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Benyamin's novel Jasmine Days bags JCB Prize for Literature

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Malayalam author Benyamin's novel Jasmine Days emerged as the winner of the much-awaited JCB Prize for Literature. The book was chosen by the jury unanimously and the author, who has been a recipient of Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award in the past for Adujeevitham, has won a trophy and 25 lakhs as prize money. The 2018 book has been translated from Malayalam to English by Shahnaz Habib. Habib has also received an additional prize of five lakhs.

Benyamin has written almost 20 books and is considered one of the most prominent literary voices in the present time. His writing highlights contemporary issue and his literary expertise enables him to deal with them deftly. In 1992, the author had moved to Bahrain and it was years later in 2013 that he returned to Kerala. "I loved mathematics. I did not take literature seriously until I reached Bahrain," the author said. India has 22 official languages and a host of other unrecognized tongues and dialects.

Jasmine Days traces the life of a young woman in a city whose life irrevocably changes as the promise of revolution changes into destruction. The novel, that is situated around the time The Jasmine Revolution started in December in 2010, has been described by the author as "a metaphor for the world today, full of fanatics".

Habib's translation of the novel has also received much praise from the judges. Based in New York, he had said that translating Benyamin "as a first-time translator, both auspicious and intimidating in equal measure".

[Half The Night Is Gone by Amitabha Bagchi](#), *Jasmine Days* by Benny Daniel (translated from Malayalam original by Shahnaz Habib); *Poonachi* by *Perumal Murugan* (translated from Tamil original by N. Kalyan Raman); *All the Lives We Never Lived* by Anuradha Roy and *Latitudes of Longing* by debutante Shubhangi Swarup had made it to the shortlist.