

**THE CONCEPT OF ENDS AND MEANS IN THE IDEALS OF  
B.G. TILAK AND SRI AUROBINDO**

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**Abstract**

*Leaders of the Indian liberation movement had great regard for the religious and moral ideas of the Bhagavad Gita. Leaders like Lok manya BalgangadharTilak, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo Ghost, etc. were inspired by great ancient civilization and culture. They urged Indians to have an unflinchingstruggle against the colonial regime. The term-end means failure to discriminate between which causes most of the controversy and confusion regarding the relationship between ends and means.Tilak and Aurobindo are revered throughout India not only as a fighter for the liberation of the people but also as spiritual teachers, the guru of unimpeachable authority. This paper explores the views of both great leaders on ends and means.*

**Keywords:** *Civilization, Colonial, Ends, Means.*

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## Introduction

Can violence be mean to end violence? A resolution of this problem has kept a large number of philosophers, humanists, political thinkers, reformers and even psychologists busy in analyzing human nature and the existing social frame. Violence signifies a case of violation but violation only so far a person or human being is concerned. Violating natural laws is not violence unless that violation affects some person somewhere and only then will it constitute violence. It can be also argued that legality and illegality of acts or cases of violence would make any difference towards their being counted as acts of violence. Thus the violation of another's person involves the notion of its being done against such person's will. Even the collective and sanctioned violence committed by the instrument of government for law and order and defense, if anything has been and can be much more lethal and morally reprehensible, for more dangerous to freedom, security, dignity and in these days of nuclear warfare, to the very survival of man to be neglected. For these and other reasons, violence has rarely been advocated as a value in itself. Involving as it does an attack on and a violation of the person of the other, often even to the extent of his death, it is in fundamental conflict with the idea of dignity and respect for other human beings as a person, with our insistence on the treatment of these as ends in themselves rather than using them as mere dispensable powers in the advancement of our goals and purposes.

The term-end means failure to discriminate between which causes most of the controversy and confusion regarding the relationship between ends and means. It became a sort of tradition for leaders of the Indian liberation movement to have recourse to the religious and moral ideas of *Bhagavad Gita*. Leaders like LokmanyaBalgangadharTilak, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, etc. were inspired by great ancient civilization and culture. They urged Indians to have an unflinching struggle against the colonial regime. At the beginning of his creative evolution, AurobindoGhosh emphasized the actual, practical bearing of the religious and moral principles of *Upanishads* and *Gita* and wrote, "It is a delusion to suppose that Vedanta contains no inspiration of life, no rule of conduct, and is purely metaphysical and quietist. On the contrary, the highest morality of which humanity is capable finds its one perfect basis and justification in the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita."<sup>1</sup> Aurobindo also holds the view that man is an evolutionary being. As he contended that man is capable of "an inner evolution, a progression from higher to higher type, a constant self-transcending."<sup>2</sup> He further added, "not only to expand inwardly and outwardly but to grow upward, wonderfully exceeding himself as he has wonderfully exceeded his animal beginnings, into something more than mental,

more than human, into a being spiritual and divine... Man's consciousness of the divine within himself and the world is the supreme fact of his existence and to grow into that may very well be the intention of his nature."<sup>3</sup> Aurobindo insisted that an individual is capable of attaining perfection by discovering and following his true nature. According to him, he is a spiritual and cosmic being. As he said, "man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine."<sup>4</sup>

Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak also accepted the views of *Vedanta* philosophers on human nature.<sup>5</sup> He further argued that "the consideration of the Body and the Atman"<sup>6</sup> has been very minutely taken up by the ancient Indian philosophers. Tilak also regarded Atman as the owner of the body. He also held that Atman never dies as it is the essence of God himself. Thus he said, "The body might grow old, decrepit and it might perish, but the soul is immortal."<sup>7</sup> He further added, "What is called Atma is the essence of God Himself."<sup>8</sup> Tilak compared the human body with a factory and said that the external material comes into the factory of the body through the organs of perception like eyes, ears, nose, skin and tongue to the mind (*manas*). According to Tilak, reason discriminates between good and evil and decides which object is acceptable or not. He also asserted that the mind brings about the execution of the decisions of reason through the organs of action. He also added that reason only decides on the goodness and boldness of any particular act. Action cannot by itself inspire the organs to do anything. Thus he said, "Reason by itself, that is, without the help of the mind, never inspires the organs to do anything. On the other hand, though the mind can inspire the organs when under the sway of anger, etc., yet an action which may have been performed without the discrimination of the reason and merely by the inspiration of the mental impulses, will not necessarily be morally pure."<sup>9</sup> Thus, he further added, "The mental impulses by themselves are blind without the help of reason."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, so that any good action should be performed by a man, there must be a combination of a reason which is pure, that is to say, such as will arrive at a correct decision between good and bad, a mind which will act according to the dictates of the reason, and organs which are subject to the control of the mind.<sup>11</sup>

Lokmanya Tilak sought earnestly for the vindication of the necessity of struggling for swaraj, for ways and methods of drawing masses into the fight for independence and when addressing the people employed as far as possible the traditional stereotypes of common place consciousness so that the ideas and principles he preached might be intelligible to everybody. At the outset of organizing anti-imperialist propaganda. Tilak and his followers undertook, to reach the people, popularizing and arranging religious festivals to worship the God Ganesh and to revive

the memory and glory of Shivaji, the national hero, the liberation of Maharashtra.<sup>12</sup> Thus mass demonstrations and public festivals helped in the education of the people in unity and arose in them the spirit of patriotism and nationalism. He allowed recourse to violence in certain circumstances. As he said in his speech delivered at the celebration of Shivaji festival in June 1897, “Did Shivaji sin killing Afzal Khan?” asked the speaker and the answer of this question was as follows, “Shri Shivaji Maharaja did nothing to fill the small void of his stomach, that is, from interested motives. With benevolent intentions, he murdered Afzal Khan for the good of others (...) Do not circumscribe your vision like a frog in a well, get out of the Penal Code, enter into the extremely high atmosphere of Shrimat Bhagavad Gita and then cowardice the actions of great men.”<sup>13</sup> Tilak considered the dilemma that the hero of the Gita had to solve quite a common place and of everyday occurrence. He said, “The critical position in which Arjuna had found himself in the commencement of the Bhagavad Gita (...) is not something unique. The cases of persons who, taking up sannyasa give up the world and live in the woods (...) are different. But those great and responsible persons, who have to live in society and to do these duties consistently with righteousness and morality often find themselves in such circumstances.”<sup>14</sup>

Sri Aurobindo criticized the moderate policy of petitions, prayers, protests and he felt that Congress leaders did not adopt a clear-cut goal of national freedom and wasted their time and energy in petty things. He argued that both passive and active resistance attempt to make administration under existing conditions impossible. He asserted that passive resistance tries to achieve the object by refusing to cooperate with the government. On the other hand, active resistance tries to accomplish the same task by bringing about positive harm to the government through assassinations, riots, strikes and agrarian rising all over the country.

He justified even the use of violence, under certain circumstances, for the attainment of swaraj. He said, “Liberty is the life-breath of a nation; and when the life is attacked when it is sought to supplies all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable.”<sup>15</sup> In his article, “The morality of Boycott” he said, “The Gita is the best answer to those who shrink from battle as a sin and aggression as a lowering of morality.”<sup>16</sup> According to Sri Aurobindo, the method of passive-resistance was suitable for the countries where the ruling power was dependent on the support of the masses for the functioning of the administration. According to Sri Aurobindo, the method of passive resistance was suitable for the countries where the ruling power was dependent on the support of the masses for the functioning of the administration. He said, “The first principle of passive-resistances, therefore which the new school has placed in the forefront

of their program, is to make administration under present condition impossible by an organized refusal to do anything which shall help either British commence in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it unless and until the conditions are changed in the manner and to the extent demanded by the people. He recommended economic, educational, judicial, executive and social boycott. According to Aurobindo, self-help and self-dependence are the first conditions of Swaraj.

Tilak and Aurobindo are revered throughout India not only as a fighter for the liberation of the people but also as spiritual teachers, a guru of unimpeachable authority. Their views on ends and means are also important in the present-day scenario.

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- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. **183**.
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