Note by the awardee

At the outset, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the IIT Kharagpur Foundation of the USA for the award which has given me an opportunity to take up an internship with the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) at the Columbia University in the City of New York, USA. The financial grant particularly helped me in arranging for the travel to Columbia University in the summer of 2018 and participate in the end-term review as part of the internship.

This internship has given me a great learning opportunity by the virtue of closely working with both experienced Professors and hard-working team-mates at the Columbia University who come from different parts of the world; and also being exposed to an altogether different world-view to look at research and practice related to my discipline, i.e. urban development, particularly, of Varanasi – which is the empirical case for my ongoing doctoral research on artisan communities. Such first-hand association with the intersection of world views – coming from two different academic institutions, i.e. IIT Kharagpur and Columbia University - will deeply help me in the long run in developing a more holistic understanding of pedagogy related to planning and design of human settlements.

With thanks and regards,

Deepanjan Saha
14AR91R05, Research Scholar (Ph.D. student),
Department of Architecture and Regional Planning, IIT Kharagpur

About the internship

The internship involved participating in a semester-long Urban Design studio of M.S. in Architecture & Urban Design Program (MSAUD) at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) titled *‘Water Urbanism in Varanasi’*. It was held over the Spring Semester of 2018, i.e. from January till May.

The overarching theme for the studio was as follows: ‘*How water can be at the core of urban management strategies and planning?*’ It was further expanded to explore how traditionally run community-based water management of inland water-bodies in the city of Varanasi had ensured better water infrastructure in earlier times, as compared to the prevailing system of water supply singularly drawing from rivers. In other words, how locally-evolved-yet-informal community-based urban management systems have ensured sustainability in organically grown old Indian cities like Varanasi.

At the outset, grounded field-work was conducted between Jan. 5th-13th, 2018 in Varanasi, India. It had engaged a team of about 50 students from three institutes - IIT Kharagpur, Columbia University, and IIT Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. Student-groups had explored city-transects starting from the river-bank and extending up to about 1 or 2 km inland. It included reconnaissance survey, spot-interviews with people, discussions with local experts and city administrators. My group had looked into the role of locally developed community-based networks / systems and their involvement in shaping public places in the city.

This was followed by a series of discussions over the internet along with the students from Columbia University to develop design interventions. The internship was concluded in an end-term review held in May 2018 in New York. Few days before the review, we had prepared for the presentation by working together at the design studio at Columbia University.

At the kind invitation of the Consul General of India in New York – Mr. Sandeep Chakravorty, end-term presentations were held at the Indian Consulate in New York on 3rd May, 2018. The audience was comprised of several academicians and professionals invited by the studio coordinators as reviewers who were from the city of New York, other parts of the USA and beyond, and even from India. Each student-group shared its design proposal through slide show and posters, followed by constructive feedback from the reviewers.

Figure 1 Working in the design studio at GSAPP, Columbia University

Figure 2 Deepanjan (2nd from left) presenting the design proposal, along with team-mates from GSAPP, at the Consulate General of India in New York