

INDIA AND CHINA

A THOUSAND YEARS OF CULTURAL RELATIONS

by

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INDIA AND CHINA

To
FRIENDS IN CHINA

“To show that we are not forgetful.
The road is long, so do not mind the smallness
of the present.
We wish you may accept it.”

INTRODUCTION

India and China by the late Dr. Prabodh Chandra Bagchi is a brief survey of more than one thousand years of Sino-Indian cultural contacts and is indeed one of the most important works in this particular field of study. Within a small compass this book covers all aspects of cultural exchanges between the two countries. It is true that we have now more information about and a better understanding of certain aspects of cultural problems discussed by Dr. Bagchi, but still the value and importance of this comprehensive study can not be denied. It has been a pioneering work that for the first time presented before the English-knowing scholars a plethora of important materials culled from original Chinese sources and also from the writings of French and German experts in the subject.

In the *First Chapter* has been discussed the routes of communication between India and China which should lead to further researches in the subject. Dr. Bagchi has traced the early trade and cultural contacts between the two countries and his study shows that the routes of communication 'although essentially trade routes' were practically 'Buddhist routes through which culture in all its aspects flowed from one country into the other'. The Maurya Emperor Aśoka was the first Indian 'to look across the frontiers' and it was

Buddhism which brought the two countries closer culturally. There are references to India's trade with China from very early times, as early as the 2nd. Century B. C., but the history of this trade relation is still shrouded in darkness. A clue may well be taken by scholars from the treatment of the subject by Dr. Bagchi for further investigation into the problem.

The activities of the Buddhist Missionaries of India to China have been discussed in the *Second Chapter*, covering a long period of one thousand years. In short but revealing accounts the activities of celebrities like Dharmakṣa, Kumārajīva, Saṅghabhūti, Saṅghadeva, Buddhayaśas, Bodhiruci, etc. have been referred to. Dr. Bagchi has given only short sketches about these masters,—perhaps he could not go for a detailed treatment of the topic owing to the nature and scope of the book,—and we are lamentably ignorant of a true and detailed account of contributions made by these great personalities in enriching Buddhism and propagating the religion in China. Very interesting and fruitful researches can be carried on by scholars along the line worked out by Dr. Bagchi.

Accounts of the pilgrimage of Chinese monks to India form the subject matter of the *Third Chapter*. It informs us of the lives and activities of such stalwarts as Tao-ngan, Fa-hien, Hiuan-tsang, Wang Hiuan-ts'ö, Yi-tsing, etc. It is true that the memoirs and travel accounts of some of these pilgrims are available to us but greater part of this highly inter-

esting subject is still beyond our reach. Attempts should be made to dig out the materials from Chinese documents and it is sure to provide us with absorbing and fascinating details.

A short history of Buddhism in China forms the topic of discussion under the *Fourth Chapter*. Having based his treatment of the subject mainly on Chinese sources Dr. Bagchi enlightens us on the activities for and services to Buddhism by Chinese Emperors, dynasties and schools like Lu-Shan, T'ien-tai, etc. The services of Bodhidharma have also been referred to but we wish we could have greater details about his teachings and activities. With a very interesting analysis Dr. Bagchi has brought it to our knowledge that though at the outset Buddhism did not get a warm reception in China, 'from the fifth century onwards Buddhism was no longer considered in China as a foreign religion' and 'was a living force in the life of the Chinese people exercising a deep influence on the Chinese culture which manifested more in the field of art and literature'. The *Fifth Chapter* deals with the vast Buddhist literature in China. These texts were translated from Indian originals by devoted Buddhist monks of India and China. A large number of these Indian originals are now lost and available only in these Chinese translations. These translations of Indian texts were catalogued from time to time and we hear about 46 such catalogues of Chinese translations. The survey of Dr. Bagchi in this chapter, however brief, brings out clearly

that the history of Buddhism and 'of Indian civilization in its various aspects can not be properly studied without the help of this literature which China has so zealously preserved for posterity'.

In the *Sixth Chapter* Dr. Bagchi has discussed the migration of Indian art and sciences to China. A very interesting study can be formulated on this basis to enquire into the problem as to in what way the Buddhist art grafted itself 'to give birth to a new art in China which may be styled Sino-Indian'. The influences of Indian Music, Medicine, Astronomy and Mathematics are discussed in their true perspectives which may also inspire interested researchers to activities in these fields.

A study on the synthesis of the two civilizations has been made in the *Seventh Chapter* which holds out the impact of Indian thoughts on Chinese religion and philosophy.

The *Eighth Chapter* has been significantly entitled as China and India. Here an attempt has been made 'to trace certain Chinese influences on Indian life and thought'.

The Appendix containing biographical notes on Indian Scholars who translated Indian texts into Chinese is of immense value to research workers in the field.

This brief survey of the contents of the book shows how valuable and important is this work of Dr. Bagchi. He has cut the ice and it is upto interested scholars now to proceed along the path.

Such an important book has been long out of

print causing much inconvenience to all students of Sino-Indian study. We thank Messers Saraswat Library most heartily as they have ventured to bring out an edition of this important work. The present edition may be said to be a virtual reproduction of the previous edition. Minor changes and corrections that have been incorporated in the text do not in any way disturb the thesis of Dr. Bagchi.

Vidya-Bhavana
Santiniketan
15 April, 1981

Biswanath Banerjee

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The accidents of the war have brought together the two peoples who had almost forgotten their common past. The roads connecting their countries had lost themselves in the desert sands or in tropical forests, uncared for; the footprints of the ancient messengers had been effaced by the ravages of time and the old literature had become a sealed book. The history of the cultural collaboration of the two peoples has to be unfolded by the historians and archaeologists. Yet, the theme has more than a mere historical interest. The great Song philosopher Chu-hi said: "The act is past, the ancestor is no more, but life and gratitude remain." Perhaps we are not yet fully aware of the magnitude of this gratitude which we should feel for our ancestors who had sacrificed themselves for the selfless work of building up a common civilization for the two largest agglomerations of people in Asia. The accounts of their efforts may be an inspiration to us, their descendants, in the twilight of a new age.

An outline of those accounts will be found in this small book. The materials are too scrappy to allow a more connected treatment. I have, however, tried to make it as free from academic discussions as possible and it is for the reader to judge if I have been able to make it interesting enough. It has not been possible for me to attach illustrations to the

chapter on Art but I have referred to only such relics of art as are illustrated in the standard works on the art of China and Central Asia.

I have presented this little book to our friends in China as a token of our gratefulness for what we owe to them. In this I have been led by the same sentiments that were expressed almost thirteen hundred years ago by a Buddhist scholar of Bodhgaya in a letter written by him to the famous pilgrim Hiuan-tsang. A translation of this letter will be found on pp. 81-2 of this book.

I have to thank Mr. S. F. Che, the Director of the China Press Ltd., without whose kind help this book would not have come out in this form.

P. C. Bagchi

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

As the first edition was soon exhausted it was necessary to bring out a new edition. My absence from India for the last two years and other preoccupations did not permit me to carry out all the improvement that I wanted. I have, however, corrected some mistakes in the old edition and added a new chapter to the book.

P. C. B.

Note : *The method of transcription of the Chinese names followed in this book is the French method with such modifications as : ch for tch, u for ou, sh for ch, etc.*

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Ancient Empires :

Ts'in 221-206 B. C.
Former Han 206 B. C.-24 A. D.
Latter Han 25-220

Period of Three Kingdoms :

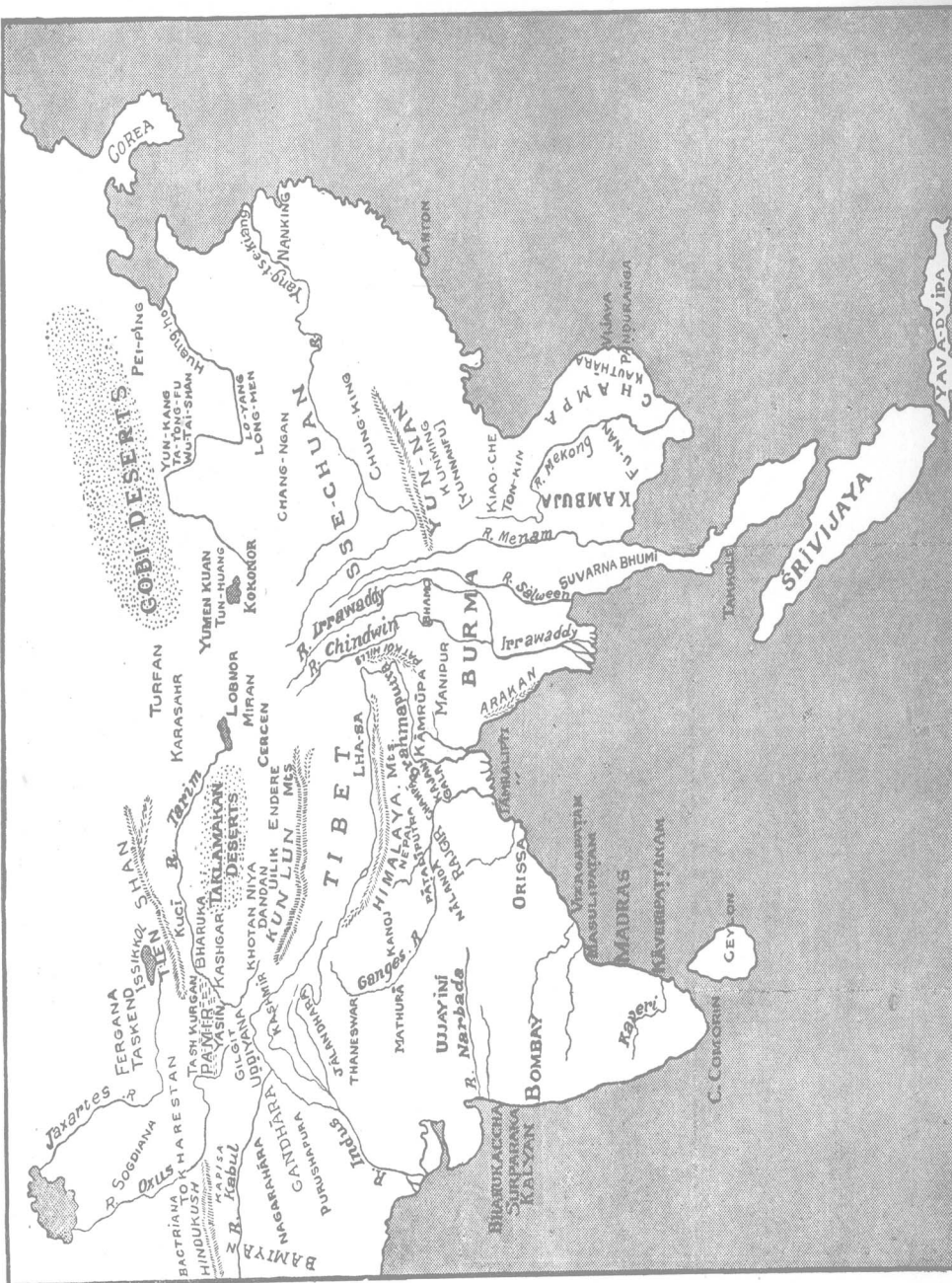
Shu Han 221-264
Wei 220-265
Wu 220-280
Western Tsin 265-316
Eastern Tsin 317-420
Former Leang 317-376
Former Ts'in 350-394
Latter Ts'in 384-417
Western Ts'in 385-431
Northern Leang 386-439

Dynasties of North and South :

1. North : Wei Toba 381-534
Ts'i 550-557
Chou 557-581
2. South : Song 420-478
Ts'i 479-501
Leang 502-556
Ch'en 557-589

United Empires :

Sui 589-618
T'ang 618-907
Song 960-1279
Yuan (Mongol) 1280-1368



COREA

GOBI DESERTS PEI-PING

YUN-KANG
TA-TONG-FU
MUL-TAI-SHAN
LO-YANG
LONG-MEN

CHANG-NGAN
YANGTSEKING
NANKING
CANTON

S-SE-CHUAN
CHUNG-HING
SIAM
SIAM-NUAN
SIAM-NUAN
SIAM-NUAN
SIAM-NUAN

KAMBUA
R. Mekong
KHAU-HA
YU-YA
PHU-PHURA

SRIVIJAYA

YAVA-DWIPI

TURFAN
KARASAH
LOBOR
MIRAN
CERCEN

IRRAWADDY
CHINDWIN
BURMA

ARAKAN
SUVARNA BHUMI
TAMBOLE

FERGANA
TASKEND
TASH KURGAN
BAMIER
YASIN
KASHGAR
TIAN-SHAN
DESBERTS

GILOKANG
KHOTAN NIYA
KANDUJIK
KUN-LIJN
MIS

TIBET
LHA-SA
HIMALAYA

NEPALA
KANDUJIK
KAMRUPA
MANKO
R. Ganges

ORISSA
MADRAS
KALINGARAJAN
MADURAI

CEYLON

BACTRIAN
KHA RESTAN
HINDUKUSH
KAPISA
R. Oxus

GANDHARA
NAGARHARA
PUSHKAVANA
INDUS

THANESWAR
MATHURA
UJJAYINI
R. Nerbada

BOMBAY
BIAHUKACCHA
SURPARANA
KALYAN

ORISSA
MADRAS
KALINGARAJAN
MADURAI

C. COMORIN

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	vii
Preface to the first edition	xiii
Preface to the second edition	xiv
Chronological table	xvi
I. Routes to China and the first contact	1
II. Buddhist missionaries of India to China	36
III. Ancient Chinese pilgrims to India	75
IV. Buddhism in China	112
V. Buddhist literature in China	147
VI. Indian art and sciences in China	181
VII. The two civilizations : a synthesis	217
VIII. China and India	247
Appendix—Biographical notes on Indian scholars who worked in China	255
Bibliography	279
Index	281

CHAPTER I

ROUTES TO CHINA AND THE FIRST CONTACT

Historical Background

The ancient world was not so large as we are often used to think. Since Alexander led his campaigns in the east, the line of demarcation between the west and the east gradually disappeared. Communication by sea and by land became brisk and regular. Exchange in trade and commerce brought about the prosperity of the two worlds. Exchange in culture contributed to the growth of their respective civilisations.

India did not play a mean part in this great exchange. The natural barriers of India were insurmountable only in appearance. The mountain ranges in the north neither effectively checked any outside infiltration nor hampered the expansion of the Indian civilisation to the outside world. The Indian Ocean was navigated at an early date and hence it was easy for the Indian traders and missionaries to proceed unhindered to the Far Eastern countries across the seas. This slow and steady expansion of the Indian civilisation in different directions over the Asiatic continent brought India closer to countries which were

widely separated from it by geography. Thus at a particular stage the history of India became inseparable from the history of the rest of Asia.

We have to go back to the time of the great Maurya Emperor Aśoka in order to trace the origin of this grand effort made by India. The empire which Aśoka governed had reached the natural frontiers of India. He was a devoted follower of a religion, Buddhism, of which the fundamental doctrines had an international appeal. It was therefore quite natural for him to look across the frontiers and to try to bring the innumerable foreign people under the influence of the religion which he himself followed and admired.

We know on undisputed authority that Aśoka sent emissaries on a mission of religious conquest (*dharma-vijaya*) not only to the frontier countries but also to such distant kingdoms as Syria, Egypt, Macedonia etc. Conversion of Ceylon to Buddhism is also ascribed to him. He had sent a prince and a princess of his own family to Ceylon on the same sacred mission. Such a mission was also sent to Nepal and probably another across the ocean to the Land of Gold (*Suvarṇabhūmi*) which was the name given by the Indians to the Malay Peninsula and the neighbouring islands.

Although it is not known what immediate success these missions attained, one thing remains certain. It led to the foundation of a closer relation between the Greeks and the Indians over the north-western frontier of India. After the disintegration