



## **K.B.SIDDAIAH AS DALITH MYSTIC POET WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GALLEBHANI**

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### **Abstract**

K.B.Siddaiah is a very popular name in Dalith movement as well as dalith literature. He is one among the three important writers of Dalith literature alongwith Devanooru Mahadeva and Dalitha kavi Siddalingaiah. He founded a new literary genre namely Khanda kavya. He has written a number of narrative poems under the genre—Anathma, Daklakatha Devi kavya and Gallebani etc. In the present paper an attempt is made to make a critical analysis of his poem Gallebani.

**Key words :** Dalith literature, Dalith movement, Khanda kavya.

### **Introduction**

K.B.Siddaiah is popularly known as K.B.in Karnataka and siddaiah in Indian literature as well. He is a distinguished poet-critic of the time immemorial and versatile folk cultural leader and the voice of Dalit, farmers and women. In the combination of three KB established an award as Daraisthree in the year 2004 and in the name of them he began to award three who are distinctively identified in accordance with the service that they have done to the society as a whole.

He is also a dominant protagonist of the culture. If there is any kind of injustice or exploitation done to any sections of the society he is first man to protest either in media or in person. His very birth in untouchable community leads him so and when he is touched first by letters, he could become liberated and the letters themselves liberated from clutches of upper caste. There is a liberation at sides as Mercy is twice blessed as Shakespeare admits in The Merchant of Venice. As a result K.B. has got re-birth and rejuvenated himself and determined to liberate illiterate oppressed and depressed castes. He thought that it is his responsibility to bring radical change in Indian society by educating them. But it is not so easy and immediate task in any movement.

### **Objectives**

The Present Article tries to explore the contribution of K.B.Siddaiah to the Dalith literature.He was one among the three prominent writers of the Dalith movement,the other two being Devanooru Mahadeva and Dalitha kavi Siddalingaiah.K.B.Siddaiah establishes his own identity by experimenting and achieving success in the new literary form 'Khanda kavya'. Thus,he proves to be different from the other two writers.

### **Critical Interpretation**

There was DalithPanth and Dalit Sangarsha Samithi actively working in Maharashtra and in Karnataka in 1970 and there was already Prof. B. Krishnappa, Dalitha Kavi Siddslingaiah and Devanoora mahadeva and

Prof Nanjundaswamy, the staunch leader and voice of farmers and the several. The poem Hole Madigara Hadu/ The Song of Untouchables of Siddalingaiah has played vital role in the Dalit Movement of the time. Devanooru Mahadeva has opted prose for writing and Siddlingaiah has chosen poetry. It was a crucial moment for K.B. to start his journey in Kannada literature. Ultimately he has made a choice of long verse form to write poetry which is known as KHANDAKAVYA. It is poetic verse, a unique form invented and popularized by him. As K.B. is well versed both in Kannada and English literature, he could express his unique views in both the languages. A poet in the views of Tolstoy has an innocent infant, he has a comprehensive soul to meet and greet every mind and heart of layman of the land. He loves and has embarrassed every complex and crucial situations and contemplates to understand, conceptualize situation with a new term and express it in a dynamic way. He is the master of creating new terms by splitting in accordance with the accent and sound and gives new contextualized sense. He interprets every word of his poetry in a mystic way. As a poet he has strong faith in mysticism that he admits in the poem Daklakatha Devikavya.

O mother as you rock the world  
And rock the child  
Bear me again in your womb  
Walk this infant from the cave of your vagina  
Into the cave of contemplation.

Here in the above context the poet brings out that once the mother bears him in her womb the stigma of untouchability will not be so strong.

He has contributed a lot to the Kannada terminology with new perception with folk touch. He is greatly influenced by Lohia, Tolstoy, Buddha, Basavanna, Ambedkar, Gandhiji and Kuvempu. Hence he is communicating himself with them and introspects himself in the present context and visualize future with his indigenous insight. He does not express anything without meditation. The poet is virtually and literally incorporated the mode of meditation in any point of his expression. It is in meditation he can absorb the context and conceptualize the text. Therefore K.B. is unique in his way of thinking and expression both in writing and speech. There is a clarity, fluency and proficiency in it. He has such a unconquerable will and memory like Satan of Milton. He has esemplastic power to register the words and unifying power to blend the past and present. It is relevant to refer T.S. Eliot words in this context, "I shall show you fear in a handful of dust". He produced four volumes of four different poems having only 150 pages. It is the personality of the poet to concise his expression and let readers to extend and enlarge according to their perspectives. The first poem BAKALA having only twenty two pages in eight segments is milestone in the history of Long Verse. This concised short poem has created place for K.B. as poet in Kannada poetry and vibrates the so called intellectuals. He has a skill of using the language at any length with relevant mystic and current illustrations and concise at any short. He can bounce his thoughts and ideas back and forth in a poetic away in lively and effectively. He believes that writing is more powerful and immortal in the world. There is a popular saying that "Highly intellects are highly idiots" but K.B. is highly innocent as an infant because a true poet / an artist is infant as Tolstoy puts it. In short a poet should free from the bias. He should be impersonal as a catalytic. The poetic voice of K.B. is very significant in the kannada poetic tradition. K.B. began his writing as voice of subaltern with his article Kathalodane Mathukathe is published in Panchama. It is an interaction with darkness. He got acquainted with Buddha way, K.M. Shankarappa, Allama and bakthipantha through L. Basavaraju he reached Lohia and Kuvempu and found way of Gandhi and Ambedkar. It becomes a long faithful poetic journey to give light and enlighten the minds of downtrodden who are in the utter darkness.

In the spectrum of Dalit poetry K.B.'s preoccupation centers around folk legends which invariably finds their roots in the consciousness'. Here K.B. creates a distinct and unique path which is free from rage and wrath outburst found earlier in abundant measure. His poetry attempts to give an antidote to the excess of liberalization and globalization. In the passage of time in the dalit movement the new idiom is most essential to create a new space to stand and express himself democratically. After the long storm, the agitated minds become calm and contemplates the situations as well. KB's contribution is understood in the context where Dalit poetry reflects both internal and external imbalance. His poetic journey has four stages like BAKALA, DAKLAKATHADEVE KAVYA, ANATHMA and GALLEBHANI published in 1988, 1999, 2003 and 2009 respectively as long verse in kannadadalit poetry. Having eight segments in just 22 pages of Bakala has given space to the poet in Indian poetry. It is observed that the stuff and noble thoughts of a poet in the poetry are enough to get noble place in the scheme of things.

The choice of content / subject is must for poetry and the subject of the poetry must have a great tradition which should direct the present and helps to decide the future. The transaction of knowledge of the past shows the historical sense of poet which enables him to present in the current. The poet himself admits that 'A true poetry should sustain the attention and create an interest in the mind of the readers but not feel monotony'.

Poem GalleBani or The Cobbler's Trough the poet himself has provided an excellent introduction to the volume in which he has expressed some of very significant thoughts about how the craft of a cobbler traces the "Socio-Spiritual Travelling" of the progress of our history. The poet firmly believes that quotidian life, humaneness, culture, religion, politics, arts, agriculture and many other human transactions all these are involved in that great journey. He remembers William Blake's immortal observation in which Blake says "If dog tethered at the gate of an owner in dying of hunger that surely indicated the death of the state". Therefore the poet thinks that the writing of poetry, politics and spirituality are unconnected activities. When a cobbler is deeply involved in his task it nothing but his socio-spiritual meditation. Gallebani or the Cobbler's Trough is born out of the conviction that spiritually results from the womb of misery and pain suffered by a Dalit, a peasant, a woman or a cobbler. What we 'social' is not very different from 'spiritual' as they have natural kinship being accommodated in the womb of reality. Gallebani attempts to express this union in its own way.

KB draws our attention to a very important thing which has not been said by many Dalit poets so far that is " My poetry is struggling to find a path of redemption to everyone. It is born out of "Social-Spiritual Consciousness', if you will. This state has neither the beginning nor the middle nor the end. Gallebani orients in the direction of ever-changing reality and hence it has transcended the pre-occupation of targeting the opponent in the changing scenario. The idea is to achieve the redemption of all aims at the destruction of none.

Therefore Gallebani or Cobbler's Trough is a trough containing water always up to the brim in which he immerses the hide he uses to mend the chappals. With the constant contact with water the hide becomes highly malleable and therefore it yields easily to the edge of the blade. This process reminds the poet of that great event in history where Haralayya made a pair of sandals out of his ownskin to Basavanna, the saint. The water of the cobbler trough graduates to the status of 'thirtha' and it is used on all auspicious occasions even by the Brahmins during the wedding ceremonies according to popular belief.

The poet likens his poetry writing to the manner in which a cobbler infuses life into the hide and a blacksmith bends iron following his fancy. The poet of course has words and only words at his disposal. Though these words he has tried to build a structure of poetry that is veritable monument of pain.

As Nataraj S Budalu, the renowned poet-critic providing a key to understand Gallebani has rightly said that KB's latest poem demands the reader to grow beyond all the known categories and expectations of poetry with which he is familiar. He has said that no uncertain terms that KB has positioned the kannada reader in such a situation that he has to pickup his poetry from the pit in which earlier on Madara Chennaiah and Basavanna the 12<sup>th</sup> century saints placed the Lingam and asked at the Bhaktas to pick it up. Kannada consciousness can take in Pamapabaratha Jaimunibaratha, Prabulingalile and Manteswamy Kavya simultaneously. And therefore it will devote zestfully to the poetry of Kuvempu, Bendre, Madhura Chenna and K.B.Siddaiah.

Siddhaiah has demonstrated in Gallebani that his poetry should go beyond the familiar meaning.

O Poet, you are a great strategist  
And a magician indeed  
Weld the word and meaning  
In the inner courtyard of silence  
Just behead the words and their meaning  
The word is Shiva  
The word is Shiva.

Since the poet has meditated around Gallebani, it is natural that it should occupy him unceasingly. Therefore he mirrors it in myriad ways.

In the cobbler's trough  
The hide has form  
It does not have a form  
The hide is Shiva....  
Death dominates the poem just as its closest kin hunger does;  
These are no bodies  
That resemble the sticks of a broom  
When knot is loosened  
They resemble too  
The pieces of the hide....

The poet who is the only voice to record this pain of death and suffering asks the deity ironically:

Why have you snatched my tongue  
What words did I utter  
Which have caused schism in the households  
And upset the communities  
The poet is born from the dead body  
To solve the riddle of death  
To understand how the dead bodies  
Find no one cremate them...

Even the amidst the unpromising landscape there is the wonder of paper-boat sailing on the buffeting waves and this is an indication of the promise, however faint it may be. The poet has passed the milestones of bitterness and his aim is now only to meditate on the possibility of achieving the redemption of all. He has the

voice of his fellowmen as source of sturdy assurance; some dead, some alive, show him the way to reach the destination. He leans rather heavily on the words of wisdom handed on from the past but at the same time he is vigilant to register the instruction indicated by the people of our time.

### Conclusion

KB achieves all this without exhibiting any anxiety to be understood instantaneously. In that sense he is a true poet demanding the reader or coalesce the parts strewn helter-skelter in the relentless movement of the montage. From Bakala to Gallebani KB has traversed quite a long distance in terms of reflecting the Indian reality vis-à-vis the conditions of the Dalits. His indirect way of hinting at establishing equality in our own society might appear or be too docile and counter-productive in the eyes of the more militant and proactive poets. But in his poetic career of two decades KB has never identified himself with the advocates of drastic and draconian change. For, in the heart of his hearts, he seems to believe that change takes place at a glacially slow pace and as long as our path is illumined by the Lights called Buddha, Allama, Ambedkar and Gandhi compassion will occupy the space monopolized by distrust and hatred. KB has kept the hide in his cobbler's trough which has the accumulated thickness of centuries and every passing day will make it more malleable. Since the water in the trough is holy, it must be sprinkled on people and the hide is converted fit to be worn by saints.

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