



Indian and Chinese Buddhism

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Abstract: *The modes of thought in Chinese Buddhism and Indian Buddhism refer to the structures of understanding, the modes and methods of thinking about problems and theories of explanation on the part of the Buddhist scholars in China and in India; this belongs to the deeper and higher-level contents of Buddhist culture. To study and compare the Chinese Buddhist and Indian Buddhist modes of thought will help us to understand the framework of response with which the Buddhist scholars of the two countries and cultures respond to external stimuli, and how they approach the task of processing intellectual information. It will help us to comprehend better the specific forms of the intuitive thought, analytical thought, and the thinking in images on the part of the Buddhist scholars of the two countries, as well as their mental and psychological structure and their national character-even the psychological structure and national characteristics of the common Buddhist in the two countries and cultures. This would be significant for the study of religion, of philosophy, of the science of thought, and for the study of psychology. This article hopes, through focusing on explaining and demonstrating the evolution of the modes of thought of Chinese and Indian Buddhism, to reveal certain similarities as well as differences between the Chinese Buddhist and Indian Buddhist modes of thought, and to arrive at some conclusion with regard to this matter.*

Key Words: thought, Buddhism, structures, understanding, explanation, scholars, belongs .

1. Philosophical and Religious Aspects of Buddhism- Most of us who first hear the Four Noble Truths have an initially negative response. Not only do the first two paint an unrelievedly depressing picture of life, but they do not seem to most of us true. After all, life has many obvious pleasures: food, love, music, cable. Why focus solely on the bad side? Furthermore, it is not at all clear that the Buddha was strictly correct about the illusory nature of things [1]. For example, many people have strong convictions about the real existence of tables and chairs. It is not certain how the historical Buddha responded to audiences who may have raised these objections. However, one of the principal activities of those who did choose to heed the Buddha's message and follow his teachings was the elaboration of a rich and sophisticated set of philosophical arguments that were designed to demonstrate the coherence of the Buddha's claims about the nature of the world. These arguments form the basis of Buddhist philosophy, which includes

distinctive doctrines of metaphysics (theory of the basic structures of reality), psychology, ethics, and logic [2].

Although some of Buddha's early audiences surely doubted his words, others were inclined to adopt his portrait of life as suffering. The poor and the sick would more easily see a message such as Buddha's as one of hope rather than despair, and Hindu yogins who had withdrawn from society would have seen in the Buddha's picture of an illusory world confirmation of their own decisions. For such people, the last two Noble Truths represented a path to salvation, albeit a very difficult path, involving years of self-denial and rigorous meditational training.

But the Buddha's own picture of salvation seems to have been so bare that few others would have found it enticing. For the Buddha, the ultimate goal of any conscious being was simply release from samsara and the cessation of suffering--and that was it! No afterlife, no paradise, no talk with Elvis.



While all of us have bad days, few would respond by undertaking years of rigorous self-denial leading to personal extinction. Therefore, those who followed the Buddha realized early on that to enlarge the audience of their faith it would be necessary to make the path easier for most to travel and the end goal more attractive. These Buddhist disciples gradually built up a very large corpus of sacred texts and devotional practices that added to Buddhism inspirational religious features. Self-cultivation came to involve more than meditation--one could approach nirvana now through doing good works, chanting Holy Scripture, praying to scores of Buddhist saints, and contributing tax-free gifts to Buddhist monasteries. And nirvana too was gradually redesigned into a sort of super-physical space in which the souls of perfected people enjoyed the company of the gods and saints for eternity, in surroundings as comfortable and gemlike as the palace from which Siddharta Gautama had once fled. Through the development of a philosophical core that could defend the very counter-intuitive claims that the Buddha made about reality, and the development of a religious tradition that greatly enhanced the attractiveness of Buddhism's salvational message, Buddhism supplied itself with tools that enabled it to emerge from India and sweep over all of East Asia, becoming a dominant religious tradition there for over a thousand years [4].

2. Buddhism's entry into China - The entry of Buddhism in China was very likely brought about by the vast expansionist policies of a single Chinese emperor: the Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (reigned 140- 87 B.C.). Emperor Wu was the first Chinese ruler to push his armies through Central Asia, and he brought China into contact with many peoples whose had previously been exposed only to cultural influences from Persia and India. Once the Han Dynasty armies had created a secure pathway from China into Central Asia, merchants from among these groups began to travel to China to trade, and this cross-Asiatic trade grew into a steady commercial stream along what became

known as the Silk Road. In time, missionary Buddhist monks searching for new worlds of sentient beings to convert to their faith, began to travel along with these caravans, eventually arriving in China during the first century A.D [5]. They carried with them not only their knowledge, but copies of the holy word of the Buddha: sutras.

When the first Buddhist monks arrived in China, the Confucian Han Dynasty was still firmly in control of a unified state. The monks, who had come from India and a variety of Central Asian states, were of interest for their exotic dress, languages, and because Han Confucians were fascinated by texts of any kind. However, China was at that time ideologically and politically stable and Buddhism found no ready audience there. During the late second century, however, the Han state began to crumble and social disorder began to appear. Life grew increasingly uncertain. After 220, China was once again divided into warring independent kingdoms, as had been true of the late Chou many years earlier, and the Confucian ideology of the Han Empire fell rapidly into disrepute [6].

The decline of Confucianism set off a search among the most the educated scholars in China for new systems of thought that could provide answers appropriate to those dislocated times. During the third century, many of these people found the ideology they were looking for in the thought of Zhuangzi, whose descriptions of the boundless Dao and of unconventional heroes possessing quirky skills appealed very much to the jaded tastes of the privileged class. Members of this upper elite produced a set of eccentric writings, artistic works, and social conventions (or counter-conventions) that are known now as "Neo-Daoism." It was the Neo-Daoists who first began to pay serious attention to the learning of the foreign monks who had been arriving from Central Asia for over a century, often taking up permanent residence in the major cities of China.

The Neo-Daoists and like-minded intellectuals began to work with Buddhist monks



to translate the sutras which the monks had brought with them. We still possess these early translations, and it is very clear both that the monks made some effort to express the texts in Daoistic language that would appeal to the Chinese, and that the Chinese interpreted the texts as a sort of Daoist exotica. As a result, in a very brief time poorly translated Buddhist sutras had become a major intellectual fad, especially in southern China, where wars and social upheavals had driven many wealthy Chinese families as displaced refugees. So deep was the Chinese misreading of Buddhism, that a widely accepted "historical fact" of the time was that the Buddha was actually Laozi, who, it appeared, towards the close of his (fictional) life, wandered off westwards with his Dao de jing in hand in order to "convert the barbarians," who apparently mistook him for a North Indian prince [7]. According to this point of view, Buddhist scripture was nothing other than the Dao de jing, volumes 2-10,000.

The growth of Chinese Buddhism-

China's post-Han "period of disunity" lasted from 220 until 589, and from the mid-point of this period on, the growth of Buddhism was phenomenal. Several Chinese kingdoms adopted Buddhism as their religion of state and patronized monks and monasteries lavishly. Varieties of Mahayana schools imported from India took root in China, each with its own signature sutra, representing the Buddha's "ultimate" teaching, which superseded the teachings of all other schools [9]. Chinese pilgrims traveled to Central Asia and India and brought back sutra after sutra, every one recording the "authentic" words of Siddharta Gautama. Chinese monks and lay followers began to create innovative new interpretive traditions and demonstrated their full membership in the world Buddhist community by writing their own sutras, which, after all, were just as much the authentic words of the Buddha as the Sanskrit sutras coming from India (and much easier for Chinese to read!).

By the end of the period of disunity, Daoism had been completely overshadowed by

Buddhism (indeed, new and unusual religious forms of Daoism had arisen during this period which owed a great many of their ideas to Buddhism). China was covered with Buddhist shrines, many comprising large temple complexes that included living quarters for monks and nuns, temples where lay visitors worshipped images of Buddhist deities, pavilions and courtyards where religious festivals, parades, and carnival markets were held, and towering pagodas that lifted the image of the religion over the landscape. The great Tang Dynasty, which ruled over a reunified China from 618 to 907, patronized Buddhism as a state cult during the greater portion of its reign. If there was a universal religion in China it was Buddhism, and that religion had duly been passed on to Korea and to Japan, where it was already beginning to flourish.

The tremendous growth of Buddhism led to a reaction by various Chinese kingdoms of the time. Although rulers of some of these states were devout Buddhists, during the sixth century we see the first of a long series of suppressions and persecutions of the Buddhist community. There were a number of factors that governed these episodes. The most critical was the growing economic importance of Buddhism in Chinese society. Early in Buddhism's career in China, it had become an established practice that Buddhist monks and temples should be tax-exempt, and rulers of the unstable regimes of the era of disunity were generally unwilling to bring their legitimacy as kings into question by the impious act of attempting to assert fiscal authority over the sacred realm. Consequently, as time went on, Buddhist institutions were able to accumulate vast stores of wealth to which the state had no access [10]. It became common for lay people to donate money and property to temples, both to earn increased access to paradise for their charitable works, and also to gain certain more tangible favors from Buddhist temples. Among the latter, for instance, might be included free use of lands that had been donated. This common practice allowed wealthy landowners



to give away large tracts of land to monasteries, but to continue collecting rents from tenant peasants who farmed the land. Because the land was now officially the property of the temple, the yields could no longer be taxed and the landowner greatly increased his profits, of which the Buddhist temple received a cut. (Buddhism came to play similarly important economic roles in Korea and Japan.) The climax came in 845 when the Tang government proclaimed a massive suppression of Buddhism. The emperor withdrew the status of over 200,000 monks and nuns, closed over 4,000 monasteries and nunneries, confiscated millions of acres of temple lands, and registered 150,000 "slaves" attached to the temples, who had been under the protection of the Buddhist establishment, as taxpaying freemen [11]. This would be the most dramatic attack on Buddhism until the Communist government closed all temples during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. The suppression came close to wiping out Buddhism in China, but so powerful were the forces of the religion that the government policy was relaxed the following year, upon the death of the emperor (who apparently died from Daoist elixirs of immortality that he had been in the habit of imbibing). The temples were soon replenished with returning monks and new postulants. But significant damage had been done, and although Buddhism remained an important force in China, it never recaptured the dominance that it possessed during the early and mid-Tang periods. The century before the great suppression of 845 remained the high-water mark of Buddhism's influence on China, and all significant philosophical and religious innovations that China contributed to world Buddhism occurred before that time.

3. Comparison of the Chinese Buddhist and Indian Buddhist Modes of Thought- As the different schools of thought got bigger and matured, it gave people in China a better grasp on what Buddhism was and what it meant to them and their country in terms of incorporating it into their culture. By incorporating Buddhism into China's

culture in a better manner, it meant there was less of a chance of people feeling like Buddhism was being forced onto them. Having Buddhism be more relatable to their culture, made it easier to understand in some aspects for people compared to when it was first introduced during the rule of the Han. There was still much to learn in general about the religion during the Han and how it could be integrated into peoples' lives.

Learning more about Buddhist script was also advancing in popularity to the point that some of the well-respected Chinese monks began to translate more sutras from Sanskrit to Chinese. This meant the desire to travel to India to find more sutras grew. By traveling to India for more of the sutras, this meant China could have their own copies of them and have the opportunity to more easily spread the word of Buddhism further into China and other nearby places. This allowed people better accessibility to the doctrines in Buddhism. It also offered a simpler way of being able to learn more of the many practices and levels that are involved in it rather than having to travel to outside sources too often.

China's visual arts and architecture also rose. As more artwork was created to depict the Buddha in homes and temples, the need of Buddha's images rose. The building of numerous temples also grew steadily as more people began to follow Buddhism and there became more of a need for a sacred place to be able to go to for prayer and donations. They were also made as a place for the Buddha to stay and live as he passed through and visited. Buddhism also gave people in China new reasons to travel and explore other countries as well. It gave them the freedom to learn more about surrounding areas while enhancing their knowledge of the world. The desire to travel had encouraged Chinese monks on their trips to seek out what they could in India to be able to learn as much as they could. This gave the monks opportunities to visit the holy places of Buddhism in India. Getting to



see India's sacred places and buildings gave Buddhism an even deeper meaning to the monks as they learned and witnessed the sacred places that are in the Buddhist stories from India. By making their way to Buddhism's place of origin, Chinese monks were able to have the opportunities of gaining new knowledge from the learned teachers in India to take back home and share among their people. As more and more trips were taken to India the interest of translating Sanskrit text to Chinese heightened again. Although the desire in translating Buddhist work began during the Han dynasty, the practice continued on and grew for more than 1,000 years after the fall of the Han. Much advancement followed because people in China were discovering more ways to enhance their writing and language skills as time went on. Having the capability of getting to build one's writing and language skills as well, was more than very likely exciting for China as their literacy continued to improve more as time went on.

4. Buddhism: A New Frontier in the China-India Rivalry- For both China and India, Buddhism is a useful enhancer of cultural soft power. The religion has, over the past decade, increased in importance for India as New Delhi tries to re-energize the religious tradition and integrate it into the country's cultural strength; for China, meanwhile, Buddhism is an important means of soothing domestic discontent and staving off risks to its territorial integrity. Buddhism, which China has begun describing as an "ancient Chinese religion" and allowing its citizens freedom to practice, is especially significant for China in preserving domestic social stability and diffusing restiveness in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan areas elsewhere in China. China is also using Buddhism to increase its influence in nearby regions by acquiring predominant access to powerful Buddhist organizations. Meanwhile India, which has been home to Buddhism since its birth, sees Buddhism as a way of strengthening its relationship with Southeast Asian nations and as a means of

preserving the religious and cultural practices of the Tibetan Buddhist people who have sought refuge in India.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DALAI LAMA- Central to these matters is the fourteenth Dalai Lama, who is recognized as the reincarnated traditional leader of Tibetan Buddhism and who remains the most prominent figure in the religious tradition today. The present Dalai Lama's advancing age underscores the increasingly crucial and time-sensitive issue of who will identify his reincarnation. Communist China sees this as an opportunity to finally resolve the nettlesome issue of the Dalai Lama's status vis-a-vis Beijing so as to enhance its political control over Tibet. Chinese government officials have publically declared that China will appoint the next Dalai Lama, who will be born in China.

The Dalai Lama's status in relation to China has remained unsettled for centuries, as successive Dalai Lamas have contested China's sovereignty over Tibet. For their part, Chinese emperors historically considered Tibet a part of China. The seventh-century marriage of Chinese Princess Wencheng, niece of Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty, to Songtsän Gampo, who is credited with bringing Buddhism to Tibet, is portrayed by the Chinese Communist leadership as an attempt to civilize and project influence over Tibet.

Centuries later, China occupied Tibet in 1950, but the Chinese leadership has not been able to calm the situation in Tibet or win over the Tibetans and get them to accept their presence. In fact, Beijing has long feared the possibility of a secessionist movement in Tibet. As a result, Beijing is keen to have the fourteenth Dalai Lama return to China before his death as a symbolic recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Failing that, China is intent on appointing the next Dalai Lama in an attempt to try to directly control the Tibetan religious hierarchy under his leadership. Apart from the Dalai Lama, China, incidentally, hosts the Panchen Lama-



the second highest ranking figure in Tibetan Buddhism-as well as 870 rimpoches (also known as tulkus or living Buddhas).

INDIA'S BUDDHIST LEGACY- Like China, India has deep historical connections to Buddhism, which modern policymakers can draw on in efforts to enhance the country's soft power. Buddhism has provided a quiet but resilient foundation to India's centuries-old cultural links to countries in South, Southeast, and East Asia. India is the birthplace of Buddhism, and the religion is part of India's spiritual heritage. When India was at the height of its power, Indian priests and scholars travelled abroad and spread Buddhism widely: across Tibet and China and then on to Japan, and throughout Southeast Asia via Sri Lanka. Tibetan Buddhism in particular spread northward to Tibet and China, while the Theravada school of Buddhism was promoted in South Asia and throughout Southeast Asia.

Buddhism's influence remains present in Indian art, culture, and architecture. The three lions of the Ashoka pillar, which independent India adopted as its national emblem, are a symbol of the impact of Buddhist thought on the country and its people. As of 2011, there are over 8 million practicing Buddhists in India.

India has ties to Tibetan Buddhism through its own sizable Tibetan community. The first major wave of Tibetans arrived in India from Tibet with the fourteenth Dalai Lama in March 1959.¹ Following the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 and the Dalai Lama's flight to India in 1959, high-ranking Tibetan religious leaders, members of the Tibetan nobility, and ordinary Tibetans continued to flee to India, mainly via Nepal. Today, India remains home to the fourteenth Dalai Lama and the heads of all four main sects of Tibetan Buddhism, namely the Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma, and Sakya, in addition to the many other high-ranking Tibetan lamas. The main monasteries of these four sects are all, however, located in Tibet.

BUDDHISM IN INDIAN AND

CHINESE DIPLOMACY- India has been promoting Buddhist thought and culture in recent years. In November 2011, with assistance from the Indian government, an organization called the Global Buddhist Congregation (GBC) helped bring representatives of a multitude of Buddhist traditions together in one overarching body. Roughly 900 patriarchs, supreme patriarchs, and high-ranking monks of various Buddhist traditions from around the world attended the GBC in New Delhi, making it one of the largest gatherings of Buddhist leaders since the time of King Asoka (268-232 BCE). The gathered heads of the Buddhist organizations agreed that there was a need for a centralized body to interpret issues concerning Buddhism, including the preservation of the traditions and practices of various sects. As an outcome of the conference, the International Buddhist Confederation was established to further these objectives by promoting research and popularizing Buddhist practices and traditions.

A few years earlier, China had begun hosting its own international Buddhist gatherings in the mid-2000s, known as the World Buddhist Forums (WBF). The first was held in Fujian Province in 2006 and three subsequent gatherings have since been held respectively in Wuxi (in Jiangsu Province) in 2009, in Hong Kong in April 2012, and again in Wuxi in 2015. The WBF aims to convey to Buddhist populations in China and neighboring countries that the Chinese Communist authorities approve of Buddhism. A large number of Buddhist religious monks, scholars, and other figures, including some from India, have been invited to the WBFs. These periodic gatherings are reflective of China's effort to raise the profile of the China-appointed Panchen Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's second most influential figure, and convince Buddhists to accept him as the rightful holder of this position. Beijing has not invited the Dalai Lama to the World Buddhist Forums on the grounds that he is a "disruptive element."² The GBC hosted in India in 2011 impacted China's efforts



and the WBF in 2012 was a muted affair.

On occasion, Tibetan Buddhism has drawn attention to the ongoing border dispute between China and India. Uyghen Thinley Dorje, another prominent Tibetan Buddhist figure in exile in India, visited the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh in November 2016; he is recognized by the Dalai Lama and Chinese authorities as the Gyalwa Karmapa (head of Tibetan Buddhism's Kagyu sect). China is especially sensitive to Indian political figures and the Dalai Lama visiting this state, which it claims is part of China. The Dalai Lama's planned visit to Arunachal Pradesh in April 2017 is being interpreted by Beijing as indicative of New Delhi's willingness to assert its sovereignty despite predictable Chinese protests. In March 2017, India is hosting a Buddhist conference in Nalanda meant to advance efforts to bring together all Buddhist lamas into the fold. Hosted by the Indian Ministry of Culture, the gathering is convening prominent Buddhist monks from over thirty countries-including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. The Nalanda conference will likely enhance India's standing in the Buddhist community.

Meanwhile, since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014, the Indian government has made Buddhism an element of its bilateral diplomatic efforts, which have been particularly noticeable with Japan and Mongolia. Modi has put Buddhism on India's diplomatic agenda with Japan. In August 2014, for instance, Modi visited two ancient Buddhist temples in Japan, and Buddhism was mentioned in the joint statement after a subsequent visit to Japan in November 2016. Private organizations have been involved in these efforts as well. In September 2015, for example, the International Buddhist Confederation, the Vivekananda International Foundation, and the Tokyo Foundation put together a joint Buddhist and Hindu three-day conclave on conflict avoidance and environment consciousness.

Buddhism also factors into India's

diplomacy with Mongolia. It is worth noting that since the Mongol ruler Altan Khan first conferred the title of Dalai Lama on the Gelug monk Sonam Gyatso in the late sixteenth century, subsequent Dalai Lamas have looked to the Mongol rulers for support. Mongolia's unique link to the Dalai Lama lends special significance to Prime Minister Modi's visit to Ulaanbaatar in May 2015. Modi's visit involved numerous references to India and Mongolia's shared Buddhist connection. Two examples were his speech to the Mongolian parliament, which mentioned the Buddha and Buddhism seven times, his visit to the Gandantegchinlen monastery.

By comparison, other countries in Asia-including Myanmar, South Korea and Vietnam-that have strong links to Buddhism have not permitted a visit by the Dalai Lama. Myanmar and Vietnam, though strongly Buddhist, follow the Theravada tradition and are especially careful of Beijing's sensitivities about the Dalai Lama. Like China, Vietnam is a Communist country, although the country's Communist party allows its members to practice religion and many of them are Buddhist. South Korea, meanwhile, has adopted a form of Buddhism that blends elements of Mahayana with its own distinctive characteristics.

CHINA'S EFFORTS TO SHAPE TIBETAN BUDDHIST POLITICS- Since the fourteenth Dalai Lama began travelling abroad around 1980 to familiarize people with the Tibet issue and lobby for the Tibetan people, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has reacted to his actions and labelled him a "separatist." As China has grown economically and militarily stronger, its protests have grown more strident. Since 2007, China has been trying to undercut the Dalai Lama's influence and isolate him by pressuring foreign leaders and governments not to officially receive the Dalai Lama. Failure to comply has resulted in China taking punitive economic measures that typically prompt an appreciable drop in foreign direct investment or exports for periods of at least six



months to a year. This has often been accompanied by a suspension, or freezing of diplomatic contact, until an apology has been tendered. Beijing has toughened the policy in the past couple of months to include meetings with the sikyong, or prime minister, of the Tibetans in exile. The Dalai Lama issue has also, since 2007, begun figuring more prominently as a bone of contention in interactions between India and China at the official Track I and unofficial Track II levels.

There are major reasons for increased Chinese concern. Beijing believes that what it deems to be hostile foreign forces will use the Tibetans to stir up trouble inside China. Beijing wants to avoid having a situation in which there are two Dalai Lamas, like the situation that exists in the case of the Panchen Lama; Beijing feels that this would inflame internal tensions. In the case of the Panchen Lama, though, the individual recognized by the fourteenth Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama is in Chinese custody and kept away from public gaze while China tries to persuade the Tibetans to accept Gyancaïn Norbu, the individual appointed by China. China persists with its efforts to persuade the fourteenth Dalai Lama to return to spend his "last days" in his "motherland."

China's efforts to undermine the Dalai Lama's influence also have included supporting Shugden worship, which he banned in 1996. Chinese authorities have supported worshippers of the Shugden deity, disbursed generous subsidies to their monasteries, and instigated Shugden groups in India and elsewhere to initiate litigation against the Dalai Lama and stage protests to harass him. The Chinese government even invited prominent Tibetan Buddhist monks known to be Shugden practitioners, or otherwise critical of the Dalai Lama, to the sixtieth anniversary celebrations of what it describes as the peaceful liberation of Tibet to embarrass the Dalai Lama.

Moreover, China has been steadily trying to acquire influence over the various Tibetan Buddhist sects and subtly get them to break ranks

with the Dalai Lama. China has consistently favored the Kagyu sect, which is numerous in western Tibet; in Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Sikkim in India; and in Bhutan. Journalists based in Jammu and Kashmir claim that the Chinese are also discreetly supporting the Drukpa Kagyu Rimpoche in Ladakh, who has made little secret of his differences with the Dalai Lama and has been urging supporters not to flock to the Dalai Lama when he is in Ladakh or participate in the Dalai Lama's teachings.

BUDDHISM IN CHINA AND INDIA'S NEIGHBORHOOD: THE CASE OF NEPAL-

One neighboring country where China is using Buddhism to expand regional influence is Nepal. China's interest in Nepal is primarily because of the nearly 20,000 Tibetans residing there. Additionally, a number of people of Tibetan origin live in the northern fringes of Nepal bordering Tibet.

China has serious apprehensions that what it refers to as hostile foreign forces—an oblique reference to the United States and India—may use Nepal as a base to create disturbances inside Tibet. China has expanded its influence in Nepal, and its embassy now interacts directly with Nepal's police to restrict the activities of Tibetans resident there. China has specific interest in Lumbini, the birth place of the Buddha, which lies in Nepal just across the border with India. As a high-ranking Chinese official once told a Nepali reporter, "We visit Nepal because you have Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha."

Nepal has been the site of ongoing efforts by Beijing to oversee, or at least influence, the selection of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders. It has successfully blocked the Dalai Lama in Nepal. In fact, in 2012, Nepal's then culture minister, Minendra Rijal, said the Dalai Lama might visit Lumbini sometime in the future after "the leadership of China will find ways to deal with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which will be respectful of the Chinese people." Meanwhile, the Sakya Tibetan Buddhist lineage and its sub-sects were permitted, after approval from Beijing, to become the only sect



to hold Monlam celebrations in Lumbini. The Nyingmapa sect too has accepted Beijing's contention that it alone has the authority to choose and recognize high-ranking monks and followed the procedure prescribed by Beijing to secure its approval for Penor Rinpoche's reincarnation and enthronement in 2014. The Kagyu sect negotiated with Chinese authorities in mid-2014 when they insisted on performing the last rites of Shamar Rinpoche, the fourteenth Shamarpa and second highest spiritual figure of the Karma Kagyu Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism in Nepal. Initial approval accorded by the Nepali embassy in New Delhi was withdrawn under pressure from the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu, which objected to the presence of a representative of the Dalai Lama who was to accompany the body to Kathmandu and preparations by the Tibetan community for a rally in Kathmandu's Bouddha area. The approval was later restored.

Additionally, there are many Tibetan Buddhist monasteries strung across the entire length of the Indo-Himalayan belt that exercise almost unmatched influence on the local populations in their jurisdictions. Monasteries like Hemis in Ladakh and Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh own considerable property and large tracts of land. The latter could at some stage become a nettlesome issue in negotiations between India and China. Viewed together with China's attempts to set up a monastery, seminary, and nunnery in Lumbini to educate and train young monks free of cost, there is a real possibility that China will use them to try and increase its influence along India's northern borders. There are other concerns for the Dalai Lama's supporters and China too. Credible reports indicate rivalries within the Dalai Lama's office have grown. Gaining quiet momentum among foreigners supporting the Dalai Lama and the Tibet cause, as well as foreign-based Tibet support groups, is the view that India-based, or Indian Tibetans, are grabbing all political power in the wider community

of the Dalai Lama's sympathizers. Implicit in this perspective is the suggestion that political authority should be shared, but it is unclear as to precisely with whom. The Chinese Communist leadership too appears to have become nervous at the rapid growth in the number of Buddhist adherents in China. Recent reports point to the authorities tightening the monitoring of the activities of Buddhist monks, especially of Tibetan Buddhist monks, and enforcing regulations restricting their activities and the places they can visit.

Buddhism is an intrinsic part of India's spiritual heritage. India's outreach to countries in Southeast Asia will be reinforced by Buddhism. Meanwhile, the presence of the heads of the various Tibetan Buddhist sects in India will enrich Buddhism and strengthen India's bonds with Buddhists around the world. The demographic changes taking place in China similarly make Buddhism increasingly relevant. China's leadership considers the return of its Tibetan Buddhist religious figures important for the country's stability. Beijing can be expected to continue to try and enhance its soft power by claiming a strong Buddhist heritage and strengthening its outreach to Buddhist populations within and outside its borders.

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