

Our Experience and Thoughts of Staying in Japan (2011.7.10)

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We are Chinese, and now are studying in the Department of Chemistry, Graduate School of Science, Osaka University, Japan. There are many famous chemists in Japan, and the research in chemistry field in Japan is on the front line in the world, so we came to Japan to learn chemistry. Before we came to Japan, we were anxious about our daily-life not only because we had never been to a foreign country, but also because there was some trouble between China and Japan, particularly the latter made us more anxious. We were worried about that the Japanese people would be not so friendly to us. However, all of the anxieties were banished only in a few days after we arrived in Japan. We were impressed by the kindness, friendliness, and helpfulness of the Japanese people around us wherever we met, in and/or out of the university. We realized that the relation between the countries is quite different from the relation between the people.

When we talked these impressions to Mr. Koichi Hatada, who is a professor emeritus of Osaka University, he told us the following things: “One day I visited a family of a professor of Florida University. While we were enjoying a conversation after dinner, the professor’s son who was a junior high school student suddenly said: ‘Russians are bad’. Then his father was a little angry with him; ‘I agree with you that Russia, the country itself, is not so good, but the Russian, the people in Russia, are very nice. Please always remember about this.’ I felt that I realized the fundamentals of world peace from that professor at that time. That is, the world peace is not destroyed as long as the people of each country are mutually friendly, even if there is some trouble between the countries”.

When we talked about Japanese people, one of our Chinese friends said to me: “Japanese people are very friendly to their acquaintances, while to the strangers, they are very cold. However, I do not think that this means Japanese people are not kind to the strangers, but they do not used to talk to the strangers”. We met a few of kind Japanese people when we just came to Japan. This might be due to that we were blessed with the opportunity of becoming acquainted with kind Japanese or to that someone supported us secretly. In a word, it is very important that we should learn the customs and cultures of the different countries if we go there.

When we come back to the dormitory from the laboratory, the staff in dormitory says to us “Okaeri” which means “welcome back home”. This greeting gives us a warm and happy feeling inside, and the lassitude is gone. We do not have such words like “Okaeri” in Chinese and think this is one of the most important traditional cultures that the Japanese people should keep.

One of the pleasant things in Japan is that the atmosphere in laboratory is like a family. We go to lunch, drink, travel, and always have fun together. Moreover, the professors are very kind and they are close to the students. Such relation between professors and students in Japan is most

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likely because they think that the result of the examination is not so important. We think that this is a good custom of education in Japanese University unless it happens that a student abuses that custom and does not work hard. In China, we are in an oppressive atmosphere of study in the university as well as in the high school because we have so many examinations in China. We do like learning, but we do not like to study only for the examination. If importance is attached only to the result of an examination in the education, we may fall into the evils that the connection between a teacher and a student will be over when all examinations are finished. We think that we should keep learning and studying as university students even if there is no examination.

The good communication between a professor and a student is very important in order to increase the effect of education and study. In most lectures in Japanese universities, only the teachers talk during the class, while we think it will be better if there is more interaction with the students such as giving some questions or asking their opinions. Even in the class of graduate students, most of them keep silent during the class, although some of them ask questions to the teacher after the class. In laboratory, when we met something arguable, normally the Japanese students told us “The teacher says so, we have no choice”. On the other hand, in China, we always get together to discuss issues, and we do not hesitate to express our opinions during the discussion until finally we reach a consensus view. This may be the reason that the Chinese students are active in the universities all over the world. Prof. Hatada told us his experience as follows: “When I give a lecture, I always keep communication with the audiences such as asking some questions or their opinions. So I had a bad reputation among the students in both Osaka University and Fukuyi Industrial University where I had worked after the retirement from Osaka University. However, recently, I am appreciated by some students especially the students who are working in the international companies. They said that they can express their opinions very clearly at the important meetings thanks to the practice when they were students in my class, and each of them is at important position in the company.” Prof. Hatada also said: “The Japanese people should be able to express their opinions clearly and communicate well with other people who have different ideas to reach a consensus view, and then Japanese people and/or Japanese government could contribute to the peace and happiness in the world.” We had talked and discussed many things with Prof. Hatada at this party, and were very happy.

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