Pan-Asianism in Twentieth-Century Indian and Japanese Art: The Resilience of a Shared Artistic and Cultural Heritage

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Abstract
The artistic exchanges of the early twentieth century in India and Japan which defined the trajectory of Asian modernism were made possible due to cultural, commercial and religious crossovers of the first millennium CE and the Edo Period during which Japanese artists and artisans looked to India for inspiration. In 1902 and the ensuing decades, the interactions between intellectuals like Okakura Kakuzō and Rabindranath Tagore, and their close circle of artists, were the direct outcome of the centuries-old common aesthetic heritage of India and Japan - one that resiliently stood the test of time, despite the absence of any direct contact between the two countries. During the Meiji Restoration, as a reaction to the westernisation policies of the newly-formed imperial government it is these shared histories that evoked the possibilities of strengthening Asian solidarity in the minds of Japanese Pan-Asianists. Artists from India and Japan looked upon the cross-fertilisation of Pan-Asian ideals in art as a means to challenge the colonial and western academic aesthetics that had dominated Indian and Meiji art at the turn of the twentieth century. This paper traces the origins of modern artistic connections between the two countries which were the outcome of early twentieth-century engagements in Calcutta and which drew from the resilience of a shared artistic past, in order to make a case for their continued presence in the art of the present-day.

Keywords: Pan-Asianism, Art Syncretism, Bengal School of Art, Indian Art, Japanese Art

Introduction

The Pan-Asian exchanges in twentieth-century Indian and Japanese art arose primarily as a result of the religious and political conditions that prevailed in Japan at different times in its history - from the advent of Buddhism in the sixth century and the closed-door policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate implemented in the seventeenth century, to the 'enlightened' rule of the Meiji era (1868-1912). The origins of Pan-Asianist art can be located in the aesthetic history of Japan when Indian artistic influences reached Japanese shores either through the Buddhist art of China, or through Indian material culture brought by European traders during the Edo Period (1603-1867). It was these centuries-old exchanges and cultural connections that enabled art scholars like Okakura Kakuzō (1863-1913), to take Indo-Japanese artistic associations out of their historic past by secularising Buddhist themes and precipitating the creation of a new genre.

One of the important consequences of the Meiji Restoration was the formation of ideas about 'Asianness' and of using Asian solidarity to counter the westernisation policies of the newly-formed imperial government. As a result of the activities of Japanese Pan-Asianists, Asian identity was collaboratively transformed not only amongst countries with close cultural and language histories, but also in India and Japan, countries with an absence of direct interactions in the past. The elevated status that Japan had given to its Buddhist heritage over the centuries, influenced Japanese intellectuals like Okakura to look to India for inspiration, and initiate an artistic engagement between the two countries that had a significant impact on their aesthetic and visual culture. While Asian politicians thought in terms of a more unified geopolitical space, those like Okakura, Indian polymath Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), and their circle of artists looked upon the cross-fertilisation of Pan-Asian ideals in art as a means to challenge the western aesthetics that had dominated Indian and Meiji art at the turn of the twentieth century. During his visit to Calcutta in 1902, Okakura's ideas of a nationalist modernism within an Asian framework found fertile ground in colonial India, as it gave direction to a newly-emerging cultural nationalism amongst artists and educationists who had been trying to 're-nationalise' art and promote an 'Indian-style' of painting.

The traffic of ideas, styles, and techniques that occurred between India and Japan in the early 1900s resulted in "re-imagining the idea of Asia in richer and more complex ways" (Guha-Thakurta, 2009, p. 22) and the artistic crossovers that occurred changed the developmental trajectories of artists from both countries. This paper traces the historic origins of Pan-Asian crossovers in the art of India and Japan, and identifies examples of mutual influence amidst artworks of eminent artists, in order to demonstrate the resilience of a shared cultural past and to build a case for their continued presence in the contemporary art of the two nations.

Artistic Crossovers of the Past

An important cultural history that India shares with Japan started in the sixth century with the arrival of Buddhism and Buddhist aesthetics through China and Korea. In the early Nara Period (710-794 CE), the art of Japan was influenced by the Tang dynasty of China which in turn was inspired by the artistic styles prevalent in Northern India and Central Asia, from where Chinese monks and pilgrims returned after visiting Buddhist pilgrimage sites. The evidence of this influence can be seen in the well-rounded, sensual forms that started appearing in Nara art and in the drapery of figures which owes much to Gandhara and Gupta aesthetics. While the Japanese artistic style gradually transformed over the course of the ensuing centuries from the rounded, sensuous forms of India to the "linear and flowing

character" of China (Biswas, 2010, p. 23) the influence of Indian aesthetics had already made a mark on the art and sculpture of Japanese temples in Nara. Modern art scholarship accepts that there is a clear relationship between the style of the wall-paintings at the Golden Hall of the Hōryū-ji Temple in Nara (see Figure 1) and the frescoes of the Ajanta caves in Maharashtra in Western India, indicating that the former was inspired by Indian as opposed to Chinese art. It was from the late-Nara period and in the subsequent Heian period (794-1185 CE), that Japanese art became gradually indigenised as artists starts assimilating these early influences of India and China, and beginning to adapt and innovate in iconography, techniques, and styles.

Figure 1: Wall painting, late 7th century, Golden Hall, Hōryū-ji, Nara.
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amidhaba_paradise_Horyuji_Mural.JPG)

In the self-imposed isolation implemented by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1633 the art of the Edo period assimilated the foreign influences that had already reached Japanese shores through Portuguese missionaries and traders. These were the first westerners to reach Japan from their established colony in Goa on the western coast of India, and their arrival in 1543 had marked the beginning of the *Namban* ("southern barbarian") trade period which introduced the imagery of India to Japanese consumers through textiles (cotton, calico, and chintz), artefacts and exotic animals like Bengal tigers and peacocks. This soon reflected in the subject matter of the *Namban* art that flourished during this period, such as in Kanō Naizen's (1570-1616) *byōbu* (folding screen) entitled *Southern Barbarians Come to Trade*, which depicts a foreign port that could be Goa with several Indian elements such as elephants, a palanquin, umbrella bearers, and richly-coloured textiles. Furthermore, the Dutch East India Company which had also reached Japan by 1600 had also brought in Indian influences through the port of Dejima, where they were allowed to settle for the next two centuries. The chintz-cotton fabrics called *sarasa* (Indian calico) that they imported from India were widely coveted for their bright colours, intricate designs and exceptional craftsmanship - earning them the moniker *meibutsugire* or 'famed fabrics'. The prestige that was associated with Indian textiles resulted in an exoticising of India with the appearance of Indian motifs and prints on items of clothing in Edo paintings and silk screens such as in the seventeenth-century *Tagasode ("Whose Sleeves?")* (see Figure 2).

Indian chintz, with its jewellike colours, floral arabesques, and gold detailing had a lasting impact on Japanese art production, including that of the Kanō School which was the dominant style of painting from the late fifteenth century until the Meiji period. The school which originally drew inspiration from the black, monochromatic style of Chinese brush-painting, developed a more brightly-coloured style in the seventeenth century that was more suited for the opulence of *byōbu* such as *Southern Barbarians Come to Trade.* The elaborate

decorations that entered its visual vocabulary during this period can be attributed to the exposure of Japanese artists to the exotic colours and motifs of foreign lands such as India through the material culture of Edo-era trade.

Figure 2: *Whose Sleeves (Tagasode)*, Momoyama Period (1572-1615), late 16th century, one of two six-panel folding screens; ink, color, and gold on gilded paper. (Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Whose_Sleeves_(Tagasode).jpg)

Japanese Art Inspires the Bengal School

Unlike the unidirectional flow of cultural influences from India to Japan before the twentieth century, the quest for an Asian identity in art that originated in Meiji Japan was more bilateral in nature. It was through Okakura Kakuzō's agency that Japanese artists Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958) and Hishida Shunsō (1874-1911) visited India and interacted with artists of the Bengal School in Calcutta. Their engagements with eminent Indian artists like Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) and Nandalal Bose (1881-1966) witnessed a crossover of techniques and styles that influenced not only their own oeuvres but also those of subsequent generations of artists. Okakura's interest in India grew out of his quest for the origins of Japanese art and his desire to promote Japanese-style painting or *nihonga* at a time when the Meiji government had been encouraging artists to look to the western canon for inspiration. The Pan-Asian model that grew out of his ideologies was as much about the evolution of a new school of art based on Asian philosophies that could counteract western hegemony in the art world, as it was about building an art education system whose graduates would create an art suited to contemporary Asia.

The *Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō* (Tokyo School of Fine Arts) founded by Okakura in 1887 to promote *nihonga* produced several of Japan's finest painters including Shimomura Kanzan (1873-1930), whose 6-panel masterpiece *Yoroboshi* influenced generations of artists in Japan and India. In 1916, Rabindranath Tagore was so taken in by the painting during his visit to Japan that he commissioned Japanese Buddhist painter Arai Kanpō (1878-1945) to make a copy of it for Kala Bhavan, the art school he had founded in Santiniketan in Eastern India. Other students like Yokoyama and Hishida became important players in the Pan-Asian movement when during their visit to India in 1903 they introduced Bengali artists to *mōrōtai*, a new style of painting that would change the course of early twentieth-century Indian art. Although disparaged by Japanese art critics as being too western-influenced, the *mōrōtai* or hazy style manifested into a 'wash' technique that was used extensively by Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose in the experimentations that characterised their early works. While the technique was carried forward by other artists of the Bengal School over the ensuing decades, the first use of the 'wash' can be seen in Abanindranath's *Bharat Mata* (1905) (see Figure 3) and Nandalal's *Sati* (1907).

Figure 3: Abanindranath Tagore, *Bharat Mata*, 1910, chromolithograph pasted on paper.
(Source: Image courtesy DAG)

The most significant teaching that had a deep impact on Indian artists during Okakura's visit was his triad of aesthetic principles that governed the composition of a good painting - "tradition, originality, and nature" (Bharucha, 2009, p. 44). Another legacy of his tutelage that was demonstrated by Yokoyama and Hishida to artists of the Bengal School was the habit of daily sketching, nature study, and "practices of the remembered image" (Guha-Thakurta, 2009, p. 34) that was part of their art training in Japan which enabled them to store and reinvoke forms in their mind's eye. These techniques became an integral part of Abanindranath's teaching methods at the Government School of Art in Calcutta, and through the agency of influential students such as Nandalal they also became part of the curriculum at Kala Bhavan. Consequently, Nandalal embarked on an intimate study of Indian life and nature, making the practice of sketching a part of his artistic life by filling several sketchbooks with postcard-sized brush drawings of the local landscape and people. Throughout his career he embodied the values he had picked up from Japanese art pedagogy, of rendering art into every aspect of national life and identity, and passed these artistic philosophies and techniques on to illustrious students like Benodebehari Mukherjee (1904-1980). For Benodebehari, regular sketching and reliance on his 'inner eye' became invaluable after he lost his eyesight in 1956, and enabled him to overcome his handicap to work across multiple mediums. He met this challenge on account of the training he received at Santiniketan in the art of nature study and in the development of observational skills, all of which had antecedents in Okakura's artistic ideologies. This deep engagement with one's environment that Indian artists learnt from their Japanese counterparts could be seen in work of other students at Kala Bhavan, the foremost being Ramendranath Chakravorty (1902-1955). In 1924, after Nandalal's return from Japan with a large collection of Japanese woodblock prints, Ramendranath used woodcut process to make prints with Indian themes, going on to become an accomplished printmaker and establish the graphics department at Government School of Art, Kolkata.

In the last few decades of his artistic life, Nandalal who is considered to be one of the pioneers of modern art in India started making a conscious move towards abstraction by exploring unconventional means of representation. His interest in Japanese *Sumi-e* painting led him to use a modular, calligraphic approach to representing an object, which involved "abstracting and internalising the rhythmic quality of natural forms" (Siva Kumar, 2009, p. 107). His paintings of the 1940s and 50s follow the traditional *Sumi-e* style of using only

black ink, with colour appearing only as an intentionally placed symbol, usually a red seal. In paintings like *Buildings in the Rain* (1955) he used the *haboku* (broken brush) and *hatsuboku* (splash) techniques to render "a rainstorm through the dripping of the black Indian ink" (Inaga, 2009, p. 169) which is reminiscent of the *mōrō* paintings of Yokoyama Taikan, such as *Metempsychosis* (1923) (see Figure 4). However, throughout his experimentations with Japanese artistic styles, Nandalal always found a way to give each work the stamp of his unique style as is evident in one of his final pieces, *Landscape* (1962). Though it seems to have drawn compositional inspiration from Hishida Shunsō's *Yū no Mori* (The Forest in the Evening) (1904) and Arai Kanpō's *Jō no Ike* (Purifying Water) (1934), Nandalal has taken his work closer to abstraction in his depiction of migrating birds as a series of lines and dots on the paper. With paintings such as these, where in Nandalal's own words, he focussed on "the form and the formless, partaking of them both" (Kumamoto, 2008, p. 79) he combined Indian spirituality with Japanese techniques, paving the way for a new style of Indian painting for a modern India.

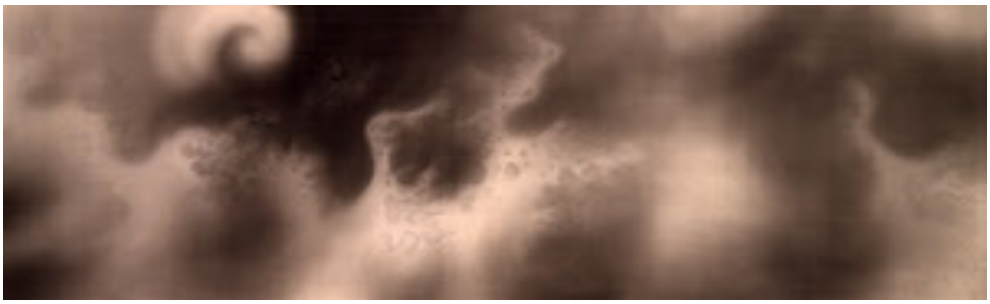

Figure 4: Yokoyama Taikan, *Metempsychosis* (section), 1923, ink on silk.
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metempsychosis_by_Yokoyama_Taikan_National_Museum_of_Modern_Art,_Tokyo).jpg)

Early Japanese Artists Drawn to India

During Yokoyama Taikan and Hishida Shunsō's visit to India they studied traditional Indian painting with its Buddhist and Hindu themes, which had a deep influence on the subject matter of their artistic oeuvre in the following years. While Abanindranath Tagore learnt Japanese brush techniques like *mōrōtai* from the visiting Japanese artists, they in turn learned the iconographic principles of Indian art from him. Hishida's *Sarasvati* (1903) and Yokoyama's *Indo Shugojin* (1903) are both paintings of Indian goddesses done in a Japanese style but with various aspects of their religious iconography clearly identifiable - such as the former's stringed instrument and the latter's garland of human skulls. Abanindranath was deeply inspired by these paintings when he painted *Bharat Mata* (1905) (see Figure 3) in which the depiction of a floating figure on water lilies was taken from Hishida's work and the four-armed depiction of Mother India was drawn from Yokoyama's rendering.

On their return to Japan, Hishida and Yokoyama "persisted in developing paintings in the Indian mode" (Wattles, 1996, p. 52) as is evident in the latter's *Ryūtō* (Floating Lanterns) (1909) considered to be one of the earliest illustrations of the Pan-Asian artistic ideology in Japanese art. With its depiction of three Indian women in saris on the banks of the Ganges, the painting was stylistically and thematically different from most of his works, and was a turning point in his career. Hishida on the other hand, returned to Japanese Buddhist painting with stronger line-work and a deeper colour palette that seems to have been inspired by Indian art particularly Mughal miniatures, which can be seen in the vivid purple, orange, and

gold colours of *Bodhisattva Kenshu* (1907). In the years following the Meiji period, *nihonga* continued to flourish while regularly incorporating Asian imagery, and it is paintings like *Ryūtō* that would inspire artists like Imamura Shiko (1880-1916) to visit India and paint Indian subject matter. Amongst the most recognisable images from the subsequent Taishō (1912-1926) era was Imamura's *Sceneries in the Tropical Land* (1914) (see Figure 5) which depicts life along the banks of the River Ganges. The work combines the spatial artistry of the horizontal Japanese hand scroll format with the stylised depiction of *Yamato-é* landscapes while including Indian imagery and colours, and is one of the finest examples of Pan-Asian syncretism in early twentieth-century art.

Figure 5: Imamura Shikō, *Sceneries in the Tropical Land* (section), 1914,
scroll painting, colour on paper.
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sceneries_in_the_Tropical_Land_
by_Imamura_Shiko_(Tokyo_National_Museum).jpg)

In 1916, amongst another group of Japanese artists who visited India to document the murals of the Ajanta caves, were Arai Kanpō and Nōsu Kōsetsu (1885-1973) who were the foremost influencers that carried forward this Pan-Asian crossover in art into the next few decades. Arai toured India extensively with Nandalal Bose making detailed sketches of his encounters with Indian sites, sceneries, and customs, including *Kodaishiki no Shokuji* (Dinner at the Tagore Family in Ancient Manner) (1917). In a year-long association as a teacher at the Bichitra Club, an art institute founded by the Tagore family in Calcutta, Arai imparted his skills in large-scale painting and printmaking to local artists while his own work began to reflect the romanticism of the Bengal School and the rich colours of traditional Indian art. The imagery of India remained with him when he returned to Japan, as is evident in the motifs and style of secular works like *Summer Breeze* (1919) and in Buddhist-themed paintings like *Portrait of Maya* (1918) in which Arai depicts the Indian Ashoka tree which never appears in Japanese art.

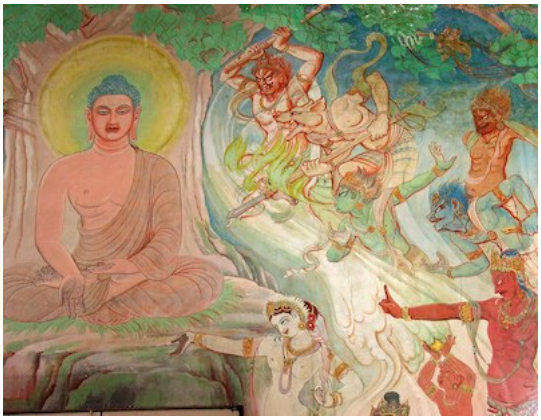

Figure 6: Nōsu Kōsetsu, *Enlightenment and Victory*, 1930s, wall mural, Mulagandhakuti Vihara, Sarnath, Bihar.
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India-5130_-_Flickr_-_archer10 _(Dennis).jpg)

The work of Nōsu on the other hand, had already reflected an interest in India under the guidance of Yokoyama Taikan at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. In early works such as *The Road to Yellow Springs* (1908) which depicts a scene from Shinto mythology, the figures are stylistically Indian although the subject matter has origins in Chinese mythology. This predilection for India helped Nōsu to commit himself whole-heartedly to the Ajanta project while interacting closely with artists of the Bengal School and he continued to produce paintings with Indian themes on his return to Japan. It was Nōsu's painting of Buddhist subject matter with a unique Indo-Japanese aesthetic that earned him the commission in the 1930s to paint the murals of the Mulagandhakuti Vihara at Sarnath for the Mahabodhi Society. In a project that took four years to complete and despite several financial challenges, Nōsu successfully combined imagery from both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist traditions to design thirty frescoes (see Figure 6). He was indebted to Rabindranath Tagore who always encouraged him to dedicate himself to the cause of Buddhist art, and Nōsu's *A Portrait of Tagore* (1932) which has a poem inscribed in Bengali by the poet laureate, is one of the most fitting examples of Pan-Asianist art.

After the artistic interactions of the early 1900s that were originated and supported by Okakura Kakuzō and Rabindranath Tagore, there was an increase in travel between colonial India and imperial Japan which opened up opportunities for artists and intellectuals to initiate such visits themselves. The most prolific of Japanese artists who depicted India in their work during this time was Japanese woodblock printmaker Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950), one of the greatest artists of the *shin-hanga* or 'new-print' movement. During his travels across the country in 1929-31, Yoshida made over thirty elaborate woodcut prints of famous landmarks of the subcontinent including the Golden Temple at Amritsar, the Taj Mahal at Agra, and the Great Stupa at Sanchi (see Figure 7), with *The Victoria Memorial* (1931) considered to be one of his finest works as it required 16 blocks and 53 impressions. Although his roots were in Japanese printmaking, he merged tradition and modernity to create a fascinating world of visual opportunities for both artists and the public. His prints are reminiscent of early twentieth-century travel posters and towards the end of his life he had been planning a series entitled *One Hundred Views of the World* which remained an unrealized dream with his death in 1950. There was also a marked change in the purpose and intent of Japanese artists coming to India with individual development driving their decision rather than the national interests of the early twentieth century. Although artists like Arai Kanpō and Nōsu Kōsetsu first came to India as part of sponsored programmes, their engagement with Indian art had a deep and

long-lasting impact on their work. It is fair to conclude therefore, that it was the visits of artists like Imamura Shikō and Yoshida Hiroshi, which were motivated by the sights, sceneries, and people of Asia, that were positive steps towards the secularisation and democratisation of Asian art in the run up to the post-war and post-independence eras.

Figure 7: Yoshida Hiroshi, *A Gate to the Stupa of Sanchi*, 1932,
colour woodblock print on paper.
(Source: Author's personal collection)

Resilience of a Shared Heritage

The 1930s and 40s were landmark decades in the political history of India and Japan with the former involved in nation-building after gaining independence from British rule and the latter in nation-reconstruction in the aftermath of the Second World War. While Indian artists were working towards creating a new school of art for an independent nation, Japanese artists who had been suppressed from individual expression during the war were experiencing the "exhilaration and confusion" (Chong et al Eds., 2012, p. 15) of moving away from local artistic developments and into the mainstream of international art. Although at first glance, the art historical trajectories of India and Japan in the post-war years appear to have moved out of Asia towards the art capitals of the world such as Paris and New York, on closer examination the after-effects of the engagements of the early 1900s are still apparent.

Figure 8: The Akino Fuku Museum, Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture.
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Akino_Fuku_museum03.jpg)

The artistic network in India that had Kala Bhavan at its centre widened after independence with its students moving across the country and becoming pathbreakers in various fields of art, many of which were influenced by Japanese aesthetics and techniques. At the same time, artists like Vasudeo Gaitonde (1924-2001) and Nasreen Mohamedi (1937-1990) who were associated with the Bombay Progressives were influenced by Japanese philosophy particularly Zen Buddhism, which reflected in the former's meditative, non-representational paintings and the latter's minimalistic practice. Zarina Hashmi (1937-2020), the Indian-American artist and printmaker, studied woodblock printing at the Yoshida family's workshop in Tokyo where she honed the skills needed to integrate Urdu calligraphy into her monochromatic prints - balancing word and image as is often done in Japanese art. The early twentieth -century artistic encounters of Japanese artists with the Bengal School continued to inspire the next generation to visit Santiniketan - from *nihonga* painter Fuku Akino (1908-2001) in the 1950s, to contemporary artist Hino Korehiko (b. 1976), more recently in 2006. Fuku was so inspired by the sceneries of India that she made fourteen trips to the country and taught at the Viswa Bharati University at Santiniketan in 1962. She moved away from Japanese imagery and painted mainly Indian themes becoming so prolific that a museum was built in her hometown of Hamamatsu dedicated to her body of work (see Figure 8). There was also a surge in interest in collecting Indian art and artefacts with artists like Hirayama Ikuo (1930-2009) famous for his Silk Road paintings owning a vast collection of Gandhara art and Kushan coinage, and those like Hatanaka Kokyo (b. 1947) who collects vintage Indian textiles for use in his paintings. In fact, one of the most significant collections of contemporary Indian art outside of India was created by the efforts of one man, businessman Fukuoka Masanori (b. 1953) who started his personal collection in 1990, shortly before setting up the Glenbarra Art Museum in Himeji in 1991 featuring the works of over sixty Indian artists.

Just as the ideologies of intellectuals such as Okakura Kakuzō and Rabindranath Tagore resulted in the sharing of stylistic techniques in painting, there were similar crossovers that occurred in other areas of art such as pottery, ceramics, textiles and architecture. These were also initiated in the first few decades of the twentieth century and it is their manifestations across mediums that needs to be considered in order to locate Pan-Asianist influences in contemporary Indian art. For instance, the *mingei* theory propounded by Japanese philosopher Yanagi Sōetsu (1889-1961) and Shōji Hamada (1894-1978) in the 1920s that celebrated the beauty of utilitarian, everyday objects, was crucial to the development of folk art, studio pottery and ceramic art in India. The celebrated Indian potter Gurcharan Singh (1897-1995) studied ceramics in Japan under Shōji and his associate, British potter Bernard Leach (1887-1979), and on his return established the Delhi Blue Art Pottery studio where he produced forms inspired by Japanese and Korean art. Singh resurrected the famous Delhi blue glaze in the 1940s (see Figure 9) with the skills that he had acquired in Japan. Just as the ceramic artist Nirmala Patwardhan (1928-2007) did decades later during her apprenticeship at Leach's studio in England where she developed her 'Nirmala Chun Blue Glaze' based on an eleventh-century Chinese technique and a deep-black *tenmoku* iron glaze. The *mingei* theory inspired generations of Indian artists, crafts activists and revivalists to bring artforms like pottery, lacquerware, and textiles on the same platform as painting and sculpture. As a result, generations of Indian artists were exposed to Japanese aesthetics and ceramic techniques, the influence of which would reflect in their work - from the bamboo-handled tea-pots of Gandhian potter Devi Prasad (1921-2011) and American-born Deborah Smith (b. 1945), to the *bonsai* and *ikebana* planters of Mumbai-based hereditary potter Brahmdeo Ram Pandit (b. 1949).

Figure 9: Delhi Blue Pottery, Andretta Artist's Village, Himachal Pradesh.
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andretta_pottery_at_Dastkar_Bazaar,_Delhi.jpg)

Another area where there was a transference in aesthetic principles between the two countries that had a lasting impact, was in the realm of architecture. At the start of the twentieth century Japanese architects like Itō Chūta (1867-1954) shared Okakura's conviction that India was more important than the West for Japanese culture, and introduced various elements of Indian architecture into his designs, such as at the Tsukiji Hongan-ji in Tokyo built in 1934 (see Figure 10). While Chūta used the classical Buddhist style to give direction to the future of Japanese architecture, Rabindranath Tagore who had been impressed by the gardens of *Sankei-en* in Yokoyama during his visit in 1916 introduced several aspects of Japanese architecture and landscape design at the Viswa Bharati University in Santiniketan. This fascination with Japanese architectural principles as well as an interest in modernist buildings also inspired spiritual leader Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973) also known as The Mother, to hire Tokyo-based Czech-architect Antonin Raymond (1888-1976) to design a dormitory for the Aurobindo Ashram at Auroville in 1937. The result was *Golconde* - India's first reinforced concrete building - the construction of which was supervised by Japanese-American architect George Nakashima (1905-90), who during his stay in India became a *yoga* practitioner and was given the name *Sundarananda* by The Mother. Nakashima's practice of *yoga* helped him surrender the artist's ego in his practice, and to work in a manner that was in harmony with nature rather than by simply destroying it for his use. He returned to India in 1964 to conduct workshops for students of the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad and the furniture designed by him using local materials like jute and Indian wood were manufactured and retailed at the institute until the 1970s, defining the future trajectory of India's furniture aesthetics.

Figure 10: Itō Chūta, Tsukiji Hongan-ji Temple, 1934, Tokyo.
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tsukiji_Hongan-ji_2018.jpg)

In the latter half of the twentieth century an important development in Indian and Japanese art that drew inspiration from traditional arts and crafts, was the evolution of an 'indigenous' modernism that was not plagued either by blind nationalism or by the imitative European modernism of the early 1900s. This was the common thread that bound the older ideologies of Okakura Kakuzō and Rabindranath Tagore, to those of revivalists like Yanagi Sōetsu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903-1988) and Gira Sarabhai (1923-2021). As artists from both countries became more visible at the international level, they continued to delve into their traditional lineage in a struggle to define their identity as modern artists. Just as Asian potters and ceramic artists resonated with Yanagi's call to return to folk tastes in the *mingei* movement of the 1920s, artists like J. Swaminathan (1928-1994) drew inspiration from tribal art and spent a lifetime promoting the traditional arts and crafts of the country. The efforts of artists like Swaminathan gave a fresh direction to India's evolving modernism by incorporating imagery of its folk art which in turn appealed to Japanese artists and collectors - rekindling artistic linkages between the two countries in the 1980s. The Mithila Museum established in Tokamachi in 1982, by Hasegawa Tokio (b. 1948) introduced the Japanese public to the Madhubani tribal art from Bihar, a state of India that is significant to many Japanese Buddhists who visit Bodh Gaya, the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. This interest in Indian arts and crafts continues to this day with a new generation of contemporary artists from Japan, like Ohkojima Maki (b. 1987) and self-taught mud-mural painter Asai Yusuke (b. 1981), who visit India regularly to participate in the 'Earth Art and Wall Art' festivals. These events have been conducted in Maharashtra, Bihar, and Ladakh since 2014 by the Wall Art Project, an Indo-Japanese initiative started by Hamao Kazunori (b. 1985) that uses local folk and tribal art to encourage tourism, build awareness, and raise funds for rural education. With similar design crossovers in 2015 between the architects of both countries at Ganjad, a tribal village in Maharashtra, who were collaborating to build sustainable housing by combining traditional Indian materials and Japanese interior design, the artistic engagements that started in the early 1900s have come full circle.

Conclusion

It may be argued that the Pan-Asianism that evolved in Indian and Japanese art in the early twentieth century drew in a multitude of inspirations. The art world of eminent artists such as Nandalal Bose, Yokoyama Taikan, and Arai Kanpō was shaped as much by the inherited aesthetic principles of traditional Japanese and Indian art with its historic linkages of past centuries, as it was by the ideologies of their mentors. The contributions of Okakura Kakuzō, Rabindranath and Abanindranath Tagore, to the national art movements of India and Japan in the first half of the twentieth century as educationists supporting traditional arts and crafts, enabled artists of the post-war and post-independence period to redefine Asian modernism by re-imagining an Asia independent of western influences. It was the synthesis of these art movements and the cross-fertilisation of their main characteristics that created a Pan-Asian model of art, formed out of the appropriation and assimilation of techniques, styles, and subject matter, that manifested across a variety of mediums in a snowballing effect that lasted decades.

Despite the adversities of a tumultuous twentieth century, the legacy of the Pan-Asian artistic ideology that was born in the early 1900s has demonstrated great resilience and has survived well - not only in the art of its first generation of exponents like Yokoyama and Abanindranath, but also in the work of their students and the next generation of Indian and Japanese artists, thereby giving a newer and more contemporary meaning to the 'idea of Asia'.

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