Epilogue

The year 1919 was marked by the repressive Rowlatt Act, passed in March, which prompted Gandhi to call an all-India *hartal* (general strike) on 6 April. This was followed by the catastrophe of the Amritsar massacre on 13 April and the subsequent imposition of martial law in Punjab. This period constituted a decisive turning point in the independence movement, as growing numbers of Indian nationalists began to look beyond constitutional agitation and demands for Dominion status. Indeed, for many Indian nationalists, the colonial reforms had become a poisoned chalice; they increasingly turned toward a new mode of political action: *satyāgraha*, or non-violent resistance, under Gandhi's leadership.

From June to December 1919, Khaparde was in London alongside Tilak and members of the Congress deputations, serving as a delegate of the Home Rule League before the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill. The various meetings with the British authorities and the British Committee of the Indian National Congress were frustrating and proved largely ineffectual. Nonetheless, the Nationalists had encouraging discussions with representatives of the Labour Party and Khaparde, along with others, traveled to various cities and towns in Britain, including Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool, Manchester, Halstead, Bradford and Norwood, where he delivered well-received speeches and was met with curiosity and even enthusiasm. It has already been noted that his wit and eloquence led local people and some newspapers to describe him as 'Mark Twain'.[1]

1 See Kunte, *Source Material*, 471.

DOI 10.30687/979-12-5742-062-8/010



Figure 47 Members of the Home Rule League deputation in London, 1919. From left to right: Bipin Chandra Pal, P.J. Mehta, B.G. Tilak, G.S. Khaparde, Vithalbhai Patel, and N.C. Kelkar

On 8 December, when he had an interview with Mr. Montagu, Khaparde asked him to remove the restrictions preventing Tilak from travelling to Punjab, to which Montagu responded that "he knew nothing about it".[2] Khaparde then expressed his opposition to the Government of India Act – which was to receive royal assent on 23 December – given that "it denies our right of self-determination, and I [= Khaparde] very much want our primary rights of citizenship".[3] To be sure, the Act introduced dyarchy in the provinces: certain areas of government were transferred to Indian ministers responsible to the provincial legislatures, while others remained under the control of the governor and his executive council. Khaparde also explained to Montagu some of his objections to the Rowlatt Act, whereupon Montagu became angry and brought the conversation to an end by saying: "You and I will never agree in politics".[4] Significantly, when articles concerning the Amritsar massacre and the atrocities committed by the British appeared in *The Times* and other newspapers, Khaparde in his diary entry of 20 December wrote: "Mr. Montagu defended the doings of General Dyer, Sir M. O'Dwyer and their subordinates. His speech was a slap in the face of the Moderates for their pains".[5]

The year 1920 marked the beginning of the political decline of Khaparde and the Tilakites. In diary entries written in Bombay on 15 January and in Sholapur on 4 April, Khaparde noted that Tilak's health was declining:

> [L]okamanya Tilak is looking very poorly. He is not half so well as he was in London. He had to fight single handed at Amritsar, against Mrs. Besant, Shastri and Madan Mohan all combined. He won all round, of course, but the exertions involved injured his health.[6]

2 Kunte, *Source Material*, 479.

3 Kunte, *Source Material*, 479.

4 Kunte, *Source Material*, 479.

5 Kunte, *Source Material*, 481.

6 Kunte, *Source Material*, 481.

> [C]hapekar of Elichpur came to ask me to influence Tilak to visit Daryapur. I asked Tilak. He is too ill to travel just now.[7]

By the end of July, Tilak's condition had become critical. Khaparde writes that on 29 July, while still in Akola, he "sat discussing the horoscope"[8] of Tilak with Puradopadhye Shastri, and they came to the conclusion that "there was no danger to life".[9] On 31 July, however, Khaparde rushed to Bombay to be at Tilak's bedside at the Sardar Griha, where the latter was staying; by then, the situation was desperate. He writes:

> Today is one of the few days in my life the record of which is black in the extreme. […] After talking to Dr. Sathaye and Dr. Deshmukh I came to my room and sat talking of Astrology, etc. etc. with assembled friends […]. In the afternoon I got a letter from Pandurangpant and our astrologer of Akola and they gave no hope of Lokamanya's life. […] Lokamanya was breathing hard with noise of a peculiar kind in the throat. So the end appeared near. I administered *hemagarbha*[10] in green ginger. […] I wished to administer another dose of *hemagarbha* but before I could do so he expired and there was a cry of pain from all in the room […]. All this happened about 12:40 midnight. There was trouble after that such as I cannot describe. When the confusion subsided a bit, we had numerous consultations, talks, and discussions about the arrangements for the funeral. […] Gandhi came and saw the body.[11]

Tilak was sixty-four years old, and his death was a major blow to Khaparde, who had known him since 1891. Coming less than two years after the *mahāsamādhi* of his beloved spiritual master in October 1918, the demise of his political leader and dear friend must have been devastating. Tilak's funeral drew an immense crowd. Khaparde describes it in his diary entry of 1 August as follows:

> The funeral procession was formed and started. It was over a mile and a half in length, and over two lakhs of people walked in mourning, some singing religious *abhangs*[12] and hymns. It was a spectacle such as Bombay never saw before. People to be counted by lakhs, sat on terraces, trees and even in niches. It was all a seething mass of humanity. The procession started

7 Kunte, *Source Material*, 487.

8 Kunte, *Source Material*, 493.

9 Kunte, *Source Material*, 493.

10 A medicinal preparation containing gold, traditionally used in Ayurvedic medicine for the treatment of chronic illnesses and respiratory disorders.

11 Kunte, *Source Material*, 494-5. In *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi writes: "I felt the loss of the late Lokamanya very deeply […]. We had our differences of opinion always, but they never led to bitterness. […] [T]he circumstances of his death stand forth vividly before my mind's eye. It was about the hour of midnight, when Patwardhan […] conveyed over the telephone the news of his death. […] Spontaneously the exclamation escaped my lips, 'My strongest bulwark is gone'. The non-cooperation movement was then in full swing, and I was eagerly looking forward to encouragement and inspiration from him" (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 611).

12 Lit. 'unbroken'. A metrical composition characteristic of the Vārkarī poet-saints of Maharashtra. The Vārkarīs are devotees of the god Viṭṭhal, whose principal shrine is located at Pandharpur.

> about 2 PM and took about four hours to do about three miles. I walked behind the body with Mahajani and Dr. Bhadkamkar and others. The crush was so great that I could not keep my ground. […] I was tossed about from one side to another. The cremation took place on the Chowpati beach, and near the funeral fire I felt faint and feared that I may swoon and fall down.[13]

In March 1920, Gandhi issued a manifesto in which he presented the core principles of *satyāgraha*, i.e., of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. This manifesto offered a concise formulation of a technique of political action that would dominate the scene for the next few years, altering the course of the struggle for independence. He formally announced the Non-cooperation movement on 1 August, when the news of Tilak's death arrived in the early morning, and it must be underlined that Khaparde was adamantly opposed to it.[14] At the Special Session of the Congress that convened in Calcutta in September, however, Non-cooperation won: Gandhi's proposals were approved by a majority of 1,000 votes, and he predicted that if the Non-cooperation movement were successful, *svarāj* could be attained within a year.

Although Khaparde's diary entries describe Non-cooperation as a "stupid doctrine"[15] and refer to Gandhi's "insanity" and "stupidity",[16] Gandhi's movement gained the approval of most people in Berar and the Central Provinces. Furthermore, since the Congress had officially passed the resolution, the prevailing view was that it must be implemented. In his diary entry of 29 September, Khaparde writes: "Every one recognizes that it is foolish and suicidal and yet they do not like to dissent publicly from Gandhi's view and programme because Congress, they say, has adopted it".[17] According to Khaparde, nobody had the courage to oppose Gandhi and the Non-cooperation movement openly. It was precisely in order to protest against this turn of events that he decided to leave the Congress.

In the aftermath of Tilak's death Gandhi, who was fifty years old, became the leader of the Congress and his new political ideas and strategy gained rapidly expanding popular support. Significantly, in his diary entry of 8 October Khaparde writes: "Both my son Baba and Balvant are inclined to think that I ought not to get into a big controversy with the general public in my old age. I am not persuaded".[18] In 1920, Khaparde was sixty-six years old and was largely perceived as a politician who belonged to an older generation that had had its day and that, with the death of its charismatic leader, could no longer dictate the agenda. Khaparde was conscious of the new phase that the Lokamanya's death had opened in India's struggle for

13 Kunte, *Source Material*, 495-6. On Tilak's funeral in Bombay, see "Death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, August 2, 1920", at `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZyfeA0iXsI`; "Funeral Ceremony of Lokmanya Tilak", at `https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1033403994094875`. A special train carrying Tilak's remains from Bombay to Poona was arranged on 4 August. When the train arrived at Poona station with Khaparde and members of Tilak's family on board, a "tremendously large procession" formed, in which Khaparde participated in it, walking "without shoes and bareheaded"; Kunte, *Source Material*, 497. Khaparde also notes the presence of Upasani, Sai Baba's disciple who later became famous as Upasani Maharaj; *ibid*.

14 See Kunte, *Source Material*, 498-507.

15 Kunte, *Source Material*, 507.

16 Kunte, *Source Material*, 507.

17 Kunte, *Source Material*, 503.

18 Kunte, *Source Material*, 504.

independence and yet he wished to be faithful to his leader's ideas and continue his fight. This he did with admirable coherence, though he was to become painfully aware that his was a rearguard battle that was destined for defeat.

Though on 30 November Khaparde was elected to the Council of State, at the Congress session that was held in Nagpur at the end of December the delegates ratified the resolution to launch the Non-cooperation movement under Gandhi's guidance. Gandhi thereby emerged as the Congress' undisputed leader. Here are a few telling excerpts from Khaparde's diary entries of 28 and 29 December:

> [A]ttended the Congress at 12 noon and sat in my old seat. Today the confusion was greater than ever. Gandhi proposed his creed, and to my surprise, Bipin Babu and Lala Lajapat Raya supported him and made extreme speeches. […] I wished to speak. Dr. Moonje asked me not to and recommended that I should not even vote against the motion. This I would not submit to and went to the platform when at last he said that he would use physical force. The confusion was so great that I also deemed it wise not to speak.
>
> […] Rambhau Kale, Vithalpant and others of Amraoti came and I told them to see if our province could be got to vote against the new creed […] [A]bout 6 PM I left as I had a severe headache and felt very tired.[19]

The following years saw the consolidation of Gandhi's leadership. Though in March 1922 he was arrested for sedition and sentenced to six years in prison, he served only two and was released in February 1924 on medical grounds. On 17 September 1924, he led a fast for Hindu-Muslim unity that lasted three weeks and in December of the same year, he became president of the Congress at the session held in Belgaum. With his election, the battle for the party's soul was won. The years leading up to his assassination on 30 January 1948 are commonly referred to as the 'Gandhian era', since the Mahātma came to dominate both the Congress and Indian politics. Though in the 1920s Khaparde sought to counter Gandhi's influence and his *satyāgraha* campaigns, his own political influence gradually waned, even in what had always been his stronghold, i.e., Amraoti and the Berar area.[20]

19 Kunte, *Source Material*, 512. In January 1921, N.C. Kelkar was elected president of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee, and shortly thereafter the Mulshi anti-dam struggle led by Pandurang Mahadev "Senapati" Bapat helped make Maharashtra a major center of the Non-cooperation movement; see Vora, *World's First Anti-Dam Movement*.

20 On these issues, see Rothermund, *Maharashtra's Response to Gandhian Nationalism*. By the same author, see "Gandhi and Maharashtra", 56-73.



Figure 48 Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde (second from the right) with his family

Another blow to Khaparde was the death of his devout wife Lakshmibai, whose health began to decline in early 1928. She suffered periodic attacks of fever and asthma and inflammation in her knees to the point that she could hardly walk. On 12 July, a touching episode occurred. Khaparde describes it thus:

> While I was doing my *Sandhya*[21] just before luncheon, my wife came and worshipped me in the same way in which an idol is worshipped. I was puzzled and asked her why she was doing this today when she had not done anything of the kind all these years. She said, "I wish to depart from the world with a peaceful mind".[22] I think she has been unwell for the last few days and has given up all hope of survival. I asked her to trust in God and to submit to His will.[23]

After this incident, Lakshmibai was confined to her bed and peacefully passed away eight days later, on 20 July 1928. Khaparde writes in his diary entry for that day:

> Went downstairs to see my wife. She apparently had a bad night, but appeared calm and collected. At the suggestion of my eldest son all the

21 Lit. 'junction'. One of the three junctures of the day – dawn, noon, and dusk – at which initiated males belonging to the three upper *varṇa*s, especially Brahmins, are traditionally required to perform a daily ritual consisting of the recitation of Vedic *mantra*s (particularly the *gāyatrī*), breath control, the sipping and sprinkling of water, and the offering of libations to the sun god Sūrya, regarded as the worshipper's chosen deity.

22 The ideal Hindu wife (*pativratā*) regards her husband as a god and worships him accordingly. On these issues, see Mackenzie Pearson, "Ritual Fasts of Hindu Women".

23 Kher, "Shirdi Diary and Mrs. Khaparde", 139-40. This passage is drawn from Khaparde's Marāṭhī biography.

> family bathed early and had something to eat which they could[24] and we all watched by her bedside. I spent the whole time practically near her bed. We removed her from the room in which she was to the *chowk*[25] and lay her in front of the room alloted to our family deities. Her breathing became harder and harder but she was cool and calm and passed on at about 3:15 PM.
>
> I felt overcome and could not control myself for some time. At last I got over it. […] Everybody said she was very fortunate in passing away during my life time. […][26] After we returned from the funeral, I heard from my sons that my wife distributed her ornaments and clothes among her daughters-in-law and their children a few weeks ago and told that she had discharged all her assets and blessed them to be happy. […] She had the *darshan* of her Guru. […] So I think she had a fairly correct idea of passing on. She never asked for medicine and showed no anxiety to be cured. She passed away very happily and I have no doubt she is very very happy now.[27]

Khaparde's comment that Lakshmibai "had the *darshan* of her Guru", i.e., of Sai Baba,[28] can be interpreted in different ways. Perhaps she was given the opportunity to gaze at the portrait of Sai Baba that was kept in their prayer room, where they worshipped the images of their family deities. Another possibility is that she had an actual vision of Sai Baba, either in a dream or while awake, and this is what Vishwas Bal Kher thinks happened.[29] We know that the saint was very fond of Lakshmibai and openly praised her for her devotion and service. Having the lord's *darśan* is an assurance of his grace: especially at the time of death, seeing the *guru* and having one's mind absorbed in him is an assurance of *sadgati*, liberation from rebirth. As Khaparde writes, she must be "very very happy now", having ultimately 'reached his feet', i.e., having achieved a communion of bliss with her beloved master.

When Lakshmibai died, Khaparde was seventy-three years old, almost seventy-four: a considerably advanced age by Indian standards of the time.[30] Within the span of ten years, from 1918 to 1928, he had lost his major points of reference: first his spiritual master, then his political leader, and now his wife. As one of the foremost Tilakites, he had to face the inexorable decline of the Nationalists and of his own social and political influence, at both the national and regional levels. He had devoted his life to the Nationalist cause through years of activism in India and Britain. Now, he had to face the bitter reality that he had been politically defeated and that the ideals for which

24 The intended meaning is that the family members shared a simple meal before gathering at Lakshmibai's bedside.

25 A central courtyard or open inner space within a traditional Indian house.

26 A woman whose death precedes that of her husband is traditionally regarded as especially fortunate or blessed. Hindu wives often observe ritual fasts (*vrat*s) intended to ensure the longevity and well-being of their husbands.

27 Kher, "Shirdi Diary and Mrs. Khaparde", 140-1.

28 It is also possible to interpret the reference as pertaining to Gajanan Maharaj rather than Sai Baba. This interpretation, however, appears unlikely.

29 He writes: "Her end was not only peaceful but she was blessed with *darshan* by her Sadguru Sai Baba. What higher joy can a devotee of Sai expect?"; Kher, "Shirdi Diary and Mrs. Khaparde", 126.

30 Average life expectancy at birth in India during the 1850s, when Khaparde was born, was roughly twenty-five years.

he had struggled no longer commanded broad support. Although his sons, especially Balkrishna and Balvant, were successful and always by his side politically, the sense of failure he experienced must have been hard to bear.

Now in his seventies, Khaparde may often have pondered Sai Baba's advice to Tilak: that at his age, he would do better to "keep himself to himself" and care for his soul rather than focus on politics. We can imagine how dearly he cherished the months spent in Shirdi in his *guru*'s company, recalling Sai Baba's teachings and the many wonders he had witnessed. Being a wise man, Khaparde realized that time was running short and that he needed to focus increasingly on his own *sādhanā*. During the last ten years of his life, from 1928 to 1938, Khaparde continued his practice of keeping a daily diary, though during this period he began to record the previous day's events on the following morning rather than – as he had previously done – before retiring for the night. Even when he was terminally ill, he did not fail to write in his diary. Only on the day of his death – 1 July 1938 – and on the day before did he not write any entries, his last one being dated 29 June 1938. During this last decade, Khaparde inevitably withdrew from active politics though he continued to follow national and regional political developments closely, also because of his sons' involvement.[31] In particular, it should be noted that in 1932 his eldest son Balkrishna supported the rise of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) led by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1889-1940)[32] and that between 1934 and 1936 Balkrishna served as minister of education of the Central Provinces and Berar.

On 19 February 1938, G.S. Khaparde witnessed his last Congress session. It was held in Haripura, in the Surat District of Gujarat, and was presided over by Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945). The Congress reinforced its commitment to attaining complete independence (*pūrṇa svarāj*); it rejected the federal structure given by the British in the Government of India Act of 1935, and instead proposed a federation in which the States would participate as independent units. The Congress emphasized the need for a new Constitution via a Constituent Assembly, whose members would be elected on the basis of adult franchise. The session was a success, with the Congress having strengthened its objectives for a free India.

Nonetheless, disillusioned with the Congress and deeply critical of Gandhi's political strategy, Khaparde remained pessimistic about the future, seeing little hope for the country's *svarāj*. His final months were marked by gloom as he witnessed the collapse of what remained of Tilak's political ideals. Little did he know that, scarcely a year later, on 1 September 1939, the Second World War – the deadliest and most destructive conflict in human history – would erupt[33] and that India would ultimately attain independence from British rule eight years later, on 15 August 1947.

Beginning in 1930, Khaparde withdrew from legal practice in order to devote himself more fully to spiritual pursuits. He consequently intensified

31 For details on Khaparde's last years, see Khaparde, *Śrī Dādāsāheb Khāparḍe*.

32 On the founding of the RSS in Nagpur in 1925 and Hedgewar's association with B.S. Moonje, see Nandha, *Hedgewar*; Ganneri, "'Whither Hindu Unity?'", 467-80.

33 India, as part of the British Empire, contributed more than two and a half million soldiers to the war against the Axis powers. More than 87,000 Indian servicemen died, while the Bengal famine of 1943 – closely connected with wartime conditions and colonial policies – claimed an estimated three million civilian lives.

his *pūjā*s, prayers, and meditative disciplines.[34] During these years, he may increasingly have reflected upon the time he had spent in the company of his spiritual guides, Gajanan Maharaj and Sai Baba, recalling their divine charisma and words of wisdom. One can only imagine the extraordinary atmosphere of those days: the rare privilege of remaining in the presence of saints and experiencing their sight, touch, and speech – their *darśan*, *sparśan*, and *saṃbhāṣaṇ*.

Even during the height of his political career, Khaparde must often have remembered with nostalgia the serenity that prevailed in Shirdi and his encounters with Sai Baba, recollecting the tone of his voice, his gestures, and his bliss-bestowing glances. Just as the thirsty *cātak* bird[35] longs for the pure rainwater that alone can quench its thirst, so Khaparde yearned for the presence of the saint.

As noted earlier, whenever he stood before Sai Baba, Khaparde scarcely dared to utter a word and became the humblest of men, notwithstanding his erudition, eloquence, and prominence as a public figure. Those years undoubtedly constituted the most spiritually formative period of his life, and he may well have regretted not having spent more time in the *faqīr*'s company and devoted himself more fully to *sādhanā*, as Sai Baba had repeatedly advised him to do. Yet, despite his faults and shortcomings, Khaparde may have felt deep within himself that his beloved master was always with him and would never abandon his disciple, given the perennial bond that unites a compassionate *guru* with his *śiṣya*. Since Sai Baba had told him that they had been together in previous births, Khaparde may have remained confident that they would meet again and that the saint would come to his aid in a future life, guiding him toward the supreme goal of *mokṣa*. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in his diary entry of 11 April 1937, Khaparde wrote: "I had a sort of vision of Sai Maharaj, distinct but very transitory".[36]

34 He reportedly recited religious hymns every morning, including a Sanskrit hymn dedicated to Sai Baba; see "*Śrī Dādāsāheb Khāparḍe rojniśī ādhārit samakālīn nondīdvārā Sadguru Śrī Upāsanī darśan*" ("Darshan of Sadguru Shri Upasani through Contemporary Notes Based on the Daily Diary of Shri Dadasaheb Khaparde"), *Saṃsmaraṇikā, Sadguru Śrī Upāsanī Mahārāj*. Post-Golden Jubilee Year Celebration (15 May 2021): 36. This hymn may have been the *Śrī Sāīnāth Mahimā Stotram*, composed by Upasani Maharaj in 1912.

35 The *cātak* bird, also known as the Jacobin cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*) or pied crested cuckoo, is a migratory bird associated with the rainy season. In Indian literary and devotional traditions, it symbolizes patience, purity, and spiritual aspiration, as it is believed to wait for the pure rainwater that alone can quench its thirst. The bird is mentioned repeatedly in the *Shri Sai Satcharita*; see Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 234 (chap. 14, v. 208), 244 (chap. 15, v. 77), 289 (chap. 18, v. 61), 432 (chap. 27, v. 4), 540 (chap. 33, v. 82), 673 (chap. 40, v. 171), 713 (chap. 43, v. 97), 784 (chap. 48, v. 37), 817 (chap. 50, v. 51), 842 (chap. 51, v. 100).

36 "*Śrī Dādāsāheb Khāparḍe rojniśī ādhārit samakālīn nondīdvārā Sadguru Śrī Upāsanī darśan*", 36. Godutai Bhavalkar, Khaparde's sister-in-law, and Chiranjiv Bhavalkar, who were present at his bedside when he died on 1 July 1938, both claimed to have had a vision of Sai Baba: "At the time of Dadasaheb's passing, Sai Maharaj had come, and at that moment he was sitting in front of him"; *ibid*.

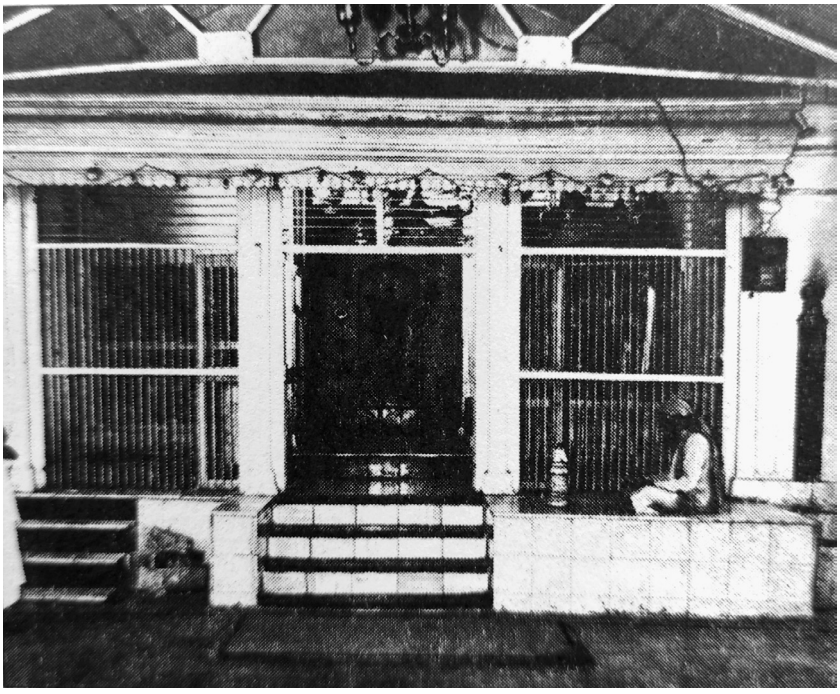

Figure 49 The mosque, renamed Dvārakāmāī, around 1930

Finally, it is important to emphasize Khaparde's broadmindedness, liberalism, and spirit of tolerance, all of which stood in marked contrast to communalism and sectarianism. This outlook reflected Sai Baba's own legacy, and there can be little doubt that Khaparde was profoundly influenced by the *faqīr*'s example. One of Sai Baba's defining characteristics was his refusal to be confined by organized religion, caste distinctions, or communal identities, whether Hindu or Muslim. This attitude was consistent with his statement that his creed or religion was Kabīr,[37] with whom he also identified himself, as when he told Khaparde that he "was Kabīr before and used to spin yarn".[38] The *Shri Sai Satcharita* itself repeatedly emphasizes that Sai Baba was "neither Hindu nor Muslim",[39] that he was "beyond *dharma* and *adharma*",[40] and that he was "without any caste".[41] In his stories and parables, the *faqīr* consistently underscored the oneness of God[42] and the ideal of universal brotherly love, for only unconditional and selfless love, according to this vision, can break the cycle of *karma* and liberate human beings from bondage to *saṃsāra*.

37 See Satpathy, *An Inspiring Life*, 174-7; Narasimhaswami, *Devotees' Experiences*, 129.

38 See Khaparde's diary entry of 10 December 1910.

39 Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 75 (chap. 5, v. 24), 105 (chap. 7, v. 13), 159 (chap. 10, v. 119). See also *ibid*., 692 (chap. 42, v. 27), 720 (chap. 43, v. 174).

40 Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 634 (chap. 38, v. 94), 697 (chap. 42, v. 78).

41 Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 636 (chap. 38, v. 117).

42 One is reminded of the popular saying attributed to him, *sabkā mālik ek* ('The Lord of all is one'); see, for instance, Verma, "*Sabka Malik Ek*", 27-9.

Sai Baba's non-sectarian outlook was inseparable from his very identity as a *faqīr*. His spirituality was grounded in detachment (*vairāgya*), voluntary poverty, and freedom from worldly identification. As a true *vairāgyamūrti*, he displayed no attachment to caste, sectarian affiliation, or any single form of institutionalized religion. In this respect, the later transformation of Shirdi into one of India's wealthiest pilgrimage centers stands in striking tension with the *faqīr*'s own ideal of radical simplicity and renunciation.

Likewise, the saint made no attempt to establish a new cult. His universalism drew upon the integrative religious culture that had characterized the Deccan for centuries and was fundamentally incompatible with communal exclusivism.[43] This point deserves particular emphasis in light of the gradual Hinduization and 'Brahmanization' of Sai Baba's image during the decades following his death, as well as the more recent rise of Hindutva-oriented interpretations of Indian history and religion.[44] Such developments stand in evident tension with the *faqīr*'s own fluid and non-sectarian spirituality, which rose above rigid communal boundaries. In many respects, the diaries of Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde evoke the memory of a world in which political commitment, spiritual seeking, and interreligious coexistence were experienced as dimensions of a broader shared moral framework. Through Khaparde's life and testimony, the diaries preserve the enduring image of Sai Baba as a saint whose message of compassion, detachment, and universal love transcended all divisions.

43 See Rigopoulos, "Shirdi Sai Baba", 648-9. On the many ways in which Hindu and Muslim communities have not only peacefully coexisted but also shared a common culture marked by pluralism and spiritual permeability, see Kent, Kassam, *Lines in Water*; Green, *Indian Sufism*; Mittal, *Surprising Bedfellows*. On the plural religious identities of precolonial Hinduism, see Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*.

44 On these issues, see Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*; Dey, "Saffronization of Public Knowledge", 1-5; Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*; Larson, *India's Agony over Religion*.