



India and Japan: Two Distinct Roots with Parallel Branches

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Abstract: Ideally, for any relationship to flourish there must be a certain degree of similarity. There are greater chances for the connection to deteriorate than to improve when there are no similarities between both sides, whether they are two individuals or two nations. Due to similarities, there are more chances of having an opinion on one thing. This paper will provide detail and depth knowledge in knowing and recognizing the similarities of culture, art and philosophy of India and Japan. This paper "India and Japan: Two Distinct Roots with Parallel Branches" will contribute to academic research by providing a framework for exploring in-depth the parallels between Indian and Japanese philosophy, art, and culture.

Key Words: India, Japan, Art, Tradition, Culture and Philosophy etc.

1. INTRODUCTION:

India and Japan are the two nations that hold their cultures and traditions in the greatest respect. Both nations cherish art and make a concerted effort to raise its visibility, whether it is classical or folk. Many of us are ignorant of how similar Japan and India are to one another, which will be highlighted and examined in this present research paper "India and Japan: Two Distinct Roots with Parallel Branches". Since Buddhism first arrived in Japan in ancient times, there have been cultural contacts between the peoples of India and Japan. People from India and Japan are guided by similar festivals, art, customs, and philosophical beliefs. While there are certain similarities between the two civilizations, they also have differences. However, it is extremely interesting to know how they have continued to uphold many of the similar beliefs despite evolving from different roots. Some dancing forms and festivals of Indian and Japanese share some parallels. India and Japan are the two nations that cherish their respective cultures and customs. Both countries value art and are always looking for ways to make it more profound, whether it is classical or folk.

2. Chosen Method of investigation - I will investigate this paper by using the Close Reading approach, which concentrates on a passage or text's particular elements in order to uncover any deeper meanings that may be there. Finding similarities in two different aspects requires a very deep study, which is impossible without close reading. Close reading will prove to be an appropriate method to bring to the surface the similarities that are hidden deep beneath the articles, passage and books etc.

First, we will discuss Buddhism, which is one of the main world religions. In the 5th century BCE. Siddhartha Gautama brought it to South Asia, and throughout the next millennia, it expanded across Asia and the rest of the world. For Buddhists, achieving nirvana, or enlightenment, is permanently breaking free from the cycle of sorrow and rebirth that characterizes human existence. The first person to reach this level of enlightenment was Siddhartha Gautama, popularly known as the Buddha. According to Dr. Indu Joshi, "Buddhism arrived, China in 65 BC, Korea in 372 BC and later to Japan in 538 AD. The Japanese emperors played a crucial role in the integration of Buddhism with indigenous Japanese religion. Prince Shotoku introduced Buddhism in 538 A.D. which was made as the official State religion in 645 A.D by the Japanese emperor Kotoku, replacing Shinto" (97). Japanese civilization shown a remarkable capacity to combine Buddhism with the essential principles and beliefs of its native Confucianism and Shinto religions, all while preserving perfect harmony between the three.



“Buddhism's journey from India to China, Korea, and Japan had taken about a thousand years. Today, some thirteen schools of Buddhism exist in Japan, and the majority of the population professes to be Buddhist. There are about 80,000 temples with some 150,000 priests as well as several colleges dedicated chiefly to Buddhist studies”(web). Buddhists acknowledge the existence of supernatural beings that can facilitate or obstruct a person's journey towards enlightenment, even if they reject the existence of gods and other deities. Siddhartha Gautama was a prince in the fifth century BCE., born on the Nepali side of the present boundary between India and Nepal. It was at this time that he first witnessed and started to understand human suffering.

He abandoned his wealth, spent some time as a penniless beggar, journeyed, practiced meditation, and, ultimately, after being unable to achieve fulfillment, decided to follow what was referred to as "the Middle Way". According to this principle, the path to enlightenment was to live in a way that was halfway between extremes—that is, neither excessive prosperity nor severe asceticism would get one there. In a highly contemplative state, finally, under the Bodhi tree—also known as the tree of awakening—he attained nirvana, or enlightenment. The Mahabodhi Temple in Bihar, India, the place of his enlightenment, is today a popular destination for Buddhist pilgrims. In the end, while deeply in meditation, he attained nirvana, or enlightenment, beneath the Bodhi tree, also called the tree of awakening. The "Mahabodhi" Temple, located in Bihar, India, is a popular Buddhist pilgrimage destination, having been the place of his enlightenment. The Four Noble Truths are what the Buddha preached. "Suffering (dukkha)," the first fact, states that everyone suffers in some way at some point in their life. "The source of suffering (samudāya)" is the second truth. This says that desire (tanhā) is the root of all misery. "Cessation of suffering (nirodha)," the third truth, asserts that enlightenment is conceivable and that suffering may stop. The Middle Way, or the phases leading to enlightenment, is the subject of the Fourth Truth: "Path to the cessation of suffering" (magga).

A profound appreciation for traditional arts, whether they be visual, performance, music, dance, or drama, is also shared by Japan and India. Both nations are renowned for their lengthy histories of royal courts promoting the arts. The state and its residents have actively participated in promoting the performing arts, which have enjoyed a rebirth after maybe declining for a few decades. Both India and Japan have been going deep into their folk and classical art histories and taking steps to support traditional music, dance, and theatre among the present generation. These efforts range from state-sponsored institutions to performance locations and opportunities.

As Buddhism gained acceptance, the Sanskrit language was also incorporated into Japanese language. An Indian Buddhist monk named 'Bodhisena' came in Japan in the eighth century and entered the Daian ji temple. His contribution to the Sanskrit-Japanese language adaptation was substantial. According to Dr. Indu Rani, "Japanese language has derived several words from Sanskrit and being used by Japanese without knowing that these words are originally derived from Sanskrit. For instance, Japanese word, 'oseva' which means service is derived from Sanskrit word 'seva'. In the same way Buddha became 'Bodhai' in Japanese, Dharma became 'Dharuma', Nama became 'Namo', Brahmin became 'Bontan' etc" (98).

She asserts that "Sanskrit" is the source of thousands of additional terms in the Japanese language. According to her, "One of the most interesting uses of syllables was in the form of 'bija-akshara'. All hindu deities were given a unique 'bija-akshara', which can be found on their statues, 'bija-aksharas' have great importance in Japanese culture as they are believed to be equal to God. Visitors bring an album called *Chin-Cho* to collect the *siddham* stamps or 'bijaaksharas' called 'shuin' to the temple. These albums are like holy books for the people and are sold at Japanese shrines and temples. Moreover in many buddhist temples mantras are incanted in Sanskrit language. In India we say *Om Saraswati Swaha* but in Japan they like to say *Om Saraswati Ke*"(99).

If we talk about Indian Kathakali and Japanese Kabuki, there are many elements in both which are similar. The terms "katha" (meaning narrative) and "kali" (meaning play) are combined to form the word "Kathakali." One of India's most engaging dance theatre genres has grown out of these two words. It is believed that Kathakali, which originated in Kerala, India, evolved from Chakkarkuthu, a performance art. Kathakali is supposed to have originated in the 16th century and has clear influences from various ancient performance styles. Essentially, it's a kind of exquisite monologue in which the artist recounts scenes from Hindu epics. In Kerala, India, a traditional performance art form is known as koodiyattam. Kerala, India's temple art is known as Krishnanattam. Written in eight parts, the story of Krishna is told in this dance theatre by Manaveda (1585–1658 AD), a Zamorin Raja of Calicut in northern Kerala. This group consists of the following plays: Vividavatham, Banayuddham, Swayamvaram, Avataram, Rasakrida, Kamsavadham, and Swargarohanam. One of India's most engaging dance theatre genres has grown out of these two words. It is believed

that Kathakali, which originated in Kerala, India, evolved from Chakkiarkuthu, a performance art. Kathakali is supposed to have originated in the 16th century and has clear influences from various ancient performance styles. The name "Kabuki," which originated to denote someone who is unusual or strangely dressed, originally meant "unorthodox entertainment." According to Geethanjali Rajan, "On the other hand, the characters that originally denoted Kabuki now imply song, dance, and talent. Traced back to the early 17 century, the Edo period, this form is seen as the first entertainment form that addressed the tastes of the common people. Okuni, a female dancer at the grand Shrine of Izumo is said to have founded this form"(6). At almost the same age, both kathakali and kabuki performers begin their training. It takes eight to twelve years of intense training in Kathakali to become recognised as an excellent performer. The majority of the actors are the sons of more seasoned kabuki performers, and they range in age from 12 to 14. Greater focus is placed on facial emotion in both art genres, and the face is painted in various hues of makeup to accentuate the expression. Taiko drumming opens a Kabuki performance. After the act has captured the audience's interest, it starts. The Kathakali performers also use a silk curtain that is held on two sides when they enter the stage using a device called a thiranottam, which is essentially a hand-held curtain lifter. In case he is a notable figure, the artist is presented while standing behind the curtain. After the act has captured the audience's interest, it starts. Situated on the left side of the stage, in a dais with two tiers, is the Kabuki orchestra. Their repertoire includes the Shamisen, koto, otsuzumi, a variety of drums, and the 13-stringed harp, which is Japan's national instrument.

Traditionally, the Kathakali dance is accompanied by musical accompaniments known as geethams, which feature instruments like the mandalam, chenga, idekka, and sanganu (conch). Dancers perform to a song that serves as a sort of narrator for the story of the episode. It's clear that the seniors (asans) have talent when it comes to how each performer expresses themselves without the use of music. To convey plays or tales, both require a lot of face expressions and little dance moves. The dance steps and musical selections combine in both Kathakali and Kabuki to create amazing emotions. Sarath Kumar Nedungadi, the director of the Cochin Cultural Centre, recently travelled to Japan to study kabuki and is working with kabuki artists to present a kabuki and Kathakali version of the Mahabharata. The Japanese Embassy in Delhi also held a traditional dance performance with Kathakali and Kabuki. Onoe Kikunosuke V, the leading man of Kabuki, The Hindu expressed his enthusiasm for promoting his own dance form in India as a means of fostering cultural interchange. He also expressed his interest in Indian classical dance. He also discusses the subtler aspects of the art form, how it is comparable to Kathakali, and his intention to perform Mahabharata in Kabuki. There have always been cultural ties between Japan and India. Anupam Joshi, an expert in Japanese language, talked on this in his speech, "Identifying Our Shared Identity!" The India Japan Study Centre, a Centre of Excellence of IIM Bangalore, is hosting a lecture series called "Tatsujin - Speak" that includes the topic "Astonishing Cultural Similarities between India & Japan." Joshi gave the example of traditional arts from Kerala, India, and Kabuki from Japan.

I'll now discuss the parallels between Japan's *Bon Odori* and India's Diwali. Known as the "festival of lights," the primary theme of both celebrations is the eradication of evil. Obon, often spelt Bon, is a combination of the traditional Buddhist practice of paying respect to one's ancestors' spirits with the old Japanese belief in ancestral spirits. People travel back to their ancestral family cemetery sites to pay respects and clean them because it is believed that the spirits of their ancestors revisit the household altars. This 'Confucian-Buddhist' ceremony has evolved into a festival honouring family reunions. Over 500 years have passed since it was first observed in Japan, and part of the festivities always involves the dance known as Bon Odori. Odisha celebrates Diwali with a special ceremony known as Kauriya Kathi, which is comparable to the idea of the ancestors of Japan's Bon Festivals. Kauriya Kathi, lit with jute sticks, is the term, to aid in the guiding of their ancestors' souls to heaven, they recite mantras and ignite bundles of jute sticks. Additionally, they think that by doing this, they will call upon the blessings of their ancestors and guarantee their families' prosperity. There are parallels between Hanami in Japan and Holi in India. Hanami is associated with several vibrant flower festivals. On the other hand, India celebrates Holi, a Hindu holiday. Both springtime festivities place a strong focus on appreciating the beauty of the natural environment. While people travel to Japan for Hanami to witness the cherry blossoms and have picnics under the blooming trees, during Holi they hurl water and coloured powder at one another. The ceremonies and rituals of both Indian and Japanese civilizations demonstrate their deep love for the natural world and its beauty. Another example of the similarities is the celebration of the Japanese harvest festival, known as *koshogatsu*, which is celebrated with joyous songs and dances and is commemorated similarly to India's Makar Sankranti by giving the crop and product to the almighty force. There are other similarities between the two cultures' customs of removing shoes before entering a home, honouring elders, eating meals while seated, etc.

3. Conclusion: It is evident that although these two civilizations share many characteristics, they also diverge. The fact that they have developed from different backgrounds while upholding many of the same principles, however, is really



fascinating. Relationships between two distinct cultures are strengthened when there are commonalities between them. The well-known Japanese academic Hajime Nakamura (1912–1999) said that: "India is culturally, Mother of Japan. For centuries it has, in her own characteristic way, been exercising her influence on the thought and culture of Japan." Additionally, he stated that: "Without Indian influence, Japanese culture would not be what it is today. As most Japanese profess the Buddhist faith, needless to say, they have generally been influenced by Indian ideas to a great extent" (web).

People become more at ease and build a foundation of trust in their relationships by travelling to one other's countries. When there are similarities between two countries, people do not feel uncomfortable in each other's socio-cultural environment. By visiting each other's country, people not only feel comfortable but also the foundation of trust develops in the relationship. By visiting to one other's countries, people exchange cultures, which opens up a wide range of future possibilities due to which both the countries can establish many laurels in the future with mutual cooperation.

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