

Lokmanya Tilak's Thoughts on Trade and Commerce

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1. Introduction

Lokmanya Balgandhar Tilak was multi-dimensional personality. He was well-known for this contribution in the field of national movement, beside that; he was successful in spreading the idea of 'nationalism' among the common people. He advocated 'Swarajya', which is nothing but the government established by ourselves. It is the government of free India. He was curious, creative, courageous and open to learn the new experiences. He was a scholar of 'Sanskrit' and 'Astro-Mathematics'. His intellectual contribution in the field of writings shows the deep understanding of him about the subjects. He made a commentary on 'Bhagvad Gita', which is known as 'Geeta Rahasya'. He is known as 'selfless' national leader, who fought for the cause of people by paying high sacrifice. The four fold programme introduced by Tilak during

British India became most successful. This four-fold programme includes 'Swaraj', 'Swadeshi', 'Boycot' and 'National Education'. The ultimate goal of this path of this programme was to get the freedom from British government and also to reach the self-reliant economic growth. This strategy made him more popular among the people. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was most successful national leader, which brought deep impact on national movement. He became mass leader and people granted him the title as 'Lokmanya'.

Lokmanya Tilak was not known as an economist in the sense that he did not produce any systematic treatise on any of the aspects of economic problems affecting the life of the people, but he was enough of an economist who ably studied current economic, material, industrial, agricultural and related topics as they cropped up, made their root-going study and made suggestions for their treatment in the best interests of the country. He criticised official tariff, trade, transport and taxation policies as obstructing instead of promoting the growth of industry and as bringing about ever-increasing de-industrialisation of the country. He was opposed to large-scale import of foreign capital in railways, plantations and industries and the facilities afforded to them by the Government. Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a person with remarkable intellect, and he proclaimed few research papers and articles in 'Kesari'. The articles on various issues were contributing to and foundational dependencies of Indian economy. Lokmanya Tilak has given thoughts on trade and commerce, which were significant for the economic development. The trade and commerce policies of

‘British’ India were against the Indians and therefore it was opposed by him. The economic thoughts of Lokmanya Tilak on trade and commerce has strong relevance even in the contemporary period

2. Lokmanya Tilak’s Thoughts on Trade and Commerce

Lokmanya Tilak has highlighted the importance of trade and commerce for the development industrial development along with agricultural development. The sectors, agriculture and industries are important for the economic development, both goes with hand in hand situation. Hence, there was need of encouraging trade policies. Basically, Tilak tried to protect the indigenous industries, especially with respect to small scale industries from the heavy taxation on Indians. He opposed the exploitation of India's trade, industries, raw-material carried out by the British for their benefit. Tilak also has pointed out the negligence of British government towards Indian industries by heavy taxes has discouraged the Indian trades. Mere increase in international commerce was never regarded by Indian nationalist leaders as of any benefit whatever. In their view, foreign trade was important only in so far as it affected the central economic problem of India viz. poverty, industrialisation and foreign economic exploitation. So they did not commend or condemn the expansion of foreign trade in abstract or on theoretical considerations of its salutary or baneful effects. British India authorities regarded the growth of foreign trade as very beneficial to the country and frequently pointed to it as a visible proof of the advancing prosperity of the people. Indian leaders disputed this view. Some of

them even questioned the belief that India's foreign trade was in a prosperous state or was growing fast, especially when contrasted with the size and population of the country.

2.1 Export and Import

He wrote in Kesari, that the Company Government and the British Crown Government exploited India's trade and industry. The British wanted the Indian people to purchase imported goods largely. He wrote that by 1830, foreign goods worth nearly 6,11,13584 pounds came to India. The finished goods could not go outside the country. This shows that, the trade during British period was not benefiting the Indian but benefiting the government. Further, Tilak gave details of imports as- In 1880, the import of cotton cloth and yarn was of Rs. 19.50 crores. It rose to Rs. 30 crores, sugar imports rose from rupees one crore to rupees three crores, oil from Rs. Six lakhs to Rs. Twenty four lakhs. India was exporting raw cotton, oil seeds, wheat, hides and skins

2.2 Trade and Tariff

Thus the Indian weavers were harassed in a number of ways, skilled artisans of India were exploited and were impoverished. And by this the art and craft of Indians was decaying. He further pointed out that Indians could not export goods to Europe due to heavy 'octroi' levied on such articles as artistic cane work, calicos, cotton cloth, woollen shawls, mats, raw silk, silk cloth, sugar, liquor, half-cotton cloth etc. Inter-State and Intra-regional trade also was

prohibited by the British Government by levying 5% to 15% 'Octroi'. Thus trade, commerce, navigation in India were ruined by the British who used scientific and technical knowledge vis-a-vis labour intensive techniques used by Indians.

2.3 British Export Policies

Lokmanya Tilak pointed out that during last few years many Indian industries were closed down and the employability was transferred from industry to agriculture. Through agricultural income increased because of coffee and tea plantations they belonged to European foreigners so it practically did not help the average Indian citizen. The imports had increased during the British period. The imports of glass, cutlery, iron goods, watches and other items also increased in relation to the exports in agricultural raw materials and every year this deficit was affecting our industry. The Indigenous industries based on agriculture were decaying because of 'British' government's wrong policy. Lokmanya Tilak stated that no country can rely upon agricultural income only as it depended totally on nature. Every country should have other sources of income. Various areas were governed by number of rules, But no rulers destroyed skill based industry in his or wired land. He also pointed out that during last few years the British Government had not taken any efforts to increase industries or industrial research. Discouraging export policies of 'British' government has reduced the Indian exports and increased imports

which resulted to closure of indigenous industries and increasing unemployment and decreasing national wealth.

2.4 Abolition of Salt Tax:

At the very first session of the Indian National Congress in 1885, held in Bombay, S. A. Swaminath Iyer and V. S. Pantalu protested strongly against any attempt to enhance the salt tax and urged the Congress and the people to raise their voice against it. Leading nationalist journals including the Hindu, the 'Swadesamitran', the 'Kesari' and the 'Mahratta' pleaded for reduction in and preferably the abolition of the tax on salt. What the 'Kesari' said in its issue of January 31, 1988 shows the temper of the people in regard to the tax on salt. It wrote: "there are no people so miserable as those of India. If a sinful man is to be punished he should be sent to India. These thoughts have been suggested by the recent order of the Government of India on the subject of the salt duty. This inhuman action could be taken only by him who was unmindful of the utterly distressful condition of the people of India. The present is the time when such men as hold the opinion that the country conquered by the sword should be preserved also by the sword are in the ascendant. The cat is naturally meek, but when hard-pressed, it is likely to turn to bay and to become irresistible. Such a contingency is possible in the case of the Hindu and it is worth remembering that there is fear of a permanent possession being lost by shrinking from a little burden of taxation on the English people." The main ground of the nationalist attack on the salt tax was its 'unjust and vicious character arising out of the fact

that it fell most heavily, oppressively and cruelly on the poorest of the poor of the land who could not afford to pay any taxes and whose income barely sufficed - and in many cases failed to suffice - to maintain body and soul together. Another charge levelled against the salt tax by the nationalist leaders was its tendency to injure agriculture by starving land and cattle of sufficient quantities of an essential commodity such as salt

3. Conclusion

Lokmanya Tilak's Thoughts on Trade and Commerce in India was most relevant during 'British' period. He has pointed out that, the significance of trade and commerce for the economic development. According to him, agriculture and industries are both are important for economy and hence there is need to promote the trade and commerce related to these sectors. He criticised official tariff, trade, transport and taxation policies as obstructions instead of promoting the growth of industry and bringing about ever-increasing de-industrialisation of the country. The thoughts of Lokmanya Tilak on Trade and commerce are equally important even today. The Government should protect the Indian exporters. The Trade and Commerce activities must be benefiting the Indian industries and not foreigners.

Key Points of Tilak's Thoughts on Trade and Commerce

- **Protectionism:** He advocated for protectionist policies to safeguard Indian industries from foreign competition.
- **Swadeshi:** He promoted the use of Indian-made goods and boycott of foreign goods to encourage indigenous industries.
- **Self-sufficiency:** He believed India should aim for self-sufficiency in trade and commerce, reducing dependence on foreign imports.
- **Indian entrepreneurship:** He encouraged Indian entrepreneurship and investment in industries like textiles, iron, and steel.
- **Critique of British trade policies:** Tilak criticized British trade policies, which he believed exploited India's resources and hindered industrial growth.
- **Trade with other nations:** Tilak supported trade with other nations, but emphasized the need for fair and equal trade agreements.
- **Development of infrastructure:** He recognized the importance of developing India's infrastructure, including transportation and communication networks, to facilitate trade and commerce.
- **Role of the state:** Tilak believed the state should play a supportive role in promoting trade and commerce, through policies and initiatives that encourage Indian industries.

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