

# **JENESYS 2.0: A Journey to the Land of the Rising Sun**

**Nafisa Shamim Rudmila**



The full elaboration of JENESYS is “Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths”. An extended program, JENESYS 2.0 for SAARC students also have been taken into action for past few years. Every year, some selected students from Bangladesh are getting the opportunity to visit Japan as Japan-Bangladesh friendship ambassador and sponsored by the Japanese government while JICE (Japan International Cooperation Center) is in charge of conducting this program.

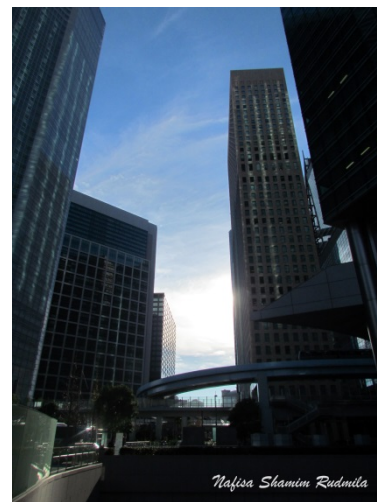
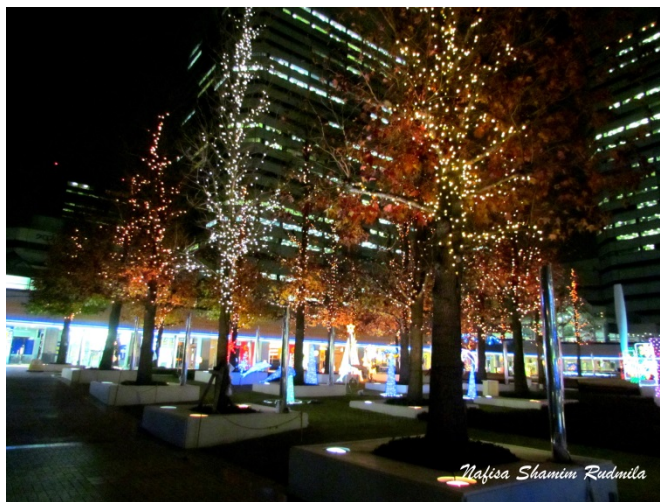
Everything began with Samurai X aired on BTV back in 1990’s. Then came other Japanese anime one after another. Started having regular access to manga and all other anime with the internet connection. Samurai, ninja, Edo-Meiji period, Tokyo tower, sky scrapers, robots, Japanese temples and shrines, their deep rooted tradition and culture, Mt. Fuji, the mighty landscape, cicada sounds in a summer day, snowflakes in the winter, red maples setting the nature in fire during fall, while the cherry blossomed spring, words will keep coming if I try to recall what else made me fall in love with Japan. Their beautiful musical compositions, Anime, Manga, all thanks to them that I got to know about the country, the language people speak, the culture and tradition they bear.

But the dream to visit the land remained a dream for almost 20 years. The yearning to know for myself what it feels to be in japan kept piling up with time. It was almost out of the blue when I got to know about the opportunity to visit japan via JENESYS 2.0 program.

You would know you are in Japan when Goku and his companions welcome you with a big smile right after you cross the immigration section at the Haneda airport. The best welcome ever for anime lovers like me.



The busy capital, Tokyo, furnished with latest technologies, while the gray concrete city is beautified with Momiji (maples) and Ichou (Ginkgo, a tree with bright yellow leaves). Not to mention the festive Christmas lights decorated all over the prefecture. The narrow lanes in between the houses, the street lamps, electric wires, flyovers, rivers, every view seemed so familiar. The busy trains in the peak hours, countless people coming and going out of the station, morning rush by the highschool students, the bone chilling cold wind blowing through the sky scrapers, all seemed so new yet familiar.





The night view of the city from Odaiba, Rainbow Bridge, peek of Tokyo Sky Tree& Tokyo tower on our way; they are going to be some mesmerized memory after all. Speaking of Tokyo tower, it was almost like seeing a childhood fantasy (from the anime Cardcaptor Sakura) standing right in front of you!



And there comes Akihabara, Mecca for anime lovers all over the world. It's difficult to control the goosebumps when you see Lelouch (Code Geass) or Eren Jeager (Shingeki no Kyojin) on big screens right in front of you, or when you see someone actually cosplaying Sasha Blouse in

front of an anime shop to promote the anime Shingeki no Kyojin, or walking in a street surrounded by all sorts of anime and manga shops. Last but not the least, Sensō-ji, the Buddhist temple at Asakusa, is the most popular temple in Tokyo and a tourist attraction. The architecture of the temples, the typical traditional way, was simply mind blowing. I actually forgot to do shopping during the small time we were given to do so, while I kept wandering around the temple and shrine to have a better look (again, reminded me of so many anime and manga where I learned about Japanese temples and shrines).



On my way to Nagasaki from Tokyo, the mighty view of Mt. Fuji from our flight was a breathtaking moment of my life.





A city surrounded by hills and mountains all over, while open to the sea on one side. Yes, that's Nagasaki for you. The name rings pretty strongly more or less to everyone if I am not wrong. The second city to be attacked by the deadliest of the two atomic bombs, Fatman, during World War II. Almost 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total population got erased from Nagasaki on August 9, 1945.



While Tokyo seemed practical, Nagasaki was like a land from somewhere in our imagination. A mountainous island surrounded by the sea, it was one of the most beautiful cities I have ever seen in my life. The serene beauty of the green hill slopes, somewhere in the city accompanied by Japanese style houses, meets the South China Sea in the south.



We visited Seiryō Senior High School, where the students spent time with us in different classes, such as music, English, cooking etc. The shy young faces beaming with smile, curious yet hesitating with English as a language barrier, tried to make our time most memorable. We sang together, giggled, ran in the school corridor (I had a prior knowledge that it is not allowed in Japanese school), cooked Miso soup and made Onigiri, and ate everything we made without any leftovers (food becomes yummiest when eaten with some great companies).



The school ground had a big perimeter, located on the top of a hill. On one side of the school downhill lie the Nagasaki city and the sea. I was wondering how it would have felt if our school grounds were turned into a site-seeing spot.





Homestay was a unique experience for me, and I would say, most important. It helped me to know what it actually feels to live like Japanese. Atsuko san, my host mother, was undoubtedly an amazing person, a wonderful mother and cook. I would still recall that long drive with her in the hilly roads of Nagasaki city. While Enya's music was being played in the car, we were passing through the mountains, the long tunnels, the city along the sea. I really hoped that journey to never stop, that day to never end.



The Atomic Bomb museum, Peace Memorial, Urakami Cathedral, the Hypocenter of bombing, the site of martyrdom of 26 Saints in Japan, Suwa Jinja (Shrine); history was born in this place. Visit to Nagasaki Penguin Aquarium, experiencing Japanese tea ceremony wearing Kimono, having a stroll around traditional Japanese garden, Nagasaki Historical Museum showcasing Japanese feudal lord's residence, traditional rice cake (mochi) pounding ceremony; 5 days were just not enough to experience all of them and be contented.



Lastly, Mt. Inasa gave the most beautiful parting gift at the end of our journey in Nagasaki, the night view of the city, as if the stars fell on the earth and glittered in the dark hill slopes.



*Nafisa Shamim Rudmila*

My brief journey in Japan lasted from December 9-16, 2013 along with 86 other students from Bangladesh. Knowing the Japanese people from this close made me realize the country's real beauty and charm lie in her people. It's because of their hospitality, kindness, curiosity, warmth that I never, for a single moment, felt away from home, lonely or a cultural outcast. I will always be grateful to them for making my stay as amazing as it can ever possibly be.



*Nafisa Shamim Rudmila*