

RANJIT HOSKOTE

I, LALLA

The Poems of Lal Dêd

Translated from the Kashmiri with an Introduction and Notes by



When the dirt was wiped away from my mind's mirror,
people knew me for a lover of God.
When I saw Him there, so close to me,
He was All, I was nothing.

When the sun melts away, the moon remains.
When the moon melts away, the mind remains.
When the mind melts away, what's left?
Earth, ether, sky, all empty out.

(74, 75 & 76 form a group of *vākhs*, sharing the same or nearidentical closing line)

When the scriptures melt away, the chants remain.

When the chants melt away, the mind remains.

When the mind melts away, what's left?

A void mingles with the Void.

Kill desire, focus on the true nature of things.
Snap out of your daydreams,
there's rarest wisdom to be found right here.
A void has mingled with the Void.

(78 & 79 are companion *vākhs*)

Shiva's the horse and Vishnu's at the saddle,
Brahma's cheering at the stirrup.
Only the yogi, artful in breath and posture,
can say which god shall mount and ride this horse.

He who strikes the Unstruck Sound,
calls space his body and emptiness his home,
who has neither name nor colour nor family nor form,
who, meditating on Himself, is both Source and Sound,
is the god who shall mount and ride this horse.

Alone, I crossed the Field of Emptiness,
dropping my reason and my senses.
I stumbled on my own secret there
and flowered, a lotus rising from a marsh.

What the books taught me, I've practised.
What they didn't teach me, I've taught myself.
I've gone into the forest and wrestled with the lion.
I didn't get this far by teaching one thing and doing another.

I gave myself to Him, body and soul,
became a bell that the clear note of Him rang through.
Thoughts fixed on Him, I flew through the sky
and unlocked the mysteries of heaven and hell.

You rule the earth, breathe life
into the five elements.
All creation throbs with the Unstruck Sound.
Immeasurable, who can take Your measure?

To the yogi, the whole wide world ripples into Nothingness:
it splashes like water on the water of Infinity.
When that Void melts, Perfection remains.
Hey priest-man, that's the only lesson you need!

Word or thought, normal or Absolute, they mean nothing here.
Even the *mudrās* of silence won't get you entry.
We're beyond even Shiva and Shakti here.
This Beyond that's beyond all we can name, that's your lesson!

Neither You nor I, neither object nor meditation,
just the All-Creator, lost in His dreams.
Some don't get it, but those who do
are carried away on the wave of Him.