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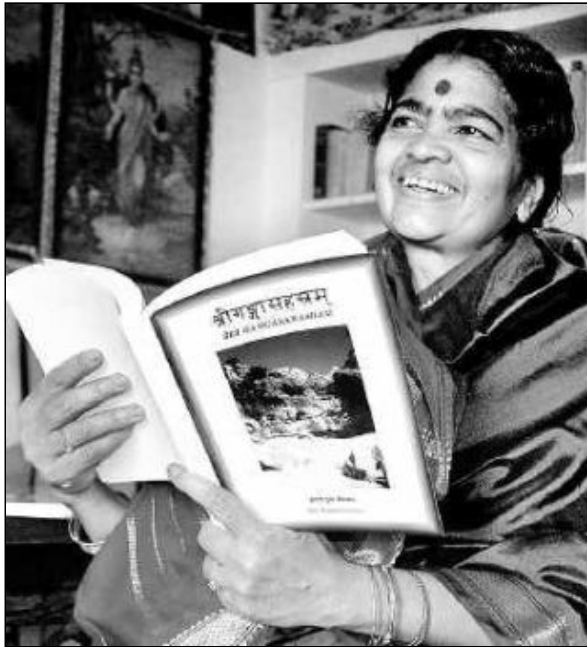
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Deifying the Himalayas

SUDHAKSHINA RANGASWAMI

Swami Dayananda Saraswati released Pushpa Srivatsan's books of devotion, at his ashram in Rishikesh, recently.



Pushpa Srivatsan. Photo: N. Sridharan.

"If a good writer treks the Himalayas he is bound to write a travelogue. If a person with a facile pen imbued with Vedic culture and wisdom travels in the Himalayas one can expect a book of sheer poetry in praise of the Lord, from him. I wonder whether Pushpa had any idea of writing a book when she went to the shrines in the Himalayas. Her gadya prose reveals that the Himalayas themselves were a shrine for her," observes Swami Dayananda Saraswati in his foreword to the book, 'Himalaya Gadyam,' by Pushpa Srivatsan, a prose poem in Sanskrit on the lines of Vedanta Desikar's 'Raghuveera Gadya.' The call of the Himalayas and the Ganga were irresistible to the mystic in her for she has made Rishikesh her home for the past three years. The tryst with her muse, though, began much earlier during her peregrinations to the sacred spots dotted along its peaks and valleys, and the course of this river.

Pushpa won the approbation of traditional Sanskrit scholars for her book, 'Sadguru Sri Tyagabrahma Pushpanjali,' published by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams in 1994, which was a devotional offering to her Ishta Devata, Saint Tyagaraja. Her poetic outpourings commenced as intense Sadhana — a personal way of adoration during daily worship. But the literary merit of her hymns was such that they had to be shared and thus published for the sake of

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wider appreciation and for posterity. This work is a collection of six hymns on the saint and soon more such hymns and gadyas followed.

They have seen the light of day now by the encouragement and initiative of Swami Dayananda and have been published by the Sastraprakasika Trust as three books: 'Himalaya Gadyam,' 'Sri Gangasahasram' and 'Sri Tyagamapushpavali.' In her preface to 'Himalaya Gadyam,' Pushpa notes, "It is 'saranagati gadyam' of Himalayan nature, addressing the Guru as the majestic 'Jnana Himalaya' and the 'Nada Ganga'; and surrendering totally at His sacred feet." A deep spiritual experience of the author in Gadya form, which is a terse prose form unique to Sanskrit, it describes in minute detail the physical, emotional and spiritual impact of the beauty and peace of the Himalayas linking the similar experiences she had with her Guru.

'Sri Gangasahasram' is a devotional offering to the Ganga in 1,200 verses, in Sanskrit, inspired by her association with the river for 25 years. It has a prefatory section comprising invocatory hymns to Ganesa, Saraswati, Tyagaraja, the Himalayas and the Ganga. The latter portion of the work includes an exceptional hymn, 'Sri Gangaragapushpanjali,' in which 411 ragas. 'Sri Tyagamapushpavali' is a collection of hymns in different metres.

This is as much a musical tribute to her Guru Tyagaraja as it is a devotional offering to the deity he worshipped. This anthology comprises a 'Sahasranama Aksharapushpavali,' 'Mangalashataka,' 'Saranagati' and 'Mangala' besides 'Srimad Ramayanasa Sri Ramastotra.' All the works have translations in English and Tamil by the author.

Fittingly, Swami Dayananda, who released the books at his ashram in Rishikesh recently, observed that such prodigious creativity was the result of her heart opening to divine grace. (Copies can be had from the author at: nvvathsan@gmail.com; Rishikesh- (0135) 2442282; Chennai- 9840672199)

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