



Asian Thumbprint in Global Literature

“My extended stay in Sri Lanka changed my perception” -Jean-Paul Faure- Author of Back to Jaffna

By [Pramudith D Rupasinghe](#) on [11 Oct 2021](#)
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His contribution to the French literary scene is invaluable; as a novelist, he has conquered francophone readership worldwide, and he did not stop there. Dr Jean-Paul Faure translates Asian literature into French, especially, work of Sri Lankan authors with whom he has a particular affiliation. The country where he served over four years as a diplomat. With great pleasure, The Asian Review welcome Dr Jean-Paul Faure for our weekly guest interview, “literary Speaking.”

A.R: You are an ex-diplomat, academic, author, and translator. Can you tell our readers about your journey as an author and how has different professions you have been involved in enriched your literary work?

J.P.F: What most nourished my taste for literature was reading from my childhood. When I was a child, my mother ran a stationery shop, a bookstore with many books, magazines and newspapers. And so, I was able to devour freely many books, and in particular comic books and detective novels. During my youth, I lived in a boarding school in a big city to study far from my village and spent my long moments of solitude reading. Later, my professional life as a teacher-led me to a more academic writing style. It was only towards the end of my professional activities that I developed a taste for free writing. Knowing that you have a treasure trove of stories and narratives and that all you have to do is let them blossom is an absolute revelation and a great adventure.

A.R: Your first two literary fictions are “Crissements de sable”-*Sand Squeaks*, and “Béziers, à Contre-Allées” *Béziers, A walk aside*, remain notable. Both of them has been translated into English and one in Spanish. Can you elaborate on the storylines, what made you write them, and their outreach?

J.P.F: In *Sand Squeaks*, sand grains squeal, spinning in the wind, and recompose themselves to write new stories. The desert is an unfinished book—a kind of palimpsest, this old parchment that one had to scratch to write a new text. I wrote thirteen short stories. It begins with a shovelful of fine grains: ordinary and touching scenes of oasis life with the short stories Tamat, The Argan Tree

and Bolero. Then sand flows and crystallizes. The conflicts of civilization and culture appear with the stories Oasis and Before the sea. And the wind still blows in the desert and also carries the death; it is the Blue Jerboa. Farther on, the sandbanks and the giant slabs of fossils trap the men: it is The Bald Ibises and terrorism. Clouds full of mineral dust melt on the city with their breath of torment from the sky: it is Khadija and modern slavery. After the storm, we hear the desert fauna waking up: follows a fable on political discourse with The Twittering Warblers. Still, prisoners of the arid immensity, men flee misery: it is Moussa and immigration. Blinded by their idols and their masters, they massacre each other: it is Call of Duty. History and knowledge promised to the nothingness are saved from the ignominy: it is Yéya. The book closes on an opaque misfortune where man is stuck, with: I am.

Words, sand and emotions, to dare new adventures, illuminated by hope and love. I wrote Sand Squeaks to treat with delicacy the hard and complex themes that we go through today.

Béziers, *A walk aside* proposes an intimate journey in the fabulous city setting. Far from clichés, this collection is a series of eleven singular portraits where poetry, psychology and society matched. Béziers offers, in echo to his characters, its fantastic hidden face. At the Plateau des Poètes (poet's park) we discover a poor woman. She lost her man. And her faith in love provides an

unexpected revival to her. At the Café de Plaisance, Pablo, a taciturn man, understands what inner strength can reveal. Then, at the Lafayette Galleries, Wanglen, a mute little girl, finally pronounces her first life words. We narrowly escape the catastrophe at Capitol. In-Place de la Madeleine, Bernard finds a little bit of paradise and a big piece of hell. Since Guantanamo, the former Lycée Henri IV student dreams of giving his speech of redemption. And at Saint Aphrodite Street, José, the old gipsy, is in prey with cops; he fears to be on the arrest one last time. Farther on, in the bullring, Julio faces his last bull. Then, in the old cemetery, the buried leave their eternal rest guided by freedom. They wake up joyfully to enter the city. Then, Fleur, the Lida Market employee located on the outskirts, illuminates Florian with her innocent grace. Finally, Claude, a rugby lover, suddenly disappears while his princess desperately searches for him.

All these characters face social or psychological torments in a city that accompanies them and talk with its poetry.

A.R: “Retour à Jaffna”- *Back to Jaffna* is a revealing piece of writing. Can you tell us a bit about this book?

J.P.F: *Back to Jaffna* is Lunna’s journey. A woman with determination, in search of a man she knows only through his literature. It is also a social and human adventure and a singular, intimate and

frank country depiction: Sri Lanka. Lunna Kacew becomes responsible for the French Alliances while Sri Lanka is still in civil war, for now, several decades. A period of cease-fire and peace talks crops up. Luna's commitment led her to cross this territory to discover Jaffna, a partly destroyed city. On the traces of French culture, she searches for links and survivors. A relationship of esteem and honour, perhaps of love, leads her to find Sandana Poninbalham, former head of the French Alliance in Jaffna. He left, before his disappearance, photos, letters and very endearing literary texts.

A.R: Your connection with Sri Lanka is not limited to one book, you lived in Sri Lanka, and you have built lasting friendships and relationships with the Island. How has Sri Lanka influenced your writing?

I lived for four years in Sri Lanka, where I was responsible for the Alliance française in Colombo, Kandy, Matara, and the Maldives. I still have many friends and I try to visit them for a short trip. My extended stay in Sri Lanka allowed me to get involved in a different culture and to change my own perception. Living in a country during a civil war and facing disasters such as tsunami has radically changed my way of being in the world.

A.R: You are an author, as well as a translator. What is more difficult and why?

J.P.F: During the Covid 19 crisis, I must admit that my need to write was strangely diminished. On the other hand, the more technical and altruistic translation allowed me to face this difficult period with more ease, desire and serenity.

A.R: The Asian Review has outreach in all the continents, therefore in case our viewers want to buy your books, where can they buy them?

J.P.F: Many possibilities are offered free of charge from my website: diary, biography, literary texts, French as a foreign language exercise, poems, audio, video eBooks, booklets, interviews etc. <http://www.jeanpaulfaure.com> However, most of my books are available on Amazon in both French and English.

A.R: We are pleased to have you with us, Dr Faure; what is your message to the budding authors and translators around the world.

I have often given many lessons during my teaching career; today, I hesitate to give them so easily. Just one thing still remains: please yourself!