HISTORICAL CHINDIAN PARADIGM: 
INTERCULTURAL TRANSFUSION AND 
SOLIDIFICATION

This is a part of my inquiry into the topic of “geo-civilizational paradigm” which, I 
humbly submit, is the only way to bail out the present international crises. I am not just 
referring to the financial crisis which has hit the world economy hard. I think the trouble 
we are facing is symptomatic of the malaise of the prevalent geopolitical paradigm the 
five manifestations of which are: (1) peoples are obsessed with money, materialism and 
consumerism, indulging in profit-grabbing and hedonic consumption; (2) countries are 
egocentric without genuinely noble altruistic motivations; (3) powerful countries 
monopolize the limited resources and opportunities available in the world, making it 
difficult for the weaker countries to develop, exasperating the scramble for power and 
creating endless tension and conflict; (4) development means only horizontal expansion 
of spatiality hence countries feeling threatened when new emergent powers rise, and 
international harmony a non-starter; (5) humans ruthlessly exploit Mother Earth leading 
to environmental deterioration and climate change and handing over toxic assets and 
heritage to posterity.

All this calls for a diligent search of a “geo-civilizational paradigm” to replace the 
prevalent geopolitical paradigm. In the new “geo-civilizational paradigm”, countries 
should cherish the ideal of universal harmony such as “世界大同”shijie datong (grand 
harmony in the world) aspired by Chinese civilization, and “vasudhaiva kutumbakam” 
(world be one family) aspired by Indian civilization. In such a paradigm, peoples can 
expand their spiritual spatiality which is not a horizontal development, and does not clash 
with the expansion of spiritual spatiality of other nations and countries. In such a 
paradigm, people of all countries, rich or poor, live much happier with moderate wealth 
by way of utilitarian consumption and promotion of spiritual enlightenment. In such a 
paradigm, empathy and selfless altruism prevail, totally eliminating the clash of 
civilizations (which should read: “un-civilizations”). In such a paradigm, humans love 
Mother Earth and hand down a green universe to future generations.

I am confident that such a paradigm can be established because we already have the 
example of it in the cultural interaction between Chinese and Indian civilizations in the 
past. Famous German scholar of Indian descent, Ram Adhar Mall, thinks that 
civilizational overlapping can create “metonymic thesis” that serves to strengthen the 
vitality of the civilization. This only happens during the overlapping of mutually 
respectful and friendly civilizations, not otherwise. There was no creation of “metonymic 
thesis” after the Indian civilization had fallen under British conquest. The same is true

* This is the revised text of my lecture at the India Chinese Institute (ICI) in the New School 
(University), New York on April 21, 2009
after Western civilization penetrated China through the “Gunboat Diplomacy” and Unequal Treaty System. But, when Buddhism performed the function of Mahayana, i.e. the “great carrier” (carrying quintessential Indian civilization to China), there was at once Sino-Indian interface that generated interfacial strength resulting in the “historical Chindian paradigm”.

The uniqueness of the “historical Chindian paradigm” is two-fold. First, the advent of Indian civilization in China was by invitation. The Chinese hosts accorded an exceptional hospital welcome to the visiting Indian guests --- cultural ambassadors of Indian civilization --- but also meant to do serious business. The business was an unprecedented inter-cultural joint-venture, i.e., the Sanskrit-Chinese translation enterprise. Second, the Sino-Indian cultural interaction gave a facelift to China which has uniquely survived for two millennia as the world’s sustainable civilizational state.

Chinese reception for Indian civilization

The “dream” story of the advent of Indian Buddhism in China has been taken with a pinch of salt among Western academia. Scholars argue that the “dream” episode was only recorded in the Buddhist literature (which is more legend-rich hagiography than reliable history), not in the imperial historiography. The argument overlooks the fact that both 唐太宗 Tang Emperor Taizong (reigning 626-649) and 唐武后 Tang Empress Wu (reigning 690-705) confirmed it as a part of Chinese history and their confirmation forms a part of Chinese imperial documentation. Thus, it is not out of order that we proceed with the assumption that it was a pious dream of a Chinese emperor that had wrought the epic of Sino-Indian civilizational interaction just like it was another pious dream of queen Mayadevi that had conceived Prince Siddhartha (Gautama Buddha) and created the religion of Buddhism in India.

After he dreamed of the Buddha, the Han Emperor Ming (reigning 57-75 AD) sent out emissaries to fetch Indian Buddhist masters to his court. This resulted in the arrival at 洛阳 Luoyang, the imperial capital, of two eminent Indian monks, Kasyapa Matanga (佛摩腾) and Dharmaratna/Dharmaraksa (竺法兰) in 67 AD. The Emperor ordered the construction of the Monastery of White Horses (白马寺) to accommodate the Indian guests and also ordered the court artists to copy the portrait of Buddha brought back by the search team led by the imperial officer, 蔡愔 Cai Yin.

That Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaratna/Dharmaraksa started their work in the Chinese capital, Luoyang, not only preaching but also translating the scriptures (yielding 四十二章经 Sishierzhang jing, i.e., “Forty two chapters of scriptures”) is significant. It is evident that from the very beginning China conceived a master plan of inviting the cream of ancient India’s intellectual elites to disseminate quintessential Indian civilization, and translating it and making it a permanent asset of China. This was a gigantic enterprise complicated by the civilizational asymmetry between India’s focus on
oral tradition and China’s on written tradition. Most of the Indian monks, great scholars they were, arrived in China without carrying any text, but everyone had an impeccable scholarly memory that won the Chinese trust. Hence, this translation enterprise amounted to converting the oral literature recited by eminent Indian monks into Chinese written text.

文心雕龙 Wenxin diaolong (Carving out a dragon from the heart of culture and literature), authored by 刘勰 Liu Xie (465?-520?), is a milestone in the history of Chinese literature. Liu Xie was a Buddhist monk, with an ordained name 慧地 Huidi. In his famous essay 灭惑论 Mie huo lun (On eliminating doubts), he described this translation edifice as “一音演法，殊译共解” yiyin yanfa, shuyi gongjie. It is rather difficult to translate these 8 Chinese syllables. In “一音演法” yiyin yanfa, he used the word “音” yin in the sense of sound bytes, and “演法” yanfa to connote “dissemination of Buddhadharma”. What he meant was that “一音” yiyin (one sound system) was in operation in the Buddhist propagation in China. By “殊译共解” shuyi gongjie, he meant that “a common understanding is arrived through different ways of translations”. According to Liu Xie, it was this “one sound system” --- Sanskrit (to a lesser degree, Pali), of course --- that was conducting the Indian cultural movement in China, but the Chinese comprehension was through “译” yi (translation). In modern phraseology, there was multilingual transposition in the Sino-Indian civilizational interaction. Liu Xie further added a commentary of “梵汉语隔而化通” Fan Han yu ge er huatong (though Sanskrit and Chinese languages are not communicable, they become conversant with each other through transformation and transposition).

A key figure in this translation enterprise was Kumarajiva who headed a huge organization called 译经院 Yijingyuan (scriptures-translation bureau) at the imperial capital, Chang’an, from 401 to 409 AD with the help of 800 odd Chinese and foreign monks. According to Buddhist historian, 慧皎 Huijiao (479-554), who published in 519 the authoritative 高僧传 Gaoseng zhuan (Biographies of eminent monks), the imperial authorities had asked Kumarajiva to view the existing scriptures in Chinese language. After Kumarajiva had discovered lots of mistakes, he was given the charge of producing a series of reliable sutras and sastras. This he accomplished with the production of 300 odd fascicles of scriptures. Kumarajiva observed towards the end of his life that he came to a “China without ready scriptures” (汉境经律未备) and “most of the new sutras and sastras are created by me” (新经及诸论等多是什所传出). Now, we have no evidence that all the scriptures thus created by Kumarajiva’s team were translated from available Indian texts. In the biography, there was a description of Kumarajiva holding the Sanskrit text and the Chinese ruler (i.e. 姚兴 Yao Xing, the Emperor of Latter Qin) holding the
old Chinese translation\textsuperscript{9} which should be regarded as an exceptional case. It is clear that most of the \textit{made-by-Kumarajiva} works were the Chinese rendering of the scriptures recited by Kumarajiva, the Master. Kumarajiva personified what Liu Xie’s 8 syllables have summarized.

There were, of course, efforts on the part of Chinese intellectuals to go to India to get the authentic text of the scriptures, creating the famous idiom of “西天取经” \textit{xitian qu jing} (literally, “obtaining the scriptures from the Western Heaven”). The most successful among these Chinese scriptures-seekers was 玄奘 Xuanzang (600-664) who described, in his report to Tang Emperor Taizong\textsuperscript{10}, that his India trip was in search of “贝叶灵文” \textit{beiye lingwen} (sacred literature on \textit{pattra}/leaves), and he had “emptied the storage of the dragon palace” (尽龙宫之所储)\textsuperscript{11} and carried them back to the Tang imperial palace by the “white horse”\textsuperscript{12}. After this fruitful mission, Xuanzang (helped by a large number of assistants) translated 75 books (totaling 1,335 fascicles)\textsuperscript{13} which topped the achievements of all translators. Incidentally, the translations of Kumarajiva and Xuanzang overlapped in a few cases, and the works of Kumarajiva were not inferior to those of Xuanzang. In other words, Xuanzang failed to improve upon the \textit{made-by-Kumarajiva} works.

For more than a millennium from the time of Han Emperor Ming up to the Song Dynasty (1\textsuperscript{st}-13\textsuperscript{th} century), Chinese government authorities and high-ups spent heavily on the construction of Buddhist shrines and the creation of the magnum opus of sacred Buddhist literature, i.e., the “大藏经” \textit{Dazangjing} (Chinese Tripitakas). Three important aspects of this should be noticed. First, this government-patronized scriptures-translation enterprise entailed the best part of Chinese intellectual energy for so many centuries at the expense of development of other disciplines of scholarship, e.g., Confucian teachings. Second, it was the need of the creation of this Buddhist magnum opus that stimulated the birth of printing industry and book-making industry in China.\textsuperscript{14} Third, it was the Chinese written tradition that could create the Tripitakas out of mostly recitations of Indian monks. This amounts to rescuing the jewels of ancient Indian intellectual and scholarly system from a perishable oral tradition of ancient India that did not produce paper or other means for literature preservation.

Mahayana Buddhism, as we see today, is nothing but a “Chindian paradigm”. For one thing, we don’t find any ancient Indian Mahayana literature extant. An overwhelmingly large part of the Mahayana scriptures we read today were first composed in China, viz. the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit texts, and now enshrined in many languages, Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Manchu etc. That is to say, the Mahayana scriptures are essentially “Made in China”. Moreover, some of the powerful Mahayana deities, especially, 观音 Guanyin (Avalokitesvara) and 弥勒 Mile (Maitreya) have more Chinese cultural ingredients than Indian. Guanyin/Avalokitesvara is a male bodhisattva in India transformed into the “Goddess of Mercy” in China, also East Asia. Mile/Maitreya is one of eight Indian \textit{bodhisattvas} transformed into the “future
Buddha” in China, also East Asia. Both the deities now have a hundred percent Chinese image in East Asia. While the image of Guanyin/Avalokitesvara just represents a pretty Chinese woman as the embodiment of all the best feminine virtues centering round the idealism of “慈悲” *cibeï* (*maitre-karuna*), the image of Mile/Maitreya, the big-bellied “laughing Buddha”, personifies a historical monk called “布袋和尚” *Budai Heshang* (the monk carrying a cloth bag) who lived in the 10th century in Zhejiang Province, according to popular tradition.

The preeminence of the symbolism of Guanyin/Avalokitesvara and Mile/Maitreya in Chinese folklore for the last thousand odd years epitomizes a powerful Chindian cultural tradition the significance of which cannot be over-exaggerated. First, these two deities have had the highest esteem in Chinese society and have been most popularly worshipped in China. All the Chinese cultural heroes, including Confucius and Laozi, have paled in comparison. Second, both the deities were the first Chinese choice for invocations in difficult times in life. Guanyin/Avalokitesvara and Mile/Maitreya (who was called “Cishi” i.e., “Mr. Maitre/compassion”) figured in the life story of Rev. Xuanzang’s celebrated pilgrimage to India in vivid details. The life story is enshrined in Da Cï’ensi sanzang fashi zhuan (Biography of the Tripitaka Master of the Great Ci’en Monastery) authored by Huili and Yancong, disciples of Xuanzang based on the Master’s oral account. There is a description that Xuanzang dreamed Guanyin/Avalokitesvara in the image of a tall warrior urging him to struggle forward when both the pilgrim and his steed were lying in the great desert (of Xinjiang today) completely exhausted and several days out of water. (Section 1) There is another description of Xuanzang’s invoking Cishi/Maitreya when he was about to be executed by a group of Indian pirates (worshippers of Goddess Durga) on the Ganga River. The invocation resulted in the occurrence of a violent sand storm that frightened the pirates who immediately released Xuanzang and asked for his pardon. (Section 4) Dramatized and mystified these accounts are, they were quite normal with the ancients. While no modern rationalism can dismiss such accounts off hand, they actually became classical examples for the propagation of the supernatural power of Buddhadharma in China for more than a millennium.

Third, Cishi/Mile/Maitreya --- the Future Buddha of the Chinese populace --- epitomizes the duplication and the synthesis of the Indian and Chinese civilizations. The image rose from the religious tradition of India but settled down in the secular tradition of China. Cishi/Mile/Maitreya represents the Bodhisattva spirit of pious India and the idealist optimism of earthy China. In the pantheon of the god-centered India, Maitreya is a relatively minor figure, but on the altar of the human-centered China, Mile becomes the most important and most beloved (not feared), omnipresent idol. Scholars trace the Maitreya-cult to Tantrism which, once again, is a Chindian faith. The Indian Tantric literature, especially *Rudrayamala* and *Brahmayamala*, depict that Lord Buddha chose to settle in Cinabhumi (the same China that introduced silk and sericulture to India as alluded to in Kautilya’s *Arthasastra*, “kauseyam cinapattasca cinabhумиjah”), leading a
life without abstaining from alcohol and women. This may be an indirect reference of Cishi/Mile/Maitreya’s popularity in China.

As a savior, Cishi/Mile/Maitreya doubtlessly belonged to the ruling elites of China’s socio-political establishment, yet he also belonged to the down-trodden who wanted to overthrow the established socio-political order. The earliest example of the second belonging was a man from Shaanxi named 向海明 Xiang Haiming who proclaimed himself as the incarnation of the Maitreya Buddha (弥勒佛), and gathered a mass rebellion in 613. In the same year, there was another self-proclaimed “Maitreya Buddha” on the part of a magician named 宋子贤 Song Zixian in Hebei who convened an abortive “无遮大会” (wuzhe dahui), i.e., the Indian style “pancaparisad”, the quinquennial mammoth gathering, to conspire an assault on the Emperor on tour. During the middle of the 14th century, there was a surge of Chinese uprisings against the Yuan/Mongol rulers. A man named 韩山童 Han Shantong, who was the head of “White Lotus Society” (白莲会), rose as a popular rebel leader amidst the widespread belief that “there is chaos in the universe with Maitreya Buddha reborn on earth” (天下大乱，弥勒佛下生 Tianxia daluan, Milefo xiasheng). This ignited a mass rebellion of the “Army of Red Scarf” (红巾军), also known as “Red Army” (红军), or “incense-burning army” (香军), because of its worshipping of the Buddha. Though Han Shantong was shortly captured by the Yuan government, the identity of the “Maitreya Buddha” was passed on to another man of his namesake, 韩林儿 Han Lin’er, and the armed rebellion lasted for 15 years from 1351 to 1366 in the august name of Maitreya Buddha.

When two civilizations affectionately embraced each other the atmosphere could not but become over-charged with pious sentiments. For instance, both the rulers of the Sui Dynasty, 隋文帝 Emperor Wen (reigning 581-604) and 隋炀帝 Emperor Yang (reigning 604-618) were baptized as “Disciple of Bodhisattva sila” (菩萨戒弟子). They emulated the precedents of the rulers of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, especially the 梁武帝 Liang Emperor Wu (reigning 502-549), and the baptism practice was followed up by the powerful Tang Emperor Taizong. Even more striking was the fact that several Tang rulers, starting from Tang Emperor Taizong, were officially associated with “转轮王” (zhuanlunwang), the Indian Buddhist idealism of “Universal Ruler” (cakrabarti). This Chindian identification reached the climax when the reigning Tang Empress Wu arrogated to herself the title of “慈氏越古金轮神圣皇帝” Cishi yuegu jinlun shensheng huangdi (The Maitreya and the Sacred Golden Cakrabartin Emperor who Surpassed Ancient Sage Kings). In this episode, we see a Chinese woman exceeding all limits and breaking the record by not only usurping the throne of a male-chauvinist despotism, but made the most daring claim of personifying the “Maitreya” and the
“Cakrabarti” of the Indian religious tradition. Her case is the most decorated example of the “Chindian paradigm”.

The Tang imperial rule was described as “悬法王之镜” xuan Fawangzhi jing (hanging the mirror of Dharmaraja) and “转梵帝之轮” zhuan Fandizhi lun (turning the wheel of Brahma) by 唐睿宗 Emperor Ruizong who wrote the “Foreword” for Indian monk Rev. Bodhiruci’s translation of *Maharatnakuta sutra* (大宝积经 Dabaoji jing) in the year of 713 after he had passed the throne to his son, 唐玄宗 Emperor Xuanzong I (reigning 710-756). “Dharmaraja” (法王) denotes the Buddha, and “Brahma” (梵帝) can be a figurative symbol of any powerful god. Chinese culture has an enormous mastery of transposition of substances in symbolism. This mastery of symbolism in Emperor Ruizong’s commentary also demonstrates the relative unimportance of religious purity among China’s ruling elites. It is also an indirect proof that Mahayana Buddhism was a more enthusiastic *great carrier* of the Indian civilization than an evangelical movement. The most extraordinary behavior of Buddhism in China is the fact that most of the prominent Buddhist temples in China through history bear the character “国 guo” (state) in their names which was quite often christened by Chinese emperors. The history of Chinese Buddhist institutions is distinguished by such secular and politically-oriented names like “兴国寺” Xingguosi (Temple revitalizing the state), “隆国寺” Longguosi (Temple making the state prosper), “安国寺” Anguosi (Temple pacifying the state), “清国寺” Qingguosi (Temple purifying the state), “护国寺” Huguosi (Temple protecting the state), “保国寺” Baoguosi (Temple securing the state), “宁国寺” Ningguosi (Temple making the state trouble-free) and so on and so forth. Obviously, the target “state” of these Buddhist shrines was China, not India.

**Chindian interfacial strength to renovate China**

Ji Xianlin, doyen of India studies in modern China, observed, in his book 中印文化交流史 Zhong-Yin wenhua jiaoliu shi (History of Sino-Indian cultural interaction), that the Sino-Indian neighborliness is “天造地设” tianzao dishe (created by Heaven and designed by Earth), and there have been four great cultural systems of the mankind in which both China and India figure, amounting to a Sino-Indian share of half of the human cultural treasury. He also asserted that had there not been the Sino-Indian cultural interaction the present day culture of both China and India would not have been what they are. He described the period between 265 and 907 (from the beginning of Jin Dynasty to the end of Tang Dynasty) as “鼎盛” dingsheng (climax) of Sino-Indian cultural interaction, and as a process of “改造” gaizao (transformation) and “融合” ronghe (fusion). Unfortunately, we don’t find in the book or elsewhere, Ji Xianlin’s full
elaboration of how the Chinese culture had been transformed, and how it would not have developed had there not been the Sino-Indian cultural fusion. While fully agreeing with Ji’s assertion, we have to do lots of work to make it convincing.

As a basic principle, all cultural interactions are a two-way traffic, and cultural influence mutual. In this light, my present study is rather one-sided and limited to the Indian cultural influence on China only. It is an unsatisfactory proposition, I admit, but also unavoidable due to a special situation and a specific difficulty which I (perhaps many others) have failed to overcome. The special situation is the asymmetry between the two interacting civilizations which I shall spell out in a minute. The specific difficulty lies in ancient India’s oral tradition in addition to crematory practice. I have already alluded to earlier the ancient Indian oral tradition contrasting with the ancient Chinese written tradition. The ancient Indian crematory practice contrasting with China’s elaborate burial of the dead gives a one-sided advantage to modern Chinese studies of her past as there have always been endless newer and newer archaeological discoveries to enrich scholarly information and insight about the past --- an advantage largely unavailable to the Indian academia. The latest evidence of this advantage is the discovery of the ruins of one of the sites of the legendary Ashokan Stupa near Nanjing in 2008 which provides new materials for studying the Chindian cultural fusion while no similar material has ever been yielded on Indian soil.

The asymmetry between the Chinese and Indian civilizations deserves serious academic attention. Before the British colonization, the Indian subcontinent had never been under one unified central rule. In other words, for three thousand years until the 18th century, there were several scores of independent states under the umbrella of Indian civilization. India, during that period was like the “United Nations of Indian Civilization”. Only after the founding of the Republic of India in 1950 can we call India a “state” --- not a nation-state, but the “United States of Indian Civilization”. China, on the other hand, has practically been the “United States of Chinese Civilization” from 221 BC (when Qin Shihuangdi unified China) till date. This is the fundamental asymmetry between India and China during yesteryears.

In addition to this, there has been the Indian sannyasa tradition, i.e., after peaking in life, an Indian intellectual would leave home and venture into wilderness --- never to return. The Indian term “sannyasi” connotes both a preacher and a vagabond. There has never been such a sannyasa tradition in Chinese culture. I have noticed from my paternal heritage the idiom of “白马投荒” baima tou huang (a white horse venturing into wilderness) which traces back to the great Chinese traveler, Xuanzang. Paradoxically, Xuanzang went from China to India as the legendary “white horse venturing into wilderness”, but returned from India to China as the “great swan” (a migratory bird). So was his late contemporary, 义净 Yijing who had his sojourn in India during 673-685. And the pilgrimage of these two great Chinese travelers is permanently commemorated by the two pagodas in Xi’an --- the Great Swan Pagoda (大雁塔) commemorating Xuanzang’s pilgrimage, and the Small Swan Pagoda (小雁塔) commemorating Yijing’s.
In contrast, the overwhelming majority of learned Indian *sannyasi*-Buddhist monks never returned to India once they set foot on Chinese soil. I and my co-author, Geng Yinzeng, have identified 226 such Indian *sannyasi*-Buddhist monks in contrast with only a few of Chinese pilgrims who could rival their greatness, and the duration of the total Chinese pilgrimage on Indian soil was just a fraction of their Indian counterparts’ on Chinese soil. Thus, the total picture emerging before us is a one-sided exchange with the balance heavily in favor of China. Of course, this imbalance of cultural trading-off should not shield the deficiency of my present study from criticism, and we --- all students of Sino-Indian studies --- have to make up the deficiency in our future endeavor.

Returning to my efforts to elaborate what Ji Xianlin has pointed out, Chinese material life would not have been so much enriched from the Tang Dynasty onward had there not been the Sino-Indian cultural interaction. I have spelled out this in my 2005 book *India and China: Twenty centuries of civilizational interaction and vibrations*. I particularly mentioned (in Chapter 9: “Flying Dragons and Phoenixes”) the rich information given by the Chinese pharmacopeia literature “本草纲目” *Bencao gangmu* (Compendium of Materia Medica) about the Indian plants (with their Sanskrit names) that were of enormous help to Chinese medicine and health care. I also mentioned the birth of tea industry, porcelain industry, printing and book-making industry as a result of the introduction of Indian “temple culture” to China as well as other material Indian gifts which I don’t want to repeat here.

It was Ji’s assertion that the Sino-Indian cultural fusion had transformed Chinese culture that leads us to our present discussion of “Chindian paradigm”. We can size up three ramifications of this *transformation* resultant from the Sino-Indian cultural fusion. First, there were new ideological constructions in the superstructure providing a thick cushion in protecting the Chinese socio-politico-cultural superdome from collapsing. Second, there was the injection of moral stimulus generating pacifism, optimism, dynamism, fellow-feelings, in addition to a fighting spirit against injustice. Third, there was the cultural renaissance enriching Chinese culture, education and art.

Spelling out the first ramification, we need to realize that the Chinese sociopolitical structure has been a gigantic edifice like a superdome from 221 BC (the time 秦始皇 Qinshihuang unified China) till date. For more than two millennia what went on within this superdome was an experiment of Chinese *Commonwealth* along with irrigated agriculture drawing water from two civilization-giving rivers. These are: the third largest river on earth, the Yangtze, and the sixth (or seventh) largest river on earth, the Huanghe/Yellow River, both under Chinese monopoly --- all other eight of the ten greatest rivers on earth have always been international waters. Within the Chinese superdome there was enormous social tension because of foreign invasions, power struggles, repressions and uprisings. Facing danger and crisis was a part and parcel of popular Chinese life. The popular worship enjoyed by Guanyin/Avalokitesvara and Cishi/Mile/Maitreya, as I have alluded to earlier, generated great moral strength for the Chinese in crisis-management.
Before the wide spread of Buddhism in China, ideological build-up as exemplified by the teachings of Confucius and Mencius etc. was quite inadequate in supporting the superdome-like socio-politico-cultural infrastructure from collapsing. There were shortcomings both in methodology and in content in China’s pre-Buddhist ideological indoctrination. In content, Confucian ideology was pre-unification thinking not cut out for the subsequent Qin and post-Qin universal empire which was China. In methodology, Chinese intellectual culture can best be described as “quotation culture”, i.e., repeating the sages’ random quotations generation after generation without weaving them into a strong ideological system.

This methodological problem was first pointed out by a 5th century scholar Zhu Zhaozhi who commended the Buddhist practice of “讲颂” jiansong (preaching and chanting) which, he thought, resulted in “通” tong (mastery of ideas) and “悟” wu (thorough understanding of ideas). Zhu’s commentary succinctly establishes the superiority of the Buddhist “preaching culture” over the pre-Buddhist “quotation culture” in China.

Turning to the content of ideology, the dissemination of Buddhism throughout the length and breadth of China gave a facelift to Chinese popular ideology. Three new phenomena are noticeable in this new popular ideology. The first phenomenon is the universal outlook in Chinese thinking. Renowned monk-scholar Sengyou (444-518) unprecedently argued against setting ideological boundaries between “华” Hua (China) and “夷” yi (non-China). He argued that “吴楚” wuchu (Jiangsu and Zhejiang in addition to Hunan and Hubei), originally a part of “夷” yi, having ultimately become a part of “华” Hua, and the ancient Chinese cultural heroes,舜 Shun and 禹 Yu, both hailed from “non-China” regions. This was, indeed, the profound understanding of the evolution of China which has been the merger of various ethnic and national components through three to four thousand years of history. Such a profound understanding helped some of the Tang rulers to conceive themselves as “转轮王” cakrabarti/Universal Ruler” as I have alluded to earlier.

Universalism was doubtlessly the ideological outlook of the Buddhist scholars who, during the “鼎盛/climax” period of Sino-Indian cultural interaction, were held in greater esteem in Chinese high-ups than the Confucian and Taoist scholars. Xuanzang, for instance, had great ideological influence on both the Tang Emperor Taizong and his son and successor, Tang Emperor Gaozong (reigning 649-693). I have detailed elsewhere Emperor Taizong’s describing India as “西极” xiji (literally “the world of extreme happiness in the West”) and India’s showering the Buddhadharma over China, which he called “东陲” dongchui (literally “the eastern corner”). Also, Emperor Gaozong wrote that “water of Anupadat irrigates eight rivers of China” and “Mount Gridhrakuta joins the
green peaks of Songshan and Huashan”. Here the Chinese emperor mixed legendary and real geographical symbols to propound a universal ideology, conceiving the mountains and rivers of China as the domain of a civilizational world --- indeed, the “Chindian” universe.

Universalism is best symbolized by the four syllables of “五湖四海” wuhu sihai (camaraderie among people from five lakes and four seas) in Chinese popular idiom. This phrase was the invention of 李白 Li Bai, the greatest Chinese poet of the 8th century. Li Bai himself was the descendant from a non-Chinese ancestry, and was born outside the territory of China. But he was a hundred percent Chinese, spent his life in China, and travelled extensively allover China. Universal sentiments reverberate in Li Bai’s poetry. “O, Yellow River descends from Heaven, Towards Eastern Sea it runs; Through leagues of ten thousand, All gushing into my bosom.” (黄河落天走东海，万里写入胸怀间)26 “What is the universe, Heaven and Earth? It is but one guesthouse. Millennia of mundane affair, An eternal lament we share.” (天地一逆旅，同悲万古尘)27 Throughout his writings, he was expounding the Indian proposition of “brahmatmaikyam” (unity and oneness between brahma and atma).

Li Bai’s idiom of “逆旅” nilu (guesthouse) was from Buddhist preaching. 宗炳 Zong Bing (375-443) wrote in his famous essay 明佛论 Ming fo lun (Understanding Buddhism) that “human body is the guesthouse” (身为逆旅) which is transitory, but “精神” jingshen (spiritualism) is eternal.28 孙思邈 Sun Simiao (541/581-682), the legendary centenarian Tang scholar who was a renowned physician, observed that “Human body is the cave and house of spirit” (身为神气之窟宅).29 This not only echoed the ancient Indian belief that the cave, including the heart in human body, was the home of god, but reiterated, from the perspective of a health expert, the essential component of spiritualism in human life.

All pre-Buddhist Chinese teachings paled before the profound discourse of spiritualism disseminated by Buddhism in China. In the words of Zong Bing, “the gentlemen of China have been conversant in civility but unenlightened in knowing human heart”.30 He characterized the Buddhist discourse as a “construction of feeling and enlightenment” (情识之构). In this construction, the “methodology of transformation and separation” (变易离散之法) could achieve an understanding of illusion and reality, of the “moon image in water” (水月)31 etc. He said that in human life, a desire in the heart kindled a flame, and the desire continued to develop into feeling and set up a fire. But, the process of the “construction of feeling and enlightenment” prevented the fire by extinguishing the flame, thus attaining spiritualism and enlightenment. He alluded to the disciple of Confucius, 颜回 Yan Hui, who was a virtuous man. Yet, Yan Hui could not have such a construction hence his virtue was hollow. That was why the longer was Yan...
Hui gone the further were people devious from virtuous behavior. We see, in Zong Bing’s observation, a powerful argument of superiority of Buddhist spiritualism over Confucian teaching.

We know the Song scholar, 范仲淹 Fan Zhongyan’s (989-1052) immortal sayings: “I am the first to worry the worries of the world, and the last to enjoy the enjoyment of the world.” (先天下之忧而忧，后天下之乐而乐) and “From the height of offices and establishments I worry about the people; from the remoteness of rivers and lakes I worry about the ruler.” (居庙堂之高则忧其民，处江湖之远则忧其君) These have been universally quoted as the Buddhist input into Confucian morality. The first observation is virtually the voice of a Bodhisattva who would postpone his own elevation to Buddhahood until the entire humanity is liberated from the “duhkhasagar/sea of sorrow”. The second observation is the injection of the Bodhisattva spirit into the Chinese ruler-ruled relationship. We know that many centuries before Fan Zhongyan, the renowned Tang courtier and prop of Emperor Taizong’s administration, 魏征 Wei Zheng (580-643), had already observed: “We worry what the people worry; we enjoy what the people enjoy.” (忧民所忧，乐民所乐) and “We take people’s hearts as our hearts.” (以百姓之心为心).

The maxim “satyam, shivam, sundaram” is chanted in the daily prayers of the Hindus and enshrined in the television logo of the All India Radio. It was translated into Chinese as “真善美” zhen shan mei centuries ago, and is now not only the euphoric symbol of Chinese authorities, but widely used in commercial advertisements in both China and Japan. While the Japanese know the Indian origin of these three Chinese characters, the Chinese are still puzzled, even describing it as a European import.

We see the maxim settling in Chinese scholarly minds during the climax of Sino-Indian cultural interaction. Famous Buddhist scholar, 僧肇 Sengzhao (384-414), discussed, in his signature essay 肇论 Zhao lun (Discourse of Sengzhao), the concept of “真谛” zhendi (truth) and that of “圣心” shengxin (sacred heart) which is obviously a discussion on the combination of “satya” and “shiva”. 李百药 Li Baiyao (565-648), famous courtier-scholar of Tang Emperor Taizong’s reign, used “舍俗归真” she su gui zhen (departing from convention and returning to truth) and “德润慈云” de run ciyun (virtue being moistened by the cloud of Maiterya) to describe the feeling of a Buddhist disciple which echoed 僧肇 Sengzhao’s synthesis of “真谛” zhendi (satya) and “圣心” shengxin (shiva).
The Song Buddhist monk-painter 道济禅师 Chan Master Daoji (1150-1209) is generally regarded as the personification of the “真善美/satyam, shivam, sundaram” maxim. He observed: “The person who cultivates dharma should dispense with his/her desire, tranquilize his/her heart, pacify his/her thought, rectify evil and follow goodness”. Like his predecessors, he always likened the Buddhist faith to “入真” ružhen (entry into satya), using “善”shan (goodness) to connote “shiva”. He was also a painter and left behind important theories about landscape painting, conceiving it as “the great dharma of universal transformation” (天下变通之大法) and “the quintessence of the structures of mountains and rivers” (山川形势之精英). Thus, we see the synthesis of “美”mei (sundar) in his thinking as well. By imbedding the spirit of 禅 Chan in Chinese landscape painting, Daoji made it a unique genre of Chinese art.

All told, a prevailing Chindian ideology was in place to fortify the civilizational country that was China and make it long endure no matter who ruled the country. However explosive the Chinese society might be during bad government there was no implosion to bring down the superdome political structure. The new Chindian ideology was neither Confucian, nor Buddhist, but pro-China, pro-unity, centripetal force. The term “天下” tianxia (literally, “all under Heaven”) was synonymous to China. In the best of times, people felt gratifying about “天下太平” tianxia taiping (all peaceful and happy under Heaven) while in the worst of times, umpteen hordes of rebels and militants all shouted “打天下” da tianxia (literally, “fight for the under-the-Heaven country”) meaning winning the entire country --- never satisfied with carving out an independent kingdom within China. China’s integrity was thus ensured even by default.

Coming to the second ramification, the injection of pacifism, optimism, dynamism, fellow-feelings, fighting spirit against injustice etc., I shall just highlight some aspects. The Sui Emperor Wen who was born in a Buddhist temple and brought up by a nun erected pagodas on the erstwhile battleground where he had vanquished the enemy and established the Sui Dynasty. The Tang Emperor Taizong issued two edicts: 收埋骸骨诏 Shoumai haigu zhao (Decently burying the skeletons) and 为战亡人设斋行道诏 Wei zhanwangren shezhai xingdao zhao (Performing mourning ceremonies for the war dead). These were instances inspired by King Ashoka’s exemplified pacifism. In his second edict, Emperor Taizong ordered to build separate temples and pagodas for the “义士” yishi (uprising war martyrs) and “凶徒” xiongtu (vicious fellows, i.e., soldiers of the Sui government) respectively. He hoped that “By beating the drum of dharma, hot fire will transform into blue lotus; by sounding the temple music, the sea of sorrow will transform into elixir dew”. Here, the Emperor used three Indian idioms: “青莲” qinglian (blue lotus, Chinese translation of Sanskrit nilotpala), “苦海” kuhai (the sea of sorrow, Chinese
translation of Sanskrit *dukhhasagar*), and “甘露” *ganlu* (the elixir dew, Chinese translation of Sanskrit *amrita*). All this is vivid evidence of the benign effect of Indian civilization, implanting pacifism onto powerful Chinese warrior rulers.

More can be cited to illustrate China’s new-found pacifism. Scholar-courtier 李君球 Li Junqiu (who lived in early 7th century) prevented an impending expedition against Korea by Tang Emperor Gaozong. He argued that the common people would become restless, if they grew “war fatigue” (疲于转戍) and were unable to have safe and stable living. That would result in the “failure of the [Chinese] universe” (天下败), and the Emperor would not have “self peace” (自安).

Scholar-courtier 韦凑 Wei Cou (658-722) did the same against Tang Emperor Xuanzong I’s intended war against 安息 Anxi (Bokhara). In his petition, he observed that 汉武帝 Han Emperor Wu (reigning 157-87 BC), the renowned ruler who had made Confucianism a state ideology, was not a hero in Chinese history because of his waging endless wars and conquests, exhausting the vitality of the country.

We also see great Tang poets such as Li Bai and 杜甫 Du Fu (712-770) being powerful anti-war spokesmen. Li Bai’s *Zhan chengnan* (Fighting South of City) poem and Du Fu’s masterpieces like *Bingche xing* (Troops Marching), *Chun wang* (Spring aspiration), *Shihao li* (Official of Shihao) etc. have exposed the horror and suffering of warfare. 毛文锡 Mao Wenxi’s (who lived in the 10th century) *Zui huajian* (Drunk among flowers) poem seems to echo 陈陶 Chen Tao’s (812?-885?) *Longxi xing* (Expedition to the west of Shaanxi) poem. In the latter, Chen Tao depicts the sad scene of “skeletons on the beach of the nameless river” (无定河边骨 wudinghebian gu) being the men in their wife’s “sweet spring dreams” (春闺梦里人 chungui mengliren). In the former, Mao Wenxi speaks out the fret of a wife who has missed the tidings of her husband who was in the army on the border (偏忆戍楼人，久绝边庭信 pianyi xulouren, jiujue bianting xin). The two scenarios together weave a complete picture of the misery of war from the angle of the warriors and their families.

Coming in the wake of the climax of Sino-Indian cultural interaction, the 宋朝 Song Dynasty government pursued a pacific policy of strengthening the central authority by weakening the military power of the governors who were stationed along the borders. The army of the country was brought under the control of the civilians. The two brother-rulers and co-founders of the Song Dynasty, 宋太祖 Emperor Taizu (reigning 959-976)
and 宋太宗 Emperor Taizong (reigning 976-997) who were devout Buddhists, initiated this pacific tradition known as “重文轻武” zhongwen qingwu (civilian rule over the military). “A high quality man does not become a soldier just like a piece of high quality steel is not turned into nails.” (好铁不打钉，好男不当兵) The genesis of this popular Chinese saying is traced back to the Song Dynasty. All this helped create a pacific tradition in Chinese history that China has always been more aggressed upon than aggressing.

The new Chindian mood made Chinese people spiritually balanced. I shall give three very famous and popular Chinese poems as examples. The first poem (probably the most internationally known piece of Chinese poetry) is “静夜思” Jing ye si (Thinking on a tranquil night) written by Li Bai whose universal sentiments I have already alluded to:

“床前明月光，疑是地上霜；
举头望明月，低头思故乡。”

Chuangqian mingyueguang, yi shi dishang shuang;
Jutou wang mingyue, ditou si guxiang.
The moon shines bright
Upon the bedside,
Frost on the floor?
I am not sure.
I see the bright moon
When I raise my head,
My head drops down and
I miss my homeland.

All literary master pieces wear a simple and innocent outlook with conceptual power lying deep, requiring in-depth musing and chewing over and over. 鲁迅 Lu Xun’s 阿 Q 正传 Ah Q zhengzhuan (True story of Ah Q) has an international impact changing the feedback from initial laughing into deep sorrow after musing, realizing that the satiric essence of “Ah Q” is easily transposed from the story onto the readers’ souls. Similarly, the more we read this apparently simple poem of Li Bai the greater shall we intoxicate in the poetic ambience so masterly created by employing only twenty sound bytes by the great master. Pondering over the seen symbols can lead us to the unseen. The “bed” unveils Li Bai’s conviction that the world is the “guesthouse” for the humans (which I have alluded to earlier), while the “bright moon” --- the central theme --- is clearly the favorite symbol of the Tang intellectuals for “Buddhadharma”⁴⁴. There is the symbol “doubt” (疑) depicting the many a confused soul --- confused about the Buddhist teachings. The second part of the poem uses the movement of head to construct a universal perspective, seeing an overview of the universe with the endeared “homeland” always under the moonshine wherever the traveler may be.
The second poem is 罗隐 Luo Yin’s (833-909) equally great and immortal piece “自遣” Ziqian (Self Amusement) which reads:

“得即高歌失亦休，多愁多恨亦悠悠；
今朝有酒今朝醉，明日愁来明日愁。”

De ji gaoge shi yi xiu, duochou duohen yi youyou;
Jinzhao you jiu jizhao zui, mingri chou lai mingri chou.

In success I sing my song,
At failure life goes on.
With worry and sorrow
I remain a jolly fellow.
When there’s wine today
I enjoy it pretty thorough,
Come tomorrow trouble may
Let me worry tomorrow.

First of all, the poem seems echoing what the Hindu holy book Bhagvadgita (14) is reiterating: “Work do not stain me; nor in me is there a longing for fruits of work”.43 Second, these 28 magical visual symbols have constructed the ideal living philosophy and worldview for China, and have created a permanent Chinese life style. The life style is: work to one’s maximum ability through thick and thin; rejoice at success but no frustration after failure; maintain happy mood and go for merry-making; minimize anxiety and anguish while seriously facing challenges only when they come. Chinese with such a living philosophy have been called “乐天派” (letianpai), i.e. the “devananda school” which is, once again, a vivid manifestation of the “Chindian paradigm”.

The third poem is “题都城南庄” Ti ducheng nanzhuang (Scribbling on the gate of a southern house in capital Chang’an) by 崔护 Cui hu (8th-9th centuries):

“去年今日此门中，人面桃花相映红；
人面不知何处去，桃花依旧笑春风。”

Qu’nian jinri cimenzhong, renmian taohua xiangyinghong;
Renmian buzhi hechuqu, taohua yijiu xiao chunfeng.

Last year the same day
I was at this gate,
Greeted here by a pretty face,
Peach flowers allover the place.
Away, today, is the pretty face,
Where has she gone I can’t trace.
Peach flowers allover the place
Smiling at me in spring breeze.
The poem is a part of a famous story in which the young scholar, Cui Hu, missed the pretty woman who had greeted him a year ago from the house he passed by, and the scholar scribbled the poem on the gate to express regret in a cheerful, romantic scenery. The poem has left behind the immortal expressions of “人面桃花” (renmian taohua), i.e., “pretty face and peach flowers”, and “桃花依旧笑春风” (taohua yijiu xiao chunfeng), i.e., “peach flowers always greet people with spring breeze”. Viewing with a Chan prism, one can regard this masterpiece a vivid summary of the social environment people have been living with. In life, a person always has his moments of exhilaration and disappointment. However, ours is a beautiful world full of warmth (symbolized by spring breeze) and pretty nature (symbolized by peach flowers). Cui Hu’s masterpiece enhances the Chinese appreciation for zhen shan mei (satyam, shivam, sundaram) which I have discussed earlier.

All this reminds me what Rabindranath Tagore has said repeatedly during his talks in China in 1924 and in his inaugural address of Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana in 1937 that the Chinese “people love material things without the strain of greed”, that they “love the things of this earth, clothe them with tender grace without turning them materialistic”. He poetically complimented the Chinese for having “instinctively grasped the secret of the rhythm of things, --- not the secret of power that is in science, but the secret of expression” --- “a great gift” only known to “God alone”. 46 Tagore was actually suggesting that while the Western materialistic culture was predicated on avarice and exploitation, the Indians were too obsessed with spiritual values to appreciate the good things of life. The Chinese culture had the merits of both. Perhaps, Gurudeva Tagore would be happy to know from our findings that it was the Chindian paradigm that has wrought such a “Rich living and high thinking” Chinese way of life.

Apart from singing hymns of humanity and life, the masterpieces of Tang and Song also expose the dark side of the country. There are the immortal lines of 杜甫 Du Fu:

“朱门酒肉臭，路有冻死骨”
Zhumen jiurou chou, lu you dongsigu
Meat and wine stink
Inside the posh houses,
Skeletons on roadside
Those died of frostbite.

There is 杜荀鹤 Du Xunhe’s (846-904) piece titled “再经胡城县” Zaijing Huxiancheng (Revisit the Hu County town):

“去岁曾经此县城，县民无口不冤声；
今来县宰加朱绂，便是生灵血染成。”
Qusui cengjing cixiancheng, xianmin wu kou bu yuansheng;
I wonder whether there is any such revolutionary poem in any other language during the 9th-10th centuries. Even today, it should appeal to radical ears. This golden treasury of the Tang and Song poetry speaks volumes of the Chindian “interfacial strength”.

Let me now dwell on the third ramification of the Chindian civilizational interface and its “interfacial strength”, i.e., the cultural renaissance blossoming during the Tang and Song dynasties. The Tang Dynasty is the most brilliant era of Chinese history. The Tang Empire was a superpower internationally. Tang Emperor Taizong, the Chinese cakrabartin ruler, is regarded as the greatest among all Chinese emperors. There is a description of “盛唐” (most prosperous Tang) in Chinese historiography which was wrought by the reigning of two monarchs --- the reigning Empress Wu and Emperor Xuanzong I. This was also the period when Buddhism was most prosperous in China. Not only during the “most prosperous Tang” period, but during the entire Tang Dynasty, major cultural events were mostly activities related to Buddhism, not Confucianism. Also, the most influential scholars were Buddhist monks, not Confucian. The surge of great painters during Tang Dynasty was a direct impact of the boom of temple culture, and the Indian three-dimensional method was introduced to China creating a sensation among Chinese art lovers. There is close commonality between 谢赫 Xie He’s (479-502) “六法” liufa (six laws) and Yashodhara’s commentary in Kamasutra on painting theory which make us all the more convinced about the beneficial Chindian “interfacial strength” in the development of Chinese painting.

The Tang golden culture thrived round two settings: (a) the temple culture and (b) the urban life. The 大雁塔 Dayanta (Great swan pagoda) in Chang’an (present Xi’an) to celebrate the triumphant return of pilgrim Xuanzang from India became a rendezvous for poets --- candidates who went to the imperial capital to appear in the Imperial Examination made it a point to pay homage, compose a poem and scrabble it on the walls. The Tang poems are replete with the serene ambient of temples and pagodas. Buddhist preaching in monasteries, especially in capital Chang’an, combined rhythmical chanting and story-telling performances called “俗唱” suchang (literally, “vulgar singing”) drawing huge crowds that spilled into the streets and causing traffic jams. The text of this “俗唱” suchang became a new genre of literature called “变文” bianwen (literally, “transformed literature”). Night life emerged in big cities from 8-9th centuries onwards (when Europe slumbered in the Dark Age), and dancing, story-telling performances drew
the attention of the revelers. The Tang Dynasty was the incubator of drama and fiction which were born later by adapting the literary stuff and style of ancient India.

Chinese culture has had three thousand years of powerful poetic tradition, and poetry speaks out people’s aspirations as defined by the Confucian adage “诗以言志” shì yì yánzhì (poetry voices aspiration). The brightest jewel of Chinese literature is “唐诗宋词” Tangshi Songci (the shì genre of Tang and the ci genre of Song) with their uniqueness. More specifically, “the shì genre of Tang” (唐诗) specializes in poems of lines of uniform length, either with 5 characters, or with 7 characters, and “the ci genre of Song” (宋词) specializes in un-uniform lines. Both specialties have rigid schemes of total number of characters, rhyming schemes, and rhythmic rules. This flowering of Chinese poetry coupled with rules and regulations somewhat reflected the style of dissemination of Buddhism --- a sign of Chindian “interfacial strength”. As the poetry of Tang and Song set the tone, all those who have been composing Chinese classical poems have to conform to the rules laid by the Tang and Song poets whose works of art have crowned the Chinese literary achievements permanently. It was not just for technical reasons, but for its golden treasury of spiritual quality. The reason for this is the Sino-Indian cultural fusion. When the Tang and Song poets were rhyming, they called it “参禅” canchan (participating in Chan), viz. the poet has to first cultivate a Chan ambience in the mind and, then, create the Chan ambience in the poem. We know that Chinese Chan masters, from Tang and Song periods onwards, have preached Buddhism in the most liberal manners, using imagination and transposition in the most liberal and unorthodox manners. Often, such preaching appears too down-to-earth to be pious, yet it does enhance the grasp of Buddha’s broad messages. Judging from such a perspective, the Tang and Song poetry is the rhetoric version of such Chan liberal indulgence of interpretation of Buddhadharma with strong secular flavor yet high thinking inspiration.

China’s Brave New World

According to Ji Xianlin, Sino-Indian cultural interaction declined after the Tang Dynasty which coincided with the expansion of Islam into the Indian sub-continent. Nevertheless, we see the beginning of a gradual restoration of native Chinese spiritual authority which had long been eclipsed by the prevalence of Buddhist ideology. The trend of dedicating most of China’s intellectual energy to the dissemination of Buddhism, especially scriptures-translation began to diminish during the Song Dynasty when Chinese intellectuals began to revive Confucian scholarship by infusing new Buddhist ideas into it. There was the new ideological discourse of the Song and Ming dynasties, generally branded as “Neo-Confucianism”. A Sino-Indian civilizational transfusion ensued. The key role played in this transfusion was 张载 Zhang Zai (1020-1077) who began with his career as a military strategist, but shifted his interest to the study of all philosophical systems. He made two sets of outstanding observations. The first set is:
“乾称父，坤称母。…天地之塞，吾其体。
天地之帅，吾其性。民吾同胞，物吾与也”

Qian cheng fu, kun cheng mu...tiandizhi se, wu qiti. Tiandizhi shuai, wu qixing. Min wu tongbao, wu wu yu ye.

Qian is called father, kun is called mother…. The prevalence of the universe creates my body. The commander of the universe forms my nature. All human beings are my brothers. All things of the universe are my species.

Here, 乾“qian” and 坤“kun” are symbols taken from 周易 Zhouyi (Book of Change) with the former representing “Heaven”, and the latter, “Earth”. Heaven being likened to “father” and Earth to mother was a very ancient Chinese idea. The exceptional word in this observation is “吾” (wu), denoting “I” or “me”, which was not emphasized in ancient Confucian literature. Ji Xianlin has very liberally translated the last eight visuals “民吾同胞，物吾与也” (min wu tongbao, wu wu yuye) of this observation thus: “People of all nations are born of the same parents, and the faunae and florae are our fellow creatures”, and treated it as the Chinese echo of the Indian adage of “Brahmatmaikya” (unity of Brahma and Atma). Applying Ji’s logic, we see Zhang Zai using the Indian symbol of “atma” to establish “吾” (wu), and using “Brahma” to equate “天地” (tiandi). Thus, Zhang Zai’s observation has injected the Indian philosophy into an ancient Chinese proposition.

The second set of Zhang Zai’s outstanding observation is:

“为天地立心，为生民立命，为往圣继绝学，为万世开太平”

Wei tiandi lixin,wei shengmin liming, wei wangsheng ji juexue, wei wanshi kai taiping.

Foster the heart for the universe, foster the life for human beings, continue the forsaken learning of past sages, create the era of taiping for posterity.

I leave “太平” (taiping) un-translated because of its duel semantic contents today. According to ancient Chinese interpretation, “taiping” connotes “grand peace”, but Buddhism seems to have injected the Indian value of “mahasamata” (grand equality) into it. Buddha is nicknamed “平等王” (pingdengwang), i.e., Upeksaraja, the champion of equality. It is the Buddhist belief that all humans are destined to another life according to the principle of equal justice --- hence the need of the “Upeksaraja” to preside over transmigration. An additional proof of “太平” (taiping) having acquired the Buddhist “Upeksa/mahasamata” value is the fact that the famous Taiping Rebellion that wrecked
the Manchu Empire in mid-nineteenth century designated its millenarianism as “太平天国” (taipingtianguo), the “Celestial Kingdom of Taiping/Mahasamata”.

The key word in the second Zhang Zai observation is “心” (xin) which had hardly been discussed as a concept in ancient Chinese philosophy, but figures prominently in Chinese Buddhist literature, being the Chinese translation of two Sanskrit words: “citta” and “hrdaya”. There is the popular Buddhist concept of “八识心王” (bashi xinwang), depicting the existence of the “心王” (xinwang), i.e., “心” (xin) as the controller of eight senses within a human. Among Buddha’s many Chinese nicknames there are “心王如来” (xinwang rulai), i.e., the Citta/Hrdaya-raja-Tathagata, and “心王大日” (xinwang dari), i.e., the Citta/Hrdaya-raja-Vairocana. Mahayana Buddhism focuses on “慈悲心” (cibeixin), the Chinese translation of “bodhicitta” (enlightened virtue). The first part of this observation, “为天地立心” (wei tiandi lixin), can make sense only when this “心” (xin) connotes “bodhicitta” (enlightened virtue). Furthermore, in Liu Xie’s “文心雕龙” (Wenxin diao long), there had already been the reference of 乾“qian” and 坤“kun”, and the description of Chinese culture/literature as “天地之心” (tiandizhi xin), i.e., “the heart for the universe”. Here we see Zhang Zai lifting Liu Xie’s words to formulate his immortal observation.

All this enables me to consider these two sets of Zhang Zai’s observations as another fine example of the Chindian paradigm. We know that Zhang Zai had greatly influenced the thinking of his late contemporary, 朱熹 Zhu Xi (1130-1200), one of the greatest exponents of the so-called “Neo-Confucianism”. Zhu Xi was the scholar who went to the imperial capital to appear in the Imperial Exams with the quotations of a famous Chan master, 大慧 Dahui, in his haversack. He was also one of the first Chinese scholars to build a 精舍 (jingshe), i.e., vihara, which he used as his school premise --- a sort of Confucian school with an Indian flavor. One of Zhu Xi’s pet theories is on “太极” (taiji), i.e., the well-known “T’ai-chi”, which was an adaptation of the Buddhist “Anuttara-samyaksa-sambodhi” --- the ultimate truth. Zhu Xi observed that this T’ai-chi existed within every human-being, even every being, which is a popular Indian holistic perspective.

The renaissance discourse of the Song scholars led by Zhang Zai, Zhu Xi, and others are now called “理学” (lixue). It developed further into “心学” (xinxue) propounded by a Ming scholar, 王守仁 Wang Shouren, better known as 王阳明 Wang Yangming (1472-1529). To call this “心学” (xinxue) “Neo-Confucianism” is misleading. Aside from what I have alluded to earlier, Wang’s discourse is to use the Buddhist prism
to enlarge two quotations of Mencius. The first quotation is Mencius’ “仁、义、礼、智，根于心” ren, yi, li, zhi, genyu xin (Section on 告子), designating “心” (xin) as the “root” of the virtues of “仁 ren” (humanliness), “义 yi” (righteousness) “礼 li” (propriety) “智 zhi” (sagacity). The second quotation is Mencius’ “良知” liangzhi (Section on 尽心) which is the key word in Wang’s discourse. This “良知” (liangzhi), or now popularly called “良心” (liangxin), connoting “benign consciousness”, is, indeed, the Chinese version of “bodhicitta”. In the last days of his life, Wang Yangming summarized his discourse in four sentences, known as “四句教” (sijujiao), i.e., the “teaching of four sentences”:

“无善无恶心之体。有善有恶意之动。
知善知恶为良知。为善去恶是格物。”

Wushan wu’e xinzhiti, youshan you’e yizhidong,
Zhishan zhi’e wei liangzhi, weishan qu’e shi gewu.
The entity of xin/citta is aloof from good and evil.
The dynamics of feeling creates good and evil.
Knowing good and evil is benign consciousness.
Doing good and discarding evil is human conduct.

Wang Yangming’s discourse which has become the most popular “Confucian” teaching in China in the last five centuries, marks the convergence of Chinese/Confucian and Indian/Buddhist ethics. We notice that the Chinese Chan Buddhist teachings during this period have diligently reiterated the importance of “心” (xin), making “bodhicitta” doubly invigorated in China. This is, once again a fine example of the Chindian paradigm.

All told, we can size up three ramifications of the face-lifting impact of this Chindian paradigm on Chinese culture. First, there was a refreshing Chinese ruling ideology, call it “Neo-Confucianism” or not, which befitted the superdome political structure of China. Second, there was universal awakening of the down-trodden masses of China highlighted by the most outstanding and outlandish hero of Chinese history, 朱元璋 Zhu Yuanzhang, the beggar-boy-turned-Buddhist-monk, who led the peasant rebellion to overthrow the Yuan/Mongol Dynasty and establish the Ming Dynasty (reigning 1368-1398). The scenario of China as a “普罗大国” puluo daguo (great proletarian state)⁵⁰, an apt description of the People’s Republic of China, has emerged a millennium ago. Third, there has emerged a Chinese way of life combining the merits of spiritualism and materialism as has so succinctly summarized by Tagore. It was the Chindian geo-civilizational paradigm that has wrought the Brave New World of Chinese civilization.
Conclusion

A study of broad historical sweep like this can only grasp the essentials by dispensing with the details that don’t fit well with my focus. However, this does not purport to be projecting a rosy picture, covering up the dark shadows. An early critic of this study has pointed out that 唐武宗 Emperor Wuzong of Tang (reigning 840-846) had persecuted Buddhist activities during the last three years of his reign, i.e., 844-846. My reply to this is that such an anti-Buddhist aberration was quickly corrected by Emperor Wuzong’s uncle and successor, 唐宣宗 Emperor Xuanzong II (reigning 846-859). We must not miss the wood for the trees as there were 10-1 pro-Buddhist Tang emperors reigning 300 odd years (minus Emperor Wuzong’s 3-year anti-Buddhist reign). Quantitatively, the total input and result of the Tang Dynasty’s proactive pro-Buddhist activities have no peer in human history.

Another contentious point during the discussion is how to explain the phenomenon of decline of Buddhism in India if it had worked wonders in China. My initial reply to this is to separate monastic Buddhism from spiritual Buddhism. True that monastic Buddhism has shown an obvious decline in India --- the motherland of the Buddhist movement ---, yet spiritual Buddhism still thrives as witnessed by Mahatma Gandhi’s “non-violence” and Jawaharlal Nehru’s “non-alignment” and, especially, by the symbol of dharmacakra on India’s National Flag and the logo of the lion-head of the Ashokan pillar as the Government of India’s emblem.

Today, it is interesting to find a revivalist discourse among the experts of “中国学” Zhongguoxue (Chinese studies) who mostly quote Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming and writings of their contemporaries as genuine Confucian philosophy with virtually little or no cognizance of their Chindian characteristics. Whereas we have to dig much deeper to unearth the boundless wisdom and fluorescence of Chindian cultural fusion hidden within the vast Chinese literature for one and half millennia, we also have to correct the perverse view of the history of Sino-Indian cultural interaction in some modern minds. We are not the proverbial blind men sizing up the elephant. We have good vision and the elephant of “historical Chindian paradigm” stands tall and prominent for us to see and measure.

It is truly remarkable that there have been these two great civilizations --- China and India. More remarkable is the fact that the two civilizations have had such mutually beneficial interaction and vibrations which made Ji Xianlin to describe Sino-Indian neighborhood as “created by Heaven and designed by Earth”. Unlike the ancient civilizations in close proximity in the Western Hemisphere (like Egypt, Babylon, Greece etc.) which were bent on destroying each other, there had never been any geopolitical paradigm in Sino-Indian relations for more than twenty centuries until the present Cold War period. It was during the Cold War that the two new republics were born and have paid heavy tuition fees to learn international politics. Now is the time that the two
countries detach themselves from the Western civilizational quest for great power status, and seek solutions of their problems under the guidance of Eastern traditional wisdom. As in the past, China and India can mutually benefit from another round of cultural interaction and vibrations. In that way, the “historical Chindian paradigm” can be transplanted to our present times, and a new world order established in the “geo-civilizational paradigm”.

“We must learn to defend our humanity against the insolence of the strong, only taking care that we do not imitate their ways and, by turning ourselves brutal, destroy those very values which alone make our humanity worth defending.”

These words from Rabindranath Tagore urge us to reject the geopolitical paradigm. Again, he has encouraged us to some new path that honors the name of “civilization” and the memories of Sino-Indian historical fraternity as he says: “Progress which is not related to an inner ideal, but to an attraction which is external, seeks to satisfy endless claims. But civilization, which is an ideal, gives us power and joy to fulfil our obligations.”

“It is co-operation and love, mutual trust and mutual aid which make for strength and real merit of civilization.” With such a note, I am confident that “geo-civilizational paradigm” can work and work wonders in our world.

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3 Han Emperor Ming (reigning 58-75 AD) dreamed the golden Buddha flying over his palace in the year of 64 AD which led to his sending out a mission to India to invite Buddhist monks to China.
4 Tang Emperor Taizong alluded to Buddha’s “腾汉廷而皎梦” (flying over the Han palace and seen in the [emperor’s] dream) in his 大唐三藏圣教序 Da-Tang sanzang shengjiao xu, the “Foreword” to Xuanzang’s translations of Buddhist scriptures. Tang Empress Wu alluded to Buddha’s “宵通汉梦” (communicating in the Han [emperor’s] dream at night) in her essay of the same title. She also alluded to 摩腾 moteng (Kasyapa Matanga) and 白马东来 baima donglai (the white horse arriving from the west) which was a part of the “dream” story in another of her essay 方广大庄严经 序 Fangguang dazhuangyanjing xu (Foreword to the translation of Mahayana-sutra-lankaratika). All this belongs to the Chinese imperial historiography. Cf. 全唐文 Quan Tang wen (Collected essays of the Tang Dynasty), reprint, 1982. Beijing: Zhonghua Bookshop publication, vol. I, p. 119, 1001, 1003.
5 There was the story of Buddhayasas, guru of the celebrated Kumarajiva, passing a memory test given by his Chinese imperial host. Cf. Tan Chung & Geng Yinzeng, India and China: Twenty Centuries of Civilizational Interaction and Vibrations, 2005, New Delhi: PHISPC/Centre for Studies in Civilizations, p. 399.

7 Ibid.


9 Ibid, p. 56.

10 Huili & Yancong, Da cien zi sanzang fa shi zhuan (Biography of the Tripitaka Master of the Great Ci’en Monastery), reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua Bookshop publication, p. 144.

11 According to Buddhist legend, the dragon palace is the greatest repository of treasures, including Buddhist scriptures.

12 The “white horse” is just a symbol for pilgrimage.

13 Tan Chung & Geng Yin Zeng, India and China, p. 458.

14 That the first printed book of the world extant is a Chinese Buddhist scripture has been universally acknowledged. The conventional theory identifies the book 金刚经 Jin’gangjing, the “Diamond Sutra” (Chinese translation of Vajracchedika-prajnaparamita Sutra) printed in 868 and now in the custody of the British Museum, London, as the first book produced in the world. This theory is outdated by the discovery of 无垢金光大陀罗尼经 Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing (Chinese translation of Vimala-prabha mahadharani) in South Korea which was obviously an even older printed Chinese book. I owe this information from Luo Shubao et al (eds), Yinshuzhi guang: Guangming laizi dongfang (The brilliance of printing: Brilliance originated in the East), 2000, Hangzhou: Zhejiang People’s Art Press, p. 30.


16 Ibid, p. 37.

17 According to ancient Buddhist legend, the Great Ashoka built 84,000 reliquary stupas with the help of supernatural power, 19 of which were within Chinese territory.


19 My father, Tan Yun-shan, had likened his life-long sojourn in India (from 1928 to 1983 when he breathed the last in a Buddhist temple at Bodhgaya) to “a white horse venturing into wilderness” (白马投荒) with reference to Su Manshu’s short pilgrimage to India which was described by his friend as “the second white horse venturing into wilderness” (白马投荒第二人). This reference would have designated Tan Yun-shan’s sojourn to India as “the third white horse venturing into wilderness” (白马投荒第三人) albeit he never made such a claim. Who, then, was “the first white horse venturing into wilderness” (白马投荒第一人)? Obviously, he was Xuanzang who had his pilgrimage in India during 628-642.

20 Tan Chung & Geng Yin Zeng, India and China, Chapter 12.


23 This is diametrically opposed to the erroneous theory that China grew from a central base expanding its spatiality at the expense of that of the “barbarians” which is still prevalent today in modern China.

24 Tan Chung & Geng Yin Zeng, India and China, p. 92.

25 Ibid.

26 Li Bai, Zeng Pei shi (poem for Mr. Pei, the 14th among his brothers).
26

27 李白 Li Bai, 拟古 Ni gu (poem imitating old style).


30 石峻 Shi Jun et al, op cit, p. 228.

31 This “水月” (image-of-moon-in-water) Chinese Buddhist idiom becomes a form of reincarnation of 观音 Guanyin/Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. As 慧思 Huisi (515-577) explained, Buddha-dharma, like the moon, had only one image hanging in the sky, but millions of images in every river, pond, even basin.


33 范仲淹 Fan Zhongyan, 岳阳楼记 Yueyanglou ji (An account on the Yueyang Pavilion).

34 全唐文 Quan Tang wen, vol. II, p. 1418.

35 Chairman Mao Zedong mentioned “真善美 zhen, shan, mei” in a speech on March 12, 1957. The Communist Party of China resolution on “Morality Construction” (October 1996) and the Chinese Government’s order on the “Implementation of Moral Construction” (October 2001) also reiterated these virtues. See Tan Chung & Geng Yinzeng, India and China, p. 89.


38 Quoting from 钱塘湖隐济颠禅师语录 Qiantanghu yin Jidian chanshi yulu (Quotations from Chan Master Daoji/Jidian who was a recluse of the Qiantang Lake).


41 Ibid, p. 60.


44 Xuanzang likened the world scene to 朗月之明 langyuezhi ming (the brightness of the brilliant moon) shining upon the paths of travelers in dark night and used the Indian word “indu” as the correct name of India, hence the Chinese phrase “印度 Yindu” --- the Chinese name for India from Xuanzang’s time to date.

Cf. 辩机 Bianji’s 大唐西域记 DaTang xiyuji (Accounts on Western Regions compiled during the Great Tang Dynasty), fascicle 2, 印度总述 Yindu zongshu (General introduction of India).


47 朱绂 zhufu, a red button for the hat, was a decoration for meritorious service on the part of Chinese imperial officers.

48 Tan Chung & Geng Yinzeng, India and China, p. 235-6.


50 I am indebted to Ms. 查建英 Zha Jianying, Director of China Initiative of the India China Institute of the New School (University), New York, for this concept of “great proletarian state” (普罗大国), cf. 查建英 Zha Jianying, 八十年代访谈录 Bashiniandai fangtan lu (A collection of interviews focusing on the 1980s), 2006, Beijing: 三联书店 Sanlian Bookshop publication, p. 29.
51 Tan Chung, *In the Footsteps of Xuanzang*, p. 179.
52 Ibid.