

Usha K.R.'s novel wins Vodafone-Crossword prize

A 'Girl and a River', a novel by Usha K.R, bagged the best English language fiction award at the Vodafone-Crossword Award 2007, while 'The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857,' by William Dalrymple won the best literary non-fiction award, a statement issued Friday said.

The award for the best translation was shared by Arunava Sinha's rendition of a Bengali novel 'Chowringhee' by Shankar and 'Govardhan's Travels: A Novel' written by Anand and translated by Gita Krishankutty. Penguin has published all four novels.

The awards carried a cash prize of Rs.300,000 each, a trophy and a citation.

'We are delighted for all the Penguin authors who have won the awards and also for everyone who were shortlisted. We understand how difficult the decision must have been for the judges since all the books were so special,' Penguin India chief executive officer and president Mike Bryan said after the awards were announced Thursday.

The winners in the fiction and the non-fiction categories were selected by a panel of judges comprising writer Mukul Kesavan, writer-cartoonist Manjula Padmanabhan and journalist Kai Friese. The judges were effusive about Usha K.R's 'Girl and the River'.

'This is an intricately plotted and beautifully-written novel that moves between an intensely imagined past and an uncertain present,' the judges said.

According to them, Dalrymple's 'The Last Mughal' distinguishes itself as a major work of non-fiction on three counts. It is based on new and largely un-translated sources; it presents an intimate and vivid picture of Mughal Delhi and it forces readers to re-assess the events of 1857, which were a watershed in colonial India.

Paul Zachariah, Dilip Kumar and Urvashi Butalia, who judged the translations said 'Govardhan's Travels' was an unusual, adventurous and a dark story that described the travels of Govardhan, a character from Bharatendu Harischandra's 'Andher Nagari Chaupat Raja', who is released by his creator to go out into the world.

Earlier Crossword winners included 'Sacred Games' by Vikram Chandra, 'Two Lives' by Vikram Seth, 'Maximum City' by Suketu Mehta, 'An Equal Music' by Vikram Seth and 'Inheritance of Loss' by Kiran Desai.

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