

Literary Legend Speaks

Interview with P.V. Laxmiprasad

Interviewer: Mary Josephine Jerina
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Q: Jerina: What is your literary contribution as on today?

Laxmiprasad: I am humbled by this question. In fact, number of publications is vis a vis the quality of publications would authenticate the genuine readership. I would put the number at 42 as on today.

Q: J: Who sparked the interest in writing?

LP: It was my great grandfather who inspired me a lot as a child. He was a poet and who composed poetry on palm leaves. He published a book on Ramayana too using conventional mode. As my father used to narrate me those literary works by him, I was fascinated to listen to his contribution as a young boy. Later a curiosity developed in me that I should follow his footsteps. I started visiting the library when I was in V standard. That was how it fuelled interest in me. From there, I made reading an everyday habit. My father brought me a few journals like Bhavan's Journal in the early eighties. I was introduced to read English daily newspapers in the local library by my teachers as well.

Q: Your criticism is based on religious texts like the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. Are you a spiritual?

LP: See, there is a degree of difference between what one makes and how one shapes. Indeed, Upanishads and the Gita are texts rooted in the meaning of life. To your question, I practise spiritual values. That does not mean that I am bounded by the fragmented walls of religion. I maintain zero tolerance for religion. The texts contain ancient knowledge and wisdom. Religion is a way of life. It all depends upon how we see and perceive.

Q: J: There are five books based on Women's struggles and psyche. Four about them are on Queens. Does this have any connection to the women of contemporary world?

LP: See, there is no present without past and vice versa. Life goes on despite struggles. Man should have challenges and sufferings. As for the books on queens, they represented the spirit of oneness and uniqueness of female heroism. The ancient queens have immortalized literature and thus, they have become living legends in the annals of history books. They left behind a legacy for women of contemporary times. I see there is a connection of strong attachment between women of ancient times and modern times.

Q: J: What prompted you to review Thirukkai?

LP: Thirukkai by Thiruvalluvar was originally a Tamil composition. Later a few translators translated the philosophic treatise. One day, as I was flipping through the newspapers, I find that Madras High Court directed the schools in Tamilnadu to implement the rendition of verses from Thirukkai compulsory. Then I understood the importance of Thirukkai. I took up the English version and reviewed 450 verses from Thirukkai. I was enlightened as a reader.

Q: J: Do you have any specific criteria for choosing writers for your book?

LP: See that I was a reader since my childhood days. I was influenced by the rendition of national anthem and Vande Mataram as a schoolboy. Later I recited a few Bhajans and Keertans for my prayers. This could have made me look at the world from different perspectives. Yes, there is every reason to support each one of my published books. I published them on original English writers and regional literatures in translation. Bhakti cult is what works speak about.

Q J: Your edited volume entitled “The Novels of Daya Disanayake” is different. Why was a Sri Lankan writer your choice?

LP: The choice was unexpected as I was seriously intending to do D.Litt. on his novels. Somehow, that could not be materialized. Then I published a critically edited volume on his novels. It is recalled that Daya Disanayake is a terrific novelist on environmental issues. He has to his credit a dozen novels in English. More research needs to be explored.

Q J: Is the book on “Representation of Women in Literature and Society” a tribute to the women folk?

LP: Of course. Woman is a creative force, a dynamic power and above all, godly. I paid my rich tributes to ancient and modern women. I am nothing in this world without my mother.

QJ: Your criticism has mostly been on all genres. Personally which genre do you like and why?

LP: To a question of this kind, it is difficult to answer. Still, I hold on to record that all the writers I have published are accomplished and outstanding. Themes are multiple in nature and style of each one of the writers is typically different. Edited volumes and authored volumes have made me a lifelong learner. To be honest with you, it is poetry that is obscure and difficult to interpret.

QJ: What is your opinion about Prison Writings?

LP: It is a good question. Prison writings constitute an interdisciplinary subject of literature. One without the other can never have a place in the literary world. Literature and prison make two good subjects. All those great prison writers have presented their experiences through this genre. I feel that successive generations will have access to this form of literature. The struggles, challenges and first-hand experiences by prison writers are lively and refreshing even today. It has relevance, substance, and sustenance too.

QJ: It was a kind of new experience for me to see a book on Quotes. How is the criticism different from that of novels and stories?

LP Absolutely. Each book that I did make some inroads into life. Working on Jiddu Krishnamurti's Quotes was a challenge for me for evaluation. When I was interpreting his select quotes, I had to introspect like anything. Finally, I evaluated them to the best of my understanding. Quotes inspire all people of all ages. They are universal and long lasting.

Q J: You have written one Creative work. Working on any other at present?

LP: My first creative work was a poetry collection followed by a Memoir on COVID-19. Yes, I am thinking of writing a few stories in English in the near future. Creativity is the gateway to crack many problems in life. I hold that creativity and criticism are the two different genres in the ultimate analysis.

QJ: What was the main reason for publishing a book on Partition? Is it because of Platinum year celebrations ?

LP: Yes. There is history and importance behind this publication. Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav inspired me to do a work. Then I thought it would be better to bring out a critical book on Indian partition which was a great human tragedy divided on communal borders. Frenzied minds did the most inhuman act. Humanity lost its human touch. Thousands fled to the unknown country triggered by violence of severe magnitude. Against this backdrop, I thought

I should do one book with Partition in my mind. We lived in 75 years of history of bloody violence. Literature acts as the vehicle of historical events. In the end, it was painful for me reading those papers.

Thanks for the interview.