

Fellowship Report

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I am very delighted to be writing this report as a sponsored fellow from the Avantha International Fellowship scheme 2015. For me being a fellow at the Ananta center gives me great pleasure and motivation for my future career and profession. I can say that being a fellow at the Ananta Centre has been like my second School of Graduate Study as I have learnt so much while being here. As a fellow here I have acquired many skills, experience and knowledge on the areas of international relations, foreign policy, peace and security.

My experience in India and at the Ananta Centre as a fellow is summarized into the following three parts:

❖ ***Research Experience and Skills:*** In my stay as a fellow I initially felt really challenged having to write research papers under such a short time constraint. I put all my efforts and energy into writing three papers; two papers for the Ananta Centre (one joint & one individual paper), and another thesis proposal for my Graduate Study in IPSS, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, hence my stay in India and at the Ananta Center as a fellow was sometimes very challenging. During my stay here I have gathered greater courage and enthusiasm for my work. I have also improved my research skills in the areas of international

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relations, foreign policy and peace and security. Across the course of my stay as a fellow I wrote one joint paper with Mr. Samarth Pathak (*Program Officer, Ananta Aspen Centre*) which has been titled “India and Africa: Leveraging cooperation on Education”. In writing this joint-paper we shared our experiences of both the Indian and African education systems and the need for collaboration. Here, I want to thank Mr. Samarth for sharing his knowledge and experience on the subject. Moreover, I was very happy in writing a paper on Indian-African policy exchange as correspondence between the two regions is currently more relevant than ever; there has recently been the 4th India-Africa forum summit which was held in New Delhi, India on 27 October, 2015. For me, therefore, our joint paper on an Indian-African partnership on Education is a step towards realizing the aims of the discussions that went on in the historic 4th India-Africa forum summit.

My second research paper was also very important as it allowed me to practice and improve my research skills. This paper was titled “Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Responses in the SAARC Region: Indian Experience” which focused on the vulnerabilities of the SAARC region, and particularly India; the impact of terrorism on the region, and cooperation and responses given to terrorism by both SAARC and India. This research paper also helped me to expand my knowledge on India and its relations with its neighbors (SAARC region), and how terrorism disrupts the growth and development potential of the region. Through my research endeavors I managed to heighten my knowledge of India - the largest country of the SAARC and the largest democracy in the world. Moreover, this task taught me how to construct a

comprehensive research paper within a short space of time, with great courage and motivation.

I would like to thank Ms. Kiran Pasricha and Ms. Harshit Sehgal for their mature and constructive comments and follow ups as without their guidance I would not have been able to produce two successful papers. In addition to this, their commitment to their responsibility as my guides has inspired me to improve all my efforts in any further academic endeavors that I choose to pursue.

❖ **Personal Experience:** In addition to research experience, being a fellow at the Ananta Centre creates an opportunity to meet with new people different from me in culture, language and personal experience. Flying to India and leaving behind my home country of Ethiopia was very new for me; I was worried about the unknown (new environment, weather and new people), but after settling in I recognized how fortunate and lucky I was to have the opportunity to experience such new and amazing things. Here, I would like to thank Mr. Ramit Grover for his special assistance in organizing my travel to and from Delhi; he was very helpful in arranging interviews and providing me with the relevant information regarding all of the paperwork that needed to be fulfilled, including Visa requirements. As previously stated, because I have never travelled outside of Ethiopia, all of these processes were new to me but with the help of Mr. Grover, communicating through email and on the phone before arrival, and then eventually in person, he managed to alleviate all of my fears and insecurities in regards to travelling and living alone in Delhi.

Generally speaking, all of the staff members at the Ananta Centre were very helpful and honest in assisting me. Starting from the first day that I joined the office Mr. Gaurav Ban had arranged to meet and travel with me by metro as a way of “showing me the ropes”, and then when meeting all the other staff members, I felt like I was a welcome part of the organization. My special thanks go to, for their honest help and hospitality, Ms. Charu Jishnu and Ms. Meenakshi Sood. For me as the first fellow to arrive in Delhi their advice and hospitality was helpful beyond expression. They truly showed me how great Indian hospitality is.

I have learnt many things from the Ananta Centre staff members; hospitality, commitment to one’s work and expertise in the area of their job.

On the topic of life experience in India, it is difficult not to mention my newly found friends and peers. As myself and all the other fellows have come from abroad, for me it was a good opportunity to experience a cultural exchange. We discussed topics such as education, politics, economics and social issues in the work place as well as at our place of residence. As my historical first trip outside of Ethiopia, my fellow friends Mr. Akmal Atkhamov from Uzbekistan, Mr. Hamdi Echkaou from Morocco and Ms. Orachorn Saechang from Thailand have been the first set of foreign friends that I have made in my life. I want to thank the Ananta Centre for encouraging diversity and cross cultural exchange by selecting fellows from different countries and providing opportunities for those from a range of backgrounds. During my stay here in India me and my friends travelled and visited a number of historical and culturally significant places. I found India to be not only blessed with rich culture and heritage, but

also being true to its title as the largest democracy in the world. I consider myself very lucky to have visited the Taj Mahal, India's most emblematic monument, a world and UNESCO heritage site. I remember being told about the Taj Mahal as a child in school and had thus always dreamt about visiting it; now my dream has been realized thanks to the Ananta Centre giving me this opportunity to come to India.

Other sites I managed to visit during my time here were the Lotus temple, the ISKON temple, Lodi Gardens and many different market places and malls. Through my fellowship I truly got to experience India; Mosaic of the people and home of diverse heritage.

❖ **Experience and knowledge on Ananta Sessions:**

My stay as a fellow was not simply limited to research but also consisted of the experiences I gathered from the sessions I attended, organized by the Ananta Center. During my stay here I attended three sessions, namely: "China's One Belt One Road Initiative"; "Rethinking of Urbanization for Good Life" and "Myanmar Elections: Why Do They Matter?" All these sessions were greatly important to me as they allowed me to further develop my knowledge on India and the world. Open dialogue is essential to addressing the problems facing the largest democracy of the world. The sessions prepared by the Centre are really multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral, covering political, economic and social issues. In addition to the knowledge acquired during the sessions, they helped me to understand better how to organize and run such public events and dialogues.

In conclusion, the Avantha International Fellowship was a tremendously satisfying experience for me. I have learnt many things while being here such

as improving my academic practices and learn ways in which I could go on to help improve issues in my country. Finally, I would strongly recommend International graduate students to join the Avantha International fellowship and experience a taste of the knowledge, skill and experience acquired from this fellowship. Last but not the least I want to thank all the Ananta Centre Staff members as well as the Executive Director of the organization Ms. Kiran Pasricha for all their support and for providing me with such a friendly and welcoming working environment.