

# GOKHALEANA

No. 7

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G. K. GOKHALE, 1897,  
at the time of the Welby Commission

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*Edited by:*  
**S. R. VENKATARAMAN,**  
Secretary,  
Servants of India Society, Madras-14.

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## FOREWORD

This, the *Seventh* issue of *Gokhaleana* contains the speech on Gokhale delivered by Prof. G. C. Bhate, of the Fergusson College, a colleague and good friend of Gokhale.

His tribute to Gokhale's qualities of head and heart, will be read with interest, by all admirers of Gokhale.

Madras-14.

May 5, 1971.

S. R. VENKATARAMAN

## **Professor G. K. GOKHALE<sup>1</sup>**

*by*

**PROFESSOR G. C. BHATE<sup>2</sup>**

I came to know Gokhale, or rather saw him for the first time in November 1884, when Gokhale joined the New English School staff as a temporary teacher, teaching the lower divisions of standard IV while I was a student in one of the upper divisions of that standard. I remember even now vividly the boyish looking but bright, fascinating but commanding face of the young Gokhale. Who could have then imagined that this young man of 18 years, was, within a short space of thirty years, to attain a world-wide reputation for the highest qualities of head and heart, was to be selflessly devoted to the cause of the country and was destined to die a premature death mourned by friends and foes alike! But such has been the unique career of Gopalarao Gokhale. He came to Poona, grooping for his goal of life and was attracted by the patriotic and selfless educational work carried on by Messrs. Agarkar<sup>3</sup> and Tilak<sup>4</sup>, and he threw his lot among them by becoming a life member of the D. E. Society<sup>5</sup> started in October 1884, pledged to work there for 20 years. Thus his public career begins in 1885 and his life work covers just a period of thirty years divided into three equal periods of 10 years each.

The first period was a period of preparation and a gradual fulfilment of his pledge. He worked hard to get mastery over the English language in which he succeeded remarkably. He studied English History, especially its constitutional aspect. He was very fond of Irish History. He studied it minutely — because of the Irish struggle for Home Rule, — for, Mr. Gokhale felt that India could learn much from such a study. Then he interested himself in the study of Economics. It was the study of the principles of this Science that gave him that wonderful insight into Indian finance by which his budget speeches in the Imperial Council were characterised. Last but not the least item of Gokhale's preparation for his subsequent public career was his discipleship of the greatest man of Modern India, i.e. Mr. Ranade.<sup>6</sup> Under the direct eye and guidance of Ranade, Gokhale learnt the proper method of handling Indian problems; the proper goal of India; the true perspective of Indian political progress and above all the moral qualities of patience and perseverance. In 1895 Mr. Gokhale became the secretary of the Reception Committee of the Indian National Congress held in Poona and made such a stirring speech in the Congress that people exclaimed; "Here is the coming man of India".

In the second period Mr. Gokhale became an all India leader. He went to England in 1897 to give evidence before the Welby Commission.<sup>7</sup> His evidence was a great triumph especially when Mr. Gokhale stood the test of a searching cross-

examination and came out with flying colours. But Mr. Gokhale was soon to suffer humiliation and self-effacement by what he did in England. Plague measures in Poona (a new scourge which swept in India while Gokhale was in England) aroused great indignation among the people and resulted in the murder of a European. The public in England were excited and thought 'the days of mutiny were again come'. Mr. Gokhale on the authority of his private correspondence made a statement in public charging British soldiers with behaving badly and immorally especially with women. This statement turned the tide of excitement against the British administration in India. The Bombay Government flatly denied the charges. On returning home Mr. Gokhale saw that he could not substantiate the charges and so he tendered his apology freely and frankly. Thus he had to humiliate himself. But he thought that as a gentleman it was his duty to do so. It was this noble act that raised Mr. Gokhale in the eyes of his European opponents and his subsequent power and influence were due to this act of self-effacement. Mr. Gokhale, in spite of his humiliation went on working for the good of India and he gradually became an all India leader. At the end of this period, Mr. Gokhale received the highest honour that India could give him by being elected the President of the Indian National Congress held at Banares in 1905. He acquitted himself in that difficult position admirably. By this time he had fulfilled his pledge in the D. E. Society.

In the third period of Gokhale's career he became an Imperial statesman and attained world-wide reputation. During these ten years he established the 'Servants of India Society'<sup>8</sup> on a firm basis ; he went to England a number of times for securing reforms ; he went to South Africa and by his tact, his statesmanship and insight into the difficult Indian problem he brought about a reconciliation and at least a temporary solution of the problem. During the last two or three years of his life he was engaged in the work of the Public Services Commission. Gokhale's public career was cut short by the cruel hand of death on the 19th February, 1915.

Mr. Gokhale's public career has been unique. The public career of many a latter day leader of India has been meteoric. They have shot up on the political horizon, have dazzled the eyes of the public for a time but have soon disappeared. But Mr. Gokhale's career has been steady and slow like the progress of the moon from the new moon to the full moon.

↑ Let us now look to the purposes and principles underlying this unique public career of Gokhale.

The first characteristic of Gokhale's career that strikes us is his fervent and pure patriotism. Mr. Gokhale's love of his country was never alloyed with personal ambition or with parochial or communal spirit. His patriotism was pure. He loved his motherland with a fervour rarely to be

found in other leaders. His motto was "we must be Indians first and everything else afterwards". It was this pure and higher patriotism of Gokhale that endeared him to persons of all creeds and castes.

The second characteristic of Gokhale's career was his perfect rectitude and high sense of duty as a public worker. He wanted public workers to do their duty without the slightest trace of personal advantage or gain. He used to say "Caesar's wife must be above suspicion". He was extremely careful about public funds and he wanted everyone to do likewise. It was this perfect rectitude by which Gokhale secured the confidence of every body and he was given funds for carrying on the Servants of India Society even though no accounts of that Society were ever published<sup>9</sup>.

The third characteristic of Gokhale's career was his clear perception of India's goal. He had no patience with visionary ideals. He had adopted the firm faith of Ranade that the connection of India and England was providential and was intended for our good. So it was wild and visionary to talk of absolute independence. He believed that 'self-Government within the British Empire' was a practicable ideal for India. There was nothing mean, low or inferior in this ideal. Mr. Gokhale used to say that he wanted no limitations or restrictions to the growth of Indian men and women. He wanted them to grow to the full height of their stature in all walks of life. But we



can all attain to that height even within the Empire as men of the self-governing colonies are doing.

The fourth characteristic of Gokhale's career was as regards the method of attaining the goal. He had firm faith in the constitutional method. He believed that that was the only practicable method in the present state of India. He often compared our political struggle to that between the Plebeians and Patricians of ancient Rome. By constant constitutional agitation the Plebeians secured inch by inch all the rights—political, social and religious—which the Patricians enjoyed in Rome. It would be the same with Indians too Gradually Indians would get all the rights of British citizenship by sustained constitutional agitation.

The fifth characteristic of Gokhale's career is his conviction about the necessity of working for the all round progress of India. Though he himself devoted all his time and energies to the political advancement of India he did not believe in a favourite theory of some Indian politicians that our only ill is the foreign rule and if that is removed every thing will be alright. Mr. Gokhale regarded this theory as a case of *hysteron proteron*<sup>10</sup>. He thought that the foreign rule in India was not the cause of our present ills but rather the result of our social structure and certain defects of our character. Unless these root causes which brought on foreign rule are removed, foreign rule would not go. This was why he wanted a reform movement in every direction. Of course everyone can-

not have the versatility of a Ranade. So each one should choose a field of activity for which he is fit. But the criterion of fitness, according to Gokhale, was perfect consistency between profession and practice. If a person says one thing and does another such a person will not influence public opinion. So every public worker should work in a field where he can act himself upto his teaching,

These have been the underlying principles and purposes of Gokhale's public career. He worked incessantly for the good of India for full thirty years and there is no doubt that he achieved success to a considerable extent. Are the higher and nobles principles which actuated Mr. Gokhale in his work being followed by our public workers? We have to confess that latterly there has been much falling off in these respects. There is much patriotism but it is of a mixed character. There is less rectitude as regards public funds. Personal ambition, parochial spirit, communal feeling, party spirit, separatist tendencies are rampant throughout the length and breadth of the land. As for methods of work we have tried many of them. Indian mind at the present time may be compared to the mind of a person suffering from consumption. Such a person takes regular treatment from an experienced doctor and after one or two years of treatment becomes impatient on finding no signs of abatement of his ailment. He therefore in his impatience tries all manner of treatment from quacks who promise speedy recovery, but after the

failure of all these remedies he again comes to an experienced doctor. Here one can easily excuse the patient. Such has been the case with our political agitation. All the varied methods of speedy attainment of the goal have been tried and found wanting; the stamp of 'failure' has been put upon all of them and we are veering round to the old time-honoured methods of constitutional agitation. For instance to take an example from practical politics of the day. Is there any difference between the Responsive Co-operationists and the Liberals? To an outside observer like myself who can see more of the game than those who are engaged in the actual fight, no difference is observable. So why should not the two parties combine under a third name if required i.e. United Constitutional Party or National Liberal Party?

On the young men depends the future of India. They should try to imbibe the purer patriotism, the perfect rectitude of Gokhale and the firm faith in the ideal and method of work long tried and found possible. Let them remember the common adage "United we stand, divided we fall".

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Govind Chinnaji Bhate, M. A. — (Sep. 17th, 1870) ; joined the Deccan Education Society, at the suggestion of G. K. Gokhale, as Life Member ; taught Logic and Philosophy in the Fergusson College ; organised the Willingdon College at Sangli and became its Principal ; writer of many books in Marathi and in English. A great social reformer and educationist.

<sup>2</sup> Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, M. A. (1856-1895) ; joined the Deccan Education Society along with B. G. Tilak (1881) ; became the first Editor of the *Kesari* (1887) ; Professor of History and Philosophy, Fergusson College (1884) ; became its Principal (1892) ; resigned Editorship of the *Kesari* on account of differences with Tilak. Started the *Sudharak* to advocate social reform (1888) ; died of overwork and Asthma, (1895) ; translated *Hamlet* into Marathi. Called the patron of the Fergusson College.

<sup>3</sup> Bal Gangadhar Tilak, B.A., LL.B. — (23-7-1856 — 1-8-1920) ; joined the Deccan Education Society (1881) ; Professor of Mathematics, Fergusson College ; resigned due to differences of opinion with his colleagues and started the *Kesari* (1887) ; charged for sedition and deported to Mandalay (1904-1914) ; wrote *The Orion*, *The Artic Home of the Vedas*, and *The Gitarahasya* ; a fiery patriot and scholar. The English journalist Sir Valentine Chirol described Tilak as "The Father of the Indian Unrest" and his fellow Indian compatriots called him *Lokamanya*, the beloved of the people.

<sup>4</sup> Deccan Education Society was founded in Poona in 1880 by English educated patriotic young men like Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar, Bala Gangadhar Tilak and Nam Joshi with the object of cheapening education. Those who joined the Society as life members agreed to serve the educational institutions run by the Deccan Education Society for a period of twenty years on a nominal salary.

<sup>5</sup> Mahadeo Govind Ranade (1842-1901) M.A., LL.B. ; Father of *Indian Economics* ; Editor, *Indu Prakash* (1861) ; rose from the position of Police Magistrate to that of a Judge of the Bombay High Court (1893-1901) ; Member, Finance Commission, Government of India (1888) ; Founder of the Indian National Congress and the Social Conference (1885) ; author of *The Rise of the Marathi Power*, *Indian Economics*, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Welby Commission — the name of the Commission appointed in England in 1886, under the Chairmanship of Lord Welby to inquire into Indian Finances.

<sup>7</sup> Servants of India Society—founded by the late G. K. Gokhale on 12-6-1905 to train national missionaries who take a pledge to work for the promotion of all national interests of the Indian Nation in all secular fields in a spirit of service and sacrifice throughout their life.

<sup>8</sup> After Gokhale's death, the Society has been regularly publishing its annual reports and audited statement of accounts.

<sup>9</sup> *Hysteron Proteron*—putting the cart before the horse.