



God on the Hill: Temple Poems from Tirupati

Annamayya

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God on the Hill: Temple Poems from Tirupati Annamayya

The devotional poems of Annamayya (15th century) are perhaps the most accessible and universal achievement of classical Telugu literature, one of the major literatures of pre-modern India. Annamayya effectively created and popularized a new genre, the short padam song, which spread throughout the Telugu and Tamil regions and would become an important vehicle for the composition of Carnatic music - the classical music of South India. In this book, Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman offer translations of nearly 100 of Annamayya's poems. All of them are addressed to the god associated with the famous temple city of Tirupati -- Annamayya's home. This deity is sometimes referred to as "god on the hill" or "lord of the seven hills." The poems are couched in a simple and approachable language invented by Annamayya for this purpose and fall into two major categories, the erotic and the metaphysical. The erotic poems, usually in the female voice, sing of the complexities of the god's love life. The metaphysical poems are sung in the poet's own voice and explore the relationship between the poet and his god. Though a small sample of Annamayya's surviving corpus, the selection in this volume suggests the scope of both genres. Rao and Shulman's elegant and lyrical modern translations of these beautiful and moving verses are wonderfully readable as poetry in their own right. The Afterword enriches the reader's understanding, providing historical context and returning us to the poems themselves with a deeper appreciation.

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