

GOPALAKRISHNA GOKHALE (1866-1915)

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Introduction:

- One of the great leader during the freedom struggle – a liberal, a moderate, a statesman, politician, social reformer, an educationist,.
- He was the political Guru of Mahatma Gandhi.
- He had full faith in the British sense of justice.
- He believed in the constitutional means like petitions & prayers for political reforms in India.
- He founded the “Servants of India Society” in order to train the young people of India to devote for the cause of service of their motherland.
- He was also the president of INC in 1905.

Gokhale's political ideas:

- His political ideas were greatly influenced by the writings of Ranade, Naoroji, Mohan Roy and others.
- He was the believer of British Liberalism.
- He was a moderate & believed in bringing about constitutional reforms.
- He pleaded for dominion status for India within the British empire.

1. Supporter of Peace:

- He championed the cause of peace and order.
- He wanted only the status-quo to the extent possible.
- He was deadly against the use of violence.
- He has belief in the peaceful means or methods.
- He has also faith in the capacity of Indians to solve their own problems.
- His programme was not merely to oppose the mistaken policies of the government but also convince the government, the Indian point of view.
- He followed the line of toleration & comprehension of adversaries view point.

2. His views about Rights:

- He has belief in liberalism.
- He stood for individual liberty and certain basic rights to people.
- No progress of society and individual possible without the enjoyment of minimum basic rights.
- Denial of rights to individual means denial of the development of human personality.

3. His views about Social Reforms:

- He was pained to see the evils of Hindu society, particularly the ill-treatment of the shudras & downtrodden in the society.
- He was unhappy with the practices of child marriage, ban on widow re-marriage, etc.
- He wanted that society should put an end to these evil practices.
- He was of the opinion that unless the society is reformed, political progress cannot be possible.

4. His views about British Bureaucracy:

- He was not satisfied with the working of the British bureaucracy in India.
- He criticized bureaucracy for its gross irresponsibility to popular demands.
- He criticized it for its being costly for India.
- To him, bureaucracy was becoming frankly selfish & openly hostile to national aspirations.

5. His views about Decentralization:

- To him, centralization leads to monocratic exercise of power.
- So he felt the need for decentralization.
- He wanted that provincial council should be given power of discussing provincial budget.
- He was not in favour of extreme centralization of power.
- To him, power should be given to lower units of administration.

6. His views about Local-self Government:

- He favoured the idea of strengthening local self government institutions.
- He stood for decentralization of authority.
- He believed in a gradual process of decentralization.
- He pleaded for the system of village panchayats & district councils for the smooth working of Indian administration.

7. His views about Swadeshi:

- His love for swadeshi is immense.
- He believed that there should be swadeshi in everything.
- With swadeshi alone problems of unemployment & poverty can be solved.
- To him, swadeshi means, an exalted, deep & all embracing love of India.
- But he did not approve the extreme step of boycott.

8. His views about Hindu- Muslim Unity:

- He was concerned with the problems of nation – building in a land of diversities.
- He agreed with Ranade that the Hindus & Muslims should be made to live a harmonious & enjoyable life.
- He believed that it is the responsibility of the majority Hindus to create an atmosphere wherein the minority Muslims can live a life of dignity & harmony with the Hindus.
- This can be done by respecting the sentiments of the minority by giving them what was their due.
- It was through this mutual adjustment that India could progress & achieve what was her due.

9. Constitutional reforms:

- Gokhale was moderate in his views & believed in constitutional means for achieving any objective.
- He had a clear vision of what the Indians were to achieve & what the government should give to the people.
- He categorized a set of demands which represents his political philosophy, they are –
 1. Raising the proportion of elected members in the Legislative Council to one half,

Gokhale on constitutional reforms.....

2. Appointment of at least 3 Indians to the India Council,
3. Creation of advisory Boards in all districts throughout the country,
4. The recruitment to the judicial branch of the Indian civil service from the ranks of the legal profession,
5. Separation of judicial & executive administration,
6. The reduction of heavy military expenditure,
7. expansion of primary education,
8. the growth and extension of Industrial & technical education,

Constitutional reforms.....

9. The alleviation of rural indebtedness.

- In the constitutional agitation he also included exerting pressure on those who mattered in administration and to mobilize public opinion in favour of constitutional reforms.

10. Spiritual Politics:

- He intended to create pure politics by introducing spiritualism or religion in politics.
- Like Gandhi, he believed that without spiritualism politics was barren and dirty.
- To him, only good means could bring good and lasting results.
- Thus, to him, constitutionalism could bring better results than the use of force.

Conclusion:

- He belonged to the liberal school of political thought & remembered for his contributions to education & constitutional reforms.
- He was not only a humanist but also a spiritual crusader in Indian politics.
- He was not a utopian idealist but believed in negotiation, moderation & compromise.
- In the words of B.G.Tilak, he was “the diamond of India, the jewel of Maharashtra & prince of workers”.