



# Social Reform in Selected Poems by Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri

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Akkitham is a poet of exceptional honesty who creates numerous works that are regarded classics. His works reveals profound compassion, remarks of Indian philosophical as well as moral ideals. He represents a king of connection between what is traditional as well as what is modern. Akkitham has been involved with social reforms alongside his poetry. As a member of the Yogakshema Sabha, he played an important part in bringing social reforms to the Namboodiris of Kerala which is a state in India. What shines through Akkitham's multiple personas of poet, translator, critic, and social activist, is the figure of the humanist poet.

**Key words:** Social, Reform and Poems.

## Introduction

Social reformer, journalist as well as an iconic example of simplicity, Akkitham, is an Eminent Malayalam which is a regional language of Kerala, a state in Indian, poet who is prolific presenting many collections like *Khanda Kavyas*, *Katha\_Kavyas*, *Charitha Kavyas* as well as melodies. Certain works of famous works contain "Veeravam", "Balidarsanam", "Nimisha Kshethram", "Amrita Khatika", "Akkitham Kavithaka", "Epic of Twentieth Century" as well as "Antimahakalam."

Certain literary awards like the Sahitya Akademi Prize (1973), Kerala Sahitya Akademi Prize (1972 as well as 1988), Mathrubhumi Prize, Vayalar Prize, as well as Kabir Samman award are given to him. Many of his works translated to several Indian as well as foreign languages. He is also well known for his excellency in other genres aside from poetry like drama, children literature, critical essays as well as translation. He is as Pratibha Ray, said about him:

A poet of rare integrity, a creator of many works, all considered as classics, Akkitham's poetry reflects unfathomable compassion, imprints of Indian philosophical and moral values and a bridge between tradition and modernity, delves deep into human emotions in a fast-changing social space (Biju, 2016).

In his "The Epic of the Twentieth Century" which consists of eight hundred lines with the epic meter, composed of four cantos. The poem was confessional in mood representing Akkitham the regretful communist. And was published in 1952. Akkitham in this epic was freely writing about the plain impiety of communism. This poem is the principal main poem in Malayalam that was conflicting on political matters as well as is largely true of classics that relates to "Epic" similarly it is scarcely read in total, he said in the preface:

As I shed a tear for others, There rise within me a thousand suns. As I expend a smile for others, Shines within me a full moon, eternal and serene. I never knew of this heavenly bliss before; Lamenting over that great loss again and again I weep (Biju, 2016).

Once more, as in relation to numerous classics, certain couplets incline to foreshadow as well as balance the poem in general :

Sobbing. I told this to the future citizen-

Light, O young one! Is sorrow; Darkness is pleasurable (Biju, 2016).

In depth the poem perched itself in completely diverse broad spheres, like common speech, political cartoons, to gain contra implication as an evidence of his supposed reverting socio-political attitude. He was essentially against innate aspect of violent things. Vengeful attitude, he proclaimed, can never lead to peace as well as delight. The poem has extended in everlasting significance seeing the philosophical alteration the party he belongs to has undergone. The disparateness between what he get knowledge about through rote as well as what he really faced -with the mouth which sang the Vedic hymns. Such contraries are dispersed through all his poetry that gives an ever-habiting tension to poetry as well as increases its spectrum. He changed the declaration to say that :

My tongue shall hence forth chant no names of gods to the exhortation,

O tongue! Ruthlessly fill the barrenness of skies with god's names has to be seen to be believed (Tharakan, 1979).

Consequently this is how he attempts to constantly to associate earliest Indian wisdom with contemporary science as well as technology notwithstanding the desires for the 'revivalist' exploitations rained on him. Really, he calls for obviously for the restoration of the Indian languages as well as the revival of Sanskrit. For him, tradition required to be decisively integrated into the contemporary times. In his poem, "The External Cloud", which among his best poems written in Malayalam on kalidasa, he pursues to a new definition to the

function of tradition. In abundant poems of his, he problematizes the contradiction amongst faith as well as reason saying :

Why wear the scared thread?, What signifies a Brahmin? (Raveendran, 2017)

AS far as Brahmanism is concerned, Akkitham come close to the issue of eliminating untouchability further as the consummation of his all-inclusive love than as a social reformation measure. He was writing around the not come across being of account of a demand to political change however, due to his spiritual relationship with them. He is a pioneer in relation to the vanguard of consolidating yagas; nevertheless will not diverge from the epitomized of spreading Vedic readings amongst non-Brahmins. Even the astonishing work of translating the Bhagavata to Malayalam was after making it comprehensible to everyone.

Among the themes he tackled in his poetry are : Sex, parentage, family and all facets of life is liable for celebration in Akkitham's verse. He discusses the farmer's jargon as well as the heightened sanskritises poetic language of the Vedas in the same way. Consequently both the folk tunes as well as the complicated Sanskrit meters employed by him obviously. Consequently he did the same to sonnets as well as muktakas. Certain verses that are among the best children's poetry in Malayalam are written by Akkitham and at the same time certain best allegoric meditative poetry in his composition. He owns verbal contentment, affluence as well as profusion, diversity as well as subtleness. His reputation is probably would lie on the unbounded empathy suggesting his consideration for children, empathy for the incapacitated, concern for the underprivileged (Kurup, 1999).

Akkitham's sublime talent as well as wide knowledge lead to his uniqueness amongst the poets of his generation. A deceiving simplicity elegances his poems even when he employs a condensed Sanskritic vocabulary to speak it. His sacred piety merely accentuated through themes like patriotism, love and conjugal bliss. Akkitham's first poetic anthology *Veeravaadam*, that was published in 1944. T. S. Eliot in his notable essay Tradition and Individual Talent states the fact that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone". Similarly Akkitham might say. Akkitham belongs to a long line of classical poets and he is at the end of this line. Neither the evolving subaltern nor the conventional capitalist top of contemporary life can place privilege to that Sanskritic Indian tradition much as the previous feudal aristocracy as well as its elite. Although his literary works like "Kuttappan the Komaram" as well as "Gramalakshmi", Akkitham's technical incapability of articulating the subaltern lived experience, although he comes from great philosophical statures to the routine of every day, is a chief blind spot in his other visionary works. He tries to grasp the involvements of the downtrodden. Nevertheless Akkitham is a liberal in the traditional style more than a socialist. He perceives the world not dialectically, rather as a lone

indistinguishable entire (Biju, 2016). Therefore he tries to affect a meld of diverse horizons over his poetry. In His Epic of the 20th Century he says , in his most famous lines :-

Luminosity is but sadness my child  
Mere darkness brings pleasure (Tharakan, 1979).

The poet is after a primeval indistinguishable depth more than a contradictory dichotomy of darkness as well as light. Akkitham in his "Veendum Thunchanparambil" pays homage to Ezhuthachan, the old master of Malayalam poetry. Akkitham says :

Wrong though it might be, or even if it's true Impossible would it be for me, to kick away, In this incandescent noon, the earthly life; Even as flowers keep smiling in the courtyard'' Akkitham, (Veendum Thunchanparambil) (Achuthan, 2002).

Consequently he keep an eye on a classical model of going back over the masters of yore, while trying to convey the potency of romantic individuality through his works. Akkitham has this struggle amid classical tradition as well as the individual intellect. The poetical vitalities in Akkitham are forcefully absorbed then perceived in feelings towards peculiar and the ordinary. In his poems, an entirely dissimilar who experience both reality as well as imaginative universe are evident themselves. Akkitham's attempts to consider modernity in his poems are in effect, although , he adopts a exceptionally Indian type of liberalism in poems like "Bharatheeyante Ganam" (Song of the Indian). The whole of Jnanpith winners from Malayalam for the sake of being noted for their capability of articulating a pan-Indian idiom (Achuthan, 2002).

Some of Akkitham's early poems, titled "Face to face with an adolescent girl", "Black market", and "To the Temple" were much discussed. A keen observer, he looked closely for the magical within the mundane; in his eyes the flower blossoming on the boundary wall too is beautiful, and finds its way naturally into his poems. In the poem titled "Melshanthi of yesteryears" Akkitham portrays a poverty-stricken Namboodiri family. He is aware of how the *illam* lost its glory. Mother says:

Hey unni Its *kanji* until *karkidakam* I don't know whether you will like it.

One of the "upper castes" of kerala, the Namboodiris, bound as many of them were through rigid customs as well as rules, often hushed those who contrasting them in their pursuit for wealth as well as power. Namboodiri women were restrained indoors, where they lived in squalor and degradation. Eventually things changed, they lost their power and wealth, and many of the families became poor, even finding it difficult to make ends meet. "Melshanthi of yesteryears" chronicles the decline of a Namboodiri family (Tharakan K. M., 1976).



Akkitham shot into fame with his Khandakavya titled *Irupatham Nootatinte Ithihasam (Epic of the 20th Century)*, which went on to bag his first award, the Sanjayan Award, in 1952. This book is a marker of the advent of modernism in Malayalam poetry:-

When I shed a drop of tear soaked in compassion for others a thousand universes are drawn in my heart.

When I spend a smile from my lips moistened with my love for others the gentle, ever pure moonlight fills my heart.

I did not know till then of this divine rapturous enlightened flow thinking again and again of this knowledge denied, Heartbroken, I weep.

The poem “Legend of the 20th Century” speaks of a shocking reality. Man is no more human and has become selfish. With his desires increasing, he is moving away from dharma, and he has no compassion for his fellow beings. He doesn’t want anyone else to be superior. This poem meditates on the great fall.

Flies fall into the Fire of the cook’s hearth  
The next day the dead bodies of infants  
Are found on narrow roads.

Akkitham says that heaven and hell are the two options for a human, and foolishness leads to the latter. He warns future generations:

Unni, light is sorrow  
Darkness is comforting (Tharakan K. M., 1978).

Another noted work of Akkitham’s is *Bali Darshanam*, where the legend of Mahabali – the Asura emperor who was loved by his subjects and was sent beneath the earth by Vamana – is given a new interpretation. The poem also gives a new dimension to the figure of Shukra Muni, and turns a critical eye on the contemporary human predicament.

The poem is located in the Onam celebrations, the narration beginning with a dream during a post-prandial nap after the feast. Describing the songs, the games, the floral decorations, and more, Akkitham contends that the fervor and charm of earlier celebrations is missing, invoking the Onam festivities in his childhood, whose memories are still strong.

Mahabali appears at the end of the dream, and Akkitham argues that the very powerful king became an icon not for his power and glory but because of his submissive nature. *Bali Darshanam* is a brilliant poem. Even as he regrets present-day consumerist Onam celebrations, Akkitham changes the traditional narrative (hails from Muzzafarpur, 2019).



Akkitham has a chief role in depriving certain of the old-fashioned as well as unrelated traditions dominant in the Namboodiri community being a rebel as well as reformist at heart. Re-marriage of Namboodiri widows as well as Namboodiri women leaving to work were extraordinary as well as inconceivable even throughout the beginning of the twentieth century.

The poet places the blame on the satisfaction that had been set in the Namboodiri communal because they are the cause after those ills in the society. As Akkitham said:

We ourselves are to blame for the same as the Namboodiri is were financially sound, up in the social hierarchy and had nothing to worry about. But when they hit a low in life and faced difficulties, they had to change and permanently at that (Plant, 2019).

The similar reason was behind the oppression of certain classes who were deprived of the opportunity to study Sanskrit, Vedas as well as Upanishads for centuries. Akkitham was the leader of the social revolution that changed the dominant customs upside down as well as let the gates unlocked for people from the inferior layers to know about the best Indian system of awareness as well as tradition, Akkitham said that:

I was totally against the practice of Brahmanism by an exclusive class. Nothing should be denied to the people of this great land in the name of religion, caste and class (Plant, 2019).

Akkitham developed his works to turn into a persona non-grata for the friends since he interrogated as well as confronted the ills of the society being experienced by the Marxists. The poet places the blame on the inactivity which has established in the administrations who governed India ever since 1947. He states :-

The first thing they (the governments) should have done was to ban religious conversion. Besides the creation of Pakistan by tearing apart India, the unbridled freedom given to the foreigners to convert Hindus to other religions played havoc with the soul of the country. Mahatma Gandhi was against religious conversions. It is sad that we failed to read what was in the heart of Mahatma (Achuthan, 2002).

Though speaking the Gandhi Peace Foundation representatives at Kozhikode in Kerala. "Even a Gold Vessel cannot cover the power of truth," he continued to quote from " a shloka" (Tharakan K. M., Malayalam—towards Unconventionalism, 1976).

Akkitham is not wholehearted around arguing poetry, any further. "My mission as a poet is over. It is my passion in astrology which sustains my energy and spirit. Now it is for the younger generation to take off from where me and my colleagues left (Raveendran, 2017). "

Starting his poetic career as a communist sympathizer, Akkitham participated in many reformist movements of Kerala. But he drifted away from communism gradually, when he realized that his ideals based on human love and concern could not find room in the communist principles. “All important poems of Akkitham are stories of human soul refined through sad experiences and modified by unconditional love” (P.M. Narayanan 17). The poet is immortalizing the concept of unconditional love when he says that love is both beauty and truth. Also, he regards love as the strength and mission of his life. In the poem, “Irupatham Noottadinte Ithihasam” (“Saga of the Twentieth Century”) he extends this unconditional love and compassion to all beings in the world:

Unconditional love becomes The strength by course. This is truth, this is beauty;  
Keeping this is my mission (Tharakan K. M., 1979).

Akkitham has the attitude to see oneness around him as well as his unconditional love towards all beings of this world without any distinction. Nature is exemplified in Akkitham’s poems not as the realization of his romantic dreams. Rather, the poet regards nature as an prevailing reality with its own identity. The words of Akkitham bear testimony to his deep faith in “Advaita” philosophy as well as its influence on him in modifying his vision towards (Biju, 2016). Thus the doctrine of “Advaita” makes him see and accept an undivided world where everything is connected to everything else in a natural reality. He dreams of a new world where humans live happily and peacefully without mutual exploitation. The “Advaita” philosophy enables him to see all beings of the world as part of the divine one. It was also the vision of oneness in Karl Marx which attracted Akkitham to Marxism in his youth. The Vedic vision of oneness has left an indelible imprint on the poet’s mind, which in turn helped him develop an ecological comprehensiveness of the world. Akkitham remembers how the Vedic “suktas” or verses caught hold of his mind as a student of the Vedas. Even as a boy, Akkitham noticed the repetition of the word “samanam” (togetherness) ten times in the “Samvada Suktas”, a part of *Rig Veda*. “Saga of the Twentieth Century”, a written in 738 lines by the poet, addresses a wide range of social as well as psychological concerns of the mid-twentieth century. “Saga of the Twentieth Century” begins with the poet’s expression of his unique happiness as he sheds a tear for others. The poem highlights his love as well as compassion for his fellow beings as well as nature. Akkitham arrives at the conclusion that the only driving force of life is unconditional love (hails from Muzzafarpur, 2019).

Also, it is love as well as care for others that give the poet happiness and contentment. “Saga of the Twentieth Century” starts with the poet’s compassion for others:

Thousand Suns dawn In my mind, When I shed a tear For others; When I pass a gentle smile  
For others, Eternal full moon Rises in my mind (Plant, 2019).

The poem, “Saga of the Twentieth Century”, as a whole symbolizes urbanization and its consequences which distanced humans from nature. He seems to say that the present social unrest results from the unethical urbanization posing irreversible damage to nature. The poet refers to a kind of life close to nature emerging out of the urban dreams of the modern society. The conflict between nature of the past and the urban present forms the unifying thread of the poem. The modernity is manifested in the form of exploitation of others. Nature is exploited by humans; similarly physically and financially weaker sections of the society have become the victims of unscrupulous exploitation by the stronger. Modernity has victimized both the weaker sections of humanity and nature as a whole. Innocent girls fall prey to the lust of the rich. The poem written in 1952 becomes more and more relevant in the contemporary society as the world is witnessing the magnified form of the gruesome sights represented in the poem. The heartbreaking sight around him forces Akkitham to tell the future generation “Light is sorrow/ Darkness is bliss” (hails from Muzzafarpur, 2019). In an interview, Akkitham has given a spiritual dimension to this oft-quoted couplet of the contemporary Malayalam poetry. He thinks that the spiritual enlightenment hidden behind the brightness of the physical world is more comfortable in the present world of hysterical modernity. The poet is voicing the deep ecological message that the lack of spiritual insight of the people will take the world to infinite physical progress devoid of any peace of mind. Akkitham’s “de-humanist” attitude acknowledges the limitlessness, mystery, divinity and uncontrollable nature of the natural world. The poet initially showed affinity to communism; but he moved away from it as he realized that there is no space for human emotions in communism. He thinks that any ideology that does not consider basic human feelings is useless for the world. The speaker of the poem regrets his own wrong doings as a follower of the communist idealism:

Out of bookish knowledge I, the devil of the nether world, Made my men cut humans as cutting plantains (Kurup, 1999).

The poet is indirectly hinting at the bloody revolution led by Stalin in Russia. The poet comes to the realization that the universe is beyond human comprehension irrespective of his revolutionary ideologies:

I misunderstood that I can put the Universe On my palms As an egg (Biju, 2016).

He remembers with respect the great spiritual masters Valmiki, Vyasa, Buddha, Ranti Deva, Ashoka, Sankara, Jesus Christ and Muhammed Nabi, who practiced love and humility. Humility makes him say that the masters of the past are immortals and that he is a mortal. Akkitham also remembers the great philosophers like Confucius and Gandhi for their enlightening ideals. The reference to them is environmentally significant as these men upheld



the doctrines of mutual love, non-violence and greedless life. The poet realizes the strength and value of unconditional love which he wants to make the mission of life:

Unconditional love Becomes strength gradually and this is truth, this is beauty  
Making this a habit is the moral duty (hails from Muzzafarpur, 2019).

The “Saga of the Twentieth century” becomes the core of Akkitham’ vision of nature Because he focuses the need of establishing peace, humility, harmony and compassion in the world. Also his stand against modernity, weapons and war is manifested in the poem. This poem is to reveal Akkitham's multilayered character as well as his literary and social contributions. The poet lived a humble life as well as his rearing, that forged the poet in him. He is versatile writer as well as social reformer who attempts to free his community from traditionalism. An explanation of his social activism, places focus on the poet's contributions as a reformer (Kurup, 1999).

### **Conclusion**

Akkitham’s poetry is known for its rich intonation as well as precision. His poems embrace a cultural heritage while at the same time portraying a new mentality. His works are known for their philosophical touch, and his innate ability to combine gravitas with simple language. He also was after social reform in his society due to the ills founded in it. Some of those ills are related to traditional ideas and beliefs inherited in the society, Akkitham was after changing those inherited beliefs to reach to change of what is bad in the society of issues like marriage of widows, poverty, certain religious issues and others.



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