JAPAN AND INDIA: A HISTORICAL CONNECT

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ABSTRACT

India and Japan are the two very significant Asian countries of the globe. While India is the largest democracy, Japan is one of the biggest economies of the world. In today's globalised world, every country remains dependent on the other for the survival of the existing international order. This was not an exception even speaking about centuries back. The ancient great world civilizations, e.g. the Indus valley civilization, the Mesopotamian civilization, show traces of inter-state relations. Modern world calls this network of bilateral and multilateral relations among the sovereign units as foreign policy. Thus, foreign policies epitomize the aspirations, expectations, national interests, power politics and strategic concerns of a nation-state vis-à-vis the other, conditioned by the economic resources and popular trust. India experienced a long colonial history which bled its economic, military and political strength for long. Hence, determining India's own course of self-reliant bilateral relations was not practicable in the pre-independent era. Interestingly, even though geographically distant, India and Japan shared a common historical and cultural heritage since 6th century B.C. Indeed, this understanding becomes essential for an analysis of India's post-independent foreign policy in general and Indo-Japan relations in particular. The traces of the prevailing warm relations between the two nations have been well laid in their age old inheritance.

JAPAN AND INDIA: THE FOUNDATION

"The Indo -Japan relationship, a rapport built over time, has had various touch points over ages, from different perspectives."(Hari & Hari, 2015, p14) The ties still show the bondage which developed over centuries acquiring different cultural and historical flavors. Both the civilizations interacted and impressed each other. Japan or Nippon, is an archipelago off the coast of East Asia in the midst of the Pacific ocean, Comprising of four main islands, which are Ittokkaido, Honshu, Shikoky and Kyushu. Japan is also called the land of 'rising sun.' Tokyo is the capital of Japan and is an extremely homogeneous society. The Japanese people are primarily descendants of various peoples who migrated from Asia in prehistoric times. The Mahayana sect of Buddhism which originated in India in the 6th century with "Gautama the Buddha" found its way to Japan via China and Korea in 6th century. "Gautama the Buddha" the greatest messenger of peace from India has given a universal message of peace, non-violence and compassion to the world in the 6th century BC as in the 20th century, given by Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi. (Mallappa, 2004, p97) It is said that Japan first came into contact with India during the reign of Emperor Kimmei (539AD – 571 AD).(Sareen,2007,p9) Buddhism became the state religion of Japan (593AD - 622 AD) under the rule of Prince Umayado.(Kalidas,1926,p32)

India's earliest documented direct contact with Japan was with the Todaji Temple in Nara, where the consecration or eye-opening of the towering statue of Lord Buddha was

performed by an Indian monk Bodhisena in 752 AD. Bodhisena arrived in Japan in 736 AD and taught in Nara college. The first Samskrt text in Brahmi script arrived in Japan in 552 AD and Prince Shotoku began lecturing in Samskrit at Nara college in 607AD. Around 760 AD, a great Buddhist monk by the name Bodhidharma, Daruma as he was called in Japan, travelled from south India carrying with him the teachings of Buddha and the methods of dhyana or meditation. The dhyana he practised, finally came to be known as Zen in Japan and finally bore Zen Buddhism in Japan. It would be interesting here that Bodhikarma, an exponent of martial arts, also taught martial arts to the monks he came across. Thus, a combination of these three, Buddhism, Dhyana and Martial Arts became the intrinsic principles of Buddhist monks. Later, the name Jujutsu for the famous Japanese Martial Art, has its origins in the Samskrt word Yuyutsuhu desire meaning the or mentality fight.(Hari,2015,p24) Japan's principle religious are Shinto & Buddhism, most Japanese practice both faiths. Many Hindu deities gradually subsumed in Indian Buddhism and as it spread far and wide, finally influenced Japanese religious practices. For example, Lord Narayana is depicted as Narenten, Vishnu as Bichuten. Devi Saraswati worshipped as Benzaiten, Myoten, Daiben are popular divinities in Japan with many temples dedicated to her in Japan. Ganesha is another Divinity who is worshipped as Binayakaten also showers prosperity, success, and health as in India.

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As Buddhism blossomed into multiple sects in Japan, India also bores the fertile ground for multiple schools of faith on its land. Not only Buddhism, but also Jainism, Sikhism and vedantic religions as Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktaism flourished in India. Lord Buddha features as the 9th Incarnation of the divinity Vishnu. During the early period of Heian, two new Buddhist sects were introduced. Initially after a few conflicts with Shinto (Japan's native religion) the two religions were soon able to co-exist and even complemented each other. India has six main branches of philosophy in the pursuit of the ultimate knowledge. Similarly, Japan also has the tradition of six schools of philosophy known as Nanto Rokushu. Interestingly, these schools of thought are deep rooted in the Indian metaphysics and Indian schools of Philosophy. Prince Shotuku of Japan, who framed the first constitution of Japan, emphasized more on harmony and moral virtues for state craft. The first clause among the 17 clauses holds, "Harmony is to be valued and the avoidance of wanton opposition honoured."(Ibid,p45-48) Thus the virtues of tolerance and sense of respect for pluralism in ideas and thought exist since long in both the countries. This harmony still thrives as a lot of Japanese visit India even now, 0.4% of the 16 million Japanese travel overseas annually, i.e., about 60,000 visits to India and 20% of these visitors to Buddhist sites.(Yamanouchi,2000,p8)

Both India and Japan follow the tradition of taking idols in procession on all festivals. Both India and Japan celebrate the harvest festival as a tribute to mother nature. This festival is known in different names in India as Pongal, Baisakhi, Bihu etc. Similarly, as Japan depends on agriculture for its staple food, the Japanese harvest festival is called Tori No Ichi and is observed around early to mid-November. The term and practice of Bonsai or dwarfing of plants for medicinal reasons or beautification in Japan interestingly originated in Indian Ayurveda.

Thus, India and Japan have enjoyed a very special cultural, social and historical bond, coveted place of learning in the ancient days. However, while India became a British colony in 1757, Japan remained a closed society till the middle of 19th century. As Japan lifted its self-imposed isolation, religious contacts between these two countries began, Since Buddhism was introduced in Japan through China and Korea, many branches of Buddhism surfaced in Japan, Hence, to know the real essence of Buddhism, many travelers visited India and wrote about their experiences. The names of Shaku Kozen, Shaku Soen, Kitabatake Doryu may be mentioned. Kitabatake took a keen observation of the Indian Society and described in his travelogue published in 1886, the sufferings of the Indians and the brutality of the British rule and cautioned the Japanese that if they failed to compete with the West successfully, they would have the same fate. Moreover, Shaku Kozen, another traveler visited Bodhgaya and co-founded Mahabodhi Society with

Dharampala, a Sri Lankan Buddhist. All these visits helped Japan not only to know India better, but also to grasp the true essence of Buddhism.(Khan, 2017,p3-6)

Japan has contributed quite a few Buddhist monuments to India as recognition of the sublime Buddhist culture. Through the UNESCO/Japan Trust Fund Japan has been providing assistance for the maintenance of Buddhist monuments in India. Buddha after his enlightenment gave first sermon at Sarnath in India. Japan has built a temple in the vicinity of the archaeological site. Bodhgaya is the place where Buddha attained enlightenment. It is the most sacred place for the Buddhists all over the world. The Japanese too has built two temples here for Buddha. Rajgir is another place where Buddha stayed for a few years and gave sermons. Commemorating this episode, World Peace Pagoda has been erected by Japan in Rajgir. This Pagoda was built by Nichidatsu Fuji (1885-1985), a Buddhist monk from Japan who was immensely impressed by his meeting with Mahatma Gandhi in 1931 and decided to his life devote for the promotion of nonviolence.(Hari.2015,p98)

Though direct contact between the two countries was initiated only in the mid-19th century, yet the Indian and Japanese elites showed concerns for their mutual causes. Both the countries nurtured the Ideas of pan Asianism during the period of Indian renaissance (1881-1905), as India under the British rule also emphasized the sentiments of Asian oneness. "During the 1880s and 1890s, the educated class in India particularly the leaders of new religious and spiritual movements in Bengal, like PC Majumdar and Swami Vivekananda, admired the Japanese example".(Rajamohan et al 2008,p2) In a letter to Miss Josephine Macleod on 14th June 1901, Vivekananda writes," The help that Japan will give us will be with great sympathy and respect, whereas that from the West, unsympathetic and destructive. Certainly it is very desirable to establish a connection between India and Japan. Certainly, it is very desirable to establish a connection between India and Japan".(Vivekanand, 2016) Swami Vivekananda visited Japan in 1893 and was much impressed by its spirit of nationalism. He advised Indian students and intellectual leaders to discern social and customary prejudices and emulate the Japanese for what they were doing. An Oriental Youngman's Association formed in 1900 served as a platform for increased interaction between Japanese, Indian and other Asian students Japan.(Prasad,1979,p31) Following its victory in the war with Russia in 1905, Japan came to be perceived as a role model on fighting colonialism. In India, there was immediate appreciation of the Japanese success as Indian leaders like Nehru, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak were all jubilant over Japanese victory. Even Mahatma Gandhi was impressed with Japan's success. This spirit and inspiration drawn by Indians, according to some "partly influenced the growth of extremism in Indian politics" highlighting the thriving historical linkages between India and Japan.(Prasad,1979,p44)

With the fall of the Tokugawa feudal system and the inception of Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), Japan's love for political and military glory turned it to the path of military expansionism. Many of the Meiji leaders travelled throughout the world during 1870s and learnt from the advanced countries and rather surpassed their skill. After defeating China in 1895 and its victory over Russians in 1905, Japan continued in subsequent decades to practice what it had learnt, entering a path of expansionism and aggression to solve its problem of feeding its own people and building up industries with scarce resources.(Hindmarsh,1936,p36) Hence, the Samurai fathers marched under the banner of 'Fukoku Kyohei', meaning 'rich country, strong military'.(Yoshida, 1973.p8) It is worth mentioning here that Fukuzawa Yukuchi (1834-1901), a noted pragmatist of Meiji period in Japan, wrote an essay called Datsua-Ram (On Saying Goodbye to Asia). He was keen on embracing world civilization singularized as the western model of enlightenment by castigating Confucianism and non-scientific behavioral systems of Korea and China and devoid of all diplomacy.(Bharucha,2009,p18)

It may be worth mentioning that with the onset of First World War in Europe, Japan got an opportunity to expand the socio economic and political set up in Asia and occupy a status of major power in the modem world to become a successful leader of Asian countries. Japan has been recognized as the military and industrial giant amongst big five countries in the world after the treaty of Versailles (1919). At this juncture, it was quite natural for a colonized country like India to hail Japan and appreciate its strength as the new Asian leader for its nationalist aspirations.

The Indian independence movement did not nurture and grow in isolation but grew greatly from neighboring countries in Asia which were also reeling under Western imperialism. Once, Speaker of the Japanese House of Peers said: "It was the sacred duty of Japan as the leading Asiatic state to stretch a helping hand ... to India, who is capable of civilization, and free them from European yoke.(Sareen, 2007, p15) There persisted a positive and friendly feeling among the Japanese with regard to Indian independence struggle and much to the dislike of the British. During 1880-1910, Japanese territory doubled and it became an empire in East Asia. The West also became respectful towards Japan. The engagement of the Western powers with the First World War, the fluidity of balance of power among them left a vacuum to be filled by Japan. When Indian freedom movement entered the Swadeshi phase, Japanese

goods were excluded from the banned category. In fact, a prominent Indian newspaper Kesari clearly called on people to choose Japanese goods over all other foreign manufactured ones.(Prasad, 1979, p45)

Thus, Japan was seen not only as the supplier of new machines and technology to a colonized country as a viable option to British goods, but also as the potential ground for the educational and industrial training of the Indians. Japan played an important role of providing shelter and place for refugees. One of these revolutionaries was Maulavi Barkatulla. He started "Islamic fraternity in Tokyo in 1910". The other revolutionaries who initiated anti-British activities were Rash Bihari Bose and Bhagat Singh. On November 1915, they organized a meeting in Tokyo Hotel Berio Park with the collaboration of many other revolutionaries including Lala Lajpat Rai & Dr. Syumel etc. As the third Anglo-Japanese Alliance lapsed in 1921, Japan was free from obligation and felt the need to drive away the western powers by utilizing the Indian revolutionaries. During the 30s, Japan, led by Tojo Hideki, adopted the course of breaking the economic ring of dominance formed by the Americans, the British, the Chinese and the Dutch that harmed it. The racial superiority of the western powers over the yellow race also prompted Japan to create a 'new order in East Asia' by liberating East Asia. Japan's plan was to conquer British territories and grant them independence at the earliest.

The Indo-Japanese connect became more forceful when Indian revolutionaries like Rash Bihari Bose and Subhash Chandra Bose developed intimate links with Japan and the Japanese. R. B. Bose who came to be known as the "Bose of Nakamuraya" took shelter in Japan to hide from the British in 1915. Despite repeated requests from the British, Japan refused to extradite Bose. Bose eventually married a native woman and spent his entire life in the country as a Japanese citizen (from 1924) till his death in January 1945. He gradually not just mastered the Japanese language over the years, but also wrote extensively in the Japanese press and literature soliciting support for Indian independence struggle. Bose was instrumental in influencing and transforming Japanese public opinion in favour of India through his writings and association with opinion leaders. Key thought leaders of Japan, such as Tsuyoshi Inuki, who became the Prime Minister of Japan later, Mitsuru Toyama, Asian leader of Japan, became his close friends.(Hari,2015,p116) Indian revolutionaries were portrayed as an intelligent group from a civilized society by the Japanese journalists like Minetaro Yamanaka who were associated with the Asahi Shimbun and later with the Shonen Kurabu and King magazines. Bose astounded them through his interactions.(Nakajima, 2005, p65) The noted nationalist and ardent supporter of Indian independence, Shumei

Okawa, wrote a book entitled The Current Status and the Origin of the People's Movement in India in 1916, in which he warned the Japanese people that by trusting the British they were making a grave mistake and endangering themselves to incurring the wrath of 300 million Indians.(Ibid, p124)

Japanese groups like the Genyosha and Kokuryukai began to connect with the spirit behind the Indian freedom struggle (despite having ideological differences over the means) as part of their larger aim to work towards the liberation of Asia. Ibid 117) Bose also formed an "Indian Club" in 1921 to promote friendship among Indians in Japan for discussing the emerging political situation in India. He also launched his own magazine New Asia in 1933. Motivated by the goal of 'breaking the economic ring', the Japanese officials initiated considering future Indo-Japanese relations by encouraging India's independence and Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity. The Japanese officials contacted various Indian organizations in south-East Asia which were determined to end British rule in India. The Indian Independence League consisting of Thailand based Indians was contacted and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Col. Tamura of Japanese Army and Cap. Pritam Singh. The main objectives of the MoU were to liberate the whole of Asia from the British yoke and to establish India and Japan as the independent, sovereign, equal nation.(Khan, 2017p20-21) R. B. Bose's revolutionary legacy of seeking independence for India with the Japanese assistance was in many ways carried forward by another Bose, Subhash Chandra Bose, who would emerge as the fervent icon of nationalism on the horizon of the Indian freedom struggle. Subhas Chandra had made it clear that he would not mind working with British enemy states—Japan and Germany in his struggle for independence. Subhash Chandra Bose met Prime Minister Tojo who seemed to be impressed with Bose's intelligence. The Indian National army (INA) was the brainchild of Japanese Major (and post-war Lieutenant-General) Iwaichi Fujiwara, the head of the Japanese intelligence who interacted with Pritam Singh Dhillon, the president of the Bangkok chapter of the Indian Independence League. He utilized Pritam Singh's connections and engaged a captured British Indian army captain, Mohan Singh in December 1941 and the first Indian National Army was constituted as a result of discussion between Fujiwara and Mohan Singh in the second half of December 1941. This was with the support of, what was then known as the Indian Independence League headed by nationalist leader Rash Behari Bose. However, the thought of an independence army was renewed with the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose in the Far East in 1943. In July, at a meeting in Singapore, Rash Behari Bose handed over the control of the organization to Subhas Chandra Bose, in Singapore, in July and

returned to Tokyo. Bose was able to reorganize the fledgling army.

Bose formed a Japanese-approved and recognized independent "Provisional Government of (Azad Hind) Free India" based in Thailand. Japan also captured the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and handed them over to Bose's provisional government as a mark of recognition to it. The Indian National Army then, under the leadership of S. C. Bose decided to enter India with the Japanese Army. The INA attacked and took over the British post at Mowdok in India. The INA reached and captured Kohima (Assam) and their counterpart Japanese forces tried in vain to gain control over Imphal. The combined Indian and Japanese forces finally buckled under British attack and had to retreat in 1944–1945. To assess the impact of Japanese aggression on the Indian psyche, in a report prepared by the Director Military Intelligence stated that "to a large extent, the public opinion is not hostile to Japanese. They are more anti-British than anti-Japanese and consider if Japanese win the war and come to India, Indian national aspiration will benefit rather than suffer".(Sareen,2007,p38)

The late 1800s and early 1900s also witnessed great literary excellence and exchange of ideas between India and Japan. Among them were the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the Japanese scholar Okakura Tenshen (1862-1913), the Indian social worker and writer Priyamvada Banerjee (1871-1935). Tagore became the cultural ambassador of India and visited Japan between 1916 and 1917 and delivered a few lectures in different universities. Everywhere he was received with great warmth and respect. On coming back he narrated his experiences in an essay. Okakura Tenshen grew up with ideas deep rooted in Japanese culture and sought to preserve Japanese art and traditions. Tenshin's statement in his book,"The Ideals of the East with special reference to the Art of Japan" underscores universality and Asian oneness in culture. Later, in another book,"The Awakening of Japan" published in 1905, he remarked, "the glory of the west is the humiliation of Asia.' Tagore and Okakura met only twice in their lives in Calcutta in 1902 and later in Boston, USA, in 1913. However 'their friendship acquired iconic quality' highlighting 'intimacy of inter-Asian cultural dialogue'. With Tagore, one could travel deeply into another Asia which had greater 'emotional depth and humanitarian insight' than the assertions of Asian ideologues. Okakura played as the catalyst for the very idea of Asia for Tagore and many Indians at the turn of the last century and revealed more vistas of how 'Asia' can travel, both as an idea and ideal of world civilization.(Bharucha, 2009,p14-15) The universal humanist position of Tagore matured between the writing of Gora and his controversial lectures against nationalism in Japan in 1916, and Tagore emerged not as a

political theorist, but with the metaphoric richness of a poet. He comments...'I am only a poet'.(Ibid,p67-77) Though Japan's developments impressed Tagore, yet he was critical of Japan's westernization. Okakura embraced the materialist notion of civilization despite his occasional potshots at the crudity of modern era. Yet, both stand as cult figures in their own realm and space.

It was Priyamvada Devi Banerjee who translated Okakura's famous book "The Book of Tea" in Bengali. Inspired by Okakura she wrote a few books on Japan. Her noteworthy work is "Women of Japan". As Japan journeyed through the process of modernization in the midst of Meiji era, with its glory of Asian culture, many Indian luminaries came in contact with it. Swami Vivekananda, Bipin Chandra Pal, scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose, historian Jadunath Sarkar, Jamshedji. Tata are worth mentioning. Much of the knowledge of present-day Japan comes from the seminal work of Prof. Binoy Kumar Sarkar which was published in 1923.

JAPAN DURING WARS

The Japanese became victorious in the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese and was looked at as a great power. After the war, as Russia was in no position to contest, Japan annexed Korea in 1910.In World War I, Japan entered on the side of the Allied Powers and occupied Germany's colonial empire in the Pacific Ocean which also marked the highest point of Japan's acceptance by the Western powers prior to 1945. During the interwar period, China started getting stronger. The Kuomintang managed to get most of the south unified under its government during 1926 to 1928. The north of the country was also brought under the control of the Nationalist government. Nationalist China still had issues but by 1928, it was a much stronger state. Japan perceived China's recovering steps for the damages of the previous century as a threat to its control of Manchuria's railroads and of the Kwantung Leased Territory. To that end, in 1931, the Japan marched into Manchuria to shield its interests in the railroad and the Kwantung Leased Territory and formed a puppet state, Manchukuo, which nobody else recognized as a legitimate state. This resulted in Japan's isolation and opened up the continuing series of border clashes with the Chinese. Eventually, in 1937, the Japanese took on a full-scale war with China on the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. It can be mentioned here that the diplomatic trend which prevailed and sustained in Japan always bet on the winning horse. If Nazi Germany had not been powerful in the early stages of world war ii, if Holland and France had not left the vast power vacuum in South-East Asia in their entanglement with Nazi Germany and if the hostilities between Germany and Soviet Russia had not freed Japan from the fear of Russian aggression, Japan would not have militarily advanced into South East Asia.(Sato, 1977, p388-398)

The war affected the Japanese economy hard. Moreover, Japan was looked upon as a rogue state by the international community. The U.S. was estranged as Japan attacked the U.S. gunboat on the Yangtze River. Japanese atrocities against the Chinese civilian population equally defamed it. Eventually, this led to embargoes on trade with Japan which desperately needed resources. The Imperial Japanese Navy got its way, but it had to accept that the South Pacific had already been colonized. Hence, the simultaneous attacks on Pearl Harbor, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Malaya were carried on.

ENDS OF THE WARS

Thus, the Samurai way of marching forward under the banner of "rich country, rich nation" finally ended in catastrophe with Japan's surrender to Allied forces on August 15th, 1945 at the end of the World War II.

India was thrust into the world war as it remained a British colony during the war years. Consequently, British India was drawn into military occupation of Japan along with the Allied forces following the war. The Indian contingent of 9.030 soldiers reached Japan in 1946. It was endowed with the task of dismantling arms and ammunitions in the area under British control. As India became independent on 15th August 1947, the troops overseas were all called back. Hence, India's military occupation of Japan remained for a brief period. However, its association with the Far Eastern Commission for the control of Japan continued till the uplifting of the occupation in April, 1952.(Rau,1977 p205) It is interesting to note here that on the question of reparation, the Indian Minister in Washington told the Commission that the Government of India favoured the halting of the reparations as this would create a burden on the living standards of the Japanese people. (The Hindu, October 16,1949) The relaxations on the control of Japan were welcomed by India.

Another International body where India was involved was the International Military Tribunal for the Far East or the Tokyo Tribunal which worked during 1945-1951 trying Japanese war criminals. Justice Radha Binod Pal became the war crimes Tribunal Judge for World War II. He gave "not guilty" verdict to the Japanese convicts and was 'the lone dissenting voice'. He criticized the legal process as a sham for satisfying the thirst for revenge. Justice Radha Binod Pal continues to be treated as a national hero in Japan and has been conferred Japan's greatest civilian honour, in the year 1966.(Hari, 2015,p86-87)

The San Francisco Peace Treaty signed between the Allied Forces, led by the USA, and Japan in 1951 brought to an end of the war. This treaty effectively demilitarised and democratised Japan. On the other hand, India came out of the

BHADURI: JAPAN AND INDIA: A HISTORICAL CONNECT

colonial clutches in 1947, abstained itself from the peace conference and in pursuance of the ideals of Non-alignment concluded a separate bilateral peace treaty with Japan in 1952. Accordingly, the Indo-Japan political relations went through various twists and turns and the momentum of bilateral ties was not sustained over decades. It started with warmth initially in the 50s and witnessed indifference during the 60s and 70s while the 80s exhibited the spirit of gradual rediscovery of each other. The revival of this mutual appreciation found more of its strength especially with the turn of the new millennium in the post cold war era.

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