

# **Cultural Aspect of Belt and Road Initiative and Project Mausam: Strategy for Engagement**

**Rajiv Ranjan\***

**Abstract:** The paper seeks to examine the cultural aspects of the two initiatives to justify the fact that enhancing cultural connections is a two way process and would certainly enable both civilizations to learn from each other. B&R's people-to-people bond strategy and Mausam's initiative to revive cultural linkages are not contradictory in nature but supplement each other. In the backdrop of Doklam Stand-off, the shaken mutual trust between the two neighbors can be healed by further increasing cultural and people-to-people contacts.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative; Project Mausam; culture; Asian power, China-India

## **Introduction**

The rise of China and India has encouraged and motivated the leaders of the two countries to chart a new path in diplomacy and foreign policy. Chinese President Xi Jinping initiated the Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road,<sup>1</sup> commonly known as *Yidaiyilu* in China and One Belt One Road (OBOR or B&R) in other parts of the World, to revitalize and stimulate the process of achieving two centenary goals and national rejuvenation. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi too unveiled Project

---

\* Dr. Rajiv Ranjan is an assistant professor at the College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University, China.

<sup>1</sup> Issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, with State Council authorization, "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road," March 28, 2016, accessed November 3, 2016, [http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330\\_669367.html](http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html).

Mausam (मौसम)<sup>1</sup> to harness its cultural linkage with countries along the Monsoon routes for effective and fruitful foreign policy.

Both Indian and Chinese media,<sup>2</sup> some sections of academia and intellectuals,<sup>3</sup> largely influenced by observations and analysis of the West, claimed that the Project Mausam aims at targeting and minimizing the effectiveness of B&R. It is also important to note that both India and China have identified each other as a target country for their own initiative. India has refused to be part of B&R, as New Delhi perceives the project inimical for participating countries, designed to maximise Beijing's interests and as a bilateral venture<sup>4</sup> and one of its flagship program, as China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through Pak-occupied Kashmir (PoK), and thereby violates India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>5</sup> The objective of the paper is not to delve into whether India should join or reject B&R and whether Project Mausam has the comprehensiveness to be equalled with B&R, as the paper is not a comprehensive comparative study of both the initiatives. The paper limits itself by examining only one aspect

---

<sup>1</sup> Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, "Project 'Mausam'—Mausam/Mawsim: Maritime Routes and Cultural Landscapes," accessed October 25, 2016, <http://ignca.nic.in/mausam.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Akhilesh Pillalamarri, "Project Mausam: India's Answer to China's Maritime Silk Road," *Diplomat*, September 18, 2014, accessed October 25, 2016; <https://thediplomat.com/2014/09/project-mausam-indias-answer-to-chinas-maritime-silk-road/>; Sachin Parashar, "Narendra Modi's 'Mausam' manoeuvre to check China's maritime might," *Times of India*, September 16, 2014, accessed October 25, 2016; <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Narendra-Modis-Mausam-manoevre-to-check-Chinas-maritime-might/articleshow/42562085.cms>; Liu Zhongyi, "India Ambiguous on China's Regional plans," *Global Times*, April 10, 2015, accessed October 25, 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/916133.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> Zhou Liangchen, "Indian media: China blocks India's UNESCO bid for 'Project Mausam'," *Global Times* (in Chinese), January 10, 2017, Accessed on March 3, 2017, URL: <https://m.huanqiu.com/r/MV8wXzk5MjYwMTNfMTI1OV8xNDg0MDA4MTQw>

<sup>4</sup> Harsh V Pant, "India challenges China's intentions on One Belt, One Road initiative," *ORF*, June 2017, accessed November 5, 2017, <http://www.orfonline.org/research/india-challenges-china-intentions-one-belt-one-road-initiative/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Official Spokesperson's response to a query on participation of India in OBOR/BRI Forum," accessed November 3, 2017, [http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/28463/Official\\_Spokespersons\\_response\\_to\\_a\\_query\\_on\\_participation\\_of\\_India\\_in\\_OBORBRI\\_Forum](http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/28463/Official_Spokespersons_response_to_a_query_on_participation_of_India_in_OBORBRI_Forum).

## *Cultural Aspect of Belt and Road Initiative and Project Mausam: Strategy for Engagement*

of B&R, i.e. cultural aspects and compares that with Mausam's objectives. The paper thus is an attempt to counter the misconception that *Mausam* counters or challenges the B&R as speculated by some. The paper also argues that although India hasn't joined B&R, it is evidently clear that both countries are progressing on strengthening cultural and people-to-people contacts outside the gambit of B&R or Project Mausam.

Though India is apprehensive of an ambitious B&R and its China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), both countries are expediting its cultural and people-to-people contacts through already established mechanism. It can be also inferred that despite media rhetoric and belligerence during the Doklam stand-off, increased people to people contacts and 'complex interdependent' engagement acted as a shock absorber.

Cultural contacts generally mean contact between the two cultures through various means and mediums. These means can be trade relations, educational exchanges and even travel & tourism. Put it simply, people-to-people contacts is interaction among people of the two nations.

### **B&R and Project Mausam: Some Comparisons**

#### **I. Origin:**

B&R is an initiative of the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. Whereas Project Mausam is the initiative of the Ministry of Culture to be implemented by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) as the nodal agency with research support of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and National Museum as associate bodies.

#### **II. Objectives:**

Project Mausam is focusing only on cultural contacts whereas B&R has much more broad and diverse objectives. Mausam encourages the production of specialized works, as well as publications for the general public with an attempt at promoting a broader understanding of the concept of a common heritage and multiple identities. An objective of the project is to prepare a dossier for transnational nomination as World Heritage. The

time of commencement and completion of the Project Mausam as per SFC (Standing Financial Committee) Memorandum is April 2015 and March 2017 respectively. Total cost of the project as per SFC approval is Rs. 150, 244, 502.<sup>1</sup>

### **III. Scope:**

As far as the scope of both projects are concerned, more than 100 countries and international organizations have expressed desire to promote B&R<sup>2</sup> whereas 39 countries have been indentified under Project Mausam to bring on board for transnational nomination for World Heritage but still has not entered into partnerships.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, 64 countries have been on B&R's board but none on Mausam, officially.

Interestingly, National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Science, China awarded 11 national major projects under National Social Science Fund 2017 to projects related with B&R initiative<sup>4</sup>, whereas Indian Council of Social Science Research, India responsible for awarding major<sup>5</sup> and minor<sup>6</sup> research projects, have not yet designated any specific projects dealing with Project Mausam.

---

<sup>1</sup> Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Project Mausam", Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Civil Aviation in a written reply in Lok Sabha April 25, 2016, accessed November 3, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=141133>.

<sup>2</sup> "Yidayilu de jianshe chengjiu yu qianjing zhanwang [B&R's achievements and future prospect]", People's Daily Online, December 6, 2016, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2016/1206/c1002-28929470.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Project Mausam," Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Civil Aviation in a written reply in Lok Sabha on April 25, 2016, accessed November 3, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=141133>.

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Science, National Social Science Fund Notice, Accessed on November 14, 2017, <http://www.npopss-cn.gov.cn/n1/2017/1107/c219469-29632360.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Indian Council of Social Science Research, Government of India, Major Projects Awarded during 2016-17, accessed on November 14, 2017, <http://icssr.org/result/All%20Recommended%20Major%20Research%20Projects%20for%20the%20Financial%20Year%202016.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Indian Council of Social Science Research, Government of India, Minor Projects Awarded during 2016-17, accessed November 14, 2017, <http://icssr.org/result/Minor%20Result.pdf>.

*Cultural Aspect of Belt and Road Initiative and Project Mausam: Strategy for Engagement*

Table 1: List of 39 Indian Ocean countries identified under Project Mausam

1	Bahrain	21	Myanmar
2	Bangladesh	22	Oman
3	Cambodia	23	Pakistan
4	China	24	Philippines
5	Comoros	25	Qatar
6	Egypt	26	Singapore
7	Eritrea	27	Sri Lanka
8	Réunion, French Department	28	Saudi Arabia
9	Indonesia	29	Seychelles
10	Iraq	30	Somalia
11	Iran (Islamic Republic)	31	South Africa
12	Jordan	32	Sudan
13	Kuwait	33	Syrian Arab Republic
14	Kenya	34	United Republic of Tanzania
15	Lebanon	35	Thailand
16	Madagascar	36	Turkey
17	Malaysia	37	United Arab Emirates
18	Maldives	38	Viet Nam
19	Mauritius	39	Yemen
20	Mozambique		

Source: Press Information Bureau, Government of India

**IV. Path:**

B&R has been transformed from being an initiative to strategy and now it's in action phase. Beijing is using its full diplomatic abilities, bringing in academia, media, and museums, and other government apparatuses for ensuring the successful implementation of B&R.

In comparison with B&R, Mausam is still in the process of initiation, engaged in researching and organizing conferences/seminars on the cultural linkage between India and other countries. The most important distinction between both is B&R Initiative is a comprehensive one whereas Mausam just deals with cultural dimensions and so the claim that both projects are countering each other might not be correct.

**People-to-people Contacts**

The people-to-people contacts of B&R and reviving cultural contacts under Project Mausam are in reality complementing each other. Cultural exchanges are not zero-sum game but is a two way process that benefit each other.

B&R highlights that people-to-people bond provides the public support for implementing the initiative. Following are the salient features to enable and enhance people-to-people contacts, as detailed in B&R's concept note:

First, vision documents notes that China will provide 10,000 government scholarships to the countries along the Belt and Road every year. The countries should hold culture years, art festivals, film festivals, TV weeks and book fairs in each other's countries; cooperate on the production and translation of fine films, radio and TV programs; and jointly apply for and protect World Cultural Heritage sites. It also highlights that countries should increase exchange and cooperation between countries along the Belt and Road.

If one carefully analyzes this objective of B&R, it comes out that both India and China have already signed many agreements to pursue these objectives, which have been dealt with in details in other parts of the paper. In other words, outside the gambit of B&R and Mausam, both countries are increasingly cooperating to enhance and strengthen partnership between countries.

Secondly, B&R mandate also requires countries of the initiative to "enhance cooperation in and expand the scale of tourism; hold tourism promotion weeks and publicity months in each other's countries; jointly create competitive international tourist routes and products with Silk Road features; and make it more convenient to apply for tourist visa in countries along the Belt and Road".

Thirdly, B&R also calls participating countries to "strengthen cooperation with neighboring countries on epidemic information sharing, the exchange of prevention and treatment technologies and the training of medical professionals, and improve our capability to jointly address public health emergencies". Further it also notes that China will "provide medical assistance and emergency medical aid to relevant countries, and carry out practical cooperation in maternal and child health, disability rehabilitation, and major infectious diseases including AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria".

Fourthly, the mandate is also to "increase our cooperation in science and technology, establish joint labs (or research centers), international technology transfer centers and maritime cooperation centers, promote sci-tech personnel exchanges, cooperate in tackling key sci-tech problems,

*Cultural Aspect of Belt and Road Initiative and Project Mausam: Strategy for Engagement*

and work together to improve sci-tech innovation capability”.

Fifthly, the vision of B&R also emphasizes on the role of communication between political parties and parliaments, and promotes friendly exchanges between legislative bodies, major political parties and political organizations of countries along the Belt and Road. Moreover, it also highlights cooperation among cities, encourages major cities in these countries to become sister cities, focuses on promoting practical cooperation, particularly cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and creates more lively examples of cooperation. In addition, it also recognizes the role of think tanks in the countries along the Belt and Road to jointly conduct research and hold forums.

In fact nothing is new in these documents with regard to improving cultural and people-to-people contact as far as India and China are concerned. For instance, the BRICS think tank forum is meant to utilize the thinking capabilities of the think tanks of BRICS nations, B&R aims for better co-ordinations between think tanks along the road.

Sixthly, the concept note also talks to “increase exchanges and cooperation between non-governmental organizations of countries along the Belt and Road, organize public interest activities concerning education, health care, poverty reduction, biodiversity and ecological protection for the benefit of the general public, and improve the production and living conditions of poverty-stricken areas along the Belt and Road”. In addition, it also highlights on “international exchanges and cooperation on culture and media, and leverage the positive role of the Internet and new media tools to foster harmonious and friendly cultural environment and public opinion.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the objectives of B&R with regard to cultural aspects are already in operation in most cases between India and China bilaterally.

Mausam, on the other hand, is trying to promote a broader understanding of the concept of a common heritage and multiple identities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China, with State Council authorization, “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road,” March 28, 2016, accessed November 3, 2016, [http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330\\_669367.html](http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html).

Following are the goals of Mausam:

Firstly, Mausam seeks to revive lost linkages with nations along the Indian Ocean in order to strengthen bilateral co-operation and partnership.

Secondly, the objective of Mausam is to create links to existing World Heritage sites across the Indian Ocean ‘world’ by providing a cross-cultural, transnational narrative.

Thirdly, the project helps in redefining ‘Cultural Landscapes’ by identifying gaps in listing of sites and filling up lacuna by providing a holistic, multi-layered perspective and drawing relationships between the existing categories of ‘Natural’ and ‘Cultural’ Heritage.

Fourthly, the Project Mausam aims for ‘Indian Ocean Maritime Routes’ to attain transnational nomination under World Heritage, increasing scope for visibility, research, sustainable tourism, heritage development and promoting other Cultural Conventions across the Indian Ocean region.

Therefore, if we compare goals and objectives of B&R and Mausam, we find that both are two sides of one coin, promoting cultural contacts along their routes. Mr. Le Yucheng, former China’s Ambassador to India, in an interview with *The Hindu*, noted that China was “willing to strengthen communication and coordination with India, to link the Belt and Road Initiatives with India’s Spice Route and Project Mausam, and bring tangible benefits to the peoples in our two countries and throughout the region.”<sup>1</sup> India and China neither are part of each other’s initiative nor have linked the initiatives. Both countries nevertheless, are bilaterally engaged in enhancing and prompting cultural and people-to-people contacts. For this assessment, this paper has chosen President Xi’s visit to India in September 2014 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s and President Pranab Mukherjee’s visit to China in May 2015 and May 2016, respectively to gauge the increasing cultural ties between both countries.

### **President Xi Jinping’s Visit to India**

If President Xi Jinping laid the foundation of the Silk Road Economic

---

<sup>1</sup> Atul Aneja, “China’s Silk Road diplomacy willing to enmesh India’s projects,” *Hindu*, April 6, 2015, accessed November 5, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-silk-road-india-mausam-spice-route/article7073804.ece>.



*Cultural Aspect of Belt and Road Initiative and Project Mausam: Strategy for Engagement*

Belt, focusing upon physical connectivity in Kazakhstan, September 2013, it was not a mere coincidence that President Xi emphasized upon cultural connections between the two old civilizations, while visiting India in September 2014, which formed one of the pillars of Silk Road.

Addressing at ICWA, New Delhi, President Xi Jinping, noted that “the relationship between China and India dates back over 2000 years. Buddhism was born in ancient India, and thrived in ancient China. Exchanges in Buddhism have been vibrant in our histories. In AD 67, the two Indian Monks Matanga and Dharmaratna came to Luoyang, China, where they translated Buddhist scriptures and spread its teachings. They translated “Sutra in Forty-Two Sections,” which are the earliest translations of Buddhist texts in China. During the Han Dynasty, white horses carried Buddhist scriptures from India to China, and Xuanzang’s Journey to the west in the Tang Dynasty, also brought Indian culture to China.”<sup>1</sup> The Hindu mythology and rituals are imbibed in Chinese Buddhism, forming the basics of Chinese society together with Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.

President Xi Jinping further emphasized that “the key to foreign relations depends on the relationship between the nations’ people. There are amazing similarities between China’s Taichi and India’s Yoga, and China’s traditional medicine and India’s Ayurveda. The life philosophy of our two peoples which has held for thousands of years is very similar.”<sup>2</sup> B&R and MAUSAM can revive this tradition to promote greater exchanges between our civilizations.

Moreover, some sixteen agreements were signed during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India in September 2014.<sup>3</sup> Among these 16, at least 7 were to strengthen people-to-people contacts, including

---

<sup>1</sup> Xi Jinping’s speech at ICWA, Taj Palace, New Delhi, September 18, 2014, accessed November 3, 2016, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-09/19/c\\_1112539621.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-09/19/c_1112539621.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, List of Documents signed during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India, September 18, 2014, accessed November 3, 2016, <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24012/List+of+Documents+signed+during+the+State+Visit+of+Chinese+President+Xi+Jinping+to+India>.

Opening a New Route for Indian Pilgrimage (Kailash Mansarovar Yatra), to enable the producers from both countries to get an opportunity to pool their creative, artistic, technical, financial and marketing resources to co-produce films; to foster long-term collaboration between various cultural institutions of the two countries.

The National Book Trust (NBT) of India and the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) of China agreed to help provide greater access to their nationals of publications of the other side. More importantly, the two sides also agreed to establish sister-city relations between Mumbai and Shanghai, Ahmadabad and Guangzhou and establishing sister province/state relationship between Gujarat and Guangdong.

It would be no exaggeration to infer that agreements signed between India and China to promote people-to-people contacts virtually mirror in visions and actions on the building of B&R, issued in March 2015.

### **PM Narendra Modi's Visit to China**

Prime Minister Modi while talking to Chinese Media in Beijing asserted that “an area of high priority for us is people-to-people contacts” and emphatically stated that “Indians and Chinese don't know each other well, much less understand each other”. Nevertheless, after a brief rupture in relationship, both countries are moving ahead but need calibrated direction to avoid bumpy road.

During PM Narendra Modi's visit to China in May 2015, 24 agreements/MoUs were signed (apart from 26 business agreements/MoUs)<sup>1</sup> and at least 13 MoUs mentioned strengthening “people-to-people ties,” including the “sister-city” relationships between Hyderabad and Qingdao and Aurangabad and Dunhuang. The two sides also agreed to establish States/Provincial Leaders' Forum, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Establishing India-China Think-Tanks Forum, between

---

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “List of Agreements signed during the visit of Prime Minister to China,” May 15, 2015, accessed November 3, 2016, [http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25260/List + of + Agreements + signed+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+China+May+15+2015](http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25260/List+of+Agreements+signed+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+China+May+15+2015).

## *Cultural Aspect of Belt and Road Initiative and Project Mausam: Strategy for Engagement*

Doordarshan and China Central Television on cooperation in the field of Broadcasting, etc. If we analyze these agreements, it becomes clear that both countries are moving ahead with their individual states' agenda to revive and promote cultural connection as described in their respective B&R Initiative and Project Mausam.

Prime Minister Modi also inaugurated Gandhian and Indian Studies at Fudan University. However, the centre is yet to be fully functional and doesn't even have its own website or WeChat public page in China, one of the essential requirements these days. The center co-organized "China-India Workshop on Development and Governance" in June 2017 and a roundtable on "Gandhian Thought and International Relations Today" to commemorate 148th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and International Day of Non-Violence. This center should be established as a model centre where all aspects of India can be studied. India can emulate the success story of the Confucius Institute worldwide to build this centre in China. India and China must walk beyond the traditional rhetoric and focus on constructive engagement whole heartedly.

### **President Pranab Mukherjee's Visit to China**

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India, during four-day state visit to China, from 24 to 27 May 2016, stressed that political understanding between India and China is vital for a closer developmental partnership which could be achieved through enhanced political communication while addressing students and faculties at Peking University. Not only agreements were signed but President Mukherjee met famous Chinese artist Han Meilin, Chinese contemporary sculptor Wu Weishan, and Huang Xiaoming, leading actor of the film *Xuanzang* (the first Sino-India co-production).

Moreover, President Mukherjee also addressed the roundtable conference of Vice-Chancellors/Presidents of universities from India and China at the Peking University. This was rather trendsetter in the sense that ideas are geminated in universities and better collaborations will certainly enhance broader and deeper understanding between the two countries. The President called for a greater collaboration between academic communities

of India and China for mutual benefit and witnessed the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between ten universities of India and China to create a “collaborative platform for academic cooperation in the areas of research and education, joint seminars and exchange of faculty and students”. The collaborative research projects with Chinese institutions on a particular topic could lead to better understanding of issues and mutual learning.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from these recent agreements, India-China in the past also worked together to promote cultural connections. Ministry of Human Resources & Development, Indian and China Scholarship Council jointly offer scholarship to some 30 students each year. Huawei Maitree Scholarship was established in 2011, every year some 10 Indian students are given scholarships.<sup>2</sup> Indian Council of Culture Relations (ICCR), India also provides scholarship to Chinese students, but only a few. Since 2007, exchange of Youth delegation between India and China has been continuing and does ignite the interests among participants and exposure to each other.

Interestingly, first India-China Think Tank Forum was held in New Delhi, Dec. 9-10, 2016, jointly organized by Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and China Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing. Speaking at the occasion, Shri S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, Government of India, emphasised that “the evidence of our interaction is there in front of our eyes, whether along the Silk Road or at Dunhuang, Luoyang or Datong. There are still older examples—be it in provinces like Sichuan, or indeed, later ones along the Fujian coastline.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sanjeev Kumar and Rajiv Ranjan, “President Pranab Mukherjee’s Visit to China: Minimizing Differences, Maximizing Convergences,” Issue Brief, ICWA, June 3, 2016, <http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/IB/2014/PresidentVisittoChinaIB03062016.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> “Huawei yindu huikui shehui, chuangli huawei youhao jiang. [Huawei established Huawei Maitree Scholarship in India]”, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://finance.sina.com.cn/roll/20110512/13119831676.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “Address by Foreign Secretary at India China Think-Tanks Forum,” accessed December 9, 2016, [http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/27798/Address\\_by\\_Foreign\\_Secretary\\_at\\_India\\_China\\_ThinkTanks\\_Forum\\_December\\_09\\_2016](http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/27798/Address_by_Foreign_Secretary_at_India_China_ThinkTanks_Forum_December_09_2016).

*Cultural Aspect of Belt and Road Initiative and Project Mausam: Strategy for Engagement*

He also warns that “yet, a narrative that we have always been distant from each other was successfully constructed by Western powers that had an interest in doing so”. The point is both researchers and academia from both countries consult Western materials for their research and study thereby falls prey to Western propaganda.

Addressing the forum, Prof. Wang Weiguang, President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, highlighted that “China and India are adjacent to each other and enjoy a long history of friendly contacts. The earliest bilateral contacts can be traced back to more than 2,000 years ago. Indian Buddhism, music, dance, literature, astronomy, calendar, architecture and sugar-making technology were introduced into China, while China’s paper-making technology, silk, chinaware, tea and music came to India.”<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, China is influenced by Indian Buddhism, music, dance and even literature but common Indian is yet to get the glimpses of Chinese Confucius, Lao Zi, Meng Zi, poetry and prose.

Prof. Wang also calls “Chinese and Indian experts to work together on topics of how development of one country can connect that of the other, so that the China Dragon and Indian Elephant can tango with each other, and how their development would in turn benefit neighbouring countries and the world at large.”<sup>2</sup> But it seems that Indo-China strategic rivalry despise fusion of Beijing opera and Indian Kathakali,<sup>3</sup> instead Asia is becoming arena of Indo-China Tandava.<sup>4</sup>

China has established hundreds of centres of Confucius Institute worldwide to promote and let World embrace the China. Ironically, India very lately allowed opening one. The Confucius Institute is embroiled in controversy of espionage and interfering with host’s academic freedom and yet majority of Western countries have thousands of Confucius Institute to

---

<sup>1</sup> Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, “Opening Remarks by Prof. Wang Weiguang President Chinese Academy of Social Science,” December 9, 2016, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/stmtdg/2014/OpeningremarksWangWeiguang9122016.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Kathakali is one of the forms of Indian classical dance.

<sup>4</sup> Tandava dance depicts the violent nature of Lord Shiva, the Hindu god as the destroyer of nature.

equip their young generations with Chinese skills and assisting them to get closer with Chinese society and culture, which is invariably essential to read China.

After successful “Visit India Year” in 2015, the year 2016 is “Visit China Year”. “Visit India Year” in China in 2015 and “Visit China Year” in India in 2016 were jointly decided by President Xi and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he visited India in 2014.<sup>1</sup> India extended electronic tourist visas to Chinese nationals. However, getting Indian research visa by Chinese is still lengthy and cumbersome process, one of the persisting complaints of majority of Chinese scholars.

Apparently, two new movies co-produced, *Xuanzang* and *Buddies* in India, indicates that China is more proactive in spreading its culture connections with India. When Buddhism travelled to China, Hinduism was inalienable partner and traveled to China too, is vividly visible in Buddhist Temples, rituals and beliefs.

It is crystal clear that both India and China are bilaterally intensifying their cultural contact and strengthening people-to-people contacts. India is also emerging and aiming to reclaim its status in world politics and not willing to accept China as a leader, which critiques of B&R point out that by being part of B&R obliquely indicates that India has accepted Chinese supremacy.

## **Conclusion**

It can be aptly concluded that B&R is a national initiative of Beijing whereas Mausam at most can be regarded as an Indian Ministry’s research project. But even this research project is limited to assigned group only. Mausam is yet to broaden its reach and scope even within India. To succeed, Mausam needs to broaden its reach and scope, whereby inter-disciplinary approach should be implemented and institutes, universities, departments and interested academicians put forward a convincing and engaging outlook of Mausam. But the fact is that Indian

---

<sup>1</sup> Xi congratulates on launch of “Visit China Year” in India, January 16, 2016, accessed January 20, 2016, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/16/c\\_135015542.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/16/c_135015542.htm).

*Cultural Aspect of Belt and Road Initiative and Project Mausam: Strategy for Engagement*

academician and journalists are doing much on B&R than Mausam. In a sense it is not unusual but it is challenging for India to convince the world about her own pet project to take it seriously. Moreover, B&R is selling like hot cake among academicians both inside and outside China. In contrast, for a researcher interested in Project Mausam, it is apparently not feasible for him/her to get funding from the government or universities. In fact, the government of India needs to have well thought out and coherent strategy to execute Project Mausam. New Delhi needs to do background study for better implementations and success of the strategy.

When the two rising Asian powers are marching towards to 'rejuvenate and reclaim' their status at global stage, it is inevitable that both will compete with each other. The competition between India and China is healthy as long as both countries don't see this competition as zero-sum game. But the problems remain lack of trust and understanding of each other. One of the certified and well taken paths is to build on cultural and people-to-people contacts which can be spilled over to cooperation in other areas.

With the advent of modern nation-states, interdependence between states for security and development has increased. As a matter of fact, globalization and creation of multilateral and regional organisations and platforms are designed to expedite such interactions. States, nonetheless must not meddle unnecessarily once the policy has been framed and avenues established to let other stakeholders to interact freely. In other words, states establish new avenues for connections but must not be steering the interactions and refrain from setting the agenda.