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Bengal's Romance with Japan: A Historical Narrative

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Bengal's Romance with Japan: A Historical Narrative¹

Rajaram Panda²

Abstract

This paper focuses on an aspect of India-Japan relations in history that is often underplayed in contemporary times. This aspect delineates the historical connect by emphasizing Bengal's special affinity with Japan and roles played by selected luminaries in contributing to the evolution of the bilateral ties up to the present times. Though there were several people from Bengal who had interacted politically, culturally and commercially with Japan in different capacities in the early part of the 20th century, in view of the vast magnitude a conscious decision was made to select only a few visionaries from Bengal whose roles in laying the foundation of India-Japan relations are significant and their relevance can be felt even today. They are (1) Swami Vivekananda, (2) Rabindranath Tagore, (3) Rash Behari Bose, (5) Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, and finally (6) Justice Radha Binod Pal. Each of these personalities left a profound impact on the evolution of India-Japan friendship. Of course, the visit of Indian monk Bodhisena and his role in the grand ceremony in Todaiji, Nara, of the Diabutsu (giant Buddha) in 752 AD had its own impact. The role of the then 45th Emperor Shomu, who made Buddhism the state religion was equally significant. This paper is the author's tribute to their remarkable contribution to India-Japan relations. The author also pays his tribute to lesser known persons whose interactions, impressions and observations are no less important but have been kept anonymous and not covered in this essay for lack of space.

Key words: Rash Behari Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Hariprabha, Nakamura, Toshiko, Azad Hind Fauj, Uemon Takeda, Justice Binod Behari Pal, Tokyo Trial, SCAP, San Francisco Peace Treaty, Asian identity.

¹ The paper is based on the author's lecture delivered at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library on 4 February 2022.

² Professor Rajaram Panda, an expert on Japan, is currently Senior Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. This is a part of his larger project under study during the tenure of the Fellowship.

Introduction

Much of the contemporary writings on India-Japan relations have tended to focus on economic issues with special emphasis on trade, investment, ODA in India's mega projects, and more recently on defence cooperation and security/maritime issues in response to changing security environment in the Indo-Pacific region. At the second layer of emphasis come the cultural aspect of the relationship and how the soft power synergy is being honed by both sides. However, it is often overlooked and also underplayed how this robust relationship in contemporary times has been influenced by historical connect. A discussion of the past shall help to posit the contemporary situation in the context of present study. Even here, a micro view is adopted by emphasizing Bengal's special affinity with Japan and roles played by a few selected luminaries in contributing to the evolution of the bilateral ties up to the present times.

The relationship between the two countries is not recent; it dates back to several centuries. This relationship is not superficial but of two real friends. The friendship, without any hiccup ever, runs through a long journey. During the long history, ties remained rooted in spiritual affinity, and strong cultural and civilisational bonds.

Similar to India's relations with the countries in Southeast Asia such as Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore etc and links of Buddhism, relations with Japan and the rest of Northeast Asia too have remained strong over centuries but shrouded in obscurity. This narrative must change. Delivering her speech at the Japan Foundation Award receiving ceremony in Tokyo on 29 October 2010, late Professor Savitri Vishwanathan, a doyen of Japanologist from India, remarked that "Japan was aware of the existence of India with the introduction of Buddhism through China even as early as the 8th century. However, India was blissfully unaware of even the existence of a country called Japan. Unlike in the case of China when many travelers came to India, no travelers from Japan ever came to India. Some Indian priests who had gone to China also visited Japan from China. They were respected, but did not return to India to talk about Japan. Being influenced by Buddhism, some Japanese learnt Sanskrit. Knowledge about Buddha's birth in India stimulated their curiosity about India (tenjiku), the divine land. However, they did not succeed in visiting India and therefore there remained a knowledge gap about India for quite some time. This ignorance 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 adopted by the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1639 did not permit the Japanese to travel outside Japan. This policy remained in place for over two centuries. When

finally Japanese learnt that India came under foreign rule first by the Muslims and later by the British, it disappointed them and resulted in a negative appraisal of India.”³

India's earliest documented direct contact with Japan was in connection with the Todaiji Temple in Nara. The consecration or eye-opening of the towering statue of Lord Buddha was performed by an Indian monk, Bodhisena, in 752 AD.⁴ A brief explanation on the significance of this event is relevant to connect the evolution of bilateral ties through contemporary times and the continuation of spiritual bonds. Though including Bodhisena in this study might look off-track as there is no connection with Bengal, the exception cannot be avoided in view of his role in contributing to the popularity and influence of Buddhism in Japan.

Buddhism and the Role of Bodhisena

Amid these cultural and spiritual links, cultural assets from India reached Japan when Chinese and Korean monks went to Japan carrying with them copies of important sutras, as well as copies of frescoes from the walls of Indian temples and monasteries.⁵ The improvised Japanese with Indian imprint can be seen at the Horyuji temple in Nara, the cradle of Japanese Buddhism, in wall paintings. This suggests that Indian influences were accepted by Japan in such an old time. With the collapse of the Tang regime, monks and traders, besides some official Japanese emissaries, decided to venture into hazardous ocean journey to India in late ninth century, carrying with them Buddha's teachings. Soon enough, Buddhist imprint took root as more and more Japanese came under the spell of Buddhist philosophy. Their enthusiasm was backed by official patronage.

In the early phase of Buddhism taking root, the ruling class used Buddhism as a vehicle for supporting the state. That spirit led the then Emperor Shomu in 741 AD to order the erection of a giant statue (daibutsu) of the Locana (Vaircana) Buddha—the primordial Buddha of the universe—at the Todaiji temple in Nara. This huge project wreaked havoc on state finances. China's Tang dynasty which had already built a giant Locana Buddha at Luoyang was the main inspiration behind the project. The project cost Japan greatly, as the statue used much of Japan's bronze and relied entirely on imported gold.⁶

³Savitri Vishwanathan, “India and Japan: Changing Perceptions”, https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/about/award/archive/2010/dl/Savitri_Vishwanathan.pdf

⁴ [Embassy of India, Tokyo, Japan \(indembassy-tokyo.gov.in\)](https://www.indembassy-tokyo.gov.in) Accessed on 20 March 2022

⁵ John Carroll, “Bodhisena: The Indian Monk Who Opened Eyes in Nara”, *Japan Forward*, 26 September 2020, <https://japan-forward.com/bookmark-bodhisena-the-indian-monk-who-opened-eyes-in-nara/> Accessed on 27 September 2020

⁶ Shōmu-tenno was the 45th Emperor of Japan, (born in 701 AD-died on 21 June 756 AD), according to the traditional order of succession. He devoted huge sums of money to the creation of magnificent Buddhist temples

It would not be irrelevant to mention here what is probably already known to many readers. In the context of the relevance of this study and to connect this historical narrative with the contemporary times, it does deserve mention that the ‘eye-opening’ ceremony (kaigen or kaigan) held in 752 AD, was truly an international affair, which was attended by Empress Koken, former Emperor Shomu, Empress Dowager Komyo, 10,000 guests including monks from China and Korean kingdoms of Paekche, Kudara, and Silla and 4,000 dancers to celebrate the completion of the Buddha. As regards the eye-opening ceremony or consecration, it is believed in Japan that in Buddhism, the “painting in” of the eyes of a statue signifies its “awakening”, meaning thereby endowing the statue with spiritual properties so that the image is believed to be akin to a living Buddha. What is remarkable and noteworthy in the context of historical connect is that an Indian priest-monk Bodhisena was chosen to officiate at the ceremony, the first Indian to reach Japan’s shores. This is established by documentary evidences. The brush that Bodhisena used, and some of the Tempyo-era costumes, masks, and other utensils used during the ceremony are preserved in the Shosoin treasure house near Todaiji, signifying the importance and respect Japan attaches to India through the century-old event.

Bodhisena, the Indian monk’s journey to Japan at a time when travelling was full of hurdles is a story told and retold countless times and therefore deserves mention here. According to author and sociologist John Carroll, his study on Bodhisena based on fragmentary and sometimes contradictory documentary evidences suggests that Bodhisena was born into a Brahmin family in the city of Madurai around 704 AD when Buddhism was already into its long decline in the land of its birth.⁷ According to the story, while traversing the South China Sea, Bodhisena was shipwrecked but was saved by an Indian who was trading pearls in the kingdom of Champa, now in Vietnam.⁸ This savior himself became a monk and travelled with Bodhisena to China and eventually to Japan. Bodhisena desired to meet Manjusri, the bodhisattva of visionary insight living in Mount Wutai for whom he had great admiration. But when told that

and artifacts during his reign. During his reign Buddhism virtually became the official state religion. In 729 AD his consort, a member of the powerful Fujiwara family, was declared the Empress, shattering the precedent that all Empress consorts had to be princesses of the imperial blood. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Shomu-emperor-of-Japan> (Accessed on 31 March 2022)

⁷ John Carroll, “Bodhisena: The Indian Monk Who Opened Eyes in Nara”, *Japan Forward*, 26 September 2020, <https://japan-forward.com/bookmark-bodhisena-the-indian-monk-who-opened-eyes-in-nara/> (Accessed on 27 September 2021)

⁸ Champa is another city in Vietnam where Buddhism left its imprint and encouraged many Vietnamese people to become Buddhist. One can see many Hindu temples in Champa even today. For detailed information on this aspect, see Rajaram Panda, ed., *India-Vietnam Relations Retrospect & Prospect* (2016), ICCR and Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, pp. 240.

Manjusri had moved to Japan, he too moved to Japan with a Japanese official delegation then in China, who invited him, in 736 AD.

While in Japan, Bodhisena met a Japanese monk Gyoki, who took him to Heian-kyo at Nara and introduced to the Emperor. Later, a Buddhist retreat named Ryosenji was built for the Indian monk at Mount Tomi. When Bodhisena died aged 57 or 25 years after coming to Japan, he was cremated and buried there. Ryosenji is located about eight kilometers from central Nara near Tomio station and a major site for Buddhists. Some Japanese seemed to have visited India around that time but the claim cannot be verified for lack of evidence. For instance, a Japanese monk Kongo Sanmai (Sanskrit name Vajrasamadhi) is believed to have reached India via Tang China and studied at the great Buddhist intellectual centre at Nalanda. When Buddhism declined, this great centre of learning fell into ruins after centuries of neglect, until recently when it was revived with support from India and some of the Asian nations where Buddhist influence contributed a great deal in making a spiritual connect in the region. Though it could be difficult to restore fully Nalanda's ancient glory, the effort to revive its memory is commendable.

Bodhisena's coming to Japan and officiating at the Todaiji dedication left huge historical impact but the cultural impact has been much greater. Instrumental music and court dance that went from India are preserved and practiced till today. With the monk's influence, Sanskrit also gained popularity. Daibutsu symbolized the Buddhist unity transcending borders.

This was the foundation from which subsequent leaders and visionaries took the relationship further ahead. In contemporary times, prominent Indians associated with Japan were Swami Vivekananda, Nobel laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, entrepreneur J.R.D. Tata, freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Justice Radha Binod Pal.⁹ To this list of luminaries the name of yet another Indian freedom fighter, Rash Behari Bose must be added whose role in forging India-Japan friendship is no less important. Each of these luminaries contributed hugely to the friendship between the two countries. Though a short description of each of these personalities might add value to the present research, another level of relations also flourished with the blessing of the British who were ruling India at that time.

Though Buddhism is often cited as the oldest civilisational connection between India and larger Asia whose influence remains relevant even today as was centuries ago, one remarkable trend in the past 100+ years or so is Bengal's special affinity with Japan.¹⁰ An attempt is made in this paper to describe the roles played by a few selected eminent persons from Bengal in

⁹ Embassy of India Tokyo, Japan (indembassy-tokyo.gov.in) (Last accessed on 5 May 2021).

¹⁰ See, two part article by Rajaram Panda, "Bengal and Japan –I and II", *The Statesman*, 9 and 10 July 2021, <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/bengal-and-japan-i-1502979918.html> (Accessed on 11 July 2021)

bringing India and Japan closer. This paper is a remembrance and tribute to the contributions of these personalities.

Swami Vivekananda's Japan Visit

The first in my list and at the intellectual level is Swami Vivekananda. Born on 12 January 1863, he died at a young age of 39 on 4 July 1902 but not before leaving his influence on the human consciousness. Born as Narendranath Datta aka Swami Bibidishanand, Vivekananda was a Hindu monk and a key figure in the introduction of the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world. It was he who raised interfaith awareness and brought Hinduism to the status of a major world religion. Being an advocate of Hindu reform movement, his concept of nationalism in colonial India stirred up the human consciousness at a time when India was seeking a voice of its own and clamouring for freedom from the colonial yoke. His best known speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893 began with the words "Sisters and brothers of America", in which he introduced Hinduism to the world audience.

Vivekananda was inclined towards spirituality and soon assumed the status of a patriotic saint. His birthday is celebrated as National Youth Day. His visit to Japan on his way to the World Congress of Religions opened a great vista to the people of India about Japan and its people. His first hand reports about Japan through his letters, lectures, etc. had only one message for the young students of India,¹¹ "Look East", go to Japan and learn from them about the development strategy of the Meiji Government and how they implemented their plans. He also conveyed to the Indians his impressions about other commendable traits of the Japanese—their discipline, punctuality, cleanliness, etc. Vivekananda admired Japan's emphasis on compulsory universal education. Vivekananda's call to the youth inspired many Indian students to go to Japan for higher education and learn about advances made in science and technology. The Indian students under the aegis of the Oriental Youngmens' Association also hoped that Japan would become the hub for Asian students for exchange of ideas, provide mutual encouragement and upon finishing their studies would be the pioneers of development and enlightenment for Asia. Thus knowledge gained in Japan seemed to give opportunities and hope for the bright future of Asia.¹²

Vivekananda's stirring speech at the Art Institute of Chicago on 11 September 1893 where he lamented on sectarianism, bigotry, and the terrible fallout that have overwhelmed the

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid.

beautiful Earth with violence and sent whole nations to despair, left an indelible mark across generations.¹³ Who funded the trip of the monk to Chicago? Not many are aware that it was Maharaja Ajit Singh Bahadur, the erstwhile ruler of Khetri who sponsored the trip for his guru and friend. On his return, the spiritual leader visited Khetri as a mark of respect and gratitude. It was an accidental meet between the Swami and the Maharaja in 1888 at Mount Abu where they tried decoding various strands of spirituality, yoga and universalism.

During one such conversation, Singh Bahadur told Swami Vivekananda to wear a turban as a shield to protect himself from the dust storms of Rajasthan. The Maharaja also provided a saffron robe—which went on to become Swami Vivekananda's traditional attire. Interestingly, Singh had bestowed the name 'Vivekananda' to him as mentioned in the book 'Living Vedanta' by Chaturvedi Badrinath.¹⁴

Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin

The second Bengali intellectual with Japan connect is none other than Nobel laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore (1862-1941).¹⁵ His friendship with Japanese art historian and curator Tenshin Okakura (14 February 1862-2 September 1913), also known as Kazuko Okakura, was path-breaking in the context of Asian renaissance and a new awakening in asserting Asian identity. Tagore's visit to Japan was the first such visit by a non-European Nobel Laureate. Tagore wrote *Japanjatri* (A Traveler to Japan) in 1919, a major travel literature and a foremost document in the study of India-Japan relations.

Both met for the first time in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1902. Okakura became an overnight celebrity in Japan at the outbreak of the Pacific War. The first line of his 1903 publication *The Ideals of the East*—"Asia is one"—was celebrated posthumously as the most powerful expression of Japanese wartime aspirations, and Okakura was considered a visionary of Japanese political ascendancy in Asia. Though the two distinguished friends met only a few times, their friendship endured and the ramifications of their friendship involved the artistic and intellectual movement of the early 20th century.

¹³ Gopi Karelia, "The Bond That moved Swami Vivekananda to say 'You Are (my) only Friend in This Life'", 23 August 2021, <https://www.thebetterindia.com/261033/swami-vivekananda-letters-read-online-maharaja-khetri-friendship/>

¹⁴ See, Chaturvedi Badrinath, *Swami Vivekananda: Living Vedanta*, Penguin Books, 2006, pp. 452.

¹⁵ Rabindranath Tagore was the first Asian to win a Nobel Peace Prize in Literature for his work *Geetanjali* in 1913. Then in the same year his friend Okakura Tenshin left the world, a short life, but all his work outlived him.

Despite the Tagore-Okakura friendship which has been widely talked about and also found in writings, both had differences on a host of other issues. For both, the word “nationalism” carried different meanings. While Tagore’s focus was mainly India, Okakura looked more towards the West. Okakura helped build the Boston Museum as curator by acquiring artifacts mainly from Japan and China but hardly anything from India, which troubled Tagore and Tagore started viewing and re-examining what exactly Okakura meant when he said in the opening sentence of his book “Asia is one”. When Tagore visited Japan in 1916 on a lecture tour, he was critical of Japan’s preoccupations with material progress and did not mention Okakura in his lectures.

From an admirer of Japan, Tagore turned into a critic of Tenshin and Japan. Though initially he saw Japan’s overwhelming victory over China in the war of 1894-95 and of Russia in the war of 1904-5 as the beginning of Asian renaissance and the ushering of a new dawn for Asia, Japan’s obsession to achieve material prosperity by any means, often violent, to expand its influence beyond its shores troubled Tagore. All long, Okakura Tenshin endorsed Japan’s choice, including Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910 after driving out China. For both Tagore and Tenshin, the definition of nationalism carried diametrically opposite meaning. The differences between the two visionaries, however, did not erase the impact on human consciousness that had already spread. Also, the Indian businessmen engaged in cotton and textile trade became apprehensive of Japan ousting them from the Chinese markets. Thus there were both expectations and also a sense of disquiet with regard to Japan. As it transpired in subsequent decades leading to World War II, Japan launched its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere much to its peril. Tagore’s premonition proved to be prophetic and therefore his turning to a critic of Tenshin needs to be understood properly.

Indeed, Bengal has a special place in the long history of cultural relations with Japan. Though the historic meeting between Tagore and Tenshin in 1902 and their subsequent views that impacted human thought process is a glorious chapter in the history of India-Japan relations,¹⁶ Okakura’s was probably influenced by the activities of the nationalist leaders of Bengal. He seems to have applied the same in Japan by supporting the military’s adventurist policy. He was so much impressed by those determined to fight against the British that he took active part in the formation of the ‘Anushilan Samiti’. Thereby, he endorsed the organisation’s philosophy to take on the British by adopting violent means.¹⁷

¹⁶ [India and Japan: Cultural Relations; Tagore and Japan: A Retrospection \(translation-anindya.blogspot.com\)](http://translation-anindya.blogspot.com) (Accessed on 10 March 2022).

¹⁷ Anushilan Samiti was an Indian organisation in Bengal in the first quarter of the 20th century that supported revolutionary activities, violence and militant nationalism as the means for ending British rule in India. In the year

On returning to Japan, Okakura sent two distinguished artists, Yokoyama Taikan and Shimomura Kanzan to Kolkata where they met Tagore and exchanged opinions and artistic views. In 1905, Jinnosuke Sano, a former student of Keio University, came to Santiniketan. He was a judo instructor. During his three years of stay at Santiniketan, he also taught Japanese language, apart from teaching *Jujutsu* (a Japanese martial art form). Tagore's five visits to Japan – 1916, 1917, 1924, and 1929 (twice) – brought into contact a remarkable group of intellectuals and artists of Bengal and Japan. In fact, the subsequent narration of events shall demonstrate that Bengal had a special affinity with Japan for over a century.¹⁸

During his lifetime, Okakura was known as a bureaucrat, art philosopher, and museum curator devoted to the protection of Asian art. His most important achievement was the restoration of Japanese pictorial art (*nihonga*). Employing the individualism and art philosophy of the West, he encouraged artists in later nineteenth-century Japan to create a new artistic tradition and cultural identity that could reflect the dynamic social and cultural change of modern Japan. This thesis aimed to transcend the gap between the principally intellectual and

1902, it was founded by Satish Chandra and three other associates, Pramatha Mitra, Aurobindo Ghose and Sarala Devi. The organisation arose from a conglomeration of local youth groups and centres of Indian martial arts (*akhara*) in Bengal in 1902. These youths turned out to be *Biplabis* or revolutionaries with the objective to win freedom from the British colonial powers by violent means. It had two prominent, somewhat independent, arms in East and West Bengal, Dhaka Anushilan Samiti (centred in Dhaka, modern day Bangladesh), and the Jugantar group (centred at Calcutta). From its foundation to its dissolution during the 1930s, the Samiti challenged British rule in India by engaging in militant nationalism including bombings, assassinations, and politically-motivated violence. Nationalist writings and publications by Aurobindo and Barin, in addition to *Bande Mataram* and *Jugantar*, had widespread influence on Bengal youth and helped Anushilan Samiti gain popularity in Bengal. In 1908, young recruits, Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki were sent on a mission to Muzaffarpur to assassinate chief presidency magistrate D. H. Kingsford. They bombed a carriage they mistook for Kingsford's, killing two Englishwomen. Bose was arrested while attempting to flee and Chaki committed suicide. He was also involved in the Kakori conspiracy, the Chittagong armoury raid, and various other violent actions. The people associated with this samiti were Sri Aurobindo, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Surendranath Tagore, Jatindranath Banerjee (popularly known as Bagha Jatin, Bhupendra Natha Datta, Barindra Ghosh and others. After Aurobindo's retirement, the Anushilan Samiti (centred at Calcutta), found a more prominent leader in Bagha Jatin and emerged as 'Jugantar', a secret revolutionary group. For more details on Bagha Jatin, see Rup Narayan Das, "Bagha Jatin: An Unsung Hero", *Odisha Review*, January 2007, <http://magazines.odisha.gov.in/Orissareview/jan-2007/engpdf/39-43.pdf> (Accessed on 29 May 2022). Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1 April 1889-21 June 1940), an Indian surgeon founded the Hindu nationalist organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), in Nagpur in 1925, based on the ideology of Hindutva with the intention of creating a Hindu Rashtra. After his demise, M.S. Golwalkar succeeded him as the RSS chief. For more details on the Anushilan Samiti, see these two books for details: Asok Kumar Ray, *Party of Firebrand Revolutionaries: The Dacca Anushilkan Samiti, 1906-1918* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates Publications Pvt Ltd, 1999), pp. 200; and Buddhadeva Bhattacharya, ed., *Freedom Struggle and Anushilan Samiti Part I* (Calcutta: D.C. Ghatak General Secretary Anushilan Samiti 75th Anniversary Celebration Committee, 1979), pp. 335. For Kakori Conspiracy, see, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kakori-Conspiracy> (Accessed on 28 May 2022).

¹⁸ See, two part article by Rajaram Panda, "Bengal and Japan –I" and "Bengal and Japan – II", *The Statesman*, 9 and 10 July 2021.

aesthetic investigations of Okakura's lifetime achievements and the primarily political examinations of his appropriation in wartime Japan.¹⁹

Rustom Bharucha's magisterial work on this friendship is a must-read for anyone interested to know the history of India-Japan relations.²⁰ The book weaves through an intricate tapestry of ideas relating to pan-Asianism, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and friendship, and positions the early modernist tensions of the period within-and against-the specter of a unified Asia that concealed considerable political differences. Tessa Morris Suzuki, professor of Japanese history at the Australian National University writes that the book is a fascinating and illuminating set of reflections on issues such as the concept of Asia, nationalism and notions of civilizations. Okakura's *The Ideals of the East*²¹ and *The Awakening of Japan*²² posited well with Tagore's radical critique of Nationalism, matching of which provided deep insights in which the Orient travelled with and beyond Asia.

Reviewing the book by Rustom Bharucha for *The Japan Times*, David Burleigh remarks that the idea of "Asia" was then a recent notion, positing a common inheritance and purpose among the countries of the East to counter the dominance of the West.²³ The eventual result was stress on liberation movement from imperial control and then independence. There could be differing interpretations when Bharucha writes about Okakura's 1903 volume *The Ideals of the East* that "Asia was less a political entity than a metaphysical and spiritual realm". Okakura's other book *The Awakening of the East* published after his death evokes similar differing opinions and perspectives. Terms such as "national exclusiveness" and "cultural schizophrenia" appear bewildering but some Japanese writers have used such expressions while reading Okakura's books. This book was first published in 1901-2 during Okakura's stay in Calcutta and its Japanese translation *Toyo no kakusei* published posthumously in 1938, supported the militaristic ideology and was mobilized as propaganda for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Tagore did not approve such a militaristic approach to redeem Asia's identity, which compromised all Asian values. This led to a strain in Tagore's relationship with a younger

¹⁹ Kaneko, Toshiya, "Cultural light, political shadow: Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913) and the Japanese crisis of national identity, 1880–1941" (2002). *Dissertations available from ProQuest*. AAI3054959. <https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3054959> (Accessed on 1 December 2022).

²⁰ See, Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore & Okakura Tenshin*, (2006), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp.326

²¹ Toshiya Kaneko, "Cultural light, political shadow: Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913) and the Japanese crisis of national identity, 1880–1941", <https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3054959/> (Accessed on 1 January 2022)

²² Kazuko Okakura, *The Awakening of Japan*, (Adamant Media Corporation, September 2001), (first published 1905), pp. 244.

²³ David Burleigh, "A friendship's influence across Asia: Japan's Okakura Tenshin and India's Rabindranath Tagore", *The Japan Times*, 28 October 2007, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2007/10/28/books/book-reviews/a-friendships-influence-across-asia/> (Accessed on 25 March 2022)

Japanese friend Yone Noguchi (1875-1947) over Japan's actions in the war in China.²⁴ Noguchi was educated in the US, married an American after several affairs, fathered a child and finally returned to Japan and then followed the prevailing political trends in Japan. In short he supported Japan's rightist policies. There was a bitter exchange of letters between Tagore and Noguchi in 1938 over political and philosophical differences, resulting in the end of their friendship. During World War II, Noguchi supported the Japanese cause, advocating a no-holds-barred assault on the Western countries he had once admired. Noguchi visited India in 1935-36 to garner support for Japanese objectives in East Asia but with little success.²⁵

There were other differences between Tagore's and Okakura's life styles. While Tagore dressed in flowing robes and expressed his views eloquently particularly in his native Bengali while using English as an appendage and an additional tool, Okakura presented himself as a Japanese in traditional costumes but communicated mainly in English and scarcely wrote in his own language. Interestingly, Tagore is the only person to have become the author of two national anthems (those of India and Bangladesh). While Okakura enhanced a marvelous museum collection in a country other than his own, Tagore established a university to continue his legacy in Bengal. The differences between the two friends widened when Japan, after defeating two great powers—Russia and China, which temporarily resonated with the Asian awakening against the imperial West and seeking its own Asian identity, chose a militaristic adventurist policy to colonize Asia which Tagore disapproved; in particular, Tagore was critical of Japan's Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere definition.²⁶ However, this policy was endorsed by Okakura.

Nevertheless, admiration of Indian intellectuals as well as freedom fighters of India reached sky-high when Japan defeated both China and Russia, interpreted in many quarters as a dwarf defeating two giants in a short span of time, raised the specter of Asian renaissance and a new awakening. The Indian nationalist leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak stated that Japan's victory has broken the myth of the superiority and invincibility of the Europeans over Asians. Inspired by Japan's successes, he felt that Indian freedom fighters can follow Japan's example and feel

²⁴ For the background of Noguchi's life, see https://everything.explained.today/Yone_Noguchi/ (Accessed on 25 January 2022).

²⁵ For more on Noguchi's life and activities, see, Madoka Nagai Hori, "Yone Noguchi and India: Towards a Reappraisal of the International Conflict between R. Tagore and Y. Noguchi", <https://doczz.net/doc/3395405/yone-noguchi-and-india--towards-a-reappraisal-of-the-inte...> (Accessed on 2 December 2022).

²⁶ There are varying opinions on this Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Concept. Those who endorse Japan's approach take the position that Japan did not want the resources of Asia should be taken away by the Western colonial powers for the good of their peoples but must remain for the benefit of Asian people. However, if this was the original and sincere intention, the method that Japan adopted to materialise this objective against the Asian people was wrong. When Okakura endorsed such of Japan's approach, Tagore opposed it. A resource-deficient Japan probably wanted a policy to secure resources from Asia that it desperately needed, which drove it to choose such an aggressive militaristic policy. As it transpired later, it was a wrong choice.

confident that they can do so too with a sense of national pride. 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.

Other Early Bengal Connections

It is not only the intellectuals, but even from the account of a commoner such as Hariprabha, a young Bengali woman who married a Japanese, Uemon Takeda, owner of a soap factory in Dhaka in 1907, that we get deeper insights about life in Japan. Hariprabha-Uemon matrimony is not the only stand-alone example of Bengal's early connection with Japan. There were also other Bengalis who visited Japan those days. Manmathanath Ghosh visited Japan on 1 April 1906 and stayed on for three years. His travel experiences and impressions are found in the three books, all published in 1915 that he wrote about Japan. The three books are *Japan Probash* (The Expatriate in Japan), *Nobyō Japan* (The New Japan), and *Supto Japan* (The Hidden Japan). He was basically an entrepreneur and his objective was to acquire Japanese techniques that he could apply in the Indian setting. He again returned to Japan for a second time in 1933 to learn and procure modern technology for his business back home. The three books written by Ghosh tell the tales of the then Japanese socio-economic life and the untold aspects.²⁷

Another account by an industrialist and statesman, Sir Lalubhai Samaldas, who had an opportunity to visit various institutions in Japan also highlights the sense of cleanliness among the Japanese. He too had very favourable impressions of Japanese politeness and manners, their thoroughness in what they do, their work ethic and sense of commitment. Similar opinions were also expressed by Hariprabha in her small book *Bongo Mahilar Japan Jatra (A Bengali Woman's Journey to Japan)*. Therefore, if we sum up the Indians' perception of Japan from the late 19th century to the turn of the 20th century, it transpires that there was merit for the Indians to 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 adopt their cleanliness and social behaviour. One might be tempted to connect Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative to promote Swacha Bharat and Atmanirbhar programmes that resonates with Japanese practices and life styles dating back centuries. All these resonate with what Swami Vivekananda had

²⁷ Subrata Kumar Das, "Manmathanath Ghosh's Japan Probash: The initial Bangla-language book on Japan, [https://www.academia.edu/12143810/Manmathanath Ghosh's Japan Probash The initial Bangla languagebook on Japan](https://www.academia.edu/12143810/Manmathanath_Ghosh's_Japan_Probash_The_initial_Bangla_languagebook_on_Japan) (Accessed on 24 December 2022).

observed years before on his way to Chicago and had exhorted the Indian youths to learn from Japan.

Role of Rash Behari Bose

Rash Behari Bose, whose role as a freedom fighter has often been not only underplayed in India but also not many in India are even aware of his contribution. 'As one of the unsung heroes and freedom fighters of India, the story of his role in India's struggle for freedom is a significant episode in the history of Indian independence movement.'²⁸

Rash Behari Bose was born on 25 May 1886 at Subaldaha village, Burdwan Dist. of West Bengal. As an officer of the British Raj, Rash Behari Bose had come under the influence of revolutionaries in the Indian national movement, such as Aurobindo Ghose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Bipin Chandra Pal. Bengal was the epicenter of nationalistic movement that stirred many people to volunteer to join any organization fighting for freedom from colonial rule. Just when the atmosphere was highly charged with nationalistic feelings, the British rulers partitioned Bengal in 1905. This provoked Rash Behari Bose to quit his job as an officer of the British Raj and turn into a revolutionary.

Rash Behari was one of the key initiators of the Ghadar Conspiracy which was a pan-India movement to trigger a mutiny in the British Indian Army in February 1915. The idea was to infiltrate the army by sending trusted Ghadarites to the cantonments.²⁹ But the strategy failed. The British issued a death warrant against him for his alleged involvement in the assassination attempt on Lord Hardinge, the then British Viceroy of India and in trying to bring about a general uprising of Indian soldiers starting from the Lahore barracks. After a prolonged investigation, thirteen persons were tried in the case which became known as the Delhi Conspiracy Case. Bose managed to escape British intelligence and fled India for Japan in 1915 where he did the groundwork for the foundation of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Fauj by writing about India's struggle for freedom from British colonialists in contemporary Japanese publications.

The way Bose escaped from India to reach Japan is an interesting story that needs reiteration. Indeed the story of Bose forms a vital part of India's struggle for independence, and the victory which was finally achieved was in no small measure due to his organizational skill and wonderful spirit of sacrifice. Referring to the role of Bose as the founder of the Indian

²⁸ "Freedom Fighter Rash Behari Bose's Favourite Indian Curry: A Taste of Romance and Revolution in Japan", <https://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/> (Accessed on 5 February 2022).

²⁹ For a background of this, see, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghadar_Movement

National Army, the former Prime Minister of Burma (now Myanmar) Thakin Nu observed that “if Netaji came out in the fight as Garibaldi of the movement, Rash Behari Bose’s part in the drama was more than of a Mazzini”.³⁰ Not many are aware that Rash Behari Bose was the founder of the Indian National Army (INA), though it is often credited with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. This historical fallacy needs to be corrected. Even A.M. Nair who opened an Indian restaurant in Ginza, a popular outlet for the Japanese wrote his memoir, *An Indian Freedom Fighter in Japan*, where he mentions that he worked as the liaison officer of Rash Behari Bose who led two important Japan-backed organizations, the Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army, and opines that the role of Rash Behari has been somewhat overshadowed by the contribution of the more famous Subhas Chandra Bose.³¹ Nair died in 1990 but his restaurant bearing his name leaves another example of cultural connect through Indian food between the two countries, besides Nakamura (café), which will be discussed in details later in this paper.

Nair laments that in contemporary India, Subhas’s stature appears to have increased but Rash Behari’s contributions underplayed. While extolling charisma and patriotism of Subhas, he slams his lack of realism and his dictatorial tendencies. Nair does concede that the INA galvanised the rebel army, resulting in mutiny by the Navy in Bombay (Mumbai). British India read the writing on the wall. Nair also acted on several occasions as interpreter for Justice Radha Binod Pal, the only judge who gave his dissenting judgment at the Tokyo War Crimes Trials declaring all “A-Class” (political) defendants innocent.

Pal’s stinging counter to allegations of Japanese conspiracy to wage war was profound and this can be deciphered from his statement: “Many powerful nations are living this sort of life, and if these acts are criminal, then the entire international community is living a criminal life.” Pal’s role shall be discussed in the final segment of this paper. After reaching Tokyo in June 1915, Bose soon reached out to the Japanese sympathizers. Japan had already entered into an alliance relationship with Great Britain and signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which bound both Japan and Britain to assist one another in safeguarding respective interests in China and Korea. Directed against Russian expansionism in the Far East, it was a cornerstone of British and Japanese policy in Asia until after World War I.³² Therefore, the Japanese government was forced to direct Rash Behari to leave the shores of Japan. However, Bose got the support from

³⁰ “Rash Behari Bose: The founder of Indian National Army”, 29 November 2009, <https://haind.avakeralam.com/rash-behari-bose-founder-of-hk10962> (Accessed on 31 March 2021).

³¹ A.M. Nair, *An Indian Freedom Fighter in Japan* (Vikas Publishing House, 1986), 364 pp.

³² The first Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed in January 1902. It was renewed and expanded in scope twice, in 1905 and 1911, before its demise in 1921 and termination in 1923. See, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglo-Japanese-Alliance> (Accessed on 10 June 2021)

the Japanese people who provided protection by hiding him in the cellar of an influential hotel Nakamura.

On entering Japan, he was introduced to Dr. Sun Yat Sen by Bhagwan Singh Gyane of the Ghadar Party³³, 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 and others. But it was the support of common people, which enabled him to carry out his revolutionary activities.

Three months after Rash Behari reached Japan, a British man-of-war attacked a Japanese merchant carrier. Whether accidentally or deliberately is not important but what is significant is that it provoked Japan and relationships between Japan and Britain soured. Japan reversed its policy in regard to Rash Behari. In order to hurt the pride and prestige of Britain, Japan went soft against Bose, encouraging him to come out of his hiding to carry on with his revolutionary movement against British rule in India. Finally Rash Behari came out in the open in April 1916. Japan also withdrew the deportation order issued against Bose based on the terms of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. During his stay at Nakamura, the owner of the restaurant Aizo Soma and Kotsuko Soma bestowed on him loving care, developed a filial affection for him offering their eldest daughter Toshiko in marriage to him. Thus Rash Behari became the son-in-law in the Land of the Rising Sun but never forgot his Motherland. Undaunted, Rash Behari continued his militant activities.

Interestingly, though the Japanese government had issued an expulsion order against Bose, these orders were never seriously implemented. When Bose found that the British would not allow him to enter India, he became a Japanese citizen in 1923. The Japanese press had also criticized the government and started a campaign against the deportation orders. The Japanese openly supported the Indians on their right to gain freedom. For India, it was a moral endorsement of its fight against the British by the Japanese people and media. 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 where he sharply criticized the British rule in India. He also

³³ https://www.indianetzone.com/21/ghadar_party.htm (Accessed on 28 May 2022). For more information about Bhagwan Singh, see <https://www.sikhpioneers.org/bhai-bhagwan-singh-gyane/> (Accessed on 28 May 2022)

warned 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 the Pan-Asia proposal 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. From the above, it transpires that Tagore's and Okakura's vision of Asian renaissance and clamour for an Asian identity had so hugely impacted the human consciousness that liberating the Asian nations from the colonial domination became the ultimate goal.

Here, two issues deserve special mention: founding of the Azad Hind Fauj and the popularization of Indian curry, which is a craze in Japan till today. A great opportunity unfolded in 1942 when World War II broke out and Singapore fell into the hands of Japan on 15 February 1942. 15,000 British, 13,000 Australian and 32,000 Indian soldiers were there in Singapore and all of them were taken as prisoners of war by the Japanese. Japan also took over Malaya and established her authority over the country of fifty lakh people, among whom three lakh were Indians.

At that time, another Indian revolutionary, Subhas Chandra Bose, was in Germany seeking help. Rash Behari was toying with the idea of forming a Liberation Army and invade India from outside with the help of Japan. Encouraged by Japan's support, Rash Behari floated the idea of building the Azad Hind Fauj for the purpose. When Rash Behari invited Subhas Chandra Bose to lead this force, Subhas was happy to accept the offer and assumed the Supreme Command of the Free Indian National Army in August 1943. Reposing his faith on the forces he had created and having handed over the reins to Subhas Chandra Bose, Rash Behari died of heart failure on 21 January 1945, and thus could not see his beloved country become independent. In 1959, when the ashes of Rash Behari were brought to India by his daughter, Tetsu Higuchi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, then President of India, paid this noble son of Bharat a glowing tribute in which he said, "Rash Behari Bose was one of those well-known patriots whose love for the Motherland and burning desire to see her free could never be curbed."

Rash Behari Bose is mostly known as a revolutionary in India, but he is remembered in Japan for a unique contribution, which only a few know. During his stay in Japan, he introduced

an authentic Indian curry that is a key dish on the menu at popular restaurants in Tokyo, even today. When investigative agencies hired by the British traced his whereabouts in Tokyo, Rash Behari moved to Shinjuku, a commercial district of Tokyo then, and even now, where he found a hideout. The hideout was the Nakamura bakery, owned by Aizo Soma and Kotsuko Soma. This couple were in support of India's struggle for independence and therefore sheltered Rash Behari Bose in the basement of the house. Gradually, Rash Behari developed a bond with the Soma family. It was where he shared the recipe of his favourite chicken curry, making the Indian curry popular in the Soma house. The bond between Rash Behari and the Somas further deepened when the latter offered their eldest daughter in marriage to Rash Behari.³⁴ The marriage was solemnised in 1918. This was a bold decision on the part of the Soma family in getting their daughter married to a foreigner at a time when such a system was frowned upon in Japan. Toshiko not only willingly accepted the life of a social outcast, but also shouldered most of the family responsibilities letting Bose pursue his sole mission of bringing India independence with single-minded devotion.

One can read this development as a sign of Japan's cultural internationalisation and paved the way for inter-cultural marriages widely popular in contemporary times. This however does not eliminate or change the mindset of the conservative Japanese completely as they continue to view children born of mixed marriages unfavourably and contemptuously call them as 'hafus', meaning those children are half-Japanese. The offsprings of mixed marriages continue to face many legal hurdles in being accepted as full Japanese citizens. Priyanka Yoshikawa, born of a Japanese mother and an Indian father, hogged international limelight when she was crowned Miss Japan in 2015 as many Japanese questioned her selection as she was a 'hafu'. It was an unnecessary controversy which could have been avoided. In these circumstances, one needs to understand how Japan despite being modern still cannot do away with many traditional beliefs and systems. It is a matter of debate whether modernity ought to be blended with traditionality.

Coming back to the Rash Behari issue, how much Toshiko contributed to Rash Behari's mission to free India from the British remains unknown as not much information is available. What is available is that Toshiko prematurely died of tuberculosis in 1925 aged 28 leaving

³⁴There are differing views about Rash Behari Bose's marriage with Toshiko. While one version says that the Soma couple offered their eldest daughter in marriage with Rash Behari the other version says that it was Bose who asked Aizo and Kotsuko's permission to marry their eldest daughter. Irrespective of which version is correct, the truth is that Toshiko had fallen in love with Bose who reciprocated her feelings. The Soma family was also fond of Bose. The couple married in a simple ceremony in July 1918. There is yet another version of the story according to which a right-wing politician Mitsuru Toyama who introduced Rash Behari to the Soma family requested the Soma family to get their eldest daughter married to Rash Behari Bose.

behind two children. This sudden turn of events devastated Rash Behari Bose. He had to take care of the two infants and needed financial support as well. Therefore, the grief-stricken Bose partnered with his father-in-law and opened a small restaurant on top of the Nakamura bakery where he prepared and served his favourite chicken curry along with other Indian dishes, to the locals. The aroma of Indian spices used in curry preparation attracted many Japanese to the Indian cuisine which became an instant hit. Thus was born *Indo Karii*, a blend of Indian curry and Japanese rice. The print media popularised the curry as Rash Behari's "Taste of love and revolution", thereby catapulting Nakamura's popularity and contributing to its success in business. Bose developed health problems related to lungs and was hospitalised in 1944 and finally breathed his last in January 1945 even before World War II ended, leaving behind Nakamura's *Indo Karii*, which continues to be a household name and a popular dish in Japan.³⁵ The restaurant still exists in Shinjuku ward. It was renovated in 2015 adding more space where over 100 people can dine at a time.

When one visits the restaurant, one cannot miss the painting of a young girl staring out at the world with a contemplative look that is beyond her years. The menu bears an unusual slogan: "The taste of love and revolution". The young lady was the eldest daughter of the Soma couple who owned and ran Nakamura in the early decades of the 20th century. In 1923 the young lady married Rash Behari, the Indian revolutionary who invented the curry, popular in Japan as *Indo karii*.

According to *Bose of Nakamura* by Professor Takeshi Nakajima, Bose wanted to prove that the curry the Japanese were used to was a colonial invention. Getting his recipe on the Nakamura menu was therefore "part of his anti-colonial struggle, by trying to win back India's food culture from British hands."³⁶

Though sushi and soba are important parts of traditional Japanese lunch and dinner, curry and rice have become equally important in Japanese diet. The Japanese Navy even has a "curry Friday" tradition where all navy canteens offer curry and rice as a Friday staple. Since 2001, the Nakamura Co. Ltd, the company engaged in the manufacture and sale of confectionery, food, ingredients etc has been selling ready-to-eat packaged curries using the original Bose recipe to convenience stores. These accounted for almost half the sales value of the 2.6 billion yen the

³⁵ Sanchari Pal, "The Other Bose: How an Indian Freedom Fighter's Curry Became a Sensation in Japan", 21 July 2017, <https://www.thebetterindia.com/109063/rash-behari-bose-ina-nakamura-curry-japan/> (Accessed on 5 April 2021).

³⁶ Takeshi Nakajima, *Bose of Nakamura: An Indian Revolutionary in Japan* (2009), *Bibliophile South Asia*, New Delhi, pp. 324

Nakamura Processed Foods division made in 2016.³⁷ Plenty of stories have been written in recent times on the Rash Behari saga and his relatively unknown aspects of life and activities have reached the public imagination. This historical connect is extremely relevant in the contemporary times when both India and Japan are facing new challenges; this cultural connect provides additional heft.

When World War II broke out and Singapore fell to Japan in 1942, Major Iwaichi Fujiwara³⁸, Commander of the victorious Japanese army in Singapore summoned prominent Indian citizens on 17 February and told them that if they were prepared to renounce their British citizenship and organise themselves to fight for India's freedom, Japan would extend all help. The Indians were undecided. Rash Behari intervened. He convened a conference of the representatives of Indians in Japan, China, Malaya and Thailand in Tokyo on 28 March 1942, and formed the Indian Independence League. Rash Behari left Tokyo and reached Bangkok to pursue his aim to liberate India from the British yoke with the help of the Japanese. A plan to build the Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army on the pattern of the Free India Army of Berlin as the military wing of the League was announced.

A second conference was held on 14-23 June 1942 in East of Bangkok. About three lakh Indians spread over Java, Sumatra, Indo-China, Borneo, Manchuko, Hong Kong, Burma, Malaya and Japan participated. The conference presented a memorandum to Japan requesting that its demand for equal rights and status for the Azad Hind Fauj of Free India be conceded. The meeting also constituted the War Council of the League with Rash Behari Bose as the first President and M. Raghavan, K.R.K. Menon, Captain Mohan Singh and Colonel G.K. Gillani as other members. The conference also decided to invite Subhas Chandra Bose to lead the Indian Independence League and the Azad Hind Fauj in the East. An invitation was sent accordingly. Soon, the membership of the League swelled to 1,20,000, and 50,000 Indian soldiers were enlisted for the Indian National Army. An independent broadcasting centre was also set up at Bangkok.

Subhas Chandra Bose had reached Japan on 20 June 1943 by a submarine, that was shrouded in secrecy. The journey from Berlin was full of hurdles. Finally, both the Boses met (in Singapore). Subhas Chandra received an unprecedented welcome when he reached Singapore on 2 July. Addressing the gathering, Subhas gave the call to "Chalo Delhi" (march on to Delhi). Being impressed with the younger Bose, Rash Behari transferred the leadership of the League to the younger charismatic Subhas Chandra on 5 July 1943 and remained himself as his adviser.

³⁷ See, Pallavi Aiyar, *Orienteering : An Indian in Japan* (2021), Harper Collins, pp. 290.

³⁸ Later on Fujiwara rose to the position of Lt. Gen. in the Japanese Army and died at the ripe age of 104 in 1986.

The women wing of the Fauj was formed and soon, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was formed under Rani Laxmi's captainship. On 25 August 1943 Subhas assumed the Supreme Command of the Free Indian National Army. This organisation played a significant role in weakening the British hold in India. Though finally India achieved liberation arguably on the strength of Mahatma Gandhi's approach of non-violence as the main tool, Subhas Chandra's contribution to India's independence is no less important.³⁹ This does not overlook other factors such as the British government's economic situation, the War and resistance of the peoples of India. The cumulative contributions of the freedom fighters and situation at the time led finally the British to leave India. Yukihiro Yamada writes that the two Boses, and their Japanese connect shall forever remain fresh in the memory of the Japanese people, both for the freedom movement and the introduction of Indian curry—and that the Japanese would never forget.⁴⁰ Both had a strong connect with Japan, friends of Japan, and the key force behind the formation of the Indian National Army (INA), the Azad Hind Fauj, which was floated to free India from the colonial rule, and both also died in the same year – 1945 – Rash Behari on 21 January in Japan and Subhas Chandra Bose in Taiwan.⁴¹ Also, it must be mentioned that while Rash Behari was born in Subaldaha village of Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal on 25 May 1886 and died on 21 January 1945 in Tokyo, Subhas Chandra Bose was born in Cuttack, Odisha, and reportedly died on 18 August 1945 in an air crash in Taihoku (present Taipei) Savitri Vishwanathan observes: “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’”.⁴²

In recent times, fresh interpretations have surfaced connecting the *Indo Karii* with the Quad concept. One view sees the Quad, which features largely in Japan's foreign policy, traces its roots to Rash Behari Bose and Nakamura amid the intellectual dynamism of Japan's Taisho

³⁹ For the military dimension of Netaji's fight against the British imperialist, see Maj Gen G.D. Bakshi, *Bose: The Military Dimension, Military History of INA and Netaji* (2022), KW Publishers, pp. 374.

⁴⁰ Yukihiro Yamada, “The tale of two Boses, their Japanese connect and authentic Indian curry”, 10 November 2019, [https://www.asiancommunitynews.com/the-tale-of-two-boses-their-japanese-connect-and-authentic-indian-curry/#:~:text=He%20married%20Toshiko%20in%201918%2C%20and%20he%20acquired,the%](https://www.asiancommunitynews.com/the-tale-of-two-boses-their-japanese-connect-and-authentic-indian-curry/#:~:text=He%20married%20Toshiko%20in%201918%2C%20and%20he%20acquired,the%20) (Accessed on 15 May 2021).

⁴¹ Netaji's death remains controversial despite several commissions and there is no finality to the truth. For a background to this, see, Rajaram Panda “Mystery over Netaji Subash Chandra's death Lingers”, *Mainstream*, Vol LIX No 35, 14 August 2021, <http://mainstreamweekly.net/article11400.html> (Accessed on 28 October 2022).

⁴² Savitri Vishwanathan, n. 3

era.⁴³ Peter Tasker writes, modern-day Japan needs revolutionaries like Bose, institutions like Nakamura, and the willingness to absorb the “complex and unpredictable mix of influences across the globe”.⁴⁴ Bose and Somas were great admirers of Rabindranath Tagore and welcomed him during his five trips to Japan. Bose did not live to see his motherland free from the British colonial rule. While Rash Behari died of illness in January 1945, his son Masahide, meaning “straight and excellent” (a name chosen by Toyama), died in the Battle of Okinawa, his daughter, Tetsuko, “child of wisdom”, passed away in 2016 at the age of 93. She lived most of her life in the RB Building in Harajuku, named after her father and constructed on the site he acquired in the mid-1920s.

Another interesting anecdote emerges from the memoirs of Nair who silently encouraged his customers—particularly Japanese military contacts, many Japanese military generals that he befriended—to fight against the British. One of his closest military contacts, War Minister Seishiro Itagaki received the death sentence, while another General Yoshijiro Umezu, died in prison. Nair writes that one of his military contacts made a dark joke that had MacArthur known about his complicity in provoking the Japanese to join Indian freedom fighters to fight against the British, Nair could have been booked as War Criminal Number One but the Supreme Commander MacArthur missed it. Nair remained an Indian citizen all his life, but because of the espionage and undercover work he carried out, he was treated by Japan's top military figures as equivalent to a Major-General in rank.

The Progressive Club Sandwich, with its assumption of Western moral superiority and Japanese backwardness, is still a popular comfort food. It has a long history, beginning with the “opening” of Japan by Commodore Matthew C. Perry's gunboats in the 1850s. Its influence can be found even today in innumerable op-eds, books, and academic papers.

What gave the Taisho era (1912-1926) its freewheeling dynamism — so different from what came before and after — was this willingness to cross boundaries and the intellectual ferment that it generated. Tagore had become increasingly critical of Japan copying Western modernisation.

Controversy over Subhas Chandra's Death

⁴³ Peter Tasker, “Love, Curry, and the Quad: A Curious Story of Japan's Indian Connection”, *Japan Forward*, 5 June 2021, <https://japan-forward.com/bookmark-love-curry-and-the-quad-a-curious-story-of-japans-indian-connection/> (Accessed on 8 June 2021).

⁴⁴ Peter Tasker, “What have Love, Curry, and the Quad Got to Do with Japan's Security?”, *Japan Forward*, 6 June 2021, <https://japan-forward.com/bookmark-what-have-love-curry-and-the-quad-got-to-do-with-japans-security/> (Accessed on 10 June 2021).

It is almost conclusively established that Subhas Chandra Bose died in a plane crash in Formosa (present day Taiwan). However, conspiracy theories appeared within hours of his death, which persisted for decades, and still persists, and kept alive various martial myths about Bose. Many of his supporters in India and elsewhere refused at the time to believe the fact or the circumstances of his death. What has transpired from credible sources is that Subhas died of third-degree burns on 18 August 1945 after the overloaded bomber in which he was being transported by the Japanese crashed in Taihoku, present day Taipei.

Subhas was marginalized within Congress in his own country and became a target for British surveillance. He chose to embrace the fascist powers as allies against the British and fled India, first to Hitler's Germany, then, on a German submarine, to the Japanese-occupied Singapore. His destination as well as his co-passengers in the bomber became the centre of controversy. Though plenty of written works are available on his death and many more shall surely be appearing in the future offering various and sometimes conflicting versions, one work by an Indian journalist Harin Shah from the Bombay-based *Free Press Journal* who visited Taiwan months after the crash and wrote a small book containing a lot of insights from first-hand information, has not received the desired publicity.⁴⁵

Having spoken to many persons such as the nurse who took care of Subhas in the South-Gate Military Hospital, the Chief of the Taipeh City Health and Hygiene Bureau Dr. Kaw King Yen, the keeper of the crematorium Chu Tsung who cremated Netaji's body, some students and many more, his observations are revealing. The nurse in the hospital was candid even to the point of showing the bed in which Bose breathed his last.⁴⁶

Though there was no dispute on Netaji's death in the plane crash and the severe burns, Dr. Kaw offered a different perspective as to the origin of the accident. He was of the belief that Netaji wanted to proceed to Soviet Russia and that the Japanese did not want him to escape to Russia. Dr. Kaw held the theory that the Japanese deliberately crashed the plane soon after it took off from the airport with the intention to kill him. Though Shah tried to gauge the basis of his conclusion by probing further, Dr. Kaw could not throw further light. His theory seems to be based more on speculation. But there are more reasons that could testify to Dr. Kaw's suspicion to be true. However, the information provided by Shah in his observation that Japanese military officers because of their anxiety advised the Director of the Bureau to cremate Netaji's body and keep this confidential gives room for suspicion. For example, Sister Tsan Pi Sha who was at

⁴⁵ Harin Shah, *Verdict from Formosa: Gallant End of Netaji* (Atam Ram & Sons, 1956), pp.158

⁴⁶ The Formosan nurse's name was Sister Tsan Pi Sha who was by Netaji's side till his death. She also confirmed this by showing the cot that was occupied by Netaji's companion Col. Habibur Rehman. It was Habib who took the ashes of Netaji to Tokyo.

Netaji's bedside when he breathed his last had no clue when and where Netaji was cremated. Shah felt that local Japanese authorities were acting under acute tension amidst the confusion to surrender. He observes: "It is possible they were acting on orders from Tokyo."⁴⁷ Even Col Habibur Rehman's, Netaji's companion, suggestion to shift the body either to Singapore or Tokyo was turned down by the Japanese.

Similar to the recognition accorded to Justice Radha Binod Pal by Japan by creating a memorial at Yasukuni Shrine, Netaji also has his pride of place in Japan, demonstrating the deep friendship and mutual respect between India and Japan. There is a memorial of Subhas Chandra Bose in the compound of the Renkoji Temple, Tokyo, where Bose's ashes are stored in a golden pagoda. Bose died on 18 August 1945. His ashes arrived in Japan in early September 1945; after a memorial service, they were accepted by the temple on 18 September 1945.⁴⁸

As mystery deepened on circumstances surrounding Netaji's death, the Indian government constituted several investigative commissions to go into the truth of Netaji's death. There was the Figgess Report (1946), Shah Nawaz Committee (1956), Khosla Commission (1970), Mukherjee Commission (2005) and Japanese government report (1956) which was declassified in September 2016. The findings of all these committees and commissions created more controversies than giving concrete results. None of them was able to decode the mystery of Netaji's disappearance. The mystery continued until people in India had to accept that Netaji died in Taiwan by taking shelter under shades of myths.

Role of Justice Radha Binod Pal

Another significant factor further cementing Bengal-Japan romance relates to the role played by Justice Radha Binod Pal at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. Justice Pal, while being the representative of the British power, much to the surprise of the British, gave the sole dissenting judgement exonerating the Japanese of any war crimes. In fact, when Justice Pal was chosen as one of the juries, the trial proceedings had already started. He was picked to beef up the Asian presence on the bench. Initially, on his arrival in Tokyo Justice Pal was even accommodated at a hotel that was inferior to the one in which the other judges were staying,

⁴⁷ Harin Shah, n. 45

⁴⁸ "Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Ashes Preserved In Renkoji Temple: Report", 30 September 2016, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/netaji-subhas-chandra-bose-ashes-preserved-in-renkoji-temple-1468691> (Accessed on 1 December 2022)

showing the mindset of the imperialist judges to look down upon the subjects of their colonies as inferiors irrespective of their positions and wisdom.⁴⁹

At the end of the World War II, the leaders of the defeated Axis powers were tried for crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity in two specially established international military tribunals.⁵⁰ Unlike at the vaunted Nuremberg trials, the judgment of the less-illustrious Tokyo tribunal was not unanimous. In his dissenting opinion, Justice Radha Binod Pal of India comprehensively disagreed with all aspects of the trial, finding all defendants “not guilty” of the charges levelled against them. Despite being considered quite incendiary at that time, the dissenting opinion has been largely ignored by International Relations scholarship analyzing the development of legal norms and institutions in global politics. Notwithstanding its many limitations, the questions raised in Pal’s dissent about criminality, power and justice, while situated in a specific historical moment, remain far from settled.⁵¹

Justice Pal (27 January 1886 to 10 January 1967) was one of the three Asian judges appointed to the tribunal for Japanese war crimes committed during World War II better known as the ‘Tokyo Trial’. He produced a judgment questioning the legitimacy of the tribunal and its rulings. He held the view that the legitimacy of the tribunal was suspect and questionable because the spirit of retribution, and not impartial justice, was the underlying criterion for passing the judgment.

He concluded: “I would hold that every one of the accused must be found not guilty of every one of the charges in the indictment and should be acquitted on all those charges.”⁵² Justice Pal never intended to offer a juridical argument on whether a sentence of not guilty would have been a correct one. However, he argued that the United States had clearly provoked the war with Japan and expected Japan to act. He argued that “Even contemporary historians

⁴⁹ Sandipan Sen, “Radhabinod Pal: The forgotten Indian and the Japanese hero”, 6 April 2018, <https://lifestyle.livemint.com/news/talking-point/radhabinod-pal-the-forgotten-indian-and-the-japanese-hero-111645432992051.html>, (Accessed on 3 December 2022).

⁵⁰ The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), also known as the Tokyo Trial or the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, was a military trial convened on 29 April 1946, to try the leaders of the Empire of Japan for joint conspiracy to start and wage war (categorized as "Class A" crimes), conventional war crimes ("Class B") and crimes against humanity ("Class C"). Eleven countries - Australia, Canada, China, France, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States - provided judges and prosecutors for the court. The defense comprised Japanese and American lawyers.

⁵¹ For an assessment of Pal’s dissent in order to recover its unique and critical insights into the relationship between imperialism and the development of international law, see Latha Varadarajan, “The trials of imperialism: Radhabinod Pal’s dissent at the Tokyo tribunal”, *European Journal of International Relations*, 10 December 2014, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1354066114555775> (Accessed on 9 July 2021)

⁵² Quoted in Adithya Anil Variath and Gauri Rane, “Remembering Radhabinod Pal’s Dissenting Opinion at the Tokyo Trial”, 16 August 2021, <https://thegeopolitics.com/remembering-radhabinod-pals-dissenting-opinion-at-the-tokyo-trial/#:~:text=Justice%20Pal%20wrote%20in%20his%20verdict%2C%20%E2%80%9CI%20would,committed%20during%20the%20war%2C%20comparable%20with%20the%20Holocaust.> (Accessed on 1 December 2022).

could think that as for the present war, the Principality of Monaco, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, would have taken up arms against the United States on receipt of such a note⁵³ as the State Department sent the Japanese Government on the eve of Pearl Harbor." He also noted that "Questions of law are not decided in an intellectual quarantine area in which legal doctrine and the local history of the dispute alone are retained and all else is forcibly excluded. We cannot afford to be ignorant of the world in which disputes arise."

In his lone dissent, Judge Pal refers to the trial as a "sham employment of legal process for the satisfaction of a thirst for revenge." According to Norimitsu Onishi, while he fully acknowledged Japan's war atrocities – including the Nanjing massacre – he said they were covered in the Class B and Class C trials.⁵⁴ Judge Pal noted, "I might mention in this connection that even the published accounts of Nanking 'rape' could not be accepted by the world without some suspicion of exaggeration".⁵⁵

⁵³ Known as the Hull note, officially the 'Outline of Proposed Basis for Agreement Between the United States and Japan', was the final proposal delivered to Japan by the United States before the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Japanese declaration of war. The note was delivered on November 26, 1941, and is named for Secretary of State Cordell Hull. It was the culmination of a series of events leading to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Notably it repeats previous American demands for Japan to withdraw from China and French Indochina. No further American proposals were made before the attack on Pearl Harbor, as the US government had received intelligence that Japan was preparing an invasion of Thailand.

⁵⁴ See, Norimitsu Onishi, "Decades After War Trials, Japan Still Honors a Dissenting Judge", *The New York Times*, 31 August 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/31/world/asia/31memo.html>. (Accessed on 30 May 2022).

⁵⁵ Nanjing Massacre, (conventionally known as Nanking Massacre), also called 'Rape of Nanjing' (December 1937–January 1938), when mass killings and ravaging of Chinese citizens took place and soldiers capitulated to the Japanese Imperial Army after its seizure of Nanjing, China, on 13 December 1937, during the Sino-Japanese War that preceded World War II. 22 October 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Nanjing-Massacre>. (Accessed on 6 November 2021). New facts have emerged recently with proper evidences, showing that China's claim of 300,000 being massacred was exaggerated. For details, see the two-part article by Paul de Vries, "Ignoring Evidence of Fewer Nanjing Massacre Victims, the West Chooses to Believe China", *Japan Forward*, 12 December 2020, <https://japan-forward.com/bookmark-ignoring-evidence-of-fewer-nanjing-massacre-victims-the-west-chooses-to-believe-china/>, and, "Politics Keep the West Holding on to 300,000 Nanjing Massacre Tall[y]", *Japan Forward*, 13 December 2020, <https://japan-forward.com/bookmark-politics-keeps-the-west-holding-on-to-300000-nanjing-massacre-tally/> (Both parts accessed on 30 May 2022).



Defendants in the Tokyo Tribunal stand as justices enter the courtroom. (Source: https://in.images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=AwrKCTZbz4hj8ZYWwIS7HAX.;_ylu=Y29sbwNzZzMEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Nj?p=Photo+of+11+member+jury+in+Tokyo+trial&fr=mcafee This source has several photos that can be perused.

Furthermore, Justice Pal believed that the exclusion of Western colonialism and the use of the atomic bomb by the US from the list of crimes, as well as the exclusion of judges from the vanquished nations on the bench, signified the "failure of the Tribunal to provide anything other than the opportunity for the victors to retaliate." Pal wrote that the Tokyo Trials were an exercise in victor's justice and that the Allies were equally culpable in acts such as strategic bombings of civilian targets. Regardless of his personal opinions about Japan, he deemed it appropriate to dissent from the judgement of his "learned brothers" to embody his love for absolute truth and justice.

After the 932-day trial, the tribunal found all 25 defendants guilty. On 12 November 1948, the former Prime Minister of Japan, Hideki Tojo, and some others were sentenced to death for war crimes by the Tribunal and many sentenced with life imprisonment.⁵⁶ The lone voice of dissent came from Indian Justice Radha Binod Pal. In his 1,235-page 250,000 words dissenting judgment, Justice Pal wrote that "the tribunal was a sham employment of legal process for the satisfaction of a thirst for revenge". Being a judge from a nation just gained its freedom from the colonial rule, Justice Pal's dissenting voice deserves special emphasis to study the relationship between imperialism and the development of international law.

⁵⁶ For the details of the accused and the judges, and various aspects of the trial, see, C. Peter Chen, "Tokyo Trial and Other Trials Against Japan – 3 May 1946-12 November 1948", https://ww2db.com/battle_spec.php?battle_id=221 (Accessed on 30 May 2022).

The majority opinion finally prevailed and wartime prime minister Hideki Tojo and six other war criminals were executed in Tokyo on 23 December 1948. According to declassified US documents that have since surfaced the ashes of those executed were scattered over the Pacific Ocean. This clears up a decades-old mystery over final disposal of the remains.

After Japan's surrender, the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces (SCAP), a position created at the start of the occupation of Japan on 14 August 1945, was headed by General Douglas MacArthur who oversaw Japan's transition into a democratic system. The Emperor's powers were drastically curtailed. He was made a figure head and symbol of the State. In greater wisdom, the institution of the Emperor, seen as a demi-God by the Japanese people, was not tampered. All military potentials were destroyed and a Constitution was virtually imposed on Japan with a peace clause enshrined in Article 9.⁵⁷ By inserting another clause in Article 96, it virtually closed option for any future attempt to amend any Article. The Occupation period ended in 1952 after Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty on 8 September 1951. Independent India refused to sign this treaty but chose to sign a separate treaty with Japan in 1952, symbolising mutual respect. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru felt that signing a separate peace treaty gave Japan a proper position of honour and equality among the community of free nations. In that Peace Treaty, India waived all reparation claims against Japan. This also marked a defining moment in the bilateral relations and in setting the tone for the future. This gesture by India and Justice Pal's dissenting judgment are important landmarks in India-Japan relations, besides the others identified and explained earlier. These experiences strike an emotional chord between the peoples of both the countries and have immensely contributed to the love and respect both have towards each other.

Shinzō Abe, the now deceased Prime Minister of Japan during his first visit to India in August 2007 paid tribute to Justice Radha Binod Pal. In his speech at the Indian Parliament, he remarked, "Justice Pal is highly respected even today by many in Japan for the noble spirit of courage he exhibited during the International Military Tribunal for the Far East."⁵⁸ In 1966, the Emperor conferred the Order of the Sacred Treasure First Class, one of the country's highest

⁵⁷ A lot of debate is going on the talk of revising this peace clause in response to the changing security environment in the region. For the full text of the Constitution, see https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html. Promulgated on 3 November 1946, came into effect on 3 May 1947. (Accessed on 30 May 2022)

⁵⁸ For the full text of Abe's speech, "Confluence of the Two Seas", 22 August 2020, see, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pm0708/speech-2.html>, (Accessed on 30 May 2022)

honours on Justice Pal. Justice Pal, a Japanese hero, has received little attention in the Indian discourse of international law and history.⁵⁹



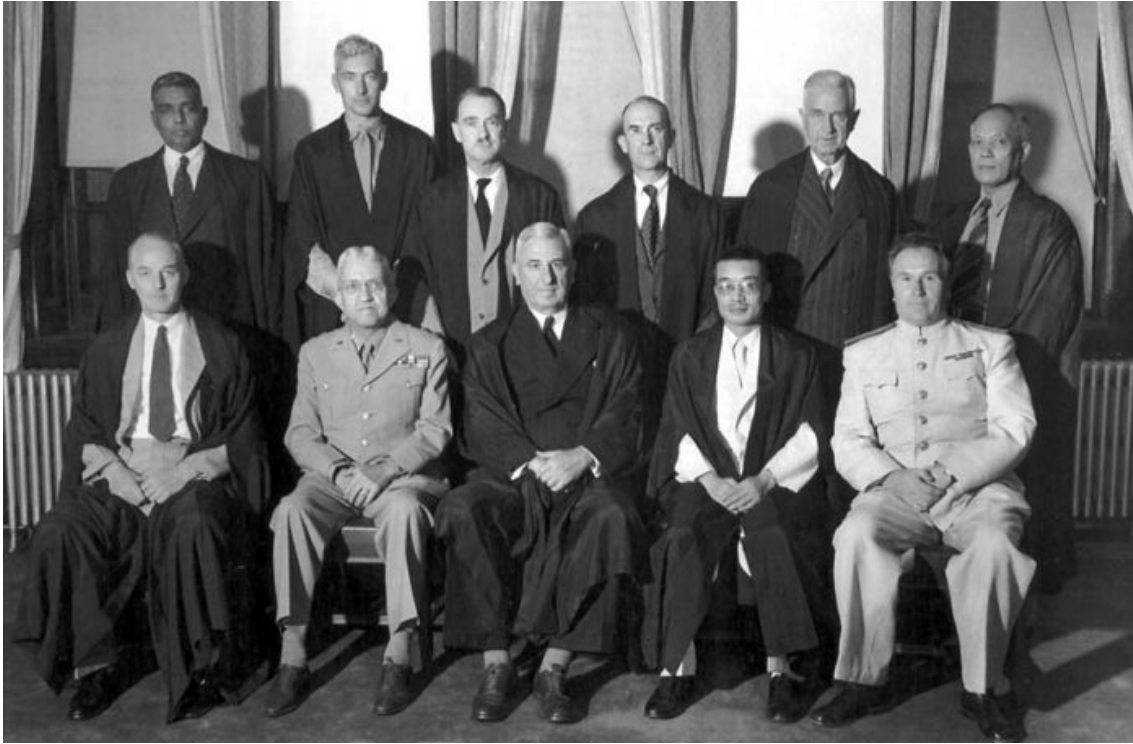
Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stops at Calcutta, where he pays a visit to Mr Prasanta Pal, the eldest son of the late Judge Radhabinod Pal, 23 August 2007. (Courtsey: Japan Forward, Tokyo)

On 23 August 2007, Abe met with Pal's son, Prasanta, in Kolkata and appreciated Dr. Pal's role during the course of the trials. Dr. Radha Binod Pal was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 1959. Prasanta along with his wife, Minati, were invited to Kyoto in Japan as the guests of honour to inaugurate a statue of Justice Pal. Prasanta donated to the Memorial, the pen with which his father had signed the dissenting judgment in 1948.⁶⁰ Prasanta Pal died in 2009, at the age of 83.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Sanjoy Ghose, ““WE ARE NO WAY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS”- The story of Radhabinod Pal, the jurist India disowned”, 14 August 2020, <https://www.theleaflet.in/we-are-no-way-responsible-for-this-the-story-of-radhabinod-pal-the-jurist-india-disowned/>, (Accessed on 30 May 2022)

⁶⁰ “The Dissenting Indian”, *Deccan Herald*, 14 August 2021, <https://www.deccanherald.com/content/88645/dissenting-indian.html> (Accessed on 15 August 2021)

⁶¹ As per his Will, his residence at Dover lane, Kolkata is converted into an historical library named after Justice Radha Binod Pal.

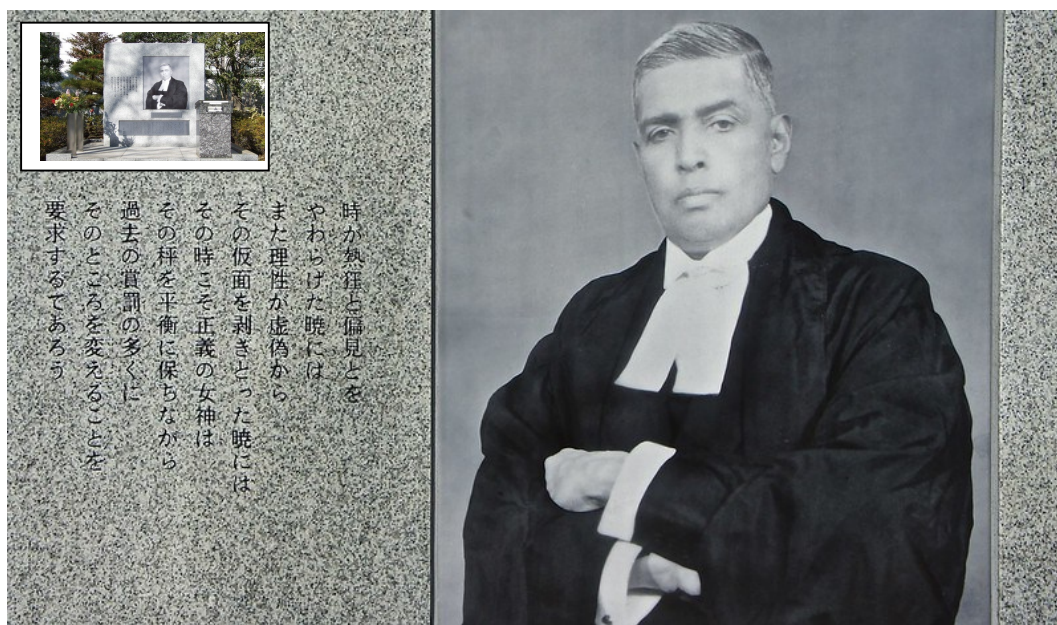


Justice Pal was one of the 11 members of the tribunal set up by the Allied powers and by General Douglas MacArthur as the representative of British India. Justice Pal standing back row first on the left. (Courtesy: Japan Forward, Japan)

Justice Pal wrote an extensive dissent rejecting the legitimacy and the authority of the Tribunal as an instrument of victor's justice. Throughout the trial, Justice Pal insisted that Japan was innocent according to the general principle of international law. He insisted that Japan did not wage war of aggression but acted in self-defence and liberation.⁶² In 1952, after the end of the American Occupation of Japan, the ban on Justice Pal's 1,235-page dissent was lifted and then published for the first time. The Japanese, proud of their past glory and tradition, took the opportunity to use this as the basis of their argument that the Tokyo trials were biased, meaningless and holds no value. Some academics also opine that the trials were a basis for shifting blame from the Emperor to Tojo as the culprit of the War. Political psychologist, social theorist and cultural critic Ashis Nandy argues that Judge Pal's lone dissenting opinion, that the Japanese soldiers were only following orders and that the acts committed by them were not illegal in an indictable sense, was because of "his long exposure to the traditional laws of India," combined with a sense of "Asian solidarity" within the "larger Afro-Asian context of nationalism." Nandy argues that "some saw Judge Pal repaying the Japanese warlords for their

⁶² Adithya Anil Variath and Gauri Rane, "Remembering Radhabinod Pal's Dissenting Opinion at the Tokyo Trial", 16 August 2021, <https://thegeopolitics.com/remembering-radhabinod-pals-dissenting-opinion-at-the-tokyo-trial/> (Accessed on 18 August 2021)

support of the Indian National Army created by the nationalist Bose in Singapore”.⁶³ In 1966, Pal visited Japan and said that he had admired Japan from an early age for being the only Asian nation that “stood up against the West”. Pal is revered by Japanese patriots and a monument dedicated to him stands on the grounds of the Yasukuni Shrine. The monument was erected after Pal’s death. There is another monument of Pal at Kyoto Ryozen Gokoku Shrine. The memorial Yushukan, Japan’s oldest museum located within the Yasukuni Shrine, dedicated to the memories of the Japanese military war heroes, also has a space for Justice Pal.⁶⁴ Regrettably, the memorials in his honour are barely noted outside of Japan.⁶⁵ More research is needed on Justice Pal’s interpretation of international criminal legal laws and their application in the appropriate manner.



This is enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine with key message of Justice Pal, both in Japanese and English. Yasukuni Shrine (Jinja) is a Shinto shrine in Chiyoda, Tokyo, Japan. It was founded by Emperor Meiji and commemorates anyone who had died in service of the Empire of Japan. The Honden shrine commemorates anyone who died on behalf of the empire, including not only soldiers, relief workers, factory workers, and other citizens, but also those not

⁶³ Ashis Nandy, “The Other within: The Strange case of Radhabinod Pal’s Judgment on Culpability”, *New Literary History*, vol.23, no.1, Versions of Otherness, Winter 1992, pp. 45-67.

⁶⁴ The Yūshūkan (“Place to commune with a noble soul”) is a Japanese military and war museum located within Yasukuni Shrine in Chiyoda, Tokyo. As a museum maintained by the shrine, which is dedicated to the souls of soldiers who died fighting on behalf of the Emperor of Japan, the museum contains various artifacts and documents concerning Japanese war casualties and military activity. See, “Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan”, <https://kamikazeimages.net/museums/yushukan/index.htm> (Accessed on 30 March 2022)

⁶⁵ M.A. Drumbi, “Judge Pal with Jefferson Davis in Tokyo”, 15 March 2019, <https://legalsightseeing.org/2019/03/15/judge-pal-with-jefferson-davis-in-tokyo/> (Accessed on 3 December 2022).

of Japanese ethnicity such as Taiwanese and Koreans who served Japan. (Photograph taken by the author).

The engraved words on the monument honouring Radha Binod Pal says: “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”



The popular Yasukuni Shrine is located in the vicinity of the Indian Embassy in Kudanshita, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, Japan.⁶⁶ Five million people visit Yasukuni Jinja every year to pay their respects to the enshrined souls. (Photograph taken by the author)

The impact of Justice Pal's judgment is so huge that it has become a talking point in praise and admiration of his courage and conviction to stand up to his integrity in upholding jurisprudence and the neutrality in delivering the judgment without succumbing to any pressure or influence from any side. His dissenting voice is frequently mentioned by Indian and Japanese diplomats and political leaders in the context of Indo-Japanese friendship and solidarity.

Nearly six decades after his death, Justice Pal remains a towering personality in the Japanese consciousness. During his long tenure, Abe with his nationalist credentials and backed

⁶⁶ In recent times, Yasukuni Shrine became controversial after the spirits of the so-called war criminals hanged after the Tokyo Trial were enshrined in the shrine. When political leaders starting with former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and subsequently more lawmakers started visiting the shrine and offered prayer, Korea and China started opposing and saw those visits as glorifying the war criminals. These two countries felt that Japan does not feel the real remorse for all its military actions and atrocities committed during the War on their peoples. These two countries see such visits as signs of the revival of militarism and thus a constant irritant in their relations with Japan. The shadow of history continues to trouble Japan's relations with China and Korea.

by like-minded academics and nationalist politicians pushed forward a revisionist view of Japan's wartime history. Judge Pal sprang back into the spotlight, resurrecting the Japanese spirit where he remains a touchstone of the culture wars surrounding the Tokyo trials.⁶⁷ It remains unclear why the British and American authorities selected Justice Pal whose views on the colonial powers were strong and had sympathised with the anti-colonial struggle in India. As an Asian nationalist, he saw things very differently from the other judges. Justice Pal was bold enough to describe the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States as the worst atrocities of the war, comparable with Nazi crimes.



Bust of Justice Radha Binod Pal in the Calcutta High Court (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radhabinod_Pal)

There can never be unanimity of opinion in praise of Justice Pal either in Japan or India. Some in Japan see differently Pal's opinion on the issue of the Nanking massacre and feel Pal was excessive in his views. There also exists a view, though a minor one, that despite Japan inspiring admiration as an Asian nation competing with the Western powers, there was equal consternation for its colonisation of Asia. Those who hold such view say that Justice Pal, being an Indian and Bengali himself, must have been aware of the activities of Indian anti-colonialists

⁶⁷ Norimitsu Onishi, n.54, (Accessed on 30 May 2022)

such as fellow revolutionaries Rash Behari Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose, which could have indirectly influenced his views.

The Tokyo trial ended but left many legal issues and interpretations unanswered and debatable, which continue to affect Japan in modern times. The templates of trial involving the composition of the judges, criteria of their inclusion, fixing either individual or collective/institutional/representative responsibility and many more continue to impact Japan's present legal system till today.

Concluding Observations

Though there were several from Bengal, many of whom not so well known, who had interacted with Japan over the past century or so in different capacities, not all had left an impact in contributing to the development of India-Japan relations to merit inclusion among the visionaries and luminaries chosen for the purpose of the present study. If we connect the dots from Gurudev Tagore to Swami Vivekananda to Rash Behari Bose to Netaji Subhas Bose and finally to Justice Pal, each of whom contributed in different capacities to the fostering of India-Japan relations, it would look as a beautiful journey. Cultural identities such as art, nationalism, romanticism, cuisine, Buddhism, Asian identity and Asian renaissance and even matrimony, when weaved together, the outcome is a relationship that is robust, time-tested, complementary and stand as rock forever. This is not to suggest that there was no one else from other parts of India who in equal measures contributed to the development of India-Japan friendship but as mentioned in the beginning, the chosen eminent personalities were particularly from undivided Bengal. This is the narrative of Bengal-Japan romance that continues to thrill the present generation and hopefully for future generations too.

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