

Statement of Purpose

Masters in Agriculture, Ecology and Societies - Fall'24

I, Pranjali Saini, was born in the small town of Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India. My family had relocated to Varanasi in 2008, after my father's appointment as a professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Banaras Hindu University, one of the best engineering institutes in India. My mother was a supervisor at a government-run Anganwadi centre, providing childcare services to the rural community. My elder sister is currently pursuing a master's degree.

While in school, I received several prizes and certificates for competitions like the Science Fest, French Olympiad, etc. I performed well in mostly all my subjects, maintained high grades and was praised by my teachers for the effort and hard work I put in. I also had several co-curricular interests like playing basketball, chess, badminton, etc.

I completed my bachelor's from Banaras Hindu University, where I enrolled in the top-ranking agriculture program in India. Since my admission in 2020, I have maintained a high CGPA of 8.2 while studying subjects like Sustainable Agriculture, Agrometeorology and Climate Change, Soil Science, Plant Physiology, Statistics, Journalism, Remote Sensing, etc. I also obtained a keen knowledge of Calculus through the Mathematics class in my first-year curriculum, and also Statistics Methods, and Agricultural Informatics in my first and third year respectively.

From my Bachelor's degree, I bring a solid foundation in environmental sciences and resource management to the program. I have a deep understanding of agricultural systems, sustainable practices and utilization of natural resources. Throughout the course, I have developed proper analytical skills which are crucial in addressing complex issues facing us today.

I am applying for my Master's degree as I wish to study further. I chose an international university – University of Kassel, in Germany, to get exposure and great opportunities ahead. During my research on options to study abroad for my Master's degree, I came across many top universities in different countries, but the best suited for me turned out to be Netherlands due to various reasons. The key factors for selecting the final location were tuition fees, programs offered, world ranking, living expenses, and safety.

I chose Germany amongst all the other countries due to its reputation for hosting international students very efficiently and because of the cultural diversity, friendly natives, and high quality of education offered by the universities in Germany.

Germany is amongst the most developed countries in the world, with universities that provide a high scope of learning out of many others with the most developed and modern infrastructure and facilities. Therefore, studying in Germany will provide me with international exposure and opportunities to grow and become a better version of myself for the future challenges in my life.

I found University of Kassel to be the most suited for me as the course structure offered several interesting subjects like GIS and Remote sensing in agriculture, Soil-Plant interactions, Agroecosystems etc. which would help me further my education and study about the matters of sustainability and resource management with a broadened practical perspective.

I wish to pursue my Master's degree from an international university rather than from a university in my home country India. Even though there are a lot of prestigious universities here, the teaching

techniques used are very theoretical. I want to experience a much more practical-focused program, which would help me further my goal of doing a PHD and going down the route of research. Moreover, the number of seats for admission are minimal compared to the country's population, making it a one-in-a-million chance to get admitted to such institutes. Also, the educational qualifications and experiences from an international university are more valued as it is backed up by international exposure and quality of studying. I believe that exploring overseas education would add value to the Indian context in multiple ways.

Therefore, for my career to flourish, I want the best education possible, which I can only receive from world-class educational institutes located abroad. The quality of education is far better in international universities as their methodology comprises more practical learning. Furthermore, the curriculum of Indian institutes is not updated regularly, which leads to students studying old content year after year. Hence, I would like to study abroad to get international exposure and better infrastructure for my education.

The AGES program would help in understanding and addressing the complex issues facing agriculture in this rapidly changing world. By integrating subjects like Agriculture, Ecology and the Social Sciences, it would provide a unique perspective in developing agricultural solutions. Agroecology is a core component of the AGES program. The principles of Agroecology are directly applicable to Indian agriculture, where issues such as soil degradation, water scarcity, and pesticide pollution are prevalent.

During my bachelor's degree, I learned of unsustainable farming practices like monocropping and intensive tillage which reduce soil fertility and productivity. Climate change has caused unpredictable weather patterns, which severely affect the yield of the crops grown in India. Such issues have made me realize how necessary it is to learn of better sustainable methods of agriculture and how to find ways of using our limited resources in an efficient way. In my course of Sustainable agriculture, I learned of a few ways on how to tackle the problems which we our nation, and at large, the world faces. But theory can only get you so far. I want to indulge in practical-based learning and make an actual positive impact on the society through my learnings.

The AGES program would equip me with knowledge of sustainable agriculture practices that can be applied to Indian farming systems. This includes agroforestry, organic farming, integrated pest management (IPM), and conservation agriculture. These practices would help address issues such as soil degradation, water scarcity, and chemical pollution in Indian agriculture.

Studying in an international environment allows an Indian student like me to gain a broader perspective on agricultural issues and solutions. I can learn from experiences of the esteemed faculty and my fellow peers, and build networks with students and professionals from around the world.

After I graduate, I would like to further study and pursue a PHD because it would help me start or continue research in a field I'm passionate about and allow me to contribute to the world by finding solutions to the problems of exploitation which our resources face. I will be able to gain professional work experience and build a strong profile that will help me excel in my career. And eventually, studying from an international university will help me get even better and financially stable jobs.

Pranjal Saini