

Tilak and Revolutionaries

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Introduction:

Swatantraveer Savarkar has rightly explained relationship between Tilak and the Revolutionary in one sentence, "If revolutionaries are blade of the sword Tilak is a grip of the Sword."

Tilak used to manage his revolutionary activities through Vasukaka Joshi and Krushnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar. Tilak himself never did any armed activity. But helped all the revolutionary activities by all means. There were revolutionary leaders like Shivrampant Paranjpe, Arvind Ghosh, Lala Lajpatrai, Gandadharrao Deshpande (Belgaum), few many more directly contacted to Tilak like Shivrampant Paranjape, Gangadharrao Deshpande (Belgaum), Vir Vamanrao Joshi (Amravati), Achyutrao Kolhatkar who were in direct contact with Tilak and they worked as the observers of the revolutionary activities.

On national level Shamyia Krishnaji Varma, Madam kama, Lala Hardayal, Lala Lajpatrai, Arvind Ghosh, Rasbahari Bose, Pandurang Khankhoje young revolutionaries like Swatyantravir Savarkar, Senapati Bapatj or Dnyanakoshakar Ketkar who is more known for creating encyclopydia, Pandit Satavalekar who translated Vedas.

Lokmanya Tilak an admirer of "Shrimad Bhagwat Geeta" believed in using all the way and means for achieving the goal (Sadhanam Anekata) His main goal was "Swarajya" for which in early days he found the ignorance of common man, about their extraction and loss of will or Swa.

Tilak's political methods were the unique combination of manliness, shrewd intelligence and sense of proportion. He regards the constant waiting never ending begging. On the other hand he kept clear from the noxious weed of anarchism. Within these two limits he was willing to work, in any way, with the support of his wisdom.

There were three main thoughts of Freedom movement.

1. To ask political reforms through resolutions in the country.
2. Tilak wanted congress to be more active, action oriented and should be more public participative or public inclusive and revolutionary groups to patriotic atmosphere.

3. There was a group of people who believed in armed revolution to get Swarjya. Revolutionary wanted internal revolution as well as external help from other countries, who were enemies of Britishers.

Tilak has observed and studied a small revolutionary fanatic activity from Vasudev Balvant Phadke in the year 1876 with lesser public support. Similarly, he had studied freedom revolution of 1857 and its failure. He clearly noticed that without public support and education, only collecting few fire arms and slaughter of handful of British Officers would not shake the well-established and organized British Government.

In College days, Tilak got trained for sword fighting and horse riding by Lahuji Ustad. Vasudev Balwant Phadke was member of same Akhada. But when Vasudev Phadke took a decision for revolution with few young followers, Tilak did not join the group because of their impractical approach.

In 1889 Tilak resigned from D.E. Society, sacrificed his motto of education and decided to work full time for political reforms or Swarjya.

Through Kesari and Maratha, he started educating masses and writing his view, to the masses. Through Ganesh Festival and Shivaji Jayanti Ustsav, Tilak organized people, coming together, make them participative using all the medium of mass education like Kirtan, Mela, Drama, Lectures, Art, Music to spread his thoughts about Swaraj to the masses.

Within few years more than 300 active youth groups were formed in Maharashtra, Madhya Prant and Belgaum. Young generation was convinced about the extractions and injustice caused by British Colonial Policy and wanted to react against it.

Ganesh and Shivaji Jayant festivals were the two activities that brought them together. Such groups established Libraries, as a legal face and under this cover youth started learning Indian Martial Arts, Horse Riding, coming together secretly and discussing various issues for betterment of the Nation and Swaraj.

Various Talims, Akhadas, temples became the centers of a these secret youth gatherings. They also started taking part in Congress Movement. Other movements like famine code, Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education, Home rule league, etc.

Though these, active groups were having the same goal but their views and ways of action were different.

They used to help one another but used to work with great secrecy. Few of these groups believed in armed revolution. They believed in Shrimad Bhagvat Geeta . As per teaching of Geeta they believed in Rebirth and were ready to sacrifice their life for freedom of their country.

In 1896 at Pune, there was one such revolutionary group as “Chapekar Club” or Arya Pratibandha Niwarak Mandal who were orthodox and hated social reformers. They established their office near Jogeshwari. They hired one room in Sardar Khasagiwale wada to start library and collected weapons under the cover of Library. The main members were Damodar Chaphekar and his brothers, Damu Anna Bhide, Mandar Ranade. They did few small activities like beating editor of Sudhakar shree Patwardhan, throwing stones on reformers wedding procession, beat prof Velankar for conversion of his religion, 29th Aug. 1896 garlanding Victoria Statue with thread ring of shoes and Chappals in Mumbai or set fire to Vidyapeeth matriculate pandol.

In 1896, there was famine and 1897 plague and many people died in plague. In order to restrict plague, the Governor of Bombay sent one officer named Rand with military force, who forcefully searched every house to find plague patients. During this search the soldiers threw away Idols of God, set fire to clothing and molested women. There were few incidents of theft. Tilak wrote against these incidents and criticized bureaucracy.

On 4th May 1897, Tilak criticized through his articles in Kesari, the anti plague administrative measures of the Govt. Plague Commissioner Rand was described as ‘tyrannical’. Chaphekar Club planned Rand’s assassination on 22nd June 1897. They executed a plan on 22nd June, on the occasion of jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria and through Khaderao Sathe, this news was passed to Tilak as “Ganesh Khinditil Ganapati Pavla”. From that incident, the British Government always kept a watch on Tilak. They tried hard to involve Tilak and many others in this assassination, who were working in the revolutionary activities in Maharashtra and India. But they could not get proofs. So the British Government prosecuted Tilak for his “Provocative” articles in the Kesari.

Tilak helped Balkrishna Chapekar to get underground in Belgam through Justice Kolhatkar. Tilak’s opinion on armed revolution was that without public support, such armed activities will not achieve the goal. It was very clear. Tilak gave a clear cut idea about this to Govind P. Bapat (Senapati) or Babarao Savarkar, in Nasik. But Tilak supported and helped all the revolutionaries during 1895 to 1920.

There were hundreds of revolutionary clubs working separately. To name a few are Shivaji Club in Kolhapur, Abhinav Bharat in Madhya Prant, Baroda, Panjab Bengal, Mumbai, Belgaum, Rajasthan, Goa, England, America, Japan etc.

There were many incidents and attempts, successful or unsuccessful, like Beed Resolution (Nizam State) by Shivaji Club, Muzapurar Bomb Blast (1908), Bomb attack on 21st December 1909 in Nasik, the unsuccessful bomb blast at Kolhapur (1908), Pandharpur Bomb Blast (1911). The three bomb blasts on 2nd January 1908 in Pune, etc. The Britishers were of the opinion that Tilak was involved in all these bomb blasts. But they could not find any solid proof for the same.

Sadhu and Saints :

After 1897 revolution, many revolutionary changed their names and became Sadhu. They used to travel all over India and preach Bhakta about importance of freedom struggle. To name a few are Baba (Rango Bapooji Gupte), Swami Bramhanand (Digras), Vittalgiri, Nityanand (Amaravati), Bramhanand, Belur Swami, Bidkar Maharaj (Pune), Maharshi Annasaheb Patwardhan, Yogi Vishnu Lele Shankaracharya Peeth, Poornananand, Gondavalekar Maharaj, Gulavani Maharaj, Swami Shraddanand, Sai Baba, Arvind Ghosh, etc. Britishers have the policy not to disturb religious feelings of the Indian Society. There were no restrictions to meet sadhus, maharaj or saints. Anyone could easily used to see saints. These saints helped to transfer messages and create atmosphere for swarajya.

Tilak was connected to all theses saints and religious Dharmagurus. Gajanan Maharaj presided one meeting of Tilak at Akola. Similarly Gondavalekar Maharaj whenever visited Pune, used to stay with Shri Damle whose house was located behind Tilak Wada. So they used to meet secretly or unnoticed. Gondavalekar Maharaj used to pass police information to Tilak.

Attempt to start Rifle Factory in Nepal :

As revolutionary activities increased, Lokmanya Tilak's two associates Krushanaji Prabhakar Khadilkar and Vasukaka Joshi planned to establish rifle and pistol factory in Nepal during 1902 to 1904. They went to Nepal and tried to establish connection with the Nepal Government. In March 1990, Tilak also went to Patna but could not get permission to pass the Nepal borders. Tilak was knowing Shri. Ketkar (Mechanical Engineer) at Gwalior. Khadilkar collected the blue prints of rifle making

machines from Shri Ketkar. During Jabalpur visit, Tilak and Vasukaka Joshi met Shree Kulkarni, whose sister's husband was working as a Pujari in Pashupatinath Temple, Nepal. Khadilkar, Hanmantrao Kulkarni, R.G. Tilkhe and Damu Joshi (Shivaji Club) went to Kathmandu and tried hard to get permission. But got contract for preparing roofs, Mangalore type tiles (Kaula). Khadilkar came back. He learned the art of preparing roofs, Tiles (kaul) and completed the contract. In 1903, the order was placed for two rifle making machines with German Crupps Company Agent in Bombay. Delivery was expected in 1908. But the Nepal Government did not want to take this risk. So Tilak asked all the members to come back, before it gets noticed by the British Police. Swatantraveer Vinayak Sawarkar successfully arranged to deliver 25 Browne Pistols to India. After Muzaffarpur Bomb Blast in 1908, Tilak was arrested for writing an article in Kesari and sentenced to jail for 6 years. After Tilak's arrest, the police were successful to capture 23 pistols and hundreds of revolutionaries and successfully destroyed revolutionary set up during 1908 to 1920 (when Tilak was sent to Mandale Jai for six years of imprisonment).

Shri Pandurang M. Bapat, who went to London for engineering studies at Edinburg on 5th August 1904, went to Paris in June 1907 along with Mirza Abbas and Hemchandra Das to learn the technique of bomb making. In August 1907, P.M. Bapat send booklet on bomb making in India. In January 1908, Tilak passed bomb making material to Arbindo Ghosh. In January 1908, P.M. Bapat got Russian Booklet on bomb making translated in English. Tilak met P.M.Bapat and Harilal Varma in Pune who were engaged in producing explosive from nitric acid, fulminate of mercury, gun colleen, nitroglycerine, etc. In short the process of bomb making was distributed all over India and Bapat conveyed the message of V. D. Savarkar to start Bomb Factory. The bomb used in Muzaffarpur bomb blast was manufactured by P.M.Bapat (Senapati). Tilak wrote two articles about the above incidence. The Secretary to Govt. of India wrote to the Bombay Governor, "we should deal with Tilak as a shrewd blow as we can. He is by far the ablest and the most dangerous of the rebel party in the country and his complete overthrow will stagger the party and show to all waverers the strength of the Government".

Posters, Pamphlets, Publicity: After going through all these incidents one can see that Tilak had not helped and initiated organizing Secret Groups but was against killing of British Officers. Tilak wanted all these groups to organize the common people, create opinion on various issues against the British Government, circulate views without any author, posters, create unrest, and are prepared for armed action. And all these revolutionary groups worked under the leadership of Tilak. They also attended all the Congress meetings. The simple non violent action was agitation with

calling of “Vandemataram” or accepting “Swadeshi” movement all over India. After Bengal partition, swaraj, swadeshi, boycott and national education movement became an active movement. Lokmanya Tilak noticed that Abhinav Bharat Nashik group is planning to kill Collector Jakson. He told Babarav Savarkar not to do it or even Gangadharrao Deshpande in Belgaum, but after imprisoning Tilak in 1908, all these revolutionary groups acted on their own. The British police captured many of them during two years and sentenced them jail or hang till death. Only few revolutionaries were successful to be underground or get out of India to France, America, Japan, etc. or changed their name settled in Gwalior, Indore, Goa, Pondichery.

Revolutionaries worked outside India after Tilak’s imprisonment from 1908. Many revolutionary went to America and Europe. Pandurang Khankhoge, Raja Mahendra Pratap. Balkrishna Daji Subhedar, Lala Hardayal and others went to Germany, Afganistan, Turkasthan, meet Kaisar Badshaha from Germany, Amir Habibulla Khan from Afganistan and Sultan of Turkasthan and planned to attack British. On 22nd August 1907, Madam Cama unfurl the ever tricolor Indian National Flag at the International Socialist Conference held in Stuttgart.

At the same time Rasbihari Bose and few members of Gaddar Party tried to revolt in Punjab regiment. Pandurang Khankhoge led troop from Kabul to India. But this revolution failed and the first world war started in 1915. Tilak was released from Mandale jail in 1916.

All these revolutionaries have contributed to Swarajya Movement. Lokmanya Tilak wanted common men to understand freedom movements. Lokyamnya Tilak was the center pillar for revolutionary activities during 1898 to 1920. Through Indian National Congress, Tilak motivated freedom struggle in legal way. But it was spread to masses through revolutionary groups. In 1916, when Lokmanya Tilak was released from Mandaley Jail. Britishers studied and reviewed the parademic situation. When the Britishers found that Tilak cannot do anything and will go to Germany for Sanskrit Study. As they have passed Press Act for the news papers and have crushed revolution activities. Tilak will not get any support from young generations. All his old supporters are either in jail or have gone outside India.

After the release of Lokmanya Tilak, the response he got was unexpected to British Govt. Every day more than 10000 people visited Tilak Wada to meet Tilak. Within six months, thousands of people, all over India started coming to meet Lokmanya Tilak. In 1916, Lokmanya Tilak initiated Home Rule League or Hind Swarajya Sangh movement. People started gathering in thousands. Congress got activated. Similarly revolutionary clubs also got activated. Hindu and Muslims came

together. People were aroused. Tilak became the National Leader. In 1918, the Britishers observed that wherever Lokmanya Tilak gave a speech, 30 to 40 thousand people used to gather. Annie Besant wanted some funds to send "Home Rule Delegation: to London and was surprised to see that after Tilak's appeal to people, within few hours the money got collected and Tilak handed over Rs. 3 Lakh to Dr. Annie Besant on 14th march 1918.

After the death of Lokmanya Tilak under Gandhiji's leadership new concept of non-violence and non-cooperation was accepted by many revolutionary groups. Revolutionary like Kakasaheb Kahadilkar, Gangadharrao Deshpande followed Gandhiji.

There were thousands of revolutionaries who worked with Lokmanya Tilak who sacrificed their life for the freedom. All the names are not recorded by the Historians but their contribution towards freedom struggle must be appreciated.