

## **Japan-India Partnership Based on History of Human Interaction**

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Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi met in New Delhi on 12 December last year and strengthened the special partnership between Japan and India. Specifically the two sides agreed in principle to conclude an agreement for nuclear energy cooperation, agreed to introduce Japan's Shinkansen High Speed Railway technologies to Mumbai-Ahmedabad route, and agreed Japan's participation in the India-US Malabar naval exercises on a regular basis. They also agreed to initiate Japan-India-Australia trilateral dialogue and concluded the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technologies. These agreements brought the Japan-India cooperation to a new stage.

Most notable of all is that a political decision was made to conclude the civil nuclear cooperation agreement despite two major obstacles. The obstacles were (1) how to deal with Japan's insistence to suspend cooperation if India resumes nuclear test, and (2) what to do with the provisions of Indian domestic law that stipulate not only the operator's but also the manufacturer's liability for a nuclear power plant accident. The two leaders determined to overcome these obstacles and agreed to find a solution.

The tectonic shift in the international geopolitics contributed the two prime ministers' decision to enhance the Japan-India partnership. The shift was caused by the rise of China, introversive inclination of the United States and the emergence of non-state terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State (IS).

China is challenging the existing U.S.-led international order by using its huge economic and military power. The creation of AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) and the announcement of "One Belt, One Road" initiative represent Beijing's attempt to build a new financial and economic order led by China. Chinese President Xi Jinping has even proposed the creation of a new regional security architecture in Asia excluding the United States. The continuing construction of artificial islands and

military facilities in the South China Sea can be interpreted as part of the strategy to exclude the U.S. military power from the seas close to China.

Meanwhile, the United States under President Barack Obama abandoned its role as the “world’s policeman” and became extremely reluctant to use military forces abroad. The U.S. has been conducting air raids in Iraq and Syria against the Islamic State militants that occupy large territory equivalent to the size of the United Kingdom. But the U.S. administration cannot decide to deploy ground combat troops. Concerning the situation in the South China Sea where China is militarizing artificial islands the Obama Administration finally dispatched a U.S. Navy’s destroyer in October as the Freedom of Navigation Operation after months of cautious consideration. But in spite of the remark by a U.S. defense official that the U.S. would conduct this operation twice a quarter or more, the fourth quarter of 2015 has passed without further operation.

With this big change of the international environment, Prime Minister Abe realized that Japan’s national security cannot be maintained if Japan depends exclusively on the United States. While strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance by approving the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, Abe has been attempting to promote cooperation with India, Australia, Southeast Asian Nations and others who are wary of China’s hegemonic behavior.

Japan and India share political, economic and security interests and embrace common values such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law. But in addition to that, the two nations have a history of respecting each other’s culture and tradition while helping each other to become independent and self-reliant. This history of interaction forms the basis of current Japan-India special partnership.

### **Japan’s contribution to the independence of India**

Looking back on the history of Japan-India interaction since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Japan started its modernization, I want to point out first Japan’s role in contributing to the independence of India.

That the small Asian country of Japan defeated the large white empire of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05 gave big shock and hope to the Asian peoples including the people of India who had been under Western colonial rule, stimulating independence movements. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of

India, wrote that all Asians, men and women of all ages, got excited at the victory of Japan and that nationalism spread throughout Asia.

Japan became a supporting base of Indian independence movement in 1915, when an anti-British fighter Rash Behari Bose went into exile in Japan. He was given shelter by a bakery in Tokyo, Nakamura, and continued independence struggle in Japan. And a quick digression, so-called “Bose of Nakamura” married the baker’s daughter and passed on the recipe of pure Bengali curry. One hundred years later, today, the Nakamura restaurant in Tokyo’s Shinjuku district serves “Indian curry” the taste of which is modified a little bit to suit Japanese tastes, contributing Japan-India interaction through food.

Then there is the other Bose. I don’t have much to add to what Professor Sugata Bose has just said in his lecture. But I would like to reemphasize this. The fact that Subhas Chandra Bose led the Indian National Army (INA) and fought hand in hand with the Japanese against the U.K. contributed greatly the post-war independence of India.

The Battle of Imphal in which the Japanese Army and the INA crossed the border into eastern India from Burma resulted in a miserable retreat due to ill-advised planning. But as the INA’s courageous and patriotic fighting during the campaign became known to the Indian public after the war, the British attempt to try INA officers at a military tribunal met a strong resistance from the people, triggering the people’s riot and the soldiers’ revolt. The British authorities couldn’t but to admit the end of the colonial rule of India.

The independence of India was not achieved solely by the non-violence and civil disobedience movement. The independence cannot be explained without referring to the armed struggle led by Subhas Chandra Bose and the role of Japan that supported him.

As Professor Sugata Bose wrote in his book “His Majesty’s Opponent,” Chandra Bose was critical about Japan’s policy towards China and expansion of the Sino-Japanese war during the 1930s. But as far as Japan’s war against the U.K. and the U.S. is concerned, Chandra Bose believed there existed the cause of “Liberation of Asia” from the Western domination.

Subas Chandra Bose participated as an observer in the Greater East Asia Conference held in Tokyo in 1943. The conference declared that Japan's purpose of the Greater East Asian War was the liberation of Asia. Chandra Bose as Head of the Provisional Government of Free India said at the conference that since Japan stood up to resist Russia in 1904, she got a mission to lead the construction of new East Asia, stressing the big role of Japan to free Asia from the Western colonial dominion.

Regrettably Chandra Bose did not come up in the history textbook I used in high school. There was almost no mention about Japan's role for the independence of India, either. This must have been the malady of post-war education in Japan that was totally negative about everything Imperial Japan had done. I hope the findings of the Collaboration of Indo-Japan Historical Studies would be helpful for improving Japan's school education.

#### **India's compassionate attitude towards Japan after the war**

The second point I would like to note on the modern history of Japan-India interaction is that the people of India did not take a position to condemn one-sidedly Japan's war responsibility and treated defeated Japan with compassion.

At the International Military Tribunal for the Far East after World War II, Judge Radhabinod Pal pointed out unreasonableness of the Allied Powers that had been determined to punish Japan forgetting their own wars of aggression and war crimes. He declared all defendants not guilty. The fact that the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo and the Ryozen Gokoku Shrine in Kyoto have monuments dedicated to Judge Pal shows how he is still appreciated by many in Japan.

A lot of studies and research papers have been published in Japan about the Tokyo tribunal and Judge Pal. Many scholars have written about Judge Pal's argument and its background. But there does not seem to be many scholars in India today who make researches about him. I would hope more scholars in India research Judge Pal and interact with Japanese scholars in order to bring a better understanding of him and his argument.

Prime Minister Nehru was also sympathetic to Japan. When India was invited to the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951, Nehru declined to attend. He said India would not attend because the conference could become an occasion for the victorious

nations to try the defeated nation whereas Japan had done nothing wrong to India. India concluded a separate peace treaty with Japan the following year. Virtually all assets abroad owned by the people and the government of Japan were confiscated under the San Francisco Peace Treaty but Japanese assets in India were returned thanks to the separate treaty.

Prime Minister Abe often refers to a warm reception given to his grandfather Nobusuke Kishi by Nehru. In 1957 Kishi made his first visit as the prime minister of Japan to India. Indian Prime Minister Nehru took Kishi to an open-air gathering and introduced Kishi to tens of thousands of people saying, "This is the prime minister from Japan, the country I admire." Abe recalls hearing of this episode many times from Kishi on his knees and says, "Kishi should have been very pleased as the leader of defeated nation."

#### **Forerunner of Japan-India interaction**

Thirdly I want to point out that there was a forerunner of Japan-India interaction who visited Japan in the Meiji Era and was deeply impressed by Japanese national character. It is little known that Indian spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda stopped over in Japan for 3 weeks in 1893 on his way from Bombay to Chicago where he attended the World's Parliament of Religions.

He was amazed at the modest and clean living of the Japanese public and wrote a letter to one of his followers, saying, "The people of Japan are the cleanest in the world. Everything is set in order. ...They are picturesque in bearing and actions. Japan is perfect for a picture."

At that time Japan took a step of modernization and was promoting the policies of "building a rich country and a strong military" and "encouraging new industry." Vivekananda admired these policies and wrote, "Japan is completely awakened to what the modern age requires. The army is organized and the navy continues to be strengthened. ....The Japanese are working hard to produce every essential goods domestically."

He continued, "I strongly hope many Indian youths visit Japan and China every year."

In a conversation with another follower, Vivekananda praised Japan for pursuing its own modernization while accepting Western civilization. He said, “Japan has been digesting every knowledge splendidly. ...The Japanese continue to be the same Japanese while accepting everything from the West.”

He told a Madras newspaper as follows:

“The Japanese are patriotic and artistic race unparalleled in the world. ...That the Japanese believe in themselves and love their motherland are [secrets to their rapid progress]. ...The Japanese are ready to sacrifice everything for the motherland. They became a great nation.”

I quoted a lot of his remarks so that you can sense a deep impression he got in Japan and a favorable eye he cast on the people of Japan.

It is well known that Nobel Prize laureate Rabindranath Tagore cultivated deep amicable relations with Japanese intellectual Okakura Tenshin in the early days of Japan-India interaction. But Vivekananda had had contact with Okakura before Okakura got acquainted with Tagore. So Vivekananda could be called as the forerunner among forerunners of modern people-to-people exchange between India and Japan.

The favorable eye Vivekananda cast on Japan was inherited by two Boses, Judge Pal and Prime Minister Nehru and now it is supporting the special partnership between the two nations.

## **Conclusion**

In addition to sharing common interests and values in today's world, Japan and India have the history respecting each other's culture and tradition, and the history of giving assistance to each other. Based on this history the two nations could be called as natural allies. While the government of President Xi Jinping is seeking Chinese hegemony in Asia under the slogan of “great revival of the Chinese nation,” it is not clear if the next U.S. president to be elected in November gets away from the introversive inclination of today. Therefore it will be all the more necessary for Japan and India to strengthen the bilateral relationship. I hope Collaboration of Indo-Japan Historical Studies will deepen the understanding of our modern history and will contribute to strengthening the basis of Indo-Japan special partnership.

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