

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE
BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATION

INAUGURAL CEREMONY

by

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

President of India

Monday, the 9th May 1966
(6-10 p. m. to 7-25 p. m.)



GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE (1866-1915)

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BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATION

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Birth Centenary Celebration

Inaugural Ceremony

The Birth Centenary celebrations of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, founder of the Servants of India Society, were organised by the Society at its headquarters in Poona on Monday, the 9th May 1966.

The day began with the garlanding, by Dr. H. N. Kunzru, President of the Society, of Gokhale's bust in the Society's premises.

The main function, the inauguration ceremony by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, President of India, was held in the afternoon on that day. A big pandal was erected on the grounds of the Society specially for the occasion and was tastefully decorated. A fair-sized portrait of the founder adorned the dais, on which seats were arranged for Dr. Radhakrishnan and his party, Dr. P. V. Cherian, Governor of Maharashtra and Mrs. Cherian, Prof. D. R. Gadgil, Vice-Chancellor, Poona University, and many others.

Dr. Radhakrishnan, accompanied by Dr. Cherian and Mrs. Cherian was, on arrival, received by Dr. H. N. Kunzru and Shri A. D. Mani, M. P., President and Vice-President res-

pectively of the Servants of India Society, and was escorted to his seat.

The proceedings commenced with the singing of the vande mataram and welcome songs by the pupils of the Vishnu Digambar Vidyalyaya, Poona.

Dr. Kunzru's Welcome Speech

In welcoming Dr. Radhakrishnan, Dr. H. N. Kunzru spoke as follows :

The Servants of India Society is grateful to you, Sir, for having agreed to its request to you to honour it by inaugurating the celebration of the birth centenary of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the founder of the Society. It was not the exalted position that you occupy but the importance you have always attached to character and the spirit of renunciation that made us feel that no one was better qualified than you to appreciate a life which was based on the principles inculcated by our ancient sages. You have constantly tried through your speeches and writings to interpret these principles to us in the light of modern developments and exhorted us to follow them as our unfailing guides, in our efforts to remould society according to our heart's desire.

Before I say anything about the centenary celebrations, I must refer to the loss that the Servants of India Society has sustained in the death of Dr. Paranjpye who was its oldest Associate and warmest friend. He was a distinguished educationist and was known as a man of character, catholic sympathies and rare modesty. There was nothing small about him. His death is a loss not only to Poona but also to the country.

Sir, this is an important occasion not merely for the Servants of India Society but for all of us, for it reminds us of one of whom it can be said, without any exaggeration, that he measured 'world's ease, as saints might measure'. He belonged to a respectable but poor family. His poverty made it very difficult for him to prosecute his studies. Only the exemplary generosity of his elder brother, Govindrao, who sent him nearly half his meagre salary every month and that of his sister-in-law who allowed her ornaments to be sold, enabled Gopalrao to receive higher education. Yet soon after graduating in 1884 he decided to lead a life of poverty and took the vow of service to the country by becoming in 1886, when he was scarcely 20 years old, a member of the Deccan Education

Society. This was a unique institution started by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Agarkar and Namjoshi to facilitate national education on a basis of self-sacrifice in Maharashtra. He threw himself heart and soul into his duties as a professor in the Fergusson College, which had been started by this Society and was a tower of strength to the College both academically and administratively.

Later, when he had opportunities of participating in the wider public life of the country, his zeal for disinterested public service grew and by his way of living he set the idea of plain living and high thinking before the country. He regarded himself as one engaged in the performance of a sacred duty. He thought day and night of how public opinion could be better organised and informed and the dawn of freedom hastened. His extraordinary self-control could not conceal the warmth of his feelings and his fervent patriotism. His suppressed emotions coloured his utterances and gave them an appeal all their own. He seemed to have hardly any private life. Those who came into contact with him would testify to the truth of Gandhiji's observation in his Autobiography that 'he never wasted a minute. His private relations and

friendships were all for the public good. All his talks had reference only to the good of the country and were absolutely free from any trace of untruth or insincerity. '

He took a serious view of the responsibilities of public life. It was a distinguishing feature of his character that he believed with all the strength of his nature that public life should be based not merely on knowledge but also on strict adherence to truth. Moral principles must govern the conduct of public men. Public work would lose much of its meaning if it did not lead to the enrichment and ennoblement of our personality. It was his spiritual view of life that drew Gandhiji to him.

His study of public questions and public work generally, under the guidance of his guru, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, which began soon after he joined the Fergusson College, threw a very heavy burden on him, but he had a passion for the cultivation of knowledge. He never spoke in public on any question without ascertaining all the relevant facts. Having been a teacher of the youth for nearly twenty years, he valued opportunities of addressing the younger generation and when he agreed to do so he carefully thought out what he should say to them,

for they were to be the future citizens of the country. He has expressed his admiration for Ranade's 'prodigious industry' and 'constant self-introspection' in one of his speeches. But these qualities distinguished Gokhale himself. I had many opportunities of being with him on many occasions and for fairly long periods and can therefore say from personal knowledge that his capacity for hard work put young men to shame and that he was constantly engaged in re-examining his views so as to have an integrated personality. I could also see what pains he took to be constructive in his criticism. Every member of the Servants of India Society, who criticised anything, say, a measure proposed by Government, in his presence, knew that he would be asked to state the reasons for his opinion and how he would like the measure to be changed. It was a severe but valuable training that those members who joined the Society in his life-time received.

His experience as a member of the Deccan Education Society was the germ out of which sprang the Servants of India Society. It made him feel that the future progress of the country required the services of men prepared to devote their whole time to public work. Dr. Paranjpye

has said in his reminiscences of Gokhale that he was also influenced by the example of Christian missions. He has referred in some of his speeches to the need of a higher sense of discipline and a better realisation of our duty to the country in order to be able to go forward. Dr. Paranjpye has said that Gokhale spoke to him in England of the desirability of starting an organisation which would fulfil this need, as early as 1897. The Servants of India Society, when it was founded by him in June 1905, was the only institution of its kind in the country and embodied an idea which was in consonance with Indian culture, but which was regarded as impracticable by his contemporaries. He was the only man in the country in his times who could successfully put this idea into practice because he believed in the spiritualisation of public life and harnessing the spirit of religion to secular work in the cause of the freedom of the nation. 'Love of country' he said, 'must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side.' Gandhiji said of him in 1916, "Gokhale taught me that the dream of every Indian who claims to love his country should be not to glorify the country in language but to spiritualise its political life and

institutions. He inspired my life and is still inspiring it in that I wish to purify myself and spiritualise myself. " This is the greatest tribute that could have been paid to Gokhale — the greatest testimony to the value of his fundamental beliefs. He has bequeathed a precious legacy to the members of the Servants of India Society. We cannot see the master but his example is ever before us. He lives in our hearts.

Vast changes have taken place in the country since Gokhale passed away. We are free now and can order our affairs as seems best to us and in the interests of our people. The country, however, still needs the devoted labours of young men who are prepared to lead dedicated lives. As you, Sir, put it so well yesterday in your broadcast on Gokhale, " Men are great not by what they acquire but by what they renounce ". The future greatness of the country will depend on the adequacy of public workers who act in the spirit of your observation. The celebration of the 100th birthday of Gokhale will have served some purpose if young men who feel in the depth of their hearts that the country should always occupy the first place in their thoughts and that they will regard all

Indians as brothers will come forward to strengthen the institution founded by Gokhale.

Messages of Good Wishes

Shri S. G. Gokhale, the Secretary of the Society, then read messages of good wishes that were received. These were from :

Shri V. V. Giri, Governor of Mysore; Sardar Ujjal Singh, Governor of the Punjab; Shri Anant Sayanam Ayyangar, Governor of Bihar; Shri S. L. Silam, Lt.-Governor of Pondicherry; Shri M. Bhaktavatsalam, Chief Minister of Madras; Shri S. K. Patil, Minister for Railways, Government of India; Shri S. Krishna Moorthy Rao, Deputy Speaker, Lok Sabha; Shri T. N. Singh, Minister of Iron and Steel, Government of India; Shri C. R. Pattabhi Raman, Minister of State, Ministry of Law; Shri G. B. Khedkar, Minister for Rural Development, Government of Maharashtra; Shri Homi Mody; Lady Hirabai C. Jehangir; Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar; Shri C. Rajagopalachariar; Shri B. N. Gokhale; Dr. G. S. Mahajani; Mrs. Leelavati Banker; Mrs. Jayashree Rajjee; Mrs. Sumati Morarji; Mrs. Maneklal Premchand; Shri S. L. Kirloskar; Shri Y. N. Sukhatankar and Principal T. A. Kulkarni.

Publication of Gokhale's Speeches

Dr. Kunzru then presented to Dr. Radhakrishnan, on behalf of the Servants of India Society and the Asia Publishing House, Bombay, a copy of the second volume of the Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and requested him to declare it published. Dr. Radhakrishnan accordingly declared the book duly published.

Publication of Gokhale Souvenir

Dr. Kunzru then presented to Dr. Radhakrishnan, on behalf of the Maharashtra Information Centre, New Delhi, a copy of the Gokhale Souvenir brought out by the Centre and at Dr. Kunzru's request, Dr. Radhakrishnan declared it published.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's Speech

Dr. Radhakrishnan then made the following speech :

It is only appropriate that the Nation should pay its tribute to the late Gopal Krishna Gokhale for the illustrious services he rendered to the country and the example he set for his successors. I do not claim to have known Mr. Gokhale well. I saw him at Madras when he

came to the Congress session and I saw him also when he came for the Public Service Commission presided over by Lord Islington. It is only seeing, not meeting or knowing. So I cannot say I know very much about him.

Maharashtra has been famous for establishing institutes for education, politics and social reform. The Deccan Education Society, the Servants of India Society, Karve's Institute for Women's Progress, these are institutions which Maharashtra started, and people of the whole country are indebted to Maharashtra for the great example that it has set.

Everybody knows now that the attempt of Gokhale was to spiritualise politics. Politics in those days was not so very complicated as it happens to be today. In those days he felt the need for spiritualisation. Today when we have power, when we have authority, when it is possible for us to do so much, how much more is it necessary to spiritualise politics? When we enter politics we enter a region full of passion, prejudice, pride, self-interest, love of power. These are the things which are so much to the top, that most of us go about saying, 'here is hoarding, there is corruption, here is dishonesty.'

These are the complaints which are made. It is not for me to say how far they are justified or not. All that I say is this that the principle of undertaking public work in a spirit of honesty, integrity and dedication is very necessary.

In our country once upon a time the question was put: "What constitutes the principle of a good life? Who is supposed to be a good Man?" The ancient *Upaniṣad* says: "Didn't you hear the thunder clap? What did it say?" *Da द, Da द, Da द, Datta (दत्त), Damyata (दम्यत), Daya-dhvam (दयध्वम्).*" Charity, self-control, compassion—these are the principles which constitute a good life. It is these principles which we have to take up and adopt in our life, if the level of our political life and public life has to be raised. Gokhale gave us an example of that. Whatever subject he undertook, whatever speeches he made, we used in our student days to listen to those speeches, to read about them as there was no radio. So we had to read them in the newspapers. But then we were all struck by his intense patriotism, when he rebutted the charge that universities were seats of sedition and that educational institutions were breeding people in a kind of inflammatory atmosphere. When we listened to all those things we were greatly

thrilled. But what constitutes his greatness? His greatness consisted in making a thorough preparation of any subject that he undertook, a careful study of facts, and then scrupulous judgements on the facts, justified condemnation or approval. Those who undertook public life today will have to regard themselves as whole-time workers, make a thorough study of the political problems of the country and then come to judgements which are reasonable and reasoned. That is what they should do. Are they doing it?

There are activities in which the Servants of India Society members participate—education, journalism, politics, tribal welfare, etc. In all these matters there are different views which we can adopt, and it is necessary therefore for us to study all sides of the case. You may call them 'Moderates', you may call them 'Liberals', but they gave us a tradition—a tradition which calls upon us not to sacrifice the individual at the altar of the State or any kind of system, protect the individual, save his rights, regard him as someone sacred. Well, that gives us the justification for the attitude which we are adopting. It is necessary, therefore, that we should regard the individual as the end and not

the State as the end. We should regard his rights as inviolable. It may be necessary to sacrifice our life, but we should do so with all respect to ourselves and integrity to ourselves.

In spite of all the objectives which we have professed, there are social disparities in our society—high and low, rich and poor, high caste-men and outcastes, untouchables, etc. Have we come to the end of the task? Is not our present position a challenge to us? Are we not called upon to adopt the right kind of attitude in the handling of these problems? It is necessary that we should do so.

Why did Gandhi feel attracted to Gokhale? For the simple reason that Gokhale would not surrender truth, would not sacrifice it for the sake of any political idea or ideology. He would stand firm, so far as his attitude was concerned, and give out his opinion without fear or favour, without any kind of ill-will or malice to anybody. Even the opponents whom he had to deal with had respect for him. Whether they liked him or not, whether they liked his opinions or not, they had considerable respect for the integrity of the individual and for the careful study which he always made of the facts; and for the brilliant Budget speeches that he made

in the Central Assembly in those days, he will be remembered for many a long year to come. Are we, or are we not, to follow his example? If we see the way in which our Assemblies and Parliament are functioning now, we think that there is great need of spiritualisation of politics today, and every one who enters the Assembly or Parliament, should regard himself as a servant of humanity, as a servant of India and should not do anything which is likely to impair the prestige or the respect for the State. That is what he should do. There are many problems open to us.

Dr. Kunzru referred to Dr. Paranjpye. I must tell you that the letter that Paranjpye received from Gokhale on the death of Ranade is a document where he says "Darkness has fallen on me, I must carry on the work" Ranade was a great religious reformer. He was not merely a social reformer but he wanted to introduce what you call the Prarthana Samaj, which is a version of Hinduism which anybody can practise with dignity and self-respect. That is what he tried to do. The death of Dr. Paranjpye has cast a gloom on the city and our activities also. He was a great institution here and whenever I came to this place I used to enjoy his wit and wisdom,

his frank talk. I met him a number of times during the last forty years of my visits to this city.

The lesson which we have to learn from Gokhale's life is that we are to improve ourselves, have an element of reverence for Ranade, reverence for Dadabhai Naoroji, Pheroze Shah Mehta, reverence for Gandhiji. That element of reverence is fast disappearing from our life. It is this that we should re-emphasize. We should be grateful to people who put us on the right track. And next to reverence was his principle of renunciation. Things come and go. Prestige disappears in a few days. Today one is a great man, tomorrow he is brought down. That is how it is. "*Vibhavo Naiva Sāsvataḥ*". All this pomp and glory are not eternal. Reverence for life and renunciation, if you adopt these two principles you will serve Gokhale and his memory well.

Dr. Kunzru appealed to the people, to the youngsters of the country to join the Servants of India Society. Well, people will join, I have no doubt they will do so. They must know that there is a great deal of good work which yet remains to be done. And by joining the Society, they will be able to do it and set a better

example to the country at large than is happening today. Therefore I have no doubt if you call upon people to develop the qualities of reverence and renunciation, they would do those things.

Our country has been famous for its great sages and saints. History is not a battle of kings, is not merely an account of what happened between dynasties. History is a mark of social changes, new economic structures, new movements which happen in this world. They are the things which matter in the life-time of a nation. So far as our nation is concerned the things that happened in Gokhale's time, the work that was done, the political movements, social movements, religious reforms, all these things which happened stand together. They are not to be disintegrated. They are to be regarded as parts of one whole. It is essential, so far as our country is concerned, that we should stick to the framework of our religions, our widest landmarks, so to say, which will always be there, because the scientists may touch the periphery but nobody touches the centre. If we concentrate on the centre of our being, we will realise that there is an aspect, a universal nature, a universal right, which gives utterance to all

the other things we have. In other words, our intellect, our mind, our growth, all these things are the expressions of that universal centre which each one has. Because we are trying to forget that centre, many of us are getting alienated from ourselves and are suffering from neuroses and disturbances.

Let us develop reverence, let us develop respect for the central principle of our being and let us have renunciation. We will go forward. Thank you very much.

Thanks to Dr. Radhakrishnan

The vote of thanks to the President of India and the assembled guests was proposed by Shri A. D. Mani, Vice-President, Servants of India Society, in the following words :

On behalf of the Servants of India Society, may I express to you, Sir, our warm gratitude for the great honour that you have done us by inaugurating the celebrations and by taking the trouble of coming all the way from Delhi to be present on this solemn occasion? Sir, I think it is appropriate that you alone should have inaugurated these celebrations, because, besides being the President of the Indian Republic and the first citizen of India, you, by your achievement,

example and dedicated selflessness, have been always a great servant of India yourself.

It is also appropriate that you should have inaugurated the celebrations because you have played no insignificant part in the development of Parliamentary institutions in India, particularly of the Rajya Sabha, of which you were the distinguished Chairman before you assumed this exalted office.

I would like to tell you, friends, that these Gokhale Centenary Celebrations are going to continue in the month of June also when there will be the Anniversary Session of the Society to be held on 12th June. It is also proposed that these celebrations should continue, in some form or the other, all over India, during the whole of this Centenary year. Our objective in having this celebration spread over a long period of time is to see that the memory of Mr. Gokhale's achievements and the ideals, for which he stood, is kept alive and the present generation is inspired to emulate his example of dedicated selflessness. The lamp of Mr. Gokhale's memory is the lamp of democracy in India. May its flame never grow less. And it will never grow less Sir, because you, Rashtrapatiji, a convinced and true democrat

and not a conventional democrat, have inaugurated these celebrations. On behalf of the servants of India Society again, Sir, I express to you our warm gratitude for the great honour you have done us, and I want to thank also the public of Poona, the Government of Maharashtra, the Governments of various States and people all over India for the great enthusiasm with which they have participated in the Gokhale Birth Centenary Celebrations.

The proceedings terminated with the garlanding by Dr. Kunzru of Dr. Radhakrishnan, which was followed by the singing of the National Anthem.

President Radhakrishnan's Tribute

On the eve of the Gokhale Birth Centenary, the President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, paid the following tribute to Gokhale in his radio broadcast to the nation on Sunday, the 8th May 1966. He said :

Friends,

I am glad to say a few words on the eve of the birth centenary of the late Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Though he died at the early age of 49, his impact on the public life of the country was of great significance.

In accordance with the traditions of our country, Gokhale emphasised the need for renunciation in public life.

*Sarvam vastu bhayānvitam bhūvi nrīām
vairāgyam evābhayam.*

While everything in this world is fraught with fear for men, renunciation alone gives fearlessness. When the comforts of the world were in Gokhale's reach and could be his, he left them and gave his great talents to the service of the country. Renunciation is the principle of a good life. Men are great not by what they acquire but by what they renounce.

Those who engage in public work should not look upon it as a career with glittering prizes.

When twenty years old, Gokhale joined the Deccan Education Society to serve it for twenty years on a small allowance of Rs. 75 per month. In 1905 he founded the Servants of India Society and set up a body of dedicated persons. He felt that

Public life must be spiritualised. Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the Motherland, a dauntless heart which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence which nothing can shake — equipped with these, the worker must start on his mission and fervently seek the joy of spending oneself in the service of the country.

No wonder that Gandhi claimed Gokhale as his political *guru*.

Gokhale insisted not only on intellectual efficiency but also moral responsibility for the members of the Society. Today in the selection

of candidates for legislatures or other public bodies we do not seem to insist on the purity of the means. We seem to be possessed by considerations of caste or community and not those of character or capacity. The disorder in the country is traceable to this factor also.

Gokhale enrolled in his Society members like G. K. Devadhar, a valiant fighter for social reforms, N. M. Joshi, who influenced the Trade Union Movement, Srinivasa Sastri, who served in varied capacities; we have with us as the First Member H. N. Kunzru, a man of integrity and uprightness, an example to others. Gandhi and Nehru seriously thought of joining the Society. If any one leads a dedicated life, if he is devoted to truth, if he avoids intrigue in public life, he is a religious man though he may call himself an agnostic.

When Gokhalé visited South Africa in 1912 a well known statesman senator said to him, "Sir, when men like you visit our country, they purify the atmosphere."

Those trained by Dadabhai Naoroji, Pheroze-shah Mehta and Ranade believed in moderation. Life is one whole. Political progress and social reform cannot be separated. Life cannot be compartmentalised. Gokhale sympathised with

the poor and the oppressed. In his evidence before the Welby Commission he gave expression to the growing poverty of the country under British rule.

Gokhale had deep faith in democratic principles, civil liberties, a free press, free association, hatred of racial discrimination of any type, decent standards of living for all. He was an ardent advocate of free and compulsory education.

A political or religious reformer is critical of the conditions round them but if they are liberal they would not have the sensation of hate. They would be free from the feeling of hate while they are eager to improve the existent conditions.

Gokhale's liberalism could not forbid him from adopting Gandhi's passive resistance. In a speech on Indians in Transvaal at a public meeting in Bombay in 1909, Gokhale said :

Passive resistance to an unjust law or an oppressive measure is a refusal to acquiesce in that law or measure and a readiness to suffer the penalty instead which may be prescribed as an alternative. If we strongly and clearly and conscientiously feel the grave injustice of a law, and there is no

other way to obtain redress, I think refusal to acquiesce in it, taking the consequences of such refusal, is the only course left to those who place conscience and self-respect above their material or immediate interests.

The problems facing India in Gokhale's time were formidable. Though he served all sides of our life in a brilliant and whole-hearted manner he was conscious of the long distance we have to traverse before we reach the goal. He had faith in the destiny of his country :

It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of the future generations to serve India by their successes; we of the present generation must be content to serve her by our failures. For hard though it be, out of those failures, the strength will come, which in the end will accomplish great tasks.

Sarojini Naidu described Gokhale as "the greatest saint and soldier of our national righteousness whose life was a sacrament and whose death was a sacrifice in the cause of Indian unity." Ministers of good things are like torches, a light to others and a destruction to themselves.

—*By courtesy of All India Radio.*

Gokhale Exhibition

An exhibition of specimens of Gokhale's handwriting in English and in Balbodh and Modi scripts, his photographs, the articles that he used, the addresses presented to him in India, South Africa, etc. was arranged by the Servants of India Society in connection with the Gokhale Birth Centenary Celebrations. The exhibition was declared open by Mahamahopadhyay D. V. Potdar at 10 a. m. on Monday, 9th May 1966.

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