

Third All India Conference of China Studies: A Report

December 20-21, 2010, Kolkata

Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) has been organizing national level workshops on China Studies in India at regular intervals. After the first two workshops held in Delhi in December, 2006 and December 2009, ICS organized the ***Third All India Conference of China Studies*** in Kolkata on December 20-21, 2010, in collaboration with **Hariprasanna Biswas Centre for India-China Cultural Studies of Jadavpur University**. As the years before, it was an important event in ICS calendar; more so because it was from this Conference that ICS decided to institutionalize the event. Henceforth, it was proposed that the All India China Studies Conference will be held once every year, preferably in December, in one of the institutions where research is being carried out in China Studies.

It was noted that China Studies has been gaining importance all over the world. It was also noted that in the decades since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, some countries of the West have had several Centres and Institutes dedicated to study and research of China. India, on the other hand, has had many limitations in its efforts to study China, in spite of the fact that India and China have shared a civilizational interaction for centuries. To begin with, India's scholarship on China was limited to a handful of experts, let alone the perpetual paucity of resources. Yet, progress made in the last two decades has been extremely encouraging, with two new generations of China scholars coming to maturity and producing works on a wide range of themes. Moreover, many of these scholars have achieved commendable competence in Chinese language, enabling them to use primary source materials that are much more readily available compared to a few decades back.

No less important was the fact that the new generations of China scholars have had the benefit of sustained training under the supervision of senior China scholars who have set the standard of academic research and continue to do so. Subsequently, some of the existing areas of research have been strengthened, but more importantly, new areas of interest and importance have been identified and ventured into. Therefore, the body of research emerging out of our Centres and Institutes on China Studies in India have two points of departure compared to the past, first, it is becoming more and more interdisciplinary, and secondly, it is taking ample advantage of the abundant primary source material and language competence available today.

Needless to mention that China, as a nation, has gone from strength to strength; the changing geo-politics of the region and changing world order, and India's proximity to China, has given rise to new concerns in India. Thus, apart from the classical areas of

China Studies, such as foreign policy, economic development, domestic politics etc., Indian scholars have become interested in a range of new issues such as issues of environment, food and energy security, soft power, socio-cultural transformation and so on.

Given this background, the exercise of dissemination of information on the research conducted in China Studies has assumed extraordinary importance. Therefore, ICS proposed a format for this two days event: three sessions comprising of *Research on China Studies in India*, *Research on China Studies in the World*, and a third session devoted to a special theme. As the whole world was celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, the third session in this year's Conference was devoted to the theme of *Rabindranath Tagore and East Asia*.

In the Inaugural Session, a Special Address was delivered by Mr. Gautam Bambawale, Joint Secretary (East Asia), Ministry of External Affairs, GOI. A large contingent of scholars from all over India and different institutional background and training participated in the event and enriched the knowledge resources on China Studies. Not only institutions traditionally having Centres/Departments of China Studies, such as Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Delhi, Visva-Bharati, Banaras Hindu University etc., but even new institutions developing interest in China such as IPCS, Gitam University etc. were also represented by young scholars. Papers presented covered diverse aspects of China Studies so as to reflect the recent research and future trends, as well as prospects and challenges. On behalf of ICS, the Conference was convened by Prof. Sabaree Mitra; the Co-convenor from Jadavpur University was Dr. Imankalyan Lahiri.