



WINNER'S CITATION



**The 2025 Neev Book Award is presented to
Baloo's Big Win: How Palwankar Baloo Broke
the Caster Barrier in Cricket, written by
Mamta Nainy, illustrated by Saumya Oberoi,
and published by Puffin Books.**

Once upon a time, in a gentleman's game, how well you played mattered less than who you were. At first glance, Baloo's Big Win is a story about runs and wickets. It reveals itself to be a story about fairness and courage, resilience and social justice. Readers bear witness to Baloo's historic attempt at breaking barriers and reshaping the game as India's independence movement unfurls across the country. Mamta Nainy is masterful in using unembellished language and a straightforward narrative style to tell a complex story about caste, class and cricket.

The story's emotional resonance is beautifully captured by Soumya Oberoi's vivid and compelling illustrations. This picture book biography is a testament to the power of hope and the will to change.

