

GOKHALE AND PUBLIC LIFE

GOKHALE BIRTHDAY CENTENARY ADDRESS

BY

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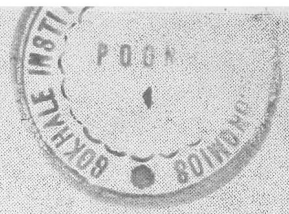
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Prof. D. G. Karve delivering the Centenary Address

9-5-1966

G.I.P.A.

GOKHALE CENTENARY

The Gokhale Birthday centenary was celebrated at the Gokhale Institute of Public Affairs, Bangalore, on Monday, the 9th of May 1966. The hall was packed and there was a huge gathering on the lawns outside. The proceedings opened with the chanting of Vedic Mantras and musical recitation of benedictory verses in Samskrit on the Gokhale Tradition. Sri D. V. Gundappa welcomed the audience and referred to the significance of the day as an occasion for the revival of the Gokhale tradition of thoughtful and sober politics. Sri E. S. Venkataramiah, a member of the GIPA Council of Management, read a few among the messages received.

Prof. D. G. Karve then released, as requested, the Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 7 — "*Gokhale & His Message*", by Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, being the text of the Rajaji Birthday Lecture delivered in January last. This was followed by Prof. D. G. Karve's Centenary Address on *Gokhale and Public Life*. (Text follows).

Sri D. V. Gundappa thanked the Professor for his great kindness in having made the journey from Poona to Bangalore for this purpose and having given the audience so inspiring an address.

This was followed by sweet music for half an hour. The function closed with *Jana Gana Mana*.

WELCOME SPEECH

*The following is the welcome speech of Sri D. V. Gundappa
Hon. Secretary, G. I. P. A.*

Professor Karve, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Speaking for the Council of Management of the Institute and the Study Circle, it is my privilege to offer you all a happy and cordial welcome to this assembly to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Gopal Krishna Gokhale whose revered name this Institute is proud to bear. The occasion is indeed one of unique significance to the whole of India, and it is a special joy to us that we have one so distinguished in the intellectual life and the public life of the country to deliver the Centenary Address to us here.

Bangalore claims to have some special associations with Gokhale. The portrait you see adorning our central hall was unveiled for us by Mahatma Gandhi 51 years ago — on the 8th of May 1915. The speech he then made was inspiring and memorable.

MESSAGES

*The following messages were read by Sri E. S. Venkataramiah,
Advocate and member of the G.I.P.A. Council.*

From Dr. S. RADHAKRISHNAN, President of India :

It is a matter for national rejoicing that free India will shortly celebrate the centenary of Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale whose personal example has been a major source of inspiration in our struggle for freedom. It is perhaps the greatest tribute to his eminence as a leader and a patriot that Mahatma Gandhi looked upon him as his political Guru. In fact Gandhiji's insistence on the fairness of means to justify good ends, was a spiritual legacy inherited from Gokhale. Gokhale is assured an honoured place in our history. His life will continue to inspire our people for many generations. An intellectual genius, a relentless campaigner, a champion of righteous causes, a person of sublime faith, a seeker of justice and a valiant fighter for freedom, these are but a few facets of his colourful and dynamic personality. We in India whose privilege it is to celebrate the Centenary of this great son of India have the sacred duty of ensuring that we devote ourselves with the same zeal and earnestness in building a strong and prosperous India as he displayed in fearlessly championing the fight for its liberation. I send my best wishes for the success of the centenary celebrations.

From Sri C. RAJAGOPALACHARI :

It is good my esteemed friend Sri D. V. Gundappa has been able to get Prof. D. G. Karve to go to Bangalore to the Gokhale Institute and deliver an address on such an important theme as the great Statesman Gokhale's impact on public life in India. I am afraid the G. I. P. A. lecture hall is not big enough to hold the audience that will gather on the occasion. But big themes are better discussed in small halls well packed with eager men than in the open air.

From Dr. H. N. KUNZRU, President, Servants of India Society :

The celebration of the hundredth birthday of Gopal Krishna Gokhale is an event of outstanding importance. It should serve to convey to the present generation, something of the spirit in which he lived and worked. His greatness is strikingly shown

by the great effort which he made to prepare himself, intellectually and morally, for the sacred task that he had taken in hand. He identified himself fully with the common man whom he tried to serve by supporting measures for the eradication of his ignorance, the development of his character and the promotion of his welfare. I trust that your function will be a great success.

From Sri B. SHIVA RAO :

I am indeed happy to know that on the occasion of the Gokhale Birthday centenary on 9th May, Prof. D.G. Karve will speak under the auspices of your Institute on "Gokhale and Public Life."

No man in India that I can think of through all the phases of our freedom struggle made as great a contribution to the basic principles of our public life as did Gokhale. Right to the end of the struggle, as I know from talks with Gandhiji, he strove, amidst doubt and difficulty, to follow a line that he believed Gokhale might have endorsed. Looking back to those early years which Gokhale gave to India's all-round progress, I realise how sound were the foundations of our freedom movement, reared by a man of the highest integrity and complete dedication of spirit.

Gokhale passed away in the prime of his manhood. He is not to be judged by his concrete achievements, significant as they were. The standards he left behind—a deep study of public problems, an objective presentation of the essential features of each problem, a meticulous fairness to the opponent in a controversy — these are imperishable qualities and constitute the life-breath of a real democracy.

It is fortunate that there are still men, though their number is fast shrinking, who can claim to have received their inspiration direct from Gokhale and can pass it on to a generation to whom he is but a name and a memory.

From Prof. M. VENKATARANGAIYA :

Thank you for your kind invitation to the birthday Centenary Celebration of Gokhale.

I am very happy that you are celebrating this function and that the centenary lecture is being delivered by Prof. Karve, one of

the most eminent men in our public life. This is a guarantee that the function will be a grand success.

People of the present day have to learn more of Gokhale's life, the ideals for which he stood, and the work which he did in achieving them.

Selfless service in the cause of the country was his ideal and this was embodied in his Servants of India Society. We have forgotten this ideal today. Selfishness and self-interest have become the motivating forces of our lives and this has led to widespread corruption. Gokhale also stood for constitutionalism. Today we find political leaders and several sections of the public resorting to unconstitutional methods for gaining their ends. Violence is becoming the order of the day and the party in power is creating conditions favourable to the growth of such an atmosphere. It is only by adhering to strictly constitutional methods that we can preserve our democracy. Gokhale's life serves us as a beacon light in this respect. I wish the function every success.

From Prof. PURUSHOTTAM GANESH MAVALANKAR, *Laski Institute, Ahmedabad:*

Gopal Krishna Gokhale's name and memory must ever remain enshrined in our thoughts and deeds. Gokhale was an outstanding liberal and an eminent humanist. He stood for decency and civilised behaviour in our public life. His life was an epic in the art of selfless service and endless sacrifice. Gokhale's words that "Public life must be spiritualized" were never more poignantly meaningful than at the present moment. A lot of our politicians and public leaders of all parties and sections have degenerated into petty and pitiable things. Gokhale's memory should inspire us, lift us from the present downfall, and ennoble us in making our private lives and public conducts cheerful and truthful. We must always stand for the basic standards of truth, decency, tolerance and fairplay in our public life; and, the measure of sincerity and earnestness in this regard should be matched by our readiness to live and die for what we believe to be good and truthful.

GOKHALE AND PUBLIC LIFE

BY PROF. D. G. KARVE

*(The following is the text of the Centenary Address delivered
by Prof. D. G. Karve)*

This day, a hundred years ago, Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born of poor middle class parents in a coastal village near Bombay. This part of the country had by then been under the British occupation for half-a-century. But in the rest of India there were still some territories which remained to be stabilized. Less than a decade had elapsed since the rebellion of 1857, and a new generation of British statesmen was making an attempt to introduce an enlightened and humane government in the country. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 assuring to the people of India the same position under the British Crown as that enjoyed by citizens of other parts of the Empire was as much a Charter of Rights of the people as a pledge of duties of the rulers.

It was in this spirit of constructive statesmanship that some of the topmost leaders of the British Indian Government devoted themselves, on the one hand, to introducing measures of orderly and progressive public administration, and, on the other, to encouraging the more far-sighted among leaders of Indian society to form and operate civic and political organizations of their own. The very year of Gokhale's birth, 1866, was a year of severe drought in the Eastern part of India. Orissa was the worst affected region, and it was estimated that in that area alone as many as 2 million people died as food could not reach them in time.

Measures of irrigation and flood control were initiated as a direct consequence of famines, but the many-sided interest in agriculture, communications, education and health was also vetted by a realisation of the state of utter backwardness of the economy and helplessness of the people. While a few enlightened statesmen and competent administrators could outline progressive policies and measures, their implementation was severely restricted by the dependent status of the country, and by the bureaucratic character of the Government. Both leaders of Indian society and

of the British Government could see that unless the people of India developed to a status of mature citizenship and political power normal welfare and developmental measures could not be assured of continued support. The active interest which the then Viceroy, and a few of his senior advisers took in the establishment of the Indian National Congress is to many an inexplicable feature. A genuine desire to make conditions favourable to the full realization of the promises contained in the Queen's proclamation guided the actions of those, here as well as in England, who took an active interest in the affairs of the Congress in its initial years of existence.

Gokhale belonged to the first generation which was coming of age when the Congress was established under such exalted, concerted and hopeful auspices. The good faith of British statesmen, as distinguished from that of the British Indian Government, having been broadly accepted, the most urgent need to ensure progress towards freedom and prosperity was education; education of the young as well as of the old, elementary as well as advanced, liberal as well as scientific, academic as well as industrial, individual as well as institutional. Gokhale like his master, Ranade, valued all these aspects of education, and helped their diffusion as much as he could. But the one most vital field of pioneering national work which Gokhale had at heart was that of putting an early end to the economic and political dependence of India. As Mahatma Gandhi has recorded in his Autobiography*—

"India's poverty and subjection were matters of constant and exclusive concern to him. Various persons sought to interest him in different things. But he gave every one of them the same reply. "You do the thing yourself. Let me do my own work. What I want is freedom for my country. After that is won we can think of other things. Today that one thing is enough to engage all my time and energy."

How few were the persons, even among the reputed leaders of the people, who in Gokhale's day devoted all their energies

* P. 539—My Experiments with Truth—Navajivana Karyalaya, Ahmedabad, 1933.

to securing an end to the country's subjection is seen from another remark—that of Jawaharlal Nehru, who in his Autobiography, says that at the Bankipore Congress of 1912, he was very much impressed by Gokhale who had just returned from South Africa, and who "alone appeared to take politics seriously."

Thus in speaking of Gokhale, we are speaking of an Indian who, having obtained the best liberal education which could be had in this country in those days, devoted his all too few years of adult-life—he died in 1915 at the early age of 49 — to the cause of spreading enlightenment, faith and determination among his countrymen so that they may come into their own as quickly as possible. Optimist as he was, even he dared not hope that success would be achieved in his own day. The gulf that separated the Indian people—with their apathy, social divisions and a general poverty of resources—from the British Indian administration against whom they were pitted—and who were marked by strength, efficiency and discipline—was so great that Gokhale felt convinced that his own generation would pass on before success—that is, the political freedom of the country—was achieved.

There was a certain piognancy in this feeling, though obviously it was prophetic in significance. Among the several occasions on which Gokhale expressed these sentiments the most notable one was a speech which he delivered in Allahabad in February 1907. The meeting at which the speech was made was presided over by Motilal Nehru, and the declared subject of the speech was **THE WORK BEFORE US**. In concluding the address Gokhale exhorted his countrymen to sink small differences and work together whole heartedly in the service of India.

"We cannot" he said, "allow ourselves to be split-up into small sections fighting with one another for the sake of petty differences. After all, there is a destiny which is really shaping our ends, and we are all engaged in merely rough-hewing them. Whoever promotes union in the country, whoever preaches swadeshi, whoever inculcates lessons of self-sacrifice, whoever builds up in any shape or form the strength of the nation—politically, socially, industrially, morally—he is a fellow-worker,

a brother. The struggle before us is a long and a weary one and while the thoughts of it should stimulate all our energies, undue impatience will only recoil upon our heads. Nation-building is nowhere an easy task. In India it is beset with difficulties which are really formidable, and which will tax to the utmost all our resources and all our devotion. Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying. That is the place which it has pleased Providence to assign to us in this struggle, and our responsibility is ended when we have done the work which belongs to that place. It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes; we, of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures. For, hard though it be, out of those failures the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks."

The struggle which the generation of Gokhale, and of Motilal Nehru, had to carry on was co-extensive with all aspects of the life of the Indian nation which was being created in the extraordinary circumstances of England's rule over all parts of the country which rarely, if ever, had in the past owed a simultaneous allegiance to one and the same political sovereign. As the struggle had many sides, it had two frontiers. One, of course, was the external, that represented by the British bureaucracy in India, and by the British Parliament in London. The other was the internal or domestic, where inertia, apathy, ignorance, and conflicting currents of opinion and action had to be counteracted. To keep a constant and watchful eye on all these, and to guide the forces of Indian nationhood in its halting, but on the whole onward march was no light task. To do it not only with a clear vision, and supreme sacrifice, but also with a pure heart—harbouring no ill-feeling even for an opponent—was almost superhuman.

Many a contemporary of Gokhale, British as well as Indian, often failed to appreciate the political wisdom and the moral virtue of his position. To build one's own strength by appropriate stages, to press one's advantages over an opponent to the point where

the struggle will not recoil on us, gradually to attain a firm and final achievement out of a series of manageable steps, and above all to deal with friend and foe in a spirit of charity and friendliness. It was a combination which few could understand, and fewer still could emulate. It takes a kindred spirit to appreciate the worth of outstanding moral, as well as intellectual, excellence. It was so between Gandhi and Gokhale.

Speaking in this very place, almost exactly fifty one years ago, at a function which must have been among the very first held to pay homage to Gokhale after his demise, which had occurred only a few weeks earlier, Gandhi said* :

“I have declared myself his disciple in the political field and I have him as my Raj-Guru, and this I claim on behalf of the Indian people. It was in 1896 that I made this declaration and I do not regret having made the choice.”

He went on to say: “Mr. Gokhale taught me that the dream of every Indian who claims to love his country, should be to act in the political field, not to glorify it in language, but to spiritualize the political life of the country, and the political institutions of the country.”

In view of the fact that Gokhale exhorted his countrymen to spiritualize public life, and that this exhortation evoked a deep, reverent and abiding response in the heart of Gandhi, whom later generations have cherished as the Father of the Nation, the concept of “spirituality in public life” may merit a little closer attention. In the same speech of Gandhi, delivered here, he asked :

“What is the meaning of spiritualizing the political life of the country?”

Admitting that it was difficult to offer a generally acceptable answer, he declared his own response as follows :

“I think the political life must be an echo of private life, and there cannot be any divorce between the two.”

Going through the several speeches of Gokhale, where a reference to an appropriate attitude towards politics and public life occurs, and keeping in view some of the controversies on a

* Jubilee Souvenir of the Gokhale Institute of Public affairs, Bangalore, 1965. Pages 84-86

high moral and political plane which went on when Gandhi made his first speech about Gokhale, his remarks have a special significance. If political life, that is, those activities of one's life which have their origin in one's position as a member of the polity, the state, is treated by citizens as an optional and additional activity, their interest in public affairs is at best casual. With the mass of the people having no more than an indifferent or only occasional interest in politics, a democratic or liberal form of government built on the assumption of active participation of citizens is ruled out. For both Gandhi and Gokhale the objective of political struggle was not only to gain freedom from Britain, but to get it in such manner that the Indian State which will emerge at the end will be a democratic, progressive and equalitarian society. For an integrated goal of political activity such as this the distinction between ends and means was most crucial.

There were not a few among the well-known contemporaries of Gokhale, and later of Gandhi, who felt that achievement of political freedom from foreign rule was itself such a supremely moral end that any controversy about the ethical merits of the means to be adopted to attain that end was irrelevant. Gokhale and Gandhi very emphatically held different views on the subject. Political or civic conduct is, or ought to be, part and parcel of the normal life of a member of a civilized community. Not only must he give to civic and political interests the same attention which he normally gives to his personal or family interests, he must also be held accountable in both spheres to the same standards of good behaviour. Political life, said Gandhi, must be an echo of private life, there cannot be any divorce between the two. Infact, Gandhi expressed his views about the crucial importance of the quality of means in a social transformation more firmly on another occasion when he observed: "It is true we cannot rise till our political condition is reformed. But it is not true that we shall be able to progress if our political condition undergoes a change by any means and in any manner."*

*Gokhale : *My Political Gyrn* p. 50

As Gokhale was among the very first of his countrymen to appreciate fully the high moral plane on which Gandhi moved—the first meeting between the two is described by Gandhi as “love at first sight”—he continued throughout his later life to pay unstinted public tribute to Gandhi, to his work in South Africa and to his teachings. In one of his innumerable references to Gandhi, Gokhale said that in him Indian ‘humanity has reached its high-water mark. While appreciating, and following, the high principles of fairness and morality in public life which the two shared, Gokhale was prepared to devote himself in a workmanlike manner to the essential task of building India’s public life. Throughout his career Gokhale worked as a Congressman, and he filled several positions in that organization. In 1903 when he was only 37 years of age, he was elected Joint Secretary of the Congress. In that capacity he toured the country to create the necessary interest in and to guide the progress of public life. The speech that he delivered in Madras in July 1904 was an occasion for him to make an important statement of his views on public life in India.

He first dealt with those who had by then grown weary and pessimistic about the results of political activity conducted by the Congress. Gokhale felt that considering the strength of those who were entrenched in power, and the weakness of the people seeking their rightful position, the achievements in respect of creating and organizing public opinion were by no means meagre or discouraging. The struggle, in his opinion, was bound to be a long and arduous one in which success will depend on the development of the people’s capacity and character, and on the quality of their efforts, individual as well as institutional. To those who felt that it would be more fruitful to turn the organised activities of people into industrial channels, Gokhale answered: “It is with me a firm conviction that unless you have a more effective and more potent voice in the government of your own country, in the administration of your own affairs, in the expenditure of your own revenues, it is not possible for you to effect much in the way of industrial development.” The spurt in planned economic development which has occurred in independent India during

the last fifteen years, in contrast with the systematic stunting of India's economic life under foreign rule for over a hundred and fifty years, fully bears out the validity of Gokhale's analysis and his emphasis on priority of political work.

The circumstances of the times, he thought, justified better hopes and called for more intensive and disciplined action. He declared that "Our public life is really feeble and ineffective because it is so faint-hearted and so soulless. Very few of us have really faith in the work we are doing." He went on to add that if we desire to emulate the example of Japan—which was then emerging as a strong Asian power—we must have a more concentrated and more disciplined public life. Elaborating the same thought further he observed :

"The day has gone by when politics could afford to be amateurish in this land. It has been amateurish in the past but the struggle is growing keener and keener, and it is necessary that men should take up the duties and responsibilities of public life in the same manner as they choose their profession and devote their energies to it...Surely in every province, the country has the right to expect at least one or two men to come forward and give more of their time and energy to the building up of the public life, whose weakness we all so much deplore. These men could then be centres round whom our young men could group and band themselves together, and it would then be possible to build up a much higher type of public life than now. There is a great deal of quiet work to be done for which we want young men, who will be willing to go among the public without noise or fuss, not anxious to address meetings but willing and content to do quiet work. If we all recognise our respective duties in this spirit, we shall be able to turn our present efforts into a great, rousing movement for the political emancipation of this land."

Only next year, that is, on June 12, 1905, the Servants of India Society was established with headquarters in Poona and with Gokhale as its First Member, who at sunrise on that day

administered the oath of membership to his three fellow-members. In a preamble to the constitution of the Society Gokhale brings out more fully the implications of his views on public life in India. In an important part of this statement he observes :

“A creditable beginning has already been made in matters of education and of local self-government; and all classes of the people are slowly but steadily coming under the influence of liberal ideas. The claims of public life are every day receiving wider recognition, and attachment to the land of our birth is growing into a strong and deeply cherished passion of the heart ... One essential condition of success in this work is that a sufficient number of our country-men must now come forward to devote themselves to the cause in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken. Public life must be spiritualised.”

It will thus be seen that Gokhale's exhortation to his countrymen to spiritualize politics had several implications. That they should follow in their public or political life the same standard of good conduct as they naturally do in their private life was an important, but only one of the important implications of his teaching. That all civilised and patriotic persons have a public aspect of their life for which they must have a programme of daily devotion, as they reserve for their private life, is a principle of behaviour on which alone the life of a great nation is based. Gokhale had Japan very much in his mind as one of the outstanding examples of an Asian country rising as one man, and working like a dedicated family for the freedom and progress of the nation. Not in one field, but in all, unless people devoted themselves to their social, civic and political duties with the same idealism and dedication which are considered appropriate virtues in private life, political freedom, democracy and progress would be impossible of attainment.

This was Gokhale's and Gandhi's teaching for all their countrymen. For the select few who would muster strength and enough idealism and dedication to devote themselves entirely to national service a higher standard of sacrifice and selflessness was

demanding. As an example may be quoted the following vows which each member of the Servants of India Society has to take before his admission into the Society :

- (i) That the country will always be the first in his thought and he will give to her service the best that is in him.
- (ii) That in serving the country he will seek no personal advantage for himself.
- (iii) That he will regard all Indians as brothers and will work for the advancement of all, without distinction of caste or creed.
- (iv) That he will be content with such provision for himself and his family, if he has any, as the Society may be able to make. He will devote no part of his energies to earning money for himself.
- (v) That he will lead a pure personal life.
- (vi) That he will engage in no personal quarrels with any one.

Such a rigid code of conduct was possible only for those who could rise to an exceptionally high level of moral and social sublimation of the normal instincts and interests of common men. In a way this code is for Political or Social Sannyasins. Gandhi enjoined in substance all these obligations on the members of his Ashram, and on his immediate co-workers. For the rest, both Gokhale and Gandhi were content to exhort their countrymen to follow these principles in spirit to the best possible extent. An educated, alert and public-spirited mass of the people, an appropriate number of leading workers giving a fair portion of their time and resources to organizing public activities, a widespread network of institutions engaged in promoting different aspects of national welfare, and a select group of dedicated workers such as those who formed the Servants of India Society was Gokhale's conception of an appropriate public life for India. In his day, both in quantitative terms and in terms of the functions to be allotted to active workers, the expectations of Gokhale were naturally very limited as compared with those which were appropriate to later times, such as those of the final stages of the national struggle under Mahatma Gandhi.

Spiritual loftiness, moral depth, organizational leadership and practical realism were combined in Gandhi to an exceptionally high degree. In a manner of speaking, he took over the leadership of India's struggle for Independence where Gokhale left it. In fact some of the words used by Gandhi in his speech at this very place, to which I have referred earlier, seem to indicate that he was conscious of his inheritance of faith as well as of responsibility.

"My dear countrymen," said he, "I wish to say this to you, that you have given me a great opportunity or rather a privilege on this great occasion...God is not in me (referring to the fact that his clothes were not dusty and tattered as mentioned in Tagore's description of a man with whom God moves, in a song of welcome which was used on the occasion). There are other conditions attached; but in these conditions too I may fail; and you, my dear countrymen, may also fail; and if we do tend this thought well, we should not dishonour the memory of one whose portrait you have asked me to unveil this morning...He inspired my life and is still inspiring; and in that I wish to purify myself and spiritualize myself. I have dedicated myself to that ideal. I may fail, and to what extent I may fail, I call myself to that extent an unworthy disciple of my master."*

That Gandhi did not fail in physical or material terms is now well known. He fulfilled to the very letter Gokhale's prophetic claim that, "It may be that the history of the world does not furnish an instance where a subject-race has risen by agitation. If so, we shall supply that example for the first time. The history of the world has not yet come to an end, there are more chapters to be added." (Madras, February 1904)

Such moral prestige as India enjoys in the present-day world is almost entirely due to the addition made by the Indian people under Gandhi's leadership, and under his banner of truth and non-violence, of a glorious chapter to world's history. That a determined, dedicated and united people can achieve their just rights against mighty material odds by mobilizing the forces of their own moral regeneration is a truth that civilised human beings

* Pages 84-86; Jubilee Souvenir of the G.I.P.A. 1965

would like to believe. They, however, see few major instances of the vindication of this truth in real experience. Gandhi, in pursuit of the ideal which he shared with Gokhale, supplied a shining illustration which has inspired hope and courage among many others who are faced with similar and worse trials.

For Ranade, Gokhale and Gandhi, the merit of achieving an end-result lay at least as much in the quality of the means as in the extent of the achievement. In fact for several reasons they attached more importance to means than to ends. As a rule disregard of just means leads to an eventual deterioration which would rob the achievement of all substance, at least of all moral substance, of the ideals in support of which the struggle is undertaken. Here again, Gokhale expresses the relatively greater importance of legitimate means when he says: "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." (Presidential Address at the Banaras Congress Session, 1905)

Now after nearly nineteen years have elapsed since the successful issue of the great popular movement for independence sponsored by the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi it should be possible to take stock of the situation and to see how far the struggle has added to our permanent strength. This is an effort that must be done by each one of us in his own way, and in any case it will have to be undertaken with much more leisure and with many more facts than I have at my disposal today. But certain aspects of our recent experience which have an immediate bearing on the Ranade-Gokhale-Gandhi leadership of the national liberation movement may be mentioned. These along with other aspects, may justify a more careful scrutiny on another occasion.

For freedom to be real, it has to be experienced by the common man in his daily life. This alone evokes interest and participation by the citizen in public affairs. A pattern of social organization in which the affairs which directly affect the people of each locality or region are left substantially to their own

management is to be welcomed as a foundational feature of stable democracy. Gokhale was an ardent advocate of decentralised administration. That considerable progress has been made in setting up these local organs of self-government at all levels of our national community is in one sense a fulfilment of the promise of a truly democratic regime. That the new set-up has its own problems, especially on the human or personnel side, only poses a fresh challenge and an opportunity for the organization of public life in the spirit in which Gokhale preached its extension in the nation's political life. The smooth functioning of democratic institutions nearer one's own place of interest and their utilization for promoting public welfare, constitute a permanent addition to the opportunities and obligations of public life which all can now share.

The same feeling of a substantial fulfilment of the institutional promise of the mass struggle for national independence may be conveyed by the efforts made to initiate a social order in which planned economic development of all classes and regions finds suitable recognition. This observation does not necessarily imply that either the machinery, or the making or the implementation of plans has been faultless. That is a different issue by itself. But as with a broadbased structure of political life, so with a commitment to planned economic development of all classes and regions in the country the two together constitute a permanent accession of strength to the nation. Their early and firm establishment in the country is a natural and a healthy sequel to the policies underlying the national struggle, for which Gokhale worked throughout his life. To bring to an end political as well as economic subjection, which more than any other purpose was Gokhale's special concern, has now been attained. Internally, and internationally, we are free in both these respects to order our affairs as the people of this country freely desire.

In one or two prominent respects, and in a somewhat unexpected fashion, a few of the most cherished values in public life, on which Gokhale and Gandhi laid great stress, appear to have faded out of sight. **Public life must be spiritualized, said**

Gokhale. Gandhi understood that to be the principal teaching of his Guru, which in his life he tried to follow. Look upon your public life as a part of your personal life: follow the same high standard in both: do your public work as you do your private work in a religious spirit. This was their teaching, their precept and their example. After nineteen years of independence a generation has appeared to whom the exhortation would appear to be pointless, if not meaningless. I do not wish to say too much on this important subject on this occasion. But I have a feeling that that version of secularism, which in practice has meant virtual eclipse of religion for the great mass of the people, in which new generations are being brought up without any assured introduction to religious philosophy and faith, would fail to constitute, in the Gokhale-Gandhi tradition, a worthy preparation for public, or for that matter for private life.

Another equally disquieting development is the absorption, into the political vortex of governmental power, of all the traditions of disinterested service of the nation and of humanity for which the generation of Gokhale and Gandhi worked. Gandhi's withdrawal from the Congress on the eve of the latter's assumption of governmental power in Delhi was an event of great symbolic significance. The Congress such as it was in the middle of 1947 was an institution devoted to the attainment of freedom by Indians of all classes, to the making of which persons with different ideologies and backgrounds, but having a common dedication to national independence, had contributed their mite. The prestige, goodwill and historical appeal which had gathered round the name of the Congress was not the creation of any particular group, each one of whom would have been legitimately free to form an electioneering organ of its own in the new democracy which was born. The Congress would then have continued as a truly non-partisan national body giving unity and inspiration to all those who had a disinterested, dedicated, spiritualized interest in public life—such as people had before the setting up of governmental institutions of our own for which electioneering postures and arrangements were thought to be necessary. It

was reported at that time, though I have no special knowledge on the subject, that Gandhi desired that after independence the Congress should cease to be a political body in a partisan sense.

The obviously unnatural situation which has been created in many parts of the country—that we have hardly any political party to compare with the Congress, but the Congress itself is full of rival factions and dissident splinters—is a portentous circumstance. But I shall not speak of it today. What is most relevant to any hope of spiritualizing public life is that the entire tradition of disinterested national service having been pressed into the normal functioning of a party government, several basic spheres of social amelioration in which non-political motivations are alone effective have come to be neglected to a point of danger. To take only a couple of examples: prohibition and tribal welfare.

In pre-independence days almost all social workers, except a fringe of highly modernized patriots, felt interested in the cause of temperance. Many among the older generation of today would recall the sustained efforts then made to persuade the victims of the drink evil to follow better ways. The whole of the official machinery in those days was hostile to such an effort, partly because the rulers did not look upon drink in the same unfavourable light as we did, and partly because excise revenue was an important feeder of the public purse. One had every right to expect that in both these respects conditions would materially change when we had our own governments. Temperance workers, with the assistance of a suitable public policy and of better example from the new rulers, would have hoped for better success, and for a cleaner and healthier society.

But when the reformers donned the clothes of rulers, or of policemen, in their inexperience and arrogance they thought that what was needed to end the drink evil was an anti-drink law and little more. Lip sympathy is even now paid to the need for educative propaganda. But I have yet to see leading lights of the ruling party going into drink-infested localities, and carrying on an anti-drink campaign as their own predecessors

were doing. Now they would more easily send a police party. If public work is no more than public coercion, albeit in a good cause, all hope of spiritualizing public life, of carrying it on in a religious spirit would vanish.

Even more disturbing are the developments, or the lack of development, in the tribal areas. The rehabilitation and the social, cultural and economic betterment of the tribal people is a debt, is an obligation which we owe to the whole humanity. If ever a missionary approach of serving God in serving one's fellow-men is called for, it is here that the need is greatest. Whatever the political motive of the foreign rulers may have been it cannot be doubted that the foreign missionaries in the tribal areas played a significant role in bringing the tribal people into the fold of the more advanced peoples of the world. Both Gokhale and Gandhi placed the greatest emphasis on this sphere of public service. Thakkar Bapa, a colleague of Gokhale and Gandhi, played almost a historical role in reclaiming for the national cause the allegiance of some tribal communities, who, left to themselves, might otherwise have posed problems almost as big as those which are now posed by some other tribal groups. The overnight transformation of the Congress into a political party and its being enthroned in Viceregal and Governor's palaces as the ruling power, has meant an end, at least an eclipse, of genuine public service, such as the one which Gokhale and Gandhi lived for and died for.

Obviously, it is too late in the day to undo what has been done in this respect. The remedy in the political field will now have to be a political one. But in the sphere of non-partisan social, human and civic activity it has now become necessary, in view of the many major frustrations of the people's hopes and ideals, to reconstruct public life more or less along the same principles which were advocated by Gokhale and Gandhi over fifty years ago. With a democratic constitution, with widespread knowledge and with growing abundance of resources it should now be easier to build local and national units of public service. What is needed is the spirit of non-partisan and devoted regard for the relief of misery,

For the spread of knowledge and for the vindication of justice. There is urgent call for public service in all these respects, and with a government committed to the principles of social justice as outlined in the preamble and in Part IV of our Constitution, the prospects of fulfilment even in material terms, as distinguished from the moral satisfaction of the worker, are definitely more assured. The attainment of independence, and the transformation of the Congress into an electioneering party, have not lessened but multiplied both the need and the opportunity of organizing public activity according to the principles of Gokhale and Gandhi.

This should not surprise or disappoint us in any way. Wider freedom and more sophisticated organizations always create larger and more intricate problems. Our efforts to solve them have also to be better organized, better equipped and better directed. But the moral principles and human values to be pursued by workers in all circumstances remain the same. To repeat, with Gokhale and Gandhi:—

- (a) The dream of every Indian who claims to love his country should be to spiritualize the political life of the country;
- (b) Political life must be an echo of private life; there cannot be any divorce between the two;
- (c) A sufficient number of our countrymen must come forward to devote themselves to the cause in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken; and
- (d) Public life must be spiritualized.

So long as his countrymen remember, and try to follow, these invaluable teachings of Gokhale, he would not have lived in vain.

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