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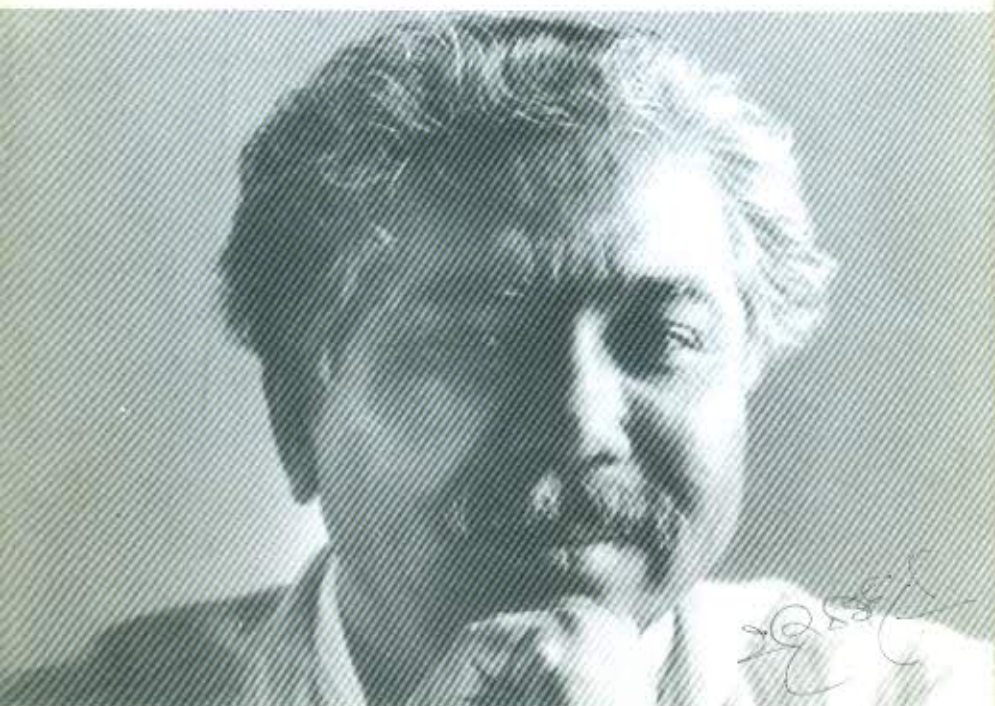


India International Centre

invite you to

meet the author

Chandrasekhara Kambar





Chandrasekhara Kambar, one of the leading dramatists in the country today, is also a great poet, folklorist, novelist and researcher. A multi-faceted genius in creative writing, Kambar is a living legend in the poetry inspired by folk tradition, particularly the folklore and mythology of Northern Kannada. 'After Bendre, Kambar represents for us the genius of the folk imagination', says U.R. Anantha Murthy.

Born in 1937 in Ghodgeri village in Belgaum district, Karnataka, Chandrasekhara Kambar took his initial schooling in a *salimath* (traditional school) and later his Masters' degree and Ph.D from Karnataka University, Dharwad. Soon after his studies, he started teaching in the university. After a brief stint of teaching in the University of Chicago, he taught in Bangalore University for more than two decades. He became the first Vice-Chancellor of Karnataka University, Hampi before his retirement in 1998.

A poet at heart, Kambar's corpus of literary achievements include 22 plays, eight collections of poetry,

three novels, 12 research works and several articles on folk theatre, literature and education.

Kambar is a natural poet. He perceives the world with a poet's eyes. *Mugulu* is his first poetry collection published in 1958 when he was 21 years. His next published work was *Helatena Kela* (1964), his first long poem — a folk narrative steeped in folk culture drawn from his soil. Even after twenty-five years, Kambar finds that most of his writing is thematically connected with this poem. His third collection of poems *Takarinaravaru* (1971) that received Kannada Sahitya Akademi Award, presents a variety of moods and tones. *Savirada Neralu* (1979) which won the Kumaran Asan Award is a collection of songs. *Ayda Kavanagalu* (1980), *Belli Meenu* (1989) *Akkakku Haadugale* (1993) are some of his other poetry collections. *Ivaregina Helatena Kela*, a collection of poems published in 1993, shows Kambar as a creator of his own world of experience and images that draw much from folklore and myth, 'a world uncharted by the Navodaya as well as the Navya movements in Kannada. Within this world peripheral to the mainstream modernism, Kambar creates an astonishing variety of forms, themes and concerns', according to K. Satchidanandan. His latest work *Chakori* is a folk epic unique in its narrative and linguistic richness. H.S. Shiva Prakash, a fellow

playwright finds in *Chakori*, 'Akkamahadevi's passionate intensity, Allama's mystical glow, the profound simplicity of Sarvagna's triplets and the lyrical sweetness of Kannada folk songs.'

Alongside poetry, Kambar has also been a prolific playwright. He started writing plays at a time when the search for a non-realistic theatre was gathering strength in Karnataka. *Bembattida Kannu*, is his first play and was followed by 21 other plays. To mention a few: *Narcissus* (1969), *Rishyasringa* (1970), *Jokumaraswamy* (1972), *Jaisidanayaka* (1975), which won Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award and Vardhamana Prasasti Award and *Siri Sampige* which received the Sahitya Akademi Award. His latest plays are *Huliya Neralu* (1990), *Pushpa Rani* (1990) and *Mahamayi* (1999).

Kambar draws inspirations from folk myths and folk literature for his experiments. 'Over the years, he

has perfected a symbolic form which effectively communicates his vision of man and human conditions through a theatrical language which derives its vitality from the life of the people and is yet distinctively individual', says G.S. Amur. The true significance of his early plays like *Narcissus* and *Rishyasringa* was not grasped at the time when they appeared, but later plays like *Jokumaraswamy* and *Siri Sampige* have made a tremendous impact on contemporary theatre.

Kambar draws upon the rich resources from popular speech and folklore with effortless ease. His approach to poetry, according to Girish Karnad, is 'through the ballad rather than the lyric; the imagery is the action, the metaphor serves to resonate the narrative at different levels'.

Kambar says his theatre is a part of his poetry. Since childhood, he used to be involved in folk theatre. It



Facing the Infinite

— Photographed by M.T. Vasudevan Nair



With his wife Satyabhama

was a sort of refuge for him where he could hide from his parents and escape into the colours of folk theatre. While talking of his creative process and the folk tradition ingrained in him, Kambar says, 'Indeed my sense of environment, the manner in which I relate my environment both in time and space are stories, fantasies, the images I use... I give character to environment and receive character as a poet.' He believes that the writer always deals with his sense of time and space. He draws his texture of experience mainly from his sense of place that forms the main core of his writing.

His contribution to fiction is no less outstanding. His novels *Karimayi* (1975) and *Singaravva mattu Aramane* (1982), are impressive works of fiction that document the tremors resulting from the clash of the old and the new. M.T. Vasudevan Nair finds Kambar unique in that he is modern and innovative even when he is drawing

from the inexhaustible repertoire of the conventional storyteller.

Kambar has made 10 feature films and 14 documentaries and composed music for 6 feature films, several documentaries and tele-series. His film *Kadukudure* entered the Indian Panorama in the 1987 National Film Festival and won the National Award. His film *Sangeeta* won the third Best Feature Film State Award in 1981.

Besides his voluminous research works, Kambar has presented papers on Indian folklore and theatre in the University of Chicago, American Oriental Center, New York, International Theatre Institute - Berlin, Moscow, Jade: Akita Japan and many universities and cultural organisations in India. The folklore dictionary in Kannada he compiled for Kannada Sahitya Parishad is a monumental work.

Many of Kambar's works have been translated and published in English and other Indian languages. Widely travelled, he has participated in World Poetry Festivals in 1985 and 1996.

Winner of several awards and honours for his literary and theatrical excellence, he was honoured with Padmashree by the Government of India in 2001.

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A CHRONOLOGY

1937	Birth	1983-1987	Chairman, Karnataka Natak Sahitya Academy
1958	First poetry collection <i>Mugulu</i> published	1991	Sahitya Akademi Award for his play <i>Siri Sampige</i>
1961	Brought out his first play <i>Bembattida Kannu</i>	1991-1998	Vice-Chancellor, Kannada University
1968-1969	Fullbright Scholar	1992-1996	Member, Sangeet Natak Akademi
1968-1970	Taught in the University of Chicago	1996-2000	Chairman, National School of Drama
1971	Received Kannada State Academy Award	1998	Member, Sahitya Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi
1975	Kamala Chattopadhyaya Award	2001	Padmashree from Government of India
1982	Kumaran Asan Award		



Receiving Padmashree from the President of India K.R. Narayanan, 2001