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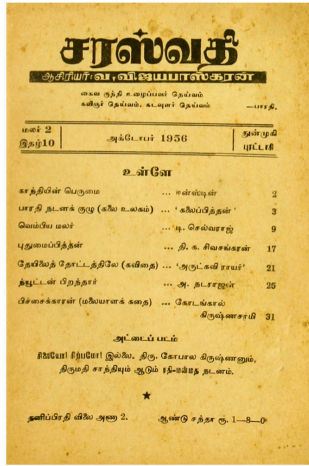
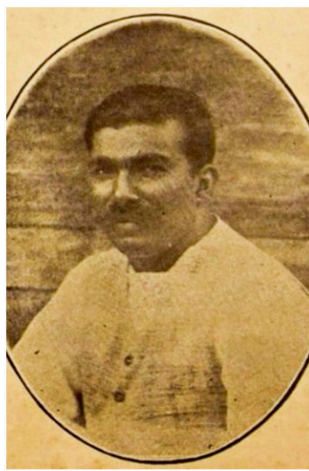
ADISESHIAH AUDITORIUM, MIDS

M Madras
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READING SUBRAMANIA BHARATI UNDER PROGRESSIVE EYE

*Literary Criticism and the
Cultural Left in Tamilnadu*



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Modern Tamil literature traces its lineage to the iconic Tamil poet C. Subramania Bharati (1882–1921), among other foundational figures. Bharati is remembered every year on 11th December, his birth anniversary, to commemorate the day as *Bharatiya Bhasha Diwas* to promote language harmony in the country. While we recall the poet's life and compositions, we must remember that there is also a history of reception of Bharati in the intellectual tradition of the 20th-century Tamilnadu. Bharati was variously referred to as *Desiya Kavi* (nationalist poet), *Vedanta Kavi* (vedantic poet), and *Maha Kavi* (great poet) by different people based on their ideological positions. Among many readings of Bharati, the efforts of literary critics associated with the progressive literary movement in Tamilnadu focused on his social and political message. The progressives reframed criticism to highlight hitherto much-neglected aspects of his poetry and prose, namely, the social reform and socialism on the one hand and his criticism of caste, patriarchy, and authoritarianism on the other. This talk will focus on the writings and speeches of P.Jeevanandam (1907–1963) and T.M. Chidambara Ragunathan (1923–2001), representative figures of the progressive literary movement in Tamilnadu, on Bharati and review some of the writings on Bharati in progressive literary magazines such as *Santi* (1954), *Saraswati* (1955) and *Thamarai* (1958).

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