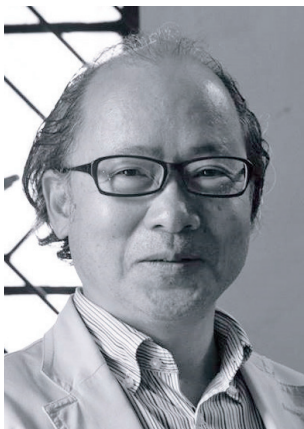




# The Development of Yokohama & Mumbai Through Sister City Exchanges



By Nobuyasu Kaneko

Yokohama, located 30 kilometers from Tokyo, is the second-largest city in Japan with a population of about 4 million people. The history of Yokohama as a metropolitan city dates back to 1859 when the port was opened after Japan ended its closed-door policy towards foreign countries, and so it is a relatively young city. Yokohama has the largest number of passenger ships docking at its port in Japan, and it also has the highest number of IT and foreign companies based in the city. Yokohama is a tourist city which offers splendid views of the port, and it is also a city which has hosted many conventions, including the final match of the 2002 FIFA World Cup and the 2010 APEC meeting. Yokohama is still in the process of growing, just as if it were a young adult.

Like human beings, cities are living creatures which are born and grow, and for growth and development exchanges with other cities are necessary. Yokohama has grown and developed through exchanges with many cities abroad, and currently has eight sister

## International Inter-City Exchanges



Yokohama city — the beautiful landscape from the sea



Mumbai, a large commercial city in India

cities and seven partner cities. It also engages in various cultural, technical and sports exchange programs with cities around the world.

In particular, the history of Yokohama's exchanges with Mumbai in India dates back over 50 years, and since their sister-city agreement was signed in 1965 various cultural exchange and economic exchange programs have taken place. This report will highlight some of the main exchanges so far.

## History of Japan-India Exchange Programs

With the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in 552, the philosophy of India was introduced and it became the foundation of Japan's moral culture. The Grand Ceremony to consecrate a newly-constructed Buddha statue was convened at Todaiji temple in 752, and Bodhisena, an Indian monk, served as the conductor of the ceremony. The Okura Research Institute of Moral Culture in Yokohama holds written records of the introduction of philosophy from India.

In 1859, Japan ended its isolationist closed-door policy towards the outside world, and the port of Yokohama opened to trade with the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Holland. With the opening of the port, many merchants from India, which at the time was under British colonial rule, came to live and work in Yokohama to do trade with various countries. Their presence and work contributed greatly to the development of Yokohama as a metropolitan city.

Yokohama was also a place that hosted exchanges between leading literary figures of Japan and India, such as that between the Nobel Prize winning Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore and Japanese scholar Tenshin Okakura who wrote about Asian culture and is widely known for his *The Book of Tea*. Tagore visited Japan several times from 1917, and Okakura in turn visited Tagore in India. Together they believed that while undergoing the Westernization of their cultures, it was also important to treasure the unique cultures of Asia, and together they called for "Asia is one".

Later, the Hindu monk and teacher Swami Vivekananda and nationalist leader Subhas Chandra Bose, both dedicated to the cause of Indian independence, came to Japan and based themselves in Yokohama. They met and interacted with many Japanese literary figures, and this became one of the foundation stones of friendship



Photos: Author



Yokohama-Mumbai Friendship 50th Anniversary Ceremony in Mumbai (above), and committee members visiting the mayor of Mumbai (below)

between Japan and India

Most recently with the beginning of the 21st century, the Indian conglomerates Tata and Wipro, as well as many Indian IT companies, have begun to base themselves in Yokohama, which now has many Indians residents who are active in business and who contribute to the culture and economic development of the city.

### Major Exchange Programs Between Yokohama & Mumbai

Yokohama signed a Sister City Agreement with Mumbai in 1965, becoming the first Japanese city to sign such an agreement with an Indian one. Some of the thinking behind this was that the two cities already had several similarities and connections. For example, like Yokohama, Mumbai also has a history of evolving from being a port town. It is a main stopping point on the major sea lane from Yokohama to Europe, and thus the two cities are connected by the sea, just like an artery.

With the signing of the Sister City Agreement, a Friendship Committee was established which consisted of citizens from Yokohama and Mumbai, and they have promoted numerous citizens' exchange activities centering on various cultural programs such as tea ceremonies, bonsai, dancing, and music. Mumbai has presented an Indian elephant to Yokohama as a gift and Yokohama has presented a Japanese-style garden to Mumbai. Citizens of both cities are now much more aware of their sister city relationship.

Many conferences have also taken place between the mayors of both cities and top officials of the local governments, who have sought to collaborate on policies that contribute to the growth of the two cities. At the local government level, an exchange program between the two cities is hosted every five years, and numerous other exchange programs among citizens have taken place over the years.

### Yokohama-Mumbai Friendship 50th Anniversary Project

2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the Sister City Agreement, and many commemorative events were held at both government and citizen level. The mayor and the municipal commissioner of Mumbai visited Yokohama in June to celebrate the anniversary, and after looking back on the many exchange programs that have taken place over the years, the two cities proposed a new student exchange program.

Meanwhile, a delegation from Yokohama which included the chairman of the Yokohama City Council and vice mayor of the Yokohama City visited Mumbai to host a Yokohama-Mumbai Friendship 50th Anniversary Ceremony. To coincide with this ceremony, a corporate mission delegation of 50 representatives from small and medium-sized companies based in Yokohama also visited Mumbai and had the opportunity to meet and exchange opinions with business associations and private companies in India.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the friendship between Yokohama and Mumbai, the Yokohama City Municipal Office opened an India Office in central Mumbai. This marked the beginning of substantive support for outbound activities from Yokohama to India and inbound activities from India to Yokohama. Members of the Yokohama-Mumbai Friendship Committee also visited the Mumbai City Hall and the India Japan Association, and participated in various exchange programs.

Other anniversary events were also held at the citizen level in



Cooperation with Clean India — environmental education at elementary schools

Yokohama. An Indian School was established in Yokohama 10 years ago for the children of Indian expatriates. As part of the 50th anniversary program, the students of the Indian School performed a drama based on the Indian epic poem *Ramayana*, and many citizens of Yokohama enjoyed this performance by both Indian and Japanese children.

To support the communities of Indians living in Japan, the Indian New Year festival Diwali is celebrated in Yokohama every year. The Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan and the Yokohama-Mumbai Friendship Committee together hosted the Diwali in Yokohama as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations, and introduced the history of Yokohama-Mumbai exchange programs. Some 80,000 citizens came to participate and enjoyed the event, which included Mumbai dances performed on stage. The essence of Japanese Yosakoi dancing and Indian Bollywood dances combined to create a “Bolly-Koi” dance, with Japanese and Indians dancing together and performing across the city.

### Further Exchanges

To improve and enhance regional development, international exchanges at a city-to-city level and at citizen level are vital to supplement national government efforts. The Discover India Club (DIC), a social organization based in Yokohama promoting exchange programs with India, is cooperating with the Discover Japan Club (DJC), a similar organization based in Delhi and Mumbai, to promote cultural exchanges and introduce the attractions of each region. The two organizations have also begun to collaborate on regional problem-solving programs, such as the Clean India campaign.

The activation of Yokohama-Mumbai exchanges has brought about innovation through the interaction and collaboration of regional resources. This has not only revitalized the two cities, but has also led to addressing regional challenges through both soft and hard measures, such as experience and technology. Promotion of such inter-city collaboration will contribute greatly to the growth of both Japan and India, and just as Okakura and Tagore had envisioned, to the larger peace and prosperity of Asia also. JS

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