



ORGANISED BY:
NIHONGO KAIWA KYOOKAI SOCIETY

日本インド学生会議

29TH INDIA-JAPAN STUDENTS' CONFERENCE REPORT

KOLKATA - INDIA 2025



SUPPORTED BY EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN INDIA

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2025

ACTIVITY REPORT

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Message from the Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society

Kazuko Nigam

I am very satisfied to see that the 29th India–Japan Students’ Conference has concluded with great success.

This year we received 11 students from Japan, and 19 students participated from Kolkata.

In previous years, one or two students from Japan usually fell sick and had to be taken to a doctor, but this year, fortunately, all the students remained in good health and were able to attend all the activities.

Mr. Yoshihisa Ishikawa, Honorable Consul General of Japan in Kolkata, kindly invited all the students to his residence for a warm welcome reception and interacted with them.

This year too, we held the IJSC in Kolkata. Hiroko Nagahama sensei accompanied the Japanese students and quietly observed from behind.

Indian team President Muskan-san and Communicator Ritika-san showed excellent administrative skills and kept us informed about the progress of the schedule and returning times.

Next year will be a remarkable milestone—the 30th Conference. We still do not know in which country it will be held, but I wish for the grand success of the conference.

Message from the Founder Member of the Japan India Students' Conference

Hiroko Nagahama

I am very pleased that we were able to hold the Japan India Students' Conference this year as well. I am always grateful for the generous support of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society, ever since the foundation of this Conference. Thank you very much.

With every passing year, Japan's temperature is becoming more like that of India, and this year Japan is experiencing temperatures even surpassing India's. The various changes occurring throughout the world are due to our continued pursuit of convenience, but that is not the only cause for this.

While minimising the damage to the nature as much as possible, we, as human beings, must also be conscious of our precious resources like water and air. Preservation of life should be our utmost priority, and the time has come when we must exchange our wisdom for a peaceful living.

We have been gifted this precious life to be lived happily, and to lead a fulfilling life, we must strive to protect our Earth and make it a more liveable place, by thinking together from different perspectives, transcending borders and sharing the same thoughts.

I hope that the small group of students who participated in the Japan India Students' Conference will continue to exchange ideas that build upon these aspirations, and I look forward to seeing you carry these efforts forward into the coming year.

I extend my deep gratitude to each and everyone who has helped and cooperated throughout the activities, and I look forward to your further support.

Lastly, I am grateful to the Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata for their continued support and kind cooperation.

Message from the Coordinator of the India-Japan Students' Conference

Partha Sarathi Mitra

The 29th India Japan Students' Conference maintained an exemplary high quality standard all throughout the Conference.

Be it Academic, Cultural or Event Management, each department outsmarted the other.

It would have been ideal to provide more time on Table Discussions, so that Critical Thinking, Analytical Skills and Presentation Skills could be demonstrated in a more detailed way.

The Concluding Day of the Table Discussion was a treat to watch and learn. It was an excellent presentation with some thought-provoking inferences.

We feel all the student participants are very much talented in their respective fields.

If nurtured properly, each one has the potential to become an exceptionally successful Human Being in the near future.

Thank you.

Message from the Students' Conference Dōsōkai

Core Team,
Dōsōkai

A very heartfelt congratulations on successfully completing the 29th India Japan Students' Conference. From planning and arranging to coordinating and conducting the main conference smoothly at every stage is no small feat. Despite most of the conference members being a first time participant, with little to no prior experience, they have navigated all the challenges thrown at them with a firm hand, which stands as a testament to their strong teamwork.

We, here at the Dōsōkai, are enthralled by your achievements, and we hope that your experiences in this conference have equally helped you discover a new perspective or a newfound enthusiasm or even a life-changing moment, just as your activities made us relive our own conference days once again.

Very well done! お疲れ様でした。

Message from the Student President of Japan

Shinichiro Sasaki

Serving as the President of the Japan-India Students' Conference has been one of the most meaningful responsibilities I have ever undertaken. From the earliest stages of planning to the moment the final session concluded, I realised that leadership in such a setting is not simply about coordination, but about creating a platform where genuine dialogue and trust can emerge. Watching participants from both Japan and India engage deeply with one another confirmed for me that the true value of international conferences lies beyond formal agendas—it is often discovered in casual conversations during meals, shared laughter during transportation, or late-night reflections after a long day.

From an organiser's perspective, I was struck by the fact that Japanese and Indian students, despite being nurtured in very different educational environments, expressed similar concerns about their futures: how to shape their careers, how to balance opportunity with responsibility, and how to embrace the growing role of technology in society. Recognising this universality gave me confidence that the work of student-led diplomacy is not in vain. It proved that young people can identify common ground even while honouring cultural differences.

Another striking lesson was observing the complementary strengths of each delegation. Indian participants often emphasised adaptability and quick decision-making, while Japanese participants leaned toward careful planning and structured discussion. Initially, these differences could appear contrasting, but I began to see them as two halves of a stronger whole. When combined, they created a model for teamwork that was both dynamic and dependable. As Chairperson, facilitating this balance was one of the most rewarding aspects of my role.

Equally powerful were the cultural exchanges. Sharing Japanese traditions such as hobbies and community values, while at the same time experiencing the richness of Indian festivals, performances, and hospitality, reminded me that culture is not merely a backdrop to dialogue—it is a driving force that shapes how we think, connect, and collaborate.

Ultimately, my greatest realisation as Chairperson is that the future of Japan-India relations will not be built solely by institutions or governments. It will be carried forward by the friendships and collaborations formed at gatherings like this. I leave this experience with gratitude, pride, and a renewed sense of duty: to ensure that the bridges we built here continue to expand, and that the spirit of cooperation cultivated among students becomes a foundation for long-term partnership.

Message from the Student Vice-President of Japan

Nanako Kotani

As the Vice-President of the 29th Japan-India Students' Conference (JISC), I am truly honoured to reflect on this year's program.

When we began preparations, my wish was simple: to create a space where young people from Japan and India could meet as equals, speak openly, and bring back new discoveries and inspirations. Through this conference in Kolkata, I saw that wish come to life in ways that went far beyond what I imagined.

In both our subcommittee discussions and cultural exchanges, I learned a great deal. One of the most important realisations was that our differences are not barriers. Instead, they make our conversations deeper and help us broaden our perspectives. In those moments, I could clearly see the true value of diversity. It is not a challenge to overcome, but a source of creativity and cooperation.

This conference was not only about exchanging knowledge—it was also about building human connections. Through daily conversations, shared meals, and even moments of laughter or confusion, bonds of trust grew much faster than I expected. For me personally, “India” or “Japan” no longer feels like a single, uniform image. Rather, it is the people I have met, one by one, who shape my understanding of a country.

Looking ahead, I sincerely hope that the connections made here will not remain only as memories but will lead to future collaborations. The challenges our societies face—climate change, inequality, and cultural misunderstandings—cannot be solved by one country alone. They require us to think and act together, across borders. I believe that the friendships and insights born at JISC will become a strong foundation for this shared effort.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made this conference possible: the organising committees in both countries, our academic and cultural partners, and most of all, the participants who brought courage and sincerity to this dialogue. This program has been a time of learning, growth, and hope in my life. I am confident that it has been a meaningful and unforgettable experience for many others as well.

Message from the Student President of India

Muskan Jamil

It has been both an honour and a privilege to serve as the Student President of the Indian side for the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference. This year's conference carried forward the legacy of continued friendship, dialogue, and cooperation between India and Japan. The whole of the Indian team's journey was very much in line with the theme of "*Weaving Life's Future: New Horizons of Cultural Coexistence*", as we shaped each other's lives in ways beyond our imagination. It was a unique year where all 19 members of the Indian team were new, full of interesting ideas, positive enthusiasm, and above all ready to enjoy our time here. This excitement was not reserved only for the conference days; instead, all of us were determined from the preparation phase itself. Throughout this new endeavour of mine, I have come to realise the value of listening, patience, and adaptability in ways that shaped my growth as both a leader and a person.

Our Japanese counterparts and their unwavering patience, kindness and resilience became a learning example for all of us. They were exceptionally understanding even when we had sudden changes of plans, and exceptionally compassionate even when they had to use unconventional forms of transport or endure the scorching sun of Kolkata. We lived the conference theme in practice, and I'm proud of each and every member for embodying "cultural coexistence" at its finest. It was in these shared smiles, conversations, and small acts of support that I saw the spirit of this conference most clearly.

I am grateful to have worked under the guidance of Nigam sensei and Partha sensei. Their belief in us inspired our efforts and gave us the confidence to do our very best at every step. I extend my deepest gratitude towards Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society for organising this conference, and towards the Department of Philosophy at Jadavpur University for making the group discussions possible. I would like to sincerely thank the Dosokai Members for their constant support from the initial stages of preparation till the end, and I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to the Consulate General for their continued belief in our mission and their dedication to fostering strong bilateral ties.

A special note of thanks to Dr Dalia Chakrabarti and "BanglanatakDotCom" for grounding our group discussions with their respective insights. I remain especially grateful to our communicator, Ritika-san, whose constant support and encouragement made everything possible and in the same breath, I offer my heartfelt thanks to every IJSC-JISC member. To have such a dependable and diverse team by my side has been one of my most cherished aspects of this journey.

As Aristotle wisely said, "*The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.*" Through this conference we truly lived that truth.

Message from the Student Communicator of India

Ritika Mukherjee

It is with immense gratitude and a happy heart that I write this message as the Communicator of the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference. Having had the privilege of participating in the 28th Conference hosted by Japan, I thought I knew what awaited me. Yet nothing could have prepared me for the entirely different and deeply enriching experience of being on the host side this year.

Serving as the Communicator has been both humbling and deeply rewarding. I have come to realise that this role extends far beyond its title. I was entrusted with being a bridge of understanding, not only between two sides, but also within my own team. I have discovered that it is less about flawless communication and more about honest, sincere connections. At times, it felt overwhelming, but I put faith in my team, leaned on my mentors and tried not to lose sight of the bigger picture. Though I am aware of my shortcomings, I am grateful that I was able to carry out my duties to the best of my abilities.

I could not, however, have done this without the unwavering support and guidance of Nigam sensei and Partho sensei, as well as the Dosokai, to whom I extend my deepest gratitude. Their wisdom and reassurance gave me the strength to carry out my role with confidence.

I am equally thankful to Muskan, the Indian side president, for being endlessly patient and steady. I was relieved to have her by my side during moments of both enjoyment and uncertainty. Alongside her, the Vice-Presidents and all the Indian members worked tirelessly and kept the spirits high till the very end, for which I am deeply grateful. As they say, "teamwork makes the dream work", and with this year's pick of members, I truly got to experience that.

The Japan side was more than cooperative during the pre-conference planning stages and even throughout the conference, their enthusiasm never faltered, and for that, I am thankful. I hope they were able to build meaningful connections and memories through their interactions with us.

As I reflect on the month and a half of pre-conference preparation, the late-night meetings, the exhausting schedule and budget drafts, the rehearsals, and the moments we shared during the conference itself, I have come to realise that the spirit of genuine, heart-to-heart communication, one that transcends language barriers, is what truly defines this conference. Even across cultures and borders, we opened ourselves with sincerity and built friendships and understanding that go beyond words.

Serving as the Communicator of the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference has been a journey of growth, gratitude, and connection, one that I will hold close to my heart for many years to come.

Message from the Student Vice-President of the Academics Team

Swastidipa Roy

The India-Japan Students' Conference has been a prestigious forum for discussion and cross-cultural understanding for many years, bringing together young minds from India and Japan to deliberate on issues of global concern. It was an honour to be appointed the Vice-President of the Academics Team for the 29th IJSC. Being new to the conference, I started with a mixture of nervous excitement, unsure of what lay ahead.

The Academics Team closely collaborated with our Japanese counterparts to organise group discussions that were centred on the key theme of "Weaving Life's Future: New Horizons of Cultural Coexistence." The overarching theme of this year, "Life", was inspired by the Osaka Expo 2025. It was further explored through four subcommittees: Entertainment, Education, Food, and Mobility and Community.

To deepen our inquiry, we invited Professor Dalia Chakrabarti, from the Department of Sociology of Jadavpur University, who delivered a thought-provoking lecture titled "Creating Capabilities to Connect with Others: A Journey from Loneliness to Meaningful Coexistence." Her insights highlighted the sociological challenges that confront both India and Japan and their implications for cultural coexistence. The lecture resonated with all four subcommittees, sparking meaningful debate and encouraging participants to consider new perspectives on their theme.

To complement this scholarly interaction, the conference had a presentation by the social enterprise "Banglanatok Dot Com" as well. Their efforts toward developing cultural communities and empowering marginalised sections at the grassroots level offered us a very practical insight into coexisting cultures in action. The session focused on the role of social innovation and community development in meeting modern-day challenges. This presentation has been facilitated by the smooth organisation of the Events Team, and I would like to thank its Vice-President, Tarun Binay Das, for his encouraging support. I would also like to extend my thanks to our President, Muskan Jamil, and Communicator Ritika Mukherjee for guiding me through every step.

During the course of the conference, our team prepared research guidelines and discussion outlines to support participants in their studies. I was immensely supported by my committed team members and am very grateful to Bedant Tamang, Disha Nag, and Parijat Datta. The passion and hard work exhibited by Indian and Japanese participants resulted in lively discussions and well-researched presentations. It reminds me how collaboration is not merely a concept but a living practice.

We were also responsible for gathering and editing the official reports. Recalling the diverse experiences through words was a privilege as well as joy. Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Nigam sensei, Partha sensei, and Dosokai members for offering me this opportunity. Being a Vice-President of the Academics Team was something I will forever cherish as both an aspiring academic and an individual committed to cultural understanding.

Message from the Student Vice-President of the Cultural Team

Moushree Sen

As a person who has always loved art and culture, being chosen as the Cultural Vice-President of the 29th India–Japan Students’ Conference was both an honour and a golden opportunity. It allowed me to represent the richness of Indian traditions, share their warmth with the Japanese side, and experience the joy of cultural exchange firsthand.

My team consisted of six members—Swayangsiddha, Annapurna, Ritika, Anurag, Srija, and me. I still remember our very first meeting, when I proposed showcasing India’s diversity through singing, dancing, and recitation. To my delight, every member was excited and eager to participate. I soon realised that our performance was not just a skit—it was a celebration of the diverse cultures each of us brought to the team.

We prepared the script, allocated roles based on everyone’s strengths, and began rehearsals. Many members were dancing or performing in a new genre for the first time, yet their dedication and enthusiasm made the performance possible. At the same time, those less comfortable on stage managed the logistics so smoothly that the event ran flawlessly. A special thanks to Tarun for supporting the management team in preparing the presentation.

On the first day, Anurag mentioned that he wasn’t confident with singing or dancing and would focus on scripts and speeches instead, but believe me, he helped a lot throughout the conference and down the line, he shared that being part of the cultural team helped him interact more closely with everyone, which truly made our day.

The highlight of our efforts came when Natsumi sensei said, “I have been to Kolkata for three months, but through this skit I travelled and experienced the whole of India.” That was our true “WE DID IT” moment.

For the cultural exchange activity, we organised *Alpona Art*. Ten groups of three members were formed, each guided by someone familiar with the art. When the activity began, there was complete concentration and silence. The final showcase of canvases was an “aww” moment for everyone. Even Japan-side members, many trying *Alpona* for the first time, created beautiful works and proudly carried their canvases and brushes home as souvenirs.

Due to time constraints, we adjusted the “Drapes of Culture” segment for the closing ceremony, but seeing everyone in *sarees* and *dhoti-punjabis* with such grace truly reflected Indian culture. I am also grateful to Bedant for hosting the closing ceremony on my behalf, as I was delayed by traffic. We also played “Pass the Pillow with Truth and Dare” chits, selected by Ritika and Swayansiddha, which was enjoyed by all.

Finally, as a gesture of friendship, we prepared handmade fridge magnet canvases as gifts for the Japanese side. Srija, Annapurna, and I worked together on these, and the process, especially the clay work, was full of fun and memorable moments.

To the future Cultural Vice-Presidents, I would like to say: think beyond boundaries. At first, it may feel overwhelming, but when your efforts touch the hearts of your audience, the pride and acknowledgement you feel will be your lasting reward.

Message from the Student Vice-President of the Events Team

Tarun Binay Das

The 29th India–Japan Students’ Conference has been an experience filled with challenges, learning, and memories that I will carry with me for a long time. From the moment I was entrusted with the role of Vice-President of the Events Team, I knew the responsibility was immense. The schedule is the foundation on which the entire conference rests, and ensuring its smooth execution required patience, flexibility, and most importantly, teamwork.

In the weeks leading up to the conference, we worked tirelessly on shaping the itinerary. What began as a single draft soon turned into almost nine different versions, each adapted to accommodate new ideas, last-minute changes, and practical considerations. The final week was especially tense, as we waited nervously for confirmations from all the places we had planned to visit. Each email and phone call felt like a small hurdle crossed, and the relief we felt when everything was finalised is something I will not forget. Yet, when the conference finally began, I felt a quiet satisfaction in seeing how seamlessly the events unfolded. The fact that everything went according to plan is something I remain deeply thankful for.

I owe this success not to myself but to the people I had the privilege of working with. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my team members – Utsa, Kimaya, Yash, Muskan, and Ayesha – who stood by me through every revision, scouting trip, and (many) late-night discussions. Their commitment and creativity ensured that we were not just making a timetable but crafting experiences that participants could enjoy and learn from. I am equally grateful to the other team leads, who constantly lent their support in coordinating with us—whether it was working out feasibility, balancing the budget, or integrating cultural and academic considerations into the final schedule. A special word of thanks must also go to Dosokai, whose insights and suggestions were invaluable in helping us shape a program that reflected both authenticity and inclusiveness.

What I take away most from this experience is the power of collaboration. The schedule was not simply about timings and logistics; it was about creating a shared space where Indian and Japanese participants could connect, explore, and build friendships. Being part of the team that made this possible is something I will always look back on with pride.

Serving as the Events Vice-President for the 29th IJSC has been an honour and a privilege. It has taught me that behind every smooth event lies not just planning, but the relentless efforts of people who care enough to make it work.

Message from the Student Vice-President of the Finance Team

Aditya Prasad

In the 29th IJSC, I had the honour to serve as the Vice-President of the Finance team. The day I received the news, I was worried about how I was going to deliver my best for this position, given that I have never been good with finances. But now that the conference has come to an end and has been a great success, I can finally take a breath of relief that I can perform well when in need. In the initial days, I was clueless, but Tamalika-san from Dosokai came to the rescue and gave me crucial insights from her experience in the previous IJSC editions. Namrata-san also helped me in planning things around in the preparatory stage of the conference.

I was blessed with two very talented people in my team, Soumyojit-san and Samriddha-san, who were always active and ready to work even in the late hours. It was through the collective effort of all that we could serve the best from the finance team.

The position of Vice-President of the Finance team came with multiple challenges and responsibilities, which made my work interesting till the very last hour of the conference. From keeping note of every single penny spent to negotiating in places where I could cut extra expenditure, I gained new experiences and learnt from them. We were lucky not to experience any issues with the weather or the health of our peers, for which I am very grateful. I was given the title of *Mishti Bapi* by my IJSC peers as a joke, which added some laughs and an element of comic relief for me. I am highly grateful to have such cooperative, fun and responsible teammates from India who were there for me throughout the conference.

I have learnt a lot from this conference, and I would like to extend my gratitude to Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society, Nigam sensei, Partha sensei and the Dosokai for their administration and constant support in making this conference a success.

I would like to end this report with a message for the future Vice-Presidents who will be in my shoes in the upcoming editions of the IJSC. This position comes with utmost responsibility, and communication plays a major role from day one. Since it involves managing funds, it is important to be attentive to everything and always be prepared with some extra because emergencies do come uninvited. All the best!

The Schedule of the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference

06.08.2025	Wednesday	Arrival in Kolkata
07.08.2025	Thursday	Opening Ceremony
		Birla Mandir
		Consul General Visit
08.08.2025	Friday	Indian Museum
		Lunch at Aami Bangali
		Shopping at Sunshine
		Saint Paul's Cathedral and Nehru Children's Museum
09.08.2025	Saturday	Group Discussion 1
		Group Discussion 2 (Guest lecturer)
		Group Discussion 3
10.08.2025	Sunday	Dakshineswar
		Belur Math and Bhog
		Cultural Exchange
11.08.2025	Monday	NGO Presentation
		Group Discussion 4
		Buddhist Temple and Rabindra Sarobar
12.08.2025	Tuesday	Final Presentation
		Homestay
13.08.2025	Wednesday	Closing Ceremony
		Sayonara Party
14.08.2025	Thursday	Airport drop off

The Theme of the Conference

Theme: Weaving Life's Future: New Horizons of Cultural Coexistence

The 29th India-Japan Students' Conference (IJSC) took place under the theme "Weaving Life's Future: New Horizons of Cultural Coexistence," as motivated by the vision of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. The theme encouraged Indian and Japanese youth to consider the idea of life, sustainability, and coexistence, drawing from their richly divergent cultural identities.

Purpose of the Theme:

The theme had been chosen for three main reasons.

1. **Rethinking the Meaning of Life:** With today's ever-accelerating pace of change in the global world, it is necessary to redefine the meaning of life from both the Indian and Japanese points of view. By looking into the religious and philosophical concepts of life in both civilisations—highlighting differences as well as similarities—the conference created greater mutual understanding.
2. **Global Challenges to Response:** Mankind encountered imminent life-related matters like climate change, hunger, and health inequality. Inter-generational practices between Indian and Japanese youth created creative solutions. Analysing "life" from culturally different perspectives, the conference fostered concepts that solved such worldwide issues.
3. **Reflection Post-Pandemic:** In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which instilled renewed international concern about the fragility of life, the conference provided an arena for visionary discussion. Students participated in discussions that dreamed of a more equitable and sustainable future society.

Structure of the Conference:

The Conference was structured under two broad themes and split into four subcommittees, enabling participants to interact based on their individual interests and knowledge. The agenda of each subcommittee had been determined beforehand by joint Indian and Japanese students' collaboration to ensure a sense of relevance and incorporation.

Theme 1: Co-creating Cultures for the Future

This topic explores how different cultures may find common ground and coexist, with particular reference to youth culture and cultural expressions in India and Japan.

Subcommittee 1-1: Entertainment — How Could We Create and Preserve Cultural Diversity?

This subcommittee considered how entertainment—anime, fashion, social media—can foster cultural diversity and coexistence. With globalisation affecting cultural industries, the committee discussed how traditions may be preserved while adopting innovation.

Key Topics: Anime, Fashion, Social Media

Subcommittee 1-2: Education — How Did Education Influence Individual Values?

This subcommittee examined the impact of education on values. Topics included gender roles, language, morality, and minorities. The participants also reflected on issues of inclusivity and access in education, while sharing their own perspectives and experiences as learners.

Key Topics: Gender, Language, Morality, Educational Disparities

Theme 2: The Future of Food and Living

This theme was concerned with building a future in which everyone has safe access to food and decent living standards. Sustainability, inclusion, and community were emphasised as essential parts of human existence.

Subcommittee 2-1: How Could We Create a World Where No One Struggles to Get Enough Food?

This section tackled food security through examining the options of minimising food loss, promoting sustainable agriculture, improving food literacy, and having resilient supply chains. Using India's and Japan's management of food as models, the committee worked on achieving international cooperation as a means of ensuring fair access to food.

Key Topics: Food Loss, Food Literacy, Supply Chains, International Cooperation

Subcommittee 2-2: What Type of Mobility and Community Can Enrich Our Lives?

This subcommittee explored the interaction between mobility, community, and technology. The topics addressed are transportation systems, automation, smart cities, resilience in the face of disasters, and social inclusion. Through comparison of Indian and Japanese experiences, the group aimed to create sustainable and equitable mobility systems that could enrich community life.

Key Topics: MaaS & Automation, Smart Cities, Disaster Resilience, Inclusive Mobility Design, Sustainable Mobility Futures

Group Discussion Overview of Subcommittees 1, 2, 3, and 4

Subcommittee 1: Entertainment

Name	Position	Institution/Major
Swastidipa Roy	Vice-President of the Academics Team	Jadavpur University, B.A. (Hons) in English
Bedant Tamang	Academics Team Member	Jadavpur University, B.A. in Political Science
Srija Bhatta	Cultural Team Member	Amity University, B.A.(H&R) in Applied Psychology
Kimaya Thakkar	Events Team Member	St. Xavier's University, Bachelors in Management Studies (BMS Hons)
Parijat Datta	Academics Team Member	Sister Nivedita University, B.Sc. (Hons) in Psychology
Shinichiro Sasaki	President – Japan Side	Hirosaki University, Faculty of Medicine
Motoya Aono	Academic Planning	The University of Tokyo, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Mathematical Engineering and Information Physics
Yoshimi Saito	Academic Planning	Tsuda University, Department of Policy Studies

When exploring the theme of life and coexistence, it becomes crucial to look into the entertainment we have in our daily lives that shapes a lot of minor but impactful decisions in life. Different forms of entertainment shape our perceptions and make us engage with cross-cultural entities. As such, it becomes an important tool of cultural engagement.

Pre-Conference Stage

In the online meetings preceding the conferences, all members made acquaintances with each other and began to explore much of the ambit of the vast topic of 'Entertainment'. As such, given the vast nature of the topic, it was decided upon by consensus that the work will be divided into three sub-headings: Anime, Fashion, and Social Media. It was in this stage that much of the academic reading was done. It was also in this stage that the contents that would be talked of were decided and debated upon.

Conference Stage

As the group discussions during the time of the conference were initiated, the work on the script for speaking was done. Further additional data was added, and some new necessary adjustments were made, such as the inclusion of talks on anime pilgrimage and the influence of Instagram content creators on cross-cultural interactions. Each subgroup decided for themselves on the subtopics they would want to include and make their presentations. Care was taken to ensure that the presentation would be short and precise, with adequate pictures for a better explanation. Data from various research studies were added to turn the presentation into a data-backed discourse on the relevant discourses. Newer issues like the conservative sentiments, the role of entertainment in combating loneliness and the impact of differences in expression in social media were discussed towards the latter half. Lastly, all members collaborated

to make the presentation slides informative, bite-sized data chunks. As the data and research findings were presented on the floor of the conference, an interactive question and answer session ensured that the audience grasped what was being said, and even the team members saw new angles to the content of their research.

Conclusion

By the end of the final presentation, it was concluded that the different forms of entertainment serve as bridges between the cultures of the two countries. As such, it was also noted that although modern forms of entertainment meant new norms and new standards, it depended on choices that cultural and traditional norms could be preserved. The conclusion arrived at was that the entertainment we use and the contents thereof ensure that the cultures interact and evolve, and are also passed on to the next generations. It was the final finding that entertainment forms and the way things are expressed help form positive perceptions among people and encourage travelling and cultural exchange.

Subcommittee 2: Education

Name	Position	Institution/Major
Aditya Prasad	Vice-President of the Finance Team	Sister Nivedita University, B.Tech in CSE (AI-ML)
Tarun Binay Das	Vice-President of the Events Team	Sister Nivedita University, Bachelors in Computer Science
Utsa Basu Das	Events Team Member	Sister Nivedita University, Masters in Economics
Annapurna Das	Cultural Team Member	Sister Nivedita University, Masters in Economics
Yash Das	Events Team Member	Vivekananda College, Bachelors in Computer Science
Nanako Kotani	Vice-President – Japan side/ Finance Bureau	Tsuda University, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Department of Multicultural and International Cooperation
Tamami Tomita	Public Relation	Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, International and Area Studies, Hindi major
Joe Ito	Domestic Liaison	Aoyama Gakuin University, Faculty of Global Studies and Collaborations

Education plays a central role in shaping societies, and both India and Japan place strong emphasis on it, though in different ways. Japan focuses more on moral education, practical skills, and a uniform curriculum, while India shows its diversity through multiple languages and a decentralised structure. Despite these contrasts, the two systems face similar challenges—like ensuring inclusivity, providing equal access to resources, and preparing young people for the demands of a fast-changing world. What stood out to us was that, at the core, both countries share the same goal: to raise learners who are culturally grounded yet ready to face the future.

Pre-Conference Stage

In the pre-conference stage, our subcommittee came together to finalise the frameworks and divide into three focus groups. Much of our discussion revolved around comparing the education systems of India

and Japan—their similarities and the clear differences. We also benefited from a research paper shared by Momoyama Gakuin University, which gave us useful academic insights and helped us see the topic from a new angle. Interestingly, apart from formal discussions, we spoke about our hobbies too, and this gave the feeling that education is not just about school or university but also about the interests that shape us outside of classrooms. These lighter moments made the stage more interactive and helped us connect better as a group.

Conference Stage

When the conference began, our group worked together to bring all these ideas into a proper PowerPoint presentation. We covered themes like the link between education and culture, challenges of inclusivity, and what India and Japan could learn from each other's systems. The slides included comparisons, data, and visuals to make the discussion clearer. What made the stage truly engaging was the question and answer session. The questions from the audience were thoughtful, touching on practical reforms, cultural differences, and real-world implementation. The answers and counter-questions turned the session into a two-way exchange rather than just a presentation. It gave everyone the sense that the discussion was alive and collaborative.

Conclusion

In the end, our group discussion showed that education is not only about academic knowledge but also about preserving culture and driving progress in modern times. India and Japan may have different approaches, but both are trying to find the right balance between tradition and innovation. Through this dialogue, we understood that learning from each other's strengths, sharing resources, and respecting cultural differences can open the way for more inclusive and sustainable education in both countries. Looking ahead, events like the Osaka–Kansai Expo 2025 will provide another chance for such exchanges on a global scale. These platforms encourage countries to share experiences and strengthen ties, showing how education can build resilience, creativity, and a stronger sense of global connection.

Subcommittee 3: Food

Name	Position	Institution/Major
Muskan Jamil	President – India Side	Jadavpur University, Masters in Philosophy
Ayesha Firoz	Events Team Member	Lady Brabourne College, B.A. in Philosophy (Hons)
Moushree Sen	Vice-President of Cultural Team	Sister Nivedita University, BBA in Healthcare and Hospital Management
Anurag Das	Cultural Team Member	Jadavpur University, Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering
Hiroki Kasahara	International Liaison	Akita International University, Department of Arts in International Liberal Arts
Hyoga Sasaki	Public Relation	Kindai University, Faculty of International Studies
Saki Yamazaki	International Liaison	The University of Tokyo, Humanities and Social Sciences I, College of Arts and Sciences

Keeping in mind the main theme of the conference, “Weaving Life's Future: New Horizons of Cultural Coexistence”, the main concern of the food subcommittee is to create a world where no one struggles to get enough food. Both India and Japan face varying degrees of food loss and related issues, which lead to a lot of people suffering. According to UN SDG 2, we are to eliminate any form of hunger by 2030 and achieve food security and provide proper nutrition to each and every person in this world. To help achieve that goal, we have contributed by making a presentation listing the main causes of food wastage and a few solutions on how we can overcome them.

Pre-conference stage

Various online meetings were held during this stage, where all the members got a chance to know each other and discuss the vast scope and extent of the given topic. During the first couple of meetings, both sides shared their knowledge and experiences regarding food-related issues in India and Japan. We all put forward data and statistics along with real-life examples to better understand our current scenario. Afterwards, we decided to split the subcommittee into three more teams: food loss and supply chain, food literacy, and international cooperation, and assigned at least one Indian and one Japanese member to each. It helped us conduct our research more easily and efficiently, thereby completing a lot of work before the main conference even started.

Conference Stage

During the group discussion sessions of the main conference, all three teams shared their findings and research. An outline for the final presentation was decided, and all of us started working on it. Each team continued with their research and simultaneously worked on making the PowerPoint presentation. Inspirations and suggestions from the guest lecturer session and the NGO presentation were also included in it. We tried to keep the presentation concise and to the point by adding more data and images over plain text as required. After the final presentation was done, a question and answer session was also held to interact with the other subcommittee members and get their insights and reasoning on the topic. Food, being a natural right for everyone, must not be wasted, was our main message to be conveyed.

Conclusion

Food loss and waste pose a significant threat to global food security; however, collaboration between nations such as India and Japan offers a way forward. By integrating India’s large-scale meal programmes with Japan’s strong food education practices, we can build sustainable systems that ensure nourishment for all. Such partnerships not only address hunger but also promote awareness, responsibility, and innovation in food management. Tackling this challenge requires active involvement from governments, communities, and individuals alike. The responsibility rests with each of us—eat mindfully, reduce waste, and work collectively towards a future where no one goes to bed hungry.

Subcommittee 4: Mobility and Community

Name	Position	Institution/Major
Disha Nag	Academics Team Member	Sister Nivedita University, Masters in Economics
Swayangsiddha Dey	Cultural Team Member	Asutosh College, BBA (Hons)
Samriddha Jana	Finance Team Member	Rabindra Bharati University, Masters in History
Soumyojit Chakraborty	Finance Team Member	Prafulla Chandra College,

		Masters in Finance
Ritika Mukherjee	Communicator – India Side	Indira Gandhi National Open University, Masters in English
Mana Sakamoto	Finance Bureau	Akita International University, Department of Arts in International Liberal Arts
Rina Nakajima	Domestic Liaison	Kyoto University, Faculty of Engineering, Division of Electrical and Electronical Engineering

In today's rapidly changing world, 'Mobility and Community' has emerged as a highly sought-after theme, shaping how societies function and how people connect. This work was aligned with Expo 2025's vision of 'Designing Future Society for Our Lives'. This research aimed to explore how mobility can enrich communities by fostering connection, opportunity, and sustainability. While India and Japan are both leading Asian economies, their approaches to mobility differ due to distinct geographical, socioeconomic, and political contexts, offering scope for mutual learning.

Pre-Conference

In the pre-conference stage, the subcommittee's first focus was to build a common understanding of what falls under the theme of 'Mobility and Community'. Six focus areas were initially identified but later refined to three major key points for deeper study and more efficient pair research work.

1. Sustainability: Promoting eco-friendly transport by reducing pollution while ensuring safety, affordability, and accessibility for diverse communities in both India and Japan.
2. Smart City: Creating people-centric transport systems that bridge digital gaps and strengthen urban connectivity.
3. Disaster Resilience: Integrating mobility into emergency response and recovery for safer and stronger communities.

Conference Stage

During the conference, the subcommittee revisited the theme of 'Mobility and Community' with the objective of making the subcommittee's work more meaningful for ordinary people. This was built on the outline prepared during the preconference meetings and enriched by the insights of guest lecturer Professor Dalia Chakrabarti. The group decided that instead of only relying on book-based knowledge and technical content, we would focus on people-centric explanations supported by simple visuals and relatable examples. The resources provided during the presentation aimed to raise awareness and encourage reflection on how mobility directly affects daily life, from transportation access to community well-being.

Conclusion

The subcommittee's discussion reaffirmed that 'mobility' and 'community' are deeply interconnected. Mobility is more than just transportation – it shapes how people connect with others, how they access opportunities, and how they live their daily lives. It was concluded that sustainable transport, inclusive smart city planning, and disaster resilience are not abstract policy goals but everyday necessities that touch lives directly. India and Japan, despite their differences, share this common truth that mobility must remain people-centric. By learning from each other's experiences, both nations can design systems that make life easier, safer, and more connected for everyone.

Arrival in Kolkata

6th August, 2025

Anurag Das

“And suddenly you know: It is time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings.” –Meister Eckhart

It was the beginning of a new journey filled with hope, joy, and excitement. With thorough planning by the Indian side over the past two months and cooperation from the Japanese side, the conference was finally set to begin with their arrival at Kolkata Airport. Their scheduled arrival on the night of August 6th prompted us to form a pick-up team, which included our esteemed President Muskan Jamil, the Communicator Ritika Mukherjee, the Finance Vice-President Aditya Prasad, Events team member Kimaya Thakkar, Cultural team member Srija Bhatta, and me, another fellow Cultural team member. Four of us brought our cars to safely escort the JISC members from the airport to the RMIC guest house.

All of us reached the airport safely by 11:30 p.m. and eagerly awaited the Japan side’s arrival with excitement and enthusiasm. We patiently awaited their arrival, keeping track of the flight via our phones. Hiroko Nagahama sensei, the founding member of JISC, was the first to arrive, blessing us with her presence as we greeted her warmly. Following her, the other ten JISC students arrived by midnight, led by Shinichiro Sasaki-san, their president.

Meeting our Japanese colleagues face-to-face for the first time sent shivers of excitement through us. After months of online discussions, exchanging messages, subcommittee meetings, and extensive planning, welcoming them was a truly rewarding experience. Unfortunately, one of the JISC members, Motoya Aono-san, was scheduled to arrive at midnight on August 9th due to his exams. After distributing water bottles among the Japanese students—already arranged by Aditya—we exchanged greetings and took photos as directed by our Press team. Despite their 15-hour journey, all the JISC members displayed remarkable energy and enthusiasm, motivating us to keep the spirits high.

Later, we helped carry their luggage to the parking lot and loaded it into our cars. We left the airport around 12:45 a.m. and reached the Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture (RMIC) guest house within 30 minutes on clear roads, with a brief glimpse of the Kolkata skyline from the *Maa* flyover. Upon arrival, we quickly unloaded their luggage and guided them through the check-in process. The Indian members weren’t permitted inside the guest house to assist with check-in, so we shared instructions and a list of dos and don’ts beforehand to ensure a smooth and efficient process. At Shinichiro-san’s request, we also helped buy mosquito repellent cream and international adaptors for their convenience. After assigning rooms to the JISC members, it was finally time for us Indian members, to depart and head home. As the clock struck 2 a.m., a mix of calmness and anxiety washed over us, reminding us that the opening ceremony was less than ten hours away.

Opening Ceremony

7th August, 2025

Muskan Jamil

The inaugural ceremony of the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference started with the welcome address of our Cultural Vice-President, Moushree Sen. We were then graced by the inspiring speech of Mr Ishikawa Yoshihisa, the Consul General of Japan in Kolkata. He first congratulated everyone for participating in such a unique endeavour. In his address, he briefed us on the importance of the exchange of culture and education, which was to guide us through our journey. He wished for the conference's success and inspired the participants towards an academically and culturally rewarding time. Consequently, we were inspired by the kind words from Ms Babli Chowdhury, President of the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society.

The presidents of both the Indian and the Japanese sides came up next, one after the other, and they thanked all the guests and participants for gracing the occasion with their solemn presence and sharing their thoughts on the beginning of this new journey together as a team. With personal and courageous messages from the presidents, we moved into individual introductions from the members of both IJSC and JISC.

The section for cultural exchange began with a short skit performance titled "*India: A Tapestry of Vibrant Diversity*", performed by almost all the members of the Indian side. It was a lively performance showcasing the different flavours of India through various dance forms, clothing, a group song, and recitation. It was indeed an experience, slightly chaotic but entertaining. The Japanese side presented us with an energetic traditional dance performance of *Soran Bushi*. Every member's face lit up with enthusiasm, and they began to take their positions while a round of introductions took place. The whole performance captivated everyone; each of us in the audience felt drawn in so much that we wanted to join them in the performance. Both the performances, from the Indian and Japanese sides, lifted everyone's spirits.

Towards the end of the ceremony, the members of the Students' *Dosokai* were invited to deliver their speeches. They shed light on what *Dosokai* actually does and the important role it plays in shaping the whole conference.

The opening ceremony became the lively beginning of the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference. With gratitude and joy in our hearts, we then gathered for a group photograph, which marked the commemoration of the ceremony.

Visit to Birla Mandir

7th August, 2025

Bedant Tamang

After the enthusiastic and much-anticipated opening ceremony came the visit to Birla Mandir. We all met at the venue at 5 p.m. and entered the temple premises after taking a group photo beside the temple.

All the members entered together and climbed the white stairs to enter a serene abode of majestic architecture and great devotion. We entered the main hall and offered our respects to the various deities in the temple auditorium, including the figurines of *Shri Krishna*, *Radharani*, *Devi Durga*, *Hanuman*, and the “*dash-avatars*” (ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu). Along with these, we also witnessed the different displays of events from the tales of *Shri Krishna* and went in groups to get the traditional *tikas* on our foreheads.

The sightseeing was vibrant with enthusiasm from the Japanese members about the culture of the ancient Indian civilisation, and a heavy input on details about the deities and their philosophical and cultural relevance from the Indian members.

It was wonderful to hear that many of the Japanese counterparts had either heard of some Indian tales like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* or had even seen some animated or cinematic adaptations of such tales and fables.

It so happened that we had stayed there roaming and enjoying till it was time for the evening ‘*aarati*’. We all entered the majestic hall again, into the chants and the enthralling ringing of the bells. In that momentary halt in time's passage, it perhaps would not be an exaggeration to say that all of us witnessed a profound sense of being, of awareness and admiration for the place and the people in there and also for the serenity of the place.

We exited the temple premises after the *aarati* and had a fun time in the hectic area of the shoe collection counter. Finally, when we walked out, we were all carrying happy faces, having seen perhaps a mini thesaurus of mythology and culture in such a small time frame in such a serene and beautiful place.

Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata's Residency Visit

7th August, 2025

Ritika Mukherjee

The first day of the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference was special in many ways. While the opening ceremony in the morning and the Birla Mandir visit in the afternoon were quite the start to the conference, the visit to the residence of the Consul General of Japan in Kolkata in the evening was truly the highlight of the day.

All the members gathered at the gates of the esteemed residence at half past six in the evening and, following a simple set of protocols, along with the organisers and the representatives from the Students' Conference *Dosokai*, entered the venue. Everyone made their way to the residence's living room and seated themselves comfortably with a soft drink of choice in hand. Soon after, Mr Ishikawa Yoshihisa, the newly appointed Consul General, along with his wife, entered the space and welcomed all of us warmly with their gentle smiles.

The evening commenced with an inspiring address from the Consul General himself. He spoke about the strong friendship between India and Japan, the ongoing Osaka Expo 2025, and finally extended his heartfelt welcome to all the organisers and participants of this year's conference. Following his words, Mr Shinichiro Sasaki, the President, and Ms Nanako Kotani, the Vice-President of the Japan side, shared their excitement for the days ahead. From the Indian side, our President, Ms Muskan Jamil, expressed how fortunate we felt to host our friends from Japan, while the Vice-President of the Academics team, Ms Swastidipa Roy, spoke of her willingness to engage in meaningful academic discussions this year.

After the formal speeches, the evening turned into a warm and lively gathering. Some of the members went to personally thank the esteemed Mr Ishikawa for hosting us, while others had spontaneous *bunka kōryū* (*cultural exchange*) or deeply insightful academic conversations. As we lined up for dinner and entered the buffet space, we were astonished by the wide variety of dishes and the enticing aroma that filled the room. The Japanese members particularly appreciated the fish puffs and prawn curry. I especially fell in love with and could not stop praising the mango custard throughout the evening.

The evening turned out to be even more special when the participants received bags featuring *Myaku Myaku*, the official mascot of *Osaka Expo 2025*, along with a copy of the latest *Niponica* magazine, a kind and generous gesture from Mr Ishikawa. As the event ended, everyone gathered for a group photograph to mark the occasion. The evening left us with a strong sense of gratitude and anticipation, as we promised ourselves and each other a meaningful and fruitful conference built on friendship, dialogue, and mutual respect.

Visit to the Indian Museum

8th August, 2025

Swayangsiddha Dey

On the second day of this conference, which took place on August 8, 2025, we visited the Indian Museum in Kolkata. We entered around 10 a.m. and concluded our visit around noon. Nothing could have been better to headstart the conference. This place gave a deeper understanding of India's heritage. We met our tour guides, who were interning, and it was their first experience too – starting with the *Bharhut* sculptures, which represent Buddhist stories. The descriptions shed light on the role of early Indian handicraft in Buddhist traditions as well as its artistic brilliance.

After that, we went to the coin collection that featured various Indian kingdoms. These coins represented trade customs, political power, and the centuries-long development of monetary systems. After that, we looked around the gallery of statues and sculptures. We were being educated on the craftsmanship, detailing of each variant and their historical context. In particular, when we moved towards the Egyptian *mummy*, it received a lot of attention. The probable cause is its preservation methods and historical significance.

We then proceeded to the exhibits of animals, birds, and reptiles. It never fails to fascinate even the Indian side members who have visited before. And, lastly, the skeletons of whales and dinosaurs. Standing in front of it, as we saw the comparison between an average human being and whales and dinosaurs, made us feel so small.

Through art, architecture, and cultural exhibits, including the accurate model of the *Taj Mahal*, the museum also helped us understand the *Mughal* dynasty. The tour's final stop was the section of Indian paintings, where we were able to admire the subcontinent's artistic tradition's depth of creativity and diversity. All things considered, the trip to the Indian Museum was a rich cultural and intellectual experience. It achieved the conference's larger goals by promoting communication between Indian and Japanese students in addition to deepening attendees' appreciation of India's heritage.

Lunch at Aami Bangali

8th August, 2025

Samriddha Jana

After spending almost two hours in the museum, it was time for the second day's second big event, the grand lunch. The plan was made prior to the event. The restaurant we chose for this event was Aami Bangali, which was around a 15-minute walk away from the Indian Museum.

The walk itself was not anything special. We did have a few conversations and small talks on the way. As soon as we entered the restaurant, we were awestruck by the ambience. The ambience was a mix of both modern and traditional Bengali décor. Once we had freshened ourselves up by washing our faces and hands, we sat down at our table, waiting for our meals to be served.

We were six who sat together—Tarun, Tamami, Soumyajit, Mana, Moushree, and me. The restaurant had a lot of traditional Bengali and other Indian food. We opted for their traditional *thali*, which included rice, *sukto*, *dal*, fried items, fish or chicken curry depending on your choice, *chatni* and *papad*. For dessert, we had *payesh* and *gulab jamun* to end our meal.

Following authentic Bengali tradition, everyone at the table was eating with their hands, which made the experience all the better and made the meal feel more personal. The service was quick, and everything was swift and clean. When we got our food, we took a lot of pictures of the food. We also took a few selfies. We shared many conversations while eating; we talked about a lot of things, from our museum outing to a lot of personal stories, and taught the Japanese members how and when to eat which food. The environment was very energetic, and each moment was worth preserving. Some of the Japanese members tried to eat chillies, but none could quite manage it. Some members were taking photos of everyone.

After nearly an hour of eating, socialising, and making some unforgettable memories, our lunch finally came to an end. It was not just a meal but an experience—an extremely special, memorable experience with new friends, tastes, stories and exchange of cultures. The grand lunch at Aami Bangali will long be remembered as a delectable highlight of the day.

Shopping at Sunshine

8th August, 2025

Srija Bhatta

On August 8th, after exploring the Indian Museum and having lunch at *Aami Bangali*, we made our way to Sunshine, a souvenir and clothing shop located just a short 15–20 minute walk from the restaurant.

Though the shop appeared quiet from the outside, inside it was bustling with travellers browsing clothes and souvenirs, filling the space with a lively, cheerful energy. To our surprise, there were also a couple of rabbits, which instantly caught everyone's attention. Some of our members delighted in petting and playing with them, adding to the joy of the visit.

Later, after strolling and looking around for a while, we all gathered and divided into three groups of our choice. In one shop, all the girls from the Japanese team, along with a few Indian members, were browsing for souvenirs and trying on clothes to buy. In the other shop, a few boys from the Japanese side, along with a few Indian members, were trying on clothes and looking at different patterns and prices. And the last group was sitting in a cafe, right next to the shop, while having coffee and enjoying short conversations.

From the girls' side, Rina-san and Tamami-san were playing and racing with the *tuk-tuks*, which they later purchased.

A few members bought clothes and souvenirs for themselves, their families and friends. The girls bought a few pairs of trousers for themselves, and some even got kurtis. From the guy's side, Joe-san bought a black shirt which resembled a *kurta*.

The visit turned out to be a pleasant blend of shopping and leisure for all of us, leaving everyone at ease. After wrapping up our shopping spree, we made our way to the cathedral.

Visit to Saint Paul's Cathedral and Nehru Children's Museum

8th August, 2025

Ayesha Firoz

On August 8th, after our Japanese friends had fun shopping and browsing through 'Sunshine', the quaint clothing store hidden in a small side street, our group of 30 headed out to catch the metro to visit Saint Paul's Cathedral. The walk towards the metro station was lively, where we divided ourselves into groups ready to take on the crowded metro. Every Japanese member was accompanied by at least two Indian members. After getting off the metro, we reached the cathedral after a short walk.

Saint Paul's Cathedral is of Anglican background, noted for its Gothic architecture, and it is dedicated to Paul the Apostle. It is also the seat of the Diocese of Calcutta, the largest church in Kolkata, and the first Anglican cathedral in Asia. The building was completed in 1847.

After arriving, we were divided into groups of five as we explored the beautiful specimen of Indo-Gothic architecture. As photography is prohibited inside, we took our time admiring the interior of the cathedral and its structural intricacies. It also includes three stained-glass windows and two frescoes in the Florentine Renaissance style, which all the members seemed in awe of. We all sat in pews in the church to just take in the peaceful and holy atmosphere; some members even knelt to offer prayers at the little bench in front of the seats. We all then wandered outside to admire the well-maintained lawn and garden. We then wandered into a small park where we had a lot of fun riding swings, with Rina-san standing on Nanako-san's swing, which at first concerned Indian members for their safety, but they told us it was common to swing like that in Japan. The other members, by that time, tried to have fun by learning each other's dance forms, with Mana-san teaching the Indian members steps from the *Soran Bushi*, and Moushree teaching the Japanese girls a few steps of *Kuchipudi*. Everyone seemed to be having a lot of fun.

When we arrived at the Nehru Children's Museum, we were mesmerised by the immense collection of dolls there, almost representing all countries in the world. The dolls were really beautiful, and some were even donated by the Consul General of Japan. Various countries also seemed to have donated their dolls, which seemed so in harmony with our conference—how different cultures thrive more by sharing their growth and growing together. In the museum, there were also exceptionally beautiful scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The details with which each story was built, even in miniature forms, were breathtaking.

With the happy chatter of a day well spent and the joy and hopes for the coming day, we all gathered to drop off the Japanese members at Ramakrishna Mission with a very satisfying ending to our second day.

Group Discussion One

9th August, 2025

Disha Nag

The first group discussion of the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference was held at Darshan Bhavan, Jadavpur University, on 9th August from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. IST. The students were previously divided into subcommittees: Entertainment, Education, Food, and Mobility and Community. Each subcommittee focused on three major key points under the main theme. Each subcommittee consisted of four to five Indian students and two to three Japanese students, allowing for a collaborative exchange of ideas and perspectives.

By the time of the conference, the participants had already identified probable problems and potential solutions during their pre-conference preparation. The purpose of the discussion, therefore, was to transform these ideas into a structured presentation format. The groups worked together to draft a clear outline for their presentations, including the introduction, main discussion points, and conclusion.

The tasks were divided among members to ensure the efficiency of the presentation. The process encouraged teamwork, clarity, and a sense of shared responsibility across both Indian and Japanese participants. In addition, our Japanese counterparts also presented their jelly candy and chocolate, which added a light-hearted touch and helped to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

After this intensive session, everyone welcomed a short tea break, a small pause that gave everyone a chance to recharge and share light moments of relaxation before continuing with the rest of the day's activities. The break, along with the small treats, encouraged informal conversations and allowed participants to bond beyond the structured discussion, emphasising the value of intercultural engagement.

The discussion was not only productive but also intercultural in essence. Hearing different perspectives from our Japanese peers encouraged us to think more critically about our approaches. For me, it highlighted how collaboration across cultures can generate fresh solutions and build stronger mutual understanding. The tea break, though short, also served as a bridge for informal exchanges, reminding us that meaningful dialogue often continues beyond formal sessions. These moments reinforced the importance of small gestures, such as sharing snacks, in fostering a collaborative and congenial environment.

Group Discussion Two: Guest Lecture Session

9th August, 2025

Anurag Das

The third day of the 29th India–Japan Students’ Conference focused on group discussions within the four sub-committees: Entertainment, Education, Food, and Mobility. After the successful completion of GD1 and the members having a delicious lunch of *pulao*, chicken, mixed veg, and *misti*, it was time for GD2: the guest lecture session. Professor Dalia Chakrabarti, from the Department of Sociology at Jadavpur University, was invited as the guest lecturer. Her presentation theme was “*Creating Capabilities to Connect with Others – A Journey from Loneliness to Meaningful Coexistence.*” The theme aligned with the overall conference theme, “*Weaving Life’s Future: New Horizons of Cultural Coexistence,*” based on the Osaka Kansai Expo 2025.

After all the students were seated according to their subcommittees, Professor Dalia Chakrabarti began her lecture. She started by stating how loneliness is a major issue in both India and Japan, with countless men and women, young and old, rich and poor, suffering from it silently without anyone knowing. According to various reports, approximately 10-15% of people worldwide either feel “lonely” or “very lonely”.

Japan also faces a long-standing problem of loneliness. *Hikikomori* (social withdrawal), as they are called in Japan, make up at least 2% of the population. Due to a rapidly ageing population and prevalence of nuclear families, Japan has seen a significant rise in single-person households. Data from its National Police Agency revealed that more than fifty thousand people aged over 65 died alone in their homes in 2024. To address such issues, the government of Japan appointed a Minister for Social Isolation and Loneliness in 2021 and passed a law in April 2024, recognising loneliness and isolation as national concerns that require local governments to take action.

Similarly, India also suffers from acute loneliness, but there is no considerable effort from the government to either tackle or at least recognise this issue. Various research works show that at least 24% of the youth, 43% of the overall population, and nearly one-third of young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic reported experiences of loneliness. Overall, more than half of the population acknowledges feeling lonely at least occasionally, underscoring its prevalence across age groups. Despite all of this, there was hardly any lack of concentration on our part, as many members kept asking her numerous questions to make the session more interactive and engaging. She continued with the definition and main reasons for feeling lonely, with some major examples being failure, bullying, migration, and lack of social structures. However, her suggestion to tackle this situation of loneliness was to build better connections among people.

We as individuals should strive to have better communication skills in order to interact with a lot of people, which may reduce our tendency to get lonely. Moreover, with good stress management skills and proper control of feelings, we can make small improvements in our daily lives. Finally, in the end, there was a question and answer session where each subcommittee asked questions regarding how the topic of loneliness aligns with their theme and what inputs they can use from it to improve their research work.

Group Discussion Three

9th August, 2025

Soumyojit Chakraborty

After Dr Dalia Chakrabarti's appealing and intriguing talk on "*Creating Capabilities to Connect with Others – A Journey from Loneliness to Meaningful Coexistence*", all participants left with unique takeaways to advance their research after hearing her real-life insights and participating in an interactive question and answer session. Following a twenty-minute tea break, a light conversation helped everyone to restore their energy levels with fresh interest and focus.

The Group Discussion (GD3) started at 3:30 p.m. on schedule with the agenda of “Incorporating the learnings from GD2 into the committees,” creating outlines, and sharing updated progress. Each of the subcommittees started brainstorming innovative yet feasible methods that could be implemented smoothly within their key topics.

At a timely point, when the participants were having difficulty honing their insights, Swastidipa-san suggested going back to a series of questions she had jotted down during the lecture. Not only did these questions fit with the goals, but they also provided a new frame through which we could study the topics. Emboldened by this change, the teams plunged into learning about new programmes and innovations that incorporated sustainability while enhancing everyday human existence.

By 4:35 p.m., all the subcommittees had finally pieced their research together, pushing past the day's fatigue for one last effort to complete GD3's agenda. The focus shifted to shaping presentations that were not just informative but also clear, engaging, and impactful. In a presentation, the real challenges are not coming up with ideas but choosing the most impactful ones and presenting them well.

Throughout the session, a strong sense of commitment and teamwork flowed all over in the group. The quiet moments expressed everyone's focused effort and reflected a shared sense of responsibility and purpose. As the day drew to a close, Swastidipa-san made the final wrap-up call at 5:00 p.m., marking the end of an enriching and productive session. The room carried a mix of pride and exhaustion. A sign of how deeply and sincerely everyone had engaged in the discussions. With that in mind, the day ended with a real taste of satisfaction.

Visit to Dakshineswar Kali Temple

10th August, 2025

Swayangsiddha Dey

Day four began earlier than usual, with all of us eagerly meeting at the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, one of Kolkata's most respected spiritual sites. A traveller was scheduled to bring the members of JISC and IJSC together, and we soon arrived at the glorious abode's gateway by 8 a.m. With intense devotion, the members left their shoes and phones in the van before entering the temple grounds, eager to immerse themselves in its sacredness. The wonderful air of *Maa Kali's* shrine quickly moved everyone's hearts. The JISC members, in particular, were captivated by the temple's fascinating founding tale and rich history. They, too, made customary offerings, joining the stream of thousands of believers in paying homage to the Goddess.

We visited every area of the sacred site, including the serene *Panchavati Garden* where Sri Ramakrishna used to meditate, his modest but potent chamber, and the twelve *Shiva lingams* that were elegantly arranged along the ghats. Beside the main temple, there was Sri Ramakrishna's room, where he stayed for 12 years and performed spiritual practices. He is known for his strong devotion towards *Maa Kali*, and he usually treated her as if she were right in front of him and spoke to her as though in a conversation – he was called mad by others. We felt as if we had turned back time and travelled to his era – to the point that we could picture him there.

There was also another small room outside the temple where he stayed for 14 years. With each step came a fragment of history entwined with a timeless spiritual presence. At the *ghat*, several members felt drawn to the sacred Ganges and stepped down to touch its holy waters. Some dipped their hands and sprinkled water on their heads, while others waded in a little, laughing and capturing countless photographs. The Japanese side especially enjoyed the playful moment, delighted by the coolness of the water and the vibrant atmosphere. It became a cherished memory of cultural connection, blending spirituality with joy.

What added to the charm of the visit was the sight of monkeys leaping from tree to tree, moving freely yet peacefully alongside pilgrims within the temple grounds. The scene seemed to embody a sense of harmony between nature, humanity, and the divine. We were deeply fulfilled and spiritually enhanced by the entire experience. We packed up our visit here at around 9:30 a.m. and boarded the traveller again, hearts still ringing with devotion, and headed for Belur Math, eager to begin the next phase of our adventure.

Visit to Belur Math and Bhog

10th August, 2025

Parijat Datta

Our visit to Belur Math began with a light-hearted moment at the gates, when we teased each other about who should take off their shoes first. The beautiful notes of the *sitar*, accompanied by light laughing, set the tone for a day of devotion and affection.

Inside, the Japanese members expressed a strong interest in Indian traditions, to which the Indians enthusiastically replied. The *Maharaj* guided the exchange, which was both rich and sincere. Stories of Shri Ramakrishna, Sarada Maa, and Swami Vivekananda were recounted, mixing philosophy with everyday life. At one point, the *harmonium* (Indian musical instrument) piqued the Japanese members' interest—momentarily mistaken for a harmonica—adding a fun touch to the lesson. A temple employee spoke of Vivekananda's writings, while others reflected on his travels to Japan and the enduring ties they had forged. The museum visit enhanced the overall experience. Saki-san appreciated Shri Ramakrishna's things, seeing how they not only maintained history but also devotion itself. Shinichiro-san pondered on the monks' profound intellectual mood, while Hiroki-san recalled his conversation with the *Maharaj* as intensely emotional. Some members were delighted with the Namaskar Museum, while others appreciated the opportunity to touch the Ganga's hallowed waters.

By lunchtime, the company had assembled in Maa Sarada Sadabrata Hall for lunch. In a kind gesture, the lunch was made to suit Japanese tastes—simple yet nourishing, with boiled vegetables, rice, and soup. This occasion was especially noteworthy since *Maharaj* personally joined the table. Traditionally, monks do not share meals with visitors or *bhakts*, making this a rare and memorable moment of intimacy.

During lunch, conversations flowed effortlessly between cultures and everyday life. Yoshimi-san spoke lovingly about her family, and relatives shared memories about their daily meals in India and Japan. Laughter mixed with the clinking of cutlery, emphasising a sense of common humanity. What should have been a simple supper became a bridge across traditions, made deeper by the *Maharaj*'s presence. His decision to sit with the group had an implicit meaning: it was a symbol of togetherness and openness that went beyond conventional limits. This sense of closeness laid the scene for the day's emotional high point: an audience with *General Secretary Maharaj*. His reflections drew together threads of Buddhism and Hinduism, delivered with a calm yet powerful clarity that left the group deeply moved.

Among his many meaningful observations, one particularly struck a chord: "Every Japanese child is a philosopher." The comment struck a deep chord with listeners, reminding them of the underlying wisdom found in curiosity and simplicity. For the Japanese members, it represented an acknowledgement of their cultural traditions, whilst for the Indians, it mirrored the universality of spiritual philosophy. Few people had the opportunity to meet the senior-most monk of Belur Math, and everyone who was there felt quite fortunate. With childish tenderness, he handed out candy to everyone, a simple yet loving gesture. The visit to Belur Math was more than just an information exchange; it was also a spiritual rendezvous. Blending philosophy, culture, and humanity, it left memories that will endure long after the day itself.

Cultural Exchange at Agora Space

10th August, 2025

Utsa Basu Das

After our visit to Dakshineshwar and lunch at Belur Math, we headed to Agora Space near Rabindra Sadan for an India-Japan cultural exchange. After arriving, the Indian side took some rest while the Japanese side was practising what they had prepared for us.

The session began with an introduction to *Alpana*, a traditional Bengali floor art, by Moushree, our Cultural Vice-President. Thereafter, we were divided into groups of three (two Indian and one Japanese member), and each member was given a red canvas with white paint in a cup and a brush to showcase their artistic and creative skills through the medium of *Alpana art*. She sent a few pictures in the WhatsApp group for reference. Everyone adorned their canvases with their unique and intricate designs while sharing a laugh and helping one another, while sitting around a big round table. When talking to some of the members, we found that many members were excited about the drawings, and they all had a subtle competitiveness among them to draw the best *Alpana* from the lot. While most of the students chose to follow the designs provided, some chose to be creative and made beautiful designs out of their imagination.

Soon after, it was time for our Japanese friends to perform idol dances. Before the show began, they handed us origami flowers and glowsticks so we could cheer them on. The room came alive with energy as Shinichiro, Nanako, Saki, and Motoya danced to “Koisuru Fortune Cookie”, and we enjoyed it so much that we found ourselves dancing along with them. The lively mood continued as Yoshimi, Joe, and Tamami delivered an equally delightful dance to “Kawaii dake ja dame desu ka”, which we all cheered on enthusiastically.

Towards the end of the evening, the Japanese and Indian teams came together to celebrate the birthdays of some of our members. While a few members distracted the birthday celebrants, the rest of us were decorating the room with balloons and banners. Cakes were brought in, and we celebrated Joe’s birthday along with Mana, Tamami, and Ritika, who also had their birthdays earlier that month. The room was filled with happy laughs and cheers for the birthday celebrants, pictures were being taken, birthday songs were being sung, and overall, it was a heartwarming experience for all. Yash and Rina, along with others, helped in cutting the cake and distributing it to others with drinks and *dhoklas* brought in by Aditya and Anurag. Everybody enjoyed the Indian snack of *Dhokla*, especially the *chutney* it came with. To conclude the evening, everybody took pictures with the birthday celebrants, and then we left the venue for our homes.

NGO Presentation

11th August, 2025

Yash Das

On the fifth day, the conference opened with a special presentation by the NGO Banglanatak Dot Com. The session began at 10:30 am with Mr Siddhanjan Ray Chaudhari introducing us to the organisation's unique approach of using culture as a tool for community development.

Right from the start, one idea stood out to me—"culture is not static; it evolves with time." Through examples such as *Madhubani* folk painting and the traditional performing arts of Purulia, we learnt how Banglanatak Dot Com has worked to empower marginalised communities by turning cultural heritage into a source of livelihood. Villages once labelled as "backward" are now recognised as cultural tourism hubs, sometimes attracting more visitors than Darjeeling itself. Their philosophy—collaboration, contribution, and confidence—was reflected in every initiative he shared.

What made the work of this NGO truly inspiring was its focus on people. As Mr Chaudhari explained, their "clients" are the communities themselves. Through initiatives like "Art for Life", they have revived art forms on the verge of extinction, recorded more than 500 traditional songs from Rajasthan, and supported women artisans in embroidery. Cultural empowerment has also opened doors to solving social problems—issues like child marriage, domestic violence, and poor sanitation were addressed once people recognised the value of their art and identity. He explained culture in two layers: tangible heritage that we can see and touch, and intangible heritage expressed through skills, traditions, and knowledge.

The lecture also included a lively question and answer session. Parijat asked about the similarities between Japanese *Kabuki* theatre and Indian folk theatre. Mr Chaudhari replied that, though the forms may differ, theatre everywhere serves the same purpose: it is a language of community, one that carries history forward while adapting to modern needs. Another participant, Bedant, asked how social media could help artists. Mr Chaudhari reflected that while many traditional artists lack the training to present themselves online, digital platforms have become essential to connect local talent with global audiences.

We concluded with a group photo with the speaker, which felt like the perfect way to end such a meaningful session. Personally, I left with a strong impression of how art is not just about performance or aesthetics but about dignity, sustainability, and respect. A *Baul* song line that Mr Chaudhari shared—"Love, please brother"—remained with me long after the session ended. It was a simple yet profound reminder that culture, at its heart, connects us all as human beings.

Group Discussion Four

11th August, 2025

Ayesha Firoz

On 11th August, after a wonderful presentation by the NGO Banglanatak Dot Com, where we learnt about their work in preserving authentic art and protecting artists from exploitation, we sat down to a delicious lunch of fried rice, chilli chicken, *manchurian* for the vegetarians, and *mishti*. Energised by the meal, we moved into our fourth and final group discussion in preparation for the presentations the following day.

The atmosphere was both enthusiastic and competitive. I overheard some members joking about wanting their subcommittee to give the best presentation, but beneath the lighthearted rivalry was a genuine commitment. Whether in Entertainment, Education, Food, or Mobility, every group took the issues seriously, eager to find meaningful solutions while learning from one another. Since most of the groundwork had already been covered in earlier sessions, this round focused on refining and highlighting the main problems and solutions, while also incorporating last-minute ideas for the final presentations.

I noticed how deeply engaged everyone was not just in polishing their work, but in thinking about solutions at both the student and governmental levels. Highlighting that today's students could very well be the face of the future governments.

There was a snack break in between, where we ate Indian snacks and chips, enjoying the Indian *chai* break. Some members enjoyed the packaged *lassi* and chips, and the Japanese members were kind enough to share their snacks of *matcha* Kit-Kats, and *mochi* with us.

As the day went on, preparations grew more intense. Teams anticipated the next day's question and answer session by posing challenging questions to one another, ensuring that no one would be caught off guard. Some groups even began drafting scripts to structure their presentations. Others drew inspiration from the day's speakers, such as Siddhanjan Ray Chaudhuri, General Manager of Banglanatak Dot Com, who had shared how his organisation addressed issues at the grassroots level, or Professor Dalia Chakrabarti, whose lecture provided further insights.

As the session slowly wound down, everyone seemed to be both excited and nervous for the next day. With the presentations finally done, everyone seemed deep in conversation with their teammates, discussing how they would be prepping for the final presentation and encouraging each other, and willing to discuss further ideas in subcommittee WhatsApp groups. Everyone seemed positive about the hard work they had done and started packing, looking forward to going to the *Niponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple* next.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to share my experiences.

Visit to the Buddhist Temple and Rabindra Sarobar Lake

11th August, 2025

Parijat Datta

By the time we arrived at the Buddhist temple, the monks were already in prayer. When the monks finished praying, everyone who had come to the Buddhist temple remained. Followed by a volunteer, who asked us who we were, and Bedant introduced us. He told us we can visit the upstairs room and the altar over there. We were guided by a monk there. Following that, a volunteer enquired as to our identity. Bedant presented us and our event. He said we may go up to the upstairs chamber and see the altar over there. We went there with the monk and took about three laps around the little altar. We were running out of time since we had somewhere else to be, so he handed us the *prasad* (God's offerings). After that, we came out, took photographs of ourselves as memories, and headed out.

Following that, the party travelled to Rabindra Sarobar Lake. By the time they arrived, twilight had fallen, casting shadows across the lake and giving the stroll a reflective aspect. The motionless river reflected the trees, and the peaceful environment encouraged unhurried steps and polite interactions. Shinichiro-san remarked on how serene it seemed in comparison to the city's hustle and bustle, which others agreed with. Saki-san, in the meantime, studied the contrasts between Indian and Japanese temples, observing how customs vary even within the same faith.

Along the path, the gaze shifted to a little shrine beside the lake. This sparked a discussion on how such sites serve as community gathering places, similar to temple grounds in Japan. At another place, one of the Japanese members noticed an inscription that had recognisable Chinese characters. The discovery prompted meditation on how Buddhism, like flowing water, crosses civilisations and frequently returns to its source. The Indian side nodded gratefully at the connection.

Curiosity grew when the group watched individuals slowly around a statue near the water's edge. The ritual was described as a sort of devotion, representing continuity and reverence. Yoshimi-san said that such manifestations of variety reminded her of India's long history of religious harmony, which was well accepted.

Final Presentation

12th August, 2025

Bedant Tamang

Early on the 12th of August, we began the final presentations for all the research subcommittees – Entertainment, Education, Food, and Mobility and Community. The event was attended by Partha sensei from the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society. At the behest of the Academics Vice-President of the Indian team, Ms Swastidipa Roy, the final presentation commenced.

The first team to present their research was the “Entertainment” subcommittee with Shinichiro Sasaki, Motoya Aono, Yoshimi Saito, Srija Bhatta, Kimaya Thakkar, Parijat Datta, Swastidipa Roy, and Bedant Tamang. The team focused their work under three main headings of anime, fashion, and social media; in these three subtopics, the team tried to explore the differences of expression, the influence of each country's culture on the other, and the possibilities of innovation and preservation of cultural traditions, making use of these three modes of entertainment.

The next presentation was based on the topic of “Education”; the team comprised the following members: Nanako Kotani, Tamami Tomita, Joe Ito, Yash Das, Annapurna Das, Utsa Basu Das, Tarun Binay Das, and Aditya Prasad. The team dealt with the policies that impact the education systems of both countries and the problems shared in the education system of both countries, including the problems of marginalisation of minorities, females, and infrastructure. They highlighted points for both countries to make education cheaper and readily available, even in rural spaces, and to make use of technology.

This was followed by the presentation on the topic “Food”; the team members included Saki Yamazaki, Hyoga Sasaki, Hiroki Kasahara, Anurag Das, Moushree Sen, Muskan Jamil, and Ayesha Firoz. The team focused their research in line with Sustainable Development Goal 2 – “Zero Hunger”. The work provided insights into consumption trends, sustainable use, and waste. They made an attempt to highlight how certain trends of consumption and certain inadequacies in supply chains and storage led to waste. They referred to the cultural practice of *Mottainai* and respect for food, and also the principle of ‘pay as you throw’. They provided insights on the necessity to educate people about the good consumption and usage of food. The group also worked on technology for agriculture and the need to increase self-sufficiency from local agricultural produce.

The final presentation was by the group working on “Mobility and Community”. The members in this group were Rina Nakajima, Mana Sakamoto, Ritika Mukherjee, Soumyojit Chakraborty, Samriddha Jana, Swayangsiddha Dey, and Disha Nag. This team presented their work on mobility and community, and also made relevance using the ideas of a smart city. They emphasised the necessity to adopt better transport techniques, such as hydrogen-powered vehicles and artificial intelligence-run vehicles, to ensure better mobility and facilities for rural populations. They talked of the digital divide in both countries: in India due to the rural-urban divide and in Japan due to the age gap in the population. As such, they emphasised the advanced modes of service provision, such as MaaS – Mobility as a Service – and artificial intelligence-powered kiosks to make services more accessible. Thus ended the work of all groups, leading to a morning of great vigour and academic dialogue.

Closing Ceremony

13th August. 2025

Annapurna Das

On 13th August, at around 3:57 PM, the members of the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference gathered at Agora Space for the closing ceremony. The programme began with a warm welcome speech by Bedant, who set the tone for reflection and gratitude. This was followed by encouraging words from Kazuko Nigam sensei, Hiroko Nagahama sensei, and Partha Sarathi Mitra sensei. They appreciated the depth and factual strength of the presentations, commended the members for their sincerity, and expressed confidence that the participants would carry this experience into their future journeys.

Bedant then thanked the senseis and turned to address the Japanese side, which led into one of the most significant moments of the evening: the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding for the 30th IJSC. Muskan, Ritika, Nanako, Shinichiro, Nigam sensei, and Nagahama sensei came forward together, symbolising the continuity of a dialogue that has endured for decades. Certificates were distributed soon after, each representing not just participation but the shared labour of creating this year's conference.

Reflections followed from both sides. Muskan, as the Indian president, and Shinichiro, as the Japanese president, offered their heartfelt accounts of leading their delegations. Ritika, the Indian side communicator, spoke about the experience of building bridges across cultures, while Saki and Nanako from Japan reflected on the friendships and understanding that had grown during their time in India. The Indian Vice-Presidents, Tarun (Events), Aditya (Finance), Swastidipa (Academics), and Moushree (Cultural), each took a moment to thank their teams, reminding everyone that the success of IJSC lay in collective effort.

Several Japanese members, including Hiroki, Hyoga, Tamami, and Mana, also shared their personal experiences. Their words, spoken with warmth, revealed how cultural differences had quickly turned into opportunities for learning and how laughter, curiosity, and teamwork had transcended language barriers.

The ceremony concluded with Bedant's memorable reminder that in Bengali, farewells are never final. Instead of saying goodbye, people say *aschi*, which means "we will come back." His words captured the heart of the IJSC: that this gathering was not an ending, but the beginning of enduring friendships and future collaborations across borders.

Sayonara Party

13th August, 2025

Soumyojit Chakraborty

The official closing ceremony marked the end of the evening and gave the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment. But the day was far from over. At 5:30 p.m., the Sayonara Party started with a highly anticipated celebration of culture, friendship, and cherished memories.

The programme started on an unexpected note when Moushree-san asked the Indian side's president to sing solo. An atmosphere of warmth and excitement was immediately created by this spontaneous act. The atmosphere grew even more vibrant as Srijia-san and Mana-san captivated the audience with their vivacious dance. Adding a touch of wit, Hiroki-san and Swastidipa-san's clever comedy act, which not only amused but also addressed cultural preconceptions and stereotypes between India and Japan, further improved the atmosphere. After that, the mood of the evening changed with a heartfelt solo by Parijat-san, whose captivating performance won everyone's admiration.

What followed was perhaps the most engaging segment of the evening, the introduction of traditional Japanese games and art forms. Students flocked to watch and play *shogi* (Japanese chess), *koma* (spinning top), and *karuta kyogi* (competitive card game). In the meantime, others were led by the patient explanations of Japanese participants who showed the origami demonstration. We all succeeded in folding a paper star, which was a minor but enjoyable achievement. When Hiroki-san asked me to try spinning the *koma*, that was my personal high point. I was surprised and thankful that I was able to do it on my first try.

A fierce '*karuta kyogi*' match between Hiroki-san and Joe-san perfectly portrayed the spirit of competition. We were astounded by their lightning-fast reflexes and keen memory, making the game's excitement more contagious. The opportunity for Indian students to wear *kimonos* and *happis* (traditional festival coats) further enhanced their cultural immersion. Mana-san kindly helped me into a *happi*, and in that instant, I felt as though I had stepped into a Japanese summer festival scene.

With equally captivating activities, it was time for the Indian side to take the lead. The entire hall was energised by the strong and inspirational duet that Parijat-san and Kimaya-san performed. A group game of "Pass the Pillow with Truth and Dare" ensued, which reinforced our friendship through countless giggles and humorous challenges. After a short break for dinner, we all gathered for the last dance. The hall echoed with a collective cheer, and despite the clumsy steps, the joy was real.

In such final fleeting moments, everyone chooses to live fully, savouring the experience. Even now, we find ourselves—both consciously and unconsciously—bracing for tomorrow's sorrow, when the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference will draw to a close and these days will pass into cherished memory.

However, that's what it is for tomorrow. For now, it's all about *carpe diem*.

Airport Drop-off

14th August, 2025

Swastidipa Roy

Saying goodbye is never easy. Having spent a great week together in Kolkata, with plenty of small escapades around the city, we were finally facing the time when we had to leave our Japanese friends at the airport. Most of the members of IJSC and JISC gathered on 14th August at Eco Park Gate number four to catch a bus to the airport; some of them chose to drive directly to the airport.

Throughout their visit, the Japanese members infused so much energy and concern into whatever they undertook. Their keen participation and curiosity about Indian outlooks made all sessions a real exchange, an actual collaboration. That openness made the conference unique. Even beyond the official context, our experience in Kolkata forged even deeper connections. Strolling hand in hand through the crowded streets, eating together, and seeing sights.

We did have a final adventure on the way to the airport from the bus station. A nice man took us on a shortcut to the airport; we laughed as we walked the unfamiliar path together. The sun shone brightly, and the shadows of the trees danced merrily to our voices. Goodbyes at the airport took even longer.

Pictures were being taken, hasty jottings of phone numbers were being made, small presents were being exchanged, and so many promises to meet again were being made. No one wished for the moment to pass. Some attempted to loosen the mood with humour, and others sat silently clutching the last conversations. It was obvious that these weren't only conference buddies anymore — they had become actual friends.

Watching them disappear through the gates was bittersweet. We did not want to see them leave, but were happy knowing that everything we built together would last. This was not a goodbye but a "see you again". These Kolkata days with them will remain some of our best memories, and their departure only reminded us that the connections we have made are meant to continue across distance and time.

Homestay Reports

1. Tarun Binay Das

The homestay was one of the most special parts of the India-Japan Students' Conference for me. A home is not just a place to stay; it is a reflection of culture, tradition, and family. Hosting Japanese participants at my home was an opportunity to open up that world to them and, at the same time, to learn about theirs. I was fortunate to welcome two wonderful guests, Joe Ito and Shinichiro Sasaki, into my home, and the three days we spent together gave us countless moments of joy, exchange, and laughter.

We arrived home around 2 p.m. on 12th August, where my family warmly greeted Joe and Shinichiro. After settling in, we had a hearty lunch of *Mughlai* chicken, *arbi* (taro) fry, fish fry, rice, *papad*, and a South Indian dal called *parippu* with *ghee*. They loved the flavours, and it was a great first introduction to Indian home-cooked food. After a short rest, we headed to my friend Kimaya's house and then to Prinsep Ghat. Joe went along with Nanako and Rina in Kimaya's car, while Shinichiro joined me on my bike. At Prinsep Ghat, we had soda lemonade, went on a boat ride, walked around a bit, and tried Indian street food like *panipuri*, *jhuri bhaja*, and *kulfi*. Later, we all went to visit the "Mishti Hub", where we ate a variety of Indian sweets. Their unanimous favourite turned out to be *mishti doi*. Back home, we had a dinner of paneer, chicken, and the softest *rotis*. We had planned to watch an Indian movie together, but the day's excitement caught up to us — Shinichiro fell asleep almost instantly, calling it "just a trial," and soon Joe and I dozed off too.

We began the next day with *idlis* for breakfast before heading out to City Centre 2 by *toto*. Shopping was a lot of fun — everyone picked up clothes at MAX, and Shinichiro found a particularly cute and chubby Pikachu plushie. At *Manyavar*, Shinichiro selected traditional Indian dress. After a quick stop at a convenience store, we returned home briefly before heading to *Oudh*, a restaurant with a royal ambience, for lunch. We had *Awadhi* biryani followed by *shahi tukda* for dessert — both of which Joe and Shinichiro loved. From there, we went straight to Agora Space for the Sayonara Party. Later that night, we returned home along with Bedant, another Indian participant, and ended the long but fulfilling day with deep sleep.

The final day began with a cheerful breakfast at home, joined by Ritika and other members of the conference, since my house was the meetup point for homestay participants. The atmosphere was lively — some were getting *mehendi* applied, others were trying temporary tattoos, while the rest of us just sat around chatting and enjoying the time together. After loading all the luggage into the SUV, we drove to Eco Park and then finally to the airport for the heartfelt goodbyes.

Looking back, the homestay gave me the chance to create memories not just within the walls of my home, but across the city — from boat rides at Prinsep Ghat to laughter-filled meals, shopping adventures, and heartfelt farewells. My family thoroughly enjoyed hosting Joe and Shinichiro, and their warmth made us feel as though they were part of our own family. The cultural exchange was natural, filled with little discoveries about food, lifestyle, and language. More than anything, it was the smiles, laughter, and comfort we shared that will stay with me for years to come.

2. Utsa Basu Das

For two cultural exchange meetings held online, I had the opportunity to talk to Saki Yamazaki, and even though our interests and choices vary, we had fun knowing about each other's lives and our recent travels just a few weeks before the conference. And that is how I ended up having the opportunity to host her for the homestay.

I was so excited for her arrival that I taught my parents a few simple Japanese words like *konnichiwa*, *itadakimasu*, etc., to use so that she would feel welcomed. After a tense yet fruitful final presentation on 12th August, Saki and Annapurna came to my abode. After reaching home, my mother exchanged greetings with Saki and Annapurna. We freshened up quickly while drinking energy drinks and changing into pyjamas, while my mom was setting the table for us. We had a traditional Bengali spread for lunch in front of us, out of which Saki liked *Katla Maach* the most, followed by fried shrimp and *mishti doi*. Saki tried everything and savoured every bite with great relish, which made us happy. A stomach sated and content calls for a deep slumber, and the three of us had the same thought. The evening settled in, and we woke up by the call of the *conch*, a sound that signalled the start of my parents' *sandhya puja* (evening prayer). Saki watched them while I was preparing coffee and some Indian snacks like *chanachur*. While munching on the evening snacks, I read a Japanese children's book, *Furandaasu no inu* (Flander's dog), that I was gifted a few days ago by a friend, and Saki explained the story to me as I was reading through.

Making homemade *momos*, a Nepali and Tibetan staple food which is widely eaten as an Indian snack, has been a tradition at my home ever since I can remember. This is a shared culture with the Japanese, where they make dumplings/*gyoza* at home too. Annapurna was rolling the dough, making it into perfect circles, while Saki and I were filling and folding the *momos* together. My mother steamed the momos and made the soup. We were joined by my dad and my cousin brother. My brother and Saki talked about how they both enjoy Akira Kurosawa's movies like 'Rashomon', 'Seven Samurai', and 'To Live'. Saki also came to know about Okakura Bhawan, a building situated in Kolkata, which was made in honour of Okakura Tenshin and Rabindranath Tagore's friendship and cultural exchange.

After making momos, Annapurna applied *mehendi* on Saki's hand, which she admired greatly. Followed by dinner, we exchanged homestay gifts. We gifted her a *laal-paar saree* and a pair of earrings along with some Indian snacks. Saki gave us Japanese sweets, handkerchiefs, lucky charms and a *Sensu/Ogi* (Japanese folding fan). Later, we began watching the film 'Bhoothnath' together, though we could not finish it as Saki grew tired. We decided to sleep on it and ended the day on a happy note.

On the second day, Annapurna left early in the morning due to her prior commitment. After starting our day with a cup of morning *chai*, the two of us got ready to head to Hatibagan local market. Since we could not conduct the 'Drape of Culture' during the cultural exchange, my mother helped Saki wear one of my sarees, and I helped her with my accessories. Draped in the saree, she was looking breathtakingly graceful. Before leaving, my mother made us eat my comfort food, *aloo-sheddh bhaat*, which is boiled egg and potato mashed with rice and *ghee*. We left for Hatibagan in a cab and were joined by Aditya and his homestay partner, Hyoga. They bought us guava with mustard, which was to Saki's liking. Saki and Hyoga bought some clothes from the market, and then we went to 'Karim's' to have mutton *biriyani* for lunch. It was their first time trying out Kolkata's *biriyani*, and Saki and Hyoga found it to be delicious. Then we were set to go to the closing ceremony and the sayonara party.

After returning home, I took Saki to my terrace, where we had a heartfelt conversation for a while. On the final day of homestay and the conference, after getting a good rest, I helped Saki pack her bags, and my mother made us South India's *idlis* and *dosa* along with North India's *dahi vada* and Bengal's *luchi payesh* for our last meal together. With a heavy heart, Saki gave me a thank-you postcard, and my mother asked Saki to come again. All of us shared hugs and said our goodbyes. We booked a cab and set off to Tarun's place to go to the Eco Park.

3. Samriddha Jana

On the first day of homestay, Hiroki and I started from Jadavpur University at around 12:30 in the afternoon. My senior was also supposed to join us. But due to some unexpected problem at his home, he was unable to join us on the first day. We arrived home at around 1:45 p.m., and after washing our hands, sat down to eat a traditional Bengali meal like the day of the grand lunch. The menu was rice, *dal*, a lot of fried items in small quantities since Hiroki doesn't eat too much fried food, fish and chicken curry. It was Hiroki's first time having a home-cooked Indian meal, and he looked very excited. I wanted to relax afterwards, but then we started playing games since Hiroki was not tired at all. He was a great player, too. First, I thought we had to cancel going outside due to the rain, but thankfully, it slowed down a lot during the evening.

Thankfully, we went outside in the evening to explore some local sites. First, we visited the river *Ganga*, which was a ten-minute walk away from our house. There was a *Kali Mandir* next to *Ganga*, and we visited that too, as I explained its history to Hiroki. After that, we went to *Gurudwara*, which is another historical place, and Hiroki had never been to a *Gurudwara*. After exploring the local sites, we reached home at around 7:30 p.m. Then we played some more games, and Hiroki worked on his stand-up script till dinner. Dinner was served around nine, and it was *paratha*, paneer, cauliflower curry, and some traditional Indian sweets.

We wanted to watch my favourite horror movie, but both of us were far too exhausted to watch it. So, we went to bed early at around 10:15 p.m.

The following morning, I woke up around eight, but Hiroki was awake even before me. First, my father made *chai* for Hiroki, and shortly after that, we had our breakfast. After breakfast, my father sketched a portrait of Hiroki, and he was very happy about it. After that, we went clothes shopping at my friend's store, then went to the Victoria Memorial via Uber. In Victoria Memorial, my senior Soumyajit arrived, and we toured the place together. I wanted to take Hiroki to 'Arsalan', which is a very popular *biryani* spot, but due to time constraints, we had to choose another restaurant. At around 3:00 p.m., we joined the rest of the IJSC team for the closing ceremony of the conference.

We came home around 11:30 p.m., and this time, thankfully, our senior also came with us. The next day, we woke up around 8:30 a.m. and had our breakfast. We wanted to watch the movie, but we played games again instead. At 11:30 a.m., we had our lunch, and shortly after lunch, we left, a bit earlier than expected, to go to Tarun's house because of the long journey ahead. From there, we went to the airport and had our goodbyes.

This homestay was one of the best experiences of my life. Exploring the local places together, sharing meals, and sleeping together is an experience I will never forget.

4. Aditya Prasad

Hyoga Sasaki was my homestay partner. On the 12th, the two of us, along with Srija and her homestay partner, Mana, went home together from Jadavpur University. Upon reaching home, my mother welcomed Hyoga in classic Indian fashion with a welcome *aarti*. Then, we freshened up and had our lunches, after which we decided to take rest. It was at this time that Hyoga gifted me the souvenirs he bought for me from Japan, including some snacks, a t-shirt and some instant ramen. As the evening approached, we went to the terrace to see my terrace garden, and we talked about our school life and families while enjoying the mild cold breeze in the evening. Later, Hyoga and I decided to join Srija and Mana to visit the arcade in City Centre, Salt Lake. There we played multiple games and enjoyed every bit of it. All four of us took turns to play different games; in some we could play together, in others we tried to beat each other's scores. Towards the end of our arcade visit, we watched a short movie in VR where Mana and Hyoga were kind of terrified, given it was a horror movie. While leaving the arcade, we redeemed the points we won and bought some snacks and a pack of cards for Mana.

From the arcade, we went to the Newtown Carnival, where we rode the Ferris wheel. Until the middle of the ride, we did not know of Hyoga's motion sickness; however, he managed to survive the ride, and as soon as we got off it, he got himself a mango *lassi*. After that, we tried some shooting games where all of us failed miserably at hitting the target; however, it was fun regardless. We then had some *momos* and called it a day. Upon reaching home, we had some dinner and rested for the day ahead.

On the second day of the homestay, we visited the local fish market, where Hyoga was astonished to find so many varieties of river fish, as he had only seen fish from the ocean back in Japan. We bought some for him, and at home we ate them for breakfast. In the morning, Hyoga tried some *jalebis*, which immediately made him full of joy as he found them to be delicious! After that, we got into our outfits for the day, traditional Indian attire for Hyoga, and then we left for some shopping with Utsa and Saki at Hatibagan. On our way to Hatibagan, I made Hyoga try some guavas with *kasundi*, which he found to be a great combination! I bought some souvenirs for Hyoga from Hatibagan, after which all four of us went to 'Karim's' to have *biryani* for lunch. It was a first-time experience for Hyoga to have Kolkata-style biryani, and he found it to be simply delicious. Thereafter, we went to the closing ceremony, after which Hyoga and I, along with Utsa and Saki, took a cab to get to our respective homes. We freshened up and rested for the final day of the conference.

On the third and last day of the conference, we started the day with a visit to the local sweets shop, where Hyoga devoured some *jalebis* and tried some *malpuas*. Thereafter, we cooked *upma* for breakfast, which Hyoga found to be a fun way to understand Indian cuisine. We then planned on cooking some Japanese curry with rice for lunch at Srija's place at Shapoorji. Hyoga and Srija took on the responsibility of cooking for four of us while I was having a nice conversation with Mana about her experience throughout the conference. We were supposed to reach Eco Park to meet others, but unfortunately, we were running late, and we decided to reach the airport directly after having our lunch. At the airport, everyone bid farewell to the Japan team with a heavy heart, and promises were being made of meeting again in the future, pictures were being taken as memories to look back on, and overall, it was an emotional scene to witness.

5. Yash Das

On the afternoon of our GD presentation at Jadavpur University, I had the opportunity to welcome my homestay guest, Motoya Aono-san, from the University of Tokyo. He is studying mathematical engineering and applied physics, and from the very beginning, I was curious about his experiences in Japan. After booking a cab back home, we both freshened up and went for lunch at a South Indian restaurant nearby. It was Aono-san's first time trying *dosa*, and he really enjoyed it. He found the taste very unique, and his excitement over such a simple dish made me appreciate it even more.

When we returned home, we decided to relax a little by watching an episode of "Steins;Gate", an anime that both of us like. The conversation soon shifted towards academics since Aono-san's background is in mathematics and physics. We ended up discussing topics like number theory and atomic structure, which made the afternoon both light-hearted and intellectually engaging. Later in the evening, I took him for a walk around my neighbourhood. I showed him my school, we stopped by a local park, had some lemon tea from a small roadside shop, and even did a bit of shopping at a convenience store. The day ended with a special dinner—Kolkata *biryani*. Aono-san was very excited to try it, and watching his reaction made the meal all the more memorable.

The next day, before the closing ceremony and Sayonara party, I wanted to show him one of Kolkata's landmarks, the Victoria Memorial. We spent time walking around the gardens, admiring the architecture, and taking photos together. After that, we headed for the closing ceremony at Agora Space, which was followed by the farewell party. By the time we returned home, it was late, and both of us were quite tired.

On the final morning of his stay, Aono-san told me he would like to cook something together before leaving. We made simple vegetable sandwiches, but the process itself was fun—we laughed, shared stories, and enjoyed trying something new side by side. Before departing for Tarun-san's home, where the group had planned to meet before heading to the airport, Aono-san took photographs with my family. The warmth of that moment made the farewell feel very special. He left with the hope of returning someday, and that simple wish meant a lot to me.

6. Moushree Sen

After the final presentation, Tamami and I began our journey to my home. During the hour-long ride, we spoke about our families and friends, and she showed me her grandmother's beautiful drawings. When I mentioned that my father had taken leave from work to welcome her, she felt very special. On the way, I pointed out the Biswa Bangla Gate and my college before we reached our apartment in Rajarhat.

At the entrance, my parents had arranged a traditional welcome. They even prepared a handwritten note in Japanese saying, "*Welcome to our home.*" Tamami was greeted with *arti*, blessings, and a *bindi*. Our pet dog, Kuttus, ran to her first, which delighted her instantly. She later called my room "very cute", making my late-night cleaning efforts worthwhile.

We began with chilled homemade mango *lassi*, which she loved, followed by a tour of our home. She admired my father's book collection and a Jamini Roy-style painting he had created. Lunch included *basanti pulao*, *chicken kosha*, *kuler achar*, *sandesh*, and *gulab jamun*. We even turned it into a fun memory game until she could pronounce each dish correctly. After lunch, we rested before visiting the Newtown *Mela* with my father.

On the way, Tamami experienced her first scooty ride, which she thoroughly enjoyed. At the *mela*, we went on rides like the merry-go-round and disco disc, laughing through the thrill. We shopped for jewellery, *kurtis*, and souvenirs. I gifted her jewellery and a purse as birthday presents, and on the way back, we picked up a tub of mango ice cream—her choice. After returning home, she shared red tea with my parents, enjoying light conversations. My parents then gifted her a yellow and emerald-green *saree*, her favourite colours, which she received with great joy. She, in turn, brought thoughtful gifts—Japanese snacks, stationery, and even a doughnut-shaped toy for Kuttus, with whom she played a lot. Dinner that evening featured *daalpuri*, *alur dom*, *payesh*, and *gulab jamun*, ending with mango ice cream. Before bed, I applied *alta* on her feet while she admired the tradition.

The next morning, after breakfast, we went shopping at Kolkata Bazaar and discovered that both of us are *yujufudan* (indecisive) shoppers. Lunch included traditional Bengali dishes like *sukto*, *fried potol*, fish curry, and *kuler achar*. Later, my mother draped a *saree* on Tamami, dressing her up with accessories. She carried it with such elegance that we couldn't stop admiring her. After the Sayonara Party, we returned home and spent our last night sharing heartfelt conversations. On the final morning, my mother served homemade *pathishapta* and *jalebi*, and I applied *mehendi* on her hands. Since her hands were covered, I fed her lunch myself, which included fried fish, *dal*, fish curry, *rosogolla*, and mangoes—her favourite. Before she left, my mother lovingly packed *taler bora*, sweets, and fruits for her journey.

Saying goodbye was emotional. Tamami told my mother she would return for her cooking, which filled our hearts with joy. Her stay with us was not just about food and traditions but about the bond we created in just two days. When she left, the house felt empty, but the warmth, laughter, and memories will always remain close to my heart.

7. Disha Nag

Hosting Yoshimi-san from 12th to 14th August was a deeply meaningful experience that allowed me to share the warmth of Bengali culture while building a bond that felt more like family than friendship. As Parijat-san travelled by the same route, I invited her to spend the first few hours with us. On the way, we enjoyed *aamras* ice cream, offered as a gesture since Yoshimi-san had earlier mentioned her fondness for mangoes.

At home, my mother warmly prepared a traditional Bengali meal with great care so that Yoshimi-san could experience authentic cuisine. After a short rest, we went for an evening walk and tasted *phuchka*. Parijat-san explained its legendary connection to the *Mahabharata*, making the experience more meaningful. She also gifted Yoshimi-san a pair of traditional earrings, while the three of us exchanged twinning bracelets, symbolising the beginning of our bond. After dropping Parijat-san off, we purchased *mishti doi* and mango *lassi*, and I introduced Yoshimi-san to *Maaza*, a mango drink unavailable in Japan, which she found refreshing as a taste of Indian snacks.

After that, at dinner, my mother served *luchi* and curry along with *shemai payesh* (vermicelli pudding). Yoshimi-san was pleasantly surprised, recalling that she had once eaten *luchi* at Ramkrishna Mission and wished to try it again. She also mentioned that she loved *payesh*, though vermicelli was unavailable in Japan, which inspired me to plan to gift her some as a token of Bengal's sweetness.

Our homestay was also filled with creative moments. Together, we made a sunflower-themed clay plate, and I discovered her fondness for sunflowers, reflected in the many photographs she cherished in her gallery. Ensuring she had adequate rest, we prepared for the sayonara party the next morning.

I shared my *saree* collection, and she chose an elegant white *saree* in which she looked graceful, receiving warm compliments from all. Before the party, we also visited Hatibagan, where I presented her with the earrings and a locket of her choice, and later experienced the serenity of the Ganga on a ferry from Baghbazar to Howrah Bridge.

Yoshimi-san also gifted me many thoughtful items from Japan, each chosen with great care. On the final morning, my students, whom I tutor, presented her with handmade Indian cultural gifts. Observing her admiration for *kurtis*, I also gave her one as a keepsake. Before her departure, I drew a small *mehendi* design on her hand, marking a sweet farewell. The homestay went beyond cultural exchange. Through shared meals, thoughtful gifts, and heartfelt conversations, we grew to feel like sisters. What began as hospitality blossomed into an enduring bond of warmth and affection.

8. Srija Bhatta

Mana Sakamoto was assigned to be my homestay partner. On the 12th of August, after the final GD, the both of us, along with Aditya and his homestay partner Hyoga, left Jadavpur University in my car. After dropping Aditya and Hyoga, Mana and I went to Shapoorji. Upon reaching my house, we first served ourselves with lunch, as it was late and we were hungry. It was her first time trying paneer, and she loved it along with the chicken curry. After eating, we freshened up and rested for a while. That was when Mana gave me the souvenirs she had bought for me and my two roommates. Later that evening, Mana and I decided to join Aditya and Hyoga to visit the arcade in City Centre, Salt Lake. There we played multiple games and enjoyed every bit of it. All four of us took turns to play different games; in some we could play together, in others we tried to beat each other's scores! Towards the end of our arcade visit, we watched a short movie in VR where Mana and Hyoga did get scared a bit, as it was a horror movie. While leaving the arcade, we redeemed the points we won and bought some snacks and a pack of cards for Mana! After the arcade, we went to the Newtown carnival and rode the Ferris wheel. Mana and I enjoyed the ride a lot, whereas we forgot that Hyoga has motion sickness; however, he did end up managing himself, and upon getting off, he got a mango *lassi*, which Mana loved as well. After that, we tried some shooting games where all of us failed miserably at hitting the target, but we enjoyed it and had fun. We four then went to the food truck street and had momo from 'Wow Momo', which all of us enjoyed. We strolled around for a while, and then Mana and I came back home, and they returned too. Later that night, Mana and I were actually practising the dance which we were to perform during the sayonara party, and we both enjoyed it a lot and, after a while, called it a night.

On 13th August, the second day of the homestay, both of us woke up a bit late, as we had been practising the night before. Mana and I freshened up; she had ramen for lunch, I gave her a *kurti* for her to wear at the closing ceremony, and I carried a *saree* for her to change into upon arrival. We then went to the closing ceremony and the sayonara party.

After the ceremony/party, we took a cab and returned home. We then got freshened up and actually spoke and bonded mostly for the rest of the night till we fell asleep.

On 14th August, the third and the last day of the conference, we woke up a bit late and had coffee. Aditya and Hyoga were supposed to come to my home, and we were to cook Japanese curry and have it with rice. Upon their arrival, they rested up a bit. After some time, Hyoga and I took up the responsibility for cooking the rice and curry for the four of us while Mana and Aditya had a nice conversation about how the conference went. We then had our lunch while having fun conversations. We were supposed to meet the others at Eco Park, but since we were running late, four of us decided to go directly to the airport after lunch.

Upon reaching the airport, we bid farewell to the Japan team with a heavy heart and made promises to stay in contact and meet each other someday in the future. It indeed was an emotional moment for all of us.

9. Kimaya Thakkar

The homestay program during the 29th India-Japan Students' Conference, from 12th to 14th August, offered a memorable opportunity to experience cultural exchange beyond the conference hall. It deepened friendships and created lasting memories of hospitality and shared traditions.

On 12th August, I welcomed my Japanese counterparts, Nanako Kotani and Rina Nakajima, into my home. After lunch, Tarun joined us with his partners, Shinichiro Sasaki and Joe Ito, and at 4:30 p.m., we set out for Prinsep Ghat. The drive across the Hooghly Bridge was scenic and exciting. At the ghat, we began with a half-hour boating session on the Hooghly River, clicking photographs beneath the iconic bridge and sharing laughter on the calm waters. We then enjoyed a stroll along the riverbank, observing local life and tasting *jhuri bhaja* and *puchka*, which our Japanese friends relished with curiosity. The visit continued to the Prinsep Memorial, where the Palladian columns made for perfect photography. A refreshing *kulfi* break added sweetness to the outing. Later, we drove through College Street, offering glimpses of the city's cultural hub, before reaching Misti Hub at Eco Park. There, our Partners sampled a variety of Bengali sweets, some being *rosogolla*, *sandesh*, and *mishti doi*, each leaving them delighted. The day was a perfect balance of history, cuisine, and companionship, and it became one of the most cherished parts of the homestay. That night, I took Nanako and Rina to the terrace to see the full moon shaded with layers of clouds, complemented by the beautiful city lights stretched far across as far as the eye can see. One side was decorated fully with the city lights flickering and shining, meanwhile, the other side was semi-city lights giving a dim and aesthetic look to the scenery, and lastly, in complete contrast to them, was a dark jungle-like view with little or no light. It was a perfect balance of the lights, with only a temple with a small light on top of it acting as a cherry to the beautiful cake that the city lights laid out for us.

The next day, 13th August, carried a celebratory tone. After a simple breakfast and a short stroll, Nanako and Rina explored Indian traditional outfits. Nanako selected a gown, while Rina chose a *sharara*, both matched with ornaments chosen with the help of my mother. Lunch included *dhokla*, *roti*, *aloo* gravy, and *kadhi*, which they enjoyed heartily. In the afternoon, we attended the Closing Ceremony and Sayonara Party at Agora Space. The evening was filled with *kimono*-wearing, *happi* coat sessions, origami, games, dance, and music performances. It was an energetic celebration, combining Japanese and Indian cultural expressions, and reflected the joy of our shared journey.

On 14th August, the mood grew reflective. After breakfast, we visited Tarun's home for a final gathering with Shinichiro and Joe. While the others were busy with packing and talking, Shinichiro and I decided to take a walk around the apartment, where we exchanged a lot of cultural activities of our countries with each other, further complemented by Indian and Japanese humour. After having our part of the laugh and fun, we returned home, where I helped Nanako and Rina with packing, followed by an exchange of gifts and a photo session with my family. After a farewell lunch of rice and curry, I dropped them off at the airport. The parting was emotional yet fulfilling, leaving behind bonds that symbolised the spirit of IJSC.



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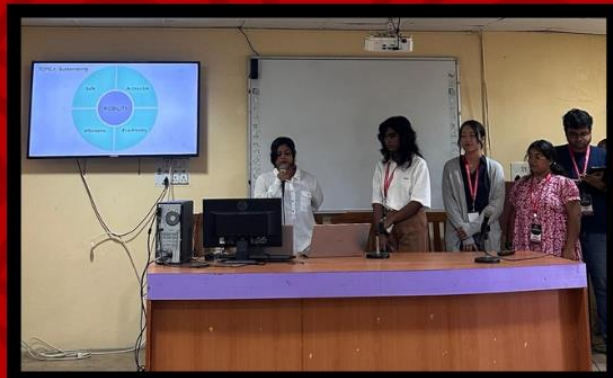
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