

## CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: THE CASE STUDY OF PAKISTAN-JAPAN CULTURAL RELATIONS

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### Abstract

*The cultural presentation and exchange have always influenced international relations and have positively played a role to motivate exchange programmes between countries. This research refers Japan-Pakistan relations as a case study to understand the concept of 'cultural diplomacy' and its practical implementation and influence on strengthening of this kind of Diplomacy. Multiple steps have been taken since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Japan to promote and flourish cultural relations. This paper aims to explore influence of 'cultural diplomacy' on Pakistan-Japan relations. Alongside, it ascertains the practical measures both the countries taking to consolidate their relations through cultural diplomacy.*

**Keywords:** Cultural diplomacy, bonsai, ikebana, literature, Saki, exchange programs

### INTRODUCTION

To promote successful diplomatic relations, it is a dire need to seek understanding not only from foreign governments but also from foreign nationals. Contemporarily, culture is playing a robust role as significant source of diplomatic policies; states are investing considerably in guaranteeing that nationals in other states perceive them positively. Alongside business and technology, culture is one of

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the most significant and vital features in 'Japanese Diplomacy' (Schneider, 2006).

Pakistan-Japan cultural relations are rooted in the rich heritage of Gandhara civilizations, which flourished in the South Asian region and extended to East Asia including Japan during the sixth century. This civilizational linkage is a source of strong cultural bondage between the two countries in the current time as well. Keeping in mind the importance of culture and tourism, Pakistan and Japan have established as well as maintained their strong and robust bilateral relations through the promotion of respective cultures (Abbasi, Khatwani, 2013).

The year 2022 marked 70 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Japan. Throughout these years, bilateral relations advanced with the main emphasis on social expansion. The Japanese government supported and still supporting Pakistan in areas of health, agriculture, disaster management, and water supply. Besides, they also enhanced and strengthened people-to-people relationships and communication (Rafi, 2022).

There is a diversity between the cultural values of two states because of their variant locations. Pakistan is located in Subcontinent; therefore, its cultural traditions are more similar to Indian traditions. However, Japanese culture is very much relevant to ancient Chinese culture. There are diversities between the cultural setup of Japan and Pakistan as well, but at the same time, the two countries are inclined to cultural exchange and people-to-people contacts. This mutual desire brings up successful cultural linkages between the two countries.

This paper highlights the significance of Pakistan-Japan cultural relations reflecting upon the various areas of cultural cooperation between these two Asian States. Promotion of cultural relations between the two countries includes students' exchange programmes, exhibition of arts, Japanese language courses, translation, of Japanese

and Urdu literature in respective states, and cultural events to enhance relations between Tokyo and Islamabad.

## **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

Cultural diplomacy can more appropriately be described as set of ideas and course of actions based on practicing exchange of opinions, values, customs, beliefs, traditions, and multiple cultural features. Public, private, and civil sectors are mostly engaged in cultural diplomacy to promote and strengthen social-cultural cooperation among states. It is a form of public diplomacy in which states want to attain their interests through promotion of their cultures in foreign nations. Its target is to wind the minds and hearts of the audience. States by exhibiting the positive sight of their culture tries to gather peaceful image among foreign states. Cultural Diplomacy is a significant soft power for a more coercive form of diplomacy. It encourages various elements of artistic and cultural domain in a way to engage hearts and minds across the borders (Syed, 2019).

Governments' supports and encouragement to those activities that connect people of one country directly to foreigners is termed as public diplomacy. When this public diplomacy is used by states in a long term to expose their culture to foreign public of other countries, it becomes cultural diplomacy (Ang, Isar, & Mar, 2015). This type of diplomacy aims to create a positive image of its state showing culture, customs and traditions to the outer world. It aims to create a way so that hearts and souls connect across the borders. Culture diplomacy comprises cultural societies, friendship groups, people-to-people exchange programmes, exhibiting artistic trends, music and folk tales, promotion of language and publicizing literature beyond the borders (Norrman, 2013).

Nye (2004) denotes that 'soft power' of any country rests on three sources: political values, foreign policies and culture. Cultural diplomacy helps the rest of two sources as it helps a country to design its political values more authentic in order to make its foreign polices

workable (Yavuzaslan & Çetin, 2016). Buledi (2019) writes that reflection of universal values in culture of any country makes its external relations attractive and it helps them to obtain the outcome of their desire. Cultural diplomacy contains two-pronged strategy. On one hand, it fosters values and customs of one nation to the foreign audiences and it is an effort to understand other countries, their culture and values and to be in touch with foreign public.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This is a case study research and it employs the qualitative approach for the in-depth understanding of cultural relations of Pakistan and Japan. 05 in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the perception and opinion of academics and experts of field about existing cultural relations between Pakistan and Japan and the opportunities for further collaboration in the domain. Deductive Thematic Analysis (DTA) technique was used to analyse the data. This technique means applying predetermined themes to data. The themes are created and developed from concepts drawn from existing literature or theory. In this analysis technique, the researcher expects to find their answers from respondents about predetermined themes. Deductive thematic analysis helps a researcher to maintain focus on the objective of research. During this research study, the researchers created broad relevant categories based on research objectives and questions and subsequently sort the primary data into those categories.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Being a civilized nation with catastrophic experiences of WW-II, Japan believes in peace and stability and intends to promote it through cultural diplomacy. The Pakistan-Japan cultural relations are going strong; both countries are utilizing their resources in promoting, and extending their respective culture. Since last six decades, the two countries have successfully established and

enhanced their cultural bondage. Japan as a civilized nation and having catastrophic experience of WW-II believes in peace and stability and has promoted this concept throughout world.

### **Institutionalisation of Cultural Relations**

Institutionalization of cultural relations occurs when the culture of a country becomes so well established that it becomes advantageous for the people and common persons become familiar with that culture. Cultural activities of Japan in Pakistan have also been institutionalised largely with time. The Governments of Pakistan and Japan moved by the mutual interest to encourage and establish the cultural ties with the aim to strengthen the understanding between the two countries. The two governments with the aim of promoting cultural relations signed a Cultural Agreement in 1957. Pakistani Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardi and Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi established the foundation of these cultural relations. In this agreement both the states agreed upon to support and facilitate each other in all possible ways and to fortify better cultural understanding in their respective states. Especially, by arranging theatrical performances, art exhibitions, literature, concerts, and publications. Through this agreement, multiple projects and several activities were conducted for solidification of Pak-Japanese relations (Anjum, 2012).

The creation of the Japan Foundation in 1972 was additional indication towards positive cultural relations. The foundation's main three activities were cultural exchange, support for education of Japanese language abroad, exchanges between artists and musicians. The establishment of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme invited many international exchange and foreign language teachers to Japan every year, it was attempt to internationalize Japanese communities. This aimed that Japan has to present itself as forerunner of postmodern culture instead of highlighting the interesting and multifaceted Japanese culture. Japanese manga, cuisine, novels, pop culture, web series, anime, and fashion became an integral part of

Japan's international cultural activities. However, most of these activities and policies are commercial because Japanese cultural diplomacy is closely related to its economic policy. This latest path was greatly represented and symbolized by the extension of content creation industry such as blogging, music, art, films, dramas, fashion and much more (Ogoura, 2012).

Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association (PJCA) is one of the most stable example of this collaboration. This organization fosters bilateral relationship between Japan and Pakistan. The association conducts several kinds of Japanese cultural activities such as Ikebana and jujitsu demonstration and multiple others in collaboration with the Embassy and Consulate General of Japan in Islamabad and Karachi respectively. PJCA has four branches operates in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and, Peshawar (Embassy of Japan, 2016).

Group participation is highly essential to take advantage of each other's values and cultures. It is an exciting way to share your ideas and ideals in a forum where your opinions matter and your inputs shared for the benefit of other members. With this spirit, Pakistan Japan Friendship Forum (PJFF) was established in Islamabad on 25th September 2018. This forum is helping to reinforce public relations between the two countries, which are foundation of very relations between the two states. This forum organizes each year The Pakistan-Japan Friendship Festivals to foster long-standing relationship and to exhibit deep affection and feelings towards Japanese people (Embassy of Japan, 2019).

### **Promotion of Language and Literature**

Theoretically, literature is an active part of cultural diplomacy as it takes readers beyond the borders through imaginations where they can see the foreign culture through the eyes of mind. People of Pakistan and Japan have also learnt a lot about each other through literary work. In 1990s, many Japanese novels were translated into Urdu language so that Pakistanis could enjoy Japanese literature. In

this connection, a literary organization, 'Pakistan Japan literature Forum' was established in 2017. Since then this forum is giving awareness about literature and culture of the both Pakistan and Japan. This forum helps both the countries to introduce their culture, language, literature, and poetry to the people especially to the younger peers. This forum works mainly in four cities namely Karachi, Lahore, Tokyo and, Osaka. People who want to be a part of this society must have some knowledge of prose and poetry. First ever session 'Pakistan and Japan Literary Relations' was held in December 2017, the session was presided by Professor Hirjoi Kataoka, he has the honour of translating masterpiece of prestigious and remarkable Pakistani poets such as Allama Iqbal, Faiz, Manto, Ghalib into Japanese language.

Pakistan Japan Literature Forum is a platform that aspires to facilitate both states to introduce each other's cultural and literary activities. The forum has lately published the world's first novel 'Genji Monogatari' in Urdu translation. Genji Monogatari was the first ever novel in the world written by a female writer Murasaki Shikibu. The novel has been translated into multiple languages but a Hindustani scholar translated only nine chapters while the novel consists of fifty-nine chapters. Hence, the translation done by a Hindu scholar was not complete. Raheel Publications in Karachi, Pakistan performed this task of translating the world's first novel in Urdu language under the title of 'Genji Ki Kahani'. The translation of this novel was conceived under the supervision of Khurram Sohail (Ali, 2021).

Much popular literary contribution of Pakistan to Japan was a famous Urdu literary magazine 'Saqi', which issued Japan Edition in 1936. The author of this magazine, Shahid Ahmed Dehlvi was a famous and prestigious Urdu writer; he inherited his sense of language skills and literary complexities from his grandfather Nazeer Ahmed Dehlvi commonly known as 'Deputy' Nazeer Ahmed. In January 1930, Shahid launched this magazine from Delhi. After migration to Pakistan, he launched the magazine from Karachi. Saqi also

published many numbers and special issues that hold great importance in the history of Urdu Literature; Japan Number is one of those special issues edited by Shahid Ahmed Dehlvi and Prof. Noor-ul-Hasan Birlas.

In 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan was among the few Asian states who were blooming in technology and education therefore; this becomes the main reason for publishing special issues on Japan. Saqi's Japan Edition of 1936 has been reprint and launched at the Japanese Consulate Karachi. The magazine was hand written in 1936 but now it is fully compiled on computer. The fiction novels in this edition of the magazine highlight Japan's social, political, literary, and other aspects of Japanese life style. The magazine 'Saqi' hold the great importance, as the reprint of this would give Pakistani readership an insight about Japanese life style and culture in Urdu language. (Salman, 2019).

It was the same decade of 1930s when Japanese language was introduced in Japan. Professor Birlas was a scholar from Delhi, he played significant role in the teaching of Urdu language in Japan. He taught Urdu Language in Tokyo University as a visiting professor from 1932 to 1948. Professor Birlas translated many Japanese literature in Urdu and most of his pieces published in Saqi. Much of his published work has been reprinted and preserved by the Pakistan Japan Literature Forum (Parekh, 2018).

Similarly, with the intention to foster understanding of Japanese culture and to make Japan attractive place for foreign students, the Government of Japan started Japanese Language Overseas Programs. The Japanese Foundation is working with Government for sending Japanese-language education specialists and instructors in different countries. According to Japan Foundation, 3.66 million individuals in 137 states are studying Japanese in 2015 (MoFAJ, 2021). To enhance the cultural understanding between Pakistan and Japan, the Department of Japanese Language was established in 1981 in National University of Modern Languages. It is the only Japanese



department in Pakistani universities, it teaches Japanese to tourist guides working in a country, military officers dispatching to Japan for training and governmental officials going Japan for studies. The department holds Japan language proficiency test twice a year that is only trusted international test in Japan. The University hopes to take benefit from this and provide comprehensive knowledge to students, at the same time it also aims to promote the areas of understanding between Pakistan and Japan. Some private language institutes are working in Karachi, Islamabad and, Lahore. In Lahore, various private institutes are teaching Japanese language (NUML, n.d.).

Area Studies Centre, Far East & Southeast Asia at the University of Sindh Jamshoro is teaching Japanese language since January 2022 with the support of Japanese Consulate General in Karachi (Interviewee No.1, 25 November 2022). Twenty to twenty-five students are enrolled in each batch, and so far, it is going successful. There are different levels in Japanese language such as N5 to N1. As the level goes up the language gets more professional and difficult, such as N5 and N4 is the basic Japanese language whereas, N1 and N2 is more challenging because it is the understanding of Japanese language used in daily life. The bridging level between these five levels is N3. Students and workers who are going to Japan for higher studies or for jobs respectively required N4 level of Japanese language so they can communicate without having a feeling of language barrier (Interviewee No.5, 24 November, 2022).

### **Cultural Collaboration via Exchange Programmes**

The main objective of launching exchange programs is to establish and foster positive relations between nation-states around the world and develop the understanding of each other's society and culture. Japan in order to carry out this aim is facilitating research overseas over the areas related to commerce, politics, society, and Japanese culture. Japan Foundation is primarily working for it and carrying out multiple complex aid measures such as setting up the organizations' meeting and providing foreign Japan studies thinkers with a prospect

to carry out research in Japan (Embassy of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, n.d.).

People to people exchange programs are one of the most important factors to strengthen Pak-Japan Relations. It helps Pakistanis to visit Japan and experience their beautiful life style or vice versa. This personal experience is very important for an individual to develop cultural understanding. Similarly, it helps the two countries' to develop cordial bilateral relations (Interviewee No. 3, November 28, 2022). In this connection, the first and foremost program, which places a high significance, is the educational exchange program. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in Japan provides opportunities to international students to start their education in Japan under MEXT Scholarship. International applicants from any educational background from all over the world can apply for MEXT fully funded Research scholarship. Students going under MEXT scholarships are given six months training of Japanese language after that they can proceed with their studies. This training helps them to avert language barrier. The number of Pakistani applicants is still shorter than Indian and Bangladeshi students. Pakistani Universities should convey information about this scholarship to students so that a big number of students could apply for this scholarship in the years ahead (Interviewee No. 3, 28 November 2022).

Apart from Research Exchange Programs for students, Japan is highly focused on exchange programmes for Youth. Youth Programs help youngsters to understand the world around them; these programs develop leadership qualities and characteristics for civic engagement. Youth learn the art of connectivity building friendships on international level. Youth exchange programs help students to be more useful for their own country by being aware of the best societal values.

'The Young Leaders' Program' is being conducted by The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology since

2001. It is a programme for school of local governance or school of government. The Young Leaders' Program welcomes young public administrators and government officials who are projected to play vigorous and dynamic role as a leader in their home countries in future (Embassy of Japan, 2016). The program aimed to promote, built inclusive social connections amongst the leaders, and established cordial relations between states involved. This program cultivates future leaders from Asian and other countries to maintain cordial relationship between various states. Young Leaders' Program intends to enhance quality of policy-making through a web of national leaders from different states to maintain long-lasting bond and their trust on Japan. So far, approximately more than 18 Pakistanis have participated as Young leaders under this program (NGRIPS, n.d.).

Another similar type of programme named 'The Youth Invitation Program' commenced in 1984 gradually spreads to Asia, Africa, Latin America, Saudi Arabia, Central Asia, Caucasus and the Central Asia. Since then, the program has expanded to 120 countries. During these years, the program has played a very significant part in fostering positive relations between Japan and countries participating in this program. Youth from developing state sitting on significant positions are invited to Japan for the purpose of study in their specialized field and also meet and greet Japanese citizens. The youth throughout their stay in Japan reside with young Japanese individuals with same fields so that they could have the opportunity to participate in variety of social activities.

This programme not only aims to empower participants to increase understanding of their field but also to promote better understanding of Japan and its people, culture and history. One of the main elements of this program is to put forward the training of youth through exchange. Among many features, one of them is the study of Japanese language in which Japanese volunteers teach participants daily life Japanese language while showing them the places they are staying. The participants also have the chance to make conversation with the

employees of the same places that they visit. Another appreciable feature of this program is that it let the participants to experience the Japanese lifestyle and household as they stay in private homes (JICA, 2001).

### **Exhibition of Art and Craft**

Art performs as a shared memory of society. Artists reserve life through communicative outlets. This expressive outlet is more vocal than the fact-based records of history. Japanese art of arranging flowers is known as *Ikebana*, means living flowers. It can be described as more delicate, elusive, and contemporary than other methods of flower normally adopted in different cultures. This is because Ikebana is an art in Japan just like sculpture and painting as a form of art in other countries. In 1979, Ikebana International Karachi Chapter (IIKC) was established under the supervision of Mrs. Matsumura. The motto of this IIKC is to develop friendship through flowers. Every first Wednesday of the month, a demonstration or workshop is held for Ikebana, origami (Japanese art of paper folding), Japanese cuisine and so on in collaboration with Japanese Information and Culture Center and Japanese Consulate (Embassy of Japan, 2015).

The art of Ikebana started in Pakistan since the inception of its diplomatic relations with Japan. The Japanese ambassador's came here started its demonstrations, many Pakistani people learnt from it and started teaching it. Different cities are actively working on the art of Ikebana such as Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta and, Peshawar. Ikebana International Karachi Chapter is a social group, people in this group have mutual interest of Ikebana. It is directly connected through its head quarter in Tokyo, all the activities or exhibition that has been held here in Pakistan are directly reported to its head quarter (Interviewee no. 4, 23 November 2022).

One more Japanese Art Work called 'Bonsai' means 'tray gardening' is highly famous in Pakistan. It is a traditional Japanese art of nurturing creatively moulded miniature trees in the container. These

miniature trees are carefully styled with unique techniques. The Japanese public started taking interest in Bonsai and by the 15th century, it became very popular trend in Japanese society. After Second World War, the Japanese experts of Bonsai visited many different countries to spread awareness about Bonsai and to teach local public this art. Similarly, many people visit Japan to learn this art. Thus, the art of Bonsai works as a cultural bridge between Japan and outside world and represent fascinating Japanese traditions. It has played a very significant and vital role in strengthening Japanese relationship with international actors.

Pakistan Bonsai Society was founded in August 1998 by a group of passionate and hobbyist individuals with an aim of promoting and encouraging the art of Bonsai in Pakistan. The Bonsai Society of Pakistan organized The Bonsai Beginner Certificate Course 2022, the instructor will teach the basic of Bonsai and help the students to grow and style their own Bonsai tree (The Bonsai Society Pakistan, n.d.).

## CONCLUSION

Cultural Diplomacy or 'Diplomacy between Cultures' is in existence for centuries. This term 'Cultural Diplomacy' has been popular only recently, but it is being practiced by public throughout history since long. Therefore, all the professionals who conduct cultural trends such as travellers, artists, teachers, students, they are living examples of 'cultural diplomats'. Every person of society who comes across different cultures, facilitates cultural linkage. Interaction with people of different faiths, ideas, customs, language, and societal structure improves relations between divergent groups. Asian states, Pakistan and Japan, have divergent cultural setup, but for better integration, they are focusing to introduce their public with each other's culture. Both the countries have multiple things to learn from one another, Pakistanis can learn punctuality of time, and that the Japanese are very strict follower of rule and community guidelines. These elements of Japanese culture helped them to rebuild their nation after the

devastation in Second World War.

Similarly, Japanese can learn from Pakistani culture too such as that Pakistanis are very hospitable and welcoming. Japan is very active in promoting its culture in Pakistan through various events such as Ikebana workshops, books and novel exhibitions, photography exhibition, Japanese language courses, bonsai, literature activities and much more. Unfortunately, Pakistan is not much active in holding or organizing cultural events that could extend Pakistani culture in Japan as well. Cultural relations are backbone of every relation so Pakistan should play an active role in extending its cultural in foreign that could create positive image of Pakistan and its people that have been affected over the years. In order to expand cultural areas Pakistan need to take further initiatives, launching more cultural activities to promote positive side of Pakistani people and culture.

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