

## THE TORTOISE

Groaning under a thick load of shame  
I creep step by step in pursuit of duty.

People ask:

'Tortoise, can't you ever shake it off?

How pitiable your plight!

Nothing wrong in that;

But isn't this shell

Of the good of previous lives

That keeps my worthless life

Safe from the rains, safe from the winds,

Safe from the heat of the sun?

I cannot gambol and revel

Or run fast

Or stand on my head

Or turn a somersault.

Every day I reach my rendezvous late;

Yet I cherish loyalty to my armor.

When I cling to myself inside this,

Even lighting crumples

Whoever brandishes it.

*(Translated by Ayyappa Paniker)*