

**THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND  
REVOLUTIONARY DISCOURSE  
IN LU XUN'S WRITINGS**

*Thesis submitted to the  
Jawaharlal Nehru University in fulfilment of the  
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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**MANIK BHATTACHARYA**

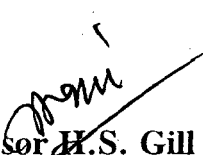
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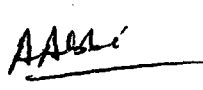
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Centre for Linguistics and English  
School of Languages  
Jawaharlal Nehru University

**CERTIFICATE**

This thesis entitled The Creative Process and Revolutionary Discourse  
in Lu Xun's Writings submitted by Manik Bhattacharya for the award of the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted  
so far, in part or in full for any other degree or diploma of any university. This  
may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
Professor H.S. Gill  
Supervisor

  
Dr. (Ms.) Anvita Abbi  
Chairperson

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## PREFACE

Lu Xun (1881-1936) is the foremost figure in the literary scene of modern China. His first story in vernacular Chinese "A Madman's Diary" was written in 1918.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter he had an uninterrupted literary career till his death in 1936. Apart from essays, reminiscences and short stories he wrote few poems in traditional style and a collection of prose poems<sup>2</sup>. Moreover his keen interest in the literature of other countries and literary theories kept him busy in translation. His early essays which were written in classical Chinese laid the foundation of his perspective. Between 1918 and 1924 he mainly wrote short stories and later he was engaged in writing satirical essays. His creative mind which was revealed through his stories was reflected in a brilliant and more powerful manner in his essays written in the later phase.

Lu Xun's thought which developed in the background of the late 19th century and early 20th century is worth probing into. In the history of modern China (1840-1949) which spans little more than a century, one witnesses a series of

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1. "kuangren riji" 《狂人日记》 , LXQJ-I.

2. YE CAO 《野草》 , (Wild Grass) collection of Lu Xun's prose poems, LXQJ-2. Lu Xun also wrote some poems in new-style in order to encourage the young poets, see Lu Xun, SELECTED POEMS, pp.2-5.

historic and epoch-making events. There were quite a few Chinese who analysed the social reality of China in the post Opium War period and reflected on the complexity of the time. A few of them who came out with authenticity in their views were Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan, Hong Xiuquan, Wang Tao, Kang Youwei, Tan Sitong, Yan Fu, Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen), Zhang Taiyan, Liang Qichao, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, Mao Zedong and Lu Xun.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Lin Zexu 林则徐 (1785-1850), the enlightened Qing official who banned opium and led the patriotic resistance against British imperialism during the Opium War. He was one of the leading intellectuals who stressed the importance of practical knowledge and learning from the West. Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794-1857) an enlightened official and a contemporary of Lin Zexu. He was one of the leading intellectuals who advocated reforms and learning from the West. Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814-1864), failures in the official examination made him disillusioned. China's defeat in the Opium War, corruption among the officials and the misery of the people urged him to take part in popular anti-Confucian movements. He was influenced by the evangelistic spirit of Christianity and mobilized peasants in the Taiping Peasants' Uprising in 1851. Wang Tao 王韬 (1828-1897), one of the early representatives of bourgeois reformism. They were in favour of development of capitalism and establishment of parliamentary democracy in China. Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858-1927), Tan Sitong 谭嗣同 (1865-1898), Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929) and Yan Fu 严复 (1853-1921) were leading intellectuals during late Qing period. They condemned orthodox Confucian ideology and feudal autocracy and put forward a comprehensive plan for institutional reform. New learning, constitutional monarchy, integration of ideas of evolution with Confucianism etc. were some of their ideas. The impact of their ideas was considerable during the post Sino-Japanese War period. Although the Reform Movement of 1898 变法维新 led by Kang Youwei was suppressed by Empress Dowager Ci Xi 慈禧太后 with the help of the Westernization group 洋务派 the reformists' programme of modernization 改良派 变法维新思想 remained active in early 20th century. Sun Yat-sen 孙中山 (1866-1925), Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869-1936) were two eminent

When Lu Xun died the entire nation was engulfed in grief and he was honoured by the people as 'the soul of the nation'.<sup>1</sup> Mao while commemorating Lu Xun's first death anniversary called him the 'sage of modern China'.<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun's works have been considered as an encyclopedia of Chinese society and his essays as a whole have been compared with the popular romance A DREAM OF THE RED MANSIONS, which is worth reading a hundred times.<sup>3</sup> Mao was fond of reading Lu Xun's works and his profound understanding of Lu Xun was

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representative personalities of revolutionary democratic movement in China. The Revolution of 1911 辛亥革命 under Sun Yatsen's leadership overthrew the Qing dynasty and ended the feudal autocracy once for all. Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1889-1927) and Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1880-1942) were two early Marxists who founded the Chinese Communist Party. They also guided the cultural movement during the May Fourth era. Chen was the first editor of NEW YOUTH Journal 《新青年》. Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962) was one of the representative figures in the new culture movement during the May Fourth period when he played a pioneering role in popularizing vernacular Chinese 白话. Later he led a pro-Western intellectual group and took a conservative political stand. Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893-1976), Lu Xun 鲁迅.

1. "The soul of the nation" "民族魂", see "Jinian Lu Xun xiansheng danchen yibai zhounian" (Commemorating the Birth Centenary of Lu Xun) in LU XUN DANCHEN BAINIAN JI-NIANJI (Lu Xun Birth Centenary Commemorative volume), p.72.

2. "Sage of modern China" "现代中国的圣人", see Mao's speech delivered in 1937 "Lun Lu Xun" (On Lu Xun), RENMIN RIBAO, 22nd Sept. 1981, p.1.

3. A DREAM OF THE RED MANSIONS 《红楼梦》, see Li Zehou, ZHONGGUO JINDAI SIXIANGSHI LUN (A History of Modern Chinese Thought), p.439.

well summed up in the essay "On New Democracy" which for the first time aroused widespread academic interest in Lu Xun among Chinese scholars and pointed out to the need to carry on a serious and systematic study of Lu Xun and his works. Mao's observation on the role of Lu Xun in the history of China is unequivocal:

"Lu Hsun was the greatest and the most courageous standard-bearer of this new cultural force. The chief commander of China's cultural revolution, he was not only a great man of letters but a great thinker and revolutionary. Lu Hsun was a man of unyielding integrity, free from all sycophancy or obsequiousness; this quality is invaluable among colonial and semi-colonial peoples. Representing the great majority of the nation, Lu Hsun breached and stormed the enemy citadel; on the cultural front he was the bravest and most correct, the firmest, the most loyal and the most ardent national hero, a hero without parallel in our history. The road he took was the very road of China's new national culture."<sup>1</sup>

The reason why Lu Xun and his works have become a widely accepted topic of research is not only for his remarkable contribution in the field of literature but also for his views which provide authentic clues to facilitate

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1. Mao, SELECTED WORKS, Vol.II, p.372. Apart from "On New Democracy" "Xinminzhuyi lun" 《新民主主义论》 Mao also referred to Lu Xun and his works in "Fandui dangbagu" (oppose Stereotyped Party Writing), 《反对党八股》 "Zai yan'an wenyi zuotanhuishangde jianghua" (Talks at The Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art), 《在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话》 and in "Zai zhongguo gongchandang quanguo xuanchuan gongzuohuiyi shangde jianghua" (Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda work), 《在中国共产党全国宣传工作会议上的讲话》



our accessibility into the complex social reality of the time. The literary images in his writings were not merely faithful reflections of the real life characters but were moulded and created by him with certain specific messages.

Lu Xun's contribution in the field of language and literature has been studied by many a scholars but the common spirit of all such researches has been to look at Lu Xun primarily from the angle of literature. However, the point that he played an important role in the overall historical development of Chinese society, which was acknowledged by Mao, has not been examined in detail. The scholars who correctly evaluated the essence and spirit of Lu Xun's works and foresaw the pervasive influence of Lu Xun in the future literary and cultural life of China were Qu Qiubai, Feng Xuefeng, Mao Dun and Xu Shoushang.<sup>1</sup> Their contribu-

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1. Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1935), critic and one of the early theoretician of the Chinese Communist Party. His writings particularly literary criticisms are valuable documents for our understanding of contemporary literary scene. His "LU XUN ZAGAN XUANJI xuyan" (Preface to Lu Xun's Selected Miscellanea) recognized Lu Xun as a great writer and ended the controversy among leftist writers on Lu Xun and his works. QU QIUBAI WENJI 《瞿秋白文集》 was published posthumously. Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰 (1903-1976) was one of the leading members of China's Left-wing Writers' Alliance. A well-known writer and critic and one of Lu Xun's intimate friends. Some of his important works are LUNWENJI 《论文集》, LINGSHANG 《灵山歌》, HUIYI LU XUN 《回忆鲁迅》 etc. Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896-1981), a well-known novelist and critic. ZI YE 《子夜》 (Midnight) is his most well-known novel. Xu Shoushang 许寿裳 (1882-1948), a close friend and an admirer of Lu Xun. His writings like WO SUO RENSHI DE LU XUN 《我所认识的鲁迅》 (Lu Xun as I know him), WANGYOU LU XUN YINXIANGJI 《亡友鲁迅印象记》 (Impressions

tions were not voluminous but they did provide valuable references to the later scholars.

In the process of the changing social and cultural structure there is a need to understand the different aspects of Lu Xun's thought and its relevance today. When the ideological support from the people for the ruling feudal class and culture was disappearing fast, Lu Xun drew the positive and relevant elements from the old and integrated them with the concrete social reality. In this process of transformation he did not fail to take heed of ideas from the outside world. Thus he played the role of a link between the past and the future by reconstructing and evolving a suitable ideological foundation for the emerging social and cultural structure. In brief, the purpose of the present work is not to restrict the discussion to the role Lu Xun played in the field of literature only but also to highlight his role in the wider social and political scene of that time.

Lu Xun's magnum opus "The True Story of Ah Q" (1921) has aroused controversy among scholars ever since its ap-

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of my late friend Lu Xun), LU XUN SIXIANG YU SHENGHUO 《鲁迅思想与生活》 (Lu Xun's Life and Thought), LU XUN NIANPU provide reliable references to Lu Xun's life and thought. Besides, Xu Guangping 许广平 (1898-1968) Lu Xun's wife, Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967), Zhou Jianren 周建人 (1888-1984) Lu Xun's two brothers also wrote on Lu Xun, his thought and his works.

pearance.<sup>1</sup> The significance of the story is measured at chronological level in human history and the dispute the story had unveiled has long ceased to remain confined to literary discussions alone and has become a subject matter of inter-disciplinary studies.<sup>2</sup> This is precisely because of the fact that the questions raised in the story are complex and not merely confined to literature. In fact "The True Story of Ah Q" is the key to understand Lu Xun's works and his perspective of the Chinese society.

The definite social reality in which Lu Xun was born and brought up was characteristic in few aspects. The process of disintegration of the traditional order and its ideology was gradually coming to an end while the picture of a new social, political and cultural order was yet to emerge. The impact of China's feudal culture and ideology was deep in Lu Xun's mind. The task of freeing himself from the ideological influence of old China was rather difficult. The conscious and mature reaction Lu Xun had in his critique of the old tradition was possible only because of the rigorous training in traditional education he had in his childhood till the age of eighteen. He not only discovered the weak points in that system but also learned the necessary

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1. "Ah Q zhengzhuàn" 《阿Q正傳》 ; LXQJ-I.

2. For a recent discussion on such a multi-dimensional meaning and nature of Ah Q's image see in Huang Mingfen, "jiazhi pipíng yu Ah Q xingxiangde kuaxueke, kuashiji, kuawenhua yiyi", LU XUN YANJIU YUEKAN.

tactics to deal with it. Therefore in this sense the thorough understanding of the old China was not merely to question the *raison d'être* of the old system but a source of strength for his analysis and his ideological struggle against it. The role Lu Xun played in the transition between the old and the new culture, his understanding of the inner contradictions in that process and his attitude towards ideas from other societies need to be studied. The consciousness of the history of an ancient and rich cultural tradition, an understanding of the social reality in the context of the political influence of imperialism in feudal China, an awareness of the scientific and technological development in the outside world and an unbiased attitude to the influence of Marxism in the political process are elements of the method with which the present work has been carried out.

CHAPTER - I  
CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS IN CHINA AND  
LU XUN'S APPEARANCE ON THE SCENE

The Opium War of 1840 which marks the beginning of modern China is considered as the watershed in the history of China. From 1840 to 1911 China witnessed a series of historical vicissitudes. The social and political reality of the period was characterized by a process of continuous disintegration which eventually led to the collapse of a two thousand year old monolithic political authority and feudal institutions supporting it. Before the war the urge to reform was reflected in the intellectual introspection of Gong Zizhen and continued by patriotic reformers like Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan and others.<sup>1</sup>

At this historical juncture when the time-worn ancient China was about to breathe her last, the puzzled Chinese who inherited a rich cultural tradition found themselves at the threshold of a new modern world. The invading country too, experienced a similar kind of historical dilemma. Though the British guns broke open the maindoor of the "Middle

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1. Gong Zizhen 龚自珍 (1792-1841), essayist, poet, historian and philosopher of the Qing dynasty.

Kingdom", the mystery of that world still remained unravelled.<sup>1</sup>

Cultural conflicts in the history of evolution of Chinese culture until the war may be ascribed to two distinctive features, one between the Han ethnic majority and non-Han ethnic groups and the other between the ruling Confucian ethos and Taoist and Buddhist influences in the minds of the common Chinese. Non-Han ethnic groups who were mainly pastoral and nomadic people were all along considered as culturally alien by the Han gentry class and scholar-officials. Although the long dynastic history of imperial China was interrupted by non-Han political domination at different points of time there had been a continuous process of their assimilation with the mainstay of Chinese culture.<sup>2</sup>

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1. "Middle Kingdom" zhongguo 中国 .

2. Han ethnic majority 汉族 ; In present China out of fifty nationalities main non-Han ethnic groups are Manchu, Korean, Mongolian, Uygur, Dongxiang, Tibetan, Miao, Bouyei, Dong Bai, Hani, Dai, Zhuang, Yao etc. The earliest ethnic conflict what Chinese history witnessed was in the early fourth century when the north China was ruled by non-Han minorities. The period is known as the "period of disunity". The expression "five alien tribes creating chaos" 五胡乱华 (wuhu luan hua) is used to describe such a confused political scene. These five tribes were known as Di 狄, Xiongnu (Huns) 匈奴, Jie, 羯 Xianbei 鲜卑 and Qiang 羌. The period also known as the Sixteen States period (304-439 AD) which was mainly ruled by the above five tribes, was a non-Han political domination. Besides, Chinese imperial history also experienced two major non-Han dynasties i.e. Mongol dynasty (Yuan 元朝), (1279-1368) and Manchu dynasty (Qing 清朝), (1644-1911).

The Opium War brought in an altogether new element in the traditional cultural scene of China. China, a vast land mass inhabited by different ethnic groups, inherited a rich cultural heritage which was predominantly Han tradition. The mainstay cultural tradition was based on the dominant Confucian and Mencian texts which were fostered by Han scholars. Therefore a sense of cultural superiority enjoyed by them created an unfavourable attitude towards other ethnic groups. The West was more remote and hence looked down by China as culturally obnoxious and heretic. This historical 'consciousness' of the society right from the ruling class to the popular mind was put to the test at the time of the war. The superiority in military strength of the West seriously injured the ego of the ruling class. The West posed an unprecedented challenge to the psychological and cultural existence of the people. Thereafter, the conflicting aspects between the two distinctive processes one the historically continuing within the native structure and the other emerging with the alien cultural pattern mainly Western were mingled into one process full of complexities. The new process which was not initiated by the native Chinese themselves created a national crisis in the history of China.

The Qing dynasty had inherited a vast autocratic feudal empire with a deep-rooted social and political ideology of Confucianism. Qing rulers who were Manchus, a non-Han

ethnic minority, were supported by a powerful army, a bureaucracy consisting mainly of Han scholars and a land-owning gentry class at the grassroots level. Confucianism had harmonized the entire society from the emperor down to the family unit into a well-knit hierarchical social structure for about two thousand years. Although Confucianism never failed to absorb new ideas from other sources nor discouraged outstanding individual merit it remained essentially a hereditary, hierarchical and elitist tradition. The system was based on strict observance of rituals, divinity of the emperor, ancestor-worship, filial piety and the subordinate status of women. The self-sufficient economy was based on agriculture and the peasants were forced to pay tributes, taxes and Corvee services to landlords. The ruthless exploitation and the absence of political rights led to peasants' uprisings at times. The Imperial Examination for the recruitment of civil servants was perfected during the Tang dynasty (618-907), a system in which the emperor, the Imperial army, the scholar-officials and the land-owning aristocracy constituted the ruling class and the vast masses mainly peasants who were engaged in the traditional mode of production supplying essential needs to it.<sup>1</sup> Both the ruler and the subject were supposed to remain loyal to the Confucian social doctrine. Until the war China with

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1. Tang dynasty ( 唐朝 )



her archaic social and political characteristics remained self-centered and insulated from the external influences. Inter-ethnic conflicts and other contradictions underwent a process of slow and evolutionary changes without having any qualitative systemic transformation.

The imperial political authority had the support of a strong military force under the command of the emperor. Emperor cult was the pivot of the whole system as the source of his power was divine and the notion was historically accepted in the concepts such as "the Mandate of Heaven", "Son of Heaven" etc.<sup>1</sup> The autocracy was supported by a hereditary aristocracy in a hierarchical social structure. Confucianism remained as the spiritual strength of the feudal autocracy. The influence of Confucian teachings was all-embracing and inviolable in the family relations. The competitive examinations had the orientation of Confucian teachings and were thus restricted to a few. The vast peasantry was deprived of the institutionalized education. The age-old set pattern of human relationships between the benevolent ruler and the loyal officials, the father and the filial sons, the husband and his obedient wife was the standard ethical code in feudal China. Besides these three

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1. "The mandate of Heaven", "天命" "Son of Heaven"  
 "天子" for the relationship between the feudal political system in Western Zhou dynasty and the clan law see Fan Wenlan, ZHONGGUO TONGSHI, Vol.I, pp.75-80. For Confucius and tianming see Fan, Vol.I, p.162.

ethical principles and also five virtues, the women had to follow the behavioral norm of the three obediences and four virtues.<sup>1</sup>

Mao's analysis of social system and ideology in China enunciates three types of authority namely the state or political authority, the clan authority, and the supernatural or religious authority. In addition to these three types of authority the women in China were subjected to male domination or the authority of the husband. "These four authorities - political, clan, religious and masculine - are the embodiment of the whole feudal-patriarchal system and ideology, and are the four thick ropes binding the Chinese people, particularly the peasants."<sup>2</sup> The ruling class and a dominant culture as their ideology survived under the patronage of the emperor and were supported by the elite coming from land-owning gentry families. The whole society was harmonized neatly by common cultural bonds which also maintained social cohesion in China. The parallel cultural

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1. Sangang-wuchang 三纲五常, three guiding principles and five virtues. The "Sangang" or three ethical principles in feudal China held that the monarch commands the subject, the father commands the son, and the husband commands the wife. "君为臣纲, 父为子纲, 夫为妻纲". The five virtues are benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity, 仁、义、礼、智、信. Sancongside 三从四德 the three obediences are to father before marriage, to husband after marriage, and to son after the death of husband, "未嫁从父, 既嫁从夫, 夫死从子". The four virtues are morality, speech, manners and work 妇德、妇言、妇容、妇功.

2. Mao, SELECTED WORKS, Vol. I, p.44.

system which bound the rural people together for ages reflected in a rich folk tradition however had to get along with dominant cultural perceptions.

The post Opium War China experienced certain complicated problems unique in the history of imperial China: the vastness of the imperial jurisdiction, the excessive demographic pressure, the acute shortage of opportunities while there was a rapid increase in the number of aspirants for official positions, corruption in selling official positions in examination system and transferring the economic burden to the people by the gentry class etc. The inefficiency and corruption of the officials made the situation worse. The centralized government could hardly function smoothly. The frustration among the scholars, poverty and untold sufferings of the peasants at the hands of officials led to mushrooming of secret societies and peasants' uprisings in different parts of China.<sup>1</sup>

China's defeat in the war was a national humiliation at the hands of an alien Western power. The Qing ruling dy-

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1. See Kwang-Ching Liu's monograph "Nineteenth-Century China: The Disintegration of the Old Order and the Impact of the West" in CHINA IN CRISIS: CHINA'S HERITAGE AND THE COMMUNIST POLITICAL SYSTEM, eds. ping-ti Ho and Tang Tsou, Vol. I, Book I, University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp.95-99 and also for a brief discussion on the features of Late Qing Chinese Society see "Introduction: The Old Order" in CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF CHINA, Vol.10, Part I.

nasty which had become a powerful political authority became vulnerable and the growing presence of the colonial powers intensified the psychological tension within the native ethno-cultural relationships in China. During and a few decades after the war the traditional functional harmony in the relationship between the Manchu ruling family and the Han intelligentsia was somewhat intact and they reacted to the foreign power as a united and cohesive national force. Although the Manchus were in a process of assimilation with the mainstream, there was a deep-seated hatred and mistrust in the minds of Han people. The nature of the traditional political enmity between the majority nationality and non-Han ethnic groups expressed in slogans such as "overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming" and the activities of secret societies and peasants's movements to replace the Manchu rule was an ethnic conflict within the framework of an absolute monarchy, while the nature of the constitutionalists' political movement and later the slogan "drive out Manchus and establish the republic" of the revolutionaries in early twentieth century was qualitatively different from the above.<sup>1</sup>

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1. "Overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming", "反清复明"  
 "drive out Manchus and establish the republic" "驱除鞑虏, 创立民国"  
 See "The Slogan 'Drive out the Manchus' and The Modern Chinese National Movement" by Zhang Kaiyuan, in Hu Sheng et al, THE 1911 REVOLUTION: A RETROSPECTIVE AFTER 70 YEARS, pp.128-146, also see Hu Sheng, FROM THE OPIUM WAR TO THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT, Section I of Ch.21, p.IV, (Vol.II).

The Manchus gradually became the target of popular as well as elitist resentment. The traditional political integrity which was the core of Chinese polity in attracting unquestioned loyalty to the emperor was shaken. The Confucian scholars of Han nationality who never recognized the Manchus' role in the cultural sphere became politically active. The defeat in the war had already tarnished the divine image of the imperial political authority. Ironically, the humiliation experienced by the British troops in South China at the hands of militiamen boosted the morale of the common Chinese and shook the balance between the royalty and the masses.<sup>1</sup>

The absence of state cult was not a matter of concern for the Confucian ruling elite whereas the ordinary people particularly the peasantry all along considered themselves outside of the official religious ceremonies and sustained their spiritual existence through cultural activities at folk level. In the post Opium War period the cultural conflict assumed a political dimension leading to a disastrous consequence for the existing system. Popular movements which were essentially the result of historical and cultural conflicts played a decisive role in the late Qing

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1. Killing of British soldiers in Sanyuanli, Guangzhou 三元里, 广州 in 1841 provoked British troops to invade. Invading soldiers were encircled by the villagers and most of them were either killed or wounded. This was one spontaneous armed resistance by the peasants against the foreign aggression in modern China.

political scene. The declining conservative and repressive political authority which had withstood the outburst of political protests outlived the nineteenth century.

Chinese society remained isolated and undisturbed from changes which were taking place in the outside world. The reaction of the people especially the vast masses of peasants to the rigid political system, economic exploitation and conservative cultural and educational system was evident in innumerable peasants' uprisings which took place almost in each dynasty of Chinese history.<sup>1</sup> These movements did

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1. Some major peasants' uprisings in Chinese history were: The Uprising led by Chen Sheng 陈胜, Wu Guang 吴广, Xiang Yu 项羽 and Liu Bang 刘邦. It ended Qin 秦 dynasty and later Liu Bang established the Han dynasty 汉. In the later years of the Western Han dynasty 西汉, there were several peasants' uprisings like the Xin Shi 新市 (Present day Jingshan county in Hubei 京山县, 湖北), the Pinglin (present day Suixian in Hubei, 平林, 随县, 湖北) the Red Eyebrows and the Bronze Horses (赤眉, 铜马). In A.D. 8 Wang Mang 王莽 brought an end to the Western Han dynasty and introduced reforms. The yellow Turbans Uprising 黄巾起义 erupted in A.D. 184. Li Mi 李密 and Dou Jiande 窦建德 revolted against the Sui dynasty in 7th century. Wang Xianzhi 王仙芝 and Huang Chao 黄巢 led uprisings in Henan and Shandong 河南山东 respectively in the later half of ninth century. Song Jiang 宋江 and Fang La 方腊 organized uprising in the 12th century. Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 and Guo Zixing 郭子兴 revolted against the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty and later Zhu became the first emperor of the Ming dynasty 明. Li Zicheng 李自成 was the peasant hero who took arms against the Ming rule in 1628. He, however, was defeated by a Ming general Wu Sangui 吴三桂 and the Qing troops. The Qing dynasty witnessed two important peasants movements, one being the Taiping Peasants Rebellion 太平天国 and the other being Yi He Tuan (the Boxers) 义和团运动.

play historical role in bringing about dynastic change and social progress, yet the economic relations and political system in feudal China remained unchanged. "The peasantry was invariably used by the landlords and the nobility, either during or after the revolution, as a lever for bringing about dynastic change".<sup>1</sup>

The society came to extensive and direct contact with the West, the people became aware of the changes in the outside world. They began to question the weaknesses of the indigenous system and institutions and urged intellectuals for learning such new things from foreign countries. The gradual realization of own weaknesses and the difficulty in becoming strong gave birth to a host of issues on which both intellectuals as well as the common folk had to contemplate. The national crisis led to profound and far-reaching consequences for the emerging cultural conflict. The political dimension of the conflict could no longer remain confined to immediate or practical solutions but pointed out the exigency of a systemic change in China. The history of seven decades can be construed as a continuous process of a psychological tension in Chinese society. The Xin Hai revolution of 1911 was therefore the culmination of that process which ended the monarchical political system

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1. Mao, "Chinese Revolution and Chinese Communist Party", SELECTED WORKS, Vol.II, p.309.

once for all.<sup>1</sup> But the other aspect of the revolution was its failure in bringing about any fundamental change in the economic life. The cultural dimension of the crisis continued and even emerged as a major political debate in the post revolution era. The debate on how to define and reshape China's cultural perceptions continued more vigorously after the decline of the old political order. The failure of the republican government and the attempts to usurp power and political revivalism by warlords engaged Chinese intellectuals in an intense ideological struggle. The emergence of the intellectuals trained in new learning contributed to the rise of new forces against the old ideology. Obviously the constitutionalists' movement could not play the role of a radical political force to face the wild revivalist ambitions of the warlords.

In spite of the severe blow by the Western powers, the process of intellectual debate over the weaknesses of the native system remained slow in the later half of the nineteenth century. Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan, two representative patriots of the time initiated the process of learning from the West and encouraged translation of Western literature. The defeat in the second Opium War and the long-drawn civil

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1. The Xin Hai Revolution of 1911, 辛亥革命 led by Sun Yat-sen ended the Qing rule and the monarchy. In 1912 a Republican China 中华民国 headed by Sun Yat-sen as provisional President was established at Nanjing.



war during Taiping rebellion convinced the Qing court and a section of Han officials of going for military build-up in Western style. The so-called Westernization movement, an officially-sponsored campaign for self-strengthening was launched by Yi Xin (Prince Gong), Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang, Zuo Zong-tang and Zhang Zhidong.<sup>1</sup> The process of "learning the techniques of the barbarians" (Wei Yuan), and "Chinese learning for the essential principles and Western learning for practical application" (zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong - Zhang Zhidong) remained cosmetic in nature and went in vain.<sup>2</sup>

The successive defeats in the military encounter with the Western power and finally the defeat at the hands of Japan in 1894-95 reminded Qing rulers of their utter impotence and proved the self-strengthening endeavour as futile. The trend of bourgeois reform and learning from the West had already been conceived by Wang Tao, Xue Fucheng and Zhang

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1. The Westernization Group 洋务派, its leading members were Yi Xin, Prince Gong 奕訢 (1833-1898), Zeng Guofan 曾国藩 (1811-1872), Li Hongzhang 李鸿章 (1823-1901), Zuo Zongtang 左宗棠 (1812-1885) and Zhang Zhidong 张之洞 (1837-1909).

2. "Learning the techniques of the barbarians", "师夷长技" (魏源: 《海国图志叙》) See Li Zehou; A HISTORY OF MODERN CHINESE THOUGHT, pp.37-43. "Chinese learning for the essential principles and Western learning for practical application, "中学为体西学为用" (张之洞: 劝学篇) (Exhortation on learning) see Li Zehou, pp.76-82 and also in Hu Sheng, FROM THE OPIUM WAR TO THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT, Vol.II, pp.109-120.

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Guanying in 1870s and 1880s.<sup>1</sup> The reform agenda both for the political institutions as well as for the social structure became popular in the post Sino-Japanese War period. Kang Youwei's appearance on the intellectual scene heralded the era of political reform in modern China. He proposed a comprehensive reform programme to replace the old system. His proposal met with opposition both from the die-hard conservative elements as well as the Westernization faction in the royal court under the leadership of Empress Dowager Ci Xi.<sup>2</sup> So the Reform Movement of 1898 (the Hundred-day reform) went abortive. Thenceforth the question of overthrowing the Manchus and ending the feudal autocracy became indisputable.

The impact of Christianity inspired the leaders of the Taiping Rebellion to mobilize a vast contingent of peasants against the traditional enemy i.e. the Qing rulers and the social and moral doctrine of Confucian orthodoxy. The fact that the peasants were inspired by ideas from an alien religious creed and could defy the native ideological and

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1. Wang Tao 王韜 (1828-1897) Xue Fucheng 薛福成 (1838-1894) and Zhang Guanying 张观应 (1842-1891) were early reformers who criticized the officially sponsored Westernization movement. They were in favour of developing national capitalism and political reform. They wanted to oppose the foreign aggression by waging a trade war.

2. Empress Dowager Ci Xi 慈禧太后. After the death of Emperor Xian Feng 咸丰皇帝, his minor son Zai Chun 载淳 succeeded and his wife became Empress Dowager.

political authority for about fourteen years presents another dimension of the challenge China was facing from the West. The traditional base of loyalty from the masses to native rulers was shaken. But later in 1900 the peasants demonstrated violent protests against feudal exploitation and imperialist powers. Uncompromising attitude of the peasants or the Boxers against Manchus' capitulationist policies and the xenophobia among the masses preempted the possibility of a constitutional monarchy and paved the way for a republican government in the future. Realizing the imminent doom the Qing rulers in a desperate move abolished the imperial examinations in 1905 and officially ended the legacy of classical learning. The Qing court was forced to accept the idea of reform and a new thirst for learning from the West became fashionable. Yan Fu made strenuous efforts to introduce social and political ideas of European societies. He translated important works such as T.H. Huxley's EVOLUTION AND ETHICS AND OTHER ESSAYS, Adam Smith's THE WEALTH OF NATIONS, J.S. Mills' SYSTEM OF LOGIC and Montesquieu's L'ESPRIT DES LOIS. Modern schools were established. Thousands of students were sent to Japan and European countries to learn sciences and social theories.

Mao mentioned four progressive intellectuals Hong Xiuquan, Kang Youwei, Yan Fu and Sun Yat-sen who were representative during their own time for their endeavour for

learning from the West. He recollected his own experience of that time. The Chinese of that time had insatiable thirst for reading books containing ideas from the West. The flow of scientific, social and political theories of Western societies replaced the feudal education which was known as the old learning. More and more intellectuals acquired the learning from the West or the new learning and abandoned scornfully the traditional education. Mao himself was engaged in such studies. The Japanese had been successful in learning from the West, which inspired the Chinese too to learn from other countries. The Chinese in those days regarded Russia as backward and few wanted to learn from her.<sup>1</sup>

Japan was a window for China to look at the West. Japan which also had a similar historical and cultural background of an old civilization in the East successfully absorbed scientific knowledge from the West after the Meiji Restoration demonstrated her imperialist ambitions by humiliating a vast country like China in the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>2</sup> Chinese intellectuals discovered themselves in a historical crossroad and were forced to seek ways and means entirely

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1. Mao, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship", SELECTED WORKS, Vol.IV, pp.412-413.

2. Meiji Restoration 明治维新, the period of reforms and learning from the West carried out in Japan during Meiji reign (1868-1912).

non-traditional to meet the emerging challenge. It was nothing but a gradual realization of a new reality. The Opium War which was a direct and open conflict between China and the West brought down the divine image of the political authority by humiliating it in a worldly encounter between China and the so-called "barbarous" West.

The resentment among Chinese intellectuals against repressive attitudes of Qing rulers towards Han Chinese and other convincing reasons for open revolt against the so-called "Son of Heaven" turned Tokyo into a fertile soil for anti-Qing activities. By the time the reform movement and the constitutional monarchy became out of fashion, the Han scholars became active in their political agenda of opposing Manchus and restoring China to the Han Chinese. The ceremony to commemorate the 242nd anniversary of the fall of Han ruled Ming dynasty at the hands of Manchus took place in Japan in 1902 when the oath to "drive out the Manchus" was reiterated (earlier the oath was taken by the members of the Xing Zhong Hui - Society for the Revival of China in 1894). Sun Yat-sen, Zhang Taiyan and others formally gave the call to overthrow the Manchus.<sup>1</sup> The occasion was followed by a

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1. 242nd anniversary of the fall of Han-ruled Ming dynasty at the hands of Manchus took place in Japan in 1902, see "The Slogan 'Drive out the Manchus' and the Modern Chinese National Movement" by Zhang Kaiyuan in Hu Sheng et al, THE 1911 REVOLUTION: A RETROSPECTIVE AFTER 70 YEARS, pp.128-146.

series of speeches by eminent Han scholars and publication of articles with revolutionary content.<sup>1</sup>

The continuation of social and political institutions around a feudal emperor who had the mandate of heaven for about two thousand years, relied mainly on the strength of an age-old cultural tradition typically reflecting the aristocratic spirit of Confucian teachings and the weaknesses of the illiterate and ignorant masses who were silently sustaining their existence. Confucianism maintained an apparently practical harmony ideal in the society by providing it with a time-tested secularized moral and ethical ideology. The influence of Confucian teachings in family and in the society in general survived in a specific reality naturally and the question of denying it was unthinkable. The entire intellectual creativity had to accept the divine source of the political ruler. Confucianism remained successful till the Opium War in keeping the balance between free thinking and the closed structure. The war was not merely a political and military challenge to the Chinese but an event with far-reaching impact in the national psyche of China.

The cultural conflict and its relationship with the political system in the history of feudal China became open

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1. Ibid. And also see in Hu Sheng, FROM THE OPIUM WAR TO THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT, Vol.II, Ch.21.

at the time of the war and continued for about a century till the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949 when the new political order came to existence in concrete form. One important reason why the old system sustained so long was the non-utilization of direct military power to maintain political loyalty and social cohesion among the masses in normal situations. An efficient aristocracy functioning within a well-knit social ideology maintained the political integrity without any qualitative changes from within. And the vast masses of people had to comply with the dominant cultural perceptions. The invisible power of the ruling class was so all-embracing that the people howsoever conscious were convinced and had to accept the reality. There was no need for any direct physical coercion as such. The society and its political institutions with individual talent continued in its own way for such a long time.

The ethnic conflict in pre-Opium War history was of a different nature. Even such non-Han ethnic minorities who seized political power during the sixth century, during Yuan dynasty recognized the cultural and social system of values of mainstream tradition for political purpose. Qing rulers were considered to be the ideal custodian of the ruling ideology. Non-Han ruling dynasties never faced another alien political rival. The Opium war therefore created an unprecedented dilemma both for the ruling minority and the Han intellectuals. The people as such did not have a direct

role to play in the political development of China. It is true that the periodic peasant uprisings in Chinese history threatened the political stability, and these situations amply manifested the growing consciousness among the masses, yet the post-Opium War situation differed from the past instances of revolt. The Taiping Peasants' Uprising the longest ever in the history was a symbol of political maturity of the Chinese peasantry who defied the ruling feudal class and also the domination of the Manchus. Hong Xiuquan drew inspiration from Christianity. He mobilized peasants against the traditional ideology with a set of anti-Confucian slogans.

Confucianism underwent several stages of transformation in its long history beginning from Confucius' own time till Kang Youwei of pre-modern China. The New Texts School (Jinwenjia) which was dominant during the Former Han dynasty revived after about eighteen centuries in the late Qing period.<sup>1</sup> The texts which were compiled by Confucius himself were interpreted by Dong Zhongshu of the Han dynasty who integrated elements of Yin-Yang School with Confucianism. He deviated from the classical Confucianism as was interpreted by Mencius. Dong Zhongshu who thoroughly studied CHUN QIU presented a naturalistic and less idealistic inter-

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1. Jinwenjia 今文家 (New Text School), See Feng Youlan, A HISTORY OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY, Vol.II, pp.7-10 and Ch.II and Ch.XVI.



pretation of heaven and man and tried to disconnect the world from the heaven. Man and his morality became a separate subject of discourse in a more complicated social reality than a simple social reality of earlier times during Confucius, Mencius and Xun Zi.<sup>1</sup> Dong Zhongshu developed a theory of guiding political and social institutions of the autocratic feudal rule. According to him the relationship between the ruler and the subject was pre-determined by Heaven. The relationships (ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife etc.) as discussed by Confucius were changed into a doctrine of three bonds and five rules (sangangwuji).<sup>2</sup> The status of subject, son and wife became secondary and these relationships along with qualities such as loyalty, filial piety and chastity became the traditional

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1. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 B.C.), the great confucian scholar of Han dynasty, see Feng, Vol.II, Ch.II; Confucius 孔子, 孔夫子 or Kong Fuzi (551-479 BC), the most influential thinker of China, a philosopher par excellence and a great educationist. Lun Yu《论语》 (The Analects) contains his conversation with his disciples. Later Confucianism 儒家 became the principal school of thought in China. Mencius 孟子 (372-289 B.C.) and Xun Zi 荀子 (313-238 B.C.) were two great confucian philosophers. See vol.I, p.43 for a brief sketch of Confucius life, and for a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Confucianism including Mencius and Xun Zi see relevant chapters of Vol.I of Feng's book. For Dong Zhongshu also see Fan, Vol.II, pp.143-158.

2. Three bonds and five rules 三纲五纪 sangangwuji. Three bonds are: ruler and subject, father and son, and husband and wife. Five (or six rules) are (the relationships between paternal uncles, elder and younger brothers, other relative of the same surname, maternal uncles, teacher, and friends, see Feng, Vol.II, pp.42-46.

criteria for evaluating social role and moral integrity of an individual.

Confucianism absorbed ideas of Yin-Yang School and also from Fa Jia, the Legalists and was transformed into an ideology suitable to serve a strong bureaucratic political system.<sup>1</sup> The earliest person who formulated the ideas concerning human relationships and the relationship between the sovereign and the subject into a well-knit clan law (zongfa) was Zi Si.<sup>2</sup> He expounded his ideas in the DOCTRINE OF MEAN. He extended the concept of filiality to political loyalty and obedience. Clan became the mechanism to maintain human relationships in feudal society as well as to protect them for the service of the political authority. The kinship or lineage was crucial in clan relations. It was Zi Si who first developed theoretically the idea of considering family ethics as the spirit of all human relationships. Therefore the relationship between husband and

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1. Ying-yang School 阴阳家 . Yang and Yin are conceived as two mutually complementary principles or forces, Yang represents masculinity, light, warmth, dryness, hardness, activity, etc., and Yin represents femininity, darkness, cold, moisture, softness, passivity, etc. pp. 7-8 and the Ch.II, Sub-title I of Vol.II of Feng's book; and for Yin-Yang, five elements see pp.159-169, Vol.I, for Legalists see Ch.XIII, Vol.I.

2. Zi Si 子思 zongfa 宗法 . Zi Si, grandson of Confucius, a Confucian who authored the ZHONG YONG 《中庸》 (THE DOCTRINE OF MEAN), see Feng, Vol.I, pp.369-377. For Zi Si and Zongfa (clan law) see Chen Gujia, "On the three Major Characteristics of Ethical Thought in Traditional China", CHINESE STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY, Winter, 1992-93, pp.3-38.

wife which was determined by the will of Heaven became the key factor of familial institution. The father-son and elder brother-younger brother relationship depended on the relationship between husband and wife. Concepts such as tianli (principles of Heaven), yi xiao zhi tianxia (the rule of filial piety), ren yi (principles of being human), san-gang-wuchang (three principles and five norms), xiao qin (being filial to one's parents), xiao zi (filial son), "bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da" (not having a son is the worst type of unfiliality to one's parents) became criterion in guiding the society into a whole entity and playing the role to support and harmonize social and political institutions and authorities.<sup>1</sup>

After Eastern Han period the conflict between three schools of religious and philosophical system Ru, Shi, and Dao (Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism) continued and also made impact on each other until the Song dynasty when Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi developed Li Xue School (rationalist school) and reemphasized human relationships and san-gang-wuchang moral and ethical system according to the notion of tianli. They rejected the role of mind (desire, feelings etc.) and emphasized the role of li (principles or reasons), though they absorbed ideas of Buddhism and Daoism.

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1. Tianli 天理, yi xiao zhi tianxia "以孝治天下" ren  
 yi, 仁义 sangangwuchang 三纲五常 Xiaogin 孝亲  
 Xiaozi 孝子 "buxiao you san, wuhou wei da" "不孝有三, 无后为大" 《孟子》。

Thus Li Xue School (also known as Dao Xue) or Neo-Confucianism assimilated ideas of other schools with the aim to demonstrate the common origin of three major schools of thought (sanjiaotongyuan).<sup>1</sup>

Zhu Xi is considered as "the greatest synthesizer in the history of Chinese thought".<sup>2</sup> He systematically synthesized ideas of earlier philosophers belonging to two major schools which developed within Neo-Confucianism and provided a more contemporary version of Confucianism which remained orthodox until the twentieth century. His version was a systematic and mature development of the Rationalistic School. The New Text School which was dominant in the early half of the Han dynasty gradually declined after the rise of the Old Text School in the later half of the Han dynasty.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ru, Shi, and Dao 儒释道 . Song dynasty 宋  
Cheng Hao 程颢 (1032-1085), Cheng Yi 程颐  
(1033-1107), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200). For Cheng Hao and  
Cheng Yi see Feng, Vol.II, Ch.XII, pp.498-532, Zhu Xi Ch.  
XIII, pp.533-571. Rationalism, Li Xue 理学 (or "Study  
of principle"), idealism, Xin Xue 心学 ("Study of  
mind"), pp.500, 533 and for a detailed explanation see the  
above-mentioned chapters. Dao Xue 道学, Sanjiaotongyuan 三教  
同源.

2. Feng, Vol.II, p.533.

3. Old Text School 旧文家 . On the basis of ancient  
texts collected during the Former Han dynasty by Prince Gong  
of Lu 鲁恭王 , and Prince Xian of Hejian 河间献王  
the scholars (during later Han) wanted to restore the status  
of Confucius (and of Confucianism) from supernatural level  
to that of a human teacher. Later in the late years of the  
Qing dynasty there was a revival of New Text School. The  
New Text School maintained that Liu Xin 刘歆 (ca.46 B.C.-  
A.D.23) had forged the classics at the behest of his patron  
Wang Mang 王莽 , See Feng, Vol.II, Chapter IV, pp.133-167.

It remained obscured for about eighteen centuries until late Qing period when it posed threat to the Old Text scholars. With the revival of the New Text School the scholars became interested in those texts which were popular during the Han dynasty. The growing impact of the West and the inability of the old scholarship to face such a formidable challenge led to the rise of New Text intellectuals. Therefore, reforms became the only solution to mitigate the growing pressures from outside. Chinese intellectuals felt the absence of an organized religion or religious institutions in China. They perceived this as a weakness which encouraged the West to exert pressures or infiltrate into social and political institutions of China. Kang Youwei the leading intellectual and the champion of the reform movement in the late Qing period studied meticulously the writings of the New Text School and interpreted Confucius' role as a political reformer more crucial than as a spiritual leader. He attacked classics which were forged by Liu Xin and accepted New Text School writings as genuine.<sup>1</sup>

Kang Youwei maintained that the genuine classics were those which have been studied by the New Text School and regarded Confucius' role foremost in the intellectual histo-

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1. For Kang Youwei and the New Text School of the Qing dynasty see Feng, Vol.II, Ch.XVI, pp.673-721.

ry of China. Later Kang developed his own philosophical system and wrote DATONGSHU (Book of Great Harmony).<sup>1</sup> His attempt was to draw radical views from historical texts in order to introduce political reforms in modern China. The idea of a world of great harmony which already existed in ancient China was visualized by Kang in order to shape an egalitarian social order to face the rising Western bourgeois civilization. Mao acknowledged Kang's positive role and discovered elements of radical thought within the Chinese intellectual framework prior to the emergence of Communism in Kang's DATONGSHU.<sup>2</sup>

The reform movement at the end of the nineteenth century was the outcome of Kang Youwei's idea of replacing the feudal autocracy by a constitutional monarchy. The leading intellectuals who represented the movement were Kang, Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong. The Emperor Guang Xu who was convinced by the ideas of reforms accepted proposals submitted by the reformist leaders.<sup>3</sup> Kang and others were appointed advisors to the emperor and few imperial edicts on reforms issued during a period of about hundred days but the die-hard feudal elements frustrated the dreams of the

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1. DATONGSHU 《大同书》

2. Mao, SW, Vol.IV, p.414.

3. Emperor Guang Xu 光绪皇帝 (1875-1908).

reformers.<sup>1</sup> Tan Sitong and five other were executed and Kang and Liang fled abroad.<sup>2</sup> The reformers continued their movement from Japan and Kang later established Bao Huang Hui (Royalist Society).<sup>3</sup> The movement gradually lost its popular support and degenerated into a reactionary faction which confronted the revolutionaries who were led by Sun Yat-sen.

Zhang Taiyan and Yan Fu were influenced by reform movement. Yan Fu who studied in England came into direct contact with the scientific developments of Europe and translated some important works of scientists and thinkers of the West. He was the first who introduced the social, political, economic and legal systems of European countries to China. He was attracted by the empirical studies and specially the theory of evolution. Zhang Taiyan was a scholar of traditional mould and conversant with Confucian,

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1. The role of the Westernization group in making Kang's reform unsuccessful was significant. Zhang Zhidong was a key person in opposing and undermining the reformers like Kang youwei and others though Empress Dowager and the conservative section of the court apparently constituted the main force against the reforms, See Hu Sheng, FROM THE OPIUM WAR TO THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT, Vol.II, pp.178-187 and also Li Zehou, pp.31-91.

2. Five others were Liu Guangdi 刘光第, Yang Rui 杨锐, Lin Xu 林旭, Yang Shenxiu 杨深秀 and Kang Guangren 康广仁.

3. Bao Huang Hui 保皇会

Daoist and Legalist classics.<sup>1</sup> At the same time he was acquainted with Western philosophy and Buddhist thought. Guang Fu Hui (Society for the Restoration of China) was a group of intellectuals who were scholars as well as revolutionaries.<sup>2</sup> Some of them specially Zhang Taiyan were profoundly influenced by the rich cultural heritage and wanted to mould modern China by integrating elements of Western thought with China's tradition. They were staunch opponents of the Qing ruling clique who according to them were alien and did not represent the cultural heritage of China. Therefore, they attacked the Qing government as well as the reformists and identified with the political thought of the revolutionaries.

Zhang opposed the Qing rule tooth and nail. He quoted historical instances when Han scholars resisted alien aggressions and those anti-Manchus activities during late Ming and early Qing periods. He was one active participants who

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1. Confucian Classics (儒家经典), Thirteen classics (Shisanjing) are SHI 《诗》 SHU 《书》 YI 《易》 ZHOU LI 《周礼》 LI JI 《礼记》, YI LI 《仪礼》, GONG YANG ZHUAN 《公羊传》, GU LIANG ZHUAN 《穀梁传》, ZUO ZHUAN 《左传》, XIAO JING 《孝经》 LUN YU 《论语》, ER YA 《尔雅》, and MENG ZI 《孟子》. Daoist classics (道家经典), Major Daoist classics are DAO DE JING 《道德经》 also known as LAO ZI 《老子》 and ZHUANG ZI 《庄子》. Legalist classics (法家经典), major texts are SHANG JUN SHU 《商君书》 and HAN FEI ZI 《韩非子》.

2. Guang Fu Hui (光复会) was established in Shanghai, intellectuals like Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培) (1868-1940), Tao Chengzhang (陶成章) (1878-1912), Zhang Taiyan, Lu Xun, Qiu Jin (秋瑾) (1877-1907), and many others were its leading members.



celebrated the 242nd anniversary of the founding of the state by the native Han emperor before the Qing invasion. Zhang's early writings were against aggressions. He accepted bourgeois democracy and was active in Guang Fu Hui along with Cai Yuanpei and Tao Chengzhang. Zhang's criticism of Kang Youwei was expressed in "A Refutation of Kang Youwei's Theory of Revolution".<sup>1</sup>

Zhang raised his voice against accepting the model of capitalist countries for China and made attempt to revive the positive aspects of Chinese culture. The stand was against the pro-Westernization landlords who were ready to accept a model for China's industry in Western style while denying the social and political values of the West, and the die-hard gentry class reacted to anything foreign. Zhang differed from both these groups though his attachment with the classics and his scholarly temperament brought for him disrepute as a spokesman of Guocui (essence of Chinese culture).<sup>2</sup>

Zhang believed in a pure and direct democracy and did not approve a democracy by proxy. He argued that laws of a country should not be made by the government or by the

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1. Zhang's "A Refutation of Kang youwei's Theory of Revolution", 《驳康有为论革命书》

2. Guocui 国粹 . See, Li Zehou, pp.394-95, 397. Zhang Kaiyuan, "The Slogan 'Drive out the Manchus' and the Modern Chinese National Movement", (pp.138-140), THE 1911 REVOLUTION: A RETROSPECTIVE AFTER 70 YEARS.

parliament representing the minority i.e. the bourgeoisie. His argument was something like a utopia. But it differed significantly from the views of those who opposed democratic revolution for the political power of the landlord class.

Zhang's antagonism towards capitalism had originated from suspicion and fear about a weak Chinese becoming a slave in the white hands. Moreover, he believed in promoting agriculture and restricting commerce a notion typically Chinese. In this respect his views differed from that of Sun Yat-sen who formulated his principles of people's livelihood and of democracy along with the development of capitalism in China. This dispute was one of the major ideological differences between Tong Meng Hui and Guang Fu Hui.<sup>1</sup> Certain elements such as Buddhist idea of equality and simple and happy life, spiritual or mental peace and his moral and ethical perceptions were the product of the profound impact of the ancient society on his mind. He opposed Confucianists for their greed for honour, wealth and social status by seeking official positions. He was against corruption, hypocrisy and cowardice which were rampant among

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1. Tong Meng Hui 同盟会 (The Revolutionary League). The democratic revolutionary organizations including Xing Zhong Hui 兴中会 (Society for the Revival of China) which were formed since 1894 met in Tokyo in 1905 and formed Zhongguo Geming Tong Meng Hui 中国革命同盟会 under the leadership of Sun yatsen. For ideological difference between Tong Meng Hui and Guang Fu Hui see Li Zehou, "Zhang Taiyan as a Revolutionary and a Thinker". THE 1911 REVOLUTION: A RETROSPECTIVE AFTER 70 YEARS.

Qing officials and reformists. This kind of revolutionary theory based on simplicity, honesty and moral integrity was Zhang Taiyan's ideal. The altruistic spirit to dedicate and sacrifice oneself to the cause of the country and the people influenced the young generation of the time. Attempts to accommodate some features of agrarian society to the growing influence of capitalism and the notion of democracy in a process of rapidly changing society brought about by scientific advances and the political consequences thereof became complicated in China. Zhang's ideological position reflected subtle aspects of such complexity. His thought was a combination of anti-Manchu sentiments and anti-imperialism, a mind struggling to discard certain chauvinist elements from otherwise true patriotic mould reflecting a conflict between economic prosperity and utilitarian intentions, between a genuine democracy and bourgeois democracy and between modernity and cultural conservatism.

The debate between the constitutional monarchists and revolutionaries over the political system surfaced after the Qing government gradually succumbed to the pressure by imperialist powers. The process began during Sino-French War (1884-85) continued through Sino-Japanese War (1894) and culminated during Yi He Tuan Movement (1900) as a violent outburst against the Qing rule and the foreigners.<sup>1</sup> The

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1. Sino-French War 中法战争, Sino-Japanese War 中日战争  
Yi He Tuan Movement 义和团运动

massive invasion by the Eight Powers' Allied Forces and the overwhelming popular anti-foreigners sentiment urged for a national revolution and exposed the weakness in the ideology of reform movement.<sup>1</sup> The anti-Manchu sentiment was an essential component in the overall reaction towards imperialist political behaviour. Sun Yat-sen put forward a democratic constitutional government and called for driving Manchus from the political leadership. So the question of continuing with the Manchus or political autocracy did not exist in the minds of the revolutionaries. Whereas reformists Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao still maintained the stand of not opposing the monarchy against western democracy. Liang Qichao edited XINMIN CONGBAO (New People's Miscellany) and preached ideas in favour of constitutional monarchy and opposed democrats and their revolution.<sup>2</sup> He wanted to preserve the age-old political system of China and rejected the ideas of revolutionary change to it.

Zhang Taiyan was a scholar of Confucian classics and studied the Buddhist theory of Vijnanavada. He was also familiar with Western and Indian philosophies. Though he was not so widely exposed to the West like Yan Fu he was

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1. Eight-power Allied Forces, 八国联军

2. XINMIN CONGBAO 《新民丛报》, for Liang's view see Hu Sheng, "Anti-Imperialism, Democracy and industrialization in the 1911 Revolution" in Hu Sheng et al, THE 1911 REVOLUTION: A RETROSPECTIVE AFTER 70 YEARS.

aware of social and political theories of the West. While Kang Youwei utilized New Texts of Confucian classics to propagate his ideas of reform by interpreting Confucius as a reformer Zhang Taiyan was interested in Old Texts and in his book QIU SHU (Forced Writings), he made use of innumerable historical references in order to put forward his views against Kang Youwei's arguments.<sup>1</sup> The radical reform programme gradually became a political ideology of status quo position in favour of the royalty and sounded less and less progressive and more and more conservative. Zhang voiced a counter and revolutionary ideology after 1900. But elements such as adherence to old classics, influence of religion and metaphysics and a strong anti-Manchu sentiment and narrow Han cultural perspective made Zhang Taiyan's thought an extremely complicated system.

In a time when China's social-political system was facing a challenge from the cultural perceptions of the West Zhang's reaction was a reflection of the complexities of that time. Zhang's position can be regarded as a voice which was raised from Han intellectuals against both imperialists' threat in cultural arena and the passivity, incompetence and a lack of understanding of the Manchu rule in China. Zhang's attempt to revive the cultural tradition ignoring the critical approach towards the negative aspects

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1. Qiu Shu 《九信书》, 1899, (Forced Writings or Book of Grievances).

of bourgeois societies put Zhang in a difficult situation. He considered Kang's political line as a pseudo constitutional monarchy and expressed aspiration for a genuine constitutional system in the line of feudalism rejecting the parliamentary democracy of bourgeoisie.

Chinese revolutionaries were engaged in an intense intellectual debate in order to evolve the future course of China. They had two primary tasks. The ideological dispute between the revolutionaries and the constitutionalists was becoming more and more wide. The question of exact nature of the political thesis and the form of government became more significant from cultural point of view. The problem was not confined to the task of overthrowing the Qing rulers who had become the target for both the revolutionaries as well as constitutionalists. The adoption of a political structure, a system and its institutions in accordance with China's tradition was out of question. The foremost and the paramount aspect of the political-cultural debate was how to incorporate western ideas and methods in shaping a concrete political and economic system in China. Zhang expressed apprehension about the so-called enchantments with the West and exposed the weaknesses of the industrialized societies in contrast to the traditional Chinese system of values. He ridiculed the attempt to realize democracy or develop capitalism and insisted on the moral and ethical strength. In this sense his attempt to promote China's indigenous method

by reviving the cultural essence was apparently against the tide of the time. He remained a controversial personality. The subtleties of his thought remained obscure. The controversy around Zhang due to his inconsistent political positions and his profound scholarship and oversensitivities in absorbing ideas from the West never stimulated a serious and sustained interest in examining his writings.<sup>1</sup>

The challenge from the West led to a process of rapid breaking down of the political and social institutions of the old system and the ideological disintegration of Confucianism. These situations in turn provoked innumerable secret societies to act and peasants' uprisings in such a scale and duration unprecedented in the history. The institutional transformation was evident in the fact that the foundation of the educational, intellectual and professional pool was discarded by abolishing the Civil Service Examinations and stereo-typed eightlegged essays. The attempt to revitalize Confucianism in order to face the impending crisis became a belated and even a futile exercise. The weaknesses of the old system, which remained overlooked for ages surfaced too rapidly and appeared to be fatal. The intellectuals had to take bold endeavour to face the chang-

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1. For Zhang Taiyan's thought see Li Zehou, pp.382-420 and Li Zehou, "Zhang Taiyan as a Revolutionary and a Thinker", in Hu Sheng et al, THE 1911 REVOLUTION: A RETROSPECTIVE AFTER 70 YEARS, pp.183-202.

ing reality and to break the historical isolation of China. They engaged themselves in a painstaking process of integrating the concepts deriving from such changing realities of the world, which had experienced revolutionary changes in the field of science, philosophy, culture and politics with the actual reality of China.

Confucianism obviously failed to cope with the changes so rapid and unforeseen and could not even absorb the ideas both from the native and foreign sources in such a period of transition. Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, Yan Fu, Zhang Taiyan and others who played revolutionary role in the intellectual history of pre-modern China, all thought in a changed and transitory situation and demonstrated remarkable mental capacity in a time of crisis. They in their unique fashion broke away from the traditional Confucian ideology and made strenuous attempts to integrate ideas from the West with China's traditions. The process of transformation thanks to the complex factors both internal and external, was so rapid and devastating that few creative personalities turned out to be utterly insufficient and helpless. Pre-modern China unveils history of that desperate intellectual endeavour in the face of a challenge of unimaginable magnitude.



## II

Lu Xun was born in Zhou family in the ancient city of Shaoxing in Zhejiang province.<sup>1</sup> The Xintaimen compound at Dongchang fang was inhabited by several branches of the clan.<sup>2</sup> His family surname was Zhou, personal name was Zhang Shou and his courtesy name was Yu Shan. As the word "Yu Shan" meaning Yu Mountain was often mistaken as yusan meaning umbrella it was changed into Yu Cai.<sup>3</sup> People in the neighbourhood used to call him Ah Zhang or Zhang Guan.<sup>4</sup> His father Zhou Boyi who had passed county level examination was not able to earn anything for the family.<sup>5</sup> Mother Lu Rui came from countryside and gradually learned how to read on her own.<sup>6</sup> She was a warm-hearted woman and friendly with the peasants families working for the Zhou family. The influence of his mother upon his character was so powerful that when Lu Xun grew up he used her surname Lu to replace his family surname Zhou. The name "Lu Xun" was actually a pseudonym which Zhou Shuren (adopted at the time of his admission into the school in Nanjing in 1998) used as a pen-

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1. Zhou family 周家 , Shaoxing 绍兴 , Zhejiang Province 浙江省
  2. Xintaimen 新台门 , Dongchangfang 东昌坊
  3. Zhang Shou 樟寿 , Yu Shan 豫山 , Yusan 雨伞  
Yu Cai 豫才
  4. Ah Zhang 阿樟 , Zhang Guan 樟官
  5. Zhou Boyi 周伯宜 (1861-1896).
  6. Lu Rui 鲁瑞 (1858-1943).

name and wrote his first short story "A Madman's Diary" in vernacular Chinese in 1918.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun's grandfather Zhou Jiefu was an editor at the Imperial Academy in Beijing and his grand-mother was a kindhearted lady who often used to tell interesting stories to him.<sup>2</sup> Zhou family had forty to fifty mu of land for farming which provided a comfortable livelihood to the family.<sup>3</sup>

Lu Xun was the eldest son of the family and was, therefore, considered as a treasure of the family. Everyone was concerned with his health and long life. The people of that place used to believe that a child might die young under the influence of evil power. So it was customary to choose a monk who could dispel the evil spirits. Soon after his birth Lu Xun was dedicated to Changqing Monastery and the monk Master Long became his first teacher.<sup>4</sup> It was a ritualistic gesture and he was not sent to live there. He also received a Buddhist name Chang Geng which he used as a pen-

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1. Zhou Shuren 周树人 . In 1898, Lu Xun's grand uncle Zhou Shusheng 周叔生 gave him the name "Shuren", see Zhou Xiashou, "LU XUN XIASHUOLIDE RENWU", pp.172-173.

2. Zhou Jiefu 周介孚 or Zhou Fuging 周福清 , (1838-1904) grand mothers name was 蒋氏 (1841-1910).

3. mu 亩 (is equal to an area of 0.0667 hectares).

4. Changqing Monastery 长庆寺 , Master Long 龙师父 see Lu Xun's "Wode diyige Shifu", 《我的第一个师父》 (My First Teacher), LXQJ, Vol.2.

name later.<sup>1</sup> He was given a few things such as a priestly robe, a calendar, a mirror, a silver sieve for driving away evil spirits. In those days, the monks who were preparing to become bodhisattvas were not considered seriously by the society specially by the Confucian moralists. As monks had no homes and could not become officials the evil spirits could only chase people of promise. Thus, a Confucian moralist once gave his son the name "monk". The custom of giving children names of insignificant things or animals was popular in Shaoxing, the names like Ah Mao (Little Cat), Ah Niu (Little Ox), Ah Tu (Little Rabbit), Ah Long (Little Dragon), Xiao Laohu (Little Tiger), Ah Gou or Xiao Gou (Little Dog) and so on. Lu Xun also comments on such habit of giving names to the children, "the monsters and ghosts conceived by the literati naturally hold the same views as the literati; hence they do not trouble monks. The idea is the same as calling children by such names as Pussy or Puppy: it helps to keep them alive."<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun used to visit the monk's family where he often spent time in playing with his children. After about fifty years he recaptured those moments of joy in the pleasant

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1. Chang Geng 长庚, See "Qiejieting zawen mobian fuji", 《且介亭杂文未编》附集, LXQJ.6.

2. "My First Teacher", LXSW, Vol.I, p.423, For a detailed observation on such habits and custom see "Ren ming" in Qiu Shixiong and others, LU XUN BIXIADE SHAOXING FENGQING, pp.1-11.

company of the monk and his family. He was attracted by his unconventional ideas. The monk never taught him any religious teachings nor he asked Lu Xun to chant sutras. The monk's wife was kind and affectionate. Lu Xun all along cherished in his heart the touch of love and warmth he had received from her.<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun's grandfather Zhou Fuqing was unusually particular about the upbringing of the children of his family. Lu Xun and his brother Zhou Zuoren were taught by him personally.<sup>2</sup> He taught them "the Four Books" and "the Five Classics" and how to write eight-legged essays for official examinations.<sup>3</sup> Lu Xun once appeared in the county level examination but soon lost interest in examination system. It was customary for the children to learn by heart the classics one after another while Zhou Fuqing's view in introducing an outline of China's history was quite unusual.

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1. "My First Teacher", LXSW, Vol. I, pp.423-432.

2. Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967) was Lu Xun's second brother.

3. "The Four Books" 四书 are: DA XUE (The Great Learning) 《大学》, ZHONG YONG (The Doctrine of the Mean) 《中庸》 LUN YU (The Analects) 《论语》, and MENG ZI (Mencius) 《孟子》. The Five Classics are: SHI JING (The Book of Songs) 《诗经》 SHANG SHU (The Book of History) 《尚书》, YI JING (The Book of Changes) 《易经》 also known as ZHOU I, 《周易》 LI JI (The Book of Rites) 《礼记》 and CHUN QIU (The Spring and Autumn Annals) 《春秋》. Eight-legged essays, 八股文 baguwen the stereotyped form of essay written as answer in the official examinations from the 15th century to the 19th century. Each essay was divided into eight sections hence the name bagu ("eight-legged").

He introduced A PILGRIMAGE TO THE WEST, a popular novel to Lu Xun because it was easy as well as entertaining.<sup>1</sup> A reading of THE BOOK OF POEMS was followed by works of eminent poets such as Bai Juyi, Li Bai and Du Fu of Tang dynasty.<sup>2</sup> His grandfather was working in Beijing and he used to send instructions to his family and established a unique tradition. Although he was unconventional in his views on education he nevertheless had a disciplinarian attitude towards teaching. As a result Lu Xun was systematically exposed to the rich and profound tradition of Chinese poetry.<sup>3</sup>

Lu Xun recollects his childhood days in ZHAOHUA-XISHI (Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk), a collection of ten reminiscences. From a very early stage of his childhood he developed the habit of reading and was particularly attracted by books with illustrations. The children of that time usually were not allowed to read illustrated books. The act of looking at such books was punished by the elders. Lu

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1. A PILGRIMAGE TO THE WEST, (Xiyouji) 《西游记》, a popular Ming dynasty novel by Wu cheng'en 吴承恩 (1500C-82).

2. Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), Li Bai 李白 (701-762) and Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) were three eminent poets of Tang dynasty.

3. For Zhou Fuqing, his views and the impact of his views on Zhou family see Wang Shiqing, LU XUN: A BIOGRAPHY, pp.9-10, and also in Duan Guochao, Luxunde zufu - Zhou Fuqing in LU XUN YANJIU ZILIAO, Vol.21, pp.161-193.

Xun's uncle Yu Tian was fond of children and had a stock of interesting books.<sup>1</sup> He was Lu Xun's paternal grand-uncle and Lu Xun went to the private school run by him at the age of seven. His library was an attraction for Lu Xun to visit him. He came to know about many books with unusual themes and strange pictures. The old man informed him of the BOOK OF HILLS AND SEAS and described the strange pictures of it such as man-faced beasts, nine-headed snakes, three footed birds, winged men, and headless monsters who had eyes on their breasts etc.<sup>2</sup> The description was so vivid that it immediately stirred the child's imagination. Lu Xun began to crave for it and became impatient to acquire a copy of the book. Once he expressed his desire to his maid-servant Ah Chang. Ah Chang was an ugly woman and some of her habits were disgusting. She had strange superstitions and often put restrictions on the movements of the children. Once she killed Lu Xun's pet mouse by stamping on it. But she used to tell stories of Long-haired Taiping rebels.<sup>3</sup> Once she returned after spending her vacation in the countryside and made him surprised by presenting a book to him. It was the BOOK OF HILLS AND SEAS! He was overjoyed and immediately forgot all unpleasant things about her. Suddenly the image

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1. Yutian 玉田

2. Book of HILLS AND SEAS 《山海经》 (Shan-haijing).

3. "Binghou zatan zhi yu" 《病后杂谈之余》 3 , LXQJ, 6.

of an ugly, illiterate country woman changed into an affectionate and kind-hearted one. Lu Xun developed a sense of respect and love towards her. Later when he grew up he recalled the incident in a moving account of Ah Chang and paid tribute to her memory.<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun's grandmother was another skilful narrator of ingenious stories. "Flooding Jingshan Monastery" was a story of a cruel Buddhist monk Fa Hai.<sup>2</sup> A young named Xu Xian rescued two snakes.<sup>3</sup> The white snake transformed into a beautiful woman and married him in return to his kindness and the green snake became the maid-servant.<sup>4</sup> The monk hid Xu Xian behind the monastery in order to drive away the evil influence of the spirit. When the lady white snake came to search for her husband the entire place was flooded. The monk put the snake into a small alms-bowl, buried it underground and built a pagoda on it. Lu Xun wished that the pagoda a symbol of such a tragic incident should collapse.<sup>5</sup> Another story told by his grandmother was about an ungrate-

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1. "Ah Chang and the BOOK OF HILLS AND SEAS" 《朝花夕拾·阿长与山海经》 LXQJ, 2.

2. "Flooding Jingshan Mountain", "水满金山", Fa Hai 法海

3. Xu Xian, 许仙

4. Lady White Snake 白蛇娘娘, the green snake 青蛇

5. Lu Xun, "The Collapse of the Lei Feng Pagoda", THE GRAVE  
《坟·论雷峰塔的倒掉》 LXQJ, 1, and in "Dogs, Cats  
and Mice" 《朝花夕拾·狗·猫·鼠》 LXQJ, 2.

ful tiger who after learning a few tricks such as how to pounce and how to catch his prey from his teacher cat became impatient to make the cat his prey.<sup>1</sup> But he could not succeed because the wise cat knew it. she climbed on a tree before the greedy tiger could pounce on her. The poor tiger didn't know how to climb a tree as the cat had not taught him! Lu Xun was fond of watching village operas and religious processions with the country folk. He used to enjoy the supernatural images in "Wu Chang Hui" and read fictions like A PILGRIMAGE TO THE WEST, WATER MARGIN etc.<sup>2</sup> He regretfully remembers the pedantic attitude of his father who granted him permission to watch a religious procession in Shaoxing only after he memorized the monotonous and boring piece of the history text: "Now, everything else is forgotten, vanished without a trace. Only my recitation from the RHYMED HISTORY is as clear in my mind as if it happened yesterday. Even now, when I think of it, I still wonder why my father made me learn a lesson by heart at a time like that."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Wang, LU XUN ZHUAN, p.8.

2. WATER MARGIN 《水浒传》 (shuihuzhuan), a novel written by Shi Naian 施耐庵 during 14th Century. For "Wu Chang Hui" see Lu Xun's "Wu Chang Hui" (The Fair of the Five Fierce Gods) 《朝花夕拾·五猖会》 LXQJ, 2.

3. "The Fair of the Five Fierce Gods", LXSW Vol.I, p.379.



When Lu Xun was about eight or nine years old he got a book preaching filial piety of the feudal society.<sup>1</sup> This was one of the earliest book with illustrations which had more people and fewer ghosts. He was delighted though soon he was disappointed. He came to know how difficult it was to become a filial son after reading twenty four illustrated stories. He recalls the fearful impact the book made on his mind. Lu Xun like others had the desire to become a filial and obedient son of his parents, but he was not able to fully grasp the real meaning of being filial. His innocent mind took the task of being obedient and taking care of one's parents as normal duty of a son. But the text book of filial piety made him aware of the enormous difficulty in preparing oneself as a filial son. The most dreadful story, he remembered clearly, had two versions, one being about a three-year old child of a poor parents, who was buried in order to provide food to the grandmother and the other being a story of a rich son (of same parents as above) who gave all his property to his brothers and had a new-born baby, he also dug a hole but not for burying his baby. He found some gold in the hole as a reward. The theme of burying a child to save the old grandmother or to get a reward from the ancestors nevertheless could not lessen the fear which child

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1. ERSHISI XIAOTU 《二十四孝图》 (The Picture Book of Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety), compiled by Guo Jujing 郭居敬 in the 14th century.

Lu Xun had in his mind. The fear haunted him for a long time. When he was grown up he came to know more arguments against burying a child in old texts. He writes, "Although I thought this might not necessarily happen, from that time on I dreaded hearing my parents deplore their poverty and dreaded the sight of my white-haired grandmother, feeling that there was no place for the two of us, or at least that she represented a threat to me."<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun expressed his dislike for the Confucian scholar who gave him the book and created such an "ideal" relationship between a grand-mother and a grandson though it ended with her passing away.

In his uncle's school he came across a few books like JIAN LUE, QIAN ZI WEN, BAI JIA XING, WENCHANG DIJUNYINYINGWEN TUSHUO, YULICHAOZHUAN and ERSHISI XIAO TU.<sup>2</sup> It has been

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1. Lu Xun, "The Picture Book of Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety", DAWN BLOSSOMS PLUCKED AT DUSK, FLP, Beijing, 1976, p.35.

2. JIAN LUE 《鉴略》 (Rhymed History) written by Wang Shiyun 王仕云 of the Qing dynasty, an elementary text for the school children in the old society. See "Wu Chang Hui" in ZHAOHUA XISHI. QIAN ZI WEN 《千字文》 (Thousand characters), an elementary text for the children. See "Wu Chang Hui", in ZHAOHUA XISHI. BAI JIA XIANG 《百家姓》 (Hundred surnames) by an unknown author of the Northern Song dynasty, used as a text book for school children. See "Wu Chang Hui", ZHAOHUA XISHI. WENCHANG DIJUN YINYINGWEN TUSHUO 《文昌帝君阴骘文图说》 (The God Wenchang Rewards virtue), an old religions book, and YU LICHAO ZHUAN 《玉历钞传》 (Records of the Jade Calendar) an old religious book. ERSHISI XIAO TU 《二十四孝图》 (The Picture Book of Twenty-four Acts of Filial Piety), for the above three books see "ERSHISI XIAO TU" (The Picture Book of Twenty-Four Acts of Filial Piety) in ZHAOHUA XISHI.

already observed that ERSHISIXIAOTU had pictures but disappointed him. He could not appreciate such feudal values of suppressing one's emotions and feelings to such an extent. While he was reacting to such moral and ethical texts, he became more and more attracted by stories popular among the people. First time when he became aware of stories of long-haired Taiping rebels he was nine-year old. The old people also told him stories how Manchus used to chop up heads of those who dared not to grow queue in Manchu style. The queue (bianzi) took the shape of Lu Xun's time after innumerable people sacrificed their lives in so many generations. That was the first time he realized the difference between Hans and Manchus. He began to nurse a deep sense of hatred against Manchu rulers.<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun entered Sanwei-Shuwu (Three-Flavour Study) at the age of twelve.<sup>2</sup> The school was known for its strict discipline in the town and the teacher Shou Jingwu was a man of integrity and a learned scholar.<sup>3</sup> Everyone held him great respect, "... I had the greatest respect for him, having heard that he was the most upright, honourable and erudite

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1. "Binghou zatan zhi yu" in QIEJIE TING ZAWEN MOBIAN, LXQJ, 6, bianzi 辮子.

2. Sanwei Shuwu 三味书屋.

3. Shou Jingwu 寿镜吾 (1849-1930).

man in our town."<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun used to spend lot of his leisurely time in the Hundred-Plant Garden (Baicaooyuan) in observing minutely plants and insects. Curiosity and keen interest in the world of nature, in strange herbs, plants and living things was an important pastime for child Lu Xun.<sup>2</sup>

The imprisonment of his grandfather shook the economic and social foundation of the Zhou family. He was accused with a charge of bribery in the official examination. In imperial China, the violation of law by one member of the family would implicate the entire family. So, Lu Xun and his brothers were sent to Huangfu, a village not far from Shaoxing. He spent in eldest maternal uncle's place for sometime.<sup>3</sup> Later he was shifted with his uncle's family to Xiaogao village.<sup>4</sup> During his stay in the countryside he experienced cold and indifferent treatment from the members of his clan.<sup>5</sup> However, he once again came to close contact with the rural folk and had lots of fun and recreation while playing with the peasants' children in the riverside or

1. "From Hundred-Plant Garden to Three-Flavour Study", LXSW, Vol.I, p.392. (《朝花夕拾·从百草园到三味书屋》LXQJ.2).

2. Ibid.

3. Huangfu village 皇甫庄, Lu Jixiang 鲁寄湘 was his eldest maternal uncle.

4. Xiaogao Village, 小皋埠 (Xiaogaopu).

5. See Wang, LU XUN: A BIOGRAPHY, p.24, also in "JI WAIJI ewen yiben 'Ah Q Zheng Zhuan' xu ji zhuzhe zixu zhuanlue", 《集外集·俄文译本〈阿Q正传〉序及著者自叙传略》LXQJ, 7, pp.82-83.

watching village operas and temple fairs or religious processions.<sup>1</sup>

When the incident of his grandfather's imprisonment took place, Lu Xun was about thirteen years old. He later recalled these years in "the Preface to CALL TO ARMS". The tragedy completely shattered the mind of the child.<sup>2</sup> His father who was sitting idle at home became seriously sick. The strain on the family resources forced Lu Xun to move between a pawn-shop and a pharmacy for about four years. Eventually his father died. Those traumatic four years seriously disturbed the normal schooling, though he learnt through his experience of a cruel social reality a child could hardly imagine of. Father's prolonged illness and the unscientific medical treatment by ignorant medical practitioners made him disappointed with the traditional system of medicine. During that time he was often asked by such physicians to collect strange and uncommon herbs and insects. Lu Xun was amused when he discovered his familiarity

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1. One favourite play or village opera was about how Maudgalyayana, the Buddhist monk went to hell to rescue his mother; see Wang, LU XUN: A BIOGRAPHY, pp.25-26, for Maudgalyayana and description of hell see "The Hanging Woman", LXSW, Vol.I, 《且介亭杂文末编 附集·女吊》, LXQJ, 6, "Wu chang or life-is-Transient" 《朝花夕拾·无常》, LXQJ, 2 and QIEJIETING ZAWEN "menwai-wentan", 10, 《门外文谈》 Part 10, LXQJ, 6.

2. NAHAN zixu 《呐喊·自序》, LXQJ.1 and also see in ZHAOHUA XISHI, "fuqinde bing", 《朝花夕拾·父亲的病》, LXQJ.2.

with the plants and insects, which he developed in his early childhood, was proved insufficient. The whole family was almost abandoned by the other members of the clan. Lu Xun writes, "It is my belief that those who experience the decline of their family from a well-to-do condition to poverty will probably learn in the process and become aware of the reality."<sup>1</sup> The importance of fantasy, dream, imagination, curiosity, minute changes in the world of nature, different seasons, and attractive illustrated books was a characteristic feature of Lu Xun's writing, "Children are admirable. they keep wondering what it is like on the moon and stars or under the earth, what different flowers can be used for, how insects speak. They long to fly up to heaven, to crawl down an ant-hole... So we should be most careful what books we give our children, and should take great pains over writing them."<sup>2</sup>

There are innumerable occasions when Lu Xun becomes a spokesman of children. Even in his late years of life he reflects on the problems of the children. He does not ignore things in which children are interested. He criticizes the world of the elders, "In China we have many play-

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1. "Preface to CALL TO ARMS", LXSW, vol.I (The English translation is modified).

2. "An Illustrated Primer" LXSW, vol.IV, pp.47-48,《且介亭杂文·  
《看图识字》 LXQJ.6.

things for grown-ups: concubines, opium pipes, mahjong sets, decadent songs, seances, Buddhist masses and so many others that we have no time to think about our children."<sup>1</sup>

Concern for the children and their education remained as a significant objective in Lu Xun's creative mind. The world of children which is unfolded with all its purity, innocence and imagination is a powerful thematic element in his writings. The memory of his childhood and his reflections on the social reality are intermingled in the following lines, "For a time I kept recalling the vegetables and fruits I ate as a child in my old home: caltrops, horse-beans, water bamboo shoots, musk melons. So succulent, so delicious were they all, they beguiled me into longing for my old home. Later, tasting these things again after a protracted absence, I found them nothing special. It was only in retrospect that they retained their old flavour. They may keep on deceiving me my whole life long, making my thoughts turn constantly to the past."<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun's uninhibited criticism of an education system in which innocent children are subjected to dull and joyless exercises and his consistent concern for the children can be seen in many of his writings. "A Madman's Diary" merciless-

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1. "Toys", LXSW, Vol. IV, p. 54, 《花边文学·玩具》  
(Fringed Literature), LXQJ. 5.

2. "Preface", DAWN BLOSSOMS PLUCKED AT DUSK, p. 2, 《朝花夕拾小引》  
LXQJ. 2.

ly exposes the cruelty of Confucian morality and seriously questions the very rationale of the dominant cultural tradition of old China. The story ends with a loud and clear message "Save the children".<sup>1</sup> In "Kong Yiji" a poor scholar who degenerates into petty thief disappears without any trace.<sup>2</sup> Kong Yi Ji who studied classics but never passed examinations attracts ridicule and humiliation from the surrounding crowd. In spite of his painful existence he entertains the children and even takes interest in teaching the child-attendant of the wine shop. The story is narrated from a child's view. Runtu in "The Old Home" is a lively and unforgettable image of simplicity and innocence.<sup>3</sup>

Lu Xun was admitted to the Jiangnan Naval Academy in Nanjing in 1898.<sup>4</sup> Nanjing was a centre of political and cultural activities. The Academy was not a traditional institution, both classical Chinese and English were taught. One important reason why Lu Xun left Shaoxing and went to Nanjing was financial difficulties of his family. The school in Nanjing was a government school where no tuition fees were charged and scholarships were offered. At the

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1. "Save the Children", "救救孩子" in "Kuangrenriji"

2. "Kong Yi Ji" 《孔乙己》

3. Runtu 闰土 in "Guxiang" 《故乡》

4. Jiangnan Noval Academy in Nanjing, 南京江南水师学堂.



time of leaving home his mother gave him eight yuan and sent him off with a heavy heart. Lu Xun was not interested to become an official like his grandfather nor he was willing to become a merchant or a clerk in the magistrate's Yamen, the professional jobs or openings for the sons of the impoverished families had to accept. He was determined to take a different path. The mother was unhappy thinking that her son had to leave the study of classics and the chance of being an official in the future was forfeited. People used to believe that studying foreign languages or unconventional subjects was not a Chinese ideal and was as good as selling one's soul to foreign devils.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the disillusionment with the people in the surroundings and the acute shortage of money forced him to leave Shaoxing. He strongly reacted to two incidents which happened during his conversations with Mrs Yan.<sup>2</sup> She was an interesting lady in the neighbourhood and used to attract children to her place. Once she showed a book of pornography to Lu Xun and on another occasion advised him to solve his problems of buying things by disposing of the valuable things of his family. Lu Xun was eager to change the place and was dissatisfied

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1. See "Ewen yiben 'Ah Q Zhengzhuān' xu ji zhuzhe zixu zhuanlue" in JIWAIJI, LXQJ.7, NAHAN "zixu", LXQJ.1, "Suoji" (Fragmentary Recollections)《朝花夕拾·琐记》 LXQJ.2.

2. Mrs. Yan ( 衍太太 ) was Lu Xun's grandaunt, see "Suoji", ZHAOHUA XISHI, LXQJ.2.

with the study of Confucian classics. However, he was neither attracted by the so-called trend of learning foreign languages of the time. He was interested in learning more uncommon subjects.

Lu Xun was not satisfied with the curriculum of the Academy. Fortunately the following year he was transferred to the School of Railways and Mines which was attached to the Jiangnan Army Academy.<sup>1</sup> There too he was not very happy but became elated at being exposed to the books containing social and political theories and the scientific achievements of the West.<sup>2</sup> He learned subjects like physics, arithmetic, geography, history, drawing etc., some of which were not even known to him earlier. He was specially curious to know about physiology and read books such as a NEW COURSE ON THE HUMAN BODY and ESSAYS ON CHEMISTRY AND HYGIENE.<sup>3</sup> He became aware of Japan's experiments in learning from the West during the Meiji era. Lu Xun was fascinated by the advances of science in the West. His father's prolonged illness and eventual death without proper medical care and the backwardness of the Chinese medical system made him conscious of a situation of utter ignorance and helplessness. The impressive success Japan had achieved in various

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1. 江南陆师学堂附设的矿务铁路学堂,  
see "Suoji", ZHAOHUA XISHI, LXQJ.2.

2. "Suoji", ZHAOHUA XISHI, and NAHAN "zixu".

3. "The Preface to CALL TO ARMS", LXSW, vol.I.

areas especially in the field of medical science therefore made him optimistic. He decided to introduce western Medicine to china.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun's father who was perturbed after China's defeat at the Japanese hands (1894) had expressed his desire of sending his sons to the West or Japan for study and had wished that they would contribute to the national rejuvenation after their return from abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun's dissatisfaction with the traditional education became clear when he came to know about the New Learning in Nanjing. In fact he was never attracted by the classical texts. He expressed his reactions to the monotonous, dull and repetitive means to master the classics. We have already mentioned how Lu Xun was insisted by his father on reciting the history text before he was allowed to watch the village procession. He writes about his own experience of learning thirteen classics in an essay "The Fourteenth Year of the Republic and the Study of Classics" in 1925.<sup>3</sup> He comments in the postscript of the GRAVE about his strong dislike for such texts. "Although from my very childhood I studied the books of Confucius and Mencius and became thoroughly conversant in them yet I have nothing to do with

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1. "Preface to CALL TO ARMS", LXSW, Vol.I.

2. Zhou Zuoren, ZHITANG HUI XIANGLU xianmu shilue, (LU XUN NIANPU, vol.I, p.37).

3. HUAGAIJI, "Shisiniande 'du jing'", LXQJ.3, 《华盖集·十四年的“读经”》.

them."<sup>1</sup> His view on this matter was categorical while answering to a questionnaire recorded in a small piece of writing in 1925, he wrote "When I read Chinese books I always become quiet and go away from the life. While when I read foreign books except Indian, I often come into contact with the life and feel inspired to do something."<sup>2</sup>

When Lu Xun was studying in Nanjing there was an euphoria for reform and learning from the West. The Westernization Campaign in old style was over. He first studied in Jiangnan Naval Academy which was run by the Westernization Group. He read extensively scientific and literary works and he was fond of reading SHIWUBAO and YISHUHUIBIAN two popular journals of that time.<sup>3</sup> More he reacted to the traditional education more he was attracted to the ideas from the West. He drew his intellectual strength from the achievements of modern science beginning with T.H. Huxley's EVOLUTION AND ETHICS.<sup>4</sup> His emotional and romantic attachment with the past history, opposition to rigid rationalism

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1. "Xiezai FEN houmian," 《坟·写在(坟)后面》, LXQJ,1.
  2. "Qingnian bidushu", 《华盖集·青年必读书》, LXQJ.3.
  3. SHI WUBAO 《时务报》, one of the important journals of the reformists. It was edited by Liang Qichao and published from Shanghai between 1896-98. YIXUEHUIBIAN, 《译学汇编》 a monthly appeared from Japan in 1900. One of the earliest journals brought out by chinese students. It carried translated works by famous thinkers of the West. See "Suoji" ZHAOHUA XISHI, LXQJ.2.
  4. See "Suoji", ZHAOHUAXISHI, LXQJ.2.

of the Confucian thought and his passion for revolutionary ideas from the West led him to study different aspects of other civilizations and the profound consequences brought about by modern sciences. His interest in mythology religion and philosophy of the West was a definite area of his intellectual engagement, secondly he was preoccupied with a strenuous and systematic study of the achievements accomplished by the scientists in empirical investigations. He wrote "Sibada zhi hun" (the Soul of Sparta) in which he conveyed the spirit of the Spartans and the revolutionary ideal of patriotism.<sup>1</sup>

Four years' exposure to scientific theories of the West was not sufficient for Lu Xun to develop a mature understanding of the crisis china was facing in a historical era when a new political reality in the shape of imperialism was fast emerging in the world. In 1903, Lu Xun wrote a poem on a photograph: "the tower cannot avoid the god's sharp arrows; Dark in the ancient garden crushed beneath the storm. Unrecognized, I put my hope in an ice-cold star While offering my blood to the Yellow Emperor"<sup>2</sup> The photograph on which the poem was inscribed was taken after cutting off his queue in Japan and presented to his friend Xu Shoushang.

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1. "Sibada zhi Hun", 《集外集·斯巴达之魂》, LXQJ.7.

2. The poem "On my photograph", 《自题小像》 was written in Japan in 1903, 《集外集拾遗》 LXQJ.7 also see Lu Xun's SELECTED POEMS, (tr. W.J.F. Jenner), pp.30-31 and pp.127-128.

The strong emotion expressed for the Yellow Emperor, the progenitor of Chinese civilization was a romantic outburst which was inspired by Chinese mythology. The god's arrow was also a reference to Greek mythological image Cupid.

Lu Xun first met Zhang Taiyan in Japan where he gradually became aware of the political activities of different organizations. He wrote two essays "Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan" and "A Few Matters Connected with Zhang Taiyan" just before his death in 1936.<sup>1</sup> In both the essays he paid tribute to Zhang and evaluated his contribution and role in the history of modern China. He writes, "I heard about China's Zhang Taiyan not because of his studies in the Confucian classics and ancient philology, but because he attacked Kang Youwei, wrote a preface to Zou Rong's THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY, and was imprisoned in the jail of the International Settlement in Shanghai."<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun recollects how he was inspired by Zhang Taiyan's poems published in ZHEJIANG CHAO (The Zhejiang Tide, a journal brought out by the Chinese students of Zhejiang province who went to Japan

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1. "Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan"《关于太炎先生二三事》 and "A Few Matters connected with Zhang Taiyan"《因太炎先生而想起的二三事》.

2. "Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, Vol.IV, pp.322-323. Zou Rong, 邹容 (1885-1905), a revolutionary in pre-1911 Revolution years. He was imprisoned by the Qing Government and later died in prison. THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY 《革命军》, see Guanyu Taiyan Xiansheng ersanshi in QIEJIETING ZAWEN MOBIAN, LXQJ.6.

to study.)<sup>1</sup> Zhang expressed profound respect and deep affection towards the young revolutionaries who defied the Qing authority by cutting off their queue. He was an admirer of Zou Rong for his revolutionary spirit. Lu Xun was keen in knowing the ideas of Sun Yat-sen and his revolutionary activities against the Qing government. Chinese students who went to Japan for study during the early twentieth century were in their teens and were attracted by the warmth of revolutionary activities. They were ready to dedicate themselves and sacrifice anything for the cause of China. They were the ardent supporters of the anti-Qing political campaigns. The cutting off the queue was considered as a symbolic gesture to swear as a revolutionary. The queue was considered as a sign of humiliation shown by a non-Han ethnic group on Han Chinese for about three hundred years. It had already become an object which was undermining the superior Han cultural tradition for generations. Zhang Taiyan also came from Zhejiang province (the ancient land of Wu-Yue). Lu Xun writes, "I cut off my queue neither because I belong to the land of Yue and wanted to follow the ancient Yue tradition of short hair and tattooing, nor because of any revolutionary motive. The true reason was that I found

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1. ZHE JIANG CHAO 《浙江潮》.

a queue inconvenient".<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun was carried away by the scholarship and revolutionary ideas of Zhang Taiyan. He and his friends used to listen to lectures of revolutionary leaders in Tokyo.<sup>2</sup> They also learned philology from Zhang Taiyan for some time. Zhang had a detailed and minute study on the origin, evolution and the development of Chinese language and he systematically introduced the youth to the ancient and rich tradition of culture with obvious emphasis on the culture and history of the Han people.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the task of ending the rule of Manchus was foremost and urgent in the minds the young Chinese.

Zhang's book QIU SHU later renamed as JIAN LUN had essays preaching anti-Manchu political ideas and had once edited by Zhang himself.<sup>4</sup> Lu Xun mentioned Zhang's antagonism towards Manchus and the incident of cutting off his own queue. On the other hand the reform movement led by Kang Youwei which was a progressive political movement earlier became degenerated after the Yi He Tuan Movement or Boxers'

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1. "A Few Matters connected with Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, Vol.IV, p.332, in this essay Lu Xun expresses his view on the queue, also see "Binghou zatan zhi yu", LXQJ, 6.

2. See "Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, Vol.IV, also see Xu Shoushang WANGYOU LU XUN YINXIANGJI (Jottings on the Impression of my late friend Lu Xun), p.22-25.

3. See Xu, WANGYOU LU XUN YINXIANGJI and "A Few Matters connected with Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, Vol.IV.

4. QIU SHU 《遺書》, JIAN LUN 《檢論》, See "A Few Matters connected with Zhang Taiyan".



Uprising and Kang gradually identified himself with the conservative trend.

Zhang Taiyan's image as a revolutionary of the time has remained tainted and his role in the history of China disputed. Lu Xun expressed his views on Zhang's role as revolutionary pioneer in unambiguous words.<sup>1</sup> Zhang had warm and intimate relationship with the young revolutionaries. There were quite a few journals published in Tokyo by Chinese students coming from different provinces of China. MIN BAO was the monthly organ of Tong Meng Hui and Zhang was the editor and a regular contributor to it. The journal was actively engaged in propagating anti-Manchu ideas. Lu Xun was influenced by new ideas coming from different sources and his concern and passion for the future of China was demonstrated in his writings. Lu Xun was fond of reading MIN BAO.<sup>2</sup> He was attracted to Zhang not because of his literary style or his scholarship in classics, philology and Buddhist philosophy but for his revolutionary stand against the royalist Liang Qichao, and against Wu Zhihui and Lan

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1. "Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, vol.IV.

2. MIN BAO 《民报》 (People's Journal), monthly official organ of Tongmenghui (China Revolutionary League). See "Tiji" (Preface to the GRAVE) 《坟·题记》, LXQJ.1, and for Zhang's influence on Lu Xun see "JIWAIJI xuyan" ("Preface to COLLECTED UNCOLLECTED PIECES"), LXQJ.7.

Gongwu.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun writes, "I listened to his (Zhang) lectures too during this time, not because he was a good scholar, but because he was at the same time a revolutionary, so that today I can remember his expression and gestures but not a word of the ancient philology (SHUOWEN-JIEZI) about which he lectured."<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun was not a blind admirer of Zhang. Sometimes he expressed his critical observations on his thought. Zhang's faith in religion to arouse moral confidence in the people at a time when the political ideal of overthrowing Manchus had already accomplished was nothing but visionary. Lu Xun did not approve Zhang's strong nationalist stand which was prejudiced with Han identity. He expressed his dislike for Zhang's role after 1911 Revolution when Zhang lived a passive and secluded life and took part in reviving the ancient ceremony Tou Hu for the warlords. Lu Xun wrote in "Setting the Fashion and Sticking to Tradition". "At the end of the Qing Dynasty Zhang Taiyan was not the only scholar to study Confucian classics, yet his

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1. Wu Zhihui 吴稚晖 (1865-1953), a member of Tongmenghui later supported Jiang Kai-shek's 蒋介石 (1887-1975) anti-communist actions. Lan Gongwu 蓝公武 (1887-1957).

2. See "Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, Vol. IV, p.324. The words in the bracket are inserted. SHUOWEN-JIEZI 《说文解字》 (Analytical Dictionary of Chinese Characters), the earliest book on Chinese characters by Xu Shen 许慎 of Han dynasty.

fame much surpassed that of Sun Yirang because he set the fashion by advocating a national revolution - not only setting the fashion, but even going so far as to 'rebel'. Later, after they had their turn, these men became orthodox living sages. But ill luck dogged their steps: Kang Youwei will be known for ever as the saint of the restoration of the monarchy, Yuan Shikai wanted Yan Fu to support his ascension to the throne, and Marshall Sun Chuanfang asked Zhang Taiyan to revive the ancient ceremony of touhu".<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun took a strong exception of articles critical of Zhang's role by writers who were not aware of Zhang's greatness in the history of Chinese revolution. He mentioned some of Zhang's daring acts such as criticizing Yuan Shikai, his several persecutions and imprisonments three times. Lu Xun comments, "This showed the spirit of a great man, a model for those coming after."<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun's two articles "Some

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1. Lu Xun, "Setting the Fashion and Sticking to tradition", (1934) LXSW vol. IV, p. 89, 《花边文学·趋时和复古》 (Fringed Literature), Sun Yirang 孙诒让 (1848-1908), a scholar in classics, Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 (1859-1916). Sun Chuanfang 孙传芳 (1885-1935), Northern Warlord who conducted the Tou Hu ceremony in Nanjing in 1926. Zhang Taiyan did not turn up though he was invited to preside over the ceremony. Touhu 投壶 ceremony, an event of entertainment popular in ancient time. During a banquet the host and the guest used to insert arrows inside the pot and the loser in the game had to drink.

2. Lu Xun, "Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, Vol. IV, p. 325.

Recollections of Zhang Taiyan" and "A Few Matters Connected with Zhang Taiyan" not only illuminate Zhang's obscure image but also reveal Lu Xun's own ideological bent.

## CHAPTER - II

### THE MAKING OF LU XUN'S PERSPECTIVE

It is popularly believed in China that there were eight emperors in the beginning of history. They are Fu Xi, Shen Nong (the Divine Farmer), Huang Di (the Yellow Emperor), Shao Hao, Zhuan Xu, Gao Xin, Yao and Shun.<sup>1</sup> Yao, the only human ruler reigned between 2357 and 2256 B.C. The Great Yu, a popular folk image for his heroic efforts to save China from flood established the first dynasty Xia.<sup>2</sup> These divine or semi-divine images have been mentioned in various texts apart from the stories about them in myths and legends. Besides, a few early rulers who have been held in high esteem in general and particularly by Confucius and later Confucianists are King Tang who founded the Shang (also known as Yin) dynasty (1766-1123 B.C.), he also led the popular revolt against the tyrant Jie the last Emperor of Xia, King Wen and King Wu. The latter established the Zhou dynasty by defeating the tyrant Zhou, the last ruler of

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1. Fu Xi Shi 伏羲氏, Shen Nong Shi 神农氏, Huang-di 黄帝,  
Shao Hao 少皞, Zhuan Xu 颛顼, Gao Xin Shi 高辛氏(帝喾),  
Yao 尧, Shun 舜.

2. The Great Yu 大禹.

the Shang dynasty.<sup>1</sup> Yao, Shun alongwith Tang, King Wen, King Wu and the Duke of Zhou dynasty are considered as the sages and ideal political figures by the Confucianists, who have been mentioned in major texts with reference to the golden age of China's antiquity. While Jie and Zhou the last rulers of Xia and Shang dynasties have been depicted as wicked villains of the history in such texts. The Great Yu has also been held respectfully by Confucians, and has been admired by Mo Zi the founder of Mohist School.<sup>2</sup> While the Yellow Emperor has been regarded popularly as the founder of Chinese civilization and specially mentioned by Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi.<sup>3</sup>

The superficiality in the attitude of Confucianists towards the questions about the spiritual realm has its origin in Confucius' negative observations on the role or the existence of supernatural world. Confucius had three criteria while he compiled six classics: "shu er bu zuo" (transmit and donot create i.e., preserve the originality of

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1. King Tang 成汤, Shang dynasty (also known as Yin 殷), Jie 桀, Xia 夏, King Wen 周文王, King Wu 周武王, Zhou 纣, Duke of Zhou 周公.

2. Mo Zi 墨子.

3. Yellow Emperor is also known as 轩辕氏 (Xuan Yuan Shi), for a brief description of above mentioned mythical characters see "Historical Introduction" by the translator, pp.282-283 in Feng Youlan, A HISTORY OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY, Vol.I, and in Fan Wenlan's ZHONGGUO TONGSHI (A History of China), Vol.I, parts 3 and 4 of the Chapter I.

texts), "bu yu guai li luan shen" (never talk about strange and unknown things) and thirdly "gong hu yi duan, si hai ye yi" (avoid ideas of other schools mainly because their ideas do not conform with the "zhong yong zhi dao" i.e. the doctrine of Mean thus are harmful).<sup>1</sup> Confucius himself strictly refrained from commenting on supernatural things. Some of his observations are quoted to show his dislike for matters such as "wei zhi sheng, yan zhi si" (one does not even understand this life, how can one think to understand the life after death?), "wei neng shi ren, yan neng shi gui" (one is incapable of serving the interests of living beings how can one expect to serve the interests of dead spirits?) or "jing gui shen er yuan zhi" (keep respectful distance from gods and demons).<sup>2</sup>

The idea of keeping aloof from gods and demons while not denying clearly the existence of supernatural beings was the very attitude in tune with the ideology of "Mean" and remained as the characteristic of Confucianism in later

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1. "Shu er bu zuo" "述而不作" "bu yu guai li luan shen" "不语怪力乱神", "gong hu yi duan, si hai ye yi" "攻乎异端,斯害也已", "Zhong yong zhi dao", "中庸之道" for Confucius and classics see Fan, Vol.I, pp.168-177.

2. "Wei zhi sheng, yan zhi si", "未知生,焉知死", "Wei neng shi ren, yan neng shi gui" "未能事人,焉能事鬼", "Jing gui shen er yuan zhi", "敬鬼神而远之". For Confucius, Confucius' views on supernatural matters for related atheistic views see Fan, vol.I, pp.159-167, and vol.II, pp.297-304, for early religion in China see pp.310-319.

times. In spite of not inclining either side and thus keeping harmony with the doctrine of Mean Confucianists in its specific stages of development have either preached "you shen lun" (theism) or "wu shen lun" (atheism). However, generally they have expressed their views as if supernatural beings existed and even used them in order to maintain their supremacy over other schools of thought.<sup>1</sup>

YI JING (Book of Changes) a book of divination was accepted by Confucian scholars as text.<sup>2</sup> Dong Zhongshu of Han dynasty systematized the classical Confucianism and integrated metaphysical elements with it. He explained "yin" and "yang" theory (positive and negative forces) and the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth) on the basis of YI JING. He studied CHUN QIU (Spring and Autumn Annals) and closely examined the historical events.<sup>3</sup> Political exigency to bring order and stability of emerging empire urged him to shape an ethical and moral system of human social behaviour in conformity with the political rule. His understanding of the universe and its pre-dominant role over human behaviour is expressed in the following lines: "Heaven, Earth, and man are the origin of all things.

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1. Fan, vol.II, pp.297-304.

2. YI JING 《易经》.

3. CHUN QIU 《春秋》.



Heaven gives them birth. Earth nourishes them, and man perfects them. Heaven gives them birth by (instilling) filial piety and respect for elders; Earth nourishes them by (supplying) clothing and food; man perfects them by (creating) ritual (LI) and music (YUEH)."<sup>1</sup>

Dong Zhongshu reinterpreted human relationships in "san gang" and "wu ji" (three bonds and five rules) and determined the relationships between ruler and subject, father and son and husband and wife according to the metaphysical principles of "yin" and "yang". Thus he fixed the criteria for evaluating the integrity and moral character of an individual as loyalty, filial piety and chastity and undermined the status of subject, son and wife. He discussed heaven, mandate of heaven, nature, the nature of beasts and human beings, "yin-yang" principles, correlation between human minds and four seasons, the two aspects of human psychology: human nature or instinct and feelings or desires and simplicity and refinement in human behaviour. He established a close relationship between heaven and man and the idea that the man's role was predetermined by the Way of Heaven which is unchangeable.<sup>2</sup> A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINESE FICTION is a pioneering work in which Lu Xun traced the

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1. Feng, vol.II, p.32.

2. For Dong Zhongshu and Confucianism, See ch.II, Feng's vol.II, pp.7-87, Fan, vol.II, pp.143-158.

origin and evolution of Chinese fiction.<sup>1</sup> His observations based on meticulous examination of the history of fiction writings are refreshing and help to have an authentic understanding of the literary genre so far neglected by Chinese scholars. He considers mythology as the source of fiction. His comments on scarce and scattered mythological sources in China are insightful. He in his detailed analysis discovers the historically-evolved characteristic features of Chinese fictions and observes that the same has never been recognized as superior literary work by most of the major schools of thought. The prose writings of historical and philosophical nature contained references to the life and activities of mythological and legendary figures and great poets were inspired by myths and legends and made considerable use of mythology. Apart from this i.e., being a part of historically recognized literary genres mythology had no independent place. Fictions or stories therefore had no official recognition too. Ironically, the supernatural and strange themes and characters of gods, demons and spirits remained the subject matter of Chinese fictions throughout and enjoyed immensely by the people. Lu Xun believes that the motive of creating fantasies and strange phenomena in primitive times was nothing but a positive and natural reflection

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1.《中国小说略史》.

of literary activities. He finds the relationship between mythology and primitive religious thought somewhat rational though both had originated from the primitive need of maintaining psychological balance of mind facing a chaotic and hard life. SHAN HAI JING (the Book of Hills and Seas) is the oldest book of geography which contains a few legends. HUAI NAN ZI is another book of myths.<sup>1</sup> ZHUANG ZI is a book written by the famous thinker Zhuang Zi and his disciples in the Warring States period, it contains number of legends though it is essentially a work of philosophy.<sup>2</sup> CHU CI (the Songs of Chu) is a collection of poems compiled by Liu Xiang during western Han dynasty.<sup>3</sup> It has poems written by Qu Yuan and Song Yu of Warring States period and Xiao Shan and Dong Fangsu of Han dynasty.<sup>4</sup> The book is rich in extensive mythological references. The tradition of mythology and fairy tales continued through ages by direct or indirect references in poems and even in philosophical and historical works. This shows that there was no dearth of imagination and fantasy in the social reality of China. The tradition established by poets like Qu Yuan continued by

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1. HUAI NAN ZI 《淮南子》.

2. ZHUANG ZI 《庄子》.

3. CHU CI 《楚辞》, Liu Xiang 刘向 (77-6 B.C.)

4. Qu Yuan 屈原 (340-278 B.C.). Song Yu 宋玉 a poet of Warring States Period. Xiao Shan, 淮南小山 Dong Fangsu 东方朔 (154-93 B.C.)

poets such as Ruan Ji, Tao Yuanming, Li Bai, Li He, Su shi and essayist Zhuang Zi.<sup>1</sup> XIYOUJI (A Pilgrimage to the West) and LIAOZHAI ZHIYI (the Strange Tales of Liao Zhai) are works of strange and fanciful events.<sup>2</sup> The spirit of mythology and fictitious episodes was experimented by Lu Xun by giving a modern version of it in his GUSHIXINBIAN (Old Tales Retold).<sup>3</sup>

Lu Xun considers the reason of indifference towards myths as the absence of a strict division between gods and ghosts in the written traditions of China. There are quite a number of ghosts who could become deities and worshipped by the people. Since there was an absence of proper demarcation between men and gods in ancient China religion could not be fully institutionalized. Myths and legends lost their due place in the history of literature. However, religious elements whether as metaphysical or mystical questions or as ritualistic cults were all along at work in the evolution of Chinese culture. The age of mythology and

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1. Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263). Tao Yuanming 陶渊明 (365 or 372 or 376-427) Li Bai 李白 (701-762) Li He 李贺 (790-816). Su Shi 苏轼 (1037-1101) Zhuangzi 庄子 (369-286 B.C.)

2. LIAOZHAI ZHIYI《聊斋志异》 (Tales of Liao Zhai), contains stories about ghosts, fairies etc. by Pu Songling 蒲松龄 (1640-1715).

3. GUSHI XIN BIAN 《故事新编》, for the above references see, You Guoen et al, ZHONG GUO WENXUESHI; vol.1, pp.19-25.

the realm of gods and spirits have remained lively in the minds of people through popular stories. Wushi or the position of priesthood was an important official status and Wujiao or Shamanism was a kind of primitive religion which were replaced gradually by Shiguan or official historian and by the system of recording history.<sup>1</sup> The indigenous religious system of Han people had four basic activities: ancestor worship, worship of heaven, divination and sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> The inscriptions on oracle bones (Jiaguwen) of Shang dynasty (ca.1523-1027 B.C.) were the earliest records of divination on important matters such as harvest, war, peace, natural calamities etc.<sup>3</sup> Confucianism the chief school of thought which gradually developed somewhat secularized ethical and political ruling ideology could not but reflect on such religious or spiritual matters.

The demarcation line between celestial and worldly characters remained confused and the attraction of such other-worldly strange stories were well relished by the common people while not entertained by the historians. This romantic source of the mythology nevertheless inspired creative minds through ages. Lu Xun's interest in the

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1. Wushi 巫师, Wujiao 巫教, Shiguan 史官 see Fan, vol.II, pp.310-313.

2. Ancestor worship 祭祖宗, Worship of heaven 祭天, divination 占卜, sacrifice 祭礼.

3. Jiaguwen 甲骨文.

origin and evolution of civilization of human kind in general led him to examine other traditions. He was aware of rich and profound source of Indian mythology.<sup>1</sup> His knowledge of deities and demons of Indian tradition was acquired from Buddhist literary texts. The Buddhist tradition remained as popular yet a separate tradition in China. Deities and demons of Buddhist texts were an integral part of the popular cultural tradition. It has been mentioned that Lu Xun acquired a religious name after he was dedicated to a Buddhist monastery. His grandmother and his maid-servant used to narrate stories of nature, animals, fairies and popular myths. The deities and supernatural characters in folk operas were intensely watched by child Lu Xun. The hanging woman, different images of Wu Chang, Mu Lian's rescue of his mother, the colourful description of Yama, the king of death were Lu Xun's favourite.<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun was brought up in a traditional atmosphere and gradually became aware of the splendid cultural heritage and

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1. Lu Xun's specific references to Indian Mythology can be seen in "Moluoshili shuo"《摩罗诗力说》 (1907) LXQJ.1 and Po esheng lun 《破恶声论》 (1908), LXQJ.8.

2. See The Hanging Women (Nudiao) 《女吊》, LXSW, vol.I. The Play "Mulian's rescue of his mother" 《目连救母》 was popular in Shaoxing, see "A Layman's Remarks on writing", LXSW, vol.IV, "Village Opera" 《社戏》, LXSW, Vol.I, and "'Wu Chang'" or "Life is Transient" 《无常》, LXSW, vol.I, (Mulian: Maudgalyanyana). For Yama or the King of Hell see the above essay.

ancient history. He studied Confucian classics and the time-honoured historical and philosophical texts. China's tradition of preserving a recorded history of the past and strict restriction on reading fictions made him more and more averse to classics. He became curious to know more about the mythological past and the origin of Chinese civilization beyond the limited references of myths and legends in historical texts. Fantasies and stories with supernatural characters always fascinated child Lu Xun. Later when he grew up he studied various aspects of human life and activities in the primitive and prehistoric stage of human civilization particularly that of China.<sup>1</sup> The rich and glorious past that he inherited through well-preserved historical documents not only made him inquisitive about the origin of Chinese civilization but also made him feel proud about his own cultural heritage. His inquiries into the mythological life of China enabled him to grasp the spirit and characteristic features of that civilization. His study also enabled him to make certain valuable observations on early religion, psychology and culture. With such insights acquired from his study of the past he could reflect on the

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1. Lu Xun's views on the origin of language, literature and other aspects of Chinese civilization and his references to the mythological past can be seen in many of his writings mainly in A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINESE FICTION, "A Layman's Remarks on Writing", LXSW, vol.IV, "Two or Three Things Chinese", LXSW, vol.IV.

contemporary life and society. The profound understanding of and a deep emotional attachment he had with various mythological images can be seen as an intrinsic element of his work. Mythology contains the life and achievements of human experience reflected in such characters who had uncommon and supernatural capabilities and who were able to understand the mystery of the nature through their long and arduous encounters with various phenomena. They have been eulogized or worshipped through ages as heroes, gods or as semi-gods. Among various mythological characters who are known popularly in China are Pan Gu and Nu Wa and their stories concerning the origin of the earth, Kua Fu and Hou Yi two heroes with indomitable determination: Kua fu who tried to reach the Sun and died, Hou Yi shot down nine Suns and left one for the earth, Lady Chang E and her consumption of the elixir in the absence of her husband and as a result her lonely flight to the Moon and stories of legendary kings such as Yao, shun and Yu and other mythological characters such as Fu Xi Shi, Shen Nong Shi, You Chao shi, Zhuan Xu, Huang Di's protracted war with Chi You, the tribal chief of Jiu Liu race, and the eventual victory of Huang Di.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Pan Gu 盘古, "Kaitian-pidi" "开天辟地", Nu Wa  
 女媧 "nuwa-butian" "女媧补天" "nuwa-zaoren" "女媧造人"  
 Kua Fu 夸父 "Kuafu zhu ri" "夸父逐日" Hou yi  
 后羿 "hou yi she jiuri" "后羿射九日", Chang E  
 嫦娥, "Chang E ben yue" "嫦娥奔月", Chiyou  
 (Jiuliu race) 蚩尤 You Chao Shi 有巢氏



Chi You who has been depicted as a ferocious monster who had a head of a horse and who could communicate as human being, whose food was stone and sand. He represents as an awesome unsurmountable trouble-maker a symbol of evil power and atrocity and therefore was destined to be vanguished. Huang Di or the Yellow Emperor as a symbol of a positive and divine power met Chi You in a series of battles. Chi You also had supernatural power. He asked thunder and rain to come down on earth while the Yellow Emperor summoned goddesses to disperse thunder and rain and finally overpowered him. The Yellow Emperor is popularly known as the first ancestor of the Chinese people who subdued other hostile tribes and brought order from chaos during the primordial stage of Chinese civilization. He established the dominance of the Hua Xia people who later became known as the Han Chinese. Han people usually considered themselves as the descendants of the Yellow Emperor and Yan Di i.e., the Emperor Yan (Huang-Yan zisun).<sup>1</sup> The Yellow Emperor not only brought back the political stability but also laid the foundation of the Chinese civilization. He is hailed as the patron of several important innovations such as carts, boats, clothes, houses, writing, silk-weaving etc. All were achieved during his time.

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1. Yan-di 炎帝 , Huang-Yan zisun, 黄炎子孙  
Hua Xia 华夏 .

The affinity with the mythology and his pride of belonging to a place which was the origin of a great civilization reflected in his essay "The Power of the Mara Poetry". He traced back the literary creation in great civilizations of the world. He compared different civilizations such as Indian, Jews, Persian, Arabic, Russian and reflected on contemporary China. While he admired outstanding literary works like "Four Vedas", RAMAYANA, MAHABHARATA and the plays of Kalidasa of Indian civilization, he did not hesitate to criticize such mentality of boasting one's past glory. He was amazed to see that creative minds could attain such perfection in their literary and artistic endeavour while he lamented on the fate of such peoples who were surviving in a miserable condition in recent times. He expressed his anguish at the foreign rule in India and at the bleak and uncertain future of China.

Lu Xun was distressed to see the conditions of such peoples who, though, having a rich cultural heritage, living in their own lands suffering from a sense of humiliation as if they were driven out from their native lands dispossessed and surviving at the mercy of their alien rulers. They have lost their power to raise their voice and living with a false pride for their golden past. Such a gloomy and silent mental state on the desolate and ruined structure of the past has to be overcome. Lu Xun visualized a similar type of lifeless and sorry state for China. He was depressed yet

didn't lose hope. He wanted to get rid of the pervasive pessimism and the fear of bleak future by invoking the magical and supernatural power of a demon as reflected in the writings of the romantic poets such as Byron, Shelly, Pushkin, Mickiewicz and Petofi. The spirit of such poets was unconventional and against the established order of the society. The image of a demon as Satan in Byron's poems was borrowed from the image of Mara in Indian mythology.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun explained how he was influenced by the Byronic spirit in his youth.<sup>2</sup> He remembered these romantic poets while he was writing the preface to his collection of essays THE GRAVE in 1926.<sup>3</sup> In the postscript of the same he expressed his dislike for most of his essays except the reference to the life and works of such poets.<sup>4</sup> Lu Xun had the general interest in mythology and religion and was aware of the mythological and religious background of different ancient civilizations. His work A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINESE FICTION underlines the significant role Chinese mythology had played in the origin and evolution of Chinese fiction. He examines the causes why China could not produce a rich and comprehen-

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1. For the foregoing part see "Moluoshili shuo" in LXQJ, vol.I.

2. "Zayi" 《杂忆》, LXQJ, vol.I.

3. "Tiji", FEN, LXQJ. Vol.I.

4. "Xie zai FEN houmian", 《写在〈坟〉后面》, LXQJ, vol.I.

sive mythology. He attributed this to the hard conditions in early life and the absence of leisurely time for imagination and literary creation. Secondly, he believed that in ancient times gods, ghosts and men were so intermingled that with the passage of time, people forgot the respective identities of such prehistoric characters. Therefore, myths and legends remained fragmented and China could not have a collection of myths in an epic form. The Confucian scholars who in principle opposed the otherworldly matters were least interested in preserving such supernatural and fictitious tales. The place of fiction was never recognized by Confucian tradition though fairy tales and stories were enjoyed by the people generations after generations.

## II

The defeats at the hands of countries of the West and even Japan a small country in the east perturbed the minds of the Chinese. The ego of a people who had inherited a rich and ancient civilization could hardly reconcile with such humiliations. The native place of Lu Xun was remote from the centres of contemporary politics but had a long tradition of resisting enemies and fighting against injustice. Shaoxing had been known as "the home of retribution and erasure of shame".<sup>1</sup> People of Shaoxing put up heroic

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1. "The home of retribution and eraser of shame", see Wang, LU XUN ZHUAN, p.2.

wars of resistance at the end of Song dynasty against Jin soldiers and against Qing soldiers at the end of Ming dynasty.<sup>1</sup> Shaoxing has been the native place of revolutionaries most notably Qiu Jin who were in the front rank in taking up arms against the Qing rule in the early twentieth century. Therefore it was not a wonder why Lu Xun was so bold in absorbing ideas from new sources. He remained sincere in that process throughout. The crisis in the post-Opium War China created a situation marked with degeneration, helplessness and a complex of being proud of the past glory and reluctance to face the reality. Lu Xun was born in such a critical time. It was not so difficult for him to consciously extricate himself from that pervasive sense of helplessness but it was a formidable task to do so in his sub-conscious mind. The emotional attachment with the cultural ethos which had nurtured him and the fear of the disintegration of or even the extinction of the people disturbed the equilibrium of his mind. He was in the gradual process of being disillusioned with the tradition and his confused mind being refreshed by new ideas and scientific achievements from the West. During his four-year stay in Nanjing the most significant inspiration he drew was from the Darwin's theory of evolution through the book EVOLUTION AND ETHICS in which Yan Fu's ideas were also revealed. Lu

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1. Song dynasty 宋朝 , Ming dynasty 明朝 .

Xun was deeply influenced by Yan's ideas. Yan was a well-known bourgeois thinker with ideas of enlightenment and gave impetus to the reform movement by systematically introducing ideas of the West in China. Concepts such as freedom, democracy, laws, constitution and values of western societies were new and unthinkable in China and were considered revolutionary by the ruling class who held the son of Heaven as the ultimate law.

The post Industrial Revolution Europe experienced a series of remarkable achievements in different branches of science. The unforeseen technological advances and the rapidly changing face of industry transformed the traditional course of human history. The three notable achievements in the field of natural science were the discovery of the law of conservation, transformation of energy and the Darwinian theory of evolution. The characteristic feature of the development of science in the mid-nineteenth century was a change in the nature and attitude of scientists towards various phenomena. The change was characterized by meticulous and minute observation, investigation and experiments of the nature and the universe i.e. the positivist trend of emphasizing experimental researches and asserting the role of science by denying its connection with the all-embracing philosophical approach. The emergence of an ideological understanding of the nature and the universe with a materialistic interpretation of the history in opposition to the

traditional metaphysical approach became visible. The vigorous movement in favour of scientific method and empirical investigations gave rise to a host of new philosophies and theoretical formulations. The old concepts about the origin of the universe, nature, man, religion became ridiculous and new concepts and values took shape in place of them in a very short span of time. The triumph of science became unchallenged. Even the religion became the subject matter of scientific study. Philosophical questions about the reality, nature, man, god, mind, matter and ideas dealt with by earlier philosophers became the target of attack from the thinkers of positivism, they denied the intelligibility of forces which were beyond facts.

Lu Xun was carried away by such amazing human achievements and wrote few essays in response to such developments in early twentieth century. He expressed his keen interest in science and his concern for the progress of humankind in general. In "On Radium" he welcomed the discovery of radium by Madam Curie.<sup>1</sup> He observed the discovery of radium a substance which emits light was a great scientific discovery which demystified the myths of the past and also dealt heavy blow to the existing theories particularly the atomic theory of physics. He considered the discovery would provide revolutionary inputs in human thought. "The History of Man"

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1. "Shuo Ri", 《说钚》 (1903), LXQJ, Vol.I.

introduced the biological theories to the Chinese.<sup>1</sup> He explained the theoretical formulation of Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (1835-1919), the German biologist and a follower of Darwinism. Lu Xun systematically explained the different stages of the theory of evolution from the early Greek thought to the interpretation by Thomas Henry Huxley. He mentioned Pan Gu's legend of opening the heaven and separating the earth from it and Nu Wa's legendary contribution to the emergence of man on earth. He described the Chinese mythological scene and also mentioned the western notion of creation by Noah and Moses. The primordial existence of human beings visualized by the Chinese poet Qu Yuan was as an anxious mind when the huge legendary tortoise Ao was dancing and the mountains could hardly remain undisturbed.<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun traced the theological interpretation of human existence which was an obstacle to the scientific understanding of the universe. He mentioned a number of scientists and thinkers who contributed to the demystification of creation myths. He mentioned their works and was confident of the rapid and lasting impact of the theory of evolution on human mind and its contribution to removing the misconceptions about the origin of man. He rejected the so-called creation theories and expressed his faith in the scientific theories

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1. "Ren zhi lishi", 《人之历史》 (1907), LXQJ.vol.I.

2. Ao 敖, see in "Ren zhi lishi", LXQJ.vol.I.



about the mysterious universe which was first illuminated by Thales the Greek atomist.

Other essays written by him during that time were "A History of Science", "Cultural Trends", "On the Demoniatic Poets", (or "The Power of Mara Poetry"), "An Outline of Chinese Geology", "On Breaking the Evil Sounds" and he also made abridged translation of Jules Verne's FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON and VOYAGE TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun's youthful enthusiasm in portraying the Thermopylae episode in "the Soul of Sparta" was indicative of the deep influence of the spirit of valour and patriotism of Spartan warriors. He wanted to invoke such a spirit of sacrifice from ancient Greek in the minds of the Chinese youth. The idea of inspiring the youth with an indomitable spirit of courage and ambition can be seen in Lu Xun's frequent references to Greek mythological images in many of his writings. The story of Prometheus, the prototype of Greek mythology, who stole fire for men from heaven and was punished with eternal torment was a source of inspiration to Lu Xun. His own intense desire to bring such a revolutionary spirit from

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1. "Kexueshi jiaopian" 《科学史教篇》 (1907), LXQJ.1, "Wenhua pianzhi lun" 《文化偏至论》 (1907), LXQJ, I, Zhongguo dizhi luelun 《中国地质略论》 (1903), LXQJ.8, "Po e-sheng lun" 《破恶声论》 (1908), LXQJ.8.

alien sources in an apparently lifeless and stagnating environment of China was reflected in many places.<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun studied in Kobun college in Tokyo for two years (April, 1902-August, 1904) and later in Sendai Medical College for two years (August, 1904 - March 1906). The incident of watching a news-reel which changed his mind is well known. The slide showed a crowd of strong and healthy Chinese enjoying the execution by the Japanese authority of a Chinese spy who was working for the Russians. The utter apathetic attitude of his compatriots to a fellow countryman worked as a stimulus in his mind. After the incident he dropped his original idea of becoming a physician, he writes, "... this slide convinced me that medical science was not so important after all. The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they might be, could only serve to be made examples of or as witnesses of such futile spectacles; and it was not necessarily deplorable if many of them died of illness. The most important thing, therefore, was to change their spirit; and since at

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1. Prometheus and his spirit of helping the mankind by stealing fire from the heaven have been mentioned by Lu Xun in "'Ying Yi' yu 'wenxuede jiejixing'", 《硬译与文学的阶级性》 LXQJ.4, "Bie yige qiehuozhe" 《别一个窃火者》 LXQJ.vol.5, "Guanyu zhongguode liang san jian shi" 《关于中国的两三件事》 LXQJ.vol.6, "Huo" 《火》, LXQJ.vol.4.

that time I felt that literature was the best means to this end, I decided to promote a literary movement."<sup>1</sup>

When Lu Xun was in Japan he often used to discuss with his friend Xu Shoushang three interrelated questions: how to have a man with an ideal character? What was that China's national character lacks most? And what was the root cause of it?<sup>2</sup> In another occasion when Xu Shoushang asked him to be the first teacher of his son Lu Xun taught the child two Chinese characters "tian" (meaning heaven) and "ren" (meaning man).<sup>3</sup> The image of an ideal man and the problem of China's national identity was the key theme of Lu Xun's works. While he was influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, western humanism and individualism, he never forgot his close acquaintance with the rural life and the peasants he had during his childhood.

When Lu Xun was in Japan, the Dean of the Kobun College asked Chinese students to go to the Confucian Temple at Ochanomizu to pay respects to Confucius thinking that the Chinese students were all disciples of Confucius. Lu Xun was amused, "Do I still have to worship him here?"<sup>4</sup> He

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1. "Preface to CALL TO ARMS", LXSW, vol.I, p.35.

2. Xu Shoushang, WANGYOU LUXUN YINXIANGJI, p.19, see in Wang, LU XUN, p.47-48.

3. Xu, WANGYOU LU XUN YINXIANGJI, p.91.

4. "Confucius in Modern China", LXSW, vol.IV, p.184. (《且介亭杂文二集·在现代中国的孔夫子》, LXQJ.6.)

knew many had similar reaction to this. He recalled his days in Japan and his disappointment with Confucian social doctrine. He expressed his views on the classics and Confucius specially on the followers of Confucianism and their attempt to revive the teaching of classics and worshipping of Confucius. Yuan Shikai and other warlords after 1911 revolution were keen in such a revival of the ways of the sages in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> But the people in general already began to believe that the traditional wisdom and the spiritual strength accumulated through thirteen classics and worship of Confucius could no way prevent China's humiliating defeat at the hands of foreigners. The Qing government spent enormous money and

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1. Activities to revive Confucian morality and popularize Confucius-cult continued with active support and patronage of the warlords in post-revolution period. In 1914 Yuan Shikai made an attempt to revive ancient custom and Confucian values by upholding and glorifying the virtues of women and young like chastity, obedience and filial piety. In the same year he appeared in traditional costume to offer sacrifice to the sage. Confucian Societies were busy in organizing functions to celebrate the sage's birth anniversary. Yuan Shikai's aim was to restore monarchy and declare himself as an emperor. Sun Chuanfang, also a warlord revived the Confucian ceremony *touhu* in mid-twenties. Zhang Zongchang 张宗昌 (1882-1932), another warlord reprinted the thirteen classics, reintroduced the worship of Confucius and wanted to revive the custom of kowtowing at the sacrifice to the sage. Zhang Shizhao introduced study of classics in school in 1925. Lu Xun criticized such activities in his essays like "Confucius in Modern China," "My views on Chastity", "What is Required of us as Fathers Today", "What Happens after Nora leaves home?", "The PICTURE BOOK OF TWENTY-FOUR ACTS OF FILIAL PIETY", "The Fourteenth year of the Republic and the Study of Classics", etc.

energy to get foreign books translated and the whole education system of learning classics, writing stereo-typed eight-legged essays etc. abolished in early twentieth century. The attempt to revive Confucian worship, learning classics, Confucian ceremonies such as touhu etc by the warlords in the post-revolution period was matter of fact nothing but to reverse the wheel of history. In his essay "Confucius in Modern China" (1935) he not only attacked those adherents of Confucius and their ulterior motives behind their cult of Confucius. He exposed these selfish and conservative forces by using the expression "brick to knock at on doors to fulfil their political ambitions". He made the distinction between the power crazy politicians and the common people of China. The ordinary Chinese were never interested in the sage. Only those in authority admired and worshipped Confucius. Lu Xun writes, "We may say that the sage's luck took a turn for the better after his death. Because he could no longer pontificate, various authorities started whitewashing him various ways till he was raised to awe-inspiring heights. And yet, compared with the later imported Sakyamuni Buddha, he cut rather a poor figure. True, every county had a Confucian temple, but this was always a lonely, neglected place where the common folk never worshipped. If they wanted to worship they looked for a Buddhist temple or a shrine to some deity. If you ask ordinary people who Confucius was, of course they will

answer 'A sage', but this is simply echoing the authorities."<sup>1</sup>

In the postscript of the GRAVE he expressed that though he was brought up in classical education and learnt Confucian classics he never felt that these classics had something to do with him. His criticism of the tradition was a political task. He considered the burden of tradition in China a challenge awesome and formidable, so he prepared himself for a long and strenuous ideological confrontation with the traditionalists. His target was the Confucian ideology of his time, which evolved from the history and was the core of the old order. Therefore, his critique of Confucianism was penetrating, thorough and tenacious. The question of having any meeting point with the followers of Confucianism of any category therefore did not arise in any place of Lu Xun's literary communication. Lu Xun in his essay "More Thoughts on the Collapse of Lei Feng Pagoda" (1925) while talking about Confucius' neutrality on the existence of supernatural beings writes, "Confucius was truly great, for though he lived at a time when witchcraft was rampant, he refused to follow the fashion and speak of ghosts and spirits. The pity is he was a little too clever. 'Sacrifice to your ancestors as if they were present' he said, 'Sacrifice to the gods as if the gods were present'".

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1. "Confucius in Modern China", LXSW, vol.IV, p.185.

He simply used the device he had employed in editing the SPRING AND AUTUMN ANNALS, adding the words 'as if' in a slightly caustic way."<sup>1</sup> As we have already observed that Confucius refrained from discussion on supernatural beings, and expressed his inability to understand fully the human affairs and life and therefore took a rational stand of not being able to understand or even contemplate on death and supernatural existence. Lu Xun comments, "Now Confucius was an extremely shrewd old gentleman. Apart from this question of having his portrait printed, it seems he possessed considerable subtlety and knew it did not pay to wreck things openly. Thus he simply refrained from discussion, and would on no account attack anything. And so, quite rightly, he became the sage of China, for his way is great and all embracing. But for this there might be someone else - not named Confucius - worshipped in the temples today."<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun's views on the ruling Confucian thought were construed with an intense desire to change the cultural behaviour of China. Confucian thought was a formidable and stumbling block on the way of doing that. He never failed to distinguish the difference between the sociocultural behaviour of the common folk and the cultural elite. Jun zi (the gentle-

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1. "More Thoughts on the Collapse of Lei Feng Pagoda", LXSJ, vol. II, P.115, (《再论雷峰塔的倒掉》,《坟》, LXQJ.1).

2. Ibid, pp.115-116.

man) was the address he always used to ridicule the so called followers of Confucian ideas.<sup>1</sup> He criticized the cruelty, hypocrisy, anti-people elitist attitude of such type of people. It is true that he was indignant towards ignorance, superstitions and utter indifferent attitude of the toiling masses but gradually he himself was enlightened and was able to discover simplicity, innocence and wisdom of the Chinese people. His criticism, thereafter, of upper-class gentlemen and the so-called literate section became merciless. He felt the growing urge to grasp such subtleties in the behaviour of the people. He gradually realized the way people have been deceived and influenced by the age-old tricks of the ruling ideology.

Lu Xun in the preface to the GRAVE acknowledged Zhang Taiyan's literary style of using classical expressions in his early essays. Later in his essay "Famous Men and Famous Sayings" (1935) he recalled certain views of Zhang Taiyan on vernacular.<sup>2</sup> Zhang Taiyan was a supporter of using classical Chinese. He expressed that unless someone studies philology he would not grasp the way modern words were pronounced and written in the old days and thus he would

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1. Jun zi 君子, Lu Xun also used "君子之徒" (Junzi zhi tu) and "正人君子" (zhengren junzi) indirectly pointing to the members of the MODERN CRITIC group (《现代评论》派).

2. "Mingren he mingyan" (Famous Men and Famous Sayings), 《且介亭杂文二集·名人和名言》, LXQJ.6.



make mistakes. In this respect modern language was considered more difficult. Many modern colloquial expressions have their origin in classical Chinese. Zhang also quoted some examples to support his views. Lu Xun's critical observation on Zhang's comment was, "Mr. Zhang Taiyan is a forerunner in the revolution, an authority on philology; if he speaks of ancient documents or philology, of course he is well worth listening to, but when he attacks the modern vernacular he misses the point completely."<sup>1</sup> He held that the origin of vernacular was the classical language but it was also true that when at the time of using vernacular it was irrelevant to trace the etymology of characters. What people used were the forms sanctioned by the popular usage. The vernacular was for the present time and not for the ghosts of the Shang or Zhou dynasties. If ancients were to come back and find the language incomprehensible that would not make the people worried. Lu Xun comments that Zhang's third argument is wide of the mark. This is because he applied his expert knowledge of philology outside his own field. It is not desirable that famous men should comment on every aspect of life and it is not desirable to accept sayings by famous men as correct. Lu Xun did not like Zhang's attitude of keeping himself aloof from the people

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1. "Famous Men and Famous Sayings", LXSJ, vol.IV, p.204-205.

after the revolution. Lu Xun regarded Maxim Gorky as a fighter, "while though Mr. Zhang Taiyan first became known as a revolutionary, he later retired to live as a quiet scholar cut off from the age by means of a wall built by himself and others."<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun also disapproved Zhang's desire to give men faith through religion and his emphasis on moral quality of the people. The idea of arousing people with such type of nationalism was merely a visionary ideal. Zhang was not like Gorky, who was respected during his life and honoured after death. The reason according to Lu Xun was the difference in their fates. The dreams Gorky saw came true and he identified himself with the common people, sharing their joy and anger, their pleasures and sorrow, whereas Zhang took a passive role after revolution and lived in obscurity.<sup>2</sup>

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1. "Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, vol.IV, p.322.

2. Ibid, p.324.

### CHAPTER III

#### METAMORPHOSIS: EVOLUTION OF LITERARY IMAGES

1911 was a year of immense historical significance. The revolution led by Sun Yat-sen ended the 260 year-old Manchu rule and more significantly brought about a decisive end to the 2000 year-old feudal autocratic political system. The change in the political system had far-reaching impact on social and cultural behaviour of the Chinese people. The revolution debased the age-old institutions and made them ideologically bankrupt. It also paved the way for a thorough transformation of old institutions into new ones. The forces representing the old political interest were still alive and desperate, the forces advocating status quo were no less weak and the forces in favour of revolution were the weakest. The people were still not in favour of any drastic change in the traditional order. They were still swayed over by the influence of the old ideology. In such an ideologically confused state the handful of revolutionaries under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen could not resist the powerful warlords who were still dreaming to revive a monarchical system. The years were uncertain and a shadow of frustration, despair and fear loomed widespread among the masses. The infiltration of foreign powers was posing a threat to the national sovereignty. The intense rivalry among the warlords gradually made China a prey to the on-

slaught of imperialism. The conflicts in the various layers of national psyche were not only confined to the native rationale, they were also a consequence of external factors. The intensity of tension from individual life to the behavioural pattern of society became a long-term feature. The people became anxious and gloomy. The prospect of strength, prosperity and becoming a modern nation was at stake. The idea that the cause of national crisis was the rule of Manchus, as was thought by many, became less convincing. The host of problems such as a suitable political system and an able leadership which would remove national weaknesses became discernible topics. China in the post-revolution era experienced misrule by the warlords. Political instability, infiltration of the western political powers and the rise of social and cultural obscurantism alongwith cruelty and indifferent attitude of the officials towards popular sentiments continued till 1919. The May 4th Movement was a protest against feudal values as well as against imperialism in China. It was inspired by the October Revolution. China's aspiration to learn from the West and the application of Marxism as a political theory to solve national problems became clear. A widespread and heightened political consciousness was demonstrated by the youth and intellectuals against old values. The participation of workers was also a significant development. The emergence of the Communist Party in 1921 was a concrete move in realizing

such aspirations. The intense ideological dispute between the conservative feudal elements and the rising intellectuals influenced by the ideas of Marx became evident. May 4th Movement was a movement of progressive democrats with a strong ideological input from the early Marxists of China.

Lu Xun did not write anything between 1908 and 1918 except three poems in classical style and a story "Huai Jiu" (Reminiscences) which was written in classical language.<sup>1</sup> His understanding of the democratic revolution and the uneven power between the revolutionaries and the feudal forces reflected in the story. The story which was written in 1911 was an analysis of social and political scene during the revolution. The clearcut reaction he had to the political and cultural behaviour of the Qing ruling class before the revolution can be seen in his writings till 1908. The intimate affinity with the cultural heritage and the life of Chinese people was a basic element in his anti-Manchu bent of mind.

He firmly believed that the end of Manchu rule would bring rejuvenation to Chinese culture. He thought that the Manchu rule was one of the most important cause of national woe. He earnestly looked forward for such a change. The attitude which had a typical cultural perspective inspired him to identify himself so explicitly with the Han ethos,

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1. "Huai Jiu" 《怀旧》  
《哀范君三章》

LXQJ.7, "Ai Fan jun san zhang"  
LXQJ.7.

and therefore his reaction towards Manchus was evident. So till the time of revolution he clearly identified himself with that cultural heritage where anti-Manchu sentiment was an ingredient. This aspect, as a matter of fact, obscured his view from understanding the real contradictions inherent in that time. The affinity with the mainstream cultural tradition as well as an aristocratic social upbringing no doubt nourished his mind with certain healthy and positive inputs yet at the same time allowed a space for certain biases. When the revolution failed to be constructive he gradually isolated himself from the political life and lived a secluded and solitary life. It continued for about ten years. The long spell of disengagement from social and cultural activities and deep introspection therefore do not seem to be so much strange. It was a necessary and at the same time a significant break in the process of his being biased with a particular type of outlook.

The prejudice towards non-Han ethnic groups was a historical product among the literate Chinese. The dominant culture of China which evolved through the long imperial history was expressed in the language of Han nationality. The historical, philosophical and literary texts, official examinations and education tuned to the mainstream cultural tradition were all written in the script of Han nationality's language. The predominant or more precisely the monopoly role Chinese played in preserving and strengthening the

culture of China was a fact which helped to develop this kind of superiority complex among Han intellectuals. While the physical superiority of other tribes was an important reason why they could subjugate the Han Chinese during different historical periods. The cultural superiority of Hans was an undisputed fact and other tribes were outside the mainstream cultural development. This kind of historical consciousness about the ethnological composition was inherited by many Han intellectuals at the end of Qing dynasty. Undoubtedly this was also the source of popular hatred towards Manchu rulers among the people.

The fundamental political change brought about by the revolution was unforeseen in a sense that it ended the imperial rule once for all. The feudal ruling class realized enormous difficulty in sustaining its ideological strength which it had in the name of the emperor in the past. Moreover, in the absence of an imperial authority, the dominant culture which survived alongwith the emperor who had the moral support of the common people lost the old political patronage and started disintegrating. The condition with a weakened political system and a disintegrated culture ushered in an era of popular political and ideological upsurge.

Lu Xun mentioned three aspects why he disliked Qing rulers: firstly because of the queue which was the symbol of political and cultural arrogance of Manchus over the Han

subject, secondly the autocracy which however, was the tradition of the political system of China and thirdly the persecution and cruel treatment towards Han scholars during the Qing dynasty.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun's love and concern for his country and the people till the revolution was abstract and he as a passionate patriot emotionally identified himself with the revolution and revolutionary democrats. He believed that revolution would bring about significant changes in China. China would become a free, democratic and prosperous modern state and it would be able to free itself from the burden of tradition. The idea that the society had to undergo a process of revolutionary changes was a strong and unshakable conviction in his mind. He sincerely hoped to see such changes through the revolution. A republic in place of an autocracy, a new culture in place of the old and a free nation in place of an enslaved semi-colony was a dream he nurtured. The end of Manchu rule and the transformation of the institutions which were influenced by social, moral and ethical standards of Confucianism were immediate requirements to realize his dream. The task of facing the forces which were behind the old system was a challenge for him. The revolution was successful in ending the feudal autocratic dynastic rule by overthrowing the Qing emperor.

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1. "A Few Matters connected with Zhang Taiyan", LXSW, vol.IV, p.329.



A republican government was established. Lu Xun's early response to such a historic change was full of hope but his optimism was short-lived. The failure of the revolution made him disillusioned. His wish to see political and cultural changes was shattered. There was no fundamental change in the nature of the society. China witnessed the worst situation of internal strife among the mutually hostile ambitious warlords. The warlords usurped the power and very soon suppressed and drove away the revolutionaries. The influence of imperialist countries in China became well-entrenched. The revolution was thus nominal. It merely changed the nomenclature of the political system. The situation after the revolution became more confused and remained politically chaotic, socially disintegrated and economically underdeveloped. The image of a nation could not emerge and there was no hope for that in foreseeable future. It was a situation Lu Xun described in his poem in 1912 while mourning Fan Ainong, "No sooner have the foxes fled their dens, than peachwood dummies prance upon the stage".<sup>1</sup> The chaos continued for more than a decade. Lu Xun used to live in that chaotic time, though at times there were incidents which could spark rays of hope in his mind.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Lu Xun, "Three Poems Mourning Fan Ainong", LU XUN SELECTED POEMS, p.33.

2. Specially the incident of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. See Preface to CALL TO ARMS, LXSW, vol.I, and "Preface to my SELECTED WORKS", LXSW, vol.III.

The clan and family in old China was important symbol of social status. A list of common family names primary students had to learn from BAI JIA XING (Hundred Surnames). In the context of inheritance and succession surnames had the primary role to play in the society. Therefore the identity of an individual in China was revealed by his surname. Lu Xun's family name was Zhou which also indicates the particular clan he belonged to. The family pride or how far someone is filial to his family could have been expressed by someone sticking to such names. Lu Xun was not happy with his patrilineal ancestry and he was steadfast in his opposition to the patriarchal system so his dislike for such concepts such as obedience, faithfulness, filial piety, self-sacrifice, chastity etc was clear right from his childhood. But being the eldest son of his family it was next to impossible to deny in any way the pressure of social-cultural tradition. In "Sudden Notions(5)" he writes, "My elders' instructions had such a strong effect on me that I observed all the rules of a scholar's family. With bent head and bated breath, I dared do nothing hasty. I kept my eyes on the ground, for to look at heaven would have been presumptuous. My face showed no expression, for to laugh or chat would have been frivolous. Naturally I thought this right, yet sometimes I felt rebellious at heart. To feel rebellious at heart was not considered very wrong in those days,

when apparently thought control was not so rigid as now."<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun wrote this in the context of Kang Youwei's attempt to usurp the throne through his reforms. Elders in his clan explained Kang Youwei's 'you' means to possess i.e., he wanted to possess the empire and 'wei' means 'to be' i.e. he wanted to be the emperor. And his action was nothing but a treason. The lifeless environment in which no one was allowed to laugh and chat became unbearable for Lu Xun. Once he was grown up he thought to giving up the gloomy face but when he laughed some respectable person was disappointed. So Lu Xun expressed surprise that the world which had belonged to the old now belonged to the young and it never occurred to him that the new rulers would also forbid talking and laughing. His dream of talking and laughing with an easy mind as a grown up man was not realized. He writes, "Surely I was born at an unlucky time, in an accursed age and in an accursed place."<sup>2</sup> He referred to John Stuart Mill's view, that tyranny makes men cynical, while Lu Xun himself regarded that the tyranny of fools makes them more dead than alive. "If there are still men in the world who really want to live on, they must first dare to speak,

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1. "Sudden Notions" (5), LXSW, vol.II, p.136 (《华盖集·忽然想到》LXQJ.vol.3)

2. Ibid, p.137.

laugh, cry, rage at, revile, fight and defeat this accursed age in this accursed place!"<sup>1</sup>

In the preface to CALL TO ARMS Lu Xun wrote that during his youth he had many dreams and he had no regrets even though he forgot most of them later. It was his habit to often recall the past in order to be happy though it often brought loneliness instead. He writes, "However, my trouble is that I cannot forget completely, and these stories stem from those things which I have been unable to forget."<sup>2</sup> He again says, "As far as I am concerned, I no longer feel any great urge to express myself; yet perhaps because I have not forgotten the grief of my past loneliness, I sometimes call out to encourage those fighters who are galloping on loneliness, so that they do not lose heart."<sup>3</sup> In fact few mental exercises such as hope, dream, memory etc were Lu Xun's favourite things mentioned in his writings particularly in his reminiscences.

The behaviour of different types of people in China was gradually understood by him. His idea of enlightening the masses was a vision which he attempted to realize in a long process in which he himself was enlightened. Such mental exercises were applied in the context of a reality where

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1. Ibid, p.137.

2. "Preface to CALL TO ARMS", LXSW, vol.I, p.33.

3. Ibid, p.38.

despair, hopelessness, loneliness and past sufferings were hidden. He writes, "I did not want to infect with the loneliness which I had found so bitter those young people who were still dreaming pleasant dreams, just as I had done when young."<sup>1</sup> In "What happens after Nora leaves home" he comments, "The most painful thing in life is to wake up from a dream and find no way out. Dreamers are fortunate people. If no way out can be seen, the important thing is not to awaken the sleepers."<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun referred to the death of Tang dynasty poet Li He, who died after having a life of misfortune and expressed his wish to his mother.<sup>3</sup> The wish was that the emperor in heaven would invite him to write something on the completion of a jade palace. Lu Xun comments what was this if not a lie? A dream? The wish might have made the young man's death less painful and helped the old mother kept on living. According to him we need dreams when we have no way out. He mentioned the way Artzybashev's challenge to such idealists who dream about the future.<sup>4</sup> He says that giving the descendants a hope of a golden world in the future is nothing but deception. Lu Xun writes, "...if

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1. Ibid, p.38.

2. "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?", LXSW, vol.II, p.87. 《坟·娜拉走后怎样》 LXQJ.1.

3. Li He 李贺 (790-816).

4. Artzybashev (1878-1927), Russian novelist.

we can find no ways out, what we need are dreams; but not dreams of the future, just dreams of the present."<sup>1</sup> In the same essay he talked about memory in the context of relationship between father and son. He disapproved the method of fighting. Someone should use parental authority to liberate one's children in China by sharing the property equally among children and thus avoid conflict. Some parents who oppress their children now were probably rebels against their own families ten years ago, he considers bad memory an important reason for this change in attitude. The remedy, he prescribes, is to record one's thought and actions from day to day on a notebook. One should keep looking at such notes along with the change of time. Before preventing one's son from going to the park one should check up whether one had the same desire in the past.

In "Teachers" he pointed out the short memory of the Chinese people, the reason of which, according to him, was, "...there is too much suffering in life, especially in China. People with good memories are liable to be crushed to death by the weight of suffering, only those with bad memories, the fittest to survive, can still live happily on".<sup>2</sup> His observations and analysis of human mind in the context

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1. "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?", LXSW, vol.II, p.87.

2. Lu Xun, "Teachers", LXSW.vol.II, p.165, 《华盖集·导师》 LXQJ.3.

of such things like hope, despair, dream and memory, indifference to reality and the distinction between physique and spirit were connected with life and death. The question of survival, death and immortality was also raised by him in many of his writings. On the other hand he was keen to know the power of man, ghosts or demons and of gods. These concepts he employed in different places and created complex yet colourful literary images in his stories. He sometimes invokes demons to change things which are impossible to do for human beings. His repeated utterances about the ultimate end of life and his vivid descriptions of hell and the king of hell both in his stories as well as in his essays are easily noticeable. Buddhism was a resourceful inventory for him. Xiang Lin's wife in "New Year Sacrifice" questions the existence of the soul, "Do dead people turn into ghosts or not?", the narrator of the story answers in affirmative though hesitantly. She then comes to the conclusion, "That means there must be a hell too?" And finally she asks, "Then will all the members of a family meet again after death?"<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun nurtured a dream that he would cure patients like his father who died because of wrong treatment. He also thought of becoming an army doctor or inspiring his

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1. Lu Xun, "The New Year Sacrifice", LXSW, vol.I, for the Conversation see p.171, 《彷徨·祝福》 LXQJ.2, Xiang Lin's Wife 祥林嫂.

countrymen to go for reform. But the slide which he watched in Japan convinced him of the futility of being a medical practitioner and inspired him to change the spirit of his countrymen through literature.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun's enchantment with the West and its scientific achievements was over, and his intention of enlightening the people, which he already expressed in his essay "The Power of Mara Poetry" became a strong conviction. He visualized China as an iron house where the Chinese were fast asleep and about to die without having the pain of death.<sup>2</sup> The long-stretched loneliness and pessimism he was passing through after the revolution and his failure in bringing out a magazine VITA NOVA (New Life) had already made him indifferent to life. He describes, "... the real tragedy was for him to lift up his voice among the living and meet with no response, neither approval nor opposition, just as if he were stranded in a boundless desert completely at a loss. That was when I became conscious of loneliness."<sup>3</sup>

Lu Xun again in his preface to SELECTED WORKS recalls his mood of not having much enthusiasm for literary revolu-

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1. Lu Xun, "Preface to CALL TO ARMS", LXSW, vol.I, pp.34-35.

2. Ibid, p.37.

3. Ibid, p.36.



tion.<sup>1</sup> He lost all hopes and became cynical after seeing the revolution, the second revolution, Yuan Shikai's assumption of the imperial title, and Zhang Xun's restoration of the monarchy.<sup>2</sup> He reiterates a line from Petofi's "Song of Hope" (which he quoted in "Hope" in WILD GRASS): "Despair, like hope, is but vanity."<sup>3</sup> And he writes, "I suspect my own hopelessness too, though, because I have seen so little of men and affairs. Indeed it was this which emboldened me to write."<sup>4</sup>

The reason why Lu Xun responded to the request of Chen Duxiu and his old friend Jin Xinyi to write in NEW YOUTH was primarily because of his being convinced about the ideal of those fighters.<sup>5</sup> Therefore he "joined in the shouting to add to their strength."<sup>6</sup> He writes, ... "when shouting I could not help slipping in certain exposures of the root of all evil in the old society, mixed up with warnings and the

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1. "Preface to MY SELECTED WORKS, LXSW, vol.III, (《南腔北调集·〈自选集〉自序》, LXQJ.4.

2. Ibid, p.200, Zhang Xun 张勋 (1854-1923).

3. Ibid, p.200.

4. Ibid, p.200.

5. Jin Xinyi 金心异 another name of Qian Xuanton 钱玄同 (1887-1939), who was a leading intellectual of the New Culture Movement. Jin Xinyi a character portrayed in Lin Shu's 林纾 story "Jing Sheng" 《荆生》. Lin Shu created the character in order to indirectly criticize Qian Xuanton and attack the New Culture Movement.

6. "Preface to my SELECTED WORKS", LXSW, vol.III, p.201.

hope that some cure might be found. But to realize this hope I had to take the same line as those pioneers. That is why I cut out some of the gloom and assumed a faint look of gladness, so that my stories might hold out some rays of hope."<sup>1</sup> He was frank in stating that his stories were written by the orders given by the revolutionary vanguard of that time. These orders were neither issued by an emperor, nor at the point of the sword. He did not write either for the sake of money.<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun's exposure to the West and his disillusionment with the tradition led him to absorb more and more new ideas from outside sources. After he realized the futility of curing individual he began to believe in the importance of changing the minds of the countrymen. The idea of enlightenment or the desire to dedicate himself to the cause of transforming the psychological behaviour of China engaged him to examine and analyze the salient features of china's tradition and to understand thoroughly the strong and weak points of the Chinese system. His study of China's feudalism was a political task. His understanding, as he believed, could make him well-equipped to face the forces of reactions. He was then in search of revolutionary writers.

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1. Ibid, p.201.

2. Ibid, p.201.

He explained in "How I Came to Write Stories" that in China fiction was not considered as literature and fiction writers could not become men of letters.<sup>1</sup> Therefore he wanted to raise the status of short stories to that of literature and use fiction to reform the society. In fact he was more interested in translating stories by writers of oppressed peoples. Young people of that time were engaged in their search of revolutionary literature with an aim to drive out the Manchus. Lu Xun too, whether before or after the revolution, was interested to search such type of literature. He was interested in writers from Russia, Poland and Balkan states. He was eager to get such stories from India and Egypt but could not succeed. His favourite writers were Gogol (Russian), Sienkiewicz (Pole), and two Japanese writers Soseki Natsume and Ogai Mori. He writes, "I still felt as had dozen years earlier, that I should write in the hope of enlightening my people, for humanity and of the need to better it. I detested the old habit of describing fiction as 'entertainment', and regarded 'art for art's sake' as simply another name for passing the time. So my themes were usually the unfortunates in this abnormal society. My aim was to expose the disease and draw attention to it so that it might be cured."<sup>2</sup>

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1. "How I Came to Write Stories", LXSW.vol.III, (《南腔北调集·我怎么做起小说来》, LXQJ.4.)

2. Ibid, p.263.

Lu Xun once again explains his purpose of writing stories in the preface to the English translation of his collection of short stories in 1933. He says, that though Chinese poetry reflects the sufferings of the common people, painting and fiction fail to depict the reality and give a picture of happiness. Intellectuals view the life of common people as a painting of flowers and birds. He writes, "I have been brought up in a town and my teachers taught me ancient books. I therefore watched the life of the toiling masses as a painting of flowers and birds. Sometimes the hypocrisy and degeneration of the so-called upper class society made me depressed and I envied the peace and happiness enjoyed by the common folk. As my mother's native place was in the countryside I often came into the contact of the peasants families. I gradually understood that they were exploited and the life they had was one of sufferings and was not like a painting of flowers and birds."<sup>1</sup>

He wrote that although he had understood the reality of countryside in the early stage of his life he did not know how to share his understanding with others. Later he came to know the toiling masses of other countries had similar fate. Writers of Russia, Poland and other Balkan countries were urging the people to struggle. The scene of rural

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1. "Yingyiben DUANPIAN XIAOSHUOJI zixu", 《英译本〈短篇小说集〉自序》 LXQJ.7, p.389.

China reappeared in front of his eyes more vividly. And when he got the opportunity to write he portrayed the decline of the so-called upper-class and the misfortune of the common folk. What he had in his mind originally was simply to put these before the readers and raise certain questions. He had no intention to make some pieces of art as writers of that time were making. His stories drew attention of some and in spite of being rejected by some critics they survived. He never contemplated in his dreams that the English translation of his stories would have been introduced to other countries. He regretted that he could not write stories for a long time and he could see the people in worse conditions. He felt the absence of such writings at that time. He admitted his inability to write in the new situation and nor he was interested to write about the old society. He compared his situation with someone who forgot his own steps while learning the famous steps of Handan. Lu Xun sighed that he was still crawling and expressed his desire to keep on learning to regain his ability to stand.<sup>1</sup>

While writing the preface to the second volume of stories CHINA'S NEW LITERATURE in 1935 he commented that his stories which were published successively after 1918 could be considered as a real achievement of the literary revolu-

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1. Ibid, p.389-90. Handan 邯鄲 in Hebei province.

tion which was initiated by NEW YOUTH. His stories had the depth of exposure and a unique style and therefore were well-received by the young readers. The excitement among them was mainly because of the influence of European literature in his writings. Gogol wrote "A Madman's Diary" in 1834 and Nietzsche wrote THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA in 1883. Lu Xun quoted the words of Zarathustra who said that human beings have travelled the path from insects to men and retained some characteristics of insects behaviour. Men had evolved from monkeys and they still resembled monkeys sometimes. Lu Xun acknowledged that he added the sadness of Andreev in the end of his story "Medicine". When he compared his own story "A Madman's Diary" with that of Gogol he said that his story reflected more anguish and exposed the negative influence of the clan system and feudal ethics while his treatment was less complicated than the superman of Nietzsche. He could undo the influence of foreign writers in later stories when he improved his own technique and his sketches were deeper but they lacked warmth and were not as enchanting as his earlier stories he was forthright in admission.<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun's disagreement with the values of the feudal culture inflicted a sense of insecurity and loneliness upon

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1. See "ZHONGGUO XIN WENXUE DAXI xiaoshuo erji xu", 《中国新文学大系》小说二集序》 (Preface to China's New Literature, vol.II), in 《且介亭杂文二集》 LXQJ.6, pp.238-39.

his mind for some years, "... this sense of loneliness grew from day to day, entwining itself about my soul like some huge poisonous snake."<sup>1</sup> It was only after the outbreak of the October revolution which regenerated him to begin the second phase of his literary career. May 4th movement made a deep impact on his mind and he regained his lost hope. The anti-feudal and anti-imperialist political spirit and the voice against the Confucian orthodoxy provided a concrete ideological guidance to his literary practice. His target of criticism was the dominant culture which was based on the Confucian and Mencian morality and ethical values. Reformers like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were not in favour of any fundamental change and were eager to impose the so-called cultural heritage as China's national identity on the majority of the people without considering the ongoing changes in the social, political and economic life of China. The champions of the national essence faced the crisis created by the infiltration of ideas from modern industrialized societies.<sup>2</sup> They realized that the native culture without royalty and the Confucian orthodoxy was

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1. "Preface to CALL TO ARMS", LXSW, vol.I, p.36.

2. The Champions of National essence or Heritagists considered cultural heritage of feudal China mainly Confucian and Mencian tradition as national essence of China. In order to maintain the feudal system they wanted to preserve national essence and vehemently opposed the New Culture Movement during May-Fourth era. Such views were later expressed in XUEHENG 《学衡》 monthly published between 1922 till 1933.

inadequate to meet the challenge of the time. Their sense of insecurity and fear of losing identity forced them to uphold an extremely rigid and conservative line.

Lu Xun attacked the entire edifice of Confucian social doctrine. "My Views on Chastity (1918), "What is Required of us as Fathers Today" (1919), "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home" (1923) were some of his major essays in which he criticized the views of Confucian scholars on women, children and political system.<sup>1</sup> He argues that the orthodox ideas such as chastity of women, filial piety of the children, autocracy, patriarchal authority, and treating children, young and women in a discriminatory way denying them any rights or freedom are against the laws of nature. He writes, "we have no means of ascertaining what happened in China in remote antiquity; but by the end of the Zhou Dynasty the retainers buried with their masters included men as well as women, and widows were free to marry again. It appears then that this custom died out very early. From the Han to the Tang Dynasty no one advocated chastity. It was only in the Song Dynasty that professional Confucians started saying, 'Starving to death is a small matter, but losing

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one's chastity is a great calamity.'"<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun's "New Year Sacrifice" narrates the plight of a widow. The theme of the story is based on the fate of a widow who remarries and meets a situation of either being captured by her former husband's ghost and carried off to hell or condemned by the whole world. Eventually she becomes a beggar who is turned away by everyone and dies a wretched death. Lu Xun comments, "Only a society where each cares solely for himself and women must remain chaste while men are polygamous could create such a perverted morality, which becomes more exacting and cruel with each passing day."<sup>2</sup>

On how to emancipate children he observes, "The emancipation of children is something so natural that it should need no discussion, but the elder generation in China has been too poisoned by the old customs and ideas ever to come to its senses. For instance, if a crow caws in the morning, young people think nothing of it, but the superstitious old folk will be in a flutter for hours. It is most pathetic, but they are past curing. Thus the only way is for those who have seen the light to start by emancipating their own children. Burdened as a man may be with the weight of tradition, he can yet prop open the gate of darkness with his shoulder to let the children through to the bright,

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1. "My views on Chastity", LXSW, vol.II, p.19.

2. Ibid, p.21.

wide-open spaces, to lead happy lives henceforward as rational human beings."<sup>1</sup>

After writing fourteen stories in response to the literary movement called by the NEW YOUTH group Lu Xun was disappointed to see the breaking up of the group and the end of the movement. The members of the group changed in their own ways and forgot the noble ideals once they cherished in bringing out a journal like NEW YOUTH. Between 1924 and 1926 Lu Xun wrote few short prose poems which were published in 1927 as WILD GRASS. He writes, "...though technically I had improved a little and my ideas were perhaps less limited, my fighting spirit had diminished considerably".<sup>2</sup> He became pessimistic and his aimlessness led him to hope desperately for a different future. He still had his lofty ideal which he expressed in Qu Yuan's lines on his collection of eleven short stories WANDERING, "The way stretches endless ahead, I shall search through heaven and earth".<sup>3</sup> He had to leave Beijing and take refuge in Xiamen where he wrote stories based on mythology and history OLD TALES

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1. "What is Required of us as Fathers Today", LXSW, vol.II, p.57.

2. "Preface to my SELECTED WORKS", LXSW, vol.III, p.201.

3. Ibid, p.202 also see in PANGHUANG (Wandering) 《彷徨》 LXQJ.2.

RETOLD and ten essays DAWN BLOSSOMS PLUCKED AT DUSK. He writes, "after that I wrote no more - I was written out".<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun's way of addressing the problems of youth was unconventional. "Youngsters" he writes, "who want to move forward usually look for a teacher. However I dare say they will never find one. Still, if this is the case, they are lucky; for those who know themselves and their limitations will decline, while those who believe in themselves may not prove reliable guides." He continues, if those who set themselves up as guides "really knew the way they would have advanced towards their goal, instead of remaining as teachers. The monks who expound Buddhist law and the Taoists who sell elixirs will some time become white bones like everyone else; yet men go to them to hear the great truth about immortality. Ridiculous!"<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun considers that those who think they are not reliable are more reliable. Young people should look for friends, be united and move forward to places where they can survive. If they are in a dense forest they can cut it down, they can plant trees when they are in a wilderness and they can sink wells in a desert. Should they ask about the old tracks which are overgrown with brambles?. So the spirit of reaching new unknown areas on one's own strength was Lu Xun's message to the young.

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1. Ibid, p.202.

2. "Teachers", LXSW, vol.II, p.164.

While writing to Lu Yunru and Xiang Peiliang in 1925 he expressed that he himself was on a crossroad. In fact he was on a unknown path. He writes, "I am not afraid of anything because my life is my own, so I can take big stride without any hindrance. I am there to look at if I come to a place full of thistles and thorns, a deep narrow valley or a pit of fire. If a blind man on a blind horse guides, I fear he may commit sin of killing few persons."<sup>1</sup> So when he was insisted upon to comment on the goals the young should have, he said, first they should survive, secondly they should have sufficient food and clothing and thirdly they should advance. Whosoever dare to obstruct these three things should be opposed. He explains that survival does not mean to drag on an ignoble existence. Having enough to eat and wear does not mean live in luxury. And the advance does not imply self-indulgence or indiscipline.<sup>2</sup>

"In "Some Notions Jotted down by Lamplight" Lu Xun summed up the history of China by saying that there were two types of periods the Chinese experienced: The periods when the Chinese longed in vain to be slaves and the periods when they succeeded in becoming slaves for a time.<sup>3</sup> So the

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1. "Beijing tongxin 《华盖集·北京通信》 LXQJ.3, p.51;  
(Lu Yunru 吕蕴儒, Xiang Peiliang 向培良).

2. Ibid, pp.51-52.

3. "Dengxia manbi" (some Notions jotted down by Lamplight)  
《坟·灯下漫笔》, LXQJ.vol.1.

spirit of the Chinese people has been to survive in a relationship not between two men but between a master and a slave. He expressed his views in the context of Yuan Shikai's attempt to become emperor. In the same essay he mentioned the ten degrees in human relationship.<sup>1</sup> The lowest were slaves who had no subjects below them. Lu Xun remarked that even the slaves should not feel bad for they have wives and children who rank even lower. And there was hope for the children too for they would have wives and children below them to serve them. So this was the cycle of slaves without a voice in protest. The tyranny towards own people and submission to foreigners has been spiritual characteristic of China and was not removed even after the establishment of the republic. The Manchus simply left the feast. Lu Xun was critical about the romantic gaze with which foreigners looked at China. Lu Xun refers to the praise Bertrand Russell bestowed on the Chinese when some sedan chair-bearers smiled at him at the West Lake. Lu Xun comments, "...if chair bearers could stop smiling at their fares, China would long since have stopped being the China she is. The hierarchy handed down since ancient times has estranged men from each other, they cannot feel each other's

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1. Ten degrees in human relationship are constituted by Wang, gong, dafu, shi zao, yu, li, liao, pu and tai 王、公、大夫、士、卓、與、東、僚、仆 and 台, the first four (King, duke, official and scholars) were ruling categories in the hierarchy while the remaining categories (servants or slaves) were to serve them, see "Dengxiu manbi".

pain; and because each can hope to enslave and eat other men, he forgets that he may be enslaved and eaten himself . . . . the anguished cries of the weak to say nothing of the women and the children, are drowned in the senseless clamour of the murderers".<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun calls upon the youth, "Feasts of human flesh are still being spread even now, and many people want them to continue. To sweep away these maneaters, overturn these feasts and destroy this kitchen is the task of the young folk today."<sup>2</sup>

The two collections of stories CALL TO ARMS and WANDERING brought Lu Xun in the limelight. He writes in the beginning of "The True Story Ah Q" . . . while wanting to write I was in some trepidation too, which goes to show that I am not one of those who achieve glory by writing; for an immortal pen has always been required to record the deeds of an immortal man, the man becoming known to posterity through the writing and writing known to posterity through the man - until finally it is not clear who is making whom known. But in the end, as though possessed by some fiend, I always came back to the idea of writing the story of Ah Q."<sup>3</sup> When these lines came forth from his pen Lu Xun had already become a

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1. "Some Notions Jotted down by Lamplight", LXSW, vol.II, p.157.

2. Ibid, p.157.

3. "The True Story of Ah Q", LXSW, vol.I, p.102.

popular writer but he was not aware of the possibility that the image of Ah Q would make him such a celebrity. He became the most controversial and at the same time the most popular writer of the time. He made an enviable place in the hearts of the people and the literary images which were created by him as true as life became the part of daily conversation among the people. These images did not remain as fictional and many took pain to find out the identity of such characters in real life. A large number of readers became fascinated by new themes, wit, satire and easy language.<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun's predicament as far as his literary experiment was concerned was clearly expressed in his story of Ah Q. His criticism of the tradition became more mature, more analytic and more satirical than his earlier direct anguish against the system. He justified his attempt of writing fiction in a sarcastic fashion. He remained, though apparently, extremely cautious about the difficulties of breaking the so-called traditional rules of literary endeavour in China. On the one hand he attacked Confucian tradition which steadfastly upheld strict rules and rejected the status of fiction writers. Lu Xun disapproved the spirit

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1. For the comments made in the foregoing part see MAO DUN, MAO DUN LUN ZHONGGUO XIANDAI ZUOJIA ZUOPIN (Mao Dun on the works of writers of Modern China), pp.145-149, and for various characters see Zhou Xiashou, LU XUN XIAOSHUOLIDE RENWU.

and the views of Confucianists in interpreting things. Their claim of being the champion of truth and authenticity, their upper-class outlook and method of being celebrity, their dislike for vulgarity of novelists' attempt to describe the life of common people in common language, the importance of family background, surname, clan and social status, their hatred for foreign things, the importance of official examinations as a symbol of social status and wisdom and the sphere of power of the landlords etc pointed out in the introduction.<sup>1</sup>

In the preface to the Russian translation of "The True Story of Ah Q" Lu Xun expresses his doubt about his ability in creating a national soul of modern China.<sup>2</sup> He realizes the existence of a high wall separating two individuals from knowing each other. The so-called sages of China were really clever as they divided men into ten categories in a strict hierarchy of human relationships. Though these were not in use, the ghosts of them still existed and have become more dangerous. Even the human body was classified into different categories making one's feet inferior to hands. Lu Xun comments that the defect in the creation of living being which was already a wonder that it made human beings unable to feel pain of others physically was thus removed by

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1. "The True Story of Ah Q", LXSW, vol.I, pp.102-106.

2. "E-wen Yiben 'Ah Q zhengzhuan' xu ji zhuzhe zixu zhuanlue", LXQJ.7.



the sages and their disciples in China by making human beings unable to feel the pain of others mentally. His comment on the Chinese script is discerning. The ancients have created a fearful script in square shapes which were so difficult to learn. He does not blame them as he himself believes that it was not a deliberate act, but many would find these characters as obstacle to speech. Therefore the difficulty in the language and the high wall erected by the classical education have made the people afraid of thinking. And the views and reasons current in the society were actually created by few sages for themselves, while the common people grew, faded and withered quietly like grass under a huge rock for thousands of years. Lu Xun explains the difficulties he had in portraying such a silent soul of China because the people of China who belongs to an ancient civilization remained almost unchanged, and actually uncommunicated. He made efforts to conceive the soul of the people but he often felt himself separated from the people. He hoped that the people surrounded by the high wall might be awakened in future and might even come out and speak. He writes, "I therefore rely on my own observations and portrayed in solitude these images which I had experienced in the Chinese reality. Some young critic criticized my stories, later some considered them as sick, some described them as satirical, amusing, ironical etc. This made me doubt whether I do have fearful coolness hidden in my heart.

Our views of life are influenced by the author and reading of text varies in interpretation because of the reader."<sup>1</sup> He hoped that the Russian readers who were not influenced by the traditional thought of China would perhaps see different situations in his stories.

The question of national identity, the key theme in Lu Xun's discourse, which can be seen in many of his essays and stories written particularly in the early phases of his creative life was somewhat out of focus during the period when he wrote zawen or satirical essays. The malfunction in the political system became more acute after the May 4th movement and military leaders as warlords ruled in their respective spheres of influence. It was neither a monarchy nor a democracy nor a constitutional monarchy. The hardcore feudal conservative forces which were being patronized by a group of ambitious warlords and a group of intellectuals under the influence of the old ideology were active in reviving the ossified values. The political swindlers were behaving like politicians and the hired intellectuals as the custodians of the moral standard of the society. The time was characterized by confusion and chaos in the individual as well as in the collective behaviour (like matters of intellectual integrity, political loyalty or views, and social and cultural responses members of a society communi-

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1. Ibid, p.82.

cate in normal time). Old ideas were preached with more vigour and the need to revive moribund and decadent things was stressed. Such a task was interpreted as an ideal solution to preserve China's national character as well as to resist the flow of new ideas. In such a situation Lu Xun's task to change China with ideas from other societies became a difficult political goal. He looked at the question with utmost seriousness and took an attempt to understand the complex and subtle nuances of China's tradition, the social reality of his time and the complexity of individual and collective behaviour. He quite often ridiculed those so-called champions of national characteristics (guocui) in many of his essays.<sup>1</sup>

The revolution ended the imperial political authority but failed to bring about a political system in place of the old one. The retrogressive section of the land-owning class and few military leaders took the opportunity of a chaotic situation and seized the power. They became intoxicated with the taste of power and behaved in an extremely rowdy fashion. The general condition in fact became worse than the pre-revolution era. The absence of a definite political system sanctioned either by the popular will or by gaining historical legitimacy continued till 1949. The so-called

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1. "Suiganlu" (38), 《热风·随感录》

governments during this period were neither representative nor legitimate in any way. The main themes on which Lu Xun reflected earlier therefore remained almost unchanged. Only the 'Son of Heaven' was replaced by illegitimate political successors. The problems remained same as they were in pre-revolution era. As if the revolution gave wrong signals to the people. Gradually people realized their dream of seeing China as a modern and prosperous nation was still a utopia. Yet the political task of changing China and establishing a new alternative system continued. The task of the new forces in such a politically confused situation became extremely difficult. The revival of the cult of Confucius, the attempts to restore monarchy or despotic rule, the spread of superstitions and proximity with the imperialist countries became important activities of some intellectuals. Enemies and friends were indistinct, unpredictable changes in one's political stand etc were very common in such a confused age. Lu Xun was one of those few intellectuals who never wavered from his basic outlook. Democratic spirit, learning science and new ideas from the West, carrying with only those healthy and positive elements from different sources of native tradition and concern for the children, young and women were some of his major topics he often discussed. The ethnic issue he all along discussed was a subject matter of his analysis. Lu Xun acquired the Han outlook which was a combination of both intellectual as well

as popular perceptions, though he was able to shake it off after the revolution. He himself being a Han experienced a long period of chaos under the Han warlords. Therefore the personal obsession whatever he had diminished. His discourse on ethnic issues underwent a qualitative change. He engaged himself in a task of exposing the Han mentality and while doing so he in a brilliant way referred to his earlier views on non-Han behaviour. He was sober and more analytic. His criticism became more penetrating. His hatred for the Manchus and his passionate tie with the past glory of Han culture transformed into a new type of discourse by examining, analysing, and criticizing more specifically and thoroughly the negative features of Han mentality and behaviour. His dislike for Manchus was cultural in nature to some extent but it originated mainly from his hatred and opposition towards Manchu rulers, which was political in nature. Therefore if we view this aspect of his thought from such an ethnological angle the apparent complexity of his thought will be easily comprehensible.

The attraction towards fun and entertainments was an important characteristic of the common psychology. The ordinary folk used to take the role of onlookers when a Chinese was killed in front of them. Their craze to crowd around interesting scenes of such nature was common in China. Lu Xun often described such scenes and the Chinese

crowd around them.<sup>1</sup> Such indifference of the people to social and political matters was a source of indignation in his mind. The contrast between the Confucian idealism which has been reflected in ZHONG YONG (the Doctrine of the Mean) and other classics and the reality of an inhuman society remained as a fundamental ingredient of Lu Xun's ideology.<sup>2</sup> One can visualize such a fearful picture of the reality in "A Madman's Diary", "In ancient times, as I recollect, people often ate human beings, but I am rather hazy about it. I tried to look this up, but my history has no chronology and scrawled all over each page are the words: 'Confucian Virtue and Morality', since I could not sleep anyway, I read intently half the night until I began to see words between the lines. The whole book was filled with the two words - 'Eat people'".<sup>3</sup> The abnormal society was a consistent concern in Lu Xun's stories. In "A Madman's Diary" he

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1. During Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) Lu Xun was in Japan where he watched a newsreel slide. The slide showed an apathetic crowd enjoying the scene of the execution of a Chinese spy by the Japanese soldiers. This was one important event which made a deep imprint in Lu Xun's mind. Later he described such execution scenes surrounded by apathetic Chinese in his stories. These executions were generally carried out as warning to others. In "The True Story of Ah Q" we see somewhat jubilant crowd eagerly waiting for the spectacle, in "Medicine", the onlookers gather near the crossroad to see the execution of a young revolutionary and a citizen old shuan who is waiting for the blood to save his son's life.

2. For ZHONG YONG (Doctrine of the Mean) and other Confucian classics see earlier note in Ch.I.

3. "A Madman's Diary", LXSW, vol.I, p.42.

conceived the society as man-eating-man social reality. "Medicine" is another story based on similar theme but articulated in a more mature way. The plot is based on a common social background in which the man-eating-man mentality could grow. The execution of the revolutionaries at the end of the Qing dynasty was very common and a fun-seeking crowd always used to enjoy such public trials. As if by not watching such incidents they were going to miss certain opportunities of amusement. In "New Year Sacrifice" Xiang Lin's wife a diligent, honest and kind-hearted woman becomes the victim of the society. Her death symbolizes a social reality in which she is slowly devoured both physically and spiritually. She is a victim of superstitions prevalent in the common Chinese. From an ordinary working rural woman she is reduced into a beggar by the so-called rational behaviour of the upper class and finally she has no way but to sustain her balance of mind by believing in superstitions. On the very next day of her death the narrator of the story finds everything as usual in the village and feels comfortable with the atmosphere of festivity. He hopes that "the saints of heaven and earth had accepted the sacrifice" and were "preparing to give Luzhen's people boundless good fortune."<sup>1</sup> The story is an example how a woman becomes victim of the four ropes of China's ethical norms. In "A

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1. "The New Year Sacrifice", LXSW, vol.I, p.188.

Madman's Diary" it is perceived by one individual. The helplessness in front of a cruel social and cultural treatment it is not a matter of merely physical sufferings but a fear of being annihilated both physically as well as spiritually.

Such questions whether there is any existence of soul raised by an ordinary uneducated woman explains the intention of the writer as well as the fact that a reality does exist where the common people are seriously influenced by religious beliefs. Petofi's line on the non-existence of both hope and despair which Lu Xun referred to in many occasions was applied in his story "My Native Home" in the context of two minds brought up in different sociocultural environments.<sup>1</sup> The narrator who came back to his native place after twenty years to leave it for ever found the place a cluster of desolate villages. The scene of such lifeless villages spread under the pale yellow sky was depressing. Lu Xun writes, "The old home I remembered was not in the least like this. My old home was much better. But if you ask me to recall its peculiar charm or describe its beauties, I had no clear impression, no words to describe it. And now it seems this was all there was to it. Then I rationalized the matter to myself, saying: Home was always like this, and although it has not improved, still it

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1. "Gu Xiang" (My Old Home), LXQJ.1.



is not so depressing as I imagine; it is only my mood that has changed, because I am coming back to the country this time with no illusions."<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun describes the intimacy the narrator had with the son of the family servant. After twenty years "...it was not the Runtu I remembered. He had grown to twice his former size. His round face, crimson before, had become sallow and acquired deep lines and wrinkles; his eyes too had become like his father's with rims swollen and red, a feature common to most of the peasants who work by the sea and are exposed all day to the wind from the ocean. He wore a shabby felt cap and just one very thin padded jacket, with the result that he was shivering from head to foot".<sup>2</sup> The narrator was overjoyed and said, "Oh! Runtu - so its you?..."<sup>3</sup> He wanted to talk about their childhood but he was tongue-tied and unable to express what he was thinking. While Runtu "stood there, mixed joy and sadness showing on his face. His lips moved, but not a sound did he utter. Finally, assuming a respectful attitude, he said clearly: 'Master!...'",<sup>4</sup> the narrator "felt a shiver run through"<sup>5</sup> him; for he "knew then what a lament-

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1. "My Old Home", LXSW, vol.I, p.90.

2. Ibid, pp.96-97.

3. Ibid, p.97.

4. Ibid, p.97.

5. Ibid, p.97.

ably thick wall had grown up between"<sup>1</sup> them. Then Runtu introduced his fifth son Shuisheng who went out with Hong'er the narrator's ten-year old nephew to play.<sup>2</sup> Two kids communicated with each other easily and spontaneously.

The separation between the narrator and the native place where Runtu continued to live was visualized by the writer as something at physical or even emotional level but also as a separation between two different types of existence. "I thought: although there is such a barrier between Runtu and myself, our children still have much in common, for wasn't Hong'er thinking of Shuisheng just now? I hope they will not be like us, that they will not allow a barrier to grow up between them. But again I would not like them, because they want to be one, to have treadmill existence like mine, not to suffer like Runtu until they become stupefied, nor yet, like others, to devote all their energies to dissipation. They should have a new life, a life we have never experienced".<sup>3</sup> Then the narrator makes the distinction between his illusions and Runtu's superstitions, "The access of hope made me suddenly afraid. When Runtu had asked for the incense burner and candlesticks I had laughed up my sleeve at him, to think that he was still worshipping

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1. Ibid, p.97.

2. Runtu, 闰土, Shui sheng 水生, Honger 宏儿.

3. Ibid, p.100.

idols and would never put them out of his mind. Yet what I now called hope was no more than an idol I had created myself. The only difference was that what he desired was close at hand, while what I desired was less easily realized".<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun's ability to capture the life in totality of a particular time and a particular social reality can be seen in his description of the hard life of the peasants, "...many children, famines, taxes, soldiers, bandits, officials and landed gentry, all had squeezed him as dry as a mummy."<sup>2</sup> Or "a golden moon suspended in deep blue sky and beneath it the seashore, planted as far as the eye could see with jade-green watermelons, while in their midst a boy of eleven or twelve, wearing a silver necklet and grasping a steel pitchfork in his hand..."<sup>3</sup> Lu Xun within such a concrete yet lively social reality and amidst the beauty of nature draws a picture of imaginative future, "As I dozed, a stretch of jade-green seashore spread itself before my eyes, and above a round golden moon hung from a deep blue sky. I thought: hope cannot be said to exist, nor can it be said not to exist. It is just like roads across the earth. For actually the earth had no roads to begin with, but when many men pass one way, a road is made."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid, pp.100-101.

2. Ibid, p.99.

3. Ibid, p.91.

4. Ibid, p.101.

Lu Xun's love and concern for the unfortunate people of rural China earlier expressed in the spirit "ai qi bu xing, nu qi bu zheng" (having sympathy with their misery and angry with them for their inertia) later changed into an untiring effort to emancipate the people especially the peasants from their backward, ignorant, insensitive and inert condition.<sup>1</sup> When he discovered the contrast between unsound mind and strong physique he took oath to bring about a fundamental change in their spirit. With this in mind he came forward to focus the problem of China's national characteristics. In the "True Story of Ah Q" he depicted his wild grass Ah Q as the silent soul of the people which "for thousands of years 'grew, faded and withered quietly like grass under a great rock'."<sup>2</sup> The image of the silent soul remained clear in his mind throughout his literary practice. The story was written in the background of 1911 revolution which failed because of the fact that the peasantry was not mobilized. He wanted to expose and attack the gentry class and the bourgeoisie who led the revolution. The May 4th movement inspired Lu Xun to emphasize the need to learn the historical lesson from the failure of the revolution and mobilize the broad masses of peasants for a true and successful

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1. "哀其不幸, 怒其不争" in "Moluoshilishuo", LXQJ.1, p.80.

2. See Feng Xuefeng's "Lu Xun: His Life and Works" in LXSW, vol.I, p.19, and in "E-wen yiben 'Ah Q Zehngzhan' xu ji zhuzhe zixu zhuanlue", LXQJ.7.

revolution. The critic Qian Xingcun made an adverse criticism of Lu Xun and the "True Story of Ah Q". According to him Lu Xun's works failed to depict the social reality. He considered Ah Q's image was successful only in pointing out certain weaknesses of the Chinese people and it was only a portrayal of morbid national character. He questioned the philosophical perspective with which Lu Xun wanted to depict Ah Q as a universal image of the social reality. Qian observed that both Ah Q and his ideas were limited to the period of 1911 revolution, which did not exist any more. He concluded that Ah Q's image has already become extinct. There was no longer any need for being infatuated with the human skeleton. Ah Q's ideas alongwith his body should be buried.<sup>1</sup> Whereas another well-known critic He Qifang defended Lu Xun's artistic creation of an image like Ah Q. According to him literary characters too are being set in some social context. Lu Xun intended to expose the weaknesses of the Chinese nation but he could not find a single abstract representative which would embody common national vices. Therefore he could not restrict himself to writing only about Ah Q's ringworm scars, his tactics of winning psychological victory but had to depict the class relationship in rural China, characters other than Ah Q, how he was exploited, how he changed his attitude towards revolution

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1. Qian Xingcun, "Siqulede Ah Q shidai" (Ah Q is no more alive), WENXUE YUNDONGSHILIAOXUAN, vol.II, p.57.

etc. Moreover he wrote about the unsuccessful revolution by clearly pointing out to the fact that Ah Q was not only barred from revolution but also faced a tragic end.<sup>1</sup> The success of the story thus lies not only in that he created a character like Ah Q but primarily in the fact that he so faithfully captured the contradictions in the society of rural China.

It was a process in which Lu Xun gradually understood the complexity of the social reality and the difficulty in expressing critical views on the existing social and political institutions. He realized the futility of having any notion of changing the system by using current literary forms. Any expression which did not conform to the prevailing linguistic behaviour was simply unacceptable and denounced at the popular level. Such was the nature of the forces of conservatism in the literary field. A new word may attract immediate and vehement protest from the public. The vocabulary of that linguistic behaviour was ritually learned and inherited by the scholars. If anyone dared to break such "taboos" would invariably become a social dissent. But Lu Xun presents that complexity in a different way, "Ah Q who 'used to much better off', who was a man of the world and a 'worker', would have been almost the perfect man had it not been for a few unfortunate physical blemish-

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1. He Qifang, "Lun Ah Q" (on Ah Q), RENMINRIBAO, 16th Oct. 1956, p.7.

es. The most annoying were some patches on his scalp where at some uncertain date shiny ringworm scars had appeared. Although these were on his own head, apparently Ah Q did not consider them as altogether honourable, for he refrained from using the word 'ringworm' or any words that sounded anything like it. Later he improved on this, making 'bright' and 'light' forbidden words, while later still even 'lamp' and 'candle' were taboo. Whenever this taboo was disregarded, whether intentionally or not, Ah Q would fly into a rage, his ringworm scars turning scarlet. He would look over the offender, and if it were someone weak in repartee he would curse him, while if it were a poor fighter he would hit him. Yet, curiously enough, it was usually Ah Q who was worsted in these encounters, until finally he adopted new tactics, contenting himself in general with a furious glare."<sup>1</sup>

The basic nature of the political system was an unquestioned, self-centered absolute autocratic rule which remained unchanged for two thousand years. The system had ideological support of feudal morality i.e. the Confucian and Mencian morality. The legacy and the effect of that on the cultural behaviour continued even after the dismantling of the system. The rigidity of such an individual oriented political and social behaviour was against any qualitative change in that definite structure and extremely immuned to

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1. "The True Story of Ah Q", LXSW, pp.108-109.

new ideas. Individual creative thinking was thus restricted.

The retrogressive political system prolonged by an age-old strict sociocultural ideology continued so long it could contain popular sentiments. Contradictions were resolved without affecting the monolithic rule. The ideas of changes both within and outside were not necessarily discouraged by the ruling class but most of the time were ridiculed by the common folk themselves. The contradiction between the impregnable system and the violent popular upsurge was at times sharp and the political authority was seized by the peasants. But after a gap of few years the revolutionary peasant leadership either resigned itself to the feudal power or reverted to the traditional system.

The apathy to social changes and indifference towards the activities of the political revolutionaries in the people was deep rooted. Scenes of punishing the revolutionaries were witnessed by the people with keen interest and such incidents were considered not as political measures but as social obligations on the part of the ruling class to the people. The story "Medicine" vividly portrays one of such scenes which points to the social immunity of political authority. The story exposes more the weaknesses of the revolutionaries than criticizes the people for their indifference to such causes. The antagonism between the people and the revolutionaries who were working for the people was



the reality of that time. And the existence of popular hatred against the revolutionaries was the ideological strength at the grassroots for the feudal ruling class. The equation was not between the establishment versus anti-establishment but between few individuals and the people at large. The few individuals engaged in revolutionary activities were considered seriously misguided members and who were unrepentant and turned enemies of the society only destined to death.

In the early stage after the change of his mind in giving up medicine and taking up literature Lu Xun was more interested in introducing modern and unconventional ideas to China. He discovered certain thinkers in the realm of culture. Nietzsche was one such thinker whose bold and powerful language for destroying the old ideology attracted Lu Xun. The enthusiasm in breaking anything traditional and stereotype was the purpose. Romanticism was a strong ideological thrust in Lu Xun's search for such writings. Another image of revolution was Byron who voiced against the established order of the society. Warm revolutionary spirit and emotional purity of his poems swept over the whole of Europe setting the romantic trend of modern literature. Lu Xun was deeply influenced in his youth by such unconventional and revolutionary ideas. Apart from cultural and literary texts he was keen to introduce science to China. The impact of modern science specially the theory of evolution on him was enormous. Science was his major weapon to con-

front the tradition. Concepts and theories developed in the West after industrial revolution and specially during the later half of the 19th century were unknown to China. The man who attempted to translate various theories of the West and introduce to China with unprecedented zeal and dedication was Yan Fu. Lu Xun's most favourite book was TIAN YAN LUN (Evolution and Ethics).<sup>1</sup> The volume of literature Lu Xun read in order to find out suitable ideas to change the traditional values of China was amazing. The essays he wrote at the initial stage of his literary career had so many names and so varied ideas all from the West and were completely new and unfamiliar in China. He worked very hard to make people familiar with such things. His understanding of China's basic problems though was not so clear at that stage his sincere desire to grasp them had a definite result. He understood the psychological barrier the Chinese have towards new ideas coming from the outside world. So he was engaged in introducing new ideas in such accuracy and scale unique of that time. He knew that the people were so content with their own way of life and so ignorant of things beyond that. This mentality was a product of history and the influence of tradition was so much that the people in general were never even interested to know others. The closed mind, the lack of any curiosity to know about new

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1. Yan Fu, TIAN YAN LUN 《天演论》

things and unwillingness to look at the reality squarely, fear to question about the existing reality, the so-called common sense of treating everything foreign as a source of fun and entertainment and distorting new ideas according to their own necessity, indifference to truth, ignorance and a sense of false pride and complacency were so widespread and common in the national behaviour pattern. Therefore Lu Xun's affinity with such ideas specially that of Nietzsche, Byron, Darwin was in accordance with the native requirement. His sensitivity became more and more sharp and subtle. Sometimes critics ridiculed him for being oversensitive.<sup>1</sup> The second stage of literary career when he was engaged in writing stories he was mainly interested in realistic as well as revolutionary literature. His aim was not merely to expose the society, he wanted to change the reality. The task of faithfully depicting the social problems was important for him in achieving the goal of transforming china. He was not interested in merely changing certain things, his commitment to remove the root of evils and expose the dark forces in a long process was clear and firm. He had one important theme in his essays written during the second stage: national identity of China and the distinctive features of China's national character. His attempt to understand the national character of china led him to contemplate

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1. SAN XIAN JI, "Tongxin", LXQJ.4, "Two letters" in LXSW.III.

certain philosophical questions. His dream about the revolution became a matter of distress and the enthusiasm of the NEW YOUTH group was not much effective in breaking his silence and he was reluctant in taking any new venture in literary movement.<sup>1</sup> However he did break his silence and "A Madman's Diary" was his first indictment of the abnormal society. He was no more a passionate nationalist blindly preaching that everything Chinese was superior. He became cool and dispassionate in his analysis of the basic problems of China. He visualized certain characteristics of an abnormal society. His belief in a super human power or genius who would rescue China, which he had under the influence of Nietzsche, was not there. He no more believed in super human qualities for bringing about social change and gradually gained confidence in the power of the silent masses of China. He criticized Napoleon, Nietzsche and all such personalities who preached absolute faith in individualism.<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun clearly dissociated himself from such blind individualism by saying that symptom as madness. His understanding of Darwin's evolutionary theory was through Huxley's interpretation and he in fact applied such natural and biological laws while observing human societies. He regarded that the evolution was an imperative, the old should be

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1. See "Preface to CALL TO ARMS", LXSW, vol.I.

2. Lu Xun's criticism of Napoleon and Nietzsche in the context of individualism see "Waiting for a Genius" 《坟·未有天才之前》 LXSW, vol.II and "The Take-Over Policy", LXSW, vol.IV.

replaced by the young in a process and society actually has a trend of progressive development.<sup>1</sup> His anguish towards the indifference and insensitivity, self-deception, self-abasement, self-glorification, strong dislike for new ideas and the attitude of not looking boldly at the reality was evident in his writings. The relationship between masters and slaves was repeatedly pointed out by him and the nature of behaviour of common Chinese was seen by him as that of weaklings.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The influence of the theory of evolution on Lu Xun's writings can be seen in many essays written in early phase of his literary career, for example the theme that the old should be replaced by the young is explicit in "What is Required of us as Fathers Today", LXSX, vol.II.

2. Guominxing (national characteristics) and aspects of common human behaviour in China were pointed out by Lu Xun throughout particularly in "The True Story of Ah Q" and in early two phases of his writing and more specifically in his brief as well as long essays written between 1918-1927, most of the "Random Thoughts", 《随感录》 some "Sudden Notions"《忽然想到》 e.g. 1,4,6,7,10, 11, "Bubai"《补白》 (Stopgap writing); in "Shisiniande dujing"《十四年的读经》 (Fourteenth year of the Republic and the Study of Classics), "Zhege yu neige"《这个与那个》 (This and That), "Dengxia manbi"《灯下漫笔》 (Some Notions jotted down by Lamplight), "Lun zheng le yan kan"《论睁了眼看》 (On looking Facts in the Face) "Wushengde zhongguo"《无声的中国》 (Silent-China), "Lao diaozi yijing changwan"《集外集拾遗老调子已经唱完》 (The Old Tune Has Been Played out), "Guanyu zhongguode liangsanjianshi"《关于中国的两三件事》 (Two three things chinese), including his relatively long essays like "My views on chastity", "What Happens after Nora leaves Home?", "What is Required of us as Fathers Today?". Also see, Wang Yao, "tan Lu Xunde gaizao guominxing sixiang",《谈鲁迅的改造国民性思想》 (Lu Xun's ideas of Reforming National characteristics LUXUN ZUOPIN LUNJI, pp.331-343, Lung-Kee Sun, "Social Psychology in the late Qing Period, MODERN CHINA, July, 1992, pp.235-262.

Lu Xun's understanding of the complex reality from the angle of Han perspective was proved to be a prejudice after the failure of revolution and he realized in a slow process of introspection the ideological weakness of that understanding. In 1918 when he wrote "A Madman's Diary" he could shun his anti-Manchu bias. His stories and essays and the prose poems in WILD GRASS were more or less a reaction against his own biased views. His understanding of human body as a physician was an important step to acquire a scientific attitude in his understanding of human life. The deep influence of Darwin's theory of evolution and other scientific theories was a powerful insight for him to go against the old morality and social values. He believed that human intelligence played a decisive role in transforming the physical environment around us. His opposition to superstitions, miracles, deception and ignorance of the forces of obscurantism was consistent. His sympathy with the common masses the silent toiling population was an integral part of his writings. The contradiction between the potentialities of the masses and the impact of obscurantism in their mind is a thematic element in his stories. He held that the life of a human being is a process which undergoes certain natural laws, in which the old has to give away his role to the young.

Although he was not applying the evolutionary ideas in a crude way he held the old generation as responsible. The

reasons with which he expressed his positive remarks on the young and women were superfluous and general in nature.<sup>1</sup> However, what he meant was that the old generation should be more generous and kind to the younger generation because this type of attitude was healthy and in harmony with the laws of nature. He wanted to absorb the positive spirit from the ideas of modern societies. His views about the children, young and women were reasoned. The lively images in his stories were those of the common folk and their enemies. He exposed mercilessly the negative features of the gentry class such as their high-brow cultural attitude, hypocrisy, empty talks, deceptions, bankrupt moral standard while he sympathetically pointed out the weaknesses of the common folk. He was distressed at their silence, helplessness and inert attitude. He regarded women were the worst victim of old society. He was not able to understand the actual reasons behind such a strange and indifferent attitude of the masses towards social change or new ideas.

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1. "What is Required of us as Fathers Today", LXSW, vol.II.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DISCURSIVE ETHIC AND ELEMENTS OF A NEW CULTURE

The national identity as construed by Lu Xun in the changed political reality after the revolution became clear in "Random Thoughts" 35 and other essays.<sup>1</sup> He considers that the relevance of conflict between the pro-Manchus and anti-Manchus Han intellectuals did no longer exist after the revolution. The queue was the symbol of humiliation for those anti-Manchus Han intellectuals who demonstrated their patriotic spirit by cutting it off, whereas pro-Manchus Han intellectuals considered the wearing of the queue as patriotic gesture. Lu Xun ridicules the view that the Chinese characteristics are distinctive and good. He finds it ridiculous that all distinctive Chinese things should be preserved. He rejects that the originality of Chineseness has been lost after the arrival of the foreigners in post-Opium War era. While he criticizes the traditional view that the Chinese have failed to learn from the sages and illustrious kings of the golden ages in the past and argues that there were periods of chaos in China before and after such golden ages. Lu Xun concludes by saying that self-preservation is more important than preserving such so-

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1. "Random Thoughts", 35, LXSW, vol.II.



called national characteristics which fail to preserve the people. The fear of extinction of the Chinese as a nation and China's isolation from the outside world, the spirit of going back to the golden ages of sage kings are criticized.<sup>1</sup> His loyalty towards and his affinity with the Yellow Emperor (Xuan Yuan) is expressed in a spirit of recognizing him as the founder of a distinctive culture which gradually developed and flourished on the soil of China. The idea of looking at the Yellow Emperor as a Cultural hero and not as a forefather of the yellow race was never confused by Lu Xun. His attitude of criticizing all historical evils executed by non-Han "barbarians" becomes no less ruthless while he criticizes the acts of Han evil doers.<sup>2</sup>

"Random Thoughts" 38 is one of his important essays in which he analysed the psychological behaviour of the Chinese in the historical perspective. He distinguishes the pride and the ego of individual genius from the sense of self-complacency indulged in the mob mentality. The people of latter type of mental make-up are coward and prone to survive with certain false ego, such as "reviving to the ancient time", "loyalty to the emperor", "supporting the Manchus and

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1. Ibid.

2. Lu Xun's criticism of Zhang Xianzhong 张献忠 (1606-1646) was unequivocal and consistent. References to Zhang can be seen in essays like "Zai lun Lei-Fengtade daodiao", LXQJ.1, "Suiganlu", 38, LXQJ.1, "Huran xiangdao" 4, LXQJ.3, "Binghou zatan", LXQJ.6. "Dengxia manbi", LXQJ.1, etc.

exterminating the foreigners" etc. China which is governed by such type of collective psychological attitude could therefore hardly see a mistake in the deeds of the ancients and the people are constantly worried that they might become less dutiful in observing the traditional ways. How can they talk about reform? Lu Xun ridicules such chauvinistic attitudes which glorify one's own past and he classifies such people in five categories : according to the people belonging to the first category China has a vast territory and abundant resources and her civilization is the oldest and her morality the foremost. The second category considers although foreign countries have higher level of material civilization the Chinese possess a superior spiritual civilization. The third category regards China has had everything what foreign countries have now. The people belonging to the fourth category say foreign countries too have beggars, slums, prostitutes and bed bugs. The Chinese in the fifth category are not worried that China is uncivilized. They say the befuddleness in Chinese thinking is the crystallized form of national heritage. The Chinese have inherited it from their ancestors, so they should pass it on to their sons and grandsons. Their conclusion is : "we are four hundred million people, can we become extinct from the earth."<sup>1</sup>

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1. "Suiganlu" 38, 《热风·随感录》

Lu Xun analyses factors causing these perceptions of patriotism and holds that the reasons for category one to four are still not groundless though they apparently sound absurd. These reasons are normally put forward by the sons of declining families. When they see the prosperity of others they try to boast or put on airs or seek weak points of others in order to find excuses to console themselves. He comments that these reasons are better than that of those who after losing their nose still publicly boast of it by saying this is nothing but the old disease inherited from their ancestors.

Patriotism of the fifth category, however, makes Lu Xun bitterly disappointed. He is worried about the real reason behind such thinking. It is a genetic theorem that the muddle-headed state of the ancestors are responsible for bringing up and carrying forward muddleheaded successors. Lu Xun is afraid thinking that once the basic nature of a race takes shape it is difficult to change. He refers to the French social psychologist G. Le Bon's view that our movements are restrained by dead spirits of our ancestors and if we compare our generation with dead spirits of several hundred generations then the number of our generation could hardly match.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun comments that there are quite a

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1. G. Le Bon (Gustave le Bon) (1841-1931), also see Lung-kee Sun, "Social Psychology in the Late Qing Period", MODERN CHINA, vol.18, No.3, July 1992, pp.235-262.

few muddle-headed men among several hundred ancestors, there are neo-Confucianists as well as Daoist priests practicing Yin-Yang five elements school, there are those celestial beings who meditate and try to attain immortality by magic pills and there are operas where the Chinese have facial make-up and acrobatic fighting. Though the Chinese have sincere intentions to become "men" one cannot be sure that muddle-headed elements would not make mischiefs, therefore they could not but go for studying those characters having facial make-up in the pubic region. He makes an optimistic note by saying that hereditary muddle-headed state is not as severe as syphilis. Physical diseases can be cured so he hopes that there will be a 707 type medicine to cure abnormal thinking. He comments that the magical or miracle medicine is the "science". It is desirable that those Chinese who have lost their nose should not refuse to take that medicine with the pretext of having the "old disease" of their ancestors. Then the disease of being muddle-headed will be completely cured. Lu Xun explains that although ancestors are powerful one can gradually eliminate the virus. One should start right now and be determined in change. When the impact of the literatures of both the Confucianists and Daoists which have been nurturing such state of mind is removed, then the suitable medicine should be applied. Even though the effect of the medicine will not be immediate the disease will be cured slowly. After a gap

of few generations when the present generation becomes the ancestors the Chinese will be able to dissociate themselves from their muddle-headed ancestors and then the situation will turn for the better. Le Bon's view will no more make them panicky.

Lu Xun considers that the foregoing is the treatment for such nations who cannot progress and reject the question of the Chinese becoming extinct. He says that the word "extinction" should not be said by human beings. The people like Zhang Xianzhong are still condemned by the Chinese for their misdeeds. The word "extinction" can only make men afraid but the nature remained unaffected. The nature does not stand in the way of extinction of some nations. One wants to live and also hope that others should live. One can not bear others becoming extinct because one fears that other will involve one on the way to extinction. Lu Xun concludes; "If, without changing the existing condition, we can prosper and have a life with real freedom and happiness then it is preferable to have uncivilized savage life. But is there anyone who can dare affirm such a situation?"<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun's reaction to the "ten-sight disease" of the Chinese who lamented after the collapse of Leifeng Pagoda

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1. The foregoing discussion has been based on Lu Xun's "Random Thoughts", 38.

leading to the loss of one sight of the West Lake reflected as a comprehensive debate on the complex question of the dynamics of culture.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun again brings out the distinction between the aesthetic taste of the so-called cultured elite and the common folk who actually brought about the collapse by taking away bricks from the pagoda home. Lu Xun expressed sadness over the incident, however, he raises an question on the occasion. He says that to be delighted in such inevitable destruction is nothing but self-deception. While the traditionalists will try to make up the defect. He refers Rousseau, Stirner, Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Ibsen who not only destroyed the old tracks but paved the new paths for their people. He pointed out how shrewdly Confucius avoided the controversial issues on the existence of supernatural beings. He preferred to be in the safe position by saying, "Sacrifice to your ancestors as if they were present, sacrifice to the gods as if the gods were present."<sup>2</sup>

While commenting on the stereotyped nature in China's culture, he says, "All the world is a stage: tragedy shows how what is worthwhile in life is shattered, comedy shows how what is worthless is torn to pieces, and satire is a

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1. "More Thoughts on the Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda", LXSW.vol.II.

2. Ibid, p.115.

simplified form of comedy. Yet passion and humour alike are foes of this ten-sight disease, for both of them are destructive although they destroy different things. As long as China suffers from this disease, we shall have no madmen like Rousseau, and not a single great dramatist or satiric poet either. All China will have will be characters in a comedy, or in something which is neither comedy nor tragedy, a life spent among the ten sights which are modelled each on the other, in which everyone suffers from the ten-sight disease."<sup>1</sup>

In the same essay Lu Xun mentions the successive invasions by the non-Han tribes (the Huns who were also called as Xianyun during the western Zhou dynasty, about three thousand years ago, then the five tribes and then the Mongols).<sup>2</sup> He compares the Han peasant leader Zhang Xianzhong's cruelty with that of other non-Han destroyers. He says, "When a foreign invader appears, there is a brief commotion. Then he is asked to be the ruler, and the old traditions are patched up under his sword. When a Chinese rebel appears, there is a brief commotion. Then he is asked to be the ruler, or a different ruler is found, and the old

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1. Ibid, p.116.

2. Huns 匈奴 (Xiongnu), Xianyun 獯鬻, Western Zhou, 西周, five tribes, 五胡 (匈奴、羯、鲜卑、氐 and 羌) Mongols (蒙古族 of 元代).

traditions are patched up amid the ruins".<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun denounced such mindless destruction and says, "But does that mean that there is no destruction in time of peace, when we patch up our old traditions untroubled by invaders and bandits? No, indeed, for then slaves are ceaselessly undermining society."<sup>2</sup> He laments over how the Buddhist carvings at Longmen are mutilated or how illustrations of library books get torn out. Public property or things though belong to none are seldom left intact. This is neither "reformer's urge to sweep a place clean, nor the bandit's lust for loot or sheer destruction. It is for the sake of some trifling personal gain that these people secretly spoil a large, complete entity."<sup>3</sup> And he concludes: "What is distressing is not the ruins, but the fact that the old traditions are being patched up over the ruins. We want wreckers who will bring about reforms, for their hearts are lit up by an ideal. We must learn to distinguish between them and the bandits or slaves, and must beware lest we slip into one of the last two categories. The difference is not difficult to detect: all we have to do is watch others and test ourselves. Anyone who in thought or deed shows signs of taking things for himself is a bandit, while anyone who shows signs

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1. "More Thought on the Collapse of the Lei Feng Pagoda", p.116-117.

2. Ibid, p.117.

3. Ibid, p.117.



of seizing small advantage is a slave, however splendid and handsome the banner he carries."<sup>1</sup>

Although China was a supporter of the Allied countries during the First World War she was denied the status of a victor country after the war. Lu Xun observed that China ranked among the victors because many Chinese were sent to Europe as workers. The Chinese often boasted of their contribution to the war. But as time passed by the Chinese forgot everything. He laments "Of course, one difference between the weak and the strong is that some have guns and some do not; but the men behind the guns make even more difference. A country of weaklings, even if they have guns, can only massacre unarmed people; if the enemy is also armed, the issue is uncertain. Only then are true strength and weakness revealed."<sup>2</sup> He describes how the Song people made jokes : before the Song the Hans had something to face with the non-Han invading troops, yet what the Song people had against the Tartars : noddles! Lu Xun comments, "Noddles were all we had after the Song Dynasty. Now, however, we have discovered something called 'the national spirit', which is more mysterious and unfathomable".<sup>3</sup> He continues,

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1. Ibid, p.118.

2. "Stopgap Writing", LXSW, vol.II, p.182. (《华盖集·补白》, LXQJ.3.)

3. Ibid, p.183.

"... we glory in self-abasement. I have recently had a great load on my mind, for fear lest China revert even more to the past. Melon-shaped caps, long gowns, shoes with double ridges, bowing with the hands together, red visiting cards and water-pipes may all become symbols of patriotism; for we can produce all these without any effort, just like our noddles. ...I would not call the Chinese too conservative, however. I am sure that not all foreign products--such as opium and playing cards--will be banned. Besides, our patriots tell us that mahjong is now becoming popular in the West, so we are having our revenge".<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun concludes, "To my mind, admitting our weaknesses is less shameful than boasting of our love for peace."<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun in his juvenile outbursts often quoted European writers particularly Nietzsche. We have observed that the influence of romantic writers was a strong ideological strength for him to react against the tradition. Once he had quoted Nietzsche, "He who has grown wise concerning old origins, behold, he will at last seek new springs of the future and new origins. O my brothers, it will not be long before new peoples shall arise and new springs rush down

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1. Ibid, p.183.

2. Ibid, p.184.

into new depths."<sup>1</sup> It was youthful reaction against the established order. It was more emotional less analytic, a reflection of a general anguish pouring out from a cultivated mind. He believed that a super human being or a genius might bring desired change, a team of spirited patriots might help the silent masses to be awakened. Nietzsche's superman, Darwin's theory of evolution and the revolutionary unconventional literary spirit of Byron influenced him for sometime. Compassion for the masses for their misery and anger for their inertia (ai-qi-bu-xing, nu-qi-bu-zheng) was an important aspect of his thought. On the one hand he wanted to invoke the spirit of stern and disciplined Spartan soldiers but on the other hand he never forgot the faces of the multitude.

In "How I Came to Write Stories" Lu Xun once again mentioned that he was in search of literature which contained revolutionary spirit and vengeance.<sup>2</sup> He was never interested in taking art as entertainment or art for art's sake. He was unambiguous in his ideological direction for being a writer from the very beginning of literary career. His pledge to "write in the hope of enlightening my people,

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1. Quoted by Lu Xun in "Moluoshilishuo". English translation by R.J. Hollingdale from Nietzsche, *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA*, Penguin Books, London, 1969, p.228.

2. "How I came to Write Stories", *LXSW*, vol.III. (LXQJ, vol.4).

for humanity, and of the need to better it" remained firm all along.<sup>1</sup> He was eager to bring about a qualitative social change. He worked assiduously for his specific aim to change the old culture and reinterpret the old in the light of the new culture. He was steadfast in his task to unmask layer after layer of the so-called tradition, the established pattern of social behaviour. More he came to know the difficulty in going against the rationale of the old system more he became determined and stubborn. His training in classical education made his task to defeat the age-old and widely accepted arguments easy and he could present more convincing and sharper reasons for his own argument. He had to react and react vehemently against the convention. After his analysis of China's tradition he was convinced about the futility of searching appropriate set of reasons in favour of the change he wanted to bring about. He ridicules the tradition which did not allow any type of change and rejected anyone having new ideas of change as traitor. Common people used to laugh at such person or such ideas, and preferred to remain backward without any urge to progress. Lu Xun wanted to end such grim passivity from the minds of the youth. He preferred the light of firefly rather than to wait for a torch. One should keep emitting the light till there is enough light. One should be willing

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1. Ibid, p.263.

to disappear or vanish alongwith the more powerful light because it gives light to mankind.<sup>1</sup> He reminds the Chinese of what China requires is the spirit of breaking the old and creating something new. He mentions Nietzsche's superman and also quotes him, "In truth, man is a polluted river. One must be a sea, to receive a polluted river and not be defiled. Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is this sea, in him your great contempt can go under."<sup>2</sup>

In "Random Thoughts (59)--`Martial and Sagacious'". Lu Xun reflects on China's problem of not being able to interact with the outside world.<sup>3</sup> There has been a psychological gap between the Chinese and others. He is determined to break the traditional isolation. He says that China is "neither a breeding place for new ideas nor a country to tolerate new ideas".<sup>4</sup> Moreover new ideas change as soon as they come in, and the Chinese often take pride in their ability in changing new ideas according to their wishes. Merely by going through prefaces to translations or criticisms and comments on events abroad one can easily realize that Chinese views are separated from those of other people by several iron walls. When they talk about social evils the

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1. "Suiganlu", 41, LXQJ.1, p.325.

2. Ibid, p.325 (For the English see ZARATHUSTRA, p.42).

3. "Random Thoughts", 59, "Martial and Sagacious", LXSW, vol.II, 《热风·随感录·圣武》 LXQJ.1.)

4. Ibid, p.48.

Chinese take them joking, when they discuss family matters the Chinese think they are advocating war. He considers that after studying other's national characteristics and literature one could clearly see the ideas expressed in such books are alien to the Chinese. Lu Xun writes, "Those who advocate new ideas may start a fire, but there must be some spiritual fuel to feed the flame. They draw music from the lyre, but if others have no heartstrings they can strike no common chord. They give forth sounds, but if others remain silent there will be no echo. Because the Chinese never make much response, new ideas have no effect on China."<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun points out to that irony that the people at large remain under pervasive sense of indifference and insensitive to the sacrifices made by the conscious people in different times. There have been cases of giving lives for noble causes such as martyrs who died for the republic, during the six dynasties period many monks burned themselves to death, and in Tang dynasty a monk cut off his arm to give to some rogue.<sup>2</sup> Latter two incidents which were influenced by alien ideas failed to make any impact on Chinese history. Lu Xun comments; "... no summary of history can be so accurate as a sum in arithmetic which states a figure to several decimal places: we can only set down a round

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1. Ibid, pp.48-49.

2. Ibid, p.49.

figure... In the round figure we arrive at for Chinese history, there are really no ideologies or ideals. There are two things only - fire and the sword, and the whole can be called 'It's coming!'"<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun criticizes one Chinese weakness of not accepting boldly the truth reflected in the death of a man. To become an immortal is China's one highest ideal, as Lu Xun regards, is also cherished by modern men. In Chinese thought there is no place for liberty, equality, mutual help and co-existence, there is too much importance of the self, "... Hence, simply to prevent 'It's coming' is enough. In other countries, as we can see, those who resist this are the men with ideals. For their cherished ideals they sacrifice all beside, splintering the enemy's weapons with their bones, and extinguishing flames with their blood. When the gleam of the sword and the glow of the fire die away, they see the first glimmer of dawn, the dawn of a new era. ... Now dawn is overhead, but unless we look up we shall for ever see only the glitters of material wealth."<sup>2</sup>

China's interaction with the outside world and particularly with the West set in at the time of the Opium War and gradually became mature and consolidated in early twentieth

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1. Ibid, p.49.

2. Ibid, p.50-51.

century. The initial shock and surprise that baffled the minds of Chinese intellectuals at the outbreak of the war slowly disappeared. After a strenuous process of knowing and understanding the West the Chinese not only became aware of the societies in the West but also were able to grasp the subtleties of them. It is true, that the situation in which the Chinese had to experiment with the West was not anticipated but forced and China had no choice but to have extensive contact with the outside world yet a slow but powerful momentum of learning from the West was acquired by the sincere and diligent team of intellectuals. The people in general were strongly reluctant to go for any contacts with the foreigners. They found it unnecessary and irrational to develop familiarity with such peoples who lived in a funny wonderland. They construed the West as an image too unreal and remote and a large number of intellectual were eager to maintain the popular ethnocentric and xenophobic attitude towards alien cultures. They, therefore, were unwilling to make positive and spontaneous response to the West. However the ideological resistance in accepting the reality in which the predominant role of the West was emerging increasingly became weaker and there has been a renewed upsurge in knowing the developments in the West after May 4th movement. The conservative forces were in the retreat and became desperate in reversing the wheels of the history. The representatives of such forces were engaged in an intellec-



tual campaign of reviving the old system of values or at least maintaining a status quo position in the social order. They appealed to the traditional stubborn attitude of the people towards any change or new ideas from outside sources. Lu Xun's persistent criticism of such attitudes was reflected in his essays written in early and mid twenties when he wrote, "Unfortunately China is very hard to change. Just to move a table or overhaul a stove probably involves shedding blood; and even so, the change may not get made. Unless some great whip lashes her on the back, China will never budge. Such a whip is bound to come, I think. Whether good or bad, this whipping is bound to come. But where it will come from or how it will come I do not know exactly."<sup>1</sup>

Such attitudes which did not encourage new ideas and showed coldness to new talents were criticized by Lu Xun. The lack of the spirit to change and having a desire to adopt an attitude of compromise in the name of reform as suggested by the adherents of the idea "zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong" and its later version "yin shi zhi yi, zhe zhong zhi dang" were also criticized.<sup>2</sup> He questions how can one be able to learn new things while preserving the old

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1. "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?", LXSW, vol.II, p.92.

2. "Yin shi zhi yi, zhe zhong zhi dang", "因时制宜,折衷至当", doing things according to changing circumstances and adopting an attitude of compromise with various views, see, 《鲁迅感录》48页 LXQJ.1, pp.336-337.

ideology? As if a group of new people who want new abilities with the old thought are carrying on their back the old people with old techniques and old ideas. How can one expect milk from a cow which has been eaten out, how can a cow be offered for sacrifice as well as be used for ploughing? How can one survive with the ancestors on one's back?<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun's strong dislike for such mentality of sacrificing the present for the past was not the only point, he also expressed that it is not the spirit of complacency but dissatisfaction for not being perfect is the motive force of the progress. Those nations who are not complacent will move forward and will have hope forever and those who blame others and do not know how to engage themselves in introspection will perish.<sup>2</sup>

The chance of survival of new ideas in China is nil. China's soil is so hostile towards new ideas that a genius could hardly emerge. This theme Lu Xun discussed in some of his essays and pointed out those attempts which prevent China from the path of progress namely those who propagate the idea of restoring national culture, they say China has many good things, and one should not run after new things, going for new ideas instead of studying and preserving the

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1. Ibid.

2. "Suiganlu Buman", 61, 《随感录·不满》, LXQJ.1

old is as bad as condemning one's own ancient heritage.<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun comments, "...I cannot believe before the old jacket is washed and folded no new one must be made".<sup>2</sup> Secondly it is the so-called "extolling original work" which is more superficial as he observes, "It smacks strongly of chauvinism in the realm of ideas, and thus will also cut China off from the current of world opinion".<sup>3</sup> Most of the translations are poor in content, there are attempts to incorporate old ideas to suit the traditional Chinese temperament. And thirdly, the presence of destructive criticism which rejects young writers as childish thus preventing them from being mature. Lu Xun comments, "...it is not only hard to produce a genius, but also hard to have the soil from which a genius could grow. It seems to me that while genius is largely inborn, anyone can become the soil to nurture genius. For us to provide the soil is more realistic than to demand the genius; for otherwise even if we have hundreds of geniuses they will not be able to strike root for lack of soil, like bean-sprouts grown on a plate."<sup>4</sup>

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1. About new ideas in China Lu Xun wrote few essays, important ones are: "Wei you tiancai zhi qian" (Waiting for a Genius), 《坟·未有天才之前》 LXQJ.1, "Suiganlu, laile", 56, 《热风·随感录·"来了"》 and "Nalaizhuyi", (The Take-over Policy, 《且介亭杂文·拿来主义》 LXQJ.6.

According to Lu Xun the preparation for a soil which is conducive to the emergence of genius is more important. For that one should be broad-minded, must accept new ideas and make oneself free from all old inhibitions. Thus one will be able to accept and appreciate any future genius. One should not make fun of the artistic attempts by the young writers. In the context of accepting new ideas and learning to progress he puts forward his views succinctly in "The Take-over Policy". He criticizes Nietzsche's individualism, his boasting of himself as a sun a source of heat endlessly giving without receiving from others. Lu Xun writes, "But Nietzsche was not the sun after all - he was simply crazy."<sup>1</sup> Lu Xun in one of his early essays criticized the negative aspects of individualism by referring to the arrogance of power shown by Napoleon. He mentioned that incident when Napoleon had declared his invincibility on the top of the Alps that he was higher than the Alps. Lu Xun remarks that Napoleon had probably forgotten the presence of millions of soldiers behind him.<sup>2</sup>

Whether it is a question of emulating the past experiences or learning from foreign countries it is of utmost importance that one should be selective and critical. One should understand what one requires and must exercise dis-

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1. "The Take-Over Policy", LXSW, vol.IV, p.51.

2. "Waiting for a Genius", LXSW, vol.II, p.95.

crimination. Lu Xun suggests a new term for such an act, he writes, "...we must take things over. We must use them, put them by, or destroy them... But we must first be serious, brave, discriminating and unselfish. Without taking things over, we cannot become new men, without this, art and literature can have no renaissance."<sup>1</sup> "Nalaizhuyi" or the "take-over policy" therefore means shrewd understanding of both the native requirements and shortcomings as well as things to be borrowed from the outside world.<sup>2</sup>

In post-May 4th movement period Chinese intellectuals were divided into different ideological stands. The scholars who studied in England and America were influenced by Hu Shi and interested mainly in pure research and science. They opposed any kind of political leanings. Hu Shi who had a pioneering contribution to language reform during the new cultural movement gradually became a leading intellectual figure to lend tacit or sometimes active support to the northern warlords' governments and later represented the conservative faction of the Guomindang or the Nationalist Party.<sup>3</sup> Lu Xun was the target of their attack. These scholars, mostly university professors, were tied up with more or less similar political viewpoint formed a sort of

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1. "The Take-Over Policy, LXSW, vol.IV, p.53.

2. "Nalaizhuyi" "拿来主义".

3. Guomindang, 国民党.

clique behind the journal MODERN CRITIC.<sup>1</sup> Hu Shi who was though away from the actual editorial work was the driving force of the views expressed by scholars like Wang Shijie, Gao Yihan, Xu Zhimo, Tang Youren and Chen Yuan (also known as Chen Xiyong).<sup>2</sup> They contributed articles on a wide range of subjects mainly on contemporary politics. Lu Xun had to face the character assassination campaign launched by MODERN CRITIC group during 1925-27 and wrote a series of essays in order to defend himself from trivial allegations and steadfastly criticized these so-called progressive pro-western scholars. These scholars who claimed themselves as an unarmed class whom Lu Xun ridiculed as actually acting as demons with soft knives and harming the people in an imperceptible way.<sup>3</sup> In the preface to THE GRAVE he criticized their crafty tricks which justified the anti-students actions of the warlords' regime. He came down heavily on them calling them as junzi zhi tu or zhengren junzi both meaning "gentlemen". These so-called gentlemen specially Hu Shi and Chen Yuan took side, though in a discreet way; with

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1. MODERN CRITIC 《现代评论》", was brought out from Beijing in 1924, later in 1927 place of its publication was shifted to Shanghai. It ceased its publication in 1928. See the note 5 of "Tiji" 《坟·题记》, LXQJ.1, pp.5-6.

2. Wang Shijie, 王世杰, Gao Yihan, 高一涵 (1885- ?) Xu Zhimo, 徐志摩 (1896-1931) Tang Youren 唐有壬 (1893-1935), Chen yuan (Chen Xiyong), 陈源 (陈西滢) (1896-1970) See FEN, "Tiji", LXQJ.1, pp.5-6.

3. Ibid.

the warlords' regimes and opposed popular protests led by the Communist Party or the students, like their attitude during May 30th movement, March 18th incident, warlord Duan Qirui's highhandedness in dealing with the students' demonstration against the foreign powers' interventions in 1926.<sup>1</sup> In the period between 1918 and 1927 Lu Xun was engaged not only in writing short stories but preparing himself to counter the criticisms of the established writers of that time. He wrote mainly two types of essays: in one type of essays he wrote to struggle through his status as a writer amid controversy and bitter criticisms and in other type of essays he wrote to expose the conservative elements who were preaching feudal morality and making efforts to revive outdated values among the younger generations. The reading of Confucian classics, glorifying chastity of women, imposing unquestioned authority of patriarchy and spreading superstitions were considered as the standards of national character. Lu Xun's essays exposed and attacked such ideas and he suggested a new alternative value system in place of the old one. He was direct and merciless in his criticism of the champions of so-called national characteristics. He attacked the feudal conservative forces, warlords and bureaucrats who were taking a status quo stand and opposing everything unconventional. Thus he was not only engaged in

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1. Duan Qirui 段祺瑞 (1864-1936). See the note 8 "Tiji", FEN, LXQJ.1, p.7.

attacking conservative political elements but at the same time creating assiduously a practical democratic and objective social and cultural behavioural pattern on the basis of contemporary popular sentiments and aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

It was an intense process in which Lu Xun was trying hard to establish himself as a writer in the literary world of China after being ignored and rejected by almost all major literary societies and important men of letters of that time.<sup>2</sup> These societies were engaged in a common task

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1. Essays apart from his two earlier collections FEN and REFENG, written during this period i.e. between 1918-1927, are mainly included in HUAGAIJI, I, HUAGAIJI, II, ERYIJI (And That's That).

2. MODERN CRITIC continued for a period of four years between 1924 and 1928. Lu Xun's many writings between 1925 and 1927 were either replies to the criticism against him by MODERN CRITIC or Lu Xun's criticism of their views. These writings are mainly included in collections such as BAD LUCK, BAD LUCK II, and THAT'S THAT. See "Tiji" in FEN, LXQJ.1. During mid-twenties Chuang Zao She (The Creation Society), 创造社 Tai Yang She (The Sun Society) 太阳社 two literary societies were influenced by Marxian ideology and engaged in a debate on the question of revolutionary literature. In 1928, the members of these societies attacked Lu Xun and his works. Lu Xun had to put forward his counter arguments about the nature of revolution and revolutionary literature. See "Qianji" of WEI ZIYOU SHU (Preface to the FALSE LIBERTY) 《为自由书·前记》 LXQJ.5. Some of the notable members of the creation society were Guo Moruo 郭沫若 Yu Dafu 郁达夫 Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾. Later Feng Naichao 冯乃超 Li Chuli 李初梨 and others joined the society. Xin Yue She 新月社 (the Crescent Moon Society) and other societies had members like Hu Shi, Xu Zhimo, Chen Yuan, Liang Shiqiu. They were close to warlords and after Jiang Kaishek's anti-revolutionary coup in 1927 they became close to KMT. See SAN XIAN JI "xuyan" (Preface to THREE LEISURES) and the notes in it, LXQJ.4.



of criticizing, denigrating and even attacking him personally. The scholars belonging to MODERN CRITIC were notorious in their anti-Lu Xun campaign and specially Chen Yuan in his series of essays entitled as "Idle Talk" was engaged mainly in criticizing Lu Xun personally. Apart from continuously undermining his ideas and literary works he even questioned Lu Xun's background.<sup>1</sup> His indirect ways to somehow erode his image of a great writer and deliberate and consistent attempt to project him as a writer of ordinary calibre were revealed in many of his remarks on Lu Xun. He questioned Lu Xun's personal identity and even found his place of birth amusing. Lu Xun was a keen supporter of the students of Beijing Women's Normal College where the notorious president Yang Yinyu ruled more like a tool in the hands of the then minister of education.<sup>2</sup> She was extremely unpopular among students because her ways of treating students were unusually harsh. In a series of her anti-students activities and some repressive actions on behalf of the governments against the students' protests gradually drew support and sympathy from the public in favour of the student community. Lu Xun was a teacher of the same college and took

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1. Lu Xun's reply to all such rumours and allegations made by his critics particularly by Chen Yuan was recorded in his "Bu shi xin" (Not a letter), 《华盖集续编·不是信》 LXQJ.3, see both the text as well as the notes, pp.221-241.

2. Yang yinyu 杨荫榆 ( ? - 1938) Zhang Shizhao (1881-1973) was the minister of education.

keen interest in such incidents and expressed his views against the victimization of the innocent students. He wrote several essays in which he criticized those teachers who were blindly supporting Mrs Yang.<sup>1</sup>

It has been pointed out elsewhere that the scholars belonging to MODERN CRITIC pretended to be neutral in political questions and yet tacitly taking side of the ruling warlords in opposing all patriotic movements. The critics were trying to undermine Lu Xun in a personal and narrow encounter whereas Lu Xun was steadfast and uncompromising in his replies. Sometimes he was defensive, sometimes he was employing humour or satire in order to ignore them but most of the time he was bitterly offensive. They questioned Lu Xun's personal identity, his place of origin and even his company. The nature of their criticism was confined to narrow political differences and there was no point of meeting each other. They pulled him down in every possible means and did not express any intention of acknowledging him as an able writer when as a matter of fact Lu Xun was one of the most popular writers in China. The long war of words between Lu Xun and the MODERN CRITIC group is recorded

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1. See "Pengbi zhi hou", (After knocking against the wall) 《华盖集·"碰壁"之后》; LXQJ.3, "Nu xiaozhangde nannude meng" 《华盖集拾遗·女校长的男女的梦》, LXQJ.7, "Cong huxu shuodao yachi", 《鲁迅杂著选·从胡适说起》 LXQJ.1. "'Pengbi' zhi

in many of his writings.<sup>1</sup> His two brief pieces of writings "Qingnian bi dushu" and "Yaowen jiaozi" were provocative and led to a serious controversy among traditionalists.<sup>2</sup> Chen Yuan spared no opportunity to criticize Lu Xun. He used indirect and sarcastic comments and even abuses such as Shaoxing shyster, legal pettifogger, scholar bandit and spread such rumours about Lu Xun's background and habits. Lu Xun's replies in BAD LUCK, BAD LUCK II and the GRAVE and his criticism of the then minister of Education Zhang Shizhao, Chen Yuan and others were examples of unique and rare human communication in course of which Lu Xun churned out a meaningful and enlightening literary context. He not only demonstrated his rare intellectual and sublime mental capacity in dealing with such trivial, routine and selfish matters, in which he was implicated by his enemies he also documented a series of correspondence which remains as an invaluable socialized literary texts till today. His profound understanding of the past, his in-depth analysis of the contemporary social reality and his skilful use of language were so great and so colossal that the entire ideological background in which a few inept, petty and

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1. These writings are mainly included in his BAD LUCK, BAD LUCK II, and THAT'S THAT.

2. "Qingnian bi dushu" 《青年必读书》 (The Books the Young should read) and Yaowen jiaozi 《咬文嚼字》, (Words difficult to pronounce) both are included in HUA-GAIJI, LXQJ.3.

shallow critics were busy crumbled miserably. Lu Xun's sober mind, generosity and above all greatness as a personality of that time emerged in the process surpassing and even dwarfing those gentlemen.

Liang Shiqiu commented that the form Zagan (miscellanea) was the product by such writers who were dissatisfied with the social reality of their time.<sup>1</sup> It was nothing but their pessimism. Lu Xun said that some considered writing miscellanea as his "fatal disease" and for this he had to go through sufferings. Many established writers called him as a "miscellanist" showing their contempt and reluctance in recognizing this type of writing as a literary form. Though sometimes they themselves may write miscellanea to settle private scores they would prefer to write in pseudonyms to avoid their reputation from being affected adversely. Lu Xun still intended to collect and publish such pieces. He had no regrets for writing miscellanea. These short pieces of writing would, as he considered, help young to understand properly the reality in which charges and counter charges were labelled. He writes, "As a matter of fact, I have made a search and can find no sign in my stories or reviews that I ever thirsted for the blood of the young. Nor did I ever dream of such a thing. I believed in evolution, was sure that the

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1. Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋 See SAN XIAN JI xuyan, (The Preface to THREE LEISURES), LXQJ.4.

future would be better than the past and the young better than the old. Indeed, such respect did I have for the young that if they stabbed me ten times with their daggers I only shot back one arrow. Later, however, I realized my mistake. It was not the materialist interpretation of history or some revolutionary writing which befuddled me; but in Guangdong I saw young people divided into two great camps - some of them acting as informers or helping the authorities to make arrests. This exploded my old way of thinking, and I started looking sceptically at the young instead of admiring them unconditionally. I still uttered a few cries of encouragement, though, for young people fresh to fray - not that it did much good".<sup>1</sup> While he remembered painfully the criticisms both from the right and the left, he acknowledged the help though indirectly he received in the ideological debate launched by the Creation Society. He was forced to read certain scientific literary criticism, his translation of Plekhanov's THE THEORY OF ART helped him to correct his one-sided view of evolution. Cheng Fangwu a leftist writer observed Lu Xun's attempt to print the materials collected for A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINESE FICTION as ANECDOTES OF CHINESE FICTION saying Lu Xun had too much "leisure" - "leisure, leisure, and yet more leisure". Lu Xun caustically remarked, "I do not believe the working class would

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1. "Preface to THREE LEISURES", LXSW, vol.III, pp.173-174.

resort to such a method of condemnation, for workers are not 'pettifoggers'".<sup>1</sup> He called his collection THREE LEISURES which was aimed at Cheng Fangwu.

During 1930 and 1931 many periodicals were confiscated or banned and only one magazine SPROUTS carried Lu Xun's contributions.<sup>2</sup> That too was banned after five numbers and NEW TERRITORY was brought out.<sup>3</sup> Lu Xun in his preface to TWO HEARTS talked about the time when the warlords were engaged in an internecine strife and when murder, looting were rampant.

He recalled that in one of his talks he had said that there could be no ivory-tower art in China because she lacked suitable environment.<sup>4</sup> He also talked about "snail shells" a thatched hut in which "recluse" of the Three Kingdoms period retired, something like the hovels in the north of Changjiang used by the poor folk to crouch.<sup>5</sup> They

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1. Ibid, p.175.

2. "Preface to TWO HEARTS", LXSW, vol.III, p.176. SPROUTS 《萌芽》, a literary monthly edited by Lu Xun and Feng Xuefeng. It was published from Shanghai in 1930, after a shortwhile, however, it was banned by KMT government.

3. NEW TERRITORY 《新地》, a monthly which replaced the SPROUTS but ceased after the first issue.

4. "Ivory Towers and Snail Shells", 《象牙塔与蜗牛庐》  
See ER XIN JI xuyan, 《二心集·序言》 LXQJ.4.

5. "Snail Shells" "蜗牛庐", recluse "隐逸"  
Three-Kingdom period 三国时代

never used to come out to stir, lived without food, clothes and conversation. Lu Xun remarked, "...that was the only way for a dissident to survive. But as a world of snail shells had no art, if we went on like this we could be certain that China would have no art."<sup>1</sup> Someone criticized that he dared not act like a Communist, he said, "...after the 'purge of the party', to talk about communism is a great crime, and a net has been cast all over China for the capture and execution of those who do so; yet unless I do so I am despised by courageous young men loyal to our party state. All I can do is change into a real snail. This is my only chance to escape denunciation."<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun once again remembered how he was attacked by the MODERN CRITIC a few years ago. Tang Youren declared that writer wrote under the instructions of Moscow. Now, some dailies alleged that left-wing writers taking Russian roubles. Lu Xun comments, "These are traditional tactics. At the end of the Song Dynasty men were accused of being 'in league with the Tartars', in the early Qing Dynasty of being 'in league with foreigners across the seas'. Many have been murdered, invariably on some such pretext. Indeed, spitting poison has become second nature among Chinese gentlemen and scholars, but it does not simply show their acumen: it

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1. "Preface to TWO HEARTS", LXSW. vol.III, pp.176-177.

2. Ibid, p.177.

demonstrates that money is the driving force in this world. As for my being a 'turncoat' there is something in this accusation. For if I do some soul-searching, I find that although I did not write about all current events, I sometimes could not avoid harbouring dissident ideas. 'I deserve death for my crimes, but the emperor is sagacious.' A loyal subject must never harbour dissident ideas. Incidentally, since it was those men of letters in government pay who pinned this label on me, they must have an emperor in their world of letters."<sup>1</sup>

Lu Xun mentions Franz Mehring's view that a dissident in a decadent society is illtreated by the members of his own class and considered more despicable than a slave.<sup>2</sup> He poses more danger than a revolting slave because a slave belongs to another class. Therefore people of his own class are determined to kill him. Lu Xun writes, "...my incessant harping on myself, of the way I keep 'knocking my head against a wall' and of my snail-like conduct, as if all the miseries of the world were embodied in me, a scapegoat for mankind, is a bad failing of middle-class intellectuals. It is true, though, that while I started by simply hating my own class which I knew so well, and felt no regret over its

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1. "Preface to TWO HEARTS", pp.177-178.

2. Franz Mehring (1846-1919) German Marxist historian and Literary critic.



destruction, later on the facts taught me that the future belongs solely to the rising proletariat."<sup>1</sup>

This reminds us of the expression Lu Xun used in the Postscript of the GRAVE, "cong jiu-lei zhong lai, fan ge yi ji".<sup>2</sup> But the process of self-awareness, and continuously improving himself by a rigorous soul-searching was not smooth and easy. The ghosts of the past haunted him for a long time, the task of forgetting his past was almost formidable. His hatred for his own background remained in the realm of his romantic fancy and through a process of self-criticism and virulent criticism cast by his adversaries he gradually became successful in identifying himself with the people. His sadness and loneliness because of alienation from his own class and his helplessness in not being able to join himself with the common people continued for a long stretch of time. He never had the ego of disliking the people he was only unable to identify himself with them. In "A Small Incident" he writes about this difficulty which the narrator of the story faces while comparing himself with a rickshaw man, "Suddenly I had the strange sensation that his dusty retreating figure had in that instant grown larger. Indeed, the further he walked the larger he loomed, until I

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1. "Preface to TWO HEARTS", p.179.

2. "Cong jiu-lei zhong lai, fan ge yi ji", "从旧垒中来...反戈一击", 《坟·写在〈坟〉后面》, LXQJ.vol.1, p.286.

had to look up to him. At the same time he seemed gradually to be exerting a pressure on me which threatened to overpower the small self hidden under my fur-lined gown."<sup>1</sup> He remembers the small incident in which an ordinary rickshaw man showed compassion to an old woman who was knocked down by him. The narrator was in a hurry and seeing that the old woman was not seriously injured and no one had seen them, urged the rickshaw man to leave the place. The rickshaw man on the contrary helped the woman to stand up and carried her to the near by police station. Lu Xun writes at the end of the story, "Yet this small incident keeps coming back to me, often more vivid than in actual life, teaching me shame spurring me on to reform, and imbuing me with fresh courage and fresh hope."<sup>2</sup>

The image of the most ordinary man of China was slowly yet firmly conceptualized by Lu Xun. The social reality of China in the background of a decadent civilization was a revelation to him. The complexity of the problem in bringing about any change or making the vast masses of the people awakened was a utopia yet he spared no effort for that cause. His utterances such as "My torture is that I have to carry on my shoulders a collection of extremely ancient

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1. "A Small Incident", LXSW, vol.I, p.77. (《呐喊·一件小事》 LXQJ.1.)

2. Ibid, p.78.

phantoms : it is a load I cannot shed, and I constantly feel that I am being choked under its crushing weight," "I should write in the hope of enlightening my people, for humanity, and of the need to better it", "so my themes were usually the unfortunates in the abnormal society" and consistent and unflinching conviction to instill a sense of dignity and confidence among the people as he perceives, the silent soul of the people which for thousand of years "grew, faded and withered quietly like grass under a great rock."<sup>1</sup> His intention of taking up a model like Ah Q an extremely negative example to show as a representative of the common psychology irrespective of any class should be understood in the context of his critique of Chinese culture. Ah Q's wretched life, his dreams, his technique of winning psychological victories and his childish way of posing himself as a comrade-in-arms of the revolutionaries are closely linked together.

Between 1934 and 1936 Lu Xun wrote FRINGED LITERATURE, and three volumes of QIEJIETING ESSAYS—four collections of his important essays.<sup>2</sup> China experienced more extensive intrusion of Japanese troops. A puppet government was set

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1. See for "My torture ..." in FEN, LXQJ.1, p.285, for "I should write...." and "so my themes..." in "How I came to write stories", LXSW, vol.III, p.263 and for "grew, faded..." in LXSW, vol.I, p.19.

2. FRINGED LITERATURE 《花边文学》 QIEJIETING ESSAYS《且介亭杂文》,《且介亭杂文二集》 and 《且介亭杂文末集》.

up in Inner Mongolia in 1935. KMT government followed a policy of non-resistance and was engaged in suppressing patriotic movements. The Chinese Communist Party endangered by the fifth offensive by the KMT in 1934 at its base advanced towards north in the Long March. The call given by the Communist Party for ending the civil war and forge a united front to resist Japanese was welcome by all. A declaration on uniting the people to resist aggression inspired the artists and the writers to form a national anti-Japanese united front.

In his preface to *THREE LEISURES* he recalled his past few years specially two years when he wrote some miscellanea. He regretted that these two years were not productive and no publisher was interested to publish his writings. He wrote a few with hesitation and fear. When he left Guangzhou in 1927 and reached Shanghai he faced another kind of reproach heaped by the celebrities of the literary world. The Creation Society, the Sun Society and those "gentlemen" of the Crescent Moon Society all criticized him and even those who didn't belong to any literary group and later became writers or professors also commented on him to show their superiority.<sup>1</sup> He was called as "leisured and moneyed", the "spawn of feudalism", "degenerate and even

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1. SAN XIAN JI xuyan, LXQJ.4, p.4, also see "Preface to *THREE LEISURES*", LXSW, vol.III.

"fascist" thirsting for the blood of the young.<sup>1</sup> Someone who was his student in the Sun Yatsen university in 1927 regretted that many of his friends have avoided him because of his link with such a man like Lu Xun. Lu Xun writes, " 'someone like you' this shows how low I had sunk."<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun's sensitivity made him unusually scrupulous in self-criticism. He was very candid and forthright in correcting his own mistakes. He was zealous for progress and impatient lest he should lag behind. He was keen to keep himself update in latest developments and his ideas afresh. He maintained a child-like inquisitiveness throughout his life. He writes in the postscript of the GRAVE, "It is true that I often dissect others but I dissect myself more often and more dispassionately. I express a bit of what I know, which those who love the warmth of life feel very grim, I do not know how would have they reacted had I revealed my blood and flesh to them. Sometimes I use this method to drive away some people from me. Those who even do not abandon me, howsoever strange are they, are my real friends. Had this situation not existed I would have been alone but till now I am not alone. The reasons why I have not been so brave firstly, I still think to survive and live in this society,

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1. Ibid, p.4 and also see the notes therein and "Preface to THREE LEISURES", LXSW.vol.III.

2. "Preface to THREE LEISURES", LXSW, vol.III, p.173.

and secondly I want to make the life of those so-called gentlemen little uncomfortable. So I specially wear certain armour on my body and keep pointing out to their shortcomings. I will keep doing so until I get tired".<sup>1</sup> The same mood was expressed by him in the preface to the above collection. He commented that he was aware of his own weaknesses such as drinking etc and he wanted to stop drinking, he was fond of eating fish liver to extend his life. He declared that such measures for longer life were not solely because of his wife but because of his enemies. He had wanted to say in a better way to keep them in good humour after all they were his adversaries. And he had to point out certain loopholes in their otherwise beautiful world.<sup>2</sup>

The question of the Chinese being coward has been explained by Lu Xun as such that the Chinese behave like wild beasts in front of sheep, but like sheep in front of wild beasts. Young people of China have to reverse this attitude in a way i.e., when his opponent is a wild beast, he should act like a wild beast himself and when he meets a sheep he should behave like a sheep. Lu Xun remarks, "For then, no matter how cunning the devil may be, he will have to go back to his own hell."<sup>3</sup> In "Sudden Notions"-10, Lu

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1. "Xiezai FEN houmian", LXQJ.1, p.284.

2. "Tiji", FEN, LXQJ.1, p.4.

3. "Sudden Notions", 7, LXSW, vol.II, p.163.

Xun makes a subtle distinction between "minqi" and "minli" meaning national spirit and national strength.<sup>1</sup> He was expressing his opinion on how some Chinese were defending those Chinese who were killed by British police in Shanghai by saying that they were not "Reds" incited by any foreign power, nor were they rioters. Above distinction was originally made in SHUNTIAN SHIBAO, a Chinese paper sponsored by the Japanese in 1923.<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun said that he seldom read the paper because the views expressed in it were very different from him. But sometimes it said things which the Chinese would not say. Once he came across the editorial in which it was said that, when a country declines, people hold two different opinions, some say "national spirit" and some say "national strength". If majority holds the former the country will become weak while if the latter opinion is held by the majority then the country will become strong. Lu Xun was convinced and said that the Chinese should bear this point in their mind. Because unfortunately, as he thought, majority in China was in favour of "national spirit". Lu Xun reminds the youth about the heavier responsibility they have to shoulder than the young people in other countries. The forbears have devoted so much energy for being mysteri-

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1. HUAGAIJI Huran xiangdao, 10, LXQJ.3.  
"Minqi" 民气, and "Minli" 民力.

2. SHUNTIAN SHIBAO 《顺天时报》, see the note 10, in "Huran xiangdao", 10, LXQJ.3.

ous, unfathomable, and balanced, and left real difficult things for them to do. They have to do the work of several people to prove their own ability, "...our opponents are the stubborn Britishers, who are a good whetstone on which to improve our mettle. Assuming that the average age of these youngsters who have woken up to the facts is twenty, and paying due consideration to the fact that the Chinese age prematurely, we can still resist, work for reforms, and struggle together for at least thirty years. If this is not enough, another generation or two can continue after us. So many years may seem rather frightening from the point of view of one individual; but if we are so easily frightened, then we are incurable, and all we can do is resign ourselves to death. For in the history of a nation this is a very brief period, and there is no short cut. Let us, then, not hesitate, but make trial of ourselves, and struggle for our existence with malice towards none."<sup>1</sup> Then Lu Xun concludes by giving a caution. The task may not be completed successfully if some effort of soul-searching is not done. The Chinese should not pay too much attention to superficial propaganda and despise other tasks. Secondly the habit of calling the fellow-men as traitors or slaves of foreign masters because of difference of opinion should be checked. The third difficulty is that there are many who are

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1. "Sudden Notions" 10, LXSW, vol.II, p.181.



ready to take every opportunity for their own interest. It becomes more and more a clearly revealing idea through Lu Xun's most of the writings that literature plays a crucial role in enlightening the people. Lu Xun believes that the impact of literature on society is more immediate and provocative than that of normal education. It has a power of enkindling the human minds in Lu Xun's words, "Literature is the spark of fire from the national spirit, and the torch that lights our way forward. Literature and the national spirit also act upon each other in the same way as sesame oil and sesame seeds. The oil is pressed from the seeds, but the seeds steeped in this oil become more oily. If you want oil, well and good; otherwise, you should add other ingredients like water or soda".<sup>1</sup> This intrinsic quality which only literature can employ in making public aware of the interplay between the introspective man and his environment and thereby arouse the large number of people for a long period of time. Therefore, Lu Xun could say, "Because we Chinese have never dared to look life in the face, we have to resort to concealment and deceit; hence we have produced a literature of concealment and deceit; and with this literature we have sunk deeply than ever into the quagmire of concealment and deceit, to such an extent that we do not know it ourselves. The world is changing from day

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1. "On Looking Facts in the Face", LXSW, vol.II, p.203, (《坟·论睁了眼看》LXQJ,1).

to day; it is high time for our writers to take off their masks, look frankly, keenly and boldly at life, and write about real flesh and blood. It is high time for a brand-new arena for literature, high time for some bold fighters to charge headlong into battle!"<sup>1</sup>

In the later stage Lu Xun gradually made his criticism against the so-called gentlemen more and more caustic and made them his target of attack. He had already adopted two different types of attitude in dealing with his opponents and the people in general. Being the eldest son of an idle father in a scholar-official family he experienced the trauma of a declining family. The harsh treatment from the relatives and the near members of his clan had reduced the status of the family almost to a state of pauper.<sup>2</sup> So when his critics ridiculed him as "moneyed-class", "leisured-class" etc he could easily dissociate himself from the company of the so-called men of letters. He mainly criticized such gentlemen's insensitivity and lack of courage to look at the reality with eyes open in "on Looking Facts in the Face." Lu Xun says that the Chinese men of letters do not have the courage to look squarely at life and they are

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. Ibid, p.203.

. See "E-wen yiben 'Ah Q zhengzhuang' xu ji zhuzhe zixu guan lue", LXQJ 7, NAHAN zixu, LXQJ.1, "Fuginde bing" (father's illness), in ZHAOHUA XISHI, LXQJ.2 and "Wode yige shifu" in QIE JIETING ZAWEN MOJI, LXQJ.6.

indifferent to the social problems. Even though they are discontented with the reality they pretend ignorance at the crucial time. They keep their eyes closed and can think that everything is perfect. Lu Xun quotes Mencius, "Before Heaven puts great trust in a man, it will first torture his spirit, rack his frame, chasten his flesh, exhaust him utterly, and confound him at every turn".<sup>1</sup> This is the way they reconcile with the reality before them. They close their eyes to everything and adopt a set of methods of concealment and deceit, they not only cheat themselves but deceive others too.

Lu Xun often points out the impact of the doctrine of "Mean" on the society. In "on Deffering 'Fair Play' " he criticizes those gentlemen who were beyond reform and their conservative way of thinking.<sup>2</sup> He suggests an extremely cautious attitude against them. The question of taking softer or impartial attitude towards them would mean keeping the chance of more harmful retaliation from them open. In his reply to Xu Bingchang Lu Xun explains that the cause of two types of common attitude in China i.e. the submission to the will of heaven and the doctrine of Mean is not only the inertia of the Chinese people but more because of abasement

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. "On Looking Facts in the Face", LXSW, vol.II, p.199.

. "On Deffering 'Fair Play", LXSW, vol.II,《坟·论"费厄泼赖"之该缓行》, LXQJ.1.

and lack of courage.<sup>1</sup> When they meet someone stronger they do not dare to oppose and reconcile themselves with the help of "mean" or so-called neutrality.

When the Chinese have authority or power they become arbitrary and behave like a tyrant, and do not act impartially. When they talk about the mean or neutrality it means they are losing or have already lost their power. It is the time to take shelter in so-called neutrality. When they lose everything they find solace in fate, take things calmly and even behave like a slave. Lu Xun admonished that these shortcomings are the real reasons for China's defeat and it hardly matters whether they have a foreign enemy or not. It is imperative that these inferiorities should be exposed and the beautiful mask should be torn apart.<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun's attitude towards the vast majority of unawakened illiterate masses also changed from a purely humanistic to a more concrete and more specific outlook. He was open and unequivocal in declaring his stand with the causes of the vulnerable sections of the people. The approach he had earlier was humanistic, full of compassion and a strong desire to enlighten the masses. Gradually, though he often

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1. Xu Bingchang 徐炳超 (1888-1976), was professor of philosophy in Peking University and the chief editor of MENGJIN 《孟津》 weekly. See "Tongxun" 《通讯》, 《华盖集》 LXQJ.3.

2. Ibid, p.26.

had the similar type of intention, there was a clear change in his mental make-up. He considered himself as a part of the population who have become aware and little ahead of the people. He no doubt had defended the attitude of taking the people as foolish. Although he himself was trained in classics and classical Chinese he became one of the most active champion in advocating baihua or vernacular Chinese.<sup>1</sup> His story "A Madman's Diary" was written in vernacular Chinese and heralded the dawn of new literature in the history of modern Chinese literature. The task of popularizing a simple, universally comprehensible common form of language become indispensable for him to achieve his purpose of reaching out the common Chinese. Conversely people would have become literate easily in a short period of time. Lu Xun discussed this question in many of his important essays. He criticized the serious contradiction existed between the archaic written language and the common people. The fearful legacy of the written language has made Chinese silent. It was hard to write though one could speak, while those in distance were left in ignorance. Some regarded it as a

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1. There are quite a few places where Lu Xun criticizes the use of classical Chinese and expresses his opinion in favour of using vernacular Chinese. Some of these writings have already been referred to elsewhere in the present text. He condemned such people who were trying to revive classical Chinese and opposing vernacular and called them as "Murderers of the Present" in a small piece of writing "Random Thoughts", 57, "Murderers of the Present", 《热风·随感录57, "现在的屠杀者"》 LXQJ.1, p.350.

treasure and would amuse themselves by using erudite terms and it was difficult to say that even the small minority could understand what he wrote. Chinese writing was divorced from the masses and it described old sentiments and what it uttered belonged to the past. Scholars did not dare to express themselves in writing. They simply had to study classics and new ideas were taboo. They could write in the style of either Han Yu or Su Shi who belonged to an age far removed from their own time.<sup>1</sup> They could not but express the voice of Han Yu or Su Shi. Lu Xun comments that China has men but no voices, "To restore speech to this China which has been silent for centuries is not an easy matter. It is like ordering a dead man to live again. Though I know nothing of religion, I fancy this approximates to what believers call a 'miracle'."<sup>2</sup> He asks young people to stop speaking the language of Confucius and Mencius, or Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan.<sup>3</sup> They must speak their own language, the language of their own time, using the living vernacular to give expression to their thoughts and feelings. He concludes, " There are only two paths open to us... One is to

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1. Han yu 韓愈 (768-824), a prose writer of the Tang dynasty.

2. "Silent China", LXSW, vol.II, p.330,《三闲集·无声的中国》LXQJ.4.

3. Lui Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), a prose writer of the Tang dynasty.

cling to our classical language and die; the other is to cast that language aside and live."<sup>1</sup>

The indomitable spirit of changing oneself and his environment was Lu Xun's quality. The change is not a natural phenomenon in human society, one has to make conscious effort to making changes. This ideal of social change with human perspective and dynamism has to be cherished and continuously strived for. It should be realized in a dogged manner, continuously and in an imperceptible way, specially in countries like China where a huge population with a strong ideological hang over from the ancient times is awaiting to be awakened in a long period of time. Lu Xun gives the concrete method by quoting Han Feizi's art of horse-racing. One should not be ashamed even if one comes in last, "not to try to come first, and not to mind coming last".<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun comments, "...those runners who fall behind yet still press on to their goal, together with those spectators who do not laugh at them, will some day be the

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1. "Silent China", LXSW, vol.II, p.333.

2. Han Feizi 韩非子 (280-233 B.C.), one of the leading legalist philosopher of the Warring States period. "not to try to come first, and not to mind coming last", (不为最先, 不耻最后) Although Lu Xun mentions this as Han Feizi's statement, there is no such saying in his work 《韩非子》 however, a similar type of comment is recorded in HUAINANZI 《淮南子》, see the note 29 in 《补白》 (Stopgap Writing), LXQJ.3, p.110. The above quotation is also mentioned in "This and That", LXSW, vol.II.

backbone of China."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes he advises the youth to read less or rather stop reading Chinese books.<sup>2</sup> He says that according to the people in ancient times one becomes stupid if one does not read, it is quite true. Lu Xun comments that it is also true that the world has been made by such stupid people. Wise men cannot support the world specially the wise men of China.<sup>3</sup>

Mao while talking about how to articulate effectively in a short essay cited the ideal example of Lu Xun's essays. He asserts analysis can be done in an essay of a few hundred or one or two thousand words. Lu Xun did in his essays, Mao writes, "...sound analysis is impossible without intimate knowledge of life and without real understanding of the relevant contradictions. Lu Hsun's later essays are so penetrating and powerful and yet so free from one-sidedness precisely because by then he had grasped dialectics."<sup>4</sup>

Mao's speech at Yanan in 1942 is an important document which not only summed up the literary movement of the past but also laid down the guiding policy and objectives in the

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1. "This and That", LXSW, vol.II, p.225 (《华盖集·这个与那个》 LXQJ.3).

2. "Xiezai FEN houmian", LXQJ.1, p.286, also see in "Qing mian bi dushu" in HUAGAIJI, LXQJ.3.

3. "Xiezai FEN houmian", LXQJ.1, p.286.

4. Mao, "Speech at Party National Conference on Propaganda Work", SELECTED WORKS, vol.V, p.431.



work of art and literature for the future.<sup>1</sup> Mao had already acknowledged the paramount and undisputed status of Lu Xun in the sphere of new culture in his essay "On New Democracy" in 1940.<sup>2</sup> Now in his Yanan speech he evaluates the undisputed role Lu Xun had played in the field of art and literature. He discusses at length the intrinsic qualities of revolutionary literature and the tasks before the writers and the critics in understanding and shaping the emerging form of the people's art and literature. He referred to Lu Xun's views on art and literature as an integrated part of his thesis and particularly acknowledged the relevance of sound ideological and political stand and the artistic sensibilities as demonstrated by Lu Xun in his writings specially in his later essays. He questions whether contemporary writers should use Lu Xun's way of writing. He points out that Lu Xun was absolutely right in using burning satire and freezing irony in his satirical essays. One should not forget that he was living under the period of repression when there was no freedom of speech. Mao reminds that the contemporary writers should no longer use such veiled and indirect expressions. He says, "Lu Hsun never ridiculed or attacked the revolutionary people and the

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1. Mao, "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art", SW, vol.III.

2. Mao, "On New Democracy", SW, vol.II.

revolutionary Party in his 'satirical essay period', and these essays were entirely different in manner from those directed against the enemy. To criticize the people's shortcomings is necessary, as we have already said, but in doing so we must truly take the stand of the people and speak out of whole-hearted eagerness to protect and educate them."<sup>1</sup> Then he talks about satire, "Are we then to abolish satire? No, satire is always necessary. But there are several kinds of satire, each with a different attitude, satire to deal with enemies, satire to deal with our allies and satire to deal with our ranks. We are not opposed to satire in general; what we must abolish is the abuse of satire."<sup>2</sup> In the end of his talk Mao quotes Lu Xun to express the ideal relationship between the individual and the masses as the motto for the party members, "Fierce-browed, I coolly defy a thousand pointing fingers, Head-bowed, like a willing ox I serve the children."<sup>3</sup>

There has been an attempt, though veiled, undertaken by Lu Xun in his writings in general, and more visibly in Ah Q to conceptualize an image representing the ideal reflection of Chinese culture from a single individual. His search to

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1. Mao, "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art", SW, vol.III, p.92.

2. Ibid, p.92.

3. Ibid, p.96.

visualize the reflection of positive and dynamic qualities of Chinese culture in every Chinese was simply a matter of academic obstinacy. In fact, he questioned the very rationale of a culture in such a way. The failure of culture or the decay of a civilization was criticized by him in such an extreme yet convincing critique. The sincerity he had and the perfection he gradually achieved in his communication was a rare example. His critique of tradition which developed through an all-embracing and assiduous study has outlived his time in providing us with a certain framework for human communication. He shaped an alternative image of culture with the help of its dynamics which remained tabooed outrightly by the cultured class' perceptions. Lu Xun in his early phase of literary career had intense desire for change and his passion for the country and the people was surcharged with romanticism inspired by the ideas of Byron, Nietzsche and Schopenhaur. He loathed mediocrity, and cherished a lofty revolutionary ideal. He was distressed at the pervasive silence among the people. He dedicated himself to the cause of enlightening them. He eagerly wanted to awaken them. Most of his writings at that stage were not received with warm reciprocity by the people. He suffered from acute solitude and after a decade or so he was able to come out from the self-imposed isolation. His stories and reminiscences reflected his mind with a haunted past, his keen intimacy with the toiling masses, his childhood impres-

sions, and his strong conviction for change though with a tone of underlying pessimism.

An aristocratic background had enabled Lu Xun to understand the finer and subtle characteristics of Chinese tradition. While he learned an exquisite and sophisticated cultural behaviour he also acquired the sensitivity of seeing through negative and decaying elements of it. After being trained to absorb the finer traditions of Chinese culture he gradually realized the difficulty in making himself as an ideal and positive archetype of that system. After being convinced about the vitalities of Chinese culture he gradually became convinced about the near impossibility of becoming a positive human being in the contemporary environment. This was his predicament a contradiction between the image of Chinese culture as perceived by a devoted and sincere learner and the true nature of it in actual reality. The illusions and values of an education imparted by his elders, which he learned or accepted blindly were proved as mere handicaps for progress and came into sharp contradiction with the reality. All such so-called time-honoured moral values such as loyalty, filially, obedience, chastity and the attitude of accepting the instructions of the elders without questioning remained mainly symbolic of an archaic spirit and were not understood nor followed either by the elders or by the young according to the changing contexts of social reality. They became mere

rituals in maintaining the status quo or even as readymade pretexts of containing new ideas. The dynamics of culture as was gone through an evolutionary process along with the space of time was not reflected in the behaviour of cultured elite class. On the contrary the value system became so distorted and misinterpreted by the conservative forces that the people outside the educated class were completely isolated from the mainstream culture. The vast majority of the masses mainly the rural peasantry looked at that cultural behaviour as alien, strange and funny. It was ironical that the very source of a lively culture began to ridicule the rationale of that. Apart from the amusing part as manifested in the behaviour of the upper class the conflict created a critical situation leading to a deep sense of losing one's identity. This was precisely the theme Lu Xun dealt with throughout his intellectual odyssey. The appalling absence of dynamism in the cultural behaviour of the elite was the target of his attack. It is true that he showed a sort of romanticized affinity with Chinese culture and took the image of it as a comprehensive and generalized form but later he shook off his impulsive reaction and conceptualized a more analytic and distinctive contour of Chinese culture.

Lu Xun's stories drew a large number of readers and literature which was not commonly enjoyed so far became truly popular craze. He not only attacked the high-brow literary practitioners by shaking their upper-class ivory

tower of literature, he also made genuine effort to satisfy the aesthetic taste of the popular minds. His rise as the most popular writer itself was considered by many established literary personalities as a threat to their profession and the current theories of literature of that time. His writings were not the product of a leisurely mind. His hatred for the art for art's sake was expressed by him in many occasions. His firm conviction of using literature to transform the national spirit never wavered. His spirit of engaging himself in understanding the essence of Chinese civilization and the contemporary mood of the people was so sincere and unique which remained unparalleled in the history of modern China. He clearly dissociated himself from the advocates of classical language although he himself was trained almost thoroughly in the traditional education. He criticized vehemently the Confucian views and distanced himself from them. His voice against so-called moribund national characteristics was unequivocal. He laid bare the selfish intentions of the so-called reformers and pseudo progressive people. He overstepped almost all traditional rules and norms and advised publicly the young Chinese to read less or not to read Chinese books. He welcomed foreign ideas and theories and was enthusiastic in absorbing anything new. His fearless attitude to face all odds and criticisms while putting forward his views squarely was exemplary. As if the entire edifice of the so-called tradi-

tion began to crumble by an unforeseen cyclonic storm. Lu Xun remained steadfast, determined and sober-minded while replying the weapons thrown at him by his critics for years. He remained relentless in facing all sorts of abuse, slanders, innuendoes and allegations. Passionate patriotism, firm conviction in truth and earnest desire to see a fundamental change in China were three basic aspects of Lu Xun's intellectual search. Concepts such as "man", "freedom" and "national identity" kept him engaged in a life-long inquiry into various types of texts. He hardly spared any opportunity of making himself exposed to new ideas and gradually realized that the passion for the country and the people was not enough to understanding the complex and intricate reasons working behind the changing reality. Affinity with mythological and romantic literary tradition of China was evident yet his spirit of grasping the hidden laws of the nature and the reality was profound. He questioned the validity of the divine source of imperial political power and therefore disapproved any experiment with the constitutional monarchy. He clearly expressed his support to political leadership of Sun Yatsen and the ideology of revolutionary democrats and highly evaluated Sun Yatsen's role in the democratic process of China. He always cherished the genuine revolutionary spirit of great personalities of his time and respectfully acknowledged the contribution of revolutionary pioneers such as Zhang Taiyan, Sun Yatsen and

Li Dazhao.<sup>1</sup> The struggle with his own self as well as with the existing intellectual and cultural perceptions continued for a long time and remained in ideological realm. His early essays were inarticulate while his stories made him the most popular writer of the time. The truthfulness, the sensibilities and the superb skill in narrative articulation made most of his characters immortal as they were as true as life and representative of that time. But the success which was so quick and unprecedented that it made Lu Xun the target of virulent attack by the established men of letters and the conservative political forces. The price was too heavy for an individual to pay. Even the so-called progressive writers and worst the revolutionary writers of the time grossly misunderstood his views. The fame became an unbearable burden and made his nights sleepless. The struggle in real life of withstanding baseless allegations, abuses and unhealthy and biased literary criticisms made his ideological stand clearer and firmer in a long process of tenacity,

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1. Two essays in which Lu Xun pays tribute to Sun Yat-sen are "Huanghuajie de zagan" 《而已集·黄花节的杂感》 (Stray Thoughts on Huanghua Day), LXQJ.3, and "Zhongshan xiansheng shishihou yizhounian" 《集外集拾遗·中山先生逝世后一周年》 (The first Death Anniversary of Sun Yatsen), LXQJ.7. Also see "Zhong Shan Daxue kaixue zhiyu" 《集外集拾遗补编·中山大学开学致语》 LXQJ.8. For Li Dazhao see "SHOUCANG QUANJI tiji" 《守常全集·题词》 (The Preface to the works of Li Dazhao), LXQJ.4, "Qingzhu Hu Ning kefude na yi bian" 《集外集拾遗补编·庆祝沪宁克复的那一边》 (The Other Side of Celebrating the Recovery of Shanghai and Nanjing), LXQJ.8. Lu Xun's tribute to the young revolutionaries is recorded in "Weile wangquede jinian" 《为了忘却的纪念》, (written for the sake of forgetting), LXQJ.4.



tolerance and strong conviction. The trivialities of the worldly life, which his adversaries themselves employed without much seriousness while Lu Xun's sincerity, tenacity and truthfulness even to such trivialities made him achieve a high level of philosophical insights. The true understanding of culture through such a long-drawn trivial communication took a concrete and distinct shape in this writings. His writings of this stage which contained mostly such trivial matters became significant and meaningful. He not only showed sober-mindedness, tolerance and above all a healthy mental capacity but also exposed those so-called representatives or "gentlemen" of Chinese culture.

Lu Xun's legacy was thus formed through a process in which genuine, lively elements of Chinese culture of a particular time were discovered, classified, revived and reestablished. The irrelevant, distorted and harmful elements as were propagated by such champions of so-called national essence and modernism under the influence of the West became too evident. The lack of seriousness, the utter failure of understanding of the true spirit of tradition and of the dynamics of culture apart from their hypocrisy, aristocratic pride and snobish attitude have been documented in Lu Xun's words. This was the significance of his role in specific historical context. He made the great masses of the people of an ancient civilization aware of their time helped them in a painstaking attempt to regain their self-

confidence as a nation, and as a healthy, positive and constructive part of the global civilization without losing the distinctive native cultural identity. Lu Xun all along was engaged in conceptualizing a comprehensive image of modern man and the problem of China's national characteristics. In such a philosophical attempt to grasp the deterministic laws of man's psychological and cultural behaviour Lu Xun eventually was able to construct a specific and commonly accepted features of national cultural behaviour and thus was successful in pointing out to the emerging universal pattern of human culture. He was a creative writer in the realm of literature but gradually he broke his link with his own domain and laid the foundation of studies on culture with an inter-disciplinary approach. Particularly in his later stage of communication he became so much preoccupied with a routine interaction specially with his critics that a complex yet unique system of practical political thought evolved. In this aspect Lu Xun transcended the social cultural theme to a political task. This was a concrete and easily visible role of a trail-blazing revolutionary which Lu Xun played in the process of criticizing and rejecting the old culture and paving the way for the new culture. It was not merely a task of rejuvenating a dying culture but recreating out of a mammoth structure a precise and healthy value system suitable for the time.

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