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Sahitya Akademi

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meet the author

Puthusseri Ramachandran





With Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai during a foreign trip

Puthusseri Ramachandran, an eminent Malayalam poet and scholar, was born on 23 September 1928 at Vallikunnam, a village near Kayamkulam of Alappuzha district in Kerala. His parents were Pokkatt Damodaran Pillai and Puthusseri Janaki Amma. By his early education in Sanskrit school at Vallikunnam, Puthusseri had received the title of Sastri. During the secondary education at Pope Pius XI English High School, Kattanam near Kayamkulam, he was very active in students movement as the President of Middle Travancore Committee of Students' Congress. His brilliant educational career was interrupted

by expulsions and incarcerations on account of his radical political activism.

His college education was started at Sree Narayana College, Kollam where he was involved in students struggle as the leader of the Students' Federation and imprisoned. He took his B.A.(Hons) Degree in Malayalam language and literature from University College, Thiruvananthapuram with first class and first rank in the university. His Ph.D was in linguistics in 1970 from the same university.

He started his career as a lecturer at Sree Narayana College, Kollam in 1957. Also he served as a



Sharing a light moment with Vaikom Muhammad Basheer



With Sukumar Azhikode in a Literary Meet

lecturer in the Department of Malayalam at the University of Kerala in 1969. After retirement as Professor of Malayalam and Dean of Oriental Faculty in 1988, Puthusseri became the Honorary Director of International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala.

Puthusseri Ramachandran was a member of the Syndicate of the University of Kerala and was the General Secretary of First World Conference on Malayalam language and Kerala Culture organized by the University of Kerala in 1977. He was the Organizing Secretary of the First All India Conference on Dravidian Linguistics which led to the formation of Dravidian Linguistics Association (DLA). He is one of the founder Directors of International School of Dravidian Linguistics (ISDL) in Thiruvananthapuram and continues as Honorary Visiting Professor. He is the President of Place Name Society and the Director of Asian African and Latin American Studies.

Started as a staunch freedom fighter and freedom singer during student days, Puthusseri Ramachandran emerged as a major poet of post-independence period.

His first poem *Onnanthyakkuttam* was published in 1944. The themes of his early works were evolved from the experience developed by the life and struggle of his surroundings. Most of his early poems were written in the background of freedom struggle. The later evolutions of his poetry occurred in the period of his involvement in revolutionary politics. The urges and dreams of the marginalized subaltern classes find a memorable expression in his poems. In the period known as Pink Decade (1945-1955) in Malayalam Poetry, young poets inspired by revolutionary ideology of Marxism were active and Puthusseri was in the forefront. In the later period he was the critical insider to the left politics and his poems *Thee Peyyaruthe Mazhamukile*, *Moongayum Pananmarum* etc. reflect this sentiment. The wide range of his poetic forms, his satirical barbs on decadent elements in society, the soaring lyrical imagination, protest against suppression, against liberties, above all his clarion call to combine the humanist values of Indian heritage with the emancipatory western ideals - all these have



At a discussion with M.T. Vasudevan Nair

made him a powerful cultural icon in contemporary Malayalam poetry.

As a translator of poems from other languages like English, Sanskrit and Tamil, his contributions are unique in many respects. Sahitya Akademi has recognized his contribution by giving him the national prize for translation. In 2009, Kerala Sahitya Akademi conferred him with the Fellowship, the most distinguished honour of the Akademi.

After securing his own place in Malayalam poetry in the sixties of the twentieth century, Puthusseri Ramachandran devoted his

endeavours to the in-depth study of the ancient and medieval Malayalam language and ancient history of Kerala. As a linguist of international reputation, he has made significant contribution to linguistic studies, place name studies and epigraphical studies in Malayalam. He had first published *Yuddhakanda* of *Kannassa Ramayana*, copied from the palm-leaf text and prepared a critical edition with linguistic and sociological study. Later he published the complete text of *Kannassa Ramayana*, the first complete Ramayana in Malayalam



With Chandrashekhara Kambar



Receiving Translation Prize of Sahitya Akademi from Gopichand Narang

with scholarly notes and interpretations. Moreover, he had also published the critical edition of *Bhasha Bhagavad Gita* by Madhavan, one of the Kannassa trios. Puthusseri's most important scholarly book may be his herculean work entitled *Kerala Charitrathinte Adisthana Rekhakal* (the basic documents of the History of Kerala). This monumental volume includes the translation of old Malayalam inscriptions into modern Malayalam with the comments on their linguistic and historical commentary.

Puthusseri has been untiringly trying his best in the public sphere for the due recognition of Malayalam language and literature

and their upliftment. On the basis of an elaborate document prepared and submitted by the Government of Kerala with his guidance and leadership, Malayalam was recognized as a classical language by the Government of India in 2013. He took the initiative in organizing the first World Malayalam Conference in 1977 in Thiruvananthapuram.

In recognition of his contribution to the studies on ancient and medieval Malayalam language and literature, Sahitya Akademi has selected Puthusseri for its Bhasha Samman for the year 2011.

Now at the age of 86, Puthusseri is living in Thiruvananthapuram with active involvement in literary and cultural activities.



Along with Ayyappa Paniker, O.N.V. Kurup, S. Guptan Nair, Sugathakumari etc.

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Malayalam:

Poetry:

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- Aavunnathra Uchchathil, 1954
- Puthiyakollanum Puthiyoralayam, 1960
- Sakthipooja, 1965
- Akalumthorum, 1970
- Agnaye Swaha, 1988
- Puthusseri Ramachandrante Kavithakal (Selected Poems), 1988
- Ente Swathanrya Samara Kavithakal (Poems on Indian Freedom Struggle), 1998
- Utsavabali, 1998
- Ee Veetil Aarumillo, 2003
- Puthusserikkavithakal (Complete poetical works), 2008

Prose:

- Ee Mannil Evarodoppam (Memoirs), 2011
- Theranjedutha Prabhandangal (Selected Essays), 2012

Translations:

- Medra (Greek Tragedy by Euripides), 1965
- African Kavithakal (33 poems from 13 African Countries), 1989
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Critical Editions:

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- Kannassa Ramayanam, Sundarakandan, 1980
- Kannassa Ramayanam, Kishkindakandan, 1984
- Pracheena Malayalam, (Collection of Inscriptions), 1978
- Kerala Panineeyam (Reprint of the first edition of Malayalam grammar with critical introduction), 1989
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- Bhasha Bhagavath Gita - (Complete text with critical edition and commentary), 2002
- Kannassa Ramayanam - (Complete text with critical edition and commentary), 2013

Research Work:

- Kerala Charithrathinte Adistana Rekhakal (Extensive Studies on Early Malayalam Inscriptions), 2007

English:

- Language of Middle Malayalam, 1972
- Perspectives in Place Name Studies (Editor), 1987
- Ellis on Malayalam Language (Editor), 2003

Festschrift on Dr. Puthusseri Ramachandran:

- Kavitha Kaelathinte Sakshi, 1998
- Studies in Dravidian Place Names, 1993

Works Translated:

- Puthusseri ki Kavitha (Hindi), 2001
- His poems were translated into Hindi, English and Tamil published in various journals.

Awards:

- 1998 Mahakavi Muloor Award
- 1998 Mahakavi P. Kunhiraman Nair Award
- 1998 Malayali Association Award, Houston
- 1998 All India Radio National Award
- 1999 Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for total contribution
- 2000 Mahakavi Ulloor Award
- 2000 Dubai Kairali Kalakendram Award
- 2001 Ramapurathu Warriar Award
- 2002 A. P. Kalakkad Award
- 2003 Kannassa Smaraka Award
- 2004 P. T. Bhaskara Panicker Memorial INDIS Award
- 2005 Sahitya Kalanidhi (Kerala Hindi Prachar Sabha)
- 2005 Translation Prize, Sahitya Akademi
- 2006 Abudhabi Sakthi Award
- 2006 T. A. Majeed Award
- 2008 K. Damadaran Award,
- 2008 N. V. Krishna Warriar Puraskaram
- 2008 Mahakavi Vallathol Award
- 2008 Asan Award (Asan Memorial Association, Chennai)
- 2009 Fellowship, Kerala Sahitya Akademi
- 2012 Yessenin Award, Russia
- 2014 K. C. Pillai Award, Saudi Arabia
- 2014 Bhasha Samman, Sahitya Akademi

Universities Visited Abroad For Academic Programmes

- Moscow University, USSR (3 months on Faculty Exchange Programme, 1979)
- University of Texas, Austin (1983, 1998)
- Pennsylvania University (1983)
- Chicago University (1983)
- Cologne University, Germany (1985)