



Longlist for India's richest literary prize announced

Updated: Sep 04, 2019, 22:17 IST | [Dalreen Ramos](#)

Ten novels have made it to the long list of the JCB Prize for Literature - including Mumbai-based writer Amrita Mahale's debut title Milk Teeth



Amrita Mahale trained as an aerospace engineer before turning into a full-time writer. Pic/Instagram Amrita Mahale

Carrying a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh, the JCB Prize for Literature, which was constituted in 2018, announced its longlist on Wednesday. Selected by a five-judge panel comprising Pradip Krishen, Anjum Hasan, KR Meera, Parvati Sharma, and Arvind Subramanian, the list features four debutants - Roshan Ali's *Ib's Endless Search for Satisfaction*, Mukta Sathe's *A Patchwork Family*, Madhuri Vijay's *The Far Field* and city-based writer Amrita Mahale's *Milk Teeth*. Other titles include *There's Gunpowder in the Air* by Manoranjan Byapari, translated from the Bengali by Arunava Sinha, *The City and the Sea* by Rajkamal Jha, *The Queen of Jasmine Country* by Sharanya Manivannan, *Trial by Silence* and *Lonely Harvest* by Perumal Murugan, *My Father's Garden* by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, and *A Secret History of Compassion* by Paul Zacharia.

Speaking about her novel's inclusion Mahale, an aerospace engineer who works at an independent non-profit research institute in Mumbai, tells mid-day, "I would be lying if I said I hadn't thought about it. I knew the list was going to be announced at 11.30 am. I left for work and then was stuck in traffic due to the rain so I ended up working from home. Then, around the time of the announcement, I got a call from my publisher and I knew it would be good news." *Milk Teeth* released last November with a story that is set in the years following post-liberalisation and revolves around Matunga and Mumbai, at large.

Given that the longlist was chosen from submissions across 14 states and six languages, how does a city-specific narrative find such a resonance with readers across the country, we ask the writer. "The basic theme of the novel is the protagonist trying to find their place in a changing world. Even though it is a specific circumstance, it is still very universal," she says, adding that a second novel is already in the works.