

SPEAKING OF ŚIVA



TRANSLATED WITH AN

INTRODUCTION BY

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BASAVANNA

THE biography of Basavanna has many contradictory sources: controversial edicts, deifying accounts by Virasaiva followers, poetic life-histories, pejorative accounts by his Jaina opponents mentioned in the vacanas of contemporary and later saints. Basavanna was a political activist and social reformer, minister to a king in a troubled century; it is not surprising that he should have been praised as a prophet by followers and condemned as a zealot and conspirator by his enemies, of whom he had many.

Leaving aside the scholarly and other controversies regarding the dates and the events of Basavanna's life, here is one generally accepted version:

Basavanna was born in A.D. 1106 and died in 1167 or 1168. His birthplace was probably Manigavalli. His parents seem to have died early in his childhood and he grew up under a grandmother's care; he was later looked after by his foster-parents, Mādirāja (or Mādarasa) and Mādāmbike of Bāgēvādi, who are often considered his own parents. His foster-father, Mādirāja, appears to have been learned in the traditional classics; Basavanna's Sanskrit learning obviously derives from his early education and environment. There are also records of a brahminical initiation ceremony (*upanayana*) in 1114 A.D. There is some reason to believe that Bijjala, later Basavanna's patron and king, married the daughter of Mādirāja, and so was well-known to Basavanna even from his early years.

Basavanna had always been devoted to Śiva; by the time he was sixteen he decided to spend his life in the worship and service of Śiva. He found the caste-system of his society and the ritualism of his home shackling and senseless. As

Harihara, his fifteenth-century poet-biographer says, "Love of Śiva cannot live with ritual." So saying, he tore off his sacred thread which bound him like a past-life's deeds . . . and left the shade of his home, disregarded wealth and propriety, thought nothing of relatives. Asking no one in town, he left Bāgēvādi, raging for the Lord's love, eastwards . . . and entered Kappaḍisaṅgama' where three rivers meet.

The Lord of the Meeting Rivers, *Kūḍalasaṅgamadēva*, becomes his chosen god; every vacana by Basavaṇṇa has his chosen god's name in it, usually as the closing signature-line.

In Kūḍalasaṅgama, he found a guru, with whom he studied the Vēdas and other religious texts. Though he began his worship with an external symbol (*sthāvaraliṅga*), he soon found his *iṣṭaliṅga*, his own personal, chosen, liṅga. Legend says that the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Son, Basavaṇṇa, we want to raise you in the world; go to Maṅgaḷavāḍa where King Bijjaḷa reigns.' Basavaṇṇa woke up and found it unbearable to follow the Lord's decree, leaving the temple and the Lord of the Meeting Rivers behind. He cried out that the Lord was merciless, 'taking away earth from under a man falling from the sky, cutting the throat of the faithful'. The Lord appeared to him again in a dream in the midst of his distress and said to him that he would appear next day to him through the mouth of the Sacred Bull. Next day while Basavaṇṇa waited worshipfully, leaning his body on the Stone Bull in the temple, the Lord formed a liṅga in the heart-lotus of the Bull, and enthroned on the tongue, came into Basavaṇṇa's hand, and initiated him. From then on, Basavaṇṇa was freed from places. He was his Lord's man and prepared himself to create a society of Śiva's men.

Basavaṇṇa then went to Kalyāṇa where his uncle Baladēva was Bijjaḷa's minister, and married his uncle's daughter

Gaṅgāmbike. Soon he was a trusted friend of King Bijjaḷa, and rose in his court. When his uncle Baladēva died, Basavaṇṇa succeeded him as Bijjaḷa's minister, and assumed many powers of state. He also gave his foster-sister, Nīlāḷcane, to Basavaṇṇa in marriage.

Meanwhile, Basavaṇṇa's devotion matured from strength to strength. 'Not only was he the king's treasurer (*bhaṇḍāri*) but he became the Treasurer of the Lord's Love (*bhakti-bhaṇḍāri*)'. As the Lord and his jaṅgamas (wandering devotees) are both one, he fed and served the Lord's men. For 'they are the face and mouth of the Lord, as the root below is the mouth of a tree'. Devotees from far and near walked a beaten path to Kalyāṇa to see Basavaṇṇa and enjoy his hospitality. Many were converted to Śiva-worship by the fire of Basavaṇṇa's zeal and stayed in Kalyāṇa, thus swelling the numbers of Viraśaivas. Basavaṇṇa also undertook the work of initiating the newcomers himself. A new community with egalitarian ideals disregarding caste, class and sex grew in Kalyāṇa, challenging orthodoxy, rejecting social convention and religious ritual. A political crisis was at hand.

Naturally, there was fierce opposition to this rising utopian ginger-group. Its enemies gathered around Bijjaḷa and battered at his faith in his minister with gossip and accusation. Bijjaḷa was swayed by this barrage of accusations and waited for a suitable opportunity to curb the rise of Viraśaivism in his country.

In the new egalitarian Viraśaiva community a wedding took place between two devotees; the bridegroom was a former outcaste and the bride an ex-brahmin. The traditionalists thought of this unorthodox marriage as the first blow against a society built on the caste-system. So Bijjaḷa sentenced the fathers of the bride and the bridegroom to death; they were dragged to death in the dust and thorn of the streets. The Viraśaiva community, instead of being cowed by it, was

roused to revenge and violence against 'state and society'. Basavaṇṇa, committed to non-violence, tried hard to convert the extremists but failed. In his failure, he left Kalyāṇa and returned to Kappaḍisaṅgama, where he died soon after (1166/1168?).

Meanwhile, extremist youths were out for revenge; they stabbed Bijjaḷa and assassinated him. In the riots and persecution that followed Virāṣaivas were scattered in all directions.

But in the brief period, probably the span of one generation, Basavaṇṇa had helped create a new community. Many great men like Allamaṇḍabhu, saint of saints, were in Kalyāṇa in that period. He helped clear and shape the ideas of the Virāṣaivas. Many others like Siddharāma, Mācidēva, Bommayya ('the lute-playing Bommayya'), and the remarkable radical woman-saint Mahādēviyakka were part of the company of saints. A religious centre called Anuḇhava-maṇṭapa ('the Hall of Experience') was established in which the great saints met for dialogue and communion, shaping the growing new community. A hundred and ninety thousand jaṅgamas or mendicant devotees are counted as having lived in Kalyāṇa under Basavaṇṇa's direction, helping spread the new religion.

Basavaṇṇa's achievement, in addition to the great vacanas he composed, was the establishment of a Virāṣaivism, with eight distinctive features,¹ based on a rejection of inequality of every kind, of ritualism and taboo, and exalting work (*kāyaka*) in the world in the name of the Lord.

Basavaṇṇa's vacanas have often been arranged according to an enlarged six-phase system (cf. appendix). For instance, Basavanāḷ, following no doubt earlier editors and commentators, divides the phases into several sub-phases; the rationale for such divisions is esoteric and technical. I shall

1. cf. footnote p. 32.

content myself here with an indication of the main six-phase classification, according to the editor:

<i>Bhakta</i>	1-527
<i>Māhēśvara</i>	528-765
<i>Prasādi</i>	766-795
<i>Prāṇalingi</i>	796-918
<i>Aikya</i>	919-958

It is significant that though each saint goes through all the stages, he is most intensely expressive in some rather than in all equally. Further studies of this interesting typological framework and these expressive distributions in the saints' works will be rewarding. For instance, nearly half the vacanas of Basavaṇṇa are in the first phase of a man struggling with the world, its ills and temptations (compare Allama).

For the texts, the order and the numbering of the Basavaṇṇa vacanas I have used S. S. Basavanāḷ's edition (Dharwar, 1962).

21

Father, in my ignorance you brought me
through mothers' wombs,
through unlikely worlds.

Was it wrong just to be born,
O lord?

Have mercy on me for being born
once before.

I give you my word,
lord of the meeting rivers,
never to be born again.

33

Like a monkey on a tree
it leaps from branch to branch:
how can I believe or trust
this burning thing, this heart?⁶
It will not let me go
to my Father,
my lord of the meeting rivers.

30

Nine hounds unleashed
on a hare,
the body's lusts
cry out:
Let go!
Let go!

Let go! Let go!
cry the lusts
of the mind.

Will my heart reach you,
O lord of the meeting rivers,

before the sensual bitches⁷
touch and overtake?

52

Like a cow fallen into a quagmire⁸
I make mouths at this corner and that,

no one to look for me
or find me

till my lord sees this beast
and lifts him out by the horns.

59

Cripple me, father,
that I may not go here and there.
Blind me, father,
that I may not look at this and that.
Deafen me, father,
that I may not hear anything else.

Keep me
at your men's⁹ feet
looking for nothing else,
O lord of the meeting rivers.¹⁰

62

Don't make me hear all day
'Whose man, whose man, whose man is this?'

Let me hear, 'This man is mine, mine,
this man is mine.'

O lord of the meeting rivers,
make me feel I'm a son
of the house.¹¹

64

Śiva, you have no mercy.
Śiva, you have no heart.

Why why did you bring me to birth,
wretch in this world,
exile from the other?

Tell me, lord,
don't you have one more
little tree or plant
made just for me?

70*

As a mother runs
close behind her child
with his hand on a cobra
or a fire,

the lord of the meeting rivers
stays with me
every step of the way
and looks after me.

* This poem is taken from Basavanā's appendix to the poems.

97

The master of the house, is he at home, or isn't he?
 Grass on the threshold,
 dirt in the house:
 The master of the house, is he at home, or isn't he?

Lies in the body,
 lust in the heart:
 no, the master of the house is not at home,
 our Lord of the Meeting Rivers.

99

Does it matter how long
 a rock soaks in the water:
 will it ever grow soft?

Does it matter how long
 I've spent in worship,
 when the heart is fickle?

Futile as a ghost
 I stand guard over hidden gold,¹²

O lord of the meeting rivers.

101

When a whore with a child
 takes on a customer for money,

neither child nor lecher
 will get enough of her.

She'll go pat the child once,
 then go lie with the man once,

neither here nor there.
 Love of money is relentless,

my lord of the meeting rivers.¹³

125

See-saw watermills bow their heads.
 So what?
 Do they get to be devotees
 to the Master?

The tongs join hands.
 So what?
 Can they be humble in service
 to the Lord?

Parrots recite.
 So what?
 Can they read the Lord?

How can the slaves of the Bodiless God,¹⁵
 Desire,
 know the way
 our Lord's Men move
 or the stance of their standing?

129

The sacrificial lamb brought for the festival
 ate up the green leaf brought for the decorations.¹⁶

Not knowing a thing about the kill,
 it wants only to fill its belly:
 born that day, to die that day.

But tell me:
 did the killers survive,
 O lord of the meeting rivers?

132

You can make them talk
 if the serpent
 has stung
 them.

You can make them talk
 if they're struck
 by an evil planet.¹⁷

But you can't make them talk
 if they're struck dumb
 by riches.

Yet when Poverty the magician
 enters, they'll speak
 at once,

O lord of the meeting rivers.

144

The crookedness of the serpent
 is straight enough for the snake-hole.

The crookedness of the river
 is straight enough for the sea.

And the crookedness of our Lord's mer
 is straight enough for our Lord!

487

Feet will dance,
 eyes will see,
 tongue will sing,
 and not find content.
 What else, what else
 shall I do?

I worship with my hands,
 the heart is not content.
 What else shall I do?

Listen, my lord,
 it isn't enough.
 I have it in me
 to cleave thy belly
 and enter thee

O lord of the meeting rivers!

494

I don't know anything like time-beats and metre
 nor the arithmetic of strings and drums;
 I don't know the count of iamb and dactyl.²⁴

My lord of the meeting rivers,
 as nothing will hurt you
 I'll sing as I love.

500

Make of my body the beam of a lute
 of my head the sounding gourd
 of my nerves the strings
 of my fingers the plucking rods.

Clutch me close
 and play your thirty-two songs
 O lord of the meeting rivers!

555

Certain gods²⁵
 always stand watch
 at the doors of people.
 Some will not go if you ask them to go.
 Worse than dogs, some others.
 What can they give,
 these gods,
 who live off the charity of people

O lord of the meeting rivers?

558

How can I feel right
about a god who eats up lacquer and melts,
who wilts when he sees fire?²⁶

How can I feel right
about gods you sell in your need,
and gods you bury for fear of thieves?

The lord of the meeting rivers,
self-born, one with himself,

he alone is the true god.

563

The pot is a god. The winnowing
fan is a god. The stone in the
street is a god. The comb is a
god. The bowstring is also a
god. The bushel is a god and the
spouted cup is a god.

Gods, gods, there are so many
there's no place left
for a foot.

There is only
one god. He is our Lord
of the Meeting Rivers.

581

They plunge
wherever they see water.

They circumambulate
every tree they see.

How can they know you
O Lord
who adore
waters that run dry
trees that wither?

586

In a brahmin house
where they feed the fire²⁷
as a god.

when the fire goes wild
and burns the house

they splash on it
the water of the gutter
and the dust of the street,

beat their breasts
and call the crowd.

These men then forget their worship
and scold their fire,
O lord of the meeting rivers!

639

You went riding elephants.
 You went riding horses.
 You covered yourself
 with vermillion and musk.

O brother,
 but you went without the truth,
 you went without sowing and reaping
 the good.

Riding rutting elephants
 of pride, you turned easy target
 to fate.

You went without knowing
 our lord of the meeting rivers.

You qualified for hell.

686

He'll grind till you're fine and small.
 He'll file till your colour shows.

If your grain grows fine
 in the grinding,
 if you show colour
 in the filing,

then our lord of the meeting rivers
 will love you
 and look after you.

703

Look here, dear fellow:
 I wear these men's clothes
 only for you.²⁸

Sometimes I am man,
 sometimes I am woman.

O lord of the meeting rivers
 I'll make wars for you
 but I'll be your devotees' bride.

705

If a rich son is born
 to one born penniless,
 he'll delight his father's heart
 with gold counted in millions;

if a warrior son is born
 to a milk-livered king
 who doesn't know which way
 to face a battle, he'll console
 his father with a battlefront
 sinking and floating
 in a little sea of blood;

so will I console you
 O lord of the meeting rivers,
 if you should come
 and ask me.

820

The rich²⁹
will make temples for Śiva.
What shall I,
a poor man,
do?

My legs are pillars,
the body the shrine,
the head a cupola³⁰
of gold.

Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,
things standing³¹ shall fall,
but the moving³² ever shall stay.

831

I'm no worshipper;
I'm no giver;
I'm not even beggar,

O lord
without your grace.

Do it all yourself, my lord of meeting rivers,
as a mistress would
when maids are sick.³³

847

When
like a hailstone crystal
like a waxwork image
the flesh melts in pleasure
how can I tell you?

The waters of joy
broke the banks
and ran out of my eyes.

I touched and joined
my lord of the meeting rivers.
How can I talk to anyone
of that?

848

Sir, isn't the mind witness enough,
for the taste on the tongue?

Do buds wait for the garland maker's word
to break into flower?

Is it right, sir, to bring out the texts
for everything?

And, sir, is it really right to bring into the open
the mark on our vitals
left by our lord's love-play?

860

The eating bowl is not one bronze
and the looking glass another.

Bowl and mirror are one metal.
Giving back light
one becomes a mirror.

Aware, one is the Lord's;
unaware, a mere human.

Worship the lord without forgetting,
the lord of the meeting rivers.

885

Milk is left over
from the calves.
Water is left over
from the fishes,
flowers from the bees.

How can I worship you,
O Śiva, with such offal?
But it's not for me
to despise left-overs,
so take what comes,

lord of the meeting rivers.

DĒVARA DĀSIMAYYA

DĒVARA DĀSIMAYYA or 'God's Dāsimayya' was probably the earliest of the vacana poets. Commentators, and later saints like Basavaṇṇa, make admiring references to him in their writings.

He is said to have been born in Mudanūru, a village full of temples, in the tenth century. His village has a Rāmanātha temple among its many temples, dedicated to Śiva as worshipped by Rāma, the epic hero, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Every vacana of Dāsimayya is addressed to Rāmanātha, 'Rāma's lord'.

Legend says that he performed ascetic penance in a dense forest when Śiva appeared to him, advised him not to punish his body to follow the way of the liṅga, the all-encompassing symbol. The Lord taught him that working in the world (*kāyaka*) was a part of worshipping and reaching Him. Dāsimayya became a weaver. So he is also known as Jēḍara Dāsimayya or 'Dāsimayya of the weavers'.

Today in Mudanūru, popular tradition identifies several places where Dāsimayya set up his weaver's looms.

Many stories are told about Dāsimayya's achievements as a propagator of Viraśaiva religion. Once he met jungle tribes who hunted wild animals and lived on their flesh. He converted them to the non-violent ways of liṅga worship and taught them the use of the oil-press for their living. Another time, he was challenged by brahmins. They said to him: 'Your Śiva is the chieftain of demons; he covers his body with ash. Give him up. Worship our Viṣṇu and find a place for yourself.' He answered: 'Your Viṣṇu in his incarnations has come through the womb of a pig; and stolen butter from villagers. Was that right and proper?' In the course

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133

If they see
breasts and long hair coming
they call it woman,

if beard and whiskers
they call it man:

but, look, the self that hovers
in between
is neither man
nor woman

O Rāmanātha

144

Suppose you cut a tall bamboo
in two;
make the bottom piece a woman,
the headpiece a man;
rub them together
till they kindle:

 tell me now,
the fire that's born,
is it male or female,

O Rāmanātha?

MAHĀDEVĪYAKKA

MAHĀDEVĪ, a younger contemporary of Basavaṇṇa and Allama in the twelfth century, was born in Uḍutaḍi, a village in Śivamogga, near the birthplace of Allama. At ten, she was initiated to Śiva-worship by an unknown guru. She considered that moment the moment of her real birth. Apparently, the form of Śiva at the Uḍutaḍi temple was Mallikārjuna, translated either as 'the Lord White as Jasmine' or as 'Arjuna, Lord of goddess Mallikā'. 'Cenna' means 'lovely, beautiful'. She fell in love with Cennamallikārjuna and took his name for a 'signature' (*aṅkita*) in all her vacanas.

She betrothed herself to Śiva and none other, but human lovers pressed their suit. The rivalry between the Divine Lover and all human loves was dramatized by the incidents of her own life (vacana 114). Kauśika, the king (or chieftain) of the land, saw her one day and fell in love with her. He sent word to her parents, asking for her hand. In addition to being only human, he disqualified himself further by being a *bhavi*, an unbeliever. Yet he persuaded her, or rather her parents, partly by show of force, and partly by his protestations of love. It is quite likely that she married him and lived with him, though some scholars dispute the tainting fact. Anyhow it must have been a trying marriage for both. Kauśika, the wordling, full of desire for her as a mortal, was the archetype of sensual man; Mahādēvi, a spirit married already to the Lord White as Jasmine, scorned all human carnal love as corrupt and illegitimate, wife to no man, exile bound to the world's wheeling lives, archetypal sister of all souls. Significantly she is known as Akka 'elder sister'. Many of Mahādēvi's most moving vacanas speak of this conflict (cf. 114). Sometimes, the Lord is her illicit lover (cf. 88),

sometimes her only legitimate husband (cf. 283). This ambiguous alternation of attitudes regarding the legitimacy of living in the world is a fascinating aspect of Mahādēvi's poetry.

At one point, Kauśika appears to have tried to force his will on her and so she leaves him, cutting clean her relations with the whole world of men. Like many another saint, enacting his true homelessness by his wanderings, she left birthplace and parents (102). She appears to have thrown away even modesty and clothing, those last concessions to the male world, in a gesture of ultimate social defiance, and wandered about covered in her tresses (124).

Through a world of molesting male attentions she wandered, defiant and weary (294), asserting the legitimacy of her illicit love for the Lord, searching for him and his devotees. She walked towards Kalyāṇa, the centre of Viraśaiva saints, the 'halls of Experience' where Allama and Basavaṇṇa ran a school for kindred spirits.

Allama did not accept her at once. A remarkable conversation ensued, a dialogue between sceptic and love-child which turned into a catechism between guru and disciple. Many of Mahādēvi's vacanas are placed by legend in this famous dialogue.¹ When Allama asked the wild-looking woman for her husband's identity, she replied she was married forever to Cennamallikārjuna. He asked her then the obvious question: 'Why take off clothes, as if by that gesture you could peel off illusions? And yet robe yourself in tresses of hair? If so free and pure in heart, why replace a sari with a covering of tresses?' Her reply is honest:

Till the fruit is ripe inside
the skin will not fall off.

1. Recorded or reconstructed in *Śūnyasampādane* (ca. fifteenth century) cf. note on Allama Prabhu, p. 144.

I'd a feeling it would hurt you
if I displayed the body's seals of love.
O brother, don't tease me
needlessly. I'm given entire
into the hands of my lord
white as jasmine.

MAHĀDĒVIYAKKA 183

For other such contexts, see also vacanas 104, 157, 184, 251, 283, and the notes on them.

At the end of this ordeal by dialogue she was accepted into the company of saints. From then begins the second lap of her journey to her Lord. She wandered wild and god-intoxicated, in love with him, yet not finding him. Restless, she left Kalyāṇa and wandered off again towards Śrīśaila, the Holy Mountain, where she found him and lost herself. Her search is recorded in her vacanas as a search for her love, following all the phases of human love as set forth by the conventions of Indian, especially Sanskrit, poetry. The three chief forms of love, love forbidden (e.g., 328), love in separation (e.g., 318) and love in union (e.g., 336) are all expressed in her poems, often one attitude informing and complicating another in the same poem (e.g., 318).

She was recognized by her fellow-saints as the most poetic of them all, with a single symbolic action unifying all her poetry. She enlists the traditional imagery of pan-Indian secular love-poetry for personal expression. In her, the phases of human love are metaphors for the phases of mystic ascent. In this search, unlike the other saints, she involves all of nature, a sister to bird, beast and tree (e.g., 73). Appropriately, she chose for adoration an aesthetic aspect of Śiva, Śiva as Cennamallikārjuna, or the Lovely Lord White as Jasmine.

Like other bhaktas, her struggle was with her condition, as body, as woman, as social being tyrannized by social roles,

as a human confined to a place and a time. Through these shackles she bursts, defiant in her quest for ecstasy.

According to legend, she died into 'oneness with Śiva' when she was hardly in her twenties – a brief bright burning.

I have used L. Basavarāju's edition of Mahādēviyakka's vacanas: *Akkana Vacanagaḷu* (Mysore, 1966). The numbers follow Basavarāju's edition, which does not classify her vacanas according to the six-phase system.

Like

treasure hidden in the ground
taste in the fruit
gold in the rock
oil in the seed

the Absolute hidden away
in the heart

no one can know
the ways of our lord

white as jasmine.⁴¹

You're like milk
in water:⁴² I cannot tell
what comes before,
what after;
which is the master,
which the slave;
what's big,
what's small.

O lord white as jasmine
if an ant should love you
and praise you,
will he not grow
to demon powers?

65

If sparks fly
I shall think my thirst and hunger quelled.

If the skies tear down
I shall think them pouring for my bath.

If a hillside slide on me
I shall think it flower for my hair.

O lord white as jasmine, if my head falls from my shoulders
I shall think it your offering.

68

Locks of shining red hair
a crown of diamonds⁴⁷
small beautiful teeth
and eyes in a laughing face
that light up fourteen worlds –

I saw His glory,
and seeing, I quell today
the famine in my eyes.

I saw the haughty Master
for whom men, all men,
are but women, wives.

I saw the Great One
who plays at love
with Śakti,
original to the world,

I saw His stance
and began to live.

69

O mother⁴⁸ I burned
in a flameless fire

O mother I suffered
a bloodless wound

mother I tossed
without a pleasure:

loving my lord white as jasmine
I wandered through unlikely worlds.

73

O twittering birds,
don't you know? don't you know?

O swans on the lakeshore,
don't you know? don't you know?

O high-singing koils,⁴⁹
don't you know? don't you know?

O circling swooping bees,
don't you know? don't you know?

O peacocks in the caverns,
don't you know?
don't you know?

Tell me if you know:
where is He,

my lord
white as jasmine?

74

O swarm of bees
 O mango tree
 O moonlight
 O koilbird
 I beg of you all
 one
 favour:

If you should see my lord anywhere
 my lord white as jasmine

call out
 and show him to me.

75

You are the forest

you are all the great trees
 in the forest

you are bird and beast
 playing in and out
 of all the trees

O lord white as jasmine
 filling and filled by all

why don't you
 show me your face?

77

Would a circling surface vulture
 know such depths of sky
 as the moon would know?

would a weed on the riverbank
 know such depths of water
 as the lotus would know?

would a fly darting nearby
 know the smell of flowers
 as the bee would know?

O lord white as jasmine
 only you would know
 the way of your devotees:
 how would these,

these
 mosquitoes
 on the buffalo's hide?

79

Four parts of the day⁵⁰
I grieve for you.
Four parts of the night
I'm mad for you.

I lie lost
sick for you, night and day,
O lord white as jasmine.

Since your love
was planted,
I've forgotten hunger,
thirst, and sleep.

87

Listen, sister, listen.
I had a dream

I saw rice, betel, palmleaf
and coconut.
I saw an ascetic⁵¹
come to beg,
white teeth and small matted curls.

I followed on his heels
and held his hand,
he who goes breaking
all bounds and beyond.

I saw the lord, white as jasmine,
and woke wide open.

88

He bartered my heart,
looted my flesh,
claimed as tribute
my pleasure,
took over
all of me.

I'm the woman of love
for my lord, white as jasmine.

93

Other men are thorn
under the smooth leaf.
I cannot touch them,
go near them, nor trust them,
nor speak to them confidences.

Mother,⁵²
because they all have thorns
in their chests,
I cannot take
any man in my arms but my lord

white as jasmine.

102

When one heart touches
and feels another
won't feeling weigh over all,
can it stand any decencies then?

O mother,⁵³ you must be crazy,
I fell for my lord
white as jasmine,
I've given in utterly.

Go, go, I'll have nothing
of your mother-and-daughter stuff.
You go now.

104

Till you've earned
knowledge of good and evil

it is
lust's body,
site of rage,
ambush of greed,
house of passion,
fence of pride,
mask of envy.

Till you know and lose this knowing
you've no way
of knowing
my lord white as jasmine.⁵⁴

114

Husband inside,
lover outside.
I can't manage them both.

This world
and that other,
cannot manage them both.

O lord white as jasmine

I cannot hold in one hand
both the round nut⁵⁵
and the long bow.

117

Who cares
who strips a tree of leaf
once the fruit is plucked?

Who cares
who lies with the woman
you have left?

Who cares
who ploughs the land
you have abandoned?

After this body has known my lord
who cares if it feeds
a dog
or soaks up water?

119

What's to come tomorrow
let it come today.
What's to come today
let it come right now.

Lord white as jasmine,
don't give us your *nows* and *thens*!

120

Breath for fragrance,
who needs flowers?

with peace, patience, forgiving and self-command,
who needs the Ultimate Posture?

The whole world become oneself
who needs solitude,

O lord white as jasmine.⁵⁶

124

You can confiscate
money in hand;
can you confiscate
the body's glory?

Or peel away every strip
you wear,
but can you peel
the Nothing, the Nakedness
that covers and veils?⁵⁷

To the shameless girl
wearing the White Jasmine Lord's
light of morning,
you fool,
where's the need for cover and jewel?

283

I love the Handsome One:
 he has no death
 decay nor form
 no place or side
 no end nor birthmarks.
 I love him O mother. Listen.

I love the Beautiful One
 with no bond nor fear
 no clan no land
 no landmarks
 for his beauty.

So my lord, white as jasmine, is my husband.

Take these husbands who die,
 decay, and feed them
 to your kitchen fires!

294

O brothers,⁶² why do you talk
 to this woman,
 hair loose,
 face withered,
 body shrunk?

O fathers, why do you bother
 with this woman?
 She has no strength of limb,
 has lost the world,
 lost power of will,
 turned devotee,

she has lain down
 with the Lord, white as jasmine,
 and has lost caste.

319

What do
the barren know
of birthpangs?

Stepmothers,
what do they know
of loving care?

How can the unwounded
know the pain
of the wounded?

O lord white as jasmine
your love's blade stabbed
and broken in my flesh,

I writhe.
O mothers
how can you know me?

321

The heart in misery
has turned
upside down.

The blowing gentle breeze
is on fire.⁶⁴
O friend moonlight burns
like the sun.

Like a tax-collector in a town
I go restlessly here and there.

Dear girl go tell Him
bring Him to His senses.
Bring Him back.

My lord white as jasmine
is angry
that we are two.

322

My husband comes home today.
Wear your best, wear your jewels.

The Lord, white as jasmine,
will come anytime now.

Girls, come
meet Him at the door.

323

I look at the road
for his coming.
If he isn't coming,
I pine and waste away.
If he is late,
I grow lean.

O mother, if he is away
for a night,
I'm like the lovebird⁶⁵
with nothing
in her embrace.

324

Better than meeting
and mating all the time
is the pleasure of mating once
after being far apart.

When he's away
I cannot wait
to get a glimpse of him.

Friend, when will I have it
both ways,
be with Him
yet not with Him,
my lord white as jasmine?

328

I have Māyā for mother-in-law;
the world for father-in-law;
three brothers-in-law, like tigers;

and the husband's thoughts
are full of laughing women:
no god, this man.

And I cannot cross the sister-in-law.

But I will
give this wench the slip
and go cuckold my husband with Hara, my Lord.

My mind is my maid:
by her kindness, I join
my Lord,
my utterly beautiful Lord
from the mountain-peaks,
my lord white as jasmine,
and I will make Him
my good husband.