

A World Expanded Through Study Abroad: Ms. Yahagi Shares Her Real Experiences in India

“My first time overseas was India”—a challenge that changed me

Ms. Yahagi (*) spent about one month studying at the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IITH) starting in November 2024. This opportunity arose from a connection between her academic advisor, Prof. Hemanth Noothalapati, and Prof. Suhanya Duraiswamy at IITH, who were joint research collaborators under the JICA FRIENDSHIP2.0 project. India was the first country she ever visited abroad—she even had to get a passport for the first time. During her stay, she experienced cutting-edge research, adapted to a new environment, and grew while immersed in a multicultural setting.

Research Experience in a Different Culture

Ms. Yahagi had been conducting research using Raman spectroscopy in her home university’s lab. At IITH, she had access to a state-of-the-art Raman spectrometer, which allowed her to advance her research.

“While we also have a Raman spectrometer at my university, it’s an older model and requires regular maintenance, which sometimes makes it unusable. The one at IITH was newer and didn’t require downtime for maintenance, so I could use it whenever I needed—it was really convenient.”

She also noted that research ethics practices were somewhat more flexible in India compared to Japan. Thanks to the cooperation of local volunteers, she was able to proceed with her research smoothly.

During her stay, a three-day international conference hosted by the Department of Chemical Engineering at IITH was held on campus. Researchers from around the world, including Japan, gathered, and many students also gave presentations and participated in poster sessions. She was also able to connect with other participants over dinner at a campus restaurant.

“I realized this was a unique environment at the university focusing on research—different from my home university. It was a valuable experience.”

Challenges and Discoveries in Daily Life

“The first thing that surprised me when I arrived on campus was that there was no toilet paper in the restrooms.”

Life in India was a series of surprises for Ms. Yahagi. From bathroom and shower facilities to food and sense of time, many things that are taken for granted in Japan were completely different in India.

Still, she had made up her mind before going abroad: “Since I’m in a different country, I’ll adapt to its culture. Rather than imposing Japanese ways, I’ll try to live according to the local customs.” That mindset helped her overcome these differences.

Despite the challenges, she found joy in cultural exchange—playing table tennis and badminton with

Indian students at the on-campus gym near her dormitory, or striking up conversations with Indian students she happened to sit next to in the cafeteria.

A Challenge and Growth Through English

English is the common language at IITH, but at first, Ms. Yahagi struggled with the Indian English accent.

“I had to ask people to repeat themselves over and over—it was honestly tough. But the more I tried to listen carefully, the more I got used to it.”

By placing herself in an environment where English was not just studied but actively used, she improved not only her language skills but also her ability to communicate across cultures.

What She Gained from Studying Abroad

“The passion for research was incredible. It was normal for Indian students to go to the lab even on weekends. After breakfast, they’d ask, ‘Are you going to the lab today too?’”

The attitude toward research, the perception of time, and the ability to adapt to life in a different culture—what Ms. Yahagi gained in India went far beyond academic knowledge.

“Through this experience, I developed the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds. I believe that in the future, when I work in society, there will be times when I’ll have to collaborate with people from different countries. And when that time comes, this experience will definitely come in handy.”

To Those Considering Studying Abroad

“If you ever get the chance to go abroad while you’re still a student, I really encourage you to take it.”

It’s precisely because it’s study abroad—not just travel—that you can engage deeply with local culture and people. For Ms. Yahagi, her one month in India was filled with both surprises and learning.

“You might feel anxious at first. But once it’s over and you look back, you’ll realize that everything contributed to your growth.”

Why not take the leap and discover a new version of yourself out in the world?

(*) Ms. Momoko Yahagi: Second-year Master’s student, Graduate School of Natural Science and Technology, Shimane University (at the time of study abroad at IITH)

At the main gate of IITH



With my lab members



With my lab members

