

## **Conclusion**

### **“Program to foster 100,000 foreign students”**

In 1984, I came to Japan as a foreign student to learn the Japanese language and culture under the program to “foster 100,000 foreign students” during the Prime Minister Nakasone’s administration. At that time, Bangladesh was under the Ershad military regime and in very unstable social circumstances. Many university graduates went abroad to study or work. I was majoring in history in my master’s course at the University of Chittagong. I quarreled with a history department professor over his class and almost instantly I quit school. Then, as many Bangladeshi people did, I decided to study in the United States, but I was somewhat hesitant to carry it out.

At such a time, I learned that Japan, a Buddhist country, was accepting foreign students and I wanted so much to go to Japan that even though it was against my late father’s wishes, I still came to study in Japan. Though my father wanted me to study in the United States, after I decided to go to Japan, he wholeheartedly wished me good luck for my studies in Japan and advised me to learn about Justice Pal.

### **The encounter with Professor Azuma Kazuo**

I came to Japan and entered a Japanese language school and immediately liked the country. People are so polite and kind and everywhere you go, the environment is always kept clean. With the country being so completely different from my homeland Bangladesh, I came to feel wonder and respect toward Japan.

By 1987, I got quite used to living in Japan and at that time, I met Professor Azuma Kazuo of Tsukuba University for the first time at an event held at the Bangladeshi Embassy. Professor Azuma and his wife Keiko were both scholars on Tagore. Mr. and Mrs. Azuma always invited me to their house and discussed with me the cultural exchanges between Tagore and the Japanese people. I did not know that Tagore visited Japan many times and felt fascinated by the history of the exchange between Tagore and the Japanese.

In the Bengali society, some intellectuals knew about the contacts between Japanese and Bengalese, but such a history was hardly known to the general public. From the time when I was a student at the University of Chittagong, I had been contributing articles to magazines and newspapers and wanted to convey the fascination I felt to other Bengalese.

Immediately after I came to Japan, I was so much charmed by the beautiful Japanese newspapers and magazines displayed at bookstores that I really wanted to learn the printing and publishing technologies. With the helpful introduction of Japanese friends, I got employed at several printing companies and learned silk printing, offset printing, printing plate processing and proofreading, together with the self-taught DTP (desktop publishing).

Late in the 1980s, the number of migrant workers from Bangladesh increased and I thought of publishing a magazine for those Bangladeshi workers living in a different Japanese environment away from home without much pleasure or information, using my own experiences living in Japan. In 1991, I published an informative magazine in Bengalese titled *Machitro*. At first, I had serious financial difficulties, but luckily was able to obtain advertisement from ITJ (International Telecom Japan Inc.), predecessor of SoftBank, which enabled me to publish the magazine monthly on a regular basis. For several years prior to the last issue, the magazine became seasonal, but the publication continued until 2002.

### **The encounter with Mr. Tanaka Masaaki**

I worked from 1998 to the middle of 2002 at a printing company. There were many books on the shelves of the company. Around 1999, while I was looking at books, I came across a book titled *Dr. Pal's Theory of Non-guilty Japan* written by Mr. Tanaka Masaaki. Glancing through the pages, I realized the book was about Justice Pal, the person my father had mentioned when I was about to leave for Japan. I asked the company president for the permission to borrow the book and he allowed me to take it with me.

As the book was written in Japanese, I could not understand it well, but I read it as hard as I could. When I went to the president again to return the book, he said, "Don't you want to meet Mr. Tanaka Masaaki, the author?" I said, "Yes, I do!" Then he said, "There is Mr. Tanaka's phone number in the author's profile at the back of the book. Why don't you call him up?" It is unthinkable now, but the book was old and there they were, Mr. Tanaka's address and telephone number. Although I hardly expected to speak to Mr. Tanaka in person, with little expectation, I dialed his number and there he was! Mr. Tanaka answered the phone in person and told me to come over to his house.

Mr. Tanaka welcomed me, saying, "You are the only Bengali I met after Mujibur Rahman." Mr. Tanaka said that he liked Mujibur Rahman and took me to his bedroom to show the picture of Mujibur Rahman standing at the pillowside. It was a photograph of Mujibur Rahman and Mr. Tanaka Masaaki shaking hands taken on the occasion when Mr. Tanaka visited Bangladesh in 1972 and offered to invite Mujibur to Japan.

I was moved by the precious picture and asked if I could borrow it for copying. Mr. Tanaka gladly accepted my request and took the frame off. There, an identical photo appeared, and Mr. Tanaka said, “Oh, you are lucky! You can keep this.” So, he gave me the precious photo.

Then, Mr. Tanaka said to me, “You had better study the Nanjing Incident from now on,” and gave me a copy of his book *Summary of the Nanjing Incident: 15 proofs for denying the massacre*, signing his name on the book for me.

On that wonderful occasion, Mr. Tanaka told me a lot about Justice Pal and Mr. Shimonaka Yasaburo. Then, I did not know Mr. Shimonaka Yasaburo, but I knew that the company I worked for was a subsidiary to Heibon-sha. Mr. Tanaka told me that Mr. Shimonaka Yasaburo established Heibon-sha company. And I was very much impressed by this fateful connection, that I worked for a subsidiary of Heibon-sha of Mr. Shimonaka Yasaburo. In my heart I felt sure that my father introduced me to Mr. Tanaka.

### **My sincere wish that the Japanese achievements be widely known in my home country**

After my lucky encounter with Mr. Tanaka, I endeavored to study Justice Pal and the Tokyo Trials and through my friend Rophikle Alom, I came to get acquainted with Ms. Tojo Yuko, granddaughter of the former Prime Minister Tojo Hideki. Ms. Tojo taught me, in depth, about the Tokyo Trials, Justice Pal, former Prime Minister Tojo, Behari Bose, Subhas Chandra Bose and Yasukuni Shrine.

Before I came to Japan, I did not know Behari Bose. Although I knew Subhas Chandra Bose, I was not aware of his relationship with Prime Minister Tojo Hideki and Japan. Examining these events in history, I was simply flabbergasted to learn that it was Japan that paved the way for Asia, including India, to become independent and that Japan achieved the feat at an enormous cost on her part. Eventually, I came to think that in the Indian and Bangladeshi history textbooks, we should state the fact that Japan greatly contributed to the independence of India and thank Japan on the state level.

Sincerely hoping that people in Bangladesh and India know the facts, I have introduced Japanese culture and history and exchanges between the Japanese and the Bengalese in three-volume series titled *Japan We Know and We do not Know* (in Bengalese, only first volume both in Bengalese and Japanese).

It is a great honor this time that I was given the opportunity to introduce the history of exchanges between the Bengalese and the Japanese in the Japanese language. To younger generations who do not

know the War, I would like to convey the sincere gratitude I feel as an Asian and Bengali and I will continue to study the history and to disseminate it far and wide.

Last but not least, I sincerely thank you, the late Professors Azuma Kazuo and Azuma Keiko, Mr. Tanaka Masaaki and Ms. Tojo Yuko. May you all rest in peace.

And my deepest gratitude to you, Professor Pema Gyalpo, Mr. Miura Kotaro and Mr. Nishiyama Yoshihiko of the editing department of Heart Publishing for your great assistance in completing this book.

For 36 years since I came to Japan, I was greatly helped by many Japanese and Bengalese. I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to all of you. Last year, I turned 60, *Kanreki* as you say in Japanese, the age to be reborn. I always feel in the bottom of my heart that thanks to all of you, I have become what I am today.

Probir Bikash Sarker

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