

# Tilak's saga of sacrifice

By M.J. Audi

Lokamanya Tilak is one of the giants of India's Freedom Movement. His life is a saga of sacrifices and sufferings. This is an appraisal of fundamental issues springing from his work. These issues had a profound impact not only upon India's struggle for Swaraj but also upon India's ability to make her rightful contribution to cultural treasure of mankind as an independent Nation.

## British policy

The English entered India as the traders and ended as the rulers. To an island-nation, which has lost its colonies on the American continent, India was veritable *El Dorado*. Hence, the English were determined to retain India forever. The Revolt of 1857 gave them a death-blow. The British were virtually on way out. The inner intrigues the proverbial bane of India's leadership gave them fresh lease of life. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 was a shrewd Carrot and Stick Policy for the consolidation of the Raj. Politically, economically and culturally, India was to be firmly chained to the Chariot of England. The supreme objective of this policy was slow but steady emasculation of Indians. Calculated steps were taken towards the denationalisation of Indians and denigration of their culture. The British ambition found cogent expression in Lord Macaulay's famous Education Minute of 1835. It was the creation of society "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect".

The Carrot and Stick Policy would have been a great success but for the bold challenge thrown by one man at a critical and crucial juncture in the life of modern India. That was Lokamanya Tilak. Tilak was born in 1856 and died in 1920. Very rarely world sees persons who

never compromise public good for private gains and for whom service of country matters more than personal prosperity. Tilak belongs to this rare type. With pen and press, Tilak defied the might of the mightiest colonial empire known to history.

Western and Indian Scholars argue *ad nauseam* that Tilak was a revivalist of Hindu Culture. What preserves Hindu Culture is its vibrancy, vigour and vitality. The splendour of Hindu Culture lies in its worship of values that transcend time and place. When large areas of earth in Europe and America were in the state of savagery, India was musing over Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram -- Truth, Beauty and Kindness. A culture that has survived for thousands of years, despite systematic steps to destroy it by powerful forces, needs no revival. Tilak was not a revivalist, He is one of few outstanding Indians who thought it their sacred duty to assert abiding values of Hindu Culture. Others were Swami Dayanand Sarasvati, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Lala Lajpat Rai, V.D. Savarkar and Mahatma Gandhi.

Within twelve years Tilak was convicted twice on the charge of sedition. In 1897, Poona was the victim of plague. The Secretary of State for India was anxious to root out the disease not because he bemoaned the heavy loss of life suffered by India but because of heavy loss of trade suffered by British. The European ports were closed to the British ships carrying Indian wares and the British Government was frightened that "a market once lost, or even partially diverted, is not easily regained". Mr. Rand, and English Officer in charge of plague operations in Poona, was notorious for his arrogance. On 22 June 1897, when people of India were suffer-

ing from Famine and Plague, the rulers celebrated the Victoria Jubilee on a grand scale. On that night, Rand was assassinated in Poona. On 27 July 1897, The British Government arrested Tilak. The prosecution was based on the material published in the Kesari.

## Key phrase

Tilak was charged under Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code whose key phrase was exciting "feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in British India". Robert Clive and Warren Hastings - The founders of British Raj should tum in their graves whenever the phrase Government established by law in British India is uttered. Fraud and force mark every step of British conquest of India. Justice Strachey - an Englishman was the judge. The jury consisted of nine persons of whom six were Europeans and three Indians. The decision depended upon the exact meaning of word "disaffection". "Disaffection", explained the learned judge to the jury, simply means "the absence of affection". On the basis of that *wise* explanation, the jury gave a verdict of guilty by six to three a divided verdict. In England, there would have been a retrial. In India, the judge sentenced Tilak to eighteen months rigorous imprisonment. Tilak's petition for permission to appeal to the Privy Council was rejected by the Bombay High Court. When the Privy Council was directly approached, in a full court, it refused to review the trial. The judicial machinery played a second fiddle to the machinations of the Executive.

The cult of bomb which appeared in India in 1907 frightened the British Government. In 1908 on one day, the British approved two most

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repressive measures - the Explosive substances Act and the Newspaper (Incitement of Offences) Act. Incidentally, the English are the most law-respecting people in the world. They never did anything in India which was not provided by law. Only the laws were interpreted and implemented to the advantage of the rulers. On 2 May 1908, the police raided Aurobindo's house in Calcutta, placed irons on his hands, put a rope round his waist and took him to the police office. On 24 June 1908, Tilak was arrested for his article in the Kesari "The Country's Misfortune". Now it was the turn of Indian judge justice Davar to try Tilak on the charge of sedition. The jury consisted of seven Europeans and two Indians. None of the members knew Marathi. The Government translator frankly admitted that the translations were erroneous, distorted, misleading and failed to convey the spirit of original. The expert endorsed that the translations were fallacious. The learned judge ruled that the translations were correct.

## Cong policy

The conclusion that emerges from the activities of Lokamanya Tilak is that India would have never attained Swaraj by the policy pursued by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Indian Liberals. Similarly the Indian National Congress is not entitled to claim complete credit for India's freedom. Real work for freedom was done by the revolutionaries. As self-preservation is the natural instinct of human beings, in the rating of sacrifice, the sacrifice of life is the greatest. Those who make

it in the prime of life for the sake of public good are infinitely superior to those who use public cause as a ladder for personal advancement and prosperity of one's own children and grandchildren. But for the sacrifices of such brave known and unknown revolutionaries and their insistence upon shaping present on the Values of the past, India, after winning freedom, would have been a nation of thorough-bred denationalised degenerate people taking pride in the imitation of the West. Lokamanya Tilak was the mentor, the moving spirit, and the rallying point of India's honour and self-respect.

## Chavan asked for statement on bridge collapse

NEW DELHI, July 31: (UNI): Mr. Pramod Mahajan (BJP) today demanded a statement from the Home Minister Mr. S. B. Chavan on the collapse of a bridge yesterday connecting Bombay with New Bombay.

Speaking during zero hour in the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Mahajan said the bridge, built at a cost of Rs. 100 crore, had slipped into the earthy in just 100 days of its being opened.

The member said the Railways had not taken any action on complaints that the bridge was slipping into the earth.

He said a train load of people would have lost their lives if the commuters had not taken the matter seriously yesterday.

Mr. Mahajan demanded action against the guilty.