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“Self-Surrender”

“Peace”

“Compassion” &

“The Mission of the Goose”

Poems and Prayers from South India

by Appayya Dīkshita, Nīla-kantha Dīkshita
& Vedānta Dēshika



Translated by

YIGAL BRONNER & DAVID SHULMAN

With a Foreword by Gieve Patel

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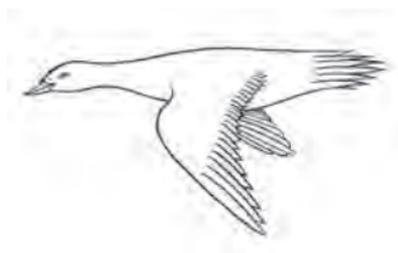
“SELF-SURRENDER”
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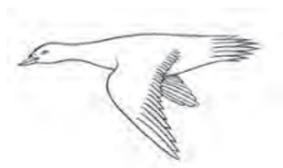
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COMPASSION

1 P^{RAPADYE TAM} giriṃ prāyaḥ
 Śrīnivās' | ânukampayā
 ikṣu|sāra|sravanty" ēva
 yan|mūrtyā śarkarāyitaṃ.

vigāhe tīrtha|bahulāṃ
 śītalāṃ guru|saṃtatim
 Śrīnivāsa|day" | âmbodhi|
 parīvāha|paraṃparāṃ.

kṛtinaḥ Kamal" |āvāsa|
 kārūṇy' | âikāntino bhaje,
 dhatte yat|sūkti|rūpeṇa
 tri|vedī sarva|yogyatāṃ.

Parāśara|mukhān vande
 Bhagīratha|naye sthitān
 Kamalākānta|kārūṇya|
 Gaṅgā|plāvita|mad|vidhān.

5 a|śeṣa|vighna|śamanam
 anīk' | ēśvaram āśraye
 Śrīmataḥ karuṇ" | âmbodhau
 śikṣā|srota iv' ōtthitaṃ

Prelude

I SURRENDER TO this mountain,
this stream of sugar-cane sap
turned solid, as God's Compassion
takes crystal form.

1

I swim in the cool
steady flood of God's Compassion,
in its deep pools, eddies, currents
flowing through the long line
of our teachers, which
never fails.

I follow unique poets
immersed in the mercy of Kámala's lord.
It is only their songs
that open up all three Vedas
for everyone to hear.

I hold high those sages,
starting with Paráshara,*
who take their lead from the man
who brought the Ganges down to earth.*
The river that is God's Compassion
swept them away
as she now floods me.

I pray to God's General, Vishvak-sena,
who washes all obstacles away.
He rises, steady, from the ocean of God's Compassion
like a river flowing uphill.

5

samasta|jananīm vande
caitanya|stanya|dāyinīm,
śreyasīm Śrīnivāsasya
karuṇām iva rūpiṇīm.

vande Vṛṣa|gir'īśasya
mahiṣīm viśva|dhāriṇīm,
tat|kṛpā|pratighātānām
kṣamayā vāraṇam yayā.

niśamayatu mām Nilā
yad|bhoga|paṭalair dhruvaṃ
bhāvitam Śrīnivāsasya
bhakta|doṣeṣv a|darśanam.

kam apy an|avadhiṃ vande
karuṇā|Varuṇ'ālayam
Vṛṣa|śaila|taṭa|sthānām
svayaṃ vyaktim upāgataṃ.

She mothers all there is.
 She nourishes us with the milk
 they call awareness.
 I bow to her, Compassion embodied,
 the best thing about God.

And to Earth, the highest queen
 of the Lord of Bull Hill.*
 She bears us all
 and bears with us all.
 She won't let us strike back
 at God's Compassion.

Nila,* I pray for your attention.
 When God makes love to you,
 we can be sure his eyes turn blind
 to the faults that we, who love him,
 may commit.

That unfathomable, unending
 ocean of kindness
 who makes himself visible
 to anyone who climbs the slopes
 of Bull Hill—
 I bow to him.

10 a|kiṃcana|nidhiṃ, sūtim
 apavarga|tri|vargayoḥ
 Añjan'ādr'īśvara|dayām
 abhiṣṭaumi nir|añjanām.



anucara|śakty|ādi|guṇām,
 agre|sara|bodha|viracit'ālokām,
 sv'ādhīna|Vṛṣa|gir'īśām,
 svayaṃ prabhūtām pramāṇayāmi dayām.

api nikhila|loka|su|carita|
 muṣṭiṃ|dhaya|durita|mūrcchan'ā|juṣṭam
 saṃjīvayatu, daye, mām
 Añjana|giri|nātha|rañjanī bhavatī.

I praise you, Compassion,
 who belong to the god of Ánjana Hill:*

You are pure gold
 to those who own nothing.
 You alone deliver final freedom
 and the other three ends of men.



Power and other such traits
 follow her everywhere.
 The light of wisdom
 goes before her.
 The Lord of Bull Hill
 is her servant.
 That's how I recognize Compassion
 when she comes to be
 of her own accord.

I've been bad.
 I'm losing my mind.
 My terrible record
 is a fist in the face
 of any good deeds
 that others have done.
 Mother Compassion! Bring me back
 to life. Be the lover
 of the god on Ánjana Hill.

bhagavati daye, bhavatyā

Vṛṣa|giri|nāthe samāplute tuṅge

a|pratigha|majjanānām

hast'ālambo mad|āgasām mṛgyah.

kṛpaṇa|jana|kalpa|latikām

kṛt'āparādhasya niṣkriyām ādyām,

Vṛṣa|giri|nātha|daye, tvām

vidanti saṃsāra|tāriṇīm vibudhāḥ.

15 Vṛṣa|giri|gṛha|medhi|guṇāḥ

bodha|bal'āiśvarya|vīrya|śakti|mukhāḥ

doṣā bhaveyur etc

yadi nāma, daye, tvayā vinā|bhūtāḥ.

ā|sṛṣṭi|saṃtatānām

aparādhānām nirodhinīm jagataḥ,

Padmāsahāya|karuṇe,

pratisaṃcara|kelim ācarasi.

When you flood even the god
 on the peak of Bull Hill,
 surely my burden of evil
 will drown, too.

Compassion, great goddess:
 would it be too much to ask you
 to give it a hand?

You're bounty unending
 to anyone in want,
 immediate expiation
 for anyone who's done wrong.
 Goddess Compassion who lives with the god
 on Bull Hill: those who know,
 know you can guide us
 to the other shore.

Omniscience, might, mastery, vigor,
 and all the other blessed qualities
 of the god at home on Bull Hill
 would be nothing but a curse, Compassion,
 if not for you.

15

People commit crimes non-stop
 from the beginning of time, and you,
 God's Compassion, block them with a torrent
 at every end of time, as the curtain falls
 on your dance.*

a|cid|a|viśiṣṭān pralaye
 jantūn avalokya jāta|nirvedā
 karaṇa|kalevara|yogaṃ
 vitarasi, Vṛṣa|śaila|nātha|karuṇe, tvam.

anuguṇa|daś”|ârpitena,
 Śrīdhara|karuṇe, samāhita|snehā
 śamayasi tamaḥ prajānāṃ
 śāstramayena sthira|pradīpena.

rūḍhā Vṛṣ’|âcala|pateḥ
 pāde mukha|kānti|patrala|cchāyā,
 karuṇe, sukhayasi vinatān
 kaṭ’|âkṣa|vitapaiḥ kar’|âpaceya|phalaiḥ.

20 nayane Vṛṣ’|âcal’|êndos
 tārā|maitrīṃ dadhānayā, karuṇe,
 dṛṣṭas tvay” âiva janimān
 apavargam a|krṣṭa|pacyam anubhavati.



samay’|ôpanatais tava pravāhair,
 anukampe, kṛta|saṃplavā dharitrī
 śaraṇ’|âgata|sasya|mālin” îyam
 Vṛṣa|śail’|ēśa|krṣṭivalaṃ dhinoti.

Then, after the deluge, when you see all living beings
 no better than dead matter, you despair, Compassion,
 and bless them with the burden of vital senses
 and a body—you
 who belong to the god of Bull Hill.

With the unwavering lamp of Scripture,
 its coiled wick lit at the right moment
 and burning with your love,
 you, Mother Compassion, dispel the darkness
 in people's minds.

If God is a tree on Bull Hill,
 you grow at his feet, you're the lush shade
 flowing from the foliage at his head,
 and to delight those who bow to him, Compassion,
 you bend the long boughs that are his glances
 heavy with fruit within reach.

God, rising like the moon on Bull Hill,
 supplies the eyes, but you, Compassion,
 give him sight. If your gentle gaze falls,
 star-like, on anyone alive, they'll find freedom,
 a rich yield from an untilled land.

20



When the earth is flooded on time
 by you, Compassion,
 pilgrims crop up in field after field
 to the great joy of that Peasant
 who farms Bull Hill.*

kalaś'ôdadhi|saṃpado bhavatyāḥ,
 karuṇe, san|mati|mantha|saṃskṛtāyāḥ
 amṛt'âṃśam avaimi divya|dehaṃ
 mṛta|saṃjīvanam Añjan'|âcal'|êndoḥ.

jala|dher iva śītatā, daye, tvam
 Vṛṣa|śail'|âdhipateḥ sva|bhāva|bhūtā.
 pralay'|ārabhaṭi|naṭim tad|ikṣam
 prasabhaṃ grāhayasi prasatti|lāsyam

praṇata|pratikūla|mūla|ghātī
 pratighaḥ ko 'pi Vṛṣ'|âcal'|ēśvarasya
 kalame yavas'|âpacāya|nītyā,
 karuṇe, kiṃkaratām tav' ôpayāti.

25 a|bahiṣ|kṛta|nigrahān vidantaḥ
 Kamalākānta|guṇān sva|tantrat'|ādīn,
 a|vikalpam anugrahaṃ duhānām
 bhavatīm eva, daye, bhajanti santaḥ.

When you whipped yourself into cream
 in the butter-churn of your willing mind,
 Compassion, Ocean of Milk,
 a spoonful became God's body
 rising like the moon on Bull Hill
 that pulls the dead
 back to life.*

Like coolness to the ocean,
 you, Compassion, are the very nature
 of the god on Bull Hill.
 When his gaze does the wild dance
 that devastates the world,
 you sternly retrain it
 in the soft step of peace.

Someone always has to weed a field
 of growing paddy. God's infinite rage
 that uproots the enemies
 of those who come to him
 at Bull Hill takes its orders
 from you, Compassion.

Good people know
 that among his other fine features,
 God is wholly free—but not quite free
 from judgment. That's why
 they stick to your free-flowing
 kindness, Compassion,
 no questions asked.



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Three poets of particular salience and artistic genius are represented in this selection from the vast literature of prayers, devotional lyrics, and introspective meditations composed in Sanskrit in South India over the last thousand years. Together, these four works reveal the Tamil country as one of the most productive civilizational centers in the subcontinent.

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