

Mahakavi Subramania Bharthi- A Great Humanist, Nationalist and a Social Revolutionary

- K. Sambath Kumar

Indian Independence movement brought forth many luminaries like Balagangadhara Tilak, Gopalakrishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel and a host of other freedom fighters as diverse as Netaji Subashchandra Bose and C.Rajagopalachari who contributed in their own diverse ways to the freedom struggle. Tamilnadu did not lag behind; we had Subramania Siva, Chidambaram Pillai and the great poet Subramania Bharathi with their indomitable spirit challenging the Great British Empire!

Mahakavi Subramaina Bharathiyar (1882-1921) was not just a poet; he was a Nationalist to the core, a Revolutionary who raised a strong tirade against social injustice, at the same time, a strong believer in Hindu religion, and a great Humanist. From social reforms which brought forth his Humanism to the fore, he turned to aggressive Nationalism. While dealing with social injustices, his poems spat fire! His deep nationalistic songs posed a great challenge to the British. In his poems, we are confronted with deep Nationalism, Revolutionary social ideas, based on humanistic ideals, and of course, religious fervor.

His poetic skills were revealed even at the young age of seven, and the poets of Ettayapuram Zamin, dumbstruck by his talents, awarded him the title "Bharathi" when he was just eleven years of age! He also studied other Indian languages- Hindi and Sanskrit during his sojourn in Banaras Hindu University. On his way back from Banaras in 1905, he met Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, whom he adopted as his spiritual Guru. Such was the great influence of his poetical works that he was considered along with Rabindranath Tagore for the Nobel Prize for literature.

He was an important linchpin in the early periods of freedom struggle from Tamilnadu. He made a gallant attempt to galvanize the Indian masses through his most provocative and prolific writings. He brought out a superbly rich and readable collection of writings on various aspects such as Nationalism, the political liberation of India, the eradication of casteism, emancipation of women, importance of education and concept of God etc. His extraordinary and unequalled power of writing poems, particularly patriotic songs, fostered the spirit of nationalism among the people and motivated them to jump into the freedom struggle. In fact, his songs warmed and brightened the lives of the people and developed in them patriotic feeling.

Taking 'Vande Mataram' as his magnificent mantra and having consuming thirst for freedom he sings:

“When will this thirst for freedom slake?

When will our love of slavery die?

When will our mother's fetters break?

When will our tribulations cease?”

His poems articulated not only the anguish of the oppressed people and awakened them to fight against the British yoke but also proclaimed in prayerful tones his pantheistic philosophy with crystal clarity.

His 'kakkai sirakinile Nandalala' brings out with invigorating lucidity his concept of God which is omnipresent. Bharathi hoped and dreamt that mother India should become free politically, ethically and spiritually. His loud appeal to the people is that let us change the world and make it modern and make men, the mortals into immortals. The nation has proudly attested the quiet depth of his wisdom and his great share of influence in the freedom struggle.

In all his poems, the core ideas were Equality, Fraternity and Liberty – all three based essentially on Nationalism as revealed in his “Vandemataram”, Bharatha Desam”, and other poems. He dreamt of an independent India where people will progress in all fields and even reach the Moon! There will be no distinction based on caste or creed amongst Indians, and no dichotomy between the rich and poor, male or female, or higher and lower caste!

All Indians will have equal opportunities, and not even a single person will suffer the pangs of hunger. Women will have equal rights with men and none will dare ill-treat, insult or abuse women! His Nationalism and Humanism led to the depiction of “Bharatha Desam” as an Ideal State where people will live in peace without any distinction of caste, creed or sex and will be highly educated, talented and progressive.

He was deeply religious; at the same time, he gave a clarion call to Indians to wake from their dogmatic slumber through his revolutionary ideas in the arena of social relationship. His poems were an invigorating tonic to Tamilians and wake-up call to all Indians, not only to break the chain of slavery to the British, but also the fetters of social disparity.

He was Nationalist, religionist, social Revolutionary, and a great HUMANIST! Call it Nationalistic Humanism or Spiritualistic Humanism, the concern for the suffering humanity ran through his verses. No wonder, we still cherish his ideas, his idyllic verses and his brave

forthright thoughts. We salute the great Nationalistic Poet and revolutionary HUMANIST!

VANDE MATARAM!

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