



Business Standard

Debut novels dominate 2019 JCB Prize longlist

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First time authors dominated the longlist for the JCB Prize for Literature that was announced on Wednesday, with four debut works making the cut this year.

The debuting writers on the list include Roshan Ali for "Ib's Endless Search for Satisfaction", Amrita Mahale for "Milk Teeth", Mukta Sathe for "A Patchwork Family" and Madhuri Vijay for "The Far Field".

Now in its second edition, the Prize carries an amount of Rs 25 lakh, and is awarded each year to a distinguished work of fiction by an Indian writer. It is the most expensive Indian award for writing.

The list also features two translations -- Manoranjan Byapari's "There's Gunpowder in the Air", which has been translated from Bengali by Arunava Sinha, and Perumal Murugan's "Trial by Silence and Lonely Harvest", translated from Tamil by Aniruddhan

Vasudevan.

This year's longlist was chosen from a vast range of submissions by writers in 14 states writing in six languages -- Bengali, English, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu, and published between August 1, 2018 and July 31, 2019.

The jury comprised of filmmaker and environmentalist Pradip Krishen, author and critic Anjum Hasan, economist and former Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India Arvind Subramanian, and writers K R Meera, and Parvati Sharma.

"It's impossible to generalise about these ten books. Indian fiction today is a richly bewildering category, and this longlist is correspondingly varied and complex.

"These are novels about working-class struggles and upper-class unease, historical evocations and contemporary conflicts, each written in an absolutely distinctive voice," Krishen, chair of the jury, said.

Other books on the list include "The City and the Sea" by Rajkamal Jha, "The Queen of Jasmine Country" by Sharanya Manivannan, "My Father's Garden" by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, and "A Secret History of Compassion" by Paul Zacharia.

"There are many treasures in this list, and I encourage everyone who wishes to understand what 2019 means to spend time exploring it," Rana Dasgupta, Literary Director, said.

The shortlist of five titles will be announced on October 4. Each of the five selected authors will receive Rs 1 lakh, and if a translated work makes it to the shortlist, the translator will also receive Rs 50,000.

The final winner of the Rs 25 lakh Prize will be announced on November 2. In case the winning entry is a translation, the translator will be awarded Rs 10 lakh.