For my international internship, I spent 8 weeks working as an intern at the Indian Express, an English-language daily newspaper with branches in 9 major cities across India. During my time at the Pune branch of The Indian Express, I worked as an intern in the Features section which is primarily responsible for covering human interest, arts and entertainment and lifestyle stories, thus it is important for reporters and editors in the section to have their ears to the streets and be knowledgeable about the latest trends and happenings in the city. In my five weeks at the Indian Express, I published 6 articles for the section about local artists, food, and even my own personal experience as an American living in Pune. I also assisted in coordinating content for specific pages, and assisted in editing copies and making pages if and when required.

However, as an IARD major seeking to link my interest in journalism with my academic goals, I decided to research how the media in India has promoted sustainable agricultural, and particularly organic farming practices as a research report for the Alliance for Global Education — my sponsoring organization. I spoke with reporters at two Indian newspapers, farmers at the organic farming organization Sendriya Setu and looked at the Indian Express’ coverage over the month of June to determine that the number of TV shows, newspaper articles and oftentimes, government media publications, devoted to sustainable agricultural practices are severely lacking in Maharashtra.

Overall, I would say that my experience at The Indian Express and in India was a positive one. I am happy to have gotten the opportunity to have my work published as
often as I did in, as I know many of my friends working at media outlets in the U.S. are lucky to get published maybe once in the span of their entire internships. Despite being an international student, I found that my supervisors at The Indian Express oftentimes gave me more responsibility than even I thought I deserved and were supportive of my work. Before my internship, I had only ever worked in the news section at my college paper and I came away from my internship feeling empowered that if I choose to pursue a career in journalism, I have proven that I can write well for a different section, in a different style, with language barrier and cultural difference to overcomes.

However, I went into my international internship trying to decide whether I wanted to pursue a career in international development or journalism, and visiting NGOs for my research made me really regret not pursuing an internship in development work. Oftentimes working in the features section, I was jealous of other students who were going out into the slums or meeting real people, with real hardships. Meanwhile I was interviewing artists, and westernized celebrities, not really getting a hands-on learning experience about the development struggles I had hoped to learn more about. It’s hard to realize that a country has had such a profound effect on you but that through your work, you didn’t really have much of an effect on the country and that is something I’m still working through.

I also had a difficult time sitting at an office all day. I know that were I a full time reporter this wouldn’t be the case, but the amount of time I spent at the office just sitting around was oftentimes crippling. Though there was never a day where I did absolutely nothing, I was often plagued by thoughts that this was my one time studying abroad and I was wasting it staring at a computer screen in an office building. I came to reconcile this
thought by telling myself that I was not in India to be on vacation — an internship is an internship in any country, and work is still work.

These things together and the truly amazing experience I had on my visits to Sendriya Setu have made me think that maybe agricultural development work is the right path for me. While I love to write and hope to use my journalism skills in whatever profession I pursue, nothing I did at The Indian Express got me as excited as talking with farmers and being outside on farms learning the ins and outs of the agricultural development organizations. I will look back on those days, as my best in India, which I think not only speaks volumes about the organization, but also to my passion for sustainable agriculture.

Most importantly, I am glad that while in India I got to have both experience of working for an Indian newspaper and learning something about agriculture. At one point I was worried that I would return to my professors and advisors in the International Agriculture department at Cornell with nothing to say about my field of study, international agricultural development. However, the diversity of my experience in India has certainly quelled that fear. I am happy to say I have returned to the states understanding India from a variety of perspectives — culturally through the India Express, and agriculturally and developmentally through my research with Sendriya Setu.