

Dr. Shuddhananda
Bharati

Voice of
Thayumanavar

The life of the saint and his song-offering



ASSA
Editions

This book

Read this book daily and contemplate over a few lines; your life will brighten with peace and bliss. For the life and hymns of St. Thayumanavar emanated from silence which is the spotlight of self-immersed bliss.

Thayumanavar lived in tune with the Cosmic Spirit. He was a cosmic citizen, common to East and West. He united the two poles of thought in Indian philosophy - Vedanta and Siddhanta. His voice is the mellow symphony of the soul.

Portions of this book were read to poet Rabindranath and Dinabhandhu Andrews in 1917 and they appreciated them and encouraged me to bring out in rhythmic English important works in Tamil. I dedicate this book to these great souls. I have similarly written in English *Alvar Saints, St. Meikandar, Thirumula the Integral Yogin, St. Vagisa and His Fervent Hymns, The Renunciation of Pattinattar, St. Arunagiri, Mahatma Ramalingam and His Revelations, The Ecstasy of Manikkavachakar*, etc. etc. Let the Divine open the heart of fervent souls to help me in publishing such works for the good of humanity.

While I was in Malaya as the patron of the Pure Life Society, Sadhu Subramaniam (MKS) requested me to bring out the *Voice of Thayumanavar*. He had the large heart to donate the printing charges.

The Sadhu is an ardent devotee of Thayumanavar, a lover of saints and holy men. He saw Mahatma Gandhi in the Gauhati Congress 1926 to his heart's content. He was a

friend of Sardar Vedaratnam, who hailed from the lineage of Thayumanavar. He got a book of his hymns from his father in Jaffna and that was the lamp of his life. During the Japanese regime in Malaya, he had plenty of time to read and assimilate the sublime voice of silence. He was specially attracted by the Parapara Kanni, whose English rendering we have given in this book. Blessed be the good heart and liberal hand of this fervent soul - simple, sincere and saint-conscious.

Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati

Editor's Notes

It is a real pleasure for me to present *Voice of Thayumanavar* to you. We have to much to learn from this wonderful text! Thank you to Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati for having transmitted *Voice of Thayumanavar* to us. With the blessing of *Aum Shuddha Shakti Aum*.

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 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 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!

Editions ASSA



Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati



Introduction

by

H. H. Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Voice of Thayumanavar is a great achievement. As millions know, the translator of this work is himself a Maharshi, seer poet, a yogi, a superman and, therefore, his competence to translate and present the entire spirit of Thayumanavar in all its beauty. Right from boyhood, St. Shuddhananda found his great inspiration in the hymns of Thayumanavar, which he committed to memory. The light and charm of Thayumanavar largely influenced his own poetic expressions and contributions.

Maharishi Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati preserved silence for two months to write *The Voice of Thayumanavar*. In Tamil literature, the *Hymns* of Thayumanavar constitute a great classic and in the world of spiritual literature this translation of those hymns will be rated on its own merits, as a masterpiece.

Readers will value in a great measure the information that Sage Thayumanavar's life had a close connection with the ancestors of Kavi Yogi Maharishi Shuddhananda Bharati. We learn that in the home of Sri Bharati's ancestors, at Ramnad and Sivaganga, Arulayya and Kodikkarai Jnani, the disciples of the saint often lived.

His ancestors were ministers of the Naik rule and one of them, Narayanayya, brought Thayumanavar incognito to Ramnad. Thayumanavar also met Sage Sadasiva Brahmam, who was the forefather of Shuddhananda Bharati

and the *Atmavilasa* of Sadasiva Brahmam inspired in Thayumanavar Vedantic sentiments.

In Tamil, English and French, Kavi Yogi Maharishi Shuddhananda Bharati has had to his credit, distinctive poetic achievements. Like Thayumanavar himself, Sri Bharatiar occupies an immortal place in Tamil literature. His prose in English is varied and voluminous; his versatility is marked and more remarkable is his deep spiritual fervour and vitality; his yogic attainments are many-sided and high-soaring.

Sri Shuddhananda Bharati is born with a lyrical gift and displays a loftiness of sentiment and soul thrilling spiritual experiences that are couched in a language of rhythm, melody and music. To those who are familiar with Sri Bharati's magnum opus, *Bharata Shakti*, nothing need be said of the greatness of soul that is manifest in him. Continuous service, sacrifice, austerity, meditation, yoga, silence, writing of poetry - these are the magnificent facets of the epic life of Maharishi Bharati, the superman who sees in India the symbol of spiritual force and desires to make yoga-sadhana a national discipline.

To thousands this work, *Voice of Thayumanavar*, will constitute a source of perpetual illumination and a constant inspiration for rapid spiritual evolution.

Swami Sivananda



Part 1

The silent sage

Chapter I

A guiding light

The world was my open book and inner quest my deep study. Who am I in the vastness of cosmic phenomenon? The mystery car of Time takes me round changeul seasons; destiny leads the play of life, blindfolding me in self-oblivion. "Who am I? What am I? Whence am I? What is beyond the entry and exit in this amphitheatre of existence? Who feels in the senses and thinks in the mind and dreams in my fancy?"

Such were my self-reflections during my school days. I kept aloof from home, society and noisy crowds, taking delight in inner communion. Home and school resented my dreamy mood and crazy solitude. One day I was treated harshly by my kith and kin. I ran for refuge to the temple and there hugged the feet of God. I surrendered my life into the hands of the Divine Grace. "O Grace, I take refuge at Thy feet. Lead me to light from this dark vale of tears. Reveal to me the mystery of life and its mission. Keep me here to fulfil that mission and call me back to be with Thee." I sobbed in a frenzy of spontaneous fervour. I felt a warm current traversing my heart and brain and a descent from above which continues to this day. I was

reborn in the Grace and could now understand the meaning of life and the language of the soul.

I sat in a dark corner of the temple, forgetting body and world, when a song attracted me to the lotus tank nearby.

There, in the bright moonlight, some monks were singing together a song that touched my soul.

“The Silent One possessed me in silence and poured into me a speechless word that was the seed of wisdom. That word, O friend, had a magic effect on my life. It hushed up the mind and opened my heart to silent embrace of the Divine.”

So on went the song which brought me peace and joy. I learnt from the monks the song and for the first time knew about its author, Sage Thayumanavar. I secured a copy of his works and treasured it in my bosom. The hymns of Sage Thayumanavar became the guiding light of my life. I still believe that the Divine Grace gave a silent friend to my pilgrim soul.

The hymns of Thayumanavar removed my gloom and solved my mental problem. It unravelled the riddle of existence. Each line was a message and each message a vision of truth. Each truth was a spark of intuition and each intuition had a transforming force. The style of Thayumanavar was limpid, simple, straight, bright, profound and sweet. It flowed from the abundance of soul's delight in rapturous union with the Beloved. Every hymn is a gem of divinity. It is an enchanting flute-voice of the soul that touches all souls. The poet was song and the song the poet. This is the message of the Seer Poet:

“The Unique One pervades all beings. All are one in that. It is the life of lives, the One that moves in many names and forms. It is beyond the mental conceptions of caste, creed and religion. Ascetic or householder, all have a right to live in its consciousness. Come collectively to enjoy the bliss of life in the Divine Grace. Call with deep love; the Grace shall pour itself from above.”

Now let us see the evolution of his life towards divinity.

Chapter II

Who is this boy?

The rock temple at Trisirapuram is a marvel of Indian architecture. It enshrines the image of Thayumanavar - the God of Mother Love. The temple is busy with crowds of devotees singing devotional songs and dancing in ecstasy. Among them we see a brilliant boy, fair in colour, tall in stature, with rosy cheeks, lotus face and phosphorescent eyes beaming with grace and rays of knowledge. The boy contemplates upon the Divine for a while and then leaves the crowd. He quickly gets up to the topmost temple of the hill. There Ganesa stands. The boy sits self-immersed, meditates a while and then sings:

“Rare is human birth. While yet I live on this earth, in this body, with heart and soul, I must revel in the ecstasy of Divine Grace.”

The boy seeks a spiritual teacher to initiate him in the secret of the divine art. He stands again before Lord Thayumanavar and pours out his soul's aspirations into songs.

He becomes silent in meditation, tears gushing out of his eyes in pearl drops of ecstasy.

Chapter III

The pious parents

A tall stately man comes in haste. He looks here and there. He catches hold of the boy, saying: "Come home; how long are you to be here? Come!" That is his father, Kediliappa. 'Kediliappa' literally means immortal Father. Born to this *mortal* father, the boy sought Father, the immortal. This saintly boy is our Thayumanavar. He was named after the deity of the Rock Temple. Kediliappa Pillai, a Chola Vellala, was an administrative officer of the Naik kingdom.

Kediliappa originally lived at Vedaranyam, a famous pilgrim centre. He was the trustee of the local Shiva temple. He was a learned man, high in intellect and wide in heart. His wife Gajavalli was a pious lady, humming devotional songs while attending to housekeeping. Their home was surrounded by a divine aureole. The liberality of their hearts expressed itself in charity and hospitality. There was a royal dignity in the personality of Kediliappa and a remarkable sweetness in his words. His elder brother, Vedaranyam, a great scholar well placed in life, had no children. Kediliappa offered his own boy Siva Chidambaram in

adoption to the elder brother. The brother's face glowed with joy and there was sunlight again in his life.

Chapter IV

The king's favour

Those were days of the Naik kings. The Pandyan dynasty had declined. The Naik chiefs of Vijayanagar possessed the Madurai kingdom (1559-1736). Visvanatha, Tirumalai and Mangammal were noteworthy rulers of Madurai. They were great patrons of art and poesy. The grandson of Mangammal was Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha. He set up his residence at Trisirapuram. He was a pious man, but not a statesman. He ruled for twenty-seven years (1704-1731). His kingdom was often attacked by the Maharattas and the Mussalmans. He wanted strong assistants. His minister Govindappa one day came to Vedaranyam. Kediliappa received the august guest, with temple honours and entertained him under his hospitable roof. Both of them spoke on religion and politics. The minister said: "Kedili, you are a scholar, a devotee, an astute statesman, a clever diplomat and a keen accountant. You are just the man that we are seeking. Come with me and serve the king." Kediliappa shifted his family to Trisirapuram. King Chokkanatha, pleased even at first-sight, took Kedili into his council and gave him a free hand in the management of his household. Kedili was faithful to the king, alert to his duty and timely in advising him against enemies. Chokkanatha treated him like a brother. Kedili's fame and

fortune flourished day by day. There was only one gloomy spot in his life; that was the absence of a child to cheer his home.

He and his wife went daily to the Rock Temple and prayed to Swami Thayumanavar for a child. They fed saints and made gifts to scholars. Kedili chanted holy songs. He also arranged for Vedic recitals before the sanctum of Thayumanavar. While the atmosphere was thus charged with holy vibrations, his wife Gajavalli became pregnant. Gajavalli spent her days in prayer and holy hearing. One day devotees were chanting the soul-thrilling psalms of Manikkavachakar when Gajavalli delivered the gifted child. That child was named Thayumanavar, for it was born by the grace of Tayumana Swami. Kedili was overjoyed at the sight of his luminous son, radiant in beauty. Temple bells rang in blessings.

Chapter V

Learning and yearning

Everyone was attracted to this lovely child. King Chokkanatha admired the boy and marked him for his service. The father brought up the son with high hopes. He taught him Tamil and Sanskrit, spiritual lore and statecraft. The king was satisfied with his progress. He was the cynosure of saints and scholars. He was an adept in Vedanta and Siddhanta. He read with rapture the hymns of saints like Manikkavachakar, Appar, Sambandar and

Sundarar. He mastered the *Meikanda Sastras*. These are holy books in Tamil.

He studied the *Upanishads*, side by side with Tiruvachakam. He was a clever logician and none could rival him in discussions, but he was not satisfied with booklore. Books did not reveal the Blessed One cradled in his heart. Words did not quench his thirst. From sunrise to sunset, he was seeking for something within, for somebody that could lead him to the fount of Self-conscious Bliss. He had a rich home. He had free access to the king's palace. He was welcomed in royal circles, but the born sage preferred solitude to company, reflection to reading and introspection to speaking. Words were loads to him and books burdens. He went often to the Rock Temple and spent his time in meditation and prayer. In the bosom of purified calmness, in the silent seclusion of inner peace, he sought Self-reality with all the fervour of his faith. His eyes flowed with tears of yearning. His lips throbbed with songs of spiritual melancholy. He had the sage-mind of Pattinattar, the contemplation of the Buddha, the inspiration of the Vedic seers, the fervour of Manikkavachakar, the humility of Appar and the faith of Sambandar. Nuggets of golden truth, cast in brilliant couplets, came first out of the inner mine. Then longer poems flowed out spontaneously. Showering tear-pearls gushing out of his lotus eyes, the boy saluted and contemplated upon the Supreme. Learning yielded to yearning.

Thayumanavar saw the Hata-yogins, controlling breath and twisting their bodies. He saw religionists in hot discussion; he saw verbomaniacs quarrelling about the God

whom they could not even imagine. He sought solace in the Unique One who is all and all in all.

He invoked His grace day and night for a guiding light.

Chapter VI

Royal service

Kediliappa did not live to see the brilliant manhood of his son. He joined the majority while yet Thayumanavar was in his teens. His father's death intensified his yearning for spiritual freedom. "With this body, I must attain liberation," this was his resolution. But the king would not leave him to himself. "Dear Thayumanavar, serve me in your father's place," said he. Thayumanavar had to obey the king. He became the chancellor of exchequer of the Naik kingdom. He fulfilled his state duties to the entire satisfaction of the king, who loved him more and more. His Rani, Minakshi, fondled him. She was ready to do anything for him. People liked his gentle manners and benevolent heart. He did his duty for duty's sake; but his heart was aloof from the distractions of state affairs. He saw what the world was and took lessons from what he saw.

Those were troubled times. Trisirapuram was a field of conflicting foreign forces. The throne was shaken by invasions and revolutions. Political butchery, local treachery, social animosity, royal indolence and religious pretence disrupted the harmony of life everywhere. The marauding

Maharatta hordes and the invading Nawab's forces were lurking in ambush in the vicinity. The clatter of enemy swords enervated the Naik force. Thayumanavar saw with open eyes the danger of royal courts disrupting by flippant pleasure. The kingdom was a web of spies and a trap of enemies. The friends of today became the foes of tomorrow. None can play with fire without being scorched. Thayumanavar did not like to be caught in this political turmoil. He witnessed a thousand golden hypocrisies and pitied humanity caught in the coils of temptation.

Thayumanavar despised the mere life of carnal desires and sex indulgence. Yoga was his deep aspiration. A master sought the seeker.

Chapter VII

The master

One day Thayumanavar went up the Rock Temple for his daily worship. There he met a sage who belonged to the order of St. Tiru Mula. The master and the disciple discovered each other. The disciple fell at the feet of the master, shedding tears of joy, and poured out his heart in sublime hymns.

The master blessed him graciously, took him alone and accepted his devotion.

"Master," said the disciple, "I shall follow thee, renouncing home and royal service." "Wait, good soul!" admonished

the teacher. "Be a householder until you beget a child, then I shall come to initiate you in meditation. Be silent. Rest in peace; keep quiet, have faith. You will reach the supreme state of Bliss." Having said this, the master went away. Thayumanavar shed tears of joy and gratitude at the love of his gracious master who opened his inner eye and followed his teachings faithfully.

Chapter VIII

Liberation

The free soul, hungering for the inner delight, cannot live in the limitations of a royal court. Its proud pleasures are flimsy shows of vanity. It is a place for flatterers and not for sages and seer-poets. Thayumanavar would make his life a song-offering to the Divine of his heart. He would live in the Divine, for the Divine. He lived in tune with the Infinite and would not seek the lightning smile of royal favour. He would be the king of the Spirit's kingdom and never a slave of the worldly empires. He would enjoy the soul's birth-right.

He remembered God in all the changing phases of life. He aspired for grace and never for gold.

As knowledge dawned upon the aspirant, he rose above the mythic imagination of mental poets, coloured exaggerations, fads, creeds, cults and dogmas. Faith in the inner reality gave him force. Force fructified into grace

and grace into knowledge. He drew the mind from the wandering senses into inner recollection and contemplated upon the pure reality which he was. He discriminated the spirit from the body of nature. He internalised his attention, intensified his concentration, controlled his thoughts and lulled his mind to meditation. A dynamic peace possessed him. His heart widened into a deep compassion for all. His equal vision saw one soul in the king and in the subject. Life in harmony with the Divine was eternal springtime; life in separation was cyclonic winter. His brain thought, his heart loved, his vital liked nothing but the Divine.

The invincible Grace heard his heart-beat. It influenced the king. Chokkanatha was a devotee of Siva and lover of saints. He saw a holy saint in his secretary, Thayumanavar. "Thayumanavar," said the king one day: "Your pilgrim soul seeks the inner temple. I see the hidden light flaring up in your emotional symphony. We see the world with a thousand-eyed mind and are deluded. You see the spirit of things with the one-eyed heart. Can the myriad-eyed night equal the one-eyed day? Your soul hungers after the Supreme Reality. State service is a hindrance to your aspirations. Waste not your days in politics and diplomacies. You are no more the king's servant; the king is your servant. Come, I shall raise a peaceful ashram for you and you can fix yourself in yoga there." "I am grateful to you, O king; God has heard my prayer from *your* heart. I am liberated; thanks," said the saint and he repaired to the banks of the Kaveri to continue his meditation. The king raised a fine hermitage on the river bank and served the saint devoutly.

Chapter IX

That is Mother

The saint was self-absorbed. The mind was nullified, like a burnt camphor, in the flames of self-consciousness. Body-consciousness was lost in the Infinite Spirit. The body changes and falls, like the petals of a flower. The immortal Spirit rises up at the magic touch of the Divine Energy generated by meditation. The saint realised the self of all throbbing in his heart. He felt the pinch of hunger when anyone was hungry. He shivered when a poor man had no clothes for the winter.

One day the king offered him a rich shawl. At that moment, a poor old lady passed by, shivering with cold. Thayumanavar gave the shawl to the lady, saying: "Mother, you need this more than I." The king felt insulted and demanded an explanation.

King: Swami, I gave a fine shawl for your use and you have presented it to the old hag of low caste. Why so?

Thayumanavar: No caste, no hag! I gave the shawl to the Universal Mother! It is She who has received back what belonged to Her.

Chapter X

Silence meets silence

The great silent sage, Sadasiva Brahmam, sanctified the atmosphere of India in those days. He moved steeped in trance. The sky was his roof and earth his home. To see him was to know the Real. His songs were already popular among the learned. On his way to Pudukottah, Sage Sadasiva met Thayumanavar (1738). Their meeting was like the meeting of Vedanta and Siddhanta. "Silence is peace, silence is bliss, silence is knowledge," wrote the sage. Thayumanavar, already a lover of silence, became yet more silent.

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