



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 September 1983

India

I received a telephone call yesterday from the Deputy High Commissioner of India who asked whether, during her visit to Delhi for the Commonwealth Conference, the Prime Minister would be prepared to present the Bhartiya Jnanpith Award to this year's recipient, Mrs. Mahadevi Verma. I asked Mr. Johari if he could let me have a letter setting out in more detail what would be involved. A copy of this is now enclosed. Since I agreed to Mr. Johari's request that I should treat his letter as having been sent on a personal basis I should be grateful if you would not reveal to him that I have copied it to you.

BF | I should be grateful for early advice on the proposal so that I may speak to Mr. Johari in the early part of next week.

A. J. COLES

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Urgent/ By Special Messenger



सत्यमेव जयते

Pushkar Johari
Deputy High Commissioner

TELEPHONE: 01-836 8484 EXT.

TELEGRAMS: HICOMIND, LONDON, W.C.2.

भारत का हाइ कमिशन
लन्दन

THE HIGH COMMISSION OF INDIA,

DEPARTMENT,

INDIA HOUSE,

ALDWYCH,

LONDON, W.C.2.

No. 370 /DHC/83

September 8, 1983

Dear *Mr. Coles,*

With reference to our telephone conversation this morning I am giving below some details about the Bhartiya Jnanpith Award, the presentation ceremony of which is to take place in New Delhi on the afternoon of 28th November, 1983.

2. The Award is the country's highest and most prestigious in the field of literature and was instituted in 1965. The Award is made annually with the twin objectives of shouldering the cardinal national responsibilities of rediscovering the neglected treasures of Indian philosophy and of encouraging original creative writing in 15 Indian languages. The Award carries a cash prize of Rs.150,000/- (approximately £10,000/-). This year's recipient is Mrs. Mahadevi Verma who is a very distinguished and eminent poetess in the Hindi language. She is now 76 years old and is the last surviving member of the Romantic School of Hindi poetry. She has been chosen for this honour for her distinguished work "Yama", a collection of outstanding poems which was first published in 1939 and the Fifth Edition of which was brought out in the late 70s. A special feature of the collection is the beautiful illustrations painted by Mrs. Mahadevi Verma herself.

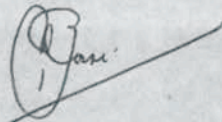
3. As I had mentioned on the phone it is customary for either our President or Prime Minister to give the Award. However, since this year the ceremony is happily coinciding with the Commonwealth Heads of Governments meeting in New Delhi, my Government has made the suggestion which I mentioned on the phone.

...2/-

4. I look forward to hearing from you at your very early convenience.

with regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Pushkar Johari', written over a horizontal line.

(Pushkar Johari)

Mr. A.J. Coles,
Private Secretary to
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London SW1



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 September, 1983

Dear Sir,

India

Thank you for your letter of 9 September asking for advice on the Indian proposal that the Prime Minister should present the Bhartiya Jnanpith Award, India's most prestigious literary prize, on the afternoon of 28 November during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in New Delhi.

This is an attractive proposal. Presentation of the Award by the Prime Minister would provide an excellent means of underlining the close relationship between Britain and India. The occasion, which would almost certainly also be attended by Mrs Gandhi, will be a considerable media event attracting extensive press, radio and television coverage, at a time when the Indian media will otherwise be preoccupied with Commonwealth rather than specifically Indo-British affairs. We can confirm Mr Johari's description of the Award and this year's recipient and we recommend that the Prime Minister accept the invitation.

It has been proposed that, on the afternoon of 28 November, the Prime Minister should give a lunch for a number of Commonwealth Heads of Government and thereafter attend the afternoon session of the Commonwealth meeting. We assume, therefore, that the Indians would arrange for the presentation to take place in the late afternoon. At present, no other engagements are envisaged for the Prime Minister at that time.

Yours ever

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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CHGM India

17 SEP 1982

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PRIME MINISTER

The Indians have asked whether you would agree that during your visit to Delhi for CHOGM you should present India's most prestigious literary prize to this year's winner.

The prize is called the Bhartiya Jnanpith Award. It is worth about £10,000. This year's recipient is a Mrs. Mahadevi Verma, who is a Hindi poetess and is 76 years old.

Normally, either the President of India or the Prime Minister present the Award. But this time they would be delighted if you would.

It can be fitted into your timetable without difficulty. We should arrange for the presentation to take place in the late afternoon of 28 November, after any session of CHOGM has concluded.

Are you willing to do this?

Yes *A. J. C.*

14 November, 1983

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15 September 1983

INDIA

Thank you for your letter of 13 September. The Prime Minister has agreed to the Indian proposal that she should present this year's Bhartiya Jnanpith Award. I have so informed Mr. Johari and asked him to discuss further details with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SEP 15 1983

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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11 November 1983

ipda in literature

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Dear Private Secretary,

ck | I have just returned from a visit to Delhi, where I heard that at the forthcoming conference there the Prime Minister is likely to present an Indian literary award to the Hindi writer Mahadevi Varma. If this is correct, and if it would be of assistance, I would be glad to provide you with a brief note on Mahadevi Varma's work. We could also provide a cassette with a few Hindi phrases and translation if you wish.

Yours sincerely,

R.S. McGregor

R.S.McGregor
UL in Hindi