Gopal Krishna Gokhale was one of the great men of this who died in the early part of this century. Gandhi had the highest respect and affection for him. He was well known as he was political guru Mahatma Gandhi.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born on May 9, 1866, in Kotluk in the Chiplun taluk, which was then in the Ratnagiri district (presently in Raigad district). All the Gokhales in Maharashtra are Chitpawan Brahmins originating from Velneshwar, which is in the Chiplun taluk. They eventually spread out from Velneshwar to different parts of Maharashtra. Gopal Krishna Gokhales ancestor, Balaji Mahadev Gokhale, established a village, Tamhanmala, ten miles from Chiplun. As was the custom then, Balaji Gokhale secured the rights as a rent collector called Khot. Krishnaji Gokhale was one of the sons of Shridharpant who was Gopal’s grandfather. Gopal’s mother, Balutai (Satyabhama), was the daughter of Bhaskarrao Oak who was also a Khot.

Gopal’s father, Krishnajipant, moved to Kolhapur for his studies where he was the schoolmate of Mahadev Govind Ranade, who in later years became the mentor and guru of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Krishnajipant could not complete his studies, but with the help of his uncle succeeded in getting a job in Kagal, a jahagir under the Kolhapur darbar. He died early. As Gopal's elder brother, Govindrao was not academically inclined, he was given a clerical job by his uncle in Kagal. Govindrao paid for the education of his
brother, Gopal, in Kolhapur. His education continued without interruption because of the determination and the sacrifice of his brother and his wife. Gokhale always felt obliged to them and never failed to send them a fixed sum of money after he started earning. When his popular book on mathematics was selected as a textbook for schools, Gokhale assigned all the royalty to his brother and sister-in-law.

Some people lose their sensitivity because of the hardships they suffer in their childhood and in young days; while others become revengeful. Gokhale was neither. He was always introspective and would think of improving himself. Gokhale was, nevertheless, impetuous and had a complaining nature. Because of his impetuousness, he sometimes quickly lost his temper and reprimanded people; but within no time he would recover and beg their pardon. With the passage of time he learnt to control his temper. After his matriculation, Gokhale went to Pune for his college studies. He worked very hard even to the point of neglecting his health. In his college days he used to play tennis, but gave it up because of his public duties. Honesty and truthfulness were his characteristics. In his school when his teacher complimented him, as he alone in his class was able to correctly solve a mathematical problem, Gokhale broke down, to the amazement of his teacher. He confessed that he had been able to solve that problem with someone’s help. Just as he was honest, he was also differential to his elders;
and when he saw greatness in somebody, he was reverential. He was devoted to Dadabhai Naoroji and Justice Ranade and accepted the leadership of Pherozeshah Mehta. Gokhale came under the spell of Tilak and Agarkar because of their sacrifices. Hence, he joined them as a teacher in the Deccan education society. Gokhale’s contemporary, Ganesh Raghunath Abhyankar said that Gokhale was always grateful to those who had helped him in any way. He remembered that when Specy bank fell on bad days, Gokhale was advised by a Parsi gentleman to withdraw his deposits, but he refused to do so, telling his friend that Sir Chunilal Mehta, who was the chairman of the bank, had given him a blank cheque to be cashed anytime, when in need. Gokhale did not have any occasion to cash the cheque, but he remained ever grateful for the generosity of Sir Chunilal.

Gokhale had a sharp memory, which he cultivated diligently. He had memorised the speeches of Edmund Burke and some plays of Shakespeare. Since 1885, Gokhale set out to acquire mastery over the English language. He could recite Burke’s speeches, demanding the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the French Revolution and the American war of Independence as well as John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. He used to give those books to a neighbour and ask him to test him for mistakes. For every mistake, he would pay a fine of an anna; but such occasions were rare. Gokhale’s another friend said that Gokhale had with him a book—*Public Speaker*—which he
studied every day in the early hours of the morning and then recited passages from it. Vasudevrao Patwardhan was Gokhale’s contemporary. He remembered that some people taking advantage of Gokhale’s innocence would ask him to memorise some of the passages and laugh behind his back. Writing in ‘Manoranjan a Marathi magazine, Patwardhan said that in school or in college, Gokhale was never known as a first class student. Unlike bright students who could understand the subject in no time, absorb it and never forget it, Gokhale did not possess that faculty. His memory was not exceptional or extraordinary. His name was never in the list of those who stood first in the university and he was never known for extraordinary intellect. Gokhale joined the Elphinstone College, Mumbai, for his senior BA. After graduation, he joined an engineering college, but found it unsuitable. He also thought of appearing for the ICS, but it was beyond his means. So he joined the law course. At the same time, the Deccan Education Society invited him to be a teacher in the New English School. His monthly salary was thirty-five rupees with a yearly bonus of Rs. 120. Gokhale, with his colleague, taught in a class for the Public Service Commission examination, which brought in another forty rupees per month.

The New English School was started by Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar with the assistance of Tilak and Agarkar. They also started a Marathi weekly, ‘Kesari’ and an English one, Maratha. Gokhale was much impressed by this
enterprise. After joining the school he became closer to Agarkar whose views about social reforms he shared. The New English School, ‘Kesari’ and ‘Maratha’ all had a special place in the political life of Maharashtra and also that of India. In the Maratha regime or under the Peshwa rule, education was not the responsibility of the government. Eight years before the Peshwa rule came to an end, Christian missionaries had established a printing press in Pune. But it did not occur to the last Peshwa to make use of this new invention. Under the Peshwa, Brahmins used to receive some annual grant for learning Sanskrit. After the end of the Peshwa rule, Elphinstone, who was the Resident, abolished this largesse and allotted that money to start schools. The yearly largesse depended on the whims of a ruler, but under the new rule, education was institutionalised. Initially, the curriculum and the textbooks were improvised and had no scientific basis. Very few teachers were qualified and would not continue in the profession for long. Textbooks were of a poor quality. Even the law students used to be crowded in a small room to give their examinations. They did so by consulting the textbooks and also indulging in mass copying.

However, a radical change came about very shortly and there came, in Mumbai and Pune, a resurgent generation of erudite teachers and diligent and scholarly students. Dadabhai, Bhau Daji, Ranade, Bhandarkar, Telang all belonged to this first generation, and Tilak and Agarkar followed them.
Gokhale belonged to the third generation. In Pune, the government school was very renowned. Its principal, Madhavrao Kunte, was a scholar and an efficient administrator. Vishnushastri Chiplunkar was not happy in the government service. So he resigned and started a press, ‘Chitrashala’, and a high school, the ‘New English School’ on 2nd January, 1880 with the assistance of Tilak and Agarkar. As the school could enlist the services of well-known and dedicated teachers, its progress was fast. Chiplunkar thought that the government school would come to grief very soon. But it lasted thirty years before it closed down. Even though Tilak had passed his law examination, he did not practice law, but offered his services to the new school. Agarkar, who was a postgraduate (MA), could have secured a lucrative and cozy government job, but preferred to be a teacher.

With such a teaching staff, it was no wonder that various scholarships came easily to the New English School’s students. There was a great demand for admission. Wordsworth, a grandson of the poet, was the principal of the Elphinstone College in Mumbai. He visited the New English School two years after its inception and was very impressed by its progress. He wrote that he was pleasantly surprised to see the success of the school. According to him, the school was an example of the new spirit and strength generated by the English education. There was nothing more ennobling than the educated Indians shunning government jobs to start their enterprises.
Wordsworth felt this would have a lasting impact on the future course of India. Chiplunkar died in 1883, two years after the inauguration of the New English School. At the same time, Vaman Shivram Apte, who was a good teacher and a skilful manager, joined the school. The governor of Bombay had by then appointed a commission under Sir William Hunter to delve into the educational problems. Apte appeared before the Commission and pleaded powerfully for generous grants for the private schools and least interference in their administration. Hunter appreciated the deposition of Apte and had heard about the New English School. He wrote that he had not found any such great school in the whole of the country. According to him, the school had successfully competed with the government high school and surpassed it without taking any government grant. Hunter had no doubt that the New English School would compete with any first class school in any country.

On February 20, 1884, ‘The Times of India’, while reporting the prize distribution ceremony held on February 13, said: “This school is one of the most remarkable results of our English education. It is entirely managed by native graduates, it is self-supporting, and it gives a liberal education at a small cost to eight hundred boys. The founders of the school feel what the Jesuits have always felt and acted on that real power lies with those who educate and mould the young. Like Jesuits the Superintendent of the school and his colleagues give their services for the love of education and only take
a pittance from the revenue of school to support themselves. They are men who have taken good degrees and might be enjoying handsome salaries if they had entered government service. They, however, preach the doctrine—and they practice what they preach—that graduates of the University, if they possess self-respect and patriotism, ought not to look to a foreign government for place and pay, but it is their duty to achieve a name and place of their own in education, in literature, in commerce or at the bar. No doubt these enthusiastic men will preach love of the country to these disciples, but it is better after all to have patriotism preached by educated men than the wandering mendicants. We have given the people of India education, and now it is for us to do all we can to have the moral energy created on our side and not against us”.

As the school was receiving encomiums from various quarters, the idea of starting a college took a definite shape, and in a public meeting on October 24, 1884, the formation of the Deccan Education Society was announced. The meeting was presided over by Sir William Wedderburn who was a Civil Servant and played an important role next year in the formation of the Indian National Congress. The D.E. Society had on its council, persons like Wedderburn, Mandlik, Telang, Wordsworth, Narayanbhai Dandekar and Yeshwant Moreshwar Kelkar. Wordsworth and Mandlik were appointed as trustees of the Society. The then governor of Bombay, Sir James Fergusson,
was sympathetic to the Society. Hence, the University readily granted permission to the college. Lee-Warner, the director of Public Instruction of the Bombay government, while writing on the subject of recommendation of the Education Commission, commended the D.E. Society and its Fergusson College in these words: “The Native Society at Poona, which is generally called the Patriotic Society, entertains an objection to the Bengal system (of assessing grants at a certain proportion of the income guaranteed from private sources). This Society has lately started the Fergusson College, and attracted by an appeal to patriotism, the very best outturn from our High Schools which the educated ranks of the Brahmin and other Hindu society in Poona can afford. It believes that it will distance all rivals in the examination-room and it has no fear of result system. It argues that the salaries paid to its teachers afford no index to their value. The College wishes to be largely independent of any European element in its lecture-rooms and to impress upon its students the patriotic sentiments of its independent founders. The experiment has no parallel in any city in India, and is interesting from other points of view than the educational aspect”.

Lord Sandhurst, governor of Bombay, while inaugurating the building of the college, said that in England the life members of a society were elected from the donors, but here it was quite different. This society demanded sacrifices from the life members. Lord Sandhurst appealed for generous
donations to the society and gave a cheque of rupees one thousand. The goodwill shown to the society encouraged others to emulate its example, and in Pune another society, the Shikshan Prasarak, was formed which started the Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya as a memorial to Vishnushastri Chiplunkar and later, Sir Parshurambhau College. The Bombay government, desiring to reduce the expenditure, decided to hand over the Deccan College to the Deccan Education Society. As a quid pro quo, the government was to give some grant to the D.E. Society, which was not averse to such a deal, at least in principle. But while negotiating the details, the government put forward various conditions. The Deccan College was started with the amount of money, which the Peshwas were expending yearly on the learned Brahmins. Justice Ranade apprehended that after the transfer of the Deccan College to the D.E. Society, this amount would be permanently reverted to the Treasury. So he called a public meeting and demanded an extension of the lease to the Deccan College. As Ranade was connected with the D.E. Society’ from its inception, the society’s executives consulted him about the government proposal. He advised them not to agree to the appointment of any European: professors and government nominees on the executive committee. As this was not acceptable to the government, the proposal fell through.

Later, describing the condition under which Deccan College was
functioning, Gokhale wrote in ‘Sudharak,’ on March 17, 1890, that the people of Pune promised a sum of fifteen thousand rupees to the college, provided the government would extend its lease of the college. However, “Promises are always more or less very inconvenient, but if they are not to be ‘the mere idle wind that passes by a breath, a bubble’, the inconveniences must be borne by all honourable men, if for nothing else, at least for the temporary advantage to which they show you when you make them. It is, therefore, high and solemn responsibility—one which it would be dishonour to shirk—resting on the shoulders of those, who made the promises three years ago, to come forward now with their promised contributions. And by doing so, they would entitle themselves to high praise of all, for everyone wishes that the Deccan College, which hitherto had done such noble work for the people of Maharashtra, should be maintained in a high state of efficiency, and be accessible to poor students as well as to rich ones”.

As the New English School set a new trend in the field of education, ‘Kesari’ and ‘Maratha’ changed the pattern of journalism. The first issue of ‘Maratha’ came out on January 2, 1881 followed by ‘Kesari’ on January 4. Both papers initially had to incur losses, but ‘Kesari’ in few years began to break even, and then making a small profit. The ‘Maratha’ was always in financial difficulties and had to depend on ‘Kesari’ for sustenance. Vishnushastri, Agarkar and Namjoshi all shared a love for writing and
contributed much to the weeklies. Tilak, however, was a reluctant writer. Agarkar edited ‘Kesari’ and Tilak was the editor of ‘Maratha’. Before the advent of ‘Kesari’, the papers in Maharashtra were edited indifferently. The new weeklies were bold in their approach and were forthright. The immediate cause for their popularity was the case of Shivaji Maharaj, the prince of Kolhapur state. It was rumoured that he was suffering from fits of insanity. The Diwan of Kolhapur, Mr. Barve, and the English Resident were suspected to be responsible for this ailment. It was presumed that some jewellery had also been stolen. As both the ‘Kesari’ and ‘Maratha’ received oral and written complaints followed by some letters, which were supposed to be written by Barve, both papers started a campaign that caused a libel suit. As the case proceeded, those who had complained against Barve and the Resident were reluctant to come forward as witnesses and even the letters, which were purported to be written by Barve, proved to be fake. This resulted in the imprisonment of both Tilak and Agarkar. But it invoked tremendous sympathy in Maharashtra. People came forward to contribute to the fund raised to pay for the court case. Gokhale, who was then a student in the college, acted in a play that was staged to collect money for Tilak and Agarkar. They were released after about a hundred days. Later, the Kolhapur maharaja became insane and was detained in a fort at Ahmednagar where he died of maltreatment and torture.
Tilak and Agarkar were pleased with Gokhale’s work as a teacher in the New English School. They asked him to accept the post of a lecturer in the newly started Fergusson College. He was elated by this offer but was doubtful about the response of his elder brother who naturally was expecting him to earn a good and comfortable living. However, when Agarkar pleaded with Gokhale’s elder brother, he gave his consent. In no time Gokhale was promoted as a professor and later as the principal of the College. As a life-member of the Deccan Education Society, Gokhale took the responsibility of collecting funds for the Society, which he discharged with zeal as his wont and established himself as one of the important members of the institution. After his death, his colleague and a pioneer in female education in Maharashtra, D.K. Karve, told an anniversary meeting that the Fergusson College owed Gokhale a debt because the magnificent building of the college was the result of Gokhale’s untiring efforts in raising funds.

As a professor, Gokhale was very helpful to the students. He used to memorise almost all the prescribed books. T.K Shahani, who was Gokhale’s student and later the principal of the College in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, wrote that while teaching a book on Nelson, Gokhale took great pains. He says, “The spirit of doing things in thorough fashion was now beginning to take hold of him and prompted him to take several trips to Bombay, solely with a view to study the build of a fighting vessel as an object lesson. The ‘fore’ and
‘aft’, the ‘starboard’ and the ‘larboard’, the tack etc. to be well understood had necessarily to be seen; and Gokhale soon proved to be quite equal to it.”

But Shahani has also said that though Gokhale tried his best to make his subject clear to the students, he could not make it as interesting as his colleague, Vasudevrao Kelkar. R.P. Paranjpe, one of Gokhale’s students, made his name as a Senior Wrangler. He was then invited by Gokhale to be the principal of the Fergusson College. Gokhale had the magnanimity to not only relinquish his post but work as a professor under Paranjpe. Paranjpe tells us that Gokhale at various times taught mathematics, history, economics and English literature by turn. He was, therefore, called a ‘made to order professor’. In fact, according to Paranjpe, Gokhale was not a professor in a true sense of the term and was reluctant to call himself a one. By 1891 Gokhale had lost interest in mathematics, but because of his proficiency in the subject, he was able to explain any subject to the public as a political leader. Paranjpe said, “His (Gokhale’s) teaching of English suffered by a comparison with that of his colleague, Prof. Vasudevrao Kelkar. The latter was a true connoisseur of poetry and light literature and entered into the spirit of any novel or poem better than Gokhale. He is said to have taught some very difficult books in an inimitable manner, especially those for which students have no extraneous help in the shape of copious annotations, but several times he hurried over difficult books. This was too much for the average student who did not come to the class sufficiently prepared.
beforehand. Gokhale, on the other hand, was very methodical. He never slurred over even the easiest passages, took great pains to explain all the allusions and especially all the historical references. But his teaching was not calculated to give one the love of literature as such, if it was not already there. Perhaps, one can say that his teaching was more useful to the average examinee than that of professor Kelkar.” Though Gokhale was a teacher of mathematics, he tried to persuade Paranjpe to take up English as his subject for the degree examination and not go in for science.

Gokhale used to care about his students and guide them. Nevertheless, he could not mingle with them easily. He was reserved and even after entering public life, he generally used to meet people by appointment, in contrast to his mentor, Ranade, who had an open house. Even when Ranade was engrossed in some serious work, he was surrounded by a number of people and used to join them when free. Gokhale was particular about his clothes. When he went to England to depose before the Welby Commission, he wore a Parsi type long coat and never failed to don a typical headgear pugree of Pune. He also asked Dinshaw Wacha to wear a Parsi cap in London. Later on, Gokhale used to wear western clothes whenever he visited England. Even while at home, he would not meet a stranger without wearing a jacket. Srinivas Sastri, Gokhale’s political heir, writing about his fastidiousness about his dress and appearance, narrates that once when the
governor was to visit the Servants of India Society, Gokhale told him that he (Sastri) must shave, and provided a razor to him. Gokhale had travelled extensively in India and abroad. He was interested in acquainting himself with the social life of the people but being busy in his public work, he never wrote about the places of interest he visited.

What manner of man was he? Sastri’s account is very graphic. He says, “Gokhale’s figure is familiar his handsome face, his fair colour, his long coat of gray, his red pugree, his scarf of white with thin lace border. Still when I tell you he wore a cap sometimes, and often tied a long narrow strip of coloured cloth round his head as a loose turban, and that for many years, like any domesticated Deccani, he changed into holy time-honoured silk at meals, and that till he made his first voyage he grew a long tuft at the back of his head and tied it into a knot.

Being diabetic, he was placed under (a) strict diet but didn’t always observe it. He must have his brinjals daily, seasoned with chillies in as angry a style as would have pleased any Andhra of Krishna District. Ghee (clarified butter), prized above everything else by the true Brahmana, he avoided like poison; he could not endure it even on his neighbours plate. Someone told me this was because, for a long time, he had had to swallow quantities of it along with medicines. Curds were a favourite dish, and he grew lyrical when he expatiated on the unqualified merits of a preparation of
curds called srikhand. He found it in his heart to forgive the Peshwa who lost an empire eating it. I would like to believe his admiration was only academic, for he was not blest with the marvellous eupepsia of the ordinary Maharashtrian.”

“Gokhale loved his daughters but never demonstrated it as other fathers usually do... Gokhale had a playful habit of betting on all occasions and sundry. Though he never had much money, his mode of life, ever since I knew him, was high, higher than would have been expected of him. He tipped servants like a prince. He subscribed generously for causes. He helped friends open-handedly.” Sastri also narrated an incident from Gokhale’s life, which showed his truthfulness and courage to admit an error. This happened at the residence of Mrs. Sarla Ray, who was a friend of Gokhale. He regularly visited her when he attended the Imperial Legislative Council, in Calcutta. Once Mrs. Ray said to Gokhale that with all his liberal views, he was still wearing the sacred thread around his neck, to denote that he was a Brahmin by birth. Gokhale saw the point and the next morning Mrs. Ray received an envelope, enclosed in which Gokhale’s sacred thread was cut into pieces with a note. Mrs. Ray told this to the students of the school which she had established in the name of Gokhale.4

The Deccan Education Society, which was receiving plaudits all round and was poised to progress rapidly, was beset with a tragedy followed by
internecine feuds and controversies. Chiplunkar died before the college started and Apte followed him without seeing the completion of the college building. This was a great blow to the society but the internal feuds and quarrels crippled it for some time. Gokhale was disgusted by the quarrels among those he held in high esteem. He even thought of quitting the society. However, Apte persuaded him to stay on and told him that senior members had some schemes of expanding the activities of the society and they were looking to Gokhale with great expectations. Apte also said that the college had not become a full-fledged one and to achieve that status the society was in need of a dedicated and hard working person like Gokhale.

Differences in the society arose out of personal attitudes, prejudices and predilections. Both Tilak and Agarkar, who were editing ‘Maratha’ and ‘Kesari’, had identical views on politics, but had fundamental differences on social subjects. These came out into the open, and that affected the College staff, which was divided; and the students were disturbed and confused. Tilak then decided to resign from his life-membership of the society. He sent his resignation with a letter, which ran into forty printed pages and was accusatory. He traced the history of the society and regretted the fact that the original idea of having an institution like that of Jesuits was botched. Various rules and regulations were breached and, exceptions were made without any consideration of propriety. Some of the points of disputes could have been
resolved, if both parties had an open mind and were ready to compromise in the spirit of give and take. Dr. Bhandarkar, who presided over the meeting of the Governing Council, declared that the differences were irreconcilable and Tilak’s resignation should be accepted. The council then accepted the resignation on February 3, 1891. Thus ended a glorious chapter in the history of the Deccan Education Society, which was started with lofty ideals. Tilak was in a minority in the society. He would otherwise have accepted this readily, but he gave a fight. His biographer, N.C. Kelkar, says that Tilak was not a person who would accept defeat without a fight. But he adds that Tilak did not venture to start a parallel educational institution, as he thought that both the new and old institutions would come to a sorry pass by the competition. In a larger sense, this dispute in the Deccan Education Society proved to be a blessing in disguise. It would have been better if the parting of ways had come without bitterness. But it could not be avoided; and that paved the way for Tilak and Gokhale to play their historical roles in the arena of national politics. It, of course, took eighteen more years for Gokhale to resign from the society, not because of any differences, but because an opportunity had come for him to play a bigger role.

Controversy in the Deccan Education Society was preceded by that over the editorial policy of ‘Kesari’ and ‘Maratha’. Agarkar was all for social reforms, and justified government intervention in social matters which Tilak
would not tolerate. Agarkar then resigned from Kesari and started his own weekly, ‘Sudharak’, which for about a year or so was bilingual. Agarkar edited Marathi section while Gokhale, the English. Gokhale was Agarkar’s supporter; but unlike his mentor, Ranade, he did not play a leading role in the Social Conference nor did he go headlong with Agarkar, which might be because of personal reasons. His wife suffered from white leprosy and physical intimacy was impossible. Therefore, his uncle prevailed upon him to marry again. Gokhale was apprehensive about the fact that if he publicly came out as an ardent advocate of social reforms, he would invite bitter personal criticism from his orthodox critics. He also could not go with Agarkar in challenging the religious tenets. Agarkar was agnostic and never minced words. Not only Gokhale, but also most of the social reformers, did not dare to subscribe to the radicalism of Agarkar in social as well as political matters. In politics, Agarkar was nearer to Tilak than with any moderates. Gokhale used to call himself an agnostic in the initial period of his public life; but he changed his views eventually. He started yoga and invoked the blessings of Dattatreya. Srinivas Sastri remembers that Gokhale used to eagerly await a weekly letter from an astrologer. Later, when K.Natarajan, editor of Social Reformer met him in Calcutta, he saw a paperweight on Gokhale’s table on which were inscribed the words—‘God is Love’. Dr. Bhandarkar was aware of this change in Gokhale’s attitude and told Natarajan that Gokhale was going to announce this publicly. Lallubhai
Samaldas was one of those who were very close to Gokhale. This industrialist friend of Gokhale laid the foundation stone of the building, ‘Gokhale Hall’, in Pune on September 10, 1925. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Samaldas said, “Like many of us, he (Gokhale) passed through the stage of agnosticism, but he came back to the faith in the Bhagwad Gita and the teachings of *Upanishads*. The last time I saw him, I remember having found him reading Moksha Dharma from the ShantiParva of Mahabharat; and thereafter we had a very interesting discussion about the advisability and necessity of belief in higher power.... He had almost made it a rule at that time to read every day few English hymns or the few mantras of the *Upanishads* and shlokas from the *Gita*. He had not, of course, the faith of a Bhandarkar or a Ranade in the personal Deity. He did believe in the Parabramha of Hindu philosophy.”

As editor of the English section of the Sudharak, Gokhale wrote several editorials and notes. They cover the period between January 27 and September 1890. Gokhale generally spoke and wrote in English, but he also had a mastery over Marathi, his mother tongue. He wrote two articles on the subject of the use of Marathi in the University. Writing on April 21, 1890, Gokhale criticised both Justice Telang and the Syndicate for curtailing the study of vernacular languages. Gokhale pointed out that the founders of the educational system had given a proper place to the study of the vernacular
languages. He then said, “We have always been most sensible of the importance of the languages which alone are understood by the great mass of population. It is indispensable, therefore, that in any general system of education, the study of them should be assiduously attended to.” Gokhale appealed to intensify the agitation in favour of the vernacular languages and form a committee to conduct this agitation. Gokhale’s advocacy of the vernacular languages was impressive; and the ‘Sudharak’ received a large number of letters supporting the plea. Some letter-writers expressed their willingness to serve on the committee, if the university were prepared to appoint one.

Gokhale was modern enough to criticise Prof. Jinsivale, an erudite but an extreme orthodox orientalist and a Sanskrit scholar. Jinsivale had criticized Western civilisation and made some derogatory remarks against English ladies. Gokhale took strong exception to such retrograde views and intemperate language. But when some social reformers asked the Missionary society, which employed Jinsivale, to proceed against him, Gokhale expressed his disapproval and said that intolerance or extremism on both sides was equally reprehensible.

Gokhale did not confine his writings in the ‘Sudharak’ to the issues pertaining only to Maharashtra, but chose wider subjects. Thus, we find him reproducing an article about Parnell, an Irish leader. Afterwards when the
report of a committee absolved Parnell of any complicity in the revolutionary or violent activities, Gokhale gave extensive excerpts from the report. The commission had found almost all charges against Parnell and other respondents unfounded. They were; charged that their denunciation of the Phoenix park murder was insincere; but the commission declared that the facsimile letter, on which this charge was based, was forged. The commission also did not accept that Parnell and his associates were conspiring against the British government, for a revolution in Ireland. Why did Gokhale give such extensive excerpts from this report? He did so to convey to the bureaucracy in India not to rush to accuse anybody of conspiracy without a proper inquiry.

Gokhale wrote an article discussing the grievances of the workers of the then Great Indian Peninsula Railway, presently Western railway, and especially of the subordinate staff. There were no definite leave-rules, which the employees in government offices enjoyed. The subordinate railway staff was getting only ten days leave. There was no fixed rule for leave for temporary illness. The leave for private business was dependent on the discretion of the officer concerned, while the working hours of these employees stretched up to twelve. Gokhale asked the company to reduce the dividend to win the satisfaction of the employees. In another article, Gokhale referred to the strike by the Anglo-Indian skilled staff of the
railway company. Because of unity and perseverance, they could get their demands accepted. Gokhale asked the subordinate staff to follow the example of this skilled staff and organise as well as persevere.

Gokhale, like Ranade, was not soft towards Indian states and their chiefs. He cited with approval some extracts from an article by Lee-Warner who had asked why the Indian leaders' did not pressurise the rulers of Indian states to accept so many demands, which these leaders made on the British government? Gokhale said that this was a legitimate question and the Indian leaders should exert pressure on the rulers of the states. Lee-Warner wrote, “In almost every self-governed state of India the ruler could do no wrong and is invested with absolute powers. He is not controlled by a legislative body. His laws are his executive orders. There is no code of these executive orders that have the force of law and no public discussion at their introduction. If his ministers claim as public property anything to which a subject prefers a claim, the latter has no legal redress. The Judiciary is not independent. Occasionally municipalities have been created, but the municipal boards are under strict state control”. Gokhale endorsed the criticism of Lee-Warner. Gokhale’s views about the administration of the Indian states were not fashioned by Lee-Warner’s article. On July 7, 1890 he had published an obituary of Raobahadur Srinivas Rao, the chief justice of Gwalior. Srinivas Rao served in Indore and Devas as a subordinate judge and
was then promoted as a district judge, in which capacity he served for twelve years. Those were trying periods of his life, as the Raja of Indore used to make unlawful demands, and expected Rao to fulfil his wishes. Srinivas Rao stood up to his guns in all matters. Holkar expected Rao to subordinate the interests of the state in preference to his own, which Rao refused to do. Ultimately, the Resident who was impressed by Rao’s integrity arranged his transfer to Devas and then Rao was appointed as the chief justice of Gwalior.

It must be remembered that Holkar was one of the benefactors of the Deccan Education Society; but Gokhale was forthright in his criticism of the irresponsible behaviour of Holkar.

Gokhale had written several articles in ‘Sudharak’ on financial problems, which were the precursors of his illuminating budget speeches in the Imperial Legislative Council in later years. He was an ardent advocate of the various demands of the Indian National Congress like simultaneous civil service examination in England and in India; more representation to the Indians in higher government jobs; reduction of the salt tax; expansion of the legislatures and acceptance of elective principle for the legislative bodies.

Gokhale could not continue to edit ‘Sudharak’ for long, as he had increased responsibilities as a secretary to the Pune Sarvajanik Sabha and the editor of its prestigious quarterly journal. It was Agarkar who recommended him to Justice Ranade. Gokhale’s respect for Ranade
bordered on devotion and veneration. Ranade was also impressed by Gokhale’s sincerity and his willingness to work hard. Their relationship was unique. Though Gokhale was the editor of the Sabha’s journal, no article appeared without the approval of Ranade, who would go through each one and make suitable changes. The journal published very thoughtful and scholarly articles and won recognition from the government as well as discerning people.

Ranade, Tilak, Agarkar and Gokhale, who were the four more prominent leaders in the social and political life of Maharashtra, held different views on political and social problems, but they also cooperated on various occasions. As a social reformer, Agarkar was a fighter and was never afraid to use harsh language. Ranade on the other hand, always acted as a teacher and was persuasive. Tilak was totally absorbed in politics and thought that social reforms could wait and political rights must get precedence. Gokhale, though a social reformer, devoted himself to politics and constitutional reforms. But the attitude of these four leaders on different problems was sometimes complex. All of them had studied the writings of Mill and Spencer as did most of their contemporaries. But Ranade thought that both Mill and Spencer were the products of the Western civilisation and should not be followed in India, which had a rich tradition of her own. Mill and Herbert Spencer, according to Ranade, reacted against the rigidity of
some Christian sects in their times. But Ranade maintained that such rigidity was an anathema to Hindu philosophy as it was much more liberal. When Agarkar opposed the views of Dr. Bhandarkar and quoted Spencer, Ranade came down heavily against him and said that those who wanted to follow Spencer and Mill should better find a place in some other country. But it was Tilak who came to the rescue of Agarkar. Later when Spencer died, Tilak wrote a scholarly editorial, which could be said to be one of his best, eulogizing the contribution of Spencer to the human thought and said that scholarly persons like Spencer belong not to any nation but to the whole world. They were the sages or rishis. Writing an obituary of Max Muller, Tilak emphasised the need for studying the Western scholars in order to understand the Eastern religious treatises. Ranade was a prominent member of the PrarthanaSamaj, which was against idol worship but he gave discourses in the PrarthanaSamaj on the devotional poetry of the Marathi saints. He used to sing their devotional songs every morning when, according to both his wife and Gokhale, his face would glow.

Ranade, Tilak and Agarkar wrote and spoke extensively about religion and philosophy. They might not have agreed with each other; but they relished these philosophical discussions. Gokhale was not so inclined. He differed from Ranade and Tilak in respect of the study of Indian or Maratha, history. Ranade, in fact, wrote a book Rise of the Maratha Power. Tilak wrote
several articles about the Maratha history and started the Shivaji festival. Gokhale never wrote or spoke on Maratha or Indian history. He, indeed, advised his students to study European history. He had taken upon himself to have as much knowledge as possible about the economic and social problems of India and enlighten people on the subject.

Gokhale made several speeches about Ranade after the death of his mentor. He also helped in raising a memorial to him. Gokhale wanted to write a biography of Ranade but could not do so for want of time. His high regard for Ranade was evident on every occasion. Eulogising Gandhi’s service to Indians in South Africa and his spiritual qualities. Gokhale said, “In all my life I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Mr. Gandhi does-our great patriarch, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and my late master Mr. Ranade men before whom not only we are ashamed doing anything unworthy, but in whose presence our very minds are devoid of thinking anything that is unworthy.” Gandhi experienced Gokhale’s reverence for Ranade. When Gokhale visited Africa to study the problems of the resident Indians, Gandhi found Gokhale’s scarf a little creased. He offered to iron it. But Gokhale was reluctant. Gandhi writes, “When Gokhale came to South Africa, he had with him a scarf which was a gift from Mahadev Govind Ranade. He treasured the memento with the utmost care and used it only on special occasions. One such occasion was the
banquet given in his honour by the Johannesburg Indians. The scarf was creased and needed ironing. It was not possible to send it to the laundry and get it back in time. I offered to try my art. “I can trust your capacity as a lawyer, but not as a washerman,” said Gokhale. “What if you should soil it? Do you know what it means to me? With this he narrated, with much joy, the story of the gift. I still insisted, guaranteed good work, got his permission to iron it, and won his certificate. After that I did not mind if the rest of the world refused me its certificate.”

After taking charge of the editorship of the Sarvajanik Sabha journal, a letter from Gokhale to G.V. Joshi, an eminent economist, also tells us about Gokhale’s high regard for Ranade. He wrote to Joshi on October 17, 1889: “The Sabha has conferred me an honour of which I am conscious I am quite unworthy. The opening offered me endeavour to cultivate relationships of acquaintance, if nothing higher, with one for whom I all along cherished the deepest regard, whose earnest and unassuming exertion for the welfare of the country. I must content myself with only admiring from respectful distance. Mr. Ranade, at whose feet I am at present and hope to always sit as a very humble pupil, was kind enough to show me your last letter to him in connection with an article on the economic situation”.

Gokhale learned from Ranade that there were no rewards in public life
and representations to the government might not receive any response; but leaders of the people had to persevere, as these representations were also meant to educate the people. This might be a thankless task, Ranade nevertheless told Gokhale that their generation was destined to fail. However, in their failure lay future success. Ranade was a creative genius, who was all the while, striving to bring about all round progress. He had an eye to pick talent, which he would harness in the service of the country. He thought that the Indians were bad at building institutions, and therefore, instead of relying on individuals, he built various institutions. There was the Sarvajanik Sabha to ventilate the grievances of the people; its journal discussed different problems and enlightened the government as well as the people. The Social Conference was championing the cause of social reforms; and the industrial fairs and conferences were making people aware of the economic problems and inducing them to enter the field of trade and industry. Because of his contribution to the cause of the welfare and awakening in India, Lokmanya Tilak paid the highest tribute to him after Ranade’s death. He said that Maharashtra was dormant but it was Ranade who awakened it. If people had become bold, it was solely because of Ranade.

Ranade had a clear picture of the future India before him. He said:
“With a liberated manhood, with a faith that never shirks duty; with a sense of justice that deals fairly to all; with unclouded intellect and powers fully cultivated; and lastly, with a love that overleaps all bound; renovated India will take her proper rank among the nations of the world, and be the master of the situation and of her own destiny. This is the goal to be reached this is the Promised Land. Happy are they who see it in distant vision, happier those who are permitted to work and clear the way on to it, happiest they who live to see it with their eyes and tread upon the holy soil once more. Famine and pestilence, oppression and sorrow, will then be myths of the past, and the gods will then again descend to the earth and associate with men as they did in times which we now call mythical.”

Gokhale had accepted this as his goal. He struggled hard to achieve it and, even if he was deterred and faced a setback at times, he never gave up. Gokhale benefited from the knowledge and experience of Ranade and he made the best of it. Ranade was a high court judge at the time of the inception of the Congress. But for some years he continued to help it, shunning the limelight. Not being a government servant, Gokhale had no such restraints. He plunged himself in the Congress politics and attracted the attention of the Congress leaders by his maiden speech. Then onwards he achieved greater success and an eminent position in the public life of India.

References


5. Gokhale Digest (It is a collection of Gokhale’s speeches, notes and writings collected and bound by the Servants of India Society after the death of Gokhale. It is not a publication. So the date of the publication is not given. They are just bound volumes).
