



ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FELLOWSHIP COHORT 2 - MUMBAI

REPORT 2018-19



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ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

Among Praja Foundation's several efforts towards better governance in the city of Mumbai, the Elected Representatives Fellowship Programme has been one of the most collaborative projects. The Programme was designed to challenge the participating fellows to understand the ground-level realities of governance and the powers and functions of local Elected Representatives while working alongside them.

The Programme aimed to engage students in assisting Mumbai's Municipal Councillors in order to facilitate the work of and provide these councillors with a dedicated team of individuals serving as a link to Praja; and to provide exposure to students by participating in the process of governance. In this programme, 19 students selected as fellows through a structured selection process, were assigned to work with local representatives of specific wards allotted to them, for a period of ten months. These fellows provided 13789 hours of research assistance to the Councillors.

In the course of their fellowship, they undertook research and analysed data to interact with councillors and assist them in raising issues in the deliberative bodies of the city. Councillors in Mumbai benefitted immensely from this Fellowship Programme as they would get regular assistance from the fellows who would approach the councillor with Praja's data on various issues related to the councillor's respective ward and the city in general.

The fellows, through this opportunity, have gained invaluable experience which they will carry forward in the projects they take up in the near future. It has not only helped them to grow as professionals but also as individuals.

As this journey comes to end, the fellows share their experiences of this endeavor.

A young woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue patterned top, stands smiling in front of the Gateway of India in Mumbai. The background shows the historic stone archway and other visitors.

"Governance is the proper balance of power between administration and elected representatives to run the corporation smoothly. You can only achieve good governance if the balance is restored."

AKANKSHA PHALKE 20

TYBA, K.J. Somaiya College of Arts



The first thing that caught my attention as well as motivated me to apply for this fellowship was the chance to work with councilors, to observe closely how the city is governed and help in whatever way I can.

When I started the fellowship, I knew very little about the governance in Mumbai but now, almost a year later, I can hold a conversation with a councillor and answer their questions. I did not know about Praja before the fellowship, but throughout the fellowship, as I visited ward offices, councilors for meetings or schools/ hospitals to collect information through RTI, I learned about Praja's work from an outsider's perspective and realized the importance of governance, following the system and data. I also attended workshops with councillors, which helped me understand their point of views.

I learned about the workings of various committees, how the number of members in each committee is decided, the power tussle between administration and elected representatives, etc. Another interesting thing I learned was about the different systems of urban governance existing in various cities.

The major challenge that I faced during this period is the fact that how little things can affect the attitude of the councilor towards you. It is also a major challenge that councillors tend to seek the easy way out. They don't want to follow the system the way it is made. They have been conditioned to think that doing things unofficially is easier and saves time and it is difficult though not impossible to change the attitude of such councillors in short period of time. Here's where we as fellows stepped in to make them realize that they should follow the system and ask questions to the administration as much as possible. I assisted the councillors in drafting questions based on their request. As a matter of fact, councillors have very few skilled personnel who can provide them information in limited time, which is why the data of Praja really helps the Councilors to understand the problem and raise questions.

I learnt more about the power of RTIs and experienced it when I went to collect the information at various places. There are things that you can only learn by experience and no amount of study can match that. I have realized that throughout my time with Praja.

I realised that good governance is not just the duty of councilors or MCGM, but is also citizen's duty to help them. It is easier to criticize politicians but you need to do your part too. This fellowship helped me in understanding the duty of a citizen.

A portrait of a young man with dark, wavy hair, a beard, and glasses, wearing a black and white plaid shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and a building.

***“Serious deliberation
and regular follow-up by
the Elected
Representatives over
administration, latter
delivering the services on
time and equal co-
operation by the citizens
who follow rules and
regulations is Good
Governance.”***

AKSHIT SHINDE 21

TYBA, PTVA's Sathaye College



As I am a student of Political Science, I was very enthusiastic about serving my city and Praja gave me the perfect opportunity to serve my city and to bring change into the current system. We were taught about 74th amendment in theory but Praja offered us to observe closely and learn its implementation model. This really excited me about the fellowship programme.

It was a great learning journey. I got to learn how a city actually works and how it functions. During the orientation we were taught about the city governance and its structure. We got an exposure about how the devices and functions are applied by the councillors to propose some work, discussion in the house or to raise any issues regarding the city. We were happy to assist our councillors to frame questions related to various issues in their constituency or ward and felt proud when Praja's research was mentioned in the house by the councillors. Overall we developed a very good rapport with our councillors.

My perspective of the MCGM is that it is a vast ocean and it plays a vital part in running our city. Although the Corporation has a huge system I feel that it is failing to deliver its services on time which increases inefficiency in the work.

The new technical aspects of Urban Governance that I learnt during the fellowship is the method of escalating the complaints from ward level to commissioner level, Systems applied protocol, complaints made from 1916, etc. Initially it was really difficult to get any appointments of the councillors. Some councillors hardly participated in the deliberative process of the house but we explained the importance of asking questions, post which the quality and number of questions raised increased.

The fellowship has impacted me a lot. As a person I've become a more responsible citizen of our country. The fellowship has transformed us into an active youth of democracy and now we can make a difference in the governance on our own in the future. I always wanted to be a politician and was passionate since my schooling days. Praja's elected representatives fellowship has given me an opportunity to learn from the councillors and their responsibilities as an elected representative who caters to a large constituency of citizens. I've gained perspective that I want to serve the society. It is going to be very useful in my future career.



*"Transparent, efficient, innovative, accessible
and robust way of governance is good
governance."*

ANAGH MAMADAPUR 21

TYBSc, Kirti M. Dongursee College



I always wanted to work with elected representatives and be a part of the policy sector. Praja's ER fellowship gave me the opportunity of a lifetime to be a small part of my city's governance and Praja's selling point was I MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK and that's why I applied for the fellowship.

The experience at the fellowship was quite overwhelming at first because meeting councillors was not an easy task. But as we went on taking as many appointments as we could and with time I think we got better and more confident with our communications skills. The way councillors approached us for various issues was humbling as time and again it reminded me of the larger goal that Praja had kept for us and the organization itself of good governance and capacity building of Elected Representatives.

As an organization Praja has always been supportive right from the day one of training to today. The weekly meetings were the highlights of the fellowship because of the platform it provided us to discuss our experiences at the same time taught us how to tackle various situations, problems. The various sessions that Praja organized helped me personally to understand various aspects of governance.

The MCGM is a huge and complex body with lots of branches and it's difficult to understand its functioning. Yet we could understand a substantial part of its functioning because of our fellowship experience. It has a long way to go in terms of establishing itself as an efficient government body. It is difficult to govern a city as big and diverse as Mumbai.

The functioning of the MCGM was made very simple by Praja. To know who are the personnel that runs the various department in MCGM, the different committees and their responsibilities was one of the major learning as it helped us while communicating to councillors and helping them addressing the issues. Building a relationship of trust and transparency with councillors was a key challenge because of which we could communicate positively with councillors. Even if we'd built that relationship it was tough for us to keep consistency of communication with councillors.

Communication and relationship building was the most important learning for me from the fellowship. It has helped me to be persistent with my task of not being discouraged with one bad meeting and continuing with my pursuit. As a citizen it has made me proactive in my surrounding and make things happen rather than keep waiting for it to be done by someone else. The fact that I can proudly say I have communicated and worked with more than 50 councillors is an achievement of a lifetime itself. It has given me endless opportunities of helping my city in direct and indirect ways.



"Good governance is where the citizens are happy and administration and ERs hold a positive mindset towards the work assigned to them. Only then we would keep our feet towards the direction of real progress."

ANSHUL KOCHAR 19

SYBLS LLB, Pravin Gandhi College of Law



What motivated me the most to apply for the fellowship was the opportunity to get selected among the top 20 people in the city; the job seemed very interesting, to visit and talk to the elected representatives and suggest them some questions that they could raise in the meeting seemed very unique.

It was really enlightening to be a part of such a profound institution. My overall experience was really amazing and informative. I got to learn a lot. For a person like me who is totally new to the governance of Mumbai, this was probably the best way to get into the system to know it in the best way. Honestly, I got a lot of insight into the working of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM). None of which was probably possible without an opportunity like this.

The major technical aspect of urban governance that I learnt here is that everything is neither in the hands of the administrative body nor that of the elected representatives. As a layman, at almost every instance we tend to blame the administration for the mismanagement. However, it is way more difficult than we think.

The major challenge that I faced in the course of the fellowship was getting the appointments from ERs and dealing with people who would not speak any other language but Marathi. Being a person not so well versed with the language, I had to struggle a lot.

My key learning from the fellowship is that I got to know how the governance of Mumbai works. As a person I have grown, in terms of fulfilling my duties towards the country rather than ranting about the ERs and the administration being ineffective.



"Good governance is being responsible and accountable elected representative and the efficient checks and balance between the ERs and the administration for service delivery."

BALASAHEB SHINDE 19

SYBA, NES Ratnam College



My political science teachers, my knowledge about the subject and my family background in politics were key sources of motivation for me to apply for this fellowship. My experience throughout the fellowship was very good. It was a moment of pride for me to be a part of Praja. In every program and workshop, we met various kinds of research people and gained deep knowledge about their particular subjects of expertise which in its own way helps the city to become better.

I understood that the functioning process and system of the MCGM is good for the city to become better, but many newly elected councillors and councillors that are dominated by one political party or by some administrators do not work adhering to the system. If they made efficient use of these devices, it would ensure smooth and better administration of the city.

Under the fellowship, I had an opportunity to learn about the functions and responsibilities of the General Body Meeting, the various other committee meetings, the devices provided by the MCGM to the councillors and also I could gain knowledge about 1916 and CCRS complaint registration system.

Undoubtedly, communicating with the ERs is not an easy task. I did face difficulty in reaching out to them, scheduling appointments and convincing them about the reliability of Praja's whitepapers and any data relating to MCGM. These circumstances posed the challenge of being able to perform our roles and responsibilities effectively during the fellowship. The fellowship demanded us to be our best.

The ward allotted to me consisted of many newly elected councillors and women councillors who had to daily navigate the web of gendered patriarchy to deliver their duties as councillors. This was a very interesting situation for me where I had to explain them in detail how could they use the devices, what powers they did and did not have and how they could efficiently work through the MCGM system.

I attained a deep understanding of the Urban Local Self Government, especially in the MCGM along with learning the responsibilities and accountability of not only the councillors but also the Administrative staff. I now know who is the right person to approach for a particular issue. I realized that not only are the ERs and the administration who are responsible for running the city but the citizens as well.

The Praja ER Fellowship proved to be a great platform for me to test myself as a neutral and good citizen of the city of Mumbai. It definitely helped me ensure I will become a better aware and efficient councillor of Mumbai working towards the betterment of the city in the future.

“Governance is a circle of interdependent entities: the ERs, the Bureaucrats and the Citizens and if even one of them chooses to ignore their duties or build prejudices against the other, then it is no longer a Good governance or an efficient Government.”



CHITRALEKHA RATHOD 19

SYBA, Mithibai College



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"Good governance is corruption-free governance. Where all elected representatives are given an equal chance to learn and to speak. One which accepts its mistakes and failures and implements innovative solutions to resolve it."

DISHA SAWANT 19

TYBA, Patkar College



Initially I hadn't heard about any NGO which offers such a fellowship program through which we, the youth can learn about the governance of our own city and also assist the Elected Representatives in understanding their role and responsibilities. The topic 'Urban Governance' was very unique. Apart from this, the stipend offered would also ensure that I could bear my own educational expenses. Thus I was motivated to apply for the Fellowship. Right from the orientation day to the various sessions organized by Praja, my experience as a fellow was very good & it was a learning experience each day. The orientation, meetings with ERs, Praja Samvad, White Paper Launches, Collection of RTI data, Standing Committee Study, Attending GBM, Various Workshops such as RTI, Juvenile Justice etc. taught me a lot of things. Without Praja, I think, we would have never been able to learn about these things at this stage. I made little mistakes and learnt new things from it. I also observed improvement in myself.

Before the fellowship, I had very little knowledge about MCGM. But now, I have learnt about the various departments of MCGM, special committees, their functions & duties, their powers etc. Use of devices for raising questions in the ward committees and GBM was one of the most interesting things I learnt. MCGM can perform way better if all the councillors are educated towards understanding the laws, acts & devices of MCGM. Every constituency has problems and every councillor needs to speak. That's when the fellowship steps in to bridge the gap.

Initially, we faced problems in getting appointments with the ERs. But once we met them and explained the fellowship program, we built a relation of trust with them. We provided them assistance and then they started calling us proactively. While interacting with councillors, we learnt their individual strengths and weaknesses. We assisted them on the devices and helped in framing question. Many councillors who did not have knowledge about the devices have now started raising questions frequently. Once, while discussing a White Paper, the Chairperson of P/North Ward ordered the Complaint Officer to follow-up on civic complaints every week. Such moments are a sign of improvement in system.

I understood the grassroot level governance through this fellowship. Without this fellowship program, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to interact with ERs on governance matters. On a personal note, this fellowship taught me the importance and management of time, the value of honesty & trustworthiness. My perception towards the government has completely changed. The government alone cannot change the country; people's participation is also important. I also learned new skills which will be very useful for me while appearing for Civil Service examination.



“जेव्हा प्रशासकीय संस्था लोकांना उत्तम प्रकारे मदत करते, प्रशासनात घडणाऱ्या गोष्टींबाबत पारदर्शकता बाळगते, तसेच लिखित कायदे व कार्यप्रणालीनुसार कारभार चालवते, तेव्हा त्यास 'सुशासन' असे म्हटले जाते.”

GANESH KHANPAT 20

Diploma in Social Work, Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work



मला अनुभूती ट्रस्ट या संघटनेकडून कळले की प्रजा फाउंडेशन म्हणून एक संस्था आहे जी प्रशासनाला घेऊन काम करते. फेलोशीपमध्ये येण्यापूर्वी माझं असं मत होतं की राजकारण हे खूप वाईट असतं. तर खरंच ते वाईट आहे का? राजकारण म्हणजे काय? ते कसं केलं जात? असे अनेक प्रश्न मनात होते, आणि त्याचीच उत्तरे जाणून घेण्यासाठी मी प्रजाच्या फेलोशीपमध्ये आलो.

फेलोशीप दरम्यानचा अनुभव खूप छान होता. खूप काही शिकायला भेटलं. मला महानगरपालिकेबद्दल बरीच माहिती मिळाली. महानगरपालिकेचा कारभार कशा प्रकारे चालतो, त्यामध्ये लोकप्रतिनिधींची भूमिका काय आहे, अधिकाऱ्यांची भूमिका काय, महानगरपालिकेमध्ये कोण-कोणते विभाग असतात, इत्यादी. आमचं सर्वाधिक लोकप्रतिनिधींसोबत होतं. आपण एखाद्या लोकप्रतिनिधीशी कशा प्रकारे बोलावं, स्वतःला कशा प्रकारे सादर करायला हवं आदि गोष्टी मी शिकलो. अजून एक गोष्ट शिकायला भेटली, ती म्हणजे, जेव्हा आपल्याला कोणत्याही विषयाला घेऊन काम करायचं असेल तर त्यासंबंधी तपशीलवार माहिती आपल्याकडे असायला हवी.

प्रजा फाउंडेशन वेगवेगळ्या कार्यशाळा आयोजित करत असते, ज्या खूप माहितीपूर्ण असतात. प्रजाच्या कार्यशाळा या आपण प्रशासनाला कशा प्रकारे आणखी चांगलं बनवू शकतो याच्याशी संबंधित असतात. उदा. माहितीचा अधिकार, महानगरपालिकेचा अर्थसंकल्प, प्रतिनिधी प्रशासनास प्रश्न विचारण्यासाठी कोणती माध्यमे वापरतात इ.

फेलोशीपदरम्यान बरीच आव्हाने आली. जेव्हा प्रजाने लोकप्रतिनिधी अहवाल काढला होता (Councillor Report Card), त्यावेळेस खूप लोकप्रतिनिधींना तो अहवाल समजून सांगणं हे खूप मोठं आव्हान होतं, कारण अहवालात ज्यांना खालचा क्रमांक मिळाले होते, ते नगरसेवक काहीही ऐकण्याच्या मनःस्थितीत नसत. परंतु, आम्ही सर्वांची आमचे प्रयत्न चालू ठेवले व सर्व लोकप्रतिनिधींना तो अहवाल समजवला. आम्ही त्यांना समजावले, की लोकप्रतिनिधी फोन करून किंवा वैयक्तिक चर्चा करून जे प्रश्न सोडवतात, ते त्यांनी लिखित प्रश्नांद्वारे विचारावे, जेणेकरून व्यवस्थेसाठी बनविलेल्या कार्यप्रणालीप्रमाणे काम व्हावे.

समाजात अशी मानसिकता आहे कि आपण सामान्य नागरिक म्हणून प्रशासनातील लोकांना प्रश्न विचारू शकत नाही किंवा त्यांच्याशी आपल्या समस्यांना घेऊन चर्चा करू नाही. पण मुळात तसं काही नाही, ही मंडळी आपल्यासाठीच त्या पदांवर बसलेली असतात. एक नागरिक म्हणून आपली काय जबाबदारी बनते, याचीदेखील फेलोशिप दरम्यान जाणीव झाली.

अशा प्रकारच्या फेलोशीपमुळे तरुण मुले एक नवीन क्रांती घडवून आणतील. ही फेलोशिप माझ्या भविष्यासाठी एक महत्वाचा भाग ठरेल. आता मीसुद्धा कल्याण-डोंबिवली महानगरपालिकेमध्ये काही विषयांना घेऊन काम करण्याच्या विचारात आहे. त्याची सुरुवात मी माझ्या गावापासून केली आहे आणि मी सध्या गावातील कचऱ्याच्या समस्याला घेऊन काम करायला सुरुवात केली आहे.

A portrait of a young man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue polo shirt, smiling. He is standing in front of a large, ornate stone building with arches and intricate carvings. A quote is overlaid on the right side of the image.

"My notion of good governance is when the taxpayer's money is used in a proper manner and the people in the country feel a sense of economic, political and social security."

GAURAV JOGAL 23

Msc., University of Mumbai



The motivation to contribute in the field of public administration was there right from the beginning but to get the opportunities at such early age is very rare. When I became aware of the Praja Fellowship there was never a second thought as it provided an opportunity to understand, deliberate and learn with the councillors of the place that we stay and to impact some positive change in the system which is one of its kind.

The experience has just been fabulous and during the course of these 10 months the amount of practical and on field knowledge that has been received is a lot and will always stay with me during my future course of work in the administration field. The biggest learning for me has been the exposure to politics and administration. The experience of working with the PRAJA staff has been overwhelming and everyone has just been very supportive. The sessions and interactions with excellent resource person and highly reputed people who have worked in the system was very useful.

The fellowship surely helped in understanding the working of the MCGM which is one of the largest in Asia like what devices are to be used when discussing a particular issue and also how the budget is prepared and finalized and also it personally helped me in understanding the different committees that the different councillors are assigned along with the mandatory ward committee. I would like to highlight the technical aspects right from how complex it is to manage such a city where there is almost equal amount of the inflow population as the static one and to provide the basic facilities to all the citizens is a very huge task.

The challenges that we faced were at the start of the fellowship where we didn't have that rapport with the councillors and it took some time for both of us (councillors and fellows) to come on the same page but now towards the end of the fellowship we have been able to develop good relations with at least 7 councillors. It was encouraging to work with councillors who listened to us and appreciated our efforts. The whole fellowship was a good learning curve.

The key learnings for me would certainly be that this was another step in becoming a leader in future life. It motivated me to try to think of some unique solution to the problem faced by majority of the citizens in the ward or in the city and it has boosted my confidence that I can certainly work in this field of administration. The things learnt from here and also mistakes committed will surely guide me whenever similar situations arise again.

***"Good governance
is a perfect blend
of work done by
administration
diligently, elected
representatives
efficiently, and the
same rendered to
citizens
transparently."***

HANSIKA SINGH 20

BBA LLB, SNDT Womens University Law School



The foremost thing that attracted me towards this fellowship was not the idea of the program, but the slogan on Praja's logo, 'Making Democracy Work'. Being a law student whose life revolves around understanding, interpreting the constitution of India and Democracy being the most important pillar of the same motivated me to apply for this fellowship. Secondly, we were awarded a stipend which help me finance my educational expenses thus making me self-reliant.

I feel really fortunate to be a part of Praja and the three-day orientation program was really informative and formal. We attended numerous orientation program organized by Praja and undoubtedly, they were really helpful for our personal and professional growth. Once I visited few of the councillor's ward, I understood the prominence of Praja in Mumbai. Praja plays an important role in the domain of urban governance.

Every day in this fellowship we had new experiences and hurdles, one of them was understanding the mechanism of MCGM, though it is very complicated but Praja made sure that fellows understand the crux of the MCGM functioning, which helped us in our meetings with councillor's as well as AO, commissioners.

We were introduced to many new spheres of urban governance, how the MCGM works, about their laws and Acts, their area of jurisdiction etc. We learnt about the roles and responsibilities of Councillors who are the most important link between the citizens and MCGM. We went through each aspect of the relation between MCGM and Councillors.

It was really troublesome to tackle few of the councillors who were reluctant to give appointments for the meetings due to some misconceptions. However, after the initial hurdle, we were able to build a rapport with the Councillors. I also attended the women's councillors workshop where I interacted with the female councillors for three days. I helped them with the orientation sessions and explained them different things where they were getting any difficulty.

Praja made sure every difficulty we faced on the field gets redressed positively. The key learnings from the fellowship has been my growth in terms of team work, stress management, positive attitude, understanding governance, amongst others. Fellowship has been really impactful for me as an individual as it taught me to work with different people coming from diverse background.

I feel this fellowship encourages any individual to not only think about themselves but also about the citizens, the governance, the representatives and the country as a whole. This fellowship adds special bricks of experiences to any youth's life for better understanding of the society as a whole. I am blessed to be a part of this fellowship program, as a lawyer, communication plays a crucial role in my career thus engaging with elected representatives helped me in enhancing my skills.

"Good Governance is time bound delivery of essential services to the citizens with the purpose of improving their quality of life. It's a marriage of development and people's need."

MAHESHWARI KARNELOO

FYBA, S. K. Somaiya College

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make democracy work... written next to the Praja logo caught my eye and made me think “What?” I was shocked how could I make democracy work? I was excited to do something and contribute whatever little to the society, my surroundings and democracy at large.

Through the fellowship, I gained knowledge about various departments, their functions, duties of the councillors and norms governing the city. I could study the measures to bring in transparency, accountability and efficiency in the functioning of all MCGM bodies. Before joining Praja, I was unaware of all the different bodies of MCGM, for instance, the complaint registration toll free number 1916, simple usage of RTI, etc. I also got interested in politicians and their work or their movements for the betterment of the society. I started observing the things going on around me.

I tried my best to transfer my knowledge of data to the councillors to build their understanding of data, the questions they want to raise at the ward committees, GBM or new policies for the city. Most of the councillors need some motivation to do certain things. I made sure to personally motivate them to raise their voice by following the protocol as only then he/she can stand out amidst councillors at the committee meetings.

It was a great experience to be a part of Praja. I literally feel that Praja is like a family to me. Everyone is understanding and free minded. I feel proud of myself of being able to work with this awesome team of Praja. As part of our work as fellows, we had to take appointments and meet the councillors and make reports and attend workshops. I am surely going to miss it. We utterly enjoyed our work. I am an introvert and the fellowship helped me grow out of it and become more confident and raise myself up again to realise my duties as a responsible citizen of my country.

Praja Elected Representatives fellowship will definitely help me in my future career because it has given me deep knowledge of MCGM's system and their functions and policies. This knowledge will stay with me throughout my life enabling me to share it with others in need.

"प्रशासकीय यंत्रणेशिवाय राजकीय व्यवस्था, समाज व्यवस्था व आर्थिक व्यवस्था टिकू शकत नाही. प्रशासकीय यंत्रणा ही केंद्राची ,राज्याची व समाजाची, संस्कृतीची संरक्षक आहे. तसेच लोकप्रतिनिधी व शासकीय यंत्रणा यांच्या संयुक्त कार्यामुळे समाजातील जनतेला उत्तुंग असे सामाजिक जीवन प्राप्त होते."

MOHIT TANDEL 20

TYBMM, PTVA's Sathaye College



प्रशासनासोबत काम करण्याची जी संधी आम्हाला मिळणार होती त्यामुळे मी प्रजा फाऊंडेशनच्या फेलोशीपसाठी अर्ज दाखल केला.

हा अनुभव एकंदरीत माझ्यासाठी खूप महत्वाचा होता. प्रजामुळे शहर प्रशासन कशा प्रकारे काम करते, हे समजण्यास तसेच त्यांच्यासोबत काम करून प्रशासनाचे ध्येय व जबाबदारी कशा प्रकारची असते, हे समजण्यास मदत झाली. पुस्तकी माहिती ही आम्हाला होती, परंतु प्रात्यक्षिक कामाचा अनुभव नव्हता आणि प्रजामुळे महाविद्यालयाच्या जीवनातच हा अनुभव आम्हांला मिळाला. त्यामुळे आमच्या जीवनातील अमूल्य वेळ आम्ही या फेलोशीप मध्ये घालवला, याचे समाधान आहेच, शिवाय त्याचा फायदा आमच्या पुढील जीवनात नक्कीच होणार, यात काही शंका नाही.

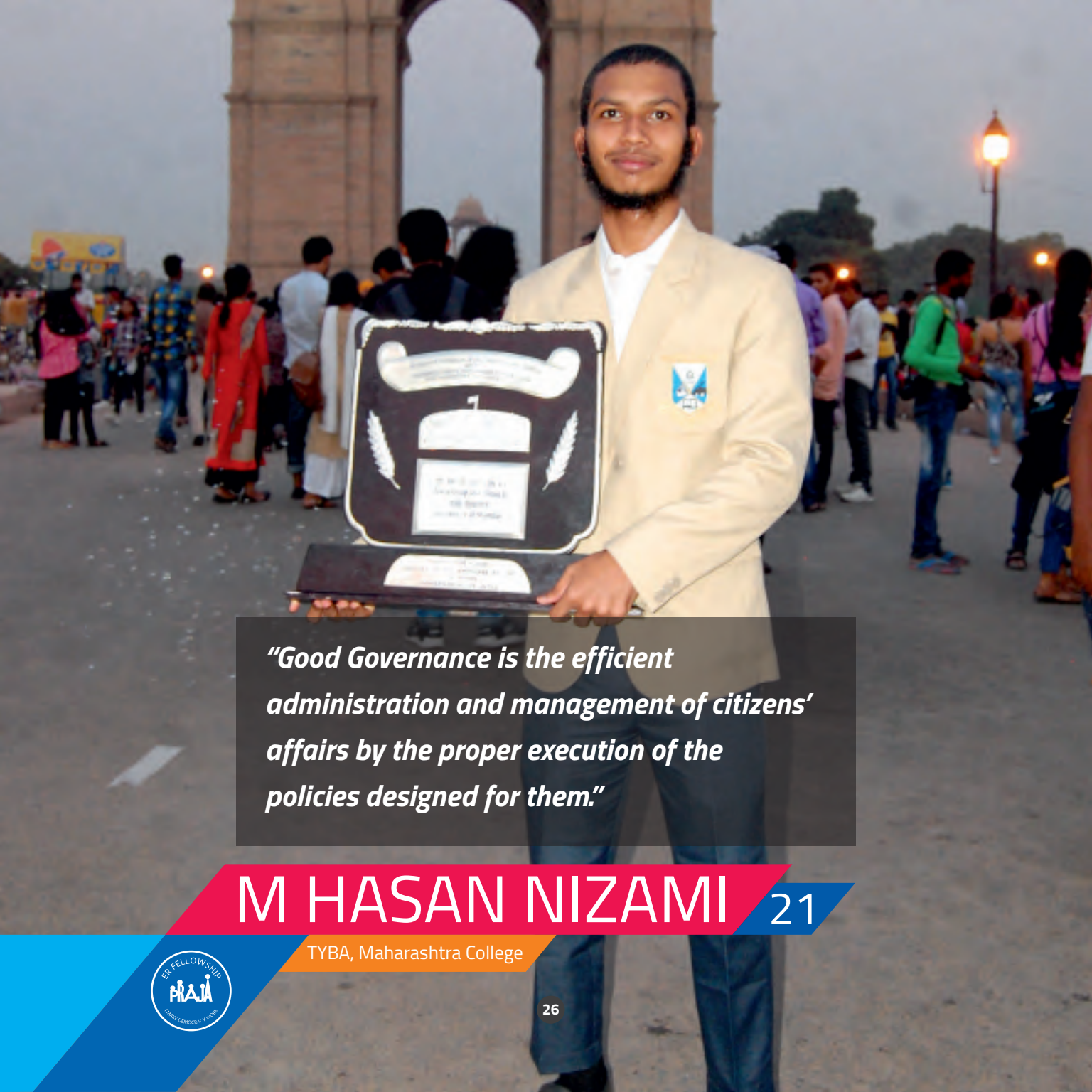
प्रजामध्ये आल्यापासून मुंबई महानगरपालिकेचे प्रशासकीय कार्य कशा प्रकारे चालते, याची माहिती प्राप्त झाली, तसेच मुंबई महानगरपालिकेमधील विविध समित्यांचे कार्य समजण्यास मला मोठ्या प्रमाणावर मदत झाली. यामध्ये सर्वाधिक महत्वाची समिती म्हणजे म्हणजे स्थायी समिती. कारण त्यामधूनच मोठमोठ्या प्रकल्पांना मान्यता आणि त्यासाठी आर्थिक पुरवठा केला जातो. तसेच त्या मध्ये कशा प्रकारे सदस्य संख्या असते आणि दरवर्षी कशी बदलली जाते आणि अध्यक्ष कोण असतो याची माहिती प्राप्त झाली.

फेलोशीपदरम्यान आम्हांला विविध गोष्टींना सामोरे जावे लागले. रिपोर्ट कार्ड मुळे नगरसेवकांच्या मनात प्रजाबद्दल ज्या नकारार्थी भावना होत्या, त्यांचे आम्ही सकारात्मक भावनेत रूपांतर केले आणि त्यानंतर ते स्वतःहून आम्हाला त्यांना कुठल्याही गोष्टीसाठी मदत लागली की फोन करून आमच्या कडून माहिती घेऊ लागले.

प्रजा फाऊंडेशनच्या विविध शश्वेतपत्रिका आम्ही नगरसेवकांसमोर मांडल्या आणि शाळा व्यवस्थापन समितीचे महत्त्व नगरसेवकांना पटवून दिले. त्याचा परिणाम अर्थसंकल्पात दिसून आला. प्रजा फेलोशीपमुळे सरकारी यंत्रणा कशा प्रकारे कार्य करतात, हे समजण्यास मदत झाली आणि त्यामुळेच सरकारी यंत्रणेबद्दल चांगली भावना माझ्या मनात निर्माण झाली. मी कशा प्रकारे सरकारी यंत्रणेत सहभागी होऊन देशाच्या विकासकामात मदत करू शकतो हे मला प्रजामुळे समजले.

लोकप्रतिनिधींना मदत करताना त्यांच्या मनात आपल्या जनतेबद्दलचा काय विचार असतो, हे समजण्यास मदत झाली आणि त्याच गोष्टीचा फायदा आम्ही आमच्या पुढील जीवनात करू. तसेच कशा प्रकारे आपण लोकांसोबत नगरसेवक म्हणून बोलले पाहिजे, हे मला प्रजाच्या माध्यमातून समजण्यास मदत झाली. लोकांच्या गरजा नेमक्या काय असतात आणि त्या आपण कशा प्रकारे पूर्ण केल्या पाहिजेत, हे मला या फेलोशिपमुळे शिकण्यास मदत झाली आणि त्याचा फायदा भविष्यात आम्ही उपयोग करू हे निश्चित आहे.

प्रजासारख्या समुद्राप्रमाणे शहरी प्रशासनाची माहिती देणाऱ्या संस्थेला मला एकच सांगावेसे वाटते, ते म्हणजे त्यांनी मुंबईतील शहरी प्रशासनाच्या माहितीवर जो भर असतो, त्याच पद्धतीने त्यांनी महाराष्ट्रातील इतर जिल्ह्यांवरसुद्धा आपले लक्ष केंद्रित केले पाहिजे. कारण खेडेगावातील लोकप्रतिनिधी व प्रशासनास देखील याची गरज आहे.



"Good Governance is the efficient administration and management of citizens' affairs by the proper execution of the policies designed for them."

M HASAN NIZAMI 21

TYBA, Maharashtra College



The flyer pinned on the Sociology Department notice board of our college with the headline 'Are You Interested In Running Your City' caught my attention. I was always interested in the administration of the city. I spoke with our Professors, and they recommended me to join Praja Fellowship as it will be a very good start for me and will give me a lot of experience.

I learnt a lot from the fellowship – One to One Communication with people who are of higher authority – Committee Chairpersons, Councillors and their auxiliaries and administrative officials. The biggest learning is the skill of listening patiently to things we may disagree with and tolerance to people's views.

During the orientation itself, we were introduced to the key articles of the Mumbai Municipal Act, 1888 Act and the devices in the by-laws – Corporation Procedure Rules and Regulations. We learnt the intricacies of 74th Amendment – the 18 functions that a Corporation should do, its application in the MCGM and the functioning of GBM, Ward Committees and different committees. We also learnt about the hierarchy of the whole MCGM administration who is responsible for what, and how the decentralization of powers has helped MCGM manage one of the most complicated and biggest Municipal Corporation of the country.

The biggest challenge I faced during the whole fellowship was to get an appointment at the mutual free time. In the beginning, most of the councillors rarely responded to our messages. This caused frustration and waste of time. Additionally, it was a major challenge to convince the councillors that there are other instruments other than Point of Order which can be used to raise the issue in both Ward Meetings and General Body Meeting.

My main contribution to the capacity building of the councillors is making them understand (albeit few – but a good beginning) that the use of numerical data for the betterment of their work is important, which they usually consider as just numbers with no actual value, and it actually gives credibility to their claims.

I actually learned a lot from this fellowship – Communication Skills, Grasping Skills and more importantly patience and tolerance. I understood the dilemma that Elected Representatives usually go through, for they have to answer to the people for their promises, but could not do what they really wish to, due to different hurdles. Even in cities like Mumbai, there is a section of population who are dropping out of schools, or are not getting the health care they should get due to ignorance or illiteracy.

Praja made me more aware of things that are actually happening in my surroundings but are somewhere hidden from the public purview, and it made me more sensible to problems faced by the citizens.



"Good Governance is when the manner of governing a state or organization is balanced and effective. It is achieved when the citizens and the corporation work together by understanding their individual roles and responsibilities."

POOJA GOUR 21

BBA LLB, SNTD Womens University Law School



The most attractive thing about the fellowship was the question 'Do you want to run your city?' I was extremely curious to know how can I play a significant role in running the massive city like Mumbai. I was highly motivated to be an integral part in running the administration and closely witness the day to day business of the Corporation.

The fellowship isn't simply about urban governance and the corporation moreover it's a holistic development of once own self. The experience of nearly one year, the responsibility of carrying the tag of Praja Foundation throughout along with your name, the meetings with the councillors, the experience of the House, Ward committee meetings, is extraordinary. I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to be associated with Praja and learn so much each day from personal excellence to communication skills in such a friendly workspace.

There were a lot of new learnings in the past few months. We were taught about how the budget of the corporation is framed, the allocation of budget for various departments, the Development Plan of the city, the infrastructure and every technical aspect which surrounds it. We had workshops for the same wherein the councillors were also invited. This was very new for me since I earlier never encountered the functionalities of a corporation so closely and for a city like Mumbai it is more fascinating.

It was a new challenge everyday as every single day we had to persuade the councillors or their PA's to spare us some time for an appointment. But through our persistent efforts and persuasion a few councillors started to meet us. There were a lot many things which the councillors had no idea were in existence. For instance, the various methods of raising issues in the meetings besides point of orders. We extended our help in framing questions on whatever issues the councillors asked us to frame. We helped them with their ward specific data and answered all those questions which we could. After disseminating the data of our white papers, we noticed that the corporation has taken a few steps towards certain issues.

The key learning for me from the fellowship is how one's individual contribution can help in better administration and governance of the city. The fellowship is throughout a learning process. It has helped me realize my duties as an individual. If in future I want to be a councillor, I now know what should be my priorities in fulfilling my mandate, my duties as a citizen of the country and my responsibilities as a councillor. The entire learning process has been very enchanting and will stay with me throughout my career, professionally as well as an individual.



"Good Governance is an aware and empowered citizen wishing to actively contribute and participate in the day – to – day functioning of the city."

RAHUL THEKDI 24

M.A., St. Xavier's College



I had applied to the fellowship program in order to better understand the functioning of my city and wished to contribute in whatever capacity that I could.

The entire fellowship was quite an enriching experience as had it not been this, I would not have taken such keen interest in understanding the complex hierarchy structures of the BMC and how is it that an organization like Praja helps improve the overall functioning and efficiency of the institution. At the beginning of the fellowship, there were quite a bit of disappointing moments given the general indifferent nature of government institutions but later on once we understood the right channels we started working accordingly and it worked.

Like other municipal corporation, the BMC too is quite ill – equipped as far as human resources is concerned and overtly complex institution structures makes it difficult for lay men to reach out to the city administration.

The major challenge I faced was initial reluctance on part of councillors but then I learnt to get along with them by developing customized methods to approach each one of them. Of course, I learnt to patiently make way through the slow path of law making.

Through the course of the fellowship, I become better aware about the government structures and these months of experience helped me know the right path to grievance redressal now.



"Good governance is a realist approach to making the previously invisible hand of government, efficient and transparent, with the potential to empower all the stakeholders in any society."

SARIKA NAIR 22

M.A., Department of Civics and Politics, MU



As a student of Political Science, the practical aspect of meeting and working with the councillors while actually playing a part in running our city through the fellowship led me to become a part of the Praja Elected Representative Fellowship.

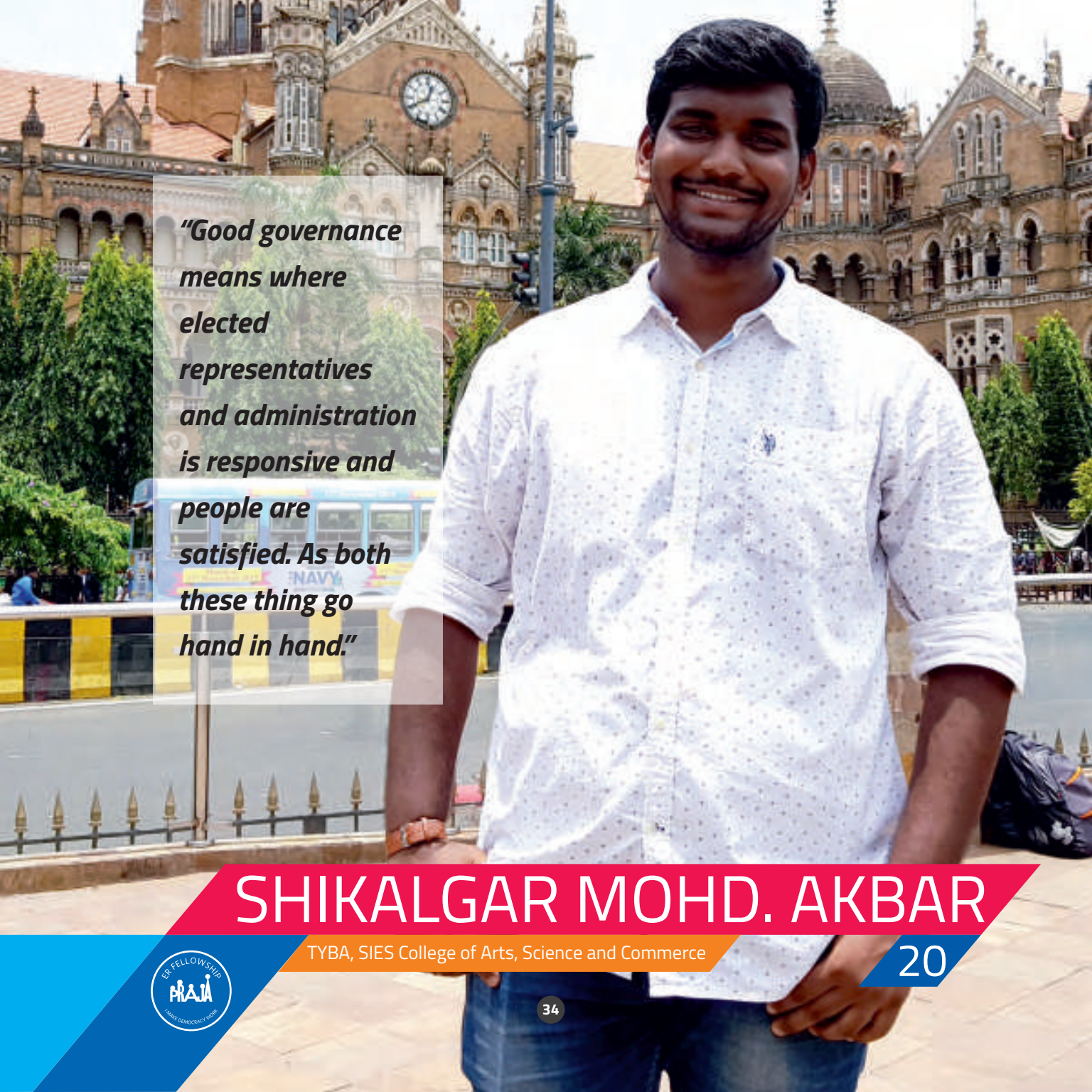
It has been a very fulfilling and enriching journey. Whenever we went to the General Body Meeting to meet our councillors and they would introduce us to other councillors saying “they are from Praja”. It was always a matter of pride.

Even though we have learnt about the 74th Constitutional Amendment on field we realised the practical implications these parallel agencies cause while each try to run the city. It is a never ending work and we saw the way our councillors contribute to run the city. The entire legislative process involved in business of all the statutory committees were all unknown to us prior to the fellowship. Learning this as a Fellow definitely put light on to the previous understanding of the invisible hand of administration.

I got the opportunity to be a part of the women councillors workshop Praja had organised where I could help build their knowledge of how to use the specific devices to improve their Legislative business. Most of the councillors since then have been very good at it. Watching them become informed councillors and committee chairpersons gives a sense of the value that I could add in their role as Elected representatives. To see them, regain leadership and uphold power endowed on them by the Constitution, emerging from the shadows, of their husband/brothers/fathers makes my presence worthwhile.

Building trust with the person you are working with is the key to doing any job right. In the case of our fellowship we work with the Councillors who being in the public eye are cautious of who they want to be associated with. To establish trust with them takes sincere efforts and one needs to invest a lot of time to develop that level of comfort. Once you achieve it then every meeting becomes fruitful and positive. As a citizen I am now more aware of where to raise our grievances, what to expect in the budget and the Development plan and as a person it has taught me a lot of patience.

Seven months into the fellowship, I was offered the opportunity to become a Project Officer in the Capacity Building team and work with Elected Representatives, Admins and the Citizen Engagements at Praja Foundation. The fellowship and my work done in this period became the grounds on which I was scouted for this position I am handling right now.



"Good governance means where elected representatives and administration is responsive and people are satisfied. As both these things go hand in hand."

SHIKALGAR MOHD. AKBAR

TYBA, SIES College of Arts, Science and Commerce

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always believed that as a member of this society it is my responsibility to contribute in a good way. I think the feeling of belongingness towards this great city of Mumbai motivated me more than any other thing to apply for this fellowship.

I faced many ups and downs during my whole journey of Praja Fellowship. When it all started I and my partner Gaurav both struggled to set meetings with the Councillors even though we got meetings we were not given any chance to speak but gradually we built a relation with the Councillors and by the end of the fellowship, the Councillors invited us to lead the meeting.

I, absolutely like many Mumbaikars had this myth in my mind that– “Councillors are responsible for everything”. I realized that this belief was misplaced because, not only councillors but also the administration is majorly responsible for every good and bad that happens in Mumbai. Urban governance is not as simple as other people think, and not as tough as I think. according to this act, there are different ways of raising issues and getting work done, which we know as ‘Devices’. “Devices” is my favourite technical term which I have learnt during my fellowship and I am hopeful that tomorrow I will represent people and I won’t be confused about usage of devices.

As a team of Akbar and Gaurav- I feel we were able to assist first time women councillors, who are often working in the shadows of the patriarch of the house, with measures and tools through which they can effectively deliver their roles and responsibilities.

The fellowship taught me team work and time management. It was first time when I worked with a partner on ground, where I actually learnt how time is managed. As a citizen, person and a student fellowship had great impact on me. Now I won’t simply criticize or blame any Councillor but will try to resolve it.

A decade from now, I see myself as a politician or strategist or administrator. I see myself in law and policy making process. And this exposure at such an early stage will definitely give me perspective and strength to think, how I asked particular councillor to solve particular issue.

"Good governance is a process where people and government are connected to each other in order to improve quality of life for all."

TEJASWINI PIRANI 20

TYBA, SIES College of Arts, Science and Commerce



When I first got introduced to this fellowship, I was quite amazed the way it was presented to us. What caught my eye was that we, the students have to assist the Councillors which was very different for me because I had never heard or ever came across any such thing. The most important fact that motivated me to join this fellowship was that the level of exposure I would get as a political science student and the practical learning that will teach me how to handle tough situations at critical times.

The experience in Praja has been outstanding since the day I joined. Right from the training period to my last day I have learnt a lot from multiple people be it the Councillors, my other fellows or the office staff. It is very rare opportunity that any NGO or organisation would ever care to give to anyone but Praja is going out of its limits and trying to educate the upcoming generation through the channel of students. It has been a great experience in Praja due to which I got to learn the issues that concern the city of Mumbai.

Before Praja I had an understanding that the role and work of MCGM is minimal at the best, no policy decisions are being made in order to improve the situation of Mumbai, but after the fellowship I realized that there are numerous decisions that are being discussed and taken on daily basis and that the laws of MCGM is at the best for its citizens.

Aspects that I learnt was the laws and devices of BMC and how do they function. I also learnt that what kind of questions is being asked by the councillors in their meeting and how to frame these questions. In the beginning the challenge was to approach the councillors and how to convey them our assistance but over a period of time we were able to mitigate this challenge.

My contribution in capacity building of the councillors was to guide them about the basic civic, health and educational problems of the people. How to raise questions in their ward committee meetings and what methodology should be used in order to raise questions.

The fellowship is a great learning experience which should be participated by each and every young student like us which will help them to learn and understand governance and its basic policy in a better manner. Being a political science student, the fellowship has given me a lot that even if I am planning to start a political career, I have a basic knowledge about the rules and regulations and acts and devises to function in a correct manner.

A portrait of a young man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. He is standing outdoors with green foliage in the background. His arms are crossed.

"Good governance means making appropriate policies for the betterment of a region and citizens. The policies should remedy the drawbacks of the past and think for the future. Need based regulation and amendment of these policies is required."

VEDANT VICHARE 19

SYBA, V. G. Vaze College



The line "Are you interested in running your city?" which was posted on a notice board in my college motivated me to apply for this Fellowship. I smiled and said to myself, "Of course why not the pleasure's all mine"

The experience throughout the fellowship has been fantastic. I thank Praja for providing me an opportunity to engage with the councillors of Mumbai and have an in-depth knowledge of urban governance. There were days we could not get a single appointment whereas some days there were four appointments. The idea of assisting councillors is really vital and we saw them making use of this opportunity while we got to learn a lot too. I developed relations with many councillors and realised maintaining follow-ups was the most essential task.

At Praja office everyone is extremely cooperative. Everyone is different but they have a consensus towards one goal i.e. "Making Government Accountable". I learnt how an office functions and the various workshops and lectures organised for us by the Praja team were informative, qualitative and at core were for bringing change.

I had very poor knowledge about urban governance before joining Praja fellowship. I used to think that only a Councillor is responsible for the improper functioning of the ward and they are the cause of corruption. But later I realised that there are other municipal authorities like the Central agencies and the various Departments of administration that man this huge machinery of the Corporation. That's when I made sense of the need for Praja 'ER' Fellowship i.e. (Elected Representative) to empower our elected representatives for better governance.

As a fellow I assisted the councillors in framing questions, analysing and explaining whitepapers, organizing workshops in the wards on SWM, SMC, Budget allocation, promoting 1916, CCRS, etc. I got the chance to know and understand Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act, 1888. I also visited ward offices of many wards and saw how they function. The fellowship gave me a chance to see Mumbai like never before.

Fellowship has impacted me into becoming very rational and to make use of data/statistics to prove my point. It is necessary that we interact with our Councillor on a regular basis so that he/she can represent his electorate in the house very effectively. Criticizing them without credible civic participation is futile. I believe this fellowship encourages more eminent youth to aspire to take up careers as Councillors.

I aim at clearing UPSC Civil Service Examination. Understanding how governance and administration work in a metropolitan city like Mumbai that also with practical experience will help me in my studies of Polity. I shall spread this knowledge in common citizens so they can make use of the services provided by MCGM.

FELLOWS

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FELLOWSHIP COHORT 2 - MUMBAI 2018-19





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Delhi : Room No. 215, 2nd Floor, Competent House, F-Block, Connaught Place, Middle Circle. New Delhi 110 001, Tel. : 011-2332 1559

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