
The Thoughts Of Lokmanya Tilak On Swadeshi And Its Relevance*

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1) Introduction:

'Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak' (1856-1920) was a dynamic personality, who performed dynamic activities throughout his political life. He was known as the man of courage and optimism. He was described as the first national mass leader with the *'Lion'* image. (Choudhari K.C. :1978:56). *'Lokmanya Tilak'* was representing the group of extreme nationalism and actively supported and involved in the freedom struggle of India. His dedication and dynamism in political activities, he was described as the *'pathfinder'* of the freedom of India. Many political leaders and thinkers described *'Lokmanya Tilak'* with different connotations. Inamdar N.R. (1993:271) writes that, "Mahatma Gandhi described *'Lokmanya Tilak'* as the maker of modern India and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru called him as *'the father of Indian revolution'*". This shows that, *'Lokmanya Tilak'* was a personality with dynamic leadership and thoughts. He was described as the father of Indian unrest, which further used for the freedom struggle. *'Lokmanya Tilak'* has expressed his thoughts on different issues in reference to the political and economic perspective. *'Swaraj'* and *'Nationalism'* was the centre of the freedom struggle. *'Swadeshi'* thought was also given by him, which has deep relevance even in the present time. *Lokmanya Tilak* used *'Swadeshi'* movement during the freedom struggle. *'Swadeshi'* is nothing but offering *'freedom'* to indigenous producer and dismantling the economic exploitation continued by the *'British'* government. This thought has a central meaning that, the indigenous technology and producer must be protected and foreign technology and producers must be discouraged. The *'swadeshi'* thoughts of *'Lokmanya Tilak'* have percolated in the economic policies of the government of India declared after the independence. Therefore there has been strong relevance of *'Swadeshi'* thoughts of *'Lokmanya Tilak'* in the present context. This paper explores the relevance of Tilak's thoughts on *'Swadeshi'* with the help of present economic policies of the government of India.

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2) Lokmanya Tilak's Thoughts on 'Swadeshi':

The term 'swadeshi' indicates the 'indigenous'. In terms of national importance, the 'swadeshi' means using and promoting the commodities manufactured by indigenous producers. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2019), "the term 'Swadeshi' means a movement for national independence in India boycotting foreign goods and encouraging the use of domestic products". This also indicates the strategy of discouraging the non-indigenous commodities. Lokmanya Tilak used 'swadeshi' movement to achieve economic freedom and destroy the economic exploitation, which was being carried by the foreigners (or British Government) before independence. According to Mohanty (1997:212), Lokmanya Tilak was the first person who started 'Swadeshi' movement in India even before 'Mahatma Gandhi'. 'Swadeshi' movement was initially started as economic movement but later it became political movement. This 'swadeshi' movement in India brought the stimulus among the Indians to fight for freedom. According to Gupta R.C. (1994:88), "the Swadeshi movement began as the economic boycott to all those products manufactured in 'Birmingham' and 'Manchester'".

The 'swadeshi' movement was also treated as 'self-reliance' and 'self-help' for a nation. This movement was used as political weapon to fight against the 'British' government. The idea of 'Swadeshi' was economic and political during the 'British' rule in India. However Lokmanya Tilak laid a foundation for indigenous industries and indigenous products. This was nothing was protection of indigenous industries and products. According to Mohanty (1997:213), "Lokmanya Tilak encouraged the youth of India to establish cottage industries. He also had supported 'Paisa Fund' movement, which began in the year 1903. The main intention of this movement was to promote Indian industries and products. Tilak also took leadership in establishing 'Bombay Swadeshi Cooperative Store' in the year 1906. This cooperative store was established to promote and create the market for the handloom and handicraft products made by the Indians. This was a part of 'Swadeshi' movement. The decision of creating the platform of market for the indigenous products had great importance in the national movement before Independence. Lokmanya Tilak also had promoted 'Swadeshi' exhibitions in Calcutta". The concept of 'exhibition' was new during those days. This 'exhibition' was also a part of promoting the market for 'swadeshi' commodities. Thus the idea of 'swadeshi' launched by Lokmanya Tilak had 'economic' perspective besides the 'freedom' struggle. The first consumer cooperative society was established in Madras

(now Chennai) in the year 1904 with a name of ‘the Triplicane Urban Cooperative Society Limited’. However, the structural establishment of this society was different than the ‘Bombay Swadeshi Cooperative Store’. Hence, BSSL had got national importance during those days. The ‘Swadeshi’ movement was being used during British India as powerful tool to oppose them. However, the central theme of the ‘swadeshi’ concept was to establish the strategy of ‘indigenous’ industries and products. This strategy of ‘swadeshi’ was accepted by the government of India as a policy decision. This paper has highlighted the contribution of ‘Lokmanya Tilak’ with respect to ‘Swadeshi’ and its relevance in the Indian economy especially after Independence.

3) ‘Swadeshi’ and Its Relevance:

The concept of ‘Swadeshi’ was initiated by ‘Lokmanya Tilak’ was the central idea of encouraging Indian Industries and discouraging the foreign commodities. This concept has valid significance in the process of making of industrial policies in India. In the modern times, the ‘Swadeshi’ means cottage industries established and operated by the Indians. The cottage industries had greater importance during the ‘British’ India. This sector was helping rural India in creating income and employment. The structure of cottage industries has changed after the Independence; however the concept of ‘swadeshi’ could be seen in Indian cottage industries. The cottage industries have played vital role in promoting employment and income in India over the years. According Prasad C.S. (2004:5), “the cottage industries have emerged as an engine of growth in India. The most important contribution of this sector is employment generation which is next to agriculture.” The government of India also has accepted the significance of these industries and had planned number of policies to promote it. The government of India has framed number of economic policies to promote the indigenous industries. The concept of ‘Swadeshi’ could be seen in these policies. Some of the relevance of the ‘swadeshi’ concept initiated by ‘Lokmanya Tilak’ can be discussed as below.

3.1 Protection and Promotion of Indian Cottage Industries:

The protection and promotion of small scale and cottage industries in India has been the major objective of Indian planning over the years. The policies and strategies of protection of cottage industries have gone through various changes as per the requirement. According to Bala N. (2007: 28), “all the industrial policies and five year plans have supported the protection and promotion of small scale and cottage industries in India. This has been initiated as a developmental strategy to promote employment

generation and removal of poverty”. Some of the industrial policies framed by government of India for the promotion of small scale and cottage industries are as below. Industrial Policy Resolution (1956) has given some of the protective measures for village and small scale industries viz., ‘reservation of items’, ‘restriction over expansion of large industries’, ‘management of supply of raw materials’ and ‘concessions to producers’. Industrial Policy Resolution (1977) has given some of the protective measures for village and small scale industries as ‘reservation of products (504 items)’, ‘establishment of District Industries Centres’, ‘technological upgradation assistance’ and ‘special marketing arrangements’. Industrial Policy Resolution (1980) has given number of protective and promotional measures. Some of them are- ‘raising investment limit (from Rs. 2 Lakh to 25 Lakh)’, ‘reservation of items’ and ‘availability of credit’. Industrial Policy Resolution (1990) also has emphasized the significance of small scale and village industries. The features of resolution are- ‘raising investment limit’ (to Rs. 75 Lakh), ‘investment subsidy’, ‘reservation of products’ (836 items) and ‘established Small Industries Development Bank of India’. Industrial Policy Resolution (1991) has launched ‘structural adjustment programme’ which changed the Indian economy as a whole. The main features of resolution are- ‘exemption from licensing’, ‘raising investment limit’, and ‘marketing and promotional strategy’. Comprehensive Policy Package for small scale and tiny sector (2000) has announced by the government of India. The main focus of the policy was –‘exemption for excise duty’ (upto Rs.1crore), ‘raising investment limit in service enterprises’. The Industrial Policy Packages for small scale industries (2001-02) has given following protection viz; ‘raising investment limit (upto Rs. 5 crore), ‘Credit Guarantee Fund’ and ‘Market Development Assistant Scheme’. The Policy Package for small and medium enterprises (2005-06) has announced by the Government of India. The main features of this policy package were: ‘insurance cover’, ‘cluster development model’ and ‘promotional strategy for textile and handicrafts’.

3.2 Promoting the ‘Swadeshi’ Products:

The indigenous products needs marketing platform. This is very essential for the growth the ‘swadeshi’ industries or cottage industries in India. Lokmanya Tilak had realized this requirement of the ‘swadeshi’ industries and had launched ‘Bombay Swadeshi Cooperative Store’ (BSSL) on 17th December 1906. In this establishment of BSSL Sir Ratanji Jamshedji Tata took initiative. The main intention of the BSSL was to promote and create the market for the handicrafts and handloom products made by the

Indians during the British rule. This was established as a part of 'Swadeshi' movement. (BSSL) has been functioning for the last 106 years and has gone through number of changes. The BSSL has expanded its functions to retailing of home, furnishing, accessories and many more. The establishment of store to promote the products has been accepted by the modern economics. The big stores as 'Big Bazar', 'Star Bazar', 'D-Mart' and many other consumer stores have been established to promote the marketing and sale of the products. In the present period, the producers are getting easy platform for the sale of their products.

The concept of 'Swadeshi' established by Lokmanya Tilak has been used by 'Baba Ramdev' in a most effective way in the present times. Patanjali Ayurved Limited (PAL) was established in the year 2006 by 'Baba Ramdev' by using the concept of 'Swadeshi'. The company has used 'swadeshi' term for the marketing of the products. Surprisingly, the PAL has emerged as fastest growing company in the country. It has established the production units and marketing units. The production is made by using 'swadeshi' products and marketing is made by using again 'swadeshi' concept. According to the India Brand Equity Foundation Report (2019), "the Patanjali Ayurved Limited (PAL) has launched 450 products with several hundreds of retailing stores across India. According to Business Today Report (2019), PAL has earned revenue of Rs. 8,329 crore in the year 2018-19. Similar growth of revenue has been recorded by PAL over the years. The middle class group of India have been main target of the company. The growth of the PAL has showed the power of the concept of 'Swadeshi' even in twenty first century. Therefore, the vision of Lokmanya Tilak of promoting 'Swadeshi' store was revolutionary during those days.

The concept of 'exhibition' for marketing of handicraft and handloom products has been accepted in India by various organizations. The 'exhibition' has promoted the market for indigenous products over the years. The exhibition of handicrafts and handloom products is being arranged in different cities of India. Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) Ministry of Textiles, Government of India has been organizing the exhibition of handicrafts and handloom products across India. The exhibition is being arranged by the ministry with the help of grants. The Development Commissioner (handicrafts) has planned 80 exhibitions across India in the year 2019-20. 'National Jute Board of India' and 'National Handloom Development Corporation of India' also have been using the 'exhibition' method for the marketing of indigenous

products. Thus the idea of ‘exhibition’ of ‘swadeshi’ products has been accepted by the government bodies even in the contemporary period.

4) Conclusion:

Lokmanya Tilak launched ‘*Swadeshi*’ movement with a vision of national freedom and economic independence. The concept of ‘swadeshi’ has national importance and economic importance. The ‘swadeshi’ movement gave self-reliance to Indian producers. The production and marketing, both were arranged by Lokmanya Tilak. The strong relevance of ‘Swadeshi’ concept could be seen even after Independence. The Government of India has framed several policies to promote indigenous industries. This is nothing but, the protection and promotion of ‘swadeshi’ industries. The establishment of the structures of ‘Stores’ and ‘Exhibitions’ could be seen even today. Thus the vision of Lokmanya Tilak towards ‘Swadeshi’ had greater importance with economic perspective.

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