Chapter 1
Indo-China cultural relations.
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Early History

India and China are naturally a pair of sister countries. Their similarities and their associations are great, numerous. And intimate. Looking over the geography and history of all the nations in the world, we find there are not any other two nations that can be compared to our two countries. This is true from every respect and from every standard of observation and judgment. Our two countries, both situated in the bright and glorious continent of Asia. India to the south-west and China to the north-east, spread out lordly in different direction but yet are linked up at the main line, just like the two wheels of the carriage or the two wings of a bird, and even better to say, like the two hands and feet or the two ears and eyes of a person. And the Himalayas gigantic and majestic brilliant and magnificent exactly resemble the common backbone, or the shoulders, or the neck and also the nerve system of their through their boundaries are marked off, yet the physical shape is similar.

A Chinese proverb speaks “an extensive land with a multitudinous people”. Both India and China have actually
possessed them. Besides, the soils of our two countries are fertile, beautiful anti productive; the peoples honest, frugal and industrious. The products of soils and the outputs of labor are sufficient not only to maintain our own national existence but also to contribute to international prosperity.

Our civilizations started from the misty, ancient times, that is, many thousands of year’s age. According to the orthodox historic accounts in Chinese the formal establishment by Huang-Ti of a United Empire in China was accomplished in 2697 B.C., so that this present year 1934 is the year 4631 in the Chinese calendar of orthodox history. But the pre-historic periods must have been long and full of events. Some old books assert that Chinese civilization began about eighteen thousand years before Huang-Ti, others even go so far as to say that our rudimentary culture appeared fifty thousand years prior to the formation of Huang-Ti that and verified, so that there is no more room for any doubt at all. About India, the historical records of very ancient times are rather insufficient but according to reference in Chinese books on Buddhism, the condition of ancient India was roughly similar to that of ancient China. Modern scholar have
proved from investigations that the date of the first appearance of the Vedas cannot be less than 2000 B.C. to 3000 B.C. and consequently no one can be skeptical of the early civilization of India. The invention of the written language is the most essential element of civilization, and knowledge of such invention is a clue to the understanding of the history of civilization of any nations, the system of Chinese written language came into perfect existence at the time of Huang-Ti; so it follow that such language must have budded and evolved for a long time before that period. Argument and proofs are found in abundance in old Chinese books and classics, so numerous that I have no space here to quote them all. In a Chinese book by the name of “Fa-Yuan-Chu-Lin” or “Pearls of Buddhist world” written by a famous monk named Tao-Shih in the Tang Dynasty, we find a beautiful passage about the system of Indian written language.

The true old civilized nations of the world are four in number. Egypt and Babylonia, India and China. But ancient Egypt and Babylonia have become at present mere vague terms in history. Not only have their original peoples dwindled always, but also their civilizations paled into the twilight of the dim past; their lands and their
cities are affording only materials for archaeologists to dig out and only a subject-matter for scholars and poets to sing and mourn forever. There are also many other younger nations which come and go, rise and fall. Only our two countries, India and China, have stood up firm and high form the very beginning to the present day for thousands of years already. Though our lands have many times been trampled down, devastated and usurped by foreign people politically and economically, yet our superior traditions, teachings, systems, and customs have often assimilated, the wild, barbarous. Invaders and made them educated and cultured so that our two countries are able to survive other and shine permanently.

So much for the similar features in our national life. As for the interchange of cultures between India and China, it has taken place for more than two thousand years in the book of “Buddhacharita” or the classical biography of Lord Buddha, it is stated that Buddha once learnt from Visvamitra Acharin, who told him of many books among which one was a “Book of China” in another book called Ratnakutha or the great classics of Buddhist treasures, we also find the names of some Chinese feudal states, such as “Wu, “shu”, “chin”. Such records as appear in
Chinese books are even far more in quantity. At a time when most of the modern strong nations had no shadow of existence yet, and when there people were still in a primitive state of life over an uncultivated land, our countries India and China, had already achieved glorious and brilliant civilizations, and our wealth and prosperity had reached a stage really superior to what the European and American powers have attained today in the true sense of life. The essence of the present Western civilization of which the white races are so proud and for which the common people have so much envy and admiration is science. India and China possessed even in ancient times the beginning of some sciences, Long, long ago, India had what we call in Chinese “Wu-Min” the five sciences or “Pancha-Vidya”. This is of course due to the remoteness of time and the complexity of circumstances. Any momentous event which happened in the world, and any intercourse which took place between the nations must first have a long period of growth before any clear and detailed records could be made about them. So the actual historical facts of our cultural interchanges are available only after the influx of Buddhism into China. The formal date for the first introduction of Buddhism
into China is generally recognized to be the Yung-Ping tenth year of Min-Ti of Han Dynasty (67 A.D.) when the Emperor himself accorded Buddhism his royal welcome to the Capital Lo-Yang. But in fact, it is certainly not the Yung-Ping tenth year when Buddhism first entered China it is also certainly not after the Chinese acceptance of Buddhism that our cultures began to have interchange we can only say that Buddhism was first formally welcomed by a Chinese Emperor in Yung-Ping tenth year, and that the cultural interchange between India and China become more intimate an prevalent after the royal recognition of Buddhism. After this great Indian sages and scholars came to China and learned Chinese monks and scholars travelled to India in large number at different times, carrying on the real work of Cultural exchange through the medium of Buddhism. According to the records of a Chinese book called “Li-Tai-Kao-Seng-Chuan” or the biographies of great monks in various ages, there were two hundred Chinese monks who studies in India with great Success, and twenty-four Indian sages who preached in China with marvelous achievement. But it must be bared that there must have been many, many more monks and scholars who either
perished on the way or disliked to leave their earthly names to posterity. In another book called “Tang-Kao-Seng-Chuan” the biographies of the great monks of Tang Dynasty, there is a poem of two line read as below

“Away from Chang-A monks go west to learn,
Out of a hundred no ten do return.”

From this we see that many are they who went to India but few are the fortunate who could return to China. This must also hold goad with the Indians who toured in the East.

With regard to the influence of Indian culture on the Chinese civilization, it is almost inexpressible, in words, from the point of view of philosophy, the thought of Confucianists and Taoists had been closely intermingled with Indian thoughts since the dynasties of Wei (220-264 A.D.) and Tsin (265-419 A.D.); the process of assimilation was gaining momentum especially during the Tang Dynasy (676-906 A.D.) and in the subsequent age of the “Five Dynasties” till there was evolved in the philosophy called Sung Dynasty or New Rationalism. From the point of view of literature, the prose and poetry of Tsin and Tang Dynasties, the Records of philosophical discourses in the Sung and Ming (1368-1643 A.D.)
Dynasties, had a striking tint and tay our of Indian literature inform and inequality. Culture over the Indian civilization seems to be comparatively meager and insignificant. In China we can see everywhere things and objects of Indian style or model; but in India we can hardly see anything of Chinese origin. Some minutes ago I made an allusion to Visvamitra Acharin who once told Buddha of many books including one called “A book of China”. Whether there is any such book still in India. it is also said in same Chinese book that the great Buddhist Hsuan-Tasang had translated into Sanskrit the Chinese classical book of “Tao-Te-Ching” or the classics of virtue by Lao-Tse, but again limited knowledge of Sanskrit prevents me from knowing if there is still existent any such text in Sanskrit today here is therefore a question worthy of our attention; Since the Indian influence over Chinese culture has been so great why is the Chinese effect upon Indian culture so little? If we consider the merits of these two cultures the religion and philosophy of India are, of course, supreme and unparalleled in human history, but the ethics and arts of China are also superior and matchless. And the Chinese classical works are capable to being translated and many of them should
be translated, too; why were there so many Indian classical books translated into Chinese and yet none of Chinese great works rendered into Sanskrit? It was often sought for the reasons influences dwindled away with the long lapses of time; secondly the religious sentiment of the Indian people was rich and strong so strong that they were behaving as all religious peoples so only actively to teach their gospel to other but not passively to receive any gospel from others; thirdly the Chinese mentality might be receptive and sensitive to absorb and assimilate any other good civilization but shy and reluctant to propagandize their own culture among others. At any rate china has received too much from but returned too little to India, she must therefore, have the sense of gratitude and do the duty of reciprocation towards India. Something, however, has China gratefully done for Indian culture though not directly but indirectly. It is that she has taken great care and made much effort to preserve, to cherish, to cultivate, and to magnify what she has got from India at different ages. So far some true facts about the old intimate relationship between the cultures of our two great sister countries. But for the last few centuries it is deplorable to say, that friendly
relationship has somehow dwindled and even stopped, probably on account of vicissitudes of life and changes in circumstances, at the same time the modern science of Europe rose so much in power and materialism roared so loud for force that the so-called industrial revolution was brought about in the turbulent tide of the human sea.

Bearing in mind the importance of this point, a humble way has initiated a movement to organize the Sino-Indian Cultural Society. The object of the society will be to link up the learning’s of our two countries, to interchange our cultural to cultivate friendship between our people and lastly, to work for universal peace and human fraternity.

While economic relations have picked up, cultural relations between India and China are in a stalemate. The two countries have been traditionally closed to each other, with very little exchanges taking place. This social gap is probably one of the reasons for many misperceptions about each other. The leaderships of the two countries have shown eagerness in opening up their social face. Coinciding with Wen Jiabao’s visit, representatives of 23 Chinese universities visited India to advertise their institutions which are now home to 1.1
million foreign students, but only about 800 Indians among them. The aim, the representatives said, was to create awareness about Chinese university their curriculum, scholarship facilities and the many opportunities available to the student fraternity.

During Wen Jiabao’s visit, the two sides signed a protocol that envisages the constitution of the India-China Film Cooperation Commission to strengthen cooperation and promote bilateral exchanges between India and China in the entertainment sector, with special focus on films, both features and documentary and animation. Under another Memorandum, India will build an Indian Style Buddhist Temple in Luoyang, which is the oldest icon of India-China exchanges in the field of Buddhism it is expected that the Temple, once completed will become an enduring symbol of the centuries old Indian influence in China and epitomize how Buddhism from India became an integral part of Chinese culture and life.

In 2005, the two countries also celebrated the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China. To mark the occasion, the two
countries organized a series of commemorative activities. These included the “Cultural Festival of China” in India and “Cultural Festival of India” in China. In order to further promote mutual awareness and deepen the friendship between the two peoples, the two sides are celebrating 2006 as the “year of India China friendship”. Numerous activities are planned for the current years. These include high level visits, including the proposed visit of Indian Defense Minister to China; trans-border interactive visits and sporting activities between the two armies; academic and literary publications on the bilateral relations; educational cooperation among major universities of both sides; a series of cultural, sports and youth exchanges; and above all, a fresh set of recommendations by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to promote bilateral relations based on deliberations in previous EPG meetings. A comprehensive India – China Cultural Exchange Program for 2006-2008 is also on the anvil.

While the two Governments have taken the initiative, people from the two sides are also getting to know more about each other through various mechanisms. Needless to say, the business opportunities and the great power
potential of the two countries have generated curiosity about each other. Journalistic coverage about each other has increased in domestic newspapers. More and more Indian journalists are living in and reporting from China. Similarly, China and India are hot topics for comparative studies among the strategic think tanks of the two countries. Educational activities are now less dependent on official support and Indians are now looking towards China as a possible destination. Indian yoga is getting more popular among the Chinese citizenry. However, all these are at a small level given the huge size of the two countries and their geographical proximity to each other. Language is still a big barrier that prohibits any diffusion of ideas or cultural perspectives across the border.

**HISTORY**

**Roman Empire**

Soon after the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE, regular communication and trade between India, Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, China the Middle East, Africa and Europe blossomed on an unprecedented scale. The party of Maes Titianus became the travelers who penetrated farthest east along the Silk Road from the
Mediterranean World, probably with the aim of regularizing contacts and reducing the role of middlemen, during one of the lulls in Rome’s intermittent wars with Parthia, which repeatedly obstructed movement along the Silk Road. Land and maritime route were closely linked and novel products, technologies and ideas began to spread across the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa international trade and communication become regular, organized and protected by the ‘Great Powers’ Intense trade with the Roman Empire soon followed confirmed by the Roman craze for Chinese silk (supplied through the parthians) even though the Romans thought silk was obtained from trees. This belief was affirmed by Seneca the Younger in his Phaedra and by Virgil in his Georgics. Notably, Pliny the Elder knew better speaking of the *bombyx* or silk moth is written in his Natural Histories “They weave webs, like spiders, that become a luxurious clothing material for women called silk.”

The Senate issued, in vain, several edicts to prohibit the wearing of silk, on economic and moral grounds; the importation of Chinese silk caused a high outflow of gold,
and silk clothes were considered to be decadent and immoral.

“I can see clothes of silk, if material that does not hide the body or even one’s decency can be called clothes… Wretched flocks of maids labors so that the adulteress may be visible though her thin dress, so that her husband had no more acquaintance than any outsider of foreigner with his wife’s body ” (Seneca the younger( c.3 BCE-65, Declamations Vol. I)

After losing at the battle of Carrhae in 53 BC, 10,000 Roman prisoners were sent by the Parthians to Mrgiana to help guard the eastern frontier of the Parthian Empire. It is possible that contingents of these men found their way into China.

The Hou Hanshu records that the first Roman envoy arrived in China by this maritime route in 166 CE, initiating a series of Roman contacts with china.

**Medieval age**

The main traders during Antiquity were the Indian and Bactrian traders, then from the 5th to the 8th century CE the Soggian traders, then afterwards the Arab and Persian traders. A .V. Dybo noted that “according to
historians, the main driving force of the Great Silk Road were not just Sogdians, but the carriers of a mixed Sogdian Tiirkic culture that often came from mixed families.”

The unification of Central Asia and Northern India within Kushan Empire in the 1st to 3rd centuries reinforced the role of the powerful merchants from Bactria and Taxila. They fostered multi-cultural interaction as indicated by their 2nd century treasure hoards filled with products from the Greco-Roman world, China and India, such as in the archeological site of Bigram.

The heyday of the Silk Road corresponds, on its west end, to the Byzantine Empire, Sassanid Empire period to II Khanate Period in the Nile Oxus section and Three Kingdom to Yuan Dynasty in the sanities zone in its east end. Trade between East and West also developed on the sea, between Alexandria in Egypt and Guangzhou in China, fostering across the Indian Ocean. The Silk Road represents an early phenomenon of political and cultural integration due to inter-regional trade. In its heyday, the Silk Road sustained an international culture that strung
together groups as diverse as the Magyars, Armenians and Chinese

Under its strong integrating dynamics on the one hand and the impact of change it transmitted on the other, tribal societies previously living in isolation along the Silk Road or pastoralists who were of barbarian cultural development were drawn to the riches and opportunities of the civilizations connected by the Silk Road taking on the trades of marauders or mercenaries. Many barbarian tribes become skilled warriors able to conquer rich cities and fertile lands, and forge strong military empires.

The Sogdians demonated the East-West trade after the 4\textsuperscript{th} century CE up to the 8\textsuperscript{th} century CE with Suyab and Talas raking among their main centers in the north. They were the main caravan merchants of Central Asia. Their commercial interests were protected by the resurgent military power of the Gokturks. Whose empire has been described as “\textit{the joint enterprise of the Ashina clan and the Soghdians}” their trades with some interruption continued in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century within the framework of the Uighur Empire which until 840 extended across northern Central Asia and obtained from china enormous
deliveries of silk in exchange for horses. At the time caravans of Sogdians traveling to Upper Mongolia are mentioned in Chinese sources. They played an equally important religion and cultural role. Part of the data about eastern Asia provided by Muslim geographers of the 10th century actually goes back to Sogdian data of the period 750-840 and thus shows the survival of links between east and west. However after the end of the Uighur Empire, sogdian trade went through a crisis. What mainly issued from Muslim Central Asia was the trade of the Samanids, which resumed the north western road leading to the Khazars and the Urals and the northeastern one towards the nearby Turkei tribes.

The Silk Road gave rise to the clusters of military states of nomadic origins in North China, invited the Nestorian, Manicharan, Buddhist and later Islamic religions into Central Asia and China, created the influential Khazar Federation and at the end of its glory brought about the largest continental empire ever. The Mongol Empire with its political centers strung along the Silk Road (Beijing in North China, Karakorum in central Mongolia, Sarmakhand in Transoxiana Tabriz in Northern Iran, Sarai and Astrakhan in lower Volga, Solkhat in crimea,
Kazan in Central Russia, Erzurum in eastern Anatolia) realizing the political unification of zones previously loosely and intermittently connected by material and cultural goods.

The Roman Empire, and its demand for sophisticated Asian products, crumbled in the west around the 5th century. In Central Asia Islam expanded from the 7th century onward, bringing a stop to Chinese westward expansion at the Battle of Talas in 751 further expansions of the Islamic Turks in Central Asia from the 10th century finished disrupting trade in that part of the world, and Buddhism almost disappeared. For much of the middle Ages, the Islamic Caliphate (centered in the Near East) often had a monopoly over much of the trade conducted across the Old World.

The Mongol expansion throughout the Asian continent from around 1207 to 1360 helped bring political stability and re-establish the Silk Road. It also brought an end to the Islamic Caliphate’s monopoly over world trade. Since the Mongol had dominated the trade routes, it allowed more trade to come in and out of the region. Merchandise that seems to be fewer values to the Mongols, westerners
highly values them. As a result, the Mongol received so much luxury goods from the West. However they never abandoned their nomadic lifestyle. Soon after Genghis Khan died, the Silk Road was in the hand of Genghis Khans’ daughters. The Mongol diplomat Rabban Bar Sauma visited the courts of Europe in 1287 to 1288 and provided a detailed written report back to the Mongols. Around the same time, the Venetian explorer Marco Polo became one of the first Europeans to travel the Silk Road to China, and his tales documented in *The Travels of Marco Polo*, opened Western eyes to some of the customs of the Far East. He was not the first to bring back stories but he was one of the widest-read. He had been preceded by numerous Christian missionaries to the East, such as William of Rubruck, Benedykt Polak, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, and Andrew of Longjumeau. Later envoys included Odoric of Pordenone, Giovanni de’ Marignolli, John of Montecorvino Niccolo’ de’ conti, or Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan Muslim traveler who passed though the present-day Middle East and across the Silk Road from Tabriz, between 1325 to 1354.

The 13th century also saw attempts at a Franco-Mongol alliance, with exchange of ambassadors and attempts at
military collaboration in the Holy Land during the later Crusades, though eventually the Mongols in the Ilkhanate, after they had destroyed the Abbasid and Ayyubid dynasties, eventually themselves converted to Islam and signed the 1323 Treaty of Aleppo with the surviving Muslim power the Egyptian Mamluks.

The disappearance of the Silk Road following the end of the Mongols’ reign was one of the main factors that stimulated the Europeans to reach the prosperous Chinese empire through another route, especially by sea. Tremendous profits were to be obtained for anyone who could achieve a direct trade connection with Asia. This was the main driving factors for the Portuguese explorations of the Indian Ocean including the sea of China, resulting in the arrival in 1513 of the first European trading ship to the coasts of China under Jorge Alvares and Rafael Perestrello, followed by the Fernão Pires de Andrade and Tome’ Pires diplomatic and commercial mission of 1517, under the orders of Manuel I of Portugal, which opened formally relations between the Portuguese Empire and the Ming Dynasty during the reign of the Zhengde Emperor. The handover
of Macau to Portugal in 1557 by the Emperor of China resulted in the first permanent European maritime trade post between Europe and China, with other European powers following suit over the next centuries, which caused the eventual demise of the Silk Road land route.

In 1594, Willem Barents left Amsterdam with two ships to search for the Northeast Passage north of Siberia, on to eastern Asia. The west coast of Novaya Zemlya and followed it northward being finally forced to turn back when confronted with its northern extremity. By the end of the 17th century, the Russians re-established a land trade route between Europe and China under the name of the Great Siberian Road.

The desire to trade directly with China and India was also the main driving force behind the expansion of the Portuguese beyond Africa after 1480, followed by the Netherlands and Great Britain from the 17th century. While the Portuguese were entering China from its southern coast, by the sea route the question arose by 1600, the Jesuits as a Lay Brother in Bento De Gois. A Portuguese former soldier and explorer who had joined the Jesuits as a lay Brother in Goa, India traveled in 1603.
to 1605 from India via Afghanistan and one of the routes of the traditional Silk Road.

In the 18th century, Adam Smith declared that China had been one of the most prosperous nations in the world, but that it had remained stagnant for a long time and its wages always were low and the lower classes were particularly poor.

**Middle ages**

After the transmission of Buddhism from India to China from the 1st century onwards, many Indian scholars and monks travelled to China, such as Batuo (464–495 A.D.) fonder of the Shaolin monastery and Bodhidharma founder of Chan/Zen Buddhism while many Chinese scholars and monks also travelled to India, such as Xuanzang (604) and Ching (635–713), both of whom were student at Nalanda University in Bihar. Xuanzang wrote the Great Tang Records on the Western regions on account of his journey to India which later inspired Wu Cheng’en’s ming Dynasty novel journey to the west, one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature.
Tang and Harsha dynastines

During the 7th century Tang Dynasty China gained control over large portions of the silk road and central Asia. Wang Xuance had sent a diplomatic mission to northern India, which was embroiled by civil war just following the death of Emperor Harsha (590–647) after the murder of 30 members of this mission by usurper claimants to the throne. Wang fled, and returned with allied Nepali and Tibetan troops to back the opposing claimant. With his forces, Wand besieged and captured the capital, while his deputy Jiang Shiren captured the usurper and sent him back to Emperor Tang Taizong (599–649) in Chang’an as a prisoner.

During the 8th century the astronomical table of sins by the Indian astronomer and mathematician, Aryabhata (476–550) were translated into the Chinese astronomical and mathematical book of the Treatise on Astrology of the Kaiyuan Era (Kaiyuan Zhanjing) compiled in 718 A.D. during the Tang Dynasty. The Kaiyuan Zhanjing was compiled by Gautama Siddha an astronomer and astrologer born in Chang’an an whose family was originally from India. He was also notable for his translation of the Navagraha calendar into Chinese.
Ming dynasty

Between 1405, and 1433 the Ming dynasty China sponsored a series of seven naval expeditions emperor Yongle designed them to establish a Chinese presence, Impose imperial control over trade, and impress foreign people in the Indian Ocean basin. He also might have wanted to intend the tributary system, by which Chinese dynasties traditionally recognized foreign peoples. Admiral Zheng He was dispatched to lead a series of huge naval expeditions to explore the regions. The largest of his voyages included over 317 ships and 28,000 men, and the largest of treasure ships were over 126.73m in length. During his voyages, he visited numerous Indian kingdom and ports. On the first three voyages Zheng He visited Southeast Asia, India, and Ceylon. The fourth expedition went to the Persian Gulf and Arabia, and later expeditions ventured down the east-African coast, as far as Malinda in what is not Kenya. Throughout his travels, Zheng He liberally dispensed Chinese gifts of silk, porcelain, and other goods. In return, he received rich and unusually presents from his hosts, including African Zebras and giraffes that ended their days in the Ming imperial Zoo. Zheng He
and his company paid respects to local deities and customs, and in Ceylon they erected a monument honoring Buddha, Allah, and Vishnu.