

THE ZUBAAN-SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION RESEARCH GRANTS FOR YOUNG RESEARCHERS FROM THE NORTHEAST, 2020-21

Zubaan Publishers and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation are offering a number of research grants for the year 2020 for young researchers from the eight northeastern states and eastern Himalayan region. The grants provide a modest fund to prepare a research paper/essay/oral history on the themes detailed below in the call.

Background

As a geographical category, the term 'Northeast India' can be used to refer to the territory beyond the chicken neck bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh, which comprises the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The cultures, communities, geographies of this region are similar in many ways with Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong and the eastern Himalayan region. The region, in mainstream discourse, has been continually defined, described and constrained within a particular identity that in many ways deprives it of its internal richness and variety. What exactly do we mean when we speak of 'the Northeast'? This region is home to many peoples, religions, customs, practices, languages and histories. Their collective grouping, the brainchild of colonial administrative practices that have been carried on by the present state, has also become a sort of marker of their 'separateness' as an entity, despite the wide internal variety. An argument that is often used to hold the category of 'the Northeast' together is ethnic identity — and yet, not only are these states ethnically very diverse, but ethnicity often extends beyond state and national borders into other, neighbouring territories.

Details of the Research Grant

This research grant, in its third year now, hopes to encourage young writers and researchers to contribute in the diversification of knowledge production. It is set against the broad framework/themes mentioned below which will be examined through the lens of gender in the Northeast. We are looking for applications under the themes of:

- a. ***Gender and Public Spaces:*** In the last few years the question of women's access to and claims on public space have come to attention again and again. Whether it is the ways in which women are marginalized and rendered invisible by the exercise of the NRC, or denied access to governance bodies, or targeted simply for being in the public eye in ways that society does not wish to sanction, or more recently in the

protest movements on citizenship rights that they have peopled and led, women's claiming

of public space has firmly established their right to it as citizens. And yet such claims are staunchly resisted, and women are pushed back into the domestic sphere through the mobilization of systemic and cultural pressures, and more.

The recent spread of COVID-19 has resulted in further reduction of women's access to public space. Their visibility in state responses to the pandemic (in healthcare, education, access to transportation, etc.) has been routinely left out of policy imagination and it is feared that the existing, hard-fought gains in these spheres may now be lost. Researchers working on this broad subject may choose any aspect of the relationship between women and public space, within the broad parameters outlined above.

- b. **Gender and Disability:** While marginalization is experienced all along the axis of gender, identities at the intersection of gender and other forms of non-normative existence, such as that of disability, are vulnerable to greater discrimination and disempowerment. Both during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown, for example, women with disabilities have found it virtually impossible to access any relief. Deprived of their carers (if they had any), disallowed from using touch to orient themselves, they are being pushed back into a realm of silence and powerlessness, their citizenship rights conspicuous by their absence. What have been the experiences of gender and disability, and their intersections, in the northeastern states? How have those with disabilities articulated their rights? Researchers are asked to explore these and other aspects of this particular axis of marginalization, not limited to the pandemic and lockdown period.

The grant provides financial and academic support to young researchers who may wish to look into particular aspects of the history, politics, culture of the northeastern states in relation to gender and the outlined themes.

The papers will be written in English. In subsequent years the grant may open up to other languages but for the moment it remains limited to English. All papers written with the support of the grant will be published electronically by Zubaan Publishers on various digital platforms. They may also be compiled in print form and made widely available.

The papers may be academic research papers, long-form journalistic essays or long interviews, visual essays, graphic stories on a particular subject, thematically aligned with the call. Hybrid or creative forms are welcome. Mentors will be assigned to all the grant recipients for research and writing support during the grant duration.

[Note: Papers which are a part of an ongoing or recently completed PhD thesis will not be covered by this grant.]

Eligibility criteria

1. If you are from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura and are **less than 40 years of age**, you are eligible to apply. The research grant is also open for applicants from hill regions of districts Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong.

[Note: Preference will be given to candidates based locally in the areas of research, keeping in consideration travel restrictions within the region due to the COVID-19 pandemic.]

2. You must be fluent in reading and writing English.

[Note: If you feel that you fit into the eligibility criteria and have an interesting proposal to discuss, which may not be in English but has the scope of being translated/adapted, please write to us at projects@zubaanbooks.com before submitting your proposal.]

You must commit to researching and writing a 10,000 words (minimum) essay. The grant also allows for you to develop graphic narratives, or do extended interviews, or produce creative works such as a story, in lieu of the essay, all within a specified timeline.

*[Note: Since we have a limited number of grants available, we would like to encourage applicants who can **commit to submitting the first drafts of their work within four months** of selection. Please apply **ONLY** if you feel you can fulfil this criterion so as to not deprive other deserving applicants.]*

To apply:

1. Send in a grant proposal (maximum two pages) which clearly describes what you wish to do, what sources you will tap (primary and secondary), the subject of your research and a timeline.

[Note: If you are unsure about the format of the research proposal, please write to us at projects@zubaanbooks.com for a sample research format.]

2. Submit a writing sample of roughly 500 words or a two-page spread of a graphic story, or an extract from an interview transcript done by you.
3. Grant proposals may be creative and do not need to be written in academic language.
4. Submit your CV and any other relevant information about yourself that you think is necessary, including proof of age.
5. Include two names of referees, ideally people you have worked with, along with their contact information.

Shortlist and selection of grantees

All grant proposals will be screened by a selection committee. The committee will prepare a shortlist based on pre-decided criteria and may wish to interview some candidates. Interviews



can take place by Skype or phone. The committee will then decide and the candidate will be informed. The committee's decision will be final.

Duration: The first draft of the selected papers is expected in four months after the methodology workshop/webinar, details of which are mentioned below. Papers may need to be revised after the first draft depending on the feedback. Depending on the feedback, a month may be given for the required revisions.

Grant

The fellowship carries a grant of Rs 35,000 less applicable taxes.

Payments will be made in two instalments: 25 per cent on approval of the project and signature of contract, and the remainder on completion of the study.

Methodology workshops/webinars

All successful candidates will be required to attend a preliminary methodology workshop/webinar, as well as a mid-term online review where they will present a draft of their work in order to get feedback from peers and resource people. In the time remaining for the grant, candidates will be required to take the feedback on board and to finalize their papers.

Interested people can send in their applications to projects@zubaanbooks.com. The last date of submission of application is Monday, 22 June 2020.

Shortlisted candidates will be informed by second week of July 2020.

Zubaan is an independent feminist publishing house based in New Delhi. We publish academic books, fiction, memoirs and popular nonfiction, as well as books for children and young adults under our Young Zubaan imprint, aiming always to be pioneering, cutting-edge, progressive and inclusive. For more information visit www.zubaanbooks.com

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation addresses the diverse and complicated issues that human society is encountering in the 21st century. SPF and Zubaan Publishers work together in Northeast India, on projects linked with writers and literature. For more information visit www.spf.org