

India-Japan: Changing Perceptions

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Perceptions of a country change over time and are influenced both by bilateral factors as well as global factors. Change in perception of the other country also brings about a reversal in the way people view the other country. While official policies may not necessarily bring about changes in the basic understanding of the people about the other nation, as the people to people relations have their own momentum, they do exert an influence. Perceptions about Japan in India will be dealt with in a historical perspective , both at the official level as well as the people's level.

Japan's early perceptions of India

Although Japan was aware of the existence of India with the introduction of Buddhism through China even as early as the 8th century, India was blissfully unaware of even the existence of a country called Japan. There were no travelers from Japan as in the case of China. Indian priests, who reached Japan from China and were respected, did not return to India to talk about Japan. Study of Sanskrit by the Japanese helped them to evolve a simpler phonetic script , the Buddhist scriptures stimulated their curiosity about India(tenjiku)the divine land, where Buddha was born. However, they did not succeed in visiting India. It is interesting to note that the Japanese perceptions of India were first formed through the prism of China and later, through that of the West. The ignorance of the Japanese about the actual conditions in India, including the geographical position was dispelled to a certain extent by the accounts obtained from the Portuguese and the Dutch in the 16th century. However, Japan's seclusion policy in 1639 did not permit the Japanese to travel outside Japan and knowledge about India had to be limited to the accounts received from the Dutch. These accounts informed the Japanese that India came under foreign rule first by the Muslims and later by the British and there was lack of resistance on the part of Indians to preserve their country's honour and cultural heritage. This was a source great of disappointment to the Japanese intellectuals and resulted in a negative appraisal of India.

The interest in spiritual matters gradually shifted to an understanding of British imperialism, particularly after the Opium War in China in 1840. There was an awareness of the fact that India had come into the clutches of the British East India Company, even before she became a British colony. Among the intellectuals of the popular rights movement in Japan

in the early Meiji period, there seems to have been a good understanding of the sepoy rebellion of 1857 and an appreciation of the growing nationalism in India, the anti-British movement in India, and the demand for independence.

India's first contacts with Japan

What about India? When did India become aware of the existence of Japan? It was only after Japan was opened to the world by the West in late 19th century. Therefore India is aware of the existence of Japan only for two centuries now. Till late 20th century, initiatives to know about Japan were constrained since India was a British colony. After India became independent, Japan was still under US occupation and could not exercise its options freely. However, this did not prevent the new independent India from making attempts to bring Japan into the comity of nations on an equal footing. Once Japan regained its sovereignty, it is Japan's decision to align with the USA in a bi-polar world, while India preferred to be non-aligned, that the two nations drifted apart. However, this did not prove to be an obstruction in the attempts to create an understanding between the two nations and cooperate with each other, particularly in economic relations. In recent years, the two nations have come closer to each other. Their mutual needs have only made it clear that they should explore various means to come to a true understanding of each other and work together, accepting their dissimilarities and learning from each other.

Let us now discuss how these historical developments have brought about changes in mutual perceptions. Whatever mistaken perceptions might have existed or may continue to exist in the two nations, there has been no period of hostility between the two nations. In India Japan ranks as number one among the most liked nations and as number two in the nations people would like to visit.

Japan is opened to India

Japan's need for raw materials for its first stage of economic development made the Japanese come to the portals of India. It is the demand for cotton and cotton yarn for Japan's budding textile industry, which was to be built as the base for Japan's plans for industrialization that brought Japanese to India. The Government of Japan had accepted India as a British colony and the people to people contacts could also progress only if they did not go against British interests. The Japanese could trade with the cotton growers, even establishing ginning factories in the fields thus giving an opportunity for interaction between Indians and Japanese, Japanese could export silk yarn and silk textiles from Japan as in the 19th century Japanese silk textiles were considered to be highly sophisticated and cheap.

Tata Co. tried to promote a joint Indo-Japan shipping venture to enable Indian businessmen to transport goods at lower freight rates using their own ships for transport of cotton, cotton yarn, etc. Jamschetji Nuserwanji Tata (1839-1904 AD) went to Japan to meet Shibusawa Eiichi for talks. This joint venture for shipping would have led to greater interaction between Japanese and Indians. Before this could take off successfully, Tatas had to bow out because of the price wars by the British and European Companies. However, the Japanese shipping company Nippon Yusen Kaisha(NYK)was allowed to transport goods between India and Japan but with restrictions about the number of voyages and also the ports the ships could use. It is reported that NYK ships recruited Indians as crew for their ships. The Indian crew had a favourable impression of the Japanese both in terms of wages and the treatment they received. Probably, the Indians found these foreigners different from their British masters and could develop an affinity with them.

While Indian collaboration in shipping services was nipped in the bud, a fillip was given to Indian business houses trading with Japan. Indian trading houses were opened in Kobe and Yokohama and the number of Indians visiting Japan for trading purposes increased. While raw cotton accounted for 50 percent of Japanese imports, other commodities like pig iron, teak, jute, gunny bags, natural rubber, oils and fats, leather etc. were also traded with Japan. The exports from Japan consisted of cotton and silk textiles, matchsticks and other miscellaneous products. Interactions between Indians and Japanese increased.

Tata's visit also yielded other results; establishment of silk farms in Mysore for production of silk under two Japanese experts, so that development of sericulture could be done on scientific lines

At the intellectual level, Swami Vivekananda's visit to Japan on his way to the World Congress of Religions in 1893 opened a great vista to the people of India about Japan and the Japanese. His first hand reports about Japan through his letters, lectures, etc. had only one message for the young students of India, "Look East", go to Japan and learn from them about the development strategy of the Meiji Government and how they implemented their plans. He conveyed to the Indians also his impressions about other traits of the Japanese, their discipline, their cleanliness, etc. Vivekananda admired Japan's emphasis on compulsory universal education.

Vivekananda's call to the youth led to many Indian students going to Japan for higher education to learn about advances made in science and technology. The Indian students under the aegis of the Oriental Youngmen's association also hoped that Japan would become the hub for Asian students to exchange ideas, provide mutual encouragement and

on finishing their studies would be the pioneers in bringing about development and enlightenment for Asia. Thus knowledge gained in Japan seemed to give opportunities and hope for the bright future of Asia.

Japan's stress on universal education and the importance given to vocational education and compulsory education made a great impression on M. Visvesvaraya (1860-1962) from the southern state of Mysore when he visited Japan in 1898. Visvesvaraya looked upon Japan as a working model for India and felt that for the rapid progress of India, education and planned economic development of India was essential. The government should enter actively into the service of commerce and industry. Visvesvaraya, as the Dewan of Mysore, could get his ideas implemented in the field of education and industry, as Mysore was a princely state and the British Government could not interfere. Visvesvaraya's book *Reconstructing India* published in 1920 referred to Japan's modernization. Another princely state, Hyderabad sent Syed Ross Masud to Japan to study Japan's educational system and his report was published in 1923. Thus the educated elite were being informed about the conditions in Japan and how India can take the example of Japan in its own development. In short, a very favourable impression of Japan was projected among the people of India

Another great man, who brought Japan closer to India in the field of fine arts, is Rabindranath Tagore. Okakura Tenshin acted as a catalyst in this process. Tagore brought artists, carpenters, etc. to his School, Shantiniketan. On his visits to Japan which gave him an opportunity to observe and study Japan closely, Tagore admired Japan's artistic and cultural traditions, such as the love for simplicity, intimate relationship between man and nature, respect for the ancestors, regard for the family system, recognition of social obligations, etc. He felt that if Indians "could learn the art of living from Japan with an open mind, our homes and hearths would be cleaner, our behavior more refined, graceful and restrained"

The Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5 and Japan ousting China from Korea caught the attention of Indian intellectuals and the people in general. However, the Indian businessmen engaged in cotton and textile trade became very apprehensive of Japan ousting them from the Chinese markets. Thus there were both expectations and also a sense of disquiet with regard to Japan. Expectation reached its height with Japan's victory over Russia in 1905. This was hailed by the people at large with great enthusiasm. The article written by a nationalist leader, Bal Gangadhar Tilak clearly stated that Japan's victory has broken the myth of the superiority of the Europeans over Asians. He also added that Japan's example showed that it was possible for Indians also to do so and thus

instill a sense of confidence and national pride among the Indians. Japan thus boosted the confidence of the Asian nations in their struggle against western nations. There was great expectation in the leadership of Japan to fight the west.

It is not only the intellectuals, but even from the account of a commoner Hariprabha, who married a Japanese, Uemon Takeda, owner of a soap factory in Dhaka, that we get the same views. Hariprabha visited Japan along with her husband in 1912 to meet her husband's family living in Niwa (Aichi prefecture). It is interesting to note that she found the policemen in koban (police beat box) friendly and helpful. They were not an object of fear like the British police force.

Another account by an industrialist and statesman, Sir Lalubhai Samaldas, who had an opportunity to visit Japan's various institutions also stresses the sense of cleanliness among the Japanese. He also had very favourable impressions of Japanese politeness and manners, their thoroughness in what they do, their work ethic and sense of commitment.

Therefore, if we sum up the perception of Indians about Japan from the late 19th century to the turn of the 20th century, it was that Indians should learn from Japan's achievements in the fields of education, science, technology, etc. Admiration for Japan's social and cultural traditions led to a call to adapt their cleanliness and their behavior in social life.

Japan's ambition to reach a position of equality with the West – Sense of betrayal in India

There seems to have been inadequate understanding about the significance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 among the Indians. The extension of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1905 clearly signified that Japan, in the interests of British imperialism, would act as a bulwark against Russian expansionism in India. This was a great shock to Indians as Japan, an Asian nation, had clearly joined the western imperialists to keep their colonial control over Asia. In the revised treaty of 1911, the potential enemy was no longer Russia, as there was a concord between Britain and Russia. It was USA's apprehension that the Anglo-British Alliance would be against its interests that influenced the revision. There was a feeling in Japan that the honeymoon period in the relations of Japan and Britain had ended. Anti-British trends started emanating in Japan in the form of support at the people's level for the Indian revolutionaries who took refuge in Japan.

The colonization of Korea by Japan in 1910 and the demand of extra-territorial rights in China to be at par with other western powers, using the same methods as adopted by the

West revealed Japan's ambitions. Japan was trying hard to get accepted as a member of the West on a position of equality

In India as a part of the anti-British movement, boycott of British goods and encouragement for the use of goods produced in India had started in Bengal and Maharashtra. It is interesting to note that this boycott did not include goods produced in Japan.

The budding socialist movement in Japan did show solidarity with the struggle of Indians against British imperialism. Although Katayama Sen shared the platform with Dadabhai Nauroji in the Second International held in Amsterdam in August 1904, both Dadabhai Nauroji and Katayama Sen have not even referred to each other in their later reports. In the same way, the appeal for support for the nationalist struggle made by Madam Cama in Stuttgart in 1906 did not elicit any reference in *heimin shimbun*, a newspaper brought out by the socialists,

After the Russo-Japanese War, many Indians went to Japan for studies or sought refuge in Japan to escape the suppression of the British in India.

As early as in 1897, Okuma Shigenobu, a statesman in the Meiji period, had established an Indo-Japan study circle to study the problems of India. In 1907, after he became the President of the Waseda University, he established a Centre for Indian studies in the University. Okuma's interest in India made the Indian students invite him for a function organized by them in honour of Shivaji, who was a hero in 17th century Maharashtra. Shivaji's call for Swaraj (self rule) had inspired the nationalist movement in India. Okuma disappointed the Indian youth in Japan by asking them to pursue their studies by not resorting to violence, not hurting others but by reforming society. Thus, many of the Indian youth, who had come to Japan with great expectations after the Russo-Japanese War, had to face the reality of the constraints put by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance on the Japanese Government and left the shores of Japan greatly disappointed. Okuma's position was consistent as he supported Japan fulfilling the role of a policeman in the East for Britain during the rebellion of the Indian army soldiers in Singapore in 1915.

Changes in the international situation – Japan softens towards Asian nationalist movements.

Japan's active cooperation with the Allied Powers in World War I did not necessarily bring about realisation of its ambition to be treated on an equal footing with the Western Powers. The promises made to her by the Powers were not fulfilled. Japan was not allowed to treat

China as its own sphere of influence. The rise of Japan's military strength, particularly naval strength, raised fear in the minds of the western statesmen and curbs were put on its naval growth. USA had risen as a global power in contrast to the weakness of Britain. Britain had to accept the pressure put on it to abrogate the Japanese Alliance in 1923. The establishment of a communist power in Russia in 1917, even before the end of the War, also changed the international situation. All the attempts made by Japan to prove to the western powers through its successful economic development and military prowess that it was different from other Asian nations, could not get for Japan a different treatment in the matter of immigration policy of the Western nations. All these factors led to a change in Japan's attitude towards the nationalist movements in Asia. While at the people's level, support for the movement had been there, the covert support given by the Government to the Indian revolutionaries in Japan was a new factor. Japan resisted the pressures from the British to ferret out the revolutionaries and deport them from Japan. This becomes clear, if we examine the case of Rash Bihari Bose who had sought refuge in Japan.

Rash Bihari Bose had come under the influence of extremists in the Indian national movement, like Aurobindo Ghose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal. He fled India in 1915 after an attempt to assault Lord Harding, the Governor general and failure in a conspiracy to bring about a general uprising of Indian soldiers starting from the Lahore barracks. On entering Japan, he was introduced to Sun Yat Sen by Bhagwan Singh of the Gadar Party, and got into the network of the so-called "Pan-Asianists", both Chinese and Japanese. He also got the sympathy and support of right wing leaders like Toyama Mitsuru, Ohkawa Shumei, etc. But it is the support of common people, which enabled him to carry out his activities. The Soma family, who owned the Nakamura gave him shelter and protected him from the police, although there was an expulsion order issued against him by the Japanese Government. These orders were never seriously implemented. The Nakamura also got their daughter Toshiko married to Bose. When Bose found that the British would not allow him to enter India, he became a Japanese citizen in 1923.

The Japanese press criticized the government and started a campaign against the deportation orders. The Japanese openly supported the Indians that they have a right to gain freedom by cooperating with Japan.

Rash Behari Bose extended his activities to China and other countries in Southeast Asia. He was active in pan Asiatic conferences which called for the unity of Asia and the formation of union of Asiatic races to bring about world peace based on justice and equality. It was also resolved in these conferences that emancipation of Asia from European domination would be achieved under Japan's leadership. Rash Behari Bose also

enlightened the Japanese through his writings in Japanese journals like Kaizo, Toho Jiron, and Gekkan Nihon and public lectures about the nationalist movement in India. He sharply criticized the British Rule in India. He also warned Japan that after World War I, Japan should be more watchful of a closer relationship between Britain and America. At the same time, he strongly criticized Japan's China policy. The Indian national leaders were initially quite receptive to the idea of Pan-Asia proposed by Japan, but Japan's aggressive policy towards China was strongly condemned. All sections of Indians, whether of the nationalist movement in India, or those in Japan were clear that they would not tolerate the control of Japan over India, even if India gains freedom from the British with Japan's assistance. However, the leaders of the Congress were keen to strengthen cultural, economic and political relations with Japan. For this purpose, an Indian National Committee was formed with A.N.Sahay, who was in Japan as its President. The purpose of the Committee was to create better understanding and friendship between Indians and Japanese.

Subash Chandra Bose, who arrived from Germany was very confident of assistance from Japan for the Indian National Army, which had been formed for liberation of India from the British. This was initially formed with the Indian army personnel, of the British Army, who had surrendered to Japan after the fall of Singapore. This was expanded later with volunteers from the Indian people living in Southeast Asia. Subash Bose, through his broadcasts to the people of India, which were avidly listened to, was able to sway Indian public opinion to repose faith in Japan, He was confident that the INA with the help of the Japanese Army would be able to achieve freedom for India from the British. The early victories of Japan in South East Asia even made an Indian leader like Mahatma Gandhi ponder about the possibility of using Japan in achieving self-rule, once the British were forced to leave India, unable to resist the Japanese Army. Although the Indian National Army could not finally successfully enter India and were badly defeated, the INA interlude brought Indians and Japanese closer. As Nehru put it, even in the defeat and subsequent prosecution of the INA officers, INA became "a symbol of India fighting for independence". Therefore, when the trials were held against the treason of officers of the INA, after the War ended, there was widespread support from the political parties and the people. The cooperation given by Japan to the INA was appreciated. The respect shown to Subash Bose in allowing him to have independent command of the of the Indian Army , the recognition by Japan of the Azad Hind Government established by Subash Bose made Japan and Japanese rise in the esteem of the people of India. Indians showed great sympathy for the suffering Japanese with an outburst of indignation on the use of atom bombs in Japan.

Goodwill and friendship of India towards defeated Japan.

Among the nations in Asia, India and Indians were the first to welcome Japan into their fold without any rancour. Indians did not want to start their relation with Japan with a view to punish them for their aggression against China, although all sections of Indians had condemned it. There was a widespread feeling that Japanese people had equally suffered during the War and this should be assuaged as much as possible. In spite of opposition from other nations, India supported the proposal of food aid for Japan in the Far Eastern Commission. As soon as the interim Government was formed in 1946, Nehru asked for the withdrawal of the Indian Army contingent from the British Occupation force in Japan as the Indian Army should not occupy another Asian nation. The Indian Army personnel left a good impression on the Japanese and found them friendly towards them. Another factor, which motivated the Indian policy makers with regard to Japan was that it should be reinstated in the comity of nations, as early as possible. Though Japan was still under US occupation, as an Asian nation, Japan, was invited to the Asian Relations Conference, organized by the Indian Council of World Affairs in 1947, even before India became independent. Nehru took up the mission of Asian unity, which Subash Chandra Bose had endorsed during the War and the Conference was convened to provide a meeting ground of new peoples and an expression of “the spirit of Asia, which has persisted in spite of isolation and grew up during the years of European domination”. Though Japanese delegates came to the conference, they were not allowed to attend the Conference under the orders of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. The spirit of the Conference was that enmities and hatred engendered by the last War should be forgotten. The dissenting judgement of Judge Radha Binod Pal, the Indian Judge in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in 1948, questioned the legal right of the victors to sit on judgment on the vanquished for their war crimes, The victors had also committed war crimes. Nehru’s gift of a baby elephant, Indira, to the Ueno Zoo, as all the animals had perished in the aerial bombing also showed India’s eagerness to bring some cheer to the Japanese children in war-devastated Japan. Japan was also invited to take part in the Asian games in 1951, even before she became independent. To enable Japan to rebuild her ruined country economically, India signed a barter agreement with Japan for supplying raw cotton on 20th January 1948.

India took keen interest in the San Francisco Peace Conference but did not sign the Treaty. India had various objections to the Anglo-American draft. In India’s policy towards the peace settlement, there was an underlying desire that there should be no vindictive action and the settlement should be capable of wiping out hatred from the minds of the people

concerned. India felt that the treaty failed to give Japan a position of honour and equality among nations. India objected to the continuation of stationing of foreign troops in Japan even after the end of the occupation. In India's view the exclusion of the People's Republic of China from the negotiations could not be justified. India also strongly protested against provisions relating to the disposition of territories taken away from Japan. Therefore, India did not sign the San Francisco Treaty. The Indian stand was appreciated by a large section of people in Japan as they were also objecting to a 'separate treaty'. India justified its stand by concluding a separate peace treaty with Japan in June 1952 after Japan got back her sovereignty. It was a Treaty of friendship and goodwill. The Treaty had provisions for the restoration of the Japanese assets in India and renunciations of reparation claims. In the immediate postwar years, India's official policy reflected the perception of the people of India that the people of Japan should be assisted in rebuilding their country after the war. There should be compassion rather than hatred. An attitude of tolerance rather than revenge should prevail. Japan should be brought back to the family of nations with honour.

The Government of India was clear that cultural exchanges were essential for building the foundations of mutual understanding. Therefore under the Cultural Agreement signed in October 1956, which took effect in 1957, India took the initiative to offer scholarships to Japanese students to study in India, even before the Japanese Government instituted scholarships for Indian students. These students on return to Japan were able to motivate Japanese students to study about India. Scholarships were given to Indian students by the Indian Government to study in Japan. Nehru also initiated a proposal for establishment of an Institution to make in depth studies of Asian nations, which had not been encouraged during the colonial rule. This led to the establishment of the Indian School of International Studies affiliated to the University of Delhi in 1955. This marked the beginning of Japanese Studies in India, in the sense of study of Japan on the basis of Japanese language materials. This got further fillip with the establishment of the Japan Foundation in 1972 and their active assistance to educational institutions for the study of Japanese language and development of Japanese studies.

Hence by mid-1950s, a new beginning was made in establishing friendly relations and developing mutual understanding. The Japanese had great expectations that under Nehru's leadership, a new international order would be created. However, the two nations drifted apart, as India chose the path of non-aligned and Japan was firmly aligned to USA. Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke's proposal for an Asian Development Fund, when he visited India in 1957 was not welcomed by Nehru as he thought that it was a ruse to bring India into the so-called free world. However, there was disappointment among the Japanese that India

was not able to remove poverty and illiteracy from the land. Japan had already recovered from the effects of the War and was making rapid strides in its economic development. However, when India took PL 480 funds from the USA to tide over its economic crisis and was getting indebted to other nations even for its basic needs, Japan became an important member of the Aid India Consortium. The first Yen Credit Agreement for \$50 million was signed in 1958. Japan continued to be a creditor nation with regard to India. This coloured the attitudes of the Government of Japan and the people of Japan towards India. Whether it was the Yen credits or later the ODA, Japan became the giver and India the receiver, according to the general understanding of the people of Japan. However, the unsatiable demand for raw materials by the rapidly growing industries in Japan made Japan apply the “develop and import” policy to India to acquire an assured supply of iron ore by supplying capital in the form of machinery and equipment for iron ore mines. Japanese capital and technical knowhow also helped in the development of the fishing industry in India, with Japan also getting an assured supply of marine products. However, India lost its place as the biggest supplier of iron ore to Australia by the late 1960s, India could not match the better infrastructural facilities and the lower price of Australian ore. The total opening of the Chinese market for trade and investments for Japan after normalization of relations with China in 1972 decreased the importance of India.

Japanese public opinion turned against India on a few occasions. The Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 and India asking Japan for assistance was the first occasion. There was great disappointment that India, which had advocated non-violence resorted to war to settle disputes. There was not much understanding about the origin of the dispute. And how the hostilities started India’s conflicts with its other neighbour in 1965 and 1971 also elicited the same kind of response. Probably, Japanese of an island nation, could not visualize and understand the problems faced by nations which are land locked and have to defend themselves from border intrusions. When India tested a nuclear device at Pokhran in 1974, it sent shock waves in Japan. This was deplored by Japan. India figured boldly on the first page in Japanese newspapers. However, Japan did not join USA and Canada in suspending aid to India. Japan’s reactions were very vehement, when India conducted a test again in 1998. It is understood in India that the nuclear issue evokes an upsurge of popular emotions in Japan, as Japan is the only nation which has suffered atomic bombardment. However, it is not understood in India why this moral abhorrence is not expressed in the case of tests conducted by China. China embarked on a programme for becoming a nuclear power in the 1960s. It is also known that there is a China-Pakistan nuclear nexus and China is also linked to the North Korean missile development plans. Japan’s reaction to the test conducted by China in 1995, was very mild compared to the very harsh reaction by Japan

like suspension of aid and condemnation of India in the international councils. Japan did not seem to understand the compulsions and circumstances that led to the test in 1998. Japan had covered itself by the US nuclear umbrella as a protection against its powerful nuclear neighbours. Apart from the nuclear umbrella, as admitted by Prime Minister Hata Tsutomu in the Diet in 1994, Japan had the capability to produce nuclear weapons. There was no apprehension in India that Japan will produce nuclear weapons. However, Japan was relying more and more on nuclear power to ensure its energy security and lower its dependence on oil imports. India should also have the option to protect itself from its powerful nuclear neighbours and also find alternative means for energy security. Both Japan and India were committed to complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. A continuing dialogue may lead to agreement on the ways and means of forcing the nuclear nations to commit to a time bound phase out of nuclear weapons. Hence the vehement reaction of Japan cooled off relations between the two nations.

Japan took a serious view of India's nuclear tests and suspended aid to India. The earlier commitments of aid were, however, exempt from these sanctions and aid flows continued. Humanitarian aid was also exempt from these sanctions. While in the case of the Pokhran Test II, apart from economic sanctions, Japan also tried to link it to the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan, equated India with Pakistan and tried to assume the role of a facilitator in settling the Kashmir issue. This was, therefore, a difficult phase in the relations between the two nations. However, this brought about a realization that the absence of contentious issues between the two countries had led to indifference to the need for a continuous dialogue between the two nations. Greater efforts were needed for establishing better communication. The sensitivity of certain issues in both the nations should be clearly understood.

Economic Liberalisation - Look East Policy

The timely and prompt assistance given by Japan in 1991 to tide over India's balance of payments crisis was greatly appreciated by India. The Japanese Government had arranged a loan of \$300 million from its own funds and also arranged \$150 million from the Asian Development Bank. In addition, the Finance Minister of Japan was able to persuade the Japanese Banks to roll over the short-term debts of \$2billion for three months. This also led to the policy of liberalization of the Indian economy. India formally launched the "Look East" policy as well. India's economic reforms had provided an opportunity for greater Japanese investments into India. FDI commitments reached a peak level of \$ 531.5million with actual inflows being about one-third the committed level. Big Companies like Toyota, Honda, Sony, Mitsubishi, Matsushita, etc. were establishing their presence. There was a

general promotion of Indian economic reforms in the Japanese media and Japanese economic organizations. The potential of the Indian market was being studied. High level interaction at the political level had started. There was even talk of the need for a bilateral security agreement. Japan Foundation established its office in New Delhi in 1994 and facilitated greater academic and cultural exchanges.

The Pokhran interlude did not really affect the people to people relations. Over the years the number of Engineers who had been going for short-term training in Japanese companies had been increasing, enabling Indians to have first hand contacts with the Japanese in the work place and outside. Generally, they went to their work place after a general orientation course which included a short course in Japanese language to enable them to communicate with the Japanese. In the sixties and seventies, the trainees used to be appalled at the treatment they received, as their technical competence levels used to be related to the low development level of India and not to the technical knowledge they had acquired in the Universities in India. Diffidence about sharing technical knowledge by the Japanese used to cause irritations. The manuals were given only in Japanese language, causing linguistic problems. However, by the end of the training period, the trainees were able to get some understanding about the Japanese work ethic, their thoroughness, etc. The Japanese also were initiated into interactions with people coming from multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual societies and learn to respect their sensitivities though they may come from “a poor developing country”. This also brings us to the question of the “donor syndrome” of Japan. There was a poor understanding among the people in Japan in general that all the programmes of assistance by Japan were not one-sided and that Japan was as much a receiver as a giver and sometimes more of a receiver. Even all the yen loans were returned with interest and India had not defaulted on interest payments and return of loans. The infrastructure development for which these loans were used involved import of Japanese machinery and equipment, dispatch of Japanese experts to India, etc. for installation and initial operation of the project. With respect to ODA also the grant element was low and in the case of India, over a period of years, it was least tied, i.e. the Japanese content in the aided projects was less than 20 percent. They were also soft loans, i.e., with low interest rates and a long repayment period. It was also not understood that India on its part was helping the least developed countries through grants, loans and improving their technical skills.

Assistance from the Japanese Government was not limited only to projects giving substantial returns to Japan in the material sense. Good will for Japan was created by the

work of the trained volunteers sent by Japan to work in agricultural farms and other projects related to rural development, These volunteers interacted at the grassroots level, improved the skills of rural labour and thus were able to develop an understanding of their problems. This interaction created a different image of Japanese in India. Japanese were not reserved and distant but were willing to communicate (the volunteers had a working knowledge of the local language) and the Indians were also eager to respond. There is no doubt that the volunteers would have had to undergo a great deal of privations and life would have been difficult. However, they succeeded in bringing Indians closer to Japan. The grassroots level assistance programme to non-governmental organizations(NGOS), who are engaged in social service projects like spreading literacy among the underprivileged, healthcare services or the empowerment of the disabled, so that they could become useful members of the society has also brought out the “human face” of Japan. NGOS had to interact with the Japanese to project their needs and convince them about the sincerity of their purpose through self-generation of funds for their projects. Japanese were thus able to get insights into the socio-economic organizations in India increasing their understanding of India.

Promotion of Japanese language education in India

Even in the early 20th century, Ohkawa Shumei emphasized the need for Indians to learn Japanese language, Rash Behari Bose was able to establish good communication with the Japanese, as he was able to speak in Japanese and publish his articles in Japanese(Bose could not write in Japanese but could dictate his articles in Japanese language). In principle, the need for studying Japanese language was accepted in post-independent India and a Japanese national was invited to teach Japanese in the School of languages in the Defence Ministry, where both Defence personnel and civilians could learn Japanese language in part time courses. Rabindranath Tagore’s Shanti Niketan had established a Japan Centre, where Japanese language was taught. Japanese language education in India got a fillip with the active initiatives taken by the Government of Japan initially and by the Japan Foundation later. University of Delhi could provide facilities for Japanese language education in 1969 after a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 1969 between the Government of India and the Government of Japan, which provided for sending of Japanese nationals specially trained for teaching Japanese language to foreigners. Japanese language became the most sought after foreign language both in Delhi University and later in Jawaharlal University in New Delhi which started courses in the language in 1973.The 1980s saw an increase in the number of private institutions teaching Japanese language in the western

region of India like Bombay and Pune in response to the demands made by Indo-Japan joint ventures.

The economic liberalisation of India in 1990s and the emergence of India as a software giant gave a further fillip to Japanese language learning. A number of BPOs were set up and the demand for personnel knowing Japanese language increased. Knowledge of Japanese language increased employment opportunities also in the tourist industry. In 2004, among the initiatives agreed to be taken both by the Japan and India for the promotion of economic relations, a definite target was set for the promotion of Japanese language education in India. In order to overcome the language barrier for students wanting to study in Japanese Universities, it was decided to introduce Japanese language at the secondary school level in India.

After a conference in 2007, Japan Foundation took up specific measures such as “encourage Japanese language learners to continue learning and give incentives for Japan visits”, etc. Japan Foundation has specific programmes for the training of overseas teachers of Japanese language. New methodologies are being evolved with a stress on skills for communication in Japanese language. Among the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) volunteers, there are teachers trained for teaching Japanese language, who are assigned to Universities, according to the latter’s requirements.

21st century - Japan’s recognition of India as part of Asia

In the 19th century, when Fukuzawa Yukichi pronounced *datsu-a nyu-o* asking Japan to disassociate itself from Asia and enter the West. His call was based on the fact that the Western nations regarded all Asian nations as poor, backward and apathetic, with no will to change their circumstances. Further, Fukuzawa opined that Japan should not allow itself to be put into that category of Asian nations in the eyes of the West, but display its ability to rapidly change itself according to western norms and thus be regarded as different from other Asian nations. This change of attitude by the western nations, according to him, would save Japan from western aggrandizement, and help in preserving its independence. Okakura Tenshin gave the slogan that “Asia is one”. Tenshin did not exclude India from the concept of Asia. However, in my view, the Government of Japan put China in a separate category, Korea and Taiwan had become its colonies. Hence, its concept of Ajiya was limited to South East Asia but included Burma, although under British control. India as a British colony, was beyond the purview of Ajiya. The INA (Indian National Army) interlude did not succeed in including India into Ajiya even in the postwar era. While India

tried to associate Japan in every Asian conference including the Bandung Conference held in 1957, India was not part of Japan's Ajiya.

This has changed in the 21st century. After a gap of 10 years, Prime Minister of Japan, Yoshiro Mori visited India for talks in 2000. On the occasion of Prime Minister's visit, India and Japan agreed to build a global partnership in the 21st century. The interlude of cooling off relations between Japan and India, on account of Pokhran II, ended. Economic delegations visited India to explore ways of promoting bilateral investment and economic cooperation. Closer co-operation in the Information Technology (IT) sector, like exchange of information, human resource development, technical cooperation etc. was envisaged. Liberalisation of visa regulations for business people engaged in the IT sector was agreed upon to facilitate greater interaction between IT specialists of India and Japan. Sanctions imposed after PokhranII were lifted in October 2001. On 12 February 2002, Japan agreed to extend a major ODA loan for the ongoing power station in Simhadri, Andhra Pradesh and the Delhi Mass Rapid Transportation system. 2001 also saw agreement between Japan and India to have a comprehensive security dialogue every year on issues like defence policies of both the countries, regional security, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Another significant development is the expansion of the definition of East Asia beyond the traditional geographical limits. The region is defined more in political terms to accommodate a larger geographical area for the purposes of the East Asia Summit. Japan struggled hard to ensure that India got full membership along with Australia and NewZealand. Japan thwarted China's attempt to have a system of membership, core and secondary. Japan has recognized the importance of cooperation with India for the task of the integration of East Asia. India's transformed ties with the USA stepping up defence cooperation and establishing a strategic partnership might also have been a factor in Japan accepting the economic and strategic significance of India in Asia. With the phenomenal rise of China in the region both as an economic power and a military power, the South East Asian nations also welcomed India as a full member of the EAS. ASEAN nations had always wanted greater participation by India. India became an ASEAN sectoral dialogue partner in 1993 and progressed to full dialogue partnership with the ASEAN in 1995. India became a member of the ASEAN-led ARF formed in 1994 and conceived to be a security valve through collective efforts.

The Indo-US nuclear deal and the NSG waiver for India has set in motion the negotiations for a nuclear deal with Japan for setting up nuclear power plants in India with their time tested technology.

An Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan, which would boost mutual trade and Japanese investments in India, is also likely to be signed when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visits Japan in October 2010.

21st century is thus witnessing a realisation of the convergence of interests of the two nations in economic and strategic fields. The annual strategic dialogue has been elevated to the level that Japan has with USA and Australia, i.e., a combined foreign affairs and defence 2 + 2 dialogue. Both India and Japan have common interest in other issues also, like global warming, the safety and security of international maritime traffic, anti-terrorism, etc. There is also convergence in the views of both the nations regarding the reforms of the UN Security Council .

At the people's level interactions are increasing in all fields. The Indian residents in Japan have increased with the influx of Indian personnel in the IT industry in Japan, not only in Tokyo and surrounding areas but also in other areas of Japan, giving increasing opportunities for Japanese and Indians to interact in Japan itself. In the fields of art, music, dance, cinema, etc., there have been more exchanges. The interest of Indians in Japanese animation has increased and has become popular in the Indian TV channels. One of the motivations of the youth for learning Japanese is their interest in animation. Other interests which draw Indians to know about Japan are fashion design, judo, etc. If introduction to India for the common man in Japan was through the "curry rice|" popularized by Nakamura-ya, in recent years, Japanese cuisine is becoming popular among the urban elite, with even recipes for sushi, tempura, etc. appearing in the news and TV media.

Conclusions

In these two centuries of inter-action between India and Japan, even during periods, when state to state relations had witnessed a cooling off period, there was no sense of animosity. People to people relations continued, though there may have been disappointments, misgivings, etc. about the policies followed by the respective states. The yard stick of material development used by the Japanese for positioning India in the hierarchy of nations and which conditioned their attitudes towards Indians proved to be irksome. Indians felt that there was poor understanding by the Japanese of the complex problems faced by them internally on account of their multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious character and externally because of being a nation sharing land borders, The Japanese, who tried to comprehend India as a monolithic whole and make generalizations of Indian character, behavior, etc. felt that India was too complex and cannot even be called a nation at all. Both nations tried to put one another in a stereotype. This made them miss the continuous

changes happening in each society, the regional differences, etc. Though both the nations are democracies, the difficulties in building a national consensus for acceptance and implementation of policies and the delays involved in this process are lost sight of. No doubt, this causes lot of frustrations and irritations for Japanese in India. However, the success of Suzuki Maruthi, an automobile company in India, shows that a lasting useful relationship can be built with patience and perseverance. In this venture, both Indians and Japanese had to make adjustments and they did so because they did not want the project to fail. This is also an example of success built on constant interaction and dialogue.

Linguistic hurdles do exist in the mutual understanding of Indians and Japanese. Efforts are being made to motivate more and more Indians to learn Japanese language for smoother communication. This would also give more insights into the Japanese way of thinking, behaviour patterns, etc. In early 20th century itself, the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages had facilities for learning Hindi and Urdu. Indian nationals were employed as teachers. In the post World War II era, when facilities were made available in Indian Universities, Japanese took advantage of them and on return to Japan propagated the study of Hindi in Japanese institutions.

India never had a trust-deficit with Japan. Even in the bi-polar world, when Japan decided to align with the USA for maintaining its national security, India's only objection was that Japan should be allowed to make this decision after she regained sovereignty and not as a condition for restoration of her sovereignty. India also deplored that, even after gaining its independence, Japan was not free to negotiate for normalization with other Asian nations because of the constraints included in the Peace Treaty itself. India was not a signatory to the treaty and could conclude a treaty of peace and goodwill with Japan in June 1952.

Though all sections of Indians had condemned Japan's aggression in China, they did not want the past actions of Japan to affect India's relations with a new Japan, which had resolved to live in peace with the world. In the age of imperialism, nations in the West had also resorted to war to establish their control and committed many atrocities in their colonies. India did not believe in singling out Japan for condemnation of its past. Nor did India believe that the people of Japan should be forced to carry the burden of this past by other nations, while entering a new age of concluding peaceful relations. It should be left to the people of Japan to do the necessary introspection and reflect upon their past mistakes so that they are not repeated in the future, as the people of Japan also had to pay a heavy price. The people of Japan had the right to come back to the comity of nations with peace and honour. It is in this spirit that India began its relations with Japan. Independent India started its relations with Britain without any spirit of revenge or acrimony.

In Japan's early economic rehabilitation, India did not hesitate to give whatever help was possible. Neither did India have any reservations in asking for Japan's economic assistance for its own economic development. While there was need for one's own efforts at development and avoid over-dependence on other nations, economic cooperation was for mutual benefit and did not place the nations in a hierarchy of superior inferior relations.

The need for removal of misconceptions and forging of mutual understanding through people to people interactions and promotion of mutual critical studies, was clearly understood. India had been deprived too long of interactions with other Asian nations on account of centuries of colonial domination.

India and Japan took each other's friendship granted, as there were no serious issues of conflict between them. India's policy of economic liberalisation and looking to the East for its future did remove many thorns in their relations. However, the nuclear tests by India led to recrimination in Japan, as it went against the sensitivities of the Japanese and there was a period of coolness. But through a process of continuous dialogue, the compulsions of each nation, have been understood. Japan is also moving forward to assist India in achieving energy security through increasing its use of nuclear power. Japan has taken positive steps to integrate India into the East Asian community for peace and prosperity in the world.

We are now in an age of globalisation. Globalisation does not mean only an opening up in the economic sense of free exchange of goods, services, human skills, capital, etc. Globalisation must also imply the acceptance of dissimilarities among nations and utilization of their strength and weakness to build a peaceful and prosperous world.

As partners in progress, India and Japan have to march forward hand in hand to reach this goal.

