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‘Jasmine Days’ by Benyamin, a novel in translation, wins the Rs 25-lakh JCB Prize for Literature

Five novels, two of them translations, were in the running.



Jasmine Days by [Benyamin](#), a novel translated into English from Malayalam, has won the inaugural JCB Prize for Literature, which fetches the winner a purse of Rs 25 lakh. [Shahnaz Habib](#), who translated the novel, has won a prize of Rs 5 lakh.

Jasmine Days is “told in the remarkably forthright voice of Sameera, a young Pakistani woman who works as a radio jockey in an unnamed West Asian country”.

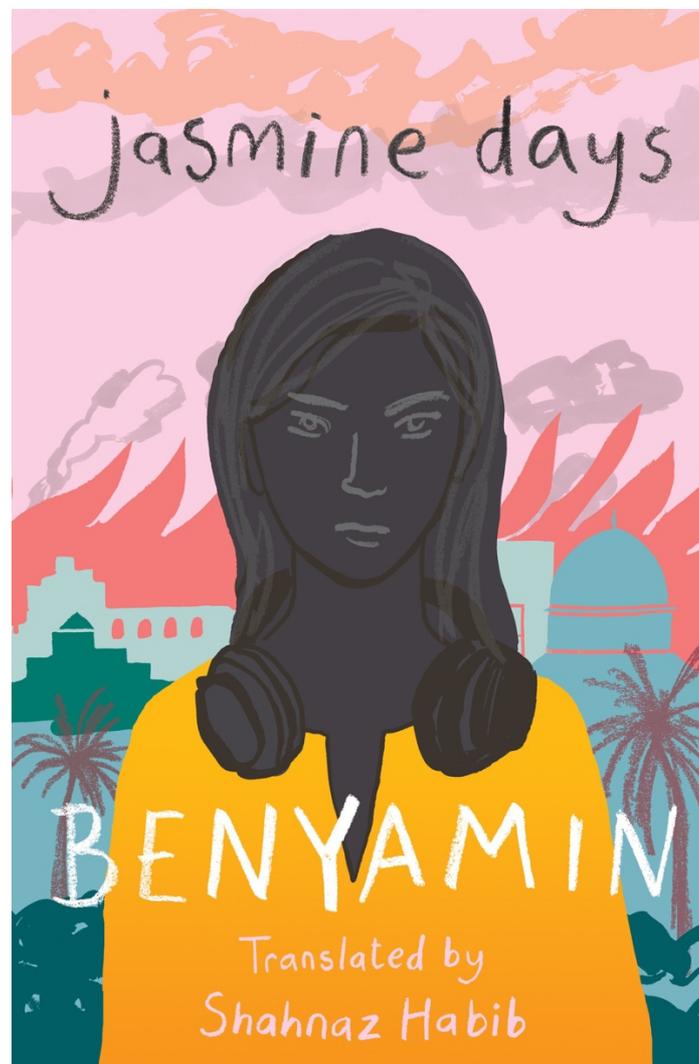
The winner was chosen from submissions made by 42 publishers in eight languages. The jury comprised Rohan Murthy, founder of the Murty Classical Library, theoretical astrophysicist and author Priyamvada Natarajan, translator and scholar Arshia Sattar, and novelist and playwright Vivek Shanbhag, who took over as the Chair from filmmaker Deepa Mehta, who had to drop out for personal reasons.

“One of the questions we asked ourselves again and again,” said Shanbhag, “was this: Will the book stand the test of the time?”

“We are mostly at the receiving end of abuses and allegations,” said the winner, Benjamin, accepting the prize. “Every serious novel is an enquiry into the marginalised brethren within us.”

He added: “I have no doubt that this will rejuvenate several brands of vernacular literature and their translation.”

At the awards ceremony, the director of the prize, Rana Dasgupta made a strong statement in support of the #MeToo movement, applauding the courage of those who have spoken up – “a sad kind of literature of our time”.



The five shortlisted books:

- [*Half The Night Is Gone*](#), Amitabha Bagchi (Juggernaut)
- [*Jasmine Days*](#), Benyamin, translated by Shahnaz Habib (Juggernaut)
- [*Poonachi*](#), Perumal Murugan, translated by N Kalyan Raman (Westland)
- [*All The Lives We Never Lived*](#), Anuradha Roy (Hachette)
- [*Latitudes of Longing*](#), Shubhangi Swarup (HarperCollins India)