



Arthy Ramu
YIF 2020

Dear Founder,

My name is Arthy Ramu, and I am a Young India Fellow from the cohort of 2020. I am writing this letter to thank you for your support that made my Ashoka journey possible.

I belong to Trichy, Tamil Nadu. I grew up in an agricultural family. My father cultivates paddy and is the only earning member in our family of four. Since resources were never available to us in abundance, my parents always stressed on the importance of education. From a young age, my sister and I were taught to treat education as our greatest asset, one that would help us become independent and successful. I pursued my bachelor's in physics, from the PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore.

I first read about the Young India Fellowship (YIF) on the internet during my final year of graduation. It was the first time that I was hearing of the 'liberal arts'. During my undergraduate degree, I felt what I studied, especially the way it was taught, had no real meaning and impact. As a result, I was not sure about pursuing a master's in physics. The prospect of being able to explore other fields through the YIF really excited me. The fees did seem like an obstacle, but because of the University's financial aid policy, I was not deterred. I applied and was thrilled to receive a letter of admission. Without the Aurobindo Pharma Scholarship, I could not have possibly accepted the offer.

The year at Ashoka was deeply fulfilling for me, in all aspects. The Critical Writing Programme, in particular, helped me develop both creative and critical thinking skills. The subjects that I got to engage with ranged from economics and law to foreign policy and literature. A few courses that I really enjoyed included *Art Appreciation* taught by Prof. Anunaya Chaubey, *Perceptive Communication* taught by Prof. Amit Kumar Goyal, and *Fundamentals of Law* taught by Prof. Apurv Mishra. The classroom experience at Ashoka was unlike anything I had ever experienced before – the focus was not on bookish learning alone. We were always expected to think and question. Several courses involved group activities, which also helped me interact with different sets of people from amongst the cohort. All of this made my Fellowship experience extremely holistic, engaging, and transformative.

Coming from a pure sciences background, my time at the YIF was enriching in many different ways. I grew more socially conscious. The one year at Ashoka also gave me the confidence to switch streams. Education, as I mentioned earlier, has always held an important place in my life. I am now looking for opportunities to work in the education sector. After working for a few years, I want to get back to academics and broaden my horizons even further.

I am truly grateful for your support. The Aurobindo Pharma Scholarship helped me make the most of my time at Ashoka, as I did not have to worry about my lack of finances. I sincerely hope to be able to extend similar support to other students in the future. Thank you!

Yours sincerely,

Arthy Ramu



Nidhi Niharika
YIF 2020

Dear Founder,

My name is Nidhi Niharika. I am a Young India Fellow from the class of 2020. I am writing this letter to thank you for your scholarship without which I would not be here at Ashoka.

I grew up in Dhanbad, Jharkhand in a family of five. My father ran a small business that supported our entire family. However, his business has not been doing well for several years. The resultant financial distress also impacted my education, amongst other areas of our home. After graduating from school I began preparation for the IIT JEE, but could not afford to pay for tuitions. I worked hard to secure admission at the Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra and was fortunate to receive some financial aid. I funded the remaining amount through an education loan.

Although I wanted to study further, I had to start working after completing my bachelor's degree so I could repay the loan. I proceeded to work as a software engineer at Accenture for four years. The job allowed me some financial stability and an opportunity help support my family. I realised early on that this was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I had always wanted to study further but did not want to restrict myself to a traditional degree in management – I wanted to develop a skillset that was more holistic in nature. I learnt about the Young India Fellowship (YIF) from a senior and was fascinated by the wide range of courses offered. The Aurobindo Pharma Scholarship ensured that I could accept the admission offer without having to worry about the fees.

Getting into the YIF was the best thing to have happened to me. My biggest takeaway was learning how to communicate effectively – be it during classroom discussions, group work, or one-on-one interactions with peers and faculty. I was exposed to a multitude of subjects – from democracy and social justice to public policy, economics, gender, and cinema. Courses like *Design Thinking and Innovation* taught by Prof. Ranjan Banerjee and *Perceptive Communication* by Prof. Amit Kumar were instrumental in boosting my confidence. These courses and the conversations that followed made me socially conscious, as I learnt about and engaged with different perspectives.

I got placed at a firm named Socion through the University's Placement Cell. I am currently working with them to develop digital infrastructure for training and knowledge sharing for the semi-skilled workforce. My year at Ashoka has shaped me into an independent, curious, and empathetic woman, and I want to continue working in the social sector.

I am extremely grateful to the Aurobindo Pharma Foundation for their support without which I would not have had this opportunity to learn and grow. Life at Ashoka has been a transformative experience – it has not just shaped who I am today, but has also allowed me to work towards a career and future that I had always wanted. Once again, thank you!

Yours sincerely,

Nidhi Niharika

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