
CHAPTER TWO :

POLITICAL IDEAS OF LOKMANYA TILAK -

CONCEPT OF SWARAJ

C H A P T E R - II

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FOUNDATION OF TILAKS POLITICAL THOUGHT :

Like other political leader and thinker Tilak was much influenced by many things and circumstances. We must remember that Tilak was political activist and Indian Freedom Fighter. Lokmanaya Tilak does not give idea on origin of state of ideal state or any new theory but he asserted concept of swarajya and gave dynamic support to Indian nationalism. His ultimate aim was to achieve freedom of India which he called it is our birth right.

The main difficulty that any student of Indian political thought faces is the time in which the main political thinker were functioning." This applies not only to Tilak, but probably to all Indian political thinker's most of them were primarily political activists, and not pure academicians secluded from the main currents of their times. This was more true of Tilak, who practically for all his life, was mainly concerned with the mission of mobilizing people for Swaraj. Therefore, it is difficult to expect any kind of coherent political

philosophy from Tilak."¹ If political philosophy means the speculative construction of an idealistic utopia, then Tilak has not given us any picture of the politically perfect society in this sense of the term. He does not create the architectonic of the conceptually perfect state in the manner of Hegel and Bosanquet. His main problem in life was the political emancipation of India and hence there is an element of greater realism in his political ideas and outlook. However he was not a realist in the Hobbesian and Machiavellian sense of the term. He was never a political programmatist."² Lokmanaya Tilak was not political thinker like Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes or Marx. But he was political activist, who work^{ed} for Indian freedom. He was a child of Indian circumstance. His ideas and work was realistic.

Tilak's political philosophy has its roots but in the Indian tradition as well as in some of the currents of western political and legal thought. It should not be forgotten that he was a graduate of the Bombay University and had a Law degree. But he was also nurtured in a greater Sanskrit tradition and cultural environment permeated with old Hindu values. His father was a Sanskrit scholar. Tilak himself was a great scholar of the Vedas.³ Tilak was Chitapavan

Brahmin and according to some legends the Chitapavans are supposed to have come from outside India.⁴ There is no direct mention, however, of this legend in Tilak's own writings. It may be possible, nevertheless, that he had known of this legend. If so, it may be further guessed that since Tilak, on legendary basis, was supposed to be born of ancestors who had originally come to India from outside, he might have supported the view of an Arctic home for the Aryans in order to find similarities to the view of the possible foreign origin of the Chitapavans. But this is just by the way and there is no scientific evidence to corroborate this guess.⁵ Many of the Chitapavans are religious and orthodox.

The Mahabharata had a great influence on Tilak's thought. He derived some support for his view of the non-absolutism of the norm of Ahimsa from the Mahabharata. In the epic, Prahlada says to Bali, not to consider forgiveness as an eternal law. There may be occasion when compromise has to be made in the application of this law. This statement could well support Tilak's view that in politics there is not place for the absolute application of Ahimsa.⁶ The Bhagavadgita was a concrete support to Tilak in his concept of righteous violence. In his second sedition case and sentence for six years to Mandalay meantime he composed Gita Rahasya. Tilak's defence

of the political murder of Afzalkhan by Shivaji on the basis of the Bhagavdgita is well-known.

In his writings in the Kesari, Tilak has at a few places, quoted the Manusmruti⁷, and the Nitishataka of Bhartruhari. Their realism came to Tilak's support. Tilak was deeply rooted in the Hindu tradition. For his religious traditionalism he did draw substance and support from the writings of the large number of Marathi saints including people like Dnganeshwar, Tukaram and Ramadas.

SWARAJ :

The word Swaraj is a vedic word and in the vedic literature we find the word Svarat or Swaraj. Linguistically, this word has a political meaning and it meant rulership or political power or autonomy. In the upanishads, this term gained entrance into the language of spiritual metaphysics and a person having attained spiritual eminence was supposed to have achieved swaraj.

The Unique relation of the individual to the cosmic order of Sanatan Dharma was called Swadharma, self-dharma or self-duty, by the Rishis. Each created thing has a Dharma of

its nature. The Gita, the most sacred of texts, teaches the lesson of Swadharma. Man is free, but freedom may lead to either lawless or lawful. The potential for chaos exists in the universe but because of Dharma it is made lawful. So also for the individual. Freedom is made beneficial and lawful because the individual can order his life by his Swadharma. Thus it is that the classical ideal was not lawless freedom but rather lawful freedom - self-rule, swaraj, lawful freedom, swaraj meant living in accordance with Swadharma.⁸

Tilak gave a moral and spiritual meaning to the term swaraj. Swami Dayananda had visited poona in May-June 1875 , at the invitation of Ranade and Kunte by Dayananda and Tilak belonging to opposite school. Dayananda was a reformer of a militant type, while Tilak was a conservative Hindu. Both Dayananda and Tilak have used the vedic word swaraj and Dayananda certainly used it earlier than Tilak.⁹ It is true that both Dayananda and Tilak were protagonists of swaraj but there were differences in their conceptions. Dayananda certainly meant by swaraj, fully autonomy or independence Tilak was far more aware of and sympathetic to the newer economic and political ideas of western writers. He was not as trenchant a ruralist as Dayananda. Dayananda does not use the word swaraj in any

moral or spiritual connotation. Tilak on the other hand, has some occasions referred to the moral meaning of swaraj, as the virtue of the soul.¹⁰ It is clear that before Tilak Dayananda and Dadabhai Nooraji used the term swaraj but Tilak gave definite and proper meaning. To him swaraj was ultimate end and for achieving swaraj he suggest means.

" Swaraj is my birthright, and I will have it " proclaimed. Tilak . He justified the demand for swaraj on the ground that it was the birthright to the people. Thus Tilak said swaraj is natural to an individual. It is only in swaraj that an individual can acquire manhood.

Tilak and nationalist leader's looked back to the India of the past to highlight her present fallen position, once our country was on the top of glory and pride. But now hunger, poverty and despair stalked our land. One the civilization flourished and on this golden land everyone was happy and the country stood as an example to the world. They feel that only due to Mughal Empire and then British rule destroyed our golden destiny. Tilak reminded the people that it is God's will that India should be free from foreign rule and that the Liberation of the country should now be our foremost task. The future depends on you, said Tilak to the Indian people

and warned them that " No one can expect providence to protect one who sits with folded arms and throw his burdon on others. God does not help the indolent. You must be doing all that you can to lift yourself up, and then only you may rely on the Almighty to help you".¹¹ Thus Tilak inspired the spirit of activism among the Indian people. In this connection Tilak exhorted the people " we say prepare your forces, organize your power, and then to work so that they cannot refuse you what you demand ... we are not armed, and there is no necessity for arms either."¹² Tilak has much faith on Indian manpower. United, popular, non-violent action was the Campaign of the Nationalist. Tilak had defined Swaraj as " Government for the people, by the people."¹³ Thus to him the people were the great power. He had faith in God and so he had assured the Indian people that " by the grace of God we will succeeded . I am confident of success for, our cause is a right cause."¹⁴ Thus he had emphasised the justice of the country's cause and asserted his faith in the ultimate victory of justice and truth, and called upon his country men to do their duty. God helps those who help themselves. If the majority of the people in India wanted Home Rule then it would be given to them. Tilak had firm faith in the democratic principal i.e. " the will of majority must be carried."¹⁵

Tilak realised that in the greater task that faced the country the people should stand united, forgetting all the differences that divided them. The caste system had, in the past served to ensure division of labour and harmony among the classes but at present it worked to divide man from man. He taught Rashtradharma to our country men and called upon them to bring it into practice. Unity is the great power he asserted, and said that any difficult objective can be realized if unity is created among the people. Going a step further he insisted on the need of creating unity regardless of provincial prejudices - in his words - " it is our duty to give up provincial prejudices and promote unity that underlies all seats." ¹⁶ Tilak emphasis^{es} that swaraj is most necessary and for that Indian people should unite.

To Tilak, the concept of swaraj does not have only a negative meaning, that is only to be free from the foreign yoke, Tilak recognised the possibility of a native government turning tyrannical. He observed that under such circumstances the people naturally become hostile to such a regime and at times may not regret even the loss of political independence. In the last day, such was happen in Peshava rule, which was overthrown and British rule was established. ¹⁷

Political community existed only to preserve and promote the Dharma, and without Swaraj this was not possible . Swaraj, therefore, in the classical value system was moral imperative for both the individual and the community. Without swaraj life was not worth while. Tilak insisted that ' our life and our Dharma are in vain the absence of Swaraja '.¹⁸ It also needs to be mentioned here that Tilak used the word Dharma only with a view to emphasis that swaraj is not only a natural right of a people, a nation, but also its bounded duty, a sort of moral obligation.¹⁹

Tilak looked upon freedom as the chaitnya of a nation and as such essential for the existence of a society as oxygen is for the existence of the human body. He observed that the loss of political freedom hampers the vitality and moral grit of any society, foreign rule truncates and development and curbs the growth of a subjected nation and deprives it of the chance of attaining excellence in any field on life. A subject nation comes to lose the very necessary human qualities which make social and individual living meaningful.²⁰ Tilak perceives that adverse consequences of political subjection are bound to be reflected in the economic field as well and more so in the post-industrial revolution world.

By his article " Amche Udyogdhande Kase Budale " it make quite evident that Tilak was aware of this dimension of modern European imperialism. Tilak concluded that it was essential for a subject nation to strive for freedom, for its salvation.

At this juncture, Tilak raised a basic question : can a subject nation rely on the imperial power for help and guidance towards attainment of its freedom ? This question is all the more significant as the then prevailing condition in India had overshadowed the true character of the relationship between India and Britain. Foreign domination to Tilak, was the foremost and all pervading obstruction in the way of true development of nation towards ultimate freedom. Demand for freedom to Tilak, thus became imperative on the part of a subject nation.

Usually swaraj is translated to mean ' self rule ' or ' independence ' from foreign political domination. But to be free from the foreign rule is not the logical end of swaraj to Tilak. He was of the opinion that the society must be governed by the people for the interest and welfare of the people then only could it be called free.

Tilak raised the question " What is Swaraj ?" Giving the literal meaning of swaraj as rule by the natives, Tilak pointed out that an inquiring mind would not be satisfied with this explanation. Real swaraj, to Tilak was rule by the people according to the wishes of the people. Swaraj meant peoples rule and hence self-rule or democracy.²¹ He maintained that according to this criterion Russia under the czar nor Germany under the Kaiser could boast of enjoying swaraj in the true sense of the term, though both of them were politically independent and were governed in the larger interests of the nation state. And this also true with Indian kingly state.²²

The main point of Tilak's criticism against foreign domination was that it stagnates the growth of an individual deprives him of the opportunity of attaining excellence in any field of life. The purpose of swaraj was to remove those obstacle, it would not be meaningful orther wise. Hence under an undemocratic political set up people do not feel that they are enjoying swaraj.

It may be pointed out here that Tilak conceded that a democratic political set-up may at times be lacking in the discipline and efficiency of a dictatorial regime. But he maintained that it would be gratifying because there is noting

dearer to a man than his liberty.²³ He compares life in such authoritarian regimes to the life of in jail, which is also well disciplined and even well protected but fails to bring happiness to its inmates. Tilak urged that the famous adage, " self government is better than good government " should be understood in this context.²⁴ He asked the people always to keep in minds this meaning of the swaraj. Tilak hoped that with increasing political awareness people would come to identify the idea of self-rule with that of democratic rule, and would realise that the emergence of good government would not be possible in the absence of a democratic set-up.²⁵

India should obtain, firstly swaraj because that is very foundation of indian community. In Tilaks words " If we do not get swaraj, there will be no industrial progress, if we do not get swaraj there will be no possibility of having and kind of education useful to the nation, either primary or higer. If we do not get swaraj it is not merely to advance female education or to secure industrial reform or social reform. All these are parts of swaraj power is wanted first.²⁶ Swaraj was a moral imperative for there in no question which is not dependent upon swaraj. Tilak has continually emphasized " we demand swaraj, as it is the foundation and not the height of our future prosperity.²⁷

Swaraj was the goal of the Nationalist and Tilak because it had a deeper meaning than western concept of national independence, Swaraj was a concept integrally related to the value of the Indian civilization. Tilak spoke of democratic swaraj had a different meaning than is usually associated with it in the western philosophy of politics. Democratic swaraj was the opportunity for spiritual swaraj for all the people. This was a great restatement of the classical philosophy of life, relating that philosophy to the philosophy of politics of the independence movement and the goal of that movement swaraj.

Tilak clearly stated in terms, ' It is true that what we seek may seem like a revolution in the sense that it means a complete change in the theory of the Government of India as now put forward by the bureaucracy.'²⁸ This complete change in the theory of the Government in the philosophic basis of the state, involved a reapplication of the classical Indian theory of the state, as it would be modified in its forms to meet the changed circumstances of the twentieth century. This change in the theory of the government was obviously far more radical than simply an Indian use of the British form of the state. It meant a revolutionary recasting of those forms to accord with the Indian civilization's value system, it meant

the remaking of the state so that it would fulfill the purposes and become the embodiment of swaraj as it was in the Indian civilization.²⁹ We know what type of Indian civilization, no doubt it was rich, but caste system has much importance. In ancient India there were ~~px~~ republic state, elected by people but many states were kingly state.

To sum up, it may be said that to Tilak ' swaraj is my birth right and I will have it,' was no expression of his mere patriotic emotion, but of well-knit logical argument. Tilak tried to convey his concept of swaraj to the commoners in their own idiom and language. He gave the substance of the concept of swaraj in plain simple language and further explained to them that it was their natural right and moral duty to strive for such swaraj.

MEANS TO SWARAJ :

Swaraj or complete self-government for the country was the end visualized by the nationalist leader's and Tilak. Even those who belonged to other schools of thought and action were largely agreed about the goal in its ultimate form but they differed in regard to the pace of which it should be realized, commenting on these differences Tilak said " Two new words have recently come into existence with regard to our

politics and they are moderates and extremists. These words have a specific relation to time and they, therefore, will change with time. The Extremists of today will be moderates of tomorrow, just as the Moderates of today were Extremists yesterday. Every new party begins as Extremists and ends as Moderate." 30

The extremist phase of Indian nationalism is distinguished by the recognition of the efficacy of violence as an instrument for the realization of its objectives. The extremists nationalist were ethical relativists not recognizing the distinctions between right and wrong as final in life and conduct. What promised to be effective was regarded both as necessary and desirable. At the same time it must be remembered that the extreme nationalist were men of religious. They usually talk about God and God's help. " God was guiding us and he would give us strength and capacity to fight and so it was our duty to act according to God's guidance." 31

Tilak by means of his writings in newspaper and by their speeches taught Indian's about their history, need of swaraj and their proper role in society and their political rights and showed them how to struggle to achieve them. Tilak and Nationalist presented the nation with a three fold

programme for effective, practical political action. The three principles were boycott, swadeshi and national education. Originally, they were designed for use in Bengal, as the most effective way to bring the British administrators to their senses over the issue of partition. Tilak asserted that the neglect of industrial education by the British government was the main cause of the backwardness of Indian industries and therefore our industries were not able to compete with European industries. Our industries were ruined by the foreign ruler's as they were only interested in exploiting the country for their profit.

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. The Nationalist saw that the whole superstructure of the British Indian administration, that the British system of rule over India, was based upon the willing, or unwilling, co-operation of the Indian people. In speech at Poona as early as 1902, Tilak urged " you must realize that you are great factor in the power with which the administration in India is conducted. You are yourselves the useful lubricants which enable the gigantic machinery to work so smoothly." Boycott was the most important

weapon accepted by all of Nationalist leaders as the economic necessity of our country our handicrafts were deliberately ruined by the import of British goods and our people had as a result to face poverty and unemployment. This broke the backbone of our economic system. Boycott was the best way of preventing the country's death. Boycott was a humanitarian mass movement and it had political effects. Its effective use demanded courage and a large measure of self sacrifice. Tilak emphasis that ' if you have not the power of active resistance, have you not the power of self-denial and self-abstinence in such a way as not to assist this foreign government to rule over you. This is boycott and this is what is meant when we say boycott is a political weapon.³²

Tilak made the people aware of the fact that our industries were ruined by foreign rule. Even the wealth drain to England was going on and so our countrymen had to face tremendous poverty. So in order to end the poverty and to stop the wealth drain we must rely on self help. The remedy is boycott. Tilak told the people that they had a stronger weapon, a political weapon in boycott. Tilak appealed to our people that prayers, petitions and protest would not be useful unless backed by solid force. He made them conscious of the fact that

the same technique of boycott was used for attaining swaraj in other countries also. Tilak also pointed out them the examples of Ireland, Japan and Russia and advised them to follow their methods. ' Boycott moved from the economic into the political sphere, it moved from the arena of Bengal to all India. Boycott as an all India political weapon was the first principle of the programme of the Nationalist leader's. Boycott foreshadowed non-co-operation'.³³

Swadeshi initially began as a primary economic counter part to the programme of economic boycott. Swadeshi meant self-help to rely upon Indian made goods rather than to patronize the retail outlets of the import product. Swadeshi was the first great impetus to industrial development in India. Local Indian production was given the stimulus for its natural growth. But like boycott, swadeshi soon came to mean a great deal more than simple economic self-sufficiency. If there could be self-help in the economic sphere, then there must be certainly could be self-help in all spheres of life. The Dharma of action had taught self-respect and self reliance, and swadeshi extended self - reliance to self-help in all things.³⁴

Showing importance of swadeshi Tilak says " swadeshi and swadeshi will be our cry for ever and by this we will grow in spite of the wishes of the rulers. Swadeshi and national education are the two methods for attaining swaraj".³⁵

Swadeshi was a forced necessity in our country due to the economic exploitation of the British rule. Our middle class was the consumer of British goods and the British government had failed to stop the wealth drain by imposing a protective duty. Therefore our leader's felt it imperatively necessary to carry through the swadeshi movement. Swadeshi was weapon against Indian poverty and unemployment and best alternative to famine.³⁶ Tilak further explained " The object ... is to bring about the spread of swadeshi thing's visible and invisible, to bring about the gradual disappearance of visible foreign thing's and to bring about the gradual disappearance of foreign ideas also. And he added like the bodies our mind also should become swadeshi ... swadeshi thoughts should always regin in our hearts." ³⁷

Nationalist had taught Indian to become self-reliant. Independent in all things and there by to earn all those privileges and rights of free men. Swadeshi was a practical application of love of country. As Tilak said

" To recognize the land of the Aryas as mother - earth is the swadeshi movement." It was an economic political and spiritual weapon. Shri Aurobindo characterized swadeshi as a sentiment " which directed itself not merely against foreign goods, but against foreign habits, foreign dress and manners, foreign education, and sought to bring the people back to their own civilization." 38

Boycott was a negative weapon and swadeshi was its positive side. If these two were faithfully followed swaraj would certainly be attained. The next necessity was swadeshi in education i.e. national education.

The third element in their three fold programme for effective political action was national education. If it was clear to any one in India, it was clear to the nationalist leaders that the western education begun by Lord Macquay and pursued in all the Government supported school was ruinous to the future health and well-being of the nation. The younger generations were being educated away from not only their families and the great majority of the Indian people but also away from the value system of India's civilization. Government supported western education uprooted the youths from their ties to the past and made them Indians-in-name only. Western

liberal arts education especially was not a productive kind of education for young India. National education was Nationalist's answer.

The programme for national education was a logical outgrowth of the boycott and swadeshi movements. The plan involved the establishment of schools throughout the country dedicated to giving young India a truly national educational background. Mrs. Besant and the Theosophists had founded the Hindu University at Banaras to reteach the classical values and to prepare the younger generation for fruitful participation in the affairs of national life.

It was the need of our country at this stage to open schools by our own efforts and to start giving instruction in the history of our past, our own religions, philosophy and morals, so that our coming generation will be steeped in our culture and our great heritage. Tilak defined National education as " That which gives us a knowledge of the experiences of our ancestors is called education." Shri Aurobindo wrote " Swadeshi in education does not mean teaching by Indian professors only or even management by Indians only. It means an education suited to the temperament and needs of the people fitted to build up a nation equipped for life under modern

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conditions and absolutely controlled by Indians " Nationalist determined upon the policy of establishing national educational institutions all over the country and through schools and colleges they imparted knowledge of our own culture, our ancient glory, about our religion languages of the people.

Swadeshi, boycott, national education are all doomed to failure if pursued separately and for their own sake, but as part of a single co-ordinated attempt to attain an organized independence they are the necessity of the present time. Tilak similarly suggested four means of attaining independence viz. boycott, swadeshi, national education and swaraj. According to Tilak these are to be followed together and should be harmonised into a single programme.

Boycott, swadeshi and national education was presented to the country by the Nationalist leader's and was also presented to the Indian National Congress for its approval and adoption. The programme began primarily as an economic weapon but quickly its political importance was realized and became predominant. The impetus behind the programme was initially a reaction to the British partition of Bengal, but it soon developed an all India programme " An economic programme became a political programme, a locallycentered agitation became a national issue, the cause of altering a specific British policy evolved into the cause of gaining India's self-determination". 40

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