

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK



Bal Gangadhar Tilak described by British as "The Father of Indian Unrest". His slogan, "Swaraj (Self Rule) is my birthright", inspired millions of Indians. He was also conferred with the honorary title of "Lokmanya", which literally means "accepted by the people (as their leader)". His book "Geetarahasya" a classic treatise on Geeta in Marathi was written by him, in prison at Mandalay. Great journalist- editor, an authority on Vedas, Sanskrit Scholar, mathematician and a natural leader of India. He founded (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 nationalist struggle. He founded schools and published newspapers, all for his motherland.

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Where & when born

Tilak was born in Ratnagiri on 23rd July 1856 to Gangadhar Ramachandra Tilak and Paravti Bai Gangadhar in a Chitpavan Brahmin family in Ratnagiri, headquarters of the eponymous district of present day Maharashtra

Brief life history of the person

His ancestral village was Chikhali. His father, Gangadhar Tilak was a school teacher and a Sanskrit scholar who died when Tilak was sixteen. Tilak graduated from Deccan College, Pune in 1877. Tilak was amongst one of the first generation of Indians to receive a college education. In 1871 Tilak was married to Tapibai (a women belonging to Bal family) when he was sixteen before few months of his father's death. After marriage, her name was changed to Satyabhamabai. He obtained his matriculation in 1872. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts in first class in Mathematics from Deccan College of Pune in 1877. In 1879 he obtained his LL.B degree from Government Law College of University of Mumbai.

After graduating, Tilak started teaching mathematics at a private school in [Pune](#). Later due to ideological differences with the colleagues in the new school, he withdrew and became a journalist later. Tilak actively participated in public affairs.

He organised the Deccan Education Society with a few of his college friends, including Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Mahadev Ballal Namjoshi and Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. Their goal was to improve the quality of education for India's youth. The Deccan Education Society was set up to create a new system that taught young Indians nationalist ideas through an emphasis on Indian culture

The Society established the New English School for secondary education and Fergusson College in 1885 for post-secondary studies. Tilak taught mathematics at Fergusson College. He began a mass movement towards independence by an emphasis on a religious and cultural revival.

Tilak, who started his political life as a Maratha propagandist, progressed in to a prominent nationalist after his close association with Indian nationalists following the partition of Bengal. He became popular to date as “the maker of Modern India” and “Father of Indian Revolution”

Tilak was so disappointed by the brutal incident of Jalianwala Bagh massacre that his health started declining.



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Despite his illness, Tilak issued a call to the Indians not to stop their movement no matter what happened. He was preparing to lead the movement but his health did not permit that. Tilak had become very weak by this time. In mid-July 1920, his condition worsened and on August 1, he passed away.

Career in political

Tilak joined the Indian National Congress in 1890. He opposed its moderate attitude, especially towards the fight for self-government. He was one of the most-eminent radicals at the time.

Even if, though the British authorities' measures were well-meant for controlling against the Bubonic plague epidemic, they were widely regarded as acts of tyranny and oppression. Tilak took up this issue by publishing inflammatory articles in his paper Kesari (Kesari was written in Marathi, and Mahratta was written in English), quoting the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita, to say that no blame could be attached to anyone who killed an oppressor without any thought of reward. Following this, on 22 June 1897, Commissioner Rand and another British officer, Lt. Ayerst were shot and killed by the Chapekar brothers and their other associates. According to Barbara and Thomas R. Metcalf, Tilak "almost surely concealed the identities of the perpetrators". Tilak was charged with incitement to murder and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment. When he emerged from prison in present-day Mumbai, he was revered as a martyr and a national hero. He adopted a new slogan coined by his associate Kaka Baptista, "Swaraj (self-rule) is my birthright and I shall have it."

Following the Partition of Bengal, which was a strategy set out by Lord Curzon to weaken the nationalist movement, Tilak encouraged the Swadeshi movement and the Boycott movement. The movement consisted of the boycott of foreign goods and also the social boycott of any Indian who used foreign goods. The Swadeshi movement consisted of the usage of natively produced goods. Once foreign goods were boycotted, there was a gap which had to be filled by the production of those goods in India itself. Tilak said that the Swadeshi and Boycott movements are two sides of the same coin.

Tilak opposed the moderate views of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and was supported by fellow Indian nationalists Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab. They were referred to as the "Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate". In 1907, the annual session of the Congress Party was held at Surat, Gujarat. Trouble broke out over the selection of the new president of the Congress between the moderate and the radical sections of the party. The party split into the radicals faction, led by Tilak, Pal and Lajpat Rai, and the moderate faction. Nationalists like Aurobindo Ghose, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai were Tilak supporters

Tilak had mellowed after his release on 16 June 1914, because of having diabetes and also the ordeals faced in Mandalay prison. When World War I started in August, Tilak cabled the King-Emperor in Britain of his support and turned his oratory to find new recruits for war efforts. He welcomed The Indian Councils Act, popularly known as Minto-Morley Reforms, which had been passed by British Parliament in May 1909, terming it as "a marked increase of confidence between the Rulers and the Ruled". Acts of violence actually retarded, than hastened, the pace of political reforms, he felt. He was eager for reconciliation with Congress and had abandoned his demand for direct action and settled for agitations "strictly by constitutional means" – a line advocated by his rival Gokhale.



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Tilak tried to convince Mohandas Gandhi to leave the idea of Total non-violence ("Total Ahimsa") and try to get Selfrule ("Swarajya") by all means. Gandhi, though respected him as his guru, did not change his mind

Later, Tilak re-united with his fellow nationalists and re-joined the Indian National Congress in 1916. He also helped found the All India Home Rule League in 1916–18, with G. S. Khaparde and Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Annie Besant.

When asked in Calcutta whether he envisioned a Maratha-type of government for independent India, Tilak replied that the Maratha-dominated governments of 17th and 18th centuries were outmoded in the 20th century, and he wanted a genuine federal system for Free India where every religion and race was an equal partner.

He added that only such a form of government would be able to safeguard India's freedom. He was the first Congress leader to suggest that Hindi written in the Devanagari script be accepted as the sole national language of India.

Critical moments in his life

On 30 April 1908, two Bengali youths, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose, threw a bomb on a carriage at Muzzafarpur, to kill the Chief Presidency Magistrate Douglas Kingsford of Calcutta fame, but erroneously killed two women travelling in it. While Chaki committed suicide when caught, Bose was hanged.

Tilak, in his paper *Kesari*, defended the revolutionaries and called for immediate Swaraj or self-rule. The Government swiftly arrested him for sedition. But a special jury convicted him, and the judge Dinshaw D. Davar gave him the controversial sentence of six years' transportation and a fine of Rs 1,000. The jury by a majority of 7:2 convicted him. On being asked by the judge whether he had anything to say, Tilak said:

All that I wish to say is that, in spite of the verdict of the jury, I still maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destinies of men and nations; and I think, it may be the will of Providence that the cause I represent may be benefited more by my suffering than by my pen and tongue.

In passing sentence, the judge indulged in some scathing strictures against Tilak's conduct. He threw off the judicial restraint which, to some extent, was observable in his charge to the jury. He condemned the articles as "seething with sedition", as preaching violence, speaking of murders with approval. "You hail the advent of the bomb in India as if something had come to India for its good. I say, such journalism is a curse to the country".

Tilak was sent to Mandalay, Burma from 1908 to 1914. While imprisoned, he continued to read and write, further developing his ideas on the Indian nationalist movement. While in the prison he wrote the *Gita Rahasya*. Many copies of which were sold, and the money was donated for the Indian Independence movement.

Achievements

- Considered as Father of Indian National Movement; Founded "Deccan Education Society" to impart quality education to India's youth; was a member of the Municipal Council of Pune, Bombay Legislature, and an elected 'Fellow' of the Bombay University; formed Home Rule League in 1916 to attain the goal of Swaraj.



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Social Contributions

- Tilak started two weeklies, Kesari ("The Lion") in Marathi and Mahratta in English[16] in 1880–81 with Gopal Ganesh Agarkar as the first editor. By this he was recognized as 'awakener of India'. As Kesari later became a daily and continues publication to this day.
- The events like the Ganapati festival and Shiv Jayanti were used by Tilak to build a national spirit beyond the circle of educated elite in opposition to colonial rule. But it also exacerbated Hindu-Muslim differences. The festival organizers would urge Hindus to protect cows and boycott the Muharram celebrations organized by Shi'a Muslims, in which Hindus had formerly often participated. Thus, although the celebrations were meant to be a way to oppose colonial rule, they also contributed to religious tensions.
- The Deccan Education Society that Tilak founded with others in the 1880s still runs Institutions in Pune like the Fergusson College.
- The Swadeshi movement started by Tilak at the beginning of the 20th century became part of the Independence movement until that goal was achieved in 1947. One can even say Swadeshi remained part of Indian Government policy until the 1990s when the Congress Government liberalised the economy

Writings

- In 1903, he wrote the book The Arctic Home in the Vedas. In it, he argued that the Vedas could only have been composed in the Arctics, and the Aryan bards brought them south after the onset of the last ice age. He proposed a new way to determine the exact time of the Vedas. He tried to calculate the time of Vedas by using the position of different Nakshatras. Positions of Nakshtras were described in different Vedas.
- Tilak authored "Shrimadh Bhagvad Gita Rahasya" in prison at Mandalay – the analysis of 'Karma Yoga' in the Bhagavad Gita, which is known to be gift of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

Sources

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