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Lokmanya Tilak

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Why is in news? Prime Minister pays tributes to Lokmanya Tilak on his Jayanti

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (23 July 1856 – 1 August 1920), was an Indian nationalist, teacher, and an independence activist.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born on 23 July 1856 in **Ratnagiri, Maharashtra**, India, to a Marathi Hindu Chitpavan Brahmin family. His father, Gangadhar Tilak, was a school teacher and Sanskrit scholar.

He was **one third of the Lal Bal Pal triumvirate**.

Tilak was the **first leader of the Indian independence movement**. The British colonial authorities called him "**The father of the Indian unrest**".

He was also conferred with the **title of "Lokmanya"**, which means "accepted by the people as their leader".

Mahatma Gandhi called him "**The Maker of Modern India**".

Tilak was a **strong proponent of Rashtriyatva**, which can be translated as **Nationalism**.

He firmly **believed in the idea of a united India** where Indians would have control over their own destiny.

He **joined the Indian National Congress in 1890** and became a part of the extremist faction within the party. This faction advocated for more assertive and radical measures in the struggle for independence, often differing from the moderate approach of the Congress leadership at that time.

Tilak was one of the first and **strongest advocates of Swaraj** ('self-rule') and a **strong radical in Indian consciousness**. He is known for his quote in Marathi: "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it!".

Recognizing **the importance of education in empowering the Indian masses**, Tilak **co-founded the New English School in 1880**.

The need for improved education and a sense of national identity prompted Tilak and his college friends to establish the **Deccan Education Society in 1884**.

The Deccan Education Society's **goal was to create a new system of education** that would teach young Indians nationalist ideas by emphasizing Indian culture and heritage. As part of this initiative, **Fergusson College was established in 1885**, and Tilak himself taught mathematics at the college.

In response to the Partition of Bengal implemented by Lord Curzon in 1905, which was seen as a British strategy to divide and weaken the Indian nationalist movement, Tilak played a significant role in promoting the **Swadeshi Movement**.

Tilak reunited with his fellow nationalists and rejoined the Indian National Congress during the **Lucknow Pact in 1916**, bridging the divide between the extremist and moderate factions within the party.

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In 1916, he **co-founded** the **All India Home Rule League** along with G. S. Khaparde and Annie Besant. The league aimed to seek self-rule for India and played a crucial role in mobilizing public support for the freedom movement.

He formed a close alliance with many Indian National Congress leaders including Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghose, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Tilak sought to unite the Indian population through a **combination of anti-British sentiment and pro-Hindu activism**.

To foster a sense of national spirit and unity, Tilak utilized cultural and religious festivals like the **Ganapati festival and Shiv Jayanti**. He saw these occasions as opportunities to awaken the spirit of patriotism and mobilize the masses towards the cause of independence.

Tilak was associated with two influential weeklies - **Kesari (Marathi) and Mahratta (English)**.

Notable literary works include The Arctic Home in the Vedas, Shrimadh Bhagvad Gita Rahasya (The Secret of the Bhagavad Gita).

He died on 1st August 1920.