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11.1 Objectives

This module seeks to highlight Gokhale’s:

- Brief outline of life, political career and political philosophy
- Major aspects of political ideas including interaction with the British, recommendation for administrative reforms, demand for self-government, constitutionalism, liberty and spiritualization of politics
- Social ideas by explaining views on education, Hindu-Muslim communion and depressed class
- Economic ideas with an illustration of budget speeches
- Contributions and its critical evaluation.

11.2 Introduction

Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915) was one of the renowned front ranking leaders of Indian nationalist movement. He represented the moderate school of Indian National Congress. He did not formulate any systematic theory; rather he was a pragmatic statesman as he was actively engaged in practical politics. He was one of the earliest protagonists of liberal values in colonial India. He relied heavily on persuasive method and constitutionalism. For the welfare of Indian nationals he sought to utilize opportunities and facilities available under the British rule. He also pushed the British Government through argument, sheer criticism and recommendations to bring about reform in existing political, economic and social order. He insisted on achieving welfare of the people through cooperation and never resorted to any extreme measure against the British Government. He was an avowed patriot of Indian nationalism. In his life time he served as an outstanding teacher, a responsible journalist, political leader and social reformer.

11.3 Brief Life-sketch and Political Career

Gokhale was born on 9 May, 1866 in a village of Ratnagiri district of the Bombay Presidency. He was graduated from the Elphinstone College, Mumbai in 1884. In 1886 he joined Deccan Education Society and thereafter he started teaching at the Fergusson College. Ranade made him one of the Secretaries of the Sarvajanik Sabha, the chief political association in Poona. He carried out the responsibility as editor of the quarterly journal entitled ‘Sarvajanik’ for a long period and he also edited the journal, Sudhakar for four years.

He had a very good reputation, among his fellows and in the British administration, for having an exceptional quality of oratory. He participated in the session of Indian National Congress for the first time in 1889. In 1899 he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council as representative of the Municipalities of the Central Division of the Bombay Presidency. In 1902 he became a member of Indian Legislative Council and continued to
hold this position till he took last breath. As a member of the Council his most significant contribution was illustrious lecture series on budget and other important issues. Those lectures delineated economic hardships of the people and valuable recommendations to redress those problems.

Gokhale visited England and took the issue of the economic distress of India at the Welby Commission in 1897. Again in 1905 he travelled to Britain along with a group of Indian representatives and strived hard to dissuade the British Government from initiating Bengal Partition, although his effort failed to produce desired outcome. He established the Servants of India Society on 5 June, 1905 for providing services by trained and dedicated workers of the Society to resolve divergent socio-political problems. The Society also sought to elevate general standard of public life by cultivating moral virtues and nurturing spirit of nationalism among the masses. Since 1910 Gokhale endeavoured to evoke consciousness in the larger platform of world community and in India regarding indentured labour system practiced in South Africa. In 1912 he visited South Africa in response to Gandhi’s invitation. He was actively engaged in collecting money for aiding the Satyagraha movement in South Africa. In September 1912 he became member of the Royal Commission for the Public Service in India headed by Islington. On February 19, 1915, he breathed his last.

11.4 Foundation of Gokhale’s Political Philosophy

The Indian and Western intellectual traditions had shaped and moulded Gokhale’s train of thought and his political philosophy of liberalism. Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G Ranade, Phirozshah Mehta and Agarkar were among the Indian erudite nationalists who streamlined to a large extent Gokhale’s outlook. Gokhale studied thoroughly writings of anumber of Western intellectuals such as Edmund Burk, J.S Mill, Gladstone and Friedrich List. He regarded M.G Ranade and Phirozshah Mehta as his mentors. Under the influence his mentors he developed a strong conviction that the British rule was a divine dispensation for India. A meticulous study of Edmund Burk’s *Reflection on the Revolutions in France* deeply imprinted in his mind the efficacy of moderation. Therefore, Gokhale strictly remained adhered to the evolutionary and gradual process of socio-political transformation and constitutionalism. He also realised the important role of British administration in preserving order and stability in India.
Gokhale had a deep understanding of economics. He earned substantial command over the British Classical Economics. Gokhale was also influenced by the economic ideas of an early Indian nationalist and Economic thinker, Dadabhai Naoroji, especially his famous Drain of Wealth Theory. His well-articulated budget speeches and recommendations for economic reform were assimilation of both economic doctrine propounded by Indian thinkers and western economic liberals. Following List, Gokhale emphasised on the fact that an agriculture-based and industrially backward country like India required constructive support and positive endeavours of a state machinery as maintained by the British Government in India. His views on self-government evolved from liberal ideas of Gladstone and J.S Mill. Gokhale conceptualised of the freedom of thought, expression and dissent by studying J.S Mill. Therefore he propagated for the emancipation of depressed class, attaining liberation of India from the unrighteous control and exploitation of the arbitrary measures of the British, end of economic subjugation, industrialization and a progressive state system in India. He considered initiating dialogue and engaging in deliberation based on rationality was supreme liberal values and most tangible and trusted weapons against all odds. Finally as a staunch liberal he believed in the unity of means and ends which was foundation of his politics of moderation and constitutional agitation.

11.5 POLITICAL IDEAS

Gokhale’s major political ideas based on liberal principles focussed on maintaining good relations with the British, recommendations for administrative and legislative reforms, attaining self-government, practicing constitutionalism, demand for liberty, state intervention in economic development and moral elevation of the Indian people.

11.5.1 Support for the British Rule

Gokhale as a true moderate rightly assumed the necessity of developing amicable relations through providing active support to the British Empire. He realized that proper functioning of law and order was an indicator of peaceful development. In order to deal with the emergency situations and to restore order in India he wanted the British to exercise extraordinary powers. On a similar ground of restoring peace and order, Gokhale did not contest the Indian Press Act (1910). Indeed he assumed that India’s peaceful and steady advancement to emerge as a progressive and modern country depended upon the unquestioned continuance of British
Rule. However he did not unconditionally conceded with the every initiatives of the Government without evaluating its intent and implications on the Indian people. In an address to the Council, 1911, Gokhale admitted that “ Why my lord, even if I could defeat the Government today I would not do it for the reason the prestige of the Government is an important asset at the present stage of the country and I would not lightly disturb it”. (Mahajan: 20) He unequivocally welcomed the Morley-Minto Reform proposal, as he was attached with the framing of the proposal, and he said “My Lord, I sincerely believe that your Lordship and Lord Morley have between you saved India from drifting towards what cannot be described by any other name than chaos. For however strong a government may be repression never can put down the aspirations of people and never will.”(Mahajan: 21) He was disappointed later with the provisions of the India Councils Act, 1909 which was a culmination of Morley-Minto Reform.

However, several compatriots of Gokhale were not only against the British rule in India but also they severely criticized him for his apparent pro-British attitude. Tilak, a renowned Congressman, raised voice against the jubilee celebration of Victoria’s rule in India by referring that period as an era of ‘decline, helplessness and destitution for India’. Gokhale, in his address to the Indian National Congress, 1905, offered gratitude and cordially welcomed the Price and Princes of Wales plan to visit India. In the same speech he specially acknowledged the late Queen Empress for contributing enormously to restore justice and promote constitutional practices in India. Gokhale was also overwhelmed by the Prince’s decision to follow similar line of actions like his predecessor. He paid homage to the Royal Highness as one of his major plans was getting acquainted with the people and their conditions. Gokhale had reservation regarding denoting the British as mere conqueror, neither he sought to identify them as invader because they did not fought any catastrophic warfare against India. Indeed under the British over-lordship India got the privilege to be familiar with the pattern of governance and its structure in England, modernized ideas and ultimately economic and industrial development.

Gokhale, as a practical statesman, considered that the people could expect more favourable attitude form the Government if they showed fealty to the British ruler. He argued that it would indeed serve the national interests; otherwise there might be irreversible damage. He extolled the Government at a lecture delivered to the Student’s Brotherhood in Bombay, 1905, by mentioning important role played by the British for the development of the people. Apart from restoring peace and order, British system of law and order ensured equal
treatment to the Indian people through the Charter Act of 1833 and the Proclamation of 1858. He urged to keep faith in the British Government and in the budget speech of 1902 he mentioned, “What is needed is that we should be able to feel that we have a Government national in spirit though foreign in personnel—a Government which subordinates all other considerations to the welfare of the Indian people, which resents the indignities offered to Indians as though they were offered to Englishmen, and which endeavours by all means in its power to further the moral and material interests of the people in India and outside India.” (Verma: 183) However, Gokhale’s lenient attitude to the British rule in India was not altogether uncritical in nature. He identified various shortcomings of the Government, especially its exploitative nature and exercise of absolute power over the people in order to fulfill its own goals.

The bureaucracy, most efficient part of the Government, lacked a genuine popular character and it centralized all powers in its own hand. Even in the Government machineries representation of the Indian population was scant. In fact, the educated class remained excluded from the representative bodies of the Government. However he intended to exercise freedom allowed by the Government, use existing laws and regulations and develop a spirit of mutual understanding among the British and Indian people for the gradual welfare of the people.

11.5.2 Major Recommendations for administrative and legislative reforms

Gokhale’s critical attitude towards the British Government was revealed from the recommendations regarding administration and legislative system and he brought under the scanner the discrepancies and lacunas of the existing ruling pattern and structure. He recommended for decentralisation of powers which was under the monopoly of the bureaucracy. Although he eulogised the performance of bureaucracy on several occasions, yet he advocated for introduction of self-government. He categorically mentioned that the bureaucracy sought to exercise absolute control of power in order to serve their own interests as well as of the ruler and thereby remained indifferent to protect interests of the people. In 1909, Gokhale, at the Decentralization Commission, stressed on setting up Local and Municipality Board as popular bodies. Gokhale further drew attention of the Government to the growing dissatisfaction of the people with the increasing trend of over-centralisation of power in the bureaucracy. With the gradual spread of education and collecting information from the vernacular press people became aware of the anomalies of the Government. He
presented before the Commission a blueprint of reform which enumerated introduction of a mechanism that would work from below and village panchyats would be its primary units. A panchyat constituted of 5 or 7 members would be established in those villages with population around 500 or more. The village head, the police patel, munsif and conciliator would be selected by those persons paying Rs 10 as land revenue. The major functions of Panchyats would be execution and supervision of village works; providing relief at the time of famine and plague; maintain village forest, water supply and sanitation and resolving disputes such as petty thefts, simple assault or hurt and abuse. On the next level, over the Panchyats, there would be another elected body of Taluka Local Board. This board would enjoy autonomy over managing fund and other financial issues. However, the Government could intervene in the conducts of the Local Board in exceptional situations. In a speech at the Bombay council on February, 1091, Gokhale, referring to J.S Mill’s book ‘Representative Government’, mentioned that the prime role of municipality would be to manage local issues and problems. Moreover it must take efforts for developing civic spirit and elevate the level of general intelligence of the people. He proposed the municipal committees to be comprised of elected members. Gokhale proposed definite functions and defined jurisdiction of work for the Municipal Committee, independent of Governmental interferences. He further sought the committee must entrust with the task of developing awareness and spreading education among the masses. He recommended to constitute District Board with the 2/3 elected members and 1/3 nominated members. The Collector would act as the president of the Board. The Government would nominate the Executive Engineer, Civil Surgeon and Educational Inspector as members of the Board. In addition Gokhale further suggested to set up an Advisory District Council.

Another aspect of Gokhale’s scheme of reform was to allow substantial autonomy to the provinces. In his proposed framework the provincial administrative structure would be consisted of a Governor, to be appointed directly from England, and a Cabinet comprised of six members having equal representation from both British and Indian national. The provincial legislative council would have total membership from 75 to 100. A few members would be nominated in council for providing special advice. The Council would mainly conduct budget discussions and approve economic measures. The Council would be entrusted with the authority to regulate internal administration and financial issues of the province. The Imperial Government and the Provincial Government would have separate jurisdiction regarding management of finance. The Provincial Government could frame its own policy of
taxation. Gokhale further recommended for replacing Commissionership with the Collector. For decentralization of power of the Government, he proposed to set up small advisory council in every which would function in consultation with the Collector. The Collector would be the ex officio president of the District Board. He suggested that the Taluka Board would be allowed to function in such a way that could share the burden of work of the District Board.

The Imperial Government would be constituted of Viceroy and Executive Council. Executive council would be consisted of six members and each of them would head the department of Interior, Finance, Law, Defence, Communication and Foreign Affairs. He suggested the Central Legislature would be renamed as Legislative Assembly of India. The Central Government was vested with the power to intervene in the affairs of the Provincial Administration when the latter did not comply with the directives of the former. The Legislative Assembly could discuss and raise questions regarding Governmental policies and issues related to Military and Navy. Apart from that, Gokhale proposed to enhance representation of the Muslims in the Assembly to safeguard their interest. However Madan Mohan Malaviya contested Gokhale’s effort to increase Muslim representation.

Gokhale’s recommendations had strengthened the foundation of local self government in India and it was in the best interest of the ruler and the ruled. His intention was to ensure a higher public life by conceding the Government to implement his scheme of restructuring Governmental machineries. He urged for inclusion of educated class in the Government functioning so that the latter could get useful information from their intellectual endeavour and constructive criticism while formulating policies. Moreover Gokhale’s proposals not only provided the British such ideas to operate a more efficient Government but also created scope for the Indians to participate in the machineries of the Government.

11.5.3 Demand for Self-government

Gokhale, as a pragmatic statesman, in his initial initiatives did not strive for attaining political independence or sovereign status of India. He never upheld the demand of Swaraj like the Extremist, an internal faction of the Indian National Congress. Instead he considered that the demand of self-government would be more pertinent for India. Gokhale contemplated that
Self-government could not be realised without good government, although the former was qualitatively different from the latter. He admitted that the British had ensured good government as they build up an efficient structure to serve their interests. Therefore the demand of self-government intended to fulfil needs of the Indian population. At the Banaras session of Indian National Congress, Gokhale raised the agenda of self-government as a precondition of an efficient Government. He also demanded increased participation of the Indian population in the Government. He did not want to severe connection with England; instead his aim was to achieve the status of self-government with the empire. Gokhale explicated that people of India would be gradually acquainted with the nature and function of the political institutions of the West under the apprenticeship if they were allowed to participate in process of governance. In the Surat session of Indian National Congress (1907) Gokhale illustrated that India needed the status of self-government which had been allowed to practice in some states under the British Empire. The claim of self-government was important because it would promote national unity, foster public spirit and develop intellectual, moral and economic capacity of the nation. Before the Welby Commission, Gokahle proposed for indianisation of public services as a first step to move forward to this direction. He argued that inclusion of the Indian nationals in the public service would not only elevate the status of the people but also it would reduce gulf between the ruler and the ruled. Gokhale was closely attached with the process of formulating Morley-Minto proposal and therefore he had a firm conviction that it might be consistent with the interest of the Indian people. But, to his utter disappointment, the final proposal proved detrimental to the people. However, he furnished a memorandum, preceding three years of the Morley-Minto proposal, for the personal use of a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy which was not paid attention at that time as the Government was not in a position to introduce constitutional reform. But Montague-Chelmsford report of 1918 and Government of India Act of 1919 incorporated the provision of provincial autonomy which was mentioned earlier in the memorandum prepared by Gokhale.

11.5.4 Pursuing Constitutionalism

Gokhale held that the British over-lordship in India was a dispensation as they restored peace and order, installed a strong legal and administrative system and promoted rational and progressive western ideas. On the other hand Indian nationalists showed benevolent and tolerant attitude to the Empire. However Indian nationalists became disillusioned about the British intent through a careful observation of their role in the world politics which was basically by
nature expansionist, imperialist and exploitative. Moreover the British tendency to subjugate India was exposed since 1903, particularly with their initiative of Bengal partition in 1905. Gokhale, in the presidential address at Banaras, called for resisting against unrighteous conduct of British Government. In the same address he severely criticised the British Government and particularly the acts of Lord Curzon for indiscriminate repression and utter disregard of the interest of the people. Even Gokhale’s disappointment with Curzon was so intense that he compared his rule with Aurangzeb. However Gokhale did not rely on the violent method, neither he took resort to mendicancy. He considered it more appropriate to raise the demands and discontent of the people to the Government through argument, illustrations and reform proposals. He mentioned that the goal should be approached through gradual and slow process because he believed that advancing one step at a time would be sufficient. However the Extremists were doubtful about efficacy of his method and sought to look down upon it by comparing with a form of begging. Nevertheless Minto realised the motive behind Gokhale’s piecemeal effort and he mentioned, with grave anxiety, in a letter to Morley in 1906 that Gokhale was playing with dangerous tools. Further Minto in a letter to Morley apprehended that Gokhale’s approach did not reflect attitude of an honest moderate. (Goyal: 39) However Gokhale never lost his faith on his approach and continued to pursue his goal following the same method throughout his life.

Gokhale remained adhered to the constitutional method for perusing his goal. Constitutionalism did not indulge rebellion, aiding or abetting foreign invasion and criminal initiatives. Constitutional strategy in a benign form relied on prayer and petition and as an extreme measure it might adopt initiatives like passive resistance and even non-payment of tax. However he did not prefer to employ passive resistance as a method of constitutional agitation. But he eulogised, at a meeting in Bombay (1909), Gandhi’s effort to initiate passive resistance against the unjust racialist policy in South Africa. In the Lahore Congress he stressed on the moral and spiritual basis of passive resistance. He further affirmed this form of resistance prohibited strictly use of violence, inflicting harm to others and showing retaliatory attitude even against the opponent. The resisters might disobey those laws and ordinances which were unjust and oppressive. Gokhale mentioned that the resister must accept suffering willingly in course of the movement. Passive resistance should be initiated when all other means failed to produce desired outcome.

11.5.5 As Liberal Thinker
Gokhale was immensely influenced by the English Philosopher J.S. Mill and he expressed his gratitude to the great philosopher before the students at Ferguson College. Mill propagated the idea of liberty and he divided its sphere in self-regarding and other-regarding activities of the Individual. He illustrated that an individual should be allowed to enjoy absolute freedom in his conducts, like freedom of thought, expression and conscience, to that extent it would not pose threat, hinder or violate similar conducts of others. Therefore he envisaged freedom to be practiced under certain reasonable restrictions. Gokhale also stressed on individual liberty as an essential precondition of human progress. He emphasised on practicing self-restraint and self-discipline for pursuing freedom. He conceded that free criticism and liberty of expression should be allowed in India in a similar way as it had been in vogue in Britain. Under this perception he opposed the Defence of India Act and Official Secrets Bill (1904) as both were restricting freedom of Indian press. He argued that imposition of such absolute restriction was unnecessary because it might enfeeble voice of the people. Moreover it might evoke dissatisfaction and resentment among the people against the Imperial Government.

Gokhale claimed to the Government for ensuring freedom of contract and right to private property for the people. He strongly criticised introduction of the Cantonments Accommodation Bill, Land Revenue Code Amendment Bill and Land Alienation Bill (1901) for limiting land holding rights of the people and, hence, it would be baneful to the interests of the farmers. Therefore, Gokhale strongly demanded to establish representative institution for the protection of the interests of the people and developing mutual faith, proximity and goodwill among Indians and Englishmen. He further argued that representation of the Indian would not only able them to preserve their own interests but also motivate the Government to the similar direction. Moreover the Government would be benefitted from the cooperation of the Indian population. Gokhale demanded voting rights for the Indians, although he was not in favour of universal suffrage. He mentioned that holding property would be a mandatory qualification for enfranchisement. Even he considered the educated class to emerge as the natural leader of the people.

Despite an ardent proponent of liberal values, Gokhale under the influence of Ranade welcomed state intervention in matters of economic development of the country. Gokhale, having shifted from the Classical Liberal principle, observed that state protection was necessary for India than pursuing free trade policy. He felt that Industrialization could alleviate poverty in India. He suggested the Government to take requisite measures for industrial development in India. As an issue of utmost consideration the Government should
endeavour to restore the existing feeble indigenous industries and render support for the
development of new indigenous industries through providing necessary infrastructure and
subsidies. Gokhale suggested important role to be played by the state with regard to
promotion of free and compulsory education, sanitation and other developmental works for
the material and moral wellbeing of the people. The Government needed to regulate economy
and review budget for the purpose of maximising benefit and reducing hardship of the
people. The Government should follow the principles and positive qualities of modern state
system. State-intervention, as Gokhale perceived, purported involvement of the state and
performance of the Government machineries in a passionate, rational and responsible way for
the progress and prosperity of the people.

11.5.6 Spiritualising Public life

Gokhale initiated a process of spiritualising public life. He ruminated that public life
determined people’s national character and developed capacity as a community. He observed
that the prime consideration of public life would be to attain self-reliance and greater extent
of liberty and corresponding duties for the betterment of all. He urged to develop strong
public spirit in order to influence the Government to meet the ends of the people. Public
service should be brought into full-fledged operation for the elevation of public life and
public spirit. Gokhale iterated that the people involved in public service should relinquish
their desire of personal comfort, gain and convenience for the sake of common good. The
objective of the public service would be to extend support to the British Government, ensure
upliftment of Indian people and educate bureaucracy. He held that it was incumbent upon the
youngmen to carry out the responsibility of public service for the betterment of the public life
and gradually transform it into a rousing movement for the emancipation of India. Gokhale
mentioned about the important role of the students, considering their intellectual
achievements and political inquisitiveness, in the awakening of the nation.

Gokhale envisioned institutionalising spiritualisation of public life through the Servants of
India Society. The Servants of India Society would endeavour to develop a common feeling
of nationality among the people by generating awareness regarding common traditions
aspirations. In order to accomplish the mission of nation-building, this organisation would
train the members to serve the nation with a true missionary spirit. Gokhale mentioned the six
fold duties and activism of the members as follows:
a. Development of love for motherland and strived to attain it through service and sacrifice.
b. Promoting political education and organising agitation by carefully considering public demands and questions.
c. Fostering cordial relation, goodwill and cooperation among different communities.
d. Supporting educational movements particularly among women and backward classes and encouraging industrial and scientific education.
e. Facilitating industrial development in the country
f. Upliftment of the depressed classes.

He further identified seven obligatory vows to be abided by the members of the society in the following manner:

a. The country would be first priority in his thought and deed. He must give his best in the service the nation.
b. He must regard all Indians as his brothers and devote himself for the advancement of all without any distinction and discrimination.
c. The service to the nation would not involve any intention of personal gain.
d. He ought to maintain a simple and pure personal life.
e. He must remain satisfied with the provisions offered by the society and would not lust for making money.
f. He should not indulge any personal feud with others.
g. He should carry out the goals of the Society with highest devotion and resolve not to contravene its principles.

But the Society was not a religious unit, neither it preached or patronised any religious belief. The society was a socio-political organisation of life-workers espousing spirited devotion, sacrifice and patriotism for the awakening and welfare of the people. The society established a number of outfits in Madras (1910), Nagpur (1911), Bombay (1911) and Allahabad (1913). On several occasions it extended support to the Indian National Congress for strengthening nationalist movement. For proliferating education among masses the Society established Elementary Education League in Madras and Allahabad. It also set up schools in rural areas and industrial belts and introduced mobile library facility. The society also was engaged in social service and relief work almost throughout the county as in during famines in UP, Gujarat, Cutch and Bihar (1909-1913). Sanitation, plague-relief, cattle-relief and Children
welfare were other major services of the society. Indeed spiritualisation of politics endeavoured to cultivate moral values among the people and sought to ensure a higher standard of living.

11.6 SOCIAL IDEAS

Gokhale’s concern for social problems was reflected in his views on education, communal harmony and depressed class.

11.6.1 Views on Education

Gokhale extolled the supremacy of the British Government and its steady pace of advancement. At the same time he urged qualitative change in the pattern of revenue allocation for maintaining military whereas budget allotment for education and industrial development remained neglected. Gokhale perceived that efficiency and intellectual capacity of an individual would be developed and moral backbone of a larger section of community would be strengthened only through imparting education among the masses. He believed that the prospect of India as a nation was inalienably related with the spread of education among the masses. Gokhale compared the British initiative to promote education in India with the measures pursued in several western countries like Australia, Japan and America. He stated that the Government in India seemed disinterested to formulate effective policy for education. He unravelled that Government initiatives remained minimal in promoting education among masses, although Lord Rippon recommended in 1880 and 1885 a substantial increase of grants in elementary education. But in 1888 the government further pronounced a policy to reduce state contribution in education. (Holyland: 82-83)

Gokhale’s concern for existing education system was reflected in his plea for reassessing Indian University Bill (1903) and the Validation Bill of 1905. Gokhale proposed, in the budget speech at the Imperial Council (1907), to introduce free primary education. In 1910 Gokhale placed before the Council a resolution on elementary education. Initially he proposed for compulsory education only for boys. Although he admitted that education was also important for girls but at the outset, he considered, it should be left to the voluntary choice of the girls. He also recommended that education should be made compulsory to the children under the age group of six to ten year. The state would bear the major amount of expenditure for free compulsory education. Moreover the provincial, municipal and other local bodies would share the expenses for the same. Gokhale, following the practice in
Scotland, suggested that the 2/3 of the total expenditure would be shared by the state and the local bodies would manage the residue. He wanted to entrust the task of spreading elementary education to the local bodies likewise it was mentioned earlier in the Act of 1870.

He further proposed that the compulsory education would be introduced in those areas where at least 33 percent male students would be enrolled in the school. For the management of the whole affair a separate office of secretary would be established under the Home Department. In order to check the progress an annual review report would be published as an annexure of the annual financial statement. Gokhale further presented an elementary education bill in 1911 at the Imperial Council which also faced the same fate like the earlier one. Even his persuasive arguments and efforts to generate public opinion in this regard proved futile. In his last speech on the bill he mentioned that even in England introduction of compulsory elementary education and other educational recommendations at the initial stage, like his initiatives, faced difficulties. Although he anticipated of the rejection of the bill but he was optimistic that this demand for educational reform would reappear in the days to come.

11.6.2 On Social Harmony

Gokhale delivered a well articulated speech in Marathi in 1909 on the exigency of Hindu-Muslim communion under the backdrop of growing polarisation, preceded by the formation of Muslim League (1906) and introduction of separate electorate for the Muslims. The Muslims were numerically inferior than Hindus and they were scattered throughout the country. Being a majority community the Hindus got material advantages more than the Muslims. Indeed the contributions of the Hindus in the national regeneration was certainly greater compared to other communities in India. But the Hindu community also suffered from some inherent limitations like graded unequal order of caste system and indifferent attitude towards own development. On the other hand Muslims were more cohesive community. Gokhale observed that apparently there was a truce between Hindus and Muslims which at any moment turned into a horrendous battle at the slightest provocation. Gokhale showed keen concern for preventing recurrence of such trends and issues. He maintained that the longstanding animosity between the Catholics and the Protestants in Europe was resolved gradually and after several set-backs through spread of education, discharging certain civic duties and developing national self-respect in both communities. Similarly Hindu-Muslim antagonism and hatred would be turned into a harmonious relation with the passage of time. Gokhale argued the India would consolidate as nation if harmony and reciprocity between
two communities could be restored positively. For a lasting and peaceful relation between the two communities Gokhale recommended for strict avoidance of humiliating gestures, abusive words and controversial comments between them. He asserted that only practice of self-restraint could restore durable peace. Hindus by dint of their numerical predominance could easily get scope to educate them. In order to develop proximity with and earn confidence of the Muslims, as Gokhale conceived, Hindus should offer welfare services to them.

Gohale supported the idea of special separate electorate for all important minorities, including the Muslims, residing in India. However the initiative of ensuring a mechanism of proper representation for every community would be able to avert the loophole of the general election. Gokhale proposed a detail framework of the election procedure. In the first stage, election ought to be conducted on the principle of territorial representation for all. Thereafter a special separate supplementary election would be held to redress the under-representation of the minority communities. Gokhale wanted to evoke greater consciousness among the Muslims so that they could be rescued from their perception of relative deprivation under an apparent Hindu dominated power structure. It would likely to restore order and peace among the two major communities in India. Any demand of granting privileges in pace of fair share either to Muslims or to any other community would invoke resentment and enmity among them and, therefore, none of them would allow others to have such special treatments. However Gokhale had firm faith on the goodwill of the Government to resolve the problem of polarisation of politics and sectarianism. The Hindu-Muslim harmonious relation, as Gokhale envisioned, would be propitious for flourishing nationalistic spirit in India.

11.6.3 Views on Depressed Class

In the Social Conference at Dharward (1903) Gokhale elaborated his views on depressed class. He held that the well-wisher of the country should endeavour to rescue the depressed class form century old backwardness through providing them opportunities of education and employment. Besides initiatives for moral and social upgradation of the lowly class should be introduced so that their dignity and self-respect could be restored. Gokhale wanted to put an end of marginalisation and social exclusion of the depressed class for the greater cause of national solidarity. He also mentioned the dispassionate attitude and apathy of the educated class towards the upliftment of the backward section. Even the socially well-off section consciously avoided proximity or physical contact with the socially excluded group. Gokhale explained that utter negligence and seclusion made a deep imprint on the mind of the
backward class population that they deserved this maltreatment what they had been subjected to for generations. He, referring to a speech delivered by Ranade, demanded a more sensitive and responsible attitudes towards the marginalised class.

He also endeavoured to develop a pan-Indian public opinion against the discrimination of the Indian population in South Africa, which was more clearly exposed by Gandhi. In this connection Gokhale distinguished between Western class system and Indian caste system. He mentioned, as an example, that rise of a shoe-maker, Mr. Chamberlin, to the designation of Prime Minister in Britain would be an impossible event if he were to try his luck in India. He further expounded that the caste system prevailed in India might have certain benefits. But it hampered progress, justice and social cohesion as it evolved as a graded unequal order. Gokhale reiterated that the primary objective of national self-interest of India was national awakening and persistent growth. National regeneration and ceaseless development of society could only be attained through a mutual effort of every sections of the society.

11.7 Economic Ideas

Gokhale was not at all an economist *per se* but all his Budget speeches revealed his deep understanding of economic necessities and crisis of colonial India. He severely criticised the Government for its exploitative nature which was more clearly identified by Dadabhai Naoroji as Drain of Wealth theory. The major aspect of Gokhale’s economic vision was to develop self-reliance or upholding swadeshi which was intricately linked with the growth and welfare of Indian population. In a speech delivered to the Indian National Congress at Banaras in 1905, Gokhale, quoting Ranade, expounded that the economy of a country under the political domination of another country or foreign rule lost its economic freedom to the latter. The British as the East India Company in the earlier phase and later as British Raj damaged potential economic growth and trade and gradually destroyed the foundation of indigenous industrial development. Indeed the British imperial design of economic exploitation had crippled Indian economy and even it strongly affected the wider socio-political domain.

Gokhale directly accused the British for extracting Indian resources for own benefit and development. It was thus British Government deprived India from her due. In the Lucknow address Gokhale mentioned that at the one hand promoting free trade policy and on the other hand exercising protectionism in the homeland the British developed a mechanism to establish its monopoly over the Indian Economy. He explained explicitly that the British
products in the Indian market were actually made using Indian raw materials which were forcefully being exported to England and the British was trading in India those finished products made of Indian raw materials. In 1902, Gokhale, in a speech on Budget at the Imperial Legislative Council, urged the Government to show concern to the issue of poverty and inefficacy of the Government to redress it. In the same speech Gokhale uncovered that increasing death rate, severe agricultural depression and diminishing area for cropping was deepening poverty. He also criticised Lord Curzon’s failure to alleviate poverty. However, Curzon refuted his claim and maintained that the economic condition of the people improved under British Government. At the Budget discussion in 1903 Gokhale urged to reduce importing cotton goods from India otherwise it would ruin the indigenous cotton industry. He also contested the official stand of the Government that revenue growth was an indicator of prosperity. On contrary Gokhale held that the famine and plague, along with the burden of increased rate of revenue, had pushed the people to utter destitution.

Gokhale provided evidence before the Welby Commission (April, 1897) regarding the dreadful effects of expenditure allocation prepared by the Government on Indian economy. The tax-paying Indian nationals suffered most under the British budgetary framework. Besides excessive expenses on military and on a number of Railway contracts had proved counterproductive. Only British nationals serving in military and civil service were entitled to enjoy special privileges. Indeed, Europeans had monopolised the top ranking positions in the Military and Civil service. In Budget speeches delivered in 1907 and 1908 he argued for reduction of salt duty. He considered the salt tax as the most regressive tax in India and it was comparatively higher than the tax paid in France and Germany. He also pleaded for abolition of collecting revenue from opium trade. He categorically mentioned the grave impact of inflation on Indian economy in his consecutive budget speech on 1908 and 1909. In 1910 Gokhale raised an agenda in the Imperial Council to prohibit further recruitment of Indian indentured labour in South Africa in order to put an end to this inhuman practice. It was considered one of the greatest feats of Gokale that the British Government in 1912 finally dispelled the indentured labour system. In budget discussions of 1910-11, he opposed the proposal of enhancing petroleum duty. Gokhale recommended to form a committee to look after the indigenous sugar industry. The major tasks of the committee would be to identify existing and impending threats to this sector. Even he appealed to the Government to offer protection required for the survival of the sugar industry.
Gokhale vehemently opposed the Bombay Land Revenue bill of 1901 at the Bombay Legislative Council. He argued that this bill would be detrimental to the interests of the majority of agriculturists. He provided statistical evidence with the data collected by Deccan Riot Commission on the issue of over taxation, diminishing rate of surplus collection from the agriculture, seizure of lands and threats to land rights of the indigenous farmers. Thus he considered all those factors were the major sources of burgeoning debt crisis in the agriculture sector. Gokhale, in the Banaras session of National Congress, highlighted that around 44 million starlings, almost half amount of the total revenue, was spent on British Army; nearly one third of the revenue was exhausted for paying Europeans employed in Civil Administration and the residual sum approximately one-sixth of the net revenue was allocated for other expenses. Even the Indian tax-payers were compelled to share over 46 crores as the expenditure for British imperialist expansion in Burma (1823), Afganistan(1838) and Egypt(1842). Gokhale stressed on Indianisation of services and diversification of expenditures on elementary education, sanitation, protective irrigation and public works department by curtailing excessive allocation of revenue on British imperialist aspirations. He also proposed to bring the railways under the control of state in place of companies.

Gokhale promoted an idea of progressive economy. He espoused that the major source of revenue would come through taxation. His objective was to develop a framework of public expenditure for the welfare of Indian population without hampering interests of the British. To his mind the guiding principle of Budget allocation would be decentralization and diversification of economy. It would ensure free play of national industries and taxation policy should not be disadvantageous to any section of the population. Moral and material wellbeing of the masses would be the driving force of Indian economy. It appeared to him that given the socio-political backwardness of the masses the British administration could be proved providential for the growth of Indian economy. Indeed Gokhale sought meaningful utilisation of revenue surplus of the Government for the amelioration of India and he moved a resolution in 1912 at the Imperial Council in this regard. With a view to strengthen economy and to ensure welfare of the Indian people Gokhale suggested the Government to pursue following measures: a) curtailment of revenue, b) debt-relief of the rural masses and tillers, c) providing credits at low interest and establish cooperative credit societies to meet this end, d) development of irrigation and encouraging more use of scientific methods and tools in the agriculture, e) promotion of technical and industrial education, f) build up infrastructure for
primary education, g) development of a proper mechanism for sanitation. Gokhale’s proposals for economic reformation were aimed at securing maximum benefit for the people and persistent growth of the economy.

11. 8 Summary and Observation

Gokhale had unadulterated faith on liberalism and, therefore, he propagated and practised liberal principles in all his endeavours for socio-political-economic regeneration and reconstruction of Indian polity. His budget speeches reflected the essence of welfare economy. His major economic reform proposals enumerated preservation of indigenous industries, massive industrialization, modification of existing taxation policies and development of public works. He also exposed and opposed the anti-Indian disposition and exploitative nature of British rule in India. His initiatives for expansion of primary, technical, industrial and general education were most constructive reform measures for the upliftment of Indian population. In order to contain British arbitrariness, Gokhale sought to introduce certain modifications in the prevailing administrative and legislative structures. Further, Gokhale, a progressive liberal, advocated decentralization of power, representation of Indian people in running Government business and self-government as tangible measures to evolve people-oriented governance in India. His adoption of moderate politics and clinging on to constitutionalism introduced a new method of struggle – a combination of conflict and cooperation-- based on democratic principle and liberal values. Indeed it led to peaceful transformation of Indian polity. His efforts to preserve the social cohesion by ensuring peaceful co-existence of different communities, religious and socially well-off and least well-off, had strengthened the foundation of nationalistic spirit and national solidarity movement in India. However, he was neither a revolutionary nor a reactionary, rather a unifier and reconciler. Apart from struggling the mighty British Empire and internal difference and backwardness of Indian society, he had to strive against the fierce criticism from the Extremist leaders of Indian National Congress as the called him ‘faint-hearted Moderate’ and ‘seditionist in disguise’ for his benign inclination to the British Government. In spite of his tremendous contribution to the Indian nationalist struggle he missed prominence and acknowledgment like other renowned leaders and thinkers of Indian nationalism. However, Gokhale’s indelible impact and legacy in the subsequent freedom struggle movement was carried forward by M.K Gandhi who revered Gokahle as his political guru.
Endnotes:

Mahajan, V.D, *Some Aspects of Gokhale’s Political Thought*, Indian Journal of Political Science, vol.6, No. 1, July-September, 1944, pp. 18-27

