CHAPTER-II

SWARAJ: JUSTIFICATION

“Swaraj is my birth-right and I will have it” was not just a rhetorical expression of Tilak’s patriotic emotions. Even a cursory study of his argument about Swaraj clearly reveals that a complete well-knit argument underlies this expression.

Tilak equated freedom with the right of a people to shape their own destiny. As such, he thought that freedom was the natural right and moral necessity of every nation. He maintained that a people have the right to claim freedom just by the virtue of their becoming a human society and that no further justification is necessary. It is just sufficient to declare: “We are human beings and as such we have the right to be free”\(^1\).

To Tilak, ‘desire for freedom’ was a natural human instinct\(^2\) and ‘to strive for freedom’ was an ‘inherent right of every people’\(^3\). Accordingly, there is no need for the subject people to prove that they deserve freedom; for, it is only in the conditions of freedom that a people can develop the necessary virtues and qualities for freedom. In a way, he was echoing the maxim, “it is liberty alone that makes people fit for liberty.”

Tilak, further, looked upon freedom as the Chaitanya—the elan vital\(^4\) of a nation and as such, he maintained that it was vital for the very existence of any human society. Tilak likened freedom to Tejas—one of the Panch-Maha-Bhutas (the five vital elements)—that acts as the source of all life. To clarify his point further, Tilak used a metaphor. As he observed, “Even a speck of light has
more luster than a heavy rock”,⁵ and added that “once that vital spark is extinguished, a nation is reduced just to vegetative life”.⁶ Tilak held that loss of freedom hampers the vitality and the moral grit of any nation. In other words, foreign rule truncates the development, curbs the growth of the subject nation and deprives it of the chance of attaining excellence in any field of activity. Foreign rule eats into the vitals of the subject nation and deprives its people of all the essential qualities that lend meaning to human life.⁷ In short, foreign domination emasculates any subject people. This is reflected in the total loss of hope on the part of these people.⁸ Political freedom, for Tilak, was therefore a pre-condition of moral human existence, and hence, he felt that loss of freedom should be a matter of prime concern for any people. As Tilak held, all wisdom is rendered helpless and mute in the face of political power which calls for regaining political freedom.⁹ He, accordingly, observed that “Just as ‘Self-emancipation’-Mukti-is the ultimate aim of any individual, (‘Freedom’) is the ultimate aim of any nation”.¹⁰

The demand for Swaraj thus becomes morally imperative. Freedom thus emerges, according to Tilak, not merely as a natural right but a moral necessity as well.

Tilak, therefore, looked upon political freedom as a moral obligation, a sort of bounden duty of every individual Purushan. He not only claimed that freedom was a natural instinct but believed in its evident corollary too: “One who does not think freedom as a natural phenomenon may be looked upon as a
His advocacy of Swaraj for India was, thus, the logical sequel to his perception and understanding of political freedom.

It is true that in the beginning, Tilak was basically concerned about the fact that foreign domination was transforming Indians from all walks of life into mere dwarfs. His objective, initially, was a limited one: to try to find some means of ameliorating the conditions of the Indians. Once, however, Tilak applied his mind to this issue, he chose to take a ‘general’ view of the situation: to treat the Indo-British relationship as a specimen of the ‘imperial-relationship’ model.

As a keen observer of the situation, Tilak thought it necessary to analyse and interpret the overall situation in the country, independently and preferred to draw his own conclusions. It should be noted that to start with, Tilak is seen to be evaluating the overall impact of the ‘imperialrelationship’ on India as a subject country. In the analysis of this relationship, the first expression of Tilak’s anxiety was about the ready reception of and submission to the (‘cultural) domination’, on the part of the Indians; and the ‘claims of cultural superiority’ of the British imperialists. As he observed, “It is but natural that an alien power-especially when it represents a different culture always strives to maintain its cultural domination. The same must have happened when the Aryan culture was implanted in India. The same phenomenon is operating in India under the British. The ways and means’ of course, are different but the underlying motive remains the same”\(^{12}\).
He further observed, with deep concern, that “The (foreign) rulers have captured all positions of responsibility which require qualities such as zeal, courage, initiative etc. and have reduced us merely to the status of human machines. In other words, the essential human qualities were being suppressed and ‘the human being’ degraded. The foreign rule, Tilak was convinced, had made the Indians weak and spineless. He feared that “if this subjection sustained for long, it would adversely affect all the potential and even the will of the Indians for freedom, so much so that if at all the British happen to leave India as rulers, the Indians would not mind accepting, sheeplike, the subjection of a new master. He was, particularly, distressed over the fact that the peculiar political environment transfigured even the highly-educated Indian intellectuals into mere nursery plants. It is significant that Tilak frequently refers to this simile. He claimed that, while imparting education to the Indians, the British rulers were all cautious that none of these saplings grew to their proper heights. This phenomenon, Tilak pointed out, had adversely affected the emergence of a courageous leadership which would be in a position to give proper direction to the national movement. This had immensely disturbed Tilak.

Tilak was quite conscious that the adverse consequences of foreign domination were bound to be reflected in the economic sphere as well, and more so in the post-Industrial revolution era. To Tilak, this was the logical consequence of the colonial relationship between the two nations (Great Britain and India). He referred to the deteriorating agricultural conditions and
observed that iii a predominantly agricultural country like India, this meant a
general deterioration of the entire nation. He, likewise, took cognizance of
India’s total dependence on the industrial West. Tilak used a most appropriate
term to describe this phenomenon, ‘Audyogik Partantrya’ (‘Industrial)
Subjugation’. As early as in 1894, he observed, “Presently, our people’s
capacity has been reduced to producing only raw materials. All manufactured
goods are coming from the West, which has turned ourselves into total
dependence. We are struggling to acquire the specific rights which the British
already enjoy. We feel restive because we cannot conduct our affairs, in the
way we like, and we clamour for such a position. However, we fail to acquaint
ourselves with the real nature of our industrial subjugation to the British.
Because of this subjugation, we have become so paralytic that we have been
left incapacitated to prove our mettle. As we fail to understand it correctly, the
chains of industrial slavery continue to tighten us and this is beyond our
forbearance. The earlier we realize that we are being crushed under this
economic subjugation the better.”

Fully aware of the overall conditions, Tilak thought it necessary to
inquire as to why the Indians were suffering a setback both spiritually and
materially, and were experiencing deprivation under the ‘refined’ governmental
system of the ‘enlightened’ foreign rulers.

It was not that the other prominent Indian leaders were unaware of these
phenomena. In his evidence before the Welby Commission, Gopal Krishna
Gokhale, one of the leading Moderates, had observed that “a kind of dwarfing
or stunting of the Indian race is going on under the present system". But the Moderates did not think it necessary to relate this to the imperial relationship between the two nations. On the contrary, the Indian Moderates were carried away by the lure of ‘liberal, democratic, and benevolent character’ of the British rule. They not only came to appreciate the norms and values of democratic liberalism but also felt that the then prevailing social and religious conditions in India were, in no way, harmonious with these ideals. British Liberals including Gladstone, had declared that it was the mission of Britain to spread the light and message of democratic institutions throughout the world. Taken in by these ‘pious’ proclamations, the Moderates came “to look upon the Britisher as a teacher, a guide, a friend and philosopher” The Moderates hoped that the British, true to their proclamations, would sincerely bear the responsibility of a true Gunt-the Saviour. Thus, the Moderates believed that (“the...”) the (British) empire was not a cruel infliction but a God-sent institution meant for the development of best interests of India”  

The Moderates, as well, were not unaware of the deepening poverty due to the increasing economic exploitation. Their contribution in this field is well-known (especially that of Dadabhai Naroji, Justice M.G. Ranade, G.V. Joshi and R.C. Dutt’). They, however, did not feel any need to despair. The Moderates believed in the British sense of justice; they felt that the material injury was the result of lack of the proper understanding of the Indian situation on the part of the British authorities. The Moderates hoped that if properly approached and correctly briefed, the ‘magnanimous’ British rulers and British
people would correct their path and make the necessary modifications. They, thus, hoped to reconcile their faith in the ‘providential character’ of the British rule with their experience that the alien rule had been materially injurious to India. They believed that the British nation “would, on no account, knowingly do a wrong to, or degrade or impoverish a people...” They hoped to make themselves fit for self-government with the help and guidance of the ‘liberal British Gums.’ Hence, they concluded that, “in the peculiar circumstances of India, inspite of the humiliations of the situation... no real progress for the country was possible without the continuation of the British rule”

Tilak, however, refused to be taken in by the proclaimed intentions of the alien rulers, and be carried away by the potential than the real. Instead, he thought it necessary to take a ‘general’ view of : the Indo-British relationship.

It goes to Tilak’s credit that once he applied his mind to the issue, he chose to look upon Indo-British relationship only as a specific case, a specimen example of the imperial-relationship model, and tried to investigate the problem in that light. There is ample evidence to prove that Tilak was not unaware of the plus points of the British rulers. He conceded that the British rulers were comparatively more considerate and liberal. And yet, he maintained that one should not lose sight of the fact that ultimately, even the British would be behaving as ‘imperial’ rulers working within the parameters of ‘imperial-relationship model’. Tilak, thus, realized the need of investigating whether a subject nation can hope that the imperial nation-howevers generous and liberal otherwise-would render them the requisite guidance and help in the process of
attainment of Swaraj. To get the answer, he felt, it was essential to properly understand the true character of ‘imperial relationship.’ Tilak believed that it was only after such an investigation that one could draw correct inference about the Indian situation, name, the real implications of the Indo-British relationship.

It is remarkable that Tilak proceeded with a clear understanding about the motives behind empire-building. He elaborated, “No nation would rule any other nation with a pure welfare motive. Empires are built and used necessarily to seek and achieve national interest.” Observing that the imperial system of government is never based upon generosity or on altruistic motives, he added that “Empires are essentially built with a view of exploiting the subject nation for the imperial nation’s own benefit. It is a business of exploitation.” As such, there naturally exists and will always exist an inherent, inevitable, as also unavoidable contradiction in the interests of a subject nation and those of the imperial nation. Tilak maintained that the same logic would apply also to the British empire. He reminded, “The British empire belonged to the ‘Whites’-the Britishers-and not to the ‘non-whites’-the Indians,” and, naturally, was run in the interest of the whites.

Such exploitation, to Tilak, was an inalienable feature of every imperial relationship. Referring to the popular impression that the British people or their officials have changed their mode of behaviour once they consolidated their rule, Tilak observed that this did not mean that they had changed their nature; previously, it was latent, now it is manifest; that’s all. He declared that the
British have not come down to India, all the distance of six thousand miles, with catholic intentions of liberating the Indians.\textsuperscript{33}

Tilak had thus no illusions in his mind regarding the true nature of the British imperial rule in India. He refused to accept that there was any qualitative difference between Great Britain and other European imperial nations in their lust for power-domination.\textsuperscript{34} Hence, it was necessary not to be taken in by the diplomatic language of the British imperial rulers.

The Indian experience, according to Tilak, only substantiated this observation. He asserted, “A nation, loving both justice and liberty, and proud of having reached the peak of reforms, is ruling India; yet, we are finding it difficult to put a hault to our degenerating economic conditions only because of the ‘alienness’ of our rulers.”\textsuperscript{35} This, added Tilak, only proves that even such a liberal country could not be an exception to the rule.

The uniqueness of Tilak’s approach lies in the awareness on his part of this phenomenon. It stands in glaring contrast with the faith of the Moderates in the providential character of the British rule in India. This does not mean that the Moderates were less patriotic or were, in any way less, interested in the attainment of self-rule. Tilak, himself, even at the height of his disagreement with the Moderates, had commented that there is no difference between the solicitude of the Extremists and of the Moderates?\textsuperscript{36} But the Moderates held fast to their belief that the regeneration and advancement of India depends on the continuance of the British rule. It may be added here that a few of the English liberal leaders were aware of the contradiction between the two roles-
as an imperial nation and as disseminators of Liberal thought—and sincerely sought to reconcile these. If anything, this only helped further in strengthening the faith of the Moderates. Convinced otherwise, Tilak challenged the validity of the Moderates’ position. He pointed out that the Moierates were overlooking the simple fact that the interests of any imperial nation and the subject nation would necessarily be at variance.

It should be noted that Tilak further extended the same logic and refused to make any distinction between the Conservatives and the Liberals in Great Britain: “Whether a Liberal or a Conservative, everyone-barring a few genuinely generous—is intoxicated with the spirit of Imperialism”.37 He observed that those few who did entertain genuine sympathy for the Indian cause, would not be in a position to materially influence the imperial policies and mend the behaviour of the bureaucracy. “The worldwide British Empire is not run on liberal principles either of Spencer or Morley.”38 Tilak added, “If Morley, by attaining the position of Secretary of State, hastens to liberate the conquered people of India, entire England will catch fire and, in the meantime, burn to ashes the very political existence of Morley”39

The Moderates in India had hoped to join hands with the British Liberals in the belief that both of them were natural allies.

They (Indian Liberals) viewed the deteriorating Indian conditions as just a transitory phase. W.C. Banerjee had hoped that “the return to power of the Liberal party in Britain would sooner or later enable the Indians to redress all their grievances and help them to acquire a real share in the government of
their countr’. Tilak, on the contrary, felt that it was essential to understand that those who wield the reins of power in Great Britain would have their natural leanings towards their own kith and kin. They would wish to protect the interests of the and would support the Bureaucracy in India. He further added that the same constraints would prevail in the formulation of the Imperial polices, irrespective of the party in power. He saw little difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals:

Both would love to rule India with an iron hand. The only difference was that while the Conservatives did not feel ashamed of exhibiting their iron fist, the Liberals preferred to put on a velvet glove. Tilak was amused to observe the Moderates had to be hoping that Morley would lay the imperial policies, any differently.

Tilak commented that to cherish the hope that the colonial exploiters would, out of altruistic motives, take interest in redressing the grievances of the subject people when their own interests were at stake, was the height of political naively. “It was sheer political folly not to understand the real implications of the high-levelled philosophical and benevolent language of the ‘liberal’ foreign rulers. To hope in this manner was to bring to the notice of the world that we are ignorant even of the basic principles of politics and therefore, are deceived.” It was easy, Tilak observed, to express altruistic motives and give generous assurances. However, when it boils down to giving up one’s claims to vast material exploits, hardly could that person be expected to admit the injustice done by him and keep up his pledges. To Tilak, therefore, this
phenomenon reflected nothing but a human weakness. What the old school of Moderates considered as ‘accidental’ he regarded as ‘inevitable’. What they called ‘un-British’ was, in his opinion, only ‘human’. Tilak, further added, had the Indians been in place of the British, they too would not have acted differently.46

Tilak observed, elsewhere, “there is no empire lost by a free grant of concessions by the rulers to the ruled. History does not record any such event. Empires are lost by luxury (etc.).... But an Empire has never come to an end by the ruler’s conceding powers to the ruled”...47. It is not in human nature to do so.”48

This observation proves that Tilak was taking a ‘general’ position when he claimed India’s right to freedom. It must be added here that he, accepted that the British rule and the British people were more liberal and more considerate than those of other imperial nations. Still, he maintained that with all their sense of liberalism and justice, the British in India would not be and could not be an exception to this rule. Therefore, freedom was a ‘must’ for India as it is for any other subject people. Indians could not, thus, depend upon the rulers for help and guidance of any kind.

Some critics argue, “Tilak” shared neither Gokhale’s aspirations nor his evolutionary inclination. He saw the moat rather than the bridge between his world and that of the West. Where Gokhale was synthetic, Tilak was chauvinistic. Instead of international harmony, he preached the national revolution.”49 The discussion referred to above, should prove that it was not
Tilak’s narrow-mindedness but, his correct perception of the true character and limitations of the Imperial relationship that had led him to insist upon Freedom i.e., separation from the British Empire. Here, he was blaming not the British as such but then prevalent relationship. He maintained that it was this peculiar relationship between an imperial nation and a subject nation in an imperial set-up that denies all possibilities of the emergence of a fruitful dialogue and co-operation between two such nations on the international plane. The model, of imperial-relationship Tilak, had realized, had little chance of evolving itself into ‘relationship model of international co-operation’, by sweet persuasion.

It would be naive, observed Tilak, to expect that in political matters, one could be converted to give up his selfish vested interests by mere academic or philosophical argumentation, unless the concerned person is made to feel the pinch of losing his pocket or vested interests. This would, particularly, be so with an imperial relationship.50 It might be mentioned here that to bring out the contradiction convincingly, Tilak had observed, “Why talk of the British? Had the people of Rajputana and Kathiawad approached the Peshwas against Gaikwad or Shinde, the former would have met with parallel treatment even at the hands of the celebrated judge Ramshastri Prabhune”.51

The Indian Moderates had also believed that “the Englishman is incapable of despotism”. R.J. Moore observes that the Indian leaders including Gandhi, were “to learn from painful experience that a Churchill as well as a Curzon could exult in Empire and could flay with redoubtable rhetoric the nationalistic hopes of an early transfer of power”.52 Tilak’s uniqueness lies in
his realization and expression of the truth that exigencies of imperial politics were such that not only Curzons and Churchills but even Morlcys and Gladstones, would come in the way of India’s attainment of freedom at an early date.

As has been observed earlier, Tilak had chosen to take a ‘general’ view of the Indo-British relationship. He proceeded to analyse the issue of Indo-British relationship in that light. His analysis convinced him that the spiritual and material deprivation that India had been experiencing, was an inevitable result of the imperial relationship and that it was the fate of every subject nation. Hence, the only salvation for a subject nation lay in its regaining Swaraj—the inalienable right to shape one’s own destiny. And the only way towards the attainment of Swaraj—Freedom—was Self-reliance. A subject nation cannot rely on the imperial nation for guidance and help, howsoever progressive and liberal it might be.

Thus convinced, Tilak concluded that the only way to salvation for a subject country like India was to strive for freedom on its own.

It should be noted, however, that Tilak not only propagated the need of self-reliance but also elaborated his concept of self-reliance. To him, self-reliance was equivalent to involvement and participation of the masses in the freedom struggle: it was not an armed rebellion by a handful extremists.

Tilak appreciated that a political regime could not be challenged so long as it enjoyed support of the people. What is equally, if not more important, is that he comprehended its converse as well, namely, that no regime, howsoever
powerful, even seemingly invincible, could perpetuate in power once it forfeits its claim to legitimacy. Yet, as Tilak understood it properly, no people would be ready to challenge the supremacy of the imperial power unless they are conscious of their own role in sustaining a political regime. Unless, thus convinced of their strength, the common masses, though unhappy over their lot, remain submissive. It is, this submission that sustains the imperial rulers in power. He observed that “The Britishers continue to rule us not because they bask in the favour of God, but because we are (politically) too apathetic.\textsuperscript{53}

‘Self-reliance’, thus, emerges in Tilak’s logic as ‘People’s participation and involvement’.

Tilak elaborated that the common masses, the peasant class and others forming the majority of the people, ignorant as such, do not properly realize their own strength. As a result, they tend to look upon themselves as insignificant nonentities.\textsuperscript{54} One is really impressed by Tilak’s foresight and democratic spirit when he adds, “It is obligatory on the part of the educated to change the present sorry state of affairs. They ought to make the masses realize that they (the masses) are the real pillars of strength. Likewise, they must be assured (made aware) of their great potential for achievement and be taught to look upon themselves as the ‘real’ rulers”.\textsuperscript{55}

As has been observed earlier, Tilak had advocated the necessity of enlightening the masses on their role in sustaining a political set-up. He was intent upon explaining to them that they could play a decisive role by withholding their consent and refusing to extend their co-operation to the
coercive and unjust imperial government. Tilak, thus, exhibited a keen and unparalleled perception of the importance of the role of masses in any freedom struggle. His own efforts, in this direction, are only the practical applications of his inferences and conclusions. These efforts are valuable in that these give a researcher an insight into Tilak’s line of thinking.

Although Tilak did not put it in so many words, a study of his argument and activities does make it clear that he perceived of a three-stage formula for involving the people: firstly, to make the people aware of the deteriorating conditions in all the walks of national life; secondly, to convince them of the causal relationship between their hapless lot and political subjection; and, thirdly, to enlighten them on the fact that it was their co-operation that was sustaining the foreign rule. Tilak wanted to convince the people that if they so desired, they could put an end to it all, by withdrawing their support to the alien rule. It goes to Tilak’s credit that he did not believe in rallying round the people by making emotional appeal but believed in educating them and appealing to their reason.

It may as well be mentioned here that Tilak showed a precise understanding of the Indian political situation and the role of the peasantry therein. He asserted that in a land of peasants, national freedom can be achieved only by removing the clouds of lethargy and indifference which had been hanging over the heads of the peasants. “It is impossible to create the strength of unity, e’spirit de’ corps (team spirit) among these people unless they are educated and well-informed” Recognizing the need of the hour, as
has been aptly pointed out by Laxmanshastri Joshi, Tilak focused his searchlight on the appalling poverty in rural Indian and exposed the dismal character of the imperial strategy. Tilak not only referred to the famines but also put forward the basic pertinent question: “Why is it that the Indian peasantry, unlike their European counterpart, did not have sufficient resources to see them through one single drought year? He elaborated how India had been reduced to the position of a beast of burden for the benefit of their white masters. Tilak wanted the people to realize that the Indians were suffering because their rulers were foreigners. In order to illustrate his point further, he referred to the progress made by Japan—an ‘independent’ Asian nation. As he stated, this difference could only be properly explained by a single word ‘freedom’. Even captions of Tilak’s articles are self-explanatory and bring out, forcefully, the argument that he wanted to reach to the people.

As to the second stage, Tilak explained to the masses, in simple language, that the foreign rulers were knowingly discriminating, between their own white people and the coloured Indians, and were giving the latter stepmotherly treatment. He tried to convince them that neither the British Parliament nor the British people were really interested in helping India. He endeavored to expose the facade of generosity and magnanimity of the British rule in India by bringing to the notice of the Indians and clarifying the basic contradiction of interests.

The third stage, the logical outcome of the first one, was to explain to the people that it was, ultimately their meek submission that lent legitimacy to
the foreign rule. Tilak, here, was clearly making a basic point that people’s subdued submission and co-operation were equivalent to acceptance of the unjust rule that was being interpreted as the necessary consent. He emphasised that the foreign government would not budge even a little with studied arguments and sweet persuasion on the part of the subject people. An imperial government’s reaction to the demands of its subject people would depend on its perception of the public dissent and popular unrest. He reminded that the members of the British Parliament and British people, in general, were bothered only when there was some news of some uprising or unrest from India. Therefore, the best way of convincing the British rulers was to impress upon them that it could, no longer, take for granted the loyalty and support of the masses. Tilak wanted to assure the people that they could play a decisive role in the actual political process simply by withholding their consent. He entreated that the people should not look upon themselves as helpless, insignificant non-entities. He added, “The British rule appears to be invincible only because people do not dare to stand up and challenge the wrongful policies.” He, therefore, tried to convey, “Your future rests entirely in your own hands”. He wanted the people to understand that only a handful of Englishmen were able to rule over India because “we are willing instruments of our own oppression in the hands of an alien government. And that the Government is ruling over us not by its innate strength but by keeping us in ignorance and in blindness to the perception of this fact.”
Lastly Tilak wanted to impress upon the minds of the people their potential strength, and convince them that though disarmed, they could influence the decision-making process through determined efforts and united action. He pointed out that the Congress agitation could not achieve positive results, so far, because it had failed to convey the right message. Tilak emphasised that “The British bureaucrats will never take cognizance of us unless we make them realize, by our positive action, that we are in a position to deter them or to affect adversely the interests of their kith and kin.” According to Tilak, ‘Swadeshi’, ‘Boycott’ and ‘National Education’-the Trisutri-were the effective means of convincing the British rulers that “The people of India are firm in their resolution; they would not budge inspite of the unceasing threats on the part of the rulers, but would keep on their struggle incessantly, though peacefully.” It is significant that although Tilak’s propagation of these methods became more vocal after 1905, he had given a clear indication of all these methods quite earlier.

Of these three, Tilak attached more importance to the method of the Boycott, a forerunner of the idea of ‘Total non-co-operation’. To quote his own words, “We are not armed and there is no necessity of arms either. We have a stronger weapon, a political weapon, in Boycott.”

Throughout his propagation of the ideas of Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education, Tilak was, in fact, spelling out a programme for directly involving the masses in the freedom struggle. This point is elaborately dealt with in the next chapter.
It was this awareness of the need of taking the masses into confidence and involving them in the national freedom struggle that distinguishes Tilak from both the Revolutionaries and the Moderates.

Tilak and the Revolutionaries were, in a sense, nearer to each other: Both of them had refused to accept the British rulers as ‘Political Gurus’.

Also, it must be understood, Tilak had not totally eschewed the idea of using violent revolutionary methods. One gets a distinct impression that Tilak envisaged a possibility—in fact the inevitability—of a last violent thrust. Certainly, Tilak did visualise, as Jawadekar observed, that “although the peaceful struggle might lead the country to the very precincts of Swaraj, at its last lap, this method might not prove sufficient and the armed revolutionaries might be required to play some part.” But, at the same time, Tilak was aware that an attempt at armed revolt would not succeed unless there prevailed an intense feeling of discontent, unrest, and, especially, disenchantment among the common people. Secondly, Tilak did believe in plurality of means (Sadhananam Anekata). There is ample evidence that Tilak was in league with the revolutionaries. The Government, too, was suspicious of Tilak’s activities. It was because of this suspicion that in 1908 the Government thought it fit to incarcerate Tilak for six years.

At this stage, it would not be out of place to discuss, a little elaborately, Tilak’s moral position about the use of violent means. It is certain that Tilak did not glorify violence per se. He maintained that, as far as possible, “One should, if possible, resist an evil-minded person through pious means. Evil
need not necessarily be answered by evil.” If, however, one cannot contain evil with piety, one should not hesitate to adhere to even harsh or ruthless means.”

Tilak gave an apt simile: “When simple, painless medicines fail, one has to take resort to a needle for removing a thorn embedded in one’s flesh”. He further emphasized that a vicious person loses the moral right “to expect others to behave righteously with him”. “Moreover”, Tilak observed, “the Dharmashastras maintain that for the lapse of righteousness on the part of the pure-minded saintly person, not the saintly person but the vicious person who compels the former to commit such an act should be held morally responsible. It is clear that Tilak extended the same logic to the freedom struggle. Evidently, Tilak was suggesting that, in this imperfect world, whether the methods used in any freedom struggle are violent or non-violent, need not be made a moral issue.

Tilak also appreciated the spirit of self-sacrifice of the Revolutionaries. He, however, realized that the revolutionary efforts would prove abortive in the absence of popular backing. As observed by P.G. Sahasrabuddhe, Tilak was aware that effective public opinion which, in his (Tilak’s) opinion, is a decisive regulatory tool which scares even the tyrants and egocentric power-holders, has not yet emerged in Tndia, even on a conceptual plane”. To Tilak, therefore, the first task of leadership was to educate the people and generate effective public opinion. He did accept that this way of building up the national movement was rather prosaic in character and lacked the romantic glamour of a revolutionary attempt. Yet, he insisted, those who were thinking on the lines of an armed
struggle, should wait patiently till the nation has become mature enough for such an attempt. He cautioned that undue haste is bound to end in disaster, would prove self-destructive. And one has to wait till the time was ripe? He, therefore, advocated that the leadership take up to the task of arousing the masses and initiating them into the national movement in as massive a degree as possible. He was confident that this approach would, ultimately, prove more effective, useful and even more revolutionary. He, therefore, sought to give the Indian freedom struggle a mass base.

Tilak’s argument clearly brings out that he was propagating the need of involving the masses not because, in the then Indian situation an armed revolt was not possible, but because, basically, he was convinced that a freedom struggle, armed or unarmed, would not succeed “unless the people, totally discontented and disenchanted with the foreign regime, get inclined to resist it”. He emphasized that, in order to attain the goal of freedom, it was necessary for the people to develop a feeling that it was impossible to survive in the absence of freedom. This indicates how thorough was Tilak’s perception of the role of the masses in a freedom struggle.

It must be observed, here, that the Revolutionaries did not exhibit such an awareness of the importance of the role of the common man in the freedom struggle.

The same could be said of the Moderates. They stood only by the constitutional agitation. Even a constitutional agitation, it must be appreciated, could be launched in two different directions: an agitation to enlighten and
rouse the common people and an agitation to seek a favourable response from the imperial rulers. The Moderates chose to tread the latter course.

Having pinned their faith and hope in the British people, the Moderates had hoped to attain self-government gradually, step by step, by convincing the former that the Indians were fit for more responsibility. They claimed that what failed was not the constitutional agitation but the Indians. The possibilities of constitutional agitation, they believed, had hardly been fathomed. Patience was nowhere more necessary than here. But, can it be said that the Moderates fully appreciated the need of educating the masses in the art of constitutional agitation? Did they think of the necessity of putting in adequate efforts to intensity the proposed constitutional agitation on popular lines? It becomes evident that the Moderates failed to recognize the significance and importance of ‘determined and organized public opinion’ as a political factor. As a result, with few exceptions, the Moderates did not even try, earnestly, to reach the common man. They could not bridge the wide gulf between themselves and the masses. Nor could they bring the latter into the main stream of the national movement.

The Moderates’ constitutional agitation, thus, remained subdued in character. On the contrary, Tilak had fully recognized the need of bringing the masses in the main stream of the national struggle. He had realized that in the modern era, “new forces had taken birth not only in India but also in the whole of Asia”. Tilak’s differences with the Moderates were, thus, not confined to the issue of adopting only the constitutional methods. The Moderates, it seems,
were apprehensive that illiterate masses would go unruly—would become uncontrollable. But Tilak did not entertain any such apprehension and, hence, he was not afraid to take people in confidence. It must, however, be reiterated here that Tilak did not believe in rallying round the people through emotional appeals. All his stress was on educating the people and convincing them of the justness of the National cause. It may, thus, be rightfully claimed that Tilak was one of the first Indian leaders to recognize the significance and importance of organized public opinion.

The Moderates had advocated the principle, ‘first deserve and then desire.’ To them, “The advances, however, can only be gradual, as at each stage of progress, it may be necessary for us to pass through a brief course of apprenticeship”. As against this, Tilak asserted that this process involved a Vital question of sharing Power. Hence, if it was given to the power-holders to judge whether the deprived were worthy of sharing power, the verdict was bound to be biased. He explained: it is instructive to note that the character of political power is such that even within their own nation, when the section of the British people, ever deprived of political power, pressed for a share in it—the right of franchise—they had to resort to obstructive measures. clear indication that the power-holders, especially the foreign ones, would be ready to part with power only if they are convinced, beyond doubt, that the people could no longer be taken for granted nor could their loyalty and co-operation be taken as assured.
To conclude, Tilak’s claim that ‘Swaraj is my birth-right’ and his priority to Swaraj were neither the products of Romantic Nationalism nor of historical nostalgia. His approach to the whole issue of Swaraj was, basically, rational and not emotional.

It must go to Tilak’s credit that he took into account the total impact of political subjugation on a subject nation. He established, beyond any shade of doubt, that loss of the right of the subject people to shape their own destiny, was bound to prove, both materially and morally, injurious to them. Political freedom, to Tilak, was thus the pre-condition of meaningful human existence, the very e’lan vital, of every nation. No effective reform in social affairs, education, economic development, etc. would be possible in the absence of Swaraj.

It must, however, be added, at this stage, that to Tilak, Swaraj was only a pre-condition and not a ‘guarantee’ of good human life. This point requires a detailed discussion and, as such, has been dealt with, separately, in the chapter, Tilak’s Connotation’.

Proper congnizance should also be taken of the fact that, to Tilak, Swaraj was not only a natural right and a moral necessity of every nation but was, also, its bounden duty.

As has already been observed, Tilak preferred to have a ‘general’ view of the Indo-British relationship and treated it only as a specific specimen of ‘imperial-relationship’. His distinctive greatness lies in the fact that he realized the necessity of going to the very roots of the issue.
Secondly, Tilak, convincingly brought out that an inherent contradiction of interests exists and would always exist in an imperial-relationship. And he inferred that as such, an imperial power could not be relied upon to act as an agent of change. Tilak was, hereby, making a point of universal validity and relevance. By doing this, he challenged the moral basis not only the British imperial set-up in particular, but of ‘Imperialism’ in general. That Tilak raised this point at that particular juncture was all the more important; for the peculiar conditions in India had eclipsed the true character of the relationship between India and Great Britain. That the British Liberals belied the hopes of the Indian Moderates, only emphasizes the validity and relevance of Tilak’s argument. With one stroke, Tilak challenged the legitimacy of the imperial-relationship and lent moral justification to the freedom struggle on the part of any subject nation. Tilak, clearly emerges, here, more as a political thinker than as a political activist.

Tilák was the first Indian leader to understand the full significance-importance-of organized public opinion. He stressed that the people need be convinced that they were not helpless nonentities. Likewise, he advocated that the people need be enlightened in that, ultimately, it was their consent and cooperation that lent sustenance to the imperial rule. The, principle of legitimacy is nothing new; what was new and, therefore, unique, was Tilak’s perception of the need and the positive efforts he put in for creating among the people a consciousness of this principle. His greatness lies in his faith and confidence in the potentiality of the common man.
Tilak, thus, exhibits a clear and unprecedented grasp of political forces.

To sum up, Tilak’s uniqueness as a political thinker lies in his correct perception and explanation of the rationale of Swaraj. He, thereby, presented the necessary philosophical foundation to and a moral justification for the struggle for Swaraj-Political Emancipation.

So far, only the negative aspect of Tilak’s argument has been highlighted by the scholars and the positive side of his argument seems to have been overlooked by them. It is, therefore, necessary to evaluate Tilak’s contribution in the proper perspective lest the real import of his contribution be lost.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Samagra Tilak, Vol. No. VI, p. 867


5. Samagra Tilak, Vol No V, p. 637. 26th Jan-1892.


11. Samagra Tilak, Vol. No. VI, p. %\text{67}


18. Tilak’s articles make it sufficiently clear that he was aware of this dimension of modern imperialism. Detailed discussion on this point has been incorporated elsewhere.
23. Buch MA.: Rise & Growth of Indian Liberalism. p. 175, 263.
30. Samagra Tilak, Vol. No. III p. 111. Tilak’s discussion of this issue is very illuminating and, if possible, should be read from the original.


43. “To Morley, the sundried bureaucrat is only a bureaucrat and not the incarnation of wisdom. Morley is now engaged in ‘digging the grave of bureaucracy. We can almost hear the thud of the spade and the music, yes, the music of the knell.” Rash Bihari Ghose, cited in Shanker Ghose: Western Impact on Indian Politics, pp. 66-67.


46. Samagra Tilak, Vol. No. VI, p.422-423


52. R.J. Moore: Liberalism and Indian Politics pp. 126-127.


56. How to approach the people and secure their participation? Please refer to next chapter.


73. Gita Rahassya p. 358. (Samagra Tilak, Vol. 1)
74. Gita Rahassya p. 359 (Samagra Tilak. Vol. I)
77. P.G. Sahastrabuddhe.-Kesarichi Trimurti. p. 266.


87. G.K. Gokhale: Benaras Presidential Address cited in G.K. Gokhale: