

# Grand Visit to China: Historical Significance of Tagore's China Visit

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**Abstract** This essay contends that Tagore's 1924 China visit is a great event in the annals of the modern Chinese cultural development and the annals of Sino-Indian relationship. It created a huge impact on the development of culture, especially that of the new literature in China. These conclusions of mine may be divergent from the general view. I shall spell out my proposition in three sections: (1) taking a macro and positive standpoint to find the significance of Tagore's 1924 China visit from a civilizational perspective, (2) examining the misunderstandings and distortions in Chinese and foreign media regarding this visit, and (3) pondering upon deeply what Tagore said in China when we are now in a new era.

**Key words** Tagore ; China visit; *Talks in China*; Sino-Indian relationship

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People of my generation born and brought up in the People's Republic of China do not have any perceptive understanding of the scene of the 1920s. Professor Ji Xianlin, late lamented doyen of China's India studies, was a witness of history. He saw Tagore in 1924 when he was studying in a middle school at Jinan. "Then I was only 13, did not know much of poetry and even less of India. Yet, I felt at that time he must have been a great man" (Wang 296). During the 1950s, Professor Ji was lecturing at Peking University on "Indian literature in China". In the teaching material he issued to the students in 1958, he wrote:

In 1924, the great patriotic modern Indian poet Tagore visited China. It was an earth-shaking event at that time. Overwhelming numbers of newspapers and magazines featured special articles introducing the life, thought and works of Tagore. *Fiction Monthly Journal* published special "Tagore Issue" (Nos. 9 and 10 of Volume 14) and an instant extra issue entitled "Welcome to Mr. Rabindranath Tagore!" (No. 4 of Volume 15). In these special and extra issues, Chinese writers exhaustively introduced Tagore, writing his biography, analyzing his thought, selectively featuring his works. It may be said that China was intoxicated in the Tagore fever around the time of his visit to China both beforehand and afterwards. (Wang 289)

In his article titled *Tagore and China* written in 1979, Ji Xianlin wrote: "The most important achievement of Tagore's visit was the strengthening of the traditional friendship between the people of China and India...bringing the friendship of the Indian people, sowing the seeds of friendship in China wherever he went, and carrying back the friendship of the Chinese people...Viewing from the perspective of the history of Sino-Indian relations, his visit became the curtain raiser of the new epoch. From then on, contacts between the two countries gradually warmed up. He vigorously advocated the studies of Chinese language and Chinese culture, and set an example by establishing the Cheena-Bhavana inside the Visva-Bharati."<sup>1</sup>

Ji Xianlin was not only the witness of history, he was also the highest authority of China's studies on Indian literature and Sino-Indian relations. I think his comments above on Tagore's 1924 China visit is the most authoritative on earth, and I have not seen any other comment more authoritative than it. In other words, Ji Xianlin has said the final word on the positive significance of Tagore's 1924 China visit. All those negative comments and even vilifications pale in value in front of these words of Ji Xianlin.

Based on the authoritative comment of Ji Xianlin, this essay contends that Tagore's 1924 China visit is a great event in the annals of the modern Chinese cultural development and the annals of Sino-Indian relationship. It created a huge impact on the development of culture, especially that of the new literature in China. These conclusions of mine may be divergent from the general view. I humbly and sincerely wish to have a discourse with Chinese and foreign experts in the spirit of the Chinese saying of "hurling away brick-bits to invite jewels throwing at me". Now I shall spell out my proposition in three sections: (1) taking a macro and positive standpoint to find the significance of Tagore's 1924 China visit from a civilizational perspective, (2) examining the misunderstandings and distortions in Chinese and foreign media regarding this visit, and (3) pondering upon deeply what Tagore said in China when we are now in a new era.

## I

In 1924, on the eve of his departure — he and his entourage embarking on the sail from Calcutta to Hong Kong on their way to China — Tagore said to the press: "When the invitation from China reached me I felt that it was an invitation to India herself, and as her humble son, I must accept it." He further said: "I am hoping that our visit will reestablish the cultural and spiritual connections between China and India" (Hay 145). In his "leave taking" address in Shanghai on May 22, 1924, Tagore further elaborated this point in these words:

I may tell you now that when my people heard I had received an invitation from China, there was great rejoicing and excitement amongst them. Most of you are aware that I have had, before this, other invitations from countries in the West, but this time the feeling of rejoicing was not restricted to that small circle which knows England, — it came from those who had no knowledge of England at all, and yet who were full of admiration at your generosity in inviting a man from the

East, at a time when most people are infatuated with Western culture. They felt that this was a great opportunity for us to reopen the ancient channel of spiritual communication once again... They thought it absolutely easy for me to let you, through the length and breadth of China, know how we in India have a love for you, and how we long to be the recipients of your love. (Das 73)

This observation of Tagore set his 1924 China visit in the sphere of modern intercourse between the two great civilizations of China and India. Viewing from Tagore's public and private statements in China in 1924 and the responses of Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and other important Chinese intellectuals who participated in the events of Tagore's visit, Tagore's China visit was truly a wide-ranging Sino-Indian civilizational dialogue, and a very significant event in the annals of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse.

From times immemorial there has been a salient feature in the Sino-Indian cultural intercourse. Let us trace it from the very beginning. First, there was Han Emperor Ming's dreaming of the golden Buddha, then the Han government's sending out a search team led by Cai Yin for fetching Buddhist missionaries to visit China, then Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaraksha/Dharmaratna's arrival in China, then the Monastery of White Horses being constructed for the two eminent Indian monks to stay and translate the scriptures. This entire process has become a formula, making it a procedure of admiration-invitation-hospitality-learning on the part of China vis-à-vis India. After receiving Tagore in Beijing, Liang Qichao spoke at the Beijing Normal University to mobilize the Beijing intellectuals to attend the Tagore programmes. He alluded to historical events of Indian eminent monks being accorded warm receptions to China in yesteryears.

All the historical instances alluded to by Liang had followed the same procedure I have just mentioned. Liang also asked the intellectuals of Beijing to show the same historical warmth to Tagore. Tagore's sojourn in Beijing, in fact, his entire tour in China including Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Jinan, Taiyuan and other places proceeded in the same traditional procedure, and the host-guest cordiality was as same as in the historical times, and the effect of cultural intercourse was as same as in the historical times. All in all, Tagore's China visit was an evidence of optimal hospitality on the part of the Chinese hosts. It was also one of his most exciting and moving experiences among Tagore's numerous foreign trips all over the world. It was an extremely lively and touching scene everywhere, and the fruitful event was very much in the traditional mode viewing from the prism of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse.

Taking a macro-view of the modern development of the world, first there was the rise of the West with a design to swallow up the globe, and then Asia has been on the rise and eclipsed the domination of the West. The West is like the setting sun, going along the downward curve. The contours of the 21<sup>st</sup> century becoming an "Asian century" are on the horizon. There have been three models within the rise of Asia: Japanese, Indian and Chinese. Japan's has been the example of "whole-hog westernization". After getting into the ranks of the Western powers, she started encroaching upon her Asian neighbours. In the wake of World War II she turned into a political ap-

pendage of the U. S. A. , but became a sub-superpower economically. Her future prospect is not that great judging from her unwillingness to repent her historical mistakes and to change course thoroughly as well as her limitations of an island state, in addition to the constraints imposed on her by the U. S. A. Her model is that of both success and failure. Being mocked as a hitchhiking civilization, it won't have much success in future. <sup>2</sup>

We are thus left with the two eminent models of India and China. Apparently, these two models are poles apart. India has been the leader for the independence movement among the Afro-Asian colonial countries. After her independence, she has maintained intimate connections with the Western camp, but has been consciously developing her own cultural tradition, avoiding the Japanese course of completely groveling at the feet of the West. Though China was one time pursuing the course of "lean to one side" and stood opposed to the Western camp, she corrected this stance afterwards. Though China had excessively destroyed her cultural traditions during her modernization reforms, on the whole she has been embarking on the Indian road of maintaining her traditional characteristics without falling into the quagmire of the Japanese style of ludicrous blind imitation. When we examine the positive significance of Tagore's 1924 China visit, we must keep this point in mind.

Tagore's China visit, especially the Beijing celebrated Tagore's 63<sup>rd</sup> (the 64<sup>th</sup> according to Chinese tradition) birthday by all walks of life on May 8, was an outstanding event in international intercourse. The most significant programme in the birthday celebration was Liang Qichao's speech, translated into English by Hu Shi (1891 - 1962), presenting the Chinese name "Zhu Zhendan/Chu Chen-dan" to Tagore. This was also a great episode in the annals of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse deserves touting. For, not only was it brimming with the cordiality between two fraternal countries, but it had high value of the geo-civilizational spirit. Liang Qichao who was just 15 years younger than Tagore was an Indophile. He and Tagore had very vivid dialogue in Beijing. Professor Tan Chung has conducted some research on this vivid dialogue which deserves to be cited to reiterate the positive significance of Tagore's China visit.

According to Tan Chung, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some Chinese looked down upon the Indians, even calling them slaves who have lost their own country. However, among the Indians Tagore rose to win the Nobel Prize of the white Western world. This gave a tremendous moral boost to the Chinese who used to be bullied and insulted by the white "foreign devils". This was testified by Liang Qichao who went to Tianjin to welcome Tagore and escorted Tagore to Beijing by express train on April 23, and went to the Beijing Normal School to mobilize people to attend Tagore's lectures. In his mobilizing speech at the Normal School, Liang Qichao said: "I daresay we have never welcomed any foreigner so warming and sincerely [like the people of Beijing welcomed Tagore]" (Tan & Geng 22). In the same speech, Liang described China and India as fraternal countries. He said: "I say this not to flatter our guest, but from historical knowledge". He analyzed the millennial Chinese culture which was "extremely monotonous, extremely conservative". Fortunately China could have intimate intercourses with the "extremely great cultured na-

tion” India. Liang praised the Sino-Indian cultural interaction: “Even before many of the cultured nations began their activities the twins [of China and India], our two brothers, had already started studying the world problems, and had done a lot of service for humankind” (Tan & Geng 26). “When we had most intimate interactions, the little brother [China] was unfortunately young and naive, and had few gifts to offer to the old brother [India]. But we can never forget the valuable gift for us from our old brother [India]” (Tan & Geng 26). The “valuable gift” alluded to by Liang Qichao included the two great gifts of absolute liberty and absolute love which was Buddhism, in addition to twelve supplementary gifts: music, architecture, painting, sculpture, drama, poetry and novel, astronomy and calendar, medicine, alphabet, writing styles, education methods and social groups and organizations (Tan & Geng 25 – 26).

Tan Chung discovered that in all the three versions of *Rabindranath Tagore: Talks in China* published in India in 1924, 1925, and 1999, there is the “Introduction” by Liang Qichao (Liang Chi Chao) which is actually the English translation of the speech delivered by Liang at the Beijing Normal Institution, the transcript of which is now enshrined in volume 7 of *Collected Works of Liang Qichao* published in Beijing in 1999. The only difference is the English version in *Talks in China* has lost the vividness of the original. Let me cite what Tan Chung has discovered by picking up a paragraph from Liang’s original speech and rendered it into English to show what is missing in the translation in the “Introduction”.

“Introduction” in *Talks in China*:

After a thousand years of separation during which period, however, we two continued to cherish thoughts of love for one another, this elder brother of ours has once more come to us animated with fraternal sentiments. Both of us bear lines of sorrow on our face, our hair is grey with age, we stare with a blank and vacant look as if we are just awakened from a dream; but, as we gaze on each other, what recollections and fond memories of our early youth rise in our mind, — of those days, when we shared our joys and sorrows together! Now that we have once more the happiness of embracing each other, we shall not allow ourselves to be separated again. (Das 23 – 4)

Tan Chung’s translation of the original speech:

Ha ha! Our old brother [India], ‘affectionate and missing’ for more than a thousand years, is now coming to call on his little brother [China]. We, the two brothers, have both gone through so many miseries that our hair has gone grey and when we gaze at each other after drying our tears we still seem to be sleeping and dreaming. The sight of our old brother suddenly brings to our minds all the bitterness we have gone through in our separate beds for all these years. Ah, ah, we must hold his [Tagore’s] hands tight and not let go; we must hug him and kiss him again and again... We must pour out the hot tears we have

carried from our mother's womb and soak his huge lovely white beard into them. (Raganathan 63)

Liang's above-cited words are not only vivid, but came out from the heart, full of sentiments. The speech made by Liang while presenting the Chinese name "Zhu Zhendan/Chu Chen-tan" was equally warm with sentiments; "One day when we met, Tagore said to me: 'I don't know why, as soon as I arrived in China, I felt as though I was an Indian monk in a previous life, who stayed on a particular mountain, in a particular cave enjoying freedom.'" This was Tagore's motivation of asking for a Chinese name. After offering the name "Zhu Zhendan/Chu Chen-tan", Liang Qichao expressed his sincere wishes: "Today, our respected and beloved poet-saint from Heavenly India is celebrating his 64<sup>th</sup> birthday<sup>3</sup> in his beloved country 'Zhendan'/Cinasthana, with best mood and happiness. Let me join the names of both countries together and present a new name to him as 'Zhu Zhendan'. I hope our love for him will imprint this name in his heart. I hope through this person named Zhu Zhendan the old love between Indian and Chinese will be revived" (Raganathan 64). Both these wishes of Liang Qichao — (1) "Zhu Zhendan" imprinted in Tagore's heart, and (2) "Zhu Zhendan" Tagore revived the old love between Indian and Chinese — have been fulfilled. As Liang asserted that joining the names of the two countries of China and India would mean the revival of their fraternity, today Chinese and Indian scholars are promoting "Chindia" which amounts to the repetition of Liang's creation of "Zhu Zhendan".

Liang Qichao's exuberant enthusiasm in welcoming Tagore's China visit had a root cause in the consensus between Tagore's talks in China and the thought of Liang Qichao in the wake of his European tour (a disappointed mission of learning from the West on how to save China). A scholar observed later: "With the great thinker and literary master of Tagore's stature loudly advocating the values of the Eastern spiritual culture, Liang Qichao further fortified his resolution to seek truth from the native culture after his European tour, and he greatly invigorated his advocacy in this regard."<sup>4</sup>

The love-at-first-sight between Liang Qichao and Tagore failed to change the grave situation China was facing at that time. Walking down memory lane, we see a long process of an insular arrogant China with her drawbacks thoroughly exposed by the rise of Western civilizations. There was a complex background of the belated response to the challenge of Western civilizations on the part of the Chinese intellectual elite. During the reign of Emperors Kangxi and Qianlong, following the publications of a series of massive encyclopaedias and collections of reference books like *A Comprehensive Reference Book with Data from All Chinese Publications Past and Present*, popularly known as the *Kangxi Encyclopaedia*, *Kangxi Dictionary*, *A Comprehensive List of All Titles of the Holdings of the Four Imperial Libraries*, *Twenty Four Dynastic Annals*, *Ten Comprehensive Reference Series* etc. the Chinese culture reached its insular "golden era". At that time China had already fallen far behind the West in science and technology, yet the intellectual elites were intoxicated with self-admiration for the glories of Chinese culture. The two Opium Wars and a series of unequal treat-

ties impinging on China's prestige and sovereignty in their wake shocked some Chinese elites who finally woke up and endeavoured to revitalizing China. On the one hand, they realized the necessity to learn from the "advancement" of the West. First, they thought China was falling behind other countries only in gadgets, then, they realized that China was also backward in skills, and finally they further realized China's backwardness in sociopolitical structures. On the other hand, their realization of the corruption of China's ruling machine and their blaming the Manchu regime for its failings also made them deeply feel that the millennial cultural tradition was a heavy burden.

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Chinese intellectual elite woke up to catch up with the progress of the times, the Western powers had already dominated Asia. The Chinese saw two models of the Asian nations' responses to the Western challenges: one was Japan, and another was India. A large number of Chinese revolutionaries, including Dr. Sun Yat-sen, turned their attention to Japan and went to Japan to learn her experiences. However, driven by narrow nationalism and militarism, Japan was developing in the direction of nibbling away Chinese territories which served to dampen Chinese passion for her. Meanwhile, two giants emerged from the Indian scene: Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. In January 1924 when Sun Yat-sen delivered six lectures on "Nationalism", he elaborated the example of anti-British movement led by Gandhi in his fifth lecture. He highly praised Gandhi's achievement of uniting the Indian people into a national group contrasting with China's remaining as a span of scattered sands. Sun observed: "If the entire people [of China] could emulate the Indian people's non-cooperation and become a great national group by using religion as its foundation, we would not have feared any foreign country using military, economy and population to oppress us."<sup>5</sup>

Tagore's breaking the monopoly of the white Westerners to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, and his subsequent lecture tours to the European countries and America as a non-white Indian having fans in the white Western high societies greatly encouraged the Chinese intellectuals who had been gravely repressed and insulted by the West. Tagore and Gandhi pointed out a direction for Chinese culture to revitalizing China by emulating the scientific progress of the West without servitude towards the Westerners. This was a valuable direction which China could neither get from the Western countries, nor from the Japan that was foolishly aping the West like the proverbial Lady Dongshi. Grasping such a direction has enabled China to rise in modern times from Sun Yat-sen to Chiang Kai-shek to Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping up to the contemporary Chinese leaders. This is a very important aspect of historical development for us to appreciate.

When Tagore was visiting China in 1924, the country and people of China were facing grave danger. China was in shambles, people were in dire poverty, warlords were doing dogfights. Most of the warlords cared not two hoots for the future of China, but keenly sought the protection of the imperialists in their fighting with each other for power and gains. The Communist Party of China (CPC) in its infancy had already succeeded in helping Dr. Sun Yat-sen reform the Kuomintang and adopt policies of uniting with Russia, uniting with communism and promoting the interests of

the peasants and workers, and establishing a united front with the Kuomintang and CPC as its nucleus. The high tide of a spectacular people's revolution was in the offing. In 1912, Sun Yat-sen said in his Oath of the President of the Republic of China: "It is the common wish of the people that the autocratic rule of the Manchu government be overthrown, that the Republic of China be strengthened, and that people's livelihood and welfare be pursued."<sup>6</sup> These words of Dr. Sun Yat-sen hit the nail on the head. It was true that "the common wish of the people" was concentrating on the earth-shaking political struggles. Culture is the superstructure that is the reflection from the life of the masses. The ideal that "people's livelihood and welfare be pursued" that was born in the wake of the establishment of the "Republic of China" was the manifestation of the Chinese cultural tradition absorbing inspirations from the Western civilizations. At this juncture a fierce polemic between the Eastern and Western cultural influences was taking place and deepening increasingly among the cultural and intellectual circles. Dr. Sun Yat-sen himself was a man inheriting Chinese cultural tradition who paid attention to absorbing the inspirations of the Western cultures. It was simultaneous to Tagore's China visit that Sun Yat-sen developed his "Three People's Principles" that was a concrete East-West synthesis which not only included the impact of the capitalist ideology, but also the Marxist ideology that he came in contact with from his CPC comrades.

In fact, at that time, the most serious expectant host to Tagore's China visit and eagerest to learn from this poet saint on how to save China among the Chinese ruling elite was Dr. Sun Yat-sen. As early as 1911, Sun said at Vancouver, Canada: "We must wake up all the countries of Asia, especially China and India" (Zhang Minqiu 72). Tan Chung in his article *Sun Yat-sen's Extraordinary Understanding of India* observes: (1) Sun Yat-sen was the first Chinese political leader to view the issue of revitalization of China from the "Asian" perspective; (2) when Sun Yat-sen talked about revitalizing China he was fond of using India as a reference point; (3) Sun Yat-sen's view was that the sources of the power of Great Britain did not originate in the British isles, but in India, and without India Britain would become a "third class country of the world"; and (4) Sun Yat-sen reiterated that the Eastern civilizations were superior to the West (Zhang Minqiu 73 - 80).

Dr Sun Yat-sen had a special eye on India when he was in search of an ally in the East keeping the Chinese ethos in his mind. He observed: "The India-China intercourse began from the era of the Eastern Han Dynasty. Both interacted with each other peacefully and conducted scholarly and ideological exchanges. Both loved and admired each other, never had there been slight clash."<sup>7</sup> He always admired Tagore and wanted to be acquainted with him. In his opinion, Tagore had dedicated his entire life to social upheaval with art and literature as his weapon, advocating the revitalization of the traditional Indian culture, enhancing national self-pride, and promoting the national liberation movement. When Tagore was visiting China in April, 1924, Sun Yat-sen thought he was responding to the invitation to visit China with an aim of "promoting the rebirth of the traditional cultures of the East as well as the unity of Asian nations". In Sun's words, Tagore was opposed to "the complete reliance on European civilizations and whole-hog Westernization at the expense of one's own



special civilization and values”, condemned the West’s aggression, exploitation and devastation of China at will, and advocated “the coming together of the people of Japan, China and India under the banner of the rebirth of the oriental thought”.<sup>8</sup> These premises of Tagore were in perfect agreement with Sun Yat-sen’s reiteration on reinvigorating the national culture, morality and wisdom in order to revitalize the national spirit and restore the historical prestige of China. Therefore, though Sun Yat-sen thought he and Tagore differed on the means of struggle they had the common goal of striving for national independence. Before Tagore’s departure for China, Sun Yat-sen sent a warm invitation letter to him. When Tagore was in Hong Kong on his way to China, Sun dispatched an emissary to call on Tagore, telling him that he was unwell and thus could not pay personal respect to Tagore. Sun also sent words that “The centre of China’s life is in Beijing, the work of the Indian delegation should start from Beijing.” This indicates that in Sun Yat-sen’s opinion, Tagore’s visit was helpful for the movement of rescuing China from going under, and he was sure that Tagore was able to help China to see correct road ahead and to come out of the crisis and peril. In the letter Sun wrote with his own hand to Tagore, he said: “I look forward to the privilege of personally receiving you when you arrive in China. To pay homage to scholars is our age old tradition. However, I shall be welcoming you not only as a writer who have created brilliance to Indian literature, but also an outstanding labourer whose diligent toiling has sowed the seeds for future welfare and spiritual achievement for the mankind.”<sup>9</sup>

We can draw two conclusions from the above discourse. First, Sun Yat-sen and Tagore were comrades of sorts in many ways. Had the two met and a dialogue taken place between the two it might have had a certain impact on China’s political development. Obviously, Sun had expected Tagore to spell out his views on how China and the Chinese people could be rescued, hence he had alluded to the “Indian delegates” coming to China to “start work”. Second, as his hosts were in the eastern and northern China, Tagore’s loyalty lay with them. Sun Yat-sen’s base was at Guangzhou (Canton) which was branded as the “red capital”. Tagore could not figure out Sun’s “politics” at once, hence did not positively respond to Sun Yat-sen’s invitation. Tagore’s meeting with the deposed Manchu emperor, Puyi and some warlords in northern and eastern China but avoiding the “cradle of revolution” sent a wrong signal objectively speaking. This drew some criticisms from various quarters. In a word, it was regrettable that Tagore and Sun Yat-sen missed the opportunity for a dialogue.

Nevertheless, Tagore’s not visiting the Kuomintang headquarters, Guangzhou (Canton), should not mean that the members of Kuomintang paid no attention to Tagore’s China visit as well as his speeches in China. We find that later on when Tan Yun-shan (1898-1983) established the “Sino-Indian Cultural Society” in Nanjing and the Society helped Tagore build up “Cheena-Bhavana” in Tagore’s Visva-Bharati in the 1930s, leaders of the Kuomintang like Chiang Kai-shek and Dai Jitao (Tai Chi-t’ao) etc. showed great admiration for Tagore and were eager to help. Still later, Dai Jitao and Chiang Kai-shek even paid personal visit to Visva-Bharati. All this proves that Sun Yat-sen’s attaching great importance to Tagore’s China visit was transposed to many members of Kuomintang.

Finally, there is an important fringe evidence to confirm the unique success of Tagore's 1924 China visit. C. F. Andrews, a close English friend of Tagore chanced to meet the poet in Hong Kong when Tagore was on his way home. He gathered a lot of information about Tagore's China visit both from the press and from Tagore himself and featured a story in the *Manchester Guardian* which was carried by *Bombay Daily Mail* on July 31, 1928. In Andrews' story, he wrote that Tagore had effected powerful influence on young Chinese intellectual who had "believed in armed force, as the only successful weapon in the modern world" and won them over. Andrews further revealed that these young Chinese intellectuals had "asked Mahatma Gandhi to come over, in succession to Tagore" which was, indeed, a convincing evidence "that the poet's message has truly carried weight" (Hay 305).

## II

At the time Tagore visited China in 1924, there were two main trends among Chinese intellectuals: (1) a sort of "hundred schools contend" situation in their political thinking, even among Tagore's hosts there was no consensus in political opinions; (2) the intellectuals were much politicized, and politics tended to polarize, ill tolerating different views, making it like "not supporting me you must be my enemy". In such a situation it was but natural that Tagore's visit encountered some opposition. We know that the person who was the most vehement detractor of the visit was no other than the earliest Chinese scholar to commend Tagore in public who translated *Gitanjali* into Chinese and published it in 1915. He was Chen Duxiu (1879 - 1942). He and his leftist comrade Qu Qiubai (1899 - 1935) stood firmly against Tagore's lecturing in China and did two things: one was to write in the journals to comment adversely on what Tagore had said in China, and another was to send people to the venues of Tagore's lectures to distribute anti-Tagore leaflets.

It was in one of Tagore's lectures in Beijing that a leaflet got into the hands of Tagore. It was in Chinese and the Indian friends could not read it. They sought the help of Xu Zhimo and others. As an enthusiastic host of Tagore's visit, Xu was embarrassed and would not like to share what the leaflet actually said. However, the Indian friends obtained an English translation from a Japanese who was in China. Tagore was rather shocked and decided to cut short of his visit. Later, the gist of the leaflet was published in *Bengalee* at Calcutta which contained five points:

1. We have suffered much from the ancient Oriental civilizations, which include discrimination between the sexes, the worship of Emperors, oppression of the people, the feudal system, caste distinctions and the blind observance of ceremony. We cannot but oppose Dr. Tagore, who tries to uphold these useless and dead aspects of our civilization.

2. We feel a great shame when we come into contact with modern civilization. We should improve these conditions: Man-power farming, hand manufacturing, inefficient vehicles and ships, poor printing, poor roads and lack of sanitation. We oppose Dr Tagore so that we may reap the benefits of modern civilization.

3. The so-called spiritual civilization of the Orient is nothing more than civil wars, selfish occupations, hypocrisy, fraud, rapacity, vicious royalty, wicked filial respect and the contemptuous habit of foot-binding. How can we help but oppose these things which are so ruinous to us?

4. The Chinese have been indifferent towards encroachments by foreign powers and oppression by their own militarism, and their safety and lives are endangered. Dr Tagore would have nationality and politics abolished, replacing them with the consolation of one's soul. These are a refuge and a source of aesthetic joy for the sluggards, but not for us. We cannot but oppose Dr Tagore, who upholds these things which would shorten the life of our nation.

5. Dr Tagore shows a hearty sympathy with the Tung Shan Spiritual Society, a contemptuous and vicious organization in China which combines Taoism and Buddhism. Dr Tagore speaks of the 'Heavenly Kingdom', 'Almighty God' and 'soul'. If these could remove us from misery what would be the use of man's endeavour to reform the world? We oppose Dr Tagore, who tries to stunt the growth of self-determination and the struggle of the oppressed classes and races.<sup>10</sup>

Chen Duxiu (who used the pseudonym "Shi'an") and Qu Qiubai continually critiqued Tagore's lectures in their articles in the journals like *Chinese Youths*, *The Guide Weekly*, and *Verbal Threads* in the course of Tagore's visit. However, Tagore and his entourage might not have noticed them as these journals had very limited circulations. Tagore always had many detractors at home which did not perturb him much. He (as well as other Indian friends) was under the impression that it was the initiative of the Chinese youths to distribute leaflets at the venues of his lectures (actually it was Chen Duxiu and others who manipulated behind the scene), and this hurt the sentiments of Tagore who was extremely fond of the youths, juveniles and children.

Tagore did some candid and sincere talk in his farewell lecture in Shanghai. He said, "it is difficult [to bring different races close together] because life has become so conventional" (Das 75). He hinted that the Chinese youths would not have "the opportunity, nor perhaps even the curiosity to listen to" the great sages of the past because their numerous engagements in life, unessential but had to be there "to fill up so many gaps". He further said:

Let me confess this fact, that I have my faith in higher ideals. I believe that through them we can best serve the higher purposes of life. At the same time, I have a great feeling of delicacy in giving utterance to them, because of certain modern obstacles which make it almost a disreputable thing to be frank and free in the expression of ideas. ((Das 76)

Tagore even forced himself to repent while admitting his inner sorrow that a perfect visit had turned out to be unpleasant in the minds of many people. He said:

My stay here has been made pleasant, beautiful, and I am happy. But in the depth of my heart there is a pain, — I have not been serious enough. I have had no opportunity to be intensely, desperately earnest about your most serious problems. I have been pleasant, nice, superficial, when I ought to have come as one making penance, to take up the heart of life, to prove that I was sincere, not merely literary and poetical. (Das 75 –6)

Chen Duxiu and Qu Qiubai criticized Tagore due to their fear that Tagore's thought might hamper the leftist mobilization of Chinese youths to break up with the tradition and throw themselves into the revolutionary cause. They made no personal attack on Tagore. Even in the leaflet that we have cited above, its sharp denouncement was written in between repeated polite references to "Dr Tagore". The worst indecorous critique among Chinese scholars was Lin Yutang (1895 –1976) who penned the essay *On Tagore's Political Thought*. In this essay, Lin resorted to dark innuendo to call Tagore "a slave whose own country was dead", and condemned Tagore for his audacity to brag about how to save the country spiritually on the soil of China that had not yet gone under. Lin commented condescendingly: "When one lives in a situation that his country is dead, he would not feel very comfortable spiritually. This results in a kind of reaction of figuring out how to revitalize the country's glories. They have tried all sorts of assassination, revolution, or reformation of the constitution; those who are fed up have resorted to the silliest means namely taking refuge in spirituality."<sup>11</sup> Lin saw the fundamental difference between Tagore's patriotism and Goethe's patriotism. Lin asserted that Tagore's advocacy of "spiritual restoration", "inner purity", "harmony with universe" and "seeing god everywhere" were all rubbish ideas, and even commented sarcastically: "when Tagore succeeds in his cultivation of the *kungfu* of 'seeing god everywhere' (the quickest would take a thousand years), God knows what India would have been by then." Lin commented viciously: "Tagore who enjoyed great reputation and favourable treatment today find himself inconvenient in advocating independence and opposing the British government. However, he has to find some way to get out of his predicament. Hence he unconsciously advocates the most convenient spiritual movement which does harm to nobody." He tried to bring down Tagore's noble mind to the debased level of his own meanness to categorize Tagore's ideas as "a discourse of consciousness assassination", and came out with a foul-mouthed utterance, like the proverbial wicked woman cursing everybody on the street, that Tagore's "discourse of spiritual restoration" actually "bears the stench of spiritual self amusement".<sup>12</sup>

Professor Tan Chung told us a story. When he was teaching in Delhi University in the 1960s he invited colleagues home for dinner. Once, in the after-dinner gossip, Professor Rubi Dasgupta, "Tagore Professor" and the Dean of Arts Faculty, told a joke. He said when people asked Lin Yutang what he was doing in the U. S. A., Lin's reply was: "I am selling *My Country and My People!*"<sup>13</sup> This was a well-known international joke that penetratingly critiqued Lin Yutang's academic mental servitude in his admiration of the West. Yet, when it was told through the mouth of an Indian friend, especially an expert on Tagore it assumed great significance. Tagore was

so deeply imbued in the Western civilizations that Lin Yutang fell far behind. However, Tagore disliked most such people like Lin Yutang who had no national self respect and were bent on flattering the Westerners. It was, indeed, the servitude of Lin Yutang that a man of his excellent talent inspired little respect in China. Tagore was so upright and overboard with dignified speech and well-meaning opinions during his times, and all what he said were verbal gems and golden truth while Lin Yutang featured himself as a narrow-minded fellow devoid of the deportment of Chinese civilization. His accusing Tagore's ideas of bearing "the stench of spiritual self amusement" reminds us the "Pseudo-Foreign Devil" in the fiction *The True Story of Ah Q* who would not allow Ah Q to rise in revolution. The strength of the "Pseudo-Foreign Devil" lies in his proverbial cleverness of the fox taking advantage of the fierce image of the tiger. He situated himself behind the tail of the "Foreign Devil" — the aggressor against China — and gesticulated at the "country bumpkins" of China and shouted: "You bear the stench!" Today, it is for the scholarly and cultural circles to come to the defence of Tagore and turn the table on Lin Yutang. Those whose ideas bear the stench were not the noble souls like Tagore, but the intellectuals like Lin Yutang who admired the West with mental servitude. Lin Yutang's abusive description of Tagore as the "pitiabile person whose country is dead" showed his cloven hoof. Had Tagore been a Briton or American Lin Yutang would not have resorted to the above cited vicious comments. He typified the prejudice on India's modern development on the part of a portion of Chinese intellectuals.

Nevertheless, Lin Yutang's disrespect to Tagore was the lone instance among the expansive Chinese intellectuals, thus should not deserve too much attention from us. On the whole, it was just like what Tagore had said himself "My stay here has been made pleasant, beautiful, and I am happy." — China tried her level best to be a good host while Tagore enjoyed VIP treatment. In his remaining days of life during his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Tagore was too weak to hold the pen when emotion surged within him, making him nostalgic for the celebration for his 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday in Beijing, and he dictated the poem below:

In the vessel of my birthdays  
 Sacred waters from many pilgrimages  
 Have I gathered, this I remember.  
 Once I went to the land of China,  
 Those whom I had not met  
 Put the mark of friendship on my forehead,  
 Calling me their own.  
 The garb of a stranger slipped from me unknowing,  
 The inner man appeared who is eternal,  
 Revealing a joyous relationship, unforeseen.  
 A Chinese name I took, dressed in Chinese clothes.  
 This I know in my mind:  
 Wherever I find my friend, there I am born anew.

Life's wonder he brings.<sup>14</sup>

In 1924, after returning from China to India, Tagore sorted out his China lectures and published it. He had not done anything like this after visiting other foreign countries. It shows the special importance he had attached to this visit. He really thought it a great event in his life. The book *Talks in China* was brought out in 1924 by Arunoday Art Press through the management of S. K. Bose. But, very soon, the copies of the book were withdrawn from the book stores. In less than a year, a substantially revised version of the book was published in 1925 by one of the publishers of Tagore, Karunabindu Biswas (Das 7). With these two versions, in addition to the brief reminiscences of Leonard Elmhirst, Kalidas Nag, and Kshitimohan Sen<sup>15</sup> all of whom were in the entourage of Tagore's China visit, the event drew a satisfactory conclusion for the time being. However, a young American scholar, Stephen Hay, undertook an exhaustive research and collected data from China, Japan and India in the 1960s, and bought out the book, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India* (by Harvard University Press) in 1970. Being rich in information the book received tremendous attention in Indian academic circles, and provided ammunition for some Indians for criticizing Tagore. Based on his conviction in "clash of civilizations", Hay played up the Chinese voices that were critical of Tagore's visit. This stimulated the anti-China opinions in India. In 1984, there was a seminar in Shimla under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. The "Tagore Professor" of Delhi University, Sisir Kumar Das, delivered the keynote address, Tan Chung who was Professor of Chinese in Jawaharlal Nehru University presented his paper on Tagore's China visit, titled "The Rabindranath Thunder of Oriental Dawn: A Sino-Indian Perspective of Tagore". In his paper, Tan Chung hailed Tagore's China visit as an important historical event. He presented to the seminar the warm welcome of China for Tagore, and cited massive Chinese source materials to criticize Stephen Hay for distorting history. After the seminar, Das and Tan Chung, along with another Indian expert on comparative literature, planned to bring out an English book on "Tagore and China". Finally, while Das and Tan Chung accomplished their tasks, the other scholar failed to deliver, and the book aborted.

With the help of Tan Chung and his sister, Tan Wen<sup>16</sup>, Das and Tan Wen jointly brought out a book in Bengali, *Bitarkita Atithi (The Controversial Guest)* published at Calcutta in 1985, and Das published his portion of work for the abortive book first in *China Report*, Delhi, and then, in the book, *Across the Himalayan Gap* edited by Tan Chung in 1998 (published by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi). Later, Das included it in the book he edited, *Rabindranath Tagore: Talks in China*. These efforts helped eliminate the misunderstandings about Tagore's China visit among the Indian friends to a certain extent. However, the great significance of this China visit of Tagore would become the consensus of the vast academia only if Chinese and foreign scholars work with tenacious efforts. Only thinking of "re-viewing Tagore's influence on Chinese literature and the traditional base that the Chinese nation could absorb the influence of Tagore to seriously summarize the experiences and lessons of the emulation of Tagore on the part of Chinese literature as well

as people's acceptance of Tagore when he was in China" is not the appropriate mood for the Chinese academia to grasp the significance of Tagore's China visit (Zhang Yu 287). We should view the topic from multiple angles of Sino-Indian friendship and world peace, more objectively and deeply embark on the research on "The significance of Tagore's China visit" so that we can contribute to the elimination of the "Himalayan gap" between China and India.

### III

On May 12, 1924, Xu Zhimo gave a talk at the Zhenguang Theatre in Beijing and said that after landing at Shanghai on April 12, Tagore "had given lectures and talked at smaller gatherings for 30 – 40 times at least" (Xu 442). By that time, Tagore had already decided to cut short of his visit (leaving Beijing two days after, and bidding farewell to China from Shanghai two weeks after), and there won't be too many talks afterwards. During these "30 – 40 talks at least", Tagore generally was well prepared, carrying a script or outline but very frequently departing from it and talking off the cuff. Xu Zhimo was his interpreter at most of, if not all the talks. His hand notes would have been the most comprehensive source materials of Tagore's talks in China. Unfortunately, after he died of an air crash in 1931, his wife, Lu Xiaoman did not take care of his manuscripts. Besides the four talks (Tagore's first talk at Shanghai on April 13, his talk at Hangzhou a few days later, his talk at the Tsinghua Institution on May 1st, and his farewell talk at Shanghai on May 22) Xu had published in the Chinese press, all others are not extant. What a pity! In 1999, "Tagore Professor" of Delhi University, renowned scholar of Bengali literature, Sisir Kumar Das, brought out a new book at the behest of Visva-Bharati, *Rabindranath Tagore: Talks in China* (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati Rabindra-Bhavana publication) which combined the two published versions during Tagore's time into one volume. This book has now become the most comprehensive and valuable primordial data.

Here, I wish to say something in passing. Translation, especially oral interpretation, is rather difficult to be absolutely perfect, deficiencies are unavoidable. Though Xu Zhimo's English was excellent, to fluently convey to the audience through Chinese Tagore's lofty ideas and profound emotions poetically expressed by him would be a great challenge. When we compare Xu Zhimo's translation with the original text of Tagore's talks as provided in the volume of Professor Das, we find the deficiencies. A few examples are given below.

In his very weighty lecture delivered at the Tsinghua Institution on May 1, Tagore said:

My young friends, I gaze at your faces, beaming with intelligence and eager interest across the distance of age... I envy you. When I was a boy, in the dusk of the waning night, we did not fully know to what a great age we had been born... What a delight it may be for you, and what a responsibility, this belonging to a period which is one of the greatest in the whole history of man! We realize the greatness of this age dimly, in the light of the glowing fire of pain, in the suffering that has come upon us, a suffering that is world-wide; we do not even know

fully what form it is going to take. (Das 62)

There is profound meaning in this short observation. He came from an India that was ruled by British colonialism, while many countries in the world, including China, were suffering similar pain. However, from the faces of the students of Tsinghua Institution he saw the vibrant young generation of China who were sensitive to the coming of the new era, contrasting with the bewilderment in which he spent his own boyhood. His poetic language was to remind the Chinese youths to see clearly the new era and realize their own responsibilities.

I now render Xu Zhimo's translation of this Tagore observation into English which sounds thus:

My young friends, I look at your young faces, beaming with intelligence and sincere interest, yet there is a gap of age between us... I envy you. When I was a boy, that time there was no dawn in the East, and the universe was dark. We did not fully realize that we had been born in a great period... You can be proud of yourself, but also should know of your responsibilities. You are now living in one of the greatest period of the history of man. We dimly distinguish the greatness of our times through the fire of our sorrow and pain. The pain is universal, and we don't know fully the shape of our future. ( Xu Zhimo 7, 34)

We can say that the main meaning of Tagore has been conveyed by this translation, but the power of agitation of Tagore was somewhat lost. It was like rendering a good poem banally.

The Chinese translation of this lecture was the revised version that Xu Zhimo completed at Mount Lushan on July 26 and published later, not what Xu spoke out during the on-the-spot interpretation which might be even worse. According to Xu's revised version, Tagore seems to have said something like this which does seem very unlikely to be said by the poet saint:

All things having perfect quality and behaviour belong to humanity. A beautiful thing cannot be monopolized by someone, cannot be easily blocked. That is desecration. Supposing you have utilized your instinct for beauty, arranging things on the ground, creating everything, this is a kindness towards distant guest. Even if I am a stranger, I can find my homeland and comfort in the heart of beauty. ( Xu Zhimo 7, 39)

We find it difficult to understand what this means, the on-the-spot interpretation of Xu Zhimo would have been even more difficult to grasp. The objective observer would have thought Tagore was indulging in scholastic discourse at the Tsinghua Institution, totally irrelevant to the world situation China was facing at that time. This is absolutely untrue. According to Tagore's manuscript, he has said these words to the Chinese youths:



Things that possess this quality of perfection belong to all humanity. Being beautiful they cannot be secured within closed doors, — that is a desecration which providence does not permit. If you have been successful in creating beauty, that in itself is hospitality, and I, a stranger, can find my home here in the heart of beauty. (Das 66)

These words have summarized what he dwelt upon at length that the Chinese culture laid emphasis on the material life while maintaining the spiritual beauty. Tagore used the wording “secured within closed doors”. By the word “secured” he meant locked in the safe to prevent it from being stolen. He was insinuating at the Western civilization treating private property as the sacred cow, hence it was impossible for all humanity to enjoy together. By saying “I, a stranger, can find my home here in the heart of beauty,” Tagore also fully reiterated the commonality between the Chinese and Indian civilizations. Such profound meaning has not been brought out by Xu Zhimo’s translation.

On August 19, Xu Zhimo completed translating Tagore’s speech at Hangzhou more than three months earlier, and published it in the supplementary of *Beijing Daily*. There are a number of places that we don’t find the translation happy. For example, Tagore thought his audience won’t expect “any message” from him, which is rendered by Xu Zhimo as “to bring any news to you”. Tagore said that “the great task of India in the past” was “building paths over obstacles.” Xu Zhimo translated as “The great cause of India in history was to open obstacles, building the paths.” Tagore said: “Men, at their highest, are pathmakers,” Xu Zhimo translated it as “We must first remember these road-makers”. Tagore said: “I have come to ask you to re-open the channel of communication which I hope is still there; for though overgrown with weeds of oblivion its lines can still be traced.” Xu Zhimo translated it as “I have come to ask you to channel again that waterway of emotional interaction, I hope we can find its original trace though it is covered with creepers of time” (Das, 49, 50; Xu Zhimo 7, 72, 73). Though the last sentence correctly convey the meaning, it sounds rather odd.

The discourse above is not meant to find fault from Xu Zhimo’s translation, but avail of this opportunity to discover the profound substance in Tagore’s lectures in China, so that all of us are encouraged to embark on an in-depth study of the manuscript of Tagore’s lectures, digest word by word, thus all the more thoroughly appreciate the positive significance of Tagore’s China visit. I want to spell this out from three viewpoints. The first point is that among all famous people of the modern world, Tagore was the most enthusiastic in advocating Sino-Indian fraternity. Everywhere he went inside China he made the Chinese people feel that India was their neighbourly country and sincere friend. Second, Tagore was the first foreign visiting scholar in China to compare the merits and demerits of the Eastern and Western civilizations from the height of geo-civilizational paradigm. He himself was deeply imbued with the Western civilizations, and was in favour of emulating the West and realizing modernization. However, he saw clearly the importance of the spiritual culture of the East and earnestly advise the Chinese not to ape the West. Third, Tagore was a patriotic

poet. When he was in China, he not only strongly revealed his ardent love for India, but also expressed his warm affection for China and wished the Chinese patriots success in their endeavours for constructing a rich and strong country and people.

Let us first discuss the first viewpoint. Tagore said in 1937 while inaugurating Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana:

This is, indeed, a great day for me, a day long looked for, when I should be able to redeem, on behalf of our people, an ancient pledge implicit in our past, the pledge to maintain the intercourse of culture and friendship between our people and the people of China, an intercourse whose foundations were laid eighteen hundred years back by our ancestors with infinite patience and sacrifice. (Tan Chung 177)

From these words, we see how Tagore cherished the mission of restoring the two-millennial geo-civilizational intercourse between India and China which he had repeatedly referred to while delivering his lectures in China in 1924. "This was the great task of India in the past, the task of building paths over obstacles," Tagore told Chinese students at Hangzhou (Das, 49). Tagore was even more enthusiastic about the restoration of the millennial Sino-Indian friendship in his first lecture at Shanghai:

I hope that some great dreamer will spring from among you and preach a message of love and, therewith overcoming all differences bridge the chasm of passions which has been widening for ages... The time is at hand when we shall once again be proud to belong to a continent which produces the light and radiates through the storm-clouds of trouble and illuminates the path of life. (Das 48)

Tagore made the observation below in another China lecture which was a special discourse on "*satyam*":

I have no doubt in my own mind that in the East our principal characteristic is not to set too high a price upon success through gaining advantage, but upon self-realisation through fulfilling our dharma, our ideals. Let the awakening of the East impel us consciously to discover the essential and the universal meaning of our own civilisation, to remove the debris from its path, to rescue it from the bondage of stagnation that produces impurities, to make it a great channel of communication between all human races. (Das 99)

Though only the "East" is mentioned in this observation, Tagore eyed on "all human races" which, obviously included the West, and Tagore's reference to achieving "success through gaining advantage" was clearly the identification of the Western ethos as well as its influence on the westernized non-Western world. In this observation, Tagore linked up India and China as well as "*dharma*" — the umbilical cord of the twin civilizations of India and China — in his appeal for the creation of a new geo-civilizational paradigm.

In Tagore's 1937 speech, he further observed: "The Hall [Cheena-Bhavana] which is to be opened today will serve both as the nucleus and as a symbol of that larger understanding that is to grow with time. Here students and scholars will come from China and live as part of ourselves, sharing our life and letting us share theirs, and by offering their labours in a common cause, help in slowly re-building that great course of fruitful contact between our peoples, that has been interrupted for ten centuries. For this Visva-Bharati is, and will, I hope, remain a meeting place for individuals from all countries, east or west, who believe in the unity of mankind and are prepared to suffer for their faith" (Tan 177).

All this shows that Tagore was not only an idealist, but paid great attention on the realization of idealism. He named the institution he created in 1921 as "Visva-Bharati" (meaning "where the whole world meets in one nest"), and developed the Sino-Indian intercourse as a break through. The first foreign institution on the campus of Visva-Bharati was "Cheena-Bhavana," and the first flock of foreign birds in Tagore's "world nest" was the Chinese community — scholars and their families led by Tan Yun-shan (1898 – 1983). This became the manifestation of the entire ideal of Tagore, and Tagore's 1924 China visit was an important step of this entire course.

Coming to the second point, before going to China Tagore had already lectured in many countries in the world. What he had lectured was the merits and demerits of the Eastern and Western civilizations which Tagore had had perceptual experiences. As early as 1916, when Tagore lectured at Tokyo Imperial University, he said: "The lamp of ancient Greece is extinct in the land where it was first lighted... But the civilization, whose basis is society and the spiritual ideal of man, is still a living thing in China and India" (Hay 64). In 1924, Tagore said in one of his lectures in Beijing: "Your civilization has been nurtured in its social life upon faith in the soul. You are the most long-lived race, because you have had centuries of wisdom nourished by your faith in goodness, not in mere strength" (Das 55).

There is no gainsaying that in the mind of Tagore there was immortality of the two great spiritual civilizations of China and India while the cultural holy lands of ancient Babylonia, Egypt, Greece and Rome had been reduced to ruins. Tagore was one of the few famous people in modern history who admired the Chinese and Indian civilizations like a pilgrim. In China, Tagore drew from the perceptual experiences he realized that countries like India and China that had age-old civilizations should not undergo "whole-hog westernization", instead of developing self-confidence in their own civilizational traditions and realizing deeply the positive functions of the Eastern civilizations in the making of a future world. He said in a lecture in Beijing:

We must rise from our stupor, and prove that we are not beggars. This is our responsibility. Search in your own homes for things that are of underlying worth. Then you will be saved and will be able to save humanity. Some of us, of the East, think that we should copy and imitate the West. I do not believe in it. What the West has produced is for the West, being native to it. But we of the East cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament. We want to find our own birth right. The West is becoming demoralized through being the

exploiter, through tasting of the fruits of exploitation. We must fight with our faith in the moral and spiritual power of men. We of the East have never revered death-dealing generals, nor lie-dealing diplomats, but spiritual leaders. Through them we shall be saved, or not at all. Physical power is not the strongest in the end. That power destroys itself. Machine guns and bomb-dropping aeroplanes crush living men under them, and the West is sinking to its dust. We are not going to follow the West in competition, in selfishness, in brutality. (Das 53 - 4)

We have just alluded to Tagore's "we are not beggars" (meaning "we are not poor both materially and spiritually, and would not become solicitant towards the Western civilization") and "We cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament. We want to find our own birthright." These are absolutely adages worthy of digestion on the part of Chinese intellectual elite so that they can undertake in-depth self-scrutiny. In his first lecture in Beijing, Tagore said with even more clarity: "My warning is, that those who would have you rely on material force to make a strong nation, do not know history, or understand civilization either. Reliance on power is the characteristic of barbarism; nations that trusted to it have already been destroyed or have remained barbarous" (Das 55). He further said: "Many will point to the weakness of China and India and tell you that thrown, as we are, among these strong and progressive peoples, it is necessary to emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction... We have seen victory won by diplomacy and brute force, but there are signs in the civilizations founded on diplomatic lies and blind material strength that even now their doom is on them. Lies do prosper for a while; but the true life dies at the root" (Das 56).

Tagore hit the nail on its head by alluding to emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction. Such a conviction was what the Japan of Meiji Restoration had taught to the Chinese patriots, an idea which is still deeply rooted in Chinese political thought. We see, today, the absolute truth of what Tagore has said that the "blind material strength" is the cause of self-destruction. The Great British Empire was thus destroyed, Hitler's Germany was thus destroyed, and the militarists' Japan was thus destroyed. Today, we see Tagore's prophecy of "their doom is on them" auguring ill for post-Bush, even post-Obama America.

Tagore admired the modernization of Japan. He was hoping that as a part of the great Eastern cultural tradition, Japan would lead Asia in modernization and in providing an alternative developmental model from the dominating materialistic West. He said in Japan in 1916:

Asia now feels that she must prove her life by producing living work, she must not lie passively dormant, or feebly imitate the West, in the infatuation of fear or flattery. For this we offer our thanks to this Land of the Rising Sun and solemnly ask her to remember that she has the mission of the East to fulfil. She must infuse the sap of a fuller humanity into the heart of modern civilization. (Hay 65)

Tagore also said in the same trip to Japan that “there are two currents in Japan: the old and the new. I sincerely hope that the Japanese people will not forget the old Japan. The new Japan is only an imitation of the West. This will ruin Japan. Now I believe that Japanese civilization is harmonizing the West and the East. I hope that you will carry the light of this glorious Oriental civilization to the West” (Hay 66).

Afterwards, Tagore was greatly disappointed about the developments of the events. In 1937, Japan launched a wanton aggression on China which triggered the Anti-Japanese War. The militarists’ Japanese government wished to utilize Tagore’s Japanese friends to lob anti-China propaganda on Tagore but Tagore vehemently rebuked them. In 1938, Tagore had two rounds of open correspondence with famous Japanese poet, Yone Noguchi, which helped Indian and international media see clearly Japan’s getting onto the path of self-destruction by behaving like the proverbial Lady Dongshi stupidly copying others’ examples. In Tagore’s first letter dated September 1, Tagore said: “your letter has hurt me to the depths of my being... Faced by the borrowed science of Japanese militarism which is crudely western in character, China’s stand reveals an inherently superior moral stature” (Tan Chung 210). In his second letter to Noguchi, Tagore said: “I suffer intensely not only because of the reports of the Chinese suffering batter against my heart, but because I can no longer point out with pride the example of a great Japan” (Tan Chung 214). All this is not only Tagore’s total disappointment with Japan, but also the poet’s most severe condemnation couched with sophisticated nuance on Japan’s discarding the tradition of Eastern civilizations to blindly ape the West.

In the last couple of centuries, Japan has been the unity of opposites without its clearly understanding it. On the one hand, it is like what Tagore described “feebly imitate the West, in the infatuation of fear or flattery” and tasted its sweetness, even Tagore had appreciated it. On the other hand, it has taken over all the bad points of the Western civilization and does it in high spirit. Tagore saw this peril clearly and observed: “The new Japan is only an imitation of the West. This will ruin Japan.” In 1921, Tagore wrote to C. F. Andrews: “To me humanity is rich and large and many-sided. Therefore I feel deeply hurt when I find that, for some material gain, man’s personality is mutilated in the Western world and he is reduced to a machine” (Uma 202). In his speech at Tokyo Imperial University in 1916, Tagore warned Japan against “imitating the West”. He said: “It is like dressing our skeleton with another man’s skin, giving rise to eternal feuds between the skin and the bone at every movement... You can borrow knowledge from others, but you cannot borrow temperament” (Uma 242).

In 1916, Tagore said in Japan “you cannot borrow temperament”, but the Japanese turned a deaf ear to it. The result was Japan’s creating its self-destruction. In 1924, Tagore said again in Beijing: “we of the East cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament”, and the Chinese did not turn a deaf ear to Tagore’s most sincerely advice. China did not follow the beaten track of Japan. People should thank Tagore for his advice. Earlier I have alluded to Tagore’s pointing out that there

was a proposition among the Asians about “emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction”. That the Japanese were pushed towards self-destruction by this proposition is an indisputable fact. However, the Chinese have not experienced the bitter lessons of the Japanese, hence are not deeply convinced of the harm of this proposition. In the past, China had no opportunity to pursue power. Now, their opportunities in doing so are increasing more and more, hence we hear louder and louder the advocacy of “emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction”. This is a dangerous trend. We must carefully study the valuable advice of Tagore of 1924 again and pay attention to infuse the sap of the excellent tradition of Chinese civilization.

About the third point, we have to see first of all the fact that the national anthem of two different countries today — India and Bangladesh — are poems composed by Tagore and songs from the Rabindra sangit (Tagore himself participated in the work of music composition and opera direction). A single poet giving birth to two national anthems is an unprecedented feat in human cultural history. Tagore passed away in 1941. The Republic of India born in 1950 adopted *Tagore's Janaganamana (Thou Art the Ruler of the Minds of All People)* as its national anthem. The People's Republic of Bangladesh born in 1972 adopted *Tagore's Amar Sonar Bangla (Our Golden Bangla)* as its national anthem. These are vivid examples of the geo-civilizational paradigm with profound significance, eternalizing Tagore's ardent love for his own land through posterity in the hearts of Indians and Bangladeshis and to a certain extent neutralizing the crime committed by the British colonialism in mutilating the solidarity of the people of the Indian subcontinent. We can thus conclude that the great and noble patriotism of Tagore is contesting against the narrow-minded geopolitical paradigm forever.

Such great and noble patriotic sentiments of Tagore permeate in the two anthologies, *Gitanjali* and *The Crescent Moon: Child poems*, that were so familiar to Chinese readers. In “Baby's Way” in *The Crescent Moon* Tagore rhymed:

Baby was so free from every tie in the land of the tiny crescent moon.

It was not for nothing he gave up his freedom.

He knows that there is room for endless joy in mother's little corner of a heart,  
and it is sweeter far than liberty to be caught and pressed in her dear arms.

Baby never knew how to cry. He dwelt in the land of perfect bliss.<sup>17</sup>

These poetic words view the providence and sentimental attachment between an individual and his/her native land from a modern cultural perspective. Tagore likened the individual to a baby and his/her native land to the mother's bosom. The individual, like the baby, is born “free from every tie”, i. e., from the attachment of the native land. This, in fact, is the individual attitude towards his/her native land and motherland in many cases in the Western world. However, Tagore felt that the individual living in the native land was like the baby willing to sacrifice his freedom and “to be caught and pressed in the dear arms” of the mother — the native land. This was because living in the happy state of love is far more enjoyable and enriched than indi-

vidual freedom.

Baby never knew how to cry. This is a modern scientific theory: Baby's "crying" is only a kind of exercise, for the baby does not know sadness. Tagore transposed this scientific theory into the reiteration that love for one's own native land is an individual instinct, and is the manifestation of positive optimism. If every Chinese intellectual elite carefully digests these words of the "Baby's Way" poem and deeply understands their philosophical logic, it will help augmenting patriotism.

*Gitanjali* that fetched Tagore the Nobel Prize of literature is in every word and every line the crystallization of Indian philosophical thought. The various symbols for God in the anthology do not reflect any idol worship, but manifest the profound affection for the native land, the tradition, the faith and the civilization. It is a manifesto of patriotism with high IQ. That is why some Indian institutions adopts *Gitanjali* as the "Bible" of its training programmes. The most famous stanza is *Gitanjali* (35), which says:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfect;  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action —  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.<sup>18</sup>

Lu Xun (1881 – 1936) published an article titled *Wanton condemnation and superlative eulogy* in the supplementary of *Shanghai Daily* in 1933 in which he observed: "About the modern people serving the ancient times, I am reminded Tagore's visit to China, and the setting up of a stage for him to lecture. People provided him with a harp, burnt incense. He was flanked by Lin Juemin on the left and Xu Zhimo on the right, both donned the Indian cap. Poet Xu started introducing: 'Ai, *jiligulu*, white clouds and clean breeze, the silver plate... Dong!' talking like a living fairy. In this way our youths on earth got disappointed and departed. How can the laymen not depart from the fairies! However, I read his [Tagore's] essay on the Soviet Union in which he described himself as 'I am an Indian under the British rule', he knew himself well. Perhaps, if our poets and others had not made him a living fairy he would not have been so confused, and the [Chinese] youths would not have been so alienated. What a bad luck now!"<sup>19</sup> Lu Xun described in another place that Tagore was totally confused by the Chinese who donned the Indian caps and ultimately left [China] bewildered. These two observations reflect that Lu Xun did not take Tagore's China visit that serious, if not opposed to it. However, Lu Xun could not but concede that in those days when the whole world was under the repression and domination of the West, the Chinese had no say, entire Asia had no say with the lone exception of

Tagore. When Tagore lectured in Europe and America as well as Japan, all the immensely proud government officials, king's men and aristocrats and upper class intellectual elites of the world eulogized him. This was in sharp contrast with the cold reception meted out to outstanding Chinese elites like Liang Qichao and Cai Yuanpei (1868 – 1940) in Europe. Lu Xun lectured in Hong Kong in February 1927 and his talk was titled *China That Is Mute*. He said: "Let us see which are the mute nations. Can we hear the voice of Egypt? Can we hear the voice of Annam and Korea? Except Tagore what other voice of India can we hear?"<sup>20</sup>

The observations of Lu Xun cited above also reflect the fear of the Chinese leftists at that time that the hosts of Tagore (Lu Xun named Lin Juemin and Xu Zhimo) intended to utilize Tagore's China visit to propagate the rightists' ideology and stem the development of the leftist movement. Just as Daiying observed: "Tagore should not have been the target of vilification, but as there was real possibility of Tagore's being utilized by others, we cannot but offer a little critique to his thought."<sup>21</sup> This critique is objective. It combines with the observations of Lu Xun cited above to reflect the involvement of Tagore's visit in the internal political polemics of China. The critics of Tagore's China visit were motivated by their concerns for the future of Chinese revolution and the will power of the Chinese youths. Their offering positive suggestions and criticisms, and steadfastly leading the people onto the path of revolution are not wrong. But, they did not do it properly. Especially improper was that some individuals attacked Tagore openly in the press, even resorting to the distribution of leaflets showing disrespect to Tagore. This was discourteous towards the great emissary who was Tagore and who went to China in search of the traditional friendship between China and India for which he had suffered toiling and fatigue. Still, Tagore with his broadmindedness treated it as a friendly gesture. He thought that those who were opposed to him had paid great attention to him hence having overacted. Before Tagore's generous toleration we must all the more censure the impropriety of our countrymen.

Among various comments the most appropriate were those of Zhou Zuoren (1885 – 1967) and Jianhu which, nevertheless, were not paid much attention to by the media. In his article *Damage of the Adults and Others*, Zhou Zuoren made himself clear that he was neither with Tagore's fans nor with his detractors, but was viewing the polemic from a neutral standpoint. In the essay he observed: "I feel people should welcome [Tagore] as his hosts, not utilizing the image of the venerable sir as advertisement to sell their metaphysics. As for those who were opposed [to Tagore's visit] in the name of advocating science, they were a little over-sensitive albeit their motivation was appreciable. When we say that it was improper to utilize the image [of Tagore] as advertisement to sell their metaphysics, we have only said this was mean behaviour, but we believe it won't succeed. The power of ideology is simply pitifully feeble for the masses, this can be grasped by us who do not understand historical materialism." "Nowadays the enthusiasts seem afraid to be carried away by venerable Tagore. This is rather too idealistic a state of mind." Zhou Zuoren also observed that the macro tendency in China at that time was "xenophobia versus traditionalism," it was in such a stormy polemic atmosphere that "Mr. Zhu Zhendan visited China unfor-



unately and bore the fury of the ‘elephant expelling group’, he was all the more an innocent victim.”<sup>22</sup> In his article *Welcome to Tagore*, Jianhu, like Zhou Zuoren, tried to moderate the atmosphere of the media. He observed: “Tagore has arrived in China, there is no denying that issues like the Oriental culture, spiritual life... would again be debated in the open forum.”<sup>23</sup> He thought the controversy over Tagore’s China visit was, to a great extent, the misunderstanding of venerable Tagore. He requested people not to “forget his teachings on real problems”. He cited one instance of Tagore’s reply to the question raised by Feng Youlan (1895 – 1990) in the United States regarding China’s future. Tagore said to Feng: “I have only one advice for China: ‘Quickly grasp science!’”<sup>24</sup> Another instance was Tagore’s letter to an English friend in which Tagore said after suffering all the humiliation from the West, the East would not easily love the West. Neither could the East gently yield to the West, nor could feebly begging the West do because it would make us even poorer. Jianhu used an ancient Chinese saying to conclude: “A teacher can be likened to supporting a bunch of drunkards, after making one stand up another would fall down.”<sup>25</sup> I think the “teacher” alluded to was Tagore. His likening the Chinese intellectuals at that time to “a bunch of drunkards” is vivid analogy. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Chinese intellectual circles gradually opened up, yet a bunch of narrow-minded “drunkards” remained, turning a deaf ear to the objective advices, obsessed with their desire for help from the “outsiders”. They wanted to utilize Tagore to enhance their own values which is a typical attitude of “adding weight to oneself by hijacking the ocean” and “making oneself shine with other’s light”.

I would like to add a footnote to Jianhu’s observation that what he has cited was Tagore’s letter to C. F. Andrews dated July 9, 1921 in which Tagore observed:

We in the East have long been suffering humiliation in the hands of the West. It is enormously difficult for us either to cultivate or express, any love for Western races — especially as it may have the appearance of snobbishness or prudence. The talk and behaviour of the Moderate Party in India fails to inspire us because of this —because their moderation springs from the colourless principle of expediency. The bond of expediency between the powerful and the weak must have some element in it which is degrading. (Uma 208)

We have quoted Lu Xun’s 1933 observation: “I read his [Tagore’s] essay on the Soviet Union in which he described himself as ‘I am an Indian under the British rule’, he knew himself well.” Nine years after Tagore’s China visit, Lu Xun saw Tagore praised the Soviet Union hence changing his opinions about Tagore. He seemed to say: “I did not see clearly before, now I know that Tagore is also an anti-imperialist patriot”. Such a mentality was quite typical among the progressive Chinese intellectuals in those days. This was because, on the one hand, the Chinese intellectuals did not understand Tagore very well while on the other hand, Tagore’s political thought was quite ahead of the times, and he stood on the height of geo-civilizational paradigm. Those whose minds were contained by the geopolitical paradigm (they existed not only in China, but also in large numbers in India) were like the proverbial

blind men sizing up the elephant. We have earlier alluded to Tagore's "*Janaganamana*" (*Thou Art the Ruler of the Minds of All People*) poem which has become the national anthem of India and is indeed a topmost patriotic poem. Because it has used "ruler" as imagery, there were even people vilifying it as a piece composed to welcome the British ruler, King George V who visited India in 1911 (the only British monarch ever visited the Indian colony). This is tantamount to measuring the noble motivations of a gentleman by the yardstick of a mean person's heart.

A typical example of modern Indian critic against the thought of Tagore was M. N. Roy, who was the founder of the Communist Party of India, met Dr. Sun Yat-sen, was sent by the Comintern to China to persuade Wang Jingwei (1883-1944) to remain in the KMT-CPC united front, and was expelled by Stalin and returned to India. In the 1930s, Roy criticized Tagore's thought without naming him: "The claim that the Indian people as a whole is less morally corrupt, emotionally purer, idealistically less worldly, in short, spiritually more elevated, than the bulk of the western society, is based upon a wanton disregard for reality" (Hay 263).

Roy's criticism of Tagore's thought makes us see the unending debate on the unity of opposites of inheriting tradition and modernization. In concrete terms, how should the societies of ancient civilizations like China and India modernize; should the millennial civilizational traditions be swept away as trash, or should they cast off the slough like the snake does and effect metabolism and rejuvenate their vibrancy? If we sweep away our tradition as trash and the house becomes clean and empty what should we do? China is facing such a problem now. As advocated by Lu Xun and others, the moral values of Confucius and Mencius were swept away like trash, and the morality of the new generations is a vast void spatiality. Foreign cultural trash seizes the opportunity to get in and create the spiritual crisis for the Chinese society. This, of course, is a new discourse that is beyond the scope of our essay.

It is a misconception to think of Tagore advocating the preservation of the old. He said in one of his lectures in China: "I have said that life is rebellious. Some of our Eastern schoolboys may at once jump to conclusion that this rebellion must take form to imitation of the West. But they should know that while dead custom is plagiarism from our own past life, imitation would be plagiarism from other peoples' life. Both constitute slavery to the unreal. The former, though a chain, at least fits our figure; the latter, for all its misfit, is just as much a chain. Life frees itself through its growth and not through its borrowings" (Das 99).

Let us return to the topic of the ardent patriotism of Tagore. From the critique of Roy we can see that owing to his profound sentiments for and in-depth understanding of the traditional wisdom of his own land, Tagore pointed out some of the serious drawbacks of the Western civilization from such a standpoint. We can say this was the "regard for reality" from the Indian perspective. Departing from this stand, there were people who don't love India as much as Tagore did, or don't love India at all but only love the West. To them what Roy pointed out was correct. Indeed, Tagore seems to have over-emphasized the superiority of the Indian civilization in comparison to the Western civilizations. However, in Tagore's 1924 lectures in China, he never hyped India, but only reiterated the Chinese civilization and the Eastern civilizations.

In other words, he just transformed his profound sentiments for and in-depth understanding of the traditional wisdom of his native land into the profound sentiments for and in-depth understanding of the traditional wisdom of China. He just pointed out some of the serious drawbacks of the Western civilization from this standpoint. He said at the Tsinghua Institution on May 1:

You are not individualists in China. Your society is itself the creation of your communal soul. It is not the outcome of a materialistic, of egoistic mind, — a medley of unrestricted competition, which refuses to recognize its obligations to others. I see that you in China have not developed the prevailing malady of the world, the lunacy of an unmeaning multiplication of millions, the production of those strange creatures called multi-millionaires. (Das 63)

We find today that these words of Tagore are most relevant for the Chinese situation. In China today, we have “multiplication of millions” and the so-called “multi-millionaires”, thus we have to pay attention all the more to maintain the society as the creation of “communal soul” and avoid its degeneration into “the outcome of a materialistic, of egoistic mind”. In this way, China’s current rage of getting rich would not turn into “lunacy” and “unmeaning,” and the nouveau riche of China would not become “strange creatures”.

Having said the above Tagore had absolutely no desire to wish China remaining poor and backward. I have alluded to earlier that he had gained an impression that the students of the Tsinghua Institution were “beaming with intelligence and eager interest” and he was “envious”. Tagore cared for the future of China, especially the Chinese civilization, as he cared for his own country, hence offering his sincere advice. At the end of his farewell speech delivered at Shanghai, Tagore said the following:

Some of your patriots were afraid that, carrying from India spiritual contagion, I might weaken your vigorous faith in money and materialism. I assure those who thus feel nervous that I am entirely inoffensive; I am powerless to impair their career of progress, to hold them back from rushing to the market place to sell the soul in which they do not believe. I can even assure them that I have not convinced a single sceptic that he has a soul, or that moral beauty has greater value than material power. I am certain that they will forgive me when they know the result. (Das 80)

Tagore said this to refute the criticism levied on him by Chen Duxiu and others — quite a severe rebut. The last sentence hinting “the result” is tantamount to say: You fellows who don’t want your soul and don’t pay attention to spiritual culture will not meet a good end. Pardon me for saying it before the tragedy occurs. Even having said this, Tagore was always confident that China would progress both in material culture and spiritual culture. In fact, among all foreigners, Tagore was one of very few who had reiterated that the Chinese civilization enjoyed the maximum from both the mate-

rial world and the spiritual world. In this respect, not only was the Chinese civilization far superior to the Western civilizations that neglected the spiritual culture, but also deserved to be emulated by India who over-emphasized the spiritual culture. Tagore said in 1937 when he inaugurated Cheena-Bhavana at Santiniketan: “[C]an anything be more worthy of being cherished than the beautiful spirit of the Chinese culture that has made the people love material things without the strain of greed, that has made them love the things of this earth, clothe them with tender grace without turning them materialistic? They [Chinese] have instinctively grasped the secret of the rhythm of things, — not the secret of power that is in science, but the secret of expression. This is a great gift, for God alone knows this secret. I envy them this gift and wish our [Indian] people could share it with them” (Tan Chung 179). These words virtually repeated what he had said at the Tsinghua Institution on May 1st, 1924. The only difference is: at Tsinghua he was saying “Let us develop the instinct that can grasp the secret,” but at Santiniketan 13 years later he changed it into “They [Chinese] have instinctively grasped the secret.” This means Tagore had this basic admiration for China in his blood, and it grew over time.

### Conclusion

In 1924 Tagore spent his unforgettable 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday in China while we are publishing this book and organizing a seminar to greet the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary (in 2011). These are milestones of Sino-Indian friendship. Tagore fulfilled his aim in the 1924 China visit, viz., strengthening the traditional friendship between the peoples of China and India, and reopening the path of cultural intercourse between the two countries. He enabled the Chinese people to understand India better, and the Indian people to know China more in those years. Tagore made indelible contributions to the annals of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse, and his contributions were even comparable to those made by the pioneers like Kumarajiva, Bodhidharma, Paramartha, Amoghavajra, Vivekananda as well as Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing. Thus the significance of Tagore's China visit cannot be treated lightly and belittled as “a pitiable cultural interaction,” “a cultural get together with unhappy end” or using “historical misunderstanding” or “misunderstanding of the era” to describe its not having achieved the expected results as some contemporary Chinese scholars would like to conclude (Sun 331).

Those who thought Tagore was propagating the opposition to Western materialism misunderstood his real intentions. Tagore saw that with the increasing development of science and the increasing affluence of materials in the modern society, the human nature and spirit of mankind were being suppressed and their souls being imprisoned while people were acquiring the advantages and conveniences of materials. His ideal was the prosperity of Chinese and Indian as well as the world's civilizations so that the “great festival of lamps of culture” would become brilliantly lit, and it was the fire of the spiritual culture of the mankind that should ignite this festival of lamps. He realized the value and richness of the Asian civilizations. While dealing with the traditional culture he was neither a conservative, nor a radical. He was not opposed to

all changes, but was in favour of the Asian nations preserving their traditions to a certain extent, discovering the quintessence of the tradition, utilizing the tradition, and realizing their own traditional values while having a dialogue with the tradition. Tagore's was the quest for the perfection of the inner world of the humans as well as spiritual liberty, but was opposed to the expansion of material avarice that suppressed the "soul of humanity". Today the Chinese society is facing numerous problems resultant from excessive modernization, i. e. , traffic jams, environment pollution, destruction of cultural heritage, ecological crisis etc. How we regret that our intellectuals in those days failed to respect Tagore's opinions, failed to listen to his advices without distorting his views! The spiritual vitality of the Chinese society would have been much better off had they done all this.

Tagore's China visit and the various attitudes in the Chinese responses wrought an unforgettable page in the annals of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse. It has provided endless food for thought for the benefit of posterity in their introspection and forward looking. Though Tagore's 1924 China visit created approbation and disapprobation in the thinking society and cultural circles of China, there is no gainsaying that the traditional friendship between the two peoples of China and India was strengthened and the path of cultural intercourse was recreated. Tagore has made "an indelible impact on modern Chinese thinkers", and "he personified the Sino-Indian cultural intercourse" (Sun 8). Tagore "promoted the friendship between the people of China and India" (Shen 3) and "provided the modern enlightenment for thinking and resolving many an important issue" (Yin 346). As Ji Xianlin observed: "Today, both in India and China, Tagore is the symbol for Sino-Indian friendship" (Wang 296). A thorough review of the polemics resultant from Tagore's China visit should provide a discourse not only in cultural interchange, but also in comparative literature and comparative cultural studies. Examining this historical event in cross-cultural and multilingual circumstances can penetrate into the psychological complexity of the Chinese native culture vis-à-vis the arrival of foreign cultures, and review the projection of the foreign cultures on China's native culture as well as the prejudices towards and misjudgments of the foreign cultures on the part of Chinese intellectuals. Such a discourse will, no doubt, help the learned circles of China to readjust their attitudes towards the foreign cultures and establish an exemplary case for reference and emulation by scholars on inter-cultural and inter-literary studies.

150 years ago Tagore was born in India. During these 150 years, he has bequeathed to India, China and the mankind a rich cultural heritage. All his writings and speeches are the crystallization of culture. By reading and listening to Tagore one enhances his/her affection for the mankind and invigorates his/her quest for *satyam* (wisdom), *shivam* (truth), and *sundaram* (beauty). We wish in the near future a cultural giant like Tagore will rise in China.

### [ Notes ]

1. See *Battlefront of Social Sciences*, No. 2, 1979.

2. According to a survey conducted by the Reuter, 80% of Chinese and Indians are confident about the nation's future. The Japanese percentage is only 14%. Cf. <http://www.chinareviewnews.com> Feb. 18, 2010.
3. The Chinese custom maintains that when one lives "fully" that many years, he/she automatically advances to the next number of years. Tagore was fully 63 and advanced to 64.
4. 参见杨天宏:《新民之梦》(成都:四川人民出版社,1995年)329。
5. 参见孙中山:《三民主义》(第五讲)。此书版本很多,请参见:[http://www.360doc.com/content/08/0518/17/64043\\_1267974.shtml](http://www.360doc.com/content/08/0518/17/64043_1267974.shtml)
6. 参见袁行霈等主编:《中华文明史》,第4卷(北京:北京大学出版社,2006年)449。
7. 参见王维耿等编:《孙中山集外集》(上海:上海人民出版社1990年)531。
8. 参见《晨报》,1924年4月13日。
9. 参见广东省社会科学院历史研究室等编:《孙中山全集》(10)(北京:中华书局1981-1986年)40。
10. See Krishna Dutta & Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*(New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2009)251-2.
11. 《晨报·副镌》,1924年6月13日。
12. 《晨报·副镌》,1924年6月13日。
13. *My Country and My People* was Lin Yutang's English publication in the U. S. A. in 1935.
14. See *Rabindranath Tagore: Poems*, Calcutta: Visva-Bharati Press, *Poem No.* 123. 1942.
15. Grand father of renowned Harvard Professor and winner of Nobel Prize for Economics, Amartya Sen who used to hear Kshitimohan Sen talking about his China trip accompanying Tagore.
16. Dr. Tan Wen was Reader in Bengali of Delhi University, and she passed away in 1998 in the U. S. A.
17. See Rabindranath Tagore, *The Crescent Moon: Child-Poems*(New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913)8.
18. See Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*(Visva-Bharati & UBS Publishers' Distributors, 2003)75.
19. 参见《鲁迅全集》,第3册,第5册(北京:人民文学出版社年版,1957年)251,469。
20. 参见《鲁迅全集》,第4册,第5册(北京:人民文学出版社年版,1957年)14,469。
21. 参见代英:《告欢迎太戈尔的人》,《民国日报》副刊《觉悟》,1924年4月19日。
22. 参见《晨报副刊》,1924年5月14日,署名:陶然。
23. 参见《东方杂志》第21卷第6号,1924年3月25日。
24. 参见冯友兰:《与印度泰谷尔谈话——东西文明之比较观》,《新潮》第3卷第1号,1921年10月1日。
25. 参见《东方杂志》第21卷第6号,1924年3月25日 *Eastern Miscellany*, vol. 21, no. 6 (March 25), 1924.

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