

**BFIRST Global Fellowships
Ganga Fellowship, COIMBATORE INDIA, 2025**

Tigist Zewude Siyoum

I am writing to express my immense gratitude for the incredible opportunity you have provided me. As a young Ethiopian plastic, reconstructive, and hand surgeon who graduated at the end of 2024, the two-month observership at Ganga Hospital in India—generously sponsored by BFIRST and including a week of hands-on microsurgery training—has been a transformative experience.

Ganga Hospital is renowned as a high-volume center for hand and reconstructive surgery, and I have been deeply impressed by the specialized, knowledgeable, and disciplined surgeons who work there. I have learned immensely from their expertise and dedication.

Coming from Ethiopia, a country facing significant burdens of hand and brachial injuries due to industrial accidents, road traffic incidents, and the aftermath of civil conflict—conditions often mirroring those seen in India—this exposure has been invaluable. I have gained practical insights into managing a wide spectrum of cases, from minor nail bed injuries to complex free microvascular toe-to-thumb transfers. The excellent work culture within the hospital has also been a significant learning point.

I particularly appreciate that Ganga Hospital skilfully practices both traditional pedicled flaps and advanced free microvascular surgery, managing complex cases such as congenital hand anomalies, pediatric brachial plexus palsies, and diabetic foot ulcers. Witnessing these diverse approaches and the level of expertise applied to each has broadened my understanding and skills immeasurably. Additionally, I had the valuable opportunity to attend aesthetic surgery workshops and observe live aesthetic surgeries, practices that are rarely encountered in Ethiopia.

This enriching experience was made possible through the generous support and kindness of BFIRST, alongside the invaluable mentorship of Dr. Abreham, who envisions a bright future for young surgeons like myself. I extend my deepest thanks for your commitment to supporting surgeons from underserved regions.

I sincerely hope that this kindness and support will continue for future young surgeons from Ethiopia. Your investment in our training has a direct and significant impact on our ability to provide much-needed care to our communities. Currently, I am practicing in the western part of Ethiopia, implementing the knowledge and skills I gained from my time at Ganga Hospital. You have effectively given one reconstructive surgeon to 8 million people.

I hope to send you news of my first free microvascular flap soon.

Thank you once again for this extraordinary opportunity.