From India to Japan: Exploring Life at Tokyo Tech
Robin is a third-year undergraduate student from India, studying mechanical engineering, and an active player in the multinational community of Tokyo Tech.

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Period: From April 2012
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Why did you decide to come to Japan for study abroad?
I had a university that I wanted to go in India but unfortunately, I failed. Not knowing what to do, I searched for other options and found out about the Japanese Government scholarship offered by MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). The idea was appealing to me because Japan was advanced in the field of mechanical engineering, which I was planning to study. Also, I thought gaining another language besides Hindi and English as well as cultural experiences would be a great asset for my future. Luckily, my application for the scholarship was accepted and I was able to come to Japan in 2011.

Why did you choose Tokyo Tech and how is your school life?
To enter a university in Japan, I first had to study Japanese for a year since my Japanese was zero. I studied Japanese and other necessary subjects very hard to enter a university and was able to come to Tokyo Tech.

There are not many students from India at Tokyo Tech. For a fact, currently, there are only 6 students in total and I’m the only undergraduate student. Being the only Indian student can be advantageous because I obviously stand out and so people know who I am and talk to me. In a way, it’s an easy way to make friends.

One of the things I was surprised about Tokyo, or Japan in general, when I arrived was that people don’t speak as much English as I expected. Another thing was that vegetables are expensive and vegetarian dishes and restaurants are very limited. I was vegetarian but after having lived in Japan for four years, I can now pretty much eat anything, including sushi and ramen, my favourite Japanese food.
What extracurricular activities do you engage?
I have been very active with the Tokyo Tech International Students Association (TISA) and was the president last year. I met various people from around the world through TISA events and learned a lot about Japan that is not written in books, such as manners and communications, from the Japanese members and friends.

TISAs' main three annual events are welcome parties in spring and fall and a sports festival. As the TISA president, I worked with the Student Support Division, International Student Center, Tokyo Tech Fund and other international student associations to organize them. It was difficult at times to get necessary things done in time as these activities are voluntary and the members are generally busy with their studies and other activities. Nonetheless, most of the time the core members and I managed to hold the events successfully. It was great to see participants enjoying themselves and the whole experience gave me a sense of accomplishment. Now that I completed my term, I can participate in an event simply to enjoy as one of the members, which I am looking forward to.

What is your area of study and your future plan?
I liked cars, and also liked trains and airplanes but after I started to study here, I realized there is more to mechanical engineering than I thought. The more I studied the more I was attracted to designing machines. 'Kansei (sensitivity) engineering', which is the area of study that I'm interested in, is a Japanese concept. It focuses on user-centered design. There are a number of ways that we interact with machines for example; how you're feeling when you step on the accelerator of a car when you are driving is important. It does not only affect how you feel but also affects the safety. There is only one laboratory in Tokyo Tech where I can study machine designs and am hoping that I can join it in my coming fourth year. I would like to proceed to a master's degree in the same field, however, I am still not sure about the kind of work I would like to do in my future.

(Interviewed in January 2015)
Source (Tokyo Institute of Technology):
http://www.titech.ac.jp/english/graduate_school/international/experiences/india2012.html