

# **Lokmanya Tilak's Thoughts on Cottage Industries**

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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.

## **2. Lokmanya Tilak's Thoughts on Cottage Industries:**

Lokmanya Tilak was against the policies of the British government, since these policies were exploiting the Indian artisans and putting them down. The cottage industries of Indians were about to an end. Tilak wrote many times in 'Kesari' about Indian cottage industries. He wanted to develop the Indian cottage industries and the fruits of development must reach to Indian and not the British government. The thoughts of Lokmanya Tilak in case of cottage industries or Indian handicraft industries can be discussed as below.

### **2.1 Exploitation of Indian cottage Industries by British Rule**

It arose out of the exploitation of India's trade, industries, raw-material carried out by the British for their benefit and their negligence of Indian agriculture, industrial prosperity and education etc. He wrote in Kesari, that the British Government exploited India's trade and industry. By the end of 18th century number, a of regulations were implemented to ruin the Indian trade. 62.2% tariffs were imposed on goods going out of the country. As a result of it India's trade and indigenous artisans were ruined. The British wanted the Indian people to purchase imported goods largely. He wrote that by 1830, foreign goods worth nearly 6,11,13584 pounds i.e. of the value of Rs. 92 crores came to India. The finished goods could not go outside the country. 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. China glass, iron goods, watches, silk were imported. India was exporting raw cotton, oil seeds, wheat, hides and skins.

## **2.2 Decay of Indian cottage Industries**

While commenting on the decay of Indian cottage industries and impoverishment of the Indian artisans, Tilak wrote, "In 1769 order was sent to encourage production of raw material and discourage manufacture of finished products. Weavers were compelled to work in company's factories. Contracts were made to supply products to the company as ordered by them. The 70 weavers were not allowed to work anywhere else or sell their goods outside till they fulfilled the contract of the Company. Thus the weavers were harassed in a number of ways. Skilled artisans of India were exploited. The handicraft art and craft was dying. He further pointed out that Indians could not export goods to Europe due to heavy tax/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 Swadeshi and Cottage Industries:**

The term 'swadeshi' indicates the 'indigenous'. In terms of national importance, the 'swadeshi' means using and promoting the commodities

manufactured by indigenous producers. This also indicates the strategy of discouraging the non-indigenous commodities. Lokmanya Tilak used 'swadeshi' movement to achieve economic freedom and destroy the economic exploitation, which was being carried by the foreigners (or British Government) before independence. According to Mohanty (1997), Lokmanya Tilak was the first person who started 'Swadeshi' movement in India even before 'Mahatma Gandhi'. 'Swadeshi' movement was initially started as economic movement but later it became political movement. This 'swadeshi' movement in India brought the stimulus among the Indians to fight for freedom. According to Gupta R.C. (1994:88), "the Swadeshi movement began as the economic boycott to all those products manufactured in 'Birmingham' and 'Manchester'".

The 'Swadeshi' movement was being used during British India as powerful tool to oppose them. However, the central theme of the 'swadeshi' concept was to establish the strategy of 'indigenous' industries and products. This strategy of 'swadeshi' was accepted by the government of India as a policy decision. The Swadeshi movement was predominantly economic in character. It produced significant impact on industrial development in Maharashtra both in and after the Tilak era. Many enterprising Maharashtrian youths received inspiration from Swadeshi movement and laid the foundation of a number of big and small industrial concerns in Maharashtra

## **2.4 Indigenous Products of Handicrafts:**

The 'swadeshi' movement was also treated as 'self-reliance' and 'self-help' for a nation. This movement was used as political weapon to fight against the 'British' government. The idea of 'Swadeshi' was economic and political during the 'British' rule in India. However Lokmanya Tilak laid a foundation for indigenous industries and indigenous products. This was nothing was protection of indigenous industries and products. According to Mohanty (1997:213), "Lokmanya Tilak encouraged the youth of India to establish cottage industries. He also had supported 'Paisa Fund' movement, which began in the year 1903. The main intention of this movement was to promote Indian handicrafts industries and Indian products, produced under small scale and cottage industries.

## **2.5 Marketing of Indigenous Products:**

Lokmanya Tilak knew the biggest hurdle in the marketing of products produced under the umbrella of indigenous industries or Indian cottage industries. For the marketing of indigenous products of small scale industries, Tilak brought a concept of marketing through the 'Exhibition' and 'Swadeshi Store'. Tilak also took leadership in establishing 'Bombay Swadeshi Cooperative Store' in the year 1906. This cooperative store was established to promote and create the market for the handloom and handicraft products made by the Indians. This was a part of 'Swadeshi' movement. The decision of creating the platform of market for the indigenous products had great importance in the national movement before Independence. Lokmanya Tilak

also had promoted 'Swadeshi' exhibitions in Calcutta. The concept of 'exhibition' was new during those days. This exhibition was also a part of promoting the market for 'swadeshi' commodities. Thus the idea of 'swadeshi' launched by Lokmanya Tilak had economic perspective besides the freedom struggle.

The marketing strategy of Indian handicrafts products was also launched through various exhibitions. A Swadeshi Exhibition of native articles was held in Baroda city on the 26th May 1905. The Pandharpur industrial Exhibition was arranged at Pandharpur in Solapur District, on 6th November 1906. . The Hindu temples in Baroda used only sugar made in this country and a resolution to this effect had also been passed by. Thus exhibition and stores were the source of marketing of Indian goods produced by the Indian cottage industries.

### **3. Conclusion:**

Lokmanya Tilak encouraged the handicraft industries. He had a strategy of development. The 'Swadeshi' movement was also linked with the development of indigenous industries. This could give national freedom and economic independence. The concept of 'swadeshi' has national importance and economic importance. The 'swadeshi' movement gave self-reliance to Indian producers. The production and marketing, both were arranged by Lokmanya Tilak. The strong relevance of 'Swadeshi' concept could be seen even after Independence. The Government of India has framed several policies to promote indigenous industries. This is nothing but, the protection and promotion of 'swadeshi'

industries. The establishment of the structures of 'Stores' and 'Exhibitions' could be seen even today. Thus the vision of Lokmanya Tilak towards 'Swadeshi' had greater importance with economic perspective



### **Key Points of Tilak's Thoughts on Cottage Industries:**

- **Self-sufficiency:** He believed that cottage industries could help India become self-sufficient and reduce dependence on foreign goods.
- **Rural employment:** He saw cottage industries as a means to provide employment opportunities in rural areas, reducing migration to cities.
- **Preservation of traditional skills:** He wanted to preserve traditional Indian skills and crafts, which were being threatened by British industrialization.
- **Decentralization:** He advocated for decentralization of industries, moving away from large-scale industrialization and promoting small-scale, local production.
- **Swadeshi movement:** 'Swadeshi' movement encouraged the use of Indian-made goods, which included promoting cottage industries.
- **Economic empowerment:** He believed that cottage industries could empower rural communities economically, improving their standard of living.
- **Protection from exploitation:** He wanted to protect cottage industry workers from exploitation by middlemen and ensure they received fair prices for their products.

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