Fulbright FLTA Scholarship:
Making Dreams Come True

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STARTED in 1968, Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) scholarship is a unique one of its kind. Fulbright, named after William J. Fulbright is one of the world's most famous scholarships awarded by the US Department of States and administered by the Institute of International Education (IIE). United States, in its effort to understanding different countries and their cultures, has introduced this scholarship. As it goes in the Fulbright FLTA web page (Http://flta.fulbrightonline.org):

"From the beginning, the program's goal has been to strengthen foreign language instruction in the United States and to provide the opportunity for both native-speaking Teaching Assistants and Americans to learn about each others' cultures and customs, thereby enhancing mutual understanding."

Under this scholarship, every year hundreds of language teachers are brought from all over the world, to the United States to teach their mother languages to the American students. Usually these people are English language teachers in their home countries. They teach their mother languages and act as cultural ambassadors. The program offers educators and scholars from nearly 50 countries the opportunity to develop their professional skills and gain firsthand knowledge of the United States. Nearly 400 teachers have been awarded this scholarship for the year 2008/2009 to teach 30 languages.

Usually Fulbright FLTA scholarship is announced in the month of November and the applicants have to apply by the middle of December. Information is available in the website of the US embassy (http://dhaka.usembassy.gov). The Education and Exchange section of the US Embassy Dhaka (at American Center) also sends letters to different universities inviting applications.

The selection process is a bit lengthy. Students are supposed to fill-out an online application form, they also have to write a few essays. Based on the application, the essays and the reference letters (three in number), a short list is prepared. Both the essays and reference letters are very crucial, influencing the selection. The selected candidates are called for an interview. After the final selection is made here in Bangladesh, the papers are sent to the USA. The final selection is made there and the selected applicants are placed at different universities in the USA, and the FLTAs leave the country for the USA in the month of August. Usually 3/4 FLTAs are awarded this scholarship every year from Bangladesh.

Fulbright FLTA scholarship awardees have to teach Bangla to the American students for nine months (two semesters). As requirements of this scholarship, they have to take four courses in the institutions they are placed at on credit or audit basis (depending on the universities); they also attend two workshops for professional development in the field of foreign language teaching. The US Department of States bears the awardees travel, living and other expenses.

The Fulbright FLTA scholarship opens numerous doors of knowledge, wisdom and opportunities. It gives the English language teachers in Bangladesh to experience the culture they teach here in Bangladesh, to learn the English language better. Teaching Bangla to the American students in different institutions in the USA, and taking four courses, give them an insight into the US education system. Most astoundingly, they have the opportunity to know their own language and culture better. At the completion of the FLTA duties, the awardees return to the country, to serve the nation -- more confident, more competent, better teachers, more understanding of the context of the second language or foreign language teaching. The two workshops give the opportunity to know the other FLTAs from all over the world and to share and exchange views, ideas and knowledge with them, and of course, to form an exceptional network worldwide.

As Fulbright FLTAs return, they join the Fulbright family, a family of 300000 scholars, a network that will be there forever to keep opening new doors of exploration, experience, knowledge and dreams making come true.

You can know what Fulbright FLTA scholarship can give you and what it cannot, only when you achieve and experience it. Ask me, I will tell you that it is a dream that can be dreamt once in a life time. One has to be dynamic, liberal, creative and understanding to win it over. Even your smiling face will earn you an extra point to step a step ahead.

An amazing fact that many Bangladeshi people (and of course most people on earth) do not know is, Bangla is the fifth most widely spoken language in the world. It has one of the richest literatures in the world. But for many political and economic reasons, Bangla as a language is not celebrated as widely as it should have been. It is our duty, dear readers, to take Bangla to a glorious height which it deserves the best. I hope in coming days more commendable candidates would apply for Fulbright FLTA scholarship and the best ones would win to contribute to uphold Bangla language and Bangladeshi culture.

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Fulbright FLTA 2007/2008
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