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meet the author

Jeelani Bano



“I am fascinated by that rebel-girl hiding in a cave of a high mountain, waging a lone battle for her rights. Whenever a father commits suicide for failing to arrange dowry for his daughter, or a mother cannot control tears on the birth of a daughter, or a husband destroys the life of his wife by simply pronouncing the words Talaq, Talaq, Talaq . . . that girl emerges in front of me—the courageous girl who is struggling against tradition, customs and against the soldiers of social and religious persecution, simultaneously. That ideal girl has come to stay within me. I do not remember how many times I have presented myself to her, seeking hope and courage, and each time she has lit yet another lamp before my eyes.”

— JEELANI BANO

JEELANI BANO, short story writer and novelist writing in Urdu was born in 1936 in an orthodox Muslim middle class family of four brothers and three sisters, headed by a liberal scholar-poet of Urdu and Persian, Allama Hairat Badayuni. Encouraged by her father, Jeelani Bano started writing from the age of sixteen. The literary atmosphere at home and frequent visits of eminent poets like Josh

Malihabadi, Jigar Muradabadi, Makhdoom Mohiuddin and Sajjed Zaheer inspired and fuelled her creative ability.

Though she started writing under the influence of progressive story-writers like Krishan Chander, Rajindar Singh Bedi, Manto and Ismat Chughtai, she was free from the ideological compulsions of the Progressives. Her first collection of



Receiving Ghalib Award from Vice-President of India, Justice Hidayatullah, 1978

short stories *Roshni ke Minar* came out in 1958 and was followed by *Nirwan* in 1963. From stories she strayed into novelettes and the first collection of three novelettes entitled *Jugnu aur Sitara* was published in 1965.

Her world-view evolved out of her own emotional and ethical/spiritual experiences of day-to-day life and encounters between one's own definition and the truth of the hard realities of life. Her selections and treatment of themes and characters have the distinct impress of a woman's heart.

The major themes which recur in her novels and stories are crude realities of life and human behaviour and the suffering of the weak in rural India, struggle against social and communal animosities, oppressive concepts and agents of exploitation and the liberation struggles of Indian womanhood.

Her two novels deal with the revolutionary changes which have taken place in the social, cultural and human relationships, during the Independence struggle in the region of the erstwhile princely Nizam's state of Hyderabad. While her first novel *Aiwan-e-Ghazal* relates the strains suffered by persons under these changes and their struggle to select and offer responses to these challenging changes during the transitory period, her second novel *Baarish-e-Sang* carries this theme



With Faiz Ahmed Faiz

forward from 1950s to 1970s involving the socio-economic oppression related to the problem of bonded-labour in rural and urban Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh.

Not confining herself to any specific theme, Jeelani is attracted towards what is related to injustice—social, emotional, and psychological. Her empathy for oppressed women is clearly felt in most of her stories. These women belong to all classes and represent their strong and weak points. Another theme that one detects is that of loneliness. It is not empty loneliness; it is an expression of helplessness at not being able to alleviate others' loneliness. A total absence of any discriminatory outlook and a commitment to justice which appears to be natural and not deliberate, have widened her appeal beyond Urdu readership. Most of her stories have been translated into Hindi, Telugu and other Indian languages besides

English, German, Norwegian and Russian.

Involvement in culture-specific themes, led Jeelani Bano to other media for the sake of achieving a wider and direct relationship with the people. She has written and produced for the television, skits and stories on communal and cultural integration and on the new woman in India, besides a telefilm on the Indianness of the culture of Hyderabad. She has also written several radio plays.

The Deccan culture, customs, the Deccani dialect of Urdu and folk songs serve as important contents of her writings. In order to

preserve for the new generation the rich flavour of spoken Deccani, she has made recordings on 13 audio-cassettes of Deccani as spoken by a cross-section of the people of Hyderabad and the Telengana region.

She has also been participating in anti-communist and women's empowerment movements. She has been the chairperson of Youth for Action, an NGO working for the social, educational and economic empowerment of rural women in the Mahboob Nagar district of Andhra Pradesh. She is also actively attached to other NGOs working in this area.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Novels

Aiwan-e-Ghazal, Delhi, 1978; Karachi, 1983

Baarish-e-Sang, Karachi, 1934; Hyderabad, 1935

Short Story Collections

Roshni ke Minar, Lahore, 1958; Reprinted under the title, *Nai Aurat*, Lahore, 1997



With her family



Receiving Soviet Land-Nehru Award from Sri Vasant Sathé.
Dr. Mulk Raj Anand is also seen in the picture, 1985

- Nirwan*, Delhi, 1963
Praya Ghar, Hyderabad,
 1979; Karachi, 1984
Roz Ka Qissa, Karachi, 1987
Yeh Kaon Hansa, Lahore,
 1992
Tiryaaq, Karachi, 1993
 (Complete works)
Such ke Siva, Delhi, 1997

Novelettes

- Jugnu aur Sitare*, Lahore,
 1965; Delhi, 1966
Naghme Ka Safar,
 Hyderabad, 1977

Other Works

- Malayalam Afsane* (Urdu
 translation through
 Hindi), National Book
 Trust, Delhi, 1972
Krishan Chander, Sahitya
 Akademi, New Delhi,
 1986
Quli Qutb Shah, for children,
 Hyderabad
Narsaiyah ki Baodi, a story
 of a tele-play, Delhi

Translations into other Languages

- Aiwan-e-Ghazal* (novel)
 (Punjabi, Tamil and
 Telugu)
Hail of Stones (tr. of *Baarish-
 e-Sang*): (English); Delhi,
 1996
Aiwan-e-Ghazal (Gujarati)
 Serialised in Daily,
 Gujarati Dawn (Karachi),
 1984-85
Aiwan-e-Ghazal (Hindi)
 Delhi, 1981; 2nd edition.
 Delhi, 1998
Pritinidhi Kahaniyan (tr. of
 stories), (Hindi), Delhi,
 1995
Paththaron ki Baarish (tr. of
Baarish-e-Sang), (Hindi),
 Delhi, 1996
Naghme ka Safar (Hindi),
 Delhi, 1996.
Baarish-e-Sang, (Marathi)
Panch Dhara, Magazine,
 Hyderabad, 1989-90
Kedaram, (Telugu) collection
 of stories, Andhra
 Pradesh, Sahitya Akademi,
 Hyderabad 1997

A CHRONOLOGY

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|---------|---|---------|--|
| 1936 | Born in Budaon (U.P.) | 1988 | Received Maharashtra Urdu Academy Award |
| 1954 | First story published | 1989 | Received All India Qaumi Hali Award of Haryana Urdu Academy |
| 1958 | First collection of stories, <i>Rooshni ke Minar</i> , published | 1989-92 | Member, Urdu Advisory Panel, National Book Trust, re-appointed in 1987 |
| 1959 | Marriage | 1991 | Received Nuqoosh Award, Lahore |
| 1972 | M.A in Urdu Literature | 1997 | Member, General Council, National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, Delhi |
| 1973-84 | Member, A.P. Sahitya Akademi | 1998 | Aalami Frogh-e-Urdu Adabi Award, Doha (Qatar); Listed in <i>Deccan Chronicle's</i> "Hyderabad top 100" and the "Book-makers 1998", for her "Hail of Stones". |
| 1978 | Received Ghalib Award, Delhi | | |
| 1979-82 | Member, Urdu Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi, Delhi | | |
| 1983 | Received Doshiza Writers Award of Pakistan | | |
| 1985 | Received Soviet Land-Nehru Award, Delhi; visited Moscow, Leningrad and Volgograd. | | |
| 1986 | Visited Moscow, Dushanbe and Tashkent and Pakistan | | |



Receiving the Government of Maharashtra Award from Dr. N. Sanjeeva Reddy, 1988