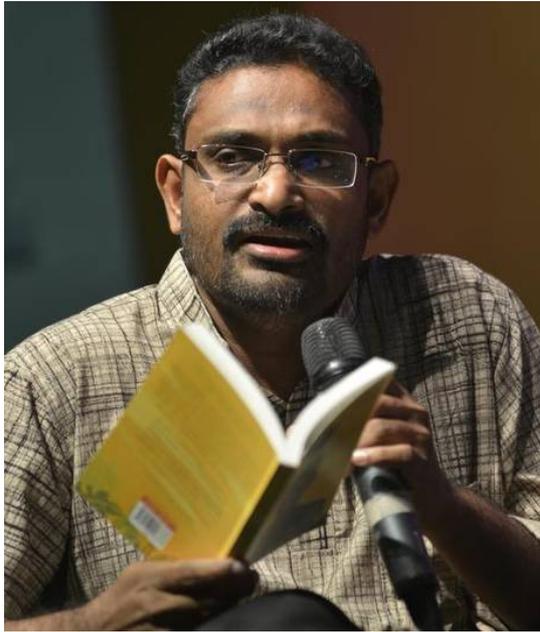


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Malayalam author Benyamin's 'Jasmine Days' wins first JCB Prize for literature



Benyamin's book, originally written in Malayalam and translated by Shahnaz Habib, is a "brilliant and intense novel", said the jury

Malayalam author Benyamin has bagged the inaugural JCB Prize for literature for his book 'Jasmine Days', which explores the lives of South Asians in the Middle East.

Benyamin's book, originally written in Malayalam and translated by Shahnaz Habib, is a "brilliant and intense novel", jury chairperson Vivek Shanbag said Wednesday night while announcing the most expensive literary award in the country.

Benyamin was awarded a cash prize of ₹25 lakh, along with a magnificent trophy created by Delhi artist duo Thukral & Tagra, titled 'Mirror Melting'. Habib received an additional prize of ₹5 lakh.

'Jasmine Days' beat four shortlisted works — 'Half the Night is Gone' (Amitabha Bagchi), 'All the Lives We Never Lived' (Anuradha Roy), 'Latitudes of Longing' (Shubhangi Swarup) and 'Poonachi' (Perumal Murugan).

Benyamin debuted with "Aadujeevitham" (Goat Days) that won him the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award.

'Jasmine Days', his second book, tells the story of a young woman in a city where the promise of revolution turns into destruction and division. It revolves around the Jasmine Revolution that sprang up in December 2010 and was quelled by January 2011.

The winner was zeroed in on after a longlist and subsequent shortlist of 10 and five books respectively, by a jury comprising film director Deepa Mehta, entrepreneur and scholar Rohan Murthy, astrophysicist and writer Priyamvada Natarajan, novelist Vivek Shanbhag, and author and translator Arshia Sattar.

“The courage shown by Benjamin in ‘Jasmine Days’ in examining some of the most important conflicts of our times is exceptional. The novel provides powerful insights into the violence associated with change. It also raises profound questions about the relationship between crime, punishment and forgiveness. A brilliant and intense novel,” Shanbhag said.