

## **Special discussion between Pema Gyalpo and Sarker**

### **The independence of Bangladesh and the Tibetans**

Sarker: Bangladesh became independent in 1971. Dr. Pema, were you a university student then?

Pema Gylpo (hereinafter Pema): I was a student at Asia University in Tokyo. Around 1970, I learned from a media report that a disaster was caused in Bangladesh by a huge cyclone [note: On November 12, 1970, a super-class cyclone and high tide hit the then East Pakistan and several hundred thousand lives were lost]. Then, I called for donations and support to Bangladesh (East Pakistan) on the street. It was the first time that I had something to do with Bangladesh. But at that time, I brought the money kindly donated by people directly to the Pakistani Embassy.

Sarker: I suppose you could not have helped it at that time, though. Then, Bangladesh was not independent yet.

Pema: After the independence movement started, the library of the Indian Embassy in Japan served as a kind of temporary office for independence fighters in exile in Japan. And there was a dormitory near the Asian Cultural Center, a library of the East, and two or three Bangladeshi students lived there, if my memory is correct.

As a Tibetan, I was very interested in this independence movement from the start. First, many of Bangladesh Independence volunteers were being trained in India, and an Indian Army general named Upan led the training. I knew him very well and was also aware that many Tibetan troops participated in this independence war, including in guerrilla warfare, and many of them were killed or wounded in action.

Sarker: Tibetans contributed greatly to the independence of Bangladesh. But the most substantial support came from India.

Pema: Of course, it was the policy of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. At that time, Prime Minister Gandhi was surrounded in all directions by enemies such as China, Pakistan, and domestic communist power and intellectuals supported by the United States. In this predicament, it was her political aim to get Bangladesh independent first and thus to weaken the power of Pakistan. And that was what the people of Bangladesh wanted.

But at the time of the establishment of the state of Bangladesh, the new country's name carried the word "socialist." The name of a country should fundamentally include every ideal and goal the country aspires to achieve. In that sense, the concept of the independence of Bangladesh meant to be not an

Islamic state but a secular state like India, separating religion and politics, and therefore, her name did not carry the word “Islamic” but it contained “socialist.”

At that time, Japan became the first country in the world to recognize Bangladesh. This was due greatly to Honorable Hayakawa Takashi (former president of the Japan-Bangladesh Association) and others. Simultaneously, if the liberal and democratic Japan had not taken an action quickly enough, Bangladesh, as a socialist state, would have aligned with the “Eastern” socialist countries. This incident should be marked as a remarkable example of one of the most outstanding successes in the postwar Japanese diplomacy. And the Embassy of Bangladesh was established at Aoyama, Tokyo.

Sarker: To symbolically indicate that Bangladesh was a secular state, the first Ambassador was a Hindu.

Pema: That’s right. They made it clear that Bangladesh was a secular state. And when I heard people sing the national anthem, looking up at the national flag of Bangladesh hoisted at the opening ceremony of the Embassy at Aoyama, I was profoundly moved. I listened to their national anthem, thinking that these people accomplished the independence of their home country and that Tibetans, being robbed of their own country, also participated in the war of independence and that someday, the Tibetans can accomplish the independence of Tibet,

Sarker: However, in 1975, Mujibur Rahman was assassinated, and the military regime was born, which erased the history and the significance of the independence of Bangladesh from the memory of the people. We do still remember those days. But young people hardly know what the independence movement was like nor at what cost independence was won. And the memory of those Japanese people who supported the independence of Bangladesh vanished.

### **Support for Bangladesh by Japan**

Pema: Up around 1974, Japan tried to support Bangladesh and build a good relationship between the two countries.

After Bangladesh became independent, the first thing they needed then was nurses. Professor Maruki Seimi at Saitama Medical University, who helped me come to Japan, invited twenty-seven Bangladeshi women to Japan and helped them receive education. Through its own diplomatic efforts, the Japanese Government recognized Bangladesh without waiting for the approval of the United States. This act was greatly influenced by the historical relationship between Japan and Bangladesh and the people of Bangladesh were truly grateful to Japan. Then, a coup d’etat broke out twice and almost all the founding leaders were killed. Under such a situation, I did not feel like getting involved with Bangladesh.

After Mujibur Rahman, who led the independence movement, was assassinated in 1975, there

were no prominent leaders like him to take his place. Specifically, he was an excellent speaker and whenever I listen to his recorded speeches, just like Chandra Bose's, I am extremely moved by them, even though I do not fully understand his words. After Mujibur Rahman, there was no such a charismatic leader to succeed him and there was a tendency to forcibly make Islam the national religion. Then, I came to distance myself away from the Bangladesh issue.

Sarker: Yes, Japan's contribution at the time of the independence was great. At that time, Bangladesh was suffering food shortage and many women were brutally raped by the Pakistani military. Although they won independence, the situation was simply dire. Under such circumstances, Japan's enormous support helped rebuild the country.

Pema: The Japanese religious world greatly helped Bangladesh and Bangladeshi people responded to the support in good ways. They worked and studied hard and there were many artistically talented people.

Sarker: Many Bangladeshi people wanted to study in Japan and many students came here to fulfill that desire. Especially at the time when the then Prime Minister Nakasone invited Bangladeshi students to Japan. I was one of them and I came to Japan to study in 1984.

Pema: There are many views in favor and against when it comes to Prime Minister Nakasone's political achievements, but at least one thing is certain. He was a man of clear and solid political vision regarding Asia.

When Prime Minister Rahman came to Japan in 1973, there was a welcome party and I listened to his speech in person there. I felt an overwhelming aura flowing out of him. Afterwards, medical students came from Bangladesh to Japan and studied medicine and surgery in Tokyo and Kyushu, which led to the building of the Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital. Looking at that, I notice another positive trait of the Bangladeshi people: they are good at teamwork, have a sense of public duty and cooperate in pursuing a common goal. To be honest, we Tibetans are very self-assertive, every one of us wants to be a leader above the rest, and we lack in cooperative efforts to achieve something as one team. We should learn from the Bangladeshis.

Sarker: The independence movement was successful, owing to the teamwork in a sense.

Pema: As I mentioned earlier, they had an artistic sense and every one of them wrote poems and sang songs. In that field, they were probably better than the Japanese people. In the 1980s the relationship between Japan and Bangladesh became somewhat less friendly, but in the 1990s the Japanese people

gradually expanded their contacts with the Bangladeshi people. It was around 2000 that we met, didn't we, Mr. Sarker?

Sarker: Yes, that is correct.

Pema: In 2015, I visited Bangladesh leisurely for the first time. After that, a terrorist incident occurred in Dhaka. But at the time of my visit, the town was peaceful and quiet. Then, former military men who had fought for the independence gathered around and we had a good opportunity to talk about many things.

They said that they honestly wanted to buy goods made in Japan, but, in fact, Chinese products were cheaper. And they wanted Japan to sell what Bangladesh really needed and wanted. In addition, Japanese companies came to Bangladesh and made Bangladeshi people work in poor conditions which the Japanese companies would have never allowed at home in Japan.

Hearing them, I felt that though terrorism is never to be allowed, it was understandable that the club that became the target of the terrorist attack was a gathering place exclusively for rich people of the special class.

Sarker: Certainly, I, too, understand that. However, at the same time, Bangladesh is grateful to Japan for her support.

Pema: If you go to a university or a library, you see signs clearly stating, "This institution was built thanks to the support from Japan." This is different in China.

And in considering Bangladesh from now on, it is the most important to fundamentally build a close relationship with India. Between the two countries, there have been many territorial issues over several islands, but they solved them together through bilateral talks.

It is vital for India to lead the formation of the so-called South Asian Sphere to resist China's advance. South Asia is not at all within the Chinese cultural sphere and apart from whether it is right or wrong, considering the fact that South Asia had been under the British colonial control, South Asian countries can work cooperatively beyond the respective national borders, under the leadership of India. In that sense, hopefully, Bangladesh and India will be able to keep the historical, bilateral relationship which can favorably affect the entire South Asia.

Sarker: And hopefully, Japan will become part of it.

Pema: When former Prime Minister Abe asserted "free and open Indo-Pacific," I thought that was the exact diplomacy based on values that can cope with China. However, this message is getting weaker

now. I want Japan to become stronger and form the alliance between Japan and South Asia once again, and at the same time, I think it important for India and Bangladesh to form together a solid bond and expand the alliance throughout South Asia.

### **Proud Bengalese**

Pema: By the way, Bangladeshi people are very proud, aren't they?

Sarker: They are proud because poet Tagore from Bengal won the Nobel Prize for Literature for the first time in Asia, and they are a proud people because they accomplished their independence at a dear cost. And in the Bengal region various peoples have lived mixed lives through the long history, producing rich cultures along the way.

Film director Satyajit Ray (1921- 1992, *Pather Panchali* and others) was from Bengal. Ray's films were highly praised by the great Japanese director Kurosawa Akira and Ray and Kurosawa knew each other well. And another person from Bengal who was closely related to Japan is Justice Pal, who confidently stated the right view during the Tokyo Trials. It was Mr. Shimomura Yasaburo that invited Justice Pal to Japan and organized lecture tours for him throughout Japan.

Pema: We must rightly understand here that Justice Pal did not take a side with Japan in his judgment. He acted strictly in the capacity of a jurist and scholar on international law and stated that it was not possible to judge those defendants claimed to be criminals of war like Tojo Hideki to be guilty. Speaking of war crimes and to be legally fair, Roosevelt and Truman, who dropped atomic bombs, and Stalin, who sent Japanese in Manchuria to concentration camps should all have been brought to trial.

On the other hand, though this may invite some misunderstanding, I thought it was better that Japan was occupied by the United States to avoid the worst scenario. I had the same feeling when I watched the new Emperor enthroned on the television. Should Stalin have occupied Japan, Japan would have met the worst fate.

MacArthur anticipated that the Emperor Showa would beg the Commander for his life or try to evade his own responsibility, blaming his men when they officially met. In fact, the Emperor Showa stated, "I do not care the least what will become of me, but I do ask the Allied Countries to help Japan so that the Japanese people may not have much trouble leading a daily life."<sup>1</sup> Such a leader can be rarely found in the world. Emperor's words and posture impressed MacArthur.

What if it was Stalin? As a Tibetan, I fully understand the terror of communism. Such a thought

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<sup>1</sup> *Recollection of the Grand Chamberlain*, written by Fujita Hisanori, published by Kodansha, Gakujutsu Bunko, 2015.

occurred when I watched the television.

And speaking of Bangladesh from now on, I repeat that Bangladesh should make the relationship with India stronger. With China, it is oil and vinegar in terms of values and characters. In addition, there was no historical connection with China in the past. Such alien countries cannot get along with each other.

And Grameen Bank founded by Muhammad Yunus which lends money to poor people at low interest and helps them start work. Mr. Yunus is now under criticism, but his idea is right. Providing poor people with funds, not welfare, so that they can engage in regular work using the money. And it is important to make agriculture a vital industry throughout the country. First, place agriculture as the national base that would have priority over IT. Take drones for instance. Let us make plans to use drones to promote agriculture, not for military purposes as China does.

My idea of society is close to democratic socialism. It is not democracy and communism, but it allows individuals to conduct free economic activities and at the same time welfare and social security are publicly provided. It does not allow the theory of extreme individual responsibility to justify differences and does not allow companies to arbitrarily fire their employees as they like. I want both Japan and Bangladesh to aspire for such a society.

Sarker: Bangladesh has a certain characteristic of “an ocean state,” just like Japan. The five major rivers flow across the country and along the rivers, civilization prospered. The beauty of the flowing rivers, the sun rising from the rivers’ horizon and setting into the rivers has produced poems and music in abundance. This beautiful nature of Bangladesh gave birth to Tagore. The Japanese people love nature, and poems and *haiku* are born out of the beautiful nature. Surely, Japan and Bangladesh have something in common and Japan and Bangladesh ought to know each other better.

Pema: Now, we have this problem of the Rohingya people becoming refugees in Myanmar. Mr. Sarker, what do you think of it?

Sarker: This is a difficult problem. Now and then, we see reporting that the Government of Myanmar is one-sidedly suppressing and expelling the Rohingya people, but it is not that simple. Among them, there are those from Middle East, though in small numbers, who are influenced by radical Islam and in some cases, they killed Buddhists.

Pema: After the Suu Kyi administration came to power in Myanmar, they tried to give citizenship to Rohingyas. Though they are not granted autonomy as a people, it is not that the Government is blindly expelling them.

Sarker: This issue dated back to the period of the British colonial rule. Britain brought immigrant workers in large numbers to make them work at the tea and gum plantations and eventually those workers settled to become permanent residents. During the Greater East Asian War, the Japanese Army supported Buddhists and Britain supported Muslims, having them fight against each other. It is not a simple question of which side is victims or which side is perpetrators.

I just mentioned that there are some radical Muslims among the Rohingya refugees. There is also a radical group in Bangladesh, and they deny the Bangladeshi political system of the separation of politics and religion. If the Bangladeshi Government accepts Rohingya refugees, there may be a danger of radical groups among refugees who may connect with radicals within Bangladesh.

Ultimately, I think that since refugees are desperate people, there is an option for Bangladesh to accept them from the humanistic perspective. But at the same time, we must consider the danger ensconced in the issue, prepare for it and make a choice at certain time in future. I think it is the same with Japan. Japan is moving toward accepting refugees, and I, as a foreigner, do not oppose this policy. But Japan must be careful about whether refugees are ready to follow the Japanese laws and respect and learn from the Japanese historical tradition and values when Japan decides to accept refugees and make them understand it.

Pema: I think a big advantage to Japanese society is that Japan has hardly any ethical or religious conflict among the people. This is the major factor in Japan's development and Japan should preciously keep it.

### **The significance of exchanges between Okakura Tenshin and Tagore**

M.C.: In considering the relationship between Okakura Tenshin and Tagore, what do two of you think regarding what Japan did politically and diplomatically in dealing with Asia after the Meiji Restoration up to the Greater East Asian War?

Sarker: First, when it comes to the relationship between Japan and India, at the first stage, it started as cultural exchange. After Britain made India her colony, particularly in Bengal, the restoration of the religious and traditional values occurred and simultaneously the social reform and the awakening of the ethical awareness took place. Japan was the only independent country in Asia that succeeded in achieving modernization. Up until that time, being far apart geographically, both Japan and India had little exchange, but a certain connection began to sprout between the two countries.

In this respect, we must not forget Okakura Tenshin. Okakura Tenshin, being a great intellectual of the Meiji period, fully understood the value and significance of the Western civilization, but at the same time, he knew it was no use for Japan and Asia to imitate the West. Asia has its own great cultures and values, not the least inferior to those of the West and Tenshin thought the greatness of Asia should

be known to the West and all the peoples of Asia should be aware of it. Therefore, he wrote his book *The Awakening of the East*, meant for Asian readers, in English and *The Book of Tea*, the essence of Japanese and Asian civilization, also in English, trying to disseminate the thought to the world. Basically, this was the same idea held by Tagore and other prominent Indian intellectuals.

On the other hand, Tenshin tried to rediscover and revalue ancient Buddhist statues and other art works left unnoticed and at the same time, to introduce new techniques and ideas to Japanese painting, which produced Yokoyama Taikan and other great painters. It was an artistic and cultural movement and in a deeper sense, was a political movement to recover the people's tradition, introducing Western technologies and politics and awakening to democracy and national independence. In this sense, Okakura Tenshin's visit to India in 1902 was not simply a cultural exchange, but it had a significant meaning to Indian intellectuals and activists aspiring for independence.

As to the relationship between Tagore and Tenshin and between Tenshin and India, I closely dealt with it, including my own view, in this book. Britain conspicuously tried to interrupt the alliance between Tagore and Tenshin and Tenshin enthusiastically connected with independence fighters in India. Among them was Tagore's nephew, Surendranath Tagore. Tenshin finished writing the book *The Awakening of the East* while staying in India and certainly the book must have reflected the exchange of various views with the independence fighters. And in 1903, *The Awakening of the East* was published. In the book, an urgent call for armed struggles asking Asian peoples to unite and rise against the Western colonial rule was clearly and passionately stated. In this sense, the exchange between Japan and India was, from the very beginning, a cultural one and, at the same time, covert political alliance.

Pema: I remember reading a book by Tagore mentioning to the effect that reading Okakura Tenshin's books, he came to have a sense of Asia for the first time. Before the famous phrase of Tenshin, "Asia is One" was born, there hardly existed the sense of Asia among Asian peoples. At that time, besides Europe, America and the African Continent, the idea of Orient referred to the Middle East and the region farther to the east. In that picture of the world, the idea of Asia was established for the first time by Okakura Tenshin and underneath it might have lain the awakening sense that the Asian peoples must unite culturally and politically against the European and American aggressors.

Sarker: In that sense, Professor Azuma Kazuo's view of Tagore is correct, but reading books written by other scholars on Tagore, I notice there is a tendency to referring to the relationship between Japan and Tagore exclusively in terms of cultural aspects. Even when they touch upon politics, they try to emphasize that Tagore was critical about Japan by merely citing the fact that Tagore opposed the war Japan waged.

But it was a historical fact that Rash Behari Bose, Indian independence fighter, came to Japan in



the capacity of Tagore's relative. Behari Bose did not say much about himself, but he was engaged in secret activities, some of which were close to terrorism by today's criteria. However, at that time, there was no other resort and Behari Bose was not directing people from a safer position, but he, himself, was acting in the middle of dangers, thus, becoming a suspect wanted by the British authorities.

Then, trying to establish a base in Japan, Behari Bose, although having nothing to do with the Tagores directly, came to Japan on the false claim that he was a relative of Tagore and in order to prepare for Tagore's visit to Japan. Tagore himself cannot have been ignorant of the situation and must have helped Behari Bose come to Japan in one way or another.

It was popularly known that Mr. Touyama Mitsuru of Genyosha, a political body, helped Behari Bose when the latter was on the edge of being rearrested in Japan. When Tagore visited Japan, he met with Mr. Touyama and there is a picture taken of them on the occasion. In addition, later, Chandra Bose came to Japan and eventually led the Indian National Army in their fight for independence. All of these events became possible because Behari Bose came to Japan prior to Chandra Bose and organized various supporters, held the official international conference for independence in Japan and created various organizations to help India.

The same was true of the Chinese revolutionaries. Sun Yat-sen was the best example. Korean patriotic fighters also came to Japan. At that time, almost the entire Asia became colonized. Under such circumstances, Japan was the only country that other Asians could depend on and thus, Japan became the only choice when it came to building a foothold for independence outside the country. Thus, it is incorrect to say that the cultural exchanges held at that time had nothing to do with politics.

Pema: Patriots in East Asia were greatly expectant of Japan, and they studied the modernization of Japan as foreign students learning in Japan and tried to participate in political activities. You just mentioned Sun Yat-sen. I would like to point out that Sun Yat-sen had both right and wrong sides.

I think Sun Yat-sen was a great revolutionary, but his ultimate goals were to overthrow the Qing dynasty controlled by Manchurians and realize a Chinese-centered country once again and modernize it. Therefore, Sun Yat-sen's first political objective was to defeat the Manchurian dynasty and the Qing Empire. He also held up the slogan, "Expel Manchuria and Prosper Han (China)." Among the basic political ideas of Sun Yat-sen, the exclusion of Manchurians was not the only one, but clearly there was also the idea of Sino-centrism, meaning that the rest of Asia should be ruled by the Chinese people. And this idea was inherited by Mao Ze-dong, self-proclaimed successor to Sun Yat-sen and by Chiang Kai-shek and eventually led to the hegemonism held by the present-day Chinese Government.

### **Pan-Asianism was right**

M.C.: Dr. Pema, what do you think of the role that Japan played in Asia, as Mr. Sarker just mentioned?

Pema: As Mr. Sarker said, at least, it was correct to say that Japan was almost the only country in Asia that successfully introduced modernization and at the same time tried to stand independent from the West. Though we should not equate Western Europe to modern age, but at least, from the end of the 19th century to the 20th century, Western Europe was a symbol of modernization in the eyes of the Asians. It is a historical fact that in adopting the Western technologies and achievements, Japan was advanced and superior to the rest of Asia and Japan should be rightly proud of it. Japan implemented the modern industrial revolution and became a capable military power that could cope with Western Europe.

At the same time, Okakura Tenshin, foremost, Nitobe Inazo, Uchimura Kanzo and other prominent Meiji intellectuals understood not only Western technologies, but also Western religion and philosophy and tried to absorb what they could sympathize with. Their endeavors saved Japan from becoming a mere imitator of Western technologies alone. Both Nitobe and Uchimura became Christians. But at the same time, they never forgot the Japanese spirit or the traditional mentality of the Japanese people and in their efforts to make the Japanese spirit and Christianity compatible with each other, they wrote many books like *Bushido, The Soul of Japan* in English. I think such attitudes of Japan gave Asia the sense of trustfulness that Japan did not imitate Western Europe but tried to show the new path for Asians to take.

After the Meiji Restoration, first, Japan started endeavoring to protect herself from the Western aggression and to remain independent. Then, gradually, Japan came to think that caring for herself was not enough, but she had to help the Asian peoples oppressed under the Western colonial rule and liberate the colonies, hand in hand with the Asian patriots striving after independence. Especially, civilian patriots tried to realize this idea, which came to be called Pan-Asianism.

There were Japanese patriots who genuinely believed that Asian liberation and establishing justice were in Japan's national interests and acted to achieve the cause. They were Touyama Mitsuru, Miyazaki Toten, Kita Ikki and many other unknown people who also risked their lives for the cause. I do not mean to say that all that Japan had done in terms of politics, diplomacy and wars was right, but at least, this principle of "Pan-Asianism" was right and I am confident to say that it still means much today.

Sarker: Nitobe's *Bushido* was translated in India. And there was a wonderful lady named Koura Tomi. When Tagore came to Japan and gave lectures, she accompanied him and was deeply influenced by Tagore. Ms. Koura left great achievements in women's and peace movements. She wrote a thesis in English at an American university and obtained her doctor's degree.

All of them were Japanese people and Asians and as such, they proudly and confidently accomplished remarkable works in the Western world. At the same time, Western intellectuals awakened to Asia and tried to "Look East," paying respectful attention to Asian culture as something

beyond the Western boundaries. And that led to Tagore's winning Nobel Prize for Literature and many Western literary people highly valued Tagore's works.

### **Shibusawa Eiichi and Tagore**

M.C.: As a great figure in the Meiji era, Shibusawa Eiichi is designated to appear on the new Japanese bill and his life is also to be depicted in a popular NHK historical drama on TV, which is slated to be broadcast soon. What do you think of this?

Sarker: As Professor Pema just mentioned, Shibusawa Eiichi was the symbolic figure when it comes to Japan's modernization and industrial revolution. Without him, we cannot talk about the modern history of Japan. Shibusawa not only started various enterprises, but also engaged in every kind of social work. It is very interesting to learn that such a symbolic figure of the modernization deeply sympathized with Tagore and cherished his relationship with the great Indian. Tagore visited Japan five times in total. During his visits, in 1916, 1924 and 1929, Shibusawa met with Tagore and spent time together at welcome parties and dinners and other occasions.

In order to promote the friendship between Japan and India, the Japan-India Association was established in 1903 by Okuma Shigenobu, Nagaoka Moriyoshi and Shibusawa Eiichi, who respectively served as the first, second and third President of the Association. The person who was the most eager to invite Tagore to Japan was Shibusawa Eiichi and the Association promoted the trade and economic cooperation between Japan and India. The activities of the Association were suspended temporarily because it had supported the Indian independence movement during the Greater East Asian War. After India became independent in 1947, the Association resumed its activities. The history and the precious relationship between Shibusawa and Tagore are little known to the Japanese or the Indians today. Now that Shibusawa has been chosen to appear on the new Japanese 10,000-yen bill (to be issued in the early 2024 fiscal year), we must reevaluate the history of the time when Shibusawa lived.

Pema: Regarding Shibusawa Eiichi, it is perfectly adequate to revalue him as the man who accomplished Japan's modernization and made the systems of capitalism and limited liability companies. But when we take up Shibusawa now, it is utmost necessary to consider what Shibusawa would have thought of the way capitalism is run in today's society. In my view, the capitalism at the present time is going in the wrong direction, with economically successful people being treated as winners in the society, nonchalantly denigrating the weak people, monopolizing the wealth capitalist economy produces and justifying such an unfair social trend. According to Shibusawa Eiichi's idea, the interests of the people and the interests of the community or the common interest matter, and one should always take heed of such values. Shibusawa tried to unite economy on one hand and morality

and social justice on the other. On the contrary, Japan's capitalism today is united with the totally opposite values of egotism such as "As long as it fares well with my own company, that will do," or "That all counts if I myself can make profits."

If Shibusawa's portrait is to be used on the prestigious face of the bill, Japan should have the reflective view of the time and instead of using Shibusawa to justify the capitalism, should reconsider the common interests of the community.

Some think that since rich people have become rich through their own endeavors, we should avoid heavy taxation of the rich, or that it is unconditionally great to have Japanese names on the list of the world's top billionaires. Such thinking is exactly the opposite to what Shibusawa wanted. And from the perspective of how capitalism should be, such a trend would never bring a good outcome.

Certainly, it is necessary and a matter of course, to a certain extent, that one becomes better off according to one's own hard work, but it is completely different if one gains one's profit at the cost of others or by making others unhappy. Speaking in terms of "Asia", essentially, there is an attitude in the Asian tradition to think that it is wrong for one to become happy at the cost of others, especially within the Buddhist thinking.

Sarker: What was great about Shibusawa was that he made a great social contribution. This is true of the wealthy Indian people. They build schools and public buildings. This tradition is still alive today.

Pema: Apart from the recent new rich Indians, traditionally rich Indian families have built schools and temples, using the profit money or they try to think of the profit for the entire society. Here is an example from my childhood. In the 1960s, there were many of Gandhi's disciples in India, and they went to rich people and landlords, obtained land from them, and gave the land to poor people. Unlike communists who violently robbed landlords and rich people of their fortunes, wise Indians persuaded rich people that giving to the poor was a good act and a valuable social contribution and thus led the rich to save the poor.

Many of those who had fought for independence with Gandhi engaged in social activities and movements after India got independent, instead of working for the important government offices. That is why they were respected by the people. Gandhi himself was so. When Gandhi was assassinated, he was neither a statesman nor a government official. If I dare say, he was no longer a political activist, but a symbolic religious figure in a sense. Without any social status or decoration, the Indian people greatly respected him.

### **Chandra Bose seen by Gandhi and Nehru**

Pema: One more thing about Gandhi. In Japan Gandhi is understood too one-sidedly. Many Japanese people take Gandhi's non-violence principle for pacifism or the principle of non-resistance. Certainly,

during his long struggle for independence, Gandhi may have changed some of his words or chosen different ones according to the political situations from time to time or to who listened, or referred to those words in order to win over the views of the European and American pacifists. But we must not misunderstand him, taking up partial pieces of his words.

Gandhi was non-violent, but he was never non-resistant. He had firm and persistent will to fight for justice to the end, but in Japan people overly emphasized Gandhi's wish for peace and it is sometimes ignored or slighted that Gandhi was a fierce fighter against injustice.

And it is not fully understood, either that Gandhi was a nationalist in a sense. Gandhi clearly stated to the effect: "A true nationalist must be a true internationalist. And a true internationalist must be a true nationalist." His words mean that respective nations and states must mutually recognize respective culture and sovereignty based on the equal status. Without this recognition, true international peace will never be realized. Peace in Gandhi's understanding stands on such basis.

Sarker: Speaking of Gandhi, importantly, I think that neither Gandhi nor Nehru could make Hinduism and Islam conciliated or united together, and consequently India and Pakistan came to be separately independent, which then resulted in the historical tragedy of Bangladesh. And the only one that accomplished this difficult task of conciliation and unification of the two religions was none other than Chandra Bose.

One more thing to add. Although Gandhi was great, he also made mistakes. When an election was held within the Indian National Congress Party, which was at the center of the independence movement, Chandra Bose won with many supporters for his policy, but Gandhi did not make Chandra Bose chairman. This was not fair from the viewpoint of democratic rule. Moreover, Gandhi did not like Chandra Bose's view that military action was necessary and practically expelled Chandra Bose. Following this incident, Chandra Bose left India, feeling disappointed and discouraged that he could no longer do anything within the independence movement.

Pema: To be fair with Gandhi, it was also Gandhi that highly evaluated Chandra Bose for his great leadership and gave him the honorific title of "Netaji" (respected leader in Hindi). Gandhi truly wanted Bose to continue to engage in the independence movement together with Nehru.

Sarker: If Chandra Bose had managed to get along with Nehru, he would have made a good leader. And certainly, that was what Gandhi wanted. But Chandra Bose's character and acting policy did not allow that to happen. After Nehru came to depart with Chandra Bose for good, he never once referred to Chandra Bose and when Nehru came to Japan after the War, he never mentioned Chandra Bose. So, after the War, achievements of Chandra Bose, Behari Bose and Pan-Asianist Japanese who supported Behari Bose like Touyama Mitsuru were hardly known in India.

Pema: Regarding Chandra Bose, though, many bronze statues of him were built in India, probably second to those of Gandhi in number. In that sense, Chandra Bose was very popular among the Indians. I don't know about today's situation, but in old days, there were many calendars using the portraits of Chandra Bose and they sold very well.

Sarker: It was true that at the people's level, he was popular. But in Nehru's diplomatic policy after India accomplished her independence, the Indian National Army or Chandra Bose were hardly mentioned at the political or diplomatic stage. Only after Nehru died, the two subjects came to be talked about freely. In the state of West Bengal, partly because the leftist power was prominent there, at some time, Chandra Bose was said to be a puppet of Tojo Hideki.

Pema: In the state of West Bengal, the communist party held power for more than thirty years, and the situation was somewhat unusual. As Mr. Sarker just mentioned, it was true that after India became independent, the Nehru administration never willingly admired Chandra Bose nor Justice Pal, who was the only judge to state the right view at the Tokyo trials, at the state level.

I guess, probably it was because India had a certain sense of reservation against Britain and since the Allied Countries after the Greater East Asian War introduced their historical view depicting Japan as a villain, India, eager to join the international community, was somewhat hesitant to speak freely.

However, the leaders of the Indian independence movement must have endeavored together and respected one another, in their own different ways. In Japan, in the past, though present-day politicians are different, those belonging to both ruling and opposition parties held respective ideals and sense of justice and even if their values were different, they trusted each other.

The same was true of intellectuals. Beyond their conservative and radical stands, they respected each other's merits and were eager to learn from each other. In this sense, I feel nowadays people are getting smaller in view of human capacity in the entire world.

M.C.: Gandhi, Bose and Nehru were great statesmen to be found once in decades.

Sarker: Sun Yat-sen of China may have had many faults from the present perspective, but a statesman as great as he has not emerged since. This is evident if we look at China today.

### **Cultural exchanges between Japan and India led to the independence of India**

M.C.: The Battle of Imphal is often referred to as the greatest blunder for having incurred so many victims of deaths from starvation. Mr. Sarker, what do you think of the Battle?

Sarker: I declare that without the Battle of Imphal, the Indian independence would have never been realized. Even if it had, that would have happened much, much later. Chandra Bose formed the Indian National Army composed of Indian soldiers held prisoners of war by the Japanese Army and acted bravely to relieve India. How overwhelmingly their patriotic act awakened the Indian spirit! The Battle of Imphal itself ended up in a disastrous failure and it was pitiful that there were so many casualties. But it was true that after the War, the spirit of the Indian National Army spread all over India, which made it possible to achieve the national independence.

After the Greater East Asian War, the Indian National Army was about to be put on trial at martial court in India by Britain. In fact, however, the Indian National Army fought for the independence of India and did not commit any crime. So, the movement to save the Indian National Army, claiming that the INA's spirit was the very will of India, spread all over India and eventually led the Indian Army, particularly the Navy, to rise for the movement. Therefore, Nehru and those who criticized Chandra Bose's policy were obliged to oppose the opening of the martial court.

For the first time in the Indian history, the movement to support the Indian National Army was able to unite India of Hinduism, Muslim, and various ethnic tribes into one. Britain had no other option but to leave India. Later, this fact was officially admitted by the British Prime Minister Atlee.

And behind this great movement was the historical fact that Japan fought throughout four years against the entire world. It was true that Japan was finally defeated but Japan, a country in Asia, fought to the end against Europe and the United States, which led to the liberation of almost all the Western colonies. And the Indian National Army fought with this brave Japan and with her help they bravely risked their lives, endeavoring to make India independent with the efforts of the Indians. This awakened the true determination to achieve independence.

Pema: What was important is that India prevented Britain from holding a martial court. In the first place, a martial court is held in order to judge soldiers who have broken the military rules in accordance with the military code but it is not up to the victor to judge the vanquished in accordance with the victor's values. Above all, at the time of the Battle of Imphal, Indian soldiers were deployed as a unit belonging to the British Army to protect India under the British rule. Therefore, though Britain fought against Japan, India did not fight against Japan in a sense. And the Indian National Army cooperated with the Japanese Army but did not fight as the Japanese Army. The Indian National Army fought as an army of Indians striving for the independence of India with Chandra Bose as their leader. Why, then, was it that the Indian National Army was to be judged at the British martial court? In this logical context, we can clearly see the significance that the independence or the state bears.

M.C.: In that sense, we can say that apart from the strategic errors, without the Battle of Imphal, the Indian independence would have never been accomplished, can't we?

Pema: That is perfectly correct.

Sarker: We must not forget here that it was Behari Bose that made the Indian National Army or at least laid its foundation. If Behari Bose had not started to organize the Indian National Army prior to Chandra Bose, Chandra Bose cannot have achieved the formation of the Indian National Army all by himself.

Pema: But Behari Bose was not very influential among the general Indian public. After laying the foundation of the Indian National Army, next came the financial task of how to collect a huge sum of money to maintain and arm the Army. That role was successfully carried out by Chandra Bose. When Chandra Bose called for donations all over Asia, greatly impressed by his speeches, Indians living in Southeast Asia eagerly responded to his call, rich people abundantly donating money and individuals unsparingly giving valuable accessories like gold bracelets they possessed. That was exactly due to Chandra Bose's charisma.

Behari Bose was well-informed and had organizational and clerical skills but did not have much of charisma like Chandra Bose's. So, Behari Bose called Chandra Bose to Japan and tried to make Chandra his successor. This showed the greatness of Behari Bose as a man. He laid the foundation and retired from the role to hand the baton to the next fitter runner.

At my office, I still have CDs of Chandra Bose's speeches. His speeches in English are excellent and those in Bengali are equally moving, though I don't understand Bengali. Even today, I get encouraged and empowered listening to his recorded speeches.

Sarker: The relationship that started with the cultural exchange between India and Japan eventually brought the independence of India through the cooperative fighting of the Japanese Army and the Indian National Army. I think here lies a miraculous history of Asia in the twentieth century. I understand that Japan has had deep and intricate history and relationship with the neighboring Korean Peninsula and China. And the history between Japan and India must also be correctly taught to the peoples of Japan and India and Bangladesh and inherited by the future generations.