

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Events

in Japan 2021-2022



Mr. Hira receiving Padma Shri



159th Vivekananda Birth Celebration



Confluence Art Exhibition

Yuriko Koike Governor of Tokyo

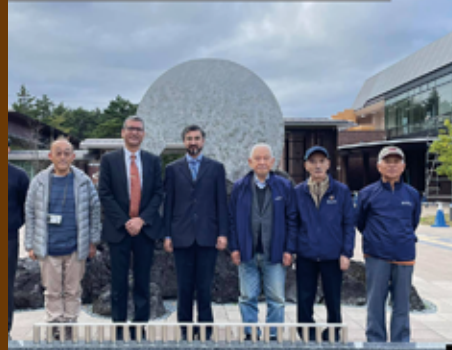


125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose



SBI Cricket Match

150 birth anniversary of Gandhi



富士山世界遺産センター Fujisan World Heritage Center



Rabindranath Tagore's birthday celebration



Rath Yatra



India-Japan Tea ceremony



73rd Republic Day



Ramayana screened

Arrival of PM Modi



Nara Todaiji



Dekho Apna Desh Quiz



Discover India club



Virtual Tour of Sarnath Lion Capital



Yoga session at Tokyo Skytree



Saree and Ikebana



India Japan military exercises

Picture Credits: <https://amritmahotsav.nic.in>



PM launching the AKAM

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM)

- Sanjeev Manchanda

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is an initiative of the Government of India to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has said, "The Azadi Amrit Mahotsav means elixir of energy of independence; elixir of inspirations of the warriors of the nation; festival of fulfilling the dream of good governance; and the festival of global peace and development".

freedom struggle; elixir of new ideas and pledges; and elixir of 'Aatmanirbharta'. Therefore, this Mahotsav is a festival of awakening of the nation; festival of fulfilling the dream of good governance; and the festival of global peace and development".

2. Like the history of the freedom movement, the journey of 75 years after independence is a reflection of the hard work, innovation, enterprise of ordinary Indians. Whether in the country or abroad, we Indians have proved ourselves with our hard work. We are proud of our Constitution. We are proud of our democratic traditions. The mother of democracy, India is still moving forward by strengthening democracy. India, rich in knowledge and science, is leaving its mark from Mars to the moon. India has always been a metaphor, a philosophical concept, a spiritual unity. This allowed different languages to evolve, different cultures to evolve, different individuality to evolve, it is a beautiful garden of different flowers, different colors, different perfumes.

3. This Mahotsav is dedicated to the people of India, who have not only been instrumental in bringing India thus far in its evolutionary journey but also hold within them the power and potential to enable Prime Minister Modi's vision of activating India 2.0, fueled by the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat. AKAM themes include Freedom Struggle, Ideas@75, Resolve@75, Actions@75 and Achievements@75.

4. The Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is an intensive, country wide campaign which focusses on citizen participation, to be converted into a 'Janandolan', where small changes, at the local level, will add up to significant national gains. The Mahotsav is an embodiment of all that is progressive about India's socio-cultural, political and economic identity. The idea is to celebrate the notion of India – being the 'best in class' in social, political and economic realm – shared by every Indian.

5. The official journey of "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" commenced on 12th March, 2021 which started a 75-week countdown to our 75th anniversary of Independence and will end post a year on 15th August, 2023. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India tweeted on the formal launch of AKAM on March 12, 2021: "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" "Today's #AmritMahotsav programme begins from Sabarmati Ashram, from where the Dandi March began. The March had a key role in furthering a spirit of pride and Aatmanirbharta among India's people. Going #VocalForLocal is a wonderful tribute to Babu and our great freedom fighters".

6. During the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', events and exhibitions (online and offline), are being celebrated keeping the unsung or unacknowledged heroes of the Indian freedom struggle. The idea of unsung heroes is being intricately linked to the Visit India Year 2022, wherein regional art, culture, heritage, wellness and yoga shall be promoted. Achievements in different spheres, for instance Agriculture, Science and Technology, will be highlighted during the course of the events. The soul of cultural heritage of India lies in the fact that it's an all embracing confluence of religions, traditions, customs and beliefs. Over the years, numerous styles of art, architecture, painting, music, dance, festivals and customs have developed in India and this wide variety has made the Indian culture unparalleled to which the entire world still looks up to. The cultural heritage of India still flourishes maintaining its original features together along with changes, a key indicator of its strength. For a successful Independence 2.0, the sentiments of India's rich cultural heritage is being tapped.

7. AKAM is being defined by a "Whole of Government" approach, where the scale is important, people's participation ('Jan bhagidari') is the key; NGOs, entrepreneurs, people's representatives are being involved, where the focus is on iconic and impactful events, rich cultural heritage, history is being celebrated, and innovations and future aspirations need are being highlighted, documented and outreach through conventional and digital media.

8. The year 2022 is also an important milestone in India-Japan bilateral relations, as we celebrate 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations which has over the course of time has transformed into a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership". The visits of Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Kishida Fumio to India in March 2022 and that of Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi to Japan in May 2022 have already demonstrated the strengths of our relationship. Several other high level engagements across all domains are being planned.

9. Indian community in Japan is approximately 40,000 strong, and is a great resource for fostering people-to-people exchanges. Indian Diaspora, through its various Associations, is serving as an important bridge head for these celebrations and are our key partners in this Mahotsav. Embassy has already celebrated a number of events commemorating AKAM and IndiaJapan@70 across various domains. These have been also uploaded on the dedicated website of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav i.e. www.amritmahotsav.nic.in

10. As we gear to celebrate Durga Puja, the worship of the mother goddess, one of the most important festivals of India, we must remind ourselves that it is also an occasion for reunion and celebration of traditional customs; the victory of God over Evil. It is a celebration of the country in its myriad of stars and moon that have a womb, known as India, the India of My Love!



Ambassador felicitating AKAM Quiz Winners on August 15, 2022

Yoga – The Alpha and The Omega

Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India. The word 'Yog' derives from Sanskrit and means to join or to unite, symbolizing the union of body and consciousness. Today, it is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity. Numerous empirical and scientific pieces of evidence support Yoga as an adjunctive strategy for managing stress and increasing physical health. Yoga also improves well being and one-pointedness of mind, including increased gratitude, friendliness, compassion, joy, acceptance, empowerment and self esteem.

Recognizing its universal appeal, on 11 December 2014, the United Nations proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by resolution 69/131. The draft resolution was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states. The proposal was first introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address during the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly, in which he said: "Yoga is an invaluable gift from our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action ... a holistic approach [that] is valuable to our health and our well-being. Yoga is not just about exercise; it is a way to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature."

The date of 21 June, is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and shares a special significance in many parts of the world. Summer solstice holds importance in the yogic culture as it is considered to be the very beginning of the yoga.

The 8th edition of IDY on June 21, 2022 was celebrated with the theme 'Yoga for Humanity'. The theme was announced by Prime Minister Modi in his 'Mann Ki Baat' address and it appropriately portrayed how during the peak of COVID-19 pandemic, Yoga served humanity in alleviating sufferings and in the emerging post COVID geo-political scenario. A Common Yoga Protocol has been designed with the consensus of all the experts. The protocol intends to create general awareness among the masses to attain peace, harmony and well-being through Yoga practices e.g. Yoga Nidra, Pranayama, Dhyan, etc.

Indian and Japanese way of life also uses Yoga and Zen to achieve tranquility of the inner core. While Yoga is an effort to reach the oneness of being through the left hemisphere, using logic, mathematics, science and trying to go beyond, Zen is just the opposite: the aim is the same but Zen uses the right hemisphere to go beyond.

There are several prominent Yoga organizations and schools in Japan, who have done yeoman service in promoting Yoga. In June, 2018, as a significant gesture, the 4th International Day of Yoga was celebrated at the Japanese Diet with a commemorative Yoga session for the Japanese Parliamentarians, which is being held every year there with the presence of several parliamentarians. A Curtain Raiser event for the 8th International Day of Yoga was aptly celebrated at the House of Councillors Building (National Diet) on June 13, 2022 with a commemorative Yoga session for Parliamentarians. The Yoga session was organized in cooperation with the Parliamentary League for Promotion of Yoga and all major Yoga organizations in Japan. Additionally, International Day of Yoga was organized at more than hundred places of Japan including iconic and historic places like Tokyo Sky tree, Kamakura and Nara. There were several other prominent IDY celebrations held across Japan with the support of the Embassy. Several Yoga enthusiasts including former Miss World Japan were also part of this celebration.



As India is also celebrating 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' - 75 National-level iconic sites were also showcased marking the Common Yoga Protocol demonstration on June 21 from 75 important locations in India. In Japan, Embassy chose the historic Sankein Garden where Guru Rabindranath Tagore had also stayed for 3 months during his visit to Japan in 1916. The event was live telecast on India's national television Doordarshan as part of the 'Guardian Ring', a relay Yoga streaming event which captured and weaved together a digital feed of IDY programmes organized by Indian Mission Abroad.

At the Vivekananda Cultural Center, Embassy's Yoga course are most successful programme so far, with more than 350 students. The Embassy regularly publishes articles on Yoga and Ayurveda in its own Digital newsletter, which is widely circulated among Japanese nationals. Embassy regularly invites media agencies, University and school students, NGOs and various Yoga organizations for familiarization visits to the Embassy and talk to them about Yoga.

Today, when we strive for the spread of Yoga, we wish '**Sarve Santu Niramay**' for every person in the world. The meaning of Yoga, as the Bhagavad Gita states, is - '**Samtvam Yoga Uchhyate**', that is, yoga is the name of compatibility-adversity, success-failure, happiness-crisis, staying in the same manner in every situation, staying steadfast. Yoga is our common good, an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Yoga has brought the people across the boundaries of nations together. India and Japan's relationship is strongly premised on people-to-people exchanges and Yoga has contributed significantly in bringing the people closer. Let the light of Yoga illuminate the world, elevate the mind and empower mankind everywhere.

(The articles Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav and Yoga - The Alpha and The Omega are written by

Mr. Sanjeev Manchanda, First Secretary (Information, Education & Culture), Embassy of India, Tokyo, in his personal capacity)

Mahatma Gandhi

- Rhitvikaa Viswanathan, Grade VIII

Mahatma Gandhi, was an Indian lawyer/nationalist who fought for India's independence against the British's rule, and later inspired many to fight for their civil rights and freedom across the world.

Gandhi led nationwide campaigns for easing poverty, expanding women's rights, building religious & ethnic amity and above all, achieving swaraj - self-rule.

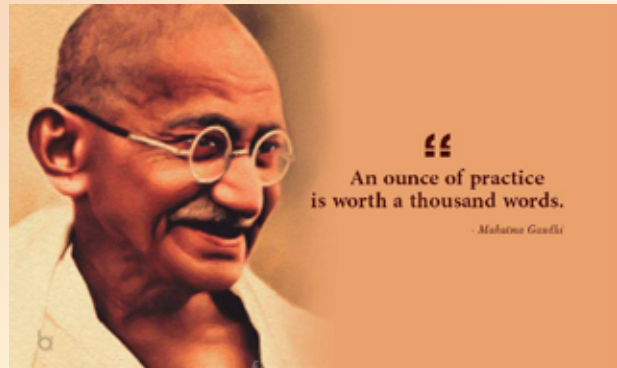
Gandhi adopted the short dhoti as a mark of India's rural poor. He began to live in self-sufficient residential communities, to eat simpler food, and undertake long fasts as a symbol of political protest. For instance, In 1924, Gandhi took a pledge to fast until the Muslims and Hindus were in Unity.

Gandhi's birthday, 2 October, is celebrated in India as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday, and worldwide as the International Day of Nonviolence. Gandhi is commonly considered the Father of the Nation in India.

In the 1920's, the Indian Congress appealed to Andhra Pradesh peasants by creating Telegu language plays that combined Indian mythology and legends, that linked them to Gandhi's ideas, and portrayed him as the leader of people, a reincarnation of ancient medieval Indian leaders and saints. This is where he captured the imagination of the people of his heritage with his ideas about winning "hate with love".

The Salt March that took place in March 1930 in India, was an act of civil disobedience led by Mahatma Gandhi. The goal was to let people get their own salt instead of having to buy them back from the British, which was heavily taxed. This was Mahatma Gandhi's first protest against the British, and was the beginning of many more.

In April of 1893, Gandhi was requested to represent an Indian merchant in a lawsuit, and he set sail to South Africa. Immediately after arriving in South Africa, Gandhi faced discrimination because of his skin colour and heritage. It went till the point where he was thrown off a train because he was sitting in the first class compartment where brown skins were not allowed to be in. However, the prejudice against him and



his fellow Indians deeply bothered him. So instead of leaving for India after his case, he extended his stay. He planned to assist Indians in opposing a bill to deny them the right to vote, and helped found the Natal Indian Congress in 1894, and through this organisation, he moulded the Indian community of South Africa into a unified political force.

After South Africa, Gandhi returned to India in order to create a better understanding between the Muslims and Hindus. The main problems were employment, and education and reservations of seats in legislatures. There were social problems as well. However these problems were mainly because of the British rule. Together with Gandhi's support and the people's hatred towards the British, there was a sudden spark of Unity between the Hindus and Muslims, As both communities had a common rival to take down, which were the British government.

"Never again" was his promise to himself after each escapade. And he never broke his promise. He made sure each incident never occurred again. His passion towards making our planet a better place, made him an idol, a model, and a leader who led our country, and many other countries and people to a better place. Just as Gandhi once said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

We thank him for all of his teachings and actions he has taken for us, and we will be forever grateful. India's pride and joy - Mahatma Gandhi.

References

- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mahatma-Gandhi>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi
- <https://www.history.com/topics/india/salt-march>



Rash Behari Bose

- Brajeshwar Banerjee

Almost every Bengali child, if not all Indian children, knows about Netaji Shubash Chandra Bose from an early age. His birthday on January 23rd is a holiday every year at least in West Bengal and the neighboring eastern Indian states, his statue (often a saluting bust in military attire) ubiquitous and his slogan "Dilli chalo" stirs hearts even now.

What many do not fully appreciate is that Netaji's exploits, impressive as they were, were built upon a foundation that was laid by another Bose - Rash Behari Bose - who was based in Japan and was instrumental in backing and enabling Netaji's exploits. On the 75th anniversary of Indian independence in 2022, a year that also marks the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India after World War II, it would be worthwhile to explore the relatively unsung contributions of Rash Behari Bose to India's freedom struggle and towards promoting Indo-Japanese friendship.

Rash Behari Bose was born on May 25, 1886, in Subaldaha village in what is now Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal. He spent his boyhood in the village and in Chandernagore (now Chandannagar), where his mother's family was based. At that time, Chandannagar was under French occupation and Rash Behari Bose studied at Duplex College there. It is said that he was inspired to undertake revolutionary activities against the British while studying at Chandannagar. After his studies, he wanted to join the army but was rejected and instead he got a clerical job at Fort William in Kolkata. Following a transfer to Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh, he left to join the Forest Research Institute (FRI) in Dehra Dun where he became the head clerk.

Even though Rash Behari Bose worked at British institutions, he maintained his contacts with revolutionaries like Bagha Jatin and others in Bengal. He recruited like-minded people like Basanta Kumar Biswas into the FRI and experimented with chemicals to make bombs. The imperial capital shifted from Calcutta to New Delhi and during the inauguration ceremony to mark the occasion on 23rd December 1912, Bose and Biswas attempted to assassinate Charles Hardinge, then the Viceroy and Governor General of India, by throwing a bomb at him when he was riding into Chandni Chowk on an elephant. Hardinge was injured but survived (as did his wife, the elephant and the mahout) but his parasol-carrying servant on the elephant died. Rash Behari Bose escaped back to Dehra Dun at night and resumed his duties at FRI.

A reward of Rs. 10,000 was offered by the British government for capturing the perpetrators and Biswas and some other conspirators were arrested and tried. Some were imprisoned and others put to death, including Biswas, who was hanged on 11th May 1915 at Ambala Jail, Punjab at the age of 20, thereby becoming one of the youngest martyrs of India's independence struggle.

Even though Rash Behari Bose had evaded capture, he knew that the British government's net was closing in on him, not only for the assassination attempt on the viceroy but also for his continued links with the anti-British Gadhar Party in the United States and the Berlin or Indian Independence Committee in Germany. Following a brief period as a fugitive in India, Rash Behari Bose set sail for Japan under the alias "Priyanath Thakur" in May 1915. Bose reached Kobe on 5th June 1915 and then went to Tokyo where he met Sun Yat-sen, who was in exile in Japan, and developed contacts with Japanese journalists and

Pan-Asianists, like Mitsuru Toyama, who were sympathetic towards the cause of Indian independence from British rule.

The British realized that Rash Behari Bose had escaped to Japan and sought his extradition. The Anglo-Japanese alliance (first signed in 1902 and renewed in 1911 till its termination in 1923)

required Japan to hand over Rash Behari Bose to the British authorities. Had this happened, he would have most likely met a similar fate as Basanta Biswas. However, due to his connections with Toyama and the positive media coverage of his plight in Japan, he managed to stay in hiding in Japan by changing residences and identities frequently.

Aizo and Kokko Soma owned a bakery in Shinjuku called Nakamura. They had purchased the shop from Mr. Nakamura ("ya" means a shop in Japanese) and had decided to retain the old name. Progressive in their outlook, the Somas supported a wide network of artists, poets and educationists and were close to Mitsuru Toyama. The Somas offered studio space and lodgings to the artists behind their bakery and it was here that Rash Behari Bose found himself taking refuge after the successful execution of a daring plan conceived by Toyama.

The plan to get Rash Behari Bose away from the Japanese police and possible extradition back to British India involved Toyama inviting him to his house (which was within the present-day US embassy compound in Tokyo's Akasaka area in Minato Ward) for dinner. As per Japanese custom, Bose took off his shoes to enter the house with the police waiting to arrest him when he came out after dinner. However, unbeknownst to them, Bose wore other shoes and escaped through the back of Toyama's house to a neighboring house from where a friend of Toyama's took him by car (one of the few available in Tokyo in those days) to his hiding place in the basement of Nakamura in Shinjuku.

Toshiko Soma, the eldest daughter of the Somas, was entrusted to be the bearer of messages to and from Bose during his time in hiding as no others could be trusted with a task of such great risk and importance.



This arrangement led to Toyama thinking that Bose could become a Japanese citizen (and thereby make his extradition to British India that much more difficult) if he married Toshiko. The idea was proposed to the Somas and Kokko Soma left the decision to daughter Toshiko, who agreed it is said after three weeks of deliberation.

Toshiko and Rash Behari Bose's wedding took place in Toyama's house in 1916 with Pan-Asian luminaries like Shinpei Goto (Japanese foreign minister) and Tsuyoshi Inukai (future Japanese prime minister) in attendance. To avoid suspicion, Toshiko and the rest of the Somas travelled by tram (yes, Tokyo had an extensive tram or streetcar network in those days) in regular clothes and Toshiko's wedding kimono was supposedly sent to Toyama's house directly by the Takashimaya department store from where it was purchased.

With the end of World War I in November 1918, one of the justifications of extraditing Rash Behari Bose as a German spy became irrelevant for the British. This enabled Rash Behari Bose to come out of hiding and take his place as a legitimate member of the Nakamura family. The couple had two children – son Masahide Bose (aka Bharatchandra) was born in 1920 and daughter Tetsuko was born in 1922.

In 1923 Rash Behari Bose became a Japanese citizen. One concern with respect to his citizenship was if he should be added to his wife's family register (in which case he would become a Soma) or be allowed to start his own. He was allowed to start his own family register with the kanji characters 「防須」 pronounced as "Bosu" which was close to his family name of Bose. His son was 「防須 正秀」 meaning "straight and excellent" which was a name chosen by Toyama.

Toshiko's health declined soon after and she unfortunately died of pneumonia in 1924. After her death, Rash Behari Bose never remarried, and instead focused on his work.

Rash Behari Bose was an accomplished linguist and had utilized his time in hiding to master written Japanese. After Toshiko's death, he worked to establish himself as a writer and journalist promoting the cause of Indian independence and staying close to the leaders of the Indian independence movement. He founded the Indian Club in Tokyo and spoke and wrote widely about the evils of Western imperialism.

Rash Behari Bose was also involved in the management of Nakamura and built a house in Harajuku (currently in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward). Shinjuku was changing and becoming a key hub west of Tokyo and in 1927, he came up with the idea of Nakamura serving authentic Indian chicken curry inspired by the good old Bengali "murgir jhol" for which he is better

remembered in Japan today.

Until then, curry in Japan was "kare raisu" (curry rice), a thick stew that was served on British naval vessels often staffed by Indian cooks. Bose and Nakamura called their creation "kari" to distinguish it from the more prevalent version. Although the spices were milder, the chicken more tender (to enable them to be pulled off the bones even with chopsticks) and the rice stickier than any curry or jhol and rice combination in Bengal, the product was a big hit with urbane Tokyoites of the day and was sold at a premium. Even today, restaurant Manna in the basement of the Nakamura Building in Shinjuku continues to serve the dish based on the original recipe although some variations, including a beef version, have evolved over time.

By the mid-1930s, Netaji was coming into prominence as a leader of the Indian National Congress and espousing his own vision of the Indian freedom movement compared to the more pacifist approach favored by Gandhi. Rash Behari Bose held both Netaji and Gandhiji in high regard and aimed to see merits in both their approaches. He became an increasingly influential figure in Japan and along with A M Nair (who established Nair's restaurant in Higashi Ginza in 1949 with its signature "Murgi Lunch" dish) was instrumental in persuading the Japanese government to back Indian freedom fighters and ultimately to actively support the Indian independence movement. Rash Behari Bose was regularly featured in the Japanese media, the average Japanese person's knowledge of India, which was called 「天竺」 Tenjiku or the "land of the heavens", began to increase at pace. Japanese media called him 「天来」 tenrai or "heavenly being" or simply "Bosu sensei" (teacher).

Rash Behari Bose convened a conference in Tokyo on 28th March 1942, which decided to establish the Indian Independence League. At the conference, he moved a motion to raise an army for Indian independence. He convened the second conference of the League at Bangkok on 22nd June 1942. At the Bangkok conference a resolution was adopted to invite Netaji to join the League.

The Indian prisoners of war captured by the Japanese in the formerly British-held territories of Malaya, Burma (now Myanmar), Hong Kong and Singapore were encouraged to join the League and become soldiers of the Indian National Army (INA) or Azad Hind Fauj formed on 1st September 1942 as the military wing of the League. Rash Behari Bose selected the flag and created its organizational structure together with Captain Mohan Singh and Sardar Pritam Singh. He was tasked as a mediator between the INA and the Iwakuro Kikan (later Hikari Kikan) the Japanese liaison offices, headed by Col Bin Yamamoto and later by Major General Saburo Isoda, responsible for relations with the INA.

In May 1943, Netaji reached Japan from Germany by submarine and the two Boses met for the first time. It was at this meeting that Rash Behari Bose formally transferred the control and leadership of the League and thereby of the INA to Netaji by handing over the flag. The rest as they say is history. So it was on the foundations of the work done by Rash Behari Bose that Netaji conducted his famous campaigns that have captured the imaginations of generations of Indians since then.

In February 1944, Rash Behari Bose suffered from tuberculosis and his health steadily deteriorated. He died on 21st January 1945, aged 58. Prior to his death, the Japanese Government bestowed upon him the highest title given to a foreigner – The Second Order of Merit of the Rising Sun. His funeral was held on 28th January 1945 at Zojoji Temple in Tokyo (Minato Ward) with Tojo Hideki and many other prominent politicians and powerful persons attending.

Masahide, his son, died in June 1945 during the Battle of Okinawa at the age of 24. Tetsuko survived the war, married to become Tetsuko Higuchi and passed away at the age of 93 on 5th February 2016 after living most of her life in the RB Building in Harajuku, named after and constructed on land



purchased by her father in the mid-1920s. A portion of Rash Behari Bose's ashes is interred with the ashes of his family in the Tama Cemetery in Fuchu City of Tokyo.

Neither of the two Boses was alive to see the end of World War II on 15th August 1945 and the independence of India from British rule on 15th August 1947. Japan signed the Treaty of San Francisco with 49 countries on 8th September 1951 and the treaty came into force on 28th April 1952 returning full sovereignty to Japan. India did not sign the treaty as India considered that full sovereignty was not being restored to Japan in reality as the treaty was conditional upon Japan entering into a separate security treaty signed on the same day with the US. As a result, India concluded a separate Treaty of Peace Between Japan and India on 9th June 1952.

References:

1. Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rash_Behari_Bose, <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/ラース・ビハラー・ボース>
2. <http://www.petertasker.asia/articles/love-curry-and-the-quad-japans-indian-connection-part-1/>
3. Rash Behari Bose: Founding of the Indian National Army by Dr. Monika Chansoria - <https://japan-forward.com/rash-behari-bose-founding-of-the-indian-national-army/>
4. Rash Behari Bose – An account of his life and achievements by Lexi Kawabe <https://rashbeharibose.art.blog/>
5. Shinjuku Nakamura - 新宿中村屋 (<http://www.nakamura.co.jp/index.html>)
6. Ginza Nair - カレー | ナイルレストラン | 中央区 (ginza-nair.com)

Remembering a Hero: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- Chirag Viswanathan, Grade VII

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was an Indian Nationalist whose patriotism towards India has left a mark in the hearts of many Indians. He is famously known as the founder of 'Azad Hind Fauj' and his famous slogan, 'Tum Mujhe Khoon Do, Main Tumhe Aazadi Dunga'. So, to honor his great service to India, let us recount the story of his life and appreciate him for all he has done.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa to Prabhavati Dutt Bose and Janakinath Bose. He was influenced by teaching of Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna after reading their works, at the age of 16. He went to the University of Cambridge in England to prepare for Indian Civil Service. In 1920, he passed the civil service examination, but in 1921 after hearing the nationalist turmoil in India, he resigned his candidacy and hurried back to India.

He joined the non-cooperation movement which was started by Mahatma Gandhi. During the movement he was advised by Mahatma Gandhi to work with Chitranjan Das, who became his political guru. In 1927 he became the general secretary of the Congress party and worked with Jawahar Lal Nehru for India independence. In 1938, he was elected as the president of Indian National Congress and formed a national planning committee, which formulated the policy of broad industrialization.

In 1939, he led the All India Forward Bloc, which was the left wing nationalist political party of India that emerged as faction



within the India Congress. The prime objective of the Forward Bloc was to bring all the radical elements of the congress party together. He formed the Azad Hind Fauj also known as the Indian National Army, INA. In 1943, he went to Singapore to lead the India Independence league and rebuild the Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj) to make it effective instrument for the freedom of India. Netaji went to Andaman which had been occupied by the Japanese and hoisted the flag of India. In 1944, three units of Azad Hind Fauj, took part in the attack in the Northeastern part of India to oust the British from India.

He is said to have died on 18th August, 1945. Many among his supporters refused at that time and have refused since to believe either the facts or the circumstances of his death. Even today Subhash Chandra Bose is considered to be the most influential freedom fighter of India, with extraordinary leadership skill he led many important freedom struggle movement and helped India get independence.



Bhagat Singh - India's Martyr son

- By Abheek Dutta, Grade VIII

Bhagat Singh was an Indian revolutionary who played a pivotal role in the Indian Independence movement against British rule. He was a young freedom fighter who opposed the mighty British. His untimely death at the very young age of 23 gave the youth of India a martyr to believe in. His death motivated the youth to continue his fight against the British.

Born in Banga village of Faisalabad district which is now in Pakistan, in 1907, Bhagat Singh came from a family of committed freedom fighters. His father (Kishan Singh), his two uncles (Ajit Singh and Swaran Singh), and his grandfather (Arjan Singh) were freedom fighters who believed in Gandhi's principle of non-violence. The politically aware environment at home helped create a sense of patriotism in the mind of young Bhagat Singh.

As a child, Bhagat Singh was greatly inspired by the courage of his father and his uncles as they were unfazed even by lathi charges ordered by the British. As a young boy, at the age of 12, Bhagat Singh visited the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre site where a peaceful, unarmed crowd of protestors were mercilessly killed under the orders of General Dyer. He took a fistful of soil and stood with that same fist against his heart in remembrance of all those who had passed on the very same place on which he was standing. This moment forged Bhagat Singh's resolve to fight the British. He was an ardent reader who was exposed to various ideologies and revolutionary movements. As Bhagat Singh grew up, he became attracted to anarchist and Marxist ideologies which further stirred revolutionary ideas within the young man.

In 1923, Bhagat Singh joined the National College in Lahore, founded two years earlier by Lala Lajpat Rai (a prominent nationalist leader) in response to Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement, which urged Indian students to shun schools and colleges subsidized by the British Indian government. Bhagat Singh studied here and it was here that he met his friends Sukhdev and Yashpal, with whom he founded the political party Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

Bhagat Singh left home for Kanpur when his parents urged him to get married. He was determined to steadfastly focus only on India's freedom movement without any attachments or distractions. In 1924 in Kanpur, he became a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, started by Sachindranath Sanyal a year earlier. The main organizer of the Association was Chandra Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh bonded with him to form a close friendship. It was with the HSRA that Bhagat Singh learnt about making of bombs.

In 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai died due to injuries sustained during a protest against the Simon Commission in Lahore. The lathi charge was ordered by the superintendent of police, James Scott. After 'Lalaji' (as Lala Lajpat Rai was fondly called) died, Bhagat Singh was deeply pained and sought revenge against superintendent James Scott. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru decided to avenge the death of the dear leader. They were all members of the HSRA. They believed that only an armed revolution could bring about freedom from colonial rule. However, they made a mistake in identifying superintendent James Scott and assassinated another police official J P Saunders. As Singh and Rajguru fled, Chandrashekhar Azad shot a police constable Chanan Singh who was pursuing the revolutionaries. The young revolutionaries were on the run for many months.

To avoid arrest Bhagat Singh changed his appearance. He shaved his beard and cut his hair, a violation of the sacred laws of Sikhism. A comrade of Bhagat Singh, Durga Devi volunteered to act as Bhagat Singh's wife to help him escape. He disguised himself as an Anglo Indian, donning a suit and hat at the Lahore Railway station which was teeming with



more than 400 policemen, who had spread their net across the station. With Durga Devi's infant son in his arms and his friend, Sukhdev, posing as the servant, the disguise worked and the fugitives managed to escape to Calcutta. Here Bhagat Singh took refuge for several days in the Arya Samaj building in the city and learned about creating bombs and weapons while hiding inside.

On 8th April 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs at the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi to protest the implementation of the Defense of India Act which gave the British special authority to deal with revolutionaries. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt did not intend to harm anyone by this act. It was done in order to highlight their protest. They were arrested immediately as they did not flee from the scene. They courted arrest shouting 'Inquilab Zindabab' (which means long live the revolution). During the court trial, the revolutionaries' link to the Saunders murder surfaced and Bhagat Singh and his comrades were charged for the crime and were given life imprisonment.

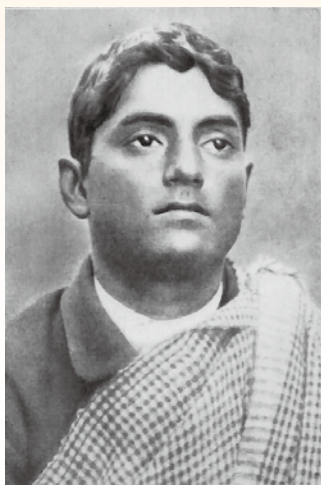
While in prison Bhagat Singh's socialist ideologies shone through when he demanded equal treatment of all prisoners. He went on a hunger strike along with his comrades to support his demand. Another revolutionary, Jatin Das, succumbed to this fast unto death after more than 60 days. This hunger strike aroused the sympathies of the general public.

On 7 October, 1930, the trio, Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death while others involved were sentenced to imprisonment and deportation. The death sentence was protested by many people who admired the revolutionaries. Nationalist leaders appealed to the government to alter the sentence from death to life imprisonment. Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were to be hanged on 24th March 1931 but the death sentence was carried out a day earlier on the 23rd of March at the Lahore Jail.

March 23rd is observed as 'Martyrs' Day' or 'Shaheed Diwas' or 'Sarvodaya Day' in India in honour of the eternal heroes of our freedom struggle. Bhagat Singh's bravery and sacrifice will be etched forever in the hearts and minds of Indians for generations to come. He will always be remembered for his heroism and patriotism. As Bhagat Singh once said, 'They may kill me, but they cannot kill my ideas. They can crush my body, but they will not be able to crush my spirit.' Bhagat Singh gained immortality through his ideas. Bhagat Singh's slogan 'Inquilab Zindabad' became the catchphrase of the Indian national movement as thousands chanted 'Inquilab Zindabad' to oust the British.

Bagha Jatin and his Influence on the Indian Independence

- Arnab Karmokar, Grade X



When discussing Indian revolutionaries and freedom fighters, some of the most common names that are brought up are Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, but Jatindranath Mukherjee, famously known as Bagha Jatin, is a personality that is rarely mentioned. In fact, before learning about him and his impact, I too was completely unaware of his existence.

After studying and looking at Jatin's great accolades, I discovered that despite the lack of acknowledgement and recognition, the work he has managed to accomplish and the legacy he has left behind are extremely significant and eminent. Bagha Jatin made a substantial contribution to India's independence through his actions, ideas, and devotion.

Bagha Jatin is best known for choosing the path of revolutionary violence during the struggle for Indian independence and for being the driving force in the attempt to drive the British out of India during an uprising under the shadow of World War I. Many historians speculate that it was in fact Bagha Jatin's determination that started the insurgency of revolutionaries in India, to battle the British Raj.

Jatindranath Mukherjee was born in 1879 in the Kushtia district of undivided Bengal (part of modern-day Bangladesh). In 1906, Jatin gained the moniker 'Bagha Jatin' after fighting a Royal Bengal tiger alone for three hours and killing it with a dagger.

Jatin was first exposed to nationalism when he was a teenager. The Bhagavad Gita and Swami Vivekananda's religious nationalism teachings fueled Jatin's desire for leadership and liberation. He was volunteering with the Ramakrishna Mission on the streets of cholera-stricken Calcutta when he met Swami Vivekananda through Sister Nivedita, one of Swami Vivekananda's disciples.

The British Raj's discriminatory policies and unequal treatment of the Indian people at the time caused a great deal of hatred in the nation. Indians were growing impatient with the slow pace of change and losing faith in the British's constitutional agitation. Upon meeting Jatin, Swami Vivekananda noticed his potential and instructed him to take up the mission to assemble devoted young men with the courage and determination to revolt against British rule.

In 1902, Jatin joined the Anushilan Samiti, an underground group of anti-British revolutionaries after nationalist Aurobindo Ghosh recruited him to challenge the dominance of British rule. In 1906, Jatin became the commander-in-chief of Jugantar, another covert group against British rule.

The birth of Indian nationalism was triggered by Jatin's trumpet declaration "Amra morbo, Jagat jagbe" (We shall die to awaken the nation), and hundreds of restless young revolutionaries joined Jatin's brand of militant nationalism to fight for independence. Today, it is recognized that the Anushilan

Samiti and Jugantar were the two primary covert revolutionary organizations that fought for Indian independence from Bengal.

These two groups used bombings, assassinations, and other forms of political violence to oppose British rule in India, drawing inspiration from both Italian nationalism and Japanese philosopher Kakuzo Okakura's Pan-Asian ideology. A number of notable revolutionary actions against the British were carried out by the Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar, including early attempts to assassinate British Raj officials, an attempt on the Viceroy of India's life in 1912, and the Seditious conspiracy, in which numerous nationalist groups across India attempted to organize a Pan-Indian rebellion against the British.

Bagha Jatin persisted in fighting for his nation despite being repeatedly jailed for waging war against the British Raj. He met numerous revolutionaries from different parts of Bengal while he was in jail waiting to go on trial for the Howrah-Shibpur conspiracy case, and he started formulating his next course of action against the British.

When World War I started in 1914, most British Indian soldiers were sent to fight against the German army, leaving only about 15,000 soldiers to protect India. Jatin believed that this presented an excellent opportunity to revolt against the British troops in India.

Jatin started to look up to Germany and was adamant that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." In Calcutta, Jatin met with the German Crown Prince and asked for weapons for an uprising to install a socialist government in India, and luckily, Jatin was promised financial support and weapons by the prince.

The plot was going as planned, and Jatin and his supporters were set to welcome the ship Queen Maverick, which was loaded with arms consignments from Germany, but unfortunately, fate had other plans.

The German shipment delivery schedule at India's east coast was discovered by a Czech spy who sold the information to the British. Additionally, the German agent in charge of monitoring the shipment of weapons switched sides and informed the British of the situation. Furthermore, British Police decoded a telegraph sent to Universal Emporium in Balasore, which revealed where Jatin was.

A team of British police rushed to arrest Jatin and other revolutionaries and approached them in a pincer movement. A 75-minute shootout erupted between five revolutionaries armed with Mauser pistols and many police and troops armed with modern guns.

There were unrecorded losses on the British side. On the rebel side, one died, Jatin and another were seriously injured, and the remainder were apprehended after their ammo ran out. Jatindranath Mukherjee later died in Balasore hospital on September 10, 1915.

When Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa in 1915, he found an entire generation inspired by Jatin's philosophy of passive resistance ready to rise for the sake of the Motherland. Gandhi skillfully removed the "revolutionary violence" component of it and enforced his complete faith in Satyagraha (nonviolence); which is why following Jatin's death, the Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar shifted away from their aggressive doctrine in the 1920s, owing to the influence of the Indian National Congress and the Gandhian nonviolent campaign. Although it is Gandhi that is regarded as India's

“Father of the Nation,” some academics contend that he would not have earned the title if it weren’t for the Czech spy who revealed Jatin’s scheme.

Although Jatin’s planned armed rebellion did not materialize, it also influenced Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s subsequent armed fight. These two eras of history got connected by Veer Savarkar, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha and a close associate of the Berlin Committee and India House in London during the Bagha Jatin era. Savarkar instructed Bose to leave the country secretly, make contact with the axis powers, and form an Indian Army of Liberation out of POWs in Germany to launch a military campaign akin to what Jatin planned in 1915 against the British. Bose went on to achieve what Jatin could not; he led the Indian National Army and fought British troops, resulting in India’s freedom.

The top British colonial cop at the time, Charles Augustus Tegart, wrote; “Bagha Jatin, the Bengali revolutionary, is one of the most selfless political workers in India. His driving power...

immense: if an army could be raised or arms could reach an Indian port, the British would lose the war.” Tegart added, saying, “If Bagha Jatin was an Englishman, then the English people would have built his statue next to Nelson’s at Trafalgar Square.”

After researching and looking into Bagha Jatin’s life, I realized that his drive, courage, and sacrifice for the freedom movement are what make his legacy so prominent. At a time when many Indian citizens could not even fathom India’s independence, Jatin stood up for complete freedom. While many Indian citizens had not given much thought to implementing global assistance, Jatin’s vision went beyond the borders of India and sought to enlist Germany’s assistance and take advantage of the conditions brought on by the First World War. Regardless of the lack of prominence, Bagha Jatin’s path of freedom fighting significantly impacted India’s independence, and I strongly believe it is absolutely important that his legacy gets preserved.

Works Cited:

- Das, Rup Narayan. 2007. “Bagha Jatin: An Unsung Hero.” Orissa Review, January, 39~43.
- Panigrahi, Saswat. 2019. “Bagha Jatin: The Unsung Hero of Indian Independence Struggle.” Dailyo. September 10, 2019. <https://www.dailyo.in/variety/bagha-jatin-independence-struggle-subhas-chandra-bose-world-war-i-32004>.
- Panigrahi, Saswat. 2018. “Revolutionary Bagha Jatin & His Kaiser Connection.” October 17, 2018. <https://www.livehistoryindia.com/story/people/revolutionary-bagha-jatin-his-kaiser-connection>.
- Mukherjee, Prithwindra. n.d. “Why Could Bagha Jatin Not Be the Father of Our Nation?” Get Bengal. Accessed August 18, 2022. <https://www.getbengal.com/details/why-could-bagha-jatin-not-be-the-father-of-our-nation>.

Chandra Shekhar Azad The Roar of Freedom

- Anushka Mohanty, Grade IX

“Inquilab Zindabad or Long live the revolution” was the mantra of the fraternity of freedom fighters where the great revolutionary Chandra Shekhar Azad belonged to. Lovingly people of India call him “Azad”.

Azad means “FREEDOM”.. well was it his real surname? let’s connect the dots, there is an interesting story behind, Azad was born as Chandra Shekhar Tiwari in year 1906 in a village of Uttar Pradesh, the largest northern state of India, to an upper caste Brahmin family. Since his school days Azad dedicated his life-energy towards India’s struggle for freedom against the mighty British Empire.

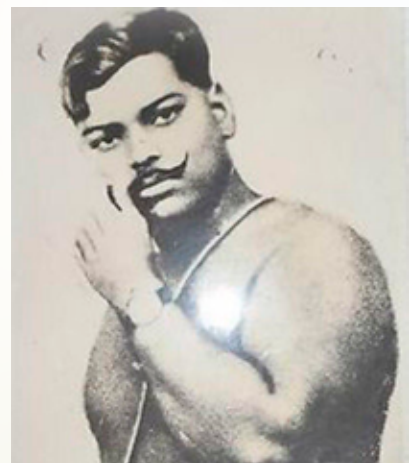
Those were the days when Mahatma Gandhi’s non-cooperative national movement started to gain recognition, and thus began to have more participants throughout India, which included a 15 year old Lion called Chandrasekhar. In the process of protesting peacefully, Azad was arrested on 20th December 1921, for his participation, along with many other peaceful protesters. But this did not slacken his spirit in any sort of way. In fact, in his admission to new life in prison, he changed his last name to “Azad” (which translates to “free/liberated” in Urdu) and then registered his father’s name on the form as “Swatantrata” (Which translates to Independence) and put his residency as “jail.” British officials were frustrated by his unwillingness to share his real identity, and many were surprised as to why he would write untrue things when he would suffer 15 lashes and unthinkable torture every day just because of this

mere action.

Little did they know that through his new name he was revealing his true identity that he was not merely the son of a Tiwari he was “Roar of Freedom and weapon of Independence”.

This was just Chandra Sekhar Azad’s way to say, “Lock me up, hit me, even if you spit on me, I couldn’t care less. India will have it’s Independence.”

After his bold move in prison, the Indian National Congress recognized him, making him more well-known amongst the citizens of India. Despite his new gain of popularity, Azad was a little disappointed when he heard that Gandhiji’s rallies were being suspended after the violent Incident in Chauri Chaura (A violent scene that caused many casualties and injuries amongst Indian residents) . That brought a big turning point in Azad’s life and he met the legendary revolutionary “Ram Prasad Bismil” and together they formed the HRSA (Hindustan, Republican



Socialist Association.) This was one of his key contribution towards India's fight for freedom. The organization was an NPO, and the organization obtained funding through many rebellion activities they committed against the British force. They started robbing the money Britishers robbed from innocent Indians through their several unscrupulous taxations. My writer's heart somehow compares Azad as "Indian Robinhood".

Soon many legendary freedom-fighters who believed in communist manifesto, started joining HRSA, including the great "BHGAT SINGH" History remembers their most daredevil act against British Atrocities was "The Kakori Train Robbery", where Azad and his associates ambushed a train that was going from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow. However, the train abruptly stopped at Kakori as Rajendra Lahiri, (an associate of Azad and also known as a revolutionary) stopped the train as Azad and the other Members of HRSA looted the train for money. This money would go to the funds for HSRA to continue its fight for India's Independence.

Azad was known for many crimes that he committed for the liberation of Indian citizens. But as we look back we question "are those really crimes?" Was he a criminal? Or he was the biggest threat to British occupation of India, which used many strategies to malign the image of a "true son of the soil". When HRSA was low on members since many of them were arrested, Azad came to the rescue with his tactile intelligence and his extraordinary organizational skills helped obtain freedom and a rebellious force against the British. It was all worth it for the sake of the liberation of India.

Azad's leadership skill was praised by even Motilal Nehru ji, even being in National Congress (which was strongly disapproving Azad's violent way of revolution), he was willingly funding Azad's organization believing in his "Deshbhakti". Azad had certain magical power and skills like he could able to run as a cheetah, almost never being caught by any English policeman, competing with their horses he would run faster, hide and can camouflage in the forest. As if he had the capacity to dissolve within the lap of mother-India.

He led, and inspired, not only his fellow members of the HRSA but, people in general, to fight for their liberation.

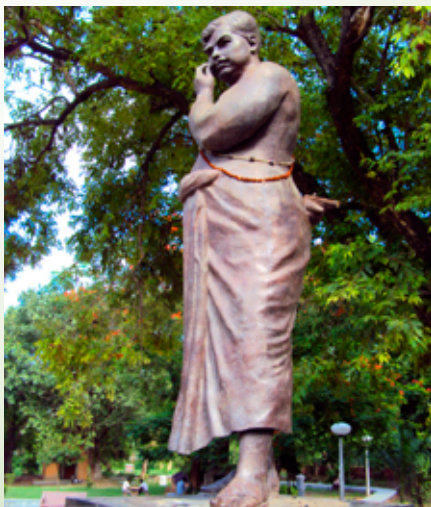
Although Azad did use risky methods many times, but it was all for a greater cause, and as he said: "A plane is always safe on the ground, but it is not made for that. Always take some meaningful risks in life to achieve greater heights." His work not only saved millions of lives, but his work also taught us the great value of courage, leadership, and always having a plan. Azad was an inspirational revolutionary who played a key part in India's Liberation. Azad gained much fame in his merely short life of 24 years. He had followers from different levels of society, starting from govt. officials to poor farmers. But one thing we must learn from him is that he did not do it for fame. He did it to save his country.

On 27 February 1931, the CID head of the British police Nott-Bower was tipped off by someone that Azad was at Alfred park and was having a talk with his companion Sukhdev Raj. Azad's old comrades Veerbhadra Tiwari and Yashpal were held responsible for tipping off two of the police constables. The police arrived at the park and surrounded it from all four sides. Some constables along with DSP entered the park with rifles and the shootout began. Raj escaped, uninjured. Azad hid behind a tree to save himself and began to fire from behind it. The police fired back. After a long shootout, holding true to his pledge to always remain Azad (Free) and never be captured alive, he shot himself in the head with his gun's last bullet. In the shootout he seriously injured many policemen fighting alone. The police recovered Azad's body after the other officers arrived at the site.

The last words of the 24year young legend were "Azad hi rahein hain, azad hi rahenge.....(I was free and shall remain always)" "आज़ाद ही रहें हैं, आज़ाद ही रहेंगे" But these were the last words that were going to leave a mark in Indian History as the roar of India's "true son of the soil".

Azad's jingle : "abhee bhee jisaka khoon na khaula, vo khoon nahin pani hai . jo desh ke kaam na aae, vo bekaar javaanee hai".

“अभी भी जिसका खून ना खौला,
वो खून नहीं पानी है
जो देश के काम ना आए,
वो बेकार जवानी है”



The Chandrasekhar Azad Park (formerly know as Alferd Park), and the tree under which Azad took his last breath.

「スーリヤ・セン 『チッタゴンの勇士』」

－ ポール・アスマタ（10年生）

1947年8月15日、インドは大英帝国から独立しました。

大英帝国のインドの植民地政策にプラスとマイナスの両方の影響を及ぼしました。プラスの影響としてはインフラを通して就業の場を与え、新しい技術をインド国内に起こしました。マイナスの影響としては、この植民地化により数多くの飢饉を齎し、インドの地場産業を破壊し、またインド人に対する人種差別を行いました。イギリス人はインド人を傷つけたり殺害しても罪に問われず、逆にインド人が殺人を犯した場合、彼らはすぐに裁判にかけて処刑されました。このインド人に対する不公平と不平等、そして経済の混乱を終わらせるために、インド各地で多数の抗議運動が行われました。

直接行動としては大胆にも大英帝国から派遣された首脳陣の幾人かを暗殺したりしています。そのため抗議運動に参加した人々が処刑されました。その中の一人に、後にインド独立の革命家となるスーリヤ・センがいました。スーリヤ・センとその仲間たちはインド独立運動の先駆的革命家として重要な役割を果たしました。彼らはチッタゴン武器庫襲撃を主導することに最もよく知られています。スーリヤ・センの独立運動への参加が他のグループに大英帝国に対する革命を促し、最終的にはインドの独立につながりました。

スーリヤ・センは1894年3月22日にノアバラ、チッタゴンのバラナガルに生まれました。チッタゴンはベンガル湾に臨む現在でもバングラデシュの重要な良港となっています。彼の父は学校の教師でした。六人兄弟でした。幼いころに彼らの両親が亡くなり、6人の兄弟は叔父のゴウロモニに引き取られ育ちました。センはダヤモル小学校とノアバラ高等英語学校で学び、卒業後は西ベンガル州のベハランポア大学（現在クリシュナス大学）に入学しましたが、在学中の1916年に教授から、大英帝国による悲惨なインドの現状を知らされました。そしてすぐに独立運動の世界に飛び込みました。その年、彼はアヌシラン・サミティという革命組織に参加しました。

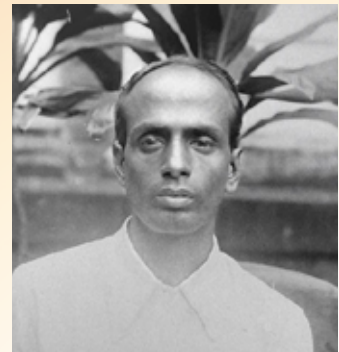
1918年にチッタゴンに帰った後、センは国立学校の教師になりました。その時、センはマスタルダという尊称を受けました。接尾辞「ダ」は年上の人を意味し、または兄という意味があります。後に教職を辞し、インド国民会議のチッタゴン支部長になりました。

センはマハトマ・ガンジーが始めた不服従運動に参加しました。しかしセンの活動はガンジーの不服従運動にくらべ、より過激なものでした。例えば、運動のために資金を得る手段として、アッサムのベンガル鉄道会社を襲撃し金品の略奪したのです。このため、他の仲間たちとともに逮捕されました。その仲間の中には後にインド共産党の指導者となるアンビカ・チャクラバルティもいました。

1928年に刑務所から釈放された後も革命の活動を続けました。センはチッタゴンの二つの重要な武器庫を襲い、電話局と電信局を破壊し、チッタゴンをカルカッタから切り離すために鉄道と通信を襲撃したのです。さらなる革命のために、チッタゴンの帝国銀行を襲撃し、多くの逮捕された同志の革命家を釈放するための計画でもありました。これがチッタゴン武器庫襲撃の作戦でした。

1930年4月18日の午後10時に襲撃は行われました。ガネーシュ・ゴーシュのグループが警察の武器庫を襲い、ロクナート・バルのグループはまた別の武器庫を襲いました。この襲撃には65人くらいが参加しています。グループは

電話線と電信線を切断し、電車の運行を混乱させることには成功しましたが、弾薬を見つけることができませんでした。他に16人ほどが帝国本部を占領しましたが、こうした点ではヨーロッパの国々にも警告を発することができませんでした。襲撃が終わった後、センはインドの国旗を本部に掲げ、チッタゴンから逃げました。



スーリヤ・セン

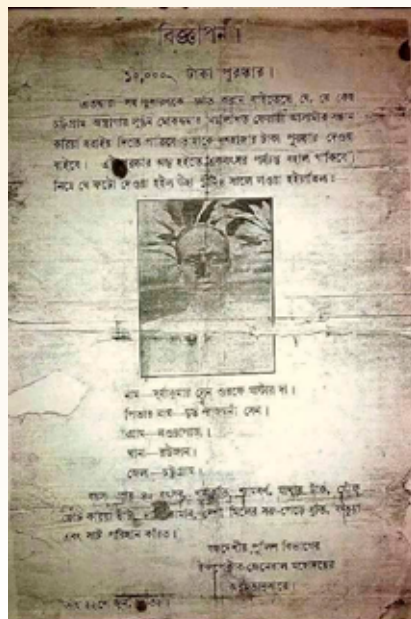
警官隊はジャラーラーバードの丘の避難所に潜んでいた革命家を見つけ、激しい銃撃戦が繰り広げられましたが、被害は80人の警官隊と12人の革命家が亡くなりました。他にも多くの革命家が逮捕されましたが、センを含む少数の人たちは逃亡に成功しました。

警官隊の手を逃れ、センは潜伏場所から潜伏場所へと移動し続け、労働者、農民、司祭、さらにはイスラム教徒になりすまし逃亡を続けました。しかし彼の親戚の一人、ネトラ・センの家に潜んでいた時、懸賞金の10000ルピーに眼がくらんだ叔父の裏切りに遭い、警官隊に訴えられたのでした。叔父は懸賞金を受け取る前に仲間の手によって殺されました。

1933年2月16日にセンは逮捕されました。警察による残酷な拷問を受けました。1934年1月12日にスーリヤ・センは他の革命家と共に絞首刑にされました。

チッタゴン武器庫襲撃は大英帝国をインドから追い出すことは出来ませんでした。センの行動はインド独立運動の輪を広げ、インド国民の自主独立の考えに行動しなければ、という意識を植えつけました。スーリヤ・センは大英帝国に対する過激な手段に訴えましたが、インドの独立運動の端緒を切り拓いた偉大な革命家でした。

現在、チッタゴン武器庫襲撃から92年が経過し、インドの独立から75年が経過しました。インドの独立を勝ち取るために闘った多くの名もなき革命家の名誉を称えるべきだと私は信じています。いまなおスーリヤ・センの伝記は母国のために戦って死んだ勇士として紹介されています。



スーリヤ・センの指名手配のポスター



センが絞首刑にされたチッタゴン中央刑務所

参考文献:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surya_Sen#Chittagong_armoury_raid
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chittagong_armoury_raid
- <https://positivenegativeimpact.com/british-rule-in-india#:~:text=Positive%20Impact%20of%20British%20Rule%20In%20India%201,language.%20...%205%20Safety%20from%20other%20nations.%20>
- <https://wikibio.in/surya-sen/>

Khudiram Bose

- Gandharbee Misra, Grade X

Khudiram Bose was born in a very crucial time of Indian history when Indians were mistreated and looked down upon. He gave his life at 18 to fight for freedom.

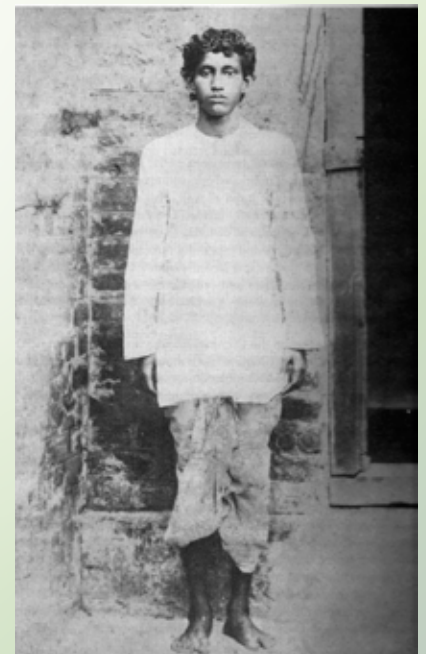
He was born on December 3rd, 1889 in the Medinipur district of Bengal, where he lost his parents at a young age and was raised by his sister, the oldest in the family at the time. He attended Hamilton High School in Tamluk, North 24 Parganas. While in school, he observed revolutionary activities and organizations all around him, which prompted him to eventually join one of these groups called "Jugantar" (1902). He was detained a few years later while committing revolutionary deeds (such as distributing anti-British pamphlets, sticking up revolution posters and violence) in (1906), but was dismissed due to his young age.

In 1907, "Barindra Kumar Ghosh arranged for his associate Hemchandra Kanungo to learn bomb-making techniques in Paris from a Russian revolutionary in exile, Nicholas Safranski" (Javaid, 2020). Later, while engaging in small-group activities to attempt to destabilize the British in any way possible, the group chose to target Douglas Kingsford, a merciless oppressor and the chief magistrate of a Presidency Court, who was well known for his harsh treatment and hatred towards the freedom fighters. The party intended to assassinate Kingsford and bring relief to the oppressed people; giving the responsibility and task to Khudiram and Profulla. He and his accomplice Profulla Chaki decided to murder him with a bomb made by Hemchandra using knowledge and experience from the bomb-making sessions. They concluded that Kingford's daily excursion in a carriage on a trail was the ideal location and timing to detonate the explosive that would kill him. Hemchandra designed a book bomb to assassinate Kingsford. Which would make it appear as if a book was tossed into the vehicle before it exploded.

On that particular day, Kingsford and his wife were playing with Pringle Kennedy and Grace Kennedy, the wife and daughter of a British Barrister. The two families rode in identical vehicles, The Kennedy's leaving earlier than the Kingsfords, which resulted in Khudiram and his accomplice to misfire, killing Pringle Kennedy

and her daughter, Grace Kennedy. Following the incident, news spread quickly across the surrounding region, and a search for the duo was launched. Khudiram was able to flee for a short time while the search was underway, whilst Profulla Chaki committed suicide before being arrested.

Later when Khudiram was arrested, the body of Profulla Chaki was brought to him and he identified his body for the police and Khudiram was finally sentenced to death after multiple trials and hearings. Later it was decided that he would be executed on a special day for the British. Khudiram Bose was executed by



hanging on August 11 1908. Newspapers such as the Amrita Bazar Patrika (Bengali) and The Empire (British) stated that this young patriot was smiling as he scaled the scaffolding. To honor Khudiram Bose, the Khudiram Bose Memorial Central Jail was renamed after him; Khudiram Bose Central College, founded in 1965 in Kolkata, West Bengal, offers undergraduate programmes in arts and commerce; and work on naming a hospital after him has been decided. This is our 75th anniversary of independence. In this time, let us not forget all the brave freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the country, letting us be born in an independent country.

References

- State Archive, C. (2022, July 24). Khudiram Bose. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khudiram_Bose#/media/File:Khudiram_Bose_1905.jpg
- Culture Staff, I. (n.d.). Khudiram Bose. INDIAN CULTURE. <https://indianculture.gov.in/node/2796633>
- Javaid, A. (2020, August 11). Shahid Khudiram Bose biography: Birth, family, revolutionary activities, legacy and execution. Jagranjosh.com <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/khudiram-bose-1597142729-1>
- Roychowdhury, A. (2020, December 23). Explained: Who was Khudiram Bose? The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-who-was-khudiram-bose-7111682/>
- Vir, D. (2021, August 11). Remembering Khudiram Bose, the brave freedom fighter on his death anniversary. The Economic Times. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/Remembering-khudiram-bose-the-brave-freedom-fighter-on-his-death-anniversary/articleshow/85232368.cms>

एक और झांसी की रानी

- पूर्णिमा शाह



वह वीरांगना जिसने ब्रिटिश सेना को पराजित किया, कहा जाता है कि रानी लक्ष्मी बाई से

अदभुत समानता होने के कारण, उन्होंने इस समानता का लाभ उठाया और रानी के सेना की कमान संभाली। इतिहास के खोए हुए पन्नों की यह कहानी है उस वीरांगना की, जिसका नाम था झलकारी बाई। एक विनम्र परिवार में जन्मी यह साधारण युवती कुछ ही समय में रानी लक्ष्मी बाई की सलाहकार बन गई। वास्तव में वह इतनी साहसी थी कि झांसी के युद्ध के दौरान उसने रानी की जगह ले ब्रिटिश सेना को भ्रमित किया और इस दौरान रानी को भाग जाने का मौका दिया। १८५७ के विद्रोह के दौरान एक औरत केवल अपने साहस और धृति की सहायता से संपूर्ण ब्रिटिश सेना के हृदय में खौफ पैदा करने में सफल हुई और करोड़ों के लिए छोड़ गई एक समृद्ध विरासत जिसका अनुसरण हर आने वाली पीढ़ी कर सकती है।

यह उसी की कहानी है। झांसी के पास भोजला नामक गांव में २२ नवंबर १८३० में सदोबा सिंह और जमुना देवी के यहां जन्म हुआ था झलकारी का। माता-पिता की इकलौती संतान झलकारी को मां के देहांत के पश्चात पिता ने अकेले ही बड़ा किया। झलकारी एक गरीब और दलित परिवार से होने के कारण शिक्षा प्राप्त न कर सकी। किंतु बचपन से घुड़सवारी और हथियार इस्तेमाल करने की शिक्षा प्राप्त की और इनमें निपुण थी। उसके शौर्य की गाथा आज भी झांसी के घर घर में सुनाई जाती है कहा जाता है कि जब डाकू ने एक व्यापारी को लूटने का प्रयत्न किया तो अकेली झलकारी ने उन्हें मार भगाया यही नहीं उसने कुल्हाड़ी से उस बाघ को मार गिराया जिसने उस पर जंगल में आक्रमण किया। एक मशहूर कहानी यह भी है कि केवल एक लकड़ी की सहायता से उसने जंगल में तेंदुए को मार गिराया।

यदि रानी के सैनिक पूरन सिंह से झलकारी का विवाह ना होता तो शायद उसकी मुलाकात रानी से कभी ना होते। पूरन सिंह एक ऐसा कौशल सैनिक था जिसकी कला और कौशल से सभी लोग परिचित थे। इसी दौरान झलकारी का परिचय रानी लक्ष्मीबाई से हुआ। गौरी पूजा के दौरान झलकारी गांव की अन्य औरतों के साथ झांसी के किले पर आई। यहीं पर रानी की नजर उस पर पड़ी। झलकारी में अपनी झलक देखकर वह अचंभे में पड़ गई। तुरंत पूछताछ करने पर रानी को झलकारी की वीरता और शौर्य से परिचित किया गया। रानी ने

झलकारी को नारी सेना में नियुक्त किया और उसे निशानेबाजी और तोप चलाने का प्रशिक्षण दिया गया। १८५७ का विद्रोह भारतीय इतिहास का महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा है। इसकी शुरुआत १० मई को मेरठ में हुई और यही थी शुरुआत संपूर्ण उत्तर और मध्य भारत में अनेक विद्रोह की। इसे भारत के स्वतंत्रता का पहला युद्ध माना जाता है जिसमें झांसी का महत्वपूर्ण स्थान था और रानी लक्ष्मीबाई थी उन कई महान शासकों में से एक जिसने ब्रिटिश सेना का साहस पूर्ण विद्रोह किया।

१८५७ में फील्ड मार्शल युग हेनरी रोज ने झांसी पर आक्रमण कर इस विद्रोह का अंत करना चाहा। इतिहास साक्षी है कि रानी ने केवल ४००० की सेना से ब्रिटिश सेना का सामना किया। यदि रानी की सेना के सेनापति उन्हें धोखा ना देते तो रानी को हार का सामना कभी न करना पड़ता। सैनिकों के परामर्श से वह चुपचाप घुड़सवार हो युद्ध भूमि से निकल गई। यही वक्त था जब झलकारी ने डोर संभाल लिया। यह परवाह न करते हुए कि वह अपने आप को किस खतरे में डाल रही है, वह रानी का भेष लेकर तुरंत ही युद्ध के मैदान में उतर पड़ी। सेना को संभालते हुए वह जनरल रोज की छावनी में पहुंच गई। वहां उसने जनरल को ललकारा। यह केवल दुश्मन सेना को गुमराह करने का बहाना था ताकि रानी को भागने का मौका मिले। रानी से झलकारी की अदभुत समानता ब्रिटिश सेना का पूरा १ दिन भ्रमित करने के लिए काफी था।

बुंदेलखंड की कथा के अनुसार, जब जनरल ने उससे पूछा कि उसे क्या सजा दी जाए, झलकारी ने उसकी आंखों में देख कर फांसी की सजा मांगी। रानी की आड़ में झलकारी की बहादुरी और साहस देखकर जनरल ने प्रशंसा से यह भी कहा कि यदि भारत की १% महिलाएं भी रानी की तरह होती तो ब्रिटिश सेना मुंह की खा कर देश छोड़ जाते। पूरे १ दिन पश्चात दूल्हाजू नामक व्यक्ति ने झलकारी की पहचान की और ब्रिटिश सेना को इस छल का पता चला। झलकारी की मृत्यु एक रहस्य पूर्ण घटना थी। कहीं बताया गया है कि उसकी मृत्यु १८५८ में हुई। और कहीं कहा गया है कि वह मुक्त हो गई थी और १८९० में उसका निधन हुआ। इतिहास में भले ही उसे भुला दिया हो परंतु झलकारी बाई के साहस और वीरता की गाथा दलितों में कहानियों के रूप में हमेशा जीवित रही। कुछ ही समय से इतिहास रचने वाले इस वीरांगना की कहानी को लिखने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं। ग्वालियर में सन् २००१ में झलकारी के सम्मान में एक बुत बनाया गया। भारत सरकार ने इस वीरांगना के सम्मान में एक मोहर भी जारी की। वह जीवित रही तो देश के लिए और मृत्यु को गले लगाया तो वह भी देश के लिए।



Now here was my father who lost his father and 5 uncles all at a time and was not even able to see the dead-bodies of them. Can anyone imagine the trauma of my wretched grand-mother who just lost her husband and the whole family and was left with 2 young kids of 8 years (my father) and 5 years (my uncle) without having any clue of what is waiting for her next day?

From Victim to Winner

What do you expect from a typical 8 years old, 3rd grader? Possibly learning about the solar system, studying about the world map? Unfortunately, not every 8-year-old was that fortunate when the world map was redrawn after the division of India and Pakistan.

When most of the people would think this as the end of life, my grand-mother along with her 2 sons accepted this as God's will. They stayed in refugee camps for a few months. She didn't have anything to eat for four days. *"After 4 days, when we got to eat a Sukhi Roti which my mother cooked on fire after kneading flour in her dupatta, it tasted sweat"* my father used to tell us. He said that the taste of that first Roti after days of hunger is still in his memories.

My grand-mother started working as a house-maid in few houses at Nilokheri (a newly built town for refugees) and my father also started working as domestic helper to a very generous Government official, who graciously allowed my father to study in a school while helping in the domestic errands. My uncle also got some work in the same house where my grand-mother used to work and life started creeping...

My father ensured that while working as a domestic helper, he would not stop his studies. He completed his Matriculation and ensured to secure a Govt. job. Now, he was able to take care of his mother and younger brother. My grand-mother stopped working as a house-maid and my uncle also got vocational training to secure a Govt. Job.

There were so many such incidents that my father used to tell us about the struggles of his life and how he could steadfastly attain his goal despite losing everything during the partition. Instead of having a breakdown as a result of all the atrocities, experiences made him more resilient, strong and grateful for whatever he had. A strong sense of humbleness became his permanent trait which we try to inherit as his legacy. Later in his life, he was showered with abundant grace of God, which can be undoubtedly attributed to his Good Karmas. Little he knew at his young age that he would have three successful, happy children. My two brothers are now well settled in the US, one with Apple and another with Facebook. 19 years back, I started Meritech, a small IT company in Japan which now employs more than 150 people worldwide. My father's life had been an institution for me. I learnt so many things from him and still keep learning from all true stories of his life. Every moment, I try to emulate his unique strength of turning around a nightmare into a shiny day. I wish him constantly enlightening me with his divine qualities from his heavenly abode.



"Partition's pains can never be forgotten. Millions of our sisters and brothers were displaced and many lost their lives due to mindless hate and violence. In memory of the struggles and sacrifices of our people, 14th August will be observed as **Partition Horrors Remembrance Day.**"

(Tweet by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Dated: 14th August, 2021)

"SALUTATIONS TO THE MILLIONS OF INDIANS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE HORRORS OF PARTITION AND SUFFERED THE PAIN OF DISPLACEMENT!"



Refugees awaiting transport at Ranaghat, West Bengal.

The migration and rehabilitation of people took a different form in Bengal compared to Punjab, continuing over decades. Officials downplayed the crisis and encouraged refugees to return to their homes and refused relief to migrants from East Bengal.

Picture courtesy: <https://amritmahotsav.nic.in/>

Dr. Radhabinod Pal and his fight for True Justice at Tokyo Trials

- Ashoke Karmokar

A news article from around August 2007 intrigued me, as it probably did in the thoughts of many NRIs in Japan. The titled content was on the scheduled visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (now former, recently deceased) to Kolkata. Based on the overall geopolitical dynamics of the time, I initially believed the goal would be to increase trade and collaboration between India and Japan to offset China's rising power. But to say critically, I had the following thought: why would Prime Minister Shinzo Abe travel to Kolkata? It makes sense if he visited New Delhi for a state visit; a distinguished political leader from a G7 nation rarely would consider visiting Kolkata.

With curiosity, I went through the content, and the answer came subsequently; Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will meet the son of the Indian judge Dr. Radhabinod Pal in Kolkata, who opposed sentencing the convicted Japanese war criminals in World War II. The news article elaborated that this move might cause controversy in other Asian nations. To justify the Prime Minister's visit, a senior Japanese government official claimed that the meeting had no political intent, adding that eastern India was a significant investment focus for Japan. Additionally, the official announced that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe would attend the inauguration ceremony of an India-Japan Cultural Center in Kolkata on August 23, 2007. Whatever the case, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe paid a visit to Kolkata to honor Dr. Radhabinod Pal, a hero in the eyes of the Japanese, who passed away in 1967.

Looking back in history, Dr. Radhabinod Pal was an esteemed jurist in British-ruled India. He earned his Ph. D. in law from Calcutta University in 1924. From 1923 to 1936, he was a professor at the Calcutta University's Law College. Dr. Pal also served as a judge at the Calcutta High Court in 1941 and held the position of Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University in 1944. Among his many notable accomplishments, he played a very crucial role in the development of the present Indian legal system and the Indian Income Tax Act of 1922. Dr. Radhabinod Pal was awarded the Padma Vibhushan by the India Government in 1959 in honor of his significant contributions to India's advancements.

Dr. Radhabinod Pal's career was crowned with notable international achievements in addition to his extensive work in India. He served as an elected official at the United Nations' International Law Commission from 1958 to 1966. Also, Dr. Pal received a prestigious appointment to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, or "Tokyo Trials," where judges from a group of selected nations looked into Japanese war crimes committed during the World War II. It is important to note that the accusations made by the Military Tribunal against the Japanese war criminals in the Tokyo Trials were divided into three categories; Class A: crimes against peace (waging war), Class B: conventional war crimes, and Class C: crimes against humanity. The Tokyo Trials began in 1946 and went on until 1948.

Dr. Radhabinod Pal was one of three Asian judges in the 11-judge Allied War Crimes Tribunal. He was the only panel member to voice displeasure with the Tokyo Trials' procedure and harshly condemned the panel as the prime representation of victors' justice. Dr. Pal expressed his deep concern by stating there could hardly have been any doubt about the Tribunal's conclusion because the allies had won the war, and thus the victors would write history.

Furthermore, based on his in-depth knowledge of international laws, Dr. Radhabinod Pal asserted in his dissenting judgment that the accused were not guilty. He argued that prosecuting Japanese war criminals was the victor's justice and vigorously opposed it. However, the jury ultimately found 25 defendants guilty under different counts. In the final ruling, seven received death penalty, sixteen received life sentences, and two received twenty and seven years in prison, respectively. It is noteworthy to mention that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, was also accused of war crimes during the Tokyo Trials but was never found guilty by the jury.

Former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi became an excellent admirer of Dr. Radhabinod Pal, so it is no surprise that his grandson, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, would also follow the path. On August 23, 2007, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met with Dr. Radhabinod Pal's son, 81 years old Shri Prasanta Pal, in Kolkata and praised the senior Pal's judging role during the Tokyo Trials. In his meeting with Shri Prasanta Pal, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe conveyed that Dr. Radhabinod Pal is a hero to Japanese nationalists and is still respected by the people in Japan. Shri Prasanta Pal also showcased a photograph of his father with the former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, taken during the Japan visit of Dr. Radhabinod Pal in 1966. The junior Pal felt a great honor after meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and jokingly expressed that he would not mind dying the meeting.

The dissenting views of Dr. Radhabinod Pal was based on facts rather than sentiment. The bonds of goodwill with the Japanese people were sealed by his lone testimony at the War Crimes Tribunal. In a statement during his visit to Japan in 1966, Dr. Pal said that he had been astonished since Japan was the only Asian nation that stood up against the West. In recognition of his services for justice under international law, the Emperor of Japan bestowed upon Dr. Radhabinod Pal the First Class of the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Japan's highest honor, in 1966.

It is noteworthy that Indian diplomats frequently refer to Dr. Radhabinod Pal's involvement in the Tokyo Trials while discussing India and Japan's friendship. Following the complete restoration of Japan's sovereignty in 1952, the India-Japan peace treaty was signed. In the very same decade of establishing diplomatic ties, former Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi visited India in 1957, followed by the former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's visit in the same year. Ever since, the bi-lateral relations have remained strong by many high-profile visits and dialogues from both countries. The former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in a speech at the Japanese Diet in 2006, "The principled judgment of Judge Radhabinod Pal after the War is remembered even today in Japan. These events reflect the depth of our friendship and the fact that we have stood by each other at crucial moments in our history." Thus, Dr. Radhabinod Pal's judging assessments in the Tokyo Trials was viewed as a turning point in the cordial India-Japan relations, and established the course for future friendship.

Many Indians today remember Dr. Radhabinod Pal. Nevertheless, he is also greatly revered in Japan as a nationalist hero. There is a Monument to Dr. Radhabinod Pal on the grounds of the Yasukuni Shrine, erected in 2005, to celebrate Dr. Pal's bravery and zeal. Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo commemorates the war dead and Japanese military heroes. As a result, the

monument to Dr. Radhabinod Pal represents the Japanese community's patriotic respect and deep appreciation for him.

To highlight the Tokyo Trials, a Japanese public television network, NHK, filmed a cinematic historical drama miniseries depicting the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in 2016. Now-deceased Indian actor Irrfan Khan played the Indian judge, Dr. Radhabinod Pal. As documented in the miniseries, Dr. Pal was appointed to the Tokyo Trials after it began to bolster the Tribunal's Asian representation and was initially put in a hotel

inferior to where the other judges were staying. Dr. Radhabinod Pal also experienced numerous instances of racial prejudice and unfair treatment. Dr. Pal, however, avoided serving as the court's puppet despite several such discrepancies. So, his own words as scripted in the monument, "...when Time shall have softened passion and prejudice, when Reason shall have stripped the mask from misrepresentation, then Justice, holding evenly her scales, will require much of past censure and praise to change places," are evergreen for true justice.

Works Cited:

- Nishiyama, George. "Abe Risks Ire by Meeting Son of Indian Judge." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 23 Aug. 2007, <https://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idINIndia-29108320070823?edition-redirect=in>.
- Chatterjee, Shankar. "Great Indian Judge Radhabinod Pal: Popular in Japan." Times of India Blog, Times of India, 19 Mar. 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/my-view/great-indian-judge-radhabinod-pal-popular-in-japan-10710>.
- Deb, Sandipan. "Radhabinod Pal: The Forgotten Indian and the Japanese Hero." Mintlounge, Mintlounge, 6 Apr. 2018, <https://lifestyle.livemint.com/news/talking-point/radhabinod-pal-the-forgotten-indian-and-the-japanese-hero-111645432992051.html>.
- "The Postwar Judgment: 1. International Military Tribunal for the Far East." Nanking Atrocities, Nanking Atrocities, http://www.nankingatrocities.net/Tribunals/imtfe_01.htm.
- "Pal, Justice Radhabinod." Banglapedia, National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh, https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Pal%2C_Justice_Radhabinod.
- Pal, Radhabinod. International Military Tribunal of the Far East - Dissident Judgment of Justice Pal. Kokusho-Kankokai Inc., 1999.
- "India-Japan Relations." Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Jan. 2014.



Photograph1. Monument to Dr. Radhabinod Pal built on the ground of Yasukuni Shrine.



Photograph2. One of the posters of the cinematic miniseries 'Tokyo Trial' (Source: Facebook account page of Tokyo Trial)

Pioneering the Indo-Japanese Relationship

(Reprinted from Anjali 2007)

- Swami Medhasananda

On May 31, 1893, an unknown Hindu monk boarded the ship 'Peninsular' sailing from Bombay bound for Japan. His final destination, however, was Chicago, where he was going to represent Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions to be held there on September 11.

"The ship, the farewells, the uncertainties and formalities of foreign travel, and so many belongings to care for - all these were new to him. Then too, his friends had made him dress in a robe and turban of silk. Like a prince he looked, indeed, but in his heart stirred various emotions. The monk stood on deck and gazed toward the shore until it faded from sight, sending his blessings to those who loved him and whom he loved ..."

"From Bombay the ship next stopped at Colombo and then on to Penang, a strip of land along the sea in the body of the Malay Peninsula. On his way from Penang to Singapore, he caught glimpses of Sumatra, with its high mountains, and the captain pointed out to him several favorite haunts for pirates in days gone by. The next port was Singapore, then the capital of the straits settlements, where he went to see the museum and the Botanical Garden with its beautiful collection of palms ... Next the ship stopped at Hong Kong, giving him his first glimpse of China ... The halt of three days at Hong Kong gave the passengers an opportunity to visit Canton, eighty miles up the Sikiang River ..."¹

Canton proved to be a revelation to the monk. From Hong Kong the ship sailed to Nagasaki in Japan, where he was greatly impressed with everything he saw. This unknown monk who now stood on Japanese soil - I believe readers have already guessed - is Swami Vivekananda, to whom we shall henceforth refer to as Swami or Swamiji.

On the momentous occasion of the celebration of India-Japan friendship year 2007, this article attempts to study the role the Swami played in this relationship - a role that started with his visit to Japan in 1893. We understand that Swamiji was the first among many prominent personalities of Modern India to visit Japan, and he was also the first to foster relationships with Japan which would benefit India materially and Japan spiritually.

A visit by the Swami Vivekananda to any country whatsoever, including Japan, is important, for he was not just a religious leader, but most decidedly a prophet of this age. The impact of his life and teachings was felt not only in the field of spirituality, but in other fields by every thinker or leader of late nineteenth- and early twentieth century India, including Gandhiji, the poet Rabindranath Tagore, the savant Aurobindo and the scientist Jagadish Chandra Basu, freedom fighter Netaji Subash Chandra Basu². World thinkers and writers like Leo Tolstoy, Romain Rolland and Arnold Toynbee were also influenced in one way or another by Swamiji³.

Japan was sanctified by the visit of Swami Vivekananda, although the details of this visit are, unfortunately, still to be explored. Except for very limited information from other sources, most of what we know about this subject is found in a letter written by Swamiji on July 10, 1893 from Yokohama to Sri Alasinga Perumal of the then Madras, a devotee and sponsor for his trip to the U.S.A. Swamiji also wrote another letter on the same subject from Japan to the Maharaja of Khetri in Rajasthan, another disciple, which has not been traced to date.



Swami Vivekananda

Let us now furnish this first-hand information about his visit to Japan from the letter he wrote to Alasinga Perumal. Among other things Swamiji writes:⁴

"... From Canton I returned back to Hong Kong and from thence to Japan. The first port we touched was Nagasaki. We landed for a few hours and drove through the town. What a contrast! The Japanese are one of the cleanliest peoples on earth. Everything is neat and tidy. Their streets are nearly all broad, straight, and regularly paved. Their little houses are cage-like,

and their pine-covered evergreen little hills form the background of almost every town and village. The short-statured, fair-skinned, quaintly dressed Japanese, their movements, attitudes, gestures, everything is picturesque. Japan is the land of the picturesque! Almost every house has a garden at the back, very nicely laid out according to Japanese fashion with small shrubs, grass plots, small artificial waters, and small stone bridges."

"From Nagasaki to Kobe. Here I gave up the steamer and took the land-route to Yokohama, with a view to see the interior of Japan."

"I have seen three big cities in the interior - Osaka, a great manufacturing town, Kyoto, the former capital, and Tokyo, the present capital: Tokyo is nearly twice the size of Calcutta with nearly double the population."

"No foreigner is allowed to travel in the interior without a passport."

"The Japanese seem now to have fully awakened themselves to the necessity of the present times. They have now a thoroughly organised army equipped with guns which one of their own officers has invented and is second to none. Then, they are continually increasing their navy. I have seen a tunnel nearly a mile long, bored by a Japanese engineer."

"The match factories are simply a sight to see, and they are bent upon making everything they want in their own country. This is a Japanese line of steamers plying between China and Japan, which shortly intends running between Bombay and Yokohama."

"I saw quite a lot of temples. In every temple there are some Sanskrit mantras written in Old Bengali characters. Only a few of the priests know Sanskrit. But they are an intelligent sect. The modern rage for progress has penetrated even the priesthood. I cannot write what I have in my mind about the Japanese in one short letter. Only I want that numbers of our young men should pay a visit to Japan and China every year. Especially to the Japanese, India is still a dreamland of everything high and good ..."

As mentioned earlier, we have no detail of his travels in Japan. For example: What temples did he visit? Who were the priests he met? Who were the people Swamiji interacted with and what impact had he left upon them?

Swami praised Japan and her people not only in

the letter quoted above, but on many other occasions in private conversations as well. In his reminiscences Swami Akhandanandaji, one of his brother disciples, mentions a reference to Japan when Swamiji told him that he had liked a painting by a Japanese artist so much that he considered buying it with what money he had for the trip to Chicago and returning home! ⁵

Again while conversing with Priyanath Sinha, one of his friends and devotees, in 1901, Swamiji said, "If I can get some unmarried graduates, I may try to send them over to Japan and make arrangements for their technical education there, so that when they come back, they may turn their knowledge to the best account for India. What a good thing that would be."

Question: "Why, Maharaj, is it better for us to go to Japan than to England?" (That was common during those days when India was ruled by England).

Swamiji: "Certainly. In my opinion, if all our rich and educated men once go and see Japan, their eyes will be opened."

Question: "How?"

Swamiji: "There in Japan, you find a fine assimilation of knowledge, and not its indigestion, as we have here. They have taken everything from the Europeans, but they remain Japanese all the same, and have not turned European; while in our country, the terrible mania of becoming Westernized has seized upon us like the plague."

Question: "Maharaj, I have seen some Japanese paintings; one cannot but marvel at their art. Its inspiration seems to be something which is their own and beyond imitation."

Swamiji: "Quite so. They are a great nation because of their art. Don't you see they are Asians, as we are? ... The very soul of the Asian is interwoven with Art. The Asian never uses a thing unless there be art in it. Don't you know that art is, with us, a part of religion?" ⁶

In an interview published in Hindu, a Madras newspaper, in February 1897, again the topic of Japan appeared. Here is a report of that interview: ⁷

Hindu: "What did you see in Japan, and is there any chance of India following in the progressive steps of Japan?"

Swamiji: "None whatever until all the three hundred millions of India combine together as a whole nation. The world has never seen such a patriotic and artistic race as the Japanese, and one special feature about them is this, that while in Europe and elsewhere Art generally goes with dirt, Japanese Art is art plus cleanliness. I would wish that every one of our young men could visit Japan once at least in his lifetime. It is very easy to go there. The Japanese think that everything Hindu is great and believe that India is a holy land. Japanese Buddhism is entirely different from what you see in Ceylon. It is the same as Vedanta. It is positive and theistic Buddhism, not the negative atheistic Buddhism of Ceylon."

Hindu: "What is the key to Japan's sudden greatness?"

Swamiji: "The faith of the Japanese in themselves, and their love for their country. When you have men who are ready to sacrifice their everything for their country, sincere to the backbone - when such men arise, India will become great in every respect. It is the men that make the country! What is there in the country? If you catch the social morality and the political morality of the Japanese, you will be as great as they are. The Japanese are ready to sacrifice everything for their country, and they have become a great people. But you are not; you cannot be, you sacrifice everything only for your own families and possessions."

Hindu: "is it your wish that India should become like Japan?"

Swamiji: "Decidedly not! India should continue to be what she is. How could India ever become like Japan, or any nation

for that matter? ... "

It is clear from the above reports of Swamiji's views on Japan that he had a firm belief that it would do good for Indians if they imbibed the positive qualities of the Japanese without abandoning their own national characteristics.

Here we see Swamiji not just in the role of a traditional religious leader, but the mentor of a nation; not only thinking in terms of spiritual regeneration, but also concerned with the material rejuvenation of his country - a nation which had been subjugated and was groaning under the exploitation of British Imperialism.

Another remarkable incident took place while Swamiji was in Japan which later proved to be momentous in the economic and educational history of India - an incident about which very few Indians have any knowledge of even today. While in Japan, Swamiji had met Jamshedji Tata, the founder of a higher institute of scientific research and also of a huge steel factory. Perhaps they first met while staying at Oriental Hotel in Yokohama in the second week of July 1893, and this association continued for around another 10 days; that is, from 14th July through 25th July, on their way to Vancouver, B.C. since they were fellow passengers on the ship called 'The Empress of India'. ⁸

Jamshedji was the sole exporter of Japanese made matchsticks to India at the time. It is quite probable that since both men were visionary, dynamic and patriots, they discussed many important things for the uplift of India. But we can only speculate, as again, any details of these conversations are missing. We do know, however, from stories recollected by Mahendranath Datta, Swamiji's younger brother, who had obviously heard it from the latter, that Swamiji had advised Jamshedji that instead of merely eking out a meager profit in his present enterprise with Japan, he should start a match factory in India which would provide employment to many of his countrymen. It would also generate more income for him in the process⁹. Remembering Swamiji's animated discussion with him and later in observing the former's spectacular success in preaching Vedanta in the West, and the rejuvenating effect his message had on the Indian people, upon his triumphant return to India in 1897, Jamshedji wrote a letter to Swamiji dated 23rd November, 1898¹⁰. In it he requested Swamiji to take a leadership role in materializing his plans for a 'Science Research Institute', an idea that would meet with great difficulty from the British. Although it was not possible for Swamiji to accept such an offer, an editorial was written in the April 1899 issue of Prabuddha Bharata, the English organ of the Ramakrishna Order, highly appreciative of Jamshedji's noble endeavor in all probability at Swamiji's bidding.

There is however another version of what transpired between Swamiji and Jamshedji during the said voyage, given in an address by none other than Dr. Abdul Kalam, the former President of India and a celebrated scientist, at the 'Youth Convention' and inauguration of the 'Vivekananda Institute of Value Education and Culture' at Porbandar, Gujarat on January 12th 2006. It should be noted that the source of Dr. Kalam's information is not known to the present author. The relevant extract from his address is as follows:

"...At this point let me share the meeting between Swami Vivekananda and Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata during a ship journey. It happened in 1893. A ship was sailing Japan to USA. There were hundreds of people in that ship including two significant personalities. Swami Vivekananda and Jamshedji Tata were in that ship. Swamiji asked Jamshedji for what mission he was traveling. Jamshedji said that he wanted to bring steel industry to India. Swami Vivekananda blessed him. He suggested steel technology had two components - one is steel science and the other is manufacturing technology. What can you bring to this country in material technology - you will have to build material science within the country. Jamshedji

was thinking and thinking and made a decision. Earlier when Jamshedji went to London he asked for technology transfer for Steel Plant. UK steel manufacturers looked at Jamshedji and said that if Indians make steel, Britishers will eat it. Jamshedji crossed Atlantic Ocean, talked to Americans and brought manufacturing technology for steel. And Tata Steel was established in Jamshedpur in 1907 posthumously by his able successor.

He seeded and worked for the steel plant. Jamshedji is not there now, but 7 million tones per annum steel is rolling out. The visionary Jamshedji gave one portion of his asset for starting a science institute today known as Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore.” (Note: This institute was finally set up in 1905, one year after Jamshedji’s passing away.)

“This institution as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda, has one of the best material science lab., providing the best of research results for development and production of material for various R&D labs and industries. Also Indian Institute of Science is a world class institution in various areas for physics, aerospace technology, knowledge products, bio-science and bio-technology. This is the one institution where convergence of technology like bio-technology, information technology and nano-technology is emerging. The results will have tremendous influence in improving solar cell efficiency and healthcare, particularly drug delivery system. This institution also participated in the research and development of space programmes, defense programmes and also many societal missions.”

It is also interesting to note that Jamshedji once mentioned to Sister Nivedita, Swamiji’s Irish disciple who went to India and dedicated her life to implementing Swamiji’s vision of education for the women of India, that the Japanese people who had come across Swamiji were amazed by seeing the striking similarity between Buddha and him.¹¹

The possibility of a second visit to Japan arose when Tenshin Okakura had gone to India to request Swamiji to take part in a religious conference to be organized in Kyoto provided he would agree. Okakura, born into a samurai family in 1862, studied Buddhist scripture with a Buddhist priest and English in an American missionary school. He had a special love for traditional Japanese art and visited Europe and America as a member of the Imperial Art Commission of Japan in 1886. Later, he was appointed the principal of New Art School in Tokyo, but when he was pressured to follow European art styles in this institution he resigned and founded a new institute named the Hall of Fine Arts attended by prospective young artists.¹²

There was some background regarding Okakura’s knowledge of Vivekananda that resulted in his request for Swamiji to revisit Japan. Ms. Josephine MacLeod, another of Swamiji’s committed American disciples and a resourceful woman of varied interests, had come to Japan in March of 1901 to study Japanese art and took lessons from Okakura. It was MacLeod who actually acquainted Okakura with the greatness of Swamiji’s work and his success in the West. MacLeod’s dedication and love for Swamiji may have influenced Okakura to make the trip to India to invite Vivekananda for such a conference. Okakura himself became convinced that a visit by Swamiji held the prospect of enhancing the image of Mahayana Buddhism which he professed, and which he had learned that Swamiji, too, held in high regard and, above all, spiritual regeneration of Japan.

Accompanied by a young Japanese man named Hori – who was leading a life of celibacy and wanted to study Sanskrit and English in India – Okakura reached Calcutta in the first week of January 1902 and met Swamiji on January 6, at Belur Math, the recently established headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order situated on the west bank of the river Ganga not far from Calcutta, then the capital of British India.¹³ The image of Swamiji he had formed from the words of Ms. MacLeod was

not only corroborated, but strengthened at this encounter. He wrote of his impression of Swamiji in the following letter:

“...Coming to this place recently I have met Swami Vivekananda. He is so great in spirituality and learning that he is beyond comparison. I consider him to be the greatest man of this age. Wherever you go (in India), you will not find anyone who does not love and respect him ... “

“The revered Swami is a very good speaker in English. He is thoroughly conversant with both Eastern and Western learning and has synthesized them. He teaches the Religion of Oneness.

“I would like to take him to Japan along with me when I go back.”

Swamiji and his friends gave a reception for Okakura in Calcutta on 12th January.¹⁴ Okakura implored Swamiji to visit and help Japan regenerate spiritually. McLeod also very much wanted Swamiji to accept the invitation which, she felt very keenly, would have a lasting impact on Japan.

At this time, another invitation to visit Japan came to Swamiji from an entirely different quarter, which was official and from none other than the Japanese Emperor Mutsuhito himself. Students of Japanese history know that it was during the tenure of the Emperor Mutsuhito (1867 – 1912) that the epoch-making Meiji restoration took place in 1868 and the process of modernisation started in full-swing in Japan. Manmathanath Ganguli, a disciple of Swamiji, who happened to be present in the Belur Math, when this official invitation came, reminisced thus:¹⁵

“It was about four in the afternoon, when one day the Japanese Consul (from the Consulate, Calcutta) came to meet the Swami at Belur. He was asked to be seated on one of the benches inside the inner verandah when Swamiji generally received his guests. He was informed of the honorable guest, but he had to wait for some time before the Swami came down. He took a chair near the Consul and the conversation took place through an interpreter.

After the formal greetings, the Consul spoke to the following purport: “Our Mikado (Emperor) is very keen to receive you at Japan. He has sent me to request you to visit Japan as early as may be convenient to you. Japan is eager to hear about Hindu religion from your lips.”

Swamiji answered: “In my present state of health, I think it will not be possible for me to visit Japan now.”

The Consul said: “Then, may I, with your permission, inform the Mikado that you will go there sometime in the future when your health permits?”

Swamiji said: “it is very doubtful whether this body will ever be fit enough”

At the time, Swamiji was suffering from diabetes. His body was quite emaciated”.

Now one wonders - What was the background of such an invitation from the Japanese emperor? How did the emperor come to know about Swamiji and become keen to invite Swamiji and listen about Hinduism?

Had Okakura any role in this? But Okakura had never given any inkling, anywhere in his correspondence or conversations that he persuaded the Japanese officials to invite Swamiji.

Then, was the Imperial Government of Japan, being informed by its Consul in Calcutta, about the visit of Okakura and his plan to invite Swamiji to Japan for his participation in a parliament of religions to be organised by the Buddhists, was persuaded to invite Swamiji to Japan independent of the invitation of Okakura?

Besides Okakura, there were a few more prominent Japanese, according to our knowledge, who knew about Swamiji and at least had some idea about his spiritual height and magnetic personality. They were the Japanese representatives

of Shintoism, (which was then the state religion of Japan) and Buddhism in the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, who witnessed the tremendous impact that Swamiji had left, in the said Parliament. ¹⁶

Moreover, Daisetsu Suzuki, (1870 –1966), a celebrated scholar who wrote a number of books on Zen-Buddhism and Shin, in English and Japanese, mentioned with a note of appreciation, in one of his recorded speeches that he knew Swami Vivekananda during his stay in USA. Now, did one of these persons mentioned above, inform the Emperor about Swamiji and his greatness? These questions would have to remain unanswered till we get new data on this subject.

Swamiji at times, became enthusiastic about these prospective visits to Japan, but the next moment, he vacillated.

Meanwhile, on 27 January 1902 Swamiji took Okakura with him on pilgrimage to Buddhagaya and Varanasi, a journey Okakura enjoyed immensely. During his stay in Varanasi, Okakura also paid a visit to the 'Poor Men's Relief Association', a charitable hospital started by the followers of Swamiji, which later grew as a full-fledged hospital, known as Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service. Okakura recorded the following comment on the visitor-book of the institution on 9th February 1902, along with his signature. "After visiting the institution, I sign my name to express my deepest sympathy and gratitude for the noble work of the Relief Association. May all works be carried on in that spirit". ¹⁷

It was at this time that Sister Nivedita, whom we have already mentioned, introduced Okakura to the great poet Rabindranath, who was already a celebrity in Bengal. Okakura became closer to Rabindranath and other members of the Tagore family, including Surendranath Tagore, a relationship about which many are aware. On the other hand, Okakura's relationship with Swamiji was waning, especially when Swamiji clearly expressed his inability to revisit Japan, considering various practical difficulties including his failing health.

It is true that both men had identical views on various issues for example, the regeneration of Asiatic nations, Mahayana Buddhism and aesthetic concepts, but it was gradually revealed to each other that they had some fundamental differences in their approaches to the highest ideal of life. Further, their level of realising that ideal was also very different. Being himself a realised soul of the highest order, Swamiji's dedication to the spiritual ideal based on renunciation (Nivritti marga – the path of renunciation of desires) was total. But Okakura's way was the path of desire (Pravritti marga) and he still had 'love for the world' which becomes evident if one analyses his personal life prior to his visit to India and after¹⁸. Moreover, Okakura had a secret political agenda in uniting Asia against European Imperialism, which he did not reveal to Swamiji, who, as a monk, scrupulously distanced himself and his newly established Order from all active politics. Nevertheless, Okakura continued his relationship with Sister Nivedita who edited 'Ideals of the East' (published in London, 1903) and 'The Awakening of the East' (published in Tokyo, 1939) written by him.

After spending eventful months in India, Okakura returned to Japan that same year in October, but would not talk much about India upon his return. But there is one special occasion known to us when Okakura urged his audience of 70 Japanese historians to visit India at least once, in an address lasting more than two hours,

on the history of Indian Art at the Academy of History, University of Tokyo, on 12 December 1902. ¹⁹

It is also worth mentioning that Swamiji made the following significant remark on 4 July 1902, the last day of his mortal existence, the context of which is not known to us: "I want to do something for Japan." ²⁰ This shows that Japan occupied his thoughts even to the end. Presumably, Swamiji's wish was fulfilled partially, when a Vedanta Society, (now located in Zushi), was started in Japan in 1959 by a group of devotees, and later affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission, as one of its accredited branches in 1984.

The information furnished above shows that in promoting the Indo-Japanese relationship, especially in the modern era, while Okakura Tenshin was a pioneer on the Japanese side, Swami Vivekananda was the preeminent Indian pioneer. This relationship was strengthened by later visits and stays of other prominent Indians, namely the poet Rabindranath Tagore, the freedom fighters, Rashbihari Basu and Netaji Subhas Chandra Basu, and the jurist Radhabinod Pal.

It is a pity that though many people in both India and Japan are aware of the Tagore-Okakura connection and the visit of Tagore to Japan, few indeed know the Vivekananda-Okakura connection or anything related to Swamiji's visit to Japan. In this backdrop it is heartening to observe that possibly for the first time a contemporary Japanese government official has recognized the pioneering role of Swami Vivekananda when former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made the following respectful and appreciative references to Swamiji during that very important policy speech on Indo-Japan relations, on 22nd August, 2007, before the Joint Session of the Indian Parliament during his recent visit to India. The references made by Prime Minister Abe are as follows: ²¹

"Today I have the great honour of addressing the highest organ of state power in this largest democracy in the world. I come before you on behalf of the citizens of another democracy that is equally representing Asia, to speak to you about my views on the future of Japan and India.

"The different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their waters in the sea.' It gives me tremendous pleasure to be able to begin my address today with the words of Swami Vivekananda, the great spiritual leader that India gave the world."

"A number of times in history, Japan and India have attracted one another. Vivekananda came to be acquainted with Tenshin Okakura, a man ahead of his time in early modern Japan and a type of Renaissance man. Okakura was then guided by Vivekananda and enjoyed also a friendship with Sister Nivedita, Vivekananda's loyal disciple and a distinguished female social reformer ... "

"I would argue that among many contributions that India can make to world history, there is first of all its spirit of tolerance. I would like to quote, if I may, Vivekananda again, part of the conclusion of deeply meaningful remarks he delivered in Chicago in 1893. He said, 'help and not fight,' 'assimilation and not destruction,' 'harmony and peace and not dissension.' "

"If you insert these exhortations into the context of the modern day, it is clear that these words preaching tolerance can hardly be considered relics of the past. Instead, we can recognize that they now hold a tone that is even more compelling than before."



Tenshin Okakura

We may conclude this article with this observation that if we were to analyse the trend of Indo-Japanese relationship in recent years, it would be evident that what Swamiji had hoped with regard to the outcome of the said relationship about a century ago, is now actually taking place. While Japan has been largely contributing to the material welfare of India, by lending both financial and technical assistance, India is also lending spiritual support to many people of Japan. People of all ages visit the branches of Indian religious organisations in Japan, including the Vedanta Society, take part in their different programmes, throng in hundreds when any Indian religious leader visits Japan, and also go to different ashrams and holy places in India to seek peace and spiritual guidance. This is in addition to the elderly Buddhist devotees, who usually go to India, on pilgrimage for visiting places associated with Lord

Buddha.

Indo-Japanese relationship is not restricted to the economic and spiritual areas only, but also extends to the cultural sectors – especially, the traditional health-care system and performing arts.

Nevertheless, this relationship ought not to focus only upon these two countries, but the ultimate perspective must be global. Let us all combine our hands in promoting the Indo-Japanese relations, at all levels, and in all sectors, with the ultimate aim that a fully developed India and Japan would contribute in making, what we may call, a fully developed world, which was the vision of great minds like Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. ■

Notes and References:

1. The Life of Swami Vivekananda – His Eastern and Western disciples.vol.1.P.391, 5th edition, 1979, Advaita Ashram. Calcutta-14.
2. World thinkers on Ramakrishna Vivekananda ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda. 1983, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta – 29.
3. Ibid.
4. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. Mayavati Memorial Edition.vol.V pp.7-10. 1992. Advaita Ashrama. Calcutta – 9.
5. Swami Akhandananake Jerup Dekhiachhi (Beng) (Swami Akhandananda as we have seen him) – compiled by Swami Chetananda. Pp.84-85 1999. Udbodhan., Calcutta – 3.
6. Opus Cit., The Complete Works.vol.V,pp.372-73.
7. Ibid.pp.209-210
8. Swami Vivekananda's Arrival in Vancouver – Historical Research Committee, Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's arrival to the West. P.2.Vivekananda Vedanta Society of British Columbia, Vancouver.1993.
9. Srimat Vivekananda Swamijir Jivaner Ghatanavali (Incidents in the life of Swami Vivekananda) – Mahendranath Datta. vol.3.pp 2-3. Mahendra Publishing Committee.1989.Calcutta – 6.
10. Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha (in Beng) (Vivekananda and Contemporary India in seven volumes) – Sankariprasad Basu.vol.V.chapter 32. pp 239-266).September 1981. Mandal Book House. Calcutta – 9;
A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda – Sailendranath Dhar. Vol.2. pp 1117-1118 Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan 1975. Madras – 5.
11. Opus Cit., Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha p.240.
12. Ibid. Vivekananda-Okakura, Chapter 38. pp. 458 -470; Okakura and Swami Vivekananda-Yasuko Horioka. Prabuddha Bharata (monthly) January 1975 and March 1975 – Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda – Eastern and Western admirers. P.357. Advaita Ashrama.1961.Calcutta – 6.
16. Swami Vivekananda in the West – New Discoveries – Marie Louise Burke (in 6 volumes) – Vol.1. p.77 – p.122. 4th edition 1992. Advaita Ashrama. Calcutta – 14.
17. Memoir: Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi.p.73-published by the Secretary, Varanasi – 2005.
18. Opus Cit., Vivekananda – Okakura, Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha. Chapter 38 pp 458-470; Okakura & Swami Vivekananda- Yasuko Horioka : Prabuddha Bharata, January 1975.
19. Opus Cit., Okakura and Swami Vivekananda -Yasuko Horioka – p.142.
20. Opus Cit., The Life of Swami Vivekananda:Volume2.
21. "Confluence of the Two Seas" - Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>

রবীন্দ্রনাথ, জওহরলাল ও ইন্দিরা - প্রজন্ম পরম্পরা

(Anjali 2018 সংখ্যা প্রকাশিত লেখাটি পুনর্মুদ্রিত করা হয়েছে)

- শ্রীকান্ত চট্টোপাধ্যায়

ভূমিকা

রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর, জওহরলাল নেহরু ও ইন্দিরা গান্ধী তিন প্রজন্মের তিন জন সুপরিচিত ব্যক্তিত্ব। কর্মজীবনের বিস্ময়কর বহুমুখীতা সত্ত্বেও রবীন্দ্রনাথ ছিলেন মূলত সাংস্কৃতিক পরিমন্ডলের মানুষ আর জওহরলাল ও তাঁর কন্যা ইন্দিরা প্রধানত রাজনীতির জগতের। তাই তাঁদের কর্মজীবন এবং ভারতের জাতীয় জীবনে অবদানের ক্ষেত্র এক নয়, কিন্তু যেন একটি অদৃশ্য সূত্রে তাঁরা ছিলেন গভীরভাবে গ্রথিত। গত বছর, ২০১৭ সালে, ইন্দিরার জন্মের শতবর্ষ পূর্ণ হয়। এই তিন জন ভারতীয়ের ব্যক্তিগত সম্পর্কের কয়েকটি দিক আলোচনা করাই এই প্রবন্ধের মূল উদ্দেশ্য।

‘বাঙ্গালী কবি’ হিসেবে রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রথম পরিচিতি এবং তাঁর কর্মজীবন প্রধানত বাংলা ভূখণ্ডে। তাই বাংলা ভাষাভাষী মানুষ তাঁর সাহিত্য ও বহুবিধ অন্যান্য কাজকর্মের দ্বারা সর্বাত্মক এবং সবচেয়ে বেশী মাত্রায় প্রভাবিত হবে এটাই স্বাভাবিক। কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথের ‘আত্মিক’ (spiritual) অবস্থিতি ভারতবর্ষে, যেটি তাঁর অনুভূতিতে শুধু একটি ভৌগোলিক সীমানায় চিহ্নিত ভূখণ্ড নয়, একটি উদার ও উন্নত সভ্যতার লীলাভূমি, বহু মানুষের বাসস্থান ও আশ্রয়স্থল - ‘মহামানবের সাগরতীর’। তাই ভারতের মানুষ যাদের ভাষা বাংলা নয় বা যাদের সংস্কৃতি-বোধও অ-বাঙ্গালী, তাদের কাছে রবীন্দ্রনাথের পরিচিতি শুধু কি একজন বাঙ্গালী কবি হিসেবে বা খ্যাতিমান ভারতীয়দের মধ্যে একজন হিসেবে, না জাতীয় জীবনে কবির বহুবিধ অবদানের মাধ্যমে তাদেরও ‘নিজের মানুষ’ হিসেবে? এই বিষয়টি এই প্রবন্ধের অন্যতম জিজ্ঞাসা। জওহরলাল এবং ইন্দিরা বাংলার বাইরের ভারতীয় এবং রবীন্দ্র-মনিষ্ঠ। পারস্পরিক আদান-প্রদানের মাধ্যমে কবির সঙ্গে তাঁদের যে সম্পর্ক সৃষ্টি হয়েছিল তা ছিল গভীর স্নেহ ও শ্রদ্ধার। তাই দুই প্রজন্মের এই দু’জন (অবাঙ্গালী) ভারতীয় তাঁদের ব্যক্তিগত জীবনে এবং বৃহত্তর ভারতে রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রভাব কি ভাবে অনুভব এবং মূল্যায়ন করেছিলেন তার অনুসন্ধান এই প্রবন্ধের স্বল্পপরিসরে করার চেষ্টা করা হয়েছে।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের জীবদ্দশায় ভারতবর্ষ রাজনৈতিক স্বাধিকার অর্জনের সংগ্রামের মাধ্যমে তার জাতীয় চরিত্র ও পরিচিতিতেও নতুনভাবে আবিষ্কার করায় সচেষ্ট হয়েছিল, হয়ত খানিকটা সচেতনতা ছাড়াই। এই অনুসন্ধান যে ‘নতুন ভারতের’ পথ নির্দেশ করেছিল তার দিশারীদের মধ্যে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভূমিকা ছিল অনন্য। “নতুন ভারতের স্রষ্টা” বলতে যে সব মানুষের নাম উঠে আসে, তাঁদের মধ্যে রবীন্দ্রনাথ অবশ্যই অগ্রগণ্য। তাই তাঁর সর্বভারতীয় পরিচয় “গুরুদেব” হিসেবে - তিনি জাতির শিক্ষক। মূল প্রসঙ্গে যাবার আগে এই প্রবন্ধের নির্বাচিত তিন চরিত্রের সঙ্গেই ঘনিষ্ঠ আরও একজন বিখ্যাত (অবাঙ্গালী) ভারতীয়ের সঙ্গে কবির বিশেষ সম্পর্কের কথা সংক্ষেপে বলে নেওয়া হয়ত প্রসঙ্গ-বহির্ভূত হবে না। এই মানুষটি হলেন মহাত্মা গান্ধী। বিশ শতকের বিশ-তিরিশের দশকে ভারতের জাতীয় জীবনের মহানায়ক ছিলেন এই দুই নেতা - যাঁরা গুরুদেব ও মহাত্মা বলে আখ্যায়িত।

গুরুদেব ও মহাত্মা

বিলেত-ফেরত, প্রতিষ্ঠিত, ব্যারিস্টার মোহনদাস করমচাঁদ গান্ধী সক্রিয় রাজনীতিতে এসেছিলেন অপরিষ্কৃতভাবে, ঘটনাচক্রে বলা যায়। উকিল হিসেবে দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকায় গিয়ে তিনি ব্যক্তিগত লাঞ্ছনা ও কঠোর বর্ণবিদ্বেষ প্রত্যক্ষ করেন। তার প্রতিবাদে প্রবাসী ভারতীয়দের সজ্জবদ্ধ আন্দোলন তাঁর নেতৃত্বে কিছুটা সফলও আদায় করতে সক্ষম হয়। তিনি সপরিবারে দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকায় বসবাস করতে শুরু করেন ডারবানের কাছে ফিনিফ্রে। উদ্ভত অন্যায়ে বিরুদ্ধে সংগ্রামে যে তিনটি ‘অস্ত্র’ তিনি কাজে লাগিয়েছিলেন সেগুলি ছিল অহিংসা, সত্যগ্রহ ও সজ্জবদ্ধ অত্যাচারিতার সঙ্গে অসহযোগ। এগুলির বিবর্তন ও প্রয়োগ এই সময়েই শুরু হয়েছিল। এই সুবাদেই তাঁর সুনাম ভারতীয়দের কাছে বা বিশ্বের অন্যত্র পৌঁছয় তাঁর নিজের ভারতীয় রাজনীতিতে আসার আগেই। দীর্ঘ একশ বছর দেশের বাইরে কাটিয়ে গান্ধীজি পাকাপাকি ভাবে দেশে ফিরে আসেন

১৯১৪ সালে। রবীন্দ্রনাথ তখন শুধু বাঙ্গালী কবিই ন’ন, তিনি এশিয়ার প্রথম নোবেল পুরস্কার বিজয়ী। তাঁর পরিচিতি সর্বভারতীয়, তাঁর খ্যাতি বিশ্বজোড়া।

যদিও এই দুই ভারতীয়ই ছিলেন স্বনামধন্য, তাঁদের ব্যক্তিগত পরিচয় বা সাক্ষাৎকার তখনও হয় নি। কিন্তু গান্ধীজির দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার কাজকর্ম সম্পর্কে শ্রদ্ধার থেকেই নিশ্চয়ই ফিনিফ্রে আশ্রমের সদস্যদের মধ্যে যাঁরা গান্ধীজির সঙ্গে বা কিছু আগে ভারতে ফিরে আসেন তাঁদের শান্তিনিকেতনে প্রাথমিকভাবে আশ্রয় দেওয়ার ব্যবস্থা হয়েছিল রবীন্দ্রনাথের অনুমতিক্রমে। এঁদের দুজনেরই বন্ধু ইংরেজ চার্লি (দীনবন্ধু) এ্যাড্ভুজ এই ব্যাপারে উদ্যোগী হয়েছিলেন এবং তাঁর আমন্ত্রণে গান্ধীজি, সত্বীক, প্রথমবারের মত শান্তিনিকেতনে যান ১৯১৫ সালের ১৭ই ফেব্রুয়ারী, রবীন্দ্রনাথের অনুপস্থিতিতেই। তাঁর পরিকল্পনা ছিল শান্তিনিকেতনে কিছুদিন কাটাবেন চার্লি এ্যাড্ভুজ ও কবির আর এক আশ্রমবাসী ইংরেজ বন্ধু উইলিয়াম পিয়ারসনের আতিথেয়, আশ্রমের ব্যবস্থাদির সঙ্গে পরিচিত হতে। কিন্তু ১৯শে ফেব্রুয়ারী গান্ধীজির রাজনৈতিক অভিভাবকতুল্য নেতা গোপালকৃষ্ণ গোখলের হঠাৎ মৃত্যু হয় পুণাতে এবং গান্ধীজিকে শান্তিনিকেতন ছেড়ে ফিরে যেতে হয়। আশ্রম-পরিচিতি পূর্ণতর করার জন্যই বোধহয় তিনি শান্তিনিকেতনে আবার ফিরে আসেন ৬ই মার্চ এবং থাকেন ১১ তারিখ পর্যন্ত। কবিও ইতিমধ্যে তাঁর আশ্রমে ফিরেছেন, তাই তাঁদের প্রত্যক্ষ পরিচয় এই প্রথম হল। এই দুই ‘দূরের বন্ধুর’ পারস্পরিক শ্রদ্ধার সম্পর্কে আরও ঘনিষ্ঠ করে তুলতে নিশ্চয়ই সাহায্য করেছিল আশ্রমের সহজ-সরল ঘরোয়া পরিবেশ। নানা বিষয়ে তাঁদের আলোচনা করার সুযোগ হ’ল কখনও একান্তে, কখনও বা এ্যাড্ভুজ এবং পিয়ারসন সাহেবদের উপস্থিতিতে। এর পর থেকে সাক্ষাৎকার, পত্রালাপ বা লেখালেখির মাধ্যমে তাদের নিবিড় ব্যক্তিগত সম্পর্ক নিবিড়তর হয়েছিল বলা যায়। দেশের, সমাজের বা বিশ্বসভ্যতার বিভিন্ন সমস্যা ও তাদের সমাধানের উপায় নিয়ে তাঁদের মতের মিল যেমন ছিল, তেমনি ছিল বিভিন্ন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়ে তাঁদের গভীর মতানৈক্য। যুক্তি-ভিত্তিক বা আদর্শগত মত-পার্থক্য সত্ত্বেও পরস্পরের প্রতি আন্তরিক শ্রদ্ধা ও বন্ধুত্ব যে বজায় রাখা যায় কবি ও মহাত্মা গান্ধীর সম্পর্ক তার একটি উজ্জ্বল দৃষ্টান্ত। গান্ধীজি কবির সঙ্গে তাঁর সম্পর্কের প্রকৃতি নিয়ে মন্তব্য করেছিলেন - “I started with a disposition to detect a conflict between the creation of Gurudev and myself but ended with the glorious discovery that there was none”। রবীন্দ্রনাথও বিভিন্ন সময়ে বা ঘটনার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে গান্ধীজির চিন্তা-ভাবনা, মতামত, নেতৃত্ব বা ব্যক্তিত্ব নিয়ে সূচিস্তিত অভিমত ব্যক্ত করেছেন যেগুলো অনেক সময়ে তাঁদের আদর্শগত গভীর গরমিলের সাক্ষ্য বহন করে। কিন্তু তিনি বিক্ষিপ্ত ঘটনাদির উর্ধে যে মানুষটিকে চিনেছিলেন তাঁর পরিচিতি এই ভাবে দিয়েছিলেন - “যাহা কিছু মহৎ, যাহা কিছু সৎ, মহাত্মাজি তাহারই প্রতীক। তিনি ভারতের প্রাণস্বরূপ”। গান্ধীজিও কবিকে চিনেছিলেন স্বদেশের “মহান প্রহরী” (Great Sentinel) হিসেবে, যিনি দেশের সমাজব্যবস্থা ও সংস্কৃতিকে কুসংস্কার ও ক্ষুদ্র-মনস্কতার উর্ধে রাখার জন্য আজীবন সচেষ্ট ছিলেন।

কবির জীবদ্দশায় গান্ধীজি শেষবারের মত শান্তিনিকেতনে আসেন, সত্বীক, ১৯৪০ সালে, অসুস্থ কবিকে দেখতে। প্রিয় বন্ধুকে বিদায় দেবার সময় কবি একটি অনুরোধ করেন লিখিতভাবে, মমস্পর্শী ভাষায়। তাঁর মৃত্যুর পর কবি তাঁর “জীবনের উৎকৃষ্ট সৃষ্টিসম্পদের বাহক” (a vessel which carries the cargo of my life’s best treasures) শান্তিনিকেতনের ভবিষ্যৎ রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ ও স্থায়ীত্বের দায়িত্ব গান্ধীজি স্বয়ং নেন, এই ছিল কবির অনুরোধ। গান্ধীজি দেশের সমস্ত মানুষের অবগতির জন্য ব্যপারটি প্রকাশ্যে আনেন এবং তাঁর নিজের মত জানান এই ভাষায় - “who am I to take this institution under my protection? It carries God’s protection because it is the creation of an earnest soul”। এরপর ১৯৪৫ সালের ডিসেম্বর মাসে দেশব্যাপী রাজনৈতিক অস্থিরতার মধ্যেও সময় করে তিনি শান্তিনিকেতনে গিয়েছিলেন অন্যান্য কাজের মধ্যে কবিপুত্র রথীন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে শান্তিনিকেতনের ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে। এইটাই ছিল

শান্তিনিকেতনে তাঁর শেষবারের মত আসা। কবির অনুপস্থিতি তাঁর মনকে নিশ্চয়ই নাড়া দিয়েছিল। আশ্রমবাসীদের উদ্দেশ্যে সংক্ষিপ্ত ভাষণে তিনি প্রয়াত বন্ধুকে স্মরণ করে শব্দা জানিয়েছিলেন এই বলে - “it is my conviction ... that Gurudev as a person was much bigger than his works; bigger than even this institution”।



গুরুদেব এবং মহাত্মা

উপযুক্ত উত্তরসূরী জওহরলাল - গুরু-শিষ্য পরম্পরা

এলাহাবাদের লক্ষ-প্রতিষ্ঠা উকিল মোতিলাল নেহরুর পুত্র জওহরলালের জন্ম ১৮৮৯ সালে। তাঁর আত্মজীবনীতে তিনি উল্লেখ করেছেন যে তাঁর পিতার ও কবি রবীন্দ্রনাথের জন্মের বছর, মাস ও দিন একই। তাই তাঁর সঙ্গে কবির সম্পর্ক যে পুত্র ও পিতার মত ছিল এ কথা একাধিক অর্থেই বলা যায়। বিলেতের অভিজাত পরিবারের পুত্রদের জন্য শীর্ষস্থানীয় স্কুলগুলির অন্যতম হল লন্ডনে অবস্থিত হ্যারো স্কুল। জওহরলাল ১৯০৫ সাল থেকে ১৯০৮ পর্যন্ত এই স্কুলে পড়েন। স্কুলের শিক্ষা শেষ করে তিনি আরও একটি অভিজাত শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠান কেম্ব্রিজ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ট্রিনিটি কলেজে বিজ্ঞানের ছাত্র হিসেবে পড়াশোনা করেন। কেম্ব্রিজ থেকে ডিগ্রী সম্পূর্ণ করে জওহরলাল লন্ডনের আইন শিক্ষার কলেজ ইনার টেম্পলে ব্যারিস্টারি পড়েন এবং দেশে ফেরেন উচ্চ স্তরের ‘বিলেত-ফেরত’ উকিল হিসেবে ১৯১২ সালে। পিতা মোতিলাল পেশায় উকিল হলেও দেশের রাজনীতিতেও ছিলেন সক্রিয়। তাঁর প্রভাব এবং স্বদেশ সম্পর্কে নিজস্ব চিন্তা বা অভিজ্ঞতা উকিল জওহরলালকেও প্রথমে রাজনীতি জগতের কর্মী ও অচিরেই নেতৃত্বান্বিত ব্যক্তিতে পরিণত করে। রাজনীতির জগতে মহাত্মা গান্ধী তাঁর পথ-প্রদর্শক সহকর্মী এবং প্রেরণার উৎসস্থল।

জীবনব্যাপী রাজনীতির জগতের সংশ্লিষ্টতা সত্ত্বেও জওহরলালের ছিল বহুমুখী মননশীলতা। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও তাঁর সৃষ্টির প্রতি তাঁর যে আকর্ষণ থাকবে এটাই স্বাভাবিক। তাই ভারতের সংস্কৃতি এবং রাজনীতি জগতের এই দুই নেতাই যুবক জওহরলালের গুরুস্থানীয় হয়ে উঠলেন। ভারতের জাতীয় জীবনে গান্ধীজির উদয়কে তিনি ‘বজ্র-বিদ্যুতের বলকের’ মত বলেছেন যা পরাধীন দেশের মানুষকে একই সঙ্গে আলোড়িত এবং আলোকিত করেছিল। আর ভারত-মানসের ওপর রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রভাবকে তিনি তুলনা করেছেন পর্বতচূড়ায় উষার আলোকের সঙ্গে যার ছড়িয়ে-পড়া প্রভা দেশবাসীর মনের জগতকে উদ্ভাসিত করতে সাহায্য করেছিল। যৌবনে-পাওয়া এই দুই গুরুর সম্বন্ধে স্মৃতিচারণ করতে গিয়ে পরিণত বয়সের জওহরলাল লিখছেন - “I belong to a generation which grew up under his influence. Perhaps we did not fully realize at the time because of the powerful impact of Gandhi’s thunderbolt. I speak more for the non-Bengali-speaking people in India, and more especially students and the younger intellectuals who did not have the advantage of reading Tagore in the original Bengali. In Bengal his influence was no doubt deeper and more pervasive because his songs reached the masses of the people”.

ব্যরিস্টার হিসেবে জওহরলাল লাহোরের আদালতে কাজ শুরু করেন, কিন্তু দেশের রাজনীতির টান তিনি সর্বক্ষণ অনুভব করতে থাকেন তাঁর পিতার ও পিতার সহকর্মীদের সংশ্লিষ্টতা থেকে। ১৯১৬ সালে তাঁর বিয়ে হয় এবং ১৯১৭ সালে কন্যা ইন্দিরার জন্ম হয়। কিন্তু বিলাসবহুল সংসার-জীবন, যা তাঁর কাছে সহজলভ্য ছিল, তার আকর্ষণ তাঁকে পরাধীন দেশের রাজনীতির কঠোর বাস্তবতা থেকে দূরে রাখতে পারে নি। জালিয়ানওয়ালাবাগের ভয়াবহ হত্যাকাণ্ড ঘটে ১৯১৯ এর এপ্রিলে। এই বীভৎস ঘটনার ব্যপক প্রচার বন্ধ করতে সরকার পাঞ্জাবে মিলিটারি আইনকে কাজে লাগিয়ে সংবাদ-মাধ্যমগুলির কঠোরোধ করে। সাধারণ মানুষও অজানা আশঙ্কায় দিশেহারা এবং স্তব্ধবাক হয়ে পড়ে। ঠিক তখনই সারা দেশের হয়ে এই ঘটনার জন্য দায়ী বিদেশী শাসককে ধিক্কার জানিয়ে কবি রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর নাইটহুডের খেতাব ফিরিয়ে দেন বড়লাটসাহেবকে লেখা একটি অসাধারণ চিঠির মাধ্যমে। কবির সংগে জওহরলালের তখনও ব্যক্তিগত পরিচয় হয় নি, কিন্তু কবির এই পত্রটি তাঁকে অভিভূত করে। তিনি দেশের রাজনীতিতে কবির প্রভাব এই ভাবে দেখেছিলেন - “রবীন্দ্রনাথ রাজনীতি জগতের মানুষ ছিলেন না, কিন্তু হৃদয়ের গভীর অনুভূতিশীলতা তাঁকে কবিতা বা সংগীতের ভাবের জগৎ থেকে বারে বারে সরিয়ে এনেছে। যখনই কোন পরিস্থিতি তাঁর অসহনীয় মনে হয়েছে, তখনই তিনি বিদেশী শাসক বা তাঁর নিজ দেশবাসীর উদ্দেশ্যে ভবিষ্যৎদ্রষ্টার ভূমিকা নিয়ে সাবধানবাণী উচ্চারণ করেছেন। ... জালিয়ানওয়ালাবাগের হত্যাকাণ্ডের পর তাঁর নাইট উপাধি ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার ঘটনা দেশের রাজনীতির জগতকে গভীরভাবে প্রভাবিত করেছিল”।



গুরুদেবের সাথে আলাপচারিতায় জওহরলাল

জওহরলালের সঙ্গে কবির প্রথম সাক্ষাৎকার কোথায় এবং কবে হয়েছিল তা সঠিক জানা যায় না, তবে ১৯২০ সালের সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে কলকাতায় কংগ্রেসের একটি অধিবেশন সেরে তিনি গান্ধীজির সঙ্গে শান্তিনিকেতনে যান এবং কয়েকদিন সেখানে কাটান, ‘ভবঘুরে’ কবি যদিও তখন দেশের বাইরে, ইউরোপে। দীনবন্ধু এ্যাড্‌জুট ও কবির ‘বড়দাদা’ ঋষিভুল্য দ্বিজেন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে তাঁরা যে কিছু সময় কাটিয়েছিলেন সে কথা জওহরলাল তাঁর আত্মজীবনীতে উল্লেখ করেছেন। বড়দাদাকে তিনি মনে রেখেছেন “পরম আদরণীয়” (most lovable) বলে। আর এ্যাড্‌জুটসাহেব তাঁকে কয়েকটি বই উপহার দিয়েছিলেন যে গুলি পড়ে জওহরলাল উপকৃত হয়েছিলেন বলে জানিয়েছেন। কবির যুক্তিবাদী মন ও চিন্তার গভীরতা জওহরলালকে বিশেষভাবে প্রভাবিত করেছিল এ কথা তিনি বারবার উল্লেখ করেছেন। কিন্তু গান্ধীজির অসহযোগ আন্দোলনকে, বিশেষ করে বিদেশী দ্রব্য বর্জনের আহ্বানকে, কবি যখন অনুমোদন না দিয়ে সমালোচনা করলেন তখন জওহরলাল কিছুটা বিরক্তি বোধ করলেন (felt a little irritated); কারণ তাঁর মতে ব্রিটিশ শাসনের বিরুদ্ধে গান্ধীজির এই সংগ্রাম ভারতীয়মাত্রেরই সমর্থন করা উচিত।

বিশ-তিরিশের দশকে ভারতের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রাম, যার কর্ণধার ছিলেন মহাত্মা গান্ধী, ক্রমশই উত্তাল হয়ে ওঠে। রাজদ্রোহের অপরাধে নেতাদের কারাবাস নিয়মিত বরাদ্দ হয়ে দাঁড়ায়। জেল-জীবনের সহস্র

অসুবিধার মধ্যে, অযাচিতভাবেই, যে বিশাল একটি সুযোগ নেতাদের জুটে গিয়েছিল তা ছিল পড়াশোনা এবং চিন্তা করার অবকাশ। জওহরলাল এমনিতেই পড়ুয়া মানুষ ছিলেন, তিনি জেলে বসে পড়লেন এবং লিখলেন প্রচুর, কবির লেখার সঙ্গেও তাঁর পরিচিতি গভীরতর হল। এর অনেক বছর পরে জীবনের এই পর্যায়ের অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পর্কে তিনি লিখছেন – “পরবর্তী কালে কবির প্রতি আমার আকর্ষণ বাড়ে। তাঁর চিন্তা ও তাঁর জীবনদর্শনের সঙ্গে আমি যথেষ্ট একাত্মতা বোধ করতে শুরু করি”। তাঁর জীবনে “দুই গুরু” প্রভাব সম্বন্ধে তিনি আবারও লিখলেন – “আমি চিন্তা করে অর্থাৎ হই যে কি ভাবে কবির বিশাল সৃষ্টি এবং তাঁর ব্যক্তিত্ব আমাকে এবং আমাদের সময়কে প্রভাবিত করেছিল। কর্মজীবনে গান্ধীজির সঙ্গেই আমার ঘনিষ্ঠতা, কিন্তু তাও আমি বলব আমার মন রবীন্দ্রনাথের সুরেই বিশেষভাবে সাড়া দেয়”।

শান্তিনিকেতনের প্রতিও তাঁর অনুভূতিশীল মন আকৃষ্ট হয় এবং তিনি কর্মব্যস্ত জীবনে যখনই সময় করতে পেরেছেন কবির সঙ্গে দেখা করতে শান্তিনিকেতনে গেছেন। রিজু, নিফলা পারিপার্শ্বিকের মধ্যে শান্তিনিকেতনকে তিনি একটি মরুদ্যান বলে বর্ণনা করেছেন (an oasis in the midst of much barrenness)। কবি শান্তিনিকেতনকে গড়ে তুলছেন নীরবে, প্রায় লোকচক্ষুর অন্তরালে, “ভারতীয় সংস্কৃতির অন্যতম পীঠস্থান” হিসেবে, এ কথা জওহরলালের সপ্রশংস দৃষ্টি এড়ায় নি। ১৯৩৪ সালে দুটি বিশেষ ঘটনা জওহরলাল ও রবীন্দ্রনাথকে আবারও কাছাকাছি নিয়ে এল। কন্যা ইন্দিরার স্কুলের গণ্ডী পেরিয়ে কলেজে যাবার সময় আসছে। ১৬ই জানুয়ারী কলকাতা থেকে জওহরলাল কবিকে তার পাঠালেন এই মর্মে যে তিনি ও তাঁর পত্নী শান্তিনিকেতনে আসতে চান কবিকে শ্রদ্ধা জানাতে। ১৯ তারিখে ট্রেনে এসে পৌঁছলেন নেহরু-দম্পতি। কবি তাঁদের অভ্যর্থনা করলেন সাদরে, নিজকণ্ঠে বেদমন্ত্রোচ্চারণের মাধ্যমে। বিলেতে শিক্ষিত জওহরলালের সংস্কৃত জ্ঞান ছিল হয়ত স্বল্প, কিন্তু কৌতুহল ছিল অদম্য। তিনি ঐ সংস্কৃত মন্ত্রগুলির ইংরেজি অনুবাদ কবির একান্ত সচিব অনিল চন্দর কাছে চেয়ে পাঠান। বিদায় নেবার সময় তাঁর মন্তব্য লিখে গেলেন – “জীবনের যাত্রাপথের একটি আনন্দময় দিনের স্মৃতিতে” (in memory of a delightful day in life’s journey)। নেহরু-পত্নী কমলাও সেই করলেন মন্তব্যটির নীচে।

ইন্দিরাকে শান্তিনিকেতনে পড়ানোর ব্যাপারে নেহরু-দম্পতি কবির সঙ্গে কথা বলেন। যে চিন্তা থেকে তিনি ইন্দিরাকে শান্তিনিকেতনে পাঠাতে চেয়েছিলেন সে সম্বন্ধে তিনি বিস্তারিত লিখেছেন যার সার-সংক্ষেপ হল – শান্তিনিকেতনের আবহাওয়া থেকে, এবং বিশেষত, গুরুদেবের উপস্থিতিতে ও তাঁর সাহচর্যে, ইন্দিরা কিছু আহরণ করতে পারবে (she would imbibe something of the atmosphere of the place and, more particularly, profit by the presence of and contact with Gurudev)। নতুন শিক্ষাবর্ষের গোড়ায়, ১৯৩৪ সালের জুলাই মাসে, ইন্দিরা যখন কলেজ-ছাত্রী হিসেবে শান্তিনিকেতনে এলেন জওহরলাল তখন জেলে এবং কমলা নেহরু অসুস্থ অবস্থায় শয্যাশায়ী। কবির সঙ্গে ইন্দিরার প্রথম সাক্ষাত অবশ্য এর আগেও একবার হয়েছিল, সেটা ছিল ১৯৩২ সালে, পুণার যারবাদা জেলে। মহাত্মা গান্ধী তখন সেখানে অনশনে। কবি স্বয়ং এসেছেন তাঁর সমব্যাপী হিসেবে সঙ্গ দিতে; কিশোরী ইন্দিরাও, হয়ত মহাত্মার সেবায় সাহায্য করতে। পিতা জওহরলাল দেবাদুনের জেলখানা থেকে ইন্দিরাকে লিখলেন যে ভারতের আর একজন মহাপুরুষ রবীন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে যে তাঁর (ইন্দিরার) দেখা হওয়ার সুযোগ হল এটা সৌভাগ্যের ব্যাপার। ইন্দিরা-শান্তিনিকেতন প্রসঙ্গে পরে আসা যাবে, জওহরলাল-কমলার কথায় ফিরে যাওয়া যাক।

কমলা নেহরুর স্বাস্থ্যের দ্রুত অবনতি হওয়ায় তাঁকে এলাহাবাদের বাসস্থান থেকে ভাওয়ালীতে একটি স্বাস্থ্যনিবাসে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়। জওহরলাল নিজে তখন জেলে। রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিজ-উদ্যোগে উত্তরপ্রদেশের রাজ্যপালকে টেলিগ্রাম করে জওহরলালকে মুক্তি দেওয়ার অনুরোধ জানান যাতে তিনি তাঁর রুগ্ন স্ত্রীর পাশে থেকে তাঁর সেবা করতে পারেন। জওহরলাল আলমোড়া জেল থেকে নিয়মিত তাঁর স্ত্রীর সঙ্গে সাক্ষাত করতে যাওয়ার অনুমতি পান। পরে কমলাকে চিকিৎসার জন্য ইউরোপে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়। কিন্তু যে কালব্যাপিতে তিনি আক্রান্ত হয়েছিলেন সেই যক্ষ্মা রোগে তাঁর মৃত্যু হয় ১৯৩৬ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারী মাসে সুইজারল্যান্ডে, মাত্র ৩৬ বছর বয়সে। এই প্রসঙ্গে আলোচনা করার আগে ১৯৩৪ সালের দ্বিতীয় ঘটনা, যেটি রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও জওহরলালকে আরও কাছাকাছি এনে দিয়েছিল, সেটা কি এবং কেমন ছিল দেখে নেওয়া যাক।

১৯৩৪ এর ১৫ই জানুয়ারী বিহারের বেশ বিস্তৃত অঞ্চল জুড়ে একটি বিধ্বংসী ভূমিকম্প হয় যাতে হতাহতের সংখ্যা ও ক্ষয়ক্ষতির পরিমাণ ছিল বিপুল। নেহরু-দম্পতি শান্তিনিকেতন সেরে এলাহাবাদ ফিরে যাওয়ার পথে পাটনায় এসে নামেন এবং কিছুদিন বিহারের ভূমিকম্প-কবলিত কয়েকটি অঞ্চলে ত্রাণের কাজকর্ম পরিদর্শন করেন। এলাহাবাদে ফিরে ভূমিকম্পে ক্ষতিগ্রস্তদের সাহায্যের জন্য জওহরলাল নানা উদ্যোগের সঙ্গে জড়িত হয়ে দেশবাসীর কাছে ত্রাণকার্যে সর্ববিধ সহযোগিতার আবেদনে ও আয়োজনে নেতৃত্ব দেন।

ইতিমধ্যে ২৪শে জানুয়ারী মহাত্মা গান্ধী দক্ষিণ ভারতের একটি শহরের জনসভায় বিহারের ভূমিকম্পে হতাহত বা ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত মানুষের জন্য সমবেদনা জানানোর সঙ্গে এই মন্তব্যও করেন যে বিহারের “অস্পৃশ্যতার পাপের” শাস্তি হিসেবে এই ভূমিকম্প বিধাতার রোষের (divine chastisement) প্রতিফলন। বিভিন্ন পত্র-পত্রিকার মাধ্যমে মহাত্মার এই উক্তিটি দেশের মানুষের কাছে পৌঁছল অচিরেই। রবীন্দ্রনাথ এই উক্তিটির সত্যাসত্য যাচাই করার জন্য প্রথমে গান্ধীজিকে লেখেন এবং তাঁর উত্তর পেয়ে এর তীব্র প্রতিবাদ করেন, প্রায় তিরস্কারের স্বরে। গান্ধীজির এই উক্তিটি জওহরলালকেও পীড়া দিয়েছিল। মন্তব্যটিকে তিনি ‘বিস্ময়কর’ (staggering remark) বলে মনে করেছিলেন এবং এর বিরুদ্ধে কবির প্রতিবাদটির সঙ্গে সহমত পোষণ করে তিনি সেটিকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছিলেন। কুসংস্কারমুক্ত, বিজ্ঞানসম্মত মানসিকতায় ও বিচারবুদ্ধিতে জওহরলাল আবারও নিজেকে রবীন্দ্রনাথের সহমর্মী ও সহযাত্রী হিসেবে পেলেন। এ কথাটাও প্রসংগত উল্লেখ করা যায় যে গান্ধীজির এই উক্তিটি যখন সারা দেশে নিন্দার ঝড় তুলেছিল তখন তার একাংশের অশোভনতা কবিকে পীড়া দেয় এবং তিনি তার বিরুদ্ধেও প্রতিবাদ জানিয়ে লেখালেখি করেছিলেন। গভীর মতান্তর তাঁদের পারস্পরিক শ্রদ্ধাবোধকে দমাতে যে পারেনি এই ঘটনাগুলি তারই সাক্ষ্য।

কমলার প্রয়াণ ও বেদনাহত কবির প্রতিক্রিয়া

১৯৩৫ সালের ১৬ই এপ্রিল ছিল আলমোড়া জেল থেকে ভাওয়ালীর স্বাস্থ্যনিবাসে কমলার সঙ্গে জওহরলালের নিয়মিত সাক্ষাৎ করতে আসার একটি দিন। একদিনের এই ‘ছুটিতে’ গুরুতর অসুস্থ পত্নীর জন্য দৃশ্চিন্তা ছাড়াও পিতা জওহরলাল ভাবছিলেন শান্তিনিকেতনবাসী কন্যা ইন্দিরার শিক্ষাজীবনের ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে। কবিকে তিনি চিনেছিলেন অন্তরঙ্গ শুভাখী হিসেবে। তাই তাঁর মনের কথা কবিকে জানালেন ভাওয়ালী থেকে একটি দীর্ঘ চিঠিতে। তিনি লিখলেন যে খুব শীঘ্রই কমলাকে চিকিৎসার জন্য ইউরোপে নিয়ে যাওয়ার দরকার হবে এবং তিনি নিজে জেল থেকে ছাড়া পাবেন না তাই ইন্দিরাকেই তার মায়ের সঙ্গে যেতে হবে। তিনি জানালেন যে ইন্দিরার মুখ থেকে এবং তার বন্ধুবান্ধবদের কাছ থেকে এ কথা জেনে তিনি অত্যন্ত আশুস্ত বোধ করেছেন যে গুরুদেবের মেহচ্ছায়ায় ও তত্ত্বাবধানে ইন্দিরা শান্তিনিকেতনে নিজেকে ভালভাবে মানিয়ে নিয়ে সুখে আছে। কিন্তু পারিবারিক অবস্থার বাধ্যবাধকতায় ইন্দিরাকে শান্তিনিকেতন ছেড়ে আসতে হবে যেটা তিনি নিজে এবং ইন্দিরা মোটেও পছন্দ করছেন না। শান্তিনিকেতনের ছাত্রী হতে পারাটা ইন্দিরার জীবনের একটি বিশেষ গৌরবের ব্যাপার বলে তিনি নিজে এবং ইন্দিরা মনে করেন বলে উল্লেখ করলেন।

এই চিঠিটির মর্মাত্ম কবিকে পীড়া দিয়েছিল। তিনি জওহরলালের চিঠির উত্তর দিলেন ২০শে এপ্রিল, লিখলেন ‘ভারাক্রান্ত হৃদয়ে ইন্দিরাকে আমরা বিদায় দিয়েছি’। তিনি আশা প্রকাশ করলেন যে কমলার স্বাস্থ্যের উন্নতি হবে এবং ইন্দিরা আবার শান্তিনিকেতনে ফিরে এসে পড়াশোনা শুরু করতে পারবে। কিন্তু কমলা আর সুস্থ হলেন না। ১৯৩৬ সালের ২৮শে ফেব্রুয়ারী যখন তিনি মারা যান তখন জওহরলাল নিজেও তাঁর মৃত্যুশয্যায় উপস্থিত ছিলেন। ইন্দিরা আর ছাত্রী হিসেবে শান্তিনিকেতনে ফিরতে পারলেন না।

কমলার সঙ্গে রবীন্দ্রনাথের একবারই সাক্ষাৎ হয়েছিল, কিন্তু সেই তরুণী-কন্যার-মাতা, স্বামীসঙ্গবধিত যুবতীটির মনের বেদনা তিনি নিশ্চয় বুঝতে পেরে থাকবেন। তাই তাঁর অকাল মৃত্যু কবিকে বিশেষ পীড়া দিয়েছিল। ১৯৩৬ সালের বসন্ত-পূর্ণিমার দিনটিকে (৮ই মার্চ, ২৩শে ফাল্গুন) শান্তিনিকেতন কমলার স্মরণসভা হিসেবে পালন করে। আবেগ-মাখানো দীর্ঘ একটি ভাষণে কবি কমলা এবং জওহরলাল দু জনকেই মেহভরে স্মরণ করলেন – “একদিন যখন তাঁর স্বামী কারাগারে তখন দেহের উপর মরণান্তিক রোগের ছায়াঘনায়িত, সেই সময় তিনি তাঁর কন্যা ইন্দিরাকে আশ্রমে নিয়ে এসেছিলেন। সেদিনের কথা আজ মনে

পড়ছে। সেই প্রশান্ত গম্ভীর অবিচলিত ধৈর্যের মূর্তি ভেসে উঠছে চোখের সামনে ...। কমলা নেহরু যার সহধর্মিণী, সেই জওহরলাল আজ সমস্ত ভারতের রাজসনে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হবার অধিকারী”। নব বসন্তের পত্র-পুষ্প-শোভিত বনরাজির আশ্বাসবাণীতে কবি অনুভব করলেন “যুগসন্ধির নির্মম শীতের দিন শেষ হল, এল নবযুগের সর্বব্যাপী আশ্বাস। আজ এই নব যুগের ঋতুরাজ জওহরলাল”।

এই ভাষণটির ইংরেজি অনুবাদ পড়ে আবারও অভিভূত জওহরলাল এলাহাবাদ থেকে ১লা এপ্রিল একটি চিঠি লিখে তাঁর প্রতিক্রিয়া জানানোর সবিনয়ে - “কমলা সম্পর্কে আপনি আপনার অতুলনীয় উদারতায় যে কথাগুলি বলেছেন, তা আমার হৃদয় স্পর্শ করেছে। ... আপনার আশীর্বাদ পেয়ে আমি কত শক্তি লাভ করি। শক্তি পাই এই কথা ভেবে যে আপনি আমাদের মত পথভ্রান্তদের সঠিক পথে চালিত করার জন্যই আমাদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন”।

ব্যক্তিগত জীবনের ঘাতপ্রতিঘাত বা দীর্ঘ কারাবাস জওহরলালের মননশীলতাকে স্তব্ধ করতে পারে নি। কমলার মৃত্যুর কয়েক মাস পরেই তাঁর জেলে বসে লেখা আত্মজীবনী প্রকাশিত হল। তাঁর বয়স তখন পঞ্চাশও পেরোয় নি। বইটি পড়ে উচ্ছ্বসিত রবীন্দ্রনাথ জওহরলালকে লিখলেন - “I have just finished reading your great book and I feel intensely impressed and proud of your achievement. Through all its details, there runs a deep current of humanity which overpasses the tangles of facts and leads us to a person who is greater than his deeds and truer than his surroundings”।

হাতে লেখা এই চিঠির দুটি মাত্র বাক্যের অসাধারণ প্রশস্তিতে আনন্দিত জওহরলাল উত্তরে লিখলেন - “আপনার প্রশংসাবাণী আমাকে আনন্দিত ও শক্তিশালী করেছে। আপনার আশীর্বাদ পেলে আমি বোধহয় এক বিরুদ্ধ পৃথিবীর সামনে দাঁড়াতে পারি”।

শান্তিনিকেতনে ইন্দিরা - ক্ষণিকের অতিথি

শান্তিনিকেতনে পৌঁছে ছাত্রী ইন্দিরা গুরুদেবকে প্রণাম জানাতে গেলেন। কবি তাঁকে সম্ভাষণ করলেন তার নামের সঙ্গে “প্রিয়দর্শিনী” বিশেষণটি যোগ করে। ইন্দিরা পরে এই নামটি প্রায়শই তাঁর মধ্যম নাম হিসেবে ব্যবহার করতেন।



রবীন্দ্রসাম্নিধ্যে ইন্দিরা

শান্তিনিকেতনের ব্যবস্থাদির সঙ্গে ইন্দিরা ভালই মানিয়ে নিয়েছিলেন, নিজের হাতে কাজকর্ম করা এবং সহপাঠীদের সঙ্গে আশ্রমের দায়িত্ব ভাগ করে নেওয়া এই ব্যবস্থার অঙ্গ ছিল। ইন্দিরা ছিলেন লাজুক, মুখচোরা মেয়ে এবং নিঃসঙ্গতায় অভ্যস্ত। শান্তিনিকেতনের খোলা-মেলা অন্তরঙ্গ পরিবেশ তাঁর খুবই পছন্দ হল। তিনি লিখলেন জীবনে এই প্রথম তিনি নিজেকে ‘বন্ধন-মুক্ত’ বলে অনুভব করছেন। আর চারপাশে কলা ও সংস্কৃতি জগতের দিকপাল সব শিক্ষকেরা, গুরুদেব তো আছেনই। আঁকিয়ে নন্দলাল বসুর কথা ইন্দিরা বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখ করেছেন। আর গুরুদেব নিজে যখন পট সাজিয়ে তুলি নিয়ে ছবি আঁকতে বসতেন, ইন্দিরা পাশ দিয়ে যেতে হলে যেতেন পা টিপে টিপে, পাছে তাঁর কারণে কোন ব্যাঘাত না সৃষ্টি হয়। রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিজে ‘ক্লাস’ নিতেন, খোলা-হাওয়ায় বসে পড়ুয়াদের সঙ্গে নিয়ে গল্প করতেন। একদিন তিনি ইন্দিরাকে জিগ্গেসাই করে বসলেন - “আমাকে কি তুমি ভয় পাও”? কিছুক্ষণ চুপ করে থেকে মাথা নামিয়ে ইন্দিরা উত্তর দিলেন “আপনার কাজে ব্যাঘাত ঘটতে চাই না”। আর একজন শিক্ষক ইন্দিরার বিশেষ পছন্দের ছিলেন, নাম ফ্র্যাঙ্ক ওবার্ডফর্ড, জাতে জারমান, পড়াতেন ফ্রেঞ্চ। শান্তিনিকেতন ছেড়ে চলে যাবার পরে অনেক বছর পর্যন্ত ইন্দিরা এই শিক্ষকটির সঙ্গে নিয়মিত পত্র-বিনিময় করতেন। শান্তিনিকেতনের ঋতু-উৎসবগুলি ইন্দিরার প্রিয় ছিল। একবার কবির ‘চিত্রাঙ্গদা’ নৃত্যনাট্যটি মঞ্চস্থ হল, মুগ্ধ ইন্দিরা কাহিনীটির আদ্যপ্রান্ত সহপাঠীদের কাছে জানতে চাইলেন। কিন্তু ইন্দিরার জীবনের শান্তিনিকেতন পর্ব সুখের হলেও দীর্ঘস্থায়ী হয় নি, এক বছরেরও আগে তাঁকে চলে যেতে হয়। কিন্তু যদিও তাঁর অভিভূতা অল্পকালের, তাঁর জীবনে শান্তিনিকেতনের প্রভাব হয়েছিল চিরস্থায়ী। সুচিত্রা মিত্র, কণিকা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের মত সংগীতশিল্পীরা গল্প করতেন যে তাঁদের সঙ্গে দেখা হলেই ইন্দিরা রবীন্দ্রসংগীত শুনতে চাইতেন এবং অনেক সময় কোন বিশেষ গান ফরমায়েস করতেন। ‘একলা চল রে’ তাঁর অন্যতম প্রিয় গান ছিল। এটির প্রচলিত ইংরেজি অনুবাদগুলি হয়ত তাঁর পছন্দ হয় নি, তাই তিনি নিজে এটির অনুবাদ করেছিলেন, যেটি আন্তর্জালের কল্যাণে এখন সহজলভ্য।

পাঠকের কাছে মার্জনা চেয়ে দুটি প্রাসঙ্গিক ব্যক্তিগত স্মৃতি ভাগ করে নিই। আমার এক বন্ধু অশোক চট্টোপাধ্যায় তখন বর্ধমান জেলার জেলা-শাসক। সময়টা বাংলাদেশ স্বাধীন হবার পরের বছর। শান্তিনিকেতনের আচার্য হিসেবে ইন্দিরা যাচ্ছেন সমাবর্তন অনুষ্ঠানে। তাঁর হেলিকপ্টার বর্ধমানে অল্প সময়ের জন্য থামবে এবং তিনি সাংবাদিকদের সঙ্গে কথাবার্তা বলবেন এই রকম ব্যবস্থা। সেই সব পর্ব সেরে তিনি অশোকের বাসস্থানে গেলেন এবং বললেন তাঁর কিছু লেখার কাজ আছে। টেবিল-চেয়ারের ব্যবস্থা হল। তিনি লিখতে লিখতে অশোককে ডেকে জিজ্ঞেস করলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথের ‘সংকোচের বিহীনতা’ কবিতা/গানটি তার পরিচিত কিনা। ইতিবাচক উত্তর পেয়ে বললেন তাঁকে সেটি পড়ে শোনাতে। অশোক পড়তে শুরু করে যখন ‘দুরূহ কাজে নিজের দিও কাঠিন পরিচয়’ লাইনটিতে পৌঁছেছে, তিনি তাকে থামতে বলে অনুরোধ করলেন এ লাইনটি রোমান হরফে তাঁকে লিখে দিতে। তিনি তাঁর শান্তিনিকেতনের বক্তৃতার মধ্যে এটি পড়তে চান! আর দ্বিতীয় গল্প ১৯৭০ এর দশকের, তখন আমরা ইংল্যান্ডে থাকি। আমার এক ভাইবির সমাবর্তনে পৌষ উৎসবের মধ্যে শান্তিনিকেতনে গেছি। অমর্ত্য সেনের মা অমিতা সেনের সঙ্গে আমাদের পরিচয় হয়েছিল লন্ডনে। সে সুবাদে, প্রধানত আমার ভাইবির ইচ্ছাক্রমে, তাঁদের বাড়িতে গেলাম। অমিতা সেনের মা, আচার্য ক্ষিতিমোহন সেনের স্ত্রী, কিরণবালা তখনও জীবিত এবং একই বাড়িতে থাকেন। আমি তাঁর সঙ্গে দেখা করে শ্রদ্ধা জানাতে চাইলাম। অমিতা সেন আগে তাঁর মাকে আমার ইচ্ছার কথাটা জানিয়ে এলেন। তারপর আমাদের সঙ্গে করে তাঁর ঘরে নিয়ে গেলেন। তিনি আমাদের পরিচয় দিতে গিয়ে বললেন, “মা, এরা বিলেত থেকে এসেছে, তোমার সঙ্গে দেখা করে প্রণাম জানাতে চায়”। কিরণবালা বিছানায় বসে, আমরা প্রণাম করলাম। তিনি বললেন “তোমরা অতদূর থেকে এসেছ, ইন্দিরাও এলেই দেখা করে যায়”! জানা গেল পুরণো ছাত্রীটি গুরুপত্নীকে শ্রদ্ধা জানিয়ে যেতে ভুলতেন না।

ইন্দিরা এরপর অক্সফোর্ড বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে পড়তে যান, সেখান থেকে তাঁর পিতাকে একটি চিঠিতে তাঁর শান্তিনিকেতনের স্মৃতি স্মরণে লেখেন - I was glad of my stay in Santiniketan - chiefly because of Gurudev. In the very atmosphere there, his spirit seemed to roam and hover over one with a loving and deep watchfulness. And his spirit, I feel, has greatly influenced my life and thought”। জওহরলাল ১৯৩৬ সালের ডিসেম্বর মাসে লেখা একটি চিঠিতে কবিকে ইন্দিরার এই মন্তব্যটি জানিয়েছিলেন।

জীবনের অন্তিম পর্ব - কবির শেষ রাগিনীর বীণ

তাঁর জীবনের শেষ চার-পাঁচটি বছর রবীন্দ্রনাথকে নানা শারীরিক অসুস্থতায় ভুগতে হয়েছিল। কিন্তু শান্তিনিকেতনের সাংস্কৃতিক পরিধিকে বাড়িয়ে তোলার দায়িত্ব তিনি অবহেলা করেন নি। ১৯৩৭ এর ২৮শে মার্চ চীনাভবনের দ্বারোদ্ঘাটনের জন্য কবি জহরলালকে আমন্ত্রণ করে লিখলেন - এই কাজের জন্য “তোমার চেয়ে যোগ্য কোন ব্যক্তির কথা ভাবতেও পারি নে”। ইন্দিরাকেও সঙ্গে আনতে বললেন। কিন্তু অসুস্থতার কারণে জওহরলাল আসতে পারলেন না, ইন্দিরাকে পাঠালেন, নিজের একটি শুভেচ্ছাবাণী সমেত - “সশরীরে থাকার মতই আমি আপনাদের সঙ্গে আত্মিকভাবে উপস্থিত থাকব। চীনাভবন চীন ও ভারতের মিলনের মূর্ত প্রতীক হয়ে উঠুক, এই আমার কামনা”।

ব্রিটিশ সরকারের বিতর্কিত ‘ভারত শাসন আইন ১৯৩৫’ এর পটভূমিকায় দেশের রাজনৈতিক আবহাওয়া এই বছরগুলিতে ক্রমশই উত্তপ্ত ও অস্থির হয়ে উঠতে থাকে। জওহরলাল সহ অন্যান্য নেতারা ১৯৩৭ সালের প্রাদেশিক নির্বাচন ইত্যাদিতে ব্যস্ত হয়ে পড়েন। রবীন্দ্রনাথও বাংলার রাজনীতির অস্থিরতা ও হিন্দু ও মুসলমান সম্প্রদায়ের সম্পর্কের অবনতি লক্ষ্য করে উদ্বিগ্ন ও পীড়িত বোধ করতে থাকেন। জওহরলাল কলকাতায় এসেছেন কংগ্রেসের মিটিং এ ১৯৩৭ এর অক্টোবর মাসে। কবি তখন কলকাতার উপকণ্ঠে প্রশান্ত মহলানবিশের বাসস্থান বরাহনগরে রয়েছেন। জওহরলাল খবর পেয়ে সেখানে তাঁর সঙ্গে দেখা করতে গেলেন। মহলানবিশ জানাচ্ছেন যে কবির সঙ্গে অন্যান্য বিষয়ে আলোচনার সঙ্গে সেদিন স্বাধীন ভারতের জাতীয় সংগীত কি হতে পারে তা নিয়েও জওহরলাল আলোচনা করেছিলেন। ভারতের বিভিন্ন ভাষায় রচিত গানের মধ্যে যে গুলি জাতীয় সংগীতের মর্যাদা পেতে পারে তার একটি তালিকা জওহরলাল বা কংগ্রেস পার্টির সংগ্রহে ছিল, যার মধ্যে বাংলায় লেখা ‘বন্দে মাতরম্’ ও ‘জন-গণ-মন’ও ছিল। সেদিন এ ব্যাপারে কোন সিদ্ধান্ত অবশ্যই নেওয়া হয়নি, কারণ জওহরলালের স্মৃতিলিপির থেকে জানা যায় যে ১৯৩৯ সালের জানুয়ারী মাসের শেষে যখন তিনি শান্তিনিকেতনে যান কবির বিশেষ আমন্ত্রণে হিন্দীভবনের দ্বারোদ্ঘাটনের জন্য তখনও তাঁর সঙ্গে কবির এই ব্যাপারে কথাবার্তা হয়েছিল। কবির জীবদ্দশায় এটিই ছিল শান্তিনিকেতনে তাঁর শেষবারের মত আসা। তাঁর উপস্থিতির খবর পেয়ে সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু শান্তিনিকেতনে যান এবং দিন-দুয়েক কাটিয়ে ২রা ফেব্রুয়ারী তাঁরা একসঙ্গে শান্তিনিকেতন ছেড়ে যান। কংগ্রেস পার্টি তথা ভারতের ইতিহাসে ১৯৩৯ সালের ২৯ শে জানুয়ারী তারিখটি একটি বিশেষ তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ দিন, কারণ ঐ দিনেই সুভাষচন্দ্র দ্বিতীয়বারের মত কংগ্রেসের সভাপতি নির্বাচিত হন, গান্ধীজির আপত্তি সত্ত্বেও। দেশের জটিল রাজনীতি এবং তাঁর নেতৃত্বকে ঘিরে কংগ্রেস পার্টির আসন্ন সমস্যা এই দুই শীর্ষস্থানীয় নেতা নিশ্চয়ই আলোচনা করে থাকবেন। কিন্তু সে অন্য ইতিহাস!

দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ শুরু হয় ১৯৩৯ সালের সেপ্টেম্বর মাসের গোড়ায়। জওহরলাল তখন চীনে গেছেন চিয়াং কাই শেকের সঙ্গে সাক্ষাৎ করতে। যুদ্ধ শুরুর পরিস্থিতিতে সেই সফর ছেড়ে জওহরলাল দেশে ফিরে এলেন। কবি তখন আবারও বরাহনগরে প্রশান্ত মহলানবিশের অতিথি। দমদম বিমান বন্দর থেকে জওহরলাল সরাসরি চলে এলেন তাঁর সঙ্গে দেখা করে

শ্রদ্ধা জানাতে। অন্যান্য বিষয়ের সঙ্গে তাঁর চীন ভ্রমণের অভিজ্ঞতা কবিকে কিছু জানালেন, এবং অল্প সময় পরেই বিদায় নিয়ে বিমান বন্দরে ফিরে গেলেন। এইটির তাঁদের শেষ দেখা।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের মৃত্যু হয় ১৯৪১ সালের ৭ই আগষ্ট, (২২শে শ্রাবণ, ১৩৪৮), জওহরলাল তখন দেৱাদুন জেলে। এই দুঃসংবাদ জেল-জীবনের নিঃসঙ্গতার মধ্যে তাঁর একাকিত্ববোধকে যে আরও বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছিল তার আভাস পাওয়া যায় তাঁর এই স্মৃতিলিপিতে - “In the solitude of prison life, I felt particularly desolate at the passing of a man who had come to mean so much to me and to vast numbers of others. From an intellectual appreciation of his ideas and his outlook on life, an emotional bond had grown up between us”।

কবিপুত্র রবীন্দ্রনাথকে টেলিগ্রাম মারফত তাঁর শোকবার্তা পাঠালেন কবিকে ভারতের আকাশে “সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ জ্যোতিষ্ক”

(brightest luminary) আখ্যা দিয়ে। প্রাচীন ভারতের মহান ঋষিদের সঙ্গে তাঁকে তুলনা করে জওহরলাল লিখলেন যে গুরুদেবের উত্তরাধিকার সারা ভারতের অমূল্য সম্পদ যা রক্ষা করার দায়িত্ব ভারতের প্রত্যেকটি মানুষের। কবির জীবদ্দশায় জওহরলাল শান্তিনিকেতনে এসেছিলেন পাঁচবার, কিন্তু তাঁর মৃত্যুর পর দশবার। বিশ্বভারতীকে কেন্দ্রীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হিসেবে স্বীকৃতি দেওয়া হয় স্বাধীনতার পরেই, জওহরলাল ছিলেন প্রথম আচার্য।

শেষের কথা

এই ছিল বাঙ্গালী-কবি রবীন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে তিনজন বিখ্যাত অবাস্তবী ভারতীয়ের নিবিড় সম্পর্কের সংক্ষিপ্ত ইতিবৃত্ত। রবীন্দ্রোত্তর বাংলায় বা ভারতের অন্যত্র কবির প্রভাব আজও অনুভূত হয় কিনা তা মাপজোখ করা সহজ নয়। স্বাধীন ভারতের জাতীয়সংগীতের নির্বাচনে জওহরলাল একাধিকবার কবির সঙ্গে পরামর্শ করেছিলেন এ কথা আগে বলা হয়েছে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের জন্মশতবার্ষিকী উদ্‌যাপনের সময় ভারতের জাতীয় জীবনে তথা বহির্বিশ্বে রবীন্দ্রনাথের নানা অবদান সম্পর্কে আলোচনা করতে গিয়ে জওহরলাল এই ব্যাপারটি স্মরণ করেছিলেন এই ভাবে - I have a feeling of satisfaction that I was partly responsible for this choice [of the national anthem], not only because it is a great national song, but also because it is a constant reminder to all our people of Rabindranath Tagore।

আসলে রবীন্দ্রনাথের উপস্থিতি যেহেতু মানুষের মনের, চিন্তার বা অনুভূতির জগতে, তাই বাংলায় বা বৃহত্তর ভারতে কবির নীরব অনুরাগী নিশ্চয়ই অসংখ্য আছেন বা থাকবেন। সাধারণ মানুষের দৈনন্দিন জীবনে তাঁর ‘নিত্য আসা-যাওয়া’ নাই বা থাকল। ■

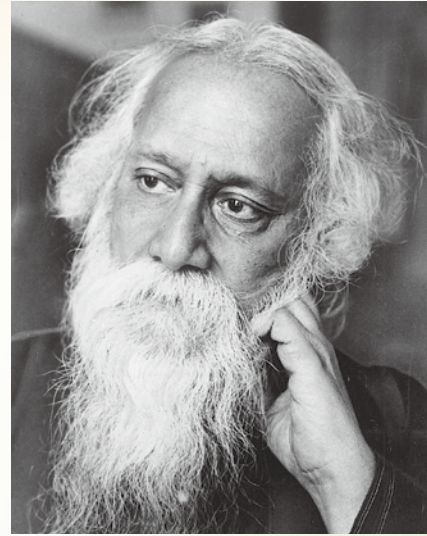
To What Extent did Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore's Visits Impact Japan and India?

(Reprint of article from Anjali 2017, written by same author then Grade X)

- Nishant Chanda



Swami Vivekananda



Rabindranath Tagore

Westernization has deprived many countries of their rich culture. This idea was central to both Tagore and Vivekananda's visits to Japan. They were both notable people who have accomplished a lot throughout their life.

Tagore is considered the greatest poet of India and this isn't a surprise as he is the lyricist of two country's national anthem India and Bangladesh and he is also composer of India's national anthem "Jana Gana Mana". He was the first Asian to receive the Nobel Prize for literature for the English version of his work "Geetanjali", and he was offered knighthood, which he rejected. Nationalism and patriotism oozed from him, and for that, he has been a figure for Indians to this day.

Vivekananda lived his life as a Hindu saint and a religious leader. He spread the religion globally and led the Vedanta movement. He played an important part in India's so called "national awakening" during British rule by inspiring many to "arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached" (www.importantindia.com). Vivekananda's speech at the first Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 was when he became an icon. Other significant figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose have all looked up to Vivekananda for inspiration. Westerners who were influenced by him are Nicola Tesla, John Rockefeller, and Leo Tolstoy (who also wrote a biography of Vivekananda). He had a special attachment to Japan after his visits. Like Tagore, he also praised Japanese's love for their country, their work ethic, and aesthetic sense.

Okakura Tenshin, a well known Nihonga artist, can be given credit for starting the cultural exchange between Japan and India. He visited India in 1902, and there he met Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda, and Tagore. After his visit, famous Japanese artists, Taikan Yokoyama and Shunso Hishida, visited Calcutta as well. The Japanese artists spread their knowledge on the Japanese wash technique (Bose 91). Some Indian artists visited Japan with Tagore. They came back fascinated by the Japanese style of sumi-e. In total, Tagore visited Japan five times, the first being in 1916. He was well-known in Japan even before his arrival because he was the first Asian Nobel laureate. Many of Tagore's publications were also in circulation

there. During Tagore's stay in Japan, he couldn't help but to be amazed by the way the Japanese went about their daily lives. He admired their stoic personality, their graceful, dignified and warm manners, their sense of discipline, their delicate sense of aesthetics expressed in the tea ceremony and Japan's many arts. He also admired the fact that people would get out of their daily lives to visit gardens and parks and that disputes on the streets were resolved without the presence of anger. He visited and gave lectures at numerous venues, thus becoming one of the pioneers of the India-Japan relationship. He gave speeches at the University of Tokyo, Keio University, Japan Women's University, Asahi Shimbun, and many other places. The speeches he is most renowned for are: "India and Japan", "The Message from India to Japan", "The Spirit of Japan", and "Western Culture and Mission of Japan" (Kawai 15). In his talks, he addressed the destruction westernization was bringing upon Japan ever since the Meiji Restoration. He elaborated to the uprooting of traditional values and substitution of Western customs and beliefs. He said to them, "Don't forget your soul, while you modernise your country by imitating Europe." Another thing he despised in the Japanese was their hostility to their neighboring countries. He wished Japan would live with China and Korea in harmony. After he gained in popularity, scores of his books were translated into Japanese (previously they were only available in English). Yasunari Kawabata, Japan's first Nobel Laureate in Literature, claims that he was inspired by Tagore and has used many of Tagore's ideas in his works. Tagore's criticism on Japan's imperialism brought Tagore some trouble. Nevertheless, he concluded his visits by referring to Japan as a "manifestation of modern life in the spirit of its traditional past" (Sen 54).

After Tagore's visits, he invited some Japanese acquaintances to come over to India. He set up a foundation called "Nippon Bhavan" in India, where Japanese painting and language were taught by Japanese. In exchange, Tagore taught the Japanese people Indian language, literature, philosophy, art, music, and dance. To this day, the Bengali Association in Tokyo have been commemorating Tagore's birth anniversary annually (Medhasananda 12).

Vivekananda's visit to Japan "benefit[ed] India materially

and Japan spiritually” (Medhasananda 50). There is little information on his visits, but there are sources, such as a letter he wrote on July 10, 1893 from a hotel in Japan to Chennai, India. The following is an excerpt from the letter:

What a contrast! The Japanese are one of the cleanliest peoples on Earth. Everything is neat and tidy. Their streets are nearly all broad, straight, and regularly paved. Their little houses are cage-like, and their pine-covered evergreen little hills form the background of almost every town and village. The short-statured, fair-skinned, quaintly dressed Japanese, their movements, attitudes, gestures, everything is picturesque. Japan is the land of the picturesque! Almost every house has a garden at the back, very nicely laid out according to Japanese fashion with small shrubs, grass plots, small artificial water, and small stone bridges... I have seen three big cities in the interior - Osaka, a great manufacturing town, Kyoto, the former capital, and Tokyo the present capital: Tokyo is nearly twice the size of Calcutta with nearly double the population. No foreigner is allowed to travel in the interior without a passport. The Japanese seem now to have fully awakened themselves to the necessity of the present times. They have now a thoroughly organised army equipped with guns... In every temple there are some Sanskrit mantras... The modern rage for progress has penetrated even the priesthood. I cannot write what I have in my mind about the Japanese in one short letter. Only I want that numbers of our young men should pay a visit to Japan... every year. Especially to the Japanese... (Vivekananda).

In the letter, Vivekananda wholeheartedly praises Japanese customs and traditions. He believes that India should strive to become something greater. He said, on another occasion, “If I can get unmarried graduates, I may try to send them over to Japan and make arrangements for their technical education there, so that when they come back, they may turn their knowledge to the best account for India. What a good thing that would be” (Vivekananda). Do not get his teachings wrong, though. He did not want India to lose its national identity and blindly copy what Japan did. He makes this clear in an interview, “There in Japan, you find a fine assimilation of knowledge, and not its indigestion, as we have here. They have taken everything from the Europeans, but they remain Japanese all the same, and have not turned European; while

our country, the terrible mania of becoming Westernized has seized upon us like the plague” (Vivekananda). Vivekananda was like a mentor for the nation. He wished India would look to Japan for ideas, such as incorporating aesthetics into life and religion. Jamshedji Tata, the founder of one of India’s largest companies (even to this date) was enlightened by him. He wrote Tata a business plan where Tata could incorporate Japanese manufacturing into their business. Soon, Vivekananda grew sick. He rejected an offer from Emperor Mutsuhito on talking to the parliament of Japan about Hinduism.

Swami Vivekananda’s legacy continues to this date. In 2007, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made several references to Vivekananda before a joint session of the Indian Parliament during his visit to India. He said:

A number of times in history, Japan and India have attracted one another. Vivekananda came to be acquainted with Tenshin Okakura, a man ahead of his time in early modern Japan and a type of Renaissance man. Okakura was then guided by Vivekananda and enjoyed also a friendship with Sister Nivedita... (Abe)

Prime Minister Abe went on to talk about how India can be developed and used Vivekananda’s quotes: “help and not fight”, “assimilation and not destruction”, and “harmony and peace, not dissension” (Vivekananda). To this day, Japan is a major helping hand for India in terms of financial and technical assistance while Indian religious organizations in Japan, including the Vedanta Society provide spiritual welfare to Japanese.

The Japanese way of life has been appealing to many, but Indians have been awestruck by their ways ever since the end of the 19th century. For Tagore, Japanese art and aesthetic sense was something he wanted Indians to marvel at, and for Vivekananda, the way Japanese were advancing with respect to technology and infrastructure was something he wanted Indians to internalize. In Japan, Tagore has left a footprint in terms of literature, art, and music; Vivekananda brought the Vedanta Society to Japan, and started the India-Japan relationship with Okakura Tenshin. ■

Works Cited:

1. Bose, Sugata. “Tagore and His Times: The Idea of Asia.” *India Perspectives*. 2nd ed. Vol. 24. New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 2010. 90-95. Print.
2. Kawai, Tom. “Tagore - 100th Anniversary of his Visit to Japan” *Anjali*. Tokyo: Bengali Association of Tokyo, Japan, 2016. 15-16. Print. The author of this publication is the grandson of Kampo Arai, a significant figure in Japanese art. Mr. Arai has also met Tagore in person.
3. Medhasananda, Swami. “Rabindranath and Japan.” *Anjali*. Tokyo: Bengali Association of Tokyo, Japan, 2016. 11-12. Print.
4. ---. “Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin.” *Swami Vivekananda and Japan*. Zushi: Vedanta Society, 2009. 47-83. Print.
5. Roy, Anurag. “Short Paragraph on Life of Rabindranath Tagore.” *Important India*. N.p., 17 Feb. 2016. Web. 15 May 2017.
6. Sen, Amrit. “The Wayfaring Poet.” *India Perspectives*. 2nd ed. Vol. 24. New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 2010. 52-59. Print.
7. Work, Team. “Short Paragraph on Swami Vivekananda.” *Important India*. N.p., 26 June 2015. Web. 15 May 2017.

ネタジ・スバス・チャンドラ・ボースと日本

－ 佐々木 理香

ネタジ・スバス・チャンドラ・ボースはインド独立運動の指導者の一人であり、インド国内においては教科書にも登場する独立の志士であり、今日も「ネタジ」の愛称で呼ばれている人物です。志半ばで亡くなりましたが、ネタジ率いるインド国民軍が、ビルマ方面からインドのコヒマ、インパール地域に展開し、そこにインド国旗を掲揚したことが、インドの独立を早めることになりました。



活動の一方の舞台ともなりました日本において、「ネタジの考えと行動」、また「日本のインド独立への支援」を後世に伝えるべく、ネタジの関連図書・資料を集積することは大いに意義あることと思われます。

そこで、本年2022年、日印国交樹立70周年・インド独立75周年・ネタジ・スバス・チャンドラ・ボース生誕125周年を祝して、チャンドラ・ボース生誕125年記念実行委員会は、インド大使館図書室に『ネタジ文庫』を開設し、関連書籍を寄贈しました。

また、関連行事として本年9月2日(金)14:00～16:00インド大使館に於いて、講演会・オンライン(ZOOM配信)の同時開催および『ネタジ文庫』寄贈式典を開催し、ネタジの功績を日本とインドの専門家が多面的に考察しました。本講演会の資料やYouTubeは同実行委員会のホームページ(<http://chandrabose125japan.com/>)に掲載する予定です。

スバス・チャンドラ・ボースについて

スバス・チャンドラ・ボース(1897-1945)は、ガンジー、ネールと並び称されるインド独立運動の英雄です。

インドは、1757年にイギリスの植民地になって以来、イギリスのドル箱として富を搾取されつづけました。インドの人々は、たびたびイギリス支配に抵抗しましたが、武力をもたない民衆運動は、きびしい弾圧によってつぶされました。こうした状況のもとで、もはやそれまでの穏健な抵抗運動ではインドは解放できないと考え、急進的な反英・独立主義をとったのが、ボースでした。第二次世界大戦が勃発すると、ボースはイギリスの敵であるドイツに亡命し、インド独立のため果敢な言論活動を展開しました。そして、日本が英米に宣戦布告すると、インド独立のためには日本の協力が不可欠と、昭和18年(1943年)5月、来日して政府にインド独立支援を要請し、その確約をとりつけました。同年7月、日本占領下のシンガポールで、ボースはインド独立連盟総裁、インド国民軍司令官に就任。さらに同年10月、自由インド仮政府を樹立して、みずから首席となりました。この頃からボ

ースはネタジ(統領・指導者)の尊称で呼ばれるようになり、そのたぐいまれな情熱と指導力は、インド兵に強烈な祖国愛と戦闘精神を植えつけました。昭和19年(1944年)1月、日本はビルマ防衛のため、イギリス軍の前線基地であるインド領インパールに反撃する作戦(いわゆるインパール作戦)を発令。ボース率いるインド国民軍もこの作戦に加わり、2万の将兵をビルマに進めました。しかし、物量においてはるかにまさるイギリス軍の爆撃、さらに雨季による豪雨に追い討ちをかけられ、作戦は失敗に終わりました。昭和20年(1945年)8月の日本の敗戦後も、ボースの闘志はおとろえず、ソ連と結んで北からインド侵攻する計画をいだいていました。ところが、8月18日、ボースはソ連に向かう途中、台湾の台北で飛行機事故に遭い、亡くなってしまいました。しかし、ボースが生涯をかけた祖国独立の闘いは、やがてインドの民衆の心の中に、自由と独立への希望を燃え上がらせることになりました。それが、昭和22年(1947年)8月14日のインドの独立につながっていったのです。

蓮光寺とスバス・チャンドラ・ボースについて

飛行機事故で不慮の死を遂げたスバス・チャンドラ・ボースの遺骨は、台湾の日本軍司令部から東京の参謀本部へ、そしてインド独立連盟の関係者へと手渡されました。しかし、終戦直後の不安な世相のなかで、葬儀を引き受ける寺院がなく、関係者は困惑していました。相談を受けた当時29世潤乗院日輝(望月教榮)師は、英断をもってこれを引き受け、9月18日に葬儀をとりおこないました。ボースの遺骨は、そのまま蓮光寺に安置されることになりました。外部には、独立の英雄の遺骨を私欲に利用しようとする動きや不純な策動もありましたが、日輝師は仏教者としての信念のもとに遺骨をまもり、供養をつづけました。

この間、昭和32年(1957年)にはジャワハルラル・ネール首相がお詣りに来られ、異郷に眠る同志の霊をあつく弔われました。

翌33年にはブラサット大統領、さらに昭和44年(1969年)にはインディラ・ガンジー首相も参拝をされました。

平成2年(1990年)、スバス・チャンドラ・ボース・アカデミーによって、境内に供養碑が建立され、平成6年(1994年)8月18日には、百名近い参列者を集めて、50回忌法要が挙行され、現在に至っています。



Picture courtesy: <https://amritmahotsav.nic.in/>

- কিওকো নিওয়া

আমাদের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, টোকিও বিদেশ চর্চা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে বাংলা বিভাগ চালু হয়েছে ঠিক ১০ বছর আগে, অর্থাৎ ২০১২ সালে। এটা নিশ্চিত একটি স্মরণীয় এবং গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ঘটনা, কারণ এটাই ছিল জাপানে প্রথম বাংলা ভাষা বা সংস্কৃতির শিক্ষা সংস্থান আর গবেষণা কেন্দ্র স্থাপন। বাংলা বিভাগের স্থাপনা দীর্ঘদিন ধরে অনেক লোকের আশা ছিল বটে, তবে বিভিন্ন কারণে তখনও পর্যন্ত তা পূর্ণ হয় নি।

আমার সৌভাগ্য হল যে সেই বাংলা বিভাগের প্রথম শিক্ষিকা হিসেবে শুরু থেকে শিক্ষকতার কাজ করে এসেছি। শুরুতে আমাদের বিভাগে প্রথম শ্রেণীর দশ জন মাত্র ছাত্র ছাত্রী ছিল। ছোট পরিবারের মত ক্লাস, আর এই ক্লাস আনন্দ ও উৎসাহের সাথে চলছিল। তার পরে প্রতি বছরে দশজন দশজন ছাত্র ছাত্রী ভর্তি হয়ে এখন আন্ডার গ্রাজুয়েটে সব মিলিয়ে ৪০ জন ছাত্র ছাত্রী রয়েছে আর কয়েকজন দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার বিভিন্ন বিষয় নিয়ে গ্রাজুয়েট স্কুলে গবেষণা করে।

স্মরণ করি যে প্রথম থেকে বিভিন্ন মানুষ আমাদের বিভাগের শিক্ষক শিক্ষিকা হিসেবে সহায়তা করেছেন যেমন এন-এইচ-কে ওয়ার্ল্ড-এর ওয়াতানাবে-সান, হক-সান ও রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীতের গায়িকা ওকুদা-সান। এঁরা সবাই প্রত্যেকে নিজের ক্ষেত্রে বিশেষজ্ঞ আর তা ছাড়াও ভারত থেকে অধ্যাপক ও অধ্যাপিকা এসে আমাদের বিভাগে শিক্ষকতা করেছেন। এমন ছোট জায়গায় এভাবে বিভিন্ন শ্রেষ্ঠ লোকজন একত্র হয়ে কাজ করেছেন তা আর কোথাও হবে বলে মনে হয় না।

প্রতিবছরে যে সব বিদেশী ভাষা আমাদের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে শেখানো হয়, সেই সব ভাষায় নাটকের অভিনয় করাটা হচ্ছে আমাদের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রথা। ২০১৩ সালে আমরা প্রথমবার এই অনুষ্ঠানে যোগ দিয়েছি আর তখন স্থির করেছি যে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ডাকঘর নাটক অভিনয় করব। তবে নাটকের অনুশীলন শুরু হওয়ার ঠিক পরে আমরা বিপদে পড়ে গিয়েছিলাম, আমাদের অধ্যাপিকা শুভাদির শরীর খারাপ হয়ে গেল। তিনি ভারত থেকে ফিরতে না পারায় তাঁর পরিবর্তে গৌতমদা আর রুমাদি ছাত্র ছাত্রীদের উপদেশ দিয়েছেন কিভাবে অভিনয় করতে হয়। শেষের দিকে তারা অত্যন্ত ভাল করে অভিনয় করতে পেরেছে আর এই বিখ্যাত নাটকটিকে উপস্থাপন করতে পেরেছে জাপানী দর্শকের সামনে। তার পরে প্রতিবছর বাংলা বিভাগ বাংলা নাটকের অভিনয় করেছে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের

উৎসবের সময়। ইতিমধ্যে রবীন্দ্রনাথের রাজা, রক্তকরবী, তাদের দেশ ও রথের রশি অভিনীত হয়েছে, আর রূপকথার মধ্য থেকে সাত ভাই চম্পা এবং সুখু ও দুখু এবং রবীন্দ্রনাথের ছোট গল্প সমাপ্তিকে নাটকের আকারে উপস্থাপন করা হয়েছে। এ বছর শকুন্তলা নাটকের উপস্থাপনার কথা ভাবছে বর্তমান দ্বিতীয় বছরের ছাত্র ছাত্রীরা আর আমার বিশ্বাস এবারও ওরা সফল হবে।

২০১৫ সালে আমাদের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে বঙ্গবিদ্যা সম্মেলন আয়োজিত হয়েছে। অনেক লোকের সহায়তা পেয়ে এরকম বড় সম্মেলনের আয়োজন করা সম্ভব হয়েছিল। ভারত এবং বাংলাদেশ থেকে দু শ থেকে তিন শ গবেষক সম্মেলনে যোগদান করেছেন সেই সময়ে। আমরাও অনুমান করিনি যে এত বেশি বাঙ্গালী আসবে তবুও আশা করছি যে সবাইয়ের জন্যে তা ছিল এক ভাল অভিজ্ঞতা। আমাদের জন্যেও এ এক অসাধারণ অভিজ্ঞতা ছিল আর এ ধরনের অভিজ্ঞতার আরও আয়োজন করে এই বাংলা বিভাগ বঙ্গবিদ্যার এক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কেন্দ্রীয় স্থান হবে বলে আমার আশা।

আমাদের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বেশির ভাগ ছাত্র ছাত্রীর বিদেশে পড়াশোনা করার ইচ্ছা আছে। আমাদের বিভাগের ছাত্র ছাত্রীদের মধ্যেও অনেকে বাংলাদেশে বা পশ্চিমবঙ্গে গিয়ে এক মাস বা এক বছর পড়াশোনা করে। বাংলা বিভাগের সঙ্গে চুক্তি আছে ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় এবং যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের।

আসলে আমি নিজেই যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে পড়াশোনা করে ডিগ্রিটা পেয়েছি বলে একই জায়গায় আমার ছাত্র বা ছাত্রী পড়াশোনা করছে দেখাটা আমার পক্ষে এক আনন্দময় বিষয়। যখন আমি যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে পড়াশোনা করতাম, তখন কল্পনাও করিনি যে ভবিষ্যতে বাংলা সাহিত্যের অধ্যাপনা করব বা আরো তরুণ তরুণীরা বাংলা ভাষা ও সাহিত্য শেখার জন্যে আবার একই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে আসবে কারণ সেরকম জায়গা তখন জাপানে ছিল না। আমি শুধু বাংলা সাহিত্য ভালবাসি বলে এই তিরিশ বছর ধরে সে নিয়ে গবেষণা করে বাংলা সাহিত্যের মধ্য থেকে কিছু কিছু ভাল রচনা অনুবাদ করে পরিচয় করিয়ে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করে এসেছি মাত্র। তার ফলে এই বিশেষ জায়গায় নিজের যে প্রিয় বিষয় নিয়ে অধ্যাপনা করতে পেরেছি সে রকম খুব কম লোকই করতে পারে বলে মনে হয়।

আগামী বছরের মার্চ মাসে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে আমি অবসর নেব। আমার দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস যে বাংলা বিভাগ আরো উন্নতি লাভ করবে আমার উত্তরাধিকারী শিক্ষক শিক্ষিকাদের হাতে।



Haiku-A Literary Tie Between India and Japan

(Reprinted from Anjali 2005)

- Sushmita Pal

Haiku is one of the most important forms of traditional Japanese poetry. During my five years stay in Tokyo, I was impressed by the simplicity of haiku's poetic expression which creates a suggestive, concise and momentary picture of its subject. The beauty of Japanese haiku poetry, inspired by Zen Buddhism, lies in the conciseness of expression which conveys a world of meaning and emotions.

Katatsuburi /soro-soro nobore /fuji no yama Snail/inch by inch climbs /Mount Fuji



This haiku is written by Issa, the famous Japanese poet. The above haiku is a short but concise explanation that any great work can be accomplished by our efforts and patience.

Haiku is known as the 'poetry of nature', but it is more a poetry of life through unity with nature. Haiga is a haiku combined with illustrations. In other words haiga is a combination of image and text, often simple and sketch-like, where each element enhances the character of the other.

Hito ha chiru/Totsu hito ha chiru/Kaze no ue A leaf falls/ Lo, another leaf falls/ With the wind. This classic haiku is written by Ransetsu, a Japanese poet. The above haiku explains about our transitory world.



What is said in haiku is important but what is unsaid may also be important. The poet may talk of nature but he may be conveying some deep feeling, an intuition or a concrete experience of life. Haiku is more concerned with human emotion or with experience and nature is used to reflect or suggest that emotion. Haiku consists of short verse of 17 syllables in three metrical sections (lines) of 5-7-5 syllables. Kigo, a word or phrase suggestive of a season, is a must for haiku. It is the kigo's constant presence that creates the erroneous impression that haiku is poetry of nature. Kigo is one of the elements that make such poetic compression possible. It may be an animal, plant, event, custom or any other word symbolizing the season. Haiku is a compact yet profound and evocative form of poetry originated in Japan but now is considered as a World literature. Matsuo Basho (1644-94), Taneguchi Buson (1715-83), Kobayashi Issa (1763-1827) and Masaoka Shiki (1866-1902) are the four pillars of haiku poetry. Many of the haiku poets even wrote travelogues in haiku. The most famous being Oku no hosomichi (The Narrow Road to the Deep North) by Basho, which became a classic. A Japanese woman named Niwa Kyoko has translated this work in Bengali. In 17th century haiku developed as a new style of poetry. Matsuo Basho the originator of haiku had more than 2000 students at the time of his death.



Matsuo Basho

India has its own very rich poetic heritage.

Rabindranath Tagore the Nobel Laureate poet, writer, philosopher, musician, painter and educator visited Japan several times and Japanese haiku were translated into Bengali by Tagore early in the 20th century. In fact the credit of bringing haiku in India goes to Rabindranath Tagore. An example of classic haiku (by Basho): Kare eda ni/ Karasu no tomari/ Mizu no oto

(An old pond! /A frog jumps in /the sound of water)

Translation in Bengali by Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore:-

পুরোনো পুকুর Purono pukur
ব্যাঙের লাফ Banger laf
জলের শব্দ Joler shobdo

Tagore's, 'Fireflies', comes from the first verse of the bilingual 'Lekhan' (1926). It consists of 256 epigrams and short

verses like haiku. The possibility of the influence of Japanese Haiku can be suggested. The compact style conveys memorable poetic expressions with great force and intensity. The brevity and crispness of these verses combined with the wit and wisdom contained in them make these poems extremely delightful and reader friendly. Here are few lines from the poem 'Fireflies'. The beauty and romanticism of the poem is unique.

I touch God in my song as the hill touches the far-away sea with its waterfall. The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough.

Let my love, like sunlight, surround you and yet give you illumined freedom.

Love remains a secret even when spoken, for only a lover truly knows that he is loved.

Emancipation from the bondage of the soil is no freedom for the tree.

In love I pay my endless debt to thee for what thou art.

The Tamil poet Subramania Bharati wrote an essay on haiku poetry as early as 1912. The poets of Bengal and Orissa had modeled their verses trying to catch the magical rhythm of the Japanese Haiku. With no knowledge of the Japanese language and no direct access to the original works, the first interest in haiku in India was developed through such translations. Some of the Indian poets started writing similar poetry in their own languages. In the '50s, we find a new form of poetry started developing in India, which was short and expressive but free in style. Here are some examples from Hindi poetry: The first shower of rain/ The sky has thrown/ Its roots on earth (Shrikant Varma)

The butterflies/ Jumping from flower to flower/ Love letters of spring God (Sarveshwardayal Saxena) The pioneer of haiku is India's scholar Prof. Satya Bhushan Verma - whose first translation of Japanese haiku into Hindi - 'Japani Kavitaen' was published in 1977. In 1981 Prof. Verma started a newsletter in Hindi called 'Haiku'. This was in the form of an aerogramme. This publication was discontinued in 1989. Prof. Satya Bhushan Verma, a professor emeritus of Jawaharlal Nehru University, was chosen for the Masaoka Shiki International Haiku Prize in 2002. He shared the one million yen prize with an American poet - Cor van den Heuvel.

The second Indian whose efforts are to be commended is Prof. B.S. Aggarwala who publishes a Hindi quarterly journal called 'Haiku Bharati', started in 1998 and continuing till today. There are about 300 poets writing in their native mother tongues associated with this quarterly Hindi journal. Some haiku are translated from the original into Hindi, and then published. Prof. Aggarwala, the author of several books in Hindi is currently working on a history of haiku in Hindi.

Here is an inspiring story of Dr. Angelee Deodhar an ophthalmologist and how she became a famous haiku poet and illustrator. Born just before the partition in India, schooled in the best 'English' tradition she grew up in sylvan surrounds amongst the foothills of Himalaya, and fell in love with them. Her father was a doctor in the India Army, and her home was full of books and music. Even during medical school (graduate and post graduate studies) she wrote short stories, articles, poems - but never thought of writing as a career.

After working as an ophthalmologist in remote villages for almost 18 years, she developed a life threatening recurrent pulmonary thrombo embolism with repeated prolonged hospitalization. This is when writing became a lifetime and a second career. Now, a decade later, her poems, stories and haiku have been published in USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Japan, Greece, Croatia, Romania, Finland, Poland and India. Of all the poetic forms she finds haiku most appealing. Throughout their deceptive simplicity one can share moments of absolute awareness, of truth, of images, or depths and heights of the spirit which transcend time, cultures and continents-bringing about universal peace and understanding. She believes that if more people turn to writing haiku, there would be more joy and less strife in our lives, in our world. Here is a haiku written by Angelee Deodhar:- Dawn temple visit The conch and the bells Through the fog

A three day seminar on 'Impact of Haiku in Indian literature' was held at the Institute of Asian Studies based in Chennai (Madras) from 29th-31st of March 1999. Several poets from India and Japan participated in this seminar. In India work on haiku is going on in different languages. Many books, newsletters, magazines are being published. Still a lot of effort is required to popularize haiku more. Haiku should be introduced in schools to gain more attention. ■

References:

- 1- An article on Japanese haiku poetry by- Dr. Satya Bhushan Verma
- 2- Haiku: An Indian Perspective by -Dr. Angelee Deodhar

The Vedanta Society of Japan -

A Branch of the Ramakrishna Mission

Fulfilling Swami Vivekananda's wish "to do something for Japan"

An excerpt of the interview of Swami Medhasananda Maharaj for 'Anjali.'

Interviewed by Ranjan Gupta (Gautam) & Sanjib Chanda, transcribed by Krishana Das.

One of the themes of Anjali this year is the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India. Many commemorative events are occurring in both nations. The fact that the strengthening of diplomatic relations between the two countries needs persistent effort at diverse individual and non-governmental levels, is a fact that is well understood. It is of paramount importance that successful attempts that have been expended so far in order to improve the people to people relationship between two nations, be truly acknowledged and brought into the limelight. How individuals or organizations keep contributing towards this goal in the background, may not be easily understood from the surface by the common man. One needs to go deeper to understand how individuals as well as non-governmental organizations are already contributing in the background, and creating a long-lasting impact. When we started thinking about non-governmental organizations that are noteworthy with regard to strengthening the relationship between India and Japan - the first name that came to our mind was the **Nippon Vedanta Kyokai**. The Kyokai has for a long time provided services in Japan, and it is essential that many more people come to know about it. So, we thought it would be proper if we covered NVK's story in Anjali. Basically, how did NVK start its journey, and as a spiritual organization how have they been contributing towards the forging of cultural and spiritual relationships between India and Japan, over the years. With these questions in mind, we approached Swami Medhasananda Maharaj of the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai.

Gautam-

Well, Maharaj, on behalf of the Anjali Magazine, may we request you to give us a brief introduction to your society as its head and resident monk, and its various contributions?

Maharaj-

First of all, let me clarify that many people do not know what the real identity of the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai is. In English it is called the **Vedanta Society of Japan**, and here again many people do not know that it is the one and only branch of the Ramakrishna Mission in Japan, with its headquarters in India. In many countries outside India there are branches of the Ramakrishna Mission, and most of them are known as the Vedanta Society. Why is this so? It is because many people may not know Sri Ramakrishna, but they (those who have an interest in India) know something of the Vedantic philosophy. That is the reason why the Ramakrishna Mission branches outside India are known as the Vedanta Society. Vedanta is one of the oldest of India's philosophies, and it is universal. This philosophy has been exemplified in the current age in the lives of Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Spreading the message of Vedanta in the light of the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda is the goal of the centers of the Ramakrishna Mission worldwide, and as a matter of fact the Vedanta society of Japan also has the same objective.

The readers of Anjali, who are mostly Indians, do not need much of an introduction regarding the Ramakrishna Mission. They already know about the Ramakrishna Mission. Before I get into this question-and-answer session concerning the contributions made by the society, let me read out a relevant quotation from the works of Swami Vivekananda. Around as early as 1897, he made the following significant remark

- "Certainly it is desirable to establish a connection between India and Japan." We need to bear in mind that this remark of his was made in 1897, and much later, after about 20 years, Rabindranath Tagore the eminent poet and a pioneer of the India-Japan relationship, visited Japan for the first time. People know a great deal about Tagore's relationship with Japan and Japan's relationship with Tagore, but very few people are aware of the fact that Swami Vivekananda realized it much earlier. As I already quoted, "it is very desirable to establish a connection between India and Japan". So the critical point to note here is that it was Swamiji's wish to build a relationship between India and Japan, and that is what we are striving for.

As you know, diplomatic relations with other countries, if not based on the people-to-people relationship, becomes superficial. Hence, it should be based on the firm foundation of the people-to-people relationship, and with regard to that government organizations cannot do much. It is mostly private and voluntary organizations that play vital roles in establishing such a relationship. Furthermore, such relationships should be promoted by mutual effort. That is to say, both Indian and Japanese voluntary organizations should work towards the same objective.

We shall now examine how Swamiji's wish to establish a connection between India and Japan is being fulfilled by our Society. In this context, I would also like to quote another remark of Swamiji's, that he uttered on the very last day of his mortal existence, (he left us on 04-July-1902), he said - "I want to do something for Japan". It was a very significant remark. Why did he say so? It was because Okakura Tenshin, a celebrated Japanese art historian had just visited India, and one of his main purposes was to invite Swamiji to Japan. At that time he had no knowledge of the Tagore family and other eminent Indians, but he came to know about Swamiji from one of the close American devotees of Swamiji who had visited Japan, and who had studied art with Okakura. Okakura wanted to invite Swamiji to Japan to deliver a speech, in order that the Japanese people may be regenerated spiritually.

Another Buddhist monk named Tokumo Oda also came to India with the same purpose, and incidentally, Okakura and Oda happened to be friends. The Meiji emperor had also extended an invitation to Swamiji to visit Japan through the Japanese consul stationed in Bombay, but Swamiji ultimately was unable to come to Japan owing to his ill health. Hence, something was working in his mind. However, although the Japanese people were so very keen on his visit, due to his ill health he could not come. All these issues were perhaps bothering his mind, and that is possibly the reason why he made the comment, 'I must do something for Japan.' I firmly believe Swamiji is fulfilling his final wish through us, namely through our Society. We should perceive all our activities from this perspective. From another plane of existence, Swamiji is implementing his own wish through us. We are just serving as Swamiji's instruments.

Gautam-

Thank you Maharaj.

Now perhaps our readers would be interested in knowing exactly when the Vedanta Society of Japan (Nippon Vedanta Kyokai) was started, and how it was launched. At that time this

name was also non-existent, and there could have been some other name. How did it start?

Maharaj-

As a matter of fact some Indian people in Japan and some Japanese scholars as well knew about Swami Vivekananda, and as I mentioned earlier, Okakura Tenshin went to India in January. So, through him and other such connections, people came to know about Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and the Ramakrishna Mission. Also there was Professor Kimura who had been to India for his studies, and who finally became a professor of Pali in Calcutta University. During his stay in Calcutta he had visited Belur Math and knew well about Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and he finally returned to Japan. Thus there are some Japanese intellectuals who knew about Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Ranganathanandaji, an internationally known speaker and monk of the Ramakrishna order who later became the President of the Order, was sponsored by the Government of India as a cultural ambassador, to deliver lectures on Indian Culture and civilization in foreign countries. He delivered many speeches in different parts of East Asia including Japan, and also in many leading universities of Japan. A talk was also arranged at the Indian Embassy, where he first suggested the idea of setting up an organization to propagate the ideas of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Vedanta, in 1958. Being inspired by Swami Ranganathanandaji, Professors Kimura and Hajime Nakamura (Hajime Nakamura was a famous Indian scholar) who had a fairly good idea of the Ramakrishna Mission, Mr. Sumitra Rao (Retired Military officer and member of the Allied force) and a few other Japanese and Indian well-wishers who attended the meeting, took an interest in the matter. Finally the society was formed in Tokyo as a private group, with Professor Kimura as the President, Hajime Nakamura as the Vice President, and Sumitra Rao as the Secretary. This society was initially entitled the Tokyo Ramakrishna Vedanta Kyokai. Swami Nikhilanandaji, an eminent monk and scholar who was the current head of an American Center of the Mission, inaugurated the society at the Indian Embassy in 1959. That is how the society started as a private body. As the society was run by devotees, it had its own limitations. In spite of many constraints as a private group, they managed to run the society successfully, for example by publishing bulletins, conducting regular meetings in rooms requested in schools, and so on. They also invited some monks to give talks. Thus, it continued for some years. Finally, the society had its first building in 1974 in Zushi. That was the first house owned by the society, and Mr. Chellaraam, the owner of a shipping company based in Hongkong, donated a lump sum of money for the construction of the house. As for the regular expenditure of running the society, Mr. Rao used to go to different places including the Osaka and Kobe areas to get the donations from the Indian businessmen.

In 1978, Swami Bhutesanandaji, the then Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Mission came to Japan at the invitation of the society, to meet its members and give them spiritual talks. After that visit he made nine more visits to Japan, and this paved the way for the affiliation of this private group as one of the accredited branches of Ramakrishna Mission in 1984. Affiliation with the Mission meant that from that time onwards a monk of the Ramakrishna order would be deputed to take the charge of that private group/society, which would be considered as a branch of the Mission. After affiliation, Swami Siddharthanandaji (I think many of the old Indian residents in Japan like you have seen him), took the charge of the Center as its first President and introduced the daily schedule of the Mission Center, namely meditation, prayer and so on, of the Ramakrishna Mission in this society.

Meanwhile, another building (the main building of the

society), close to the first building (called Mother's house) was constructed at about 10 minutes walking distance away, thanks to a lump sum donation by Mr. H.R. Gajria and Mrs. Haru Nakai (who was living in the society's first building for a long time and who acted as a translator/interpreter. She also helped the society in various other ways) and also obtained donations from other sources.

Gautam-

Thank you, Maharaj, you have nicely elaborated the history, and we could very well understand that it was all about fulfilling Swami Vivekananda's dream, or his last wish. Now please tell our readers briefly what activities this society is involved in on a regular basis?

Maharaj-

Siddharthanandaji, from the beginning had devoted lot of his time and energy to learning the Japanese language, because it was evident that it would be difficult to undertake Missionary work in Japan without a knowledge of the Japanese language. In fact, he got enrolled in a Japanese language school and did very well in the examination. Devotees started visiting from other parts of the country in growing numbers. Although Siddharthanandaji learned Japanese quite well, yet after nine years he had to go back to India for reasons of health. For the last few months of his stay in Japan he could not do much, due to his having fallen sick. Finally, he returned to India in 1993 and informed the people at the Headquarters of the Mission that when they had decided his substitute, he would guide him to Japan and introduce him to the devotees in Japan.

Now, just to give you a brief account of myself, I was a student at institutions run by the Ramakrishna Mission, for three years in a school and for another three years in a college named Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandir in Belur, now one of the most reputed colleges in India. This college is fully residential, and only for boys. After my post-graduation, I joined the same college as a teacher in 1973, and then joined the Ramakrishna order as a bramachari (monastic novice) in 1974.

In 1980 I was appointed principal of the college, and continued in that capacity till 1993. Hence, I had a close communication with the students, the non-teaching staff, and the professors. My world was mainly academic, and I didn't have any contact with the devotees. In 1993, those at the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission appointed me head of the Vedanta Society of Japan. You can well imagine that for me to be posted to Japan as a resident monk was definitely challenging, since Japan was different from India in many respects and the nature of my regular job too would be different, that is, to interact with the foreign devotees, both male and female.

Siddharthanandaji as promised came with me, stayed here for almost three weeks and then departed, and I was left all alone, without any prior knowledge of either the country or the devotees with whom I had to always interact.

Moreover, the then General Secretary of the Mission told me of his observation that for the last 8 to 9 years there was not much growth at the center, and asked me to focus on the center's growth. Hence, I thought if I devoted the maximum time to learning Japanese other things would get neglected, and the condition of the society would remain as it was and would not grow. So right from the start I focused on the growth of the center. Of course learning to communicate in Japanese and establishing a relationship with our Japanese devotees were other exigencies. Over the years many other activities came to be undertaken.

Now I will give you an overview of the activities of the society. First of all, we have a Shrine. The Shrine is the place where we meditate with the devotees in the morning

and evening, recite mantras, and read from the scriptures. However, the Shrine remains open from early morning to late evening, so anyone can come in and meditate. Also, we have a monthly retreat (as the Christian churches have on Sundays). Siddharthanandaji, my predecessor, had started a tradition that once a month there would be a whole day's retreat, which we are still continuing. The program of the retreat consists in chanting Vedic mantras, reading the scriptures, discourses on spiritual subjects, Q& A, lunch prasada, and devotional songs. We also give monthly discourses on the Bhagavad Gita at the Indian Embassy. In addition to that I used to visit many groups in different parts of the country and hold a spiritual program for them. In fact before the Covid pandemic began, almost every month I used to visit these groups. Generally it would be a three hours program, consisting of chanting, discourses on spiritual themes, questions-answers, and guided meditation. For several years I paid regular visits to many groups in different parts of Japan, such as Oita, Fukuoka, Kumamoto, Osaka, Yamagata, Sendai, Sapporo, Inambari, Tajimi, Nagoya, Hamamatsui, and Okinawa, besides Tokyo (where there are multiple groups), where we preach the message of the Vedanta and Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. We also organize Summer retreats for devotees. We rent some places in hotels or guest houses of temples once-a-year, where the participants would stay for 2 to 3 days and attend this intensive program from morning until 9:00 PM, including meditation, yoga, exercises, sight-seeing, night get-togethers etc. Our purpose was to give them an experience of intensive training for 2 to 3 days, away from their own houses so that they may have a glimpse of what an ideal life is and how it should be lived.

In addition to that, we also celebrate Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's birthday, and Swami Vivekananda's birthday, with special programs including ritualistic worship. As Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda believed in the harmony of religions, we also celebrate the birthdays of Jesus Christ and the Lord Buddha which is a unique feature of this religious organization. All the Ramakrishna Mission branches of India and other foreign countries hold similar celebrations. We also give personal interviews, as there are people who want to consult us about their personal problems, mental, spiritual and so on, and who also ask spiritual and philosophical questions. Besides that, we have numerous publications. In order to reach to the people who are interested, publication is very important, and we have about 50 publications in Japanese. Compared to all other publications in non-Indian and non-English languages, the number of publications in Japanese is currently the maximum. We also publish a bi-monthly magazine in Japanese.

Also, there is a public celebration of Swami Vivekananda. The important thing is, unlike other foreign centers, most of our communications are bilingual. All our websites and most of the modes of communications are in English and Japanese, enabling the non-Japanese who are interested to become aware of our activities and take part in them.

Every morning we also send an inspiring message in Japanese to the subscribers. In that way we provide a lot of mental, intellectual, and spiritual support to the people of this country. As a result of this activity at least 50,000 Japanese have come to know about Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, or have to some degree gained an idea about them. Some yoga groups study Swamiji's yoga series. For example, one of the biggest yoga groups of Japan has included Swamiji's four yoga books in their syllabus. Then we have some welfare activities for the homeless, which we call Homeless Narayana, once a month in one of the Public parks in Yokohama. We send some foodstuffs and used garments for the use of the homeless. This year the Rachana Club of Tokyo collected old clothes and sent them to us for distribution among the homeless. On a few occasions we also sent a great deal of relief items to the victims of the tsunami of 2011. So, in these ways, although

our means are scanty and hands are very few, yet symbolically we engage these types of social services as well. Although in India as you know the dimensions of these philanthropic services are huge, yet in foreign countries for obvious reasons, we cannot do much. We also have a library with both a reading and lending section.

Gautam-

Maharaj thank you so much.

Now will you please explain the challenges you faced in undertaking your activities in this country? Furthermore, how could you manage to integrate the Japanese and the Indians in the Vedanta Society so well?

Also, it's amazing to see how the Japanese coming to the Vedanta society developed the spiritual base to understand the difficult concepts of Vedanta. How could you make them understand in Japanese and integrate them with the main organization? That seems to me a great challenge. There are not many examples of Indian organizations in Japan that achieved similar success.

What are the challenges that you faced, and how did you overcome those? Our readers would be very keen on knowing this.

Maharaj-

Since 1993, the year of my coming to Japan, what I have observed and also came to know through my study, is that the image of India to the Japanese was at one time very high because of Buddhism. During the Meiji restoration when they were modernizing the country, they accepted the West as their model. Since then there was an attitudinal change, the high image of India as the land of Buddha started declining, since India was subjugated by the British, and was a poor country.

For Japanese, a great country is a country that is economically and militarily powerful. To the average Japanese people that was the standard for the greatness of a country. Since for many years after the independence India was neither economically nor militarily strong, hence to the average Japanese the status of India was rather low. However, towards the end of last century, when India started developing and its economic and military power also grew substantially, and especially with the boosting of Information technology, the image of India started improving.

Another point to which I would like to draw your attention to as an Indian, is the basic lacuna of establishing people-to-people relations between India and Japan. In Japanese schools where the students get to know about different cultures and civilizations including the religions of the world, it is very unfortunate that while in their school text-books there are detailed descriptions of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and even Judaism, yet the description of Hinduism and India is minimal and insignificant. Hence an average Japanese has very little scope to attain a fair idea about India and Hinduism, and this is most unfortunate.

It would not be out-of-place to mention the fact that from time to time we organize talks about India and Indian culture for the University students of Japan who are interested, and where a few students escorted by a professor visit our Society and we arrange an audio-visual talk for them on India.

When you ask us about the challenges we face while running this center, we should confess that sometimes we face to a certain extent financial problems. Unlike many of the Buddhist religious organizations, all our programs, which sometimes include provision of food, are free of charge. So, to run our institution we have to depend mainly on donations, which is an uncertain source of income. Although we gain

some income from the sale of religious articles including books, our income is also decreasing. Fortunately, in view of Covid pandemic, generous people are sending donations to us, for which we are tremendously thankful to them.

Another point is that though the majority of the Japanese people are Buddhists, yet they hardly practice it. For many reasons religion has now become just a matter of tradition for an average Japanese, if not redundant. For example, going to the temple on the 1st of January, is not out of real faith and respect for the deities, but just to follow the tradition. Real interest in spirituality has been going down day by day. Japanese people have many wonderful character traits, but it is a matter of great concern that they are becoming more and more materialistic and atheists. They are becoming more and more fond of the secular enjoyments. Incidentally, Americans also follow the principle of materialistic philosophy, but there are millions of religious-minded persons as well. However, now the average Japanese does not have much interest in spirituality and religion. They have the notion that if somebody gets interested in religion or spirituality, the person must be crazy.

That is where we pitch in. It is certain that the more one leads a materialistic life, the more he is stressed out and tensed. On the one hand the Japanese really want to have peace and sublimity, but they don't know how to achieve it. So they search here and there but finally get disappointed. They don't get much support from their religious establishments, nor have they any spiritual education. The families teach children about good manners, but not the spiritual values which are most important to acquire mental peace and happiness.

Moreover, most of the Indians have deep roots in religion. Indians have deep roots in the spirituality. So, when any Indian professional, businessman, or visitor, visits the country and encounter the local people, while chatting there could be a possibility of their bringing in religion/spirituality, to which their Japanese counterparts show an utter lack of interest.

In the current situation, along with all materialistic needs there is a need for spirituality, to obtain happiness and mental peace. This spirituality should not be of an orthodox type. It should be universal, harmonistic, rational and should be open, and that is the feature of Vedanta philosophy. Vedanta though a very old spiritual and philosophical tradition, yet it is modern, rational, universal, and harmonistic. Japan needs this type of religion and that is what we are trying to propagate in this country.

Japanese who are searching for religion which is open and rational visit our ashrama and attend our programs. They feel so excited to see the celebration of Christmas and Buddha's birthday in a Hindu Temple. Every Sunday morning, we have a special service. We do chanting of the Vedic mantras and the Bhagavad Gita. Furthermore, we read the teachings of the Buddha, the Bible and the teachings of Mohammad. Hence, we do not merely talk about religious harmony we try to practice it in a humble way, and that is what impresses our Japanese devotees and visitors. In that way they identify themselves with Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and our organization. When there is a program, as for example the Vivekananda celebration, both Japanese and Indians, who are already familiar with Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Vedanta, and the Ramakrishna Mission, and who love them, come to attend these special functions. Not only that, they integrate with each other spontaneously, and help together to organize such programs successfully.

I think that you have observed that our Vivekananda celebration committee consists of Indians, Japanese, intellectuals, ordinary house-wives, yoga teachers, and Christian priests forming a cross-section of society, a really diverse set of people. The committee itself represents how harmonious

we are. These things impress both Japanese and Indians, and motivates them to get involved in our activities. Also, all these happen in a natural way.

Gautam-

Thank you, Maharaj. Will you please give us a few more details about the Vivekananda Celebration in Tokyo which is held successfully over the years ?

Maharaj-

Let me tell you how it started. Earlier there used to be no such public celebration organized by the society. Interestingly, Swamiji came to Japan on 1893 and I came to Japan in 1993, 100 years after his visit. The year 1993-94 marked the centenary of Swamiji's visit to Japan, which was a very important event for followers and admirers of Vivekananda in this country. I thought about utilizing this very special situation, since we cannot celebrate every year the 100th anniversary of Swamiji's visit to Japan. I came to Japan in the month of November 1993. In the same year, in the Netaji indoor stadium in Kolkata, the centenary year of Swamiji's address in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago was celebrated on a grand scale for seven consecutive days. Many devotees and scholars from all over the world attended, and I got a chance to become the master of ceremonies at that magnificent event. With those experiences fresh in mind, I decided to celebrate the centenary of Swamiji's visit to Japan. I knew neither Japanese nor Indians who could help us in organizing it, and it was impossible to do so with the help of a few of our Japanese devotees, whom I did not also know well at that time. Late Mr. Jyotirmoy Ray, who was an ex-student of the Ramakrishna Mission and a senior executive introduced me to BATJ, during Saraswati Puja of 1994. I thought this was a great opportunity to organize the celebration. I wanted the Indians to help us in making this event successful, as without their support it would have been difficult to organize it, since Indians are already familiar with Swamiji for whom they have reverential love. I introduced the idea of the celebration to Syamal Kar, Gautam Gupta, Partho Ghosh and few others. Every one of them agreed to support it and work for it. The biggest constraint was financing the event. One had to reserve a hall, decorate it, give some publicity to the event, find relevant speaker(s), arrange refreshments, and many other big and small things, and for all these one needs money. Fortunately, the owner of the chain of Maharaja restaurants, namely the late Shivji Kothari donated 1 million Yen for the event. See, if its lord's work, money never becomes a problem. That was my experience, and experience of other monks as well who are engaged in voluntary works. We reserved a community hall for the celebration somewhere in Meguro. The Ambassador of India and many other dignitaries spoke on that occasion, and many devotees and admirers attended the program and the whole event was a grand success.

This encouraged us to celebrate Swamiji's birth anniversary celebration every year. Also, it became a platform to invite scholars, leaders of different religions, and other distinguished persons of Japan, to share their thoughts, and also a platform for holding various cultural programs. Additionally, this event also helps in spreading the message of Swamiji, as the program is attended by Japanese, Indians and other foreigners as well, and we sell and exhibit our publications and sometime organized exhibitions on the India-Japan relationship, which had highly impressed many visitors.

Gautam-

Thank you Swamiji.

We just have another 5 mins to wrap up. In the public celebration, that you had referred to both the Indians and Japanese work together so seamlessly. Could you tell me what

is the secret of that? Not many other organizations can do that.

Maharaj-

Ok, I believe there are two points.

First of all, Sri Ramakrishna is called '*Jugabotar*' – Prophet of this age. And a prophet of this age must be the prophet of harmony who can harmonize the world with full of variants. At the same time the world also needs spiritual values to experience peace and fulfillment amidst the materialistic scenario, and in Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda we find the message of harmony and fulfilment of life.

And the second thing is the Organization. The presence of an organization like the Vedanta Society run by monastics has only one motive, namely how to spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, and also to practice the same in our daily life.

In conclusion, I must say that in addition to the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swamiji upon this society, there are many devotees, other persons/organization/

establishments who/which have contributed and are still contributing in various ways for the smooth running and growth of the society, and assume its present dimension to whom we are immensely grateful. Here I would like to mention a few of them. The Embassy of India, BATJ, Japan-India Association, Indian business community, Japan Yoga Therapy Association, the late Mr. Chellaram, Mr. Gajria, Mr. and Mrs. Shivji Kothari, Sumitra Rao, Mrs. Haru Nakai, Prof. Tsuyoshi Nara, Professor Cyril Veliath, Mrs. Sato Yuko, and the Vivekananda Celebration committee members.

Gautam-

Thank you, Maharaj.

We had a very informative and interesting discussion today about the Vedanta Society's role in bringing a closer relationship between the Indians and Japanese, and also to spread Indian Culture and spirituality in general, and the soul inspiring message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta in Japan in particular.



Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Celebration 2022 (part of Flyer)



Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Celebration



Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Celebration



Discourse on the Bhagavad Gita at the Indian Embassy



Homeless Narayana



Homeless Narayana

On the occasion of celebrating Silver Jubilee Anniversary of Durga Puja in Tokyo

- Recollections of a long-time BATJ member - Sudeb Chattopadhyay

(Original article in Bengali written by the same author was published in Anjali 2014)

We started our Durga puja in Tokyo in 1990. But for a long time before that, many of the senior women in the then community, in particular, Seuliboudi and Manjulikadi, had been requesting me to start performing the priestly services for the Durga puja here.

Back in 1981, when I was a graduate student, I had started doing Saraswati puja (as a priest) at the behest of the same people, so their argument was, why such hesitation with Durga puja when I was already doing the Saraswati puja regularly.



Our first Saraswati puja was held at Gokokuji



Saraswati Puja in 1989 - at Shinagawa Dai-ichi Kumin Shukaisho



Saraswati Puja in 1992 - at Minemachi Bunka Kaikan

In fact, because of my own superstitions I could not make up my mind for a long time. My father used to perform Durga puja in our Kolkata home every year, so it was not that I was unfamiliar with the procedures. It was just an unwritten rule passed down through generations at home, that had forbidden me from performing the priestly activities for Durga puja in a community setting as opposed to a home setting. Accordingly, I could not immediately comply with the request from the enthusiastic senior women back then. It took me almost two years to negotiate with my family members, especially, my mother, to find ways compatible with family rules. Eventually, my mother consented with a procedure much like the one followed at our home, and sent me the mantras necessary to perform the puja, in her own handwriting, referring to the

handbook for priests, "Purohit Darpan." Even now, I use her handwritten script to perform the puja. My mother has left us for her heavenly abode this year, so as per family tradition, I shall not be able to perform the puja this year, I shall spend the day remembering her.

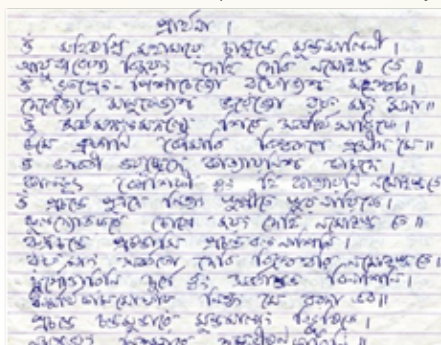
The autumn season in Japan is full of local festivities, and accordingly, the first hurdle is that it is very difficult to rent a hall for Durga puja. Usually, a written application needs to be submitted at least three to six months (and some cases even one year) prior to the actual date of the event to the relevant hall authorities. These applications then go through a lottery process, and only if one is lucky, one gets the required approval, albeit replete with restrictions, to use the hall for the intended purpose. I have now entrusted my wife Keiko with this difficult task, which she does dutifully every year. The second hurdle is the use of fire in the hall premises. Initially, when we first started the puja, we were able to light lamps (and candles)



Our first Durga puja meeting

and burn incense, as is common in a puja setting, because the managers of the facilities were not able to monitor our activities behind the closed door using the surveillance cameras, which are very common now. As per the official practice, one needs to inform in advance the local fire authorities through the hall management. Without appropriate approval from such authorities, it is prohibited to light fire inside a public facility. The difficulty and complexity in applying for such approval, has ultimately prompted us to forego the lighting lamp and burning incense ritual of puja, and that is the only regret I have about performing the puja here.

Our first Durga puja was held at the Minemachi Bunkakaikan in Ota-ward in Tokyo. We used to hold our Saraswati puja regularly at this hall at that time, so, most of our members were already familiar with the facility. That is why, I thought of trying our luck with the venue for Durga puja. With God's grace, we were able to get the approval for using the premises on the day we planned to hold the event. Another advantage of this hall was the cooking facility it provided back then. Initially, the women members themselves used to prepare the lunch provided to all the participants, and therefore, the cooking facilities provided by the hall for this purpose was a boon for us. Nowadays, the lunch is served only by caterers, and we do not need such cooking facilities any more. Of the different halls we have used so far for the occasion of Durga puja, I think the most memorable one was the Curian



Handwritten Mantra in Bengali

Hall in Oimachi, Shinagawa-ward. This large hall is situated in a building very close to the JR Oimachi station, and the ease of access to the facility using JR trains was its biggest advantage. I think, that was the main reason for the large attendance of about four hundred and fifty participants in the event that year. This hall needs to be booked one year in advance, and only the residents of Shinagawa-ward are eligible to submit an application. I live in Ota-ward and was not eligible to apply. Luckily for us, the person who applied and won the lottery at first, had to cancel the application for some reason, and we were allowed to apply as Shinagawa-ku non-resident and won the lottery. Many old-time members still remember the puja (more so the hall) that year, and ask me every year if the same hall can be booked again.

We used a picture of Ma Durga and her children decorated in a frame as the idol in our first Durga puja. At that time, we were only a small group of Bengalis from India, and accordingly, we had limited financial resources. Another issue was that it is not possible to immerse the idol image in a river or pond in Japan as is the common practice for immersion of a deity in Kolkata. Eventually, considering that I have to keep the deity in my small house, using a picture was the unanimous decision. As the size of our community increased over the years, puja related income (donations and participation-fee collection) and expenditure have also gradually increased. Nowadays, we bring a new idol from Kolkata, every five or six years. Initially, the idol was kept at someone's garage, where there was enough room to keep the idol in a safe and clean environment. These days, freeing up our members of any extra burden, the idol is kept in a rented trunk room. To store the idol in such facilities, the idol needs to be neatly packaged in a lightweight but strong box for easy transportation and safe storage. Such a box is now built in Japan, every time we get a new idol from Kolkata. Last year, we brought our largest idol so far, after a gap of six years. This is the idol that we will also worship this year. Since we cannot immerse the idol in a river here, the idols that we have worshiped previously, are now kept in a museum of artifacts related to Japan and India, owned and managed by a Japanese well-wisher of our community. Anyone interested in our Durga puja history, can visit the museum freely.

here used to arrange by themselves, songs, dances and dramas, to entertain the local crowd. Everything back then definitely had a homely atmosphere. Nowadays, that environment has changed markedly. Members these days are no longer satisfied with simple arrangements, calling for detailed lighting on stage and advanced sound systems. Such arrangement is also a prerequisite, when a reputed professional group from India is invited to perform in our function. These days, a significant attraction of the programme is the performance by different reputed Indian groups brought to Japan through help from Government of India and the local sponsor organization of Namaste India. In that light, the arrangement last year was by far the best, and I hope that an even more delightful programme will be held this year.



BATJ members and guests offering prayers in Durga Puja 2013

Speaking of Durga puja celebrations here in Tokyo, I must mention about the publication of Anjali magazine, that has become a signature item for our celebrations here. We started publishing the magazine Anjali commemorating the Durga puja celebrations, nineteen years ago. Our local readers as well as our well-wishers all over the world regularly enjoy reading the articles published in Bengali, English, Hindi, and Japanese in this magazine. We strive our best to maintain the quality and unique features of our magazine as best as we can. Anjali has also become an indispensable tool for our sponsors here to advertise their services and products. We started initially with black and white print, but for the last two years it has been published in colour print, and this is our standard now.

Altogether, we as a group of Bengali Indians living in Tokyo are trying our best to entertain the people joining us to celebrate Durga puja as best as we can. A community puja in a homely setting, has become our tradition. I hope, by the grace of God, that tradition will continue in the future.



First Durga Puja, 1990

One main attraction of Durga puja is the cultural programme. Initially, the Bengali Indian residents



1992



1994



1999



2003



2013

Abenomics to FOIP: Economic Vision of a Statesman and Partnering with India

- Mona Khandhar

The unfortunate and untimely assassination of the longest serving Prime Minister in Japan, HE Late Mr Shinzo Abe at a relatively younger age of 67 years, shook Japan and the rest of the world alike, as his global economic vision spelt out within the larger connotation of “Free and Open Indo Pacific” (FOIP) is gaining popularity and traction within the region and globally to be one of the binding forces for the global economy. Closer in Japan, three arrows of Abenomics, especially expansionary monetary policy, continue to dispel the contractionary clouds over the Japanese economy.

In the early 1990s, when the stock market and real estate bubble was burst, Japan was experiencing sluggish growth and deflationary trend for a considerable period of about two decades. In order to counter this, three Arrows of Abenomics viz i) Aggressive Monetary Policy; ii) Fiscal Consolidation and iii) Growth Strategy was advocated by HE Late Mr Shinzo Abe during his second term as PM of Japan in 2012.. By February 2013, these measures led to 22% rise in Tokyo Stock Price Index (Topix). Japanese Govt and Bank of Japan (BoJ) jointly set the price stability target at 2% in Jan 2013, to be achieved by aggressive monetary easing.

Growth strategy to strengthen competitiveness of Japanese economy in medium to long term was required to overcome energy constraints and enhance innovation. At the same time, it was necessary to remove domestic institutional bottlenecks through reforms. In Jan 2014, 10 major aspects of Japan's growth strategy were identified which included measures such as encourage companies to increase wages of their employees to expand domestic consumption; greater female participation in labour force by improving child care facilities, regional medical care system, rationalize medical & health care prices, disaster preparedness, repair aging infrastructure, increase spending on Research and Development, financial support to Small and Medium Enterprises and support agriculture. (ADB Working Paper)

Abenomics has been further expanded to bring Innovation in social structures, promote diversity & Empowerment of people, Smart regulations & Laws, attract international opportunities and make business competitive. It envisages twin goals of sustainable growth and Society 5.0. The JapanGov portal puts forth the achievements of Abenomics: Nominal GDP rose to 547 trillion yen at present from 498 trillion yen in 2012; Record high participation of female employees achieved from 26.6 million in 2012 to 29.9 million at present; unemployment rate reduced from 4.3% in 2012 to 2.4% now; tax revenue increased from 43.9 trillion yen to 60.2 trillion yen; Record high pre tax corporate profit increased from 39.7 trillion yen in 2012 to 81.8 trillion yen now. Such is the impact and confidence in Abenomics that even during this turbulent times with economic complications and high inflation, Japan continues with its expansionary monetary policy with the same vigour, even though it's an outlier among developed countries in following such a policy and faces additional challenges of weakening yen and rising yield. Abenomics has brought Japan back in focus and reckoning again on the world stage.

Mr Abe's overall economic vision encompasses both - National interest and Liberal common good. HE Late Mr Shinzo Abe spelt out his global economic vision embedded in the umbrella concept of Free and Open Indo Pacific – FOIP - in August 2016 while speaking at the 6th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI). FOIP envisages “Dynamism” as a key for stability and prosperity of the international community. This “Dynamism” is proposed to be created by combining two Continents of Asia and Africa and two Oceans viz, Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. The horizon of Japan's Foreign Policy has been broadened by the vision of an overarching and comprehensive concept of FOIP. It is open to all the countries that share this vision. The global economic vision is mainly expressed in the second pillar from among three pillars of development strategy for FOIP as follows:

2nd Pillar: Pursuit of economic prosperity, which includes improving connectivity and strengthening economic partnership including Economic Partnership Agreement/ Free Trade Agreement and investment treaties

- It involves improvement of “physical connectivity”, including quality infrastructure development such as ports, railways, roads, energy and ICT
- It includes “people to people connectivity” through human resources development.
- It also envisages “institutional connectivity” through facilitating customs, among others.
- It further encompasses strengthening of economic partnership including Economic Partnership Agreement/ Free Trade Agreement and investment treaties and improvement of business environment.

First pillar of FOIP also mentions the establishment of Free Trade as one of the fundamental principles. Third pillar is very important for Economic development.

1st Pillar: Promotion and establishment of fundamental principles such as rule of law, freedom of navigation and free trade

3rd Pillar: Commitment to peace and stability, including capacity building on maritime law enforcement, Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief cooperation...etc.

Nonetheless, it is pertinent to note that the initial thoughts on FOIP were presented by Mr Abe during his address at the Parliament of India on Aug 22, 2007 in the following words - “We are now at a point at which the Confluence of the Two Seas is coming into being. The Pacific and Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity.

A “broader Asia” that broke away geographical boundaries is now beginning to take on a distinct form. Our two countries have the ability – and the responsibility – to ensure that it broadens yet further and to nurture and enrich these seas to become seas of clearest transparency....Japanese diplomacy is now promoting various concepts in a host of different areas so that a region called “the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” will be formed along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent. The Strategic Global Partnership of Japan and India is pivotal for such pursuits.” This brings out the importance of having India early on board for rolling out FOIP that Mr Abe had in mind.

Further, Japan and India Vision 2025 Special and Global Partnership jointly issued by both the Hon’ble Prime Ministers of India and Japan during the visit of HE Late Mr Abe to India on Dec 12, 2015 mentions – “The two Prime Ministers reiterated their unwavering commitment to realise a peaceful, open, equitable, stable and rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Japan and India uphold the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity; peaceful settlement of disputes; democracy, human rights and the rule of law; open global trade regime; and freedom of navigation and overflight. They pledged to work for peace, security and development of the Indo-Pacific region toward 2025 underpinned by these principles.” Obviously, initial support forthcoming from Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi was like a shot in arm for rolling out FOIP further. It has further gained recognition and support from the USA, Australia, ASEAN, the EU and G7.

In the words of President Joe Biden during QUAD Leaders’ Summit, Sept 24, 2021 “The future of each of our nations – and indeed the world – depends on a Free and Open Indo – Pacific enduring and flourishing in the decades ahead”. These words are also mentioned in the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the US released in Feb 2022 from the White House Washington.

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, the US on Dec 14, 2021 at Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta mentions as follows - “The Indo-Pacific is the fastest growing region on the planet. It accounts for 60% of the world economy, two-thirds of economic growth over the last five years. It’s home to more than half the world’s people, seven of the 15 biggest economies. And it’s magnificently diverse, more than 3,000 languages, numerous faiths stretching across two oceans and three continents .The United States has long been, is and always will be an Indo-Pacific nation....The US has already provided more than USD 1 Tn in FDI in the Indo-Pacific...Today, half of the United States’ top trading partners are in Indo-Pacific. It’s the destination for nearly one-third of our exports, the source of USD 900 Bn in FDI in the US and that’s creating millions of jobs spread across all 50 of our states...**More than 2.300 business and government leaders from the region joined for this year’s Indo-Pacific Business Forum, which we co-hosted with India, and where we announced nearly USD 7 Bn in new private-sector projects...** At President Biden’s direction, we’re developing a comprehensive Indo-Pacific economic framework to pursue our shared objectives, including around trade and digital economy, technology, resilient supply chains, decarbonization and clean energy, infrastructure, worker standards and other areas of shared interest...Finally, we’ll work to connect our relationships in the Indo-Pacific with an unmatched system of alliances and partnerships beyond the region, particularly in Europe. The European Union recently released an Indo-Pacific strategy that aligns closely with our own vision.” This account further brings out the importance of India and leadership of Hon’ble Prime Minister of India Mr Narendra Modi.

For implementing the economic vision of FOIP, Japan has worked towards comprehensive rule making through Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership/ Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, other economic partnership and the World Trade Organisation. Japan has also strived for Rule-making in areas such as data management, cyber security and quality infrastructure. The “Expanded partnership for Quality Infrastructure” initiative was directed toward the G-7 Ise-Shima Summit Meeting. Ministry of Economy Trade and Industries (METI) Japan has put a lot of focus on Resources and Energy, Digital and Infrastructure, especially the promotion of open and competitive energy market in the Indo-Pacific region and the realization of universal access to affordable and reliable energy. In the Infrastructure sector, gap between infrastructure demand and supply in developing countries by 2040 is estimated to be about USD 15 trillion. METI of Japan specifically promotes the concept of “Quality infrastructure”. In these areas, the bilateral cooperation between India and Japan grew leaps and bound, even as India exercised caution and restraint according to its own exigencies. Japan plays a vital role in building quality infrastructure in India through Official Development Assistance in the form of JICA loans. Mumbai Ahmedabad High Speed Railway (MAHSR) is the epitome of this partnership. Bilateral cooperation is further expanding in areas like Digital partnership, Information and Communication Technologies, Supply Chain Resilience, Energy and Climate Change, again thanks to the progressive vision shared by both the Prime Ministers – Mr Narendra Modi and Mr Shinzo Abe. India and Japan also set up frameworks of QUAD and SCRI in partnership with the USA and Australia and Australia respectively.

Mr Abe’s global vision and proactive approach have been largely instrumental in replacing the words “Asia – Pacific” with “Indo-Pacific” and wider acceptance of FOIP. His exuberance and Statesmanship will continue to be around the globe side by side his vision.

(Author Ms. Mona Khandhar is the Principal Secretary to Government of Gujrat)

Diwali in Yokohama

- S.K. Rangwani

Indian Commerce & Industry Association in Japan (ICIJ) previously known as Indian Merchants Association of Yokohama (IMAY) was established in 1921. ICIJ celebrates two Diwali events in Yokohama every year. First one is called "Diwali in Yokohama" which is a walk-in festival-kind cultural event held in Yamashita Park where entry is free and it is open to all.

The second one is called "Diwali Party in IMAY Hall, a paid event on invitation basis only. This party is held in IMAY Hall which is located in Yamashita-cho. Invitations for "Diwali Party in IMAY Hall" are sent only to Indians and their spouses/families. This event was totally changed and remodeled from the year 2000 and since then it has been organized by me.

Indians in Yokohama have been celebrating Diwali in IMAY HALL for more than 60 years. When I first came to Japan in 1977, we, the Indians living in Yokohama, used to gather on Diwali day and have prayers in each other's houses/offices and exchange sweets and gifts. In those days there were no Indian restaurants in Yokohama, so catering services were not available. In the evening everyone would cook and bring something from their home and we would have a potluck. We all used to have dinner together & enjoy as a family event at maximum level in the association hall by playing bingo & some musical event. We would look forward to this day every year.

Things gradually changed year by year & in 2000, I had celebrated my 25 year's wedding anniversary party in IMAY HALL and invited people from Yokohama and Tokyo. Everyone enjoyed the party and it was a great success so the then President of Indian Merchants association requested me to organize our annual Diwali event in a similar way henceforth. I accepted, and since then have been organizing the Diwali party every year in IMAY HALL.

(The author is Internal Auditor, Indian Commerce and Industry Association, Japan)

First, we decide on the day of the party event in our Association's meeting which we try to keep on a Saturday closest to Diwali day so that maximum number of people can attend and enjoy. And then the invitations are sent to the Indians in Yokohama and Tokyo who are likely to attend the party and celebrate a Diwali get together. We also send the invitations to all the Indian Embassy officials and request them to attend the party.

Before the party, we approach different firms/individuals with a request to donate for the raffle prizes and ask people who would like to perform -- dancing/singing etc. at the party. We make arrangements for the DJ and Emcees; give order to the caterers for food and drinks based on the number of attendees. We arrange the prizes for all the performers and sweets and fire-crackers for all the children.

We start the party with Laxmi puja and then have speeches by Indian Embassy officials and the President of the association. Then we have dance and song performances by kids/adults. After the performances are over, we proceed for dinner. People socialize during the dinner and pass greetings to each other. After the dinner, kids and adults all dance together on the dance floor and have fun. Finally we hold the raffle and prizes are distributed and the party is drawn to a close.

Organizing all this is a bit challenging and overwhelming sometimes but with the grace of God and help and support from fellow Indians, it has been managed every time. Of course, at present the event has been on hold in the last two years due to pandemic. If everything goes well, hopefully will start the event soon.



In the year 1975 Mr. Eric Gonsalves came as the Ambassador of India to Tokyo. The following year Mrs. Rose Gonsalves, spouse of the Ambassador, perceived the necessity and conceptualized the idea of creating a Social Club for the Indian ladies and foreign wives of Indians in Japan to form a Social Club. At that time families living in Tokyo were few and Mrs. Gonsalves took the initiative of creating The Rachna Club under the helm of the Embassy of India to create a place which could be a meeting point for the Indian ladies, far from home, and to learn about the culture of the host country while trying to build an awareness among the Japanese of the food and culture of India. Monthly meetings were held at the Embassy auditorium with focus on learning something new, Diwali was celebrated at the Embassy or at the Residence, attention was also being paid to fundraising for charity. Sakura Bazaar became the major fundraising event, which was held at the Embassy grounds and was a major attraction for the Japanese who would love to make a return visit here every year for the home cooked Indian food, Indian clothes, and accessories.



Over the years the Club has evolved in many ways. Rachna Club has organized and is now organizing a myriad of events that portray India-Japan cultural ties. The Club has also responded to natural disasters, and during the pandemic donated both in India and Japan. For the last six years the club has



been supporting the education of sixteen children through Hope Foundation in Kolkata. This year it has taken up the project of donating food to the homeless, which is one way of serving the underprivileged in our host country.

Understanding the cultures of other countries and promoting mutual understanding creates harmony between nations and at the same time helps to enhance one's own culture through absorbing the cultures of other countries. Cultural exchange also adds value to live by inspiring new forms of artistic expression. Rachna Club in its 46th year aspires to understand the ways of thinking, the manner of living, the arts of Japan through the introduction and diffusion of the rich culture of India.



Hisamoto Masanori

- Biswanath Paul

Hisamoto Masanori, our own Hisamoto san an ardent and awe-inspiring Tabla player, playing for last four decades in Indian cultural programs and is associated with BATJ over three decades, mesmerizing all of us with his brilliant performances - But how many of us know about his lifelong journey as a Tabla player?

Born in Saga prefecture, Kyushu, Hisamoto san was fascinated by Indian music and culture from his early age. In the early 70s he had a chance to see the movie "Pathar Panchal" of legendary film maker Satyajit Roy. He was very impressed with the storyline, cinematography etc., however one thing which principally mesmerized him was the music of the movie. And when we talk about the music, specifically Tabla – a *membranophone percussion instrument* which intrigued him to master this instrument.

Japanese being influenced by western music and culture were inclined towards learning western instrument. However, in that era, choosing and accepting this instrument from the sub-continent region signifies the adoration he had developed for this instrument. It was the time to explore the opportunity to pursue the learning – with the help of one of his friends he got this first Tabla set in Japan. As soon as he initiated to shape up his passion, he realized a Guru (teacher) was required to guide him in his journey, hence his search began in Japan. However, in those days you could find the institutions for learning western instruments but none for the Indian classical instruments, and that's when he decided to visit India in search of Guru who could enlighten him.

Moving from one country to other and that too for just fueling your passion is not an easy thing, especially when you are bounded with the chores of life (both personally and professionally) -working as a system engineer in reputed construction company, it was quite challenging to leave behind and move on to pursue his dream. Despite all the hindrances his inquisitiveness and determination made it possible to visit

India to find a Guru. In the late 70s he visited Kolkata for the first time and met his Guru Sri Manik Das, a well-known Tabla player at that era. Thereafter he visited 5 times to India and the longest stay was for 3 years from 1980. During 1970-80 Japan's economy was booming and getting a job for an engineer was much easier, which gave him liberty to take long intervals from job to pursue his dream.

Staying in India (Kolkata) was neither easy nor comfortable – he faced many challenges and difficulties, in fact once he was admitted to hospital with hepatitis. However, as the saying goes – "When you desire for something, the whole universe conspires in order for you to achieve it" – his local friends helped him to gradually ease all his pain and paved his path for his mission. He is indebted to them forever. During his stay in Kolkata he started learning Bengali language in Ramakrishna Mission, as he realized that knowing the local language would not only help him to understand the Indian music and culture, but also it would make his stay easier. Today he is fluent in Bengali and feels comfortable to communicate with his Bengali friends.

His masterful dexterity and creative genius have helped him to accompany with many renowned singer and musician in Japan. He has played with prominent Sitar player Sri Amit H. Roy and Rabindra sangeet singer Srimati Promita Mallik. His Guru Sri Manik Das also visited Japan few times during 1970-80.

He is passionate about Indian music and culture and his awareness about the same, makes him think that Indian music is quite different from other western music. He feels that Japanese are developing interest towards Indian music and have started exploring Sitar, Sarod, Tabla and other Indian musical instruments. To continue his legacy his son has developed interest in Sitar and have excelled in it.

Hisamoto San is an epitome of India-Japan cultural exchange. We see him in all our BATJ cultural program in complete Bengali attire with his usual smiling appearance.





My Mother and Father

私の名前は羽成淳です。

私の母は羽成モンジュリカ(2019年没)で、かつてBAT Jのメンバーでした。私の父は日本人(2015年没)で、インドで修行したのち、1970年に新宿に「東京ヨーガセンター」というヨーガ教室を開きました。現在、私は父の遺志を引き継ぎ、東京ヨーガセンターを運営し、ヨーガを教えています。<https://tokyoyogacenter.com/>

【母について】

父と母が結婚したのは1959年。当時、インド人の女性が外国人と結婚するのは、珍しかったようです。彼らのカルカッタでの結婚の様子は、地元の新聞で報じられたと聞いています。父と母の出会いは文通だったそうです。そのとき、父から送られてきた手紙は200通以上あり、それを母は亡くなるまで大切に持っていました。母が亡くなった時、父からの大量の手紙を彼女の棺に入れました。彼女はたくさんの花とラブレターに囲まれて旅立ちました。

母が日本に来た1960年、日本ではインド人が珍しい存在だったようです。写真をとられたり、サインを求められたり、人からジロジロと見られることが多かったと聞いています。色々大変だったようですが、TVやラジオに出演したりと、楽しい仕事を色々やっていました。あと、僕の子供の頃の記憶では、家で彼女はインド料理の教室をして、それが人気だったことを私は覚えています。

晩年、介護施設で暮らしていた母の持ち物はかなり少なかったのですが、父からの手紙と、毎朝のお祈りに必要なもの、友達たちとの思い出の写真、タゴールの写真とCDを、最後まで大切に持っていました。祖国から遠く離れた日本で、長く暮らしてきた彼女を支えてきたものは、彼女の数少ない持ち物に凝縮されていたように感じました。

日本人と結婚し、祖国から遠く離れた日本で暮らすことは勇気がいることだったと思いますが、彼女は晩年「父と結婚してよかった。人生に挑戦し、色々なことを経験できてよかった」と言っていたことが、とても印象に残っています。

【私とインド】

さて、僕はインド人の血を引いているものの、日本の社会で、日本の教育を受け、日本人として育てられたため、自分がインド人であるという意識がほとんどありませんでした。母はもちろんインド人なのですが、インドという国や文化と、自分に隔たりを感じていました。自分に二つのルーツがあるものの、インド文化については何も教育されなかったことは、思春期において、僕の存在/アイデンティティを不安定なものにし、自尊心を損なう結果に繋がりました。

8歳の頃、母と一緒にカルカッタに里帰りをしましたが、その1回だけしか行ったこともありませんでした。この時の体験は、大人になった今も、不思議なことに、色々覚えていますが、しかし大人になるまで、インドのことも何も知りませんでした。

大学生の頃(1998年)、ふと思いました。「せつかくもう一つ、インドの血が流れているのに、何も知らないなんて、もったいないな」と。だからインドに行ってみようと思いたちました。北

インドに行きたかったのに、母に「今は暑いからやめておきなさい」と言われ、なぜか南インドに行くことになってしまいました(笑)。

そこからだんだんインドに興味を湧いてきて、その次の年(1999年)は40日に渡り旅行を試みました。最初は南インドの色々なところを巡りました。そしてマドラスから飛行機でカルカッタに降り立ちました。8歳のとき以来のカルカッタでしたが、バスから街をみたときに、全身が不思議な感動に貫かれました。自分の身体がここに来たことを全力で喜んでいました。街の光景や匂いが、とても懐かしく、親しく感じました。それまで自分がインド人だと感じたことがなかったのですが、その時、生まれて初めて「自分はインドの血が流れているんだな」と実感しました。

帰国して、そのまま仕事が多忙となり、しばらくインドに行くことは出来ませんでした。そこから6年間、仕事のしすぎで、過労で心身がボロボロになりました。ちょっと生命の危険を感じたので仕事をやめました。そしてインドに行ってみました。そこでまたインドが好きになりました。

帰国後、健康を取り戻すために、父の運営する東京ヨーガセンターでヨーガを始めてみました。そこでヨーガを初めてした瞬

間「自分はこれをするために生まれてきた」と強烈に感じました。と同時にヨーガによりアイデンティティの問題が解消されました。

というのも、私は幼い頃から「自分は何者なのか?」というテーマを日本社会に突きつけられ、長い間そのテーマと向き合い、大きな葛藤を抱えていました。それが自分の存在を不安定なものにしていました。それがヨーガを行うことで「自分が自分である充足感」を獲得し続けることで、解消されました。自分の本質が帰属する場所は、国籍や人種や社会ではなく「もっと大きな何か」であることを、体感的に理解したのです。それから18年、私はインドの伝統的ヨーガを毎日練習し、勉強してきました。

【ヨーガへの想い】

ヨーガは古代インドに発祥したのですが、現代の日本に生きる私たちにとっても、ヨーガを学び、実践することは有益なものだと考えます。自分自身を理解し、人生や世界を理解し、より良い人生を構築するサポートになります。

ヨーガの哲学、理論と技術には、身体と心、生と死、自然の摂理にまつわる膨大な智慧が蓄積されており、いつの時代の人にも必要不可欠な、普遍的で尊い価値が秘められています。このような偉大な伝統を継承してきたインドに、私は感謝し、リスペクトしています。

ヨーガを通し、インドに触れ、インドを知り、インドに縁が出来るしていくことを幸せに思います。

=====

My name is Sunao Hanari. My mother is Hanari Monjulika (died in 2019) and she used to be a member of BAT J. My father is Japanese (died in 2015), and after training of yoga in India, he opened a yoga class in Shinjuku in 1970 called "Tokyo Yoga Center". Today, following my father's will, I run the Tokyo Yoga Center and teach yoga. <https://tokyo-yogacenter.com/>

[About mother]

My father and mother married in 1959. At that time, it was rare for an Indian woman to marry a foreigner. I heard from my mother that the local newspaper reported on their wedding in Kolkata.

It is said that my parents met through correspondence. At that time, my father sent her more than 200 letters, which her mother kept with her until her death. When my mother died, I put a lot of letters from my father in her coffin. She departed surrounded by many flowers and love letters.

[Me and India]

Well, although I have Indian blood, I received a Japanese education in Japanese society and was raised as a Japanese person, so I had almost no awareness that I was Indian. . Of course my mother is Indian, but I felt a gap between myself and the country and culture of India. Despite my dual roots, being never educated about Indian culture led to my existence/identity being unstable and undermining my self-esteem



during adolescence.

When I was eight years old, I went home to Kolkata with my mother, and I had only been there once. Even now, as an adult, I still remember many things about this experience. But I didn't know anything about India until I grew up.

When I was a university student (1998), I suddenly thought. "It's a waste to know nothing even though I have Indian blood in my existence. " So I decided to go to India. I wanted to go to North India, But my mother told me not to go because it was too hot, so for some reason I ended up going to South India....

From there, I gradually became interested in India, and the following year (1999) I traveled for 40 days. At first, I visited various places in South India. From Madras I flew down to Kolkata. I hadn't been to Kolkata since I was eight years old, but when I saw the city from the bus, my whole body was filled with a strange impression. I seemed to be extremely happy that my body had come here. The sights and smells of the city made me feel nostalgic and familiar. Until then, I had never felt that I was Indian, but at that time, for the first time in my life, I realized that I had Indian blood running through my existence.

After returning to Japan, I became so busy with work that I could not go to India for a while. For the next six years, I was overworked and exhausted physically and mentally. I quit my job because I felt my life was in danger. Then I went to India. I fell in love with India again.

After returning to Japan, I decided that I wanted to regain my health, so I started practicing yoga at my father's Tokyo Yoga Center. The moment I started practicing yoga, I felt strongly that I was born to do this. At the same time, yoga solved my identity problem.

The problem is because from an early age, Japanese society confronted me with the question, "Who am I?" It made my existence unstable. It was resolved by continuing to acquire a sense of fulfillment that I am myself by doing yoga. I understood through my experience that the place where my essence belongs is not nationality, race or society, but "something bigger".

For the next 18 years, I practiced and studied traditional Indian yoga every day.

[Thoughts on yoga]

Yoga originated in ancient India, but I believe that learning and practicing yoga is beneficial for us living in modern Japan. It helps us understand ourselves, understand life and the world, and build a better life.

The philosophy, theory, and techniques of yoga have accumulated a vast amount of wisdom. Yoga gives us the strength to live positively, accepting mind and body, life, sickness, aging and death, all related to the laws of nature.

I am grateful and respectful to India, which has inherited such a great tradition. Through yoga, I am happy to come into contact with India, to know India, and to have a connection with India.

Buddhism-The genesis to Indo-Japan relationship

- Moitrayee Majumder

Five years back, I landed in the land of rising sun without any knowledge about the language, culture, tradition and socio-economic background. However, somewhere in my heart I always felt that we would be humbly accepted by this beautiful country. As we progressed on our journey, after a year we were blessed with our son. At this juncture I developed the passion to learn the language as it would play the pivotal role from the nurturing aspect of my son and would also help to develop a bond in the local community. Immediately, I joined a Japanese language school, at the same time was fortunate enough to be introduced to a Japanese gentleman (Sensei) by one of my friend, who not only has abundant knowledge in Japanese history, culture and tradition, also has profound wisdom in Buddhism and its genesis. With the ongoing pursuit for the language and continuous consultation with 'Sensei', opened a door to explore and gain the esoteric knowledge about various aspects which ignited the inquisitiveness to learn more about Japan and its history and its diplomatic and cultural relationship with India.

With this curiousness, I started my exploration and discovered a book "The story of India - Japan Relationship" authored by Swami Medhasananda Ji from Vedanta Society of Japan. After going through the publisher's note, the very first thought sprung to mind – it would lay the foundation for my journey. It provides an immense knowledge on how Buddhism played a significant role in developing a strong bond between India and Japan. Also focuses on one of the common challenges faced by both India and Japan - the influence of the western ideologies on the cultural aspect of both the nations. The book embarks on the cultural connect between both the countries primarily emphasizing on Indian and Japanese civilizations which are tied by a common thread i.e. religion. The Japanese believes in seven gods of fortune and out of them four are originated as Hindu deities like Benzaiten as Saraswati, Daikokuten as Shiva or Mahakala, Bonten as Brahma and Katen as Agni. These deities emerged between the 6th and 8th century. Followed by Buddhism which originated in India, took a long route and reached Japan via China and Korea. Buddhism was universally preached, practiced and patronized by the country. The book also portrays about the first Indian, Bodhisena Bharadwaja who visited Japan and his contribution in the field of education, religion, art and the influence on the life of Japanese which can be well identified by the spread of Buddhism, worship of Indian deities, presence of old Buddhist temple, Sanskrit etymology of Japanese words etc. In fact, it is said that he was the one who inaugurated the Great Buddha Statue of Todaiji-temple in Nara.

Moving on, the book elucidates about Meiji restoration in the year 1868 which took place under the rule of Meiji Emperor Mutsuhito. This period saw Japan's transformation from a feudal policy into a modern industrial state thus raising its political and diplomatic status onto the world stage. During this period the world could also see the rise in trade between India and Japan especially in the cotton manufacturing sector. This era also marks the inauguration of the Japanese shipping sea-lane to Bombay.

The most fascinating section which intrigued me was the narration about the contribution of the two pioneers, Swami

Vivekananda from India and Okakura Tenshin from Japan who played vital role in developing a strong relationship between India and Japan. In the year 1983 Swamiji came for a short visit to Japan as he had to board the ship from the port of Yokohama for traveling to Chicago for delivering his speech on "The world's first parliament of religion". During his stay he visited several places like Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo and Yokohama. After his excursion he was simply delighted by the beauty of this country and was fascinated by the marvel of engineering and the modernizing military. He also became very fond of the Japanese painting and art. In one of his letter dated 18th June 1901 to Okakura Tenshin who himself was a great artist, Swamiji wrote, "Japan to me is a dream- so beautiful that it haunts one all his life".

Swamiji, being a great observant, within few days of his experience in Japan identified the cultural qualities which helped in reinvigorate his mission in India, viz. self-assuredness, patriotism, adoption of western ideologies but remain culturally strong, awakening themselves to modern times and most importantly theoretical, practical and universal education. As we advance through the book, deciphered another important facet - Ms. Josephine Macleod who played a significant role in connecting Swamiji and Okakura Tenshin. Macleod was an ardent follower of the principles of Swamiji that is Vedanta and at the same time she was also taking lessons on the history of Japanese art from Okakura Tenshin in Japan. Okakura was an eminent artist of his time. He was a profound thinker and had a sound knowledge of Buddhist philosophy. His contribution to the protection of Japanese cultural properties and art education was enormous. He was the president of Tokyo School of Fine Arts. Later he also co-founded the Japan Fine Arts Academy (Nihon Bijutsuin). Macleod along with Tenshin were interested to invite Swamiji to Japan for preaching Vedanta in collaboration with Buddhist temples. However, Swamiji could not re-visit Japan due to his ill health. Hence, Macleod along with Okakura and Shitoku Hori decided to visit India. Hori, a descendant of a famous priest of a Buddhist temple, a devout Buddhist and had admiration for celibacy with a vision to establish a monastic organization based on celibacy. Hori visited India to discover his "Satdharma" and, while in India, immersed himself entirely in the study of Sanskrit and Pali till the end. In fact, he helped Tagore and his scientist friend Jagadish Chandra Bose sought to obtain copies of the Buddhist Sanskrit texts from the libraries of China and Japan for libraries in India.

Okakura's main objective for visiting India was to persuade Swamiji to re-visit Japan for preaching Vedanta as well as to fulfill his desire to visit holy places associated with Buddhism (being a devout Buddhist) and also being an art historian wanted to explore the art and sculptures of India. Swamiji and Okakura spent precious moments exchanging their own ideologies, principles during their pilgrimage across Bodhgaya and Varanasi. Okakura's profound interest in art and sculpture, drew him to Agra, Gwalior, Rajasthan and other places to understand the ancient art and architecture of India.

While on his visit to India, an important piece of history got etched – Okakura got a chance to meet Sister Nivedita who was also an ardent follower of Swamiji and his principles of Vedanta. "The Ideals of the East", a thought and manuscript written by Okakura was edited and proofread by Sister Nivedita. Since

Okakura was a great influencer, Sister Nivedita requested him to inspire the Indian youths to a truer patriotism and sacrifice for the country and spread the nationalist movement across India. "The ideals of the East" encapsulates the essence of spiritual and cultural connect between India, China and Japan, which originated through Buddhism. This book also comprise the vedantic idea of Advait non-dualism about which he was introduced by Swamiji. Okakura was able to comprehend and appreciate the intricate concepts of Advaita namely that the supreme reality is of the nature of existence, consciousness and absolute bliss that pervades the universe and manifests itself diversely through culture and civilizations.

An important intersection of the Inter-Asian cultural politics, i.e., late Meiji period in Japan and the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, could be visualized with Okakura's introduction to the Tagore family by Sara Bull who was an ardent follower of RamaKrishna order. These two remarkable figures from the early twentieth century were drawn to each other's distinctive personal style, belief in art, and desire to revitalise Asian culture. During this period, India saw a large number of Japanese visiting India for the purpose of learning, research, teaching in numerous fields like fine arts, language, music, dance and martial arts. Gradually Okakura and Tagore family developed a very special bond. When Okakura revisited India after 10 long years in the year 1912, he stayed with Tagore family and also guided the Tagore family on fine arts. The proximity between the two led to the foundation of the Nippon Bhavan at Shantiniketan in 1994, and Rabindra- Okakura Bhavan 2007 in Kolkata.

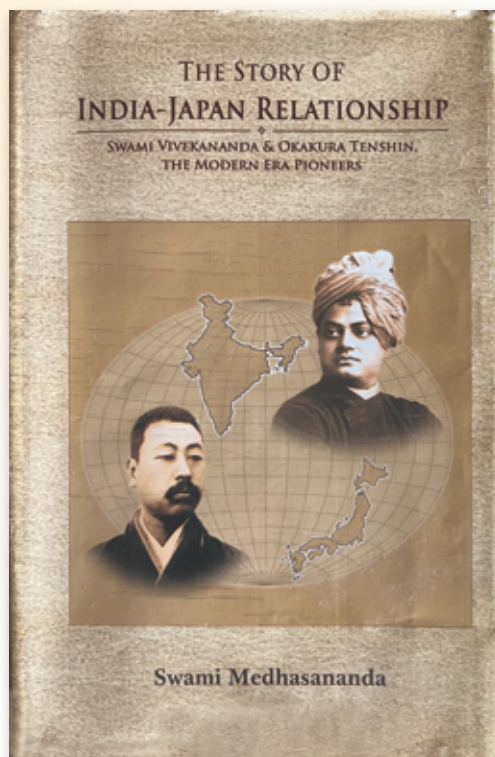
Later in the book, it became apparent that the initial closeness between Vivekananda and Okakura had waned off for various reasons, like, Swamiji couldn't convince Okakura to dedicate his life as follower of Vedanta, then he didn't approve the collaboration of Nivedita and Okakura in the nationalist movement (as this was against his ideology and principles of Advaita), and also he could not re-visit Japan (on Okakura's invitation).

Both Vivekananda and Okakura were dynamic visionaries, they had mutual love and appreciation for their respective countries and were proud of their Asian origin. Both were exponent and interpreters of the culture of their motherland. Swamiji's universalism was more profound and comprehensive based on the experience of the supreme reality. For him not only "Asia is one" rather "the world is one". Swamiji was a man of the highest spiritual realization and essentially a man of spirituality, while Okakura was a man of art and culture.

Swamiji's real impact on Japan, began with the Japanese translation of his biography by a French novelist and Nobel laureate, Romain Rolland published in 1941. Many lecture tours were also conducted by the monks of Ramakrishna order in Japan and later two Vedanta societies group were formed. Moreover, the Yoga therapy Association of Japan also incorporated Vivekanda's yoga series of four books on Jnana yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga and Raja yoga as part of their yoga curriculum. Swamiji's message on spirituality, self-realization, harmony, peace and universalism has a major contribution on building the India Japan relationship. Inspired by the speech of the first parliament of religion, world leaders like Japan former Prime Minister Shinjo Abe and US former president Barak Obama have quoted various lines in their speeches.

In today's world, the mutual relationship has expanded beyond culture and religion –with India's demographic dividend and Japan's capital and technology, it's time to ascertain the true potential of the Japan-India economic partnership for a prosperous future.

My heartfelt gratitude to Swami Medhasanandaji of Vedanta Society of Japan for taking out his precious time for this extensive research work. He had put an immense effort to collate abundant information on life of Swamiji and Okakura Tenshin and articulated in a comprehensive and intelligible manner which would definitely help to enlighten the conscious mind.



'Anjali' – 26 years of journey

- Ranjan Gupta

It was one of the year-end holidays of 1994, I was chatting with Mr. Akhil Mittal, who came from All India Radio on deputation to NHK Radio Japan. Our casual discussion hovered on various topics. Our professions were not the same though, we had a common passion about literary magazine.

Akhilji told me that with his few friends, he was planning to publish a little magazine from Japan and if interested, I could join them to take care of its Bengali section. I immediately grabbed that opportunity. Five of us worked together for next few months and came up with the first edition of "Japan Bharti" in April 1995. As Bengali New Year's Day falls in April, I remember I wrote a detailed write up on that subject. It was a modest start, but it ignited my passion to bring out our magazine for Durga Puja. On my request, Rita wrote a column on Bengali cuisine in Japan Bharti.

In 1995, we added three articles with our usual one-page leaflet on cultural program and came up with a small booklet without any name. However, I was still aspiring for a full fledged properly printed version of a literary magazine.

Fortunately, I was surrounded by extremely talented young people. Bibek and Chandreyee came up and supported me with a great zeal. We decided to bring out a properly printed literary magazine during Durga Puja. We worked very hard. I remember at times we all worked whole night and they would stay at our place to complete the work. With lot of uncertainties, **we brought out our first edition in 1996 which I named as Anjali, our humble offerings to Goddess Durga.** Bibek drew the cover page, and it was highly appreciated. We went through the drudgery of typing, proof reading etc. in addition to the time pressure. However, we could manage it by having lot of fun otherwise. As a matter of fact, we thoroughly enjoyed the period of making it. We also fondly remember Late Ms Karabi Mukherjee (Karabidi), who was with us right from the beginning and constantly kept us enthused by her jovial and supportive nature. That's how Anjali's journey was started.

Anjali First Edition



Since its inception, we set four objectives for Anjali and all these years we tried to keep our focus on those.

First and foremost, it has to be a proper multilingual literary magazine.

Secondly, we wanted to create a modest platform where adult members of Indian diaspora in Japan could get an opportunity to give an expression to their passion for writing. Many of them amateur though, had some experiences of writing before coming to Japan. They were all very happy with our requests for writing for Anjali. Many writers and painters irrespective of their age have been contributing every year even if they have left Japan.

Next objective was to involve our kids who were born and raised in Japan. We wanted them to know about their roots. The kids were always very enthusiastic and brought a

new flavor to the overall magazine. In this current issue, few kids wrote about Indian freedom fighters. I am sure that in this process they learnt more about Indian Freedom fighters, and this could sow a seed of curiosity in them to know more about Indian history.

Finally, we thought of using this platform to foster Indo Japanese cultural relationship at a grass root level. In various editions, we published articles on pioneers of India and Japan who built the foundation of the bondage between two countries. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Japan. People to people relationship between two countries helps making actual diplomatic relationship stronger. This year in Anjali we are commemorating that historical moment by dedicating a section specially compiled with related articles.

To achieve these above stated objectives, it was necessary for us to make Anjali multilingual. Our obvious choice was four languages viz., Bengali, English, Hindi and Japanese.

Until 2007, we didn't have a structured editorial team. The baton was with me, but from time to time, I handed it over to enthusiasts like Devashis, Nivedita, Sougata, Tathagata, Bhola and Sushmita who took main responsibilities of editing and compiling Anjali. They all made significant contribution in making the foundation. From 2002, Anjali started growing in volume. Number of pages went up significantly. The workload also increased accordingly. In those days, we had to type all Bengali, and Hindi articles ourselves as we used to get handwritten manuscripts. It was very time taking and tedious job to type Bengali and Hindi articles, as not many user-friendly software and fonts were available in those days. I remember few final proofreading sessions we had in Bhola's house. While Karabidi, Ruma, Bhola and I were doing the final checks, Sushmita would constantly supply us fuel in the form of her homemade delicious snacks followed by an awesome dinner. A serious work in a partying mood was the key factor for our sustainability. The legacy is being continued. Later on, we organized similar events at our house, and for last many years Sanjib and Meeta have taken that role.

Anjali reached a big milestone in 2007, when we formed an editorial team comprised of Imroz, Rinku, Sanjib, Meeta, Sudeb, Keiko, Ruma and me. The drastic changes in that edition were its look and feel in both inside and cover pages. The contents got better in terms of its quality. Presentation of articles were improved with appropriate sketches. The fonts were changed and the whole magazine was nicely cleaned up. Sanjib, Meeta



and Imroz with their artistic flare created a professional look and feel of the book. Sudeb ensured collection and editing of Japanese articles and editing & compilation of advertisements. For proofreading we took additional help outside the editorial team, to name a few Bhaswati, Biswa, Hemalatha helped us a lot. Beloved late Karabidi contributed a lot in proofreading the magazine. Syamal does the proofreading of the advertisements.

As already mentioned above, during the process of making, we used to gather at someone's place, at least for one or two rounds of proofreading. I still remember in 2007, I had an office space in Kawasaki Business Incubation Center (KBIC). The big meeting rooms of KBIC were available in the evening for tenants, where we could all sit across and do our editing tasks accompanied by Bengali style adda. Nishant, son of Sanjib & Meeta, since the age of six, always cooperated and supported while they were fully engrossed with the preparation of Anjali.

Along with the growth of Anjali, one can easily notice the growth of the kids of Bengali community. Those who used to write in Kid's section earlier now write in the adult section. Contents and style of their writing got changed over time. One can surely enjoy originality as well as maturity in their writings as they grow older. Thus, Anjali also became a witness of the growth of the kids of Bengali community.

The next change in the editorial team happened in 2008 when Imroz left Japan. As their replacement Sudipta and Indranil were inducted in the editorial team. Keiko San (Sudeb's wife) who was already helping from the background, officially joined the team. The new addition in the team helped us improving our quality further. The team composition got changed again in 2010 when Sudipta and Indranil moved out of Japan. Thereafter, for almost 10 years, the editorial team was steadily managed by Sanjib, Meeta, Sudeb, Keiko San, Ruma and me. Some highlights from 2010 are given below:

2012 – all inside pages were also colored and specially designed

2013 – dedicated to 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

2016 – focused on centenary of Rabindranath Tagore's visit to Japan

2017 – 50th anniversary of signing of Indo Japanese cultural treaty

2019 – change of era from Heisei to Reiwa

2020 – **25th year of Anjali** (because of pandemic only online version was available); Sudeb and Keiko San retired from the editorial team; Anjali owes a lot to them. They made a very significant contribution in the success of Anjali. Sanjib took up editing & compilation of advertisements.

2021 – theme was Olympic games and Satyajit Ray's centenary (only online version was available because of pandemic); Biswanath and Krishana joined and are well integrated in the team.

Since 2013, Anjali is available online in BATJ website as well as Magzter & ISSUU.

Meanwhile, Sanjib and Meeta took charge of designing cover pages. Keeping in mind the theme of that particular year, we all discuss about the design of the cover page and Meeta gives a final shape to it. Sanjib painstakingly ornaments each page with innovative ideas. All of us contribute our best to find out appropriate fillers for the blank spaces inside the pages.

In few years' time Anjali became an acceptable platform for the advertisers. Syamal with his meticulous nature collected lot of advertisements using his widespread network. Funds started coming in and helped making Anjali even better, and the virtuous cycle never stopped. Rita and Syamal continues to provide a very valuable overall support.

All through these years we got a tremendous moral support from Medhasanandaji Maharaj of Vedanta Society of Japan. As far as I remember there was hardly any issue where his article was not there. After publication of each issue, he gave us his well thought feedback.

In 2013, it was decided to start an official release of Anjali before it is handed over to the public and Swamiji blessed us by doing the first official launch.



2013

Thereafter, every year Ambassador of India or senior officials of Embassy of India makes the official release of Anjali.



2014

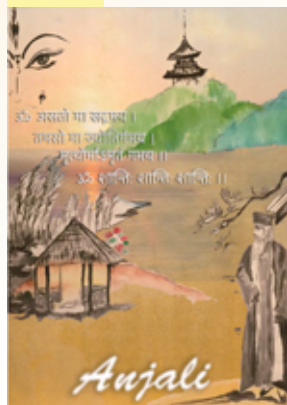
We have come a long way and always try to make it better and enjoyable to our readers, and will continue doing so by bringing innovative changes to reach close to reader's heart. Reader's encouragement will help us to produce even better qualities in the future. I am sure Anjali will continue receiving reader's whole hearted appreciation and the legacy will continue as the baton passes through generations. Before I conclude, I must say that without Sanjib and Meeta's passion, persistent effort, technical and artistic skill, and hard work, Anjali could not have reached to the position where it has come today. I sincerely acknowledge their contribution in Anjali's journey so far.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to sincerely thank all the contributors, sponsors, and well-wishers who have supported us in the evolution of Anjali. I beg to be excused if I have missed any name who made a contribution to make our journey successful.

2013



2016



2017



2019





Courtesy: <https://amritmahotsav.nic.in/>

H. E. President of India Shri Ramnath Kovind presents Padma Shri award to Shri Ryuko Hira, President of HMI Hotel Group and Ora Group of companies Japan. Mr. Ryuko Hira has done some outstanding work in promoting ties between India and Japan by promoting investments into India from Japan and people exchange.

Bengali Association of Tokyo, Japan (BATJ) congratulates Mr. Ryuko Hira on receiving Padma Shri Award from the Government of India in 2022 for his contribution towards improving India-Japan relationships.