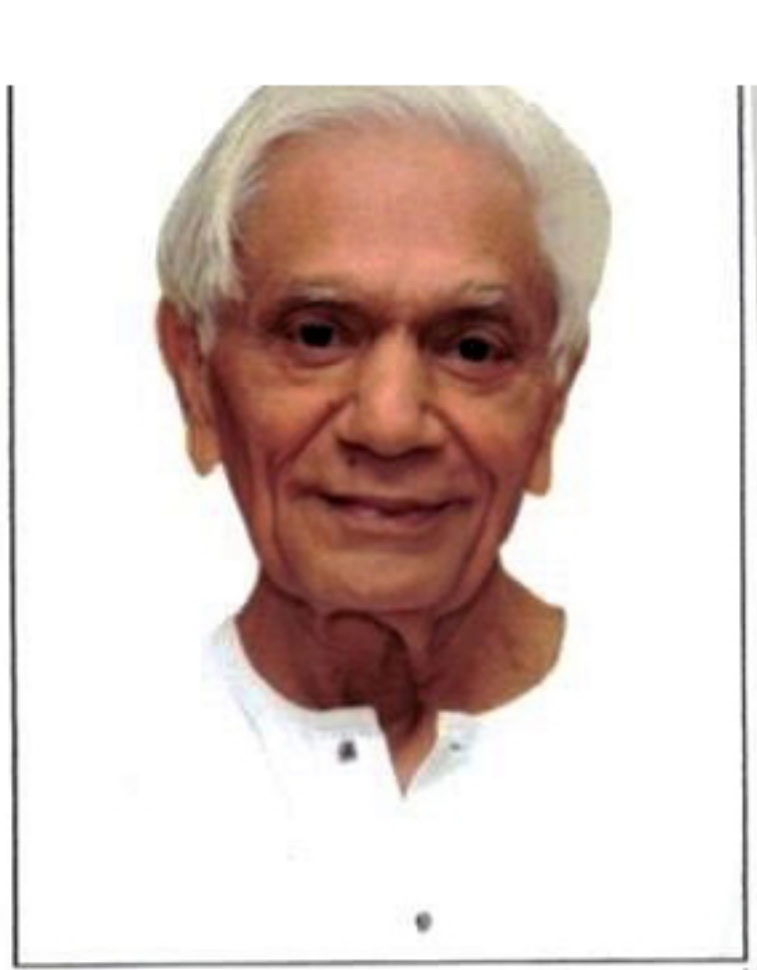




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Mrs. Shobhana Radhakrishnan and her colleagues relive the journey of great minds from Japan to India and from India to Japan during the last fifteen hundred years. It has been the unity of minds to create good will and the glorious light of culture to illumine our lives. In a poem of Saigyō:

*In many springs
I've come here to meet
And unite my mind
With the opening blossoms.*

Japan termed herself Nippon or 'the Land of the Sun' and India 'the Land of the Moon'. The moon has been a symbol of India and the enlightenment of Lord Buddha in Japanese poetry. Shobhana and friends enrich these bonds by recounting the great message of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. Both of them had enriching contacts with the leading lights of Japan.

The great cultural icon of Japan Okakura Kokuzo had the pen name Tenshin 'The Heart of Heaven'. He came to India at the end of 1901 for blessings of Lord Buddha and to invite Swami Vivekananda to a conference at the Higashi Honganji monastery in Japan. He stayed with the Tagores in 1902, wrote *The Ideals of the East* in Kolkata and said to the Indians: "go and free your country first". He urged India to awake, and lead an awakened Asia in its wake, but emphasized that the awakening must come from Asia herself: "Only at great loss can Asia permit its spirit to die".

In the final sentences of his book, Okakura became poetical: "We await the flashing sword of the lightning which shall cleave the darkness. For the terrible hush must be broken, and the raindrops of a new vigour must refresh the earth before new flowers can spring up to cover it with their bloom. But it must be from Asia herself, along the ancient road-ways of the race, that the great voice shall be heard." These words became a battle-cry in the movement for India's national regeneration: "Victory from within, or a mighty death from without".

At the instance of Swami Vivekananda, Okakura visited Bodhgaya, Varanasi, Ajanta and Ellora. He expressed his feelings on the frescos of Ajanta in a letter to Vivekananda in March 1902. "The Ajanta frescoes have given me the true glimpse into your classical art—shall I say ours? I found all I dreamed of before and more.... This land is great in this as in all other expressions of the soul. Who says that feeling is dead? The same Live-idea runs throughout the later development as a stream courses among the fallen leaves. Shall we not drink at the fountain again? The cloud of misery---the right of political oblivion whose darkness drew you nearer the stars than ever---is waning away. I wait the drawn in you and yours".

Ten years later, Okakura came for a short visit to India in 1912. Went to Jagannath Temple at Puri and Konark. He told Abanindranath Tagore in a touching farewell : " I am blessed, have drunk deep of joy : now it is time to start for the Great Beyond in bliss" Shortly after he reached Tokyo, he went into the Great Beyond.

India's artistic rejuvenation was deeply influenced by the Japanese brush and the simplicity of its delineation. The rigorous purity of line, a spirit of living imagery that guides the artist's hand to seize the ultimate essence of water or of a flower--imparted its irreducible personality to the new Indian school of art developed in Bengal.

Venerable Fuji Guruji of Japan joined the Wardha Ashram of Mahatma Gandhi. As a devotee of Nichiren Daishonin he used to recite the Lotus Sutra and *Namu Myoho Rengekyo*. Gandhiji asked my father Prof. RaghuVira the meaning of this mantra, its Sanskrit original and the Lotus Sutra. My father gave a copy of the Sanskrit original and English translation of the Lotus Sutra to Gandhiji. The Mantra became a part of the daily morning recitation of the Ashram and was included in its printed hymn book (*bhajanavali*). Venerable Fuji Guruji had come to India as prophesied by Nichiren Daishonin five hundred years ago that one day the Lotus Sutra will go from the Land of the Sun (i.e. Japan) to the Land of the Moon (i.e. India). In Jan 1948 Gandhiji announced that he would break his fast only when the conscience of all is aroused, prayers of all religions were read, including the Japanese scripture of the Lotus Sutra. To Gandhiji the Japanese *daimoku* was a message of ahimsa and compassion to the world.

The Indian delegation to Japan renews the message of universal sharing of the material and spiritual in the words of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. We have to realise that the value system of life and human destiny are a universal order. The three principles of Gandhiji can be summarised as compassion, contentment and non-violence. We have to share, to be satisfied with need, to avoid greed, and be non-violent both in mind and deed. We are trustees of *aparigraha* 'non-accumulation'. Greed has be replaced by need.

Lokesh Chandra