

## Present ties find roots in past cultural fusion

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Within about 1,400 years of India-Japan relations, the Heisei Era (1989–2019) marked the first state visit to India by Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko in December 2013.

The Heisei Era saw internal consolidation of Japan's power and politics with progressive changes, seeing an unprecedented number of 15 prime ministers. After a lapse of 10 years, Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, whom I have coined the "father of modern Japan-India relations," visited India in August 2000 for the first time to forge a new partnership toward the dawn of the 21st century.

The roots of the Heisei Era can be traced back to the seventh century, when Emperor Shomu (701–756) conducted his politics based on Buddhist ideology. Lord Gautama Buddha's parents, birth, upbringing and the process of penance for self-realization were wholly based on Hindu philosophy, which transcends religion and spirituality into pure wisdom of ideal, humane doctrines such as "Help Ever Hurt Never" and "Love All Serve All."

The power of wisdom deeply influenced Prince Shotoku (574–622), who formed Japan's 17-Article Constitution in 604 where he included in Article 2 the wisdom of Buddha as the guiding principle of the state.

After the eighth century, Japanese interest did not remain tethered to Buddhism. It went further to encompass Sanskrit language and literature; the whole gamut of Indian thought and culture.

Through the fusion of Hindu heritage, many gods and goddesses of Sanskrit tradi-

tion reached Japan and acquired Japanese forms and names. For instance Indra, the god of heaven, became Taishakuten.

The relations between India and Japan developed from a range of complex historical, intellectual and economic conditions.

Beginning with the long journey in search for wisdom from India to Japan in the sixth century, India-Japanese relations have today expanded to cover almost all aspects of human endeavor. There is, however, much scope for further strengthening of these relations and promoting deeper understanding between the peoples of India and Japan.

The Heisei Era has been a boon of developing peace and prosperity, as well as providing the golden bridge to cross over from Heisei to the next era.

On the occasion of commemorating the 70th Republic Day of India, the Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan offers its heartiest felicitations for commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Heisei Era.