

FUTURE OF MANAGEMENT – BUDDHIST MODEL OF THAILAND

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The readers of the Malayalam novel “Oru Sankeertanam Pole” (Like a Psalm) consider it a miracle that 50,000 copies of the novel has been sold within six years of its publication in 1993. (More than 80,000 copies were in print by 2004.)

I am happy to put this same amazing novel in the hands of the Gujarati readers. I have translated it from the original Malayalam version. Perhaps this must be the first book translated directly from Malayalam into Gujarati. There are a few literary works of Malayali authors translated into Gujarati. But they have come into Gujarati from their Hindi or English translations making the Gujarati books a translation from the translation.

In many literary translations what we get is not a real faithful translation of the original work but a very liberal version or re-interpretation of the original. Such translations are a recreation of the original work. The originality and the uniqueness of the original work are not recreated in such liberal or re-interpreted translations. Taking these things into consideration I have tried to get the Gujarati readers a faithful translation of the original in literary Gujarati language.

In my effort to master the Gujarati language I had given up contact with my mother tongue Malayalam for many years. But, once when I was home for the holidays, my mother told me half jokingly and half seriously, “when you come next time for your holidays, keep 3 days to study Malayalam and then only begin counting your holidays.” Though my mother’s remark was made in a lighter vein, I got her point and after many years I began to subscribe and read regularly some Malayalam periodical and books.

One day on a journey I thought of reading a Malayalam book and by chance I got the novel “Oru Sankeertanam Pole” by Sreedharan Perumpadavom. In the bookshop of the Cochin railway station not knowing which book to choose, I told the salesman: Please give me a Malayalam novel which has got some awards. The shopkeeper gave me Perumpadavom’s novel which had received eight awards.

During the two-day journey to New Delhi I read the whole novel in the train.

“Oru Sankeertanam Pole” is a novel based on the life of a Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky. In the novel, according to me, one may also see the reflection of two other lives; the lives of Jesus Christ and of the author himself.

Once a journalist Jaimon Kumarakam (Sunday Salom, 23, December 2001) drew the attention of the novelist that there is a great difference in the portraits of Dostoevsky drawn by the historians and by the author. Responding to the journalist Perumpadavom said that according to historians Dostoevsky was a drunkard, gambler and a womanizer. He had his characteristic weaknesses. But I do not see him that way. How can a drunkard and gambler write “The Insulted and Injured”? (1861). How can he write “Crime and Punishment”? How can he write “The Brothers Karamazov”? (1880). I strongly believe that only a person blessed by God can write such great

novels. So in Dostoevsky I tried to find a person who is abundantly blessed by God. In my search I imagined a Dostoevsky with the signature of God in his heart.

Speaking about his experiences of writing the novel Perumpadavom told the journalist that he felt that while writing the novel he was journeying with Jesus Christ and Dostoevsky. Everyone knows about the life of Jesus. Amidst much opposition and suffering he endured his infamous death on the Cross. The novelist Perumpadavom also has led a life of much suffering and pain. Sreedharan Perumpadavom was born in a poor family in the village of Perumpadavom near the town of Muvattupuzha. His father died when he was only 4 years old. His mother brought up Sreedharan and his young sister in struggling against poverty. Sreedharan led a lonely life while the children of his age lived carefree lives in their homes. In his childhood loneliness Sreedharan found consolation in reading poetry sitting alone in some lonely places.

Sreedharan went to St Peter's High School at Elengi near his village, he was lucky to meet a very famous poetess Mary John Thottam alias Sr Mary Benigna. Before meeting Sr Benigna the child Sreedharan had read her collection of poems like "Kavitaramam", "Geetavali" etc.

Oh world, thou who hast respected me
Ever since my birth
By caring and protecting me
And giving me everything I needed
And fondling me with love
I bid thee farewell...

With these words of her poem Sr Benigna embraced religious life and became a sadhvi (nun). When Sreedharan first met her he could not help but keep staring at the great poetess.

Perumpadavom spoke about his childhood to that journalist and then added, "Sr Benigna had a tender love and care for me. Then, the Principal of Elangi high school was Fr Abraham Vadakel who valued literature and culture. He was an eloquent speaker in Malayalam. His speeches were very much appreciated in the Malayalam literary council. His literary criticism of well known literary books were also much appreciated. In this literary atmosphere of Malayalam literature my desire to create literature began to blossom. My teachers showed me how to soar the literary world."

After his matriculation Perumpadavom came to Muvattapuzha city in search of a job. He tried a number of small jobs. For a while he also worked as a journalist, During this period he wrote his first novel "Abhayam". Those days were very hard for him. He was struggling to feed his wife and two children.

Speaking about this period of his life Perumpadavom said, "I am a person who has suffered a lot. In such different life situations I was trying to swim against the current."

In this experience of insurmountable difficulties lying alone on the sands of the Muvattupuzha river Perumpadavaom even thought of committing suicide. He had no money even to provide one meal a day for his wife and children. When he thought of suicide staring at the sky, his

conscious said to him, "Suicide is a great sin. The leaf with your name has not yet fallen down on the earth. Live and search for a livelihood."

He felt some sort of divine experience. An invisible power was drawing Perumapdavom. He turned to life. He became a devotee of Jesus Christ.

"There is a Christ in the heart of every person of good will. Without Christ no one can become good. Christ became victorious through the path of love and self sacrifice against decadent religions," Perumpadavaom said. Obviously Christ lived in the centre of his life. He is well acquainted with the Bible.

Explaining the name of the novel. "Ek Stotraganni Jem" (Like a Psalm - Oru Sankeertanam Pole) Perumpadavom says that "the life of Dostoevsky was filled with much pain and suffering. He has suffered more than an ordinary person can endure. In the eyes of Dostoevsky there is only one person who has suffered more than him. That person is Christ. So I imagined an intimate spiritual relationship of Dostoevsky with Christ. I also cherish a personal relationship with Christ and his Mother Mary. So the two lives of Dostoevsky and Christ, which have suffered much sorrow and pain came to my mind.

In a way Christ came into this novel without my knowing it. Dostoevsky had only one person to share his suffering and miseries: Christ. On the one hand, Dostoevsky suffered much pain and sorrow. But what did he do with his life? He acknowledged in his heart that he had muddled his life. A sense of crime and sin always pursued Dostoevsky. Then I remembered the story of King David in the Bible. The Psalms of David came to my mind. From David's Psalms I conceived the name 'Like a Psalm' for my novel," Perumpadavom said.

The novelist's own spiritual intimacy with Christ may have prompted the author to conceive the close relationship of Dostoevsky with Christ. Acknowledging his relation with Christ Perumpadavom says, "I believe that Christ was born on this earth for me, or Christ has come for lonely, abandoned and helpless people like me. I was able to endure all my suffering by remembering Christ. When I felt abandoned by my suffering I have experienced the protection of Christ's pierced hands embracing me close to his heart."

Now there is no need for me to write anything more, because in "Ek Stotraganni Jem" you can not help but deeply share the experiences of Dostoevsky as well as of the novelist Perumpadavom.