

Publisher: DNA India

Date: 26th October 2018

Malayalam author Benyamin bags inaugural JCB Prize

Literature award Benyamin was awarded a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh



"Authors are generally at the receiving end of criticism but this award has reaffirmed my faith to continue writing. The recognition that I got today has steeled my resolve to wield the pen," said Malayalan author Benyamin who 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, tells the story of a young woman in a city where the promise of revolution turns into destruction and division.

Jasmine Day was pitched against four other 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). It revolves around the Jasmine Revolution that sprang up in December 2010 and was quelled by January 2011.

Benyamin was awarded a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh, making it the most expensive literary award in the country, along with a trophy created by Delhi artist duo Thukral & Tagra, entitled Mirror Melting. Habib received an additional prize of Rs 5 lakh. Benyamin has earlier won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for his debut novel Aadujeevitham (Goat Days). Jasmine Days is his second book.

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.

While announcing the winner, jury chairperson Vivek Shanbhag hailed Jasmine Day as a "brilliant and intense novel". "The courage shown by Benyamin in 'Jasmine Days' in examining some of the most important conflicts of our times is exceptional," he further said.

TALE OF THE BOOK

- 'Jasmine Days', explores the lives of South Asians in the Middle East.
- Benyamin's book, originally written in Malayalam and translated by Shahnaz Habib.