



## *‘Getting to know you more’* *Featuring ... Mr. Rasaya Marimuthu*

### **In Retrospect: A Retirement Interview with Rasaya Marimuthu**

*by Nazima Versay Kudus*

**1. Please describe your work history, beginning with your first job.**

I started my teaching career as a secondary school English language teacher in 1988 after undergoing training at the Language Institute, KL. My first posting was at a state Islamic Religious School in a remote part of Pahang, in a place called Padang Tengku. Two years later, I was transferred to a government funded Secondary School - SM Padang Tengku. After 6 years, upon my application to return closer to my parents, I was posted to SM Mahang in Kulim, Kedah. In 1994, I left to pursue my TESL degree in UPM and upon my return, was posted to another rural school in Kedah, in the district of Sik – SMK Jeneri, and then on to SMK Bakai in Baling. In 2003, I was offered and accepted the post of Educational Technology lecturer at the Teachers Training College of Perlis, as I had then completed my M. Ed. (Edu. Tech.). Later the same year, I joined UiTM as an English language lecturer in its Dungun Campus. In late 2008, I managed to get a transfer to its Penang Campus and have been here ever since.

**2. What inspired you to become a language lecturer?**

On a frank note, teaching was never my preferred vocation at one time, let alone being an English language teacher. It was at the insistence of my family that I had applied to pursue a career in teaching. However, I have always had this knack for the English language from very early on and excelled in the subject, despite the fact that Tamil was fully used at home and studying in the full Malay medium. I was an avid reader of Reader's Digest and other English language materials back then. I must say that my real love for the English language started in college while undergoing my training and upon exposure to the intricacies and nuances of the language. There was no turning back after that – I wanted to excel as an English teacher. I just enjoyed the process of teaching the language to my pupils, in creative ways.

**3. What would you say are your greatest personal and/or professional strengths today?**

I would view both my personal and professional strength as my ability to be able to communicate well with others. I always think of myself as a team player, working in harmony with anyone with as little or no friction as possible. Making adjustments and compromises when interacting with others is a big part of achieving success in any organisation. Thus, I have never hesitated to compromise when the situation warrants it.

**4. What were the greatest challenges you faced at work? What advice would you have for other employees facing similar challenges?**

Challenges? It has always been of time constraints. There's always so much you want to do and achieve but never had the time to accomplish all of them. In most cases, it's all about prioritising the more immediate and pressing goals at the expense of the lesser ones. My advice to others: time is a constant, it can never be stretched, nor expanded. Use your better judgement to work towards your goals, using your discretionary powers. It's impossible to achieve everything that you wish for all the time. There are times we've to learn to let go of some.

**5. What have been the most significant changes in work culture since you started? Which changes were for the better? What do you wish hadn't changed?**

The work environment and culture has certainly changed considerably from the day I started. For example, it's impossible to work in silos anymore. Every job that's entrusted upon us requires a team effort. Gone were the days, when we could single-handedly accomplish any given task. We are all sum of the parts and together we strive for common excellence. While it's important to prove our individual worth, it's more important to establish ourselves as team players. We continuously evolve as a system. As such, change is unavoidable. What is more important is how we adapt ourselves to these changes. What I wish hadn't and wouldn't change is emphasis on human values and its importance. At the end of the day, we are all imperfect human beings always seeking to improve ourselves in more than one way.

**6. Describe the characteristics of the co-workers with whom you most enjoyed working.**

Generally, in all my years of experience here, I have had a cordial working relationship with everyone around me. I must say that coming to work and engaging in the work process while interacting with everyone, be it at the department level or higher has always been an interesting and learning experience for me. It is not fair for me to say or dictate that I only enjoy working with a person of a particular trait. That would be building unrealistic expectations, and it could work both ways. So, my mantra has always been to have a working relationship minus personal expectations. Mutual respect and acceptance are essential in the name of collegiality. I guess that solves a lot of problems and also avoids conflicts on all sides.

**7. Have you or do you plan to continue scholarly activities post retirement? Tell me about these activities, and why or why not?**

I certainly do. Although I have been lagging in that, I have always had a penchant for writing, academically speaking. It's been some time now since I had last published as the lead author of any paper. I do not want to blame this on any one factor – being too busy? distracted? procrastination? On a more serious note, YES, I intend to write more. Of course, not to meet

*continued on the next page ...*

my KPIs. At least, writing and publishing just for the sake of enjoying the process would be a reward in itself, and that's exactly what I intend to do upon my retirement.

**8. What other activities have you engaged in or plan to engage in during retirement? Why?**

Actually, I'm a little apprehensive about planning for my post-retirement. Witnessing a few close friends who have retired in the past, I've realised that over-planning or being too ambitious about the things that you want to do after retirement can backfire. Thus, I intend to tread more cautiously. Having said that, I hope not to lose touch with my academic bearing – academic reading & writing. Leisure reading is also in the plans, I've not been doing much reading of late, but I do have a large collection waiting to be read. Of course, health becomes a priority too and I hope to keep myself in the best shape possible. Now that the pandemic is almost over, I wish to travel more and visit places that I've always dreamt of.

**9. What will you miss most about the ALS' fraternity?**

In all my 20 years at UiTM (14 years in this campus), I've grown to enjoy the company. While not discounting working under stress and extreme demands at times, life has been cool on the most part. This is largely due to the fact that we could all work as one big happy family. So, to answer your question, the thing that I'll miss most about the ALS fraternity is being able to work together with everyone, regardless of their position. This has been evident through the many successful projects that we have accomplished together in the past.

**10. What are your hopes for our organisation?**

I believe our department is in good hands, while ably supported by the other members. So, there's little cause for concern or worry. We are moving in the right direction. I see a strong sense of esprit de corp among the department staff. There's a strong and healthy blend of experience and enthusiasm between the older staff and the younger ones. This bodes well for the future of our department. Finally, it is my hope that our department will achieve greater heights in all possible aspects and become the standard bearer among all the other departments and faculties here in UiTM CPP. I wish everyone the best of luck and keep on striving in pursuit of excellence.

Some sentiments from the team...

**Assoc. Prof. Dr Rofiza Abou Bakar** - Hadirnya menyenangkan, Budi pekerti indah nian, APB akan kehilangan, Sebutir permata kesayangan

**Lim Teck Heng** - Resourceful, Accountable, Selfless, Amicable, Youthful, Admirable → that's RASAYA

**Muhammad Aiman Abdul Halim** - Mr. Rasaya is a true embodiment of lifelong learning. I got to know him as he was nearing his retirement age, but his adaptability and passion for utilising the latest technology in his work is really inspiring and made me realise that age is no barrier to education and self-improvement.

**Emily Jothee Mathai** - Over the years I recognized him to be a very responsible, reliable, hardworking, helpful, polite and a straightforward person. He's been great to work with and thank you for being a friend.

**Some pictures from my collection:**



*Me and my small family*

*While on holiday in Bali prior to the pandemic*



*With some of the APB guys*



*Degree students from the previous semester*



*With my current PreDiploma students*