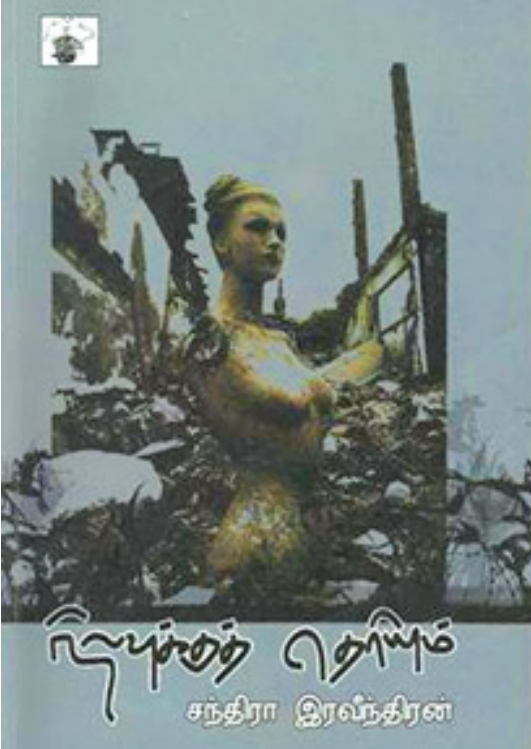


Written by K S Sivakumaran

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Restrained recollection of the past

A Lankan-born expatriate writer in London recaps her unbearable sorrows experienced in the North especially during the onslaught of the Tigers (Liberation Tamil Tigers Eelam) and the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) during the second half of the 1980s in her stories in Tamil. Her name after marriage is Chandrakumari Iravindrakumaran, now shortened as Chandra Ravindran. Earlier she used to write short stories in Lanka under her maiden name Chandra Thiyagarajah. She hails from Melaip Pulolyoor, Athiyady, Paruththithurai (Point Pedro) in the widely known region Vadamaratchi in the northern peninsula. Her first collection of short stories was published in Lanka in 1988. It was called “Nilalkal” (Shadows). Until her departure to U.K. via Egypt in 1991, she had worked at the government’s Yaalpaanam (Jaffna) Secretariat. While in London she had worked for seven years until 2007 for the International Broadcasting Corporation. Presently she works for a commercial firm.

In her second collection of short stories titled “Nilavukkuth Thetiyum” (The Moon will Know), she writes 10 stories in an interesting way reenacting her own experiences confronted in the turbulent times three decades ago. Free from sentimentality she narrates beautifully in a restrained manner the agony (the anguish, uncertainty of life for the next moment and the horrors of killing in a scenario of Jungle Law) and also the ecstasy of the simple rural family life she had enjoyed as a young woman. Though lacking in chiseled craftsmanship in her stories, her descriptive and narrative power of writing captures the right mood of life in the peninsula during three decades of cruel war. Similar situations were experienced in other parts of the country particularly in places where the Tamils and Muslims lived.

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Most people including this writer did not experience first hand the gruesome and horrible plight of the people caught in the killings in the name of war. As such we merely thought that the war was between the Tigers and the Lankan Armed Forces. We didn't realize the gravity of the destruction of human values and cultures of people at large.

Unlike other Lankan writers writing in Tamil from here where emotionalism is not under control, Chandra Ravindran writing from abroad strains her emotions in tranquility that a certain kind of objectivity is displayed in her stories.

What are her stories about?

The first half of the book is filled with her almost auto biographical snatches of the general situation in a war-torn region. In 2012, most Lankans would have been fed up hearing sordid stories of war experiences because daily experiences were commonplace incidents that the people would have been immune from emotionally enraptured. However for others living in other parts of the world would find in these creative stories almost a documentary evidence of what the people had to undergo. The second part of the book deals with other experiences in the life of the writer in foreign climes. I found these stories quaint as they brought information that I might not have heard before. These experiences though related to the war and the people that escaped and domiciled in the west, they are fresh and treated differently in her stories.

Right throughout the writer maintains a sense of balance and objectivity and her restraint exhibits certain maturity in understanding the human psyche.

I do not wish to analyze each of the stories giving the theme, plot, characterization and the like because the readers must first read these stories. One of the front rank innovative short story writers with a remarkable writing style in Tamil, Uma Varatharajan from Kalmunai, has written a foreword for this book that perceptively analyses Chandra Ravindran's stories. The book is published by Kalachuvadu Publications Pvt.Ltd, 669, K.P.Road, Nagarcoil 629 001, India. Readers inn Tamil will find it of literary value as well. Someone should translate at least one of he stories into English for others to read.

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