



Somerville  
College



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

## *Indira Gandhi Scholars at* **THE OXFORD INDIA CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*Somerville College established the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development to enable the best young minds from India to develop their knowledge while gaining the skills to lead India to a sustainable future. Talent development, pioneering research and new partnerships form the key themes of our vision, and at its heart lie the exceptional scholars already pursuing their studies at Somerville - and preparing themselves for transformative careers in India.*

### **SOMERVILLE SCHOLARS**

#### **VAANATHI SUNDARESAN (2015), studying for an EPSRC and MRC Centre for Doctoral Training**

Vaanathi did her Master of Science by research at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras in Electrical Engineering, specializing in retinal image analysis. Her Masters' research was focused on identification of various retinal diseases including diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration in retinal colour fundus images, using image computing techniques and machine learning algorithms. "Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development, I believe, provides an excellent avenue for understanding and developing interdisciplinary research, which is one of the main objectives of CDT as well. Through OICSD, I hope to understand the impact of various other disciplines on healthcare, which I think would be helpful in achieving my long-term goal of promoting sustainable healthcare delivery in rural India through academic research and industrial collaboration. Moreover, I hope to improve my social connectivity and management skills by organizing OICSD seminar meetings and conferences."

#### **SHIVANI MALIK (2015), studying for a DPhil in Plant Sciences**

Prior to Oxford, Shivani attended the University of Delhi for her B.Sc. degree in life sciences and M.Sc. in Botany. During her post-graduation, she spent a summer at the Institute of Life Sciences, Odisha, as an Indian Academy of Sciences' Research Fellow. Over the last few years, she has worked with various Non-governmental organizations in India, working on education and agriculture-related concerns.

Shivani's DPhil in Plant Sciences, under the guidance of Professor Dr. Renier van der Hoorn, aims to understand the evolution of mechanism of extracellular perception of pathogens in the Solanaceae plant family, including important crops such as, tomato and potato. Subsequent to perception, plants actively resist infection by most pathogens via deployment of multiple defense pathways. Since plant pathogens pose a huge challenge to crop production, enhanced understanding of how plant disease resistance is achieved will open novel avenues for plant protection methods. This eventually holds the potential of simultaneously addressing the many crises related to agriculture, including, global food security. "I am truly grateful to have received an IGS award, and I hope that OICSD, through inter-disciplinary collaborations, will provide necessary support to translate my research findings into effective solutions to crop losses."

#### **DEEPA KURUP (2015), studying for an MPhil in Development Studies**

After finishing a Master of Science at the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies, Oxford University, Deepa is now doing an Mphil in Development Studies at the Oxford Department of International Development (Queen Elizabeth House). She was funded for her Masters by the Louis Dreyfus-Weidenfeld scholarship. Deepa's research focus for the Mphil (leading to a Dphil) is the consumption puzzle in rural and urban India. Her research project, a continuation of what she started with her Master's thesis, will be an attempt to understand the development paradox, wherein despite economic growth and rising incomes (reflected in mean per capita expenditure), nourishment levels have been on the decline for a vast majority of Indians.

"Prior to this, I worked for over seven years as a journalist with a leading national newspaper *The Hindu* in Bangalore. I reported on topics ranging from higher education, technology and finance to more specialized focus areas such as the state of labour, work and wages of the vast urban working class in India. After this academic stint, I intend to return to the field of journalism with grounding and expertise in development studies. My long-term goal is to be able to head a team that can steer the agenda on development reporting, both in terms of grassroots reportage and incisive commentary. The space for such work is indeed shrinking in the Indian media, but I hope to be able to use the expertise I gain here to be able to make positive efforts to put development back on the daily news agenda."

**NARENDRA KILLADA (2014), studying for a DPhil Geography & the Environment**

Narendra's focus is the politics of environment and development. He is from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. After an undergraduate degree at Birla Institute of Science & Technology in Pilani, Narendra studied a Master's in Water Science Policy & Management at Oxford. He worked in think tanks and NGOs between courses. "Longer-term, I'd like to pursue an academic career in social sciences and to contribute intellectually to debates on the environment and on development in India."

**RANU SINHA (2014), studying for an MSc Water Science, Policy & Management**

Ranu arrived at Oxford after spending several years working for the World Bank and International Growth Centre on water resource management across several Indian states. Ranu has a BSc Economics and an MPA from the London School of Economics. It was at the LSE that she developed a strong interest in global development challenges. "The Indira Gandhi scholarship is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fulfil my dream of pursuing an MSc in Water Science Policy Management at Oxford. It will equip me to contribute to finding solutions that address India's water challenges."

**SHAHANA MUNAZIR (2013), studying for an M Phil Social Anthropology**

Brought up in Delhi and Bihar, Shahana studied for her MSc Contemporary India in her first academic year and is now studying for an M Phil in Social Anthropology. "Funding enabled me to continue my MPhil Social Anthropology. I now have far greater confidence and self-reliance to pursue my DPhil. I am better able to approach my research on madrasas through an anthropological lens, as I am now equipped with the theoretical context and appropriate methodologies."