

1. 5th Anniversary Day Inaugural Address

(12th June 1910)

2. Instructions about his private affairs  
(January 1915).

by Gopal Krishna Gokhale

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Dhananjayarao Gadgil Library



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5th Anniversary Day

(12th June 1910)

The First Member's Inaugural Address,

A Summary

Five years ago, three of you and myself met one evening on the hill behind the grounds of the Fergusson College, to launch this society into existence. Looking at this time on what progress we have made, one cannot help feeling deep emotion and humble thankfulness to God, the giver of all blessings, who has permitted us to do the first part of our journey safe. When this Society was started, it was a novel experiment; in the country there was no institution conducted on the lines which we have adopted. At such a time, the idea of four persons without resources, going to launch an institution costing a good deal of money was certainly a novel one, and attended by an uncertain future. The three members who chose on that day to place themselves under my guidance and dedicate their lives to the service of their country are men who could have done very well in other walks of life. One of them was a professor in the Fergusson College; Another was tutor to a prince and the third was the Principal of a well-conducted High school in Bombay. These three joined the Society out of their own free will, they sacrificed future prospects in order to be able to serve the country better and place themselves under my guidance. For me, to devote myself to this Institution was much easier than for them. Having been for 20 years a Professor in the Fergusson College, and having had varied experience of public life

during the same period, I feel I am one of those whose work lies more behind than before. They joined me; the step was taken at a time when the state of public feeling was beginning to be disturbed; the Partition of Bengal had been the cause of unparalleled agitation in the country; young men felt the need of the spirit of renunciation in life. Our resources were very small at that time, though we undertook to provide for the families of Members. But now we feel a Higher blessing has always rested upon this Institution than I thought before. In a short time we purchased these grounds; later on buildings grew as all things grow; additions have been made one after another and now you find it all as it is. My own anxiety was that the Members under Training should not be touched by the responsibilities and the consequent anxieties of financial affairs in connection with the Society. This has been possible.

When starting this Institution we started with two things:-

- (a) Faith in the work undertaken and on the lines to be followed;
- (b) A resolute spirit which, even under unfavourable circumstances was not to be easily set back.

Equipped with these things we felt we were bound to achieve success.

This morning three of you have been made Ordinary Members. Mr. Shastriar's illness, to our great sorrow, has prevented him from being present here on this occasion; but I am glad to know that he is fast improving. The training he has received is considered to be sufficient in his case, and he too has been made an

Ordinary Member. I have sent him a message to-day bearing this announcement and I wish him a speedy recovery.

During these five years, the greater part of our energy was devoted to the work of organisation. The building and the Library had to be developed. Confidence had to be established among friends. During this interval, it has been three times necessary for me to go to England in connection with the Reform Scheme. This added to four months' stay in Calcutta has accentuated the fact of my absence from this place. Though, therefore, we have not been able to do much here, we have reason not to be dissatisfied, for we could have done worse. We should be thankful for what we have been able to do.

A gentleman from S. M. Country in high official position will soon join us and all added, we will be 25 - a fairly good number. That these have undertaken to dedicate their lives to the service of the country is a matter of satisfaction. Under the rules of our Constitution, for 5 years are Members are under training and upto now we were able to say to our friends that our Members are being trained. All along, friends of this Institution have been giving us most generous support; now it becomes necessary to show what work we are doing; we have had losses and disappointments; one member has been allowed to secede on account of continued ill health and inability to cope with our discipline and one Permanent Assistant has also been removed from the list. These severances have been painful at the time; but in the life of institutions such things are bound to happen. The question is what we are going to do henceforth.

In the first place, I must dissipate any misapprehensions in the minds of our Members with regard to the

object in training Servants of India. We train men who would go about, rouse people to a sense of duty, raise local money and energy, gradually building up small institutions and develop the public life of this country. Women's education, elevation of the depressed classes and other branches of Social service are not objects without the scope of our work; but our energy would be too small to be directed largely towards these objects.

We have by our earnestness and zeal to enthuse people and train them to a higher life; we have to rouse a high sense of duty among our countrymen; the people have to be trained to a higher type; may they do the work which is theirs; it is ours too but we are only instruments in enabling them to do their work. We are expected to understand the country's interests clearly, stimulate enthusiasm among the people, rouse their patriotism and ardour in such a manner as would be conducive to the well-ordered progress of our country. We are missionaries; our mission is to preach the gospel of patriotism and our Creed is LOVE OF COUNTRY.

Naturally this Institution has two sides:- (a) TRAINING side and (b) Working Side. The first is represented by the Central Institute, where we acquire knowledge, train and discipline our spirit. The second-the actual work which the Society would represent is work done by Members in the Country.

In October 1910 two Branches are going to be opened; Mr. Shastriar will be the head of the Madras Branch; Mr. Deodhar will be the Head of the Bombay Branch; Mr. Dravid will be in charge of the studies here. Two years hence I hope to open the Upper India Branch. A curious similarity strikes me in the development of our

Institution with the first period of the British people in India. They started with three Presidencies; with the Upper India Branch we start with three Branches. The session will be henceforward:-

(A) Minor Session - from the 5th of April to the 10th of June;

(B) Major session - from the 20th of June to the 30th of September.

June 10th to the 20th will be the Society's week of Anniversary when all will meet here.

Once it was contemplated to send young men touring in different provinces every year. But, looking to the developments of events in the country during these three years and the danger involved in sending about young men in whom the sense of responsibility has not adequately developed, we have decided that for 3 years they will be under Provincial Heads and do work in the Provinces under their control.

I earnestly desire, your attention should be firmly fixed on the root principles of the Society; you should have an eye on the dangers and the pitfalls that lie ahead. Conditions have now greatly altered than when the Society was started and the needs of the Institution are becoming greater day by day. The comparative failure of our public life is due to three causes:-

(1) Our public life was not sufficiently self-less. In other countries where conditions are normal, it does not matter so much; but in this country it is uphill work; the spirit of renunciation is needed; our public life must be spiritualised; we should take to public life out of pure devotion to the country. Considering the need of the times absolute renunciation practised by our religious orders is not what is required; but such of it as is possible and compatible with the necessities of the day.

(2) Those who took to public life were not equipped and qualified properly. A careful study of public questions is essential.

(3) View of Members who take to public life should be properly balanced; a comprehensive and intelligent understanding of all questions is necessary; and it should be in harmony with what we call the liberal forces or tendencies of the age.

This Society has not been started merely to go about and do work. Our nation should be built up not in aggressive spirit. So far as possible our work has to be inoffensive, persuasive, enlightening and elevating. We must achieve equality with other nations in order that we may harmoniously proceed into the broad stream of the world. For this, work must not be sectional. We must all rise to the height of which we are capable. I trust that this Society on the whole does represent and will represent these broad principles; these three things lie at the root of our aspirations.

In strict theory no nations has a right to exercise dominion over another. But there are circumstances when foreign rule is needful and is a potent instrument of order and progress. We are divided and subdivided; we are far behind in many respects. British rule for us is a necessity; towards that rule our attitude is one of loyal acceptance. British rule is not one merely tolerated; but actively supported for the peaceful revolution of our race. Under that rule there is any amount of room for our development. To strive for equality with the Englishman is not only our right but it is our duty also. Rightful agitation is responsibility, not occupation; those who fail to agitate fail to discharge their responsibilities. This equality can be obtained only by undertaking and discharging these responsibilities. We must begin by building up small institutions.

Difficulties Ahead

You will excuse me for some personal reference. Upto now the work of the Society was judged by what I personally did. So long members stood sheltered behind the training period and I stood exposed to the public gaze. This period is happily over. I assure you, I have waited and waited for this day. To-day I have the Council to share my responsibilities and I feel happier for it. I have had my own mistakes; but I have had my advantages too. I know where dangers lie and pitfalls stare in our face by reason of the 20 years of my public life. You, Ordinary Members, have not these advantages. During the five years you have spent here your vision has undoubtedly broadened, sense of proportion properly balanced and you may now be trusted to take a view of things at once correct, patriotic and wise. Now-a-days you see institution after institution coming under the ban of Government. You have to be very careful. Realise the fact that one person putting himself in a strange position drags the Society with him. The future is uncertain. The English people in this country number a lac and fifty thousand people; it is, therefore, natural that, when they see disloyal unrest, they should be restless; when the monster of suspicion is raised, evil is bound to follow. An extremely delicate responsibility rests upon you. Your life is a life of consecration, dedicated with all the passion and fervour of which you are capable; do your work in a way that no danger falls upon the Society. Each one of you carries not only the interests but also the honour and future well-being of the Society in his charge.



The rest of the prospects are full of joy. There is any amount of work to be done in this country; work, work, is the cry all around. If you devote the best that is in you, to the service of the country in a perfectly selfless spirit, your duty will have been done. Yours will be one of the few Institutions working for the country. There is a future of great usefulness before you. Among joys, no joy is greater than what comes from the consciousness of consecrated life.

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