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# Indian Images in Chinese Literature: A Historical Survey

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INDIA is the closest ancient civilization to China which is another ancient civilization. The two civilizations can be described as 'Trans-Himalayan Twins' not only because they flank the Himalayan ranges, but also because both were given birth to by the rivers flowing from the Himalayan region. It is but natural that India figures prominently in the Chinese imagination, folklore, and literary records. The image of India in Chinese literature changes according to two factors: (i) mutual knowledge and intimacy between Indian and Chinese peoples, and (ii) India's impact on China.

We can divide the cultural contacts between India and China into four historical periods. First, from the time of Christ to the early centuries of the present millennium was the period when China was under active influence of Indian culture through the vehicle of Buddhism. Second, from the 13th to the 19th century was a period of little contact between India and China. In the meanwhile, both countries underwent political, social and cultural changes because of invasions by external forces. Third, from the 19th century upto the time when both countries won complete independence from Western imperialist domination (India in 1947 and China in 1949) was the period when the two trans-Himalayan twins became colonial twins—co-sufferers of the world imperialist systems. From the 1950s onwards, we have the fourth period of Sino-Indian contacts which saw the two newly independent peoples first being perplexed by the historical burdens and recently starting the process of liberating themselves from the labyrinth of historical problems

to found Sino-Indian relations on a new rational basis. Barely a week ago, officials representing Indian and Chinese governments concluded their fifth round of normalization negotiations, and decided to take up joint projects on the historical contacts between India and China.<sup>1</sup> It is high time that Indian scholars interested in Chinese studies give attention to this topic which has fascinated Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru and many other eminent Indians in recent decades, but has been kept in cold storage because of the abnormal relations between India and China since 1962.

Before I elaborate the different images of India projected in Chinese literature during the above mentioned four historical periods, I should like to point out certain phenomena which have a bearing on our discussion. First, it is well known that China had a glorious past which made the Chinese exceedingly proud of their cultural heritage. It is but natural that others suspect the Chinese of being too fond of their own cultural heritage to give due appreciation to the cultural streams originating outside China. This suspicion coincides with the lamentable fact that among all the great lands of the world China has remained unconquered by Christianity despite enormous efforts emanating from the Western Hemisphere. This is why until today Western scholars can hardly forget and forgive what they have termed 'Sinocentrism' or 'Middle Kingdom mentality'.

Secondly, it is relatively less known but a historical truth that the Chinese culture was innately deficient in religious imagination, if not pious devotion. Confucius set the tone to avoid any discussion on spirits and after-life development.<sup>2</sup> It was the Indian Buddhist monk-scholars who transformed China into a religious country. The corollary of this was the emergence of Taoism which is by all means the progeny of Sino-Indian cultural hybridization. Careless foreign observers have mistaken China as a great land of religion, and ranked both Taoism and Confucianism as the world's great religions.

Thirdly, it was short of a miracle that a great civilization as China was, and a people so proud of their heritage should bow before the moral teachings of an unarmed, half-naked Indian saint, Gautama Buddha, without any threat of an Indian crusade. This is particularly unbelievable to those who still lament China's rejection of Christianity. They try to explain away the great significance of China's historic conversion to Buddhism either by highlighting the sinicization of Buddhism, or by digging out stray instances of anti-Buddhist and anti-Indian pronouncements and actions from a thousand odd years of Chinese history of pro-Indian and pro-Buddhist effusion. Such efforts of trying to assemble a few swallows to make a summer are still the dark clouds which prevent the public from gaining a true perspective of the historical contacts between India and China.

But I have already started discussing the first period of Sino-Indian contacts which was marked by the advent and enduring stay of Buddhist influence in Chinese life. The ramifications of this influence can be briefly stated. In the first place, the Buddhist efforts aimed at disseminating the dharma among the widest population possible. The Buddhists, Indian and Chinese monk-scholars jointly, launched a mass education campaign which

at once changed the elitist cultural outlook of China. Learning became widespread. Block printing was invented to circulate Buddhist scriptures among the masses. A new colloquial literature called 'bianwen' (which may be translated as 'literature of illustration') emerged to popularize the Indian stories cited in Buddhist scriptures. It was this mass education campaign which registered a holy image of India in Chinese folklore.

In the second place, Buddhism began to influence Chinese politics which was known for its secular character. Liang emperor Wu (502-549) was one of the first rulers in China to place religion above all other considerations of political rule. He spent a greater part of the imperial revenue on building Buddhist temples and pagodas, and he himself behaved more as a Buddhist devotee than a political ruler, spending a good part of his reigning time in Buddhist monasteries. He was one of the rare examples of a Chinese ruler observing strict vegetarianism, and forced his subordinates to follow suit. He even proclaimed himself as 'Bodhisattva emperor'.<sup>3</sup> After him, there was another great Chinese emperor, Sui Wendi (581-604) who entitled himself as a 'disciple of Bodhisattva-sila' (*Pusajie dizi*). He was the first and one of the few Chinese rulers to prohibit slaughter in the entire country on his own birthday.<sup>4</sup> Even Tang emperor Taizong (626-649) whose policies tilted in favour of the Taoists behaved in many ways like a Buddhist devotee. Both he and Sui emperor Wendi emulated the Indian king Asoka to mourn the dead of their conquest wars and erect Buddhist temples on the major battlefields.<sup>5</sup> He also emulated the Liang emperor Wu to repatriate the large population of the imperial harem in the true Indian spirit of renunciation.<sup>6</sup> The Tang emperor was flattered by both his crown-prince and the famous Chinese monk, Xuanzang [Hsuan-tsang] as a ruler 'turning the golden wheel', likening him to a cakrabartinraja.<sup>7</sup> The crown-prince, who was later Tang emperor Gaozong (649-683), emulated his imperial father to write a preface for Xuanzang's translations of Buddhist scriptures. In his preface, Emperor Gaozong eulogized his father's imperial reign in the following extraordinary manner:

His Majesty turns the wheel to rule the earth, with his influence approaching Kukkutarama. His eminent mansion is adorned by flags, with its spirit calling up Gridhrakuta (Rajagriha)...The sacred water of Nilanjan irrigates the tanks of the Emperor. The Jetavana of Sravasti extends its exuberant gardens to the Emperor's forest resort.<sup>8</sup>

According to the Buddhist theory, the king on earth is the cakrabartinraja blessed by the dharmaraja in the heaven who was the Buddha. It was the extension of this logic that the Tang emperor tried to link the terrestrial kingdom of China with the celestial paradise. But we have noticed that the geographical names in the imperial document which were supposed to be parts of the paradise, belonged to the ancient Indian map. With the Chinese recognition of Lord Buddha as the almighty, the status of India was elevated to that of the paradise, because it was the 'kingdom of the Buddha' (*foguo*).

The term 'foguo' was first used by pilgrim Faxian (Fa-hsien) (337-422 approx.) to title his account on India. The term was used by Faxian with a sacred connotation. This was, most probably, one of the earliest occasions when India was eulogized as 'paradise'. But India was more often referred to in Chinese historical accounts as 'tianzhu' which literally means 'Heavenly zhu'. We know that this was the third oldest name for India preceded by 'Juandu' and 'Shendu'. Obviously, while the other two were the distorted sounds of 'Sindu' or 'Hindu', the term 'tianzhu' was a semantic-phonetic combination, using syllable 'zhu' to represent 'Shendu'. This term first appeared in *Houhan shu* (Later Han Annals) compiled by Fan Ye who was a late contemporary of Faxian. It was no coincidence that India began to assume the Chinese names of the 'Kingdom of the Buddha' and 'Heavenly zhu' from the fifth century onwards by which time the legitimacy of Buddhism as a sacred teaching had already been established beyond doubt. While the term 'Kingdom of the Buddha' was more current among the Buddhist devotees, 'Heavenly Zhu' became the proper name for India in all subsequent dynastic annals.

Here we have seen that the powerful influence of Buddhism created an ambiguous 'Heavenly India' image. The best evidence of this is seen from the following two lines of a poem of Li Bo (701-762), one of the greatest poets of China, when he visited the famous Tianzhushi monastery, i.e. Heavenly India Monastery, which had its name board personally written by a Tang emperor in 765:

*Heavenly India is separated from me  
By mountains and seas.  
When I sit by the window  
My thoughts to Buddhahood flees.<sup>9</sup>*

It could be said that 'Heavenly India' was a kind of Chinese euphemism rather than reflecting a firm Chinese belief that India was the paradise. The best evidence of this was Xuanzang's account on India which clearly informed its readers about another country he saw.<sup>10</sup> However, even Xuanzang became a part of the Indophile legend, and in the last several centuries an average Chinese has hardly known Xuanzang's own account on India, but has surely heard of the story of Xuanzang's going to the 'Western Heaven' in search of scriptures (known in Chinese terminology as 'xitian qu jing'). And Xuanzang's book *Xiyu ji* (On the Western Region) had not even one hundredth of the fame of another with a similar title *Xiyou ji* (Travel to the West) penned by Wu Cheng'en (1500-1582 approx.) which rendered the theme of Xuanzang's quest for Buddhist scriptures in the Western Heaven in a fantastic way of distortion. This is the internationally renowned novel in which the hero is a Chinese version of monkey-king Hanuman, named Sun Wukong, whereas Xuanzang is depicted as a useless Confucian-type of scholar. But we must notice that although the novel *Xiyouji* has downgraded Xuanzang it has kept the Heavenly Indian image intact, rather it lent more colour

to it. We know that although the novel was written only in the sixteenth century, the stories contained therein were prevalent in China's folklore in the previous centuries. In other words, the 'Western Heaven' image of India has long existed in Chinese folklore—probably since soon after Xuanzang returned from his Indian sojourn. At the same time, an extended euphemism has been created describing the death of a Chinese as a 'glorious return to the Western Heaven' (*rong gui Xitian*), which is still a favourable condolence message among tradition-oriented Chinese, particularly those who live in Taiwan and other places outside mainland China.

A euphemism like this inevitably interferes with Chinese judgements on India. An instance would suffice to illustrate this effect. In *Xin tangshu* (The New Annals of Tang Dynasty) which was compiled by the famous Song scholar-officials, Ouyang Xiu (1007-72) and Song Qi (998-1061) in 1044-1060, India is described in glowing terms. India's hereditary system of ruling succession worked so well that there was 'no fight and killing for political power.' About India's agriculture: 'Paddy yields four crops in a year. It grows so tall that even a camel walking in the paddy field is totally covered.' The Indian people are described as refrained from animal slaughter and alcohol drinking. They swore by god and remained faithful to their pledges. To crown it all, Indians could 'invoke dragons for rain' (*neng zhi-long qi yunyu*), according to the learned authors of the Tang Annals.<sup>11</sup>

Even Xuanzang's matter-of-fact account on India is so evenly mixed with Buddhist legends that the magical power of Buddhadhamma looms large in the background. In Xuanzang's biography penned by disciples Huili and Kuiji (632-682) it is stated that the abbot of the Nalanda University, Silabhadra, had already been forewarned by god about the visit of the Chinese pilgrim to his institution, and had his chronic illness cured by some mystic force to await for the arrival of Xuanzang.<sup>12</sup> Whether Xuanzang and his disciples added their wishful thinking to the story we are unable to ascertain. Under the 'Heavenly India' impact even the most honest chronicler could produce fantastic narrations about India.

Here I wish to return to the 'Middle Kingdom' obsession. It seems to me that this obsession belonged more to modern Western China watchers than to the ancient Chinese. The term 'Zhongguo' from which comes the English translation of 'Middle Kingdom' first occurred in the preface to an ancient poem 'Sixth Month' of pre-Qin (246-207 B.C.) vintage, which denotes the domain of the Chinese states as distinguished from the foreign tribes. But subsequent occurrences of 'Zhongguo' in Chinese literature had a much narrower connotation depicting a particular state or region within China which was regarded as occupying a central geographical position.<sup>13</sup> Then came the frequent usage of the term 'Zhongguo' in Chinese Buddhist literature which was originally a translation of the Sanskrit term *Madhyadesa*, but later assuming the connotation of 'India'. There was the famous debate between a Chinese Buddhist scholar Huiyan and a non-Buddhist scholar, He Chengtian, in front of the Song emperor Wen (424-453) on whether it was India or China which was the centre of the world. Huiyan won the debate

by giving a scientific illustration that there was no shadow in India at noon during Summer Solstice.<sup>14</sup> After this debate, it seems, 'Zhongguo' became a legitimate term for India and not for China, at least not among Chinese Buddhist writers. In the Dunhuang manuscripts I have come across umpteen references of 'Zhongguo' as the description of India. In one discourse written by the famous Tang Buddhist monk-scholar, Daoxuan (596-667), who was the founder of the Vinaya School of Chinese Buddhism, for example, referred to 'Buddhadharma spread to the east' (*fofa dong liu*) and 'monks arrived from the Middle Kingdom' (*Zhongguo seng lai*). On closer examination, the word 'east' was used by him to mean 'China', while the word 'Middle Kingdom' was used by him to mean 'India'.<sup>15</sup> Many Buddhist writers in China had been using the term 'Zhongguo' in this manner without fearing that their readers would confuse what they meant by 'India' with 'China'. We have, thus, the evidence that the term 'Zhongguo' or 'Middle Kingdom' had the connotation of India. Chinese imperial documents from the first dynasty Qin to the last dynasty Qing (ending 1911) always described China as the domain of the dynasty, and the Chinese government as 'wo chao' (our dynasty) or 'tian chao' (celestial dynasty).

What I have just shown is a paradoxical picture of a supposedly extremely chauvinistic culture of the Chinese conceding the position of the centre of civilization to India voluntarily. Once again, this was but the impact of the force of Buddhism. India as China's trans-Himalayan-twin and Buddhist cousin had already assumed the 'Heavenly India' and 'Middle Kingdom' images in Chinese literature. The Chinese have always been more secular than religious, with more attachment to their present life than to their future life. The Indian image of 'Middle Kingdom' was certainly a token of great magnanimity on the part of Chinese intellectuals than the 'Heavenly India' image.

The examples of Chinese writing I have so far cited to illustrate the 'Heavenly India' and 'Middle Kingdom' images of India in Chinese literature, seem to have been confined within the Tang Dynasty (618-907) which, incidentally, was the golden period of Chinese culture. Printing and book-making were invented then. Chinese poetry was at its best with the emergence of the maximum number of great poets in any single period of Chinese history. Colloquial literature emerged along with the prosperity of story-telling and dramatic performances in addition to music and dance, painting and sculpture, symbolizing the mass awakening of literacy and culture. This was also the golden period of Buddhism, particularly spiritual Buddhism (as distinguished from monastic Buddhism) which was the dominant cultural force in China. Many eminent Chinese writers were under the Buddhist influence. Li Bo, for instance, styled himself as 'Qinglian jushi' meaning 'Nilotpala upasaka' in Sanskrit (a blue lotus of a lay Buddhist). Li Bo seemed to have equal attachment to the three major spiritual streams of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism of his time. His choosing a Buddhist title was because of his deriving the highest mental satisfaction from Buddhist spiritualism, particularly when he was disillusioned

with the political and social realities. We can see this from one of his poems which was an arrogant depiction of himself:

*Be who the Blue Lotus of a Lay Devotee?  
He the demoted saint standing before thee.  
And who has his reputation outstanding?  
Buried within the tavern for thirty springs.  
Why should it arouse his curiosity  
Of the leading official of Hu Prefecture?  
Here is the personality, don't you see,  
Who is Golden Millet Buddha of the future?<sup>16</sup>*

Whenever Li Bo was fed up with the materialist country of his, his thought wandered to the spiritual heaven of India, as he rhymed:

*Reminiscence of Chang'an brings back smile,  
Longing for my Western Heaven meanwhile.<sup>17</sup>*

Li Bo, thus, synthesized the 'Heavenly India' and 'Middle Kingdom' images into an escapist's dream-land. But Li Bo, like most of the disillusioned talents whom the Chinese history has seen was no escapist. He advocated unabashedly the philosophy of life of making merry here and now. Confucius once said 'respect the spirits, but keep a distance from them.'<sup>18</sup> The Chinese attitude towards the Buddhist pure-land that was utopian India, as highlighted by Li Bo, was to keep it at a respectable distance. As yonder pastures always look greener, the heavenly image of India could be long preserved in Chinese memory even after the golden period of Buddhism.

I have earlier mentioned the two eminent compilers of the New Annals of the Tang Dynasty, Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, who lived in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). This period still belonged to the first phase of Sino-Indian contacts with Buddhist monks continuing to visit each other's country, while the Song imperial court took interest in the contacts. Meanwhile, great efforts were made in China to revive the ancient glories of Confucianism which was totally eclipsed by Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty. A new school of thought emerged named 'lixue' (study of rationality) or 'Neo-Confucianism'. Let us quote a present-day Chinese authority, Professor Ren Jiyu, Director of the Institute of Religious Studies in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who observes:

The emergence of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties, which had as its core the Confucian code of feudal ethics, coupled with such religious practices as contemplation and self-abnegation borrowed from the Buddhists and the Taoists, marked the completion of the evolution of Confucianism into a religion.<sup>19</sup>

Professor Ren has helped us extend our discussion onto the second phase

of Sino-Indian contacts by mentioning the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) during which Neo-Confucianism reached its high-tide. While Neo-Confucianism kept the Buddhist influence active in Chinese culture, this was the period when China had lost contacts with her Buddhist cousins in India. 'Heavenly India' disappeared from the Chinese world map, so to speak. A sudden spur of overseas maritime activities by the Ming navy in the first half of the 15th century brought Chinese visitors again to the Indian shores in the well-known episode of Admiral Zheng He's seven expeditions to the Indian Ocean. The reports of Zheng He's party gave birth to several accounts which are extremely important for the study of Sino-Indian contacts.<sup>20</sup> The first thing we miss in these accounts is the existence of India. Instead, Bengal, Cola, Cochin, Quilon, Calicut, etc. figure in them as separate political entities. It is evident that those who visited these places and those who wrote these accounts had no idea that these were the places which had sent many Buddhist monk-scholars to China and had received many Chinese Buddhist pilgrims centuries ago. I suspect that their Indian hosts in Bengal, Cola, Cochin, Quilon, Calicut, etc. had themselves forgotten about the brisk cultural contacts between India and China. Otherwise, this would have figured in their conversations with their Chinese guests which would, in turn, find mention in the accounts. When we read these Ming accounts on the coastal Indian states, we feel no excitement. And what a climb down from the earlier Buddhist and non-Buddhist accounts on India!

While 'Heavenly India' was lost to the Ming officials, it was still kept alive in Chinese folklore. I have already mentioned the great novel *Xiyou ji* which was written in the 16th century. The Ming Dynasty also gave birth to another great Chinese novel, *Shuihu zhuan* (Heroes of the Marshes) written by Luo Guanzhong (1330-1400 approx.) which gave birth to 108 popular heroes to Chinese folklore. The remote origin of the 108 heroes was India again, because 36 of them were supposed to be the reincarnations of the Tian' gang constellation which bore the trace of the 36 mirdus or guardian divinities of the Indian Buddhist legend, while the other 72 were reincarnations of the 72 devas of Indian Buddhist origin who stayed in the sinicized Disha constellation. It is my contention that both the novels represent the scriptures of the religion of peasant rebellion inspired by Buddhism, which could also be called the 'Buddhist struggle ethics'. I have mentioned earlier that in *Xiyou ji* the Buddhist saint Xuanzang is eclipsed by a monkey-king, yet the legend of 'Heavenly India' has been preserved intact. In addition, the novel makes a powerful advocacy of the eternal Indian ethos of dharma overcoming evil. Here we have the paradox of 'Heavenly India' having physically disappeared from the globe during this period, while it continued to inspire millions of Chinese peasants and their down-trodden brethren in the spiritual realm.

British colonialism once again brought India and China back into brisk contact, this time nothing to do with any religion, which was spiritual opium to Karl Marx, but doing real business in real opium. 'Heavenly India' was dead and gone with the 'flowing poison' (*liudu*) entering the interior of both

the country and her opium addicts, making China the 'nation of opium-smokers' by courtesy of the 'nation of shop-keepers'. A 19th century writer lamented thus about this new development of Sino-Indian relation:

The cloth in China was previously woven by hemp. Since Kublai Khan's expedition to India we have obtained the cultivation of cotton which has spread in China, with cotton cloth clothing all the nine parts of China. Cotton has proved to be superior to silk and hemp, giving profound benefit. However, opium was also originated here, all the five Indias producing it, with Maratha producing the maximum... The five Indias abound in the production of cotton and opium. In recent years, opium has occupied the lion's share. How strange that all the pollutants of the world have concentrated on the Kingdom of the Buddha alone!<sup>21</sup>

Another Chinese writer wrote in the beginning of this century that smoking opium was invented by Lord Buddha. He cited a passage from the *Vinayas* translated by Xuanzang that once the Buddha had been sick at Rajagriha and had cured himself by smoking some medicine. He added: 'The trend of people today is to live on opium. Opium-smoking smacks pessimism which comes closest to the tenets of our Lord Buddha.'<sup>22</sup> How ironic! The Buddha's smoking some medicine does not necessarily mean smoking opium which could not have been discovered by then. The irony of question lies in the fact that while the Buddha was the best model of moral life, opium-smoking was the worst kind of moral degeneration. Both were gifts from India. This reminds us of an interesting observation by a modern Chinese scholar, Gu Jiegang (Ku Chieh-kang), one of the pioneers of the new cultural movement in the early 20th century:

After the introduction of Buddhism [to China] divinity became transcendent personality. Temptation could no longer entice them [gods and goddesses]. Birth and death were out of question. Love turned to be obscenity. Gods and goddesses acquired the character of solemnity, leaving romantic affairs to the freaks and goblins.<sup>23</sup>

What Gu shows here is that Chinese intellectuals on the whole have not blamed India for the crime which Britain had committed, and certainly, the Buddha has stood as an example of chastity forever.

Another image India acquired during the third phase of Sino-Indian contacts was that of a 'colonial slave' in the eyes of patriotic Chinese. There was a popular song during the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945) which had the following lines:

*Should not we beat back the wolflike foe,  
We shall perish like the Indians do.*

'We shall not become the nationless slaves!' was another popular slogan at

that time. India loomed large behind this image of 'nationless slaves' (*wangguonu*). Li Dazhao (1889-1927), one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, warned his countrymen in the early twenties that the fate of 'nationlessness' of India was in store for China.<sup>24</sup>

The description of India was certainly harsh, a consequence of the harsh international reality which China had to face. But the image of 'nationless slaves' was more a self-chastening warning than censuring a neighbouring people by the Chinese intellectuals. This becomes clear in the following observation voiced by the famous modern Chinese writer, historian, archaeologist and statesman, Guo Moruo (1892-1978): 'The pitiable nationless slaves! The pity is that we are even lesser creatures than the nationless slaves. The Indians can walk in and out here freely. Only we Chinese are the dogs!'<sup>25</sup> Here Guo Moruo was making a reference to the notorious park on the Bund of Shanghai where admission was denied to the Chinese and dogs by the British Masters of the Concession. Guo Moruo had to pretend to be a Japanese by wearing the suit and tie to get into the park.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen, 'father' of modern China, was even more judicious in his judgement. He looked upon India as the real source of all the splendours that had made Great Britain. Observed Sun:

...[Britain] boasts of the control of her national flag which knows no sun set. What does she control? The power of parliamentary politics? No.... The Teutonic gentleman's spirit? No. What she depends upon is India. It is India that enables her to control the colonies all over the world. It is India that has made London the centre of the world. It is India that has given her the leadership position in Europe and hegemony of the world till today.<sup>26</sup>

Sun Yat-sen further pointed out that India and China were common targets of the global imperialist scramble for colonies, and 'China would not escape the fate of being their victim along with India.'<sup>27</sup> His observations thus underline the commonality of the international situations faced by India and China.

However, if we care to analyse the respective colonial situations in India and China, we shall see that as compared to the imperialist treatment meted out to China, what India received from Britain could be regarded as preferential treatment. Moreover, as India was a part of the British Empire, what the colonial raj did in India had to be accounted for in the public debates of the British Parliament, which, however, was not the Chinese case. There was strong criticism in the British public about the British opium enterprise in India under the aegis of the East India Company, and the Court of Directors of the East India Company promised in 1817 that 'were it possible to prevent the use of the durg altogether except for the purpose of medicine, we would gladly do it in compassion to mankind'.<sup>28</sup> The British Raj adopted a dual policy of restricting the circulation of opium

in India, while ceaselessly expanding production of opium in Indian 'factories' for the ever increasing supply to China.

On the other hand, there was a degree of difference in the Indian public response to foreign imperialist domination as compared to the Chinese public response. The Chinese could not have failed in noticing this. We have the following observation of Laiang Qichao (1873-1929), an eminent advocate of political reforms in modern China :

"I often hear Indians say: 'The political system of England is noble and perfect, and full of virtue. It is much more superior to that we had in India in the past.' They regard every look, every smile, every food, every drink of the Britons several tens of degrees higher than their own."<sup>29</sup>

Very few Chinese, not even a moderate like Liang Qichao, could appreciate such Indian appreciation of colonial presence in their country. The Chinese have often been accused of being xenophobes. They were certainly colonio-phobes. This explains why they opted for violence to liberate themselves from foreign imperialist domination as compared to India's non-violence. Even after independence and liberation, the two nations have taken different paths to modernization and social change.

Liang Qichao further called the Indian mentality as 'zi-bian' or 'self-disparagement'. He even developed a social Darwinist perspective, observing that ten thousand English residents in India had no great difficulty in making three hundred million Indians submissive, thus proving the proverb: 'Ten thousand hawks are not comparable to one single osprey'. While noticing that the Anglo-Saxon was a superior race, he thought the Indians an inferior people because they matured too early. 'Indians are the earliest to marry. It is common for them to give birth to children at the age of fifteen. Hence they decay very quickly.'<sup>30</sup> This, of course, is not a scientific analysis, and betrays that Liang was strongly influenced by the 'white men's burden'. However, it would be difficult to conclude that Liang was an Indophile. Apart from being a Buddhist scholar, he was a modern Chinese intellectual who advocated the benevolent Indian cultural influence on China's historical development. He wrote: 'In the perspective of Buddhist history, she [India] was more advanced than us [China]. That there has been a marriage of the two civilizations of India and China is the most powerful evidence of this.'<sup>31</sup> India's subjugation by British colonial rule did not blur Liang's Indophile historical vision, while his admiration for ancient Indian culture did not prevent him from looking down upon his contemporary counterpart in India.

Though Liang Qichao was a learned Buddhist scholar, he never used both the 'Heavenly India' and 'Middle Kingdom' images in his writings on India. On the contrary, he was one of the first modern Chinese intellectuals to restore the term 'Zhongguo' for the designation of China. Actually the term 'Zhongguo' was used by him as an abridged form of 'Zhonghua min'guo', i.e. the Republic of China, not the Middle Kingdom. He wrote: 'The esta-

establishment of the term 'Zhonghua min'guo' is a miracle wrought by the citizens of Zhonghua in the history of human evolution.'<sup>32</sup> Thus, when he spoke about 'Zhongguo', it was with a sense of pride and reverence comparable to the ancient Chinese Buddhists' using the term to designate India. But as the India of the colonial period was no longer a respectable model, Chinese intellectuals like Liang Qichao shifted their admiration to their own cultural heritage.

The fall of India's image in Chinese literature from that of a wonderland with the magical power of Buddhhadhamma to that of a helpless nationless or even willing colonial slaves, is a sad comment on the decline of the cultural splendours of an ancient civilization in the face of modern cultural challenges. The Chinese in their worst hour of national humiliation and individual misery became desperate in their anti-imperialist struggle. Perhaps no Chinese anti-imperialist violence was more violent than that exhibited by the Yihetuan Boxers in 1900, which got back in return an even more brutal blood bath at the hands of eight foreign powers led by Britain. Incidentally, not only the Boxer uprising belonged to the mainstresam of Buddhist-inspired struggle ethics, but there was tangible Indian spiritual involvement in the Boxers' anti-imperialist struggle. The Boxers had kept alive the tradition of boxing for a righteous cause founded by the Shaolin Maonastery under the inspiration of an Indian monk, Bodhidharma who died in China in 528 or 536. They heroically faced the bullets of the foreign imperialists with their bare-bodies after invoking the protection of Bodhidharma, Vaisravana, Sun Wukong the Chinese Hanuman, and other Sino-Indian deities. One of the secret magical chantings of these Boxer dare-devils was 'Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara'. Some of them wore a red turban with the Chinese word 'Fo' for Buddha inscribed on the turban.<sup>33</sup> So the magical power of Buddhhadhamma was still alive, and even the 19th century colonial conquerers had a taste of it. It was this taste which truned Britain and other Western imperialist powers back from their earlier designs of cutting the Chinese melon into their respective spheres of influence.

In the meanwhile, Britain was also beaten back finally from India by the non-violent but steel-like will power of the Indian masses inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, who was in all aspects the reincarnation of a Bodhisattva. So in India, too, there was the magical power of Buddhhadhamma, and the colonial slaves managed to overpower what was once most powerful imperialist power on earth. The trans-Himalayan colonial-twins had remained the old faithful Buddhist-twins.

It is but natural that both the Indian and Chinese peoples should have confidence in their respective cultural strength and believe their respective roads to independence and liberation as the most correct. Unfortunately, this self-confidence and self-righteousness did not help the two countries to renew their cultural affinity. There were mistaken identities in their mutual understanding as well as in realizing their own strength. Poisoned by Western projection of the Middle Kingdom dragon-monster, a section of Indian intellectuals over-emphasized the influence of Chinese xenophobia on the

government of the People's Republic of China, and overlooked the enduring influence of Buddhist culture on modern China. Similarly, the Chinese intellectuals did not fully realize the inner strength of India's non-violent approach to external challenges on the one hand, and forgot the Buddhist contribution to the cultural vitality of China on the other. The long passage of time and the absence of intellectual interaction for almost ten centuries took their toll. Both nations went through a transformation like the caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Yet, when the two cultural cousins approached each other, both had a psychological shock comparable to the caterpillar being frightened away by the butterfly. This perhaps constituted the psychological element of the unhappy episode of recent years between India and China.

Historical developments seem to have turned a full circle. Now the ancient cultural affinity between India and China is once again beaconing at us. We remember how in the ancient past physical obstacles on the ground created problems for trans-Himalayan communication, yet those years were the golden period of Sino-Indian understanding. This was because there was no human barrier. Buddhist monks travelling to and fro between the two countries carried no passports and experienced no immigration checks. Today the communication distance between the two countries has been reduced to a matter of minutes. But the communication gap in the mental realm still requires tremendous effort to bridge. A historical survey of the mutual images in each other's mind can perhaps advance a small step forward leading to bigger leaps.

#### NOTES

1. *The Times of India* (Delhi edn.), 23 September 1984, p.1.
2. *Lun yu* (Analects), ch. vi, section 20, ch. vii, section 20; ch. xi; section 11.
3. Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, (Princeton, 1964), p. 136; Yu Zhengxie, *Guisi cun'gao* (Manuscripts of 1833), (Commercial Press, 1937), vol. v, pp. 392-4; Fan Wenlan, *Zhongguo tongshi* (General History of China), (Beijing, 1964, 4th ed.), ii, 382-83.
4. *Cefu yuan'gui* (References from Imperial Archives), (reprint, Hong Kong, 1960), vol. I, p. 295A.
5. Daoxuan, *Guang hongming ji* (Collected Documents on the Dissemination of Enlightenment), *juan 17*, in *Taisho Daizokyo* (Japanese ed. of Chinese Tripitakas), (Tokyo) ,lii, 213, 328, 329.
6. *Cefu yuan'gui*, I, 476B, 477A.
7. *Quan tangwen jishi* (References for the Complete Collection of Tang Documents, 1, 47; Huili & Kuiji, *Sanzang fashi zhuan* (Biography of the Tripitaka Master), *juan 6*.
8. *Tang pianwen chao* (Collection of Tang Essays of Couplet Style), (reprint, Taipei, 1962), *juan 1*, pp. 12B-13A.
9. *Litaibo quanji* (Collected Works of Li Bo), (reprint, Hong Kong, 1975) p. 373, 45.0
10. Xuanzang's account is entitled *Datang xiyu ji* (Account on the Western Region during the Great Tang Dynasty).
11. *Xin Tangshu* (New Annals of Tang Dynasty), *juan 221*, section on India.
12. Huili *et al.*, *op cit.*, *juan 3*.
13. *Cihai* (Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Chinese Terminology), (Shanghai, 1979), ii, 3222, entry on 'Zhongguo'.

14. Daoxuan, *Shijia fangzhi* (Gazetteers of the Domain of Sakyamuni), in *Taisho Daizokyo*, li, 949.
15. Peking University collection of Dunhuang Manuscripts microfilms, Boxihe Collection Part (Pelliot Collection, originals in the Paris Museum), p. 2041, exposure 42, *Sifenlu shanfan buque xingshi chao* (Illustrations for the Four Vinayas), vol. II, part II.
16. *Litaibo quanji*, p. 425.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 464.
18. *Lun yu*, ch. vi, section 20.
19. Ren Jiyu, 'How Confucianism Evolved into A Religion', in *Social Sciences in China* (Quarterly Journal of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing), Vol. 1, No. 2 (June 1980), p. 139.
20. Among the well-known accounts are *Xingcha shenglan* (Wonderlands of the sea) written by Fei Xin, *Yingya shenglan* (Wonderlands of the yonder shores) written by Ma Huan, *Xiyang fangno zhi* (Accounts of foreign countries in the Western Ocean) written by Gong Zhen, and *Xiyang chaogong dianlu* (Records of countries of the Western Ocean paying tributes) written by Huang Shengzeng, all scholars of Ming Dynasty.
21. Lei Jin, *Rongcheng xianhua* (Random talks of Rong City), citing 'Suxiang suibi' (Jottings on Opium), in *Zhongguo jindaishi ziliao: Yapian zhanzheng* (Sources of Modern Chinese History: The Opium War), (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. I, p. 271.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 292, Lei Jin's own observation.
23. Gu Jiegang (Ku Chieh-kang), 'Gushibian zixu' (*Introduction to the Study of Ancient History*), in Zhou Zuoren ed., *Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* (The grand collection on new Chinese literature), (Shanghai, 1935), vol. vi: Essays, I, pp. 322-3.
24. *Li Dazhao xuanji* (Selected Works of Li Dazhao), (Beijing, 1962), p. 19, 31.
25. Guo Moruo, 'Yueshi' (The Lunar Eclipse), in Zhou Zuoren, *op cit*, p. 191.
26. *Zongli quanji* (Collected Works of Premier Sun Yat-sen), (Shanghai 1920), vol. 1, pp. 968-9.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 987.
28. F.S. Turner, *British Opium Policy and Its Results in India and China* (London, 1858), p.44.
29. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi quanji* (Writings from the study of Yinbing), (reprint, Taipei, 1974), p. 72, from essay 'Lun zizun' (On self-dignity).
30. *Ibid.*, p. 59, 136.
31. *Idem*, 'Fojiao yu xiyu' (Buddhism and the Western Region), in *Liang Rengong jinzhū* (Recent Writings of Liang Qichao), Series I, (Commercial Press, 1930), vol. II, pp. 135-6.
32. *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 110, from essay 'Lishishang Zhonghua guomin shiyezhi chengbai ji jinhou gejinzhi jiyun' (Successes and failings of the Chinese people in history and their chances of future advancement).
33. *Zhongguo jindaishi ziliao: Yihetuan* (Sources of Modern Chinese History: Yihetuan Boxers), (Shanghai, 1957), vol. I, p. 468, 470; vol. II, p. 8, 183.