“For a common Pakistani, the word ‘Japan’ is associated with automobiles, cameras and watches. What a pity! This is indeed a misleading image of people with profound and delicate sensibilities, complex perception and aesthetic values. As nation, the Japanese are great lovers of beauty and aesthetic expression. Poetry, particularly Haiku, is a way of life for these people . . .”

— Dr. Syed Abulkhair Kashfi

To start, here I must say that every healthy and wise man loves Nature . . . but frankly speaking, not every man has the potential of praising Nature in words. So Nature is not praised from each and every one.

While commenting on common Pakistani, we should not forget that they people have no real interest in their own literature, either prose or poetry.

Since literature has never been an attraction for commoners, only a few people take interest in it. It’s not only the case of Pakistan or Urdu, but also almost all other lands and nations have the same scenario.

When it comes to Urdu, the third most widely-spoken language, we see a great love for Nature among all-time masters of literature, whether the nazm (the poem) or ghazal (the verse composed rhythmically, in praise of beloved or someone else, in that manner). We find plenty of words and phrases which denote natural beauty.

If a student of linguistics is asked to throw some light on the common characteristics of Japanese and Urdu, he might shake his head in negation. But I would like to say that there exist a few common elements in the literature of both languages. Both languages have common tradition of love writing, whether it’s love of Nature and natural beauty or of human beings. Love of another human is also a part of natural beauty. Secondly, Zen Buddhism has strongly affected the poetry of Japan; likewise Urdu poetry has an impressive quantity of religious verse. As you find praise of Nature’s in Japanese verse, so shall you see the same in Urdu. Great Urdu poets have successfully portrayed natural scenes with the help of their impressive word-art. So, Urdu nazm and ghazal are very similar to haiku and tanka in this manner.
The common elements of Urdu ghazal and Japanese haiku are as follows:

1) Compactness
2) Diversification of thought
3) Impressive word-art

In Urdu haiku he addition of rhyme creates a certain music. We also see a great variety of topics in Urdu haiku, as well as the powerful influence of ghazal, which sometime results in a “shortened” or mini-ghazal.

The first pieces of Japanese poetry were translated into Urdu in 1922 by Barrister Syed Hassan Abid Jafri, for Nigaar, the prestigious Urdu literary journal of India. Jafri introduced haiku, tanka and some other Japanese verses in his article, titled, “Jaapani Sha’yeri per Ik Nazar” (“A Random Look at Japanese Poetry”).

In 1936, an entire issue of Saaqui (Delhi), our most established literary journal, was devoted to Japanese poetry, including translations and introductory articles, especially of and on haiku. Shahid Ahmed Dehlvi, a well-known penman of his time, edited this journal, assisted by Noorul Hasan Berlaas. Translators included Aziz Taman’naee, Fazle Haque Qureshi and Ali Zaheer. These translations were free or somewhat prosaic. At that time, our writers showed very little interest in it. In the next decade the renowned Urdu journalist Hameed Nizami translated a few haiku. Another famous poet, Meerajee, is reported to have followed him. These initial efforts to introduced the genre in Urdu before the independence in 1947.

In the 1960s a Sindhi poet of Pakistan, Dr. Tanveer Abbasi, rendered Sindhi translations of Japanese haiku. In response a number of Sindhi poets in Pakistan and India started composing original Sindhi haiku.

Mohsin Bhopali, a noted Urdu poet, translated the Sindhi haiku of Tanveer Abbasi into Urdu in 1963. In doing so he became the first Urdu poet to have attempted this following Independence. His translations were printed in the esteemed literary journal Afkaar, but did not follow the form of haiku.

In 1966 Qazi Saleem printed some of his haiku, but they did not follow traditional haiku format either. In 1970 Dr. Tanveer Abbasi, Sheikh Ayaz (Sindhi poets), and their fellow Afaque Siddiqui, a prominent Urdu poet, composed few original Urdu haiku while sitting by the side of the Indus. Afaque said they were published in Daily Kaleem (Sakkhar). By this reckoning these three men are the earliest Urdu poets to have written original haiku, but I cannot verify this claim. The practice continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The translators from 1938 to the 1980s included Zafar Iqbal, Kaleemuddin Ahmed, Abdul Aziz Khalid, Tasad’duque Husain Khalid, Dr. Pervaiz Pervazi, Narendra Lother, Bilraaj Komal, Dr. Manazir Ashique Harganvi, Dr. Muhammad Amin and many others. (In 1991 haiku took root in Hindi and Bengali, in translation, as it appeared in Selected Haiku by Dr. Manazir Ashique and Sushobhan Sen Gupta. They included English, Hindi and Bengali translations of Urdu haiku. This was the first and most unique effort to introduce Urdu haiku throughout the Sub-continent.)

In the 1970s Dr. Muhammad Amin visited Japan for the first time as a student-tourist. He so liked the plant of haiku that he decided to sow it in the land of his heart. He seemed to be unaware of the fact that the plane of this unique genre had been landed here, decades ago. However, many have considered him the pioneer of Urdu haiku. Amin avoided 17 syllables, the very identity of this genre, using no rhyme like others, and composed in the meter, called,

In 1983 Dr. Syed Abulkhair Kashfi, following his return from Japan where he served as a Professor of Urdu, initiated the Urdu Haiku Mushaira (Recital), coordinated by the Japan Cultural Center, Karachi. He presided over the historic event, while Mr. Muhammad Ali Khan Houti, the then-Minister of Education for Pakistan, consented to be chief guest. Pakistan Television telecast this foremost Mushaira. Mr. Kashfi personally contacted veteran Urdu poets like Taabish Dehlvi, Raaghib Murad-abaadi, Ada Jafri, Jamil Naqvi, Mehshar Badayooni, and others to render translations as well as to compose original haiku. They could not write haiku in a fixed pattern initially, but soon after senior critique Professor Dr. Farman Fatehpuri and others decided that the 5-7-5 syllables could best be followed in the behr-e-mutaqareb meter, as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{FE'LUN/FE'LUN/FA} = 5 \\
& \text{FE'LUN/FE'LUN/FE'LUN/FA} = 7 \\
& \text{FE'LUN/FE'LUN/FA} = 5
\end{align*}
\]

Mohsin Bhopali, Wazahat Naseem, Muhammad Rais Alvi, Iqbal Haider, Sarshar Siddiqui, Taabish Dehlvi, Raaghib Murad-abaadi and Sehar Ansari are the most prominent followers of this type of technique. Others include notable haikuists like Shahaab-uddin Shahaab, Jamal Naqvi, Rasa Chughtai, Shabnam Romani, Khawja Razi Haider, Jaazib Qureshi, Rashed Noor, Shahnaz Noor, Yaser Chughtai, and Liaquat Ali Asim.

Dr. Muhammad Amin and his followers in Punjab mooted the idea of masavi-ul-auzaan (equal-meter) haiku, which they launched at a Mushaira held under the auspices of the Japanese Embassy, Islamabad. As a result, Punjabi poets usually practice haiku composition in that way, with some exceptions. Some poets like Naseem-e-Sehar, Bashir Saifi and Az'har Abbas have tried both types.

According to form, the haikuists of Urdu can be divided into four groups:

a) Haikuists of ‘equal-meter’

b) Haikuists of Japanese harmony, i.e. Karachi group

c) Haikuists of ‘similar form’

d) Haikuists of free-form

‘Equal-meter’ form has become popular in Punjab while the Karachi group is leading the rest of the ‘Urdu-World’.

Mohsin Bhopali writes haiku using rhyme and a polished manner. In the beginning, he gave titles on his poems, but no longer does. He has concentrated on slow currents of feelings, instead of their flood. Whenever a natural phenomena and a passion are intermingled, it touches the heartiest feelings of the reader. Here are some examples (all translations are mine):

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Barish ka yeh saaz} \\
& \text{Reh reh kir yaad aati hai} \\
& \text{Ghungroo ki awaaz}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Downpour’s Orchestra} \\
& \text{reminds me of} \\
& \text{Sound of Ghungroo}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{Ghungroo} \text{ are small bells worn by dancers on hands and feet.}\]
Night of winter
the silence of speaks
Sparkling voice
Petering sound of rain
is a striking sword
in your absence
Tears on flowers
the beautiful weather
Dew on thorns
Crown on peacock
but prevails in his heart
the peahen's rule

Mohsin Bhopali was one of the most sensible translators of Japanese haiku, too, along with Muhammad Rais Alvi, Muhammad Amin, Aftab Muztar, and Shehzad Niaz.

Wazahat Naseem has visited Japan three times and studied the language, literature and culture there for some time. She has taught Japanese language at the Japan Cultural Center, Karachi, for five years. She loves nature and composes haiku on a wide range of Nature's bounty, using season-word or any word corresponding to the Nature. Hence, she follows the original pattern of Japanese haiku. She at times deviates from the set pattern, as all Urdu haiku-poets do. For example, rhyme is not used in Japanese haiku, but she often uses rhyme, following other poets of ghazal. Some examples of her work:

Khushbu aur Gulab
Rose and fragrance
Murjha kir bhi saath rahein
keep Company though withered
Chahat ko adaab!
Salute to love!

Lehrown ka ye schore
noise of Currents
Jhag uda kir kehta hay
announces with the surfing
Paani hay moonh-zore
Water is wild

Ose maein bheegi ghass
Dew-soaked grass
Dil choone wala manzar
The scene touches the heart
Titli phoo ke pass
A butterfly, by the flower

Aaj huwa dil shaad
My heart rejoices
Uss ko hanstaa dekha hay
have seen him smiling today
Ik mud'dat ke ba'd
after a long time

Mehve-intezaar
Keep waiting for him
Wo nahein tou kya kejiye
no use of the Spring
Mausim-e-Bahaar
without him

Iqbal Haider is the only poet to have worked to promote haiku in Urdu and several local languages and dialects of Pakistan. For his untiring efforts, dedication and missionary zeal in
propagating this genre, the Consul General of Japan awarded him the title of “Ambassador of Haiku.” He thinks that Urdu haiku can play the role of national integrity and harmony. He writes haiku on all topics, including love, Nature’s bounty, individual and collective problems, social and cultural issues and above all, patriotism and Islamic ideology. Here is a sampling of his work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urdu Haiku</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phoolown ka mausim</td>
<td>Season of flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sansown mein uss ki khushboo</td>
<td>her breath's full of fragrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelkown per shabnun</td>
<td>dew on the lashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dil kiyoon dharka hay</td>
<td>Why does my heart throb?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mein ne aaj ayene mein</td>
<td>Whom have I seen today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kis ko dekha hay</td>
<td>in the mirror?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhoot gaya wo haath</td>
<td>I have lost that hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meri hatheli julti hay</td>
<td>my palm ignites badly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meray dil ke saath</td>
<td>along with my heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishta such'cha hay</td>
<td>What a true relation!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ik boorhe ki banhown mein</td>
<td>A little babe in the arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nun'nha buch'cha hay</td>
<td>of an old man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phool hay paani mein</td>
<td>Flower in water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rung berungi dunya hay</td>
<td>colourful is the world in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khab-kahani mein</td>
<td>the dreamy story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I turn now to waka. Dr. Faheem Azami, one of our most famous poets, writers and critics, introduced waka in Urdu. In 1989 Mohsin Bhopali composed some waka, and the same year Muhammad Rais Alvi, visiting professor, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, published *Chaand Ke Chaar Rung (Four Colours of the Moon)*. This is the Urdu translation of 101 waka of Saigyō.

Soon after publishing his first book, Prof. Alvi translated the *Manyōshū* under the title *Gul-e-Suddburg (The 1000-Petal Flower)*. It includes 101 tanka of various eminent and unknown poets. (*Waka* and *tanka* are identical.)

Iqbal Haider is also very eager to write waka/tanka in Urdu. He tries to create a more enthusiastic image through this genre.

The author of this article created the first and foremost multi-lingual haiku journal of the Sub-continent, *Haiku International*. This unique journal covers views and reviews, articles regarding haiku, both original and in translation. Launched in 1998, its has produced nine issues, including four special numbers to date. It is the only journal dedicated to haiku in Asia outside Japan. *Haiku International* has published work in 25 foreign and regional languages.

To conclude, here are few points to ponder:

1. Urdu has become a second mother-tongue of haiku. One can find all shades of life and all issues, discussed in Urdu haiku.
2. A rich and diversified Urdu haiku has a brighter future, as compared to other forms or genres.
3. Regional languages and dialects of Pakistan have now accepted haiku as a native genre. After
Sindhi, Punjabi, Pushto, Balochi, Hindko, Seraiki, Brahvi, Kashmiri and Persian, some enthusiasts have introduced haiku in dialects like Pothuwari, Memoni, Marwari and Hazargi.

May Haiku further strengthen cordial relations between Japan and Pakistan.