



Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's views on Social Reforms and It's Relevance

- Dr. Gectali Tilak

Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune.

Keywords: Lokmanya Tilak, Kesari, National Movement, Social reforms, British rule

Introduction :

Many times, Lokmanya Tilak is misinterpreted as being against social reforms. This is a result of the political climate and the divergent world views of Tilak and Agarkar. Justice Ranade and his staff were opposed by Tilak from holding a social reform conference in the Indian National Pandol. One needed to be aware of the time's social, political, and educational realities as well as the opposing points of view held by Justice Ranade and Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. The social Indian Civilization had stagnated for numerous centuries because of various social ills and religious retreats, which combined to cause unfairness to different social groups. It not only caused social division but also served as a major roadblock to the nation's progress and expansion.¹

Tilak, who valued our Vedic culture and wisdom, concurred with Vishnushastri Chiplunkar's viewpoint. But because he was more of a doer than a thinker, he prepared to focus on political concerns and was adamant that every country needed political freedom for its citizens' social well-being and the development of his motherland.

As was previously mentioned, one group solely relied on western influences and welcomed state interference, whereas Tilak and his supporters wanted to meld traditional culture with modern social



demands and believed that reforms should be accepted by society as a whole and rejected any strategy of state interference. There was yet one more area where Tilak and the Reformers disagreed. Tilak never agreed to give the Reformers access to Congress Pandol. Tilak did not want social improvements and political Swaraj to be combined. Due to the conservative and illiterate nature of 80% of the population, the inclusion of social change alongside political freedom would have dissuaded the average citizen from supporting the National Congress and the Swaraj movement

Tilak felt that it would be unwise to postpone the achievement of political emancipation and make it dependent on the achievement of social reform; we can have as much social reform as possible with our own efforts and without the aid of the alien rulers even during the foreign rule, but the process of social reform would get real impetus only after the achievement of political emancipation. Tilak therefore, was noth enthusiastic about giving a role of primacy to social reform. Social reform being a continuous process had to go before and even after political freedom.²

Tilak's Views on Women's Education :

On this topic, Tilak published editorials in his newspapers Kesari and Mahratta. First, he took issue with the girls schools' standard curriculum because it was identical to that of British institutions. He believed that because Indian girls cultures and social backgrounds are so very different from British girls', so should the curricula. Second, he was against girls attending full-day, or six-hour, schools. He advised them to attend half-day school after completing their household chores, which he believed to be their first moral duty. The third argument against women's education was that it might simply prepare them to work as clerks in British offices. They would forsake their primary responsibility, which is



domestic labour, if they started working at these offices. His fourth argument was against hurried reforms since he found this possibility to be the most repulsive. As a result, he argued that such education should be abandoned. Education of a select few women would not benefit society: however, education of the general populace would. If only few women received an education, hurriedly spending money on their education would be a waste. Tilak's conservative views on women's education were a reaction to the radical ideas of the reformists of the day, as well as a result of the influence that time-honored Hindu conservatives had on him.³

Tilak published numerous essays in Kesari about educating women (1887). Tilak desired that the foundation of female education be practical. The age of marriage for girls back then was between 10 and 12. Back then, women stayed at the home of their husbands. Her husband's family will therefore have to support her in continuing her schooling.

Lokmanya Tilak personally opposed to early marriage, but also he was against the 1891 Age of Consent bill, which rose the age of a girl from 10 to 12 years for marriage. Tilak sees as interference with freedom movement and vigorously protested by saying we would not like that the British government should have anything to do with our social customs or ways of living even supposing the act will be very beneficial and suitable. Tilak wanted social reforms by conscious consent of the society and not by British law. He believed that laws alone do not change the attitude of the society.⁴

In conclusion, Tilak was a pragmatic reformer in his own right. He educated his daughters, and when his older daughter Krushna finished school, Agarkar congratulated Tilak and Krushna on their accomplishments. Tilak also delayed the couple's marriage until it was allowed by the shastras' maximum time frame, and he promoted the reduction of caste prejudice. However, the social



reform party was criticised for permitting government interference for social reformers. Tilak attacked the person rather than the object of criticism.

When defending Tilak, it is important to keep in mind that his opinions on women's education were a response to the reformists' extreme viewpoints. He had to assume this role as a spokesperson of the Hindu traditional cult's former splendour in defence of it. On this subject, there is no distinct theoretical exposition. His perspectives are so constrained and confined to rare occurrences.⁵

In conclusion, Tilak believes that women should receive distinct education to help them become better housewives and moms. There is a nagging concern in this position that English education and the copying of western culture would transform the way society lives. He dislikes the idea of serving women and is adamant that education only has a minor impact on the lives of women.

There are two different types of reformists: those who wish to implement reforms despite opposition, and those who believe social improvements will come as a result of political and societal changes. Tilak is an example of a second type of leader who wished to preserve the current social structure. Reading his article carefully reveals that he is not against women's education, but rather that he is concerned that the reformists waste will sway the public's opinion against it.

Tilak's views on Untouchability :

Because Lokmanya Tilak opposed ending untouchability, he received criticism from a small number of people. - gathering against untouchability was arranged by Shri Vitthal Ramji Shinde. There are not many references to the meeting having been planned on Tilak's advice. Tilak was present at the event. His exact beliefs can be understood from the words he used: Tilak: If God believes



in untouchability, I do not believe in God. Tilak, however, declined to ratify the Charter. S. M. Mate, a modern activist, provided evidence to support his explanation of Tilak's behaviour. According to Shri. Mate, Tilak's statements truly suffice to explain his deed, but social reformers wanted Tilak to actively participate in the social reform movement.

Workers opposed to untouchability urged Tilak to participate actively in the movement in a same manner. But Lokmanya Tilak has set Swarajya as his end goal for achieving political independence. He wished to avoid any disagreements that may have hampered the Swarajya Movement. He desired a united front among all Indians in support of home rule. His fifth was not within society and was against British or foreign rule.

The goal of Lokmanya Tilak's Ganesh celebration was to unite all the aspects of the school. In addition to uniting everyone, the popularity of Ganesh Utsav easily passed the line between untouchability. Not only Hindus but Muslims also took part in the Ganesh procession during the festival of Utsav. Untouchables were not permitted into temples back then. Tilak, however, placed Ganesh idols outside of the temples, where anybody may go and pray. One untouchable mandal asked Tilak to carry the Ganesh idol beside his own during the Ganesh procession, and Tilak complied to it.

Tilak received an invitation to a neighbourhood where the untouchables once lived in 1908 when he visited -kola, and again in 1919 when he visited Sangli. Tilak also went to such locations. On March 24, 1918, Tilak suggested to Congress that one delegate be chosen from the untouchable community.

Briefly said, Tilak was a unique example of a practical reformer. He educated his daughters, and when his older daughter Krushna finished school, Agarkar congratulated both Tilak and Krushan.



Tilak also delayed the couple's marriage until it was allowed by the shastras' maximum time frame, and he promoted the reduction of caste prejudice. However, the social reform party was accused for permitting government intervention for social reformers. Tilak criticised the individual rather than the thing in question.

Against Alcohol :

Tilak even spoke against the negative effects of alcohol during the Poona Conference because he thought that the nation's religion, culture, and moral principles were wholly opposed to drinking. He came to the conclusion that picketing was the only way to prevent the Indians from drinking.⁷

Tilak and Two National Festivals :

To instil a sense of hope and self-assurance in the populace, Tilak used the revivalist approach when creating the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals. He saw these celebrations as a way to bring about a national awakening and a way to give political goals an ethical foundation. Tilak wished to bring back the previous creations' spirit rather than their outmoded forms in religion or institutions. He wanted to graft new notions like nationalism onto the conventional way of life because he saw it as a tree.

Tilak said that the indigenous way of life needed to be revitalised and given a new direction. Love for one's country is a basic instinct, he once observed. It needs a new perspective, and we must persuade people to embrace nationalism as a valid ideology. Tilak was thus playing a crucial role as a teacher who wished to shape public opinion and instil in people a sense of patriotism through the Shivaji Festival and Ganapati Festival. Through the local Ganesh festivities, Tilak was able to channel the strength of the populace. Through extensive education, he was able to turn the majority of the population in favour of the liberation cause.



Overall, it can be said about Tilak's stance in his discussion with social reformers that he wasn't opposed to reforms. He was somewhat hesitant about the pace of change due to his desire for stability, but he definitely recognised its necessity. He even cautioned against complacency.

Tilak can't be categorised as a no-changer. His criticism of the reformers was somewhat true, and it still serves to open people's eyes today.

Relevance to Modern Times:

Tilak Quote on Social Reform :

We must not only see what reforms are required, but also whether and how far they are practicable and how they can be made popular for reforming the society

Tilak's approach on Women's Education :Further Educational reforms and new Education Policy. Many schools, colleges and universities women's are getting education. Even now women are getting education for Military Training at NDA and IM- etc.

Distinguish of Widow:

The disfigurement of Widow is almost stopped in these days, still the widows are not getting equal social status and respect like non-widows. The widows can't wear the 'Mangalsutra and can't put 'Kumkum on her head etc. The widow woman can't be respectfully called in social or family function or religious Scenario etc. Hence the thoughts of Tilak about disfigurement must be carefully revised into the reforms. The Widow women can have social liberty to wear ornament and she must be respectfully invited for religious functions.

Dowry in Marriage Prohibition :

The dowry in Marriage is made offence by law in present situation, but the practice of dowry in marriage is not totally



eliminated. The nature of the system is changed. The dowry is paid in different kinds by willingly or by forcefully. Under the presence of society status. The Thoughts of Tilak about complete eradication of dowry in Marriage are more relevant in current situations.

Tilak's Thoughts on Missionary :

Tilak wanted social reform to run parallel to religious and Partiotic feelings of the people. One more episode happened about Mrs. Ramabai (Indian Christian Lady), who started residential school for Indian girls, especially widows. Reformers helped her to establish the same and declared that secular education. Tilak against it, issue was not of female education but conversion to Christianity, even in some Minority Institution in present condition the same things happen.

Untouchability In Post Independence many Legal and Administrative Provisions made for not to practice untouchability. In Urban area, the programme of untouchability is successful up to some extent. But in rural area the person is still known by his Caste and called by his Caste Even today we find the Political Untouchability in the nation.

Liquor :

Tilak totally against the Liquor. The present circumstances are quite different. The absolute prohibition of liquor is not a policy of any government. Instead, the some governments are issuing permits and licences to open new liquor shops. Besides, the government think allow the setting of it in grocery ships too. Wherever there is a complete ban on liquor in a state the liquor becomes available, i.e. black market. The policy makers mainly considers the Tax Revenue other than absolute banning the liquor. The existing policy is contradicting the thoughts of Tilak



Ganesh Utsav :

In post independence, the changing nature of Ganesh Festival and Participation of many people from different castes. Besides, Caste some other religious people celebrate the Ganesh Festival viz-Jain, Buddha and even Muslim also celebrate the festival. For example like famous Actor Salman Khan and his family celebrate household Ganesh Festival every year. The objectives of Tilak behind starting and promoting the Ganesh festival is successful in the present days. The festival has crossed the boundaries of Indian sub continues and it is celebrated in Japan, Australia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab, USA, UK, etc. It's not only symbol of National Integration but becoming the symbol of World is a family. He Vishwa hi Ek Kutumbha.

Swarajya :

Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it, thundred Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Patriotism, was his religion. His message was clear. For people there was nothing else to do but, struggle to be free, because it was liberty which unclosed the gates to all sorts of Progress, Social, Political, Cultural, Economic and Material. Tilak concept of Swaraj (Self Government) is more relevant today to solve many problems of India. In short, one may say with Conviction that Tilak's approach to Swarajya was dynamic and future oriented. It is worth nothing that Tilak not only equated Swarajya with democratic Self-rule but also tried to birth this message to the common man.

Conclusion:

Lokmanya Tilak first sought independence from the British before pursuing social reforms. Tilak was a frequent social reformer, and via his writings and works, he educated the nation's social and political affairs.



His initiatives and projects, such as the Ganesh festival, Shivajayanti, fairs, and festivals, united people and strengthened Indian nationalism.

Tilak's social-religious ideas about women's education, dalits, the caste system, and alcohol are still relevant today in an effort to improve Indian society and culture.

The opinions of Lokmanya Tilak and his contemporaries as social reformers were not universal at the time. But everyone aspires to the welfare of the populace and society. Only their approaches and ideologies differ.

As a result, Tilak, Agarkar, and Chiplunkar all had various approaches to serving the country. Tilak was not just an influential political figure in India at the time, but also a social reformer. Many of his works in Kesari served as proof.

Tilak afterwards concentrated his energies more in politics and less in social reforms. He felt it more prudent to attack the foreign rule and concentrate upon capturing political power and use it as a means of bringing about social reforms. He became a national leader and tried to revive nationalistic spirit among people.

Tilak was the scholar of eminence. He was so visionary that, his articles are still considered to be very relevant in the present social, political, religious, academic, and economical sphere of our life.

References :

1. For detail Deepak J. Tilak and Geetall Tilak, *Lokmanga 8.G Tilak The Visionary*, Tak Maharashtra Vidyarth Pune, 2019, pp 236-245
2. Verinder Grover (ed), *Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, Deep Deep publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp.583-584.
3. Chitra Nayak, *Lokamanya Tilak as Educational Thinker*, Indian Institute of Education, Pune, 2001, PP-16-17.



4. Lion's Road Swaraj is my Birth Right and I shall have it, Article by Geetal *Women's Quest for Status in India after Independence*' Tilak Maharashtra, Vidyapeeth, Pune, 2016, pp.89-90
5. See for detail, Sudharma Josh, *Educational Thoughts of Lokmanya Tilak*, Crescent Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 156-230
6. S.V. Bapat (ed), *Lokamanya Tilak's athavani*, Kesari Prakashan, Pune, 2010, Volume-2, p.72.
7. Nandini Saraf, *The Life and Times of Lokamanya Tilak*, Ocean Books Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2017.p.71.
8. Sudhama Joshi, *Educational Thoughts, Lokamanya Tilak*, Crescent Publishing Corporation-2009,P.72.
9. 'Deepak J.Tilak, *Lokamanya Tilak and The Mass Media*, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune, p.129.
10. Samagra Tilak, *Samaj va Sanskriti*, Kesari Prakashan, Vol. V, reprint, 2019, p.211-233.

