

In the limelight: The award goes to...

Nawaid Anjum lit awards

Literary awards in the country face a quintessential dilemma: How to define Indian writing? With more and more awards for literature, Indian writing is all set to be redefined

The jury for the Man Booker Prize may have given an Indian author for an author of Indian origin a miss this year, but the celebration of the Indian writing in the subsequent continues with undiminished gusto. It's a celebration that included itself in the recent award functions to lend, recognize and reward the outstanding literary figures from our part of the world. The Vodafone-Crossword Book Award 2011 raised a toast to the Indian writing in English at the NCPA in Mumbai on September 2. Omair Ahmad and Ashif Jaleel were declared the joint winners of the award in the Indian fiction category for January. *The Terrorist* and *Sensawati Park*, respectively. V.S. Naipaul's recent work, *The Tiger Balm*, won the award for Indian non-fiction. Ashish Singh bagged the Popular Award for *Chandev's Chair*. A. Jadhav Singh said: "For me, personally, it is a vindication of sorts. Many observers told me that my brand of historical, mythological and theological fiction would never have mass appeal. This year has proved otherwise."



Pakistani author M.M. Naghi (center) receives the first DSC Prize for South Asian Literature from M.S. Narula, chairman of DSC Limited, and Sarina Narula at the Jajpur Literature Festival in January this year. Chandrabekkar Neelkar, CEO of Crossword BookStores, gives away the Popular Award to Adhish Singh for Chandev's Chair.

While Vodafone-Crossword Book Award has limited itself to only Indian citizens, other awards are more open. The Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize, for example, has earlier awarded Pakistan's stellar writer Mohammod Hanif for his scrappy satire on General Zia, this year another Pakistani figure on its shortlist: Javed Akhbar for *The Wandering Jew*. Also vying for the prize is Sri Lanka's Shashan Karunatilake for *Chitranet*. The borderlines are already blurring as Indian

publishing is becoming one big celebration of voices from multiple regions in Asia. The longlist for the second edition of the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature includes *The Palace Stone* by Atiq Rahimi. Based in Afghanistan, the novel was originally written in French and then translated into English. It is one of the three novels shortlisted for this year's prize. The other two include U.R. Ananthamurthy's *Akshayajna* (OUP), translated by



Swalooka Parvita, and Chandrabekkar: *A Street in Srinagar* (Gibbon Books), translated by Manisha Qudusly. Mahesh Nerula, founder of the DSC Prize, says: "This year we've close to a 20 per cent increase in the number of submissions that we have received and that too from newer frontiers. The entries received this year are from the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan amongst others."

As Parade, chairperson of the jury for the DSC Prize, feels that so far South Asian writing is concerned, there's greater confidence in experimenting with language and narrative styles is emerging. Some of the themes in the 68 awards submitted this year include terrorism and political violence, migration and the rural-urban divide.

Srinivasan Balakrishnan, marketing manager, Crossword BookStores, says the most logical step for the Vodafone-Crossword Award would be to "recognise" writing in the Indian subcontinent.

For the writer, every award has its own rewards. The most visible is the increase in sales of every prize-winning book. Balakrishnan says that after Ashish's *Melba's Moustache* City won the Vodafone Crossword Prize, its sale went up by 50 per cent.

Agnes Shiroon Quadri, manager, marketing & promotions, at the Strand & Schuster India, "After Anvita Adiga's *The White Tiger* made it to the Man Booker, the demand for the book, which was published in the US by \$65, went up by about 30-40 per cent," she says.

While the literary awards in India are giving a fillip to writers, curiously, they face a gastrointestinal dilemma: How exactly do you define Indian writing? With more and more awards being instituted for Indian writing in English, it is all set to be redefined.

Longlist for the DSC South Asian Literature Award

1. *Amry, The Terrorist*
2. *Shardhipura*
3. *Chandev's Chair*
4. *Day Scholar*
5. *Witness the Night*
6. *Afghanistan*
7. *One Amazing Thing*
8. *Sensawati Park*
9. *The Thing About Things*
10. *The Last Kestrel*
11. *The Story that Must Not Be Told*
12. *The Palace Stone*
13. *The Quarantine Papers*
14. *Buddha's Orphan*
15. *Chinaman*
16. *Monkey-man*

Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize shortlist

1. **THE COLLABORATOR**
By Mica Wolcott
Penguin Writing
2. **THE WANDERING FALCON**
By Javed Akhbar
Harish Haritjan
3. **THE TRUTH ABOUT ME**
By A. Ravathi
Penguin Books India
4. **CHINAMAN**
By Shashan Karunatilake
Random House India
5. **A FREE MAN**
By Anus Sethi
Random House India
6. **R.I.D. BURMAN: THE MAN, THE MUSIC**
By Anusha Bhattacharjee and Balaji Vittal
HarperCollins India

The Hindu Literary Prize shortlist

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1. *Shardhipura*
 2. *The Sky Company of People Who Care*
 3. *The Faker*
 4. *River of Smoke*
 5. *Literaries of Dutch Battery*
 6. *The Folded Earth*
 7. *The Storyteller of Marakesh*