

Now read Bhagavad Gita from right to left!

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SWATHI. V

Venkata Appala Chari, who translated the 'Bhagavad Gita' into Urdu. Photo: G. Ramakrishna Venkata Appala Chari translates the holy book into Urdu

In mundane imagination, a book titled 'Naghme Ilahi' will perhaps invoke the image of classical Sufi saints in ecstasy of God's praise. But hardly does it occur to even the most devout Hindus that the title literally translates into 'Bhagavad Gita'!

If this Urdu translation of the hymn from Hindu mythology raises many eyebrows, the translator S.T. Venkata Appala Chari, who achieved this task at 74 surprises many more. Now 83, Mr. Chari, who retired as the Statistical Officer in the Education Department long ago, claims that his is the most authentic Urdu translation of the hymn. "I finished the work in one year, and got it published in 2003. In 18 chapters, it contains the translation of the meanings of 700 slokas," said Mr.Chari.

The job was not as simple as said. Effort to script the slokas in Urdu failed due to many differences between the languages in terms of pronunciation. Barriers were encountered in translating a few words such as 'Parashakthi' and 'Paramapadam', and in explaining the relevance of a few mythological characters. These were effectively addressed by providing a



glossary. "During Mughal period, the Bhagavad Gita was translated into Persian tongue. There have been a few recent Urdu translations too, but not very meaningful ones. I am satisfied that my translation is faithful to the original," Mr. Chari says.

The Nawabi tongue came more naturally to Mr.Chari than either Telugu or Sanskrit, as he had studied up to graduation with Urdu as language medium.

"I owe my penchant for and knowledge of Urdu to my high school teacher, Khadar Husain Khan, who would call me '111' referring to my Vaishnavite symbols," he recalled fondly.

The octogenarian is now busy working on the manuscript of a 50-year-old Telugu-Urdu dictionary.