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LITERARY AWARDS

Reading list: Winners of the 2023 Valley of Words Book Awards in English and Hindi languages

The literary award picks fiction, non-fiction, books for young adults, and books for children.

Scroll Staff

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On Friday, Valley of Words announced the winners of all eight categories of its 2023 Book Awards – in English and Hindi languages. The Prize received more than 600 nominations from 70 publishing houses across the country. The longlist of ten books per category was brought down to five in the shortlist from which a winner was finalised.

Each member of the jury was assigned one category – Rudranghsu Mukherjee (English nonfiction), Satish Aikant (English fiction), Pooja Marwah (Writings for young adults), Alka Saraogi (Hindi nonfiction), Neelakshi Singh (Hindi fiction), Mamta Nainy (Writings for children), Anjan Ray (Translations into Hindi), and Ira Pande (Translations into English).

Here is the list of winners:

English fiction: *No Way In*, Udayan Mukherjee

It is the summer leading up to the high-stakes national election of 2014. Sabita, a middle-aged cook, lives with her son, Dinu, in a terrace room of Jol Pori, the South Kolkata mansion of the prosperous Banerjee household comprising Rana, Ila and their son, Shubho. When communal divisions rear their ugly head on the brink of a controversial election, it becomes apparent that Jol Pori, under its benign surface, is nothing but a microcosm of modern-day India with all its destructive divisions.

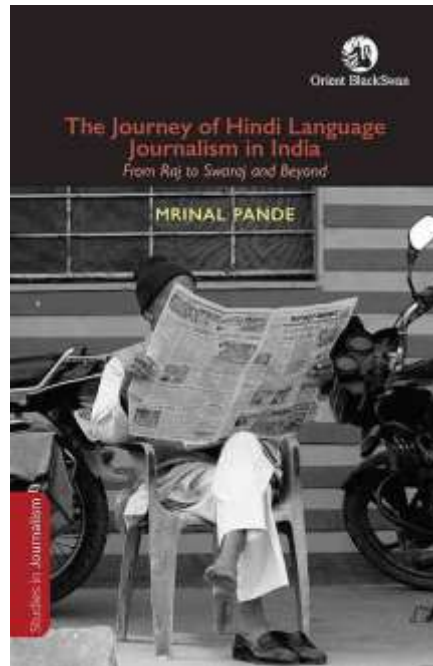
With Dinu’s future in mind, Sabita clings on desperately to her perilous position though it is this very threat of violence she had left behind in Assam, her home. But the secrets she has hidden about her past soon reappear to turn her life upside down, forcing her to make the most difficult of choices.



English nonfiction: *The Journey of Hindi Language Journalism in India: From Raj to Swaraj and Beyond*, Mrinal Pande

In India, the English-language media is considered the “national media”, while vernacular media remains “regional”. However, from the 1980s onwards, demographic changes and growth in literacy in the Hindi heartland broadened the market for Hindi newspapers.

In this book, well-known journalist Mrinal Pande takes us through the history of Hindi-language journalism in India. She discusses its early days as nationalist newspapers in the colonial period; its subservience to the English print media in the early decades of independence; the fillip it received in the post-Emergency 1980s when an inclusive Hindi, propped up by regional dialects, became the best vehicle for furthering Indian democracy. The author also focuses on the current digitisation of all media, the increasing influence of social media platforms, and heavy reliance on advertisements.



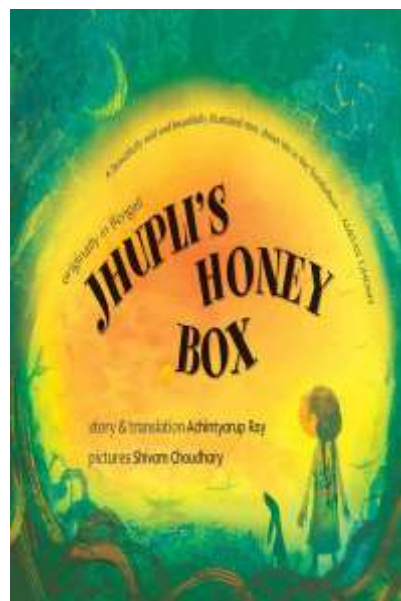
Translation into English: *The Bride*, **Harimohan Jha**, translated from the Maithili by Lalit Kumar

13-year-old Buchia is quick-witted and pleasant-looking, but in the competitive marriage mart of Bihar, her family needs to be resourceful and wily to find the right groom to uphold their pride. When a match is made with CC Mishra, English educated and recently graduated from Banaras Hindu University, everyone believes that a happy ending is near. But unknown to them, the groom dreams of a partner who writes poetry and plays tennis; is more-or-less a carbon copy of the film star Devika Rani. So, when he discovers that his new wife cannot even recognise the letters of the alphabet, their future begins to look less rosy.



Writings for children: *Jhupli's Honey Box*, Achintyarup Ray, translated from the Bengali by the author, illustrated by Shivam Choudhary

Where is Baba? Why is he not back yet? Jhupli is restless as evening sets in. Her father has gone into the dense jungle to gather honey and she is afraid. Because there are tigers in the forest. Because people sometimes go inside and never come out. Must Baba go in danger every day? Jhupli has an idea – honey boxes! The illustrations and text weave Jhupli's constant anxiety into the sweep of the magnificent Sundarban, a place as menacing as it is beautiful, in a story that points to the plight of its honey gatherers.



Writings for young adults: *Children of the Hidden Land*, Mandira Shah

15-year-old April lives in Imphal Valley and has grown up learning to save herself from tear-gas shells and hearing stories about children disappearing. But when her best friend Henthoiba goes missing, she is determined to find him. April finds an unlikely ally in Shalini Gupta, her new schoolmate and the daughter of an army man recently posted in Imphal. With no real leads except for a bag with some of Henthoiba's belongings and sharp deduction and combat skills, the two set out to find him. As they get sucked into the investigation, they stumble upon a dangerous, unknown world – where children disappear and are trafficked and trained to be soldiers. A world where drugs, arms and gold are peddled across borders. Was Henthoiba abducted because he knew too much about this world? What awaits Shalini and April at the floating island on Loktak Lake where Henthoiba was last seen?



Hindi fiction: *Shahar Se Das Kilometer*, Neelesh Raghuvanshi



Hindi nonfiction: *Dinank Kay Bina*, Ushakiran Khan

Translation into Hindi: *Bhaaga Hua Ladka*, Manoranjan Byapari, translated by Amrita Bera

