

Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati

Fashion Club
and
other Stories



ASSA
Editions

Editor's Notes

In this collection comprising *Fashion Club and other stories* (Nagareega Pannai), there are eleven stories filled with artistic flavour, literary attributes, poetic descriptions and experiences of truth.

Yogi Sri Shuddhananda Bharati, who has made service to the Tamil people his life's mission, has drawn an accurate picture of the good and evil aspects of present-day culture and human nature in this book. He has presented some stories from France and Italy in Tamil, translate in English.

It is a real pleasure for me to present this treatise on *Fashion Club and other stories* to you. It was written in the south of India. Thank you, Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati for having transmitted *Fashion Club and other stories* to us, it is written with so much love.

Christian Piaget

Courage!

*The night is through,
The chain of slavery
It is already broken –
I am full of courage!*

*Peace in the morning,
A golden sun rises
Like a lion superhuman
To accomplish my dream.*

*A hopeful smile,
Docile as a child
Who plays in the infinite
With a fiery star.*

*My journey is over;
I enjoy time;
The universe is my nest;
Of eternal spring.*

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*

Peace Anthem

*Peace for all, peace for all
For all the countries peace
Joy for all, joy for all
For all the nations joy
A rosy morning peace
A smiling summer joy (Peace for all)*

*All for each and each for all
This is the golden rule
Life and Light and Love for all
For all that live our love (Peace for all)*

*Work and food and clothes for all
Equal status for all
Health and home and school for all
A happy world for all (Peace for all)*

*No idle rich, no more beggars
All are equal workers
No more tears, no more fears
The heart is full of cheers (Peace for all)*

*No atom scare, no fat mammon
No room for war demon
Like leaves in trees, like rays in the sun
We are one communion,
One Divine communion (Peace for all)*

*The good in you is good for all
Your life is life for all
The God in you is God for all
Your love is love for all (Peace for all)*

*For he or she or it or the rest
This collective life is best
This Universal Life is best
North or South, or East or West (Peace for all)*

*Peace for plants and birds and beasts
For hills and streams and woods
Peace in Home – land and air and sea
Dynamic peace we see
Peace for all, peace for all*

Immortal Peace for All

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 gasoline 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. This work was completed and appreciated by Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Romain Rolland, Annie Besant, Bertrand Russell, George Bernard Shaw, Dr. Suzuki and so many others. It installs the author among the great men such as Dante, Homer, Racine, Shakespeare, Vyasa, and Valmiki. Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati is the greatest Tamil poet, having translated into this language: *Gita*, *Upanishads*, *Veda*, the *Bible*, the *Koran*, *Avesta*, the *Buddha-Dhamma-Sangha* and *Tattvartha Sutra*, the life and teachings of Lao-Tseu and Confucius.

From their original languages, he also translated into Tamil *The Divine Comedy* of Dante, the tragedies of Racine, the comedies of Molière, the dramas of Corneille, Shakespeare, Goethe and the novels of Anatole France, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and others.

Shuddhananda's works are innumerable. Malcolm Macdonald, who chaired the Congress on the Unity of the Conscience in Singapore, said in his short speech about him: "He is such a remarkable man, having such a diversity of raised gifts, that it is difficult to know where to start and where to finish when one speaks about Kavi Yogi Maharishi Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati. Few men have achieved as many things in only one human life." His name appears moreover in the Encyclopaedia of the World's Great Men, which says: "Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati is the author of literary works of varied styles: works epic and lyric, melodramas, operas, comedies, pastoral, romance, novels, biographies, commentaries on famous works and texts. *Bharata Shakti* is his magnum opus." He had a presentiment that he would receive the Nobel Prize for Peace or for Literature but did not live to see it. His commitment is summarized in his book celebrating his life, "*Experiences of a Pilgrim Soul (Expérience d'une Âme de Pèlerin)*."

God I loved and lived in him,
Making His commandment
Leave to Man his entire talents
This is my will!

Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati
Editions ASSA



For all the Words God is One
All Bodies are God's Temples only

11-5-1897 – 7-3-1990
Swami Shuddhananda Bharati

Fashion Club and other Stories

1. Fashion club

Is fashion a chameleon or a magical pretence? How it evolves! Another form; the following day it faces opposition! How many mutilations are there in clothes! How much work for scissors! How much load for the washer man! How many affected gestures in behaviour! How much make-up on the face! How much torture for the moustache and hairdo! How many looks in the mirror; how many twists! Shaving of the face and the newspaper stand for morning and evening prayers; coffee or tea for sipping of water while uttering mantras; gossiping for self-enquiry and Brahma Bhadra fire sacrifice – the five sacrifices take place in high fashion mode! Getting up at 4 a.m., bathing, reciting mantras and meditating to purify the mind, reading from scriptures, working hard and partaking of tasty and healthy food to satisfy hunger and living an austere life – all these have become outdated! The old traditions have become rare. The Kali Yuga has ripened, and love marriages have become the norm. It is of course necessary to follow the mores of the age; education and behaviour must be in tune with the times; but why attribute irregular acts that defile the body and mind to the prevailing fashion? “Cigar is bad, my son” says the father; “Dad, I know it is bad, that is why I burn and reduce it to ashes to avenge myself,” says the son. Why talk only about the son? Even girls have started to play out their independence on the stage of modern fashion.

The Sharda Act has come into force; now maidens sit on the marriage dais in middle age. No; why talk of a dais? It is sufficient if they sit on a chair, exchange garlands or a ring and utter smilingly, "My lovely". Or host a dinner and have a couple of friends give a discourse on marriage. Why go through the rituals which include a lot of smoke from the fire sacrifice, the tying of kusa grass and the sacred badge of marriage and the special sari? Even the marriage badge is a symbol of slavery; it is inimical to women's rights. The ethics of Manu, Parasarar, Valluvar and others are all old hat; Dr. Digby Smith, Skinner Wood, Freud and Gellie Chooder have written a book in English titled "Free Love". These writers are the authors of the new age Manusmriti. When there is talk of Manu and Parasarar, they strike a match! Dear readers, do not grit your teeth in anger thinking all this is my point of view; it is Sivakadaksham Shastri who is lamenting thus. The occidental fashion notes downloaded by his son, our Dr. Sunderson (Sundharesan) are the cause of his father's agitation. These notes have been memorised and followed to the letter by Sundharesan's sister Lila.

The doctor's father, Sivakadaksham Shastri was a faithful follower of religious rules and was well versed in English. He observed the five dictates of the scriptures as far as possible and also worked as a shorthand typist in the High Court. Justice Mani Iyer himself helped him to get the post. T. V. Sri Krishnaswami esteemed him greatly. Sivakadaksham Shastri used to take the beach road from Triplicane to the High Court. He would carry a string of rosary beads in his hand and he would recite the *Panchakshari mantra* (Aum Namah Shivaya) as he walked. His

jaunty gait appeared to match a tuneful recitation of "Aum Nama Sivaya Aum". In the evening he would bathe, recite mantras and light a fire; he worshipped the flames of the fire as Siva. This increased purity of mind, clarity of thought and radiance and also physical strength. He was never beset by headache or fever that necessitated the intake of medicine.

Such a straightforward man was blessed with Sundharsan and Lilavati as offspring. Shastri's wife was an advocate's daughter. Her relatives were all sprigs of high fashion. Everything from a ladle to paper was the acme of fashion. The conversation in their houses was mostly in English interspersed with one or two words in Tamil owing to the sin of being born as Tamilians. Amma became Mamma, Appa was Papa. They were convinced that Sanskrit was a dead language.

Shastri's brother-in-law M. K. Bali, M. D. (son of Mahadeva Shastri, M. Kabaliswaran) had studied in Edinburgh to become a doctor. He was wont to say that Sivakadam's sacred ash, rosary beads and daily worship of fire were all ancient barbaric relics. He has written a book 'New Life' in English. Fortunately, no one has come forward to publish it till now. After analysing everything from morning and evening recitation of mantras to Tamil and Sanskrit (including father's death anniversary) with a foreign microscope, he has written "all are blind practices, those who follow them have no hope of redemption in the present century; the only possibility of redemption lies in the transformation of everyone from the top of the head to the tips of the feet". To the patients who came to him, he

would give a couple of 'doses' of his new fashion along with medicines.

It so happened that Sundharesan and Lilavati's upbringing was entrusted to this magnanimous man owing to the death of their mother in childbirth. Dr. Bali attributed bizarre reasons even for the death of the mother Kavery – no breeze could come in contact with her as she wore a sari, eating with the hand from a banana leaf caused poison from the nails to enter the body, she had no psychological free pleasure as she was tied to one person etc. In their childhood, Sivakadaksham taught them good songs and habits. After the death of his wife, he turned his attention to God and to performing worship with devotional songs. At the time of going to Dr. Bali, Sundharesan was twelve years old and Lila was seven. Dr. Bali groomed the children to a new life in accordance with his ideas. His wife Kamakshi had not yet abandoned the fashion of turmeric and vermilion even though her husband hid and broke the vermilion container; she managed to uphold her wifely obligations by offering passive resistance. Kamakshi was called "Fish-eye" by Bali and now goes by the name of Mistake. The couple had no children. So Sundaresan and Lilavati grew up in their house without encountering rivalry and with a lot of indulgence.

Dr. Bali established a 'Fashion Club' in Chennai. Only fashionable and wealthy men and women following western culture were admitted as members. In his eyes a wealthy person represented a foreigner. Doing away with man-woman differences, passing the time taking potshots at temple, God and religious observances, reproducing all

pure elixirs from chocolates to champagne, dismissing all sacred texts such as the *Vedas* and *Arulpa* as texts promoting slavery: in short importing London to Chennai and pushing Chennai into the sea – these were the fashion club’s resolutions. The first rule of conduct enjoined those joining the club to get a crew cut of the hair and facial shave followed by an application of hair dye. The second rule made it mandatory to wear trousers and a hat. The third rule – using a spoon to eat. There were fifty such steps. The last one saw men and women join hands for a blissful session of dance. Those who ascended all the fifty steps were bestowed with the title of M. F., “Master of Fashion”. The fashionable ladies (Mistresses of fashion) resembled men strongly – if only there was the possibility of growing a moustache, men could be beaten at their game.

Short drawers, boots, shirt, tie, collar, coat, hat, cigar, bespectacled look (even a false moustache): everything was similar. There was no need to give milk – that was the mother’s task! Women alone become men. Men have not yet taken to wearing a skirt or a sari. Some have initiated the process thinking it would promote impartiality if it happens.

Sundaesan and Lilavati grew up in such a fashion club. After completing B. A., Sundaesan sailed to Cambridge and returned after acquiring a doctorate. He became an M. F. (Master of Fashion) here immediately on his return. He ascended all the fifty steps and went to the peak of fashion. Sundharesan became Sundresan, then Sunder-son or Sanderson. Bali claimed that this name was extremely pleasing.

Now Sunderson was the secretary of the fashion club. He was helped in this task for the past one month by Sweety (an aberration of Savitri), she of the arrogant gait and haughty eye and disregard for the world. If you saw Sweety, you would call her "Sir". Some days one could spot a moustache on her face. It was impossible to guess easily if she was a sir, madam, man or woman.

When Dr. Sunder himself was flummoxed, you are not a patch on him! Coming to see him in the guise of a patient, she drove him round the bend!

One who was extremely captivated by the sight of Sweety was Lila (Laila). Lila also was a product of the fashion club; but she still wore a silk sari owing to Kamakshi's upbringing and affection; she had climbed three-quarters of the club's steps. After completing her Inter studies, she was in medical college. Age: twenty-three years; the age-related rope-nets of desire were visible as spots on the face. Dr. Bali and Sunder gave her complete freedom. She could do as she wanted; she could love and live with anyone of her choice. We're not horoscopes, rituals, smoke from the fire, sound of music, marriage badge etc indecent habits?

Laila would get up from bed in the morning only when the bed coffee was ready. After washing her face with lavender soap in the wash basin, she would drink the coffee, then sharpen a knife. She had a light growth of hair above her lips and on her face. After removing the hair, she would apply a fashionable oil, wash, then apply lipstick, cream, cold cream, other cosmetics and eyebrow tints; it would take her an hour to put on all the make-up. Some days she would soak in the bathtub and use soap

and fragrant powders to scrub her body. Blood red enamel on the nails would be followed by the application of perfume on her handkerchief. Laila would then open her wardrobe where a major fashion contemplation would take place. Laila always loved dressing up in colorful clothes like a butterfly. So, she would choose color-coordinated sari and blouse and wear them stylishly and also put on a gold belt around her waist. Only earrings, nose studs, nose clips and marriage badges were taboo in the fashion club. Expensive stone-studded and pearl necklaces could be worn. A tiara could be worn on the head. Laila wore gold bangles on her arms, a necklace with nine gems and a pearl necklace around her neck and a gold band on her head like a Greek queen and looked like a young princess. She spoke only in English; she would shake hands and talk animatedly with friends who spoke in English and adopted western mores of dress and conduct. Dr. Bali would egg her on saying, "Laila! Fear, bashfulness etc are all signs of ignorance and stupidity, walk boldly, speak as you will". Laila never respected men. The arrogance of beauty, the intoxication of youth, the reading of books and the influence of films made her look at men as her slaves. Even then she was unable to control the forces of nature. She looked for a pole to support the creeper of her life. She committed errors – who could question her? Aghast at her indiscretions, Kamakshi spoke to Sivakadaksham about arranging a marriage. The father found several eligible grooms; he checked the matching of horoscopes.

"I do not want this fool or this idiot nor that elephant, this mongoose, this bag of bones, this common guy, this

outsider, this animal, this wolf, this monkey” – in her fashion-induced hauteur, Laila drove away all the young men with harsh criticism. The young men feared her, labelling her a “fashionable shrew”. Those who marvelled at her made-up beauty and elegant gait from a distance of twenty feet were afraid to come near. Her hauteur became her downfall. Kamakshi would hint, “If you behave with modesty, someone may come forward to marry you, otherwise you will be an old maid”. Laila would retort, “Does it matter if these uncivilised brutes do not like me? I shall not be an old maid...” because her gaze was already focused on someone.

From Dr. Bali’s terrace it was possible to see Sweety walking indolently on the upper floor of her house and cuddling her pet dog. Sweety was a mysterious person; no one even knew if she was a man or woman. Cropped hair, hat, khaki shirt, tie, hunting jacket, knickers, stockings, boots, wristwatch on her hand, few hairs above her lips, few hairs on the chin, an insolent smile on her lips, a Spencer cigar in the mouth, a dog trailing behind, Sunder in the evening – two servants to do the housework. Two persons in the house hidden from view – this was Sweety. Only Sunder was in close contact with him (her). He called Sweety as Ty. She (He) called him Sun. From resting their hands on each other’s shoulders and lighting one’s cigar from the other’s lighted one, Sun and Ty were close friends.

Seemingly pruning the rose plants and plucking the blossoms on her terrace, Laila was in reality engaged in capturing Sweety’s masculine beauty in her eyes. “Oh, so handsome, so fashionable! He who has the title of Master of

Fashion after ascending all the fifty steps, he alone is worthy of becoming my husband. How lavishly he spends; his car itself appears to be a chariot of success! How beautifully this young man speaks in the fashion club about new life! Well educated, pleasing English. He cannot be more than twenty-five years old; an innocent face; beautiful jet-black hair that lies in thick waves on his head! His nose, eyes and red lips are sculpted like a marble statue. I shall marry this handsome guy without informing even my brother. Apart from him, no other animal can come near me", so resolved Laila and sent tender glances and smiles across from her terrace. Ty's thirty-two ivory teeth flashed in a wide smile in seeming reciprocation of her love. Ty resolved to drive her mad with her love.

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