

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF CONFERRING THE
JNANAPITH AWARD FOR THE YEAR 2010 TO
DR.CHANDRASHEKHARA KAMBAR**

Belgaum, Karnataka: 11-10-2012

I am very happy to be present here to confer the 46th Bharatiya Jnanpith Award on Dr.Chandrashekhara Kambar, the eighth awardee of this prestigious National Literary Award in Kannada language.

I understand that Kannada has the highest number of awardees amongst regional languages and is next only to Hindi. This achievement should be a matter of pride and joy for all members of the Kannada literary fraternity and all Kannada speakers in India and across the world.

Dr. Chandrashekhara Kambar joins the band of illustrious Kannada writers comprising Kuvempu, D.R.Bendre, K. Shivarama Karanth, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, V.K.Gokak, U.R.Anantha Murthy and Girish Karnad who have received this award in the past. These writers and their works are a glowing testimony to the richness of Kannada literature.

Dr. Chandrashekar Kambar is an icon not just in Karnataka but across India. A man of humble beginnings, I understand poverty forced him initially to drop-out at school

level. However, he persevered in his efforts to gain formal education and went on to acquire postgraduate and doctorate degrees. He subsequently not only taught in the University of Chicago and Bangalore University but also became the Vice-Chancellor of the Kannada University at Hampi for two terms. I believe Dr. Kambar was able to develop the University into an important Centre of “Kannada Knowledge” conducting multi-disciplinary research into various aspects of Karnataka.

Dr. Kambar has won many awards during his literary career and has been honoured by the nation with a Padmashri. He is well-known as a poet, playwright, short-story writer, novelist, folklorist and film-director. In his writings, he has retained the earthy flavour of rural Karnataka. Dr. Kambar has portrayed through his writings the subjects of conflict between tradition and modernity, identity, feudal decay and colonialism. He has presented in all his writings the perspective and world view of the down trodden.

Dr. Kambar’s multi-faceted genius can be seen in the fact that he has directed a number of movies based on his works, and also composed music for them. He has produced several documentaries for the State and Central governments. His elevation to the post of Chairman of the National School of Drama and the Karnataka Nataka Akademi speaks of his accomplishments in the field of theatre.

I am delighted to know that a good number of his works have been translated into English and prominent Indian languages like Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Punjabi, Malayalam and Rajasthani. The Sahitya Akademi is doing commendable work to promote translations between Indian languages. But, that is not enough. State Governments, authors, translators, lovers of literature and the publishing industry should work together to ensure that the literature of our vernacular languages, both modern and classical, is available to readers in all corners of India. I am sure Dr. Kambar with his vast experience can guide efforts in this regard.

The Jnanpith Award instituted in 1961 by Bharatiya Jnanpith, a trust founded by the Sahu Jain Family is along with the Sahitya Akademi Awards the foremost prize for Indian literature. Over the last half century, it has established itself as a prestigious award recognizing the best of literary talent in different languages of our country. I congratulate and compliment the Trustees for having sustained this outstanding initiative for over five decades and taken it from strength to strength.

Literature cannot flourish based on the support of Government alone. Society at large, philanthropists and the private sector must play their role in nurturing and promoting

the treasure of Indian languages and literature that is India's heritage.

We need to do much more to recognize, nurture and promote excellence in writing in Indian languages. The creativity and talent that is widely present in Indian languages need better platforms and greater exposure. There is a need to take to the world Indian literature from our vernacular languages. Indian writing in English has sparked excitement and recognition across the world. Even greater laurels await us if we can expose the world to the flowering of creativity in our vernacular literature.

I congratulate Dr. Chandrashekhara Kambar and wish him many more years of good health and achievements in his creativity and contributions for the benefit of the vast multitudes.