

Namita Gokhale, Tamil writer Ambai win Sahitya Akademi Award

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TAMIL FEMINIST writer Ambai, Kannada biographer DS Nagabhushan, Telugu poet Goreti Venkanna, and English author Namita Gokhale, among others, are this year's winners of the Sahitya Akademi Award. The award was announced for literary works in 20 languages on Thursday.

This year, seven books of po-



Ambai (left); and Gokhale

etry, two novels, five short stories, two plays, one biography and autobiography, a book on criticism, and a poem were chosen for the award. Awards in Gujarati, Maithili, Manipuri, and Urdu lan-

guages will be announced at a later date. The awardees will receive a cash prize of Rs 1,00,000.

The other winners are Mwdai Gahai (Bodo), Sanjiv Verenkar (Konkani), Hrushikesl Mallick (Odia), Meethesh Nirmohi (Rajasthani), Vindeshwariprasad Nishr (Sanskrit), Arjun Chawla (Sindhi), Raj Rahi (Dogri), Kiran Gurav (Marathi), Khalid Hussain (Punjabi), Niranjana Hansda (Santali), Anuradha Sarma Pujari (Assamese), George Onakkoor

(Malayalam), Bratya Basu (Bengali), Daya Prakash Sinha (Hindi), Wali Muhammad Aseer Kishtwari (Kashmiri), Chhabilal Upadhyaya (Nepali).

Talking about winning the prestigious award for her book *Things to Leave Behind*, Gokhale says, "To be a Sahitya Akademi awardee as an English writer, amidst those books in 22 languages, is a privilege. I believe in the concept of many languages, one literature."

Gokhale's book is set during

1840-1912 in the Kumaon region. "It looks at the new fragile modernity that was emerging at that time. It looks at colonial history from the point of view of both the colonisers and of Kumaon — my home state. It has many themes but the basic story is about three generations, of stubborn Kumaon women. There's a peculiar obstinacy that characterises the mountain women," she told *The Indian Express*.

A lot of the material for the book came from Gokhale's previ-

ous work *Mountain Echoes: Reminiscences of Kumaoni Women*, where the author explores the oral history of the Kumaon region through the memories of her grandmother and three great aunts. "It gave me an idea of how people lived, especially the women of the household. My great grandfather, BD Pandey, had written the first history of Kumaon, which was a credible source. Another source was *The Himalayan Gazetteer*, written by ET Atkinson," she says.