



KARM उड़ान



KARM Fellowship

As we move forward...



Table of Contents

Letter to the reader	Vinita Johorey, Fellowship Director
Looking Forward	Soumya Ramasubramaniam, Senior Program Manager
KARM Chitrashala	
Overcoming the initial struggles	Ankita (Vidushi)
The Realisation - The Praveena Lens The Vidushi Lens	Teena (Praveena) Saziya (Vidushi)
The Invisible Hand Praveena perspective Vidushi perspective	Shafak (Praveena) Disha (Vidushi)
Entering the World of Work	Anjali (Praveena)
The New Me	Ansuiya (Praveena)
Transfeminism	Priyanka (Praveena)

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From the Directors desk

Dear friends of KARM,

It is now three and a half years since we began to conceptualize the Fellowship – many scrapped plans, aborted curriculum ideas, forty-four Fellows (and twenty-six new ones just about to join), many new friends and supporters and certainly more confidence define these months for us. Seeing the first tentative step of the first Fellow as she walked into our guest house for our Orientation in October '21 reminded us of the enormous responsibility that we had undertaken. It was the second Fellow and then the third and the fourth and the accompanying laughter that helped us see how much fun it would also be. The singing, the dancing, the incorrect quiz answers (the odd right one too!), the fearless opinions, the brave stories - all overlaying foundational grit and tenacity – continues to make the journey both fun and incredibly powerful!

And here we are. On to our fifth newsletter. We see the themes of the stories changing, with many expressing themselves with the clarity that surprises and thrills us. Most of all, we see the Fellows taking charge – designing, planning, writing, collaborating, and creating. Each one building on the other – one quiet brick at a time. From running and managing presentations for one another to helping each other with resources, contacts, and empathy, we realize that while the responsibility for the Fellowship is ours, they are doing the shouldering along with us.

For the Praveenas (our third-year girls), with their internships just over we know that they worked with elan and learnt with humility. Their supervisors de-construct their experiences and tell us that they see strong women with potentially great careers in each of them. They begin their third year now and very soon it will be time for their convocations and amidst some happy tears, KARM Shakti (our alumni body) will begin to take form. The Vidushis (our second-year girls) have just entered year two and now is when they begin thinking of their career options and the skills they must acquire. The Navyas (our newest batch) are just getting into their colleges and KARM – enthusiastically looking at a whole new world!

Through all this, it is you – our friends, mentors, funders, and well-wishers – who have remained in our corner, silently guiding us with your encouragement. Your steady support has validated our efforts and reinforced our convictions. Do continue to cheer for us – for only with consistent support, can we build world-class teams!

We hope that you will read the articles that follow. We would be keen to know what you think of their views and expression.

Onward and forward,



Fellowship Director

Looking Forward

Reading the stories contained in this newsletter, one feels inclined to give our mentors, collaborators and supporters a well deserved pat on the back, and our Fellows a standing ovation. It has been a joy to see the progress of our Fellows, validation to see their accomplishments, and a privilege to watch the passion with which the KARM Family has stretched itself to accommodate more and more of these amazing young women.

In one short week, we will hit a milestone - the Fellowship will be at full capacity with 3 batches! Joining us just in time for this expansion is Pragya Jain our new Program Associate. We will be working with **20 Praveenas**, helping them find and apply to the best possible jobs, fellowships, scholarships available to them. Meanwhile **24 Vidushis** will begin an experiential exploration of careers through immersions, industry visits, and career talks culminating in a customised internship. And **26 Navyas** will have to be welcomed into the KARM Family, gotten to know better and loved.

We have our work cut out to ensure that even as we scale, we maintain our standards and deliver sustainable growth – by the Fellows and of the Fellowship.

Watching our Praveenas take on the world of work with confidence and commitment, our Vidushis supporting the incoming batch better than any school counsellor – has helped us define our success metric – **Growth By the Fellows**. A KARM Fellow must be able to take ownership of her own growth, using her KARM cohort for what she needs, while giving back what she can.

To do this, we have to **build the KARM Fellowship to be an educational institution of worth**. We will be implementing our new curriculum, sharpening our interventions/facilitation and laying down processes supported by accessible infrastructure. To build a better understanding of which KARM values and interventions best supports a Fellow's growth – we will be starting our formal Monitoring and Evaluation processes as well. The **Growth Of the Fellowship in purpose and process** will be one of our key focus areas next year.

Contained within the stories in this newsletter, also lies the WHY of KARM.

It is **For the Fellows** – the ones we already know and love, and the many, many we are eagerly looking forward to meeting.

Saunmya Ramasubramaniam

Senior Program Manager

KARM Chitrashala



KARM Talks



Meeting Mentors



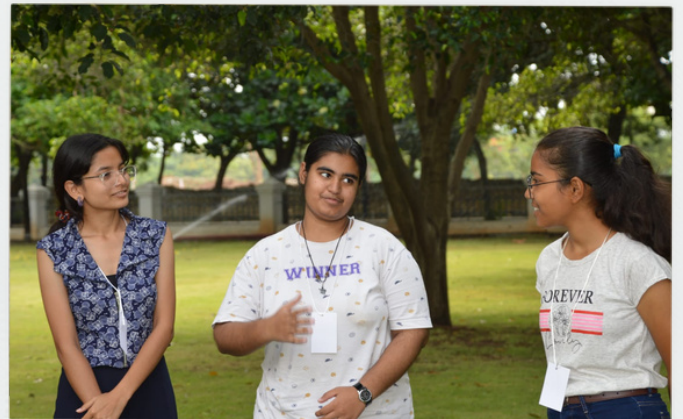
Internships



Beyond KARM



Presentations



KARM Fellows at Aspen

Overcoming the initial struggles

Struggles are similar to investments that have a multiplier effect on the success we will achieve in the future. Everybody's life is filled with struggles as they begin new journeys. Similarly, I also confronted a variety of challenges when I came to Delhi for my higher education.



Accommodation and adjustments are prominent challenges one faces when they are moving to a strange place. However, I faced several other challenges at my college. Introduction of New Education Policy at the University of Delhi aggravated my challenges as I already had no one to guide me about the college curriculum and functioning, and when I could manage to speak with a few of the seniors they had no clue about the new syllabus and course pattern. Even Professors were not certain about the new procedures. With all the confusion in my mind I attended my classes and to my shock, I understood nothing nor did I have the courage to ask my professor to clarify my doubts. I had reservations about whether I would be able to fluently express myself in front of my class or not. The fear of making mistakes in front of my peers dragged me down and obstructed my learning.

We all know that a pessimistic person finds a problem in every opportunity while an optimistic one finds an opportunity in every problem and I have always been optimistic. My sheer determination was complemented by the efforts of my KARM family. They provided me with a buddy who helped me throughout my first year in navigating my college. The KARM team also supplemented our learnings with an English teacher (Mrs.Sujata Mehra) who was patient that I never felt that my questions would irritate her. I gave my undivided attention and participation to all my classes which yielded better returns for me. I could say proudly that I have improved a lot from her classes and will do even more in the future by taking responsibility for my growth. Additionally, Anoushka Mam's guidance in English helped me improve my communication. Thinking and articulation classes taught me the importance of being aware alongside the skills of comprehension and clear articulation. I owe all my confidence, fluency and optimism to my KARM Fellowship because this is the only place where I am never hesitant about making mistakes and learning from them. This attitude helped me build the courage to express myself and build a growth mindset.



Ankita
(Vidushi, Batch 2022 - 25)



The realisation - The Praveena Lens



In the heart of the KARM Fellowship, a momentous event took place - the very first Fellowship Day, which marked a pivotal milestone in the journey of self-realization and collective growth for its Fellows. This unique occasion brought together Fellows from both the cohorts. Before the Fellowship Day, my KARM journey revolved solely around the current cohort- our shared beliefs, dreams, and aspirations. But as we started celebrating Fellowship Day, I learnt about the values, beliefs and vision that both cohorts share.

A cohesive energy emerged binding all 44 of us not just by the name 'KARM' but by a sense of unity and purpose, motivating all of us to align our individual aspirations and experiences with KARM's overarching mission. The best part of the Fellowship Day celebration was watching both Praveenas and Vidushis speak about different KARM values and share how they demonstrated those values at different incidents.

I heard- Disha (a Vidushi) talking about the importance of being open to new experiences and challenges; Kanak talking about the power of hope and optimism and Tara sharing her views on building trust by demonstrating integrity. After that day, my relationship with Vidushis transformed remarkably as it shifted from providing help and guidance to a mutual exchange of learning, guidance, support, and encouragement. I learned that my role as a KARM Fellow involves not only shaping my own destiny but also uplifting and empowering others on their journeys.

Teena (Praveena, Batch 2021 - 2024)

The realisation - The Vidushi Lens

We celebrated the KARM Fellowship Day on April 30th to acknowledge the growth and to bring the two cohorts together and reflect upon the struggles and find the common string connecting us. We were very excited because we knew it was going to be fun as we were going to meet our senior Fellows. Clearly, we were not going to literally play but have fun while learning. It holds a special place in our hearts, it enabled us to reflect upon our experiences, the relationships we forged, and the growth we underwent.

The day started with listening to powerful stories of the Fellows' lives. A line said by one of the Fellows hit me very hard, "Trying might not guarantee you success but not trying will guarantee 100% failure". It changed my perspective towards people, we usually say that they tried many times but failed. But if we think deeply, those people are courageous and worthy of appreciation. If you have the courage to try, you've won half of the battle.

I realised how each one of us is unique and how everyone opened up and shared their vulnerabilities. I realised that vulnerability is not a sign of weakness, rather it allows us to build genuine connections. The most important part is that the Fellows never gave up because of the unwavering support of other Fellows and KARM. Not only Fellows, but KARM has not stopped working on Fellows. Appreciating, learning and supporting each other is what makes us strong. Embrace these realisations and strive to build a community that thrives on empathy, understanding, and shared experiences.

Saziya (Vidushi, Batch 2022 - 2025)



The invisible hand

I feel incredibly fortunate to have been selected for the Ananta Aspen emerging leadership program.

I remember the ease with which I was able to fill the application, given the several months of language practice behind it which KARM made us do. Participating in this program was enriching, as it provided a platform to engage with accomplished Aspen Fellows, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas. I met several Fellows over there and got an opportunity to understand the perception of society, human nature and the world at large.

The thought-provoking nature of the program was truly apt for us to think critically by delving into profound readings like Machiavelli's "The Prince". The pivotal lesson that resonated with me deeply was the notion that authentic leadership demands not just virtuous qualities but also acknowledging the need for astute decision making in the face of adversity, even if it means confronting evil forces. I believe my perspective to bring a change remains the same but what I have developed from Ananta Aspen Fellowship is to be able to talk about changes openly and to raise questions.

The invaluable learnings I acquired during the program will forever serve as a guiding light in times of uncertainty. KARM's unwavering commitment to instilling authentic qualities in us enables us to emerge as powerful women with a distinct voice and resolute convictions. I am immensely grateful for this transformative experience which equipped us to make informed decisions, to lead with purpose and contribute meaningfully to the society.

Shafak (Praveena, Batch 2021-24)



The invisible hand

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

So here the journey begins...

It was a sunny day, I was standing in front of the airport, calling other Fellows to reach the airport soon and then finally I was in my seat, watching my dreams come true in the form of beautiful clouds that were floating in the air. I landed in Coimbatore, my home for the next 6 days. From day 1, our round-table conferences started. It sounds terrifying, but let me prove you wrong, I got to know the worth of my 186-page long binder only in those discussions. I found it to be an amazingly combined work of some philosophers who left us with some very critical unanswered questions. I learned about various disciplines of leadership and viewed this concept with totally different opinions. "Leaders are not born, they are made". It is rightly said because it is inside you, you have to identify yourself and make changes in yourself before you can make other lives better.



In order to perform the Mahabharata play, the first step was to know each other. It was time for us to choose our on-stage as well as backstage roles. I learned about the real power of teamwork and unity. We trusted each other and gave our best. We reached the end of this journey. It was time to leave our Jyothi Nilayam. It was time to say painful goodbyes to everyone who had become like family in some days, taking back all the leadership skills that we identified in ourselves during our stay.

Entering the world of work



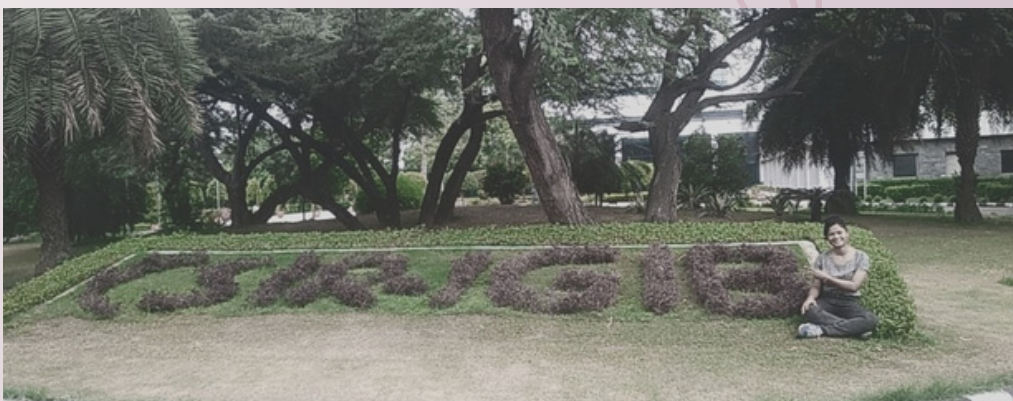
After the 3rd semester exams, as a KARM Fellow, I had a pivotal meeting with the KARM team to discuss my future goals and turn the vision of KARM into reality. With a passion for genetics since my early encounters with DNA and chromosomes, I aimed to pursue Biotechnology. However, uncertainty loomed, prompting me to seek a summer internship for real world exposure. I'm thankful to the KARM team for the opportunity at Premas Biotech under KARM Immersions which gave me valuable insights into the biotech industry. Determined to further my knowledge, I set my sights on the renowned CSIR-Institute of genomics and integrative biology (IGIB). Extensive research and networking led me to a senior scientist at IGIB, who showed interest in my aspirations. However, he requested completion of a challenging course designed by his lab before considering my application.

Despite the difficulties, I persevered, only to find myself waiting anxiously as the days passed. With no response for some time, I reached out for clarity but received no immediate answer. Time continued to tick away and as June began, I found myself disheartened as my internship hadn't commenced like other Fellows. Determined to discover the reason for the delay, I personally visited IGIB and met with the senior scientist. It turned out that he needed additional documentation including a bonafide certificate and course completion certificate. Obtaining the latter proved to be a daunting task yet I refused to give up.

Through the relentless efforts and the unwavering support of the KARM Team and my mentors, I finally secured the prestigious internship at IGIB. The journey taught me the value of perseverance and the dedication of those who assisted me along the way.

I realized how hard it is to get a valuable internship. I appreciate the rigorous hard work KARM Team has done for months to make sure that all the Fellows get the best place to learn and experience the World of Work. Heartfelt gratitude and Hats off to the KARM team.

Anjali (Praveena, Batch 2021-24)



The new me

A profound transformation in my perspective in the past two years has unfurled an aspect of new possibilities, reminding me of a quote by Satsuki Shibuya: "A shift in perspective opens a completely new set of unlimited possibilities". Initially, I was driven by societal expectations, shouldering the weight of my parent's expectations to have a stable career as their only hope. However, now I realize that my career aspirations are not driven by external pressure; rather, they are fuelled by the desire to build a future for myself that includes my parents but also extends beyond their influence. Considered prodigious, I have borne the expectations of my teachers, parents, and myself. The allure of an elite and prestigious career seemed a reality, especially after scoring a perfect 100% in grade 12 and emerging as CBSE national topper.



This transition paved the way for a steep shift in my thoughts and perspective. Here, confronting my own identity, I battle with the conservative notions of being a 'good daughter', or an 'ideal girl', that have clung to me since childhood. As I dived into the vibrant ocean of knowledge and diverse perspectives, I began embracing a new outlook and expressing myself more freely and frequently in my work, friendships, and social interactions. Stepping out of my comfort zone, I embodied the mindset of a hustler, pushing my boundaries and exploring new horizons.

Notably, my realization of financial independence marked a turning point in my journey. KARM's innovative idea of reimbursing the scholarship amount in our personal accounts propelled me to be financially literate and exercise control over my finances. I was empowered to have agency over my decisions and life, making judicious choices about my lifestyle. My journey has been an amalgamation of failures, learning, and incessant self-confrontations. I implore myself to embrace new opportunities and be driven by the authentic desire to fulfill my dreams and have a stable career.

Ansuiya (Praveena, Batch 2021 - 24)



Transfeminism

"Don't make me feel less of a woman or a man; embrace my authentic self, for in diversity, empowerment stands."

I'm penning this article because I firmly believe that KARM's impact will transcend time. I am devoted to representing the queer community in the Fellowship. My aim is to foster a safer, inclusive space where future queer KARM members feel seen, heard, and valued.

Transfeminism represents the intersection between transgender and feminist ideologies, bridging the gap between transgender rights and feminist principles, aiming to dismantle oppressive systems affecting both communities. The journey of transfeminism begins with the struggles faced by transgender individuals in society. Discrimination, exclusion, body consciousness, abuse, and violence are rampant, leaving transgender individuals vulnerable and marginalised. The theoretical foundation of transfeminism highlights the need to challenge gender norms and stereotypes, cisnormativity, stigmatisation, dichotomy and transphobia, but translating these ideals into practical change can be a daunting task.

As a queer individual with an intricate relationship with gender, my journey starts amidst the obstacles imposed by society's patriarchal binary gender system. The rigid binary constructs of the world can feel suffocating, dictating the expectations of womanhood and manhood, leading us to internalise limiting gender stereotypes. Consequently, many individuals, including myself, find themselves confined to predefined roles that do not align with their authentic identity. Subsequently, the challenge arises of grappling with a lack of belongingness to my own body, causing shame and insecurity. Transfeminism asserts that society should honour the decisions made by transgender individuals concerning their bodies and gender expression.

Realising my true identity brought transfeminism's theoretical concepts to life, illuminating the intersectionality of struggles in feminism and queer activism. The 'new me' embraces authenticity, breaking free from societal expectations that do not align with my true self. Confidently expressing my gender identity, I have created safe spaces in college for myself and others, where I am known as "Ryu" - a name that feels more genuine than my birth name. Yet, the journey is not easy, considering the challenges faced by trans/queer individuals in India.

The struggle persists as I strive to protect myself and raise awareness for the trans community. I firmly believe that there is no feminism without trans women, and they must not be made to feel any less than women due to societal constructs. There must be no rigid definitions of womanhood; a woman is simply a woman.

Priyanka Bora (Praveena, Batch 2021 - 2024)

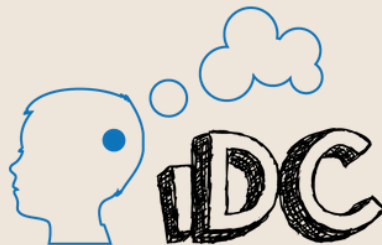
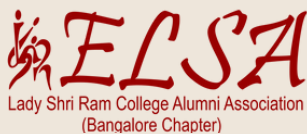


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