



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, January 28, 2022

Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

The Germ Academy Wins The National Jarul Book Awards 2022

India's only book award dedicated to celebrating Indian picture books and children's voice and choice, the National Jarul Book Awards, announced 'The Germ Academy', written by Ms. Rea Malhotra Mukhtyar and illustrated by Ms. Shahena Zaveri, as the 2022 winner. In its fifth year, the National Jarul Book Awards is supported by librarians around the country, with Ms. Heeru Bhojwani, the American School of Bombay's (ASB) Secondary School Librarian taking the lead to bring the Awards to children across India. More than 200 Indian picture books were reviewed, with a shortlist of 10 books selected by a jury of librarians. A student jury then reviewed the shortlisted books and selected three finalists. After collecting votes from over 4,000 children across India, the winner was chosen.

"Winning the National Jarul Book Awards was so unexpected," Ms. Mukhtyar exclaimed at the event today, after being announced as this year's recipient. "The picture book space needs more representation in the Indian market, and it is so much more special when we are recognised by the students. We are who we choose to be. Thank you for choosing to be a reader. Thank you for taking the time out to build your imagination and your creativity. It is going to hold you in good stead for the years to come."

"We created the book with a lot of love and enthusiasm. The whole process was an absolute joy," added Ms. Zaveri.

Over 200 students and adults from more than 20 schools in India joined the live event today, Friday, January 28, to celebrate Indian picture books and children's voice and choice. Students from ASB's Elementary and Middle School hosted the event and provided the keynote speeches, making this a truly children-led event.

Opening the Awards ceremony, Grade 7 student from ASB, Rishi, kicked off the event noting that as children, "we all deserve a voice and make a choice about what we believe in".

"The Jarul book awards is all about children's choices," keynote speaker and Grade 6 student, Katelyn, noted. "It's all about your choice, and what you choose can change the outcome. The choice of your favorite book will create a winner to celebrate Indian children Picture Books.

Now, it is your time to think about all that is important to you, and to take action. Stand up for what you believe. You don't have to wait to become an adult to change the world."

Grade 6 student, Arhaan, also spoke passionately about children. "If you feel strongly about something you should always take action. Don't be afraid!" I began writing down about social injustices, and the more I wrote the more I felt empowered. My advice to anyone starting out is to try your best and learn new facts to support human rights. Even though we are young, we understand the world around us and deserve a chance to make a positive difference in the world."

Both Ms. Mukhtyar and Ms. Zaveri attended the event, and shared their experiences about collaborating on the winning title. "This book has been created entirely in lockdown," Ms. Mukhtyar said. "Shahena and I did not meet at all during the process." Ms. Mukhtyar went on to ask the students in the audience to share their ideas about what they learn at school. Students from all over the country were quick to share their ideas. "We learn qualities like sportsmanship and being kind," said one student. "We learn to help each other," said another. With answers like these, it is no wonder the organisers of the National Jarul Book Awards are keen to promote student voices!

Honorable mentions go to the two other finalists. 'Fauja Singh Keeps Going: The True Story of the Oldest Person to Ever Run a Marathon', by Simran Jeet Singh illustrated by Baljinder Kaur, and published by Penguin House Publishers, and Pickle Mania by Srividya Venkat and illustrated by Shailaja Jain Chougule, published by Tota Publishers. The Germ Academy is published by Harper Collins.

To learn more about the National Jarul Book Awards and to watch the event [visit the website](#).

END

For more information, please contact Rachel Burchett, Director of Communications at the American School of Bombay burchett2@asbindia.org +919930040528

About the National Jarul Book Awards

The National Jarul Books Awards empowers and honors children voice and choice of contemporary Indian picture books. The National Jarul Picture Book Award is designed to promote Indian Literature and honor the best in children's picture books. A committee of educators support the Committee that comprise of students who read, select and nominate the best picture books based on several criteria. This award is a Children's Choice Award. The titles are nominated and reviewed by students from Grade 5-6, and children are empowered and honored by providing their voice and choice.

About the American School of Bombay

www.asbindia.org

Located in the heart of Mumbai, India, the American School of Bombay (ASB) is a coeducational, independent, non-profit school for students Prekindergarten - Grade 12. Celebrating 40 years of excellence in education in 2021/22, we offer the International Baccalaureate Primary Years and Diploma Programs (IB PYP & IB DP), and are fully accredited by the Middle States Association (MSA). ASB's Mission is to inspire all of our students to continuous inquiry, empowering them with the skills, courage, optimism, and integrity to pursue their dreams and enhance the lives of others. Serving others, with a desire to make a positive impact in their world, underpins an ASB education.

With our home in India's vibrant cultural and financial capital, Mumbai, and a student population drawn from more than 50 countries, ASB is intentionally international. We identify the big issues that are affecting our students, and actively address equity, diversity and inclusion, both philosophically and through explicit teaching. We are committed to open dialogue with our students, parents and staff, to better educate ourselves and each other, and make a positive impact in our local and global community.