



Relevance of socio-political ideas of tilak in the present context

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Abstract

Bal Gangadhar Tilak inspired to the common people and youths to uncompromising struggle against the foreign rulers when the local organizations, including the Congress, failed to organize a movement against the British rulers. Matsini's nationalist teachings and methods of struggle were applied in Tilak's political activities. Tilak uses yubashakti as the main force of his terrorist movement, citing the example of Matsini's young forces. Tilak called upon the people of India to abandon personal interests, materialistic interests and the passions of consumerist industrial civilization and join the bonds of morality and socialism and be inspired by the principles of public service and public welfare. He called for India's full independence with his own strength, not with the Charbak philosophy of India or the European benevolent thought, but with the convincing thought of the Vedas and the Gita. According to Tilak, the path to the ultimate goal is not autonomy, but self-government; Indigenous, not fascinated by foreign art civilization. The organizing soldiers of Tilak's nationalist politics are the youth, the working class and the students.

Keywords: Moderate thinker, swaraj party, Anti-British, inspiration of yuba, social reformer

Introduction

Every person is the representative of his own age. But there are some people who not only represent their own age, but become the torch – bearer for the future. Tilak was one among them.

“Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it!”, this is the slogan that inculcated a political conscience among Indians regarding self-rule. The slogan was given by Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (Lokmanya means the man accepted by the people). Given his contribution, Tilak can be hailed as the first mass leader of the Indian Independence 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.

The uncritical admiration of some contemporary biographers of Tilak is as outmoded as the outright condemnation of his political opponents. In the period of agitation before 1920 no political figure had been so widely discussed by his contemporaries as was Tilak. The Indians called him as *Avatar*, an incarnation of God's spirit; in contrast his Anglo-Indian critics called him a genius of destruction. In his lifetime, Tilak was at once the object of unlimited veneration and unreasoning hatred, a man worshipped by the millions and detested by not a few. He evoked the most contradictory and mutually hostile emotions among his countrymen and the British rulers of the time. This extraordinary situation has its roots in his extraordinary achievements.

Tilak was a great visionary who believed in action. He attempted to prove two contentions: first, that the *Gita* advocated primarily a philosophy of action rather than renunciation or devotion: secondly, that social or political

action is the duty of all citizens when the nation is threatened by internal decay or external oppression.

According to Tilak, action must be done to keep the world going by the right path of evolution which the creator has destined the world to follow. In order that the action may not bind the actor it must be done with the aim of helping his purpose, and without any attachment to the coming result.

Emerging from the first generation of Indians to receive a college education, Tilak's choice of Mathematics as the primary subject for his Bachelor of Arts degree, which he finished in first class from Deccan College of Pune in 1877, speaks volumes. We know that Mathematics improves the power of reasoning, creativity, abstract or spatial thinking, and scientific temper and disciplined problem solving ability. In fact, after completing his LLB course in 1879 from the Government Law College, Tilak started teaching mathematics at the Fergusson College in Pune from which he later withdrew to become a journalist and plunge headlong into the freedom movement.

“To be able to read and write alone is no education.”
Lokmanya Tilak

These ideas later found their logical expression in the Constitution of India which aims to, “develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform” as one of the fundamental duties of the people of the Republic of India. Article 51 A encourage us “to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavor and achievement.”

Against this perspective, we have tried to critically evaluate the issues pertaining to the education of youth in today's India and identify gaps that need to be bridged to give India a place of pride in the field of knowledge development and social advancement in the world. India has a rich convention of learning and education from ancient times. There are Shastra's and Sutra's which detail the obligation of an

educator and his student. Education in ancient India focused on the holistic development of Man and not just his survival. How an individual developed as a human being was viewed as an aesthetic and genuine determinant of education and the acquisition of knowledge.

Tilak's pioneering vision in the field of national education included the foundation of schools all through the country to impart genuinely national education. In our view, his idea of synthesizing scientific education with ancient cultural traditions of religion was at the heart of his philosophy. He sketched out the four components which were key for comprising an arrangement of national education. Tilak stressed on religious education for building character as well as to inculcate cultural pride among Indians. He stated that mainstream education just isn't sufficient to develop character. Religious education is important because the investigation of high standards restrains us from malicious quests. However, he laid equal importance on the need for bringing in industrial and political education. Political education ought to be conferred in instructive establishments to teach citizens to be aware of their rights and duties.

Historical accounts of the late 19th and early 20th century – the time when the idea of Indian nationhood was taking shape and struggle for independence from colonial rule gathered pace in India – portray a people steeped in negativity, backwardness and low self-esteem after centuries of oppression and servitude.

Leaders like Tilak and other freedom fighters inspired the masses to rise above these sentiments and take pride in India's own great cultural and intellectual achievements through the millennia, while at the same time, build a future based on modern scientific thinking and the concepts of liberty, equality and human dignity. His powerful assertion that "Swarajya is my birthright and I will have it," stems from this assimilation of ideas from the East and the West.

To create that appreciation and pride, Tilak wrote extensively, interpreting ancient Indian philosophy and mythology to spread awareness, especially among the young, western educated generation of Indians. While in the Mandalay jail, Tilak authored his magnum opus, the Śrīmad Bhagava dgitā Rahasya ("Secret of the Bhagavad Gita") — an original exposition of the most sacred book of the Hindus. Moving away from the orthodox interpretation that the Bhagavad Gita 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 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.

Currently India's education system is riddled with contradictions. Some say it is overly job - centric and theoretical without enough emphasis on critical thinking, research, innovation and personality development. Some say that education is essential to gain knowledge about the past and the present to make our future better. It should not only include the readable information present in the books used in schools and colleges, which are consigned to memory for the next examination and the discarded, Although academic achievements play an important part in building careers and providing financial sustenance; they fall short in providing a strong moral compass and character that is required for

individual success as well as the greater good of humanity. As Tilak said, "To be able to read and write alone is no education" and, "The real spirit is to make the country, your family, work together instead of working only for your own. The step beyond is to serve humanity and the next step is to serve God."

The goal of true education is more than the cerebral aspect of understanding the various modes of critical, abstract, visual, and creative thought processes. It is also about addressing the corporeal aspect of a person making a holistic individual. Simply put, it can be said that education is a platform that can break all barriers allowing us to discover and explore our limits.

Role of ethics in education

Some of the most significant deficiencies that impede the progress of our country—and even the world—are embedded in human frailties which our education system must be equipped to address. Issues such as corruption, duplicity, lack of mutual respect, tendency for violence and unscrupulousness, plague our society and thwart overall progress. If the education system fails to inculcate ethical values among the young generation it is hardly fulfilling its role in building the moral fibre of the nation and a better future for all.

Ethics has been derived from Greek word *ethos*, which means character; it is an inherent element of an edified society. It is a psychological measuring stick which focuses the mind to recognize between good or bad conduct, character and works on going around our general public, nation or world. Value is a term utilized in practical and philosophical setting where economy relates its value an incentive among the product, while theory bargains its helpful commitment for humankind. The minutest unit of society is home, a spot where learning of human qualities, moral obligations and moral qualities are supported by seniors to younger ones since ages, humanity part of students just to make their tags on global standards. The principle point of granting virtues and morals during Gurukul framework was to construct a positive character among students that lead to make a genuine resident and at last prompts gear up country building process.

Nowadays' youth invest more energy in their telephone, talking, operating Facebook and WhatsApp than with their older folks, who used to impart them good values. They talk about large issues like corruption, legislative issues; however they themselves lack the capacity to deal with the companions, for celebrating the festival in genuine sense, for valuing their older forerunners.

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If the young generation is dynamic, ambitious, optimistic and moral, it can catapult our society to live up to its full potential. Unlike the times of Tilak and other freedom fighters yearning for the country, "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, where knowledge is free. Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls. Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action", today's youth have the privilege of living and breathing in a land of liberty, equality, democracy and free speech. Nurtured and empowered by an education system that truly mirrors the aspirations of our times and inspired by the rich and noble traditions of our motherland (as evoked repeatedly by the indomitable Lokmanya Tilak) they should imbibe the best of the world and make India shine as the land of knowledge, excellence, progress and morality.

Political ideals of tilak

The concept of Atma Nirbhar or self Reliance that we talk about today was formed by Bal Gangadhar Tilak during the Indian Independence movement. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was one of the strong advocates of Swaraj or self-rule in India. After witnessing the atrocities and barbaric practices that the British followed to destroy Indian society, Bal Gangadhar Tilak devoted his life to the freedom of India and its people from the British rule. He formed his own publications known as Kesari and Maratha in Hindi and English that educated people about the atrocities and the role of the British regime. Without Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the massive support for the Indian Independence movement would not have been possible. He was a visionary leader who understood the potential of media and communication and used it to gather support against the British rule in India. Tilak was not an idealistic thinker like Plato or Aristotle. Tilak never depicted any picture of the ideal State. His main aim was the political emancipation of India. Tilak was realistic in his political thought. Tilak was a Vedantist and believed in metaphysical assumptions. Tilak was of the view that metaphysics of the Vedanta was the political conception of natural rights. All men have the same autonomous spiritual potentiality. Tilak regarded freedom as a divine attribute, without which on spiritual and moral life was possible. That is why he regarded Swarajya as Dharma. Politically, Swarajya, according to Tilak meant Home Rule and morally, it meant the attainment of the perfection of self-control. For Tilak, Swaraj was a moral necessity. It was the duty of every men to achieve Swaraj or self-rule. In his own words: "it is a life centered in selfrule. There is Swarajya in this world as well as in the world here after. The Rishis who laid down the law of duty be took themselves because the people were already enjoying Swarajya or people's dominion which was administered and defended in the first instance by the Kshatriya Kings." Tilak was a deeply religious man and held the conviction that India must be re-created on the foundations of her own greatness in the past.

According to D.V. Tahmankar, the key to Tilak's power over the masses was to be found in his realization of the central and vital teaching of the ancient philosophy of India; the complete absence of an anti-thesis between the ideal and the real. There was no difference in Tilak's saying and deeds. Society could never progress unless there was oneness in saying and deeds. It can be argued that Tilak was a real *karmayogi* who served the society selflessly.

Tilak talked about *dharma*. When he used the word 'dharma', it did not imply religion, but it indicated the human duty, morality and right action. That is why, he argued that swaraj was not only our right, but *dharma*, because he argued that it was the duty of every Indian to make effort for the attainment of *swaraj*, and thus, *swaraj* ultimately became the dharma of the people of India."

He gave more importance to duties than rights. He tried to harmonise the interest of individual with the interest of society. He argued that it was necessary that every individual should follow his duty for the welfare of society and universe. It is true that rights and duties are co-related and in return of every right, we have to discharge some duties. If we do not discharge our duties properly, our rights become meaningless. They are the two sides of the same coin and always go together as two lines of railway track or two banks of a canal. They are closely related as man and his shadow or body and soul.

Mahatma Gandhi was of the opinion that there was no need to give rights to individuals, they should be given duties and rights would come to them automatically. Every citizen had only one right which was supreme and that was the right to fulfil his duties. So far as the present day society is concerned, it seems that Tilak's ideas on interrelationship between rights and duties are much relevant.

Today, people have become self-centered and they have no regard for others and community. People are more worried about their rights and they do not bother about their duties. They also forget that in the absence of duties, rights cannot be enjoyed. They want to have easy gains without putting labour. This imbalance between rights and duties has created confusion in the society and has led to a number of social problems. Unfortunately, after Independence, majority of our leaders forgot their role as social workers. They became whole time politicians and were wholly engrossed in their game of grabbing chairs of power and position. They had no time to remember our nationalist leaders like Tilak and Gandhi and their teachings.

Tilak was a leader of masses and thus, he wanted the participation of every group and class of the society in the national movement, whether they were students or peasants or workers. Undoubtedly, Tilak was the first Indian leader, who planned to make this movement mass-based. He himself went down to the masses dwelling in the remote villages and gave them the message of their rights and implications of the freedom. One can say that Tilak did not speak in terms of conflict of interests of workers and capitalists. But from what Tilak said and did, it is clear that he initiated the idea of consensus and harmony of interests of all the people and sections of the society which Gandhi and Nehru carried forward.

Tilak wanted to promote the spirit of nationalism, which could enable people to transcend the limits of caste and religion and stand as one unit against the foreign domination. He tried to unify people to promote the national cause. At present our leaders are trying to divide the masses on the basis of caste, culture, region, religion, creed and sex for their vested interests.

We have so many social and political problems before us. These problems can only be solved if we rise above petty differences. It is the duty of our leaders to show the people right path and to unify them to fight against the problems.

Tilak was always ready to serve people, physically and economically, whenever they were in distress. He appeared

like a legend for the people during the time of plague and famine. During the famine he himself went from shop to shop in the grain market of Poona, requesting shopkeepers not to sell grain at too high price to the poor people. Tilak's humanitarian activities were very significant. They showed him to be a constructive political genius of the highest order. Tilak opposed governmental interference in bringing about social reforms. That's why he has stressed on education to reform the society. Because motivation is the means and not legislation for each and everything. Conversion must precede legislation. Legislation in the absence of conversion remains a dead-letter. As an illustration, we have today, the power to enforce rules of sanitation, but we can do nothing with it, because the public is not ready. When we see our society, it seems that Tilak's views are of paramount importance. Because we have so many laws to eradicate the social problems in India but still we are not able to change or reform our society properly. People are still fighting with these problems.

Of all the social inequalities in the context of our social reality, none is more dehumanizing than those imposed by the caste system, which intertwined with a long continuing period of feudalism riveted stronger the bonds of enslavement on those who stood at the lower rungs of hierarchical order. The Government of India has through various enactments including the Removal of Untouchability Act, 1955, tried to end this evil but failed. Similarly, many legal structures, penal laws, etc. are available to check Dowry System. But the practice continues.

Moreover today our leaders have double standards. They preach noble ideas and ideals to the people but in their personal life they have nothing to do with what they preach. The need of the hour is that our leaders should first themselves practice these reforms and thus set an example for the society as suggested by Tilak. It is also a truth that education is a must to enlighten the masses. Through education people will become aware of their social problems. They will certainly realize that they should change themselves for their betterment and for the betterment of society.

On the basis of the preceding discussion it can be said that Tilak was ahead of times. He was a clear-sighted man. He wanted to put his ideas towards the society strongly and clearly. He was very strict with his principles and was never ready to make any adjustment with his principles. On the whole, it can be said that people like Tilak are the pride of our society. He was a great scholar, leader, a practical reformer, a real politician and over all a supreme *karmayogi*. Historical and political ideas are very much relevant in the present context. Only through such leaders the country could advance towards the path of peace and prosperity.

Remembering tilak today?

No nation attains greatness without pride in its history. And pride comes with self-knowledge. Knowledge about the great moments, great achievements and great personalities in a nation's history. Knowledge about its cultural and spiritual traditions which give the nation its unique identity. And also knowledge about developments in the past that weakened the nation, robbed it of its freedom, fractured its unity and sapped its vitality.

Sadly, we Indians do not take our history seriously.

Many examples prove this point. Here is one of them. Lokmanya Tilak is a largely forgotten name today. With the passage of time, it is somewhat natural for young Indians not to have the same level of popular knowledge about famous personalities of the last century. But why have the political establishment, the scholarly community and the media pushed Tilak – and several other eminent names from the freedom movement – into oblivion?

Even in the 21st century today, people see Tilak as a supreme model of revolution. Every identity till date has faced criticism. But why is that in case of Bal Gangadhar Tilak some people feel the pain of marginalisation? The Prime Minister said that Tilak continues to inspire him on the path of 'New India'.

Tilak belonged to the rare category of philosopher-politician. His ideas of swaraj and swadeshi were anchored in making every Indian conscious of the insults and injustice meted out by the British. He prepared a fertile ground for swaraj through his home-rule movement. He was clear on the aim of the home rule movement. The tone and tenor of his demand were strategically conciliatory. He wrote: "India was like a son who had grown up and attained maturity. It was right now that the trustee or the father should give him what was his due. The people of India must get this effected. They have a right to do so."

A master strategist, Tilak adroitly used the two things — constitutionalism and democracy, that the British rulers used to boast about, to his maximum advantage. To that end, he used both, his passion and professional acumen as editor and pleader dexterously. His editorials were not only hard hitting, but well-argued and still carefully-worded in order to avoid legal implications. Tilak was also known for not mincing his words. However, a scholar at heart, Tilak used both activism in the field as well as opinion to hasten slowly and attain the goal of swaraj, something his fellow Congressmen were wary of publicly speaking about at that time.

Great scholars often lack the ability and even the inclination to connect with the masses. Tilak was a glorious exception. He was a man of oceanic intellect, towering character and unflinching courage, all of which were reflected in his oratory and his writings that touched the minds and hearts of millions of people. Today, there might be some problems regarding Tilak's monument or the museum maintenance, but does that mean lack of respect for him and his thoughts? Really? The infrastructural and the cultural development is always a debate for the state, say be it for the 'Shivaji Putala' of the Art Museum, but this should not be linked to the favour of admiration.

Why has Tilak been marginalised? There are many reasons. One of them is that successive Congress governments at the Centre eulogised the Nehru-Gandhi family so excessively and exclusively that other great national heroes got sidelined. However, much of the current indifference to him can be attributed to the claims by Communist historians and Ambedkarite writers that he was a "Hindu nationalist" and Brahminical opponent of social reform. When one Ambedkarite scholar, Kancha Ilaiah, wrote a fictionalised book about Tilak – *Untouchable God*, published by Samya in 2013 – which consists of an undisguised character assassination, he barely received any challenges.

If we want to be truthful to the history of India's national liberation struggle, we ought to show admiration and gratitude to Lokmanya Tilak. This does not mean we should

be uncritical in our admiration of him. An unbiased and unprejudiced eye alone can help us gain a balanced understanding of historical developments and historical personalities.

Today, when we talk about Atmanirbhar Bharat, the legacy of Tilak is carried forward. Reviving the spirit of economic nationalism for indigenously manufactured goods and striving for social integration through culture are the features of Tilak's strategy and they continue to be relevant even today as we observe his 100th death anniversary on August 1.

Conclusion

Tilak's intense love for his motherland, his sacrifice and suffering and the values which he stood for, all became a perennial source of inspiration to his countrymen. The method for political work adopted by Tilak in the later phase of his life holds a special significance for the post-Independence period. Tilak described his method as 'responsive co-operation' and explained that he would accept the rights given by the people, use them for their benefit and continue to work for securing greater rights for them. In the free India of today, the same method can be adopted during the process of development. People have to participate in the process of development, earn the rewards and continue to work for securing for the poor all the benefits of integrated development. A positive approach, from the Parliament to the Gram Panchayat, would benefit the society all the more in India, where democracy has taken its roots. Some leaders are victims of circumstances and though for some time they earn a measure of success and popularity, gradually they fade into oblivion. A few leaders, however, rise to the occasion to confront all kinds of circumstances and help shape the destiny of the nation. Such leaders continue to live in the life of a nation long after they are no more. Tilak was a leader who belonged to the latter category and his life is a message for generations to come. He is like a mountain peak which continues to give dignity to our nation, even when fast and far-reaching changes are taking place. He has left his footprints on the sands of time, never to be effaced.

Today, we need such constructive selfless leaders who dedicate themselves wholeheartedly for the development of the society and the nation.

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