

CHAPTER -11

JAPAN AND BRAZIL THROUGH A TRAVELER'S EYE

Comprehension I

1. 'Exquisitely well- mannered people' refer to

b. Japanese.

2. What behavior substitutes privacy of Japan?

The respect to another's privacy substitutes privacy in Japan i.e. nobody listens to another's conversation.

3. The reference to public telephone suggests:

a. How overcrowded Japan is.

4. Hierarchy in bowing demands.

Youngsters bow to their elders, wife bow to her husband & sisters bow to their brother.

5. What is the sign of appreciation in eating soup?

When eating soup, one must make a fearful noise, which is a sign of appreciation. If they don't make noise the hostess will think, it is an ill- mannered lout.

6. How are pavements in Brazil decorated? What does it tell us about the people there?

Pavements in Brazil are decorated with beautiful black Mosaics, a unique type of decoration. The writer thinks that only those people who have plenty of time to appreciate the beauty of their surroundings, though they walk very slowly and meditatively to have a lot of time for contemplation which can decorate the pavements. The Brazilians are easy going people.

7. What happen when leisurely people in Brazil get a steering wheel in their hands?

When leisurely people in Brazil get a steering wheel in their hands no speed is fast enough for them as if they have turned themselves into speed devils. They do not care about pedestrians thus the pedestrian life becomes more hazardous.

8. Who do the drivers look out for when they are driving? Why?

The drivers look out for Pedestrians when they are driving. They do not care about people. As soon as a driver notices a Pedestrian step off the pavement he regards him as a fair game. He takes aim and accelerates. The Pedestrians has to jump, leap and run for his dear life. To conclude, the Brazilian drives treat Pedestrians as hunters treat their prey.

9. What remarkable attitude is seen in the war between drivers?

The war between drivers themselves is murderous but good tempered. They cut in overtake on both sides; they force you to break violently and commit all the most heinous crimes of the road and twenty times every hour. But they smile to each other at the same time and there is no anger, no hostility and no mad hooting.

Comprehension II

1. Why is bowing in Japan a complicated process?

Bowing in Japan is a complicated process because they follow a complicated hierarchy in bowing which they have to follow as sacrosanct. The author found difficulty in their bowing because the act involved a lot of intricacies. Either he bowed too deeply or not at all. He bowed to the wrong man at the wrong time. Either he clasped his hands too tightly in front of him or not at all. Bowing in Japan has a complicated hierarchy: who bows to whom, how deeply and for how long. If two Japanese bow, neither is to straighten up before the other stands erect in front of him. The Japanese manage it without difficulty and even the smallest difference in rank, standing, age, and social position will be reflected in that split second, one man's bow is shorter than the other.

2. Why does bowing, a natural practice in Japanese culture, look so 'quaint' and puzzling to the author?

The skill of 'bowing' for Japanese is an art and the author thinks that it is in their genes. The author being a European feels that bowing in Japan is more formal and oriental than shaking hands or kissing the cheek. It is also infectious. What makes it look so 'quaint' to the author is the fact that foreigners cannot get the bowing exactly right. They bow to the wrong man at the wrong time; they do not clasp their hands in front of them which is bad; or they do clasp which is worse. The Japanese on the other hand manage to show the subtlest difference in rank, standing, age and social position in the degree and duration of their bowing. The writer found it very difficult to understand these intricacies.

3. Do you think the author is finding fault with/making fun of the culture of bowing in Japanese and speeding cars in Brazil?

The author is finding fault with bowing in Japan only to a slight extent because he finds it difficult to understand how much to go, for how long, and whom to go bow to. He makes fun, in a light-hearted manner, firstly of the baby who bows from a majestic height, having been tied to its mother's back; next of the two conductors on the coach, who bow in both the directions and then start checking the tickets.

He certainly makes fun of the Deer which he feels bowed deeply to him before snatching the little bag from his hand. He pokes fun at the Japanese. He compares the Deer to the people in the bus stop. A bit sarcastically, he says that the Deer is a true Japanese. Both of them, the Deer and the people, first bow ceremoniously and later behave violently. The Deer jumps at the author and snatches the food bag from his hand. The people, as soon as the bus arrives, push each other, tread on each other's toes and show their elbows into each other's stomach.

With regard to finding fault with and making fun of the speeding cars in Brazil, the author does both. He does joke about the way driver's target pedestrians stepping on to the road, but describes vividly how horrible the experience can be to a pedestrian. He also remarks that with the increase in the number of cars on the roads, the life of pedestrians is becoming more hazardous everyday.

Similarly, he finds fault with the way the drivers compete with each other. However, he finds it funny that the drivers can smile, in a good-humouredly manner, at each other and at pedestrians whom they have terrified out of their skins. While finding fault with the heavy traffic that doesn't allow pedestrians to cross the road, the author uses humor to deal with the situation by saying that a fellow should be born on the other side to reach there. Otherwise, there is no possibility of crossing the road on the main streets of Brazil.

Comprehension III

1. 'Bowling in Japan is quaint; more formal, more oriental.' Do you agree?

The author, George Mikes, says that bowing as a form of greeting, is neither less nor more silly than shaking hands or kissing the cheek, but it is quaint; more formal, more oriental. As the author, himself a European, describes later on, bowing in the right manner takes some time to learn : either you bow too deeply or not deeply enough ; you bow to the wrong person or at the wrong time; you do not clasp your hands in front of you which is bad ; or you do which is worse. The Japanese have a complicated hierarchy in bowing: who bows to whom, how deeply, and for how long.

When two Japanese bow, neither straighten up before the other stands erect in front of him. They manage this without difficulty, and even the smallest difference in rank, standing, age, social position will be subtly reflected in that split second one man's bow is shorter than the other's. In many cases, there are clear-cut differences in position but no difficulties in following them because these are the basic rules inside the family: 'the wife bows to the husband, the child bows to the father, younger brothers to the elder brothers, the sister bows to all brothers of whatever age.' The Japanese followed this practice of bowing in all places – girls at the top of escalators, conductors on coaches and people at the bus stop.

2. Describe how traffic in Brazil leads to humorous observations.

The pedestrians in Brazil habitually do not hurry at all. They are relaxed, easy going and do not bother whether they reach their destination an hour too soon or a day late or not at all. But in contrast when they hold a steering wheel, no speed is fast enough for them. They drive as if gaining a tenth of a second is of grave importance to all of them at all times. The pedestrian's life is becoming more and more dangerous everyday due to the speeding drivers. As soon as the driver notices a pedestrian step off the pavement , he takes aim and accelerates and treats him as a hunter would treat it's prey. The poor pedestrian has to jump , leap and run for his dear life. the driver doesn't feel sorry for this act. When it comes to the war between two drivers, they cut in overtake on both sides, they force each other to break violently that leads to all the crimes of the road and this happens twenty times every hour. Even after all this, both the drivers smile at each other and there is no anger, no hostility and no mad hooting. Thus we feel that the traffic in Brazil is a humorous observations.

3. What aspects of our social life, do you think, would appear quaint and odd to a foreign tourist?

India consist of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi- lingual society. Different customs and traditions are followed in different parts of the country. This variety itself would puzzle many foreigners. Many other things would appear odd to a foreign tourist: our habit of touching elder's feet for blessings; our manner of greeting with folded palms; our sitting down cross-legged and eating with our fingers; our innumerable languages; our different ways of dressing, our festivals, our ways of worship etc.

Many shameful habits coming from even educated people might make foreigners disgusted with Indians: our tendency to speak very loudly everywhere; urinating and spitting everywhere; our ways of jumping the signal and driving without following any rules of the road. The system of untouchability that prevailed years ago in our culture and such many traditional customs, rituals etc, might seem different, quaint and sometimes odd.