**Zacharia, Paul (b. 1945)**

Sanil.V



Paul Zacharia, a short-story writer, novelist and essayist, brought counter-modernity to Malayalam literature in the late 1960s. He rejected the self-definition of western modernity and its Indian nationalist versions. Drawing upon vernacular biblical idioms and everyday rural life, Zacharia has probed the fragile certainties of urban life, intellectual establishments and religious orthodoxies. He has said that “Jesus Christ, cinema, bars, friends, lovers, hens and dogs have given me stories.”

Zacharia was born in 1945 in the village Urulikunnam, near Kottayam in the state of Karala. He published his first story “Unni the Child” in 1964. In 1969, his first collection of short stories was published. In 1972, he moved to New Delhi and worked in publishing and media, returning to Kerala in 1992.

*Zachariayude Kathakal*, a collection of his short stories up until 2000, won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2006. Two of his novellas (*Praise the Lord* and *Enthondu Visesham Pilathose?* [*What News, Pilate?*]) have been translated into English. Two short story collections are also available in English (*Bhaskara Pattelar and Other Stories* and *Reflections of a Hen in Her Last Hour and Other Stories). Vidheyan (The Servile)* a film which won the national award for the best Malayalam film 1993 (directed by Adoor Goplala Krishnan) was an adaptation of Zacharia’s *story Bhaskara Pattelarum Ente Jeevithavum.* Zacharia has been active in print media and publishing. He was one of the founders of the Asianet television network.

For Zacharia, God is not dead. He is the virtual existence of contingency that sustains and disrupts all structures. God appears in ridiculous apparitions – as a peeping tom where ladies bathe, as an Egyptian belly dancer, or as the mew of a cat. *What News, Pilate?* takes the form of an extended correspondence between Pontius Pilate and Titus Antonius. Ruth, Pilate’s secretary during a letter-writing session, plays a game of pretence with the old Pilate, exposing her pretty leg to him. As punishment, her sandals pinch her feet on her way to witness the resurrection of Christ. Her feet are redeemed only by the touch of Christ. Zacharia’s female characters are force fields for the secure and graceful descent of God; they are prismatic presences through which all speech has to pass to engender interiorities of both men and women.

As a public intellectual, Zacharia has challenged right-wing Hindu nationalists, the business empires of the Church, the spiritualist industry, and political terror. He writes on contemporary issues for newspapers and periodicals in both English and Malayalam. He has traveled widely in India and to 43 countries abroad and has published travelogues on East Africa, the Lakes District, England, Saudi Arabia, and China. His travelogues are imaginative ethnographies of expatriate Malayalees from all over the world.

**Works**

***In Malayalam***

Short Stories:

1. *Salaam America: Kathakal,* 1998.
2. *Aarkariyam: Kathakal*, 1998.
3. *Kannadi Kanmolavum: Kathakal*, 2000.
4. *Zachariayude Kathakal*, 2002.
5. *Enthundu* *visesham, Pilathose*, 1996.
6. *Oru Nasrani Youvavum Gaulisastraum,*
7. *Oridathu,*
8. *Kanya Kumari*
9. *Zachariayude Penkathakal*
10. *Zakharia’s Jeshu*
11. *Ente Preeyappetta Kathakal*

Novellas:

1. *Praise the Lord*
2. *Ishtikayum Aashariyum*
3. *Ithanente Peru*
4. *Bhaskarapattelarum Ente Jeevithavum*

Travelogues:

1. *Oru African Yatra*
2. *Agniparvathangalude Thazhvarayil*
3. *Thatakanadu*
4. *Nabiyude Nattil*

Essays:

1. *Govindam Bhaja Moodamathee*

Screen Play:

1. *Joseph oru Purohithan.*

***In English:***

1. *Bhaskara Pattelar and Other Stories*,Chennai: Manas Books, 1992.
2. *Reflections of a Hen in Her Last Hour and Other Stories*, New Delhi: Penguin India, 1999.
3. *Praise the Lord* and *What News, Pilate?: Two Novellas,* New Delhi: Katha, 2002.

*Links:*

Link to entry in the Library Congress.

<http://www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/delhi/salrp/paulzacharia.html>

Interviews with Zacharia

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF-R1nR1rLw

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGs4P_qe0ro>