UNIT 6 GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit deals with the political thought of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Among all the liberal political thinkers in pre-independent India, Gokhale enjoys a unique position both as a man of liberal ideas and as a practitioner of liberal faith. The present unit therefore intends to acquaint you with the political ideas of Gokhale in the light of the liberal tradition of political thinking that characterised the early phase of the Indian national movement. After going through the unit you would be able to know:

- the development of Gokhale’s political career and the formative intellectual influences that shaped his political thinking;
- his political thought with respect to his responses to British rule in India, his ideology of liberalism, his views about ‘ends and means’ in politics, his Political Programme and his economic and social ideas.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of modern Indian political thought is closely linked with the development of the Indian national movement. During the course of the national movement two distinct streams of thought appeared within the Indian National Congress prior to the emergence of Gandhi as a prominent political figure. These two streams of thought are popularly known as the Moderate and the Extremist school. The early phase of Indian national movement was dominated by the moderate thinkers such as Justice M.G. Ranade, D.E. Wacha, Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji who laid down the foundations of liberal political thinking in India. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was one of the leading moderate thinkers of his time.

The moderate thinkers stood for a liberal political outlook and advocated an all-round but gradual social progress. They significantly differed from the extremist thinkers like Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, B.C. Pal and others with respect to their understanding of the British rule in India, their perception of the social reality in India, their ideas regarding the social and political goals and the means to realise them. Broadly speaking, the moderates appreciated and welcomed British rule in India and believed that it will set in the process of modernisation of Indian society. They insisted more on social and economic reforms as they sincerely felt that mere political independence would mean nothing without attaining the minimum level of social and economic progress. Gokhale was a major liberal thinker after M.G. Ranade, who had contributed greatly to the liberal way of politics. As an ideal disciple of M.G. Ranade and the revered ‘Political Guru’ of Mahatma Gandhi, Gokhale provided a major intellectual link between Ranade and Gandhi. In the
following pages therefore we will also try to understand Gokhale's political thought as an intellectual link between Ranade and Gandhi.

## 6.2 LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT OF GOKHALE'S POLITICAL CAREER

In order to understand Gokhale's political thought it would be essential to first see the manner in which Gokhale's political career developed. It would be quite clear that his political activities are intimately linked with his beliefs and various influences that guided him.

### 6.2.1 Biographical Sketch

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born in a middle class Chitpavan Brahmin family at Kotluk—a small village in Ratnagiri district on May 9, 1866. His father Krishnarao was employed first as a clerk but later on rose to the position of police sub-inspector. He died when Gopalrao was hardly thirteen years old, leaving two sons and four daughters behind. Govindrao, the elder brother of Gopalrao shouldered the responsibility of the family.

Gopalrao took his primary education at Kagal near Kolhapur and completed his matriculation in the year 1881. He had his higher education in three different colleges viz. the Rajaram College at Kolhapur, the Deccan College at Pune and the Elphinston College at Bombay from where he completed his graduation in 1884. At one time he thought of becoming an engineer but ultimately decided to devote himself to the cause of education.

In Pune a band of patriotic young men had already started a secondary school, called The New English School, under the inspiration of a veteran nationalist Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. Gopalrao accepted the job of a teacher in the New English School. His sincerity impressed the proprietors of the Deccan Education Society, and they made him a life-member of the Society. Soon Gopalrao was promoted to the post of lecturer in Fergusson College—a college run by the Deccan Education Society itself, and since then he devoted almost eighteen years of his life to the teaching career.

During his teaching career he was introduced to M.G. Ranade and since then he volunteered his talents and services to the cause of public life under the able guidance of Ranade. He became the Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha—a public body that was chiefly activated by M.G. Ranade to articulate the interests of the common people. The Sabha had its influential quarterly and Gopalrao worked as an editor of the quarterly. For some years he also wrote in the English Section of the journal 'Sudharak' started by Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, a veteran social reformer in nineteenth century Maharashtra.

In the year 1889 Gopalrao attended the session of the Indian National Congress for the first time and since then he was a regular speaker at its meetings.

In 1896 when Tilak and his associates captured the Sarvajanik Sabha Ranade and his followers including Gokhale dissociated themselves from the Sabha and founded a new association called the Deccan Sabha. Gokhale took keen interest in the activities of the Sabha. On behalf of the Sabha he was sent to England to give evidence before the Welby Commission which was appointed by the Government to suggest ways of more equitable distribution of expenses of the administration between the British and the Indian Government. This was his first trip to England. His excellent performance raised a lot of expectations.

In 1899 he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council. In 1902 he retired from the Fergusson College and devoted the remaining thirteen years of his life entirely to political work. During this period he was elected, term after term, to the Imperial Legislative Council where he made a mark as an eminent Parliamentarian. His budget-speeches, in particular, have become classics as they contained so much constructive but at the same time fearless criticism of the Government's fiscal policies.
At the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, Gokhale also took keen interest in the affairs of the Indians in South Africa. In 1910 and 1912 he moved resolutions in the Imperial Legislative Council for relief to Indian indentured labour in Natal. He went to South Africa at Gandhi's invitation in 1912 and played a significant role in tackling the problems of Indians settled there. In 1913 he raised funds for helping the South African Satyagraha Movement. Gokhale's strenuous routine ultimately caused his untimely death in Feb. 1915.

6.2.2 Formative Influences

Political thought and ideas do not evolve in a vacuum. They emerge in a particular social atmosphere. A thinker is a product of his times. Gokhale was no exception. His ideas and thinking were influenced mainly by the leading personalities of his time and the events he encountered.

As a product of the British educational system Gokhale was bound to acquire a modern outlook towards life which characterised the English educated elite of his time. During his student days he learnt by heart Beattie’s ‘Public Speaker’, repeated passages from Bacon’s ‘Essays’ and ‘The Advancement of Learning’, mastered Fawcett’s ‘Political Economy’ and memorised Burke’s Reflections on the French Revolution. All this had a far reaching effect on the development of his political ideas. The liberal philosophy of John Stuart Mill made a profound impression on him and he was particularly inspired by Mill’s political doctrines. As a student of history, Gokhale was particularly impressed by the Irish Home Rule Movement. The coherence, dynamism and democratic evolution of European history, considerably influenced his thinking and led him to believe that there is much to learn from the West.

Among the Indian personalities it was M.G. Ranade who influenced Gokhale to a great extent. Gokhale always took pride in being a follower of Ranade. He was particularly impressed by the social and economic ideas of Ranade. While Gokhale had a deep respect for the sacrifice made by nationalist leaders like Tilak and others he was not much attracted by their nationalist ideology and this made him move closer to the moderate thinkers like D.E. Wacha and Pherozeshah Mehta, who exercised considerable influence on him in matters of party organisation and technique.

Contemporary liberal politicians in England such as Morley and others also had a considerable influence on Gokhale’s political career. Gokhale always looked to Gladstone and Morley with a reverential attitude and believed that they would apply just Principles to the governance of India. Gokhale’s political thinking essentially represented the liberal ethos of his time and it was that liberalism which shaped his social and political ideas.

6.3 SOURCES OF GOKHALE’S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Gokhale was not a political thinker in the strict sense of the term. He did not produce any political treatise like that of Hobbes or Locke. Neither did he write a political commentary like Tilak’s ‘Geeta Rahasya’ or Gandhi’s ‘Hind-Swarajya’ which could be referred to in order to explain his political tenets. But we do have a number of articles written by him on various occasions that reflect his political thinking. Likewise the several speeches he made on important socio-economic issues and his correspondence with his contemporaries, now available in the form of collected works, enable us to explore his political ideas. There are some excellent biographies and scholarly works on Gokhale that also constitute an important source for the study of his political thought. Thus with the help of all these sources it is possible for us to delineate the political thinking of Gokhale.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
   ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

1) It was in..................................that Gokhale attended the session of the Indian National Congress for the first time.
2) Among the Indian personalities it was...................................who influenced Gokhale to a great extent.

6.4 POLITICAL THOUGHT

Gokhale's political thought revolves more around the socio-political issues of his times rather than any basic political concept like that of the state or nation or sovereignty. Hence in order to understand his political doctrines we have to refer to the basic political issues of his time and way he responded to these. Now the issues being many in number and complex in nature, the ideas that emerged as responses to these issues reflect the rich diversity of Gokhale’s political thinking. In this lesson, however, we shall concern ourselves mainly with discussing Gokhale’s political thought under three major headings viz. Gokhale’s responses to British rule in India, his liberalism and the political programme that he devised and worked for.

6.4.1 Responses to British Rule in India

Like most of the liberal Indian thinkers of his time Gokhale appreciated and welcomed the British rule in India. His appreciation of the British rule and particularly his insistence on the continuation of the British rule in India were based on two premises. In the first instance, like all the moderates, Gokhale was convinced that it was because of British rule that the process of modernisation of the Indian society had set in. The British upheld the concept of equality before law, they introduced the principle of representative government (on however limited a scale it might be) they guaranteed the freedom of speech and press. All these things were certainly new. It was again the British who set in the process of political integration in India. There was much for Indians to learn from the British and hence, Gokhale pleaded that we should bear with them for some time and make progress in the field of industry, commerce, education and politics. Gokhale was convinced that if British rule continued for some time, India would be modernised completely and eventually join the community of nations like any other independent state in Europe.

Gokhale believed that in keeping with their liberal traditions, the British would fulfill their pledges and bestow on India self-government once Indians qualified themselves for the same. This concept of ‘England’s pledges to India’ was built upon the declarations of Thomas Munro, Macaulay, Henri Lawrence and above all Queen Victoria’s Proclamation. In spite of the fact that from the end of Ripon’s viceroyalty in 1884 to the August-Declaration of 1917 successive Viceroy’s and Secretaries of India emphatically repudiated the feasibility of introducing English political institutions to India, Gokhale still believed that by appealing to the British sense of liberalism, by convincing them of India’s genuine capabilities the British would ultimately be convinced and would introduce to India western political institutions. It was this faith in British liberalism that made Gokhale plead for the continuance of the British rule in India.

His justification for the continuance of the British rule in India did not mean that he was totally satisfied with the British administration in India. For instance, he was a bitter critic of the high handedness of the Curzonian administration. He also argued on many occasions that the British raj was more raj and less British in the sense that it was reluctant to introduce English parliamentary institutions to India, yet he believed that British rule was destined to accomplish its providential mission in India.

Gokhale sincerely felt that the history of India had nothing to offer so far as the development of democratic political institutions was concerned. In a paper read before the Universal Races Congress, London, July, 1911, Gokhale admitted, “India did not develop the national idea of political freedom as developed in the west.” He was convinced that the social and political institutions of the country must be reformed in the image of the west. To him the European history presented a well-marked evolution of the democratic idea and was therefore useful in shaping our ideas of liberty and democracy. The British connection would definitely serve this purpose and hence he welcomed the British rule in India. In one of his letters to his friend Gokhale wrote: “You must all realise that whatever be the shortcomings of
bureaucracy...however the insolence of individual Englishman, they alone stand today in the country for order; and without continued order no real progress is possible for our people." Thus to Gokhale British rule in India stood for social order which was the pre-condition of progress and hence he justified the continuance of British rule in India.

### 6.4.2 Liberalism

As noted at the outset Gokhale was essentially a liberal thinker. But his liberalism was slightly different from the classical liberalism that existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. In order to understand the distinct character of Gokhale's liberalism it is essential to get ourselves acquainted with the liberal ideology in general.

Liberalism as an ideology may be defined as an idea committed to individual freedom, as a method and policy in government, as an organising principle in society, and a way of life for the individual and community. Liberty is the core doctrine of liberalism and it stands against coercive interference of any kind in any walk of life. In the social sphere liberalism stands for secularism. It advocates man's freedom from the shackles of religious orthodoxy and believes in freedom of conscience. In the sphere of economy it appreciates the ideal of free trade coupled with internal freedom of production and external freedom of exportation. It stands for free competition implying no curb on import and export of goods. For this reason it stands for the exploitation of natural resources and distribution of economic dividends at the hands of the individuals. In the sphere of politics liberalism and instead of restricting the role of the state in economic life of the nation, he wanted the state to play a positive role in promoting industrial development and trade.

As a liberal Gokhale cherished the ideal of individual liberty. But to him, liberty did not imply the total absence of restraint; on the contrary, he felt that individual liberty could be usefully allowed only when the individuals behave with a sense of self-restraint and self-organisation. He knew that the ideal of liberty could not be realised unless the citizens are guaranteed certain rights to freedom. To him the right of free expression and the freedom of press were essential to...realise the ideal of individual liberty. He, therefore, opposed the Official Secret Bill in 1904 on the grounds that it was proposed to arm the government with a greater power to control the press.

Gokhale also favoured the right to private property and the freedom of contract. Commenting on the Land Revenue Code Amendment Bill Gokhale said that "the ordinary citizen is as tenaciously attached to his proprietary rights over his holdings...that there is nothing he will not do if it is in his power to ward off what he regards as a direct or indirect attack on these rights. And it is not difficult to understand that a proposal to take away from his power of alienating, when necessary, his holding should appear to him to be a most serious encroachment on his rights. Thus Gokhale defended the right to private property, individual liberty and freedom of contract which essentially constituted the core of liberal doctrine.

In order to maintain individual liberty and essential civil rights, Gokhale proposed the establishment of representative institutions in the country. According to him the first prerequisite for the improvement of relations between Britain and India was 'an unequivocal declaration in England to put her resolve to help forward the growth of representative institutions in India and a determination to stand by this policy.' However, Gokhale did not demand universal franchise. He proposed property qualification for enfranchisement. For example, for the village Panchayat elections Gokhale wanted that only such persons should be enfranchised who paid a minimum land revenue.

Gokhale also preferred the representation of interests along with the representation of people in the legislature. In his last testament and will be suggested that the Legislative Council in each province should constitute of 75 to 100 members. Taking Bombay as an illustration he pleaded for one seat each in the legislature for the Karachi Chamber, the Ahmedabad Mill Owners and the Deccan Sardars. He also suggested the principle of special representation for the religious minority.

Recognising the communal differences between the Hindus and the Muslims...
Gokhale pleaded for separate representation of the Muslims. Thus, as a liberal, Gokhale on the one hand defended the concept of individual liberty and on the other hand supported the establishment of representative institution in a limited sense.

Gokhale's ideas regarding the role of state remarkably differed from that of classical liberalism. Classical liberalism pleads for a laissez-faire state. The only functions that classical liberalism grants to the state are police functions. They believe that a government which governs the least is the best. But Gokhale, following the footsteps of Justice M.G. Ranade pleaded for state-intervention to regulate the economic and social life of the country. Here Gokhale differed remarkably from J.S. Mill. Gokhale wanted the Government to intervene in the economic life for the sake of industrial development and agricultural prosperity. He wanted the government to intervene not only in the processes of distribution but also in the process of production. According to Gokhale the purpose of government was to further the moral and material interests of the people. In order to realise this purpose the government cannot remain unconcerned towards the unnatural restrictions in the path of development. According to Gokhale the government should remove these ‘unnatural restrictions’ and accelerate the pace of development. Gokhale said: "Indians needed a government which subordinates all other considerations to the welfare of the Indian people, which presents the indignities offered to Indians abroad 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 and outside India." Thus to Gokhale the state should not be a ‘police state’ only, but it should embark upon welfare activities and intervene in the economic life of the country whenever necessary. We can conclude that Gokhale's liberalism was no doubt inspired by the liberalism of Mill but it significantly differed from the classical liberalism in two respects. On the one hand it did not advocate the extreme individualism, emphasising the negative meaning of liberty and on the other hand it pleaded for necessary state intervention in the economic and social life of the country.

6.4.3 Political Goals and Programme

Gokhale's understanding of the British rule in India was one of the factors that determined his political goals and programmes. As noted earlier Gokhale sincerely believed that India's connections with the British were going to help her in many ways in the long run and hence any idea of severing these connections was always repugnant to his mind. The political goal which he put forward, therefore, was that of self-government for India. The earlier Congress leaders were satisfied with the idea of the 'good government' which meant an efficient and enlightened government. But Gokhale, like Dadabhai Naoroji, gradually realised that no good government was ever possible without having self-government. Moreover, he felt that the British had given good government in the sense that they had established law and order in the society but then the time had come to associate the Indians with the work of government and this was possible only if the British granted self-government to India. In his Presidential address to the Banaras Congress (1905) Gokhale said, "Now the Congress wants that all this should change and that India should be governed, first and foremost, in the interests of the Indians themselves. This result will be achieved only in proportion as we obtain more and more voice in the government of our country."

Thus, instead of insisting only on 'good government' Gokhale went a step further and demanded self-government for India. But what did self-government mean? Gokhale's idea of self-government was different from that of the extremist thinkers like Aurobindo or Bipin Chandra Pal. By self-government he never meant complete independence for India. He wanted self-government only within the limits of the British Empire. In other words, he wanted that kind of a rule which existed in the self-governing colonies of the British Empire. The extremists like Aurobindo wanted complete independence for India, having no connection with Britain. Gokhale did not go to that extent while demanding self-government. Neither did he prefer the term 'Swaraj' for self-government, as Tilak did. Tilak's concept of Swaraj had wider implications and it ultimately aimed at the attainment of complete independence. Gokhale in no way hinted at complete independence. Again, for Tilak, Swaraj was the birth right of the people for which no specific conditions were required. Gokhale on the other hand thought that people should qualify themselves to be worthy of running the representative institutions. He thought it reasonable that the sense of
Ideology of Socio-Political Reform in the 19th Century

Responsibility required for the “proper exercise of the political institutions of the west can be acquired by an eastern people through practical training and experiment only,” Gokhale sincerely believed that this ‘practical training and experiment’ on the part of the Indians would be better achieved if India maintained the British connection.

Having fixed the goal of ‘self-government’ Gokhale designed a political programme and devised appropriate methods to implement it. His political programme envisaged several reforms. These reforms could be grouped under four heads.

i) Those which aimed at securing a larger share of the people in the administration and control of their affairs; these included a reform of the Legislative Council, the appointment of Indians to the Secretary of State’s Council and the Executive Councils in India and a steady substitution of the Indian for the European agency in the public service of the country.

ii) Those which sought to improve the methods of administration, such as the separation of judicial from executive functions, police reforms and similar proposals.

iii) Those which proposed a readjustment of financial arrangements with the object of securing a reduction of burdens of the taxpayers and a more efficient application of the available resources. Under this head came reduction of military charges, the moderating of land assessments, etc.

iv) Those which urged the adoption of measures calculated to improve the condition of the masses. These included a vigorous extension of primary education, facilities for industrial and technical instruction, grants for improved sanitation and a real attempt to deal with the alarming indebtedness of the peasantry. Gokhale believed that if the Indians concentrated all their energies on some such programme they might, within a reasonable time see results which would not be altogether disappointing. In his Presidential address at the Banaras Congress (1905) Gokhale expressed his hope that for the first time since the Congress movement began the Radical and Liberal party in England would come into real power and a strong current had already set in England against that narrow and aggressive imperialism. It was this hope that motivated Gokhale to go for a programme which he had proposed on the Congress platform.

The methods Gokhale advocated to realise his political goal and programme were essentially constitutional. To him constitutional agitation was the only way to realize our political aspirations. To Gokhale constitutional agitation meant primarily prayers and petitions. However, Gokhale did not rule out passive resistance as an act of last resort. At a meeting held in the Town Hall at Bombay on Sept. 9, 1909 Gokhale said: “...in the circumstances of the Transvaal, passive resistance such as that organised by Mr. Gandhi is not only legitimate, but is a duty resting on all self-respecting persons. What is this passive resistance? Passive Resistance to an unjust law or an oppressive measure and a refusal to acquiesce in that law or measure and a readiness to suffer penalty instead which may be prescribed as an alternative. If we strongly...and conscientiously feel the grave injustice of a law and there is no way to obtain redress, I think, refusal to acquiesce in, taking the consequence of such refusal is the only course left to those who place conscience and self-respect above their material and immediate interests.” However, Gokhale’s passive resistance differed from that of the extremists. While the extremist leaders like Aurobindo or Tilak pleaded for passive resistance as a measure of attack, Gokhale pleaded for it as a measure of defence. Further, Gokhale’s ideas of passive resistance categorically excluded rebellion or aiding or abetting a foreign invasion. The extremists, on the other hand, did not rule out the possibility of rebellion or violence. Lastly, Gokhale advocated passive resistance only as the last resort to be taken when all other methods of redress had failed and here too, the passive resistance movement must be moral, spiritual and carried on without any vindictiveness. We can, therefore, say that theoretically Gokhale believed in passive resistance but he did not advocate that measure in India as he sincerely felt that a ‘thousandth part of the possibilities of constitutional agitation had not been exhausted in India’s struggle for self-government.’ He also felt that the methods of passive resistance could not possibly be used in India since there was not enough popular feeling. Hence Gokhale opposed Tilak’s political methods. Moderation was the watchword of Gokhale’s politics and
he never deviated from it. In contrast to the extremist leaders Gokhale relied more on the constitutional methods than on mass-agitation, more on enlightening the British public opinion on Indian issues than on pressurising them with the threat of organised mass-movements. This, again, speaks of his liberal faith.

Check Your Progress 2
Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
       ii) Check your progress at the end of the unit.

1) How according to Gokhale can individual liberty be made more meaningful?

2) What was the role of the state as envisaged by Gokhale?

6.5 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IDEAS

As noted earlier Gokhale's economic and social ideas constitute a part of his political thinking. He was not an economist in the strict sense of the term. Neither was he a social thinker with deep sociological insight. However, as a leader of the Congress and as a member of the legislature Gokhale had to ponder over many socio-economic issues of the time which, in turn, gave birth to his economic and social ideas. These ideas reflected his way of thinking which considerably influenced the process of social change of his time.

As far as his economic ideas are concerned Gokhale owes much to Justice M.G. Ranade and Prof. List, a German economist. Both Ranade and List differed from the classical economists such as Adam Smith and Ricardo. Ranade argued that 'Political Economy being a Hypothetical Science, its propositions are not based upon axiomatic truths like those of Euclid and do not absolutely and universally hold good, like the latter, true in all times.' Therefore, if a particular economic policy was suited to England it was not necessarily valid for India as well. It was on this ground that Ranade opposed the policy of free trade in India as advocated by the classical English economists. Ranade argued that it was not the policy of free trade but that of protection which India needed. Ranade noticed that in Germany it was because of state initiative that the country was able to transform itself into a first rate modern power, and hence he pleaded that the state should take initiative in accelerating the process of industrialisation. Like Prof. List, Ranade thought that the trade policy of the country is integrated with its general economic policy and therefore he felt that 'the government should guarantee or subsidise private efforts till private enterprise could support itself...should advance loans to private capitalist at low interest and help them in the choice of places and the selection of the form of investment.' According to Ranade, the grave problem before India was that of poverty and it could not be removed until the process of industrialisation set in. The policy of free trade, open competition, as followed by the British administrators were not conducive to the growth of industrialisation in India and hence Ranade advocated state intervention in the economic life of the Country.

Gokhale made a careful study of Indian finance from 1874 to 1909 dividing this period into four phases comparing the growth in expenditure with the growth of revenue. The results are given in the table below:
On the basis of his study Gokhale concluded that the growth in expenditure tended to more than the growth in revenue, whereas in fact it was essential to keep the two in balance. Moreover, there was no point in having a surplus budget while the budget of the common man failed to balance itself. During a period of budgetary surplus, Gokhale recommended that the state adopt the following measures:

i) a reduction in state demand on land by 25 to 30%
ii) the creation of a fund of million sterling to rescue the Indian agriculturists from the load of debt,
iii) the activisation of co-operative credit societies through establishing agricultural banks on Egyptian model,
iv) the promotion of industrial and technical education and the sanctioning of the increased expenditure for this purposes,
v) free and compulsory primary education,
vii) improvement of the finances of the local bodies.

It is evident from the above proposals suggested by Gokhale that he was of the opinion that it was of no use to have surplus budget when the budget of the common man failed to balance itself. If there was to be a surplus budget the surplus must be devoted to the work of promoting development functions of the state.

Gokhale was also aware of the state of the agricultural life in India. He saw that the agricultural industry in India was in a serious depression and the crop yield per acre was low. In such circumstances he resented the increase in the land revenue demanded by the state. He made it clear that he regarded land revenue and the indirect taxes as together placing an unbearable burden on the poor. He wanted the state to give importance to irrigation and scientific agriculture as measures for agricultural prosperity. He disapproved the excise duty on cotton textiles which in his opinion was imposed to counter balance the duties on imports. Gokhale thought that such a duty further burdened the poor.

Following the German economist Prof. List, Gokhale pleaded protection for the new industries in India on the ground that she was an industrially backward country. Gokhale observed: "...he (List) says that when a country is industrially backward...comes into vortex of universal competition—competition with countries which use steam and machinery...in their production—the first effect is to sweep of local industries and the country is thrust back on agriculture for some time. But then, he says, comes in the duty of the state. When such a situation is reached, the state should step forward and by a judicious system of protection it should foster such industries as are capable of being fostered so that the country may once again enter on its industrial path with the aid of the latest appliances and ultimately stand successfully the competition of the whole world. India should follow this advice of List." In short, Gokhale stood for the industrial development, advocated state-initiative to further the process of industrialisation, demanded protection for infant industries and thus paved the way for capitalist development.

Gokhale did not stop at merely criticising the fiscal policy of the government but also advocated the cause of Swadeshi. However, he did not identify Swadeshi with boycott. To him the Swadeshi movement was both a patriotic and an economic movement. So far as its patriotic aspect was concerned it meant devotion to motherland but the movement on its material side was economic. It ensured a ready consumption of such articles as were produced in the country and furnished a perpetual stimulus to production by keeping up the demand for indigenous things. To Gokhale the question of production was a question of capital, enterprise and skill.
and whoever could help in one of those fields could be called a worker in the Swadeshi cause. Gokhale did not mind even to seek governmental co-operation in the cause of Swadesh. Through the Swadeshi movement Gokhale sought to lay the foundations of indigenous capitalism.

In the sphere of social reforms Gokhale sided with Ranade. Like Ranade, Gokhale also believed that social reforms must go along with political reforms. As early as in 1890 Ranade had advocated certain reforms viz. (i) not more than a year's income should be expended on the marriage ceremonies of son or daughter; (ii) that the boys should not be married before the ages 16, 18 or 20 and the girls before the ages of 10, 12 and 14; (iii) Polygamy should be prohibited; (iv) no one should marry after the age of 60; (v) that efforts should be made to promote female education. By and large Ranade believed that all these reforms should be introduced gradually, and the state might be utilised to bring about social change through legislative procedure whenever it was absolutely necessary. But on an average, Ranade believed, that 'popular initiation' rather than 'imposed laws' would be helpful in reforming the society. However, it must be noted here that Ranade was not totally against the state-intervening to promote social reforms as Tilak was. Gokhale followed Ranade in this respect. He was of the opinion that the state must help the progressive elements in the society. He thus supported the motion on the Civil Marriage Bill. With the support of an influential and enlightened minority Gokhale wanted the state to proceed with measures of social change.

Gokhale suggested free and compulsory elementary education for the masses. To him the elementary education meant something more than a mere capacity to read and write. It meant the greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual—and hence he strove hard to insist on compulsory free education. He also suggested prohibition of liquor and other measures of public health so as to remove hindrances and hardships from the path of the development of individual personality.

It could be easily noticed from the reforms suggested by Gokhale that his programme of social reforms reflects his liberal faith. Liberalism attaches greater importance to individual dignity. This dignity cannot, however, be restored unless the person is educated and enlightened. It is for this purpose that the liberal ideology advocates the all-round development of the individual personality. Gokhale as a convinced liberal attached utmost importance to this aspect of human life viz., the development of personality. Caste barriers, racialism, communal disharmony, ignorance, religious fanaticism, subjugation of women, were all hindrances in the path of the development of individual personality and hence had to be removed immediately. Thus Gokhale's social reformism was also the child of his liberal outlook. His ideas of spiritualisation of politics presupposed the moral purification of the individual along with that of his or her enlightenment which is implicit in his general programme of social reforms.

Check Your Progress 3
Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
   ii) Check your progress at the end of the unit.

1) Gokhale sought to lay the foundations of...............through the Swadeshi movement.

2) ..................and................influenced Gokhale's ideas.

6.6 LET US SUM UP

We have discussed the major political, economic and social ideas of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. We shall now summarise his thought in brief.

Gokhale was a moderate and liberal political thinker. His political ideas were largely influenced by the liberal thinker like Bentham, Mill and Ranade. So far as his political tenets were concerned he believed that—

i) political progress of India must be based on law and order,

ii) his political goal was that of the colonial self-government,
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iii) to him the constitutional agitation was the only means to attain the desired end.

He was a liberal thinker but differed from the classical liberal thinkers in certain respects, particularly with their ideas regarding the role of the state and their insistence on laissez-faire policies. In contrast with the classical liberal thinkers Gokhale advocated a positive role for the state in developing and modernising society.

Gokhale was an ardent social reformer. He favoured legislation in order to bring about certain social changes. His attitude towards social reform was essentially humanitarian and liberal. Religion as a particular sect or faith did not count much in his thinking although he insisted on the spiritualisation of politics. This morality was again based on secular considerations and did not refer to any religious dogma. As such he proved to be a precursor of Mahatma Gandhi in this respect. Gokhale was not a mass leader unlike Tilak and Gandhi. On the contrary, he was of the opinion that the enlightened, educated people, few in number should guide the society and lead the masses in a proper way. Hence he exerted more to enlighten the educated classes on major socio-economic issues rather than to organise masses for political action. He believed in persuasion rather than confrontation.

In short, in the field of politics Gokhale laid the foundations of constitutionalism. In the field of economics he encouraged the process of capitalist development and in the field of social reforms he tried hard to enhance the dignity of the individual irrespective of his taste, race, religion, language and class. He was thus a modernizer of Indian society in every sense of the term.

6.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Moderator and Extremists.


6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1
1) 1889
2) M.G. Ranade

Check Your Progress 2
1) Individual liberty according to Gokhale did not imply total absence of restraint, it becomes useful only when the individuals behave with a sense of self-restraint and self-organisation.

2) Gokhale pleaded for state-intervention to regulate the social and economic life of the country. Thus, the role that he envisaged for the state was very different from the role assigned to the state by classical liberalism.

Check Your Progress 3
1) Indigenous Capitalism
2) Justice M.G. Ranade and Prof. List.