



首届丝绸之路（敦煌）国际文化博览会

The First Silk Road (Dunhuang) International Cultural Expo

分论坛五

SUB-FORUM 5

敦煌文化的当代价值

CONTEMPORARY VALUE OF DUNHUANG CULTURE

程序册

Programme Booklet

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India and China: An appraisal of two unbroken civilisations

Bansi Lal Malla

(Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Art New Delhi)

(I) Background

India and China, the two giants are unique examples of unbroken 21st century civilisations. Both are situated in one of the glorious continent of the world, Asia, India to the south-west and China to the north-east. They are naturally a pair of sister countries with a hoary past. Both countries possess an extensive land with a multitudinous people, and have vibrant cultures and traditions with significant mutual influence in areas like art, philosophy, etc. They have stood up strong and tall from the very beginning to the present day. Although our countries have many times been trampled down and devastated by foreign invaders politically and economically, yet our superior traditions, teachings and customs have often assimilated the wild and barbarous. The prehistoric periods of both the countries has been long and full of events. We do not know exactly when and how they started exchanging their cultural elements; however, we do know that they grew in parallel and shared their cultural traits since the beginning of human history and this tradition has been continuing ever since. All along, the Silk Road played a significant role in facilitating India-China cultural, commercial and technological exchanges. It also connected both the countries with the ancient Persia and the Mediterranean.

The beginnings of Indian and Chinese civilizations seem somewhat similar. Although the records of ancient times in India are rather deficient, but according to references in Chinese sources on Buddhism, the condition of ancient India was quite similar to that of ancient China. Even before the transmission of Buddhism, the Shang-Zhou civilization and the ancient Vedic civilization showed some evidence of conceptual and linguistic exchanges. In the sixth century B.C., the birth of Confucius and Sakyamuni opened a new period of exchanges between these two civilisations.

The Indian theory of aesthetics is deeply rooted in the triple principle of *satyam* (truth), *shivam* (goodness/auspiciousness) and *sundaram* (beauty). *Satyam* (truth) is paired with *rtam* (the Cosmic Order) in the famous passage of *Rigveda* (X.90.1), which says both of these were born of kindled *tapas*. *Tapa* is the basic effort and form of the manifestation of existence, creation and bliss from the basic cause. This relates to the primary analysis of creation where Reality is seen in two forms. Viz. *Rtam*, the kinetic aspect of order and *satyam*, the potential aspect of truth. *Rtam* for Hindus is the blueprint for cosmic harmony (*Dharma*); for the Buddhists the law of righteousness (*Dhamma*); for the Muslims, it represents the inflexible yet all the merciful decrees of divine (*Haqq*), and for the Chinese, *rtam* is the mystical path

