CHAPTER-VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Tilak had not set out to write a well-organized, well structured and coherently stated academic treatise on politics and political philosophy. The socio-political conditions in a subject country were not very much conducive to theoretical discussion about any conception of the State, of the relationship between the State and the Individual, of the authority of the State, the rights of the citizens, and related issues. Actually, it was by the sheer force of circumstances that Tilak was drawn into the vortex of practical politics, and thus, primarily, was an activist. In a way his thoughts are his reactions to the events in which he participated. However, as a keen observer of men and events Tilak applied his sharp intellect, acutely analytical mind and sound mathematical judgment to the mission he had undertaken. He chose to go beyond the immediate, and sought to interpret the facts independently so as to get a correct grasp of the situation before formulating his strategy. This brought him face to face with many basic political and social issues. His thoughts, therefore, do not remain merely reflections, and go beyond and, at times, strike at certain basic philosophical issues. He touched some of the fundamental problems related to political and social philosophy. It is revealing to note that Tilak's thoughts are interrelated. Although scattered through his speeches and writings, and spread over a considerable time span, his thoughts have an
internal consistency, bearing the stamp of powerful intelligence and moral convictions.

This definitely brings out the need of assessing Tilak as a thinker rather than only as an activist and agitator. Tilak's role as an activist and agitator has, thus far, been highlighted vis-a-vis his role as a thinker. This projection of Tilak has ended in his partial and incomplete assessment. This has resulted in over-looking the positive contribution of Tilak to political and social thought. It is surprising that even those who hail Tilak as the 'Father of Indian Unrest', and give him credit for starting a mass movement fails to take full cognizance of his conceptual argument. As a result, the analysis and interpretation of Tilak's thought has remained narrow, limited and negative in character. Narrow and limited in the sense that it was considered that for Tilak, 'Swaraj' in the restricted sense of overthrowing the British rule was the ultimate Goa. It is, at times, suggested that in the post Independence era: Tilak had lost all relevance; Negative in the sense, it is alleged that Tilak wanted to reinstate Peshwai.

Tilak's observations need to be studied in the light of the circumstances in which he lived. Thoughts do not emerge in vacuum. This, specially, applies to an activist like Tilak. Moreover, Tilak was a resident of a subject country. As such, the issue of Swaraj emerged as the focal point of his political and social thought, and his priorities were fixed accordingly. Tilak had to face situational constraints and was compelled to take pragmatic positions. Effectiveness of the strategy adopted, thus, many times became the main criterion. Tilak, therefore, could be understood only against the backdrop of the
typical Indian conditions and of his own understanding and assessment of the same. It is possible, at least some of the deficiencies, lacunae and discrepancies in his views emanated from this situation.

At this juncture, it may be pointed out that certain critics tend to connect the further developments in India, e.g., Muslim separatism, stagnation of the Social Reform movement, emergence of the forces of Regionalism etc. to the positions and views held by Tilak. In this context, it need be pointed out that Tilak was not the sole operator on the Indian political and social scene. There were other actors also, and as has been observed earlier, each and every one of them was responsible for shaping the Indian situation.

While understanding Tilak's thought, it has, further, to be remembered that he was a man of the masses, had real concern for the masses, and also was genuinely comfortable with the masses. At the same time, it must be re-emphasized that people did not mean to him a mere flock or a multitude. This point needs special mention. In modern times, many a dictators have utilized their mass-appeal and their mass mobilizing capacity for furthering their own interests. Mass-mobilization was actually used by these dictators for anti-democratic, anti-liberal purposes.

Tilak's analysis of contemporarily situation had given him the clear perception that politics is a game of worldly people and not of Sadhus (pious, saintly people). This understanding helped him to arrive at a realistic and objective view of the phenomenon of Imperialism, the issue of 'Swaraj as also the issue of Political Relationship in general.
Tilak's political and, especially, his social thought further bears a definite imprint of his understanding of 'Human nature' and of the working of Human mind. As has been observed earlier, Tilak believed that Human mind is a combination of 'Divine' and 'Animal'.

Last but not the least, Tilak's own temperament, personality traits and beliefs are definitely reflected in his thinking. His approach, even to such sensitive issues as that of Swaraj or Nationalism was not basically emotional. He had an ascetic bent of mind. These had both a positive and a negative influence.

As has been stated in the introductory chapter, as a resident of, a subject-country, Swaraj Political freedom formed the focal point of Tilak's political as also social thought. It goes without saying that any assessment of Tilak's thoughts should start with a total perception of his views regarding Swaraj. In his treatment of the issue of Swaraj, as discussed in the foregoing chapters, Tilak emerges more as a thinker than as an agitator or activist.

Tilak’s approach to the issue of Swaraj is remarkable. His justification of Swaraj brings out, convincingly, that he had a clear grasp “of the phenomenon of Political Power and a deep understanding of its working. Tilak’s decision to take a ‘general’ view of the IndoBritish relationship and treat it only as a specific specimen of Imeprecial-relationship model is a sure indication of his grasp.

Tilak’s significance as a political thinker lies in the fact that he realized that for a proper appreciation of the issue of Political Freedom it need be
reviewed against a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of Imperialism as also the full implications of Imperial relationship. Emphasizing the truth that empires are founded necessarily for promoting the national interests of the Imperial power, Tilak, convincingly, brought out the contradiction of interests inherent and inevitable in this very relationship. He, therefore, rightly, insisted that it would be nothing but a political naivety to hope that Imperial rulers, however liberal and progressive otherwise, would ever perform the role expected of an agent of modernization and fulfill the obligations expected of a true Gum. The uniqueness of Tilak’s approach is his awareness of this phenomenon. It should be recalled, in this context, that Tilak had refused to distinguish between the British Conservatives and Liberals. It is all the more important that Tilak showed this awareness at the peculiar historical juncture when the British rule was being looked upon as Divine Dispensation.

It need be re-emphasized that Tilak’s justification of Swaraj, thus, does not emerge simply as an emotional out-burst of patriotic feeling. Similarly, neither it is a product of romantic nationalism nor historical nostalgia. Tilak’s justification of Swaraj emanates from his objective perception of the phenomenon of Imperial relationship. It develops as a well-knit rational argument, having universal validity. Its relevance is not confined only to India. In fact, it may be claimed that Tilak’s advocacy of Swaraj for India was but a logical sequel to his perception and understanding of the phenomenon of Swaraj Political Freedom.
It is revealing to note that Tilak recognized that no freedom struggle armed or unarmed could hope to succeed without the involvement and participation of the common people. Self-reliance, for Tilak, did not just mean non-reliance on the foreign rule. Tilak’s elaboration of the concept of self-reliance is, thus, both revealing and striking. It exhibits Tilak’s vivid perception of the relationship between the sustenance of political power of a government and public opinion. As is well-known, Tilak had not totally given up the choice of an armed revolution. But he did clearly perceive that no Imperial power could be challenged so long as it enjoyed the support, co-operation or even a tacit consent of the subject people. Further, convinced that once the Imperial power forfeits its claims to legitimacy, it could no more hope to perpetuate in power, Tilak repeatedly emphasized the need of bringing the common people in the main-stream of the national struggle.

Tilak’s eminence lies in the fact that he advocated the need of mobilizing the people not only because Indians were, then, not in a position to use arms. As he himself had emphasized, no where has armed revolt proved successful without public backing. It must also be noted that Tilak was aware that the process of mass-mobilization was bound to be slow and painstaking requiring lot of patience.

Tilak’s greatness lies in his faith in the capacity of the masses though poor and ignorant to be educated, to become organized and politicized. They are only to be made aware of their true potential, and assured that their future rests entirely in their own hands. This done, affirmed Tilak, the same people
who were accustomed to look upon themselves as insignificant non-entities, would dare to challenge the Imperial rulers. It was his firm conviction that once a feeling of patriotic self-confidence is aroused, the people would be ready to undergo any sacrifice for achieving their cherished goal of Swaraj. One could rely upon people’s courage and capacity to resist, emphasized Tilak. It is, thus, evident that he correctly identified a new locus of power and strength among the masses. This is his major, significant addition to Political thinking. This realization on his part is a sure sign of Tilaiık’s insight into Political process which sets him apart from his contemporaries who never realized the importance of such a move. It could be claimed that Tilak was the first to think on these lines.

It further goes to Tilak’s credit that he not only envisaged the necessity of securing a mass-base and giving a mass-orientation to freedom struggle, but also formulated a programme. As he did not have any ready-made model, Tilak envisaged his own model. Through his five-fold strategy, based on a well thought, out logic, he as if framed a blue-print for ‘mass mobilizations’, namely: (I) Communication (ii) Aggregation (iii) Awareness (iv) Organization and (v) Self-identification and Involvement. Tilaic’s insistence on the use of vernacular languages, his introduction of the national festivals to facilitate a meeting ground with the common people, bring out, quite evidently, that he had a clear view about establishing effective communication. Of course, these methods had their limitations.
Yet, it must be noted that Tilak himself was aware of such deficiencies, and put in special efforts to minimise them. It could, thus, be claimed that Tilak thought of and paved a new path. This could, even to-day, provide effective guide-lines. Through this programme, he hoped to unleash the much-needed revitalizing forces.