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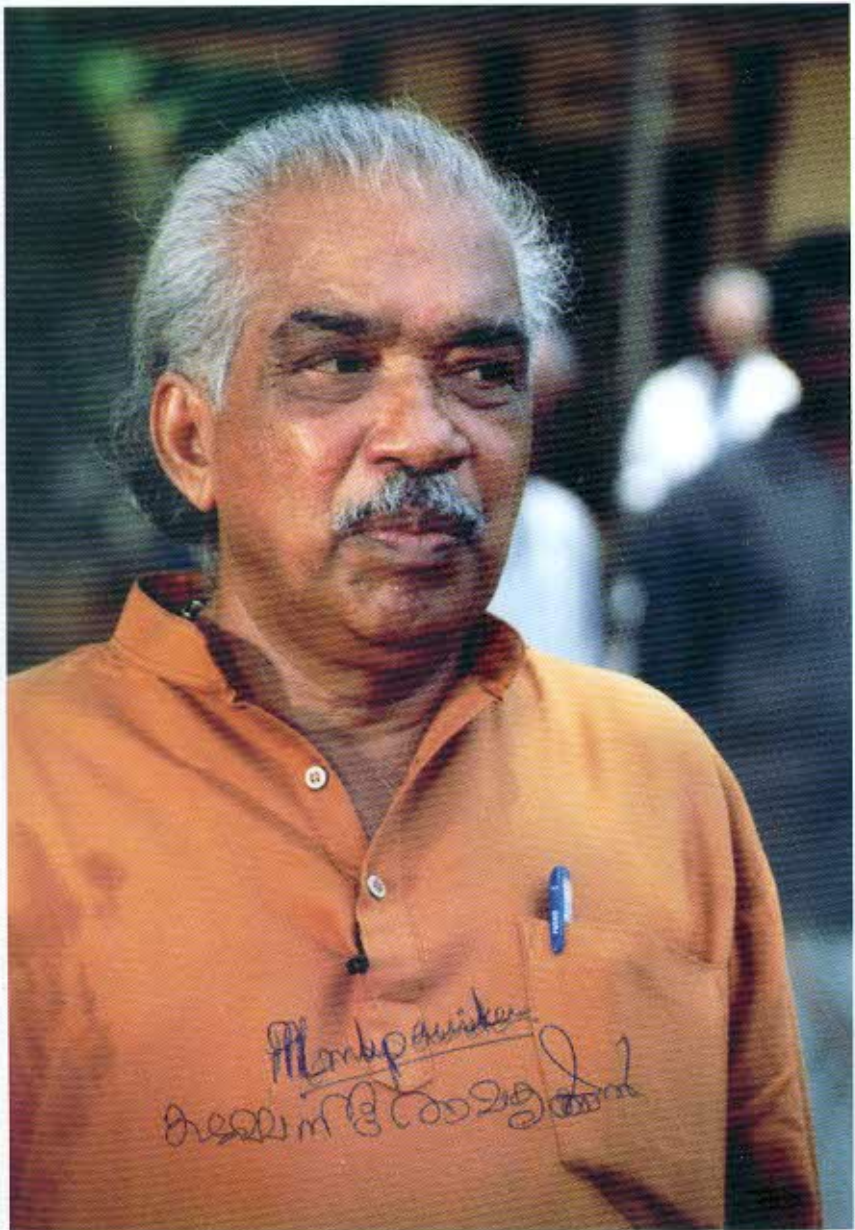


Sahitya Akademi

18 July 2007

# meet the author

**Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan**



M.R. Ramakrishnan Panicker, popularly known as Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan, was born to Sri Meletharayil Raman Nair and Smt Kuttyamma on 17 March, 1934 at Kadammanitta village in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. He had his primary education at Mylapra and high school education at Kozhemcherry.

After completing his BA in Political Science from Changanasseri NSS college in 1958 he set out for a journey to Assam in search of employment. But, on reaching Calcutta, he joined an organization called *Khadi Pratishthan* for learning to make matches by hand. He stayed there for three months. During this time he got appointed as a Lower Division Clerk in the Postal Audit and Accounts Department in Madras. He was retired from the service as the Accounts Officer in 1992.

Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan began writing poems at the age of fourteen. His first poem *Njan* (I) was published in *Sameekshan* edited by Govindan who had heartily encouraged him.

Since childhood Kadammanitta has been reading extensively. The works like

*Harinamakirthanam*, *Erupathinaluvritham*, *Adhyatma Ramayanam*, *Bhagavat Gita* and the biographies of Kunhikuttan Thampuram, Mannathu Padmanabhan, Mamman Mappila, A.K. Gopalan, Subrahmanian Potti, E.M.S.Nampoodirippad seemed to have enriched his sensibility in the childhood. In his childhood days at Kadammanitta village he conceived cultural features from puranas like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha* and the rituals like *Padayani*. *Padayani* is a folk performance done as part of the ritual worship in some of the *devi* temples in southern Kerala. It is dance and spectacle but is equally noted for the rhythmic songs that accompany the spectacle. Kadammanitta's early association with *Padayani* allows him to create a folk atmosphere in several of his poems, especially in the ones that seek to reconstruct and comment on contemporary culture in terms of *Padayani* metaphors. He himself asserted that the overwhelming impact of Ezhuthachan, the father of modern Malayalam language, the epics and the ritual art form *Padayani* on him is the major source of inspiration for him as a poet.



Sri Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan receiving Malayalam International Foundation Award New York 1984





Sri Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan with Bharath Murali

Kadammanitta's poems reflect his abiding concern for the poor and vulnerable sections of society. His extremely keen and sensitive understanding of the travails of the rural poor and the downtrodden has greatly influenced his poetry. His poems have provoked the readers to think differently and see things from a different perspective, a perspective that is formed by his all-encompassing vision, innate compassion and instinctive humaneness. His own rural background, coupled with a sensitive understanding of events and their settings, has left an indelible imprint of his personality on the rich and variegated literary canvas of Kerala. Though his poems are unarguably regional, yet, the great poet that he is, he has been able to transcend the barriers of language because the concerns he articulated and the characters that he created are indeed universal in their sweep and scope.

The Kadammanitta genre has carved out a niche for itself in the rich mosaic of Malayalam literature and in the modern literary scene of Kerala, Kadammanitta has a distinctive place. Kadammanitta democratized modern day Malayalam poetry. He did not deal

with superficial and peripheral matters in his poems it would have been antithetical to his very being, if he were to do so. As a poet he has indefatigably been dealing with the perhaps less exciting, but more humane themes dear to his heart—the concerns and considerations of the poor, the deprived, and the exploited which disturbed him. His poems saw the literary movement in Kerala in ferment state. Recognition came his way from far and wide. Today, Kadammanitta continues to provoke the readers' imagination with his unique style of poetry.

Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan is not only a poet but also a multi-faceted personality. He has been an avid, voracious and discerning reader who felt that the best of the world literature should reach the people of Kerala and the barrier of language should not stand in their way. His efforts have been monumental as best testified by the popular appreciation for his Malayalam translation of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Octavio Paz's *Sunstone* and the poems of Leopold Ce'dar Senghor, Vallejo, Lorca, Victor Hugo and Goya. He has also been a spirited leader of the *Purogamana Sahitya Sangham*, the literary movement which has been associated with progressive writing in Malayalam.



Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan is one who has become instrumental in effecting a radical change of sensibility in the Malayalam poetry of the post-Independence era. His name has become synonymous to the contemporary revelation and revolution of Kerala modern poetic scenario. He conceived the feelings of the people and expressed them to the various spheres of the society with its own intensity, credibility and subtle sensibility. He brought down Malayalam poetry to the thinking level of common folk from high intellectual level. The relevance of socio-cultural aspects could easily be traced in his writings.

He expressed his feelings and thoughts in a very powerful diction. He began the use of the local vocabulary which was once avoided and degraded by the so-called intellectuals in the society. The thirst to retain natural shades of the socio-cultural aspects of Kerala against the invading artificial modern cultural changes, the continuous struggle against oppression, folk myths, folk grammar, the human struggle for existence have been epitomized by his poetry. He mocks at and encounters the superficial cultural invasions that prevail in the modern times with his language of the village and celebrates the feelings and the urge for living of the common folk.

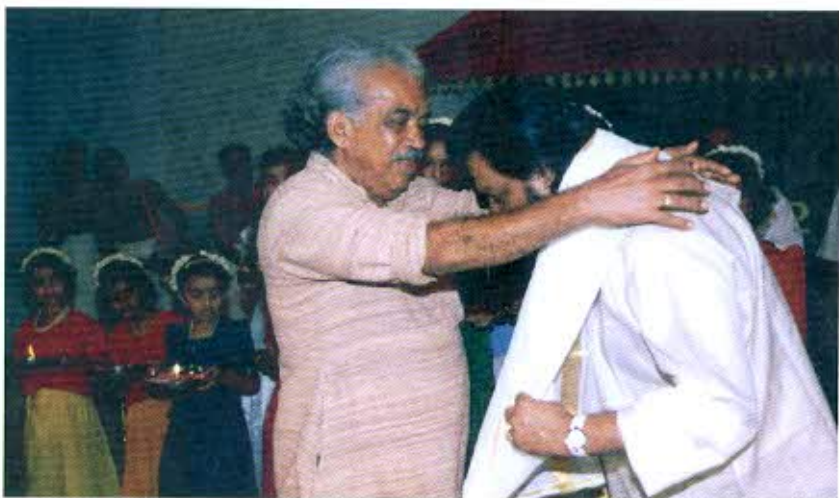
Kadammanitta's poetry firms the strong base of the Dravidian culture and folk literature. He himself pointed out many a time that for him poetry is the medium to revive himself and rejuvenate others.

He remains unique by placing himself as a poet among social workers and a social worker among poets in the socio-cultural history of Kerala.

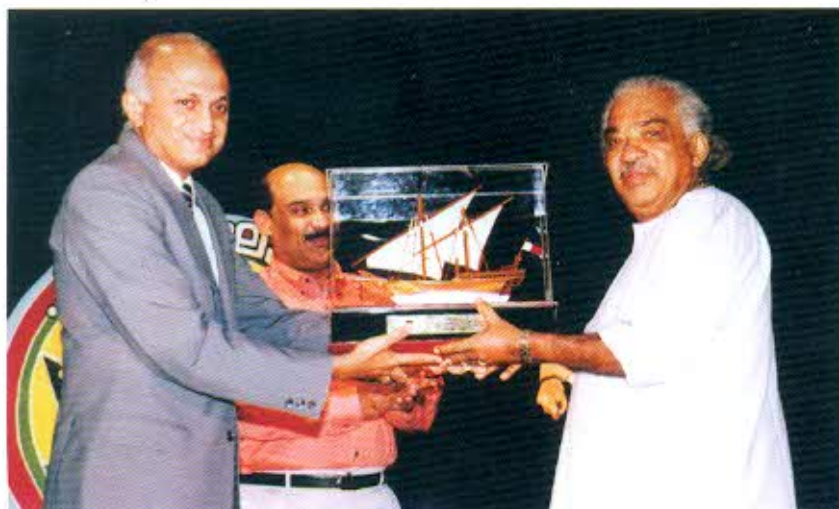
Many of his poems have been transformed into drama, Kathakali and *Cholkazhcha*. He has widely been translated into Tamil, Kannada, Hindi, English, French and German.

His works have inspired the new generation to a great extent with a message to become a real human being keeping away all artificial factors of the modern society. He expects the younger generation to conceive all the good characteristics of a real human being to serve the society and nation in its full sense and realization of pleasant life.

His creations give a clear dimension and direction of the art of poetry to the younger generation. He asserts that poetry should be a medium to correct the society or the poet, with his talent, should act as a corrective measure to the contemporary happenings of the society.



Sri Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan honoring the musician and singer Sri K.J. Yesudas



Sri Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan receiving *Samskara* Award from the Qatar Ambassador

### Awards

Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award	1982
Asan Prize: <i>Kadammanittayude Kavithakal</i>	1982
Abudhabi Malayalee Samajam Award (1 <sup>st</sup> Award)	1982
Malayalam Inter-National Foundation (New York) (1 <sup>st</sup> Award)	1984
Muscat Kerala Cultural Centre Award (1 <sup>st</sup> Award)	1986
Beharin Malayalee Samajam Award	1988
Asan Prize for Poetry (Madras) Award	1995
Bashceer Puraskaram (Pravasi, Doha)	2004
Mahakavi Pandalam Kerala Varma Award	2006
E. V. Krishna Pillai Award (Kunnathoor)	2006
Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for total literary contribution	2006

### A Chronology

1934	Born on 17 <sup>th</sup> March at Kadammanitta, Pathanamthitta District, Kerala
1958	BA in Political Science
1959	Joined Government of India's Postal Audit and Accounts Service as Lower Division Clerk in Madras
1992	Retired from service as the Accounts Officer
1994-2004	President, Kerala State Library Council (two terms)
1996-2001	Assembly Constituency (MLA) Member, Legislative Library Committee
2006	A sculpture park based on his poetic creations was inaugurated by Hon'ble Lok Sabha speaker Sri Somanatha Chatterji on 4 <sup>th</sup> October. This sculpture park is the only one of its kind in India. The project was jointly sponsored by Central and State Government.

At Present Chairman, Vasthuviedya Gurukulam (Kerala Government Institution, Department of Culture)  
Member, Kumaranasan Smaraka Samithi, Thonakkal

### A Select Bibliography

#### Collection of Poems

Kavitha  
Kadammanitta Kavithagal  
Kadammanitta Kavithagal (Collected Poems)  
Mazha Peyyunnu Maddalam Kottunnu  
Kadinjool Pottan  
Mishrathalam



## Prose Works

Vellivelicham (Essays)

Translations into Malayalam

*Sunstone* by Octavio Paz

*Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett

Poems by: Leopold Ce'dar Senghor

Lorka

Vallejo

Victor Hugo

Goya

## The Pyre

*I lean against the pyre  
Of dying longings  
To relish a beedi smoke  
Puffing away to the heart's  
Content, throwing up  
Smoke in circles,  
Mixed with nicotine;  
Longing to disappear  
In the ashen rim  
Of the encircling smoke.  
On the day I turned  
Restive to see the sky  
Littered with bones  
After the moon grieved to death,  
On the day I wandered  
On torrid wings  
Like a piece of dark cloud,  
On the day I lay awake, tired  
In the lap of centuries,  
Washed ashore by the sea,  
Its frilly waves parading  
Rhythmically,  
I pull out  
The fingers thrust into the eyes,  
The ribs stuck inside,  
I put to death  
My drowsy longings,  
Numbering a hundred,  
And me moved to laughter  
Out of grief.  
And here I lean against  
This pyre made of my life spirit,  
Fired by my lifeblood,  
Where perish my longings*

By the hundreds,  
And relish a beedi smoke.



*(Chita, 1966)*  
translated from Malayalam by  
P.P. Raveendran