

May 9, 1966

Birth Centenary Publication



Library

IIAS, Shimla

923.254 G 561



00027225

Published by
Maharashtra Information Centre
Government of Maharashtra
Connaught Circus
New Delhi

Government Central Press, Bombay



923.254
G 561

Bopal Krishna Gokhale

THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

923.254

G 561

—Dr. H. N. KUNZRU



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ADVANCED STUDY
LIBRARY * SIMLA



Library

IIAS, Shimla

923.254 G 561



00027225

923.254
G 561

27225

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

DATE ENTERED

CATALOGUED

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE, whose birth centenary will be celebrated in the current year, was born of poor parents on 9 May 1866, and died on 19 February 1915. He was, thus, less than 49 years old when he died, but during the short span of his life he attained a distinction which few public workers of his day could lay claim to. When he entered public life it was adorned by great men whose patriotism, courage, and intellectual qualifications had earned them the respect and admiration of their grateful countrymen, but he shone brightly even in this galaxy of talent. His rise in public life was phenomenal. He was only 22 years old when he was elected Secretary of the Bombay Provincial Conference. At 29 he worked as the Secretary of the Reception Committee of the Indian National Congress. At 31 he was one of the four Indian representatives chosen to give evidence before the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure, popularly known as the Welby Commission; at 33 he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council and at 35 of the Imperial Legislative Council. At 39, he founded the Servants of India Society (June 1905) and a few months

later he presided over the Banaras session of the Indian National Congress. The very first speech that he made on the Indian Budget (1902-03) attracted the attention of educated men all over the country. The comprehensive knowledge of Indian problems which it displayed, its masterly exposition of the financial situation, its deep concern for the welfare of the masses, and its forceful presentation of the Indian point of view commanded the admiration of the intelligentsia and enabled him to stand before the country as one of its foremost leaders. On reading it, Romesh Chandra Dutta wrote to him that he considered it to be 'the ablest and best speech that had ever been made from our point of view in the Viceroy's Council,' and that he 'dared to prophesy—knowing all the public men of India—that you will be the strongest, the foremost and most irresistible leader among them.'

Gokhale received a training for participation in public life which had hardly been the good fortune of any of our public men to undergo. He graduated in 1884 and joined the next year the New English School, started by Tilak and Chiplunkar in 1880, to place education within reach of the common man. In 1886, he joined the Deccan Education Society, which was founded by Tilak, Agarkar, Chiplunkar and Namjoshi in October 1884, and whose Life-Members vowed to serve it on a pittance for twenty years. The D. E. Society started the Fergusson College which commenced working in January 1885. As one of its professors, Gokhale taught English and Mathematics in the beginning, but subsequently taught History and Economics for many years. Soon after joining the Deccan Education Society he had the inestimable advantage of coming into contact with Mahadev Govind Ranade, who was one of the master minds of his age. His learning, versatility, patriotism, and saintly character inspired reverence in younger men who looked up to him as their Guru. Gokhale sat at his master's feet for twelve years and showed himself to be an uncommonly gifted, diligent, and faithful disciple during this period. It was no easy matter to please Ranade. He was a severe task-master. From time to

time, he asked his disciple to prepare representations to be submitted to the local or to the Central Government. Gokhale had sometimes to sit up the whole night to finish the task allotted to him, because he was occupied during the day with his College work and the preparation required for the discharge of his professorial duties. Besides, his duties in the College were not merely academic but also administrative, for he was appointed Secretary of the Deccan Education Society in 1891.

This, however, does not give one an adequate idea of the burden of public work on his shoulders. In 1888 he began to edit the English columns of the *Sudharak*, a weekly started by Agarkar (Principal of the Fergusson College) and devoted to the discussion of questions relating to social reform. In 1890, he was appointed Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha and Editor of its *Quarterly*. It was a tribute to his ability that he was chosen to edit this journal which was noted for its able discussion of serious questions. On account of differences between the members of the Sabha he resigned from its Secretaryship in 1896 and helped like-minded persons to start a new association under Ranade's guidance called the Deccan Sabha, of which he became the first Secretary. This shows how heavy were the duties that he had to discharge. His responsibilities were sufficiently onerous to require the wholehearted attention of at least two capable and devoted workers. This was how he laid the foundation of his future greatness, but he had to pay dearly for it. Nature had blessed him with a strong constitution, but it gave way under the weight of his manifold and responsible duties. In his valedictory speech on his retirement from the Fergusson College in September 1902, explaining the reasons for taking leave of his colleagues, he said: 'In the first place, my health is not now what it once was. During the last term it was a matter of anxiety to me from week to week, and almost from day to day how I should be able to finish my work without breaking down in the middle of the term.' But his burning love for the country prevented him from taking the rest that his health demanded. He continued to work with undiminished

vigour till his life drew to a close and when the end came he left the world like a true sadhu without any regret. Justly has Mahatma Gandhi said of him: 'Whatever he did, enjoyed, sacrificed; whatever charity he practised; whatever austerities he underwent; all this he surrendered at the feet of Mother India.'

To his vast and profound knowledge of public questions and his untiring industry, Gokhale added moral and spiritual qualities which gave him a special position among his contemporaries. To his master Ranade, he owed not merely habits of unremitting labour and thoroughness and a firm grasp of public questions which distinguished him in his later life, but also moral and spiritual elevation, wide sympathies, and a liberal outlook. He wanted not only political freedom but also social reform and the liberation of the people from the thralldom of old ideas which retarded the growth of a feeling of unity. He was a warm supporter of women's education and the uplift of the depressed classes. Every action of his was guided by moral considerations and every speech of his derived its force and effectiveness not merely from the cogency of his arguments but also from the high moral standpoint from which they were made. The political problem was to him a part of the moral problem. He believed like Mahatma Gandhi that we should not have two standards, one to be followed in politics and the other to be followed in our private life. Morality must govern both our private and our political activities. Moral considerations governed his conduct throughout his life and all his important political speeches bear witness to this.

Political Principles

In his Presidential speech at the Banaras Congress he supported the agitation against the partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement to which it gave birth, primarily on moral grounds. Speaking of the partition of Bengal, he said: 'A wave of true national consciousness has swept over the province and, at its touch, old barriers have, for the time at any rate, been thrown

down, personal jealousies have vanished, other controversies have been hushed. . . . 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. The most astounding fact of the situation is that the public life of this country has received an accession of strength of great importance, and for this all India owes a deep debt of gratitude to Bengal.’ His reference to Swadeshi was also suffused with a strong moral feeling: ‘The highest Swadeshi is an influence so profound and so passionate that its very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts one out of oneself. India needs today above everything else that the gospel of this devotion should be preached to high and to low, to prince and to peasant, in towns and in hamlets, till the service of the Motherland becomes with us as overmastering a passion as it is in Japan.’

He loved his country so profoundly and passionately that once he had arrived, after deep thought, at any conclusion, he could not be turned away from it by considerations of popularity. He valued truth above all else ; but his desire always was to place it before the public in such a way as to make it feel that what had been said by him deserved its serious attention. His ‘ammunition’, as Gandhiji has said, was ‘his wealth of facts and figures’, and his arguments were ‘persuasive and full of enthusiasm’.

While not blind to the disadvantages of foreign rule, Gokhale believed that statesmanship demanded that, situated as we were, we should support the continuance of India’s association with England in the best interests of India. He, therefore, firmly held the opinion that the objective for which public men in India should work should be self-government within the Empire of the same kind as that which the self-governing colonies of the British

Empire enjoyed, and he repeated this conviction on various occasions. In his Presidential Address to the Congress in 1905, he said : 'The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interests of Indians themselves and that, in course of time, a form of government should be set up in this country similar to what exists in the self-governing colonies of the British Empire.' He said the same thing during his tour of Northern India early in 1907. For instance, he said at Allahabad in February 1907: 'I want India to take her proper place among the great nations of the world, politically, industrially, in religion, in literature, in science, and in art. I want all this, and feel at the same time that the whole of this aspiration can, in its essence and reality, be realized within this Empire. The cases of the French in Canada and the Boers in South Africa had shown that there was room in the Empire for a self-respecting India.' He said in the same speech that it was not a question 'of what was theoretically perfect, but of what was practically attainable'. His recognition of the political realities of the situation convinced him that we should not advocate the severance of the British connection or for going out of the Commonwealth. He did not stand alone in this respect. When the partition of Bengal stirred up feelings against the British Government in India and there were serious differences of opinion in the Congress with regard to the manner in which political agitation should be carried on in future to enable India to be fully self-governing, some leaders strongly questioned the wisdom and efficacy of the policy that India should continue to be a member of the Commonwealth—or the British Empire as it was then called. Aravind Ghosh and Bipin Chandra Pal repudiated the ideal for which the old Congress leaders stood. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who was looked upon as the leader of the new Party in the Congress, appeared to stand for complete independence in 1906, but subsequently he advocated consistently the goal of self-government within the Commonwealth. He wrote in his paper, the *Kesari*, early in 1907 that 'the colonial model sufficed for him as an ideal to work for.' His differences with the Moderates, he repeatedly

pointed out, was not 'with regard to the objective but only with regard to the methods of agitation to be pursued by the Congress'.¹ Again in 1919, he said in England: 'The British Empire is already a League of Nations. Why should Indians—believers in world polity—wish to separate from the Commonwealth of Nations?'² C. R. Das spoke of the 'deep spiritual significance' of the Commonwealth idea and he believed that it was 'for the good of India, for the good of the world that India should strive for freedom within the Commonwealth and so serve the cause of humanity.'³ In the Manifesto of the Congress Democratic Party of which Tilak was the leader, he said in April 1920: 'This party believes in the integration or federation of India in the British Commonwealth for the advancement of the cause of humanity and the brotherhood of mankind, but demands autonomy for India and equal status as a sister State with other partners in the British Commonwealth, including Great Britain.'

When the Congress voted for Independence at its Lahore session in 1930, its Resolution was not interpreted by Mahatma Gandhi as meaning secession from the Commonwealth. It meant to him that the partnership between India and England should continue but should be dissoluble at the option of either party. Soon after the Lahore session of the Congress, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhiji wrote: 'The Independence Resolution need not frighten anybody. I had repeatedly declared that for me as for all other Congressmen, Dominion Status could mean only virtual Independence; that is, partnership at will for mutual benefit and to be dissolved at the instance of either partner.' This interpretation was upheld by the Karachi Congress, presided over by Vallabhbhai Patel. The Resolution passed by the Congress made this quite clear. Gandhiji never resiled from this opinion. He stood for *poorna Swaraj* but not for putting an end to the British connection. This attitude was also supported by Independent India which under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru decided to continue her association with the Commonwealth. It

recognized that association with the nations of the Commonwealth was of some value and that it was better than standing alone. And India has continued to stick to this view in spite of the Suez and Rhodesian crises.

To achieve Indian freedom, Gokhale strongly felt that the method to be employed should be that of constitutional agitation. But his idea of constitutional agitation was much broader than that of other Indian leaders. Contrary to the popular belief, it did not begin and end with petitioning and appealing. In the Allahabad speech, referred to above, he defined constitutional agitation as action to bring about the changes that were desired through the action of the constituted authority. This meant that 'the methods adopted were such as we were entitled to employ,' and secondly, that 'the changes desired must be obtained only through the action of constituted authorities by bringing to bear upon them the pressure of public opinion.' This obviously excluded violence. It further excluded rebellion or aiding a foreign power and resort to criminal actions. 'Roughly speaking, barring these three things, all else was constitutional.' Thus 'passive resistance, including even its extreme form of non-payment of taxes till grievances were redressed' was perfectly legitimate. But Gokhale added: 'No doubt, everything that was constitutional was not necessarily wise or expedient.' All this meant that the result of the pressure exerted on the authorities depended upon the strength and determination of the people and that 'the necessity of building up strength and hardening their determination was obviously paramount.'

Gandhiji adopted a course which had not been clearly thought of in Gokhale's lifetime. But I think it may nevertheless be said that with regard to the manner of carrying on agitation there was broad agreement between Gandhiji and Gokhale.

Gokhale clearly saw the evil effects of British rule and in his Presidential address to the Congress, and on other occasions he gave forceful expression to this view. He was convinced

that the domination of one race over another, 'especially when there is no great disparity between the intellectual endowments of their general civilisation', was very harmful to the subject race 'in a thousand insidious ways', but at the same time, he realized that these evils could be removed only by the development of a strong public life. He visited Madras in July 1904, as Jt. Secretary of the Indian National Congress. Addressing a public meeting on 25 July, he explained to the audience the enormous difficulties in the way of the realization of our ambitions. We were, he said, faced with a strong bureaucracy which would not give up its power and privileges at the first assault on its monopoly. Besides, he felt that it had to be recognized that the British officials who were responsible for the formulation of policies and the administration of the country were picked men and had 'a higher standard of duty, higher notions of patriotism, higher notions of loyalty to each other, higher notions of organized work and of discipline,' and therefore, knew how to make a united stand in defence of their privileges. As against this, he said: 'Our public life is really feeble and ineffective because it is so faint-hearted and so soulless. Very few of us have real faith in the work we are doing. When men take up work in a mechanical spirit without believing in it, you should not be surprised if no great results are achieved.' 'The day has gone by', he said, 'when politics could afford to be amateurish in this country.'

He expressed similar sentiments in some other political speeches also. He realized that the development of public life to such a degree as to force the hands of the Government in the political conditions existing then would be far from easy. He was, therefore, most anxious that political work should be taken up with greater earnestness and should be carried on continuously by men who were prepared to devote their lives to the service of the country. This was the only method of achieving our goal. Though there were bound to be disappointments in the beginning, there was no reason why this should make people lose faith in their struggle. 'Moreover, the real

moral interest of a struggle, such as we are engaged in, lies not so much in the particular readjustment of present institutions which we may succeed in securing, as in the strength that the conflict brings us to be a permanent part of ourselves. The whole life of a people, which is broader and deeper than what is touched by purely political institutions, is enriched even by failures, provided the effort has been all that it should be.’⁴ This was the true meaning of the statements made by him on several occasions that while future generations of Indians might serve India by their successes, the present generation must be prepared to serve the country by its failures, for every failure, looked at in the proper spirit, could build up the strength of the nation.

He always said our political work had to be done very largely in India. He said, for instance, at Allahabad, that he had always been of the opinion that ‘nine-tenths of their work had to be done in this country.’ This work consisted in the promotion of greater unity among the different sections of the people—between Hindus and Muslims and between the different sections of Hindus themselves—the development of a stronger and higher type of character, firmness of purpose and discipline in action, and the development of an intense national feeling throughout the country, rising above distinctions of caste and creed and accompanied by the spread of political education among the masses. This work could be done only in India, but he felt, at the same time, that an important part of our work lay in England also. He thought that we should keep in touch with British democracy and take advantage of the rising tide of democratic forces in England. No method of increasing our influence and realizing our demands should be left unexplored.

He had, in the course of his public life, repeatedly, expressed the opinion that we had reached a stage in the political progress of the country which required more methodical and continuous work for its further advance. His experience as a member of the Deccan Education Society had shown him what a band of

sincere, hard-working, and patriotic workers could achieve in spite of the obstacles in their way. He saw that a similar organization was needed to promote the work that had to be done in order to strengthen the people, for it was only the pressure of organized public opinion that could compel the Government to move forward. He started the Servants of India Society (12 June 1905) to fulfil this need. The Preamble to the Society's Constitution clearly stated that an essential condition for success in our work was that a sufficient number of Indians must come forward 'to devote themselves to the cause in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken. Public work must be spiritualized. Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side.' The object of the Society was 'to train national missionaries for the service of India'. The principal objects to which the Members of the Society were to direct their attention were: creating by example and precept intense love of country among the people, and promoting goodwill and co-operation between different communities. They were also required to work for the elevation of the depressed classes and to assist educational movements, specially those for the education of women and the backward classes, and industrial and scientific education. The Members were to take the pledge of lifelong and dedicated service to the country. The first five years of membership were to be devoted to a quiet study of public questions and gaining practical knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the country. Gokhale strongly felt that it was necessary to raise the capacity of the public workers in order that they might fit themselves for national service. Public life to him was a great and sacred responsibility and he felt in every fibre of his being that no one had the right to claim to be a servant of India unless he had equipped himself not merely to criticise the existing system but also to make constructive suggestions for its improvement. He must realize the difference between what was possible and what was practical. Without compromise, he often said, nothing worth-while could be achieved. Doubts were entertained

by leading public men about the success of the Servants of India Society, but their doubts were soon set at rest. With the inspiring example of the Founder of the Society before them, young men came forward enthusiastically to join it. They cheerfully laid aside all thoughts of acquiring wealth and strove in right earnest to prepare themselves for the service of the country and learnt the truth of the adage that he who loses himself finds himself.

The Statesman

Gokhale visited England in 1905 as a Congress Delegate to represent India's case in view of the impending general elections there. The visit lasted for 50 days, but he addressed as many as 45 public meetings during this short period. He went there again in 1906 on the same mission after the Liberal Government had assumed office, but the emphasis this time was on private meetings, interviews, etc. His next visit to England in 1908 was mainly in connection with the question of the introduction of constitutional reforms in India. It is not necessary to say anything here about the Morley-Minto Reforms with which political workers in India are well-acquainted. It may be noted that the Congress expressed its appreciation of his work in England in 1906 and by a Resolution in 1908 welcomed the Reforms as a partial fruition of its efforts and conveyed its appreciation to Mr. A. O. Hume, one of the Founders of the Congress, Sir William Wedderburn and the British Committee, for their zeal for the Congress cause and their strenuous labours in the cause of Indian political advancement. Gokhale made such an impression on British public men during his visits to England that Mr. Massingham, who was one of the best known journalists of his time and the editor of the *Nation*, said to Sir C. Y. Chintamani in 1919 that 'there was no statesman in England comparable to Gokhale;' that 'he was easily greater than Mr. Asquith himself.' He added: 'Lord Morley's success as Secretary of State for India was due chiefly to Gokhale's advice.'⁵

The partition of Bengal, which created intense dissatisfaction not merely in Bengal but in the whole of India, had brought about a most anxious situation in Bengal. The Government of India, instead of trying to conciliate the people by undoing the partition, which was regarded by them as an attempt on the part of the bureaucracy to punish Bengal for the leading part played by it in connection with the agitation for securing for India a position consistent with her self-respect and honour in the Commonwealth, embarked on a policy of repression. The haste with which the Seditious Meetings Bill was passed did not allow even the members of the Legislative Council to take part in the deliberations of the Select Committee. Gokhale opposed it strongly and pointed out that, though strong speeches had been made against the Government and even wild things might have been said at a few of them, the resentment against the Government was largely due to the measures of repression adopted by the Government since May 1907. He pointed out the unwisdom of the Government's policy by referring to the action taken by it in connection with the agitation in the Punjab on account of the Colonisation Bill and other grievances. 'That a man like Lala Lajpat Rai,' he said, 'loved by thousands not in his own Province only, a man of high character and elevated feeling, and a keen religious and social reformer, and a political worker who, whatever his faults, worked only in broad daylight, should have been suddenly arrested and deported without a trial—this was a proceeding which stunned the people throughout India.' He also referred to the arrest in the same connection of 'the venerable Lala Hansraj on a charge of inciting to violence and conspiracy against the Crown.' It was actions like these, he said, which created resentment and brought about estrangement between the Government and the people. He opposed the Act when it came up for renewal in 1910 and when it was finally passed in 1911.

Another important measure which the Government brought forward to control what it regarded as seditious writings in the Press was the Press Bill. When the report of the Select

Committee on the Bill came up, Gokhale opposed it, proposed amendments to it and suggested that its life should be limited to three years, but refrained from voting against it. Gokhale was naturally strongly against the Bill, but he had to exercise great self-restraint, for reasons which were explained by Sir C. Y. Chintamani, editor of the *Leader*, in a weekly conducted by Mrs. Besant in London when Lord Sinha was very unfairly attacked by Mr. Eardley Norton in the *Looker On* of Calcutta. Chintamani had got his information from Gokhale and Lord Sinha.

The Bill as originally drafted was much more drastic than the Bill that was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council. Lord Sinha, who was the first Indian Law Member of the Viceroy's Council, was so strongly opposed to it that he told the Viceroy that he could no longer remain in the Government and that his resignation should be cabled to the Secretary of State. Lord Minto then asked his Private Secretary, Col. Dunlop Smith, that he should explain the full facts to Gokhale and Sir Lawrence Jenkins, Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, the only two men who, in his opinion, could influence Lord Sinha's decision, and request them to advise Lord Sinha to reconsider his resignation—Lord Minto was not prepared to lose the services of Lord Sinha, and Lord Morley thought that if Lord Sinha resigned, 'it might be fifty years before any Secretary of State could think of appointing any other Indian' as a member of the Viceroy's Council. Neither Gokhale nor Sir Lawrence would, however, agree to advise Lord Sinha to withdraw his resignation, unless the Bill was at least very substantially modified. Gokhale and Lord Sinha considered what amendments should be insisted upon as a condition preceding the withdrawal of Lord Sinha's resignation. One of them was that the Bill should apply equally to 'Anglo-Indian' and Indian papers. Another was that no security should be demanded from the presses and newspapers existing at the time of the passing of the Bill unless they rendered themselves liable to be proceeded against under the Bill by their

future conduct. The third amendment was that, at the final stage, an appeal to the High Court should be allowed. It was understood that unless this was agreed to by the Viceroy, Sinha would not continue to be a member of the Viceroy's Council and that Gokhale would not press him to remain in office. The Viceroy was so strongly in favour of accepting Lord Sinha's amendments that the other members of the Council gave in, though with great reluctance. At this stage, Sinha insisted on a new condition without the satisfaction of which he would retire in spite of the concessions made to him by the Governor-General-in-Council. The condition was that Gokhale should join him in supporting the amended Bill. Gokhale's position, as a non-official elected member, being different from that of Sinha, he could not agree to Lord Sinha's condition. But Sinha then took up the position that he would himself remain neutral when the Bill was voted upon. This would have been clearly improper after the acceptance of the amendments by the Government of India. Gokhale was, therefore, compelled to enter into a compromise with him that he would refrain from voting against the Bill, though he retained perfect liberty to move amendments in the Select Committee and the Legislative Council. He actually moved some amendments, but as might have been expected, they were rejected by the Council.

Before referring to the financial and economic reforms suggested by Gokhale, it is necessary to point out that he was as keenly interested in social reform, in the larger sense of these words, as in political progress. In particular, the condition of the depressed classes, which was 'profoundly painful and humiliating', was a matter of deep concern to him. Speaking at the Social Conference held at Dharwar in April 1903, he observed that 'it is absolutely monstrous that a class of human beings, with bodies similar to our own, with brains that can think and with hearts that can feel, should be perpetually condemned to a low life of utter wretchedness, servitude, and mental and moral degradation...' Gandhiji, writing about

Gokhale's anxiety regarding the condition of these classes, has said : 'The problem of the uplift of the untouchable classes disturbed Gokhale's peace of mind every day. If some one criticised him for it, he would say to him plainly that we were not polluted by touching our brother the untouchable, but by falling a prey to the wicked feeling that we should not touch him.' It may be added that he asked the Members of the Servants of India Society to work, among other things, for the elevation of the depressed classes.

The Authority on Indian Finance

The written and oral evidence given by Gokhale in 1897 before the Welby Commission, whose task was to examine the growth of expenditure in India and suggest remedies for its control, shows how deep and accurate Gokhale's knowledge of the Indian financial problems was. Every important department was included in the evidence. He drew the attention of the Commission to the harmful effect of the existing political system on the growth of expenditure, both civil and military, and the scant attention which education had received at the hands of the authorities. Writing about the increasing expenditure, he forcefully observed: '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 opinion, 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 natural defences, and burdened us with undefined and indefinite financial liabilities.' He further pointed out that while the Government had saddled India with heavy and growing military liabilities and had constantly borrowed for commercial enterprises often under the pressure of English commercial classes, 'our Indian Government has little money to spare, with all this

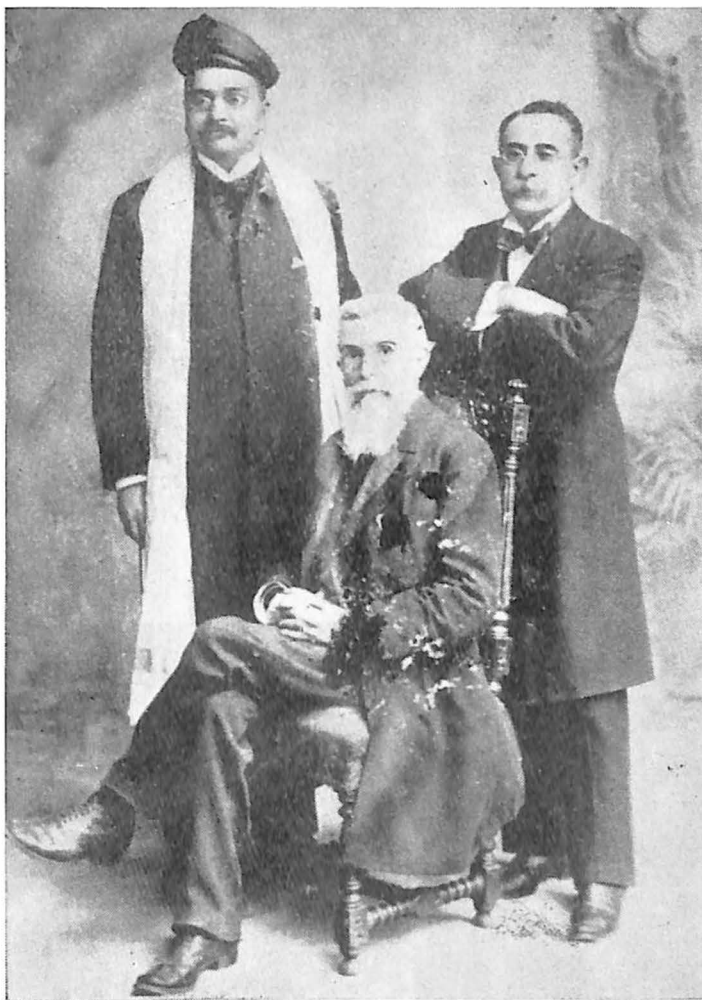
increase of taxation, for purposes of national education.' He contrasted the stagnation of education in India with its rapid progress in England, and showed that while between 1891-92 and 1894-95 the expenditure on education in India had increased by only a little over 2 lakhs, in Great Britain and Ireland it had increased from 6½ crores to nearly 13½ crores. 'One cannot help thinking', he said, 'that it is all the difference between children and step-children.' Out of 100 children of school-going age, about 88 were growing up 'in darkness and ignorance and consequent moral helplessness'. It was his careful and comprehensive study of the financial and other important questions at this stage that enabled him to make his mark as a member of the Supreme Legislative Council five years later.

He stood the cross-examination so well that he was complimented both by Wedderburn and Caine on his excellent performance. Wedderburn said to him that his evidence was 'much the best on our side' and that Caine had written to him to say that he had 'never seen a cleverer or more masterly exposition of the views of an educated Indian reformer on all the subjects dealt with.' It was a tribute to him that he was asked to prepare the first draft of the Minority Report which Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir William Wedderburn and W. S. Caine had decided to submit.⁶

As a member of the Bombay Legislative Council, Gokhale is best known for his severe criticism of the Bombay Land Revenue Bill, 1901. On reading his speech, Sir Dinshaw Wacha wrote to him: 'What a marvel of patient and scientific industry you are!'⁷ The Opposition was led by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and when the Government refused to accept any of the non-official amendments, Gokhale and some other members of the Legislative Council walked out with Sir Pherozeshah Mehta.

Gokhale succeeded Sir Pherozeshah Mehta as a member of the Supreme Legislative Council. By his ability, fearlessness,

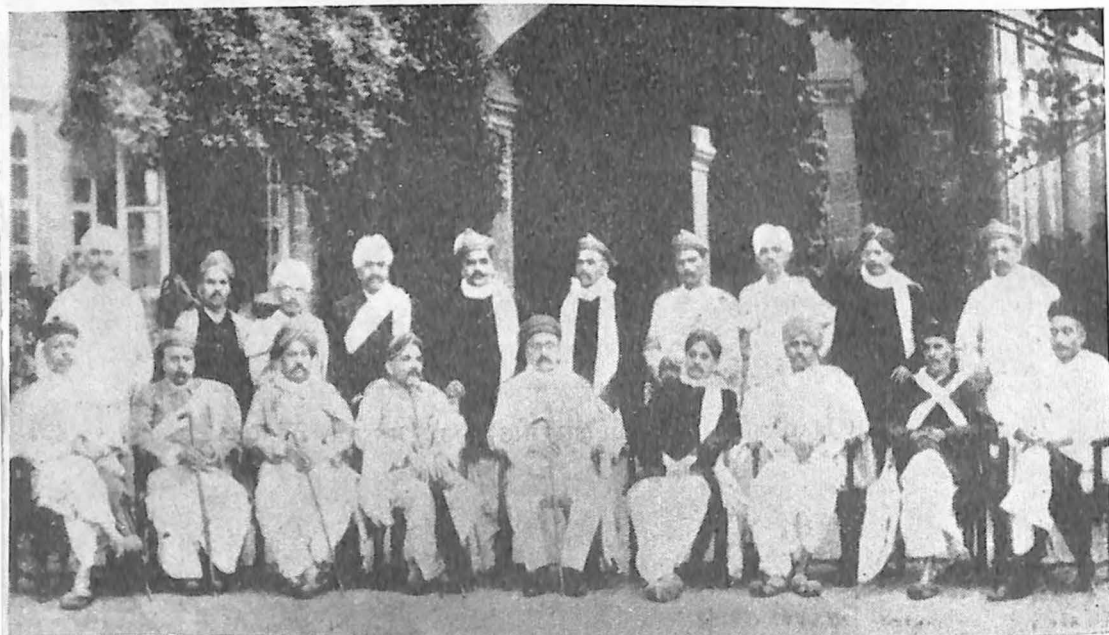
and capacity to meet the bureaucracy on its own ground, Mehta had created a new atmosphere in the Supreme Legislative Council and had won the respect and admiration of his countrymen. The task of his successor was, therefore, not easy. But Gokhale's very first Budget speech (1902) not merely established his position in the Supreme Legislative Council but, as has been pointed out above, also turned the eyes of the whole country towards him. His masterly exposition of the Indian financial system and the problems relating to the economic and social well-being of the people has never been excelled, or perhaps, even equalled in the Legislative Council. The taxation imposed owing to the diminishing exchange value of the rupee and maintained even after it had been stabilized at 1s. 4d., the duty on salt, the poverty of the rural masses, agricultural indebtedness, the unsatisfactory condition of the agriculture, industrial and agricultural education, mass education, and the growing military expenditure, all received his attention. He was never tired of pressing the Government to improve the condition of the rural areas in respect of education, water supply, sanitation, etc. He laid the greatest stress on the immediate formulation of schemes for improving the moral and material condition of the people. In his Budget speech in March 1906, which was perhaps even greater than his Budget speech in 1902, he urged Government to adopt measures for the uplift of the masses. In almost every speech he dwelt on 'the deep and deepening' poverty of the people. The urgent need for the limitation of the Government demand on land, permanent settlement, legislation for the abolition of rural indebtedness, the provision of cheap credit to the cultivators and the introduction of improved scientific agriculture were dwelt on by him in many of his Budget speeches. (Although he seemed generally to be engaged in considering questions of great political importance, his heart went out to the rural people and their 'fearful poverty' haunted him day and night. A large part of his legislative work was, therefore, designed to bring about their all-round development.) He was also a strong



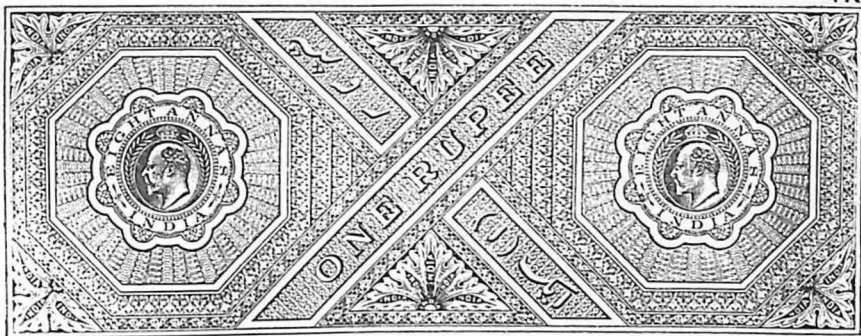
WITH DADABHAI NAOROJI (SITTING) AND DINSHAW WACHA



EARLY GROUP PHOTOGRAPH OF MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY:
 (SITTING, FROM LEFT): DEODHAR, SASTRI, GOKHALE, DRAVID, CHATTERJI



AMONG COLLEAGUES OF THE FERGUSSON COLLEGE



The Servants of India Society.

We, the undersigned, agree to associate ourselves to form a Society, called "the Servants of India Society," and we agree to be bound by the articles set forth below and the rules and regulations that may be made thereunder.

We also agree that Mr. G. K. Gokhale, ^{B.A. C. S. E.}
shall be the first member of our Society.

In testimony of this our agreement,
we put our signatures to this document
this day the 12th June 1905.

G. K. Gokhale

M. D. Desai

M. P. Wadgaonkar

M. K. Desai



IN ETERNAL REST



LOKAMANYA TILAK ADDRESSING
MOURNERS ON THE CREMATION
GROUND IN POONA

advocate of the reduction of the salt duty which stood at Rs. 2½ per maund in 1902. His condemnation of so high a duty on salt and his efforts to bring it down soon bore fruit and three reductions in five or six years brought the duty down to Re. 1 per maund. But he was not satisfied with this. He agreed with Fawcett that salt being a 'prime necessary' of life should be 'as free as air'. His view, I believe, was that except in an emergency, salt should be left untouched by the Government.

He also asked for relief from the heavy burden of taxation and said, more than once, that both the remission of taxes and a substantially larger expenditure on nation-building programmes should be possible if military expenditure were reduced. He, therefore, subjected it to close scrutiny, probably every year, from 1902 to 1909. He pointed out in his Budget speech in March 1902, that the strength of the Army had been raised by 30,000 troops (10,000 British and 20,000 Indians) on account of the scare of war with Russia in 1885 in spite of the protests of two members of the Viceroy's Council. After the crisis had passed away, the armies in England and other parts of the Empire were reduced to their previous strength, but India was not fortunate enough to be treated in the same manner. Even the victory of Japan over Russia in 1904 and the conclusion of a treaty between England and Russia in 1907 or 1908 did not lead to a change in the military policy of the British authorities. Gokhale further pointed out that our Army on which we spent a large proportion of our revenues, was always maintained on a war footing even in times of peace.

Gokhale charged the Government with maintaining a defence system based on a policy of distrust of the people. Virtually the whole population was excluded from following a military career. While Europeans and Anglo-Indians were encouraged and sometimes exhorted to receive military training as volunteers, Indians were excluded from it. The number of British officers in the Indian army had been steadily increased, with the result that Indians were ousted from the position which they

occupied before and could no longer be even Company Commanders. He also complained of the manner in which the Arms Act was being enforced. He said in his Budget speech of 1906: 'It is a cruel wrong to the whole people—one-fifth of the entire population of the world—to exclude them from all honourable participation in defence of their hearths and homes, to keep them permanently disarmed, and to subject them to a process of de-martialization such as has never before been witnessed in the history of the world.' The Government's reply to the persistent charge that the Indian Army was being maintained at a strength not required for the defence of India, was that the old conception of India's position and responsibilities was no longer adequate to the needs of the situation. The Military Member of the Viceroy's Council, Sir Edmund Elles, said in 1904: 'Are we to be content to hide ourselves behind our mountain barriers under the foolish impression that we should be safe whilst the absorption of Asiatic kingdoms is steadily in progress?' and added: 'It is, I think, undoubted that the Indian Army in the future must be a main factor in the balance of power in Asia; it is impossible to regard it any longer as a local militia for purely local defence and maintenance of order.' Lord Curzon, referring to the same question, strongly supported this view. 'This is the secret', he said, 'of the whole position in Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet and as far eastwards as Siam... And the whole of our policy during the past five years has been directed towards maintaining our predominant influence and preventing the expansion of hostile agencies in this area, which I have described.' Thus, as Mr. Gokhale observed, India was to be compelled to defend the Empire at her own cost. He naturally demanded that if the Indian Army must be used for imperial purposes, England must bear a part of the cost of the Indian Army. While military expenditure had virtually doubled in the course of a few years, nation-building programmes had been largely neglected and mass education, on which the foundation of the future progress of India rested, had received little attention.

When the Morley-Minto Reforms were introduced in 1910, he showed how the new powers conferred on the members of the Legislatures to move resolutions in connection with the Budget and non-financial matters could be made use of to raise important questions of policy and administration. The manner in which he utilized the new powers enabled the members of the provincial legislatures to understand how they could make use of their new opportunities to influence the attitude and actions of the Provincial Governments and to seek redress of popular grievances. It may be said without fear of contradiction that he was the greatest parliamentarian in his time and that his position has not been rivalled in this respect during the fifty years that have elapsed since his death. Lord Curzon, whose policies he strongly opposed, said in the House of Lords after his death that he had never met 'a man of any nationality more gifted with parliamentary capacities. Mr. Gokhale would have obtained a position of distinction in any parliament in the world, even in the British House of Commons.'

Owing to the large increase in both civil and military expenditure, he demanded more than once that a mixed Commission should be appointed to inquire into the matter. He also asked for an inquiry into the rise in prices which began in 1908 or thereabouts. As the Government paid no attention to his suggestions, he moved a Resolution on the growth of public expenditure in January 1911. His speech on the Resolution, in which he compared the growth of expenditure from 1875 to 1908, showed his wonderful grasp and vast knowledge of Indian finance. He clearly showed that in the period 1901-08, while the normal annual growth of revenue was about 1·5 per cent, the expenditure had risen by about 5 per cent per annum. Taking civil and military expenditure separately, he showed that the increase in the former was about 40 per cent in seven years, and that in the latter about 15 per cent during the same period. Some money was no doubt found for the improvement of the Police Service, education and the financial position of the Municipalities and Local Boards, but it was small in comparison

with the expenditure on 'increased establishments and revised scales of pay and pension for the European officials', for which Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty was noted. The facts that Gokhale mentioned were not questioned by the official representatives. Indeed they held out the hope that the need for keeping the expenditure under control would receive their immediate attention but nothing was actually done.

The wider employment of Indians in positions of trust and responsibility which was first brought to the fore by Dadabhai Naoroji was a question to which Indians attached the greatest importance. Lord Curzon, in 1904, maintained that the charge of exclusion of Indians from the higher rungs of the public services brought against the Government was not supported by facts and that India had been treated with a 'liberality unexampled in the history of the world'. Gokhale set himself to the task of pointing out the fallacious character of Lord Curzon's statement and the Government Resolution of May 1904, and showed in the tables attached to his Budget speech of 1905 that taking into account only the posts carrying a salary of Rs. 500 a month and over, the number of Indians was extremely small and that between 1897 and 1903 most of the newly created posts had gone to either Europeans or Eurasians, while the Indian element, instead of increasing, had even lost ground in some of the departments. The employment of Indians in the higher posts, he said, 'is to us something more than a mere question of careers'. The virtual monopoly of all superior posts by non-Indians placed a brand of inferiority on the Indians which was galling to their self-respect. 'Such a state of things as a temporary arrangement may be accepted as inevitable. As a permanent arrangement, it is impossible. This question thus is to us a question of national prestige and self-respect, and we feel that our future growth is bound up with a proper solution of it.'

On Education

It has been pointed out above that one of the subjects in

which Gokhale was keenly interested and to which he referred in many of his Budget speeches was that of mass education. In his Budget speech of 1906, he pleaded strongly that vigorous measures should be taken by Government to spread primary education, and observed: '... the question of mass education in this country has been neglected much too long, and the Government must lose no more time in waking up to its responsibilities in the matter. What is needed is a clear aim, and a resolute pursuit of that aim in a feeling of faith and with enthusiasm for the cause.'⁸ He further said: 'It will not do to be deterred by the difficulties of the task. Our whole future depends upon its accomplishment, and as long as the Government continues listless to the matter, it will justly be open to the reproach of failing in one of its most sacred duties to the people.'⁹ Primary education, he proposed, should, in the first instance, be made free. The loss that this would cause to Government would entail a very small sacrifice because the annual income from fees amounted to Rs. 30·5 lakhs only. The next step should be the introduction of compulsion for boys in the presidency towns and, 'perhaps, in a few other leading towns'. When the people had become accustomed to compulsion, it should be extended to other places 'till, at least, in the course of twenty years or so from now, we have in our midst a system of compulsory and free primary education throughout the country and that for both boys and girls.'¹⁰

He gave fuller expression to his ideas when he moved his Resolution on primary education in March 1910. The Resolution recommended that a beginning should be made in the direction of making primary education free and compulsory and that a commission of officials and non-officials should be appointed to frame definite proposals for the purpose. His speech shows how thorough was the preparation that he had made in order to bring conviction to unprejudiced minds of the urgent need for a limited measure of free and compulsory primary education in the country, and to meet the objections of those who were unwilling on various grounds to favour even

so cautious a proposal. The speech was marked not merely by knowledge but by the moral enthusiasm that was an essential ingredient of his patriotism.

He showed in his speech that India was behind all the civilised countries in spreading primary education. Even in Russia which had not paid much attention to it, substantially greater progress had been achieved than in India. While both in Russia and in India, the proportion of children at school to the total population was only 1·2 per cent in 1880, it was about 4·5 per cent in Russia in 1906-07, but in India it was only 1·9 per cent. Even the Philippines and Baroda were ahead of India. In the Philippines which passed under the rule of the U.S.A. towards the end of the 19th century, the percentage of school-going children to the total population rose from 2 in 1903 to 5 in 1908. In India, on the other hand, the advance was only from 1·6 per cent to 1·9 per cent. In Baroda 5 per cent of the total population was at school, though the conditions there were similar to those in the rest of India. He calculated that taking *per capita* expenditure on primary education in India, it would require only about 4 crores more to make primary education compulsory for boys.

He proposed that the compulsion should be applied only to boys between the ages of 6 and 10 as in Japan. In other words, the period of compulsion was to be 4 years. Further, compulsion was to be restricted to areas where 33 per cent of the boys of school-going age were already at school. It should be gradually extended to other areas and made applicable to girls also, so that the whole field might be covered in about twenty years. In order that adequate attention might be paid to education, he proposed that there should be a separate Secretary for Education in the Home Department and eventually a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in separate charge of Education. He also made suggestions for finding the funds required for the extension of primary education. He further proposed that the expenditure on primary education should be divided between the Central and Provincial

Governments and that the Government of India should prepare a definite programme for spreading education, just as they prepared a programme for the extension of the railways. But if every other resource failed, which he did not consider to be possible, he would be prepared, he said, 'to advocate an extra 8 as. on salt'. The driving force behind all his efforts in this matter was his deep and passionate feeling that 'the increased efficiency of the individual, the higher general level of intelligence, the stiffening of the moral backbone of large sections of the community, none of these can come without the diffusion of education.' The official reply was not unsympathetic, but no action was taken by Government in the direction recommended by Gokhale, though his Resolution had been welcomed not only by the Congress but also by the Muslim League.

Gokhale introduced a Bill in the Supreme Legislative Council in March 1911, which embodied the ideas referred to above and which explained in greater detail how his scheme should be carried out. He again referred forcefully and feelingly to the importance of mass education. He believed that 'elementary education for the mass of the people means something more than a mere capacity to read and write. It means for them a keener enjoyment of life and a more refined standard of living. It means the greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual. It means a higher level of intelligence for the whole community generally. He who reckons these advantages lightly may as well doubt the value of light or fresh air in the economy of human health.'

The attitude of the Government seemed to be more favourable than it had been before. A separate Department of Education had been established under Sir Harcourt Butler (then Mr. Butler). The Viceroy, in his reply to the Congress address in the beginning of 1911, had employed significant language on the subject of Education, and the Under-Secretary of State for India had stated in the British House of Commons in July 1910, that one of the objects of the creation of the new Education Department

was to spread education throughout the country and the Educational Conference summoned by Sir Harcourt Butler, which had met at Allahabad in February 1910, indicated that the Government was alive to the necessity of moving faster in the matter of mass education. Gokhale was therefore hopeful that Government would take vigorous measures for the more rapid extension of primary education.

During the debates he was not dissatisfied with the attitude of Government and the members of the Council towards the Bill. The attitude of the Government was 'cautious' but not 'unfriendly'. Some non-official members also had criticised the Bill. Some members objected to compulsion because in their opinion the time for it had not come. Some objected to a comparison between India and the Western countries. His reply to the criticism was that there was no country in the world which could do without compulsion, and that compulsion had been applied to an Asian country like Ceylon where the conditions were similar to those in South India, that 6·6 per cent of the total population was at school there in 1909, and that the period of compulsion was 6 years for boys. He again referred to the case of Baroda where the compulsory period of education was 6 years for boys and 5 years for girls. In the end the Bill was circulated for eliciting public opinion.

A year later, Gokhale moved that the Bill should be referred to a Select Committee. The reception of the Bill in the country was a source of great satisfaction to him and he said: 'It is no exaggeration to say that no measure of our time has received such a wide, such an enthusiastic, such an overwhelming public support, as the Bill before the Council.' But every local Government that was consulted was opposed to it. He referred to the 'message of hope' given by the King to the people of India before he left Calcutta—'And it is my wish too that the homes of my Indian subjects may be brightened and their labours sweetened by the spread of knowledge, with what follows in its train—a higher level of knowledge, of thought, of comfort, and of wealth.' In spite of this, Gokhale's motion was opposed

not merely by the Conservative non-official members of the Legislative Council but also by Government itself. The old objections to the introduction of compulsion were trotted out again and it was said that compulsion would meet with great difficulties in rural areas on account of differences of language, script, caste, etc. As was expected, the Bill was thrown out. Thus ended the Government's lip sympathy for Education and all the official pronouncements in favour of Education. Gokhale learnt about that time on good authority that the Bill was opposed by Government because it was regarded as a danger to the continuance of British rule.

Fighter for Indians Abroad

Another very important question touching the national self-respect of India which Gokhale brought up before the Supreme Legislative Council was that of the recruitment of indentured labourers in India. He moved two Resolutions on the subject. The first, which related to the prohibition of the recruitment of such labour for the Colony of Natal, was moved by him in February 1910. The historic struggle carried on by Mahatma Gandhi during the three previous years to protect the honour of India had created a strong feeling in the country against the policy of the Government of India which permitted the recruitment of indentured labour for Natal. A booklet exposing the cruel and degrading treatment of the Indians in Natal and the Transvaal, which was published by H. S. L. Polak soon after he came to India in 1909 on behalf of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indians in South Africa, further added to the indignation in the country against Natal and the policy of the Indian Government. Gokhale forcefully pointed out the evils of the indenture system which, he thought, should be abolished altogether, and said: 'It is true that it is not actual slavery, but I fear in practice in a large number of cases it cannot be far removed from it. To take from this country helpless men and women to a distant land, to assign them there to employers in whose choice they have no voice and of whose language, customs, social

usages, and special civilisation they are entirely ignorant, and to make them work there under a law which they do not understand and which treats their simplest and most natural attempts to escape ill-treatment as criminal offences—such a system, by whatever name it may be called, must really border on the servile.’ He demanded that the ‘Government of India should consider it its duty to put an end to the system, which was responsible not only for the miseries of the indentured labourers in Nepal and the ill-treatment of free Indians, but also for lowering the prestige of the country.’ The worst feature of the system was that the indentured labourers, after arrival in Natal, found that even efforts on their part to have their wages raised, or to modify the conditions laid down in the contract, made them liable for punishment with imprisonment. Indian workers who had completed their contract had to pay, unless they re-indentured themselves, a tax of £3 for every male above 16 years of age and every female above 13 years. The total Indian population in South Africa was about 1,50,000. Of this number, 1,20,000 were in Natal, about 15,000 in the Cape Colony and about 13,000 ‘entitled’ to be in the Transvaal, though the actual number there was not more than 6,000 owing to the passive resistance carried on there under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi against unjust laws which cast a reflection on Indians as a race. The Indian workers had rendered a great service to Natal, which owed its prosperity largely to their labours. As recently as July 1903, Sir Leige Hulett, ex-Prime Minister of Natal, bore the following testimony on this point: ‘The condition of the Colony before the importation of Indian labour was one of gloom ; it was one that then and there threatened to extinguish the vitality of the country, and it was only by the Government assisting the importation of labour that the country began at once to revive. The Coast had been turned into one of the most prosperous parts of South Africa . . . Durban was absolutely built up by the Indian population.’ The sugar and tea estates of the Coast depended on Indian labour which, in various other ways, rendered a great service to

Natal. Referring to the Transvaal, Gokhale pointed out that the Indians could not acquire political or municipal franchise and could not hold any immovable property there. Further, they were liable to be condemned to live in locations. It will be noted that these grievances still continue and that Indian traders there have been forcibly shifted from places where they were carrying on a flourishing business to out of the way places without any amenities, where it is difficult for them to have any custom. Happily, the Government of India accepted the Resolution moved by Gokhale and announced its decision to stop the emigration of indentured labour to Natal in the Imperial Legislative Council on 3 January 1911.

As the harrassment of Indians in South Africa continued even afterwards, Gokhale visited South Africa towards the end of 1912 at the invitation of Mahatma Gandhi. His tour in South Africa, where he was treated with every mark of respect by the Government of South Africa and the European community, was enthusiastically welcomed by the South African Indians. It was hoped that his visit would ease the position of the Indian community. He assured Gandhiji after meeting General Botha and General Smuts that the 'Black Act', against which he had carried on a gallant fight, would be repealed, the racial bar in the Immigration Law would be removed, and the £3 tax abolished; and pressed him to return to India in a year. But as Gandhiji had predicted to Gokhale, the South African Government did not keep its word. Soon after his departure from South Africa, it began to follow its old harsh and unjust policy against the Indians, although Gokhale had agreed, with Gandhiji's consent, to limit Indian emigration to South Africa in order to remove the fear of an unlimited influx of Indians from the minds of the South African whites. Mahatma Gandhi was, therefore, forced to start passive resistance once more. Thousands of Indians courted imprisonment at his bidding. Gokhale, whose appeal for donations in aid of the passive resisters received an excellent response, sent a large sum of money to Mahatma Gandhi to help him to continue the struggle. The

speech of the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, expressing sympathy with the South African Indians, created a very good impression among them and the Indian public. An agreement was arrived at afterwards between Mahatma Gandhi and the South African Government which was consistent with the honour of Indians as a race and enabled him to leave South Africa and come to India early in 1915.

The other Resolution which Gokhale moved in the Imperial Legislative Council in March 1912, concerned the prohibition of the recruitment of indentured labour, whether for employment in India or for employment in any British Colony. He pointed out in his speech the fact that Indian indentured labour was introduced into a number of colonies soon after the abolition of slavery and explained the main features of the indenture system which had been brought to light by the Report of the Committee presided over by Lord Sanderson and published in 1910. The indenture system which violated human dignity, was looked down upon even by the recently emancipated Negro, who 'scorned' to place himself under it. The labour contract contained no information about the special law which would apply to the indentured labourers and under which any breach of contract would be treated as a criminal offence and punished accordingly. They were kept ignorant of the fact that they might be sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for negligence, carelessness, or 'even an impertinent word or gesture to the manager or his overseers'. 'No fair-minded man', Gokhale said, 'will, I think, hesitate to say that the system *is* a monstrous system, iniquitous in itself, based on fraud and maintained by force, nor will he, I think, demur to the statement that a system so wholly opposed to modern sentiments of justice and humanity is a grave blot on the civilisation of any country that tolerates it.'¹¹ He painted a moving picture of the appalling human misery for which the system was responsible, in the following words: 'And, Sir, last, but not least, the unutterable tragedy and pathos of men and women, at a distance of thousands of miles from their homes, knowing

full well that the vast sea rolled between them and their native country, starting actually to *walk* back to their country, imagining in their simplicity and ignorance that there must be a land route somewhere, and either caught on their way and forcibly taken back to the life from which they were fleeing or else devoured by wild beasts or perishing of hunger and cold; all this, Sir, constituted a sum total of human misery which is appalling to contemplate, and which will be a standing witness against the system for all time.'¹² Heavy mortality had prevailed among them in the past in all the Colonies and there were numerous suicides owing to the inability of the poor and ignorant Indian workers to free themselves from their slavery. They preferred death with their own hands to living under this appalling system. The system also led to immorality, owing to the fact that every 100 men had to be accompanied by only 40 women, including women of loose morals. All this, as Gokhale pointed out, was degrading not merely to the workers but also to the people of India from a national point of view. I think that this will be borne out by those Indians who have visited the Colonies to which Indian labour used to be sent. When I went a quarter of a century ago to Fiji which occupied a central position in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Western people who passed through it formed their impression of India from what they saw of the position of the Indian labourers there.

When Gokhale moved his Resolution, indentured labour was recruited for the different plantations of Assam also, but he was informed that this would be prohibited in 1913.

In spite of the undoubted evils of the system indicated by Gokhale and the grave hardship that it had inflicted on Indian labourers, his Resolution was opposed on flimsy grounds by the Government of India and was therefore rejected by a majority of 33 votes against 22. In 1913, however, the Government appointed a Committee to visit British Guinea, Trinidad, Jamaica, and Fiji and to report on the condition of Indian labourers there. The Report of the Committee was published in 1915. The Report of C. F. Andrews and Pearson on the

condition of Indian indentured labour in Fiji, which was dedicated to the memory of Gokhale, was published in February 1916. Both these Reports exposed the horrors of the indenture system and created a strong feeling in the country against it. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya moved a Resolution in the Supreme Legislative Council in 1916 asking the Government of India to discontinue the system immediately. The Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, who spoke during the debate, accepted the Resolution on behalf of the Government of India subject to the condition laid down by the Secretary of State that the existing system should continue till alternative arrangements for the supply of labour to the Colonies had been worked out in consultation with the Colonial Office and the Colonies concerned. The system was, however, abolished soon afterwards.

Member of the Public Services Commission

Gokhale's membership of the Royal Commission on Public Services in India, popularly known as Islington Commission, which was appointed to deal with a question, the handling of which by the British authorities had given rise to strong resentment among Indians, placed a very heavy strain on his health which had been gravely undermined by twenty-five years of unremitting toil. Regardless of the consequences, he threw himself into his work with his accustomed energy and thoroughness. His cross-examination of some of the principal detractors of Indian ability and character showed his wonderful mastery of the facts and won the admiration of those who followed the proceedings of the Commission carefully. He was anxious to complete his work as a member of the Commission but death unfortunately prevented him from taking part in the formulation of its recommendations, which, when published in January 1917, were received with deep disappointment throughout the country and were regarded as another proof of Britain's determination to keep all real power in its own hands.

Last Labours

Gokhale's last act was to draw up at the request of Lord Willingdon, then Governor of Bombay, a scheme of constitutional reforms which, in his opinion, should be granted by the British Government, on its own initiative, to satisfy Indian aspirations. Owing to the importance of the matter, and the advisability of finding out the views and securing the support of some of the recognized leaders of India, he decided, with Lord Willingdon's consent, to consult confidentially Pherozeshah Mehta and the Aga Khan before formulating his proposals. The desired consultation could not, however, be held for various reasons. Lord Willingdon, unaware of the deterioration in Gokhale's health, wrote to him again three days before his death, asking for his proposals. It is a marvel that Gokhale could give serious thought to the matter in the condition in which he then was. He drafted a note in pencil, of which three copies were made; one was sent to Lord Willingdon and the other two to the Aga Khan and Pherozeshah Mehta.¹³ It was his intention to revise it after consultation with the Aga Khan and Pherozeshah Mehta, but they could not meet, and his note was published as it was by the Aga Khan in England in 1917.

It was then published in India by Srinivasa Sastri with an explanatory note. The draft represented, as he said, 'not what, in Mr. Gokhale's opinion, the people of India were fit for and entitled to, but what, if announced by the Government of India of their own accord and early enough, might, in Mr. Gokhale's judgment, avert an agitation during the war and ensure the fullest co-operation of the people of India. Lastly, it was prepared within six months after the beginning of the war and much before the popular movement in India had taken full shape... I cannot believe that Mr. Gokhale would, if he were writing on behalf of the people of India, have voiced any but the most progressive and the most enlightened phase of political thought compatible with the safety of the Empire and the ordered advance of the country.' This opinion is borne out by

what Gokhale said to the Members of the Servants of India Society when they met him at Poona after his return from England in November 1914. Speaking of the war, he said one day, he did not agree with the view that if England was defeated it would inevitably mean subjection of India to new masters for the reason that Indians would not have the strength and capacity to establish their own rule. And later, on the same occasion or some other day, he said he did not think that Britain would be able to keep us down for more than twenty-five years. There can, therefore, be little doubt that had he lived and been chosen again to be India's ambassador to England to discuss her claim that she should, in future, occupy a position consistent with her honour in the Empire, he would have vigorously supported the most progressive views on the subject.

The greatest obstacles to our freedom being 'the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin', he exhorted those who wanted to serve the country to be inspired with 'a fervent patriotism which rejoiced at every opportunity of sacrifice for the Motherland.' He was the embodiment of such patriotism. It was his lot to meet with injustice and disappointment on many occasions, but they only spurred him to work harder and with greater devotion to the interests of the Motherland. He bore no ill will to his opponents. He wanted public life to be 'spiritualized' and he lived the life he preached. He devoted every minute of his life to the service of the country. He allowed himself no rest till the last day of his life and 'reverently' sought only 'the joy which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country.'



- 1866 Birth on 9 May at Kotluk in Chiplun Taluka, Ratnagiri Dist.
 1876 Migrated to Kolhapur for education.
 1879 Death of his father.
 1880 Was married.
 New English School was started in Poona.
 1881 Matriculated.
 1882 Studied in Rajaram College, Kolhapur.
 1883 Studied in Deccan College, Poona.
 1884 Studied in Elphinstone College, Bombay, and took the B.A. Degree.
 Joined Law Class.
 Formation of the Deccan Education Society.
 1885 Joined the New English School as Assistant Master.
 Fergusson College opened.
 Maintained coaching establishment for Public Service Certificate Examination.
 1886 Became Life Member of the Deccan Education Society, and began teaching in Fergusson College.
 Wrote frequently in the *Mahratta*.
 First introduced to M. G. Ranade by S. H. Sathe.
 First public speech at Kolhapur on India under the British rule.
 1887 Married second time.
 1888 Edited English section of the *Sudharak*.
 Elected Secretary, Bombay Provincial Conference.
 Public speech (perhaps not delivered) upholding the action of Lord Reay in the Crawford case.
 1889 First participation in the Indian National Congress, held at Bombay.
 1890 Elected Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha and Editor of its *Quarterly*.
 Spoke at Calcutta Congress on the reduction of salt duty.
 Tilak resigned from the Deccan Education Society.
 1891 Appointed Secretary of the Deccan Education Society.
 Spoke at Nagpur Congress.
 Death of his first wife.
 1892 Spoke at Allahabad Congress on Public Services.
 1893 Death of his mother.
 Engaged in collection of funds for the Deccan Education Society.
 1895 Worked as Secretary to the Reception Committee of the Indian National Congress which met at Poona.
 Elected Fellow of the Bombay University.
 Editor of the *Rashtra Sabha Samachar*.
 1896 Resigned Secretaryship of the Sarvajanik Sabha and Editorship of its *Quarterly*.
 Helped in organizing the Deccan Sabha of which he became the first Secretary.
 First meeting with Gandhiji.

- 1897 First visit to England. Evidence before the Welby Commission. Plague measures in Poona. Publication in England of complaints on the subject.
First meeting with John Morley.
Return from England. The Apology incident.
- 1898 Took prominent part in plague relief work in Poona.
- 1899 Elected Member of the Bombay Legislative Council. Criticised famine relief measures of Government.
- 1900 Death of his second wife.
- 1901 Opposed Land Alienation Bill. Walk-out from the Council.
Opposed introduction of the communal principle in the District Municipalities Bill.
Supported Temperance Movement.
Elected to the Imperial Legislative Council.
Death of Ranade.
- 1902 Retired from the Fergusson College.
Budget speech: Criticised Government's financial policy in respect of—
1. Currency surpluses;
2. High level of taxation;
3. Salt duty;
4. Army expenditure.
Elected President, Poona Municipality.
- 1903 Budget speech :
1. Reduction of salt duty ;
2. Abolition of excise duty on cotton goods ;
3. Indianization of services ;
4. Increased effort for spread of education.
Elected additional Joint General Secretary to the Congress.
Gandhiji stayed a month with Gokhale in Calcutta.
- 1904 Received title of C.I.E.
Budget speech: Criticised increased Army expenditure.
Opposed the Official Secrets Bill.
Opposed the Indian Universities Bill.
- 1905 Founded the Servants of India Society on 12 June.
Opposed the Universities Validation Bill.
Budget speech :
1. Reduction of salt duty ;
2. Pleaded for relief to agriculturists ;
3. Indianization of services.
Second visit to England as Congress Delegate to represent India's case, in view of British General Election.
- 1906 Presided over the Indian National Congress at Banaras.
Third visit to England to agitate for the prospective Reforms.

- 1907 Death of his brother.
 Deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai.
 Undertook lecturing tour in Northern India.
 Budget speech :
 1. Urged complete abolition of salt duty ;
 2. Pleaded for free primary education ;
 3. Pleaded for Constitutional Reforms.
 Congress split at Surat.
- 1908 Evidence before the Decentralisation Commission.
 Fourth visit to England to agitate for the prospective Reforms.
 Announcement of the Morley-Minto Reforms.
 Arrest and imprisonment of Lokamanya Tilak.
 Defamation suit against the *Hindu Punch*.
 Indian National Congress at Madras.
- 1909 Declined offer of lecturing tour in America.
- 1910 In the Imperial Council:
 Moved a Resolution on Indentured Labour to Natal (adopted).
 Moved a Resolution on Elementary Education (withdrawn).
 Criticised the Press Bill.
 Acted as Secretary to Sir W. Wedderburn at Allahabad Congress.
 Founded the Ranade Industrial and Economic Institute.
- 1911 Introduced the Elementary Education Bill.
 Opposed the Seditious Meetings Bill.
 Contributed a paper on 'East and West' to the Universal Races Congress.
- 1912 In the Imperial Council:
 Spoke on the Resolution of Bhupendranath Basu on Police Administration in India.
 Moved a Resolution on Indentured Labour.
 Moved a Resolution on resources of local bodies.
 Defeat of the Elementary Education Bill.
 Fifth visit to England in connection with the work of the Public Services Commission on which he had been appointed this year.
 Visit to South Africa.
- 1913 Sixth visit to England with the Public Services Commission.
 Raised funds for the South African struggle.
- 1914 Seventh visit to England with the Public Services Commission.
 Declined offer of K.C.I.E.
 Gandhi-Smuts Agreement.
 Met Gandhiji in London.
 Attempted a Congress compromise but failed.
- 1915 Visit of Gandhiji.
 Death on 19 February.

REFERENCES

- 1 S. R. Mehrotra: *India and Commonwealth*, p. 40
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 251
- 3 *ibid.*
- 4 *Congress Presidential Addresses*
- 5 C. Y. Chintamani: *Indian Politics since the Mutiny*, pp. 40-1
- 6 Introduction to: *The Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Vol. I, p. xi
- 7 *ibid.*, p. xxxiv
- 8 *The Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, p. 105
- 9 *ibid.*, p. 106
- 10 Budget Speech, 1906
- 11 *The Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, p. 350
- 12 *ibid.*, p. 356
- 13 V. S. Srinivasa Sastri: *Life of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, p. 113

73

27225-
16-11-16

