

# INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE FOR GEETANJALI

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“Shortlisting from 135 books was daunting. Choosing a single one from them has been agonising,” as the compere said before the announcement.

Shortly before the award ceremony in London, Ms. Shree, who has four other novels under her belt, told the media, “The plot challenges the boundaries of time and geography. It is recognition of a very special kind. When a work appeals to unknown people sitting in faraway places, then it must have the ability to transcend its specific cultural context and touch the universal and the human. The final selection for the Booker shows how rich and meaningful my and Daisy’s interactions have been.”

Her translator, Ms. Rockwell chipped in, “The longlisting brought the book many new readers around the world, in English and in Hindi as well. It also created an awareness of Indian literature written in languages other than English, and I sincerely hope that awareness will grow into a desire for more.”

Ms. Rockwell said, “I am honoured and overjoyed... The subcontinent has so many talented translators and amazing translated works to offer.”

It is an unprecedented moment in the history of literature in Indian languages.

Ms. Shree is happy to soak in the moment. International newspapers and channels vied for the attention of Ms. Shree and Ms. Rockwell who are beseeched with requests for interviews from across the world.

Amidst all the chaos of flashing lights and reporters seeking replies, Ms. Shree hails her feat as not that of an individual, but an entire culture of literature of south Asia. “This is not just about me, the individual. I represent a language and culture and this recognition brings into larger purview the entire world of Hindi literature in particular and Indian literature as a whole.”

Ashok Maheshwari, managing director of Rajkamal Prakashan, the publishers of the Hindi original, nods in agreement. “It is a historic feat, unprecedented too. It is a moment of pride for Hindi literature and indeed all Indian languages.”

His words are backed by early reports from the market. Penguin which published the English translation reported all copies sold out in the morning itself.

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