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Lokmanya Tilak Death Centenary

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the foremost leader of India's freedom struggle before the advent of the Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi era, breathed his last, after a brief illness, in Bombay in the early hours of August 1, 1920. He was 64.



Destiny snatched him away at a relatively young age. Had he lived longer, this lion among Indian patriots could have changed the course of the nation's freedom struggle for the better.

The funeral at Chowpatty Beach, not far from where he lived – in a modest rented room in a guest house called Sardar Griha – was attended by over a million people. Among the pall-bearers were Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Shaukat Ali, a prominent leader of the Khilafat Movement.

This year we mark his 100th death anniversary, here are some facts about him.

1. He founded the Deccan Education Society in 1884, to educate people especially in the English language because at that time he and his associates believed that English is a powerful force for liberal and democratic ideals.
2. He started awakening people through newspapers like 'Kesari' ("The Lion") in Marathi and in English 'The Mahratta'. From these papers, he became famous and he criticised Britishers and the methods of moderates who

advocated social reforms along Western lines and political reforms along constitutional lines.

3. Two important festivals were also organised by Bal Gangadhar Tilak namely Ganesh in 1893 and Shivaji in 1895.

4. Bal Gangadhar Tilak joined the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1890 and started self-rule. He was the first nationalist freedom fighter who brought the concept of 'Swaraj'.

5. In India, he started the Swadeshi movement. Jamshed Tata and Tilak together established Bombay Swadeshi Stores to promote the national movement.

6. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai are known as 'Lal-Bal-Pal'.

7. To achieve the political aim, Tilak wanted to generate a mass movement which is different from the opinion of moderates and so, in 1907 there was a split in moderates and extremist in Surat Session. British took the benefit of the situation and sent Bal Gangadhar Tilak to the Mandalay jail in Burma (Myanmar) to serve a six-year prison sentence.

8. In April 1916, Bal Gangadhar Tilak launched the Indian Home Rule League with the rousing slogan "Swarajya is my birthright and I will have it." In September 1916, Annie Besant

9. He published The Arctic Home in the Vedas which represents the origin of Aryans and Srimad Bhagvat Gita Rahasya (1915).

10. In Maharashtra, Ganesh Chaturthi is celebrated on a huge scale and is considered one of the main festivals which was started by the Tilak only. He spent a lot of time reading Hindu religious books.