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Abstract:

This article deals with the literary contributions of Benyamin, renowned author from Kerala. He was born in the year 1971. His works reflect the dialects from Nhettur, Kulanada of Kerala. His works would appear regularly in Malayalam publications magazines, periodicals and journals. *Goat Days* (2005) is the first novel of Benyamin, translated into English by Joseph Koyippally which focuses on the animal-like suffering of Najeeb, who is forced to live in a remote farm in Saudi, amongst goats and camels, with no water for sanitation, and a strict ration of khubuz and water. *Jasmine Days* is a 2014 Malayalam novel by Benyamin and translated into English by Shahnaz Habib. It tells the story of Sameera Parvin, a young Pakistani woman who works as a radio jockey in an unnamed Middle Eastern country which is on the verge of revolution. *Yellow Lights of Death* (2015) is the third novel of Benyamin, translated into English. In this novel, two friends, Christy and Jesintha, witness the killing of a young man. Benyamin's latest novel *Body and Blood* (2020) is by turns introspective and thrilling, a meditation on faith and God that also holds up a mirror to the power and corruption of organized religion. The main study focuses on the author Benyamin and his literary contributions.

Keywords: Benyamin, Malayalam, Renowned Author, Goat Days, Najeeb, Jasmine Days, Sameera Parvin, Yellow Lights of Death, Christy, Jesintha, Body and Blood. Praise, Readers.

Introduction:

Benyamin is a short story writer and an Indian novelist from Malayalam language. He was born in the year 1971. His works reflect the dialects from Nhettur, Kulanada of Kerala. His works would appear regularly in Malayalam publications magazines, periodicals and journals.

In the initial stage Benyamin himself did not guess that he would become a story teller. First he was known as Benny Daniel, after writing many stories he shows himself as Benyamin. He has a doubt that how he became a writer because no one of his family members engaged themselves in writing. He did not have spent any deep study in literature and he did not have any special interest on Malayalam and literature from his school days. When others asked him a question about his future, he did not have answered 'literature' or 'writing'.

After becoming a writer, Benyamin calls his path as a great destiny not a fate. He tells fate and destiny are not same. According to his point of view, fate is a final declaration but destiny is the beginning of a path. Circumstances and opportunities stood in front of authorship and told him that there was a path that he could take which he liked. So, he declares destiny and circumstances will help us to take a perfect path. Benyamin's father was a taxi- driver and his mother was a house wife when he was born. He calls himself fortunate to have parents like them with less education. In his childhood he was affected by unknown diseases. He calls his childhood as 'procession of ailments'. Many of his neighbours told that he would die of tuberculosis or something. So, he used to pray to survive till his 20s to enjoy his first kiss. This wish is quite familiar among all the youths when they count their end days. Somehow the fate and destiny played a role there to come out the sickness.

Cricket becomes Benyamin's passion in the mid of his young age. Before realizing that cricket was not his destiny, he passed many years by playing cricket. In the imaginary cricket field he, started dreaming of vast canvases. All the characters in his book reflect the transmigration and time-twist experiences he faced in the cricket where he was batsman, bowler, fielder, wicket-keeper and umpire everything.

Literary Touch:

His literary touch comes from his friends who accompanied him to play cricket and swimming. They would discuss the stories that they read. Even they spoke about Naipaul, Rushdie, Bimal Mitra and Anand. When they talk about them, he stood close by them as a passive listener and something from their words led him to read books. He considered that as an inspiration and started visiting library to read many books. Leaving his inspiration on the other side, he concentrated on his studies. He joined a polytechnic institute in Tirupur, Tamilnadu and studied electronics where Mathematics was his favourite subject. He received an offer to work in Bahrain. In the age of 21, with a pleasant heart he moved to the city which he called 'the land of deserts'.

Since Benyamin was allotted in the maintenance department of the bank, he had to be very alert all the time. Though, his working hours were very less, he had to be attentive in the rest of the time. But the work gave him a complete boredom and stress. To overcome the boredom and emptiness, he started to read. He called the circumstance as a 'favourable circumstance' which gave him own interest and commitment to read.

The city he lived was Manama where gambling, alcohol, dance bars were given freedom to perform its role. Benyamin was in the same age which would tempt him to involve in all those vices but he chose to read instead. Availability of books became hurdle there. Circumstances helped him through his friends. They sent him collection of books instead of normal eatables. He found a private library in the street of Manama where he read Malayalam novels and the classics of world literature. He paid attention to his inner voice and began writing synopses of the books which he read and noted his favorite passages in a diary. It is a great shock for him when he saw one of those diaries that he used to read 150 to 200 books per year. He footnotes everything which he read as 'written by x writer, read in y novel, stated by z friend' (5). That might be the root for him to hide himself behind the pseudonym of Benyamin.

After seven long years of diary entries, Benyamin started writing short stories. The acceptance from the readers made him to write more works of literature. And the applauses from the readers encouraged him to write even more works. Still he wonders he entered into the dream world of literature without any intention and wishes not to awake from the dream. The entire he shared in *The Hindu* which kindles the young minds of nation to love literature. Circumstances capture him a great destiny from where he does not want to escape. According to Kevin Hood in *Becoming Jane*, "A novel must show how the world truly is, how characters genuinely think, how events actually occur. A novel should somehow reveal the true source of our action (25)".

Works of Art:

Benyamin has fulfilled all the features of novel in his works of art. When Benyamin stepped into the field of writing, he contributed many remarkable works of literature to the society. *Goat Days* is one of the majestic works which was originally published in Malayalam language in the year 2008 with the name *Aadujeevitham* later it was translated by Joseph Koyippally in English on 1 July 2012. This is the story of a young man Najeeb who desires to work in the Gulf land leaving his pregnant wife at home. His dream becomes horrible when he is forced to take care of the sheep in the desert. He longs to see his wife and a new born child. Three years of continuous struggle lands him in his home land.

Jasmine Days was first published in the year 2014 as *Mullappoo Niramulla Pakalukal* and it has been translated in 2018 by Shahnaz Habib. This is a story of a Pakistani girl, Sameera Parveen who works as a radio jockey. She involves herself in the middle of a revolution in the unnamed Middle Eastern City. The novel received the JCB Prize which is the India's richest prize for literature.

Manja Veyil Maranangal is the third book of Benyamin which was published in the year 2011. It is the novel of crime thriller which has the plot of investigation to find out the mysteries of two important deaths. Sajeer Kumarapuram translated it in English and titled as *Yellow Lights of Death*. *Abeesagin* (a name from the Old Testament) is a novel which was published on 25.09.2018.

Akkapporinte Irupatu Nasrani Varshangal (Twenty Years of Christian Quarrels) is a novel which was published in August 2008. *Al Arabian Novel Factory* was published on June 2014; *Mullappoo Niramulla Pakalukal* was published in the same year.

Body and Blood is the novel which is first published in English in India in 2020 by Harper Perennial an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Following the lives of men and women caught in a web of criminally orchestrated accidents and medically induced comas, Benyamin's latest novel *Body and Blood* is by turns introspective and thrilling – a meditation on faith and God that also holds up a mirror to the power and corruption of organized religion.

Beyond Novels Benyamin had released many short story collections also which are *Euthanasia* (*Mercy Killing*) which won the first award of the Abu Dhabi Malayalam Samajam, *Penmarattam* (*Ladies Sex*) and *EMS um Penkuttiyum* (*EMS and the Girl*). Few of his notable writing collections are *Pravachakanmarude Randam Pustakam* (The Second Book of Prophets), *Irunda Vanasthalikal* (*Dark Forest Places*) (notes), *Anubhavam*, *Ormma*, *Yaathra* (*Experience, Memories & Travel*), *Irattamukhamulla Nagaram* (travel), *Manthilirile 20 communist varshangal* and *Shareera Shasthram*.

Feathers to His Crown:

The below mentioned honors have come to Benyamin's stride through his wonderful literary products. He received Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel *Aadujeevitham* (*Goat Days*) in 2009 and it has been long listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2012. In the very next year it has been short listed for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. In addition to this, he has received Padmaprabha Literary Award in 2015. *Jasmine Days* is the novel which is considered to be the important milestone of Benyamin's literary career which gained him the JCB Prize for Literature and the Crossword Book Award for Indian language translation. All of the awards and honors have been added as feathers to his crown. Following these reputations he received Muttathu Varkey Award in the year 2019.

Conclusion:

As a renowned author Benyamin has received many praising words from the readers. The selected praises are: 'The best Indian writer of our times' – Mohammed Hanif, 'Nudges the reader towards critical moral questions of our times' – Arhia Sattar, 'An incisive take on a contemporary and consequential subject' – HuffPost, 'Gripping... Benyamin startles the reader with the poignancy of his prose' – Wire, 'One of the finest contemporary Malayalam writers' – Mint. Thus, Benyamin shines a renowned author by producing outstanding literary pieces.

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