



## The Role of Bal Gangadhar Tilak In Indian Freedom Fight

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### Abstract :

Tilak claim that 'Swaraj is my birth right' his priority to *swaraj* is rational and not emotional, Tilak guarantee of good human life, ideas. Tilak was the first Indian leader to understand the full importance of organized public opinion, moral justification for the struggle. For Swaraj-Political Emancipation, contribution is lost. Tilak has developed his own programme for building up the freedom struggle. Tilak had pivotal role in the Indian Freedom Struggle.

*Keywords : freedom movement, british rule, swaraj*

### Introduction :

Lokmanya Tilak was one of the main architects of India's Freedom movement. Lokmanya Tilak, in his long political career, organized mass-movements, and involved people in different struggles against the British. When there was famine in Maharashtra, in 1886, he organized the peasants and pressurized the British government to give relief to farmers, according to the 'Famine Code' passed by the Government. When Bengal was partitioned by Lord Curzon, Tilak, along with Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, converted the agitation against the injustice to Bengal into an all-India struggle. In order to enable the common man to participate in this struggle. Tilak gave the nation his famous four-point programme: Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education and Swaraj. The British Government leveled the charge of sedition against Tilak, and he had to suffer two terms of imprisonment one of eighteen months and the other of six years. Tilak's unflinching courage and great sacrifice made him a symbol of India's aspiration for freedom.

Tilak played a key role as an activist, agitator and a thinker in Indian freedom struggle. In Indian freedom struggle Tilak's image built as 'Father of Indian Unrest', as an ardent

freedom fighter who inspired people with the slogan, - 'Swaraj is my birth-right and I will have it', as also an effective nation- builder, has, in fact, obstructed such an analysis of Tilak<sup>1</sup>.

Tilak thought it pertinent to begin with an inquiry into the phenomenon of 'Political Independence' and its significance for any nation-the issue of sovereignty-as also the issue of 'Imperialism' and imperial Relationship. More importantly, Tilak's approach to Swaraj being basically rational as also positive, he developed a total and comprehensive philosophy of Swaraj taking, within its purview, alongwith the justification of Swaraj, the obilization for and connotation of swaraj. A total view of Tilak's approach convincingly brings out the need of taking cognizance of his role as the philosopher of Swaraj rather than merely as an 'agitator'<sup>2</sup>.

The ideas tilak the Ganesh and Shivaji festivals helped. In the bringing the politically conscious class indirect contact with the masses to people.

Tilak suggested that the leadership of the National Movement should take up issues of public importance and organize peoples movement he hoped thereby to firstly kindly feeling of 'Nationhood' and a will to resist and to teach them to ventilate effectively.

Tilak awareness undertaken the common people are willing to associate with such a movement. Tilak concept as self-realization is the surest way of self-salvations national education. Political independence or individual salvation self-realization. Create the awareness among the study. Concept equally, an unjust king loses his moral his divinity and becomes demon. Self-government is better than good government this approach constituted the major difference a dividing line between the old and new political theories it is important to note that Tilak thought it proper this point further. This observation is quite significant as many a times. People even educated ones, have a latent attraction for the apparent efficiency of an authoritarian government.

### **About Tilak :**

BalGangadharTilak, also known as Lokamanya, (born July 23, 1856, Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, India—died August 1, 1920, Bombay, scholar, mathematician, philosopher,

<sup>1</sup>SamagraTilak. Vol. No. IV, p. 185

<sup>2</sup>Cited in Tilak and Indian Struggle for Freedom. Ed. J M. Reisher and KM. Goldberg, p. 68, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1966

and ardent nationalist who helped lay the substance for India's independence by building his own defiance of British rule into a national movement. He initiated (1914) and served as president of the Indian Home Rule League. In 1916 he concluded the Lucknow Pact with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, which provided for Hindu-Muslim unity in the Indian freedom struggle.<sup>3</sup>

Tilak's activities aroused the Indian populace, but they soon also brought him into clash with the British government, which prosecuted him for agitation and sent him to jail in 1897. The trial and sentence gave him the title Lokamanya ("Beloved Leader of the People"). He was freed after 18 months.

When Lord Curzon, viceroy of India, separated Bengal in 1905, Tilak strongly supported the Bengali demand for the annulment of the partition and advocated a boycott of British goods, which soon became a movement that swept the nation. During the preceding year he set forth a program of passive resistance, known as the Tenets of the New Party, that he hoped would destroy the mesmerizing influence of British rule and prepare the people for sacrifice in order to gain independence. Those procedures of political action initiated by Tilak—the boycotting of goods and passive resistance - were later adopted by Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi in his program of nonviolent non-cooperation with the British (satyagraha).

Tilak's approach was strong fare for the moderate Indian National Congress (Congress Party), which believed in making "loyal" representations to the government for small reforms. Tilak aimed at swarajya (independence), not piecemeal reforms, and attempted to persuade the Congress Party to adopt his militant program. On that issue, he clashed with the moderates during the party's session (meeting) at Surat (now in Gujarat state) in 1907, and the party split. Taking advantage of the division in the nationalist forces, the government again prosecuted Tilak on a charge of sedition and inciting terrorism and deported him to Mandalay, Burma (Myanmar), to serve a six-year prison sentence. In the Mandalay jail, Tilak settled down to write his magnum opus, the ŚrīmadBhagavadgītāRahasya ("Secret of the Bhagavadgita")—also known as Bhagavad Gita or Gita Rahasya—an original exposition of the most-sacred book of the Hindus. Tilak discarded the orthodox interpretation that the Bhagavadgita (a component of the Mahabharata epic poem) taught the ideal of renunciation; in his view it taught selfless service to humanity. Earlier, in 1893, he had published *The Orion*; or, *Researches into the*

<sup>3</sup><https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bal-Gangadhar-Tilak>

Antiquity of the Vedas, and, a decade later, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*. Both works were intended to promote Hindu culture as the successor to the Vedic religion and his belief that its roots were in the so-called Aryans from the north.

By the time Tilak returned home in late 1919 to attend the meeting of the Congress Party at Amritsar, he had mellowed sufficiently to oppose Gandhi's policy of boycotting the elections to the legislative councils established as part of the reforms that followed from the Montagu-Chelmsford Report to Parliament in 1918. Instead, Tilak advised the delegates to follow his policy of "responsive cooperation" in carrying out the reforms, which introduced a certain degree of Indian participation in regional government. He died, however, before he could give the new reforms a decisive direction. In tributes, Gandhi called him "the Maker of Modern India," and Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first prime minister, described him as "the Father of the Indian Revolution."

### **Role of Tilak in Freedom Movement**

BalGangadharTilak was an Indian nationalist, journalist, teacher, social reformer, lawyer and an independence activist. He was the first popular leader of the Indian Independence Movement. The British authorities called him "Father of the Indian unrest." He was also conferred with the honorary title of "Lokmanya", which means "Accepted by the people (as their leader)".<sup>4</sup>

Tilak was one of the first and strongest advocates of "Swaraj" (self-rule) and a strong radical in Indian consciousness. His famous quote, "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it!" is well-remembered in India even today. He also formed a close alliance with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, later the founder of Pakistan, during the Indian Home rule movement.

Mahatma Gandhi called him 'The Maker of Modern India' or as British colonial authorities called him 'the father of Indian unrest', testifies his legacy and contribution to Indian society and freedom struggle. As a philosopher-politician, his contribution is immense as he is said to be a pioneer of ideas of swaraj and swadeshi and used culture, education and the media.

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<sup>4</sup>D. V. Tahmankar (1956). *LokamanyTilak: Father of Indian Unrest and Maker of Modern India*. John Murray; 1St Edition edition (1956). Retrieved 5 February2013

- **Igniting Patriotism:** Ruthless suppression of the revolt of 1857 by the British and its aftermath, had created disillusionment and darkness regarding self-rule, that continued for many decades. This is when Tilak began to quicken the growth of nationalist consciousness with the advent of the 20 century.

He ignited patriotic consciousness among the masses during one of the most difficult periods in the freedom struggle

- **Switching to Extremism Phase:** The founding of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 was aided by the British, under the narrative of safety value theory. As a follow-up to that, the voice of INC was weak and subdued. Early leadership of INC was mainly focused on 3Ps: Prayer, Petition and Protest. Along with two other congress leaders, LalaLajpatRai and Bipin Chandra Pal (popularly known as Lal, Bal and Pal), he started the extremist phase of INC, which focused on mass mobilisation of masses.

- **Trisutri Program:** Tilak gave trisutri or three-point programme for nationalawakening – Swaraj, Swadeshi and Nationalist Education based on vernacular. This helped the realisation of self-pride and activism in a nation that wasculturally suppressed by the British under the narrative of Whiteman’sburden. For the cultivation of an enlightened mind, he used the media in the form oftwo newspapers, Kesari and Maratha, and national education throughDeccan Education Society, an institute he established.

- **Swadeshi Movement:** Tilak started the Swadeshi movement (1905), which was notjust about boycotting British goods, but his larger objective was promotingindigenous entrepreneurship. Tilak wanted to promote manufacturing in India. To that end, Tilak startedcollecting funds for a corpus, known as Paise Fund. This can be termed as reminiscent of the Make in India Program, in presenttimes.

- **Broader Vision of Swaraj:** For him, Swaraj or Home Rule meant the rule of, andthe rule for, the common people of India. However, he also had a blueprint of anindependent India in mind. For him, swaraj was also linked to swa-bhasha and swa-bhusha, i.e. mothertongue and indigenous attire. Perhaps, he was the first national leader who envisioned the formation oflinguistic states.

- **Laying Foundation for Gandhian way of Mass Movement:** Tilak’s two arrests by the British in (1897 and 1908) galvanised workers, peasants, professionals and youth in

an unprecedented manner. His formula for preparing the ground for political activism through culture, education and media was so powerful that later on Mahatma Gandhi, Babasaheb Ambedkar and others adopted this path. Also, he prepared a fertile ground for swaraj through his home-rule movement.

- Cultural Revival: Tilak's campaign against the British colonial rule was also anchored on reclaiming Indian heritage and culture. In 1896, he famously initiated the 'sarvajanik Ganesh visarjanutsav' in Bombay, in which the masses of people came out to worship and then immerse idols of Ganesha in the sea. This religious drive served the political purpose of mass mobilisation. Though it is seen as a communal move by many historians, his writings reflected that his call for public celebration of these festivals was not meant to rouse sentiments against any other community. Its sole purpose was cultural self-assertion of his people then living the yoke of foreign rule.

### **Conclusion**

Tilak was a man of the masses, had real concern for the masses, and also was genuinely comfortable with the masses. At the same time, it must be re-emphasized that people did not mean to him a mere flock or a multitude. This point needs special mention. In modern times, many dictators have utilized their mass-appeal and their mass mobilizing capacity for furthering their own interests. Mass-mobilization was actually used by these dictators for anti-democratic, anti-liberal purposes.

Tilak's analysis of contemporary situation had given him the clear perception that politics is a game of worldly people and not of Sadhus (pious, saintly people). This understanding helped him to arrive at a realistic and objective view of the phenomenon of Imperialism, the issue of 'Swaraj' as also the issue of Political Relationship in general. It is revealing to note that Tilak recognized that no freedom struggle armed or unarmed could hope to succeed without the involvement and participation of the common people. Self-reliance, for Tilak, did not just mean non-reliance on the foreign rule. Tilak's elaboration of the concept of self-reliance is, thus, both revealing and striking. It exhibits Tilak's vivid perception of the relationship between the sustenance of political power of a government and public opinion.

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