

CHAPTER – I

Introduction

1. Social and Political Idea of Gopal Krishna Gokhale : The Conceptional Framework :

“It was a case of love at first sight, and it stood the severest strain in 1913. He seemed to me all I wanted as a political worker – pure as a crystal, gentle to me that he may not have been any of those things. It was enough for me that I could discover no fault in him to cavil at. He was and remains for me the most perfect man on the political field.”¹

Thus, the name of Gopal Krishna Gokhale is best remembered as one of the moderate thinkers and moderate leader. He, like other moderate leaders inherited the legacy of the socio-religious reformers, which played a predominant role in the Congress during its formative period. It was agreed that for social and religious reformation as well as for the improvement of economic conditions of the people, no agitation was necessary. Thus, the early Congress which was highly elitist in character and consisted of a small educated minority greatly influenced by western education and culture, loyal to the Rule with its zeal for social uplift, was never taken to be a dangerous organization.”² (H.H. Das and P.S.N. Patra, *Indian Political Tradition*).

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a noble man. His dedication for public life and for freedom movement was incomparable and this was the region regarding the constitution of Servants of Indian Society, he said :

“Public life must be spiritualised. Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the motherland, a dauntless heart

which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of providence which nothing can shake – equipped with these, the workers must start on his mission and reverently seek the joy which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country.”³

During this time, there were two clear trends that should be found. Though the roots of the genesis of moderate philosophy can be traced into changes that were brought by western liberal education in India, one group tried to emancipate India from the darkest period of history, the other tried to assimilate the good aspects of other religions and cultures and the last group wanted to revive the great Indian Culture and was essentially Conservative in approach.

Gokhale inherited the traditions of the early Congress, which struggled mainly for the recognition by the government and followed the principles of moderation and loyalty in its dealings with the foreign rulers. But he had a specific attitude towards the British rule. He sometimes supported the government as he wanted to know and learn the administrative procedure of the British government. But he was not the blind supporter of the government. When he found any irregularities of the government, which were against the Indian interest, he protested against them. He strongly opposed the salt tax, excise duties on cotton goods and many other illegal acts of the government. He presented the case for alleviation of poverty before the Welby Commission and for that purpose he went to London. He spoke in clear terms against social and economic evils like poverty and famine, drink and prostitution, upliftment of socially backward classes, women education and also mass education and similar other issues confronting the nation.

Gokhale's career as a political leader can be understood against a number of aspects namely, his role in the nation building activities, his concept of political progress and self government, his humanism and lastly, his economic ideas, particularly his idea about the constructive intervention of the state for the welfare and growth of the Indian economy.

This brings us to a number of questions regarding the social and political condition of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, for understanding his nature and extent of the impact of his leadership during those fateful days of India's struggle for independence. Although basically a moderate thinker, Gokhale had his own ideas and views on some pressing socio-economic problems of his time and here he differed fundamentally from other moderate thinkers. Not only that his lofty ideal of spiritualization of politics, demands greater security because it had its profound impact in the information of later political thinking, particularly the thinking of Mahatma Gandhi who thought in terms of "spiritualising" politics for the greater causes. As a true moderate, he wanted to reform in all sectors, from constitution to social structure. He stood for the policy of cooperation wherever possible and opposition, wherever necessary. Thus, viewed, Gokhale's entire views were conditioned by the prevailing social-economic and political environment in which he had to work.

Thus, for the assessment of Gokhale's idea resolved a number of questions, which are given below :

- a) What had been the general philosophical and political foundations of the moderate leaders during the freedom movement ?
- b) What were the philosophical and political bases ?
- c) How far was Gokhale successful in influencing the career of moderate movement ?
- d) What had been Gokhale's views about the masses and the future cause of free India ?

These questions are of critical significance in a political system, which is based on the spirit of democracy and liberalism. In other words, it is upon a successful analysis of those questions that the understanding of the system depends to a large extent.

Thus, the study is primarily historical analytical in nature. For this purpose, historical records and archival data will be of great help. Besides this all other primary sources

including autobiographies, correspondences etc. will be analysed. Apart from this, official documents, partly resolutions, aspects, as other information will also be examined. Over and above, other secondary sources will also be taken into account while coming to a specific connection.

2. Overview of the existing literature :

At the outset, it should be clearly mentioned that any study of this nature demands through investigation of all the source materials available, which cover the period in which Gokhale had been there in the political environment of the period, namely, the period between 1866 and 1915. The section dealing with select bibliography will present an illustrative, if not exclusive list of the works relating to moderate theory in general and that of Gokhale in particular.

Of all the works of general nature dealing with freedom struggle movement, the book by Azad, *India Wins Freedom* demands greater attention. Besides this A.C. Banerjee's books *Indian Constitutional Development* (4 vols.) give a detailed analysis of the development of the Constitutional System in India. The works by Bipin Chandra, *Indian National Movement*.

The long term Dynamic and also his *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India* also deal with the account of historical and political development during the freedom struggle movement. Another edited volume, basically of primary nature, contains all speeches of the nationalist leaders during that period it is a work by A. Appadorai, *Speeches and Documents of the Indian Constitution 1921-1947*. The work entitled *Indian Nationalism and the early Congress Party in generating a sense of nationalism in India*. Besides these, the original speeches and correspondence of Gokhale will serve as a primary where for the proposed work.

3. Chapter wise Arrangements :

The following plans have been adopted in connection of the present study:

CHAPTER – I of the present study deals with the conceptional framework and theoretical foundation of leadership dynamics of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. A brief references has also been made to throw some light on the social-political idea of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and his contribution as a moderate leader in the freedom movement in India.

CHAPTER – II deals with the political condition of India specially the most important political organization – Congress which was founded by A.O. Hume. What were the demands of the Indian; genesis of the moderates' thought and their policy. Reasons for prayer and petition to the government, their plan for making Congress, as a representative body, their social reform and the relation of the masses with the moderates were first stage of this chapter. The other phases deals with the reason for rising the extremism in India, their political thoughts, religious nationalism and the different thoughts of different political extremist leaders and the last phase deals with the ideological difference with the moderates and extremists and the rise of Gokhale in such political condition.

CHAPTER – III deals with the formative period of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. This chapter broadly discussed the formative life of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. His early life, his college life and his apprenticeship near Ranade, his role in Congress, his role as a moderate life, his Presidentship in Congress and his visit to England where he tried to mobilize the British, regarding the condition of Indians and it was clear from it that in his formative period, he became the rising star of Indian politics.

CHAPTER – IV an elaborate study of the social idea of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. For the sake of convenience, it has been divided into number of sections i.e., his deep impact of Ferguson College, his social thought regarding spiritual and moral liberation, his idea about elementary and primary and also for compulsion of elementary education, his

thought about upliftment of depressed class, about marriage bill and his idea for solving the communal problem in India.

CHAPTER – V deals with the political idea of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. This chapter has been devoted to an in depth analysis of the political thought of Gokhale. His nature of idea, his idea on public, private and public sources, about government, his concept about the representative government, Constitutional theme of Gokhale, his theme of spiritualization and lastly being a moderate, he played like extremist.

CHAPTER – VI deals with assessment of Gokhale and with concluding observation and it has been established that it is meaningless or futile to judge or analyse the role of Gokhale without taking into account the proper historical perspective, economic condition and political condition of that time. Moreover, the roots of variation in individual outlook and value preference can be traced in the family condition, educational background and the influence of other national and international events. The importance of these factors and his impact on next episode of political movement cannot be ignored in the study of Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

Reference of Introduction :

1. Gokhale – My Political Guru, Mahatma Gandhi, p. 55.
2. H.H. Das and P.S.N. Patra, Indian Political Tradition.
3. Political thought of Gopal Krishna Gokhale – (Introduction) p. 1, Vol. 2.