

8 April 1995



Sahitya Akademi

meet the author

M. V. Venkataram





Receiving the Sahitya Akademi Award from Prof. U.R. Anantha Murthy.

Nearly six decades have elapsed in my literary journey; but I am not affected either by fatigue or despondency... I am always in search of the root cause which compelled me to lead this life in this planet and my writing has always been a reflection of this perennial quest. In other words, I am rediscovering myself through this craft.... The human predicament has always been the source of my inspiration. What all I have witnessed, heard, talked, tasted, touched and fantasized have become my works of art. My creations are brimming with the vibrations of my self....

M.V. Venkataram

"A gem of the Manikkodi group, that waxed strong in the Thirties, M.V. Venkataram achieved prestigious publication even in his teens. *Manikkodi*, published his first story 'The Sparrow' in its issue of November 1936. Venkataram

was then hardly sixteen. He has been a steady writer and six decades of creative writing have given us some very strong volumes," writes Dr. Prema Nandakumar, an eminent writer and critic in Tamil and English.

A contemporary of Pudumai-pithan, Na. Pichamurthy, Ku.Pa. Rajagopalan, T. Janakiraman and Karichan Kunju, Venkataram is best known for the psychological thrust that he has given for the modern Tamil novel and short story. Born in Kumbakonam in 1920, Venkataram belongs to the saurashtra community which had migrated from Saurashtra a few centuries ago and is now spread all over the Southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

Venkataram took his B.A. degree in 1940; whereas his literary career had already begun when he was a student at college.

Venkataram has been contributing short stories, novels, novelettes, one-act plays, poems and articles to almost all the literary magazines, popular journals and little journals. In 1948, he edited and published a literary Tamil monthly, **Theni** (The Bee) which was acclaimed as the beacon light to modern Tamil literature. He was also the honorary editor for the Tamil literary monthly **Paalam**. Besides his creative writings he did a lot of translations from English and Hindi.

Venkataram is known for his painstaking technique and determined adherence to his

pursuit. He utilised his talents on writing educational books also for students, than bow down to compromise his creative spirit. His first novel **Nithiya Kanni** though serialised in a Tamil Weekly in 1944, was published in book form in 1957. A lesser-known character in Mahabharata, daughter of Yayati, became the main character in M.V.V's imagination. Even after childbirth, she attains maidenhood because of the boon. She marries another person. Nevertheless the thoughts of earlier days and the resultant complexity are pictured graphically in this novel.

His contribution to Tamil short story is as great as that of his Novels. Seven volumes of his short stories are already published. He has dealt with almost all problems - physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual - that confront the humans in his short stories, one-act plays and novellas. His language is simple; his style is noted and admired for its poetic rhythm, musical melody and impeccable harmony.

He has written nearly 60

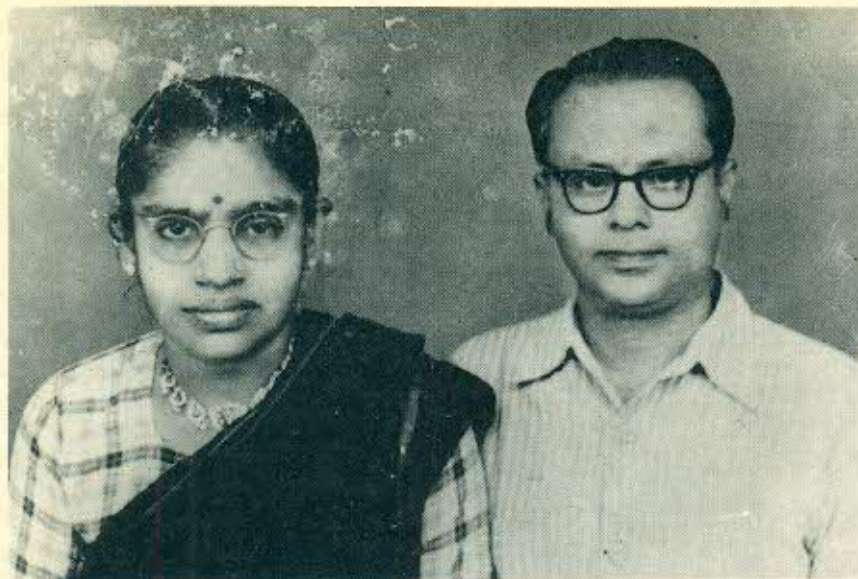
biographies of great men of India under the title **Nattukku Uzhaitha Nallavarkal**.

Venkataram's creative power has been proved time and again, in his novels and stories that have regional content and a catholic perspective, a novel like **Velvithee**, and novellas like **Naanum Unnodu**, and **Appavum Pillaiyum**, meticulously record the life of saurashtra community in Tamil Nadu. His novel, **Arumbu** (The Bud) is an experimental one and an indepth analysis of psychological process. Some of his themes relate to the mysterious, the others to wordly, the surreal and the mystical like **Uyirin Yathirai, Iruttu**.

Venkataram won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1993, for his novel **Kathugal**. This novel depicts the spiritual odyssey of Mali, given to a tormenting conflict between the cosmic Mother-of-Evil-principle and the mundane, but spiritually bent self symbolised by his ears that burst into an argument with each other. This fantastic experience leads him to a state where illusion becomes reality. His



In a Writers' Meet



With his wife

physical universe crumbles, poverty and disease assail him and he finds his escape only in a metaphysical surrender to his personal God who frees him from his tormentor. For its profound spiritual concern, its visionary sublimity, its intense portrait of human dilemma, its subtle employment of day-to-day speech, its rare use of fantasy and its innovative narrative technique, **Kathugal** is recognised as a great landmark in Indian fiction.

'My novel Kathugal is only a portion of my experiences in life. Normally, when I write I don't have any anxiety about the readers. But when I wrote this novel, I was doubtful whether the readers will accept it,' says Venkataram.

In addition to Sahitya Akademi Award 1993, he is also a recipient of the Siddha Suri Ratna Award (1982) the Lilly Devasigamani Literary Award (1991), and Santhome Award, Madras (1993). He also received the Pudumaipithan Sadhanai Veeru Award in 1994 followed by

the Thamizhpani Award in 1994.

Venkataram never had any perplexity for the ups and downs in life; not bothered about reputation or recognition; but went on creating classic literature even from his young age. His writings are the creation of a personal involvement and he would stand by them whatever be the responses from readers and critics.

M.V. Venkataram is a creative writer, translator, journalist and above all, a literary giant.

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Receiving the Lilly Devasigamani Literary Award

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A CHRONOLOGY

1920 Born in Kumbakonam

1936 First Story 'The Sparrow' published in *Manikodi*

1938 Marriage with Rukmani

1940 B.A. (Economics); Hindi Visharad

1944 First novel **Nithya Kanni** Serialised in the Tamil Weekly 'Shivaji'

1948 Edited Literary Tamil monthly 'Thenee'

1975 Special Editor, **Palam**, a Literary Magazine

1982 Siddha Suri Ratna Award

1991 Lilly Devasigamani Literary Award

1993 Received Sahitya Akademi Award for **Kathugal**

1993 Santhome Award, Madras

1994 P u d u m a i p p i t h a n Sadhanai Veeru Award

1994 Thamizhpani Award



Felicitations function organised by Delhi Tamil Sangam.