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**Sahitya Akademi**

invites you to

**meet the author**

**Prapanjan**



"Keeping in mind that creating and reading good literature is a morally uplifting experience, we should write literature that makes the world sit up and take notice." - Prapanjan



Tamilnadu Govt. Award given by Chief Minister Thiru M.G. Ramachandran

Prapanjan is a renowned writer with a vast and sensitive readership in Tamil.

Prapanjan was born on 27th April 1945 in Pondicherry during French rule. He started his primary education in a French school but was later changed by his father Thiru M. Sarangapani an ardent follower of Indian National Congress to English education as protest against French colonial government.

At the age of 16, while still at school Prapanjan's first poem and short story were published in magazines. He was encouraged by the reception and decided to write regularly.

Pondicherry was liberated from French rule in 1954 and merged with free India. Prapanjan's childhood was shaped and marked by the memory of French culture and life. This memory and impact have been playing a major role in his writing. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once remarked "Pondicherry is a window of French culture in India". But Prapanjan lived well inside that culture and experienced the interactions between Tamil and French life. He observed the

phenomena with a critical insight which helped him create two monumental novels based on the early period (1700 - 1750) of French rule in India.

Due to his love for Tamil language and literature Prapanjan joined Thanjavur, the *Vidvan* course in the Tamil college of Karanthai. This period of stay in Tanjavur changed his attitude to literature because of vast reading and a circle of friends with keen literary interest. He got exposed to new realms of world literature and schools of thought. Prapanjan developed friendship with many important Tamil writers of Tanjavur region. He stayed there nearly ten years and imbibed the Kaveri culture which he acknowledges, shaped him into a modern writer.

Prapanjan's earlier writings were committed to left politics and he associated himself with leftist art and literary fora. His short stories of that time were published in a left oriented party magazine *Thamarai*. He had a bitter experience of working in a private school for two years in early 70's. He could not continue this profession for long. He left the job with a dream of being a full time writer. But his lower middle class background forced him to find

some job for survival. He selected his profession as a journalist which could keep him close to reading and writing and thus moved to Chennai. Though he could not secure a permanent position he worked in many popular magazines like *Kunkumam* (1980-82), *Kumudam* (1985-87) and *Ananda Vikadan* (1989-90). After those wandering years of changes and shifts he decided to give up jobs to be a full time writer. He has been a full time writer since 1990.

Prapanjan asserts that he dislikes competitive way of life for attaining social status. He is firm in his ideological standpoints and uncompromising in his ethical values. These ethical perceptions disturbed his life in many ways and made his survival difficult. But he enjoys the spirit of artistic freedom without any tint of self pity or a sense of loss.

He started writing in little magazines and later moved on to popular magazines thereby gaining a wide range of popularity. His first collection of short stories *Oru Ooril Irandu Manithargal* (Two Persons in a Village) was published in 1982. This collection won him the Govt. of Tamilnadu award for 'best collection of short stories'.

Prapanjan's characters are from middle class and lower middle

class where life is a prolonged struggle. They are always in scarcity and pain but with their own unusual inner world. Their life is full of contradictions, personal encounters, disputes and interpersonal conflicts; they harbour enmity with each other, can be provoked to vengeance, and do not hesitate to apply violence physically and verbally. But ultimately they are able to maintain themselves as human beings. This quality of social life is explored by Prapanjan in many ways. His stories are close to reality but artistic in narration. His style is simple and clear. His language is fluent without any proclaiming tone.

Prapanjan opened a new path in Tamil literature by launching his two major novels *Maanudam Vellum* (Humanity will Prevail) *Vaanam Vasappadum* (Conquer the Skies). These are two landmarks in Tamil literature in many aspects. These novels introduce new historicism and reconstruction in historical narration. Both novels are based on the earlier history of French India which focuses on marginalised elements and life of common people who had been suffering under social and political injustice. Hence it is the history of people who have been marginalised in recorded history.



Govt. of Pondicherry Award 1986  
Education Minister Sri Joseph Mariadasson presents



Dinathanthi Adithanar Award 1988

Hon'ble Tamilnadu Governor Justice Fathima Beevi,  
Chief Minister Thiru M. Karunanidhi, Editor Sivanthi Adithan are seen

Prapanjan was inspired by the ideals of French culture and politics of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. He was shocked by the oppression imposed by French rule in Pondicherry. He constructed a new form to narrate the history in the voice of oppressed self. He wanted to avoid the narration of pseudo-historical novels which centred on palace and harems. He demythified the aristocratic and orthodox Indian life. As a pioneer in reconstruction of history he explored a new language in narration.

Prapanjan created a unique style and language to narrate the story of a culture with all its organic functions and complexities. He also portrays various mindscape and individual sensibilities in the background of life in French India.

*Maanudam Vellum* won him the 'Ilakkiya Sindanai' award in 1992.

*Vaanam Vasappadam* received an award from Bharatiya Basha Parishad of West Bengal in 1995. Prapanjan has been conferred Sahitya Akademi Award for this novel in the same year.

Prapanjan's one more novel *Mahanadi* raised many debates and controversies for its political criticism and the portrayal of contemporary social problems. This novel is the voice of a

disillusioned idealist and an ardent humanist. The author criticises the political corruption and antisocial power structure. Prapanjan's dream on society is also expressed in this novel. This novel advocates real freedom and social development and also the need for merging spirituality and politics. It was published in 1989 and won him the award from Kasthuri Rangammal Foundation, Coimbatore.

Prapanjan is considered an exceptional writer for his social criticism and for his immediate comments on contemporary issues. He doesn't shy away from registering his opinions and comments on political, social and cultural problems. His reactions have been published in magazines which played a role in raising public awareness. These articles written over 20 years have been collected and published under the title *Penn* (Woman).

Prapanjan's works have been translated into Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, English and French.

Prapanjan believes that he has achieved a multi-dimensional enduring creativity in literature by disseminating the sensitivity of human nuances and complexities among his readers.

## A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Short Story Collections

*Oru Ooril Irandu Manithargal*  
(Two Persons in a Village) 1982

*Nertru Manithargal*  
(Men of the Past) 1985

*Prapanjan Kathaikai*  
(Prapanjan's Stories) 1986

*Vittu Viduthalai Yagi*  
(The Quest for Freedom) 1987

*Thirai*  
(The Cover) 1992

*Manithargal Mattiyil*  
(In the Midst of People) 1994

*Kumarasamiyin Pagal Pozhuthu*  
(A Day in the Life of  
Kumaraswamy) 1994

*Oru Manushi*  
(A Woman) 1994

*Pathavi*  
(Power) 1997

*Iruttin Vasal*  
(The Door of the Darkness) 2001

*Virukshangalin Veedu*  
(The House of Plants) 2002

### Novella Collections

*Aangalum Pengalum*  
(Men and Women) 1986

*Varam*  
(Boon) 2002

### Collections of Critical Essays

*Penn* (Woman) 1999

*Erodu Tamizhar Uyirodu*  
(Periyar and Tamils) 1999

### Collection of Plays

*Muttai*  
(Egg) 1983

### Novels

*Sugaboga Theevugal*  
(Islands of Pleasure) 1989

*Mahanadi* (1989)

*Maanudam Vellum*  
(Humanity will Prevail) 1990

*Kanavu Meypada Vendum*  
(The Dreams) 1991

*Oru Sinegathin Kathai*  
(Story of A Friendship) 1992

*Vaanam Vasappadam*  
(Conquer the Skies) 1993

*Inbakkeni*  
(Inner Joys of the Soul) 1995

*Sandiya*  
(Sandiya - A woman) 1996

*Pookkal Naleyum Malarum*  
(Flowers will Blossom Tomorrow  
Too) 1997

*Theevugal*  
(Islands) - 1997

*Kagitha Manithargal*  
(The Frauds) 1997

*Kanavugalai Thinbom*  
(Cherish the Dreams) 1998

*Kanneeral Kappom*  
(Save with Tears) 1998

*Mudal Mazhathuli*  
(First Shower) 2000

*Ithu En Sorkam*  
(This is My Paradise) 2000

Publisher:  
Kavitha Pathipagam  
T. Nagar, Chennai - 17.



Prof. U.R. Ananthamurthy gives away the Sahitya Akademi Award  
for *Vaanum Vasappadam* in 1995

## A CHRONOLOGY

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|--|---|
| <p>1945 Born at Pondicherry</p> <p>1961 The first story and poetry came in print.</p> <p>1969 Received Title – Vidwan - Tamil</p> <p>1970 Married Pramila Rani</p> <p>1982 Tamilnadu Govt. Award for the First Story - Collection - <i>Oru Ooril Irandu Manithargal</i></p> <p>1983 Ilakkia Sindanai - Best short story award - <i>Brahmam</i></p> <p>1986 Tamilnadu Govt. Award for the story collection <i>Nertru Manithargal</i>.</p> <p>1987 Pondicherry Govt. Award for the Novella <i>Aangalum Pengalum</i></p> <p>1989 Kasthuri Rangammal - Best Novel Award for <i>Mahanadi</i></p> <p>1991 Ilakkia Sindanai - Best Novel Award for <i>Maanudam Vellum</i></p> | <p>1995 Sahitya Akademi Award for the Novel <i>Vaanam Vasappadum</i></p> <p>1996 Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad (West Bengal) Award for the Novel - <i>Vaanam Vasappadum</i></p> <p>1998 Dinathanthi Adithanar Ilakkia Award</p> |
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### Honour

- Kalaimamani - Pondicherry Govt.
- Rithambar Puraskar - Baratiya Bhasha Parishad – West Bengal
- Representing Pondicherry - South Zone Cultural Centre, Thanjavur.
- Regional Language Adviser – National Book Trust, New Delhi



Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad Award 1996 - West Bengal



Prapanjan's Family