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GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA

# Gopal Krishna Gokhale

*His Life and Speeches*

BY

JOHN S. HOYLAND, M.A.

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To  
MY STUDENT-FRIENDS IN INDIA  
1912-1928

## FOREWORD

THE experience of traversing dreary wastes of other people's summarisation, in regard to Gokhale's speeches and policies, has convinced the writer of this memoir that the only adequate fashion of dealing with Gokhale is to permit him, as far as possible, to speak for himself. Consequently the following pages are filled largely with quotations from his speeches. To turn from a summary of a speech by Gokhale to the speech itself, even though it has been mutilated for reasons of space, is like turning from darkness to light ; for Gokhale was not only a great orator, and a great master of clear and forcible English ; but he also possessed a unique faculty of making interesting even the driest details of public business.

His speeches show a mind which was capable of undertaking laborious study of the *minutiae* of finance and statistics, but which was also possessed by a pure and undefiled zeal on behalf of the weak and oppressed, by an undying fire of love for his Motherland, and by a wideness of sympathy which made him not only a good patriot where others thought provincially or communally, but a statesman concerned with the relationships of the whole Empire, where others thought only of England or of India.

There is urgent need that this great man should come into his own, and be appreciated—especially amongst the rising generation of his contemporaries, who are now wont to dismiss him contemptuously as a 'Moderate'—at his true worth, namely, as amongst the greatest of all the builders of modern India.

The author owes a great debt to Messrs. Natesan's edition of Gokhale's Speeches ; and to the work of Principal T. K. Shahani, of the Samaldas College, Bhavnagar, whose admirable monograph on Gokhale has been consulted extensively for the details of Gokhale's life. He is also much indebted to the Hon. R. P.

Paranjpye's little life of Gokhale ; and to a brief biography published a number of years ago by Professor J. R. Raju. He owes much also to the kindness of the Servants of India Society in Poona for the loan of the letters printed in this book for the first time. These letters, it is believed, will prove to be historical documents of some importance with regard to the genesis of the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909. Another authority to which reference must be made is Professor V. G. Kale's *Gokhale and Economic Reforms*. I have also to thank Messrs. Venkataraman and Dravid of the Servants of India Society, Nagpur, for help received from them.

My grateful thanks are due to the Rev. Dr. Nicol Macnicol for revising the manuscript of this book, and for adding details of information arising out of his own acquaintance with Mr. Gokhale. Without Dr. Macnicol's kindly and effective help the book would never have seen the light.

June 5, 1933

J.S.H.

*Note.*—The Indian names occurring in this volume are given in the spelling generally familiar to English readers, without attempting to reproduce accurately the vernacular spelling by means of diacritical marks and accents.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. EARLY YEARS	I
II. BEGINNINGS OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP	17
III. THE WELBY COMMISSION, AND AFTER	29
IV. WORK IN THE BOMBAY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL	53
V. 1902	71
VI. 1903	80
VII. 1905	96
VIII. 1905 ( <i>Contd.</i> )	102
IX. 1907-1909	106
X. THE MINTO-MORLEY REFORMS	126
XI. 1910	132
XII. CLOSING YEARS	139
XIII. GOKHALE'S PLACE IN HISTORY	154
APPENDIX	161
INDEX	166

## APPENDIX

### GOKHALE'S POLITICAL TESTAMENT

IN 1914, at the instance of a distinguished Provincial Governor, Gokhale prepared a scheme of Reforms to be inaugurated by the Government of their own accord in order to avoid the growing discontent in the country.<sup>1</sup> The scheme was entrusted to H. H. the Aga Khan, by whom it was published in 1917. It is of interest as embodying Gokhale's conceptions of the next step that should be taken towards his ideal of a fully self-governing India, and also as affording certain grounds of comparison and contrast with the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, and with later constitutional developments upon which his influence is clearly visible.

#### PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY

The grant of Provincial Autonomy, foreshadowed in the Delhi Despatch would be a fitting concession to make to the people of India at the close of the War. This will involve the two-fold operation of freeing the Provincial Governments on one side from the greater part of the control which is at present exercised over them by the Government of India and the Secretary of State in connection with the internal administration of the country, and substituting on the other, in place of the control so removed, the control of the representatives of tax-payers through Provincial Legislative Councils. I indicate below in brief outline the form of administration that should be set up in different Provinces to carry out this idea.

Each Province should have:

(1) A Governor appointed from England at the head of the administration.

<sup>1</sup> See a statement to the Press by the Hon. Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Shastri (President of the Servants of India Society) printed in *Indian Reforms* (Natesan).

(2) A Cabinet or Executive Council of six members, three of whom should be Englishmen and three Indians, with the following portfolios:

- (a) Home (including Law and Justice).
- (b) Finance.
- (c) Agriculture, Irrigation and Public Works.
- (d) Education.
- (e) Local Self-Government (including Sanitation and Medical Relief).
- (f) Industries and Commerce.

While members of the Indian Civil Service should be eligible for appointment to the Executive Council, no place in the Council should be reserved for them, the best men available being taken, both English and Indian.

(3) A Legislative Council of between 75 and 100 members, of whom not less than four-fifths should be elected by different constituencies and interests: Thus in the Bombay Presidency, roughly speaking, each district should return two members, one representing Municipalities and the other District and Taluka Boards. The City of Bombay should have about ten members allotted to it. Bodies in the mofussil like the Karachi Chamber, the Ahmedabad mill-owners, the Deccan Sardars, should have a member each. Then there would be the special representation of Muhammadans, and here and there a member may have to be given to communities like the Lingayats, where they are strong. There should be no nominated non-official members, except as experts. A few official members may be added by the Governor as experts, or to assist in representing the Executive Government.

(4) The relations between the Executive Government and the Legislative Council so constituted should be roughly similar to those between the Imperial Government and the Reichstag in Germany. The Council will have to pass all Provincial legislation, and its assent will be necessary for additions to or changes in Provincial taxation. The Budget, too, will have to come to it for discussion, and its resolutions in connection with it, as also on questions of general administration, will have to be given effect to unless vetoed by the Governor. More frequent meetings or longer continuous sittings will also have to be provided for. But the members of the Executive Government shall not depend, individually or collectively, on the support of a majority of the Council, for holding their offices.

The Provincial Government, so reconstituted and working under the control of the Legislative Council, as outlined above, should have complete charge of the internal administration of the Province, and it should have virtually independent financial powers, the present financial relations between it and the Government of India being largely revised—and to some extent even reversed. The revenue under Salt, Customs, Tributes, Railways, Post, Telegraphs and Mint should belong exclusively to the Government of India, the services being Imperial: while that under Land Revenue, including Irrigation, Excise, Forests, Assessed Taxes, Stamps and Registration should belong to the Provincial Governments, the services being Provincial. As under this division the revenue falling to the Provincial Governments will be in excess of their existing requirements, and that assigned to the Government of India will fall short of its present expenditure, the Provincial Governments should be required to make an annual contribution to the Government of India fixed for periods of five years at a time. Subject to this arrangement the Imperial and the Provincial Governments should develop their separate system of finance, the Provincial Governments being given powers of taxation and borrowing within certain limits.

Such a scheme of Provincial Autonomy will be incomplete unless it is accompanied by (a) a liberalising of the present form of District administration, and (b) a great extension of Local Self-Government. For (a) it will be necessary to abolish the Commissionerships of Divisions, except where special reasons may exist for their being maintained, as in Sind, and to associate small District Councils, partly elected and partly nominated, with the Collector, to whom most of the present powers of the Commissioners could then be transferred—the functions of the (District) Councils being advisory to begin with. And (b) Village Panchayats, partly elected and partly nominated, should be created for villages and groups of villages and Municipal Boards in towns and Taluka Boards. The Talukas should be made wholly elected bodies, the Provincial Government reserving to itself, and exercising, stringent powers of control. A portion of the excise revenue should be made over to those bodies, so that they may have adequate resources at their disposal for the due performance of their duties. The District being too large an area for efficient Local Self-Government by an honorary agency, the functions of the District Board should be strictly limited, and the Collector should continue to be its ex-officio President.

## THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The Provinces being thus rendered practically autonomous, the constitution of the Executive Council or the Cabinet of the Viceroy will have to be correspondingly altered. At present there are four members in that Council with portfolios which concern the internal administration of the country, namely, Home, Agriculture, Education and Industries and Commerce. As all internal administration will now be made over to Provincial Governments, and the Government of India will only retain in its hands nominal control to be exercised on very rare occasions, one member, to be called Member for the Interior, should suffice in place of these four. It will, however, be necessary to create certain other portfolios; and I would have the Council consist of the following six members, at least two of whom shall always be Indians:

- (a) Interior.
- (b) Finance.
- (c) Law.
- (d) Defence.
- (e) Communications (Railway, Post and Telegraph).
- (f) Foreign.

The Legislative Council of the Viceroy should be styled the Legislative Assembly of India. Its members should be raised to about one hundred to begin with, and its powers enlarged, but the principle of an official majority (for which perhaps it will suffice to substitute a nominated majority) should for the present be maintained, until sufficient experience has been gathered of the working of autonomous arrangements for the provinces. This will give the Government of India a reserve power in connection with provincial administration to be exercised in emergencies. Thus if a Provincial Legislative Council persistently decline to pass legislation which the Government regard as essential in the vital interests of the Province, it could be passed by the Government of India in its Legislative Assembly over the head of the Province. Such occasions would be extremely rare; but the reserve power will give a sense of security to the authorities, and will induce them to enter on the great experiment of Provincial Autonomy with greater readiness. Subject to this principle of an official or nominated majority being for the present maintained, the Assembly should have increased opportunities of influencing the policy of the Government by discussion, questions connected

with the Army and Navy (to be now created) being placed on a level with other questions. In fiscal matters the Government of India so constituted should be freed from the control of the Secretary of State, whose control in other matters, too, should be largely reduced, his Council being abolished and his position steadily approximated to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Commissions in the Army and Navy must now be given to Indians with proper facilities for military and naval instruction.

German East Africa, if conquered from the Germans, should be reserved for Indian colonisation, and should be handed over to the Government of India.

# INDEX

- A GARKAR, G. G.**, 6 f., 10, 12,  
15, 22, 23, 27  
Allahabad, 18  
Amraoti, 20  
Andrews, C. F., 151  
Army expenditure, 38, 39, 76
- BENARES**, 106, 108  
Bengal, 31, 109, 116  
Bi-metalism, 10  
Bombay Legislative Council, 53 ff.,  
62  
Bombay Provincial Conference, 33,  
42  
Bright, John, 4  
Bombay University, 68  
Brodrick, Mr., Secretary of State,  
66  
Bureaucracy, 115  
Burke, 7
- CAVOUR**, 105, 154 ff.  
Chisol, Sir V., 140  
Congrave, Mrs., 44  
Congress, Indian National, 18, 33,  
34, 50, 89, 102, 106, 107, 108,  
126, 153  
Co-operative credit, 61  
Courtney, Lord, 122  
Criminal Investigation Department,  
141, 142  
Cross, Lord, 75, 76  
Currency surpluses, 72  
Curzon, Lord, 29, 66, 88, 89, 106,  
107, 108, 110
- DECCAN** College, 3  
Deccan Education Society, 6, 7,  
13 f., 24, 157  
Deccan Sabha, 35  
Delhi, 148  
District Municipal Act, 62  
Dominion Status, 30  
Dravid, Mr., 120
- EDUCATION**, 41, 82, 83, 96,  
134 ff., 158
- Ellis, 112  
Elphinstone College, 3  
Englishman (Newspaper), 87  
Excise, 82
- FAMINES**, 53 f., 99  
Fergusson College, 7, 9, 15, 24,  
68, 69  
Fuller, Sir B., 112
- GANDHI, M. K.**, 85, 107, 148,  
150  
Ganpati, 27  
Gokhale, G. R., 2, 6  
Gokhale, K. R., 1  
Government of India, 164, 165
- HARDINGE, LORD**, 151, 157  
Hawthornthwaite, Prof., 4  
Hindu and Moslem relations, 26,  
31, 50 ff.
- IMPERIAL** Legislative Council,  
65 f., 71, 86  
Indebtedness, Agricultural, 55 f.,  
59 f., 98, 99  
Indentured Labour, 142, 143  
Indianisation of services, 40, 84,  
102  
Irish land purchase, 101
- JOSHI, G. V.**, 35
- KARVE**, 121  
Katluk, 1  
Kesari (Newspaper), 22, 24, 34,  
123  
Kitchener, Lord, 67, 109
- LAND** alienation, 54, 55  
Law, Sir E., 97
- MARATHA**, 7  
Mayhew, A., 91  
Mehta, Sir P., 27, 65, 93  
Meston, Sir J., 67, 109

Mill, J. S., 138  
Minto, Lord, 66 f., 108, 117, 154  
Minto-Morley reforms, 28, 32, 123,  
126 ff., 155  
Montagu, E. S., 67  
Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, 32  
Morley, Lord, 32, 67, 112 ff., 168 f.,  
126 ff., 154, 159  
Muharram, 26

**NAMJOSHI**, 13, 24  
Naoroji, D., 19, 20 f., 27  
Natarajan, K., 46, 108, 152  
Nevinson, 119  
New English High School, 4, 7, 11

**OFFICIAL** Secrets Act, 87 ff.  
Oka, 2

**PEDLER**, 91  
Plague, 41 f., 48  
Police administration, 139  
Poona municipality, 49, 62, 102  
Poona murders, 25, 46  
Provincial autonomy, 161  
Public Services Commission, 149,  
150

**RAMABAI, PANDITA**, 46  
Ranade, M. G., 1, 10, 11, 14,  
18, 19, 27, 33, 63, 64, 108,  
110, 123  
*Rashtra Sabha Samachar*, 34  
Reay, Lord, 17

Ripon, Lord, 83

**SALT** Tax, 37, 74, 75, 81, 97,  
116  
Sarvajanik Sabha, 12, 14, 25, 33,  
34  
Sathe, A. S., 11  
Scott, 4  
Secretary of State, 42  
Secretary of State's Council, 157  
Servants of India Society, 48,  
103 ff., 148, 152  
Shastri, V. S. S., 162  
Sinha, 129  
Social reform, 34  
South Africa, 85, 148, 149  
*Sudharak*, 15, 23 f.

**TAXATION**, 73 ff.  
Temperance, 63  
Tilak, B. G., 6 f., 12, 23, 24 ff.,  
122

**UNIVERSITIES** Bill, 89 ff., 108

**VALIDATION** Act 92, 93  
Vivekananda, Swami, 108

**WACHA, D. E.**, 36, 44  
Wedderburn, Sir W., 32, 112,  
113, 119  
Welby Commission, 35 ff., 46  
Wilson, Sir G. F., 66, 118