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

Oak, A.

1. B. G. Tilak and Indian Political Thought

1.1 Introduction

After spending thirteen months in England on a Delegation which was jointly supported by the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Indian Home Rule League (HLR), Bal Gangadhar Tilak returned to India in November, 1919. The Poona Municipality on behalf of all the 'Citizens of Poona' offered him a public welcome-address on 7th December, 1919, congratulating him for his services rendered to India's movement for Self-government. Congress leader 'Wrangler' R. P. Paranjpye, belonging to the Moderate faction, objected to the felicitation delivered on behalf of 'Citizens of Poona'. He proposed that the welcome address be submitted under the title 'Admirers and Friends of Mr. Tilak'. He also wrote an article in the *Bombay Chronicle* accusing Tilak of misusing the INC for his personal propaganda and undermining Congress' efforts for 'social reform'. Tilak responded through a long letter (*Bombay Chronicle*, 12th December, 1919) (Tilak 1976e: 40-48) in which he reflected on his forty years of political career. Tilak reiterated the political ideals which guided decisions of the 'Extremist' Party which he represented.

Tilak insisted that "political emancipation" must be granted priority over "social reconstruction" since without the former no change in the Indian society could be engineered (Tilak 1976e: 42). Political emancipation, or Svarājya (in Marathi), did not mean 'complete independence' or Sovereign status for India. Instead, the demand was primarily for complete autonomy and control to colonised Indians in local and provincial administration and adequate representation in Imperial Legislative Council and, ideally, in the British Parliament as well. These demands were in direct contrast to the ones raised by the Moderates, the latter, prone to accepting the "[…] official view under the guise of moderation" in politics (Tilak 1976e: 44). Nationalism, as conceived by Tilak, could not afford to neglect its "old foundations". Social reforms advocated by the Moderates were based upon "utter disrespect for the old" and hence incapable of adding to any constructive work of national interest. Moreover, decisions taken by the INC had to be arrived at through democratic and constitutional means rather than depending upon vagaries of individual leaders. Tilak's final statement with regards to his political ideology was as follows- "We [the Extremists] don't

want to pose as self-constituted wise leaders of the people. We have our plan, our goal, as open and constitutional as that of the Moderates. We shall do our best to educate the public in our views and doctrines in open competition with the Moderates. If we can carry the majority of the people with us it would be idle for any one [sic] to complain of our action in these democratic days [sic]" (Tilak 1976e: 48).

Little did Tilak know that within few months after he wrote these words the conflict between the Moderates and the Extremists, a defining feature of India's early nationalist movement (1885-1920), would cease to exist. The Moderate leadership, already reduced to a minority by 1920, would disappear from Indian political scene. The leaders of the Extremist faction would have to make a difficult choice, namely, accepting the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi-Jawaharlal Nehru and their path of ahimsā (non-violence), satyāgraha, movement for Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of Untouchability and the demand for total sovereignty for India; or to lay the foundation of a strong Hindu nation under the auspices of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

This dissertation examines the political ideas of 'Lokmanya' Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920). The period which he spent into active politics as a journalist, a political thinker and one of the principal leaders of the INC coincides with the early period of Indian nationalist movement (1880-1920). My dissertation primarily challenges popular perceptions of Tilak as a Hindu nationalist who propagated violent mass uprisings against the British government. Tilak's stand on social reform within Hinduism and Hindu-Muslim unity has also been portrayed, with considerable fortitude, as divisive in character, reaffirming his conservative socio-religious ideology.

Through this dissertation, I seek to re-examine such claims by locating Tilak's ideas and politics within the larger landscape of intellectual and socio-political history of Western India of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Equipped with burgeoning scholarship (theoretical and historical) on Indian nationalist thought, (global) anti-colonial movement(s), search for indigenous political ideas and ideals, regional histories and new methodological breakthroughs in recent years I will scrutinize Tilak's political ideas supporting/in contrast to reigning ideas of his time. Tilak's engagement with colonialism and nationalism would be used as a foil for broader analysis of the interaction between modern constructions of Hinduism,

the repressive character of the British colonial state and the nationalist response to the crisis of political (non-)representation.

The interaction of Hindu intellectuals with colonial state and western modernity during the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulted into the development of an interesting set of political ideologies which had far-reaching implications. While Hindu intellectuals did not abandon Hindu/Brahminical theology its cohabitation with Western ideals such as liberty and democracy presented difficult alternatives. Response to colonial modernity by colonised thinkers has generally been classified as either 'revivalist' or 'reformist' (Kopf 1969; Farquhar 1977; Sen 1993).

There are two lacunae of such binary formulation: first, both the 'revivalists' and the 'reformists' used classical (Sanskrit) texts to build a systematic genealogy of modern nationalism while drawing legitimacy for their political struggles. Moreover, invoking a direct genealogy with the ancient Hindu past allowed them to "[…] by-pass the long stretch of Muslim rule" with its distinct and "[…] sophisticated judicature and administrative terminology" (Dalmia 2017: 15). Second, modernity and nationalism developed in different parts of South Asia differently. Scholars are increasingly shying away from unequivocally applying Bengal-centric studies to the experiences and histories of other regions of the sub-continent. The primacy to the 'Bengal experience' is partly rooted in British colonization, as the primordial site from where British and later Indian historiography emerged. In the case of Maharashtra, on the other hand, the agonistic Muslim-Maratha relation (Deshpande 2007), Bombay's liberalism (Bayly 2011), the formation and structure of labour class and differential history of colonial capitalism (Chandavarkar 2009), the discrete character of land control and peasantry (Kumar 1968a; Charlesworth 1985; Hatekar 2003) and the identity of the citpāvana Brahmins vis-à-vis other Brahmin and non-Brahmin communities (Kumar 1968b; Rao 2010; O'Hanlon 2014,) lend the rise of Hindu nationalism and modernity in western India its peculiar quality.

Therefore, the exclusive character of Maharashtra rooted in its medieval Bhakti soteriology, the memory of Maratha rule and the associated deification of Shivaji, caste-character of the ruling classes, and Dharmaśāstra traditions, were important historical markers for Tilak and his contemporaries in negotiating modern subjectivity. Such a modern subjectivity took the form of cultural self-assertion, religious atavism and a demand for political representation.

1.2 Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak: Life and Legacy

'Lokmanya'[1] Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) was to achieve fame (in the minds of Indians) and notoriety (in the eyes of the British colonial state) as one of the most outstanding figures of India's nationalist movement. His life-journey and political career was filled with resplendent struggle and personal sacrifice. Tilak was one of the founders of the Extremist faction in the INC. He led the Swadeshi agitation (1905-08) in western India and later co-founded the Indian Home Rule League (1916-20). Through his two newspapers- *Kesari* and *Mahratta*- Tilak positioned himself squarely against the British colonial state and was instrumental in transforming Indian nationalism into a mass movement. His thunderous slogan 'Swarajya is my birth-right and I shall have it' echoed throughout the nationalist movement and continues to have a prodigious resonance in post-colonial India. The conservative British journalist Sir Valentin Chirol famously called Tilak 'the father of the Indian unrest'. Indians, on the other hand, affectionately referred to him as 'Lokmanya' or 'Tilak Mahārāj'[2].

According to Sri Aurobindo, Tilak's greatness was in his ambition to free India, often at great personal sacrifice, which earned him extraordinary popularity and respect amongst his compatriots (Tilak 1919.: x-xi). Rabindranath Tagore remembered Tilak as someone who "[…] had more faith in Truth than in method. His ideal of the fulfilment of India's destiny was vast, and therefore it had ample room" for all kinds of people including a "'music maker'" such as Tagore. According to Tagore, Tilak knew that "[…] freedom had its diverse aspects, and therefore it could be truly reached, if individuals had their full scope to use their special gifts or opening out paths that were diverse in their directions" (Bapat 1925: 609). M. K. Gandhi, on numerous occasions, spoke of Tilak in honorific terms and confided that he, "[…] like millions of his countrymen", admired Tilak "[…] for his indomitable will, his vast learning, his love of country, and above all, the purity of his private life and great sacrifice. Of all the men of modern times, he captivated most the imagination of his people" and breathed into them "the spirit of Swarajya". Gandhi considered himself "[…] in all humility […] the best of his disciples" (Bapat 1925: 648). Mohammed Ali Jinnah regarded Tilak as a "[…] shrewd practical politician" (Bapat 1928b: 33) who abandoned his earlier "communalistic" and regionalist attitude in favour of a "[…] broader and greater National outlook" (Bapat 1928b: 34). The Hindu nationalist V. D. Savarkar and the Communist leader S. A. Dange regarded Tilak their political *guru*.

Bal (cradle-name: Keshav) Tilak was born on 23rd July, 1856 in a village called Ratnagiri situated on the western coastline of India. Much of Tilak's ancestry is shrouded in mystery. According to one of his biographers (Keer 1959), Tilak's great-great-grand-father had fought in the Third Battle of Panipat (1761). Tilak's great-grand-father served as a Mamlatdar (revenue officer) in the Peshwa court and after the demise of the Peshwa-dynasty (1818) settled in his ancestral home at Chikhalgaon. The Tilaks were *khots* (revenue land collector) of the village. Tilak's grandfather, Ramachandra, sent his eldest son Gangadhar to study in a school at Pune. After his wife died of cholera Ramachandra became a hermit. Gangadhar, his son, taught at a local school in Ratnagiri. Bal was his fourth child. Gangadhar was interested in mathematics and Sanskrit. His book on trigonometry which earned him a prize from the Bombay Education Department. He also wrote a small book introducing Sanskrit in Marathi language which was a prescribed text for Marathi vernacular medium until 1877. In 1866 Gangadhar was transferred-on-promotion to Pune as an Assistant Deputy Educational Inspector. Five years later he died of dropsy. Around the time of his death Bal was studying at Bombay University. He matriculated in December, 1872 and enrolled himself in Deccan College at Pune in July 1873 (Keer 1959: 1-12). Tilak appeared for his BA exams in 1876 and thereafter pursued Law. He earned his Law degree in 1879 (More 2014:73).

After graduating Tilak embarked upon two ambitious projects, namely, starting two newspapers- *Kesari* and *Mahratta*- and establishing a native education society. The former would define Tilak's political career. The growing suspicion of the British government in Bombay about Sārvajanika Sabhā and the fear of a larger Brahmin conspiracy to overthrow the British Raj found an expression in the uprising and looting activities of Vasudev Balwant Phadke. While Phadke was found guilty and put to gallows Sārvajanika Sabhā and its leader M. G. Ranade supported the government which displeased the young radicals of Pune (Tucker 1969).

The young radicals who had gathered around Vishnu-śāstrī Chiplunkar were displeased by the unsympathetic outlook of the British administration towards colonised Indians and the supposed lackadaisical behaviour of the Sārvajanika Sabhā (Tilak 1976e: 903-08). Rejecting a comfortable life of a lawyer Tilak (along with Gopal Ganesh Agarkar) vowed to devote his life to public service and raising mass political consciousness. *Kesari* and *Mahratta*, the two newspapers and New English School and Fergusson College under Deccan Education Society

were directed towards this singular purpose. Tilak taught mathematics at Fergusson College for few years but had to resign due to ideological bickering (Tilak 1976e: 3-36; Phadke 2000: 124-215). He also gave private tuitions to law students. However, his scholarly pursuits continued through his Indological and theological researches.

Tilak's political biography can be divided into three parts: During the first phase (1880-1897) Tilak gradually relinquished his suspicion of Congress politics and eventually came to support the party owing to its pan-national representational character. However, Tilak's focus was to redirect Congress' attention towards confrontational politics. The first phase is also marked by his conservative stand on the Age of Consent Bill [1891], stiff opposition to co-organizing the sessions of Social Conference and the INC under the same pandal (1895-96), and undertaking a vigorous campaign for starting public festivals commemorating Shivaji and Lord Ganapati (Kaur 2003). His vicious attack on the social reformists of Maharashtra for adopting 'Western' liberal notions vis-à-vis Hindu practices resulted into the famous split between him and Agarkar (Phadke 2000) and strained his relations with senior Congress leaders and social reformers such as M.G. Ranade, R. G. Bhandarkar and G. K. Gokhale. Tilak also joined the Bombay Legislative Council (1895-96). However, the highlight of this period was his criticism levied against the Bombay government for its cruel taxation policy and general apathy towards the peasants during a horrendous draught (1896-97) which had claimed the lives of around 750,000 Deccan-dwellers (Sinha 2019). The draught was followed by an epidemic of plague (1897-98). Measures undertaken by the government to curb the menace of plague included forcible mass inoculation (when the drug was in its trial stage) and plenipotentiary powers granted to the District Collector Walter Charles Rand to ransack houses to find 'dead rats'. Tilak wrote scathingly against colonial repression and Rand's misdemeanours which provoked violent retaliation from the British Raj. Tilak was tried in court for delivering treasonous speeches and publishing anti-government material (Setlur and Deshpande 1897; Kamra 2016). The sedition trial against Tilak and his subsequent imprisonment (for 18 months but later reduced to 12 months) was closely followed by newspapers from other provinces (for instance, *The Hindu* in Madras and *Amrit Bazar Patrika* in Bengal) earning him pan-national popularity.

The second phase (1898-1908) of Tilak's political career is marked by the Swadeshi agitation of which became a national leader. His disagreements with the Moderates, over program and

ideology, sharpened and reached its zenith during the Surat session of the INC (1907). The second phase is marked by Tilak's advocacy of Self-rule for India and bending the will of Congress leaders to adopt the principles of Swadeshi, Svarājya, boycott of foreign goods and national education. This phase, too, ended with a sedition trial instituted against Tilak for publishing two editorials in *Kesari* which suggested that government's repressive policies and lack of space for democratic dissent was pushing young 'nihilists' towards violence. Tilak was imprisoned at Mandalay for 6 years.

Tilak returned to active politics in 1914, reached a compromise with the Moderates and rejuvenated the demand for Self-rule for India. The final phase of his political activism (1914-1920) was defined by his support to the British government during the First World War (1914-1918) with the hope that India would be duly rewarded for her sacrifice with political Self-rule. He established the Indian Home Rule League (on the lines of Irish Home Rule League), sought support from the British Labour Party for its activities and persevered to garner sympathy from British public for Indian self-rule. Tilak also tried to co-opt the Muslim vote bank (which had been untethered from Congress during the Bengal- Swadeshi agitation) by coalescing the INC and the All-India Muslim League to sign a Pact at Lucknow (1916). Tilak was twice elected as the President of the INC (1918 and 1920)[3]. Emboldened by Woodrow Wilson's cry for 'right to self-determination' Tilak vociferously campaigned for greater political representation for India within the British Commonwealth.

1.3 Lokmanya Tilak: Liberal, Conservative and Nationalist Thinker

Scholarly research on Tilak and his legacy took two inter-related forms. In the early years of decolonisation modern Indian history carved up a space for itself in Western (primarily British) academic circles (Chakrabarty 2015: 51-56). Tilak, being one of the leaders of the Extremist faction, was indispensable for writing the pre-Gandhian history of Indian nationalism. Anil Seal's pioneering research on Indian nationalism (Seal 1970) had identified Indian elites, who had turned 'collaborators and competitors' with the British State to seek entry into the power corridors of the Empire, as effectively controlling the early Indian nationalist movement (Chakrabarty 2002: 5-7). Seeking inspiration from Seal a series of monographs came to be written during the 1970s which focused on the development of provincial politics during the nationalist period (Spodek 1979; Hyam 2001). Popularly known as the 'Cambridge School' the

methodological and conceptual shafts opened by Seal's book were further honed to analyse the exploitative character of the local client-patron relations represented through the local boards, the municipalities and the provincial legislatures established by the British colonial state. However, nationalist ideology and caste-class relations during the colonial period, while having a bearing on provincial politics, were treated secondary in character. The primacy, instead, was granted to 'self-interest' of the personalities involved. Nationalism was projected as the logical outcome of various convenient tactics used to expand the responsibilities and/or the rights demanded from the colonial state. Political movements involving mass mobilisation were construed as a means to achieve 'power' for the colonised. The 'Cambridge School' historians emphatically stated that the politics of Congress leaders was led by a single conviction, namely, to accumulate power at each level of the colonial administrative set-up (Raychaudhuri 1979).

By this token provincial politics in Bombay was characterised as an urban phenomenon where political actors imbibed European notions of nationalism (Dobbin 1972; Masselos 1974). In the absence of British legislative mechanisms personal rivalries among leaders of the provincial Congress committees would have been permanently stuck into local quagmire. British constitutional amendments forced the Bombay elites to enter into uncomfortable alliances with other leaders across a broad socio-political spectrum and across different regions of India. This process helped in providing a national character to India's anti-colonial movement (Johnson 1973). Tilak and other political radicals were held responsible for destroying the "[…] old style public association […]" of INC and replacing it with a new faction interested in establishing total control over India's leadership (Masselos 1974: 234). The diverse range of socio-political issues, championed by various social organizations soon dissipated into nationalist rhetoric.

There have also been some attempts at constructing the political thought of Tilak by placing it within the larger nationalist discourse and the genealogy of the Western and /or Indigenous philosophical traditions. Theodore Shay's pioneering work (Shay 1956) read Tilak's political philosophy through the prism of indigenous (Hindu) tradition. Shay qualified Tilak as a torch-bearer of an authentic 'Indian political philosophy' premised upon a reformed 'Sanātana Dharma'. Tilak was portrayed as a representative of a new group of Indian intellectuals and nationalists who, in the late 19th century, "[…] sought out the guidance of their own

philosophy in their own religious principles" (Shay 1956: 57). Tilak was impressed by the achievements of modern western civilizations in terms of science and technology and the material benefits which it accrued. However, western materialism left out a crucial aspect of human existence, namely, "spiritual good" which was the basis of "social good" (Shay 1956: 58). According to Shay, Tilak's pride in India's glorious history and its Hindu civilizational ethos was juxtaposed against the counter-narrative proposed by the British "alien civilization" (Shay 1956).

Following Shay, V. P. Verma (1983) compared Tilak with ancient Greek philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle). Unlike the latter, Tilak's political philosophy lacked grandeur of ideas and blueprints of a future utopian society. Tilak's political philosophy, while partly influenced by the Western canon, derived its actual strength from the Hindu Vedāṅta tradition. Freedom (Svarājya) and Self (Jīva) retained their theological presumptions. Therefore, a colonised people's desire for political sovereignty was associated with the soul's desire for liberation. Dharma meant political duty performed towards the nation while Svadharma was the obligation towards the Self. Duty (Dharma/Svadharma) and freedom (Sovereign/ontological) worked upon one another forming an indispensable bond in the political thought of Tilak. The nationalist outlook of Tilak was, thus, identified by Verma as "spiritual" in its orientation.

A simple binary formulation of 'spiritual' and 'material' used by Shay and Verma do not reveal the complex picture of political ideas which Tilak was representing and contesting. The characterisation of Tilak's political thought through an exclusivist framework of spirituality bordering on 'exceptional moralism' bears the mark of cultural relativism. The method of juxtaposing 'India' against the 'West' (both terms used by Shay and Verma in their singularity) blames the latter for misrepresenting and corrupting the indigenous and authentic culture of India (Menon 2019). As such, adherents of neo-Hinduism were projected as safeguarding the Sanātana Dharma (Halbfass 1990: 344-45).

According to N. R. Inamdar (1984; 1986), Tilak's nationalism was rooted in Hindu ethnic pride while simultaneously appropriating modern (Western) colonial process of modernization. The Shivaji and Ganapati festivals, Inamdar suggests, conformed to ethno-cultural principles of nationalism. And yet, they were also meant to elicit support from elite Brahmin sections of Bombay Presidency. For Inamdar, Tilak's demand of 'political rights' for colonised Indians through non-procedural means such as mass agitation and social activism distinguished him

from Moderate leaders. Inamdar differentiated the 'historico-social' approach of the Moderates from the 'economic-constitutional' approach exhibited by Tilak (Inamdar 1984: 1-2). Thus, nationalism as conceptualised by Tilak carried the following four connotations- a) Nationalism in terms of racial homogeneity between the ruler and the ruled, b) Nationalism leading to the formation of a modern nation-state under Constitutional law, c) Nationalism as a model of a Welfare-state, and d) Nationalism resulting into the formation of an elected and responsible government (Inamdar 1984: 24-25). In another study (Inamdar 1986), Inamdar alluded to the regional-national dichotomy in Tilak's nationalism. Tilak, in his later years, managed to engulf and assimilate the regional strand into nationalist politics, which was a sign of his political maturity (Inamdar 1986: 115).

Some scholars were also interested in distinguishing early Tilak from his supposed 'mature' period of political leadership. His political maturity was thought to be contingent upon various external factors such as the transformation of Congress into a mass-based party and the impact of British policies upon Indian anti-colonial struggle during the pre-World War I years (Pandit 1983). For Govardhan Parikh, the 'Manifesto of the Congress Democratic Party' authored by Tilak in 1920, was the culmination of Tilak's ideological transformation- representative of a decisive shift from political conservatism to political liberalism. The Manifesto proposed deeper political affiliations with the marginalised sections of Indian society- Muslims, women and non-Brahmin sections- and bringing them within the ambit of the Congress-led nationalist movement (Parikh 1969).

On the other hand, scholars have resented Tilak's representation as liberal and constitutionalist and have tried to re-fashion his image as one of the pioneers of Hindu nationalism. A self-declared Hindu nationalist and follower of Savarkar's ideology, Anant Janardan Karandikar appropriated Tilak for Hindutva politics. In his book 'Krantikāraka Tiḷaka āṇi tyāncā kāḷa' (1969)[4] Karandikar argued that the nationalist politics of Tilak was strongly based upon Hindu revivalism and the organisation of Ganapati festival provides testimony to it. The masculinist and Hindutva-based politics of Tilak was a strong anti-dote to the 'naïve and weak' reformist agenda of Gokhale and Agarkar. However, had Tilak survived for a few more years, Karandikar contended, he would have uprooted his "arch-nemesis" ('mahāna śatṛū') Gandhi (Karandikar 1969: 16, my translation) and the nation would not have fallen prey to the politics of a "Cross-bearing pseudo-saint" (Karandikar 1969: 16, my translation).

The scholarship mentioned above does not critically engage with the problematic positions taken by Tilak vis-à-vis the Hindu social reformers. Therefore, Tilak has found considerable disfavour with recent scholarship which focuses upon his polemics against the Age of Consent Bill (1891) (Kosambi 1995a; Anagol 2005; Ganachari 2005) and his overall ambiguity on the question of caste (Phadke 2000; Rao 2008; O'Hanlon 2014). Disagreeing with Shay's description of Tilak as "an ardent advocate of social reform" (Shay 1956: 67), Stanley Wolpert (1989), in his comparative study of Gokhale and Tilak, argued that Tilak's social conservatism emanated from his local-regional political constituency represented by the Hindu orthodoxy. For Wolpert, Tilak's chief concern was in guarding "Hindu male's pride and (the) unique privileges" associated with it (Wolpert 1989: 52). Wolpert also suggested that Tilak's scholarly texts, his two books on Vedic past and his philosophical treatise on the Bhagavad Gītā, were deployed in order to solidify his leadership amongst the Brahmins and upper-caste communities. Therefore, Tilak's texts may have made "[…] significant contributions to the literature of Indian nationalism" (Wolpert 1989: 63) but proved useless to modern Indology. Wolpert preferred the liberal-constitutionalism outlook adopted by Gokhale rather than Tilak's militant Hinduism, Maratha regionalism and upper-caste pride.

Richard Cashman (1975) argued that Tilak invoked Hindu myths, legends along with heroic tales of historical figures in a creative fashion to generate mass consciousness which helped in expanding the activities of Congress. However, Tilak alienated himself from non-Brahmin and Muslim communities due to an over-reliance on Brahmin symbols. This resulted in the formation of a close clique around him which radicalised his ideas and contributed to communal disharmony in modern India turning Tilak "[…] a prisoner of his own myths" (Cashman 1975: 219).

More recently, Parimala Rao (2010) has rejuvenated the debate around social orthodoxy and political conservatism exhibited by Tilak. Her book is one of those rare attempts at examining Tilak's political ideology from a Marxist perspective[5] . Rao argues that Tilak used *Kesari* and *Mahratta* for preserving caste-class hierarchies and defending the rights and privileges of the moneylenders. He is also projected as the founder of the 'Hindutva' ideology which put up a strong defence of caste superiority and traditional rights of the land-owning classes (*khot*). Tilak is shown advising the princely state of Kolhapur (*Kesari* on 3rd April, 1884) to "take proper pride in Hindutva" (quoted in Rao 2010: 282). Hindu social reformers and Christian

Missionaries striving to improve the conditions of women and lower-caste people through modern education were treated as enemies of Hindutva (Rao 2010: 282). Tilak, in Rao's reading, treated Indian Christians and Muslims as "[…] two separate nationalities". According to her, Tilak "often used Indian nationality, Hindu nationality, Hindutva and Varnashrama Dharma as interchangeable terms" (Rao 2010:283). For him "[a]nything that undermined the institution of caste amounted to loss of nationality" (Rao 2010:283). In Rao's estimate, Tilak's orthodox attitude was antagonist to a profoundly "liberal and secular nationalism" advocated by the Moderates. progressive ideals of the INC. The political ideas of the Extremist faction drew their inspiration from Mazzini's movement and laid the foundation of a racist, xenophobic and anti-liberal form of nationalism (Rao 2010:297-98). The fact that N. C. Kelkar and B. S. Moonje, close associates of Tilak, admired Mussolini and Hitler was, in fact, an extension of Tilak's xenophobic ideology. Undoubtedly for Rao, Tilak's Hindu nationalism reached its excess under Savarkar and Golwalkar, often conflicting with the "[…] secular Indian nation advocated by the Congress" (Rao 2010: 319).

Let me point out a few lacunae in the existing scholarship on Tilak. At the outset it has approached colonialism and nationalism through a pre-mediated singular theoretical foundation and resulting teleology. Scholars on Tilak were in a rush to situate his politics into pre-formulated ideological trajectories and/or principles which could 'precisely' explain his political actions. Therefore, Tilak's politics gets conveniently structured in the binary ideological formulations of liberal-conservative, collaborationist-nationalist or materialist-spiritualist. These scholars had failed to realise that such ideological classifications, while known to Indians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, did not carry puritan values and hence operated in crude and fluid fashion. Indian nationalists greedily borrowed ideas from modern European (primarily British) as well as indigenous (primarily Hindu) traditions. Therefore, nationalist elites such as Tilak could easily coalesce regional power-relations/ self-interests with "a boundless enthusiasm for the Empire" (Raychaudhuri 1979: 755).

Since liberalism and conservatism have been used for many years to define the ideological trajectories of Indian nationalism and has been verily associated with Tilak's politics let me address some its aspects. Liberalism and conservatism are ideologies carrying a long lineage in European history. Both ideologies had a decisive impact on the formation and consolidation of the colonial state and has been thoroughly analysed in recent scholarship (Armitage 2013;

Arneil 1996; Holt 1992). If one were to restrict oneself to the British liberal attitude towards South Asia scholars have identified an extremely complex network of British thinkers and politicians who defined the contours of and offered justifications for the long-standing existence of British colonialism (Bayly 2012; Bell 2007; Hall 2002; Koditschek 2011; Mantena 2010; Mehta 1999; Metcalf 1995; Pitts 2005; Zastoupil 1994). Whether liberalism flowed from Britain to India, where the latter were merely enthusiastic recipients of the ideas, is a debate which is yet a reach a definite conclusion, although some progress has been made challenging such a diffusionist approach (Sartori 2014).

What about his identification with conservatism? Conservatism in Tilak's ideas has been identified with his politics of radical nationalism which was opposed to liberal constitutionalism advocated by Gokhale and other Moderate leaders (Johnson 1973; Wolpert 1989). Tilak also nurtured orthodox views about women's liberation and caste-based discrimination and came strongly in favour of 'puritan Hindu values' Kosambi 1995a; Anagol 2005; Ganachari 2005; Phadke 2000; Rao 2008; O' Hanlon 2014). Identifying conservatism in Indian politics poses difficult challenges, not only because no Indian political party (unlike the Tories in the UK for the Republican Party in the US) or political leader (unlike Edmund Burke in England) claimed to follow 'conservative ideology'. What goes in the name of conservatism in colonial and contemporary India is an affiliation to traditionalism or religious revivalism and a sustained criticism of revolutionary change (Jaffrelot 2017). Therefore, any formal understanding of conservative political thought in India would have to distinguish between, what Sudipta Kaviraj calls, "the relation between expression of opinion and real belief" (Kaviraj 2018: 3). One would have to identify such expressions about conservatism in language and in temporal affectivity produced by it. By all means, Tilak propagated mass action, although if by mass action he desired revolutionary upsurge (a *la* Bolshevik Revolution) is hard to surmise. But his use of vernacular terms such as caḷvaḷ (mass movement) or āṅdolan (rebellion) are scattered across his Marathi writings in *Kesari* pointing towards some affiliation with non-Conservative strand of European politics. He held ambiguous views about religious revivalism (also found in most Indian thinkers including most prominently in Tilak's successor Gandhi) and his open avowal of pre-colonial religious rituals and customs was aimed towards inciting mass protests and a collective nationalist consciousness among Indians.

Of more significant interest is whether Tilak's texts and his politics pose a serious challenge to the existing academic nomenclature over the teleological end of nationalism. In other words, Tilak shatters the formidable and putative belief that nationalism ends with a demand for sovereignty exhibiting either secular-democratic or majoritarian-xenophobic character. As Prathama Banerjee (2018) suggests, the notion of sovereignty, emerging in early modern Europe and which came to be conceptualized in terms of an absolutist State and divine kinship, was nearly absent in pre-colonial India. Therefore, the transition from sovereignty to governmentality in colonial India did not follow the trajectory set in modern Europe. The principle of social power in pre-colonial India was exercised through samāj. In modern parlance the Sanskrit/vernacular term samāj gets translated into society. But recent historical scholarship suggests that the term carried varied connotations- it could mean a caste(s) association governed by jātī –based socio-ritual commandments, arbitrations regarding marriage, rituals and status or could mean religious heterodox sects such as Vārkarī sampradāy. Thus, racial/linguistic/ethnic homogeneity which one finds in early modern European imagination of nation-state was completely absent in pre-colonial India (Chatterjee 2005). By extension State was one amongst many centres of power. It had to share its space with various commercial guilds, religious sects, caste-groups, religious doxa, temples and monasteries. Sovereignty rested primarily with the non-State institutions.

The entry of the colonial state changed the Samāj-State relation and produced anxiety amongst Indian nationalists (such as Tilak) who believed that the foreign rule was bent on destroying traditional Indian society. I find Tilak's political ideas reflecting a strange and contradictory relation with the British Empire. He belonged to the second generation post-1857 Revolt from western India who had been exposed to the generosity of western liberalism through colonial pedagogy but at the same time was confronted with the despotic nature of colonialism. Therefore, unlike his contemporaries such as M. G. Ranade and R. G. Bhandarkar, Tilak grew critical of the British colonial state. At the same time, while he cherished and propagated ideals such as democracy and liberty (which had grown out of a European milieu) he remained firmly entrenched into the indigenous upper-caste Hindu culture. The alleged supremacy of the Aryan race, propagated by prominent European Indologists, was seen by Tilak as an endorsement of traditional Vedic-Hindu values passed on through centuries by an unbroken lineage. Therefore, his philosophical and historical texts

implore Indians to take proper pride in indigenous knowledge-systems while paying allegiance to modernity and its transformative role in colonial world.

New scholarship on Tilak, I believe, needs to first flesh out conceptual schemata used to characterise Indian nationalism by questioning three important problematic areas or sources of enquiry- the distinct nature of 'Indian' nationalism in terms of its self-referentiality, the role of epistemologically and historically embedded religious discourse and the growth of Hindu community as a historical-heuristic instrument in determining modern Indian history. I will briefly discuss these issues in the following sections, as a theoretical background and set the stage for my principal task of establishing and analysing Tilak's political ideas.

1.4 Thinking about Indian Political Thought: Nationalist, Vernacular and Communalist

Modern European nationalism emerging out of the Enlightenment ideals of bourgeois-rationality was established on moral and epistemological foundationalist rectitude. The epistemic tutelage of universalism through modern framework of knowledge legitimised the 'autonomous character of a national culture'. However, the growth of European nationalism co-habited the manifestation of colonialism. Thus, 19th century notions of nationalism (and recent theories on nationalism) in the West have had to negotiate the difficult proposition of 'nationalist aspirations from the non-European colonised world (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983). As a representative of the colonised global community the national question in India was "[…] historically fused with a colonial question. The assertion of national identity was, therefore, a form of struggle against colonial exploitation. Yet an assertion of traditional cultural values would often be inconsistent with the conditions of historical progress" (Chatterjee 1993b: 18) which produced a difficult dilemma before the Indian nationalist thinkers.

On one hand, they were keen on conceptualising nationalism as a modern, secular and rationalist project. On the other hand, Indian nationalists found it difficult to negotiate secular modernity with erstwhile pre-modern traditions which bordered on irrationality and ethno-cultural atavism. Thus, Indian public sphere produced its own "[…] domain of sovereignty within the colonial society" (Chatterjee 1993a: 6) in the form of a dichotomous division between, what Chatterjee characterises, the 'material' or the outer domain and the 'spiritual'

or the inner domain. The former consisted of "[…] the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed" whereas the latter bore "[…] 'essential' marks of cultural identity" (Chatterjee 1993a: 6). Its restrictive appropriations provided a distinct flavour to Indian nationalism- "univocal […] articulated by a middle-class elite that sought to replicate Western political institutional structures, and unwittingly thereby contributed to fashioning a kind of community consonant with the requirements of capital" (Lamba 2013: 130).

If, for Chatterjee, the autonomous domain of the inner sphere reflected the indigenous character of Indian nationalism, Sudipta Kaviraj speaks of Indian nationalism as an ideological discourse. Drawing on the works of Michel Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin, Kaviraj argues for rethinking the structure and form of nationalism and its inseparable relation with history and its narrative constructions (Kaviraj 2010a: 85-89). Nationalism, according to Kaviraj, is a "[…] field of ideas rather than a doctrine- evolving, unstable, volatile, capable of sudden shifts in emphasis and political direction" (Kaviraj 2010a: 7). Indian nationalism was driven by an 'enchantment with modern State' reimagined as a "moral force" (Kaviraj 2010b: 40). Post-Enlightenment European thinkers (most prominently Karl Marx and Max Weber) visualised modern nation-state in an instrumentalist vein possessing absolute impartiality. By contrast, Indian conceptions of modern nation-state harked back to the *rajanitic* model where the figure of the king assumed a paternalistic and disciplinary role deriving his authority from the Dharmaśāstra texts (Kaviraj 2013). With the consolidation of British colonialism, Indians were confronted with a new form of governmental control exercised through modern institutions. However, the colonised were quick to adapt to this new model of governance and references to the ancient Dharmaśāstra codes became a subject of historical enquiry rather than a replacement for the present structure.

Nevertheless, the confrontation with colonial state threw up two sets of problems for the colonised- one was over the steady disillusionment with the modern nation-state which saw its origins in a particular early modern European political landscape and thus, was perceived unsuitable to the Indian conditions. Secondly, the issue of translatability, that is to say, the difficulty in offering Western concepts about State and governance to a population which had grown into a different social-political milieu. As a result, Indian political thinkers of the 19th century were left with two major tasks. First- India being a multi-lingual nation with highly

developed forms of vernaculars, they had to navigate through its communicative 'linguistic duality'. Second-but closely associated with the first, was the challenge of 'historical duality'. English terms bore a distinct mark of the European history, but when translated into the Indian vernacular languages, they needed to be located into the indigenous traditions and Dharmaśāstra discourse. Thus, political terms simultaneously attained western/indigenous and modern/pre-modern meanings (Kaviraj 2013). While colonial administrators such as Henry Maine tried to reverse this process by recoding colonial laws through indigenous (Hindu) traditions and categories, such attempts were sparse (Mantena 2010; Mamdani 2012: 6-42).

Kaviraj goes on to stress on the vernacular (ized) nature of the political idiom in colonial India. The national language of India -Sanskrit, if at all there was one, had disappeared by the early 19thcentury (Pollock 2001). Thus, unlike the nationalist thought of early modern Europe which grew out of a homogenous linguistic community, Indian nationalism developed through its vernacular languages. The 'vernacular regions', however, were internally hierarchized for centuries due to caste restrictions. Thus, the large majority of illiterate masses spoke in various local dialects and had no access to the 'mārgī' or canonical literature (of either Sanskrit or Persian origins). Access to English education opened up new vistas of knowledge-gathering. By the late 19th century, a complex picture of nationalism (incipient, multi-pronged, with numerous claimants and varied articulations) began to gradually develop.

In order to analyse the vernacular forms of nationalism one must abandon its formal-modular structure which re-inscribes it into a national space. Every linguistic region had its own unique heritage and Indian thinkers heavily drew from their historical memory to chart nationalism. Ideological variations within the INC, too, were regionally located resulting into the birth of factionalised politics quite early. At the heart of these variations were distinct cultural articulations, religious doxa, popular perceptions of history and a highly evolved textual tradition. If European nations were 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983), India comprised of 'imagined vernacular-communities'. For studying Tilak's political ideas, I believe, it is important to situate him, first and foremost, in the Marathi vernacular ethos before treating him as a nationalist political leader.

Indian nationalism during the late 19th and the early 20th centuries was also informed by a complex inter-mingling of religion and politics. Although Indian nationalist movement took a

decisive religious turn with the establishment of the All-India Muslim League (1906), the Hindu Mahasabha (1915) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (1925) some scholars have traced its origin to ethnic mobilizations during the Swadeshi movement (Datta 1999; Jaffrelot 1996). Others locate the rise of Hindu nationalism to an earlier period which developed in opposition to European Orientalist scholarship (Jones 1989). Scholars also argue that the ideological contours of Hindu nationalism developed out of a sense of lost identity due to blind imitation of western norms of life and religion (Chakrabarty and Jha 2020: 2). Hindu nationalism was, simultaneously, invoking the pyscho-social aspects of Hindu religion in developing a nascent idea of nationalism. This involved, at least after the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha, an institutionalised attempt at safeguarding political, economic and socio-cultural interests of the Hindus (Chakrabarty and Jha 2020: 1-11). Thus, communal nationalism in the form of Hindu majoritarianism and Muslim separatism rejected the inherent universalism of nationalism articulated by the Congress (Pandey 1990).

These scholars are quite right in suggesting that the divisive nature of Indian politics, seen in post-colonial times, could be traced to the colonial period. But one must be careful in our choice of Indian nationalist thinkers who acted as ideologues of communal politics. Intellectual and socio-cultural influences over these thinkers were too varied and the response they elicited was, quite often, polemical in nature. At the same time, regional and local histories had a bearing upon their political thought. Since Hinduism had been acting as a unifying factor for many centuries (Nicholson 2010) its invocation was deliberate. Religious mobilizations took peculiar and yet temporary character in colonial times. Eclectic religious discourse was not necessarily divisive in character. In other words, the politics of 'Othering' prevalent in Indian politics 1920s onwards had a chequered history during the preceding decades.

1.5 Colonialism and an Indian 'Self'

It has been long assumed that in its religious articulation Indian nationalist discourse followed two distinct forms- atavistic-puritan and modern-secular. But Indian nationalists were in search of a modern identity which, in Charles Taylor's famous description, "[…] involve[d] tracing various strands of our modern notion of what it is to be a human agent, person, or a self" (Taylor 1989: 3). Claiming a lost Indian 'Self' was an indispensable aspect of Indian

nationalism. Its recovery took various shapes and treaded different paths (Nandy 1988). A particular strand of Indian nationalist thinkers took to religious revival (for instance, Swami Dayanand Saraswati) while others invoked religion in its historical-heuristic desideratum and reasoned with peers over its appropriate implications through textual injunctions. Indian intellectuals freely borrowed from European modernist-evolutionary tradition and conceptualised anti-imperial sovereignty in ethical terms (Kapila 2007) while others granted primacy to the Self in terms of 'recovering liberties' (Bayly 2011). The recovery of the Self occurred through ethno-cultural self-referential means and developed through nativist sensibilities which were self-generating, resilient and deeply attached to the Indian traditional ethos. Nationalist texts took an aggressive and self-protective stand under pressure from 'foreign' values, cultures and languages (Nemade 2001: 78-80). It was a colonised nation's strategy for survival, a struggle to exist as it wished. Thus, British colonialism posed three fundamental challenges to Indians nationalist thinkers-

i) How to decolonize knowledge about India from Western epistemology?

II) How to decolonize Indian understanding of the West?

iii) How to decolonize Indian understanding about the Self? (Nemade 2011: 57)

Nationalist response to these challenges was contingent upon historical and spatial exigencies (Guru 2011). Self-referentiality forced Indian intellectuals to break out of Western hermeneutics by either charting a parallel tradition of intellectual enquiry or absolutely rejecting it. Modern Indian thinkers, having privileged access to three levels of language-apparatuses- colonial discourse, the traditional Sanskrit discourse and the vernacular discourse, could revert to subaltern and elite vocabularies interchangeably. The discursive elasticity in his/her public responses to colonialism coupled with multi-layered access to epistemological devices allowed these thinkers to amalgamate and differ from the indigenous and foreign lineage of traditions as required.

Rejection of the hegemonic western categories and a push for nativism has been an important feature of Indian political theory. Scholars have problematized the heuristic primacy granted to 'nationalism' in modern Indian political thought (Pantham 1986) and questioned its legitimacy in modern Indian thinking (Nandy 1994). Others have argued for an indigenous thought placating the Western/colonial superiority and 'reversing the Orientalist gaze'

(Kaviraj 2010a: 254-290) by rejecting post-Enlightenment methodologies and favouring authentic forms of Indian (Asian) religions and moral norms developed independent of the West (Balagangadhara 1994). The incommensurability between European epistemological and Historicist-Universalising models and non-European historical experiences has resulted into a call for 'provincializing Europe' (Chakarabarty 2000).

While I am sympathetic to calls for decolonising political theory any search for an 'Indian theory' (with its multiple starting points and varied argumentative teleologies) should account for vicissitudes of regionally located knowledge-traditions and be open for critical vivisections. In other words, my decision to juxtapose an enquiry into the notion of Self supplementing Indian nationalist thinking is guided by Gurpreet Mahajan's sane advice that an "*Indian* political theory can be meaningful only when the concept of a *culturally embedded* self, which informs the project of indigeneity, is abandoned in favour of the notion of a *historically situated* self" (Mahajan 2013: 5-6, italics in the original). By the term 'historically situated self' Mahajan implores her interlocutors to abandon the quest for "some uniquely Indian categories or [a] concept [which] exists in the vocabulary of a given culture". Instead, one should direction one's towards ideas- "no matter where they come from"- and their contribution in shaping Indian public discourse and imagination (Mahajan 2013: 6).

1.6 Community, Region and Nation

Any exercise of exploring modern political thought requires some knowledge of the indigenous intellectual traditions from which (knowingly or otherwise) it has evolved. Although historically determined, categories and concepts take up new meanings within a changed theoretical framework (Banerjee et al 2016). Thus, to argue that the 19th century Indian nationalist thought imbibed western liberal tradition (in its puritan or 'hybrid' form) is also to suggest that it endorsed its points of origin. But does that mean that Indian political thought, like its European predecessor, developed upon an empty (historical and theoretical) space akin to the Social Contract tradition. I do not believe this to be true.

Henry Tam points out that, in the 19th century, "[…] nationality increasingly became a notion that was invoked to define a state-level community" (Tam 2019: 101). Thus, shared language and traditional customs were overwhelmingly utilized to mobilize a people into a national community and identify 'foreigners' who were to be fought or driven out. However, this ideal

was not meant to express xenophobia or carry hyper-nationalist innuendos. The ideal of community-as-nation was meant to develop along the lines of a democratic government with people's participation and raising the standard of living of all citizens which would result in some form of 'common good'. While the government was expected to fulfil its duties towards its citizens, the latter too had to share mutual responsibility towards the state and fellow citizens. The general perception of 'common good' was philosophically developed in Britain by the Utilitarian thinkers and juxtaposed against the limits to liberty (Fitzpatrick 2006).

19th century British liberalism perceived political space governed by superior individualism bordering on atomism and conceptualised Self as autonomous and rational. A communitarian approach, in turn, proposes a realist alternative which argued that the purpose of politics is to help the socialized Self to reach its ontic superiority. Thus, rights and norms were useful, not in abstraction or isolation, but needed to be imbricated into the society. The core ideals of communitarianism developing in late 19th century Britain suggested that "the communities into which people are born are wellsprings of the political claims that they recognize" and that "collective norms and practices constitute individuals as the beings that they are" (Shapiro 2003: 170). It argued for a proclivity towards the establishment of a common good, not through any rationalised agent or the lineage of natural rights discourse, but was seen to be embedded in the "evolving traditions and practices of political communities" (Shapiro 2003: 171). Thus, political obligations and rights would have a bearing on the people only under the conditions in which they were experienced. A Hegelian touch to this argument would mean that Law emerges, not out of the State as the Social Contract theorists argued or from the natural dispensations of 'men' as Locke stated, but out of the collective ethical Self-Will (Avineri 1972; Horstmann 2004).

Communitarian ideals comprise of three crucial elements, namely, "mutual responsibility", "cooperative enquiry" and "citizen participation" (Tam 2019: 10). Mutual recognition entails that, as a community, each of its members interact in a manner which values the goals and outlooks of others. All members are expected to contribute to the growth of community, not out of altruistic reasons but for achieving a common good, which may also demand some proportion of self-sacrifice. Cooperative enquiry is a natural development from mutual responsibility. Legal apparatuses and the State carry second-order authority. Every decision is arrived at in a spirit of mutual cooperation amongst various groups in a community. The

decision-making procedure follows democratic principles of deliberation. Authority cannot be instituted in an individual or a group with esoteric and/ or historical antecedents. Thus, mutual responsibility and cooperative enquiry requires active participation of the citizens on the principles of equality of representation or adult franchise.

I argue that Tilak borrowed ideas from the European and indigenous traditions in order to prioritise community over individual. In the Indian context, community-as-nation developed under the shadows of colonialism. Indian communities consist of various sampradāy (sects), jātī-samāj (caste-groups) and religious groups with different theological-religious affiliations existing for centuries. In Maharashtra chief sampradāy include Mahānubhava, Nātha, Datta and Vārkarī. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra along with hundreds of poṭa-jātī (sub-castes) make up the jātī-samāj while religious traditions are largely divided into Vaishnava and Shaiva followers (Zelliot and Maxine 1988). 19th century Marathi intellectuals were conscious of these sectarian affiliations and their (limited) role as a catalyst in developing a unified community-as-nation (deśa) and modern citizenry. The three fundamental sources of Self transformed into sources of conflict: reinterpretation and conflict over Hindu traditions (Dharma-vicāra/saṅghaṛṣa), the role of caste in modern Hindu societies (Jātī-vicāra/ saṅghaṛṣa) and the duties of the colonial state and rights of the natives (Rājakīya-vicāra/ saṅghaṛṣa) (Palshikar 2007; Deshpande 2009; Chousalkar 2014).

One of the principal modes for theorizing community-as-nation (deśa) and nationalist Self used by the nationalist thinkers was through texts and the associated socio-political practices. I argue that Indian political thought raises serious questions regarding the canonization of certain texts, which is habituated in tracing the history of (political) ideas on at least five levels- firstly, it challenges the assumption at the heart of Western intellectual history of its bias towards Universal and somewhat equitable lineage of textual corpus. Secondly, it raises doubts regarding the supposed seamless trajectory of political thought and, in the case of India, of nationalist thought. Thirdly, the 'political' as a normative category is forced to share space with texts emerging out of a steady lineage of historical, religious (theological) and even non-theoretical thought. And therefore, notions of authenticity could attain multiple meanings with which individuals and/or communities survive. Notions of authenticity, thus, lose their monolithic articulation. Fourthly, it allows us to read the colonial/nationalist texts as variant ways to reach different notions of modernity. And finally, it breaks the binary

location of thought as colonial and anti-colonial/nationalist or modernity/traditions and suggests that a new *polis* or a political community was imagined which allowed traditions to be co-opted and minimal collaboration with the colonizers justified on grounds of 'equality-liberty' and fair redistribution of rights and resources.

By placing Tilak's political ideas at the centre of my dissertation I explore two simultaneous issues. On one hand, I will be reconstructing the intellectual history of western India in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Departing from earlier attempts at constructing the history of the region in terms of the function and evolution of a caste-category (Rao 2010), focusing on its political history (Phadke 1989) or focusing on a group of intellectuals and their contribution to social reform movement (Omvedt 1976; Singh 2016), my arguments rest on prioritizing Tilak's writings as the primary heuristic device at developing a formal 'medium of thought'. My thesis moves slightly away from the traditional field of political theorizing which has put normative categories handed down from the Anglophone world as universally applicable. Following recent endeavours in the field (Vajpeyi 2012; Banerjee 2020), I argue that Tilak reinterpreted Western normative concepts, invested new meanings into old Indian concepts and pitched his political philosophy at a parallel distance from the Western framework without reducing it to any parochialism. To use a statistical metaphor, I claim that if Self-as-community (in its spatio-historical and socio-religious forms) makes up the X-axis then Self-as-ideology (in its spatio-historical and socio-religious forms) falls onto the Y axis, connecting and departing simultaneously.

At the same time, I do not agree with the assumption that an individual-centric study of modern Indian political theory results into icon-making and that the preferences and political-ideological commitments of the individual-thinker gets imposed upon the entire temporal-historical field occupied by her/him (Datta and Palshikar 2013). I regard individual-centric studies to be crucial in developing new possibilities for conceptualising the 'political'. If themes were to act as the starting point of political theory the presumption is that they get established inhabiting a sociological 'empty space', a mistaken starting point for any conceptualization but which has been readily used in much of postcolonial scholarship. Moreover, to grant these normative concepts priority robs Indian intellectuals of their agency to re-negotiate the (altered) meanings attached to national and regional imaginations. Attempts to search for these normative concepts in pre-modern India at best only helps us in

according them a parallel point of origin separated/away from the Western gaze but does not add much to a global knowledge-system.

1.7 Sources, Methodology and Framework

Unlike some of his contemporaries (Surendranath Banerjee, Lala Lajpat Rai or Gandhi) Tilak did not write an autobiography. Therefore, the best sources to gather information about his political-intellectual life (and his conduct in private) are the biographies and four volumes of 'Reminiscences and Anecdotes' recorded by the Tilak's associate S. V. Bapat. The earliest, and for many decades considered the most authentic, account of Tilak's life was offered by N. C. Kelkar. Having worked in close proximity with Tilak for almost three decades Kelkar possessed intimate knowledge about Tilak. Following Tilak's death Kelkar was granted full access to Tilak's personal correspondence. Kelkar, although of lesser talent and popularity compared to his *guru*, was widely regarded as Tilak's protégé and therefore his biography automatically attained extraordinary popularity (Banhatti 1932)[6].

Around the same time S. V. Bapat also embarked on an ambitious project of compiling anecdotes and reminiscences about Tilak. The project began in 1924 and was concluded in 1928. It comprised of 3 volumes in Marathi followed by a slender volume in English. All the contributors (around 750) were Tilak's peers and admirers. Their reminiscences were meant to act as character-sketches of Tilak providing invaluable resources for future historians and biographers.

The next set of biographies appeared during the late 1950's marking Tilak's birth centenary year (1955-56)[7]. Some biographers (Bhagwat and Pradhan 2011) tried to maintain 'objectivity' towards Tilak and his activities while others were interested in bringing new archival material (such as Tilak's 'Private papers' and 'Letters') to light (Karandikar 1957). Biographers struggled to establish political and ideological genealogy between Tilak and Gandhi (Parvate 1958), an exercise not appreciated by others (Keer 1959: v). Nourished on a nativist culture of producing popular hagiographies (of saint-poets), most of these biographies refused to critically engage with Tilak. Nevertheless, these biographies have painstakingly recreated Tilak's life and hence prove an invaluable resource[8].

Barring the work of Parimala Rao (2010) and Sadanand More (2014) scholarly studies and biographies of Tilak appeared at a time when Tilak's 'Collected Works' were yet to be published. Four volumes of Tilak's journalistic writings from *Kesari* edited by Narsimha Chintaman Kelkar (Tilak 1923, 1924, 1926 and 1930) and a collection of his letters (Tilak 1966) were used by Tilak scholars which were deemed limited in their scope and debilitated scholarship on Tilak. In due course the first set of Tilak's 'Collected Works' were published through seven volumes in 1976 followed by an eighth volume and a supplementary text comprising of the documents related to his sojourn in England (1918-1919). Thus, most of Tilak's writings, speeches and letters documented in the 'Collected Works' series act as the primary resource for my dissertation. Since Tilak's political writings appeared in his two newspapers- *Kesari* and *Mahratta*- I have cross-referenced the Collected Works with the actual newspaper issue in order to assure of its veracity. Furthermore, since much of Tilak's political writings were produced in his newspapers, keeping in mind its readers, they very often appear ideologically motivated, inflexible and highly polemical in character. Tilak admitted the superficiality which had at times crept into his political writings and blamed the limitations of a newspaper column (Bapat 1923: 16). I have also extensively used texts written by other nationalist thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th century wherever the need arose.

Of my particular interest, apart from Tilak's journalistic pieces and speeches delivered on various occasions, is his historical and philosophical scholarship. Tilak wrote two books on ancient Aryan civilization- *Orion*: *Or Researches into the Antiquities of the Vedas* [1892] (Tilak 1999) and *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, *being also a new key to the interpretation of many Vedic texts and legends* [1903] (Tilak 2008) - and a voluminous commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā which has earned him the stature of an Indologist and a formidable modern Indian philosopher. I find deep connections between his scholarly pursuits and his political goals. Each of these texts were written keeping in mind its readers, the intellectual and political climate surrounding its author and the impact it would have upon the intellectual-political pursuits of Tilak, his followers and supporters. A detailed enquiry into these three texts is largely missing in existing scholarship on Tilak. I also argue that these three texts provide the most sophisticated justification for and deploy the methodology and conceptual apparatus that make up Tilak's religious-nationalist Self. Therefore, in my dissertation I have devoted

two chapters to Tilak's historical and philosophical scholarship in trying to probe its historical-contextualist significance and normative-theoretical uniqueness.

The almost inexhaustible nature of the primary resources has led me to probe into deeper intellectual interactions and disagreements between Tilak and his local-regional-national interlocutors. I have, therefore, selectively borrowed from various resources- diaries, speeches, newspaper articles and editorials, magazines, reports of annual sessions of the INC, books and monographs. From these resources I have tried to build an intellectual history of Maharashtra and India within the context of British colonialism and the indigenous response to it from various quarters of the Marathi intelligentsia. I have tried to extrapolate divergent opinions about colonialism, access to pre-colonial Hindu traditions and practices, nationalism and India's relationship to the British colonial metropolis. I have copiously borrowed from the socio-cultural history of colonial period constructed by historians and political scientists and reoriented it by keeping the figure of Tilak at the centre of my enquiry. In this regard various biographies and contemporary accounts on Tilak have aided my endeavour.

Mindful of the normative and political-theoretical assumptions, articulations and interactions of the two intersecting ideologies- colonialism and Hindu nationalism- I place Tilak's political ideas within the historical 'time-space' and produce an internalised problematic. In the first chapter I situate the rise of Tilak's political career in the background of the rise of modern public sphere, the skewed relationship between the Marathi intellectuals and the colonial state and agrarian distress in Deccan. I trace the birth of Tilak's two newspaper- *Kesari* and *Mahratta*- and his early suspicion of the INC and social reform movement in western India. Tilak participated in heated discussions with his contemporaries (particularly the social reformers) over the question of emancipation of women. I treat the controversy about the Age of Consent Bill (1891), explored in the second chapter, as the locus standi for these debates. Tilak used his legal training and command over Sanskrit language in interpreting Vedic theological-legal scriptures which automatically made him the leader of the orthodox section of the Maharashtra society. I highlight deeper issues of colonial law and the Dharmaśāstra doxa which had a bearing upon the social reform movement of the 19th century.

In the third chapter I challenge the dominant perception among Tilak scholars, namely, that the two public festivals instituted by Tilak in mid-1890s emerged out of xenophobic hatred

towards Muslims. While the communal riots of 1892-93 deepened Hindu-Muslim divide in western India, I address Tilak's attempt at mitigating the crisis by putting the onus of communal polarization on the colonial state. The two public festivals were used to build cultural unity among Hindus and instil nationalist fervour. The chapter, briefly explores his polemics with British apathy towards plague-patients and general agrarian crisis in rural western India which resulted into his first incarceration (1897) for publishing seditious material against the British government.

Shivaji and Ganapati festivals, although formidable in inspiring nationalist feelings amongst Hindus, were largely restricted to Maharashtra. In order to attract nation-wide attention to his project of Hindu nationalism, Tilak used his copious Sanskrit learning in exploring the origins of Aryan race. In the fourth chapter I focus on the historical writings of Tilak (Tilak 1999 and 2008), and explore his extra-territorial/original Aryan homeland thesis. I regard these two texts as important interlocutions in the Orientalist debates raging in Europe throughout the 19th century. Tilak departs from the hermeneutical tools used by the European scholars in ascertaining antiquarian past and instead relies on indigenous knowledge systems. I also suggest that the Arctic Home thesis presented by Tilak is in tandem with his supra-nationalist vision in terms of a global and antiquarian Aryan community. Therefore, for Tilak, his enquiry into the Aryan-origins was not merely a scholastic exercise but was meant to generate historical-nationalist Self-consciousness amongst colonised Hindus.

In the next chapter, I analyse deepening crevices between the Moderates and the Extremists in the context of Swadeshi movement. Eager to control Congress, Tilak formulated a four-fold program and wanted the Party to spearhead anti-colonial mass movements. His debates with Gopal Krishna Gokhale over the modus operandi to be adopted by INC and Tilak's opposition to British liberal-constitutionalism resulted into the famous split during the Surat session of the INC (1907). The chapter deals with British perception about Tilak, suspicion about his general popularity which resulted into the second sedition trial against him (1908). Following Tilak's imprisonment, the Swadeshi cause lost its last vocal apologist and the movement soon reached an impasse.

Modern Marathi language, as a literary critic once suggested, would be forever indebted to Tilak for writing his magnum opus, the Gītā Rahasya in Marathi. Written while imprisoned at Mandalay (1908-1914), Tilak offered a novel exegesis of Bhagavad Gītā and argued that the

purpose of human life was in karma-yoga. I treat Gītā Rahasya as a philosophical-political text, written in the aftermath of the failed Swadeshi movement and a pre-cursor to the Home-Rule League movement. His modern interpretation of the Bhagavad Gītā in terms of karma-yoga leading to lokasamgraha troubled Hindu sanātanī pundits who launched a major theological attack on Gītā Rahasya. Gītā Rahasya and his earlier antiquarian studies share methodological similarities. His antiquarian studies relied upon Vedic astronomy as exact science. In Gītā Rahasya he shifted his focus to the Mimāmsa tradition as a superior form of traditional hermeneutics and treated Bhagavad Gītā as the foremost global text on moral action.

Tilak's socio-religious and historical outlook was largely determined by the history and traditions of western India while colonial British State lurked in the shadows. Tilak's main adversaries were, on the one hand, European Orientalists who had developed a distorted image of Hinduism and its knowledge-systems and on the other hand, Brahmin śāstrīs representing anti-modernist orthodoxy. It is important to note that Tilak did not wish to antagonise or alienate either of them. Therefore, he embarked upon a difficult rope-walk- of chiding European Orientalists about Hinduism while retaining his traditionalist outlook and ameliorating the upper-caste conservatives who also happened to be his principal political supporters.

The steady evolution of Tilak's political ideals from Swadeshi to Svarājya-as-Self-government, piggy-backing on his loyal constituents from Maharashtra, is explored in the eighth chapter. One finds Tilak consistently criticizing the Congress-Moderates for their opposition to mass agitation. The crux of Tilak's political praxis, I argue, was in the instrumental value attached to all forms of social life aimed at developing popular sovereignty. The dissertation concludes with a brief afterthought on the legacy of Tilak in terms of the shift in nationalist politics under the tutelage of Mahatma Gandhi which, on one hand put a decisive end to the demand for 'self-government within the British Empire' raised by Tilak and on the other hand, grounded India's freedom struggle into a mass non-violent movement.

I have found the case-study method useful in highlighting Tilak's political ideas and constructing the intellectual history of the time. Thus, chapters three, five and seven take up an event (Controversy around the Age of Consent Bill and Tilak's responses) and Tilak's texts to bring out landmarks in Tilak's (and in turn India's) political-scholarly journey. Chapters two, four, six and eight act as setting the background to case studies while helping us to frame

Tilak's political journey. Most of Tilak's writings, as I argue in the following pages, were directed towards developing anti-colonial nationalist consciousness among Indians. The principal goal of Tilak's politics was to secure Self-government for India, which, more or less, remained unsullied throughout forty years of his public life. The eighth chapter brings the totality of Tilak's political ideas, explores the political comprises which he made, the travels which he undertook and the alliances which he formed.

As is evident from the above description, my dissertation oscillates between political theory and intellectual history while keeping the figure of Tilak at the centre of my enquiry. My dissertation could even be treated as an intellectual biography of Tilak. My dissertation stands apart from prior Tilak scholarship in at least three ways. First, unlike many Tilak scholars, I have used Marathi texts (by Tilak and his contemporaries) extensively. This allows me to develop new insights into the Marathi socio-cultural and intellectual milieu which was largely inaccessible to others. Second, I have deliberately focused on Tilak's texts owing to their symptomatic representation of the Indian/Marathi 'life-world' and the vortex of ideas circulating at the time. And third, the eclectic nature of Tilak's political ideas have granted me an opportunity to be in conversation with some of the recent work on global intellectual history. As the following chapters would argue, internationalism was an important aspect of anti-colonial politics of Maharashtra during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Tilak was one of the important interlocutors in harnessing global ideas and applying them to India's demand for Self-government. Therefore, I am in favour of abjuring pre-defined nomenclatures associated with Tilak's political ideas and instead focus on their trans-regional and trans-national dimensions.