

16th



INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES

Giri Deshmukh
Memorial Lecture

INDIA IN THE CHINESE QUEST FOR NATIONALISM & MODERNITY: PERSPECTIVES FROM CHINESE TRAVEL WRITINGS



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DATE & TIME VENUE

20 th August 2024 6 PM	Conference Hall-II (Pergola with terrace), India International Centre, New Delhi.
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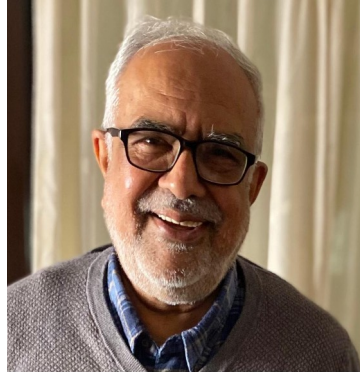
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Biographical Note



Prof. Kamal Sheel was Professor of Chinese language at the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India, until his retirement in 2016. He is now an Adjunct Fellow of the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi. Prof. Sheel completed his BA from Banaras Hindu University and received a postgraduate training in Chinese language and history at Fu-Jen Catholic University and the National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan. He received a doctoral degree in the field of Modern Chinese History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. He has been Visiting Professor/ Fellow at the universities in Wisconsin-Madison, Yale, Copenhagen, Beijing, Singapore, and Taiwan; and in India in University of Delhi, Panjab University, Central University of Sikkim, and IIT- BHU. His current research interest primarily lies in the area of social and intellectual history of China, and cultural interaction and encounters in Asia with a focus on India and China. His major publication is *Peasant Society and Marxist Intellectuals in China* (Princeton 1989). He also has to his credit jointly edited volumes titled *India on the Silk Route* (Delhi, 2009) with Charles Willemen and Lalji; *From Local to Global: Papers in Asian History & Culture* (Delhi, 2017) with Kenneth Zysk and Charles Willemen; *Thirteen Months in China: A Subaltern Indian and the Colonial World* (Oxford, 2017) with Anand Yang and Ranjana Sheel. His two other works with Prof. Ranjana Sheel, *Kang Youwei Engages India: His Travel Narratives (1901-1902) and Predicaments of Civilization and Nation*; and *Territorializing the Chinese Nation: Cartography, Geopolitics and Huang Maocai's Mission to India (1878-1880)* by Routledge in 2024.



Prof. Patricia Uberoi is an Emeritus Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), Delhi. She served as the Chairperson of the Institute of Chinese Studies from 2015-2021. A sociologist by training, Dr Uberoi has taught Sociology at the University of Delhi and the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and retired as Professor of Social Change and Development at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. Her research interests centre on aspects of family, kinship, gender, popular culture and social policy in respect to both India and China. Her most recent publication is the 4 volume *Asian Families and Intimacies* (co-ed. with Ochiai Emiko, 2021), a compendium of original translations from Asian languages, in which she had sourced and edited Part III, 'Transforming Asian Sexualities'. At the ICS, she has been closely associated for several years with the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Forum for Regional Cooperation, a Track II dialogue focusing on development issues in the region stretching from Northeast India to Southwest China. She is also a Member of the Joint Study Group (India) for the BCIM Economic Corridor.

Executive Summary

- The 16th Giri Deshingkar Memorial Lecture (GDML) was organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, in honour of Giri Deshingkar, who was among the first generation of Sinologists in India. This lecture series celebrates the strong foundations laid down by Giri Deshingkar, and commemorates his contributions, that initiated a systematic approach to the study of various aspects of China.
- Mr. Rakesh Pandey, Associate Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi, acknowledged the significant role that Giri Deshingkar played at the CSDS, which was his home institution for the longest time. Further, he also commended the collaborative relationship between CSDS and the ICS, which was nurtured by Prof. Deshingkar and his contemporaries.
- Prof. Alka Acharya, Honorary Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; and, Chairperson and Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, also underscored the central role played by Giri Deshingkar at both the ICS and the CSDS, and referred to his multifaceted personality and interests. Further, Prof. Acharya highlighted how the ICS and the CSDS developed a strong and close bond through the efforts of Giri Deshingkar.
- Prof. Manorajan Mohanty, Distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi, spoke on the legacy of Prof. Giri Deshingkar. He mentioned the establishment of the China Study Group, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019, wherein Prof. Giri Deshingkar played a pivotal role,

and made significant contributions through his his extensive knowledge of Chinese, Indian, and European history. He also stated that Prof. Deshingkar was the first editor of *China Report*, a quarterly journal of East Asian Studies, published by the ICS.

- Tracing the major milestones of Prof. Deshingkar's illustrious life, Prof. Mohanty detailed how a scholarship from the Ford Foundation helped Prof. Deshingkar receive education abroad. From Yale, he received his doctorate where his research focused on the founding of the Manchu dynasty. As a scholar, Prof. Deshingkar advocated for a reciprocal relationship where social sciences would support the growth of area studies. His contributions led to the establishment of numerous centres dedicated to research in various universities.
- Prof. Patricia Uberoi, Emeritus Fellow, and former Chairperson, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi highlighted Prof. Deshingkar's versatility as a scholar and as a person. She noted how Prof. Deshingkar, apart from his intellectual prowess, also excelled at various other fields, and held great regard for music and the arts.
- The 16th GDML on “**India in the Chinese Quest for Nationalism and Modernity: Perspectives from Chinese Travel Writings**” was delivered by Prof. Kamal Sheel, former Professor of Chinese language, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; and, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, who explored how travel narratives in modern China have depicted India. Despite the fact that these narratives are highly subjective in nature, Prof. Sheel stated, they still provide highly useful insights, and can also be viewed as an alternative source to construct not just ethnic history but also cultural history.

- Prof. Sheel spoke about the contributions of Huang Maocai, a trained Chinese cartographer, who travelled to India in the late 19th century. Huang Maocai wrote two short volumes titled, *Xiyou Riji (Diary of the Travel to the West)* and *Yindu Zazhi (Miscellaneous Notes on India)*. His travels, encompassing both terrestrial and maritime routes, yielded significant contributions to geographical knowledge and cultural understanding between India and China. These works were later translated by Profs. Ranjana Sheel and Kamal Sheel.
- Kang Youwei was another key figure mentioned by Prof. Sheel. He described Kang as a maverick intellectual and moderniser of late 19th century China, who led the famous Hundred Day Reform Movement of 1898. He traveled to India in 1901-1902, and his travelogue, *Yindu Youji (Record of Travel to India)*, contains his observations on Indian history and politics, as well as society.e.

Report

Since ancient times, India has had a significant influence on Chinese intellectual thought. Despite their historical and civilizational ties, the transition of China from a civilization-state to a nation-state in the late 19th and early 20th centuries led to new national concerns in Chinese discussions about India. This shift highlighted India's role as China began to explore the relationship between civilization, nationalism, and modernity. This is evident in the travel writings of early twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals who visited India. This seminar focused on the first two major modern travelogues by Huang Maocai and Kang Youwei, which offer insights into the mindset of early 20th century Chinese intellectuals and reformers as they navigated the era's challenges and uncertainties, using India as a reference point. The 16th Giri Deshingkar Memorial Lecture featured Prof. Kamal Sheel, former Professor of Chinese language, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; and, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi. The title of his lecture was **India in the Chinese Quest for Nationalism and Modernity: Perspectives from Chinese Travel Writings** and it was chaired by Prof. Patricia Uberoi.

Dr. Rakesh Pandey, Associate Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, in his opening remarks, highlighted the pivotal role of the late Giri Deshingkar in shaping the field of Chinese Studies in India. He described Giri Deshingkar as a renowned authority on China, who was actively involved with the United Nations University and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), contributing to peace initiatives alongside Rajni Kothari. Dr. Pandey also reflected on Giri's multifaceted personality, noting his deep interests in science, classical music, and Chinese Studies. He further emphasized that he remains a key figure connecting the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) and CSDS.

In her introductory remarks, Prof. Alka Acharya, Honorary Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, and, Chairperson and Professor, Centre for East Asian

Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, mentioned that the predecessors at both the ICS and the CSDS have set the highest standards of academic research and have been a source of inspiration. She further added that both CSDS and ICS view Prof. Giri Deshingkar as a central figure due to his incredible contributions to both institutions. Prof. Acharya also noted the close and ever-growing relationship and collaboration between CSDS and ICS.

Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Emeritus Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; and, Distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi, while exploring the legacy of Giri Deshingkar mentioned that the China Study Group, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019, , was initially a programme under the CSDS, and later evolved into the ICS. In 2010, through the efforts of Amb. Shiv Shankar Menon, the ICS became an independent institute.. He also mentioned that after Giri Deshingkar received his doctorate from Yale, he was called back to India to start a programme on Chinese studies at the University of Delhi in close cooperation with Prof. V.P. Dutt.

Prof. Kamal Sheel's lecture , emphasised the importance of travel narratives in understanding cultural and political dynamics. He noted that travel documents were often seen as subjective until recently. However, modern historiography has pushed the boundaries of traditional narratives by incorporating travel accounts to enrich ethno-history and cultural discourse. These narratives provide an alternative and deeper understanding of a country's history, culture, and society. Furthermore, such travelogues explore the minds of individuals, nurtured by their own distinct circumstances, and outline the boundaries of nations and communities, while shaping cultural and political perspectives. Prof. Sheel highlighted how the travel narratives of Chinese monks like Xuan Zang, Faxian and Yi Jing documented their travels to India. These historical figures noted that India was a focal point for Chinese explorers from ancient times. He explored two travelogues written by different authors. The first was Huang Maocai, a Chinese cartographer, who traveled extensively from 1878 to

1880. His journey, both overland and maritime, provided valuable geographical and cultural insights. Huang Maocai wrote two short volumes titled, *Xiyou Riji (Diary of the Travel to the West)* and *Yindu Zazhi (Miscellaneous Notes on India)*. Prof. Sheel also pointed out how Huang travelled across China on his way to India, and the impact it had on him. The travel undertaken by Huang allowed him to develop a deeper understanding of both China and later India, which he then wrote about in his travelogue.

Apart from Huang, Prof. Sheel also looked at Kang Youwei, a key figure in late 19th century China and leader of the Hundred Day Reform Movement, who authored *Yindu Youji (Record of Travel to India)* in 1901-1902. He mentioned that Kang's travelogue offers detailed observations about India, ranging from its history and politics to various aspects of Indian society. Kang noted that China and Europe differed more than China and India, indicating his belief in the nuanced nature of cultural comparisons.

Prof. Sheel explained that travel narratives, while often subjective, offer significant insights into the dynamic exchange between India and China. Chinese travelers like Huang Maocai and Tang Chung were particularly motivated by their interest in Buddhism and their admiration for India as a civilization state. According to Prof. Sheel, these travellers were strong advocates of the lessons to be learnt from India, which could be employed at a time when China was facing various challenges, especially due to encroachments by Western powers. Both Huang Maocai and Kang Youwei believed in the value of modern sciences and reform, and through their travels, they learnt and recorded their experiences. There was thus a strategic significance of their travelogues, which provided the declining Qing state with knowledge about various aspects such as geography, culture, trade, and commerce beyond Chinese borders.

The lecture concluded with Prof. Sheel providing a thorough analysis of the aforementioned travel writings and how they influenced notions of modernity and nationalism in late imperial China. Ending his talk, Prof. Sheel also mentioned the importance of such writings in the present, since they can help the construction of history by complementing the available sources. Lastly, such records and sources also provide an alternative approach to revisit history and glean unexplored leads to foster a more comprehensive understanding.

Image Gallery



Image Gallery



Institutional Profile



The **Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS)**, New Delhi is engaged in and committed to interdisciplinary research on China. Apart from the annual All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS), the Institute undertakes various collaborative research programs and multilateral initiatives with prominent institutions in India and abroad, and brings together leading and upcoming scholars through multiple fora. Among its many legacies, it has been conducting the iconic Wednesday Seminar for over 50 years and publishes the *China Report*, a peer-reviewed quarterly journal on China and East Asia, currently in its 60th year of publication.



Since its inception in 1963, the **Centre for the Study of Developing Societies** has been recognised as one of the leading intellectual institutions of the global south. The Centre has accomplished a generational transition by reinventing itself in the 21st century, with a fresh commitment to forging links between the social sciences and the humanities, and to discovering non-European lineages of political and ethical thought in Indian languages. The Centre values its autonomy and the continuing critical presence in the public domain for which it is widely respected. Indeed, it generates research in the hope that it will shape public opinion, influence policy and make meaningful interventions in society. To imagine alternatives in response to our own social, political and economic problems, in diverse cultural settings, is an activity highly valued by all those who work at the Centre.



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