

OPPORTUNITY OPEN SOURCE 4.0 | CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Title: One PR Away: From User to Contributor

Track: Community, Development/Coding

Format: Lightning Talk (10 Minutes)

Speaker: Harsh Vardhan Pandey

Affiliation: SDE-II @ DaanVeda

ABSTRACT

I didn't start contributing to open source to get a job. I started because I wanted to improve a tool I used every day.

That first pull request led me into the project's community, where I gradually earned the trust of the maintainers by consistently solving real problems. Over time, I contributed to Conar, an AI-powered database client, helped release it as an official Homebrew Cask, and worked closely with the project's founder as the community grew.

Alongside my open-source contributions, I also optimized Docker images for Kubernetes deployments using multi-stage builds in another project, an effort that earned me a community bounty and reinforced the value of writing efficient, production-ready software.

None of this happened through GSoC or a formal mentorship program. It happened because I kept showing up, asking questions, and submitting pull requests.

Those contributions became my proof of work. Instead of telling people what I could build, I could point to production code, public discussions, and real collaboration. They opened doors to opportunities that a resume alone couldn't.

This talk is for anyone who thinks they're not "good enough" to contribute to open source. I'll share how contributing to projects you already use is one of the easiest ways to start, how to earn the trust of maintainers, and why your first contribution is probably much closer than you think.

If you're waiting for the perfect time to contribute, this talk is your sign to start today.

WHAT THE AUDIENCE WILL LEARN

- Beginner-friendly session focused on practical strategies for making your first meaningful open-source contribution and building confidence as a contributor.
- Learn how contributing to a project I used every day led me to work closely with its founder and become a trusted contributor.
- Discover how solving real engineering problems, including a Docker optimization that earned me a community bounty, can help you grow as a developer.
- See how consistent public contributions became proof of work, resulting in startup founders reaching out to me and creating multiple career opportunities.
- Leave with a practical roadmap, actionable resources, and clear next steps to start contributing to open source with confidence.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Students, early-career developers, first-time open-source contributors, and anyone interested in learning how to get started with open source through real-world contributions.

SPEAKER BIO

Hi, I'm **Harsh Vardhan Pandey**, a Software Development Engineer II at DaanVeda, where I build products for the social impact sector. I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science in **May 2026** and started my software engineering journey as an intern during my third year of college, later transitioning directly into a full-time SDE-II role.

I've worked with startups, including as a founding engineer, and contributed to open-source projects such as **Conar**, where I helped improve the developer experience and release it as an official Homebrew Cask. Open source has been instrumental in my career, helping me collaborate with founders, build a public portfolio, and grow through real-world contributions. I'm passionate about helping students and early-career developers make their first meaningful contribution to open source.