

Name	Divya Jha
Type of position	ALT
Period and duration of assignment	2007-08
Name of Prefecture you were dispatched to	Fukuoka
Name of School/Municipal Government you worked for	Hibiki High School, Tobata, Kita-kyushu

### My Life In Tobata

I was appointed at Hibiki High School in Tobata area of Kitakyushu, Fukuoka prefecture. Hibiki High School was a credit-system school, the environment was more like a college. Classes ran in 3 shifts and students had the advantage of taking classes throughout the day, in any shift as per their convenience and subjects of their choice. Most of the students were holding part-time jobs. There was no school- uniform (many fashionable students opted for this school for this reason too) and students' age varied from 15 to 75.

I was probably the first Indian in that school and that entire area. People were quite inquisitive about my saris (how many saris did I have), long hair (was it a wig or real hair, how did I manage to braid it on my own), nose-pin (it was oshyare & kashikoi for them, they were thrilled to know that it was traditional custom for most Indians to have pierced nose and ears), mathematics skill (all Indians were supposed to be good at it, how was it possible that I disliked maths and was poor at it), (yoga (if everybody in India did yoga every day) and food (if India had other foods too, other than kare'.... !!). So, my English class-lectures and activities mostly revolved around those topics.

My jutaku (Kannonjimachi) was at very convenient and lively place. The school, Tobata JR station, bus-stop, Seven-Eleven store, Spina super market, city library were all at a walking distance. I still have vivid memories of Kitakyushu city art museum, Matsumoto-Tei, Wakato bridge and its fireworks, Tobata-Gion festival etc. Since I came from noisy, densely populated place, this small and quiet town gave me heavenly feeling. Very soon I made many friends around the place and felt like I had always belonged there.

I had spent 5 years studying about Japanese language and history, geography, culture of Japan during my Graduation and Post-graduation from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; but JET program gave me the opportunity to 'see and feel' it. Though I came back within a year because I had left behind

my two little daughters, now that I look back, I feel it was not enough.

I set up India chapter in 2012 to stay connected with other JETs and thank JET program by helping them back if they needed me. Unfortunately there have not been any JETs from India since I came back in 2008, so I was a bit inactive with regards to JET activities. However, recently I had the opportunity to participate in 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of JET program celebration in Tokyo as the country representative from India and it has given me a fresh lease of life with regards to JET activities. With the news coming up that they are going to include one ALT candidate from India this year (2017), I am glad to extend all help that may be required. I only hope that the number of candidates go on increasing steadily in coming years.



With my student (76yrs old) and her daughter on school annual day function



Making samosas and pakoras for Indian stall at school annual day function



With other Indian JETs and Hawaii JETs at the school annual day function