

### **Gopala Krishna Gokhale Speech**

Gopala Krishna Gokhale was a great freedom fighter of our country. He delivered a speech in response to the address presented to him by students. On 25th July 1911 at an open air public meeting near Victoria Hall, Mumbai.

My first duty on rising is to tender my most sincere and grateful thanks to the students of Madras for their address which they have just now presented to me.... There is no doubt whatever in my mind that if I could now go back once again to the days of my student hood, I would do so at once with pleasure. The life of a student is comparatively speaking, a sheltered life. There are, of course, certain responsibilities; they are definite and they are assigned to you by those who are willing to take care of you and there is not much need to be constantly exercising your own judgments. You know that in later life the position is reversed; instead of others helping you, you have in the first place to help yourself... Gentlemen, because this is the happy part of your life, there are certain responsibilities attached to it which must be well discharged by you, because no privilege in life is worth having, unless it is attended by corresponding duties and there are certain duties, which those who placed you in your present privileged position expect you to perform.

I will consider these duties under four heads. First of all, the duty which you owe to yourselves; then there is the duty which you owe your fellow- students; the third duty is the which you owe to those in authority over you, and the last duty is a duty which you owe to those who are around

You, not students, but people of the wider world.

### **Duty to yourselves**

The duty to you is twofold. You have first of all to lay by a stock of knowledge that will suffice you not sincerely for your examinations but will be helpful to you in later life. Knowledge is an exacting mistress; she needs devotion, whole- hearted, on the part of the person who seeks her. Such whole0 hearted devotion is possible only in the days of student hood. Therefore, the first part of the duty towards yourselves is to take the utmost advantage of your present position, to lay by a stock of knowledge that will be useful to you in later life.

### **Importance of character**

But it is not merely knowledge that will help any class of human beings by itself. Along with that knowledge there is another requisite that you must secure and that is character. It is almost a truism to say that more depends for success in life on character than on knowledge. It is an invidious thing to distinguish between comparative values of knowledge and character. But since both are indispensable, I would urge on you that you should attach as much importance to character as to knowledge. This character must show itself in earnestness, in energy of action

and in high and generous sentiments being brought to bear upon the discharge of your duties and in recognizing what is due to yourselves. You have to acquire a character which will raise the whole life of the people amidst whom you move and for whom you are expected to work.

As character will naturally have to act on those around you, the stronger, the firmer and nobler it is, the better work you will do for the country. Even if you acquire a fairly high character while you are at school or college; it may not always be easy to retain that character in the struggles of later life, because you are sure to be acted upon by those who are around you. But if you begin by acquiring a strong character for yourselves and when you in course of time, occupy the place of the present seniors, then the students or the younger men of the succeeding generation will find that the forces that act on them are more helpful for retaining a good character than possibly what you may be able to find today. This is the twofold duty which you owe to yourselves – the acquiring of knowledge (I use ‘ knowledge ‘ in its widest sense) not only knowledge from every quarter which will be useful to you in later life- and acquiring character which will enable you to achieve success in whatever work you may take on hand. That, in brief, is the duty to you.

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