

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 men
 is straight enough for our Lord!

350*

a grindstone hung at the foot
a deadwood log at the neck

the one will not let me float
and the other will not let me sink

O time's true enemy
O lord of the meeting rivers

tide me over this life at sea²⁰
and bring me to

* This poem is taken from Basavanāḷ's appendix.

420

The root is the mouth
of the tree: pour water there
at the bottom
and, look, it sprouts green
at the top.

The Lord's mouth is his moving men,
feed them. The Lord will give you all.

You'll go to hell,
if, knowing they are the Lord,
you treat them as men.²¹

430

Out of your eighty-four hundred thousand²² faces
put on just one
and come test me, ask me.

If you don't come and ask me,
I'll swear by the names of your elders.

Come in any face and ask me;
I'll give,
my lord of the meeting rivers.

468

I drink the water we wash your feet with,²³
I eat the food of worship,
and I say it's yours, everything,
goods, life, honour:
he's really the whore who takes every last bit
of her night's wages,

and will take no words
for payment,

he, my 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!

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?