



# 27th INDIA-JAPAN STUDENTS' CONFERENCE REPORT



2023

# The 27th India-Japan Students' Conference

K o l k a t a    R e p o r t

**Organized by**  
Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society

# Table of Contents

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1. Message from the Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society
2. Message from a Founder Member of the Japan-India Students' Conference
3. Message from the Coordinator's Desk
4. Message from the Student President of Japan
5. Message from the Student Vice-President of Japan
6. Message from the Student President of India
7. Message from the Student Communicator of India
8. Message from the Student Vice-Presidents of Academics, Culture, Events, Finance, Press
9. Schedule
10. Sustainable Development Goals
11. List of Members
12. Daily Reports
13. 27th IJSC Gallery
14. Homestay Reports



## Message from the Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society

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Kazuko Nigam

We recently completed the 27th India-Japan students conference in Kolkata successfully. It is interesting to note that many Indian students repeat their participation in the conference. Members are eligible to participate as many times as they want, as long as they do not cross the age of 23. Using this criteria many students repeat their participation, and using their previous experiences make suggestions which ensure more satisfaction, smoother operations and a higher level of achievement by all. This year as well, the students organised new activities which were educational, popular and enjoyable to all. A good example was changing the home-stay option from one day to two days. The home-stay was not only very popular, but gave a great opportunity for Japanese students to enjoy & understand Indian culture and the Indian way of life closely with a family in an Indian home. Another new activity that was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone was the air-conditioned tram ride where the students had a wonderful view of the heritage parts of Kolkata.

The conference is held every year in the month of August which is the annual university summer holiday season in Japan. Kolkata during this month has had rains and high humidity. The Japanese students who are already tired due to last minute conference preparations in Japan, have to face the challenge of a totally different weather and atmosphere as they land in Kolkata. This unfortunately causes many of the students to suffer from cold, cough and slight fever. But despite this adversity, most of them happily & fully participate in all the activities like table discussions, sightseeing, an NGO visit and most of all the home stay. The Indian students as well, many of whom are having exams, still extend their full energy & cooperation to ensure the success of the conference.

I hope that all the participants not only enjoyed the conference, but gained knowledge and awareness of each other's countries, culture and of course made many friends. I want to also take this opportunity to express my thanks and gratitude to the Japanese Consul General of Kolkata, Mr Nakagawa who kindly invited all participants to his house for an enjoyable evening and dinner. The students really appreciated the hospitality by Mrs Nakagawa, the wife of the Consul General.

I want to also convey my sincere thanks to all who worked hard to make the conference a great success, including of course the members of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society.

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## Message from a Founder Member of the Japan-India Students' Conference

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Hiroko Nagahama

I am overjoyed to have been able to meet everyone at the 27th Japan India Students' Conference (JISC) that took place in Kolkata.

I am very grateful to the students from the Kolkata side who always took utmost care of the students from the Japan side and also their considerations and efforts in making my first stay in Kolkata a very pleasant one.

This was the second students' conference ever since the infections of the coronavirus subsided. Although the time interval between the 26th and the 27th Students' Conference was short, I would really like to express my thanks to everyone from the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyokai Society (NKKS), including Mrs. Nigam for making all the preparations.

The Consul General of Japan in Kolkata, Mr. Nakagawa showcased his hospitality by arranging a welcome event with Japanese food for everyone and I believe that Indian students also had their first delicious encounter with Japanese cuisine.

After coming in contact with Japanese cuisine they might have been more intrigued about wanting to visit Japan! Enjoying delicious food together is a great way to bond and engage with each other. I would like to express my gratitude to the Consul General for giving me this opportunity.

The theme of the 27th JISC being [Water], it was very fascinating to see the exchange of ideas between the students regarding the awareness of water problems we have at hand globally and how we could improve the ways of dealing with them. This theme is also a common world-wide issue currently. Here is to hoping that this activity will be continued by students who are tackling many such similar issues.

Of course, I wish for it to be a continuous activity and forge bonds with one another through interactions. I would also like everyone to turn the image of the Himalayas and Mt. Fuji shaking hands into reality!

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## Message from the Coordinator's Desk

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Partha Sarathi Mitra

I sincerely appreciate that I have had this opportunity to be a part of 27th India Japan Students Conference.

I hope all of you must have enjoyed attending the Conference as we enjoyed supporting you from time to time whenever required.

An exemplary participation of all of you has prompted the spirit of the Conference to the next higher level. A tremendous mood of friendship has been clearly evident.

Slowly but steadily this has become an important event on the international calendar as well as a platform to strengthen the friendship and cultural exchanges.

You all should feel privileged to be a part of this Conference. Over the next few years you all can become a coherent part in building a stronger relationship between India and Japan.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Dosokai members and most importantly the Office of the Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata, for their valuable help and support.

Domo Arigato Gozaimasu.

Thank you.

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## Message from the Student President of Japan

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Hajime Yamamoto

I am Yamamoto Hajime, the representative of the 27th Japan-India Student Conference. First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the success of the 27th Japan-India Student Conference, which marks the 27th edition of this remarkable event. I am truly thankful for the support of many individuals who made this possible. I would like to extend my appreciation to individuals such as Professor Nigam and Professor Nagahama, as well as all those who contributed to this endeavour.

I myself participated in the 26th Japan-India Student Conference, and this year marks my second year of involvement. While I contributed to the support of the conference while staying in Japan last year, I had the opportunity to travel to India this year and collaborate with the members of IJSC to prepare for the main conference.

After the challenges posed by the pandemic, this marks the second time we have organised the conference in India. However, the journey has been one of continuous trial and error. Drawing from the lessons of the 26th conference, we identified numerous areas for improvement and aimed to implement them in the 27th conference. In Particular, we focused on improving the schedule. Yet, during the actual conference, we encountered unforeseen challenges such as health issues and weather changes that necessitated adjustments to the schedule. In such instances, there were moments where the desires of IJSC and the expectations of JISC did not align. In my role as the representative, I bridged these differing opinions and proposed compromises.

Being a bridge between Japan and India, disagreements in opinions are not only characteristic of student conferences but also inevitable in shaping careers within our future societies. These experiences have been gleaned from my active participation in this conference during my time in India.

The theme of the conference, "Building a Sustainable Society in Harmony with Water," has been deeply significant for both nations. Many students from JISC displayed a keen interest in India's water issues, a sentiment I shared. The process of discussing and seeking solutions with IJSC members was unique to our location in Kolkata. Furthermore, beyond the theme of the conference, it was apparent that students from JISC and IJSC had learned much from each other. Students from JISC found the landscapes and cultures of India to be fresh and inspiring. Similarly, IJSC students had the opportunity to gain a clearer understanding of Japan through conversations with their JISC counterparts. Sharing these discoveries and inquiries has been a crucial aspect of the student conference's mission.

Lastly, I would like to share a moment that profoundly moved me. During the farewell party, as I expressed my gratitude to IJSC students for the past 10 days, some of them responded by saying, "I haven't done much." I was truly touched by their modesty. Each individual from IJSC contributed their strengths and provided knowledge and wonderful memories to the students of JISC. The spirit exhibited by the IJSC members to do this effortlessly is something truly invaluable. I aspire to possess the same spirit of contribution and to live with the goal of positively impacting others.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who played a part in preparing the groundwork to establish this cross-cultural learning platform.

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## Message from the Student Vice-President of Japan

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Mako Kurosaki

I'm honoured to be a member of 27th Japan India Student Conference in Kolkata. Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to Nigam sensei, Nagahama sensei, and all other people who contributed to organising this event including students from Japan and India.

Personally, I've been curious about the personal interaction between Japan and India because I realised the gap in depth of the relationship between the political aspect and the grassroots level interaction. Although the political cooperation between Japan and India is increasing day by day, there is room for growth in the personal interaction between the two countries. At least around me, many Japanese people think India is a country with many dangers, and sanitation problems and they have almost no chance to change that image, therefore there is a mental distance. My purpose in visiting India was to see with my own eyes what kind of people there are in India and what kind of culture they have and bring them back to Japan and spread them.

Through our stay in Kolkata for 10 days, we experienced various things, such as museum visits, shopping, movie watching, discussions, cultural exchanges, homestay, and so on. All of them are extremely precious experiences for us, but I think that especially the homestay was one of the most impressive and life-changing experiences for all of us. Students of the Indian side and their families warmly welcomed us, and we could be part of the "real life" in Kolkata, and this wouldn't have been possible if we had come here on our personal travels, and this reaffirmed the significance of this visit as the student conference. Not only during the homestay but also every moment, students from the Indian side were always warm-hearted and energetic, so we could communicate with each other in a lively manner. Therefore, we could exchange our thoughts, experiences, and feelings. Additionally, almost all Japanese members got sick during our stay in Kolkata because of the environmental difference. Even so, we received generous support from the Indian side, and we recovered soon and enjoyed the rest of the days there. We cannot thank them enough. Looking back now, it was a very fulfilling and valuable time. We've

gotten a glimpse of the way of living and thinking of people in Kolkata. Although we may have only experienced a part of the whole of Kolkata, we're eager to spread our experience to our Japanese friends and families, and I



strongly believe that this steady process will lead to the deepening of the friendly relationship between the two countries. Moreover, I hope that in the future there will continue to be opportunities for the youth of Japan and India to become friends, as we have done.

Once again, we are extremely happy that we could visit the wonderful city, Kolkata, with its abundant cultural resources, and warm-hearted people, and I want to thank all the people who made this conference a great success.

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## Message from the Student President of India

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Tamalika Nag

In the 27th edition of the India Japan Students' Conference (IJSC), under my leadership as the President, I undertook a multifaceted approach to ensure the success and enriching experience of this esteemed exchange program. Drawing inspiration from the storied history of IJSC and its participants, I recognized the importance of embracing both tradition and innovation. By meticulously managing the diverse team that comprised the conference participants, I orchestrated the development of a comprehensive plan that would encompass educational, cultural, and visionary aspects.

Decisions were made with careful consideration, aimed at fostering an environment where cultural exchange could flourish. Financial planning was executed with precision, ensuring the smooth execution of our vision. Through meticulously curated educational and cultural sessions, I aimed to broaden participants' horizons and deepen their understanding of both our cultures. These efforts contributed significantly to the conference's inclusivity, transparency, and its role as a secure space for all involved.

Teamwork emerged as the cornerstone of our endeavours, as we harnessed the collective energy and expertise of our diverse team. Effective communication served as the linchpin for seamless collaboration, fostering an atmosphere where everyone's input was valued. Upholding equality and mutual respect as fundamental tenets of communication, we forged connections that transcended cultural boundaries. The ethos of kindness and cooperation echoed throughout our work, creating an environment where helping one another was not just a choice, but a shared responsibility. As we adhered to these principles, we found ourselves mutually inspired, creating a cycle of empowerment that elevated the entire conference experience.

In conclusion, my role as the President of the 27th IJSC encompassed steering the team towards a collective vision, fostering intercultural

understanding through educational and cultural sessions, and adhering to the Five Principles that I set forth. This experience taught me that successful endeavours are born from a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation, and that by prioritising teamwork, effective communication, respect, kindness, and mutual inspiration, we can create a transformative experience that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

As the President of the India Japan Student Conference (IJSC), I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude towards Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society for organising this conference. I would like to thank the Dosokai Members for being there with us whenever we needed them, and to extend my sincere appreciation to the Consulate General for their continued belief in our mission and their dedication to fostering strong bilateral ties. A special note of thanks goes to "Water for People" for organising an enlightening educational seminar, which significantly enriched our group discussions and broadened our perspectives. To our esteemed members from Japan, your cooperation and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in creating an environment of mutual understanding and friendship. I extend my warmest gratitude to the entire team of IJSC members. Your relentless dedication, seamless cooperation, and unwavering faith in one another have been the driving forces behind the successful execution of our plans. Together, we have created an event that not only transcends cultures but also exemplifies the power of teamwork. Thank you all for being a part of this incredible journey. Your contributions have left an indelible mark on the legacy of IJSC, and I am immensely proud to have had the privilege of working with such an exceptional group of individuals.

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## Communicator's Message

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Adesh Kumar Sahoo

The moment we hear the word "Communicator", it endorses within one that it has got to do with some person and communication; and to be exact, the work entails relaying messages among both the India side and the Japan side as well as to check that all news, updates and any other notifications from either side are shared without much delay and hindrance.

To begin with, I am extremely grateful to Nigam Sensei, Partha Sensei, the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society and the Dosokai for entrusting me with the duties and responsibilities of a Communicator, in this chapter of the India Japan Students' Conference, without which I wouldn't even be here to write this message in the first place.

At the end of the Conference and acting as the Communicator, I feel that this has come out to be an unparalleled experience and something which I will treasure as an important lesson in my life for it enabled me to learn and cultivate myself in a number of aspects from soft skills, to management and various other necessary skills that might be required further. Ever since my first participation in this Conference, I had always looked up to all the executive members of the

Conference – the president, the communicator, and the vice presidents, and it always intrigued me how they made everything look so smooth and complete, and here I was this time standing in the shoes of an executive member, and I came to realise that everything that looks smooth and complete depends solely on the skills and handling techniques of the individuals who were in charge and not how difficult or easy the work they were entrusted with was. I extend my gratitude to them all; the then president, the then communicator and the then vice presidents whose messages have kept on inspiring me throughout my stride as the Communicator.

I deeply hope that I could fulfil all the duties that I was entrusted with, but I will certainly not claim all to be quintessential. Not only being a channel of communication between the two sides as well as within the India side during the Conference in addition to the pre-Conference stages, but I also hope that I was able to complete every other responsibility that I was entrusted with on the go.

To the Japan side president Hajime Yamamoto san, and the Japan side members, I thank you all so much for your cooperation during the early stages of the Conference, and communicating with me regarding all the updates and other news, and also during the Conference. Had it not been for your kind cooperation, enthusiasm and zeal, the Conference would not have been such a success. I also thank you for taking this trip all the way to Kolkata, and I hope that you could make the most out of this visit despite the not-so-comfortable weather.

To the India side president, Tamalika san and to the five vice presidents, Debeshi san, Sabarno san, Deepalika san, Namrata san and Drishti san; I thank you for your tireless assistance and extending your help to me throughout the Conference and correcting my inaccuracies. To all the India side members, I am grateful to all of you for putting your trust in me and freely communicating with me, allowing me to fulfil my duties in turn; “teamwork at its best” is how I would like to mention it. Thank you for promptly cooperating with me regarding all management work by replying to all the forms, polls and documents on time and being so considerate of any shortcomings.

Last but not the least, I extend my sincerest gratitude to Mr. Koichi Nakagawa for his kind invitation to the Conference members for a delightful reception at his residence.

To all the future communicators of IJSC, if you are reading this, do remember that you are the one trustworthy and responsible member, who has

been entrusted with this work of laying the tracks of communication and to act as the bridge with the Japan side before any of the other members do. So enjoy your position, but don't forget that you are the forerunner and your energy and enthusiasm will be reflected by both the Japan side and India side. Make sure that there is transparency in all communications and take good care of all your members, both India side and Japan side. I believe in you and so do all the members!

At the end, I would say, acting as the Communicator was an eye opener which has helped me grow as a person, and given me a newfound strength to take up some new challenges. I never really thought it would emerge as a journey of self discovery and I am glad I could embark on this with all my India side and Japan side friends together. Cherishing the Conference, we will all do and so do I, but this experience will be etched forever within me.

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## Message from the Student Vice-Presidents of Academics, Culture, Events, Finance, Press

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### **1) Debeshi Mandal, Vice-President of the Academics Team:**

The India-Japan Students' Conference is a wonderful amalgam of academic innovation and cultural exchange that brings together students across borders and unites them in the pursuit of a better world as beacons of the future. I had the honour of serving as the Vice-President of the Academics Team for the 27th IJSC, and the experience has been nothing short of enriching and exhilarating. This was my first time participating in the conference, and I would firstly like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the President, Tamalika Nag, and the Communicator, Adesh Kumar Sahoo, for guiding me through the process and helping me every step of the way.

This year, the topic that lay at the core of the academic discussions that comprise the conference was chosen to be "Building a Sustainable Future with Water by Our Side." The three groups that were created to broach this subject were to discuss the following themes- "Overcoming Public Health Challenges from The Perspective of Water", "Disasters from the Perspective of Water", and "Comparison of Urban and Rural Water Environments." The Japan side contributed heavily to the formulation of these themes, and I am greatly indebted to their sincere commitment and meticulous approach in contributing to the academic ambience of the 27th IJSC.



We further explored our subject matter by inviting the NGO “Water for People” to conduct a workshop at the conference. We sought to understand the perspective of a group of people working with issues of water and sanitation at the grassroot level so that we could broaden our horizons and bring a more holistic outlook to our group discussions. The NGO workshop would have been impossible without the help of the Events team, and I would like to express my gratitude to its Vice-President, Deepalika Deb, for coordinating with us so seamlessly.

The Academics team crafted various guidelines and pointers for research and group discussions throughout the conference, and I hope they have proven to be helpful to all members in their academic endeavours. I was assisted in all my efforts by my team members Tisyagupta Pyne, Mandas Biswas and Sneham Dey, and I am eternally thankful to them for their help and cooperation.

The NGO workshop and the three group discussions were characterised by enthusiasm from both the Indian and Japanese side, and the vividly detailed and thoroughly researched presentations were testimony to the fact that we had wrapped up the academic part of the conference with perfect flourish. I also assigned and edited the reports chronicling the entire conference, and it was indeed a joy to delve into the personal and collective experiences of various members, almost reliving them all over again.

Lastly, I would like to thank Nigam Sensei, Partha Sensei and the Dosokai for giving me this incredible opportunity, and for their incessant help and guidance. Working as the Vice President of the Academics Team has taught me valuable lessons in leadership and teamwork, and I will forever cherish this experience for helping me grow as an aspiring academic as well as a person.

## **2) Sabarno Sinha, Vice-President of the Cultural Team:**

As the Vice President of the Cultural Team of the 27th India Japan Students’ Conference, I must say that my experience was quite different than usual, as I had previously served as an ordinary member (25th) and a communicator (26th). Hence, this was very new to me. The primary task of the VP of the Cultural Team is to make sure that all cultural events are planned, scripts are made, performances are decided and well-rehearsed so that the day goes smoothly. However, despite my best efforts, I was finally let down by my health, which faltered in the final days leading up to the conference and even during the conference, due to which I could not perform to the best of my ability. Nevertheless, I must say that my team with Ritika, Aasia and Jayee helped me from the first day to the end of the conference. Our first and main job was to prepare the opening ceremony performance. As this IJSC was spread over the days culminating into the Independence Day, we decided that our programme too should be themed on the same. It took us several days to write and revise our script because our idea was too large to be performed within 15

minutes but we somehow managed to do that on the final day. Our aim was to capture the Indian independence movement through famous songs and poems of that period. Once the script was finalised, we had to recruit members from the India side for the chorus and the recitation. Thankfully, it took us very little time to get members and thereafter, it was time to start rehearsals. Rehearsals went on for several evenings at my house and our greatest challenge was to maintain a uniform scale while singing. Everyone had different natural scales, and nobody was used to singing in a chorus. With the help of an electronic tanpura, we tried to set a standard scale for everyone and I believe that it finally worked out in our favour on the day of the performance. I am very grateful to all the singers: Sneham, Mandas, Tamalika, Oishee, Aasia, Sunanda and Drishti, for coming for rehearsals and spending hours at my house and trying very hard (under my often agitated instructions) to sing to my satisfaction. The script also had parts to be read out and it had to be in sync with the chorus. While Aasia and Ritika were able to practise physically while the chorus practised, Jayee was unable to join us owing to her house being almost three hours away from Kolkata. Nevertheless, we practised online and tried to coordinate quite instinctively on the final day. Aasia, Drishti and Adesh also prepared a wonderful presentation for the Japan side which was played with the cultural performance that day. I am told that our presentation was enjoyed by the Japanese members thoroughly and the Deputy Consul General, Mr Yamasaki Matsutaro was all praises for us.

My team was also involved in choosing the games and songs that would be played on the cultural evening that was to happen at my house, which also involved making and eating phuchkas. They were quite good at this and they quickly decided the songs that would be played as well as the game that would be played: passing the parcel. Chits were also made in which actions that had to be performed by the one who got the parcel were also written. I thank my team once again for finishing these tasks so deftly during the conference.

Finally, I must thank Ritika once again for serving as a last-minute replacement for me during the closing ceremony of the conference. I was supposed to anchor both the opening and the closing ceremonies but once again, due to a severe headache (which stemmed from an even worse toothache), I was unable to attend the closing ceremony. I was very fortunate to have a team which was so helpful and supportive throughout.

I would like to close my report with a small piece of advice for future Vice Presidents (of culture, especially): always distribute tasks among people. Everyone has shared responsibility in the successful and smooth organisation of the conference and only if we work together can we do our best.

### **3) Deepalika Deb, Vice-President of the Events Team:**

The Pirates took long sea voyages, with predictions mapped on papers, and stars and winds navigating them until they reached their destinations wherein lay treasures of hope, magic, and gems; or lay mysteries of civilizations, art, cults, or supernatural antiquity. The Sailors built distances and directions in the seas, forged their swords against the high tides, and steered the ships abroad to unknown lands, and to unidentified and strange people. Amidst tensions of the Cold War, scientists and people with prudence took days and nights to prepare for a launch that would take men to the realm beyond earth, a place far distant, a giant white shining planetary mass with a rocky body. Blackbeard took to the West Indies, Columbus took to the Atlantic, Armstrong took to the atmosphere – each on their own adventure. Analogies are not always perfect, but the Team Events were no less than voyagers and strategists, reasonably and fairly motivated to step into the unknown.

In the India-Japan Students' Conference, the Events Team upholds the responsibility of scheduling the whole IJSC. Simply formulating an itinerary is not enough, or plainly putting events one after the other does not do justice to the baggage this students' conference holds. Once assigned, the team took forward the task of carefully putting out the dates, day, timings, and the planning of the whole conference.

The task began approximately a month before IJSC. With less time in hands and more programmes to fit into the 10 days conference, the journey of scheduling had been a rocky one, yet the most amusing. The Events Team had 3 mottos:

Keep the schedule light but eventful – With the Japanese members travelling so far, and Kolkata's weather, the team decided to keep the schedule light, giving more space and time to activities where people could enjoy, talk, relax, and take in the aura of the atmosphere or the place. Each monument or museum was given ample amount of time for the members to learn and interact, thus, having an adequate momentum building phase. Members were given time to rest, as well as wander once, twice, or thrice, sometimes aimlessly and oftentimes purposefully for pictures, learning about the place, and for chit-chat sessions.

Include places that show the authenticity of Bengal – One lingering question that loomed over the team's mind was – 'How do we impart the true Indianness or the culture of Bengal on the Japanese members who are visiting the city for the first time?'. Keeping this as our line of thought, the team ventured into different corners of the city to explore and re-explore places that we had often visited for school picnics or with our parents. Scouting old lanes of Kolkata – the bookstores, famous eateries offering Bengali cuisine, traditional Bengali households or the great houses of erstwhile Zamindars, residences of freedom fighters and significant figures of Modern Indian history, transport

systems original to the city – the Team went ahead and explored all to see what was fit and feasible for the conference and the days we had.

Make people Enjoy – For people to make memories, beam their faces with amusement and laughs, and fill their phones with pictures of merry moments and striking nature was our most crucial priority. We wanted to take the members to places where there was not just education involved, but where we could all enjoy fun-filled activities. Each and every place the Events Team took the members to, had some significant fun moments.

With a very inclusive schedule, taking the preferences of both Indian and Japanese members, the Events Team tried to connect the taste and fondness of every member together. In the 27th IJSC, the Team brought to the table crucial exercises and events necessary for the success and education the conference imparted. The Team organised an NGO collaboration with “Water for People” who did a presentation on their water and sanitation related activities and transmitted information regarding the same and the probable solutions; with the help of other members booked a Tram ride from Shyambazar tram depot to Esplanade tram depot, and also had a brief meeting with the Managing Director of the Transport Department of Kolkata; planned for museum visits and lunches at renowned eateries in Kolkata, including KC Das. While coordinating with the other Teams (Finance, Cultural, Academics and Press), the Events Team carefully planned the routes and transport to undertake, judging with the criteria of feasibility, safety, distance, budget, and places that were authentic to Kolkata as well as could bring the cultures of Japan and India together.

Acknowledgement goes to the team members – Kanak, Reeti, and Adesh – for their coordination and wholehearted dedication. The Team members had each other’s back always and were fully expressive in their work. With walking 24 kilometres a day, to taking small pizza breaks in cafes around central Kolkata, to the allegories of jokes cracked during serious moments – the team maintained the responsibility they were holding, the wisdom they had to impart, and the merriment they had to preach. Leading such a Team gave me immense satisfaction and gratification, albeit all the nervousness and minimum time we had to prepare the schedule.

For getting the opportunity to serve as the Vice President in the 27th IJSC, and to get such an amazing team, it was truly an occasion brought to me by the heavens. Frankly, perhaps my analogy of Blackbeard, Columbus or Armstrong would also be less conspicuous in comparison to the fun I have had and the knowledge I have gathered in this conference. With the astronomy of the events, the sense of wonder, the simplification of complexities, and the will to form connections, the Events Team never wore out or uninspired somebody/something – and that’s how we operated in the 27th India Japan Students’ Conference.



#### **4) Namrota Mandal, Vice-President of the Finance Team:**

In this 27th India-Japan Students' Conference, I had the honour of serving as the Vice-President of the finance team. It was the most exhilarating experience ever. Contrary to the popular belief that if you are participating as an executive member, it is unlikely that you'll have any fun for yourself, I found myself enjoying every bit of the responsibilities till the end. Functioning as the auditor of an international conference along with my most cooperative teammates was nothing short of a blessing. I am extremely grateful to Tamalika and all her help, not just as a member of the team but also as the responsible President, always guiding me and showing me the ropes. Madhura and Gunjari have always been patient in my dealings with finances and have always offered help whenever I needed it.

As much as being the Finance Vice-President was fun, I understood the duties that I had to bear. Meticulous calculations had to become my second nature, deft note-taking my vital efficacy, and collecting bills, my hobby. The machinery of the finance team kicked off in the latter half of the conference after initial planning and updates were exchanged daily amongst the teams, especially the events team. A tentative structure was made which was followed and duly changed and corrected according to arising situations and exigencies. Being the month of August, the very mid of monsoons, a lot of plans were changed on the day itself owing to the weather. Keeping a note of all means of expenditures, be it in the form of an absence of a member, or an extra commutation charge due to the weather, we had to be extremely vigilant in decisions regarding what would oblige the budget.

I have learned a lot during the course of the conference. Having a tentative structure was definitely easier for my anxious heart but executing all of those disbursements within the expected outlay was more difficult. Nevertheless, the entire process was remarkably fun, and the things I took away from bearing this position only dip towards the positives. I would also take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of the President, the Communicator, and the entire team, without whose contributions this conference could not have been a success.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to Nigam Sensei, Partha Sensei and DOSOKAI for their tireless contributions. Lastly, to all my successors and my fellow readers in the hope of bettering the legacy of this conference, remember that responsibility is synonymous with benevolent leadership. Enjoy your achievements as much as your plans and beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. I will end this report by quoting a few lines by Lanston Hughes:

“Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird

That cannot fly”.

## **5) Drishti Shroff, Vice-President of the Press Team:**

The 27th India-Japan Students’ Conference took place in the city of joy, Kolkata, during the month of August for a duration of roughly ten days. The

IJSC is a platform for cultural exchange, growth and camaraderie where people share treasured experiences and knowledge that is intrinsically valuable to their development.

It has been my utmost pleasure and privilege to be a part of this prestigious conference since its 24th instalment and each IJSC I have appreciated the opportunity I have received to understand the Japanese culture while working on Sustainable Development Goals and devising solutions to social issues.

In my experience, mutual respect, understanding, compassion and friendship are the pillars to success in a conference while also being driving factors for its members to make cherishable contributions and connections. Each member yielded their best to this conference and helped create an experience that was invaluable for everyone.

My initial connection with Japan started with books of Haruki Murakami until I was irrevocably in love with its culture, food, movies and shows. Now, it’s my resolve to strengthen India-Japan relations through dialogue and collaboration where we learn from each other and grow.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to NKKS, Dosokai, Nigam Sensei and Partha Sensei for always supporting us throughout the conference and giving me the opportunity to serve as the Vice President of the Press team. It has been a pleasure to lead my team with wonderful hardworking members and steer the wheels of the conference through the work done by the Press Team.

The Press Team or Editorial Team was created in the 26th IJSC where it’s primary focus is to write regarding all events pertaining to the conference and make an archive collection available to people for understanding the significance of our students’ conference. Documentation of vital events through blog posts and social media platforms alongside reels are given due priority and fall under the purview of the press team. Creativity and flexibility are essential elements to facilitate completion of tasks in lucrative ways. There’s no hard rule about scope of work in the press team and a lot of interesting tasks can be undertaken depending upon the availability of time and other factors.

In the 27th IJSC, the field of work for the press team expanded as we took interviews of Japanese members for Tram Depot, published individual members’ bio on social media and posted weekly updates on wordpress sites as well as on Instagram.

The press team has a multidimensional and dynamic role to play as it dabbles with information processing, video editing, blogging, graphic design and social media work. Since we had limited time at hand, we used to create weekly blog posts regarding all meetings and relevant updates ranging from schedule to group discussions on online forums as well as general meetings. Design related work such as creation of banners, report covers, placards, ID cards, etc, were simultaneously delivered before the commencement of the conference. Reels were created while the conference was ongoing and uploaded on a day-wise basis to give insight into our conference proceedings and merriment.

After the conference ends, the press team makes limited posts of relevant updates, wrapping up through final blog posts and social media posts. At this stage, presenting the report remains the main focus that documents the events while providing an insight into the experiences of its members. Providing a layout regarding the conference proceedings through documentation for future reference is, therefore, the objective of the editorial team.

The Press Team is an excellent team if one wishes to harness their creative potential and has a penchant for writing. There's a wide scope here for improvisation and flexibility as it is independent and is not confined to any barriers with plenty of opportunities for innovation.

I consider myself extremely fortunate for having hardworking and cooperative team members such as Oishee-San, Rusha-San and Sunanda-San who were able to contribute immensely to our ideation process and aligned themselves to our collective vision. Each member was committed to create a legacy that would be looked up by our future successors and gave their support towards our end goal.

Lastly, I would like to thank every member of 27th IJSC for creating beautiful memories with a smile on their face. Every moment captured for group pictures and videos taken has gained special meaning as everyone engaged in having fun relentlessly. I am also elated that everybody shared pictures and videos on a collective Google drive that allows us to rewind time whenever we want.

It was an extremely rewarding experience where I could tap into my managerial skills and commit myself to the success of our conference. I would tell my successors to make fond memories with each other and convert their hard work into something beautiful and memorable.

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# Schedule

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## 6th August

- Arrival of the Japanese Side

## 7th August

- Opening Ceremony

## 8th August

- Visit to the Indian Museum
- Lunch at The Bhoj Company
- Visit to Metcalfe Hall

## 9th August

- NGO Seminar
- Group Discussion 1
- Cultural Session at Sabarno's House

## 10th August

- Tram Ride
- Lunch at K.C. Das
- Evening at Victoria Memorial

## 11th August

- Group Discussion 2 & 3

## 12th August

- Presentation
- Homestay

## 13th August

- Homestay

## 14th August

- Shopping at Dakshinapan
- Reception Dinner at the Residence of the Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata

## 15th August

- Movie
- Lunch at the Food Court of Acropolis Mall
- Closing Ceremony
- NKKS Foundation Day
- Sayonara Party



16th August

– Drop off at the Airport

## Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations came forward with 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs to protect the planet, and to ensure that all the world's people can live in dignity and freedom. The year 2030 has been set as the year of achievement of these goals. These goals include the elimination of poverty, hunger, and societal inequalities; it is to be able to provide clean water, proper sanitation, good health and a quality education to everyone; it is to enable a decent economic growth for all countries; it is to be able to build sustainable and environmentally friendly cities; and it is to be able to provide peace, justice, equal human rights and effective governance to all. The centrepiece of the 27th India-Japan Students' Conference is our discussion on Sustainable Development Goals, what their status in the world is, and how we can achieve them as citizens of the world. We explored these SDGs through intricate research, brainstorming, and discussions, and fieldwork to certain notable establishments around the city to have an idea of their present scenario.



## List of Members

### Group 1: Overcoming Public Health Challenges

Name	Position	University/ Major
Tisyagupta Pyne (Group Leader)	Academics Team	Visva Bharati University/ Integrated Science Education and Research Centre
Tamalika Nag	Finance Team	Institute of Company Secretaries of India/ Company Secretaryship
Jayee Dutta	Cultural Team	Indira Gandhi National Open University/ English
Deepalika Deb	Events Team	St. Xavier's College (Autonomous)/ Political Science
Aasia Mansoor	Cultural Team	JIS University/ Education
Reeti Dey	Events Team	Jadavpur University/ English
Haruka Mizuno	Academic Planner and Domestic Liaison	Meijo University/ Pharmacy
Junya Ueda	Academic Planner	Keio University/ Law
Raito Sato	Domestic Liaison	University of Fukui/ Medical Sciences

### Group 2: Disasters from the Perspective of Water

Name	Position	University/ Major
Oishee Biswas (Group Leader)	Press Team	Women's Christian College / Department of English
Sabarno Sinha	Cultural Team	Jadavpur University/ Department of English
Adesh Kumar Sahoo	Events Team	Meghnad Saha Institute of Technology/ Information Technology
Madhura Ghosh	Finance Team	Presidency University/ Economics

Mandas Biswas	Academics Team	Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences/ Physical and Mathematical Sciences
Rusha Chowdhury	Press Team	Jadavpur University/ English
Sunanda Shaw	Press Team	Bhairav Ganguly College/ Department of English
Mako Kurosaki	Vice-President	Waseda University/ Education
Kichiya Mie	Public Relation/ Domestic Liaison	Waseda University/ Cultural Media and Society
Shogo Inoue	International Liaison	Kyoto University/ Integrated Human Studies

### Group 3: Comparison of Urban and Rural Water Environments

Name	Position	University/ Major
Ritika Banerjee (Group Leader)	Cultural Team	Jadavpur University/ Master of Arts (English)
Debeshi Mandal	Academics Team	Jadavpur University/ Master of Arts (English)
Namrota Mandal	Finance Team	SRFTI/ Animation and Cinema
Drishti Shroff	Press Team	Calcutta University/ Master of Arts (English)
Kanak Verma	Events Team	St. Xavier's College Autonomous/ Multimedia
Sneham Dey	Academics Team	Techno International, Newton/ Applied Electronics and Instrumentation Engineering
Junjari Sarkar	Finance Team	Presidency University/ Economics
Hajime Yamamoto	President	Kanda University of International Studies/ Global Liberal Arts

# I

## ARRIVAL FROM AIRPORT

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*BY ADESH KUMAR SAHOO*

*“The magic in new beginnings is truly the most powerful of them all.” – Josiyah Martin*

After a number of thorough planning sessions in addition to interacting with the Japan Side members over online platforms for nearly a month, the time had finally come for their arrival at Kolkata for the Conference. The pickup of the Japan side members might not be considered as a pompous event when compared to the palette of events throughout the conference, but it is indeed, the one silent yet significant event which signals that the Conference has begun. All the excitement, anticipation, enthusiasm and mix of emotions that has bottled up throughout the pre-Conference planning stages comes to this one moment when the familiar Japan side walks out of the airport, matching the same amount of excitement with the India side members.

It was the 6th of August, after a whole month of pre-planning and making everything foolproof to the best, three members from the India side, Tamalika san, the President; Drishti san, the Vice President of the press team and I started for the airport to pick the Japan side members up. We started at half past nine at night, for the airport, almost two hours before their flight's scheduled touchdown at Kolkata Airport. Tamalika san and I booked a SUV and were soon joined by Drishti san with her car and headed onwards to the airport. On the way we picked up water bottles for the Japan side, since by the time we would return all shops might have closed down.

The Japan side's scheduled arrival in Kolkata was at forty-five minutes past eleven. Hajime Yamamoto san, the president of the Japan side, had been continuously updating us on their position, starting from the time they boarded their flight at Narita and even during their transfer at Delhi. Six Japan side members accompanied by Nagahama sensei were to arrive that day, with one member, Raito Sato san, arriving a day before and another member, Haruki Kodaira san, to arrive on the 9th of August.

A sudden rush of adrenaline and goosebumps were felt the moment Hajime san updated us for one last time, over messaging, that they had boarded the Delhi-Kolkata flight, the final leg of their journey, and that it would take off very soon. It all started to set in, that the next time we talk with the Japan side it would not be over messages but face to face. An air of excitement and anticipation prevailed and with continuous tracking of their flight position, we reached the airport at five minutes to eleven.

Thanks to Tamalika san's arrangements, we could park our cars on the bay itself, instead of going into the parking zone, which guaranteed a quick exit from the airport after



picking them up. After reaching the airport, we still had about an hour to kill, so we roamed around and grabbed a quick coffee from the array of stalls outside the airport gates. We chatted and discussed the upcoming days and we kept on squinting at the arrival board for their flight, and sooner than later, Hajime san dropped a message that they had landed in Kolkata, ahead of their scheduled time. The moment the message came in, we quickly finished our coffees, did micro-adjustments, and moved over to Gate 3B. With the arrival placards in hand, designed by Drishti san, we looked at the sea of people coming out of the gates and searched for the Japan side. After a long wait of about half an hour, we finally spotted the six members with Nagahama sensei walk out of the airport gates with big smiles on their faces, and their demeanour extremely enthralled to see us in person.

In spite of their 14 hour long journey to Kolkata, they seemed extremely rejuvenated, which in turn gave us a boost; a million times more than the coffee we drank. Welcome greetings and a few photographs later, we all moved towards the cars, with the India side members helping the Japan side with their luggage carts. Soon, another cab was booked along with the 2 cars already there and the baggage was loaded and at around ten minutes past midnight we started our journey back to the RMIC Guest House. The return journey was swiftly done well under forty minutes due to clear roads and without much hassle, we all could start their check in procedure at the guest house by twelve forty five. The check in took a little time, which did not really feel as long since all the members kept interacting and discussing the days ahead and before we knew it, all the six members were assigned their respective rooms. Once the rooms were allocated, the Japan side members went up to their rooms. By one thirty the check in was done and with a concise briefing about the following day and a few formalities later, Tamalika san, Drishti san and I left the guest house to head back home, looking forward to the Opening Ceremony that was only ten hours away.

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## II

# OPENING CEREMONY

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*BY REETI DEY*

The inaugural ceremony of the 27th India-Japan Students' Conference commenced with the inaugural speech by Ms Babli Chowdhury, President of NKKS, who motivated us to embark on this educational journey and do our parts efficiently to make the conference a success. Consequently, we were graced by Mr Yamasaki Matsutaro, Deputy Consul General, Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata, who with his light-hearted warm address made us feel relaxed and energised for this new beginning.

The ceremony continued with an inspiring speech by Mr Partha Sarathi Mitra, Coordinator of IJSC, who with anecdotes emphasised the importance of active participation in the conference to bridge the gap between the two countries. He wished for the conference's success and inspired the participants to look forward to an academically, culturally as well as traditionally enriching time. The welcoming message from Students' Conference Dosokai was up next, announcing the beginning of this beautiful journey. Then

the President of the India side, Ms Tamalika Nag and the President of the Japan side, Mr Hajime Yamamoto were called up to the podium to deliver their respective speeches. They thanked all the guests and participants for their presence at the ceremony and for providing all the necessary requirements for such a conference. The speeches came to an end with the self-introductory speeches of all participants. The section for cultural exchange began shortly after with the Cultural Team of the Indian side putting up a carefully concocted dramatic reading of the events that crafted India and Indians on the occasion of the conference taking place during the culturally significant month of August. The ending to the reading was a rather memorable one with everyone standing up in reverence to the national anthem of India being sung at the ceremony. The Japanese side members then put up a lively show demonstrating a game of Daruma Otoshi and a game of Koma, a traditional Japanese spinning top which is not much different than our Indian game of Lattu.

The opening ceremony became a vivacious start to the 27th India-Japan Student Conference. The ceremony ended with a Vote of Thanks and the members all coming together for a group photograph to commemorate the event.

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### III

## VISIT TO THE INDIAN MUSEUM

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*BY RITIKA BANERJEE*

The bright morning of 8th August, 2023 commenced with the tour of the Indian Museum which is recognised as the oldest and largest museum in Asia. Kolkata rains ceased on the morning of the 8th to grant a mildly warm but pleasant weather ideally suited to sightseeing. The season may have been a rainy one for Indian members but the air carried a hint of late summer as a reminder of home for the Japanese members.

The Indian side was asked to assemble directly in front of the Indian Museum while the Japanese members were to be escorted by President Tamalika Nag-san and Communicator Adesh Sahoo-san. The time allocated for the meet-up was set at 10 am and the tour was scheduled to start from 10.30 am. The towering gate of the museum awaited our arrival as we proceeded to get checked by security and entered the interiors of the historical site.

Our first destination was the room of excavations from Bihar which inaugurated the guided tour, starting with the Bharhut Gallery. The guided tour gave us insight into the history of Buddhism and its origin in India. Both Indian and Japanese students were educated and gratified to know more about the sculpture styles, the presence of Pali scriptures, along with the sight of the Torana, the gate found through excavation. Our guide also explained the differences in architectural forms of the sects of Buddhism. The next room was the Gandhara Gallery which featured slabs of intricately carved pieces of stone artefacts

encased in glass boxes, containing centuries' worth of history in a room. Our guided tour ended soon and we were left to roam around the museum as per our desires. The Indian members gave the Japanese members an overview of the diverse history of India, including the arrival of Goddess Durga and the folklorish reinterpretations of the story. Most of the Japanese members were aware of Ganesh, also known as the elephant-headed god, and Benzaiten, an incarnate form of Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and wisdom. Thus, they were delighted to see the Tantra Ganesh figure adorned with skulls and know about the origin of the legend of Benzaiten. Leaving the Gandhara Gallery to return to the same spot, the Japanese members had a small informal picture session with a cat family they found in the museum before visiting the next gallery. Soon we moved to another destination, the Painting Gallery on the next floor.

The Painting Gallery was a spectacle that highlighted pieces of famous artists like Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy, and Abdur Rehman Chughtai. The Japanese members, especially Mie Kichiya-san, found the raised paintings very delightful since they could touch the artwork and it was a first for them. By this time, most of the members had split into smaller groups to take a better tour of the museum. The Rock and Minerals Gallery, the Industrial Botany Gallery, the Mammal Gallery, the Bird Gallery, the Human Evolution Gallery, the Textile Gallery, and the Egypt Gallery were hotspots for Japanese members. The Rock and Mineral Gallery led us to find ammonites while the Mammal Gallery gave us the splendour of gigantic skeletons of mammoths and other prehistoric animals. Haruka Mizuno-san expressed interest in the Industrial Botany Gallery due to her fascination with plants and exclaimed that she loved it. After a fairly long tour of the other galleries, we headed to the section that causes curiosity even in Indians, the Egypt Gallery with the embalmed mummy brought to Kolkata back in 1882. The chilled room filled with preservation salts contained the mummy with a description. The mummified hand was displayed in a separate glass case. The Japanese members were highly enthusiastic about the mummy and Junya Ueda-san observed the mummy carefully with great attention. Shogo Inoue-san also mentioned how the mummy greatly impressed him as it was his first experience with a real mummy. The members examined the Egypt Gallery thoroughly, with the Nefertiti bust and the remnants found of Egyptian origin. The Egypt Gallery was the last of our destinations after which we met together on the ground floor of the museum. Completing a successful tour of the Indian museum, both the Indian and Japanese members beamed with satisfaction, one as hosts and the other as guests. With smiles on our faces, we posed for a group picture on the stairs to commemorate our visit and create a beautiful memory to be shared in the future. Finally, we left the museum to head to Bhoj Company to have a taste of traditional Bengali lunch.

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## IV

### LUNCH AT “THE BHOJ COMPANY”

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*BY AASIA MANSOOR*

8th August 2023 marked the 2nd Day of the India-Japan Student’s Conference. The day began with a morning full of adventure, as the students delved deep into the antiquity of the past at the Indian Museum. Everyone was in high spirits but unfortunately some of the members couldn’t join due to exams and health issues.

After we were done exploring the museum, the participants stopped by the Bhoj Company for lunch; and to reach there from the Indian museum it approximately took 15 minutes by walk. On the way to the Bhoj Company, Japanese members got to see Kolkata’s iconic hand-pulled rickshaws and some of them were quite amazed to see it.

All the members reached the Bhoj Company at 1:30 PM and as it was a hot day, getting inside the air-conditioned restaurant was a relief for everyone. The ambience of the restaurant was pleasant and the members liked it a lot; the dim lights were the icing on the cake. The menu for lunch was plain rice, moong daal, aloo bharta, paneer pakora, french fries, chicken curry, jhinge aloo posto for vegetarians, papad and aam chutney, allowing us to taste the flavours of authentic Bengali cuisine. Members also ordered beverages according to their preferences. The Japanese side tried to eat using their hands in order to follow the traditional Indian way of eating. The food was scrumptious, specially the paneer pakora, which was liked by everyone because of its crunchy outside and creamy insides. One of the Japanese side members even commented, “The paneer pakora was the tastiest”. The service was excellent and the staff were pretty polite.

Whilst having the food, members interacted with each other and spoke about different topics related to food, language, movies and more. Members of the 26th IJSC, Poulomi and Debabrata, also joined us and interacted with the Japanese students. It could be considered the ice breaker for both the Japanese and the Indian side members, which definitely served the purpose of the conference!

Having a home-styled lunch gave the members a boost of energy and they danced a bit to their very favourite Bollywood songs which made the atmosphere cheerful. It was surely a delightful experience for each and every one of us. After making the payment at 4 PM, the members left for Metcalfe Hall.

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## V

### METCALFE HALL

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*BY JAYEE DUTTA*

On 8th August, after a hearty lunch at The Bhoj Company, our team of 22 headed out for the next location that was Metcalfe Hall. Though it was a long walk, time went swiftly as Indian and Japanese members engaged in various conversations, taking this as an

opportunity to get to know each other even better. On the way, mild rain started pouring. It took around 40 minutes to reach Metcalfe Hall.

Metcalfe Hall was built in the mid 19th century in honour of Charles Metcalfe, officiating Governor General of India in 1835-36, who later served as Governor General of Canada. The building was designed by C.K. Robinson in classical Greek style and is noted for its colonnades supported by massive Corinthian columns. Initially, this building was used as a public library. It reopened as a museum in 2019 after extensive restoration.

After verifying everyone's documents and paying for the tickets as well as taking rest for a while everyone headed towards the Metcalfe hall. Entering the hall we discovered a rickshaw filled with messages from the various visitors of the hall over time. Every member took their time to leave a signature on a paper as a memory on the rickshaw. The Japanese members also wrote their experiences in India and their own wishes. While videography is prohibited, photography was allowed so the members took memorable pictures in the hall. Everyone took their time to relax and look around and admire the quiet hall. The Indian members explained about the various movie posters, art and sculptures found in the hall to the Japanese members while leisurely walking around. At the end of the hall everyone took their time to sit and rest as well as sing together.

After some more group pictures it was the time for us to leave and end our day. Various members went their separate ways towards their home while others, along with Japanese members, went for the metro.

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## VI NGO SEMINAR

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*BY MANDAS BISWAS*

Following the exciting and colourful day of visiting the Indian Museum, The Bhoj Company and Metcalfe Hall, it was time to settle down for some serious discussions on the topic of our GD theme – Building a Sustainable Future with Water by Our Side. We had invited the wonderful NGO “Water for People” (operated by the NGO conglomerate NSE Foundation) who are working in the field of water management, water sanitation, and freshwater availability in nine countries all across the globe since 1991 to conduct a workshop for us. Within India, they said, they’re active especially in the states of West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Bihar. They shared with us some really exhilarating and insightful presentations about their journey, experiences, impact on people’s lives and future strategies to address the cause.



The venue was the nice and cosy CR1 room of the famed Aurobindo Bhawan in Jadavpur University. Some of the Japan side members were unwell, and as a result they couldn't attend the seminar. Other than them, everyone arrived at the venue by 11:10AM. Three representatives from the NGO came to present to us about their journey. They introduced themselves and told us about their memorable journey with the NGO and how they got connected to the cause, and also about their respective fields of expertise. Then, we had a round of introduction for the student members of the IJSC-JISC. After that, all the student members settled down and the NGO people started telling us about their presentation.

First, they showed us a video that documented the strategies and measures they took in West Bengal for water health and sanitation under the Swachh Bharat Abhijan of the Indian government. It showed how they are prioritising quality, quantity and accessibility of water resources all over India under the flagship programme of the government to cover the remaining 40% of people in India who are yet to get freshwater accessible to them in an easy manner. They also showed interviews of local people from rural Bengal (mainly from Birbhum area) as they talked about all the privileges they had access to after the NGO completed their work in those areas. The video also showed us the cause addressed by Mr. Arumugam Kalimuthu (NSE Foundation's Chairperson), and Mr. Bishwadeep Ghose (country director for the NGO) – and they raised the important point of how implementation of water sanitary practices is more difficult than rendering the services anew, as they are already in factory practice. They showcased various ways of fighting the cause (most striking was the activity-based lessons) and the models that they plan to settle on for the water filtration process.

Various questions were asked by several members of the IJSC-JISC following each section of the presentation. Our knowledge for fighting water-related causes increased tenfold from the practical experience the representatives shared with us – like vermicomposting, mobile water mechanics, governmentalization of private water sanitary units, rainwater harvesting, the “Inspire->Activate->Sustain” model, and several filter models like wheelbarrow and groundwater storage aquifer, and so on.

After such a joyous ride through the seminar, everyone was ready to be recharged for the upcoming GD session. It was already 1PM, so we smoothly went into a hungry mode seeing the food as it arrived from “e-dabba” during the seminar itself, and became ready to relish the taste!

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## VII

### GROUP DISCUSSION (GD)-1

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*BY SNEHAM DEY*

The morning of 9th August was allotted for the NGO (Water for Life) seminar. After the seminar we proceeded with Group Discussion (GD)-1 at Jadavpur University Aurobindo Bhawan CR-1 Hall. The room was quite spacious and adequate for such sessions. The GD started around 3.30 pm and the members from both India and Japan sides joined their respective groups. Each group consisted of members from both the Japanese and Indian side. There were a total of three groups for GD to discuss Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) related to water resources (conceptualised from the 17 SDGs of the United Nations). The topic of discussion of each group was:

1. Overcoming Public Health Challenges
2. Disasters from the Perspective of Water
3. Comparison of Urban and Rural Water Environments

All the members joined their respective groups and everyone started researching on their allotted topics. All the group members wholeheartedly focussed on their respective topic; in addition, they took help of their team members who had sincerely collected information prior to the event. Academics Team Vice President Debeshi Mandal discussed the guidelines, relevant points, and the rules everyone needed to follow while preparing their presentations. All the groups started to work on their respective topics and the group leaders distributed tasks to every member of their respective team. Members worked together and discussed their views while finalising the presentation slides. It was truly a wonderful moment for all of us while preparing the documents. All the members discussed the relevant scenario of Japan. We also interacted with our Japanese counterparts to know about their current activities in their educational field and also their future pursuits. Both the Indian side as well as the Japanese side members extended their full cooperation by exchanging their respective views and opinions on the relevant issues. During this session we took a short interval for refreshment with hot tea and biscuits.

It was a memorable experience to work with the Japan side members and we all came to know lots of interesting facts about Japan and about Japanese people and their traditional culture. On the third day of the 27th IJSC, GD-1 session began as per schedule at 3.30 pm and was concluded by 5 pm. All the team members summated their work and finally got ready for departure. Thereafter, we proceeded to our next scheduled activity which was a gathering at the house of one of the Indian members, Sabarno, for a cultural evening followed by our favourite puchka party. Overall, the third day of 27th IJSC was well spent with lots of exciting moments and cherished memories.

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## VIII

# PHUCHKA PARTY

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*BY KANAK VERMA*

On 9th August, after the first group discussion, we headed for Sabarno San's house for the Puchka party. In India, puchka is not just a snack, but an emotion so everyone was pretty excited for the Japanese members to try out the puchkas.

After everyone was there, we started playing a game of passing the pillow, where the cultural team made some daring and funny dares for us! The first one to be out was Dhristi San and was dared to dance to a Bhojpuri song which she did amazingly, no doubt. One by one the dares were getting more interesting and funny, Miye San had to act as a cat and she became a very cute, adorable one. Jayee San had to eat as loudly as she could, basically food asmr but even a voice recorder could not record her chewing voice. I personally got the dare of doing the titanic scene with someone and I failed miserably, was even called a very bad Jack. Debeshi San had to eat puchka with mayo and she should be given an award for being able to because I never could, and Sunanda San also had to eat a mixture of sauce and sugar and something weird. Mizuno San did a really cute, adorable dance. The funniest one was Shogo San's dare, which was to click a photo with his foot! He did an amazing job at it, though the photo was really funny. With the phone falling and two of the members reaching for it it, the photo came out very wonky and funny. Namrata got a dare to act as a ghost and it was scary and funny at the same time, and no one could have done it better. Meanwhile our president, Tamalika San and the events team Vice President, Deepalika San along with Sabarno San were preparing the aloo masalas and different kinds of water for the puchkas! Soon, everyone was ready for the highlight of the evening, puchkas!

The Japanese members first tried out the sour water puchka which was too sour for them but they really liked the Dahi Puchka. Shogo San also tried the spicy water which was made for the Indian side and liked it too!

After everyone was done with eating, Ueda San, the winner of our game, was given the special power to make anyone do anything he wanted and he made a few of the members dance together in a really memorable fashion.

It was time to go home after a really fun and memorable puchka party.

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## IX TRAM RIDE

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*BY RUSHA CHOWDHURY*

On the fourth day of the 27th India-Japan Conference, we went for a tram ride through the city. One of the most unique attractions in Kolkata, our Japanese guests were very excited to experience the ride. At around 11:30 AM, everyone gathered at the Shyambazar tram depot where an AC tram had been reserved for all the members to enjoy. The Japanese members were quite impressed by the syncretic appeal of the vehicle, the dust-laden tramline and the depot, which at once represents modernity as well as bears the stamp of age. Upon asking the Japanese members whether the vehicle is similar to the ones they ride in Japan, they said the tram is more unique in its aura and appeal. Having boarded the tram, every member settled down on the seats of their choice. Stepping into the cool air conditioned vehicle from the humidity outside gave everyone a sense of relief. The Indian members were incredibly excited to see how the Japanese members reacted to the ride. As the tram left the depot, the crowd inside was overtaken with song and dance as the Indian members played famous Bollywood songs and urged the Japanese members to join in.

The tram moved through the City of Joy and the little bubble of happiness inside was too infectious to be contained. Seeing us dance and sing through the windows of the vehicle, a lot of people on the road joined in, waving hands and smiling. The Japanese members watched the colonial buildings with a keen eye and were thoroughly impressed. On the way, they also witnessed a petty street fight in the middle of the road, which was a curious sight for them.

As the tram rolled into College Street, the Indian members quickly shifted the focus of the crowd outside to show the Japanese members the historic Presidency University, the Calcutta University, the Medical College Hospital and the unending lines of bookshops that garland the College Street area. The Japanese members were intrigued to see the rows of book stacks that lined the footpaths. When asked what kind of books they sold, the Indian members informed the Japanese side that College Street is the cradle of almost all kinds of books in English, Bengali, Hindi and a few other Indian languages that one can hope to find in Kolkata.

The Indian members broke into the song "Coffee House'er Shei Adda'ta" by Manna Dey as they spotted the historic Indian Coffee House. The tram passed the rustic gate leaving us wondering what the Japanese members would say about the interior of the Coffee House, the hovering portrait of Tagore as Balmiki, the old, shadowy ceiling fans, the large space and the constant bustle.

That is how the tram finally reached its destination, the Esplanade depot where the members of IJSC got down and savoured the aftertaste of the ride. The Esplanade tram depot is also home to the Tram Museum, which was our next destination. Before that, the

tram authorities asked the Japanese members how their experience had been. The latter were elated to share the same.

Stepping into the Tram Museum, the Japanese members were acquainted with the history of the tram in Kolkata by the keeper of the museum. He slowly took them through all the relics that consisted of tickets, coins, parts of the engine and coupons. Quite a few pictures were taken. Having concluded the guided walk, the Indian and the Japanese members had some light snacks at the small cafe inside the museum itself. The Japanese members tried Indian chips and snacks.

Following the fun ride and the informative walk, the IJSC members made their way to the office of the Managing Director of CTC who hosted the members with utmost courtesy. The respected MD especially asked the Japanese members to recount their favourite experiences. The latter talked of their fascination with the long history of the tram, and the urban diversity that the ride took them through. One of them emphasised on the fact that Indians are more inclined towards dancing in a jolly manner in the middle of the day, which they rarely find in Japan.

On the whole, the tram ride was a memorable experience for both the Indian and the Japanese members who not only enjoyed the day, but also learned quite a bit about the history of the tram and the city.

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## X

## LUNCH AT K.C. DAS

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*BY SNEHAM DEY*

The morning session of 10th August was allotted for Tram ride from Shyambazar to Esplanade. Tram is deeply interlinked with the culture and heritage of our beloved city Kolkata. All the team members were eagerly waiting for this exciting moment. It was truly a nostalgic feeling for all of us, especially for the Indian side to ride a traditional tram after a long time. After reaching Esplanade we went to the tram museum to learn about the evolution of Tram from the British era to the present. Despite being the rainy season, it was a hot and humid day with the temperature soaring to about thirty-five degrees centigrade. We, along with Japanese team members, decided to stroll from Maidan to K.C Das's outlet.

K.C. Das was founded in 1935 at Esplanade, one of the oldest eatery chains in Kolkata. It got wide popularity due to its location in a posh area, quality preparations, and liveried waiters. We reached there around 4.30 pm and all of us were quite hungry. The manager of K.C Das welcomed us wholeheartedly and we went to the first floor where the tables were booked. Four members from the Indian and Japanese side sat at each table for lunch and the Japanese team members were amazed to see the earthen pot and earthen



dishes provided by K.C Das. This eatery only provides vegetarian items but with a prodigious ambience and atmosphere. Before the food was served, we shared the history of K.C Das's famous Rosogolla and Mishti doi with our Japanese team members. Within a few minutes delicious food was served - stuffed Radhaballabhi with Alur Dom, Cholar Dal, Chanar Kalia, Basanti Pulao, Chutney, Rosogolla, and Aam Doi. Both the Indian and Japanese team members enjoyed the sumptuous platter to its fullest.

The Japanese team members were excited to try traditional Indian delicacies and we enjoyed the food. The items were nicely prepared and it was pre-instructed to prepare them with less spice to avoid discomfort for the Japanese members. The staff were friendly and they treated all the members in a generous way. Japanese members liked all the items, especially Radhaballabhi and K.C Das's special Rosogolla. During lunch we also discussed the preparations and ingredients of the served dishes with the Japanese members.

It was truly an amazing experience of having lunch with the Japanese team members. The time passed by in such a beautiful way that we couldn't even notice that it was late evening and the time for our next activity i.e., visiting the Victoria Memorial. Before leaving K.C. Das, all the members gathered and took a group photo with the manager. Finally, we could get ready for departure from K. C. Das with a full stomach as well as a happy heart.

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## XI

# EVENING AT VICTORIA MEMORIAL

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*BY RITIKA BANERJEE*

On the cool evening of the 10th of August, 2023, the India side escorted the Japan side to the Victoria Memorial. The day commenced with the Tram Ride followed by lunch at K.C. Das and we closed the curtains with a visit to the Victoria Memorial, one of the most renowned Kolkata tourist spots. After a hearty and sweet meal at K.C. Das, the bus ride to Victoria was fun and filled with chatter. There seemed to be a buzz of excitement among the Japanese members about their nightly bus ride to visit the heart of Kolkata and see the white palatial grounds of Victoria.

Victoria lay ahead of us, gleaming with shadows of the light and sound show conducted every evening from 6.30 pm, yet serene in the stretches of Maidan. The Indian side was faintly surprised at the quietness surrounding the spot, missing the hustle of curious onlookers and visitors. The Japan side watched in awe as they leaned on the gates of Victoria Memorial to get a better view. The Japan side had been promised an illuminated Victoria Memorial, showered with gold, and thus they eagerly waited for the building to shine

radiantly with a golden hue. The scheduled light and sound show was meant to be completed by 7.30 pm, so we waited for the moment of truth. To pass the time, all the members started clicking pictures in front of the Victoria Memorial, posing with each other. A few Indian members also recorded a video message for Raito Sato-san's friends in Japan and cheered them on. We spent more time dancing in front of Victoria, playing soccer with discarded birthday poppers, blowing bubbles in the air, and conducting other antics to keep ourselves entertained. After a fairly long session of photography, cultural and casual conversations, and popping soap bubbles, both the India side and Japan side observed the palatial grandeur of Victoria shine in golden light. The pure white of the edifice was tinged in glittering gold, leaving us awestruck. The fairly long wait by the members proved worthwhile as the night was lit up with lights and we all gathered to take pictures of the splendour ahead of us. Finally, we all posed for a group picture in front of the Victoria Memorial for one last time.

We took the path that led to Maidan metro, swinging our torches on our phones and singing in the chill solitude of the night. It was time to return. Despite a long day, we were not tired but happy with our mini-bonding sessions and fun little games that drew us closer. The Japanese side silently listened to our rambling and singing with smiles on their faces and stopped here and there to admire Kolkata at night. They halted near the Tata building to appreciate its colourful lights and waved to buses and our members. Finally, the members departed, returning to their respective homes and the RMIC guesthouse.

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## XII

### GD2 AND GD3

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*BY JAYEE DUTTA*

Unlike GD 1, GD 2 and 3 took place in RKM's Language Building. Kazuko Nigam sensei helped us choose a suitable room. Most of the Indian members gathered in the room first followed by Japanese members arriving by 11:30 AM. After the arrival of the members every group began researching and preparing for the presentation without any delay.

An atmosphere of seriousness soon took over the room as the members worked hard on their research and presentation. It could be told at a glance that every group member was strictly engrossed in researching for their respective SDGs. Some confusion and stress took over the members but they overcame it by enjoying some snacks brought by Japanese members which lifted up everyone's spirits and helped them focus better.

Both the Japanese and Indian students worked in coordination by exchanging ideas and opinions on the issues with each other. GD1 continued till 2:00 PM. After that, lunch from e-dabba was brought in for the members. We left the room and gathered around an

empty corner of the hall for lunch. The members took their time to eat and spent some amusing time together.

After the lunch break, GD3 commenced at around 3:00 PM. Students seemed to gain their energy back and continued the session without delay. During the previous session the students spent their time researching and piling up the resources and information they required, and after summing up the entire research in session 2 everyone started working on their presentation slides. Not much time was left, so the session grew a bit more intense. Members continued to wind up their remaining work vigorously till the end.

By 4:30 PM the GD session was wrapped up for the day and the members could take a sigh of relief after making valid progress during the session. The nervousness for the day ahead for the presentation could also be seen in students. Everyone left the Language Building as the Indian members bid goodbye to the Japanese members for the day. The GD sessions turned out to be successful as the Japanese and Indian members both cooperated with each other. Tackling every perplexity, helping out each other, being respectful, being a good listener and resolving any kind of problems together, the GD sessions taught the members all sorts of values to be maintained in teamwork. It was certainly not easy as doubts and overwhelming thoughts arose but the perspective of two different nations coming together helped make the GD sessions a great success. The journey and lessons learnt along the way brought valuable outcomes for every member in the 27th India-Japan Students' Conference.

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## XIII PRESENTATIONS

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*BY MADHURA GHOSH*

After 3 GD sessions of discussion and preparation, the final presentation took place on the 12th of August. All the GD topics were based on the 6th UN SDG related to water. Time was short, but we managed to overrule it with our youthful energy and teamwork. The presentation venue was the AV room on the 2nd floor of RKM, school of languages. The presentation started from around 12 pm and went on till 1.30 pm. With ingenious efforts and a little struggle from our resident physicist Tisyagupta, and myself, the computers were connected, and the screens, speakers and microphones set up. It was time to present the work we had started long ago in July, even before we had physically met one another. Friendly competitiveness gave us the necessary boost of adrenaline to show everyone the fruits of our combined brainstorming.

The topic for Group 1 was “Overcoming Public Health Challenges from The Perspective of Water”. The group consisted of Mizuno-San, Sato-San, Ueda-San, Tisyagupta-San, Deepalika-San, Tamalika-San, Jayee-san, Reeti-san and Aasia-San. After Mizuno-San introduced the group, the members took turns to explain the framework of their presentation. First, the root of the problem must be identified. Lack of clean and safe drinking water, proper hygiene and sanitation, sewage contamination and storm water management appeared to be some of the pressing problems. There is seepage of water containing agricultural chemicals, and faeces contaminate the groundwater aquifers on which majority of Indians are heavily reliant on. The case study for India showed that untreated sewage wastes cause water-borne diseases like diarrhoea, jaundice, or cholera in numerous children. Mosquitos and germs breed freely in the degraded nalas, canals and rivers leading to air-borne diseases like malaria, dengue, or chikungunya. Freshwater life is extensively harmed by such unsustainable practices. Case study for Japan showed that old sewage facilities can lead to breeding of bacteria like the e-coli, unsafe for even the 2020 Tokyo Summer Paralympic swimming tournament. In times of heavy rainfall or typhoons, the sewage water treatments are simplified, subjecting many citizens to diseases. Solutions are plentiful, but sustaining them is more important than new innovations. Chemical effluents in groundwater like arsenic and fluorine can be filtered through AMAL filters. Methods like HAPA are being used to reinstate the groundwater to sustainable levels with the help of NGOs like “Water for People.” The collaboration among government institutions and the community is the only way to a sustainable, disease-free future.

After a short Q&A session, Group 2 took the platform. This group comprised Mie-San, Shogo-San, Mako-San, Rusha-San, Oishee-San, Mandas-San, Sunanda-San, Adesh-San, Sabarno-San and myself. We had worked on the GD topic “Disasters from the perspective of water.” In light of the increasing number of disasters in the recent decade, the case studies from Japan included the 2011 Great east Japan earthquake and tsunami, and the 2018 heavy rainfall in eastern Japan, while for India, it included cases of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the Sundarbans floodings. Apart from the devastation the two countries suffered, similarities regarding the skewed nature of impact on gender and education were observed. The women, elderly and children suffer disproportionately more when disaster strikes and again in the relief shelters where unsanitary conditions and sexual assault become common problems. The presentation included the cooperative measures and practices adopted by the respective nations and sustainable water management solutions that can be adopted by the citizens. With the trend of uncertain climate patterns, preparedness is the key to reducing casualties. The Q&A session included questions about the inseparable nature of man-made and natural water-related disasters and measuring intensity of these disasters in terms of nuclear power.

Keeping a sharp lookout on the clock, the Academic team deftly handled the transitions and Group 3 took their positions. This last team consisted of Kodaira-San, Hajime-San, Debeshi-San, Ritika-San, Kanak-San, Namrata-San, Sneham-San, Gunjari-san and Drishti-san and illuminated on the topic “Comparison of Urban and Rural Water Environments.” In the urban localities of India, the groundwater reserves are intensively utilised to meet the increasing water demand. With the limited water supply, households tend to rely on multiple sources like handpumps and tube wells. Water quality still remains a pertinent problem, added to leakages and wastages. Rural uses mainly include irrigation and

with uncertain monsoons, farmers often face shortages. Water collection is time-consuming and young girls and women walk several kilometres a day to obtain it.

Japan is endowed with a relatively high supply of water and has constructed dams and weirs for management. Tap water is clean and reliable; though most urbanites prefer bottled mineral water for drinking and cooking purposes. In rural Japan, the most common need for water is irrigation in paddy fields, which are also good reservoirs of excess stormwater. Huge underground channels have been constructed to prevent flooding of this island nation. Rivers and dams are used to generate hydroelectricity as they are short in length and can generate enough power. Case studies highlighting reforms and restorations like Jal Shakti in India and the Tamagawa River cleaning in the 1970s show that sustainable treatment of water is the only way to evade the wrath of water-related catastrophes.

With little time in hand, all the groups had battled sickness and fatigue to prepare their reports and speeches and performed their best on the presentation day. The language barrier was hauled down as everyone chipped in to make an impact. The presentation was honoured by the presence of Kazuko Nigam sensei and we were enthralled to receive her compliments and applause. The tired, sleep-deprived yet happy faces were testimony to the dedication all IJSC members share for academic and environmental pursuits.

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## XIV SHOPPING AT DAKSHINAPAN

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*BY TISYAGUPTA PYNE*

After the long toil of the conference and a speedy recovery by everyone during their homestays, perhaps the only thing that remained to be done after the illustrious shenanigans was shopping. The plain and simple act of looking at things and (if they're good) buying them. Apart from the everyday gossip and occasionally occurring frequent laughing spree, this particular occasion was observantly the other major highlight of the entire conference – one where we got to see for ourselves what people chose for themselves. Due to heavy traffic we decided to do the smart thing and simply take a soothing but perhaps a tad bit noisy walk over the bridge which led us to the famous shopping district of Dakshinapan. The sun soothed its rays as we ventured out of the RMIC campus. The roads hummed their usual noise, which to the India side, was perhaps something to be ignored due to constant reception over the years. However, everyone from the Japan side, lively and excitedly, joined in on this rendezvous.

I, Deepalika-san, Tamalika-san and Drishti-san arrived at RMIC in the afternoon, around 1430 hrs. Upon arrival we met with the Japan side and soon jostled our way above the bridge and through the jam ridden roads to reach the entrance for the shopping district. On reaching the shopping district, we were now faced with the challenge of effectively



navigating our way through the marketplace in such a manner that would be time efficient and allow maximum freedom of movement for all. It was hence decided that since there were 4 IJSC and 8 JISC members, 2 JISC members would be accompanied by each IJSC member. This division allowed us to scour through the entire shopping district on a requirement specific basis. The teams cracked up as follows: I helped Kodiara-san and Mie-san with their shopping while Sato-san and Shogo-san went with Deepalika-san, Hajime-san and Mako-san went with Tamalika-san and Ueda-san and Mizuno-san went with Drishti-san. In the midst of our shopping expedition we were also joined by our IJSC member Jayee-san who tagged along with us whilst trying to see if she could get some shopping done on her behalf as well.

And with such packs of interested shoppers the teams went around looking at the various shops in the district. They looked through the windows at the displayed items, giving the definition of window shopping another edge, often going inside to find that even if the correct colours were available, the correct sizes were not and vice versa. But in spite of such occurrences everyone found items they liked. The dresses they tried looked brilliant and the ones they selected at the end were perhaps the best.

Everyone assembled in a hurried convergence (some literally ran) near the Biswa Bangla gate around 4:30 pm to finally halt the shopping spree and return back to the RMIC to get some rest and prepare for the next event in the evening – the dinner reception at the house of the Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata.

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# XV

## RECEPTION DINNER AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF JAPAN IN KOLKATA

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*BY TISYAGUPTA PYNE*

On the 14th of August, 2023 the Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata invited all the IJSC and JISC members to his residence for dinner. All the members assembled near Birla Mandir in the evening before entering his residence together. The dress code for the evening was formal wear. And needless to say, all the India and Japan side members wore their best outfits for the night. Many members from the Japan side loved Indian traditional outfits and wore them that day. While some went ahead and bought what they wanted when they went out shopping earlier in the day – others wore their gifts. Some others wore their western formal wear – India and Japan side alike.

Once everyone arrived inside, they were seated comfortably whilst Maeda-san, the Vice-Consul General of Japan in Kolkata and Supratik-san engaged with everyone – asking us about the conference – how it went, which were the fun memories and what we liked the most about this conference.

This was followed by us reminiscing about our days at the conference whilst we engaged amidst ourselves in all the fun gossip and memories we had made over the past week. As the evening livened up by and by, we were soon graced with the presence of the Consulate General, NAKAGAWA Koichi and his wife, NAKAGAWA Yayoi. Once he arrived, he acknowledged the India Japan Student's Conference with his kind words and Supratik-san coordinated the speeches of the two presidents from the India and the Japan side.

Since it was a gathering of students – MEXT (Monbukagakusho) scholars were also invited to interact with everyone at the Students' Conference. Both NAKAGAWA Koichi-san and NAKAGAWA Yayoi-san went around the room to interact with everyone individually and got to know the thoughts and opinions of all the young minds which will bloom to be the pillars of international cooperation and globalisation of the world.

The academically inclined people engaged in brilliant discussion with each other – and learnt how to apply and further their career especially if they were interested in studying in Japan. The others found themselves interacting with one another as well, mostly discussing the plans for the next day.

The dinner was brilliantly exquisite with Japanese delicacies made with the finest quality fish and meat, rice and vegetables cooked to pristine tastes and temperatures and desserts that were just the right sweetness and flavour.

After the fun and frolic of the evening was over it was time for everyone to return to their own homes. And after a great evening we departed from the place with warm memories and filled hearts.

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## XVI MOVIE

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*BY GUNJARI SARKAR*

Today, Indian cinema has a global footprint, with Bollywood films screened in over 90 countries. The industry has also made significant impact in international film festivals, highlighting the universal appeal of its narratives. With RRR basking in worldwide success as the movie's song, Natu Natu won the Oscar for Best Original Song, Japan was no exception to witness the extravagance of the movie. In fact, the film completed one year of an unimaginable theatrical run in the country. Many of the Japan side members had watched the film and had expressed their wish to watch another Indian movie with its characteristic vibrant dances and music. Accordingly, we selected a winning package of message and mirth- "Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahaani".

At about 9:30 am, the Japan side members were escorted to the Acropolis Mall theatre from the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture (RMIC) Guest House by some Indian members. Having woken up early, we all were quite sleepy. With droopy eyes we walked into the theatre and took our seats. Sadly, the movie did not have English subtitles so we made an arrangement whereby we sat beside the Japan side members to help them in understanding the movie. The movie was a convergence of romantic comedy and family drama in a non-didactic way. It had an amalgam of beautifully woven loud and boisterous characters which was sure to make the viewers feel the same plethora of emotions as the actors in the film. The Japan side members thoroughly enjoyed the vivid and colourful dances and the retro songs which were not only used as a backdrop but also as a narrative device. The India side members were enjoying the funny dialogues and anecdotes in the movie, but it was a bit difficult to explain those dialogues to the Japan side members although we tried our best to make it a memorable experience for them. The Japanese members were quite curious about the concept of intervals in Indian movies and also about the long duration of the movie. During the interval we went outside the theatre to get some refreshments as the Japan side members had not yet had their breakfast.

The second half of the movie consisted of a Durga Puja scene and we were more than elated to describe the pomp and show of Durga Puja in Kolkata to the Japan side members. The Japanese were quite entertained and burst into laughter when we were translating the dialogues. The movie came to an end and our discussions began on the real life of the actors in the film. Overall, it was a memorable experience and we all felt emotionally warm and fuzzy as the characters in the movie transcended from being judgemental to celebrating each other at the end of the movie.

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## XVII

# LUNCH AT FOOD COURT

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*BY MANDAS BISWAS*

The rollercoaster journey of the intense Bollywood Karan Johar epic “Rocky Aur Rani ki Prem Kahani” got over at about 11:40AM. It was Independence Day for India, and the whole atmosphere of the mall was very grand in celebration of the 77th anniversary of the occasion – and all the Japan side members were overwhelmed to see every wall, hoarding and billboard bathed in the Triranga palette. Of course, everyone had to take some refreshments after this head bending experience of Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt flying all over the intense emotional canvas presented by the movie.

After settling in a big table in the middle of the food court of Acropolis mall – big enough to accommodate 13 of the Indian members and all the Japanese side members – we all went on the prowl for the food we would like to take on as luncheon. Mie-san, Kodaira-san and Mizuno-san accompanied me and Sneham-san to the various options – Wow! Momo, Wow! China, Wow! Chicken, Subway, Burger King, Domino’s, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, and so on. Everyone was sad because the Japanese side were in Kolkata for only one more day. They were in the mood for one last challenge, to try authentic Indian spicy food! In this endeavour, Kodaira-san settled for a platter of pan fried Schezwan momos, and a steamed chicken momo burger from Wow! Momo, along with a tall glass of Pepsi from the Tea-Bar, whereas Inoue-san took a whole baked momo au-gratin from the same shop, with a supremely mozzarella cheesy base; Mizuno-san, Sneham-san and me all took Chicken Hakka Noodles in Garlic Sauce from Wow! China, and Mie-san settled for some Wow! Chicken. People from Japan really like to have hamburgers on a go in a gulp, with a large glass of Coke or Pepsi for washing it down as I understood. Hajime-san and Mako-san settled for some burritos as a light lunch.

As the chit-chatting around the table died down as the food plates progressed to being emptied, some of us took the Japanese members to roam around the Acropolis mall. Sato-san was accompanied by Deepalika-san and me to the Crossword book store that is there on the fourth floor of the mall. Sato-san bought a Ganesha pendant which he thought of gifting to one of his friends back in Tokyo, and he was gifted a fountain pen by Deepalika-san while I chatted whole-heartedly with him about Japanese Ikigai. Meanwhile Jayee-san and Mie-san came to Crossword, and together we went to Starbucks on the ground floor of the mall (and Mie-san was more than pleased to learn that Starbucks in India is operated through Tata Alliance). Here Sato-san bought a souvenir for his friend working in a Japan Starbucks – a cup that was entirely available for this auspicious occasion of Independence day only.

Thus, filling our tummies and hearts alike, but with a slightly heavy mind that soon we would be having our closing ceremony – we started for Onkar Towers, where the closing ceremony and the NKKS Foundation Day Programme would be held at around 3PM.

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## XVIII CLOSING CEREMONY

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*BY REETI DEY*

On 15th August 2023, at around 3:30 PM, all the India side members and the Japan side members gathered at The Onkar Towers Community Hall for the Closing Ceremony. The ceremony began with us thanking the Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society, Kazuko Nigam Sensei and The Founder of Japan India Student Conference, Hiroko Nagahama Sensei, for paving the way for future generations to exchange the cultural insights of two countries, expanding our views.

We also expressed our gratitude towards the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society and Dosokai for supporting us and providing us with the necessary requirements as well as giving us the opportunity to organise this conference. Kazuko Nigam Sensei congratulated the members for successfully conducting the 27th India Japan Students' Conference. We then received a sweet speech from Ms Hiroko Nagahama, urging us to eagerly wait for the next conference.

Then all the Japan Side members were called up to talk about their experiences while staying in Kolkata during the conference. They expressed their gratitude, and also mentioned their enthusiasm to try out Indian traditional outfits in Japan which resulted in much mirth. The India side President Tamalika Nag thanked everyone for their hard work to make this conference a success. The India side Communicator Adesh Kumar Sahoo shared his experience of the whole conference as did the Vice Presidents of the Cultural, Events, Press, Academics and Finance teams- Sabarno Sinha, Deepalika Deb, Drishti Shroff, Debeshi Mandal and Namrota Mandal respectively.

The Memorandum of Understanding for the 28th India Japan Student Conference was signed by The President of the Japan side Mr Hajime Yamamoto, The President of the India side Ms Tamalika Nag, The Vice President of the Japan side Ms Mako Kurosaki, The Communicator of the India side Adesh Kumar Sahoo, The Chief Patron of NKKS Mrs. Kazuko Nigam Sensei, The Founder of the Japan India Student Conference Ms Hiroko Nagahama and The Coordinator of the India Japan Student Conference Mr Partha Sarathi Mitra.

Certificates were distributed to the Japan Side members by Kazuko Nigam Sensei. The closing ceremony came to a sweet conclusion with the Japan side members teaching us how to do origami. Everyone participated in this session, thus ending the ceremony on a happy note.

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## XIX

# NKKS FOUNDATION DAY

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*BY SUNANDA SHAW*

Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society (NKKS) was established on 15th August, which is also celebrated as the Independence Day of India, and to celebrate this occasion NKKS organised a cultural program on the very day. NKKS celebrates its foundation day every year, but this year, members of NKKS cordially invited the participants of the India Japan Student Conference to witness and participate in the program, showcasing India's heritage and the rich culture.

Just after the closing ceremony of the 27th India-Japan Student Conference, a mind-boggling function awaited the members. The function started with the speech of the President of the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society, Babli Chowdhury. The Master of the Ceremony (MC) was Tuneer Chakrabarti, who splendidly executed the whole function. Many solo and group songs were performed, both in Japanese and Bengali. They were followed up by dance performances and recitations. Some students also performed a spectacular drama on the story popularly known as 'Tanabata'. Two members of the 27th IJSC, Adesh san and Oishee san showcased their talent in acting by participating in the drama and giving life to the characters on stage. The evening was full of colours and to make the evening more amusing the management set up a Shruti Natok where the protagonist was the President of NKKS herself. The function ended with a quiz led by Tisyagupta san. Enthusiasm could be seen on the faces of the audience during the quiz.

Concluding the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society foundation day, and the celebration of Indian Independence Day, Mrs. Nigam Sensei, Mr. Nigam Sensei, and Nagahama Sensei cut the cake and distributed it to each and every member present. Food packages were distributed to all the performers and the members present. However, just like all good things come to an end, after an amazing time spent relishing India's historical past, the beauty of the Indian and Japanese culture, the celebration concluded at 6:40 PM.

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## XX

# SAYONARA PARTY

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*BY TAMALIKA NAG*

To commemorate the success of the 27th edition of the India-Japan Students' Conference, a splendid evening comprising singing, dancing, games and food was organised. The Sayonara Party held at Drishti-San's terrace in Onkar Towers Building commenced at 7 PM IST.

All the members were exhilarated to celebrate their contribution and the new friendships that they had made in this conference with a bittersweet tingling and the anticipation of a beautiful evening under the dazzling sky. With a nostalgic heart, all the members were thrilled while also reminiscing the memories that they had created in these last few days. The evening kicked off with some fun and interactive games. We played the game of anonymous chits where chits were written anonymously by everyone and it was read out at the end of the party. We also played "Dumb Charades", where people had to guess the name of movies or song titles. Apart from games, we also engaged in a small dance session, where all the India and Japan side members danced to Bollywood songs while sipping on a few drinks and bustling with laughter. In this session, the Japan side members were taught some classic Bollywood dance steps by the India side members. The Japanese members wanted to dance to Natu Natu, so we formed a huge circle and danced until our feet were sore yet our spirits remained high. In this conference we went for a movie, and everyone was obsessed with the song "What Jhumka" from it. So, we danced to it and also taught the hook step to the Japan side members who were extremely energised and turned out to be great dancers. The evening came to a close as everyone munched on a few slices of pizza and shared interesting anecdotes with each other. The enlivening atmosphere with everyone's shared laughter added to the charm of this party. This elevated our comfort and helped every member to interact and create an unforgettable string of memories. The party came to an end after members exchanged small gifts and showed gratitude towards each other.

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## XXI

# DROP-OFF AT THE AIRPORT

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*BY OISHEE BISWAS*

After an unforgettable and delightful night, the members of IJSC and JISC found themselves facing a bittersweet challenge: bidding farewell. The JISC group displayed a strong façade, gathering with positive spirits for one last shared Indian meal at the café across from RKM. Amidst the familiar chatter, an undercurrent of melancholy lingered, despite our attempts to mask it.

A surprising downpour caught me off guard as I headed out, mirroring the unexpected emotions of the moment. To my astonishment, our Japanese friends had ordered Tandoori dishes. Witnessing their contentment while consuming it filled our hearts.

After a brief reprieve, all JISC members were led to the RKM lounge, where their suitcases awaited. Tears welled up as heartfelt farewells were exchanged between members of both sides. Amidst this poignant atmosphere, all IJSC attendees tied Rakhis on the wrists of our dear departing friends.

Soon, we found ourselves outside, preparing to squeeze into the waiting cars. As music played in the background, jokes and laughter filled the air. Notably, I observed how the weather mirrored our emotions throughout the IJSC. While rain often carries a sense of sadness, on that last day, it seemed to embody our complex feelings perfectly. Nostalgia and anticipation mingled with a touch of gloom in our hearts.

The airport emerged in our view, a stark confirmation of the impending parting. Warm wishes, heartfelt sentiments, videos, pictures, and sincere hugs were exchanged by everyone. Slowly, the JISC members were ushered into the airport, and the final act had concluded.

All the bustling about, scouting lunch spots, exploring Kolkata on foot to discover hidden gems, and pouring our thoughts, ideas, and dreams onto the canvas of our experiences – these moments painted an enchanting picture. A picture that exalted friendship and the power of collective effort. As all great banquets eventually reach their end, so did the 27th IJSC. Yet, in my heart, it isn't truly goodbye; it's perpetually a heartfelt 'MATA NE!'

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# 27TH INDIA-JAPAN STUDENTS' CONFERENCE GALLERY



**AIRPORT PICKUP**



**INDIAN SIDE CULTURAL PERFORMANCE**



**VISIT TO INDIAN MUSEUM**



**JAPAN SIDE CULTURAL PERFORMANCE**



**METCALFE HALL**



**LORDS AND THE DRINKS**





**LUNCH AT K.C DAS**



**BENGALI THALI AT K.C DAS**



**LUNCH AT FOOD COURT**



**STROLL NEAR BIRLA MANDIR**



**VICTORIA MEMORIAL SIGHTSEEING**



**PUCHKA PARTY**



**MOVIE**





**NGO AND GROUP DISCUSSION 1**



**GROUP 1**



**FINAL PRESENTATION**



**GROUP 2**



**MEET WITH TRAM DIRECTOR**



**GROUP 3**



**TRAM RIDE**





**CONSUL GENERAL'S RESIDENCE**



**JAPANESE SIDE WITH  
INDIAN FLAG**



**ORIGAMI ACTIVITY**



**CLOSING CEREMONY**



**FOUNDATION DAY**



**FAREWELL PARTY**



**FAREWELL PARTY**



**DROP-OFF AT AIRPORT**

## XXII

# HOMESTAY REPORTS

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### 1) Tisyagupta Pyne

After a long, tiring but fun week filled with laughter, brainstorming and hanashi (chats), it was time for the members to come home for a smooth rest and get an opportunity to experience how it feels to live in an “Asian” household. Yes, I know that this seems to be a wrong term to use here since both India and Japan belong to the biggest continent on the planet – Asia. But perhaps the meaning behind such choice of words stands with the fact that in all our differences we find ourselves – once mixed and familiar with one another – not so different. And amidst that indifference we learn to truly recognise our uniqueness, amidst our similarities.

My homestay partner was Junya Ueda, a student from Keio University with an interesting part-time job at a French bakery shop in Japan. Ueda-san has a nature similar to my own. A nature of laughing at things just because they sound funny – and going about things that matter mindfully and things that do not casually. The homestay began when I brought him over to my place here in Howrah, near the Shalimar Station and the Botanical Gardens. After reaching home and taking a quick rest (and of course introductions), we began with the gift exchanges. He gave us a traditional fan, green tea, postcards and matcha flavoured Kit-Kat. We gave him Darjeeling tea, a Kalimpong t-shirt and a blue Panjabi. After the gift exchanges my neighbourhood friend came to visit us to have a long chat about the lifestyle in Tokyo, all the while interrupting politely in-between with Kolkata's tales and experiences. After a light Indian dinner made with a smooth blend of spices and sweet desserts at the end (which Ueda-san enjoyed every time) we made our way to the bedroom to talk some more about cultural exchanges for a while before we rested our eyes and bodies to sleep.

The next morning, we lazily woke up from the bed with my mother bringing us a hot cup of black tea. And as we rested and lazed about in the morning waiting for our IJSC/JISC friends to join us on our trip to the Botanical Gardens it was already noon. But that allowed us to have a good breakfast at home which had been prepared by my mother. From watermelon juice to Rasmalai, Ueda-san loved his desserts and drinks. Once our friends arrived, we halted for a game of chess and some snacks before going to the Botanical Gardens. Ueda-san and I were joined by Sunanda-san and Kodaira-san, along with Jayee-san, Mandas-san, and Asia-san.

After our trip to the Botanical Gardens, we returned home to have some rest and lunch. Delicious pomfret curry and fish fries were followed by what turned out to be Ueda-san's favourite food in India so far – 'Mishti Doi.' Lunch was followed by my friend's visit once more which percolated towards us finding ourselves inside a train.

It turned out that Ueda-san is fond of trains and longed to go to the station that is visible right from our home. Hence, we went to Shalimar Station in the evening and after showing him around for a while decided to take a walk till the IEST (Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology), Shibpur campus nearby. When we returned home, we talked more about our futures and later joked about various things amongst ourselves before it was time for the traditional dress trials. After an interesting session of trials, he ended up liking the gifted sky-blue coloured Panjabi the most.

After a good night's rest, it was now time for us to have some *luchi* followed by some *Mishti Doi* for breakfast and leave for Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture (RMIC) Guest House. We took a Barasat B. Garden Bus from IEST (Ueda-san is fond of Indian buses) and rode it till Gariahat. There we got off and walked till the RMIC guest house while chatting about the funny incidents which took place and our thoughts regarding the rest of the remaining days.

## **2) Sabarno Sinha**

My homestay partner was the President of the Japan side, Hajime Yamamoto. Hajime-san was a very pleasant person, and our homestay began around 10 PM when he was dropped at my house by another IJSC member with whom he had been spending the day. Hajime-san arrived tired, and it seemed that he was not very well. So, I showed him to his bedroom and told him to rest. After dinner, I went up to Hajime san and asked him how he was. That was the start of a 2-hour long conversation about various topics ranging from Indian food to Japanese countryside and work culture in Japan. Hajime-san was a very nice homestay partner because even though he had a fever, he never complained about his symptoms. His temperature was constantly going up and down which made me wonder if he had dengue or malaria but luckily, that wasn't the case. Hajime-san was so tired that he couldn't switch off the tubelight at night while sleeping.

On the second day of the homestay, Hajime san was feeling much better. But, we thought it best to rest. So, we rested at home and, as it was a Sunday, I thought it would be good to give him an authentic Sunday experience at my house which involves eating and sleeping only. So, Hajime san ate and slept. For lunch, we had rice, dal, *ucche chocchori* (bitter gourd preparation) and fish fry. As he didn't want to eat much, I didn't give him the pomfret curry. Nevertheless, he enjoyed all the food that I gave him and found it delicious. He had also very kindly brought some gifts for my family from Japan which was appreciated by all.

In the evening, Hajime san felt better, and our President came to visit. So, we went out to a café called Abar Baithak. On the way, we found another IJSC member on the road, so we picked him up as well. As another IJSC member, Kanak, wanted to meet Hajime-san, I called her to the café so that we could all spend a nice evening there. However, she had gone to watch a movie so we went inside and ordered some tea and coffee. Hajime san ordered a Makaibari Green Tea which turned out to be quite good. We all had a nice evening as we spoke about various things of India and Japan.

At night, I gave Hajime san *roti* and chicken stew for dinner and he enjoyed the meal a lot. After that, we decided that it would be best if he rests. So, I asked him to go to sleep



and he did. He was so tired once again, that he forgot to turn off the light. So, I did it for him. Electricity cannot go waste under my watch in any place, be it India or Japan.

I hope I can keep Hajime san at my house once again because he, like me and most Bengalis, likes to eat and sleep.

### **3) Deepalika Deb**

Often it is very uneasy to be with people you meet for the first time, especially when the people seem to be from a different culture, follow different lifestyles, live in a different country, and perhaps, experienced their life far differently than yours. Such an encounter is amusing, nerve-wracking, and oftentimes confusing, as to how both the people can fit into each other's lives. Yet when I welcomed my fellow friend from Japan in my abode in Kolkata, as much as she had welcomed me and my family in her heart, all those feelings of jitteriness, worry and hesitation faded, as our encounter got clouded by friendships of two diversely similar souls.

In the 27th edition of India-Japan Students' Conference, eight Japanese members visited India for elaborative discussions on the theme and to get acquainted with the diverse culture of India. As polymorphous and manifold it may be, one common gesture that binds Indian culture is the amiability and hospitableness our diverse cultures have taught us. I got the opportunity to host Kurosaki Mako at my residence in South Kolkata, amidst the noisy metro yet brushed with greenery and warm neighbours all around.

My first interaction with Mako-san was during the 26th India-Japan Students' Conference during online discussions. As she geared and made her plans to visit India in the 27th IJSC, I was elated and overwhelmed to have her in my home. Before visiting India, Mako-san and I had a brief interaction getting to know each other and about our health, family, the place we live in, the kind of food we eat among other things. Indians usually acquire a higher spice tolerance because of the varied spices and flavours used in our cuisine. Cultures not used to such a cuisine often get baffled and impressed at the number of seasonings and spices used in Indian or sub-continental dishes. And as the saying goes, "Nothing brings people together like good food", most of my engagements with Mako-san have been with food.

'Food Culture' as a concept roots its understanding to the sociological, historical, political, religious or ceremonious, environmental and psychological understanding of a nation or a community. Food is not just a way to the heart and a potion for friendship, but its flavours open up knowledge about different tastes, lifestyles, preferences, traditions and practices. Mako-san was curious to know what, why, and how we ate different foods. She learnt some Bengali cuisines, and how to intake them. For instance, the logic behind having the bitter-gourd first before the curry in a served 'thali' (plate), or having the sweets at the end and not during the main course. The arrangements of the food, the hierarchy of the flavours, the layers of taste made us understand the networking of food of different cultures. Similarly, I learnt about traditional Japanese style breakfast, lunch and dinner. Though our traditional cuisines differed, yet we found a common ground on cornflakes, KFC, and McDonalds as our go-to meals. Alas! The beauty of globalisation and how it binds us all! Not to miss, what merged Mako-san and me in a delicious palatable meal was an Aminia biryani!

As a passionate student of Japanese language, and Mako-san reading my passion very well, we both had a calligraphy session where we tried writing each other's names in Kanji and Katakana. We used calligraphy brush pens gifted to me by Mako-san to enhance our penmanship. There were brief moments of posing and clicking pictures with the Japanese folding fan or 'sensu' brought by Mako-san for my family. There were exchanges of sweets, snacks, and souvenirs, thus bringing Japanese elements to my home.

The highlight of the homestay experience was a saree draping session. Mako-san always desired to drape a saree before coming to India. Saree, for Indian women, is a garment of resilience and empowerment, as much as it is a symbol of grace and beauty. We helped Mako-san drape a red-bordered white saree (which signifies the 'mother goddess') in a typical Bengali draping style, and ornamented her with golden jewellery. With the saree artfully draped, and Biryani on her table, she was eager to learn Bengali words and phrases, thus, portraying her amusement at the culture.

What amused us both again were exchanges of songs, long talks about Yokohama and Kolkata, Bollywood movies, friends, families, and nature. With a consensual decision to stay indoors due to the monsoon, we enjoyed Netflix and watched 'Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani' – a movie about friendship, career, students' life, and enjoying life to the fullest at present.

Social sciences define socialisation in terms of proximity or immediacy of interactions – primary, secondary, institutional, anticipatory, resocialization among other variants. This concept puts itself in domains of social, political, socio-cultural domains, each necessarily not isolated from each other. However, such a heavy and academic understanding of socialisation and learning underwent a deconstruction once I familiarised myself with the values of compassion, and empathy one holds in interactions, learning and re-learning of cultures, and above all, fraternising myself with people and their culture. It re-socialized me into a patient human, sensitive friend, responsible guardian, and mostly, a loveable and laughable friend. With Mako-san, I got socialised into a different kind of friendship – long distance in miles, yet adjacent to my soul – in the domain of my heart.

Admittedly, her leaving the doors of my home left us all teary. Her feelings resonate with ours – she felt it was her second home, and we felt she was our family. Truly, the impression she had left on us makes us all remember her as an angel in disguise. Yokohama and Kolkata may be 5,124 kms apart, yet the calligraphy in my notebook signifies she is just beside me.

#### **4) Sunanda Shaw**

I got the opportunity to host Kodaira Haruki at my house for two nights. The best place where a person could get an excellent exposure for cultural exchange is home. The casual house environment acts as the best place to delve deep into the day to day life, lifestyle, culture, societal norms and food habits of the inhabitants of a place. Before hosting Kodaira, my concern was that everything in my house should be at the right place and properly organised, so that he doesn't feel uncomfortable at all.

On 12th August, after the brainstorming presentation at Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, all the members were excited for their respective homestays. But before leaving for the homestays, all the members decided to have lunch at South City Mall. After spending

a great afternoon there, Kodaira and I left for my house. As he informed me he already had a lot of spicy food at South City Mall, so he wanted to eat something non-spicy. We decided to have pizza for dinner. When he entered my house, my mother did 'Arti'. He was mesmerised with this cultural experience and told my mother that he liked this custom. Before having dinner he took a shower and changed, and then joined us at the dining table. While we were having our pizza, my mother cooked 'Roti' for herself and asked Kodaira if he also wanted to taste it. He said he was very excited to have it, and after having pizza he had the 'Roti and Sabji' and remarked that it was delicious. After finishing our dinner, I asked him to take a rest as we were exhausted by the end of the day. We also planned a trip to the Botanical Garden with other IJSC members the next day.

The next day we woke up at 7AM, and started getting ready for our trip to the Botanical Garden. Meanwhile, I gave him a tour of my house and took him to my terrace, so that he could see the whole locality. He said that our locality was a bit similar to his locality. By the time Aasia also arrived at my place, we decided upon the activities which we would do for the whole day. After spending nearly 40 minutes at my terrace, exploring my neighbourhood from above, we came down for breakfast. For breakfast my mother made Luchi and non-spicy potato curry. She also served him sweets, just in case he felt it was too spicy. After having breakfast we set out for the Botanical Garden, where we met with a few of our friends with whom we had planned our trip. There we saw many trees and small lakes, especially its main attraction- the 300 years old banyan tree. After spending a few hours there, we went to have lunch at a Bengali restaurant, Koshe-kosha. From there we decided to watch an evening show at Birla Planetarium. This was the best part; Kodaira san enjoyed it a lot and was glad to watch the show. Then it was time to return back, Aasia invited us to have dinner at her place, since her house is very near to my place. At dinner, Aasia served us Biryani, which Kodaira san had missed because he arrived a bit late to Kolkata. At the end of the day he was pleased that he got so many cultural exchanges. While travelling we had a great talk and discussed both the countries' livelihoods and especially about the garbage management system. We returned back to my house, we talked and went back to bed. The next day we had to go back to RKM.

Next day, in the morning after getting changed, we had our breakfast. My mother cooked 'Sattu-paratha and chana curry.' After having a flavourful meal, I took Kodaira san around my neighbourhood. He also learned two Bengali words- 'Dhonnobad' and 'Khub bhalo' which mean 'thank you' and 'very good' respectively in English. As he mentioned before that he loved to ride Auto, I thought I would take it on him during the homestay too. Then it was time to bid adieu, so I dropped him to RKM and he checked in there at 1pm. It was truly an honour for me to host Kodaira san as my houseguest. I will cherish and treasure these new experiences which we had during the homestay.

## **5) Namrota Mandal**

IJSC being a multifarious forum for building comradeship, camaraderie, and togetherness through social mingling, intellectual sessions and cultural exchanges, provides yet another welcoming episode in the form of homestay. I had the opportunity to host Raito Sato San, who was acting as the Domestic Liaison this time.

Our homestay started as all the members united with their hosts after the conclusion of presentations by the groups on 12th August. Sato San and I moved to Drishti San's place



with her hostess, Haruka Mizuno San for a quick lunch as we had planned the first day together. In the car, Sato San handed me over a bag full of souvenirs that he had got for me. It had the most exquisite flavours of Kit Kats, cookies, ocha, and beautifully printed 'sensu' and towels. Goes without saying, my joy knew no bounds as I was ogling them shamelessly and vigorously thanking him for them. I had gotten Sato San a "panjabi" which I wanted him to wear for the day's occasion. We were supposed to be joined by Mizuno San and Drishti San in our plans as well but Mizuno San wasn't feeling too well so we decided to let her rest some more. Sato San, practising medicine, was constantly checking up on her condition. After some insisting from Haruka San that she was feeling fine and receiving a green light from Sato San, we decided to go together. We quickly changed into traditional sarees, including Haruka San, while Sato San wore his Panjabi. Meanwhile, we were joined by another friend of ours, Ankana San, a DOSOKAI member, for my homestay. Though they had a prior inkling, we finally revealed our destination to our guests, as I will disclose to you now: Rajbari Bawali.

The journey was an hour and a quarter long from Gariahat. I had Sato San and Ankana San in my car. While travelling, we played our favourite Japanese and Indian songs and made Sato San guess the number of passengers in overcrowded trekkers. We reached Rajbari around six. We were very warmly welcomed by the people in charge. It was beautifully lit in the evening with golden lights adorning the white and ivory building. The moment we reached, we were guided by the assisting manager for a tour around the three hundred and fifty years old place. Soon the "shondhe arati" started which was followed by sensational dance performances conforming to the Bharatnatyam and Kathak styles. We were ushered to the lounge area directly overlooking the garden and "thakur dalan" of Rajbari, where the performances were happening. We were exclusively brought in chairs facing the "dalan" to enjoy the dances. As we ordered some refreshments, the dances ended, moving onto a beautiful rendition of songs. After spending some time there, we were escorted to a completely private dining room for just the five of us. The food was mouth-watering and we savoured every bit of it. It was getting late and we had a long way to travel, so we decided to leave but before leaving, Sato San wanted us to make a cheer video for his teammates back in Japan, who were participating in a competition.

After parting ways with Haruka San and Drishti San, we reached home tired after a long day. Sato San relished some tea and we decided to retire to our beds for the day. We all slept in till late the next morning. We woke up to some Darjeeling tea and breakfast and I decided to take my two guests around my house. They met all my family members and had a hearty conversation with them. Later, we went to the market for some "omiyage shopping" where Sato San revealed his ever-so-long list of things he wanted to bring back to Japan. After a satisfactory shopping spree, we returned home for lunch. My family had planned to treat him to the very Bengali "macher jhol", which he had previously mentioned he wanted to try as well. He insisted on using his hands to eat like the rest of us and I could not help but think to myself what a fast learner he was. The lunch ended with sweets as desserts. Sato San wanted to retire for some "hirune" which rolled into late evening. I had plans of going for local sightseeing but instead, we decided on paying a visit to the local fair. The fair was bustling with people and the crowd pleasantly surprised Sato San. We made him try a few "aachar" flavours and he tried the 'Balloon-Dart' game, which to my surprise, he was a prodigy at. He then went on the Ferris wheel and the sparkle in his eyes was unreal. We left the fair and went home for a sumptuous dinner cooked by my mother- her special mutton

curry and roti. We had a hearty meal and Sato San was happily asking for refills. Post dinner, we planned to give him a proper Bollywood experience and made him watch 'Om Shanti Om' while relishing kulfis and icecreams.

The next day was the end of homestay. We woke up a little earlier, despite the late-night movie session. We gave him some Darjeeling tea that he liked a lot and different scented incense sticks which he wanted to take back as souvenirs. After some light breakfast, we got ready and left home by 11:15 am to drop Sato San off at RKM. On the way, we were stuck in terrible traffic in light of 15th August's tight security. We reached RKM by 2:15 pm. As I helped him check-in, a month full of preparation, planning and organising all came back to me in a flash with a feeling of emptiness settling in and how it had all boiled down to the last two days. Experiencing homestay with Sato San and Ankana San was beyond enticing for me and right now, thinking back, I can only wish for time to rewind or scream an "ENCORE"!

## **6) Debeshi Mandal**

Having concluded the academic part of the conference with the much awaited presentations, it was time for the Japanese members to experience life in an Indian household with their respective homestays. Shogo Inoue-san was the Japanese member who would be coming to my home, and I was bombarded with multiple excited calls from my family throughout the day asking me when I would bring home our Japanese guest. After grabbing some lunch at the food court of South City Mall, I booked an Uber to drop us home. We were also accompanied by Ritika, an Indian member of IJSC and a close friend who would be coming along with us. However, evening traffic and my house being situated in the suburbs led to us being stuck in the car for almost two hours. Thankfully, Shogo-san engaged in a hearty conversation with me and Ritika throughout the journey and time passed by without us noticing as we passed by the city lights of Kolkata blurred by light rain. We discussed almost every topic under the sun, and Shogo-san even told us about his food tour of India the previous year, filling the car with chatter and laughter.

A round of introductions swiftly commenced when we reached home, following which Shogo-san went to freshen up after the long journey. In the meantime, my mother prepared a variety of Bengali sweets for him to try out. Although the sweets were a bit too sweet for his palate, Shogo-san tried out each one of them before bringing out some gifts he had brought for my family. He gifted us two boxes of cookies, with the delicious matcha cookies being a great hit with all of us. Meanwhile, we gifted him a red kurta which he was very excited to wear since he had never tried on traditional Indian clothes before. Since Shogo-san was tired and suffering quite a bit because of his sore throat, we let him rest before dinner was served. Dinner consisted of naan, chana masala and kali mirch paneer, all whipped up at home by my mother who loves to cook and was elated to hear about Shogo-san's appreciation for Indian food. We had a hearty meal and proceeded to a long "adda" session accompanied by my brother playing the guitar to entertain us. We conversed about myriad subjects, from music to manga to food, and shared tales and anecdotes from both Kyoto and Kolkata until way past midnight when we realised that all of us needed a good dose of sleep.

We woke up the next day to the smell of freshly fried luchi, and Shogo-san was presented with a typical Bengali Sunday breakfast, luchi and aloo sabzi. We also urged him

to try the popular combination of luchi with rasgulla, which he promptly did although the rasgulla was sadly still too sweet for him. Breakfast was followed by a round of Snakes and Ladders, during which my father came back from the market with a bunch of shopping bags. This led to Shogo-san asking him if the market was nearby, and when answered with the affirmative he expressed a desire to see it since he was fascinated by Indian bazaars. Thus, we ended up on an impromptu trip to the local bazaar, which intrigued Shogo-san with its long winding alleys, unlike the big open air markets he had mostly seen on his last trip. We even caught a glimpse of the local train, and although Shogo-san had used the Indian Railways to travel between different cities before, it was interesting for him to see the daily trains most commuters used, and especially the way many people hung out from the train doors.

Drenched in sweat from our little trip in the humid weather, we thought it would be best to freshen up and rest before lunch. Lunch included rice, daal, aloo bhaja, bhetki paturi, and chicken chaap. Shogo-san was especially impressed by the preparation of the fish in bhetki paturi, and had two. He also asked after the spices and preparation of each dish he was served, since he likes to cook a variety of Indian food himself, and my mother happily answered all his queries. We took a quick walk on our rooftop after lunch, during which we learnt a lot about Shogo-san's life as a student of Kyoto University.

We had decided to take Shogo-san to Belur Math after lunch, and he expressed his desire to wear his new kurta on the trip, to our great joy. Soon we made our way to Belur Math in our car with my father driving and the rest of us chattering away about Japan, India and the conference that had brought us all together. Sadly, it started raining heavily when we reached our destination, and we had to hurry inside the main temple, slightly drenched despite our umbrellas. The evening prayer soon started and Shogo-san was mesmerised by the music as well as the architecture of the temple's interior sanctum. When the rain stopped we went out and explored the temple grounds and caught sight of the Hooghly River which flowed by Belur Math. We came home with warm memories of the pleasant ambience and beautiful music of Belur Math.

Shogo-san had my mother's homemade firni soon after we got back, and we finally found something that he deemed "not too sweet". Watching the Bollywood movie *Pathaan* and enjoying the Indian snacks bought by Ritika occupied us before dinner, which comprised some of the dishes from the afternoon with the addition of chingri malai curry. Once again, Shogo-san's love for Indian food did not fail to delight us. We ended up conversing too late into the night once more, eager to enjoy the last night of the homestay to the fullest. Before he finally clocked in for the night, Shogo-san gifted us some wonderful souvenirs from Japan, adding that they were from his grandmother's souvenir shop.

The next morning, we woke up early and had a breakfast of aloo parathas followed by mangoes and kaju barfi, both of which Shogo-san seemed to have taken a liking to. My father was quick to notice and promised to bring him mangoes on the day of his flight back to Japan. Soon it was time to make our way back to the RMIC Guest House. My parents shared their goodbyes with Shogo-san before we gifted him chocolates, dry fruits and kaju barfi and urged him to definitely come back to Kolkata and visit us again. On the car ride back, I reminiscenced about the wonderful two days we had just experienced, and all the planning and excitement that had led up to them. A tinge of sadness threatened to overtake me as the homestay finally came to an end, but I washed down the melancholy with the

sincere hope that I would be able to welcome Shogo-san as a guest at my home again someday.

My father kept his promise of gifting mangoes to Shogo-san on the day of his departure, and he brought along a box of kaju barfis as well. Sadly, the mangoes did not make it to Japan because of airport security rules. But thankfully, the kaju barfis did.

## 7) Drishti Shroff

The homestay for 27th IJSC commenced from 12th August and ended on 14th August at noon. Homestays are priceless experiences in the personal quarters of our Indian homes. Conversations flow freely as you exchange personal stories, ideas and experiences.

I'm extremely grateful to receive this wonderful opportunity and gift of a lifetime for being able to host Haruka Mizuno, hailing from Nagoya which is the capital of Aichi prefecture. She is serving as the Academic Planner and Domestic Liaison this time.

Home also brings ease to our minds as it remains a resting ground to all our adventures. It provided me immense joy to introduce Haruka-San to my personal space, my family and also eat meals together as we bantered about each other's lives.

On the first day of Homestay, 12 August, I wished to introduce to her the glorious traditional customs of Rajbari, a cultural heritage site in Bengal. Namrata-San, Sato-San and our friend and fellow Dosokai member, Ankana-San joined in this plan to make the evening a memorable one.

Before leaving the house, we ate some chilla, a savoury Indian pancake with spices and vegetables for condiments along with some poha, which is beaten rice with tomato and onions. This was enjoyed alongside some Darjeeling tea which garnered special attention for its flavourful blend. Here, I also gifted a pack of "Makaibari Darjeeling Tea Blend" to Haruka-San and Sato-San which made them extremely happy.

There are several Rajbaris spread in distinct parts of the city and I found Rajbari Bawali to be extremely magical for an authentic Indian dining experience. A three hundred and fifty year old property, their services were immaculate as they showed us the lounge area, evening "aarti" and beautiful ivory structures while giving us an attendant to show everything around. On our tour, we captured a sight of a few ducks huddled together.

The shimmering stars in the lounge area added charm to the dance and musical performances we watched while sipping on our drinks. We dressed up in traditional Indian outfits and Haruka-San looked stunning in a saree while Sato-San donned a gorgeous black Kurta. The day concluded after we had a sumptuous dinner inside a beautiful private dining space lit with candles and surrounded by Indian cultural artefacts such as an ornate mirror, an antique telephone and a traditional musical instrument. We ate some Mutton Korma, creamy Dal Makhani, Naan, Malai Kofta and some rice.

It was pleasant to gaze at the marvel of Bengali-style architecture and soak in the cultural beauty of Rajbari which amazed our guests and left them awestruck. Sato-San also recorded a clip of us together screaming in excitement to show it to his loved ones.

On our way home, Haruka-San and I caught a glimpse of Alipore Jail Museum and the city outskirts. She spoke about her future goals and slept on my shoulder while telling me to visit her in Japan. I gave her a nickname, Chibi-chan, as she was the cutest little delight for me and reminded me of Nezuko-chan from an anime called Demon Slayer. After returning home, she gave me Dora Cakes apart from a few other things which I have been eating even now.

On the second day of homestay, 13th August, I planned on shopping. We ate some beans, toast and chai alongside some fruits like bananas and papaya. She found it delicious and her favourite consistently remained the chai we gave her. Then, Haruka-San wore the beautiful pink kaftan I gave her alongside a rose clip and accessories. I found more accessories in stores and gifted them to Haruka-San. We ate some soba noodles, dumplings and tea in a Burmese restaurant for lunch. The tea was an authentic Burmese blend and we couldn't get enough of it. After the meal, we watched Howrah Bridge and nearby attractions. The neon glow of lights around Howrah Station as rain fell was a surreal sight. As the evening came to a close, we went around Park Street and took a bite at a cafe with some of my friends while enjoying a band playing some western rock. Here too, Haruka-San savoured Indian Chai with steak as we danced and sang songs on our way home.

After returning home, we gossiped while wearing face masks and had a peaceful sleep. On the morning of August 14th, my parents gifted Haruka-San many souvenirs, outfits, sweets and savoury items that would be cherished by her family as well in her hometown. An Indian "ghagra" skirt was apparently too big for her so we decided that her mother would look gorgeous wearing it. At that, Haruka-San expressed that she would've liked to be taller but I believe she looks extremely adorable the way she is. My parents loved Haruka-San and we took plenty of photographs together to always remember her.

We had a homemade burger together which found its way to Haruka-San's heart. I swear by my homemade recipes which use homemade sauces and innovative patties for a healthy bite. The juicy crunch was especially savoured by her as it was her last meal at my home. Again, we had some chai together before we left for RKM guest house.

On our way, I bought her some red roses as Haruka-San's name actually means flower so it was my wish to see her and roses together in one frame on my camera. We shed some tears as we realised that our time together for homestay had expired but made promises to always stay in touch and visit each other in the future. I am exhilarated to experience these precious moments with Haruka-San and everyone who joined us. I will look back at these memories and nurture my dreams to visit Japan even more.

## **8) Rusha Chowdhury**

On August 12, 2023, after having gotten over with the most crucial academic part of our conference, that is, the presentations, the much awaited homestays commenced. The Japanese member who was supposed to stay at my house was Mie Kichiya-san. Grabbing a bit of lunch from the Food Court at South City Mall, Mie-san and I took an Uber to my place. The Uber took us through the bypass that exposed Mie-san to the picturesque view of the city from the height and distance of the highway. Mie-san and I spoke about the sartorial traditions in India and Japan. She expressed her desire to wear a saree while I told her how I wish to try on the Kimono someday if circumstances allow me. Mie-san was elated to know

of my enthusiasm about Japanese traditional clothing. Most of the ride was spent in mutual silence as both of us took in the view, making occasional comments on the architecture, water bodies and the roads.

By the time we reached home, Mie-san and I were tired. My parents welcomed her with open arms and prepared her a bed to take rest to restore herself after a long day. Her luggage was safely kept by her bedside. Having freshened up, Mie-san and I took a nap on our respective beds. Both of us woke up at around 7 PM. My mother had prepared a small meal of malpoa, a traditional Indian chapati dessert, and cookies. Mie-san especially liked the malpoa so much that she said she would like to have another one after dinner the same night. Finishing our meal, we spent the next one hour talking about random things ranging from movies to books to music. We found that we have a lot in common in terms of our music tastes. At around 8 PM, I took Mie-san out on a casual walk around the neighbourhood. Since it had rained, the streets were drenched with mud puddles here and there. The neighbourhood was quite vacant and calm as it usually is around the place I live with minimum traffic of vehicles and people. As we walked, we listened to a few songs about the rain and had a good laugh talking about random things. When we got back home, we exchanged a few souvenirs, which was an extremely exciting activity. I gifted Mie-san a pair of thread-woven earrings tasselled with chumkis, and she gave me packs of delicious snacks from Japan, a hand-fan and a few stationary products designed with some notable artworks from the portfolio of Hokusai, who happens to be one of my favourite artists.

On the morning of August 13, 2023, we planned to go to Princep Ghat since my guest wanted to see the Ganges. We would be leaving in the afternoon, so to spend the morning, we shared our childhood memories with each other. I showed Mie-san a game of riddles I used to play with friends in school. We sketched random things on my tablet, of which the Snoopy sketch that Mie-san casually did was something that surprised me. I was impressed by her command of lines and proportions. After a while, my father brought out packets of Indian snacks for Mie-san as a souvenir from his side.

We had a light lunch of egg curry and rice and left for our destination. The ghat fascinated Mie-san as she strode along the path with me. The water glistened in the light of the sun muffled under grey clouds. I explained to her how the small boats that were docked at the ghat were used for navigation in olden days, about various stories of the capsizing of those boats of which Tagore's *Noukadubi* is an intriguing example. She was a keen listener throughout and wanted to know more about the riverside tales. Another thing that delighted her was the stray dogs that frequented the ghat. She told me that in Japan, stray dogs are not as widely seen as in India, and she found the dogs very cute. As we walked on, we counted how many strays we encountered. She taught me how children call dogs *wanchan* in Japanese whereas in usual parlance, they are called *inu*.

Having spent quite a bit of time at the ghat, we decided to head to Howrah Bridge, a vague and distant shadow of which we could see from Princep Ghat through the smog. However, a sudden burst of rain ruined our plans, and we had to head back. It being close to dinnertime already, Mie-san and I booked a cab to the Aminia near my place. We had biryani and chicken with relish, after which we headed back home.

One of the things that Mie-san wanted to do was try on a saree, so that is what we did next. I let her choose from the stack of sarees belonging to my mother. The intricate



fabric designs awed her. She chose one with a black-grey-gold colour palette. She was a bit anxious that the task of putting the saree on her would tax me, but I assured her that it would be a fun activity and a crucial part in our cultural exchange. Mie-san looked stunning in the saree. She was giddy with joy as she saw herself in the attire. In the saree, she looked like a perfect Bengali Indian girl with an irresistible charisma. We took loads of pictures and had a great time.

On August 14, 2023, it was time for the homestay to come to an end. We woke up with a lingering sense of sadness. My mother made a light breakfast for both of us, after which we spent some time listening to some Indian music. Finally, it was time for us to depart. My parents expressed their regret at not being able to interact with Mie-san as much as they had wanted to given the paucity of time. Mie-san, too, said that she wanted to talk more with my parents, but unfortunately, that could not be done this time, but she hoped that in the future, if circumstances are right, we all would meet again and engage in a more fruitful exchange.

Finally, it was time to say goodbye. My parents told Mie-san that she is welcome to stay at our home any time she is in Kolkata in the future. With courtesy, Mie-san was seen off. At 11 AM sharp, we reached the RMIC Guest House where Mie-san checked in. As I was about to leave after walking her to her room, she handed me a heartwarming letter of gratitude with a pen-sketch of Snoopy the dog. All in all, the homestay with Mie-san was a most delightful experience.

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