



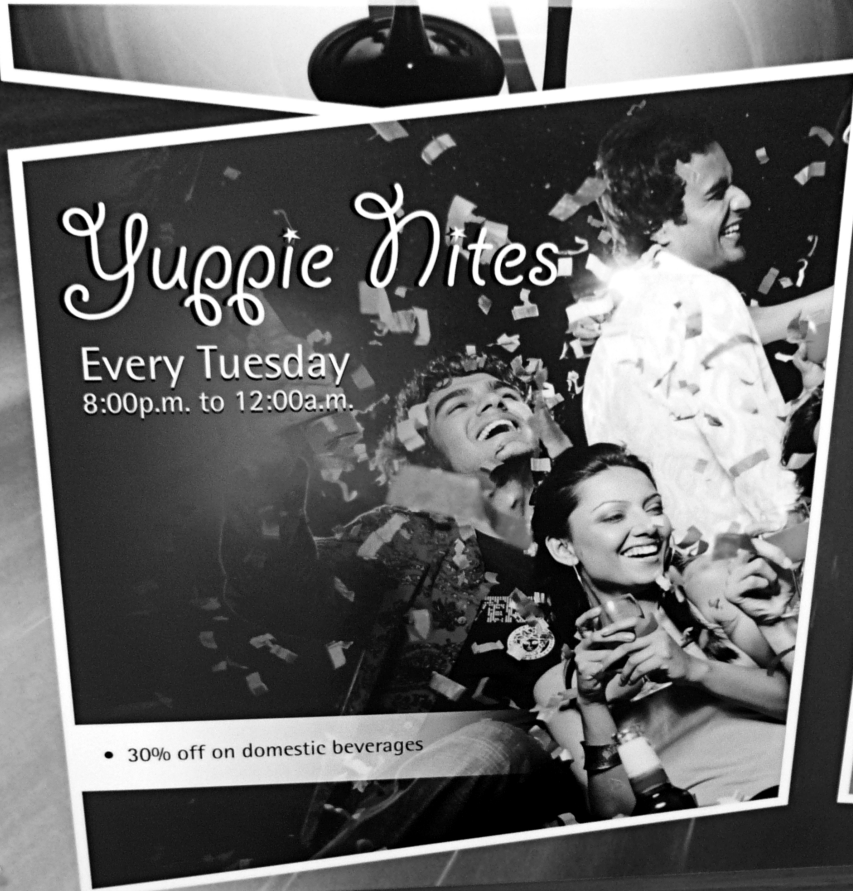
CHINA BY NIGHT

CHRIS KEALY

China Through Indian Eyes

NAZIA VASI

MUMBAI—Shaped by disparate political, economic, and social forces, and starkly divergent histories, China and India, though neighbors, have arrived at a point where their young people, as well as their leaders, have developed individual paths toward each other and the world. For a host of reasons, the two nations remain at odds 30 years after both economies and societies truly opened to global markets and outside influences.



Yuppie Nites

Every Tuesday
8:00p.m. to 12:00a.m.

- 30% off on domestic beverages



Ladies' Nites

Every Wednesday
8:00p.m. to 12:00a.m.

- Ladies groups get 30% off on total
- 1 complimentary snack platter (Veg)
- Lucky dip - one winner gets a 25% discount on next Kitty Party at Oriental Wok

INDIA AFTER DARK

CORY DOCTOROW

Take the attitude toward house ownership. Indians love to invest in their homes, decorating them with works of art, exquisite furniture, and high-tech gadgets. In India, the home is an extension of the self. Family and professional colleagues are routinely welcomed into both rich and poor households. In contrast, a Chinese may own several homes, but these remain zealously guarded private domains, functional in nature and primarily used as a place to sleep at night. The Chinese prefer to spend most of their time outdoors. Friends and family are entertained in fancy restaurants, or met in the park or mall, but are rarely invited back home.

In China, it is rare for friends or co-workers to get acquainted with each other's family. In contrast, young Indians consider friends to be an extension of their family, and it is common for everyone to spend time together in one large close-knit circle. Whether it's over lunch in the company cafeteria, socializing after work, or dining at a friend's home, Indians tend to let outsiders into their lives more quickly than the Chinese. This camaraderie creates an informal social circle, making it easier to make friends in India.

China's one-child policy clearly plays a substantial role in the obsession with keeping families private. The single "em-

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peror child,” powdered and pampered by his parents, has high expectations riding on his shoulders. This pressure to perform tends to force the young Chinese into a corner, enclosing him within a cocoon and making him uncomfortable sharing his friends with his family. Furthermore, since the nation has been through such a monumental change in recent years, experiencing a myriad of good and bad influences both from within and outside, many Chinese youths are finding it difficult to keep pace with such change. Often deeply self-conscious of what they perceive as their shortcomings, these young people tend to be more careful upfront by not letting outsiders in. Once a personal rapport is established, though, defenses break down, and the Chinese can be very warm people.

In contrast, Indians work within a social web, constantly surrounded by friends and family. As they grow, so does this social network. “It’s fun to invite friends home for a meal or just to catch up,” says Niyati Parikh, a college student in Mumbai. “I prefer calling at friends’ homes to hanging out in a coffee shop because our homes are more comfortable, convenient, inexpensive, and casual. It’s a good way to get to know each other better, and my parents are always happy to meet my friends.”

This openness, coupled with a far broader tolerance of free speech, often means that Indians express their opinions more freely than Chinese, whose prevailing social environment encourages conformism. On conference calls between Indians and Chinese, most of the talking is done by Indians who love to discuss, debate, and argue. By contrast, the Chinese system, which doesn’t encourage pupils to question authority, results in few prepared to raise their voices to express an

opinion. Conferences in China are usually meant for the boss to communicate his one-way message down the chain. He is meant to be listened to and followed. In India’s democratic ethos, the boss’s policies can be questioned, even challenged. Employees often don’t agree with him—and that is all right.

Furthermore, both China and India house a multi-tiered society—carved from vastly divergent histories and cultures. While the measure of a man’s wealth—like in any capitalist system—determines his status in society, India and China have developed unique systems of segregation. In India, it’s the caste system, and in China, it is proximity to the Communist Party. As a result, China’s princelings and India’s Brahmins (the highest caste) enjoy privileges other citizens without political affiliations or of a particular caste might not.

Many Chinese traveling to India find the caste system intriguing. “I find it fascinating how different groups of people all know, accept, and adhere to the lifestyle dictated by their caste systems since birth. Each individual knows his role in society, and acts accordingly—especially while making life-changing choices from education to marriage,” says Danfang Wu, a Chinese employee at an Indian firm. “In China, we treat everybody equally, giving each individual their dignity and pride of place in society.”

SUPERSONIC CHANGES

In 1991, when India opened its economy, per capital GDP in China and India were almost equal. This year, China’s figure of \$9,000 will be more than double that of India, according to the International Monetary Fund.

This colossal change within Chinese society has created a widening gap be-

tween parents and children. Because Chinese youth have grown up in a world vastly different and more privileged than their parents', the generational gap has created a huge vacuum within the family. With nuclear family ties still close, Indian youth tend to share their personal and professional thoughts with their parents more easily than Chinese youth, who don't easily open up to their parents about their inner most thoughts and feelings.

Furthermore, the pressure of being single children and proving themselves to parents and society has led young Chinese to become highly independent in their thoughts and actions. By contrast, many Indian youths remain dependent on their parents for financial aid and emotional support. So the entire range of decision making—from routine, daily purchases to such life-altering choices as marriages—diverges sharply between Chinese and Indian youth.

This independence and an amplified exposure to Western thought processes and philosophies over the past two decades has changed the way Chinese youth treat relationships. An increasing number of Chinese young couples now make their decision to marry regardless of their parents' wishes, while arranged marriages remain the norm in India. Because Chinese youth are economically independent, many don't see the need to consult their parents before marrying. Moreover, in contrast to Indian weddings, still replete with traditional ceremonies and costumes, young Chinese today tend to ape the west, with many marrying in long white gowns in churches, or in stark, state wedding offices.

The role of young women within the family is also sharply different in India and China. Chinese women tend to be more independent within their families, often making major decisions due to the equal op-

portunities, education, and status they've experienced while growing up. An Indian woman, however, is often forced to yield to her husband's diktats, as she did to her father while growing up. The young Indian woman is still taught that the man comes first, his opinion matters, and his decisions are final. As a result, most Indian women will first serve their husbands, brothers, or fathers-in-law food before serving themselves or their mothers, sisters, and daughters. Married women will also continue to consult their fathers and husbands on big purchases, while marriages are sanctioned only if both fathers consent.

ECONOMIC SURGE
Beijing's single-minded, centralized, and authoritarian strategy in creating and enforcing growth and development of the nation has led to China's phenomenal economic ascension. In 2011, the Middle Kingdom's GDP was

\$6.99 trillion, or nearly four times India's \$1.84 trillion. If the Indian economy were to grow at an annual average of 7.8 percent (the average rate for the past decade), it would take 18 years to reach China's current size. If growth were to accelerate to 9 percent, it would still take India 15 years to catch up with China. The race of the dragon and tiger reveals that the dragon has experienced unprecedented economic transformation in the last 25 years—the time needed for a generation to come of age—whereas the tiger's growth has been more gradual.

TECHNOLOGY HAS TRANSFORMED THE VORACITY WITH WHICH INDIANS AND CHINESE CONSUME PRODUCTS AND SERVICES— BUT AT A SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT PACE.

This economic surge has led to a substantial increase in disposable income in the hands of young Chinese. Upwardly mobile Chinese increasingly judge people based on the brands they consume in their rapid ascent of the social ladder. In comparison, Indian youth, who haven't seen this sudden surge of cash and are exposed to more traditional retail formats aren't as brand conscious. Few Indians see the point in spending money on luxurious goods for themselves. Most Indians still purchase brand names, not as status symbols, but as items that allow them comfortable lifestyles.

"As an Indian in China, I was constantly amazed by the ostentatious display of wealth, be it in the form of ordering a lot more than one can eat (especially at client dinners) or the Louis Vuitton bags carried by company secretaries," says Samta Lalan, a Mumbai native who has worked for a foreign bank and traveled extensively through 30 cities across the mainland. Having spent four years based in Shanghai, she observes, "The young Shanghainese woman is all about living the high life in the moment, while a young woman from Mumbai is more into building her home and investing in her family's future."

Furthermore, technology has transformed the voracity with which Indians and Chinese consume products and services—but at a substantially different pace. Some 450 million households in China have broadband connections compared with barely 12.5 million households in India, translating to a huge number of young Chinese buying everything from face creams to fancy dresses online.

"Everything is a lot cheaper online. I get to browse through and compare multiple products retailed across the country and get them all delivered to my home within

a week," says Wang Ming, a marketing executive from Shanghai, who adds he'd rather spend his time with his girlfriend than shopping in a mall.

UNFETTERED FAITH

"Every time the government has changed, there has been a revolution. We don't want the present government to change. We're proud of our nation, but not always happy with policies it's implemented," says Katy Cheung, a financial analyst, over spicy Sichuanese food in a refurbished traditional Beijing hutong.

Flush with funds, happy with the way their lives have improved over the years compared to their parents and neighboring nations, young Chinese hone a sense of pride toward their country. Moreover, widely publicized national achievements further seek to alleviate this sense of patriotism among Chinese youth. Ever passionate about their nation, Chinese pride in their homeland can make every Indian envious.

By contrast, dogged by corruption scandals, a crippled economy, and minimal social impact on people's lives, Indians are quickly losing their patriotic spirit and faith in their government. Success in India comes despite the government, not because of it, which is why a majority of Indian multinational companies are privately owned; upwardly mobile parents dream of sending their children to private schools; and Indian consumers trust products from private companies for reliability and guarantee of goods and services, rather than government controlled jobs, schools, or products.

This lack of national pride also translates into Indians having little trust in other Indians while doing business, hence failing to take advantage of the domestic dividend. When it comes to striking

a business deal between two Indians, one will only trust the other if there is a personal connection. A deal between two Chinese businessmen is struck on the sheer solidarity that they are both Han Chinese. In fact, according to a projection by *The Economist*, employee and infrastructure inefficiencies are so high in India that Indians need to work almost an hour to earn half a liter of beer, compared with a Chinese who must work barely 10 minutes for the same brew.

What Indians lack in national pride, however, they make up for in democracy. In addition to a widespread grasp of the English language, India's greatest weapon against China has been its democratic structure, ensuring everyone has a voice in government, business, and society. The very fact that Indian people can express views against their government gives India an unparalleled edge over China, where the government is an extension of the family, and nobody wants a broken home. Being able to express oneself has given Indian youths the freedom to choose their leaders, a novelty Chinese youth can only yearn for, and a substantial goal of government change—but with one central difference. China wants India's voice, just not its noise.

The Chinese appreciate the double-edged sword change can bring. Everyone having a say all too often can mean nothing really gets done. "India's democracy still seems messy and unfinished. It seems that the highly diverse population, divided by so many languages, religions and sub-cultures, makes it difficult for the Indian government to develop unified social rules," writes a Chinese journalist from Shantou University on a school trip to India.

While the youth of China and India share many differences, they also share many similarities. Beginnings have already been made through companies setting up operations in both China and India, diplomats signing bilateral pacts in trade and defense services, and tourism numbers exploding. Further, as globalization allows borders to crumble, differences will gradually melt away, bridging what gulfs remain through deeper understanding and trust, and culminating in the richness of contrasting relationships. Every day, the handshake across the Himalayas is getting stronger.

The world, as former premier Wen Jiabao observed, is big enough for both nations. We just need to learn to work in sync, while we reap the rich dividends of our mutual diversity. ●