

## KUVEMPU

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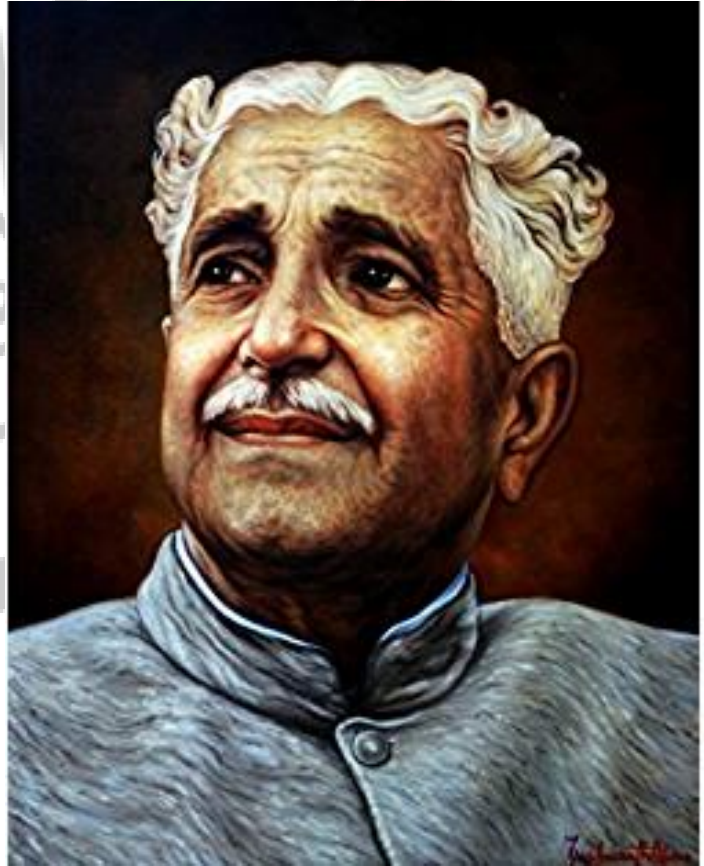
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Kuppali Venkatappa Puttappa (29 December 1904 – 11 November 1994), popularly known by his pen name Kuvempu// (listen), was an Indian poet, playwright, novelist and critic. He is widely regarded as the greatest Kannada poet of the 20th century. He was the first Kannada writer to receive the Jnanpith Award.

Kuvempu studied at Mysuru University in the 1920s, taught there for nearly three decades and served as its vice-chancellor from 1956 to 1960. He initiated education in Kannada as the language medium. For his contributions to Kannada Literature, the Government of Karnataka decorated him with the honorific Rashtrakavi ("National Poet") in 1964 and Karnataka Ratna ("The Gem of Karnataka") in 1992. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 1988. He penned the Karnataka State Anthem Jaya Bharata Jananiya Tanujate.

### EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Kuvempu's ancestral house in Kuppali. Kuvempu was born in Hirekodige, a village in Koppa taluk of Chikmagalur district and raised in Kuppalli, a village in Shivamogga district of the erstwhile Kingdom of Mysore (now in Karnataka) into to a Kannada-speaking Vokkaliga family. His mother Seethamma hailed from Koppa, Chikmagalur, while his father Venkatappa was from Kuppali, a village in Thirthahalli taluk (in present-day Shimoga district), where he was raised. Early in his childhood, Kuvempu was home-schooled by an appointed teacher from South Canara.[citation needed] He joined the Anglo-Vernacular school in Thirthahalli to continue his middle school education. Kuvempu's father died when he was only twelve. He finished his lower and secondary



education in Kannada and English languages in Thirthahalli and moved to Mysore for further education at the Wesleyan High School. Thereafter, he pursued college studies at the Maharaja College of Mysore and graduated in 1929, majoring in Kannada.

## **FAMILY**

Kuvempu married Hemavathi on 30 April 1937. He was forced into enter marital life on this faculty out of Ramakrishna Mission. Kuvempu has two sons, Poornachandra Tejaswi and Kokilodaya Chaitra, and two daughters, Indukala and Tharini. Tharini is married to K.Chidananda Gowda the former Vice-Chancellor of Kuvempu University. His home in Mysore is called Udayaravi. His son Poornachandra Tejaswi was a polymath, contributing significantly to Kannada literature, photography, calligraphy, digital imaging, social movements, and agriculture.

## **CAREER**

Kuvempu began his academic career as a lecturer of Kannada language at the Maharaja's College in Mysore in 1929. He worked as an assistant professor in the Central college, Bangalore from 1936. He re-joined Maharaja's college in Mysore in 1946 as a professor. He went on to become the principal of the Maharaja's college in 1955. In 1956 he was selected as the Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University where he served till retirement in 1960. He was the first graduate from Mysore University to rise to that position.

## **KUVEMPU'S FAME AND RECOGNITION**

In 1930, he published his first Kannada language poetry collection called 'Kolalu.' But what made him famous was his version of the Ramayana titled 'Sri Ramayana Darshanam.' The book clinched him a Jnanpith award; the first ever given to a Kannada language author.

In Sri Ramayana Darshanam, he gave a new perspective on the central character of Lord Rama, making him a mouthpiece of his Universalist ideology of equality and justice. The most striking example of this characterization is during the trial of Sita when she returns to Ayodhya. While in the original Hindu epic written by Valmiki, Sita alone went through the fire to prove her chastity, in Kuvempu's version, Lord Rama also joins her, thus giving a strong message of gender equality. Most literary critics consider Kuvempu's version of the Ramayana as a modern revival of the Indian style of Mahakavya (Epic Poetry).

## **PUBLISHED WORKS OF KUVEMPU**

Kuvempu had an illustrious career during which he published numerous poems, plays, novels, essays, literary criticism and so on. Some of his most famous works are given below.

- Kolalu, a collection of poems – 1929
- Kaanuru Heggadati, a novel – 1936
- Shoodra Tapaswi, a play – 1944
- Sri Ramayana Darshanam (in two volumes) – 1949 and 1957

**AWARDS AND HONOURS**

- Karnataka Ratna (1992)[14]
- Padma Vibhushan (1988)[15]
- Pampa Award (1987)[14]
- Jnanpith Award (1967)[16]
- Rashtrakavi ("National Poet") (1964)[14]
- Padma Bhushan (1958)[15]
- Sahitya Akademi Award (1955)[14]
- To landmark the golden jubilee of Kannada's first Jnanapeeth award, on 29 December 2017, Kuvempu's 113th birth anniversary, Google India dedicated a Google Doodle in his honor.

**MEMORIALS**

- Kavimane — Kuvempu Memorial
- Kuvempu's memorial in Kavishaila, Kuppali
- The childhood home of Kuvempu at Kuppali has been converted into a museum by Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Pratishthana (a trust dedicated to Kuvempu). This trust has undertaken immense developmental works in Kuppali to showcase Kuvempu and his works to the external world. On 23 November 2015 night, many valuables including the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awards conferred on poet laureate Kuvempu were stolen from Kavimane.

The entire museum has been ransacked. The surveillance cameras there have also been damaged. The Jnanapith award kept there has remained intact..

**KAVISHAILA**

The gradually rising hill south of the house is named Kavishaila, Kuvempu's mortal remains were placed at Kavishaila.

**BIOGRAPHIES ON KUVEMPU**

- Kuvempu on a 2017 stamp of India
- Annana Nenapu, Poornachandra Tejaswi
- Yugada Kavi, K.C. Shiva Reddy
- Kuvempu, Pradhan Gurudatta
- Magalu Kanda Kuvempu, Tharini Chidananda,