



# INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES

## **100th Anniversary of Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary'**

**Panelist:** Roman Shapiro, Emily Mae Graf, Taku Kurashige, Raman Sinha, Senno Takumasa

**Moderator:** Hemant Adlakha

**Venue:** Multipurpose Hall, Kamaladevi Complex, IIC

The panel discussion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' was organized by the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and India International Centre (IIC). The panelists were welcomed by the Director, ICS and he also shared with the audience the gist of Lu Xun's short story 'A Madman's diary'.

Lu Xun (1881-1936) is considered one of the most important writers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese literature and his short story 'A Madman's Diary' is also regarded as a 'milestone fiction – the first piece of fiction written in revolutionary realism tradition'.

After the Director's remarks, he handed over the proceedings of the panel discussion to the moderator of the session, Dr. Hemant Adlakha. Dr. Adlakha started the discussion with the picture presentation of slides on the Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary'. The slides showcased how different images were used as a cover for Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' in the subsequent years in China and in other countries like Japan, Korea, and Russia. He began the discussion by posing the question to the panel of whether Lu Xun's madman is a Chinese madman or a world's madman.

Prof. Senno Takumasa highlighted the importance of 'A Madman's Diary' on the birth of modernism in literature in China. He said that Lu Xun was describing a local problem in his

story but it becomes theoretically universal. Senno Takumasa argued that the significance of Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' does not lie, as generally believed, in the story as a first work of Chinese modern literature or as a first writing in Chinese vernacular language. He even questioned the authenticity of the knowledge, that 'A Madman's Diary' was the first literature in Chinese vernacular language, for he argued that there were other attempts at vernacular language during Lu Xun's time by other writers. He claimed that Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' is important because of how it "let the readers feel the story is real". He said that modernization of literature occurred throughout the world, after the efforts of many writers but he argues that in China, it was Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' alone that brought modernization of literature, in that way the work is special and significant.

The next discussant, Roman Shiparo portrayed the comparability of Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' and Nikolai Gogol's (1809-1852) 'A Diary of a Madman'. He not only pointed to the basic similarities in the title and diary as form of the story but also presented a direct relation between the two work. Firstly, he informed that Lu Xun himself has stated that Gogol had influenced his writing. Secondly, he pointed out that many of the Lu Xun's translation of foreign literature to Chinese were Gogol's work. He recorded 166 translations, out of which 44 were from Russian authors. He estimated that out of these 44, about 19 are of Gogol's writings. Roman Shiparo also thinks similar to Prof. Senno Takumasa regarding the moderator's question, he believes that "Lu Xun's madman is regional but at the same time a world's madman".

Emily Mae Graf's primary research focused on museums dedicated to Lu Xun in the People's Republic of China, Bertolt Brecht in the German Democratic Republic and Lai He in Taiwan. She highlighted the multiplicity of voices in a single space and importance of narrator within a space (museum for example) where prevailing a particular narrative means dispersing another narrative. Emily asked the readers of the 'A Madman's Diary' to question truth, category, reality and to understand that one logic, truth and category suspend another. She also questioned whether we can define or pin point madness. She particularly pointed to the multiplicity of voices in a display and always having a room outside of the narrator's narrative.

Taku Kurashige postulates that 'A Madman's Diary' is Lu Xun's criticism of both the 'old intellectuals' and 'new intellectuals' for he argues that the cannibalism metaphor used in 'A

Madman's Diary' is of 'classical intellectual'. He also pointed out to how Lu Xun is suspicious of successful intellectuals. Kurashige argues that although Lu Xun was aggressive in his criticism of the 'classical intellectuals, he himself is a 'responsible intellectual'.

Raman Sinha, the final discussant pointed out to some basic facts such as the published Lu Xun's 'A Diary of Madman' is an edited version and that it is in its entirety. And also that the narrator has used classical Chinese and the diary is in vernacular. He also discussed the moderator's question and said, whether we consider Lu Xun's madman a Chinese madman or world's madman is dependent on how we read the story. If read literally, then it is 'cultural/regional' but if read metamorphically and psychoanalytically, Lu Xun's madman is a world's madman.

With this the panel discussion was concluded but further discussion with questions from the audience took place for short time. The audience also posed the panelists with the questions about the study of Lu Xun's Madman and human nature and also the connection between Lu Xun and Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

*This Report has been prepared by Namkha Tsering, Research Assistant, Institute of Chinese Studies*

### **About the Speakers**

**Prof. Senno Takumasa** is a Professor and the Head of the Department of Chinese Literature and Linguistics in Waseda University. He graduated from Waseda University, the Department of Chinese Literature in 1979. He completed his master and doctoral course in Tokyo Metropolitan University, the Department of Chinese literature. He was appointed a full-time lecturer in Ryutu Keizai University in 1989, and was appointed an Associate Professor in Meisei University in 1992 and raised to the rank of Professor in 1997. He was later transferred to Waseda University in 2004. He is mainly engaged in research on Chinese modern literature and culture.

**Dr. Roman Shapiro** teaches Chinese Translation, History of Chinese Literature and other philological subjects. He taught at a number of universities in Russia and abroad and was a Board Member of the European Association of Chinese Studies and the European Association of Chinese Linguistics. He published research papers on Chinese literature,

philology and culture. Dr Shapiro translated a number of works of Chinese literature into Russian, including Yu Hua (To Live, Chronicle of a Blood Merchant, China in Ten Words), Jia Pingwa, Li Jingze, and Wang Anyi. He also translated Jung Chang's bestselling memoirs Wild Swans. He graduated from the Institute for Asian and African Studies (Moscow University).

**Mr. Taku Kurashige** is a lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Tsinghua University. He did his graduation from Minnesota State University, Mankato (USA). He worked as editor in Tokyo. In 2010, he entered the master program at the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Tsinghua University (China). After finishing his degree in Modern Chinese Literature, he is pursuing the research at Tsinghua University under the supervision of Professor Wang Hui as Ph.D. candidate.

**Dr. Emily Mae Graf** works at Heidelberg University as Assistant Professor (Assistentin) at the Institute of Chinese Studies, teaching classes on the writers Lu Xun and Lai He, on contemporary writers, such as Yan Lianke, as well as on past and present cultural politics in the PRC. She received her PhD in 2018 in Sinology and Transcultural Studies from Heidelberg University at the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context". Her primary research focused on museums dedicated to Lu Xun in the PRC, Bertolt Brecht in the GDR and Lai He in Taiwan. Taking a global perspective, she investigated how each writer is represented as a left-wing writer and revealed how "world literary heritage" is thereby constructed through the display of their literary estates. A Joint-PhD Fellowship at Renmin University of China, Beijing (2013-14) enabled her to visit author museums across China and Taiwan, interviewing museum directors, staff and visitors.

**Dr. Raman P. Sinha** teaches Sanskrit Poetics, Western Literary Theory, Hindi Drama and Theatre, Philosophy of literary History at the Centre of Indian Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. He has published three books besides several articles and research papers. He has also translated more than two hundred poems and some prose pieces from English and from different Indian languages and vice versa. His area of interests includes Hindi studies, Translation studies, Culture studies and Performing arts.

**Dr. Hemant Adlakha** is Professor of Chinese and the Ex-Chairperson, the Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies (CCSEAS), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He is also an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) Delhi. His areas of

research include Political discourse in the P R China, Chinese literature, culture and cinema. His PhD dissertation was on 'Modernization and the State in Contemporary China: Search for a Distant Civil Society'. His present work looks at Lu Xun in contemporary China, East Asia and the world. He has published articles in Chinese and in English. He is a member, International Editorial Committee, International Society for Lu Xun Studies, Seoul (ROK). His most recent publications include, 'Confucius' in Encyclopedia of Race and Racism, 2nd Edition, Gale Cengage Learning, Macmillan Reference, USA. He is currently working on a book entitled "The Poetics of Change: Lu Xun's Relevance and Influence on East Asian Modernity". He has recently, in collaboration with Dr. Raman Sinha, Centre for Indian Languages, JNU, has completed a Chinese - Hindi translation of Lu Xun's prose poetry collection Wild Grass (forthcoming 2018-19). Dr. Adlakha has also translated Lu Xun's A Madman's Diary from Chinese into Hindi (forthcoming 2018-19). He regularly contributes articles to journals and news magazines such as China Report, The Diplomat etc.