Subramaniya Bharathiyar

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | History*

Why in news?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Mahakavi Subramaniya Bharati on his birth anniversary, recalling his lasting contributions to India's cultural, literary and national life.

- He was a revolutionary poet, journalist, and social reformer, remains an iconic figure in Indian literature and history.

Early Life

- He was born on ***11th December, 1882*** in Ettayapuram, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu.
- His childhood name was *Subbiah*.
- Gifted with remarkable talent in poetry and debate since childhood, he was conferred the ***title "Bharathi"*** after defeating eminent scholars in an educational debate at the Ettayapuram Durbar.

Nationalist Poet

- He was known as ***Mahakavi Bharathiyar*** (Great Poet) and ***Father of Modern Tamil Literature.***
- **Literary works –** Like Kannan Pattu, Nilavum Vanminum Katrum, Panchali Sabatam, and Kuyil Pattu blended patriotism, devotion, and mysticism.
- **English collections** includes Agni and Other Poems and Translations and Essays and Other Prose Fragments (1937).
- He published Sudesa Geethangal (1908), rallying masses towards independence.

Journalism & Political Activism

- He worked as a translator and later joined the Tamil daily

Swadesamitran as sub-editor (1904).

- He founded India (1906), adopting the *French Revolution's slogans*: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.
- He introduced ***political cartoons*** in Tamil journalism.
- He ***exiled to Pondicherry*** (French territory) in 1908, lived there till 1919, to escape British persecution, where he collaborated with leaders like *Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai, V.V.S. Aiyar*.
- He was arrested upon re-entry to British India in 1918; continued writing even in prison.

Association with National Leaders

- He engaged with Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, V.O. Chidambaram, Subramanya Siva, and others.
- He participated in **Benaras** (1905) & **Surat Session** (1907) of the Indian National Congress.
- He met Mahatma Gandhi in 1919 at Rajaji's home in Madras.

Social Reformer

- He **opposed** caste system, declared only two castes: men and women, child marriage and dowry.
- He **advocated** temple entry for Dalits, widow remarriage, women's rights and caste abolition.
- He practiced inclusivity by sharing meals across communities and attending churches.

Legacy

- Died on **11 September 1921**.
- Remembered as a poet, journalist, freedom fighter, and reformer whose vision of a free and egalitarian India continues to inspire.
- **International Bharati Festival** - An annual event organized by the Vanavil Cultural Centre in Chennai to celebrate his life and ideals.

References

1. DD News | PM Modi pays tribute to Subramania Bharati on his birth anniversary

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