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Constructing Alliances: Media Narratives, India-Japan Relations and the China Dimension

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Abstract

India belongs to South-Asia and Japan is another country in Southeast Asia. A good relationship between them started in the sixth century. The medium of this relationship there was Buddhist religion and culture and those aspects, which led both countries towards stronger development. In the aftermath of World War II, an India-Japan bilateral relations agreement was signed. It then commits to helping both in the fields of finance, defence, trade and culture.

The joint progress of India and Japan in the Pacific region, the unnecessary aggression mentality of the US and China is becoming increasingly dangerous in the relations between India and Japan. However, the media has an important role to play in promoting the mutual relations between India, Japan and China in front of the whole world. Although China is on the path of free-economy, their news does not come out much. There media is controlled by the government. But India and Japan believe in more freedom and liberality than China when it comes to media usage.

In that case, the media of the three countries continue to play their role in any discussion, be it political or academic, to highlight the deepening of India-Japan relations to the world, above all China's aggression in it. India-to-day can be mentioned among the first class media in India. whose print and digital-driven media mainly highlight the positive aspects of India-Japan relations. For example:

“Japan is recasting its national security vision in the face of an aggressive China. India must inject strategic content into ties during 2+2 dialogue” [The Indian Express on 06/09/2022.]

Japan has also seen heightened exposure to its own print and digital media. Some notable such media in Japan are the Japan Times, Asahi Shimbun, respectively, apart from their TV and various digital media. Those who observe India-Japan relations wherever China has come, India's relations with its neighbors have hit rock bottom. In that case, how the media can influence India-Japan relations will be highlighted in the main research paper with information.

Keywords: India, Japan, relationship, print and digital media, China, aggression mentality, free-economy, government.

Part: One

India-Japan and their media: Looking at the modern era from an economic perspective, it can be said that no country in the world and its people have been able to distance themselves from the extensive effects of globalization. The reason for this is that globalization has turned the whole world into a global village by talking about advanced technology and applying it step by step. Among the things that have become very powerful in the modern world due to that advanced technology, the media is particularly noteworthy. What exactly is meant by media is hidden in the meaning of these two words 'mass' and 'medium'. In the general sense, 'mass' means the common people, and 'medium' means a field of communication. That is, through which it is possible to exchange various ideas and information available between people, it can be called media.

That is, if we look at this media from a broader perspective, we can see that any information or news, sometimes in print or sometimes in digital form, does not only connect people with each other. Through this media, two states or a country can be linked to one or more countries and foreign countries in various dimensions. This relationship can be cultural, economic, political, mutual religious policies between the two countries and those areas, so that those countries can move forward on a special path of development.

And from that source, it can be said that the media of both countries can play an important role in the strategic relationship between India and Japan. Because, when some kind of positive field is prepared in their mutual relations, which is good for both countries and if those news are easily available to the common people of both countries through the media, then a special public opinion and along with that, a field of positive thinking can be prepared for the common people. Which is quite effective as a significant development step for a country and a nation - there should be no doubt in accepting this. In this context, Dr. Helena Ferdousi writes about the power and influence of the media, especially news media:

“The power and influence of the media in changing society is considered to be omnipresent. However, it is also necessary to examine how and for whose benefit this power of the media is being used. The global media today is controlled by a handful of multinational corporations (News Corporation, Time Warner, Disney, Viacom)... These mainstream media are being run for the sake of their own business, profit, authority and control. The mainstream media is immersed in corporate air and profit investment without regard for social values, cultural traditions and ethics... They are more business-oriented, profit-oriented, corporate-oriented and commercial. Those who keep the audience focused on light and cheap entertainment, work for the market, present consumer culture and provide corporate culture.”¹

History says that India's relations with Japan were initiated through the mutual exchange of Buddhism. The Indo-Japanese relations of that time were initiated by an Indian named

Bodhisena or Bodaisenna. After traveling to China, he reached Japan and at the invitation of the Japanese Emperor Shomu, he started the work of propagating and spreading Buddhism there. Naturally, there was no modern media at that time. However, the information recorded in various media where he took refuge in the Buddhist monastery called Dai-an-ji has been accepted as evidence later. However, after the Second World War, when Japan was trying to turn around in every way, Jawaharlal Nehru traveled to Japan in 1957 and as a token of their mutual friendship, he gifted the Japanese Prime Minister an elephant named Indira. The news was published in the Financial Times, a famous Japanese newspaper run by Nikkei In-Corporation. Where it was written:

“The mutual talks between Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India Shinzo Abe, and their sincere exchange of various issues will bring Japan-India closer. And they will work together in various industries and defense in the Asian continent.”²

The newspapers in India that covered the first Prime Minister's visit in various dimensions were 'Hindustan Times', 'Stateman' and 'Anandabazar Patrika' in Bengali, 'Rashtriya Samachar' published in Hindi, 'Punjab Keshori' in Punjabi, etc., published news on the positive aspects of the mutual relations between India and Japan, and various analytical articles in post-editorials. However, since the newspapers of that time were not driven by modern corporate thinking, complete freedom of journalists in reporting news was observed in both India and Japan. But with time, in the era of Internet, along with the print media of India and Japan, along with radio-TV and electronic media, the corporate-run media can certainly be driven by both positive and negative appeals on various aspects of India-Japan relations. However, there is no doubt that modern media, by combining their ethics and in some cases corporate objectives, have created such an environment that it is no longer possible to ignore the media in India-Japan relations.

Part: Two

India-China relations and their media: India and China are two of the most populous countries in Asia - the combined population of the two countries is one-third of the world's total population. Both countries have a tradition of ancient civilization. Both countries are rapidly developing and have the status of two of the world's great powers. Independent republican governments were established in both countries almost simultaneously. The journey of independent republican India began on August 15, 1947. And the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. There has been communication between the two countries from the very beginning; the leaders and government officials of the two countries have regularly met and discussed with each other. In this context, Pranab Kumar Dalal writes:

“Despite so many similarities, both countries have moved forward hand in hand in the years following independence. Mao Zedong's China has supported the anti-imperialist movement of the Third World and the non-aligned movement in principle. In 1954, China established friendly relations with India on the basis of the 'Five Principles'. At the Bandung Conference in 1955, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai

reaffirmed his belief in the Five Principles and emphasized the need to build good relations with neighboring countries and Third World countries based on these principles. However, after a few days, relations between the two countries began to deteriorate due to certain incidents.”³

Among these incidents, China's human rights violations in Tibet, Dalai Lama's asylum in India, Beijing's policy of encircling Pakistan are noteworthy. Finally, the 1962 border conflict ended the friendly relations between India and China and the relations between the two countries became bitter. In the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965 and 1971, China took the side of Pakistan and put pressure on the Indian defense forces in favor of Pakistan. Apart from this, China also tried to stir up trouble over the issue of Sikkim's accession to India. Among the newspapers of this country that became particularly active on these issues, 'The Times of India', 'The Hindustan Times', 'The Telegraph', 'The Indian Express', 'The Hindu' and in Bengali, 'Anandabazar Patrika' can be mentioned.

News from inside China never comes out uncensored. So, what exactly was their role in the 1965 India-Pakistan war, no other country in the world could know from any Chinese newspaper. But according to 'The Telegraph', it became clear to the public that—

- 1) On August 5, 1965, Pakistani soldiers disguised themselves as Kashmiri locals and crossed the LoC with the aim of starting a rebellion among the locals against the Indian government.
- 2) This infiltration strategy was codenamed Operation Gibraltar. Through this, Pakistan wanted to take control of Kashmir.
- 3) India was defeated by China in 1962 and Pakistan thought that the Indian army would not be able to defend Kashmir.
- 4) Operation Gibraltar failed because the presence of Pakistanis was reported to the Indian authorities by the locals.
- 5) The Indian army retaliated at the Haji Pir Pass in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- 6) On September 1, Pakistan launched its Operation Grand Slam to capture the city of Akhnoor in Jammu. Although the Indian Army was surprised by this move, Pakistan was unable to capture Akhnoor. India retaliated by attacking further south in the valley and successfully drove the infiltrators from Kargil.
- 7) The International Border (Radcliffe Line) crossed into India on 6 September, marking the formal start of the war. The Indian Army captured parts of Pakistan's Lahore district.

This war, unlike the previous conflict of 1947–48, was fought on many fronts, including Rajasthan. The war also saw the first aerial combat between India and Pakistan. The war ended on 23 September 1965 when the United Nations Security Council called for an unconditional ceasefire from both India and Pakistan.

However, China's aggressive mentality resulted in India's defeat in the 1962 Indo-China war. Then in 1967, there was a shootout on the Indo-China border. In this context, Ananth Krishnan writes in 'The Hindu'—

“On June 19, 1967, police stood guard outside the Chinese embassy in Delhi when tensions between India and China flared up again. The 1967 clash between India and China is often remembered as the last firing on the Indo-China border. The clash in Sikkim, where India turned on China just five years after its defeat in the 1962 war, killed more than 80 Indian soldiers while estimates suggest that 400 Chinese soldiers may have been killed.”⁴

Part: Three

Recent India-Japan-China relations and the media: Over time, India-Japan relations have progressed towards a strategic relationship based on mutual exchange and cooperation in political, economic and in some areas such as defense and entertainment. There is a big difference between the foreign policy followed by India under Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister and the foreign policy of India today. With the end of the Congress rule, India and Japan have come closer in their relations under the rule of the two families of Narendra Modi. The aim is to stop China's aggressive attitude towards land and sea in the Pacific region. In this regard, it is no longer just the printed media; having surpassed the era of TV and radio, today the media is as fast as the internet technology, and has not only limited its role in the various ups and downs of a country, but today they are also able to influence the mutual relations, policies and agreements of a country with other countries.

However, at present, the leading Japanese national dailies are the Asahi Shimbun, the Mainichi Shimbun, the Yomiuri Shimbun, the Sankei Shimbun and the Nikkei Shimbun. The first two are generally considered liberal or left-leaning, and the last three are considered conservative or right-leaning. The most popular national daily in Japan is the English-language newspaper The Japan Times. During Manmohan Singh's visit to Japan in 2006, it welcomed the idea of an Indo-Japan 'global and strategic' partnership. Narendra Modi's visit in 2014 also saw India-Japan relations as a strong step towards international unity. However, The Hindu is a jury in providing up-to-date news on India's relations with Japan. In this context, a report dated 23-Sep-2022 states—

“Ahead of bilateral meetings with his Japanese counterpart, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, May 23, 2022, said he sees Japan as an ‘indispensable partner’ in India’s ongoing transformation, asserting that New Delhi’s speed and scale combined with ease of doing business, attractive incentives, bold reforms and ambitious plans create unparalleled opportunities for Japanese businesses.”⁵

Some researchers believe that influential newspapers in foreign relations often produce negative news under the influence of a particular party or third force. In this context, it is worth mentioning the theory of Goebbels of Germany. Where he said that the media has such a power that if a false news is repeatedly conveyed to the general public, at some point the general public may consider that false news to be true. Not only in India; in the case of

Japan and China as well, such paid or objective news is being spread in various media outlets in China at different times. As a result, confusion and distrust are being created in any case. In other cases, it is seen that any issue that may go against the general public is being continuously promoted by wrapping it in the framework of nationalism or some other source. Which is identified by experts as 'fake news'. In this context, it is worth noting that wherever Narendra Modi's foreign policy regarding 3.0 has become strict, some newspapers have written that it is becoming an obstacle to good relations with neighboring countries.

But it cannot be denied that when Narendra Modi builds a quad, i.e. a four-sided security ring, to prevent Chinese aggression and establish a strategic relationship with America, Australia and Japan, it undoubtedly strengthens and elevates India's power and security in the international arena - there is no doubt about this.

China's largest newspaper is Xinhua, which is completely under the control of their government. So, no news that the government does not want can be published in that newspaper. However, it is true that in various news and reports of Xinhua, they publish various fake news about the border problem in the northeastern region of India; sometimes they include Arunachal Pradesh or several regions of India within their borders, trying to create an area of instability in front of the whole world. Sometimes they introduce their army into the borders of India and build something different, and they repeatedly raise their demands in Xinhua, creating a special pressure on India in the international arena. Currently, China has its eyes on this Chicken Neck of Bengal on the border of Bangladesh-Bhutan and China. Because if they can get the rights to Chicken Neck, then it is possible to cut off India from the Seven Sisters of the northeast - this is true for geographical reasons.

Along with this, there are three more newspapers run by the Communist Party of China. Their job is to continue spreading anti-India news. How much the common Indian has been affected by this is debatable. But once when the Communists of India raised the slogan 'China's Chairman is our Chairman' in their mouthpiece, there is no doubt that this issue became a big headache for Indian defense and border problems. But in today's context, there is no doubt that the unlimited power of the media and the ultimate awareness of the people will continue to believe in the leading aspects of India-Japan relations. And whatever is not beneficial, they will reject that news no matter what medium it comes from. However, Indian Foreign Minister Dr. S Jaishankar said—

“Indian soldiers will be able to patrol the border areas where they used to roam around China, again. Talks between India and China on reducing tension have ended. The two sides have reached a mutual understanding. In the future, the effect of this agreement will be to restore the pre-2020 situation on the LAC. This is an important event, but it would be premature to assess its full impact now. We will have to wait.”⁶

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