

**HUZOOR'S TOUR OF JAPAN**

**November 2015**

**A Personal Account**

*By Abid Khan*

## **Introduction**

On 16 November 2015, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) and his Qafila (entourage) departed for an 8-day visit to Japan, where Huzoor was travelling to inaugurate the Baitul Ahad Mosque.

Apart from Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) there were 9 members of the Qafila.

There were five security staff members, Muhammad Ahmad sahib (*Ahmad bhai*), Sakhawat Bajwa sahib, Mahmood Khan sahib, Sardar Humayun sahib and Khawaja Qudoos sahib.

The office staff comprised Munir Ahmad Javed sahib (*Private Secretary*), Abdul Majid Tahir sahib (*Additional Wakil-ul-Tabshir*), Mubarak Ahmad Zafar sahib (*Additional Wakil-ul-Maal*) and me travelling on behalf of the central *Press & Media Office*.

In addition, Huzoor had also accepted the request of Nadeem Amini sahib from Bradford to join the Qafila in a private capacity and so he joined us at Heathrow Airport and remained with the Qafila for the duration of the tour. Nadeem had previously been a Qafila driver in Europe for a number of years.

### **Huzoor's concern and love and getting ready**

In the days before the tour began, Huzoor mentioned his forthcoming visit to Japan on a few occasions to me. One day he asked me if my wife Mala

would be ok and if there would be anyone to look after our son Mahid in case she needed to go to the hospital as she was nearing the end of her pregnancy. I told Huzoor what arrangements we had in mind and Huzoor did not say anything further. However the next day, Huzoor asked if I had started preparations for the tour and so it was then that I knew I should get ready.

I was immensely looking forward to the tour. I had been fortunate enough to visit Japan with Huzoor in 2013 and had seen first-hand the vast impact of Huzoor's visit.

Also, at a personal level I had really liked Japan and its people. When we had returned to London, I remember thinking it may be at least 15 or 20 years before I would have the opportunity to visit again and so to be returning just two years later was a great privilege and blessing.

During the last few days before the tour, Huzoor asked me on a few occasions if I had packed and was ready. One day, Huzoor mentioned that the weather forecast was relatively mild but that I should pack at least one sweater. Huzoor said that he knew I preferred long-sleeve sweaters but he preferred short sleeve as it was more comfortable to wear a short-sleeve sweater under his *achkan* coat.

### **Waking up and getting to the Mosque on time**

I had been told to report to *Masjid Fazl* by 8am on Monday, 16 November. I was extremely worried in case, *God forbid*, I slept in and was late and so I

set at least 10 alarms on my phone and asked Mala to do the same. I also asked a friend to call me to make sure I was awake.

Thankfully, I woke up with my first alarm in time and was up and ready in good time.

When I left home, Mahid was fast asleep which I was glad about as I did not want him to be upset at seeing me leave.

I said *salaam* to Mala and I have to admit that as I left the house I wondered if by the time I came back she would have given birth to our next child as she had just started the final month of her pregnancy. (As it turned out she did not.)

Under normal circumstances it takes between 20 to 25 minutes to get to *Masjid Fazl* from my home and so I left my house at 7.10am to give myself plenty of time to get to the Mosque.

However, there was a lot of traffic near nearby and so it took me 20 minutes just to get to the *A3* which is only a couple of miles from my house.

I admit I was panicking, worrying that I could be late to report. I was praying non-stop that the roads would clear. Thankfully, by the time I made it to *A3* the traffic speeded up and I began to breathe easily again!

I finally arrived at the Mosque at 7.50am and resolved that in future, if ever faced with similar circumstances, I would leave home much earlier!

## **Departure from Mosque and short stay at Heathrow**

Huzoor and Khala Saboohi emerged from their residence at exactly 8.15am and after a silent prayer led by Huzoor the Qafila departed from the Mosque by car and proceeded to Heathrow.

By the time we arrived at the airport it was just after 9am and Huzoor was escorted to the *Windsor Suite* where he and Khala Saboohi waited for the next hour, whilst the rest of us waited in a nearby reception area.

Ameer Sahib UK, Rafiq Hayat sahib, had come to see Huzoor off at the airport and so for the next half an hour, I talked with Ameer sahib about the terrorist attacks that had taken place in Paris a few days earlier.

We were both of the opinion that the attacks would lead to increasing anti-Islamic sentiment in Europe but were also hopeful that perhaps it would lead to more media opportunities for our *Jamaat* to spread the true teachings of Islam.

### **A long flight!**

A few minutes after 10am, the Qafila members were taken through a small separate security checking area within the *Windsor Suite*. Thereafter, we travelled in three vehicles directly to the *British Airways* plane on which Huzoor and the Qafila would be flying directly to Tokyo.

Although, I was looking forward to the tour, I was less looking forward to the 12 hour flight. After taxiing on the ground for a few minutes, the flight took off a few minutes after the scheduled 10.45am departure time.

I had hoped for an aisle seat but ended up in a window seat with Mubarak Zafar sahib next to me and someone else to his left. It meant that it was quite tricky to get out of my seat if I wished to stretch my legs or go to the bathroom. Thus throughout the flight I only once got up and prayed that I did not develop deep vein thrombosis!

As the minutes passed by I tried to engage myself with various activities. First of all I read the newspaper. We were then served a small snack consisting of pretzels and a drink. I then watched a bit of TV before we were served a lunch of *chicken teriyaki* followed by chocolate mousse. After offering *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers, I then slept for a while.

Having completed so many activities, I looked at the '*Moving Map*' on the screen thinking we must be somewhere near Japan but was left quite disappointed when I read that we still had 9 hours left till we reached our destination!

### **A full day's worth of prayers and an old memory**

Due to the fact that Japan was 9 hours ahead of the UK it so happened that we offered an entire day's five prayers on the plane. We each offered our own prayers in our seats. Initially, we offered *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers, then later *Maghreb* and *Isha* and finally *Fajr* prayer shortly before we landed.

As we flew, I recalled how on one occasion, when Huzoor returned to London from his visit to Los Angeles and Western Canada in 2013, I was fortunate to sit very close to Huzoor on the return flight which was an overnight flight.

For much of the night Huzoor remained engaged in prayer and in reading the Holy Quran. Huzoor did not watch TV although he did check the '*Moving Map*' from time to time. Huzoor also kept some reading material with him and I recall how he spent quite a bit of time reading the latest issue of the *Review of Religions*.

### **Arrival in Japan**

*Alhamdulillah* the flight continued safely and as we neared Japan I looked out of the window and saw pristine white clouds resembling huge cotton wool rolls spread for miles and miles. Interspersed between the clouds, I could see the ground and Japan's high rise buildings and cities.

The flight landed at *Haneda Airport* at exactly 7.40am (17 November) and as I came out of the plane, I saw that Huzoor and Khala Saboohi had already exited and were seated on a buggy waiting for the rest of the Qafila members. Despite the long journey, Huzoor looked extremely fresh. I, on the other hand, felt tired but also delighted to have arrived in Japan.

When we had all disembarked most of us walked ahead across the airport terminal, whilst Huzoor and Khala Saboohi, travelled on the buggy, escorted by an airport official. Though there were travellators (moving walkways), we preferred to walk normally given that we had been seated in a plane for the best part of 12 hours.

After crossing from one side of the airport to the other, we reached an immigration area where our passports were quickly stamped and then Huzoor was escorted to the entrance of the airport where the *Sadr Jamaat Japan* and *Missionary-in-charge*, Anees Nadeem sahib was waiting to receive Huzoor along with other members of the Jamaat.

There were also some Ahmadis from abroad present to receive Huzoor including Imam Ataul Mujeeb Rashed sahib, who had been a *Missionary* in Japan for a number of years before being posted to London.

### **Holding the bouquet!**

Huzoor was presented with a bouquet of flowers by a young Ahmadi boy, which Huzoor handed to Ahmad bhai. As I was the nearest to him, Ahmad bhai handed the flowers to me and told me to keep them until we reached the hotel where we would be staying.

Huzoor, Khala Saboohi and some of the Qafila members then entered a lift and upon seeing me, Khala Saboohi asked me how the flight had been. I told her I had hardly slept and so the flight had seemed to go on extremely slowly.

Seeing me hold this large bouquet of flowers, Huzoor smiled and said:

***“Having received such a large bouquet of flowers you could not sleep due to your happiness and excitement!”***

All of us in the lift laughed at Huzoor’s joke.



### **Arrival at Hotel**

From the airport we drove straight to the Hilton hotel in Odaiba, which is a commercial area within Tokyo city. Huzoor was escorted to the 12<sup>th</sup> floor where his room was. The rest of the Qafila members were also staying on the same floor and I had the honour of staying in the room next to Huzoor's room along with Ahmad bhai who was my roommate throughout the trip.

I looked out of the window and stepped onto a small balcony and observed the beautiful view of Tokyo. The only thing I did not understand was the fact that amongst the various buildings and ocean view there was also a large replica of the *Statue of Liberty*. It seemed that American influence was alive and well in Japan!

After breakfast, we all took the opportunity to rest for a couple of hours. If I am honest, when I woke up I had no idea what time it was or even what day it was! Thankfully, after showering and changing I felt more alert and ready for the afternoon ahead.

### **Visit to Meiji Shrine**

Huzoor had been invited to visit the *Meiji Shrine* in Tokyo, located in the well-known Shibuya district. The shrine is a Shinto memorial to the Emperor Meiji and his wife who ruled Japan during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Emperor Meiji was, and continues to be, extremely revered in Japan because during his reign he brought about revolutionary changes in Japan and developed the country into a world power. Thus, after his death in

1912 a shrine was built in his honour, consisting of 700,000 square metres of land in central Tokyo covered by an evergreen forest made up of 120,000 trees.

Often when world leaders visit Japan they begin their tours by visiting the Meiji shrine. Thus, in recent years the likes of the *Dalai Lama*, *President Obama*, and *Hillary Clinton* amongst others have visited the shrine.

After a 20 minute drive through Tokyo, during which we passed the famous *Tokyo Tower* and the *Rainbow Bridge*, Huzoor arrived at Meiji just after 3pm and was welcomed by a young Shinto priest dressed in traditional robes.

Huzoor was also welcomed by Dr Mike Sata, a prominent Japanese businessman, a close friend of the Jamaat who had previously met Huzoor twice in London and had given a short address at the Jalsa Salana UK in 2010.

### **Walk through forest area**

We walked for around half a mile through the beautiful forest area. The young priest acted as a guide, informing Huzoor of the various features of the Shrine.

It was an extremely beautiful walk and as we passed a display of some local flowers, Huzoor took out his phone and asked the Priest if it was permissible for him to take some photos.

Once permission was given, Huzoor took some photos with his own phone. I am sure most people would have taken photos without seeking permission but Huzoor's standard of respect is far higher and so he refrained until he had obtained permission.



We also walked past a section in which there were hundreds of large wooden barrels stacked upon one another.

The priest informed that the barrels, though empty, were actually barrels commonly used to store *sake*, which is a form of wine that is drunk very commonly in Japan. Such barrels are often displayed outside Japanese shrines as a form of decoration.

Over the next week I actually came to realise that, regrettably, alcohol plays a very prominent part in the culture and lives of the Japanese people. In fact, Huzoor also told me a Japanese person he had met had told him that the one big obstacle for Islam entering Japan was the fact that Islam did not permit drinking alcohol.

### **Huzoor's respect for a local custom**

Huzoor was then taken to a large wooden basin filled with water. It is a tradition that as a mark of respect, guests wash their hands and rinse their mouths, as a means to cleanse themselves before entering the main shrine area.



In some respects it seemed quite similar to the Islamic concept of *Wudhu*. Thus, as a mark of respect, Huzoor also washed his hands and rinsed his mouth at the basin.

It was an example of how Huzoor respects the traditions and customs of others, so long as they do not conflict with the teachings of Islam.

### **Huzoor spreading the message of *Tauheed***

Huzoor was then taken to the main part of the shrine, where he was greeted by the *Vice Chief Priest*, Shigehiro Miyazaki, who is extremely

respected throughout Japan. He described the opportunity to host Huzoor as a “*great honour and privilege*”.



The *Vice Chief Priest* showed Huzoor the main prayer area and also pointed out the forest and greenery of the shrine. He said that according to Shinto belief nature was a means of reaching God.

They associated natural elements such as water, trees or the air as being divine, to the extent that they consider such natural elements as ‘gods’ known as *kami*.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor responded by saying:

***“When observing the world’s natural beauty and scenery it reminds us of the greatness of the One God, who is the Creator of the Universe. All forms of nature are signs of His existence.”***

Thereafter, Huzoor was invited to write a message on a small piece of wood, which he hung on a wall along with the messages of other visitors to the shrine.



In his message, Huzoor again made clear the *Oneness of God* and how Allah is the source of all forms of nature, whereby he referenced *Sura Al-Nur*, Verse 36 of the Holy Quran and wrote:

***“Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.”***

Regarding Emperor Meiji, Huzoor wrote:

***“Allah reward the Emperor Meiji for his peace creating work in the country and the world.”***

### **Watching a video at Meiji**

Thereafter, Huzoor was escorted to a hall within the shrine where the *Vice Chief Priest* formally welcomed Huzoor to Japan and gave a brief introduction to the Meiji shrine.

We were shown a 30minute video which detailed the life of Emperor Meiji and the construction of the shrine and its objectives. We learned that each year around 10million people visited the shrine as a means to ‘cleanse’ or ‘purify’ themselves. The busiest period each year was *New Year’s* when over 3million people visited the shrine.



Whilst we watched the video, I heard Huzoor ask Anees sahib (*Sadr Jamaat*) if the video was being shown also on the ladies side where Khala Saboohi was seated. The fact that Huzoor sought to find out this detail illustrated yet again Huzoor’s respect for his wife and for members of Lajna in general.

*Alhamdolillah* the visit had proved extremely interesting. From the perspective of a visitor to Japan, it was fascinating to see their local culture and beliefs.

It was also amazing to see how Huzoor had manifested the *Oneness* of Allah so clearly and vehemently at a place where the concept of the divine was quite different to Islam.

### Dr Sata's kind invitation

Following the visit to the Meiji shrine, Huzoor was escorted to the very beautiful *Meiji Kinenkan*, which is a resort run by the owners of the Meiji shrine. It is often used for conferences or weddings. There, Dr Mike Sata had arranged a reception dinner in Huzoor's honour.



Huzoor was seated at the centre of a long oval table with Dr Sata to his right. I was seated a few places to the left in between Munir Javed sahib and Khawaja Qudoos sahib.

You could see how much Dr Sata respected Huzoor and the Jamaat. This was apparent from the short address he made before dinner was served. He told how he and his daughter had visited London in 2009 and Huzoor had invited them for dinner. He said that he had been particularly touched that Huzoor had arranged for *sushi* to be served out of respect for his Japanese heritage.

I remembered that dinner in London as I had also been fortunate enough to be present. It had taken place in *Guest House 41*, opposite the Fazl Mosque,



and I remember that I had been surprised that Huzoor spent around 2 hours with Dr Sata, despite being so busy.

In his welcome address Dr Sata also mentioned how he had attended the UK Jalsa Salana in 2010. He pulled out his Jalsa entry card which he had kept safe as a memento for past five years.

### **Huzoor's address at Meiji Kinenkan**

Following Dr Sata's words, Huzoor also spoke for a few minutes.



Huzoor said:

***"I remember that Dr Sata came to meet me in 2013 in Japan and now once again. Thus he follows our tradition that 'once a friend, always a friend' and I hope and pray that this friendship continues for generations to come."***

Huzoor also mentioned how in his lifetime the Promised Messiah (as) had expressed his desire that Ahmadi Muslims were able to spread true Islam in Japan.

Huzoor said that he had seen that the Japanese people were naturally good natured and so he prayed that this quality enabled them to understand and accept the true teachings of Islam.

### **A ten-course meal!**

Thereafter, over the next 90 minutes we were served a traditional Japanese meal. As I looked at the menu I was astounded to see that there were 10 courses! Most of the dishes were things I had never heard of before and so I was excited to try the different dishes.

We were served two different soups and various forms of seafood including big-eyed flathead, eel, seaweed and crab. We were also served sushi and small beef squares. Most of the dishes were very nice, though one or two were not quite to my personal taste. I particularly enjoyed the small portions of beef, tempura prawns and the sushi.

There was one dish that I was quite apprehensive to try and in any other circumstances I would probably have avoided – it was *'Chinese Soft-shell Turtle Soup'*! I had not come prepared for eating turtle!

When the dish came I stared at it for a minute. The turtle meat was moulded together into a rather large dumpling and placed in a bowl of soup.

I was not sure whether I dared try it but then I looked across to where Huzoor was seated and saw that Huzoor was eating it quite casually and easily!

When I saw this, I thought I must try it and when I did I was pleasantly surprised. It actually tasted very nice. It was slightly chewier than I would have hoped for but in terms of taste it was good and I would eat it again.

Later on, I asked Huzoor about eating turtle and Huzoor said he had no problem eating it and had actually eaten it before in Pakistan!

Huzoor enjoys seafood and unlike some people who prefer to sample only common seafood such as white fish or prawns, Huzoor is willing to try all forms.

In fact, later in the tour Huzoor told me:

***“The Japanese Ahmadi Lajna members sometimes sent local traditional dishes which they had cooked for me to try. For example, one day they sent octopus soup for me!”***

I asked Huzoor if he had managed to eat the octopus soup and whether he had enjoyed it. In response, Huzoor said:

***“Yes – I enjoy all forms of seafood!”***

### **Chopsticks & Wasabi**

We were given chopsticks as cutlery and so I and some of the security guards tried to use them. We kept practicing but without success.

On many occasions people have tried to show me how to use chopsticks but I have not had the patience and soon reverted to a fork and knife. The same was true on this occasion and after a few minutes of trying, I called the waiter and asked for western cutlery.

In between, I glanced towards Huzoor and I saw that at certain times he was using chopsticks! Certainly, it appeared Huzoor was having more success with the chopsticks than I was!

When a plate of *sushi* was served, Munir Javed sahib turned to me and said the green *wasabi* paste was extremely hot. I tried it and it was much hotter than *wasabi* that I had tasted in England. Upon hearing this conversation, Humayun sahib said the chillies Pakistanis eat are much hotter and so *wasabi* was nothing in comparison.

Qudoos sahib said that if it is so mild, you should eat the entire portion of *wasabi* in one go. Humayun sahib said “*No problem*” and suddenly placed all of the *wasabi* in his mouth.

As I watched this scene I could not stop laughing to the extent that tears of laughter rolled down from my eyes. Initially, Humayun sahib continued to maintain that the *wasabi* was not at all hot and that he was fine but I am sure the aftertaste hit him! In fact for the next few minutes I saw that every few seconds he would drink water and as soon as his glass was empty he called the waiter urgently and asked for more!

*Alhamdolillah* both the visit to the Meiji shrine and the subsequent dinner had been extremely enjoyable.

### **An example of Huzoor's humour**

That evening *Maghreb* and *Isha* prayers were offered in a meeting room in the hotel. After completing the prayers, Huzoor waited for the lift and as he did so he told a story to those of us who were present, which included his security guards, Munir Javed sahib and myself.

It so happened that Huzoor told a story about Humayun sahib which I had narrated in the diary I had written about Huzoor's tour of Holland and Germany in October.

I had written how in Germany, Humayun sahib was seated in the front of our car and that Munir Javed sahib and I were in the back.

When our driver, Nasir Amini, had asked if there was any car approaching, Humayun sahib had confidently said "No" and so Nasir pulled out thinking it was clear but then almost crashed into a huge tractor that passed.

Upon this, Humayun sahib had responded by saying "*You asked if there was a car coming but this was a tractor!*"

As he narrated this story in the presence of Humayun sahib, Huzoor was smiling and enjoying. As we entered the lift Huzoor grabbed my arm and said:

***"I don't think Humayun had enmity with you Abid but probably with  
Munir Javed!"***

We all started laughing, knowing that the security team reports to Private Secretary, Munir Javed sahib! Both Humayun sahib and Munir sahib also laughed a great deal.

It was a very affectionate moment and an example of how Huzoor keeps the spirits of those who travel with him high with his love and sense of humour.

### **A security check at the train station**

By the time we returned to our rooms, I was shattered. However, Ahmad bhai needed to do a security check of the train station at which Huzoor would be travelling from the next morning and so he asked if I wanted to accompany him. I was happy to go because it was an opportunity to see what Tokyo was like at night.

We went to the local train station and I watched as Ahmad bhai checked all of the possible options from where Huzoor and Khala Saboohi could enter the station, measured how far they would need to walk and held discussions with the local train station officials. It was only when he was satisfied with all of the arrangements that we left.

Even though it was 11pm, the train station was completely packed. Literally thousands of people, dressed in smart black suits, were getting off the trains having just arrived home from work. A local Khadim told us this was normal and that Japanese people often returned home extremely late from work and they would be back at the station at 6am the next morning.

## Walking with Huzoor at Tokyo train station

On the morning of 18 November, Huzoor and the Qafila members travelled by bullet train from Tokyo to Nagoya, where our Jamaat's headquarters are based in Japan.

We arrived at Tokyo train station at around 10.35am but our train was not until 11.27am. Whilst Khala Saboohi sat down in the waiting area, Huzoor paced back and forth inside the station. Huzoor was wearing a black *achkan* coat and looked extremely graceful. As he walked, Huzoor called me towards him and so for the next 20 minutes I was able to walk alongside him.



At one point, Huzoor noticed a group of teenage Japanese schoolchildren walking across the train station. Upon seeing them, Huzoor said that they were walking in a very calm and orderly fashion in pairs, one behind the

other. Huzoor said that they were not rushing around but walking in a good and decent way and that even the Japanese youngsters had good etiquettes.



At the back of the group were some young school girls, who followed behind the boys.

Upon seeing this, Huzoor said:

***“If they were Muslims then people would say that Muslims are discriminating against the girls by asking them to walk behind the boys! But here in Japan this is treated as very normal.”***

I mentioned how some more people had read the diary I had written about Huzoor’s tour of Holland and Germany in October. Upon this, Huzoor said:

***“In the diary you mentioned that I did not do Qasr (shortening of some of the prayers during travel) whilst I stayed in Holland, however you did not mention that I did do Qasr during our 5 day stay in Germany.”***



Huzoor was right I had forgotten to include this detail. Whilst Huzoor had not done *Qasr* in Holland, he had done in Germany and he was also doing *Qasr* in Japan.

I also mentioned to Huzoor how I had taken the interview of a person called Mirza Karim sahib in Germany but I had not realised at the time that he was a member of the family of the Promised Messiah (as).

Upon hearing this, Huzoor grabbed my arm and said:

***“I noticed that you had not mentioned he was my relative but then thought that perhaps you had omitted this detail on purpose.”***

Huzoor continued by saying:

***“Karim is my first cousin and is also the first cousin of your mother-in-law Koko.”***

I laughed as I heard from Huzoor that the person I had interviewed in Germany had actually been a close relative of my mother-in-law, Amtul Kareem Kaukub (*Koko*) and yet I had no idea who he was and he had no idea who I was!

Huzoor also asked me if I had enjoyed the 10-course meal we had eaten the evening before. I said that I had enjoyed it a great deal. Huzoor then added:

***“I told our host Dr Sata that when he next comes to London then I will have to arrange at least a 12 course dinner for him!”***

I laughed but Huzoor's comment also manifested his humility and desire to reciprocate the hospitality of his host.

### **Huzoor's respect and concern for Khala Saboohi**

At one point, Huzoor called Ahmad bhai and asked him how far the distance was to the platform. Ahmad bhai mentioned there were two routes and so Huzoor told him to measure the routes and that we would take the shortest route so that Khala Saboohi would have to walk as little as possible.

Huzoor's concern and respect for his wife is ever apparent and this was another example. It is difficult for Khala Saboohi to walk long distances due to a knee problem and so Huzoor always seeks to ensure that the distances are as short as possible.

When they walk together, Huzoor invariably slows his own pace so that he walks alongside or just behind Khala Saboohi.

Whenever, I see this I am reminded of an incident a few years ago when Mala and I were walking near *Masjid Fazl* in London.

Huzoor had seen us walking together and afterwards had said to me:

***"I saw from my window that you and Mala were walking but you were walking ahead of her, rather than walking alongside her as you should have! If she walks a bit slower then you should slow down."***

## Travel on the bullet-train

I was looking forward to sitting on the *bullet-train* once again. One of my most memorable experiences from Huzoor's Japan tour in 2013 was to experience the bullet train in the company of Huzoor.

The train arrived at exactly the scheduled time and we followed Huzoor and Khala Saboohi into *carriage number 9* at *platform 24*. The seats were in rows of two and so Ahmad bhai and I had the honour to sit in the seats directly behind where Huzoor and Khala Saboohi were seated.

After a few minutes, the Japanese ticket inspector came and she stamped Huzoor's ticket and then the tickets of the other Qafila members one by one.

Thereafter, a lady passed by with a trolley of snacks and drinks. Huzoor took a packet of salted 'mixed-nuts' and after eating some, Huzoor handed the rest for the Qafila members to enjoy. Later, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi also took some crisps and again after taking some Huzoor sent them back for the Qafila members.

During the journey, Huzoor called me towards where he was seated and I crouched down beside him. Unfortunately, where I was crouched was also the middle of the train and so every few seconds a train employee would walk past and I would move to the side so they could pass. When this happened for the third time, Huzoor told me to return to my seat as I was proving too much of an obstacle for the train staff!

As the journey came to an end, Omair Aleem sahib (*in-charge of Makhzan-e-Tasaweer*) and Munir Odeh sahib (*Director Production MTA*) sought Huzoor's permission to take a photo and video of Huzoor on the train. Huzoor granted the permission and the footage of Huzoor on the train was later played on MTA.

### **Arrival in Nagoya**

As we arrived in Nagoya just after 1pm and walked out onto the platform both Huzoor and Khala Saboohi individually put their tickets into the ticket machine and crossed as the barrier was raised.

We went straight to the *Nagoya Hilton Hotel* where Huzoor and the Qafila members would stay for the next few days. We stayed on the *24<sup>th</sup> floor* and *Alhamdulillah* both Ahmad bhai and myself again had the opportunity to stay in the room next to Huzoor's room.

### **First visit to Baitul Ahad**

Later that afternoon, Huzoor travelled to the *Baitul Ahad Mosque* which was around 20 to 25 minutes drive from the hotel. We would make this journey numerous times over the coming days as all prayers and activities such as Mulaqats were held at the Mosque. That afternoon, a guest from Malaysia stood up to offer the *Azan* before *Zuhr* and *Asr* but upon seeing this, Huzoor said:

***“Why a Malaysian? Will not a member of Japan's Jamaat offer the Azan?”***

Upon hearing this, the *Sadr Jamaat* called a young Khadim from the local Jamaat forward and he offered the *Azan*. Thus, a member of the Japan Jamaat had the honour of offering the first *Azan* at the first prayer led by *Khalifatul Masih* at Japan's first Ahmadiyya Mosque.

### **Emotions and feelings of Ahmadis**

Later that evening, Huzoor returned to the Mosque and held a session of family Mulaqats. As many Ahmadis had travelled from other countries, notably Indonesia and Malaysia, it was not just the members of the Japan Jamaat who had the opportunity to meet Huzoor but also Ahmadis from other countries.

When Huzoor meets Ahmadis in Mulaqat, I often try to meet some of the Ahmadis myself and to hear first hand their experiences.

One person I met that evening was a young Ahmadi, *Munib Ahmad Syah (21)* from Malaysia.

Speaking about his journey, Munib said:

***"I took a 6 hour flight to come here and my only purpose was to meet Huzoor. I actually had to resign from my job to come here but it does not matter because I know that due to the blessings of seeing Huzoor I will Insha'Allah get a better job when I return."***

I met a very friendly and jovial Ahmadi called *Abdul Kafi (64)* from Indonesia. Throughout our meeting he was smiling and laughing and you

could sense just how happy he was to have met Huzoor after a number of years.

Abdul Kafi sahib said:

***“Whenever I meet Huzoor my heart beats faster and I become filled with a mixture of joy and nerves. Normally, I talk non-stop but when I am in front of Huzoor it is hard to speak because I am so overawed by his grace and wisdom. Our Khalifa is extremely loving and gentle and to meet him is a great blessing of Allah because seeing him makes me understand better what Huzoor wants from me.”***

I met an Indonesian Ahmadi called *Abdul Nasir (48)* who said:

***“I have travelled 3,000km and I swear my only purpose was to meet Huzoor and to pray behind him. I have no other desire. Just a few seconds with Huzoor has changed my life. We, who live in Indonesia, feel deprived because Huzoor is unable to travel to our country and so we are all ardently praying that the situation improves so that our Khalifa can be with us.”***

### **A very emotional meeting**

With the *Grace of Allah*, I have met many Ahmadis in different countries and heard about their experiences during the past few years. However, one of the most emotional conversations I have ever had took place that evening in Nagoya when I met an Indonesian lady called *Ina Sakinah Gunawan*.

On 6 February 2011, her husband was one of three Ahmadi who were brutally martyred on the streets of Indonesia by a baying mob, whilst the police and authorities stood by and took no action.

I remember watching some video clips of those attacks and being utterly shocked at the total disregard for humanity. I remember feeling sick as I saw those horrific moments.

When I met Ina sahiba, I did not initially know that she was the wife of one of those martyrs as she did not mention it herself. However, she had remarried in the years after the 2011 attacks and so it was her new husband who told me about her past history. It was then that I asked Ina sahiba about her life with her husband *Tubaqus Chandra Mubarak Shaheed* and the period after his martyrdom.

Ina sahiba said:

***“After I got married to Mubarak shaheed, I was unable to get pregnant for a long time but Alhamdulillah, after 8 years of marriage Allah answered our prayers and I conceived. However, it was Allah’s Will that the martyrdom of my husband took place when I was 5 months pregnant. Thus my husband did not get to meet his son.”***

She then pointed to a young boy who was playing a few metres away. She said that he was her *“miracle child”* who had been born a few months after her husband’s martyrdom. She told me that when she became pregnant her husband had said to her that their child should become an Ahmadi *Missionary* and so she prayed that this wish of his will come true.

Ina sahiba then told me about her husband's martyrdom. She said:

***"As I was pregnant I asked for him to stay at home, however he told me that it was his obligation to protect the Mosque and so he went and later I found out that he had been attacked and had not survived. However, I did not feel angry or panicked – all I felt was peace. I cannot describe it but that is how I felt and how I have felt ever since."***

During our meeting, the only time Ina sahiba became emotional was when she described Huzoor's love in the aftermath of her husband's martyrdom. As tears rolled from her eyes, she said:

***"When my husband was martyred I received a message from Huzoor and he said that if I ever need anything I should let him know. Out of his immense concern for us, Huzoor also instructed the local Jamaat to arrange a house for me to stay in and for me to be given regular financial help. However when I was informed of this I told the Jamaat that I did not need a house or money and that the only thing I needed were the prayers of my beloved Khalifa. Because I have Huzoor's prayers I am so lucky and fortunate. I am constantly overwhelmed by Huzoor's love and kindness. In every aspect of my life I am content and happy."***

Ina sahiba concluded by telling me how a dream she had seen prior to her husband's martyrdom had come true. She said:

***"Two months before my husband was martyred I saw a dream in which he said to me that he preferred that the Jamaat looked after me rather***



***than him. And then after his martyrdom, Huzoor told me that the Jamaat would always look after me and my family. Alhamdulillah.”***

I also met the person Ina sahiba had married after her husband's martyrdom. His name was *Basharat Ahmad Mahmood* from *Qadian*. He told me that when he heard of the Indonesian martyrdoms he felt a desire to marry the bereaved wife of one of the martyrs. Therefore he sent a proposal at the appropriate time and after prayer Ina sahiba accepted. He spoke with great love for her martyred husband and also for her young son.

Basharat sahib said:

***“I lost my father when I was 2 years old and I always felt a sense of loss and a void. Yet, Ina's son had lost his father even before he was born. I am not his biological father but I swear I will love and care for him more than if he was my own child.”***

### **Feelings of Ahmadis**

Another person I met was *Syed Muhammad Ibrahim (24)* who was born and brought up in Japan but was now in his fifth year as a student at *Jamia Ahmadiyya Canada*. He was one of three members of Japan's Khuddam who were studying at Jamia Canada.

Later in the trip, Ibrahim became a good friend of mine and acted as a translator when I met Japanese non-Muslim guests.

About the importance of Huzoor's tour, Ibrahim said:

***“Japan is a country where many people do not believe in God or they worship false Gods and idols and so I am personally extremely grateful that Huzoor has travelled across the world to give the message of the One God directly to the Japanese people.”***

I met a Malaysian Ahmadi convert called *Musa Masran (56)*. He told me why he had come from Malaysia. He said:

***“I have travelled only to meet my spiritual leader because there was a longing in my heart to see my Khalifa again. After seeing Huzoor I feel ‘recharged’ and my faith has increased. For me there is only one word that can describe Khilafat and that is ‘love’. There is no barrier between the Khalifa and me. Our love is two-way and not one-way like with other leaders and their people.”***

### **A harmless tennis court**

By the time *Maghreb* and *Isha* had concluded it was 10pm and as Huzoor left the Mosque he noticed a tennis court adjacent to the Mosque, where two Japanese girls were practicing.

The *Sadr Jamaat* seemed a little worried that perhaps Huzoor will not like the fact that there is a tennis court next to the Mosque or consider it to be a disturbance.

Perhaps sensing this, Huzoor said:

***“What is the issue or problem? After all we have a tennis court next to Masjid Fazl in London as well!”***

### **Waqf-e-Nau class**

The next day on 19 November 2015, Huzoor held separate *Waqf-e-Nau* classes with local Ahmadi boys and girls. During the boy’s class, a young Japanese child did *Tilawat* but unfortunately, the local *Jamaat* had not arranged for anyone to read out the translation as is normal in *Waqf-e-Nau* classes.

Noticing this, Huzoor said:

***“It is essential to include the translation in the programme otherwise how will the children understand what is being recited and how will they learn?”***

I personally thought that perhaps translation could have been arranged there and then. Even if there was not a copy of the Holy Quran with translation to hand, most people had copies of the Quran on their phones or tablets or were able to access them through *Alislam.org*.

Unfortunately, there was a lack of preparation also apparent in other parts of the class. For example when quotations from the writings of the Promised Messiah (as) were presented there were a number of mistakes in the Urdu pronunciation.

Thus, at the end of the class, Huzoor addressed the organisers and said that it was important to ensure that the children were properly prepared for such classes.

Huzoor said it was not the fault of the children as they could not be expected to know all of the correct pronunciations but that it was the responsibility of the elders to teach them and prepare them properly.

### **Huzoor's total respect for the Promised Messiah (as)**

During the class, a Khadim also recited an Urdu poem which he had written about Huzoor. In the poem he had included the words '*Imam of the Era*'.

As soon as he concluded, Huzoor said that the term '*Imam of the Era*' is used to describe the Promised Messiah (as) and so this term should be changed as the poem was about *Khalifa-Waqt*. Huzoor also instructed MTA to edit out the phrase before broadcast.

This was an example of Huzoor's personal humility and total respect for the status and honour of the Promised Messiah (as). Huzoor did not want anything to be broadcast or published that could, *God forbid*, confuse or conflict with the true status of the Promised Messiah (as).

### **Meeting Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya**

After the class, I met Ihsan Rahmatullah, Japan's *Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya*. Ihsan, originally from Indonesia, had been appointed as Sadr Khuddam during Huzoor's previous tour of Japan in 2013.

Speaking about his duties and the opportunity to be close to Huzoor, Ihsan sahib said:

***“During the past couple of days I have been able to see Huzoor from a close distance. For example, I have the honour of accompanying Huzoor in the lift and on one occasion he even held my hand. At those moments I feel as though I am in an entirely different and completely spiritual world.”***

Ihsan sahib continued:

***“The first prayer I offered behind Huzoor on this tour was extremely emotional. Huzoor had only said ‘Allahu Akbar’ to start the prayer and I began to cry uncontrollably. The feeling that amongst the millions of Ahmadis in the world, I was the one stood directly behind Khalifatul Masih was indescribable.”***

### **A few moments with Huzoor**

After the two *Waqf-e-Nau* classes were completed, Huzoor called me to his office where I was able to spend some time in his company until *Namaz*.

Huzoor mentioned the *Waqf-e-Nau* classes that had just taken place. He said the boy’s class had not been of the standard expected but that the girl’s class had been better.

Speaking about his visit to the Meiji shrine and the subsequent dinner, Huzoor mentioned how he had tried to use chopsticks at the dinner.

Huzoor said Dr Sata had shown him how to use chopsticks and that he had been partially successful but had not yet mastered the art. Huzoor said if the opportunity arose again he would practice using chopsticks again. Huzoor then showed me with his fingers how a person is supposed to hold chopsticks and Huzoor's finger movements seemed very professional!

Huzoor also mentioned how despite the fact we had been in Japan for the best part of three days, he had not yet been able to rest properly. I mentioned how I had slept after *Fajr* for a few hours earlier in the day. In response, Huzoor said that he had spent the morning preparing his Friday Sermon.

### **Inauguration of Baitul Ahad Mosque**

On 20 November 2015, Huzoor inaugurated the *Baitul Ahad Mosque* in Nagoya with his *Friday Sermon*. The opening of the Mosque was extremely historic as it was not only the Jamaat's first Mosque in Japan but also the first Ahmadiyya Mosque in North East Asia.

We left our hotel at 12.30pm and arrived at the Mosque at exactly 1pm.

After unveiling a plaque to commemorate the opening of the Mosque, Huzoor delivered the *Friday Sermon* during which he said that the physical construction of Mosques were meaningless unless they were filled with sincere worshippers.

In his sermon, Huzoor also condemned the terrorist attacks that had taken place in Paris a week before.

Huzoor said:

***“Regrettably, the Muslims of today are becoming ever more extreme to the extent that some claim to serve Islam through the brutal and merciless killings of innocent people. The recent terrorist attacks in Paris can only be described as despicable and barbaric.”***



Addressing the Ahmadis living in Japan, Huzoor said most of them had come from Pakistan where the Jamaat was persecuted but they were now able to live with religious freedom in Japan.

Huzoor said:

***“You should reflect upon the blessings God has manifested upon you as a result of living here. There are no restrictions upon your worship. You are not imprisoned for referring to your Mosques as ‘Mosques’. Rather than resulting in a prison sentence, your salutations of ‘peace’ are appreciated and welcomed in this nation.”***

## **Interview with Chukyo TV**

Immediately after the *Friday Sermon* and prayers were concluded, Huzoor held a media interview with *Chukyo TV (CTV)*, a Nagoya based TV channel that has been broadcasting since 1969.

Normally, where translations are needed it is enough for the interview to take place in two different languages – for example Huzoor may speak in English or Urdu and his answer is translated into the local language and vice versa.

However, on this occasion three languages were used and this was not ideal as the more languages present naturally the greater risk that something may be lost in translation and invariably more of Huzoor's precious time is used.

The reason it was conducted in three languages was that the interviewer had requested Huzoor to speak in English, whilst she asked questions in Japanese. However, the person translating did not feel comfortable speaking in English and so he translated the questions from Japanese into Urdu. Thus questions would be asked in Japanese, the translator would then translate them into Urdu and Huzoor would answer in English.

I had asked about the translation in advance of the interview and had been given the impression that it would be a direct translation from one language to another and so I was surprised when the translator used a third language. Anyway, Huzoor remained entirely patient and answered each of the questions extremely eloquently.



Upon being asked about the new Mosque, Huzoor reiterated the message he had given during his *Friday Sermon* that it was not enough to only construct a Mosque but it was essential that the people who entered the Mosque were pious.



Huzoor was also asked his views about the terrorist group known as *ISIS* or more recently as *Daesh*. In response, Huzoor said:

***“Groups like Daesh or other terrorist groups are acting completely against the teachings of Islam because Islam invokes only peace and love rather than brutality and injustice. All such terrorist groups are achieving is to defame the name of Islam.”***

The journalist mentioned how she had read Huzoor’s address at the *Peace Symposium 2014* in London and had been very impressed by Huzoor’s message that it was necessary to cut the supply lines and funding of *ISIS*.

In response, Huzoor said that this was a message he had given on many subsequent occasions also. He asked why it was that world powers and

international organisations had the ability to place sanctions on major nations and were able to restrict trade yet were seemingly unable to stop the funding of terrorist groups such as *ISIS*.

When Huzoor first spoke about the funding of *ISIS* no one else had raised this point but in the past year the issue has come very much to the fore. Now many governments, military representatives and analysts have come to the conclusion that cutting the supply lines and funding is the best way to stop *ISIS*.

### **Waiting only for lunch!**

After listening to Huzoor's answer the journalist said that she had better concluded her interview as the people seated behind were now waiting for the opportunity to interview Huzoor.

The people seated behind were the likes of me, Majid sahib and a few other of the Qafila members. I think the journalist thought that we were also members of the press and were waiting to interview Huzoor!

Huzoor responded by saying:

***“They are not waiting to interview me, they are my staff members – the only thing they are waiting for is their lunch!”***

We all laughed and when Huzoor's comment to the journalist was translated she also began to laugh a lot and enjoyed Huzoor's joke.

## Interview with *Shingetsu News Agency*

After lunch, Huzoor returned to the Mosque and held another interview with an American journalist called Michael Penn. He had moved to Japan around 20 years previously and had set up the *Shingetsu News Agency*. The agency regularly provided news to various national and international media outlets such as *Al-Jazeera*.



During the interview, which was conducted in English, Huzoor was asked about the future prospects of the Jamaat in Japan, given that currently the number of Ahmadi Muslims in Japan numbered just a few hundred.

In response, Huzoor spoke about how when the Promised Messiah (as) first made his claim he was a lone voice living in an extremely remote village in India.

However, at the time of his death hundreds of thousands of people had accepted Ahmadiyyat and today there were millions of Ahmadis in more than 200 countries.

Huzoor continued by saying:

***“We are a missionary organisation and so our task is to preach the true teachings of Islam. I have seen that the Japanese people are quite pious and have good etiquettes and so I am not pessimistic. I believe that one day many Japanese people will accept Islam.”***

The journalist also asked what Huzoor had meant when he had referred to Ahmadiyyat as ‘*living Islam*’ during his *Friday Sermon* earlier in the day. In response, Huzoor explained that the majority of non-Ahmadi Muslims believed that the process of divine revelation had come to an end but that according to Ahmadi beliefs it was impossible for the *Attributes* of Allah to be restricted or suspended.

Thus Ahmadis believed that Allah still reveals Himself through “*wahi*” (revelation) and that this was a sign of a living religion. He said that if it was accepted that divine revelation had come to an end it would signal the death knell for religion itself.

As the interview concluded, Huzoor called me and said that he felt this interview had been better than the interview earlier in the day because there was no need for translation.

Originally there had been no official engagements scheduled apart from the media interview that evening. However, the Jamaat had sought Huzoor’s permission to add a session of *Mulaqats* with Ahmadis who had travelled to Japan from abroad, which Huzoor had permitted.

Thus as I walked out, Huzoor said:

***“Even when the diary is clear they arrange for Mulaqats!”***

I thought to myself how Huzoor was so generous that even on those rare occasions where there may be a little free time, Huzoor would invariably accept a request to fill that time with official Jamaat activities or Mulaqats.

### **Feedback of the journalist**

Based on his visit to the Mosque that day and his interview with Huzoor the journalist Michael Penn authored a column which was later published by *Al-Jazeera*.

A few days after publication he wrote that the column had proved to be the most popular article on *Al-Jazeera's* international website that week and had been the most successful article he had ever written as a journalist. He also wrote how the *Japan Times* had picked up a quote of Huzoor he had published in which Huzoor had said:

***“This (the opening of the Mosque) is a milestone in our progress. If this Mosque is preaching the message of love, peace and harmony then naturally people will be attracted to it.”***

Based on this, Michael Penn wrote that he would now need to produce a video report for the *Japan Times* which is Japan's biggest English language newspaper.

I also spoke to Michael Penn later that evening and he told me:

***“It was extremely interesting to hear your Khalifa speak about your belief that divine revelation continues. Based on all my research I believe that this view is entirely unique and distinguishes the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community from all other Muslims.”***

### **Emotions of Ahmadis**

That evening I met some Ahmadi Muslims who had the opportunity to meet Huzoor that evening.

One person was *Sidi Umar* from Indonesia who was a *Regional Ameer* of the *Jamaat*. He told that in his region the local Ahmadis were facing many difficulties due to the heavy influence of Mullahs and extremists.

Sidi Umar sahib said:

***“Although there is danger, our faith is firm. We are ready to bear all hardships and face all risks for the sake of our faith. All of us in Indonesia firmly believe that with Huzoor’s prayers we will remain safe and well, Insha’Allah.”***

I met an elderly Indonesian lady called *Asrida* who said:

***“The only way to describe those moments with Huzoor is as ‘life-changing’ because Huzoor’s prayers have the power to change my life***

*forever. I just feel sad that we live so far from Huzoor and only see him very occasionally – if only I could meet him every day!”*

She added:

*“For me the most important way of staying connected to Huzoor is to listen to his Friday Sermon each week. If I do not listen to it I feel extremely anxious and as though something is missing from my life but that anxiety evaporates as soon as I hear Huzoor’s blessed words because then I feel as though I have been guided to the right path.”*

I also met *Syed Wadood Janud (25)* who had travelled from Australia. He was a young *Missionary* who had qualified from *Jamia Ahmadiyya Canada* and was now posted in Australia where he had been raised. His trip to Japan would prove personally memorable for him as later in the tour, Huzoor announced his *Nikah* (marriage).

Speaking about what makes our Jamaat unique, Wadood said:

*“I have always felt that the universal brotherhood within our Jamaat is what distinguishes us. If I go to any part of the world where there are Ahmadis then I do not need any family members to get by because those Ahmadis are my family. It does not matter if we do not speak the same language because we all speak the language of Ahmadiyyat and the reason we are so united is Khilafat.”*

Wadood also spoke of his own experiences of Huzoor’s wisdom. He said:

*“In 2014 our National Amir in Australia, Mahmood Bengali sahib passed away. He was like a father figure for the entire Australian Jamaat and so his passing was a cause of great sadness. In his place, Huzoor appointed Inam-ul-Haq Kauser sahib, who had been in the United States for many years. Just like Mahmood sahib, Kauser sahib is also a very loving and a fatherly personality and so our Jamaat was able to move on in the best way. This one incident showed me how wise Huzoor’s decisions always are and his foresight was a means of reaffirming my own faith.”*

### **The Jhelum attack**

During the night of 20-21 November both Ahmad bhai and I were in bed asleep by midnight. However, throughout the night Ahmad bhai was receiving phone calls and I too kept receiving messages on *Whatsapp* from family members about an incident in Jhelum, Pakistan.

An anti-Ahmadi mob had gathered to attack the chipboard factory which was owned by the children of the late Sahibzada Mirza Munir Ahmad sahib and was now managed by his son Mirza Naseer Tariq sahib and grandson Mirza Ali Ahmad sahib.

As the hours passed it became clear that it had been an extremely serious attack and that many Ahmadi families who lived on or near the site were in danger. The mob had torched the entire chipboard factory and the homes of Mirza Naseer Tariq sahib, who is the *Ameer Jamaat* in District Jhelum, and Mirza Ali sahib.



My cousin Humda is the wife of Mirza Ali sahib and so she sent me updates and photos and videos of what was happening. She and other family members were anxious that Huzoor be informed and his prayers could be sought. Thus at *Fajr*, as Huzoor came out of his residence Ahmad bhai and Munir Javed sahib informed Huzoor about the incident but Huzoor said he was already aware having received updates during the night.

I saw that Huzoor was completely calm and his faith and total trust in Allah was manifest once again, just as it was when there was a fire at *Baitul Futuh* a few months earlier and on every other occasion where our *Jamaat* has faced any trial or difficulty.

Later in the day, Huzoor asked me what the update was from Jhelum and I informed how it appeared that Mirza Naseer Tariq sahib was under a form of house arrest.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“The main thing is that no Ahmadi was injured or hurt, Alhamdolillah. It does not matter that there was damage to the property as these things are not important. And if the police falsely lodge an FIR (First Information Report) against us what difference does it make? It is just a piece of paper.”***

Huzoor’s demeanour was again entirely calm and a perfect manifestation of patience. He was only thankful that no Ahmadi had been hurt.

Throughout the day, I myself had felt sad thinking of the attack but after observing Huzoor's reaction I realised that it was a day to be thankful to Allah rather than regretful.

### **Getting lost**

On the evening of 21 November 2015 the Japan Jamaat hosted a special reception to mark the inauguration of the Baitul Ahad Mosque. It proved an extremely blessed event in which Huzoor delivered the pure and blessed teachings of Islam to the Japanese people in the most wonderful manner. *Alhamdolillah.*

Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) departed from our hotel at 4.10pm and drove straight to Baitul Ahad. As Huzoor walked to his car wearing a black *achkan* coat and holding a black file in his hand he looked extremely graceful and filled with *noor*.

I was seated in a car, along with Mubarak Zafar sahib and Nadeem Amini. Our regular driver, Maqbool sahib, was otherwise engaged that evening and so another Ahmadi who was from Burma had been appointed to drive our car.

At the first junction he got left behind as the other cars passed through a set of traffic lights before it had turned red. We assumed we would soon catch up, however after about 15 or 20 minutes it became apparent that we were not travelling on the normal route to the Mosque.

Upon asking the driver, we realised that he was completely lost and had no idea where the Mosque was! He said he had never driven to the Mosque before and did not even know the address!

I have to admit I was extremely agitated and frustrated because before the event Huzoor was scheduled to have some meetings with local dignitaries, guests and media and it was clear we would not now arrive on time.

In some of the tours I had been on in the past there had been occasions where one car or a couple of cars of the *Qafila* fell behind for a period of time. However those were normally instances that could not be avoided, whereby one of the cars got stuck in traffic. However, on this occasion we were lost because the driver did not have any idea of where to go! It was not his fault but I was upset with the local administration for asking him to drive without even telling him the address.

Upon realising our driver was lost we then searched for the Mosque address on our phones and then Nadeem put the address in *Google Maps* and he then navigated for the rest of the journey.

### **Huzoor's meetings with guests**

We arrived after 5pm and I went straight to Huzoor's office where Huzoor was holding meetings with local dignitaries having arrived at 4.30pm.

We had missed the first meeting, which had been with a Japanese teacher and her students and joined in the middle of the second meeting which was with a Japanese academic, Mrs Hiroko Minesaki who had been researching

the *Jamaat* for a number of years and her uncle, who was a retired politician.

During the meeting the guests spoke of their continued appreciation at the *Jamaat's* efforts to serve the people of Japan in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake. In response, Huzoor said:

***“To serve others at a time of need is essential and a part of Islamic teaching and so the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community always seeks to help others whenever and wherever it can.”***

The researcher, *Hiroko*, had met Huzoor in 2013, however on this occasion she had brought her newly born infant child with her. She held him in a baby-carrier sling and during the meeting she informed Huzoor how she had delivered the baby in the car on the way to the hospital!

Upon hearing this, Huzoor looked at the baby and smiled before saying:

***“It seems he was very much anxious to see the world!”***

### **Interview with Chugai Nippou**

Later, Huzoor was interviewed by the Japanese religious newspaper *Chugai Nippou* and, as in earlier interviews, Huzoor was asked about his views on the recent Paris terrorist attacks. Huzoor said:

***“The Paris attack was a huge cruelty and the entire world should condemn it in the strongest terms and as I have said on so many***

*occasions such attacks are completely against the true teachings of Islam. I would urge the authorities and police to remain extremely vigilant to the threat of terrorism and extremism.”*

### **Huzoor’s definition of peace**

Also present in the room was a Christian Priest, Reverend Yoshia. The Priest happened to wear an Indonesian *topi* (hat), the type that many Ahmadis also wear.

Upon seeing this, Huzoor said:

***“You look like an Ahmadi Priest!”***

Thereafter, Reverend Yoshia asked Huzoor what his ‘definition’ of peace was.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“According to the teachings of Islam the definition of peace is that whatever you like and desire for yourself you should also like and desire for others. It means that you do not give priority to asserting your own rights but that you give priority to discharging the rights of others. That is true peace.”***

Later on I spoke to the Priest and he told me that he had never heard such a beautiful definition of peace in his entire life and that Huzoor’s definition had completely satisfied his heart.

## Special Reception marking Inauguration of Baitul Ahad

The formal reception began at 5.30pm and following the translation of the Holy Quran various guests and dignitaries addressed the audience, which included more than 100 non-Muslim guests. The guest speakers all welcomed Huzoor to Japan and offered congratulations on the opening of the Mosque.



Thereafter, Huzoor delivered the keynote address during which Huzoor said that the objectives of Ahmadi Mosques mirrored those objectives with which the *Kaabah* was built.

Huzoor said:

***“We seek to spread Islam not by force or compulsion but through love and compassion. Our Community and our Mosques fulfill those purposes for which the Holy Kaabah was built - to spread peace in the world. Our Mosques are beacons of light that illuminate their surroundings.”***

Huzoor explained what was meant by Jihad in the modern era by saying:

***“We believe that in this era, true Jihad is not the Jihad of the sword but is the Jihad of self-struggle towards betterment. It is the Jihad of developing righteous changes within ourselves. And it is the Jihad of spreading the true and peaceful teachings of Islam to the corners of the world.”***

And speaking about the Jamaat’s efforts to spread Islam in Japan, Huzoor said:

***“We seek to inform the Japanese people that Islam is that religion which calls upon us to recognise our Creator, to attach ourselves to Him and to serve mankind.”***

In the latter part of his address, Huzoor quoted extensively from the Holy Quran to prove that Islam did not permit injustice or extremism of any kind.

### **Impact of Huzoor’s address**

With the *Grace of Allah*, Huzoor’s address had a huge impact on the guests.

With *Jamia* student Ibrahim acting as my translator, I met many of the guests and I was struck by how fearful of Islam many of them had initially been and how shocked they had been to hear and to see the peaceful teachings of Islam that Huzoor had advocated that evening.

One person I met was an exchange student from Brazil called *Eduardo* who said:

***“Today I learned that the media portrayal of Islam is completely wrong. I have to admit I became emotional listening to the address of the Khalifa and tonight’s event can only be described as ‘mind-changing’ because my views have changed completely. I learned that Islam is a peaceful religion and that the acts of terrorists have no link with Islam.”***

I met a lady called *Mrs Uzuki* who said:

***“I consider today to be a turning point in my life. My views about Islam have completely changed for the better. The Khalifa said that this era is not a time for Jihad of the Sword but is a time for a Jihad of Love and this message has had a huge impact upon me.”***

I met a young university student called *Singisaki Yuki*. She said:

***“The speech of the Khalifa was very much needed at this time because in Japan we do not know much about Islam and most of us fear it. Yet the Khalifa reassured us about what Islam really is. He has proved himself a man of peace and has completely changed my opinion of Islam.”***

*Reverend Yoshia*, who *Huzoor* had met earlier in his office, said:

***“It is my view that Japan’s Government is moving away from peace and becoming more aggressive and so I pray that our Government listens to the message of the Khalifa. I pray that he can meet the Emperor of***



***Japan and guide the Emperor towards peace otherwise there is a great risk that we will see a repeat of World War Two.”***

### **Huzoor’s meeting with National Majlis-e-Amila**

On the morning of Sunday 22 November Huzoor held a meeting with Japan’s *National Majlis-e-Amila* at the Baitul Ahad Mosque.

Before the meeting commenced Huzoor asked the *National Sadr* if all the guests had been served food properly and at time at the reception the evening before. The *Sadr Jamaat* informed Huzoor that all guests had been well fed.

Huzoor then looked in my direction and asked if I had been provided dinner afterwards because Huzoor had noticed that I had been meeting guests rather than eating during the reception. Huzoor’s attention to detail and observation was again manifest in that he had noticed I had not been eating, even amongst a packed marquee.

I had not been offered food later and so when Huzoor asked me I remained silent and did not say anything. I had not minded because our hotel was located very centrally and so late in the evening I walked with a couple of other *Qafila* members who had not eaten and we had dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Anyway, the fact Huzoor asked was registered by the local *Jamaat* because following the subsequent reception in Tokyo a local Khadim came up to me

especially and said that food had been arranged for me as I had not eaten during the event!

During the *Amila* meeting, Huzoor asked the various Secretaries questions about their departments and also answered their questions.

Huzoor asked the *National Maal (Finance) Secretary* the number of *Chanda* payers in the Jamaat. The *Secretary* responded with an approximate figure rather than an exact one. Upon this, Huzoor said:

***“You are a young man and so you should not be producing approximate figures but you should have exact data to hand.”***

Giving the *Finance Secretary* some very important advice, Huzoor said:

***“You must make it clear to all Ahmadis that Chanda is not a tax but that giving financial dues is a command of Allah and so they should understand the importance and value of Chanda. The Tarbiyyat Department should also make people realise the blessings associated with financial sacrifice for the sake of their faith.”***

Huzoor spent a significant period of the meeting encouraging the *Amila* to always work together as a united body and with a spirit of mutual brotherhood.

Huzoor said that it was up to the *Missionary-in-Charge* and the members of the *Majlis-e-Amila* to set the very best example for other Ahmadis to follow.

Huzoor also said it was essential that the members continued to work with diligence and perseverance. Huzoor said:

***“You must never give up but always continue to fulfil your duties with sincerity. One day your efforts will reap fruit, whether in this life or in the next. You will be rewarded for all your good intentions and efforts.”***

### **Huzoor’s guidance about using Jamaat finances**

During the meeting Huzoor was also informed about a plot of land the Jamaat had purchased in 1991 in Tokyo at a significant cost. He was told that in the subsequent 24 years its market value had decreased a great deal and it was very difficult to develop the land.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“Before the Jamaat purchases any land or property a full feasibility study must be undertaken. The Jamaat should get professional advice from multiple experts about the future prospects of whatever they plan to purchase. Always remember that the Jamaat’s money is extremely valuable and is based on the financial sacrifices of Ahmadis and so must be spent with the utmost care.”***

### **Huzoor’s emotional words**

A very emotional part of the meeting was when one of the *Amila* members spoke about the fact that sometimes even amongst Ahmadis there were personal disputes or grudges and the level of unity was not always what it

ought to be. Huzoor said that in such situations a person should display humility and patience and seek the Help of Allah.

Huzoor said:

***“Wherever a person faces trouble or feels the victim of injustice he should bow down weeping before His Lord seeking His Help. Remember that when a person remains silent and patient in the face of injustice then Allah the Almighty speaks on his behalf and defends him. Thus, always show love to all your Ahmadi brothers and sisters no matter what the circumstances and place your trust in Allah.”***

As Huzoor said these words I looked around and saw that a number of the Amila members had tears in their eyes and I too felt very emotional having heard such powerful and faith inspiring words from my Khalifa.

### **An example of importance of leading by example**

Later in the meeting the *National Jaidad (Property) Secretary* informed Huzoor that when Ahmadi children living in Japan went to school they placed their shoes neatly in racks before entering their classrooms, however when they came to the Mosque they threw their shoes without any decorum or order.

He said that he had asked the children about this and they responded by saying that in school everyone placed their shoes neatly but in our Mosque we follow the examples of our elders who did not place their shoes neatly.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said this was an example of how a person's example and choices had a direct impact on the next generations. Thus the *Amila* members and elders must set the very best example for their children and coming generations.

The meeting had lasted almost two hours and just as an observer I had personally learnt a great deal listening to Huzoor's guidance and instructions.

### **A memorable train journey to Tokyo**

On the afternoon of 22 November, Huzoor and the *Qafila* departed from Nagoya and returned to Tokyo. We once again travelled by bullet-train, taking the 4.32pm train from Nagoya.

I was seated in one of two seats directly behind Huzoor and Khala Saboohi.

Half-way through the journey I saw Huzoor stand up and so I also stood up thinking that perhaps Huzoor is going to walk along the cabin, however instead he came and sat in the empty seat next to me.

*Alhamdulillah* for the next few minutes I was able to sit with Huzoor and we talked about the previous evening's reception in Nagoya.

When you are able to sit next to *Khalifa-Waqt* at such a close distance, you feel even more amazed and captivated by his grace and beauty. Those moments were truly priceless and even as I was talking to Huzoor I

remember thinking how I would remember this train journey forever, *Insha'Allah*.

I informed Huzoor about some of the people I had met the previous evening and Huzoor mentioned some of the guests he had met.

For example, Huzoor mentioned how one Japanese doctor had told him that after listening to Huzoor's speech, he wished to say that Islam as described by Huzoor was extremely welcome in Japan.

Whilst we were seated, Huzoor pulled out a hand-wipe from his *achkan* pocket. It was a hand-wipe that Huzoor often uses made by the German cologne company 4771. Huzoor tore apart the packing and then wiped both his hands and face before placing the used wipe in the magazine sleeve at the back of the seat in front.

As soon as Huzoor stood up and returned to his seat, I took the used wipe and used it myself and then kept it with me for the rest of the day. As I wiped my own face with it I could not only smell the 4771 cologne but could also smell Huzoor's personal and beautiful fragrance.

### **Huzoor's steady hand**

We arrived back at the same Tokyo *Hilton Hotel* we had stayed earlier in the tour at 6.35pm. In fact we were all staying in the same rooms that we had stayed in at the beginning of the tour.

Soon after arriving, very kindly Huzoor said to me "*Welcome to Tokyo*" and showed me a video that he had taken on his phone of the outside city

skyline. I was genuinely surprised when I saw the video because normally when a person takes a video on his phone there is a degree of camera 'shaking', particularly when taking a panoramic shot. However, the video Huzoor had taken did not shake at all and seemed as though it had been taken from a camera fixed on a tripod.

### **Almost late for *Namaz***

That evening *Namaz* was scheduled for 8pm and so during the intervening period both Ahmad bhai and I lay on our beds watching TV. At 7.40pm Ahmad bhai got up and left the room.

I must have fallen asleep for 5 or 6 minutes after Ahmad bhai left because a few minutes later I heard a voice which woke me up. I presumed Ahmad bhai had come back to our room but when my eyes opened I was shocked and startled to see that Huzoor was stood at the foot of my bed having entered after knocking at the door and saying 'salam'.

Huzoor asked me if I was not planning on attending *Namaz*. It was a good question considering I was asleep with just a few minutes left! I told Huzoor that I had set an alarm for 7.50pm and just as I said this my phone alarm started to ring.

Huzoor looked around our room but I have to admit I was still half asleep and slightly dazed. Out of the blue and extremely randomly I asked Huzoor if he planned to visit any tourist places during our stay in Tokyo! Afterwards, I felt very embarrassed that I had asked this.

Anyway, Huzoor responded by saying:

***“There is no need for me to go out and see the city. I have been to Tokyo before and that is enough.”***

Huzoor then said that he was going downstairs for *Namaz* and that I should do *Wudhu* and then join the prayers. As Huzoor left the room, I did *Wudhu* and though I missed the start of *Namaz* I was able to join during the first *Rakat*.

### **A few moments with Huzoor**

The next morning, 23 November, at around 11.30am I was in my room when Ahmad bhai walked in. He had been downstairs checking the arrangements for a *Jamaat* reception being held at 12pm within the hotel. He had lost track of time and so when he entered the room he told me that he was running late and needed to quickly shower.

A few minutes later I heard Huzoor say ‘salam’ and he also knocked before entering our room. Thankfully, unlike the evening before I was not asleep when he entered!

Huzoor came and sat down on a chair facing the outside balcony. I initially seated myself on a chair opposite but Huzoor noticed that I had sat on Ahmad bhai’s tie and shirt which he had laid out and so he told me to come and sit on the chair next to him instead.



Over the next few minutes, I was able to enjoy Huzoor's company and Huzoor was very relaxed even though there was only a few minutes until the formal reception was due to begin.

I mentioned to Huzoor how I had read the text of the address he had given a couple of days earlier at the reception in Nagoya and had enjoyed it even more than at the time and realised how much ground Huzoor had managed to cover in such a short space of time.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor smiled and said:

***“You always seem to like my addresses or speeches more with the passing of time than initially!”***

I responded by saying that I always liked Huzoor's addresses instantly but the more I read or heard them the more I realised the wisdom of Huzoor's words.

Huzoor said that at such receptions there were often people of different ages and backgrounds present and so he tried to include points that all people would be able to relate to and understand.

### **An unforgettable dive!**

As we were seated one thing kept playing in my mind. I kept thinking how Ahmad bhai was in the bathroom showering with no idea that we had been blessed with Huzoor's company and that his clothes were where we were seated! I kept wondering how this situation would resolve itself!

Just as I was wondering this, I saw a scene that must be classed as one of the most funny and memorable scenes I have witnessed in my entire life!

I was sat facing inwards with the bathroom a few metres in front of me, whilst Huzoor was seated to my left at an angle so that the bathroom was partially in his eye-line but not completely.

As we were talking suddenly I heard the bathroom door open and extremely nonchalantly and without a care in the world Ahmad bhai walked out wearing just a towel around his waist!

As he looked up and saw who was sitting next to me the look on Ahmad bhai's face was absolutely priceless! I have never ever seen an expression change so quickly. Utter panic was visible in his eyes and the colour drained from his cheeks instantly!

Without a moment's thought I saw Ahmad bhai dive back towards the bathroom with indescribable haste! I swear that if Ahmad bhai's speed had been measured at that point he must have broken some sort of world record!

As Ahmad bhai returned to the bathroom, Huzoor had clearly noticed him coming out but I am not sure to what extent Huzoor saw this scene. All I know is that Huzoor looked at Ahmad bhai's clothes lying on the chair and suddenly said to me:

***"It is better for us to go outside as Ahmad's clothes are in here!"***

As we walked out I could not stop laughing! I followed Huzoor out of the room, pausing only to knock on the bathroom door. Hearing the knock Ahmad bhai peeped out and so I told him it was all clear. He looked both mortified and yet strangely amused by what had just happened!

Personally I was just amused and thought that any lingering embarrassment I had felt about the fact that Huzoor had seen me in my night-suit during his recent tour of Holland paled into comparison to this incident!

For the rest of the day whenever I thought of that moment when Ahmad bhai dived back into the bathroom I began to laugh and even now as I write about that incident I cannot contain my laughter!

### **Sitting in the corridor**

As Huzoor and I left the room there was still ten minutes until the reception and so Huzoor went and sat in a chair at the end of the corridor outside his hotel room. There was also a second chair and so Huzoor told me to sit with him.

Not long before, I had shown Huzoor a video which Mala had sent me on *Whatsapp*. It was of a Chinese thief who was riding a motorbike on the road and upon seeing a young lady he got off his bike and mugged her taking her purse before running off. However rather than panicking or lying back the woman ran to his motorbike which still had the keys placed in the ignition. She then rode off with his bike, whilst the thief looked on in desperation and horror!

As we sat there Huzoor mentioned the video and said that the woman had taught the thief a lesson! It seemed that Huzoor had enjoyed the video, *Masha'Allah*.

### **Tokyo Reception**

After a few more minutes, I walked with Huzoor as he went down to the reception hall in a lift.

The purpose of the Tokyo reception was for Japanese dignitaries and guests to have the opportunity to listen to Huzoor's words and to meet with him. It would prove another beautiful means of true Islam being spread by *Khalifatul Masih*.

### **Guest speeches**

Following the recitation of the Holy Quran, two guest speakers took to the stage. One was *Dr Mike Sata*, who had hosted Huzoor at a dinner reception at the beginning of the tour and the other was *Mr Endo Shinichi*, a guest who had travelled from Tohoku, which was the region most affected by the earthquake and tsunamis of 2011.

If I had just heard the audio of Dr Sata's address and not known who he was, I would have presumed he was an Ahmadi Muslim. He did not talk at all about himself, but spoke exclusively about Huzoor and repeatedly used the term 'Huzoor' when speaking about Khalifatul Masih.

He informed the members of the audience how Huzoor had been elected *Khalifatul Masih* at 11.40pm on 22 April 2013 and that he had devoted his entire life to spreading peace in the world and that he felt that ***“inter-religious peace and dialogue was Huzoor’s mission.”***

Dr Sata had also brought a small fir tree from his own garden which he wished to donate as a symbol of peace to be planted at the Baitul Ahad Mosque. Huzoor had given permission for this and so at the reception both Huzoor and Dr Sata watered the plant and it was later planted at Baitul Ahad.



In his address, the other guest speaker, Mr Endo Shinichi, spoke about the humanitarian relief efforts of the Jamaat in the immediate aftermath of the 2011 earthquake. He too spoke very movingly saying that the Jamaat helped the local people at their time of need. He said:

***“It is due to the help and love of the Ahmadi Muslims that many of us are still alive and we can never repay this debt of gratitude.”***

## Huzoor's address

Thereafter, Huzoor addressed the audience of over 60 guests, about the state of the world today and explained the true teachings of Islam.



I found Huzoor's address to be extremely moving, whereby he spoke repeatedly about the nuclear bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki exactly 70 years ago.

Huzoor said:

***“Your nation of Japan had to contend with the most horrific devastation and grief imaginable when hundreds of thousands of your citizens were mercilessly killed and two of your cities were demolished and destroyed in nuclear attacks that shamed humanity.”***

He said that based on its past history Japan was the country that could understand, perhaps more than any other nation, the devastating consequences of warfare.

Thus, they should be the ones who were always at the forefront of striving for peace in the world.

Huzoor said:

***“At every level and in every possible way, the Japanese Government should seek to counter and prevent all forms of inhumanity, persecution and injustice. They should seek to ensure that the heinous attack they faced is never repeated again in the future anywhere in the world.”***

Huzoor also quoted the words of condemnation spoken by Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) following the use of the nuclear bombs on Japan, when he had said:

***“Our religion and moral teachings demand of us that we proclaim before the entire world that we do not consider this horrific act and this bloodshed to be justified in any circumstances whatsoever. It makes no difference to me whether certain governments do not like what I am saying.”***

Huzoor also mentioned how Hazrat Chaudhry Zafrullah Khan sahib had delivered an historic address at the *1951 San Francisco Peace Conference* urging world powers to treat post-war Japan with justice and fairness.

He had strongly condemned proposed sanctions and restrictions that world powers sought to impose upon Japan. Huzoor said that although Chaudhry sahib had been representing Pakistan’s Government, the truth was that first and foremost he was representing the teachings of Islam.

Later in his address, Huzoor quoted various verses of the Holy Quran that called mankind towards peace before concluding by saying:

***“Rather than grouping together in opposing blocs, we should all unite and co-operate with one another.”***

### **Question and Answer session**

Following the conclusion of Huzoor’s, a *question and answer* session took place with Japanese guests.

Huzoor was asked about the concept of idol worship in Islam to which he replied that all forms of idol worship were prohibited by Islam. Nonetheless, Huzoor said that the recent destruction of historical monuments and statues by *Daesh* in Syria was wrong and that if they ought to have been destroyed then would not the Holy Prophet (sa) or his successors have demolished them?

A guest then mentioned how he had learned for the first time that Islam was a peaceful religion whilst listening to Huzoor’s address and wished to know a little more about Islam’s views on other religions.

Huzoor said that a basic *Quranic* teaching was that there should not be any compulsion in matters of religion and that it was the obligation of Muslims to believe in all prophets of God and to love and respect them.

### **Meeting guests**

As the formal proceedings concluded with a silent prayer led by Huzoor, a traditional Japanese lunch was served to the guests. As the starters arrived



the food looked mouth-watering and so before getting up to meet the guests, I did try some fresh prawns that were delicious!

Over the next 30 minutes I met various guests and the way they described their feelings and how they had been moved by Huzoor's address was quite amazing.

I met a gentleman called *Mr Itesen* who was extremely emotional after listening to Huzoor's address. He told me how honoured and fortunate he felt by the fact that Huzoor had travelled across the world to meet the people of Japan and to share the teachings of Islam with them. He said:

***“Normally we do not have the chance to meet Muslims but today we met the greatest Muslim in the world! How fortunate we are! I look at the Khalifa and I see truth, honesty and wisdom. He has come to Japan only to invite our people to a message of peace and to tell us the truth of Islam.***

I met a Japanese man called *Takeshi Koko* who said:

***“Most Japanese people think Muslims are bad but I am witness that your Khalifa is nothing but peace. He said that we must never repeat the mistakes of 70 years ago and never allow such cruelty to occur again.”***

Another guest, *Mr Miura* said that Huzoor had given a special message to the people of Japan. He said:

***“The Khalifa said it is not the time to provoke one another but it is the time to unite and show love to one another.”***

### **Interview with Asahi Shimbun**

*Alhamdulillah* the Tokyo reception had proved extremely blessed and immediately after Huzoor was interviewed by the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper that is widely regarded as the most respected media publication in Japan and has a readership of tens of millions.



During the interview Huzoor was asked in which parts of the world Ahmadiyyat had spread. In response, Huzoor said:

***“In Japan we are a very small community but in other parts of the world we have very significant numbers. For example there are millions of Ahmadis in Africa. However, whether we are small or large the most important thing is that Ahmadis should always be sincere and true followers of the teachings of Islam.”***

Upon being asked his message to the people of Japan, Huzoor said:

***“The world is moving towards another world war and so as a nation Japan should seek to establish peace in the world and to bring an end to all forms of conflict.”***

### **Feeling nervous!**

When the interview concluded, the *Sadr Jamaat* informed Huzoor that there was still some time until the hall was ready for *Salat* and so for the next twenty minutes Huzoor remained in the room where the interview had taken place. Whilst *MTA* removed its cameras from the room a few of us stayed with Huzoor.

After a few minutes, Huzoor called me and asked who I had met that day and about the reception that had taken place. Over the past few years on dozens of occasions I have had the privilege to submit such reports to Huzoor, however on this occasion the environment was quite different!

As I stood to Huzoor’s left, standing to my left were senior *Qafila* members Munir Javed sahib, Majid Tahir sahib, Mubarak Zafar sahib and Japan’s *Sadr Jamaat*. As they stood to my left I felt inherently even more nervous than normal and conscious of my poor Urdu. I do not consider myself to be a public speaker at all and certainly not when conversing in Urdu!

Huzoor knows well my weaknesses and personal failings and is extremely forgiving but having the audience to my left certainly increased the pressure!

Nonetheless, for the next 15 minutes I spoke more or less non-stop so that by the end I could feel my mouth was completely dry! It was actually a good experience and a good form of training as by the end I felt more confident, *Mash'Allah*.

### **Japan's Kit Kats**

Near our hotel there was a shopping centre in walking distance and so that afternoon a few of us took the opportunity to visit and to buy gifts for home. I walked to the shops with Nadeem Amini and also Dr Tanvir Ahmed sahib, a doctor from the United States who had stayed with the Qafila for the majority of the tour.

One thing I learned in Japan is that they had a strange fascination with *Kit Kat* chocolate. In fact very early in the tour a local *Khadim* had very proudly told me that there were 24 different flavours of *Kit Kat* in Japan! Thus throughout the trip, whenever I saw a corner shop I used to try to see what flavours they had. Knowing my family members back in England were also chocolate fans I used to take pictures of any *Kit Kats* I found and would send to them on a family *Whatsapp* group we have.

On that day, as we walked in the shopping centre I found one shop which dealt extensively in *Kit Kats*. As I read the description of the different flavours I was both horrified and fascinated! I could not refrain from purchasing utterly weird flavours such as '*Wasabi Kit Kat*', '*Green Tea Kit Kat*' and '*Sweet Potato Kit Kat*' as well as some less controversial flavours like '*Strawberry Cheesecake Kit Kat*' or '*Crème Brulee Kit Kat*'.

The one I was most looking forward to trying was the Wasabi flavour *Kit Kat*, having only ever had Wasabi with *sushi* in the past. Somehow I convinced myself that Wasabi Kit Kat would be delicious.

Thus when I returned to London one of the first things I did was to eagerly open that particular flavour. I put it in my mouth full of hope expecting a rare treat. However, with the utmost difficulty I swallowed one bite and had to stop! It was truly awful! I wondered thereafter why anyone would mix wasabi and chocolate!

### **An emotional incident and Huzoor's love for martyrs**

Upon stopping for coffee in the shopping centre, Dr Tanvir told me about his father, *Syed Laique Ahmed shaheed*, who had been martyred in the 28 May 2010 attacks in Lahore.

Dr Tanvir told me that during the burial process in Rabwah elders of the *Jamaat* and members of the family of the Promised Messiah (as) served him food with their own hands and considered it an honour to do so. He said he felt extremely embarrassed but also amazed by the love and emotion of every single Ahmadi.

He told me that at the same time his father was being buried there were a number of other Ahmadi martyrs who were also being buried. He said he had noticed an elderly Ahmadi lady frantically pacing back and forth between the different graves. It appeared to him that the lady was from a nearby village and like many people from such villages in Pakistan appeared illiterate and quite simple.

After a few minutes Dr sahib approached the lady thinking that she might be looking for a particular grave to pray at. He asked her if she was looking for the burial site of any particular martyr and upon hearing this she looked up at him and said:

***“They are all mine! They are all mine! Every Ahmadi martyr is mine!”***

He realised then that the reason she had been anxiously pacing back and forth was because she considered each of the martyrs to be her family and loved ones.

Dr Tanvir also spoke of how at that time of grief, Huzoor personally called all of his family members and spoke to them individually.

I recalled myself that during those days there was a long list of the relatives of martyrs in Private Secretary sahib’s office. Each day Huzoor would take time to call the family members one by one. He would speak to them for a great length of time and reassure them and ask about their lives. Truly, Huzoor’s love and concern for every single Ahmadi is astonishing.

### **Meeting Ahmadis**

Monday was our final day in Japan, however the fact that Huzoor would be taking a 13-hour flight the next morning did not mean that his schedule would be any lighter that evening.

Rather, Huzoor conducted a full session of family Mulaqats with members of the local *Jamaat* and also some Ahmadis who had come from abroad.

I met one Indonesian lady, *Triaagustiani sahiba*, who had travelled to Japan along with her husband and children. Her happiness and joy was unconfined as she met Huzoor for the very first time. She said:

***“We have travelled thousands of miles to meet Huzoor and with children and due to the cost it is not easy. But such obstacles are nothing in the face of the happiness I am feeling at having met my Khalifa. I am so fortunate! I am so fortunate! We are just praying that Huzoor can come to Indonesia because the blessings of such a visit will change our nation forever.”***

As she spoke these words she began to cry and said that she could not thank Allah enough that she, her husband and children had been able to meet Huzoor.

I also met *Farhan Malik (34)*, whose family moved to Japan when he was a child. He was with his wife, *Yuka Jasmin*, a Japanese lady who had converted to Ahmadiyyat in 2009.

Yuka sahiba could not speak English and so her husband translated. She told me:

***“Since I became an Ahmadi Muslim I have found a way out from all of my troubles and worries and that way out is called prayer. I never had this before but now whenever I face any problem I pray to Allah and seek His Help and always Allah removes the difficulties.”***

### **Huzoor's farewell at the airport**

Huzoor's return flight to London the next morning was just after 11am from *Narita International Airport* which was an hour's drive from our hotel. Thus, at 7.55am Huzoor and Khala Saboohi and the rest of the Qafila members departed from the hotel after a silent prayer led by Huzoor.

Following arrival at the airport the local Japan Jamaat members waved goodbye to Huzoor. You could see how sad they were to be parted from their Khalifa not knowing when they would again have the opportunity to be near him. Very lovingly, Huzoor met the members of the Jamaat before entering the security area where only passengers could enter.

### **A turbulent flight**

After clearing security, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi went and waited in an airport lounge whilst the rest of us took the opportunity to visit the duty free area and purchase some gifts for home!

As we entered the *British Airways* plane at 11am I was sad that our journey was reaching its conclusion. I would miss Japan a lot.

Our flight to Japan had been extremely smooth but unfortunately our flight home proved quite different. For the first hour of the flight there was severe turbulence to the point that the plane was not just swaying but quite violently shaking. The captain ordered the flight crew to take a seat as we passed through a severe head wind.



The turbulence was such that a number of people looked highly concerned. Nadeem Amini told me that the Japanese lady who he was seated next to looked as though she was about to faint!

Under normal circumstances I too would have panicked and been extremely scared as I am not the best flyer in the world.

However, no matter how bad the turbulence became I did not feel any anxiety or worry and the same could be said of all the Qafila members. The reason was simply that we knew that as Huzoor was on the plane, *Insha'Allah*, Allah would protect us all. Thus, instead of praying that Allah saves us from crashing, I found myself praying in gratitude to Allah that I was on the same flight as *Khalifatul Masih*.

After an hour the turbulence subsided and the rest of the flight proved quite uneventful.

I was seated in between Ahmad bhai and Khawaja Qudoos and was able to sleep for much of the journey. Normally, I find it difficult to sleep on planes but before departure Dr Tanvir sahib had given me some medicine for travel nausea which had a side effect of inducing drowsiness! I am sure that the reason I slept so well was due to the medicine!

### **Arrival in London**

The flight landed at London Heathrow at 2.45pm local time where Huzoor was greeted by Ameer sahib UK just over a week after he had come to see Huzoor off. After a few minutes waiting for our passports to be stamped the

Qafila returned to *Masjid Fazl* where Huzoor was greeted by hundreds of Ahmadis.

### **Conclusion**

As we arrived home, I reflected upon the countless blessings we had witnessed during the tour.

At a time when the world was moving increasingly in the direction of conflict and disorder and at a time when Islam was being constantly misrepresented, our Khalifa had impressed upon the Japanese people the true teachings of the Quran and of the Holy Prophet (sa) in the most magnificent manner.

At the receptions held in Nagoya and Tokyo and through his media interviews, Huzoor's message of peace had directly reached the Japanese people. At the Meiji shrine, Huzoor had reiterated the Oneness and Unity of God and in various meetings Huzoor has answered the questions of the local people in light of the teachings of Islam.

At a personal level, it had proved a very special and blessed trip for which I could never thank Allah enough.

May Allah grant Huzoor a long and healthy life filled with happiness and may all Ahmadis fulfil his expectations. *Ameen.*

**End**

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