

SPEECH OF SHRI LA. GANESAN, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF MUPPERUM
VIZHA ON 25TH DECEMBER, 2021 AT KOLKATA.

All the distinguished personalities present here today,

All the functionaries of Bharathi Tamil Sangam,

Distinguished Invitees,

Friends from Print and Electronic Media,

Brothers and Sisters,

It is, indeed, a privilege for me to have this opportunity of addressing you on the occasion of “MUPPERUM VIZHA” this evening in honour of Subramania Bharathi. The endeavours made by the Bharathi Tamil Sangam to organize such an eventful programme are, indeed, commendable and praiseworthy.

At the outset, I would like to say a few words about rich cultural heritage of Manipur. Manipur, as you all are well aware is today best introduced to the world through her rich cultural heritage. It is through the Manipuri dance that the world knows the existence of such a tiny State in this far-flung North Eastern part of the country. Apart from dance and music, even in the field of literature, Manipur is well-known not only in the country but overseas. Recently, I attended a function for distribution of State Literature award of Manipur in which one renowned writer was awarded. I would be very happy to

make an announcement today that on the occasion of Anniversary Celebration of Bharathi Subramania, Directorate of Art and Culture, Government of Manipur is organizing a Cultural Confluence of Tamil and Manipuri tomorrow, 26th December at Imphal and all the prominent personalities here today will also participate. I am very grateful to all of you for your kind cooperation to make the anniversary a grand success.

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 BalaBharatham 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 MandayamSrinivachariar, 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 KanchiVarathachariyar. 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.

It is also a matter of great satisfaction to note that the Bharathi Tamil Sangam regularly celebrates the Birth days of prominent Tamil scholars and writers including Bharathi Birth Day and SaadhaniThamizharVirudhu in the month of December, for which I

appreciate the Sangam. I am fully confident that the Sangam will keep continuing forever. I am very satisfied to know that the Sangam has installed the statue of the great National Poet SubramaniaBharathiat the Vivekananda Park in South Kolkata and further initiating the renaming of Lake Road in South Kolkata as KaviBharathi Sarani. My blessings are always with you for the success of the mission.

With these words, I, once again, pay my tribute to Mahakavi Bharathi and wish the endeavours of Bharathi Tamil Sangam all success in their future missions.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.