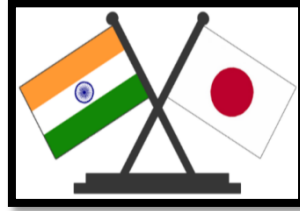


# INDIA- JAPAN BILATERAL RELATIONS AND BEYOND

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION: STUDENT VOICES AND ASPIRATIONS



A REPORT BY  
INDIA JAPAN LABORATORY (IJL), KEIO UNIVERSITY, JAPAN  
YEAR- 2024



Keio University



India Japan Laboratory



SFC  
KEIO UNIVERSITY



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## ➤ **ABOUT THE REPORT**

This report is part of Keio University's India Japan Laboratory research initiatives, capturing student voices and aspirations to strengthen India-Japan bilateral relations. As 2024 marks the 72nd anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two nations, the report first provides a historical overview of India-Japan relations and emphasizes their growing importance for the future. The core of the report synthesizes perspectives from Keio University students, particularly those from the 2023 batch of the course 'Culture, Environment, and Technology of India'. It reflects how India is currently perceived in Japan and identifies potential areas for cooperation to enhance future relations. The insights are drawn from two-page summaries submitted by approximately 200 students as part of their coursework. The findings from this report aim to offer valuable guidance for shaping the future of India-Japan bilateral relations.

## ➤ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Anuska Ray, born in 2000 in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, hails from the land of cultural and political icons such as Rabindranath Tagore and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. From a young age, Anuska was drawn to the intricate interplay between natural and social sciences, with a special interest in understanding the relationship between humans and their environment. Her curiosity was particularly piqued by the study of disasters and the ways communities adapt and respond to such challenges. Her fascination with Japan's resilience in the face of frequent natural disasters sparked a desire to learn from the country's unique approach to disaster management and apply these lessons to address the challenges India faces in managing disasters and improving community resilience. In January 2023, Anuska embarked on her first journey to Japan, having been awarded a prestigious scholarship by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan. This opportunity allowed her to delve deeply into the geography, economy, politics, and culture of Japan. During this trip, her passion for disaster studies was further nurtured, and she began her research under the mentorship of Professor Rajib Shaw at Keio University, focusing specifically on disaster resilience with an emphasis on community resilience. Anuska's academic journey began at the University of Calcutta, where she pursued her undergraduate degree in Geography. Her dedication and academic excellence earned her several accolades, including a prize for securing first-class honors in her department during her postgraduate studies. Her academic focus, coupled with her hands-on approach to fieldwork, highlights her commitment to understanding human-environment interactions. Beyond her academic pursuits, Anuska is also an accomplished volleyball player, having competed in numerous state and university-level tournaments. Her love for sports is complemented by her passion for engaging with diverse communities, learning from different perspectives, and conducting fieldwork to gain firsthand knowledge of the complex relationship between people and their environment. Through her research and diverse interests, Anuska Ray aspires to contribute to both academic knowledge and practical solutions for building disaster-resilient communities in India and beyond.



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### ***Disclaimer***

This report is derived from the experiences based on the students in the coursework in Keio university SFC and the review of complete literature. The references in provided at the end of the report.

## PREFACE

The history of India-Japan bilateral relations dates back centuries, with shared ideals and cultural diversity forming the foundation of their strong ties. In recent years, while the economic dimension of this relationship has seen significant growth, it is crucial to remember the importance of cultural connections. Acknowledging this diversity, Keio University established the India Japan Laboratory (IJL) in 2019 ([www.indiajapanlab.org](http://www.indiajapanlab.org)). Since 2020, IJL has offered a unique course titled "Culture, Environment, and Technology of India" at Keio University. This 14-week course features lectures from Keio University faculty, along with invited experts from fields such as technology, innovation, development, environment, yoga, music, film, and even astrology. During the 2023 session, more than 200 students registered to these courses. They were asked to share their views on the present and future of India-Japan relations. This report synthesizes those perspectives, highlighting key insights and messages from the students' reflections.

In addition to the India-focused class, IJL emphasizes building knowledge partnerships with Indian universities, focusing on areas such as disaster risk reduction, environmental management, and sustainable development. A key goal of these collaborations is the creation of incubation centers in different universities where students from both India and Japan can come together to develop innovative solutions to societal challenges. By fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and offering mentorship from the private sector and development professionals, IJL seeks to promote social innovation and partnerships between the two nations.

While IJL's initiatives may seem modest in comparison to the vast potential of India-Japan cooperation, we believe that these small efforts will lead to meaningful societal changes in the future. As we commemorate the 70th anniversary of India-Japan bilateral relations, this report represents a humble contribution from the students and youth of Japan toward the future of this partnership. I am deeply grateful to all the students, professors, and lecturers who contributed to the India class. Special thanks to Ms. Anuska Ray for shaping this report with her experiences in India and her thoughtful analysis of the students' voices. I hope this document will prove valuable to the youth of both countries.

Rajib Shaw  
Director and Professor  
India Japan laboratory  
Keio University

## ➤ INTRODUCTION – INDIA-JAPAN BILATERAL RELATIONS

The relationship between India and Japan has always been characterized by mutual friendship and goodwill. Remarkably, the two nations have never engaged in war, nor have they experienced any significant historical conflicts. Formal diplomatic relations between India and Japan were established on April 28, 1952, with the signing of the Treaty of Peace. Notably, India was one of the first countries to sign a peace treaty with Japan after World War II. Following the treaty, India exported iron ore to Japan to help the nation recover from wartime losses, while Japan provided India with its first yen loan in 1958.

Since 2019, India has emerged as one of the world's top five economies, surpassing countries like the United Kingdom and France. It is now recognized for its thriving information technology sector and globally influential film industry.

The 21st century has witnessed significant collaboration between Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi, with geopolitical factors driving India and Japan closer. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), which includes the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, has further highlighted India's growing influence in global affairs. Today, India is regarded as one of the fastest-growing and most influential emerging economies, largely due to its rapid advancements in science and technology.

With a large proportion of its population under the age of 25, India's global impact is steadily increasing. By 2023, India is projected to surpass China as the world's most populous country, further enhancing its potential on the world stage. This demographic strength has attracted substantial business interest from Japan, a trend that shows no signs of slowing.

The peace treaties between India and Japan have evolved into the "Japan and India Vision 2025: Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World." This long-term agreement aims to promote sustained economic and political collaboration between the two nations. As part of this partnership, Japan has significantly increased its direct investment in India and is now the fourth-largest investor in the country.

While India's economy continues to grow, buoyed by its increasing population and its reputation for producing skilled programmers and entrepreneurs, Japan faces a contrasting challenge. Japan's population is aging and declining, with a large portion of its citizens being elderly, leading to workforce shortages.

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2022, India remains somewhat of an enigma in Japan. There is a real need to bridge this gap in understanding. India is often viewed as a mysterious and exotic country, with many Japanese citizens unfamiliar with its economy and educational system. This lack of awareness also contributes to the common perception in Japan of India's remarkable success in producing highly skilled professionals in fields such as information technology and engineering. There is now greater scope for fostering deeper mutual understanding between these two nations.

## ➤ CHRONOLOGICAL EVENTS OF INDIA- JAPAN BILATERAL RELATIONS

### ANCIENT TIMES TO WORLD WAR II

India's earliest documented direct contact with Japan dates back to 752 AD, during the consecration of the towering statue of Lord Buddha at Todaiji (“Great Eastern Temple”) in Nara. This sacred event was conducted by Bodhisena, an Indian monk, marking the beginning of formal India-Japan ties. Buddhism had reached Japan via the Silk Route through Central Asia, China, and Korea by the 6th century and quickly became associated with the Japanese Imperial court. During the Nara Era (710-794 AD) under Emperor Shomu and Empress Komyo, Buddhism was elevated as a protector of the state. The construction of the Todaiji temple, the chief temple of the Kokubun-ji (national monastery system), was a massive national project, involving Japan’s best craftsmen and latest building technologies. The colossal bronze Buddha at Todaiji, created using all of Japan’s available copper and vast human resources, required an estimated 163,000 cubic feet of charcoal for the metal alloy. The Daibutsuden (Great Buddha Hall), completed in 752 AD, was the world’s largest wooden structure, measuring 50 by 86 meters, supported by 84 massive cypress pillars. This monumental project culminated in the "eye-opening" ceremony, attended by the Japanese court, government officials, and Buddhist dignitaries from China and India. The presence of Bodhisena, who symbolically painted the Buddha’s eyes to imbue the statue with life, marked the first recorded instance of official contact between India and Japan, establishing a significant milestone in bilateral relations. In modern times, prominent Indians like Swami Vivekananda, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, JRD Tata, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, and Judge Radha Binod Pal have maintained strong connections with Japan. The Japan-India Association, founded in 1903, remains the oldest international friendship organization in Japan.

### POST-WORLD WAR II TO LATE 1990S

After World War II, India’s export of iron ore played a crucial role in Japan’s post-war recovery. Japan had been devastated by the war, and even the animals at Tokyo’s Ueno Zoo were ordered to be killed to prevent potential attacks if the zoo was bombed. In 1949, the Children’s Diet of Taito Ward, Tokyo, initiated a campaign to bring an elephant back to the Ueno Zoo. When attempts to bring elephants from within Japan failed, the children turned to India, submitting heartfelt letters and drawings to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Moved by their appeal, Nehru gifted an elephant named Indira to Japan. Indira’s arrival in Japan was met with great enthusiasm. She walked 9 kilometers from Shibaura Port to the Ueno Zoo, welcomed by 10,000 people in the middle of the night. The following months saw over a million visitors flock to the zoo, making Indira a symbol of peace and friendship between India and Japan, offering hope to post-war Japan. In 1957, Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi visited India, followed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s visit to Tokyo. In 1958, India received its first yen loan from Japan, marking the beginning of significant economic cooperation. Japan later bailed India out of its 1991 balance of payments crisis, solidifying its status as a reliable friend and economic partner.

### YEAR 2000 ONWARDS

Bilateral relations between India and Japan gained new momentum in August 2000, with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori’s visit to India. This led to the establishment of a

"Global Partnership between Japan and India," formalized by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In 2005, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visit to India further strengthened ties, resulting in annual summit meetings between the two nations. The subsequent years witnessed a series of important diplomatic transitions, as summarized in Figure 1 and Table 1, which outline the key treaties and agreements that have defined the history of India-Japan relations.

➤ **DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT TECHNOLOGY OF INDIA**

Since the Spring Semester of 2020, Keio University's Shonan Fujisawa Campus introduced a unique course titled "Culture, Environment, and Technology of India," primarily coordinated by the India Japan Laboratory. The course aims to deepen students' understanding of India's rich cultural diversity and explore potential areas for India-Japan bilateral collaboration. It is the first of its kind, offering a cross-disciplinary perspective that encompasses three main areas:

1. **Culture, history, art, religion, and language studies**
2. **Development, environment, and economic growth strategies**
3. **Science, technology, and innovation studies**

This course features a combination of in-house faculty lectures and presentations by eminent guest speakers, providing students with a well-rounded perspective on India. It also offers opportunities for students to engage directly with guest lecturers from premier Indian educational institutions, benefiting from their practical expertise. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the course was conducted online, with guest speakers participating from India and other countries. In 2021, a total of 13 lectures were delivered online, covering a range of topics, and a visit to the Embassy of India in Tokyo was organized to give students firsthand exposure to India's diplomatic presence in Japan.

Below is a brief overview of the lectures conducted in the 2021 class:

1. **Orientation:** Introduction to course objectives, assignments, and credit requirements.
2. **India-Japan Evolving Relations:** The start-up ecosystem, internet, and new technologies.
3. **Japan-India Overseas Development Assistance:** Historical and contemporary perspectives.
4. **Bilateral Relations from a Global Perspective:** A historical overview of India-Japan relations.
5. **Meditation:** Theory, practice, and its importance to human health and well-being.
6. **Yoga Demonstration:** Highlighting yoga's relevance in today's world and its link to SDGs.
7. **India-Japan 'Sound Culture' Collaboration:** Examining performing and literary arts.
8. **Diversity in Indian Art and Music:** Exploring India's rich cultural heritage.
9. **Tagore Songs:** Their significance in the Bengali community and cultural identity.
10. **Astrology and Astronomy:** Their role in contemporary India-Japan relations.
11. **Embassy Visit:** A trip to the Embassy of India in Tokyo for direct interaction with officials.

12. **India's Economic Growth Strategy:** Its impact on bilateral and multilateral cooperation.
13. **Core Development Issues in India:** Examining recent policy changes in "New India."

Through this course, students were able to identify gaps and suggest improvements in India-Japan relations. Their post-course assignments highlighted a few key insights:

### **A. Lack of Interactions between India and Japan**

The students noted the comparatively fewer exchanges between India and Japan than between Japan and China, leading to limited opportunities for Japanese students to learn about India.

### **B. Learning Opportunities on India**

Despite the limited chances to engage with India, this course offered a rare and valuable opportunity for students to explore various aspects of Indian society, culture, and development, from music to yoga.

### **C. Suggestions for Strengthening India-Japan Relations**

Students, driven by their curiosity and active participation in the course, proposed several practical and achievable ideas to improve and strengthen bilateral ties between India and Japan. This course, with its comprehensive approach and multidisciplinary content, offers a platform for enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation between India and Japan, helping pave the way for future collaboration.

#### **➤ ABOUT THE STUDENTS**

The student community at SFC (Shonan Fujisawa Campus) is a microcosm of diverse nationalities, with each student possessing a unique life story shaped by their upbringing and cultural backgrounds. This diversity is reflected in their writing, which embodies the various environments they have been raised in. Through this course on India, students were able to relate their own cultural contexts and experiences to the study of India, allowing them to reflect on and explore the depth of the India-Japan bilateral relationship. The course encouraged students to engage deeply with their own perspectives and, in turn, to offer practical suggestions for strengthening ties between the two countries.

Many students had personal connections or experiences with India—whether through interactions with Indian people via family members or friends, exposure to Indian goods, or their appreciation of Indian music, architecture, and spiritual practices. Some students were influenced by practicing Buddhism or Hinduism, while others were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's quotes, Ayurvedic traditions, astrology, or playing Indian musical instruments. Practicing yoga, a key part of the course, had a significant impact on the students' understanding of India.

The course demonstrated that real, tangible experiences related to India offer the greatest learning opportunities. Whether it was through casual contact with Indian fabrics, tasting Indian cuisine, exploring human stories in Bollywood films, or embracing the relaxation and self-awareness brought by yoga, students were able to connect with India on a personal level.



These experiences, from the aromas and flavors of Indian food to the wisdom of Gandhi's teachings, helped students to engage with India's culture and philosophy, deepening their appreciation and understanding of the country's global significance.

➤ **STUDENTS BACKGROUND**

The student body at SFC is highly diverse, reflecting its multicultural environment that includes a blend of various ethnic backgrounds, including Indian and Japanese. The students' levels of interaction with Indian people and their knowledge of India vary widely. However, the common thread among students enrolled in the course was a genuine interest in learning more about India.

Many students noted that the class significantly deepened their understanding of India, complementing their prior knowledge of Hinduism, yoga, Ayurveda, and Bollywood films. Those who already practiced yoga appreciated its impact on mental peace and mindfulness. Some students, despite having had no previous contact with Indian people, developed a curiosity about India's rise as a leader in information technology. They recognized India's highly skilled professionals in IT and engineering as a major advantage.

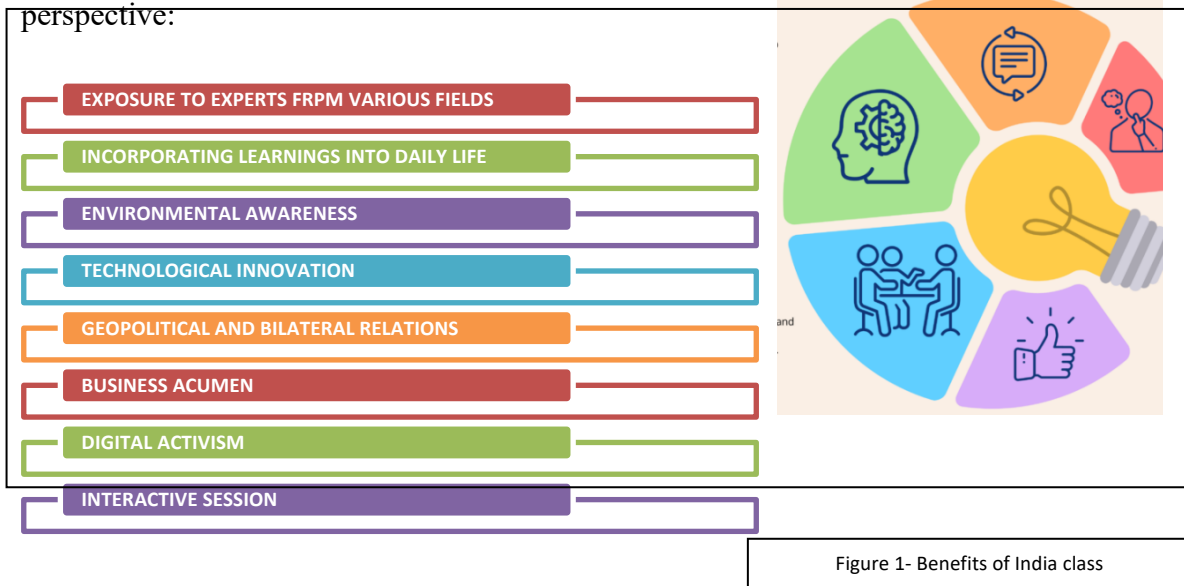
Food, particularly Indian curry, was a cultural touchpoint for many students. Some had the opportunity to taste homemade Indian food, which they found to be an accessible and friendly way to explore Indian culture. While one student was born and raised in India, others had lived in the country or had family and friends with deep connections to Indian culture and business. Almost all students had experienced some aspect of Indian culture, whether it was through food, fabric, yoga, music, or movies. Those who grew up in multicultural settings with frequent interactions with Indians generally viewed them as intelligent and technologically adept.

Overall, the course fostered a deeper appreciation and understanding of India, encouraging students to engage with Indian culture in various ways, from food and entertainment to the broader technological and cultural contributions India continues to make on the global stage.

➤ **BENEFITS OF INDIA CLASS FROM A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE**

India Class offers a unique and enriching educational experience for students by exposing them to a wide array of topics ranging from culture and technology to business and diplomacy. It fosters global awareness, enhances personal growth, and encourages students to think critically about contemporary issues, especially in the context of India-Japan relations. Here are the detailed benefits from a student

perspective:



❖ **Exposure to Experts from Various Fields**

One of the key benefits of India Class is the opportunity to interact with experts from various disciplines such as business, technology, diplomacy, and culture. This exposure broadens students' understanding of the world by offering diverse perspectives and real-world insights from professionals who excel in their fields. These interactions not only enhance subject-specific knowledge but also highlight the importance of intercultural collaboration. By learning from professionals who work in global environments, students can better appreciate how cross-cultural partnerships drive progress in business, science, technology, and international relations. For example, students might engage with a technology expert who discusses innovations in artificial intelligence, while a diplomat might share insights on geopolitical cooperation between India and Japan. Such interactions demonstrate the power of collaboration across borders and industries, offering students a more nuanced understanding of the world.

❖ **Incorporating Learning's into Daily Life**

The learning's from India Class are not just theoretical—they can be practically applied in students' day-to-day lives. One such example is the practice of yoga, a central aspect of Indian culture that promotes both physical and mental well-being. By integrating yoga into their daily routine, students can manage stress, improve concentration, and enhance their overall health. The benefits of yoga go beyond physical fitness, offering tools for mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. Additionally, students may learn

other valuable life skills, such as time management, cultural sensitivity, and strategies for holistic personal development. The focus on personal growth through everyday habits emphasizes the relevance of the course content to students' lives beyond the classroom.

#### ❖ **Environmental Awareness**

India Class often emphasizes the urgent need for environmental responsibility and sustainability. In today's world, environmental issues like climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss are global challenges that require local and international solutions. Through the course, students gain important insights into how nations like India and Japan are addressing environmental issues, as well as the role individuals can play in fostering sustainable practices. Students are encouraged to think critically about how they can contribute to environmental conservation efforts, whether through small actions like reducing waste or larger projects like advocating for clean energy policies. These classes not only make students more aware of the environmental challenges facing the world but also empower them to take part in creating solutions, fostering a sense of responsibility and global citizenship.

#### ❖ **Technological Innovation**

India Class also opens doors for students to explore technological innovations through engagement with experts in the tech industry. India is known for its growing digital economy and thriving tech sector, while Japan has long been a leader in fields like robotics, automation, and electronics. This combination of Indian and Japanese technological expertise creates fertile ground for innovation and collaboration. By learning about the latest trends in artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and renewable energy technologies, students are inspired to think creatively about how they can contribute to the field of technology. The course encourages students to explore new ideas and innovations, particularly those that address global challenges such as sustainability, healthcare, and digital transformation. This engagement fosters an entrepreneurial spirit and motivates students to become innovators and problem-solvers.

#### ❖ **Geopolitical and Bilateral Relations**

A key focus of India Class is the geopolitical relationship between India and Japan. By examining the historical and contemporary ties between these two nations, students gain a deeper understanding of international diplomacy and global politics. This is particularly relevant in the current geopolitical landscape, where India and Japan play significant roles in regional stability, economic partnerships, and strategic alliances. Understanding these relations helps students better appreciate the importance of diplomacy and international cooperation in addressing global issues such as security, trade, and development. It also provides students with insights into bilateral relations that go beyond the textbook, showing the real-world impact of political and economic partnerships on global affairs.

#### ❖ **Business Acumen**

India Class is also a platform for students to develop essential business skills and acumen. Through exposure to industry leaders, case studies, and discussions on India-Japan business relations, students learn about the dynamics of international trade, entrepreneurship, and market trends. For example, India is an emerging market with a growing middle class, while Japan is a developed economy with significant technological and financial resources. Learning how businesses from both countries collaborate and compete gives students a practical understanding of global commerce. They can gain insights into investment strategies, market entry, and supply chain management, which are valuable for students aspiring to careers in international business.

#### ❖ **Digital Activism**

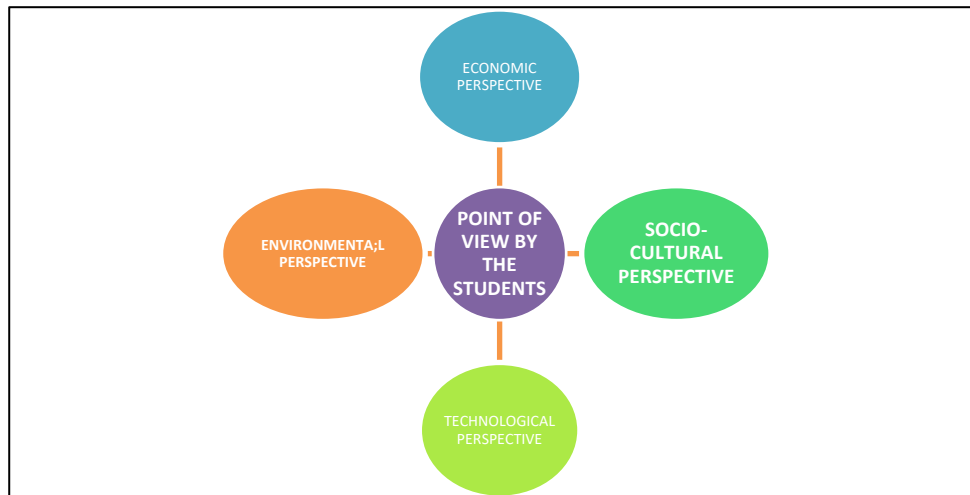
In the digital age, activism and advocacy have taken on new forms, largely driven by online platforms and digital technologies. India Class raises awareness about the role of digital activism in shaping public opinion and policy on issues like human rights, environmental protection, and social justice. Students are introduced to the ways in which digital tools, such as social media campaigns, can be leveraged to mobilize support and create social change. By understanding the role of digital activism, students are empowered to use technology responsibly and effectively to advocate for causes they care about. Whether it's raising awareness on climate change or supporting humanitarian efforts, the class provides a framework for engaging in meaningful digital advocacy.

#### ❖ **Interactive Sessions**

Finally, one of the standout features of India Class is its emphasis on interactive sessions. These sessions encourage students to participate actively in discussions, debates, and group projects. Such engagement allows students to share their own perspectives, learn from others, and collaborate on problem-solving exercises. Interactive learning helps deepen their understanding of complex issues and enhances their communication and teamwork skills. By participating in simulations, role-playing activities, and case studies, students experience a more hands-on approach to learning. These activities help them to critically analyze situations, make informed decisions, and consider the implications of various actions. Interactive sessions also provide a dynamic platform for exploring ideas, fostering creativity, and building confidence in public speaking and negotiation.

➤ **INDIA-JAPAN RELATIONS: POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES**

India and Japan share a strong partnership rooted in historical, cultural, and strategic ties. Both countries have leveraged their shared democratic values, economic interests, and regional security concerns to deepen cooperation. From an economic, socio-cultural, technological, and environmental perspective, the relationship between India and Japan holds



immense potential, though several challenges persist.

Figure 2- Point of view by the students

ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE		SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE		TECHNOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE		ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE	
POTENTIALS	CHALLENGES	POTENTIALS	CHALLENGES	POTENTIALS	CHALLENGES	POTENTIALS	CHALLENGES

Investment and infrastructure	Bureaucracy and regulatory issues	Cultural diplomacy	Language and culture barriers	Technology transfer	Innovation gap	Renewable energy collaboration	Cost of green technologies
Trade expansion	Trade imbalance	Skill development	Workforce integration	Start-up ecosystem	Intellectual property rights	Disaster management	Balancing growth with sustainability
Economic zone development				Collaborative research		Environmental technologies	

Table 1 – India-Japan potentials and challenges

### ❖ Economic Perspective

India and Japan complement each other economically. Japan, as the third-largest economy in the world, has a highly developed industrial base, advanced technologies, and significant financial resources, while India, with its large population and fast-growing economy, offers a vast market, a skilled labor force, and growth potential.

#### Potentials:

**Investment and Infrastructure:** Japan is a key partner in India’s infrastructure development. The most notable example is the collaboration on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail project, funded by Japan. Japan has been a significant source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India, focusing on sectors like automobile, electronics, and energy.

**Trade Expansion:** With the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), there’s potential for expanded trade in sectors like electronics, pharmaceuticals, and textiles. Japan is keen on diversifying its supply chains, and India could be a strategic alternative for Japanese companies, reducing dependence on other countries.

**Economic Zone Development:** Several industrial corridors, like the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, are being developed with Japanese expertise and investment, which could further accelerate India’s industrial growth.

#### Challenges:

**Bureaucracy and Regulatory Issues:** India's complex regulatory environment, bureaucratic red tape, and infrastructure bottlenecks hinder the smooth flow of Japanese investments.

**Trade Imbalance:** Trade between the two countries is still below potential, with a significant trade imbalance. Japan’s exports to India are much higher than Indian exports to Japan, which creates room for economic friction.

### ➤ Socio-Cultural Perspective

India and Japan have deep-rooted historical and cultural ties, going back to the spread of Buddhism from India to Japan. These shared cultural values continue to influence modern socio-cultural interactions.

**Potentials:**

**Cultural Diplomacy:** There is potential for enhanced people-to-people exchanges through initiatives like student exchange programs, joint cultural festivals, and collaboration in arts and entertainment. Tourism can also play a role, with India as a spiritual and cultural destination for Japanese tourists.

**Skill Development:** With Japan facing an aging population and India having a youthful workforce, there is a growing demand for skilled Indian workers in Japan. Japan's technical training programs for Indian workers, such as the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), are steps in this direction.

**Challenges:**

**Language and Cultural Barriers:** Despite the historical ties, language and cultural differences can act as a barrier to deeper socio-cultural integration. English is widely spoken in India, but Japanese language proficiency remains low, limiting people-to-people connections.

**Workforce Integration:** While India can provide skilled labor to Japan, integrating Indian workers into Japan's workforce remains a challenge due to societal norms and expectations in the Japanese workplace.

➤ **Technological Perspective**

Japan is a global leader in innovation and technology, especially in fields like robotics, electronics, and clean energy. India, with its growing tech industry and pool of software engineers, offers an exciting landscape for collaboration.

**Potentials:**

**Technology Transfer:** Japan's advanced technologies in robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation can significantly boost India's industrial capabilities, particularly in manufacturing and smart cities. The Japan-India Digital Partnership focuses on emerging technologies like AI, IoT, and cybersecurity.

**Start-up Ecosystem:** India's rapidly growing start-up ecosystem, especially in the fintech and e-commerce sectors, is attractive to Japanese venture capitalists. Japanese companies like SoftBank have invested heavily in Indian start-ups like Paytm and OYO.

**Collaborative Research:** India and Japan have initiated several collaborations in space technology and defense research. Both countries have a mutual interest in advancing cooperation in areas like 5G technology, cybersecurity, and quantum computing.

**Challenges:**

Innovation Gaps: India's innovation ecosystem, while growing, still lags behind Japan in terms of research and development capabilities. Bridging the gap between Japan's technological expertise and India's large-scale implementation remains a challenge.

Intellectual Property (IP) Rights: Concerns over intellectual property rights protection in India can deter Japanese companies from sharing sensitive technologies and innovations.

➤ **Environmental Perspective**

Both India and Japan are vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. Japan, with its advanced green technologies and expertise in disaster management, can support India's sustainable development goals.

**Potentials:**

Renewable Energy Collaboration: Japan's expertise in solar and wind energy, combined with India's ambitious goals to increase its renewable energy capacity, creates a strong synergy. Japan can assist India in achieving its energy transition goals, especially in the development of smart grids and energy-efficient technologies.

Disaster Management: Japan is a world leader in disaster management, particularly earthquake preparedness. India, which is prone to various natural disasters, can benefit from Japanese experience and technology in building resilient infrastructure.

Environmental Technologies: Collaboration in areas like waste management, water treatment, and pollution control is another area of potential. Japan's technologies in environmental conservation could help India address issues like air and water pollution.

**Challenges:**

Cost of Green Technology: While Japan's green technologies are advanced, they can be expensive to implement in India, where cost considerations are critical. Financing mechanisms need to be developed to make these technologies more accessible.

Balancing Growth and Sustainability: India's focus on rapid industrialization sometimes conflicts with environmental sustainability goals. Japan's focus on eco-friendly technologies must align with India's need for economic growth.

➤ **SHAPING THE FUTURE : ENVISIONING A VIBRANT INDIA-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP**





### ❖ Buddhism as a Bonding Philosophy in India-Japan Relations

Buddhism serves as a deep cultural and philosophical connection between India, the birthplace of Buddhism, and Japan, where it has flourished for centuries. This shared heritage creates a strong spiritual and cultural link that contributes to the bilateral relationship in several ways:

1. **Cultural Diplomacy:** Buddhism provides a foundation for cultural exchange programs, pilgrimages, and the preservation of Buddhist sites and artefacts. This fosters mutual respect and understanding between the two nations.
2. **Soft Power and Global Influence:** By promoting Buddhism as a shared cultural heritage, India and Japan can jointly enhance their soft power in the global arena. Collaborative efforts in promoting peace, non-violence, and mindfulness align with Buddhist principles, strengthening their image as advocates of global harmony.
3. **Tourism and Pilgrimage:** Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India, such as Bodh Gaya, attract Japanese tourists and spiritual seekers, enhancing people-to-people ties. Increased tourism and religious exchange deepen the emotional and cultural bond between the two countries.
4. **Philosophical Alignment:** Buddhism's principles of compassion, peace, and mutual respect align with both India's and Japan's diplomatic goals. These shared values strengthen cooperation in international forums and foster collaboration on peace building initiatives.

By embracing their Buddhist heritage, India and Japan can deepen their relationship, promoting cultural, spiritual, and diplomatic ties that resonate with both their histories and futures

➤ **BUILDING BRIDGES : STUDENT VOICES STRENGTHENING CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND PEOPLE TO PEOPLE TIES BETWEEN INDIA AND JAPAN**

As globalization continues to connect countries more closely, cultural exchanges and people-to-people interactions between India and Japan have become critical avenues for fostering mutual understanding, collaboration, and growth. From the student perspective, these interactions are particularly important because they build bridges for future generations, creating lasting bonds between two nations with distinct yet complementary cultures. Here are the ways students envision enhancing cultural exchanges and the benefits these interactions can offer.

❖ **Academic Exchange Programs**

One of the most effective ways to enhance cultural exchanges is through **student exchange programs** between universities in India and Japan. These programs give students the opportunity to immerse themselves in each other's academic environments, learn new perspectives, and appreciate different educational approaches.

- **Language and Cultural Learning:** Academic exchanges offer students the chance to learn Japanese or Hindi, along with cultural practices, philosophies, and values. By living in a different country, students can gain firsthand experience of traditions, festivals, and social customs, thereby breaking down cultural barriers.
- **Collaboration on Research and Innovation:** Students from both countries can collaborate on research projects, particularly in fields such as technology, environmental science, and social sciences. For example, a Japanese student studying robotics might work with an Indian counterpart focusing on artificial intelligence (AI) to develop innovative solutions to global challenges.
- **Scholarships and Grants:** Expanding scholarships and financial support for Indian and Japanese students will make these exchanges more accessible. This financial assistance will encourage more students to pursue higher education abroad, fostering long-term cross-cultural relationships.

❖ **Joint Cultural Festivals and Events**

Organizing joint **India-Japan cultural festivals** and events on college campuses and in cities will encourage students to experience and appreciate the richness of each other's traditions. Festivals can include **music, dance, art, and cuisine**, allowing students to participate and engage with the culture in a more interactive way.

- **Indian and Japanese Traditional Arts:** Hosting events that feature classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Odissi from India, alongside traditional Japanese performances like Kabuki or Noh theater, will enable students to explore the rich performing arts of both nations.
- **Food and Cuisine: Culinary exchanges** can be a great way to connect cultures. Indian students in Japan can showcase the diversity of Indian cuisine, while Japanese students in India can introduce the delicacies of Japanese food. Events like cooking competitions, food festivals, and culinary workshops can spark interest and dialogue.
- **Film Screenings and Art Exhibitions:** Organizing film screenings of Indian and Japanese cinema, along with joint art exhibitions, can offer students visual

representations of the unique narratives and histories of both countries. This would foster dialogue about cultural identity, traditions, and contemporary issues.

### ❖ **Technology-Driven Cultural Exchanges**

In today's digital world, technology provides numerous platforms to enhance people-to-people interactions between India and Japan. **Digital collaboration** can make cultural exchanges more accessible to a wider audience, especially for students who may not have the opportunity to travel.

- **Virtual Exchange Programs:** Universities can establish **virtual exchange programs** where students can engage in online learning environments. These programs could include joint classes, discussions, and projects that focus on cultural studies, business practices, or technology. Virtual forums can also help students discuss topics like gender roles, social equality, or environmental challenges from their respective cultural perspectives.
- **Social Media and Digital Activism:** Students today are highly engaged on social media platforms. These platforms can be used to foster cultural exchanges through campaigns, challenges, and digital events that highlight traditions, festivals, and social issues. Initiatives like "Cultural Days" on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube could encourage Indian and Japanese students to share videos, stories, and insights about their cultural experiences.
- **Cultural Apps and Online Platforms:** Developing mobile apps or online platforms that allow students from both countries to participate in **language learning, cultural activities, and virtual tours** can bring cultural exchanges to a larger audience. This would offer students a more dynamic and accessible way to engage with each other's culture.

### ❖ **Promoting Mutual Respect and Awareness through Dialogue**

Dialogues and seminars focusing on shared cultural values and societal challenges will help students better understand each other's worldviews. Students recognize that building **mutual respect** is essential for fostering deeper connections between India and Japan.

- **Cross-Cultural Workshops:** Organizing cross-cultural workshops that teach students about the history, values, and traditions of both countries is essential to dismantle stereotypes and misconceptions. For example, a workshop might focus on the role of family in Indian and Japanese cultures, comparing the similarities and differences in social structures.
- **Youth Forums and Student Debates:** Engaging in youth forums and debates on topics like globalization, cultural identity, and social responsibility helps students discuss **contemporary global issues** while understanding each other's perspectives. These forums can also provide a platform to explore topics like **geopolitics, international diplomacy, and economic cooperation** between India and Japan.
- **Cultural Ambassadors Programs:** Appointing student **cultural ambassadors** who promote awareness about the traditions, customs, and contemporary lifestyles of their home country can bridge the gap between Indian and Japanese students. These ambassadors can organize peer-led initiatives, arrange meetups, and act as cultural guides for students exploring new traditions.

## ❖ Expanding Work-Study and Internship Opportunities

Work-study programs and **internships** provide students with hands-on experience in another country's work environment, helping them to better understand the business practices, communication styles, and corporate cultures of their host country.

- **Cross-Cultural Business Internships:** Offering internships in companies that operate in both India and Japan, especially in industries such as **technology, manufacturing, and entrepreneurship**, can deepen students' understanding of bilateral business relations. Students can learn about Japanese management practices, such as Kaizen and lean manufacturing, while Japanese students gain exposure to India's fast-growing tech industry.
- **Cultural Exchange Internships:** Companies and NGOs focused on **cultural preservation, tourism, and arts** can provide internship opportunities that allow students to work on cultural projects. These internships can promote **cultural tourism**, help preserve traditional crafts, or focus on language translation efforts, contributing to deeper bilateral understanding.

## ❖ Youth-Led Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives

Youth can act as informal ambassadors of their culture through **youth-led initiatives** that promote cross-cultural diplomacy between India and Japan. Student organizations, clubs, and networks can play a pivotal role in leading such efforts.

- **Bilateral Student Associations:** Forming **India-Japan student associations** can facilitate year-round engagement, fostering stronger relationships. These associations can organize joint activities such as sports competitions, cultural fairs, and charity events that bring Indian and Japanese students together.
- **Joint Leadership Programs:** Leadership programs that focus on developing cross-cultural communication skills and **diplomatic engagement** will prepare students for future leadership roles in international relations, trade, and diplomacy. By collaborating on real-world projects, students can hone their problem-solving and negotiation skills while developing empathy for different cultural perspectives.
- **Cultural Heritage Projects:** Students can participate in or lead initiatives that focus on the preservation of both Indian and Japanese cultural heritage, such as promoting UNESCO heritage sites, traditional crafts, or indigenous knowledge systems. This will not only raise awareness about cultural preservation but also create a sense of shared responsibility.

## ➤ CONCLUSION

As we reflect on cross-cultural communication challenges in countries like India, Japan, and beyond, it's clear that both natives and foreigners can feel a sense of alienation. These challenges will only become more prominent as people increasingly live and work across borders, establishing roots in places beyond their homeland. With this in mind, it's essential to focus our efforts on fostering meaningful exchanges between people, as suggested by students. By blending this approach with existing initiatives and a spirit of innovation, we can create a powerful catalyst for change. A platform for cultural exchange and innovation will be vital, particularly for the youth of India, Japan, and beyond. This is an endeavor truly worth pursuing. The voices of students are crucial in shaping the future of cultural exchanges

between India and Japan. As global citizens, they recognize the importance of understanding and appreciating diverse cultures in an increasingly interconnected world. Whether through academic exchanges, virtual interactions, joint festivals, or leadership programs, students have the power to create meaningful connections that transcend borders. By expanding these opportunities for engagement, both countries will benefit from a generation of young people who are more empathetic, globally aware, and prepared to tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

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Thank you