



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Political ideas of B.G. Tilak: colonialism, self and Hindu nationalism

Oak, A.

Citation

Oak, A. (2022, April 12). *Political ideas of B.G. Tilak: colonialism, self and Hindu nationalism*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3283505>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3283505>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

6. Tilak and the Swadeshi Movement: Extremist Challenge to Colonialism and Moderate Politics

6.1 Introduction

The first decade of the 20th century marks a decisive shift in India's nationalist movement. India experienced its first mass political action between 1905-08 called the 'Swadeshi Movement'. Indians rose up against the autocratic regime of Viceroy Lord Curzon who was singularly responsible for manufacturing modern India's first territorial partition along religious fault-lines. The Partition of Bengal catapulted local conflicts between Hindus and Muslims into deep-seated hatred which ultimately resulted into the formation of Pakistan in 1947 (Sarkar 1973; Datta 1999). Increasing use of Hindu religious-nationalist symbols and narratives resulted into the establishment of the All-India Muslim League in 1906 [hereafter, Muslim League] (Gopal 1964). The Swadeshi movement also brought forth ideological differences between the Moderate and Extremist factions within the INC resulting in a split during its Surat session (1907) for which Tilak was (and continues to be held) responsible.

The purpose of this chapter is to critically analyze Tilak's role in the Swadeshi movement. I argue that the Bengal-Partition and the Swadeshi movement elicited complex responses from Tilak, and thus, representing changing landscapes of Tilak's political vision. I suggest that Tilak's political writings during the Swadeshi period greatly eschews Hindu racial pride (prevalent in some of his early writings) and seen abundantly among his Extremist comrades such as Aurobindo Ghose (Heehs 1998). On the contrary, Tilak espoused a robust vision of nationalist India founded on the principles of democratic representation arrived at through a restive national political community.

The period under consideration (namely 1899 to 1908) is also a crucial period in the history of INC. Debate amongst Congress leaders over 'social reform' more or less disappeared around 1901-02. The next phase in Congress' history is marked by greater antagonism between the Moderates ("[...] the timid party [...]") and the "bold" Extremists (Gandhi 2009: 22). The Swadeshi movement and the Extremist politics implanted a 'new spirit in India' (Nevinson 1908) and helped in determining the trajectory of India's nationalist movement in subsequent decades. Tilak acted as one of the key political thinkers in inculcating radical

political culture among rebelling Indians and the INC. The nuances of these debates, sometimes missed in historical reconstruction of the Moderates-Extremists differences, would be explored in greater details in this chapter.

Tilak gradually came to recognise international implications of India's nationalist fervour with better clarity. One finds Tilak expanding his political outlook to embrace anti-colonial political programs from Britain and showing greater awareness of nationalist movements across developing countries. The provincial nature of Tilak's politics (characteristic of his formative years) turned subservient to a nationalist vision. His role in inciting mass rebellion was noticed by the British government. He was charged with sedition in 1908 and incarcerated for 6 years at the Mandalay prison. The sentence was strongly opposed by some British Parliamentarians and criticised in world press. Tilak, as a result, found an ardent admirer in Vladimir Lenin⁶¹.

6.2 Rise of Congress-Extremists in Indian Nationalism

The rise of Extremist politics in India's nationalist movement has been variously traced to Bankimchandra Chatterjee (Heimsath 1964), Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda (Tripathi 1967) and to the early writings of Lala Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghosh (McLane 1978). Aurobindo launched one of the earliest attacks on the Moderate attitude of 'mendicancy' towards colonial state. Writing from Baroda for the Indian English language newspaper *Indu Prakash* in August, 1893 Aurobindo argued that a public institution such as the INC "[...] was made for the use and not at all for the worship of man, and it [Congress] can only lay claim to respect so long as its beneficent action remains not a memory of the past, but a thing of the present" (Aurobindo 2002: 12). The Moderates, in Aurobindo's views, were speaking a language of flattery which could, at the most, please British politicians but could achieve nothing substantial for Indians. "Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism" (Aurobindo 2002: 18) and it was the job of the Congress to address these anomalies in the Indian character.

Indian Extremists as well as the English Parliamentarians and larger public saw remarkable similarities between their struggle and radical politics perpetrated by the Irish revolutionaries. And it is quite possible that the epithet 'Extremist' applied to the non-conformist faction of

the INC may have been borrowed from the Irish counterpart (Brasted 1980)⁶². Therefore, the term Extremist, towards the end of 19th century had acquired a romantic notion of nationalism coupled with radical politics within the European (and in turn Indian) discourse.

Speaking before the Welby Commission [1897] Gokhale claimed to represent the 'Moderationist school' of INC (Gokhale 1962). Tilak reprimanded Gokhale for dividing the Congress on such frivolous grounds (i.e., 'Moderationists' and 'Nationalists') and reminded him that the principal task before the Congress ought to fight for political and economic rights of every Indian ('Punahśca harī om', *Kesari*, 4th July, 1898) (Tilak 1969: 94-105). But the Moderate-Extremist divide had been firmly entrenched and no amount of Tilak's bickering would have changed the discourse⁶³.

It was only with the rise of Swadeshi movement and various underground 'terrorist' organizations in Bengal and Maharashtra which proclaimed militant overthrow of the British Empire that the 'Extremists' provoked caution and opposition from the British political establishment. Interestingly, Tilak used the word *Jahālavādī*-the 'Radicals'- when referring to the anti-Moderate faction in the Congress in his Marathi writings. Contemplating on the Moderate-Extremist divide in the INC Tilak uttered the following statements at Calcutta on 2nd January, 1907- "Two new words have recently come into existence with regard to our politics, and they are *Moderates* and *Extremists*. These words have a specific relation to time, and they, therefore, will change with time. The Extremists of to-day will be Moderates tomorrow, just as the Moderates of to-day are [sic.] Extremists yesterday" (Tilak 1919: 37). Therefore, in Tilak's conception the Moderate-Extremist divide was contingent upon external factors, the status-quo of the colonized vis-à-vis the colonizers, the nature of popular demands placed before the colonial state and the best means to achieve them (Seth 1999).

6.3 An Empire in Crisis: Curzon and the Partition of Bengal

At the turn of the 19th century the British Empire faced numerous challenges on its colonial frontiers (Tumblin 2010). Wars with China and South Africa, Boxer and Boer rebellions, rising economic and military powers such as Germany and Japan, intensification of arms race amongst European powers, radicalization of Irish Home-Rule struggle, the war between US

and Spain, Russia's policy of aggrandizement in Afghanistan and French colonial expansion in Africa had pushed the British empire into a state of crisis.

Tilak was closely observing the anti-imperialist sentiment steadily growing in Britain and its ramifications on international events. He realized that in case a major conflict was to break out between the European powers, India would emerge as the single largest source for material and human capital for Britain. Indian resources, readily available at its disposal, had allowed Britain in the past to expand its colonial frontiers and undertake military expeditions in "[...] Egypt, Abyssinia, Malta, China and Africa". However, Imperial "greed" was in no way profiting Indians and went against the Queen's Proclamation which had guaranteed happiness and prosperity of her Indian subjects ('Anāvāra rājyavistāra', *Kesari*, 25th February, 1902) (Tilak 1976a: 56-57, my translation). The British government had been exploiting Indian resources for its Imperial expansion. Tilak estimated that the British government expropriated 2 lakh 62 thousand pounds annually from India for protecting and expanding its frontiers. The annual military expenditure had risen from 16 crore rupees in 1885 to 22 crore rupees in 1890 and 27 crore rupees in 1902. Taxes paid by the Indian peasants were used by the India Office to support British foreign military expeditions. Tilak complained- "[W]hether it is fighting the Chinese, crushing the revolt in Africa or occupying Burma, it is the Indian resources and soldiers who are rampantly used by the British" (Tilak 1995: 416, my translation) ('Hindusthānavara lādālelā laṣkarī kharca', *Kesari*, 18th March, 1902) (Tilak 1995: 415-18).

British military aggression had turned particularly aggressive after the appointment of George Nathaniel Curzon as the Indian Viceroy in 1898. By temperament Curzon was anxious in halting foreign challenges to British imperial interests in Asia and beyond. Therefore, Curzon used his Viceregal power to protect British interests in Asia. During the budget speech delivered before the Imperial Legislative Council at Calcutta in 1900 Curzon defended mounting military expenses and observed- "A Storm [sic.] has taken place in the great ocean, the commotion caused by which will be felt thousands of miles away on every beach and shore. Here, as elsewhere, we shall require to set our house in order, to overhaul our military machine, and to profit by lessons learned" (Curzon 1906: 463).

Curzon's activities in India, undertaken with acute responsibility towards British Empire, were unsuitable to India's interests and produced more damage than good. The historian S. Gopal has described Curzon's six years reign over India in quite succinct words- "He [Curzon]

handled India as a sculptor his marble, chiseling to his intention what he assumed to be an inanimate mass.” (Gopal 1965: 223). The Partition of Bengal, purportedly for administrative purpose but resulting into communal division, is a prime example of Curzon’s ill-fated policies.

Lord Curzon’s years of Viceroyalty and his decision to Partition Bengal led to a ferocious struggle between the Moderates and the Extremists. Both factions sought to use Congress in controlling the nationalist narrative. Tilak was suspicious of Curzon’s Imperialist motives and racial prejudices⁶⁴. In his speech during the Convocation Ceremony at Calcutta University (11th February 1905) (Curzon 1906: 220-231) Curzon accused Asian people of being perpetual liars who could never truly imbibe the principles of truth. The latter-

“[I]s not merely the opposite of a lie. A dumb man would find it difficult to lie, but he might be guilty of untruth every day of his life. There are scores of people who pride themselves on never telling a falsehood, but who are yet habitually false – false to others, and what is worse, false to themselves. Untruthfulness consists in saying or doing anything that gives an erroneous impression either of one’s own character, or of other people’s conduct, or of the facts and incidents of life” (Curzon 1906: 222).

People of the Orient and the Orientalist literature “habitually deviate[d] from the truth” (Curzon 1906: 223) whereas Europeans were renowned for maintaining higher degrees of moral standard (Curzon 1906: 223). Tilak responded to Curzon’s speech (‘Lord Curzon hyāncā vidyāpīṭhādhipati hyā nātyāne Vidyarthi-janāsa upadeśa’ *Kesari*, 21st and 28th February 1905) (Tilak 1976a: 866-872) by reminding him that the oldest text in the world, namely the *Ṛgveda*, regarded Truth to be of the highest value and added, “His Lordship must be quite learned in the literature of the Western world. However, nobody has heard that his Excellency has ever read or engaged with the Oriental literature” (Tilak 1976a: 867, my translation). As a later historian characterize him, Curzon was “[i]ncapable of developing any spirit of partnership even with his fellow-countrymen whose lot it was to serve him [...]” (Gopal 1965: 227). Therefore, it was hardly surprising that Curzon found no reason to form an emotional bond with the people over whom he ruled. “His natural emphasis was on efficiency rather than on understanding, on cool application to the daily tasks rather than on furtherance of any belief or ideal. It was a viceroyalty without vision” (Gopal 1965: 227).

Few months prior to the partition of the Bengal Province, western India experienced hints of Curzon's autocratic regime and erratic behavior. In March 1904, during his tour of Western and Central India, Curzon visited the Varhad region in Central India and offered to sign an agreement with the Nizam of Hyderabad by which the region would be leased out to the Princely State for an annual rent of Rs. 25 lakhs. When the Nizam refused Curzon decided to amalgamate the region with the Central Provinces. Congress leaders were distressed by Curzon's arbitrary decision. They felt that the Varhad region, consisting of a large proportion of Marathi-speaking population, should have ideally been amalgamated with Bombay. *Kesari* (5th April 1905) decried Curzon's divide-and-rule policy in harsh words- "India has never seen a Viceroy as arrogant and cunning and who cares less for the rights of the people as Lord Curzon" (quoted in Phadke 1989: 136, my translation). The decision to divide the Bombay Province was clearly meant to break Congress dominance in the region and put an end to increasing mass politicization by invoking the memory of Shivaji (Sarkar 1973: 15). Perhaps Curzon was also testing the waters for his grand partition of Bengal- declared on 19th July 1905 and materialized on 16th October, 1905. Citing difficulty in administering the large Bengal province it was divided into eastern and western divisions. The former consisted of majority Hindus whereas Muslims dominated the eastern region. The dismemberment of Bengal Province was actually replete with covert political motives. It is evidenced through private correspondence between the Viceroy and his administrative staff that the former held disdain towards the 'Bengali babu'. Curzon was also anxious over the threats posed by Bengali nationalism to British imperial interests in the East (Sarkar 1973: 19-20).

The Bengal-Partition triggered a nation-wide uproar resulting into what Anandita Ghose has described as "[...] the first ever concentrated and sustained mass protest in the sub-continent." (Ghose 2016: 279). Bengali Congress leaders had been opposing Curzon's plan of Partition for many weeks in the Imperial Legislative Council. Numerous memorials and petitions had reached the Viceroy's office as well as the British Parliament. During his Presidential Address to the annual Congress Session (held at Bombay in 1904) Sir Henry Cotton opposed Curzon's plan. He observed that the "[...] severance of the oldest and most populous and wealthy portion of the province and the division of its people into two arbitrary sections" would give a "[...] profound shock to the Bengali race." (INC Report 1905: 45). He advised the Imperial Council to come up with an alternative scheme which would not elicit

“[...] the unanimous disapproval of the affected population.” (INC Report 1905: 45). Cotton put his faith in the rationality, “[...] good sense and better feeling [...]” of the Secretary of State to shoot down the proposal of Partition (INC Report 1905: 46). While Ambica Charan Majumdar’s resolution opposing the Partition of Bengal was carried unanimously in the Congress (1904)⁶⁵ it could not stop Curzon’s plans. Bipin Chandra Pal wrote bitterly in July, 1905- “If anything could prove the utter futility of our so-called methods of constitutional political agitation ... the history of the agitation against the proposal to partition Bengal has done it.” (Pal quoted in Sarkar 1973: 43)⁶⁶.

Following the official announcement of Bengal’s Partition, *Kesari* carried an editorial (‘Āṇibāṇīcī veḷa!’, 16th October, 1905) providing a vivid description of the events in Calcutta. Tilak extended his support to the dissenting factions of Bengalis and urged his readers to closely watch the events unfolding in Bengal and to prepare themselves for a prolonged battle with the British government. Days of discussions and deliberations were over. It would require national unity and public opposition to repeal the Partition. Tilak wrote, “Thousands, nay, lakhs should come together with a determinate will. The strength of public opinion’s lies in fortitude and not merely in gatherings [...] Mere words won’t suffice; action is required [...]” (quoted in Javadekar 1953: 280, my translation). Tilak called Lord Curzon a “mad elephant” let loose threatening to destroy everything which came in its path. Tilak argued that the “[...] movement for self-rule ha[d] begun and it [would] conclude only with India getting what is due to it” (Tilak 1976b: 56, my translation). Unless the colonial government did not put brakes on its divisive activities Indians would be forced to “[...] act on volition and unfortunately the whole issue would be worse than the Irish quagmire” (‘Kāḷa yeta cālālā, sāvadhā rahā’, *Kesari*, 8th August, 1905) (Tilak 1976b: 56, my translation).

Few weeks before the actual partition of Bengal Lord Curzon was deposed from his post on 21st August, 1905 and Lord Minto was appointed as the new Viceroy of India. Tilak wrote a harsh indictment of Curzon’s personality and his seven years long career as the Viceroy of India. Tilak compared Curzon with an asūra from Hindu Puranic tradition. Purāṇas portray asūras as courageous, strong-willed and learned creatures/men. However, bane sentiments such as excessive self-indulgence, pride bordering on arrogance and disregard for the plight of their subjects resulted into their downfall. Curzon was an arch-Imperialist who had had left no stone unturned in establishing sovereign control of the Empire over South Asia and

beyond. His actions had left an indelible mark on Indians. For ages to come, Tilak observed, Curzon would be remembered, especially among the Bengali population, as a thoroughly autocratic ruler ('Lord Curzon yāncī kārakīrda', *Kesari*, 29th August, 1905) (Tilak 1976a: 827-833).

The Moderates, on the other hand, were not ready to confront the British State. During its 1904 session the British leaders of the Congress Committee, Sir Henry Cotton and William Wedderburn, had advised Indian Congress leaders to spend time in England and persuade the British parliamentarians to be kinder and more considerate towards the Indian situation. Elections were due in Britain and Cotton hoped for a change in guard. The Congress unanimously agreed to send Sir Surendranath Banerjea, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, Lajpat Rai and Gopal Krishna Gokhale on a deputation to England. Tilak whole-heartedly supported the delegation but also implored the Congress leaders to take a tougher stand on the Partition. In December 1904 he reiterated the historic importance of Congress, the maturity which it had attained in the previous 20 years since its inception, and the twin political goal before it, namely, fighting for equal political rights for all Indians while maintaining solidarity with the Empire and involving as many Muslims and other educated Indians in Congress' work ('Veḷa tara hīca āhe', *Kesari*, 20th December, 1904) (Tilak 1976b: 253-258). In the background of Bengal- Partition Tilak thought it was also important to pressurize British Parliament into passing legislations beneficial for Indians. Begging for larger representation for Indians in the Imperial Council and demanding promotions for Indians in higher administrative posts was utterly useless ('Hīndusthānacī Vāṭa kāya?', *Kesari*, 8th August, 1905) (Tilak 1976b: 49-53). Instead, he advised the Delegation to use the opportunity to demand self-rule for India. Tilak advised the Delegation to seek support from Labour Party leaders such as Henry Mayers Hyndman (Rāṣṭrīya sabhā āni svadesī caḷavaḷa', *Kesari*, 3rd October, 1905) (Tilak 1995: 538-42)⁶⁷.

6.4 Tilak and the Swadeshi Movement: Towards National Rejuvenation

Since his early activist days Tilak had nurtured the idea of inspiring indigenous capitalists into investing and expanding the role of capital in the birth of a national economy⁶⁸. Tilak found the agitation fomenting in Bengal perfectly suitable for generating mass consciousness against imperial- industrial exploitation of India. Accordingly, Tilak founded the Svadeśī Vastū

Pracāriṇī Sabhā in 1906. With the help of a few Bombay industrialists and mill-owners, Tilak also established the 'Bombay Swadeshi Co-operative Stores Company Limited' in May 1906 and served on its board of directors⁶⁹ (Kelkar 2012b: 250). Growth of native industries would require Indians to invest in native capital. Speaking at a lecture series organized during the Ganapati festival of 1906 Tilak urged big money-lenders to abandon older method of money-lending and instead establish co-operative banks. Money invested into such banks would not only protect financial interests of small and tenant farmers but the capital generated could be used to promote industrialization. For Tilak, the primary means of industrialization was through establishment of numerous textile-mills which, with the help of co-operative capital funding, could give rise to mechanical innovations and enhancing capital accumulation (Tilak 1976d: 616-623).

Many poorer and colonized countries in the world were following policies of Swadeshi (trade protectionism) protecting their indigenous economic interests. "A cursory look at the movements in countries such as America, Japan, Australia, Natal, Boer-led Transvaal, France, Germany and even England would reveal that they have been incentivizing indigenous industries [...]" (Tilak 1995: 526, my translation). During the last decade of the 19th century the Americans had prohibited the entry of Chinese labourers, Australia had refused entry to the Japanese, and Indian and black laborers from South Africa were denied the right to work in Britain. Every advanced capitalist nation of western Europe was working towards protecting its domestic markets and restrict employment to its 'native labour-force'. America promoted Japanese war with Russia to seek entry in the Russia-controlled Manchuria and exploit its resources. Tilak argued that the movement of labour and capital had turned inversely proportional between the colonial metropolis and its colonized satellites. A new "intellectual revolution" (vicāra krāntī) was sweeping across the world which favored "[...] native interests over foreign investments" (Tilak 1995: 527-28, my translation). Considering that Indians were the subjects of the British Crown, the British government was duty-bound to protect the interests of India/Indians. But Britain had "[...] clearly failed in its duty [...]", and as a consequence, Indians must take up the responsibility of protecting their self-interests (Tilak 1976e: 623-24).

Overwhelming competition to Swadeshi goods from foreign commodities could not be tackled only through the growth of indigenous capital. People, over-exposed to foreign goods,

were required to abandon their use. The call for boycott of foreign goods, propounded by Bengali agitators, was popularized in Maharashtra by Tilak. Tilak called upon Maharashtrians to join their fellow Bengalis and transform the agitation into a ‘national boycott’ (Rāṣṭrīya bahiṣkāra) (‘Rāṣṭrīya bahiṣkāra’, *Kesari*, 22 August, 1905) (Tilak 2004: 39-45). Tilak used concepts from Hindu theology to explain the modern concept of boycott. During pre-colonial times, Tilak had argued in 1881, boycott- Bahiṣkāra- meant excommunication or social ostracism of criminals (Tilak 2004: 34-38). Tilak appropriated the notion of ex-communication (of individuals) to those of foreign commodities. The newer form of boycott, which he termed Bahiṣkāra-yoga, was meant to protect national interests and, hence, a virtuous act. The Sanskrit word ‘yoga’ meant union. The practice of boycott was closely tied with the concept of Swadeshi. While boycott expected ‘ethical sacrifice’ from its practitioners, the use of Swadeshi-made goods would result into ‘nationalist pride’. A practitioner of the path of Yoga is expected to show consistency, grit, and strength of character in order to attain Liberation. In a similar fashion, Tilak argued, boycotting foreign goods required great personal sacrifice. The practitioner of Swadeshi was expected to forfeit a life of comfort and pleasure (‘Bahiṣkāra-yoga’, *Kesari*, 5th and 12th September, 1905) (Tilak 2004: 46-57). Tilak, unlike Gokhale and other Moderates, did not propound gradually ceasing the use of foreign goods (Ghose, Aurobindo. “Graduated Boycott.” *Bande Mataram*, 26th April, 1907) (Aurobindo 2002: 349-52). The tie which bound British economic-imperial interests with Indian market had to be snapped.

Bahiṣkāra-yoga, Tilak felt, was a promising step towards economic empowerment of India. He wrote, “Even if we lack sufficient means to be self-reliant using indigenous capital” Indians had to make sure that “our consumption does not add to the profit of the foreign capitalists” (Tilak 1995: 529) (‘Hī veḷa āja nāhī tara udyā yāvayācī hotī’, *Kesari*, 11th September, 1905) (Tilak 1995: 524-30). Boycott and use of Swadeshi were two sides of the same coin, similar to the relation between Brahman and Prakṛtī or the two facets in the image of Ardha-nārī-naṭeśvara and it was the “sacred duty” (“pavitṛa kartavya”, my translation) (Tilak 1995: 535) of all Indians to participate in the Swadeshi movement (‘He Kāma tumacyā śaktī bāherace nāhī’, *Kesari*, 26th September, 1905) (Tilak 1995: 531-37). In the performance of this sacred duty Tilak urged Indians to set aside their religious and caste-based differences. “Patriotism is a sentiment which each individual is naturally endowed with” (Tilak 1976d: 629, my

translation) and therefore, even at the cost of losing out on few pennies, every patriotic Indian was expected to buy home-made Swadeshi commodities, considering, the profit generating out of the sale of such goods would be retained in India and eventually find its way to fellow compatriots. To this end Tilak informed his readers that the idea of Swadeshi had, in fact, originated in modern Maharashtra. Gopal Hari Deshmukh (Lokahitwadi), through his *Śatapatre*, was the first to formulate the idea of Swadeshi. M. G. Ranade had also been an active proponent of Swadeshi goods (Phadke 1989: 117-18)⁷⁰.

On another occasion⁷¹ Tilak stressed on the need to develop a vibrant and united civil society and demand political rights from the British colonial-state. These demands could be placed without taking recourse to violent means, not because violence was morally unjustifiable, but because the Indians lacked the necessary resources to combat the military power of the British State. However, he was not sure if the relationship between the natives and the British state could follow the Contractarian model, partly because, no contracts could be signed between unequal partners. He further noted that the Social Contract was invented to pacify popular rebellions occurring in Europe (possibly referring to the unrest in England during the 17th century and to the French Revolution of 1789) and was developed into a philosophical tradition by the 'western-materialist' thinkers. It was not suitable to Indian conditions. Hindu tradition argued for a 'union' (Advaita) between the ruler (King or the State), subjects or citizen and the Absolute (Brahman). A king was also expected to reach out to wise seers and seek their advice in order to rule in a morally virtuous manner. This was his 'rājadharmā'. Having never heard of Locke, Hooker or Hobbes a native prince such as Shivaji could govern in a morally righteous manner because he had learnt the 'rājadharmā' at the feet of great Masters (Tilak 1908: 2-7).

Such open invocation of ancient principles of social conduct and political governance became a regular feature of Tilak's speeches throughout this period. He used terms such as karma, the karmic retribution and associated it with the nation. He visualized an individual Ātman, a collective Ātman of the nation and a Cosmic Ātman (Brahman), all tied by a common thread, to righteous action. Therefore, the actions of an individual bore result at an individual, or at the most, family-level (Tilak 1908: 35-36). However, the actions of a King (meaning the government) affected the entire population. In such a case, the 'moral duty' of citizens was to oppose wrongful actions of the government, and failing to do so would result into an

accumulation of bad karma both at the levels of the individual and the nation. One of the means of making the government responsible was by dissociating oneself from its cruel and unjustified actions. Tilak proposed that 'boycott' could help reach this goal. He appealed to all the lower government officers to join boycott and resign from government employment. A paralyzed government, just like a paralyzed body, was totally dependent on others for assistance. He reminded his audience that the British had entered India for commercial activities and amassing profit and not to grant Indians their 'Liberation' (Mokṣa). Obstructing the work of the foreign government which impoverished India and prioritizing the growth Indian industries was the moral duty of all Indians (Tilak 1908: 73-75). This was the meaning of Swadeshi. In a speech delivered before the Bombay mill-workers on 15th December, 1907 he said, "Swadeshi is not a practice of the Brahmins. Hindu-Muslim discord has no role to play in it. All those born in this country and are contributing to the well-being of this nation and whose welfare is dependent upon this nation belong here. Swadeshi is a matter of survival for everybody living here" (Tilak 1908: 97, my translation). He further argued that the labor cost involved in manufacturing a cloth in the native mills would be returned to the native workers when one bought a native-manufacturer. Boycott of Manchester-produced cloth meant taking up the vow of Swadeshi. "Swadeshi is not a commodity which can be purchased from a market. Your heart, your mind, your conscience should be enamored by Swadeshi. All you have to do is recognize it" (Tilak 1908: 98, my translation). Tilak believed that the colonial state was puppet in the hands of the British bourgeoisie. Boycott on foreign goods and promotion of Swadeshi would "[...] definitely carve out a hole in the pockets of Manchester-based industrialists and their Indian cronies" (Tilak 1995: 524, my translation).

Tilak's plan for national rejuvenation included fundamental changes in modern education system. Tilak believed that the youth of the country, if educated in the 'right manner', would be willing to sacrifice their luxuries, pleasures and comfort and participate in the nationalist movement. However, Tilak held conflicting views about the very use of modern education. Himself trained in colonial educational institutions, Tilak neither opposed modern pedagogy nor did he consider West-inspired modern education deprecative or propagating immorality. His focus was on delivering 'national education', that is, imbibing nationalist values into the present and future generations. The colonial education system, instituted by Lord Macaulay, had abandoned its righteous tone. It was producing lackeys of the colonial state, intelligent

enough to work in the colonial civil services but incapable of opposing its exploitative rule. Through a series of lectures delivered throughout the Bombay Province (Kelkar 2012b: 295-300) Tilak exposed the double-standards of colonial education. Religious education, education through one's native tongue, vocational training and political education were the four pillars of Tilak's vision of nationalist education (Speech at Barshi on 3rd March, 1908) (Tilak 1976d: 903-08). To learn about British counties at the expense of Indian geography was unacceptable to Tilak (Speech at Dhule during the 15th Provincial Congress, 28th April, 1908) (Tilak 1976d: 913-15). Unlike the traditional form of knowledge-imparting (guru-śiṣya paramparā) national education was not restricted to the Brahmin caste. "Everybody, from a cobbler, goldsmith to the pariah untouchable should be trained in nationalist education." (Speech at Pune, 4th September, 1907) (Tilak 1976d: 883, my translation). Cultural revivalism was an important ingredient in his program of nationalist education.

The Swadeshi agitation was inspired by foreign economic and cultural nationalism and gaining international recognition (Manjapra 2012: 53-62). Nationalist movements in Asia along with new political ideologies such as socialism attracted Tilak. He was observing the ideological assault on British imperialism from some parts of Europe. He especially hoped that the United States, a former British colony, would pressurize Britain in granting greater political and financial autonomy to India. His desire to seek American help was bolstered after a short visit of its Democratic Presidential candidate and a fierce anti-imperialist, William Jennings Bryan, to India in 1906 ('Kāḷa yeta cālālā, sāvadhā rahā', *Kesari*, 8th August, 1905) (Tilak 1976b: 54-58). Tilak also wrote a long editorial in *Kesari* providing a vivid description of the International Socialist Congress held at Amsterdam in August 1904 'Mr. Dadabhai yāñce nikarāce bhāṣaṇa', *Kesari*, 20th September, 1904) (Tilak 1976b: 249-52). The conference, attended by socialists from over a dozen countries, also included Dadabhai Naoroji as a representative of India. The Conference condemned the drain of resources from India to Britain and passed a resolution (proposed by the British socialist John A. Hobson) of assisting India's rightful claim for financial and political autonomy. Praising the socialists' commitment to end Britain autocratic rule over India Tilak wrote-

"Imperial-national governments, which went on a rampage and conquered lesser developed nations with their military strength, are rightly condemned by none other than liberals, socialists and positivists. [As a famous Sanskrit saying goes] only the exploited would know

the suffering of a suppressed [...] We wish the socialist movement grew stronger in the years to come [...] and if, in future, we seek the help of socialists in redressing our current political predicament all blame would rest with crony capitalists and cruel British bureaucrats [...]" ('Mr. Dadabhai yāñce nikarāce bhāṣaṇa', *Kesari*, 20th September, 1904) (Tilak 1976b: 249-52, my translation). Tilak's approach to the political crisis of India was, thus, simultaneously took into account its nationalist and internationalist dimensions.

Tilak's political outlook towards Swadeshi and Svarājya was premised upon envisioning political and economic autonomy for India from the British Empire coupled with a simultaneous notion of an abstract yet universalist social body peculiar to Hindus. Therefore, it was a double critique of a "[...] differentiating logic of colonial practices [...]" (Goswami 2004: 251) coupled with a semantic and theoretical refusal of modern liberalism. Tilak's propagation of Swadeshi was coupled with the ideas of 'passive resistance' formulated most prominently by Aurobindo Ghose. Aurobindo wrote a series of articles (between 11 and 23 April, 1907) for *Bande Mataram* under the heading *The New Thought: The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*. Through these articles Aurobindo argued that the era of petitions and requests for change from British colonial state (the approach of mendicancy of the Moderate Congress) had long passed. While self-help and self-development was important (as propagated through Swadeshi ideals) the presence of an exploitative colonial state would severely restrict such activities from the colonized subjects. In such a situation, Indians ought to adopt the principles of passive resistance by which Indians could establish a parallel government in India. Aurobindo advocated popular uprisings, rioting, demonstrations and refusal to pay taxes. They were tried and tested methods successfully implemented by suppressed populations against autocratic regimes and therefore should be urgently followed in India as well (Aurobindo 2002: 263-303). By his own admission Aurobindo was inspired by movements of popular resistance occurring in Russia (Hardiman 2018: 35-37) and Ireland (Sen 2007) for theorizing his doctrine of passive resistance.

6.5 Liberal or Radical Politics: Moderates and the Extremist Challenge (1905-08)

Despite nation-wide spontaneous agitation in support of Bengal the INC refused to be the face of the struggle. Although Gokhale severely criticized Bengal's partition (for instance, during his Presidential Address to the Congress session at Benares in 1905) he refused to

include Swadeshi, Boycott or national education in Congress resolutions. Instead, Moderate leaders were interested in discussing the forthcoming visit of the Prince of Wales (on his maiden visit to India in 1906). The Benares Congress appointed Gokhale on a Congress-delegation and asked him to place Congress' demands before the British Parliament. In July 1906, Dadasaheb Khaparde, a staunch Tilakite, came out with a public circular urging upon the Congress to change its policy (Khaparde 1978: 348). The Anglo-Indian press pounced upon Khaparde for dividing the Congress along 'nationalist' lines.

The Moderates, and especially Gokhale, were hopeful that the newly formed Liberal government (under the leadership of Campbell-Bannerman) would be more sympathetic towards India's plight. Lord Morley was appointed as the new Secretary of State for India and Lord Minto was entrusted with Viceregal responsibilities. Morley sympathized with the Swadeshi movement (Wolpert 1967) and wished to distinguish his approach to Indian unrest from his predecessors. He advised colonial representatives caution and restraint and reminded them of their historical role in the colonial enterprise (meaning that the British were visitors to the land and ruled India for the latter's benefit). He was left bereft when democratic methods of rule were trampled upon in the name of security and obedience. His past association with the Irish question must have guided his approach to Indian unrest (Wolpert 1967).

Morley's writings were read by Indians and, in some way, guided their action. Gokhale, an ardent admirer of Morley, during his presidential address to the Benares Congress (1905) called Morley a "Master" in whom Indians had placed their faith (Gokhale 1920: 708). During his sojourn in England Gokhale tried to persuade Morley to accept the Congress resolutions regarding revocation of the Bengal Partition, greater fiscal autonomy and granting 'self-government' to India. But Morley remained stoic and requested the INC to suspend its agitation till the impending India Council Reform (due in 1908)⁷². Informed of the rising unrest in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab by Minto, Morley sanctioned further repressive measures. Vernacular press in these regions was held responsible for manufacturing popular dissent. Numerous newspapers were shut down and their editors/proprietors imprisoned.

Tilak, too, was hopeful that Morley's control over India would produce positive results and that Morley would follow the steps of his political guru, William Gladstone, and support a colonized nation's legitimate constitutional rights. However, in his official capacity as the

Secretary of State Morley showed a different side of his personality. In his addresses to the House of Commons as well as in his annual budget speeches (which were widely circulated and commented upon in India) of 1906-07, Morley maintained his allegiance to the Imperialist project and tried to convince his peers in the House of Commons that the unrest in India had entirely subsided and that the Partition of Bengal was a 'settled matter'.

During his budget speech to the House of Commons on 26th June, 1907 Morley argued that the political upheaval in Punjab was a result of the spread of plague and longstanding agrarian distress. The Swadeshi firebrands were using this opportunity to stir the hornet's nest and build public hostility against the colonial government (Morley 1909). And that the government's response of slapping sedition cases against Swadeshi agitators was completely justifiable. Invoking the writings of J. S. Mill, Morley argued that the British colonial activities were meant to bring its undeveloped colonies to the (civilizational) level of Britain (Morley 1909: 19).

Morley was contradicting himself since, during his first budget speech for 1906, he had shown sympathy towards the agitation in India and had assured the British parliament that things in India ought not be perceived with prejudice. He also assured Indians that the new government under the Liberal Party would be willing to comprise and be markedly more accommodative of demands made by Indians. "I do not see why anyone who takes a cool and steady view of the Indian Government should be frightened. I will not at once conclude that, because a man is dissatisfied and discontented, he is disaffected. Why, our own [British] reforms and changes have been achieved by dissatisfied men who were no more dissatisfied than you or I" (quoted in Naik 1945: 7). Such statements made by Morley must be read in the light of the policy-decisions taken by the Campbell-Bannerman administration, one of which included, not to introduce any demand for Home Rule to the Parliament during the lifetime of the Liberal government (Searle 1992: 79).

Change in Morley's stance towards India met with fierce criticism from the Extremists. Tilak accused Morley of taking Mill's remarks out of its context and applying them to suit his purposes. As per Tilak, Mill was a champion of liberty and opposed arbitrary control. Mill's ideas, when correctly interpreted, put the responsibility of supporting economically weaker nations upon advanced economies. Tilak believed that Mill did not espouse politics for 'selfish-interests' (Mill āṇi Morley', *Kesari*, 10th September, 1907) (Tilak 1976a: 910-914). In

all probability, Tilak argued, Morley was confusing the role played by a statesman and a philosopher in modern societies. The domains of philosophy and statecraft were intricately bound and therefore a philosopher could be employed as a state official [Mill] while a statesman was philosophically inclined [Morley] yet had different existences. Tilak explained the role of a philosopher in the following words-

“The work of a true philosopher is to contemplate, in deep isolation, of the most suitable form of government to meet the demands of welfare of the people, to develop procedures of State-function in order to contribute to the common good and of the different policies by which the civil society prospers and the citizens favor the government. In the process the compulsions of the real world such as greed, ego, jealousy and such others sentiments must be either set aside, or a philosopher has to find ways to mitigate social conflicts emerging out of such personal ambitions” (Tilak 1976a: 905, my translation).

Vedānta, Tilak added, teaches the simple formula of experiencing the Self in the Absolute. However, such metaphysical experiences must also be translatable and applicable to the contingencies of the real world. Statecraft was the art of translating metaphysical ideals into practical common good. Philosophers rarely stepped into the political arena in order to supervise the practical implications of their philosophical ideals. Tilak observed that neither Herbert Spencer nor Mill ever actively participate in actual Parliamentary affairs⁷³. A statesman, on the other hand, accosted by majoritarianism ends up dismissing and/or opposing every dissent. According to Tilak, Morley’s opposition to the Swadeshi agitation was a classic example of a philosopher turned into statesman (*mutsaddī*) (‘*Tattvavettā āṇi mutsaddī*’, *Kesari*, 18th September, 1907) (Tilak 1976a: 905-908). “To expect getting more political rights from Mr. Morley now would be a great folly” since in “statecraft self-interest lies prior to higher philosophical ideals” (Tilak 1976a: 907, my translation). Morley was, ultimately, governed by the British imperialist compulsions which had no space for altruism and worked on the principles of ‘self-interest’ and ‘self-gratification’. Tilak called the British Liberal government a glaring example of ‘enlightened despotism’. “The only way to extract rights from the English government was by obstructing all its transactions and activities in India. And for this to happen every Indian, whether educated or not, has to strive towards building a united front” (Tilak 1976a: 908, my translation).

Tilak was fast losing his faith in the British Liberal government- and its ministers/officers responsible for India- of any significant relaxation in governing norms. Since the INC was the sole political organization of India capable of pressurizing the rigid British colonial bureaucratic system to bend to the will of majority of Indians Tilak hoped that the Calcutta Congress (1906) would prove to be a 'turning point' in the history of the nation and its on-going agitation ('Gelyā rāṣṭrīya sabhet viśeṣ kāy jhāle?', *Kesari*, 8th January, 1907) (Tilak 1976b: 284-290). Dadabhai Naoroji in his Presidential Address to the Calcutta-Congress (1906) supported the radical program proposed by the Extremists. The Congress also passed resolutions calling for the four-fold agitation- Swadeshi, Svarājya, Boycott and National Education- to be adopted in future Congress mass activities.

In his Presidential address Naoroji suggested that the logical next step for the Congress was to demand self-government or Home-Rule. That Naoroji had almost spoken the language of the Extremists shocked the Anglo-Indians, the Moderates and the English Parliamentarians⁷⁴. Tilak reminded the Moderates, and especially their leader Gokhale, of the 'wisdom' imparted by the 'old Indian political sage'. Tilak said, "[Naoroji] has come here at the age of 82 to tell us that he is bitterly disappointed [with the Morley-Minto administration]. [But] Mr. Gokhale, I know, is not disappointed. He is a friend of mine and I believe that this is his honest conviction. Mr. Gokhale is not disappointed but is ready to wait another 80 years till he is disappointed like Mr. Dadabhai" (Tilak 1919: 40). In the same speech he also cautioned Gokhale that British Liberal government remains loyal to its liberal roots while ruling over England but does not apply the same principles to its colonies. The Queen's Proclamation, symbolizing the benevolence of the British Monarch, carried no legal stature. Therefore, it was anybody's guess whether Morley was constitutionally bound to enforce the Royal promises.

But the Moderates proved recalcitrant. Tilak proposed to establish, what was simply known as, The New Party. Largely comprising of the Extremists, the New Party was expected to work under the auspices of the INC. But its chief means of political activism was "[...] not petitioning but boycott" (Tilak 1919: 48). Boycott was thus presented as a "political weapon" and Indians were expected to refuse all assistance to colonial bureaucracy in collecting taxes, revenues, sending Indian soldiers for protecting the frontiers of the Empire or even administering judicial duties and obligations (Tilak 1919: 50). Persuaded by Aurobindo Ghose, the Bengal

group declared Tilak as the undisputed leader of the New Party (Tripathi 1967: 128-29). The bitter struggle to control INC had begun.

Gokhale began his tour of Punjab and United Provinces in February 1907 with a single-point agenda of refuting the line taken by the New Party and defending the ‘liberal and constitutional’ methods adopted by the Moderates for close to twenty years. He called the method adopted by the Moderates as ‘constitutional agitation’ which was meant to bring about changes through, and only through, the power vested in the constituted authorities (Gokhale 1966: 215-35). He opposed violence of all sorts but particularly that which invited criminal activities, invitation to foreign powers to invade India and incited mass rebellion.

Tilak believed that Gokhale was caught in a terrible fix. Being the leader of the Moderate faction, Gokhale was forced to toe the line of other Moderate leaders such as Phirozeshah Mehta, D. E. Wacha, R. N. Mudholkar among others and was left with no freedom to voice his personal opinion. And yet Gokhale was aware that the ‘New Party’ had gathered substantial mass support. Therefore, while Tilak cheered Gokhale for supporting agitational politics in one of his lectures, he strongly defended ‘constitutional agitation’ (Nāmdāra Gokhale yāncā ghoṭālā, *Kesari*, 12th February, 1907 and ‘Bare zāle, bolale!’, *Kesari*, 19th February, 1907) (Tilak 1976b: 435-41 and Tilak 1976b: 442-47). The political outlook of Tilak and Gokhale vis-a-vis the constitutionality of the ‘demand for self-government’ in general and the Swadeshi agitation in particular becomes quite explicit in Tilak’s editorial ‘Sanadaśīra āṇi kāyadeśīra’ (*Kesari*, 5th March, 1907) (Tilak 1976b: 448-455). Tilak argued that the Congress-movement of the preceding twenty-two years was an Indian avatar of anti-imperialism registered by the Manchester School English economists of the 19th century. Therefore, neither of two were ever following ‘constitutionalism’ of any sort.

Tilak translated the English term Constitution in Marathi as ‘sanad’. He argued that modern nation-states were divided into three types- a) if power was vested with an individual it came to be called as monarchy (rājasattā); b) when power was concentrated in the hands of a few influential individuals who acted as representatives of the entire citizenry it came to be called as ‘democracy’; c) power emanating from popular will was called ‘republicanism’. The latter, according to Tilak, was “[...] the highest form of modern statehood” (Tilak 1976b: 449, my translation). Constitutionalism was the “body-structure [śarīra-ghaṭanā] of rules which

determined the governance by a State” (Tilak 1976b: 449, my translation) and hence was desirable in modern polities.

In British history, the expanse of the citizens’ rights was determined by the scope of the British Constitution. British citizens, at different times in the nation’s long history, acquired rights from the British monarch by signing various ‘charters’ (sanad). Thus, in the absence of any written document, British Constitutionalism evolved out of the principles and agreements laid out in these numerous charters. In the process, the powers of the monarch were substantially reduced and legislative authority came to be vested in a popularly elected Parliament. The ‘Queen’s Proclamation’ was a ‘promise’, “a sweet promise- or call it a sweet lie if you like” (Tilak 1976b: 450, my translation), but not a charter and hence could not be treated as a constitution. It created a “mirage” of being a charter/ Constitution (‘sanadecā ābhāsa’) (Tilak 1976b: 450, my translation). According to Tilak, looking after the welfare of citizens was the primary duty of a modern state. Modern parliamentary democracies, which claim legitimacy through popular sanction, strives hard towards delivering decent governance. However, since Indians were prohibited from casting votes in British Parliamentary elections, British legislators were largely disinterested in protecting and advancing Indian interests. The British government in India was, therefore, to be considered both illegitimate and unconstitutional (Tilak 1976b: 451).

The Swadeshi movement was perfectly ‘legal’ (kāyadeśīra). It rarely broke any prohibitions laid out in the Indian Penal Code. In any case, a penal code was a statutory codification and did not emerge out of popular sanction. Tilak argued-

“In these times we do not have the right to pass our own laws; therefore, even if we deem our actions to be following old native customs, or emerging out of our natural rights’ dispensation or ethically acceptable, their legitimacy or illegitimacy would be ultimately decided by our government. Our morally justified efforts might be rendered illegal by the government. In such a situation- we should realize that our actions are not ‘illegal’. The colonial law imposed upon us is cruel. In any case, it is pointless to debate about the legality and illegality of our current agitation. All that matters is if our agitation and our endeavors are in tandem with our customs, our ethics, our history and whether they contribute to our progress [...]. Ultimately this law is of foreign origin [...] [and] when law differs from ethics things quickly fall apart (Tilak 1976b: 455, my translation).

Tilak severely attacked the 'unconstitutional' means of petitioning adopted by the Moderates. He believed that a tremendous popular pressure had to be mounted upon the British government to grant favorable reforms to Indian and that only the INC was the legitimate-representative body capable of doing so. The debate over the constitutional means of agitation and the Congress' support to 'boycott' as a legitimate tool of political agitation was the principal bone of contention between the Moderates and the Extremists, contributing to the famous split in the Congress during its session at Surat in December, 1907.

In an article he questioned the very basis of the Congress, for whose benefit was it working and to whom did it belong. While the Congress worked on definite liberal-democratic principles handed down from the British tradition, its Constitution was loosely structured. The election of the President of a Congress session followed a certain procedure. In 1907 the Extremists put the name of Lala Lajpat Rai before the Subjects' Committee which was strongly opposed by the Moderates. Tilak compared the British parliamentary system with the Congress ('Rāṣṭrīya sabhā koṇācī?', *Kesari*, 27th September, 1907) (Tilak 1976b: 291-95). The Congress, similar to the British parliamentary system, was expected to follow the principle of democratic elections and power-sharing. The Opposition too had an honored place within the parliament and its views and opinions were given due credence. The Moderates, claiming a direct lineage to the founding members of the INC, were unwilling to accommodate divergent opinions. Tilak argued that hereditary rights belonged to religious institutions such as temples and not to a modern political institution such as the INC which worked on the principles of representative-democracy. Moreover, the representative-parliamentary system works on the system of garnering majority votes to back a decision (legislation). Delegates to annual Congress-sessions were elected by the people from various provinces, who in turn, were responsible in electing office-bearers of the INC. Tilak accused the Moderates of following a "feudal mindset." He pointed out that the INC "[...] belong[ed] to all the people of India" and therefore "[...] must function according to the decisions taken by the majority of its elected representatives" (Tilak 1976b: 295, my translation). Tilak was interested in instituting parliamentary procedure in the INC and in turn, educating Indian masses in the modern form of proceduralist democracy. The Moderates, according to Tilak, refused to abandon the old means of aristocracy and engage with new (albeit radical) ideologies.

Political polarization with INC reached its crescendo in 1907 when the Moderates, citing ideological differences and crude procedural cracks, refused to recognize Lala Lajpat Rai's election to its Presidency for the Surat session. ('Lala Lajpat Rai adhyakṣa pāhijeta', *Kesari*, 10th December, 1907) (Tilak 1976b: 309-14). Moderates were unwilling to flesh out the details of the four-fold program. Gokhale introduced changes over the adoption of the four-fold program of which the Extremists were unaware of. Owing to his popularity Phirozeshah Mehta lobbied for an overwhelming majority of the Moderates at the Surat Congress (Johnson 1973: 164-65). During the session Tilak wished to move a resolution. The Chairman of the Reception Committee refused Tilak on procedural grounds. Tilak was accused of causing a riot during the Surat session, an incident remembered by Congress attendees⁷⁵ and recorded by historians differently (Nanda 1977: 286-291). Consequently, the INC was split⁷⁶. Tilak defended his stance taken during the Surat-Congress by stating that the Extremists were using due procedures in raising their rightful demands. However, Tilak also realized that a formal split in the INC would have proved detrimental for the Swadeshi agitation and the impending Morley-Minto Reforms (1909). Therefore, following his return to Pune in January 1908 Tilak tried to persuade the Moderates to act upon the four-fold program adopted at the Calcutta-Congress and reverse the split if possible.

The Congress-split, coupled with deportation of Extremist leaders in between 1906 and 1908, substantially contributed in weakening the Swadeshi movement. Minto counted on a rapid demise of the New Party in near future. He considered the Congress split a "great triumph" for the colonial state (quoted in Tripathi 1967: 185). Tilak's attempts at reconciliation with the Moderates failed. Moderates such as Gokhale were eager to please Lord Morley (who had visited India in 1907) and support his reform program in whatever shape it existed (Nanda 1977: 297). Eventually, the Moderates forced the 1908 Congress session to pass a manifesto which ratified the 'constitutional method', propounded by the Moderates, as the official *modus operandi* of the INC. Tilak could not participate in the 1908 session. He was arrested on charges of sedition in July 1908 and after a prolonged trial sentenced to six years' imprisonment at Mandalay.

6.7 Free Press and Democratic Dissent: Sedition Charges against Tilak

The vicious attack on the native Marathi press, initiated by the Minto government after getting ratified by Morley, was diligently executed by George Clarke (Lord Sydenham) in the Bombay province. Congress leaders were put under state surveillance and their writings and publications were closely watched for any seditious propaganda. Editor of the Marathi newspaper *Bhala* was imprisoned for six months for publishing an article deemed seditious (Phadke 1989: 122). Tilak came out with a strong defense of *Bhala*. He pointed out that the colonial government was distancing itself from the judgement passed by the Bombay High Court in 1897, of which Tilak was a party, and which had clarified the definition of sedition. Disaffection, through words deeds, against the British government was termed as sedition. However, Tilak argued, “[b]eing critical of the government and fomenting popular rebellion against it were two different issues.” (Tilak 1976b: 805, my translation). Indian newspapers like *Bhala* were perhaps guilty of the former, which in any case, did not amount to sedition (‘Bhālā patrāvarīla khatalā āṇi rājadroha’, *Kesari*, 20th February, 1906) (Tilak 1976b: 802-809). The Punjab government too, propagating stricter censorship, deported Lala Lajpat Rai for publishing seditious material in his newspaper *Punjabi*. Lajpat Rai’s exile “completely shattered” Tilak’s faith in the British government’s constitutional and democratic means of ruling India (Kelkar 2012b: 303, my translation). Tilak condemned Lajpat Rai’s forced-exile in harsh terms. He argued that even the most autocratic regimes followed due procedure. He compared the British rule in India with the Czarist regime in Russia and warned the British government that Indians would be forced to follow the Russian method of violent agitation against the monarch (Kelkar 2012b: 304). During his speech at the Ganapati festival, he thundered that if one Lala was exiled, India was capable of producing fifty more Lalas (Kelkar 2012b: 304). The Imperial Legislative Council, under Morley’s directions, passed the Seditious Meetings (Prevention) Act (1907) which banned public congregations with overt political purposes. Tilak criticised the Bill and enquired into its constitutional veracity. The Bill was neither “politic or expedient” and was inconsistent with the “British sense of justice”. The Bill was “simply outrageous” and “violate[d] the laws of Gods and natural rights of man [sic.] enjoyed under all civilised governments” (Tilak 1995: 1098).

Kesari carried two editorials on 12th May 1908 and 9th June, 1908 entitled ‘Deśāce durdaiva’ (The Country’s Misfortune’) and ‘He upāya ṭikāu nāhita’ (Such remedies will not last for long’) respectively. The editorials, while condemning an assassination plot against Justice Douglas

Kingsford which had, instead, claimed the lives of a certain Mrs Kennedy and her son at the hands of Khudiram and Prafulla Bose in April 1908 in Muzaffarpur, also suggested that government's repressive policies and lack of space for democratic dissent was pushing young 'nihilists' towards violence⁷⁷. George Clarke who was convinced that "[...] Tilak's various revolutionary activities must be stopped and action [be] taken [against him]" rushed to charge Tilak with sedition (Sydenham 1927: 222). By his own admission Morley, who was initially sceptical of charging Tilak, eventually supported Clarke's decision⁷⁸.

During the lengthy trial Tilak pleaded non-guilty and pointed out that the two articles published in *Kesari* when read in their totality and in original Marathi did not, in any way, excite enmity or hatred towards the British colonial state. The Jury found Tilak guilty on both charges: under Section 124A with respect to the articles published on 12th May, 1908 and 9th June, 1908 and under Section 153A of raising ill-feelings amongst classes with respect to the article published on 9th June, 1908⁷⁹. In his short but now famous response Tilak said, "All I wish to say is that in spite of the verdict of the Jury I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher Powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of the Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free" (The Trial of Tilak 1986: 228). With Tilak's deportment to Mandalay the Swadeshi movement lost its bastion in Maharashtra.

6.8 Conclusion

Between 1899 and 1908 Tilak's nationalist politics developed along the trajectory of recognising moral responsibility of the British colonial state to its colonies and the INC as the only legitimate representative body of Indians. Therefore, unsurprisingly, he had little to comment on the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906. In tandem with the liberal doctrine state welfarism Tilak expected the British Parliament to safeguard the interests of the colonised. The colonial state was expected to follow rational principles of governance and guarantee reasonable liberty to all its constituents. Such an Enlightened government could ensure 'good life' and result into legal and civic obedience from Indians. However, colonial measures during times of crisis worked exactly in the opposite direction. Confrontational politics pursued by Tilak was a result of, what he construed, as a fundamental difference between political loyalty and national self-interest. In order to pursue the latter, Tilak

propagated economic-industrial autonomy for India. For Tilak, a person's primary loyalty lay with his/her compatriots while obedience to a colonial law/policy was of secondary importance. This was justified by him on two grounds- a) the law-making body was not only foreign but morally untenable; b) the Congress, as the sole representative body for India, had been denied legitimacy by the colonial state.

Despite his ambiguous stand on revolutionary violence and associations with various revolutionary- 'terrorist'- groups during the Swadeshi agitation (1905-08) (Phadke 2000), Tilak did not openly advocate mass uprising. The notion of boycott, as has been argued in this chapter, functioned on a rudimentary notion of civil disobedience which was a legitimate means of opposition to unfair state practices. He construed disobedience in terms of opposition to the colonial state since it had acted out of malice and suspended rational decision-making. However, civil disobedience was also complemented by a positive response (the four-fold program) for national rejuvenation which would involve the entire native population and deepen civic ties. Thus, Tilak attempted at developing a nascent form of 'popular sovereignty'.

The ambiguous character of the Moderate leaders vis-à-vis the program for national rejuvenation proposed by the Extremists hinged upon an erroneous reading of European liberalism. In Tilak's formulation the British State - claiming ideological affinity to liberalism - functioned in an illiberal manner with regard to its colonies. Therefore, the larger task before Tilak was to imagine a moral-nationalist community for India which could steer the nationalist movement away from liberal fancies and firmly entrench it within the sphere of popular nationalism. The moral-nationalist community premised upon a Hindu traditionalist-religiosity was expected to promote ethical ways of political action while avoiding the pitfalls of the 'tyranny of majority' warned by the liberal philosophers. His magnum opus- the *Gītā Rahasya* [1915]- written during his years of incarceration at the Mandalay prison (1908-1914) and explored the following chapter- dealt with this crucial philosophical question presented to the nationalist movement.