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# JAPAN MY SECOND HOME

It is my first experience here in Japan living in the main city of Tokyo. I was at first highly unfamiliar with the life in Tokyo, to be a part of the busiest city in the world, having lived a relaxed life in the comforts of my home in Sri Lanka, was a whole new experience.



With the whole crowd walking here and there, it made me really difficult to get used to it. It is totally a new life with my husband here in Japan. I made the decision to leave my motherland with some reluctance because of the fact that currently Sri Lanka is under an acute financial crisis. I live in a place where the population is 919,729. It is the western Chiba ken prefecture in east central Honshu, Japan. It is located just northwest of Funabashi, along the Edo River which it shares with Tokyo to the west. The Tokyo Yokohama metropolitan area relies heavily on this landscape.

The three salt producing post towns of Ichikawa, yawata and Nakayama were located on the Chiba highway. During the Edo era in the year of 1603-1867, they have been combined to form the city. The city has been a commercial, industrial, and residential suburb of Tokyo. This is the second time I am visiting Japan. In the very first time to Japan I was not fluent in Japanese language. Here in Japan, Japanese people don't use any other languages than Japanese. So one thing we should make ourselves familiar with, before we come to Japan is the Japanese language. This time it was really an astonishing experience for me because I was going to start a new life with my husband. It was after two months that I was meeting my husband and after passing so many hardships it was time to live under one roof.

I came here in the summer season. It is usually a hot season with extreme humidity levels and daytime temperature often higher than 30 C, especially in Tokyo, Osaka and other metropolitan cities. During the summer season there is a particular life style we should adhere to because it is totally different to the Sri Lankan Kandy weather which I was used to all my life. I really miss my hometown even though I live in a country with super facilities. During the summer season there is specific way of dressing and we should consume more liquids.







## My Trip to Futami Inari



After landing in Japan, my first trip was made to Futami Inari shrine in Kyoto. Futami Inari shrine is one of the most significant shrines in Japan, dedicated to Inari, the of God of rice. There is a long history about the building of the temple Futami Inari. It was built in the 8th century, when agriculture played a significant role in Japanese life. Later on, business became the route of prosperity and agriculture become less important. But Inari still is the God of rice who has a place of success for development in business. The rope made of twisted rice straws which is called shimenawa, is hung over the entrance to the main building. There are thousands of gates in the Fushimi Inari shrine.

There is a story behind the offering of gates. Historically, companies and businessmen donated Torii gates to honour Inari. There are now thousands of gates lining the path uptown Inari. Each of the gates is inscribed with the





donor's name and the date it was donated. It costs 40,000 yen for a small gate to be offered to god Inari. There are even stone foxes beside the gates and they are symbols of protection for the Fushimi Inari shrine. In Japan they believe in Shinto Buddhism. Even the foxes are symbols of messengers of Inari. It took 2-3 hours for the trip. There is a real cultural value in the Futami Inari shrine.

While stepping forward through the gates I had the feeling that every religion has different faiths. Around religions exceptionally unique cultures are born. Japan is a first class example for such phenomena. It is true that Japanese culture has a huge faith in natural resources. There are places in Japan where they worship dead relatives as their gods. When compared to Sri Lankan culture and Theravada Buddhism I do really have a different opinion. I do really admire visiting Kyoto because I like the culture of Japan, But I didn't experience the same solace of spirituality though I passed through thousands of gates.

## First part-time experience

It was 25th of August 2022, my first day doing a part-time job in Tokyo Japan. It was at a convenient store. In Japan these convenient stores are known as konbini. It can be found across Japan. There are various types of convenient stores in Japan, for example, seven eleven, family mart, and Lawson. Most of the convenient stores open for 24 hours a day and 7 days of the week. I got a part-time job at a convenient store called Seven Eleven. In most of the convenient stores they sell all kinds of goods, including meals, snacks and sweets, such as Japanese rice balls (onigiri), sandwiches, bread, chips, obento (lunch), fried chicken and various other food





items which can be consumed after micro-waving. There are even beverages from soft drinks to alcohol.

On the very first day in the Seven Eleven convenient store, I found it much difficult to get used to the working environment. I found it easy to understand what the manager was explaining because I knew a little Japanese. I left the apartment at 12.00 p.m. from the place I am living and it took me 15 minutes to the station where the convenient store was situated. I got ready and went to the station to take the train. But unfortunately I was waiting at the wrong platform of the station to get into the train. After I asked from another Japanese person who was standing near me, she told me that I had to cross the stair case and go to the next train line to get the train up to Kinshicho. So straight away I went there and got down from Kinshicho station. With the help of Google maps I found it easy to find the convenient store. Within 15 minutes of time from the station I went there. After I met the manager he asked me for some documents and agreements to sign before I joined them.

I had a full inaugural program about the convenient store and its process. Within one and half hours I got some knowledge about the services offered by the seven eleven convenient store. Some were selling tickets for sport events, concerts, theme parks, high way buses, and other travel services. There were the facilities of ATM and banking services to deposit and withdraw cash. Even within the store premises there was free Wi-Fi connection to all the customers who visit the convenient store. There was even a

delivering service to drop off or pick up deliveries from the post office. On the very first day at the convenient store, I found it little hard to remember the words which they were using to address the customers. I had got only 5 hours to work at the convenient store. In Japan foreigners who were living in Japan are used to doing part-time jobs for various reasons. They do it to gain experience and extra cash or to








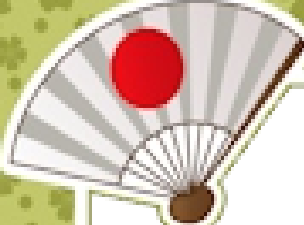
enhance their foreign language skills. In Japan part time employment is common, where many students try to get one as a secondary income. Here in Japan also the salary range differs with the white collar and blue collar jobs. The minimum wage for a part time is 930 yens an hour. It was a good opportunity to work in a convenient store because I could improve my Japanese language skills and have a good rapport with the customers who visit the store.

It really helps to improve communication skills. At work I used almost only 3 words for the whole time. That was irasshaimase (welcome), arigathogozaimashita (thank you), mata Okoshikudasaimase (please come again). Whenever any customer visited the place, we must greet him/her by calling them irraishaimase. That is the way to greet any customer who visits the store. It was really very strange for me, because it's not the way in Sri Lanka. At the same time, we should greet all the customers when they leave the store as well. Most places have incentives such as accommodation, free food, and so on. Most places give the pay for transportation. There are even stores where they provide expired lunch boxes (obento) to be taken. I was curious about how it tasted. I was delighted when I discovered that I could get those obentos for free since I enjoy eating.

As I am having a dependent visa I have only the household work. In addition, that I can pay attention towards doing part time work.

But there are many foreign students who are doing part time jobs to make money to pay the school fees. So if they focus only on making money then there is no time for studying, because if we get a bad GP level at the graduation, it affects future job prospects. I am working at a place where there is no crowd. So I found it easier to learn new things very easily. If





someone asked me whether you should do part time or not, my answer will be 'yes you should'. But you should do it balancing it with studies if you are a student and if your main purpose of doing a part time job is to pay the school fee for the university or training school. At the same time, part time jobs are an effective way to experience Japanese culture and manners, and improve language skills.

However coming to Japan is a decision that I never regret in my life. Instead I think it is the best decision I ever made. I hope to experience deeper aspects of its culture and society. Japanese society, from my point of view is a perfect blend of modernity and tradition and materialism and human values.

