

## Swami Vivekananda's Impact on B. G. Tilak and the Nationalist Movement

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I thank the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture for the honour they have done me in inviting me to deliver the lecture named after Acharya Nripendra Chandra Banerjee. He played an important role in the nationalist struggle in Bengal. Born in 1885, the year the Indian National Congress was founded, Nripendra Chandra was a teacher of repute in Presidency College, Calcutta. In response to the call from Mahatma Gandhi in 1919-20 to join the Non-Cooperation Movement and to boycott the Government's educational institutions, he resigned his professorship at Presidency College. It was Chitta Ranjan Das who inspired Nripendra Chandra to be active in the Congress and the result was imprisonment by the British Government several times. Having given up at the age of only 34 his privileged position in government service, Nripendra Chandra had to suffer distressing financial conditions and the only alternative employment he found was in some cash-starved nationalist newspapers. When independence came in 1947 he did not seek material rewards for his services to the Congress,—quite unlike many other Congress politicians—and he passed away in 1949.

It so happens that his family and mine have been closely associated for almost a century. My father Nirmal Chandra Bhattacharya was taught by Nripendra Chandra Banerjee in Presidency College in 1914-17. And in turn Nripendra Chandra's son Binayendra Nath was one of the students taught by my father in

the University of Calcutta. They retained lifelong contact and after Nripendra Chandra's death at the request of his son my father wrote a prefatory essay to introduce to the readers Nripendra Chandra's autobiography entitled *At the Cross Roads*. In the early 1990's when I was Vice-Chancellor at Visva-Bharati University, my wife and I were privileged to renew our bond of affection with Binayendra Nath Banerjee who resided in Santiniketan till his death.

I am gratified that coincidence which some would call 'fate'—has brought about the conjuncture of circumstances that I stand before you today to deliver this lecture in memory of a person who has been revered in our family for many years, Acharya Nripendra Chandra Banerjee.

It is not at all a coincidence that I address the theme of Swami Vivekananda's impact on nationalist leaders such as Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and others. I chose that theme since I think that it is appropriate that we pay a tribute to nationalist intellectual, Nripendra Chandra, in this manner. Moreover, speaking more generally, I believe that Vivekananda's role in the nationalist movement has not yet been properly recorded and evaluated by historians. We have to ask ourselves whether in recent years the focus of study has been only on Vivekananda as a Bengali spiritual preceptor. He was that no doubt, but he was more than that. He was the leader of a thought

movement which had an impact on all parts of India. I hope to address that theme in my research and in a series of lectures.

I will begin with the story of Tilak's contact with Vivekananda. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1857-1920) was senior to Vivekananda by half a dozen years and at their first encounter in Bombay in 1892, Tilak was quite unaware of the momentous importance of that meeting. As you probably know, Vivekananda, in pursuit of his plan to travel all over India up to Cape Comorin as a mendicant, passed through many parts of Maharashtra. In April to September 1892 he visited Bombay, Mahabaleswar, Pune, Kolhapur, Belgaum, and Indore. Some of the letters Vivekananda wrote in 1892 provide a sketchy idea of his itinerary. These letters have been collected in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. VIII.<sup>1</sup> This was at a time when he was not yet famous. Fame came to him next year when he went to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. In 1892 he was a little known *sannyasi*, hosted by various local landlords and this picture comes out clearly in the reminiscences Tilak recorded in January 1934 in *Vedanta Kesari*.

About the year 1892, i.e., before the famous Parliament of Religions in the World's Fair at Chicago, I was once returning from Bombay to Poona. At the Victoria Terminus a Sannyasin entered the carriage I was in. A few Gujarati gentlemen were there to see him off. They made the formal introduction and asked the Sannyasin to reside at my house during his stay at Poona. We reached Poona, and the Sannyasin remained with me for eight or ten days. When asked about his name he only said he was a Sannyasin.

Vivekananda seemed to be keen at that time to be anonymous. Incidentally, at this time Vivekananda sometimes used another name, Sacchidananda. There is at least one document signed by him under that name<sup>2</sup>

written at Margaon, Maharashtra, in 1893. To get back to Tilak's story, he writes:

At home he would often talk about Advaita philosophy and Vedanta. The Swami avoided mixing with society. There was absolutely no money with him. A deerskin, one or two clothes and a *kamandalu* were his only possessions. In his travels some one would provide a railway ticket for the desired station. The swami also believed like me that the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* did not preach renunciation but urged every one to work unattached and without the desire for fruits of the work.

We may specially note this particular statement of Tilak's. The idea of highlighting the concept of Karma Yoga in the *Gītā* figures very prominently in Tilak's commentary *Gītā Rahasya*. Vivekananda likewise emphasized Karma Yoga and often quoted from the *Gītā* the well-known verse, *kaivalya māśma gamah Pārtha*. . . . He thought that 'in this one shloka lies embedded the whole message of the *Gītā*.'<sup>3</sup> As Frank Rhodehamel and Sister Nivedita have recorded in their notes on his 'Gita class', Vivekananda upheld the *Gītā* text as the New Testament for the Hindus.<sup>4</sup>

Tilak also writes in his memoirs:

Two or three years thereafter Swami Vivekananda returned to India with worldwide fame owing to his grand success at the Parliament of Religions and also after that both in England and America. He received an address wherever he went and on every one of such occasions he made a thrilling reply. I happened to see his likeness in some of the newspapers, and from the similarity of features I thought that the Swami who had resided at my house must have been the same. I wrote to him accordingly inquiring if my inference was correct and requesting him to kindly pay a visit to Poona on his way to Calcutta. I received a fervent reply in which the Swami frankly admitted that he was the

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IMPACT ON B. G. TILAK AND  
THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

same Sannyasin and expressed his regret at not being able to visit Poona then.

This lost letter from Vivekananda to Tilak must have been written between 1896 and 1899, the period between his two visits to USA. Tilak says that police search in his home led to the destruction of this letter from Vivekananda. The last contact between Tilak and Vivekananda took place in 1901.

'During one of the Congress sessions at Calcutta', Tilak recalls, 'I had gone with some friends to see the Belur Math of the Ram[a]krishna Mission. There Swami Vivekananda received us very cordially. In the course of the conversation Swamiji happened to remark somewhat in a jocular spirit that it would be better if I renounced the world and took up his work in Bengal while he would go and continue the same in Maharashtra. "One does not carry," he said, "the same influence in one's own province as in a distant one."<sup>5</sup>

**Tilak's meeting with Vivekananda**

Tilak says this meeting with Vivekananda took place during a Congress session in Calcutta without mentioning a date. Now, there were two such sessions in Calcutta, one in 1896 and the other is 1901. My guess is that Tilak met Vivekananda during the 1901 Calcutta session of the Congress because I infer from dates of his letter that during the earlier session of 1896 Vivekananda was out of Calcutta.

To sum it up, from the time when Vivekananda was an unknown itinerant sannyasin in 1892, till 1901, the year before his death, Tilak had fleeting contacts with him. The relationship between these two thinkers was more in the domain of ideas than its terms of personal contacts and conversation. No letter between them has survived. Tilak's name does appear in Vivekananda's correspondence occasionally,

when he recommended to his disciples Tilak's publications. In one such letter Vivekananda mentions Tilak's historical work, *Orion*, on the origins of the Aryans. But Vivekananda did not accept Tilak's speculations and seems to say that the facts are uncertain and in any event how did it matter in history where Aryans came from?

In many towns which Vivekananda had visited in Maratha country in course of time social groups were formed to study his writings, eventually leading to foundation of ashrams. Swami Saradananda, senior monk in the Mission, visited Bombay Province several times from 1920 to 1930. In 1927 the Vivekananda Society was set up in Pune and in course of time 25 such societies came up all over the province. After Tilak introduced Ganapati worship and Shivaji festival increasingly the political and the cultural elements merged. On the other hand, Vivekananda study remained generally apolitical. Needless to say, one can see both resemblances and differences between Tilak's approach and Vivekananda's ideas.

At this point let us note the evidence we have about the extremist nationalists who were attracted to Vivekananda. Tilak was, it is well known, one of the leaders of the extremist section of the Congress who rejected the path of constitutional negotiation with the British Indian government. The distance between these extremist nationalists and the militant nationalists, often called 'terrorists', was not great. The links between the Congress extremists, the militant nationalists, and the followers of Vivekananda was the subject of many police investigations. New light has been thrown on the subject recently with the publication of secret police reports.

Initially, in early part of the 20th century mainly the militant nationalists were attracted by the ideology of Vivekananda.

The most important police report we have is that by a well-known officer called Charles Teggart, the Superintendent of Police in the Intelligence Branch, and later the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta. Teggart wrote a very detailed report covering almost fifty closely printed pages in 1914. This report was based on reports of police informers or spies as well as routine reports lodged with the authorities by the regular police force in different parts of India. This report of 1914 has been published recently by the Government of West Bengal, as part of a series of documents in six volumes edited by the Director of Intelligence Branch of West Bengal Police.<sup>6</sup>

What are the new facts revealed in the IB or Intelligence Branch reports? First, R K Mission establishments were sometimes nodal points in the organization of conspiracies leading to political crimes by nationalists in different part of India. Secondly, many militants, or so-called terrorists, were as individuals associated with the R K Mission *ashrams* and occasionally took shelter there. Thirdly, the published works of Vivekananda and generally his message to the youth formed a part of the syllabus for training militants or so-called terrorists.

As regards the big conspiracy cases, we might note that in the famous Lahore Conspiracy, Rashbehari Bose as well as accused five Bengali youths were members of the R K Mission branch in Hardwar-Kankhal.<sup>7</sup> Similarly the police reports say that in the Barisal Conspiracy case of 1913, which led to transportation for life for 12 people, the conspiracy was under the cover of R K Mission. The members of Dhaka Anushilan Samiti regularly used the name of mission as a code word for Anushilan Samiti and the Mission or Vivekananda's name was a password for mutual recognition.<sup>8</sup> According to another report, R K Mission ashram in

Madras was a major base of a secret society. But this was a report from a police spy and cannot be trusted without corroborative evidence.<sup>9</sup> Of the Maniktalla Conspiracy case, at least accused Prajnananda also known as Debabrata Basu, as well as Upendra Nath Banerjee were connected with Mayavati Ashram at Almora. However, Aurobindo Ghosh of that conspiracy case was not so connected with the Mission, although he openly acknowledged that he was profoundly influenced by Vivekananda's ideas.<sup>10</sup> Teggart also alleges link between Belur Math and the conspirators of Maniktalla Bomb conspiracy<sup>11</sup> as well as connections between Mayavati Ashram and 'Ram Chandra Prabhu of Bombay who harboured some of the Bengal anarchists.'

As regards militants or terrorists seeking shelter in R K Mission as individuals, they are too numerous to mention. Some were just occasional visitors like Jatin Mukherjee or Pulin Das. The more regular frequenters or residents were of two categories: probationers who left the *ashram* having been won over by militants; second, former militants who joined the Mission later in life. Teggart's report is incomplete in this regard because he had little data about ashrams at a distance from Bengal, e.g. those at Mylapore in Madras, in Bangalore, in Benares, in Allahabad etc. At the time of Teggart's report in April 1914 there were 10 such out-stations officially affiliated.

The third set of facts reported by police in 1914 was regarding the use of books by Vivekananda for training militant nationalists. The most illustrious example was Aurobindo Ghosh who highlighted Vivekananda's message in his book *Bhavani Mandir* (Baroda, 1904). The trial of Anushilan Samiti members revealed that Vivekananda's books were 'Anushilan text books'<sup>12</sup>; militants set up 'Vivekananda

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IMPACT ON B. G. TILAK AND  
THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Library'<sup>13</sup>, and as the police report says, 'Members of the revolutionary party seized upon the teachings of Vivekananda Swami and adopted them to suit their own ends.'<sup>14</sup> In fact, by the time the Chittagong Armoury Raid took place, the police regarded possession of books written by Vivekananda as sufficient evidence of militant tendency among people they arrested; possession of *Ananda Math* or the song 'Vande Mataram' was of course even more reprehensible.

I have used a lot of information from the Intelligence Branch report of 1914 for two reasons. One reason is that these facts are new and relatively unknown since the secret police reports have been de-classified and published only recently. Secondly, I wanted to make the point that regardless of Vivekananda's views, there were links between the militant nationalists and some members of the R K Mission *ashrams*. This was true up to around 1914. In later years the nationalist movement as a whole came under the spell of Vivekananda's ideas, the erstwhile Moderates included. But that will be the subject of another lecture later, it is not the subject of discussion today since our focus is on Tilak and the extremists.

**Vivekananda and the nationalists**

Let us now turn to the question, why Vivekananda's ideas influenced the nationalists, first the militants and then almost all others in the nationalist fold? It is not easy to answer that question. If you recall the fact that there are more than 5000 pages of Vivekananda's thoughts in the nine volumes of his *Complete Works*, you will realize that the answer to that question could last longer than the listeners' patience.

If we try and get to the bottom line, what were the reasons that Vivekananda's ideas resonated in the nationalist mind? First, the political struggle for freedom had as a

subtext a cultural struggle. Recovery of Indian people's *cultural confidence*, their confidence about their old civilization was important. Vivekananda was one of those who forcefully presented India's civilization as something her people can be proud of. Second, talk about India's ancient culture and civilization often led, in the nationalist discourse, to a blind glorification of the past. Vivekananda was keenly aware that to be proud of the past is one thing and to live in the past is quite another. That awareness was the door to *modernity without losing Indian identity*. Thirdly, Vivekananda's emphasis on *unity* of the Indian people despite difference in religious beliefs, caste status, class hierarchy, and linguistic and cultural differences, struck a chord common in all truly nationalist thought. Finally, Vivekananda cast a spell on nationalist minds in recommending to the youth in particular *fearless engagement in action*. His message of 'practical Vedantism', a philosophy of Karma Yoga, and '*abhih*' or '*abhaya*' *mantra* appealed to almost all nationalists though they were doctrinally divided.

(1) As regards the first of those ideas, let us recall the circumstances which required a proud affirmation of Indianness. The nineteenth century was an era characterized by increasing distance between advanced West and the backward East, the denigration of Indian civilization by James Mill and other 'Orientalists', the demoralizing defeat of the uprising of 1857 in north India, the abject dependence of the Bengali middle classes on the jobs the British alone could offer, the devaluation of indigenous knowledge systems and culture on the one hand and the growing hegemony of European civilization on the other. The self-esteem of the Indian educated middle classes was at its lowest ebb by the end of the century. In these circumstances Vivekananda comes and

affirms the greatness of India's ancient civilization. It was a turning-point in diminishing the native Indians' sense of inferiority, it was a step towards the recovery of an entire people's self-confidence. Vivekananda struck that note of cultural self-assertion right from 1893. His speeches at the Chicago Parliament of Religions won over India for that reason above all others. In the concluding session of the Parliament of Religions, the last speech delivered by Vivekananda emphasized an assertion of equality of all religions, in the face of the assumed superiority of the Christian Church whose representatives naturally outnumbered all others in the Chicago assembly. Parliament of Religions, he said, 'proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not exclusive possessions of any Church in the world'.<sup>15</sup> This assertion of equality may have been made in the spiritual domain, but it also carried another message to Indians who read of the triumphs of a Hindu in the West. Consider some reactions to that news in Indian newspapers. 'We can't become a great nation unless we love our religion and try to respect ourselves . . . Hindus have at present degenerated. They have forgotten their own self-respect'.<sup>16</sup> 'There is not a Hindoo who is not proud of Vivekananda Swami. He has done honour to himself, to his race and religion'.<sup>17</sup> 'The advent of the Swamiji in the West has undoubtedly enhanced the character of the Indians in the West'.<sup>18</sup>

There was an irony in the fact that Vivekananda was recognised by fellow-Indians because he was recognised as a preceptor in the West. He was aware of that irony and made fun of it, a sign of his intellectual superiority. For instance, in his jocular speech introducing a recent Indian sojourner in the West, he recalls the discovery of America and goes on to say that in his times 'multitudes came to America for getting

themselves discovered in the United States'.<sup>19</sup> In this ironical reference to himself and others 'discovered' like him, Vivekananda shows contempt for the trifling publicity occasioned by his reception in the West. However, there is no doubt that contemporary newspapers show that the advent of Vivekananda, hailed as the representative of India, was balm to the injured pride of his countrymen. The theme of enhanced 'self-respect' figured prominently in Indian public opinion reflected in reports of the kind I have cited. The lasting effect of Vivekananda's message was to elevate Indian culture and civilization in the perception of the educated middle classes.

An oft-quoted passage on the subject is the peroration at the end of an essay on 'Modern India', originally written in Bengali: 'Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, "I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother." Say "The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother"'.<sup>20</sup> Here the idea of pride in identity is as important as the idea of unity.

The effort we see in Vivekananda to combine pride in India's past with a readiness to embrace modernity, is stated by him repeatedly and clearly. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in *The Discovery of India*: 'Vivekananda himself was careful to warn his people not to dwell too much on the past, but to look to the future. "When, O Lord", he wrote, "shall our land be free from this eternal dwelling upon the past?". . . This looking back to the past and finding comfort and sustenance there was helped by a renewed study of ancient literature and history. . . .' As a modernizer, Nehru was naturally anxious to bring out this trait in Vivekananda. This was indeed a characteristic of Vivekananda, marking him out from

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IMPACT ON B. G. TILAK AND  
THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

scores of spiritual preceptors of the early twentieth century. For example, in March 1899, in his long essay of almost fifty pages on 'Modern India': "Have we not. . . to learn anything from the West? . . . Are we perfect? Is our society entirely spotless, without any flaw? . . . Yes, learn we must many things from the West."<sup>22</sup> At the same time he pointed to a dilemma. 'On one side is modern Western science, dazzling the eyes with the brilliancy of myriad suns. . . on the other hand are the hopeful and strengthening traditions of ancient forefathers, in the days when she was at the zenith of her glory. . .'.<sup>23</sup> The Western civilization also was far from being perfect. Moreover, learning from the West should not be mere imitation of the West and alienation from one's own people. Thus he recommended that Indians, from the highest to the lowest, should retain their identity and sense of belonging and, at the same time, be ready to learn what is worthwhile from the West.

**Appreciation of Western civilization**

There are numerous examples of Vivekananda's appreciation of Western civilization and the dilemma he analyzed in the essay cited above seems to come out of his own life experiences. In conceding that India should learn from the West, Vivekananda differs from the conservative Hindu thinkers and in this matter he stands closer to Rabindranath Tagore. In a tract called 'The East and the West'<sup>24</sup> Vivekananda reiterates: 'We have many things to learn from other nations. . . The nation that says it knows everything is on the brink of destruction. . . . But one point to note here is that when we take anything from others, we must mould it after our own way. . . . we must always be careful to keep intact what is essentially our own.'<sup>25</sup>

(3) It is well known that there were

among Indian nationalists a section which equated a religious community with the nation. In thus attributing to a community nationhood, the other communities were ipso facto excluded. Thus their approach was exclusivist. They may be characterized as 'religious nationalists'. However, the problem is that there is an ambiguity about that word 'religious nationalism'. In the language of those who equate a religious community with a nation e.g. a 'Hindu nation' or a 'Muslim nation'—religion, as they understand it, figures prominently. But that does not mean that all those who talk of religion and of nationalism are therefore 'religious nationalists'. That is a fallacy which comes from confused thinking. The fallacy consists of inverting the proposition 'All religious nationalists talk of religion', to read 'All who talk of religion are religious nationalists'.

This theoretical point needs to be grasped to understand Vivekananda's approach to the idea of nationhood which was far from being exclusive. He made that clear on many occasions. It is historians who have made this issue obscure. For instance, since the Missionary historian Rev. J. N. Farquhar down to our times many historians have described Vivekananda as one of the creators of 'Religious Nationalism'. While supposedly radical historians characterize him as a Hindu nationalist, from the opposite end of the political spectrum, authors like Eknath Ranade have claimed that he gave 'A Rousing Call to Hindu Nation'. Professor Hiren Mukerjee in a lecture at this Institute in 1985 said: Vivekananda 'knew, as Marx did, that men cannot make history as they please, but in building the future had to use bricks left by the past'. In his view, therefore, it is 'totally unfair to label Vivekananda's work as Religious Nationalism'.<sup>26</sup> A careful study of Vivekananda's writings seems to lend support to Hiren Mukerjee's views.

Admittedly, there are indeed some passages in Vivekananda's writings where he speaks of the need to find the common bases of Hinduism and awaken the national consciousness among Hindus.<sup>27</sup> But one or two such rare passages (usually occurring in Addresses to meetings of a Hindu association or local community) are insignificant compared to the vast number of the contrary kind where he emphasizes the unity of all religions. Here is a typical passage: '...the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are various phases of one eternal religion. . . . Therefore we must respect all religions. . . . Religion is realization: but mere talk—mere trying to believe, . . . mere parroting the words of ancestors and thinking it is religion, mere making a political something out of the truths of religion—is not religion at all.'<sup>28</sup> Or, again, consider his statement at the Parliament of Religions on 19 September, 1893: Mankind needs a universal religion 'which will not be Brahminic, or Buddhistic, Christian or Muhammedan, but the sum total of all these.'<sup>29</sup> I will not elaborate this point further since many scholars have written about it. (I may particularly mention the latest, Swami Prabhananda, 'Prospect of Human Unity through Sri Ramakrishna's Harmony of Religions'.<sup>30</sup> The unifying ideal cutting across religious divisions became a major plank of the nationalist movement as we all know.

(4) Finally, another bond between Vivekananda's ideas and the nationalists was his message of activism, as opposed to a tradition of religious quietism. That was the essence of his 'Practical Vedanta', his exhortation to the youth to forget religion limited to the cooking pot and 'dont-touchism', his effort to remind his countrymen of the message of '*abhih*' or fearlessness, the exhortation to develop manliness because 'you will be nearer to Heaven

through football than through the study of the Gita.'<sup>31</sup> The militant Nationalists in Bengal particularly were attracted by such ideas and their famous Liberty Pamphlet reproduced these stirring words: 'Let us proclaim to every soul: "Arise, awake, and stop not till your goal is reached. . . . Too much of inactivity, too much of weakness, too much of hypnotism, has been and is upon our race."'

#### **Difference between Tilak and Vivekananda**

To sum up, while there is no doubt that the Bengal militants or revolutionaries (*biplabi* in contemporary usage) were influenced by the ideas of Vivekananda, it is an open question whether Lokamanya Tilak and Swami Vivekananda influenced each other or there were parallel developments in their ideas in respect of some issues. The difference between Tilak's system of ideas and that of Vivekananda is fairly obvious. The most important difference was that Vivekananda nurtured an inclusive notion of the Indian nation whereas Tilak, it is generally believed, gave centrality to a 'Hindu nation' which did not include other religious communities. This trend of thinking in Tilak was made visible in the public sphere in his cultural strategy, the creation of Ganapati and Shivaji festivals. Vivekananda derived from his spiritual mentor Ramakrishna a faith in the inner unity of the essentials of all religions and hence a broad catholicity open to all religions; in Ramakrishna this approach was a personal and interior realization, in Vivekananda it is exteriorized in the public sphere, in his discourses and writings harping upon the need for unity cutting across religious divides.

While that was a prominent point of divergence between Tilak and Vivekananda, one can see a parallelism in respect of Vivekananda's and Tilak's ideas in one vital

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IMPACT ON B. G. TILAK AND  
THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

area, their approach to what both of them called 'Practical Vedanta.' This concept appears in 1908 in Tilak's well-known book, *Gita Bhasya*.<sup>32</sup> 'No one can expect providence to protect one who sits with folded arms and throws his burden on others. God does not help the indolent. . . . Karma Yoga does not look upon this world as nothing, it requires only that your motives should be untainted by selfish interest and passion. This is the true view of Practical Vedanta, the key to which is apt to be lost in sophistry.'<sup>33</sup> Thus, five years after the death of Vivekananda, the concept of Practical Vedanta was used, a concept which he had made his watchword. Tilak provided in *Gita Rahasya* an elaboration of the concept by way of a learned exposition of the *Gita*. In this matter Tilak and Vivekananda were in complete accord. That is why Tilak wrote later that the chief thing he remembered about Vivekananda was that 'the Swami also believed like me that the Srimad Bhagavad Gita did not preach renunciation. . .'<sup>34</sup>

We have to bear in mind another fact when we consider Vivekananda and Tilak's ideas and endeavours. The historical moment when Vivekananda propounded the doctrine of Practical Vedanta was different from the opportune moment Tilak came upon later. After Vivekananda passed away there came a time when the growth of militant nationalism allowed Tilak the opportunity to preach that doctrine with a tangible result. 'If the Gita was preached to desponding Arjuna to make him ready for the fight—for the Action—how can it be said that the ultimate lesson of the great book is Bhakti or Jnana alone?'<sup>35</sup> Tilak was able successfully to evoke this spirit of activism in his political life; as Stanley Wolpert has pointed out, this is exemplified by Tilak's writings at the time of Bengal Partition. The time for protests and pleading was over, he said to an audience of twenty

thousand in Calcutta on 7 June 1906.<sup>36</sup> Such exhortations from Tilak led the British India Government to the conclusion that he was connected with the actions of Bengal militants. The Bombay Governor in Council wrote to the Secretary of State for India in 1908: 'Bomb outrages in Bengal. . . lent fresh life and vigour to the party of violence of which Tilak was the recognised leader.'<sup>37</sup> While Vivekananda long after his death was a source of inspiration to the militant nationalists, Tilak was in his lifetime an active element in that movement.

As we have noted earlier, Jawaharlal Nehru, who was deeply impressed with the moving biography of Vivekananda by Romain Rolland, acknowledges the impact of Vivekananda on the process of nation formation. Tagore also did that but more sparingly. Tilak's colleague in the Congress, Bipin Chandra Pal, likewise. While Tilak's own actions and pronouncements do not seem to be in accord with Vivekananda's idea of the unity of the essence of all religions, on the other hand their ideas had a great deal in common in respect of the regeneration of India they looked forward to.<sup>38</sup> Vivekananda's ideas inspired some of Tilak's admirers and followers. For instance, K. N. Athalye (1852-1927) of Pune published a biography of his hero Vivekananda in Marathi in 1912. The Marathi playwright Acyuta Balavanta Kolhatakara (1879-1931) wrote a full length play based on Vivekananda's life in 1914. All this within a decade after Vivekananda's death and later there was, of course, wider appreciation of his life and work in Maharashtra.

The more general conclusion we arrive at in the light of the facts I brought to your attention is that the inter-relationship between Swami Vivekananda's ideas and the Nationalist movement needs to be studied in depth. I hope to bring before you the results

of such studies in my lectures later. Today, I conclude with the thought that it has been a great privilege to stand before you today to deliver this lecture as a tribute to the memory

of Professor Nripendra Chandra Banerjee on behalf of all of us who are aware of our debt of gratitude to him and to others who were in the national struggle for freedom. ■

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Calcutta, 2008 (hereafter cited as CWSV), Vol. VIII.
- 2 CWSV, Vol. VIII, pp. 290-91.
- 3 CWSV, Vol. IV, p. 110.
- 4 CWSV, Vol. IX, pp. 374-382.
- 5 Tilak, *Vedanta Kesari*, January 1934.
- 6 Teggart's Report, 22 April 1914, in A. K. Samanta, ed., *Terrorism in Bengal*, Volume IV, Calcutta, 1995, pp. 1333-1375; hereafter cited as *T.B.*; Partial use was made of this and other police reports by another author, L. M. Ray Chowdhury, *Ramakrishna Mission in the Eyes of the Police*, Calcutta, 1983.
- 7 *T.B.*, Vol. IV, p. 1366.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.1362.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.1363.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.1357.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p.1358.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p.1359.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p.1363.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p.1359.
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- 28 CWSV, Vol. IV, pp. 180-182.
- 29 CWSV, Vol. I, p. 19.
- 30 *Bulletin of RMIC*, Vol. LXI, no. 4, pp. 190-195.
- 31 The last passage occurs in 'Vedanta and Indian Life', CWSV, Vol. III, p. 242.
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- 36 Stanley Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1961, p. 180.
- 37 Govt. of Bombay to Secretary of State for India, Judicial Dept. no. 1, 18 September 1908, in Ravindra Kumar, (ed.), *Selected Documents of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, Delhi, 1992, Vol. I, p. 136.
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