

*Special Centenary Edition*

# SSGSA NEWSLETTER

**SIR SYED GLOBAL SCHOLAR AWARD  
SIR SYED EDUCATION SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA**

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**EDUCATION**

**EMPOWERMENT**

**GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP**

Website: [www.ssgsa.us](http://www.ssgsa.us)

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# MESSAGE FROM THE SSGSA CHAIRPERSON



**Mr. Wasikul Islam**  
**Chairperson, SSGSA**  
**Stillwater, OK, USA**

Dear Aligs and SSGSA family around the globe,

Greetings! I feel honored to address you while publishing this special Centenary edition of SSGSA Newsletter-2020 during our 1st SSGSA Convention to celebrate the journey of our mentorship program over the last 14 years. First of all, I congratulate you all for the 100 year anniversary of our beloved Aligarh Muslim University. I am also thankful to Prof. Abhijit Banerjee, 2019 Nobel Prize winner in Economics for agreeing to grace our SSGSA Convention.

SSGSA program and its scopes, activities have grown significantly over the years and the program has been successful in making an impact not only in many personal stories of its selected scholars, but also in the journeys of hundreds of other students from AMU who did not make it to the final merit list, but got mentored by SSGSA with similar care. To mentor a single student from India who doesn't have much knowledge about application process for higher studies abroad, it requires incredible amount of efforts and time throughout the year to guide for his/her different test preparations, university application processes including preparing application documents, university shortlisting and in also helping the mentee to move into university town smoothly after admission.

And we have been able to create 120 such stories of our scholars joining graduate programs around the globe so far, many of whom are working in different professional spaces after graduation. Thanks to the dedication & selfless efforts of our SSGSA mentors and volunteers who devote much time tirelessly out of their busy lives for this cause of education & also for their love for their alma-mater. Named after visionary educationist & philosopher Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, SSGSA truly stands for Education, Empowerment & Global citizenship.

I would like to specially thank all our founders who not only broke ground with their vision, but also have been working very hard as team members to materialize those visions through their active involvement. As we celebrate our journey, I would like to acknowledge all our past SSGSA Chairpersons for their excellent leadership in expanding the horizons of SSGSA, all our donors, our excellent mentors, reviewers, passionate volunteers and well-wishers for their continuous support for our program. As our program keeps on expanding, we are always looking forward to new ideas, more volunteers & donors. We have a long way to go with your support and contributions.

I had the distinct honour of serving the organization as a chairperson for the last 2 years and we have been fortunate to observe growth and expansion of the SSGSA program on many fronts, thanks to the whole SSGSA family. Improvement in the mentorship processes and significant rise in student-outreach activities in recent years have been possible only due to our dedicated mentors and volunteers. As perfection is not a destination, but a journey, we, the SSGSA family will keep walking on that path. I am confident our future chairperson of SSGSA, Mr. Salman Bin Kashif, who has been an outstanding volunteer and an amazing human being will take our SSGSA forward to new heights.

I am especially thankful to our Newsletter Editor Mr. Mohd. Toaha Umar and his editorial team for their excellent work in publishing this newsletter. I wish you all a happy reading!

# EDITORIAL NOTE

Dear Readers,

It is an honour for me to present the Special Centenary Edition newsletter of the Sir Syed Global Scholar Award. (SSGSA). The year 2020 marks a monumental milestone for the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), as it completes its 100th anniversary this year. Coincidentally, this year also marks a significant milestone for SSGSA, as the number of success stories not just crossed the century mark, but has now reached 120. To commemorate this wonderful occasion, SSGSA has organized its first ever Convention, and it was an utmost privilege for me to unveil this newsletter during this historic event.

In this newsletter, we have covered the events of the recently concluded SSGSA Convention, including the summaries of the keynote speeches by Prof Abhijit Banerjee and Ms. Swara Bhasker. This newsletter is a celebration of everything SSGSA stands for.

We celebrate the history of SSGSA, and give a glimpse into how our organization works. Most importantly, this newsletter aims to celebrate the scholars, who are the principal components of SSGSA, and this newsletter glances through the stories and successes of the illustrious scholars of SSGSA. This year has been extremely taxing, and we hope that reading the stories of our scholars can provide inspiration to the readers.

The newsletter aims to provide a glimpse into the lives of several prominent scholars, and how life changes after moving abroad. Through the medium of this newsletter, we have attempted to showcase different stories— about overcoming sheer adversity in life, navigating through the different career options after graduation, life at elite universities and shaping up a fledgling career with foreign internships. We also take a look at the future, and discuss the vision and aspirations for the future of SSGSA.

The drafting of this newsletter was a challenging process, and it would not have been possible to present this newsletter without the constant support of **Mr. Wasikul Islam**, the Chairperson of SSGSA. He has supported our newsletter team constantly, and has always been available for offering invaluable advice and insights. I would like to extend my gratitude to him for his patience, and I would also like to thank the SSGSA executive committee and **Mr. Salman Bin Kashif** for their inputs. Finally, I would like to thank and congratulate my newsletter team (**Mr. Salman Khan, Mr. Shujaut Bader, Ms. Ifra Ilyas, Mr. Md. Ful Hossain Sk, Mr. Sajad Sheikh, and Mr. Ansab Amir Khan**) for their efforts and contributions, which have been instrumental in bringing this newsletter to life.

I sincerely hope that reading this special newsletter will be an enriching experience for all of you.

*Happy Reading!*



**Mr. Mohd. Toaha Umar**  
**SSGSA Newsletter Editor**  
**TU Munich, Munich,**  
**Germany**

# MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE VICE CHANCELLOR



**PROF. TARIQ MANSOOR**  
MS (Surgery), FICS

Vice-Chancellor



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Dec 15, 2020

Dear AMU Alumni and SSGSA team:

Greetings to you all from your dear alma mater, the great Aligarh Muslim University.

The Aligarh Muslim University, its alumni and its well-wishers across the globe, have been organizing programs to showcase its achievements and to celebrate 100 years of its fine existence and unique contributions in the service of our dear country, India.

Towards that end, I am delighted to learn that the Sir Syed Education Society of North America ([www.ssgsa.us](http://www.ssgsa.us)) is organizing a virtual online Convention to celebrate the 100 years of Aligarh Muslim University and to highlight their efforts towards their alma mater on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**SSGSA** is a registered non-profit organization that administers mentorship and financial support to meritorious students of AMU aspiring to pursue higher studies at top academic institutions around the world. Since 2007, the SSGSA team has diligently mentored and supported nearly 300 students. More than 119 SSGSA scholars have been successfully admitted in 97 premier institutions of higher learning in 22 countries across the world.

I am sure that the beneficiaries of this program will carve a name not only for themselves but also bring glory to their families, their alma mater, Aligarh Muslim University and to their motherland, India.

I am glad that the excellent TALEEM and TARBIYAT (education and grooming) that the students receive at AMU remains their guiding spirit in their lives.

Our founder, Sir Syed was a reformist much ahead of his time and passionately believed that inclusive education for all would provide the foundation for growth, peace and harmony. Through you all, Sir Syed's vision and wisdom is spread across the globe. Thank you all for giving back to your university and to your country. I also congratulate and appreciate the work being done by Mr. Syed Ali Rizvi and his team.

"Jo Abr yahaN se Utthega, Woh Saare jahaaN par barsega".

Stay safe. Stay connected. Stay healthy.

Jai Hind

*Tariq Mansoor*  
15/12/2020  
Professor Tariq Mansoor

# MESSAGE FROM THE SSGSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



It is a moment of great pleasure for us to write this short note for the SSGSA. This occasion is special as we are also celebrating the 100 years of AMU. In these 100 years, AMU and its Alumni have played a very significant role in nation building. The Alums of any institution are its biggest resource. The AMU Alumni spread across the world, by some estimates in 88 countries, are connected to it. To the best of their abilities, they are giving back to their alma mater and to their country.

SSGSA came into existence from humble beginnings in 2006. The only resource we had was our vision, motivation, passion and restlessness to contribute to our alma mater, and provide timely guidance to the brightest students who could get admission in the world class institutes for their higher education, particularly for PhD. Our goal was to identify and bring students at a young age to internationally recognized institutes/Universities so that they could obtain very high quality education at early stages and pursue an ambitious career.

Another idea was to enable these younger students to get associated with this dream and bring fresh perspectives and energy to the organization and provide leadership, which would keep the organization very young and dynamic all the time.

We are very delighted to see that we have laid a great and solid foundation of the organization, and have successfully passed the baton to the student leaders. While the founders - Rehan Baqri, Syed Ali Rizvi, Saif Sheikh and Shaida Andrabi are still intimately involved in the organizational affairs, our youngsters are essentially running the organization now. It is a great blend of old and new that brings together experience, enthusiasm, vision and the latest trends as well as technology.

This program has grown very rapidly, has become very competitive and is very popular and prestigious at AMU. Three of our scholars Mohsin Khan, Ali Muzaffar and Wasikul Islam, who were the recipients of this scholarship, later served as chairs of this organization, which defines our culture and legacy.

More than 100 students from all fields of study have obtained admission around the globe. We hope that most of our awardees will do very well in life, have an outstanding career, contribute to the world of wonderful discoveries, philosophy, philanthropy and humanity.

Sir Syed Education Society of North America is growing and welcomes those who can help in this mission to spread the light of knowledge and the vision of our founder, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Join us. Together, we shall all see the dream coming true,

*Jo abr yahan se uthe ga, wo saare jahan per barse gaa*

*Khud apne chaman per barse gaa, ghairon ke chaman per barse gaa*

SSGSA has indeed developed into a great organization and we all look forward to seeing it becoming an even greater and internationally recognized educational resource. We wish the scholars of this organization a great future.

**Dr. Shaida Andrabi, PhD   Dr. Rehan Baqri, PhD   Mr. Syed Ali Rizvi, MBA   Dr. Saif Sheikh, PhD**

# MESSAGES FROM THE SSGSA ADVISERS



**Prof. Shahid Jameel**

*Director,*

*Trivedi School of Biosciences,*

*Ashoka University, India*

I was recruited to SSGSA fairly early in its life when it was called SSES. Though Shaida Andrabi had first asked for my help to interview prospective applicants, we also schemed up to start a GRE-like shortlisting test, which I put together for a number of years. What attracted me to this organization was the idea of experienced Aligs mentoring their juniors to access higher education beyond one's immediate reach. The democratic and loose model of governance is also attractive since it provides much needed leadership and soft skills to the mentors. It has been an absolute pleasure to witness the growth and success of SSES and its transformation into SSGSA. Metamorphosis is not easy and neither was this transformation. But as the caterpillar changed into a butterfly, I had hoped it would not crawl the surface but soar the skies. And I am so pleased to see that happen. With my best wishes for the future.

It was almost thirteen years back when some well meaning alumni like Rehan Baqri, Saif Sheikh and others thought to start SSGSA- a program to help those students of AMU who had the potential to go abroad, particularly the United States, for higher education. As I was involved with many scholarship programs run by various Alumni Associations around the world, they asked me to coordinate the selection process of such students and thus started the journey which has reached to such a point where 120 students have been selected for what is now called SSGSA. Most of these students have been placed in the world's best institutions. I feel proud of my students- Mohsin Khan, Ali Muzzafar, and Wasikul Islam, who have contributed immensely to this most prestigious program run by our US Alumni. I am sure that SSGSA will continue for years to come. I appreciate the help and guidance provided by faculty members and particularly Dr. Shahid Jameel. I extend my whole-hearted support to this program and wish it a great success.



**Prof. Suhail Sabir**

*Pro Vice Chancellor,  
USTM Meghalaya, India*



**Prof. Asad U. Khan**

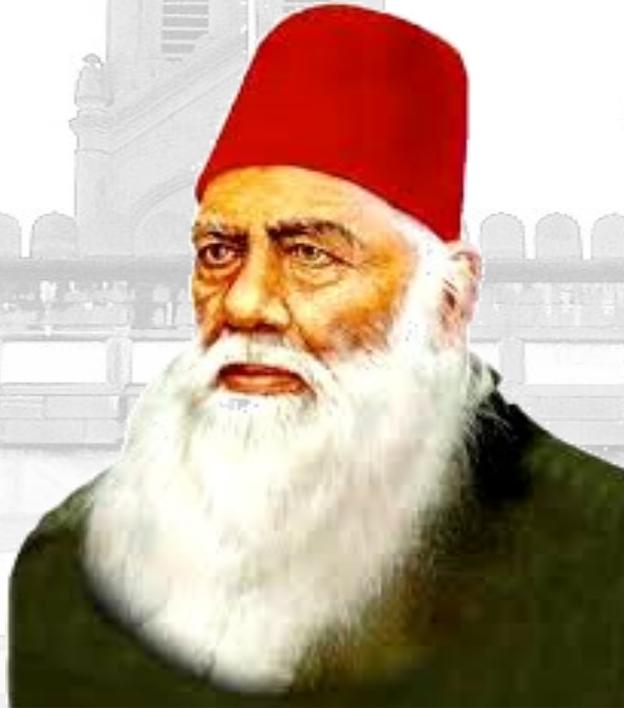
*Interdisciplinary*

*Biotechnology Unit,*

*AMU, India*

I have been associated with Sir Syed Global Scholar Award (SSGSA), since its inception when it was named as Sir Syed Excellence Science Award. Although my association was confined to provide logistic and support to hold test/interview in Biotechnology Unit, AMU, I am passionate about supporting any academic activity in the campus and around. I still remember in 2006-07 that only a few students had participated in test-cum-interview. But in the last fifteen years, SSGSA has grown exponentially and the number of applicants reached over 100 per year, to be screened for test/interview. The process of selection is very transparent and rigorous, hence, selected candidates show their best performance every year. This is an incredible platform for young and ambitious aspirants to get ahead in their academic endeavours. One of the remarkable features of this organization is to support candidates from diverse fields - from science and technology to arts and humanities. I appreciate the efforts of all team members of this non-profit organization who have been involved in both financial support as well as academic mentorship. I also congratulate all SSGSA fellows who have been well placed in the top international laboratories across the globe.

# VISION OF SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN



*"From the seed that we sow today, there may spring up a mighty tree whose branches like those of a banyan shall in their turn strike firm roots into the earth and themselves send forth new and vigorous sapling".*

*Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*

**THE FIRST SSGSA**  
**CONVENTION (VIRTUAL)**

**DECEMBER 19, 2020**

# HIGHLIGHTS



**Boston, USA, December 19, 2020:** In a virtual gathering that marked attendance from over 25 countries and over 1000 participants watching live, the [Sir Syed Global Scholar Award \(SSGSA\)](#) Committee organized its first ever convention. Timed to celebrate the achievements of SSGSA scholars in conjunction with the momentous centenary year of the [Aligarh Muslim University \(AMU\)](#), India, the event was a celebration of the power of education, mentorship and peer-support in transforming the lives of students. The convention was kicked off by [Mr. Wasikul Islam](#), [Dr. Saif Sheikh](#) and [Dr. Rehan Bagri](#), members of the SSGSA Executive Committee, with an ode to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and an overview of the SSGSA organization, and achievements of its scholars. The host of the day, philanthropist and civic leader, and member of the SSGSA Executive Committee Mr. Syed Ali Rizvi, captured the spirit of event and maintained engagement with the audience, with opportune Urdu couplets and personal anecdotes.

The event featured two uplifting keynote talks by stellar speakers. The first was from the 2019 Nobel Prize winner in Economics, and Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [Dr. Abhijit Banerjee](#). Highlighting the educational vision of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Dr. Banerjee emphasized the need to take risks and aim high but to enjoy one's pursuits, thereby highlighting the role of self-motivation for success. He raised the importance of supporting the academic dreams of students and praised SSGSA's efforts towards empowering young minds and encouraging them to endeavor. The second keynote speaker was award-winning actress and activist, [Ms. Swara Bhasker](#) who passionately advocated for the need for education to be the guiding light in allowing us to discover our inner humanity. She said that as students and learners, it was important to go beyond academic excellence, to be self-aware and aware of the world around us, and speak up as a 'principled disruptor' to harness the power of student movements to drive accountability and purpose. She stressed the importance of students to live with hope, and not fear, as a guiding force. The two keynotes left lasting impressions on students, alumni and teachers as was evident from the continued feedback and responses on social media channels.

*Continued...*

# HIGHLIGHTS

[Dr. Tariq Mansoor](#), the current Vice Chancellor of AMU spoke of the illustrious history of the university and the contributions of freedom fighters and scholars in building an institution that believed in the education and empowerment of men and women in achieving their highest abilities. Focusing on the future and growth of the university in fostering the development of those who will lead in the future, he touched upon the need to give back and importance of alumni networks. He commended SSGSA as an example of an alumni organization that was contributing to fulfilling the vision of Sir Syed. Exemplifying this passion to give back to the alma mater, was the next speaker [Dr. Frank Islam](#), an AMU alumnus, successful entrepreneur and philanthropist who recently established the Frank and Debbie Islam Management Complex at AMU to support the next generation of leaders. Dr. Islam pledged support to SSGSA, believing in the need to support students that will ultimately not just give back to their alma mater but also strive to drive positive change in the world.

Past and current scholars as [Dr. Mohsin Khan](#), [Mr. Shujaut Bader](#) and [Dr. Ruchi Dana](#), shared their uplifting personal journeys of how the SSGSA network of mentors and peers allowed them live their childhood passions and motivations in the form of their advanced degrees as well as the career paths that have ensued. As they themselves take on the role of mentors, their experiences powerfully illuminate how education and guidance can break the shackles of ignorance, gender bias and poverty, transform lives and enable an individual to reach his or her highest potential. In true spirit of nurturing the next generation of leaders and passing on the baton, the leadership of SSGSA was handed off from the current Chairperson and SSGSA alumnus, Mr. Wasikul Islam, PhD candidate at Oklahoma State University, to another SSGSA alumnus and beneficiary, [Mr. Salman Bin Kashif](#), PhD candidate at Clemson University, who will assume the new role starting January 4, 2021.

A rendition of the [AMU Tarana](#) from the SSGSA network left everyone nostalgic and yet energized, emotionally connecting the broader AMU community across geographies despite this challenging year. The event culminated with [Mr. Ali Muzaffar](#), SSGSA alumnus and ex-Chairperson, hosting 'Bazm-e-Sukhan', a special session to showcase and celebrate talent amongst SSGSA scholars, in which the legendary AMU music icon Mr. Johny Foster, and SSGSA scholars such as Mr. Shujaut Bader, Mr. Mohd Zubair, and Ms. Oroosa Anwar enthralled everyone with their musical and poetic caliber.

# SUMMARY OF PROF. ABHIJIT BANERJEE'S KEYNOTE

## SPEECH: BY MR. SHUJAUT BADER



**Prof. Abhijit Banerjee**

*Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Nobel Laureate in Economics, 2019*

Sir Syed Global Scholar Award (SSGSA) was privileged to have Prof. Abhijit V. Banerjee, Nobel prize winning economist, and a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) deliver a keynote address at the annual convention on December 19, 2020.

Immensely humble and simple, it is very rare to see such qualities in a man of his stature and accomplishment. He touched upon various areas related to economics, jobs, job security, success, passion and ambition.

Prof. Banerjee started out with a quote<sup>1</sup> on self-belief and success by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, and how important its message is in this age of hype and spurious values. He stressed that it is not easy in this age to even know what to believe in, when a surge of information is constantly targeted at us to make us something else than what we are. Social media, lifestyle magazines and newspapers are full of trivialities like famous people celebrating their birthdays at exotic locations, portraying luxury, comfort, and extravagance as the representations of success. Prof. Banerjee, however, stated that it is extremely important to think that things like these are not (and should not be) the real aspirations. He maintains that ambition is so much bigger than just aspiring to make money and live a comfortable life. The message is not to deter one from doing well economically at all. We live in the world where money is important. However, the advice is to stop believing in the ideas that portray 'being rich' as a meaningful goal or aspiration. He quipped, "*We ascribe meaning to things which have little substance*".

The takeaway is that once you think you have done well enough financially; you must try to look beyond economics and learn to identify the things in life which carry weight and can influence your own life and the world around you positively.

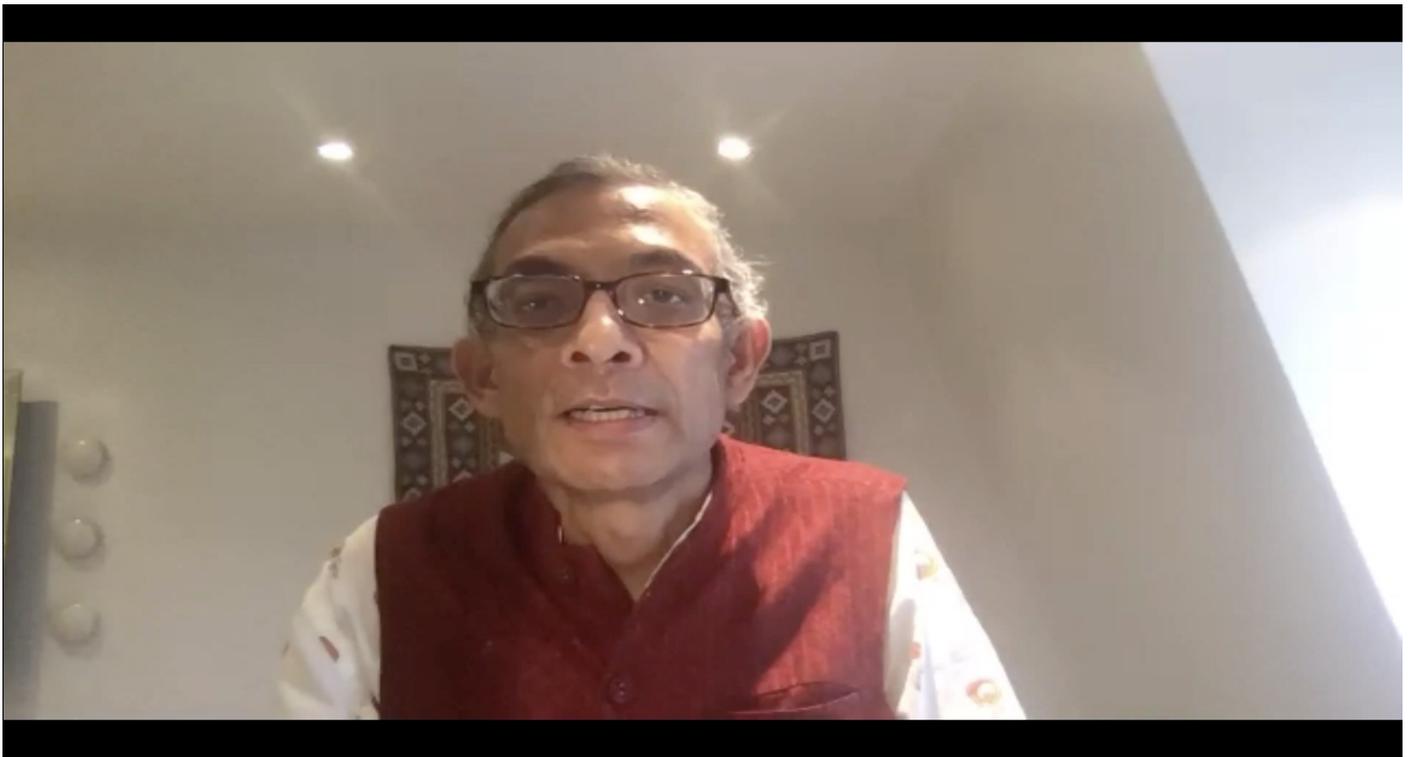
Prof. Banerjee stressed upon the importance of patience and perseverance and how these traits are important to develop a passion for work. Sharing an interesting anecdote from his life as a graduate student at Harvard, he did not know if he really wanted to be an economist. He has accomplished a lot in his field and that is not possible if he were not passionate about economics. His idea is to patiently wait for passion to arise. He said, "*Passion comes later, give yourself some time.*" Once you immerse yourself religiously in something that is valuable to you, however hard and prosaic it may appear at the onset; stick to it, persist, persevere and your work will itself infuse passion in you one day.

This is particularly important for researchers and doctoral students like us who may get overwhelmed and feel dispassionate in the beginning. From my own experience as a doctoral candidate, if you persist and show up every day in the lab during those dull and difficult days, a day will come when the little breakthroughs in your work will infuse passion in you.

In a world where we are constantly being fed with ideas, pursue what sparks your interest, and what challenges you. Prof. Banerjee posits that it pays to not make lifestyle commitments early on in life. Another Harvard anecdote of his clearly explains what that means: running short of money as a graduate student, he used to still manage to cook and throw dinner parties for his friends in his dormitory by procuring the raw materials from the dorm. When faced with a challenge, success is a guaranteed consequence for a resourceful mind.

*Continued...*

# SUMMARY OF PROF. ABHIJIT BANERJEE'S KEYNOTE SPEECH: BY MR. SHUJAUT BADER



Towards the end of his keynote address, Prof. Banerjee encouraged the scholars and other student attendees to believe in their talents and skills and worry less about job security. While job security may be valuable after a certain point in life, Prof. Banerjee emboldened the young audience to be adventurous and look for what is exciting and risky. That is where the chances of discovery and being a real success lie.

Prof. Banerjee also stressed upon the importance of relishing life as we live it. The little moments that constitute our days are ever fleeting and there is no chance to turn the clock back and revisit the bygones, thus making it important to appreciate life. He emphasized on asking this critical question to ourselves – *Am I enjoying my life or am I just running after something?*

Finally, the Nobel laureate talked about the illusion of scale that is treated as the hallmark of success. Success to him is not about scale at all initially, rather about zeal, interest, passion, service and perseverance. Once these elements are present in you, success is inevitable. It does not matter if you are able to touch the lives of millions of people or transform the lives of a very few. As long as you are contributing, the scale is irrelevant.

Wishing good luck to all the SSGSA scholars, Prof. Banerjee ended his address praising the Sir Syed Global Scholar Award for its efforts towards empowering young minds and encouraging them to endeavor, ***“I wish you all the luck with your enterprise. This (SSGSA) is a very noble enterprise and the one that has great potential for transforming the lives of many people”***.

## Footnotes

1. *My advice to all of you: Do only which you believe (to be right) and do not do anything (the rightness of) which you do not believe. This is real truthfulness, and this is the only thing on which depends success in both the worlds.- Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*

# SUMMARY OF MS. SWARA BHASKER'S KEYNOTE SPEECH: BY MS. IFRA ILYAS ANSARI



**Ms. Swara Bhasker**  
**Renowned Actor and Activist**

Ms. Swara Bhasker, an award winning actress and an activist, graced the first ever virtual convention of SSGSA on December 19, 2020. Her keynote address focused on ***'Emerging role of students in shaping the new world order'***. Swara began with calling the world order - a huge 'mess' and went on to question the audience – *"How do we as young educated people become relevant players in the huge mess that is the world order? or The importance of a student as a disruptor."*

She highlighted a few incidents of world disorder from the recent past where we have witnessed the emerging role of students in shaping the world order in different geographical regions. Talking about the unabated spate of police brutalities against black people of United States of America, she pointed out the fact that such incidents lead to special solidarity movements of our time, the movements of social justice such as *"Black Lives Matter"*. She emphasised on the significance of such movements that lead to public mobilization. On the first anniversary of the nationwide movement against the CAA-NRC laws in India, which were termed discriminatory by many legal experts, she recalled how the student mobilization played a crucial role in shaping resistance to government diktat.

Ms. Bhasker said, *"The greatest value and abiding relevance of students to a society is in their role as disruptors of a normalised hierarchy"*. She went on to state that disruption need not be physically violent or only by means of protests. She shared a classic example of one of the greatest non-violent disruptors of history - Mahatma Gandhi!

Ms. Bhasker warned the youth of not becoming the agents or mere tools of the power structures and said that by becoming subservient to abuse by institutional structures, one ultimately loses their own identity. She said that the purpose of education should not be restricted to earning a degree or livelihood, but to be a socially accountable citizen, to be relevant to the society and to raise voice against injustice. She stressed on the fact that when we don't question the system it leads to normalisation of hate and discrimination among the general public as it can be seen in different parts of the world currently.

Ms. Bhasker emphasised on how the students, as disruptors of this modern world, should not be indifferent to the wrongdoings of the system. The right way to put our education to use is to become relevant in the world by not responding with indifference, by refusing to accept the normalized hierarchy, by challenging the abuse of power, by asking questions to keep power structures in check, by participating in society and making a change for good.

A part of her talk was focussed on the demerits of our conventional and traditional education system; how it preaches to obey and doesn't give the privilege of asking unnecessary questions. She also took a cheeky dig at the science students who are so engrossed in their academics and research that they pretty much happen to be unaware of their surroundings. She stressed on the importance of 'verifying news' from multiple sources to avoid possible bias and spread of misinformation, that, in the past, had led to unnecessary hate mongering on various social media platforms.

*Continued...*

# SUMMARY OF MS. SWARA BHASKER'S KEYNOTE SPEECH: BY MS. IFRA ILYAS ANSARI



On being asked as to what makes her so fearless and bold – she gave credit to her supportive parents and emphasized on how higher education has given her the vision to not only differentiate between the right and the wrong, but also the strength to take a stand for what is right, and to say 'No' to what is wrong, both in her personal and as well as professional life.

She pointed out that each and every one of us should thrive to be a socially accountable citizen and keep on raising voice against any forms of injustice. She concluded by asking the students to be aware of everything happening around them, keep asking questions to check the power structures and most importantly to be a '*Principled Disruptor*' while at the same time being kind and empathetic.

She ended her keynote address on a positive note hoping that the student community will keep playing essential roles in not only bringing new ideas in the form of technological advancements, but also by realising their full potentials as educated and democratic social reformers, contributing to the peace & prosperity of the nation.

# REMARKS OF DR. FRANK ISLAM ON THE 2020 SSGSA VIRTUAL CONVENTION



**Dr. Frank Islam**  
*Entrepreneur, Philanthropist  
and Civic Leader*

Dr Frank Islam began his speech by congratulating the SSGSA team for the phenomenal work it has done and all of the SSGSA award recipients past and present for their notable accomplishments in the classroom and beyond.

Dr Islam quoted Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who upon the establishment of AMU said,

*...from the seed which we sew today there may spring up a mighty tree whose branches, like those banyan of the soil shall in their turn strike firm roots into the earth and themselves send forth new and vigorous saplings; that this college may expand into a University, whose sons shall go forth throughout the length and breadth of the land to preach the gospel of free inquiry of large-hearted toleration, and of pure morality.*

Dr Islam highlighted the legacy of AMU, and the difference the AMU alumni have made in different fields across the world. He hailed the profound effect AMU has had on his development and growth, and on the other alumni as well, “It provided me with the basic building blocks to become a successful entrepreneur, to assume serious responsibilities, and most importantly to become a passionate and Thought Leader.”

Dr Islam praised the achievements of the 120 SSGSA scholars who have gone on to do great things, and mentioned his connection with the SSGSA family, “Even though there was no SSGSA mentoring or scholarship program when I left AMU and India to go to school at the University of Colorado in Boulder to get my bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Computer Science, **I have a direct and an indirect connection to the SSGSA scholars of this century.** The indirect connection is that I went to the United States from AMU because a visiting professor from the University of Colorado took me under his wing, mentored me, and helped me enroll at that outstanding school in the United States of America. Without that support, my journey would have been a different one. I’m sure the same can be said for all of the SSGSA scholars. Hats off to them and to those who have been their mentors and all who have supported them at the start of their journey.”

He continued, “The direct connection is that when I was visiting AMU last year, I had the honor to meet all the 2019 SSGSA scholars and award them their certificates at a function organized at the New Management Complex that we sponsored that bears our name, the Frank and Debbie Islam Management Complex.” Dr Islam remarked about the great potential possessed by the SSGSA scholars, and predicted that they will make future leaders who will make India and the world a better place.

Dr. Islam concluded his remarks by inaugurating the SSGSA Annual Newsletter, adding “each annual edition adds a new chapter to the SSGSA story that has been written by the new scholars, the scholars who have preceded them, and those who have mentored and assisted them.” He explained, the SSGSA newsletter tells the story of what SSGSA has done to make the world a better and brighter place during these dark, trying and challenging times. He ended his speech by wishing all the best to the SSGSA scholars for their future endeavors.

# ACCEPTANCE NOTE OF THE INCOMING SSGSA CHAIR:

## MR. SALMAN BIN KASHIF



**Mr. Salman Bin Kashif**  
*Clemson, SC, USA*

Dear SSGSA Family and AMU Fraternity,

Greetings!

It will be a great honor for me to serve as the chair of the program that has played a huge role in shaping my career, and of many other students like me. I can admit without hesitation that it would have been near impossible for me to apply for grad programs abroad without the support from SSGSA. While working towards my grad school applications after receiving the award in 2014, I was amazed as to why someone who is keeping extremely busy with his/her professional commitments would take time to give a detailed feedback on my application package and sit with me for hours to fine-tune it. Therefore, well before securing my first admit, I was motivated to give back to the program in whichever capacity I could. After volunteering in SSGSA over the past few years, I feel greatly privileged to be entrusted with leading the program.

SSGSA, as an alumni-backed scholarship cum mentorship program, has been an incredible success story. We have benefitted a good number of students, and are particularly delighted with the inspiring stories that have come out of enabling students in achieving their dreams. If I were to choose a stand-out factor that has helped sustain the program this far, I would pick on the *work being selfless in nature*. The desire to help a deserving student without any expectation of personal gains, a thought actively promulgated by our founding members, has helped us achieve the goals that looked too ambitious to start with. While keeping our core principles intact, I will work with our team to address the changing needs of our scholars as the program evolves.

I am thankful to the previous chairs of the program for steering the ship this far and leaving a rich legacy to carry forward. I cannot help but look with reverence the time and effort my predecessor Mr. Wasikul Islam has put into the program. We have greatly improved our application portal, expanded our outreach and responded well to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic under his able leadership. I look forward to taking this program forward with the same level of commitment.

There are a few challenges that seek our attention. Despite our best efforts, we still face a challenge in realizing a better ratio of the number of successfully placed students over the number of scholars we select every year. We need to work better in guiding students to identify fully-funded programs. With the program expanding significantly, we need more people who can help with their time and resources in reviewing the volumes of applications we get, funding the applications of awardees and, most importantly, providing their valuable mentorship. We are hopeful that more and more people will pledge their help.

Finally, I must confess that I am nervous, but excited about assuming this humongous responsibility. With the help of our well-wishers, donors, volunteers and supporters, I am confident of taking the program to newer heights.

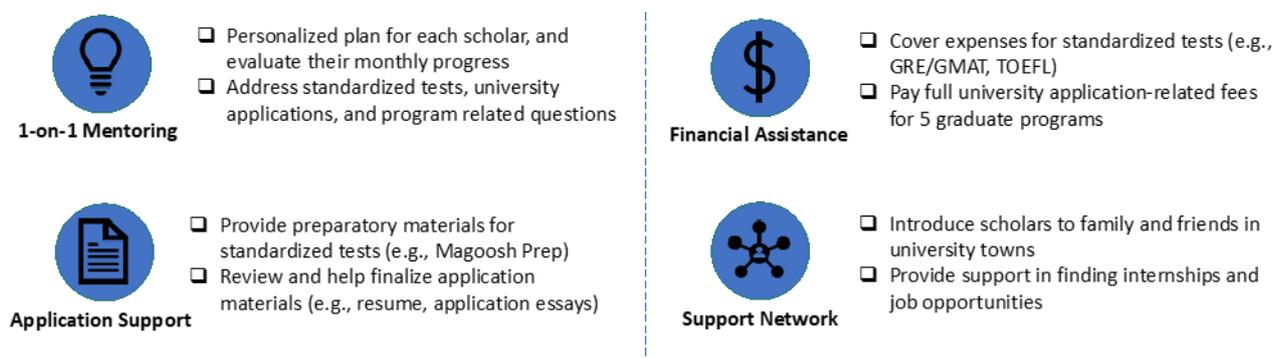
# SSGSA: THE JOURNEY SO FAR

# HOW SSGSA WORKS?

BY DR. SAIF SHEIKH AND DR. MOHSIN KHAN

**Brief:** The Sir Syed Education Society of North America (SSESA-NA), a 501 c (3) non-profit organization, annually administers the Sir Syed Global Scholar Award (SSGSA). SSGSA, formerly known as the Sir Syed Excellence in Science Award (SSESA), is a merit-based scholarship that is awarded to academically outstanding students at master's level from all faculties, including sciences, life sciences, medicine, arts, business, commerce, law, and education at the Aligarh Muslim University. All donations and contributions directly sponsor the attempts of talented students to secure admission in MS/PhD programs at centers/universities of international repute. SSGSA supports each scholar in achieving their full potential, as outlined below:

- SSGSA scholars are selected on the basis of rigorous screening by independent academic experts and performance in Graduate Record Examination (GRE)-style test and personal interview to assess knowledge and motivation
- A committed team of mentors work with the scholars on every aspect of their preparation and application. The mentors continue to be available for guidance and help throughout the academic journey of the scholars, and in many cases well into their professional careers.



- Upon successful admission, the students in turn become mentors to other students.

**Points of expenditure:** There are three main parts of expenditure incurred by prospective applicants. GRE/GMAT and TOEFL, mandatory for application to most masters and PhD programs in the United States, and individual application fee of the university.

**Award Benefits:** SSGSA award helps student with financial assistance towards Standardized test preparatory materials, standardized tests (GRE/GMAT & TOEFL) and application fees, and personalized mentoring throughout the process from selection of universities to refining personal essays and resumes.

**Sponsorship by SSGSA:** SSGSA covers the cost of GRE/GMAT and TOEFL entirely and fund the application fee of up to 5 universities. No. cash is available to the student at any point during the entire application procedure. GRE/GMAT and TOEFL as well as application fees is paid online by SSGSA operational team. In order to ensure serious effort by the students that are nominated, we pay for the tests in steps. For example, students who get a good score in GRE (over 300, as recommended by most universities) will be supported for TOEFL, and students who score well in both the tests will be supported for the application fees for the universities. Students who don't get good scores will not be supported for the next step. Each candidate is supported for only one attempt.

*Continued...*

# HOW SSGSA WORKS?

BY DR. SAIF SHEIKH AND DR. MOHSIN KHAN

**Selection of Awardees:** Since the existing examination system in India at the bachelors and master's level and the other entrance exams for PhD is entirely different from the TOEFL/ GRE/GMAT pattern, it may not be possible for students to prepare well for these tests simultaneously. Hence, the award is valid for two years. Applications for the award is invited in the first week of February and results are declared by the third week of March. The selection is based only on the Merit. Only applications from talented students with a proven academic record are considered. However, there are certain other criteria that the student has to fulfill. The entire application procedure entail the following requirements:

2) Curriculum Vitae/Resume

3) Copy of mark sheets for all years of Std. XII, bachelors, masters, and other tests (NET, GATE and other test scores may also be included if taken).

4) Copies of certificates and documents in support of listed achievements.

5) Statement of purpose (SOP), briefing the student's interest in science and/or their intended field of study (this is important as it is also one of the selection criterion in US graduate programs and will help us evaluate the student).

**Selection of the students:** A panel of experts in the respective fields review the contents of each application from that discipline. The reviews are done independently so that the students get a fair assessment, and each application is assigned marks on a scale of 1-10. An average of these marks are used to draw up a merit list and the top 5-10% students are called for GRE-style standardized test and personal interview at AMU. About 25-30 students (dependent on available financial aid) are awarded SSGSA scholarships each year.

**Mentorship:** Besides the financial assistance required for the GRE/GMAT, TOEFL, and applications fees that are needed for applying to the US universities, the awardees is assigned mentors who are experts in the field. The students are guided through the entire application process and receive help in framing a strong personal statement, resume etc.

**Validity:** The award and its benefits are valid for a maximum period of two years from the date of announcement. Students must take the exams and apply for admission within this time. Failure to do so would automatically disqualify the student from the award. Under pressing/ unusual situations, the student may request for extending the award benefits. However, the committee's decision will be final.

**Disqualifications:** Students will face immediate disqualification under the following conditions:

a) If at any stage, it is found that wrong or fraudulent information was submitted. Disqualification will also ensue due to an act of plagiarism.

b) If the student gets a score in the exams that is not enough to make the application competitive. For GRE, at least 300/340 and for TOEFL at least 90/120 would be the requirement. They will be given a chance to take the exam again AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE. The award benefits will be re-offered if they score well on the second attempt.

c) The students are required to update the committee on their progress at regular intervals (e.g., monthly updates). If they fail to do so or attempts to contact them prove futile repeatedly, they will be given a notice to respond or face disqualification.

**Internal Growth:** Students/scholars, once successfully sponsored, will automatically become paying members of the SSGSA fraternity. They will commit to returning the initial scholarship awarded to them in this manner. The students, who have benefited from the SSGSA award and have complete faith in its existence, will bring a fresh perspective and spirit to contribute to the viability and growth of this mission. Successful awardees will be involved in the functioning of the program once they come to the US or Europe.

# THE TIMELINE OF SSGSA



**Conception of SSGSA as SSES.** Drs. Shaida Andrabi, Saif Sheikh, and Rehan Baqri, and Mr. Ali Rizvi started SSES to help AMU students and alumni with their aspiration of achieving higher education in the USA.



SSGSA Co-Founder Dr. Shaida Andrabi assumed the role of SSGSA's first Chair.



The outreach program of SSGSA to raise awareness about higher education opportunities abroad begins, with interactive sessions conducted by SSGSA Co-Founders Mr. Ali Rizvi and Dr. Saif Sheikh, and SSGSA supporter Mr. Hasan Kamal in AMU.



2006

2007 - 2008

2008 - 2009



First mentor-mentee meeting held in Chicago, IL during the formative years of SSGSA (Founding members Drs Saif Sheikh and Rehan Baqri, and Mr. Ali Rizvi, and scholars Mr. Asim Rizvi, Mr. Adam Ahmad, Ms. Sharmeen Khan)

The very first batch of SSGSA Scholarship awarded. 4 students from the first two batches, Mr. Adil Masood, Mr. Asif A Khan, Mr. Asif Alvi and Ms. Beenish Zia, were placed in graduate programs offered by top universities around the globe.



SSGSA Co-Founder Dr. Rehan Baqri started his tenure as SSGSA's second Chair.



SSGSA Co-Founder Dr. Saif Sheikh interacting with students at Department of Chemistry, AMU.

SSGSA gets represented for the first time at the Federation of Aligarh Alumni Associations (FAAA).

This period saw an increase in the successful acceptance rate by a whopping 275%, as compared to 2007-2008.

Dr. Rehan Baqri, SSGSA Co-Founder and Chair, shared SSGSA program's goals and activities at the 2010 FAAA Convention in Chicago, IL.



6 more scholars secured admissions in leading research universities around the world.

Dr. Ruchi Dana, from JNMC, AMU, successfully got placed in a fully-funded MBA program offered by the Stanford University.

2009 - 2010

2011 - 2012



SSGSA expands its outreach program in Aligarh Muslim University, and SSGSA scholar Mr. Adil Masood, from the University of Ghent, Belgium, became the first successfully placed SSGSA scholar to go back to AMU as an ambassador of SSGSA, when he delivered a talk to students of Science and Life Sciences faculties.



SSGSA Co-Founder Dr. Saif Sheikh assumed the role of SSGSA's third Chair.

SSGSA scholar Dr. Ruchi Dana (R) with 66<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of State Ms. Condoleezza Rice (L).



Additional 9 scholars secured admissions in leading research universities around the world.

Continued...

# THE TIMELINE OF SSGSA

A path breaking Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Hon. Vice Chancellor Lt. General Zameeruddin Shah and Dr. Saif Sheikh, SSGSA Co-Founder and Chair, to facilitate summer internship opportunities for AMU students in USA. Major media outlets, including the Business Standard, highlighted the ISRA program.



SSGSA received a glowing recommendation from Aligarh Educational Endowment Fund (AEEF), which praised its efforts for giving the meritorious students of AMU a promising platform for pursuing their higher studies from prestigious universities abroad.

Past SSGSA awardees Ms. Nida Rehmani and Mr. Asim Rizvi were selected for the prestigious STEM-ER program under the Obama-Singh Knowledge Initiative Project (2014).

SSGSA scholar Mr. Wasikul Islam did his summer internship at reputed European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Geneva, Switzerland.

2013

2014 - 2015



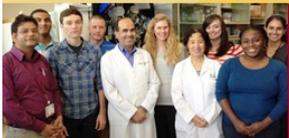
Dr. Saif Sheikh, SSGSA Co-Founder and Chair, delivered a seminar on educational opportunities in the US, facilitated by Dr. Suhail Sabir at AMU. Mr. Afzal Usmani, AEEF also attended the event.



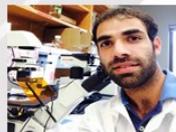
*Passing the baton.* Mr. Mohsin Khan, an SSGSA awardee, became the first scholar to become the Chair of SSGSA in the year 2013.



Mr. Hasan Kamal shedding light on SSGSA's mentorship activities at the FAAA Convention at Chicago, IL. The panelists include (L-R): Dr. Shaheer Khan (AEEF Executive), Mr. Mohsin Khan (SSGSA Chair), Ms. Beenish Zia (SSESA scholar), and Prof. Syed Hashsham (Professor, Michigan State University).



Mr. Sabahuddin Ahmad did his summer internship at Loyala University Medical School, Maywood, USA.



Mr. M.R. Wani completed his summer internship at University of Alabama, USA.



The first ever Facebook Live Question and Answer (Q&A) session for AMU students held in November 2016. Owing to the efforts by SSGSA scholar Mr. Abu Talha Danish, SSGSA Application Portal went live in 2016. The portal streamlined the selection process greatly, and the total number of applications went up by 200%.

Mr. S.K. Abdus Sayeed completed his summer internship at University of Houston (Main Campus), Houston, USA.



ISRA scholars completed summer internships in the US.

2014 -2015

2016



SSGSA scholar Mr. Mudasir Ahmad Yatoo delivered a talk on the opportunities abroad, required test scores and application process at the Department of Chemistry, AMU.

23 more scholars secured admissions in leading research universities around the world.



*Grooming leaders.* Mr. Ali Muzaffar, an SSGSA awardee, became the second scholar to become the Chair of SSGSA in the year 2016.

SSGSA Resource Centre, where the aspiring students can have access to webinars, collection of interesting videos related to higher studies, and copies of important information, opened in Centre of Alumni Affairs, Aligarh Muslim University.

Continued...

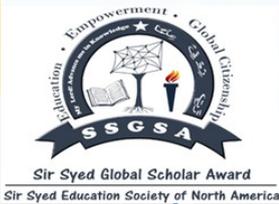
# THE TIMELINE OF SSGSA

SSESA became Sir Syed Global Scholar Award (SSGSA).

SSGSA published 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary newsletter. In its journey so far, SSGSA has successfully placed 70+ scholars in prestigious graduate programs around the world.

Mohammad Afzal Shadab joined the MIT, USA as a visiting Student Researcher.

Mr. Sheeraz Athar received the prestigious MITACS Globalink Research Fellowship.



The SSGSA Reviewer Portal went live in 2017, which streamlined online review process.

Dr Ruchi Dana received the 2018 YUVA RATNA Award for outstanding contribution towards the development of India and for fostering investment opportunities as a Young Indian Entrepreneur.

2017

2018

SSGSA Chair Mr. Ali Muzaffar and SSGSA scholar Mr. Wasikul Islam participated in the United Nations Youth Assembly as delegates and presented briefly about Sir Syed Emerging Scholar Award in the panel session of "Sustainable Development Goal: Quality Education" at UN Head Quarter in New York.



Mohd Toaha Umar becomes the sole recipient of the 2018 IEEE Life members Graduate Study Fellowship In Electrical Engineering, and is also awarded the IEEE Presidential Coin



Keeping the tradition. Mr. Wasikul Islam, an SSGSA awardee, assumed the role of SSGSA Chair in the year 2018.



Mr. Ahmad Faraz Badar became the prestigious SN Bose Scholar to pursue his internship at Purdue University, USA.

Dr. Abhishek Royal received World Health Organization (WHO) TDR (Tropical Disease Research) Fellowship.

Ms. Zeba Karin became one of the 50 recipients of the prestigious Khorana Scholarship and pursued her internship at the Rice University, Houston.



SSGSA award distribution at the Frank and Debbie Islam Management Complex on October 17, 2019.

2019

Mohd Umair Khan was awarded the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship for pursuing the Masters in economics programme at the University of Bath.

Arish Naim was selected for the American Chemical Society Travel Award to attend its 257th National Meeting in the USA and received the Shastri Indo-Canadian Award for an internship at University of British Columbia.

SSGSA application 2019 billboard near Bab-e-Syed, AMU



SSGSA webinars at main campus, AMU. Three successful events were conducted at the department of Chemistry, Women's college and Arts faculty.



Continued...

# THE TIMELINE OF SSGSA

SSGSA reached AMU off campus centres at Murshidabad, Mallapuram & Kishanganj through webinars and in-person modes first time.



2019- 2020

Dr. Saif Sheikh, Mr. Syed Ali Rizvi and Mr. Ali Muzaffar participated in FAAA-2019 convention. New Mexico House of representative Abbas Akhil Sahab can be seen discussing SSGSA.

Many outreach events of SSGSA took place resulting rise in SSGSA applications. Photos below are from IBU, AMU (left) & from Chemistry Dept. during Wasikul Islam's AMU visit (right).



Many SSGSA events/webinars/seminars were organized on AMU campus, and also through virtual platforms.

First SSGSA convention was conducted virtually on December 19, 2020 where 2019 Nobel Laureate Prof. Abhijit Banerjee (MIT) and Award-Winning Actress and Activist Ms. Swara Bhaskar were present as Keynote Speakers. AMU Vice Chancellor Prof. Tariq Mansoor and Entrepreneur, philanthropist Dr. Frank Islam were invited as distinguished guests.



2020

**SSGSA made history.** SSGSA achieved its first hundred success stories. The count goes beyond 120.

SSGSA conducted its virtual mode interview with SSGSA interview portal during COVID-19 pandemic .



SSGSA mentorship process improved with more mentors & new dashboards.



2019 Nobel Laureate Prof. Abhijit Banerjee shared life lessons with SSGSA scholars and convention participants.

*Passing the baton, again!* Mr. Salman Bin Kashif, an SSGSA awardee, will assume the role of SSGSA Chair starting year 2021.

# THE SUCCESS STORIES

S. NO.	SCHOLAR NAME	YEAR	PROGRAMMES
1	Adil Masood	2007	PhD; University of Ghent, Belgium
2	Asif Alvi	2007	MS; Boston University, USA
3	Asif A. Khan	2007	PhD; Ben Gurion Univ, Israel
4	Uzma Mansoori	2007	MBA, Liverpool John Moores University, UK
5	Mohammed Danish	2007	PhD in Chemistry, University of Science Malaysia, Malaysia
6	Beenish Zia	2008	M.S; Portland State Univ, USA
7	Savita Singh	2009	PhD; Cleveland State University, USA
8	Abdullah Ahsan	2009	MS, University of Maryland, USA
9	Syed Murtuza Abbas	2009	MS, University of Cincinnati, USA
10	Ali Shoeb Moon	2009	MS, Yeungnam University, South Korea
11	Mustafa Ali	2009	PhD, UAE University, UAE
12	Mohammad Khan	2010	PhD; University of Maryland, USA
13	Fahad Ali Usmani	2011	MS in Electrical and Electronics Engineering at University of Florida, FL, USA
14	Dr. Ruchi Dana	2011	MBA, Stanford University, Sloan Institute of Management (MIT), USA
15	Supriya Jindal	2011	PhD, Cleveland State University, USA
16	Moin Khan	2011	PhD, Turku Biotechnology Center, Finland
17	Amena Arif	2011	PhD, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, USA
18	Hanadi Falki	2011	MBA Program, Auckland University of Technology, NZ
19	Husain Bin Qasim	2011	MS Program, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA
20	Asim Rizvi	2011	PhD Program, University of Leeds, England

# THE SUCCESS STORIES

S. No.	SCHOLAR NAME	YEAR	PROGRAMMES
21	Abdul Haleem Kidwai	2012	MA Program, University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA, USA.
22	Musfira Jilani	2012	PhD Program, Portland State University & University College of Dublin,, Ireland.
23	Amra Ismail	2012	PhD Program, Cleveland State University, OH, USA.
24	Mustafa Ali Khan	2012	PhD Program, University of Maryland Baltimore, MD, USA
25	Haji Mohammad Saleem	2012	MS Program, McGill University, Canada & University of Amsterdam, Netherlands.
26	Meraj Khan	2012	PhD Program, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, WI, USA
27	Utkarsh Goel	2012	MS Program, Montana State University, MT, USA.
28	Danish Ameer Khan	2012	MS Program, Youngstown State University, OH, USA
29	Shah Kamran	2012	PhD Program, University College London, UK
30	Mohammad Saleem	2012	PhD in Cardiovascular Pharmacology from University of Houston, TX, USA
31	Zainuddin Quadri	2013	PhD Program, ICGEB, Italy
32	Quamar Niyaz	2013	University of Toledo, USA
33	Mohammad Anas Anis	2013	University of Cincinnati, USA
34	Mohammad Sarim	2013	University of Toledo, USA
35	Mohsin Jahan Qazi	2013	PhD Chemical Physics at University of Amsterdam, Netherland & MS Chemistry at University of Eastern Finland
36	M. Sameer Khan	2013	MS Power Electronics at North Carolina State University, USA
37	Ishan Sharma	2011	MS , Automotive Engineering, Clemson University, USA
38	Maqsood Alam	2011	PhD in Fluid Dynamics at Kingston University, London, UK
39	Mohd. Tabish Siddiqui	2011	MS Electrical and Computer Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA
40	Qambar Hasan Rizvi	2011	PhD in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia; Satellite Stem Cell Research Lab of School of Biotechnology, Yeungnam University, South Korea

# THE SUCCESS STORIES

S. No.	SCHOLAR NAME	YEAR	PROGRAMMES
41	Ali Muzaffar	2014	MS Engineering Management at the University of California Irvine and MS Electrical Engg at University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and Duluth, USA
42	Haris Shamsi	2014	MS program at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) Germany and the University of Edinburgh, UK
43	Atif Zafar	2014	PhD program at the Georgetown University, Washington DC, USA
44	Farid Haq	2014	PhD Computer Science program at the State University of New York (SUNY), NY, USA, University of Toledo, OH, USA
45	Kushagra Kumar	2014	MS Industrial Engineering, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, USA
46	Mohsin Jahan Qazi	2015	PhD program at the Tampere University of Technology, Finland and the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
47	Mudassir Yattoo	2015	PhD program at the Imperial College, London, UK, Erasmus Mundus Program (Germany), Tohoku University (Japan), University of Eastern Finland
48	M. Zulqaranain	2015	PhD program, Boise State University, ID, USA
49	Mohd Zubair	2015	PhD program in Biological Sciences, the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR, USA, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH, USA
50	Wasikul Islam	2015	PhD program in Physics, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, USA, University of Alabama, AL, USA and University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), Baltimore, MD, USA
51	Farhat Parveen	2015	MS program in Electronics, University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), Baltimore, MD, USA, University of Toledo, OH, USA, New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), NJ, USA,
52	Prakhar Gupta	2015	MS program in Civil and Environmental Engineering, the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC), IL, USA
53	Mariam Siddiqui	2015	MS program in Electrical Engineering, the New York University, New York, NY, USA
54	Medha Sharma	2016	PhD in Cell and Systems Biology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
55	Tanwee Kausar	2016	MS Program, Stony Brook University, New York, USA
56	Taru Saraswat	2016	MS, Computer Science, Cornell University, USA

# THE SUCCESS STORIES

S. NO.	SCHOLAR NAME	YEAR	PROGRAMMES
57	Abhay Mittal	2016	MS, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, US, University of Southern California, USA
58	Kashif Ahmad	2016	Purdue University, West Lafayette, USA ( MS in Industrial Engineering), North Carolina State University, Raleigh, US (MS in Operations Research), Joint Masters Program in Tribology and Masters in Space Technology in joint European Program
59	Mohammad Zulqarnain	2016	Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e), Netherlands
60	Rajat Kant Goel	2016	University of Southern California, US, North Carolina State University, USA
61	Safia Rahmat	2016	University of Toledo, USA and University of Maryland (Baltimore County), MD, USA
62	Md Sajid Khan	2016	Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey with Full-Bright Scholarship
63	Abhishek Royal	2016	MS in Public Health, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia; School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University , Boston University's School of Public Health (Boston) ,Tulane University, New Orleans (LA) , Yale University, USA
64	Nida Rehmani	2016	MS in Education-STEM, Ohio State University,Columbus,OH, USA
65	Mohammad Faraz	2016	MS, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago for Masters in Mechanical Engineering , Arizona State University, US, Oklahoma State University, USA
66	Bhanu Pandey	2017	MS , Electrical & Computer Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology, USA
67	Sadia Tanweer	2017	Masters in Research Chemists, ,University of Eastern Finland, Finland
68	Ajazarul Islam	2017	PhD Physics, Kent State University, Ohio, USA, Mississippi State University, MS, USA, Western Michigan University, Michigan, University of Massachusetts, Lowell, USA
69	Abdullah Haroon	2017	MS in Civil Engineering at Southern Illinois University, IL, US , University at Buffalo (SUNY) , University of Illinois, Chicago , University of Toledo, US., Michigan Tech. University, US, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

# THE SUCCESS STORIES

S. NO.	SCHOLAR NAME	YEAR	PROGRAMMES
70	Sarmad Rizvi	2017	MS in Chemical Engineering from University of Florida, USA, State University of New York (SUNY), Buffalo, New York, University of Toledo, Ohio and University of Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
71	Sk Abdus Sayeed	2017	PhD in Biology ,Cleveland State University, OH, US , Texas Tech University, Texas, USA, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, USA and University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR, USA
72	Shujaut Bader	2017	PhD in Aerospace Engineering, Iowa State University, Iowa, US, Virginia Tech University, Virginia, USA & MS Mechanical Engineering program (2015) at The University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, USA
73	Sharif Kidwai	2017	MS, Texas A&M University, Texas, USA ,North Carolina State University, University of Illinois, Chicago & Michigan Technological University, USA
74	Sabahuddin Ahmad	2017	PhD in Biology at Heinrich Heine University of Dusseldorf, Germany
75	Salman Bin Kashif	2017	PhD in Chemical Engineering, Clemson University, South Carolina, USA, MSc program (2014) at Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Malaysia
76	Zeba Khanam	2018	PhD in Computer Science, University of Essex, England
77	Tajuddin Khan	2018	PhD in Economics from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, USA
78	Sajad Shiekh	2018	PhD in Physics from Kent State University, OH, USA & University of Sonora, Mexico
79	Hafijul Islam	2018	PhD in Physics from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA , University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, USA & Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, USA
80	Hashir Ahmad	2018	M.Sc Informatics from Technical University Munich (TUM), Germany & Southern California at Los Angeles, California, USA
81	Vibhu Varshney	2018	MS in Computer Science from Arizona State University, USA, North Carolina State University, North Carolina, USA & University of Southern California, California, USA
82	Mohd Toaha Umar	2018	MS in Communications Engineering from Technical University of Munich(TUM) at Munich, Germany, University of Southern California, USA, University of Toronto, Canada & EURECOM Institute at Alpes-Maritimes, France

# THE SUCCESS STORIES

S. No.	SCHOLAR NAME	YEAR	PROGRAMMES
83	Abhinandan Jain	2018	MS from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA & MS in Electronics Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology
84	Rifa Khan	2018	MSc. Informatics from Technical University of Munich (TUM), Munich, Germany
85	Atiur Rahman	2018	PhD Chemistry from University of Fribourg, Switzerland
86	Arshia Sulaiman	2018	MS Industrial Chemistry from Nankai University, China
87	Junaid Khan	2018	joint MS-PhD Physics from University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany
88	Mohd Azeem Khan	2018	PhD in Chemical Engineering from Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey, USA
89	William Issac	2018	MS in Electrical & Electronics Engineering, University of Toronto, Canada
90	Syed Asnal Rizvi	2019	MS in Computer Science & Engg. from Politecnico di Milano, Italy
91	Ishfaq Ibni Hashim	2019	PhD in Inorganic Chemistry, from Ghent University, Belgium
92	Atiya Usmani	2019	PhD in Engineering & informatics, from University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland
93	Fasil Bashir Wani	2019	MS in Physics from University of Burgundy, France; Aalto University, Finland; University of Turku, Finland; & University of Jyväskylä, Finland
94	Vatsala	2019	MS in Electrical Engineering from University of Calgary, Canada
95	Monanshi Gupta	2019	MS in Computer Science & Engg. from University of Minnesota, USA
96	Vanshika Varshney	2019	MS in Information Systems, University of Maryland College Park, USA; Texas A & M University, USA and University of Texas at Dallas, USA
97	Shiva Agarwal	2019	PhD in Physics, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA
98	Madeeha Mohd Zubair	2019	PhD in Physics, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, USA
99	Mohd Umair Khan	2019	MSc in Development Studies at London School of Economics, UK & MSc in Economic Development at University of Glasgow, UK & MSc in FT Behavioural Finance at Queen Mary University of London, UK
100	Mohammad Omar Khursheed	2019	MS in Computer Science, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA, and U Mass. Amherst, USA

# THE SUCCESS STORIES

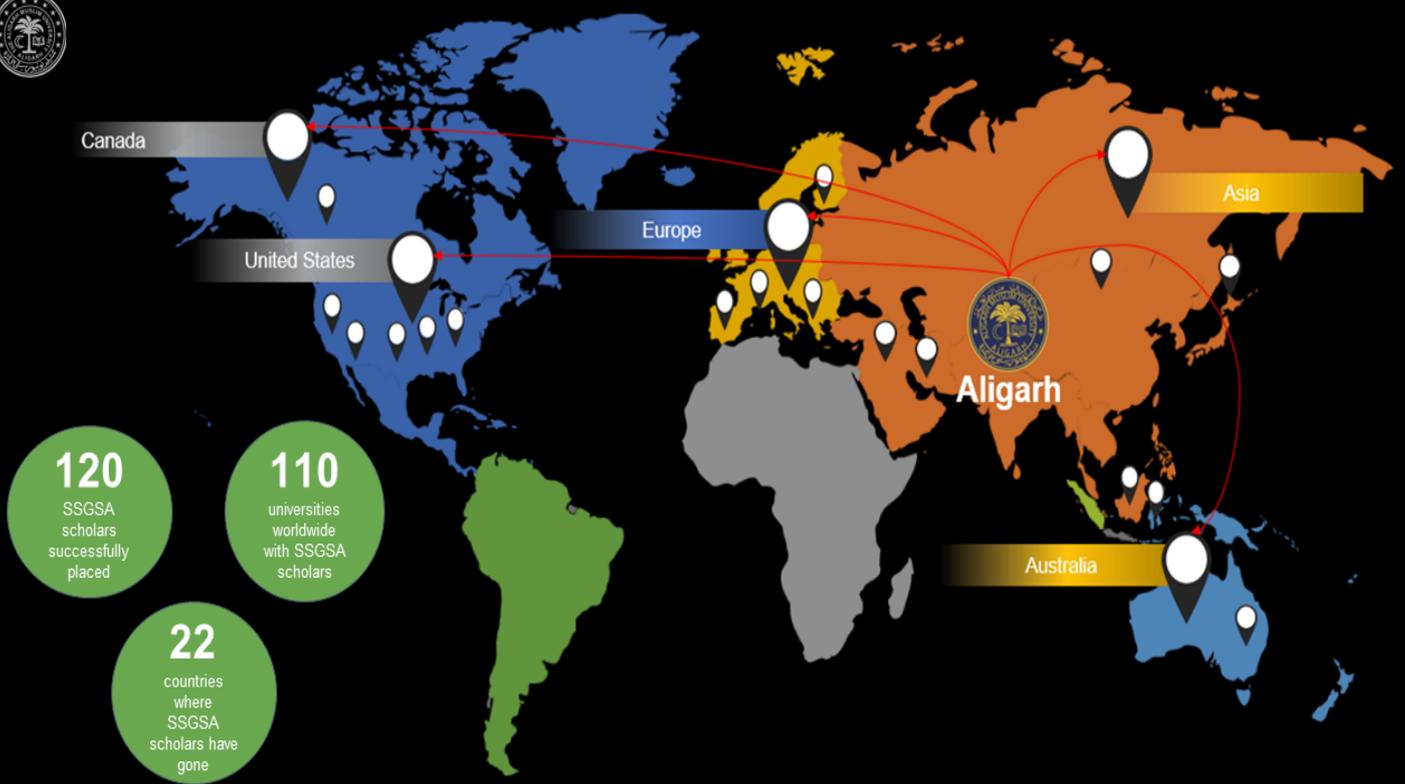
S. No.	SCHOLAR NAME	YEAR	PROGRAMMES
101	Mohammad Afzal Shadab	2019	PhD in Computational Science at University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA & (2016) M.Phil in Mechanical Engineering, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong
102	Sachin Gupta	2019	PhD in Physics at University of Massachusetts Lowell, Massachusetts, USA
103	Faiz Alam	2019	MS in Computer Engineering at Arizona State University, Arizona, USA
104	Sheeraz Athar	2019	MPhil in Mechanical Engineering at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong
105	Rukhsar Ahmed	2020	PhD in Chemical Engineering from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, USA
106	Haaris Ahsan Safdari	2020	PhD in Biological Sciences at Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland
107	Arish Naim	2020	MS in Mechanical Engineering at University of British Columbia, Canada
108	Md Ful Hossain Sk	2020	PhD in Physics, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, USA, Kansas State University, KS, USA, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, USA & University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, USA
109	Abdul Hannan Faruqi	2020	MS in Computational Science - Joint Program of the University of Amsterdam and Vrije University, Netherlands; MSE in Aerospace Engineering at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA and PhD in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at Oklahoma State University, OK, USA
110	Arpit Jadon	2020	MS in Electrical & Computer Engineering at University of Southern California, USA; Professional Masters Program (M. Eng) in Computer Engineering at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA; MS at Georgia Tech University, Georgia, USA; MS at North Carolina State University, North Carolina, USA & MS at University of Saarland, Germany
111	Shivam Kumar Upadhya	2020	MS in Electrical Engineering at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, USA
112	Jeelani Inaam ul Haq	2020	MS in Geology from Katholieke Universiteit (KU) Leuven, Belgium, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands & MS in Geology and Geophysics at University of Helsinki, Finland

# THE SUCCESS STORIES

S. No.	SCHOLAR NAME	YEAR	PROGRAMMES
113	Noma Ahmad	2020	PhD in Computer Science from Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, USA; PhD in Computer Science from Florida State University, USA
114	Mohammad Waquar Uddin Siddiqui	2020	M.Sc program in Molecular Chemistry at University of Burgundy, France; Masters in Research Chemists, University of Eastern Finland, Finland
115	Zuhaib Akhtar	2020	MS in Software Engineering at Arizona State University, USA; MS in Artificial Intelligence at Northeastern University, USA; MS in Computer Science at University of Texas, Arlington, USA; MS in Computer Science at University of Texas, Dallas, USA; MS in Computer Science at New York University, Tandon; MS in Computer Science at New York University, Courant, USA; MS in Computer Science at University of Central Florida, USA
116	Syed Husain Mustafa	2020	MS in Computer Science at University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, USA; MS in Informatics at Technical University of Munich, Munich, Germany
117	Pradeep Kumar	2020	MS in Electrical & Computer Engineering at University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada
118	Firoz Khan	2020	MS in Mathematics at the Institute of Mathematics, University of Burgundy, France
119	Anam Hashmi	2021	MS in Computer Science at University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
120	Zeba Karin Ahmad	2021	MS in Visual Computing at Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany

# THE SUCCESS STORIES: STATISTICS

## Distribution of SSGSA Scholars Around the Globe

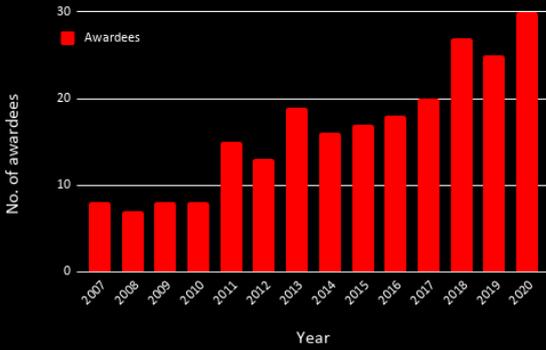


SIR SYED EDUCATION SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA  
(A 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization)  
Lexington, MA 02421, USA  
Email: [contact@ssgsa.us](mailto:contact@ssgsa.us) | Website: [www.ssgsa.us](http://www.ssgsa.us)

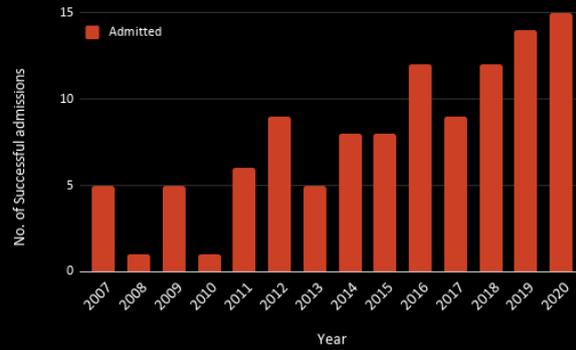
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# THE SUCCESS STORIES: STATISTICS

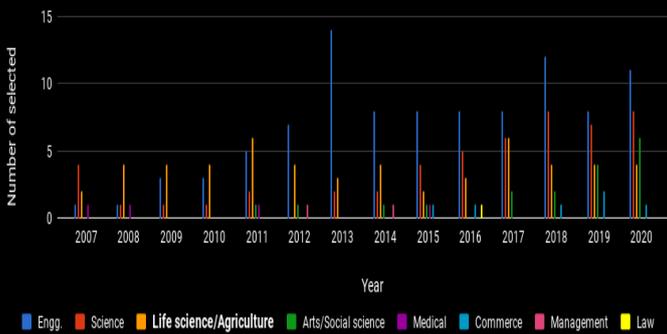
SSGSA Awardees over the years



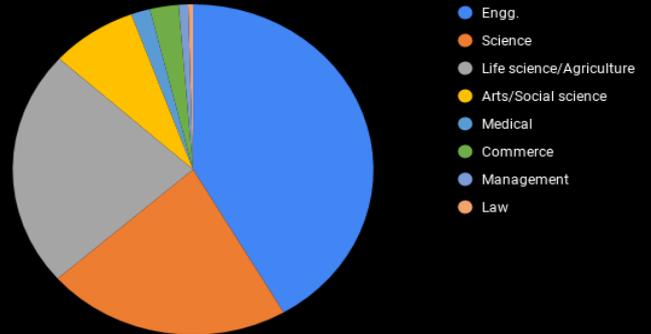
Number of admission of SSGSA scholars



Faculty wise distribution of SSGSA scholars

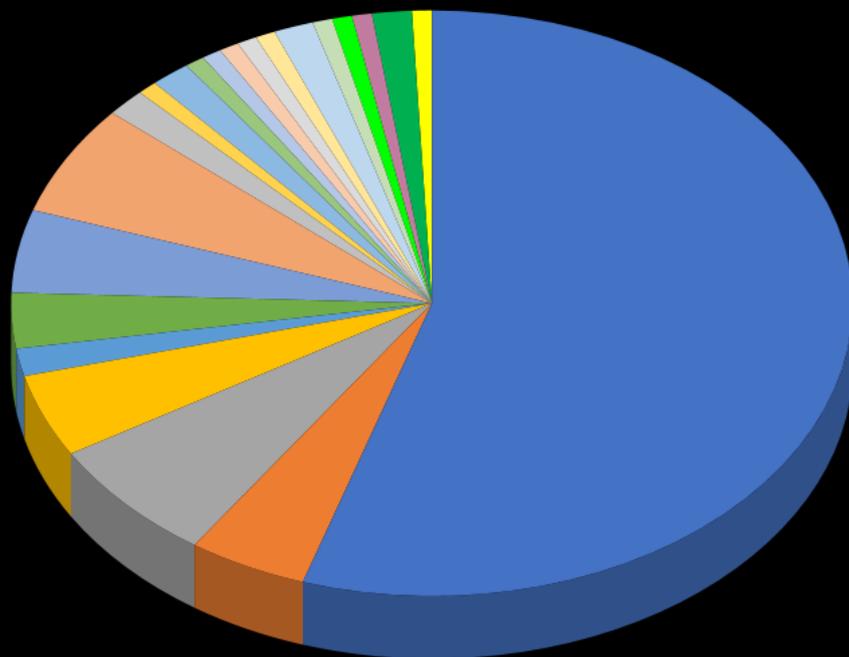


Selected SSGSA scholars



Destination of SSGSA scholars for higher studies (2007-2020)

- USA
- Canada
- Germany
- UK
- Ireland
- France
- Netherlands
- Finland
- Belgium
- Switzerland
- Italy
- Poland
- Turkey
- Australia
- New Zealand
- UAE
- Malaysia
- Indonesia
- China
- Hong Kong
- South Korea
- Israel



# AND THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

## THE LIST OF THE 2020 SSGSA SCHOLARS

After receiving a record number of applications from the Faculties of Arts, Commerce, Humanities, Science, Life Science and Engineering, the SSGSA family announced the selection of 30 scholars for the academic session 2020-2021. The scholars were selected after a rigorous selection process, which included a test and an interview round. The list of the selected scholars, in alphabetical order, is as follows:

SSGSA SCHOLAR 2020-21	FACULTY/ DEPARTMENT
AIJAZ NAZIR	SCIENCE / MATHEMATICS
ANAM HASHMI	ENGINEERING / ELECTRONICS
AREESHA ALI	SCIENCE / PHYSICS
AREESHA KHAN	SOCIAL SCIENCE / DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
ARIBA SHAHAB	SCIENCE / INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY
AZKA KHANAM	ENGINEERING / ELECTRONICS
BURHANI TAHER SAIFUDDIN	SCIENCE / PHYSICS
FATIMA MUZAFFAR,	LAW / LAW
IFRA ILYAS ANSARI	SCIENCE / CHEMISTRY
JAFFAR ALI LONE	ENGINEERING / ELECTRICAL
JAVERIA MARYAM	SOCIAL SCIENCE / ECONOMICS
KHAN SAAD BIN HASAN	ENGINEERING / COMPUTER SCIENCE
MAAZ ABDUL MOIZ	ENGINEERING / CIVIL
MAHVASH JAFRI	COMMERCE / COMMERCE
MARIYAM ABBAS	SOCIAL SCIENCE / PSYCHOLOGY
MD ABDULLAH ANSARI	ENGINEERING / ELECTRICAL
MD SOHIDUL ISLAM	LIFE SCIENCE / ZOOLOGY
MOHAMMAD HANZALA	ENGINEERING / CIVIL
MOHD AZHAR HASAN ANSARI	SCIENCE / CHEMISTRY
MOHD HOZAIFA KHAN	ENGINEERING / COMPUTER SCIENCE
OROOSA ANWAR	ARTS / ENGLISH
PRADEEP KUMAR	ENGINEERING / MECHANICAL
RABIA OMAR	SCIENCES / PHYSICS
TANUJ SINGHAL	ENGINEERING / COMPUTER SCIENCE
WAREESHA ALI	LIFE SCIENCES / BIOTECHNOLOGY
WASEEM AHMAD	ENGINEERING / MECHANICAL
YASHA TAIMURI	LIFE SCIENCE / ZOOLOGY
ZAINAB FAIYAZ	LIFE SCIENCE / BIOTECHNOLOGY
ZANBAZ AHMED KHAN	SOCIAL SCIENCE/ ECONOMICS
ZISHAN HASSAN	MANAGEMENT / BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

# TALES OF THE SCHOLARS

# SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT:

## DR. ABHISHEK ROYAL



**Dr. Abhishek Royal** is one of the most inspirational and unique success stories of the Sir Syed Global Scholar Award (SSGSA). Dr. Royal is an alumnus of the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College (JNMC), Aligarh Muslim University, and is currently pursuing the Master's Program in Public Health in Implementation Research from the Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. He is pursuing WHO TDR. Postgraduate training in Tropical Diseases as a part of his master's program. His program is fully sponsored by WHO, UNICEF, UNDP and World Bank. Coming from a humble background in Hathras, India, Dr. Royal developed a strong inclination towards giving back to the community. This sense of altruism prompted him to take up Medicine as a career, and later Public Health as a specialization. An SSGSA scholar of the 2015 batch, Dr. Royal is one of a select few scholars from the medical background. He recalls the significant role SSGSA played in his career, and how helpful everyone was.

"Everyone at SSGSA was extremely supportive. When I joined SSGSA, I felt that I did not know how to present my accomplishments and talents properly.

I feel medicos often have difficulties in doing so, and for me, even making a resume seemed like a gargantuan task. Furthermore, at the time, no one from SSGSA had pursued Masters in Public Health, which was the field in which I wanted to specialize.

There were significant obstacles to overcome, but the senior figures at SSGSA, in particular, Rehan Bhai, Saif Bhai, Rizvi Bhai, Mohsin Bhai and my friends, Ali Muzaffar and Afzal Shadab guided me throughout my journey. They advised me on approaching the application process in the right way and helped me improve my presentation skills."

Dr. Royal has extensive experience of working in public, private as well as the non-profit sector along with consistently pursuing his academics. He is also involved in volunteering work at various levels. He has represented India at various international platforms including Delhi Sustainable Development Summit and 4<sup>th</sup> People's Health Assembly. He was also a part of a relief team from AMU to Nepal Earthquakes in 2015. Owing to his strong academic record and exemplary voluntary services at grass root levels, he secured admission in best public health institutes of the world including Johns Hopkins University, UC Berkeley and Yale University. However, he was unable to join these institutes due to his poor socio-economic condition and inability to secure student loans for his studies.

Undaunted by these setbacks, Dr. Royal continued his work at grass root levels in public health and enrolled in master's programme at AIIMS Jodhpur. However, due to the poor quality of the programme and systemic harassment by the authorities, he resigned from the course and moved back to the fieldwork. In 2019, he got selected in a new postgraduate training programme by the **World Health Organization** with a focus on research in 'diseases of poverty' This prestigious scholarship enabled him to live his dream of pursuing an

*Continued...*

# SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT:

## DR. ABHISHEK ROYAL

International Master's In Public Health from Indonesia's finest university: **Universitas Gadjah Mada.**

Coming from a poor socioeconomic background, Dr. Royal has faced great adversities in all sectors of life. These experiences have made him empathetic to the plight of the marginalized sections of society. He explains, "When I started pursuing my degree, I wanted to be at the forefront of treating the communities who were at the receiving end of the worst kind of societal oppression. I wanted to make sure I played a part in making their lives better".



Dr. Royal has worked extensively for the health of slum dwellers, sex workers, drug users, LGBTQIA+ and people living with HIV & AIDS. He is an HIV physician and among one of the few LGBTQIA+ health experts in the country. He was invited as a speaker in the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam in 2018 and received a National Community Leadership Award 2018 for his exemplary contribution to community development and strengthening India's HIV response. He advocates against the discrimination of these neglected communities and works for their human rights, "These communities are frequently subjected to severe discrimination. It is important to accept them and protect their human rights. The abolition of Section 377 is a welcome step but a lot more needs to be done."

To the budding SSGSA scholars, Dr. Royal has a simple message. "It is important to do something 'extra' along with your classes during college. It could be projects, research work, extra courses, sports or volunteer work. Along with strengthening your applications for master's or PhD programs, it makes you a practical and strong person in life. It is really important to learn to apply your theoretical knowledge to practice".

# FROM AMU TO HARVARD, VIA EUROPE: A CONVERSATION WITH DR. MOHSIN QAZI



**Toaha:** You've had quite a journey so far- from starting in AMU to going to pursue your second Master's program in Finland, and then proceeding to do your PhD in Amsterdam, and now you are doing your Postdoc in Harvard University. Can you please walk us through your journey?

**Dr. Qazi:** Growing up in a small town in Kashmir, like many other young people, I had aspirations of going into the field of medicine. To pursue this field, I appeared in the entrance examination of 11<sup>th</sup> grade in the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). Even though I was not successful at the time, I was impressed by the environment of AMU, and I applied again to the Bachelor of Science(B.Sc) program in Chemistry and was successful this time. I had an interesting dilemma, however, as the Jammu and Kashmir entrance exam coincided with the admission day of AMU. I went with my gut instinct and decided to study at AMU.

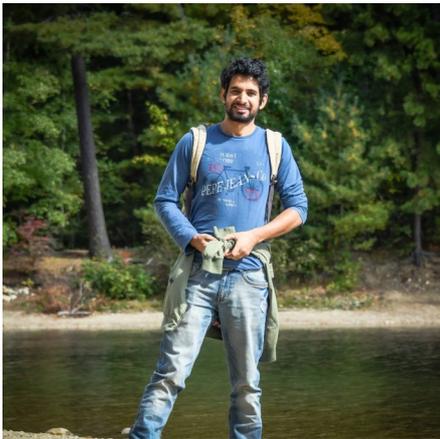
**Toaha:** Did you always have plans of pursuing higher studies when you joined or was it a decision you took later?

**Dr. Qazi:** I honestly did not think I could pursue higher studies abroad, because of my economic background. It all changed when SSGSA conducted a workshop in the Department of Chemistry, which was organized by Prof Suhail Sabir, in which I got to learn the story of Dr. Mohsin Khan bhai, who was the first scholar from our Department to pursue his PhD from abroad. That story inspired me greatly, and I decided to pursue my higher studies from abroad.

Since my Master's at AMU was more coursework based, I wanted to get more practical experience before I joined a PhD program. Therefore, I joined the Master's degree programme in Research Chemists at the University of Eastern Finland. I was the first person from AMU to go through this program, and five people have followed me after that. The program opened up many promising opportunities for me, and I ended up joining the University of Amsterdam for my PhD program.

*Continued...*

# FROM AMU TO HARVARD, VIA EUROPE: A CONVERSATION WITH DR. MOHSIN QAZI



I had an interesting experience in Amsterdam for four years. I also switched from Chemistry to Physics, and that aided my professional growth greatly. After my PhD, I took a little time to ponder whether I wanted to go into academia or industry, and I then decided to change my location. I was fortunate to find a great match in a research group at the Rowland Institute at Harvard, where I have been working for the past 10 months. Overall, it has been a great journey for me.

**Toaha: How difficult was it to transition from one area to another? What were the challenges that you faced?**

**Dr. Qazi:** It was quite challenging, but research is increasingly interdisciplinary nowadays. There are a lot of fields which act as an interface between two different fields. The field in which I work in- soft metaphysics consists of physicists, chemists, chemical engineers and mechanical engineers. Working in that field made the transition easier for me. The biggest difference I observed was that physicists and chemists often approached problems in different ways, which was challenging at first, but ultimately quite rewarding.

**Toaha: Were there any cultural differences between Finland and the Netherlands, or was your experience more or less consistent throughout?**

**Dr. Qazi:** Amsterdam is very different from Finland. Finland is a sparsely populated country, so you hardly see people walking in the streets. So when I came to Amsterdam for an interview, watching people in the streets almost made me feel like I was in a crowded street in Delhi! Amsterdam was the right place for me, as I felt that my personal development is as important as my professional development. I felt Amsterdam gave me the best of both worlds, as it is a melting pot of people from different countries, and that is why I chose Amsterdam as my destination for pursuing the PhD.

**Toaha: What differences in work culture did you observe while pursuing your PhD?**

**Dr. Qazi:** One thing which stood out to me during my time in Finland and Amsterdam was the ease with which you can approach professors here. In India, there is often a hierarchy, and that makes communication quite difficult at times. In Europe, they advertise PhD as a job position, instead of having an entrance exam. I was invited to the labs in both Finland and Amsterdam and got an opportunity to interact with my peers in the lab and ask questions to determine if I was a good fit. I feel that the wellbeing of a student is given a high priority in Europe. During evaluations, I was always asked if I felt happy and satisfied. We are also encouraged to have our own opinions and are free to disagree with someone who has tons of experience in an area. It was quite engaging too, as I got to work in a pretty international group. We had people from 8-10 countries in our group and often got together for social events. Overall, my experience was quite enriching, both professionally and personally.

*Continued...*

# FROM AMU TO HARVARD, VIA EUROPE: A CONVERSATION WITH DR. MOHSIN QAZI

**Toaha:** So after you were done with your PhD, how did you chart your journey from Amsterdam to Harvard?

**Dr. Qazi:** A great feature of our PhD program was that we got to attend lots of conferences. During my time at Amsterdam, I ended up attending around 15 conferences. I attended the American Physical Society March meeting last year, and after my presentation, I had a brief chat with one of my present-day colleagues. He then invited me to the lab, and that set the wheels in motion.

**Toaha:** What differences did you observe in the work cultures of Europe and the USA?

**Dr. Qazi:** I feel that the academic environment in the USA is much more demanding. In European countries, you are expected to maintain a work-life balance. Everyone was asked to leave for home after a specific time, which is something that does not happen in the United States. Another observation I have is that the universities are heavily inclined towards entrepreneurial endeavours. You will often find professors helping the students to start-up companies. European universities are also evolving now and becoming more entrepreneurial than before, but I find the entrepreneurial spirit higher in the USA.

**Toaha:** Before we finish off this engaging conversation, would you like to share some advice for your juniors who may wish to follow a similar path as you?

**Dr. Qazi:** I have often felt that a disproportionate amount of importance is placed on the grades or percentages obtained in examinations. While the grades are certainly important, students often do not pick up skills which are necessary for thriving in a professional environment. There are numerous online courses available across different platforms, and I would strongly recommend students to sharpen their skills, which will benefit them in the future.

**Toaha:** This has been an enriching conversation, Dr. Qazi! Thank you so much for your time!

**Dr. Qazi:** You are very welcome. It has been a pleasure!



# LIFE ABROAD: GRADUATION AND BEYOND



**Mr. Sharif Kidwai**

Over the years, SSGSA has produced over 100 successful scholars: people from different academic and social backgrounds. While there are plenty of resources about profile building for a successful application, we often do not know how life is in countries far away from our home.

Moving abroad is a daunting challenge. The culture, the cuisine and the people are all different, so culture shocks are a part and parcel of living abroad.

**Mr. Sharif Kidwai**, ( Schlumberger Inc., MS in Electrical Engineering, Texas A&M University, 2018), recalls the biggest shock of moving to the United States was the drastic difference in population density between India and USA, "Initially when I moved there, I found the place to be quite depressing.

But Americans, in general, are quite friendly, and good at small talk, so it helped me adjust." Homesickness is also inevitable, as pointed out by **Dr. Mohsin Khan** (ex SSGSA Chair, Senior Consultant at Booz Allen Hamilton), "Being away from your family is challenging. To overcome this feeling, I tried to rationalize my thoughts- as I was here on a purpose. Furthermore, the Alig community, in particular, the SSGSA family, helped me adjust when I first moved here."

There are certain perks as well. **Ms. Tanwee Kausar**, (Senior Engineer at Qualcomm) elaborates, "I feel the biggest advantage is the enhanced safety aspect. Furthermore, moving abroad helped me become more independent and gain more agency". Adjusting to the culture is also a lot of fun, as **Dr. Musfira Jilani** (PhD, University College Dublin) recalls, "As I had studied in a convent school before, I did not feel overwhelmed by the shift. I also stayed with an Irish landlady, which was a great learning curve for me, and helped me understand the local culture. "



**Dr. Mohsin Khan**

There is a sizeable shift in the academic culture as well. Mr. Kidwai recalls the intensive academic schedule, " In the USA, there is a focus on continuous learning, so students are expected to complete weekly assignments, which are non-trivial and require dedication. Initially, I used to procrastinate, but I quickly realized that discipline is critical if one is to succeed here. It is also important to maintain communication with the professors and the teaching assistants, as they help you navigate the courses." Ms Kausar also talks about the benefits of the practical aspects of the courses, " The first semester at Stony Brook University was dedicated to coursework, and after that, the Master programme was fairly project-oriented which was quite challenging but rewarding as well."

*Continued...*

# LIFE ABROAD: GRADUATION AND BEYOND



**Ms. Tanwee Kausar**

Graduate studies offer plenty of options after completion, be it in research, the tech industry, academia or consulting. Ms Kausar and Mr. Kidwai both pursued their Masters in the USA and ended up in different domains. Ms. Kausar, who had previously worked in Adobe for 3 years in India, says "From the beginning itself, I wanted to pursue a career in the tech industry, and I, therefore looked for internships immediately after reaching the States. I was fortunate to secure an internship with Qualcomm, which helped me transition into a full-time job with the company."

Mr. Kidwai, on the other hand, wanted a more research-oriented role, and even though he had completed an internship with Facebook, he chose to decline their full-time job offer and chose to work for Schlumberger, as the Facebook role was more managerial as compared to Schlumberger's research-oriented role. As to why he chose to work in industry instead of pursuing a PhD, he explains, "I wanted to work in a more practical setting, as practical work is a different ball-game compared to the theoretical academic work. Working in industrial R&D gives me more flexibility and helps me increase the breadth of my knowledge, rather than restricting my knowledge to one particular area only."

While pursuing a PhD is often looked at as a vehicle for joining the academia, there are other options as well. Dr. Jilani recalls that she wanted to contribute to the healthcare field after graduating as an Electronics Engineer, and thus took up a PhD. She then transitioned to a teaching role, as an Associate Professor with the Dublin City University at the new Riyadh campus. "Teaching has been a joy so far", she says, "It has opened up a lot of new avenues in which I can learn. It is often challenging, but quite enjoyable too."

Dr. Khan, on the other hand, wanted to explore different fields. "I wanted to gain more exposure, and not restrict myself to academia only. I explored different areas such as investment banking and management consulting and looked for mentors in these fields. I was quite proactive in my laboratory as well and took up additional tasks which no one was willing to do, such as working towards obtaining funding for the lab. The key to success is building relationships, and thanks to these relationships, I ended up in my current role at Booz Allen Hamilton as a management consultant."

As explained by Dr. Khan, everyone agrees that the key to success is through effective networking. "It is important to keep in touch with the seniors ", says Dr. Jilani. Dr. Khan further adds, "Reaching out to different people and looking for collaboration opportunities are the most effective ways of building relationships. It is important to have a personal network as well, and it is critical for your stability and happiness."

# THE MIT EXPERIENCE: MR. AFZAL SHADAB



*Being the top research institute in the world, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is a dream destination for engineers. One of SSGSA's most illustrious scholars, Mr. Afzal Shadab, spent a year at the prestigious institute as a Visiting Student Researcher. Here, the newsletter team interviews Mr. Shadab about his experiences at MIT.*

**Toaha:** Can you please describe your journey to MIT?

**Mr. Shadab:** Of course. I pursued my Master's at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), and in the second year, I participated in an entrepreneurial boot camp called MIT Entrepreneurship and Making Skills Integrator (MEMSI), in which 14 students from Hong Kong and MIT worked along with each other. I was greatly inspired by the MIT students and their work ethic. My team's start-up, Hummingbird, performed excellently at the event, winning both the judge's prize and the audience prize on the final day. This gave me the confidence to apply to MIT for a research project.

The journey was not easy. I first applied to the MEMSI program in January 2018 but was unsuccessful in my application. I tried again in June and was successful this time. I then had to find a group for myself, and after sending out scores of emails, I finally secured a Skype interview with a professor. The interview went quite well, and not only the professor agreed to take me in his group, he also agreed to fund my project! The funding was critical, as the Boston area is quite expensive.

**Toaha:** That is incredible! So, did you face any challenges when you went to MIT?

**Mr. Shadab** Yes, I did. The biggest challenge was changing my field from computational research and fluids to polymers. I was also the only Indian in my research group, and that meant that not only was I representing myself, I was also representing my alma mater and country at the institute. The project itself was quite challenging, but I ended up learning a lot from the experience.

*Continued...*

# THE MIT EXPERIENCE: MR. AFZAL SHADAB



**Toaha:** I am sure you must have done a terrific job. How was the work culture at MIT?

**Mr. Shadab:** The biggest takeaway from MIT was that everyone was always talking and breathing research. In cafes, instead of gossiping, people used to discuss their research. While it could get stressful at times, there were plenty of places around the Boston area for recreation. I was also involved with the Muslim Students Association, and there was a distinct but vibrant Indian community there, so I never felt I was too far away from my culture and people. I also owe deep gratitude to **Syed Ali Rizvi sir**, who was extremely hospitable and made me feel right at home. While the academic pressure was quite intense, I enjoyed taking the classes.

**Toaha:** I'm glad to hear that! Can you share some interesting trivia about MIT?

**Mr. Shadab:** I think one thing I found interesting was that the professors were extremely approachable, which does not happen everywhere! The professors often carried a notepad and a pen along with them, and if a student even approached them with questions outside of the class, they would happily explain the solution to the students.

**Toaha:** Thank you so much for your time, Afzal bhai! Would you like to share some advice with your juniors?

**Mr. Shadab:** It would be my pleasure! I feel it is important to be grateful for what you have, and have a burning desire for your career goals. It is very important to recognize your strengths and hone them to an extent that will set you apart from the rest of the crowd. Also, it is very important to network and connect with people. Networking opens a lot of doors, and the right people will help you make the right decisions!

# SHAPING CAREERS WITH FOREIGN INTERNSHIPS



Mr. Sheeraz Athar

**Mr. Sheeraz Athar** is an SSGSA scholar of the 2018 batch, and is currently pursuing M.Phil from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). An enterprising scholar, Mr. Athar secured the prestigious MITACS Globalink Research Fellowship, which enabled him to pursue a research internship at a Canadian institute. He went on to do his internship at the **Ecole de Technologie Superieure, Montreal** for three months, which was a great learning experience for him. He liked the efficient and professional working culture of the institute, and there were plenty of recreational activities as well! His research was focused on the spine of the human body, and its reactions based on increments of loading, and he worked towards predicting the fracture patterns.

**Ms Zeba Karin** is an alumna of the ZH College of Engineering and Technology, Aligarh Muslim University. She is an SSGSA scholar of the 2019 batch. In 2019, Ms Karin became one of the 50 recipients of the prestigious Khorana Programme scholarship. This scholarship enabled Ms Karin to take up a 3 month internship at a premier university in the United States of America. She went on to pursue her internship at the Rice University in Houston. Her research was concerned with Deep Learning, and she developed a Multi-modality prediction model. The model combined the physical data of psychiatric patients along with the prediction models based on structural/MRI results. While the academic work was enriching, Ms Karin fondly recalls the time she spent at the university. The cultural programmes at the university gave her a chance to interact with different people, and her time at the university enabled her to become a more dynamic individual. Ms Karin recently obtained an admission offer to the Master's program in Visual Computing at the University of Saarland, Germany.



Ms Zeba Karin

# VISIONS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

# VISION FROM THE FIRST SSGSA CHAIR:

## DR. SHAIDA ANDRABI



**Dr. Shaida Andrabi**  
*University of Kashmir*  
*Srinagar, India*

It gives me tremendous pleasure to write this note for the SSGSA newsletter on the occasion of celebrating our success stories and our first virtual convention on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2020. This program, originally named as Sir Syed Excellence in Science Award (SSESA) was founded in 2006 when Rehan Baqri and I met in Boston. We were very lucky to get in touch with very good persons who immediately understood the significance, impact and the relevance of our desire: Mr. Ali Rizvi and Dr. Saif Sheikh, two outstanding persons. We together laid the foundation of an organization that would identify, mentor and guide students towards successful careers. The important points that we agreed upon for the organization were as the following:

- This would be a completely democratic and non-political organization. The organization would be run by selfless people.
- This would be a highly student-centric organization, where the leadership would be given to the students who obtain admission through our program and who will take a keen interest in organizational affairs. The students would always bring energy and keep the organization young, and incorporate the latest trends.
- Within a few years, the organization would be self-sufficient in its resources. The students who reach to the reputed places in different parts of the globe would ultimately contribute to the organizational growth and make it rich both financially as well as intellectually.

With almost no resources to start with, we initiated the program in 2006. The organization initially worked under the aegis of the then newly founded Aligarh Alumni Association of New England (AAANE) but later chose its own independent path, and was renamed as Sir Syed Global Scholar Award (SSGSA), keeping in view its global outreach.

Since the target students were at AMU, so we needed to have a strong base there. For that purpose, the help of my teacher and mentor Prof. M.Saleemuddin, Professor of Biochemistry and Biotechnology at AMU, was incredibly invaluable. This proved to be the cornerstone for the establishment of this program at AMU. At the same time, we also approached Dr. Shahid Jameel, an AMU alumnus and a well-known scientist in India, who was at ICGEB at that time. He mentored, encouraged and supported us during the formative years which proved to be extremely helpful. Other faculty members who also helped us during these and the following years are Dr. Asadullah Khan and Dr. Suhail Sabir. I also want to acknowledge different individuals and organizations individuals who warmly responded to our initiative and provided us support during these years. These include AEEF, IMRC, AMU Alumni Associations of Atlanta, Chicago and others.

As of now, in this short journey, we have already achieved several milestones that we had set for ourselves, and are summarized as under:

- 120 students have obtained admission in about a decade. They are spread in internationally recognized institutes all over the world.
- We have passed the torch successfully to the student generation, who were initially selected for this scholarship and later obtained admission in the Universities/ institutions in the US.

*Continued...*

# VISION FROM THE FIRST SSGSA CHAIR:

## DR. SHAIDA ANDRABI

- Our students have already taken the leadership positions for this program. From the pool of our students, we have had Mohsin Khan as our first chair, followed by Ali Muzaffar and Wasikul Islam. The next chair is all set to take charge in a few days.
- Our students are running most of the affairs of this program/organization. Lots of students are now contributing both financially as well as intellectually towards the growth and expansion of this program.

While we have laid a strong foundation of the organization, I think it is high time to reflect on our set goals, evaluate our achievements and make a transition to the next phase. We must set the goals for the next decade: 2021-2030. In my opinion, some of the most important ones are summarized below:

- The student community in the organization should be given more important roles and affairs to run the organization. They must be given to understand that they should raise enough funds amongst themselves (from the beneficiaries) and also from external resources.
- The more senior people must now focus on pushing the students, who have already joined their graduate programs and are towards the completion of their degrees, towards higher goals: obtain important positions in both academia and industry. This pool of the people will play an incredible role in lifting the standards of the organization, bring invaluable resources and make footprints across the globe.
- We should enable and guide the students to obtain prestigious fellowships, grants, faculty positions as well as awards. That will enrich the organization in all possible ways.
- The organization should set higher benchmarks for its success. We should help and enable prospective students to obtain admissions in the most well-known institutions and universities across the world. Quality rather than quantity has to be promoted and valued.
- The organization should help bring people/students from different fields to bring different perspectives to the organization: science, engineering, medicine, humanities, philosophy etc. These people must be creative, innovative and highly ambitious. Though the program is already designed in that manner, our students must be encouraged and inspired to propose/come up with new ideas, theories and technologies.
- The organization must aim to produce outstanding scientists, philosophers, thinkers, technocrats and philanthropists.

Unless we think on those lines, we will be just another organization that will help students pursue their goals, through financial help and guidance. Though this by no means is ordinary, we must aim for the extraordinary. We must move beyond helping individuals, rather help build a nation through these individuals.

Given our vision, resolve, ambition, motivation, culture and history, I am quite sure that we can achieve all these goals and become a well-known organization that produces extraordinary people who will serve the humanity.

I am a proud member of this organization and will always be keen to know about the success stories of this great organization. I wish the organization a great success.

# ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: BY THE SSGSA SCHOLARS

Ruchi Dana

“Setting up goals. Like x number of students in top universities by the year 2025. If AMU could become a feeder university to some of the top universities worldwide, SSGSA can leave a legacy behind for all”

“1. Launch a professional development course for aspiring students, and  
2. More initiatives for increasing representation of women in the organisation”

Nida  
Rehmani

Javeria  
Maryam

“I hope that the SSGSA success stories get multiplied twice of present, in upcoming 3 years”

“I hope that SSGSA will be able to mentor scholars even after admissions and provide a platform for networking to find jobs abroad”

William Isaac

Haaris  
Safdari

“I want to see SSGSA cross 200+ success in next five years”

*Continued...*

# ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: BY THE SSGSA SCHOLARS

"I hope that SSGSA reaches the maximum number of people in the country, and more students and alumni benefit from it"

Burhani  
Saifuddin

Shujaut Bader

"I would love SSGSA to develop a plan for weekly or bi-weekly journal/academic/entrepreneurial club talks where past scholars talk and discuss their work in academia or industry from a purely technical point of view"

"Right now, SSGSA is limited to students of AMU but I would want to see it working for any deserving student of the country"

Shiva  
Agarwal

Mohammad  
Zulqarnain

"I hope success rate becomes 100%"

"Seeing more SSGSA scholars get highly prestigious awards and getting into top institutes in the world. More SSGSA scholars coming to give back to the country and Aligarh"

Khan Saad  
Bin Hasan

*Continued...*

# ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: BY THE SSGSA SCHOLARS

Wasikul  
Islam

"I want to see few Nobel Laureates from the pool of SSGSA scholars in the future years . I hope to see a day when world's topmost researchers from different fields will identify as past SSGSA scholars"

"I hope that SSGSA becomes a permanent feature, and a nodal officer is assigned at every faculty so as to help spread awareness, and guide the students"

Abdul Sabur  
Kidwai

Sabahuddin  
Ahmad

"I hope that SSGSA receives more funding (contribution) in the coming years, which can increase the number of awards per year"

"Have SSGSA alumni association where all past and present awardees can interact and have annual social meet or get-together over some light music and nice food"

Mariyam  
Abbas

Md Ful  
Hossain Sk

"In the near future, SSGSA should be globally known like any other reputed international scholarships. I would like SSGSA to achieve a network of scholars at every Institute/ university in the USA in coming 10 years"

*Continued...*

# ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: BY THE SSGSA SCHOLARS

"I hope that SSGSA organizes more on campus webinars"

Gaurav  
Prakash

Hafijul Islam

"I would like SSGSA to organize more awareness programs in different parts of the country, especially in places where awareness about higher studies is quite low"

"SSGSA should be a key mentoring agency right from secondary education. Hope for the lower middle class and lower class students who are the first generation in education for their abroad studies."

Md Asif Belal  
Ansari

Iqra Fatima

"Ensure that all departments and faculties have full awareness of what SSGSA truly stands for, which will in help the efficient growth of SSGSA"

"Increased female representation in SSGSA"

Madeeha  
Zubair

# THE PRESENT DAY SSGSA TEAM

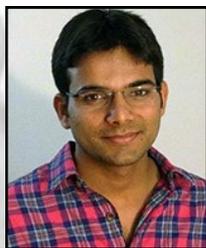
## Executive Committee



Mr. Wasikul Islam



Mr. Ali Muzaffar



Dr. Mohsin Khan



Dr. Saif Sheikh



Dr. Rehan Baqri

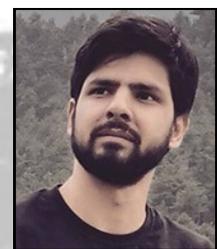


Mr. Ali Rizvi



Dr. Shaida Andrabi

## Operations Team



Mr. Shujaut Bader



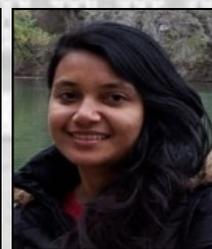
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Mr. Ajaharul Islam



Mr. Sk Abdus  
Sayeed

## Technical Team



Mr. Roshan Sharma



Mr. Abu Talha Danish



Mr. Rajat Kant Goel



Mr. Prateek Jain



Mr. Haider Ali

# DONATIONS AND SUPPORT



**Mr. Ali Muzaffar**

*Senior Consultant in Integrated Risk Management, Deloitte, USA*

As a past scholar and Chair of this organization, I have experienced that the mentorship component of the program plays a huge role in the journey of the awardees. However, if we reflect back to our student days for a moment, we will realize that the scholarship award is quite significant. Majority of the students come from middle and lower income families, especially in central universities like AMU, and the financial support that SSGSA provides (about \$1200 per student) plays a key role in their pursuit of higher education abroad.

*"Kabhi kabhi dikhne men chote meel ke patthar bhi agar raaste men na hon, to raste se insaan bhatak jata hai..."*

From the perspective of a student, \$1200 matters for selecting a career path option. Knowing my current mentees or juniors in AMU campus, this initial amount and support does play a deciding role to pursue a higher education abroad in a country where other national applications cost around 500 rupees or less.

As an organization, we are extremely transparent to our donors expanding across continents who have donated generously since the inception of this organization in 2006. As an individual or organization, you can donate GRE/TOEFL fees for 5 awardees, or just a portion of it. Alternatively, you can donate to cover for the application fees or just a part of it. You may also choose to cover other aspects listed in the itemized list below - the choice is yours but every choice counts, as every penny counts.

GRE/ GMAT (incl. score reports)	\$250
TOEFL/IELTS	\$200
Test Prep (e.g. Magoosh)	\$150
University Application Fees	\$600
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1200</b>

Every year we target to provide this career booster to 25-30 of our selected scholars. Your support today or a pledge for tomorrow could be in many forms, and believe me, it will matter because it mattered to scholars like me and many others. You can donate now using the QR code on the following page and scanning through your camera. If you are on your laptop, you can donate on the website [ssgsa.us](https://ssgsa.us). You can also donate your time as a mentor in your area of expertise be it in science, engineering, medicine etc. by reaching out to [contact@ssgsa.us](mailto:contact@ssgsa.us)

At the end, I just want to say that the COVID pandemic has taught us the meaning of togetherness. The sustainability of a non-profit program like SSGSA depends on the support we build together in the community of scholars who have graduated from SSGSA and are in a great place today, or the support of the people who care and know the power of quality higher education for the betterment of humanity.

Thank you for your continued support and your love for the SSGSA program. I hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter.

# DONATIONS AND SUPPORT

**SSGSA earnestly thank its donors, supporters and well-wishers**

**Want to contribute your bit?  
It's very simple and matter of just a few clicks**

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