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Professor Ganguly
Summer I Dialogue to India

Social Sciences Perspective

My freshman fall schedule was completely absent of any traces of STEM. Instead, my anthropology lectures and globalization readings were decidedly focused on my International Affairs major requirements. At first, I was completely excited by the prospect of no general education requirements, of jumping right into my specialized coursework and of being encompassed in the world of social sciences. For as long as I can remember, the social sciences and humanities have always spoken to me. Sitting in a history lecture from one of my eccentric teachers or learning economics for the first time with Ms. Grayautomatically captured myattention. I can't pinpoint why some people go into social sciences and others choose hard sciences, but I can say with a degree of certainty that sometimes, you just feel it. In high school, I challenged myself by taking AP Chemistry. The fatigue of studying for AP Chemistry every night eventually caught up with me and I finished the year with a case of pneumonia. Despite my initial high school devotion to science, I ended freshman year the farthest I've ever been from science. I had not taken a single science class since junior year in high school.

The opportunity to take Civil Engineering courses in India arose. Although there are dialogues that relate to my major more directly, I wanted to be able to have the chance to do something different. It's easy to completely go down one straight track. I could have moved on from science coursework and chosen to not look back. The majority of majors in this dialogue are from either engineering or the science. Despite this, the dialogue courses offered the perfect blend of policy studies and scientific phenomena. There were more than a few times when I felt nervous about the coursework. Whether I was downloading complicated software in my room at

home or sitting in the Sustainability Data Lab at Northeastern, I realized that this dialogue would not be short of challenging. Additionally, I knew that traveling to India would push me outside of my comfort zones in ways that weren't academic.

India offers the perfect place to be interdisciplinary because it encompasses so much energy. My doctor prescribed me Mefloquine for my anti-malarial medication. I decided to switch to a different medication because I was afraid I would have hallucinations or unusually vivid dreams. However, being in India lends itself to intense dreams regardless of medicine composition. There's so *much* in India. So many people.So much history. So many smells and noises and vibrant colors everywhere. So much landscape.So many political nuances. In a place like this, it makes sense that aspects of life aren't isolated. I cannot think of a more perfect location to explore how climate change affects policy. Especially looking back now, understanding the acute way specific weather phenomenon affects a society with great potential for change and growth, I realize that India is an incredible environment to study in.

In addition, some of the greatest scientists in the world are located in India. The Indian Institutes of Technology are notoriously selective, putting Harvard and MIT's numbers to shame. Hearing from scientists across India's public universities was both a humbling and enlightening experience. I deeply appreciated Sublimal Ghosh's lecture on monsoons, or hearing from students at IIS-Bangalore. We met with people from all over the country, all doing the hard work of modeling climate change phenomena. Moreover, I was grateful to hear from Professor Ganguly's expertise in the field. Initially, I was worried that the climate change science portion might go over my head. However, as I delved deeper into the course, I realized that weather hazard predictions are not simply isolated in their basis of physical principles and use of models. Instead, these models are used to apply to real world policies. The variables within the models

are inherently affected by policy. Each time I heard from a scientific speaker, I was able to be enlightened with the facts. However, I was also able to explore complexities. As a social science major, I did not fully expect this.

On the other hand, I also saw how people in the non-scientific field impacted climate change science. Swiss Reinsurance, which is a company that provides reinsurance worldwide, bases its fiscal decisions after climate hazard modeling. Monika Jain, an urban planner, uses green technology to create spaces that are more environmentally friendly. One of the most powerful sessions for me was when we visited IIT-Bombay to hear from the people at the Center for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas (C-TARA). The institute supported rural development as a new job field. Hearing from speakers at C-TARA made me feel at home again – their ideals and values were not very isolated from those of the Northeastern International Affairs faculty. C-TARA brought PhD Students from hard science disciplines to create technologies and structures to help alleviate poverty in rural India. Ultimately these brilliant minds are using their enormous brainpower to take action. People who once studied biotechnology or nanoengineering are applying their talents for the greater common good.

Ultimately, I entered the dialogue excited but worried about what my place would be in the scientific conversation. Going to India completely changed my perspective about the science-humanities divide. Although different talents do exist, we can come together and solve the biggest challenges that society throws at us. The reason I am getting my degree is so that I can do something to contribute to the greater good of society. And if that sounds like a lot, I'm not ashamed. Being on the India dialogue was a whole a wash of hope: people who deal with statistics that constantly suggest a premise of future doom keep emulate optimism unwaveringly. They keep striving for solutions in the face of despair. For me, listening to people like Asha at C-

TARA, who traded a stable high money making future for real change in the world show me that anything is possible. Regardless of discipline, it is problem-solving that is inherently powerful. Problem-solving transcends simple academics and rises above. It pulls all types of thinkers and learners and leaders together and it asks for a genuine will to solve. I can't help but leave India an inspired person.