

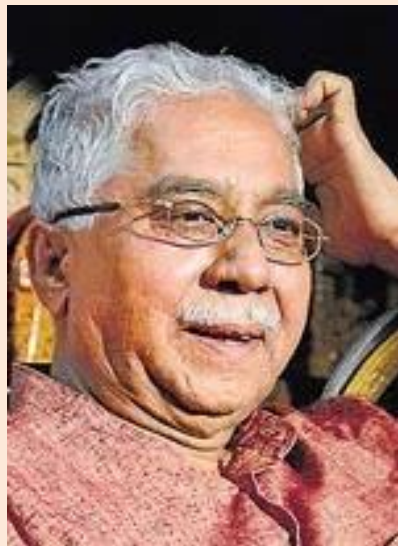


NATYA SHODH SANSTHAN

An Interview of
'Dr. Chandrasekhar Kambar'

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Recorded on 2nd. December, 1987



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প্রতিভা অগ্রবাল

আজ ২ ডিসেম্বর, সন ১৯৮৭, হম সংস্থানমে শ্রী চন্দ্রশেখর কাম্বারকে কার্যক্রম কি রেকর্ডিং কর রহে হ্যায়।

Samik Bandyopadhyay

We have great pleasure this evening in welcoming Dr. Chandrasekhar Kambar in our midst. It was with 'Jo Kumaraswamy' almost 14 years ago, that he came into prominence all over India. We read 'Jo Kumaraswamy' in translation a few years later and the original production by B.V. Karanth which is staged here once again after a long gap - The old production. He is already a part of India's theatre history. But last year I had the opportunity of seeing one of Kambar's later works, probably his latest work, Siri Sampige, in Delhi when we were having a workshop which had been arranged by the Ford Foundation and Kambar had been working on this project. It was a very exceptional and striking work because it was part of the scheme of the project, to try to experiment with tradition and in India, one of the problems that we have been facing for the last few years that whenever a director tries to work with tradition there is almost a kind of an outside pressure or compulsion, so that the end product looks extremely uneven with some contemporary themes and the traditional elements almost standing apart within the same show. And very often we have felt quite disturbed and felt quite unhappy with this kind of thing. So some of us who went to this workshop at Delhi were quite a number of Indian playwrights and directors would be showing the products of experimenting with tradition we had our fears and reservations. And Kambar's work, I have no reservation in saying that it was one of the most striking works, one of the finest achievements of this whole project. Because at one level he was using the Yakshagana with a fabulous Yakshagana actor, at the same time he was working with modern actors from a group and they gelled, merged so remarkably but more important as a playwright what Kambar had achieved was a more complex and I consider a much richer use of almost the same problem that Girish Karnad had once posed years ago in 'Hayavadana'. But much more complex, much richer, much more modern with more layers but with the same kind of a choice than emotional and moral choice getting mixed and merged and creating a crisis. It was a remarkable work which we all admire and it is always so rewarding in India to find somebody growing so excitingly from 'Jo Kumaraswamy' about fourteen years back to something like 'Siri Sampige'. And that made it very important for us to look forward to this occasion in

Calcutta when I came to know a few months earlier that Kambar was coming to Calcutta. He wrote me in a letter. We all got quite excited and invited him and he has been very kind to be with us this evening. And I have asked Kambar to speak on some of his experiences of playwriting.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Thank you Samik. Friends, I will narrate my experience of playwriting in two forms. So the paper is actually in two parts but it is not continuous work. So, bit by bit – in the first part I will say some words about the background of my works. How I started writing and all that. So, the second part I'll say what I do now with the words and all that. So this is how I - I belong geographically to a village and sociologically to what was considered to be an oppressed, uneducated class. I am therefore a folk person simply because I honestly cannot become anything else. The first long poem I wrote 'Helatena Kela' that is 'listen to me' was entirely drawn from my soil. The sheer comprehensiveness in opulence of the experience as it formed itself in 'Helatena Kela' have given me structures and approaches adequate to my most very



needs as an artist, as a man trying to articulate the creative urge of my people. I might make bold to state that the kind of folk medium which made 'Helatena Kela' possible, has made 'Jo Kumaraswamy' and other plays of mine impossible. I have a feeling which I endured these years, I endure hereafter that I am handling the – handling an art which is total. In my poem 'Helatena Kela', 'listen to me', I have expressed my anger and anguish and all my – all my unhappy feeling against Belgaum city which is situated near my village. For me the city in question, that is Belgaum, it

not only represented a demon, which was swallowing my village 'Shivapura' but also it represented the British, all their cruelty and their kind of modernity. In fact it is a unity of all these. In the story, the demon that represents Belgaum City enters the village in the garb of Gouda, the village chieftain, works as a crafting factor to destroy the integrity of the village. Then, I have written the next part of the 'Helatena Kela' - 'Helatena Kela' was a ballad form, and the next part, second part was in a folk theatre form – Bayalata form. In this part, the Gouda's son goes to the same city

of Belgaum to get an English education. On this side, in the village – the village gets no rain; there is draught, the village Goddess says that there would be rain in the village if Gouda’s son takes five steps in the village area. Gouda’s son comes from Belgaum and takes five steps in the area of Shivapura, but it doesn’t rain. Since it doesn’t rain, the folk say that the chap is not Gouda’s son. In that case, who am I? Whose son I am? Thus the chap starts seeking his identity – this is the theme of ‘Rishyashringa’ the second part of my ‘Helatena Kela’. It is an exploration on how one gets alienated to one’s own village after one’s education. This was the object of that play and the Bayalata form, folk theatre form, in which it was written, was also a part of that exploration. Though these two plays – two works were extrovert in their form, they were introvert in their themes. It was a result of an exploration on the question of how I lost myself. ‘Rishyashringa’ – though written in 1965, no one mounted it on the stage. It was because of its poetry, it posed a challenge that none in the Kannada scene came forward to accept the challenge and stage it until 1975. It was not until I came to Bangalore I realized the significance of drama as a performing art. By then I had visited America and its Broadway Theatre. There I had also seen the performance of Blake’s plays and the performance of the Living Theatre. But to me, none of these appeared to be new or innovative. Perhaps because I had already written ‘Rishyashringa’ in folk theatre forms. I am in the good discussions I had with my teacher A. K. Ramanujan. The confidence I rested in my Bayalatas became more and more. I did see a large number of folk theatres in my young age. But I saw them as a means to escape for my father was a blacksmith. He had a large family to maintain. But his profession could not meet the demands of the family. He had no conception of my future whatsoever. I showed no talent in my family’s profession that is blacksmith. I neither was a bright student in the school. The poverty we suffered in the family is not only a major problem of the family, but also a bitter experience to me. As such I used to immerse myself in folk theatre forgetting all my miseries in colors and rhythms of folk theatre. I used to imitate what I witness. Thus in my process of my escapism I became a playwright. When I returned to Bangalore from America I also realized that writing is not merely an act of self-dialogue or an act of introvert but something more than that involving a lot of responsibility. It was at this juncture I wrote the play ‘Jo Kumaraswamy’. Kundaranadu is the name given to the region in which my village falls under Belgaum District. Should I translate ‘Kundaru’ for your sake? It signifies ‘inferior variety’. An ardent admirer of my plays used to say that original name must have

been ‘Sundaranadu’ instead of ‘Kundaranadu’ meaning ‘beautiful place’. But I endorsed the title ‘Kundaranadu’ itself for my place is very well-known for its murders used to take place so often. Sanyukta Karnataka – a regional daily of my place used to publish the news items of the murders. But what appeared there was only a fraction of murders that took place in the daily paper. And whenever a news item of the murder of my place appeared in the paper, the folks of my village used to feel elated and became proud. And they used to feel happy by showing that news item to the folks of the neighboring villages. The murders were done for only two reasons – woman and land. The folks of the place were so sensitive on these two subjects that it had also become their point of weakness. Succeeding in these two matters was like a victory and failure was a matter of humiliation. Land and woman were the ultimate objects of their life. In the background of these two, there existed exploitation. Also in the eyes of the folks it is simple for a woman to go barren and leave the land barren. There are a number of stories which were on the elements of barrenness and for not getting the rain. There are also stories which say that either it rains fire or blood when the land in question becomes pregnant with seed. In such times of crisis, when the folks invoke the blessings of the Jo Kumaraswamy by worshipping him, it is hoped the Naxalite hero like Jo Kumaraswamy is born and he establishes the vigor and vitality of creation among the people again, the aspiration of which is represented in the play ‘Jo Kumaraswamy’. So this is the first one. Now I would like to read what I do with my words and how I write. I write – in writing I build what I feel. My feelings are my experiences and I build with words which are stories, pictures, and pieces of tales, all of which have been a part of my environment. Indeed my senses of environment, a manner in which I relate to my environment both in time and space of stories, the fantasies and the images I use. It is not as if I am trying to relate poetically with something that exists already outside. What exists outside is only an anonymous story like a dictionary – store like a dictionary. It is amorphous. The characterless and plural like bricks and mortar. My environment has simply to be mine. In order to make it mine I have to build it. I am in this task I give a character to my environment and receive a character as a poet. We make each other. I look around and I look into myself – both are possibly same process. What I find is always in terms of panic would – mad, joy, simmering cruelty, pain, dense growth, orgiastic sex, loneliness, unbelievable face by legend-like people in legend-like structures, all of which I celebrate – celebration is the primary mode of experience for me. Because the celebration has a musicality at one’s private and self

– the rhythm is at one’s primitive and contemporary - a blend of self and community. In celebrating I believe I am functioning as a myth-maker. Man was a child when he saw experience as myth. He being single tried to relate meaningfully to the plural, the inner-self and outside. The total nature of this attempt was myth which celebrated his effort in terms of all round fertility. Man was younger and so did not abstract and philosophise. Myth celebrates philosophy contemplates. The mythical episteme is one of recognition as growth. The philosophical episteme is one of reduction of many into one - the many manifestations and a single essence. As a poet, I accept plurality in all its richness. The myth is alive in India because we still bargain with our Gods and walk among them. Our moods of worship were essentially participatory rituals in which man and the super humans are both parts of the same structure. In this, we are a truly mythical people. To be a poet, truly of my soil, I have to be mythical. How do I relate with my times? I am aware of my moments like modernism, with its insistent rejection of everything that is facile and is lacking in integrity. I am also aware of the profound influence it has had on the some of the excellent writers in contemporary Kannada literature. Indeed I think a small part of my own writing it shows the influence also. Standing at this distance however today, I wonder if structures of modernism as it came to us from the West are necessary springs in the task that I have of relating with my environment. Yelled at its rootlessness existentialist I need sense of the absurd, the European search for the primitive and arlone like ?– are pone like attempt could trace and locate the lineament of content. The modern Western sense of alienation from farce to hippies I concede the legitimacy of all these but I wonder if I can borrow them unthinkably – thinkingly as my own structures. Are not these profound problems of being more fundamental and therefore more universal than the structures in which the great Europeans saw them, the writers always deals with the sense of his time and again with sense of his space. Indeed there are two great parameters governing the writer and it is impossible to separate them fully. I would like to look at them from my standpoint as a writer working today in this country. I draw my structure – texture of experience mainly from my sense of place. It forms the main core of my writing. It use me every ingredient of texture, it encompasses time, well, not only my time, but other kinds of facts – fictional but meaning to time. I am a bit suspicious of him, insists them on the sense of time. It is abstract and could be neurotic in writer, the pathetic list to be up with the wisest result of such a neurosis, a part of our unfortunate colonial heritage. To the writer as to the painter and a sculptor, place is

a primary experience - real and pressing. Whereas time as a sense is more of a notion, perhaps I am simplifying the contrast somewhat. But this – a way in which I like to describe my own writing thus learned discussion about the differences between the contemporary and the modern art somewhat remote from the concrete up my creativity and of my time and unavoidably - as unavoidably as my place. The relative stresses that I feel decide the character of my writing and distinguish it from those - my peer writers in Kannada. Environment to me comes importantly and primarily as a sense of place. My insistent relationship with place has something to do with my social background also. I do not belong to an upper - meaning Sanskritized caste. Hence I am distant from the contrast central to the upper caste inheritance - time, eternity, appearance, essence, Janma, moksha etc. Not being burdened by these basically time based structure I am a child with a child's illiterate fascination of powerful immediacies of sense. A vivid and opulent sense of the many is at the very centre of my grasp of experience. Hence I feel an easy conceive with the myth making sensibility. In a sense, that this advantage of not belonging to an upper caste has helped me enormously. My people, illiterate and oppressed, sank vividness in order to preserve its experience. Sensuous memory was indeed all knowledge to them. And so when literature and writing came to me there's on, it came as unique excitement, not as routine. Therefore, at will when I write, I do not because I cannot reduce and classify. I am bold enough to think that in this country with its wide social and intellectual structures of – structures ranging from the easily abstracting Brahmin to the non- reducing sensibility of the primitive or the oppressed, it is possible to relate to the environment with the power and variety unthinkable in the unmanaged anonymous social structure elsewhere. A mythical episteme is still valid and we are here to say this, to point out the possibility of a special relationship between poet and his readers.

Audience

Dr. Kambar made a statement that he comes from a blacksmith family, and he could not imbibe the art of speaking – I totally disagree with him. Because when you read his verse you can see the force of the billows there, you can feel the red-hotness of

the iron. You can feel the vigorous blows of the hammer, so I don't know in what way he is not a blacksmith – he is really a blacksmith - It is so authentic and so far as the myth-making is concerned it hardly matters one is not a Brahmin, one is not a middle caste, lower caste or whatever it is. Some of the highly Sanskritized writers, Brahmin writers in Kannada say like Marxism as profession - with their words they transport you back to the then existing place, then existing time and atmosphere. Same thing here, it is so relevant, so authentic, the language, the place, you are immediately transported. So I would request Dr. Kambar to shed that feeling completely because he is in no way inferior. He is one of the most authentic contemporary writers we have in Kannada. I am so happy that he has come here right now in this get together and should come more often. So I would only request him to retain what he mentioned as the child-like wonder – that is very essential – he can imbibe everything - anything given to him. I feel it is some sort of a justification which is the price which you give him for his writing that is the result of his modern education. I request him to continue – may God give him all life and health so that he can serve the literature and drama. Thank you.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

I don't know whether my impression is correct Kambar that I think that you write more poetry than plays. Primarily you still are a poet?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah. Even when I am writing a drama – a take it as a - I write it as a poet. For me, you know, there was a saying in Sanskrit - the best poetry is drama. So therefore, 'Rishyashringa' was not staged because it was full of poetry. So even today I work on that.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Actually, the reason why I asked you this question or want a clarification was that I think that the strength of a playwright lies in the poetry in the heart of the play. I have the impression from Dev Kumar Sahni and Siri Sampige both, that it is really the poetry which makes the drama. That is where you are different from even the other playwrights in your own language who begin with theatre, who begin with the theatrical framework and theatrical structures whereas you begin from the poetry -

let it grow into the drama. So that gives a very special quality to your play, because it draws so much on poetry.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah, I think so, I think so and I believe it.

Pratibha Agrawal

What are the other plays that you have written - Just these two? You must have written some more?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

I have written sixteen plays. So, and I made the ballad – the first ballad – I made it a play again – Bak Prasanna. So this one is there and I adopted the “Kaadu Kudure” - ‘Wild Horse’ another play. ‘Jasisidanayaka’ is there, and ‘Bali ka Bakra’ - ‘Harkeya Kuri’ and - so sixteen plays in all.

Pratibha Agrawal

I am sorry that we are also ignorant about so many things –

Samik Bandyopadhyay

‘Siri Sampige’ was your last play till date or you have written anything after that?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Latest I wrote one children’s play – Parsuvala. So –

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Is that staged already?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah it was staged in Madras. in Kannad

Chandrasekhar Kambar

I have written some realistic plays also –for example ‘Bali ka Bakra’. You know we have a tendency about M G Ramchandran, N T Rama Rao - they grow out of this out of the screen – and you might be remembering that film you know, the film hero, he takes a pistol and he points at an audience –audience is present there, he doesn’t know what to do, he was sitting there, so he goes to that side - right? So this way, this N G Ramchandran and N T Rama Rao – they grow out of the screen. And they demand watt, for the image of the screen they are given real watt and they are electric. So in this measurement I wrote this ‘Bali ka Bakra’.

Audience

Any of them is translated in Hindi?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah. Four or five –

Pratibha AgrawalBali ka Bakra – that is there. ‘Jo Kumaraswamy’ was also been translated long back ‘Aur Tota Bola’. Dubey did it. Then Satish Anand did that. He came with that play two years back.

Audience

Four or five plays have been staged in Hindi?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah.

Audience

All the translated plays have –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

All the translated plays – ‘Alibaba’ they have done.

Pratibha Agrawal

Alibaba? You have written ‘Alibaba’?”

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah, children’s play - Karanth has translated it.

Audience

What about the forms you used?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Usually I use these folk forms.

Pratibha Agrawal

In Alibaba you mean specially? In Alibaba especially because Alibaba had been quite common here in Bengal.

Audience

In puppetry –

Pratibha Agrawal

Yes, Suresh Dutta – but that was ‘Aladdin’ – So what was the form that you took in Alibaba?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

I use usually folk form. Because only there I think I am using all–

Audience

Folk form means Yakshagana mainly?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

No, Yakshagana is one, one of the forms which are very sophisticated. There are lots of forms like –

Pratibha Agrawal

Would you like to elaborate a little more on the different folk forms? Raw folk forms?

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Those that you have used particularly -

Chandrasekhar Kambar

You see, we have say five types of folk plays excluding this puppet. One is ‘Dasrata’ we say, Dasrata and Sannata, Doddata, Yakshagana and Parijatha – this are the five types.

Pratibha Agrawal

And there is one ‘Jogeraata’ also. The style Jayashree -

Chandrasekhar Kambar

They are on dances - mainly folk dances – narrate folk dances mainly -

Audience

Last time worked by B. Jayashree -

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah. That was the one I edited it for her – Lakshapati Rajana Kathe-

Chandrasekhar Kambar

I collected it in ‘70s while I was doing some folklore research.

Pratibha Agrawal

Who wrote the script for that? Lakshapati Rajan Kathe?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Sanganna.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

So, you see, there are innumerable folk dances like Jogeraata but you don't call them the 'pukka' forms. So Dasrata is the one which is very -

Audience

That is one of a particular side –

Pratibha Agrawal

Northern side –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Northern side and this was only coastal area – hill area also. So, Dasrata is very – Dasrata and Sannata both are very inclusive forms. So, any foreign character may enter it, any kind of language they can speak.

Pratibha Agrawal

What do the words mean? Do they mean something - Dasrata and Sannata?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Dasrata – Dasa is a clan. They perform it from village to village of begging alms.

Pratibha Agrawal

What does this 'rata' or 'ata' means?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Play.

Pratibha Agrawal

‘Ata’? ‘Ata’ is play?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Leela - Play. So, Bayalata means ‘open air’. Ata – open air plays.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

‘Bayal’ means ‘open air’.

Pratibha Agrawal

What types of themes are used for Dasrata and Sannata?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

In Dasrata and Sannata, all social themes are taken - any social theme - love - So, they don’t have any inhibitions taking themes from the society.

Audience

Does it take place inside the hall or outside? This is also Bayalata?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

No no, outside. This is also Bayalata. All outside - Bayalata –

Pratibha Agrawal

How old are these forms? Very old?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Dasrata I think is as old as 12th century. And Sannata -

Pratibha Agrawal

12th century. And all these contemporary things were taken.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

The Sannatas are small plays – so, there you know, they – it is a culmination of both - Half professionals and half amateurs. So professional is always the woman character. Woman is always a professional character. She has bi-hearted some of the plays like ‘Sangya Balya’ and some plays, some very popular plays, so she is invited, say, 300 rupees 400 rupees – so all these people learn this at the same time, do whatever they practice. Then the final day they perform - kind of that. So these are also social themes and social themes in the sense there is one very – I don’t know how it came to – Roopsenanovitari. Roopsen was the man who came to Kattakamadgaon, as a village man, and he got a job. He had a son and wife in his village. Forgetting them he came to Calcutta and had a job here, and he forgot his family in village. They came to Calcutta and recognized him, but by that time he had fallen in love with a prostitute. So cities always treated as a prostitute, it is very wonderful – cities treated as – as a Veshya. So ‘Veshya’ is captured here. Knowing that, the child and the wife had come, she gives them ‘Visha’ - poison. She poisons them to death. Then Shiva lives and they are happy. So this is what – such themes, you know, and there is one –

Pratibha Agrawal

Roopsen comes from which province - from which part of the country?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Ankiya – ankiya –

Pratibha Agrawal

Ankiya Nat?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah, I read some of the stories.

Pratibha Agrawal

Roopsen – then – the name seems to be –

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Can be Bengali, can be Assamese –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Since ...



Pratibha Agrawal

third from – folk form?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

There is another form – so anyhow –two types of Bayalata - Two types to listen. In one sort of form, you know, in a certain form, only one narrator tells the story to the audience like the Yakshagana in Parijatha. Only Walla Bhagavata is there and he narrates the story and in other forms – there are group of people who narrate the story together. So, they divide themselves into front chorus and back chorus. So, the back chorus stands behind the screen, unseen by the audience. So, they sing, in Dasrata there only, in Sannata they are filed. In Doddathavil there are seven people. They repeat the song whatever sung by the front chorus. They repeat whatever they sing. And sometimes they called the only lullabies humming – but that humming must be Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni – like that – all the seven scores must be there. So, naturally the last one of the either a boy or a girl, because he has to sing the height of singing –

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Of the line –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah. So, this way they have a structure of the score.

Pratibha Agrawal

No, but what about the actors - Is there only singing or –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

No, no – they narrate the story. In hna Parijatha, only one narrator is there, who cheer the group itself – the whole group –

Pratibha Agrawal

The acting portion is there – there are actors -

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Actors are there and they come and act - whatever they do as usual - but the structure of chorus – so they provide – sometimes they don't have words to provide. Whenever a character is going they give a sort of humming, whenever a character is coming, and another sound of humming. And for war - something, and for joy - something, and for love – all the sorts of –

Audience

Humming was there – I mean – without words or –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Without words. La – la – la – la – yah – la li la li – malali – mala li mala li – mala – so this is a streak array going on the stage to meet her lover.

Pratibha Agrawal

Another thing – what were sound last time what Jayashree was doing that they were not using any instrument to ensure it was only that smuggling sort of thing that she was having in that and she was giving 'swar' by her throat – aaaa – aaaa – that sort of thing she was maintaining. So you don't use any 'swar' or anything that is humming or –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

In Ecsiora and in Doddata we use humming, and in the rest you know in Dasrata they have some of very indigenous instruments. One instrument used in Dasrata, you know, pappai enu tadike –

Audience

That is Papaya –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

At the one end – (something in Kannad) some vibrations -

Pratibha Agrawal

Moone ral tadike –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

That is ‘Shrutipat’ –

Pratibha Agrawal

That is ‘Shrutipat’ –

Audience



Actually what they maintain about the rear chorus, people who stand behind. It has come into the common parlance of – when it’s a pipe it’s a family, family members – one fellow tells the other fellow something, and is supported by some elderly -

Pratibha Agrawal

So may be that the – music that – in drama it has come from that mark of practice – I see –

Audience

Is it widely practiced? These forms?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

They are still in practice – these forms – they are still in practice.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

The comedies – these forms are not been affected by the Abdani theatres? Because Abdani theatres have been was in force in North Karnataka long back –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yes, they are going that way. You know this Dasrata the lady has to be a prostitute – the heroine of the play –

Pratibha Agrawal

There was a time when only prostitutes might have been coming to theatre but now –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Dasa means – it's a family affair. The whole group. They are curved the left hand Dasas and the right hand Dasas. Left hand Dasas – they give their first daughter to this art. At the age of 13 she is married to a drum – to a drum. So, then she leaves the prostitution and art. She is usually – she is a talented lady and she leads the group. The popularity of the troupe depends on her talent – on her beauty and –

Pratibha Agrawal

Tell me one thing, that she has to have the - carry on the profession of prostitution or she runs - all right, she was married and she was given for this profession, so then she takes up this drama and music of Dasrata form and as a profession and all? Or she normally –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

She normally is a prostitute. Sometimes, there were some great actresses you know, even the great people used to touch their feet.

Pratibha Agrawal

Another thing you were telling may be of interest to all of you to know – this family thing. Family affair – these groups belonging to a family. While I was talking to P.S.R. Appa Rao in Hyderabad, he said that this is a very strong convention in Hyderabad, there are many ‘Sangeet Mandalis’, now I don’t remember exactly –

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Famous is the ‘Suravi Natak Mandali’.

Pratibha Agrawal

The ‘Suravi Natak Mandali’ – so there are about forty groups in Hyderabad and it is the whole family which constitutes these groups – family – wider family – a father, mother, their children and all that and they say that the whole family moves and if you need a small child in the play the child is there in the family. The mother can come on the stage with that and of course P.S.R. Appa Rao was very strongly said that what I feel that the tradition of transcript plays offering this ‘Nat-Nati’ being the husband and wife there. Actually that tradition, he was very strongly said, that I feel that, that tradition is still alive in Andhra Pradesh in the form of these family troupes and husband and wife is the leader of that troupe. He was very confidently said. Now it is very interesting to note that in Karnataka also and I was just wondering the other day I was talking – now I am meeting so many people – somebody else was also telling about this thing that this roaming group is there and family is there.

Audience

Rajasthan – most of the puppet shows which come out – led by husband and wife.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Usually the puppets are led by one family.

Pratibha Agrawal

No because you need there a very small group.

Audience

The puppet play?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah.

Pratibha Agrawal

Three four people in that group is there so one family is there. But this is full company – there are about twenty thirty people staying together.

Audience

Family move together.

Pratibha Agrawal

Family – one joint family – big joint family moving together and this type of thing.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Kambar, what has been the kind of problems that you have faced in having your plays produced as you said when you started at least the first play was not touched by anybody for all those years? Then what happened? Now there are playwrights in times who are of a different kinds who stick to one director or one group at least for a length of time because if the other groups are not interested but there is some kind of an affiliation with one director and another standing forms? But what has been your experience with your plays?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Once I write the play I don't mind who plays it or who directs it. For example, my 'Jo Kumaraswamy' is played in folk style also. They do it for eight hours.

Pratibha Agrawal

They introduce a lot of singing and music –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

They add their own problems of land – there land problems are added, the exploitations are there, so many things are there. So I cannot see them.

Audience

That must be an overnight affair.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah. Eight hours – eight hours they do. They drag it – drag it – I cannot see these. But luckily, sometimes they mention my name.

Pratibha Agrawal

But tell me one thing that suppose if you see it, how you react to that? Your play being extended? Because some editing is always done in the play is, but extending the whole thing and adding a lot of thing. How do you react to that?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

I like it. Ok, it is theirs, theirs -

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Once you accept, the point there is Kambar is making right from the beginning that he locates himself as a folk playwright. Born in the folk, writing for the folk, he is a folk playwright. A folk playwright has to accept that.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

There is a play, another play, ‘Sangya Balya’ we call it.

Pratibha Agrawal

Sangya Bala?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Sangya Balya – two friends, and you know –

Pratibha Agrawal

How different is the language is there – is nothing Thangiya Baja –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Balya – Balya –

Pratibha Agrawal

Balya.

Audience

Balya is a corrupt form of Bal.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Almighty. So you see, two friends, and there was some family affair was there, and he murder the another friend. And the British Government – its fact – it is based on a fact – so the British Government hanged him and the other two were forgiven for becoming Christians. So till that time the lineage is there. So immediately it was staged. It was so popular – it is so popular in the North Karnataka area that whenever the actors do this ‘Sangya Balya’ the people think that Oh, my son is doing ‘Sangya Balya’- I have to get him married. This is the way they respond. And I do it for Bangalore audience. I adopted it and I did for Bangalore audience. And it was so good, those people, my village folks saw it and they adopted all these things. Wonderful! OK! You see, this way the give and take is there between these two.

Pratibha Agrawal

This is quite interesting to know that your plays are being equally popular with – in the villages at the folk level –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Only one play – Jo Kumaraswamy.

Audience

That company is – I have the question of addition – when one is extending – it is done by Cho also in his plays, isn't it? He was not extending his own plays.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

But here you know, there is some cultural leads are there, cultural give and take is there, you know, why should they take only this story – for example, 'Siri Sampige', 'Siri Sampige' many external coups are asked. But I am not always to improvise things. But once I would like to know how they – how they improvise. Because, this 'Jo Kumaraswamy' I gave it to a professional troupe – Company Natak troupe. They took it. They played it 500 shows. I didn't know this.

Pratibha Agrawal

You did not know?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

I did not know.

Audience

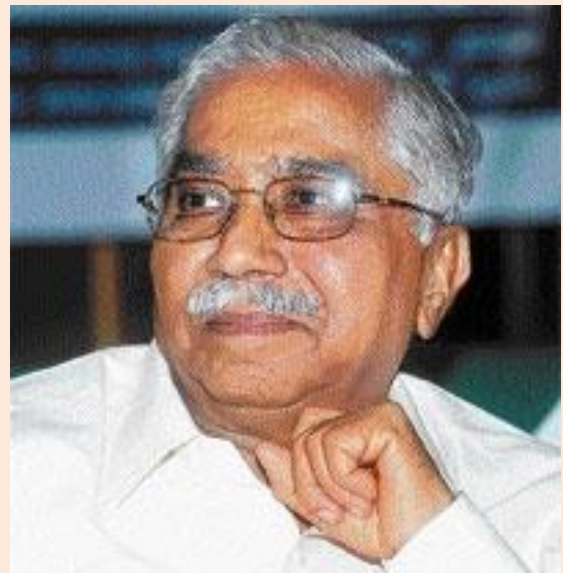
You should highly protest for royalty -

Pratibha Agrawal

Naturally if you did not know for 5 or 10 shows then we –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Theatre was worked in hush, theatre was worst and then I came to know when 'Jo Kumaraswamy' was being played – this news appeared in the paper. So I asked – they had a big band of musicians and gorgeous dresses and so they did it in their own way. But, that I don't like but about the folk I like. Because here is a cultural need, but those are the people who are exploiting. They think that it expresses our



desire and need. It expresses our need and something like that, so I feel, I feel happier even though they –

Audience

Extend it –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yah. Whatever they do – I am happy.

Audience

I have seen ‘Bhagavatajjukiyam’ both in the Bharatnatyam style and the Kathak style.

Pratibha Agrawal

Very interesting. Accha, Kambar Saab, one more thing, you belong to that class of writers who is combining these folk forms, of course, you are – you may be belonging to the village but with all your education and all that you are as much a town person – urban, as – nowadays, now this big venture that is going on of going to the news and the younger actors and directors – directors specially being promoted for combining the folk forms in the region in their modern place. Now how do you react to that? The productions that they are doing and even there in Madras you must have seen the south region thing. We saw in Patna this time and last time that they did in Calcutta also. What do you feel about it? Now, and there is no question of comparison but at the same time it seems, we feel that you have imbibed both the things very nicely. Now, there are these people making mistake because all the time there is the complain that it is just put in something – some folk form, a little bit of just like salt and pepper and something in they are trying to do there. How do you react?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

I think, you know, very serious effort has to be made both by the Academy and the Government. That seriousness is not found in the directors as I see. Because you know, a showmanship can be gained very easily. If you go to NSD, stay there for

three years, even without attending the classes, one can gain this showmanship being in there. But that showmanship is not the thing we want. Actually root means – I mean the cultural roots you know, not the showmanship of the visual quality. But the visual quality has its own roots in the very culture you know, we are not going there. Sometimes I am afraid are we wasting our time and energy of the youngsters but its good thing that a director works with the playwright and a playwright works with the director – it’s a good thing because together they can set for another language – some good language. But what I see is director being placed on the playwright. You are stressing the point that –

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Spectacle using – not the verbal or text –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

So, the words now – I am afraid using poetry even poetry being the text of – text OK – text plus poetry. I do not want my text to be poetry because of the modern directors. You see, poetry is also one of the wonderful things that can convey beyond these spectacular things and only word can say something beyond the spectacular and not our visuals. So, this somewhere we are forgetting. Therefore, my drama experiences is not that deep, it doesn’t go that deep for example Chekov you heard. Spectaculars – it was visually wonderful. It did not reach me inside. So, all our efforts are I’m afraid that whether they are (inaudible). So some deeper efforts are to be made. There I think we should concentrate. But its good thing that both work together.

Pratibha Agrawal

Your plays have been produced by Karanth and by Prasanna also and who are the other directors?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Rajindernath did two -

Pratibha Agrawal

Rajindernath- then Dubey – he did. Did you work in collaboration with these people?
What was your experience?

Chandrasekhar Kambar

No, no, once I write I give it to them – they come to me and I will say this is the –

Audience

Is there a consulting regarding –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Sometimes they do – sometimes they do not. But when – when this ‘Huliya Neralu’
‘Shadow of the Tiger’ the ballet, it was done – in the first production he – I was
consulted by Prasanna. But the second production – no, he didn’t and it was all very
badly produced in Delhi as you know.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

But you were involved to a certain extent that Karanth’s first production of ‘Jo
Kumaraswamy’.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yes, yes, together – I did music for them.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

He gave the music for the production and this is the original music.

Pratibha Agrawal

And we could just get a little sample of your singing or – they told me it is a pleasure
to – Karanth also said so –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Thank you. Because you know, being a poet you know, I am always like people asking me to read poetry, sing poetry. Not talking – not talking. I'll sing a poem, when I wrote - when Mao-tse-tung died, the day I –

Audience

You will give us a synopsis –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

I wrote this poem when Mao-tse-tung died and I wrote two other poems on him – about Mao-tse-tung. So, when he died I was very unhappy and I wrote this poem. So this is a poem written in the rhythm - when some person dies there is a way of weeping in our religion. So that is the rhythm of the song and you know, between a politician and a poet there is difference I suppose. Politicians have power, but they don't have dreams, poets have dreams and they don't have power. But this fellow had both. He was a poet and a politician. Even he didn't do anything. That was my -

Audience

In our country it's called 'Bilap' that is a kind of grief.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

So the first stanza say – he wanted to change the Sun, he wanted to change the elements – Panchabhoota. He wanted to make man with some other Bhootas – not with this 'Panchabhootas' and – and next he had to kill so many people in the mud of the blood. He stood there and the fire on his – (some words in Kannad) - this was like isle – this blood and he was like 'Batti'. And he had fire on his head and said you wanted another song? Look, I am here. That is what he said. And he did not want you to say this and he did whatever the bad things one couldn't have done. I have not written any poem on Mahatma Ji or Nehru. But I was very hopeful about this guy. So I wrote this poem. It says – how can I forget you Mao-tse-tung? How can I? [click here](#)

Audience

I find a similarity with – Powada. Maharashtra form –

Chandrasekhar Kambar

Yes, that you know – I belong to North part of Karnataka. Actually I stay in the border area.

Audience

We have a saying in Kannada – (in Kannad) – that means what the Sun could not see, a poet sees.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

This is the poem I wrote for ‘Rishyashringa’. In ‘Rishyashringa’ what happens – this is the song by Sutradhara. Now the boy has stepped five steps, he has taken five steps into the Shivapura area. It has not rained and now the boy goes to the search of himself and the Sutradhara knows that. The tiger is inside the village. The demon in the form of tiger has come into the village and he is ruling the village and the one who wanted to save the village has gone in search of himself. So who would save the village? So this is the song he sings –[click here](#)

Pratibha Agrawal

Ek dam isi swar par – athiya hi sindur mang bhaile baba/ chunari bhaile anmol re/ ehi re sindurwake karana baba/ choralu main besa tohar re – it goes like this.

Chandrasekhar Kambar

The idea she put you know is different from ours.

Pratibha Agrawal

Anything else? It has been very nice evening and it would have been more benefitting to us if they would have been more acquainted with the Kannad Theatre, Kannad language, Kannad plays and as I said earlier we know so little and on the

basis of that only we could just ask you and know something from you. It has been really very nice and I didn't want to ask you to talk about the Kannad play writing or theatre in general but because you – then we wouldn't have been able to know you a little better. So we hope I think next time we listen from somebody either you or somebody coming from Kannad – about the Kannad theatre, we didn't have any session – we had one about Tamil done by N. Viswanathan. So, thanks a lot to you and thanks to you all – all those who are interested in our sittings may tell us – we will send invitations to them. We have almost a sitting every month. These are on different aspects of theatre and theatre of different regions in our country. So you are all welcome. Who all are interested can give their names and your name will be in the mailing list. Thank you all of you.

