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The First Seminar on "India and China: Looking at Each Other" (15th - 18th November 1995)

Jointly organised by IGNCA and Institute of Chinese Studies

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India and China, the only two ancient and yet living civilizations of the world have more points of convergence than divergence. But, the two neighbours have distanced in the spin of development. The IGNCA, realising the potential of the two civilizations coming together hosted a seminar on "India and China : looking at each other". The seminar was jointly organised by IGNCA and the Institute of Chinese Studies.

In another four years' time the world is entering into the third millennium of our common era which symbolizes the beginning of a new epoch. For India and China, their civilizations will be more than five thousand years old by then. How could they have such a long continuity through all historical vicissitudes, and why do they not rank among the front line nations today, are questions which deserve deep pondering and reflection. We should rediscover the strength and weakness of our civilization and regain a place in the sunshine of the coming new eras. Indian and Chinese intellectuals shoulder a historical responsibility at the present juncture to look closely at their own civilizational experience and also at each other's civilizational experience. When one looks at another person closely one sees his own image in the eye-pupils of the other. In looking at each other, India and China will gain a better understanding of their own selves.

The genesis of the seminar was during a visit by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Academic Director of IGNCA, to the famous Chinese historical monuments of Dunhuang caves in the centre of the Gobi Desert in northwest China in 1990, she proposed to Prof. Duan Wenjie, Director of the Dunhuang Academy, that the scholars of India and China call it a day in looking for information and insight of each other's country through the sources of the far away western hemisphere while the two countries were immediate neighbours in the east. Prof. Duan at once endorsed her proposal, and the two institutions began their direct interactions and collaboration, which culminated in this seminar.

The seminar was a part of a larger project of promoting close cultural understanding between the civilization of the two countries. The four-day seminar yielded well researched papers and presentations in addition to significant comments by the Chinese experts and eminent scholars and public personalities of India who have a deep interest in China's cultural history and current developments. Through all these efforts we wish that the ruling elite, the enlightened circles and the general public of India and China can gain a better understanding of each other's country, to greet the first rays of the 21st century.