



Early Years Winner Citation

The Neev Book Award for distinguished children's literature recognises outstanding writing that leads to a fuller understanding of Indian lives and stories -- books that build empathy and resilience, explore conflict, negotiate identity, and inspire change. This annual award encourages and promotes Indian children's literature globally.

Publishers across India submit titles for consideration. An independent jury uses a rigorous process to establish a shortlist in four categories: Early Years, Emerging Readers, Junior Readers, and Young Adult. The criteria include the quality of writing, interpretation of theme, development of plot, portrayal of characters, crafting of setting, and the overall presentation of the book. After months of deliberation, the four books chosen for this award are those which best voice the evolution of Indian lives and stories.

The 2021 Neev Book Award, in the category of Early Years, is presented to Ammu and the Sparrows, written by Vinitha R, illustrated by Jayesh Sivan, and published by Pratham Books.

Parental discord wreaks havoc on a young child. Neither Ammamma nor the sparrows attempt to moralise or solve Ammu's problems. Instead, the sparrows make a parallel connection to the situation allowing for the problem to sit side by side as the child navigates his emotions. Like the writing, the art work demonstrates the raw nature of pain and brilliantly uses negative space to create room for the outpouring of emotions.





Emerging Readers Winner Citation

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The 2021 Neev Book Award, in the category of Emerging Readers, is presented to *The Miracle on Sunderbaag Street*, written by Nandita da Cunha, illustrated by Priya Kuriyan, and published by Kalpavriksh.

Relationships, like the environment, need a special nurturing that involves kindness and patience. The subtle parallel between a barren heart and barren land brings forth a deeply relevant theme of the miracle of community where both the young and elderly co-exist and also inspire each other. The stand out collage art work complements the story beautifully and rewards repeated examination.





Junior Readers Winner Citation

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The 2021 Neev Book Award, in the category of Junior Readers, is presented to *The Adventures of the Kohinoor*, written by William Dalrymple, Anita Anand, and Devika Cariapa, and published by Juggernaut Books.

The Kohinoor diamond as a literary device has enabled the authors to offer a wonderfully approachable account of the history of the Indian subcontinent to Junior Readers. It narrates, re-enacts and contextualizes how the diamond is imbued with the symbolic value of power, status, and the right to rule. Struggles for power are brought to life, but always footnoted with a brief, yet informative account of historical facts. The final questions as to whether the gemstone should be returned to India or not will hopefully encourage young readers to reflect on reparation in other contexts as well.





Young Adult Winner Citation

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The 2021 Neev Book Award, in the category of Young Adult, is presented to *Oonga*, written by Devashish Makhika and published by Tulika Publishers.

This novel uses the adventure story as a vehicle to explore how tribal protectors and conservators of nature can be historically marginalised and misunderstood by those in power. It helps young readers and adults see how we might move closer to stewardship by viewing the earth as tribal people do, and away from ownership and the resultant devastation that comes from the urban 'developmental' view point. This book is remarkable for building a powerful thematic structure by controlling several interacting leitmotifs. These interacting ideas bring within the novel's scope a staggering range of subtexts from hope in human wisdom to near despair at human depravity.

