

Soft Road to Trans-national Encompassment- Analyzing role of Soft Power in shaping the contours of India-Japan Relations

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Abstract:

The 21st century has witnessed the emerging dominance of Asian countries with the shift of the global economic and strategic epicenter from west to east. As all the major powers intersect in the Asia Pacific region in this pursuit, *influence* is destined to be a stronger word than *power*. And this is the point where *Soft Power* critically interjects. Strategically placed between South East and West Asia, SAARC has been a significant global platform for deepening transnational integration and cooperation. While ethno-religious differences have kept the South Asian association disintegrated, Japan stood untouched by power contention, rather re-shaping its foreign policy outlook standing synonymous with a ‘cultural and economic powerhouse.’ The trust Japan has built over decades in developing Indo-Japan diplomacy through cultural appeal now stands exemplary for South Asian countries to look to these two nations for inspiration. In doing so, the role of Japan’s popular culture, along with the contemporary Japanese web series broadcasted to South Asian countries, has contributed significantly to the mass commercialization of Japanese culture, engendering an attraction toward a benign image of the Japanese state. While depicting Japan's refined lifestyle, modern yet very eastern, the J-dramas have penetrated young generations, creating a wave of Japan-ness in their minds and motivating them to learn the language. The National Education Policy of India 2020, too, has boosted the learning of Japanese among foreign languages right from the secondary level of education, and the JENESYS program has been continuously adding to the number of learners in India. From classic literary narratives to traditional arts- *Kabuki*, Bharatnatyam, *sushi*, *sake*, *curry*, and *anime* to *kawaii* culture, Bollywood, Yoga, and *Zen*, Japan has been binding the Indian community for decades. In the present era of intensified economic globalization, Soft Power's window allows Japan to maximize peaceful cooperation with her neighbors, particularly India.

Keywords: Soft power, Indo-Japan relations, anime and culinary diplomacy, philosophical bridges

Introduction

Name of a country is included in the history of records for the wars it wins and for the cities it builds, but a country is remembered for the way it influences hearts.

The 21st century has witnessed the emerging dominance of East Asian countries with the shift of the global economic and strategic epicenter from west to east. As a result, this century has proved to be an ideal time for the Eastern world to augment its resources. As all the major powers intersect in the Asia Pacific region in this pursuit, *influence* is destined to be a stronger word than *power*. And this is the point

where Soft Power critically interjects. The global system is changing in the disfavor of Hard Power for its destabilizing nature, paving the way for the role and effectiveness of Soft Power for its endurance and sustainability. Besides strengthening *influence* in a benign way, enhancement of intangible outreach through cultural appeal, political values and norms, and foreign policy could turn out to be the best synergizing investments for the Asia Pacific Community to not only deal with economic and security issues in an integrated way but creating a strong bond of cross-cultural empathy. This paper highlights the importance of augmenting the intangible ‘Soft-Power’ and how India and Japan have remarkably incorporated it into their Foreign policies.

The post-World War II period witnessed America emerge victorious of the ruins with a vision of positioning herself as the global ideal for progress, liberty, modernity, and democratic values. Achieving this chimera happened to a large extent by the cultural hegemonic expansion that might not have existed then even as an idea for the majority of the nations. Undoubtedly, the past century revolved around the concept of the most desirable country: America. And this idea was sold through a. the charm of Hollywood’s movies where superheroes and wonder women appeared to be saving humanity from any global crisis, b. dream of taking walks at Times Square or spending long holidays in Miami, c. desire to be associated with Ivy League Colleges, d. taste of Steak and Beer, Mc McDonald, KFC, Burger King, Pizza Huts, Domino, and Subway that soon made their way through the global market. Perhaps Western countries have invested longer in soft power initiatives even before with success. History bears testimony to the fact that after losing against Prussia in the 1870 war, one of the most critical initial steps to rebuild her morale was to promote French language, francophone, literature, and culture studies around the world. Thus, *Alliance Francaise*¹ was born in 1883. Germany carried out similar endeavors through institutes named after Goethe, and then China followed suit in recent decades through institutes on Confucius. China, like America, not only narrated but displayed its deep-rooted culture and history through cinemas like “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” (2000.) However, that was even a thoughtful step that popularized the image of the Chinese woman warrior in the West, just like yet another critical endeavor of featuring “Mulan” (1998) that showcased prominent martial arts disciplines traditionally held to have originated by women. The film catered to the global audience with what they would want to see about China. As the new player against America in international cooperation and competition, China’s soft power sports diplomacy through hosting the 2008 Beijing Olympics was a milestone in her exploration of being acknowledged as an indispensable member of the international community. This trade of soft power is no longer an unfamiliar domain for the Eastern countries, though their endeavors have started in recent decades.

The Republic of Korea emphasized the dissemination of traditional and modern cultural values, which found an expression called the “Korean Wave” through e-sports, the fashion industry, and cosmetics products that find a great deal in both the West and East, including India. From *Kimchi* grabbing a place in the intangible cultural heritage to K-pop music and dramas that enjoy the prestige of being the most-watched videos, with more than 80% of the views coming from outside the Asian peninsula², South Korea

¹ Alliance française, a local organization in a global network. The Alliance française aims to promote the French language, to highlight French culture and to develop cultural links between France and India. In India, there is a strong and vibrant network of 15 Alliances françaises.

² <https://time.com/5750079/end-americas-cultural-hegemony/>

has not only swayed the entertainment market globally but triggered initiatives to include foreign talents to be a part of the South-Korean entertainment fraternity as well. Interestingly, a few Indian girls have become Korean pop-culture talents in recent years.³ The growing popularity of Korean dramas has been monitored by Indian DTH broadcasting companies, making such shows available in Indian homes. Netflix, too, seems to have been continuously investing in South Korean content with subtitles and dubbing in different languages. Indian viewers, especially, seem to have been interested in Korean drama content that showcases the strong character of women in contrast to Korea's deeply-rooted Confucian consciousness that dwelled in the legitimacy of men's superiority to women. From Glass skin face sheets of K-beauty products to *Korikart*- an online website to purchase Korean products, South Korea has penetrated Indian society through vibrant soft power resources.

With global migration continuously accelerating, we are breathing in a world of incredible change, significantly induced by the pervasive and relentless spreading of diasporas, making countries meet points of multiple ethnicities and outlooks. Lee Kuan Yew⁴ used the same diversity to create a nation by threading a population of 75 percent Chinese and amalgamating Malays, Indians, and others into a vibrant net through Asian values. It can be seen as *Lee Kuan Yew Soft Power* that revived the perception of a nation's success, associating it to its size. Working as a balance between the US and the East through trade, Singapore brought China and the US close to understanding each other, which finally turned out to be a channel to geographical solidarity for ASEAN.

India, too, has portrayed a tremendous cultural connection with South East Asia for centuries, especially by connecting all nations through Hinduism, which found its way through Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, and Buddhism which reached Vietnam and Japan via China and Korea, making Asian countries as cultural hegemons. Since time immemorial, the charm of the Indo-Gangetic Plain has also rested on the Sanskrit texts. This language created a bridge for pan-Indo-Aryan accessibility and transmission of information and knowledge in Asian history. Buddhist pilgrim Faxian translated the Indian Sanskrit texts in Chinese by 418 CE that were already available in China as early as 402 CE. Moreover, the 1st millennium CE witnessed the spread of Buddhist and Hindu ideas in Sanskrit to Southeast Asia, parts of East Asia, and Central Asia, creating a cultural bond across the subcontinent based on common language. From the journey of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's initiative of inking the foreign policy of India with the 'Panchsheel Treaty'⁵ in 1954 between India, China, and Myanmar till the development of 'Panchamrit' in the recent decade, India has shown enormous awareness of what she has to offer through and beyond the cultural diplomacy. India has expanded the scope of its soft power rhetoric by allowing shared cultural development instead of exporting cultural products. India has made endeavors in this direction under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi that the global audiences have lauded. As a keynote speaker at the Sanskrit Conference in Bangkok in June 2015, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj addressed more than 600 experts from 60 nations in Sanskrit, describing the language as 'modern and universal.' Since the group was organized in Delhi in 1972, it was the first time

³ <https://www.ndtv.com/feature/aria-becomes-second-k-pop-star-from-india-after-sriya-lenka-3944430>

⁴ Lee Kuan Yew was a politician and lawyer who was the first prime minister of Singapore, serving from 1959 to 1990.

⁵ Panchsheel Treaty had five principle tenets — mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence

an Indian minister of Swaraj's rank attended the World Sanskrit Conference outside the country. Prime Minister's efforts from having the UN declared June 21 as International Yoga Day, his speaking in Hindi at the UN General Assembly while addressing the Australian, Nepal, Bhutan, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Fijian parliaments, and using 'Bharat' to describe 'India' with a conscious intention of including non-resident Indians or NRIs and people of Indian origin or PIOs as a diaspora of *Bharatwasis*, all have been PM Modi's focused attempt to bring in picture the continuing active role of India and Indian diaspora spreading globally in popularizing the nation, the way it stands today. The Modi government is also taking steps to promote Sanskrit language internationally with a \$20,000 International Sanskrit Award to scholars making significant contributions to the language, the institution of fellowships for foreign scholars for researching in India in Sanskrit language or literature, and opportunities for new learners to pursue courses or research in India (*The Hindu*, 2015).⁶

With more and more players within and outside India supporting India's initiative towards the 'Look East, Act East' policy, there is greater integration with the East and Southeast Asian communities and chances to attract foreign investment for local development. Recent decades have witnessed the hype of seeing India as a major emerging power, and the perspective even accelerated to seeing India's potentiality of becoming the major superpower of the 21st century. The potentiality of making a country a world power or world leader if relies on the population it holds, India shows the possibility of overcoming even China in the coming decades, and, if the potentiality of a world leader lies in the hard power, India holds world's 4th largest army and has been recognized for nuclear capacity as well. Even economically, India has the world's 5th largest economy in terms of PPP, which is still growing. However, these features are something that most of the countries already possess or have been trying to work on the same. Then what does India have to offer with a difference to make the 21st century her own? A country as endowed as India with a civilization as old as time and an extraordinary profusion of innumerable ethnic groups, this country's cultural enigma and exoticism, resonates in every domain of her national structure. Whether India wants it or not, India is being watched by the world for the same reasons!

Leveraging India's Soft Power

Joseph S. Nye, Jr., who coined the term 'soft power' in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature American Power*, 1990, defines the word as follows: 'Soft power' is the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international affairs through attraction rather than coercion... Soft power can rest on the appeal of one's ideas or the ability to set the agenda in ways that shape the preferences of others. If a state can make its power legitimate in the perception of others and establish international institutions that encourage them to channel or limit their activities, it may not need to expend as many of its costly traditional economic or military resources."

Going by this definition, India's prominent marketing of the "Incredible India" slogan has raised awareness of the country's diverse historical, cultural and numerous UNESCO world heritage sites, making the country an appealing destination for travelers from across the globe. India's soft power priorities to foster and strengthen mutual understanding between India and other nations can be best

⁶ Shreya Khanna and P. Moorthy, "Analysing India's Soft Power Functioning in the Twenty-first Century," *India Quarterly*, Sage Publications, Ltd., September 2017, Vol. 73, No. 3 (September 2017), pp. 292-311

exemplified by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). A fine example is The Nehru Centre in London, which acts as the cultural wing of The High Commission of India in the UK. Established in 1992, it is regarded by ICCR as its flagship cultural centre abroad and has emerged as a premier institution engaged in India's cultural interface with the UK.⁷

Interestingly, though Joseph Nye coined the word 'Soft Power' in 1990, it has been historically practiced by ancient Indian minds effectively as a tool for enhancing their intangible stand as individuals or for the community they belonged to. There are many less-known events in the history of time that fascinates the society of India today. One of them is the mutual relation between India and South Korea. India-RoK relations have made great strides in recent years and have become truly multidimensional, spurred by a significant convergence of interests and mutual goodwill especially following the formal establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries that occurred in 1973. Yet there is a less-known event that exists in the pages of history that brought together the two nations and connected them forever. According to a legend, Princess Suriratna, also known as Heo Hwang-ok (in South Korea), went to Korea in 48 AD, some 2000 years ago, and started the Karak dynasty by marrying a local Korean king of 'Ayuta' kingdom. Even today, 10 percent of the South Korean population including renowned personalities such as former South Korean president Kim Dae-jung and former prime minister Kim Jong-pil claim their ancestry to the Karak dynasty. This legendary event of ancient bond turned out instrumental not only for building better relations between the countries but also played a significant role to reduce the mental gap between the people on common cultural ground. The impact was seen in modern times when in the year 2000, an MoU signed between UP government with South Korea to develop Ayodhya and Gimhae as sister cities followed by erecting a memorial of the Queen Heo Hwang-ok near Ram Katha Park and ghats on Saryu river.⁸

Furthermore, the Buddhist faith in peaceful co-existence lends itself as the central message of wide pan-Asian soft-power diplomacy. While the birthplace of Gautam Buddha, Lumbini, forms today part of southern Nepal, a congregation of international pilgrims has been to Sarnath, Bodhgaya, and Kushinagar - where Gautam Buddha first expounded dharma, attained enlightenment, and mahaparinirvana respectively; all of them being located in India. During my academic tour to Japan, I have met many sexagenarians who wanted to engage in conversation with me after knowing that I come from *Tenjuku* - the divine land where Buddha was born. It is no surprise that many Japanese and people from other countries settled in Bod Gaya initially being attracted to the spiritual essence of the place and then staying for continuing the spiritual pursuit that they might have felt for some reason could be possible only there. Perhaps the most enduring and decisive element of Buddhism as a "soft power" is that it strikes a spiritual and an emotional chord not only with the Indians and the Buddhist world but also with people of some Western countries who are probing for a calmer and philosophical meaning to their lives.

Home to the world's oldest civilization, India's outreach for her profusion of diverse ethnic groups, topography, cultural practices, food, cinema has been echoing both east and west of it for millennia. Though much of its resonance could not be felt until the intellectual convergence that happened through

⁷ Global Soft Power Index 2020, Brand Finance, <https://brandirectory.com/globalsoftpower/download/brand-finance-global-soft-power-index-2020.pdf>

⁸ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/up-government-signs-mou-with-south-korea-4996150/>

the people-to-people exchange, vast studies and research in the field of history, folk culture, anthropology, etc. that gained much-needed momentum in modern and contemporary times. A perfect example of these endeavors could be seen between India and The Land of Rising Sun, Japan.

India and Japan- Early Contacts

India's ideological influence has traveled and created a difference across the globe. From the crossing over the dangers of the ocean, the voyage of the first Buddhist emissary from India, monk Bodhisena, an Indian Tamil Brahmin Buddhist scholar and monk is known to have traveled to Japan and establishing the *Kegon* school, the Japanese transmission of the *Huayan* of Chinese Buddhism. His stay has been noted in the official records of Japanese history called the *Shoku Nihongi* where he is referred to as "Bodai-Senna." Bodhisena was also instrumental in creating an everlasting impact on Japanese consciousness by presiding over the consecration ceremony of *kaigen* or *kaigan*, which refers to the "Eye Opening" ceremony of Great Buddha statue of Nara, in the year 752 that was a major international affair of that time. The ceremony was attended by Empress Koken, Empress Dowager Komyo, and 10,000 guests, including monks from China and the Korean kingdoms of Paekche, Kudara, and Silla along with 4,000 dancers who also took part to commemorate the event.⁹

Adding to this pertinent event, in the early ninth century, the great monk scholar, *Kukai* also known as 'Kobo Daishi,' went to China to study Buddhism and brought a number of scriptures from there. He invented a new script for Japan- Hiragana on the basis of Sanskrit sound sequence- *a, i, u, e, o, ka, ki, ku, ke, ko* leading to the democratization of education. Till today the Japanese begin their life with learning the Hiragana script. Kobo Daishi was one of the first Japanese scholars to give training for writing Sanskrit mantras and seed syllables¹⁰.

India and Japan- Modern Contacts

The visit of Swami Vivekananda to Japan in the late 19th century reinvigorated the ancient bond of the two nations. Vedanta Society of Japan, in the annual birth anniversary memorial lecture of Swami Vivekananda, never fails to mention the strong impression that Vivekananda made on the Japanese people during his brief stop-over and visit some of the important cities in Japan (including Nagasaki, Kobe, Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto, and Tokyo) in 1893, on his way to the Parliament of Religions in the USA. Vivekananda's explanation of *Advaita Vedanta* is not sectarian or exclusive since it is a philosophy rather than a creed. Observing the resemblance of his face to that of the Buddha, many referred to him as the "second Buddha."¹¹ Japan in the 1890s, was witnessing persisting social and political disorder that had degraded the spiritual value of almost all the existing religions at that time. Though not very religious by character, yet Japanese were deprived of the guidance and inspiration of a religion based on renunciation, service to mankind and universal love in the name of God. Without such ideals to follow and inspire, no

⁹ <https://japan-forward.com/bookmark-bodhisena-the-indian-monk-who-opened-eyes-in-nara/>

¹⁰ Seed syllables (Sanskrit *bījākṣara*) are the quintessence of mantra, and the ultimate condensation of the Dharma, containing infinite meaning in a single syllable. For e.g., *Om* has held a special place in Indian religion since before Buddhism.

¹¹ Nippon Vedanta Kyokai: A branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, Kanagawa-Ken, Japan, Official Website: <http://www.vedanta.jp/en/about.html>

nation, no matter how materially enriched it may become, can have a firm mooring and is bound to drift with a feeling of a void at heart. Swami's visit during that point of time, though might not have been able to fill this void in his very short stay, yet provided the Japanese people hope and guidance towards finding a spiritual orientation within themselves. Few mass gatherings that took place under Vivekananda's presence attracted Americans and their support and empathy towards Indians who were still under the heavy hands of English oppressors.

By that time the study of Indian philosophy in Japan has also made its mark that started around 1884 when Nanjo Bunyuu (1849-1927) returned to Japan after having studied Sanskrit for eight years under F. Max Muller (1823-1900) at the University of Oxford, and the following year, having been appointed lecturer at the University of Tokyo, he started a course in Sanskrit. He was the first to introduce European Sanskrit studies to Japan, and he laid the firm foundations for the modern study of Sanskrit and Buddhism in Japan. This current was further consolidated by Takakusu Junjiro (1886-1945). He, too, pursued the study of Sanskrit language and literature under Max Muller, as Nanjo had done, and also studied Paali and Indian philosophy. In 1901 a chair of Sanskrit was established at the University of Tokyo, the first in Japan, with Takakusu being appointed its first professor. Then, in 1906, he initiated a course in the "History of Indian Philosophy and Religion," which was to become the starting point of the formal study of Indian philosophy in Japan.¹²

Much of the intellectual convergence that happened after that traces its history through Bengali travelogues such as *Japan-Probas* and *Japan* by Manmathanath Ghosh and Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyay, respectively, who travelled to Japan in 1906 and portrayed Japan of early 20th century. Further correspondences between distinguished individuals from both nations witnessed a noticeable increase during this period. The friendship between Japanese thinker Okakura and Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore is a matter of historical importance. Tagore-Tenshin were two remarkable figures drawn to each other's distinctive personal style, belief in art, and desire to revitalise Asian culture. Okakura spent nine months travelling in India in 1902, much of it in Bengal, where the Hindu nun of Irish extraction, Sister Nivedita, helped him finalize the manuscript of his book *The Ideals of the East*. Tagore in his visits to Japan was impressed by the sophistication of Japanese aesthetics as manifested in their gardens and decorative lay out of their homes and shrines. Tenshin's perspective towards Asia had Japan at the apex in the modern world. However, Tagore saw 'True modernism' as 'freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is the independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters,' as he mentions in his speech 'Spirit of Japan' in 1916. Tagore believed that material civilization could in no way benefit humankind.

During the turbulent period of India's freedom struggle, even Subhash Chandra Bose's endeavours were supported by Japanese sponsorship to form Azad Hind Fauj also known by the name Indian National Army (INA). The Japanese government built, supported, and controlled the INA and the Indian Independence League. Japanese forces included INA units in many battles, most notably at the *U Go*

¹² Sengaku Mayeda, Junzo Tanizawa, "Studies on Indian Philosophy in Japan," Philosophy East and West, Volume 41, Number 4, University of Hawaii Press, October 1991

Offensive launched in March 1944 against troops of the British Empire in the northeast Indian regions of Manipur and the Naga Hills (then administered as part of Assam).

At the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), a military trial that convened on April 29, 1946, to try the leaders of the Empire of Japan for joint conspiracy and to start and wage war categorized as "Class A" crimes, Indian Justice Radha Binod Pal proposed his dissenting judgment in favour of Japan. Justice Pal from Bengal produced a statement in which he dismissed the legitimacy of the IMTFE as victor's justice saying: "I would hold that each and every one of the accused must be found not guilty of each and every one of the charges in the indictment and should be acquitted on all those charges." About the conduct of air attacks, there was no positive or specific customary international humanitarian law concerning aerial warfare before and during World War II. Hence, justice Pal argued that the exclusion of Western Colonialism and the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki from the list of crimes as the lack 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". The judgment of Justice Radhabinod Pal is remembered even today in Japan. This became a symbol of the close ties between India and Japan, which stands as fundamental to the two nations' contemporary bond.

On 15 August 1947, Japan was among the first nations to recognize Indian sovereignty after its independence from the United Kingdom. A relatively well-known result of the two nations' fondness was in 1949, when PM Jawaharlal Nehru presented an elephant named after his daughter, Indira, to Tokyo's Ueno zoo as a gift 'to the children of Japan,' as well as a friendly gesture to cheer the spirits of the defeated Japanese Empire. The elephant became the zoo's star attraction and an enduring symbol of Indian friendliness towards Japan.

Like any close relation, India and Japan did face a few ebb-and-flow over the decades, yet, genuine mutual efforts to strengthen the relations have grown more sophisticated over the years. In the field of military co-operation such as naval exercises in the Malabar between Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force and Indian Navy warships, signing of military logistics agreements and various frameworks of security and defence dialogue between Japan and India including "2+2" meeting, annual Defence Ministerial Dialogue and Coast Guard-to-Coast Guard dialogues have been symbolizing the unwavering mutual trust of the two nations for respecting and protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nations, centring Indo-Pacific. India and Japan share common values of democracy, rule of law and fundamental human rights considering regional or global issues and the world is a witness to that.

India's 'Look East' policy even posited Japan as a critical partner. As economic reform processes are in place paving way for prospects for investment and international trade increase, Myanmar is now considered Asia's new frontier. Extending their strategic interest in the given times, India and Japan are engaged in institution-building especially focussing on the Buddhism connectivity between the three nations and developing cultural assets. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is investing \$100 million in developing infrastructure in Northeast India, which will help develop of that region and enhance connectivity with Myanmar. Japan has already provided generous assistance for reviving the Nalanda University in Bihar.

Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) respectively used cultural performance exchanges as a strategy to boost trade and defence ties between their governments. In media and entertainment, broadcasting Japanese animations and dramas in India (Channel Animax, dramas *Oshin* etc.) by the end of the 1990s and Japanese channels such as NHK World TV and NHK World Japan in the recent decades have minimized the distance between the two nations. Bollywood movies have a huge fan following in Japan. Starting from the first movie of Rajnikanth *Muthu* dubbed as *Odoru Maharaja* to the recent highly acclaimed *Bahubali*, *Pushpa*, *RRR*, have been very much successful in showcasing India's vivid culture and tradition. Collaborative work in the cinematic world between the two nations are being discussed and we can expect Japanese culture to be showcased in Indian movies. A modern popular culture based upon India-Japan folklore, such as works of fantasy fiction in manga and anime, bears references to common deities, demons and philosophical concepts; the Indian demon Asura has been even depicted as the titular character in video game series "Asura's Wrath". Thanks to the Sony PlayStations, Japanese video game equipment, and innumerable live telecasts on you tube and other websites have led to a major rise in interest in other Japanese avenues such as their culture, festivals and their cuisines reinforcing anime diplomacy between the nations. This has significantly contributed to promoting Japanese language education in India at private institutions, schools, colleges and universities and major research dealing with India and Japan at various domains. Subsequently, student exchange programs have brought Indian and Japanese students to the closest proximity ever. Japanese language education has opened a window of opportunities in multiple fields, translating to an increase in employment! It has been reported that due to increasing Japanese investments in India, Japanese language professionals may have a tenfold rise in demand starting from IT and manufacturing professionals and trained language teachers, interpreters and translators at various positions in a plethora of domains.

India and Japan stand in the modern world as a rare example of friendship that is threaded by strong cultural, spiritual and civilizational ties. Be it India's export to Japan from cotton products, tea and curry to Bollywood, or intake of Japan's *Kawaii* culture and cuisines to ODA (Official Development Assistance), these trends of modern decades have dwelled over the centuries of Japan-India stories that featured a motley cast of characters: traveling monks, fugitives, cooks, poets, movie stars and elephants. Maintaining regional equilibrium and strengthening institutionalized multilateral cooperation in Asia have lent credence to the claim that India and Japan are natural allies. From rhetoric to reality, they still hold the immense potential for strategic partnership in the era of Emerging Asia.

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