

# GOKHALE

My Political Guru

By: M. K. Gandhi

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Ahmedabad 380 014 (INDIA)

Phone: 079 - 27540635

E-mail: [jitnavjivan10@gmail.com](mailto:jitnavjivan10@gmail.com)

Website: [www.navajivantrust.org](http://www.navajivantrust.org)

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

About five years ago the Navajivan collected and published in book form nearly all the Gujarati writings of Gandhiji about Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Ever since that booklet was published there has been a persistent demand for it in English. Gokhale was an all India figure. Many in India and abroad came in close contact with him and had come to love him and his work. His life and work have been an inspiration to many a young man and woman of the generation after him.

Gandhiji saw in Gokhale the ideal servant of India, so much so that he accepted him as his master and endeavoured to set the pattern of his life and work in the political field in India by what he had seen of Gokhale's life and mission.

What specially attracted Gandhiji to his master was the latter's insistence on doing political work in the spirit of religion. Gokhale believed and endeavoured to act according to his belief that politics could be a means of service to the people of India only if it was spiritualized, i.e. if political workers took to their work in the spirit of seekers of Truth. This was as good as Gandhiji's insistence on the purity of means for the achievement of even political ends. Thus both master and disciple were attracted to each other by their common faith.

This lesson from the lives of both these great servants of India is invaluable to the future generations of young men and women who aspire to serve their country. While writing about Gokhale Gandhiji, therefore, brought out this lesson for his readers. The Navajivan had felt, as also many others, that Gandhiji's writings about Gokhale, which deal in a way also with his own ideal of service, should be available to all earnest minds in India and abroad. It has therefore collected everything written or spoken by him with reference to Gokhale and is publishing it here in English. Accordingly this book contains in it some material not included in the Gujarati edition.

This book will be published on the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month, the anniversary of Gokhale's death. We feel sure that these writings which reflect, the minds of two of the greatest sons of India, who have in our own clay influenced the regeneration of our country, will prove an inspiration to all those who want to see India progress further.

Ahmedabad, 1-2-'55

## HOMAGE TO GOKHALE

This book\* is being published on the thirty-fifth anniversary of Gopal Krishna Gokhale of sacred memory. It is a collection of Gandhiji's writings about that consecrated soul. Gandhiji had accepted him as his master, had followed him in the spirit of a devoted disciple and had been in contact with him for twenty years. What was his life? How did his character manifest itself in his actions? What were his aspirations? What was his message? What was the heritage he left for his people? Only a close disciple of Gokhale who had come into intimate touch with him like Gandhiji or Thakkarbapa could give us authoritative answers to these questions.

I did not have the good fortune to know Gokhale myself. I do not remember to have seen or heard him on more than two occasions: once at the Surat session of the Indian National Congress in 1907, and next about the same period (1908-9) when he was presiding over a students' meeting held at the Wilson College, Bombay. But my ears even today carry the impression that his voice had the sweetness of a silver bell. A few days before the meeting at which he presided I had heard one of my teachers, Professor Robertson, say that he had never heard an Indian speak English so grammatically correct and so pure in pronunciation as Gokhale. So when I heard him speak, I was probably more interested in the manner of his speech than in its matter.

But an incident in connection with this meeting is worth recording. The meeting was organized by the Students' Union. This Union was an association of students of all the colleges of Bombay. Shri Manu Subedar was to speak on the subject: Uplift of the Suppressed Classes, and Gokhale had consented to preside over the meeting. Expecting that the meeting would be large, permission was sought from the Principal, Dr. Machichan, to hold it in the Wilson College. I was not an office-bearer of the Union, but its Secretary was a friend of mine and I was assisting him. On the day of the meeting or perhaps the day before, the Principal created a serious difficulty. He called the Secretary and said to him, 'Mr Gokhale is after all a political worker. I cannot have him dealing with

political subjects here. So please go and get his consent that he will not touch on political topics in his speech.' My friend objected, 'The subject proposed is one of social reform. It has no connection with politics; where then is the need for such a condition?' But the Principal persisted, 'These politicians are not to be trusted. They have a knack of bringing all sorts of topics into their speeches. So please go and get his consent 011 the lines I have indicated or my hall will not be available to you.' This was disturbing indeed! My friend felt that this condition was intended to insult Gokhale. How could one dare to make such an absurd proposition to him? But what was one to do? There was hardly any time to arrange the meeting elsewhere. And having the meeting elsewhere after what the Principal had demanded would have meant that the Union changed the venue of the meeting only because it was intent on taking part in politics. This would have afforded an easy opportunity to the college authorities who were bent upon breaking the Union.

My friend was embarrassed. With trembling fingers he wrote a note to Gokhale. Gokhale sent a reply. The suggestion had offended him and he declined to preside over the meeting.

The embarrassment of my friend increased. Let me describe the developments thereafter in his own words:

"I had not the courage to go and tell Dr. Machichan that the condition he was imposing was unfair. I went and saw Mr Gokhale instead. I hesitated to tell him what the Principal wanted but ultimately I did. His first reaction was one of indignation and he said to me, ' This is an insult to me. I cannot consent to preside on such terms.' I was on the verge of crying. I said, ' Everyone will come and abuse me saying that I had cheated them by giving out a false report that you were going to preside over the meeting.' Mr Gokhale took pity on me. He reassured me by saying, ' Please do not be hurt at what I say. But our people have absolutely no sense of moral indignation. I feel it is my duty not to submit to this.' He then narrated some incidents to show how our people meekly suffer.'11 treatment and insults at the hands of superiors without a word of protest. He ended up, however, by saying, ' I shall come, but on one condition, that you promise to convey to Dr. Machichan as from me that he had no right to order what I was to say or not to say in my

speech.' I gave the promise. I was agitated and nervous before I conveyed Gokhaleji's message to Dr. Machichan. But I did convey it. Dr. Machichan saw wisdom in giving way. So at last Mr Gokhale came to the meeting and delivered his thought- provoking speech as president."

This is all the one-sided personal contact I had with Gokhale.

The writings in this booklet show that Gandhiji perceived a reflection of his own life of service in the mirror of Gokhale's life. I shall make an attempt here to give briefly the lessons and the ideals he evidently derived from Gokhale's life:

"Gokhale pledged himself to the task of imparting education for twenty years. Education becomes fruitful only when men of such spirit devote their lives to the cause of education."

"It is very essential that at least a few young men who would give their lives to politics come forward from every province in India."

"His life is very simple; indeed, it may be called severely austere.... He has devoted his life to poverty and knowledge like a true Brahmana. Better examples of the ancient Indian way of plain living, high thinking and high doing can hardly be found."

"He is carrying the burden of the Empire on his shoulders, alone, without aid, without servants who would carry out his commands, and without honours or titles."

"He is an example of meekness and goodness for Indians who have received Western education."

"Whatever he did, enjoyed, sacrificed; whatever charity he practised; whatever austerities he underwent; all this he surrendered at the feet of Mother India."

"I shall have lived to some purpose only if I see Hari (the Lord) face to face as I laugh and play. O Uddhava, Krishna, Muktananda's Master, is the Lord of our life. – This was Gokhale's attitude of surrender and devotion to India."

"The duty of those who would serve India is to transform the political life of India into a life of religion."

"My soul testifies that whatever he did and on whatever occasion was done in the spirit of religion."

"The man who leads the life of goodness, whose instincts are good, who is full of gentleness, who is the embodiment of truth and who has fully shed his ego, is a *dharmatma*, a man of religion whether he knows it or not."

"A *sannyasi* accused Gokhale that he was not sufficiently proud of Hinduism. Mahatma Gokhale raised his brows and in a voice that would have pierced the heart replied: If Hinduism consists in doing as you say (boasting that the Hindus are superior and in looking down on the Mussalmans) then take it that I am not a Hindu. Please go and leave me alone."

"The mission (of service of my country) which I have undertaken under nobody's orders, I cannot give up at anybody's bidding. It would be well if I can keep popular opinion on my side while performing my duty; but it would matter little even if I am not so fortunate as to have the people's support."

"All of us cannot enter the Central Legislative Council; cannot be on the Public Service Commission; cannot attain Gokhale's learning. Nor is it our experience that all those (who have been able to do these things) are servants of the country. But all of us can surely cultivate the virtues of fearlessness, truthfulness, courage, meekness, fairness, straightforwardness, firmness and such like and devote them to the service of the country. This is the spirit of religion. This is the meaning of the great saying, 'let us spiritualize politics'... Only thus shall we share the heritage of Mahatma Gokhale."

"It is within the reach of everyone of us to identify ourselves with the work in hand."

"I do not much care for my personal honour. But I value the honour of my country as I value my own life."

"His health was delicate throughout the period (he was in South Africa). Great care was needed. But in spite of his poor health he would work late into the night, up to twelve o'clock, and be up again by four or even two o'clock and ask for his papers."

"He burned with indignation as if the burden imposed on his poor brothers (in South Africa) was imposed on himself. He tried all the power of his soul before General Botha. His pleading had such a powerful effect on both

Generals Botha and Smuts that they relented and promised him that...the levy would be abolished."

" The problem of the uplift of the untouchable classes disturbed Gokhale's peace of mind everyday.....If someone criticized him for it, he would say to him plainly that we were not polluted by touching our brother, the untouchable, but by falling a prey to the wicked feeling that we should not touch him."

Gandhiji called Gokhale a Mahatma in all these quotations. Gandhiji himself had till then not become a Mahatma and Gokhale was known as the Honourable Mr Gokhale to the Indian public. But Gandhiji thought of him as an ideal Mahatma in his own heart, gave him a place therein, aspired to the realization of that ideal in himself, and in his own life manifested on a larger scale whatever virtues he perceived in his master. The world saw it, and of its own accord gladly bestowed on Gandhiji the status and title it had not given to his master. The child or the disciple who manifests the virtues of the parents or the master on such a scale that the world forgets the latter is indeed their true heir. Gokhale left behind him such disciples as Gandhi, Shastri, Devdhar, Thakkar and others who developed his virtues in their own lives and who raised many new institutions for service out of the one he had founded.

Rarely does a disciple find a true master and equally rarely does a master find a true disciple. But rarer still is the phenomenon of both finding each other which creates a sense of fulfillment in both and conduces to the welfare of the world.

आश्रय्यो वक्ता कुशलस्य लब्धाऽऽश्रय्यो ज्ञाता  
कुशलानुशिष्टः | त्वादृङ्मो भूयान्नचिकेतः प्रष्टा ॥

(Wonderful is the teacher, and equally clever the pupil. Wonderful indeed is he who comprehends it when taught by an able perceptor. O Nachiketas, may we often get enquirers like thee!) Such was the joy of fulfilment experienced by Yama when he found a disciple after his own heart in Nachiketa.

Even so, blessed was Gokhale who found such disciples as Gandhi, Shastri, Thakkar and others and blessed also were the disciples who adorned their master's discipleship and fulfilled as well as extended his mission!

Bombay, 5-2-50 '

K. G. Mashruwala

## I. INTRODUCTORY

### A LIFE SKETCH OF GOKHALE

#### *Introducing Gokhale to South Africa*

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born in a poor Maharashtrian Brahmin family at Kolhapur in the year 1866. He studied at college in the same place and passed the F.A. Examination. Thereafter he joined the Elphinstone College, Bombay, and in the year 1884 passed his B.A. Examination from there.

After he had equipped himself with this much education he had to work for a livelihood, and took to the teacher's profession by choice. The Deccan Education Society was doing very good work at that time, and Gokhale joined it. The Society appointed him as Professor of History and Political Economy in the Fergusson College conducted by them at Poona, on a monthly salary of Rs 70. Gokhale took a pledge to devote twenty years to the work of imparting education. He fulfilled the pledge. Education becomes fruitful and the character of the pupil is well formed only when men of this spirit devote their lives to education. Gokhale spent twenty years in the Fergusson College, and though he was not seen much at public meetings or read about in the newspapers many young men received inspiration from him during those years.

About the time he joined College he came in close contact with the late Mahadev Govind Ranade who was mainly responsible in shaping his character. For more than twelve years he studied political economy under the able guidance of Justice Ranade. As a result Gokhale's opinions on economic questions are still regarded in India as authoritative. Gokhale held Ranade in great reverence and considered him his master. At Ranade's behest he accepted the editorship of the *Quarterly Journal* conducted and published by the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. Soon after, he was appointed honorary secretary to the Deccan Sabha. He was also editor of the Anglo-Marathi weekly the *Sudharaka*, of Poona. He held office as Secretary of the Bombay Provincial Conference for four years. He was also appointed Secretary of the Congress session held at

Poona in the year 1895. His eagerness to serve and his understanding of public work were so well recognized by this time that he began to be known as the ' Rising Star of the Deccan In recognition of his career of study and devotion, the public of Bombay elected him along with Mr Vachcha to give evidence before the Welby Commission appointed to examine the question of public expenditure in India. It is on record that the evidence he gave before the Commission proved valuable.

During his stay in England he delivered some speeches on affairs in India. He published strong criticisms of the way the Government of Bombay carried on the administration of the Presidency at the time of the plague and of the terrorizing acts of the soldiers employed for the purpose. He retired from his duties at the Fergusson College in the year 1902 on a pension of Rs 25. About this time he was elected a member of the Central Legislative Council as representative of the Bombay Presidency in the place of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta who had retired on account of ill health. He performed his duties as representative so well that he has been repeatedly elected for the place till this day.

Since his election to the Central Legislative a new chapter commenced in Gokhale's public career. It has proved a great asset in his service to the cause of the country. The very first speech on the Budget he delivered in the Council was received with high applause. Everyone concerned is anxious to hear his budget speeches since then. Year in and year out he has demonstrated how the balance shown in the budget is misleading and how it fails to prove that the people are prospering. Every year he has insisted on the employment of Indians in Government Departments in larger proportion. Every year he has pleaded for reduction in military expenditure. Every year he has demanded that the Salt Tax be abolished, that irrigation be extended and that facilities for technical education be provided more widely. Every year he has clamoured for free and compulsory primary education and for other such reforms. It was his effective championing that was mainly responsible for the reduction in the Salt Tax.

Some of the most highly placed officials in India claim friendship with him; and even the arrogant Lord Curzon considered him an equal in battle. He said that it was a pleasure to exchange arguments with Gokhale in debate. He is also said to have remarked that Gokhale was one of the strongest men he had come across. Though Gokhale was an unrelenting opponent of Lord Curzon in the Council the latter bestowed the title of C. I. E. on him in appreciation of his great abilities and lofty character, and wrote a personal letter congratulating him on obtaining the title.

Gokhale joined the Congress Movement right from the beginning. He attended almost all the Congress sessions and delivered speeches at them. His most famous speech was the one he delivered at the Congress session held in Bombay in the year 1904 on the balance in the Indian Treasury. According to Sir Henry Cotton that speech stood comparison with the best speeches heard in the British House of Commons. The public of the Bombay Presidency elected him as a member of the delegation sent out to England to inform the British public about the state of political affairs in India. He performed his duties in this capacity, very satisfactorily. During fifty days he delivered at least fortyfive speeches. To many capable and well known Englishmen his tact and ability in presenting Indian public opinion on the British Administration in India came as a surprise. While still in England he was elected as president of the Congress session to be held in the holy city of Banaras. His presidential address at the Banaras Congress was remarkable for its great clarity and ability of presentation. Soon after the Banaras Congress he returned to England and had many consultations with Lord Morley. In the year 1908 he again went to England in connection with the new scheme of Reforms prepared by Lord Minto.

Gokhale repeatedly emphasized the urgent need of at least a few young men coming forward to devote their lives to political work in every province in India. In fact he long aspired to creating a way of life for political *sannyasis* whose single aim would be service of the country. This aspiration has taken concrete shape recently in the ' Servants of India Society which he has founded. The aims of the Society are indeed noble and let us all wish that it will

cultivate the strength and capacity to render greater and greater service to this country in the future.

A word or two about Gokhale's way of speaking to audiences. He is not an orator in the ordinary sense of the word. He does not seek to rouse the feelings of his audience. His only aim is to convince his hearers of what he has to say. His delivery is fast. His ammunition is his wealth of facts and figures; his arguments persuasive and full of enthusiasm, and his style simple but chaste and firm.

Gokhale is an enthusiastic reformer. He conducts a daily newspaper known as the *Jnanaprakasha* published from Poona and propagates his ideas of political and social reform by that means. His way of life is very simple; indeed it may be called austere. In fact we may say with the famous journalist Mr Nevinson that he has devoted his whole life to poverty and cultivation of knowledge. A better example of the ancient Hindu ideal of plain living, high thinking and high doing can hardly be found today.

The Education Bill and the effort at abolishing slavery of the indentured Indian labourers are among the last of Gokhale's great acts in the field of public service. The Education Bill met the same fate in the Viceroy's Council as meets other popular bills, but he has received such unanimous support from all parts and communities of India that the Government would hardly be able to resist their united strength for long.

We are deeply indebted to Gokhale for the abolition of indentured labour from this country. The speech he delivered on the subject before the Indian Legislative Council shows clearly how deeply he had studied the question in spite of his multifarious engagements and indifferent health.

Besides devoting his time and attention to the question of indentured labour he has been keeping a watchful eye on our various difficulties (in South Africa) and has rendered valuable help to our Satyagraha campaign. His sympathy for us has now reached such a stage that he has resolved to visit this country (South Africa) in person and have first-hand knowledge of our condition here.

It may not be possible for all of us to attain the wisdom and brilliance which Gokhale, who has given his whole life to the service of the motherland, possessed ; but surely, it is possible for all of us to identify ourselves fully with the work we undertake as he did with his. Gokhale has completely devoted himself to the cause which he has made his own. And that is the reason why the whole country and its friends honour him. Let us all wish after we have read this small sketch that he live long and that the impression he has left on our hearts be never dimmed!

From the *Indian Opinion*, 1912

## II. WITH GOKHALE

### 1. My First Meeting with Gokhale

Sir Pherozeshah had made my way easy. So from Bombay I went to Poona. Here there were two parties. I wanted the help of people of every shade of opinion. First I met Lokamanya Tilak. He said:

'You are quite right in seeking the help of all parties. There can be no difference of opinion on the South African question. But you must have a non-party man for your president. Meet Professor Bhandarkar. He has been taking no part of late in any public movement. But this question might possibly draw him out. See him and let me know what he says. I want to help you to the fullest extent. Of course you will meet me whenever you like. I am at your disposal.'

This was my first meeting with the Lokamanya. It revealed to me the secret of his unique popularity.

Next I met Gokhale. I found him on the Fergusson College grounds. He gave me an affectionate welcome, and his manner immediately won my heart. With him too this was my first meeting, and let it seemed as though we were renewing an old friendship. Sir Pherozeshah had seemed to me like the Himalaya, the Lokamanjra like the ocean. But Gokhale was as the Ganges. One could have a refreshing bath in the holy river. The Plimalaya was unscaleable, and one could not easily launch forth on the sea, but the Ganges invited one to its bosom. It was a joy to be on it with a boat and an oar. Gokhale closely examined me, as a schoolmaster would examine a candidate seeking admission to a school. He told me whom to approach and how to approach them. He asked to have a look at my speech. He showed me over the college, assured me that he was always at my disposal, asked me to let him know the result of the interview with Dr. Bhandarkar, and sent me away exultantly happy. In the sphere of politics the place that Gokhale occupied in my heart during his lifetime and occupies even now was and is absolutely unique.

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## 2. A Month with Gokhale in Calcutta

From the very first day of my stay with him, Gokhale made me feel completely at home. He treated me as though I were his younger brother, he acquainted himself with all my requirements and arranged to see that I got all I needed. Fortunately my wants were few, and I had cultivated the habit of self-help. I needed very little personal attendance. Pie was deeply impressed with my habit of fending for myself, my personal cleanliness, perseverance and regularity, and would often overwhelm me with praise.

He seemed to keep nothing private from me. He would introduce me to all the important people that called on him. Of these the one who stands foremost in my memory is Dr. (now Sir) P. C. Ray. He lived practically next door and was a very frequent visitor.

This is how he introduced Dr. Ray: ' This is Prof. Ray, who, having a monthly salary of Rs 800, keeps just Rs 40 for himself and devotes the balance to public purposes. Pie is not, and does not want to get, married.'

I felt I could never hear too much of the talks between Gokhale and Dr. Ray, as they all pertained to public good or were of educative value. At times they were painful too, containing, as they did, strictures on public men. As a result, some of those whom I had regarded as stalwart fighters began to look quite puny.

To see Gokhale at work was as much a joy as an education. He never wasted a minute. His private relations and friendships were all for public good. All his talks had reference only to the good of the country and were absolutely free from any trace of untruth or insincerity. India's poverty and subjection were matters of constant and intense concern to him. Various people 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.'

His reverence for Ranade could be seen every moment. Ranade's authority was final in every matter, and he would cite it at every step. The anniversary of Ranade's death (or birth, I forget which) occurred during my stay with Gokhale, who observed it regularly. There were with him then, besides myself, his friends Prof. Kathavate and a Sub-Judge. He invited us to take part in the celebration, and in his speech he gave us his reminiscences of Ranade. He compared incidentally Ranade, Telang and Mandlik. He eulogized Telang's charming style and Mandlik's greatness as a reformer. Citing an instance of Mandlik's solicitude for his clients, he told us an anecdote as to how once, having missed his usual train, he engaged a special train so as to be able to attend the court in the interest of his client. But Ranade, he said, towered above them all, as a versatile genius. He was not only a great judge, he was an equally great historian, and economist and reformer. Although he was a judge, he fearlessly attended the Congress, and everyone had such confidence in his sagacity that they unquestioningly accepted his decisions. Gokhale's joy knew no bounds, as he described these qualities of head and heart which were all combined in his master.

Gokhale used to have a horse-carriage in those days. I did not know the circumstances that had made a horse-carriage a necessity for him, and so I remonstrated with him: "Can't you make use of the tramcar in going about from place to place? Is it derogatory to a leader's dignity?"

Slightly pained, he said, 'So you also have failed to understand me! I do not use my Council allowances for my own personal comforts. I envy your liberty to go about in tramcars, but I am sorry I cannot do likewise. When you are the victim of as wide a publicity as I am, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for you to go about in a tramcar. There is no reason to suppose that everything that the leaders do is with a view to personal comfort. I love your simple habits. I live as simply as I can, but some expense is almost inevitable for a man like myself.'

He thus satisfactorily disposed of one of my complaints, but there was another which he could not dispose of to my satisfaction.

'But you do not even go out for walks,' said I. 'Is it surprising that you should be always ailing? Should public work leave no time for physical exercise?'

'When do you ever find me free to go out for a walk?' he replied.

I had such a great regard for Gokhale that I never strove with him. Though this reply was far from satisfying me, I remained silent. I believed then and I believe even now, that, no matter what amount of work one has, one should always find some time for exercise, just as one does for one's meals. It is my humble opinion that, far from taking away from one's capacity for work, it adds to it.

*Autobiography, pp. 285-87*

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My stay under the roof of Gokhale made my work in Calcutta very easy, brought me into touch with the foremost Bengali families, and was the beginning of my intimate contact with Bengal.

I must needs skip over many a reminiscences of this memorable month. Let me simply mention my flying visit to Burma.

On my return from Burma I took leave of Gokhale. The separation was a wrench, but my work in Bengal, or rather Calcutta, was finished, and I had no occasion to stay any longer.

Before settling down I had thought of making a tour through India travelling third class, and of acquainting myself with the hardships of third class passengers. I spoke to Gokhale about this. To begin with he ridiculed the idea, but when I explained to him what I hoped to see, he cheerfully approved. I planned to go first to Banaras to pay my respects to Mrs. Besant, who was then ill.

It was necessary to equip myself anew for the third class tour. Gokhale himself gave me a metal tiffin-box and got it filled with sweetballs and *puris*. I

purchased a canvas bag worth twelve annas and a long coat made of Chhaya \* wool. The bag was to contain this coat, a *dhoti*, a towel and a shirt. I had a blanket as well to cover myself with and a water jug. Thus equipped I set forth on my travels. Gokhale and Dr. Ray came to the station to see me off. I had asked them both not to trouble to come, but they insisted. 'I should not have come if you had gone first class, but now I had to,' said Gokhale.

No one stopped Gokhale from going on to the platform. He was in his silk turban, jacket and *dhoti*. Dr. Ray was in his Bengali dress. He was stopped by the ticket collector, but on Gokhale telling him that he was his friend, he was admitted.

Thus with their good wishes I started on my journey.

*Autobiography, pp. 292-93*

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### 3. Gokhale Comes to South Africa

I had been requesting Gokhale and other leaders to go to South Africa and to study the condition of the Indian settlers on the spot. But I doubted whether any of them would really come over. Mr Ritch had been trying to have some Indian leader visit the subcontinent. But who would dare to go when the struggle was at a very low ebb? Gokhale was in England in 1911. He was a student of the struggle in South Africa. He had initiated debates in the Legislative Council of India and moved a resolution (February 25, 1910) in favour of prohibiting the recruitment of indentured labour for Natal, which was carried. I was in communication with him all along. He conferred with the Secretary of State for India and informed him of his intention to proceed to South Africa and acquaint himself with the facts of the case at first hand. The minister approved of Gokhale's mission. Gokhale wrote to me asking me to arrange a programme for a six weeks' tour and indicating the latest date when he must leave South Africa. We were simply overjoyed. No Indian leader had been to South Africa before or for that matter to any other place outside India where Indians had emigrated, with a view to examine their condition. We, therefore, realized the importance of the visit of a great leader like Gokhale and determined to accord

him a reception which even princes might envy and to take him to the principal cities of South Africa. Satyagrahis and other Indians alike cheerfully set about making grand preparations of welcome. Europeans were also invited to join and did generally join the reception. We also resolved that public meetings should be held in Town Halls wherever possible and the Mayor of the place should generally occupy the chair if he consented to do so. We undertook to decorate the principal stations on the railway line and succeeded in securing the necessary permission in most cases. Such permission is not usually granted. But our grand preparations impressed the authorities, who evinced as much sympathy in the matter as they could. For instance, in Johannesburg alone the decorations at Park Station took us about a fortnight, including, as they did, a large ornamental arch of welcome designed by Mr Kallenbach.

In England itself Gokhale had a foretaste of what South Africa was like. The Secretary of State for India had informed the Union Government of Gokhale's high rank, his position in the Empire etc. But who would think of booking his passage or reserving a good cabin for him ? Gokhale had such delicate health that he needed a comfortable cabin where he could enjoy some privacy. The authorities of the Steamship Company roundly stated that there was no such cabin. I do not quite remember whether it was Gokhale or some friend of his who informed the India Office about this. A letter was addressed from the India Office to the directors of the Company and the best cabin was placed at Gokhale's disposal while none was available before. Good came out of this initial evil. The captain of the steamer received instructions to treat Gokhale well, and consequently he had a happy and peaceful voyage to South Africa. Gokhale was as jolly and humorous as he was serious. He participated in the various games and amusements on the steamer, and thus became very popular among his fellow passengers. The Union Government offered Gokhale their hospitalit} during his stay at Pretoria and placed the State railway saloon at his disposal. He consulted me on the point and then accepted the offer.

Gokhale landed at Cape Town on October 22, 1912. His health was very much more delicate than I had expected. He restricted himself to a particular diet,

and he could not endure much fatigue. The programme I had framed was much too heavy for him, and I therefore cut it down as far as possible. Gokhale was ready to go through the whole programme as it originally stood if no modification was possible. I deeply repented of my folly in drawing up an onerous programme without consulting him. Some changes were made, but much had to be left as it was. I had not grasped the necessity of securing absolute privacy for Gokhale, and I had the greatest difficulty in securing it. Still I must in all humility state in the interests of truth that as I was fond of and proficient in waiting upon the sick and the elderly, as soon as I had realized my folly I revised all the arrangements so as to be able to give Gokhale great privacy and peace. I acted as his secretary throughout the tour. The volunteers, one of whom was Mr Kallenbach, were wide awake, and I do not think Gokhale underwent any discomfort or hardship for want of help. It was clear that we should have a great meeting in Cape Town. I have already written about the Schreiners. I requested Senator W. P. Schreiner, the head of that illustrious family, to take the chair on the occasion and he was good enough to consent. There was a big meeting attended by a large number of Indians and Europeans. Mr Schreiner welcomed Gokhale in well chosen words and expressed his sympathy with the Indians of South Africa. Gokhale made a speech, concise, full of sound judgment, firm but courteous, which pleased the Indians and fascinated the Europeans. In fact Gokhale won the hearts of the variegated people of South Africa on the very day that he set foot on South African soil.

From Cape Town Gokhale was to go to Johannesburg by a railway journey of two days. The Transvaal was the field of battle. As we went from Cape Town, the first large frontier station of the Transvaal was Klerksdorp. As each of these places had a considerable population of Indians, Gokhale had to stop and attend a meeting at Klerksdorp, as well as at the intermediate stations of Potchefstroom and Krugersdorp, between Klerksdorp and Johannesburg. He therefore left Klerksdorp by a special train. The Mayors of these places presided at the meetings, and at none of the stations did the train halt longer than one or two hours. The train reached Johannesburg punctually to the minute. On the platform there was a dais specially erected for the occasion and

covered with rich carpets. Along with other Europeans there was present Mr Ellis the Mayor of Johannesburg who placed his car at Gokhale's disposal during his stay in the Golden City. An address was presented to Gokhale on the station itself. Addresses had of course been presented to him everywhere. The Johannesburg address was engraved on a solid heart-shaped plate of gold from the Rand mounted on Rhodesian teak. On the plate was a map of India and Ceylon and it was flanked on either side by two gold tablets, one bearing an illustration of the Taj Mahal and the other a characteristic Indian scene. Indian scenes were also beautifully carved on the woodwork. Introducing all present to Gokhale, reading the address, the reply, and receiving other addresses which were taken as read, – all this did not take more than twenty minutes. The address was short enough to be read in five minutes. Gokhale's reply did not occupy more than another five minutes. The volunteers maintained such excellent order that there were no more persons on the platform than it was expected easily to accommodate. There was no noise. There was a huge crowd outside yet no one was at all hampered in coming and going.

Gokhale was put up in a fine house belonging to Mr Kallenbach perched on a hill-top five miles from Johannesburg. Gokhale liked the place immensely as the scenery there was pleasant, the atmosphere soothing, and the house though simple was full of art. A special office was hired in the city for Gokhale to receive all visitors, where there were three rooms, a private chamber for Gokhale, a drawing room, and a waiting room for visitors. Gokhale was taken to make private calls upon some distinguished men in the city. A private meeting of leading Europeans was organized so as to give Gokhale a thorough understanding of their standpoint. Besides this a banquet was held in Gokhale's honour to which were invited 400 persons including about 150 Europeans. It was a novel and wonderful experience for the Europeans of South Africa to sit at dinner with so many Indians on the same table, to have a purely vegetarian menu and to do without wines altogether. For many of them all the three features were new while two features were new for all.

To this gathering Gokhale addressed his longest and most important speech in South Africa. In preparing this speech he subjected us to a very full examination. He declared that it had been his lifelong practice not to disregard the standpoint of local men and even to try to meet it as far as it was in his power, and therefore he asked me what I would like him to say from my own point of view. I was to put this on paper and undertake not to be offended even if he did not utilize a single word or idea from my draft, which should be neither too short nor too long, and yet which should not omit a single point of any consequence. I may say at once that Gokhale did not make any use of my language at all. Indeed I would never expect such a master of the English language as Gokhale was to take up my phraseology. I cannot even say that Gokhale adopted my ideas. But as he acknowledged the importance of my views, I took it for granted that he must have somehow incorporated my ideas into his utterances. Indeed Gokhale's train of thought was such, that one could never tell whether or not any room had there been allowed to one's own ideas. I listened to every speech made by Gokhale, but I do not remember a single occasion when I could have wished that he had not expressed a certain idea or had omitted a certain adjective. The clearness, firmness and urbanity of Gokhale's utterances flowed from his indefatigable labour and unswerving devotion to truth.

In Johannesburg we also had to hold a mass meeting of Indians only. I have always insisted on speaking either in the mother tongue or else in Hindustani, the *lingua franca* of India, and thanks to this insistence I have had much facility in establishing close relations with the Indians in South Africa. I was therefore anxious that Gokhale too should speak to the Indians in Hindustani. I was aware of Gokhale's views on the subject. Broken Hindi would not do for him, and therefore he would speak either in Marathi or in English. It seemed artificial to him to speak in Marathi in South Africa and even if he did speak in Marathi, his speech would have to be translated into Hindustani for the benefit of Gujarati and North Indian members of the audience. And that being so, where was the harm if he spoke in English? Fortunately for me, I had one argument which Gokhale would accept as conclusive in favour of his making a Marathi speech.

There were many Konkani Mussalmans as well as a few Maharashtra Hindus in Johannesburg, all of whom were eager to hear Gokhale speak in Marathi, and who had asked me to request Gokhale to speak in their mother tongue. I told Gokhale that these friends would be highly pleased if he spoke in Marathi and I would translate his Marathi into Hindustani. Gokhale burst into laughter and said, 'I have quite fathomed your knowledge of Hindustani, an accomplishment upon which 3-011 cannot exactly be congratulated. But now you propose to translate Marathi into Hindustani. May I know where you acquired such profound knowledge of Marathi?' I replied, 'What is true of my Hindustani is equally true of my Marathi. I cannot speak a single word of Marathi, but I am confident of gathering the purport of your Marathi speech on a subject with which I am familiar. In any case you will see that I do not misinterpret you to the people. There are others well versed in Marathi, who could act as 3'our interpreters. But you will not perhaps approve of such arrangement. So please bear with me and do speak in Marathi. I too am desirous of hearing 3'our Marathi speech in common with the Konkani friends.' 'You will always have your own way,' said Gokhale. 'And there is no help for me as I am here at your mercy.' So saying Gokhale fell in with my suggestion, and from this point onwards right up to Zanzibar he always spoke in Marathi at similar meetings and I served as translator by special appointment to him. I do not know if I was able to bring Gokhale round to the view, that rather than speak in perfect idiomatic English it was more desirable to speak as far as ma3>- be in the mother tongue and even in broken ungrammatical Hindi. But I do know that if only to please me he spoke in Marathi in South Africa. After he had made some speeches, I could see that he too was gratified by the results of the experiment. Gokhale by his conduct on many occasions in South Africa showed that there was merit in pleasing one's followers in cases not involving a question of principle.

*Satyagraha in South Africa*, pp. 259-66

\* A place in Porbander State noted locally for its coarse woolen fabrics.

#### 4. Gokhale's Visit to the Tolstoy Farm

Gokhale arrived in South Africa while we were still living on the Farm. There was no cot on the Farm, but we borrowed one for Gokhale. There was no room where he could enjoy full privacy. For sitting accommodation we had nothing beyond the benches in our school. Even so, how could we resist the temptation of bringing Gokhale in spite of his delicate health to the Farm? And how could he help seeing it, either? I was foolish enough to imagine that Gokhale would be able to put up with a night's discomfort and to walk about a mile and a half from the station to the Farm. I had asked him beforehand, and he had agreed to everything without bestowing any thought upon it, thanks to his simplicity and overwhelming confidence in me. It rained that day as fate would have it, and I was not in a position suddenly to make any special arrangement. I have never forgotten the trouble to which I put Gokhale that day in my ignorant affection. The hardship was too much for him to bear and he caught a chill. We could not take him to the kitchen and dining-hall. He had been put up in Mr Kallenbach's room. His dinner would get cold while we brought it from the kitchen to his room. I prepared special soup, and Kotval special bread for him, but these could not be taken to him hot. We managed as best we could. Gokhale uttered not a syllable, but I understood from his face what a folly I had committed. When Gokhale came to know that all of us slept on the floor, he removed the cot which had been brought for him and had his own bed too spread on the floor. This whole night was a night of repentance for me. Gokhale had a rule in life which seemed to me a bad rule. He would not permit anyone except a servant to wait upon him. He had no servant with him during this tour. Mr Kallenbach and I entreated him to let us massage his feet. But he would not let us even touch him, and half jocularly, half angrily said : ' You all seem to think that you have been born to suffer hardships and discomforts, and people like myself have been born to be pampered by you. You must suffer today the punishment for this extremism of yours. I will not let you even touch me. Do you think that you will go out to attend to nature's needs and at the same time keep a commode for me? I will bear any amount of hardship but I will humble your pride.' These words were to us like a thunderbolt, and deeply

grieved Mr Kallenbach and me. The only consolation was, that Gokhale wore a smile on his face all the while. Krishna no doubt was often deeply offended by Arjuna, 'unknowing of His Majesty and careless in the fondness of his love,' but he soon forgot such incidents. Gokhale remembered only our will to serve, though he did not accord us the high privilege of serving him. The deeply affectionate letter he wrote me from Mombasa is still imprinted upon my heart. Gokhale bore everything cheerfully, but till the last never accepted the service which it was in our power to render. He had to take the food etc., from our hands, but that he could not help.

The next morning he allowed no rest either to himself or to us. He corrected all his speeches which we proposed to publish in book form. When he had to write anything, he was in the habit of walking to and fro and thinking it out. He had to write a small letter and I thought that he would soon have done with it. But no. As I twitted him upon it, he gave me a little homily: 'You do not know my way of life. I will not do even the least little thing in a hurry. I will think about it and consider the central idea. I will next deliberate as to the language suited to the subject and then set to write. If everyone did as I did, what a huge saving of time there would be? And the nation would be saved from the avalanche of half-baked ideas which now threatens to overwhelm her.'

*Satyagraha in South Africa*, pp. 248-50

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## 5. A Certificate from Gokhale

When Gokhale came to South Africa, he had with him a scarf which was a gift from Mahadeo Govind Ranade. He treasured the moment with the utmost care and used it only on special occasions. Such occasion was the banquet given in his honor by the Johannesburg Indians. The scarf was creased and needed ironing. It was not possible to send it to the laundry and get it back in time. I offered to try my art.

'I can trust to your capacity as a lawyer, but not as a washerman,' said Gokhale. 'What if you should soil it? Do you know what it means to me?'

With this he narrated with much joy, the story of the gift. I still insisted, guaranteed good work, got his permission to iron it, and won his certificate. After that I did not mind if the rest of the world refused me its certificate.

*Autobiography, p. 262*

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## 6. Gokhale's Further Tour in South Africa

After Johannesburg Gokhale visited Natal and then proceeded to Pretoria, where he was put up by the Union Government at the Transvaal hotel. Here he was to meet the ministers of the Government, including General Botha and General Smuts. It was my usual practice to inform Gokhale of all engagements fixed for the day, early in the morning or on the previous evening if he so desired. The coming interview with the Union ministers was a most important affair. We came to the conclusion, that I should not go with Gokhale, nor indeed even offer to go. My presence would raise a sort of barrier between Gokhale and the ministers, who would be handicapped in speaking out without any reserve about what they considered to be the mistakes of the local Indians including my own. Then again they could not with an easy mind make any statement of future policy if they wished to make it. As for all these reasons Gokhale must go alone, it added largely to his burden of responsibility. What was to be done if Gokhale inadvertently committed some mistake of fact, or if he had nothing to say as regards some fact which had not been first brought to his notice, but which was first put to him by the ministers, or if he was called upon to accept some arrangement on behalf of the Indians in the absence of any one of their responsible leaders? But Gokhale resolved this difficulty at once. He asked me to prepare a summary historical statement of the condition of the Indians up to date, and also to put down in writing how far they were prepared to go. And Gokhale said that he would admit his ignorance if anything outside this 'brief' cropped up at the interview, and ceased to worry. It now only remained for me to prepare the statement and for him to read it. However it was impossible for me to narrate the vicissitudes of the Indians' history in four colonies ranging over a period of 18 years except by writing ten or twenty

pages at the least, and there was hardly left any time for Gokhale to look over it. Again there would be many questions he would like to put us after reading the paper. But Gokhale had an infinite capacity for taking pains as he had an exceptionally sharp memory. He kept himself and others awake the whole night, posted himself fully on every point, and went over the whole ground again in order to make sure that he had rightly understood everything. He was at last satisfied. As for me I never had any fears.

Gokhale's interview with the ministers lasted for about two hours, and when he returned, he said, ' You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled. The Black Act will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the emigration law. The £ 3 tax will be abolished.' 'I doubt it very much,' I replied. ' You do not know the ministers as I do. Being an optimist myself, I love your optimism, but having suffered frequent disappointments, I am not as hopeful in the matter as you are. But I have no fears either. It is enough for me that you have obtained this undertaking from the ministers. It is my duty to fight it out only where it is necessary and to demonstrate that ours is a righteous struggle. The promise given to you will serve as a proof of the justice of our demands and will redouble our fighting spirit if it comes to fighting after all. But I do not think I can return to India in a year and before many more Indians have gone to jail.'

Gokhale said: ' What I have told you is bound to come to pass. General Botha promised me that the Black Act would be repealed and the £ 3 tax abolished. You must return to India within twelve months, and I will not have any of your excuses.'

During his visit to Natal Gokhale came in contact with many Europeans in Durban, Maritzburg and other places. He also saw the diamond mines in Kimberley, where as well as at Durban public dinners were arranged by the reception committees, and attended, by many Europeans. Thus having achieved a conquest of Indian as well as European hearts, Gokhale left South Africa on November 17, 1912. At his wish Mr Kallenbach and I accompanied him as far as Zanzibar. On the steamer we had arranged to have suitable food for him. On his

way back to India he was given an ovation at Delagoa Bay, Inhambane, Zanzibar and other ports.

On the steamer our talks were confined to India or to the duty we owed to the motherland. Every word of Gokhale glowed with his tender feeling, truthfulness and patriotism. I observed that even in the games which he played on board the steamer Gokhale had a patriotic motive rather than the mere desire to amuse himself, and excellence was his aim there too.

On the steamer we had ample time to talk to our heart's content. In these conversations Gokhale prepared me for India. He analysed for me the characters of all the leaders in India and his analysis was so accurate, that I have hardly perceived any difference between Gokhale's estimate and my own personal experience of them.

There are many sacred reminiscences of mine relating to Gokhale's tour in South Africa which could be set down here. But I must reluctantly check my pen. The parting at Zanzibar was deeply painful to Kallenbach and me, but remembering that the most intimate relations of mortal men must come to an end at last, we somehow reconciled ourselves, and hoped that Gokhale's prophecy would come true and both of us would be able to go to India in a year's time. But that was not to be.

However Gokhale's visit to South Africa stiffened our resolution, and the implications and the importance of his tour were better understood when the straggle was renewed in an active form. If Gokhale had not come over to South Africa, if he had not seen the Union ministers, the abolition of the £ 3 tax could not have been made a plank in our platform.

If the Satyagraha struggle had closed with the repeal of the Black Act, a fresh fight would have been necessary against the £ 3 tax, and not only would the Indians have come in for endless trouble, but it was doubtful whether they would have been ready so soon for a new and arduous campaign. It was incumbent upon the free Indians to have the tax abolished. All constitutional remedies to that end had been applied but in vain. The tax was being paid ever since 1895. But when a wrong, no matter however flagrant, has continued for a

long period of time, people get habituated to it, and it becomes difficult to rouse them to a sense of their duty to resist it, and no less difficult to convince the world that it is a wrong at all. The undertaking given to Gokhale cleared the way for the Satyagrahis. The Government must repeal the tax in terms of their promise, and if they did not, their breach of pledge would be a most cogent reason for continuing the struggle. And this was exactly what happened. Not only did the Government not abolish the tax within a year, but they declared in so many words that it could not be removed at all.

Gokhale's tour thus not only helped us to make the £ 3 tax one of the targets of our Satyagraha, but it led to his being recognized as a special authority on the South African question. His views on South Africa now carried greater weight, thanks to his personal knowledge of the Indians in South Africa, and he understood himself and could explain to India what steps the mother country ought to adopt. When the struggle was resumed, India rendered, munificent help to the Satyagraha funds and Lord Hardinge heartened the Satyagrahis by expressing his ' deep and burning ' sympathy for them (December 1913). Messrs Andrews and Pearson came to South Africa from India. All this would have been impossible without Gokhale's mission.

*Satyagraha in South Africa, pp. 267-70*

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## **7. Satyagraha to the Bitter End**

When Gokhale heard that a fresh march was under contemplation, he sent a long cablegram, saying that such a step on our part would land Lord Hardinge and himself in an awkward position and strongly advising us to give up the march, and assist the commission by tendering evidence before it.

We were on the horns of a dilemma. The Indians were pledged to a boycott of the commission if its *personnel* was not enlarged to their satisfaction. Lord Hardinge might be displeased, Gokhale might be pained, but how could we go back upon our pledged word? Mr Andrews suggested to us the considerations of Gokhale's feelings, his delicate health and the shock which our decision was

calculated to impart to him. But in fact these considerations were never absent from my mind. The leaders held a conference and finally reached the decision that the boycott must stand at any cost if more members were not co-opted to the commission. We therefore sent a long cablegram to Gokhale, at an expense of about a hundred pounds. Andrews too concurred with the gist of our message which was to the following effect:

'We realize how you are pained, and would like to follow your advice at considerable sacrifice. Lord Hardinge has rendered priceless aid, which we wish we would continue to receive till the end. But we are anxious that you should understand our position. It is a question of thousands of men having taken a pledge to which no exception can be taken. Our entire struggle has been built upon a foundation of pledges. Many of us would have fallen back today had it not been for the compelling force of our pledges. All moral bonds would be relaxed at once if thousands of men once proved false to their plighted word. The pledge was taken after full and mature deliberation, and there is nothing immoral about it. The community has an unquestionable right to pledge itself to boycott. We wish that even you should advise that a pledge of this nature should not be broken but be observed inviolate by all, come what might. Please show this cable to Lord Hardinge. We wish you might not be placed in a false position. We have commenced this struggle with God as our witness and His help as our sole support. We desire and bespeak the assistance of elders as well as big men, and are glad when we get it. But whether or not such assistance is forthcoming, we are humbly of opinion that pledges must ever be scrupulously kept. We desire your support and your blessing in such observance.'

This cable, when it reached Gokhale, had an adverse effect upon his health, but he continued to help us with unabated or even greater zeal than before. He wired to Lord Hardinge on the matter but not only did he not throw us overboard, but he on the other hand defended our standpoint. Lord Hardinge too remained unmoved.

*Satyagraha in South Africa*, pp. 324-25

## 8. With Gokhale in London

At the conclusion of the Satyagraha struggle in 1914, I received Gokhale's instructions to return home via London. So in July Kasturba, Kallenbach and I sailed for England.

I have already referred to the attack of pleurisy I had in England. Gokhale returned to London soon after. Kallenbach and I used regularly to go to him. Our talks were mostly about the war.

When I got pleurisy this also became a topic of daily discussion. My dietetic experiments were going on even then. My diet consisted, among other things, of groundnuts, ripe and unripe bananas, lemon, olive oil, tomatoes and grapes. I completely eschewed milk, cereals, pulses and other things.

Dr. Jivraj Mehta treated me. He pressed me hard to resume milk and cereals, but I was obdurate. The matter reached Gokhale's ears. He had not much regard for my reasoning in favour of a fruitarian diet, and he wanted me to take whatever the doctor prescribed for my health.

It was no easy thing for me not to yield to Gokhale's pressure. When he would not take a refusal, I begged him to give me twenty-four hours for thinking over the question. As Kallenbach and I returned home that evening, we discussed where my duty lay. He had been with me in my experiment. He liked it, but I saw that he was agreeable to my giving it up if my health demanded it. So I had to decide for myself according to the dictates of the inner voice.

I spent the whole night thinking over the matter. To give up the experiment would mean renouncing all my ideals in that direction, and yet I found no flaw in them. The question was how far I should yield to Gokhale's loving pressure, and how far I might modify my experiment in the so-called interests of health. I finally decided to adhere to the experiment in so far as the motive behind it was chiefly religious, and to yield to the doctor's advice where the motive was mixed. Religious considerations had been predominant in the giving up of milk. I had before me a picture of the wicked processes the *govals* in Calcutta

adopted to extract the last drop of milk from their cows and buffaloes. I also had the feeling that, just as meat was not man's food, even so animal's milk could not be man's food. So I got up in the morning with the determination to adhere to my resolve to abstain from milk. This greatly relieved me. I dreaded to approach Gokhale, but I trusted him to respect my decision.

In the evening Kallenbach and I called on Gokhale at the National Liberal Club. The first question he asked me was: 'Well, have you decided to accept the doctor's advice?'

I gently but firmly replied: 'I am willing to yield on all points except one about which I beg you not to press me. I will not take milk, milk-products or meat. If not to take these things should mean my death, I feel I had better face it.'

'Is this your final decision?' asked Gokhale.

'I am afraid I cannot decide otherwise,' said I. 'I know that my decision will pain you, but I beg your forgiveness.'

With a certain amount of pain but with deep affection, Gokhale said: 'I do not approve of your decision. I do not see any religion in it. But I won't press you anymore.' With these words he turned to Dr. Jivaraj Mehta and said: 'Please don't worry him anymore. Prescribe anything you like within the limit he has set for himself.'

The doctor expressed dissent, but was helpless. He advised me to take *mung* soup, with a dash of asafoetida in it. To this I agreed. I took it for a day or two, but it increased my pain. As I did not find it suitable, I went back to fruits and nuts. The doctor of course went on with his external treatment. The latter somewhat relieved my pain, but my restrictions were to him a sore handicap.

Meanwhile Gokhale left for home, as he could not stand the October fogs of London.

*Autobiography*, pp. 433-37

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## 9. With Gokhale in Poona

The moment I reached Bombay Gokhale sent me word that the Governor was desirous of seeing me, and that it might be proper for me to respond before I left for Poona. Accordingly I called on His Excellency.

After this I went to Poona. It is impossible for me to set down all the reminiscences of this precious time. Gokhale and the members of the Servants of India Society overwhelmed me with affection. So far as I recollect, Gokhale had summoned all of them to meet me. I had a frank talk with them all on every sort of subject.

Gokhale was very keen that I should join the Society and so was I. But the members felt that, as there was a great difference between my ideas and methods of work and theirs, it might not be proper for me to join the Society. Gokhale believed that, in spite of my insistence on my own principles, I was equally ready and able to tolerate theirs.

'But,' he said, 'the members of the Society have not yet understood your readiness for compromise. They are tenacious of their principles, and quite independent. I am hoping that they will accept you, but if they don't, you will not for a moment think that they are lacking in respect or love for you. They are hesitating to take any risk lest their high regard for you should be jeopardized. But whether you are formally admitted as a member or not, I am going to look upon you as one.'

I informed Gokhale of my intentions. Whether I was admitted as a member or not, I wanted to have an Ashram where I could settle down with my Phoenix family, preferably somewhere in Gujarat, as, being a Gujarati, I thought I was best fitted to serve the country through serving Gujarat. Gokhale liked the idea. He said : 'You should certainly do so. Whatever may be the result of your talks with the members, you must look to me for the expenses of the Ashram, which I will regard as my own.'

My heart overflowed with joy. It was a pleasure to feel free from the responsibility of raising funds, and to realize that I should not be obliged to set

about the work all on my own, but that I should be able to count on a sure guide whenever I was in difficulty. This took a great load off my mind.

So the late Dr. Dev was summoned and told to open an account for me in the Society's books and to give me whatever I might require for the Ashram and for public expenses.

I now prepared to go to Shantiniketan. On the eve of my departure Gokhale arranged a party of selected friends, taking good care to order refreshments of my liking, i.e. fruits and nuts. The party was held just a few paces from his room, and yet he was hardly in a condition to walk across and attend it. But his affection for me got the better of him and he insisted on coming. He came, but fainted and had to be carried away. Such fainting was not a new thing with him and so when he came to, he sent word that we must go on with the party.

*Autobiography, pp. 457-59*

### III. THE LEGACY OF MAHATMA GOKHALE

#### 1

[Message sent on February 19, 1916, the first anniversary of the death of Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale on the occasion of the foundation of the Bhagini Samaj, Bombay, to perpetuate Gokhale's memory.]

यत् करोवि यद्भ्रासि यत् जुहोषि ऽसि यत् ।  
यत् तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत् कुरुष्व मर्षणम् ॥

'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as sacrifice or gift, whatever austerity you perform, O Kaunteya, dedicate it all to me.'

हसतां रमतां प्रगट हरि ऽखुं रे  
मारुं जीव्युं सफल तव लेखुं रे ।  
मुक्तानन्दो नाथ विहारी रे  
ओधा, जीवनोरी अमारी रे ॥

मुक्तानं ।

'I shall have lived to some purpose only if I see Hari (the Lord) face to face as I laugh and play. O Uddhava, Krishna, Muktananda's Master, is the Lord of our life.'

It seems that Mahatma Gokhale functioned as if the words addressed by Krishna to Arjuna had been addressed to him by India, the mother of us all, and had been made by him the guiding principle of his life. For it will be readily admitted that whatever he did, whatever he enjoyed, whatever he sacrificed, .whatever he gave in charity, whatever austerities he performed, he dedicated them all to his motherland.

The Gopi's devotion to Krishna as pictured by Muktanand is a just measure of Gokhale's devotion to India.

What is the moral of Gokhale's life? What legacy has he left for us?

These questions were answered by Gokhale himself in his last words to the members of the Servants of India Society who were present beside his death-bed :

'Don't waste your time in writing a biography or setting up a statue, but pour your whole soul into the service of India. Then only shall you be counted among her true and faithful servants.'

We have also before us Gokhale's views as regards the implications of service to the country. The Congress organization must be maintained in full strength; people should be brought to a realization of the real state of the country through speeches and writings; education should be made available to every Indian child. But to what end? And in what manner? As we try to answer these questions, we become aware of Gokhale's standpoint. When he drew up the constitution for the Servants of India Society, he said that it was the Society's object to spiritualize public life. This is a comprehensive definition.

Gokhale's life was that of a man of religion. Everything he did was done in the spirit of a devotee as I can testify. Gokhale once called himself an agnostic. He observed that he had not, but wished he had, Ranade's faith. Even so I could discern a religious strain in his work. It would not be improper to say<sup>7</sup> that his very doubt was inspired by religion. A man who leads a dedicated life, who is simple in habits, who is the very image of truth, who is full of humanity, who calls nothing his own – such a man is a man of religion, whether he himself is or is not conscious of it. Such was Gokhale as I could see during the twenty years of my friendship with him.

In 1896 I tried to bring to public notice in India the question of indentured Indian labourers in Natal. Before I did so, I knew our leaders only by name. But on this occasion I first came into contact with the leaders in Calcutta, Bombay, Poona and Madras. Gokhale was then known as a disciple of Ranade. He had already become a life member of the Deccan Education Society as a professor in Fergusson College while I was quite an inexperienced young man. Still when I met him in Poona, I fell in love with him at first sight, and hence was established a bond of affection between us, such as I cherished for no other

leader. I now had a personal experience of what I had heard about him, but I have never been able to forget the impress he left upon my mind by the love written in his eyes. I recognized him at once as the very embodiment of religion. I also saw Ranade about the same time, but I could not have access to the innermost recesses of his heart. I knew him only as Gokhale's master. I do not know why; perhaps it was because he was so much my senior in age and experience that I could not know him as I knew Gokhale.

Since our meeting in 1896 referred to above, Gokhale's political career served me as an ideal. I installed him in my heart of hearts as my teacher in politics.

Gokhale wrote articles in the quarterly of the Sarvajanic Sabha in Poona. Pie imparted fresh lustre to Fergusson College by his work there as a professor. Pie tendered evidence before the Welby Commission. All India thus recognized his intrinsic worth. Pie so deeply impressed Lord Curzon by his ability that the Viceroy feared Gokhale as he feared no one else. Gokhale covered himself with distinction as a member of the Supreme Council in Calcutta. He served on the Public Service Commission in spite of his failing health. On this and many other aspects of his work others have written with greater qualifications than I can claim to possess. Again the lesson which, in my opinion, we have to learn from his life cannot clearly be deduced from these activities. Therefore on the present occasion I shall limit myself to things of which I have a personal experience and which enforce the lesson which I have tried to draw from his life.

The Satyagraha struggle in South Africa created such a deep impression on Gokhale's mind that he resolved to visit South Africa although his health would hardly permit him to undertake the tour. He came there in 1912. We gave him a right royal reception. A meeting was held in the Town Hall at Cape Town a day after he landed, and was presided over by the Mayor. Gokhale's health was not at all adequate to the task of attending public receptions and making speeches. Still he insisted that the onerous programme which we had drawn up for him be left intact. He thus attended the reception at Cape Town and won the hearts of the Europeans at the very first opportunity. Everyone felt that a

saintly man was in their midst. Mr Merriman, the famous veteran statesman of South Africa and man of liberal views, said to Gokhale, ' Sir, when men like you visit our country, they purify the atmosphere.'

As Gokhale went from one place to another in the course of his tour, the Cape Town success was repeated and confirmed. For the time being, at any rate, the colour bar was taken down everywhere. Receptions were held in other places as in Cape Town, where Indians and the whites sat in line and honoured themselves by honouring Gokhale. A banquet was held in Johannesburg to which were invited 400 persons including about 150 well-known Europeans. The Mayor acted as president. The Europeans of Johannesburg are a discerning lot, and they vied with one another in shaking hands with Gokhale for the simple reason that in the speech he had made before them they had evidence of his deep affection for his own country as well as his sense of justice and appreciation of the opposite point of view. Gokhale pleaded for a place of honour for his own people, but he could not utter a word of disrespect for others. If he was anxious to secure the rights of his own countrymen, he was equally solicitous that the rights of others were not infringed. Therefore, everyone had a taste of natural sweetness in his speeches. Gokhale believed that his best speech in South Africa was the one delivered at Johannesburg for over forty- five minutes. Still I did not notice that any of the audience were tired. The preparations for it had been on for six days previous to the day of the meeting, he acquainted himself sufficiently with the history of the problem and learnt by heart the figures which he had to cite. Then again on the previous night he burnt the midnight oil in order to settle the draft of his speech. The result was that he satisfied the Europeans as well as the Indians.

The diligence with which Gokhale prepared himself for his meeting with General Botha and General Smuts in Pretoria is never to be forgotten. On the day previous to the interview, he subjected Mr Kallenbach and me to a searching examination. He himself woke at 3 a.m., and waked up both of us. He had already gone through the papers which we had placed before him. He now intended to cross-examine me and make sure that he himself was fully

prepared for the ordeal. I humbly suggested that there was no need for him to take all that trouble; we did not mind if we had to continue our struggle a little longer; and we did not want to sacrifice him for our convenience. But accustomed as he was to throw his whole soul into whatever he did, he would not listen to me. How shall I describe his cross-examination or bestow due praise on his infinite capacity for taking pains? Such indefatigable industry could not but be crowned with success. The South African cabinet gave an undertaking that a bill conceding the Satyagrahis' demands would be brought before the next session of the Union Parliament and that the £ 3 tax on the indentured labourers would be abolished.

The promise given to Gokhale was not redeemed at the appointed time. But he did not take it lying down. I am sure that the exertions he put forth in 1913 in order to have that promise kept shortened his life by at least ten years. It is impossible to give the reader an idea of the strain he imposed upon himself in organizing the agitation in India and collecting funds for the Satyagrahis in South Africa. Indeed if the South African Indians' problem shook India to its depth, it was due to Gokhale's mighty effort. The historic speech made by Lord Hardinge in Madras was also clue to his influence. Gokhale was confined to bed on account of his anxiety about the South African Indian problem, and still he would not give himself rest. Cablegrams as length<sup>7</sup> as letters sent by<sup>7</sup> sea mail were received by him at midnight and read as soon as they came in. Replies to these cablegrams were drafted and telegrams sent to the Viceroy at once. Statements to the press were prepared at the same time. In attending to this problem Gokhale could not take his meals or go to bed at the appointed hour and turned night into day. Such unique and selfless devotion is given only to a man of religion.

As regards Hindu-Muslim tension too, Gokhale's standpoint was purely religious. Once a Hindu monk came to him in order to prevail upon him to grant an inferior status to the Muslims and to secure an advantage for the Hindus. But Gokhale would not listen to him. The monk complained that the great leader did not take pride in Hinduism. At this Gokhale frowned and said, ' If Hinduism

consists in doing what you say, I am not a Hindu. Please, therefore, leave me.' And the so-called monk left the man who was a real Sannyasi.

Fearlessness was a very important element in Gokhale's composition. Indeed this virtue is an indispensable quality in a man of religion. There was a reign of terror in Poona subsequent to the assassination of Mr Rand and Lt Ayerst. Gokhale was in England at the time and referring to it he spoke to a committee of influential members of the British Parliament. Some statements made in that speech could not be substantiated later on. Therefore, when Gokhale returned to India, he tendered an apology to the European officials whom he had charged with misconduct and thus incurred the displeasure of some ignorant people who called him a coward and advised him to retire from public life. He rejected this advice with the noble words:

'Public duties undertaken at the bidding of no man, cannot be laid down at the desire of any one. Whether one works on a higher plane or a lower one is a matter of small importance. One is always glad of the appreciation by the public of what one has done.... But it is not the highest purpose of existence, nor really the highest. If it comes, to give the words of Herbert Spencer, well; if not, well also, though not so well.'

Gokhale did his duty conscientiously and never wasted a single selfish thought on what view the public would take of his action. I believe he had the capacity cheerfully to mount the gallows for the country's sake if necessary. I know to mount the gallows more than once was very much easier for him than to face a difficult situation. But he never so much as thought of turning his back to it.

If therefore we would learn a lesson from the life of this great patriot, we should follow his method of working in the spirit of a devotee. Every one of us cannot become a member of the Supreme Legislature, and members of that Legislature are not always seen in the ranks of the servants of the nation. Everyone cannot serve on the Public Service Commission and men designated as its members are not always found rendering service to the country. We cannot all acquire learning like him and learned men do not always serve the people. But we can all cultivate virtues like courage, truthfulness, patience, humility, a

sense of justice, straightforwardness and perseverance and dedicate them to the nation. This is the spirit of a devotee. This is what Gokhale meant when he spoke of ' public life being spiritualized.' All who conduct themselves in such a spirit of dedication will always see their way clear before them and claim a share in the legacy which Gokhale has left for us all. Such devoted workers will be endowed with all such gifts as they need, as the Lord has promised, and Gokhale's life is an illustration of that promise having been abundantly fulfilled.\*

\* Translated from the original Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai.

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## 2

No other activity undertaken by Gokhale illustrates so well his capacity to identify himself with the work in hand as his activity in regard to indentured labour. His tour of South Africa and the subsequent agitation he started in India demonstrate to us in a remarkable manner this capacity of his. And it was on account of this capacity in him that I have often said that religion was the basis of all his acts.

Let us now for a while have a closer look at his work in South Africa. Officials of the Government of India were perturbed when he declared his resolve to proceed to South Africa. How unbecoming it would seem if a man of Gokhale's status in Indian public life was insulted in South Africa, they thought. Could he not drop his idea of going there himself? But who could dare to make the suggestion to him? Gokhale himself realized even while he was in England what going to South Africa meant. He asked for a passage for himself but the officials of the Union Castle Company took no notice of it. The news reached the India Office. The India Office strictly warned Sir Owen Tudor who was manager of the Union Castle Company that Gokhale should receive from the Company the respect and honour due to his status. As a consequence he was asked to travel in the steamer as an honoured guest. Describing this incident to me he said, ' I do not much care for my personal honour; but I value the honour of my country as I value my own life. On this occasion I was going in the capacity of a public

man. And so feeling that an insult to me would mean an insult to India I tried to secure such facilities on the steamer as would preserve my honour.' Taking a warning from this incident the India Office had arranged through the Colonial Office for a proper reception of Gokhale in South Africa. The Union Government had therefore made all the necessary arrangements for his reception beforehand. A special railway saloon was provided for him, as also a special cook to cater for him on his tour. An officer was placed at his disposal. The Indian community had made preparations to honour him at various places in a manner that would make even an emperor jealous. He accepted the hospitality of the Union Government only at Pretoria, one of the capitals of the Union. At all other places he remained the guest of the Indian community. As soon as he entered Cape Town he immediately began a special study of the South African question. In fact he had acquired a good general knowledge of the subject, even before he set foot in Cape Town. But it was not enough according to his standards. During his four weeks' stay in South Africa he had made such a deep and comprehensive study of the problems facing the Indian residents of South Africa that all those who had met and discussed the question with him were surprised at the depth of his knowledge and his grasp of the question. When the time to meet General Botha and General Smuts arrived he asked us to prepare so many notes for his use that I at one time thought that it was hardly necessary for him to put himself to so much trouble. His health was very delicate all through the period and required great care. But in spite of it he would work late, up to twelve in the night and would be up again by four or even two and ask for his papers. As a result, soon after his meeting with Generals Botha and Smuts the Satyagraha campaign against the three pound annual levy on indentured labourers took shape. This tax was levied on all freed indentured men, their wives and even their children, both boys and girls, since 1893. The law compelled the freed indentured labourer to return to India if he was not willing to pay the tax. So the indentured labourer, in fact the Indian caught in serfdom, was reduced to a very awkward and difficult position. He had given up everything; had migrated to South Africa with his wife and family; what was he to do after his return to India ? Here in South Africa starvation was

his fate. How could he afford to remain an indentured man all his life? When free men all around him were earning four, five and even ten pounds a month how could he remain satisfied on a monthly pittance of merely fourteen or sixteen shillings? And suppose he chose to live as a freed man, and suppose also he had a son and a daughter, then taking into account his wife he would have to pay a tax of twelve pounds every year. How could he afford to pay such a heavy tax? The Indian community had been fighting hard against this tax ever since it was first levied. The echoes of the fight had been heard in India too. But still the Union Government of South Africa could not be persuaded to abolish the levy. Amongst his various other demands Gokhale therefore had to insist on the abolition of this tax also. He was burning with indignation against this burden on his poor brethren and felt its pain as though in his own person. He poured out his soul before General Botha. He tried his immense power of persuasion to the full. His advocacy had such great effect on both Generals Botha and Smuts that they yielded and promised that the levy would be abolished in the next session of the Union Parliament. Gokhale gave this glad tidings to me with great joy. The officials of the Government had made other promises also. But as we are treating at the present moment the question of indentured labour I will confine myself to reporting only that part of his consultations with the Union Government. The Parliament met. Gokhale was not present in South Africa in person and the Indians residing in South Africa learnt to their dismay that the three pound levy would not after all be abolished. General Smuts had made some attempt to persuade the members from Natal. But to my mind it was not adequate. The Indian community wrote to the Union Government that the latter were bound to Gokhale by a solemn promise to abolish the tax and that if they did not fulfill the promise the demand for its abolition would be included among the others for which the Satyagraha campaign was carried on since 1906. At the other end the Indian community informed Gokhale of their resolve. He approved of the step. The Union Government did not heed the warning given by the Indian community: the consequences are well known. Forty thousand Indians who had suffered the hardships of the Indentured Labour System joined the Satyagraha campaign.

They went on strike, suffered untold hardships, many lost their lives, but the promise made to Gokhale was ultimately fulfilled and the tax was abolished.

1917

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### 3

What could a disciple write about his master? How could he write it? The disciple's writing would be but an audacity. The true *shishya* merges himself in the *guru*. So he can never be a critic of the *guru*. *Bliakti* or devotion has no eye for shortcomings. So there can be no reason for complaint if the public do not accept the judgment of one who refuses to analyse the merits and shortcomings of his subject. The disciple's own behaviour and actions are in fact his comments about the master. I have often said that Gokhale was my political *guru*. That is why I consider myself incapable of writing about him. Whatever I write would seem but incomplete in my eyes. I believe the relationship between master and disciple is absolutely spiritual. It is not based on arithmetical calculations. The relationship is formed as if of its own accord and in a single instant, and is not capable of breach once it takes shape.

Our relationship with each other was formed in the year 1896. I had 110 idea of the nature of that relationship then; nor had he. During that very period there were blessed occasions when I met the master's master\*, Lokamanya Tilak, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Justice Badruddin Tyabji, Dr. Bhandarkar, as well as the leaders of Madras and Bengal. I was but a raw youth. Every one of them had showered his love on me. These were occasions I could never forget in my life. But I did not experience the same peace and warmth from my meeting with the others as I found from my visit to Gokhale. I do not remember to have had any special affection shown to me by Gokhale. If I permitted myself to measure the love I experienced from them all in figures I have an impression that no one else had shown such goodwill to me as Dr. Bhandarkar had shown. He had said to me, ' I do not take any part in public affairs now. But just for your sake I propose to preside over the public meeting being held in connection with your problem.' Still it was only Gokhale who somehow bound me to himself. Our new

relation did not show any results immediately. But on the occasion of the Calcutta Congress Session in 1902 where I was present I became fully conscious of my discipleship. I had the privilege of meeting almost all the leaders mentioned above at this time also. I saw that Gokhale had not only not forgotten me but actually took me under his charge. The practical result of his having done so followed as a natural consequence. During the Subjects Committee meeting I felt helpless. While resolutions were under discussion I could not gather enough courage to declare that I too had a resolution on South Africa in my pocket. It was not to be expected that the Committee would spare the evening for me. The leaders were impatient to finish the business on hand. I was trembling with the fear that they would rise any moment. I had no courage to remind even Gokhale of my business. Just at that moment he cried out, 'Gandhi has a resolution on South Africa which we will have to consider.' My joy knew no bounds. This was my first experience of the Congress. So resolutions passed by it had great value in my eyes. The incidents thereafter are many and they are all sacred for me. But for the present I shall confine myself to discussing what I believed was his great urge in life and finish this preface.

In these difficult and degenerate times the pure, spirit of religion is hardly in evidence anywhere. Those who call themselves *rishis*, *munis* and *sadhus* and go about the world under those names rarely show this spirit in themselves. Obviously they do not hold the monopoly of religion. The best among the devotees of God, Narsinha Mehta, has shown in one beautiful phrase where true religion is and is to be found :

Till the Spirit is contemplated and  
realized, all endeavour is futile.

This is a saying which came out of his own vast experience. This short saying tells us that religion does not necessarily dwell even in the man of great austerities, even in the man of great *yoga* who knows all its processes. I have not the least doubt that Gokhale was well acquainted with the inner spirit of religion. He never pretended to observe any religious practice but his life was

full of the true spirit of religion. Whenever religion was on the wane some particular activity has been known to have roused the spirit of religion in man. Such activity has its bearing on the peculiar conditions of the age. These days we experience our fallen state in our political condition of bondage. Because we lack the capacity to have a comprehensive view of things we run away with the belief that if our political condition improved we would rise from our fallen state. This belief is only partially true and takes into account only one side of the problem facing us. 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. If the means employed is impure the change will not be in the direction of progress but very likely in the opposite direction. Only a change brought about in our political condition by pure means, that is by peaceful and legitimate means, can lead us to real progress. Gokhale not merely perceived this truth right from the beginning of his public life but also began practising it. He believed that political activities could lead to salvation and freedom only if they were based on religion or in other words spiritualized. So he placed this great ideal before his Servants of India Society and before the whole nation. He firmly declared that unless our political movement was informed by the spirit of religion it would be barren. The writer who took notice of his death in *The Times of India* drew particular attention to this aspect of Gokhale's mission and while expressing a doubt about the success of his efforts to create political *sannyasis* had warned the Servants of India Society which he had left to us as our heritage about the heavy responsibility in this regard it owed to its founder. Only political *sannyasis* had the capacity to fulfill and adorn the ideal of *sannyasa* i.e. renunciation; others would but bring shame to the *sannyasi's* saffron garb. Any Indian who "aspired to lead his people in the way of pure religion could hardly afford to remain aloof from politics. In other words, one who aspires to true religious life could not but undertake the service of his people as his mission, and we are today so far involved in the political system that obtains in our land that service of the people is impossible without taking part in politics. The peasants of our country who used to remain indifferent as to who the

political ruler of the country was and could yet lead their simple lives without any danger are not today in the same state of aloofness from the working of the State. If our *sadhus, rishis, munis, maulvis* and *padris* realized the bearing of politics on the condition of our peasants we would have Servants of India Societies in every village, the spirit of religion would assume such vast all-pervading proportions that the political system which has become odious would reform itself, India would again have its empire of religion as we know it had in the past, the bonds which hold India under subjection would be severed in an instant, and the ideal state of peace which an ancient seer had described would come into being where iron would not be used for forging swords but for forging ploughshares, and the lion and the lamb would be friends and live together in peace. The ideal of Gokhale's life was to work to bring about this state of affairs. That indeed is his message and I believe that whoever reads his writings with an open mind will perceive this message in every word of his.

1918

#### IV. GOKHALE'S PLACE IN MY LIFE

A strange anonymous letter has been received by me, admiring me for having taken up a cause that was dearest to Lokamanya's heart, and telling me that his spirit was residing in me and that I must prove a worthy follower of his. The letter, moreover, admonishes me not to lose heart in the prosecution of the Swaraj programme, and finishes off by accusing me of imposture in claiming to be politically a disciple of Gokhale. I wish, correspondents will throw off the slavish habit of writing anonymously. We, who are developing the Swaraj spirit, must cultivate the courage of fearlessly speaking out our minds. The subject-matter of the letter, however, being of public importance, demands a reply. I cannot claim the honour of being a follower of the late Lokamanya. I admire him like millions of his countrymen for his indomitable will, his vast learning, his love of country, and above all, the purity of his private life and great sacrifice. Of all the men of modern times, he captivated most the imagination of his people. He breathed into us the spirit of Swaraj. No one perhaps realized the evil of the existing system of Government as Tilak did. And in all humility I claim to deliver his message to the country as truly as the best of his disciples. But I am conscious that my method is not Tilak's method. And that is why I have still difficulty with some of the Maharashtra leaders. But I sincerely think, that Tilak did not disbelieve in my method. I enjoyed the privilege of his confidence. And his last- word to me in the presence of several friends was, just a fortnight before his death, that mine was an excellent method if the people could be persuaded to take to it. But he said he had his doubts. I know no other method. I can only hope, that when the final test comes, the country will be proved to have assimilated the method of non-violent non-co-operation. Nor am I unaware of my other limitations. I can lay no claim to scholarship. I have not his powers of organization, I have no compact disciplined party to lead, and having been an exile for twenty-three years, I cannot claim the experience that the Lokamanya had of India. Two things we had in common to the fullest measure – love of country and the steady pursuit of Swaraj. I can,

therefore, assure the anonymous writer, that yielding to none in my reverence for the memory of the deceased, I will march side by side with the foremost of the Lokamanya's disciples in the pursuit of Swaraj. I know that the only offering acceptable to him is the quickest attainment of Swaraj by India. That and nothing else can give his spirit peace.

Discipleship, however, is a sacred personal matter. I fell at Dadabhai's feet in 1888, but he seemed to be too far away from me. I could be as son to him, not disciple. A disciple is more than son. Discipleship is a second birth. It is a voluntary surrender. In 1896 I met almost all the known leaders of India in connection with my South African mission. Justice Ranade awed me. I could hardly talk in his presence. Badruddin Tyabji fathered me, and asked me to be guided by Ranade and Pherozeshah. The latter became a patron. His will had to be law. 'You must address a public meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> September, and you must be punctual.' I obeyed. On the 25th evening I was to wait on him. I did.

'Have you written out your speech?' he inquired.

'No, sir.'

'That won't do, young man. Can you write it out tonight?'

'Munshi, you must go to Mr Gandhi and receive the manuscript from him. It must be printed overnight and you must send me a copy.' Turning to me, he added, 'Gandhi, you must not write a long speech, you do not know Bombay audiences cannot stand long addresses.' I bowed.

The lion of Bombay taught me to take orders. He did not make me his disciple. He did not even try.

I went thence to Poona. I was an utter stranger. My host first took me to Tilak. I met him surrounded by his companions. He listened, and said, 'We must arrange a meeting for you. But perhaps you do not know that we have unfortunately two parties. You must give us a non-party man as chairman. Will you see Dr. Bhandarkar?' I consented and retired. I have no clear impression of Tilak, except to recall that he shook off my nervousness by his affectionate

familiarity. I went thence, I think, to Gokhale, and then to Dr. Bhandarkar. The latter greeted me as a teacher his pupil.

'You seem to be an earnest and enthusiastic young man. Many people do not come to see me at this the hottest part of the day. I never nowadays attend public meetings. But you have recited such a pathetic story that I must make an exception in your favour.'

I worshipped the venerable doctor with his wise face. But I could not find for him a place on that little throne. It was still unoccupied. I had many heroes but no king.

It was different with Gokhale, I cannot say why. I met him at his quarters on the college ground. It was like meeting an old friend, or better still a mother after a long separation. His gentle face put me at ease in a moment. His minute inquiries about myself and my doings in South Africa at once enshrined him in my heart. And as I parted from him, I said to myself, 'you are my man.' And from that moment Gokhale never lost sight of me. In 1901 on my second return from South Africa, we came closer still. He simply 'took me in hand,' and began to fashion me. He was concerned about how I spoke, dressed, walked and ate. My mother was not more solicitous about me than Gokhale. There was, so far as I am aware, no reserve between us. It was really a case of love at first sight, and it stood the severest strain in 1913. He seemed to me all I wanted as a political worker – pure as crystal, gentle as a lamb, brave as a lion and chivalrous to a fault. It does not matter to me that he may not have been any of these things. It was enough for me that I could discover no fault in him to cavil at. He was and remains for me the most perfect man on the political field. Not, therefore, that we had no differences. We differed even in 1901 in our views on social customs, e.g. widow marriage. We discovered differences in our estimate of Western civilization. He frankly differed from me in my extreme views on non-violence. But these differences mattered neither to him nor to me. Nothing could part us asunder. It were blasphemous to conjecture what would have happened if he were alive today. I know, that I would have been working under him. I have made this confession, because the anonymous

letter hurt me, when it accused me of imposture about my political discipleship. Had I been remiss in my acknowledgment to him who is now dumb ? I thought I must declare my faithfulness to Gokhale, especially when I seemed to be living in a camp which the Indian world calls opposite.

*Young India, 13-7-'21*

## V. SPEECHES ON GOKHALE

### 1

[From Gandhiji's speech at a banquet given by the Indian community in the Town Hall, Kimberley, on October 26, 1912 in honour of Gokhale's visit:]

Mr Oats was good enough to take the guest of the evening, together with his following, over his great mine, and when he took them over those huge pieces of machinery I could not help thinking what a great thing the machinery v/as. Some of my friends present at this function know that I am no believer in large machinery. I for one am quite willing to admit that I would have a place for Kimberley even had there been no diamonds and no machinery. I am no believer in millions and in diamonds, but I realize that I am now before Diamond Kings and I therefore bow my head before them. One thing struck me forcibly when watching this machinery, that if we as human beings worked as well together as this marvellous piece of machinery, what a happy family we could be. Then, indeed, our swords could be beaten into ploughshares, and the lions would certainly lie down with the lambs. I realize that if one nut in this piece of machinery went loose it was possible for the whole machinery to become disjointed ; and to carry this analogy to human beings, we often see that one obstreperous man can break up a whole meeting, and one rogue in a family can damage the reputation of the family. Similarly, to take the reverse position, if the chief part of the machinery did its work regularly we find the other pieces working in harmony.

I regard Mr Gokhale's mission as a holy one, and it is a matter of pride to me that Mr Gokhale had been instrumental in bringing about such a happening in Kimberley as a meeting of the most representative Europeans and Indians at a common board. I hope such gatherings will be multiplied. As a humble student of the life and teachings of Tolstoy, I feel that functions like this one are unnecessary, and that they sometimes do a great deal of mischief if only by way of interfering with one's digestion (laughter). But although a student of Tolstoy, for the time being I am prepared to reconcile myself even to these

functions if they bring us together, and if they enable us to know each other better. I am reminded of the beautiful hymn.

"We shall know each other better  
When the mists have rolled away."

and though on this occasion we may have our differences, we shall know each other better when the mists of ignorance have rolled away. My distinguished countryman has come to South Africa in order to dispel those mists of ignorance. He has come as the brightest jewel that India can present to us. I know that I am deeply wounding Mr Gokhale's susceptibilities when I make mention of what he has done, but I have to perform a duty though painful to him. There is no one who can tell you as much about Mr Gokhale as I can, about his life in the political arena of India. He it is who gave twenty years of his life to the cause of education for a mere pittance. Even today Mr Gokhale lives in poverty although he can command riches. Hundreds of pounds are always at his disposal whenever he wants them for public institutions. A Viceroy of India carried the burden of Empire on his shoulders for five years (unless he was a Lord Curzon, who held office for seven), and even then had a train of workers to assist him, but here is a distinguished countryman of mine carrying the burden of Empire on his shoulders unaided and unassisted and undecorated. True, he has won the C.I.E., but in my opinion he is worth a much better decoration. The decoration that Mr Gokhale loves best is the love of his countrymen, and the approval of his own conscience. To those Indians who are educated on Western lines he has given a lesson in humility and gentleness (applause).

October 26, 1912

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2

[The following is the speech delivered by Gandhiji at Bangalore, on unveiling a portrait of Gokhale in May 1915:]

My dear countrymen, we should not dishonour the memory of the one whose portrait you have asked me to unveil this morning. I have declared myself his disciple in the political field and I love him as my *Raja 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 my choice.

Gokhale taught me that the dream of every Indian who claims to love his country, should be not to glorify the country in language but to spiritualize its political life and institutions. He inspired my life and is still inspiring it in that I wish to purify myself and spiritualize myself. I have dedicated myself to that ideal. I may fail, and to the extent I fail, I am an unworthy disciple of my master.

Political life must be an echo of our private life. There cannot be any divorce between the two.

I knew this saintly politician to the end of his life and I found no ego in him. I ask you, members of the Social Service League, if there is any ego in you. If he threw himself into the political field he did not do so in order that he might gain public applause, but in order that his country may gain. He lived, not in order to win the praise of the world for himself, but for service of his country.

Let that also be the aim of your life.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 1009-10

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3

[The following is the text of Mahatma Gandhi's speech in seconding the resolution on Gokhale at the Fifteenth Bombay Provincial Conference held at Poona on 10th and 11th July 1915:]

Mr President, Brothers and Sisters, – Perhaps it is impudent on my part to add anything to the feeling words that have been spoken by Smt. Ranade. The fact

that she is the widow of the master's master adds solemnity to the proceedings, which can only be marred by any remarks I may make. But, claiming as I do to be one of Gokhale's disciples, you will forgive me if I say a few words which are personal tit-bits. It was on board the S. S. Cronprinz some years ago that I found myself in the master's company together with a common friend, Mr Kallenbach, a German. He was accepted as a worthy companion by Gokhale, who used to play with him the game of coits. Gokhale had just then, during the voyage from England to Capetown, picked up that game, and he very nearly gave Mr Kallenbach a beating in the game ; and, let me add, Mr Kallenbach, so far as I am aware, is one of the cleverest players of coits in South Africa. Just after that we had our meals at which Gokhale was talking to me with reference to the game, and said : " Do you know why I want to enter into such competition with Europeans ? I certainly want to do at least as much as they can do, for the sake of our country (Hear, hear). It is said, rightly or wrongly, that we are inferior people in many matters, and "so far as I can do it" – and this he said in all humility – "I certainly want to show that we are at least their equals, if not their superiors."

That was one incident. On board the same steamer we were engaged in a hot discussion in connection with our dear Motherland, and he was mapping out for me, as a father would for his child, a programme that I was to follow in India if I ever happened to see the Motherland again. In that connection he said: 'We in India lack character; we need religious zeal in the political field.' One of his missions in life, I think, was to inculcate the lesson that whatever we do, we should do with zeal and thoroughness. Whatever he did, he did with a religious passion; that was the secret of his success. He did not wear his religion on his sleeves; he lived it. Whatever he touched, he purified; wherever he went, he created an atmosphere around him which was fragrant. When he came to South Africa he electrified the people there not only by his magnificent eloquence but by the sincerity of his character and by the religious devotion with which he worked. What was that devotion? Ailing though he was, he was awake the whole night practically when he was to see General Smuts; he did so in order to prepare the case for his countrymen with a thoroughness that surprised the

Leader of the Boer Government. What was the result? He got the promise from the South African Government that the £ 3 tax would be gone in a few years, and the £ 3 tax is no more. (Cheers).

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 1111-12

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4

[On unveiling the portrait of Gokhale at the Khallhdina Hall, Karachi, on Tuesday the 29th February 1916, Gandhiji spoke as follows :]

In Hyderabad, Sind, also, I was asked to unveil a portrait of Gokhale; and there I put to myself and to those present a question which I put to myself and to you now. That question is: What right have I to unveil the portrait of Gokhale and what right have you to join in the ceremony? Of course to unveil a portrait or to join in it is nothing great or important in itself. But the question we should ask ourselves is: Are our hearts really so moved by the glorious example of this great man that we resolve to copy him? The function will have no real significance unless we follow in his footsteps. And if we do follow him, we shall be able to achieve a great deal. Of course it is not possible for all of us to achieve what Gokhale did in the Imperial Legislative Council. But the way in which he served the motherland, the whole-hearted devotion with which he worked day and night without ceasing – all this it is in our power to copy. And I hope that when you leave this hall, you will bear in mind to follow him and thus give expression to your regard for him. You know that the best achievement of Gokhale according to himself was the establishment of the Servants of India Society. It lies with us to support it and continue its noble work. It would be best if we could join the Society. But that involves the question of our being fit for it. If we are not in a position to join the Society, we can all do the next best thing, viz. render pecuniary aid and swell the funds of the Society.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 1113

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## 5

[The inhabitants of Umreth had invited Gandhiji to declare open a library they had set up as a memorial to Gokhale. The following is the speech delivered by Gandhiji on the occasion:]

Brothers and Sisters,

You have invited me to declare open the Gokhale Library and to unveil his portrait. It is a very sacred and solemn task. These days a belief, which is almost a disease, seems to have taken hold of the minds of people in Western countries that by opening a library they have rendered great service to society. One Mr Carnegie, a millionaire, lives in a city in America. He is said to have such immense wealth that if he distributed lakhs of rupees among the people his capital would not show any appreciable decrease. He opens libraries at many places in his name. Some leaders from Scotland have requested him not to extend his activity further without their consent, for they feel that by such libraries there was a possibility of doing more harm than good. In Paris the abuse of libraries is said to be on the increase. Please do not run away with the impression from what I have been saying that I am against starting libraries. I only want to say that while opening a library we should all bear in mind the person in whose name it is being established as also what books it should have for the town so that the giving of his name to the library and the reading of the books therein may both bear good fruit.

Now about the portrait. Gokhale was not hungry for fame or honour ; indeed it is known that he did not like to receive honours. Many a time when honour was bestowed on him in person he had his eyes turned to the ground. It is certainly not true that Gokhale's soul would enjoy peace by the unveiling of a portrait of his. While on his deathbed the Mahatma had declared his ideal. He had said that his soul would not enjoy peace if after his death his biography was written, or if a memorial was raised to him, or if meetings were held to express sorrow at his passing away from this world. His only desire was that the whole of India should lead the life he had led and that the Senants of India Society founded by him progressed and prospered in its mission of service to the nation. Only those

who accept the spirit of this last will and testament of the departed soul have the right to have a portrait of Gokhale and to get it unveiled.

The extent of Gokhale's life and work is very wide indeed. But I shall rest content today by narrating to the sisters present here some domestic incidents from his life. That Gokhale rendered great service to his family is something these sisters may well emulate. He never did anything that would pain his family. Gokhale did not do what is usually done today in Hindu society ; he did not give his daughter in marriage as children marry their dolls while at play ; he did not push his daughter into the sea at the early age of eight and thus seek relief from what is among the Hindus believed to be a burden to be cast away as early as possible. His daughter is still unmarried. He has suffered a great deal in keeping her so till now. Besides, he became a widower when he was quite a youth. He could easily have married a second time. But he did not do so. He has served his family in various ways. And possibly all of us do so in the ordinary way. But service to the family can be rendered in two ways: Either out of self-interest or out of a sense of duty. Gokhale had shed all self-interest from his life. The family, then the village, then the country, to whichever of them required his service, he rendered it as the occasion demanded as a matter of duty, with the highest courage, with the fullest devotion and to the best of his ability.

Between the Hindu and the Mussalman Gokhale did not make any difference whatsoever. In his eyes everyone was equal and he had the same love for all. He gave way to anger sometimes, but his anger had in all cases to do with the good of the country. Besides, his anger had a benevolent effect on the opposite party concerned. His indignation was so disinterested that many Europeans who at first disliked him later became his close friends.

The question of uplifting the 'untouchables' was uppermost in the mind of Gokhale and he initiated and carried on various activities for their welfare. If any one dared to criticize him for this he frankly told him that we did not commit sin by touching them but by refusing to touch them.

While I was visiting the 'untouchable' quarters of this town in order to see the weaving done by our Meghwal brothers I was surprised to hear the boys who had gone with me whispering about untouchability. Though I do not intend to speak on the subject of caste distinctions here I will at least say this that unless we amalgamate that class with us we shall not be able to uplift ourselves, our town or our country. Indeed, unless we mix on a footing of perfect equality with them all hope for Swaraj is vain. Till our blind faith in custom is removed, and as long as quarrels persist in the family, in the town and in society, mere repetition of the word Swaraj by you will not lead, you anywhere in its direction. In this very town of yours, Umreth, fifty handlooms worked full time some time ago; now there are only two. and even those two are not working satisfactorily. The reason is not far to seek. It is your narrowness. It is the duty of the leaders of Umreth to advance and to give encouragement to their local industries. If they do not have this much patriotism in them they have no right to unveil a portrait of a spiritual-minded saint like Gokhale. But I feel and believe that Umreth does not entirely lack sentiment and enthusiasm. It is gratifying to see that it shows sympathy for Mahatma Gokhale and has learnt to appreciate his work.

1917

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## 6

[Gandhiji's speech on the occasion of the Second Anniversary of a Sindhi Mandal:]

The late Gopal Krishna Gokhale said, when he founded the Servants of India Society, that our country was in need of those who gave all their twenty-four hours to the nation, even as the British Empire is run by those who think of nothing but the Empire all the twenty-four hours of the day. The more we have full time workers of this type the better.

The question has been asked me whether the workers who join such institutions should receive an allowance for their livelihood or not. There are some who think it a humiliation to receive any allowance and would prefer to work without any. They do not seem to realize that if we act on that principle we

shall have to search for millionaire workers. Millionaires are few and far between and it is very rarely that we get volunteer workers from that class. I must say that there is a subtle self-conceit in the insistence that we should work without drawing any allowance. There is not only no humiliation in receiving an allowance for one's livelihood but a clear duty. Gokhale began his life of service with an allowance of Rs. 40 a month and never in his life drew more than Rs 75 monthly. He contented himself with that much all his life, and though as member of Commissions and Committees he used to get fat honorariums or allowances he made them all over to the Servants of India Society. He did not feel it below his dignity to draw an humble allowance for his livelihood, but considered it rather an act of duty and of merit. Why then should we pretend to have a higher sense of self- respect than he? Even a millionaire's son if he becomes a member should, instead of depending on his millions, make a gift of his millions to such a society and draw his monthly allowance as any other member.

I am told that a worker in Sind finds it difficult to live without less than a hundred rupees a month. I find it difficult to swallow this. It may be so in Sind because we have artificially increased our wants. But my experience tells me that it is possible to do with very much less. Lalaji's Servants of the People Society and Gokhale's Servants of India Society we know because of the great names of their founders, but there are many other societies of voluntary workers where the individual allowance is not more than Rs.25/- to Rs.30/-. In Utkal Rs.25/- to Rs.30/- is an exception and Rs.15/- is the rule. We have therefore to cut our coat according to our cloth, and limit our needs in accordance with the conditions of our people.

May this institution draw a large number of men who will dedicate themselves to the service of their province.

*Young India, 30-4-'31*