The objective of my research fellowship at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, is to complete a book. After that, I will revise my research with established scholars in my field. I am filled with excitement and anticipation to revisit my research and get back to reading and writing. Surrounded by colleagues at different stages of their careers, coming from different parts of the world, and working on diverse geographical and thematic areas, I am filled with excitement and anticipation for new research possibilities. Coming from the developing world, I am thrilled to be able to access resources that were never within my reach. I am honored to be able to discuss my research with established scholars in my field in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. So far, it has been a very fulfilling journey indeed.

The idea behind my book is to look at neoliberals through the window of Hindu organisations that have come up in India since the 1980s. Based on ethnography in three states in India (Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Karnataka), the manuscript traces the growth of two of the largest religious organisations in India and their deepening nexus with the state, corporate interests, state agencies, and international governing and funding organisations. The manuscript also looks at the visibility of godmen in media and the role they play in developmental projects, political propaganda, and mass mobilisations. Last but not the least, I study the internal structure of the religious organisations reflected in the changing caste-class-educational-gender profile of followers and members.

So far, I have contributed a chapter to an edited volume published by UCL Press. The chapter, titled ‘Doing-Seeing,’ traces the rise of guru Baba Ramdev, who taught yoga through television. It describes how the popularity of these programmes contributed to the Hindu-nationalist identity consolidation and activism in the new millennium. The chapter shows how live interactive yoga camps converted passive television viewers into empowered subjects, the ramifications of which are evident in the optics of majoritarian politics in India in the last decade. I have presented my conclusions at the 5th India India Conference in April and in an invited lecture at Krea University, India, in May.

I am touched by the friendship and camaraderie of the other fellows during the pandemic restrictions that existed until recently. I have rarely felt alone, from lessons on using a washing machine to warnings about grey winters, wine-tasting to travel, sickness to sunny days, and potlucks to political discussions. I cannot imagine a better ending to a global lockdown or beginning of a new chapter of my life.

IIAS Fellows have the option of applying for a fellowship that allows them to combine their IIAS fellowship with two extra months of research in Paris. This combination is particularly attractive for post-doctoral researchers who want to extend their stay in Paris and work on their research project in a different cultural context.

Preparing young Indologists at the post-doctorate level is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS.

IIAS Fellowship Programme

In the Spotlight

Elizabeth Smithroosser
IIAS Research Cluster: Asian Heritages
1 February – 31 July 2022
www.iias.asia/profile/elizabeth-smithroosser

Srirupa Bhattacharya
IIAS Research Cluster: Asian Heritages, Global Asia
15 September 2021 – 15 July 2022
www.iias.asia/profile/srirupa-bhattacharya

Written Traditions of Jokes and Humour in Pre-Modern China

I am first using my Fellowship with IIAS to finish an annotated translation of three pre-modern Chinese jokebooks for Oxford University Press. After that, I will revise my PhD thesis into a monograph while preparing several accepted conference papers on humour publishing in late imperial China and methodologies for utilising humorous material to the advantage of historical research.

My Fellowship at IIAS began in February 2022, a few months after graduating from my PhD in the United Kingdom. At that point in time, there were a lot of different tasks on my plate: several conference papers, a thesis to revise into a monograph, keeping up with my regular column for Medievalists.net, a book-length translation of pre-modern Chinese jokebooks, not to mention job applications.

I am filled with excitement and anticipation to revisit my research and get back to reading and writing. Surrounded by colleagues at different stages of their careers, coming from different parts of the world, and working on diverse geographical and thematic areas, I am filled with excitement and anticipation for new research possibilities. Coming from the developing world, I am thrilled to be able to access resources that were never within my reach. I am honoured to be able to discuss my research with established scholars in my field in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. So far, it has been a very fulfilling journey indeed.

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IIAS Fellowship Possibilities and Requirements

Apply for an IIAS fellowship
The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to apply for an IIAS fellowship to work on a relevant piece of research in the social sciences and humanities.

Combine your IIAS fellowship with two extra months of research in Paris
When applying for an IIAS Fellowship, you have the option of simultaneously submitting an application for an additional two months of research at the Fondation Maison des sciences de l’homme (FMSH), in Paris, France, immediately after your stay in Leiden.

Apply for a Gonda fellowship
For promising young Indologists at the post-doctorate level it is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS.

Information and application forms: www.iias.asia/fellowships