



From Delhi slum to Sydney Uni: how a scholarship changed Sumit's life



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Breaking news reporter

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Raised in a Delhi slum without enough clean water, Sumit never imagined he would get into university let alone snag a scholarship to do his master's degree in Australia.

The 21-year-old is now a postgraduate [public policy student](#) at the University of Sydney, after which he wants to return to India to work as a policy analyst in the corporate world. Sumit, whose father is a tailor and mother a housewife in Tigri in southern Delhi, was the first person in his family to go to university.



Sumit never thought he would get the chance to go to university. **Natalie Boog**

Sumit, who does not use a surname, scored 95 per cent in his final school exams and was put in touch with the Asha Community Health and Development Society, a charity that focuses on health and education in slum communities.

They stepped in to pay his fees for a bachelor in economics and political science at Delhi University. Asha also put him in touch with an English tutor as well as the British High Commissioner to India, Alex Ellis, who mentored him.

After internships, including with the Macquarie Group Foundation, which sparked his interest in the corporate world, Asha nominated Sumit for Sydney University's postgraduate India Equity Scholarship worth up to \$60,000.

"They really helped me. They took a boy from a slum and made him a Sydney scholar" Sumit told *The Australian Financial Review* from

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at Sydney School, Sumit took the train with a financial review from the Camperdown campus where he lives at St Paul's College.

Growing up, he would use a battery-operated light to study after his family went to bed.

There was an illegal liquor shop next door, which brought violence and crime. Sumit walked two kilometres to and from school each day, and waited in long lines to try and get enough water from the community street tap.

He found out he had secured the Sydney University scholarship in January and described it as "such a phenomenal feeling" given he once believed a university education was unreachable.

It was also a "very proud" moment for his parents too. "My father used to say that ... 'we could never think that you will go out of India'"

[Sydney University vice chancellor Mark Scott](#) said he looked forward to seeing Sumit realised his full potential.

"We're proud so many of our students have life-changing experiences while studying with us," he said.

"We deeply value our relationship with India and recognise the vital importance of strengthening educational links between our two nations, helping to develop talented graduates who will address the world's most complex challenges."

Sumit arrived in Australia in February, giving him his first glimpse of the ocean at Manly beach and inspiring him to start swimming lessons, so he could safely take a dip.

He aims to land a public policy-related internship or two during his two-year masters program, but ultimately wants to return home to "pay it forward" to his community.

"Asha taught me the value of education and ... made me aware of my potential."



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