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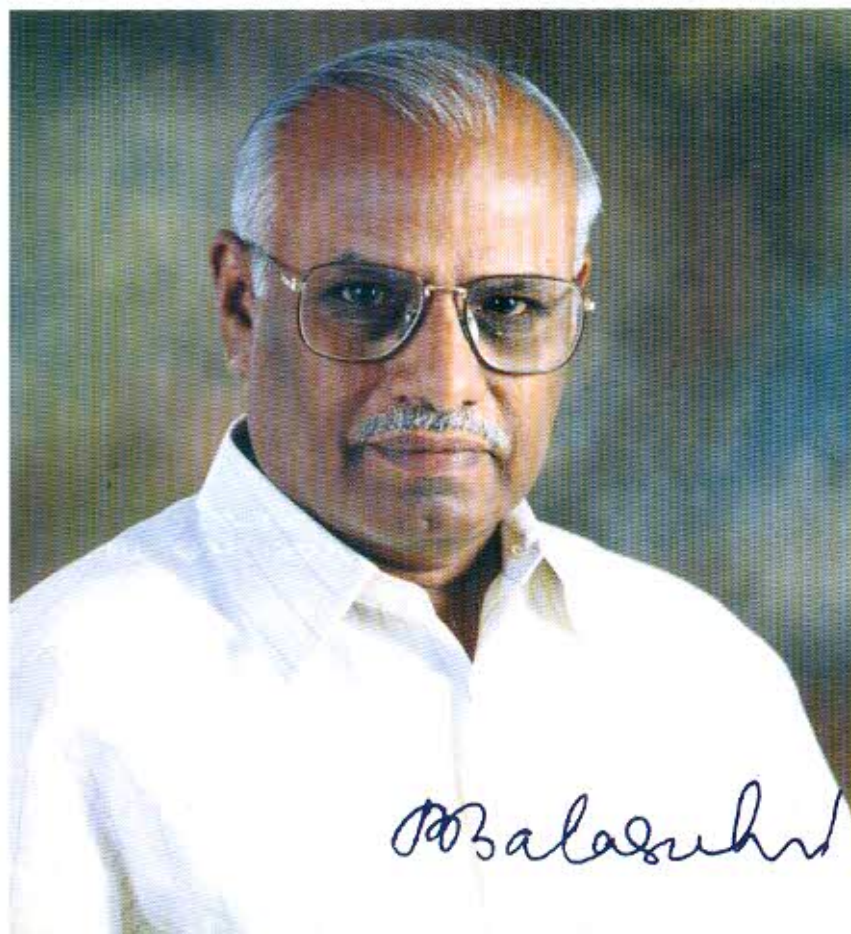


India International Centre

invite you to

**meet the author**

**Sirpi Balasubramaniam**



*Balasubramaniam*

*Sirpi, the poet, has a fantastic range. His poetry reminds us that we lie on the edge of chaos and we witness a stage of change. We are compelled to assimilate new values into orders and accommodate the old values into the new orders. Sirpi's poetry is not syrupy sweet. It is rough and harsh and that is quite natural as he is tackling complex contemporary realities. He is deviating from accepted conventions and creating new forms, new style and new imagery... His poems disturb me, they provoke me to search for new clarifications on life. I believe that is the object of poetry and such poetry will survive.*

M. T. Vasudevan Nair

**A**distinguished Tamil poet, a well-known translator, scholar, academician of distinction and literary journalist, Sirpi is a man of rare talents with multifaceted interests. True to the poetic settings of his birth place in Athupollachi in Coimbatore district, Tamilnadu, a tiny lush green village surrounded by the rivulets of Azhiyar river, Sirpi lisped in sweet numbers when he was sixteen, inspired by Subramania Bharati's verses. As the winds from the passes of the Western Ghats reached his heart he witnessed the music of life everywhere in people and places around, in the ecstasies of their joy, and in the agonies of their pains as well. The imposing

grandeur of the hills and mountains, the serenity of fields filled with palms and paddy, and the flow of poetry in the moving sheets of waters of Azhiyar river, taught him humility, sobriety, munificence and discipline.

On completion of his schooling at Tathamangalam, a border town in Kerala, Sirpi took his honours degree in Tamil Language and Literature from Annamalai University. Soon after his studies, he joined N.G.M. College, Pollachi, where he rehearsed his sparks of poetry on friends and fellow academics. This resulted in the flowering of his early poems written in traditional metre but bold enough to engage themes of modern life.



*With the members of his family.*

He published his first volume of poetry *Nilavuppu* (Moon flower) in 1963.

Sirpi is a brilliant poet of fine lyricism, liquid diction, imagistic strength, powerful imagination and progressive views. Sirpi occupies a unique place in Tamil poetry world writing ceaselessly for four decades. There is a blend of the tradition and the modern in his poems, an aura of the regional and the international, and the vistas of the cultural and the scientific ethos of modern civilization in his writings. Dr. R. Balachandran (Bala) a leading critic in Tamil says, "Sirpi is not a traditional poet and yet his poetry pleases; He is not audaciously experimental, and yet there is a lot of innovation in form and theme in his compositions. He is lyrical but not brief, in fact he is known for his long narratives. He is up to date and contemporary in his choice of themes. There is nothing that could be predicted in the range of his poetic themes, for they include both private and public themes, poems on simple rustic life and those on environmental care and pollution menace."

Being the forerunner of Vanampadi poetry movement of the 1970s, he contributed to a new era of poetic composition. Sirpi is a poet of genuine, warmth and human concern. His two poetry collections *Olipparavai* and *Sarpayagam* published during the 70s proved to be significant works in Tamil poetry. During the latter half of the seventies, the Vanambadi poets disintegrated but Sirpi continued to write. He has to his credit 11 collections of poems, apart from a complete volume of his poems (1998) and

a selection of verses in English translation.

Sirpi's poetic world has been constantly changing in tune with the changing times. His vision captures not only the pangs and passions of the common man but also the yearning of a soul that seeks new vistas of experience and enlightenment. His *Oru Kiramathu Nathi* and *Poojiyankalin Sangili* illustrate this change. While the former grounds his numbers with dusty and earthy folks of his place, the latter recounts the quest of a seeker dying to discover the mysteries of life and rediscover for himself his self caught in the mire of modern world.

Subramania Bharati has been the major influence on his art and craft and new ideas. His latest work *Bharati : Kaithi Enn 253* is a novel homage to the poet which portrays the jail days of Bharati when the poet patriot was interned in Cuddalore jail. Sirpi has turned it into a collage of Bharati's visions, dreams, hallucinations and reminiscences, leaving the long narrative to remain as a historic and historical literary document.

Sirpi is proficient in English, Malayalam and Russian languages and he has translated many Indian writers into Tamil. His versatility as a translator is known by his Tamil rendering of leading poets and fiction writer from Malayalam and other Indian languages. He has been honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Translation Award for his rendering of Lalithambika Antharjanam's *Agnisakshi* into Tamil.

An excellent teacher, orator, scholar and literary journalist,



*With his Wife*

Sirpi has edited many volumes of critical essays. He has also been a columnist in Tamil journals on the topics of contemporary relevance, science, politics and culture. His biography on C.Subramaniam, is well known. Awards and honours he has received include Annual Poetry Awards by the Govt. of Tamilnadu, Paavendar Award, Kabilar Award (1992), Rana Award (1999), Tamilnadu Kalai Ilakkiya Perumanram and Lily Devasigamani Award (1998) for

his outstanding contributions to Tamil Literature.

Sirpi's poems have been translated into English, Kannada and Hindi. His selected poems in English translation, *Noon in Summer* was published in 1966.

Sirpi speaks for a New World Order in which modern science will not devour us but would take us forward. This desire for change and a sustaining power that seeks continuity make Sirpi's art tremendously absorbing and thoroughly interesting.

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*In one of his relaxed moments*

## Chronology

1936	Born at Athupollachi (Coimbatore Dt., Tamilnadu)	1991	Paavendar Award from the Govt. of Tamilnadu.
1956	Honours Degree from Annamalai University	1993-98	General council member, Sahitya Akademi
1958-89	Professor, N.G.M. College, Pollachi	1994	Tamil University Award for A <i>Comparative Study of Bharathi and Vallathol</i>
1963	Publication of his first collection <i>Nilavupoo</i>	1996	Formation of SIRPI FOUNDATION to give awards to poets
1976	Publication of noted work <i>Sarpayagam</i>	1997	Travel to the US, England and France
1982	State Award for Poetry— <i>Mouna Mayakkangal</i>	2000	State Award for Poetry <i>Poojyangalin Sangili</i>
1983	Travel to Bulgaria and the USSR	2001	Sahitya Akademi Award for Translation, 2000
1989-97	Professor & Head Department of Tamil, Bharathiar University Coimbatore.		



*Sahitya Akademi Translation Award, 2001*