

**2 JUNE 2001**

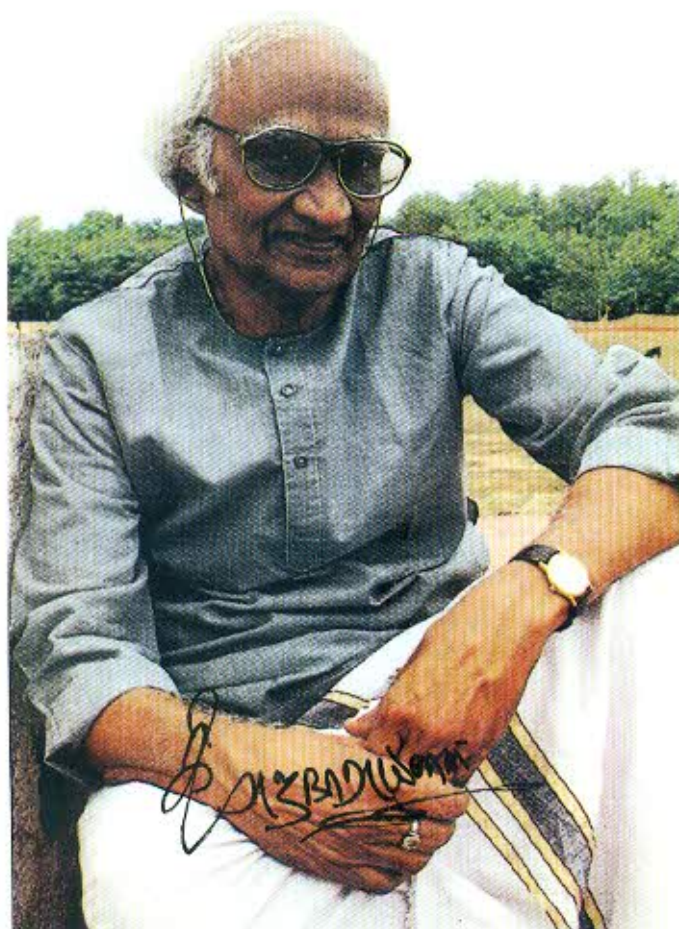


**Sahitya Akademi**

**invites you to**

**meet the author**

**KI. RAJANARAYANAN**





Ki. Rajanarayanan was born in 1923 in Edaicheval a small village in the southern most part of Tamilnadu. He was the fifth child of Shri Krishna Ramanujam and Lakshmi Ammal. His parents as per family tradition gave him a long and grand name Rayangala Shri Krishna Raja Narayana Perumal Ramanujam Naicker. His ancestors migrated to Edaicheval village before a few centuries. He studied upto 8th standard and thereafter though he discontinued formal education his flair for literature increased.

This has, in fact, prompted him to read Tamil versions of monumental works of writers like Leo Tolstoj, Anton Chekhov, Victor Hugo, Thomas Hardy, etc. Besides he is deeply interested in various literary movements like feminine writing as well as subaltern literary writings.

Ki. Rajanarayanan is one of the pioneers of folk literature in Tamil. He has contributed to the collection and study of folk tales those are prevalent in various parts of Tamilnadu and Pondicherry.

His village was termed by him as black forest receiving lowest rain. His land and literature are named *karisal* denoting black land. However *karisal* area of Tamilnadu

can claim literary eminence dating back to Andal, Periyalwar—Vaishnavite saints and the National poet Subramania Bharathi, Chennikulam Annamalai Reddiar. The great patriots Veerapandia Kattabomman and V.O. Chidambaram Pillai hailed from the same area. His boyhood friend who lived in his street Sri Ku. Alagirisamy became a famous fiction writer and won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1970 for his short story collection *Anbalippu*.

Two profound influences on him shaped his life and his outlook of literature in due course. The first influence was the tales handed down from grandfather to grandson which instead of fiction and myth, narrated the incidents which led to the migration of their Telugu speaking community from Andhra to the *karisal* area crossing 1000 km.

This sentimental journey ending in a black forest, converting it into good earth, the pleasures, pains, life-making, life-breaking events made a great impression on Ki. Rajanarayanan. This community history happened during Muslim invasion, Vijayanagara emergence, Naicker rule, East India Company's commercial and political success and the freedom struggle later.

The other influence is the rural dialect with its peculiar accent, tone, intonation and rustic honesty and simplicity. Ki. Rajanarayanan says that the ordinary superficial general language style is not deep rather the oral dialect is deep and comes out of the soul of the people. It has a special linguistic significance. In his youthful days Ki. Rajanarayanan led a turbulent life, forcefully expressing his opinions and spear-heading people's movements. His love for his motherland and his deep interest in freedom struggle are noteworthy. At the same time the life struggle of

rural peasants and workers captured his heart and he strove for the betterment of the rural downtrodden.

Ki. Rajanarayanan has published 11 collections of folktales prevalent in Tamilnadu. One among them concentrates on the folktales in Pondicherry. Two collections deal with the man-woman relations and sex without any inhibitions. But for him the Tamil folk tradition would have forgotten most of its roots in content, style and diction. The folktales of Ki. Rajanarayanan project him as a pioneer who opened new vistas in literature.

His short stories have won him many awards. He has published seven collections of short stories. His *Katavu*, the title story of a collection depicts the innocent minds of children playing with the door which was later confiscated by village revenue officials for not remitting the tax.

He has given importance to the local parlance (i.e. Tamil as spoken in *karisal* region, a region situated in between Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari) not only in dialogues but also in indirect narrative discourse.

He is the patron of a dialectal literature in Tamil, namely *karisal*-literature (literature of the black soil); his works smell local soil which has induced many other young writers of the said region to follow suit. Writers like Poomani, Cho. Darman, Melanmai Ponnusamy, Paa. Jeypragasam deserve to be quoted. Ki. Rajanarayanan's influence has spread not only all over Tamilnadu but also overseas Tamil speaking countries like Jaffna of Sri Lanka and Singapore. Among creative writers of Jaffna, A. Muthulingam is an ardent follower of Ki. Rajanarayanan's narrative techniques.

Ki. Rajanarayanan is the first Tamil writer to introduce in the modern fiction the techniques of Indian puranic writing and storytelling. He has marvellously introduced in his fiction, the traditional Indian technique of "stories within stories" however, without distracting the reader from the main track. This style of narration, like the ones found in the epics the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and other puranic tales, makes him stand out from the rest of other modern Tamil creative writers who are unable to free from



Receiving Sahitya Akademi Award from Akademi President, Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Sri Gangadhar Gadgil, Vice-President is also seen in the picture



With Sri Ilayaraja at the Seminar on *Literature and Cinema* organised by Sahitya Akademi in collaboration with Sri Sankaradas Swamigal School of Performing Arts, Pondicherry

the shackles of western narrative techniques.

Ki. Rajanarayanan, like many other Indian writers, has re-interpreted Indian myths. Besides, he has depicted, in his first novel *Gopalla Gramam* (The Village Gopalla), the exodus of a particular linguistic community from one linguistic state to another linguistic state. This depiction reminds us of the Exodus of Moses and his people from Egypt to Israel, in *Old Testament*.

Above all, he has evoked the Indian freedom struggle, highlighting the role played by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army and the Naval mutiny of Bombay in his novel *Gopallapurathu Makkal* (The People of Gopallapuram) which won him Sahitya Akademi Award (The National Academy of Letters, India) in 1991.

His characters were mostly from the *karisal* area and portray the life of peasants, and cotton growers where rain was a rarity.

One volume of fiction was for children. His stories are simple and directly communicate without any barriers or inhibitions.

Ki. Rajanarayanan acted as the visiting Professor and Director of Folktales, Documentation and Survey Centre, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry. Ki. Rajanarayanan is the foremost writer who compiled and published the first ever Dictionary of Rural Dialect in Tamil in 1982 (*Vattara Vazhaku Chollakarathi*).

He was instrumental in documenting a number of folktales of various regions. His short stories 'Vilaivu' and 'Current' were made into films. 'Muranpaadugal' and 'Kidai' were made into Radio dramas. His short stories were translated into Telugu, Hindi and French. His novels and short story collections were prescribed by many universities in Tamilnadu.

He is presently working as the Editor of *Kadaicholli* (Story teller) a magazine which acts as a catalyst to activities in folklore and fiction. Ki. Rajanarayanan whose fascination was migration, himself migrated from 'Karisal' to Pondicherry, a Union territory and continues his work inspiring a host of young writers, folklorists and playwrights in Pondicherry and Tamilnadu.

## A Select Bibliography

### Folktales

- Tamizhnattu Nadodi Kathaikal* NCBH, Madras, 1966  
*Tamizhnattu Gramia Kathaikal*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1977  
*Thaatha Chonna Kathaikal*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1984  
*Nattupurak Kathaikal* (Part-I), Annam, Sivaganga, 1991  
*Nattupurak Kathaikal* (Part-II), Annam, Sivaganga, 1992  
*Vayathu Vanthavargalukku Mattum*, Neelakuyil, Madras, 1992  
*Puthuvai Vattara Nattuppurak Kathaikal*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1993  
*Nattupura Paliyal Kathaikal*, Neelakuyil, Madras, 1994  
*Penn Manam*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1995  
*Kathil Vizhuntha Kathaikal*, Maniam Pathippagam, Kurunchipadi, 1992  
*Peruviral Kullan*, National Book Trust, Delhi, 1998

### Short Stories

- Appa Pillai, Anma Pillai*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1980  
*Kidai Kurunavalum Pannirandu Sirukathaikalum*, Annam, Sivaganga 1983.  
*Karisal Kathaikal*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1984  
*Koththai Paruththi*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1985  
*Ki. Rajanarayanan Kathaikal*, Akaram, Kumbakonam, 1998

- Katavu*, NCBH, Madras, 1965  
*Kannimai*, P.K. Books, Madurai, 1975

### Novels

- Gopalla Gramam*, Book Venture, Madras, 1976  
*Pinchukal*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1979  
*Gopallapurathu Makkal*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1989  
*Anthaman Nayakkar*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1995

### Others

- Maantharul Oru Annaparavai* (Biographical sketches of Rasi-kamani), Annam, Sivaganga, 1981  
*Vattara Vazhakku Chollakarathi* (Dictionary) Annam, Sivaganga, 1982  
*Ku. Alagirisamy Kadithankal* (edited) Annam, Sivaganga, 1987  
*Makkal Thamizh Vazhka* (about language) Annam, Sivaganga, 1991  
*Ki. Rajanarayanan Pathilikal* (Question - Answer) Annam, Sivaganga, 1994  
*Kadithankal Kadithankal*, Maniam Pathippagam, Kurinchipadi, 1998

### Essays

- Karisal Kattu Kadidasi*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1988  
*Ki. Rajanarayanan, Katturaikal*, Annam, Sivaganga, 1991  
*Puththaga Kathalar* (Collection of Essays), Maniam Pathippagam, Kurinchipadi, 1998



Receiving Ilakkiya Chinthanai Award from Sri Shivarama Karanth for his novelette *Pinchukal*

## A CHRONOLOGY

1923	Born at Edaicheval (Chidambaranar Dist.)	1990	Received Best Writer Award from Santhome International Christian Society
Sept. 16			
1965	Published his first collection of short stories <i>Katavu</i>	1991	Sahitya Akademi Award for <i>Gopallapurathu Makkal</i>
1971	Received Tamil Valarchi Aaraichi Manram Award	1998-2002	Member, General council and Advisory Board for Tamil, Sahitya Akademi
1976	Published <i>Gopalla Gramam</i>		
1979	Ilakkiya Chinthanai Award for novelette <i>Pinchukal</i> for Children	2000	Editor <i>Kadaicholli</i> literary magazine
1989-90	Director of Folktales, Documentation and Survey Centre, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry.		



Ki. Ra is seen with stalwarts in Carnatic music Sri Shemmgudi Srinivasa Iyer, Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman and Sri T.V. Gopalakrishnan



With his wife Kanavathi at his *manivisha* function