

# OPEN FORUM

with

**DR. VYJAYANTI RAGHAVAN**  
*and* **DR. JOEFFREY CALIMAG**

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**Mr. Gilbert Que:** Hello Good morning! Namaste! My question is for Dr. Raghavan. I would just like to know how Indian universities sustain the interest or further encourage Korean Studies in India. Because if you're just going to peg it on popular culture, I know that the Indian popular culture is very dominant in India. Here in the Philippines, we have our own pop culture but Korean pop culture is very dominant and ubiquitous. I think it's not so much with India, especially in the main part of the country. At least for the main part of India, just like in Delhi, how are you able to sustain and further encourage the interest of Korean and Korean Studies?

**Dr. Raghavan:** Like I said, the interest in Korean Studies is in fact growing. The reason for that is employment opportunities. That is the main thing. So, Korean investments, you have a lot of small and medium scale enterprises coming in as well. So, they need somebody who knows, an Indian who knows Hindi as well as Korean. So, there are those, there are other multinational companies like Oracle, like Hewlett-Packard, they need language analysts for their dealings with various countries I guess. Then you have big companies LG and Samsung as well. And so far, we haven't yet reached a state of saturation point where they don't need anymore. Because of that, well because our center is one of the most popular centers of the scholarships, the Korean Government Scholarships,

Korean firms; they give monetary scholarships, POSCO gives some scholarships, and we have Shinhan Bank which gives monetary scholarships to students. Therefore, students find Korea very, very, lucrative to be studied. And Kpop, you're right, it's not really as popular as in other parts of East Asia. But in Delhi, students are becoming crazy about it. I've seen that in the last few years, right in front of my eyes, I find all of them, watching all my students watching Korean drama on You tube and coming up with various, like him, I'm at loss with the names. They know much more than any of us do about Korean pop, Kpop and Kdrama. Every time there is a program in our center, there is one batch of students who wanted to have a Kpop show. So, they all, they love dressing up like that, and you know how Indians love dancing. So, there is a kind of popularity but more than just this kind of culture, but because of the employment opportunities and scholarships. So, you need to persuade Korean firms here to give you scholarships and incentivize.

**Ms. Sarah Lipura:** In fact, Mr. Gilbert Que is compiling a survey. It's to update our survey of the status of Korean Studies in the Philippines and we're very happy that you presented the data from India. Maybe in the future, we can do something comparative. In the presentation of Dr. Calimag, which very clearly pointed one of the threats and problems of Korean Studies in the Philippines is lack of expertise. And listening to your lecture, it's interesting how you started very early; in the 1970s. But you only had the first batch of BA Korean Studies in 1995. And then you also showed us the program of study, of students. So that's following the British Model, so you'll be taking several courses for three years. It's very interesting

because it's not only Basic Korean, like they have specific courses for speaking and even grammar. I'm very interested to know the status of expertise in India, when it comes to Korean Studies. Are these Ph.D. levels? Do these professors focus on language? Because most of the courses that you offer in the program are related to language, so we're very interested in that.

**Dr. Raghavan:** We've come a long way in developing expertise in these various areas. When we started in 1995, we were just three teachers. We had to teach everything, every level. You know the oral, and the same teacher would teach listening, and grammar. But fortunately, now, we are beginning to have our own experts in these areas; who've done their PhDs from Korea, or who've done their coursework of Ph.D. from Korea and they are writing their dissertation at the moment. Teaching, writing, because the scholarship is over in Korea; so, they come back and they are writing their thesis while they are teaching. But the expertise is there in that particular field. I'm not saying that we're completely 100% self-sufficient. We depend upon, we ask the Korean visiting professor. When we make our request to Korea Foundation, please send us somebody in Korean linguistics or high level Korean Literature. And there are lots of Koreans who, the local Koreans who are doing their Ph.D. or have done their Ph.D. in say, English Literature; so, they are able to take some courses in Korean Literature, at least give the perspective. Being Koreans, they do now, they can understand. And having been trained in the literature field, they are able to give the perspective in Korean literature and teach the theories as well. Literary theories, translation theories, those kinds of things, so

we're making do but very soon I think we'll become very specialized in theories and have one expert.

**Ms. Sarah Lipura:** Yeah, because we wanted to really draw lessons from what other universities do like in Ateneo, we're the only university that actually has an autonomous Korean Studies Department, which we call program because it's still very small. Our orientation is also interdisciplinary and we use the same approach, like Professor Choi is here. She was sent by the Korea Foundation to fill up the teaching requirement for higher Korean classes. So, thank you Professor for sharing your experiences in India. Are there other questions from the audience?

**Michiko:** Hello! Good morning. I'm Michiko, from the UP Asian Center. My question is for Dr. Calimag. I'm interested in multiculturalism and intermarriages. I would like to ask how Koreans respond to multiculturalism in Korea and how Filipinos who intermarried with Koreans respond to the cultural differences or cultural similarities. Thank you.

**Dr. Calimag:** Thank you very much for that question. I would like to start responding to that question with the term multiculturalism. In Korea, the term multiculturalism has been abused. They're not using the term multiculturalism as is but instead, it's just like a PR for the government; or a PR for the government to have something to offer to the multicultural families. The programs that we have now in Korea is not really benefitting the multicultural families. We have a representative, a Filipino, Jasmine Lee. She is a friend of mine but I have doubts whether she was able to represent the multicultural families or the multicultural community in Korea.

The second thing that I really want to raise is the strong discrimination in Korea. Korea is influenced by Confucianism. And Confucianism is not teaching equality. Confucianism is always leveling. There's the father and son. There's always the man and woman, teacher-student. More so with the composition of the population. So, there are Korean men, Korean women, so the foreigners are there. When they look at the foreigners, they have really extreme impression or how they look at the foreigners. On the outside, they really look up to white people. On one spectrum, they look down on colored, let's say Asian or blacks or Arabs. This is the reality in Korea. If you are married to a Korean man, that says something about your social status in Korea. And that is an impression about supply and demand. Because if we categorize the men and women in Korea as Class A Korean men, Class B Korean men, Class C Korean men; and on the left side, we have Class A Korean women, Class B Korean women; we see that when Class E, which belongs to the lowest level of the society . . . Class E Korean women aspire at least Class D Korean men. Class D Korean women aspire for at least Class C Korean men. So they look up to at least one level up of their social status.

So, there's vacuum now. There's a vacuum of Class E Korean men. And I said about the demand and supply because you know in Korean culture, they have to marry and give grandchildren to their parents, isn't it? So, they did that just for that purpose and the culture itself is discriminating.

Now the question of what the government is doing, or how are they doing . . . I must give credit to the government that at least slowly, they are doing something but it's not successful in a sense that it's more on the PR, it's very politicized. And the

people they are bringing there, they're not really, they don't really understand the concept of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is having different nationalities in one community. But multiculturalism has some issues, challenges. We have a lot of problems there that they need to respond to specifically to those specific groups. For example, the terminology expat and migrant workers or expat and migrant, foreign wives are already discriminating. For a white guy, they call them expats. But what about us? They don't call us expats. In business terms, strictly speaking, expat is someone sent by a company. It's not simply a foreigner in a country. But nowadays, they use expat as a foreigner. Expat equals foreigner. And in most of the advanced countries where they host migrants or foreigners, this term alone is very discriminating. And it should start group for them to solve, for them to give a really good welfare for the multicultural families or members of the multicultural families. They have to start from the root of discrimination and stereotyping.

On the part of Filipinos, on the part of multicultural families, they also need to advance their interest because we cannot really blame Korean people discriminating them because in some instances, members of multicultural families allow themselves to be discriminated. The other day, there is a, we had a conversation with Professor Raghavan. He's not a member, he's not married to a Korean but he was discriminated and yet he's a very well-known professor, Indian professor. Because of his looks, because of his origin, because of his color, he's being discriminated.

So, I think, when we talk about multiculturalism, by culture itself, we have to start from understanding what really is

discrimination because this discrimination is impeding all the efforts of the government. We can't really forward multiculturalism programs, we can't really forward to make the alliance better, we can't really give better lives if we cannot deal with the real problem. The real problem is the discrimination, how they see foreigners. There is a wide spectrum, as I've said. On the left side, they look up to whites and on the left side they look down to other members of the society.

So, if you want to know more about multiculturalism, as a term and abused term, please let me know after our conference. Because you know, as I've said, multiculturalism is a very wide, it's a simple term being abused by politicians in Korea; or being abused by those members of the Senate or the Congress House in Korea; that they themselves don't really understand. You know, they have funds for, for example, a guy for Korean wives in Korea. For what is that? Okay. You guide them on how to live in Korea. But you're not really educating Koreans. You're not really educating those members of multicultural families. You're not really encompassing, you're not really responding to making their lives better. You are responding only on the periphery. You are only responding on the onset, but the real problem is not being addressed by the government.

**Michiko:** Thank you very much, sir!

**Dr. Alona Guevarra:** Thank you to our invited guests. I'm actually very happy that I got to listen to Dr. Calimag's lecture and how he focused on the need for Korean Studies, focus on organic and hybrid means for it to become better, for it to move forward. Anyway, the reason why I raised this is because

I myself did not really come from a Korean Studies background. So, when you're asking the audience why you're here, why you want to study Korean studies; I also had to reflect on my own career path. So, I studied Japan-- Japan Studies. I'm still studying it now. But I felt it was necessary for me to also enter Korean Studies and also understand my position as a Filipino studying Japanese Studies. So, the point I'm trying to make is indeed, I agree with you. This is more of a comment than a question that there is a necessity really to situate ourselves and to see that Korean Studies is not cut off from other areas of studies but it complements where we are right now. One thing is for sure, that the 21st century is really a time for Korean Studies. I don't know why it took so long. Apparently, this century really opened so many doors for us who are interested in Korea.

My real question, I just used that as an entry point; is to ask both of you experts: what are your impressions about the Korean millennial, the Korean, I don't know if they are still millennial; the I-millennial, the Samsung generation, if you want to call them that, these 21st century Koreans? Because a few days ago, Dr Calimag, you mentioned that multiculturalism is just a phrase used by politicians. I wonder though, if the young Koreans also think that way? My impression is that they are well-traveled, they are as curious of the world as we are of them, so I wonder if they have other means of looking at the world now.

I also want to ask Dr. Raghavan, who is our senior here. She has been studying Korea for how many decades now. Are there changes in the impression that you have seen this new generation of Koreans? How are they similar or different to the



older ones? And one last point, according to recent study, the life expectancy in Korea is the highest in the world. So, people living in Korea, how many generations, three, four generations of Koreans living together. So that's my question. Thank you very much!

**Dr. Calimag:** First, the impression I have for millennials. Have you seen the movie Train to Busan? One Korean writer said that Train to Busan represents the kind of Korean society now. What did you see in that movie? Being selfish. Did you see that guy? That guy being selfish... And Koreans agree to this. I'm not saying that Koreans are bad. Actually, I find Koreans very warm, they're very welcoming. They're very respectful. I wouldn't stay in Korea for long if I find them very rude or bad, isn't it? So I've been living there for 15 years. There's no country that is perfect. If you ask a taxi driver, if you take a taxi and the driver is born in 1960s; he always asks about Freddie Aguilar. They know him. And many of the taxi drivers in Korea are also oil drillers. They are overseas workers in the Middle East. We are in this stage now.

Twenty years ago, they were like us. Now we are overseas workers. When they meet a Filipino, for the older generations, they have high respect for Filipinos. They have high regard for Filipinos because we built their tunnels, we built their trains. Migrant workers who go to Korea are engineers. Now, migrant workers who go to Korea are factory workers. The point that I'm trying to give you now is before, people were warm, people were welcoming, people looked up to us. They looked up to Filipinos and Southeast Asians.

But it turned out to be the opposite now. Why? I think because it has something to do with the interest of the West. Number two, it has something to do with the lifestyle that they have now. And number three, it has something to do with the competition. Korea is very competitive and I think it's also the economy. And this is just my observation. Korean society is very superficial. And when we say superficial, your friendship depends on how beautiful you are. This is not a good statement to say in public but some Koreans would agree, some would not. This is not a good statement in public like this. Superficial means your friendship depends on how much money you have.

And I think Dr. Raghavan agrees with me because the other day, we had a conversation. We had a chit-chat about this. She told me that the first time she arrived in Korea, people were so welcoming. And then recently, when she visited Korea; people are so cold. You can see that. It's very obvious wherever you go. The good thing about Korea is that they don't discriminate you. They don't make you feel, they're not really cold in front of you. In terms of travel, people are more globalized now, they're supposed to be more open-minded or supposed to be more adaptive and flexible; it just so happens that the media has been abusing the West, you know. Korea is looking up to the West, and therefore... Anyhow, it boils down to discrimination. I think discrimination in the context of the 1970s in Korea and discrimination in the context of 2016 are totally different. The impression for the millennials, they are very techie but they are kind of very superficial. Now this is our opportunity to let them travel more to Southeast Asia. This is now the opportunity for them to see the culture, the beauty of Southeast Asia; for them to understand our culture as well. And it is our role in Ateneo,

it is our role in the Philippines to let them know that Korea is not the only country in the world.

**Dr. Raghavan:** I think Joeffrey has answered a lot of questions. I'll just stick to my own impression because I've been associated with Korea since '76 and had gone there to study from '77 to '81. And I was one of the few foreigners studying in Korea that time. And the kind of reception I got and the interest they showed somebody interested in their country is a far cry from what it is now. Now they've become quite glassy about foreigners; they have become in fact a bit racial, I must say, which was nonexistent when I was there in the '70s. In fact, they were very overwrought by somebody from India. They would confuse 인도 with Indonesia and often they would ask me, "Are you from Indonesia?" Then I would say, "No, I'm from 인도, 인도 the land of Buddha." And they would be so enamored, and say "Oh Buddha." There were lots of Buddhists at that time and then they would ask me, "Why are there so many contradictions; you have the nuclear at one point and you have poverty on the other?" They were very curious to learn and they were very warm people. They didn't have money. They didn't have anything, but they have a large heart and they made my stay so comfortable that I stayed there for four years whereas many foreigners couldn't sustain because of the language problem and because of the issues on cultural things, they would go back.

And after that, in '81 I came back to India. In '83, I was teaching and I lost my job because of low demand. I went back to Korea after 17 years in 2005, this time because of the Olympics and because of the economic miracle, everything. It had boomed. It was a completely different Korea that I was encountering. There were people, they were used to foreigners.

They were completely indifferent. I was shocked, I said, “Oh they used to be so curious and look at me, there’s no one taking notice of me now.” So that happened.

And now, I find at the very, the underlying culture trait of theirs of being collective is now becoming individualistic. They are becoming so selfish and individualistic in their outlook. That core culture, I feel if they lose that, then the very essence of Korea will change. And I feel very pained to see that happening. And I see the behavior of Koreans in India too, changing. The Koreans who came in earlier were a lot more, shall I say, cultured and very kind and respectful and reverential. But the ones who come now look down on India. I don’t say Indian society is a great society or people need to be looked up to. But you are representing your country. So, I think they need to be a little more careful about how they present themselves outside the country. And the impressions that people have, like Indians... I’m not so sure living with Koreans is very easy. They are brash, they are aggressive, which is very very different from Korea I was used to. It pains me. Those are the changes. The rest, I think is answered.

**Dr. Calimag:** I just want to point out the lifestyle, if you go to Korea, the lifestyle... so just a reminder for our millennials here... When you are with your friends, put down your phones and talk to your friends. Don’t talk to your cellphones because you know, we have the fastest internet in Korea and because of that, we can just see whatever we want in our phones nowadays. If you go to subway, if you are in a coffee shop, we are talking to our cell phones, not to our friends. So that is a reminder. I think that’s also contributes, that is not thing that millennials are now known in Korea.