



From Daily-Wage Work to Scientist-C: How NFSC Support Enabled Tamil Nadu Scholar Karnan A to Build a Distinguished Research Career

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Financial assistance at the right stage can enable talented scholars from disadvantaged backgrounds to continue higher education, pursue meaningful research and build careers that contribute to national development.

Karnan A, a 30-year-old scholar from Sivagangai district in Tamil Nadu, experienced this transformation through support under the National Fellowship for Scheduled Caste Students (NFSC) Scheme. He is now a full-time employee serving as Scientist-C at the CSIR Fourth Paradigm Institute, Bengaluru.

Karnan belongs to a Scheduled Caste community and is the first researcher in his family and among the very few researchers from his community. His parents are seasonal farmers with limited and irregular income, while his two brothers also depended on the same family income for their education.

From school through postgraduate studies, Karnan undertook daily-wage work on weekends to pay his fees and meet basic needs. During the final year of his postgraduate course, he began taking tuition classes, but the income remained insufficient. In 2017, he cleared the National Eligibility Test for Lectureship on his first attempt but narrowly missed the Junior Research Fellowship cut-off.

Without a fellowship, Karnan had to meet his PhD fees and research expenses entirely through income from tuition classes. He also lacked academic guidance, mentorship and professional networks as the first researcher from his village and one of the very few in his taluk. These economic, educational and social barriers made it extremely difficult for him to continue his doctoral studies without burdening his family.

SUCCESS STORY

NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP FOR SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS (NFSC)

**FROM DAILY-WAGE
WORK TO
SCIENTIST-C**

KARNAN A

Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu

**NFSC SUPPORT**

- Fellowship, HRA & Contingency
- Assistance from September 2019
- Approximately Rs 16 lakh

**KARNAN A**

**CHALLENGE**

Daily-wage work and tuition income to meet academic expenses.

**SCHEME SUPPORT**

NFSC enabled him to focus fully on his PhD research.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

Highly Commended PhD thesis and 6 SCI/SCIE-indexed articles.

**CURRENT STATUS**

Scientist-C, CSIR Fourth Paradigm Institute, Bengaluru.

“ This fellowship did not just fund my research; it gave me freedom, confidence and a future. ”

— KARNAN A

OVERCOMING BARRIERS. | **ADVANCING RESEARCH.** | **SERVING THE NATION.**



Ministry of
Social Justice and
Empowerment
Government of India

A turning point came in 2019 when Karnan was selected for the NFSC fellowship based on his December 2018 CSIR-UGC NET Lectureship score. His assistance commenced in September 2019, and he received approximately Rs 16 lakh in the form of fellowship support, House Rent Allowance and contingency assistance.

The fellowship gave Karnan financial freedom for the first time in his academic life. He no longer had to depend on daily-wage work or tuition income to meet his fees and research expenses. The resulting confidence and peace of mind enabled him to focus fully on his research. Motivated by the support, he appeared for the NET examination again and successfully qualified for the Junior Research Fellowship.

Karnan completed his PhD, and his thesis received a 'Highly Commended' distinction. He published six research articles in SCI/SCIE-indexed international journals. After completing his doctorate, he was selected as an Institution of Eminence Postdoctoral Fellow at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, with a fellowship of Rs 67,000 per month along with HRA.

Karnan subsequently joined the CSIR Fourth Paradigm Institute, Bengaluru, as Scientist-C. He is currently placed at Level 11 under the Seventh Pay Commission, with a basic pay of Rs 69,700 per month. The support also enabled him to assist his family and contribute towards his brother's education. Today, he supports his parents and contributes to the education of children in his community.

Talking about the impact of the support, Karnan said, “This fellowship did not just fund my research; it gave me freedom, confidence and a future. Whatever I have achieved in my life after completing my PhD has been possible because of this fellowship.”

Karnan's journey demonstrates how timely fellowship assistance can help a determined scholar overcome economic and social barriers, achieve academic excellence and build a career in scientific research. He expressed sincere gratitude to the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment for providing the fellowship and to the University Grants Commission for its effective implementation.

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