

Classic Poetry Series

Jayant Kaikini
- poems -

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Jayant Kaikini(1955 -)

Jayant Kaikini (or Jayanta Kayki?i, Kannada: ????? ????????) is a poet, short stories author and movie songs scriptwriter in Kannada.

Early Life

Jayant Kaikini was born in Gokarna. His father, Gourish Kaikini, a schoolteacher, was a Kannada littérateur and mother Shanta, a social worker. After a Masters in Biochemistry from Karnataka University, Dharwad, he moved to Mumbai where he worked as a chemist for many years. He now lives in Bangalore with his wife Smita and two children, Srajana (daughter) who is an Odissi dancer and architect, and Ritwik (son). Apart from Kannada Jayant is fluent in Konkani (his mother tongue), Marathi, Hindi and English.

Career

Jayant Kaikini is regarded as one of the most significant of the younger writers in Kannada today. He is a writer of short stories, film scripts and poetry, and is based in Bangalore. His poetry is characterised by subtle imagism, a minute documentation of the seemingly commonplace, a colloquial idiom and a conscientious refusal to engage in any poeticising. He has so far published six anthologies of short stories, four books of poetry, three plays and a collection of essays.

In an introduction to Dots and Lines, an English translation of Kaikini's short stories, critic C.N. Ramachandran writes, "To understand Jayant's works, we have to situate him in the literary context of the last two decades of the 20th century. During that period, there arose a group of writers who consciously differed from both the earlier Modernist writers (called Navya in Kannada) and those contemporaneous to them, the Writers of Protest (called Bandaya in Kannada) and Dalit writers. They did not subscribe to any particular philosophical or political system of thinking – be it Existentialism of the Modernists or the Leftist ideologies of the Dalit and Protest writers. On the other hand, what they wished to do was to select precise and authentic details of daily life and organise them in such a way as to culminate in a particular experience . . . Generally, their style was comic-ironic; and the language they used was the spoken language of day-to-day life. They were neither idealists nor cynics; they just wished to observe the life around them – generally mediocre – to register all the fleeting details that marked an ordinary man's daily routine, and lead up to an experience rich in connotations. Jayant was a major figure in this group of

writers who, loosely, can be called 'post-modernist'."

Jayant Kaikini started writing lyrics to film songs from movie Chigurida Kanasu (Song: Aha enidenidenu). He is the person who has revolutionized the concept of Kannada film songs, with the classic touch of literature and beautiful, soft, lovely imaginations. Films like Mungaaru Male, Gaalipata, Geleya, Milana etc. has some touchy and memorable poems penned by the film Birugali has also great superhit songs like "madhura pismathige", "Hoovina Banadanthe" etc. which also come in the list of his memorable and touchy poems or songs.

He was hosting a TV Show "Rasa Rushige Namaskara" in ETV Kannada which a biography on Rashtrakavi Kuvempu. This show was very popular with a particular section of audience. He continued it with other series' such as "Kadala Theerada Bharghava",....y he was seen judging the reality show "Yede tumbi Haaduvenu" along with the legendary singer ubrahmanyam and famous Kannada music director and lyricist naada brahma Hamsalekha.

Kaikini received the Karnataka Sahitya Academy award for his first poetry collection at the age of nineteen in 1974. He received the same award again in 1982, 1989 and 1996 for his short story collections. He has been awarded the Dinakara Desai award for his poetry, the B. H. Sridhar award for fiction, as well as the Katha National award and Rujuwathu trust fellowship for his creative writing.

Filmfare Awards

Won

Best Lyricist (2008) : Gaalipata - "Minchagi Neenu Baralu"

Best Lyricist (2009) : Manasaare - "Yello Maleyaagide yendu"

Nominated

Best Lyricist (2009) : MaLeyali Jotheyali - "Ni Sanihake Bandare"

Best Lyricist (2010) : Krishnan Love Story - "Hrudayave"

At The End Of The Vigil

The nurse is at the bus stop
Leaving the night-shift behind her
A milk van and a rickshaw pass by
Leaving a whiff of incense
The doc who had come for an emergency
In pyjamas is honking at the exit gate
Those weary after running around
In tunnel dreams are rising sluggishly like statues
On the footpath

Tiffin carriers greet florists
Bicycle bells are calling out
To plastic lotuses in the ponds
The ward boy wielding a long broomstick
Mistakes an orange peel for the fruit
Somebody who unveiled a mosquito net last night
Forgot to remove the nails driven into the sky

The trees convulse
Shaking off the darkness

Let all hospital doors open
Let all children with feverish eyes come into my embrace
Let wounds heal with the mere kiss of a sunray
And let the tears not curdle the milk of our bosoms.

[From: Neelimale
Publisher: Patrike Prakashana, Bangalore, 1997]

Jayant Kaikini

Bobby

Have you conversed with dogs?
Rubbing your cheeks against their
striped, spotted throbbing throats,
have you listened to their hot breathed exuberance?

Have you felt slighted as it eloped
with a bitch during mating season
ignoring the feed and
you too?

It is angrrrry at somebody in the deserted backyard -
standing with woof woof breathless ado
tongue in a tizzy, then, the moment
you touch its back like cooled off milk
it begins to soften, have you experienced it?

Have you felt proud
when it barked by mistake at you
and in utter remorse weaved itself around your feet?

Once, limping, mewling, thigh-wound bleeding,
bitten by someone, it comes to you,
lies near you in pain lifting all four,
tear line at eye's edge,
snivelling every time medicine is applied,
whining at night, growling at each touch;
have you felt scared at this
strange deformity,
been melted by the wagging tail?

A visitor warns, it may be rabid, the tail is too rigid.
Frightened you make queries, hire a gun man and
get him to take aim concealed and
shoot.

At the moment of the shot
have you noticed its frantic gaze facing the cocked gun?
In those eyes – distant wrecked ships – dying days -
rain soaked cemeteries – sounds... didn't you hear?

In those eyes, oblivious of even your limbs,
didn't you merge with the world?

Jayant Kaikini

Button Rabbit

A sour-faced tempo is stranded on the road
On its back the burden of a household
A metal trunk heaved on top tilts
Its belly squashed, a cloth bundle wilts
Legs folded, the cot stands in a yogic trance
On an ink-stained table lies a hemispherical rice bowl
Carrying a ladle deposited in a hurry
Loose pincers laced with tea powder
A calendar Shakuntala rolled up in past glory
Fastened to her belly,
Pins and rusted needle with a pleat of thread
A rolled-up bed and a sleeping cupboard
A crow flying in a reclined mirror

All would have sprung to life
If a well or an oven were within reach
As you ask if anybody's around, lo,
Reclining on an upturned bucket
A stone-still button rabbit keeps vigil
On a black cloth behind a glass frame
Written in white thread, Kusuma, Kausalya . . .
And a myriad such names like monsoon flowers

Is she around? Where did she go?
She who threaded button after button
Wiping her nose during a sighing noon
Who slipped into the backyard when somebody came home
Hid herself from the visitor
Who came to see her younger sister
Slipped her brother's shirt over Amma's petticoat
Called on homes near and far
To make papads and steal a meal
Where is she now?

A needle missing in the dark
Somewhere in a crevice a ball of thread falls loose
Oh, how many buttons there are in the market
Slowly, the rabbit breaks out of the glass
Cranes its neck to look here and there

Sniffs at all the household items
And leaps out of the tempo into the street
In search of its creator.

[From: Neelimale
Publisher: Patrike Prakashana, Bangalore, 1997]

Jayant Kaikini

Now

Now it is eight p.m. -
time for the cooker's first whistle
from the single-room kitchen of the chawl -
time for the bathed luxury buses to leap
into the vast dark night -
time for the unsold jasmines withering in the wickers
to die in tired fragrances -
time for the women returning home after work
to be appalled in front of the mirrors -
time for the aged tiger in the zoo
to wait for its grub -
upstairs in the third gulley of Kamatipura
teenaged Baby
starts her labour pain
they kick her in her stomach
with none of us there.

Jayant Kaikini

Proximity

The stranger seated beside me has dozed off
His body slackened, head resting on my shoulder
How helpless he is, lost in his own sleep

His hands are lush with silvery hair
The breeze has a lock curled up on his oily brow
Small creases lie by the eyes, which if he smiles
Might wrinkle around his narrow gaze
At home, he could make himself more snug
Knees up and head reclining on his left shoulder
His drooping lips quiver
As though his mother is oiling his hair

There's a blister on his fingertip
Is his voice like a greying whisker of hair
Or like the trace of his worn-out collar
Against the fading print of his shirt
Melting with age?
How he must have trembled as a child
On his first errand to a shop –
What thoughts crowd his lonely mind
When he lights the evening lamps?

One sandal has slipped down from his toe
The nails are growing thick and fast
His tired limbs sprawled in different directions
A giant wing guards his defenceless sleep
The breath from his heaving chest
Is enough to keep the world warm.

[From: Neelimale
Publisher: Patrike Prakashana, Bangalore, 1997]

Jayant Kaikini

Script

When did the ant develop a taste for the news?
Or did it always nurse it within?
Crawling along the newspaper spread
on the floor, it devours each letter
of news, first the big headlines of national mourning
later the medium-sized bride-burning bit
and those who slit each other's throats
for a dime, and then the small fonts
of suicide, missing persons etc . . .
Thus polishing off each item,
the ant has left.

The paper's blank now
like the pale cheeks of a pregnant woman
who died for want of blood
Roll it up now and see
the stars at the end of the tube
or place it to your ear and hear
somebody digging a trench somewhere faraway

Place it between your lips
and play the flute
or if you so wish, abandon it
in the bamboo forest nearby

Now the only fear is,
where is the ant
and where is the trail of blood at its feet?

[From: Neelimale
Publisher: Patrike Prakashana, Bangalore, 1997]

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