

## FELLOWSHIP REPORT

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**Program: Ananta Centre - Avantha International Fellowship 2015**

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### **Working at Ananta Centre**

Being a part of Ananta Centre as an International fellow was a great opportunity for me. Before coming to India I visited the website and twitter page of the centre as well as of The Confederation of Indian Industry to get a rough idea of what kind of work the centre does, their objectives and the role they play in influencing the social and economic system of India. The sessions organised by the centre are extremely valuable for a wide range of people ranging from government officials to scholars. They are not mere dialogues or discussions but provide a platform for both sides to exchange ideas, messages and relevant solutions, which I found incredible. In addition I met a lot of University students in New Delhi for whom these sessions were invaluable.

I have many friends from different countries and after becoming an international fellow at Ananta Centre I have made some lifelong friends from India too. I also got an opportunity to make friends with people from Africa and Thailand too, such as Bantayehu Demissew from Ethiopia, Hamdi Echkaou from Morocco and Orachorn Saechang from Thailand.

### **Sessions organized by Ananta Centre**

I have attended three sessions of Ananta Centre.

The first session was “What Does China’s Global Economic Strategy Mean for Asia, India and the World? - With a Focus on China’s “One Belt One Road” Initiative”. At the beginning of the session the political issues and relations between India, China and the World had been discussed; after that the role of the Silk Road in trade relations between countries of the Asian continent, plans of China, scenarios of multilateral relations, initiated projects, the role of India in these trade relations, energy trade relations and issues of security had been discussed.

The second session was organized on 14<sup>th</sup> of October and was on the topic of “Rethinking Urbanisation for a Good Life”. This session was organised in collaboration with the Embassy of Sweden and was dedicated to the importance of planned urbanisation in India, learning from Sweden’s success story. Mr.

Mehmet Kaplan, Minister for Housing, Urban Development and Information Technology from the Government of Sweden shared his views in regards of economic, ecological and social sustainability, the drawbacks of the housing crisis, and possible initiatives for municipalities and new goals for local governments. Mr. Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO of WWF India shared his opinions in regards to the limitations facing the Indian government, the aspirations of the youth population, issues of noise, soil and air pollution and traffic problems.

The third session was the last session I attended and it was dedicated to the impending elections in Myanmar and why these elections should matter for India. During this session the social and political relations between India and Myanmar, the role of China in Myanmar's recent internal social-economic problems and the importance of Myanmar for India were discussed. Furthermore, India's interests in the establishment of democracy in Myanmar were discussed by Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia, Dr. Sanjoy Hazarika, Ms. Suhasini Haidar and Ambassador S.K.Lambah. Possible post-election scenarios, Myanmar's plans in regards to relations with China and India, recent social-economic development in Myanmar and future reforms and external dangers for Myanmar were also brought up by questions from the audience.

The most interesting session for me was "Rethinking Urbanisation for a Good Life". The brilliance of Mr. Mehmet Kaplan fascinated me. His ideas in regards of improving life in the cities and thinking about economic, ecologic and social sustainability were the most interesting parts of his speech. However, in my opinion, the theory of urbanization has been developed by the middle and upper-classes in order to make their own lives better. Urbanisation and development of infrastructure in the cities is all well and good but what about the people who live in provinces and rural areas? From my point of view the process of urbanization should be conducted in balance with the development of rural areas of the country. Businesses, companies and industries should be spread about the country in order to provide people with decent job opportunities everywhere. In addition development of infrastructure in rural areas plays a crucial role in the sustainable development of a higher quality of life for all members of the population. Central and local governments should meet the expectations of low income households as well city dwellers.

**The research work at Ananta Centre**

One of the most important parts of the Fellowship program is working on a detailed thematic paper on a priority area that is determined by the Centre. I worked on the topic “Issues in the agricultural sector of India: the case of food security and sustainable development”. The main goal of this work was to analyse the current issues facing the agricultural sector of India in terms of food security and sustainable development.

### **Life in New Delhi**

I have to say that I am fascinated with the spirit of young people in New Delhi. Whilst living here I mostly travelled on the metro; during my travels I always encountered people reading books, newspapers, Kindle and sometimes, even if there was no seating available, commuters would sit on the ground and read or work on their assignments. On one of my free evenings, having visited Lajpat Nagar market, when I was returning back to the hotel with my peer Bantayehu Demissew we encountered two students who were working on their research assignments on the floor of the metro station. I was so inspired by their spirit and courage. I think this special spirit is what has made India one of the leading countries in the world markets of IT and Medicine.

For daily travelling to office I used the Delhi Metro service which is very comfortable and air conditioned. Metro Travel Cards are an added help for regular patrons which I enjoyed using very much. During the weekends, when I made short trips around Delhi I used auto-rickshaws which are essentially three wheeled taxi cars.

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