

**Report on 8 day Visit to Kyoto University, Japan  
22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2017**

**Invited by: Kyoto University to attend Bhutan and Kyoto University 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Symposium, 2017**

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The stay in Japan was indeed eye opener to current Japanese situation regarding depopulation and rural-urban migration, and it fast forwarded the situation facing in Bhutan making us realize that if we don't do something about the rural-urban migration which happens in small scale right now in Bhutan, our situation might just be like Japan, where although rural areas are way developed and equivalent to Bhutanese towns, it is striking to notice that people do migrate out of villages and small towns there to go and live in the cities. As we are told rural population of Japan is 6% which is very low for a big country like Japan. Driving through depopulated areas of Miyazu especially Kamiseya and its abandoned fields, it let one to reflect upon what happened there, though the weather there forced people to migrate to the warmer region, the sight is rather heartbreaking. One thing we observed in the rural areas of Japan is that majority of people living there are old people, and we are told that young ones leave to the cities in search of better opportunities as soon as they finishes their high school which confirmed our observation.

Trip to Miyazu Fishery to learn about important Aqua Culture heritage as the industry train the fishermen on the basis of regulation, the Miyazu Aqua Industry is worth 100 million yen. The industry located in Miyazu in Kyoto Prefecture is only fishery which has been successful in cultivating shell fish which is known as 'torigai' in Japanese. In other places the cultivation of 'torigai' has been unsuccessful due to unfavorable aqua condition. The reason why they started 'torigai' cultivation is because there some years where they saw boom in torigai, some years the torigai is not enough for consumption, and to make the production constant unlike depending on wild ones, they started the cultivation. The staffs also expressed their concerns regarding change in temperature of the sea due to global warming, and how it affected their business as some fishes became abundant and some fishes started to decline. The fish like sawara (spring fish) the season to catch the fish is changing as it was caught in spring season, now fishermen can only catch the same fish in autumn. Due to rise in water temperature the same spring fish has been increasing in large scale. And fish like Buri (yellowtail fish) are now migrating towards Hokkaido area due to rise in temperature and making it harder for Kyoto people to catch in the surrounding. The Kyoto Prefecture also semi-cultivate tuna, where they catch young tuna from

the water and they grow it in favorable condition. And the community has the festival where they give out free tuna to people in the locality.

### Yorou Village Community

To observe the impact of rural-urban migration, the Yorou Village Community has provided much needed statistics, like number of households back in 2012 was almost 1050 where as in 2017 it is approximately 850 households left.

The reasons they gave were old people passing away, many old people moving into old age homes, high school students moving into cities right after their graduation, and young people moving out due to less employment opportunities. Even though Japanese government is doing what they can like giving subsidy to people moving in, giving allowance to people so that they can renovate the old houses and stay in rural areas, and they have seen that in Miyazu area that 10 households has moved into their locality. The special thing about this community's taking in new people is that they will interview the person who would like to live in their community, whether he or she can blend in the community or not. They have mentioned that even Junior High School in Miyazu has been closed down due to less number of students.

Some good things to take from Miyazu Community practices is how local people develop their own columns and pamphlets, written by local people themselves to advertise and tell stories of their community.

### Bhutan and Kyoto University 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Symposium

Her Highness Ashi Sonam Dechen Wangchuck graced the Bhutan Kyoto University 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Symposium with the keynote speech, stating how her highness was honored to be present in such special occasion to mark the friendship which was started during the time of her grandmother Ashi Kezang Choden Wangchuck who is the queen of third King of Bhutan Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. Symposium continued with so many magnificent presenters who all have special stories to tell about Bhutan, and how they made it seem like Bhutan is one of a kind place, which most of Bhutanese take it for granted. One of the memorable thing we have observed during this trip is that how Japanese love GNH philosophy. In order to let GNH work, the Professor Ando of Kyoto University has been adamantly stressed that GNH should be felt by people, not just with words and made the presentation where he stated that Sherubtse as a leading institute in Bhutan has larger role to play, gave 'Land Grand' Universities example from the United States where university has an obligation to develop local communities, and in order to do that he mentioned university need financial support from the government.

### Japanese Heritage

Introducing these kinds of programs where intangible histories and cultures can be registered, so that local people themselves can promote local culture that are viewed as insignificant and if left out, might gradually die out.

National Heritage who holds the view that Japanese castles are not only for exhibitions, but must also be utilized. And the approach they have come up is to let rich tourist pay high amount to stay in the castle for a night, but they will allow less number of tourists. This program was launched so that the Japanese Government is relieved from the burden to maintain and preserve the national heritage since government doesn't have enough budget to invest in, and as a result this program has monetary contribution towards the growth of Japanese Heritage/ National Heritage.

All in all, the experience was magnificent, learned a lot from this program and it would not have been possible without Kyoto University fund and Dr. Sakamoto, Dr. Ando for introducing such program and Dr. Akamatsu for being our guide. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for such wonderful experience!

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