



Hi! from SAGA

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Cultural Night


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Interview an International Student

We interview a former exchange student from Sri Lanka who came back to Saga University as a master student.



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CULTURAL NIGHT

At the end of the year, in December, Saga University organized an international event called 'Cultural Night' by collaborating with Global Supporters. It is one of the biggest events of the year where you can enjoy cultures and performances from all over the world. It is truly a night of cultural exchange. In the year 2020, this event was cancelled due to the severity of coronavirus. Therefore, I was so excited to participate in this event because this would be my very first experience for this event. This year the event was held in accordance with the rules and regulations of the coronavirus.

The event was divided into three sections: country booth display, performance, and fashion show.



Interesting things were not only on the stage, but also the surrounding booths from various countries. After you came through the meeting halls door the first booth you would see was the Japanese calligraphy Booth by Global Supporters. If you have learned Japanese, you would know that when you write Kanji it's like you are drawing a picture. Same as how one picture's meaning depends on the person who draws it, each kanji is different depending on the calligrapher who writes it. You can experience this interesting world of calligraphy at the cultural festival.



If writing Kanji was not enough, why not try writing character in other language, like Thai. Next to the calligraphy booth was a booth from Thailand where Thai students would teach you how to write your name in Thai, letter by letter. It was not only nice colorful paper for you to write your name on but also a Thai traditional amulet bracelet as a gift after you finish writing your name that the Thai students prepared.



Next to the Thai booth you can hear clicking sound of a bone dropping on the table. It was the Mongolian fortune telling booth. The fortune telling game is called "Shagai". The game consists of four bones which are traditionally the ankle part of a sheep or a goat. Each bone represents an animal: Camel, Horse, Goat, Sheep. If you get a horse or sheep, you are lucky while camel and goat represents unluckiness.



While you are engaged in playing the interesting Shagai, you might hear a beautiful sound coming from the Indonesian booth. The instrument is called "Angklung". It is an interesting instrument which one person plays one sound. The instrument is made from bamboo. Somehow the sound of the bamboo is very relaxing, isn't it? Not only the instrument, but the Indonesian students have also prepared traditional mask cut out from paper to decorate the booth, too.



While the pandemic prohibits us to travel overseas, let's look at the Sri Lankan students' booth. They have a nice photograph of Sri Lankan famous attractions, like the Sigiriya rock fortress and Unawatuna beach.



Not only Sri Lankan booths, if you like traveling to taste delicious food like me, why not check out the Myanmar students' booth. They have a presentation about their famous tea and snacks. Talking about Myanmar, do you know "Thanaka"? It is a creamy paste made from scent tree bark and usually applied on face as a cosmetic. It is also believed to make your skin smoother. If you have seen it before you can experience it at this booth which we have the Myanmar student demonstrate how to apply it to you.



Going around in the cultural festival made myself who is a bit lonely from all the lack of interaction with people in this period livelier again. I got to meet new students I have never met before too. I hope I can share this liveliness with our readers.

After the country booth introduction by Global Supporters, the performance section has come. Firstly, there was a performance from China. The show started with traditional Chinese music, which was very relaxing. On the other hand, beautiful Chinese girls performed traditional dances in a smooth way. The show aimed to present the culture and beauty of China through different periods. The whole performance was very interesting, and the combination of the music and the performers' traditional costumes definitely made the audience feel the real China.



The second performance was Kendo(剣道) from our host country, "Japan". Kendo is a modern Japanese martial art that uses bamboo swords and protective armour. This was performed by two Japanese students wearing a coat-like top ("Keiko-gi") and a skirt-like divided pants called a "hakama". Another performance from Japan was called "Yosakoi dance" by Saga University Yosakoi association "RANBU". Yosakoi is a traditional Japanese dance. Many Japanese students took part in this performance, and it was fantastic. I felt the courage, unity, and tradition of Japan in this performance.



In addition, we had a performance from Cambodia. The name of this dance was the 'Royal Ballet', also known as the 'Cambodian Classical Dance'. In the past, this type of dance was performed to pray to the God for peace, for the country or king. This Cambodian student not only performed but also taught the audience how to dance so that we could dance with him. The whole performance was peaceful and yet so difficult indeed. However, we all had a wonderful time together.



Next, we had a performance from Bangladesh. Unlike other countries, The Bangladesh student introduced a Bangladesh song with guitar. I thought it'd be too difficult to perform by singing in a foreign country because of the language barrier. However, thanks to the support of Global Supporters, we had a screen with the romanization of the lyrics so that we could sing together.



The Next performance was from Myanmar. Their main performance was a traditional Myanmar dance with a melody that was a mixture of traditional and modern. The title of the song is "Mingalarbar", which means "May you be blessed". In Myanmar, 'Mingalarbar' is a typical greeting accompanied by a slight bowing motion, the mudra gesture with the palms together. Throughout the performance, we also had the opportunity to admire the beautiful and breath taking scenery of the country Myanmar from the projector.



We then attended a performance of "Vietnam". It was a dance performance with the theme of "How to stay safe and be careful not to get infected with coronavirus". The performers were Vietnamese girls and wore shirts with the Vietnamese flag on them. We, the audience, not only enjoyed the performance but also became aware of the coronavirus. This performance reminded us to be safe and enjoy the event.



Last but not least, I heard some energetic music and at the same time, the audience was paving their way. This is the time for Indonesia!!!

"Oh!!....."

I could surely feel the whole crowd stopped functioning and everyone was feeling amazed...

A man, wearing beautiful clothes, was entering the venue by dancing along the way to the stage area. All his movements were dynamic and powerful. Most surprising thing was his makeup which looked like a Javanese prince from a long time ago (Javanese is the people who live in Java Island of Indonesia). Moreover, the performer had bells that attached at the ankle so that sounds come out whenever the dancers step or stomp on the stage. The performance took about 5 mins; however, the whole crowd was focused on that attractive dance.



After that, another Indonesian student explained about the dance. That dance is called "Remo dance" and it is telling about the struggle of a prince in a battle. At present time, this is performed as a welcome dance on special occasions in Indonesia.

In the middle of the performance section, there was a "fashion show" section. International students from different countries including, China, Myanmar, Nepal, Mongolia, Tunisia, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Zimbabwe put on their traditional dresses and participated in this section.



Cultural Night Galleries:



INTERVIEW WITH AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WHO CAME BACK TO SAGA UNIVERSITY

Hey everybody. One fascinating fact, a lot of SPACE exchange students came to study in Saga with the great connection and good supports from the university, they were able to come back to Saga University as a Graduate student. We even have two of us on SUIISA Newsletter team! We often got asked what, how, and why we came back to Saga University. Therefore, we thought it would be a great opportunity to interview one of the former exchange student who came back to Saga, Sunali Shinika san from Sri Lanka in this column.

• When did you come to Saga for the first time?

I came to Saga in 2018.09.25 for the first time. Still I remembered that day since it was one of the life turning point of my life. Even though it was so difficult to leave my family in Sri Lanka, when I came here, because I thought this would bring me to next level of my life.



• Have you heard about Saga before coming here?

Honestly, I haven't heard about Saga until I applied to the SPACE program. When I was in my second year of undergraduate at my mother university (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka), faculty administration informed us about SPACE program, which is offered by Saga University. Then I thought this is going to be a fabulous opportunity for me to explore the world. Then onwards I searched about Saga University and city of Saga. Finally, I decided to apply for this opportunity because of the interest I was gained through searching. I was lucky enough to secure the position as an exchange student among lot of applicants.

• Was there any cultural shock when you first came here?

I think beginning of the new life in another country is already a challenging task for all most all new comers. However, since I am from the South Asian country, there was not much cultural shock for me at that time. As expected, I was worried about the language barrier since Japanese was not familiar to me. However, with the time pass I learnt Japanese language from my SPACE program and we had lots of interacting sessions with Japanese people in that time. We engaged in different fun activities and so many events since there were no any social barriers like covid-19 pandemic in that time. Furthermore, my supervisor, tutor, other lab members and friends helped me to adjust the new environment sooner.

• Did you decide to come back to Japan since you were a space student?

When I was doing my assigned laboratory works daily, gradually I gained my interest on continuing my research under the supervision of same supervisor at the same laboratory. In here we have lots of facilities that carried out research and studies. Not only that fun activities I had with my laboratory members further increased my interest to come back here again as a Master student. After successfully completion of one year of exchange program, I had to return to Sri Lanka to complete my bachelor in 2019. At that time, I was fluent in Japanese and it was super hard to leave Saga University and my friends.

• What procedure did you take to come here again as a master student?

After I returned to Sri Lanka, I completed my bachelor's degree within one and half years. I graduated in March 2021 with first class honours in Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Technology and Management, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Then I discussed with my supervisor in Saga university and decided to apply for the master course in in Saga University. I applied for the MEXT scholarship and I was again lucky enough to grab the scholarship.

With the lot of barriers due to the covid pandemic finally, I came to Saga again in December 2021 as a graduate student.

• What was the difference between your first time as an exchange student and now as a master student?

Actually I was happy to see all of my friends in Saga again. Unfortunately, so many things were changed due to the covid-19 pandemic same as all over the world. There are so many barriers to engage in social activities, events and fun activities. I think with the time all will be good. However, in my case, as a graduate student now I have much more responsibilities than previously. I am willing to do a great job in my research field by utilizing resources in here and hard working.

• Do you have any suggestions for former exchange students who want to come back here again?

Finally, I would like to say that all of you who wants to come back or who is thinking to come to Saga for the first time, don't hesitate to do so or don't miss the opportunity. If you miss the opportunity, you will be worried in future. A person who you want to be as a researcher or any other carrier can be succeed trough working under the sky of Saga University while exploring the prestigious culture of Japan. Please come and see the beauty of Saga and enjoy the life while achieving your goal.

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