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Step-4

Recently I had the greatest opportunity to visit Japan along with other student members of Japanese language, not just from Pakistan but from other countries as well including Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Before coming to Japan I had some idea of its culture and people, but, it came to be a lot different than I imagined.

From the very minute I stepped in Tokyo, I could feel I was in a new world. Whether it was the kindness I received from everyone or the great efficiency of the transportation, or the architecture, I could feel i was in a new world. In just a short time I realized that my 18 months of studying Japanese had not prepared me enough for an independent life in Japan. One of the things that made this problem very easy was the kindness and helpfulness of the people there. Whenever I needed help I would just ask, and I was always treated kindly and despite not even being able to effectively communicate I was offered earnest help and advice. Also when it was time to leave everyone would come outside and say their farewell.

Another thing that stood out to me, is the Japanese standard of efficiency. Whether it is time efficiency or transportation or any other area of life, it is clear that these values are deeply engraved in Japanese people. The trains, the buses, they were always on time, not only that but the ride itself was comfortable, you can easily sleep during the ride if you feel like it.

Cleanliness is also a factor which is also taken very seriously in Japan. As someone who appreciates cleanliness and likes to help preserve our environment, I was very happy with how clean everything was in Japan.

In these few days we were arranged to see and participate in a number of programs and activities, which were very entertaining and also a great learning experience. We visited elementary school and observed the educational system, which was quite advanced but managed in a way that the students were not only able learn but it also helped them in growing with a number of skills. We also got to see the traditional Taiko drumming performance which was a breath taking experience for me, and it was performed by kids from 10 to 15 years of age, and it was very obvious how much effort and dedication had been put into it which involved years of hard work with diligent practice. We also visited Sumita Optics Inc, a manufacturer of fiber optic lenses and other similar products. It is among the few manufacturers in the world which produces from the raw material to the finished goods. it provides lenses to well known names in the world like Fujifilm, Nekon and Canon among others. Sumita Optics Inc is a very innovative company and every now and then produces a new technology in the optics field.

There was also a surprise when we came here, and it was the availability of free wireless Internet. This we weren't expecting in the start but after a day in Japan it was becoming clear to us, how advanced and automated Japan is even in the country side. We students were scheduled to stay at a Daikuin resort in Minamiaizu town in Fukushima prefecture, it is country side place with natural beauty and with a touch of modernization, like houses, resorts and roads etc. but these things in no way reduced the natural beauty of the place. Then there is Tokyo a very busy and crowded place, fast-paced, but also a very orderly and clean city. One of the most expensive cities in the world. Its an impressive array of sights, a great modern city look along with the magnificent Imperial Palace, Shrines and the popular Asakusa temples. One more thing is the Akihabara toys and electronic market, even though its not that much big a market but still, Tokyo's description with it, is incomplete, it is a place where youngsters from around the world dreams of visiting, as it is great market for Japanese anime, manga and toys.

All in all, Japan is unlike any other country in the world. Japan's got a longstanding culture which is very unique; but there are many similarities as well: kind and generous and hardworking people, family values, people striving towards perfection, diligent students, unique ways of thought, and a country with beautiful places. Its hard to find all those things together and may exist in slightly different form. That is what I find so intriguing and beautiful.

What I have learned from Japan, I am fortunate enough to take some of the values or rather habits I have acquired in Japan and I am trying to utilize them. And most of all, I will carry with me the fantastic relationship that I have developed here. I have already met so many amazing people here and my regret is that we had very little time together as the tour was very short, I hope that I get to visit Japan again soon, and for quite a longer time! Lastly I would like to Thank everyone that made this journey possible, and this time in my life will be something I will never forget.