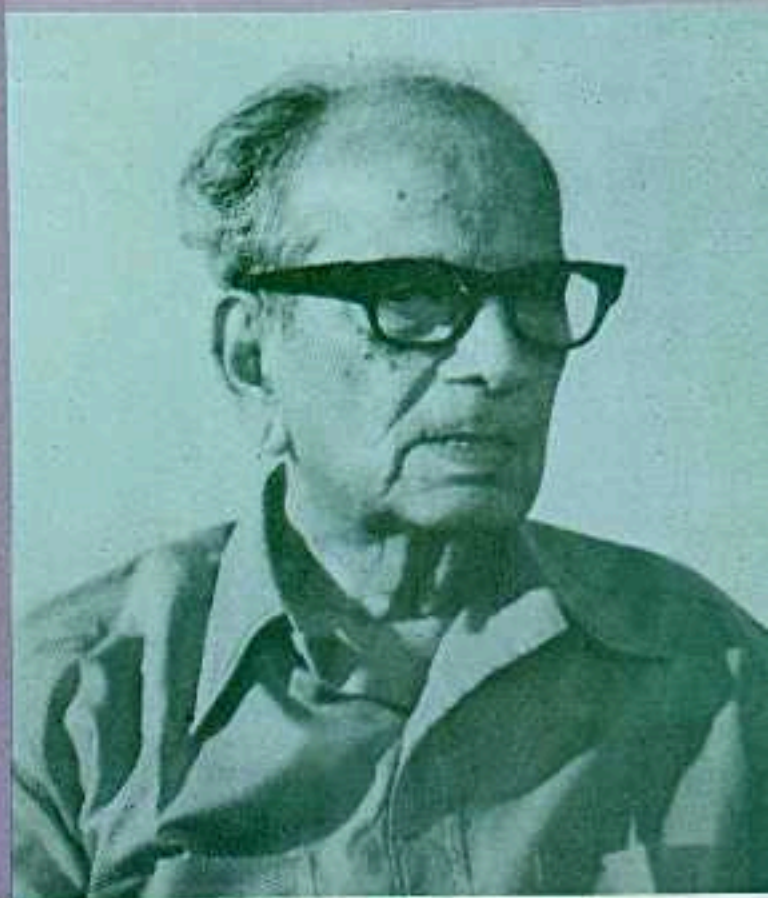




Makers of Indian Literature

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar

Prema Nandakumar



MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

K.R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

by
Prema Nandakumar



SAHITYA AKADEMI

PREFACE

I am grateful to the Sahitya Akademi for giving me this opportunity to write a monograph about my father, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar. Being a daughter and disciple to him was a unique adventure, and I learnt what was really meant by the term "gurukulavasa" in our Vedic heritage. There was love which went along with stern discipline; laughter that laced a high seriousness in conversation and the learning process. Also the terror and ecstasy of discovering the riches in the Acharya's "Sree-Kosa" (library). Above all, I learnt simply by being a listener during our long walks. If it was not literature, history or politics, it was classical Carnatic music, for he was also my music teacher.

Though my marriage took me away from the natal home, we corresponded regularly and my parents spent all their holidays with us. My studies and writing were shaped by father in every way. I never failed to marvel at the manner in which he worked long hours, writing, typing, and correcting. He was the Ideal Scholar and role model for my brother Ambirajan and me. For us, as indeed for almost everyone who came in close contact with him, he contained continents. He was a great letter-writer too and corresponded with some of the famous names of the twentieth century.

I hope the present monograph will give the reader an idea of the large body of his literary work, and its particular significance to life and letters. There are other areas in which he excelled too: as a teacher, educationist, editor and commentator. All this and more will have to wait for space in a publication with larger scope.

I may mention here that my mother used to help with the proofs for my father's publications and was herself a writer and

translator. It gives me some satisfaction that she read the earlier chapters before passing away in May 2007 and was happy that I was engaged in this task.

My thanks are due to my daughters Ahana and Bhuvana and son Raja who went through the entire manuscript and suggested improvements. My grateful thanks are also due to my husband Nandakumar and sister-in-law Prabha Ambirajan for the love and care they brought to my parents. Dr. Ila Rao (my father's student and my teacher) and other members of my extended family have been very enthusiastic about this publication. To all of them, my thanks.

Prema Nandakumar

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K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar (1908-1991) was an Acharya in the great Indian tradition. After teaching in Valvetitani (Sri Lanka), Belgaum and Bagalkot, he moved to Andhra University, Waltair, Andhra Pradesh in 1947 as Professor of English, and was Vice-Chancellor during 1966-68. Elected Vice-President, Sahitya Akademi in 1969, he retired as Acting President in 1978. Recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award, the B.C. Roy Award and the Kalidas Nag Award, he was elected Fellow of the Sahitya Akademi in 1985. Widely traveled in India and abroad, he was Visiting Professor of English at the University of Leeds in 1959, and received the Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, from the Sri Venkateswara and the Andhra Universities.

Dr. Iyengar was a scholar and a prolific writer. His works include the standard biographies of Sri Aurobindo, and the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and critical studies of Lytton Strachey, G.M. Hopkins, Shakespeare and Francois Mauriac. Some of his learned articles have been collected in *The Adventure of Criticism*, *Mainly Academic*, *Dawn to Greater Dawn* and *Two Cheers for the Commonwealth*. His authoritative and comprehensive *Indian Writing in English* reveals his strivings as the founder of a new discipline in Indian letters. He made his mark as a translator too and has rendered into English Basaveswara, Tiruvalluvar and Tirumoolar. His translation of Valmiki's *Sondara Kanda* has been published as *The Epic Beautiful*.

It was in the seventies that Prof. Iyengar turned to writing serious poetry. Apart from anthologies of short poems like *Trust with the Divine*, he also wrote the epics *Sitayana*, *Sati Saphthakam* and the *Bhagavata*-inspired *Krishna Geetam*.

Prema Nandakumar (b. 1939) obtained her Ph.D for her study of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. A creative writer, critic and translator, she writes both in Tamil and English. Her recent publication is an English translation of the ancient Tamil ethical text, *Eladi*.

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