

Studying and living in Japan- my experiences

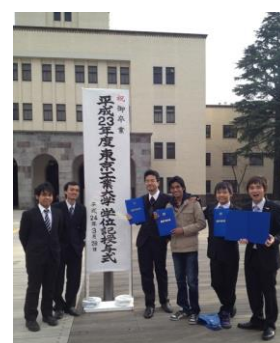
My name is DINESH KUMAR and I was a MEXT scholar in the Undergraduate Program (College of Technology program) for a period of 6 years starting from April 2006 till March 2012. I am very happy to have been given this chance to share about my life in Japan during this period and to summarize it I can say that it has been the best part of my life which helped me grow in many number of ways. To begin with, I would like to speak about from where it all started.



I was born and brought up in Delhi and in 2004 I completed my high school education. After that I got myself enrolled in Delhi University for B.Sc. (Hons.) in Chemistry and also was taking a part-time Japanese language course at MOSAI for which the classes were organized at Japan Culture and Information Center (JCIC). The main purpose of doing so was to get an additional qualification along with my major to help me in my career in future. During this time I came to know about scholarships for Undergraduate courses sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)-Japan. I felt it was a great opportunity as it could allow me to study my major abroad, which to be honest I had never even imagined before. Fortunately, I could pass the exam and the interview that followed and was selected to come to Japan for the College of Technology program for a period of 4 years. Considering all the future prospects and after thorough discussion and advice from concerned officers from JCIC and my family, I decided to drop out of my Undergraduate Degree course in India and came to Japan on 2nd April 2006.

A brief overview of my life in Japan (April 2006- Present)

- 1) After 1 year of intensive Japanese Language Training in Tokyo, transferred to the 3rd year of Associate Degree course in Material Engineering at Toyama National College of Technology in Toyama Prefecture, Japan.
- 2) After the completion of my Associate degree course in March, 2010, transferred to 3rd year of 4 years Bachelor`s degree course in Polymer Engineering at Tokyo Institute of Technology (Got scholarship period extended for further 2 years by MEXT on the basis of grades secured during the previous 4 years). Finished B. Tech. in March, 2012 and it also marked the completion of my Scholarship program sponsored by MEXT-Japan.
- 3) Currently enrolled in the M. Tech. degree course in Polymer Engineering in the same University which is scheduled to be completed in March, 2014 (Financially supported by a privately funded scholarship organization for the period of 2 years from April, 2012- March, 2014).
- 4) After the completion of M. Tech. Degree, will start working in KANEKA Corporation, Japan from April, 2014.



Living and studying in Japan for the past 7 years has helped me to achieve a lot and develop myself in a

numerous number of ways- first and the most important thing being the Academics. Tokyo Institute of Technology, which I belong to, is one of the top ranked Universities in the world in the field of Technology and Engineering and the education and research standards in most of the Japanese higher educational institutions are world class with the best of guidance around. I am very much confident in saying so as I have been lucky to have experienced it first- hand and would like to stress that this has enabled me to specialize in Polymer Engineering and start my career in this field from next year.

In India, we have the image of Japan as an island nation which became and is a world superpower because of the hard work of its people, excellent and uncompromising R&D standards and I do remember having read a real-life story in my Elementary School Hindi Textbook about the honest and polite nature of Japanese people. After living here for a long time I can confidently say that all of this is true. I have had the good fortunes of



meeting Japanese families who welcomed foreigner students like me to their homes and helped us to gain first-hand experience of the Japanese culture by inviting us to festivals and gatherings organized by them. Also, my teachers and guides during the Japanese Language Training School and afterwards have been very kind to support me not just academically but also provide valuable advice and help in personal matters , like the elders in the family.

In my case, the medium of instructions for my major`s studies has been Japanese language for which I had to take an intensive Japanese language course in the 1st year. I feel that this has allowed me to have very strong command and understanding over a new foreign language in addition to my major. Learning Japanese language helped me to communicate more freely with the Japanese people and also many of the foreigner students like me which deepened my understanding about a wide variety of cultures and the fascinating differences and similarities among them. In this rapidly globalizing world, it has been very good fortune of mine to get such kind of an opportunity to experience and respect all these cultures and develop myself as a global citizen.

During my stay and studies in Japan, it has also been possible that I could devote some of my time to volunteer and extra-curricular activities. I have been very fortunate to have had a chance to serve as the president of Tokyo Institute of Technology International students association (TISA) which represents more than 1000 International students in our university for a period of 1 year which really helped me to develop and cultivate skills such as event planning and management, teamwork, leadership and in the process I was blessed with many good friends from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.





In Japan, I have also been voluntarily involved in events involving introducing India to school kids in Japan and in this process I had to put efforts to first myself understand the diversity of cultures, languages, customs in India and the past and the present society which I might not have done otherwise and which helped me to change many of my own perceptions. Therefore, studying in Japan contributed to deepen my own understanding about India.

I hope that my experience may encourage students in India to consider Japan as a destination to pursue their higher studies. Language is not a very big issue as many universities are now offering Graduate Courses classes in English language as well and learning Japanese to a certain basic level is sufficient to live comfortably. And there are government funded and private scholarships available as well as students can support themselves by working on part-time jobs during their stay here which also helps to develop oneself as well as gaining further understanding of the Japanese work- culture and society. I do hope that in future there will be many more student exchange programs between the two nations to further strengthen the cooperative and friendly alliance.

Getting a world class education, having a truly global experience and my own personal development are some of the many things that I have been privileged to have in Japan. I have found Japan to be a wonderful blend of both eastern and western cultures and it has been a privilege to live in this country and learn so many things. Having lived in both the big cities (Tokyo) and countryside (Toyama), I have been able to experience different aspects of Japanese culture and society. There are many more memorable experiences that studying in Japan has enabled me to have and I would have loved to talk about all of them. To conclude, I would like to express my heartiest gratitude to the Government of Japan and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) for providing me and many other students with this priceless opportunity.



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