



CONTRIBUTIONS OF BAL GANGADHAR TILAK TO THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, well recognized as Lokmanya, was a prominent leader of the Indian nationalist movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His achievements profoundly influenced the political landscape of colonial India, establishing the foundation for public mobilization against British rule. Tilak underscored self-rule (Swaraj) as the paramount objective of Indian politics, promoting forceful nationalist tactics such as public agitation, swadeshi movements, and the use of the press to elevate political awareness. He adeptly integrated cultural revivalism with political engagement, advocating for holidays such as Ganesh Chaturthi and Shivaji Jayanti to consolidate communities around nationalist principles. Tilak's leadership in the Indian National Congress and his conflicts with colonial authorities exemplified an unwavering dedication to the liberation movement. In this article, contributions of Bal Gangadhar Tilak to the freedom movement in India has been discussed.

Keywords: Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Freedom, Movement, Swaraj, India.

INTRODUCTION:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a prominent leader of the Indian nationalist movement, frequently referred to as the “Father of Indian Unrest” by British colonial authorities due to his vigorous political activism. In contrast to the moderate leaders of his era, Tilak advocated for direct action and the stimulation of national consciousness by education, social reform, and public mobilization. He underscored the significance of self-governance (Swaraj) as an inherent right of every Indian and aimed to evoke patriotism through cultural symbols, festivals, and local journalism. Tilak's achievements included political, social, and cultural domains, establishing a basis for subsequent mass movements that finally contested British colonial authority. His leadership, writings, and organizational endeavors were important in shaping the initial phase of India's war for independence, establishing him as a significant figure in the history of the Indian freedom movement.

EARLY LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL FORMATION OF BAL GANGADHAR TILAK:**Education and ideological influences:**

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born on July 23, 1856, into a Chitpavan Brahmin family in Ratnagiri, renowned for its intellectual traditions and focus on education. He exhibited a keen mind and profound curiosity from a young age. Tilak obtained his basic education at local institutions before enrolling at Deccan College, where he distinguished himself in mathematics, Sanskrit, and English literature. His engagement with Western education acquainted him with liberal ideologies, scientific reasoning, and historical viewpoints, yet his immersion in traditional Indian scholarship fostered a profound feeling of cultural pride and ethical obligation. Inspired by prominent intellectuals like Madhavrao Namjoshi and the reformist beliefs prevalent in Maharashtra, Tilak formulated a worldview that integrated nationalism, social reform, and religious revivalism. He was especially influenced by the writings of Gopal Hari Deshmukh (Lokhitwadi), who promoted rationalism, social advancement, and civic participation. The amalgamation of Western rationalism and Indian nationalist emotion established the groundwork for Tilak's subsequent activity, academic contributions, and his conviction in Swaraj (self-rule) as a political and moral necessity.

Role in shaping nationalist thought:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's formative schooling and intellectual development significantly influenced his nationalist worldview. Born in 1856 in Ratnagiri, he was raised in a culturally affluent Chitpavan Brahmin milieu that esteemed education and ethical rigour. At Deccan College, Tilak acquired expertise in Western philosophy, mathematics, and English literature, while maintaining a strong foundation in Indian classical studies, Sanskrit, and Hindu scriptures. Engagement with the works of reformist intellectuals like Gopal Hari Deshmukh (Lokhitwadi) and discussions on social and political matters cultivated his sense of civic responsibility and critical analysis. This distinctive amalgamation of Western logic and Indian cultural awareness motivated Tilak to perceive political freedom as intrinsically linked to moral and social rejuvenation. His initial intellectual development directly facilitated his groundbreaking role in formulating nationalist ideology, promoting Swaraj (self-rule) as a moral, political, and cultural necessity, and establishing the groundwork for the forceful, mass-oriented tactics of the Indian nationalist movement.

TILAK'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND IDEOLOGY:

Concept of Swaraj (“Self-rule”):

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a prominent figure in the Indian nationalist movement, prioritised Swaraj in his political ideology. For Tilak, Swaraj went beyond a mere constitutional or administrative objective; it encompassed a profound notion of political, social, and moral self-determination. His conception of Swaraj amalgamated nationalist zeal, cultural renaissance, and popular mobilisation, embodying both India's historic spirit and the ambitions of a contemporary nation. Tilak contended that Swaraj signified total self-governance of India by its own citizens, liberated from British subjugation. In contrast to moderate politicians such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who advocated for incremental reforms and discussion with the British, Tilak emphasised direct political action, including protests, boycotts, and mass mobilisation, to proclaim India's entitlement to self-governance. For him, Swaraj was non-negotiable, and no concession to colonial power could fulfil India's political ambitions. Tilak associated Swaraj with India's cultural legacy and ethical revitalisation. He contended that political independence could only be attained if Indians rejuvenated their sense of national pride, grounded on historic traditions, religion, and education. Festivals, public assemblies, and institutions like the Ganapati and Shivaji celebrations were employed to cultivate patriotic awareness and unify individuals across caste and class divisions in the pursuit of Swaraj. Tilak's concept of Swaraj was fundamentally orientated towards the masses. He asserted that common Indians, rather than solely the elite, must engage actively in the political struggle. He stimulated political awareness among the populace through speeches, periodicals (such as *Kesari*), and social-religious organisations, transforming Swaraj into a collective, grassroots movement rather than a mere abstract concept. Tilak underscored that attaining Swaraj necessitated personal discipline, self-sufficiency, and sacrifice. Political freedom was associated with the moral and ethical advancement of individuals and societies. Consequently, Swaraj represented both a national objective and an individual obligation, necessitating bravery, perseverance, and commitment from each citizen. Tilak's notion of Swaraj was groundbreaking for its era. It was politically bold, culturally grounded, and morally compelling, intended to galvanise the Indian populace for total self-governance. In contrast to the moderate reformist perspective, Tilak regarded Swaraj as both a right and an obligation of every Indian, attainable through vigorous opposition and national consciousness (Krishnan, S. & Rajput, V.S., 2023).

Extremist ideology vs Moderate politics:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's political thought was characterised by a unique combination of forceful nationalism and pragmatic interaction with colonial frameworks. Although frequently linked to the

"extremist" faction of the Indian National Congress, which championed Swaraj (self-rule) via mass mobilisation, public agitation, and cultural revivalism, his methodology also demonstrated strategic moderation when deemed appropriate. Tilak underscored the necessity of employing constitutional tactics in conjunction with popular movements, asserting that India's liberation demanded both political consciousness among the populace and exertion on the British government. His philosophy starkly contrasted with that of the "moderates," who advocated for gradual reforms, negotiation, and allegiance to the Crown; nonetheless, Tilak never completely disregarded legal or legislative avenues, thereby exemplifying a mix of radical nationalist zeal with strategic political caution.

Nationalism rooted in culture and tradition:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's political thought and ideology were fundamentally rooted in the integration of nationalism with India's cultural and traditional heritage. He asserted that political awakening and the quest for self-governance were inextricably linked to the nation's spiritual and cultural character. Tilak underscored the resurgence of traditional customs, celebrations such as Ganesh Chaturthi and Shivaji Jayanti, and the examination of old writings to foster pride, solidarity, and moral fortitude among Indians. He contended that political freedom was inextricably linked to cultural awareness, asserting that a robust national identity could only materialise when Indians re-established their connection with their historical heritage and ideals. By presenting nationalism as a moral and cultural obligation, Tilak galvanised widespread involvement in the liberation fight, connecting the elite with the general populace and establishing the foundation for a culturally anchored, aggressive Indian nationalism (Hazra, S., 2021).

ROLE IN THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS:

Conflict with Moderates:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, frequently referred to as the "Father of Indian Unrest," significantly transformed the Indian National Congress (INC) from a primarily moderate, petition-driven organization into a vehicle for vigorous nationalist activism. Tilak's involvement in Congress politics during the late 19th century signified a distinct ideological shift from moderate leaders such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Dadabhai Naoroji, and Pherozeshah Mehta, who promoted incremental reform, engagement with the British, and constitutional approaches. Conversely, Tilak advocated for "Swaraj" (self-rule) as an urgent and non-negotiable objective, encouraging popular mobilisation and direct action through rallies, strikes, and the use of cultural icons such as Ganesh and Shivaji festivals to enhance political consciousness. This ideological gap resulted in significant confrontations inside the Congress. Moderates charged Tilak

with fomenting discord and subverting their incremental measures, while Tilak reproached the moderates for their appeasement tactics, which he contended did not galvanise the populace. The friction culminated in the early 1900s, especially during the discussions regarding the partition of Bengal (1905) and the implementation of boycott and swadeshi tactics, when Tilak's assertive policies garnered widespread support but estranged the moderate faction of the Congress leadership. Notwithstanding these tensions, Tilak's contribution was important in establishing the groundwork for a more radical and mass-oriented nationalist movement, ultimately transforming the Congress into a platform capable of involving wider segments of Indian society in the quest for independence.

Surat Split of 1907:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak significantly influenced the assertive and radical faction of the Indian National Congress, prioritising direct action and self-governance over incremental reforms. His influence reached its zenith during the Surat Split of 1907, a pivotal event in Congress history, where ideological divergences between the moderates, spearheaded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and the radicals, advocated by Tilak, were starkly revealed. Tilak and his adherents championed mass agitation, the boycott of British goods, and swadeshi activities as mechanisms to attain Swaraj, in stark contrast to the moderates' inclination towards petitions and negotiation with the British authorities. The conflict in Surat revealed the increasing division within the Congress and reinforced Tilak's position as a leader of the extremist side, signifying a pivotal moment in the nationalist movement by highlighting active, militant resistance as a valid approach to independence.

Leadership in the Extremist faction:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak became a prominent leader of the Extremist party in the Indian National Congress, promoting vigorous and rapid actions for self-rule, unlike the Moderate leaders who favoured incremental reforms via petitions and negotiations with the British. Tilak's leadership was marked by his steadfast nationalism, extensive mobilisation via popular campaigns, and the utilisation of cultural symbols like the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals to politically unify the populace. He explicitly confronted colonial power, asserting that Swaraj (self-rule) is the inherent right of every Indian and fostering a sense of political consciousness among the populace. Through his articles in publications such as *Kesari* and *Maratha*, Tilak motivated a generation of Indians to embrace direct action and civil assertiveness, thus establishing the foundation for a more militant and participative stage of the liberation movement inside the Congress (Ojha, R.H., 2023).

PROMOTION OF MASS NATIONALISM:**Ganapati Festival and Shivaji Festival as political tools:**

Bal Gangadhar Tilak adeptly converted cultural and religious festivities into potent tools for political mobilisation, fostering widespread nationalism among Indians throughout British rule. Through the promotion of the Ganapati Festival, he facilitated extensive public assemblies that nurtured communal togetherness and offered a venue for nationalist oratory and patriotic endeavours, therefore circumventing colonial limitations on political gatherings. The Shivaji Festival was utilised to inspire historical pride and valour, recalling the Maratha battle against foreign dominion. These festivals transcended traditional observances; they evolved into deliberate instruments for fostering political consciousness, unifying disparate social factions, and instilling a collective identity and active engagement in the independence effort.

Mobilization of common people:

The advancement of mass nationalism in colonial India was greatly propelled by the intentional mobilisation of the populace via cultural and religious avenues. Leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak acknowledged the emotive and unifying potential of festivals, transforming occasions like Ganapati Utsav and Shivaji Jayanti into instruments of political mobilisation. These festivities crossed caste, class, and geographical distinctions, fostering a unified sense of identity and communal purpose among the populace. Public assemblies, processions, and communal festivities not only bolstered cultural pride but also offered a structured environment for political dialogue, facilitating ordinary individuals' engagement with the nationalist agenda. By connecting cultural heritage with political awareness, such techniques converted passive observers into active contributors to the independence movement, cultivating a widespread and profoundly entrenched nationalist spirit.

JOURNALISM AND NATIONALIST AWAKENING:**Role of Kesari and Mahratta newspapers:**

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's journalistic efforts via the periodicals Kesari (in Marathi) and The Mahratta (in English) were instrumental in igniting nationalist awareness in colonial India. These periodicals were not simply conduits of information; they evolved into tools for political education and social mobilisation. Tilak, through insightful editorials, elucidated the injustices of British policies, challenged colonial economic exploitation, and advocated for self-rule and cultural renaissance. Kesari, characterised by its incisive and passionate tone, resonated with the Marathi-speaking community, but The Mahratta appealed to the educated elite, connecting regional and national viewpoints. Tilak's

audacious journalism, frequently provoking governmental condemnation and legal action, fostered a collective identity, stimulated public discourse, and motivated active involvement in the independence movement, establishing the foundation for a politically conscious community (Chittamma, V., 2021).

Use of press for political consciousness:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak acknowledged the press as a potent tool for influencing public opinion and igniting nationalist fervour in colonial India. Tilak vigorously propagated concepts of self-governance, political entitlements, and cultural pride among the Indian public through his newspapers, notably Kesari (Marathi) and The Mahratta (English). He utilised journalism not only to chronicle events but also to enlighten citizens regarding colonial injustices, stimulate political engagement, and cultivate solidarity against British oppression. His writings adeptly fused factual reporting with compelling rhetoric, rendering intricate political topics comprehensible to the general populace. Tilak's utilisation of the press popularised the Swadeshi ideology and underscored the need of civic responsibility, so establishing a foundation for mass mobilisation and substantially contributing to the emergence of a politically aware Indian society. Despite enduring censorship and persistent legal harassment by colonial authorities, Tilak's journalistic efforts were fundamental to the nationalist resurgence in the early 20th century.

SWADESHI MOVEMENT AND ECONOMIC NATIONALISM:

Boycott of foreign goods:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak regarded economic self-sufficiency as an essential tool for political liberation. He vigorously advocated for the Swadeshi Movement, highlighting the rejection of British products and the rejuvenation of local businesses. Tilak contended that the use of imported goods perpetuated colonial exploitation and undermined native artisans and craftspeople. Via publications such as Kesari and Maratha, he urged individuals to prioritise domestically produced goods, foster local craftsmanship, and financially endorse indigenous enterprises. This strategy served as both a denunciation of colonial economic policies and an initiative to foster economic nationalism and enhance collective political awareness among Indians. Tilak's plan integrated political action with quotidian economic decisions, rendering the boycott of foreign goods both a symbol and a pragmatic instrument of resistance.

Promotion of indigenous industries:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a prominent figure in the Swadeshi Movement, underscored economic self-sufficiency as a means to achieve political liberation. He promoted the boycott of foreign commodities, especially British manufactured items, and urged the resurgence of traditional Indian crafts and indigenous enterprises. Tilak emphasised the significance of endorsing handloom textiles, indigenous artisans, and small-scale industries, perceiving them as both a source of employment for the populace and a mechanism to cultivate national pride and economic independence. Tilak connected economic nationalism to India's independence through his speeches, publications, and involvement in public mobilisations, positioning the advancement of indigenous industries as a fundamental aspect of his political strategy.

TILAK AND REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM:

Support for assertive methods:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a crucial player in the emergence of forceful nationalism in colonial India. In contrast to the moderate leaders of the Indian National Congress, who advocated for petitions and incremental reforms, Tilak contended that constitutional means were inadequate to challenge British colonial dominance. He explicitly promoted mass mobilisation and the adoption of more confrontational strategies, such as public protests, strikes, and vigorous political advocacy. Tilak's endorsement of forceful strategies was profoundly connected to his intellectual conviction that Swaraj (self-rule) was both a birthright and a moral obligation. He advocated for the use of nationalist publications, public assemblies, and cultural holidays, like as Ganesh Chaturthi, as mediums to politically enlighten and unify Indians. Although not an advocate of violent revolution in itself, Tilak's rhetoric and organisational practices fostered an environment favourable to revolutionary nationalism, thereby motivating factions prepared to embrace drastic approaches for attaining independence. Tilak effectively connected moderate political reformers with revolutionary radicals, validating forceful techniques as essential instruments in India's quest for independence.

Influence on revolutionary groups:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, frequently referred to as the "Father of Indian Unrest," was instrumental in establishing the ideological basis of revolutionary nationalism in colonial India. In contrast to moderates who prioritised constitutional approaches and petitions, Tilak championed vigorous, mass-oriented political activism to confront British rule. His emphatic declaration, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it," profoundly resonated with young Indians, instilling a feeling of urgency and unwavering dedication to self-governance. Tilak's impact on revolutionary factions was both direct and indirect. He

fostered political consciousness and self-assurance through cultural nationalism, utilising holidays such as Ganesh Chaturthi and Shivaji Jayanti as avenues for political mobilisation. These events afforded revolutionary factions a method to organise, enlist, and disseminate nationalist philosophy covertly under imperial scrutiny. Moreover, Tilak's articles in publications such as Kesari and Maratha elucidated the inequities of British governance, fostering intellectual dissent and radical ideation among the youth. Revolutionary entities like the Abhinav Bharat Society in Maharashtra and factions in Bengal were inspired by his assertive position, employing his endorsement of direct action as a moral and ideological rationale for revolutionary endeavours, encompassing clandestine strategizing and militant opposition. Although Tilak did not overtly advocate for violent tactics, his focus on self-sufficiency, bravery, and proactive defiance fostered an atmosphere conducive to the growth of revolutionary nationalism. Historians acknowledge that his intellectual guidance served as a conduit between moderate constitutional advocacy and militant revolutionary activity, establishing him as a pivotal player in the development of India's independence movement (Waghmare, N.A., 2020).

IMPRISONMENT AND ITS IMPACT:

Sedition trials and Mandalay imprisonment:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a significant figure in India's independence movement, underwent several sedition trials because to his bold promotion of Swaraj and his impassioned articles in publications such as Kesari and Maratha. His audacious critique of British policy resulted in his incarceration under colonial sedition statutes, intended to suppress nationalist discourse. The most consequential of these cases culminated in his incarceration in the notorious Mandalay Jail in Burma (now Myanmar) from 1908 to 1914. This duration of imprisonment significantly influenced Tilak's political and personal life. During his physical isolation, he utilised this period for profound study, introspection, and fortifying his ideological convictions, ultimately emerging as a more impactful nationalist intellectual following his release. Furthermore, his incarceration invigorated popular feeling in India, transforming him into an emblem of defiance against colonial subjugation and motivating a generation of politicians and activists to persist in the quest for self-governance. The Mandalay incarceration, instead of suppressing Tilak, elevated his prominence as the "Father of Indian Unrest," illustrating the tenacity of nationalist leadership against oppressive actions.

Transformation of Tilak into a national icon:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's transformation from a regional leader in Maharashtra to a national nationalist icon was characterised by his distinctive amalgamation of political action, social reform, and cultural revivalism. Tilak initially emerged as a vigorous proponent of Indian rights under colonial authority, contesting the British administration through media, particularly via his journals *Kesari* and *Maratha*. His audacious critique of colonial policies and his capacity to galvanise public sentiment established him as a significant player in local politics. Tilak's evolution into a national symbol was propelled by his focus on popular mobilisation and cultural nationalism. By utilising festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi and Shivaji Jayanti as avenues for political consciousness, he cultivated a sense of communal identity and national pride among the general populace. His motto, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it," embodied the desire for self-governance and motivated a generation of Indians to engage in the fight for independence. Tilak's influence in transforming the Indian National Congress into a more assertive organization, particularly during the initial phase of the Extremist-Moderate divide, established him as a leader of national importance. Despite enduring incarceration and political repression by the British, his intellectual dedication and charismatic leadership guaranteed that his vision of a self-sufficient and culturally anchored India transcended geographical confines, solidifying his position as a national symbol of resistance and patriotism (Tilak, G., 2020).

HOME RULE MOVEMENT:

Formation of Home Rule League:

The Home authority Movement in India originated in the early 20th century as a reaction to the increasing demand for self-governance and political consciousness among Indians under British colonial authority. Initiated by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1916, the establishment of the Home Rule League sought to galvanise public sentiment, promote political education, and advocate for self-governance by constitutional methods. Tilak, in collaboration with Annie Besant, endeavoured to unify Indians across diverse geographies, religions, and social strata, fostering a collective national identity and encouraging political engagement. The movement employed newspapers, public assemblies, and local organisations to raise awareness and encourage active participation, establishing a robust foundation for later mass nationalist activities, such as the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience campaigns. Through the promotion of home rule, Tilak converted nationalist ambitions into structured political activity, profoundly impacting India's quest for independence.

Collaboration with Annie Besant:

The Home Rule Movement in India, led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant in 1916, represented a crucial period in the nationalist fight, highlighting self-governance and political consciousness among Indians. Tilak's leadership in Maharashtra and Besant's influence in the Madras Presidency synergised, merging grassroots mobilisation with intellectual advocacy. Tilak utilised his widespread popularity and potent nationalist discourse to galvanise local political entities, whereas Besant contributed worldwide recognition, administrative expertise, and media access to the campaign. Their partnership established a pan-Indian network of Home Rule Leagues that advocated for legislative reforms, advanced political education, and fostered civic engagement, so establishing the foundation for a cohesive national movement that surpassed regional and communal divisions (Brown, D. M., 1958).

Expansion of political participation:

The Home Rule Movement, spearheaded by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant, markedly broadened political engagement in India by galvanising the populace beyond the conventional elite. The development of local Home Rule Leagues in several provinces prompted ordinary residents, including peasants, students, and women, to participate in talks over self-governance, constitutional revisions, and national identity. The utilisation of newspapers, pamphlets, and public assemblies generated extensive political consciousness and stimulated vigorous discourse on colonial policies, so converting political participation from a restricted, elite-centric endeavour to a broader national movement. The democratisation of political engagement established the foundation for mass mobilisation in the subsequent stages of India's independence movement (Singh, G., 2018).

TILAK'S ROLE IN BRIDGING EXTREMISTS AND MODERATES:

Lucknow Pact (1916):

Bal Gangadhar Tilak significantly contributed to reconciling the ideological rift between extremists and moderates within the Indian nationalist movement. Recognising the necessity for a cohesive stance against colonial domination, Tilak championed cooperation between the two factions, prioritising pragmatic political action over individual divergences. His endeavours, in conjunction with leaders such as Annie Besant, ended in the Lucknow Pact, which represented a significant compromise: the Congress consented to share political representation with the Muslim League, while extremists embraced more moderate approaches to constitutional reforms. Tilak's diplomacy and emphasis on national unity not only fortified the anti-colonial struggle but also established a precedent for collaboration across ideological divides, exemplifying his goal for an inclusive independence movement.

Efforts toward political unity:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak played a pivotal role in reconciling the divide between extremists and moderates in the Indian nationalist movement. Recognising that internal conflicts undermined the resistance to British control, he fervently advocated for communication and collaboration between the two factions. Tilak underscored the significance of political cohesion and compromise, advocating for extremists to embrace moderate approaches while imploring moderates to endorse more vigorous nationalist initiatives. His endeavours established the foundation for cooperative activities, resulting in agreements such as the Lucknow Pact, which demonstrated a collective dedication to national interests over sectarian divisions.

LEGACY AND INFLUENCE ON FUTURE LEADERS:**Impact on leaders like Mahatma Gandhi:**

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's aggressive nationalism, focus on self-reliance, and advocacy for direct political action significantly influenced subsequent Indian leaders. His doctrine of "Swaraj is my birthright" influenced Mahatma Gandhi, moulding Gandhi's idea of self-governance and ethical fortitude in political conflict. Although Tilak promoted militant approaches, Gandhi embraced the fundamental idea of unwavering commitment to justice, reinterpreting it as non-violent resistance, therefore illustrating how Tilak's zeal and devotion to national consciousness shaped the strategic and moral paradigms of subsequent leadership. Tilak's capacity to galvanise the populace and integrate cultural resurgence with political action established a paradigm that influenced Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns and public engagement, ensuring Tilak's legacy persisted long after his death.

Contribution to mass-based freedom struggle:

The influence of early nationalist leaders on the mass-oriented liberation movement in India established a significant legacy that moulded the political awareness of subsequent generations. By prioritising grassroots mobilisation, social reforms, and the active involvement of ordinary citizens, these leaders established a framework for inclusive nationalism that transcended elite politics. Their techniques of mass mobilisation, educational outreach, and advocacy for socio-economic rights motivated later leaders to embrace a people-centric approach to the independence cause. This legacy not only fortified the determination of communities across areas but also fostered a culture of political engagement, resilience, and leadership that persisted in influencing liberation fighters and post-independence nation-builders. Their efforts connected leadership with the populace, instilling democratic principles and participatory activity at the heart of India's quest for sovereignty (Arya, A., 2021).

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF TILAK'S CONTRIBUTIONS:**Strengths and limitations:**

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's contributions to India's liberation movement were characterised by both visionary leadership and intricate limits. Tilak adeptly popularised the concept of Swaraj (self-rule) as a national objective, intertwining political action with cultural revivalism, particularly by advocating for the Ganapati and Shivaji celebrations to encourage widespread involvement. His resolute position against colonial policies, focus on educational reform, and promotion of militant nationalism galvanised a generation of leaders and mobilised the populace outside the urban elite. Nonetheless, his methodology had significant constraints. Tilak's emphasis on Hindu cultural icons occasionally estranged minority communities, and his support for militant political strategies diverged from the more moderate or inclusive tactics seen in the liberation movement. Moreover, his fervent concentration on urgent political agitation sometimes eclipsed initiatives aimed at comprehensive social transformation, including the rectification of caste disparities. Consequently, Tilak's legacy is fundamental in building nationalist awareness, embodying a fusion of transformational ambition moderated by social limitations.

Historical debates on his methods:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's contributions to India's freedom movement have been a focal point of vigorous historical discourse, especially about his methodologies. Although he is revered as the "Father of Indian Extremism" for championing assertive nationalism, his focus on mass mobilisation via festivals, public assemblies, and the elevation of cultural icons such as Ganapati and Shivaji has attracted censure from contemporaries and subsequent historians for inciting communal sentiments and favouring agitation over constitutional reforms. Academics contend that his aggressive position, encompassing his advocacy for Swadeshi and boycotts, invigorated political consciousness while simultaneously polarising society and provoking severe colonial repression, underscoring the conflict between radical action and moderate, incremental reform strategies. Consequently, Tilak's legacy is characterised by his remarkable capacity to evoke national awareness and the controversial nature of his assertive tactics within a varied colonial framework (Prashantha, N., 2018).

CONCLUSION:

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, renowned as the "Father of Indian Unrest," significantly influenced India's quest for independence. His unwavering advocacy for Swaraj (self-rule) and his audacious opposition to colonial oppression galvanised a generation of Indians to engage actively in the independence fight. By

implementing projects that advocate for vernacular education, revitalising traditional events such as Ganesh Chaturthi to foster political consciousness, and spearheading movements. Tilak effectively integrated nationalism with cultural identity, transforming the freedom struggle into a mass movement. His writings, especially in publications such as *Kesari* and *Maratha*, fostered political awareness and audacity among Indians. Despite enduring incarceration, Tilak's steadfast dedication illustrated that the struggle for freedom included both intellectual engagement and actual involvement. Tilak's achievements established a robust intellectual and organisational framework for India's eventual independence, bequeathing a legacy that continues to inspire both leaders and citizens.

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