

Role of Lokmanya Tilak in Indian National Movement

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Introduction

Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), the Father of Indian Struggle, is also praised as the architect of modern India. He taught mathematics, Sanskrit and law. His belief in education and its spread came vividly real through the formation of Deccan Education Society and under its age is came to existence the well-known college of Pune city i.e. Fergusson College. He further founded two newspapers viz, Kesari (published in Marathi) and Mahratta (Published in English). Tilak challenged the Westernization of Indian society. His personal integrity strengthened his fight against foreign goods, lifestyle and culture. He became the Lion of Maharashtra and the leader of the Nationalists, in seeking to awaken the people of India. He challenged the moderates and the British Empire with his popular slogan-cum-statement ‘Swaraj is my birthright’. Thus he became one of the main leaders who laid foundation and shaped modern political philosophy.

Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak played an important role in Indian freedom struggle. Tilak’s works focuses on various fields. Tilak’s life, work, journalism, media, social, economic, political and cultural contribution has not been noted under one platform. It is found scattered in different studies. The present study will bring in one platform. Along with Tilak’s works relevant to present era will solve existing problems in India, is noted in this study. If this information is documented and preserved it may be helpful to new and next generation.

The Champion of Nationalism not only used for political freedom but also exemplified the education. There raised a feeling in him to have Indian educational institute to defy the British system. His personal learning abilities are multifaceted and so the resemblance of his personality resonates to the intellectuals till today.

The multidisciplinary education that we proposed in the National Education Policy of 2019 is what great Lokmanya lived and excelled. We follow his footsteps after more than 150 years. This gives a chance to all the generations, now onwards to study those subjects in which they want to pursue their choice.

He propagated the feelings of nationalism among the Masses, which could unite the people and democratically dissent on the unjust rule of the British, making him the undisputed leader of the masses. His effort to spread social and cultural philosophy has a deep impact on the people of Maharashtra till today. It attracts people from all over the country as well as from abroad to make it a tourist destination and a city with intellect.

His contribution to the fields of education, political ideology, formation of Indian National Congress, and socio-cultural festivals is priceless. Highlights of these shall be seen hereon.

Tilak's Works

Tilak an eminent scholar and visionary through his articles awakened people. His ideas are relevant in the present social, political, religious, academic, and economical sphere of our life.

The Orion

Ancient Indian History, Sanskrit and astronomy always lured Tilak. He studied them deeply and explored new aspects about the subjects. He applied objective and analytical thinking and framed a book called –The Orion (1893). Essentially, he tried to fix the period of the Vedas by using the movement of the constellation, wherein he calculated the years when the constellations would have been positioned. He –unmistakably pointed out that the vernal equinox was in the constellation of Mrga or Orion (about 4500 B.C.) during the period of Vedic hymns, and that it had receded to the constellation of the Krttikas, or the Pleiades (about 2500 B.C) in the days of the Brahman. According to his observation, he concluded that the Vedic hymns would have been composed around 4500 B.C. Thus, placing them at much older period than that had been hitherto thought to be.

The Arctic Home in the Vedas

Another notable work that he authored was ‘_The Arctic Home in the Veda’ (1903). For compiling this book, he studied geology and restated some geographical propositions. He also took advice from experts in the field without hesitating. Such was his personal integrity towards his task.

His Vedic research along with the then geological and archeological discoveries led him to theorize that the original habitat of the Aryan race was in the North Polar Region before the ice age set in. At that time the climate (around 8000 BC) was warmer and conducive for inhabitation. This idea is also explained in the ‘_Zend-Avesta’.

Gita Rahasya

He had written a very popular as well as famous book known as **-Gita Rahasya** that is Secrets of Gita which is a sacred book for Hindus. It was published in 1915 and earned him status of an eminent scholar and philosophic thinker. He says 'Science of action is a movement' in Indian Moral Philosophy. It is no less than a wonder that in adverse condition he could write a book that was an added feather in his cap. The conclusion of the text highlights how it could awaken the sense of duty in an individual and taught him to act in disinterested manner. Since the book was composed in Marathi it could percolate to the masses of the society.

For Tilak working for mankind was worship to God. This view of his gave birth to many revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives for the Nation. According to Tilak, the 'Atma' living soul in nation is freedom. The idea of freedom never dies. This is new Vedanta. In short, every citizen of nation should give first preference to welfare of the nation while selecting the action.

Nishkama Karma Yoga lessons taught by Tilak through Gita Rahasya. Through his writing spirituality and ethical values important in one's life. He called it Karma Yoga Shastra. People's spiritual progress is necessary for the development of society. In another way, the Gita Rahasya written by Tilak, is not only a book, it is Tilak's autobiography. Lokmanya Tilak not only wrote Gita Rahasya but he also lived according to it. Gita Rahasya played an important role in national movement. To awaken people to fight against British powers. It built up the people's mind and spirituality against injustice and stood for justice. Free from the British powers. Gita Rahasya provides the freedom fighters with new ideas, concepts and created nationalism among the people. Tilak wrote Gita Rahasya in Marathi. Because people easily understand their native/local language. So it benefited to one and all. Easily understood the Bhagwat Gita's interpretation done by Tilak. It is used as a model book for the freedom fighters. Gita Rahasya guided the nationalist and others.

Vedanga Jyotisha

Tilak also contributed essays to Vedanga Jyotish, or Vedic Chronology and calendar calculations in the Vedas. He wrote a book that exemplifies his mastery over complex mathematics which is required to formulate a precise calendar.

Tilak as a Journalist: Kesari and Mahratta

Tilak used to describe his profession as that of a journalist and author. He was associated throughout his life with the conduct of the Kesari and the *Mahratta* from 1881 to 1920.

Role of Kesari and Mahratta in Indian National Movement:

Kesari's work has not been confined to Maharashtra alone. In Lokmanya Tilak's freedom movement, it was used as a weapon employed to bring about awakening among the masses. Thus, Kesari remained on the forefront in the great mass movement raised against the British. Kesari in fact became a symbol of freedom movement. If it is to be told in the words of Lokmanya Tilak it can be said _Kesari belongs to people. Neither have I brought nor am I going to take it away. All patriots who are indeed anxious for the interest of the country should keep it on goingl.

Kesari in its first issue clearly stated Tilak's stance- to watch vigilantly the administration of the British Government. Kesari showcased happenings and social activities like the birth of Indian National Congress, Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Queen Victoria, plague, Tilak imprisonment, his fourfold programme. The editorials dealt with subjects both political and social.

Tilak formulated his own political ideology of his own. His way of handling affairs had no resemblance to precedent. His triple formula worked effectively: first was the press, second was the public opinion (lokmat) and third was the radicalized Indian National Congress. These tools helped him to create a democratic and mass orientation of the public to the political awakening in India. Tilak's articles in Kesari were like a dialogue with the people. They guided them and gave them courage to fight against the misdoings of the bureaucrats. Tilak's major focus was to inculcate the sentiments and spirit of nationhood among the Indians and stimulating national consciousness among the common people.

Mahratta: The case of the *Mahratta*, however, is different. From the beginning it was only looked upon as a means of conveying information about the thoughts and movements of the Chiplunkar – Agarkar – Tilak group to selected English reading class of India. The *Mahratta*, Kesari's elder sibling, conveyed in English the ideas and thoughts of Lokmanya and the other writers to the far corners of the Nation with special focus on, ideas against British power, economic crisis, plague, Swadeshi, Swaraj, political situation, etc. Both Kesari and *Mahratta* played a major role in Indian National movement to awaken people against British Rule.

Popular Movements: During his earlier political career, Tilak pioneered popular movements that focused on the ideas of culture, based on historic, religious, and situational factors. The Sarvajanic Ganesh festival and Shivaji Jayanti were piloted by Tilak during the nineties of the last century. The _people's movements _that was aroused countrywide aimed at bringing to light the oppression caused during the epidemic plague and the sufferings due to successive famine respectively, was the other type of movement - economic or constitutional - *cum* – administrative.

Ganesh Festival (1893): Tilak was successful in reaching the masses through the national and religious festivals. His purpose in starting the Ganapati festival was two-fold. He wanted Hindus to come together regardless of caste or education on a common platform. Secondly he wanted to arouse in them cultural consciousness and anger against British rule.

Shivaji Jayanti (1896): Shivaji is remembered for his nation –building activities. Tilak believed that biographies of great leaders like Shivaji are the sources of inspiration to the younger generation. He started a festival to revive the memory and glory of Shivaji, the liberator of Maharashtra and restorer of ‘Swaraj’. The purpose Shivaji Festival was to promote Patriotism and Nationalism among the people.

Tilak and Extremist Era: Congress was being reframed under the leadership of Lokmanya Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai. The following extracts from his historic speech at Calcutta contain the clearest exposition of Tilak’s views: –The Extremists of today will be Moderates tomorrow just as the Moderates of today were Extremist yesterday. When the National Congress first started and Dadabhai views, which now go for Moderates, were given to the public, he was styled an Extremist, so that will see that the term Extremist is an expression of progress.

The Extremists constitute the left wing in the Congress. It was their belief that Swaraj was the birth right of India and that it was not a gift which was to come from the British Government. Lokmanya Tilak had given nationalist India the inspiring slogan: —Swaraj is my birth right and I Shall have it. The Extremists had no faith in the British sense of justice or fair play. They believed that the Britishers were to be driven out of the land.

Fourfold Programme of Tilak: From 1898 to 1908, Tilak was at the peak of his political career. He (along with Lala Lajpat Rai of Punjab and Bipin Chandra Pal of Bengal) constituted the national leadership triad, popularly known as Lal, Bal, Pal. (i.e. Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Bipin Chandra Pal) popularized a four-fold programme of action for the dissolution of the partition of Bengal, namely, Swaraj (self-government), Swadeshi (resort to the use of Indian goods), Bahishkar (boycott of foreign goods) and Rashtriya Shikshan (national education).

Swaraj, for Tilak, had not only a political connotation (i.e. Home Rule) but also a moral and spiritual connotation (i.e. self-control and inner freedom). The Swadeshi movement i.e. Boycott of foreign goods shook the foundations of British rule in India. He had worked hard for creating political awareness in the common ordinary people of India to stand against the foreign rule. Thus, he was known as ‘The Father of the Indian Unrest’. Tilak had earned a topmost place of honour in the

prominent National leaders. He was the leader of Extremist party and he ruled the congress in 1905 to 1920. That is why his era is called Extremist era in the history of Indian National Movement.

1. Swarajya: The term 'Swarajya' means the rule of the natives of the country. For Tilak, the prefix 'Swa' (Self) in Swarajya meant people 'Praja' the ruled. Thus, it became equivalent to the right of the people to conduct the administration of the country according to what they consider to be their good i.e. Constitutional self-government.

In short, one may say with conviction that Tilak's approach to Swarajya was dynamic and future-oriented. It is also worth noting that Tilak not only equated Swarajya with democratic self-rule but also tried to bring this message to the common man, in its very own Indian language and idiom.

2. Swadeshi: The concept of Swadeshi provided the philosophical basis for the strategy of self-reliance. It meant 'Swa'-self and 'deshi'-produced in one's own country. Tilak called for swadeshim in dress, in diet, in habits, in life, in arts, in literature, in science, in religion and philosophy.

Swadeshim thus became an all-pervading socio-political movement that raised voice against the western civilisation, which the British government used a tool to weaken India.

The Swadeshi movement quickly outgrew its thought of limited nature and became a movement for national regeneration.

This movement was an outbreak against Britain's policies. Britain's Rule was much more than mere political domination, which led to stunting growth of India's manhood and prevented it from rising to its full stature. Tilak was not against trade, but was protesting against exploitative trade that was not only draining away India's resources but was also destroying talented entrepreneurship and the livelihood of millions of Indians.

The strategy of Swadeshi was implemented through the policy of import substitution. As a result of which the Indian industry, which was then in an 'infant' stage, could grow and diversify. Today, owing to Globalisation, there is a large influx of foreign goods. The government is unable to offer any protection to domestic industry, especially small-scale industry that is most adversely affected.

Therefore, it becomes the duty of every Indian to adopt the idea of Swadeshi laid down by Tilak in order to save the Indian companies.

3. Boycott: Boycott was a very powerful non-violent instrument utilized by Tilak. It urged people to not to use anything that is manufactured outside India, especially England. He advocated resistance to transfer of wealth from India to England by means of suppressing Indian Industry and forcing the vast Indian population to buy goods manufactured in England.

4. National Education: National Education means making the youth self-reliant by way of education. Tilak formed educational institutions under this idea. These institutes would tutor the youth to be self-reliant and independent for their future. Since these institutes would not rely on government grants, they would be able to defy government circulars like ‘Risley Circular’ in Bombay Province (that forced the students to stay away from patriotic political activities). To instill nationalistic outlook among the youth by making education independent of government control was Tilak’s motive. He founded Deccan Education Society on these grounds. However, he was later dejected by the fact that the private college that he helped in establishing chose to obey the rules of the Risley Circular. Tilak wished that the college would have chosen to reject the government grants. Tilak helped in the establishment of nationalist educational institutions such as ‘Samarth Vidyalyaya’. He summoned funds from the people to encourage these patriotic activities.

Tilak was clear in his mind that history showed that people must be educated if progress is to be achieved. Tilak advocated that education must be widespread to build Character, dedication and hard work. He wanted education to spread in all the disciplines, traditional, scientific, technical, legal, medical etc.

Tilak and Indian National Congress: Lokmanya Tilak has been throughout his active political career a staunch and steadfast constituent and worker of the Indian National Congress. However, it is surprising that he was not recognized and wholeheartedly accepted among the *official* policy – makers of the Congress in 1916. Until 1916, his role in the Congress was a of a dedicated backbencher, rousing the conscience of the rank and file, appealing to the people in the country behind the back of the official moderate leadership, pricking and occasionally striking verbal blows at its mendicant and stopping posture and outlook.

The most significant and lasting role Tilak performed in the Congress and through his papers, national speech, tours and addresses to the provincial, district and local conferences, was in firmly founding a philosophy and ideology of Indian Nationalism.

Tilak’s concept of Indian nationalism was thus operationalised at two levels, regional and national. During the nineties of the last century Tilak concentrated on the regional issues to root the political movement firmly in the soil. After his release from prison in 1899, Tilak devoted his attention to the national causes like the propagation of the need for a Passive Resistance Movement to compel the annulment of the partition of Bengal and Curzon’s repressive policies in regard to the press, educational institutions and political organizations. The Home Rule League was established

throughout the country during the War years. Thereafter, it marked the extension of the same phase of Tilak's political career as a national leader.

Tilak's philosophy and ideology of Indian nationalism was unique in two respects: his emphasis on the role of the Indian National Congress as well as inculcating the sentiment of nationalism among the people, and his attack on the economic and educational activities in order to contest and weaken the sources of authority of the British regime. His appeal to the people to take to Swadeshi and National Education illustrated the second unique element in his ideology of Indian nationalism.

The Benaras Congress: Partition of Bengal was so ghastly that the entire nation rose in one united cry against it. On 15th August 1905 Tilak wrote an article in the Kesari –The Crisis arrives, the first of a series of scathing indictments of the malicious actions of the British and an exhortation to the people to act and act now. He saw this as the ideal opportunity to galvanize the people behind one unified cause. Tilak propagated the fourfold programme.

The Benaras Congress clearly brought out the difference between the younger delegates and the older leadership. The delegates from Bengal and Madras wanted action and not mere words. It was at this time that Tilak put forward his idea of passive resistance. Tilak's followers went home with a new concept to think about before the next congress in Calcutta. Throughout his propagation of the ideas of Swadeshi, Boycott and National education, Tilak was, in fact, spelling out a programme for directly involving the masses in the freedom struggle.

The Calcutta Congress: In the 1906 session held at Calcutta, relations between the Moderates and the Extremists were still very tense. In the session held in 1906, the Extremists wanted to propose the name of Lokmanya Tilak for the presidential chair. This was too bitter a pill for the Moderates to swallow. The difficulty was tided over by proposing the name of Dadabhai Nauroji, the grand old man of India who was universally loved and respected.

In a way, this session was a triumph for the Extremists. They compelled the Moderates to pass a resolution on all the four important planks in their programme, i.e., Swaraj, Swadeshi, boycott and national education. Nauroji called the Calcutta Congress 'the first Congress after having come of age'. He laid down 'Swaraj' as the only goal of the Congress.

The Surat Congress: Lord Minto started negotiations with the moderates for making some reforms, before the 1907 session. The Extremists were offended by these negotiations because they doubted the Moderates. During this Surat session a difference of opinion regarding the election of the president developed. The Moderates wanted to propose the name of Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh whom the Extremists opposed. The Extremists wanted open elections and wished to propose the same of

Lala Lajpat Rai. The Moderates stood firm on their viewpoint and the meeting was adjourned to avoid unruly scenes.

On the Following day, the Congress met again but only to disperse. Thus, the Surat session ended in a complete rupture between the two wings. Although Tilak's objection to the election of the president sparked off the uproar, Tilak was by no means responsible for the split of the Congress. He regretted the outbreak and believed that it was 'accidental and unexpected'. 24th June, 1908, a law suit was filed against Tilak accusing him of being treason. In the trial, Tilak was sentenced six years imprisonment and he was sent to the prison at Mandalay, Burma.

Home Rule League: After suffering the imprisonment, Tilak was released from jail in 1914. Tilak again resumed his political activities. In 1916 Tilak organized his own Home Rule league at Poona. The league's objective was to educate the people and provide the Congress demand for self-government with the support and strength of a nation united in knowledge of itself and single aim. The Home rule leagues functioned independently as Congress could not adopt a radical programme. The Home rule leagues was used as a tool to pressurize the British public for giving self-government to India. Tilak's immediate objective after the Provincial Conference was to enroll members of the Home Rule League and to establish its branches in Bombay, Karnataka and the Central Provinces, to begin with. He explained the League's aims in a leading article in the Mahratta.

Lucknow Session of Congress (1916): The Lucknow Session of the Congress is memorable because it marked the re-union of the Moderates and Extremist parties after the Surat Split (1907). Tilak was the most sorts after figure at the Lucknow Congress despite making his appearance on its platform after eight long years. It was a happy sight to see Moderates and Extremists sitting and deliberating together. A still more welcome development was the concord established at Lucknow between the Congress and Muslim League, which held its session simultaneously with that of the Congress. The three streams of Indian politics thus merged together for the first time and presented a united front to the Government. There were identical views among the Moderates, Extremists and the League.

Tilak and Nationalism: In one of Tilak's speeches at Ahmednagar, the historic Mantra (axiom) sprung out —Swaraj is my birth – right and I shall have it. He impressed in his speeches, that the spirit of liberty, like the Atma, exists in every heart and it was his bounden duty to awaken the people to the ideal of Home Rule.

Tilak was a great patriot and a man of sincere heart and action. Tilak mobilized public opinion and defied his powerful opponents, which in turn earned him popularity. He claimed Indian's right to independence for their well-being and for their spiritual and moral progress.

His thoughts shall always remain as a source of inspiration to modern India. Now, people are enjoying their several rights such as political, education, social, economic, legal, cultural, administrative etc. easily and developing their socio-economic status. Therefore, the major focus should be on enhancement of Tilak's thoughts on nationalism to push the modern India to further stage.

It seems that while working in the political field, Lokmanya Tilak exercised deep faith in religion. Tilak had started many social and cultural activities at that time. Ganesh festival, Shiva Jayanti festival, Mele, Kirtane, dramas, music, Ramnavami festival, Dashavatar, discourse, Bharude, different traditional arts etc. From the available literature, it is clear that he had used these daises for national awareness and as a tool in the movement of independence.

As Tilak said, "I regard India as my Motherland and my Goddess, the people in India are my kith and kin, and loyal and steadfast work for their political and social emancipation is my highest religion and duty".

Tilak believed in service and sacrifice and had the courage to defy the authority of the Government. It was only due to his efforts that the Congress from being the admirer of the Government turned into a great critic of the British Empire.

Findings and Conclusion:

- He was a terror and nightmare to the British Government. At every trial, his influence spread wider and his personality loomed large on the political horizon of India. India will always remain grateful to Tilak for the deathless struggle he launched for the deliverance of his countrymen from political bondage and endless sacrifices and sufferings he made to the cause of his motherland.
- Tilak's nationalism is plausible in modern times because the most important thing on a global level is to protect, serve and sacrifice life for the nation. Tilak founded the Ganesh Festival and Shivaji Jayanti to introduce nationalism amongst the common people, but their structures have known to be changing. In these times, it is essential for us to revisit Tilak's ideologies and philosophies to bring back the source ideas, in order to enhance the feeling of nationalism amongst Indians.
- In this modern period once again Gita Rahasya works as a handbook for every one for eradicating poverty, illiteracy, harassment, looting, corruption, cheating etc. In order to stop all these evils in the society, we have to go through Gita Rahasya and build a welfare society for all.

- Many of Tilak's books, essays and articles in Newspaper also guided us to good orator, writers, expert in particular subject as well as to become a good journalist his writings are the need of the day.
- Lokmanya Tilak's The Orion, The Arctic Home in the Vedas, Vedanga Jotisha and Gita Rahasya contributed to Indian History, heritage, Indology and literature and culture. Till today also many scholars, historians, researchers, indologist refer these books as a reference. Tilak's writings till guiding us in a well manner.
- Tilak sparred against the British Empire without hesitation; He was a brave scholar and an extremist nationalist. So, we have to attain motivation from his life to oppose illegal, harmful activity and build a sense of peace and prosperity in the nation.
- Tilak basically leader of masses and spend his life for the independent India and nationalism.
- Tika's Swadeshi movement advocated the use of goods produced in India alone. This appealed to the people as it aroused a sense of national pride and also enabled businessmen to start manufacturing and supplying India made goods and generated new businesses, employment, made goods available at reasonable prices and fostered the spirit of self-reliance. Boycott and Swadeshi were in fact two sides of the same coin, which together were very effective.
- Today India faced many economic problems, poverty, unemployment, economic recession, looting, business downfall, market crisis etc. To solve those problems it is necessary to follow Swadeshi in life. It is up to the Indian people to not only support our own industry but to take pride in our own products. In this situation, it becomes the duty of every Indian to voluntarily decide to use only those goods that are produced in India by Indian companies and promote Indian goods and culture in the world.
- Many of Lokmanya Tilak's thoughts and works are relevant today. It can help us come to terms with the present socio-economic, cultural and political issues that India faces today. Tilak's writings made a huge contribution to Indian culture and literature. These are inspiration to new generation. If we popularize his works and percolate it to every youth, we can once again revive and regenerate works of Lokmanya Tilak and inculcate values of nationalism, patriotism, culture and sacrifice of life for the nation. This will be the true tribute to the great patriot, nation builder, and Maker of Modern India, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

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