

India-Japan Relations

Background

India's relations with Japan are singularly free of any kind of dispute - ideological, cultural or territorial. It is unique and one of warmth emanating from generous gestures and sentiments of standing by each other at times of need. Exchanges between India and Japan are said to have begun in the 6th century A.D., when Buddhism was introduced to Japan. Indian culture, filtered through Buddhism, has impacted on Japanese culture and thought, and this is the source of Japanese people's sense of closeness with India. Direct exchange in the modern era, however, began only in the Meiji era (1868-1912), when Japan embarked on the process of modernization.

Japan's image in India has historically been positive, going back to the early 20th century when its emergence as a big power was interpreted by India as the beginning of Asian resurgence. Japanese support and assistance to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army (INA) continue to shape popular thinking about Japan. The immediate post independence experience was no less positive, with the Tokyo tribunal, waiving of reparations, conclusion of a separate Peace Treaty, the Asian Games and extension of Yen loans. This spirit was visible as well in 1991, in Japan's support during India's balance of payments crisis. In 1949 Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru gifted an elephant to the Ueno Zoo, in Tokyo. This brought a ray of light into the lives of the Japanese children suffering from the aftermath of World War II. The elephant, named Indira after Nehru's daughter, died of old age in August 1983. Her death was widely covered in the Japanese Press. In the collective Indian perception, there was a strong admiration for Japan's post-war economic reconstruction and subsequent rapid growth. This was reaffirmed a generation later by the unique role of Maruti-Suzuki in revolutionizing industrial technology and management concepts in the pre-economic reform India. Somewhere in Indian thinking was embedded respect for a society which engaged the world on its own terms and preserved its unique character through a process of upheaval and change. The intuitive feeling about Japan was one of friendliness and it was not without reason that Japan consistently ranked as the most admired nation in Indian newspaper polls for a number of years.

Popular goodwill in both societies has been a notable element in the relationship. In Japan, it is not uncommon to hear politicians refer warmly to India's declaration of mourning at the time of demise of the Showa Emperor. Japanese businessmen active in steel, textiles or trading are nostalgic as they recall their Indian connections during the reconstruction period. Even varied sections of the intelligentsia saw much good in our society - the traditionalists as the source of Buddhism, the philosophers and academics as a great intellectual tradition, the post war centre-left admired the Nehruvian approach, while the right wing still kept alive memories of the INA. Surprisingly, the most pervasive Indian presence was gastronomic, through a Japanese concoction known as 'curry rice'.

Since diplomatic relations between India and Japan were established in 1952, the two countries have enjoyed cordial relations based on trade and economic and technical cooperation. The cultural agreement between India and Japan was signed in 1956 and took effect the following year. In 1951, India established a scholarship system for overseas students. This system to this day provides an opportunity for young Japanese

scholars who are today in the forefront of Indian studies to study in India. Cultural exchanges picked up in the 1980s with Japanese local governments becoming involved in exchange activities with their Indian counterparts and traditional Indian performing arts being shown in Japan. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi attended the April 1988 opening ceremony of the Festival of India. Japan has been extending cultural grant-in-aid to research institutes, universities, and cultural faculties to encourage their activities. In addition, through the UNESCO/Japan Trust Fund for Preservation of the World Cultural Heritage, Japan is helping with the preservation and restoration of the Buddhist monuments of Sanchi and Satdhara by sending experts.

Strategic and Global Partnership

India and Japan are partners in peace, with a common interest in and complementary responsibility for promoting the security, stability and prosperity of Asia as well as in advancing international peace and equitable development. At the beginning of the 21st century, India and Japan resolved to take their bilateral relationship to a qualitatively new level. The foundation for this was laid when Mr. Yoshiro Mori, Prime Minister of Japan and Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India agreed during the landmark visit of Mr. Mori to India in August 2000 to establish the "Global Partnership in the 21st Century". Today, India and Japan share a global vision of peace, stability and shared prosperity, based on sustainable development. Shared democratic values and commitment to human rights, pluralism, open society, and the rule of law underpin the global partnership between the two countries. The global partnership between India and Japan reflects a broad convergence of their long-term political, economic and strategic interests, aspirations, objectives and concerns. India and Japan view each other as partners that have responsibility for, and are capable of, responding to global and regional challenges in keeping with their global partnership. A strong, prosperous and dynamic India is, therefore, in the interest of Japan and vice versa. In the above context and in view of the current international situation, it was decided to reinforce the strategic focus of the global partnership between India and Japan.

It was agreed during the visit of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2005 that the two countries would further strengthen their cooperation and pursue an all round and comprehensive development of bilateral relations, with a particular and urgent focus on strengthening economic ties, through full utilization of the existing and potential complementarities in their economies. It was decided that both countries would strive to develop closer dialogue and collaboration to secure peace, stability and prosperity in Asia, promote democracy and development, and explore a new architecture for closer regional cooperation in Asia. It was also agreed that the two countries would strengthen cooperation in diverse areas such as environment, energy, disarmament, non-proliferation and security, taking advantage of, and further building on, their strategic convergences.

The dynamic growth of this relationship is reflected in the number of high level ministerial and parliamentary exchanges that have been taking place at regular intervals. There is a parallel process of business and industry in both countries taking note of the opportunities which has led to a sharp increase in exchange of business delegations.

Annual Summits

Annual Summits between Prime Ministers of the two countries have been taking place since 2006. PM Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Japan from 27-30 May 2013 for the 7th Annual Summit and held talks with PM Abe. Both the leaders extensively discussed bilateral, regional and global issues of common interest which enhanced and strengthened the Strategic and Global Partnership between the two countries. Prime Minister and Smt. Kaur had an audience with the Emperor and Empress of Japan, which was followed by a private lunch hosted by Their Majesties. A Joint Statement titled, "Strengthening the Strategic and Global Partnership between Japan and India beyond the 60th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations" was signed.

Parliamentary Exchanges

Smt. Meira Kumar, Speaker, Lok Sabha, accompanied by a delegation of MPs visited Japan from 2-6 October 2011 at the joint invitation of the leaders of the Japanese Diet. During the visit, she visited Kobe, Hiroshima and Tokyo. In Kobe, she met with the Indian community and interacted with them. In Hiroshima, she visited the Peace Memorial and the Peace Museum. In Tokyo, she had interactive meetings with Speaker of the House of Representatives Mr. Takahiro Yokomichi, an audience with Their Majesties The Emperor and The Empress and a call on Prime Minister Mr. Yoshihiko Noda.

Bilateral Trade

In the financial year (FY) 2012-13, India-Japan bilateral trade reached US \$ 18.61 billion as against US \$18.43 billion in FY 2011-12. During FY 2012-13, India's exports to Japan were US \$ 6.1 billion and imports from Japan were US\$ 12.51 billion. India's primary exports to Japan have been petroleum products, iron ore, gems and jewelry, marine products, oil meals, ferroalloys, inorganic/organic chemicals, etc. India's primary imports from Japan have been machinery, transport equipment, iron and steel, electronic goods, organic chemicals, machine tools, etc. Japanese FDI into India reached \$2786 million in 2012, showing an increase of 19.8% over the previous year. According to JETRO, the number of Japanese companies in India reached 926 in October 2012 as against 812 in October 2011.

Japan is the largest bilateral donor to India. Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been supporting India's efforts for accelerated economic development particularly in the infrastructure sector. Cumulative commitment of ODA till March 2013 reached Yen 3807.763 billion on commitment basis. As on February 6, 2013, 66 projects were under implementation with Japanese loan assistance. The loan amount committed for these projects is Yen 1640.099 billion.

India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) became effective from August 1, 2011. It is one of the most comprehensive of all such agreements concluded by India and covers not only trade in goods but important areas of Trade in Services, Investments, Intellectual Property Rights, Custom Procedures and other trade related issues. It aims at eliminating abolition of tariffs over 94% of items

traded between India and Japan over a period of 10 years. It provides a very strong foundation for further strengthening our economic and commercial ties.

The two flagship projects of India-Japan cooperation namely the Western Delhi Freight Corridor (DFC) and Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) are making good progress.

60th Anniversary Celebrations

The year 2012 marked the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Japan. During the year-long celebrations, more than 150 commemorative events were organized including performing arts, photo and art exhibitions, traditional crafts and textiles, fashion shows, food festivals, tourism fairs, literary and academic seminars and business promotion in more than 60 cities and 25 prefectures of Japan in co-ordination with Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and other Indian and Japanese cultural organizations.

Indian community

The arrival of Indians in Japan for business and commercial interests began in the 1870s at the two major open ports of Yokohama and Kobe. More Indians entered Japan during World War I when Japanese products were sought to fill gaps in demand that war-torn Europe could not meet. Following the great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, most of the Indians in Yokohama relocated to the Kansai region (Osaka-Kobe), and the city hosted the largest migrant Indian population in Japan. Yokohama authorities offered special incentives to the Indian community after World War II to revive their old base in Kanto. The old Indian community in Japan focused on trading in textiles, commodities and electronics. With close linkages to India as well as connections in Hong Kong and Shanghai, they became major players in trading activities across Asia. A newer segment of the community is engaged in gems and jewelry. The Indian community established the Indian Merchants Association in Yokohama (IMAY) in 1929. In recent years, there has been a change in the composition of the Indian community with the arrival of a large number of professionals. These include IT professionals and engineers working for Indian and Japanese firms as well as professionals in management, finance, education, and S&T research who are engaged with multinational as well as Indian and Japanese organisations. The Nishikasai area in Tokyo is emerging as a “mini-India”. The community is engaged in a range of cultural and social activities. This maintains their links with the motherland and also promotes contacts with their Japanese neighbours. Their growing numbers has prompted the opening of two Indian schools in Tokyo and one in Yokohama. The community is actively engaged in events organized by the Embassy. The Indian community lives harmoniously with its neighbours and has developed relations with local governments to become valuable members of the Japanese community.

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