

UNIT 8 BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

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8.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the social and political thought of a prominent nationalist, B.G. Tilak. After going through this unit, you should be able to discuss:

- Tilak's contribution to the Indian national movement.
- His views on social reform
- His views on economic questions, and
- His political ideas and activities

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Indian National Congress, from its inception in 1885, was dominated by western educated Indians. Western political ideas and practices influenced the Congress in its early years. Liberalism was the guiding philosophy of the Congress.

The cardinal principles of governing the liberal philosophy of the Congress were:

- a) Faith in the dignity of the human person,
- b) Individual's right to freedom,
- c) Equality of all men and women irrespective of race, religion, language and culture.

In practice these principles meant

- a) Opposition to arbitrary rule,
- b) Rule of law,
- c) Equality before law,
- d) Secularism.

The first generation of English educated Indians had an abiding love for the British way of life, a faith in the British sense of justice and fair play, and a deep sense of affection and gratitude towards British rulers.

They believed that contact with the British in general, and English education in particular, were largely responsible for exposing them to radical and liberating ideas such as liberty, equality, democracy and worth of human dignity. British rule was credited with having established law and order and having introduced effective administration.

Like the European liberals, the Indian Congress leaders of the 19th century believed in gradual progress. This was to be achieved through the goodwill and sympathy of the rulers. Hence, they insisted on constitutional methods.

National unity was their primary concern. They were against exploiting religious differences for political ends. They insisted on keeping politics away from religion. They were secular in their outlook.

The younger generation of educated Indians rejected the entire thinking of the earlier generation. To a large extent, changed circumstances were responsible for this. They substituted a more radical theory and practice for the achievement of the goal of Swaraj or independence for the country. The elderly leaders of the Congress were shocked by the attitude of the young nationalists. They called them 'Extremists' and dubbed their philosophy as 'Extremism'.

These young nationalists (extremists) differed with the earlier liberals in most of their beliefs and practices. The extremists did not share their predecessor's faith in the British sense of justice and fair play. They differed with the liberals in their methods as well. The younger nationalists were wary of the so-called constitutional methods and evolutionary strategy adopted by the earlier generation of leaders. The extremists preferred a radical and bold strategy. These leaders often turned to traditional cultural practices and religious traditions in order to gather support for their movements and mobilize the masses.

The younger nationalists thus succeeded in giving to the national movement a new direction and a different outlook. They were able to initiate a process of profound and critical rethinking about the nature of the British rule in India. It must however, be mentioned that changes in the overall socio-economic and political spheres had made it possible for a new and different generation of nationalists to emerge and function successfully.

The trio, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipan Chandra Pal popularly referred to as *Lal Bal Pal* led the group of young nationalists. Each of them contributed to the development of nationalist thought and movement in India. Here, we propose to study Bal Gangadhar Tilak's contribution to Indian political thought and the national movement.

8.2 TILAK : A BRIEF LIFE SKETCH

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born in a middle class family of moderate means in the Ratnagiri district of Konkan on the west coast of India on 23rd July, 1856. The family was noted for its piety, learning and adherence to ancient traditions and rituals. His father, Gangadhar Pant was a teacher by profession and a Sanskrit scholar. Young Tilak was thus brought up in an atmosphere of orthodoxy and traditions. This instilled in him a love for Sanskrit and respect for ancient Indian religion and culture. His father was transferred to Pune when he was ten years of age. This provided him with an opportunity to get higher education. After completing his graduation in 1876, he studied law. But instead of joining the government service or practising law, he decided to serve the country.

Believing that the best way to serve the country was to educate the people, he and his friend Gopal Ganesh Agarkar decided to devote their lives to the cause of education.

They started the New English School at Pune in 1876 and started their career as school teachers. However, Tilak started feeling that educating young children was not enough and that the elderly people also needed to be exposed to the socio-political reality. Hence, in 1881 he started two weeklies, '*Maratha*' in English and '*Kesari*' in Marathi. In 1885 they set up the Deccan Education Society in order to start a college which was later named after the then Governor of Bombay as the Ferguson College.

Later, due to difference of opinion between Tilak and Agarkar, Tilak resigned from the society and took over the ownership of the two weeklies. His editorship of these two journals involved him directly in the social and political affairs of the Bombay

Presidency. Through his writings in the *Kesari*, he tried to make the people conscious of their rights. In his writings, Tilak very often invoked the tradition and history of Maharashtra. These writings made him very popular among his people. It however, antagonized the government and he was imprisoned because of it on several occasions.

Tilak was recognised as one the leading Sanskrit scholars in India. This enabled him to study the classical literature on metaphysics, religion, astronomy and other allied fields. One of his most well known works is the "*Orion : Studies in the Antiquity of Vedas.*" In this book he propounded the thesis that *Rigveda* was composed as early as 4500 B.C. This book brought him recognition as a scholar in oriental studies. His second book was "*The Arctic Home of Vedas.*" On the basis of astronomical and geological data he suggested in this book that the Aryans originally belonged to the Arctic region. However, his greatest work was the "*Gita-Rahasya.*" It is a philosophical enquiry into the teachings of the *Gita*. While reinterpreting the *Gita*, he laid stress on the concept of Karma-Yoga, instead of renunciation (as its central message).

For longing about a radical national awakening. Tilak and his colleagues evolved the famous *four-point action programme*, which was disliked by the existing leadership of the Congress. The Government was alarmed and became more and more impatient and resorted to rigorous repressive measures.

Finally, at the *Banaras Congress*, the action programme was formally adopted. This was followed by Tilak's arrest who was tried on the charge of sedition. The charge was based on an article that he had written in the '*Kesari.*' He was sentenced to six years rigorous imprisonment and was deported to Mandalay. It was here that he wrote his famous *Gita Rahasya*. On being released from the prison he once again threw himself into active public life. He popularised the idea of Home-Rule. He died on 2nd October 1920.

Tilak believed that the world is the field of God and is real. It is not an illusion or *Maya*. The individual has to live and strive in the world; it is here where he has to perform his duties. The individual will, in this way, attain spiritual freedom and promote the welfare of his fellow creatures.

Despite his belief in the Vedantic philosophy, Tilak recognised the significance of religion in the ordinary sense of the term. Symbolism and popular rituals were acceptable to Tilak because he felt that these helped in forging a sense of unity and social togetherness.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note: i) Use the space below for your answers.
- ii) Check your answers with the model answers at the end of the unit.

1) What are the cardinal principles of liberalism?

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What were the basic differences between the younger nationalists and the senior (liberal) leaders?

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Ranade, Malbari, Gokhale, Bhandarkar etc. A brief account of the issues around which the controversy in the main revolved would provide a proper background to Tilak's views on the question.

8.3.1 The Controversial Issues

Following are the main issues around which the controversy over social reforms revolved.

In 1888, the social reformers in Pune proposed co-education for boys and girls in schools and colleges, Tilak opposed the proposal. His argument was that women spent most of their time at home engaged in household activities. Hence, their curricula must be different from the curricula for boys. Separate schools and colleges would be necessary for women to cater to their specific requirements.

After her return from America in 1889, Pandita Ramabai started the Sharada Sadan as a home for widows, first in Bombay and subsequently in Pune. This was a kind of residential school for widows and was financed by American missionaries. Tilak however criticized the Sharada Sadan for accepting assistance from foreign sources. Ranade and Bhandarkar who were on the advisory board of the Sharada Sadan did not see anything wrong in taking help from foreign agencies. Tilak's criticism however grew sharper and stronger and led to the resignation of Ranade and Bhandarkar from the advisory board, thus bringing to an end the controversy over the Sharada Sadan. This issue is an illustration of the fact that Tilak was a leader who was forceful and whose opinions were always taken seriously. It is this vigour and courage of conviction that made him one of the foremost leaders of the Indian national movement.

Yet another controversial issue was the introduction of the Age of Consent Bill (1891) and a similar bill later in 1918. These bills were intended to raise the marriageable age of girls. This was done in order to discourage the practice of child marriage. Tilak however, opposed both the moves on the grounds that these bills, if passed, would amount to interference in the religious affairs of a group of Indians by a foreign government.

8.3.2 Tilak's Point of View

An important question to be asked at this juncture is: Was Tilak a social reactionary? When one studies Tilak's point of view on the question of social reforms, it will be clear that this charge is not entirely justified.

Tilak was not opposed to social reforms as such. He agreed that with the passage of time social institutions and practices should and do change. In fact in his own way he waged a battle against orthodoxy. His theory of social reforms, however, was different from that of the liberal reformers whom he opposed. He believed in organic, evolutionary and spontaneous reforms. He insisted upon gradual reforms inspired by and rooted in the heritage of the people. He believed that the human society is always in a state of flux and can change only in a gradual manner. Never is there a sudden and total break with the past. If sudden and total break with the past is artificial, it is always rejected. This in turn creates disorder in society. Therefore, Tilak could not favour the idea of drastic change as contemplated by liberal reformers. He wanted social reforms to be introduced gradually. Tilak cautioned the reformers against wholesale rejection of the past. He urged the reformers to try and adapt (and preserve) the acceptable features of our tradition.

Further, Tilak opposed the reformer's thoughtless imitation of the west. Tilak never reconciled with the idea that all that is western is necessarily good. Tilak was open-minded and was prepared to accept whatever good the west had to offer. For instance, in his scheme of National Education he included western sciences and technology. His scheme of National Education was a fine blend of all that is good in the western and eastern traditions of knowledge, tradition and culture. It was a concrete expression of Tilak's own model of social reform.

Tilak was of the opinion that most of the evils that plagued the Indian society were the result of foreign domination. The most important task according to Tilak was therefore, the attainment of Swaraj which could be achieved only through united

effort of all the people. This was a more important task than social reform as far as Tilak was concerned. He believed that social reforms could be initiated, once India gained independence.

Last but not the least, Tilak was opposed to imposing reforms through legislation. He favoured spontaneous changes springing from within the society. Tilak believed that only such reforms would be effective. Besides, he was against providing an alien government with an opportunity to interfere in the religious affairs of the Indians.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
- ii) Check your answers with the model answers at the end of the unit.

1) What was Tilak's Theory of Social Reform?

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2) Why did Tilak want to postpone the question of social reform?

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3) Why did Tilak oppose the idea of reform through legislation?

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8.4 ECONOMIC IDEAS OF TILAK

Culture and religion had been the main basis of Tilak's nationalism. Nonetheless, he also advocated his nationalism on an economic basis.

He accepted Dadabhai Naoroji's 'Economic Drain Theory' and criticised the British Government for ruthlessly exploiting the resources of the country. He wrote that the foreign enterprises and investment in India have created a delusion of prosperity, while the truth was otherwise. British rule had impoverished the country. The Britishers' reckless policies had destroyed the indigenous industries, trade and art. The alien rulers had allowed a free inflow of European products and the Indian handicrafts etc. were forced to face unequal competition with them.

But Tilak realized that a foreign government cannot be expected to accord protection to the indigenous industries. The twin political programmes of 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' suggested by Tilak were aimed at generating indigenous and independent economic development. We will discuss these points in detail later. Here it is sufficient to note that 'Boycott' meant determined opposition to foreign goods, whereas *Swadeshi* supported indigenous production.

However, Tilak's views on the immediate questions of providing economic justice to the toiling masses, both in agriculture and industry had always been a matter of debate. His views on some of the issues that cropped up in his days will sufficiently illustrate the point.

8.4.1 Tilak's Views on Economic Issues

As a frank and fearless journalist, Tilak expressed his views on all the issues, small

or big, that cropped up during his times. We now propose to discuss in brief these issues and Tilak's views on them.

In 1879, the government passed the Agricultural Relief Act to bring much needed relief to the peasants who were being exploited not only by the landlords but also by the money-lenders.

The provisions of the Act were moderate. It prohibited the mortgage of land and its transfer on that basis.

Tilak's reaction was furious. He took the side of the money-lenders and criticised the Act through his articles in the *Kesari*. His argument was that it was wrong to hold money-lenders responsible for the plight of the peasants. In fact, it was the money-lenders who provide them with capital to continue cultivation. Moreover, the money-lenders themselves borrowed huge amounts from the urban bankers at a slightly lesser rate of interest. In case, the peasant failed to repay, the money-lender had to suffer. The act provided protection to the peasants but it left the money-lenders totally unprotected. It led to rivalries between the peasants and money-lenders. Hence, the Government action in this regard was improper. The law must therefore be scrapped or withdrawn without delay.

Tilak criticised these laws on two grounds. On the one hand, he argued on the basis of the theory of free contract between the employers and the employees. He compared the rights of the factory owners with those of the British planters in India. The British planters were free to employ as many workers as they wanted and decided wages and other working conditions as suited them. There was no legal restriction on them. It was free contract between the two parties. Also, he wanted that the government should refrain from intervening in free contract between the factory owners and their labourers. Besides, he argued that the Indian entrepreneurs were already disadvantaged vis-a-vis their British counterparts in India and had to face unequal competition.

Tilak remarked pungently that on the face of it, the Act appeared to be an expression of British sympathy towards Indian workers, but in reality, it betrayed England's desire to throttle nascent Indian Industry.

However, interesting enough, Tilak supported Indian workers' demands against the British owned companies. For instance in 1897, Tilak and his colleagues forcefully represented the demands of the workers in the British Indian railways and criticised it for not sanctioning them.

It appears from the above that Tilak supported the workers' cause against British companies but refused to support their just demands against the native exploiters.

In 1897, the government introduced a legislation aimed at regulating Zamindari system in the Konkan area. In the Konkan area, the Zamindars or 'khots' as they were popularly referred to had become extremely exploitative and the act would have regulated the relations of the khots with their tenants.

Tilak who was himself a khot, was angered by the proposed legislation and wrote a series of articles in the *Kesari* criticising it. Here his main argument was that *Khot-tenant* relations in Konkan were defined by age old traditions. Tilak argued that the authority of the government was limited to the revenue demand. It should not cross the limit and attempt to decide the wages or the service conditions of the workers. Tilak pointed out that the government was not doing so in the case of the tea plantations and should therefore, not interfere with the Khot-tenant relationship either.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
- ii) Check your answers with the model answers at the end of the unit.

1) What according to Tilak were the causes of the decline of Indian industry, trade and craft?

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2) What was Tilak's argument against the Factory Legislation?

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8.5 POLITICAL IDEAS OF TILAK

Tilak's main field of concern was politics. It is here that the main contribution of B.G. Tilak is to be found. Tilak, along with his associates Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, was responsible for bringing in a new kind of political thinking and action in the Congress. He analysed the national movement with a sharp focus on its objectives, and the nature of the Indian National Congress in his time. He was convinced that the Indian National Congress had to be transformed into a Congress of the people. It was to be made truly national and democratic, and its old methods of action had to be given up. It had to be more active and dynamic in fighting for its objectives. Now we propose to discuss in brief some of his important political ideas.

8.5.1 Philosophical Foundation of Tilak's Political Thought : Swaraj

Tilak was not an armchair thinker, nor was he a political philosopher in the academic sense. He was a practical politician and his main task was the political emancipation of India.

Tilak's political philosophy was rooted in the Indian tradition but it did not reject all that was western. He was inspired by the ancient Indian spiritual and philosophical works. Thus, he imparted a spiritual connotation to his notion of *Swaraj*. In his view, *Swaraj* was more than a political or economic concept. *Swaraj* was more than a law and order mechanism. It was also more than an economic order providing the necessities of life or the luxuries of a pleasurable life. *Swaraj*, according to him, was full self-government-political, social, economic and spiritual. Thus, *Swaraj* was something more than mere home rule. Home rule simply indicated a political arrangement of self-rule without severing British connection. Beyond this, *Swaraj* also implied enlightened self-control of the individuals inspiring detached performance of their duties.

Tilak felt that materialism debases human life and reduces it to an animal level.

Tilak wanted men to rise above the level of animal pleasures through self discipline and self-efforts and attain true happiness by sublimating their desires. Hence, he conceives the fulfilment of human life not only in enjoying rights, but also in selfless performance of duties. Man needs the rights to perform his duties not for the selfish pursuit of animal desires. Man has duties to himself, to his family, to his kith and kin and also to his fellow beings and countrymen. He has to work for the moral, spiritual and material well being of all of them. This is his duty. However, all this would be possible only if men and women were free from any kind of domination and control.

For the realisation of this *Swaraj*, Tilak accepted the suitability of the western liberal institutions and concepts like constitutional government, rule of law, individual freedom, dignity of the person, and so on.

Thus, Tilak's political philosophy represented an interesting mix of the ancient Indian value system and western liberal institutions.

8.5.2 Nationalism

Nationalism basically refers to a feeling of unity, a sense of belonging and solidarity within a group of people. Of course, Tilak also accepted the significance of certain

objective factors like common language, habitation on common territory, in promoting and strengthening the subjective feeling of unity and solidarity.

According to Tilak, a feeling of oneness and solidarity among a people arising mainly from their common heritage was the vital force of nationalism. Knowledge of a common heritage and pride in it fosters psychological unity. It was to arouse this pride among the people that Tilak referred to Shivaji and Akbar in his speeches. Besides, he felt that by developing a feeling of common interest, a common destiny which can be realised by united political action, the feeling of nationalism could be strengthened.

The psychological bond of unity may at times be dormant. In such a situation people would have to be mobilized. Both real and mythical factors were to play an equally significant role in this process. Tilak believed that religion, which had powerful emotional appeal, should be harnessed for the dormant spirit of nationalism.

Tilak recognized the tremendous symbolic significance of historical and religious festivals, flags and slogans in arousing a spirit of nationalism. Tilak made very effective use of such symbols. He believed that these factors were more effective than economic factors when it came to mobilizing people. Thus, Tilak propagated the use of symbols in the form of the Ganpati and Shivaji festivals which subsequently acquired tremendous emotional appeal.

8.5.3 Extremism : As an Ideology

Extremism as an ideology was different from the ideology of the moderates. The basis of each of these ideologies was different.

The liberal (Moderates) cherished the illusion that British rule was for the good of India. Their assumptions were :

- i) The British had an extreme sense of justice and fair play.
- ii) They had come to deliver Indians from the bondage of stagnation, backwardness and irrational tradition.
- iii) British Raj was a part of the divine plan for India's progress, and
- iv) That the continuation of British Raj was beneficial to India and hence they desired its continuance.

The conclusions that logically flowed from these assumptions were :

- i) Appealing to British conscience was sufficient to get one's demands granted. Pressure politics was uncalled for. Constitutional methods should be strictly followed.
- ii) Politics is a secular matter. Mixing of religion with politics is undesirable and uncalled for.
- iii) We should win and preserve British sympathy for our cause. It is in our own interest. For this, purity of both the ends and the means is necessary. Wrong ends and wrong means, it was feared, would lead to British hostility and damage our cause. So they insisted that the British should be true to their promises and fulfil them. The British had proclaimed that the good of India was at their heart. In this respect, the moderates were only demanding what citizens of British empire could rightly demand. They would not use the argument of the Natural Right to freedom and independence.

In contrast to the above, we propose to study in brief, the ideology of extremism in two parts : (A) Assumptions and (B) Logical conclusions. Tilak contributed to the development of this ideology in a big way.

(A) The Assumptions : Characterisation of British Raj

Unlike the liberals, the extremists had no illusion either about the generous or philanthropic nature of British Raj or the British sense of justice and fairplay. To them, the British were as good or as bad as people anywhere. It was meaningless to ascribe superior and nobler qualities to them in comparison with others. Like people anywhere, they too were driven by selfish motives. They stretched their imperial

power over to India in order to enslave the people and exploit her resources, and not with a philanthropic motive to deliver the Indians from the bondage of stagnation and irrational tradition. All this was an imperialist plan and there was nothing divine about it.

(B) Logical Conclusions

The conclusions that logically followed from the above assumptions were as follows :

The selfish motive of material gain being the chief drive of the British Raj, it could not be expected to take a sympathetic attitude towards Indian demands and aspirations. The British government did not stop the export of foodgrains to England even during the worst famine in India. What did this indicate? Only that appealing to their conscience was futile. The British would not concede any thing that even slightly harmed their interest. Hence, pressure had to be used in support of one's demands. Mendicancy or praying and begging for benefits would lead us nowhere.

Hence, the new ideology differed from the earlier one in almost every respect. Let us have a look at a few points.

i) Constitutional Versus Pressure Politics

Tilak rejected the efficacy of the constitutional method in the colonial Indian context. His argument in this regard was three pronged.

Firstly, he felt that constitutional methods had meaning only under a constitutional government. We had no constitution. An imperial bureaucracy was ruling India. What we had under the British Rule was only a Penal Code and not a constitution. Hence, there was no question of our adopting constitutional methods.

Secondly, his argument was that as the British would never concede anything that went against their interest, we needed to bring pressure on the alien bureaucracy in support of our demand. This could be done by involving people in the national movement. For this, they must be taken into confidence. Constitutional methods would not serve the purpose.

Thirdly, one of the ways of arousing the people emotionally was to base one's demands on the theory of 'natural rights.' The constitutional methods, on the other hand, appealed to the theory of legal rights under the constitution. Tilak felt that this was an ineffective and weak stand, incapable of arousing popular enthusiasm. The liberals pleaded on the basis of British promises and on our rights as British nationals. On the contrary, Tilak demanded 'Swaraj' as a 'natural right' and not on the basis of British assurances.

ii) Ends and Means

According to the liberals, purity of ends or aims was as important as purity of means. They justified the purity of means on theoretical as well as programmatic grounds. Theoretically, they held that noble means alone could yield fruit. Pragmatically, they feared that debasement of means would annoy the British rulers and spoil our cause.

Tilak too did not deny that purity of means was important and desirable. But, he felt that under certain circumstances this could not be a rigid rule. Means had to be adequate and appropriate according to circumstances. We should not abandon the goal only because it could not be achieved by fair means. If circumstances so demanded, we should not hesitate to use other or lesser means to achieve the desired goal. Such means too would be justified in the end. In such circumstances, we should be firm about the purity of the goal and not be fussy about the means. Tilak supported this theory by references to ancient Indian scriptures and epics like *Gita* and *Mahabharata*.

iii) Religion and Politics

In the western tradition, the liberals regarded politics as a secular affair and insisted on treating it as such. They kept religion away from politics.

Tilak's view on this point was also totally different. He, no doubt, accepted the desirability of keeping politics separate from religion in general, but not in all circumstances. Religion always had a powerful emotional appeal and Tilak felt that this powerful appeal could and should be utilized in the service of politics, particularly under the circumstances prevailing in India in those days.

To Tilak, the ultimate goal of the national movement was Swaraj. In order to involve people in the movement, he interpreted the goal of Swaraj in religious terms and insisted that Swaraj is our religious necessity. The religion and the philosophy of Vedanta emphasise equal spiritual status and destiny of each individual. This is against bondage of any kind and Swaraj is therefore, not only a political but natural and spiritual necessity.

Tilak held that Swaraj was a moral and religious necessity for every man and group. For his moral fulfilment and for the performance of religious duties, man needs to be free. Without political freedom higher freedom is impossible. Thus Swaraj is our Dharma. To endeavour to attain it is our *Karma-Yoga*.

Practically, on the mass level Tilak utilized religious festivals to arouse mass enthusiasm and to build courage and self-respect among them.

8.5.4 Extremism: Programme of Action

The philosophy of extremism also included a definite programme of action. This programme was directed towards arousing mass enthusiasm and ensuring people's involvement in the national movement. The task of the extremist leaders was fourfold—educating the people, creating in them self-respect and pride in their own ancient heritage, uniting them and lastly preparing them for the struggle to regain their lost freedom or Swaraj.

The programme of action advocated by the extremists included: (a) National Education, (b) Boycott, (c) Swadeshi and (d) Passive Resistance. Tilak contributed immensely to the development of each of these programmes.

We now propose to discuss in brief the content and significance of each of them.

National Education

The western system of education introduced in India aimed at creating a class of people who were Indian by blood, but intellectually and culturally closer to the west with an abiding loyalty to the British throne. It had succeeded to a very large extent in its objective.

Obviously the nationalists were dissatisfied with this system of education. This wanted education to infuse among the people a sense of respect and affinity for their own religion, culture and heritage. Hence, they drew a different scheme of education which they called 'National Education'.

The objective of this scheme was to remove despondency and scepticism from and to inculcate self-respect in the minds of the people. This was to be achieved by presenting to them a picture of the greatness of their past. By depicting their own past achievements and glories, it was felt that people could be pulled out of their present defeatist mentality. This was expected to render them fit for the great role they were expected to play in the shaping of India's glorious destiny.

Under the scheme of National Education, the schools and colleges were to be exclusively managed and run by Indians. Secular education alone was not sufficient because it developed a one sided personality. Religion has a salutary influence on human personality. It builds morality and courage. But at the same time, secular and practical education was not to be neglected. This was necessary for preparing the youth for their responsibilities in the present day world. The load of the foreign language study consumed nearly the entire energy of the young boys. It was to be reduced under the new scheme. The new syllabi was also to include technical and industrial education.

Thus, under the scheme of National Education, the modern scientific and technological knowledge of the west was to be combined with the knowledge of all that was best and worth retaining in our own heritage.

Another plank in the extremists' action programme to pressurise the alien rulers was 'boycott'. Tilak greatly contributed to the development of the theory of boycott and to popularise it.

Economic exploitation was one of the primary motives of British imperialism. Their reckless policies were responsible for the total destruction of the Indian industries, crafts, trade and commerce. Indian economy was forced to face unequal competition with the foreign goods which were allowed a free flow into the country. It was meaningless to expect the British rulers to protect our industry and commerce. Self-help alone was the remedy. The tools of this self-help were 'boycott' and 'Swadeshi'.

Boycott meant a firm determination on the part of the Indians not to use foreign goods. Besides, it also meant determination not to assist alien bureaucracy to carry on the administration of the country. Obviously, it was a negative tool. Nonetheless, it was expected to help the cause of Indian nationalism in three ways. Firstly, it would hit at one of the primary motives of the imperialists i.e. exploitation. Secondly, it would create determination among the Indian people to sacrifice their immediate interests for the good of the nation. This would help foster the feeling of nationalism among them, and thirdly, it would help Indian industry, trade and craft to regain their place in the Indian life and economy and develop rapidly under the stimulating influence of nationalism.

Swadeshi

Swadeshi was the positive part of *boycott* which was only a negative weapon. The Swadeshi movement exhorted the people to use indigenous products even if they were crude and costly. It also urged the educated Indians to enter the field of production, instead of pressing for bureaucratic jobs. The swadeshi movement also included in it a plan to train Indians in the art of industry and commerce. Obviously, the success of the swadeshi movement depended upon the success of boycott. The more the people resolved to boycott foreign goods, the more would be the demand for swadeshi goods.

Swadeshi was thus a positive programme to reconstruct Indian industry, trade and craft and rescue it from its dilapidated condition. Besides, it was also a powerful political weapon to cripple imperial interests in the domination of the country.

Passive Resistance

The last but not the least weapon of the nationalists was Passive Resistance. In a sense, it was an extension of boycott. Boycott implied a determination not use foreign products and not to assist alien bureaucracy in carrying out the administration of the country.

Passive Resistance urged the people to go one step further. It insisted upon nonpayment of taxes and revenues to the alien authorities. It also included a programme to train people for self-rule. This training was to be provided to the people by organising our own administrative units parallel to those instituted by the British. The villages, talukas and districts were to have parallel institutions like courts, police etc.

Thus, Passive Resistance was a revolutionary programme. It amounted to a silent revolt against British imperialism.

8.6 A BRIEF ASSESSMENT

Tilak as a political leader has been the subject of controversy and misunderstandings. He is generally regarded as an inveterate trouble maker, an apologist of social reaction, an apostle of orthodoxy and a communalist who provoked Hindu-Muslim tensions. The truth however was otherwise.

He was not opposed to social reforms as such. On the contrary, he believed in the inevitability of reforms in society with the progress and enlightenment of human consciousness. What he opposed was the haphazard, thoughtless and abrupt changes advocated by the westernised reformers.

The bitter and prolonged controversy between Tilak and his associates on the one hand, and the elderly liberal leadership of the Indian National Congress on the other, ultimately wrecked the organization and led to a split in 1967. This sometimes made him a controversial person, who would wreck institutions. The truth, however, was that Tilak was an ardent nationalist and would not allow anything to divert him from the final goal of Swaraj. He was not to be silenced by the age or prestige of his opponents. Nothing short of a convincing argument could silence him. As he could see no justification in continuing the liberal tactics, he fought against them and saw to it that the Congress adopted the right methods.

There is also a widespread misunderstanding based on a rather wide perception of Tilak being a communalist and provoking Hindu-Muslim tensions. The truth however is that, though he protected Hindus during the Hindu-Muslim riots, he unfailingly advised them to maintain peace. The help he rendered to the Hindus was for the purpose of the protection of their lives and property in the event of organised attacks. The British rulers created cleavages between the two communities and provoked the Muslims against the Hindus. Tilak wanted to resist British designs. Attacking the Muslims just because they were Muslims was never his plan or intention.

After 1907, Tilak had matured as a leader with a wider vision. Thereafter, he showed greater appreciation of the multi-religious character of Indian society and the significance of communal harmony in nation building. It was his ingenuity and tenacious efforts that brought about Hindu-Muslim accord through the Lucknow Pact of 1917.

Though Hindu Dharma and nationalism were closely related in Tilak's thought, it would not be just to call him a communalist. He was keen that the Hindus get united, but he was also keen that this unity was not an exclusive one. Different religions and communities have their legitimate place in a plural society like that of India. As we have pointed out, Tilak was a realist in his approach to the political problems and was opposed to the misuse of religion for political gains. He was also opposed to the policy of placating minorities by extending political and other concessions, because in that case, the minorities would like to continue as minorities for ever and would in course of time, become powerful enough to obstruct democratic process. Communities must come together on the basis of mutual religious and spiritual understanding. In a nation like India, where people profess different religions, this is of the greatest importance.

8.7 LET US SUM UP

Tilak was an extremist (in comparison to the moderates).

He envisaged a significant role for religion in the national movement but opposed its misuse to divide the society.

He was not opposed to social reforms as such, but he opposed the methods of reforms advocated by the westernised reformers.

Although his political philosophy was rooted in Indian traditions, he was not opposed to modernisation. He adapted the best of the modern western thought currents and institutions to the Indian situation.

He led the Indian national movement on the right track and invigorated it by popularising the four point programme of action namely, National Education, Boycott, Swadeshi and Passive Resistance.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the model answers at the end of the unit.

1) How did Tilak distinguish between Swaraj and Independence?

.....

2) How did Tilak justify the use of symbols in the National movement?

3) How was 'boycott' expected to help the national movement?

4) What were the objectives of National Education?

8.8 KEY WORDS

Transient: Changing, not permanent, not lasting, temporary

Polemic : A controversial argument over some opinion or doctrine; verbal controversy

Dilapidated : Fallen into partial ruin or decay

Speculative : Based on mere conjecture and abstract reasoning, imaginary, having no practical touch

Utopia : An imaginary island; merry dream-land

Eternal : Lasting for ever, without beginning or end, always existing

8.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Theodore L. Shay, 1956. *The Legacy of Lokmanya : The Political Philosophy of Bal Gangadhar Tilak*. Oxford Press, Bombay

D.V. Tahmankar, 1956. *Lokmanya Tilak: (Father of Indian Unrest and Maker of Modern India)*, John Murrar Publishers, London

Richard L. Cashman, 1975. *Myth of Lokmanya Tilak and Mass Politics in Maharashtra*, London

Donald H. Bishop (ed.), 1983. *Thinkers of Indian Renaissance*, N. Delhi

K.P.Karunakaran, 1975. *Indian Politics from Dadabhai Naoroji to Gandhi*, New Delhi. Ch.III pp.43-69

Pantham and Deutech (ed.) 1986. *Political Thought in Modern India*, Sage, New Delhi Ch. VII pp. 110-121

J.P.Suda, 1975. *Main Currents of Social and Political Thought in India*, Meerut Ch. 14, pp. 361-413

8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Tilak believed in an impersonal God and in the philosophy of Advaita or non duality of existence. Nonetheless, he recognised the importance of the concept of personal God and the rituals attached to it. He held that symbols play an important role in the understanding of common man and hence, he justified idol worship and ritualism for them.
- 2) Religion includes the knowledge of God and soul, their interrelationship, the purpose of human life and ways and means to fulfil it. It also helps social cohesion and peace. Hindu religion fulfilled both these conditions of an ideal religion. So he preferred it.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Tilak believed in the inevitability of social change. With the development of human consciousness, social forms too change gradually. Such changes are demanded by society itself. It spontaneously accepts such changes. Tilak's theory of social change was revolutionary and organic. He disapproved of abrupt changes imposed artificially from outside.
- 2) Tilak wanted to postpone the question of social reforms for two reasons. Firstly, because it divided the people whereas national cause demanded unity. Secondly, society spontaneously changes at the appropriate time. Any attempt to cut short the time span was bound to disturb the social order.
- 3) Tilak opposed the idea of reforms through legislation for two reasons. Firstly, he believed in spontaneous reforms. Artificially imposed reforms disturbed the social fabric. Secondly, at that juncture legislation on such questions meant inviting alien interference in our socio-religious matters, which have only strengthened imperialism and set a wrong tradition.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) According to Tilak the basic cause of the decline of Indian industry was the unequal competition forced upon it by the unrestricted flow of European products into the Indian market.
- 2) Tilak argued on two grounds against factory legislation. Firstly, it amounted to interference in the free contract between the employers and the employees. Secondly, it created additional difficulties for the Indian industry which was already hard pressed under the unequal foreign competition. It helped only the European industry.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) According to Tilak, Swaraj or independence represented slightly different orders. Swaraj meant self-rule without severing British connection. Independence meant self-rule with a total break from the British.
- 2) Nationalism implies a psychological bond of unity. According to Tilak, symbols play a vital role in strengthening this bond. Secondly, symbols psychologically prepare men to rise above their self and identify with something higher and nobler like the nation.
- 3) Boycott meant keeping away from foreign goods and foreign administration. It was expected to help the national movement in two ways. Firstly, it would cripple British rule by hitting at its very foundations. Secondly, it would prepare Indians for sacrifice and hardship and help foster nationalism.
- 4) National Education had two objectives: (1) inculcating pride in our own heritage and self-respect in the minds of the people, and (2) providing scientific and technological knowledge to them.