

Reading Excerpt A

In Praise of Krishna: Songs from the Bengali

Translated by Edward C. Dimock, Jr. and Denise Levertov

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POEM 1

*I who body and soul
am at your beck and call,
was a girl of noble family.
I took no thought for what would be said of me,
I abandoned everything:
now I am part of you,
your will is my will.
O Madhava, never let our love
seem to grow stale—
I beg you, let the dew
not dry on our flowers,
that my honor not be destroyed.*

*When he heard these words from her beautiful mouth, Madhava bowed his head.
He knew he held the flower of her life in his keeping.*

POEM 2

*Beloved, what more shall I say to you?
In life and in death, in birth after birth
you are the lord of my life.
A noose of love binds
my heart to your feet.
My mind fixed on you alone, I have offered you everything;
in truth, I have become your slave.
In this family, in that house, who is really mine?
Whom can I call my own?
It was bitter cold, and I took refuge
at your lotus feet.
While my eyes blink, and I do not see you
I feel the hearth within me die.*

POEM 3

*Let the earth of my body be mixed with the earth
my beloved walks on.*

*Let the fire of my body be the brightness
in the mirror that reflects his face.*

*Let the water of my body join the waters
of the lotus pool he bathes in.*

*Let the breath of my body be air
lapping his tired limbs.*

*Let me be sky, and moving through me
that cloud-dark Shyama, my beloved.*