

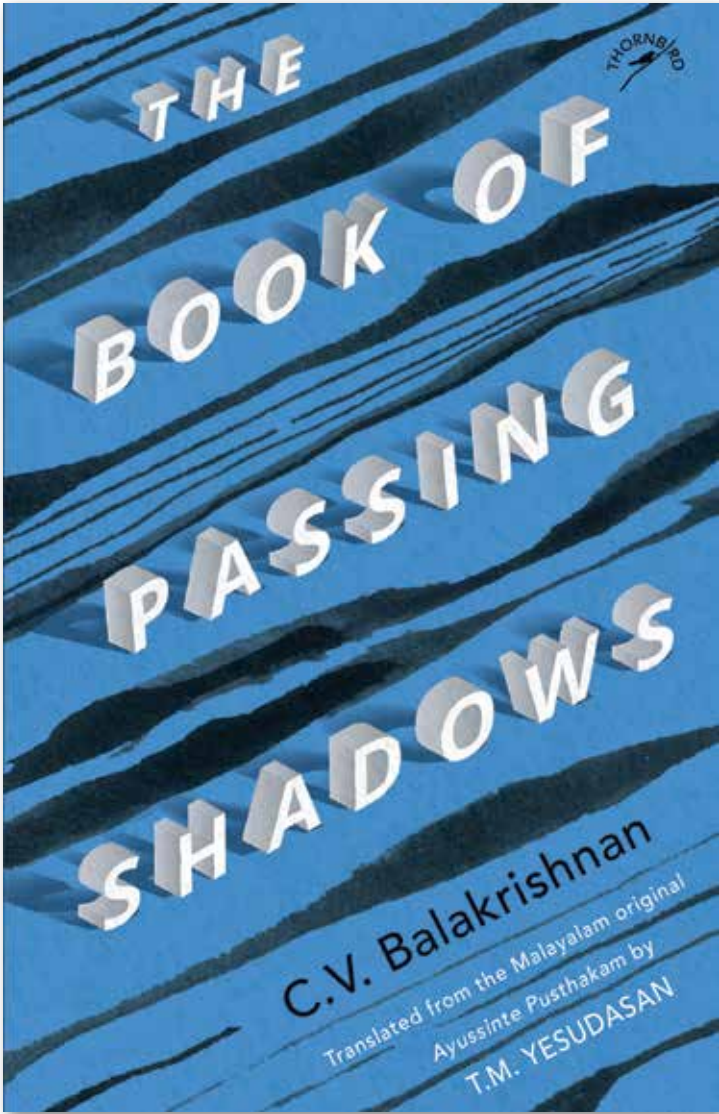
# The Book of Passing Shadows

C.V. Balakrishnan

Translated By T.M. Yesudasan

*A narrative that has the power to take you through the deepest of human emotions ever felt.*

*A tale of love—love for one's partner, for God, for family, for life—one that will surely evoke your love for reading.*



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TRANSLATION

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**Emotionally intense and spiritually evoking, a tale narrated from the heart.**

Set in a Malabar village of Christian settlers, *The Book of Passing Shadows*, translated from the Malayalam original *Ayussinte Pusthakam*, tells the story of a family's fall from grace, and their journey to redemption.

As the narrative unravels against the wider inner conflict between bodily temptations and spiritual aspirations, the sins of one generation seem to visit ominously upon the next. Through his journey from an innocent childhood to a ruined adolescence, Yohannan loses everyone he knows as 'family'—a father who is a convicted felon, a grieving mother who passes away while her husband is in prison, an elder sister with prospects who elopes to build a better life, a grandfather who embraces death after committing a sin, and a best friend and lover who chooses religion over a domestic life. The only solace he finds is in the loving companionship of a grieving widow, Sara, who has been equally wronged by fate and unbundles her woes with him.

Faith plays a pivotal role—provides a mythical, ethical, and moral scaffolding of this heart-rending novel, which resonates with the agony and pathos of the human spirit caught in the travails of earthly life.

Written in a sublime style made lyrical with a biblical cadence and rich in scriptural allusions, this passionate and visionary narrative has remained popular with readers since it was first published in 1984.

**C.V. Balakrishnan** is the author of more than thirty books: novels, short story collections, screenplays, and essays. He has received several awards including the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award for the best novel and the Kerala State Film award for the best book on film studies.

**T.M. Yesudasan** is a former associate professor and head, Department of English, CMS College, Kottayam. He has contributed to journals and anthologies on literary and cultural studies including the collection, *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India*.



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## Extract from the book

The earth wailed. The heavens above darkened. There was no lamp on the veranda. Yohannan was in the kitchen with Annie. Whenever the fire in the hearth began to die, one of them poked the firewood a little to keep it alive. Thoma stood outside silently for a long time, watching the fire burn. When Yohannan began to nod off, Annie said to him, 'Have your supper and go to bed.'

She served him some leftover rice and dried-fish curry.

'Did Grandpa eat?' Yohannan asked.

A shot was heard from the riverbank. She looked at Yohannan with fright. He understood her frightened look. Some poachers were out hunting a tusker.

'*Chechi*, you also come with me.'

'No, I'm not hungry.'

'Then, I will eat only after Grandpa has eaten.'

'Go and fetch him then.'

'*Chechi* also come with me.'

Yohannan marched in the front, carrying the kerosene lamp. He was seized by an irrational fear as he stepped out into the veranda. Annie held on to his shoulder. On the coir bed set across the southern part of the veranda, Paolo lay wrapped from head to foot in a blanket; he was shivering, as if infected with typhoid. Drawing near, Yohannan called him.

He pulled the blanket from his face. He looked at them with the pathos of a dying man. His face was swollen from the beating. His eyes seemed too small to be seen.

After looking at them sorrowfully for a while, he said in a faltering voice, 'Children, you may go.'

As they turned and walked back, they heard heaving sobs from the darkness behind them. Yohannan involuntarily caught hold of a corner of Annie's skirt in fear. When he sat down again for supper, he felt no appetite at all.

'What are you thinking? The food is getting cold,' said Annie.

'*Chechi*, don't you remember the day our mother died? That evening...' His voice dropped to a whisper.

'Please eat your rice instead of thinking this and that.'

'*Chechi*, you also eat.'

They ate from the same plate as they used to when they were little. Their hands moved mechanically, and they were silent till the plate was empty. The only sound in the dead silence came from the jingle of Annie's bangles.