

# - Impressions on the China Visit - The Tiger is Thirty Years Behind the Dragon

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India is touted as a knowledge power and China as the muscle power of the world. But objectively, I think that this comparison is crude and unrealistic. The fact of the matter is that India is at least 30 years behind China, if not more. China will soon send a man to the moon and catch up with India in information technology and mastery of English language. All their high tech and scientific communications are in Mandarin Chinese while Indians are struggling with dozens of languages and an ill digested English, making education, communication and discussions a farce. There is appalling disconnect between masses, leaders and intellectuals as a result. There is absolute lack of theory building and creative thinking based on research, experiment in India. China is investing heavily in research and education.

China is confidently, but quietly, strutting on the world stage, planning their moves strategically, to weaken India militarily, neutralize India politically and diminish India economically. They engage with Americans,

Europeans and Russians patiently drawing strength from every encounter, without yielding much. The Indian leadership wasted two years of energy and time with America negotiating an aborted nuclear deal. Evidently India has no stomach for strategic thinking and calculated action.

India has no time to waste. It has to discover collective purpose, determination, strategic vision and leadership and a willingness to take risk and bold initiatives.

I hope ideas in this booklet will inspire Indian managers and leaders to think on those lines.

## **China Visit**

I was in China for three weeks in September 2007. It was an eye-opening experience. I visited Beijing, Xian, Chengdu, Emeishan, Jiuzhaihuan, Chongqing, Shanghai, and Su Zhaou. We, including three of my disciples from Los Angeles, also took a 700 km cruise in the Yangtse River from Chongqing to the Three Gorges Dam.

No visit to China is complete without seeing the Great Wall, north of Beijing, stretching 5000 km, East to West. This granite wall, built in the 14th century, connects several mountain peaks, with observation posts, purported to protect China from the northern hordes like the Mongols and Manchus. Ninety-three percent of Chinese are the Han race: small built, fair skinned, featureless people. Comparatively, the Mongols, Urghirs, Manchus and Tibetans are big built people with sharp features.

Another big attraction of China is the 7000 Terracotta Warrior Statues excavated from one of the Ming Emperor's grave situated 40 miles outside of Xian, the old capital of China for 1200 years. The fabled Silk route began from here that went all the way to Rome.

China also boasts of being the exclusive home for Pandas. We visited a Panda sanctuary in Chengdu, in the Siachuan province. A single Panda, one-third the size of a black bear, eats 40 KG of bamboo shoots every day but only a third of it is digested.

### **Land and People**

China is three times as big as India; But very mountainous. The vast Tibetan plateau, 12,000 to 14,000 ft elevation, the desert of Inner Mangolia and Sinkiang and the cold wastes of Manchuria are sparsely populated. Most of China's 1.3 billion people are concentrated on the Yangtse and Yellow river valleys. And most of China's industrial activity is concentrated on this region. Hongkong and Shanghai, the two engines of China's growth, are in this area. Chongquin, a major production center on the confluence of rivers Yangtse and Jialin, the largest Municipality in China with a population of 30 million and an area of 12,000 square miles is 17,00 km west of Shanghai. China has about 150 cities with population of 1 million or more.

The area of arable land available is the same in India and China, but the grain production in China is three times more than in India. China consumes four times more power, steel, petrol and cement than India. China's Forex reserve is more than one trillion dollars compared to India's \$ 275 billion. China enjoys a trade surplus unparalleled in history. India's trade balance is appallingly in the red. China's saving rates are far above than India's. China attracts \$70 billion every year in foreign investments where as India gets only 3 to 5 billion annually.

No wonder China has become the workshop of the world.

China's Ruthless Determination and Ambition

The Three Gorges Dam project is a classic example of Communist China's ruthless

determination and ambition. The Three Gorges Dam is a reservoir of 800 km long and 100 km wide, water level going up to 175 meters. All the cities along the river Yangtse suffered when the water raised inundating houses, graveyards, ancient monuments and temples. 1.5 million people were uprooted and resettled. When water level rises further another 3 million will have to be resettled. As we were cruising along the Yangtse I could see brand new cities gleaming under the blue sky. But this was achieved under tremendous financial and psychological cost. Some of the old people refused to vacate their homes leaving the graveyards of their revered ancestors, preferring to drown in the surging muddy waters. The total costs of the Dam including resettlements were 30 billion dollars. The objectives of the Dam projects are (a) Flood control (b) Tourism (c) transport (d) irrigation and drinking water for the parched areas of the north (e) Power generation. When all the 32 generators are fully operational the power generated will be 18,600 Megawatt units, which will cater to one third of China's needs. 68 billion dollars will be spent on bringing water to the north through three canals of two thousand km long each. Only China can accomplish such Bhagiratha feats. We have to only watch the chaotic and rudderless Indian scene to understand the enormity of China's accomplishment. The Medha Patkars, Bahugunas, Babe Amtes, Mamta Banerjees, the VHPs, the Communists – this strange assortment of bedfellows clamoring against India's development agenda, whether it is the Narmada Dam or the Linking rivers Project! No doubt China has yet to calculate the ecological, socio-psychological and cultural cost of their rapid development.

### **Geo-politic Importance of Tibet**

India lives under the looming shadow of China – geopolitically and economically. India has no broader with China if Tibet regains its independence. Tibet has enormous strategic value for India. Tibet looks like the head of India. The rivers Sindhu and Brahmaputra, the two arms of India, flow from Tibet. Mount Kailash, the abode of Siva and Manasarovar, the symbol of Shakti are in Tibet. Chairman Mao Tse Tung being a ruthless geopolitical strategist

knew the importance of Tibet to China while Prime Minister Nehru, a compassionate idealist statesman, failed to see Tibet's value for India'. For Nehru Tibet was a barren waste with no political or economic significance. But the shrewd Sardar Patel alerted Nehru about the strategic importance of Tibet and cautioned him about China's intention. Tibetan Plateau, almost the size of India, broods over the Indo-Gangetic valley to the south and the Yangtse – yellow river valleys to the north and east. Tibet mediates between India and China. Whoever controls Tibet, the roof of the world, controls India-China dynamics and eventually Asia. All Chinese maps show Indian state Arunachal Pradesh as theirs. When I protested, my tour guide exclaimed 'is it so?'. This claim is China's strategic bargaining chip as a trade off in future negotiations against their illegal occupation of Aksai Chin.

### **The Chinese Dragon is Galloping**

The Chinese Dragon is galloping in mind-boggling speed. The Tiger turned Indian elephant is still ambivalent, hesitant, shy, and is just prowling shackled by vested interests in taking the leap. China successfully implemented the Special Economic Zone Policy and is reaping enormous economic benefits. Teng Hiao Ping's post Mao policy of iron grip political control and free market capitalism has worked magic for China; Whereas India is vacillating in the implementation of special economic zones and losing valuable time. The Nandigram protest is a perfect example of short sightedness on the part of politicians and general public.

What amazed me about China was the energy and purpose exhibited by ordinary people. Both women and men are trained, motivated and dressed up to pursue a single goal- to sell their products: silk items, shoes, garments, toys, durable consumer goods like TVs, ACs, washing machines, cell phones, automobiles, apartments, tourism (100 million tourists in 2006), Traditional Chinese Medicine, you name it, China produces it. India is nowhere in manufacturing and exports compared to China. India's much vaunted IT industry employs a meager one million people of the vast 500 million job seekers and contributes only 3 percent of the Indian GDP.

### **People and Housing**

China is in a building boom. Whichever city you go, Beijing to Chengdu to Chongqing to Shanghai it is construction and more construction. 25 to 50 story apartment buildings jostling for space as far as your eyes can see. I felt that Beijing and Shanghai have several Manhattans of high-rise buildings. But you hardly see any single standing house like you do in India or Los Angeles. These Chinese cities are like beehives or anthills. You can see old helpless men and women peer through square windows of box like tall buildings. The price for providing living quarters for all! 'Sometimes', my tour guide told me, '10 to 15 people crowd together in a small room of the size of 10x 7 square feet area'. No creativity can emerge from such cramped habitats. China may not care for creativity, innovation and individual freedom. They are good at imitation. They learn fast. They took Buddhism from India and market capitalism from America. Xuang Zang (596- 664 AD) visited India, lived in Nalanda and Takshasila for 12 years with Buddhist monks and took away 75 volumes of Buddhist scriptures and translated into 1000 volumes in Chinese. His lineage called the Pure Land Amitabha Buddhism is very popular in China today. The Pagoda that the Emperor built for him in Xian is a bustling thriving spiritual centre. Similarly, ever since Teng Hsiao Ping's visit to America in the 70s, which opened the old commissar's eyes, China's dream has been to emulate and excel United States in every field. Sometime they sound and look, to the visiting foreigner, irritatingly imitative. The size and layout of highways and airports, announcements by flight attendants, sophisticated greetings of the waiters and ushers sound so Americanized you can't help chuckling. China is the alter ego of America.

### **Infrastructure**

China has so much ready cash to spare (more than a trillion dollars) that they are building fast track swanky new airports, six lane high ways, amusement parks, malls, museums, theatres, national parks, high speed rail lines and metros, educational and research institutions, state of

the art hospitals and 5 to 7 star hotels. During the last 20 years China has built 30,000 km of six lane high ways (the same length that USA has). The ride from any airport to the city center or hotel is an amazing experience- well maintained hedges as dividers, shade trees on both sides, side tracks for cycles, high walls separating the apartments from high way traffic and noise, efficient signals and traffic signs (true still you find the tendency to cut and overtake and jump signals and I found traffic snarl caused by such lawless driving. Traffic police often seems to look the other way). Maximum High way speed permitted is 120 km (75 miles) per hour. I found India far behind China in infrastructure building. The 7000 km golden triangle and corridor projects in India are moving snail paced and without the facilities of over passes, exit points and rest areas. India is criminally wasting time and resources in a half-hearted project. This will make India a laughing stock in the eye of the world.

Another fact that I noticed in China is that their cities are remarkably clean. No litter anywhere. I saw some cigarette butts and some people engaging in the famous Chinese pastime of spitting on the road- but they were rare. I saw few emaciated aggressive beggars in the Tianen-men area. But no slums; neither in Beijing nor Shanghai. China has succeeded in housing most of its vast population.

I experienced no power shortage in China. Most of the cities that I visited had hundreds of tall buildings and all of them were well lit and some excelling in dazzle and lighting even the time square in New York.

Will China's Example Spur India in Learning Lessons?

I felt ashamed comparing India with China. China is undoubtedly far ahead of India. India badly need two raps on the knuckles, Indian communists tweaks on their ears and BJP a hard slap across the face and congress a bucket of ice cold water on its head. And the poor toiling Indian masses deserve to be told the truth that India is far behind China.

India and China were economically in the same space in 1948, but after 60 years of independence India's per capita income shrunk to one third of China.

Is it the end of the road for India's great power ambition? Will China's example spur India in learning lessons of hard work, discipline, and national purpose? Or is it that India is building slowly, like the proverbial turtle, and will eventually overtake China through the innate power of democracy, inspiring individual initiatives and coordinating free choices of citizens? Only time can tell. But as of today, the Tiger is limping (yet to leap).

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