

**On Embargo till 11:30 am IST, Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2023**

The JCB Prize for Literature marks its 6<sup>th</sup> year of celebrating India's literary excellence, unveils its Longlist for 2023

- The winning author and translator will be awarded Rs 25 lakh and Rs 10 lakh, respectively
- The Longlist includes three debut novelists, and four translations from Bengali, Hindi and Tamil

**New Delhi, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2023:** One of the most coveted fiction awards in India, the JCB Prize for Literature, unveils the Longlist of its sixth edition. A distinguished Jury from a diverse range of backgrounds, chaired by author and translator, Srinath Perur, bring forth a Longlist that promises to captivate literary enthusiasts across the world.

The Jury read entries from across the country- with authors hailing from 24 cities, writing in eight languages, including English. Four translations from Bengali, Hindi and Tamil make it to the Longlist along with six books which are originally written in English. Authors, Manoranjan Byapari and Perumal Murugan whose works have been longlisted twice for the Prize, return to the list for a third time, and author Tanuj Solanki joins the list for the second time. Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, who was longlisted for the Prize as an author in the past, returns to the list as a translator for Manoj Rupda's Hindi book, this is Hansda's first ever translation of a book.

Geet Chaturvedi's debut book joins the list this year, the translation, by Anita Gopalan is the translator's first foray into fiction translation. Tejaswini Apte-Rahm's debut English book is also part of the Longlist along with Bikram Sharma's writing debut.

The Jury for the 2023 edition of the Prize included **Srinath Perur** (Chair), author and translator; **Mahesh Dattani**, playwright and stage director; **Somak Ghoshal**, author, critic and learning designer, **Kavery Nambisan**, author and surgeon; and **Swati Thiyagarajan**, conservation journalist and filmmaker.

The Longlist for 2023 includes-

*The Secret of More* by Tejaswini Apte-Rahm (Aleph Book Company, 2022)

*The Nemesis* by Manoranjan Byapari, translated from the Bengali by V. Ramaswamy (Westland Books, 2023)

*The East Indian* by Brinda Charry (Simon & Schuster India, 2023)

*Simsim* by Geet Chaturvedi, translated from the Hindi by Anita Gopalan (Penguin Random House India, 2023)

*Fire Bird* by Perumal Murugan, translated from the Tamil by Janani Kannan (Penguin Random House India, 2023)

*Everything the Light Touches* by Janice Pariat (HarperCollins Publishers India, 2022)

*Mansur* by Vikramjit Ram (Pan Macmillan India, 2022)

*I Named my Sister Silence* by Manoj Rupda, translated from the Hindi by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar (Westland Books, 2023)

*The Colony of Shadows* by Bikram Sharma (Hachette Books, 2022)

*Manjhi's Mayhem* by Tanuj Solanki (Penguin Random House India, 2022)

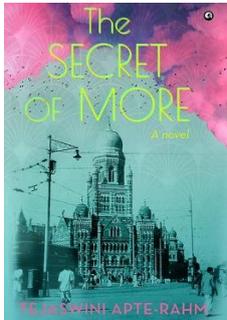
While talking about the 2023 Longlist and the encompassing reading journey, **Srinath Perur, Jury Chair**, shared, *"The set of books entered for the prize this year was remarkably strong and varied. The jury read the entries over the last few months, meeting online every couple of weeks. We read for freshness, relevance, accomplishment and ambition among other things. And we read for pleasure. We were often in agreement, and when we were not, it was instructive to consider a book from other perspectives. Given the quality of the entries, it felt like we could easily have come up with a solid second Longlist. But as it stands, every member of the jury found something special*

about these ten books. Taken together they represent a fine sampling of the breadth and quality of Indian novels published in English over the last year”.

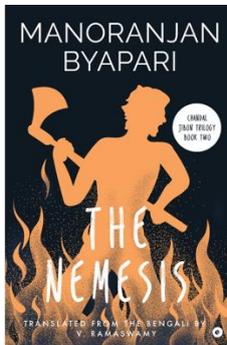
Reflecting on the journey of the JCB Prize for Literature, **Mita Kapur, Literary Director, JCB Prize for Literature**, expressed, *“The Longlisted books for 2023 are truly a dynamic reflection of Indian fiction at its finest. It is a privilege to celebrate these ten books that make our lives richer, respectively, at explore depths of our understanding of how we navigate ourselves through the unique, the mundane, the ugly, the beautiful, and the wonderful moments of human existence. This year’s Longlist is bound to captivate, surprise and delight every reader who picks it up.”*

The JCB Prize for Literature annually honours an exceptional fictional book by an Indian author. The Shortlist of five titles will be unveiled on the 20<sup>th</sup> October. The winner will be declared on 18<sup>th</sup> November and will receive a cash prize of Rs 25-lakh. If the winning work is a translation, the translator will receive an additional cash prize of Rs 10 lakh. Furthermore, each of the five shortlisted authors will receive Rs 1 lakh; if the shortlisted work is a translation, the translator will receive Rs 50,000

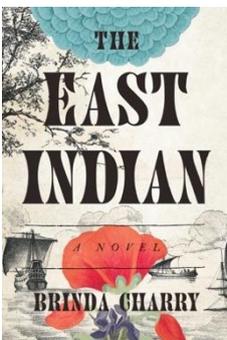
What the Jury said:



A family saga that offers a social history of Bombay and its merchants, subjects rarely described in such imaginative yet accurate detail. The Mulji Jetha textile market at the turn of the century, the intrepid journey of the protagonist into producing the first films before the advent of sound, the playing of the Oriental organ in the theatre, and the unrealized relationship between the protagonist and his movie star -- all stay with us like a heady fragrance of jasmine for a long time after the turning of the last page, leaving you with the secret of more.

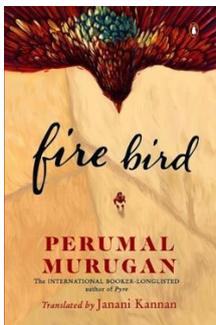
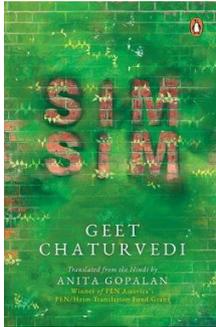


*The Nemesis* is a powerfully told story of young Jibon, who migrated from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to end up in a refugee camp in Calcutta along with hundreds of his compatriots. Unrelenting poverty, the oppressive caste system and an insensitive society shower humiliations on young Jibon. He leaves home to join the Naxal movement and suffers more indignities, but he ploughs on despite them. It is a gut-wrenching story of courage and resilience in the face of grim adversity that ends on a note of hope. The Bengali of Calcutta’s streets shines through in English with V. Ramaswamy’s translation.

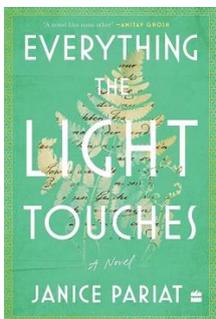


A wonderful look at the formative years of the new world through the eyes of Tony, the son of a Tamil courtesan, as we follow his journey into adulthood. Set in the 1600s, a young Tony leaves what would become Madras for London after the death of his mother. There he is press-ganged into becoming an indentured servant in Virginia, then a new colony of the British in America. It’s through Tony’s compassion, curiosity, bonds of friendship and yearning to become a physician that this story unfolds -- a historical sweep across the perhaps familiar literary terrain of early America, but imagined anew through the experiences of an Indian boy. We are all familiar with the NRI dream and modern aspirations of immigrants, but few of us know just how deeply entwined some Indian lives were with the building of America. Brinda Charry does a remarkable job of painting this world with finely observed brush strokes and individual stories to build an evocative global picture.

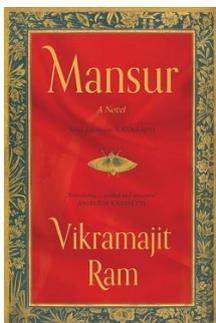
Geet Chaturvedi’s Hindi novel, *Simsim*, is a Partition story like few others, grappling with the relatively undocumented Sindhi experience of losing one’s home. It goes beyond simple elegy and nostalgia, connecting past with present, remembering with forgetting. Basat Mal, the protagonist, is an old man, sustained by his fading memories of Sindh and the upkeep of his decrepit library in Mumbai, coveted by local land sharks. His sensibility is mirrored in a young boy, growing up in 21<sup>st</sup> century India, witnessing all the social and political horrors it is mired in. Anita Gopalan’s translation provides a sublime reading experience of this unique novel.



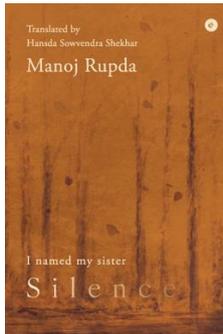
For at least a few thousand years now, humans have longed for a patch of the earth to call home, a place in which to lay down roots. The protagonist of *Fire Bird*, Muthu, comes from a farming family. An unfair division of land and worsening relations at home make him set out in a bullock-cart with an older, knowledgeable servant to look for land that he can purchase and call his own. Perumal Murugan tells the story of this search in astonishingly fine-grained detail: he knows every plant and tree, bird and animal, the soil and seasons. And how they shape the culture and proclivities of people who have settled there. Janani Kannan's translation brings the rhythms of the Tamil into English with suppleness and sensitivity. *Fire Bird* takes an age-old, universal story and makes it profoundly local. It is a deceptively simple book that asks probing questions about some of our deepest impulses.



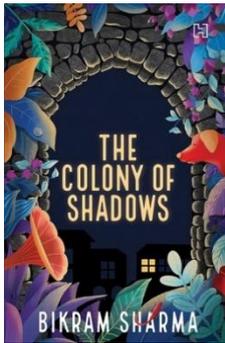
Who are we as human beings in relation to the natural world? What do our perceptions count for? And how do we reckon with the differing perspectives that come from scientific observation, philosophical exploration and the lived experience of tribal people steeped in spiritual wonder? These questions course through this powerful novel, as its four characters find answers for themselves in particular phases of their lives. Two of these characters are historical, Wolfgang Goethe and Carl Linnaeus, and two are fictional: Evelyn, a young woman from Edwardian times, and Shai, a modern Indian woman. The characters never meet, but their quests entwine. This forms the edifice upon which Shai moves from the city back to her roots in Meghalaya, from a place of ennui, disenchantment and uncertainty to a purposeful personal quest. *Everything The Light Touches* is a luminous, sweeping saga that will alter how we interact with the natural world around us.



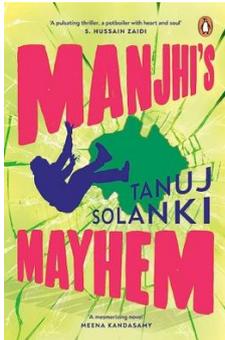
Vikramajit Ram's slender, yet profound, novel takes us inside the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Mughal atelier, where the eponymous master artist Mansur is finishing an exquisite, illuminated book, just in time for it to reach the royal summer retreat in Kashmir. But its long journey north is riddled with intrigues brewing in the women's quarters, fuelled by the twisted ambitions of Mansur's rivals. Like a beautiful miniature painting, Ram's novel forces us to pay close attention to the details, especially to the wispy characters lurking in the fringes. *Mansur* is a triumph of minimalist storytelling, every sentence shining with a gem-like clarity.



A novel of epic stature told with great beauty and brevity, it's power is felt viscerally in Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's translation. The writing offers rich imagery that does the storytelling using soundscapes and landscapes with equal felicity. Manoj Rupda plays on the theme that everything grand is eventually destroyed, be it a majestic elephant, a ship, or an entire tribal civilization eaten away by a corrupt society. The complex and emotionally wrenching relationship between the protagonist and his sister is at the heart of it, making this perhaps the most layered among many novels about sibling relationships.



A nine-year-old boy grieving for his parents begins to escape into a shadowy, liminal world that evokes a time before he knew such profound loss -- but it can never be the same. Sharma writes with spare, understated grace and possesses a remarkably light touch while dealing with a serious subject. The book is strange, moving and great fun to read. Significant characters in the book include a dog and a blind person, and the book's sensitivity to their perspectives allows the reader to inhabit a sensorially rich and unique world. Loss may be an inescapable part of being human, *The Colony of Shadows* suggests, but it is our capacity to give and receive love, sometimes in the most matter-of-fact ways, that keeps us whole.



A deftly written thriller set in Bombay that has at its core a dose of gritty reality. There's sardonic humour, fierce violence, steamy sex and cunning double-cross, all contributing to the ensuing mayhem as its characters hunt for a missing bag of money. Its protagonist, Sewaram Manjhi, is driven by a desire for all the usual things, but also by a simmering rage born of generations of oppression. *Manjhi's Mayhem* is a wickedly funny novel that reminds us of the pervasive nature of caste and class injustice..

## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

### ABOUT THE JCB PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

The JCB Prize for Literature was set up in 2018 to enhance the prestige of literary achievement in India and create greater visibility for contemporary Indian writing. The prize encourages translations and aims to introduce new audiences to works of Indian literature written in languages other than their own. It is funded by JCB and administered by the JCB Literature Foundation.

For information about the Prize, please visit: [www.thejcbprize.org](http://www.thejcbprize.org). For updates, look for [@thejcbprize](https://www.facebook.com/thejcbprize) on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

For press queries and interview requests contact: [JCBLiteratureFoundation@msslgroup.com](mailto:JCBLiteratureFoundation@msslgroup.com)

### KEY 2023 DATES

Announcement of Longlist: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023

Announcement of Shortlist: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Awards ceremony: 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023

### 2022 WINNER

*The Paradise of Food* by Khalid Jawed, translated from the Urdu by Baran Farooqi

2021 WINNER

*Delhi: A Soliloquy* by M.Mukundan, translated from the Malayalam by Fathima E.V. & Nandakumar K.

2020 WINNER

*Moustache* by S. Hareesh, translated from the Malayalam by Jayasree Kalathil

2019 WINNER

*The Far Field* by Madhuri Vijay

2018 WINNER

*Jasmine Days* by Benyamin, translated from the Malayalam by Shahnaz Habib

**ABOUT THE JURY**

**Srinath Perur** (Chair) is the author of the travelogue *If It's Monday It Must Be Madurai*. He has translated from Kannada the novel *Ghachar Ghochar* (by Vivek Shanbhag) and the memoir *This Life at Play* (by Girish Karnad). He writes on a variety of subjects including science, travel and books.

**Mahesh Dattani** is a playwright, stage director, and mentor. His works as a playwright have been translated and performed in many languages across India and abroad. For his anthology *Final Solutions and Other Plays*, Dattani received the Sahitya Akademi Award. His works as a director include an adaptation in English of Tagore's story *Chokher Bali* for Barnard College, Columbia University, an adaptation of Lorca's *Blood Wedding* for ICS Theatre, New Jersey, *Snapshots of a Fervid Sunrise*, written and directed by him. Recently he worked with This is Not a Theatre Company in New York to write and direct an audio piece, *A Little Drape of Heaven*, which was picked by The New York Times as among the top five things to catch in New York. His film work as a writer and director includes *Mango Souffle* (2000) and *Morning Raga* (2003). He is the Artistic Director of Playpen Performing Arts Trust, a group dedicated to mentoring and producing new works for the theatre. He lives in Mumbai, India.

**Somak Ghoshal** has worked in publishing and media with major Indian organizations for over 15 years, especially as a critic and book publisher. His work has appeared in *Mint*, *HuffPost*, *The Telegraph*, *Open*, *The Hindu*, *The Voice of Fashion*, *Mekong Review*, *Index on Censorship*, *CNN Style*, and other Indian and international publications. He is the author of two books for young readers, published by Penguin Random House and Pratham Books respectively. Currently, he works as a learning designer with an ed-tech organization.

**Kavery Nambisan** started her writing career with children's books. Her adult novels include *The Scent of Pepper*, *A Story that Must Not be Told* and *A Town Like Ours*. Her non-fiction book *A Luxury Called Health* is her most recent work. She also contributes articles and essays to national newspapers and international anthologies. She went to Iowa University on an international writing fellowship; to Pakistan on a Fulbright and Iowa sponsored literary programme; to Shanghai as a writer in residence with her late husband and poet Vijay Nambisan. Kavery graduated in medicine from St John's Medical College, Bangalore, did her higher surgical training in the UK and obtained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, London. She has since built her career working as a surgeon in rural India including parts of Bihar, UP and Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Kavery Nambisan lives and works in Kodagu.

**Swati Thiagarajan** is a multi-award-winning conservation journalist who pioneered conservation and wildlife reporting for television in India. She is the former Environment Editor of NDTV and helmed and created one of their flagship shows *Born Wild*. She authored the book *Born Wild, Journeys into the wild hearts of India and Africa*. She is also a documentary filmmaker, her film *The Animal Communicator* has racked up over 8 million views on YouTube since 2012 and is available on Amazon Prime in the US and UK. She was the Associate Producer on the Academy Award winning *My Octopus Teacher* and is at present working for the Sea Change Project in Cape Town.