

## **Bridging Divides and Reducing Disparities\***

**Kirit S Parikh\*\***

### **I Introduction**

I am deeply honoured to be invited to give Kale Memorial Lecture 2006.

Shri Rao Bahadur Ravaji Ramchandra Kale was one of the most reputed and illustrious sons of Maharashtra, who contributed to public life in many ways. The idea of setting up of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics was originally conceived by him in 1930 for conducting research in the economic and political problems of India and for that he donated a lakh and quarter rupees to the Servants of India Society. In today's term it is worth crores of rupees. Gokhale Institute has contributed enormously to the development of the country. Stalwarts like D.R. Gadgil and V.M. Dandekar have guided it. I hope the traditions of free and open dialogue, academic freedom and independence that they have established will be protected with passion by the staff and students of the Institute. I also hope that the Institute will continue to be guided by persons of high academic standing and with full freedom.

Rao Bahadur Kale was associated with several committees including Bombay Provincial Franchise Committee and also presided over several local self-government conferences. Because of his interest in all-round development and all sections of the society that I have selected the topic of my talk today.

### **II Beyond Rapid Growth: Expanding Opportunities**

India is at an exciting stage in its development history. We have all the possibilities to take-off into a state of high and sustained growth. We have a democratic, participatory open society that can help in ensuring that growth is inclusive. The restructuring of our policies initiated in small steps in the 1980s and given a big push in 1991 and the subsequent steady pace of reforms have accelerated the Indian economy. They have made the economy robust and resilient. India has faced globalisation with confidence and to its advantage. Indian industry has risen to the challenge of international competition. In automobiles, in auto components, in

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\*\*Member, Planning Commission, Yojana Bhavan, Parliament Street New Delhi 110 001.