

Jaggayya

Kongara Jaggayya, known as "Kanchu Kantham" for his booming and thundering voice, was a famous Telugu actor. Born in 1928 in a well-to-do Telugu family, he started acting in school plays at a very young age. He was active in politics as a young man and participated in the Independence Movement. He worked as a journalist for a periodical called "Deshabhimani". Soon he left that job to become an editor of the weekly magazine "Andhra Republic". He quit that job to pursue higher education in Guntur. In the later part of his studies at the Andhra Christian College, he met N.T. Rama Rao (NTR), who later attended the same school for higher education. Jaggayya was equally active in college dramas and in politics during his student days. Both NTR and Jaggayya performed in several plays together in their college.



Jaggayya also was interested in painting and learned to paint from Adivi Bapi Raju. In the meantime he started writing, which was his other passion. He authored a book of verses in Telugu called "Ravindra Geetha" which was a translation of Tagore's "Geetanjali". "Balidaanam" was another story of Tagore's ("Sacrifice") that Jaggayya translated.

Jaggayya was part of the drama company "Arunodaya Natya Mandali". He travelled throughout Andhra Pradesh staging and performing plays. He was the first one to recognize Savithri's talents and recruited her into his company. He was the one who seeded the idea into Savithri's and her uncle's minds that she should look ahead to start a movie career.

Beginning from his student days, Jaggayya's political leanings were socialist. He joined Jaya Prakash Narayan's Praja Socialist Party, but when it was disbanded, he joined the Congress Party. He was the first film actor in India to be elected to the Parliament on the Congress Party ticket.

After leaving college, Jaggayya worked as newscaster for All India Radio. Eventually his voice landed him a role as a hero in the Telugu film "Priyuralu" in 1952. Savithri also appeared in this film. The movie was a flop. His subsequent movies also didn't fare well. But his luck changed with the success of "Ardhangi" in 1954, also starring Savithri and another Telugu legendary actor, Akkineni Nageswara Rao.

Jaggayya acted in well over 130 movies. He also lent his voice to many Tamil films, doing voiceovers for the lead male role when the films were dubbed into Telugu. He acted most in the 50's, 60's, and 70's, but was seen in an occasional movie well into the 90's. He passed away in 2004 as a result of complications from a hip surgery.

Because of his commanding voice, Jaggayya was honored with the title of "Kala Vachaspathi". His other titles include "Kalaimamani" and "Kala Prapoorna". He was a recipient of the Government of India's Padma Bhushan Award.

Savithri and Jaggayya acted together in the following movies:

1. Aadarsham (1952)
2. Priyuralu (1952)
3. Ardhangi (1955)
4. Donga Ramudu (1955)
5. Thodi Kodallu (1957)
6. M.L.A. (1957)
7. Appu Chesi Pappu Koodu (1958)
8. Bhagya Devatha (1959)

9. Kumkuma Rekha (1960)
10. Aradhana (1962)
11. Thobuttuvulu (1963)
12. Velugu Needalu (1964)
13. Pooja Phalam (1964)
14. Dr. Chakravarthy (1964)
15. Sumangali (1965)
16. Preminchi Choodu (1965)
17. Manushulu Mamathalu (1965)
18. Navarathri (1965)
19. Manase Mandiram (1966)
20. Prana Mithrulu (1967)
21. Nirdoshi (1970)
22. Thalli Thandrulu (1970)
23. Suputhrudu (1971)
24. Rama Rajyam (1973)
25. Thulasi (1974)
26. Manushulu Matti Bommalu (1974)
27. Gaali Pataalu (1974)