

SPEECH OF SHRI LA. GANESAN, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF CULTURAL CONFLUENCE OF TAMIL AND MANIPURI ON 26TH DECEMBER, 2021 AT THE CHANDRAKIRTI AUDITORIUM, IMPHAL.

Shri N. Biren Singh ji, Hon'ble Chief Minister,

My distinguished eminent friends from Tamil Nadu,

Distinguished Invitees,

Respected eminent personalities in the field of Art and Culture, Manipur,

Friends from Print and Electronic Media,

Brothers and Sisters,

It is, indeed, a privilege for me to have this opportunity of addressing you at a memorable cultural confluence of Tamil and Manipuri this afternoon in honour of Subramania Bharathi. I do not intend to dilate about the rich cultural heritage of Manipur here today as everybody is well aware of it. When I attended a well-organized function of Tamil Sangam on the occasion of Birth Anniversary of Subramania Bharathi yesterday at Kolkata, I, in brief, highlighted the rich cultural heritage of Manipur.

Manipur is a miniature India. That means India is one. Today, in this Cultural Confluence of Tamil and Manipuri, everybody is talking about Subramania Bharathi, However, unfortunately most of the people of Manipur do not know distinctly who is Subramania Bharathi ? The mistake is not by the

people of Manipur, it is the mistake of the people of Tamil Nadu. Why because most of the people of the State are not aware the contribution made by Subramania Bharathi for the Nation. Nevertheless, the contributions made by Subramania Bharathi in the field of literature are really significant.

Today, with the kind cooperation of the Government of Manipur, we are able to organize this mega cultural confluence in order to disseminate the message of Mahakavi Subramania Bharathi. It does not mean that Manipur is lagging behind other States in the field of literature. There are many. I would like to make a mention, among others, Smt. Maharaj Kumari Binodini Devi who dedicated her whole life for development of literature not only in the State but in other States also. Smt. M.K. Binodini Devi was a renowned Manipuri writer who wrote stories, dramas, radio plays, ballet scripts, essays, song lyrics and screenplays etc. Meanwhile, “The Maharaj Kumari Binodini Devi Foundation” is organizing year-long centenary celebration of (L) Maharaj Kumari Binodini Devi who dedicated her whole life for the development of Art and Culture of Manipur in particular and the Nation in general the inaugural function of the year-long centenary celebration will be held on 6th February, 2022. In this regard, I have already made a proposal to the Governor of Tamil Nadu to organize a cultural exchange programme in Tamil Nadu in honour of this renowned poet of this State. In case the programme is arranged, I myself along with Shri L. Somi Roy son of Smt. M.K. Binodini Devi will attend the celebration.

Subramania Bharathi, popularly known as Mahakavi Bharathi (11 December 1882 – 11 September 1921), was a Tamil writer, poet, journalist, Indian independence activist and a social reformer. He was a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry and was considered one of the greatest Tamil literary figures of all time. His numerous works included fiery songs kindling patriotism during the Indian Independence movement. He fought for the emancipation of women, against child marriage, stood for reforming certain religious practices. He was also in solidarity with Dalits and expressed in action.

Born in Ettayapuram of Tirunelveli district (present-day Thoothukudi) in 1882, Bharathi had his early education in Tirunelveli and Varanasi and worked as a journalist with many newspapers, including The Hindu, Bala Bharata, Vijaya, Chakravarthini, the Swadesamitran and India. In 1908, an arrest warrant was issued against Bharathi by the Government of British India caused him to move to Pondicherry, now Puducherry where he lived until 1918.

His influence on Tamil literature was phenomenal. Although it is said that he was proficient in around 14, including 3 non-Indian foreign languages, his favorite language was Tamil. Around the age of 11, he was conferred the title of “Bharathi”, the one blessed by Saraswati, the goddess of learning by the Raja of Ettayapuram seeing his excellence in poetry.

During his stay in Varanasi, Bharathi was exposed to Hindu spirituality and nationalism. This broadened his outlook and he learned Sanskrit, Hindi and English. In addition, he changed his outward appearance. He returned to Ettayapuram during 1901 and started as the court poet of Raja of Ettayapuram for a couple of years. He was a Tamil teacher from August to November 1904 in Sethupathy High School in Madurai. During this period, Bharathi understood the need to be well-informed of the world outside and took interest in the world of journalism and the print media of the West. Bharathi joined as Assistant Editor of the Swadesamitran, a Tamil daily in 1904. In December 1905, he attended the All India Congress session held in Calcutta. On his journey back home, he met Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda's spiritual heir. She inspired Bharathi to recognise the privileges of women and the emancipation of women exercised Bharathi's mind. He visualised the new woman as an emanation of Shakti, a willing helpmate of man to build a new earth through co-operative endeavour. Among other greats such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, he considered Nivedita his Guru, and penned verses in her praise.

By April 1906, he started editing the Tamil weekly India and the English newspaper Bala Bharatham with M.P.T. Acharya. These newspapers were also a means of expressing Bharathi's creativity, which began to peak during this period. Bharathi started to publish his poems regularly in these editions. From hymns to nationalistic writings, from contemplations on the relationship

between God and Man to songs on the Russian and French revolutions, Bharathi's subjects were diverse.

Bharathi participated in the historic Surat Congress in 1907 along with V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and Mandayam Srinivachariar, which deepened the divisions within the Indian National Congress with a section preferring armed resistance, primarily led by Tilak over moderate approach preferred by certain other sections. Bharathi supported Tilak with V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Kanchi Varathachariyar. Tilak openly supported armed resistance against the British.

Though Bharati belongs to the age-long tradition of Tamil literature, his poetry flows with racing vigour with new ideas and emotions. The course of its flow, its speed and manner, its transgressions and its light are totally new, and original in the finest sense of the word. Its impact on modern Tamil literature has been tremendous.

Bharati not only a poet, writer but was also an ardent Indian nationalist, an impassioned advocate of social reform and a visionary poet. He visualized the imminent liberation of Indians that would free them both from imperial rule by the British – at a time when Britain was the most powerful nation on earth – and from oppressive social customs in India.

Unfortunately, Bharati was persecuted for his convictions both by the British and by the orthodox elements of his own

society, who treated him as an outcast. He was exiled from British India in 1908 and went to live in Pondicherry, now Puducherry, a French colony in South India. He spent ten years in exile there and eventually returned to Madras.

After Indian independence, Bharati's contribution to Indian culture was widely recognized. There was no major city in India that does not have a street named after him, or a statue erected in his honour. Though much remains to be done in the area of translation, a sample of Bharati's works has been translated into every major Indian language, as well as European languages including English, French, German, Russian and Czech. A postage stamp was also issued in his honour. In recognition of Bharati's exceptional contribution to Indian culture, the Government of India has to confer upon him the title of Indian "National Poet" RASHTRA KAVI.

With these words, I, once again, pay my tribute to Mahakavi Bharathi and to all the Kavis of Manipur and thank the Directorate of Art and Culture, Government of Manipur under the dynamic leadership of Shri N. Biren Singh ji for their invaluable cooperation to make this cultural confluence of Tamil and Manipuri a success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.