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Six Indian Americans Named 2012 Rhodes Scholars

[Lisa Tsering, Staff Reporter](#)
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Mohit Agrawal.

Six Indian American university students have made a stellar impression on the judges of this year's prestigious Rhodes Scholarships.

Ishan Nath, Aysha Bagchi, Nabeel Gillani, Anand Habib, Mohit Agrawal and Tenzin Seldon were named Nov. 19 to the American Rhodes Scholar Class of 2012 out of a pool of 830 candidates who had been nominated by their colleges and universities. They are among 32 students who will now complete their applications to begin courses at Oxford University next year across the entire range of Oxford's academic disciplines.

Nabeel Gillani is a senior at Brown University majoring in applied mathematics and computer science. At Oxford he plans to do his M.Sc. in computer science and M.Sc. in education.

The son of an Indian mother and Bangladeshi father, Gillani has always loved to teach, and does his best work teaching young people on computers.

"The highlights of teaching for me always occur when students have an 'aha! moment,'" Gillani told India-West in an e-mail. "Computer usage skills are definitely becoming more innate for younger students nowadays, but our focus through the educational technology and math outreach we've done has been on trying to engage students to create with technology, not simply use it."



Tenzin Seldon, a native of

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Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, immigrated to the U.S. after her mother, a Tibetan refugee, won a visa lottery. Seldon is a senior at Stanford majoring in comparative studies in race and ethnicity, and she is also active in the Free Tibet movement; at Oxford, she will earn an M.Sc. in refugee and forced migration studies and an M.Sc. in modern Chinese studies.

"To pursue justice and equality within Tibet, whether that be freedom or middle-way, it is imperative to use both political pressure through community collaboration and activism as well as reasoning and academic prowess," she told India-West in an e-mail. "I see my role as bridging the two and hope that a future Ph.D. degree can enable strategic ways to approach Sino-Tibet relations."

Mohit Agrawal received his B.A. in mathematics at Princeton last year and is currently doing a master's degree in economic policy evaluation at the National University

of Ireland. He has worked in Ghana and Singapore as well. At Oxford, Agrawal will do the D.Phil. in financial economics.

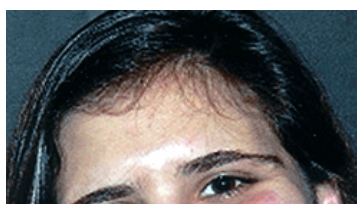
"My international experiences have influenced my interest in economics. Had it not been for the juxtaposition in development between Ghana and Singapore, I never would have decided to focus on growth-mediated-development," Agrawal told India-West in an e-mail. "[And] particularly by studying in Ireland, I've been able to gain an intimate understanding of the Euro crisis that I'll bring to my studies in Oxford."

He has learned unforgettable lessons by working on both ends of the global wealth spectrum. "I bring a strong sense of empathy to my work. This is important in economics because there are real people on both sides of each economic transaction; but also, the success of economic policy depends on local culture, which an empathic individual can understand."

Ishan Nath, a senior at Stanford double-majoring in economics and earth systems with a concentration in energy science, will earn an M.Sc. in economics for development at Oxford. His senior thesis discussed clean energy and a national cap-and-trade emissions trading system. Nath has interned at the office of economic policy at the White House and served as a consultant to the U.S. Department of Energy. A Truman Scholar and a Udall Scholar, he has also been an editorial writer for the Stanford Daily and a political columnist, and he has already spent a winter quarter at Oxford with Stanford's study-abroad program. He declined to comment to India-West.



Aysha Bagchi, also from Stanford, graduated in June with a double major in philosophy and history before shifting to Jerusalem, Israel, where she currently studies at its



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Hebrew University. She, too, has already studied at Oxford as a part of Stanford's study-abroad program, and will earn an M.Phil. in political theory at Oxford.

"The idea that I could win such an award is still hard to grasp," Bagchi told the San Jose Mercury News

from Austin, Texas, before boarding a plane to return to Jerusalem, where for the next year she will be studying the Israeli school system.

Another Stanford graduate, Anand R. Habib, is the son of Geetha Habib (a native of Madurai) and Mohamed Habib, both biochemists in Austin. Habib graduated from Stanford in June with a B.S. in biology and honors in international security studies. A leader of many public service programs at Stanford, in India, Mexico and Guatemala, Habib plans to earn masters' degrees in public policy and medical anthropology at Oxford.




Another Rhodes scholar of note this year is Byron D. Gray, a senior at the University of Washington with majors in political science; law, societies and justice; and Asian studies. Gray focuses on family law, human rights and religious sectarianism in India, and had previously earned a U.S. State Department scholarship for the study

of Urdu and Hindi, and worked for an NGO in rural northern India. At Oxford, Gray plans to earn his M.Sc. in contemporary India and a master of studies in socio-legal studies.

The Rhodes Scholarships provide all expenses for two or three years of study at the prestigious university in England, approximately \$50,000 per year. The scholars will enter Oxford next October.


Founder Cecil Rhodes' criteria for the selection of Rhodes Scholars included "high academic achievement, integrity of character, a spirit of unselfishness, respect for others, potential for leadership and physical vigor." Famous Rhodes Scholars include President Bill Clinton, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, Indian filmmaker Girish Karnad, MSNBC commentator Rachel Maddow, surgeon and author Atul Gawande and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Sidhartha Mukherjee ("The Emperor of All Maladies: A History of Cancer.")





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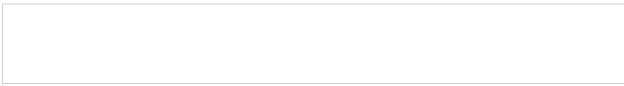
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