This is the story of an adolescent growing into adulthood and discovering the complexities of human relationships, even as he is initiated into love, sex and passion.

Ramaseshan comes from an ordinary middle-class family with its usual aspirations of a good education and job for their son. When he gets into engineering college, his life seems to be on the right track.

Once in college, Ramaseshan feels liberated from the rules he has so far had to obey. He has an affair with Mala, the sister of a classmate, Rao. Mala proves to be a handful and the young lovers soon part ways.

Angered by Ramaseshan's interest in Mala, her mother Mrs Rao decides to teach him a lesson. She seduces him and when he falls for it, gives him a severe scolding and humiliates him.

Another classmate, Murthy, Rao's closest friend, alerts Ramaseshan to the fact that Mrs Rao is having an affair with a film producer called VSV.

Ramaseshan then befriends another girl in the college called Prema, a relative plain Jane, from a middleclass background. Meanwhile he visits an old family friend, a contemporary of his mother, who has been deserted by her husband. A warm and genuinely loving relationship develops between her and Ramaseshan, a throwback to his childhood days, eventually assuming sexual overtones, but in the end he stops seeing her.

The novel ends with the young man moving on from the sexual curiosity of a teenager to a deeper understanding of love and responsibility. I, Ramaseshan is about the games people play and the awakening of a young mind.
This is the work of a young writer still evolving into the major literary force he was expected to become - before a drowning accident in 1987 snatched him away when he was barely 45. The novel explores the psyche of several individuals playing superficial roles in their daily encounters with life in a largely metropolitan setting. Most of them are prisoners of their images or rather the images they wish to project to the world. Insecurity and their sense of alienation prevent them from realising their potential as students, lovers, parents, company executives. Aadhavan juxtaposes characters from very different backgrounds and lets the reader listen to the inner voices of these diverse personalities while they interact with one another and when they are apart. The voices are sometimes strident, at other times gentle, but they keep up a constant dialogue with the reader. Despite all the introspection and self-examination of its characters, Paper Flowers is not a grim tale but one laced with humour and self-deprecation. An outstanding representative of the emerging Tamil fiction of the 1970s.
Star-Crossed is a novel about the world of Tamil cinema minus the glamour. It takes a keen look at the lives of filmmakers, technicians, producers and actors. Turning the spotlight on the fringes of the entertainment world, Ashokamitran exposes the daily trials and tribulations of a cast of character none too familiar to those who equate the world of celluloid with the proverbial dream factory.

The story revolves around the several minor cogs in the wheels that make film production in the studios of Madras go round. An elaborate, albeit chaotic, machinery consisting of people, services and equipment, goes into action everyday, based on a flimsy foundation of ad hoc financing and superstitions peculiar to the industry. The whole situation is a tragicomedy of people with dreams in their eyes and hearts, and their manipulation by the forces of commerce and greed.

The novel starts with Natarajan, a production manager in a Kodambakkam studio, organising a team of people for a stint of outdoor shooting in the early hours of a typical Madras morning. Reddiar and Rama Iyengar, film producers both, Sampat, an errand boy; Rajgopal, a wannabe manager of sorts; Chitti, an editor's assistant; Manickaraj, a supplier of stock shots to film-makers and Somanathan, an aspiring screenplay writer are among several bit players whose ordinary lives provide a stark contrast from the magic they help create on screen.

The story abounds in action and we see people running about doing their jobs, but, as the novel proceeds, we realise all the sound and fury signify nothing in the lives of so many that depend on the film industry for their livelihood. We move from one climax to the next, one anticlimax to another. To quote one of the characters in the novel, "There are no permanent or temporary jobs in cinema. Every job is permanent. And temporary!" The hype, the uncertainties and the personality cult that surround Indian cinema are brought to life in this realistic tale laced with humour and compassion.

The original Tamil title, Karainda Nizhalgal, conveys the tragedy and uncertainty inherent in the lives of these providers of mass entertainment, whose fortunes rise and fall or sink altogether with the making of a film. Simply told, the novel provides poignant expression to Ashokamitran's empathy for his flesh and blood characters, based no doubt on his own experience in the film world.
Ashokamitran’s Today - translated from his Tamil novel Indru is an avant garde departure from traditional forms of writing. The novel strings together a number of genres such as narrative fiction, poetry, lectures and a newspaper interview to produce a rare amalgam of fiction and recent history.

The condition of freedom fighters in free India, social evils like dowry, corruption and crass commercialism, institutions like marriage and politics are highlighted as problems that occupy centre stage today. The period chosen for such delineation is immediately before and after the imposition of a national emergency by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Anger, persecution, lack of compassion and tolerance find their counterpoint in a father figure perhaps a veiled reference to the Father of the Nation whose dreams lie shattered in the present.

Today is also for all time. Its concerns are universal, its people are of flesh and blood. It raises serious questions about the validity of the value systems governing our lives increasingly complex world. It is without doubt a trailblazer in post modern Tamil literature.
The Temple Elephant

Dr P S Sri


Pages: 104

Rs. 100

The Temple Elephant is a novel meant for all those with a young heart, a vivid imagination and a thirst for divine love.

Narrated from the viewpoint of an elephant, it may be called a bestiary with a socio-political and spiritual message. The novel opens with an eloquent description of an ancient South Indian temple in which the aged elephant, Kesavan, is serving God. As he ambles along the streets of a temple town with the silver image of Krishna on his back, Kesavan recalls the events of his past life. His turbulent youth and manhood in the jungle, his capture in a keddah operation, his sufferings at the hands of his tormentors, his revenge, and finally his willing submission to the Maharishi, his guru, who not only saves him from slavery and death, but also shows him a path of love and self-surrender that eventually brings him to serve in an ancient temple.

Set against the backdrop of the British Raj, the novel takes its readers on an odyssey from the beautiful jungles of South India through the opulence of palace life to the serene simplicity of an ashram.
Set amid days long gone, the story centres around the Arasur family. Grown wealthy from the tobacco trade, the family earn the envy of the king. But are the two sons of the Arasur family worthy heirs of their father’s mantle? Swaminathan, an erstwhile Vedic scholar loses his mind and has a sexual relationship with a woman who lived three hundred years before him, and Sankaran who looks after the family business battles his erotic urges. It is only in tragic circumstances that Fate reveals who will carry on the line…

Abounding in unforgettable characters such as Subbamma who echoes the disasters to come, Swaminathan’s ghostly lover—a woman whose spirit wanders restlessly across time—Kitta Ayyan, who converts to Christianity, Vaithy who drowns his ego in onion sambar, his wife Gomati, the multi-talented Kottakudi dasi—The Ghosts of Arasur reminds us that reality is often stranger than fiction.

About the author : Era. Murukan (Murugan Ramasami) is a noted novelist, short story writer, poet, columnist and translator from Malayalam besides being a writer on information technology in Tamil. He is the recipient of various awards including the prestigious ‘Katha’ and ‘Ilakkiya Chintanai’ for literature.
Lizzy’s family is caught in a bind. Once the first family of the village, they now have nothing but their ‘respectability’ to fall back on. As members of other castes begin to overtake them in wealth and position, the menfolk of Lizzy’s family feel threatened. Change comes, but at the cost of many innocent lives.

Lizzy’s Legacy was published in Tamil in 1964 as Putham Veedu. It was the author’s first novel.
Indira Parthasarathy calls Krishna a metaphor that ‘fulfils all the dark and lurking desires in our deep Unconscious and represents the collective vision of the community as a whole.’ In his view Krishna cannot be judged by the ‘moral yardstick’ set for others.

Krishna’s magical charm has always appealed to people of all generations. People from different lifestyles have interpreted his ideologies based on their values. He ‘exists in the imagination of the Indian people as the fountainhead of eternal energy, pranks and wisdom’. His godfather-like relationship with the Pandavas, his political strategies and his solutions to various problems continue to impress us even in the twenty-first century.

Narada, the narrator of the novel, begins the story with Jara the hunter shooting an arrow at Krishna’s feet in the aftermath of the Kurukshetra war. Narada’s witticisms enhance the spirit of the story. He unfolds to us the life of Krishna as revealed to Jara by Krishna himself. The pranks young Krishna played on the gopikas, his battle with various evil forces, his role in the lives of the Pandavas and the part he played in the Kurukshetra war—all these form interesting episodes in Krishna’s life.

Indira Parthasarathy’s Krishna Krishna is more than the the lord’s story as told in the Harivamsam, Sri Bhagavatam, Vishnu Purana and the Mahabharata. Here he is the hero, ‘the central figure around whom things happen’—unlike the Krishna of the epics.

The novel gives us the essence of the Krishnavatara, revealing the surpassing love and compassion with which Krishna blesses all living things. The tale is told in a contemporary idiom, sparkling with references to events and personalities across aeons.
Wings in the Void gives the reader a peep into the Delhi of the 1960s, a city suffering the bitter after-taste of the sweet victory of Independence. The Mahatma’s ideals have been finally buried; corruption, venality and platitudes rule, not only the capital’s corridors of power, but also the lives of the individuals who live in it.

Among the most significant of Indira Parthasarathy’s novels, Wings in the Void explores the wheeling and dealing, ambition and greed that rule the lives of countless upwardly mobile Indians caught up in the intrigues of the political and diplomatic circles of Delhi. Into this complex world arrives Kasturi, a young intellectual in the making from a small town in Tamil Nadu, in search of wealth, success and personal freedom. The novel is an account of his mental and emotional evolution. What Kasturi achieves - and loses in the process - mirrors the experiences of many young modern urban Indians in their struggle for a better life.
Indira Parthasarathy is a well known Indian playwright, short story writer and novelist writing in Tamil. He has received several honours for his writing, including the Sangeet Natak Akademi and Sahitya Akademi awards and the prestigious Saraswati Samman.

Mukundan can't wait to leave Tamil Nadu for New Delhi. He is search of a job and a new life. He gets both, though not in the way he expects. Chance places him as a cook in the house of Mishra, a political kingmaker, who recognises the young man’s leadership potential. Mukundan is groomed for political success by Mishra and the seductive Sarla whose raw ambition both awes and repulses him. And when a political denouement is imminent, Mukundan realises that there is room at the top only for one of them.

Set in New Delhi at the height of Indira Gandhi’s reign, Into this Heaven of Freedom (Swatantra Bhoomi) captures the intrigue, suspense, manoeuvring and one-upmanship that characterise politics.
Indira Parthasarathy is at his sardonic best while dissecting the hypocrisies of Indian society. In this novel he lays bare the double standards of fiercely competitive men in the business world and their women forced to live in their shadows. Humour and compassion soften the blow and the reader is left with empathy for each of the characters—the ambitious company executive Arun, his talented wife imprisoned in his social circle, the ‘liberated’ Radhika with her own share of adversity, and the physically challenged artist-intellectual Damodaran. The scene of the action is New Delhi, but it could be anywhere.
Bound by a sense of filial duty, Parasu, the eldest son of Jagannathan, gives up his dreams of higher studies and settles down to a safe and secure government job. His younger brother Viswam knows little of his inner struggle. Viswam also dreams big and pities Parasu for his lack of ambition while envying him his lovely wife, but when reality hits him, Viswam is forced into a deeper understanding of the way we want life to be and the way it really is.

Surrendered Dreams is a coming-of-age story, sensitively and sympathetically written.

About the author Indumathi made a substantial impact on readers of Tamil fiction with her serialised novel Tharaiyil Irangum Vimanangal back in the 1970s. Known for her bold, occasionally, controversial themes, she began her writing career at the age of 16. Her articles and stories were published in Tamil magazines like Jnana Ratham, Ananda Vikatan and Kumudam.
This story, written in the 1960s by Jayakanthan, presents the urban working class of the south Indian city of Chennai, then known as Madras, with a great deal of sympathy and vigour.

It is the story of Thangam, a construction worker, and her son Chitti. Thangam has been sexually exploited as a very young girl, and deserted when found to be pregnant. After the birth of her son, life has been tough, and she has got by with the help of an elderly woman called Annamma, popularly known as Aappakkara Ayah. Chitti has had a fairly stable childhood because of the care of these two women.

Over the years, Chitti has grown possessive of his mother, whom he has never had to share with anyone else. Like the other boys of the slum they live in, Chitti too has been drifting aimlessly, picking up bad habits through childhood and adolescence, before he is rescued by a father-figure who has mentored many a young man in the neighbourhood. Thondar Doraikannu, who respected and dearly loved his own mother, teaches Chitti some of the more important values of a life well lived, and tries to help him love Thangam unconditionally.

Into this exclusive relationship of mother and son comes Manikkam, a roadside astrologer who sits near the site where Thangam works. A friendship develops between the gentle Manikkam and Thangam, which later deepens into love. Thangam becomes pregnant again, but this time she is determined to marry the father. However she has reckoned without Chitti’s intense disapproval of her ‘immoral’ ways.

Angered by what he regards as his mother’s betrayal of him, Chitti leaves home and takes up with a group of boys who belong to the shady world of petty crime, drinking and smoking. He refuses to return home and finally Manikkam goes away, as he feels he is the person who has come between mother and son.

Thangam, by now in an advanced state of pregnancy, is again alone. She becomes depressed and dies soon after the baby, a girl, is born, but not before she makes Chitti accept responsibility for his baby sister.

Chitti finds a new reason to live and comes back to his old home as a responsible elder brother determined to give his sister the best possible start in life.
Once an Actress is about an intense interplay of emotions in a relationship punctuated by intolerance, separation and eventual reunion. An essentially cerebral columnist, Ranga is a sensitive person struggling to overcome his feudal upbringing. For an actress brought up on mainstream theatre, Kalyani is a connoisseur of arts of uncommon maturity. Ranga adores Kalyani but seeks constant evidence of her love for him. Kalyani finds her life’s meaning in her involvement with Ranga. Love for her is sincerity, honesty and compassion, not its overt demonstration. This unsettles Ranga. A helpless victim of his chauvinistic pettiness with its thin veneer of intellectual gloss, Ranga seeks and obtains separation from Kalyani. The eventual reunion with a now disabled Kalyani is a moving denouement.

Kalyani is perhaps the most sensitive woman character created by Jayakanthan. The novel offers rare insights into the inner reaches of the human mind. It is a perceptive portrayal of the low-intensity conflict between a sentimental man and a self-sufficient woman.
The eeriness of Jayakanthan's two novellas in this volume is overwhelming and disturbing. The protagonists are helpless victims of psychological maladies. Their suppressed libido and Oedipus complex are areas Tamil writers generally dared not enter - at any rate in the 1960s, when they were written.

The brilliant introvert Rajaraman is the quintessential good boy. The play of circumstances kindles oedipal fancies in him. The incandescent consummation with Sarada Mami is a catharsis. A rishi is born looking at the world with a disdain at once benignly distant and compellingly personal.

Well-educated and well-employed Janaki lives under the protective cover of her paranoid, possessive, puritanical mother. Her healthy friendship with a collegemate of yesteryear promises liberation. Her short-lived taste of freedom is stamped out and she is sucked back into her mother's bizarre, overwhelming orbit.

The success of Jayakanthan lies in evoking in the reader a profound empathy with the tragically deviant characters of the two stories.
'It’s about time,' announced Shalu’s mother one fine day. Little did the Sundaresan family realise when they jumped on the matrimonial bandwagon that they were in for the ride of their lives. Sundaresan becomes the quintessential ‘girl’s father’, nosing out prospective bridegrooms with the flair of a bloodhound. Parvati learns that for all her culinary prowess, the way to the ‘boy’s party’s’ heart is not through the stomach. Shalu, the bride-to-be, discovers that to be true to who you are is the hardest thing when ‘Reject’ is repeatedly stamped on you.

Will Shalu’s prince come along?

The TamBrahm Bride is a light-hearted journey through the dizzying world of south Indian arranged marriages predominantly populated by astrologers, matchmakers and NRI grooms. Rivettingly told, the story may be set in the Indian context, but has a universal appeal that echoes the sentiments of a global audience.

About the author Kausalya Saptharishi is a US-based freelance journalist whose byline has appeared in varied American and Indian publications including The Washington Times, Hinduism Today and India Abroad. This is her debut novel.
Neela Padmanabhan is a prolific writer in both Tamil and Malayalam. He has no less than eleven novels, six short story collections, a volume of poems and a collection of essays to his credit.

Through the life of Anantan Nair—the humble hero of this novel—we experience the tragedy of the ancient regime of princely India and traditional Kerala society, caught in a whirl of vulgar modernisation. As the rigid hierarchical social order of the Nairs, with the easy virtues of their matriarchal tribalism and the slow pace of an ambitionless life crumbles, Anantan Nair finds himself questioning his life’s worth as a husband, father and man.

In this beautiful novel, Neela Padmanabhan has captured the soul of Trivandrum and laid it bare for us to see.
Chelliah is a proud young lad who overcomes a troubled childhood amidst rural deprivation through self belief. Bullied at school and at home, surviving his mother’s anxiety and lack of confidence in him, he finds a role model in auto mechanic Ramu. His work takes him to the big city, where he finds friendship and betrayal, love and loss, challenges and triumph. Sa Kandasami’s tender story climaxes in Chelliah’s election as an office bearer in a workers’ union.

About the author Santhappa Devar Kandasamy, popularly known as Sa Kandasamy, is a noted author, documentary film maker, director and producer. He won the Sahitya Akademi award, India’s highest literary honour, in 1998, for his novel Visaranai Commission.
Kaveri’s Children is a collection of short stories based in early 20th century rural Tamil Nadu, written by Shankar Ram (real name T L Natesan or Natesiah), who wrote in both Tamil and English. They reflect the author’s love of his people and his region, the Tanjavur district, watered and nourished by the river Kaveri. These stories have been edited by Prof. William Jackson, Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, USA, famous for his books on the great composer of Carnatic music, Tyagaraja, e.g., Tyagaraja: Life and Lyrics, (1991) and Tyagaraja and the Renewal of Tradition: Translations and Reflections (1994), and other saint composers of south India like Purandaradasa, Annamacharya and Kanakadasa.

The short stories in this collection are unique tales of everyday life, ‘intriguing, psychologically believable and well-crafted, with shrewd knowledge of people and the ways of the world.’ In the words of Prof. Jackson, ‘The soul’s journey itself is also the soul’s homeland, and in the soulful stories of Shankar Ram we learn about our humanity and the earth, our journey-filled home.’
Bridges is a saga of three generations of upper caste Tamil women. The novel gives the reader rare glimpses into customs and traditions typical of each period it covers - with an unjaundiced eye, great attention to detail, compassion and humour.

The women in Bridges - the central figures in the novel - are quite often strong characters. Even the orthodox widow of the early part of the 20th century, with her blind acceptance of hidebound belief systems and rituals, emerges as a personality in her own right, a sense of duty and devotion to family underlying her every action. Each succeeding generation of women is stronger and more emancipated than the previous one.

The story spans nearly a century and although its women have different life experiences, the leitmotif is the strength that runs through all of them, making each react with courage and dignity to whatever life offers. The men too provide an interesting mix of characters, each a product of his time and milieu. In the process of telling this compelling family history, Sivasankari succeeds in capturing the many nuances of the lifestyles of the times.
Giridhar and Durga live a picture-perfect life until Giridhar is sent to the U.K. on work. Durga endures the separation but becomes increasingly worried as letters from Giridhar dry up. Unwilling to admit to her family and children that there is no news from her husband, Durga battles her fears alone. However, a final revelation sets her on a journey she had never thought she would undertake. A journey for truth.
These eighteen stories are a tribute to extraordinary India. The simple language and taut style enhance the uniqueness of every character. Ganesh is caught in a tug of war between his wife and his mother and decides that it is Time to Act. Kesavan who earns his livelihood by burying unclaimed bodies wonders what will happen to him when he dies. This story, Corpse Kesavan, was made into a short film by the students of the Manipal Institute of Communication and it won them the “Article 19 Best Film Award” in 2006.

Robin Hood shows how retirement can turn the best of men into pickpockets. In Between You and Me Dakshabehn’s husband is delighted when she conceives after many years of marriage but what effect will this news have on the narrator, such an intrinsic part of their lives? Lady Macbeth is about confrontation in marriage—a confrontation that continues even when the wife is dead.

These are some of the characters who give life and colour to this collection of short stories which includes prize winners in the Commonwealth Short Story Competition in 2001, 2002 and 2003.

Usha Rajagopalan is a poet and novelist. This is her first collection of short stories.
A Home in the Sky
Vaasanthi
ISBN : 978 - 81- 8368 - 351-7
Pages : 240
Rs. 200

A Home in the Sky is the story of the yearnings of an innocent child Raju, brutalised by a repressed, self-righteous father Sabhesan, who wallows in the misery of his self-imposed, rigid orthodoxy. Raju's angelic mother Lalita and adoring elder cousin Meenu - a fiery city-bred girl on the verge of adulthood - are the child's only hope, but they cannot save him from the cruelties of his life.

On a visit to the village, Meenu decides to stay on to study in a nearby college, drawn to the aunt she loves and admires and the cousin she feels she must protect. The handsome young lecturer Hariharan is a distraction she fails to combat, while his disabled sister poses a fresh challenge. The nascent romance between her and Hariharan soon runs into trouble.

Tragedy breaks the hitherto unrepentant Sabhesan and for the first time Meenu begins to understand Lalita's patience with her autocratic husband. And love blossoms once again in her own life.
At the Cusp of Ages
Vaasanthi
ISBN : 978 - 81- 8368 - 831-4
Pages : 232
Rs. 200

Translated by N Kalyan Raman

At the Cusp of Ages is a story of women at a crossroads—where millennia meet and disperse. It is a story of women—abject, intimidated, absurd and betrayed. It is also about women who refuse to accept male domination as an inevitable way of life. It is about the fragility of our ‘secular’ fabric, about how at times of crisis even those we believe we love are suddenly suspect in our eyes.

In this often disturbing novel that nevertheless ends on a note of some hope, three generations of women express their inmost thoughts to the reader. The first is Meenakshi who stoically, even shamelessly, accepts the infidelity of her husband and her son. The next generation is represented by Carla who constantly seeks to submerge her Europeanness in her growing Indianess, until one day she walks away.

Gayatri, Shakeela and Valli, caught in political and personal maelstroms, struggle to find their identities in a mindless society that treats them as worse than pawns. They find strength in friendship and the hope, however timid, that love can blossom again. Vaasanthi probes our psyches with ferocious honesty and delicate understanding.
By the Sea
Vanna Nilavan
ISBN : 978-81-8368-830-7
Pages : 112
Rs. 100

Translated by G. Geetha

By the Sea is no quickie—to be read once and forgotten. It is a serious novel, aesthetically faithful to its location by the seaside and the people who populate it. Its characters are real flesh and blood characters, fisherfolk who live by and with nature—until technology takes over their lives. Tradition versus survival is the new dilemma before a community which has for millennia risked lives in pursuit of its daily catch of fish. It’s a story of love and lust, faith and friendship, relationships tested by progress and greed.

Philomi and Samidas, Cruz Michael and the sea, Mariammmai and the school teacher Sebasti and Ranji—these are unforgettable characters who make By the Sea a memorable novel.
Vijay Raghavan has been a professional journalist for three and a half decades and has worked in newspapers across the four metropolises of Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta and Chennai.

Twice Born is the tale of a man who embarks upon the conquest of unhappiness; and then on the conquest of happiness. On the way, he has to clear up the mess in his head created by a psychologically castrating marriage, a beloved son who becomes a Naxalitere volutionary and tortured by the police. He is helped on his voyage of rediscovering himself by a deus ex machina in the form of Dr Hekyll and Mr Jyde, two splinters of his splintered self.

...an amazing novel that really digs into the psychological horrors of the mind with intricate detail. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.'
Blood Ties is a harrowing tale of domestic violence and terror. Set in a small town in rural Tamil Nadu, it deals with a joint family of three brothers sternly presided over by their widowed mother. The story is narrated largely through the bewildered eyes of six-year-old Thambi. Intertwined with graphic accounts of blood-letting are scenes of the everyday life of the children, their little games and pranks—and the angelic ministrations of Thambi’s elder sister. Through this largely autobiographical story, related in a non-judgemental, compassionate, sometimes humorous style, poet and illustrator Yuma Vasuki—real name D Marimuthu—paints vivid word pictures and beguiles you into a surreal world of tragedy and redemption.
Inauspicious Times
Appadurai Muttulingam
ISBN : 978-81-8368-998-4
Pages : 144
Rs. 150

In this collection of delicately crafted, poignant, often charmingly funny stories, Appadurai Muttulingam summons from the sweep of global forces the intimate realities of human relationships. From Kandahar to Nairobi, from the hills of Pakistan to the freeways of the Eastern Seaboard, Muttulingam’s characters grapple with loss, change, loyalty, and conscience. In Sudan, a young engineer from Jaffna confronts government authorities to help an elderly woman whose privations have touched him.

In Afghanistan, a grieving old man, a young woman, and her lover are caught in a life and death predicament ruled by accident and fortune. In New England, a loving immigrant father reflects on his struggles in America and the growing gulf that separates him and his daughter. Muttulingam probes the sorrows and comical absurdities of human experience in these and other stories of wit, beauty, and invention.
In this collection of short stories, Indira Parthasarathy stays true to form, portraying realistic slices of life with humour and sympathy. His characters, whether dying father, estranged son, autorickshaw driver, retired government servant or faithful wife are lifted from everyday milieus. In the usual, the author finds the unusual, prompting the reader to reflect on the extent to which our seemingly everyday experiences affect the tenor of our lives.

High Noon was first published in Tamil in 1968 as Utchi Veyil. It was made into a film, Marupakkam, by Sethu Madhavan and won the Swarna Kamal Award 1990.
Jayakanthan’s novellas Beneath the Banyan Tree and The Saint and the Garland explore the themes of desire and renunciation. Does an ascetic he wrestle with the desires of the flesh which conflict with the yearnings of the soul? Can a person be moulded into a swami or does he have to hear the divine call? And what of those left behind? Aren’t marriage and birth a natural and sacred progression of life?

Jayakanthan does not flinch from addressing and sometimes attacking the mores and traditions of society. In the process, he exposes the sensitive hearts that lie beneath the ritual facades.
The Temple Elephant is a novel meant for all those with a young heart, a vivid imagination and a thirst for divine love.

Narrated from the viewpoint of an elephant, it may be called a bestiary with a socio-political and spiritual message. The novel opens with an eloquent description of an ancient South Indian temple in which the aged elephant, Kesavan, is serving God. As he ambles along the streets of a temple town with the silver image of Krishna on his back, Kesavan recalls the events of his past life. His turbulent youth and manhood in the jungle, his capture in a keddah operation, his sufferings at the hands of his tormentors, his revenge, and finally his willing submission to the Maharishi, his guru, who not only saves him from slavery and death, but also shows him a path of love and self-surrender that eventually brings him to serve in an ancient temple.

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These are some of the characters who give life and colour to this collection of short stories which includes prize winners in the Commonwealth Short Story Competition in 2001, 2002 and 2003.
Was his family to blame for his drug addiction? Or the company he kept? In this brutally honest novel, Sivasankari charts the descent of Prem, a first year college student, into the no-win world of drug addiction. The novel cuts between the fictionalised world of Prem and the author’s in depth research and meetings with drug addicts. Prem and his friends sink to abject depths and fiction mirrors fact. This is a cautionary tale for all ages.
At the Cusp of Ages is a story of women at a crossroads—where millennia meet and disperse. It is a story of women—abject, intimidated, absurd and betrayed. It is also about women who refuse to accept male domination as an inevitable way of life. It is about the fragility of our ‘secular’ fabric, about how at times of crisis even those we believe we love are suddenly suspect in our eyes.

In this often disturbing novel that nevertheless ends on a note of some hope, three generations of women express their inmost thoughts to the reader. The first is Meenakshi who stoically, even shamelessly, accepts the infidelity of her husband and her son. The next generation is represented by Carla who constantly seeks to submerge her Europeanness in her growing Indianness, until one day she walks away.

Gayatri, Shakeela and Valli, caught in political and personal maelstoms, struggle to find their identities in a mindless society that treats them as worse than pawns. They find strength in friendship and the hope, however timid, that love can blossom again. Vaasanthi probes our psyches with ferocious honesty and delicate understanding.
By the Sea is no quickie—to be read once and forgotten. It is a serious novel, aesthetically faithful to its location by the seaside and the people who populate it. Its characters are real flesh and blood characters, fisherfolk who live by and with nature—until technology takes over their lives. Tradition versus survival is the new dilemma before a community which has for millennia risked lives in pursuit of its daily catch of fish. It’s a story of love and lust, faith and friendship, relationships tested by progress and greed.

Philomi and Samidas, Cruz Michael and the sea, Mariammai and the school teacher Sebasti and Ranji— these are unforgettable characters who make By the Sea a memorable novel.