

Jnanpith award, 2021

December 10, 2021

In news—Recently, Assamese poet Nilmani Phookan Jr has won the 56th Jnanpith Award, and Konkani novelist Damodar Mauzo has won the 57th Jnanpith Award.

Damodar Mauzo(from Goa)-

- He is notable for his novels, such as Karmelin, and Tsunami Simon, and short stories, such as Teresa's Man and Other Stories from Goa.
- His first collection of short stories was Ganthon, published in 1971.
- He won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 for his novel Karmelin, which revolves around the lives of domestic workers in the Middle East.
- He is the co-founder of the Goa Arts and Literature Festival.
- He is also an activist and worked towards the inclusion of Konkani as a language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India in the 1980s, in a movement called Konkani Porjecho Avaz.
- This is the second Jnanpith Award for a Konkani writer, the first being Ravindra Kelekar in 2006.

About Nilmani Phookan Jr (Guwahati, Assam)-

- He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1990 and received the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship in 2002.
- Phookan is a poet of renown, having written Surya Henu Nami Ahe Ei Nodiyedi, Gulapi Jamur Lagna, and Kobita.
- Primarily a poet, he also writes prose and is a pioneering art critic from Assam, with a focus on folklore and folk art.
- Phookan is the third Assamese writer to receive the Jnanpith, other two were Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya in 1979 and Mamoni Raisom Goswami in 2000.

About Jnanpith Award-

- **Jnanpith Award** is the oldest and the highest Indian literary award.
- It is presented annually by the Bharatiya Jnanpith to an author for their “outstanding contribution towards literature”.
- **Instituted in 1961, the award is bestowed only on Indian writers writing in Indian languages included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India and English**, with no posthumous conferral.
- From 1965 till 1981, the award was given to the authors for their “most outstanding work” and consisted of a citation plaque, a cash prize and a bronze replica of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge and wisdom.
- **The first recipient of the award was the Malayalam writer G. Sankara Kurup** who received the award in 1965 for his collection of poems, Odakkuzhal (*The Bamboo Flute*), published in 1950.
- The rules were revised in subsequent years to consider only works published during the preceding twenty years, excluding the year for which the award was to be given.
- **Out of twenty-three eligible languages the award has been presented for works in sixteen languages:** Hindi (eleven), Kannada (eight), Bengali and Malayalam (six each), Gujarati, Marathi, Odia, and Urdu (four each), Assamese and Telugu (three each), Punjabi, Tamil and Konkani (two each), English, Kashmiri and Sanskrit (one each).

About Bharatiya Jnanpith-

- It is a literary and research organization, based in New Delhi, India.
- It was **founded on February 18, 1944 by Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain of the Sahu Jain family and his wife Rama Jain** to undertake systematic research and publication of Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali and Apabhramsha texts and

covering subjects like religion, philosophy, logic, ethics, grammar, astrology, poetics, etc.

- It annually publishes hundreds of books in Hindi (both original and translated works) and other languages, and also **presents India's highest literary awards, the Jnanpith Awards and the Moortidevi Award.**