

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

A respectful homage

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The following is the text of an address delivered by Prof. G. D. Parikh before a public meeting organised by the Servants of India Society in the Gokhale Hall, Pune, on the occasion of the 110th birthday celebration of Gopal Krishna Gokhale on Sunday the 9th May 1976 :—

“Gokhale the Good” as Gandhiji described him was for Gandhiji his “Guru”<sup>1</sup> while Srinivas Sastri, his successor in the Servants of India Society, has referred to him as his “Master”. Sarojini Naidu who called him as “the great saint and soldier of the National Righteousness”<sup>2</sup> burst forth in a poem referring to him as “Heroic Heart” and called upon “mournful millions (to) kindle their souls with consecrated fire caught from the brave torch fallen from (his) hands”<sup>3</sup> and Jinnah aspired to be “Gokhale of the Muslims”,<sup>4</sup> and wondered how much work a single individual could accomplish. He was an inspirer of Pandit Motilal Nehru, and Gandhiji mourned his death “by going bare-foot for a year”.<sup>5</sup> These and other glowing tributes paid to him by different leaders show beyond all doubts Gokhale as one of the greatest builders of modern India.

And yet no less a person than Sastri observed in 1935, “Intimately as I knew him, reverently as I have remembered his teachings, I cannot but be surprised at the tremendous distance that India has travelled since his day. The great subjects to which he devoted his attention have all changed their tenor and complexion. The concrete issues which occupied him so intensely have become for practical purposes quite different in their nature.”<sup>6</sup> Sastri’s feeling is far more justified today than when Sastri first expressed it for the simple reason that the historical context has changed completely.

This raises a question : Was the work of this great builder of modern India only bound by his times or were there elements

in it which would retain their relevance even when times may change. Now that sixty years have passed since Gokhale's death are we in a position to bring in an element of objectivity in assessing his work or do we only think in terms of personal attributes like humility, intelligence, understanding, sensitivity, integrity, character, patriotism and so on all of which he possessed in ample measure? It is to the exploration of this question that I propose to devote my remarks today.

In an article in the Indian Review on the question whether Indian politicians should or should not ally themselves with the Liberal party in England, Gokhale observed : " We are struggling to assert in our country those principles which are *now* the accepted creed of the Liberal party. The people of India, like the Liberals of England, are anxious for peace abroad and reform and retrenchment at home. The Indian people do not want that there should be any predominance of one class over the mass of the people and they desire that the advantages which are now enjoyed by a privileged few should be spread among the unprivileged many."<sup>7</sup>

The influence of British liberalism which was increasingly faced with the economic challenges coming from labour in the late nineteenth century is evident in the latter sentiments, Gokhale, it is said, hated the word " moderate " as applied to his school of politics.

We may examine some of the implications of Gokhale's position. Our attention for that purpose should turn to some extent to England where important decisions affecting India's destiny were being taken. A recent writer, for example, has described London as the most important Asian capital in the world. When we turn there, it is evident that liberalism was not actually reconciled at any stage to the introduction of representative institutions in India.

I do not propose to take a survey of the liberal position in the nineteenth century but I might indicate a few pointers which would suffice to show the basis of the above statement. " In 1832, the assumption ' that anything approaching to representation . . . ( for India was ) entirely out of question ' was supported by James Mill."<sup>8</sup> The next year Macaulay assured

the House of Commons "that the only form of Government then suitable for India was an enlightened and parental despotism." He observed, "It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not ..... Whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in English history."<sup>10</sup> John Stuart Mill, writing twenty years later, maintained: "The educative task of government required not just the promulgation of a code of laws but a '*parental despotism*' which trained its subjects in Western knowledge and self-government. Once a person has learnt to read and to discuss intelligently, he will be a reflecting, an observing, and therefore naturally a self-governing, a moral and a successful human being."<sup>11</sup> Both the Mills remained confident that human character could be indefinitely transformed and John Stuart Mill from the beginning never believed that in India a permanent empire based upon commercial exploitation could be maintained. He looked forward to the day of separation as an occasion "not for regret but for rejoicing."<sup>12</sup> For J. S. Mill however, happiness and not liberty was the end of government and happiness was promoted solely by the protection of the individual in his person and property. So long as it provided good laws and efficient government, Britain should rest assured that it was discharging its duty to India. The encouragement of representative government was neither necessary nor desirable. Morley in 1908 in a well-known speech in the House of Lords in which he foreshadowed the reforms, said: "If I were attempting to set up a parliamentary system in India or if it could be said that this charter of reforms led directly or necessarily up to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I for one would have nothing at all to do with it."<sup>13</sup>

While the attitude of the English liberals in respect of the introduction of representative institution thus remained doubtful in its commitment, one does witness a difference between the India of the Company and the India of the Queen. Before

Mutiny the Liberals appeared to be full of a reforming zeal in India. They were seeking to "transform the Indian society upon a European model."<sup>14</sup> Deliberate interference with the customs and practices of the Indians some of which James Mill had very strongly condemned was the order of the day. The legal system was changed. Many of the traditional practices like the *Sati* were abolished. English education was introduced and so on. Thus the earlier attitude of the Company to function as purely a commercial organization, not interfering or doing anything which might disturb the minds of Indians, was revised. But the Mutiny made a considerable difference and the policy of reforms was replaced by the policy of establishing an efficient government. The Hindus whom James Mill referred as "the most enslaved portion of the human race"<sup>15</sup> were no longer to be reformed. The rulers' attitude became neutral and the question of reform of the Indian society shifted from Britain to India. The British authorities became more of a check than an authority concerned with active encouragement of reforms. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act which was a sequel to the abolition of *Sati*, for example, was a case of only an enabling piece of legislation, and heroic efforts had to be made by a handful of Indians themselves actually to bring about a few such remarriages. It would thus be seen that the latter part of the century found the liberals more concerned with good and efficient rule rather than with reforms leading to the transformation of the Indian Society. The last case in which liberalism appeared in a reforming role was perhaps the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon. Ripon had to adopt a series of measures calculated to wipe out the impression created earlier that India was to be governed in the interests of British rather than in those of Indians.

Ripon came on the scene in the context of the second Gladstonian administration in 1880, which believed that the most effective method of maintaining the imperial connection was through the device of self-government. Ripon's approach, it is urged, was determined not only by his liberal creed but also by the need of befriending educated Indians. As he formulated the position in his memorandum on local self-government there are "two policies for the choice of the Government of India. One

is the policy of those who established a free press, who have promoted education, who have admitted natives more and more largely to the public services in various forms, and who have favoured the extension of self-government; the other is that of those who hate the freedom of the press, who dread the progress of education and who watch with jealousy and alarm everything which tends in however limited a degree to give the natives of India a larger share in the management of their own affairs."<sup>16</sup> Ripon, however, could not achieve much but witnessed in his days the demand for association with the machinery of government continually grow, because the number of educated Indians was growing and they were demanding access to the higher services and representation in the legislative councils.

This was very broadly the background in which the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. The Congress instead of remaining an organization for exchange of views on social matters, as was originally conceived, became a political organization to some extent on the suggestion of the then Viceroy Dufferin who realised that an autocratic government and a free press could not go together and that it was necessary for him to encourage the creation of a forum for expression of Indian reaction to various government decisions. Questions of social reform ceased to be discussed from the very second session of the Congress presided over by Dadabhai Naoroji, himself a liberal, who maintained that the organization was mainly to serve the purpose of expressing the political aspirations of Indians of all castes and creeds.

The decisive turning point in the liberal influence on the Government of India was the fight put up by the Anglo-Indian Association against the Ilbert Bill. Unable to get the requisite support from home, Ripon felt that he should not push the bill through his Legislative Council and even if he did so, the opposition from the British Community in India would not stop at that. Ripon, therefore, settled for a compromise removing the disability from qualified Indians to try Europeans but giving Europeans in the mofussil the right to claim trial by jury, one half members of which were to be Europeans. This compromise is said to have marked the end of ascendancy of the spirit of radical Gladstonian liberalism in the Government of India.

Britain's mission in India thereafter was not to introduce democratic institutions but to provide "for the welfare of the community by the establishment of peace, order (and) supremacy of law, the prevention of crime, the redress of wrong, the enforcement of contracts ... (and) the construction of public works."<sup>17</sup> British liberalism in India thus became the doctrine of "good and efficient" government for the welfare of the Indian people.

Gokhale started attending the Congress sessions since 1889, i. e., three years or so before the Councils' Act of 1892 was passed. This measure was a slow response to the Congress demand for representation. A chance was thus missed of making National heroes of liberal Congressmen who could have attracted India's youth to the liberal creed. Similarly, under the Whiggish influence, representation through district boards, for example, took the character of representation of interests rather than that of the people. Dissatisfaction of educated Indians, therefore, found expression in radicalism; thus placing politicians like Gokhale and his school at a serious disadvantage. The same position persisted at the time of the Morley-Minto reforms. Morley a liberal-radical and Minto a confirmed whig could not still think in terms of a representative government for India. Minto clearly observed that the system of government consonant with the traditions of India was autocratic and Britain must perpetuate that tradition so long as the uneducated masses remain incapable of understanding the term "representative government". Minto favoured the "constitutional autocracy" that would blend Indian and British traditions and stood for installing in the Councils of Government, representatives of all interests which are capable of being represented. The Morley-Minto Reforms reflected more of the spirit of Minto rather than that of Morley and the former unfortunately did not realise that a "constitutional autocracy" would not be able to withstand the march of events in India. All these developments as noted earlier tended to increase the difficulties of politicians of the Liberal School in India. They led to the emergence of nationalism, stirred by the spirit of religious revival, though so far as the right of popular representation was concerned, the extremists stood for it as much as the liberals.

The career of Gokhale is to be viewed in the overall background of these developments. As the demand for representation grew more and more intense, the various sectional interests in the Indian Society including the interests represented by Muslims started mobilising themselves. Different castes began to organize themselves and the Muslim League was also founded. It was in this context that Gokhale emphasised the need of a strong Government and braved hostile criticism by going out of the way and declaring : " why My Lord, even if I could defeat the government to day I would not do it. I would not do it for this reason; the prestige of the government is an important aspect at the present stage of the country and I would not lightly disturb it. "18 Annoyed on one occasion with constant defeats even of reasonable demands, he said to an English friend : " I wish I had been a constant relentless opponent of the Government. " The reply was " That is the role of ordinary party politicians at home, it won't suit you. " " A profound observation, " remarks Sastri, " Mr. Gokhale would hardly be recognizable in such a part. "19

Such annoyance was purely temporary. Gokhale's role was the role of a statesman who could advise the government rather than seeking to defeat it in a situation where nothing better existed to take its place. As he observed in his budget speech in 1908 : " The government will no doubt put down—indeed it must put down—all disorder with a firm hand. But what the situation really requires is not the policeman's baton or the soldier's bayonet, but statesman's insight, wisdom and courage. The people must be enabled to feel that their interests are, if not the only consideration, at any rate the main consideration, that weighs with Government, and this can only be brought about by a radical change in the spirit of administration.... Opportunities rush past (the government) which can never be recalled. "20

One reason responsible for the enormous attraction which Gokhale had for Gandhiji was perhaps the moral basis he generally gave to his demands. Both education and politics in which Gokhale actively participated are moral arts and he proved himself to be : " A great master of the possible, a constructive statesman of the first rank...an idealist, a foreseer, a prophet of a new era of inter-racial goodwill and co-operation. "21 ' Politics



must be spiritualized' is what he wrote in the Constitution of the Servants of India Society, and this was clearly in no obscure religious sense but essentially in an intellectual and moral sense in which he pursued it throughout his life. His attraction so far as Gandhiji was concerned was not one sided but was mutual. Gokhale wrote ; "In all my life I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Gandhi does—our great patriarch—Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and my late master—Mr. Ranade—men before whom not only are we ashamed of doing anything unworthy but in whose presence our very minds are afraid of thinking anything that is unworthy." <sup>22</sup>

This moral accent is witnessed in Gokhale's formulation or explanation of public demands; for example, the inaccessibility to higher branches of services in India was being criticised on the ground of costliness and on the ground of the drain of resources from India, but Gokhale argued before the Welby Commission : "The excessive costliness of the foreign agency is not, however, its only evil. There is a moral evil which, if anything, is even greater. A kind of dwarfing or stunting of the Indian race is going on under the present system. We must live all the days of our life in an atmosphere of inferiority, and the tallest of us must bend in order that the exigencies of the existing system may be satisfied." Similarly to cite another example, speaking against the introduction of sectional representation into municipal politics, Gokhale said : "We value local self-government not only for the fact that local work thereby is better done, but also for the fact it teaches men of different castes and creeds, who have long been kept more or less apart, to work together for a common purpose. There are, in all conscience, causes for differences enough among different sections in this land and I submit that the legislature, in the best interests of the country, should not, without the very strongest reasons, give any statutory recognition to these differences." <sup>24</sup>

The first decade of this century was marked by the growth of extremism both within the limits of the law and outside it. Public wrath was directed against the bureaucracy which was considered responsible for encouraging communal disharmony and riots that occurred in the different parts of the country in the previous decade. Distressed with this Gokhale wrote from

**London :** “ You must all realize that whatever the short-comings of the bureaucracy, and however intolerable at times the insolence of individual Englishmen, they alone stand today in the country for order; and without continued order, no real progress is possible for our people. It is not difficult at any time to create disorder in our country—it is our portion for centuries—but it is not so easy to substitute another form of order for that which has been evolved by Englishmen in the course of a century.”<sup>25</sup>

But earlier in 1903 when Government sought to introduce in the Imperial Council a new Official Secrets Act, Gokhale advised the government pointing out : “ I think that in a country like India, while naval and military secrets ought to be protected, if anything, with even greater strictness than in England, the very reverse is the case with matters concerning the civil administration.....The criticism of the Indian press is the only outward check operating continuously upon the conduct of a bureaucracy possessing absolute and uncontrolled power.”<sup>26</sup>

The check on powers of the Government in the last analysis is essentially a moral check. It depends for its effectiveness on the conscience of the rulers themselves. This was admirably put by Dadabhai Naoroji who said : “ The Englishman is incapable of despotism. He might quite often carry things with a high hand but the instinct and love of liberty, the constitutionalism which is born and ingrained in him, made him at the time of trial recoil from being stigmatized as a despot.”<sup>27</sup> Gandhiji reached a conclusion similar to Naoroji’s about the Englishman, who he believed “ was very mortally afraid of his own conscience and thus reckoned astutely upon the forbearance, the latent liberalism of the imperial democracy. His appeal was essentially to the British sense of the justice of the Indian cause. He calculated that a nation whose history was the story of the growth of liberal institutions would not remain insensitive to a vigorous but restrained appeal for freedom.”<sup>28</sup> A liberal tradition, however, could not be very successfully transplanted in India; the liberals, popularly known in political parlance as the “ moderates ” were soon overtaken by the nationalists. Though liberal politicians became ever fewer, liberalism as a creed appeared to have survived through its influence on the policies of labour and the socialists

as was witnessed in both the countries. Early twentieth century saw the eclipse of liberalism as a political force with the result that the demand for representative institutions became more of a political *argument* against the British or an arrangement for settling the political question than an expression of one's belief with the necessary integrity behind it.

This outcome of what Gokhale strove for in his days, I venture to submit, was not something altogether unexpected. In his famous Farewell Address to the Fergusson College when he decided to embark on the uncharted sea of public life, Gokhale had already observed : "Public life in this country has few rewards and many trials and discouragements. The prospect of work to be done is vast and no one can say what is on the other side—how all this work may end. But one thing is clear; those who feel as I do must devote themselves to the work in a spirit of hope and faith, and seek only the satisfaction which comes of all disinterested exertions."<sup>29</sup>

On another occasion after having argued in a very reasonable manner about the Education Bill that he introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council, Gokhale submitted, which his successor in the Servants of India Society often emphasised : "We must serve (the country) through our failures, more fortunate ones may serve through their successes, and Gokhale maintained, "that even apparently fruitless public work has its educative value and this in a country of low national feeling like India is of first importance,"<sup>30</sup> Sastri further queries elsewhere as to "whether Ramesh Chandra Dutt, another president of the Congress, was not quite right in describing certain failures as more glorious and profitable in the long run than certain triumphs."<sup>31</sup>

There is a lesson Sastri deduced from the career of Gokhale. 'If you make a compromise and surrender a part of your case, that forms a part of the arrangement. It is favourable to the other side. You have also acquiesced in it. The result will be that in the general public mind, this surrendered portion of your case would be regarded as good in itself. What you accepted as a necessary evil, as a working arrangement for practical reasons, would then be defended subsequently as in itself good, as something to which you have yourself given sanction and your autho-

city will be quoted in its favour from time to time..(Therefore) in politics (though) compromise is a good thing, but we must take exceedingly good care that evil does not put on the disguise and habiliments of good and get extended to all spheres ..That is a lesson rather than a warning which we have to draw from Gokhle's life. Compromise is essentially a matter of extreme difficulty, it can also be a matter of danger. ”<sup>32</sup>

But apart from this lesson, Sastri raises a doubt in another context as to whether after all, Gokhale's political work, superb as it was, was more valuable in the long run than the totality of his educational labours. “ Those that read the educational speeches alone will find that they show an uncommon grasp of the realities of the situation, of the fundamental needs of the country and of the basis, as it were, upon which alone could surely be built anything like the welfare of the nation. ” <sup>33</sup> Gokhale devoted a good part of his life to this field and had a deep and active interest in it all through his life. Here also, he argued the case for universal elementary education again with the moral accent so common in all his arguments : “ Even if the advantages of an elementary education be put no higher than a capacity to read and write, its universal diffusion is a matter of prime importance, for literacy is better than illiteracy any day, and the banishment of a whole people's illiteracy is no mean achievement. But elementary education for the mass of the people means something more than a mere capacity to read and write. It means for them a keener enjoyment of life, a more refined standard of living. It means the greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual. It means a higher level of intelligence for the whole community generally. He who reckons these advantages lightly may as well doubt the value of light or fresh air in the economy of human health. ”<sup>34</sup>

Gokhale was the first to press on the legislative level the demand for free and compulsory elementary education for four years throughout the country. He insisted that the State should accept the responsibility in this respect and prepared a well-thought-out scheme. He acknowledged the enormous expansion of popular education to be as important as the application of science to industrial processes, the annihilation of distance and the rise of democracy. The humanitarian movement which led

to social reforms and liberation of slaves, the democratic movement which admitted large masses of men to a participation in government and the industrial movement which emphasised elementary education as the immediate requirement for increase in efficiency have merged together, as he argued, to underline this demand/

It is needless to go into the details of his arguments; they represented the most advanced and sagacious reasoning in his times. There were built-in safeguards against arbitrary application of compulsion and he made a realistic concession by providing that compulsion should not apply in respect of female education.

His exclusion of female education from the scope of his bill did not in any sense even remotely imply Gokhale's indifference to the education of women. Elsewhere as early as 1897, Gokhale had clearly stated that a wide diffusion of female education in all its branches is a factor of the highest value to the true well-being of every nation. In India it assumes additional importance by reason of the bondage of caste and custom. The different religious beliefs have a far stronger hold on the minds of women than of men and all who know anything of Indian women know that the turn of their mind is intensely religious – a result due in no small measure to their being shut out from all other intellectual pursuits. And this combination of “enforced ignorance and overdone religion” not only makes them willing victims of customs unjust and hurtful in the highest degree, but it also makes them the most formidable, because the most effective opponents of all attempts at change or innovation. Gokhale further pointed out that this question is intimately connected with the other necessary reform, namely, raising the marriageable age of Hindu girls, for, one depends on the other, and that the two together constituted, as Justice Telang said “a perfect vicious circle”. There was also the problem of finding good female teachers adequate in numbers to warrant the expansion.

Besides education of women Gokhale also strongly advocated the need for education of the depressed classes. He moved a resolution at the Dharwar Social Conference in 1903 which stated among other things that “every well-wisher of the country should

consider it his duty to do all he can to raise their moral and social condition by trying to rouse self-respect in these classes and placing facilities for education and employment within their reach."<sup>35</sup> In moving the resolution Gokhale said: "I am not given to the use of unnecessarily strong language and yet I must say that...the condition of the low castes – it is painful to call them low castes – is not only unsatisfactory as this resolution says – it is so deeply deplorable that it constitutes a grave blot on our social arrangement; and further, the attitude of our educated men towards this class is profoundly painful and humiliating."<sup>36</sup> He also placed his finger on the real evil when he said: "So complete is now the mental degradation of these people that they themselves see nothing in such treatment to resent, that they acquiesce in it as though nothing better than that was their due."<sup>37</sup> Gokhale realized that the work of improving the conditions of the depressed classes was bound to be slow but maintained that "it can only be achieved by strenuous exertions for giving them education and finding for them honourable employment in life. And, gentlemen, it seems to me, that in the present state of India, no work can be holier than this. I think if there is one question of social reform more than another that should stir the enthusiasm of our educated young men and inspire them with an unselfish purpose, it is this question of the degraded condition of our low castes."<sup>38</sup>

Gokhale also tackled in an address to 'the Students' Brotherhood' in Bombay in 1909, the problem of students and politics: "It is not the fact of their movement, so much as the direction in which a large proportion of them (students) have been moving that calls for our most earnest attention and our closest inquiry." Gokhale felt that "interest in politics is the same as the interest in the country. Responsibility alone will steady our judgement and control the restlessness of our patriotism"<sup>39</sup>, and he desired that for that purpose the political judgement of our younger people has to be trained. While he fully supported such training through study of politics, he clearly drew a line so far as active participation was concerned. "Political agitation", he said, "directed towards the people seeks to educate and organize public feeling and public opinion in political matters. Directed towards the Government, it seeks to bring the pressure

of that feeling of opinion to bear upon the authorities for the purpose of securing the changes that are desired. In either case it is a most responsible action, and students with their immature judgement are not qualified to take part in it."<sup>40</sup>

Gokhale also had a highly significant contribution to make in the field of higher education. He had in fact served for twenty years in one of the leading colleges of the country founded with missionary zeal and he was attracted to it by men like Tilak and Agarkar. Though his differences with Tilak developed soon and he moved to a position closer to Agarkar and also took over the Secretaryship of the Sarvajanik Sabha and thus came in more active contact with his master—Ranade. Gokhale's interest in higher education even after his leaving the college on completion of his term of service as a life member, did not cease. Therefore when the Bill to amend the law relating to the Universities in British India was moved in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1903, Gokhale opposed it strongly as a measure calculated to increase enormously the control of Government over university matters and to make the university virtually a department of the State. It was the fear of the discontented educated men that inspired the legislation. Gokhale argued "it is in the power of Government to convert these cold critics into active allies by steadily associating them more and more with the administration of the country and by making its tone more friendly to them and tendencies more liberal."<sup>41</sup> He was keen to point out that in the peculiar conditions of India, he would not ignore the association of the public with the universities. Government, the teachers and the public have all to be involved in its administration. Summing up the requirements that a college was expected to satisfy while seeking affiliation, Gokhale said: "It seems to me that the first step in the work of real reform is for Government to make its own colleges model colleges."<sup>42</sup> He further went on to add "Let not Government imagine that unless the education imparted by colleges is the highest which is at the present day possible, it is likely to prove useless and even pernicious; and secondly, let not the achievements of our graduates in the intellectual field be accepted as the sole, or even the most important, test to determine the utility of this education. I think my Lord—and this is

a matter of deep conviction with me—that in the present circumstances of India, all Western education is valuable and useful. If it is the highest that under the circumstances is possible, so much the better. But even if it is not the highest, it must not on that account be rejected”, and in saying this the very soul of Gokhale as a liberal found an expression. He added, “I believe the life of a people whether in the political or social or industrial or intellectual field—is an organic whole, and no striking progress in any particular field is to be looked for unless there be room for the free movement of the energies of the people in all fields. To my mind the greatest work of Western education in the present state of India is not so much the encouragement of learning as the liberation of the Indian mind from the thralldom of old-world ideas, and the assimilation of all that is highest and best in the life and thought and character of the West. For this purpose not only the highest but all Western education is useful.”<sup>43</sup>

Gokhale was very soon to find that the different anomalies in the Bill that he had pointed out proved to be true. Though he attempted to get the University of Bombay exempted from the operation of the Bill he could not succeed; nor could he succeed in stopping the measure, and Government very soon had to bring the Universities Validation Act to legalise several notifications issued by Chancellors which were found illegal or *ultra vires*. Gokhale pointed out that the approach was hardly fair particularly when in some matters even suits were pending before the courts and in saying so pointed out: “My Lord, I really think that it is the duty of the Government, not less than that of the private individuals to face whatever inconvenience has to be faced in obeying the law.”<sup>44</sup> But he was naturally over-ruled; then he expressed the fear, “that a few more measures like the present and the reign of law will have to be abandoned and another substituted for it, namely, reign of Executive irresponsibility and validating legislation.”<sup>45</sup> He argued that the legislature and the judiciary have to be respected more particularly because public opinion in this country is very feeble and expressed the hope that in the fullness of time our position will be much more satisfactory than at present.

↑To sum up or even to bring out the significance of Gokhale’s



many-sided contribution in the course of a single or even a few lectures is an impossible task; and I dare not claim to have done anything more than a cursory indication of some of its aspects. The economic aspects of his teachings, his support of the co-operative movement, his role as a social reformer have, for example, been completely left out. There is no doubt that his failures, if any, proved to be glorious in so far as the country, on gaining independence accepted the democratic pattern for its polity with the freedom and responsibility that it signifies; and is still grappling with the problem of universal elementary education. The basic assumptions of the former and the supreme significance of the latter have remained unquestioned. The need to preserve order is now generally recognized. The desirability of ensuring that "the advantages which are now enjoyed by a privileged few should be spread among the unprivileged many"<sup>46</sup> is also almost universally accepted and we are engaged in efforts to accomplish it. Let us now with a full sense of discipline and responsibility pursue the goal as he formulated it when he remarked: "the life of a people, whether in the political or social or industrial or intellectual field is an organic whole and no striking progress in any particular field is to be looked for unless there be room for the free movement of the energies of the people in all fields."<sup>47</sup> Let us through appropriate education try "to liberate the Indian mind" which alone will enable it "to assimilate the highest and the best" from everywhere without losing its identity.

May I thank you all for the patient hearing you have given me this evening.

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