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News Books and Literature

October in Books: What to read next, as per the jury

Apart from the JCB Prize for Literature, three book awards came out with short- and long-lists for literature in translation, business stories, and Indian history. Here's what the juries chose, and why

Written by [Udbhav Seth](#)

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(Pic credits: Jayashree Kalathil (Jaipur Literature Festival website) and Priyamvada (from X).)

Literature in Translation

An award by The American Literary Translators Association (ALTA), one of the most prestigious prizes of its kind, announced its shortlist and two Indian-language translations (Tamil and Malayalam) made it.

They are Sheela Tomy's *Valli* (Rs 699, HarperCollins), translated from Malayalam by Jayasree Kalathil and Jeyamohan's *Stories of the True* (Rs 799, Juggernaut), translated from Tamil by Priyamvada.

The book-length works are part of the National Translation Awards in Prose 2023 (administered by ALTA), currently in its 25th year. The winning translator, announced on November 11, will win \$4,000.

On *Valli*, about Adivasi communities in the Western Ghats fighting back against generational exploitation, a jury note says, "Exploratory in form — encompassing... letters, folk songs, and poems — the story is as much about a family and the inhabitants of Kalluvayal as it is about the proximate ancient trees, flora, and quick-flowing Kabani river."

On *Stories of the True*, a short fiction collection about everything from India's former pulp fiction industry to state-enabled casteism, a jury note says, "From tending to animals in a forest to begging a publisher for payment that is rightfully due, [its] scenes are electric in nature and cinematic in feel, engraving a lasting impression on the reader."

The prose judges for this year's award are Natascha Bruce, Shelley Frisch, Jason Grunebaum, Sawad Hussain, and Lytton Smith. There is a poetry counterpart to the same prize, which represented 19 languages and 19 presses in the longlist stage.

The award has been won by an Indian writer once before, in 2021, by Tejaswini Niranjana for her Kannada-to-English translation of Jayant Kaikini's *No Presents Please*.

Indian History

The Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay NIF Book Prize 2023 announced its longlist which includes stories of forgotten freedom fighters, constitution-makers, and journalists.

The prize, instituted in 2018 by the New India Foundation, carries a cash prize of Rs 15 lakh and goes annually to an author of a book about Independent India's history.

This year's longlist of 10 books includes *The Eastern Gate: War and Peace in Nagaland, Manipur and India's Far East* (Rs 899, Simon and Schuster) by Sudeep Chakravarti, and *Founding Mothers of the Indian Republic: Gender Framing of the Politics of the Constitution* (Rs 1295, Cambridge University Press) by Achyut Chetan.

It also includes [Delhi](#) *Reborn: Partition and Nation Building in India's Capital* (Rs 2599, Stanford University Press) by Rotem Geva, and *Insurgency and the Artist: The Art of the Freedom Struggle in India* (Rs 2495, Roli Books) by Vinay Lal.

Also included is *Crooked Cats: Beastly Encounters in the Anthropocene* (Rs 499, HarperCollins) by Nayanika Mathur, and *Writer, Rebel, Soldier, Lover: The Many Lives of Agyeya* (Rs 999, Penguin) by Akshaya Mukul.

The Journey of Hindi Language Journalism in India: From Raj to Swaraj and Beyond (Rs 1435, Orient BlackSwan) by Mrinal Pande, and *Land, Guns, Caste, Woman: The Memoir of a Lapsed Revolutionary* (Rs 499, Navayana) by Gita Ramaswamy, are also in the longlist.

So are *House of the People: Parliament and the Making of Indian Democracy* (Rs 1435, Cambridge University Press) by Ronojoy Sen, and *Nehru's India: A History in Seven Myths* (Rs 899, Princeton University Press) by Taylor C Sherman.

The jury comprises political scientist Niraja Gopal Jayal (chair), historian Srinath Raghavan, diplomat Navtej Sarna, president and chief executive of Centre for Policy Research Yamini Aiyar, and vice-chairman of TeamLease Manish Sabharwal.

Previous winners include *The Chipko Movement: A People's History* (Rs 895, Permanent Black) by Shekhar Pathak in 2022. *Naraji: Pioneer of Indian Nationalism* (Rs 699, Harvard University Press) by Dinyar Patel won in 2021.

Business and Entrepreneurship

The Gaja Capital Business Book Prize 2023 also announced its shortlist. The annual non-fiction book prize carries a cash prize of Rs 15 lakh for an author of business and entrepreneurship stories.

Against All Odds: The IT Story of India (Rs 799, Penguin) by Kris Gopalakrishnan, N Dayasindhu and Krishnan Narayanan is in the shortlist. So is *Capture the Dream: The Many Lives of Cap CP Krishnan Nair* (Rs 799, Juggernaut) by Bachi Karkaria.

Essentially Mira: The Extraordinary Journey Behind Forest Essentials (Rs 699, HarperCollins) by Mira Kulkarni is also in, as is *The Tech Phoenix: Satyam's 100-Day Turnaround* (Rs 395, Rupa) by TN Manoharan and V Pattabhi Ram.

Lastly, *Winning Middle India: The Story of India's New-Age Entrepreneurs* (Rs 599, Penguin) by TN Hari and Bala Srinivasa is in the shortlist.

The winner will be declared in November. The jury comprises veterans from business, academia and governance: Manish Sabharwal (chair), Imran Jafar, Arindam Bhattacharya, Lakshmi Venu, Sangita Reddy, Michael Queen, Neelkanth Mishra, Prithvi Haldea, Shailesh Haribhakti, and Upendra Kumar Sinha.

Last year's award was won by The Indian Express National Rural Affairs and Agriculture Editor Harish Damodaran for *Broke to Breakthrough: The Rise of India's Largest Private Dairy Company* (Rs 699, Penguin).

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