

Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was an Indian scholar, philosopher, mathematician, and ardent nationalist born in Ratnagiri, now in the state of Maharashtra, on July 23, 1856, and passed away in Bombay on August 1, 1920. He was also known as Lokmanya.

By organizing his resistance to British rule into a national movement, he helped establish the foundation for India's independence. He founded the Indian Home Rule League in 1914 and served as its first president. One of the most known slogans, "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it." was given by Lokmanya Tilak.

Early Life of Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, on July 23, 1856, to a Marathi Hindu Brahmin family. He was from the Chikhali village. When Tilak was sixteen years old, his father, Gangadhar Tilak, a Sanskrit scholar and teacher, passed away. A few months before his father passed away in 1871, Tilak married Tapibai (Née Bal) at sixteen. Satyabhamabai became her new name after getting married.

- In 1877, he graduated from Deccan College in Pune with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics. Midway through his M.A. course, he switched to the L.L.B. program. He graduated from Government Law College in 1879 with an L.L.B. degree.
- After graduating, Bal Gangadhar Tilak started teaching math in a school in Pune. Later, due to ideological disputes with his colleagues at the new institution, he quit and became a journalist.

Tilak took a strong interest in politics. As he said: "Practical life and religion are not different. The true spirit is to work for the country instead of just your family. Serving others comes after that, and serving God comes after that."

Educational Career of Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Several of his associates, including Mahadev Ballal Namjoshi, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, and Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, created the New English School in 1880 to provide secondary education. The young people of India needed better education, and that was their purpose.

- They founded the Deccan Education Society in 1884 to advance their mission of instructing young people in English, patriotic philosophy, and Indian culture while ensuring they were proficient in both.
- For the spread of liberal & democratic principles, Tilak and his colleagues believed that English was a potent medium.
- For post-secondary education, the society founded Fergusson College in Pune in 1885. During his time here, Tilak taught math. Bal Gangadhar Tilak joined the newly established Congress in 1890 after quitting society.

Political Career of Bal Gangadhar Tilak

In 1890, Bal Gangadhar Tilak became a member of Congress. He had an aggressive and more radical stance against British authority and opposed moderate ways of thinking. He was a leader in the movement for self-rule or swaraj. "Swaraj is my birthright & I shall have it," he declared in his catchphrase. Without autonomy, he thought, there could be no advancement. He fought for the boycott & Swadeshi movements and was a member of the Indian National Congress extremist faction. Kesari, a Marathi paper, and Mahratta, an English paper, were both published by him. He attacked the government in these publications without holding back.

Upon being found guilty of "Incitation to murder," he received an 18-month jail term. During this, he quoted the Bhagavad Gita to say that those who murder oppressors cannot be held accountable. After this, two Indians assassinated two British officials in vengeance for the "tyrannical" actions the government had taken during the bubonic plague outbreak in Bombay. Bal Gangadhar Tilak rejoined the INC in 1916. Bal Gangadhar Tilak regularly referred to ancient Hindu scriptures when forming his political philosophies. He urged them to cherish their past truly. He took issue with how much society was influenced by the West.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak Contribution to Freedom Struggle

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was considered one of the three extreme leaders known as "Lal-Bal-Pal," with Bipin Chandra Pal & Lala Lajpat Rai. Many times, he was put on trial for sedition. For authoring articles defending Prafulla Chaki & Khudiram Bose, he was imprisoned in Mandalay for six years, from 1908 to 1914. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was also familiar with the British Empire's economic principles. He was one of the pioneers in creating the link between Swadeshi & Swaraj.

He was among the All India Home Rule League's founding members, along with Annie Besant and G S Khaparde. Bal Gangadhar Tilak turned the basic Ganesh Puja conducted at home into a social & public Ganesh celebration. He promoted harmony and a sense of nationalism among the populace by using the Ganesh Chaturthi & Shiv Jayanti. Unfortunately, this action turned non-Hindus against him. One of Maharashtra's greatest celebrations remains the Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav, which he popularised starting in 1894.

Social & Religious Views of Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Bal Gangadhar Tilak held conservative social and religious views while also being a radical nationalist leader.

- He opposed the modernization of education for Hindu women.
- Initially, he opposed the age of consent bill, which suggested raising the marriage age for females from 10 to 12. Although he supported the increase of the legal drinking age, he nonetheless believed that the British were interfering with Indians' social and religious life.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak made efforts to unite the Indian people through extensive political activity.
- He searched the alleged fundamental principles of the Ramayana and the Bhagavad Gita for justification for doing this.

- Karma-yoga, often known as the yoga of acts, was used to describe this call to action. He believed that the Bhagavad Gita revealed this idea when Krishna told Arjuna to kill his enemies (many of them at the time were his family members) since it was his duty.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak thought the Bhagavad Gita provided a compelling justification for the action. However, this was contrary to the prevalent reading of the text at the time, which was shaped by renunciate beliefs and the idea of actions carried out solely for God.

Political Views of Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Throughout his life, Tilak worked to bring the Indian people together for widespread political activity. He argued that for this to occur, there had to be a thorough justification of anti-British, pro-Hindu activism. He offended many non-Hindus since he based his justification on Hindu religious lines and symbols, including Muslims, who started to join forces with the British for assistance.

Due to the fact that the notion of Hindutva & Hinduism was something that the majority of Muslims could not relate to, he alienated many Muslims by the use of religion in politics, which led to a split between Hindus and Muslims in the nation. Bal Gangadhar Tilak political views were not progressive on matters involving women, such as their empowerment and marriage, Despite the fact he was undoubtedly the most popular leader.

Books by Bal Gangadhar Tilak

The Arctic Home in the Vedas was written by Tilak in 1903. He contended in it that the Vedas could have been written in the Arctic and that once the last ice age began, Aryan bards took them south. He suggested a fresh approach to pinpointing the exact time of the Vedas. He attempted to determine the Vedic time in The Orion by using the positions of several Nakshatras.

Numerous Vedas have descriptions of the Nakshatra placements. While imprisoned in Mandalay, Bal Gangadhar Tilak composed Shrimadh Bhagvad Gita Rahasya, which is an examination of Karma Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita, which is acknowledged as a gift from the Vedas and Upanishads.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak Death

On August 1, 1920, Bal Gangadhar Tilak passed away. It was the day the non-cooperation movement got launched. Gandhiji established the Tilak Fund to honour Bal Gangadhar Tilak achievements and sacrifices made for the freedom struggle.

Gandhiji oversaw the realization of Lokmanya Tilak dream of achieving independence through large-scale protests, hartals, the boycott of foreign products, etc. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was among the first political figures to demand that Indians not surrender to a foreign authority, yet despite writings that were explosive, he never advocated using violence in his talks.

Summary of Facts Associated with Lokamanya Tilak

Following is some of the facts that are associated with Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

- In 1879, Tilak graduated with a law degree from the Government's Law College in Bombay (now Mumbai).
- Lokamanya Tilak established two publications, "Mahratta" in English and "Kesari" in Marathi. Both journals vigorously promoted national freedom while emphasising the need to educate Indians about the need to become self-sufficient.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak, together with Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and Vishnu Shastry Chiplunkar, founded the Deccan Educational Society to encourage nationalist education among Indian students. Tilak had harsh criticisms of the British education system used in India.
- To promote the Swadeshi movement in India, Jamshedji Tata and Lokamanya Tilak founded Bombay Swadeshi Stores.
- Bal Gangadhar also established two important festivals, now the prime festival in Maharashtra. In 1895, he started Shiv Jayanti, and in 1893, he started Ganesh Festival. Ganesh worship in homes was converted by Tilak into a significant public festival (Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav)
- Tilak started the Shri Shivaji Fund Committee in 1895 to celebrate "Shiv Jayanti," the birth anniversary of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the creator of the Maratha Empire.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak founded the All India Home Rule League in 1916 alongside Joseph Baptista, Annie Besant, and Jinnah. In the same year, he & Jinnah signed the Lucknow Pact, which urged Muslim and Hindu cooperation in support of revolutionary movements.
- His writings include Srimad Bhagvat Gita Rahasya and The Arctic Home in the Vedas (1903), which explain the origin of the Aryans (1915).