory alive. Since its inception, it has provided healthcare services through acupuncture while raising awareness of the contributions of Dr. Kotnis and Dr. Basu. The hospital celebrates Dr. Kotnis annually on his birth anniversary (October 10) and his death anniversary (December 9), ensuring that his humanitarian spirit remains an inspiration for future generations.

Dr. Kotnis' contributions are a testament to the power of international cooperation and selfless service to mankind. His legacy transcends borders, exemplifying the deep cultural and medical ties between India and China.

## Cultural and Historical Bonds

As two of the world's oldest civilizations, India and China have consistently influenced each other through their rich traditions, including Buddhism, art, and literature. Despite occasional political tensions, India-China relations have always been rooted in mutual appreciation and collaboration. It is imperative to look beyond geopolitical differences and focus on people-to-people engagement. Initiatives such as bilateral dialogues, cultural festivals, and exchange programmes will serve as powerful tools for fostering understanding and reducing misunderstandings.

## Parallel Journeys

Both India and China have historically been centers of learning and innovation. India's Nalanda and Takshashila universities and China's great academies have served as hubs of knowledge. Buddhism traveled from India to China, influencing Chinese spirituality, while Chinese silk and pottery were highly valued in Indian markets. These historical interactions laid the groundwork for future collaboration.

**Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis, a physician from Solapur, Maharashtra, was a key figure in strengthening Indo-China relations. In 1938, he traveled to China as part of a medical team of five Indian doctors to assist during the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. His unwavering commitment to treating Chinese soldiers led to his ultimate sacrifice, making him a revered figure in China-India friendship.**

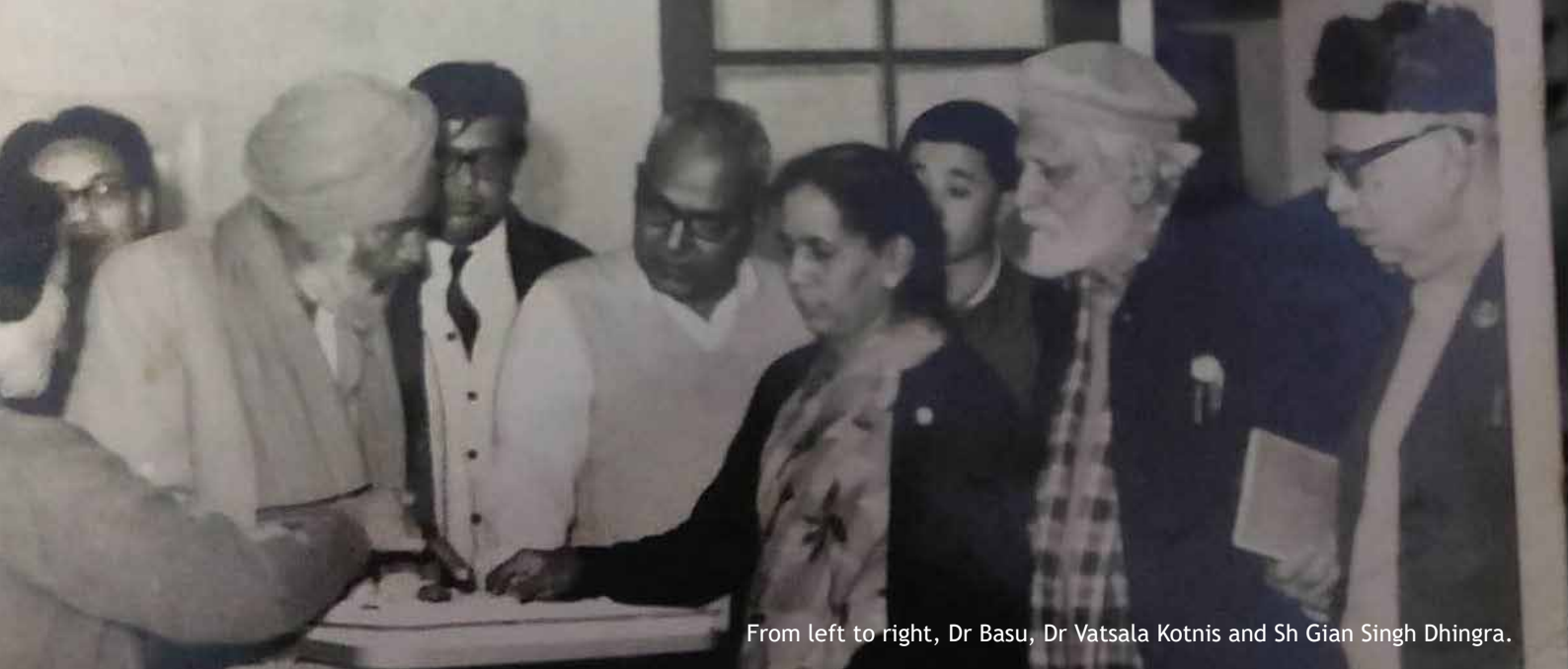
Both nations have faced socio-economic challenges, but defying odds have emerged as global powers through perseverance and visionary leadership. While India emphasized democratic reforms and technological advancements, China focused on large-scale industrialization and global trade, making both nations economic powerhouses.

Over the years, misunderstandings and political tensions have created challenges in India-China relations. Border disputes and geopolitical pressures have sometimes overshadowed historical goodwill. However, such conflicts are often magnified by political narratives, while at the grassroots level, cultural appreciation and aspirations for peace remain strong.

Bilateral efforts such as joint cultural festivals, educational exchanges, and tourism initiatives can foster trust and goodwill. When students, professionals, and ordinary citizens interact, they create personal connections that transcend political discord. Indian tourists exploring Buddhist sites in China or Chinese visitors experiencing the spiritual essence of Bodhi Gaya can contribute to a renewed sense of mutual respect and admiration.

## Cultural and Healthcare Collaborations

Cultural interactions between India and China have persisted for centuries. Ancient travelers such as Xuanzang and Faxian journeyed to India for spiritual enlightenment, while Indian scholars traveled to China to share their knowledge.



From left to right, Dr Basu, Dr Vatsala Kotnis and Sh Gian Singh Dhingra.

These exchanges continue today through art, literature, and tourism.

Healthcare serves as another crucial bridge between the two nations. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), including acupuncture, has gained popularity in India, while Ayurveda and Yoga are also practiced in China. Joint healthcare research and medical collaborations can further deepen these ties. Institutions like the Dr. Kotnis Acupuncture Hospital play a vital role in this exchange, integrating acupuncture into holistic healing practices in India.

## Education and Youth Exchanges

Educational exchanges play a pivotal role in strengthening cultural ties. Student exchange programs, language courses, and joint research initiatives provide opportunities for young minds to experience each other's societies firsthand. Collaborations between Indian and Chinese universities in fields such as AI, medicine, and sustainable development can pave the way for long-term cooperation.

Youth-led initiatives, including social media collaborations, digital art projects, and knowledge-sharing platforms, can further bridge the cultural gap. Engaging young minds helps foster a generation that looks beyond political tensions, embracing shared values and aspirations.

The historical ties between India and China offer immense potential for shaping the future. Honoring shared histories, promoting healthcare partnerships, and celebrating cultural figures like Dr. Kotnis will deepen the bond between the two nations.

In a world increasingly divided by conflict, India and China have a unique opportunity to demonstrate the power of cultural diplomacy. By embracing their common past, addressing misunderstandings with empathy, and continuing to invest in people-to-people relationships, they can pave the way for a harmonious and interconnected future.

**Bilateral efforts such as joint cultural festivals, educational exchanges, and tourism initiatives can foster trust and goodwill. When students, professionals, and ordinary citizens interact, they create personal connections that transcend political discord.**

Through continuous efforts in cultural understanding, educational exchanges, and healthcare collaborations, the people of India and China can collectively shape a future that not only honors their rich histories but also fosters shared prosperity and global peace.

## A Tiny Needle

In 1975, when I started Dr. Kotnis Acupuncture in a very small place in Ludhiana, the Government of India had imposed a state of emergency in the country. After the 1962 border conflict, neither government officials nor the general public wanted to hear anything in favour of China.

In this difficult period, we started our work under the banner of the Dr. Kotnis Memorial Committee and aimed to provide better

healthcare through acupuncture treatment, almost free of cost.

**Educational exchanges play a pivotal role in strengthening cultural ties. Student exchange programs, language courses, and joint research initiatives provide opportunities for young minds to experience each other's societies firsthand.**

Alongside running Dr. Kotnis Acupuncture Clinic, we also created awareness about Dr. Kotnis and Dr. Bijoy Kumar Basu, highlighting Dr. Kotnis's sacrifice for humanity. He set a new milestone in the medical profession and contributed to international friendship between China and India. We screened the feature film Dr. Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani, which we had obtained from the cultural department of the Chinese embassy. This created a dramatic change—people became highly interested in learning about China and acupuncture treatments. Everyone was surprised to discover the real history of India-China relations, and this marked the beginning of an “ice-melting” period.

This was the real dream of Dr. Bijoy Kumar Basu and Comrade Gyan Singh, who established the All-India Dr. Kotnis Memorial Committee and Dr. Kotnis Acupuncture Clinics. A tiny acupuncture needle worked miracles in strengthening the friendship between China and India.

In 1976, when India and China resumed diplomatic ambassador-level relations, the Chinese government invited a 13-member delegation from India under the leadership of Dr. Bijoy Kumar Basu, with Comrade Gyan Singh as the deputy leader. This was the first non-governmental delegation after 1962. The Chinese government and people gave a warm welcome to the delegation from India. Some Indian officials who had initially not accompanied the delegation later joined after witnessing the warm reception from the Chinese government.

Honorable Mr. K.R. Narayanan, who was the Indian Ambassador to China at that time (and

later became the President of India), along with other Indian officials, also joined the delegation after seeing the enthusiastic response from the Chinese people. Ambassador Narayanan sent a very positive report back to India about the warm and welcoming attitude of the Chinese people.

The delegation attended the inauguration of a hall built in memory of Dr. Kotnis at Dr. Norman Bethune Hospital in Shijiazhuang, China. This event received extensive coverage from Chinese media and was positively reported in the international media. After seeing the positive response from the Chinese government, the Indian government also reciprocated in a similar manner, marking the beginning of a new era of friendship between India and China.

The credit for this achievement goes to the Dr. Kotnis Memorial Committee and the acupuncture system. These are historical facts, proving how a tiny acupuncture needle played a significant role in bridging the gap between the two major Asian nations, India and China.

May the Friendship Between the Chinese and Indian People Last Forever.

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(The author is Director/Medical Superintendent, Dr. Kotnis Acupuncture Hospital & Education Centre, Ludhiana, Punjab. He is also Executive Member, World Federation of Acupuncture-Moxibustion Societies, Beijing, China and president, Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis Memorial Committee, Punjab. The views expressed are personal.)





# Re-imagining China-India Relations: Promoting A Civilisational Dialogue

**India and China, two enduring civilisational states, share deep historical, cultural, and philosophical ties. Ash Narain Roy, Director of the Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi, explores how reimagining diplomacy, fostering dialogue, and leveraging soft power can strengthen bilateral relations and promote regional stability.**



**ASH NARAIN ROY**

**G**reat cultures and civilisations possess immense collective moral and cultural capital. They have coexisted and synthesised over time, with different strands sometimes meeting, sometimes conflicting, sometimes merging, but continuously coexisting. No civilisation or culture represents the ultimate word in human wisdom.

“Civilisation,” says British historian Arnold Toynbee, “is a moment and not a condition; a voyage and not a harbour.” Nations and societies influence other nations, societies, and cultures and, in turn, are influenced by others. The splendour of the ancient world, epitomised by the Babylonian, Sumerian, and Mesopotamian civilisations, has long vanished.

## **Trans-Himalayan Twins**

India and China are the only civilisations that

have endured for thousands of years, nurturing their social and cultural life. No wonder Tan Chung, the doyen of Chinese cultural studies in India, describes India and China as “trans-Himalayan twins.” Their history is still alive — it is a present reality rather than merely a past. India and China are two civilisational states where the past can be lived in the present.

A dialogue between civilisations and cultures is the need of the hour. Through dialogue, people previously at odds can dissolve mistrust, gain new insights, stimulate new levels of creativity, and strengthen communal bonds. Only through dialogue can people communicate across differences.

## **A Dialogue of Cultures**

The dialogue of cultures enables people, societies, and nations to see beyond—beyond their exclusive and enclosed worldviews, beyond their limited levels of tolerance, and beyond their comforting myths. Today, humanity faces a paradox. The world is both falling apart and coming together. It is becoming postmodern and global, yet also reactionary and tribal. We are living through a long winter of melancholy



The White Horse Temple in China.

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across the world. The past is forgotten, and the future seems devoid of hope. Dystopia has become a reality.

Hu Shih, a Chinese writer, once said, "India conquered and dominated China for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across the border." Spiritually and philosophically, India is part of China's past, present, and future. Indian tourists cannot miss seeing India's historical connections with China in many of its monuments, religious traditions, and cultural heritage.

From a historical perspective, the relationship between the state and civilisation in ancient China and India was different. More than a thousand years ago, China was "one civilisation within one state," while India was "many kingdoms within one civilisation."

This contact was, of course, not a one-way exchange. As Professor Amartya Sen says, between the 1st century AD and the 11th century, interactions between India and China "involved mathematics, astronomy, science and public health." When Xuanzang, the Buddhist monk and scholar, returned to China after spending a decade in India, he asked, "Is there anyone in India who does not admire China fully?"

## Shared Ideal of Harmony

Today, humanity needs harmony. Harmony is the most cherished ideal in Chinese culture, particularly in Confucianism. China invokes its traditional principle of Tianxia, which describes

a "community of shared destiny." Meanwhile, Japan has ushered in an era of Reiwa ("beautiful harmony").

There is no fundamental contradiction between the two Asian giants, whose civilisations emphasise the concept of harmonious development. If Indian philosophy stresses Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("the world is one family"), China upholds Shijie Datong ("world in grand harmony").

Article 51-A (e) of the Indian Constitution states, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic, regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women."

Humanity also needs another form of harmony — the harmony between man and nature. Living in harmony with nature has long been an integral part of Indian culture, traditions, and the lifestyles of many indigenous peoples across the world.

Speaking of India, this has been abundantly reflected in a variety of traditional practices, religious beliefs, rituals, folklore, arts and crafts, and in the daily lives of the Indian people since time immemorial.

At a time when both countries are in the midst of year-long celebrations marking Rabindranath Tagore's visit to China and the 75th founding anniversary of the People's Republic of China, the two sides need to demonstrate greater

imagination in forging stronger ties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has put the relationship between the two Asian giants into perspective by emphasising that these ties are important not only for the people of both countries but also for regional and global peace and stability. The two sides must rethink their policies and devise a roadmap to elevate their relationship to new heights.

Diplomacy is like a garden — there is a time to sow and a time to harvest, always propelled by the shedding of the unnecessary for the vital, the old for the new.

## People-to-People Diplomacy

What German-American political theorist Hannah Arendt wrote about politics holds true for diplomacy as well. She said, “Half of politics is image-making, and the other half is the art of making people believe the image.”

Why do the two countries need to reimagine public diplomacy? Traditional diplomacy is a government-to-government exchange, whereas public diplomacy takes many forms. During the Cold War years, the US and the Soviet Union waged battles for public opinion on multiple fronts, relying on cultural envoys such as Louis Armstrong and the Bolshoi Ballet. The US also leveraged the Peace Corps.

People-to-people diplomacy, a key component of public diplomacy, must be actively promoted to strengthen India-China ties. The depth of relations between two sovereign nations depends not on who they are but on what they bring to the table. People-to-people contacts at various levels, particularly between neighbours, form the lifeblood of these relations.

Education, culture, sports, media, and other professional fields play a crucial role in fostering people-to-people interactions. These engagements help promote the mutual understanding necessary to build lasting ties between our two peoples.

## Cultural Outreach

Cultural outreach is an indispensable aspect of public diplomacy. China has over 500 Confucius Institutes worldwide and 1,113 Confucius Classrooms across 149 countries and regions.

India has a long way to go to match this level of outreach.

Equally important is the role of think tanks and civil society organisations in fostering meaningful relations between India and China. As Victor Hugo famously said, “One withstands the invasion of armies; one doesn’t withstand the invasion of ideas.”

The power of ideas and thought can play a vital role in bringing India and China closer, much like the centuries of contact between the two civilisations, which enriched each other’s goodwill and knowledge across various fields.

**Narendra Modi has put the relationship between the two Asian giants into perspective by emphasising that these ties are important not only for the people of both countries but also for regional and global peace and stability. The two sides must rethink their policies and devise a roadmap to elevate their relationship to new heights.**

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(The author is Director, Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)



The White Horse carrying the Sutra is a legendary story that inspired the construction of China’s first Buddhist temple, the White Horse Temple.



# India-China Relations: Insights From Two Decades of Visits

**Shanghai's transformation is a testament to China's rapid rise as a global powerhouse. From financial hubs to cultural exchanges, Vijay Naik, Convener, Indian Association of Foreign Affairs Correspondents (IAFAC), reflects on his visits, India-China ties, and key lessons from China's growth, diplomacy, and media landscape.**



**VIJAY NAIK**

I was standing near the Bund, a promenade in Shanghai that runs along the Huangpu river. China's showcase, Pudong, was shining like Manhattan as seen from the Hudson in the USA — indeed, a mind-boggling sight. The skyline looked stunning. It is like one Singapore built in just ten years, with astonishing speed. With world-class infrastructure, it houses offices of world-famous Fortune 500 companies. It is now home to the Lujiazui Finance and Trade Zone and the Shanghai Stock Exchange. The Oriental Pearl Tower, the Jin Mao Tower, the Shanghai World Financial Center, and the Shanghai Tower are some of its famous landmarks. New York has three Mannhattans (Upper, Middle, and Lower), but Shanghai boasts several such Mannhattans.

Some years ago, while reading about China, I came across the history of the rapidly developing eastern region, which was emerging as a showcase of modern China to the world. The region witnessed innovative initiatives led by its mayor, Zhu Rongji, who later became the Premier of the People's Republic of China (1998–2003). Zhu Rongji, a visionary, gave shape to his dreams, transforming Shanghai into an alternative financial centre of the world. Investments started flowing in, leading to the overall development of Eastern China in particular, and China in general. China, a country that remained closed to the world for several decades, now stands alongside the United States of America — one following capitalism, the other socialism. The words of Napoleon Bonaparte, "Let China sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world," have indeed come true.

## Language and Cultural Identity

Mandarin, the official language and the most widely spoken Chinese dialect, has played a pivotal role in the country's linguistic and

cultural unity, giving it a unique sense of national identity. For a long time, China was an enigma to the world, but that is no longer the case. Between 2001 and 2019, I had the privilege of visiting China seven times. Each visit opened a new window of understanding and brought India and China closer. That decade witnessed numerous exchanges at various levels, with both countries organising reciprocal cultural festivals and other events. Journalist exchanges were held, and editor conclaves took place in Beijing and New Delhi, fostering an atmosphere of camaraderie.

### India-China Relations and the Three Cs formula

The three Cs formula — cooperation, communication, and competition — worked well between the two countries despite differences over the boundary issue. Efforts must be made to bridge the trust deficit in the larger interest of both nations.

We had a fruitful meeting with the board of directors of the BRICS (New Development Bank). Its first chair, KV Kamath, provided an overview of the bank's initiatives across various member countries and explained how it has become vital for South-South cooperation. He informed us that the bank would soon move to its own premises. It has become increasingly attractive to major developing countries in the southern hemisphere and has expanded further.

At its formation in 2009, the BRIC had Brazil, Russia, India, and China as its founding members. A year later, South Africa joined as

the fifth member. With the recent addition of Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, it has grown into a powerful group of eleven countries and is now considered a counterpart and alternative to the G7 bloc.

### Strengthening Bilateral Ties

My first visit in August 2001 was under the Sino-Indian Bilateral Exchange Programme. We were fortunate to have our first meeting with Mr Wang Yi, who had been elevated to Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of Asian Affairs in February that year. He had emphasised the importance of building strong and friendly relations between India and China — the two major Asian powers with a combined population of over two billion. "If they cooperate, they could make an immense difference to the peoples of the world," he had noted. Since then, Mr Wang Yi has remained the key interlocutor in the India-China dialogue and has supported the meeting of Special Representative for China-India Boundary Question.

### Role of Media In Enhancing Understanding

During one of our visits, we went to the office of *China Daily* and discussed news gathering and the presentation of various issues. At the time, there was turbulence in Xinjiang. When we inquired about how the riots were being reported, the editorial staff explained that, given the province's large Muslim population, the daily had sent a well-known veteran correspondent to

The Bund in Shanghai.



ensure unbiased reporting. The daily enjoyed a reasonable degree of editorial freedom, though the editor worked in consultation with the party apparatus. It was delightful to see a few Indians working for the daily and for the influential Global Times.

Our visit to the magnificent Central China Television (CCTV) headquarters in Beijing and our discussions with its top officials provided further insights into its coverage of national and international affairs.

By the end of the decade, both countries had agreed to station correspondents from major Indian dailies in China. As many as six to seven Indian correspondents were posted in Beijing, and a similar number of Chinese correspondents were stationed in New Delhi. This significantly improved communication, reduced the information gap, and lessened dependence on transnational news agencies. Social, political, and cultural issues were reflected in newspapers in the right spirit. However, following the clashes in the Galwan Valley and the subsequent deterioration of relations, this progress suffered a setback.

The silver lining is that Press Trust of India still has a correspondent posted in Beijing. However, there are currently no Chinese journalists stationed in New Delhi. This situation must be addressed to bridge the information gap, which can be achieved through renewed dialogue that has recently resumed between the two nations.

## Exploring China's Historic and Cultural Sites

Memories of visiting historic sites such as Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, the Great Wall of China, various museums, newly built Olympic stadiums, and the bustling Wangfujing market remain vivid in my mind. Two moments stand out.

One evening, while walking through Wangfujing, I came across a series of black-and-white boards placed in the middle of the road, all highlighting the pollution of rivers that provided potable water to Beijing. The issue had become a major public health hazard, and the boards displayed data and images explaining

the importance of clean water and its effects on people of all ages. The boards also outlined dos and don'ts. Every passerby stopped to read them. It was an impressive effort by the Beijing administration to raise awareness about healthy living.

## Lessons From China's Environmental Efforts

Beijing, once described as a polluted capital city in the world, became pollution-free within a few years due to firm government measures. New Delhi should take inspiration from Beijing and implement similar strategies in earnest.

Xi'an, China's ancient capital, is now a thriving modern city with a vast industrial complex. During my visit, I was thrilled to walk along the ramparts of Xi'an Fort and was amazed at how well it has been preserved. The Terracotta Warriors Museum and the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda, featuring a life-size statue of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang, were simply breathtaking.

Similarly, the Dazu Rock Carvings – renowned for their exquisite Buddhist frescos and sculptures that have retained their vibrant colours even today – reminded me of India's Ajanta and Ellora caves.

In 2015, I led a delegation of Indian journalists to Shanghai. The visit, hosted by the Chinese Association of Journalists of Beijing and Shanghai, was unique as it included interactions with officials from the Chinese Army, Navy, and Air Force.

A major highlight was our visit to the CNS Tongling Stealth Frigate, docked in Shanghai Bay.

To foster better relations and mutual understanding, as the convener of IAFAC, I invited ambassadors Zhou Gang, Wang Yingfan, Sun Yuxi, Le Yucheng, and Yang Yanyi for interactions and dialogue with our association members over the years. These engagements significantly enhanced our understanding of bilateral relations.

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(The author is convener, Indian Association of Foreign Affairs Correspondents, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)



# A New Alphabet for India-China Relations



MANISH CHAND

The 75th anniversary of any relationship, be it personal or diplomatic, is a milestone that calls for celebration as well as reflection. In the case of India-China relations, the commemorative occasion has a special resonance as China-India relations are recovering and rejuvenating after a prolonged period of drift and stress. There are green shoots of early spring and a mutual desire by both sides to turn a new leaf in this crucial relationship, which will impact the fate of over 2.8 billion people, nearly a third of the world's humanity, living in the two countries.

The need for positive and harmonious relations between India and China is now more urgent than ever. In a polarising and fragmenting world order, the two rising Asian powers need to find a modus vivendi and adapt the art of peaceful coexistence to emerging realities.

## A New Alphabet

As the two countries commemorate the 75th anniversary, it's important to formulate a new vocabulary and alphabet for India-China relations. It can be called the ABCD of India-China relations: A for Asia. B for Business. C for Culture. And D for Diplomacy and Development. This alphabet should frame the multi-faceted engagement and new pathways of cooperation between the two Asian powers.

In a world beset with multiple crises and conflicts, diplomacy has a critical role to play in maintaining peace, balance, and stability in the world. Diplomacy has a pivotal role to play in addressing challenges of the 21st century that impinge on the lives of ordinary people such as climate change and food security. Instead of getting entangled in geopolitical calculations, India-China relations should be harnessed creatively to promote peace, harmony and development in the world. It's, therefore, refreshing to see that the leaders of the two countries decided to resume dialogue in the Russian city of Kazan last year. Latest developments such as the decision to resume direct flights and ease visas show that the relations are returning to a positive trajectory.

## Five Principles

While these are encouraging developments, it's important to take the long view and formulate afresh core principles that should guide the development of this partnership which can be mutually empowering. Taking the cue for Panchsheel, here are my five principles for peaceful co-existence of India and China and more harmonious relations between the two Asian neighbours.

- 1) Maintaining peace and tranquillity on the border should be the top priority and shared goal. Efforts should be made consistently and relentlessly to prevent any potential border conflict.
- 2) Both China and India should support each other's rise and development. There is no fundamental contradiction between India's rise and China's rise. On the contrary, both countries can benefit from each other's



- strength and capabilities. It's important to launch a bilateral dialogue focused on how both countries can support each other's rise.
- 3) China and India should take the long-term view and forge a *modus vivendi* of co-existing peacefully and harmoniously based on win-win cooperation and "three mutuals - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests."
  - 4) It's time to reverse the negative narrative of India-China relations with a positive view of this potentially win-win partnership. To achieve this, both sides should make systematic efforts to tell each other stories about their culture, societies and values. This is important as today there is excessive focus on the border issue and points of conflict rather than areas of convergence and cooperation. Cooperation across all domains should replace rivalry.
  - 5) China and India should keep dialogue going at all times and focus on boosting people-to-people, media and cultural exchanges. People-to-people contacts should be insulated from political fluctuations in the relationship.

Looking ahead, we should place people-to-people contacts at the heart of the India-China partnership. In this context, it's important to insulate P2P contacts from geopolitical complexities and keep P2P connections going at all times. Having visited China many times and experienced rich culture and warmth of people there, I am convinced that the spirit of friendship is the core of the India-China relationship.

**As the two countries commemorate the 75th anniversary, it's important to formulate a new vocabulary and alphabet for India-China relations. It can be called the ABCD of India-China relations: A for Asia. B for Business. C for Culture. And D for Diplomacy and Development.**

As Wang Bo, a famous poet who lived during the Tang dynasty, writes beautifully:

"If you have friends who know your heart  
Distance cannot keep you apart."

(The author is CEO, Centre for Global India Insights and Editor-in-Chief, *India and the World* and India Writes Network. The views expressed are personal.)

# 75 Years of Friendship, Cooperation and Youth-led Shared Future

**India and China have the power to shape a future that is not only prosperous but extraordinary. The youth of the two countries will play a pivotal role in shaping this vibrant future.**



**HIMADRISH SUWAN**

**T**he role of youth in fostering development partnerships cannot be overstated. It is only when young minds from both countries engage, exchange ideas, and share their aspirations that they can become true agents of change. The recently concluded Third China-India Youth Dialogue 2025 was a step in the right direction as we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations, just as the second edition in 2020 marked the 70th anniversary of our ties.

As India and China mark the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic ties, it is an opportunity to reflect on the depth of our relationship. In times of global divisions, when nations often compete for prominence, we sometimes lose sight of the larger picture. But in the end, as humans, we are above these petty shenanigans. We are closer to each other than we care to admit. India and China, despite existing as two nations today, share a common lineage, a deep historical connection, and a cultural bond that has stood the test of time.

Perhaps the biggest integrator of our two nations is the common link of religion. While Buddhism holds a significant place in Chinese society, Gautama Buddha's journey toward enlightenment began in the very heart of India, in Gaya. Similarly, Taoism, which emerged in China, found its way into Indian spiritual thought. These aren't just historical parallels; they are threads that weave our civilizations together. From ancient times, our region has inspired scientific, spiritual, and cultural advancements. Great minds like Emperor Ashoka, the Tang Dynasty, Xuanzang, Kasyapa Matanga, Buddha, and Confucius have shaped our shared legacy, just as the rivers Ganges and Yangtze have nourished our lands. Our societies have long been magnets for scholars and seekers, drawing the finest minds in pursuit of knowledge and wisdom.

## **Shared Heritage**

Beyond history and philosophy, our social and family structures reflect a striking resemblance. Both India and China value domestic harmony above ambition, building strong family foundations that hold generations together. Our respect for education runs deep, with students dedicating years to rigorous academic pursuits, and teachers enjoying a revered status in society. Having studied at Peking University and the Tsinghua University in China, I have witnessed



firsthand how both countries emphasize the importance of education as a means of empowerment and human progress. This shared commitment to learning and knowledge creation is a powerful foundation for collaboration. Our traditional medicines have evolved along similar lines, and even our music follows the pentatonic scale. These connections go beyond mere coincidence — they are a testament to our intertwined past.

**The role of youth in fostering development partnerships cannot be overstated. It is only when young minds from both countries engage, exchange ideas, and share their aspirations that they can become true agents of change. The recently concluded Third China-India Youth Dialogue 2025 was a step in the right direction as we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations, just as the second edition in 2020 marked the 70th anniversary of our ties.**

The echoes of this shared heritage are evident in literature, history, and even modern life. Ancient Chinese travelers wrote extensively about India, documenting its philosophy, political systems, and social structures.

Xuanzang, one of the most well-known scholars from China, acted as an ambassador of peace between our nations, leaving behind invaluable records of Indian society during his time. Today, remnants of China's influence remain in India, particularly in cities like Kolkata and Bihar, where a thriving Chinese diaspora has played a crucial role in local trade and culture for generations.

## Culture & Cuisine

Meanwhile, Indian culture continues to leave its imprint on China. Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar, among the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Indians, lie in Chinese territory, symbolizing the deep spiritual link between our lands. The way both nations treat their guests — with warmth, generosity, and a desire to showcase their rich heritage — further highlights our cultural alignment. This shared appreciation is perhaps most evident in cuisine. Across India, Chinese flavors have been seamlessly integrated into our food culture. Despite the growing presence of global cuisines, Chinese restaurants remain among the most popular, with names like China Bowl, China Pearl, Chung Wah, Wangs, and Zhangs dotting every Indian city. Although India has tailored Chinese food to suit local tastes, the essence remains unmistakably Chinese. Our cultural



In 2003, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited the White Horse Temple in Luoyang and announced to construct an Indian-style Buddhist temple to the temple complex, which became a new symbol of China-India friendship.



The Indian youths gave a wonderful traditional performance during the Third China-India Youth Dialogue.

ties are beautifully reflected in our traditional clothing — the elegance of China’s Qipao and the grace of the Indian Saree symbolize the beauty of the East, representing our shared heritage.

China, in turn, has embraced elements of Indian culture with open arms. The country has emerged as a global yoga hub, with millions practicing it daily and thousands of yoga schools thriving across its cities. Bollywood, too, has found a massive audience in China, with actors like Aamir Khan achieving superstardom. During one of my recent visits to China, I was pleasantly surprised when my driver played a popular Indian song, Aankhein Khuli Ho Ya Bandh, Deedar Unka Hota Hai, in his car. It was a touching reminder of the cultural bridges that already exist between us. At the same time, Chinese brands, technology, and investments have become deeply embedded in Indian markets. Mobile phones, consumer electronics, and infrastructure projects reflect China’s

undeniable presence in India. The economic potential between our nations is vast, fueled by the sheer size of our populations and our shared drive for innovation.

**Both India and China value domestic harmony above ambition, building strong family foundations that hold generations together. Our respect for education runs deep, with students dedicating years to rigorous academic pursuits, and teachers enjoying a revered status in society. Having studied at Peking University and the Tsinghua University in China, I have witnessed firsthand how both countries emphasize the importance of education as a means of empowerment and human progress.**

## Development Connect

A strong India is the best thing that could happen to a rising China, and vice versa. Both nations are among the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, shaping the global landscape in ways few others can. India, with its rich history of resilience, has emerged as a key player on the world stage, making significant contributions to science, medicine, sports, and technology. China's progress over the decades stands as a testament to its people's vision, courage, and relentless innovation. Having traveled to China widely, I have seen firsthand the rapid development driven by the sheer willpower of the Chinese people.

## Youth Power

India attaches great importance to the China-India Youth Dialogue, recognizing it as a premium and flagship Track II engagement that fosters mutual trust and collaboration between our two nations. Such initiatives not only strengthen diplomatic ties but also lay the foundation for a future where our youth lead the way in shaping a more interconnected and prosperous Asia.

## Rise of China and India

India and China are rising at an equal pace and, to a considerable extent, our growth trajectories are interlinked. We are not just two neighboring countries; we are two great civilizations that have coexisted for thousands of years and we will continue to be neighbors for thousands of years to come. Therefore, living in harmony is not merely an option – it is the only right choice. To achieve this, it is essential to break the strange circle of ups and downs in our relationship. We must move beyond the shadows of doubt and instead build an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. We must work towards a relationship that is stable, predictable, and resilient – one that is based on dialogue rather than discord, cooperation rather than

competition. This is not merely a strategic necessity but a historical responsibility that rests on the shoulders of our youth.

As the only two large developing nations with populations exceeding a billion, India and China have more in common with each other than with any other country in the world. It is time for us to join hands and lead Asia towards prosperity and peace. We must work towards building an Asian Union - Such a union would not only bring economic growth but also ensure a peaceful world order, reflecting the aspirations of our people.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping are visionary statesmen, endowed with the wisdom and strategic foresight to steer this relationship toward a future of strength and stability. Their leadership is not just instrumental but indispensable in navigating complexities, fostering trust, and unlocking the full potential of India-China ties, thereby ensuring that peace, prosperity, and shared growth define the path ahead.

**As the only two large developing nations with populations exceeding a billion, India and China have more in common with each other than with any other country in the world. It is time for us to join hands and lead Asia towards prosperity and peace.**

As we commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations, we must rise above our differences and forge a path of collaboration, driven by trust, shared aspirations, and an unyielding commitment to progress. The 21st century is Asia's moment, and together, India and China have the power to shape a future that is not only prosperous but extraordinary – one that history will remember as the era when two great civilizations came together to redefine the world.

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(The author is Chairman, Confederation of Young Leaders of India. The views expressed are personal.)



# The Golden Braid: Weaving a Prosperous Future with China and India



**SOUMYAJIT ROY**

Over the past fifteen years, my journeys between India and China have unveiled an extraordinary tapestry of similarities between these two ancient civilization-states. These nations are not just countries but living, breathing embodiments of millennia-old cultures where the heart of life beats to the rhythm of family and community. At their core lies an unshakable foundation of familial devotion, where generations intertwine in a harmonious dance of care and responsibility.

## Family Bonding

In both India and China, the family is the nucleus around which life orbits. There exists a profound reverence for the elderly, who are cherished as living libraries of wisdom and tradition. Simultaneously, these elders reciprocate by nurturing the youngest with an unmatched warmth and tenderness. The societal fabric is not merely woven with the threads of blood relations but is enriched by the bonds of locality and shared heritage. It is not uncommon to witness entire neighborhoods functioning as extended families, where every home feels like an extension of one's own. The spirit of "Grand Harmony" (Shi Jie Da Tong) is not merely an

ideal but a lived reality, a powerful testament to the ethos of communal solidarity.

What truly astonishes me is the dedication of Chinese grandparents, who embody an unparalleled spirit of selflessness. Their love knows no bounds as they devote themselves to the upbringing of their grandchildren, creating a sanctuary of security and joy. Their steadfast support allows the parents to pursue their professional aspirations with peace of mind, knowing their children are enveloped in a cocoon of love. The warmth and affection bestowed upon our own child by our parents are nothing short of miraculous. It is a level of care that transcends expectation, a manifestation of the deep-seated cultural philosophy that animated both the young and the old.

## Shared Ethos

The philosophical roots of these practices are as deep as they are ancient. In India, the teachings of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—"the world is one family"—resonate through daily interactions. In China, Confucian ideals of filial piety and collective harmony permeate the social consciousness. Together, these guiding principles create societies where human connections are cherished, and life is enriched by the simple yet profound act of caring for one another.

In a world that often feels fractured and disconnected, the shared ethos of India and China shines as a beacon of hope. These two civilizations offer a masterclass in the art of living harmoniously, proving that true strength lies not in individualism but in the unity of the



family and the community. It is a lesson that the world would do well to learn and emulate.

**In both India and China, the family is the nucleus around which life orbits. There exists a profound reverence for the elderly, who are cherished as living libraries of wisdom and tradition. Simultaneously, these elders reciprocate by nurturing the youngest with an unmatched warmth and tenderness.**

### From Upanishads to Taoism

Delving deeper into the profound philosophies of China and India, one cannot help but be struck by the astonishing parallels that have sculpted the cultural, social, and spiritual landscapes of these two great civilizations. The ancient wisdom of Taoism and the Upanishads flow like two rivers from the same sacred spring, each nourishing the lands they touch with

timeless principles of harmony, balance, and the transcendence of the self. At the heart of Taoism lies the Tao, the ineffable “Way,” a path of naturalness and effortless action known as “wu wei.” This principle finds a perfect echo in the Upanishadic teaching of Tat Tvam Asi (“Thou art That”), which reveals the ultimate truth of unity between the individual soul (Atman) and the universal reality (Brahman). Both philosophies encourage a departure from the superficial and a journey inward to the silent core of existence, where the essence of life remains unspoken yet deeply felt.

The Taoist concept of Ziran (naturalness) resonates with the Sahaja (spontaneity) of Indian thought, promoting a life lived in alignment with the natural order. Just as the Taoist sage navigates the world with minimal effort, like water flowing through the path of least resistance, the wise of India embody the Gita’s teaching of Karma Yoga — selfless action without attachment to results. The interplay of action (karma) and inaction (akarma) in the Bhagavad Gita mirrors the Taoist dance of “you wei”

(purposeful action) and “wu wei” (non-action), where the wise learn when to act and when to let things be, achieving a state of perfect balance.

## Buddhism Bridge

Buddhism, a bridge between India and China, amplifies this harmony. Born in India and flourishing in China, Buddhism brought with it the Middle Way, which harmonized the rigorous asceticism of early Indian traditions with the practical wisdom of Taoist balance. The Buddhist principles of compassion (karuna) and wisdom (prajna) complement the Taoist pursuit of simplicity and the Upanishadic quest for self-realization.

The spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road created not only a spiritual exchange but also a philosophical synergy, where Indian and Chinese thought blended seamlessly. Chinese Confucianism, while not as mystical as Taoism or the Upanishads, also contributes to this harmony through its focus on societal order, respect for hierarchy, and the cultivation of virtue (ren). This is reminiscent of the Dharma concept in Indian philosophy, where each individual plays their role in the cosmic order with integrity and responsibility. The Chinese emphasis on “li” (ritual propriety) and the Indian focus on “samskara” (rituals of life) both serve as frameworks that guide individuals toward harmonious living.

What emerges from these ancient texts and teachings is a shared cultural script of reticence and resilience. The quiet strength of the Chinese and Indian people, often misinterpreted as mere stoicism, is in fact a deep wellspring of inner peace. This silence is not an absence but a presence — an unspoken acknowledgment of the eternal truths that bind the universe. It

is a peace that whispers in the qi (life force) of Chinese tradition and the “prana” (vital energy) of Indian yoga. It is the tranquility of the Tao and the stillness of the Atman — a harmony that underlies the bustling markets of Shanghai and the sacred ghats of Varanasi alike.

**The philosophical roots of these practices are as deep as they are ancient. In India, the teachings of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—“the world is one family” — resonate through daily interactions. In China, Confucian ideals of filial piety and collective harmony permeate the social consciousness.**

## Blending Tradition & Modernity

In a world fraught with noise and haste, China and India stand as guardians of an ancient wisdom that teaches the world the art of living with grace. Their philosophies are not merely academic discourses but living traditions that guide millions toward a life of moderation, mindfulness, and meaning. They are, indeed, two jewels of the East, shining brightly with the light of knowledge and the warmth of compassion, held together in a timeless embrace of peace and prosperity.

China and India, though distinct in their outward appearances and developmental trajectories, are bound by an overarching principle that transcends superficial differences. China, with its skyline crowned by architectural marvels that pierce the heavens, showcases a nation where tradition meets modernity in a dazzling dance of glass, steel, and innovation.



Chinese and Indian youths practice Tai Chi and Yoga in the Temple of Heaven in Beijing.



The vibrant urban landscapes of Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen pulse with an electrifying blend of ancient wisdom and futuristic vision, reflecting a civilization that has mastered the art of external grandeur.

In contrast, India nurtures a quieter, yet equally profound, beauty. Her true architecture lies not merely in the stone and mortar of her ancient temples and bustling cities but in the invisible, intricate lattice of her philosophical and spiritual heritage. Rooted in selflessness, compassion, and the timeless wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads, India has built an indomitable inner architecture of the soul – one that shapes her people with the strength of humility, the courage of peace, and the resilience of hope.

The knowledge systems of both nations mirror this duality of inner and outer harmony. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a poetic symphony of natural elements, weaving the energies of the human body with the rhythms of the universe. Ayurveda, India's ancient medical science, digs deep into the spirit of life, treating not just the body but aligning the mind and soul to the cosmos. Where TCM is like the flow of a majestic river, Ayurveda is the still, reflective river – together, they create a reservoir of holistic healing that the world increasingly turns to in search of balance and well-being. With the gentle touch of India's yogic philosophy, the mind becomes a yoke to the body, birthing the ancient practice of Yoga – a gift to the world that harmonizes physical vitality with spiritual clarity.

The dreams of these two great nations have become the lodestar for billions across the globe. India, with her cinematic triumphs like "Slumdog Millionaire," reveals stories of grit and glory, echoing the melody of possibility even from the humblest corners. China's Bruce Lee, with his legendary "Be water, my friend," embodied a philosophy that transcends martial arts, teaching generations to adapt, flow, and

conquer life's challenges with fluid grace. These dreams, though painted on different canvases, share the same colours of aspiration, perseverance, and triumph.

The gifts of India and China to the world have not only enriched the past but continue to shape the future. The Hindu-Arabic numeral system, which forms the backbone of global mathematics and commerce, originated in India, while China's pioneering printing press transformed knowledge dissemination, sparking enlightenment far beyond its borders. Today, this legacy of contribution continues as both nations collaborate on cutting-edge scientific endeavours – from CO<sub>2</sub> conversion to sustainable fuels, quantum entanglement, and pharmaceutical breakthroughs. Their partnership is not merely transactional but a fusion of intellect and purpose that promises a brighter, greener, and healthier world.

## Twin Pillars of Hope

In this blooming new world brimming with possibilities, India and China stand as twin pillars of hope. Their harmonious future development is not just a bilateral dream but a vision for the entire world. Together, they have the potential to resurrect Asia as the bedrock of global prosperity, blending the strength of the dragon with the wisdom of the elephant. Their journey forward is a path paved with promise and peace, an inspiring tale of two ancient civilizations rising anew to lead humanity into an era of unparalleled innovation, harmony, and shared success.

As we look ahead, the horizon gleams with anticipation. The future shaped by China and India is not merely to be awaited but to be celebrated – for it is a future that will unfold with beauty, balance, and boundless potential. Let us all be a part of this extraordinary journey, as these two magnificent nations lead us into an age of enlightenment and enduring peace.

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(The author is professor, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Kolkata. The views expressed are personal.)



## The Archive of China-India @75





1. On April 1, 1950, China and India officially established diplomatic relations. India's first ambassador to China K. M. Panikkar on May 20 presented credentials to Chairman Mao Zedong of the Chinese Central Government.
2. Chairman Mao Zedong met with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru four times. This was their meeting in October 1954 in Beijing.
3. In October, 1954, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited China at the invitation of Premier Zhou Enlai. Besides Premier Zhou, he met Madame Soong Ching Ling, Vice-Chairwoman of the NPC Standing Committee.
4. When Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru arrived in Beijing in 1954, more than 500,000 people stood along the two sides of the street from the airport to the guesthouse to welcome him. On Oct. 23, 1954, the people from various circles in Beijing gathered in Zhongshan Park to hold a grand party to welcome Jawaharlal Nehru.







5. On December 9, 1954, a Chinese cultural delegation staged a debut in New Delhi. After the performance, India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru congratulated Chinese actors and actresses.
6. In October 1955, an Indian film delegation led by famous film actor and Parliament member Prithviraj Kapoor visited China. On October 27, Chinese Chairman Mao Zedong met with the Indian film delegation and Kapoor presented a floral hoop to Chairman Mao.
7. From April 18 to 24 in 1955, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru attended the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia. With the joint efforts, the 29-nation conference set forth 10 principles of peaceful existence and developing friendly cooperation.
8. On April 19, 1960, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice-Premier Chen Yi arrived in New Delhi to hold talks with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. PM Nehru went to airport to greet the Chinese guests.











9. In December 1955, Soong Ching Ling, vice-chairwoman of the NPC Standing Committee, was invited to visit India.
10. On December 21, 1988, Chairman of the Central Military Commission Deng Xiaoping met with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.
11. On June 24, 2003, Jiang Zemin, Chairman of China's Central Military Commission, met with Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee in Beijing.
12. On June 23, 2003, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee signed the "Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India" in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.
13. On November 21, 2006 Chinese President Hu Jintao met with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi.





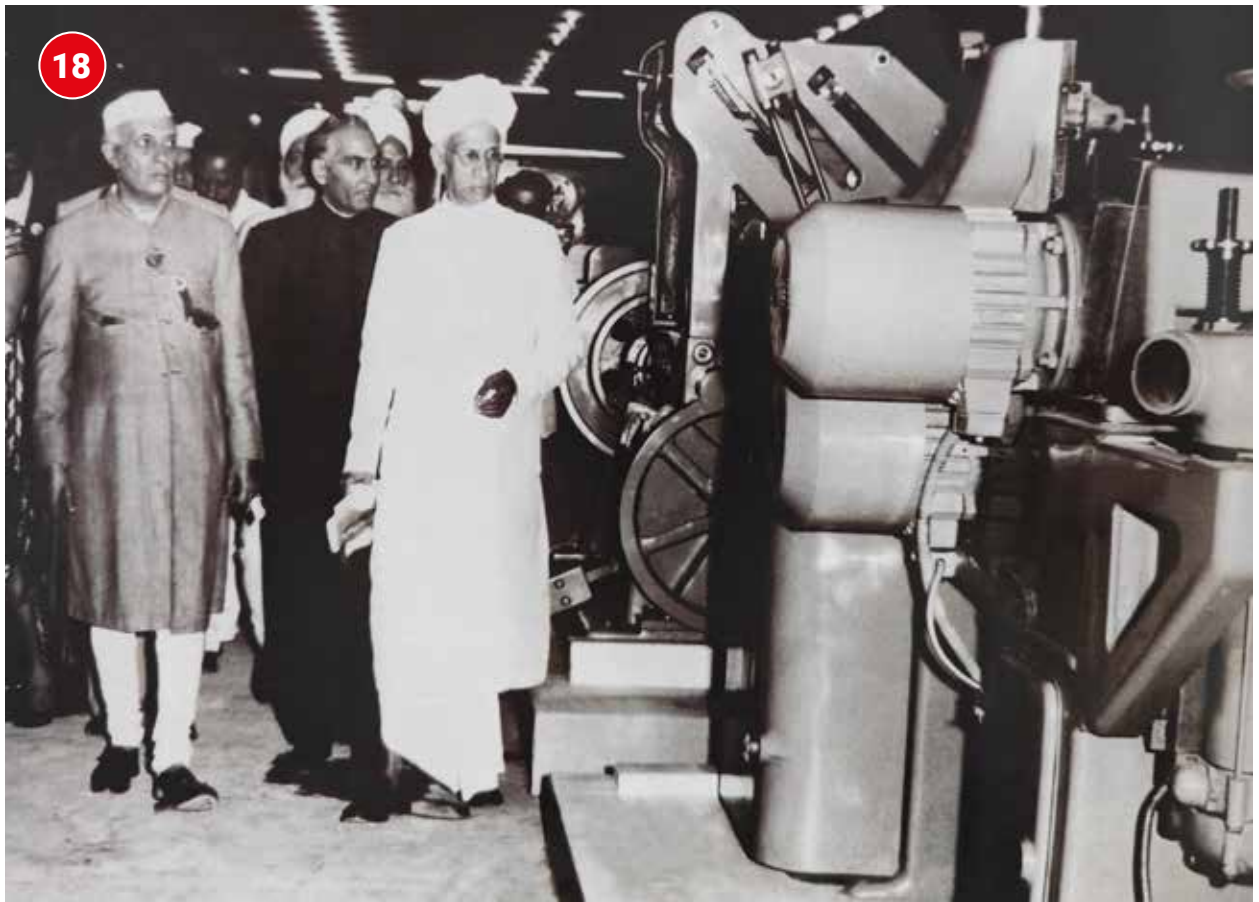


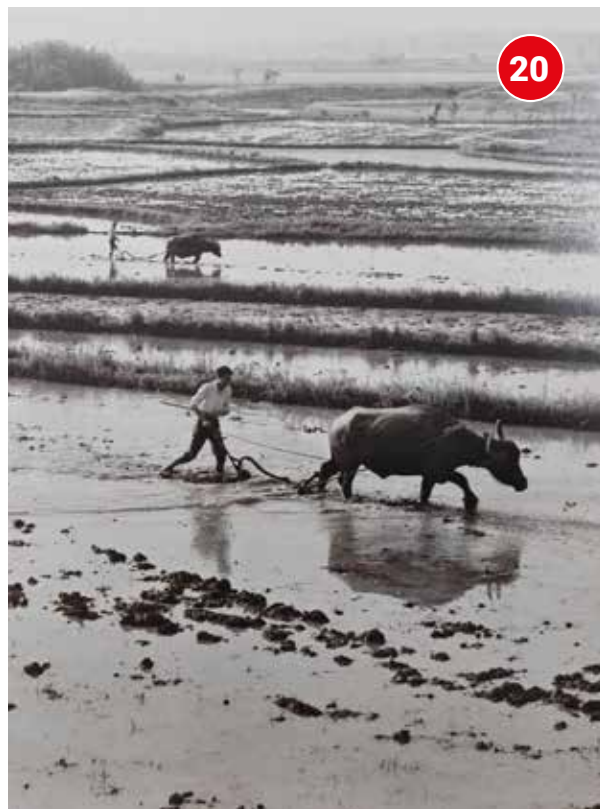


14. On September 17, 2014, President Xi Jinping arrived in Ahmedabad, on a three-day state visit to India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi showed Chinese President Xi Jinping how to operate the charkha at Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad.
15. Prime Minister Modi paid an official visit to China in May 2015. On May 14, President Xi Jinping accompanied PM Modi to Temple of Great Maternal Grace (Daci'en) after their meeting in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province.
16. On April 28, 2018, President Xi Jinping held talks with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the two leaders' informal meeting on from April 27 to 28, in Wuhan, Hubei province.
17. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held their second informal meeting on October 11 to 12, 2019 in the southern Indian city of Chennai, setting the tone for the future development of bilateral ties.









**18.** On October 29, 1955, Indian Industrial Fair was opened in Delhi City. China Hall was the largest in the fair with more than 4,000 sorts of products on display.

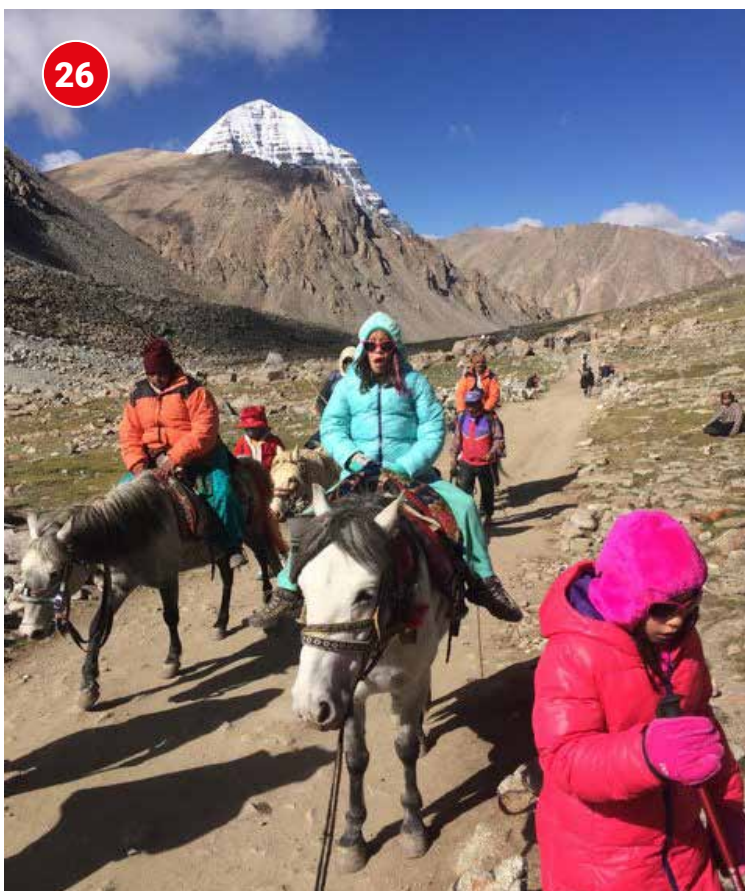
**19.** In February 1975, a Chinese Table Tennis Team went to Calcutta, India, to attend the 33rd World Table Tennis Tournament.

**20.** In the early of 1980s, China introduced India Mora cow to improve the quality of cow through hybridization.

**21.** On December 3, 1982 Dr. Dwarkanath S. Kotnis Memorial Hall in Norman Bethune Hospital was reopened to public after renovation.

**22.** On September 15, 1984, to mark the publication of the Chinese edition of Indian Epic "Ramayana", Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries held a reception in Beijing.









- 23.** On June 26, 1990, Indian Mannypuri Jageri Maru Dancing Troupe made a premiere in Beijing. The dancers performed Indian traditional dance “Vasangtarass” to welcome the coming of Spring.
- 24.** In July 1993, an Indian doctor Duri who studied traditional Chinese medicine in China set up an acupuncture clinic in New Delhi after he returned home. Everyday he provided treatment to many patients, which was widely appreciated.
- 25.** On May 30, 2000, visiting Indian President Kocheril Raman Narayanan visited Beijing University. He unveiled a brass sculpture of Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore with the president of the university.
- 26.** In 2015, the pilgrimage route through Nathula Pass was officially opened. A total of 240 official Indian pilgrims paid homage to Kailash Mansarovar in Xizang, China through Nathula Pass.
- 27.** On May 9, 2021, the first batch of 100 oxygen concentrators, 40 ventilators and other anti-epidemic supplies donated by the Red Cross Society of China arrived in India during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 28.** In April 2024, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore’s visit to China, China invite a delegation of scholars and artists following Tagore’s footsteps to China.



29. 13-year-old Lei Muzi, the Chinese Bharatanatyam dancer, performs at the first ever Arangetram, in Beijing, China on August 11, 2024.
30. On January 25, 2025, a troupe of Chinese dancers performed “Adi Kavya - The First Poem”, a dance drama based on Indian epic Ramayana.
31. On Feb 12, 2025, athletes from the India delegation learnt to make traditional dough sculptures during the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China.





**A WHITE DISH WITH PINK BORDER, CHINA**  
NMML TOSHA KHANA  
66/702

This is a floral patterned, pink-bordered dish from China.

Portraits of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and a Chinese lady in conversation are painted in the centre of the dish surrounded by Chinese furniture, books and a ceramic vase.



**CLOISONNÉ VASES, CHINA**  
NMML TOSHA KHANA  
66/702

This is a beautiful pair of cloisonné vases from China.

Cloisonné technique of inlaying enamel colour or precious stones with wired compartments developed in the ancient Near East, first and reached Europe and Asia over time. These vases from China incorporate many European and Asian symbols and patterns that were covered by the royal and nobility classes.



**A CLOISONNÉ PLATE, CHINA**  
NMML TOSHA KHANA  
66/702

This is a blue background cloisonné plate painted with peony, the king of flowers and Phoenix, the king of birds. It is an auspicious pairing in Chinese culture, symbolising prosperity and righteousness.



**IVORY BOX, CHINA**  
NMML TOSHA KHANA  
66/57

An ivory rectangular box decorated on the sides with scenes depicting village life of China. A traditional motif adorns the lid of the box presented to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru

Some gifts from China displayed in the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library Society.



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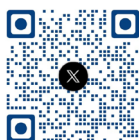


Rabindranath Tagore's family descendant Souraja Tagore danced at the Centennial Lilac Poetry Fair in Beijing, commemorating the 100th anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's visit to China.

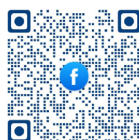
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