

Dr. Shuddhananda
Bharati

Letters
of Kaviyogi

Volume 1



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1. The Pristine Transcendental Energy

Madurai, 1908.

Oh Mother Parashakti, the Pristine, Transcendental Energy! I am constantly mediating on you; you are my true Mother, and I firmly believe that you will give everything I wish for. The moment I experience this faith, all worry leaves me. Mother, I should get sound knowledge without going through the travails of formal schooling. I should not be under the tutelage of a teacher brandishing a fearsome cane. Are you not my guru? You gifted all wisdom without the need for schooling to Sri Ramakrishna, to Jnana Sambandar. I am likewise your child; can you not gift me knowledge in the same manner? My education should be solely through living under your care.

I long to be free from the cares of the home and the rebukes of my kinsfolk; I desire deeply to imbibe of your grace and comprehend the Ultimate Reality. Appar sings, asserting that:

The chant of Namashivaya
is wisdom, is true learning.

I utter your name in every breath. Life of my life, your name is the throb in my heart. Will you not gift me all the knowledge there is? Mother, it is not my ambition to win laurels as a scholar in gatherings of learned men. What I need is to acquire good scholarship in Tamil, a certain level of knowledge in English appropriate for the times I

live in, and of Sanskrit adequate to understand the religious texts. Your grace wells up within me as poesy. I shall compose a great epic like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata*.

Mother, with your grace, enable me to study the great works of gifted poets; or bless me that some great saints should instruct me on these works to make me proficient in them. Not for acquiring fame do I seek this. After I master them, I shall sing your praise all my life; I shall pass on what I know to those around me; I shall engage myself in useful spiritual service, lead a useful life and attain your feet at the end of it all. Mother, reside within me, always; I do not wish for worldly gains; Mother, I should be privileged to be your child and play about in the ecstasy of devotion to you, Om Parashakti!

(When he was very young, Kavi Yogi was in the habit of writing poems and letters and placing them before the idol of the Goddess. He derived solace from this. His great longing to compose the epic *Bharata Shakti* comes out in this.)

2. To Father, Sri Jatadhara

Salutations, dear father! And salutations to my mother. Aum! The Shuddha Parashakti has helped me to get the money needed to buy the books I require. I earned the money by binding ten volumes of books. I did not ask my uncle for monetary help. I came walking to this place via Sembanur. If only time moved slowly, I would love to travel round the world on foot. On my way here I saw the suffering of the poor in the villages. I represented my

feelings to Mother Parashakti and Lord Shiva on the problem of poverty. "Why should some people starve without even a little gruel to drink, though they work hard? There must be something wrong somewhere for such an injustice to exist. Isn't it possible for all to work hard and live honest, straight lives, learning the ideals of love of God and service to society"?

Only after representing my thoughts in this manner did I go to see my uncle. He offered to give my money to buy books. I told him that I had earned enough by my own efforts and did not need money from others. He asked me: "Are you so capable? Don't you want my property?" In reply I asked him to give me his property so that I could establish a school and start an industry for the poor. I told him that we should work hard to develop Tamil, English and the knowledge of the *Vedas* and other religious texts. I suggested that we should work like Swami Vivekananda, by word and deed, in the service of our religion, and offer to the nation any profit we make in our endeavour.

His reaction was to advise me strongly against such a course. "All this is lunatic philosophy! A man should earn well and then enjoy the wealth; he should beget children and enjoy the wealth with them," he said. "Uncle! You have a palatial house and immense wealth. Have you attained mental peace? One day a thief might help himself to the contents of your cash box; you will then wail and beat your breast. When you die, will this cash box, this house go with you? Will this body go with you? Even your shadow, your constant companion in life, will not accompany you when you die. Only the results of your actions

will go with you wherever you go, after your death. If bad deeds have been done, the consequences will affect you in your life hereafter; so will the effect of good deeds." I went on to urge uncle to help those around him, his townspeople, the guests who came to his house, and the needy students, with money and material, in his lifetime.

Uncle's response was to 'bless' me with: "If you talk philosophy like this, you will never prosper as a family man!" I replied that I did not wish to marry and have a family. I wanted to serve the God who resides within me, my conscience and the people of the world who are all my kinsmen. Why should I not do good to the world like Annie Besant, Tilak, Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswati, Ramathirtha and Rabindranath Tagore? Thus I urged him and he ridiculed me. After lunch I went to Pudumandapam and purchased the books I needed, with the money I had earned.

Just then Purnananda, the venerable old man who had taken holy orders, arrived at the garden. He told us about his pilgrimage to Kashi. I sat quietly before him and meditated.

When I was eleven, I had put some questions to him. "Grandfather, I am not doing well in studies. My mother and father are very displeased with me; the teacher canes me frequently. Kindly show me the way by which I can learn everything by myself!"

He said, as he touched my heart: "My child, there is a learning that is beyond books. There is a Mother who is the embodiment of love; there is a Father who is knowledge itself. All of them reside here."

I now told him: "Master, I have now comprehended the Mother and the Father you referred to earlier. They have gifted me with knowledge too. So I sing their praise with all my heart." I then sang some of my compositions, with which he was overjoyed; that day he taught me Advaita philosophy the whole day long.

My heart seeks such evolved men. I read books solely to understand what they teach. But father, I tell you this frankly, I do not at all like the education of today. Next year I shall up to ninth standard and the year after, I shall study the lessons prescribed for B.A. and M.A., all by myself, research the ideas in your religious texts, gain knowledge and use it in the service of the people of the world. I spoke to the monk in this strain and he said: "You are wisdom; you are the principles of philosophy."

Tomorrow the Acharya (Pontiff) of the Puri Mutt is to speak in this town on philosophy. I shall listen to that and leave the next day, returning home to you soon. The light of Divine Energy residing within me guides me. Everything that happens is according to its will. I derive benefit even from hardships.

Father, I have written here whatever struck me as important. Please bless me, your son, so that I live to be a devotee of God, a person of good conduct and a charitable person like yourself.

Salutations to you, my respected father.

3. To the Poet Deivasikhamani

Madurai, 11.05.1912.

Salutations to great poet Deivasikhamani! I am well here. I had been to Rameswaram along with my brother and some advocates. We visited Pamban and at Mandapam we stayed at the bungalow of Marakayar. From there we proceeded to Rameswaram from where we had a pleasant journey by boat to Dhanushkodi. There we stayed in a big choultry and in the evening we went to see the new suspension bridge. While at Mandapam we met a Muslim of the sailor community. He was a very good scholar in Tamil. He had a copy of the *Seerappuranam*, an epic by the poet Omar. I read two hundred verses of the work and he explained their meaning. These people possess good scholarship in Tamil.

Some of us left Mandapam for our hometown. We slept soundly and the train passed the station where we had to alight. When we woke up we found ourselves at Madurai Station. I welcomed this unexpected turn of events, got down there and went to my elder uncle's house. This uncle, an advocate, is an extremely well-read scholar. He gave me very good books in English and asked me to study them. He wanted me to read the biographies of Booker Washington, Captain Cook, Livingstone, Benjamin Franklin, Faraday, and other great men; he made me recapitulate what I had read, correctly. After I studied these biographies, my heart became athirst to serve the country, as these great men had done. This elder uncle thus injected great ideas into my small brain. Booker Washington was born a slave but by dint of his own efforts he got

well educated and was able to serve his community in a wonderful manner. The Institute he set up in Tuskegee has become world famous. I fervently desire that I should do similar service to enable my countrymen to progress in the world. The first step is for me acquire a good education; then I shall serve the cause of education. Education is the very life breath of a nation. The Whites have published all the knowledge of the world in books in their own languages, thus making their study easy. We too should prepare books in Tamil containing the knowledge available in the world, to enable our people to read them.

I visited the Victoria Public Library where I saw a large number of very new books. Tamil was consigned to a corner. Wherever I turned, there were only English books. This should change; Tamil should be respected everywhere as English is today. All modern branches of knowledge should be available in Tamil. When I see the English lexicon, my heart aches in longing for such a work in Tamil. Gopala Krittinar and Picchu Aiyar have encouraged me in this. With your blessings, my knowledge in Tamil is growing. I saw the great Tamil Sangam works here; but old works are not enough; new works should come out to capture the new world. I very much desire to acquire proficiency in both English and Tamil. I want to write new works in Tamil, creative as well as those purveying knowledge. I also wish to translate the great Tamil works into English and show to the world the sweetness of my Tamil language. Your blessings as a guru should guide, help and protect me!

Your loving student.

4. Jnana Siddha, the Best Guru

Obeisance to the sacred feet of my noble preceptor, Swami Purnanda. Due to the grace of the Pristine Shakti and the strength of Yoga and your blessings, my mind has opened up. The great guru Jnana Siddha has brought me under his wings. Some years ago he dried my tears and my basic chakras within me bloom. When I was mediating on the hills of Tirupparakunram this great man placed his hand on my head, and said Aum, as he pressed his thumb on my Ajna Chakra. I experienced an electrifying excitement, light and bliss within me. All the past life vanished as an illusion; I was born anew. I could now personally experience the significance of the verses of the fifth and sixth chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*. I could immerse myself into that thought, feeling, will and state of mind. I could enjoy the bliss of Thayumanar. Jnana Siddha is a person of great lustre and power. He appears and disappears quite suddenly. He spoke to me in Hindi. He is a realised soul from the Himalayas.

The great soul blessed me and said: "In your previous life you did penance in the Manikarnika Ghat on the banks of the Ganga at Benares and also at Dasaswamedha Ghat. Then too I was by your side, as I am now." He showed me my entire life, as a cinema film being projected. He himself told me about the greatness of Sai Baba, Aurobindo and Ramana and added that I was going to live with them in the future.

He gave me fifteen golden points of advice. "You were born to write, go on writing; without getting diverted. The student writing an examination quietly answers all the

questions and on the ringing of the bell, he leaves the hall. Your life too is like that. There is a whole university latent in you. Write down all that blossoms in that, they will prevail in the world. As soon as the bell rings, lay down the pen and leave."

He is broad-minded as the expanse of the sky. He said: "Respect all great men; but meditate on and worship only God who is them all. Do not get imprisoned in the sectarian forts built round individuals. Be yourself!" I bow to the Master who gave meaning and substance to my life. Owing to his grace, my mind keeps growing. This growth could not have been stimulated by schools and colleges; it blossoms with the benediction of divine grace.

I am enjoying the works of great poets like Shakespeare, Shelley, Milton, Kambar, Sekkilar, Valmiki, and Vyasa. I chant the *Bhagavad Gita* and the works of Thayumanar. Just as bees seek new flowers to suck honey from, I seek great works in world literature to savour. From time to time, poets and scholars like Yogi Deivasikhamani come to guide me on my way.

I long to read the books on science too. I read my brother's physics and chemistry books and works on biology and agriculture. True education is studying to internalise everything. For five more years I shall study and develop my mind. Everything that I observe and read, I work into a garland of literature. I was born to write, so I write.

May your blessings ever guide me.

5. The Garden of Literature

Salutations, brother! The stage is developing my mental faculty. I acted in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*; also in Moliere's comedies *The Flying Doctor* and *L'Avare* and Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. This has stimulated my ability to speak and think. I watch the good plays staged in our place and in Madurai. Paramesaiyar and Ponnambalam Asari and others have asked me to compose lyrics. I am very much drawn to the dramatic art, and I shall be present on the stage in the form of my lyrics too.

Within a short time I have finished studying my prescribed texts and have started reading world literature. My inner voice tells me that I too shall one day compose a great epic as did Valmiki, Vyasa, Kalidasa, Kambar, Tulsi-das, Omar Khayyaam, Dante and Milton. A great epic entitled *Bharata Shakti* (The Power of India) is taking shape in my mind. I am able to envision many wonderful scenes in my meditation. Cary has translated Dante well. As I read it, many poetic dreams take shape within me. I see Dante in Milton. I consider Dante as the father of my own poetic art. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Shelley's *Prometheus* and Francis Thomson's *The Hound of Heaven* excite and inspire me. Aurobindo's *Ahana* I find most captivating and I read it all day long, stopping only to eat when hungry. My best friends are the great works of literature. Next to books of literature, I like reading books on science.

If the spiritual yogic wisdom of our country can be blended with the rapidly advancing scientific knowledge, then the world will be a happier and better place to live in.

If the science of the West and the spirituality of the East can come together, it will be like the combination of knowledge and grace. The yogic scientist will not hoard bombs that kill. The practice and wisdom of yoga should control scientific experiments. I shall learn both and discover a way to ensure world peace. I have greatly benefited from the study of your books on science. The Routledge edition of Shakespeare which you won as a prize has stimulated my critical faculties.

I am sharpening my creative talents on the hones of Shakespeare, Shelley and Dante. Please bless me.

Your loving brother.

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