

The Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program for Accelerating Brain Circulation
Construction of a Global Platform for the Study of Sustainable Humansphere
Overseas Travel Report

Travel Report Filed By: Satoru YAMANE

Period: December 11th – 16th, 2014

Destination: India Habitat Centre, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi (India)

Report:

For this trip, I first participated in the workshop “What Do We Eat?: Food and Identity in India,” held on December 12th in a conference room in Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi. There I gave a presentation in English entitled “More Sophisticated, More Nostalgic and More Romantic: A Study of the Urdu Writings on Cuisine Culture under the British Raj.” The workshop was an inquiry into the state of food culture in India from Medieval India to the present day. Although it was a small-scale, one-day workshop, with about 20 participants, lively discussions were held as a total of ten participants (five from Japan and five from India) each presented his or her report. For my presentation, I focused on the many accounts of nostalgia for food culture of the Mughal Empire period by Urdu intellectuals during the British Raj. This nostalgia indicated not only an attempt to preserve the decaying Indian-Muslim culture, it also introduced the names of a variety of meat dishes through the vocabulary and expressions of elegant Persian language. This presented a point of difference with Hindus, who used the Sanskrit language and avoided meat. I showed that when studying the differentiation between the Hindi language and Urdu language, not only vocabulary and characters but also the vague concept of “expression” are extremely important elements in human beings’ linguistic behavior. Due to time constraints, I could not report on many examples, but when I presented specific cases, I could see agreement from Indian researchers concerning this idea about “expression.” Thus my report achieved a certain level of results. Many participating researchers on the Indian side were young women. Through research of food culture, researchers from a variety of disciplines actively presented their views, which was meaningful in giving a strong sense of the potentials found in research exchanges between Japan and India.



Exchange with Indian Researchers



Presentation by the author

Next, from December 13th I participated in the international conference “Perspectives, Dialogues and Challenges: India, Japan and the Making of Modern Asia,” held at the India Habitat Centre. This three-day event was co-sponsored by the National Institutes for the Humanities of Japan’s research project “Contemporary India” and Shiv Nadar University. At the conference, Professor Kaoru Sugihara, formerly of Kyoto University, gave the keynote address. In 11 sessions, 11 researchers from Japan and 11 researchers from India and other countries presented their research findings. About 20 participants from each side, India and Japan, participated in the conference. The question-and-answer period for each presentation exceeded its schedule time as participants engaged in enthusiastic exchanges.

The India Habitat Centre, the site of the conference, was an enormous complex with many conference rooms and other facilities located in the urban Centre. It is an extensive building where one can feel the dedication of the Indian government’s efforts toward supporting academic research.



Exterior of the India Habitat Centre

For “Modernity and Nation in the Everyday,” the afternoon session on the first day, I took on the role of moderator. In this session, participants presented findings such as national consciousness surrounding fermented bean dishes like *natto* in the northeast region of India. Also presented was a study of the inflow of Japanese-made tiles into India during the British Raj. Along with a wealth of photographs, there have been many examples reported of Japanese-made tiles bearing pictures of Hindu gods and flowers based on the requests by the India side. Research by Takashi Oishi (Kobe City University of Foreign Studies) has already shown that such examples are similar to pictures of Hindu gods and flowers used for the design of matchboxes made in Japan for India during the same period. From such research, I felt new potentials for investigating Japanese-Indian relations during the British Raj. Also, an Indian female researcher who reported on fermented beans was a young researcher from Stockholm University. While this was the first time she presented at an international conference like this, she said she was very impressed by the richness and high quality of South Asia studies in Japan. Collaborative research between Japan and India is already being carried out at an advanced level. I keenly felt that continuing such research exchange is also extremely important for fostering young researchers.



Session moderated by the author



Scene from conference (2nd day)