



PRAJA'S GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME 2025



MUMBAI
GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP
COHORT 6



DELHI
GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP
COHORT 4



LUCKNOW
GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP
COHORT 3

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MUMBAI GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP - COHORT 6 | DELHI GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP - COHORT 4 | LUCKNOW GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP - COHORT 3



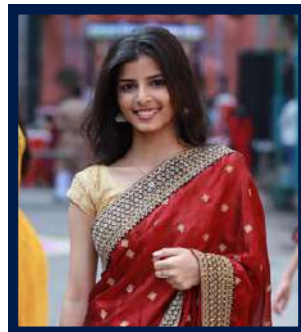
Diksha



Harsh



Kamala



Kalyani



Manu



Sahil



Samarth



Shubham



Vaishnavi



Abhisht



Aditi



Satyam

INTRODUCTION

Praja's Governance Fellowship programme continues to serve as a transformative bridge connecting young changemakers with the complex realities of urban governance. The programme embodies Praja's vision of nurturing informed, data-driven, and participatory governance by enabling fellows to work directly with elected representatives, administrators, and citizens. Through a blend of fieldwork, research, and advocacy, this fellowship empowers youth to not only understand governance systems but also to actively contribute to strengthening them.

The 2025 edition builds upon the success of the previous cohorts, expanding its footprint and deepening its impact across Indian cities. This year, the fellowship witnessed participation from three vibrant cohorts - Mumbai, Delhi, and Lucknow, each designed around the distinct governance structures, priorities, and challenges of their respective cities. Spanning 10 months from February to November 2025, the programme received over 873 applications, out of which 22 exceptional fellows were selected through a rigorous multi-stage process. Representing disciplines ranging from Political Science, Economics, and Law to Engineering, Architecture, and Environmental Studies, the fellows brought a multidisciplinary approach to governance challenges, fostering collaboration and innovation.

The journey commenced with an intensive orientation and training module, introducing fellows to the foundations of urban governance, public data systems, and Praja's long-standing work in research and civic advocacy. The sessions set the stage for an immersive learning experience that blended academic understanding with practical exposure through city-based assignments and national-level initiatives.

In Mumbai, fellows collaborated closely with Praja's research and advocacy teams to collect and analyse data from government departments on civic services, health, and education. Their work contributed to the development of Whitepapers and MLA report cards, spotlighting governance performance. Fellows were instrumental in organising press conferences and public dialogues, amplifying civic issues through evidence-based discussions. Additionally, they conducted a study of municipal governance and climate action across key cities in Maharashtra, interacting

with local officials, former representatives, and civil society organisations to assess policy implementation and urban resilience.

The Delhi cohort focused on analysing public data on civic and health services, assessing MLA performance, and engaging with local governance stakeholders. Fellows participated in municipal committee meetings and worked with councillors to identify key governance gaps. They also led college-level workshops and councillor capacity-building sessions, promoting youth awareness and civic participation. Their research and advocacy contributions shed light on urban challenges such as water scarcity, air pollution, and public health disparities—aligning with Praja’s mission of fostering transparency and accountability.

Meanwhile, in Lucknow, fellows worked in partnership with the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, Uttar Pradesh, to strengthen institutional data systems and financial transparency. They conducted a GIS mapping study of municipal corporations, analysed budgetary documents and contributed to training modules for elected representatives in cities like Lucknow, Kanpur, and Varanasi. Their engagement helped enhance councillors’ understanding of urban policy, fiscal management, and service delivery mechanisms.

The fellows also served as the core organising team for Prajatantra 2025 – India’s National Youth Festival on Democracy and Governance. From conceptualising themes and conducting outreach campaigns to managing events across the Qualifiers, Semi-Finals, and Grand Finale, fellows demonstrated exceptional leadership, communication, and teamwork. Their work ensured that the festival became a vibrant platform for youth voices in democratic dialogue.

Collectively, the 2025 fellows have contributed over 15,000 hours to strengthening urban governance and civic systems. Their journey reflects a commitment to learning, leadership, and systemic impact. As this cohort concludes, it stands as a testament to the potential of youth-driven governance reform — inspiring future generations to envision and build more accountable, inclusive, and data-informed cities.

This compendium of the 2025 Fellowship celebrates their contributions, experiences, and collective achievements, capturing the spirit of collaboration and change that defines governance fellowship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT NOTE

We attribute the success of Praja's Governance Fellowship Programme to the dedication and collaboration of all stakeholders who have shaped its growth and impact. As the 2025 Cohort completes its journey, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone whose support and guidance made this edition a grand success. Our deepest appreciation goes to the Political and Administrative Leaders across Mumbai, Delhi, and Lucknow, whose engagement and mentorship enriched the fellowship experience by offering meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and rich insights into governance systems. We also thank the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, Uttar Pradesh, for facilitating on-ground learning that enabled fellows to witness urban administration and legislative functioning first-hand. Our sincere thanks extend to our panel of advisors for their continued guidance, as well as subject experts from academia, media, and civil society whose capacity-building sessions strengthened the fellows' conceptual and analytical understanding of urban governance.

We are grateful to the college faculty and institutional partners who supported outreach and encouraged student participation, ensuring the programme continues to attract passionate young leaders from diverse academic and regional backgrounds. Our appreciation also goes to Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies and Madhu Mehta Foundation for their steadfast support, which has been instrumental in sustaining and expanding the fellowship's scope and enabling an immersive platform for youth engagement in governance. Their continued partnership has helped Praja nurture informed, socially conscious young citizens committed to strengthening democratic processes.

To our fellows, we express our deepest admiration. Your enthusiasm, curiosity, and commitment have been central to this programme, and the insights and impact you created through research, fieldwork, and advocacy reflect your dedication to good governance. Finally, we extend heartfelt gratitude to the Praja Foundation team, whose tireless efforts—from selection and orientation to on-ground guidance and project facilitation—ensured a meaningful and transformative fellowship journey.

Note: The contents of this publication are authored by the governance fellows and reflect their individual perspectives, not necessarily those of Praja Foundation or its funding partners

MUMBAI GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP COHORT 6



MEMORIES OF MUMBAI GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP 2025



Diksha Kadam

**Bachelors degree in political science,
PTVA's Sathaye College**

I've learned that good governance isn't just about systems and structures — it's about people, participation, and purpose.

As a Political Science student, I have always aspired to go beyond textbooks and experience how governance truly functions. When I heard about the ER Fellowship by Praja Foundation from a classmate who was a Prajatantra 2024 grand finalist, I instantly knew it was the kind of practical exposure I had been seeking. The selection process was rigorous and highly competitive, and being chosen as a fellow marked the beginning of an incredibly rewarding learning journey.

From the very first orientation, I realized how enriching this experience would be. We were introduced to the structure and functioning of municipal corporations, their procedural rules, and the by-laws that guide city administration. These sessions offered a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of urban governance, something that often remains unexplored within the confines of academic study. The fellowship also included capacity-building workshops on the Right to Information Act, the BMC Act of 1888, town planning, and municipal budgeting. Listening to experts who have spent years strengthening democratic and civic systems was both eye-opening and inspiring.

One of the most transformative aspects of the fellowship was the opportunity to interact directly with elected representatives. Observing how they addressed citizen grievances, framed questions for the state assembly, and relied on data-driven research to support their concerns revealed the essential connection between research and policymaking. Seeing Praja Foundation's data and white papers being used to inform real policy discussions was particularly impactful.

Through field visits, workshops, and collaborative tasks, I developed stronger communication, analytical, and leadership skills. Although engaging with officials and pitching the Prajatantra Youth Festival initially felt daunting, it taught me professionalism, confidence, and empathy.

The ER Fellowship has truly transformed my perspective—deepening my understanding of governance and shaping me into a more informed, responsible, and active citizen.



Harsh Jain

Civil Aspirant

Good governance means a transparent, accountable, and participatory system where every citizen feels empowered to engage and contribute to the nation's progress.

I applied for Praja's Governance Fellowship in Mumbai to gain practical exposure to how city governance works on the ground, particularly how administration, elected representatives, and citizens collaborate to solve urban challenges. Having appeared for the UPSC interviews and aspiring to become a civil servant, I wanted to move beyond theory and understand the real implementation of governance. The Fellowship felt like a natural step to build my knowledge, develop essential skills, and orient myself toward a public-facing career.

From the start, the experience was deeply insightful. The Fellowship offered hands-on exposure to urban governance across cities like Mumbai, Nagpur, and Pune, covering areas such as data, research, youth engagement, and e-governance. Interacting with administrative officials helped me see governance as a collaborative process, while engaging with youth through boot camps and capacity-building sessions allowed me to translate complex governance concepts into relatable messages. Leading the "Reel Making" competition at Prajatantra 2025, where I drafted by-laws and structured the event, blended creativity with strategic governance planning and was especially rewarding.

Field visits reinforced my understanding of the role of technology and data in urban governance. At the Nagpur Municipal Corporation, I observed how e-governance solutions tracked property tax, citizen complaints, and waste management. Witnessing these systems in action highlighted the importance of accurate data for informed decision-making and effective city management.

The Fellowship also presented challenges. Balancing responsibilities, coordinating with officials, and managing stakeholders during the Prajatantra Grand Finale required persistence and adaptability. With guidance from mentors and support from the Praja team, I developed resilience, communication, and organizational skills.

Overall, the Fellowship shaped me both professionally and personally. I became more aware of governance's impact on daily life, the importance of accountability, and the role of informed citizens. It also highlighted the gap between digitally connected cities and citizens struggling for basic services, grounding me in empathy and a deeper understanding of inclusive development. I aim to apply these insights in my career to create meaningful, lasting impact.



Kamala Ramkrishna

**International Relations, S.K Somaiya College,
Somaiya Vidyavihar University**



To me, Good Governance means creating a system that is transparent, accountable, and truly responsive to the people it serves.



When I first came across Praja's Fellowship, what immediately caught my attention was its hands-on, on-field experience. I was motivated to apply because it offered something beyond a typical desk-based research program—a chance to engage directly with the system and witness where governance truly takes shape. From visiting ward offices and the BMC headquarters to Mantralaya itself, and even collecting RTI data, every experience offered a window into how the city functions behind the scenes.

Throughout the Fellowship, what stood out most was the blend of learning, exposure, and responsibility. Beyond ER meetings and RTI work, I had the opportunity to attend and even facilitate several workshops. These covered topics such as the Urban Governance Index, the Constitution, the RTI Act, and the three tiers of democracy. Each session added a new layer of understanding about governance, participation, and accountability.

One of the most memorable experiences was meeting elected representatives. From the orientation day to the final moments of the Prajatantra National Youth Festival, every interaction reminded me that governance is as much about people as it is about policy. My meeting with MLA Sana Malik from Anushakti Nagar especially stands out. We had gone to present questions for the Monsoon Session, and I was struck by how attentively she reviewed each one, making handwritten notes and adding points she planned to raise later. That moment emphasized the power of informed dialogue.

The journey was not without challenges—waiting hours outside ward offices or making multiple visits for data taught me patience and persistence, qualities essential in public systems.

Leading Prajatantra 2025 as National Youth Coordinator further deepened my understanding of coordination and policy implementation. Looking back, the Fellowship has shaped me both professionally and personally—instilling in me a stronger belief in transparency, participation, and informed citizenship.



Kalyani Jalda

**B.A.M.M.C (Lala Lajpatrai College of
Commerce and Economics)**

*“A city works best when governance listens,
learns, and acts together with its people”.*



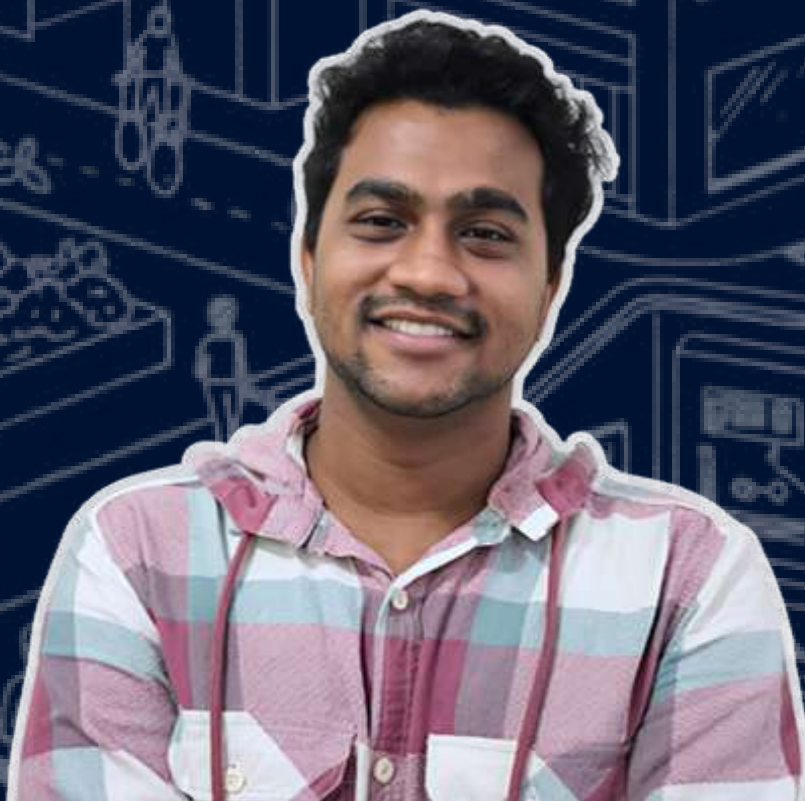
When I first came across the Praja Fellowship, my primary motivation was to understand how governance truly functions at the city level. I had always been curious about how decisions made within offices translate into real impact on the ground—and how citizens can play a stronger role in shaping those decisions. The Fellowship's unique blend of research, field engagement, and citizen participation deeply resonated with me.

The journey from its beginning until now has been nothing short of transformative. The initial months offered me an in-depth understanding of the foundations of urban governance—from the structure of local bodies to the roles of Councillors and MLAs. Through fieldwork, monthly and weekly meetings, and interactive workshops, I began to witness how systems operate in reality, and how data-driven insights can strengthen governance and accountability.

One experience that particularly stands out was during a ward-level research activity, where our team interacted with local Councillors and citizens to assess the quality of service delivery. Later, while presenting our findings, I saw firsthand how data could initiate meaningful dialogue and awareness among representatives. That moment made me truly appreciate the power of evidence-based governance. The Fellowship was not without challenges. Managing fieldwork schedules, verifying data, and dealing with ground realities that often differed from expectations tested my patience and adaptability. Yet, each challenge taught me valuable lessons in teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. Every obstacle truly became an opportunity for growth.

This journey has completely reshaped the way I view governance. I have come to realize that effective governance is not only about policy-making but also about transparency, accountability, and active citizen participation. It thrives on collaboration between the government and the people it serves. Personally, I have grown more aware, analytical, and socially responsible.

The Praja Fellowship has made me not only more conscious of systemic challenges but also more hopeful about the change we can create when knowledge meets action. I have experienced the true spirit of urban governance—its complexities, its possibilities, and its power to make our cities more inclusive, authentic, and responsive.



Manu Shanavas

B. A. LLB, Pravin Gandhi College of Law

“Good Governance is not about perfection but reflection. It is when a government holds up a mirror to itself and its citizens, revealing both progress and flaws, and using that honesty to evolve. It thrives when people and institutions see each other clearly and choose to grow together.”

When I first came across the Praja Foundation Fellowship, it immediately stood out as something different. It wasn't just another research internship but a front-row seat to understanding how a city truly functions. It promised an opportunity to go beyond theory and experience governance on the ground. The selection process was rigorous and exciting, and getting selected felt like stepping into a space where "policy" stopped being abstract and became something tangible.

The fellowship began with an intensive orientation on urban governance. We explored the three-tier structure of government, the constitutional framework, and the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act of 1888. Sessions on the RTI Act, municipal budgeting, and development plans helped us connect theoretical concepts to practical realities. Listening to experts who had spent years working within civic systems was humbling and enlightening, giving me a foundation to approach governance with both curiosity and responsibility.

The fieldwork was where the real learning came alive. Visiting ward offices, meeting officers, and collecting RTI data offered a firsthand view of how administration operates behind the scenes. Some days were unpredictable, yet every encounter revealed how deeply people and systems are intertwined. Engaging with elected representatives was particularly impactful—watching them use data from Praja's reports to frame Assembly questions showed the power of evidence-based policymaking.

Our weekly meetings with other fellows became collaborative spaces for shared insights. Each fellow brought unique experiences from their respective wards, turning discussions into collective learning. These exchanges made governance feel less like a distant institution and more like a participatory process driven by people and ideas.

Obtaining data, facing rejections, and managing delays during Prajatantra – the National Youth Festival – tested our patience but also built resilience and adaptability. Coordinating Prajatantra activities and engaging youth across colleges helped me apply my learning in real time. It reaffirmed that governance is not just about policy—it is about participation.

Looking back, this fellowship has been more than a professional journey; it has been a mirror. For me, good governance is not about perfection but reflection—when governments and citizens honestly assess themselves and choose to grow together.



Sahil Tambe

**BMS (Bachelor in Management studies)
Bhavan's H.Somani college Chowpatty**



For me, Good Governance means continuous learning, collaboration, and the courage to bring positive change—starting with oneself.



Through the Lighthouse Project, I learned about the Praja Foundation Fellowship. I have always been deeply interested in understanding governance and how our government systems function, but my knowledge of on-field work was limited to what I had read in textbooks. When I heard about this fellowship, I saw it as a golden opportunity to explore that curiosity in a practical setting and immediately applied with hope and determination. As a native Marathi speaker, the selection process was not easy for me—communicating fluently in English during the interview was challenging. Still, I gave my best and managed to express my ideas with confidence, which made getting selected all the more special.

Being chosen as a fellow was one of the happiest moments of my life. It gave me a deep sense of accomplishment and inspired me to embark on a new journey of learning. The fellowship began with a three-day orientation, where the Praja team introduced us to the fundamentals of urban governance and local government systems. We learned about the three-tier structure of governance, the Constitutional framework, and the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act of 1888. These sessions gave me a clear and practical understanding of how city-level governance functions.

Throughout the fellowship, I attended weekly and monthly meetings, interactive workshops, and field visits that connected theory to practice. One of the most enriching aspects was peer learning—fellows shared their experiences from projects in sectors like health, housing, and solid waste management. Hearing about their challenges, data collection methods, and insights helped all of us grow together and see governance from multiple perspectives.

A particularly memorable experience was interacting with two MLAs and an administrative officer during the RTI data collection process. These conversations revealed how decisions are made, how information flows, and how transparency can transform governance. Initially, I struggled with English and technical tools, but with the continuous guidance of mentors and co-fellows, I improved significantly.

This fellowship has been a truly transformative journey. It strengthened my understanding of governance, improved my confidence, and inspired me to continue contributing to society as an informed and



Samarth Khandekar

**S.Y. MA in International studies, Somaiya
School of Humanities and Social Sciences**

*Good Governance is about transparency,
accountability, and responsiveness, a system that
listens, learns, and constantly evolves to serve its
citizens better.*



My fellowship journey with Praja Foundation began in February 2025, and it has been one of the most meaningful learning experiences of my life. What made it truly special was that it wasn't just about research, it was about stepping into the real world of governance, understanding how cities function, and experiencing firsthand how data, people, and systems come together to shape civic life.

One of my first major assignments was contributing to the White Paper on the Status of Civic Issues in Mumbai, where I focused on data related to water supply, rainwater harvesting, and municipal finances. Analyzing large datasets and converting them into graphical illustrations gave me a new appreciation for the power of data storytelling in governance. Later, I worked on the Urban Governance and Finance White Paper for six major cities across Maharashtra. For this, I visited the Pune Municipal Corporation, interacted with officials, and learned about the financial structures that support municipal service delivery. These experiences helped me understand how to approach administrators, communicate effectively, and navigate the often slow but fascinating processes of government systems.

During the course of the fellowship, I also had the opportunity to meet and engage with several elected representatives to introduce them to Praja's work and our recently published white papers. Speaking with them and seeing their interest in evidence-based insights made me realize the importance of bridging the gap between research and policymaking.

Another highlight was leading the Prajatantra 2025 competition on "Leveraging AI to Enhance Municipal Services." Coordinating participants, managing outreach, and facilitating event logistics taught me strategic communication, leadership, and collaboration. It was inspiring to see how young people across India came up with ideas to make governance smarter and more efficient.

Throughout these months, I developed a diverse set of skills from mastering Microsoft Office tools and designing graphical illustrations to networking, cold promotion, and effective communication with public officials.

Looking back, this fellowship has not only strengthened my professional foundation but also shaped my understanding of what good governance truly means



Shubham Tiwari

**S.Y. B.A. LL.B Pravin Gandhi College of Law
(PGCL), Mumbai**

“Democracy thrives not in grand speeches or tall buildings, but in the quiet courage of citizens who choose to question, engage, and act.”

I applied for the Governance Fellowship at Praja Foundation driven purely by my deep interest in governance and political science. Thankfully, the Praja Foundation trusted me and accepted me as a fellow after a written test and interview round.

This fellowship holds a very special place in my life as it was my first professional experience in any organization. I still remember being interviewed by Eknath, who asked me about civic issues in my area. I listed several problems, but his next question—“Have you ever filed a complaint about any of them on the official BMC website?”—struck me deeply. It made me reflect on what democracy truly means and why it is described as not just a system for the people but also by the people.

Now, having completed this beautiful journey, I realize the transformation it has brought within me. I no longer feel intimidated by large government buildings or ward offices. I walk in with confidence, knowing that these spaces belong to the citizens and that it is our right and duty to engage with our government.

Throughout the fellowship, a series of capacity-building sessions were conducted, covering diverse themes—environment, RTI, history, communication, and even music. I was exposed to research conducted for Praja’s white papers on civic issues, education, and studies on e-governance and municipal finance. I also interacted with officials not only from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation but also from the City Governments of Vasai Virar and Navi Mumbai. Meeting MLAs and former corporators to discuss civic issues further deepened my understanding of governance in action.

The most exciting phase of the fellowship was Prajatantra 2025. From promoting the event and inviting participants from colleges and NGOs across India to coordinating competitions and serving as a Municipal Secretary across all three rounds, the experience taught me leadership, adaptability, communication, and time management.

Looking back, this journey was made truly memorable by the guidance, warmth, and constant support of the Praja team and my co-fellows. Together we laughed, learned, and grew—creating memories I will cherish forever. I will always carry the spirit of Praja with me, wherever I go.



Vaishnavi Devadiga

T.Y Economics - Ruia College

Good Governance, to me, is transparency, accountability, and empathy in the service by stakeholders and citizens for the greater good

My name is Vaishnavi Devadiga, and I am a third-year Economics student at Ruia College, Mumbai, deeply passionate about public administration and the role of economic tools in strengthening governance systems. I aspire to work in economic policy-making, with the long-term vision of contributing to India's governance and financial landscape.

I first came across the Praja Foundation and its remarkable work during Prajatantra, the national youth festival, where I was a grand finalist in 2024. That experience introduced me to the significance of informed citizenship and evidence-based policymaking. When I later discovered the Fellowship, I recognized it as the perfect opportunity to explore how governance functions in practice and how citizens, policymakers, and data converge to create meaningful change.

From the orientation to the final months, the Fellowship has been an immensely enriching experience that helped me bridge the gap between academic theories and the realities of governance. Through weekly and monthly meetings, research assignments, case studies of municipal corporations, and sessions with institutions like UDRI and WRI, I gained a deeper understanding of how urban systems operate and the challenges faced in implementing public policies. The mentorship and guidance from the Praja team encouraged me to think critically, question assumptions, and approach governance with empathy and data-driven clarity.

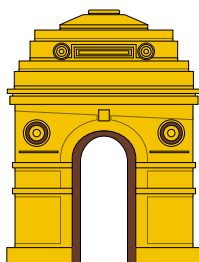
A highlight of my journey was visiting the Finance, IT, and Environment Departments of the Pune Municipal Corporation as part of a comparative study across six cities. Observing budgeting and environmental management processes offered a practical understanding of city governance. Meeting MLAs such as Ashish Shelar, Manoj Jamsutkar, and Aditya Thackeray, along with MLCs and ex-councillors, provided firsthand insight into decision-making and public accountability.

Adapting to the procedural nature of administrative work was initially challenging, but it taught me patience and collaboration. The Fellowship has been truly transformative—enhancing my analytical and research skills, broadening my perspective on governance, and deepening my commitment to public service.

Moving forward, I aim to apply these learnings in financial policy framing and public administration, using economic tools to make governance more transparent, data-driven, and inclusive.

DELHI GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP COHORT 4





MEMORIES OF DELHI GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP 2025



Abhisht Pankaj

History Honours 3rd Year, Hindu College

In local governance, a little data-driven fear works better than a thousand political promises



I first came to know about the Praja Foundation through a friend who couldn't stop raving about the fellowship. As a History Honours student at Hindu College, University of Delhi, with Political Science as my minor, I was already immersed in debates about governance and public institutions. Dreaming of becoming a civil servant, I wanted a firsthand look at how governance actually works on the ground. Spoiler: it's far more complicated, human, and less glamorous than it seems on paper.

The orientation felt like jumping into the deep end without knowing how to swim. Within days, I was trying to understand the structure and functioning of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The DMC Act of 1957 revealed itself as a world of its own. Weekly and monthly meetings became my lifeline, helping me process field experiences and answer my endless questions. By the end, I was surprisingly comfortable discussing governance over casual tea breaks.

Fieldwork was where the real learning began. I spent months wandering Delhi, collecting data, interviewing councillors, and occasionally getting lost in narrow lanes. Research trips to Meerut, Lucknow, and Mumbai added perspective and a comparative understanding of governance across cities. Somewhere between struggling with Excel sheets and deciphering MLA affidavits, I transformed from a rookie to someone who could present data confidently. Presenting my work in front of dignitaries taught me lessons no classroom ever could—especially about patience, preparation, and adaptability.

One unforgettable moment was visiting the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation building, built in 1888, whose grandeur left me in awe. Back in Delhi, meeting councillors like Nazia Danish from Zakir Nagar revealed that governance isn't just about systems; it's about people willing to make those systems work. These interactions highlighted the importance of empathy, persistence, and open dialogue in public service.

These eight months at Praja were filled with teamwork, field dust, and Excel challenges, but also invaluable lessons in communication, collaboration, and resilience. The fellowship gave me more than experience—it gave perspective, humility, and wisdom. I learned to laugh at mistakes, stay non-partisan, and understand that governance is as much about human connection as it is about rules. This journey has left me brighter, humbler, and more prepared to engage meaningfully with the world of public administration.



Aditi Gunjan

Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi

*Good Governance means accountability that
listens and acts.*



When I applied for Praja's Fellowship in Delhi, after hearing about it casually from a friend, I was intrigued but unsure what to expect. All I knew was that I wanted to understand how governance functions beyond the theories I'd studied over the years. I was curious about what really happens between policy and people, and little did I know that this Fellowship would become the perfect space to explore that curiosity.

From the very beginning, it felt less like a fellowship and more like an immersion into how a city runs. Weekly meetings, workshops, and fieldwork offered a front-row seat to the layers of Delhi's governance system, with its Municipality divided into multiple verticals. One week I'd be analyzing data and policy documents; the next, I'd be navigating ward offices to see how the same policies translated into practice. It was simultaneously challenging, confusing, and deeply rewarding.

Delhi's complexity often tested my patience. Elected representatives were sometimes hard to access, the scorching heat and pollution made fieldwork exhausting, overlapping authorities caused delays, and responses were often slow. Yet these challenges taught me an invaluable lesson: governance isn't just about efficiency or structure—it's about people working within systems that are constantly evolving. Even for a short time, being part of that space gave me a renewed respect for the everyday effort that keeps the city moving.

What I valued most was how the Fellowship made governance tangible. It wasn't just about reports or indicators—it was about listening, questioning, and connecting citizens to systems that often feel distant. Attending the Delhi Governance Roundtable Conference made this even clearer; I realized that people in positions of power within urban local bodies and beyond are humans too, navigating complex systems while striving to bring about change.

As someone drawn to research and academia, this experience reshaped my perspective. I now see data as a narrative tool that can humanize governance when used thoughtfully. The Fellowship made me a more grounded researcher and a conscious citizen, reminding me that accountability begins with curiosity and empathy. Alongside these lessons, I also learned to navigate the workplace, balancing fieldwork with academics and extracurriculars—a skill that will always remind me of my time at Praja.



Satyam Kumar

Hindu College, University of Delhi



For me, good governance begins where arrogance of power ends- and empathy takes charge.



It all began with a LinkedIn post: “Are you interested in running your city?” Something about it clicked instantly. I’ve always been drawn to public life—governance, civic engagement, and the idea of being part of something larger than myself—and that post felt like the perfect doorway to step through.

Getting selected for the Praja Fellowship became my first real step into the world I aspire to be part of. The fellowship opened a space I had never accessed before, where I could interact directly with councillors, MLAs, and understand governance at the grassroots level. What stood out most was their humility and openness. Many had decades of experience, yet they patiently heard me out—a novice with notes and far too many questions.

During one field visit, an MLA asked me to gather data on why Delhi faces waterlogging every monsoon. I researched the issue and later discussed how the outdated 1976 Delhi Drainage Plan—unchanged despite a sevenfold rise in population—was at the heart of the problem. He assured me he would raise it further, and months later, Delhi began working toward a new drainage plan. While I may never know the impact of that conversation, it made me realize what Praja truly provides: the ability to critically analyze public issues and suggest practical, data-driven solutions.

The fellowship also offered opportunities to participate in the Delhi Agenda Roundtable Conference, where councillors, MLAs, administrators, and experts deliberated on pressing issues like healthcare, education, and public services. I helped organize capacity-building workshops for college students, covering the Constitution, RTIs, and local governance. Standing before curious faces, I realized awareness isn’t built through lectures—it’s sparked through conversations.

These experiences reshaped not only my understanding of governance but also how I communicate and connect. Learning to hold meaningful conversations, to listen, and to question thoughtfully is the first step toward leadership. In today’s age of social media, our generation knows how to voice complaints—but our real role lies in understanding problems structurally and thinking of solutions that work.

Looking back, the fellowship has been far more than a résumé entry. I am deeply grateful to the Praja team for their guidance and to my co-fellows for the shared learning, laughter, and purpose. This journey has left me inspired, more grounded, and eager to contribute meaningfully to public life.



Shreya Satapathy

Msc Anthropology, Miranda house, Delhi University

Good governance is not just an administrative goal but a social process — and social sciences are its compass



I came across the Praja Fellowship through a Google form shared in a public policy group. What began as a casual discovery soon turned into an inspiring opportunity to explore governance through a citizen-centric lens. It allowed me to approach governance not merely as a system of policies, but as a lived experience shaped by social behaviour and local realities. I saw it as a chance to bridge the gap between administrative processes and field realities, contributing to transparent, accountable, and citizen-responsive governance.

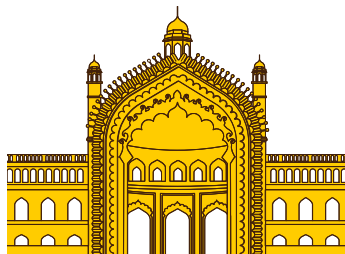
Being part of the Fellowship has been an eye-opening journey that reshaped my understanding of urban governance. From the very first day, I realised the importance of understanding the structure and functioning of the Municipal Corporation. Municipal councillors are often the first point of contact for civic complaints, making them the most immediate representatives of governance. Through the fellowship, I gained insights into the Delhi Municipal Act, Corporation Procedure Rules, and the 18 core functions of the Municipal Corporation, which helped me appreciate the complexity and interdependence of urban systems.

Balancing the Fellowship alongside my full-time Master's program was a major challenge. It required careful planning, discipline, and consistent scheduling to meet both academic and fellowship responsibilities. Adapting to technical work was another hurdle; initially, I only knew basic Excel, but the fellowship required regular data handling. Through mentorship and practice, I became proficient, which improved both efficiency and confidence. Working on ward committee reports and RTI MIS entry gave me a first-hand understanding of citizen participation and transparency in governance.

One of the highlights was Prajatantra 2025, the Grand Youth Festival in Mumbai. Being part of the core team managing volunteers, promotions, registrations, and the entire event was challenging but immensely rewarding. Overall, this fellowship provided invaluable professional experience and deepened my understanding of governance as a participatory, citizen-focused process.

LUCKNOW GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP COHORT 3





MEMORIES OF LUCKNOW GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP 2025



Aishwarya Srivastava

BA, University of Lucknow



Bridging data with decision-making — my Praja journey shaped my vision for accountable cities



My eight-month journey as a Research Fellow with the Praja Foundation has been both enriching and transformative, providing me with a deep understanding of urban governance, municipal finance, and citizen-centric policymaking. During this period, I extensively worked on the data entry and recategorisation of six years of municipal budget data from 17 municipal corporations in Uttar Pradesh, aligning it with the National Municipal Accounting Manual (NMAM) framework. This meticulous work honed my analytical, documentation, and data management skills while giving me first-hand insights into how evidence-based financial systems underpin transparent and accountable governance.

In collaboration with account officers, I ensured the timely uploading of budget documents on municipal websites, strengthening public access to financial information and promoting accountability. I also had the opportunity to interact with senior officials, including the Mayor of Lucknow, and conduct workshops with councillors across cities such as Kanpur, Lucknow, Varanasi, and Gorakhpur. These sessions focused on capacity building through training in budget interpretation, town planning, and proposal writing, helping local representatives make informed decisions.

I actively contributed to several key initiatives, including designing a GIS template for property tax mapping, proposing a Single Billing System for property, water, and sewerage taxes—which was later implemented in Lucknow—and researching innovative revenue models, including pilgrimage and airport taxes. Additionally, I participated in multiple capacity-building sessions and co-organised Prajatantra 2025, the National Youth Festival. Engaging with leaders such as MLA Aditya Thackeray and young changemakers from across India reinforced my belief in the importance of transparency, collaboration, and citizen participation for sustainable urban development.

Overall, this fellowship not only strengthened my technical and communication skills but also gave me a nuanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities in urban governance, leaving me inspired to continue contributing to the creation of more accountable, inclusive, and resilient cities.



Anshuman Dutta

BSc (Maths Hons), University of Delhi

Effective governance is the art of balancing diverse interests with an unwavering commitment to justice and transparency.

My motivation to join Praja's Fellowship stemmed from my interest in urban governance and public administration. With an academic background in mathematics and aspirations to serve in the Defence services, I saw this fellowship as an opportunity to strengthen my analytical, leadership, and policy research skills. Over the course of eight months, my role evolved from learning the basics of municipal budgeting and documentation to actively contributing to policy research, consultations, and financial data management. Through intensive induction sessions, I gained a foundation in municipal finance and governance structures before moving on to comparative analyses, presentation development, and discussions with senior officials on fiscal reforms and technology-driven governance. Working on aligning budgets of multiple municipal corporations under the National Municipal Accounting Manual (NMAM) framework deepened my understanding of fiscal decentralisation and data transparency. Field visits and consultations—such as the URJA workshop in Gurugram—exposed me to participatory planning and diverse urban systems.

The process came with challenges, from managing large data sets to standardising financial classifications across cities. These experiences strengthened my resilience, attention to detail, and time management. Cross-referencing ambiguous data, resolving discrepancies, and synthesising key insights further honed my analytical and communication abilities.

The fellowship has been transformative, enhancing my technical proficiency, teamwork, and ability to deliver actionable insights. It has reaffirmed my belief that accountability, transparency, and citizen participation are the foundations of good governance.

The lessons I've gained at Praja will guide me in whichever path I pursue—be it Defence services or public policy—towards contributing meaningfully to nation-building and effective governance.



Kartikeya

MA (Public Administration), University of Lucknow

To me, Good Governance is a shared journey of citizens and institutions built on trust, transparency, participation, and people-centric action

My motivation to join Praja's UP Governance Fellowship stemmed from its strong alignment with my academic background in Public Administration and my personal curiosity about how governance functions beyond textbooks. I wanted to witness how policies are shaped, implemented, and experienced at the grassroots level.

Throughout the fellowship, I experienced continuous learning through weekly and monthly meetings, seminars, and workshops that created a vibrant environment for dialogue and reflection. Collaborating with diverse stakeholders was particularly rewarding, as it demonstrated how inclusive discussions lead to stronger policy outcomes.

A major milestone was contributing as a knowledge partner to the Urban Development Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh. I assisted in research and drafting for the UP Non-Centralised Municipal Services Rules, engaging with senior bureaucrats and non-centralised workers. This experience refined my policy research skills and highlighted the need to integrate ground realities into regulatory frameworks. I also contributed to research on municipal finance, gaining insights into resource mobilisation and fiscal health of urban local bodies.

One memorable experience was facilitating a roundtable in Lucknow between councillors and informal service workers, where we collaboratively identified gaps in street lighting and waste management. Together, we drafted feasible interventions later considered for pilot testing—reinforcing my belief in participatory problem-solving.

Balancing fellowship duties with academics improved my time management, communication, and facilitation skills. The fellowship has been transformative—strengthening my research abilities, deepening my understanding of governance processes, and inspiring me to work towards citizen-centric and evidence-based policymaking.



Mariyam Majida

BA, Shia PG College, Lucknow University

True governance is measured not by the authority it wields, but by the dignity and empowerment it grants to its people.

With a keen interest in development studies, I found my entry into the dynamic field of urban governance through the Praja Fellowship. This opportunity bridged my curiosity with real-world learning, from insightful field visits to the Prajatantra Youth Festival, each phase deepening my understanding of how governance and citizen participation intersect.

During the fellowship, I undertook the budget format analysis of 17 municipal corporations in Uttar Pradesh, identifying whether they followed department-wise or account head-wise structures. This enhanced my analytical abilities and understanding of fiscal planning and transparency at the municipal level. My engagement in Gorakhpur added another dimension, where I studied e-governance systems, updated the Management Information System (MIS), and coordinated with Assistant Officers for timely data uploads—lessons that strengthened my sense of precision, communication, and accountability.

An insightful session with RTI activist Anil Galgali deepened my understanding of the Right to Information Act, 2005, and its role in promoting transparency and democracy. Another impactful experience was the Urban Governance Consultation in Lucknow, where discussions on fiscal empowerment and the Urban Governance Index expanded my policy perspective.

Equally significant was the Elected Representatives' workshop in Kanpur—my first hands-on interaction with a councillor—which offered firsthand insights into local governance challenges. My journey culminated at Prajatantra, where youth from across India came together to celebrate civic ideas and collaboration.

The Praja Fellowship has been a transformative chapter that merged academic learning with field realities. From analysing budgets to witnessing governance in action, I've realised that true development thrives when citizens and systems work together toward an accountable and participatory democracy.



Prateek Pandey

M.A (Economics), Indira Gandhi National Open University

Good governance, to me, means a system where transparency, accountability, participation, and efficiency come together to ensure citizens' welfare.

City governance is about building institutions that are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to public needs. It emphasizes how urban areas are managed through effective planning, coordination, and active citizen participation, ultimately creating sustainable and livable cities.

I, Prateek Pandey, applied for the Praja Governance Fellowship to understand governance beyond textbooks. With a background in economics and urban governance, I was eager to explore how policies are implemented at the local level and how data can strengthen democratic systems. Praja's evidence-based, citizen-centric approach deeply resonated with me, offering a unique opportunity to contribute to governance reform through hands-on field experience.

The orientation and capacity-building sessions were immensely insightful, introducing us to Praja's data-driven framework and helping me strengthen my analytical, communication, and documentation skills. Through these sessions, I gained a nuanced understanding of municipal and state-level governance, learning how decisions are made and how elected representatives bridge gaps between citizens and administration.

One of the highlights of my fellowship was participating in Prajatantra, a national youth platform on democracy and governance. This experience enhanced my leadership, facilitation, and networking skills while inspiring youth participation in civic matters. My day-to-day work involved data collection, report writing, and supporting the capacity building of elected representatives, directly contributing to evidence-based decision-making and informed policy discussions.

Overall, the Praja Fellowship has been a transformative journey that has made me more empathetic, aware, and responsible as a citizen. It reinforced my belief that effective governance begins with informed and engaged citizens and equipped me with practical knowledge, civic responsibility, and hands-on experience to continue contributing meaningfully to governance, policy, and the development of inclusive, resilient urban spaces.



Yashi Yuwraj

MA (Political Science), University of Delhi



Mere good governance is not enough; it has to be pro-people and pro-active. Good governance is putting people at the center of development process.



I applied for Praja's Fellowship driven by the conviction that political science education must be grounded in real-world governance. While my Master's from Delhi University provided theoretical insight, I sought direct engagement with elected representatives, municipal administrations, and citizens navigating governance challenges.

My fellowship began with data work—recategorising municipal budgets from Meerut, Mathura, Prayagraj, and Ayodhya according to the National Municipal Accounting Manual (NMAM). This exercise revealed how budget classifications directly influence fiscal management and service delivery, grounding my theoretical understanding in practice.

Field visits to Gorakhpur Development Authority and Varanasi Nagar Nigam under the Fiscal Empowerment research initiative deepened my learning. Observing tax and finance departments and participating in discussions on Gorakhpur's Master Plan 2031 exposed me to fiscal and urban planning complexities at the local level.

Later, as Promotional Head (Zone 3) for Prajatantra 2025, I coordinated outreach across six states, conducting college sessions to mobilise youth toward civic engagement. I also contributed to the UP Urban Governance Consultation 2025, managing participant coordination, maintaining databases, and supporting documentation.

Balancing these diverse responsibilities taught me adaptability, prioritisation, and communication across varied stakeholders. I learned to navigate skepticism, maintain structured systems, and work with purpose under pressure.

This fellowship strengthened my analytical, organisational, and communication skills while shaping my understanding that good governance rests on accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. It has equipped me to bridge research, policy, and citizen engagement—translating evidence into action for democratic and sustainable governance.

MEMORIES PAGE

Stick/write your fellowship memories here!

FELLOWS

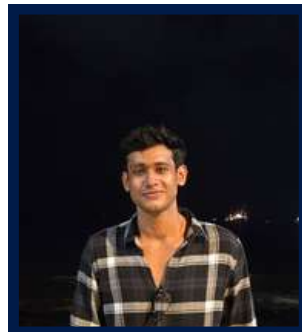
MUMBAI GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP - COHORT 5 | DELHI GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP - COHORT 4 | LUCKNOW GOVERNANCE FELLOWSHIP - COHORT 3



Shreya



Aishwarya



Anshuman



Kartikeya



Mariyam



Prateek



Yashi

Best wishes for the leaders of tomorrow, representing the power of purpose – keeps striving, keep inspiring, and keep making a difference!

Praja Foundation

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