



Friday Review Hyderabad

Published on Fridays



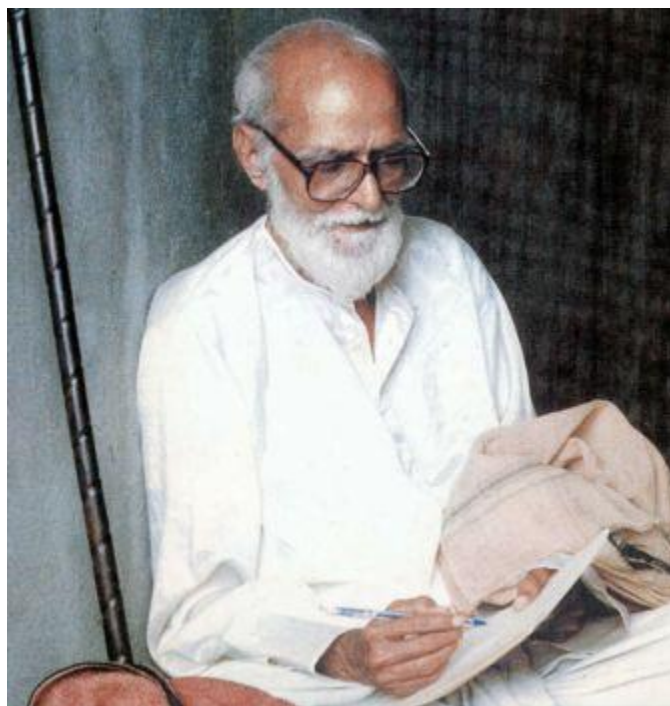
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Remembering Kaloji

K. DAMODAR RAO

Kaloji Narayana Rao's multi-faceted traits made him an extra-ordinary person.



Voice of protest Activist Kaloji.

Kaloji Narayana Rao, the doyen of literary, social, and political activism for nearly two generations in the state and a Padma Vibhushan awardee, was fondly remembered for his contribution to civil life, participation in public life, oral leanings in literary creation in a seminar on his life and literature held



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recently at Kakatiya University, Warangal.

Rebel and a rishi

He was a rebel, a rishi, an activist, an orator, a commentator, a chronicler, a conversationalist, reminisced the many luminary-speakers who participated in the seminar.

The best tribute that could be paid to Kaloji, as he is popularly known, would be to continue his legacy of protest and defiance, they averred.

It was B. Narasinga Rao, the noted film director who described Kaloji as a prophet and said that further research on his life and literature would throw more light on his genius.

During his lifetime Kaloji remained a live metaphor for Warangal — turbulent yet modest, polite but dissenting, relaxed but rebellious, simple but suave, defiant yet sacrificing, Gandhian in lifestyle and a socialist in outlook.

Kaloji's forefathers migrated from Maharashtra and soon they adopted Madikonda, a village on the outskirts of Warangal as their home. Later Warangal adopted Kaloji brothers as its illustrious sons. It is a lesson to many that Kaloji, one of the early protagonists of separate Telangana movement way back in the 1960s originally belonged to a migrants' family.

Born on September 9, 1914, Kaloji completed his primary education at Madikonda and higher education at Warangal and Hyderabad. As it happened, Kaloji Narayana Rao overshadowed his elder brother, Kaloji Rameshwar Rao, an advocate of repute and a noted Urdu poet who wrote poems with the pseudonym of "Shaad." The elder brother adopted a protective attitude towards his younger one and instances of their mutual affection and admiration are aplenty and stories of their bonding are still repeatedly narrated with much relish in Warangal.

Both of them led full lives, but the younger brother became more popular because of his activism.

Kaloji's home in Nakkalagutta area of Hanamkonda remained the first destination of any significant personality or activist from across the state who visited Warangal. Kaloji's contribution to the world of letters chiefly rests on his ability to combine the oral and written traditions.

Critics have compared him with the people's poet Vemana of the 17th century. He superimposed oral rhythms, social concern, and human rights on his poetry so much so that many have found it difficult to categorise his corpus of writing.

A similar problem was faced by the literary establishment in Bengal when confronted with the creative-activist writings of Mahasveta Devi. Who else but an unpretentious and conscientious writer would agonise as Kaloji did in one of his most celebrated poems:

Why so many agonies in my heart?/ I cannot correct. nor can I show the

path/ I am not empowered to punish the guilty/ Nor can I come to the rescue of the distraught. (My Protest)

The original poem in Telugu though written by Kaloji in 1942, it provides a framework for his life, literature, and activism all through.

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