**Adiga, Gopalakrishna (1918–1992)**

V. B. Tharakeshwar



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Mogeri Gopalakrishna Adiga was the focal point of the Modernist movement in Kannada. Hailing from a small village in South Karnataka, he moved to Mysore for his studies and worked in various places but settled at a later stage of his career in Mysore. He taught English literature in colleges in Mysore and was the principal of a college in Sagar and in Udipi. He seems to have started writing in his twenties, initially imitating old Kannada poetry in his use of prosody. However, he soon shifted to writing in the mode of the Navodaya writers. This is evident in his first two collections of poems­— *Bhaavataranga* (1946) and *Kattuvevu Naavu* (1948). In these volumes he shared the new enthusiasm of the anti-colonial struggle and dreamt of an ideal India to come. He felt that with the transfer of power and the formation of the Indian nation state the dreams of his generation were belied. This led to a sense of disillusionment, turning him into a bitter critic of the Congress and of Jawaharlal Nehru. The Jansangh and Ram Manohar Lohia’s Party were the main opposition parties at that time. He translated Lohia’s *Wheel of History* as *Itihasa Chakra* (1972). In 1967 he unsuccessfully contested election to the Parliament as a candidate of the Hindu right wing party Jan Sangh, which earned him several enemies in literary circles.

His third collection of poems, *Nadedubanda Daari* (1952), was a landmark in his career; it showed him move in a new direction, rejecting the earlier style he had adopted. The volume became a kind of manifesto for the later Modernist writers. From then onwards he became the principal modernist poetic voice in Kannada literature. Though he was criticized for the complex images in his poetry, a newly emergent school of critics was eager to mediate between his poetry and the reading public. Readers often waited to see how critics would explain his images. U. R. Ananthamurthy was at the forefront of critics who took on this role. Adiga also groomed a group of young writers in Mysore, who went on to become the leading poets/writers of the Navya movement in Kannada. Many of them fondly recollect their evening discussions with Adiga in a café in Mysore. His other important poetry collections are *Chandamaddale* (1954*), Bhoomi Geeta* (1959), which is supposed to be the *Wasteland* of Kannada, *Vardhamana* (1972), *Battalaarada Gange* (1983), *Moolaka Mahashayaru* (1980), *Chintamaniyalli Kanda Mukha* (1987), and *Suvarna Puththali* (1980).

Adiga wrote two novels—*Anaathe* (1954) and *Akashadeepa* (1953)—and several short stories. He also translated several literary works into Kannada. His article on ‘Mannina Vaasane’ (*Smell of the Soil*, 1966) was a key text of Navya poetry with the smell of the earth becoming the yardstick for measuring the intensity of experience enshrined in a poem.

**Timeline:**

1946 First collection of poetry, *Bhaavataranga*

1952 *Nadedubanda Daari*

1959 *Bhoomi Geeta*

1962 Starts the journal *Sakshi*

1967 Contests Parliament elections

1972 Translates Lohya’s *The Wheel of History*

1986 Awarded Kabir Samman by the Madhya Pradesh Government

**Bibliography:**

**Major Translations in English:**

**Gopalakrishna, A. (2005)** *Selected Poems: Gopalakrishna Adiga.* Trans. Sumateendra, N. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.