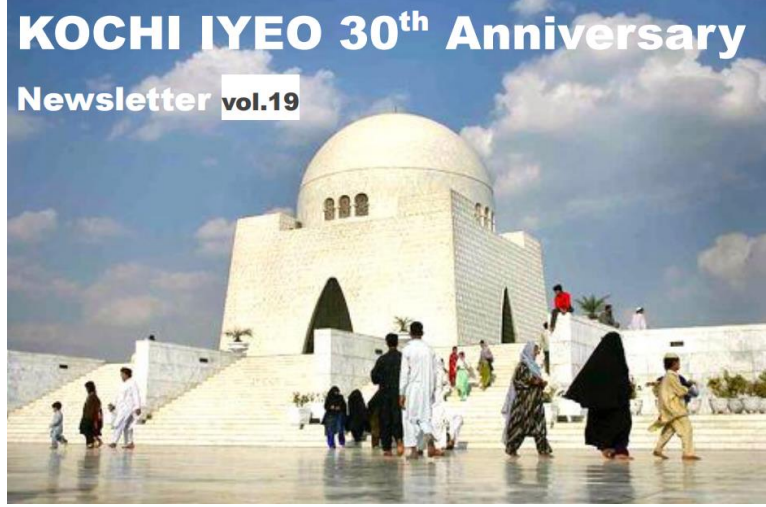




The Necessity of Education

Naoko Nakagaki
Living in Karachi,
Pakistan



Mosques in Karachi



Jinnah International Airport

On April 7, 2022, I arrived at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, Pakistan, as a teacher at a Japanese school. The first thing that caught my eye was the security guards patrolling the airport. To my surprise, they were armed with rifles. Knowing that Karachi's security situation was not ideal, I decided to hire a dedicated driver for safety reasons, put black shades on the car windows, and have a bodyguard accompany me.

I never imagined that a lifestyle akin to that of a Hollywood actress would begin as soon as I arrived.

By the way, this kind of security setup is not special in Karachi; many wealthy Pakistanis use it as a matter of course. While there is the inconvenience of not being able to go out freely, this way, foreigners can also spend their time safely.

Pakistan's official name is "The Islamic Republic of Pakistan," and Islam is the state religion. Islamic culture, including prayers, permeates daily life. There are many holidays and events related to Islam. Since the dates of holidays are determined by the phases of the moon, even today, people confirm the moon with the naked eye. I find this analog approach of Pakistan endearing. Islam has a culture of charity, and the people of Pakistan are very hospitable and kind. Hospitals and schools receive large donations. They are also kind to single women and foreigners like me. However, because of this, I sometimes face difficulties and inconveniences. Initially, I was suspected of being a spy and was denied a visa. The reason was, "It's suspicious for a woman to come all the way to a foreign country alone to work. There must be some other purpose."

Karachi is Pakistan's largest commercial city. People gather from all over Pakistan for work, so you can see all kinds of people and lifestyles, from different skin colors and faces to age groups and from the very rich to the poor.

I was shown a world of wealth I had never seen before. At luxurious parties, the maids serving were like invisible people, unnoticed by the wealthy. The literacy rate among maids is low, and they memorize everything. Such a life, requiring immense memorization, is unimaginable to me now. I respect them for their ability to retain so much information.

However, I feel a sense of questioning towards a society where "occupation equals a person's value." Yet, in reality, "injustice" and "unfairness" are the norm, leading to many frustrations. On the other hand, there are employers who send the children of maids to school. There are Pakistanis working hard to improve Pakistan. Some people turn their frustrations into power and move forward.



Luxurious Wedding

Having participated in the Cabinet Office's "Ship for World Youth" program (2001/10-12) and experienced the JICA Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (2011-13 in Kyrgyzstan), I thought I knew about the world. However, Pakistan has provided me with many shocks.

Among these experiences, what I felt most strongly was the necessity of education. If people around the world could receive an education that allows them to utilize their abilities, the world would become a much better place.

Pakistan holds infinite potential.

In the summer of 2001, I participated in a study tour organized by the Kochi Hope Project Fund (KHPF) and visited Shanghai, Beijing, Anhui Province, and Qinghai Province. What particularly moved me was the words of an official from the Ministry of Education at a grassland village elementary school in Qinghai Province, situated at an altitude of 3,400 meters:

"The people living here will spend their entire lives here. With no communication devices, this is the first time they've met foreigners like you. They probably didn't even know people like you existed. And even though this is the same China, they don't know places like Beijing exist. They will live their lives thinking that life in this village is everything. If they knew there were places like Beijing, some children might want to go there. If they have the opportunity to learn about different worlds, more children would want to challenge themselves in various ways. That's why knowing is very important. Therefore, we must create opportunities for them to learn through education. Schools are necessary."

Hearing these words, I strongly felt that education broadens the possibilities for children, and I wanted to be involved in education. Participating in that study tour at that timing, in that place, and meeting those people connected the dots of my youth into a line and became one of my turning points.

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