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My most sincere thanks are due to
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for rendering into simple and beautiful English
the original Gujarati lecture.

K. J. CHITALIA.

Some Incidents from the Life of Gokhale.*

Birth and Education.

Gokhale was born on the 9th of May 1866 at Kolhapur.

Even though he was born in a poor Brahmin family and he lost his father when he was barely thirteen, he studied under the care and protection of his dear mother and uncle and graduated B. A. at the age of eighteen. The story of his poor student days, though tragic, is likely to prove instructive to the present-day student.

What to do next?

Now was the time to relieve the family of its poverty. It would not have been difficult for him to earn a lot of money by accepting some highly paid situation as an officer or as a Professor or by practising as a lawyer. But a life of luxury and ease, of pomp and power could not attract him. On the contrary the growing youth took the difficult vow of poverty and selfless service. By accepting voluntarily, at the tender age of eighteen, the vow of service and renunciation and keeping it till the last moment of his life, he taught

* A speech delivered by Mr. Karsandas Chitalia at the unveiling of an oil painting of the late Hon'ble Mr. G. K. Gokhale at the Bhagini Samaj, Bombay, on 19-2-36, when Lady Tarabai Chunilal Mehta presided.

an object lesson in service to the sons and daughters of Mother India,

This refers to a time fifty years ago, when the Indian National Congress was started in the city of Bombay. In 1885-86 Gokhale accepted a Professorship in the Deccan Education Society and having served it for a period of twenty years on a monthly salary of Rs. 70 only, proved himself worthy of the education received by him.

During these years, thousands of students in the Fergusson College came in contact with Gokhale. Hundreds of them were inspired by him and a few could also be found to devote their lives to his Servants of India Society, started subsequently. When men of the type of Gokhale dedicate their lives to the cause of education it is bound to prove fruitful of good results and their students are sure to learn from them lessons of character and service.

As a Professor his previous preparation, eloquence and discipline were unique and impressive. At a function of the Deccan Education Society in 1887, Gokhale was one of the volunteers. He was placed at the gate and was asked not to admit anyone without a pass. xxx a prominent person, not known to Gokhale, wanted entrance. Gokhale humbly asked him, "Your pass, please? No one can get in without a pass." Obedient to the direction of the volunteer, that un-known person stood at the gate..... That person was no other than his future Guru, Justice Ranade, at whose feet he learnt, for fourteen years, the principles of public service.

In 1888 Ranade began to train Gokhale. He was placed in charge of the "Sudharak."

He conducted the "Quarterly Journal," too.

In 1889 he took an active part in the Bombay Session of the Congress.

In 1895 he became the Secretary of the Congress and the Editor of its organ.

In 1896 he founded the Deccan Sabha in Poona.

In 1896, too, Gokhale met Gandhi for the first time.

In 1897 he was sent to England by Ranade with full instructions to give evidence before the Welby Commission. Ranade and Sir W. Wedernburn bore his expenses. In England he stayed with Dadabhai. The evidence he gave there was so masterly as to impress even the British people. It struck quite a new note in politics. He was praised with one voice in all quarters. In all humility he replied that whatever was praiseworthy in his evidence was due to his principal, Ranade. He was merely his agent.

The 1897 Plague in Poona and Gokhale's Struggle.

Gokhale's star was in the ascendant. But life's stream never flows even. The Poona plague put Gokhale, while doing his duty, in a precariously trying position. Gokhale suffered silently a hundred insults, attacks and allegations. Mean and ignoble attempts were made to turn him out of public life. But he kept to the path of truth, duty and honesty. Not caring for the glaring lime lights of popularity and disregarding the breaths of opposition he acted according to the dic-

tates of his conscience. When someone advised him to retire from public life he replied, "Public service is neither undertaken nor given up at others' behests. Whether a man is working in a high position or low is not very important. If the public appreciates the services done by a public servant it is enough satisfaction and encouragement to him in this country." "My inner soul inspires all my actions," Gokhale once wrote in reply to a letter.

In 1899 Gokhale entered the Bombay Legislative Council as an elected member. In 1901 he staged a walk out from the same.

In 1902 he was returned to the Central Legislature. Sir Pherozshah Mehta made room for him by retiring himself. Gokhale retired from the Deccan Educational Society on a monthly pension of Rs. 25.

The Bombay Congress.

It was the 29th of November 1904. The Indian National Congress was to be held in Bombay. The Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale was its Secretary. Bombay was stirred by enthusiasm. Sir Henry Cotton was to come from England, with Sir William Wedernburn, to preside over the Session. The site opposite the Elphinstone College, where at present stands the Prince of Wales Museum, was then an open land. The Congress pandal was being erected on this plot. Congress history was being traced in newspapers and pamphlets. The young men of the city were being inspired by a new and wonderful awakening. Hundreds of students enrolled themselves as Congress volunteers, of whom the writer was one. Under the auspices of the Congress.

the first Swadeshi Exhibition was organised on the maidan, known as the oval. The press was appealing to the public for contribution to meet the expenditure of a lack of rupees. We, too, were inspired by a desire to do something more than mere physical work and help the Congress monetarily and at the same time benefit the public, if possible. We, a few friends, conceived a scheme of publishing a large album consisting of the portraits of all the prominent leaders from the foundation of the Congress, so that their memory may remain fresh in the minds of the rising generation. It was to be sold very cheap. We thought that on such a great occasion as the Annual Session of the Congress thousands of copies would be sold off in no time and the profits would go to swell the Congress funds; the portraits of the great leaders would be installed in every home and the rising generations and the masses would derive inspiration from them.

The photographs of most of the great leaders for this album, called "THE CHAMPIONS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS", were collected. We found difficulty in procuring some others; but the photograph of one of them was nowhere to be found. It was neither to be seen in any institution nor at any of his friends'. I looked for it at all places and was disappointed. At last (Sir) Lallubhai Mehta gave me, if not the photograph, hopes of one. He called me at his place the next day and I went to him at the appointed time. Lallukaka was not at home. But his guest, whose photograph I so much desired, was there. But how could I see such a great man without any introduction? However, delay was out of question. I took

courage and asked the gateman if the Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale was in and could be seen. I sent in my name and waited outside. But I had not to do it long for immediately I was called in. On my entering the room the great man welcomed me, offered me a seat and enquired where I came from and what I desired of him. I replied that I had not come on anyone's behalf, that I was not a journalist but an ordinary student and had been to him to obtain his photograph for the Congress benefit scheme.

He replied that he had received my letter in Poona and that he had not replied thinking that he would be excused. It was not in any case due to any arrogance on his part. He said that he had no photograph of his with him, and that it could not be found even in any of the numerous Congress groups, because he did not like being photographed. He further added that he was a man of no great importance. "By all means have a group photograph of leaders. Let me look at your scheme. I shall suggest to you some more names that have been left out. Lal Mohan Ghosh and Pandit Ajodhya Prasad are not here. Put in their names and excuse me." What could I say to this venerable great man? Still courageously I persisted, "If you have no photograph we shall arrange to take one but we must have your photograph at any cost." He begged to be excused and asked if he could do anything else for me. I was silenced and had to bid him good-bye. When I reached the staircase my heart seemed to throb within me, "Fool, how could you complete the album of the Champions of the Indian National Congress without including in it this silent and humble, but none the less

true servant of Mother India?" I retraced my steps, appeared before him again and said humbly, "Sir, we students have organised this scheme for the benefit of the Congress and the people. We have spent time and money on it and have brought it to completion but for your photograph. If we cannot get it we shall give up the scheme and shall be disappointed and none but you will be responsible for the loss of the proposed benefit to the Congress!" He submitted at last to this by agreeing to be photographed. He wanted to know where I proposed to take him for the photograph and what it would cost. I thought it rather strange that he should bother himself with all this, particularly when he was not to be required to spend. He asked me to see him at the Government Press at seven the next morning.

Even though I had no idea as to the exact location of the Press, I thankfully agreed to see him there. Directly after leaving him, I went and ascertained the situation of the press and arranged with a photographer. The next morning before seven I reached the gates of the Government Press. I strolled in front of the press awaiting him. Exactly at seven he, too, arrived. He asked me to sit in the carriage and came back in about five minutes. He asked me if we were going to Hormusji on the Kalbadevi Road. I instructed the driver to take us to Gomes in the Fort. "Where are we going,— to some high class English photographer?" I replied in the affirmative and he seemed to be displeased.

"How much money do we squander like this out of our thoughtlessness?" His words were full of sorrow. When we reached the photographer and he was asked

about the style, he pointed at me. I had seen before a photograph of his in the professorial robe which looked very impressive. Just before the photograph I innocently suggested to him to remove his usual white scarf (उपरणें). "Does it not look well?" he asked. I said, "You look better without it." The words that he said in answer to this were similar to those uttered by Mahatma Gandhi warning the Bhagini Samaj when he came to India twelve years after. One said, "No, let me be what I am. I do not want to show myself better." The other wrote, "See that you do not turn hypocrites in any way. When hypocrisy enters our work it does no one any good." The master and the pupil both meant the same thing. When the photograph had been taken I thanked him and hoped to be excused for having put him to trouble. While returning home he gave me a lift in his carriage. He insisted that I should sit by his side and not on the seat opposite to him. He enquired all details about me and advised me as to what I should do as a student. In a few expressive words he gave me a glimpse of the true condition of the country. He told me that there were heaps of work awaiting the services of hundreds of men who would be willing to offer their all to the country. He awakened my sleeping soul and kindled a fire in my heart. I felt the birth of a new spirit within me. The very moment I thought that if I were to learn the lessons of service at the feet of such a man as this, they were bound to fructify into good results. Those precious moments of my life are deeply impressed on my mind and will never be effaced. That was the 29th of November 1904, when a new light dawned on me.

Gokhale in delineating the picture of the country told me that India stands second in the world in point of population, the first being China ; and still a handful of people from a foreign country rule over crores of Indians. The reasons underlying this fact must be found out. Deep study, minute observation and close thinking are necessary to do this. All is in vain without it. What are the conditions and position of an average Indian in comparison with those of the other peoples of the world ? To find out our true position in point of character, health, industry, education, arts, intellect, discipline, sacrifice and suffering and to try to remedy our various defects, a number of young men and women of high intelligence and sterling character are needed. They must give up all ideas of self, pride or fame. They must be one with their work and duty and this should be done not in a momentary fit of enthusiasm but consistently all throughout life.

Progress of Women's Movement.

With the above view I am collecting information about Women's Organizations in the Bombay Presidency, so that it may be possible to study women's status and position in India and attempts that are being made to ameliorate their conditions. I shall give here a rough idea of the same. I propose to publish later in a book form the information collected.*

* Part I, Social section, of the Directory of Women's Institutions, Bombay Presidency, is now published at Rupee one, and the proceeds of the sale are to go to provide a Library for the Women's Fellowship of Service, of Bombay.

In the city of Bombay alone there are about 100 women's institutions. Some of them are social, some educational and others about hygiene and nursing. There are about 100 institutions in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnatak trying for the uplift of women. This is not the place to review their work. But it is enough to say that in comparison with the number of missionary institutions working selflessly for social advancement all throughout the country, the number of our institutions is like a drop in the ocean.

These missionaries have pitched their tents in the outlying places far beyond the reach of the Railways, in the forests and among the mountains and have been unostentatiously and silently serving the poor and the forsaken, the maimed and the helpless, for the last hundred years. They number at present about 6,000, as many as 4,000 of them being women. This number includes only the foreign missionaries who have come over from distant lands inspired by a spirit of service. Besides these, there are thousands of Indians to help them. Their colonies number about 1,000. In the Bombay Presidency alone there are about 45 missionary colonies. Their institutions number about 264. The Foreign women working in them are about 450 and men 250. They devote the whole of their life and time to the work undertaken by them. The nature of their activities can be gauged from the following classification of their institutions in the Bombay Presidency :—

14 Agricultural Institutions

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| 9 Co-operative | „ | 2 Industrial Schools |
| 2 Arts Colleges | | 40 High Schools |

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|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 14 Industrial Institutions | 20 Colonies |
| 32 Middle Schools | 1 Home for the Blind |
| 9 Training Schools | 4 Homes for the Con- |
| 5 Propaganda Training Schools | sumptives. |
| 7 Workers' Training Schools | 9 Leper Asylums |
| 4 Sanatoriums | 27 Hospitals |
| 34 Dispensaries | 17 Homes for the Help- |
| 4 Printing Presses | less and the Poor. |

Have the followers of Christ alone the divine right to serve humanity ?

Gokhale started in 1905 in Poona the " Servants of India Society." In the same year he was elected as the President of the Benares Congress.

On the 12th of June 1905, early in the morning on the Pandav Hill near the Fergusson College, Gokhale, with three others as the first members of the Servants of India Society, took the vow of life-long service. In 1907, I applied to Gokhale showing my willingness to join the Society. We, a few friends, had started an institution called the Swadesh Sevak Samaj. We arranged lectures, held discussions and spread the gospel of swadeshi. We used to call Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, who stayed only next door, for lectures and consulted him frequently for advice. Once when Gokhale was in Bombay we invited him to give us a lecture. He enquired minutely into the working of our Samaj and suggested that the position of ' Patrons ' and ' Life Members ' should not be sold to the highest bidders. Service of the country is not a bed of roses. He spoke at great length on this point. This advice was followed in framing the constitution of the Bhagini Samaj.

I saw Gokhale in Poona in 1908. I told him about the offer I had received of a good post. He said, "You have good feelings for me. Haven't you?" I said, "Yes." "Then do as I ask you and accept the job. Put up with me whenever you are in Poona and keep up our relations." I followed this advice. He said, "You are still an impractical idealist—a mere child. You must struggle, see the world and stand hard tests." I took leave of him and served for three years as desired by him.

Again I saw Gokhale in 1910 and requested him to accept me as a member of the Society. "Not yet," said he.

In 1910 a prize essay named "Abalā Hita Darpan," written by a lady, was published as a booklet and was dedicated to Gokhale. It had the following words:—"I dedicate this booklet with pleasure to the memory of the exemplary self-sacrifice in the service of the country shown by Gokhale." I was trying to find out, according to the dictates of Gokhale, from the vast ocean of service to the mother country the field of work which would best suit my ability and nature. Messrs. Malbari, Dayaram Gidumal, Amrutlal Padhiyar, Manishanker Bhatt, Ranjitram Mehta, and Bhogendrarao Divetia were of great help to me in this respect.

Gokhale went to South Africa in 1912 where Gandhiji served as his private secretary. The European officers, Indian merchants and other people there were greatly won over by Gokhale's ability, courtesy, character and purity of life. He got a promise to have the injustice done to the Indians redressed. When the

promise was not carried out, Gandhiji launched his campaign of satyagraha and won victory in the fight.

A Strange Coincidence.

During the days of Gokhale-Gandhi collaboration, in their quieter moments, they conferred with each other on the cause of the motherland. Gokhale used to believe and say that inspired personalities like Gandhiji should, instead of confining their unique powers to a few thousand Indians in Africa, devote themselves to the greater service of India. It may be a divine coincidence that Gokhale, having called Gandhi to India and having entrusted everything to him, passed away !

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On the 1st of May 1913 the period of my trial and waiting ended. After overcoming a few difficulties I was elected as an "attache" in the Servants of India Society. During the period of this trial I travelled, studied the working of institutions, and started work at Amreli and other places on the lines of the society.

Poona 1914.

"I know that you did not inform me of the arrival of your guest only with a view not to cause me trouble and inconvenience. But I love the honour and name of our Society more than my own life and you, too, should do likewise." On being thus reproved by Mr. Gokhale I took my guest Harilal bhai to him. In about ten minutes he obtained from us all possible information about the administration of Baroda and Kathiawar and the nature of work there. He then wished god-speed to the social work we proposed to undertake.

On the 19th of February 1915 Gokhale, the greatest Servant of India, having reminded the members of the Society of the vow of ceaseless and selfless service passed away. A thousand obeisances to this great soul who made us realise the gospel of service.

On the 19th of February 1916 Gandhiji wrote for Indian women the life message of Gokhale, called "The Heritage of Gokhale." The Bhagini Samaj of Bombay caught this message and has been doing social work accordingly for the last twenty one years.

In 1917 Mahatma Gandhi presiding at the death anniversary of Gokhale at Ahmedabad said, "A translation of the speeches of Gokhale in Gujarati should be published on the occasion of his anniversary. It is hoped that we shall ever be celebrating this function but it is mere waste of time to disperse only after hearing a few lectures and singing religious psalms. It does no one any good. With a view that the importance of actual work rather than that of mere talk may be realised and that the people may be able to reap some benefits annually from this celebration, the organisers have resolved to publish every year on this occasion a useful book in the vernacular. The choice naturally falls on the speeches of Gokhale. The translation should be the best possible—such that full justice may be done to the words of the master. This is a piece of work which could be done only by willing workers. Such voluntary workers have been found but the future alone can tell when the scheme would fructify."

Twenty years have passed by since the above was said, but the work still remains incomplete. All seem to have lost sight of it. For some time past the workers and the writers were engaged in the non-cooperation movement. But that has now passed away and people have settled down to normal conditions. Books are being published in thousands in Gujarat and it is the duty of the Bhagini Samaj, as it is the true memorial of Gokhale, to get some Gujarati writers who are admirers of Gokhale to do this work. The office bearers of the Samaj are some learned ladies who realise fully the value of the countless merits of the life of Gokhale. It is desirable, therefore, that the Bhagini Samaj should arrange to make it available to the Gujarati reading public at an early date.

Bhagini Samaj.

From the 19th of February 1916 when the Bhagini Samaj was founded in memory of Gokhale to the present day the Samaj has been trying to serve the country to its best ability in the light of Gokhale's ideals by religiously celebrating his death anniversary every year and by getting inspiration from his life of social service. "Gokhale's Heritage," which Mahatma Gandhi wrote about twenty years ago at the foundation of the Bhagini Samaj, is a thoughtful article. Every word in it is sure to move the sincere reader and inspire in him a love of the country, of the service to humanity, of the purity of life and of a religious outlook.

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At the very beginning while blessing the activities of the Samaj, Mahatma Gandhi warned it thus, "See

that you do not turn hypocrites in any way. When hypocrisy enters any work it does no one any good."

To spread and maintain this tradition the Bhagini Samaj celebrates annually the anniversary of Gokhale. Let us all pray to God that he may ever remind the office-bearers of the Samaj of this annual celebration. India needs very badly men who are devoted to their work. Gokhale's life amply bears out the truth that one who works with a singleness of purpose is given all that he needs. We have met here to-day to pay homage to the greatest Servant of India, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, whom even Mahatma Gandhi, one of the greatest men to-day, has acknowledged more than once to be his ideal of a politician and his beloved Guru. Bhagini Samaj is doing very commendable work. It conducts a Bal Mandir, Bhagini Mandir, Seva Mandir, Udyoga Mandir, Dnyan Mandir, Prakashana Mandir, etc. To conduct any institution efficiently and to put it on a firm footing, there must be at least one person who completely identifies himself with it and lends his own life to it. An institution is not to be judged by its structure of brick and mortar. Mahatma Gandhi while laying the foundation stone of the Bhagini Seva Mandir said, "Sincerity of heart is more essential than a pile of bricks and stone."

Is it not possible for the members of the Bhagini Samaj to form into groups of a hundred each and for each to find out at least one member who would be prepared to take up as her life work an activity most suited to her? If such a tradition can be established it would serve as an example to others. Bhagini Samaj was founded for this.

Bhagini Samaj has now laid deep its roots. Years of patient study and thought, the collaboration of body, intellect and money, have gone to make the Samaj what it is to-day.

Some ladies have dedicated their lives to its work. Bhagini Samaj was started to help those who have a desire to work for social service according to their natural aptitudes. It was founded to do humble social work in a sisterly spirit, rather than to dazzle the world with the strength of numbers, wealth or learning. It was started to bring about circumstances which would produce women inspired by Gokhale's sense of social service.

Reconstruction to suit the changing times is essential—nay unavoidable. But it is the duty of those who attempt it to keep in mind the life principles which have guided the institution in the past. Institutions come into being and live for ideals. Gokhale was an idealist, Bhagini Samaj is a fitting memorial to an idealist. It is his heritage.