

A Study

Of all the works of
Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati

By

Dewan Bahadur

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ASSA
Editions

This book is dedicated
to
all the spiritual seekers
and
all the nations

Editor's Note

This book was offered to the seer-poet, savant, yogi Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati of Tamil Nadu, for his 50th Birthday, 11th May 1947.

It was a well merited appreciation, this loving souvenir of the life and poetic genius of Seer-Poet Yogi Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati, presented to him by the well-known and voluminous writer on Indian Art and Culture.

I thank the late Sri Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastriar- (Retd. District Judge), who made a keen study of all the works of Kaviyogi Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati and wrote this valuable and beautiful treatise, thus making known a great yogi and seer-poet of today. This book will help the English reading public to know such a unique personality who still remains unknown to the world.

We are very much indebted to Sri Dewan Bahadur for his timely contribution of this work to the biographical literature of the world. We hope that a study of this book will give the public a vivid and illumined picture of the Yogi who has made his entire life a offering to God in the Spirit and God in humanity.

The quotations that abound in this work are all from the works of the poet. Sometimes they are quoted from his original English and French; sometimes they are free renderings of his Tamil verses. Some of the summarised translations bring out only the central idea of his long poems.

This work reflects the purity of the poet's soul and the godly perfume of his soul-thrilling heart. It is a living picture of the Divine Spirit which sings in the poet.

Let him live an Immortal among the Immortals that have elevated humanity to the heights of divinity!

Christian Piaget



Song of Unity

*Unite. Unite, Unite, Oh Souls
Unite and play your roles
Unite in mind, unite in heart
Unite in whole, unite in part
Like words and tunes and sense in song
Let East and West unite and live long
Trees are many; the grove is one
Branches are many; tree is one
Shores are many; sea is one
Limbs are many; body is one
Bodies are many; self is one
Stars are many; sky is one
Flowers are many; honey is one
Pages are many; book is one
Thoughts are many; thinker is one
Tastes are many; taster is one
Actors are many; the drama is one
Nations are many; the world is one
Religions are many; Truth is one
The wise are many; Wisdom is one
Beings are many; breath is one
Classes are many; college is one
Find out this One behind the many
Then life shall enjoy peaceful harmony*

Presentation of Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati

11th May 1897 – 7th March 1990

The wise one to the cosmic age

Although more than 90 years old, in his school in the south of India, *Kavi Yogi Maharishi* (great divine visionary, wise poet), Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati worked like a young man of twenty. When he was asked his age, he answered: "My age is Courage!" The Yogi wrote several hundred works in English, French, Tamil, Hindi, Telugu and Sanskrit; five thousand songs, and fifteen hundred poems in French. The magnum opus of the man conscious of the presence of God in him, *Bharata Shakti*, (in 50,000 verses) described his ideal: only One Humanity living in communion with only One God in a transformed world! *Bharata Shakti* is a monumental and unique work. The Yogi depicts the essence of all the religions, of all the prophets and saints, all the approaches of yoga and all the cultures on an allegorical fabric. It is a book for any age which all spiritual researchers and all nations should read and meditate on. His commitment is summarized in his book celebrating his life, *Pilgrim Soul*. The three poems mentioned in the opening express perfectly his ideal. His mantra, *Aum Shuddha Shakti Aum*, nourishes our souls and guides our steps toward the inner joy *Ananda*. It means: The light of Grace and power of the pure supreme Almighty bless us of peace, happiness and prosperity! Let the beauty and greatness of soul of Dr. Bharati Shuddhananda bloom and scent the entire Earth of its divine message and his spiritual and unifying benefactor!

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I. A Great Poet

A great poet is no mere writer of verses. He is a creator of life and superlife and a revealer of the ideal gleaming through the real, of the Divine shining through Nature and man. He appears to be a dreamer of dreams, but in reality, he is a denizen of a world which is more real and bright and joyous than ours. He is "a priest to us all, of the wonder and bloom of the world." He is an explosive force who often breaks up the bad old world to build a brave new world. In a famous lyric Arthur O'Shanghnessy says:

*We are music makers
And the dreamers of the dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers
And sitting by desolate streams;*

*World-losers and world-forsakers
On whom the pale moon gleams;
And yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.*

It is thus true that poets, while seeming to be gazing away from the real towards the ideal, are really helping to release the ideal from within the real and to build the Kingdom of God upon the common earth. As Shelley says in a famous passage in *The Defence of Poetry*:

"Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought."

"Poetry is the record of the best and the happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. Poetry reanimates the

sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world.”

“Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.”

Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati says in equally felicitous terms: “Poets are harbingers of the New Dawn, Koils of Renaissance, awakeners of new life in mankind and eye-openers of humanity. Poets are the sculptors of civilisation.”

“True poetry is a mantra of the Real, dynamic song-thrill of Soul-Bliss. It is an immortal blossom of Divine communion which breathes with the aroma of cosmic beauty and Nature’s ecstasy. The true poet is poetry itself. He is the muse of Nature and the messenger of God in her heart. The poet’s vision is far above the eyesight and the mind’s vision. It is the soul’s vision of the ensouled Divine. It gushes out of the inner fountain of bliss and flows into an ecstasy of beauty, emotion and rhythmic expression.” Swamiji says further in his *Seer-Poet*:

“Poetry is the art of arts. The ear enjoys music, the eye painting and dancing. But something deeper is required to enjoy real poetry. The head, the heart and the soul must go together to live within oneself what the poet has embodied in his verse. Poetry is not an array of words set to a metrical beat. It is not a Johnsonian jingle. Poetry is a great formative power. It reveals the “One” in Man, Nature, and the universe of beings. The real poet is a messenger of

truth and a mediator between life and the Spirit. His song falls in dizzying streams of flaming dreams, from the pinnacles of the secret spirit. The poet is a creator of the creative world. His words flow from the mystic height of cosmic consciousness to cherish earth and humanity in all the spheres of life; social, cultural, political, economic, aesthetic, moral, spiritual and educational. It kindles a creative emotion in the nation, animates it with a heroic fervour, and a sense of beauty and harmony, love and unity, and inspires dynamic progressive action and activities. The seer-poet's poems are forces of universal evolution."

Such a seer-poet is Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati and I regard the above delineation as admirably and appropriately applicable to his own poetry. Shuddhananda is a *born poet* and poetry is with him a natural passion and a natural realisation. He lisped in numbers and numbers came even while he was a little boy*. He sings:

*A mystic singer plays this flute and how, I do not know;
When the gentle scented zephyr plays prelude
To bird-voiced rosy dawn of peace;
When the occult smile that hangs on Aurora's lips
Kisses my silent wakeful self;
When the delightful rays of the rising sun
Strike the strings of my secret heart;
When the cosmic life plays before my eyes
In rapturous forms of men, women and children;
When the evening glory enchants my meditation,*

* We give only a free rendering of his sublime verses wherever they are quoted in this book since it is impossible to do full justice to the original in any other language.

*When the star-gemmed book of eternal Knowledge
Opens above my soaring dreams
When the midnight hush calls my soul
To transcendent heights of bliss
A mystic singer plays this humble flute;
My songs, O friend, are His cadenced breath
Perfumed with the flowers of consecration.*

Shuddhananda's poetry is the flowering of his spirituality. It is the Gangetic flood which comes from the Himalayan heights of his heart. His entire life is a song-offering and he offers every blossom of his muse to the Universal Mother. He is a God-centric seer-poet. Here are a few flowers offered to God in Nature:

*My thoughts and words fail before Thy splendour
My human brush blushes before Thy wonder;
O sky-wide Self, life-embodied Awareness,
Silent Witness that watches me
Through the open eye-lids of day and night,
O Impersonal-Personal Lover,
Nature is Thy thrilling form,
Flowers are Thy winning smile,
Star-gems are Thy ornaments,
Rain-clouds are Thy compassion,
Torrents are Thy flood of Grace,
Koils echo Thy sweet voice;
Parrots speak Thy lovely words;
Fruits show us Thy hospitality.
Cosmic life is Thy ceaseless breath.
The fair sun-gold-smile of the coral dawn,
The gracious look of Thy sapphired-lotus eyes*

*Fishing for devoted hearts,
Thy universal Beauty inspiring the sweet divine arts
Of poesy, music, painting, dance, drama and sciences
O how Thy manifolded-Unique harmony of manifestation
Enraptures my Spirit! Hail God in Nature!
It is Thou that giveth expression to my speechless ecstasy.
Thou art my self, my song and the soul of my song-flood!
I surrender myself into Thy hands as an aspiring vina;
Tune my fervour into torrents of song-thrill, Divine Artist!*

The Master tuned the harp and the poet sings its bliss:

*Limitless is the joy of my heart;
My song-flood breaks all bounds;
My fervent love transcends words;
O Silence that creates the universe,
At the instance of Thy inner flute-call
My soul forgot past agonies;
My art became a nectared-thrill of the soul
Born of surging ecstasy.*

Poesy is "The honeyed-thrill of the Spirit," says our poet.

II. A Great Yogi

Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati was born of pious Brahmin parents, at Sivaganga, Ramnad District, Madras Presidency. His parents, Jatadharar and Kamakshi, were learned in Sanskrit and Tamil religious lore and led a life of *Japa*, meditation and philanthropic service to afflicted humanity. Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati was born on 11th May 1897, as the youngest of the four children. His parents and his grandmother Minakshi Ammal used to tell

him stories from the great epics of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavatam*, *Shiva Puranam*, etc. The atmosphere of his home was resonant with holy songs and chantings of the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*, *Devaram* and *Thayumanavar's* hymns. It was in that way that linguistic and cultural patriotism was imbibed along with his mother's milk. I know what such an experience has meant to me and I deplore its lessening influence in these vainglorious days.

Though Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati studied in an ordinary English school, his home environment and his natural spirituality lifted him far above the secularism and hedonism of the day. In his seventh year his uncle promised to give him all his immense wealth, after adopting him as his son. But Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati said, "I am the son of Shakti (the Divine Force). Wealth! Your wealth too belongs to Her. Give it away to her hungry children in the street." The uncle then playfully asked him to go away to his Mother Shakti! The boy ran up to Goddess Minakshi's shrine at Madurai, and sought the grace of the universal Mother. There he heard devotees singing *Thevaram*, *Tiruvachakam*, *Thyumanaver's* songs, and made a vow to compose holy poems and songs and place them at the Feet of the Divine. In his ninth year, he met a guru who intensified his double gifts of poesy and spirituality. It was that great saint who realised the purity of his mind and gave him the name of Shuddhananda, namely, the blissful soul pure in thought, word and deed. Tamil poesy flowed in a swelling stream from his lips but he used to read it to the Divine in his heart, and throw it away. He had no attachment for anything except the Divine Grace. One day his

Tamil Pundit Devasikhamani Iyer, happened to watch the boy, while he was writing on the wall:

*Seek ye the Light Divine alone; all else
Will break off and then vanish like bubbles.*

The savant forbade the young poet to destroy his poems and songs, and advised him to preserve them and master Kamban's immortal Ramayana. Shuddhananda Bharati did accordingly. He also read the hymns of Maharshi Thayumanar and *Bhagavad Gita* with great reverence.

When his parents proposed marriage to him nine times, he firmly said "No, I cannot imagine woman, except as the universal Divine Mother." He removed his sacred thread and became an anchorite. He sought the company of saints and sages, and shunned worldly attachments. In a famous letter to his elder brother at that time, he stated that he felt that all beings were his children and that he was born to dispel the poverty, ignorance and slavery, that seemed to be the lot of Indians on earth.

He felt and argued that if any compulsion was applied against his freedom of thought and action, he would, in the interest of humanity and as a divine urge, rise in rebellion and revolt. He stated further in the same letter, that his way was Pure Spiritual Socialism, and that he wanted to devote his heart and soul to God, and his hands to the service of Man. He regarded all humanity as an embodiment of God: Unity of God and Unity of Souls is the basic principle of his Spiritual Socialism. He sings in a long poem on Unity of Consciousness:

From clod to God, from sky to earth,

*All are dovetailed in me.
I am bottom; I am zenith
My life is ether-free.*

*God unites; mental man divides;
And yet one religion he needs;
Awake O Soul, and see who hides
Behind the veils of castes and creeds!*

*Awake arise and march onward
From peace to peace, my soul!
Blaze thy way beyond light and shade
To "One" that is the All!*

*Let us think of that only Truth
Whose temple is the universe;
Then our path shall be very smooth
Among men of nature diverse.*

Though he wanted to become an ascetic, he did not like the idea of going to others to beg for his food. He has never begged even God for gifts. He would work hard and earn enough for his bare subsistence, and devote his care-free life to the disinterested service of uplifting his people. He fitted himself at Pasumalai for a teacher's life, the noblest of professions as he called it.

While he was there, he studied the Holy *Bible* and wrote a life of Christ in poetry, which was later published by the Rev. Mr. Popley. Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati admired the Christian missionary's zeal and spirit of service, and had a passion to do work in that spirit for the benefit of the mother tongue and the Motherland, and for the propaga-

tion of his Pure Spiritual Socialism. He dedicated his entire life for the all-round welfare of his motherland and its Dharma. It was during those days that he came in contact with the great poet Rabindranath Tagore at Madurai. Tagore heard some of his poems and encouraged him to enrich his mother tongue.

He then took service as a teacher in Kattuputtur. While he was there, he often used to go to Nerur, three miles off, for peaceful and steady meditation, for one or two days, at the shrine of Sadasiva Brahmendra, the supreme Yogi of the Tamil Nadu in recent times. He was also a trained scout master and took much interest in the scout movement. He used to take his students and scouts on excursions and teach them lessons on rural improvement, patriotism, righteousness and spirituality and make them render help and service to the rural folk. He never took food without doing a good turn and dedicating a song or two to the Divine to whom his life was an utter surrender. He himself worked for rural welfare and Harijan betterment wherever he went, and his works were well-known in the villages on the banks of the Cauvery river. He did admirable work in the field of adult literacy among the villagers and in the field of prohibition, and he made adults as well as children perform *Bhajana*.

To sing the Divine glory and dance in ecstasy was his passion and he never blushed to sing and dance, even in the open street. Many people gave up meat, alcohol and evil habits on hearing his songs, which were full of the soul's message to the heart of humanity.

In his own class, he used to begin work only after going round his students and blessing them to become heroes in life and praying to God fervently to make them supermen. He was an able and devoted teacher and used to teach his students not only their text-books, but also ethical and spiritual lessons which left a deep impression upon their lives. He got them to take an interest in manual and vocational instruction and made them masters of one craft or another. He aimed at the harmonious development of the brain, body, heart, emotions, morality, aesthetics, industry and social efficiency both in his students and his scouts.

One day, while he was engaged in mixing chemicals to make match sticks, there was a sudden, dangerous explosion by which he was injured in the wrist. He providentially escaped worse consequences. The scar of that injury still remains on his left hand, and urges him on to fulfil his life-mission, while yet the soul breathes in his body. That incident made a deep impression upon his mind, and he felt that God saved him from death, for a life of dedication to humanity.

During the days of the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920, he met Mahatmaji, and devoted himself to his ideal of truth and non-violence and the simple life of sacrifice. During those days he lived in the local mosque, read Al Quoran, wrote a fine poetic work on the Prophet and His teachings, and won the love and respect of several Muslim savants and Moulvis. He used to do regularly the five Namaz and live upon dates and milk. One day, he went with his Hindu and Muslim friends and his students to the Kattalai station

when Mahatmaji was travelling to Trichinopoly. He offered his Khaddar garlands to Mahatmaji and then saw him again at Trichinopoly. He spoke boldly on political platforms and toured with Congress workers to do constructive work. The school authorities, though they had much regard for his genius and holiness, did not like his political activities. He himself felt the shackles of slavish servanthip, and suddenly resigned his post one day with two pithy phrases: "Freedom calls; no more walls!" The teachers and the students presented him with a farewell address, to which he replied: "I leave an arm-chair life, to lead a life of meditation and service. I throw off this coat and turban to be a free pilgrim of God's Truth. I leave this palatial building to live like wind under God's heaven. I leave school-mastership to be nobody's master, but to be a very simple and humble servant of God in the human aggregate. I leave a profession to fulfil the mission of my life. Let your blessings guide me from sacrifice to sacrifice, until nothing is left in me except God, who is my pure Self."

Shuddhananda thereupon devoted himself to Yogic Sadhana at Nerur, and later at Talaimalai and Kollimalai, allowing God to lead his destiny. He had no care of the morrow nor of the body. Whenever hungry, he used to take two handfuls of Bengal gram, soaked in his Kaman-dal and three bananas, which he bought and he never begged anything from anyone. Wherever he went, Nature's beauty inspired him to poetic contemplation, and poems flowed from his heart like a cataract. He had no attachment, even for them; he used to leave them with a friend, and go away to fresh fields and pastures new. If

the least desire or egoism rose in his mind, he would at once set fire to his manuscripts, or throw them into the river; and many poems met this fate, for there was room in his heart only for God, and God alone. His life thus sped, alternating between meditation and poesy.

By providential design, he won the friendship of the great hero and savant V. V. S. Ayyar and the great poet Subrahmanya Bharatiar who were then at Pondicherry. He came to know them first only by means of letters. Later on he met them. Sri V. V. S. Ayyar and Subrahmanya Bharatiar read Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati's *Bharata Shakti* and other works with great appreciation and admiration.

A Study

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