

G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin, *The Image of India. The Study of Ancient Indian Civilisation in the USSR*. Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1984. 271 pp.

The title of this work is somewhat misleading because it is not limited to the study of ancient Indian civilisation in the USSR, but sketches the image of India as far as the end of the 18th century as well as the history of Indology from its beginnings at the end of the 18th century up to the present. The first chapter is entitled 'The Image of India among the peoples of Russia up to the end of the 18th century'. It contains interesting information about the knowledge of India which reached ancient Russia by means of such works as the *Physiologus*, the *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes, the *Romance of Barlaam and Joasaph*, the *Story of the Indian Kingdom*, the *Alexander Romance*, etc. In 1471—1474 a merchant from Tver, Afanasij Nikitin, visited India and later described his experiences in his *Voyage Beyond the Three Seas* (cf. pp. 25—29). Indian merchants from Transcaucasia and the Caspian sea appeared in Astrakhan in the years 1615—1616, and an Indian colony continued to exist there until the middle of the 18th century. Gerasim Lebedev (1749—1817) arrived in India in 1785 and remained there until 1797. In 1801 he published a *Grammar of the Pure and Mixed East-Indian Dialects*, and in 1805 *An Impartial Review of the Systems of the East-Indian Brahmins, Their Sacred Rites and National Customs* (cf. pp. 42—44). In this same first chapter, the authors point out that a considerable number of books on India were written in Armenia in the 17th and 18th centuries, for instance

a *Geography of India* (18th century) and a *Chronology of Indian Kings* compiled at the beginning of the 18th century. Another traveller who has written an account of his journeys is a Georgian nobleman, Rafail Danibegashvili, who visited India five times and lived there for a total period of about eighteen years at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. An account of his journeys was published in Russian, English and Hindi in 1969: *The Travels of Rafail Danibegashvili in India, Burma and other Asian Countries (1795—1827)*. Moscow, Progress Publishers.

The second chapter is devoted to Indological studies in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Special attention is paid to Ivan Minaev (1840—1890) as the founder of the Russian school of Indology and Buddhist studies. Less well known in the West is the work of other scholars working in this period such as Vsevolod Miller (1848—1913), the author of a book on the Ásvins and Dioscuri (Moscow, 1876); Dmitrij Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij (1853—1920), who wrote on the cult of the god Soma (Odessa, 1884) and on the fire cult among the Vedic Indians (Odessa, 1887)<sup>1</sup>; and Dmitrij Kudrjavskij (1867—1920), a specialist in the Gr̥hyasūtras on which he wrote a monograph (Jur'ev, 1904). The authors do not forget to mention the important ethnographic work done in South India and Ceylon by the Mervarts, husband and wife. Ludmila Mervart (1888—1965) is mentioned in Miliband's *Bibliographic Dictionary of Soviet Orientalists* (Moscow, 1975) but no mention is made there of A.M. Mervart and of his *Grammar of the Spoken Tamil Language* (Leningrad, 1929), a work which is highly rated by Tamil specialists. Published in only 500 copies, it has long since become a bibliographical rarity. According to the *Tamil University News Bulletin* (Vol. 1, No. 8, December 16, 1982) Mervart died in 1932. However, the year of his birth is not given.

Chapters III and IV study in detail the scholarly activities of Sergej Ol'denburg (1863—1934) and Th. Stcherbatsky (1866—1942). The work of both scholars is well known, but little has been written in English about their life and activities. Interesting information on Stcherbatsky is also to be found in two articles written by scholars who have known him personally, Nikolaj Konrad (1891—1970) and Vladimir Kal'janov (1908—), and both published in a volume in memory of Stcherbatsky.<sup>2</sup> Konrad's remarks are important for a better understanding of Stcherbatsky's philosophical background. Konrad writes that in his first publications he was a follower of Kant, but that in a lecture given in 1919 Stcherbatsky pointed to similarities between Buddhist philosophy and the philosophy of Henri Bergson. According to Konrad, his work on Buddhist Logic (Leningrad, 1930—32)

shows traces of his great interest in the *Logische Untersuchungen* of Edmund Husserl. One of Stcherbatsky's last pupils, Vladimir Kal'janov, writes that Stcherbatsky wrote most of his works in English because during his stay in India in 1910 he had come to the conclusion that studies and translations of Indian and Buddhist texts ought to be written in a language easily understood by many scholars in India and other countries.

Chapter V is entitled 'Main Stages of Indological Research in the USSR' and is chiefly devoted to more recent Indological studies from the mid-1950's onward. In this chapter, due attention is paid to Stcherbatsky's main pupils, Obermiller (1901–1935), Tubjanskij (1893–1943), Vostrikov (1904–1942) and Semičov (1900–1981). The authors mention that in 1934 Vostrikov's extensive monograph on the logic of Vasubandhu was accepted for publication in India. According to M. I. Vorob'eva-Desjatovskaja and L. S. Savickij, it is not known what happened to the manuscript.<sup>3</sup> These same scholars also mention that Vostrikov left a translation of the Nyāyavārttikatātparyapariśuddhi. Semičov published in 1930 an article on *rūpa* in the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Abhidhamatthasangaha*, of which Louis de La Vallée Poussin wrote: "Cet article contient beaucoup de choses intéressantes, et apporte une promesse qui réjouit."<sup>4</sup> In 1980 there appeared a translation of the Tibetan text of the first three chapters of the *Abhidharmakośa* by Semičov and Brjanskij, a partial fulfilment of the plans made by Stcherbatsky in the early years of this century for the study of the *Abhidharmakośa*. The authors mention a translation of the *Karmasiddhi* by Semičov, but without giving further details on its publication.

It is not possible to list even the most important publications of the last thirty years, during which period Indological studies in the USSR were greatly developed. Undoubtedly this period of Russian Indological studies is of the greatest importance for Western scholars and it would be extremely useful if an expanded version, accompanied by a detailed and systematically arranged bibliography, were to be published in book-form. Russian scholars are active in practically all branches of Indological studies: Vedic studies, Epic studies, poetics, philosophy, Sanskrit literature, Dravidian studies, dharmaśāstras, Arthāśāstra, social, economic and political history, etc. Of special importance is the archaeological work undertaken in Sovjet Central Asia to which the authors devote a special chapter which also analyses Sovjet studies of the Harappan writing and the proto-Indian civilisation. An appendix describes collections of Indian manuscripts in the USSR. The bibliography mentions some important publications both in Russian and in English.

In the introduction to this work the authors express their regret that the history of Indology in Russia is still not sufficiently known and that many valuable works by Russian Indologists are not always accessible to scholars in Europe and India as a result of language difficulties. This is undoubtedly true, but one must not forget also that it is often very difficult to obtain Russian publications which have been published in recent years. Furthermore, the work of scholars published in the form of articles is even more difficult to find, unless one has access to one of the few major libraries which are able to acquire a great number of Russian periodicals. Leading Russian scholars such as V. V. Ivanov and V. N. Toporov have published a number of extremely important articles on Indian mythology, poetics, art, etc., which ought to be collected in one or more volumes.

The authors refer only rarely to works in progress. One of the most important projects they mention is a complete translation of the Rigveda with a detailed commentary by the distinguished Vedic specialist, Tat'jana Elizarenkova, who has already published a translation of selections of hymns from the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda. After the publication of this work, Vedic specialists will certainly be obliged to learn Russian!

Peter Greenwood is responsible for the English translation of this book. The translation reads well, but exception must be made to the use of the word 'relic' to render *pamjatnik*, cf. p. 163: "Work is going on there mainly on the manuscript collections, on the study of ancient Indian literary relics and Buddhism." Page 179 makes mention of the publication of a series entitled "Relics of Oriental Writing"!

Bongard-Levin and Vigasin deserve our gratitude for having written this stimulating account of Indological studies in Russia.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Louis Renou, *Bibliographie védique* (Paris, 1931), p. 32: D. Koulikowski, 'Rg-veda, IV 26 et IV 27. Essai d'analyse', *Rev. Ling.* XVIII 1; p. 186: D. Koulikowski, 'Les trois feux sacrés du Rig-Véda,' *RHR.* XX 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Indijskaja kul'tura i buddizm.* Moskva, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> *Aziatskij Muzej — Leningradskoe otdelenie Instituta Vostokovedenija AN SSSR* (Moskva, 1972), p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> *Bibliographie bouddhique II* (Paris, 1931), p. 57.