

Mahatma Gandhi and Japan - An Approach Towards East Asian Peace

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Honorable chairperson,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I heartily welcome the convening of the International Conference on Gandhi, Disarmament and Development on the heels of October 2, Gandhi Jayarfi, which is also commemorated as the International Non-violent Day by a decision of the United Nations General Assembly.

Gandhiji and Japan

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has been the subject of extensive studies by many scholars in India and the world. Among the voluminous literature on Gandhiji, I would like to introduce a work by a Japanese, a contemporary of Gandhiji, who studied him. This will show you how Japan and India are deeply related to each other.

His name was YOHENA Chitaro (1891-1960). A journalist and an editor, he had a keen interest in Korea under Japan's colonial rule as well as India long under the British Raj. At the same time, he took an increasingly critical position against imperialism and capitalism.

In 1922, he published two books, namely "Gandhi and Satyagraha" (*Ganji to Sinri no Haji*) and "Gandhi's Judgment Day" (*Ganji Simban no Hi*). Although there was very limited interest in India and Gandhi at that time in Japan, he took up Gandhi's thoughts as a leader of the Indian national movement, arguing that the people of India were behind his leadership.

Yohena closely followed the move toward independence for India, a gigantic political transformation which helped Yohena develop his ideas on anti-imperialism, national independence, and people's movements into a coherent theoretical system. What he especially paid attention to was the core idea of Gandhiji's philosophy, "satyagraha" - non-violent resistance.

Born in Okinawa, which was occupied by the U.S. military in the closing days of WWII in 1945, Yohena was inspired by Gandhi's thinking to participate in the Okinawan people's movement. In November 1945, he founded the *Okinawajin Renmei* (Okinawan Federation) and later spearheaded the mobilization that demanded Okinawa's reversion to Japan.¹

Back in the days of Japan's militarist rule, however, even to write about Gandhi's effort for national independence was severely restricted. Despite such difficulties, he courageously argued for the independence of Korea, as he applied Gandhi's thought to Korea.

Gandhiji was assassinated by a Hindu nationalist in 1948, just after India's independence. However, Gandhiji's thought and movement was inherited by Jawaharlal Nehru, who laid the foundation for India's democracy and nation building.

As regards India's relationship with Japan, the government of India led by Nehru did not attend the San Francisco Peace Conference promoted by the U.S., but concluded a peace treaty of its own with Japan in 1952. Nehru was said to have concluded the treaty out of his desire that Japan regain her honour, freedom, and equality with other nations.

Now we are in 21st Century facing with a different set of tasks than those of Gandhiji's era. Nevertheless it is still highly significant for us to carry on his efforts towards peace, national independence and social progress. This is why we should remember Gandhiji in the present world.

Present-day world and Japan

The 20th century began with global domination by monopoly capitalism and imperialism. During the last century, however, great changes took place, such as the collapse of colonialism, and establishment of the right of national self-determination as a recognized international principle. We are also free from the shackles of the Cold War which forced many countries to choose to join either the U.S. camp or the Soviet camp. Even though there remain imperialism, hegemonism, and outrageous behaviour carried out on their behalf, we live in an era when the right to national self-determination and the right to development are accepted as the main pillars of the international human rights guarantee in which every country is able to pursue the development path it freely chooses.

In recent years, developing and emerging countries have increased their weight in the global economy. Those countries are able to tackle various international issues without being

¹ "Yohena Chitaro : Between Okinawa and India" (in Japanese) by Heiji Nakamura (presently professor emeritus of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

constrained by the great powers' beck and call. Now is the time when they are collectively moving the world. Take for example international decision-making in the economic field: developed capitalist countries are no longer able to deal with any problems by themselves without having developing countries on board.

Moreover, this is not the age when a military alliance between countries can be a mainstay of a country's diplomatic strategy. By getting rid of military alliances, Southeast Asia and Latin America have made great strides in ensuring security through confidence-building and dialogue without assuming imaginary enemies.

Look at East Asia, widely regarded as a region of high growth and rapid development with its amount of trade and investment exceeding half of the world total. India and China have increased clout both politically and economically. In this region with significant market and political influence, Japan should be playing its due role. Unfortunately, Japan is still tied down by its military alliance with the U.S. with the massive presence of U.S. military bases- Diplomatically as well as politically, Japan is left far behind by the rest of the world and other Asian countries that are pursuing independent diplomacy.

In order to build peace in East Asia, the JCP attach great importance to Japan's diplomacy based on the pacifist spirit enshrined in the preamble and Article 9 of the Constitution. We are making our utmost effort to prevent Japan from becoming a country that would join wars along with the U.S.

We are advocating for abrogation of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, which has been the source of Japan's aberrant subordination to the U.S. Our vision is that Japan concludes with the U.S. a friendship treaty, turning the lord-vassal relationship into a true friendship between equals. A new Japan will not take part in any military alliances and seek to join a path of peace, neutrality so that Japan can have friendly ties with all the countries in the world. I have been attending several summit meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement as a member of an NGO delegation with the observer status. It is my ardent hope that Japan becomes a member of this movement in the future.

Removal of the U.S. military bases in Japan is an uphill task. Even though Okinawa returned to Japan in 1972, as was desired by Yohena, the U.S. base situation has not changed since under the direct U.S. military rule. Although the area of Okinawa is just 0.6% of Japan, 75% of the U.S. bases in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa. The massive presence of the U.S. military bases, which occupy 18% of total area of Okinawa, and the U.S. troops constitute a threat to the lives of the residences and an obstacle to healthy development of the local economy.

In Tokyo, we have huge Yokota Air Base. In its vicinity, Yokosuka Naval Base, a mother port of one of the aircraft carriers of the Seventh Fleet also exists. No foreign military bases are ever located in the midst of such densely populated areas. This situation is out of touch with the present global trend.

In Japan today, a hotly debated issue is Japan's participation in the negotiations of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement (TPP). This U.S.-led agreement is basically aimed at total abolition of tariffs. It also includes trade liberalization of agricultural products, privatization of postal service, and liberalization of finance and insurance which have been demanded by the U.S. Joining the TPP would deprive Japan of its policy independence in finance, foreign exchange, commerce, and agriculture, totally transforming the way Japan is today by imposing the "American way." We oppose joining the TPP and strive for equitable and mutually beneficial economic relationship with all the nations.

Towards a world without nuclear weapons

In conclusion, I would like to speak on elimination of nuclear weapons, a goal that all human beings aspire for. I am a co-chairperson of the World Conference against A&H Bombs, which is held annually in August in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two cities on which atom bombs were dropped respectively on 6th and 9th August 1945. I appreciate that Indian delegations attend this conference every year.

Here I recall a famous quote by Gandhiji.

"The atomic bomb has deadened the finest feelings that sustained mankind for ages. (...) The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the Allied armies, but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see."

In fact, the atomic bombing still torments the living survivors and its after-effects are felt in the second and third generations even after 68 years.

This year's World Conference held in August focused cruelty and inhumanity of nuclear weapons and solemnly declared that human beings cannot coexist with nuclear weapons and that abolition of nuclear weapons is a vitally important goal on which human survival depends. It also called for all-out efforts to create an overwhelming joint action of people worldwide towards early commencement of negotiations of a Nuclear Weapon Convention.

68 years since Gandhiji deplored the use of nuclear weapons and worried about the future course of the human society, human beings have certainly imparted their wisdom and made

progress by creating a powerful movement that elucidates the way to eliminate this malicious human creation, namely nuclear weapons.

Thank you for your attention.