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

Sanil.V



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

Zacharia was born in the village Urulikunnam near Kottayam, and published his first story “Unni the Child” in 1964. *Zachariayude Kathakal*, the collection of his short stories written up to the year 2000, won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2006. Two of his novellas (*Praise the Lord* and *Enthondu Visesham Pilathose?*) 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 in 1993, was an adaptation of Zacharia’sstory *Bhaskara Pattelarum Ente Jeevithavum.* Zacharia has been active in the 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’s ridiculous apparitions—as a peeping Tom where ladies bathe, as an Egyptian belly dancer or the mew of a cat—redeem the stories from the sense of ending and place them across the punch-lines of a laughter that erects strict equality between the god and other beings.

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 pretense 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 women 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 forty-three countries abroad and has published travelogues on East Africa, the Lake 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. *0ru 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>

**Timeline**

1964: First story (Unny the child) published. Bachelor’s Degree from St. Philomena’s College, Mysore.

1966: Post Graduate Degree from Central College Bangalore.

1969: First collection of short stories published.

1972: Moved to New Delhi and worked in publishing and media

1992: Returned to Kerala

1993: *Vidheyan (The Servile)* a film based on Zacharia’s story won the National Award for the Best film

2006: *Zachariayude Kathakal* won the Sahitya Akademi Award