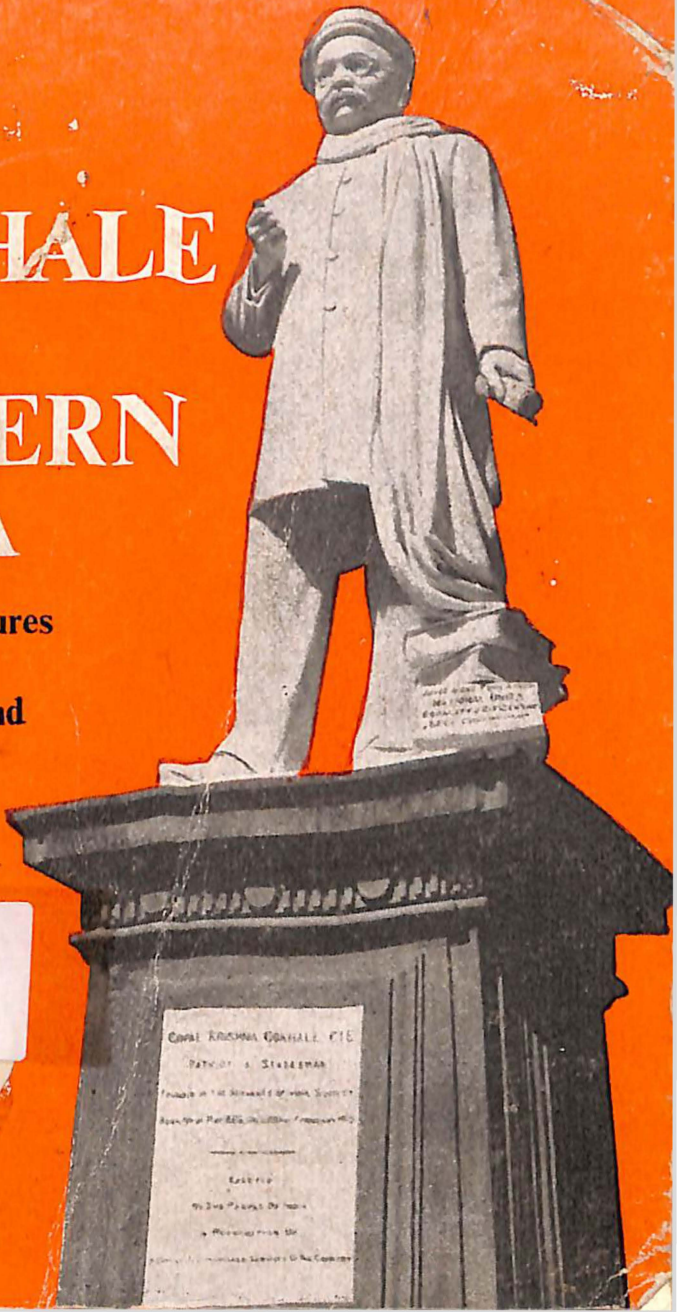
GOKHALE AND MODERN INDIA

Centenary Lectures

Edited by
A. B. SHAH and
S. P. AIYAR



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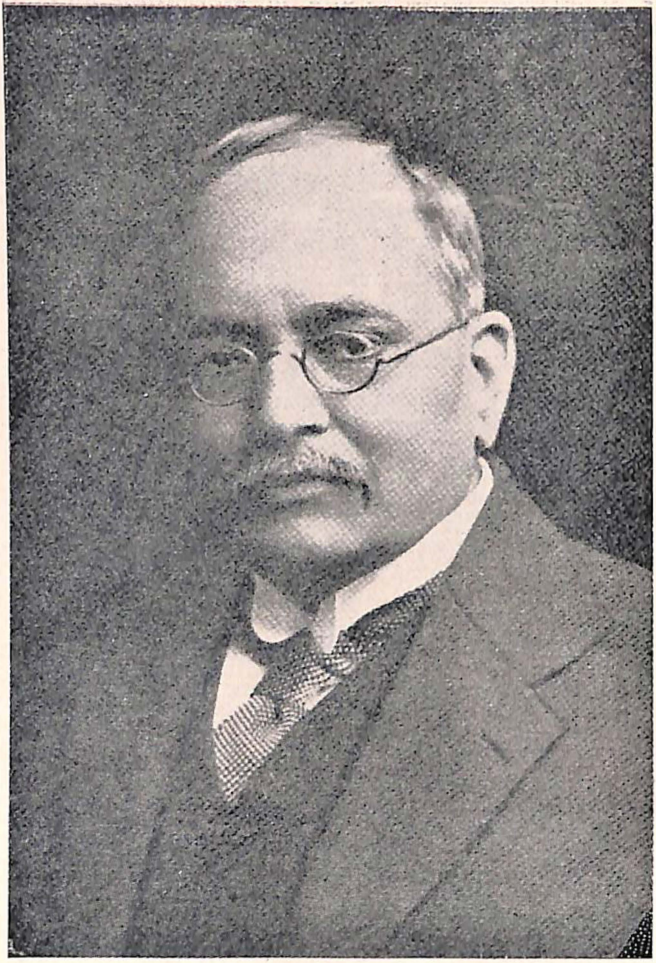

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

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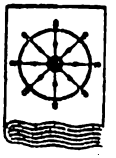

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Foreword

His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world 'This was a man!'

—SHAKESPEARE

MOST LEADERS of thought and action who laid the foundations of contemporary India were born in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was therefore inevitable that the second half of the present century should be an age of centenaries of pioneers in different fields – social, political, economic, religious, literary and cultural. However, of all those whose centenaries the nation has celebrated since Independence or is planning to celebrate in the coming years, none perhaps is more worthy of grateful remembrance and emulation today than Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Teacher and educationist, statesman and economist, social reformer and a true Servant of India in the best sense of the word; without vanity of any kind and yet completely free from a pathological obsession with simplicity; modern but not estranged from his people; atheistic – at least, agnostic– and yet (or, therefore?) committed to truth without any subterfuge; devoted to his country's interests but neither a chauvinist nor lacking in moral courage when the occasion demanded frankness or, even, a public confession of error – Gokhale stands out in the fog of Indian politics as the most important exponent of reason in public life and liberalism as the basis of a modern, democratic welfare state. Perhaps

that is why his centenary did not receive the notice it deserved. He was too good, too rational and too democratic a leader to inspire men of a different faith, based on hero-worship, religious sentiment and naked pursuit of power in the name of high-sounding ideals.

But precisely this situation makes Gokhale all the more relevant today. The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom was therefore keen on having a fresh appraisal of his thought made by men who shared his values and were, by training and profession, competent to undertake it. I am grateful to three scholars, Dr S. K. Muranjan, Dr S. P. Aiyar and Dr T. M. Joshi for their willing acceptance of our invitation to deliver the three Centenary Lectures printed in this book. They are now being made available to the larger reading public, especially of the younger generation in politics, administration, voluntary organizations and the universities.

Bombay
October 2, 1966

A. B. SHAH
Executive Secretary
Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom

Contributors

S. K. MURANJAN was Principal of Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics and a member of the Tariff Commission. His publications include *Modern Banking* (3rd edn. 1952) and *Reflections on Economic Growth and Progress* (1956).

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S. P. AIYAR is Reader in Public Administration in the University of Bombay. His publications include *Federalism and Social Change* (1961); *Essays on Indian Federalism* (Edited with Usha Mehta, 1965); *Studies in Indian Democracy* (Edited with R. Srinivasan, 1965); *Perspectives on the Welfare State* (Ed. 1966); and *The Politics of Mass Violence* (in press).

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T. M. JOSHI is Professor and Head of the Department of Economics in Nagpur University and author of *Bombay Finance 1921-46* (1947).

Contents

GOD, GIVE US MEN!

° ° ° °

God, give us men! A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and
ready hands;
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honour; men who will not lie;
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without
winking!
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
In public duty and in private thinking;
For while the rabble, with their thumb-worn creeds,
Their large professions and their little deeds,
Mingle in selfish strife, lo! Freedom weeps,
Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps.

Josiah Gilbert Holland

July 24, 1819 — October 12, 1881

1.

Introduction

S. P. Aiyar

The celebration of the Gokhale centenary on 9 May 1966 had more than ordinary significance. The nation was not merely honouring one of the most extraordinary figures of modern India but one who more than anyone else was dedicated to the philosophy which now underlies the constitution of India. His life and teachings have a message for our time and his writings, particularly the celebrated budget speeches will rank for all time as a great landmark in the ordered constitutional progress in this country.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale's life—a brief span of forty-eight years—had all the elements of grandeur and tragedy. He offered his life as a living sacrifice to his country. Only one great idea loomed large in his mind—the moral and material progress of the Indian people. It could indeed be said of him, as he said of his Master, Mahadeo Govind Ranade: 'It was as though the first person singular did not exist in his vocabulary.'

Gokhale's premature death in 1915 was the direct result of the stress and strain under which he lived and worked.

Sleepless anxiety for the country brought in its train diabetes and heart trouble. At the time of the Islington Commission, Gokhale was a physical wreck. The doctors had given him only three years to live. With stoic calmness he told Sarojini Naidu that he was carrying his death warrant in his pocket, and yet he worked on the Commission like one possessed. Sleeping for barely four hours, Gokhale was up at two in the morning to read up all the evidence and be ready for the Commission's work which commenced at 10.30 a.m. and dragged on till 5.30 in the evening. Almost his last words were:

> My end is nearing. I have deceived my country. It would have been better if I should have been spared for a couple of years more. I would have gone to England and striven hard to bring about a most satisfactory termination of the Royal Commission and thus would have repaid, although in the smallest degree, the debt I owe to my country.

Gokhale's patriotism and ideals were incarnated in the Servants of India Society, which he established in 1905 with the object of drawing together young men with a spirit of dedication and training them to serve the country through careful study of its problems. Concerning this aspect of Gokhale's work, Srinivasa Sastri wrote:

> Mr Gokhale loved India and her welfare so intensely and so deeply that he would not willingly see it injured by the labours of unprepared, immature, crude workers whose only equipment consisted in a genuine call of patriotism. Patriotism by itself is not enough. It is a noble, powerful, exalted emotion. It is only an emotion. It has got to be directed into useful, fruitful channels and that

> can only be if every worker prepared himself by arduous study, patient study of the realities of India's life and by an appreciation on the spot of the variety of things and circumstances of each particular locality.

This indeed was the model which Gokhale had set before himself. Not the least of his great qualities was the powerful mind which he brought to bear on the problems of the day. His budget speeches reveal careful study and analysis. But an even more important quality of his speeches is his constant reference to the principles of government and his concern with what government *ought* to do. It is this conscious application of the principles and philosophy of government which impart to Gokhale's speeches their abiding interest and their relevance for the future. 'To this day', wrote Mr Chintamani, 'there is scarcely a public question in the consideration of which we do not get some light from the study of one or another of Mr Gokhale's many great speeches.' Gokhale's mastery over detail, his capacity to marshal argument after argument, his remarkable grip over statistics which were made to yield their significance in terms of human suffering, his gentle irony and his moral fervour, the ability to see problems in their historical perspective and, above all, his extraordinary gift of looking at them from every angle and suggesting workable solutions—all these marked him out as the most gifted parliamentarian of his age, and it is doubtful if he has been surpassed to this day. R. P. Paranjpye thus describes the work Gokhale did in the Imperial Legislative Council:

> Gokhale was to the last the most brilliant member of the Imperial Legislative Council, and was popularly called the leader of the Indian opposition, though he himself did not consider that his duty was merely to

oppose Government, but that it was to put before Government the Indian point of view on every question. His annual budget speech was a treat to which everybody, both friend and opponent, looked forward, the one with delight, and the other with fear. An answer had to be given to his arguments, and it is not everybody who could do it at a moment's notice, if at all. On one occasion Lord Kitchener privately asked him the points on which he wished to touch so far as military expenditure was concerned; and out of consideration for the great soldier, who was no debater, Gokhale did not emphasize certain points as much as he would have liked to. His budget speeches always bore their fruit in the succeeding years' budgets. He was always on the side of retrenchment, and did not want Government to take more from the tax-payers than was absolutely necessary.

It was a characteristic of this early period of Indian nationalism that those who participated in politics often devoted themselves to the serious study of public problems. It was all the more necessary in a period when the press had not emerged as a guardian of public interests. Moreover, it was the age of an elitist national movement; the age of mass nationalism had not quite emerged. In 1939 Dr B. R. Ambedkar, delivering the Kale Memorial Lecture, contrasted the India of Ranade with that of Gandhi for which he did not have much sympathy. If allowance is made for Dr Ambedkar's own predilections, his observations deserve to be noted:

> If the India of Ranade was less agitated it was more honest and...if it was less expectant, it was more enlightened. The age of Ranade was an age in which men and women did engage themselves seriously in studying

and examining the facts of their life, and what is more important is that in the face of the opposition of the orthodox mass they tried to mould their lives and their character in accordance with the light they found as a result of their research. In the age of Ranade there was not the same divorce between politician and student which one sees in the Gandhi age. In the age of Ranade a politician, who was not also a student was treated as an intolerable nuisance, if not a danger. In the age of Gandhi learning, if not despised, is certainly not deemed to be a necessary qualification of a politician.

No account of Gokhale can be complete without taking into account the profound influence of Ranade on his mind and outlook. From Ranade he acquired not merely the passion to study public problems on the basis of carefully accumulated data but also a philosophy of life and a theory of progress. Ranade believed that progress to be meaningful and effective must be progress in several directions at the same time. Political change, for instance, required changes in the social structure and in social relationships. Moreover, the past could not be written off. Even if one could do so, it would not be desirable. The old and the new must be combined as far as possible into a functioning synthesis. The real test of the direction of social reform is the gradual liberation of the individual. A frontal attack on customs, however irrational they be, is not the path of wisdom in social reform. People must be made to see the reasons for the change. In this task of social reform, the main responsibility is that of the people themselves but it is often necessary for them to take the help of the state. One of the dominant ideas in the social and economic philosophy of Ranade was the role which the state had to assume in the transformation of the country. This was a great departure from the

assumptions of liberalism in the nineteenth century. Gokhale adopted this strand of thought and made it one of the central elements of his political philosophy. In a moving tribute to Gokhale on his death in 1915, J. B. Raju spoke of the intimacy of the friendship between the two men in words which compel quotation:

> On entering college he came under the influence of the late Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade who moulded his life and shaped his ideals. Mr Gokhale always bore testimony both in public and in private as to what a great privilege it was for him 'to sit humbly and reverently for more than twelve years—the allotted period of discipleship—at the feet of Mr Ranade'. He used to take article after article to Mr Ranade for criticism, and often they were torn up as not quite up to the mark, and Mr Gokhale was never tired of writing them all over again till they were finally approved. Under his guidance he undertook the study of Economics and Political Philosophy and became one of the very few who could speak with authority on such questions in India. During a period of fourteen years of growing intimacy this early discipleship was gradually transformed into a deep and abiding friendship. The story of this friendship is one of the most beautiful romances in modern Indian history. For years they were engaged together in the close study of the progress and destiny of nations, the inner meaning of public events, the far-off results of action, the discipline of failure, service and sacrifice, and the infinite play of human motives and passions, not only in profound treatises of political philosophy but also in the ephemeral effusions of the daily press and in the red, green and blue books of ponderous government documents. Surely, there is no fairer sight on earth than the close communion of two

kindred spirits and it has brought untold blessings in its train for all of us.

Like Ranade and Ram Mohun Roy, Gokhale saw the weaknesses of the Indian tradition, its conservatism and its medieval scholasticism and, above all, its lack of any sustained emphasis on the rights of the individual. He found that rationalism was not an effective principle in the social relations of the Hindus. Further, public life was weak in India because of a lack of discipline and the inability to subject oneself to the demands of leadership. The explosive self-assertiveness of individuals and their tendency to pull in different directions at the same time made concerted action difficult. Finally, in the perspective of history, the individual had no opportunity to strengthen his initiative and drive and influence the decisions of the rulers in any rational way. The whole task of building up the Indian nation and consolidating the new renaissance of India, which had arisen in India by one of the fortunate accidents of human history, as Gokhale saw it, was to liberate the individual from the social inhibitions of the past and make him a self-confident political being, conscious of his rights and political responsibilities. Gokhale's concept of public life was a curious amalgam of ideas derived from the Western political experience and certain values like a self-effacing idealism from the Hindu tradition. This concept was not without its *idealistic* undertones and it was formulated at a time when some of the more visible and articulate features of a modern (or modernizing) society were not yet visible. For instance, Indian working class consciousness had not arisen and it was not therefore possible for Gokhale to think in terms of competing interests in society. But his philosophy of public life, partly derived from his master but largely shaped by the insights of his own study and

experience, underlies his whole life and work and illuminates it. A major characteristic of his social and political thinking was his confidence in the power of reason and in the possibility of influencing men and government by argument and persuasion. In nursing this belief—the groundwork of his whole philosophy—Gokhale was no mere romantic dreamer. No one knew the difficulties of public life and the obstinacy with which men can oppose all reasonable arguments than Gokhale himself. He knew, as well as any one else, the play of the irrational and the dangerous potentialities of the demogogue in rousing the passions and appetites of men. He was aware, too, of the undemocratic trends in his own little social world of Poona in which his life was cast, and which provided the stage for his political activities. Gokhale was deeply wounded by the callous behaviour of the politicians with whom he had to deal. In a letter to G. V. Joshi on 8 February 1896 he wrote:

> But personally I wish now to wash my hands of all political work in Poona. There is so much that is selfish and ignoble here that I would fly from it to the furthest extremities of the world if I could (cited by D. B. Mathur, *Gokhale: A Political Biography*, Manaktalas, Bombay, 1966), p. 41.

Gokhale, however, reconciled himself to the limitations of the social situation in which he had to work. Not once did he stoop to the political morality of his opponents, nor ever say a harsh word which would offend them. Courtesy and gentleness were an essential part of his mental make-up.

Gokhale's great qualities as a teacher are not quite well-known. He kept before himself the highest ideals of the teacher. He had an infinite capacity for taking pains and it is said that when he was required to teach Southey's *Life of*

Nelson, he made several trips to the Bombay harbour in order to familiarize himself with nautical terms. He would teach *The Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* without a book in hand and although he was not endowed with oratorical abilities, he always succeeded in getting his message across. His fluency and word-perfection and the 'musical clearness of his voice' undoubtedly cast a spell over his students as more than one outstanding student has testified. But more than anything else, what was perhaps most catching was his infectious passion for great ideas. T. K. Shahani, an old student and one of his earliest biographers writes: 'To have heard Gokhale lecturing on Burke's *Reflections* was to have drunk at the fountain-head of constitutionalism'. When one recalls the fact that literally thousands of young men must have come into contact with his zeal and idealism, it is possible to have some idea of the extraordinary impact Gokhale must have had on his time.

Gokhale's interest in education was a part of his larger endeavour to modernize India and to lay the foundation for a lasting democratic system by making more and more people understand the burning issues of the day. The exercise of democratic virtues and the passion for the ideas of liberty and social justice are slow to take root, particularly in a society whose tradition is not quite conducive to their growth. Gokhale was aware of this. One of the results of this awareness was his conviction that although specialization has its value, the teacher in India must necessarily be an all-round man. In his speeches on education, Gokhale emphasized the role which it should play in liberating individuals, as he said, 'from the thraldom of old-world ideas'.

For eighteen years, he served the Fergusson College with undivided loyalty and retired in 1902 at the early age of 36 only because the insistent call of public life proved

irresistible. In the course of his farewell address, one of the most endearing passages in his writings, Gokhale said:

> Years ago I remember to have read the story of a man, who lived by the side of the sea, who had a nice cottage and fields that yielded him their abundance, and who was surrounded by a loving family. The world thought that he was very happy. But to him the sea had a strange fascination. When it lay gently, heaving like an infant asleep, it appealed to him; when it raged like an angry and roaring lion, it still appealed to him; till at last he could withstand the fatal fascination no longer. And so having disposed of everything and put his all into a boat, he launched it on the bosom of the sea. Twice was he beaten back by the waves—a warning he would not heed. He made a third attempt when the pitiless sea overwhelmed him. To a certain extent this seems to me to be my position to-day. Here I am with a settled position in this College, and having for my colleagues men with whom it is a pleasure and a privilege to work, and whose generosity in overlooking my many faults and magnifying any little services I may have rendered, has often touched me deeply. And yet, I am giving up all this to embark on the stormy and uncertain sea of public life. But I hear within me a voice which urges me to take this course, and I can only ask you to believe me when I say that it is purely from a sense of duty to the best-interests of our country, that I am seeking this position of greater freedom, but not necessarily of less responsibility. Public life in this country has few rewards and many trials and discouragements. The prospect of work to be done is vast, and no one can say what is on the other side—how all this work may end. But one thing is clear. Those who feel in the matter as I do must devote

themselves to the work in a spirit of hope and faith and seek only the satisfaction which comes of all disinterested exertions. This is not the place where I may speak of my future hopes or lines of work. But one thing I know, and it is this: Whether I am permitted to press onwards and prove of some little use to the public in another capacity, or whether I have to return a weather-beaten, tempest-tost, ship-wrecked mariner, my thoughts, as you have said in your address, will constantly be with this institution; and on the other hand, I shall always be sure of a warm and hospitable welcome within these walls, whenever I choose to come here.

Cast in a heroic mould, Gokhale was not a mass leader like those who were soon to follow him. He never thought of himself as the maker of history or one who had been chosen to play a special role in the events of his time. The great difference between Gokhale and Gandhi—who in an enigmatic phrase described him as his political guru—lay in the estimate each had made of Western civilization. For Gandhi, the progress of India was to be determined by drawing inspiration from India's own history rather than from the West which in his estimate was materialistic. His heart was set on the building up of an India based on self-sufficient village life and he was temperamentally opposed to ambitious schemes of large-scale industrialization. Although Gandhi often said that he was not opposed to machines as such but only to the enslavement of man by technology—an assertion derived largely from Ruskin—the whole thrust of his philosophy was to turn Indian nationalism against the West. Further, a philosophical anarchist by temperament, he had no sympathy for parliamentary institutions. Gokhale, on the other hand, was convinced that modern science and technology had the power

to change and transform India. In holding this view, Gokhale was not unmindful of the poverty of the masses and of village life in general. But India could not afford to shut out the knowledge and the light coming from the outside world. In this, Gokhale adopted a point of view India was to accept as part of her philosophy of development since Independence. In the field of political progress again, Gokhale regarded the gradual introduction of self-governing institutions in the country as an essential part of the political education through which a subject nation like India had to pass. In the *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi wrote: 'I bear no enmity towards the English but I do towards their civilization'. How different was Gokhale's outlook may be seen by even a casual reading of his speeches. He yielded to none in his denunciation of the evil effects of British rule after the Mutiny but he also saw the inseparable link between Westernization and modernization, which seemed even more inseparable against a social tradition which to him seemed to hamper India's progress.

Gandhi saw the power of passive resistance in undermining the foundations of the British Raj. With Tilak, he believed that it would crumble the moment the people withdrew their allegiance. Government exists because people accept it and it was part of his technique to use every kind of symbol in the revolution through which government will be compelled to wither away through non-cooperation. In the process, the political movement would also acquire a mass character. Gokhale was not opposed to passive resistance *per se* so long as every step in the programme contributed to the education of the masses in their own responsibilities. But the idea of non-coperation deeply disturbed him:

> Government may be attacked but it must never be

ignored or by-passed. For government is an essential part of social change, even if it is a foreign government.

Gokhale feared—and if we may judge from the vantage point of contemporary Indian history—rightly so, that passive resistance would ultimately educate the masses into habits of disobedience. This fear was heightened by his belief (mentioned earlier) that Hindu society had no tradition of discipline. Undermining loyalty to the established order, or to use Gokhale's expressive phrase, 'the foundations of public life', is to make constitutional government impossible. This was one of the lasting lessons Gokhale had derived from his study of Burke. At this point, Gokhale and Gandhi seemed to live in different worlds and there was no possible point of contact. For this reason, Gandhi's statement, 'I installed him in my heart of hearts as my teacher in politics', must for ever remain an enigma.

One of the most striking features of modern India since Independence has been the systematic departure from the teachings of Gandhi in almost every important respect. The age of Gandhi had cast a veil over the lasting contributions of the Gokhale period of Indian politics but that veil has now been torn asunder. Every age has the right to read its history in the light of its own contemporary experience and such an exercise may provide the key to the understanding not only of the present but also of the past. The life and work of Gopal Krishna Gokhale belongs to the present, not only to the past, for we have already left behind us Gandhi and all that was characteristic of him.

2.

Social Ideals of Gopal Krishna Gokhale

S. K. MURANJAN

I AM grateful to the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom for its invitation to me to speak on the occasion of the birth centenary of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. It is a privilege and an honour which do not repeat themselves more than two or three times in one's life-time. My acceptance of the invitation is also an act of atonement. It is my firm belief that among the three or four makers of modern India no one has received at the hands of his countrymen less recognition, praise and gratitude to which he is entitled than Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

The life and work of Gopal Krishna Gokhale fall into two broad periods. The first period ends with the year 1902, when he retired from the Fergusson College. The end of this period also coincides with the death of his master, the great Mahadev Govind Ranade. During this time, Gokhale sat at the feet of his master, wearing himself away in the study of Indian problems. He laboured first as secretary to the *Sarvajanik Sabha* and later as secretary of the *Deccan*

Sabha. His anonymous articles in the English columns of the *Sudharak* espoused the cause of social reform and change. This first period of Gokhale is important for us, for we see him grow into a leader, patiently mastering the skills of leadership which he was to display later in life. However, the most outstanding public achievement of Gokhale at this time was the evidence he gave before the Welby Commission which inquired into the state of public expenditure in India. No other witness was cross-examined by the Commission as Gokhale was but his performance was outstanding and placed him, beyond doubt, as the foremost expert on the subject in India. The written evidence and the cross-examination ran into 186 closely printed pages and they reveal, as nothing else does, the strenuous mastery of data and the power of marshalling them, which Gokhale had acquired during the period of his apprenticeship.

The second period spans the years from 1902 till his death in 1915 during which Gokhale made his greatest contribution to Indian politics. During these thirteen years the image of Gokhale which is before us is that of an outstanding political leader and statesman who made his life a sacrifice for his country. This is the period of the great budget orations which, for lucidity, closeness of argument, dignity and sentiment and, above all, for their Burkean eloquence, have never been excelled to this day. It was during this period that he struggled to promote and pilot various measures of social and economic advancement. If he expressed his ideas on social philosophy at this time, it was but incidental to his great, Herculean political efforts.

We must not, however, overlook the decisive fact that Gokhale was the faithful and devoted disciple of the great Ranade. Among the makers of modern India, Ranade holds a unique place. More than anyone else, he was keenly aware that if India was to advance among the nations of

the world it must do so on all fronts. He was a founder of the Indian National Congress and he pioneered the Indian Social Conference over which he presided for several years. It was due to his foresight and vision that the Indian Industrial Conference came into existence. To many earnest minds which were distressed by the prevailing superstitions of popular Hinduism and its social abnormalities, Ranade was the symbol of hope and inspiration. He guided his fellowmen, a cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night. In the field of research and scholarship, no other public leader of his day came within measureable distance of him. It should not surprise us therefore that Gokhale, with such a master to shape his outlook, took his plunge into politics with all the qualities that were needed in a statesman in his day.

It is perhaps permissible, or at least pardonable, if before we proceed further we ask the question—what was the inspiration which impelled Gokhale in his mission and which sustained him in success or failure, amidst praise or obloquy, amidst hostility or unfaltering support? It is instructive to recall that in one of the three great orations which he delivered on his master Ranade, Gokhale asked himself this question. Gokhale was inclined to ascribe Ranade's great and enduring work to his flaming patriotism. But others who were close to Ranade—among them, I believe, G. V. Joshi—found fault with Gokhale for his verdict and pointed to Ranade's deeply religious nature as the abiding source of his achievements. In the case of Gokhale, there can be no doubt about the impelling inspiration—it was just unalloyed patriotism. As for religion, Gokhale proclaimed himself quite candidly an agnostic. His friend K. Natarajan has expressed the view that towards the end of his life Gokhale modified his attitude towards religion. A few days before he died, R. P. Paranjpye expressed a

similar opinion. Natarajan's inference is based on the fact that Gokhale was full of admiration for the work of Swami Vivekananda. To my mind, however, this evidence is hardly conclusive. The fact that Gokhale should have admired the work of Swami Vivekananda in raising the status of India in the eyes of the people of the West is surely not incompatible with his own personal agnosticism. I feel certain that Gokhale remained an agnostic to the end of his days.

As I said earlier, Gokhale's image before us during the latter period of his life is that of an outstanding political leader and statesman who sought the political advancement of his country by every means in his power. As a member of the provincial and imperial councils, he strained every nerve to ameliorate the economic, social and political conditions of India. As India's unofficial ambassador to England, Gokhale negotiated and strove to extract from almost unwilling hands each instalment of political reforms. But alone among the political leaders of his time, Gokhale was convinced that the political education of his countrymen for democracy and freedom must keep pace with political reforms. With this object in view, he overlooked no opportunity to instil his political faith into his countrymen.

What were the tenets of Gokhale's political faith which he sought to instil into his people? His *first* tenet was that all political progress in India must be based on the maintenance of law and order. He asked his countrymen to compare the conditions of the country with those which prevailed in the centuries before the advent of British rule and draw proper conclusions, however unpalatable, from it. In Gokhale's understanding, one of the great blessings of British rule was the establishment of law and order, which must not be disturbed at any cost. *Secondly,* Gokhale adjured his countrymen to accept, freely and without reservation, India's link with Great Britain. The link with Great

Britain was often spoken of as 'providential' and the description has generally been misunderstood. It did not imply an uncritical admiration of the West but merely sought to express the fact that of the rival European powers which sought for supremacy in India in the eighteenth century, it was England which came out successful. This was a piece of good fortune for India. For England had already developed a constitutional tradition and evolved the machinery of parliamentary democracy, which could in the course of time be transplanted in India. In this sense, the success of England over her rivals was, for India, providential. Gokhale, it need hardly be said, put no limits to the political aspirations of his people and set no limits to the destiny of his country. Like Ranade, he was proud of the great historical traditions of India, although as a careful student of Indian history he saw that Indian civilization had ceased to grow from the seventh century and lay dormant till the advent of British rule. The immediate goal which Gokhale set before his country was twofold. Within the country itself, Indians must have complete equality with Englishmen in all spheres of public life. Outside her borders India must have the same status and dignity as the self-governing parts of the British Empire and even countries like France, Germany and Italy. He pointed out that even his great rival Tilak accepted this goal and pleaded that it could be realized within the Empire. The *third* great tenet of Gokhale was that the only proper and feasible means to employ for the attainment of this goal was constitutional agitation. To Gokhale, constitutional agitation ranged from petitions, representations and pressure of public opinion at one extreme to the non-payment of taxes on the other. It is obvious that Gokhale had in his mind England's own history—the role which the principle of 'no taxation without representa-

tion' had played in the growth of English constitutional history.

In the course of a great oration at Bangalore, Gokhale was asked whether he could cite a single example from history where a subject people achieved their political liberation by constitutional agitation. Gokhale pointed out that human history does not disclose any two identical parallels. He proceeded to admit candidly that history furnishes no example of political liberation through constitutional agitation. But he strongly pleaded with his countrymen to aspire to set a new precedent in history—a precedent which would be as beneficial to the world as to India herself.

Gokhale's faith in the ultimate triumph of the Indian cause stemmed from his unbounded faith in democracy whether in India or elsewhere and his prophetic vision of the new forces which had come into play in the twentieth century. He realized, as few others did, the greatly entrenched monopoly of power and position of the British bureaucracy in India and how hard it was to make it bend to the will and aspirations of the people. Although an appeal to the officials in India might fail to bring about reform in the desired direction, it was always possible, Gokhale thought, to make an appeal to the people of England since the ultimate control of Indian administration rested in England. Moreover, to continue the Empire half slave, half free was hardly in consonance with the spirit of English political traditions.

Gokhale's own time saw the emergence of new forces in Britain. The great age of William Wilberforce, who strove for the abolition of slavery and that of John Stuart Mill, who made a passionate appeal for the rights and the dignity of the individual and had expounded his ideas on representative government, was coming to a close. A new faith was asserting itself in a section of British society. It made no apology for the empire or for imperialism and believed with

a religious faith that Britain had a pre-ordained destiny in world affairs. This new imperialism took the character of a crusade and found its most colourful exponent in Lord Curzon with whom Gokhale had often to cross swords with a skill and valour which extorted not merely the admiration of his fellowmen but that of Lord Curzon himself. Little did the British imperialists imagine that if England claimed for itself a world-destiny in virtue of an already acquired empire, there were other nations which would claim for themselves a future destiny in virtue of potential empires yet to be acquired and that the two imperialisms would have to settle their claims in a world armageddon of the most destructive character. At the other extreme, in India, there arose the spirit of nationalism which derived its inspiration from that of the 19th century and looked for its guidance to the achievements of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Kossuth. Both British imperialism and Indian nationalism were backward-looking. In contrast, Gokhale, the statesman was forward-looking with a lively comprehension of the new forces which were asserting themselves in the twentieth century. Gokhale thought of the development of the nation not by deriving inspiration from India's past but by seeking to shape it on modern lines by guiding and shaping the forces of his time.

Proud as Gokhale was of India's ancient past and optimistic as he was about the present and the future, Gokhale was too honest and clear-eyed to overlook the serious obstacles which lay in the way. He was keenly sensitive to the inherent deficiencies of India's new-born nationalism. The division of Hindus into a welter of castes, the chasm which separated Hindus and Muslims, the tragic position of the untouchable classes—all these indicated grave dangers. These disturbed him profoundly and he was not willing to underestimate the strength of traditionalism. In a great

speech delivered at Dharwar, he pleaded the cause of the untouchables on three main grounds—justice, humanity and self-interest. He recalled to his audience the anger and indignation which all Indians felt against the discriminations and indignities from which Indians suffered in South Africa. Indians, he declared, were justified in resisting to the utmost any measures which treated them as less than equal with the Britishers there. But he exhorted his people not to forget the crimes which they themselves were practising against their own countrymen. Justice demanded that before we asked for equality, we ourselves practised it. He condemned as strongly as he could the obsession of the Hindu mind with pollution, which led to the degrading treatment of India's untouchables. There was something incongruous for Indians to insist on race equality in other countries while practising one of the worst forms of social inequality in their own. Finally, Gokhale saw clearly the struggle for political liberation which was soon to come. In this struggle, it was necessary that the depressed classes of India threw in their lot with the rest of the society rather than seek protection from the foreigner. Apart from justice and humanity, sheer self-interest, Gokhale argued, demanded that the untouchables be integrated with the rest of society and made to feel that they were self-respecting and respected citizens with the same rights as other people in the country.

Gokhale faced the Hindu-Muslim question with his usual perspicacity and candour. He viewed the problem in the context of Indian history, the difference of traditions and the distrust if not antagonism between the two communities. He hoped that as their representatives worked together in the political institutions—from local boards and municipalities to the very top in the Imperial Legislative Council, this distrust would yield to mutual faith and co-operation. On the question of representation in democratic institutions,

Gokhale made proposals which deserve to be remembered in the light of what transpired subsequently. According to him, at the first stage, elections were to take place in a general electorate. If any community fell short of the representation to which its numerical strength entitled it, then only at the next stage were elections to take place through communal electorates, the purpose being to restore the numerical balance. Gokhale deprecated very strongly any representation in excess of numerical strength. In particular, he warned against allocating a special importance to any community on grounds of tradition or religion. Finally, he declared himself quite prepared to extend this safeguard to any community which felt its future in peril from any quarter. In their despatch to the Secretary of State, the Government of India accepted these proposals. But for an inexplicable blunder made by Lord Morley in announcing the proposals to the House of Lords, the whole scheme would have gone through.

In Gokhale's days the question of student participation in active politics was hotly debated. Gokhale dealt with this problem in a great oration delivered before the Students' Brotherhood of Bombay. First of all, he repudiated the accusation frequently made against Indian students that they disclosed a too early interest in politics compared with students abroad. Gokhale asserted that this was due to the inherent difference between self-governing and subject peoples. In self-governing countries, the burning topics were specific measures — foreign politics, measures of taxation, social security, and the like. Such specific measures inevitably involved difficult and complex issues which were beyond the understanding of the students. It was therefore natural that the student world preferred to leave these decisions to their elders. In India, the one problem which confronted everyone was the termination of the political subjection of the

country, which naturally roused the deepest of emotions. It was therefore hardly surprising if young Indian students felt it necessary to throw themselves whole-heartedly into the struggle for freedom. The literature, the history, even the philosophy they read about in their class room had a bearing on this great issue and shaped the mind and inclinations of the student world. Nevertheless, Gokhale exhorted his student audience to cultivate self-restraint. According to him, educational authorities should encourage to the fullest extent study of politics within the portals and precincts of universities and colleges. Leaders in politics should be freely invited to participate and guide these discussions. But Gokhale warned students against active involvement in politics. The ideal he set before young students is well reflected in the rules he prescribed for the neophytes of his Servants of India Society. Among the vows he prescribed for the new recruits was that for the first five years the new recruits must not make a public speech, or write an article in his own name or involve himself in active politics. It was to be a period of intense training and apprenticeship in which he was to prove himself worthy and capable of the great responsibilities which lay ahead.

In this connection he warned the students of the grave danger from participation in politics—particularly that of an immature democracy like India's. Politics rouses the passions and inculcates habits of intolerance. Gokhale was undoubtedly speaking from his own experience, for no great leader had suffered more from intolerance, and particularly student intolerance, than Gokhale himself. While in England, he was bombarded with letters from Poona about the excesses of British soldiers in administering plague measures and was moved to publish these allegations in the British press. There was an uproar in Parliament and outside and when Gokhale was summoned to substantiate his charges,

his informants were not forthcoming to give evidence. For Gokhale, truth was a passion and when he found that he could not substantiate his charges against the administration, he saw no alternative but to tender his unqualified apology to the government. This act of his called forth fierce denunciation from every quarter. When Gokhale made his appearance at the next Congress session at Amraoti, he was treated with marked hostility and discourtesy, particularly by delegates from Bengal and Maharashtra—the two most politically conscious areas of the country. We cannot recall this episode now without a sense of shame and horror and can only imagine what tortures the sensitive soul of Gokhale must have passed through. The second occasion when Gokhale passed through a similar purgatory occurred when Tilak faced his great trial in Bombay and was sentenced to seven years' transportation. Tilak's followers freely asserted and publicized that the prosecution and sentence were both at the instigation of Gokhale, who was then in England managing delicate negotiations about the next instalment of reforms with Lord Morley. Foremost in this campaign of hate and defamation were two papers, *Vande Mataram* of Calcutta and *Hindi Panch* of Thana. Though both the papers were penalized severely for defamation Gokhale, sensitive and retiring, was shaken to his innermost being. Life in Poona became intolerable and he considered seriously the idea of moving his headquarters to Bombay, but ultimately surrendered—unfortunately, I think, for the larger interests of his country—to the pressure of his friends.

I have but briefly indicated the more prominent aspects of Gokhale's social outlook. His thoughts on contemporary social issues, on the question of compulsory elementary education and on the universities bill, on the state of the economy and the high level of taxation, the problems of

development in different fields and, above all, his passion for the suffering masses are the constant themes of his great budget speeches. In the sweet persuasion which Gokhale always employed, no objection remains unnoticed, no experience here or abroad uncited, no detail or fact, however complicated, unmarshalled. The flow of words carries a marvellous rhythm of construction and a Miltonic dignity of sentiment which have never been equalled, much less excelled, in India before or after Gokhale, with the sole exception perhaps of Srinivasa Sastri. It was no exaggeration when in a great tribute which Lord Curzon paid to Gokhale in the House of Lords on his demise, he placed him even above Asquith as a parliamentarian.

These speeches which embody his reflections on the problems of his day constitute the legacy he left behind. They are, by themselves, the most lasting monument we have for the life and work of Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

3.

Political Philosophy of Gopal Krishna Gokhale

S. P. Aiyar

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was not a political philosopher in the sense in which the term is commonly used. He did not build up consciously any system of thought on a level of abstraction which would merit the term 'philosophy'. His main concern was not the exploration of ideas pertaining to state and society but the transformation of India. He left behind no Essay on Liberty or any treatise on the principles of political obligation. The main body of his writings were concerned with influencing the policies of the government of his day or with the political education of his countrymen. These speeches and writings constitute a well of constitutional wisdom, pure and undefiled.[1]

Although Gokhale was preoccupied with the burning issues of his day, he compelled the officials to view them in the light of the larger principles of liberalism. It is this

[1] They were published by G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras. I have made use of the third edition, 1920, cited hereafter as G.A.N.

constant appeal to 'principles' and to reason which impart to Gokhale's writings a relevance which transcends his own times. These writings present a remarkable similarity with those of another great liberal of modern India, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar, whose collected works have not received in India the attention which they so richly deserve.[2]

Gokhale's writings have often been compared with those of Edmund Burke, from whom he undoubtedly drew part of his inspiration and even ideas. Both were concerned with contemporary issues and both raised the level of their discussions by constant reference to the principles of government. But Gokhale surpassed Burke from one point of view. Unlike Burke, he never once allowed himself to be dominated and tyrannized by the sway of emotions and did not indulge in uncontrolled rhetoric. Gokhale's strength lay in the debater's skill, the power of marshalling facts and quoting authorities whose veracity the government could not possibly refuse to accept. His quotations were drawn from Blue Books, statements of officials and established writings on the subject. And above all, Gokhale had a remarkable ability to see the point of view of the opponent and present it in the most charitable manner before he demolished it. This quality Burke sorely lacked. The main corpus of Gokhale's writings are linked together organically by a philosophy of government derived from his study of the great masters of political thought.

All political philosophy is necessarily rooted in the historical experiences of men and this is true even if the philosopher uses the utopia as the model for the presentation of his ideas. Gokhale's political philosophy is no exception to this general rule. It has to be viewed against the

2 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, (ed) *A Great Liberal* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1965).

background of the profound changes brought about by the Western impact on the traditional society of India as it existed till about the middle of the eighteenth century. Contact with the West brought into the country a body of thought which was to stir the mind of India. India was never to be the same any more. Thus the most far-reaching changes were begun in the world of ideas, and to these we may turn our attention briefly for they provide the backdrop for the study of the political philosophy of Gokhale.

The first and most important idea derived from the Western impact was the idea of Progress. The traditional Hindu way of life allotted to every man a pre-ordained status and position and it was his duty to abide by the rules and mores of the caste in which he was born. This was his *dharma*. The result of this belief was the co-existence of innumerable castes and sub-castes, which prevented any contact or combination for a common purpose. The only notion of progress known to the Hindu mind was that of cosmic evolution or the 'progress' of the individual soul. The idea of secular progress, the belief that society can be consciously transformed through the collective efforts of men, that man has the knowledge and power which he can use to this end, was a Western import. A corollary of the idea of progress was the notion that government is constituted by men for the good of society and can be influenced to take decisions which a large body of citizens deem necessary for improvement in any direction. They could also prevent it from enforcing decisions which were believed to affect adversely the mass of people.[3]

Secondly, government exists for the individual and

[3] It is interesting in this connection to recall the public debate which preceded the prevention of *Suttee* in 1829. When the govern-

therefore the limits of governmental power are set by what individuals think is good for them and for society.

Thirdly, Government does not exist for any class or group of individuals to the exclusion of society as a whole. It stands as a great arbiter between competing interests and must therefore be impartial and not favour any individual or group on the basis of caste or religion or any other consideration. It must not, above all, interfere with the religious ideas and ways of life of the people. Thus emerged the idea of secularism.

Finally, Western thought introduced the concept of the self-willing individual. Man in traditional Hindu thought was conceived of primarily as a spiritual being. What was new was the notion of the individual as a citizen, a repository of rights. He had the power to shape his own destiny and was not a creature driven by cosmic forces. Since the individual had the right to be 'free', it followed that *every* individual had this freedom. Consequently, all men were politically equal. This idea of political equality had a revolutionary effect on a society built and structured on the principle of 'biological' inequality.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a child of this intellectual revolution. He was born in 1866. The Proclamation of Queen Victoria had just sought to mollify the discontent which had given rise to the Mutiny and had laid down the broad principles of governance for the future. The universities of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta had been established in 1857 and were rapidly creating a class of educated people

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ment of the East India Company sought to ascertain the pulse of the people it did so, undoubtedly, not on the principle of democracy but on that of survival. But the fact that government found it necessary to take into account the possible responses of the public was only too evident. Such a thing had never been done before; it was foreign to the Hindu conception of kingship.

who had been exposed to the revolutionary ideas of modern Europe. The organization of public life was being hastened by the railways, which had been introduced in the previous year. Public life was beginning to emerge; intellectuals were gradually awakening to the role which they could play in the larger processes of change. The railways made it possible for educated people and leaders of thought and opinion in different parts of the country to come together and organize themselves for a common purpose. There was now a degree of mobility unknown in India before and it created the nationalism which found its striking expression in the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Finally, the government was beginning to be aware of the importance of consulting the leaders of particular organized interests in society. Under the Indian Councils Act of 1861, a few Indians were included both in the Central and Provincial councils.

To complete the picture of the immediate historical background of Gokhale's life and thought we must take into account three factors which figure prominently in his speeches.

In the first place, the civil service had emerged as a great bureaucratic power, highly centralized and having its own internal channels of communication but often unresponsive and insensitive to public opinion. By the time Gokhale plunged into politics in the 1880s, public opinion had become a reality. When Gokhale made his first public speech at Kolhapur in 1886, the Congress was just a year old but it was soon to be looked down upon by the conservative sections of the British official class as a 'microscopic minority.' The bureaucracy developed into a vast machine and its soulless character reached its apogee during the vice-royalty of Lord Curzon.

Secondly, the bureaucracy developed a theory of enlightened paternalism, assuming that the officials knew what was good for the people of India without even bothering to understand their wishes and sentiments. The policy of Indianization of the services which had been promised in the Charter Act of 1833 and reiterated in the Royal Proclamation was never seriously implemented, with the result that the large body of educated Indians found themselves cut off from employment in the higher ranks of the civil service. They felt alienated and frustrated and their frustration was being reflected in their political outlook.

Thirdly, in spite of the relative stability after the Mutiny, the country's economy was deteriorating. The expenditure on the army and on the bureaucracy therefore appeared to the educated classes as an enormous waste of public expenditure. These factors provided the setting for Gokhale's political activities and his political thought was influenced powerfully by these circumstances of the time.

Gokhale's Views on Public Life

The growth of nationalism and the gradual emergence of the educated classes in the 1880s as a factor in the politics of the time make it convenient for us to begin our study of Gokhale's political thought by analysing his views on public life. He saw the educated classes of India as occupying a middle position between the unresponsive bureaucracy on the one hand and the inert masses of the country on the other. Apart from their great anxiety to secure positions in government, the educated classes were not inspired by any ideals of working for the public good. Nor were they aware in any noticeable measure of the role which they *could* play in the political transformation of India. In a lecture

on Public Life in India,[4] Gokhale outlined his views on the subject in some detail. Public life, he explained, could not become a meaningful reality unless there exists a body of people who are willing to take upon themselves the task of bringing about changes in society and working for the public good. Public life had two characteristics: it exists for the public benefit and it is one in which a large section of the people, if not all of them, participate. Public life acquired meaning when society moved from personal forms of government to those which were democratic. India was, he said, far behind the people of the West in the organization of public life. In the West, public life had succeeded in securing to the people political liberties, in 'widening the bounds of freedom', and in 'discharging efficiently those responsibilities which always come with political liberties'. Gokhale was contrasting public life with private life, and in doing this he was adopting a line of thought which goes back to the ancient Greeks.[5] But there probably was an indigenous element in his concept of public life. Political activity, he was to assert over and over again, must be pure and selfless. This idea of a self-effacing idealism is a recurring theme in Gokhale even as it is in the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and indeed, in that of many of the political figures of modern India. The *saintly idiom* of

[4] *Public Life in India* (Bombay: The National Literature Publishing Company, 1922).

[5] The rise of the city state indicated that man now had apart from his own private life a second life (his *bios politikos*); there emerged the distinction between those things which concerned his own life (*idion*) and those which constituted his communal life (*koinon*). The Greeks used the word *idiotes* to refer to a person who was solely and exclusively preoccupied with himself; this is the origin of the word 'idiot'. For an illuminating discussion of the 'Public and the Private' see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), Part II,

Indian politics, a term which Professor Morris-Jones has made popular, is found unmistakably in Gokhale, but this is probably the only indigenous element which we find in his political thought.

Public life in India, he said, is a 'plant of new growth in this land and you must not, therefore, expect a very tender plant to have that strength which you find in more sturdy growths'. Public life can only develop gradually but all sections of society have a responsibility in contributing to it, particularly the educated classes. He deplored the pathetic dependence of educated people on government service: 'You remember that the expression "public service" has been used in the past to represent Government service. A man in public service means usually a man who is an official. All that has to alter for our people now. The meaning of public service now for our people should be voluntary service in the interest of our fellow-beings. Government service must be dethroned from the place which it has held in our hearts all these years....'[6] The responsibility of educated leadership was heightened by the apathy of the masses who, Gokhale says, are generally inert 'except under the sway of a religious impulse'.[7] Gokhale saw public life in India rendered difficult by its innumerable divisions and sub-divisions. Indian society was prone to factions and it had no tradition of orderly and disciplined activity. Public life in India lacked the capacity to organize itself for any

[6] *Public Life in India*, pp. 8, 34. In "The Work Before Us" (1907) Gokhale deplored the scramble for government employment and said that he would not be sorry if this ceased; educated men must strike out independent careers for themselves. University men 'should give up all thought of personal advancement and devote themselves in a spirit of sacrifice to the service of the motherland.' G.A.N., p. 955.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 948.

sustained activity.[8] In the face of this social fact, the power of the bureaucracy was entrenched and there was no possibility of political freedom being achieved in the forseeable future. Gokhale accepted the historical situation in which he had to play his part as critic of government and as national leader. A recurring idea in Gokhale's writings is that leaders of public life must reconcile themselves by serving their country through disinterested activity regardless of results. Superficially viewed, we have here the political counterpart of the *Karmayogin*, indifferent alike to failure and success. But a deeper study of Gokhale's thought would show that his concept of a political leader is very different. Since public life is a matter of slow growth, even a failure may be deemed a success, if it contributes in the long run to the political education of the people.[9] A classic expression of this aspect of Gokhale's political thought is

[8] Lest it be concluded that this critical view of Hindu society was the result of Gokhale's Western education, it is worthwhile recalling the similar line of thought in Swami Vivekananda:

'The secret of [the] Westerner's success is this power of combination the basis of which is mutual trust and appreciation.' *Life and Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati, Almora: Advaita Ashram, 1944), p. 161. Again, 'There are many things to be done, but means are wanting in this country. We have brains but no hands.' *Ibid.*, p. 332.

[9] Gokhale once complained to Ranade: 'What is the good of taking all this trouble and submitting these memorials, if Government don't care to say anything more than that they have noted the contents of our letter?' Ranade replied: 'You don't realize our place in the history of our country. These memorials are nominally addressed to Government; in reality, they are addressed to the people, so that they may learn how to think in these matters. This work must be done for many years without expecting any results, because politics of this kind is altogether new in this land. Besides, if Government note the contents of what we say, even that is something.' T. V. Parvate, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1959), p. 33.

found in the noble peroration at the close of his speech on the *Elementary Education Bill* in the Imperial Legislative Council on 18 March 1912:

> My Lord, I know that my Bill will be thrown out before the day closes. I make no complaint. I shall not even feel depressed. I know too well the story of the preliminary efforts that were required even in England, before the Act of 1870 was passed, either to complain or to feel depressed. Moreover, I have always felt and have often said that we, of the present generation in India, can only hope to serve our country by our failures. The men and women who will be privileged to serve her by their successes will come later. We must be content to accept cheerfully the place that has been allotted to us in our onward march. This Bill, thrown out to-day, will come back again and again, till on the stepping-stones of its dead selves, a measure ultimately rises which will spread the light of knowledge throughout the land. It may be that this anticipation will not come true. It may be that our efforts may not conduce even indirectly to the promotion of the great cause which we all have at heart and that they may turn out after all to be nothing better than the mere ploughing of the sands of the sea-shore. But, my Lord, whatever fate awaits our labours, one thing is clear. We shall be entitled to feel that we have done our duty, and, where the call of duty is clear, it is better even to labour and fail than not to labour at all.

Politics for Gokhale was the realm of the possible. With the poet, he would have said,

> Bring your dreams to the second best,
> For the best may never come,

the 'never come' to be interpreted to mean in the forseeable future. For Gokhale what was important in a society that was largely apathetic and inert was the creation of a *climate for change* and showing to the masses the possibilities of mitigating the conditions under which they lived. But the social transformation had necessarily to be a slow and gradual one and could not be achieved without the co-operation of all sections of the society and, above all, without that of the government. What public life in India required more than anything else was integration. Speaking on *The Work Before Us* at Allahabad on 4 February 1907 Gokhale emphasized three aspects of this process:

First, the promotion of a closer union among the different sections of the Indian community—between the Hindus and the Mohamedans—and among the different sections of the Hindus themselves;

Second, the development of a stronger and higher type of character, firm of purpose, and disciplined in action; and

Third, the cultivation of an intense feeling of nationality throughout the country rising superior to caste and creed and rejoicing in all sacrifice for the motherland, accompanied by a spread of political education among the masses.

Gokhale's Thoughts on Government

Gokhale's views on the role and functions of Government and particularly that of the bureaucracy in the Indian situation of his day are to be found in several of his speeches. Pieced together, they give us a clear and coherent idea of his political thought.

Speaking in the Imperial Legislative Council on 17 March 1911 on *The Employment of Indians in the Public Service,* Gokhale outlined his conception of good government. The first test of government, he said, was that it should be *continuously progressive;* secondly, it must work for the

material and moral improvement of the people; thirdly, it must take steps for giving the people a larger share in the management of local affairs and finally, it must *Indianize* the services.

In Gokhale's understanding, a government cannot afford to rest content on what it had already done. The function of a government is dynamic; new problems constantly arise and there are no 'limits' to good government. It cannot afford to postpone reforms in the face of a rising tide of popular discontent. At the close of his Budget Speech in 1908 Gokhale warned:

> Whatever reforms are taken in hand let them be dealt with frankly and generously. And, my Lord, let not the words 'too late' be written on every one of them. For while the Government stands considering, hesitating, receding, debating within itself 'to grant or not to grant, that is the question'—opportunities rush past it which can never be recalled. And the moving finger writes and having writ, moves on.

When Gokhale spoke of the 'material and moral improvement of the people' he did not refer merely to the maintenance of the external conditions of public order, to the provision of the essential lines of communications, the railways, post and telegraph, but continuous effort for economic development with an accent on agriculture and industry, the improvement of sanitation and, above all, the promotion of education at all levels. Education was for Gokhale, as it was for Ram Mohun Roy, the key to the economic and social transformation of India. I have referred above to Gokhale's emphasis on the need to bring about a *climate of change*, in the silent, uneventful, static world of the masses and give them a ray of hope. For

Gokhale, the supreme value of education, particularly, elementary mass education, lay in this direction. In the course of his speech on the *Elementary Education Bill* (1912) Gokhale observed:

> No one is so simple as to imagine that a system of universal education will necessary mean an end to all our ills, or that it will open out to us a new heaven and a new earth. Men and women will still continue to struggle with their imperfections and life will still be a scene of injustice and suffering, of selfishness and strife. Poverty will not be banished because illiteracy has been removed, and the need for patriotic or philanthropic work will not grow any the less. But with the diffusion of universal education the mass of our countrymen will have a better chance in life. With universal education there will be hope of better success for all efforts, official or non-official, for the amelioration of the people—their social progress, their moral improvement, their economic well-being. I think, my Lord, with universal education, the mass of the people will be better able to take care of themselves against the exactions of unscrupulous money-lenders or against the abuses of official authority by petty men in power.

In the field of higher education, he saw the creative role that Western education was playing in the making of modern India. Its greatest work was 'not so much the encouragement of learning as the liberation of the Indian mind from the thraldom of old-world ideas, and the assimilation of all that is best in the life and thought and character of the west.... For this all western education is useful'.[10] It is for this reason, again, that Gokhale laid emphasis, as

[10] 'The Indian Universities Act' (1903), G. A. N., p. 235.

Paranjpye informs us, on the study of European history which presents the growth of the democratic idea, while Indian history was, for the most part, a detailed chronicle of numerous dynasties which ruled the country.[11]

The third test of good government—the extent to which people share in the administration of local affairs—is one which occurs again and again in his pronouncements in the course of his political career. He saw the evils of a centralized bureaucracy and pleaded constantly for political decentralization, the strengthening of municipal government, the establishment of District Advisory Councils and increased participation of the people at the lower levels of the administration. His views on this aspect of government are set out in great detail in the statement which he submitted to the Royal Commission on Decentralization (1908) which was presided over by Charles Hobhouse, the Financial Secretary of the Treasury. Also in his speech on *District Advisory Councils* in the Imperial Legislative Council on 27 January 1912 Gokhale argued that real vitality in district administration could not be secured by a mechanical process of delegation of powers to the Collectors. Gone were the days when the Collector could hope to exercise his authority in the spirit of a benevolent autocrat. The spread of education, the ferment of ideas and the power of the vernacular press had made the established pattern of district administration an anachronism. It was necessary to revitalize local boards and municipalities and give the people a feeling of participation in what concerned them. Gokhale's observations on this theme partake of the character of suggestions on administrative reform and do not constitute political thought.

[11] John S. Hoyland, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1947), p. 10.

Nevertheless, his views stem from a philosophy of local self-government which he derived from his study of John Stuart Mill. In his speech on the *Mofussil Municipalities Bill* in the Bombay Legislative Council on 12 February 1901 Gokhale quoted with approval Mill's views on the value of local self-government in the political education of the people. The idea that government itself must assume responsibility for exploring the avenues of increased public participation as a means to their political education runs like a golden thread in the rich tapestry of Gokhale's political thought. At the close of his statement to the Royal Commission on Decentralization, Gokhale pleaded for bringing government closer to the people: 'the car of Administration should not merely roll over their bodies . . . they themselves should be permitted to pull at the ropes.' Mere proficiency in the vernaculars and attempts to promote greater social intercourse between the people and the Collector were only surface 'remedies'. People must have an *interest* in administration.

The fourth test, the Indianization of services had relevance only to the public services as they were constituted in his day and has only historical significance today. However, his observations on this aspect of government draw our attention to some universal truths. In Gokhale's day, the bureaucracy had emerged, as indicated earlier, as a vast power machine. It was, for the most part, the preserve of the foreigner and it had developed an unhealthy seclusion. Officials constituted a kind of caste of super-brahmins. The intensification of race feeling after the Mutiny had strained the relationship between the British and Indians. It was believed that both efficiency and integrity in the services required the maintenance of the white man's monopoly over the administration. In many of his speeches Gokhale sought to drive home to the Government the unwisdom of

British policy on this matter. He approached the problem from many angles and presented arguments from every point of view. The exclusion of Indians from the public services had led to several evil consequences: it led to the 'steady dwarfing of the race', the abilities of people were gradually becoming less and less through disuse. It led to loss of confidence in government, for Indianization had been the established policy since 1833; it was an important factor in the rising political discontent of the educated unemployed who quickly transmitted it to the masses. Even if it were true that Indians were not equal to the foreigner and could not expect the equality of treatment promised by the Charter Act of 1833 and the Royal Proclamation of 1858, this did not prevent movement in the right direction.[12] The attitude of educated Indians to British rule was bound to be affected disastrously, if they were led to believe that they were excluded from the highest offices of the land for all time.[13] In his Budget Speech of 1905, Gokhale exposed the injustice of British policy with the rhetorical question: 'As regards the question of education and morals being involved in our exclusion from most of the offices in the special departments, is it really intended to be conveyed that among the thousands and thousands of educated Indians who are ready to seek employment under the State, even a few cannot be found possessing the necessary education and moral character or qualified to exercise the desired degree of responsibility?' A final argument which Gokhale employed was the moral effects of the exclusion of Indians from the services. In the Budget Speech of 1903, he said:

> The question of the wider employment of Indians in the

[12] 'Budget Speech' (1903), G.A.N., p. 60.
[13] 'Budget Speech' (1905), G.A.N., p. 101.

> higher branches of the Public Service of their own country is one which is intimately bound up, not only with the cause of economic administration, but also with the political elevation of the people of India. There is no other country in the world where young men of ability and education find themselves so completely shut out from all hopes of ever participating in the higher responsibilities of office.

To these four characteristics of good government, which Gokhale mentions in the course of a single speech, may be added others which he suggests elsewhere.

The idea that government must be sensitive to public opinion and to the needs and sentiments of the people, and not work in an oppressive twilight of secrecy occurs frequently in Gokhale's speeches. A foreign government must strive to understand the point of view of the people over whom they were ruling; there was need, he said, for the government to consider the 'Indian point of view'. In Gokhale's days, the officials had several objections to instituting a formal machinery for popular consultation, like District Advisory Councils, recommended by Gokhale. Some of these were: (1) The officials wanted a system of informal consultation so that they could consult whom they wanted and whenever required, without being bound by rules. (2) It was difficult to know who were the real representatives of the people. (3) Administrative efficiency would suffer. (4) The time had not yet come for continuous formal consultation. Gokhale answered every one of these charges in the course of his speech on the District Advisory Councils. He pointed out to the dangers of informal consultation. He regretted the fact that the average level of character in India was not very high with the result that there were always people who sought to put themselves in official favour

by supplying information which would please the government: 'Under the present system of consulting whom we please, we often find men of straw, men of no character, insinuating themselves into the favour of officials and backbiting innocent people and exercising a pernicious influence'. The persons who are consulted must have a sense of responsibility of the position they have, and this is only possible in a system of formal consultation.

Gokhale argued that the denial of responsibility to people, particularly the educated section of the public, is to turn them into captious and irresponsible critics of government:

> If you keep them out of administration, they will soon become mere critics of the administration. Now, the limits of fair criticism are soon reached, after which there can be only unfair criticism. If you have a large section of the community in the position of mere critics, fair criticism being soon exhausted and unfair criticism having set in, each succeeding critic tries to go one better than each preceding one and the criticism passed tends daily to become more and more unfair.[14]

It is impossible for any Indian to read this passage to-day without becoming painfully aware of how relevant it is to our present discontents. Nothing corrodes the prestige of government and consequently that climate of thought and behaviour which sustains government and which we describe by the word 'constitutionalism' than the growing volume of irresponsible criticism produced, for the most part, by an unresponsive and unsympathetic government. Gokhale attributed the unrest of his times to the denial of

[14] 'District Advisory Councils' (1912), G.A.N., p. 487.

responsibility to the people. In his address on *Students and Politics*, he said:

> Responsibility alone will steady our judgments and control the restlessness of our patriotism. Where responsibility has been conferred, as in municipal matters, students feel no interest before their time. As we cease to fill the role of mere critics of the administration and are admitted to a participation in the responsibilities of Government, our politics will advance from the sentimental to the responsible stage, and the precocious interest at present felt in it by our young men will tend to disappear.

What was true of non-participation was equally true, Gokhale asserted, of the tendency of government to function in secrecy. Criticism by the press was the only outward check on the officials who possessed absolute and uncontrolled power and it was not proper to gag the press and deny it access to information. It is quite true, he said, that the press sometimes embarrassed the government by publishing certain types of circulars but the real remedy was to discourage the issue of such confidential circulars. 'From the standpoint of rulers, no less than that of the ruled, it will be most unfortunate if Indian papers were thus debarred from writing about matters which agitate the Indian community most.'[15] Further: 'The Press is, in one sense, like the Government, a custodian of public interests, and any attempt to hamper its freedom by repressive legislation is bound to affect these interests prejudicially, and cannot fail in the end to react upon the position of the Government

[15] 'The Official Secrets Act' (1903), G.A.N., p. 215-16,

itself.'[16] Official secrecy gives rise, he pointed out, to rumours which did great damage to the people's view of government. The Official Secrets Act had sought to make the visit to any office without lawful authority, an offence. Gokhale argued that this was a serious threat to the freedom of the common citizen who had often to go to public offices for the most routine inquiries. Above all, it placed a dangerous amount of power in the hands of the lower ranks of the police administration, of which he did not have a particularly high opinion. In his speech on the *Police Administration* on 27 January 1912 Gokhale drew attention to the threats to the privacy of the citizen from the activities of the Criminal Investigation Department which was manned, for the most part, by men of low character.

Efficiency Is Not Enough

In the heydey of enlightened paternalism in the 1880s, efficiency was becoming the watchword of officials, although it was not an established fact of the administration. It was also a convenient excuse for excluding Indians from the higher ranks of the public services. Gokhale pointed out on several occasions that there were obvious limits to the efficiency which a foreign bureaucracy could hope to achieve. It was a highly centralized system in which men who held power had no contact with anyone who could be 'permanently identified with the interests of the people'. The men at the centre held power for five years and they returned to England, even before they had begun to understand the problems they had been called upon to deal with. Further, although the bureaucracy as a whole was powerful, each individual member lacked the initiative for bringing about change. And even if they were men of ability, knowledge

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 222.

and experience, they soon retired to their own country, thus depriving India of the valuable services which they could render. A few returned to the country but they got 'lost in the crowd, their knowledge and experience finding, perhaps, occasional expression in a letter to the newspapers'. Vital problems which affected the people of India were thus left to themselves, while those who could assist the government were not associated. The educated classes were consequently in a 'discontented frame of mind' and in such a situation, efficiency was not to be hoped for. Finally, 'the officials look at every question from the standpoint of their own power. They jealously guard their own monopoly of power, and subordinate everything to this consideration. The interests of the services are thus allowed to take precedence of the interests of the people'.[17] Genuine efficiency, Gokhale urged, could only come when the energies of the people were released through their participation in a well-regulated system of self-government.[18] Government, Gokhale believed, should consider not only what it does but how and when it does it. The time for the implementation of policies and the manner of implementation were important and for this the rulers must have imagination. This was one of his many grievances against the administration of Lord Curzon on whom the gods had lavished many splendid qualities, but 'withheld from him a sympathetic imagination without which no man can ever understand an alien people; and it is a sad truth that at the end of his administration Lord Curzon did not really understand the people of India.'[19] In his relentless obsession with the partition of Bengal, Curzon had not consulted anyone save a few senior officials. Speaking in London on

[17] 'Indian Affairs' (1905), G.A.N., p. 944.
[18] 'Self-Government For India', G.A.N., pp. 988-9.
[19] 'Benares Congress Presidential Address', G.A.N., p. 681.

15 November 1905 Gokhale asked: 'Now, is this the way British rule is to be maintained after a hundred years? It is this which has driven the people of Bengal to the present feeling of despair.'

Government Is Not an End in Itself

Government, Gokhale held, was only a means to an end, a means for the total transformation of the life of the people. If we may impose our contemporary terminology on Gokhale's political thought, the government is a great instrument for modernization which would have for him many aspects, economic, social and political and, above all, the reorientation of the Indian mind in directions conducive to progress. Gokhale, like Ram Mohun Roy, saw the weaknesses of the Indian tradition and believed that the government could be used as a means for reorienting the mind of the people. Until this was done, no lasting progress was possible in any direction.[20] In his budget speeches a recurring theme is the need for the bureaucracy to develop on liberal lines and acquire a welfare orientation by assuming responsibilities for nation-building activities. Although Gokhale used the Drain theory as a tool for the analysis of the

[20] *Cf.* Ranade: 'You cannot have a good social system when you find yourself low in the scale of political rights, nor can you be fit to exercise political rights and privileges unless your social system is based on reason and justice. You cannot have a good economical system when your social arrangements are imperfect. If your religious ideals are low and grovelling, you cannot succeed in social, economical, or political spheres. This interdependence is not an accident but is the law of our nature....It is a mistaken view which divorces considerations political from social and economical, and no man can be said to realize his duty in one aspect who neglects his duties in the other directions'. 'Liberate the Whole Man,' in T. N. Jagadisan (ed) *The Wisdom of a Modern Rishi* (Madras: Rochouse and Sons Ltd., no date), p. 149.

economic condition of India, his main concern was not the past but the future development of the country. In the Budget Speech of 1903 Gokhale said: 'After all, the question whether India's poverty is increasing or decreasing under the operation of the influences called into existence by British rule—though of great importance in itself—is not nearly so important as the other question as to what measures can and must be taken to secure for this country those moral and material advantages which the Governments of more advanced countries think it their paramount duty to bring within the easy reach of their subjects.'

Role of the Government

Although Gokhale inherited the ideas of Western liberalism he departed from its tenets in one important respect. Like his master, Mahadev Govind Ranade and indeed like many of the liberals of modern India, Gokhale saw that the government had an important part to play in transforming the society on progressive lines and contribute to the strengthening of the economy. The very under-developed character of the country imposed additional responsibilities on the government. In major fields of national development such as education, agriculture and industry, water supply and sanitation, the responsibility was clearly that of the government to aid and stimulate the efforts made by people and to take over the task completely if necessary. Under the influence of the writings of Friedrich List, he made a powerful and persuasive plea for the protection of infant industries. In his speech on the Import Duty on Sugar, 9 March 1911 Gokhale elaborated on the ideas of List and argued that even if the government did not decide to impose a high protective tariff, it was still possible for it to appoint a committee to investigate the conditions of the industry and consider how it could be helped. Likewise, in the field

of education, in the introduction of compulsory elementary education and the establishment of institutes for the promotion of industrial and technical education, the government had an important part to play. The real weakness of the Indian situation, as Gokhale saw it, was the lack of initiative on the part of the people, a total absence of private and voluntary effort on the one hand, and on the other, the reluctance of the bureaucracy to find the finances necessary for development. It is interesting to note that among the several reasons for Gokhale's objection to the policy of political boycott of things foreign, which was being advocated in his day, was the futility and unwisdom of not making use of the benefits provided by the government while the people themselves were incapable of providing 'national' substitutes. 'The building up of national schools and colleges all over the country out of private resources, on any scale worth talking about, would take years and years of time and a tremendous amount of sacrifice on the part of the people, and before anything substantial had been done, to talk of boycotting existing institutions was sheer madness.' It should be noted, Gokhale said, 'that the more thoughtful advocates of national education urged, not the destruction, but the supplementing of the work done by Government in the field of education'.[21] In retrospect, it is now possible for us to see that the problem before Gokhale was not merely one of compelling an unwilling bureaucracy to reorient itself on liberal and progressive lines but also of stemming the frenzy of demagogic, inward-looking nationalists who turned their untutored political aspirations against everything foreign. What was needed was cautious and enlightened co-operation with government.

While Gokhale emphasized the role of government, he

[21] 'The Work Before Us' (1907), G.A.N., p. 955.

was also careful to emphasize, in the true liberal tradition, that it ought not to overreach itself and dry up the hidden springs of initiative in the people, which is the ultimate secret of lasting progress. He insisted on the gradual development of the necessary skills in every field of national activity. The task was one of 'enskilling' the people and making them self-reliant and not being perpetually dependent on outside help. This is the reason why he warned against a total and helpless dependence on foreign experts: 'The knowledge brought into the country by a succession of foreign experts, who retire to their own lands as soon as they have earned their pension, is like a cloud that hangs for a time overhead without descending in fertilizing showers and then rolls away.'[22] Gokhale also warned that often it was not the best foreign expert but the mediocre one who was available for service in India. This was particularly true in the field of education. Higher salaries could be paid, he said, to the really outstanding foreign professor. Unfortunately, the appointment of incompetent foreigners did infinite damage to the morale of younger Indians who were made to serve under them. In the Budget Speech of 1903, Gokhale said:

> My Lord, it is difficult to describe in adequate terms the mischief that is done to the best interests of the country and of British rule by the appointment of third or fourth rate Englishmen to chairs in Government colleges. These men are unable to command that respect from their students which they think to be due to their position, and then they make up for it by clothing themselves with race pride, which naturally irritates the young men under them. The result often is that young students

[22] 'Budget Speech' (1906), G.A.N., p. 123.

> leave college with a feeling of bitterness against Englishmen, and this feeling they carry with them into later life.

Gokhale pointed out that the government could, with the vast resources at its command, secure expert advice on technical education. Indians who had genuine enthusiasm for it could be taken on a commission with competent Englishmen and deputed to countries where governments were already doing a great deal for technical education. They could then study problems at first-hand and explore the avenues for the introduction of technical education in India.[23]

While Gokhale emphasized the responsibility of the government in an underdeveloped country like India, he also sensed the danger of important development programmes being bogged down by sheer red tape. In his Budget Speech of 1906 he suggested that there was no reason why irrigation projects should be carried out departmentally and not be entrusted to expert contractors as in Egypt, the government retaining only a supervisory control. He drew attention to the experience of Lord Cromer and stated that with such an administrative departure from established practice, irrigation would make more rapid progress.

One final aspect of Gokhale's anxiety to develop native skills in the people may be considered. One of the arguments against the introduction of compulsory elementary education in Gokhale's day was the lack of trained teachers. Gokhale argued that this was not a valid reason for not enforcing elementary education. For some time, the country would be compelled to manage with untrained teachers. Moreover, untrained teachers were not as useless as they were depicted: 'Many of the members of this Council re-

[23] 'Budget Speech' (1903), G.A.N., pp. 55, 56.

ceived their primary education under untrained teachers. The Hon'ble Mr Sharp said that he had *visited* thousands of primary schools; Sir, we have *learnt* in primary schools. We have experience of the inside of these schools. How did we receive our primary education? I remember how I did it. We used to squat on the floor with a wooden board in front of us covered with red powder and a piece of stick to write with. Well, we have done fairly well in life after all, though we received our primary education in that way under untrained teachers.... First establish at once these lower primary schools, then go on, as you have funds, improving the standards, bringing in trained teachers and having better school-houses. And for God's sake do not wait for your trained teachers, for your decent school-houses, till you take up the question of removing illiteracy from the land....'[24]

Two Concepts of Development

We thus find in the political thought of Gopal Krishna Gokhale two apparently conflicting emphases on the role of government in an underdeveloped society and on the need for building up the initiative of the people and helping them to release their energies for national development. This dual emphasis on what we, in the language of contemporary Indian planning, describe as the private and public sectors of the economy, was the greatest departure which the Indian liberals made from some of their counterparts in nineteenth-century England. This one fact, more than anything else, shows that Indian liberals were not blind uncritical imitators of the thought fashions of the West. They were inspired by Western liberalism but they took care to modify it for the circumstances of India. This creative

[24] 'The Elementary Education Bill' (1912), G.A.N., pp. 674-5.

modification of liberalism is best expressed in Gokhale's political philosophy. He saw the poverty of India against the background of India's authoritarian political tradition —the helpless dependence of the people on government for everything and the consequent paralysis of individual initiative[25]—and yet could find no real alternative to collective action through government. At the same time, no people could afford to sit back with complacency with the thought that government would do everything. They must co-operate with government and supplement its efforts in whatever way they could: 'The leaders of the people, on their side, must bring to this task (i.e. the universal diffusion of elementary education) high enthusiasm, which will not be chilled by difficulties; courage, which will not shrink from encountering unpopularity, if need be; and readiness to make sacrifices, whether of money or time or energy, which the cause may require.'[26] Both government and people have their own distinct roles to play in the tasks of development. It is this dual emphasis on state responsibility and private initiative which has made it possible, it seems to me, for rival political parties in present-day India to become enthusiastic about and seek inspiration from the political thought of Gokhale.[27]

Gokhale's Views on India's Political Aspirations

When Hindu society was exposed to Western ideas in the nineteenth century, it produced many complex responses.

[25] 'Co-operative Credit Societies' (1904), G.A.N., p. 282.

[26] 'Elementary Education Bill' (1911), G.A.N., 619.

[27] Viz., Congress and Swatantra. Mr D. V. Gundappa in his article 'In Memoriam: Gopal Krishna Gokhale,' *Swarajya*, 7 May 1966, emphasized only the private initiative aspect of Gokhale's thought. He scrupulously avoided mentioning Gokhale's views on the role of the state.

Hindu civilization was stirred to its depths as never before. For, as indicated earlier in this study, British rule had an effect on the *mind* of India. But three broad responses to the challenge of Western ideas have been identified. There were the Anglophiles who admired uncritically all things Western and, at the other extreme, there were the Anglophobes who had a deep and unqualified contempt for the civilization of the foreigner. In between these extremes were those who sought a higher synthesis by trying to revitalize Hinduism and reform Hindu society by examining them in the light of modern thought. It was their conviction that India could not hope to rise again in the scale of civilization until the Hindu mind was released from 'the thraldom of old-world ideas'. This was the line of thought which dominated all those who were inspired by Ram Mohun Roy, the central figure of the Bengal renaissance. 'He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and conservative progress ....He embodies the new spirit which arises from the compulsory mixture of races and faiths and civilizations — he embodies its freedom of inquiry, its thirst for science, its large human sympathy, its pure and sifted ethics, along with its reverent but not uncritical regard for the past and prudent, even timid disinclination towards revolt.'[28] In his footsteps followed Mahadev Govind Ranade and the central figure of this study. For Gokhale, contact with Britain and Western ideas was a turning point in Hindu civilization. It is for this reason that he valued Western

[28] Sophia Dobson Collett, *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy* (Edited by Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli) (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Third Edition, 1962), pp. 378-9.

education and particularly the teaching of European history as already mentioned. With other liberal politicians who dominated the Congress of 1885, Gokhale believed that British rule was 'providential'. In his speech *England's Duty to India*, Gokhale observed that although India had achieved a high degree of civilization in the past, she was 'not known for that love of liberty and that appreciation of free institutions which one finds to be so striking a characteristic of the West'.[29] But thanks to the introduction of Western education, Indians were inspired by the spirit of liberty and the passion for free institutions. This was the greatest value of British rule. The Indian National Congress in the earlier years revealed a profound sense of gratitude for the blessings of British rule and concerned itself only with demanding particular reforms like the employment of Indians in the public services, the inclusion of a representative element in the legislative councils, the separation of the executive from the judiciary, the extension of trial by jury, the reduction of military expenditure, and the like. Self-government did not figure large in the political aspirations of the leaders, although it was not entirely absent. By 1904, however, the political climate changed. The victory of Japan over Russia had gone, in the language of Lord Curzon, 'like a thunderclap through the whispering galleries of the East'; the United States Government was consciously preparing the Filipinos for self-government and Britain was planning the grant of representative government to the Boers in South Africa. These external influences combined with an increased tempo of agitation within the country for the explicit declaration of the goal of the Congress. In December 1904, Sir Henry Cotton, President of the Bombay session of the Congress said: 'The ideal of

[29] 'England's Duty to India', G.A.N., p. 925.

the Indian patriot is the establishment of a federation of free and separate States, the United States of India, placed on a fraternal footing with the self-governing Colonies... under the aegis of Great Britain.' Gokhale quickly incorporated this ideal in the preamble to the rules of the Servants of India Society in 1905. 'Its members', Gokhale wrote, 'frankly accept the British connection as ordained, in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, for India's good. Self-government within the Empire for their country and a higher life generally for their countrymen is their goal'.[30] For Gokhale, the modernization of India—the central plank of his political philosophy—was perfectly feasible within the Empire:

> And here at the outset, let me say that I recognise no limits to my aspiration for our motherland. I want our people to be in their own country what other people are in theirs. I want our men and women, without distinction of caste or creed, to have opportunities to grow to the full height of their stature, unhampered by cramping and unnatural restrictions. I want India to take her place among the great nations of the world, politically, industrially, in religion, in literature, in science and in arts. I want all this and feel at the same time that the whole of this aspiration can, in its essence and its reality, be realized within this Empire.[31]

Gokhale argued that the goal of self-government within the Empire had the advantage of guiding the Indian struggle with the minimum of disturbance to ideas. It meant proceeding on lines which were familiar. Above all, con-

[30] G.A.N., 915.
[31] 'The Work Before Us' (1907), G.A.N., p. 949.

tact with Britain and through her, with the constitutional tradition of the West was important for India. The goal enlisted on India's side everything which was progressive in England. England had many faults and was guilty of many lapses, but 'the genius of the British people, as revealed in history, on the whole made for political freedom, for constitutional liberty. It would be madness, it would be folly on their [Indians'] part to throw away in the struggle that lay before them these enormous advantages.'[32]

British rule was an opportunity for the Indian people to train themselves in the art of self-government. The political government had to be a gradual one and it was necessary for India to pass through a period of apprenticeship, 'for it is a reasonable proposition that the sense of responsibility, required for the proper exercise of the political institutions of the West, can be acquired by an Eastern people through political training and experiment only.'[33]

The Techniques of Political Change

In Gokhale's day, as already noted, the bureaucracy had emerged as a vast power structure, standing aloof from Indian society, often unresponsive to the wishes and sentiments of the people, and the officials constituted a new class of super-brahmins. Gokhale saw no way of escaping

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 950.

[33] 'Benares Presidential Address' (1905), G.A.N., 698. *Cf.* the view of Ram Mohun Roy as recorded by the French naturalist traveller, Victor Jacquemont in 1829: 'Conquest is very rarely an evil when the conquerors are more civilized than the people conquered, because they bring to them the advantages of civilization. Many years of English domination will be necessary before India will be able to resume her political independence without losing much.' J. K. Majumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule,* 1821-1918 (Calcutta: Longmans Green & Co. Ltd., 1937), p. 41.

from the bureaucracy and freedom was still a part of the 'distant scene'. He yielded to none in his denunciation of the evil effects of British rule in his time but believed that the bureaucracy could be influenced by the power of logic and argument. Although taken as a whole, it appeared insensitive and lacked the human touch, it contained individual members who brought to their task a high level of competence, a sense of duty and a desire to serve the country. To these men, Gokhale felt, he could address himself and above all make an appeal to the people of Britain. This was a matter of faith in the power of reason and in the Englishman's sense of justice and fair-play. But in order to do this, one could not appear in the role of the mere critic. To be weighty and effective, criticism must be just, sympathetic and constructive. Above all, a spirit of give and take and compromise is essential, for political discussion is not controversy. Public debate is addressed not merely to those who are in the seats of political authority but to the country as a whole, to the educated élite as well as to the masses so that public opinion could be gradually built up. When this is done, the government has no alternative but to bow to its wishes.

Gokhale thus saw himself and the educated political leadership of his time cast in the role of critics and interpreters of government and the people to each other. The educated classes, cut off from employment in government and consequently frustrated, indulged in incessant criticism which was often uncharitable and unfair; the officials, on the other hand, often displayed impatience and annoyance with the attitude of educated people and this was, at times, reflected in official documents. Gokhale saw that no progress was possible unless government and the people understood each other. The plain fact had to be recognized 'that mere impatience on the official side cannot now

abolish the educated class, just as indiscriminate attacks by non-officials cannot abolish the official class. The fact of the matter is that the two sides have to get on together in this country, for the good of the country....'[34]

Constitutional Agitation

The main problem of political agitation as Gokhale saw it was to identify the particular evil which was sought to be remedied and then to analyze and study it from every angle. It must be presented to those in authority in a manner which would convince them of the need to remedy it. Those who seek redress to grievances have the responsibility to suggest a practical remedy. They must not appear in the character of mere agitators whose main interest is to embarrass the government and create conditions of disorder. The essence of constitutional politics is public *discussion*, not *controversy*. For this purpose, public life must rest on the solid rock of political consciousness inspired by enlightened public opinion. Political agitation itself is an instrument of political education and this is the supreme test of any constitutional agitation. The important question to ask, always, is: What is the effect of this particular policy of agitation on the people? Does it educate them in their public responsibilities? And is it for the public good?' Gokhale's study of English constitutional history shaped his views on the subject. He was probably thinking of John Hampden when he observed that refusal to pay taxes was a legitimate form of protest because it brought home to each man his responsibilities to the public life and his share in it.[35]

[34] 'District Advisory Councils' (1912), G.A.N., p. 486.

[35] 'The Work Before Us' (1907), G.A.N., p. 956. In maintaining that a course of policy would be justified if it contributed to the

The idea of constitutional agitation occupied an important place in Gokhale's political outlook. In 1905 the constitution of the Servants of India Society declared one of its principal objects to be the promotion 'by all constitutional means, the true interests of the Indian people'. Gokhale elaborated his view of constitutional agitation in his speech at Allahabad in 1907: 'Constitutional agitation is agitation by methods which we are entitled to adopt to bring about the changes we desire through the action of constituted authorities.' It excluded physical force, rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion and crime. That left open a whole range of political techniques ranging from petitions and appeals at one end and organized pressure on the authorities at the other. Its essence lay in the use of public opinion. Under extreme provocation, even a mass movement against the government would be understandable. In his Presidential address to the Congress, Gokhale described the mass upheaval which followed the partition of Bengal as a 'landmark in the history of our national progress.' But with Burke he might well have said that such movements can only be used as the medicine

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strengthening of public life, Gokhale was adopting an idealist position, and one generally relevant to the times when he lived. Today we can hardly maintain that every agitation should be in the 'public interest', as the public is composed of organized groups which struggle for the good of their own members. The state stands as an arbiter in this conflict of interests as the demands of any particular group, if sufficiently powerful, may well conflict with the interests of society. Gokhale looked upon the public as an organic, collective entity. From the standpoint of a developed society, this would be a limitation of Gokhale's political thought. It is also significant to note, as indicated earlier, that his concept of public life resembles that of the Athenians; like them, he did not quite emphasize the distinction between State and Government. Occasionally, however, he does seem to depart from these idealistic overtones, for instance, when he says, emphatically, that the Government is only a means to an end,

of the constitution, not as its daily food. The whole difficulty of mass movements, as Gokhale rightly noted, is that they often break through the binding restraints of leadership and resort to violence. Even if non-violence is the declared nature of such a movement it does not always retain its non-violent character because 'the Government, which certainly does not want to see its rule overthrown, will not long permit them to retain their peaceful character.'[36] His observations on the partition of Bengal show his remarkable insight into the psychology of mass movements:

> A great rush and uprising of the waters such as has been recently witnessed in Bengal cannot take place without a little inundation over the banks here and there. Those little excesses are inevitable when large masses of men move spontaneously—especially when the movement is from darkness into light, from bondage towards freedom —and they must not be allowed to disconcert us too much.[37]

It seems to me that deep down, somewhere in the depths of his soul, Gokhale nursed a fear of unenlightened masses getting hold of power. He does not explicitly reveal this fear in any passage of his speeches but it seems implicit in many places. This fear is reminiscent of Burke, who undoubtedly influenced him in many ways. This is not to deny his deep and profound concern for the masses of India, for their penury and suffering, which is there in all his budget speeches and he could speak of poverty in the most moving language because he had known it in his own life. But his deep and abiding love for the masses of India also

[36] 'Students and Politics' (1909), G.A.N., p. 1008.

[37] 'Benares Congress Presidential Address' (1905), G.A.N., p. 689.

made him resist the slogan of immediate independence, which would only delude them with a false hope. The people are not to be fed on slogans, beautiful dreams and Platonic lies. When the dreams dissolve they would lead to frustration, and frustration to anger and violence. In a suggestive passage, Gokhale warned against touching the 'foundations of public life'. This reverence for the framework of the social order also reminds us of Burke. The state is the product of slowly accumulated traditions and conventions and, like Green, he would have said that one should approach the state trembling like a child. Law and order, the basis of civilized life, must be maintained at any cost and for its eager maintenance, the prestige of government is important. This was even more true in a country like India which had not developed any tradition of social discipline. This is why on more than one occasion he declared in the Imperial Legislative Council that even if he could defeat the government, he would not do it. While placing himself on the side of law and order, Gokhale also reminded the government of his day that repression is no lasting solution to any problem. Here is another lesson which Gokhale has for our own times:

> ... what the situation really requires is not the policeman's baton or the soldier's bayonet, but the statesman's insight, wisdom and courage. The people must be made to feel that *their* interests are, if not the only consideration, at any rate the main consideration that weighs with the Government and this can only be brought about by a radical change in the spirit of the administration.[38]

With Burke, he believed that the people have no interest

[38] 'Budget Speech' (1908), G.A.N., p. 164.

in disorder. If Burke viewed the developments in France with a sense of consternation, Gokhale viewed with apprehension the growth of terrorism and other forms of violence in his day. This was one of the many factors which lay at the root of his differences with Tilak and his followers. In August 1905, Tilak published his article on *Swadeshi Boycott, National Education and Swaraj*. Freedom, he declared, is the natural right of every Indian and he denounced the whole approach of Gokhale as one of 'mendicancy'; mere petitions and resolutions were not enough, every Indian must stand up and fight for his rights. There was no question of loyalty, a native government with all its faults would be superior to a good foreign government. In the political struggle, mass organization of the people throughout the country was essential, and above all, it was futile to limit oneself to constitutional methods alone. Tilak made it clear that he was not opposed to constitutional methods *per se*, but they did not apply to the Indian situation dominated by an officialdom which was unsympathetic and unresponsive to native sentiments. India was being ruled, he said, not by a constitution but by the Penal Code and the government would always consider every effective popular technique as unconstitutional. The only way to deal with the British Government in India was to organize a mass movement which would embarrass the rulers. Everything which achieved this result would be justified. Government continued to function because people cooperated with it; once that cooperation was withdrawn, it would crumble down. The people must have nothing to do with the government and things British; they must boycott foreign goods, foreign education, the foreign administration. No subject nation had ever succeeded in overthrowing foreign rule through constitutional methods and India could be no exception.

Answering the charge of advocating a revolution, Tilak said:

> It is true that what we seek may seem like a revolution in the sense that it means a complete change in the theory of the government of India as now put forward by the bureaucracy. It is true that this revolution must be a bloodless revolution, but it would be folly to suppose that if there is no shedding of blood, there are also to be no sufferings to be undergone by the people. These sufferings are bound to be great and the sacrifices supreme. You can win nothing unless you are prepared to suffer and sacrifice. An appeal to the generosity and good feeling of the rulers has been found everywhere to have but narrow limits. Our demands and our intentions are legitimate; they are constitutional and supported by history. They are also natural to human nature and, above all they are in accordance with God's will and creation.[39]

[39] Quoted by D. V. Tahmankar in *Lokamanya Tilak* (London: John Murray, 1956), pp. 133-4. Chapter 13, 'Gathering of the Storm' gives a useful account of Tilak's views on this theme. In discussing the differences between Gokhale and Tilak, the words 'moderate' and 'extremist' are generally used. These were the labels used by the Government and the terms have got encrusted in political and historical writings on this period of Indian history. I have, however, set aside these terms for they easily lend themselves to misunderstanding and vitiate our understanding of the thought of Gokhale and Tilak. Tilak said: 'The Extremists of today will be the moderates of tomorrow just as the Moderates of today were the Extremists of yesterday. When the National Congress was first started and Dadabhai's views, which are regarded as Moderates' views, were given to the public, he was styled an Extremist, so that you will see that the term Extremist is a term of progress'. Quoted by T. V. Parvate, *op. cit.*, p. 228. Likewise, Gokhale was not happy with the use of these labels. He said: "Now, I for one have never been in love with the terms 'Moderates' and 'Extremists'. There is at times a great deal of moderation among

The views of Gokhale and Tilak have a striking similarity in many ways and it has been argued that they differed not so much in their ideals as in their methods. It seems to me, however, that there were fundamental differences between the two, not merely over the techniques of agitation but with regard to the ends as well. The social-conservative tradition from Swami Dayanand Saraswati to Tilak saw the strength of India in her religious tradition and sought to make it the motor force of the political struggle. If India was to succeed in her fight against foreign rule, she must drink deep from the fountain of India's past which must be made to live again in the political consciousness of the Indian people. That was why Tilak organized Shivaji and Ganapati festivals and reinterpreted the *Gita* for a political purpose. This, it seems to me, is the main reason why Tilak and not Gokhale is respected by a conservative political party like the Jana Sangh. Gokhale's view was the very opposite of Tilak's. He saw the weaknesses of India's traditions from the standpoint of her progress as a modern nation on secular, democratic lines. The greatest change that India required was a revolution in the outlook of the people. If India was to progress towards a democratic form of government, it was necessary to create a democratic society, secularize her politics and spiritualize public life. If the foundations were to be laid firmly then the immediate task was not one of embarrassing the government and creating unrest, but of educating the masses in the difficult art of self-government. Freedom, Gokhale emphasized, does not come to a people for the mere asking; it is the product of

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some of those who are called Extremists and, on the other hand, there is no small amount of what is the reverse of moderation among some who are called Moderates. However, I fear the terms as they are now in use will stick. . ." in 'The Seditious Meetings Act' (1907), G. A. N., p. 305.

a struggle—a struggle which is creative, a struggle in which people grow to their full height through the discharge of their responsibilities. This is why his objection to the boycott of honorary positions under government, or Municipal Boards and Legislative Councils rested not merely on the argument of their impracticality but on the more solid ground that it meant throwing away many splendid opportunities of serving the public. Moreover, boycott may have a temporary effect on the government but in the long run it would damage our own interests. As pointed out earlier, Gokhale condemned the boycott of schools and colleges set up by government as 'sheer madness'. Further, boycott stirred up an unnatural hatred for things foreign. India needed help from all directions and an inward-looking nationalism would only hamper the country's progress. Gokhale illustrated his argument by drawing attention to the splendid possibilities opened up by the introduction of Egyptian cotton by the Bombay Government into Sind.[40]

For Gokhale, the value of any political struggle was not to be assessed by its immediate tangible benefits but by the lasting contribution it made to the strengthening of those habits of behaviour and ways of thought which sustain political systems by making the people self-reliant, vigilant and progressive. This is the reason why he reminds us that the moral content of the struggle is important in the perspective of history. The constitutional struggle itself must be a great teacher imparting to people the lessons of human freedom.

Politics, for Gokhale, was a field which demanded the highest qualities. It could not be entrusted to the unenlightened enthusiast, whose only qualification was at best an uninformed patriotism. Gokhale's view of government

[40] 'The Swadeshi Movement' (1907), G.A.N., p. 969.

goes back to the Graeco-Roman tradition which emphasized the idea of 'steering'. This, indeed, is what the word itself suggests. The ship of State was not to be manned by an untrained crew, with neither guide nor compass. It needed knowledge, foresight, skill and, above all, imagination. It needed the cooperation of a large number of selfless workers who would work with missionary zeal, but with the zeal which combined enthusiasm with knowledge and toleration of other people's opinions, faith and beliefs. In the ultimate analysis, the strength of any political system rests not only on the vigilance of its enlightened citizens but also on the strength and character of its rulers. The task of any constitutional struggle is to lay the foundation for such a political system. This was the task to which Gokhale addressed himself with a faith and devotion which made his life a dedication and a sacrifice to his country. Both the life he lived and the message he preached have a meaning for our age as well as his own.

4.

Economic Thought of Gopal Krishna Gokhale

T. M. Joshi

I

Gokhale was one of a band of men who, during the closing years of the last century and the first few years of the present century, securely laid the foundations of Indian economic thought. Let us remember them to-day along with Gokhale—Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Dinsha Edulji Wachha and Ganesh Vyankatesh Joshi—the last-named perhaps less in repute, but not a whit less in erudition and the lore of the political economist. Who will venture to measure the height of these giants? Who so bold as to fix the rank and order amongst them? About one thing, however, I am quite certain. Gokhale himself would not have claimed the first place among them. He was the youngest in the group; and with his characteristic humility, he acknowledged that he was their humble pupil and follower. These men each had a characteristic genius, but in a sense they formed a well-knit group or a school

owing to a common intellectual heritage. All had drunk deep in the liberal thought of Locke and Bentham, in the enlightened conservatism of Burke, and in the classical political economy of Adam Smith, Ricardo and John Stuart Mill. They all had a common fascination for British political institutions and constitutional procedures and looked upon India's connection with Britain as a providential dispensation. They would have sat, with comfort and dignity, with Bright and Gladstone, with Morley and Asquith. While they were liberal in their intellectual equipment and philosophical stance, they reacted violently against the liberal theory of economic policy enshrined in the doctrine of *laissez faire*, and derived their own philosophy relating to the role of government in economic life from some of the critics of economic liberalism such as Friedrich List. It is, however, a somewhat curious phenomenon that they were largely immune from the influence of the socialist tradition of critical thought. It should be remembered that by the time these men approached the basic problems of British Indian policy, Rodbertus and Marx had completed their work and laid the foundations of 'scientific socialism'; the evolutionary socialism of the Fabians had already emerged, while in practical politics, Hyndman and Keir Hardie were active. But then this band of men was not primarily concerned with the inner contradictions of a capitalist society, but with the impact of an industrially advanced imperial power on a backward and traditional economy. They brought their deep erudition to bear upon the Indian scene, in which they saw our economy brought within the orbit of the British imperial economy, and exposed to the powerful forces of change emerging out of this impact. They saw the traditional economic order rapidly breaking up under the influence of British colonial policy—the upsetting of the old agro-industrial balance, the rural exodus, the increasing

distress among the masses. They built up a powerful critique of British policy in India and made it the centre-piece of their political and economic stance. They were, however, not content with mere criticism; they evolved a wide-ranging framework of a constructive economic policy based upon state intervention for the welfare and growth of our underdeveloped economy. Without sophisticated theoretical constructs of Welfare Economics, I claim that these men evolved the conceptual foundations of the welfare state in India. These two areas—a critique of British economic policy and constructive interventionism—constituted the corpus of economic thought which Dadabhai, Ranade, Dutt, Gokhale and their associates built up.

Gokhale's contribution to this corpus was massive and significant. It was expounded in a large variety of writings and speeches—his evidence before the Welby Commission (1897), his speeches in the Bombay Council (1900-1902) and the Imperial Legislative Council (1902-1913) on budgets and resolutions, and his addresses to various conferences. It must be remembered, however, that though versed in the theoretical foundations of economics and politics, Gokhale was not primarily a theoretician; he was an active politician and controversialist, engaged in advancing a cause, in propagating a viewpoint. But even in the heat and dust of political debate, Gokhale preserved a sanity, purity, and faith in reason which in themselves constitute a spiritual legacy of his noble life. It would have gladdened the heart of Cardinal Newman to see his own lofty conception of a gentleman embodied in flesh and blood:

> It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain....If he engages himself in a controversy of any kind, his disciplined intellect preserves him from the blundering discourtesy of less educated

> minds, who tear and hack instead of cutting clean, who misconceive their adversary and leave the point more involved than they find it.... He never takes unfair advantage, never misconceives his adversary, and interprets everything for the best.... He may be right or wrong in his opinions, but he is too clear-headed to be unjust.

It is on record that, unwilling to catch Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson off-guard in the budget debate, Gokhale sent him his own notes on the eve of the debate.[1]

II

The centre-piece of the critique of British policy in India was what was called the 'deep and deepening poverty' of the country. The general framework of analysis in this connection was based upon a historical construct relating to the impact of the British colonial policy on the backward economy of India. When our country was brought within the orbit of the British economy and became subject to British colonial policy, powerful forces of disintegration were set into motion, which rapidly dislocated the old agro-industrial balance. At about the same time, the development of internal and overseas transport brought India within the

[1] The one man I frankly feared was Gokhale, the Gladstone of India. Accordingly, I endeavoured to find out what Gokhale's line of attack would be.... Imagine my surprise on receiving on the eve of the debate a letter from Gokhale, whom I did not even know, to the effect that as he had good reason to believe that I meant to do my utmost for the good of India, he had no desire to embarrass me, and that therefore he sent me the notes of the speech he proposed to make so that I should not be taken unawares. I do not believe that such a generous attitude has ever been assumed, by the Leader of the Opposition in any other country in the world.—Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, *Letters to Nobody*, John Murray, London, 1921.

vortex of the world economy. While the establishment of British law and administration provided a measure of security of life and property never known before, England's policy of developing the Indian market for her own advancing industries brought about a rapid decline of urban handicrafts and caused an enormous exodus toward land. The resultant increased pressure on agriculture intensified the tendency toward subdivision of holdings and their fragmentation into uneconomic units. The growth of unproductive debt due to improvident borrowing and unscrupulous lending led to widespread distress, often leading to transfer of land to non-agriculturists. This historical analysis, due very largely to Romesh Chandra Dutt, supplied the general backdrop of criticism centred round the growing poverty of India under British rule. Such an analytical construct of the impact of an imperial power on the backward colonial territories finds support in the writings of a number of economists of the present day. It is the old version of the current stream of thought which seeks to explain why the expansion of international trade which proved to be an 'engine of growth' in the case of currently advanced economies, not only failed to 'carry over' its growth impulse in the case of backward colonial economies, but actually resulted in a continuous downward spiral of decay and disintegration.

Gokhale was engaged in a protracted controversy relating to this phenomenon of 'deep and deepening poverty'. While he made use of the calculations of national income made by Dadabhai Naoroji, Digby and others, he did not rely exclusively on this somewhat precarious statistical base. He was at pains to refute the official contention that the country's poverty was diminishing. He made short work of the official attempts to prove this in the light of increasing silver and gold imports, growing receipts under land revenue, customs, and other fiscal sources. He presented more convincing

indicators of growing poverty by citing the rising death rate, reduced per capita consumption of salt, decline in the net cropped area (especially under superior crops), and the increasing destruction of crops and cattle under a series of disastrous famines.

Woven into this general fabric of criticism of British policy based on 'increasing poverty', there were three causal factors which were assigned varying importance by the writers of the times. Dadabhai gave a place of primacy to the 'Drain' of wealth from India to Britain under the Home charges; Dutt emphasized the role of land revenue settlements as an impoverishing factor; Gokhale, while recognizing the importance of these, laid stress upon another related factor, the operation of the system of currency and finance. I should like to offer some observations on these three points which formed constituent elements of the general corpus of critical thought.

The doctrine of 'drain' occupied the pivotal position in Dadabhai's arraignment of the 'un-British' policy pursued by Britain toward India. The drain largely consisted of a variety of payments under the Home charges—interest on sterling debt, payments for stores purchased in England, pensions and furlough charges of British army and civilian personnel, India office charges, and such other things. That not all the payments constituted a 'drain', since some portion was obviously due to goods and services received, cannot be denied; this explains to some extent why Gokhale somewhat underplayed the concept.[2] However, Gokhale was most insistent on one or two aspects of the drain, namely, the excessive employment of British personnel and

[2] R. P. Patwardhan, Introduction to *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Vol. I, Economic. p. xx (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962).

also the unfair charging of the India office establishment to India's account. That these involved a continuous drain of savings out of India to the diminution of the country's development potential was stressed by Gokhale on several occasions. Sometimes he expressed himself on this issue with an uncharacteristic bitterness, calling it 'bleeding', and arguing that if it were to cease, the military and civilian administration must be increasingly Indianized. I am not prepared to say that the drain concept was a crude economic weapon of a transparently political strategy. The basic situation was that India was forced to create, year by year, an export surplus of which at least a portion was 'uncompensated' or 'unrequited'. A backward economy which is continually forced to create such a surplus is obviously depleted of its domestic saving potential and finds its growth retarded by an exogenous political factor. In the over-all analytical construct of 'deep and deepening' poverty, the 'drain' may rightfully take a crucial role.

Romesh Chandra Dutt made land revenue the centrepiece of his critique of British policy and administration. That land revenue formed the pivot of the general as well as fiscal administration of the East India Company, and continued to do so for several decades under the Crown, is abundantly clear. The doctrinal roots of the British land revenue policy in the Whig principles of government, and in the doctrine of Rent of the utilitarian political economy, have been well brought out by Professor Eric Stokes.[3] While the Cornwallis system of Permanent Zamindari Settlement (1793) was the most obvious embodiment of the liberal principle of non-intervention and private property, the Ryotwari and other systems which were evolved in Bombay, Madras and the North-Western Provinces were

[3] Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford, 1959.

based on the classical theory of rent and its implications for taxation. That the land revenue assessments in the Company period were high, even excessively high, is an uncontestable historical fact. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, they were somewhat moderated, but they still continued to be burdensome. Gokhale and his associate, G. V. Joshi, were close students of the whole land revenue question, and tirelessly pleaded for the lowering of the assessment levels, especially in certain regions of Bombay, Madras and the United Provinces where they were inordinately high. The effects of high assessments on the agriculturist were brought out by Gokhale in the course of his Budget speech in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1905:

> Everywhere in India, and particularly in the temporarily settled districts, the resourcelessness of the agricultural classes is the most distressing fact of the situation. The cultivator has no capital and has but little credit and is simply unable to make proper use of nature's wealth that lies at his door, with the result that his cultivation is of the rudest and most exhausting type. The yield of the soil has been steadily diminishing, being simply 8 to 9 bushels an acre, about the lowest yield in the world.

I do not think that Gokhale would have supported Dutt's plea for extending the Bengal System to other areas. However, he suggested that in Ryotwari areas, the assessments should first be reduced and evened out, and then 'frozen' in order to do away with the uncertainty of periodical revision; in another context he suggested that land revenue revisions should automatically follow the trend of prices—a system of 'fluctuating assessments' later adopted in Punjab, and in a modified form, in Bombay.

There was, however, a more important aspect of land

revenue settlement which had a closer connection with rural poverty and distress, especially in Ryotwari areas. The tenurial relationship between the government and the occupant which was evolved in Madras and Bombay under the system established by Munro, Elphinstone, Pringle, and the celebrated authors of the Joint Report—Wingate and Goldsmid—conferred upon the occupant a firm title to his land, which though a 'tenure' in legal fiction, had all the features of private property such as the right of sale, mortgage and bequest. While this was a progressive step in the evolution of land rights, it gave irresistible opportunities to the impecunious farmer for improvident and unproductive borrowing. At the same time, the firm establishment of the judicial system for enforcement of legal contracts offered opportunities to the money-lender for usurious lending. The borrower and the lender alike were freed from the natural restraints of a closely knit rural society, and both used their opportunities of improvident borrowing and unscrupulous lending to the fullest extent. The result was a continuous growth of unproductive debt, frequent transfers of land to the non-cultivating classes, and resultant impoverishment and distress in rural areas. The close connection between the system of land revenue settlement and the growth of rural debt was recognized by official commissions such as the Deccan Ryots Commission and the Famine Commissions. The remedial measure which the Bombay Government conceived was to restrict the right of alienation and a bill to that effect was introduced in 1901. The Bill proposed to give the collectors:

> authority to forfeit any land for which the revenue is in arrears, and to regrant such lands without encumbrance to cultivating occupants, subject to the condition that the right of occupancy will lapse if lands are

> alienated without permission.... The Bill proposed to give power to the collector to give land on short leases and on special terms, which may include a restriction of transferability.

Gokhale, supported by his knowledgeable friend G. V. Joshi, launched a strong attack on the Bill. He expressed grave apprehension at the prospect of granting such extensive powers of creating restricted tenures to the Executive Government. He said:

> We are unable to contemplate without grave apprehension the prospect of such a vast extent of land being left at the free and unfettered disposal of Government—to be given on such leases as they, in the exercise of their executive discretion, may deem proper. The unsettling effect on the public mind of such a surrender by the Legislature of its proper functions in favour of the Executive is not difficult to foresee. A general sense of insecurity in regard to land tenure will come to prevail in the Presidency, the failure to pay a single year's assessment in time enabling the Government to force upon the occupant what lease they please.

Gokhale further maintained that the fundamental remedy for rural debt was not to restrict the right of transfer of land but to 'introduce greater elasticity into their system of revenue collections', and even more importantly, to 'make provision for reasonable needs of the agriculturists in the shape of Agricultural Banks, or a more liberal and flexible system of takavi advances'. This consistent and constructive view of rural debt and rural credit was again stressed by Gokhale in connection with the Cooperative Credit Societies Bill of 1904.

The third area of critical thought evolved by Gokhale and his contemporaries was in the sphere of currency, exchange and finance. Here Gokhale was on home ground and his massive contribution is characterized by a keen analytical perception joined to an unequalled command of factual data. In the field of currency and exchange, the last quarter of the nineteenth century was one of the most disturbing periods of our economic history. The adoption of the Gold Standard and the demonetization of silver by several countries had brought about a continuous fall in the world price of silver, and the rupee being a silver coin, suffered the inevitable consequence. The 'falling rupee' and falling sterling exchange gravely dislocated the whole economy and created enormous difficulties in public finance, especially by increasing the volume of rupee finance required for sterling payments. During the last decade of the century, and the beginning of the present, the Government evolved the Gold Exchange Standard with its complicated mechanism of Council Bills and Reverse Council Bills to stabilize the exchange rate at 1 sh. 4 d. However, as Gokhale pointed out, heavy coinage of rupees continued and, except for a short break, prices were continually on the rise. On several occasions, Gokhale drew pointed attention to this phenomenon and pleaded for an expert inquiry, which, as we know, was ordered in 1912. In his criticism of the principles and mechanism of the Gold Exchange Standard, Gokhale came very near to the view, later developed with great erudition by Dr Ambedkar, that the standard had a 'built-in' inflationary bias, especially since the Gold Standard Reserve was built out of the profits of rupee coinage. Gokhale strongly supported the resolution moved by Sir Vithaldas Thackersey in 1911 proposing the stoppage of the free coinage of rupees, and introducing an 'automatic' Gold Currency Standard. While, however, the problems

of currency and exchange were of absorbing interest to Gokhale, those of public finance were the dearest to his heart, and his long membership of the Imperial Legislative Council offered him ample opportunities to propound his critical and constructive approach to fiscal policy. In this sphere Gokhale addressed himself primarily to three issues: the growth of public expenditure, high and regressive taxation, and the 'large, continuous and progressive' budget surpluses.

Gokhale first addressed himself to the public expenditure of India in his written and oral evidence before the Welby Commission (1897). He began by saying:

> Increase of expenditure, taken by itself as a feature of national finance, is not necessarily open to any serious objection. Everything depends in this matter on the nature of the purposes for which the increase has been incurred and the results produced by such outlay of public money. In the United Kingdom, in France, in Italy,—in fact, almost everywhere in Europe—there have been large increases in national expenditure during the last thirty years, but the increase in Indian expenditure during this time differs from the increases elsewhere in a most fundamental respect. While increased expenditure in other countries, under proper popular control, has, so far as we are able to judge, helped to bring increased strength and security to the nations, and increased enlightenment and prosperity to the people, our continually growing expenditure has, in our country under autocratic management, defective constitutional control, and the inherent defects of alien domination, only helped to bring about a constantly increasing exploitation of our resources, has retarded our material progress, weakened our national defences, and burdened us with undefined

> and indefinite financial liabilities. Compelled to meet the demands of a forward Imperial Frontier policy and the exigencies of consequent imperial defence and constant borrowing for commercial enterprises, often undertaken under the pressure of English commercial classes, our Indian Government has little money to spare for purposes of national education....It is this feature that marks the difference between the growing expenditure of British India and that of other countries, and constitutes our national grievance in respect of administration of our national expenditure.[4]

Gokhale then went on to a detailed review of public expenditure in the post-Mutiny period, commenting particularly on the increase in military expenditure, civil expenditure due to employment of British personnel on high salaries, and the exchange compensation allowances. Gokhale subjected other heads of expenditure, especially the civil departments of the Bombay Presidency, to a close scrutiny, and pointed out how the expenditure on nation-building departments such as education was meagre, while that on other administrative departments had been inflated as a result of the large employment of non-Indian personnel. Gokhale then proceeded to analyse the various constituents of the Home charges, and showed how some of them—particularly the India office expenses, certain army charges, some debt burden, etc.—could be more equitably apportioned between India and England. Gokhale defended his position in his oral evidence with an alertness and command over facts which evoked enthusiastic encomium from all.

[4] Evidence before the Welby Commission, Patwardhan and Ambekar, *The Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962, p. 471,

He pursued the same theme throughout his career in the Imperial Legislative Council. In his budget speech for 1910, he urged an immediate inquiry into the growth of expenditure, not only because its vast growth by itself constituted an alarming feature in the public finances of the country, but also because there was a clear prospect of a rapid decline of an important revenue—that from opium. Such an inquiry, he argued, would be an essential preliminary to a rigorous policy of retrenchment in all fields of unproductive expenditure, and a reasonable increase in expenditure on 'objects intimately connected with the well-being of the people, such as primary and technical education, sanitation, and relief of agricultural indebtedness'. Later, in January 1911, Gokhale renewed his plea for a public inquiry into the growth of expenditure and possibilities of retrenchment by a 'mixed body of officials and non-officials'. He himself suggested four principal remedial measures: (*i*) 'the spirit of economy' should be installed in government spending, in place of 'the spirit of expenditure'; (*ii*) substantial reductions should be effected in military expenditure; (*iii*) there should be a greater employment of the Indian agency in the public service; and (*iv*) provision should be made for an independent audit of public expenditure. Gokhale laid much stress on the last point, urging that the Auditor-General should be made independent of the Government of India and that his report should be made public and laid before the Imperial Legislative Council so as to enable the non-official members to make their criticism 'well-informed and effective'.

In a similar way, Gokhale subjected the Government's tax policy to continuous criticism throughout his tenure in the Imperial Legislature. He pointed out in his first Budget Speech (1902) that while the Finance Members justified additional taxation during the earlier period when the rupee

was falling, they were pursuing the same policy even after the rupee was stabilized and when large budgetary surpluses were accruing. He particularly protested against the growth of regressive taxes such as land revenue, salt duty, customs, and the cotton excise. In regard to land revenue, Gokhale deplored the enhanced yield, especially since 1885, in spite of the fact that the cropped area showed a negligible rise. His plea for reduction of these taxes was based not only on their regressive character, but also on the ground that there were 'large, continuous and progressive' budget surpluses. This was an oft-recurring theme in Gokhale's Budget Speeches and gave him frequent opportunities of scoring over the official side. He argued that

> The surpluses constitute a double wrong to the community. They are a wrong in the first instance in that they exist at all—that Government should take so much more from the people than is needed in times of serious depression and suffering; and they are also wrong because they lend themselves to easy misinterpretation and, among other things, render possible the phenomenal optimism of the Secretary of State for India, who seems to imagine that all is for the best in this best of lands.[5]

They were essentially 'currency surpluses' arising out of the fact that the same level of taxation was maintained by the Government when the exchange value of the rupee had gradually risen from 13d. (1894) to 16d (since 1898). Gokhale pointed out that the Government had greatly increased the level of taxation during the period of the falling rupee, but saw no reason to grant relief when the rupee was stabilized. This was not all. He rightly maintained that

[5] Budget Speech, 26 March 1902.

the continuous surpluses blunted the edge of economy and offered irresistible opportunities to the Government to enhance unproductive expenditure on military establishments, on railway construction and so on. Gokhale was on firm theoretical ground when he argued that 'extra-ordinary' expenditures such as those on army re-organization, railway extension, etc. should be financed out of loans and not out of current revenues. In the final analysis, Gokhale pointed out, such a picture of a 'suffering country' and an 'overflowing treasury' does not connote advancing material prosperity or marvellous recuperative power of the masses, but that

> ...in India the tax-payer has no constitutional voice in the shaping of these things. If we had any votes to give, and the Government of the country had been carried on by an alternation of power between two parties, both alike anxious to conciliate us and bid for our support, the honourable member would assuredly have told a different tale.[6]

I have dwelt at some length on the corpus of critical thought built up by Gokhale and his associates. It will be readily agreed that this critique of British policy based upon a historical construct of the impact of British colonial policy on the backward economy of India into which fabric were woven such causal elements as the 'drain', land revenue settlements and the operations of currency and finance, formed the basic groundwork of thought which inspired our national movement. It seems to me, therefore, that these men were as much responsible for 'Indian Unrest' as its traditional Father, Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

[6] *Ibid.*

III

While the compelling circumstances of their times forced Gokhale and his associates to make this critique the centre-piece of their economic thought and political stance, they were at the same time building up a framework of policy grounded upon constructive intervention of the state for the welfare and growth of our economy. There is ample evidence for holding that they were gradually evolving the conceptual basis of the welfare state, not perhaps in terms of theoretical constructs, but empirically in terms of the needs of a backward economy. They explored strategic areas of such constructive intervention, and set forth the broad lineaments of a policy that would be conducive to mass welfare and initiate forces of change toward development. In this regard, the conceptual groundwork was prepared by Ranade, who built up a powerful argument against *laissez faire* on the ground that a theory of economic policy based upon the assumptions and experience of advanced economies can have no application to an underdeveloped country where the assumptions have no factual basis, and whose peculiar circumstances demand, not only a rejection of non-interventionism, but its fundamental reversal. A broad conception of such a policy was evolving in Gokhale's mind right from the beginning of his public career, and gradually it took concrete shape during his tenure in the Imperial Legislative Council. Thus, in one of his earliest Budget Speeches (1903), after reviewing the economic and fiscal condition of the country, Gokhale concluded: 'What the situation demands is that a large and comprehensive scheme for the moral and material well-being of the people must be chalked out with patient care and foresight, and then it should be firmly and steadily adhered to, and the progress made examined almost year to year'.

This reads almost as if it were the preamble to planning for welfare and growth! It is not that I am letting myself go a little on this occasion (which may perhaps be permitted on an occasion like this!); I can quote chapter and verse from Gokhale's writings and speeches to sustain my claim that Gokhale was the founder of the basic conceptual framework of the welfare state in India. The foundation comprised three basic elements: welfare finance, industrial development, and agricultural improvement. Together, they make up Gokhale's testament of economic policy.

A deep concern for the vast mass of the poor, exploited, long-suffering Indian population lay at the root of Gokhale's welfare approach. It sprang not merely out of his humanity, but out of the conviction that material progress of the masses was the surest foundation of their social and political advance, and a pre-condition of a vigorous national life. This conviction was the compelling urge underlying Gokhale's continuous efforts in the direction of welfare finance. Gokhale was fully aware of the fact that schemes of welfare must necessarily involve large public outlays as well as higher levels of taxation to finance them. Hence, while attacking the growth of expenditure and taxation, Gokhale took care to observe that the gravamen of his charge was against unproductive expenditure and regressive taxation, and not against the enhancement of expenditure and taxation *per se*. No stronger supporter and advocate of expenditure on education, public health and sanitation, famine relief, and other welfare measures than Gokhale could be imagined. In the course of his Budget Speech for 1902 Gokhale observed:

> Then the question of mass education must be undertaken in right earnest, and, if it is so undertaken, the present expenditure of Government on public education

> will require a vast increase. My lord, it is a melancholy fact that while with us nine children out of every ten are growing up in ignorance and darkness, and four villages out of every five are without a school, our educational expenditure has been almost marking time for many years past....It may be asked how can the two things that I advocate simultaneously be achieved together, namely, a considerable reduction of taxation and a large increase in the outlay on education and other domestic reforms? My answer is that the only way to attain both objects simultaneously is to reduce the overgrown military expenditure of the country.

Gokhale moved a Resolution (1910) recommending that a beginning be made in the direction of 'free and compulsory' elementary education. Later, in 1911, he moved his famous Elementary Education Bill, which, though a cautious and moderate measure, was thrown out by the official majority. Besides primary education, Gokhale made frequent pleas for the expansion of technical and higher liberal education, considering that expenditure on these was the most productive form of national investment.

The emphasis which Gokhale placed on welfare expenditure also lay at the root of his approach to inter-governmental fiscal relations. While welcoming the trend toward financial decentralization ushered in by the Government of Lord Ripon, Gokhale severely criticized the then existing system of provincial contracts which diverted a large proportion of provincial revenues to the Imperial exchequer and left the provinces starved of funds for nation-building activities which lay within their jurisdiction. On similar grounds, Gokhale made out a strong case in favour of expanding the financial resources of local bodies to enable them to carry out their welfare activities at a higher level.

Gokhale's welfare approach to public finance is particularly evident in his critical and constructive thought on taxation. At the Congress session of December 1890 Gokhale made a moving speech condemning the enhancement of the salt tax. He said:

> When you call to mind the thin emaciated figures of these unhappy, miserable brethren, who have as much right to the comforts of this, God's earth as you or I or anyone else; when you remember that the lives of these brethren are so uniformly dark and miserable that they are hardly cheered by a single ray of hope, or relieved by a single day of rest; when, further, you remember that a person does not generally trench upon his stock of necessaries before he has parted with every luxury, every single comfort that he may allow himself; when you recall all these things, you will clearly understand what grievous and terrible hardship and suffering and privation this measure of enhancement has really entailed.... The past is in the past and no one can recall it; but this much can surely be done—further evil and misery from this source can be averted.

On similar grounds Gokhale attacked the high pitch of land revenue, and the cotton excise duties. In regard to the latter, his basic objection stemmed from their regressive character, and not from their being a burden upon a depressed industry. Speaking on the resolution of Sir Manekji Dadabhoy recommending the abolition of the cotton excise duties (1911), Gokhale observed:

> I contend, Sir, that the main burden of these duties falls on the poorest classes of this country.... Sir, if it were the case that these excise duties fell on the producers and not on the consumers, I would not stand up to

> support their abolition to-day. My friend, the Hon'ble Mr Dadabhoy, camplained of the extreme depression of the mill industry, and several other members have also spoken in similar terms. I think, however, that it is necessary to point out that, before this depression came, they had a spell of extraordinary prosperity; some of the concerns are reported to have made profits of about 30 and 40 and even 50 per cent in a single year; when, therefore, bad years came, we should not forget the good years that went before. If we take an average of good and bad years, I am not quite sure that there is such a strong case to urge for the abolition of these duties from the point of view of the industry. Except in such abnormal times as the present, I think it is absolutely clear that the duties fall not on the producer but on the consumer, and the consumers of the rougher counts are the poorest of the poor....I suggest that the excise duties should be limited to the higher counts only, in regard to which there is competition between India and England. Roughly, I may say that all counts below 30 should be exempted.... Such abolition would be a just measure of financial relief to the poorest of the community.

A similar conception of redistributive finance underlay Gokhale's view on income taxation. Opposing Sir Manekji Dadabhoy's Resolution (1912) recommending a raise of the income-tax exemption limit from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500, Gokhale observed that, in the first place, the financial situation of the country did not warrant any tax relief of such a character; but more importantly, he pointed out, if relief were to be granted, it should be such as to benefit the poorer classes rather than the class of income-tax payers whose hardships are being considered in the proposed resolution. He said:

> The state has to work at the whole scheme of taxation, first, from the standpoint of its own necessities, and, secondly, from the standpoint of the comparative ability of the different classes to pay their particular share of the total revenue raised from the community. Now, judged by this standard, I really do not think that the class for which my Hon'ble friend seeks a remission has any substantial grievance....I have no hesitation in saying that the poorer classes of the country bear really a larger burden than the class to which my Hon'ble friend has referred to, or the classes above them. The upper and middle classes of the country contribute really much less than our poor classes relatively to their resources.

The second constituent element of Gokhale's constructive policy of welfare and growth was in the field of industrial and commercial policy. An apt pupil of Ranade, Gokhale was an ardent advocate of industrialization through a judicious policy of infant industry protection and public support for home-made goods on the 'swadeshi' principle. Like Ranade, Gokhale was a great admirer of Friedrich List's *National System of Political Economy,* and had imbibed its basic thesis that through a judicious and discriminating application of protection, a backward agricultural country could build up its industrial power, temporarily sheltered from world competition. It is well to remember, however, that Gokhale was too well-versed in classical political economy to throw overboard the general principle underlying free trade. While arguing that free trade could not be the right policy for all countries at all times, he took care to argue that protection also had its own dangers. He said:

> It is necessary to remember that there are two kinds of

protection, the right kind and the wrong kind. The right kind of protection is that under which the growing industries of a country receive the necessary stimulus and encouragement and support that they require, but under which care is taken that no influential combinations, prejudicial to the interests of the general community, come into existence. The wrong kind of protection, on the other hand, is that under which powerful influences and combinations and interests receive assistance to the prejudice of the general community, the general tax-payers of the country. And I believe that the right kind of protection, if available, will do good in India. But Sir, situated as India is, I fear there is no likelihood of that kind of protection being available to us; and it is my deliberate conviction that, in our present circumstances, a policy of free trade, reasonably applied, is after all the *safest* policy for us.[7]

Holding such views, Gokhale found it difficult to support Pandit Malaviya's Resolution (1911) recommending the imposition of a protective duty on sugar imports in the interest of the domestic sugar industry. He moved an amendment asking for an expert inquiry into the position of the industry before adopting any positive measures of support through protection or by any other device. In the course of his speech, he pointed out that the burden of the protective duties would tend to fall upon the poorer classes of consumers, while the benefit will accrue to the industrialists, many of whom were non-Indians. Gokhale thus had a very clear perception of the conflicting interests of

[7] Speech in the Imperial Legislative Council on Sir Manekji Dadabhoy's resolution recommending the abolition of cotton excise duties, 9 March 1911.

consumers and producers, poorer classes and richer classes, involved in a policy of protection, and warned against an indiscriminate adoption of such a policy under the pressure of vested interests.

An all-round programme of rural development formed the pivotal element in Gokhale's 'comprehensive scheme of moral and material well-being of the people'. A broad outline of the programme was presented by him in his Budget Speech in March 1906. In order to initiate a progressive movement in agriculture, Gokhale rightly pointed out that the first essential condition was to free the farmer from the incubus of heavy land taxation and unproductive debt, which rendered him resourceless and unresponsive to developmental incentives. He observed: 'The present system (of land revenue assessments) is having, and can have, but one effect. It tends to keep the one industry of the country in a hopelessly depressed condition, discouraging all expenditure of capital on land, and rendering agricultural improvement an impossible hope.'

In respect of the burden of unproductive debt, Gokhale outlined a scheme of debt redemption to be operated on a small scale in the initial period and extended in the light of experience. The measures of relief in land revenue and unproductive rural debt should be accompanied by the third measure, the provision of credit to the agriculturist at a low rate of interest. In this connection it should be recalled that Gokhale had given his 'cordial and unequivocal support' to the Co-operative Societies Bill which became an Act in 1904. While whole-heartedly approving the principle of the Bill, Gokhale drew the attention of the Government to two aspects of the measure which would enlarge the bounds of executive action in operating it and ensure its success. In the first place, he argued that an essential prerequisite for the success of co-operative credit was the pre-

liminary liquidation of existing debt, incurred at usurious rates of interest. In particular, this was necessary in respect of that large class of cultivators who had got into debt but not to such an extent as to be 'hopelessly involved, and who are making honest efforts to keep their heads above water'. Secondly, Gokhale felt that the principle of unlimited liability would prove an effective deterrent to participation in the cooperative organizations.

When the ground is thus cleared by the removal of growth-inhibiting incubus of heavy land taxation and rural debt, and provision made for meeting the reasonable needs for agricultural finance, the positive measures of agricultural improvement would embrace irrigation and scientific agriculture. In regard to irrigation, he commended the policies and measures adopted by Lord Cromer in Egypt of entrusting the projects to approved contractors, the government exercising supervisory control only. In the field of scientific agriculture, the Government had announced its general policy in 1904 while making a small grant to Provincial Governments. It embraced 'the establishment of an experimental farm in each large tract of country, of which the agricultural conditions are approximately homogeneous, to be supplemented by numerous demonstration farms, the creation of an agricultural college teaching up to a three years' course in each of the large provinces, and the provision of an expert staff in connection with these colleges for purposes of research as well as education'. While approving the general scheme, Gokhale objected to the importing of foreign experts as a 'standing arrangement' and suggested that such an arrangement should be regarded as temporary, efforts being made in the meantime to train Indians to take up positions of technical expertise.

I have dwelt at some length on the broad lineaments of the policy of constructive interventionism evolved by

Gokhale and his associates in the field of welfare finance, industrial development and agricultural improvement. Let us remember that all this was worked out and set forth more than sixty years ago, when even the British welfare state was in its infancy. I am sometimes drawn into a curious train of thought: what a miracle these giants would have worked if, at that time, our country had been free, and its destinies in their hands? It is rather an idle speculation, but I venture to suggest that men like Dadabhai, Ranade and Gokhale would have evolved a welfare state in our country even before it flowered in Great Britain or in Sweden. Unfortunately, these men were struggling against imponderable forces, and while their high purpose and noble spirit sustained their efforts, they were often assailed by a sense of defeat and failure. In the closing years of his life, when 'something of the autumnal sadness of fallen leaves and growing mists had passed into his mood',[8] Gokhale expressed his sense of failure in the following moving words: 'I have always felt and have often said that we of the present generation in India can only hope to serve our country by our failures. The men and women who will be privileged to serve her by their successes will come later. We must be content to accept cheerfully the place that has been allotted to us in our onward march . . . we shall be entitled to feel that we have done our duty, and, where the call of duty is clear, it is better even to labour and fail than not to labour at all.'[9] If Gokhale had lived longer (as we all wish he had), he would have, possibly, recovered from this mood, as he would have perceived that, after all, his

[8] Sarojini Naidu, quoted by D. B. Mathur, *Gokhale: A Political Biography* (Bombay: P. C. Manaktala & Sons, 1966), p. 105.

[9] Speech on Elementary Education Bill, Imperial Legislative Council, 16 March 1911.

'labour and wounds' were not in vain. Looking back over the period, one perceives a slow (all too slow, perhaps) but perceptible change of policy since the turn of the century. The Land Revenue Resolution (1902), the Co-operative Societies Act (1904), the Constitutional Reforms of 1902 and 1919, the subsequent adoption of the policy of discriminating protection—all these are indicative of a favourable change, and one cannot be too sure that Gokhale and his friends contributed nothing to it.

It is a sad thought that the light was extinguished all too soon. I sometimes bring before my mind's eye the figure of Gokhale in the closing period of his life: broken in health, oppressed by a sense of failure of his life-long labours, his soft heart lacerated by vicious attacks from some of his own countrymen, Gokhale comes to my mind as the hero of a Greek tragedy, tragic yet splendid in purpose and spirit. Let us hope we recapture that spirit to-day; let us invoke it in words in which Wordsworth invoked the spirit of Milton. 'Thou shouldst be living at this hour, India hath need of thee'.

> .....she is a fen
> Of stagnant waters.....we are selfish men;
> Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
> And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.