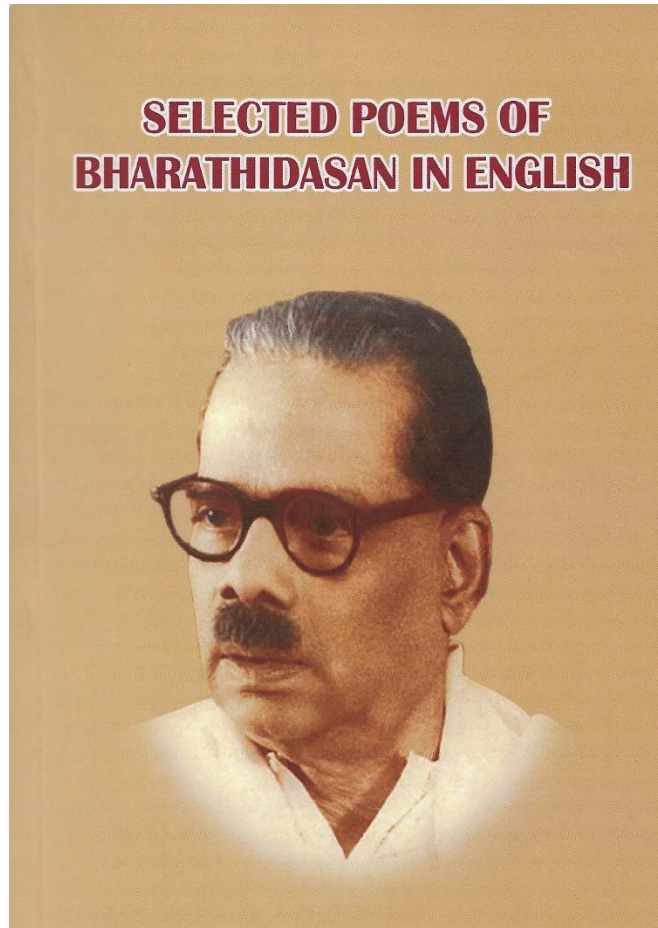


**A Review of**  
*Selected Poems of Bharathidasan in English* by Dr. Uma Allaghery

**Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.**

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**Bharathidasan (1891-1964)**

This book of translation of selected poems of Bharathidasan from Tamil into English by Dr. Uma is a noteworthy contribution. Bharathidasan (1891-1964) was a great rationalist Tamil poet, ceaselessly presenting rationalist philosophy and the ideals of Dravidian Movement in Tamilnadu. A great admirer of Subramania Bharathi (1882-1921), Kanakasabai Subburathinam, born in Pondicherry, changed his name to Bharathidasan (“**Bharathi’s disciple**”).

Bharathidasan's ideas and ideology differed radically from the philosophy of Subramania Bharathi in several respects, but, like Subramania Bharathi, Bharathidasan also vehemently supported feminine liberation from the clutches of patriarchy.

### **Level of Translation Done in This Book**

Dr. Uma has chosen 22 very appealing and relevant poems from the works of Bharathidasan and has presented transcreation of Bharathidasan's poems.

The translator has shown her superb ability to capture the spirit of these poems and bring about a special aura to the poetry of Bharathidasan.

The ideals that the original Tamil poems reveal have been carried forth into the translation. The translator has a good command of both languages and has ably structured the English translation.

*The Brotherhood of Man, Borderless Nations, Social Welfare States, and A World of Peace* are all given new birth in the English language translation. Bharathidasan's poems speak about the freedom of women, and the horrors of dowry, caste and oppression of women. Dr. Uma's use of excellent diction and rhythmic reconstruction of all these poems in the English language are a witness to her talents as a translator and critical scholar.

### **A Glimpse**

Let us see a poem, for example. Here is the translation of a poem on the atrocities of child marriage. Let us look at the second part of the poem:

“a small deer that can't even leap, not yet bloomed bud!

She is a widow staying for long at her father's house.

Her father too, a widower

Married once again to a young girl

The newly wedded bride and bridegroom

Awaiting patiently for night fall to be in bed

Enjoy the day by playing with a ball!

The young widow seeing all this!”

The misery, the pain, the loneliness, the lost childhood, and the injustice of it all – The widowed father married again, while the young child remains a widow.

### **Looking Beyond the Words**

The translator is able to look beyond the words, into the meaning of similes, and metaphors and bring out the essence of the poem. Still, she keeps a close watch over the original poem.

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Nothing lost, much is gained. The poet's message is carried over into the translated poems. Words flow well together, and one can read and enjoy the English translation. Readers will enjoy the English translation and feel the Tamil poet's heart beat in those lines.

Here below is a stanza from another poem *New World*:

Come we'll melt our hearts with the torrential flow of love  
And ban the selfish crooked motive that 'this is mine'.

(We'll create a New World.)

The poet Bharathidasan asks the Rice field to answer:

Due to daily straight-forward zeal  
Oh! Fertile land! You produced  
Paddy in plenty!  
No one can perceive how far so many  
People sweated for your sake!

Bharathidasan has some advice to young women:

Dear Unmarried Lady! Be the torchbearer of your destiny!  
Vaunting of their prowess by entering your house  
Some of them will come to ask for your hand;  
They will discuss in terms of material gains –  
The parents gave birth to you  
And reared you up amidst sacrifice  
Stone heartedly will take you for granted  
Without letting you see the bridegroom;  
Young respected lady! Are the hard-fast rules only for you?  
Don't fear these wicked deceitful brokers!  
Dear Unmarried Lady!

## To Conclude

The translation gives us some insight into the poetic genius of Bharathidasan. He was given the title the Poet of Revolution or Revolutionary Poet.

Translating a poetic piece is more difficult than translating a prose piece, but, in general, translation by itself is a difficult process. Uma has done a good job of translating some of the poems of Bharathidasan.

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