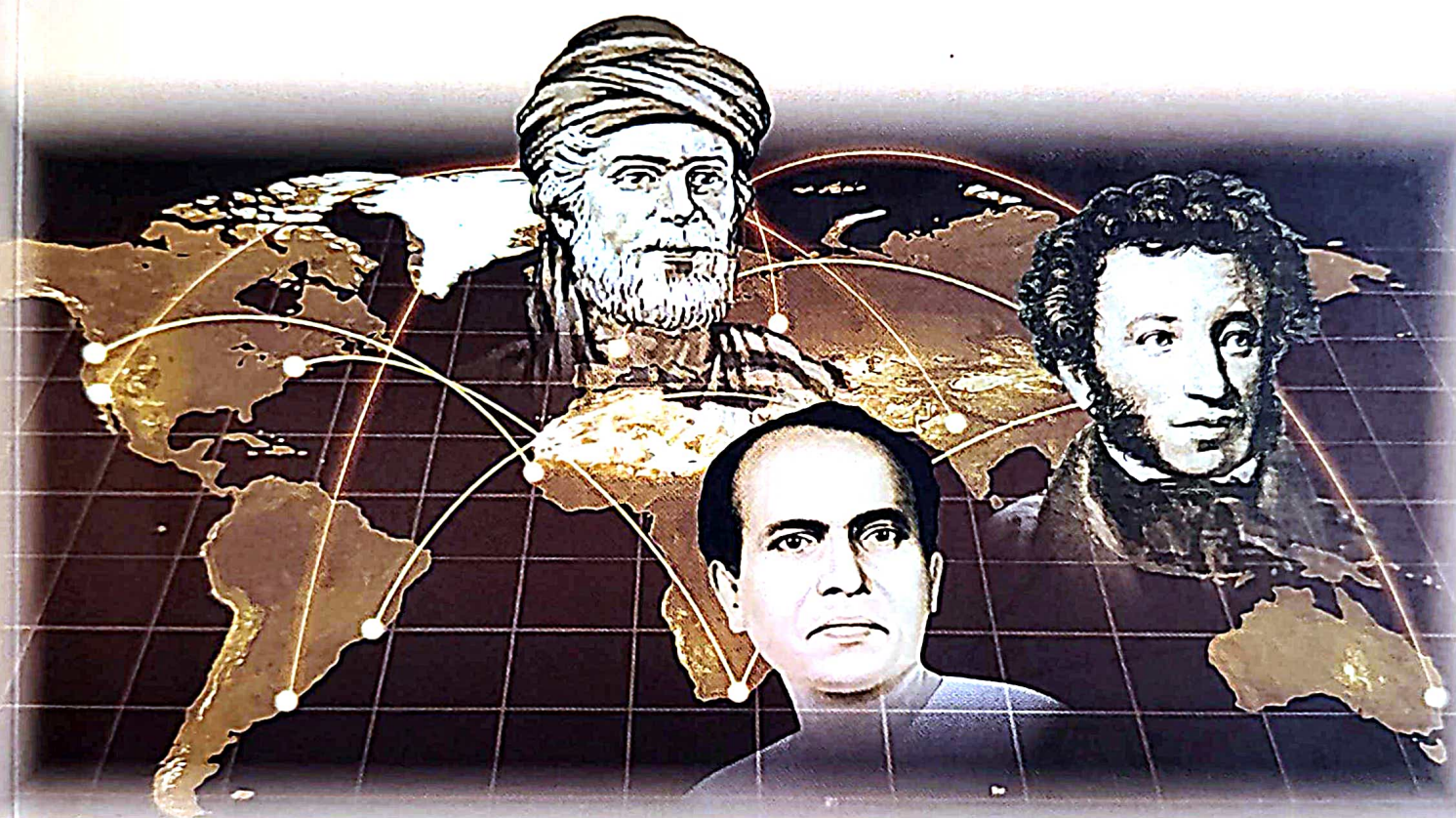


Indo-Russian Discourse of Humanism and Transnationality Reflected in Anna Bhau Sathe, Alexander Pushkin and Afanasy Nikitin's Writings



Индийско-российский дискурс
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A new path towards Political and Strategic Relationship of India and Russia

The republic of India and Russian Federation have been playing a remarkable role in not only their domestic and regional affairs but also at an international platform. It is considered that the relations took their roots even before India got independence from colonial masters. Later slowly and gradually these reached its zenith during decades of 1960s and 1970s & famously known as time tested partner. This beautiful relationship of friendship is aware by a small child of each country and has reached to its grass roots level and common people who might not knowing other formal aspects but are very much known by the India Russia's true friendship.

Being independent nations both India and Union of Soviet Socialist Republic developed their relations formally in the end of the decade of 1950s. However a remarkable footprint was left in medieval time itself when the 1st Russian traveler Afanasy Nikitin had visited India for the commercial purpose.

Documentation of Political Aspects in Afanasy Nikitin's Writings

It is believed that the first Russian traveler to visit India was the Tver merchant Afanasy Nikitin — according to some sources, he was born in 1433. It is unknown exactly when the Tver merchant began his famous journey. Some historians believe that it started in 1466, others — in 1468¹. Afanasy Nikitin has visited India and documented the minute details of governance, administrative system, commercial practices, social traditions etc in his famous book Voyage Beyond Three Seas.

His visit to India becomes significant in the sense that he was the 1st European traveler to reach to India even before the Vasco da Gama in the decades of 70s of 15th Century. His journey within India witnessed the rule of dynasties and Kings. In such system there were several units of administrations and officers were appointed by the King himself. Nikitin has mentioned about the working of judicial system to solve the issues of people and grant justice.

Military and Security Perspective

Afanasy Nikitin has described about the certain tours of Kings with his largest troops accompanying him. It shows the grand royalty of kingdom which was full of overall defense resources like infantry, cavalry and palanquin bearers walking with King and reflects the power. Nikitin described the glorification of Capital Bidar with high population and beautiful city. He has also explained about its significant aspects from safety perspective that the city was well surrounded by walls. It is situated at a height of 2333 feet nearly 60 miles to the North West of Hyderabad. Being the largest southern kingdom, it was well planned and secured with surroundings of other subordinate kingdoms by adopting above measures.

«Nikitin says that Sultan's palace had 7 gates. Speaking about palace, he had in mind the same citadel which is mentioned above. Up to 100 guards and 100 kafirs scribes sit at each gate, some of them register those coming in and others register those going out: but strangers are barred from the palace»².

Judicial system and Administration

Judicial system was well developed in village where panchayat used to hold their sessions. The guilty person had to face punishments and penalty. The collected penalty was used for good purposes like marriage of an orphan or distributing sweets and rice among people. Any person who refused to pay the penalty was ostracized and deprived from society, celebration of any festival and any other kind of assistance from villagers. So the rules were followed by people and implemented by administrators strictly. For governance at the grass root level Nikitin has described the role and responsibility of Kotwal who governed the village. However all pivotal decisions were taken by the King himself in the Bidar palace with the advices of his nominated ministers.

These small elements indicates the political and security related concerns of King as far as preserving and securing their kingdoms are concerned. Also it makes sure the law and regulations are being implemented effectively. With the political and security aspects of kingdom Afanasy Nikitin also had explored social, economic and cultural aspects of Indian society at the same time of traveling. This background provides a very strong foundation for developing relations of India and USSR and today's India Russia.

India and USSR Relations

The relations of India and Union of Soviet Socialist Republic were started developing before India get independence. «Jawaharlal Nehru's first visit to the Soviet Union in 1927 was connected with the Tenth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. His two subsequent visits were in 1955 and 1961, after he became the Prime Minister of Independent India. Of these the 1927 visit has a special importance»³. An independent India has to face so many challenges which were putting hurdles in the development like various socio-cultural and economic issues which needed to solve on the priority basis. To fulfill the demands of population and attain the self-sufficiency India needed to invest in heavy projects like USSR. The USSR had invested in heavy new enterprises like machine-building, mining, energy production and steel plants which had brought tremendous development. Influenced by this socialist model India tries to inculcate and implement it in its second five year plan where the focus was given to the development of heavy industries. Out of those 16 industries, 8 industries were set up with the aid and assistance of the USSR.

India remained non-aligned, rather one of the pioneers of Non Alignment Movement during Cold War period. «India's nonalignment enabled it to accept Soviet support in areas of strategic congruence, as in disputes with Pakistan and China, without subscribing to Soviet global policies or proposals for Asian collective security. Close and cooperative ties were forged in particular in the sectors of Indian industrial development and defense production and purchases»⁴. The cold war phase witnessed the support provided by USSR to India in diverse areas including in resolving the issue of Jammu and Kashmir at international level in United Nations, India's wars against China and Pakistan for which India had always shown its support to USSR and its successor Russia. The treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation in 1971 between the Republic of India and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic facilitated bilateral cooperation. It promotes the consolidation of universal peace and security and believes in the principles of peaceful coexistence.

After the disintegration of the USSR India faced so many challenges to establish new relations with the other nations who exists on the global platform as USSR was the trusted

partner for India. By calculating the unrealistic assessment of international relations, India developed its relations with other countries and gave up the policy of over-dependence on the USSR. However Russia as a successor state of the USSR, India continued its relations with Russia similarly like earlier time framework.

Political Relations of India Russia

After the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 the entire world order changed and transformed. The end of cold war era had put enormous impacts on several nations and their foreign policies. Indian foreign policy is one of it. Since 1991 even India started developing relations with other states by giving due importance to other countries for developing commercial and socio-cultural ties with them. Similarly Russia started engaging with the former soviet republics to have its hold over them and also to develop good relations with them and to revive its economy. As in 1991 India was undergoing through the deep economic and social crisis, it was natural that India started tilting towards west for solutions to its problems. This was the phase in which relations of India and US started improving with cooperation. Meanwhile Russia also as a successor of USSR was going in the same direction to build up its economy from a planning based economy to a market oriented one. So immediately in the decades of 1990s the relations between two were strained as an impacts of the structural changes occurred at international levels.

«However, sagacious steps by the Narasimha Rao government and its successors, aided by the efforts of a group of highly active diplomats, helped India to once again find an anchor to the sinking ship of Indo-Russian relations»⁵. At this time India was counted among one of those countries who decided to repay the loan to Russia for a decade and Russia was also grateful to India for purchasing its military weaponries by paying advance in many cases. This could surely helped Russia to revive its economy in better way by gaining support from different corners of the world. The political military and strategic relations between two countries have gone up tremendously even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and it will flourish as well in coming future. Not only these but also the other areas like economic cooperation, cultural and social cooperation, strategic partnership, and other multilateral ties are various areas of these bilateral cooperation. By enhancing these relations both India and Russia are working for their common objective to establish the 'multi polar' or 'polycentric' international order.

«Both the countries committed to non participation in any military, political or other alliances or associations or armed conflicts directed against the other side, or in any treaties, agreements or understandings infringing upon the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity or national security interests of the other side»⁶. Both the countries have preserved and enhanced their political and strategic relations through following mechanisms. «There are still great stores of goodwill between Russia and India, not just because of their historic relationship, but also due to the enduring political trust linking the two countries: they almost always vote the same way at the United Nations, and Russia has shown support for India's inclusion in the UN General Council»⁷.

Annual Summits

Annual summits are important area that continues the link between two countries where officially the head of states both President of Russian Federation and Prime Minister of Republic of India met at common platform in each other's country and indulged into signing various agreements with mutual benefits. «India and Russia highly evaluated the content-

porary relevance and significance of the informal summit in Sochi on May 21, 2018 which was a unique meeting in international diplomacy, reflecting the deep trust and confidence between Prime Minister Modi and President Putin, underlining the desire of both countries to maintain regular contacts and hold frequent consultations on issues of mutual interest, and further enhanced mutual coordination and convergence of views on all major issues»⁸.

Intergovernmental Commissions

Both the countries have established commissions under which the regular affairs of the states can be conducted. IRIGC-TEC and IRIGC-MTC particularly stands for the Inter Governmental Commission on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation and the next one stands for Inter Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation. Recently the meeting of the Defense minister of both the countries was held in New Delhi in which issues related to equipments, joint manufacturing projects were discussed.

Significant Milestones in India Russia Relations

- The treaty of 1971 was the initial landmark in establishing strong relations with each other.
- Delhi Statement by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues.
- Both India and Russia have signed Declaration of Strategic Partnership on 3rd October 2000 that opened up a new chapter of transforming relations of Republic of India and Russian Federation in the new millennium.
- Establishment of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant with the assistance of Russia to take care of the growing energy need of India.
- Signing of a joint statement of Druzhba-Dosti: A vision for Strengthening the Indian-Russian Partnership over the next decade on December 11, 2014.

These are the most important agreements and accords that are signed between two nations from time to time to enhance their relations with each other with changing time and circumstances. The above accords highlight the willingness to protect each other's national interests and with the same continuation of multilateral engagements in various sectors through such summits.

Strategic Relations of India and Russia

Defense and military exchanges and technological exchange have strategic implications for India. With the changing global equations of power the relations have witnessed various dimensions into it. At regional and international level both Russia and China are being challenged by the United States in terms of military, economic developments. Also Russia and China are becoming closer after the Ukraine issue in 2014 which gives supportive hand to develop the relations of Russia with Pakistan. This growing relationship of Russia, China and Pakistan has developed its strategic interest for Russia but a matter of concern to India. Similarly developed relations of India and United States since 1991 had developed a concern to Russia. So when it comes to China, US and Pakistan both the countries have protected their strategic interests with mutual understandings. Another area of strategic interest for India is development of INSTC. «From the Indian perspective, there is scope for improvement in trade between Russia and India if the international North-South corridor through Iran and the Vladivostok-Chennai sea route can be operationalized»⁹.

Several mechanisms have been developed to extend its relations in other areas like science and technology, space centers, cultural relations, educational exchange programs, providing

aid and assistance in the development of nuclear weapons, arms and ammunitions as far as its defense ties are concerned and most importantly the economic relations and commercial activities with other. Other than these initiatives both India and Russia are aiming to establish a multi polar world order to protect their internal and external interests' areas. It will surely raise their role in increasing their influence for solving the regional issues as well.

Looking forward...

There are still some areas where India Russia needs to explore their relations. Significant among them the economic relations where there will be effectively channelization of resources and skill manpower to revive influence not only at the regional level but also at the global level. In contemporary time framework Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin have taken initiatives to facilitate more opportunities for strengthening this relationship. The journey of India and Russia relationship is so long, it had created a historical landmark. It is not just limited to the buyer and seller for exchanging the products but it has become a joint partnership in terms of its exchanges. Since medieval times India Russia bilateral relations are based on strong foundation with the valuable visit of Afansy Nikitin who had explored India and other multiple pillars of common shared interests. So such initiatives are the continuity of those efforts which has resulted into celebration of seven decades of unfailing friendship and time tested partnership. Efforts have been made to secure their strategic interest with changing time and circumstances by engaging into the development of relations with other nations over multiple issues. These efforts have its significance in terms of establishing the multi polar world and share their bilateral interest. Besides their engagements on various multi lateral platforms it is undoubtedly that the India and Russia relations will flourish together and there will not be any full stop to it as it will continue to glorify.

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