

Dr. Shuddhananda  
Bharati

Art  
Temple



ASSA  
Editions

## Introduction and Editor's Notes

### Art Temple

*Art Temple* is a rare book which acts as an inspiration to us all. It tells the story of Tamilmani (Ramanathan) and his struggles to establish an Art Temple dedicated to the Tamil language and to Lord Shiva. Ramanathan's mother, the pious and chaste Visalakshi was inspired by the teachings of Swami Vivekanada. She and her husband, Sivanesam, educated their son so that he developed his talents fully. Art Temple describes the struggles of Tamilmani as he sought funds and recruited supporters to fulfil Visalakshi's dying ambition to establish an Art Temple. Vivekanada's vision was of a community of like-minded people working together to support themselves while focusing on a temple which celebrated Tamil art and culture.

The road for Tamilmani was not easy and he had to overcome many setbacks. He was set upon by thieves and tricksters who stole his money and perverted his ideas. However Tamilmani never lost sight of his goal, even though at times it seemed everything was against him. With the aid of generous supporters in Japan, America and other countries, he was eventually able to realise his dream. He established an Art Temple where talented performers presented the beauties of his Tamil art and culture to the world. The people around the temple lived and worked to create a self-supporting community which was an example of peace and harmony. Learning, industry and spirituality were all combined.

Tamilmani helped restore the ancient Tamil language from its position as a worthless tongue, suitable only for lowly labourers, to a venerated language recognised for its beauty and flexibility. Language and culture are intertwined; by restoring respect for the Tamil language, Tamilmani helped preserve his ancient culture. By bringing Tamil arts to a wider audience, the dwellers at the Art Temple introduced the world to the amazing riches inherent in this ancient culture.

Tamilmani proved that, by keeping our goals always in mind, we can achieve our dreams despite what may seem like overwhelming obstacles and setbacks. His life is an inspiration to us all.

A warm thank you to Daye Craddock for her help in careful editing of this book and for writing the introduction.

It is a real pleasure for me to present *Art Temple* to you. Thank you, Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati for having transmitted *Art Temple* to us. With the blessing of *Aum Shuddha Shakti Aum*.

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*

## 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

11<sup>th</sup> May 1897 – 7<sup>th</sup> 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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# Art Temple

## Part I

### 1. In front of the victory pillar

Baskara Sethupathy was a well-known leading personality among the Tamilians. He was the person who sponsored Swami Vivekananda's trip to America. The Swamiji made a great impact at the "International Religious Conference" held at Chicago. Swamiji had delivered a fiery lecture on Vedanta which made his fame reverberate all over the world. The greatness of Hinduism spread far and wide, because of him. India earned respect amidst the world population. Within a matter of 24 hours, the Swamiji had made a sweeping victory and had earned a place in the annals of Vedanta (advaita philosophy and *Upanishads*). America, England, France were all prepared to extend their welcome to him and were willing to pay homage. A few of the Europeans became his disciples then and there.

27-1-1897: the day Vivekananda stepped into his motherland after his tours abroad, prizing his trophies. Baskara Sethupathy and his brother Dinakara Sethupathy received him with great pomp.

Baskara Sethupathy had erected an imposing pillar to commemorate the Swamiji's triumph abroad. It would signify the success of India - its people and its culture; and every time one happened to glance at the pillar it would remind one of that momentous joy - when the world lauded the



Swami's knowledge. One could visualize the Swami's image in all its glory and splendour.

The Swami rendered a lecture at the foot of the pillar to the ocean of Tamils gathered there. We are honoured to hear it because of the painstaking efforts of our American friend Mr. Goodwin; he had recorded the Swami's homilies starting from Colombo up to Almora, out of which here is an interesting text:

"Friends! I'm grateful to your warm greetings and kind words. Thank you very much. My gratitude is for your king, Rajarishi Baskara Sethupathy. I attribute my triumph abroad chiefly to his efforts. We, the people of India, are indebted to him. He was the person who motivated me relentlessly and mooted my trip to America. He also financed my stay out there."

If our country had at least a few such generous patrons, we would reach our zenith in our spiritual endeavours.

Dear people! Ours is a holy land. Our fount of divine knowledge could flood the world and rejuvenate it; it could cleanse all the evil pervading in this world. The true spirit of generosity would be to share this largesse of spiritual knowledge freely and bountifully. I have been abroad; there I noticed that people are carried away by ephemeral pleasures such as money, materialism and prosperity. It is only in this holy land, that everyday life is interspersed with spirituality. God is truth. Realisation of this truth is knowledge; without discriminating against race, caste or creed, we must perpetrate this truth; it should become common knowledge and must be accessible to all.

Learning and industry should have a tremendous growth potential. Women must be liberated. Our society must preen majestically with its head held high in this world.

This revolution can happen only with spiritual knowledge as its anchoring force. There are three requisites for such a revolution:

1. Self realization and self-preservation;
2. To learn to cope with the changing times to master the beautiful art of living;
3. Embarking on a means by which the poverty of this land could be eradicated - technological improvements in agriculture.

These are our immediate and essential requirements. To attain these we need people - people of great valour; people who are educated, efficient and experienced. We need "kindred souls".

We should spread the wealth of knowledge all over the world. My first job is to identify such enlightened soldiers, such kindred souls. Strength, strength and more strength is the need of the hour. We need muscles of iron and nerves of steel; we need a pulsating strength of mind. Our religion must feed us with such humane aspects; Abhor that which would deter you, your strength of mind and body, Shun inertia! Shun fear! Be brave and lion-hearted.

This power shall give you the light of determination.

Realize, my countrymen, realise! Appraise your fate, you who are the heirs of thirty-three crores of saints - Indian

ancestry is popularly believed to have been created by this many saints! look at your state of affairs.

In this golden land, there are hundreds and thousands of people screaming for food! Don't you hear their cry? Don't you realize their plight? Doesn't your heart melt? Take a grasp of the illiteracy that shackles your country! The plight of poverty: laxness, lethargy, indolence, selfishness, envy, poverty and illiteracy - pull them all out by their roots. We need strength.

Your preference lies in ball games and not in the *Gita*. You are easily pleased. Physical strength should actually aid you in clarity of thought. Think:

"I'm soul! I'm independent; the indestructible, I'm knowledge, I'm strength" - repeat this to yourselves a thousand times! See God in all of mankind. Revere all and spread the light of knowledge. This is a call of awakening.

Our miseries are annihilated; there, is the rising sun. Our motherland India is a boundless Himalaya of knowledge; it is filled with love, strength and peace; it is blowing like a breeze, and rejuvenating shattered hopes. Gone are lethargy and indolence! Arise Bharathi! Behold! - only the blind don't see and the deaf don't hear her.

My mother - Bharath Matha, has risen out of her long dreary sleep! She shall never again sleep. No one can stop her now. She shall not be ruled over by any alien force. She the span-less has risen:

"Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

Even the waves of the ocean bore silent testimony to this emotional intensity. The king and his brother were in rhapsody. The joy of living seemed to clamour in the hearts of all men gathered there. Our Sivanesam was standing between Periasamy Dhevar and pandit Gopalakrishnan. The boy holding his hand was his son Ramanathan. The boy gazed at the Swamiji without batting an eyelid. He was dazed.

The Swamiji reached the palace, followed by a joyous band of musicians and followers. Although the crowd had dispersed, the boy could not tear his gaze off the victory pillar. His father beckoned him, but the son wanted to do homage to the Swamiji. The father agreed and also decided to donate some money for the Swami's institution. The son insisted on handing over the money personally to the Swami for he wanted to talk to him. The father was surprised. He asked: "Well little boy! What would you have in common with a great Swami like him? Kneel down and venerate and maintain silence."

But the boy said: "I will sing *Thevarams* (Hymns in praise of Lord Shiva) to him."

"But, what do you know of *Thevaram*?"

Ramanathan recites a few and claims to know a lot more.

"Who taught you all these?"

"Sundaram Odhuvar (The official hymn-singer in a temple is called Odhuvar) of Madurai..."

"How did you befriend him?"

“He has a great affection for me. Whenever I went to the temple, he took me to sit on his lap and taught me these hymns.”

“Let me test your proficiency in *Thevaram*. Sing one for me, now.”

Ramanathan clears his throat and begins:

“Hail Lord Shiva!

Steeped in love, we melt, and in tears praise You, You, who leads us in the path of devotion, You are the ultimate truth of the four vedai, Ruler of Earth, my lord...”

“Father, how is it?»

«O my God! You are good.”

“I would like to sing all this and more to the Swami”.

The father said: “Let’s meet him. After weighing his mood and with the sanction of our king, you could sing out a few...”

Both of them leave, to the palace. But the boy is still enamoured by the pillar...

## 2. Sivanesam

Sivanesam was born in Karaikudi. From his eighth year he had been a successful money-lender. He was trained by his father Chidambaram and had been at Rangoon for many years, making a lot of money. At eighteen he lost his parents and his relatives relieved him of his money through unholy means. But Sivanesam did not lose heart.

He sold his house for the sum of fifteen thousand rupees and left to Epo by ship. He set up his own money-lending business there and was favoured by Dame Fortune.

With his huge profits, he bought a rubber plantation. He brought in labourers from Tamil Nadu. He gave them living quarters and paid them generously in cash and kind. They worked hard and brought him more money. He made about five lakhs net profit; he appointed agents for his shop at Epo as well as for the plantations and returned to his homeland. He built a huge mansion at his native Karaikudi.

His maternal uncle Shubbiah, who was also a moneylender based at Ramanathapuram district, invited him over. Sivanesam readily accepted. After heavy discussions, they decided to join hands, pool in their capital and start a small trading centre.

### 3. Sethupathy

In those times Ramanathapuram was ruled by King Muthuramalinga Sethupathy. He was a great warrior; he was a scholar, in both Sanskrit and Tamil; a poet with many works to his credit. Many bards also paid tribute to this great poet-king. He was a great statesman, fair and just. He carried a special affection for our Sivanesam.

Sivanesam's uncle Subbiah had a beautiful daughter by the name of Visalakshi. She was in love with Sivanesam. After matching their horoscopes, their wedding was fixed in the month of January. It took place in a grand manner.

The king of the land himself was present for the wedding, accompanied by his two sons.

After the wedding, the uncle left on a pilgrimage to holy places. He was away for a year. Word got around that he had died peacefully making the last rites at Madurai for his father.

The daughter and son-in-law built a choultry in Subbiah's memory. They arranged for lectures on Saivism to be conducted there regularly. *Thevaram* was recited and food and clothing was distributed to the needy.

Within a month of Subbiah's demise the king too fell ill. On his death-bed the king beckoned Sivesam and said tearfully: "Ask my sons Bhaskaran and Dinakaran to study well; let them always remain united; ask them to perpetrate our clan's glory. Only Lord Muruga's blessings and your untiring love can offer them protection and security in this hour of need," and let out his last breath.

Since both his sons were under age; on the king's demise, Ramanathapuram district came under government control.

Sivanesam, true to his promise, held a deep enduring affection for the little princes. He saw to it that they graduated from the prestigious presidency college, Madras, with flying colours in English and Tamil. They were also true to their heritage - great warriors, skilled in the art of elephant and horse riding. They were also talented in sculpting, painting, music and all other fine arts; Dinakaran especially spent his time in research of philosophy and poetry.

When Bhaskara Sethupathy was throned the king of Ramnad District, he upheld the grand traditions of his times; he was a man of traditions of his times; he was a man of great learning and honour. He promoted Tamil learning by instituting a Sangam, with the help of his cousin Pandithurai Dhevar. He also built a college to teach English. He patronized Saiva mutts (monasteries) and poets and always rendered his largesse upon them.

He had a special affection for Sivanesam and held him in great esteem. Sivanesam was a special invitee; the royal guest for all occasions - especially the frequently held concerts and deharma. The king was of the opinion that Sivanesam was a sincere man in his profession and was generous with his money and had an avid interest in learning and in education. Poets used to flock to the king's palace. Sivanesam like a sponge absorbed all this; his constant exposure to this poetic atmosphere helped him be a good critic. He could discern good poetry and became a poet himself, acquired through his dedication.

Sivanesam had two children. The first one Vellaiyan was sent to Epo to carry on the money-lending business there. He was a brute and a womanizer; the second son Ramanathan was a bright boy and the father was deeply attached to him.

Visalakshi took her second son to Madurai with her when she went there to call on her relatives. Both mother and son used to listen to the devotional songs and *Thevarams* sung at their choultry. During a particularly long stay at Madurai, Ramanatham had managed to learn quite a few *Thevarams* and had mastered them.



#### 4. Vivekananda's astonishment

Sivanesam had asked the king to approve his son's hymns. The boy sang sweetly and the king was happy to hear him. Since there was a large crowd and a lot of revelry at Rameshwaram the Swami had chosen to retire to Pamban. The king propitiated the Swamiji and paid him the highest respect - of washing his feet personally. At "Rama Manthiram", Dhinakaran's palace, the Swamiji reposed. He was involved in deep talk with Dhinakaran, when Sivanesam Chetty approached him respectfully. The boy prostrated before the Swami, who blessed him with joy and warmth. Dhinakaran introduced Sivanesam as a popular and wealthy man of the province. On enquiry the boy revealed that he was studying Tamil and could sing Tamil hymns called the *Thevaram*. When the Swami could not understand, Dhinakaran translated for his benefit. He said that Ramanathan was an intelligent boy, and clarified that "Like the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, there are a lot of philosophical verses in the Tamil language. *Thevaram* is a divine hymn sung in praise of Lord Shiva by enlightened saints. It is like a vedic river. This fellow here would like to sing one for you."

#### 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)*

The boy sang with intensity. Dhinakaran interpreted for the Swami's understanding. The Swami cried out: "This is the anthem for India. We surrender to God and fear no one; we possess great joy and freedom. This is what we need today. *Thevaram* is like the nectar of life. I would like to hear some more."

The boy sang again loud and clear and excelled himself. Dhinakaran said: "This one is about the devotee's appreciation of the Lord and His presence, even in his hour of crisis." This devotee (a sastrite) has had a difference of opinion in the matters of doctrine and faith, with the king of the land, who was a Jain. The devotee was subjected to tortures but enjoyed his deliverance from them - and sings the Lord's praise in all its glory and splendour. His unwavering devotion protected him from the flames of the fire; he further states that the Lord is latent in us like the ghee in milk and is intangible like the glow of a gem. With true faith He emerges out of us and reveals Himself in His true form - This is the essence of this hymn.

Dhinakaran further arranged for the royal chorus to sing along with the orchestra more hymns on Swami's express desire. The concert took place for nearly an hour. The Swamiji danced with joy.

"What sweet melody! What a depth of meaning! These are like the *Upanishads*," said the Swami with fierce satisfaction. He also commented: "These contain all the truth of life. Why don't you translate such special hymns into English, Sanskrit and Hindi? You should spread it to the world. Why do you Tamilians bury your intrinsic wealth in your land? Let the world over hear and prosper through such great knowledge."

## Art Temple

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