1 G.S. Khaparde and His Diary

Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde (27 August 1854-1 July 1938),[1] whom Sai Baba affectionately called Dadasaheb, was a renowned lawyer and political activist, and one of the most trusted lieutenants of the Nationalist leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920).[2] Born in Ingroli, in the Berar Province, into an upper-middle-class Deshastha Brahmin family, G.S. Khaparde had his primary education in Nagpur and Amravati, also known as Amraoti and Umraoti, his home town.[3] After matriculating in 1872, he joined the Elphinstone College in Bombay where he brilliantly completed his B.A.[4] In 1884, he obtained the Bachelor of Laws Degree (LL.B.) and started his legal practice in Amravati though he soon gave it up to join Government service as a *munsiff*, a lower-level magistrate, and as an assistant Commissioner at Berar between 1885 and 1890.[5]

1 The day of his birth happened to be *Gaṇeśacatūrthī*, the birthday of the popular elephant-headed deity Gaṇeśa, patron of Bombay: therefore, he was called Ganesh. On Gaṇeśa in Maharashtra, see Grimes, *Gaṇapati*.

2 On B.G. Tilak, see the recent works of Upton, *The Thought of Tilak* and Oak, *Political Ideas of Tilak*. See also Pati, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak* and the classic studies of Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale* and Cashman, *Myth of the Lokamanya*. Tilak came to be popularly known as 'Lokmānya', which means 'universally respected'.

3 On Amravati, see Gandhi, Bhatia, Agrawal, "Urban Renewal of Walled City", 1001-4.

4 It is further recorded that Khaparde attended Deccan College in Pune between 1873 and 1876; see Shigwan, "Sanskrit Pathshala", 265.

5 Apparently, the name Khaparde is derived from Khaparda or Khaparwada, a village in Akola District. His father, Shrikrishna Narahara alias Bapusaheb, was a clerk in one of the Hyderabad Contingent Cavalry Messes and accompanied the regiment to Delhi during the Mutiny. Later, he got a civil appointment in Berar and rose to the rank of Extra Assistant Commissioner. An able magistrate, he became a wealthy landowner. He died in 1893.

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Figure 1 Hyderabad State and Berar in 1903. Detail from a Map of India Published by Dodd, Mead & Company (1903). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

Proficient in English as well as in Sanskrit language and letters,[6] which he studied from his childhood under the guidance of Narayan Shastri Pinjarkar,[7] he was well-versed in Vedānta philosophy and Hindu religious texts – starting with the ones of the Maharashtrian poet-saints, such as the *Jñāneśvarī* of Jñāndev (ca. 1271-1296) and the *Eknāthī Bhagavat* of Eknāth (1533-1599) – and was also a skilled orator and debater with a good sense of humor. In Elphinstone College, he was appointed as a Junior and Senior Fellow and in these capacities he assisted in teaching both Sanskrit and English. Khaparde was a born linguist who knew various Indian languages such as Hindī, Gujarātī,[8] and of course Marāṭhī, his mother-tongue. Significantly, when the people of Bournemouth, on the south coast of England, heard him speak with great eloquence and wit in September 1919, he became popular as 'the Mark Twain of India'.[9]

In 1890, Khaparde resigned from government service and returned to the bar. He soon became a leading lawyer of Amravati and his practice

6 His Sanskrit Professor was the eminent scholar and social reformer Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925), while his English Professor was William Wordsworth, the grandson of the Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850).

7 In his College years, he was so proficient in Sanskrit that he was selected to debate in 'the language of the gods' with Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), the founder of the Ārya Samāj.

8 See Kunte, *Source Material*, 373-4 (diary entries of 17 and 23 December 1907), 414-15 (diary entries of 4 and 6 November 1917).

9 Kunte, *Source Material*, 471.

was so lucrative that he became known as the 'Nawab of Berar'.[10] Not only was he a wealthy and eminent jurist, but he was also a generous philanthropist, always ready to help those in need, and his home was open to all. He provided shelter to numerous families, students, and scholars, keeping a home so full of guests that he spent lavishly on their comfort; at one point, his household numbered fifty people, not counting children. G.S. Khaparde was married to Shrimati Lakshmibai (d. 1928), a woman of profound piety and devotion, with whom he had three sons: Balkrishna Ganesh (1882-1968), also known as Babasaheb or Baba;[11] Balvant Ganesh, who was to become a Sanskrit scholar;[12] and Devidas alias Bhausaheb.[13] His eldest son, Balkrishna Ganesh, documented his father's life in a Marāṭhī biography published in 1962.[14]

From 1890, Khaparde became active in the public life of Berar, soon rising to President of the District Council. He built a strong political base among Maharashtrian Brahmins, an extensive circle of clients, and local landowners. Although originally a moderate, his 1891 meeting with B.G. Tilak in Nagpur transformed his outlook. He came to identify so deeply with Tilak's radical ideology that the two became close friends, with Tilak frequently

10 As Vishwas B. Kher points out: "Khaparde's income from legal practice ran into four to five figures per month"; Kher, *Sai Baba*, 124. At some point, his annual income by way of legal practice was of the order of rupees 90,000 to 95,000. In his residence, he maintained seven horses and two carriages, with staff to look after them; see Kher, "More about 'Shirdi Diary'", 114-15.

11 Following in his father's footsteps, he was a lawyer and a dedicated follower of Tilak, eventually becoming a prominent political figure. In 1923 and 1927, he was elected to the Central Provinces Legislative Council and later served as Minister of Education between 1934 and 1936. When the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), led by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar and his associates, began expanding in the Berar region in 1932, Balkrishna Ganesh was among its early supporters. A deeply religious man and the chief trustee of the Badrinath temple, he chose to end his life in 1968 through *prāyopaveśana* – a ritual of voluntary fasting unto death. Balkrishna Ganesh was survived by his son, Bapusaheb; see Baker, *Changing Political Leadership*, 53, 79, 99, 108-9, 111, 164, 177.

12 He served as a Lecturer in Marāṭhī and Sanskrit at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU). As the first teacher associated with the Marāṭhī Department, he joined the University at the request of its founder, Madan Mohan Malaviya. Balvant Ganesh was a close associate of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), and was honored with the prestigious title of *Kavi Bhushan* for his contributions to Sanskrit poetry. It is noteworthy that in a diary entry of 7 July 1920, and elsewhere, G.S. Khaparde refers to Balvant not as his second, but as his third son; indeed, as early as 11 September 1911, Khaparde had similarly referred to Balvant as his "third son". This suggests the existence of an older son who may have died at a young age; see Kunte, *Source Material*, 493; National Archives of India, New Delhi, *Diaries of G.S. Khaparde*, 11 September 1911, Microfilm Repository, Identifier: MF_222400056290. Balvant Ganesh had five sons: Madhusudhan, Keshav, Yashvant, Vasudev, and Hari.

13 Khaparde makes a reference to his son Bhausaheb in a diary entry dated 10 April 1909, while in London. He calls him "my son Buga (Devidas *alias* Bhausaheb)"; Kunte, *Source Material*, 381. A reference to Bhausaheb as well as to Balvant is implied in an entry dated 27 December 1910; see *ibid*., 390.

14 Khaparde, *Śrī Dādāsāheb Khāparḍe*. In fact, as he states in the preface, "it is not a biography but edited material gathered from Dadasaheb Khaparde's diaries for the purpose of the biography". Balkrishna Ganesh was active in promoting the Marāṭhī language from 1923, when he founded the Vidarbha Sahitya Sangh. In addition to his career as a pleader and politician, he was a journalist who edited the Marāṭhī journal *Udaya* and wrote under the pen name 'Baba Bharti' for the magazine *Prasād*. He also authored a book in English titled *From Science to Samadhi*.

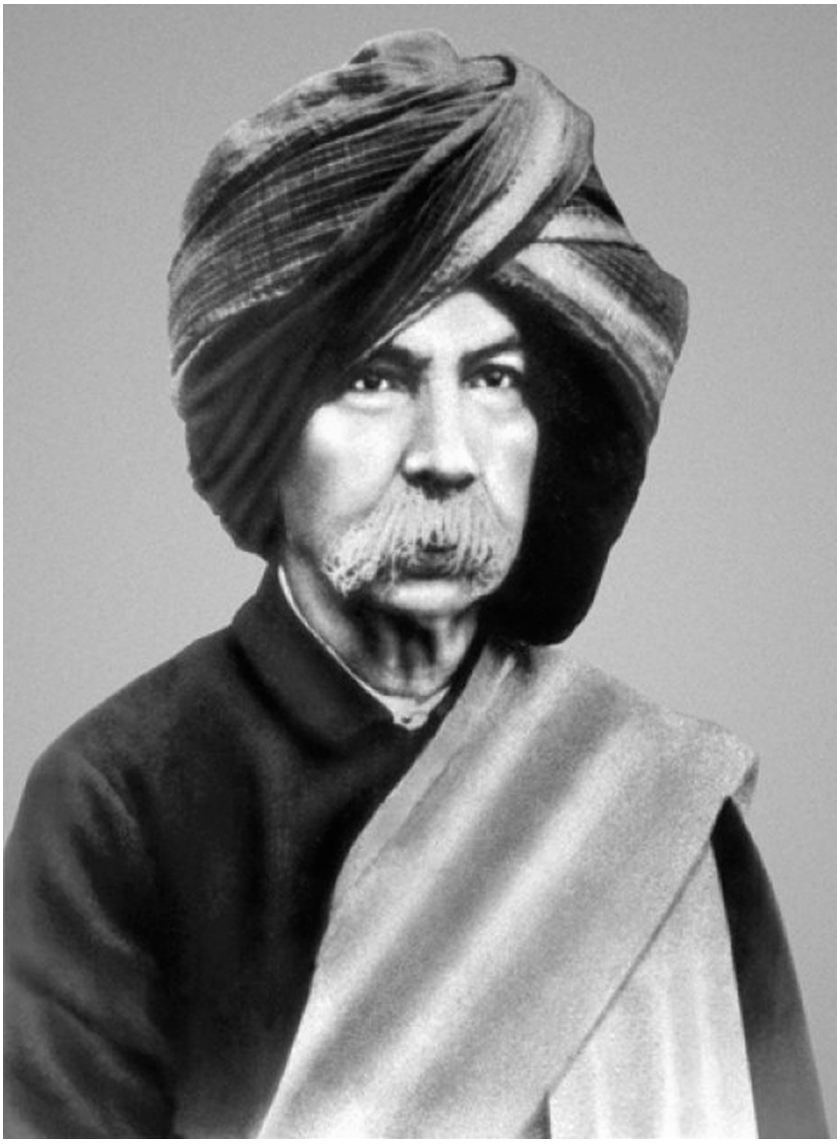

Figure 2 Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde (1854-1938)

inviting him to Pune[15] for consultations.[16] This shift from a reform-oriented moderate to a radical nationalist (*rashtravadin*) – or extremist, as he is often classified –[17] had significant consequences.[18] While initially welcomed by British authorities, Khaparde saw that support vanish as he aligned with Tilak. Despite the constant risk of arrest and the various challenges he faced over the years, Khaparde showed unwavering determination and never retreated. His resolve is clearly captured in a diary entry dated 13 May 1907. Upon hearing that Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928) – who, along with Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932), formed the 'Lal Bal Pal' triumvirate of nationalist activists[19] – had been arrested, he wrote:

> The news of the arrest of Lala Lajpat Rai reached us as we were leaving Chhindwara. Like Natu Brothers,[20] he has been arrested under the old regulation of 1818, and deported. The news was confirmed at Shivani. It damped the spirits of many luke warm people. This is, therefore, the time to infuse courage into them, and we did our best to do so. Some stupid Moderates thought that we would run away to Nagpur on hearing of the arrest. How demoralized they have become!!! It makes me more resolved than ever to do all I can for our cause and shun no risks. The D.C.'s [= Deputy Commissioners] and D.S.P.'s [= Deputy Superintendents of Police] are ranged against us, but they help by advertising our movements. We reached Jabbalpore at 1 after midnight.[21]

15 Also known as Poona, which is its anglicized version. In his diary, Khaparde always calls it Poona.

16 See Kashikar, "G.S. Alias Dadasaheb Khaparde", 24. On the political context in which Khaparde came into prominence, see Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism*, 106, 131-4, 141, 144, 149-50, 159-60, 162, 166, 171, 183. Khaparde came in close contact with Tilak through the so-called Tai Maharaj adoption case. Tai Maharaj was the wife of Wassadeo Harihar Pandit better known as Baba Maharaj – a leader of the reformed Gaṇapati movement and a rich estate owner (*jagīrdār*) of Kolhapur – and in 1897 Khaparde's eldest son Balkrishna had married one of their daughters. When Baba Maharaj found himself on his death bed in August of that same year due to a cholera epidemic – he died on 7 August 1897 – he made a will making both Khaparde and Tilak trustees of his estate and in this way their friendship grew stronger; on the Tai Maharaj adoption case which began on 29 July 1901, see *ibid*., 105-7. See also Kunte, *Source Material*, 5-6 ("Life-Sketch: Shrimant Ganesh Krishna Khaparde").

17 Tilak and his followers were called extremists by their opponents. Tilakites, on the other hand, referred to themselves as nationalists. On these issues, see Baker, *Changing Political Leadership*, 37-9. On Khaparde, see *ibid*., 40, 42, 70-1, 80, 158.

18 For an overview of Hindu nationalism, see Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*.

19 See Argov, *Moderates and Extremists*. See also Sharma, *Moderates and Extremists*; Bayly, *The Raj*, 342-3.

20 They were two prominent Brahmins of Pune who were arrested in July 1897 and imprisoned for two years without trial.

21 Kunte, *Source Material*, 358.



Figure 3 Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde and his wife Lakshmibai

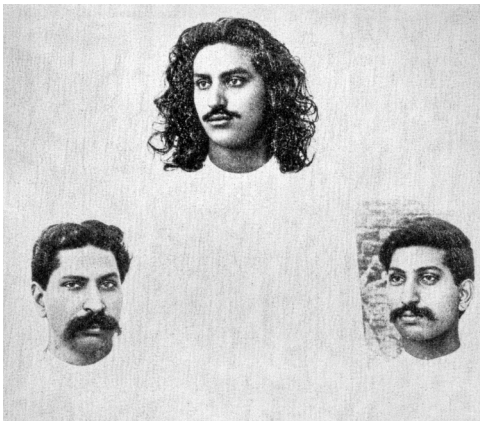

Figure 4
G.S. Khaparde's three sons.
From left to right: Devidas,
Balkrishna Ganesh, and Balvant Ganesh



Figure 5 Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde and Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1915

What is certain is that the government monitored all of Khaparde's activities, employing detectives and spies to keep him under constant surveillance. He, in turn, was well aware of being watched. In an entry dated 10 December 1905, he pointed out:

> Yesterday a man pretending to be a *Sadhu* [= an ascetic] came and behaved most wonderfully. He pretended to be a disciple of Ganesh Bua[22] [= Gajanan Maharaj] of Shegaon. I made him out soon and so did my son Baba. He appears to be a detective. He went away after taking food in the forenoon and never returned. I am not sorry that he has disappeared.[23]

And in another entry from Jabbalpore, dated 15 May 1907, he noted:

> The police have today posted a man near our gate. He takes down the name of everybody who visits me. This is a way of frightening people […] There were about six detectives present besides Mr. Bambawale. They tried to take notes, but sat listening when speeches progressed and stood spell-bound.[24]

In his diary, Khaparde frequently records being watched by the government – both in India and in England – and notes the persistent rumors of his imminent arrest. In an entry dated 19 May 1907, he wrote:

> At night Mr. Nankre said that he had received information that I and Moonje[25] were to be arrested and that telegraphic messages about the matter were passing among officers for the purpose. I am not inclined to believe the information, though in the present temper of the executive Government, which is a combination of insanity, stupidity and petty revengefulness, anything is probable.[26]

Moreover, writing from Bombay on 26 June 1908 he noted: "There is a rumor flying about that warrant of arrest is out against me".[27] Indeed, due to his intense political activism the British kept a constant eye on him: starting from 1896, Khaparde used his legal knowledge and oratorical skills to promote *swadeshi*, i.e., independence, rouse the consciousness of the Indian people, especially the young, by supporting numerous agitational activities, and defend political offenders in all possible ways,[28] both in India and in England, accepting all dangers and sacrifices.

22 *Buā* (or more precisely, *buvā*) is a term of respectful address, often used for religious teachers, elderly men, or figures of authority.

23 Kunte, *Source Material*, 339.

24 Kunte, *Source Material*, 358. On 6 February 1909, while in London, he wrote: "I discovered today the name of the detective employed by India Office to watch my movements. It is Vecsei. I wonder what there is to watch"; *ibid.*, 381.

25 Balakrishna Shivram Munje (1872-1948) was to become a leader of the Hindu Mahasabha. After Tilak's death in 1920, he dissociated himself from the Congress.

26 Kunte, *Source Material*, 358-9.

27 Kunte, *Source Material*, 380.

28 A case in point is the *Harikishore* press case of sedition, for which Khaparde worked almost continuously for two months in 1907, without charging any fees; see Kunte, *Source Material*, 362-71.

According to James Campbell Ker (1878-1961) of the Indian Civil Service, author of a confidential publication titled *Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917* (Calcutta 1917), Khaparde was the initiator, as early as 1896, of the idea of boycotting English goods. Ker even suggests that Khaparde was an inspirer, and possibly the originator, of the idea of bombs as a weapon in the fight for freedom.[29] However, although Khaparde was in touch with the revolutionaries and occasionally helped them – in his diaries he wrote with approbation of figures such as the Chapekar brothers,[30] Madan Lal Dhingra (1883-1909)[31] and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) –[32] his tangible connections with them appear to have been limited. As S.G. Kashikar writes:

> [A]lthough he might have looked upon the revolutionary line as the ultimate weapon against the British rule if other methods failed, he surely did not consider it to be the most appropriate path for his times. He favored the radical and nationalist path of Tilak as most suitable for his times.[33]

29 See Ker, *Political Trouble in India*, 24-6. See also Sinha, "New Source", 154-5. Ker writes: "In 1908, one of the principal accused in the Maniktolla Garden bomb case said that he had visited Khaparde at Amravati to tell him that the revolutionary party in Bengal was prepared to make bombs, and to ask for the subscriptions which Khaparde had promised. He also said that Khaparde had sent B.H. Kane, a youth belonging to Nagpur who was convicted in the Maniktolla Conspiracy case but acquitted in appeal, to Calcutta to learn the manufacture of bombs" (Ker, *Political Trouble in India*, 25-6).

30 Damodar Hari and Balkrishna Hari Chapekar, known as the Chapekar brothers, assassinated the British official Walter Rand and his military escort, Lieutenant Charles Ayerst, in Pune on 22 June 1897. The brothers were eventually captured and executed: Damodar Hari in April 1898, followed by Balkrishna Hari in May 1899. This is considered to be the first manifestation of militant nationalism in India, after the 1857 Revolt. It is reported that, shortly before their murder, the elder Chapekar visited Khaparde disguised as a ballad singer and that even the brothers' father was a guest at Khaparde's house in Amravati on 29-30 December 1898; see Ker, *Political Trouble in India*, 20, 25.

31 In July 1909, while studying in Britain, Dhingra assassinated William Hutt Curzon Wyllie (b. 1848), a British official, for which crime he was hanged a month later. This was the first daring act of political violence against the British in their homeland. V.D. Savarkar said that Khaparde was a sympathizer with such deeds (see Ker, *Political Trouble in India*, 26), and Khaparde himself gave interviews about Dhingra's martyrdom, praising his courage. In a conversation with the English poet and writer Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), Khaparde noted: "[If] India could produce 500 men as absolutely without fear, she would achieve her freedom. […] No great fortitude was ever shown by a martyr for any faith. With such men to love her, Mother India must succeed" (Blunt, *English Occupation of Egypt*, 267-8). Moreover, in an entry dated 22 July 1909, while in London, Khaparde wrote: "I heard also that Dr. Pollen went to Dhingra in the prison with an offer of defending him gratis. Dhingra refused his request. […] A section of the Anglo-Indian Community is anxious to make out that Dhingra committed the murder under the influence of an intoxicant. Dhingra declines to say this, refuses to be defended, and sticks to the statement made by him in Court. His is a wonderful statement" (Kunte, *Source Material*, 382). In February 1910, Khaparde made a revealing comment with regard to Dhingra, which indicates his belief in psychic phenomena as was current in theosophical circles. To be sure, spiritualism and occultism were popular religious movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries: "One Mr. Steel who is a psychist said that he called the soul of Dhingra and it said that it was moving in an endless mist, that it once concentrated on God, was lifted up and had a vision of what its appointed work was, and that since then it had acquired peace. This was a very remarkable statement" (*ibid.*, 383).

32 On Savarkar as the intellectual fountainhead of Hindutva ideology, see Bakhle, *Savarkar and the Making of Hindutva*; Chaturvedi, *Hindutva and Violence*; Sampath, *Savarkar*. Savarkar's seminal work *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* was first published in 1923, while he was still in prison.

33 Kashikar, "G.S. Alias Dadasaheb Khaparde", 31.

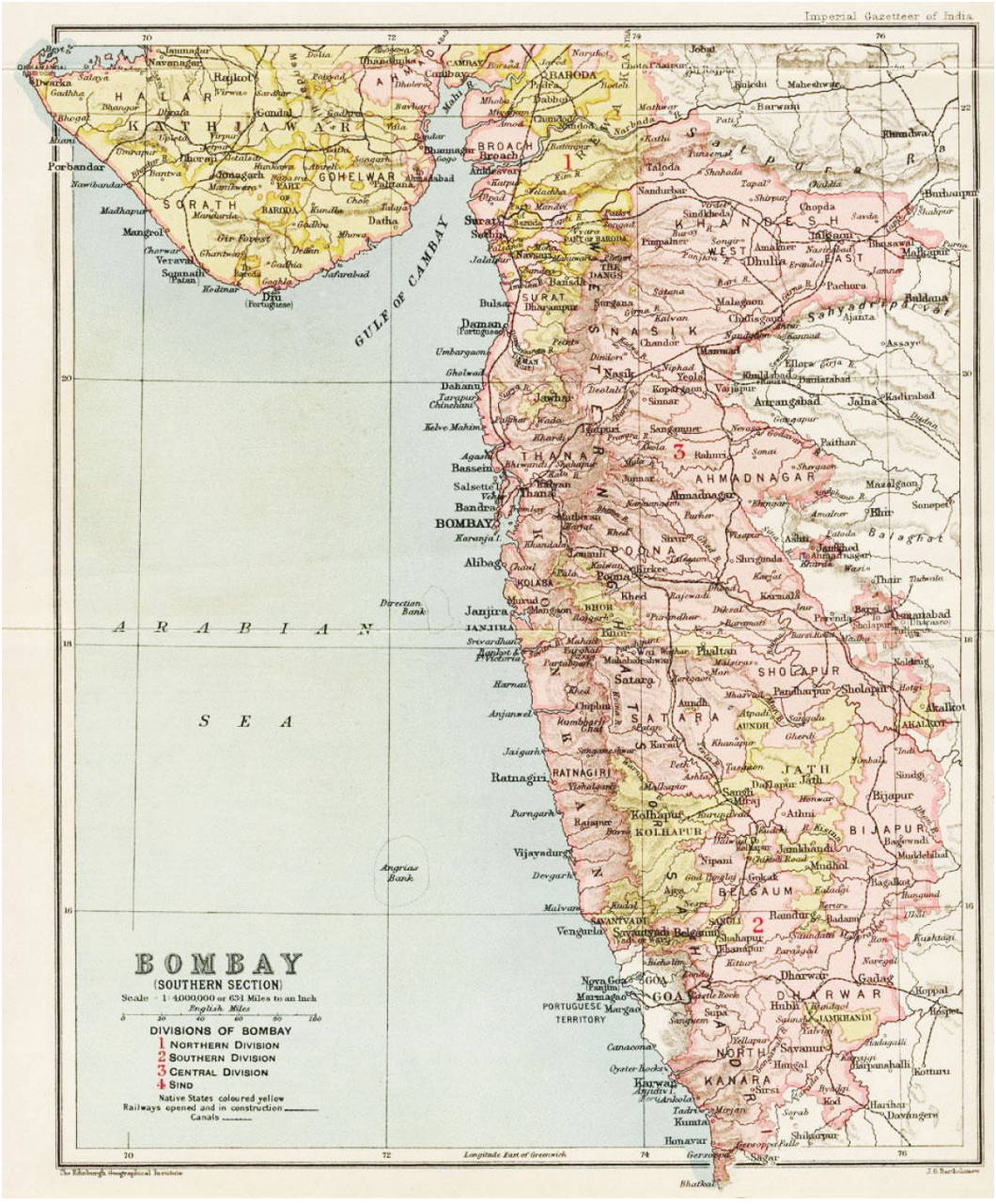

Figure 6 Map of the Southern Section of the Bombay Presidency in 1909. From J.G. Bartholomew, "Bombay (Southern Section) and Portions of Baroda", *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. XXVI: *Atlas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), map 37

By 1897, when the annual session of the Indian National Congress[34] was held in Amravati, he was elected Chairman of the Reception Committee and soon became a prominent figure in national life. Having espoused the policies of Tilak, he sought to discredit the Moderates at the political conferences held in Nagpur, Jabalpur and Raipur between 1905 and 1907. He even anticipated Tilak's scheme of national education, and in 1906 started a new school in Amravati called *Vidyagrah* (Shri Shivaji Vidyalaya), without accepting any grants from the government; the students would be given commercial training and everything would be taught in Marāṭhī. As a result, the Berar Education Society was established.[35]

Over the years, Khaparde rose to a prominent position within the Congress, in keeping with Tilak's principle of responsive cooperation. He held leading roles at both local and regional levels and maintained considerable influence and intimate contacts even at a national level, despite the Congress being controlled by the Moderates. Due to his skills as a speaker, his popularity among the masses was vast. His influence throughout Western India was second only to Tilak's and even exceeded it in Berar. In an entry dated 31 March 1907, while he was in Raipur, he wrote:

> I lectured to a very large audience of over a thousand people. My subject was the ideal of *Swaraj*. The lecture was so successful that they formed a procession, unyoked the bulls of my Tonga[36] and dragged it themselves. […] Children shouted *Bande Mataram*[37] and *Khaparde Saheb-Ki Jaya* [= 'Victory to Mr. Khaparde'] […] They sprinkled *gulal* [= brightly colored powder] very profusely, and took me round to an open space in the town. I spoke on *Swadeshi* and Congress. The lecture was more successful than ever, and the audience numbered over two thousand. They held a torch light procession and brought me to the *Sarai* [= resting place], with music, songs and *Tiparis* [= sticks used in beating upon drums and other musical instruments].[38]

To quote another instance among many, while in Kundalpur on 30 March 1908, Khaparde noted:

> The audience was the largest here, going beyond three thousand, and my speech created so much enthusiasm that when I announced my intention of going away tonight they gathered round me and would not leave me until I promised to stay tomorrow. Many took the *Swadeshi* vow and more said that they would, during the night, induce others to take it.[39]

34 On the history of the Indian National Congress from its founding in 1885 until about 1905, see McLane, *Indian Nationalism and Early Congress*.

35 Kashikar, "G.S. Alias Dadasaheb Khaparde", 30. On the educational development in the Berar area, see Shabbir, *Educational Development in Vidarbha*.

36 A two-wheeled horse-drawn cart (*ṭoṅgā*) common in India's rural areas.

37 Lit. 'I bow to Thee, Mother'. The national song of India, it is a hymn to the goddess Durgā identified as the personification of India. It is taken from the Bengali novel *Ananda Math*, written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) in 1882. It was first sung in a political context by Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress.

38 Kunte, *Source Material*, 355.

39 Kunte, *Source Material*, 380. See also *ibid*., 356-7 (entries of 3 and 11 May 1907), 373-4 (entries of 17 December through 22 December 1907).

However, following the split between Moderates and Nationalists at the Congress' annual meeting in Surat in December 1907, which led to Tilak and his supporters leaving the party, Khaparde's political influence diminished considerably, at least at a national level. Moreover, a few months later, on 24 June 1908, Tilak was arrested by the British under the charge of sedition: this was a terrible blow to Khaparde and all the Nationalists and was to have lasting consequences.[40] On 30 April 1908, two young revolutionaries, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose, threw a bomb at a carriage in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. Their target was the Chief Presidency Magistrate Douglas Kingsford, but they mistakenly killed two British women. Consequently, Chaki committed suicide to avoid capture, while Bose was caught and hanged. In his Marāṭhī weekly newspaper *Kesarī*,[41] Tilak defended the two young men and used the event to call for immediate *svarāj*. This led to Tilak's arrest for sedition. The Parsi judge, Dinshaw D. Davar, who presided over the case, described Tilak's articles as seething with sedition, accusing him of glorifying violence and approving of murder. Ultimately, the Bombay High Court sentenced Tilak to six years of imprisonment. He served his sentence from July 1908 to June 1914 in Mandalay, Burma.[42]

Following Tilak's sentencing, Khaparde and an Indian mission sailed to London on 15 August 1908[43] to seek special leave to appeal his case before the Privy Council.[44] On 3 March 1909, however, the Privy Council rejected the appeal. Along with others, Khaparde then approached the House of Lords but even this effort failed for lack of support. He then tried to find allies for Tilak among the leaders of the Labour Party, the India Committee of the House of Commons, the Civil Rights Committee, and even invoked the royal prerogative of mercy, but all efforts proved unsuccessful. Given the situation, Khaparde decided to sail back to India via Rangoon[45] on 15 September 1910 – after having been in England for more than two years – and reached Rangoon on 16 October. He was able to meet Tilak in Mandalay jail on 22 October. In his diary entry of that day, he describes their conversations regarding Tilak's will and notes in passing that Tilak

40 Tilak had already served an eighteen-month prison sentence, having been convicted of sedition for articles in his newspaper, *Kesarī*, which the British claimed had incited the assassination of the plague commissioner Walter Charles Rand in Pune in June 1897. Throughout his life, Tilak was tried for sedition three times – in 1897, 1908, and 1916 – spending a total of seven and a half years in prison.

41 Lit. 'saffron'. Tilak founded it on 4 January 1881. The newspaper, which during Tilak's lifetime was published every Tuesday, was used as a mouthpiece for the national freedom movement.

42 Burma, nowadays Myanmar, was a province of British India. The British had conquered Mandalay, the country's cultural capital, in 1885. While in prison, Tilak read and wrote extensively and further developed his ideas on the nationalist movement. It was during this time that he wrote the *Gītārahasya*, his famous commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* in which he emphasized the value of the 'discipline of action' or *karmayoga*.

43 Khaparde decided to leave for England on 13 August 1908. His eldest son Balkrishna, then a law student at the Government Law College in Bombay, was unable to inform his mother of his sudden departure for London. This lack of communication led her to blame him for the oversight; see Kher, "More about 'Shirdi Diary'", 138.

44 In 1908, several leaders of the Indian nationalist movement – among whom was Bipin Chandra Pal – had migrated to London in the hope of escaping police harassment; see Owen, "Soft Heart of the British Empire", 143-84. See also Nasta, *India in Britain*; Visram, *Asians in Britain*.

45 Now Yangon, it is situated twenty-two miles inland from the sea on the Yangon River and remains Burma/Myanmar's principal port of entry.

"did not know about the death of my mother and was sorry to learn of it".[46] She had passed away on 27 September 1910, while Khaparde was on the high seas. Finally, having reached Calcutta on 27 October, he returned home to Amravati on 5 November, after an absence of two years, two months and twenty-two days. As V.B. Kher points out:

> He had left no stone unturned to get the judgment against Tilak reversed. He had gone at his own expense to England to campaign for his leader's release. His Herculean labor in England brings out not only his qualities of loyalty and devotion to his leader but also his selflessness and the price he was prepared to pay in terms of energy, time and expense for a cause he believed to be just.[47]

When Tilak came out of prison in 1914, he immediately reverted to active politics and two years later, in 1916, founded the All India Home Rule League together with Khaparde, Joseph Baptista (1864-1930) and Annie Besant (1847-1933),[48] the British Theosophist. The aim was to demand self-governing Dominion status for India within the British Empire. Tilak's career was vindicated when the Congress invited him and the other members of the Home Rule League to rejoin the organization to fight for self-government. Khaparde formed a branch of the Home Rule League in Amravati, became its President, and was able to quickly gain control of the Congress in Berar. In 1917, he was elected in the Indian Legislative Council and, with the inauguration of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms[49] that formed the basis of the 1919 Government of India Act, he became a member of the Imperial Legislative Council. Significantly, Khaparde was part of the Home Rule Delegation that visited England in 1919 to plead the Nationalist cause. The death of Tilak in August 1920,[50] however, and the concomitant rise of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) – who in 1915 had returned to India from South Africa, emerging as the charismatic leader of the non-cooperation movement – brought about Khaparde's decline and he gradually withdrew from active participation in politics. Khaparde had a strong aversion to Gandhi whom he bitterly criticized, even saying that he was "stupid" and "insane" and would "wreck the Congress".[51]

Though he was a staunch Hindu and a conservative in religious matters, Khaparde was not rigidly orthodox and favored social reforms. Realizing that

46 Kunte, *Source Material*, 389.

47 Kher, "More about 'Shirdi Diary'", 116-17.

48 She was the president of the Theosophical Society from 1907 until her death in 1933. On Annie Besant, see Terrier, "Annie Besant", 25-46; Bevir, "Opposition to the Raj", 61-77. See also Khilnani, *Incarnations*, 218-26.

49 Edwin Samuel Montagu (1879-1924) was a liberal politician who served as Secretary of State for India between 1917 and 1922. He was primarily responsible for the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, committing the British to the eventual evolution of India toward Dominion status. The Montagu-Chelmsford Act introduced the constitutional principle of diarchy, separating 'reserved' subjects controlled by British officials from 'transferred' subjects to be controlled by non-officials.

50 Khaparde immediately hurried to Bombay when he heard about Tilak's illness and was at his death-bed till his passing away, which occurred on 1 August 1920; see Kunte, *Source Material*, 493-6.

51 See Kunte, *Source Material*, 500 (5 September 1920), 507 (28 October 1920), 509 (4 December 1920).

various practices and customs had no religious sanction, he came to advocate the abolition of untouchability and to favor temple entry, being convinced that "there was no such thing as untouchability in Hinduism".[52] In 1918, he even supported a bill on inter-caste marriage in the Legislative Council.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that though Khaparde was allied with Tilak in utilizing Hindu celebrations such as the Ganesh festival[53] and the celebration of the Maratha hero Shivaji (1630-1680) for strengthening the feelings of *swadeshi* in the masses,[54] yet he was not communal in his concept of nationalism: in his diaries, he is keen to specify that even Muslims and Parsees participated in the Ganesh celebrations, and we know that he considered holding an Akbar festival.[55]

He was a trusted friend of many Muslims,[56] to the point that in 1899 the Young Men's Mahomedan Society of Amravati, whose secretary was one Abdur Razak Zakir, elected him as its 'Life President'. Khaparde writes that he "accepted the office, though with considerable reluctance and diffidence".[57] It is also reported that a Muslim judge (*kazi*) of Malkhed requested Khaparde to perform the Manjha pre-wedding ritual[58] on the occasion of his daughter's wedding. He was even allowed entry into the *zenana*, the private area reserved for the women of the household, reflecting the deep trust and social harmony he maintained with the Muslim community.[59]

In a diary entry dated 29 May 1907, Khaparde writes that while in the city of Khandwa, many were afraid to let him speak, and the municipality refused the use of its hall. He noted: "It was wonderful that a Mahommadan [*sic*] influenced a Parsi and the latter lent the use of his compound. In it, my lecture was held in the evening at 7. There were over four hundred persons […] they were enthusiastic".[60] Two days later, still in Khandwa, he observed: "Many Mahommadans [*sic*] were present and congratulated me on the success of my speech".[61]

Khaparde's own religiosity was no doubt influenced by the integrative culture that had been a characteristic of the Deccan for centuries. This culture favored a process of accommodation – a rapprochement between faiths and communities that generated what may be called overlapping identities. During the medieval period, the various *bhakti* movements often made little distinction between Hindus and Muslims; for instance, they welcomed and appreciated the Marāṭhī writings of Sufi poet-saints such

52 Khaparde, *Śrī Dādāsāheb Khāparḍe*, 706.

53 See Kaur, "Fire in the Belly", 37-70. See also Courtright, *Gaṇeśa*.

54 In order to promote the nationalist cause, in June 1906 they introduced the Shivaji festival in Bengal.

55 See Kunte, *Source Material*, 320 (6 September 1900), 331 (4 September 1903), 332 (18 June 1905).

56 See Baker, *Changing Political Leadership*, 38.

57 Kunte, *Source Material*, 317 (15-9-1899).

58 Also known as the Mayun ritual. Turmeric paste is applied to the bride and groom to purify and beautify them.

59 See Khaparde, *Śrī Dādāsāheb Khāparḍe*, 154.

60 Kunte, *Source Material*, 361.

61 Kunte, *Source Material*, 361.

as Sheikh Muhammad (1560-1650), the author of the *Yogasaṅgrāma* and numerous devotional songs.[62]

Khaparde was a genuinely patriotic and religious person, the political and spiritual dimensions being inseparable one from the other. In one of his diary entries he wrote: "I had a wonderful dream […]. I appeared to see Goddess as described in *Bande Mataram*, and somebody standing by asked me to worship her. […] Time will show whether the dream comes true".[63] In his untiring tour of India to promote the Nationalist ideals, religion played an important role also through the *kīrtan* genre of singing and storytelling, thus making the political become devotional through musical performance.[64] As he points out in an entry dated 21 December 1907, during the Congress' annual meeting in Surat – which brought about the split between Moderates and Nationalists:

> My speech was very successful. After it he [= Ambalal Sakarlal Desai] said he wished to organize a *Swadeshi Sankirtan*. I offered him my platform but he wanted a close place. Lalitashankar Vyas sang *Jaya Jaya Garvi Gujarat*[65] and two Bengali gentlemen did the *Bande Mataram*.[66]

The original manuscript diaries reveal another feature of Khaparde's religious world: on a number of occasions he inserted diagrams that appear to be astrological charts or horoscopes. Together with his occasional consultations with astrologers, these entries indicate that astrology formed part of the broad repertoire of practices through which he sought guidance concerning the uncertainties of life. Such recourse to astrology was not inconsistent, in his eyes, with scriptural study, devotion to saints, pilgrimage, and other forms of religious observance.

Khaparde was very proud of the Hindu way of life and was a dedicated student of the *Upaniṣad*s and Vedānta philosophy, which deeply inspired both his thoughts and actions. A passage from his diary sums this up nicely:

> The Editor of 'Aruna' wrote to me to give an idea of what I would like to be in my next incarnation. I wrote to him in reply to say that I would like to be reborn in India in the family of a 'Yogi', meet my old friends, work for my country and restore it to its old glory and then be absorbed in the eternal *Brahman*.[67]

Khaparde's ongoing interest in saints and his fascination with supernatural powers (*siddhi*) are evidenced by an article he wrote for the journal *The Theosophist*, published as early as October 1880, when he was twenty-six

62 On the relational nature of religious interactions, i.e., the complex processes through which religious traditions maintain their distinctiveness while simultaneously being transformed by their encounters with others, see Stünkel, *Religions in Contact*; Krech, "Religious Contacts", 191-213.

63 Kunte, *Source Material*, 361.

64 On these issues, see Schultz, *Singing a Hindu Nation*.

65 Lit. 'Victory to Proud Gujarat', a poem written by the Gujarātī poet Narmadashankar Dave (1833-1886) in 1873 and used as a State anthem.

66 Kunte, *Source Material*, 374.

67 Khaparde, *Śrī Dādāsāheb Khāparḍe*, 686, as per Khaparde's diary entry of 7 May 1929.

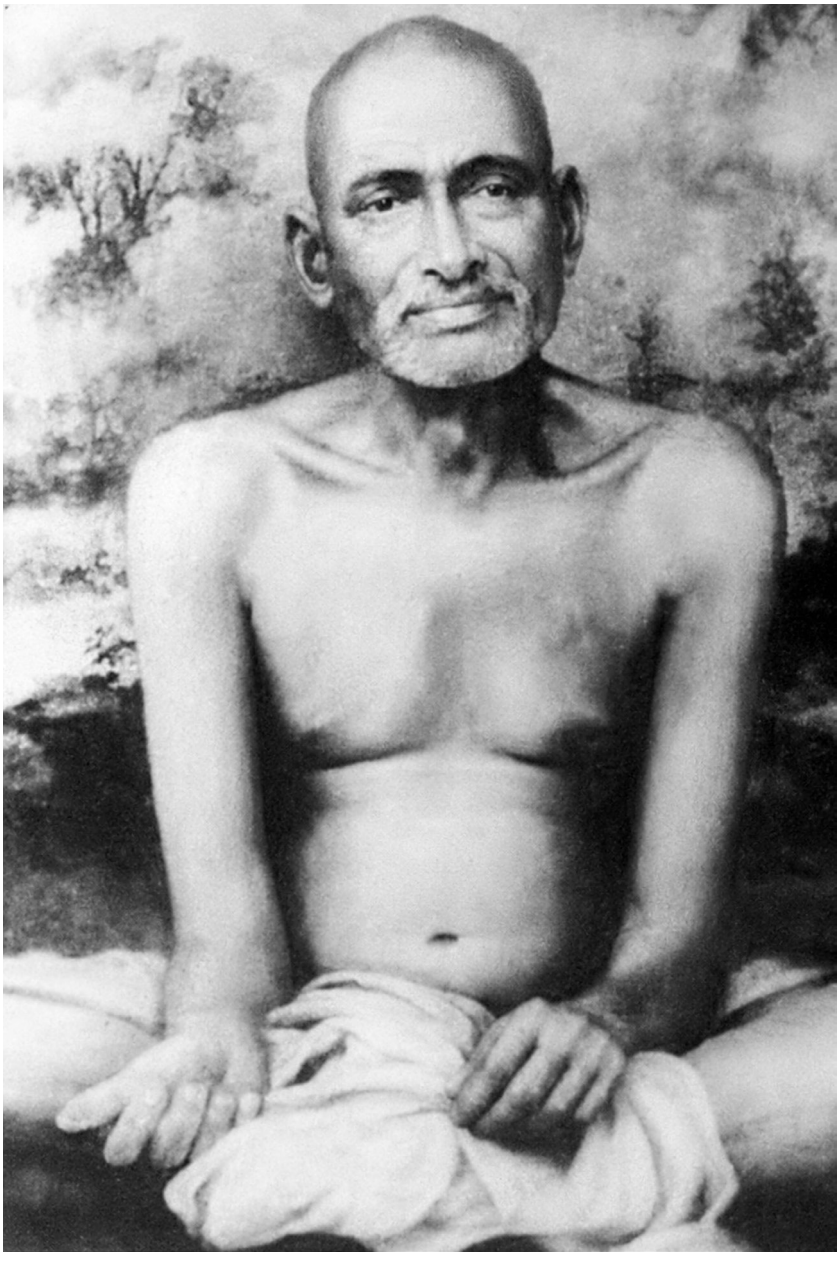

Figure 7 Gajanan Maharaj

years old.[68] In the article, he describes various miracles performed by an ascetic from the Berar region known as Maroti Baba,[69] which Khaparde had witnessed in person: the materialization of sugar balls and other foods; his sudden disappearance from Amravati and his simultaneous appearance in Karanja (nearly forty miles away); and his producing mangoes from a *nīm* tree. Khaparde notes that the saint had "made a stay of a few months with us" – at his home in Amravati – which provided him with "exceptionally good opportunities of observing him night and day".[70]

Khaparde and his wife, Shrimati Lakshmibai, were especially devoted to an ascetic known as Gajanan Maharaj (d. 8 September 1910) of Shegaon, in Buldhana District, who had first appeared in the village in February 1878.[71]

It is reported that the very name Gajanan was first suggested by Khaparde himself in 1905, since this ascetic was often heard addressing himself as 'Ganya'.[72] Hagiographic accounts – and in particular the *Gajanan Vijay*, written by the noted *kīrtankār* Das Ganu (himself a staunch devotee of Sai Baba) – inform us that the saint stayed for a couple of days at Khaparde's house in Amravati. Known as Khaparde Wada, the house had been built in 1875 and was located at Rajkamal Chowk; it was here that the saint and Khaparde had significant interactions.[73]

Though an extreme ascetic of the *avadhūta* type, Gajanan Maharaj did show an interest in the freedom struggle and in May 1908, in Akola, presided over a Shivaji Jayanti meeting that was attended by Tilak, whom he blessed by saying that he was a supreme leader. Apparently, he also warned him not to talk against the British as otherwise they would fetter him soon. The *Gajanan Vijay* reports that "Maharaj saw Khaparde as he came, and told him that he would come to the public meeting in the honor of Shivaji, that he would behave there like a sane person, and he would not do anything that would dishonor the great leader [= Tilak]".[74] Khaparde's contemporary diary substantially corroborates this account. On 3 May he recorded that Tilak worshipped Gajanan Maharaj, who "in his way blessed

68 See Khaparde, "Maroti Baba's Wonders", 6-7. Khaparde is identified as Esq., an abbreviation for Esquire, which is a title of courtesy. He wrote this article in Parel Hill, Bombay, in August 1880.

69 Maroti is an alternate spelling for Maruti, the name by which the monkey god Hanumān – famous for his devotion to Rāma – is best known in the Marāṭhī cultural area.

70 Khaparde, "Maroti Baba's Wonders", 6. For another article on the exceptional powers of Maroti Baba, see *The Theosophist*, 202-3. The article's opening reads: "The Honourable Rao Bahadur Gopalrao Hari Deshmukh, Vice-President of our Society, has kindly forwarded to us for publication the translations of […] two letters received by him in the vernacular from his trustworthy correspondent, Mr. Venkaji Jayawant Khot of Umrawati [= Amraoti], the place where the Bawa [= Baba] is still said to be residing". The letters are dated 10 and 21 March 1881.

71 Khaparde is reported to have said that this ascetic was an erudite Brahmin, well-versed in Vedic scriptures, who hailed from Andhra Pradesh; see `http://www.gajanan-shegaon.com/aboutmaharaj.htm`.

72 For further details, see the texts available at the following links: `https://mydattatreya.com/gajanan-maharaj`; `https://shreegajanangunjan.org/index.php/sample-page/mauli0/maulipd/`.

73 The fact that Gajanan Maharaj, like Maroti Baba, was a guest of Khaparde at his house in Amravati confirms that the latter and his family were very religious people; see Dasaganu, *Gajanan Vijay*, 88-9, 150-3. On Gajanan Maharaj, see also Dāsbhārgav, *Śrī Gajānan Mahārāj*; Kulkarni, *The Saint of Shegaon*.

74 Dasaganu, *Gajanan Vijay*, 150-1. See also Joshi, "Saints of Vidarbha", 286. The author writes that "some enthusiastic scholars even propounded a theory that Gajanan Maharaj was none else but 'Tatya Tope', the hero of the revolt of 1857".



Figure 8 The Khapardes' residence at Rajkamal Chowk, Amaravati, built in 1875

him"; the following day, "a wonder happened" when Maharaj arrived in his chariot (*ratha*) to attend Tilak's lecture and "sat on the dais, smiling and making remarks".[75]

At some point, Gajanan Maharaj told Khaparde: "Go to Sai Maharaj of Shailadhi".[76] In those days the village of Shirdi was also known as Shailadhi/Shiladhi[77] and thus it is believed that the saint of Shegaon would have entrusted his *bhakta* to Sai Baba.[78] It is said that before his demise Gajanan Maharaj "directed his devotees to go to Shirdi assuring them that [Sai] Baba would look after their 'Samsarik and Adhyatmic' welfare splendidly. Many

75 National Archives of India, New Delhi, *Diaries of G.S. Khaparde*, 3-4 May 1908, Microfilm Repository; Identifier: MF_222400056287.

76 The source from which the quotation is taken may be consulted at the following link: `http://saiamrithadhara.com/mahabhakthas/dadasaheb_khaparde.html`. No corroboration of this account has so far been found in Khaparde's diary for 1910. It could not, however, have taken place "a few days before Gajanan Maharaj took *samādhi*" as Khaparde was still in London when the saint died on 8 September 1910. If the tradition preserves a historical recollection, it is more likely that Gajanan Maharaj spoke these words to Khaparde in 1908, before his departure for England; alternatively, the possibility cannot be excluded that the advice was given to Khaparde's wife, Lakshmibai, or to one of his sons, who were present in Amravati at the time.

77 See Gawankar, *Shiladhi*. On Shirdi, see also Aher, *Shirdi Gazetteer*, 37-56; Kavade, *Śrī kṣetra Śirḍīce*. On the Indian village, see Shah, "Village".

78 The day Gajanan Maharaj passed away, Sai Baba, at Shirdi, is said to have exclaimed, "My Gajanan is gone". On the purported link between Gajanan Maharaj and Sai Baba, see Rigopoulos, *Life and Teachings*, 138-9.

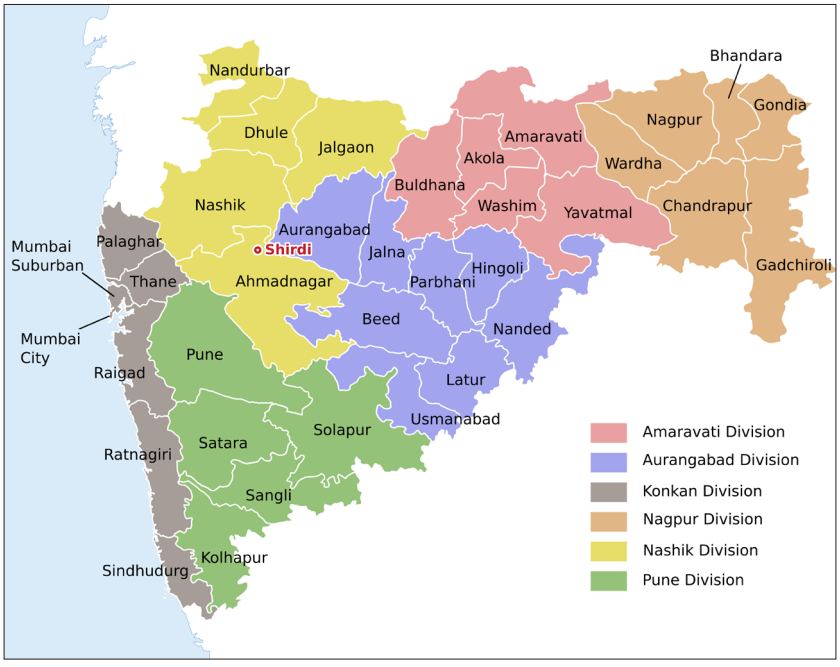

Figure 9 Map of Maharashtra showing the location of Shirdi in Ahmadnagar district. Adapted from PlaneMad and Kaajawa, "Maharashtra Divisions Eng", Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

a devotee like Khaparde, Dhumal and Buti came to Shirdi on the Maharaj's advice".[79]

Khaparde visited Shirdi and met Sai Baba for the first time on 5 December 1910, three months after Gajanan Maharaj's passing. On that occasion, he and his eldest son, Balkrishna, stayed in Shirdi for a week, until 12 December. In total, Khaparde visited Sai Baba five times. Following his initial 1910 visit, he returned for his longest stay from 6 December 1911 to 15 March 1912, residing in the village for a hundred days. His three subsequent visits were briefer: from 29 to 31 December 1915; on 19 May 1917, in the company of Tilak; and finally on 19-20 March 1918, seven months before Sai Baba's death.

From 1894 until the end of his life, Khaparde diligently kept a daily diary, which he always carried with him and wrote in English.[80] It was his habit to record his entries before retiring for the night, typically filling almost a full side of foolscap each day. Only in later years did he begin to record the previous day's events the next morning. Given their historical importance, these forty-five diaries, along with an earlier pocket diary from 1879, are now preserved in the National Archives of India in New Delhi.[81] V.B. Kher notes:

> Whether the event was trivial or important, an entry about it is to be found in his daily record. The names of his visitors, the gist of their

79 Chitluri, *Baba's Rinanubandh*, 90.

80 Some of these diaries were imported and expensive, such as *Collins Diaries* and *Letts Diaries*. Only on the day of his death, 1 July 1938, and the day preceding it, did he fail to make an entry.

81 Khaparde started his diaries in the 1870s, but the earlier years are lost.

> conversation and dialogues with important entities, in question and answer form, in detail, are faithfully entered in bold, neat and legible handwriting without any erasing or overwriting page after page.[82]

As B.G. Kunte, the editor of Khaparde's correspondence and diary, writes in his Preface:

> His personal diary gives glimpses of the political situation of the period and many a time the personal references are touching in the magnificence of their intensity and depth of emotion. His criticisms on important leaders such as Jinnah, Madan Mohan Malaviya and many others may be unpalatable to many readers. But one has to eschew them as they are coming from one who was a patriot and had written diaries for his own self. They are his candid views on men and events. The sterness of character of Dadasaheb Khaparde, his utter simplicity, his sense of devotion to the cause, his disciplined nature, his forthright comments and diatribes are reflected in this valuable compilation.[83]

Though his narrations are factual and comprehensive and by all standards a most precious source, it appears that he purposefully did not mention certain events – especially those that he deemed to be sensitive – so as to avoid controversies. Some crucial points that if known to the British would have caused damage to his cause were either omitted or only hinted at. Thus he told his eldest son and biographer Balkrishna that he alone understood his diaries.[84]

With respect to his *Shirdi Diary*, we can be confident that his nightly entries provided a straightforward, unembellished report of the essential events he witnessed. His focus remained steadily on Sai Baba's behavior, his words, and his interactions with devotees – faithfully recording everything the master said and did.

There is no question that Khaparde was a sincere devotee of Sai Baba whom, as he writes in his diary, he regarded as "a great living saint".[85] In his 1933 introduction to Rao Bahadur Moreshwar W. Pradhan's *Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi: A Glimpse of Indian Spirituality*, he plainly states that he thought Sai Baba represented perfection, and that he fulfilled his idea of God on earth:

> [T]o my mind [Sadguru Sai Maharaj] represented perfection so far as it can possibly be conceived by an imperfect being like myself. No praise that I can bestow is too high for him […]. I count it as the greatest piece of good fortune that circumstances led me to his feet, and the moment I approached them as humbly as I could, all the load of my worldly cares disappeared though only a few minutes before it was felt to be

82 Kher, "More about 'Shirdi Diary'", 112-13.

83 Kunte, *Source Material*, 2. Even Gordon Johnson notes that the Khaparde Papers are "very informative and often very amusing […]. This valuable source serves as an excellent foil to the Gokhale collection"; Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism*, 199.

84 See Kashikar, "G.S. Alias Dadasaheb Khaparde", 33 fn. 2.

85 He told this to Prof. Ganpatrao G. Narke, who came to visit him at his home in Amravati on 14 July 1914, and with whom he had a long talk about Sai Baba. See also Kher, "More about 'Shirdi Diary'", 108-25; Kher, *Sai Baba*, 124; Shepherd, *Faqir of Shirdi*, 145. Prof. Ganpatrao G. Narke and Khaparde were friends, and we know of an exchange of letters between them; see Satpathy, *An Inspiring Life*, 225-6.

> exceedingly oppressive and such as to excite disgust of life. This is not only my experience but of tens of thousands of others whom I met there during a rather prolonged stay. Among them were many highly educated gentlemen and ladies, a large number of hard-headed businessmen, many who had renounced the world and led a life of devotion and piety. The whole of the countryside worshipped him and gathered round with the instinct with which ants surround a big lump of sugar. While many came long distances at great expense and trouble, each went away satisfied and anxious to repeat his or her visit as often as it could be managed. It was a sight to see and enjoy. […] He appeared to know the innermost thoughts of everybody, relieved their wants, and carried comfort to all. He fulfilled my idea of God on earth. […] Sai Maharaj always impressed me as one who believed all religions to be true and helpful to those born to them, in their future evolution. So he insisted on each following his own ritual, without interfering with that of another. The basic virtues are one and the same everywhere, and due abstention and constantly wakeful discrimination supply the necessary impetus to further progress.[86]

The fact that a Muslim *faqīr* "represented perfection" and "fulfilled his idea of God on earth" strongly suggests that the Brahmin Khaparde was not communal. If communalism is defined as an ideology promoting division based on ethnicity or religion, Khaparde certainly did not share such a vision;[87] indeed, Sai Baba's integrative persona and universalist teachings were its total antithesis. The *faqīr* would often purposefully underline his own low status to shock his Brahmin visitors and expose their prejudices, sometimes even pointing out: "I belong to a lower caste within the Muslim community".[88]

Only Khaparde – despite his erudition – and a few other prominent devotees, such as Buti[89] and Nulkar,[90] typically remained silent in Sai Baba's

86 Pradhan, *Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi*, 6-7. Referring to Khaparde's introduction to Pradhan's book, B.V. Narasimhaswami states that "Baba came very near to his [= Khaparde's] idea of God, not that Baba was God to him". This, however, is a misrepresentation of the diarist's words; see Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, 2: 310.

87 The fact that Khaparde wrote for *The Theosophist* as early as 1880, and served as the President of the Amravati Theosophical Lodge continuously for ten years – from 1913 ("General report of the anniversary and convention of the Theosophical Society 1913"; `https://archive.org/details/GeneralReport1913/page/n1/mode/2up`) to 1922 ("General report of the anniversary and convention of the Theosophical Society 1922"; `https://archive.org/details/GeneralReport1922/page/n315/mode/2up`) – proves that his loyalty to the Society was unbroken and implicitly corroborates his anti-communalism. From its foundation in 1875, the primary object of the Theosophical Society – whose motto is "There is No Religion Higher than Truth" – has been to form the nucleus of a universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color. As the Amravati lodge (originally founded in 1900) disappears from the Society's General Report starting in 1923, it was evidently closed down at that time.

88 Mehta, *Purna Parabrahma*, 50. At the same time, Sai Baba would occasionally claim to be a Brahmin, symbolically pointing to his absolute purity: "This is a Brahmin, a white Brahmin, a pure Brahmin. This Brahmin will lead lakhs of people to the *Subhra marga* and take them to the Goal – right up to the end. This is a Brahmin's *masjid*"; Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 8. Even in his parables he would sometimes identify himself as a Brahmin; see Chitluri, *Baba's Rinanubandh*, 32.

89 On the wealthy Brahmin Gopalrao Mukund Buti (1873-1921) from Nagpur, a millionaire who first met Sai Baba in 1908 or 1910, and who between 1915 and 1918 built the *vāḍā* which was to become the saint's Samādhi Mandir, see Satpathy, *An Inspiring Life*, 80-2; Chitluri, *Baba's Rinanubandh*, 75-8.

90 On Tatya Saheb Nulkar (d. 1911), a sub-judge of Pandharpur whom Sai Baba loved very much, see Chitluri, *Baba's Rinanubandh*, 54-60. See also Chitluri, *Baba's Vaani*, 52-3.

presence when they visited him at the local mosque (*masjid*).[91] Apparently, no other devotee would hold his silence before the saint.[92] Their quietness expressed their reverence and humility, they being aware of the spiritual greatness of Sai Baba vis-à-vis their human weaknesses. This is all the more remarkable if we think of Khaparde's sociability and eloquence, he being an excellent conversationalist and humorous speaker – India's 'Mark Twain' – a leading political figure who was used to delivering public discourses to thousands of people.

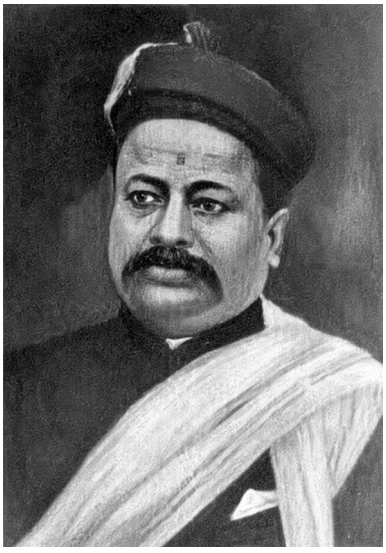

Figure 10
Gopalrao Mukund Buti

The fact that Khaparde wrote his *Shirdi Diary* – first published with his consent in 1924-25 in the monthly magazine *Shri Sai Leela*[93] – in a terse and dry style,[94] in no way implies a lack of devotion. On the contrary, his restraint appears to reflect a conscious effort to preserve a faithful record of what he witnessed rather than to embellish it with personal emotion or retrospective interpretation. The autograph pages recording Khaparde's

91 The *masjid* was located on the outskirts of the village. At the time Sai Baba made it his abode, and for many years thereafter, it was in a dilapidated state; one side lacked a wall, and the ground was marked by holes and pits. Outside the mosque, steps led up to the level of the plain earthen floor. Fronting its open side was a courtyard, entered through a gate set in the wall. The mosque was partially renovated between 1909 and 1912, despite Sai Baba's initial resistance. As Alison Williams points out: "At first, whatever work was done, Baba would undo. It seems not an uncommon occurrence with Baba that whenever a new proposal was put forward, particularly with regard to renovation, he would first oppose it, often vehemently, even violently, before eventually acquiescing and allowing the work to go ahead"; Williams, *Experiencing Sai Baba's Shirdi*, 32-3. For further details on the Shirdi *masjid* – which Sai Baba renamed Dwarkamayi – see *ibid*., 27-62. See also Satpathy, *An Inspiring Life*, 28-46.

92 See Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 444-5 (chap. 27, vv. 139-46); Chitluri, *Baba's Rinanubandh*, 77.

93 See Satpathy, *An Inspiring Life*, 273; Kher, "More about 'Shirdi Diary'", 108-9.

94 B.V. Narasimhaswami writes: "The first point that has struck many a man who saw the printed diary […] is that it is extremely dry and so very uninteresting to the general reader as to make him skip over the pages. However, here and there some highly interesting matter about Sai Baba gleams through the rest, just like bits of gold gleaming through a mass of mire or ore"; Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, 2: 313.

first stay in Shirdi, preserved among his diaries in the National Archives of India and reproduced in this volume, further reinforce this impression. Their physical characteristics reveal a compact, rapid, and remarkably disciplined handwriting, marked by a steady rhythm and displaying very few corrections despite its swift execution. The script is economical and functional rather than decorative, suggesting that Khaparde's primary concern was the accurate recording of events rather than literary elaboration. Although no reliable conclusions regarding personality can be drawn from handwriting alone, the physical characteristics of the autograph manuscript mirror the qualities of the diary itself: disciplined, economical, and devoid of rhetorical flourish. In this respect, the manuscript offers independent material confirmation of the impression conveyed by the text, namely that Khaparde approached his task primarily as a careful eyewitness, intent on preserving an objective record rather than composing a literary or hagiographical narrative.[95] The detachment with which he writes, as if he were a mere observer, is characteristic of all his entries; it can be seen even in his descriptions of the political events in which he was immersed, regardless of how emotional or delicate the situation. He clearly felt an intellectual obligation to remain as objective as possible. Consequently, in describing Sai Baba's behavior, his sayings, and the daily routine at Shirdi, he meticulously recorded the names of those present, while never indulging in hagiographical embellishments. Devotees and researchers alike should be grateful for his effort to be an impartial witness (*sākṣin*), as his diary remains an invaluable historical source.[96] His reflections on these events are narrated with remarkable self-control, striking the reader as both well-balanced and profoundly honest.[97]

Diaries are valuable sources precisely because they are not intended for an audience. Entries are recorded for one's own sake, without the

95 These observations are based on an examination of the original autograph pages of Khaparde's first *Shirdi Diary* (5-12 December 1910). They concern only the physical characteristics of the manuscript and their relationship to the style and function of the diary and are not intended as psychological inferences drawn from handwriting.

96 The significance of Khaparde's diary has been compared to that of Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), whose private memoir from 1660 to 1669 – first published in the 19th century – is one of the most important primary sources for the English Restoration period, offering eyewitness accounts of great events such as the Great Plague of London, the Second Dutch War, and the Great Fire of London.

97 B.V. Narasimhaswami's portrayal of Khaparde as an extremist political leader not fully committed as a devotee – implying he lacked total surrender and was primarily engrossed in gaining wealth and fame – is unfair. Such a view, which characterizes his diary as essentially extrovert and worldly, is contradicted by the fact that his prolonged stays in Shirdi caused him considerable financial loss. Equally unjust is Narasimhaswami's claim that Khaparde sought out Sai Baba merely for political reasons – as a refuge from government persecution – rather than for spiritual advancement. Finally, the assertion that his diary is more notable for its omissions than for its contents fails to recognize the value of his disciplined, objective recording of the master's daily life; see Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, 2: 300-1, 306-10, 318, 320-1, 324, 335. Narasimhaswami didn't even know that Khaparde repeatedly visited Sai Baba in 1915 and 1918; see *ibid.*, 332. His negative opinion of Khaparde is, at least in part, due to the fact that as early as 1920 he began to endorse M.K. Gandhi and his nonviolent methods, whereas he had previously been a follower of Tilak; see McLain, *The Afterlife of Sai Baba*, 96-7. Rangaswami Parthasarathi follows Narasimhaswami's line of thought; see Parthasarathi, *God Who Walked on Earth*, 125.

expectation of being read by others;[98] they reflect a person's private thoughts, experiences, and their own perception of the truth.[99] Especially intriguing are the omissions – the 'silences' within a diary – which can be either intentional, due to discretion or the perceived unimportance of certain facts, or unintentional.[100]

Though Khaparde's diary is written in English, his records should be taken as a reliable approximation of the saint's words. The language that Sai Baba spoke – Marāṭhī/Dekkani Urdu – was Khaparde's mother tongue and his knowledge of English was impeccable. Moreover, his level of education and intellectual honesty are a guarantee. We can be confident that he faithfully summarized the *faqīr*'s stories and that he translated his words most diligently, with no additions or embellishments, so as to preserve his sacred utterances and teachings. Having said this, Khaparde was obviously not a human recording device and his diary entries were not generally written immediately after the events described. Therefore, given the saint's often rambling, mystifying, and sometimes abruptly-halted utterances – which, as Khaparde himself acknowledges, he could not always understand – we cannot be sure that the latter's written accounts of them are word-for-word accurate, even if he sincerely intended them to be so.

Even so, Khaparde's *Shirdi Diary* – particularly the report of his second, longer visit – must be regarded as a foundational source. It allows us to appreciate the rhythm of those days, capturing the daily routine of both Sai Baba and his devotees, while contextualizing the saint's tales and parables within an extended time frame. It must be emphasized that Khaparde's simple writing style is valuable in its own right. The seeming monotony of life in Shirdi, with each day being characterized by the same schedule, as is typical of an *ashram*,[101] mirrored Sai Baba's own will and served as a structured opportunity for devotees to sanctify their lives.

Most importantly, Khaparde's account provides a unique opportunity to experience what it meant to live for a time in Sai Baba's presence at Shirdi. Readers can attune themselves to the sequence of daily life as it unfolded more than a century ago – a privilege that offers a renewed intimacy with the saint. One naturally identifies with the devotees, tasting what it meant to see, touch, and converse with Sai Baba – to experience his *darśan*, *sparśan*, and *saṃbhāṣaṇ*. This quality is something no other source can so faithfully convey.[102]

Khaparde's diary, perhaps unintentionally, allows us to appreciate the rhythm of the events that marked each and every day – the study of holy

98 Though a diary is a subjective source, still it can be conditioned by what others might think of it, i.e., the potential readers that the author can imagine – or even hope – will one day scrutinize his or her pages. In our case, however, Khaparde does not seem to have had in mind any potential reader when he wrote his entries. As he told to his eldest son Balkrishna, "he alone understood his diaries"; Kashikar, "G.S. Alias Dadasaheb Khaparde", 33 fn. 2.

99 On the historical importance of diaries, noteworthy is the campaign of rescuing them from oblivion launched in 2007 by Irving Finkel and Polly North with their "Great Diary Project". In 2020, they had retrieved more than 11,000 diaries; https://www.thegreatdiaryproject.co.uk.

100 See North, "Diaries and Silence", 208-25.

101 See Satpathy, *An Inspiring Life*, 118-28. To be sure, the plainness of Khaparde's style reflects the uniform rhythm of his daily life in Shirdi.

102 The belief is that *darśan* destroys all sins, *sparśan* saves from the effects of *karma*, and *saṃbhāṣaṇ* destroys all sorrows and fears.

texts, the *darśan*s, the gatherings at the *masjid*, and the *ārtī*s – a fixed practice that communicates a sense of peace and harmony. Adjusting oneself to the routine of the place was in itself a discipline (*yoga*). The repetition of these activities by all visitors and *bhakta*s, men and women alike, was an exercise in *abhyāsa*: a protracted effort aimed at purifying the mind and sanctifying one's habits. In this atmosphere of blessed simplicity, being mindful of one's thoughts, actions, and especially intentions, was crucial for progressing in spiritual life (*sādhanā*) and for assimilating Sai Baba's selfless love – his most precious gift. Indeed, the underlying principle is that through the cultivation of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*, detachment from worldly concerns, one is finally able to subdue and control the restless mind. As Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in *Bhagavadgītā* 6.35:

> Without doubt, great-armed one,
> The thought-organ is hard to control, and fickle;
> But by practice (*abhyāsa*), son of Kuntī,
> And by ascetic aversion (*vairāgya*), it may be controlled.[103]

103 Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, 35. For an introduction to the most famous of all Indian scriptures, see Davis, *The Bhagavad Gita*.