



Dr. Sudip SINGHA

Teaching Japanese as Guest Faculty in Department of Japanese
Bhasha-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

From: North Dinajpur, West Bengal, INDIA

Institution attended: Nagoya University, Nagoya, Aichi-ken

Course: Training Course in Japanese Language and Culture for Overseas Students (Batch 2012-2013)



The beginning of the journey

My choosing Japanese as major was a result of a strong passion to learn a brand-new, foreign language. It is worth mentioning that back then, Japanese language was not as popular in my area as it is now, so the decision was very discretionary at the time. I was beleaguered with people with a general perception of kanji, that was “*Kanji* is very difficult”, or “*Kanji* is the only thing that trips you up” etc. This conventional perception drove me to desperately try to find a reality. With this special focus, *Kanji* started to appear as “codes/symbols” with multiple meanings that needs to be deciphered. Over time, *Kanji* turned out to be my favourite aspect of the language. Learning new *Kanji* became a hobby. Perhaps, this quietly sowed the seeds of my huge interest in linguistics. In fact, Japanese *Kanji* is still the key factor to me that incessantly keeps igniting for new Japanese vocabulary.

In the third year of my four-year UG program, my name, along with a few others from the Department of Japanese, Bhasha-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati was recommended based on academic credentials, for the all-India based MEXT selection test conducted by the Japanese Embassy in India, New Delhi. Despite no prior knowledge of MEXT and absolutely no expectation of being selected, I still gave it my all and appeared for the test in Delhi. After some time, I received a call for an interview on the same day (since we were from distant state), which was a clear indication that I had qualified for the test.

On the first day of arrival

Let me share a memory of the very first day of my arrival in Japan for the MEXT program. After getting off the subway at Yagotonisseki station, I inquired a passing woman the location of my dormitory where I would be staying. She exclaimed that her residence was close to our

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dormitory. She asked me to follow her, I didn't know what to expect, but I simply accepted. She walked me to her residence and very politely asked me to wait for a moment. In a while, she came out with her car. She apologised to have kept me waiting, placed my luggage into her car, and drove me to the Yamate residence where I would be staying for the duration of the program. Thus began my one-year journey. Beginning with the kindness of a stranger, it struck me as a harbinger of the fruitful journey to come.

Hostel Life

It was a multi-storeyed international dormitory dedicated to the foreign students who come to study in Nagoya University. The room was typical, compact and nice for me. As I had previously lived in hostels with shared kitchens and washrooms, I was truly elated to see the room well equipped with a mini kitchen with a mini refrigerator, an attached personal washroom and an air conditioner. Very basic yet necessary things like laundry, emptying the garbage trash, etc. were also done as per schedule. The residence staff were also very supportive with all our needs.

Academic life

The relentless and assiduous efforts coupled with their pragmatic teaching methods of the erudite teachers were conducive enough to fostering my Japanese language learning. In order to make the learning process smoother, a native tutor was also provided. Being offered a homestay with a native Japanese family made my Japan stay more fulfilled. The homestay experience turned out to be very unique and significant when I was given the opportunity to choose the family of my preference.

By participating in classes with the incandescent minds from all over the world, I could taste a diverse and multifaceted intercultural experience. In this context, I personally felt a little luckier to have friends from Ukraine, who were very helpful in cultivating in me the enthusiasm to speak at least something about Russian language (I had studied Russian for two years from grade 11 to 12 with a diploma later, but hadn't had an opportunity to use it). In this way, I was always able to have the joy of being in a cosmopolitan classroom.

Lifestyle

I have encountered many phenomena that may seem trivial at first glance, but were in fact not. For example, how would you feel if you saw an old lady, accompanying her pet on a walk, picking up the trash scattered in the pedestrian area along the way and depositing it in a nearby trash can? I didn't have to think too hard about how far one should go in respectful consideration, to be so considerate towards the society. Even small things can play a pivotal role in reemphasizing the importance and contribute to addressing the fundamentally pressing big issues of our present time - environmental sustainability awareness, health-related awareness, etc. by adapting them within ourselves. Life in Japan has, thus, led me to learning many things that I will always treasure and would persevere to disseminate amongst my compatriots.

This reminiscence would be incomplete without mentioning another fascinating feature of the Japanese people that I personally find so fascinating and encouraging. It is the habit of

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exchanging cute Japanese souvenirs with their acquaintances. And, who doesn't want to receive delicate gifts!?! This aspect of the community intrinsically fosters motivation towards the language and culture.

A Message for the aspirants

This one-year academic trip was a culmination of my Japanese language learning journey and provided me with a solid foundation to understand different aspects of life to establish myself as a responsible human being. In a nutshell, my stay it has shed a comprehensive light on my life. The valuable lessons, important experiences and knowledge that I gained during my stay will for certain pave the way for my days to come. In my case, this stay in Japan for MEXT has greatly helped me envision my future prospects, that led me to delve deeper into the language and thus pursue a PhD in Comparative Linguistics (Japanese & Bengali). Throughout my academic journey, I was wholeheartedly welcomed into the Japanese world. As an Indian, to a large section of the Japanese society, I belonged to a country filled with the "*atama ga ii* (talented)" people.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly advise aspirants to keep '*Japan*' as one of their top priorities.



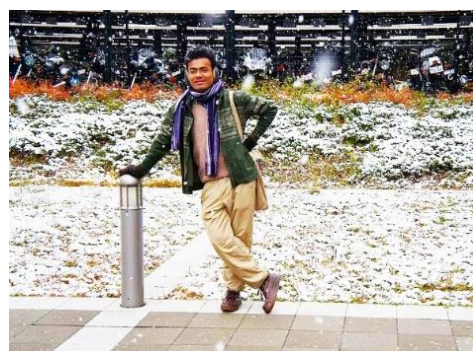
In front of Toyoda Auditorium, Nagoya University



On a trip to Lake Shikotsu, Chitose, Hokkaido



During a visit to Gujō Hachiman, Gifu-ken, on Obon festival



In front of Yamate Residence, Nagoya University



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