

VACHANODYANA

Siddayya Puranik

ANUPAMA PRAKASHANA, ATHANI

Siddhayya Puranik

VACHANODYANA

(Prose lyrics)

Rendered into English
by
D. V. POTDAR

Anupama Prakashana, Athani

PREFACE

Tagore's Gitanjali translated into English was read by a wide circle of readers and won the Nobel Prize. This fact speaks of the importance of translating a work in the regional languages into English so that it may receive due recognition.

Dr. Siddhayya Puranik is a major poet in Kannada and Vachanodyana is his **magnum opus**. Years ago I read a poem of his—Salam Sab—and was much impressed. Here I have made an humble effort to put into English seventyfive prose lyrics from Vachanodyana. The translation has received the approval of the author. The reader's reaction I eagerly await.

I am deeply indebted to:

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Athani
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—D. V. Potdar

VACHANODYANA

(Prose Lyrics)

1

The earth's my mother
The sky my father
But Thou, birthless One
the father and mother of both,
Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara!

2

Having crushed the seed,
how can you look for the sprout, brother?
Having destroyed the sprout,
how can you have the seedling, brother?
Having snipped the seedling,
how can you expect the bud, brother?
Having nipped the bud,
how can you find the flower, brother?
Having plucked the flower,
how can you long for the fruit, brother?
Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara,
Can Thy creation, or this human life,
have any significance, apart from Thee?

In the incubator of Infinity,
perhaps,
countless worlds are biding like eggs;
but in one
multitudinous beings are born, and die!
Perchance,
their struggle for existence
has brought thee a headache!
So
Hast Thou given up the act of creation
in numberless other worlds,
deeming it as futile?
I hope not, Father.....
For
a Gandhi, Tagore or Aurobindo
though born one in a century
proves quite the contrary.
When this is so.....
when centuries to come
can boast of bringing forth as many supermen.....
why this dudgeon,
Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara?

Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara
If I were to be reborn
let me be a Kannadiga and
a devotee of Basava.....
If not,
Rather than be the ambrosia of the gods
let me be the buttermilk available to the poor;
Rather than be the Airavata proclaiming the
glory of India
let me be a devotee's bullock;
Rather than be the Kalpataru favouring the rich
let me be a bush yielding berries to the poor;
Let me not be
Yama's buffalo
but Dattatreya's dog;
Not a coffer holding
the pearls and jewels of the rich
but the toolbag of Hadapada Appanna!

Some doubting Thomases
laugh at my deep belief in Thee!
But I say,
stop, show me something more worthy of faith,
I will give Thee up and believe it.
Shattering faith's easy
but how difficult
to attain the bliss of faith!
Thou art the life-breath of faith.....
The Faith Supreme!
I feel no shyness
to declare my abiding faith in Thee
Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara!

6

How if too many paths
 leave us no land to till?
 How if too many lanes
 leave us no room to build?
 How if involved in many arguments
 we have no time for small talk?
 How if listening to many preachers
 we confound ourselves?
 This is a delicate seedling
 don't transplant it everyday;
 This is a poor child
 may it not be handled by many.....
 Make me walk Thy path,
 imbibe Thy teaching,
 and speak the truth,
 Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara.

7

For getting a Koh-i-noor
 digging some pits
 isn't effort vain;
 For a novel idea
 scanning a few books
 isn't time wasted;
 For the sake of a Sita
 a war fought
 isn't an evil;
 Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara,
 For Thy glance of grace
 chastisement agelong
 is no loss.

8

Like a worn-out coin returning to the mint,
 Like a useless type returning to the foundry,
 Like a newspaper read and thrown away
 sent back to the factory,
 Like a memory rising and sinking back into the
 unconscious,
 I wish to approach Thee,
 and Thy feet;
 Admit me into your presence,
 Keep me not away,
 Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara.

9

I'm not a penny's worth,
 even alive,
 let alone dead!
 But such as I am
 I dare offer myself to Thee,
 and earn Thy grace,
 Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara.

10

If ink and paper
claim either to have penned the poem and
quarrel over it,
won't the poet smile?
If stone and chisel
claim either to have carved the image and quarrel,
won't the sculptor smile?
If colour and brush
claim either to have painted the picture and quarrel,
won't the artist smile?
If fatheads
claim to run the world and quarrel
won't Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara smile?

11

Should we reject gold ore
because of the presence of the dross?
Should we throw away juicy fruits
because of the presence of their skin and stones?
Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara,
Shouldst Thou reject me
because of my shortcomings?

12

A life without pastimes
is a fruit worm-eaten;
A life without love
is a flower without fragrance;
An aimless life
is a featherless bird;
An immoral life
is a tree loosened at the roots;
A life without pale
is a candle without tallow;
A life without recreation
is a trumpet out of tune;
Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara,
A life oblivious of Thee
is a lake that's dried up.

13

To save no shoes
will you chop off your feet, brother?
To save on toothpowder
will you knock out your teeth, brother?
To save a physician's fee
will you suffer a disease, brother?
To destroy bugs
will you burn down your house, brother?
Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara,
To deny His existence
will you deny your own, brother?

14

The dark ages are over
 And, with them, the ages of
 sacrifices, scholars, religion and charity!
 with the making of robots,
 the age of humanism, too,
 appears to be vanishing!
 What age is in store for us
 we know not!
 Caught in a whirl of doubt
 We gasp.....
 Save us, save us,
 Throw us the prop of faith,
 Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara!

15

Birds
 flock to trees
 laden with fruit;
 Bees
 swarm about creepers
 full of flowers;
 Ants
 rush to
 where the sugar is spilt;
 Wealth and power
 attract flatterers;
 Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara,
 The have lack for nothing
 But Thou,
 the only solace of the have-nots,
 desert them not!

16

Treating complicated diseases,
 widens the experience of the physician;
 Arguing difficult cases,
 sharpens the forensic skill of the lawyer;
 Technical hurdles
 make the mechanic more efficient;
 Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara
 The more errors I commit
 the more be the flow of Thy grace!

17

Who is Thy Lord, Thy Lord
 query the hecklers;
 Thus do I reply,
 Labour is my Lord,
 and Thou the lord of labour,
 Swatantra Dheera Siddheshwara.