Haiku Mushaira: The traditional form of Japanese poetry

The Embassy of Japan, in cooperation with the Pakistan Haiku Society and MEXT (Japanese Universities) Alumni Association of Pakistan organized Haiku Mushaira at Holiday Inn Hotel, Islamabad, on 22nd January 2004. H.E. Mr. Minoru Shibuya, Ambassador of Japan in Pakistan, was the chief guest and Mr. Itikkar Arif, Chairman Pakistan Academy of Letters, was the presiding poet of the Mushaira. 15 renowned Haiku poets from Islamabad and Rawalpindi participated. Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry that dates back to the 17th century. It is not just a form of poetry; it encompasses deep significance in its meaning. Haiku is defined as an unrhymed verse, written in 5-7-5 syllabic form, usually in three lines. Its subjects are predominantly nature and life experiences. One of the most important forms of traditional Japanese poetry, Haiku remains popular in modern Japan, and in recent years its popularity has also spread to many countries including Pakistan. Haiku's sensibility today is extremely versatile. It treasures nature as crude as well as refined, radically modern as well as traditionally conservative, passionately warm as well as distantly cold. It endows our lives with freshness and new wonder and reveals the charm and profoundness of all truly simple things.

MAAP (Japanese Universities Alumni Association) Annual Get-together 2004

The annual meeting of the MEXT (Japanese Universities) Alumni Association of Pakistan (MAAP), was held on March 25, 2004, at Marriott Hotel, Islamabad. It was attended by a large number of Japanese universities alumni from Islamabad, NWFP and Punjab. Members of JICA Alumni Association of Pakistan, officials of the Ministry of Education and journalists were also invited.

In his address on the occasion, Mr. Sultan Sikandar Khan, President of MAAP, briefly outlined the activities of the MAAP during the past year. He said that the present image of Pakistan in the international community needed to be improved, and that the students going to Japan for the MEXT scholarship could act as a bridge between...
ORIENTATION MEETING FOR MEXT SCHOLARSHIP GRANTEES FOR 2004

The MEXT (Japanese Universities), Alumni Association of Pakistan in cooperation with the Embassy of Japan, arranged an orientation meeting for the eleven grantees of Japanese government scholarships on 25 March 2004 at Marriott Hotel, Islamabad. The scholars leave for Japan every year in the first week of April. The orientation program started by a video showing life in Japan. This was followed by a comprehensive multimedia presentation regarding “living and studying in Japan” by Dr. Najam Siddiqi, an alumnus who stayed more than five years in Japan. Another scholar, Mr. Muhammad Awais, who is studying for his PhD at University of Tokyo and was on a short visit to Pakistan, also gave some valuable and up to date advice and guidance to the prospective MEXT scholars.

JAPANESE IKEBANA WORKSHOP HELD AT ISLAMABAD

The Embassy of Japan and National Horticulture Society of Pakistan in collaboration with MEXT Alumni Association organized an Ikebana (Japanese art of flower arrangement) workshop and demonstration for ladies at Islamabad from 10-22 March 2003 at the National Horticulture Society of Pakistan hall in Blue Area, Islamabad. Mrs. Asifa Ataka, instructor of Ikebana in Pakistan, was specially invited from Japan Cultural Center in Karachi to conduct the workshop/demonstration. On the final day, H.E. the Ambassador of Japan and Mr. Ijlal Haider Zaidi, President Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association, awarded certificates to the participants at Holiday Inn, Islamabad.

Farewell to Mr. Hajime Kido

The members of the MEXT Alumni Association of Pakistan (MAAP) arranged a lunch at the Islamabad Club to bid farewell to Mr. Hajime Kido, outgoing Director Press, Information & Culture, and to welcome his successor Mr. Hisao Nishimaki, who has arrived in Pakistan with his wife and two children. The President MAAP profusely praised the efforts of Mr. Kido in cementing the friendly ties between Pakistan and Japan in the field of culture. MAAP members would always remember Mr. Kido’s politeness, hard work and support to MAAP affairs. Mr. Kido reciprocated the sentiments of MAAP members and said that he was returning to Japan with fond memories of his stay in Pakistan and that he hoped he would some day revisit Pakistan and meet MAAP members. President MAAP also welcomed Mr. Nishimaki to Pakistan, and hoped that under his leadership, MAAP activities would continue to grow faster.

Happy Ryugakusei, Hen-na Gaijin and Poor Sarari Man
- Fond Memories of Stay in Japan

By Zafar Mahmood

I went to Japan in 1976 after being selected as a Monbusho Scholar while serving at U.E.T. Lahore as a young lecturer. This first travel to Japan changed into an almost life-long relationship. Aboard on that Osaka bound flight, I could not have even imagined that I would end up staying in Japan for almost quarter of a century and getting deeply involved in all aspects of life and society in Japan, including my long career with a Japanese company.

Probably the single event that totally changed the direction of my life and career was my bold decision to accept the offer from Monbusho for higher studies in Japan. I would not really make any fancy claims that my fascination with Japan, its culture or language were the reasons for choosing Japan for studies. Frankly, Japan was a totally un-familiar country. My only knowledge of Japan, was limited, in today's terminology, to 'High-Tech'. Being a student of Electrical Engineering, I knew about transistors and the Esaki Diode, invented by the famous Japanese scientist and of course the reliability of Japanese home electronic products. I also knew that Japanese people live in small wooden houses and use small wooden 'sticks' to eat rice! And some vague idea of the beautiful Mount Fuji, beautiful rice fields, flower-covered mountains and Kimono-clad women.

Almost fresh graduate from University, very ambitious and ready to face the difficulties and challenges of life, I can still recall the mixed feelings of happiness, anxiety and fear during my flight to Japan. I thought how I would tackle the Japanese language during my studies, hardly ever having seen a Japanese alphabet. It seemed like jumping into the dark sea without knowing even the basics of swimming.

Being at the Osaka Gaidai for the initial 6 months was really a picnic period. Studying basic Japanese and experiencing some interesting, fascinating exposure to Japanese culture. I was almost in love with Japan and things Japanese, visiting Kyoto shrines and temples very frequently and trying to get to know Japan as much as possible.

After the Japanese language course, were the studies at Nagoya University - the real purpose of my coming to Japan. I had to pass through the formalities of Japanese entrance examination for admission to the University and finally got admission as a regular Masters student of Electrical Engineering becoming a confirmed, genuine and happy 'Ryugakusei'.

Student life at Nagoya University was again a pleasant experience in spite of difficulties due to language and some cultural gaps. My Professor made every effort to make sure that I do not face any problems in studies and in daily life. My fellow Japanese students belonging to the same Laboratory were also always helpful both in studies and life in general. I remember how we all arranged a 'Pakistan Corner' at Nagoya University’s Annual Festival. It turned out to be highly visible and most popular corner at the festival. Then, together we participated in a rowing competition with me as the team leader! I still maintain close contact with some of them including my direct supervisor Professor Dr. Shiro Usui who is a very senior Professor at the University now. Our communication is still at 'Zafaru kun' and 'Zafa-Chan' level!

I traveled widely to various parts of Japan from North to the Southern most tip of Japan in Kyushu. I climbed Mount Fuji twice and was called 'Baka' by friends as per the Japanese saying which says that those who have not climbed Mount Fuji even once are stupid and those who climb twice are stupid too! I remember that during those days, I was never missing any single Matsuri in the area and sometimes my Japanese friends were also surprised at my up to date knowledge of coming cultural events in

Three Pakistani Alumni with Prof. Dr. Shiro Usui and his wife at Nagoya University, 1978 (2nd & 3rd from L); Dr. Khalid Rashid, 4th from L (Dean, Computer Sciences, Islamic International University, Islamabad); Mr. Zafar Mahmood, 5th from L; Dr. Arif Butt 6th from L, (Dean Chemical Engg. Panjab University, Lahore)
the area. 'Hen-na-gaijin' they would sometimes say jokingly.

I also started learning Japanese traditional bamboo musical instrument "Shakuhachi" and learnt how to read the classic music sheets written in those complicated old style Chinese music symbols and characters. Later, I also participated for several years in some annual music events as a member of an amateur Shakuhachi/Koto music group. Once even got interviewed and shown on NHK as well as a professional foreign worker in Japan!

After completing my Masters studies, I decided to get professional experience in Japanese industrial and business environment instead of taking the more conventional path of proceeding for the doctoral studies as strongly recommended and desired by my Professors. That brought me to Tokyo where I joined the large Japanese electronics and telecommunications company, NEC Corporation as an engineer in 1979. This was the start of another phase of my life in Japan totally different from the "Happy Ryugakusei" life at Nagoya University. After working in Japan for almost 20 years as a typical 'Sarari Man' (Salaried office worker), I am still working at the office of the same company in Pakistan for the last couple of years.

I started my career in NEC as a Software and System Engineer. I had a chance of working at some very large and prestigious international projects in various countries in Middle East, Africa and Asia. I gained vast technical and Project Management experience in different areas of Computerized Monitoring and Control systems, Telecommunications etc. Again I enjoyed my work as a part of international engineering teams and had a chance of traveling widely to several countries in very multi-cultural and versatile environments. The whole experience was very satisfying professionally.

At the same time, my family experienced and enjoyed different styles and aspects of life in Japan from living in a small 'Apato' with Tatami floors and very rare old style wooden 'Ofuro' to the modern 'Manshon' of present day Japan. My children started thinking that food means 'Miso Shiro and Gohan' and a feast means 'Sushi and Odon', and my wife started calling me 'Anata' (which eventually changed to 'Otosan') later) and slowly, she also gave up complaining when I returned home late at night after long 'Zangyo' at Kaisha or was away on 'Shuccho'. Other 'Okusans' and the neighbors had probably convinced her that the best husband is the one who is 'healthy but away from home' according to a Japanese saying. This was the new face of my life the Poor 'Sarari-Man'!

During this period I had an honor and chance of working on some very important and key Telecommunication Infrastructure projects in Pakistan as well. I feel proud at getting a chance of applying my technical and professional experience in Pakistan and I hope to continue such efforts in future as well.

Well, now this love affair with Japan which started over a quarter of century ago continues even today. Sweet memories and images of everything keep flashing and become a reminder of pleasant time my family and I had in Japan. And every trip back to Japan seems like a trip back to the Furusato (Home)!

Japanese University Alumni Association Annual Get-together 2004

Mr. Hajime Kido thanked the President and the members of MAAP for their support and cooperation during his stay in Pakistan. He expressed the hope that MAAP would continue to make efforts to make MAAP a viable and closely knit institution, and would continue to provide advice to prospective MEXT scholars in the future.

Mr. Hajime Kido left for Japan in April 2004 after completion of his three and a half years' tenure in Pakistan.
Japanese Calendars Exhibition 2004

The Embassy of Japan, in cooperation with the Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association, Islamabad and MEXT (Japanese Universities) Alumni Association of Pakistan organized the annual Japanese Calendars Exhibition 2004 at Aabpara Community Center, Islamabad, from 21-22 January 2004. H.E. Mr. Minoru Shibuya, Ambassador of Japan in Pakistan, inaugurated the exhibition at 4:00 p.m. The Japanese Calendars Exhibition is an annual event that has become quite popular among the citizens of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. More than 100 calendars were displayed. These calendars give an image of Japanese traditional art, gardens, scenery, costumes, people, photography, pottery, sports, automobiles, wildlife, communications and historical places, etc. Every calendar is a piece of art and the producing companies have tried their best to attract viewers through different subjects and mediums. The exhibition not only gives a picture of the socio-cultural development of Japan spread over centuries but also exhibits the aesthetic sublimity of Japanese artists. An interesting aspect of the exhibition is that most of the calendars have been produced through an eco-friendly process and printed on paper manufactured from trees of managed forests, non-tree sources like sugarcane bagasse, and recycled paper. This is in line with Japan's firm emphasis on preservation of the environment. Amazingly the non-conventional nature of the paper source has not affected the quality of the paper and brilliance of the printing. All the calendars displayed in the exhibition are distributed among the visitors through a lottery. Similar Exhibitions were held at Peshawar on 29-30 Jan 2004 and Lahore on 10-11 Feb. 2004.

2004 - Year of the Monkey

The advent of new year always brings to our mind the new year celebrations in Japan that we participated in and enjoyed during our student days. We remember with gratitude the kindness that we received from Japanese families who opened their doors to us on this occasion and various foods and special dishes that were prepared and offered to us.

According to the twelve zodiac signs, this year is the year of the wood monkey. Children born in the YEAR OF THE MONKEY are believed to be extremely clever and skillful. They are quick-witted, inquisitive and adventurous. Although some people may consider them mischievous, they are inventive and original, capable of solving difficult problems, very adaptable, and highly smart in money matters.

S.S.K.

Kobe University Prof. visit Islamabad

MAAP members welcomed Prof. Hirofumi Takata and Assoc. Prof. Keiichi Ogawa, Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies, Kobe University, who visited Islamabad on an official trip. It was their first visit to Pakistan. They appreciated the hospitality of MAAP and enjoyed Pakistani food. They invited the hosts to visit Kobe University which is one of the most famous Universities in Japan.
My Life as a Foreign Student in Japan
Muhammad Awais

Around the world, Japan is known for having a long history, highly advanced civilization, and a rich, diverse, unique and marvelous culture, modern technology, and a nation having very systematic and a complete system for various occasions. And one needs to learn a lot, to understand in depth about Japan. The major obstacle being that of the language. Although quite simple to pronounce and speak, it is difficult to master because of the codified layers of respect that is used depending on who you are speaking to. But the way the system established to get the new entrants acquainted with language is marvelous. I enjoyed the most learning Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji by highly competent teachers, and for the first time I observed in the classroom, how students learn so much without being put under too much burden; in an easy and enjoyable way. To learn any new language, listening power plays a very important role. Try to learn through your MIMIGAKUMON (mimi means ears, gakumon means to learn, so it means learning from ears). Spending time with a Japanese family is the best way to learn Japanese culture and language.

Highly changeable weather of Japanese islands, is most favorable to catch cold. "Kaze" (common cold) and "Kafun sho" (pollen allergy). So it's best to get medical insurance as early as possible because medication without insurance is very expensive.

For the first six months, I cooked or tried to cook myself and thanks to my stomach that tolerated my cooking. Then my family including a naughty son joined me. The advising room of International Center (Tokyo University) introduced us to a host family in order to support my family in the new environment, visiting each other on different occasions. Inviting your family in Japan is easy but it's a bit hard to run the show afterward. As the scholarship amount is sufficient for a single person but not for a family especially with children. It is always GIRIGIRI (on the border line). So in my opinion, family should be invited at least after one year. The students who have invited their families recently or planning to invite in the near future should apply for a child allowance (5000/month/child up to 6 years old) in the kuyakusho (ward office).

Japanese celebrate and enjoy flower-viewing (ohanami), fireworks (tanabata), hina matsuri, bon-odori, boys' festival, mothers' day, anything, they have, with full zeal and enthusiasm. Actually the culture is inspired by the changing seasons that bring spectacular views everywhere you look. Spring brings the cherry blossoms that fade into the beauty of summer with fireworks and the wonderful colors of the falling leaves in autumn. I would recommend that try to participate in all the cultural events to get the real enjoyment and firsthand knowledge.

Last year at Tanabata festival me and my wife made a wish for a daughter and our wish came true and God blessed us with a very cute daughter. We decided to give her a Pakistani and a Japanese name that is LARAIL SACHIKO AW AIS. The meaning of Laraib (Pakistani name) is "COMPLETE" and Sachiko (Japanese name) is "HAPPINESS". So the meaning of this international name is "COMPLETE HAPPINESS".

I WISH ALL FOREIGN STUDENTS A VERY HAPPY STAY IN JAPAN!
Mr. Zafar Mahmood
MSc, Nagoya University
zafar@neu-isch.com.pk

He went to Japan in 1976 as a Monbusho scholar. He completed his M.Sc. in Electrical Engineering from Nagoya University in 1979. After completing his studies at Nagoya University, he was on A.O.T.S. Technical training program at NEC Corporation, Japan from 1979 to 1981. Subsequently he joined NEC Corporation as an Engineer and served in Japan for a long period from 1981 to 1999. His professional experience with NEC is very versatile, including software development, System Engineering and Design for computerized data and control systems, Telecommunication Systems, Optical Fiber Systems, and Digital Microwave Radio Systems for Mobile Telecommunications. During his career at NEC, he widely traveled to several countries in Middle East, Asia and Africa in connection with his professional work for various projects. He also served as the Project Manager for a pioneer Optical Fiber Telecommunication Project in Pakistan.

Mr. Zafar is currently working as the General Manager at the Islamabad office of NEC Corporation. He is closely involved in various Telecommunications projects in Pakistan.

Dr. Muhammad Irshad
MSc, PhD, Tottori University
mirshad67@yahoo.com

He was born in Mansehra, NWFP. He got his MSc (Hons) degree in Soil Science from NWFP Agricultural University, Peshawar in July 1992. He was awarded Japanese Government MEXT Scholarship in 1999 and received his PhD in Bioenvironmental Science from Tottori University in 2003. He has been working as Water Management Officer in Water Management Wing of Agriculture Department, Government of NWFP since December 1990. He is presently on JSPS post-doctoral fellowship at Tottori university.

Dr. Khaliq Chaudhary
M.Sc., M. Phil. (Physics)
D. Sc. (Materials Science)
Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan.

He joined Islamia University of Bahawalpur in 1979 as lecturer in Physics. Got M. Sc. and M. Phil. Degrees in Physics, from Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad in 1979 and 1987, respectively. In 1989 was awarded Monbusho scholarship for higher studies in Japan. Joined Tokyo Institute of Technology in April, 1989. Received D.Sc. in Materials Science in July 1993 from Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Tokyo Institute of Technology and returned home to resume duties as lecturer at Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Was promoted to Assistant Professor in 1994. He then joined GIK Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology as an Associate Professor in July 2000 for one year. Was promoted to Associate Professor and Professor positions at home in 2001 and 2003 respectively. Research Interests are Plasma Processing of Materials and High-Tc Superconductivity. He has been engaged in graduate and under-graduate level teaching and research for the last 25 years. During this period he has supervised M.Sc., M. Phil. and Ph.D. level research and has taught courses in the diversified areas of Physics and Materials Science. He has also worked as principal investigator in three hi-tech projects funded by the University Grants Commission and Pakistan Science Foundation. During his stay in Japan, he has gone through a one year intensive Japanese language course and has worked on a project for the development of an atmospheric pressure plasma source. His pioneering work in this area has led to a novel technique to process materials in open air, which is now being successfully applied to thin film deposition and semiconductor wafer etching worldwide. He is member of numerous prestigious international bodies like IEEE, American Vacuum Society, American Electrochemical Society and IEEE Nuclear and Plasma Sciences Society. He is life member of PVS, PPS, PIP and Monbusho Alumni Association of Pakistan. He has participated in several international conferences in Pakistan, Japan and USA and has published 37 research papers in the refereed journals of international repute. Currently his interests include generation, characterization and applications of atmospheric pressure cold plasma.

Dr. Muhammad Imran Al-Haq, PhD
University of Tokyo
mialhaq@yahoo.com

Dr. Muhammad Imran Al-Haq proceeded to Japan in April 1998 on MEXT Scholarship at the University of Tokyo. He was Assistant Professor, Department of Food Technology, University of Arid Agriculture, Rawalpindi at that time. He received his PhD degree from University of Tokyo on 29th March 2002.

Dr. Imran is presently in Japan for a JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship in the National Food Research Institute, Tsukuba, Ibaraki prefecture, Japan from 8th April 2002 to 7th April 2004. He has many research papers to his credit, which have been published in research journals in Pakistan and Japan.

Dr. Javed Kausar
PhD, Hiroshima University
dkauadar@yahoo.com

He was granted Japanese Government MEXT scholarship in 1992, and proceeded to Japan in October 1992. He received his PhD in biological sciences from Hiroshima University in 1997.

Dr. Javed Kausar is presently working as Head, Department of Biology, Islamabad College for Boys, G-6/3, Islamabad.
ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER
This is the newsletter of the Monbukagakusho Alumni Association of Pakistan, published from Islamabad. It is intended to provide an update of the activities of the Association and to help its readers to understand the Japanese society and its traditions.

CONGRATULATIONS
Dr. M. Irshad received JSPS Postdoc Fellowship

We congratulate Dr. Muhammad Irshad, Water Management Officer, Department of Agriculture, Government of NWFP and an alumnus of Tottori University (1999 - 2003) for receiving a postdoc fellowship from the Japan Society for Promotion of Science (JSPS) from October 2003 to 2006. We hope that his travel to Japan will not only increase his research ability but also benefit Pakistani scholars in improving their knowledge about bioenvironmental science.

LIST OF MEXT SCHOLARSHIP GRANTEEES 2004

Mr. Rashid Manzoor
Veterinary Research Institute, Lahore
Hokkaido University (Veterinary Medicine)

Mr. M. Shahbaz Akhtar,
PhD Student
University of Agriculture Faisalabad
Okayama University (Soil Science)

Mr. M. Zakria
PARC, Islamabad
University of Miyazaki
(Plant Pathology/ Microbiology)

Ms. Sultana Rasheed
National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engg.
Faisalabad
University of Tokyo (Molecular Biology)

Mr. Tauseef Aized
UET, Lahore
Tokyo Institute of Technology (Mechanical Engineering)

Mr. Asad ur Rehman
GC University
Lahore
University of Tsukuba (Biotechnology)

Mr. Nadar Khan
Agricultural Sciences PARC, will proceed to Japan in October 2004
University of Tokyo

Mr. Imam Uddin Khoso
University of Sindh Jamshoro
Tohoku University (Economics/Business Administration)

Ms. Farheha Zafar Khan
Lecturer, Garrison Science Degree College, Lahore
Kyoto University (Chemistry)

Mr. Mr. Ghulam Mujtaba
Abbotabad
Kyoto University (Informatics)

Mr. M. Shahbaz Akhtar, PhD Student
University of Agriculture Faisalabad
Okayama University (Soil Science)

Mr. Shakeel Ahmed Jatoi
NARC Islamabad
University of Tsukuba (Biosystem Studies)