

Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak

"Swaraj is our birthright, and I shall have it"

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Object of the chapter

- To study of Tilak thoughts about Swaraj, Swadeshi and boycott.
- To study of Tilak thoughts about National Education.
- To understand Tilak Views on Nationalism.
- To understand Tilak concept Critique of Social Reformism.
- To understand Tilak doctrine of 'Loksangraha'.

Early Life

(1856-1920)

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak described by British as "The Father of Indian Unrest "
- Tilak was born on 23.07.1856.
- His slogan, "Swaraj (Self Rule) is my birthright", inspired millions of Indians.
- When his father was transferred to Pune from Ratnagiri.
- This brought sea change in Tilak's life. He joined the Anglo-Vernacular School in Pune and got education from some of the well known teachers.
- Soon after coming to Pune Tilak lost his mother and by the time he was sixteen he lost his father too.
- While Tilak was studying in Matriculation he was married to a 10-year-old girl called Satyabhama

- Tilak was a brilliant student. As a child, he was truthful and straightforward in nature.
- He had an intolerant attitude towards injustice and had independent opinions from an early age.
- After graduating from Deccan College, Pune, in 1877 in Sanskrit and Mathematics, Tilak studied L.L.B. at the Government Law College, Bombay (now Mumbai). He received his law degree in 1879.
- After finishing his education, he started teaching English and Mathematics at a private school in Poona.
- Following a disagreement with the school authorities he quit and helped found a school in 1880 that laid emphasis on nationalism. Though, he was among India's first generation of youths to receive a modern, college education, Tilak strongly criticised the educational system followed by the British in India.

- He protested against the unequal treatment of the Indian students compared to their British peers and its total disregard for India's cultural heritage.
- According to him, the education was not at all adequate for Indians who remained woefully ignorant about their own origins. He started the Deccan Educational Society with college batchmates, Vishnu Shastry Chiplunkar and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar for the purpose of inspiring nationalist education among Indian students.
- Parallel to his teaching activities, Tilak founded two newspapers 'Kesari' in Marathi and 'Mahratta' in English.
- His book "Geetarahasya" a classic treatise on Geeta in Marathi was written by him, in prison at Mandalay.
- He was Great journalist- editor, an authority on Vedas, Sanskrit Scholar, mathematician and a natural leader of India.

- The extremist ideology created by Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Ganghadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandr Pal, who altered the nationalist vocabulary by incorporating swadeshi, boycott and national education.
- In Tilak public life of forty years, Tilak devoted his energies to diverse type of activities. As an educator he was one of the most important members responsible for the establishment of the Poona New English School, The Decan Education Society and the Fergusson College.
- Long before his active involvement in the Indian National Congress, Tilak articulated his nationalist ideas in both Kesari (in Marathi) and Mahratta(in English).
- In 1893 he transformed the traditional religious Ganapthi festival into a campaign for nationalist ideas through patriotic songs and speeches.
- Similarly , in 1896, he introduced the Shivaji festival to inspire the youth by drawing upon the patriotism of Shivaji.

- His Home Rule League, established in April 1916, prepared the country for swaraj. He had a good knowledge of Indian Nationalism and the British labour party during his visit to England. He had a good knowledge of Indian History and Indian Economics.
- He had inherited from his father a strong sense of personal dignity and self-respect.
- He had a passion for independence, both for himself and for his country.
- He was died 01.08.1920.
- "Swaraj is our birthright," thundered Tilak, the Lion of India.
- He founded schools and published newspapers, all for his motherland. He rotted in a distant jail at Manda lay, in Burma. he wore himself out till his last breath, to awaken his countrymen

- **Social Reforms** : After completing his education, Tilak spurned the lucrative offers of government service and decided to devote himself to the larger cause of national awakening.
- He was a great reformer and throughout his life he advocated the cause of women education and women empowerment.
- Tilak educated all of his daughters and did not marry them till they were over 16. Tilak proposed Grand celebrations on 'Ganesh Chaturthi' and 'Shivaji Jayanti'. He envisioned these celebrations inciting a sense of unity and inspiring nationalist sentiment among Indians.
- **Death** :Tilak was so disappointed by the brutal incident of Jalianwala Bagh massacre that his health started declining. Despite his illness, Tilak issued a call to the Indians not to stop the movement no matter what happened. He was raring to lead the movement but his health did not permit. Tilak suffered from diabetes and had become very weak by this time.

- In mid-July 1920, his condition worsened and on August 1, he passed away.
- Even as this sad news was spreading, a veritable ocean of people surged to his house. Over 2 lakh people gathered at his residence in Bombay to have the last glimpse of their beloved leader.
- The one man who is known as “The Father of Indian Unrest” is “Lokmanya” Bal Gandhar Tilak. These two titles of Tilak have the different meanings.
- According to Britishers, he was the father of Indian unrest because he was the man who stood the Indian people for the first time against British Government and from that time the rest of British Government in India was gone and never came back.
- Tilak was the man who awaken the Indians about their rights and worst condition from where they had to live because of the British Raj.
- Tilak was strict against the rule of any other country or person over India.

- His slogan was on the mouth of every Indian and before Gandhiji he was the first man whose approach towards Indians was so deep, that is why he was called ‘The Father of Indian Unrest’.
- According to Indians he was “Lokmanya” it means that he was a man who was honored by the people of India.
- He wrote the articles on Nationalism in his newspapers which create tensions and troubles for British Government because of this he was sent to Jail in 1908 for 6 years.
- In this period of 6 years he wrote his famous commentary on Bhagwad- Gita in Mandalay Jail.
- “Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it” were the fiery motivating words of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, which aroused a sleeping nation to action, making Indians aware of their political plight under an imperialist rule. That way, Tilak may arguably be credited to be first of the Indian nationalists who lit the indomitable light of radical nationalism in the hearts of common people of India.

- He had multifaceted personality and devoted his energies to diverse types of activities. As an great champion of the Poona temperance and educationist, he played significant role in establishing Poona New English School in 1880, apart from the Deccan Education Society and the Fergusson College.

- He established “Poona Home rule league” and with Irish lady Annie Besant’s. Tilak started Home-rule movement which created a lot of troubles for British Government.
- When he returned from jail in 1914 he was the unquestioned leader of India and till his death on August 1, 1920.
- He was a man who devoted his whole life to Nation. He wrote two books “Geeta Rahasya” and “Arctic Home of Aryas”
- He also started two festivals in Maharashtra because of these festivals he tried to collect people and motivate them towards the freedom struggle of our country.
- He started Ganpati Jayanti” and “Shivaji Jayanti” in Maharashtra and very soon both these festivals became very popular in Maharashtra.
- Both these festivals celebrated with joy and happiness till today in Maharashtra and many other parts of our country.
- So Tilak did everything to brae the sleep of Indians and motivate them towards freedom struggle. He definitely a greatest son of our Motherland.

Tilak thoughts about Swaraj, Swadeshi and boycott.

- **'Swaraj:-** Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak possessed a fighting spirit.
- He was the first political leader to break through the routine methods of the Indian National Congress which was dominated by the moderates.
- He was against the western culture and tradition. He had a great inclination for Indian culture' and tradition and made all round efforts to preserve it.
- As an ardent nationalist, a committed politician and a profound philosopher, Tilak followed different methods and applied different techniques to achieve his goal i.e. 'Swaraj'.
- He declared, ***“Swaraj (self rule) is my birth right and I must take it”***.
- The swadeshi, boycott and national education are the political techniques of Tilak.'s concept of Swaraj.

- Tilak insisted on immediate swaraj or self-rule. His concept of swaraj was not complete in dependence but a government constituted by the Indian themselves that rules according to the wishes of the people or their representatives.
- Similar to the British executive that decides on policies, impose and remove taxes and determine the allocation of public expenditure, Indians should have the right to run their own government, to make laws, to appoint the administrators as well as to spend the tax revenue.
- The second dimension relates to the notion of the right of the people to resist an authority that loses legitimacy.
- As early as 1895, Tilak had begun to preach the necessity for swaraj.
- He came to realize that swaraj or self-rule must precede meaningful social reform, that the only enduring basis for national unity and national self-respect must be national self rule.
- He had reminded the people that Shivaji had recreated swaraj as the necessary foundation of social and political freedom.

- His insistence on swaraj was completely consistent with his personal, social and political philosophy.
- Tilak presented the nation with a threefold programme or techniques for effective practical and political action.
- The three principles were boycott, swadeshi and national education.
- At the Calcutta Congress of 1906, Tilak supported the swadeshi resolution and spelled out the economic foundations of Indian nationalism.
- The swadeshi movement quickly became a movement of national regeneration : swadeshi was a practical application of love of country.

- Swaraj became the reason and justification for the entire programme and movement led by Tilak and other nationalists.
- He held that the attainment of swaraj would be great victory for Indian nationalism.
- He gave to Indian the mantra: ' swaraj is the birth right of Indians. He defined swaraj as people's rule instead of that of bureaucracy. For pushing his ideal of swaraj forward he started Home Rule League in 1916 with the co-operation of Annie Besant.
- Tilak contemplated federal type of political structure under swaraj. He referred to the example of the American Congress and said that the government of India should keep its hands similar powers to exercise them through an impartial council for the correct implementation of his programme.
- Tilak urged the method of nonviolent passive resistance'. Thus Tilak's method of action was democratic and constitutional.

- **Swadeshi** :Tilak was an advocate of Swadeshi movement. He was against the Britishers and hence preached Swadeshi.
- Swadeshi movement first began as an economic movement but in the gradual process, it became an important political weapon to turn down the British economy.
- Swadeshi meant self-help and to become self-reliant. It asserted the feeling of independence.
- The Indians were inclined to use Indian made goods rather than to rely upon British goods.
- Tilak has rightly said, "The object is to bring about the spread of Swadeshi things, visible and invisible, to bring about the gradual disappearance of visible foreign things and to bring about the gradual disappearance of foreign ideas.
- Swadeshi movement was a movement of national generation and economic self-sufficiency. By this movement the local small scale, industries got an opportunity to become self-sufficient. Indian products were' recognized in the world.

- Post Indians also got the opportunity of employment and the standard of living also increased.
- Thus Swadeshi was a practical application of love of the country.
- To quote Tilak, "To recognize the land of the Aryas as mother earth is the Swadeshi movement".
- It was an economic, political and spiritual weapon.
- In 1905, at the Banaras session of Indian National Congress, Gopal Krishna Gokhale in his presidential address made a plea for Swadeshi.
- In this session Tilak put forth a resolution regarding famine, poverty, land revenue and the economic survey of India. He presented a devastating picture of India's poverty.
- Tilak believed that emphasis on economic issues and the demand for removal of poverty would give a fillip to the struggle of Swaraj.
- Only through the Swadeshi movement, the economic exploitation of the British rule could be ended.

- He had constructed practical objective. The swadeshi boycotted movement was an attempt at vindicating the rights of the people to self government and hence it used several techniques of political agitation as mass processions, big public meetings, strikes, picketing etc, which have been followed by later Indian leaders in their political movements.

- **Boycott:** Boycott involved the refusal of the people to purchase the British manufactured goods. Like the other extremists Tilak also believed in the method of Boycott.
- It meant the refusal of the Indian people to purchase British manufactured goods.
- Tilak asserted that belief in Swadeshi could not have any practical utility till the boycott of foreign goods was resorted to.
- He said that "when you prefer to accept Swadeshi, you must boycott as without boycott Swadeshi cannot flourish."
- In 1906 in the Calcutta session, the Indian National Congress adopted the technique of boycott. Boycott movement had a great appeal and the Indian mass accepted it whole heartedly.
- People from all walks of life rejected the British government and boycotted the various institutions. Indian people boycotted the British manufactured goods, schools, colleges, offices, etc. which were owned and run by the alien rulers;

- This boycott movement was so vigorous that it caused to tremble the whole British administration.
- It was a weapon and a substitute for war. Further, Tilak wrote that to drive out the alien ruler we do not have any weapon and it is also not necessary.
- Through boycott, which is a powerful weapon, we can remove the Britishers. Again he compared our nation with a tree and said that Swaraj is its root and Swadeshi and boycott are its branches.
- He told the masses, “We have no arms, but there is no necessity.
- But our strong political weapon is boycott (of foreign goods). Organize your powers and then go to work so that they cannot refuse you what you demand”
- Boycott initially involved the refusal of the people to purchase British manufactured goods.
- It was started as a measure designed to bring economic pressure on the British business interests, both in India and abroad.
- Boycott gradually moved from the economic into the political sphere.
- In fact, Swadeshi and boycott movements brought masses nearer to the political movement.

Tilak thoughts about National Education

- From ages it is true that education has an important role to play for national reconstruction. National education was an important element for effective political action.
- Tilak believed that western education was damaging and dangerous for the progress and future of the nation.
- It made the Indian youths Indians only by name.
- They forgot the glorious past and rich heritage of the motherland. Apart 'from this, western educational institutions made the students economically ruined (cleaned out) and they remained away from national mainstream.
- So Tilak tried to establish schools without the British governmental help and to make the youths aware of nationalism.
- He called this policy as "New National Education

Objective of National Education Policy

- The main aim of the new national education was to make the youths self-reliant and create a feeling of self-help with themselves.
- Tilak's main ambition was to create the feeling of nationalism in the minds of the Indians from the very childhood.
- Tilak as the leader of the movement launched this against the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon, made national education a major part of the four point programme which developed in to a nationwide movement.
- Tilak always regarded education as a powerful instrument of social transformation and used it as a weapon not only in the movement against Bengal Partition but in the struggle for Swaraj so to Tilak, the object of National Education was not to disturb the freedom of personal expression of the students.
- To create national awareness patriotism, love for country and national unity for getting freedom were the main objects of National education according to Tilak.

- In Maharashtra Tilak started his educational programme. He established a school in Poona, in the south he established an educational society and also established a college.
- It is true that he began his career as a teacher, which led him to believe that education is essential for all individuals and it is the prime duty of the teachers to make the students aware of the glorious past of the motherland.
- He pleaded that education is for the masses. It is true that he pleaded for national education, but it is not true that he was completely against the western education.
- He led emphasis on educational system which included Indian heritage and its glorious past combined with western method for its achievement.
- Though he was an ardent Hindu and believed in the Veda and the Indian culture, he accepted that English education is necessary for Indian political movement.

- Therefore, he upheld English as the medium of education. But at the same time, he said that the national education must be given the first priority and national heritage should be reflected in it.
- Tilak and his contemporary nationalists therefore stressed the need for national schools and colleges which would inculcate the spirit of self-reliance and self-help in the minds of the youth.
- Thus in the 20th century national education became an integral part of the nationalist programme for India.

Tilak Views on Nationalism.

- Lokmanya Tilak as a political philosopher has given us a theory of Nationalism. His theory of nationalism is a synthesis of both the teachings eastern and western thinkers.
- Tilak's nationalism had a revivalist orientation. He wanted to bring to the forefront the message of the Vedas and the Gita for providing spiritual energy and moral enthusiasm to the nation.
- According to him, “a recovery of the healthy and vital traditions of the old culture of India was essential a true nationalist desires to build on old foundation.”
- He said that we do not want to anglicize our institutions and so denationalize them in the name of social and political reforms.
- M.N.Ray pointed out that Shivaji and Ganpati festivals had been encouraged by Tilak to link contemporary events and movements with historical traditions.

- ◉ Because of his spiritual approach, Tilak regarded that Swarajaya not only a right but a dharam.
- ◉ He also gave a moral and spiritual meaning of Swarajya. Politically meant Home Rule. Morally it meant the attainment of the perfection of self control, which is essential for performing "one's duty" (Swadharma).
- ◉ It also had a spiritual significance because it meant the realization of spiritual inner freedom and contemplative delight. Tilak wanted both political and spiritual freedom.
- ◉ Tilak's nationalism was also influenced by the western theories of national independence and self determination.
- ◉ His philosophy of nationalism was a synthesis of the Vedantic idea of the spirit as self contained freedom and western conception of the Mazzani and Burke, Mill and later on of Wilson.

- According to Tilak nationalism is not a visible and concrete entity but is a kind of sentiment and idea and in generating this idea the historical memories of the great figure of a country play a significant part.
- Nationalism is essentially a psychological and spiritual conception. Tilak had a systematic philosophy 'of nationalism.
- He rightly felt that the roots of Indian nationalism must lie not in the mere intellectual appeals to the theories of the western liberal writers but in the sentiments and emotions of the Indian masses.
- He felt that the memories of Shivaji would serve to reinvigorate nationalistic emotions of the common people.
- Shivaji became the symbol of the resentment and resistance of the people against oppression and injustice.

- Tilak tried several times to repute the changes of anti Muslimism against this festival.
- He pointed out carefully that he wanted revival of his foundations and spirits.
- During Bengal partition day Tilak said that both Hindus and Muslims should assert their rights against the bureaucracy that was trying to crush all.
- Tilak wanted to substantiate the nationalistic movement in India by a strong cultural and religious revival of Hindusim but he also accepted the economic arguments for nationalism.
- Dadabhai Nauroji made famous the 'Drain theory' in Indian economies. Both Tilak and Gokhale accepted the foreign imperialism resulted in the enormous 'drain' of India's resources.
- In-1897 Tilak wrote three articles in the Kesari at the time of Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Queen Victoria on 22nd June.

- He started that India's arts and industries had declined under the British rule. He wrote that various economic enterprises and investment in India, of the foreign capitalists only created evidence given by Dadabhai, before the Welby commission.
- He also emphasized the economic dimension of the swadeshi movement, which indicates his awareness of the economic roots of Indian nationalism.
- The swadeshi movement in India assumed a spiritual and a political character. It becomes a movement for the liberation of spiritual energies of the nation for the sake of the political emancipation of the land.
- In a speech in January 1907 at Allahabad, Tilak pleaded for a protective tariff of our own by the boycott of foreign goods....
- The salvation of the country could be attained not by waiting on the bureaucracy and sending petitions to them containing appeals to logic and reason but only by the concerted efforts of the people themselves.

- He therefore exhorted the nation to work for the concrete realization of the resolutions on Swadeshi, Boycott and national education which had been passed at the congress session of 1906 at Calcutta.
- Tilak held that attainment of Swarajya would be great victory for Indian Nationalism. Hence he gave the Mantra "Swarajya is the birth right of Indians."
- Although in his speeches and writings Lokmanya always said that swarajya did not imply the negation and severance of ultimate British sovereignty, still people knew that in his heart of hearts he always wanted -complete independence.
- He once wrote that swarajya is "the foundation and not the height of our future prosperity.
- He always pointed out that the path of the attainment of swarajya was full of suffering and misery.
- During the Home Rule days Tilak always was careful to say that he was not opposed to the king-emperor but he wanted to change the Anglo Indian bureaucracy.

- Bipin Chandra Pal has described, "Tilak was a believer in Imperial Federation which would be composed of Great Britain, Ireland and Egypt, India and the dominions each absolutely autonomous internally: but combined for the purposes of protection and progress."

Conclusion

- Tilak was one of those leaders who asserted themselves ever since the beginning of the freedom struggle to argue for India's right to swaraj or national self determination.
- Such ideals as these can be achieved by fostering strong feeling of patriotism and self respect among the people by moulding public opinion and by bringing pressure to bear on the British authorities for granting political rights.
- He concentrated his efforts throughout his life for the attainment of this single aim. But the Britishers envy was pride of the Indians. The way Tilak nurtured the values and feelings for nationalism in the poor folks of the country went a long way in reinforcing the struggle for independence whose fruits were actually obtained in 1947, after the death of Tilak.
- Yet, when the country became independent, in the galaxy of Indian leaders whose mammoth efforts lay at the root of independence of the country, the name of Tilak and the other people of his ilk will remain inked in indelible colour.

Questions

- Explain the Tilak thoughts about Swaraj, Swadeshi and boycott.
- What is the view of Tilak on national education ?.
- State the Tilak Views on Nationalism.
- Elaborate Tilak's concept critique of social reformism.
- Explain Tilak doctrine of 'Loksangraha'.
- Write an essay on Tilak.