

## AN INTERVIEW WITH LAVANYA SANKARAN: A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

*Srihari Rao Bathula, Research Scholar, Andhra University, Faculty in English,  
Sri Viswasanthi Educational Institutes, Vuyyuru, Near Vijayawada, AP*

**Abstract:**

*Indian women writers have been exploring feminine subjectivity and dealing with themes that range from childhood to complete womanhood. The women wings started to fight against the atrocities done to them. The modern women groups have started only to fight for the reason of quest for their identity as equal members of the men dominated society. Women's writing in India has seen a galaxy of women writers with much more quality and depth in projecting a vision of their own. One is aware that patriarchal traditions of India have kept feminism from becoming a widely apprehended phenomenon. The new women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring self-sacrificing women, towards searching for identity. A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships.*

**Key Words:** *Feminine, subjectivity, womanhood, identity.*

**WHO IS LAVANYA?**

Lavanya Sankaran has joined the galaxy of these women writers as a voice for the voiceless. Her works, *The Hope Factory* (2013) and *The Red Carpet* (2005) have got several awards and were world-wide acclaimed. Her writing style is compared to that of Charles Dickens by the British Press. Lavanya Sankaran seeks to establish equal opportunities for women on par with men economically, personally and socially. All her characters reveal her passion for identity. Her writing remains a living example and her characters move around one sometimes making him/her be part of those characters.

She travels into the lives of the common man, industrialists, their families, labourers, children deprived of care and love, slum-dwellers' pathetic conditions of living, domestic violence, the quest for identity of every educated and uneducated. *The Hope Factory* is an inspiration to women who face hurdles in making themselves fit to be a part of this patriarchal society.

She is also a social activist speaking out against the caste system, rape and political corruption in India. She writes articles in the leading newspapers and in her blog.

*This interview is carried out to deal with the quest for identity in the works of Lavanya Sankaran. Each of her women characters aims at securing a protective identity of individuality, freedom and independence. These issues are the main aspects where Indian women still crave for redemption. She sees gender inequalities as rooted in the attitudes of the social and cultural institutions.*

**Q.1. Kamala has never succumbed to the patriarchy. Nowhere in the novel *The Hope Factory* she has expressed her sorrow for her plight. Comment.**

**Lavanya :** I think Kamala expresses a part of myself which I find very valuable. She is actually a beacon of light for me in my life. When I think of Kamala she is very much the kind of person which I would like to be.

**Q.2. Is she a beacon of light to those women who still compromise with their fate?**

**Lavanya:** So when I think it's not so much whether she is inspiration for others, for some men and some women, but she is very much inspiration for me as she struggles to live a decent life with her only son wanting to lay a good future for him.

**Q.3. Fine. Can we say The Hope Factory is an autobiographical work?**

**Lavanya:** No. No. No character in my fiction is autobiographical because what I try and do is I gain inspiration from the world around. Each fictional character is crafted to become their own complete being very separate from any one in real life.

**Q.4. Are Kamala and Shanta victims of subjugation and men dominance? Both have a common problem of being neglected by men.**

**Lavanya:** I think the primary issue in both their life is that economic difficulty. Yes, of course they are facing issues of by being not necessarily supported by men specially Shanta by her son or husband. It does not sound like being supported by women either.

**Q.5. Can you please elaborate on why Shanta becomes an enemy to other women, specially Kamala?**

**Lavanya:** Shanta is facing extreme difficulties which is why she is also a difficult personality. She does not give kindness to anyone because she has not received kindness from anyone. So I would love to see shanta. if she had proper economic life, if she had money, if she had love and affection how would she be different.

**Q.6. Are Kamala and Thangam be compared as the beacons of liberty to the suffering women in India as these two women want to lead an independent life?**

**Lavanya:** I think there is an interesting relationship between these two characters because there is generation gap. See, Thangam is much younger to Kamala. Kamala comes from a slightly old fashioned perspective. She has a son to bring him up. This is her biggest dream. That is only her dream. Whereas Thangam without children, without marriage, she is very clear that she doesn't want to get into the same trap as she sees someone like either Kamala has, Shantha has. She has her own dream just because she is a younger generation. She is finding different ways because we see it in younger generations.

**Q.7. The socialite who jumped from hotel roof in Delhi seems to be a real story of a famous politician as per my research. How do you relate this to your story?**

**Lavanya:** As per the suicide or so it was inspired by a real life event because I want to show that relationship that, you know, someone like Sita in **The Red Carpet**, who comes from a background of full of integrity and ambition about her future. It is about how in the darkest moments of our lives there is that difficult moment which we can adjust. And that is the story about the Sita as well. On the day when she wants to kill herself like her father instead she steps away to survival.

**Q.8. Can we conclude that men are always like pouncing tigers waiting for a prey like Ramu in Mysore Coffee?**

**Lavanya:** I hope not. (laugh) I am a firm believer in the humanity of human beings. I think Ramu is a negative character. He, in particular someone who doesn't reflect on himself. He spends more time thinking about and evaluating other people. He doesn't evaluate himself. So whenever he appears in story, he slightly the person that we all know someone like him who thinks very highly about himself and jump to judge other people. So he is that person. I think he would be that way either he is male or female. So that is his nature.

**Q.9. No Woman protagonist in The Hope Factory and The Red Carpet express their discouragement even though they are victims of various factors. What do you want convey through these women characters?**

**Lavanya:** All these women are just an inspiration for me. When I think about them even someone like Shanta I don't feel so separate from my life. If I didn't have kindness in my life, how would I be? So I think to say that the most difficult of circumstances I should be able to say what now can I do about it? This actually not an attribute that I aspired to have unsuccessfully.

**Q.10. How do you evaluate Indian society?**

**Lavanya:** I feel a characteristic of India. When we look at the Indian society, people have gone through such amazing difficulties culturally, historically, economically. Yet we find that Indians would smile.

There is kindness. You know, we show love to each other. So this is the characteristic that is part of our culture. That is something that I want to tell you. The positive thing is, whatever happens, we laugh about it, we make jokes about it, we sing a song about it. Then we get up and make a plan about it.

**Q.11. When is your next book hitting the market?**

**Lavanya:** (Laugh...) nice that you are asking me like my publisher. The time speaks all that.

Thank you so much for allotting your busy schedule for me. I only wish May your tribe grow to become a voice for the suffering women in our country. Let your pen remain mightier.....

**Lavanya:** My Pleasure such a great pleasure to have a chat with you. I wish you the same.



**Work Cited:**

1. Lavanya, Sankaran. *The Hope Factory*. The Bantan Dell Publishing Group; London: 2013.
2. \_\_\_\_\_. *The Red Carpet*. Headline Book Publishing; London. 2005.
3. Sathupati Prasanna Sree. "Woman in the novels of Sahshi Deshpande: A Study", Dissertation Submitted to Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visva Vidyalayam. Tirupathi. 1999.