

Five selected as Indian Rhodes Scholars for 2025

Cohort includes a law student committed to citizenship rights, a philosophy student who wants to study epistemological injustice, a literature major who wants to pursue museum anthropology, an aspiring astrophysicist from IIT-Bombay, and a veterinarian dedicated to conservation.

New Delhi (9 November 2024) – Five Rhodes Scholars-Elect for India 2025 were selected over the weekend, marking the culmination of a rigorous national selection process. After a competitive application process and two rounds of preliminary interviews, the shortlisted finalists were interviewed and five were chosen to receive the prestigious scholarship.

They will be heading to the University of Oxford in October 2025 to join a cohort of more than a hundred Scholars from around the world to undertake fully funded post-graduate studies and become part of a strong community of people determined to make a positive difference in the world.



The Rhodes Scholarship is the world's preeminent and oldest graduate fellowship, based at the University of Oxford since 1903. The Scholarships for India began in 1947 and have been awarded to 5 outstanding applicants each year.

Students from anywhere in the world can apply for a Rhodes Scholarship and many find that taking part in our rigorous selection is a profoundly positive experience which leaves them well placed to go on to a Rhodes Scholarship or other opportunities worldwide.

The Rhodes selection process aims to choose young people with proven academic excellence who also show exceptional character, leadership, energy to use their talents to the full and a commitment to solving humanity's challenges. The selection process includes a rigorous review process before the final interview, with a selection committee composed of experts and leaders in diverse fields.

Rhodes Scholars form a lifelong community of people in many fields and careers, united by a commitment to having a positive impact on the world. Scholars from India have gone on to pursue careers ranging from public policy, literature, law, medicine, scientific research, etc.

This year's winners continue the fantastic legacy of excellence and are from different parts of the country—Bengaluru, Kolkata, Kurukshetra, Ghaziabad and Ranchi. One of them, Avanish Vats, is also the third scholar with a visual impairment to have been elected from India, while another, Shubham Narwal, is the first Indian scholar-elect from veterinary medicine.

Mr Rayan Chakrabarti

Rayan is completing his Master's at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He holds an undergraduate degree in literature from St Stephen's College. His work lies at the intersection of memory studies, critical heritage, and anthropology. At Oxford, he is interested in building and working on an archive and museum of the Covid-19 Pandemic and its impact in South Asia. He is a trained pianist and loves writing and translating poetry that centres around politics and nationhood.



Ms Vibha Swaminathan

Vibha Swaminathan is a final year law student, pursuing an LL.B. (Hons.) at the National Law School, Bangalore. She also holds a BA (Hons) in Political Science from Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University. She is interested in studying the political and legal fragilities of citizenship regimes, and hopes to combine this academic engagement with a human rights litigation practice before trial courts in India.



Mr Avanish Vats

Avanish is from Ranchi and has completed his bachelors in Philosophy from St. Stephen's College, Delhi. He conducted research on accessibility in education and healthcare for disabled individuals in Jharkhand, under the State Disability Commissioner's office in Ranchi. He is a tabla player and has written and directed short films. His academic interests include epistemology and making philosophy accessible to disabled people.



Mr Shubham Narwal

Shubham Narwal is pursuing a Bachelor's in Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry at ICAR-Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izatnagar, Bareilly. Growing up in the National Dairy Research Institute sparked an interest in studying Veterinary Science. He is eager to pursue an M.Sc. in Clinical Embryology to explore new conservation strategies for the critically endangered bird, the Great Indian Bustard. Besides his passion for volunteering in nature conservation organisations, he likes Harry Potter and is a basketball enthusiast.



Ms Pal Aggarwal

Pal Aggarwal is a final year B.Tech. Engineering Physics student at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. Her academic journey has been driven by a deep-seated interest in astrophysics, mathematics and data science, having worked with researchers at the National University of Singapore and the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics. At Oxford, she wants to study high-energy astrophysics, striving towards her dream of becoming an astronaut and advocating for women in science. She is also a trained Bharatnatyam and contemporary dancer.



Dr Elizabeth Kiss, CEO of the Rhodes Trust, said:

"The Rhodes Trust is delighted to introduce the extraordinary 2025 Class of Rhodes Scholars Elect who represent cultures and perspectives from every corner of the world. For more than a century, the Rhodes Trust has brought exceptional individuals to Oxford and fostered a vibrant global community. We eagerly anticipate the invaluable contributions these Scholars will make, not just during their studies, but throughout their lives as they join the community of Rhodes Scholar alumni who are creating a more equitable and sustainable future for the world."

Statement from the Rhodes India Secretariat:

"It is heartening to see candidates from diverse disciplines, institutions, and parts of the country apply to the Rhodes Scholarship. We are always impressed by the level of intellect as well as the character and empathy that they all display. As is the case each year, we had a diverse and talented field of applicants. We are very grateful to all the selectors who assisted us through a rigorous selection process and very proud of the five Rhodes Scholars-Elect who have emerged from the process. They will benefit from the rich intellectual resources of the University of Oxford, and will join a lifelong community determined to change the world for the better."

The Trust is committed to ensuring that the world's diversity of background and thought is reflected at Rhodes House, which has expanded the Rhodes Scholarship to include the Global Scholarships and new constituencies in recent years, including West Africa, East Africa, China, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Malaysia, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon & Palestine and the United Arab Emirates.

The applications for the 2026 Rhodes Scholarships will open in June 2025. More information about the Scholarship application be found at: www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/apply.

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About the Rhodes Trust and Rhodes Scholarships

The Rhodes Trust, based at the University of Oxford, is an educational charity that forges brighter futures for individuals and the world.

We do this through a family of global fellowship programmes. All these programmes find brilliant people from around the world, give them wonderful opportunities to learn and act together, and support them as they form lifelong communities. We began in 1903 with the **Rhodes Scholarship**. This is the world's pre-eminent graduate fellowship, bringing exceptional young people of character to the University of Oxford to study. Over 8000 Rhodes Scholars, from more than 50 countries, have gone on to serve at the forefront of education, business, science, medicine, the arts, politics and beyond. All this is made possible by the wonderful generosity of our Second Century Founders, John McCall MacBain and the Atlantic Philanthropies, as well as over 3000 other benefactors from around the world.

A hundred years on, we helped create the **Mandela Rhodes Foundation**, which finds, funds, and empowers young Africans to study in South Africa. In 2016, we partnered with Atlantic Philanthropies to create the **Atlantic Institute** which empowers catalytic communities of emerging leaders to advance fairer, healthier, more inclusive societies. A year later, we helped launch **Schmidt Science Fellows** in partnership with Schmidt Futures, which believes in a vision of a world where interdisciplinary science flourishes without limit. We worked with Schmidt Futures again to create **Rise**, a program that supports brilliant people through their lives, starting at ages 15-17. And in 2022, we partnered with Harris Manchester College to launch **Oxford Next Horizons**, a rich, six-month experience designed for mid to late career participants from any field, who reflect, explore and imagine what's next for them and the world.

We are based at Rhodes House in Oxford, which we are currently transforming into a world-class facility for gathering, learning, collaborating and sharing. Rhodes House is home to most of our staff team who offer a comprehensive programme of support and learning for our Rhodes Scholars, convene a lifelong network for our alumni, and run several of our partnership programmes.