

## Road to my dream...

Hi, welcome all to read my brief epic! I am, Roni Chandra Mondal, studying Master of Science (Professional) major in Marine Biology. I am from Bangladesh which is a low elevation riverine country of South Asia. As I was born and grew up in a village, I had passion and empathy to the nature and its blessings (land, water, and creatures).

Since my childhood, I wanted to be academia, though it is still a dream. When I completed under graduation in Fisheries, I saw I stood first in the Agricultural Faculty of my University (University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh) and awarded with Prime Minister Gold Medal.



That inspiration had further motivated and reinforced my dream of continuing higher study and research and therefore I eventually completed my postgraduation in Fisheries Biology and Genetics with securing 1st position in my department. Then I applied for a lecturer post at my university to fulfill my dream, but all of my dreams and expectations turned into the very dark flipside of disappointment when I came to know that I did not qualify for the post. It was that time when I was in full of distress and sorrows.

But I did not lose my hope and had tried my best to build my career at good position. Here, I have to acknowledge my deepest gratitude to my parents and my best half (Mrs Swapna Karmakar) for their never-ending supports and inspirations in every stair of my failure. With all of their supports, dedications, and my immeasurable exertions, finally, I got a government job as a Fisheries Officer in the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Bangladesh and started my career. After a few months later, I realised that there is a huge opportunity for my country to unleash the hidden potentials of marine sectors. However, there is still a dearth of marine scientists to discover and utilise the unknown resources of our marine and coastal areas.

That is why I set my goal further for higher studies in marine science in overseas and started applying for different scholarships. After 2 years of countless endeavours, I received the Australia Awards Scholarship from the Australian Government to study in my dreamt course Marine Biology at James Cook University (JCU) Townsville campus.

As I had never been overseas before coming to Australia in January 2020; therefore, homesickness had agonised me a lot at the very beginning. Though, the first two months went glowing because face to face classes were in place and I had opportunities to meet new people from around the world. But the situation went worse when we all had been under home quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person classes, tutorials, practicals were turned to robotic online versions and field trips were lifted out that eventually compelled me to stay at home to become obese. As I wasn't used to online learning in my back home, therefore, I found

it difficult to acquire subject knowledge in that way of learning. To overcome this problem, I had taken some strategies and I am still following those.

I started asking questions about my confusions to the professors and lecturers during the lectures, discussing with them after class hours, sending e-mails for more clarification and participating in open discussion at breakout rooms. I had taken online consultations and feedback for my assignments from the Peer Advice Team and the Studiosity Team here at JCU.

I had joined different online webinars regarding how to become successful in the online study at JCU and at many other academic institutions in Australia. Moreover, as I am blessed with the Australia Award Scholarship; therefore, I had opportunity to take tutors for the subjects that I confronted difficulties. I had availed that advantage too and got wonderful experiences in learning. With all of these strategies and efforts, I have got my expected results in the first semester in 2020 and am expecting better outcomes in the second semester.

Other than study, I had made a virtual communication platform using social media with all of my friends to stay in touch and share different experiences. That had helped me a lot to reduce my homesickness. During the learning journey at JCU, I had an accident in the mid-April of 2020 and got a severe injury in my back. During that time, I had decided to defer my exams but finally I did not do that and had tried to continue my study. Though I am still recovering it, but even now I am very much optimistic about my passion and still trying to reach my destination. Undoubtedly, studying in Australia, particularly at JCU, is a life-long experience for me. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Australian Government for allowing me to improve my knowledge and skills with the Australia Awards Scholarship. I am also paying my reverence to all academics, the International Students Support Team and learning advisors of JCU to support me in every circumstance. I seek cooperation from all of you so that I can successfully gain my intended learning from JCU and use the acquired knowledge and skills in the service of the loving people of my country.

Also pray for my loving son Sandipan Mondal who could not join me and is being continuously deprived of father's affection.