

THE HINDU, Wednesday, December 11, 2002

Missionary with a Vision

**Today is Subramanya
Bharathi's birth anniversary.
The Vanavil Cultural
Centre in the city is organising
a programme to pay
tribute to the poet.**

As MESSENGERS of God, many saints had descended to earth. However, only a few had ascended to the kingdom of God as the ambassadors of mankind, as spokespersons for humanity. Mahakavi Subramanya Bharathi was certainly one who pleaded, at times even forcefully, with the Almighty on behalf of entire humanity.

Her dared to ask the Almighty: "With your grace, you exclusively rule both the heaven and earth. Do you think that all my prayers, which spring from an ardent devotion, would go waste? Don't you have the mind to consider this? Would you create the world without wisdom? Do you think that I would fall like the multitude, who are just after food that they eat daily, who indulge in narrating petty tales, who cause by their several deeds miseries to others, who get immersed in deep sorrow. Who become old, weak and succumb to death?

Nay! He was of a different mettle. His vision and mission were different. He raised his voice for the uplift of the entire mankind, not just on behalf of the elite. He espoused the cause of the common man, the downtrodden and the poor. There can be no doubt that he was a true patriot, who vociferously demanded freedom from the British rule; but he proclaimed that such freedom would be for all Indian, whatever caste, creed or religion they might belong to.

He was so compassionate that he declared with a poetic fury:

"Even if one man be denied food, we would destroy the whole world".

In his compassion, he refused to recognize any barrier, linguistic, religious or geographical. While he was uncompromising in his demand for freedom and undaunted in his condemnation of the British misrule, as the editor of the Tamil monthly, Chakravarthini, he unhesitatingly paid encomiums to Queen Victoria:

This monthly is named after the illustrious woman, Queen Victoria, so that her magnanimity and good qualities are impressed in the minds of the Indian Women'.

He transcended even natural barriers.

His compassion was not confined to the species of Homo Sapiens. He identified himself with the crow and the sparrow, with the ocean and the mountain.

To him every blade of grass, every piece of stone, everything that is, vibrates with life, with the power of the great Universal Force, Parasakthi. Such was his cosmic vision.

He was a poet, a patriot, a philosopher, a prophet and curiously, a pioneer in Indian journalism. He has been the editor of several journals like Swadesamitran, India, Bala Baratham and Chakravarthini. Sitting in a corner of an enslaved country, afflicted with intimidating poverty and virtually outcast by the orthodox pundits and his own kith and kin, who could not accept his revolutionary ideas, in solitude he wrote, in Tamil and English, not only poems but also thought-provoking articles concerning the inmates of American prisons, the women of China, the poetry of Japan, the Russian Revolution, the proceedings of British parliament, etc.

During days of starvation, he summoned for himself an imaginary chariot and undertook a thrilling, spiritual journey. He immortalised it in his work titled, "The Chariot of Wisdom" (Jnana Rathnam), reading which, every reader is transported to different worlds.

In a poetic reverie he asked for a palanquin, a jathi pallakku. His wish was not fulfilled during his lifetime. Now, 80 years after he attained immortality, every year Vanavil Cultural Centre organises a palanquin procession with his portrait from Sri Parthasarathy temple to Bharathi Illam at Triplicane, the house where he breathed his last, on his birthday.

Had not this nation failed to recognize in time a priceless jewel that lay very much in its hands, though for a short period of 39 years? Only the father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi could recognize the intrinsic worth of Bharathi and extolled after their very first, brief and only meeting.

"He is a treasure. Preserve him".

K.RAVI