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Birth anniversary of Bal Gangadhar Tilak

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Why in News:

July 23 is the birth anniversary of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, whom Mahatma Gandhi called “the Maker of Modern India”, and Jawaharlal Nehru described as the “the Father of the Indian Revolution”. However, the epithet Tilak is most identified with is ‘Lokmanya’, or the beloved of the people, and it also best encapsulates Tilak’s contribution to the Indian freedom struggle: in taking the movement to the masses.

A Brief about Tilak

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was an Indian nationalist, educator, scholar, philosopher, mathematician, and freedom fighter. He was born on July 23, 1856

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the primary leader of the Indian Independence Movement, which propelled Indian nationalism to prominence.

He was one among the first leaders who shaped the Indian freedom movement against the British at its early stages.

Tilak is recognised as the ‘Father of Swarajya’ since he was one of the first independence leaders to espouse ‘Swaraj’ and incorporate it into the independence struggle.

Tilak became a member of the Lal-Bal-Pal trio. He, together with Lala Lajpat Rai (Lal) and Bipin Chandra Pal (Pal), transformed the independence movement’s political discourse.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak founded his own newspaper, Kesari, in 1880, which is still published today.

Tilak even founded the Indian Home Rule League, proclaiming, “Swarajya is my birth right, and I will have it.” He also served as its president.

He was held captive several times, including imprisonment for a long time in Mandalay, Myanmar.

To mark Tilak’s 150th birthday, the Government of India issued a coin in 2007.

Tilak's life and contributions include:

Advocacy for Swaraj (Self-Rule): Tilak was a strong advocate for the concept of "Swaraj," which means self-rule or self-governance. He believed that Indians should be empowered to govern themselves and work towards freeing the country from British rule.

Promotion of Nationalism: Tilak believed in fostering a sense of nationalism among Indians. He popularized the slogan "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it," which became a rallying cry for the independence movement.

Maratha History and Culture: Tilak emphasized the importance of India's glorious past, particularly the Maratha history and culture, to instill pride and unity among Indians.

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Journalism and Education: Tilak was an influential journalist and writer. He founded several newspapers, including "Kesari" (in Marathi) and "The Maratha" (in English), to spread nationalist ideas and awareness among the masses. He also laid the foundation for the Deccan Education Society, which worked towards promoting education in India.

Ganesh Chaturthi Festival: Tilak played a significant role in transforming the annual Ganesh Chaturthi festival into a public event celebrated by people from all sections of society. He used this occasion to unite people and promote nationalist sentiments.

Opponent of British Policies: Tilak strongly opposed oppressive British policies and raised his voice against issues like the Bengal Partition, which he saw as a divide-and-rule tactic. He faced several imprisonments for his political activities.

All India Home Rule League: In 1916, Tilak, along with Annie Besant, founded the All India Home Rule League, which sought self-government for India and worked to create political awareness.

Famous Quotes by Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it!

The problem is not the lack of resources or capability, but the lack of will.

If God is put up with untouchability, I will not call him God.

If we trace the history of any nation backwards into the past, we come at last to a period of myths and traditions which eventually fade away into impenetrable darkness.

Life is all about a card game. Selecting the right card is not in our hand. But playing well with the cards in hand determines our success.

Conclusion

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's ideas and actions inspired many Indians and had a lasting impact on the freedom movement. He is considered one of the pioneers of the Indian independence struggle, and his contributions continue to be celebrated and remembered in India's history and culture.

Speaking in his Mann ki Baat programme around Tilak's birth anniversary, PM Modi said, "Lokmanya Tilak evoked self-confidence among our countrymen and gave the slogan 'Swaraj is our birthright and I shall have it'. Today is the time to say that good governance is our birthright and we will have it."