
THE
VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

AND

HON'BLE MR. GOKHALE'S
EDUCATION BILL.

THIS BROCHURE

**is respectfully dedicated to the Hon'ble
Law Member of the Government
of India**

BY

THE VOICELESS AGRICULTURISTS.

THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS.

The agriculturists who are said to be the "inarticulate class" form the bulk of the population of India and are the props and pillars of the State. They are one of the most important factors in the administration of the country. They are the perennial source of the revenue of the land. The prosperity of the country largely depends on the health and happiness of the agriculturists. It is they who supply the people with food. A prosperous budget of the Exchequer chiefly depends on their prosperity. Kill the peasantry, and the very existence of the Rajahs, and Zemindars, and even of the Government itself will be impossible. And yet it is the agriculturist class who are most miserable and neglected in this country.

The compulsory elementary Education Bill of the Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale has created a great sensation throughout India. Support is coming in from wher-

Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale's compulsory Education Bill.

ever it is being sought for by the author. A few journals only who were in touch with the agriculturists could not see their way to agree to Mr. Gokhale's proposal.

At the Town-hall of Calcutta a monster meeting was held to consider the Bill. Representatives of all classes were present excepting the masses *i. e.*, agriculturists or their representatives apparently for whose benefit the proposed Bill is to be introduced in the Legislative Council to be passed into law. Speeches were, as usual, delivered in support of the Bill. Mr. Gokhale's eloquence carried away with him the whole audience who indicated their approval by claps and cheers.

Why universal education will not be diffused in India, while all other civilised countries are enjoying its blessings, was the question at issue. Compulsory education prevails in England, Scotland and many other lands. Even Japan is educating her masses. The Ceylones are no longer denied its blessings. Last of all, but not least, the system prevails in Baroda which is in India. Why, then, what is possible elsewhere should not be possible in British India, was the entire force of Mr. Gokhale's argument. But the question of questions is, will primary education bring plenty and give health :

the agriculturists? Are the Baroda masses who have received elementary education happier than those of British India who have received none? Are they better off now than before the introduction of compulsory education. Government are, so far as lies in their power, trying to educate the masses. Thousands of thousands of our boys are coming out of the primary schools established all over the country to join their fore-fathers' profession. But are they faring better than their illiterate comrades? Answers to these questions would have convinced one of the efficacy of compulsory education in India in her present state; but unfortunately both the author and the supporters of the Bill were silent on these very important points. The Agricultural Community must, however, remain ever grateful to Mr. Gokhale and his friends for their solicitude to give them the light of education, though it will, in their present situation, do more harm than good, as will be shown later on.

CO. A resolution on the Education Bill was duly moved, supported, and passed in the Congress of 1911. One of the supporters said, and perhaps rightly said, that the Bill had the whole-hearted support of the congress. Edu. What what the other speakers asserted namely "the people of India," "the masses of India," "the

whole of Bengal" were unanimous in their support of the Bill was incorrect and misleading, unless it is held that the congress people constitute the whole of the population of India and represent both the palaces of the rich and the cottages of the poor. But as a matter of fact they neither represent the former nor the latter. They only represent the political portion of the educated class, and it is they, and not the masses, that want the education law to strengthen their own hands for reasons political as will appear from their attitude towards the people whose friend and guide they pose to be.

In cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Karachi, Ahmedabad etc., etc., meetings were convened and attended by those who perhaps never spared a thought on the present situation of the masses, and who perhaps never entered into their miserable hovels to enquire into their crying needs. Did Mr. Gokhale and his colleagues ever set foot in the villages peopled by the agriculturists? Did they hold even one mass meeting like the one in Jhinkergacha in the days of Indigo-disturbance to feel the pulse of the rayots? No, they did nothing of the kind. And yet they declared in the Congress that the masses of India had supported the Bill.

The Syndicate of Calcutta—a representative and deliberative body, the Hon'ble Maharaja Dhiraja of Burdwan who is more interested in the welfare of the tenantry than all the members of the congress combined, the local governments, and other eminent men of practical experience have opposed the Bill. And yet the author declares that his Bill has the support of the whole of India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin !!

During the last quarter of a century, resolutions after resolutions year after year were passed by the congress. But who is there to point out what good they have done hitherto to the agricultural community. With questions such as partition or re-union of Bengal, expansion or contraction of the legislative councils, amendment of widow or civil marriage law, and creation of more universities or local self-governments, the tillers of the land have nothing to do nor have the weavers, potters, artisans, gold and black smiths etc., etc., who together with the agriculturists form the mass of India. Yet they are dragged in by the political leaders simply to strengthen their own hands. The masses never took notice of the congress propaganda, because if they were not benefited, at least they were not harmed so long. But now that the leaders instead of saving

Attitude of the Congress and Zemindars towards the Agriculturists.

us from the clutches of droughts and diseases, are bent on punishing the half starved agriculturists, who do not know what a full meal means, we can not help remaining inarticulate any longer, and explaining our situation to the people and the government in our own rustic language.

In the days of yore the relation of agriculturists with their land-lords was direct and cordial. Sweet spirit of fatherly affection on the one hand and filial love and regard on the other existed between them. The rayots worshipped their landlords in the heart of hearts, and the welfare of the latter was always in the mind of the former. The leaders often declare both in papers and platforms that Digies, Tanks, Aqueducts and Shires which now exist in name only were excavated by the noble ancestors of the present race of the Zemindars at a great expense and self-sacrifice for drinking and irrigation purposes, that there was scarcely any village without good tanks, nor any field without means of irrigation, that failure of crops was not frequent, that enlarged spleens or levers were rare, and still they hold the Imperial government responsible for the present changed condition of the rayots, instead of blaming the Zemindars who are morally responsible for the well-being of the peasantry.

The present zemindars unlike their noble and sympathetic forefathers are merely huge machineries for the collection of rents with various intermediate tenure-holders, unscrupulous Nayebs, oppressive Tehsildars, and cruel Nagdis as their component parts to grind the rayots with. The rayots would have long ceased to stand on their legs but for the tenancy act. Disowned by our fathers, the zemindars, we have now become a subject for reflection to the leaders who do not themselves care to adopt any practical measures to ameliorate our condition but impose the task on the government.

Nothing but water for drinking and irrigation purposes is now wanted by the agriculturists. It is the want of water which is primarily responsible for the present deplorable condition of the peasantry. Digies and Tanks have been silted up. Nature has become more freakish. So want of water is keenly felt everywhere. India has become favourite haunt of diseases and scarcity for want of water, though government is trying its level best to open canals for irrigation and advance money for agriculture.

That the question of water-supply requires immediate settlement admits of no doubt. It is neither on boycott, Solution of the water-problem.

nor on the increase of political powers, nor on compulsory primary education that the salvation of India depends. India being chiefly an agricultural country must rise and fall according to the regeneration or degeneration of the agriculturists. The present unrest is partially due to the neglect of water-problem or in other words agriculture; because if the unemployed misguided youths had found their way to follow agricultural avocation, they would have surely turned out peaceful citizens instead of thieves, dacoits and murderers. If peace, prosperity, and contentment be the *beau-ideals* of the leaders, they must rise to a man to co-operate with the government, and must not rest in their easy chairs depending on their high-sounding speeches from the pulpit and grandiloquent articles in the paper regarding agricultural system which prevails in America, Australia, and elsewhere and preaching sermon to Government that it is their look-out to supply the people with pure drinking water, because they levy road-cess from the people' which is quite inadequate to meet the requirements of the peasants. Theories must now be put into practice. Companies should be organised 'all over the country for irrigation from rivers and rivulets by means of steam engine. Zemindars should be asked to reclaim the old tanks and aqueducts within their zemindaries. Government must also be ap-

proached for affording means and facilities to carry out the project. And we too would not grudge the payment of our rents at an enhanced rate.

Mr. Gokhale's Education Bill will not serve any useful purpose under the existing circumstances of the peasantry ; because it is not their ignorance of the first principles of the elementary agricultural and sanitary sciences, that is responsible for the present state of things. There is none so bereft of common sense as not to know that dirty water, dirty clothes, dirty room, dirty beddings, and dirty surroundings generate diseases, and that good soils, good manures and sufficient water are the chief ingredients for raising good crops.

We, therefore, pray to the Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale and his colleagues to drop the bill for the present and leave education to government and propound a workable scheme for the supply of water in which case the spectacle of a healthy and prosperous India will not be far off and the realisation of the ideal *Sujala, Suphala* India will no longer be a dream.

Some ascribe our poverty to our extravagance and improvidence, while idleness and uncleanness are laid at our doors by others to account for the heavy mortality among us. More mistaken notions,

however, cannot be conceived. Let the statistician say from his records whether it is the illiterate agricultural class or their literate brethern who swell the Excise revenue. Betake yourselves to our fields and you will find us to be the most laborious class in the world. Enter our cottages which, though wretched and miserable, will not be found to be indicative of neglect on the part of their occupants to keep them as clean as possible. Attend our marriage, Sradh, and other religious ceremonies and you will find us to be most simple, sober, and thrifty on the face of the earth. And yet while our American and Australian fellow-brethern with only one acre of land can afford to live on better style and feed twenty mouths, we in India having two or more acres cannot feed and clothe a family of eight members with the coarsest food and clumsiest cloth.

Thirty years ago almost all the districts of Bengal abounded with sugarcanes, potatoes, and Rabi-crops, but now they have almost disappeared, and the importation of foreign sugar, wheat, hill-potatoes and the general rise in the price of food-grains are the result. The days are not far distant, when the paddy too will follow suit.

The average annual outturn of crops may not justify one to sound such an alarming note, but the

fact remains that the bumper-crops of one district or province cannot save the rayots of another district or province; because they have no money to purchase the surplus grains of the other districts and consequently they must suffer. But why even a single district or village should be allowed to be put to distress? Scarcity and famine must be driven out from the land not by opening reliefworks but by removing the root-cause namely the want of water. Monsoons must no longer decide our fate. We must have water at our command.

India has given birth to many eminent men. But such is the irony of fate that while they are spending unbounded energy and money to realise utopian ideas, the agriculturists who form ninety per cent. of the population do not get water to quench their thirst and irrigate their fields.

The levy of road and public cesses for local improvement is often interpreted as an interference on the part of Government with the permanent settlement. But have the Zemindars fulfilled the conditions on which this boon was granted to them? Why they take Salami, Namkharij Dasturi, Begor and Abwabs from the rayots when they do not pay a single pice more than what was fixed by Lord Cornwallis. The attitude of the present race of Zemindars towards their rayots calls for the

interference of the Government to investigate whether the conditions of the Permanent-Settlement are being complied with. They have abandoned us, destroyed our means of irrigations, and left us to the mercy of others. We implore our landlords to restore the old order of things under which the Permanent Settlement was granted.

It is an inconsistency to enforce education while asserting that diseases are decimating the people for want of water. It is also highly improper to impose the duties of the zemindars and leaders on Government.

Government have taken the initiative to start credit societies and grain banks to meet the requirements of the peasantry; but their number being mere drops in the ocean, we most humbly and respectfully pray to Government that, with a view to supply water and improved implements to the agriculturists and to impart scientific education on the spot, the Royal boon of fifty lakhs may, if possible, be formed into a nucleus of a fund to be so named as to commemorate the royal visit for eternity. No dissentient voice would possibly be raised to such a proposal and taxation and compulsion insisted on the constant sufferers from droughts and diseases if the Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale and his party would find their way to see with their



own eyes the misery and poverty under which the agriculturists live their lives and personally ask them whether water or education is wanted in the present situation.

Owners of land and leaders of men of India, it is only your lack of love, feeling, and sympathy and not droughts, diseases and drains, that is really responsible for the decay of the masses. Cease to hanker after honour and power, riches and luxury, destroy your little 'self' and merge it into one universal "self," prevent useless waste of national and individual energy and money, ascend step by step, take the gospel of love in your hands, follow the foot-prints of your fore-fathers and be gods. If you cannot, please retire and rest and let us alone. A note issuing from your godhood will be taken by one and all and thrill and fill the whole of India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. Stand between the Government and the masses, make an adjustment of the Imperial and people's duties, give up giving ideals only, set your heart to practical work, sink your differences, and mix with the masses remembering the noble-saying of the Lord—whosoever says he loves his God but does not love his neighbour is a liar—and you will do in 25 minutes what you have done in 25 years. Go on holding congresses and conferences writing pamphlets and

leaflets preaching sermon and giving lectures for eternity without the spirit of love in you, you will find yourselves on the very point you started from, and fail to raise the masses an inch from their present position. Glorious is the country where there are no beggars to feed.

Enough has been said. It now only remains to apologise to those whom these may concern for the unscientific reasonings, uncouth language, desultory manner, unexpected accusation and tall talks of.

The Voiceless Agriculturists.