

China and India: Comparative Perspectives Cheryl Abbott (Germany 1986, India 1987)

Biography

C.L. Abbott, Ph.D., received U.S. Fulbright awards to Germany (1986) and India (1987); and participated in global Fulbright alumni conferences in Washington, D.C.; Greece (2004); and Morocco (2006), including the conference on "Morocco in Western Art." A founding member of the Alliance of Advanced Women Scholars that grew out of the Radcliffe Forum and evolved into the Alliance of Independent Scholars, Abbott lectures at home and abroad on topics such as "Literary Nationalism and the Popular Press," "East-West Comparative Studies," and "Interdisciplinary Aesthetics."

Abbott is a member of the Board of Directors of the New England Alumni Association of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government [KSGNE], in which capacity she led the co-sponsorship of "Perspectives from the Future: A Symposium on Tomorrow's World as Defined by Today's Research and Planning," which explored demographic trends and the future of health care, education, and urban design. Abbott's contributions to KSGNE draw on the more than a decade she served KSG in several capacities, especially on behalf of University-wide interdisciplinary and international initiatives. In 2007-2008, she served as a volunteer on a consulting team convened by Community Action Partners at the Harvard Business School.

Sole Proprietor of *Diverse Enterprises*, Abbott consults with a wide range of private, public, and NGOs, offering international strategic planning and program development; curricular development and evaluative expertise in the arts and humanities. She also serves as the appointed advisor to the Long-Range Planning Board in her town.

Background

China and India connect across centuries and disciplines. Cross-cultural influences manifest themselves in art, literature, music, religion, politics. From missionaries to the trade routes of Marco Polo to the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, interconnections abound. This Roundtable will draw on the expertise of those present: focusing on comparative governance and ways citizens in both countries participate in their governments, if area experts and political scientists attend; exploring music and politics, if musicians and historians participate; evaluating social and economic policies, if development economists join our discussion. Natives of China and/or India, as well as those from other countries who studied or taught in China and/or India, will know that talk of nearly any topic about one country nearly always engages discussion of the other. Let us compare and contrast the cultural, ethnic, and political traditions of China and India in ways that illuminate the history of their evolution into emerging superpowers. The long tradition of China-India relations makes this a promising rubric under which to explore a variety of topics.

Discussions Questions

- What comparative perspectives may we bring to bear on China and India?
- Although there are great differences between China and India, what areas of influence and exchange look most promising for the future?
- What cross-cultural influences emerge across centuries and disciplines?
- What is the function of music, for example, in agricultural festivals, state functions, and religious ceremonies?
- Which achievements do China and India each promote domestically and internationally?
- What's the impact of escalating urbanization in the past thirty years?
- In our increasingly global economy, how do institutional infrastructures in China and India differ economically, socially, politically?
- What are China and India's environmental challenges and how might they work with neighboring countries to mitigate the increasing costs of pollution while preserving opportunities for economic development?