

Chapter 3 Rash Behari Bose and Japan

Touyama Mitsuru, Behari Bose and Tagore

In this chapter, we deal first with Rash Behari Bose. He was born in May 1886 in a village called Subruda in the Buldum district of Bengal. Since he was young, Behari Bose participated in the resistance against the British colonial rule. According to his own admission, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the division of Bengal by Britain was the very incident that greatly propelled the resistance movement toward the independence of India.

At the age of 20, following his parents' wish, he worked for a scientific forestry institute. With the knowledge of scientific technology obtained at the institute, Behari Bose came to learn how to make bombs. Using the technology, he was involved in the failed attempt to assassinate the Governor-General of India and appealed to the Indian people to rise for their country. Eventually, he became a wanted terrorist with a bounty on his head offered by the British authorities and went underground.

And in 1915, using the occasion when Japan was preparing to invite Tagore, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, to Japan, Behari Bose used the opportunity to exile himself on the pretext that he was a relative of Tagore. Thus, Behari Bose headed for Japan, using a forged passport claiming that he was Priyonath Tagore, Tagore's relative. Behari Bose wrote about that incident in his autobiography *Struggle for Independence* written in 1942:

The ship I exiled myself aboard, I shall never forget, was the Sanuki-maru of Nippon Yusen (NYK Line). On the day of departure, I went to the wharf in Calcutta with my comrades who wanted to see me off. [Omitted] Their eyes were filled with tears. I myself was so emotional and teary. I was saying goodbye to my beloved beautiful homeland and dear comrades who shared the life-or-death destiny.

Paying much attention around me, I stealthily took out two guns I was hiding and handed them to my comrades, careful not to be caught sight of. "Here, take these two guns. Only two but they are valuable weapons to our party always worrying about the shortage of weapons. I don't need them any more now that I am exiling myself. So, I will leave them in your hands. Use them." [Omitted] The shipping company was busy loading cargoes. Indians in the third-class compartment were being arrested by the police, suspected of being members of the Revolutionary Party. I didn't know what would become of me....

The strict passenger check was moving on from the third-class passengers to the second-class ones. They were approaching nearer and nearer to me. That was awful and uneasy. I felt as if I were

made to walk over needles. I got aboard as a first-class passenger. In the first-class compartment, besides me, there were one Japanese, one Jewish and one Indian merchant, four of us altogether. At such moment of irritation and uneasiness, I pretended to stay as cool as ever, looking over the port town with a cigarette in my mouth quite nonchalantly. "Is there any other first-class passenger?" I heard an English policeman inquiring. Quite apart from me, and yet, I was all ears not to miss a word of the policeman or any change of his attitude. The chief officer answered, "Yes, here is another one, a relative of Mr. Tagore." "Ah, well, that'll be all right." The policeman was gone without checking on me, pretending to be Tagore's relative. "Thank God! I made it!" I cried out in spite of myself.

Struggle for Independence, written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Showa-shobo.

It is unknown whether Tagore knew about this incident, and it will not be confirmed by documents in the future, either. However, it is doubtful that such a betraying operation was conducted without Tagore's knowledge. When Tagore came to Japan twice in 1924 and 1929, he met Behari Bose during each visit. Especially important was that in 1924, Tagore met Touyama Mitsuru in his old age, the founder of Genyo-sha [political organization] and great Pan-Asianist, through the mediation of Behari Bose.

On September 12, a grand reception for Tagore's visit was held at Ueno Seiyo-ken restaurant and Touyama Mitsuru attended the reception party. Tagore held both hands together reverentially in the Indian manner while Touyama bowed down respectfully in the Japanese manner. Behari Bose himself helped them as an interpreter. Tagore made a statement to the following effect: "I was worried about the future of you, Japanese people, when I came to Japan last time nearly eight years ago. Then I was worried about Japan's grand-scale and superficial imitation of the West and its lack of mentality. Today, the situation is completely different. You have developed wonderfully in terms of spiritual richness and I am extremely pleased with you."

And in response to the M.C.'s request to introduce more and more Indian wise men to Japan, Tagore answered, "On your part, you have many wise men among you, and you should not neglect them as you did in the past when you admired the West."

These words of Tagore's apparently were meant for the Japanese patriots who helped Behari Bose and accepted and supported him in his movement for India's independence. And when Tagore visited Japan in 1929, Touyama Mitsuru was staying in China and unable to see Tagore. Tagore left a short letter to Touyama when he was about to leave Japan for India.

Dear friend,

I am about to leave Japan soon.

I would like to say goodbye to you.

Your mission is to strive for great ideals.

My mission and your mission, to spread the idea of human brotherhood in humanism from India to Japan, which fill me with immeasurable joy, are perfectly aligned.

I would like to convey this feeling.

July 8, 1929

The meeting of Touyama Mitsuru and Behari Bose, with both of whom Tagore reportedly sympathized so much and shared the “thought of fellow humans in humanism,” was another epoch-making event in history.

Behari Bose and Nakamura-ya

Even after Behari Bose exiled himself in Japan, the British authorities never gave up persecuting him. On his part, Bose never ceased his activities in Japan either and hiding in Azabu, Tokyo, he kept in touch with the Indian activists living in Japan. Simultaneously, Bose closely contacted Sun Yat-sen, who was also living in exile in Japan, and both exchanged views. In addition, he was engaged in a secret import of weapons, which was one of the original purposes of his exile in Japan. It did not take Britain long time to learn that Behari Bose was hiding in Japan.

What irritated Britain most was a celebration party for the enthronement of Emperor Taisho, held by the Indian Society in Japan at Ueno Seiyoken on November 27, 1915. At the celebration, which was also meant as friendly exchange between Japan and India, the Japanese national anthem was sung, but no British national anthem was heard, nor the Union Flag was hoisted. In spite of the fact that at that time India was under the British rule and the British Minister in Japan was invited to the celebration,

such disloyal treatment spoke of the clear resistance to the colonial rule on the part of the Indians living in Japan. The British authorities must have judged that Behari Bose was behind all of it. And finally, Britain asked the Japanese Government to turn in Behari Bose, suspected of acting as a spy for Germany.

On the next day, November 28, Behari Bose was called to the police and ordered to leave Japan within five days. It was highly likely that once Bose left Japan, he would be turned over to Britain and executed. The same order was issued to Indian activist Herenbo Ral Gupta. The two of them told a newspaper about this order and met Touyama Mitsuru and others, asking for support. The newspaper reported this as a big news and strong voices raised criticism stating that it was a national shame to turn in Indian patriots who escaped to Japan for help. Touyama Mitsuru promised to do his best for them.

Souma Aizo, owner of Nakamura-ya store in Shinjuku, Tokyo, and his wife Kokko were among those Japanese people who felt sorry for the weak-minded Japanese Government. Regarding this matter, Aizo said to Nakamura Kayu, a journalist from Touyama Mitsuru's circle, "Someone needs to come forward and hide him. My store is always crowded and looks like it is almost in disarray. So, maybe it is a good place for hiding them."

He did not mean much when he said that, but somehow it appeared to be a good idea. If they had to hide Behari Bose at Touyama's house, or at places related to Genyo-sha or at other concerned locations, the police would immediately find him. Aizo's store was already popularly called "Nakamura-ya Salon" and a famous place for painters and artists to get together. Nakamura-ya had even an atelier, but the store was not directly involved in political matters. What's more, Kokko understood English. Touyama and others decided that Nakamura-ya was the best hiding place for Behari Bose and the other man on the run. Thus, Souma Aizo was unexpectedly contacted, but he and his wife were determined to accept this sudden request.

On December 1, on the pretext that they were having a farewell party for Behari Bose and Gupta at Touyama's house, the Japanese helpers called the two to his house and Miyazaki Touten, supporter of Sun Yat-sen, said in English, "We have decided to hide you. We'll do it in secret. So, leave it to us."

Mr. and Mrs. Touyama, Uchida Ryohei, Terao Tooru, Kuzuu Yoshihisa, Miyazaki Touten, Tsukuda Nobuo, Souma Aizo and other prominent figures around Touyama gathered for the party. They secretly took Behari Bose and Gupta out through the back door and put them on a private automobile which was a rarity in those days in Japan (it was the newest model of automobile Sugiyama Shigemaru of

Genyo-sha had purchased from the United States and since no one could catch up with the speed of the car, it was chosen for the runaway) and hurried to Nakamura-ya in Shinjuku. Souma Kokko explained what was going on to the two exiles in English and hid them in the atelier with a 6-jo room and a 4.5-jo room. [Jo is equivalent to approx. 1.8 square meters.] It was a daring escape from the policemen watching in front of Touyama's house.

Souma Kokko later recalled her determination to hide Behari Bose and Gupta:

To hide these Indian exiles was an extremely risky attempt since we dared to do what the government would not. If we were found out, it would have been a big problem and we would be subjected to certain penalty. In that case, I was determined to come out as the one in charge, because it was a housewife's role to take care of the rooms, meals and other daily needs. And if I were to be arrested and taken away from the house, our children would be taken care of by others, and the business would remain in my name as it has been since it started in Hongo, which will prove that I am in the position to act as I like. My husband will just pretend to complain, "Sorry for my wife's meddling in others' business." Then our business will stay intact.

"A Note on Rash Behari Bose," written by Souma Kokko, from *Pan-Asianism*, published by Chikuma-shobo.

Souma Aizo, her husband, was equally determined to resolutely protect Bose and asked their thirty employees to cooperate with the owners.

Aizo said passionately, "We will resolutely protect the exiles who escaped from India all the way to Japan for safety even if the government forsakes them," to the employees, who in response said, "By all means, we will keep this matter secret even to our parents, brothers and sisters. Should the police step in, we would protect the exiles, using force if necessary." Aizo said to ease them, "We should try to avoid such an extreme case, but in time of emergency, you should keep doors firmly shut and never open them while we let the Indians escape through the back". Aizo told them to stay calm and strictly keep the information that they were hiding the exiles secret from the outside world.

"Should we fail to protect these important men trusted in our hands and helplessly watch them die, we the Japanese would simply lose our face, let alone the prestige of Nakamura-ya. Those of you full of fighting spirit, please stay calm and do your best for the men's safety." Finally, the employees seemed to understand Souma's feeling and calmly said, "We understand. We will be very careful."

"A Note on Rash Behari Bose," written by Souma Kokko, from *Pan-Asianism*, published by

Chikuma-shobo.

Souma Kokko was the only one to understand English. But if the female master of the store should wholeheartedly engage in taking care of the two exiles, this could invite certain suspicion (Nakamura-ya popularly sold the store's original cream bread for the first time in Japan, but their store was small and the couple often attended to the customers themselves). The communication between the two exiles and Kokko was mainly done through handing written memos and two maids were to take care of the hiding men. Regarding this, Souma Kokko described a moving episode:

The maid received a message that her uncle had died. But we could not let her go home to attend his funeral. I didn't directly say anything, but the maid herself said to me, "I will never leak it myself, but lest someone should notice by any chance that something is wrong with me, I will not go home now. I will go when there is nothing to worry about any longer." This maid was named Omaki and I shall never forget her.

"A Note on Rash Behari Bose," written by Souma Kokko, from *Pan-Asianism*, published by Chikuma-shobo.

However, Gupta could no longer endure the pains of the restricted life confined in a narrow room without taking bath and escaped to Oukawa Shumei for protection. Gupta provided Oukawa with various information available at that time and disappeared from the stage of the movement. According to certain source, he secretly participated in the independence movement.

Marriage with Souma Toshiko

During all that period, Touyama Mitsuru and other supporters of Behari Bose kept negotiating with the Japanese Government and finally, in the spring of 1916, they obtained the confirmation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ishii Kikujiro that Behari Bose will be protected. Thus, Behari Bose was able to openly leave the hiding place at Nakamura-ya. On March 15, he rented a house at Azabu, this time with the help of the Japanese police. Behari Bose threw a thank-you party, inviting to his new house Touyama Mitsuru, Inukai Tsuyoshi and others who had provided so much help to him and entertained the guests with Indian curry that Bose cooked himself.

At the party, Behari Bose made a speech in excellent Japanese, which greatly moved the guests. While he was staying at Nakamura-ya, he wasted no time in learning Japanese, very attentively about how to use appropriate words and reverential expressions and thoroughly learned about the different word usage according to respective levels of social status. He had perfected his linguistic ability to write theses and speak about India in Japanese in public during these trying days. Another fatal encounter

took place at the party. Mr. and Mrs. Souma took their daughter Toshiko with them to the party to have her help Bose.

Although Japan had changed its policy toward Bose from chasing as a wanted man to protecting him, Behari Bose remained a terrorist who could be arrested at Britain's request. Detectives were sniffing Bose's whereabouts and he had to change his places several times to avoid detection. Touyama Mitsuru thought that Bose needed someone trustworthy to watch over him night and day and to act for his sake and suggested that Toshiko become Bose's wife.

Toshiko's mother, Souma Kokko, was deeply worried about her daughter who she feared came to bear unfathomable burden as a result of the couple's having hidden Behari Bose. If she were to tell her daughter about the marriage with Bose, Toshiko might have no option but to accept it whether she liked it or not since she had seen how devotedly her parents, Touyama Mitsuru and many others had protected Bose. Kokko said to her daughter about the offer of marriage as caringly as possible, "Think very well, dear. You must not hurry in making up your mind because things are urgent. This is not an ordinary wedding."

However, Toshiko listened to her mother without changing her expression a bit and after two weeks or so, when she was asked about her answer, she said, "Let me go to marry him. I have made up my mind." "Did you think enough? It may risk your life." "I know. I know how you and father feel."

After this conversation, Souma Kokko visited Behari Bose. According to Behari Bose's autobiography, after the following conversation, the marriage between the two was decided.

"You may feel awkward in your long life from now on without a spouse, and above all, it is urgent that you get married to stay safe. I am a bit hesitant to say, but I want you to marry my daughter Toshiko as one who understands you best in Japan."

"Mr. Touyama perfectly agrees with me. So, please let me hear what you frankly feel about this. I understand that people get married young in your country, and I wonder if you are married or you have someone special in your heart. In that case, please be candid and tell me so."

Hearing her, I said, "You are right about our custom of early marriage. However, as for me, I totally devoted myself to the revolution since my boyhood, busily moving from place to place without staying at one place long enough and I even did not come near my own house where I was born, fearing lest my kins should get in trouble because of me. I have never thought of getting married

and determined that the independence of India was my life-long work and devoted my entire life to the cause as if it was my wife. I have never dreamed of having a wife myself.”

“However, with your offer that a young lady as wonderful as Toshiko be my wife and the recommendation of Mr. Touyama, whom I owe so much, I will gladly have her as my wife.”

Struggle for Independence written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Showa sho-bo.

Still, Behari Bose was not fully protected, and the Souma family feared that if their relatives were informed of the marriage, they would surely oppose it and the information might be leaked. So, the wedding was entirely taken care of by Mr. and Mrs. Souma and held on July 9, 1918, at Touyama Mitsur’s house.

In November 1918, World War I ended with the surrender of Germany. The very cause for Britain trying to arrest Behari Bose was that they suspected Bose of being a German spy. With Germany’s defeat in the War and the establishment of the Weimar Republic, that cause was automatically rescinded. The insistent pursuit of Behari Bose by Britain became less active and son Masahide was born to Mr. and Mrs. Behari Bose in 1920 and daughter Tetsuko was born in 1922. In 1923, Behari Bose became a naturalized Japanese citizen, and the safety of his life was firmly secured.

Finally, Behari Bose became able to publicly and openly engage in political and ideological activities in Japan as his base. Behari Bose took the trouble to go to the British Embassy for papers needed to apply for naturalization. He wrote joyfully about the occasion:

The British authorities chased me around with the snake-like obstinacy, but the obstinate Britain was no longer able to harass me, labeling me “German spy” with the end of the War in Europe brought by the victory of the Allied Forces. Then, I reported to the British Embassy for the first time and underwent the procedure to become a naturalized Japanese citizen. Those officials at the Embassy surely felt indignant at me for fooling them, but they could do nothing, which made me feel somewhat triumphant.

Struggle for Independence, written by Rash Behari Bose, published by Showa sho-bo.

However, Toshiko, who had been devotedly supporting Bose became ill at that time onwards, and despite the medical care, she died from illness at the age of 28 in March 1925. During a difficult life of constantly changing hiding places, her lungs seemed to malfunction. They had been married for only eight years. Behari Bose fondly recalled their years together, “It was brief in time, but we were happy living together. I enjoyed the life-worth happiness in those several years.” From thenceforth, he

refused any offer to marry again.

Regarding the marriage life of Behari Bose and Toshiko, her mother Souma Kokko said that there was hardly any trouble due to the difference of customs and habits and that especially Behari Bose understood the Japanese people's character and habits very well. At the same time, Toshiko held deep respect and admiration toward her husband's native land of India. At the last moment of departure, Toshiko whispered very softly the old Indian sutra to the voice of her husband Behari Bose. Kokko wrote that it was the serenest world of just the two of them that even she, her mother, could never enter.

Toshiko was not so talented that she attracted many people but rather she was so truthful, reticent and firm-willed.

“A Note on Rash Behari Bose,” written by Souma Kokko (from *Pan-Asianism*, Chikuma-shobo)

Mr. Kinoshita Naoe, who read a eulogy at Toshiko's funeral, described Toshiko's belief as “she would have gladly risen on to the guillotine.” As Toshiko's younger brother also described her in the same manner, Kokko felt proud of her daughter and praised her brave life, saying to herself, “Mr. Kinoshita saw Toshiko in exactly the same manner as we did. Toshiko would be smiling in her grave.” Incidentally, Masahide, the son of Bose and Toshiko, was killed in action in June 1945 during the battle of Okinawa and his soul is enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine.

Touyama Mitsuru, Mr. and Mrs. Souma, Toshiko, who devoted her young life to loving and contributing to Behari Bose, many patriots and workers of Nakamura-ya—what was common in all of them was the firm belief that they would resolutely protect people of justice who experienced difficulties in Japan, whatever ethnicity they were from and that for that cause they would bravely stand up and act, facing fearlessly any authorities. The will of those people made Japan the leader of Asia that rose for the liberation of the Asian countries, including India.