

Importance of reading newspapers



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

To most of us living in India, China is some sort of an enigma. On one hand we are told that India exported its culture and philosophy to China some two thousand years ago. On the other, we have the scars of the War of 1962.

Today the country is swamped with cheap but quality Chinese goods.

What is Chinese philosophy all about, how did it evolve, what was Buddhism's impact on China? A book on Comparative Philosophy by Prof P. T. Raju helped me find some answers. Here is an article based on inputs from that book. Notes talk about historical and philosophical developments follow it. Do not miss reading them.

General characteristics of Chinese philosophy (CP) are –

1. Chinese Philosophy is neither inward looking nor outward looking. It keeps a balance between the two and is more at home with man in society than the ultimate problems. No problem is probed too deep, pressed to its logical conclusion. Chinese thought affirms man first and never forgets its commitment to man. Confucianism affirms man in society and Taoism man by himself, although Taoism was inclined to belittle his material existence. On the whole Chinese Philosophy is outward looking if Confucianism is considered typically Chinese.

2. Although a few questions about the ultimate nature of Tao were raised, the inquiry was not very thorough and everything is related to Human Nature. None probed into the mind systematically or deep and what was found within mind were good feelings, sentiments, all that which contributes to a happy social life. They are few found in every society and were not

unique to China. Hence Chinese Philosophy is somewhat superficial and unsystematic.

3. Chinese Philosophy, however, has made a distinct contribution to world philosophy. It persistently tries to build ethics and even metaphysics on the emotional nature of man but not on his rational nature. Neither Indian nor Western philosophy consider this aspect.

4. Chinese Philosophy is concerned with the immediate life of man, not his past or future birth as is the case with Indian philosophy. If a doctrine works on building a good state and society, it is not; when it does it is accepted. The Chinese adopted Communism hoping that it would improve their quality of life. When it did not achieve its objective, they adopted the capitalistic model and their success is for all to see.

5. Chinese Philosophy is more concerned with the Good than with the Beautiful and less with the Truth than with the Beautiful. It finds the Good in normal human life not necessarily in communication with God but with other men. It finds Good, not by controlling nature but in controlling oneself with reference to others.

6. There is some mysticism but not of the kind that we in India are familiar with, a kind of nature mysticism, concerned with human nature only. Taoism has elements in it and Buddhism deepened it but it was repeatedly brought to the human level in the history of Chinese thought.

7. China does not have a well-developed materialistic philosophy. It was human nature that was elevated to the Tao of the early Taoists or to the

material Tao of the later Confucians. They were interested in human nature but not in spiritual or material nature. This has an important lesson for Indians. We were excessively concerned with the realization of Atman, in the process we ignored the well being of man, building of state and society, political thought.

8. Because nature meant human nature, China did not feel the need to develop a method for understanding nature. There are always examples of men with good nature so there was found no need to study it as good nature was observed and studied. Accordingly, China did not develop systems of logic and epistemology. The need for both is felt only when we want to study more. The Chinese were not interested in the outward or inward so what was the need to study, probe.

9. For the same reason, there is very little categorization of reality. There is some categorization of human virtues, of which human-heartedness is the highest. To the Chinese, reality, is human nature? But as the categorization is not carried out methodically and systematically, we find very little importance attached to categories.

10. Because of a keen interest in human affairs and achievements, China had a strong sense of history and constructed some philosophies of history, besides a few doctrines of evolution. The Chinese did not regard history as unreal or insignificant. The aim of the Chinese mind is universal peace and it interpreted human achievements as progressing towards universal peace. This statement baffles me. The Chinese continue their march towards

becoming a world military power, arm Pakistan to the teeth, and aid its nuclear program and Universal Peace!

11. Chinese Philosophy considers Man as the highest object of creation, not because he alone can attain salvation as the Indian philosophers thought but because he alone can build up culture and civilization.

12. Because of this deep abiding interest in man, culture, civilization China could develop good social, political thought as also good life-affirming ethics. While Chanakya's Arthashastra has some profound thoughts on foreign policy, defense, governance they were with the exception of a few warriors like Shivaji never followed. If Indians had a strategic culture, all it had to do was to convert the Khyer Pass into an impregnable fortress and the country's history might well have been different.

The ideal of democracy started with Confucius and the French Revolution seems to have influenced by his ideas, whether directly or indirectly. Even semantics must have been discovered by the Chinese school of Names. China was the first to invent paper, printing, and gunpowder but could develop none of these for the want of systematic methodology. She has to be, therefore, content with only so much credit for her inventions as Egypt received for the discovery of geometry. Because of her humanistic interest, China pushed her inquiries in political and social thought, rather than in inventions.

13. In spite of a deep interest in human nature, it appears that pre-communist Chinese thought viewed man as an emotional and social animal but not as a rational animal. The thought that the soul in full or in part is

immortal never occurred to the Chinese. This explains the lack of the development of logic and epistemology in Chinese thought.

14. Another interesting feature is the absence of a definite conception of the spirit, soul in Chinese thought. They referred to the spirits of the ancestors, spirits of water, mountain and so on but did not think of the spirit of the man.