



Call for Fellowship

Once Upon a Time

Women's Histories for Young Adults

Application Deadline: 15 April 2026

Zubaan and the Parag Initiative of Tata Trusts are delighted to announce the launch of a graphic/illustrated narrative writing fellowship under the project *Once Upon a Time: Retelling Women's Histories* (held by Zubaan and supported by Tata Trusts through their Parag initiative). This project focuses on building on existing work on writing and publishing for young adults in India, through graphic and illustrated storytelling. A series of non-fiction books focusing on the untold stories of women's contributions to the making of modern India will be generated and published in English and two Indian languages over a three-year period. These books will add a valuable dimension – hitherto missing – to the writing of history and in doing so, will raise the important question of what constitutes history.

The two pillars of the project are:

- creating gender-inclusive histories for young adults and in doing so, building upon already existing knowledge;
- making such books available in different Indian languages.

BACKGROUND/PROJECT OUTLINE

Zubaan's list of books focuses on gender and engages with diverse communities of writers, researchers, artists, academics and others. Zubaan publishes in English, and has a vibrant translation programme which enables the translation of Zubaan content into different Indian languages, and brings books from Indian languages into English. This project builds on the growing interest in graphic and illustrated narratives and aims to bring these methods of storytelling into the world of Young Adults to create feminist histories that focus on marginalized and hidden histories. By addressing the question of the absence of women and marginalized communities in our history, and by centrestaging gender in our quest for alternative and inclusive histories, Zubaan aims to create books for the young that are engaging, attractive and which encourage reflection and critical thinking. Such books will, we hope, draw in young readers and impact pedagogy by emphasizing parity and equality between genders as the norm, and will contribute to the important process of changing what has come to be seen as the 'canon' in writing for the young.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FROM WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS

To this end, we invite proposals in English from writers, illustrators and graphic artists for gender sensitive stories on themes of women's histories for a fellowship of **eight months**.

- A total of **ten fellowships of Rs 100,000 each (less taxes)** will be awarded.
- The fellowship is open to women, queer, trans and nonbinary writers and illustrators with an interest in creating illustrated stories for young adults.
- The fellowship encourages writers and illustrators to submit collaborative proposals. Please be aware that if you do not have a collaborator, you will be paired with one by Zubaan.
- The selected fellows will be expected to attend a **5-day residential workshop in June, 2026** and work in close consultation with mentors. They will be guided to follow the process to pace their work to reach desired milestones and produce material within a stipulated timeframe.
- The output of the fellowship will be a **20–25-page graphic narrative/comic** focusing on women's histories in English. Selected stories will be offered for translation in at least two Indian languages.



Themes/Medium

- The proposal should keep in mind a minimum 20–25-page graphic narrative/comic focusing on women's histories as the final output
- Themes to be explored/pitched could be individual stories, collectives, movements, legal and policy interventions (and more) where women have played a pivotal role
- The writer will be expected to write-up a narrative that will translate to a 20–25-page story to be further amplified with illustrations
- The style/medium to be used for the narrative or what the artist intends to use for the narrative should be mentioned

TIMELINE & FRAMEWORK

- Call for Proposals: 01 April 2026
- Last date of submission of proposals: 15 April 2026
- Announcement of selected fellows: mid to late-May 2026
- Orientation Workshop: mid to late June 2026

The starting date of the fellowship will be from signing the contract till an eight-month period in which the fellows will attend a residential workshop, work closely with their mentors for an initial storyboard and first draft, review and revision for second draft and a final draft in consultation with the mentors and Zubaan's internal team.

DURATION

The duration of the fellowship is eight months from the time of selection. The first draft of the selected stories is expected three months after the workshop. Depending on the online review and feedback meetings, narratives may need to be revised after the first draft. After the feedback meetings, time will be provided for the final draft in discussion with the candidate, within the eight-month duration.

PAYMENTS

The grant carries an amount of Rs 100,000, less applicable taxes.

Payments will be made in three instalments: 30 per cent on approval of the project and signature of the contract, 40 per cent on submission of the first draft and attendance of review meeting and the final instalment on completion of the study.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

The last date for submission of the application is 11:59 pm, Wed, 15 April, 2026

Selected candidates will be informed via email by mid to late-May, 2026.

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

This call is ideally open to comics creators/writer-artist teams/duos/an individual who is able to do both. Preference will be given to proposals that can take care of both simultaneously. If you are for some reason unable to team up with a partner (with an illustrator or writer), Zubaan will do its best to pair you with one. You have to sign a mutually acceptable agreement of working together on the project.



Requirements:

- Open to comics creators, writers and illustrators with an interest in creating illustrated stories for young adults. Preference will be given to women, queer, trans and nonbinary people from the Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi/Tribal, Northeast Indian and/or religious minority communities.
- Demonstrated experience or strong interest in issues related to gender, history, culture, and art
- Commitment to research, write, illustrate and produce a substantial work which would lead to a complete graphic story in the stipulated time frame.
- Availability to participate in a five-day residential workshop in Bangalore, scheduled for mid to end June 2026 (this will be confirmed soon)

HOW TO APPLY

Please complete this [Google Form \(link here\)](#) and upload all required documents as specified.

LIST OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR UPLOAD

- An updated CV and any other relevant information about yourself that you think is necessary, including proof of age.
- Send in a grant proposal (maximum two pages) which clearly describes what you wish to do, what sources you will tap into (primary and secondary), the subject of your research and a timeline.
- Link to design or illustration work (portfolio, behance profile, instagram profile)
- Two names of referees, ideally people you have worked with.
- Please mention any special accommodations that you will require (for example, disability accommodation)

SHORTLISTING AND SELECTION PROCESS

A selection committee will screen all applications. The committee will prepare a shortlist based on relevance to the fellowship's priorities as described in this document and may wish to interview some candidates. Interviews can take place via Zoom or phone, or in person. The committee will then decide, and the candidate will be informed. The committee's decision will be final.

DURATION OF WORKSHOP

Five days of workshop, excluding travel days between mid to end June (this will be confirmed soon)

REIMBURSEMENTS FOR THE WORKSHOP

Accommodation, travel and food for the workshop will be covered by Zubaan.

FAQs

— What is this fellowship about?

The objective of the fellowship is to identify comics creators, writers and illustrators who wish to write engaging non-fiction for young adults with a strong gender inclusive focus. It aims to build communities of process-oriented creators who will open up windows to new ways of writing history, foregrounding the contribution of women from diverse fields.

— Who can apply?

This call is ideally open to comics creators/writer-artist teams/duos/an individual who is able to do both. Preference will be given to proposals that can take care of both simultaneously. If you are for some reason



unable to team up with a partner (with an illustrator or writer), Zubaan will do its best to pair you with one. You have to sign a mutually acceptable agreement of working together on the project.

Requirements:

- Open to comics creators, writers and illustrators with an interest in creating illustrated stories for young adults. Preference will be given to women, queer, trans and nonbinary people from the Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi/Tribal, Northeast Indian and/or religious minority communities.
- Demonstrated experience or strong interest in issues related to gender, history, culture, and art
- Commitment to research, write, illustrate and produce a substantial work which would lead to a complete graphic story in the stipulated time frame.
- Availability to participate in a five-day residential workshop in Bangalore, scheduled for mid to end June 2026 (this will be confirmed soon)

— Can I apply if I live outside of India?

Only if you have an Indian bank account and if you will be able to attend the workshop in person and select events as the project rolls forward.

— Is there an age limit?

Yes, 20-40 years.

— What language should the proposal be in?

In this round of the fellowship, the proposals should be in English. We will open up to some Indian languages in subsequent rounds.

— What should I not submit?

Please don't submit manuscripts. Please send us clearly articulated proposals (maximum 2 pages) for a story that will be written subsequently after interactions with mentors.

— What does the process of mentorship look like?

You will be introduced to your mentor(s) in the orientation workshop. You will work out a schedule for regular follow up over email and calls over the next eight months.

— Who will own the copyright to the work created during the fellowship?

Should your proposal be accepted, Zubaan will sign a contract with you outlining the terms. The copyright of your individual piece will be owned by you but Zubaan retains first publishing rights in English and other Indian Languages. The copyright of the published anthology will rest with Zubaan.

Established in 2003, Zubaan works in the fields of feminist research, women's histories and bringing marginalized voices to public attention. Zubaan sees itself as a documentalist and archivist of knowledge about women's and feminist movements in India. Set up in the initial years as Kali for Women (1984), Zubaan remains a leading voice in the field of feminist publishing. For more information, please go to www.zubaanprojects.org.

The project fits into the Parag initiative of Tata Trusts to create a hospitable and nurturing environment for books and reading for children and young adults from all parts of India. For more information, please go to <https://www.paragreads.in/>

128 B, First Floor, Shahpur Jat, New Delhi-110049

Email: contact@zubaanprojects.org **Website:** www.zubaanprojects.org