

# **HUZOOR'S TOUR OF JAPAN**

**2013**

**A Personal Account**

***By Abid Khan***

## Final Week of Huzoor's Tour

Huzoor's tour of the Far East and Pacific reached its final week on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

Huzoor and his Qafila had been travelling since 21<sup>st</sup> September and so it was strange to think that soon we would be returning to London and to our normal day-to-day lives.

I remember that during those days Majid Sahib joked that we had been away from home for so long that it now seemed that being on tour was part of *normal* life and being in London was like being on tour!

Since the day I learned I would have the opportunity to travel with Huzoor there was one country that stood out for me and that was Japan.

Whilst, I had immensely enjoyed the weeks spent in Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, always at the back of my mind was the thought that *Insha'Allah* Huzoor would be visiting Japan.

Looking back, I can say that the week spent in Japan was filled with so many blessings and new experiences, all of which were due entirely to the blessings associated with Khilafat.

## **Flight from Auckland to Tokyo**

The flight from Auckland was around 12 hours. Before the tour had begun I had been concerned at how I would deal with the very long flights but over the course of the tour my stamina for flying increased a great deal.

Whereas before I used to think that 8-hour flights to North America or to Pakistan were extremely tiring and difficult, I would now consider an 8-hour flight to be relatively short.

We flew on an *Air New Zealand* flight and it was the first time I had ever flown on this particular airline.

We particularly enjoyed the fact that in the middle of the flight they brought out small individual pots of orange flavoured ice-cream to all of the passengers! Those little pots certainly were an unexpected bonus which made the journey go a little faster!

## **Arrival in Tokyo**

After the long flight we arrived at Tokyo's *Narita International Airport* at 5pm local time.

In terms of time-zone Japan was 4 hours behind New Zealand and so we were now 9 hours ahead of the UK, rather than the 13 hours we had been for the past week.

As Huzoor disembarked from the plane he was greeted by representatives of the Government and members of the airport staff who escorted Huzoor across the terminal to where the local Jamaat members were waiting.

Whenever Huzoor arrives in any country or in any local Jamaat the first thing that is apparent is the look of sheer delight on the faces of the local Ahmadis and the same was true that day.

Japan's *Sadr Jamaat* and *Missionary-in-Charge*, Anees Nadeem Sahib, was there to greet Huzoor along with some other local Ahmadis.

One of the Ahmadis who was there to greet Huzoor later described his feelings to me of the moment Huzoor arrived. He said that it seemed as though they were instantly "***living in an entirely different world***".

### **Drive to hotel**

The Jamaat had booked a hotel for Huzoor and the Qafila in Tokyo city centre and so we drove from the airport, which was outside the city, into Tokyo over the next hour.

It proved to be an utterly spectacular drive whereby it seemed that every inch of the city was filled with skyscrapers illuminated by bright and dashing lights.

We drove past various tourist attractions such as *Disneyland* and crossed some very beautiful bridges.

I had driven through other large cities at night such as London and New York but nothing had ever come close to that drive through Tokyo.



A couple of days later I mentioned to Huzoor that the drive had been very special and it seemed that Huzoor had also enjoyed it.

### **An amusing exchange**

One other thing I enjoyed on that drive was a conversation between our driver and fellow Qafila member Nasir Saeed Sahib who was seated in the front passenger seat.

For the first few minutes of the drive Nasir Sahib asked the driver a number of questions such as *“How long till we arrive?”* or *“How many Ahmadis live in Tokyo?”*

The driver, who was driving a Qafila car for the first time was understandably nervous. He could clearly do without any distraction and so after a few minutes of answering Nasir Sahib's constant questions he finally said:

***“Please can you do me a favour – do not talk to me for the rest of the journey! Because I have to pay attention to driving and making sure I stay close to Huzoor's car.”***

The look on Nasir Saeed Sahib's face was priceless! He seemed utterly shocked and embarrassed. For the first time I could remember I saw Nasir Saeed Sahib entirely speechless!

For the rest of the journey he sat in silence, whilst those of us seated behind tried to control our laughter.

### **Arrival at Tokyo hotel**

We arrived at the *Ana Intercontinental Hotel* in Tokyo after just over an hour.

As Huzoor came out of his car he was greeted by local Ahmadis who were all thrilled and emotional at seeing him.

Immediately, Huzoor was escorted through the vast and jam-packed hotel lobby to the lifts and from there to the 36<sup>th</sup> floor where his room was.

A few minutes later the rest of us were taken to our respective rooms. I was on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor along with a number of other *Qafila* members.

### **Namaz at the hotel**

Later in the evening, Huzoor came downstairs to a large hall in the hotel basement where he led the *Maghreb* and *Isha* prayers.

After the prayers, Huzoor also went and visited another hall where the *Lajna* had been offering *Namaz*.

As Huzoor entered, the *Lajna* members and *Nasirat* began reciting *nazms* to express their great joy that Huzoor was amongst them.

### **An amazing view**

After *Namaz* I went to see Ahmad bhai for a few minutes. He and Bashir Sahib were sharing a room on the 36<sup>th</sup> floor.

As I entered their room I was drawn immediately to the window and to the view – it was truly incredible. The lights and vast buildings of Tokyo were amazing.

One of the great blessings and benefits of today is the fact that it is so easy to communicate.

In his speeches Huzoor often refers to today's world as a "*global village*" and during this tour I really began to realise just how inter-connected the world has become.

For example, after taking some pictures of the view of Tokyo I sent them from my phone to a few members of my family and within seconds I received messages back and so in this way they were able to instantly share in what I was seeing.



### An evening walk

By the time everything concluded on that first evening it was around 10pm.

I was completely shattered but Ahmad bhai suggested that we go for a walk locally. Thus, we went and walked around the surrounding areas with a local *Khadim* who acted as a tour guide.

I found Tokyo, even late at night, to be extremely busy and a place where people of all different races and nationalities lived together.



## **Departure from Tokyo**

The next morning, 6<sup>th</sup> November, I got ready and packed early morning as Huzoor and the Qafila were travelling onwards to the city of Nagoya where the main Jamaat centre in Japan was.

At around 10am, Huzoor came down and we departed from the hotel.

I was sat in a mini-van along with Nasir Saeed Sahib, Bashir Sahib, Mubarak Zafar Sahib and Khalid Akram Sahib.

Also in our car was a local *Khadim* called Hizqeel who had been brought up in Japan but was now enrolled as a student at *Jamia Ahmadiyya* in Canada.

## **A reluctant tour guide**

As we drove from the hotel, Bashir Sahib asked Hizqeel to act as a tour-guide and to use the *walkie talkie* so that people in the other Qafila cars could also hear and learn about where we travelling.

Looking alarmed and panicked Hizqeel said that if he turned on the *walkie talkie* then perhaps even Huzoor's car would be able to hear him!

Bashir Sahib said yes but that should not stop him because perhaps Huzoor would enjoy hearing about the places we drove past as well.

As Bashir Sahib said this, the colour drained from Hizqeel's face. He reluctantly put the *walkie talkie* to his mouth and said 'Assalamo Alaikum' before suddenly switching it off!

As we saw his entirely natural fear and worry we could not help but laugh. Thereafter he put the *walkie talkie* down but did try his best to act as a guide for those of us who were sat in the mini-van.

### **Seeing Mount Fuji**

We did not drive straight to Nagoya but rather we stopped at a couple of places on the way including a memorable break to see and observe *Mount Fuji*.

I had heard about *Mount Fuji* and seen pictures of it and so I was eager to see it in real life. As we drove towards it I kept looking out of the window to see if I could spot it and to my delight after a few minutes of searching I saw it.



It was very beautiful and distinctive – perfectly white-capped and impeccably shaped, standing at a height of more than 12,000 feet.

I pointed it out to the rest of the people in our vehicle and they were similarly enthralled to see such a striking and iconic mountain.

### **Break at hotel near *Mount Fuji***

The Jamaat had arranged for the Qafila to stop at a nearby hotel from where a clear and straight-on view of *Mount Fuji* was visible.

As we got out of our cars, Huzoor saw me and asked how I had found Japan to which I replied simply that I could not believe I was here with him.

We entered the hotel lobby and Huzoor himself saw that there was a viewing area outside from where *Mount Fuji* could be clearly seen.

### **A very clean door!**

Over the past couple of weeks, Mubarak Zafar Sahib had become a keen photographer using his newly acquired camera-phone and I had taught him how to use the '*Whatsapp*' application to send photos.

Given this, he was very keen to take some photos of the mountain and so he walked briskly towards the viewing area.

The Japanese hotel must have had a high standard of cleanliness because as he walked through what he thought was an open door, he suddenly and with quite some force, walked straight into a glass door and bounced off! The way he bounced back was very comical!

The glass door was so clean that he had mistakenly thought there was nothing there! The bang was quite loud so that even Huzoor, who was some feet away, turned immediately to see what had happened.

Thankfully, Mubarak Sahib was fine and so any initial concerns we had were soon replaced by laughter at the incident.

Having twice fallen off the stage a few weeks before in Australia I perhaps should have been more sympathetic but I have to admit I found Mubarak Sahib's accident very amusing!

### **Huzoor viewing *Mount Fuji***

Huzoor then walked to the viewing area and took out his video camera and started taking video of *Mount Fuji*.



The rest of us stood a few feet behind and so I took out my *iPhone* and took some pictures of Huzoor facing the mountain.

I really liked one of them in particular and so later in the afternoon, when we were visiting a nearby lake, I showed it to Huzoor and *Alhamdulillah* Huzoor seemed to like it also as he called Private Secretary Sahib to also look at it.



Very affectionately Huzoor said to Munir Javed Sahib that “***Abid took this photo***”.

### **Enjoying the view**

Huzoor was then escorted to a room in the hotel, whilst the rest of us stayed and enjoyed the view and took some more photos.

Majid Sahib is normally quite reluctant to have his photo taken but on that occasion I persuaded him by saying that it would be nice for his family to see a photo of him in front of such a famous mountain.

### **'Lala's Hotel'**

The hotel where we had stopped was called '*Lalas Hotel*'.

The most elderly person in Huzoor's Qafila was Nasir Saeed Sahib and for years he had been affectionately called "*Lala*" by those close to him.

When it was pointed out that the hotel was called '*Lalas Hotel*', Nasir Sahib seemed quite pleased and so as the rest of us had our photos taken in front of *Mount Fuji*, Nasir Sahib had his photo taken in front of the sign outside the hotel!

### **Huzoor checking *Qibla* direction**

A few minutes later Huzoor came to lead the *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers in a large room at the hotel.

As had happened on many occasions during the tour Huzoor made sure that the *Qibla* direction was correct before leading the prayers.

Personally speaking, the way Huzoor enquires and makes sure the *Qibla* direction is correct to the exact degree has really made me more aware of the importance and value of making sure that the *Qibla* is always entirely accurate.

## A Japanese Lunch

After *Namaz* we were served lunch in the hotel. It was a buffet set up for the *Qafila* filled with local Japanese dishes such as different types of fish, noodles, sandwiches and salads.

Everything was delicious but I particularly enjoyed the local *sashimi* which was made of raw fish cut into small pieces. It was the same as *sushi* but without the rice. There were two types of *sashimi* – tuna and salmon – and they were both fresh and delicious. It tasted entirely different to the *sushi* or *sashimi* that I had ever tasted in the UK.

## Visit to a lake



Soon after lunch, we left the hotel and continued our journey towards Nagoya. Initially we drove through some mountain roads and stopped at a vast lake. For a few minutes Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) looked and enjoyed the view.

After a few minutes Huzoor called me and pointed out a large boat which was decorated in a very traditional and oriental fashion.

I think it was a fishing boat because next to the boat a local fisherman was swimming in the freezing sea holding a net. As Huzoor saw him he smiled and asked me if I felt like swimming in the sea! Being a poor swimmer I said I was much happier on land.

### **Arrival in Nagoya**

After returning to our respective vehicles we drove onwards to Nagoya.

The journey proved to be longer than anticipated because as we left the lake a local Ahmadi told us we would arrive in Nagoya within 70 or 80 minutes but after more than an hour had passed we were told that there was still around 90 minutes to go!

In the end by the time we arrived at the *Mielparque Hotel* in Nagoya it was after 7pm.

### **Visit to Jamaat Centre**

After a few minutes in our rooms we came back down to the lobby as Huzoor was going to the Jamaat Centre in Nagoya to lead the *Maghreb* and *Isha* prayers.



The centre was actually a converted house purchased by the Jamaat many years ago in a residential area of the city.

The drive from the hotel was about 25 minutes and as we drove through the city I came to realise that Nagoya was not a small town but actually a large city with an extremely dense population.

Just the inner-city itself had a population of more than 2 million and if the surrounding suburbs were included its population reached well over 8 million.

When we arrived at the Jamaat Centre, Huzoor was welcomed by dozens of Ahmadi men, women and children.

The children were waving Japanese flags and as I looked around I saw that quite a number of the Ahmadis were Japanese rather than from Pakistan.

Seeing the delight and joy on the faces of the young children as they saw their Khalifa was wonderful.

Huzoor smiled and waved at them as he walked towards the small Mosque located on the back side of building.

### **A very memorable Salat**

Doing *Namaz* in that building was a very uplifting and unique experience.

The prayer room was nowhere near big enough to accommodate everyone and so every possible space was utilised to pray – whether it was the adjacent room, whether it was the small corridor or the rooms upstairs.

Somehow everyone fitted in or rather *squeezed* in and we all offered our prayers behind Huzoor.

### **Japanese manners**

One thing I observed during our week in Japan was the very high standard of basic manners and etiquette of the Japanese people.

Their courtesy was something quite extraordinary and this was something Huzoor even mentioned in his *Friday Sermon*.

One particular way in which the Japanese people express their courtesy is by bowing down.

Throughout the tour I observed all of the locals - from young children to the elderly - bowing whenever they met or spoke to anybody.

Often it was not just one bow but every few seconds they would bow down and the other party would respond in the same way.

### **Huzoor's respect for the local customs**

During the week Huzoor met countless Japanese guests and dignitaries and they too would bow their heads before Huzoor.

In response, Huzoor would also reciprocate by bowing his head towards them.

In the same way that Huzoor had met the *Maori* King in New Zealand with a traditional '*nose-greeting*', Huzoor met the local people of Japan according to their customs.

Huzoor's conduct in such circumstances is an example for all others to follow, whereby he always shows respect according to the traditions of the local people – unless any tradition is opposed to Islamic teaching.

Thus during the week the rest of us Qafila members also regularly bowed our heads when greeting people and I have to say that as the week progressed I began to really enjoy this particular form of greeting.

### **Ahmad bhai's love for the Japanese greeting**

Whilst I tried to adopt this custom as much as possible, I was no match for one particular member of the Qafila – Ahmad bhai.

For weeks before arriving in Japan he had told me how fascinated he was by Japan and its customs and so wherever and whenever he had the opportunity he would bow down in the traditional way.

I think he adopted this custom even more than the local Japanese people and so during his conversations I would see that he would bow his head every couple of seconds.

As the Japanese people have been taught never to reject this greeting, each time he bowed his head they too would bow theirs. In this way during his conversations invariably we saw constant moving up and down!

### **A plan to visit *Hiroshima***

When Huzoor visited Japan in 2006 he visited the city of Hiroshima and its historic museum.

Indeed on that occasion Huzoor wrote a very emotional message in the guest book recounting his personal emotions upon seeing the devastation caused by the nuclear bombs dropped on Japan by the United States at the end of the Second World War.

For some weeks, Mubarak Zafar Sahib had said to me that those of us who had not been on Huzoor's previous Far East tour should seek Huzoor's permission to visit Hiroshima.

One day I mentioned to a family member who I was speaking to on the phone that Mubarak Sahib was very keen to visit Hiroshima to which she responded excitedly and to my shock by saying:

***"Hiroshima? - Is that some special mall?"***

I later told this comment to Huzoor and he laughed a great deal at this comment. Huzoor's personality is extremely loving and he has a wonderful sense of humour and it is always a great pleasure to see Huzoor laugh.

Anyway, one day Mubarak Sahib did ask Huzoor's permission if we could visit Hiroshima. Very kindly Huzoor accepted this request and directed that those members of the Qafila who were not present on his tour of 2006 should visit Hiroshima.

### **First experience of the *bullet train***

Thus at around 7am on the morning of 7 November, Mubarak Zafar Sahib, Ahmad bhai, Khalid Akram Sahib and me left the hotel along with the local *Sadr* of Tokyo Jamaat.

We first drove to Nagoya Station which was huge and packed with tens of thousands of local commuters.

I had long heard about Japan's '*bullet train*' and so on that day we were able to travel together on the famous train, which was known locally as the '*Shinkansen*'.

The train journey was an experience in itself.

Huzoor had travelled on the *bullet train* during his visit to Japan in 2006 and I recalled afterwards Huzoor speaking about how efficient and well-managed the Japanese trains were and this remained the case.

Having purchased our tickets we were told to stand on a particular part of the platform and wait for our train.

The train arrived at the exact time stated on the ticket and directly in front of where we stood the doors opened and we entered our carriage.

The distance from Nagoya to Hiroshima was 300km and though the *bullet train* can travel at speeds up to 320km/hour, often it is forced to travel somewhat slower and so the travel time was 2 hours.

The train was due to arrive at 10.55am and at 10.54 I saw *Hiroshima Station* come into view. I thought that we have arrived a few seconds early but at the exact moment the train became stationary the clock changed from 10.54 to 10.55! In terms of time it could not have been any more accurate!

### **Visit to Hiroshima's Museum**

We took a taxi from the station to the museum, called the *Hiroshima Memorial Peace Museum*.

It had been opened in 1955 to recognise and remember the devastation caused by the nuclear bombs that the United States had dropped on *Hiroshima* and *Nagasaki*.

As we drove through the city it genuinely seemed that even now there was an air of sadness and bleakness to Hiroshima.

Perhaps I felt this because of the knowledge of what had happened but other members of our group also thought the same.

We spent the next couple of hours walking round the museum and learning about what had happened.

The more I saw the more horrific it became and I came to better understand the destruction that had been inflicted on Japan.

There were pictures of people whose skin had literally melted; there were pictures of people who died instantly from the trauma and there were countless pictures of children who had been born deformed because of the impact of the radiation.

### **Personal emotions at seeing the museum**

As I walked around two emotions kept entering my mind – firstly, I felt anger towards the United States who had perpetrated this great cruelty and secondly it made me appreciate even more why Huzoor so vehemently had appealed to the leaders of nations to show restraint and warned them about the horrors of nuclear war.

I read that the nuclear bombs possessed by countries today were literally thousands of times more powerful than the ones the United States dropped on Japan in 1945. Thus the carnage caused by a nuclear war today really would be unimaginable.

### **A 'culture of fear' in the Japanese people**

During our visit to Hiroshima we also saw lots of very young schoolchildren on class trips visiting the museum.

As I saw the graphic nature of the exhibition I wondered if it was appropriate for young children to see such images.

I asked a local person who explained that because Japan had been through the trauma of a nuclear attack it had become a nation consumed by fear.

At every level there was an innate fear that they would be attacked again.

The Japanese people wanted their children to see pictures of children their own age being burnt alive so that this culture of fear and terror associated with warfare would be transmitted from generation to generation.

### **The young boy's lunchbox**

Visiting the museum was a very emotional and draining experience.

It was not just the horrific images that caused pain but looking back there were other less obvious things that left just as lasting an impression.

For example the lunchbox of a young school boy was on display at the museum. He had taken the lunchbox to school but had died minutes after the bomb had been dropped.



As I looked at the lunchbox I thought to myself how that innocent young child would have gone to school as normal and then suddenly must have wondered what was happening all around him and why everything had changed instantly.

Thinking of how terrified he, and no doubt countless other children, will have been on that fateful day was devastating.

As we left the museum we all felt very sad at what we had witnessed.

The visit to Hiroshima was one of the most eye-opening experiences of my life.

I don't think I will ever forget some of the images I saw on that day.

#### **Huzoor's interest in our visit to *Hiroshima***

I think Huzoor knew we would learn and benefit from the visit and he was interested to hear about our experiences.

In fact, the next day Huzoor asked me in detail about the visit to Hiroshima and went through the photos I had taken one by one.

Huzoor asked me what I had learned and how I had felt.

I responded by saying that previously I had no real understanding of the consequences of an atomic war and so now I genuinely understood even more why Huzoor was so fearful of the damage a nuclear war would cause for the entire world.

## Speaking Japanese!

At the beginning of the tour I had asked some of our local Ahmadis how to say 'hello' and 'thank you' in Japanese.

I had been told that the Japanese word for 'hello' was '*konichiwa*' and that the Japanese word for 'thank you' was '*arigato*' and so wherever I had the opportunity I used say these words in my best Japanese accent.

Whenever I said these words I used to feel quite pleased with myself and as though I had suddenly become very educated and cultured!

However one day my eagerness to show off my new vocabulary proved to be a source of much embarrassment.

At the train station at Hiroshima we had grabbed some lunch and so as we were leaving I took the opportunity to utilise my two new favourite words to one of the waitresses who was an elderly lady.

Looking in her direction I said '*konichiwa*', meaning *hello* – which did not even make sense considering we were *leaving* and then I said '*arigato*' meaning '*thank you*'.

Having heard me speak these two words she presumed I spoke fluent Japanese and so for the next minute or more she spoke continuously in Japanese as I stood there dumbfounded and utterly confused. There was not even a break in her flow for me to say I could not understand.

After she had finally finished talking I looked at her and with a great deal of embarrassment said ***“Sorry I don’t speak Japanese. Arigato!”*** and then turned and ran away!

Thereafter, for the last few days of our trip I was a bit more cautious in using the Japanese language.

### **Communicating without communicating!**

The fact that we did not know the language did not stop Ahmad bhai from making new friends.

Wherever I saw him he would somehow find a way to communicate with the local people.

On the train back from Hiroshima I saw that he spent at least 30 minutes talking to a very elderly Japanese lady. She was laughing at his jokes and he was laughing at her jokes.

They were communicating constantly and from a distance it seemed like they were engrossed in a very interesting conversation.

As we left the train I asked Ahmad bhai what they had been talking about and to which he replied:

***“I have absolutely no idea, she did not understand a word of English and I did not understand a word of hers!”***

### **Waqfe-Nau class with Huzoor**

On the evening of Thursday, 7 November, Huzoor travelled to the Jamaat Centre in Nagoya and held Mulaqats with the local Ahmadis.

Huzoor also held classes with the *Waqf-e-Nau* and *Waqfat-e-Nau* children.

During the final 15 minutes of the *Waqf-e-Nau* class the children had the opportunity to ask Huzoor questions and I was struck by how intelligent the children seemed.

Even though they were mostly very young, aged 10 or 11, their questions were very mature and deep.

It was clear that they all had a very deep understanding of Ahmadiyyat.

It made me think that the local Ahmadi children had not only absorbed the blessings associated with our Jamaat but had also taken on Japanese traits of being educated and motivated to learn.

### **An historic Friday Sermon**

On Friday 8 November, Huzoor delivered the Friday Sermon from the *Mielparque Hotel* in Nagoya. It was not possible to deliver the sermon from the existing Jamaat Centre as it was too small, and whilst the Jamaat had recently purchased a much larger centre in Nagoya it was not yet ready to be used.

Huzoor began his sermon by saying that the Japanese Jamaat was filled with a spirit of loyalty and sincerity and its members had displayed very high standards of financial sacrifice.

As Huzoor said these words I could see the happiness on the faces of the local Ahmadis.

I was reminded of a conversation I had with an American *Khadim* who I had met in California earlier in the year. He said that Huzoor was a spiritual father for all Ahmadis and all children were desperate to please their father and earn his praise.

Thus, when Huzoor praised the sincerity and standards of the local Japanese Jamaat it filled them with joy and motivated them towards improving further.

Indeed afterwards, Japan's *Sadr Jamaat*, Anees Nadeem Sahib told me that those few words had greatly impacted the members of the Jamaat.

Huzoor also spoke of the new property recently acquired by the Jamaat which he had named '*Baitul Ahad*'.

Huzoor said it would prove to be a great means of *Tabligh* and so it was imperative that each Ahmadi sought to prioritise their *own* personal connection with God so that they could be a positive example for others.

During his sermon, Huzoor also very directly addressed the *Sadr Jamaat* of Japan who is also the *Missionary-in-Charge* and said that he should act as a fatherly figure for the members of the Jamaat and uphold the highest personal standards.

Later on the *Sadr Jamaat* told me how Huzoor's words had directed him towards self-analysis to a much greater degree and how he had found that Huzoor's words had led to his love for the Jamaat and for Khilafat to increase a great deal. Thus, the impact of Huzoor's words is instant.

### **Announcement of new year of *Tahrik-e-Jadid***

Another very distinctive aspect of Huzoor's sermon in Japan was that Huzoor used it to announce the new year of *Tahrik-e-Jadid* and to give a report of the previous year.

Huzoor announced that in the past year £7,869,100 had been collected worldwide and this was an increase of more than £650,000 from the year before.

Huzoor also informed that the number of people who had contributed to the scheme had increased by 225,000 during the past year.

Thereafter, Huzoor gave a detailed report and prayed that Allah rewarded all those who had participated.

This would be the last Friday Sermon of Huzoor's blessed tour of the *Far East* and *Pacific* and it seemed very fitting that the final Sermon was historic in the sense that for the first time the new year of *Tahrik-e-Jadid* had been announced from Japan.

It was something that would be noted in *Tahrik-e-Jadid* and thus preserved in our Jamaat's history.

### **Blessings of Waqf**

Shortly after Jumma, Huzoor called me to his office at the hotel for some work.

As I sat in Huzoor's company he asked about the last few days and in particular about the visit to *Hiroshima*.

I felt very fortunate to be able to share my experiences with Huzoor.

As I got up to leave the office, Huzoor said:

***"It can now be said that you have seen the world. You have travelled with me to Africa, to North America and now to the Far East."***

As I heard these words I felt so much gratitude to Huzoor.

I had seen more of the world than I could ever have imagined and so I replied by saying that whatever opportunities I had been blessed with were entirely because of Huzoor's generosity and kindness.

With great love and humility, Huzoor said:

***“All of these blessings are due entirely to your Waqf. If you had remained a lawyer you would not have been able to see such countries for at least another 20 years.”***

I responded by saying that not just *20 years* but I was sure that if I had not done *Waqf* I would *never* have had the opportunity to visit some of these countries.

I mentioned to Huzoor how the day before the tour had begun I had told my elder brother Fareed that I was going to be travelling with Huzoor.

With the *Grace of Allah*, Fareed is a very successful dentist and a highly qualified specialist in his field and yet when I told him that I would be travelling with Huzoor and the countries we would visit, he said:

***“You are very lucky and fortunate to have such a job”.***

As I left Huzoor’s office, I reflected on Huzoor’s comment for the rest of the day and even now weeks later I find myself sometimes thinking about it.

The blessings of *Khilafat* and of *Waqf* truly are unparalleled and are witnessed by all Ahmadis.



### **Huzoor's interview with *Asahi Shimbun***

In the early evening of 8<sup>th</sup> November, Huzoor was interviewed by a journalist, Mr Sato Yuji, representing the *Asahi Shimbun* daily newspaper.

The newspaper is considered the most respected national newspaper in Japan and its print circulation is conservatively estimated at 10million people.

### **Simultaneous translation**

The journalist had quite a unique appearance with long greying hair and a thick, bushy grey beard.

As he did not speak English the interview was conducted in both Japanese and Urdu.

The journalist asked questions in Japanese and these were translated into Urdu by the *Sadr Jamaat*.

Huzoor would answer in Urdu and then the *Sadr Jamaat* would translate Huzoor's answers into Japanese.

### **A lot of '*Rabwah*' questions**

The journalist asked a range of questions over the next 20 minutes about Khilafat, the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Jamaat and the persecution it has faced.

In particular, the journalist asked a number of questions about the town of '*Rabwah*' - such as how it was chosen after the *Partition* of India and whether it was a '*safe*' place for Ahmadis to live.

He also asked what the status of '*Rabwah*' was in our Jamaat.

As I listened to the repeated references to '*Rabwah*' I began to think that perhaps his research had led him to believe that our Jamaat had been founded in *Rabwah* or that it was considered the most sacred place for Ahmadis.

If he did have this belief it was corrected by Huzoor who explained that the status of *Rabwah* could never equal that of *Makkah* or *Medina* and nor could it equal the status of *Qadian* where our Jamaat had been founded by the Promised Messiah (as).

Despite this answer, the journalist continued his questions in a similar vein and asked if there were Ahmadis in the world who had never been to *Rabwah*.

Huzoor responded by saying that there were millions of Ahmadis who had never visited *Rabwah* and that in today's world Ahmadis were more likely to visit either London, where the Khalifa resided, or *Qadian* the town of the Promised Messiah (as).

Towards the end of the interview, Huzoor himself asked the journalist why his questions had focused so much on *Rabwah*.

The journalist replied that he felt great sympathy in his heart for those people who had been exiled from their hometowns and so in this way he was interested in *Rabwah* because Huzoor and many other Ahmadis had been forced to leave Pakistan due to the unjust circumstances that prevailed in the country.

When I heard this response I was quite astonished – where I had thought that the journalist may have believed *Rabwah* to be the main centre of Ahmadiyyat his interest stemmed from a personal sympathy.

In response, Huzoor said that if circumstances improved then Ahmadis who had migrated could return to *Rabwah* and that no doubt a great love for *Rabwah* and Pakistan was imprinted in the hearts of Ahmadis.

### **London – “a centre of the world”**

The journalist also asked Huzoor if he could ever imagine himself living in Japan to which Huzoor responded:

***“If you look at it in terms of its location and time-zone London can be considered to be the centre of the world and so in this way it is a suitable place for the Khalifa to reside.***

***However if ever a need arises the headquarters of our Jamaat could be in any part of the world that the Khalifa deems appropriate.”***

### **Huzoor's kind offer**

As the interview concluded, Huzoor said to the journalist that given his interest in *Rabwah* if he ever wished to visit it Huzoor would gladly provide the means and arrangements for his travel.

The journalist thanked Huzoor for this offer and for taking the time to do the interview.

### **Visit to Baitul Ahad**

On the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> November, Huzoor visited the new *Baitul Ahad* premises which the Japan Jamaat had recently purchased.

I had some work to do that evening and so I thought about staying at the hotel and completing it.

I had even taken Huzoor's permission to stay back if need be but Mubarak Zafar Sahib said if I did not go I would regret it later as this was the only opportunity to visit the new Mosque.

It was a good piece of advice because I was then able to partake in the first *Namaz* led by a Khalifa at the new Mosque when Huzoor led the *Maghreb* and *Isha* prayers upon arrival.

### **Huzoor inspecting the building**

The building, which was previously used as a games centre, was very large but in need of a lot of renovation.



Huzoor inspected the building and also looked at architectural drawings showing how the Jamaat planned to redevelop it into a proper Mosque. Huzoor gave various instructions for the renovation work whilst checking the drawings.

### **Barbecue at Baitul Ahad**

After *Namaz*, Huzoor was escorted to a terrace on the roof of the building where the Jamaat had arranged a barbecue. Huzoor was seated at the head table and *Sadr Sahib* Japan and an elderly Japanese Ahmadi convert had the honour of sitting either side of Huzoor.

## 2 bowls of *falooda*

I was seated at a table directly in front of Huzoor next to Majid Sahib and Mubarak Sahib.

After we had eaten some *kebabs* I saw that the traditional *desi* dessert of *falooda* was being served.

I went and joined the queue and came back with a bowl which I enjoyed a lot.

Just as I had finished, someone came to our table to serve *falooda* to us. As I had already eaten I declined, whilst Majid Sahib and Mubarak Sahib started eating their dessert.

When Huzoor looked over he saw that I was not eating and so he told me to take some *falooda*.

Even though I had already eaten a bowl, the fact that Huzoor had told me to take some meant that I immediately got up and took another serving.

If anything that second bowl was even more delicious than the first.

Perhaps Huzoor had not seen that I had already eaten *falooda* or perhaps he had - but either way it showed how Huzoor desired for all members of his party to enjoy every aspect of the tour.

### **An example of Huzoor's love for his Khadim**

As the days went by in Japan, the emotional and spiritual impact of Huzoor's visit upon the local Jamaat was very evident.

One person I became friends with was the local *Sadr Khuddam* who was an Ahmadi originally from Indonesia called Achmad Fathurehman Sahib.

One afternoon *Sadr Sahib* told me that the past few days spent close to Huzoor were unlike any other time in his life and how he constantly felt overwhelmed whenever he saw Huzoor.

Speaking about one particular incident he said:

***"On the first day Huzoor arrived, Ahmad Sahib (Huzoor's head of security) told me that I should escort Huzoor in the lift up to his room.***

***When we were in the lift Ahmad Sahib informed Huzoor that I was Sadr Khuddam and upon hearing this Huzoor put his hand on my arm in a very loving way.***

***I could not believe how lucky I was that the Khalifa had touched my arm and those few seconds were the most precious of my life. I will never forget them."***

During Huzoor's tours I often talked to Ahmadis who said a few seconds with Huzoor had changed their lives completely.

Whenever I heard such words it made me feel ashamed that those people, like myself, who lived close to Huzoor and were able to spend much more time in his company did not realise just how blessed and fortunate they were.

### **Visit to Nagoya market and temple**

On the afternoon of Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November, Ahmad bhai and I went briefly to a local market in Nagoya. Hizqeel, the Jamia student from Canada, took us as we travelled on the local metro.

The market was very traditional, filled with small shops selling all types of local items. I purchased some traditional *kaava* cups as gifts for home and also a few other small items.

We also bought a 'green-tea' flavoured ice cream cone on the recommendation of some local people. I was a bit dubious but the ice cream turned out to be very delicious and a perfect mid-afternoon energy boost!

During our visit we were also able to see a local Buddhist temple.

It was so interesting and educational to see how the local people worshipped in their own particular way.

They would pull on a rope and light candles and incense sticks. It was clear that they believed that their rituals had a deep meaning and was a means of spirituality for them.



### **Taking the wrong train causing panic!**

At 6pm a Special Reception being held in Huzoor's honour at the Nagoya hotel was scheduled to begin and so we left the market in good time to make sure we were back well before the event.

However, unfortunately, we accidentally got on the wrong train and so ended up going in the wrong direction.

When we finally became aware of our mistake I felt very anxious and worried fearing that we would be late for Huzoor's event.

Ahmad bhai covers his anxiety very well in such situations but I could see that even he was becoming stressed as we realised that the time was getting quite tight.

As we came off the wrong train we ran across the platform and up some stairs and crossed to the correct platform.

Even then we were not sure if we were in the right place and so it was with a sense of trepidation that we stepped on to the train.

Thankfully it turned out that we were now travelling in the right direction and we managed to arrive back at the hotel by 5.45pm.

I felt so relieved when we entered the hotel just in the nick of time.

I did not let anyone know how close we had been to being late and so as I saw the other members of Qafila I acted very casually to make it seem like I had been back at the hotel for a long time!

### **Special Reception in Nagoya**

I felt extremely privileged to be able to attend the reception that took place that night where Huzoor delivered Islam's peaceful and loving message to the people of Japan.

More than 100 dignitaries and guests packed into a reception room at the hotel to hear Huzoor's address.

The guests included Nagoya's well-known Mayor, *Kawamura Takashi*, and various other politicians and dignitaries.

During his address, Huzoor explained Islam's true teachings and spoke of the urgent need for reconciliation and unity amongst mankind. Huzoor's words were very beautiful and emotive.

When describing Ahmadi Mosques, Huzoor said:

***“Our Mosques are symbols of peace and beacons of light that illuminate their surroundings...”***

***Our Mosques are not built to cause any pain to mankind, but on the contrary are built for the sake of protecting and loving all people.”***

Huzoor spoke of how terrorists had hijacked Islam's pure name through their violence and hatred and that even innocent women and children were not being spared by such evil people.



He explained how all such acts had nothing to do with the teachings of Islam and that Quran taught that killing even one person unjustly was akin to killing all of mankind.

Huzoor said the time had come for all people to ***“step forward with a spirit of reconciliation”*** and to ***“become true ambassadors of peace”***.

As I listened to these words, I found myself becoming emotional, praying and hoping that people would listen and take heed of Huzoor's warnings.

Having visited *Hiroshima* a couple of days before I understood far better the urgency and wisdom in Huzoor's words.

Thereafter Huzoor informed the audience about the advent of the Promised Messiah (as) and said that he had been tasked with the “*spiritual reformation*” of the people of this era.

Huzoor said that Ahmadis strived to protect all religions because this is what Islam taught.

At the end of his address, Huzoor reflected upon the tragedy borne by the Japanese people during the *Second World War*.

Huzoor said:

***“You are those people who know the full devastating effects of the atom bomb and the carnage that ensues.***

***You are the people who know better than any other the horrific consequences of modern warfare.***

***Thus, it is my prayer that may Allah grant the leaders and people of the world the ability to act with wisdom, so that a collective effort can be made to stop all cruel and barbaric elements of society from their heinous activities.”***

#### **Impact of Huzoor’s address**

Huzoor’s words, which were simultaneously translated into Japanese, had a very powerful impact.

As I looked around the hall it was clear that the local people had been reassured by Huzoor's words and touched by the sympathy he had shown to the Japanese people.

I spoke to many of the guests and they all expressed their sincere gratitude that Huzoor had come to their nation with such a positive and loving message.

A Japanese Christian priest who I met said:

***“During the address given by His Holiness a spirit of peace filled the entire room. His Holiness gave answers to the problems faced by today's world. His message was that all people should love one another.”***

#### **A Japanese student of Ahmadiyyat**

One young lady I met was called *Hirako Minesaki*. She had studied our Jamaat for the past few years and had published an academic thesis about the Jamaat.

Having studied the Jamaat she knew a lot of our terminology and when speaking about Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba) she used the term 'Huzoor' with the same respect with which Ahmadis use it.

Throughout Huzoor's address she took notes and so when I mentioned to her that due to the nature of my job I also take notes she responded by saying:

***“Yes you took notes like me but I also recorded the entire address on a voice recorder because I did not want to miss a second of the wisdom of Huzoor!”***

After the event, when guests were able to meet Huzoor one by one, *Hirako* mentioned to Huzoor that she was studying the Jamaat.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said that if she ever wanted to go to Rabwah, he would arrange it for her.



Reflecting on this exchange, *Hirako* later said to me:

***“I have heard lots of lectures and speeches in my life but this was by far the best. Huzoor even offered for me to go to Rabwah and this was the kindest gesture I could imagine. Please convey my gratitude to Huzoor. I will never forget this evening.”***

### Other comments of guests

One gentleman I met was Mr *Tomohira Koneko*. It was clear that Huzoor's address had made a profound impact on him and that he had taken Huzoor's message very seriously.

Speaking to me afterwards he said:

***"I am very, very afraid of the possibility of a Third World War and so people need to listen to the message of His Holiness.***

***I hope His Holiness prays that the world is saved from another war.***

***I was very impressed by his words because he kept coming back to the importance of serving humanity and in this way he showed me that Islam is a compassionate religion."***

I also met *Sato Yuji*, the journalist who had interviewed Huzoor the day before. He told me how pleased he was to have met Huzoor personally the previous evening and now to have the opportunity to see him address a public event.

He said he appreciated Huzoor's peaceful message because it was clear that they were not just words but that he and the Jamaat members lived by such a message.

He said that if there was one way to describe Huzoor it was ***"genuine and sincere"***.

### **Huzoor's meeting with the *Khuddam Amila***

During our stay in Nagoya, Huzoor also held meetings with the *Amilas* of the auxiliary organisations.

I was seated at the back of the room during Huzoor's meeting with the *Khuddam Amila* which consisted of just 5 or 6 *Amila* members.

In a very soft and loving way Huzoor enquired from each of the *Amila* members about how they were conducting their duties and Huzoor offered guidance about how they should improve their activities.

With great patience Huzoor explained what their roles and responsibilities were.

### **Approval of new *Sadr Khuddam***

During the meeting Huzoor was informed that the term of the *Sadr Khuddam* had now come to an end and that an election had recently been held during which the most votes were received by a *Khadim* called *Ihsan Rehmatullah* Sahib.

Huzoor enquired about Ihsan Sahib from the current *Sadr Khuddam* and the *Sadr Jamaat* and was told that with the *Grace of Allah* he was of good character and a dedicated *Khadim*.



Upon hearing this Huzoor said:

***“If that is the case and he received the most number of votes then Ihsan Rehmatullah should be appointed as the new Sadr Khuddam.”***

It was very intriguing to see how Huzoor had very quickly made this decision and was certainly a lesson in efficiency.

Huzoor did not enquire about Ihsan’s Sahib’s career or from which family he was from - all Huzoor cared about was whether he was of good character and someone who could be a role model to others.

After making this decision Huzoor directed that upon his return to Tokyo he wished to meet with the new *Sadr Khuddam* personally.

A couple of days later, I met Ihsan Sahib and he told me that he had now met with Huzoor and that Huzoor had been extremely kind and loving to him. He said he was now determined to carry out his duties and responsibilities to the best of his abilities.

### **Return to Tokyo**

On the morning of 10<sup>th</sup> November, Huzoor and his Qafila left Nagoya to return to Tokyo. Whilst we had driven from Tokyo to Nagoya, our return journey was to be by train. I was very excited because it was the first time I ever had the opportunity to take a train journey with Huzoor.

## Waiting at Nagoya Station

We arrived at *Nagoya Station* quite early and so there were around 20 minutes until the train was due to leave.

Very patiently and without any sense of formality, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi waited at the platform like all other travellers.

During this period Huzoor met with various Ahmadis and at one point Huzoor also called me for a few moments and so I was able to share my reflections of the previous evening's reception with Huzoor.



## A beautiful colour

I noticed the colour of Huzoor's *achkan* coat that day was a dark and beautiful colour that seemed like a mixture of dark green and brown.

Huzoor always looks radiant and beautiful but that day as Huzoor leaned against the railing with his green *achkan* he looked even more beautiful and special, *Masha'Allah*.

### **Travel on *bullet train***

We took a *bullet train* back to Tokyo and the journey was very special and memorable. The Jamaat had booked seats in 2 separate carriages.

With the *Grace of Allah* I had the honour to sit in the same carriage as Huzoor and Khala Saboohi along with Ahmad bhai, Bashir Sahib and the *Sadr Jamaat* Japan. The rest of the Qafila members were in the next carriage.

During the journey Huzoor walked up and down our carriage a few times taking video and seemed very relaxed.

Huzoor also went into the second carriage to the delight of the other Qafila members to see how they were.

### **Being able to provide *Wi-Fi* to Huzoor**

When Huzoor returned to our carriage, I mentioned that I had a mobile internet device in case Huzoor wished to connect his *iPhone* or *iPad* to the internet.

Huzoor returned to his seat but a few moments later returned with his *iPad* to where I was seated. Huzoor asked me the *Wi-Fi* code and as I repeated it Huzoor fed it into his *iPad*.

I felt happy that the mobile device I had been carrying had proved to be of benefit as it enabled Huzoor to connect to the internet.

### **Watching MTA with Huzoor on the train**

With the internet connected, Huzoor started streaming *MTA* on his *iPad* through the *MTA app*. We then had the privilege to stand alongside Huzoor for a few minutes watching the Friday Sermon on Huzoor's own *iPad*.

As we watched, I said to Huzoor that I could not believe that I was on a train in Japan watching Huzoor's *Khutba Jumma* with Huzoor. Upon hearing this comment Huzoor smiled.

### **Huzoor's attention to detail**

After a few minutes, Huzoor returned to his seat and called me over.

I crouched down and Huzoor showed me various features on his *iPad* and some of the *apps* that he had stored.

Huzoor also told me that he had noticed that I sometimes spelt a particular word incorrectly and so Huzoor went to an *online dictionary* and showed me the correct way to spell it!

I was amazed at how, despite being so busy, Huzoor continued to be aware of the smallest details and found time to correct them.

### **Arrival back in Tokyo**

I spent the rest of the journey back to Tokyo talking to Ahmad bhai and we both reflected upon various parts of the trip.

It had been such an enjoyable train journey that I found myself feeling disappointed when it ended as I could have happily stayed on that train all day.

### **Huzoor appreciating Tokyo's beauty**

We returned to *Intercontinental Hotel* where we had spent our first evening in Japan and soon after Huzoor came to a room on the 37<sup>th</sup> floor to lead the *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers.



The view from the room was breathtaking and so after *Namaz* had concluded Huzoor looked towards the local Ahmadis and said:

***“As a city Tokyo is more beautiful than Nagoya!”***

Throughout the tour I had noticed a healthy and friendly sense of rivalry between the Nagoya and Tokyo Jamaats and so upon hearing these words the Ahmadis from Tokyo were delighted!

### **Question and Answer session with Huzoor in Tokyo**

In the evening, the Jamaat had arranged another formal function in a large meeting hall at the hotel in Tokyo.

The Jamaat had called it a ‘*Press Conference*’ but apart from journalists the room was filled with various dignitaries and guests who had come to meet Huzoor and to ask him various questions.

Thus in my view rather than ‘*Press Conference*’ a better name would have simply been ‘*Question and Answer Session*’.

### **Japan’s appreciation to Hazrat Chaudhry Zafrullah Khan Sahib**

One of the main dignitaries attending was a former *Finance Minister* of Japan who had recently retired from politics but who continued to have a lot of influence.

He spoke for quite some time and thanked Huzoor for the humanitarian relief provided by the Jamaat following the devastating *Tsunamis* that struck Japan in 2011.

One further thing he referred to was the “*debt of gratitude*” the Japanese nation owed to Hazrat Sir Chaudhry Zafrullah Khan Sahib.

He said the people of Japan would never forget Chaudhry Sahib’s speech in 1951 at an international conference in which the future of Japan was debated by the world powers.

He said that whilst others wished to treat Japan unjustly, Chaudhry Sahib advocated that Japan should be treated fairly and with consideration and that any decisions made should not be motivated by a desire for revenge or due to feelings of enmity.

Addressing Huzoor, the politician continued by saying:

***“It has been more than 60 years since that speech but because of the way Zafrullah Khan defended our nation I must take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of the politicians and people of Japan.”***

As I listened to this I was amazed by how much the Japanese leaders continued to value and remember the kindness of Hazrat Chaudhry Sahib decades ago.

I felt pride as an Ahmadi that it was *our* Jamaat who had always led the way in calling for justice and fairness in all parts of the world.

### Our Jamaat's commitment to peace and justice

Throughout the Ahmadiyya Jamaat's history it had always advocated equality for all people and this was exactly what Huzoor had been doing for the past 10 years since his election as *Khalifatul Masih*.

As I heard the politician recall Hazrat Chaudhry Sahib's speech, I had no doubt that decades or even centuries from now people would look back at Huzoor's addresses at various Parliaments and public events and come to thank him for guiding the world towards peace during this conflict-ridden era.

### Huzoor answering questions of Japanese guests

Over the next 90 minutes Huzoor answered questions in a formal *Question and Answer* session.

Unfortunately one particular journalist asked about 8 lengthy questions and so it was not possible for all people who wished to ask Huzoor questions to do so.

Nevertheless, Huzoor answered each question posed to him in a really beautiful and composed manner.

Huzoor said that religion was, and always would be, ***"a matter of the heart"*** and so the Quran taught that there ***"should be no compulsion"*** in matters of faith and belief.



Huzoor spoke about Islam's compassionate teachings and said that the Promised Messiah (as) had said that a Muslim should consider the pain and suffering of *others* as his *own* pain and suffering.

In an answer to another question, Huzoor said that true Muslims preferred for others what they preferred for themselves and this was the reason why we did *Tabligh* because we wished to share Islam's perfect teachings with others so that they too could benefit from what we loved and believed in.

### **Impact of Question and Answer Session**

This question and answer session also proved to have a very strong impact on the guests.

With his every word and every sentence Huzoor expounded Islam's true teachings and removed common misconceptions.

One lady I met afterwards was called *Nozomi Shiratani* who had studied Islam in great depth as part of her *PhD* studies. She told me she had lived in Morocco and parts of the Middle East to learn about Islam.

After listening to Huzoor that evening she remarked:

***"Today it was very interesting to hear the Khalifa because his views are entirely different to what I have heard from (non-Ahmadi) Maulvis during my stays in various Muslim countries.***

***In particular His Holiness spoke about how the State and religion should be kept apart and should be independent from one another. This was very different to what I had heard from other Muslim clerics. I must say I was fascinated by the Khalifa and enjoyed the entire evening a great deal.”***

Another lady I met said she had been to various Jamaat events over the past couple of years in Japan and she found it astonishing how attached all Ahmadis were to their Khalifa.

She said even young children who had never seen the Khalifa before had told her how much they loved Huzoor and wanted to follow his every teaching.

She said it seemed like the Khalifa was a ‘*magnet*’ and Ahmadis could not help but be drawn to him.

### **The final day of the tour**

After nearly 2 months away from home, Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November, marked our final full day of the tour. It felt strange to think that after so long we would be returning to our homes the next day.

I began to think of how I would *Insha’Allah* soon be able to see my young son Mahid and see how he had grown. I found myself wondering if he would recognise me.

I was happy and excited to go home but also sad that such a wonderful and blessed tour was now reaching its conclusion.

## Huzoor visiting a Japanese market

Even though Monday was our last day it proved to be an extremely busy and full day. The Jamaat had kept the morning and early afternoon period free so that Huzoor could be taken out into the city for a few hours.

Huzoor had agreed to this suggestion and said he would like to visit a traditional part of the city. The Jamaat therefore took Huzoor to a very crowded oriental market in the heart of the city called *Asakusa Nakamise Market*.



## Selflessness of Huzoor and his family

Upon arrival, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi looked at various small shops in the market and I think Khala Saboohi did purchase a few small things.

As we walked around I thought of how even such a shopping trip illustrated the great sacrifices that Huzoor and his family had made for the sake of the Jamaat.

Whereas the rest of us could go on private family outings whenever we wanted such opportunities were extremely few and far between for Huzoor and Khala Saboohi and even on the rare occasions they were able to visit such places, invariably they were accompanied by a Qafila and members of the local Jamaat.

### **Huzoor taking photos of the market and a Temple**

As Huzoor continued walking through the market he was escorted to a local *Temple* where he was able to observe people involved in their rituals of worship.

Huzoor took some photos on his phone and watched the rites of worship with interest.

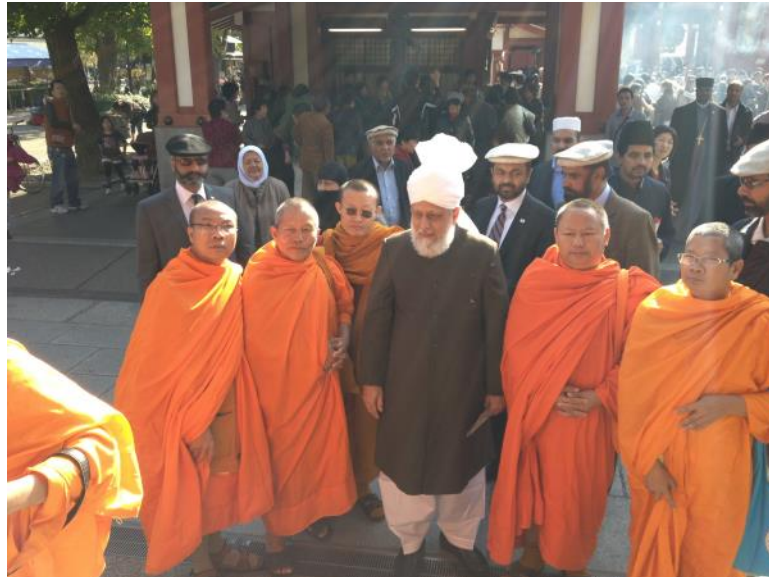
### **An unbelievable few minutes**

As Huzoor turned around a group of *Buddhist Monks* who had travelled from abroad came into view and requested a photo with Huzoor.

Very graciously Huzoor accepted the request.

What happened thereafter was truly amazing!

As Huzoor walked back through the market suddenly groups of people started flocking towards him.



Every few metres Huzoor was stopped by people of all ages asking to have their photo taken with him.

Although they probably did not know about Huzoor but they had sensed his spirituality and so were desperate to meet him.

After having their photos taken people were proudly showing the results to others. The delight on their faces and in their eyes was crystal clear.

I can honestly say I have never seen a scene like it in my life. Those moments were truly incredible. At one point I began thinking that we would be there all day because the stream of people gravitating towards Huzoor seemed to increase by the second.

### **An interesting coincidence**

Whilst the majority of people who approached Huzoor did not know who he was, one husband and wife who approached him knew exactly who he was. The couple were from England and were on holiday in Japan.

The wife approached Huzoor and introduced herself by saying:

***“You are my neighbour – we live on Melrose Road (the road just behind Fazl Mosque) and so we have seen you many times. We live at number 67.”***

As I heard her say these words I was astonished at the coincidence.

Melrose Road was literally attached to the *Fazl Mosque* and whilst she lived at number 67, the Jamaat owned number 65 which was used as a guest house.

It was quite possible that they were Huzoor’s closest possible neighbours in London and here they were in a far-off Japanese market at the exact same time as Huzoor.

There was one further coincidence which made the meeting even more unique. The lady mentioned to Huzoor that she shared a birth date with him.

Upon hearing this Huzoor asked her date of birth to which she said **“15 September 1950”** and as he heard this Huzoor smiled and said:

***“Yes that is also the date on which I was born.”***

I have to admit that these coincidences left me truly amazed.

It was clear that they had been very delighted to see Huzoor in Japan and I am quite sure that after seeing how all the local people were attracted to him they will have come to better understand the status and importance of their blessed neighbour.

### Lunch at the 'Ginza Sky Lounge'

After leaving the market, Huzoor was driven to the '*Ginza Sky Lounge*' which was a skyscraper in Tokyo's City Centre.

The local Jamaat had arranged for lunch at a revolving restaurant on an upper level of the building from where the city could be viewed.

Huzoor and Khala Saboohi were seated at one table, whilst the rest of us sat at tables a few metres away.

Initially we were told that the Jamaat had ordered *beef steak* for everyone.

I did not mind as I like steak but a few other Qafila members said they did not like eating steak and so it was suggested that those who did not want the steak could either order *seafood pasta* or *beef stroganoff*.

On my table I was the only one who went for steak, whilst the others went for either seafood or stroganoff.

Everyone else's meals came quite soon but my steak was delayed and I was becoming worried because Ahmad bhai had mentioned that Huzoor had sent a message that we should not stay for too long because we still had to offer the *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers.

As the other people on my table were nearing the end of their meal my steak finally arrived.

When I saw it I realised I would soon catch up because it was extremely tiny and so in just two or three bites I could finish it!

I did not mind as we had already been served bread and butter so I was partially full already and even though it was small it was extremely delicious. Ahmad bhai tasted it and admitted that it was better than the *stroganoff* that he gone for.

### **Huzoor working until the final minute**

We returned to the hotel and immediately Huzoor led the *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers.

After a short break, Huzoor spent the entire final evening in his office at the hotel meeting Ahmadis in *Mulaqat* and then finally presiding over a meeting with Japan's *National Amila* members.

During the *Amila* meeting Huzoor asked the various *Amila* members questions and gave detailed guidance about how they should conduct their activities.



Some of the *Amila* members spoke of their desire for a Mosque to be built in Tokyo and Huzoor said that they should certainly endeavour to do so.

By the time the meeting concluded it was after 10pm at which time Huzoor led the *Maghreb* and *Isha* prayers.

Thus even on that final night Huzoor had worked and blessed the Jamaat with his precious time right until the very end.

I think by the time Huzoor had his dinner it must have been near 11pm.

### **Two dinners in one night**

I returned to my room to pack after *Namaz*. I was told that dinner would be served in our rooms and so after a few minutes I received a knock on my door and saw that a local *Khadim* had brought *Naan* and *Channay* (chickpeas) for dinner.

As it was so late and because we travelling the next day I thought I would only eat a few bites but both the *Naan* and *Channay* proved to be so delicious that I ended up eating every last bite.

I had just finally started packing when I received another knock on my door. This time it was Ahmad bhai and he told me to get my coat.

I asked why and he said that Private Secretary Sahib had arranged for us to go out to a local restaurant to try some of Japan's famous *sushi*.

Having just eaten the entire portion of *Naan* and *Channay* and with lots of packing still to do it would have perhaps have been more sensible for me to decline but instead I happily grabbed my coat and went down to the lobby with Ahmad bhai and Munir Sahib.

We went to a restaurant a mile or so away which specialised in *sushi*.

Our host ordered two or three different types and they were each truly delicious and completely different to the sushi I had eaten in London.

Our host was a Pakistani Ahmadi who had lived in Japan for some 30 years and was eager to show his expertise in the local cuisine.

Thus, he grabbed a long piece of sushi, covered it entirely with the extremely strong green *wasabi* sauce and put the entire piece in his mouth in one go.

Although he tried to hide it I think in his excitement he had placed too much *wasabi* on his fish because I could see that his eyes began to water after eating it!

### **Final packing and struggling to sleep**

By the time we returned to the hotel it was late and there were only a few hours until *Fajr*. I thought of leaving my packing until after *Fajr* but decided it was too risky because we had to hand in our luggage very early in the morning and so over the next hour I packed my suitcase before going to bed.

I tried to sleep but found it very difficult because I kept thinking about different parts of the tour and about the fact that we would *Insha'Allah* be back in London within 24 hours. If I did sleep it was only for a few moments.

### **Departure from hotel**

After *Fajr*, I handed over my suitcase and went and had breakfast with Ahmad bhai.

Soon after, at around 8.30am, we left the hotel and headed to the airport.

Huzoor's 53-day tour, filled with so many blessings, was now reaching its conclusion.

### **Emotions of the local Ahmadis**

Upon arrival at the airport Huzoor met with the local Ahmadis one final time. Huzoor waved towards the members of the Jamaat before crossing into the departure area.

I looked back at the Ahmadis, many of whom had tears rolling down their faces.

Later, one of the local Ahmadis told me he felt utterly devastated to see Huzoor leave because no Ahmadi would ever wish to be parted from the Khalifa. However he said the Japanese Jamaat was reassured by the fact that it seemed as though Huzoor was leaving pleased with them and their activities.

Another member of the local Jamaat, a young Khadim, wrote to me a few days later saying that when Huzoor waved goodbye for the final time and crossed into the departure area it seemed as though all of Tokyo had been left hollow and empty.

Nonetheless, he said that the memories of Huzoor's tour lived on and were a great means of comfort.

### **Huzoor's final moments in Japan**

It is one of the great fortunes of travelling with Huzoor that you do not feel the sadness of the local Jamaat when Huzoor departs because you are travelling onwards with him and so after we crossed into the departure area we were taken to two adjoining lounges.

Huzoor and Khala Saboohi went and sat in one lounge whilst the rest of us sat in the next room.

### **Last minute shopping!**

After a few minutes I went to the bathroom but when I came back all members of Huzoor's staff, except two members of the security staff, were nowhere to be seen.

I asked Khalid Akram Sahib where everyone had gone and he told me that they had gone to the *duty-free* shop to buy gifts for their wives and families!

Hearing this I decided to go and visit the *duty-free* shop myself.

It was quite a sight to see – Munir Javed Sahib, Majid Sahib, Mubarak Sahib, Bashir Sahib and Sakawat Sahib all looking at different perfumes and taking advice from one another.

### **A mistaken gift for home**

It so happened that the perfume I bought for Mala and which Bashir Sahib and Munir Javed Sahib bought for their families came with a free gift of a bag.

I was very pleased by this and thought it would be an extra gift to give to Mala and she would think that I had bought it for her!

This rather bad thought came back to haunt me when I returned home and very proudly handed her the gift.

When she opened it we were both shocked to see that it turned out to be a shaving bag for men!

Upon seeing this she asked why I had purchased her a men's shaving bag at which point I had to admit that it had been a free gift which I had presumed to be a ladies bag!

### **Flight back to London**

We returned to the airport lounge and after some time one of the airport staff came and informed that it was time for boarding and so we walked behind Huzoor and boarded the *British Airways* plane.

Although the plane was otherwise packed, it so happened that I was in a row in which the two seats next to me were empty and so in this way I was very fortunate.

I was able to lie and sleep for at least 4 or 5 hours of the long 12 hour journey.

### **Arrival at Heathrow**

We landed at *Heathrow* in the late afternoon UK time.

As we walked behind Huzoor I felt so many emotions. I felt happy to be home but also felt sad that the tour was now over.

Huzoor was greeted by *Ameer Sahib UK* and numerous officials of the Jamaat and the happiness and joy on their faces at having Huzoor back was so very clear.

### **Huzoor's return to Fazl Mosque**

We drove back to the *Fazl Mosque* and upon arrival hundreds of Ahmadis had gathered to welcome Huzoor and Khala Saboohi back to their home.

Huzoor waved at all of them and then entered his residence and as he did so I thought to myself that the tour had now truly reached its conclusion.

I immediately looked left and right and within a few seconds I saw Mala with the pushchair and inside Mahid, dressed very smartly, was lying fast asleep and certainly was much bigger than he had been when we left.

### Conclusion

I think we were all happy to return to our homes in the knowledge that Huzoor's tour had been filled from beginning to end with countless spiritual blessings.

Those of us who Huzoor had taken with him could never thank Allah enough for such a great privilege.

We had been able to witness the message of true Islam reach the far corners of the earth and to millions upon millions of people.

We had been bystanders observing Allah's representative on earth spreading Islam's teachings in the most beautiful and perfect manner.

From Singapore to Sydney, from Melbourne to Brisbane, from Auckland to Wellington, from Tokyo to Nagoya so many people had been blessed by meeting and listening to the words of the *Khalifatul Masih*.

We had witnessed attitudes of people changing in an instant after listening to Huzoor.

We had witnessed non-Ahmadis kissing the hand of the Khalifa seeking his blessings.

We had witnessed major politicians acknowledge their fortune at sharing a stage with *Khalifatul Masih*.

We had witnessed Huzoor being interviewed by the world's media.

And we had witnessed thousands upon thousands of Ahmadis being spiritually regenerated and energised due to a few moments in the company of their beloved Imam.

No doubt Huzoor's 2013 tour of the Far East and Pacific would go down in the great history of our Jamaat.



## *Afterword*

With the Grace of Allah I have now had the opportunity to write about Huzoor's tour in the diaries that I have written during the past couple of months. I have written about Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

When we returned to London I had every intention of writing about Huzoor's tour but the fact the tour had been so long and filled with so many different events made it an extremely daunting project. I did not think I would ever be able to cover the entire tour.

The fact that now I have been able to write about each week of the tour is due to only one reason alone – the constant encouragement and guidance of Huzoor.

Before sharing the diary with anyone else, each submission was first sent to Huzoor and invariably by the next day Huzoor had read each and every word despite the fact that he was so busy. Indeed, Huzoor told me that often the clock would reach midnight by the time he concluded reading my latest submission.

Huzoor would not only *read* the diaries but would *correct* them where my memory had failed me or add information I was unaware of.

To give just one example, when I wrote about Huzoor conducting the inspection prior to Jalsa Salana Australia, I wrote that Huzoor visited a photo exhibition made by the Jamaat.

Upon reading my submission Huzoor added a note with his own hand stating that whilst inspecting the exhibition he had instructed that the exhibition should have included photos of the martyrs of Ahmadiyyat and that every single photographic Jamaat exhibition should include photos of our martyrs.

There were also some (in fact many) occasions during the past couple of months where I became slow in writing and whenever that happened invariably Huzoor would ask me when the next instalment would be completed.

Thus it is truly only because of Huzoor's encouragement that I have been able to write these diaries.

All of the diaries have been lengthy and so I am grateful to everyone who has taken the time to read them and particularly to those who have sent feedback.

Finally, I should make it clear that my diaries have offered and can *only* offer a very small glimpse of what took place on Huzoor's tours. There are countless things that were not included and countless things that I will not even have been aware of.

May Allah grant *Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V* (aba) a very long and healthy life filled with blessings and everlasting joy.

*Abid Khan, 3 February 2014*