

An Open Letter to UGC and Canara Bank from a Research Scholar

Sir/Madam,

This is to bring in to your notice a grievous issue which affects many thousands of research scholars of the country. I am Belga Marriya Berk, a beneficiary of Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF), 2012-13 batch. Like most of the scholars who avail the benefit of fellowships like MANF and RGNF, I live solely on this fellowship and as the fellowship amount is not credited timely, like many of my fellow scholars, I too struggle even for my subsistence. We literally have times when we have to go on hungry that we do not even have money to support ourselves even with sufficient food. We feel really dejected that we have been pushed down to the level of beggars who have to cry every month for what we deserve as scholars who have been selected for the prestigious fellowships like MANF, RGNF and NF for OBC by an eminent panel of experts appointed by UGC, the apex body of higher education in India. We are not even able to concentrate on our research, as we are constantly worried about the lack of money for our basic needs.

I don't blame either UGC or Canara Bank as we know you don't leave us completely starving as we get the fellowship occasionally (please pardon me if the expression is a bit harsh). Our problem is that we don't get our fellowship timely, in the first week of every month as mentioned in our award letter. As no necessary step has been taken to solve this long time grievance of many thousands of scholars, our lives have become a wait for the money to fulfil our basic needs. Our energy and time are lost much in this

process which can otherwise be utilized for fruitful research which will definitely benefit the country in the long run. We wait almost endlessly every month but the hostel authorities will not wait for the mess fees to be remitted; the university authorities will not wait for the tuition fees to be remitted; the labs and our work cannot wait for the essential chemicals, tools and instruments to be used from time to time, and more than everything else, our stomachs cannot wait for food to run our body till the fellowship comes.

We call and beg you (UGC and Canara Bank) almost every day for the money we deserve and when you leave us baffled with a mutual blame game, we do not know what to do to get our problem resolved.

I know there is no big point in writing an emotional letter like this to the concerned authorities because, I, like all others, have been taught in school that an official letter with chosen words and a polished format suits the situation. But this letter comes from the heart of every research scholar in India and the words have been written with the blood of each one of us, who, atleast at times regret our choice of research with a view to contributing more to the development of the country and the society at large, over a promising career as an engineer or a doctor or a teacher which would have atleast not left us starving. I request the concerned at UGC and Canara Bank to look in to the pathetic situation of us and do the needful at the earliest to resolve the late disbursement of our fellowship.

Please imagine the pain each of you will go through if you do not get your salary on 1st of every month. Our situation is not different. Because if we had opted out of research,

we could have been in a position like yours, getting our salary on the 1st of every month, leading a very comfortable life like you. Please do not punish us more for choosing to face the challenges of a career in research to contribute to the academic development of the country rather than settling down peacefully and happily with a secured job in some other field. Please act immediately to solve our problem; please give us our monthly fellowship atleast within the first week of every month; please let us do our work peacefully and properly. Otherwise, I am afraid, the days when the country has to see the suicides of research scholars just like the suicides of farmers are not too far.

Thank You

For every Research Scholar in India, Belga Marriya Berk.