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Press Release

Malayali instinct helped me in my travels: Writer Benyamin at Yaanam 2025

‘Travels help creating landscapes of novels’

Varkala, Oct 19: In an absorbing conversation about his passion to visit places closely associated with his favourite writers, eminent Malayalam author Benyamin recalled how he used his ‘Malayali instinct’ to see Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez’s remains at the University of Cartagena in Colombia.

Benyamin was having a conversation with writer Muzafar Ahamed at India’s first travel literary festival Yaanam here on ‘Macondo, Marquez and more,’

“I was travelling through Colombia, visiting places where Marquez lived and wrote, and one day we heard the celebrated writer’s remains were kept in the University of Cartagena,” remembered Benyamin.

“Me and my two friends rushed to Cartagena with an urge to see our favourite writer’s remains. But the university was closed for three days and no one other than the students and faculty were allowed to visit the remains of Marquez. However, we were persistent and found a gate keeper who we bribed to let us in,” he said.

“However, the gate keeper only gave permission for one person to go, and kindly enough, my friends allowed me to go in. I paid my respect to the memory of Marques for all the Malayalis in that moment, and now I think that the Malayalai instinct in me to be always persistent helped me experience such a memorable moment,” said Benyamin.

Benyamin also recalled on his stay in Switzerland through a resident writing project where he wrote his latest book ‘Mulberry, Ennod Ninte Zorbaye Kurichu Parayu’ a novel based on his travels in Greece to trace the life and works of Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis.

“I had this experience in Lausanne where I visited a ‘human museum’, if that’s the right word, where refugees from African countries were given shelter and people could talk to them about their refugee experiences, but due to language barrier, I couldn’t talk to them,” said Benyamin.



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On the backdrop of the current genocide happening in Gaza, Benyamin remembered the eerie feeling he felt during his visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland where hundreds of shoes of children killed by Nazi Germany were exhibited. "I pondered on human behaviour in my mind while seeing the shoes of children killed in gas chambers. A community that had been on the receiving end of brutality and genocide are now exerting more brutality over another community now."

On how travel shaped his novels, he said travels have given him more clarity about the landscapes of his novels and also get characters and situations on the way.

Every person has a different experience with the same place, he said about his philosophy of travelling.

Organised by Kerala Tourism at Ranga Kala Kendram at the Cliff here, the October 17-19 festival has brought together leading travel writers, vloggers and social media influencers from around the world, setting the stage for them to share their insights and perspectives on sustainable and inclusive tourism to meet the demands of the present day travellers.

'Celebrating Words and Wanderlust' is the theme of the three-day festival.

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