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O.V. Vijayan a Tribute by V. Saratchandran Nair

When one thinks of the evolutionary stages of Malayalam Novels, *khasakkinte itihavam* of Ootupulackal Velukkuty Vijayan popularly known as O.V.Vijayan makes a turning point, such that, the novel's penned prior to that and after that could be termed as Pre khasakkinte itihavam and Post khasakkinte itihavam. Commencing his literary forte in 1953 the first short story published in Jana Keralam entitled "Tell Father Gonsalus", which was followed by a collection of short stories entitled, "Three wars". The epoch making *khasakkinte Itihavam* created rumblings in the campuses of Kerala, when it was published serially in Mathrubhumi weekly in 1968 and later in a book form in 1969 and won the Odakkuzhal award in 1970. Probably it is the most sought after book after Changampuzha's *ramanan*, a literary piece of great reputation. Through this particular book, *khasakkinte Itihavam*, Vijayan was able to capture a larger audience and left indelible mark not only as a great novelist but also as a short story writer of poetic imagination.

The rustlings of the leaves of the palmyra trees of Palghat, the barren and parched land of summer months, have all been portrayed, in the most beautiful rustic language of various communities in Palghat that one not only remembers the main character Ravi the protagonist, but also *allahpicha mullakka*, *maimuuna*, *mungankozhi* and a host of others. All these evokes an earthly feeling and the more one reads that one finds more thoughts embedded in it. Shri Vijayan, was not only a novelist or short story writer but an acclaimed cartoonist of international reputation. A thinker, a philosopher, who was able to react to contemporary issues and above all a humanist with spiritual bend of mind. Both words and lines were equally significant to him. As his wife Dr.Teresa says, that the few lines or words he used had umpteen ideas in them and to unravel them is the most difficult.

In 1958, Shri. O.V.Vijayan, was invited to Delhi by the legendary cartoonist Shri. Sankara Pillai of Sankar's weekly that he landed in Delhi. He worked as a lecturer in English for a short stint in Malabar Christian College at Calicut and Government Victoria College there, prior to his departure to Delhi. He worked under the tutelage of Shri.Sankara Pillai. After five years he moved to 'Patriot' as a staff cartoonist and worked for the 'Hindu' and the 'Statesman'. His cartoons evoked philosophical thinking and political satire and during the time of Indira Gandhi's emergency period it was at its peak and won him many laurels. He also contributed cartoons for the far eastern economic review, Honkong Political atlas, Mathrubhumi, Kalakaumudi. The invitation by Sankara pillai has instilled in him a greater confidence that the Malayalee mind was kindled by the cartoon series entitled *ittiri nerampokku*, *ittiri darsanam*. And 1960s and 70s of Kerala saw two cartoonist Aravindan and Vijayan of admirable reputation and thought provoking cartoons.

The 20th century Malayalam literature, no doubt, have to seriously reckon with the works of Vijayan. If his philosophical and political views have captured the cartoons on the one hand, on the other hand, his spiritual and revolutionary views have made indelible marks on the pages of novels and stories, he had written. If one scans the novels after *khasakkinte itihavam*, the most notable one, one could see the evolutionary changes that have set in, which could be easily gauged. *dharmapuramam*, the saga of Dharmapuri, is outwardly a great political satire, where the author knows no restraint in lampooning political establishments. Apart from that, it keeps in store spiritual and environmental levels of meaning also. *pravachakante vazhi*, the way of the Prophet, another novel which emphasizes the vision that intuition is perennial and it is one at the same always. This oneness of the revelation makes the ways of all the prophets the same. This great education in spirituality is got in those barbarous days of Delhi when the Sikhs were maniacally hunted after and mercilessly butchered following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Gurusagaram, eternity of grace, differs in language, vision and characterization from earlier works. It is on the eminence of Guru in the life of a seeker. Guru is everywhere and manifested in

everybody. The central character is a journalist from Kerala, working in Delhi, going on an assignment to report the Indo-Pak war of 1971. He undergoes an excruciating experience both spiritually and physically to learn how to annihilate all forms of ego. His concerns of future of mankind and environmental issues are the central themes in *madhuramgayati*. *talamurakal*, generations, is autobiography in nature and to a still greater extent it is History. Beyond autobiography and History, the novel is a journey down the collective experience of a family in search of an awareness about oneself and his plan.

His collections of stories include, *vijayante kathakal*, *oru niiiNda raatriyude oormaykkayi*, *asaanthi*, *balabodhini*, *kadalttirattu*, *kaaruparañña katha*. His collections of articles include *ghoshayatravil taniye*, *svatvam*, *itihassattinte itihassam*, *haindavanum atihaindavanum*. A collection of his satirical works is *ente caritranveshaNa pariikshakaL*. A collection of his cartoons is *ittiri nerambokku ittiri darSanam*. Vijayan was conferred the Padmabhushan, the Ezhuttachan puraskaram, the Odakkuzhal award, the Kerala Sahitya Akademy award and the Central Sahitya Akademy award, the Vayalar award and the Muttattuvarkki award. During the last stages he left Delhi and stayed in Hyderabad, after living for a brief while in Kottayam. He survived by his wife Dr. Teresa and son Madhu.