

## DECCAN EDUCATION SOCIETY

Deccan Education Society, a renowned name in the educational firmament, is standing at a significant milestone in its cherished history of service to the cause of education. Steeped in the glorious tradition set by its illustrious founders – Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, Prin. Vaman Shivram Apte and Mahadeo Ballal Namjoshi – and assiduously nurtured by succeeding generations of devoted Life Members, the Society is an ideal blend of the traditional and the modern.

The seed was sown by the four young men in 1880 by starting New English School in Pune, the name that subsequently set a trend far and wide. The school made rapid progress and within a short time acquired widespread reputation for its high standards of education. These young men ('managers of the school' as they were termed then) felt the need to take their efforts further to meet the need for higher education.

24<sup>th</sup> October, 1884 is the day that marks the beginning of a journey that continues to this day and would continue for eons to come. By founding the Deccan Education Society on what happens to be one of the most auspicious days in the Hindu calendar ('Vijaya Dashami'), these great stalwarts embarked on a path that would, they were convinced, lead the masses to a new awakening and salvation. They believed in education as the best means of social transformation. With faith and determination, they steadfastly pursued their mission and the acorn of the yesteryears grew into an oak. Time has vindicated their faith and vision.

In less than three months, the fledgling Society started what is today one of the most illustrious, renowned and highly esteemed institutions – Fergusson College, even the mere mention of which evokes reverential and proud feelings in the hearts of millions. It has achieved an iconic status.

The activities of the Society soon picked up momentum, and one after another, other institutions - schools and colleges – came to be started or brought within its fold.

The DES family was growing. There were significant landmark occasions in its life, when, for instance, the Society decided - on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Fergusson College in 1935 - to start a technology institute on its campus, and later started Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce in 1943, only the second single-faculty commerce college in the then Bombay province.

Today, Deccan Education Society is a dynamic conglomeration of well over 45 educational institutions, acknowledged as centres of quality education, with firm commitment to the pursuit of excellence. The DES institutions – at Pune, Mumbai, Sangli, Satara and Wai range from pre-primary schools to post-graduate and research institutions. They include primary, secondary and higher-secondary schools, degree colleges in Arts, Science and Commerce, Management, Agriculture and Law with facilities for post-graduate studies in several subjects, institutes of technical and vocational education, and the recently started colleges of nursing and physiotherapy.

## **Brief History**

The Deccan Education Society (DES) was established in October 1884, and with a span of just a few months, it founded the Fergusson College in January 1885. This was a meaningful and logical extension of the step taken by its founders in starting the New English School in Pune in the year 1880, and marked a quantum jump in the Society's activities since it could thereby provide education to the masses from the school to the collegiate levels. Starting a privately managed College was indeed a bold and unprecedented step in India at that time. The College was named after Sir James Fergusson, the then Governor of Bombay Province, who was also the first Patron of the DES in appreciation of his valuable support. It would interest many to know that William Wordsworth, grandson of the famous poet William Wordsworth, was the master of ceremonies at the inaugural function of the college.

Principal Vaman Shivram Apte was the first Principal of the College, who also shouldered the responsibility as the Secretary of the Society. He was a great Sanskrit scholar and educationist, and authored several books including Guide to Sanskrit Composition, Selections from Sanskrit Literature, and an English-Sanskrit Dictionary. He died prematurely, at a young age of 34, on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1892. In honour of his contribution, the Deccan Education Society has been observing the day (9<sup>th</sup> August) as Founders Day.

Over the past 130 years, Fergusson College has come to be recognised as the flagship institution of the Deccan Education Society and has earned a high standing. It has rendered valuable service to the country by contributing renowned patriots, thinkers, philosophers, poets, writers, teachers, social workers, scientists, industrialists, administrators, defence officers, sports persons and film makers. Every walk of life is enriched by Fergussonians, who have achieved eminence in their respective field. The College has gained worldwide reputation and recognition.

The College has earned an enviable stature in teaching and research in the Sciences as well as in the Humanities. Students have a wide range of subjects to choose from, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.