

The Founder of RSS

Dr. Hedgewar

Seer, Patriot and Nation-builder



Foreword by
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Foreword



The B.B.C. of UK in one of its Quiz programmes had posed a question “Which is the biggest non-governmental voluntary organization in the world?” Not getting suitable answers, the quiz master himself declared that “the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a Hindu voluntary organization working in India.” This was a few decades ago. As at present, the organization has expanded in multiple proportions and still growing. But very few outside Sangh circles know the name of the founder of this mighty R.S.S., Dr.Keshav Baliram Hedgewar.

Dr.Hedgewar was a unique and extraordinary person. He was a passionate patriot, an undaunted, determined, relentless practical worker, a deep and clear thinker, a versatile organizer all rolled into one. From his boyhood he struggled to free the country from the foreign yoke, adopting every method. Very honest and earnest in all his attempts, he ultimately came to a conclusion and decided to start a non political organization to mould men of character, inculcating discipline with absolute selfless dedication and readiness to sacrifice everything for the Motherland and its people. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is the distinctive, genuine end product of the intense *Tapas* of such an unparalleled practical worker.

Organising the Hindu society was not an easy job. The great king maker Arya Chanakya has made a significant statement that “The inactivity of the good Hindu has caused greater havoc and damage to the Nation than the intense activities of the evil minded and barbaric wily invaders.” Every Hindu was

intelligent but dormant and not practical. Moreover the Hindu society was amorphous with so many diversities and divisions.

Dr.Hedgewar took up this challenging task of transforming the Hindu. The timid and docile Hindu was to be made a virile, active and assertive Hindu. Dr.Hedgewar's instrument of transformation was a simple programme of bringing together young ones of a locality for one hour at a particular place and time. This was also not an easy task. But Dr.Hedgewar's tireless efforts of going to the homes of every person and informally having a personal talk with full of affection, his transparent sincerity and intense love for the Motherland, made every person he contacted submit and follow him and the daily 'Shakha' was started. Shakha begins with hoisting Bhagwa Dhvaj with salutation, then in a disciplined atmosphere some games and physical exercises, patriotic group songs and a small talk about the country ending with a prayer would give the necessary samskars for the body mind and intellect to mould every person into a Swayamsevak, keeping Dr.Hedgewar himself as the model before them. This is the simple but most effective technique that Dr.Hedgewar adopted, the main content of which was informality and intense affection. Swayamsevaks moulded in this manner formed the backbone of the organization and the chain of such swayamsevaks are responsible for the present enormous growth of the Sangh and its allied activities.

Shri Ayush Nadimpalli & Dr.Rahul Shastri, who have written this short biography of Dr.Hedgewar deserves all appreciation and admiration. Readers of this biography are sure to be inspired to know more about Dr.Hedgewar and the R.S.S. My heartfelt thanks to Shri Ayush for giving me an opportunity to write a few lines about Dr.Hedgewar. I sincerely pray for the popularity of this book on Dr.Hedgewar.

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Introduction

Dr.Hedgewar's Lasting and Unique Contribution to Nationalism

The long term significance of Dr.Hedgewar's work was recognised by Veer Savarkar. Speaking in a Sangh camp in 1939, he said," Our work is like the torrential rain which falls down and flows away. But Dr.Hedgewar's work is like the farmer who channelises the rain water and makes the best use of it."

The exponential growth of the number of people working relentlessly to realise Dr.Hedgewar's vision of a glorious motherland, is living evidence of the enduring quality of his life's work. Not only has the organisation grown, but it has spread to every section of the society, every nook and corner of the country, encompassing all facets of socio-economic, political and cultural life of Bharat today. And it is still growing.

His unique vision emphasised four aspects of positive nationalism that have relevance even today.

The "Shakha" - Enabling Self-Organization of Society :

Our nation has produced a number of thinkers, reformers and leaders who have worked tirelessly for the glory of our country and sacrificed their all. Dr.Hedgewar is undoubtedly one such stalwart.

However, what makes his contribution special is the fact that he built an organization with an innovative style of functioning viz, the daily RSS Shakha. He insisted that if somebody wants to work for society and nation, on daily basis he should dedicate an hour for the Sangh. The Swayamsevaks who come to the Shakha, work to organise and integrate society. Through this, the RSS has established a tradition of ordinary people living extra-ordinary lives for the sake of the nation.

Creating a Hindu Identity over Caste Identity :

Many social reformers were working for eradication of caste inequalities and untouchability by attacking the caste system. Dr.Hedgewar embarked on a new path of not considering castes but only insisting on the unifying factor of Hindutva (Hinduness).

In 1939, Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar visited the Sangh training camp (Sangh Shiksha Varga) in Pune. Dr.Ambedkar was surprised to find the Swayamsevaks moving about in absolute equality and brotherhood without even caring to know the caste of the others. When Dr.Ambedkar asked Dr.Hedgewar whether there were any untouchables in the camp, the latter replied that there were neither touchables nor untouchables, but only Hindus. Dr.Ambedkar personally asked the castes of the Swayamsevaks in each room and was happy to find that many Swayamsevaks were from the so-called untouchable castes. One of the participants in the camp was Sri Gangadhar Bagul who later became a Zilla Sanghachalak of RSS, (District President). He wrote about the entire discussion between Dr.Hedgewar and Dr.Ambedkar in his autobiography, "Patha Sanchalan" .

The unique order "Ekshah Sampat" (Fall in One Line) symbolizes the profound thinking of Dr.Hedgewar through which he not only made everybody to walk together but also eat together, which was quite revolutionary at that time. The whole RSS functioning is in tandem with this line of

thinking. He made Swayamsevak to identify with the bigger identity of Hindutva as against their caste identity. The success of this practice set by Dr.Hedgewar resonates in the fact that even today nobody is asked about their caste or class, there by eroding the caste divisions among the Sangh Swayamsevak.

Organisation for Women on National Ideals :

Like Swami Vivekananda, Dr.Hedgewar believed that women can solve their own problems provided they are given education and freedom to organise themselves. He stood up for the respect for women and their rightful place in society. RSS shakhas had only male members. However, on many occasions, he invited women leaders to give talks in RSS Shakhas to enable the swayamsevak to get a perspective.

He extended support to various organisations working for the cause of women education, consolidation and social transformation. Dr.Hedgewar also approved the formation of Rashtra Sevika Samiti, an organisation run by women that works towards achieving the pristine glory of our motherland.

Shuddha Satvik Prem in the Sangh

The secret of Sangh's growth has been the unadulterated love that is showered by the seniors. The foundation of this tradition of "shudh saatvik prem" was established by Dr.Hedgewar. He believed that Sangh is one big family and the corner stone of our work is the love for society. Many incidents shared by karyakartas are testimony to this. This was evident even in his last days. In spite of being terminally ill, he wrote a letter to a sick Swayamsevak in Mumbai expressing happiness over his successful surgery. This was on 19th June 1940, just two days before his death.

Dr.Hedgewar's Philosophy of Life

Personal Piety and Divine Mission of Sangh

Dr.Hedgewar exemplified in his daily life the saying of Basaveshwara: "None is smaller than me; and none is greater than a Shiva-sharana (devotee of Shiva)."

In his conception, he was just a servant of the Nation — a Swayamsevak. It was a living faith with him. Describing an ideal public worker, Dr.Hedgewar once said : "He is not like an ochre-robed monk. He does not proclaim, 'I make no distinction between gold and mud.' He knows the difference quite well, but he is not enamoured of the glitter of gold. He willingly says, 'The gold is for the society. I shall be content with mud.'

Dr.Hedgewar was pious by temperament, and cherished deep faith in God. He invariably began his letters, and even entries in the diary, with the sacred syllable OM or SRI. Whenever he started out from his house he would invariably salute God. The Sangh work was for him a Divine Mission and this faith manifested itself in every word that he spoke or wrote. He sincerely believed that he was just an instrument to carry out His injunctions through the medium of the Sangh.

In the letters that he wrote, the inscription at the top carried a saying of Tukaram : "Compassion means protection of the living and extermination of the wicked."

Humility Personified

Sri Damodarant Bhat, a writer from Madhya Prant wanted to write a biography of Dr.Hedgewar. Dr.Hedgewar wrote to him stating “My life is not important enough to write a biography. Kindly excuse me.”

On another occasion, Shankaracharya Vidyashankar Bharati declared him as “Rashtra Senapati” meaning “General of the Nation”. Dr.Hedgewar came to know about this through newspapers and congratulatory messages. He immediately wrote back stating that he would not like to be called thus and also instructed Swayamsevaks and newspapers not to address him as ‘Rashtra Senapati’.

“Teach Me How to Live “

Dr.Hedgewar was very positive and confident in his outlook. His favourite quote was “*Swayameva Mrugendrata*”. This is part of the subashit which says that the lion becomes the king of the jungle by his daring and courage.

He believed that the social transformation of our society will come by character building, individual transformation and consolidation of such individuals . During a time when going to jail and dying for the nation were considered as the ultimate objectives of patriotism, he laid emphasis on working for the nation and laying down one’s life only as the last resort. His positive outlook is reflected in an incident wherein he struck down a line in a poster which said, “ Teach Me How to Die”. He changed it with the line “ **Teach Me How to Live**”.

“**Living for the nation**” sums up Dr.Hedgewar’s philosophy of life.

Much of the material in the book is drawn from

- ◆ Dr.Hedgewar- The Epoch Maker by Sri Deshpande & Sri Ramaswamy (compiled) & Sri H.V.Seshadri (Ed.)
- ◆ Yugadrashtya Dr.Hedgewar in Telugu by Sri Bandaru Sadasiva Rao
- ◆ Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in Hindi by Sri Rakesh Sinha

Dr.Hedgewar: The Story of His Life

Keshav Baliram Hedgewar was born on a Sunday, on April 1, 1889, in Nagpur. His family originally hailed from, in the village of Kandukurti, in Bodhan Tehsil, Nizamabad District, in the region of Telangana. Suffering from Mughal rule, his ancestors had moved to Nagpur.

The Hedgewars were a prosperous family of scholars, devoted to the Vedas. In course of his travels, the Shankaracharya used to nominate someone from their family to be in charge of propagating Dharma in the area. With the rise of modern education under British rule, the Hedgewars took to performing religious ceremonies to eke out their livelihood.

There was also a tradition of service in the family. Keshavrao's father, Baliram Pant was not only devoted to his religious obligations, but also service minded. When plague hit the area in 1902, he was ever ready to help with the last rites of the deceased, even if this meant visiting the crematorium twenty times a day. After weeks of service, both parents of Keshavrao died of plague, and he was orphaned.

Keshavrao spent most of his childhood days in his friends' houses. Even at this early age, he was blessed with self-respect and fortitude. He never accepted food from friends or asked for money. He was always among the top five in the class. He was reticent, but warm-hearted and made many friends. His favourite pastimes were five mile runs, swimming and games.

Early Nationalism

All are born with some sanskaras, but exceptional children are born with a genius, turning into child prodigies. Keshavrao was a born patriot. Even as a child, he was imbued with nationalist fervour. As an eight year old, when he was give sweets to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Victoria, instead of clamouring for more as children would, he threw them away calling them poison, and mourned the destruction of the Bhonsles by the British. He boycotted the firework celebrations of the coronation of Edward VII arranged by the Empress Mills in Nagpur, when he was twelve years old.

His patriotic enthusiasm found no task unattainable. In those days, the Union Jack flew atop the Sitabuldi fort in Nagpur. Keshava with his friends hatched a plot to pull down the Union Jack, and started digging a tunnel to Sitabuldi fort from their study room in their teacher's house. They were however discovered and their plan was foiled.

A few years later, Tilak became the Treasurer of the Paisa Fund, launched to promote Swadeshi with mass support. Keshavrao worked ceaselessly, going from house to house to raise funds. He was then strongly attracted to Dr.Moonje, an outstanding public figure and nationalist from Nagpur.

Keshavrao also participated in the Vandemataram movement.¹ In 1907, he went to Rampayali to visit his uncle for Dasara. As usual, a huge Dasara procession with the elite, including government

¹ Maharshi Aurobindo Ghose writes: "It was by means of the mantra 'Vande Mataram' that the vow of patriotism was administered to the entire country overnight."

officers, local villagers and youth, was taken out. Acting to a well laid out plan, Keshavrao led some youth in shouting loudly “Vandemataram”. As pandemonium broke out and loyalists tried to stop them, Keshavrao with two other youth sang the whole poem “Vande Mataram” surrounded by a protective cordon of nationalist youth. They followed this with a discourse on the real significance of the “killing of Ravana”. Although the police inquiry that followed was dropped due to local pressure, Keshavrao was shadowed by the police after the event and his uncle was transferred.

Next year, Lokmanya Tilak visited Nagpur and electrified it with his call for Swaraj. Keshavrao was then studying matriculation in Neel City school. He was orphaned five years ago, and was in dire financial straits. Undaunted by personal difficulties, he organised the students, and when the local inspector of schools visited the school for inspection, he was greeted with the roar of “Vande Mataram” from class to class. Furious, he ordered the expulsion of the guilty students and left the premises. Although everybody knew that Keshavrao was responsible, the students stuck together and refused to identify the ringleaders. As a result, all students of the two classes were expelled.

In retaliation, the students of the school went on strike for two months, after which the city elders arranged for a face-saving apology that allowed the expelled students to be readmitted. The strike was called off. Keshavrao was counselled to apologise in view of his dire personal situation. He however refused, and was expelled along with another student.

After leaving Neel city school, Keshavrao joined the National School : “Vidya-Griha” in Yeotmal. This was a chain of educational institutions started by nationalists to help students expelled from government institutions, to continue their studies.² However the school paid the price for admitting Keshavrao, by being forced to close down in a few months, because Cleveland, the espionage officer established a police outpost right in front of the school to suppress nationalism. Keshavrao had then to go to Poona to complete his matriculation by private appearance, which he did with flying colours.

Thus even in his early life, we see him combining high academic performance with uncompromising nationalism, even in face of extreme personal difficulties.

Revolutionary Work

After matriculation, Keshavrao returned to Nagpur. By then he was in touch with the underground revolutionary movement. He arranged for the hideout of Madhavdas Sanyasi, a Bengali revolutionary of the Kranti Dal, then on his way to Japan, at Mahopal village, at the house of Appaji Haide. He also arranged for a substantive monetary contribution.

By now, Keshavrao was committed to the ideal of an armed revolution against British rule. Dr.Moonje, who was sheltering him in Nagpur, thought that Keshav should pursue further studies in Calcutta, “the Kashi of Revolutionaries”. The Nagpur revolutionaries also thought that this would be the best way to establish contact with the Anushilan Samiti of Sri Pulinbihari Das, and receive training. Collecting money through private tuitions and teaching at a Sunday school, and partly supported by Sri Dajisaheb Buti, Keshavrao Hedgewar went to Calcutta in 1910 and joined the National Medical College, more with an eye on revolutionary training, and less for higher studies.

² Sri Aurobindo Ghose, Dr.Rasbehari Ghose, Barrister Surendranath Bandopadhyaya and others had established a national university called the “Vidya-Griha” that drew up the syllabi, held exams and awarded degrees.

Keshavrao had an impressive physique, and broad chest. He continued his vigorous physical exercises, and consumed large quantities of milk. He could down 20-25 rotis at one stretch. His object was to build a healthy body fit to serve the nation.

His public activities continued. One of his early contacts was the sixty year old Maulvi Liaqat Hussain, a nationalist Muslim, and dedicated follower of Lokmanya Tilak and Swadeshi.³ Liaqat Hussain lived on a few annas only, but assiduously collected funds for the poor, buying textbooks for poor students. He frequently organised prabhat pheris, and public meetings in college squares. Keshavrao participated with friends, helped to organise the meetings, and even addressed one of them. At one such meeting, when one of the speakers slighted Lokmanya Tilak, Keshavrao strode to the dais and slapped him on the cheek.

Keshavrao also noticed tendencies of provincial separatism during his study in Calcutta. Marwaris generally remained aloof from and indifferent to the Vandemataram movement that emerged in protest against the Partition of Bengal. On the other hand, when Marwari properties were looted, their women defaced, their ears and noses cut off by Muslim rioters, to rob them of their jewellery, the Bengalis remained largely indifferent.

There were frequent riots in Calcutta provoked by the public butchering of cows by Pathans from Kabul.⁴ Organising fellow students to rise above provincial separatism, Keshavrao founded a service unit to serve the victims of these onslaughts, carrying the wounded on stretchers to medical homes, and treating them. Keshavrao kept in touch with many victims even after they recovered and returned home, visiting them in their houses.

Keshavrao joined the Ramakrishna Mission relief team sent to work for flood relief in 1913 in Vardhaman District in Bengal. In a team of five,⁵ travelling in boats, carrying beaten rice and food for the needy, often wading through waist deep water and mire, avoiding snakes escaping from flood waters, he worked tirelessly, ignoring even the outbreak of cholera. Venkataramana, who was with him, notes in his diary that Keshavrao's zeal and capacity for work was fantastic.

The multifarious activities of Keshavrao brought him into contact with most of the important nationalists of Bengal of those days. Keshavrao often visited them. He also took care of the older nationalists who were often indigent.

He and his friends in the hostel shared their meals with Shambabu, who after solitary confinement in Burma for his patriotic writings in various nationalist journals, had returned to Calcutta in 1910. The students also organised medical help for him, and Keshavrao personally supervised all aspects of Shambabu's daughter's wedding from selection of bridegroom onwards, apart from collecting funds

³ Maulvi Liaqat Hussain started a Swadeshi store: "Kuber Vastu Bhandar" after taking the vow of Swadeshi, sported a white cap, and in pyjama and sherwani always attended nationalist meetings in the front rank, holding the Bhagva flag. He flitted in and out of prison for his activities.

⁴ Kabuli Pathans seemed to have left a special mark of aggression and violence against hapless Hindus all over India. Even the renowned revolutionary Ramlal Vajpayee, who had spent many years in USA preparing ground for the Indian revolution, writes of Nagpur of his days: "In a town with lakhs of people, an ordinary Pathan from Kabul enters, beats up the helpless poor, and goes away with his loot unhindered."

⁵ In the team were: Nalini, Gokhale, Deshpande, R.S.Surve and Venkataramana (later a renowned patriot of Madras).

for the purpose. Similarly, he nursed Maulvi Liaqat Hussain for a couple of months when he fell ill, serving him night and day. Keshavrao's service was always with a personal touch.

In the student hostel, Keshavrao initiated the public celebration of Ganeshotsav. After Tilak's incarceration in Mandalay in 1908 till his release in 1914, he fasted on Ekadashis. Khaparde and Babasaheb Paranjpe visited Tilak in Mandalaya prison, and whenever they came to Calcutta, Keshavrao would invite them to his lodge and listen to the news about Tilak and Savarkar. Narayan Savarkar came to Calcutta in 1910, and Veer Savarkar often wrote to him from his prison cell in Andamans. Keshavrao read these epistles with great interest.

Pulinbhari's Anushilan Samiti was active even in these difficult times. It was not easy to get admitted to the Anushilan Samiti. The applicants were meticulously screened.⁶ Keshavrao was a hardcore member, with the code name : "Koken". Trailokyanath Chakravarthy whom Keshavrao had supported when he passed through Nagpur, has photographs of that group in which Keshavrao can be seen. He says in his book: "30 Years in Prison", that only those who had taken the vow of renouncing their homes and families were entitled to full membership of the Samiti.

As a hardcore member of the Anushilan Samiti, Keshavrao distributed underground literature to quicken public awakening. He sent books and pamphlets to Nagpur and other places through friends going home during vacations. And he himself carried revolvers for his revolutionary friends when he went to Nagpur during holidays.

In spite of all his public and clandestine activities, Keshavrao listened to classroom lectures with one-pointed attention, and imprinted them on his razor sharp memory. In the 1912 exam, he scored 72% in Chemistry, and 65% in Anatomy.

First Public Movement

Keshavrao passed LMS in 1914 and completed the course in 1915. Meanwhile, in order to discourage the nationalist institutions, a legislation was moved in the Central Legislature to de-recognise the degrees awarded by these institutions, although not debarring the doctors from practicing their profession.

This provided Keshavrao with a suitable cause to organise his first public movement. The resources were limited, and had to be used for maximum effect. With the full support of Dr.Ashutosh Mukherjee, Keshavrao met leading newspaper editors and planted stories about protest meetings being held in Calcutta and elsewhere. The newspapers followed up these news reports with scathing editorials. The government was taken aback by the press coverage of events that its own espionage network had failed to report.

The blitzkrieg in press was followed up with a mammoth public meeting in Calcutta. Surendranath Bannerjee presided over the meeting, which passed a resolution demanding recognition to medical

⁶ The person's attitude, character, patience, endurance, obedience, self-control and such other traits were put to a severe test and only those who came through it successfully were admitted. The members were graded, and the best of them formed the hard-core, the others constituting circles of second and third removes, and so on. Each member on enrolment had to take a religious vow in the presence of ten or twelve people, or in the Kali temple or in the crematory. There were four strata of members, and the vows were different for each category. The severity of requirement increased as one proximated to the hard-core.

graduates from the national university. The government was forced to backtrack, and agreed to recognise the medical degrees after the graduates passed a token examination. While many took the exam, Keshavrao refused to take it, calling it “alien dictation”, and said that his primary purpose in joining the national university was to avoid such alien dictation.

Keshavrao had made his point. He had mobilised press and public opinion to defeat an unjust legislation of a dictatorial foreign government. He had no personal interest in the agitation, as he had no intention of practicing medicine.

Upon completion of his course, he was advised by the Principal to take up a job in Burma which was available. Keshavrao politely refused, explaining the higher patriotic ideals which inspired him. He was committed to the high expectation of Sri Aurobindo Ghose, who had said while resigning from the principal-ship of the National University: “It was not to provide some book learning or means of livelihood to young men that we have started this educational institution. Our aim has been to prepare them to serve the Motherland and undergo suffering and sacrifice if need be at her altar.”

Lessons from Bengal

The Bengal agitation organised by Dr.Hedgewar was part of a broader learning process that extended from clandestine underground revolutionary activities to open mobilisation of public opinion and movements. He had established wide ranging contacts through his work for Anushilan Samiti across North India. He had gained the experience of underground activity, and understood the problems involved.

He had seen how fleeting and shallow public enthusiasm was. He had seen revolutionary and nationalist sentiments boil in emotional moments, and evaporate quickly over time. He had seen enthusiasm stultify under disorganisation. He had seen Hindus divided by narrow considerations of province and language.

He grappled with the problem of transforming the effervescent sentiments and emotions of a divided people into lasting convictions and organised and disciplined actions for a united nation. He began to feel that the key to successful nationalism lay in the deepening of the Self. Before preaching patriotism to others, one had to become a shining example oneself. And this required training of body and mind to serve the cause of the nation till the last breath.

Public Life in Nagpur

Returning to Nagpur in 1916, at the age of 27, Dr.Hedgewar resisted pleas to set up practice and get married. Medical practice was lucrative and in great demand, since according to estimates, there were not more than 75 medical practitioners in the whole of Central Provinces and Berar. However, Dr.Hedgewar was not interested in making money or setting up a family. Instead he joined Bhauji Kawre in his revolutionary activities in Kranti Dal, using his experience from Calcutta to prepare plans that Kawre implemented.

Preparations for Armed Revolution

Given his wide contacts in other provinces, he was soon called upon to strengthen the communications network. A gymnasium was started in Nagpur by Anna Khote and reading rooms

were started in Wardha and Nagpur as recruitment centres. Money was needed for arms and ammunition. Utilising social occasions and strategic luncheons hosted by sympathetic landlords, funds were raised, sometimes up to five to six thousand rupees on a single occasion.

Re-establishing contacts with the Bengal and Punjab underground, Dr.Hedgewar sent 20 selected volunteers from Nagpur and Wardha to organise in North Bharat. Gangaprasad Pande, who was the leader of the group, set up his headquarters in Ajmer, where Ghandikiran Sarada joined him. Dr.Hedgewar coordinated the movement of volunteers and funds etc., from Nagpur.

The outbreak of World War 1 aroused hopes of a fresh uprising, and Dr.Hedgewar spoke to Dr.Moonje. With Moonje's introduction, he went to meet Lokmanya Tilak, and discussed the revolutionary situation in Central Provinces and Berar. However, the elder leaders may have felt that the time was not yet ripe.

Dr.Hedgewar dispatched arms to Punjab and Rajasthan. After a group of couriers was caught by the police, he began to send couriers disguised as women. New recruits were subjected to severe tests, and administered an "oath of dedication". Nanasahab and Bhausahab Talatule trained the recruits in handling arms, while Dr.Hedgewar taught them the art of clandestine work. Revolutionary literature, lives of Mazzini, Joan of Arc, Bengali rebels, reports of Alipore, Manektaal bombings, Veer Savarkar's 1857 War of Independence formed the study material. Over 150 recruits were trained, one of whom was Harikrishna (Appaji) Joshi who later became a lifelong confidant of Dr.Hedgewar. In Nanasahab Telang's residence, revolvers and cartridges were hidden in book cases.

The preparations stretched from Nagpur to Punjab. There were plans to secure ample ammunition from abroad, and in 1918 Vamanrao Dharmadhikari of Yeotmal was sent to Marmagaon to report on the arrival of a ship laden with ammunition. He has also stated that Dr.Hedgewar had asked them "to be prepared to rise in rebellion". Patil from Satara also reached Marmagaon, but after eight days, they got the news that the British had intercepted an enemy ship on the high seas. This scuttled the plans for a wartime uprising.

Congress and the Underground

Dr.Hedgewar plunged into open public activities after the war, using the Ganesha festival to tour the entire province and address meetings. Work for the Home Rule League and the planned visit to Berar by Tilak provided other reasons for tours, agitation and organisation.

He combined public addresses and meetings with clandestine contacts with the Krantidal workers. There was also the problem of safeguarding the arms that had been collected for the aborted uprising. News from Amritsar indicated that this had been done in North India. In central India, however, many arms were not returned to the central corpus, indicating weakening discipline and possible misappropriation. This made Dr.Hedgewar realise that successful patriotism and purity in public life were interdependent.

Dr.Hedgewar was in the forefront of the "Rashtriya Mandal", formed by the Tilak school of Nagpur Congress. In order to popularise its Hindi weekly "Sankalpa", he toured the Mahakoshal area, where he picked up lasting friendships that were later transplanted into Sangh activities.

Once a Bengali gentleman of Mahakoshal, Sri Gnanaranjan Sen refused to become a subscriber since he was not comfortable with Hindi.

Dr.Hedgewar's reply summed up his approach to national integration, and is worth reporting. He is believed to have said: "you have spent all your life in this Hindi province. That being so, is one local periodical devoted to a national cause such an unbearable burden to you? ... Whichever be the province to which we emigrate, should we not look upon it as our own and join the mainstream of life there ...?" Thus, in Dr.Hedgewar's view, being a patriot implied embracing every single part as well as the whole of Bharat.

Dr.Hedgewar started organising the students. For this purpose, he founded the "Rashtriya Utsav Mandal" and organised various functions under its aegis, involving distinguished leaders like Dr.Moonje, Khaparde and Loknayak Ane as well. He attended the 1919 Amritsar session of AICC, and in 1920 he joined the Bharat Swayamsevak Mandal of Dr.L.V. Paranjpe and helped to organise a corps of 1000-1500 volunteers for the Nagpur Congress session. When Lokmanya Tilak, who was to have presided over the session, passed away, he travelled with Dr.Moonje to Pondicherry in order to request Maharishi Aurobindo Ghose to preside over the session.

The Nagpur Congress session was held with 3000 reception committee members, 15000 delegates and 7-8 thousand spectators. Dr.Paranjpe and Dr.Hedgewar looked after the lodging and food, impressing all with their organisational efficiency, service mindedness and humility.

Dr.Hedgewar and his friends met Gandhi and pleaded for support for a resolution for Complete Independence. Gandhi dismissed the plea with the statement that this was implicit in the word "swaraj". However, Dr.Hedgewar's National Union prompted the reception committee to forward another resolution asking for democracy in India and liberation of all nations from capitalist countries.

Dr.Hedgewar disapproved of Gandhi's policy of linking non-cooperation movement with Khilafat, as he felt that it would only encourage extra-territorial fanaticism in Muslims. However, once the call was given for non-cooperation, he set about organising public meetings and bonfires of foreign clothes, in violation of the Sec. 144 that was imposed. Finally, he was arrested and charged with seditious speeches.

Utilising the court proceedings to further broadcast the message of freedom, Dr.Hedgewar argued in his defense that a) a foreign government had no right to judge an Indian b) that there was no lawfully established government in India c) he was only inspiring reverence for the motherland among Indians d) independence was the birthright of his country and inevitable. The judge found his defence to be more seditious than his original speeches, and banned him from public speaking for a year, with a bail of rupees three thousand. On Dr.Hedgewar's refusal to comply with the gag order, he was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment.

Different Forms of Struggle

Even in those days, Dr.Hedgewar was deliberating on the different types of struggle required for national revival. While being led out, he remarked that although we should be willing to go to jail, even to the gallows if called upon, jail going was neither all in all nor the only path for achieving freedom. He noted "there are ... many fields of national service awaiting us outside the prison".

Trying to harmonise the ideal of non-violence with the practical need for violence, he noted that "real non-violence lies in the attitude of the mind. At heart one should not harbour feelings of violence of hatred. One may outwardly carry out certain acts which appear to involve physical

violence, but if it is done in a spirit of detachment and without any selfish motive or hatred, then the act can no longer be termed violent.”

Later in 1936, he explicitly pointed out the limits of Ahimsa, stating that it should not result in “Atma-Himsa”. Observing that while the precept “Ahimsa Paramo Dharma”, was well rooted in the Hindu mind, it had to be taught to other communities as well, and others would learn it only if it was taught on the basis of strength” since predatory communities would not listen to weakness.

Also in 1936, Dr.Hedgewar participated in the Temple Satyagraha in Pune against the Government ban on ringing of bells in Sonya Maruti temple, and playing of music on public roads, in deference to Muslim demands. He explained that such agitations were like external bandages to boils on the body, serving to provide relief without correcting the internal impurity that would cause the problems to re-surface. They were necessary but short term remedies. For long term remedy, Hindu society would have to be united, and become robust.

The Muslim Question

Dr.Hedgewar sensed danger in Gandhi’s slogan of Hindu-Muslim unity, linking Khilafat with non-cooperation. He met Gandhi and argued that it was wrong to reduce to question of unity of different sects in a multi-religious society to a bi-polarity of Hindu-Muslim unity alone. Gandhi replied that this was aimed to secure a friendly attitude of Muslims and their participation in the nationalist struggle. Against this, Dr.Hedgewar argued that leading Muslims like Barrister Jinnah, Dr.Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan and others had identified with the nation and worked with Hindus under Tilak’s leadership long before Gandhi’s slogan of Hindu Muslim unity. He expressed the fear that this new slogan instead of helping unity, might further aggravate the feeling of separateness among the Muslims”. Gandhi closed the discussion with the abrupt remark: “I have no such fear”.

Unfortunately, Dr.Hedgewar’s fears proved to be right. By the time he was released from prison, Mullahs and Maulvis were reciting passages from Koran to urge execution of kafirs and pursuit of jihad. Muslims had begun to replace Vandemataram with Allah ho Akbar. Separatism affected even educated muslims, and Jawaharlal Nehru remarked in his autobiography: “Even western-educated Muslims who had no genuine religious feelings began to grow beards and observe external Islamic rituals.” Over 80 lakh rupees collected for the Khilafat movement, to which Hindus had generously contributed, went into the hands of fanatical Muslims. While Hindus burnt foreign clothes, Muslims sought permission to send the foreign clothes to their Turkish brethren.

Finally, the Moplahs of Kerala (in the south) rebelled, killing a thousand Hindus, converting twenty thousand, dishonouring and abducting thousands of Hindu women, looting property worth more than Rs. 3 crores (Servants of India Society report). Dr.Moonje who had toured the area, described it as the biggest Muslim attack on the Hindus after Muslim rule had ended. In Saharanpur, the local Khilafat committee members attacked Hindus, destroying property and life, dishonouring women. At many places, Muslims began to slaughter cows, attack Hindu processions, molesting Hindu women, desecrating Hindu temples. Nagpur, Amethi, Sambhal, Gulbarga and other attacks were followed by the Kohat massacre of Hindus which left 150 Hindus dead.

Muslim aggression was born of a total disdain for Hinduism, and a rejection of its right to exist. Reflecting this view, Mohammad Ali, a leader of the Khilafat movement, declared: “However pure

Mr. Gandhi's character may be, he must appear to be from the point of view of religion, inferior to any Mussalman, even though he be without character."

Even Gandhi who supported the Moplahs and the assassin of Swami Shradhananda, finally admitted that the root cause of the riots was Muslim aggression and Hindu weakness. He wrote: "My own experience but confirms that the Mussalman as a rule is a bully and the Hindu as a rule is a coward. I have noticed this in railway trains, on public roads, and in the quarrels which I had the privilege of settling. Need the Hindus blame the Mussalman for his cowardice? Where there are cowards there will always be bullies..."⁷

Before his murder, Swami Shradhananda testified before the Non-cooperation Enquiry Committee, that Hindus were divided and not as well organised as Muslims, and stressed the need to organise them. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya also noted at the Belgaum session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1924: "But for the weakness and fear enveloping the Hindus, many Hindu-Muslim clashes could have been averted", and stressed the need to organise the Hindus.

Painful questions arose: Did Muslims respond positively to fraternisation, or develop warmth to Hindu society? Did they reciprocate the tolerance of the Hindus? Were they willing to pay homage to the motherland?

Dr.Hedgewar's prescience on the Hindu Muslim question is also borne out by the fact that he was perhaps the first Indian statesman to forewarn the nation about the possibility of the demand for Pakistan. Speaking in 1932 at a Wardha district Sangh district camp at Alipore, he said: The Gandharadesha of yore has now become Afghanistan. Likewise, I am afraid, the Hindusthan of today may well become Islamistan of tomorrow if things continue in the same strain as at present. People may soon start thinking of securing political independence even at the cost of our Dharma and Culture. ... We are not in a position to say that such a possibility does not exist. In fact, at the recent Round Table Conference a proposal had been brought to convert most of Northern Bharat into Pakistan. This clearly indicates the way the wind is blowing."

Provincial Congress Leadership

Dr.Hedgewar was appointed the joint secretary of Provincial Congress in 1922. In order to combat indiscipline in Congressmen, to inculcate dedication among them, he tried to organise a volunteer corps in the Congress. He called for four volunteers from each Taluq, but his move ran into difficulties due to the attitude of congressmen who expected volunteers to be merely "charge-free hamals" and assistants to political leaders. Even Dr.Hardikar's Hindustani Seva Dal (1923) ran into opposition from leading Congressmen, as observed by Nehru.

In spite of this setback, Dr.Hedgewar initiated many moves to forge a force of patriotic, self-less, dedicated and disciplined men. He invited Gangaprasad Pandey, the revolutionary leader of Punjab and Rajasthan, to set up a national wrestling school in Nagpur. He helped to set up an orphanage in Nagpur. He was active in the Rifle association of Dr.Moonje, participated in the provincial Sports Committee, never missed the evening prayer in the Hanuman Temple, participated in study groups, sponsored protests in front of liquor shops, participated in Ganesh festivals, and even attended one of the secret meetings of the underground in Calcutta.

⁷ Young India, 29-5-1924

These far-flung activities put the threads of wide ranging contacts into his hands, and when the time was ripe, he drew in these threads to weave the fabric of a disciplined, patriotic organisation.

Harmonising Diversity

Dr.Hedgewar well knew that national interest demanded the harmonising of the many differences of approach and thinking that were natural in a diverse nation.

Thus, even as he led the Congress, he kept in touch with the revolutionary underground. He never felt any contradiction in his participating in the non-violent Satyagraha launched by Gandhi and following all its rules, even though he himself was a fiery revolutionary who believed that it was armed rebellion alone which would ultimately free the country.

In the Deogarh Congress Conference of 1923, over which he presided, when Mahatma Bhagavan Deen, a Gandhian, attempted to leave in protest against go-puja and a cow-protection resolution, Dr.Hedgewar not only prevented Bhagavan Deen from leaving, but gave him the floor to present his views on the subject. Only after Bhagavan Deen spoke, Dr.Hedgewar addressed the Conference. He would not favour estrangement merely because of ideological differences. Even Ramgopal, editor of Rajasthan Kesari (Wardha) admitted: "Dr.Hedgewar never lost a friendship on account of differing viewpoints..." He used to say to those with whom he differed: "I welcome you, but not your way of thinking !".

This was a life-long attitude. When in 1928, the Abhyankar group invited Dr.Ansari for the unveiling of the Tilak statue, while excluding Dr.Hedgewar and the Moonje group from the function, Dr.Hedgewar not only participated, but arranged a guard of honour for the statue by the Swayamsevaks.

While in jail, during the 1932 Salt Satyagraha, he intervened smilingly in a heated debate among the prisoners over who was greater, Gandhi or Savarkar. He said: "This is just like asking, which is more pleasant, the rose or the jasmine? The fact is, neither the rose is like jasmine nor is jasmine the same as rose. Of course, there is bound to be differences of opinion according to one's taste about which of the two is superior in beauty, softness and fragrance. In such a situation, rather than decrying the one and eulogizing the other, it would be far better to enjoy according to one's own liking."

It was this trait in Dr.Hedgewar which percolated into the swayamsevaks and had made them to whole-heartedly support the Congress movement, in spite of the latter's criticisms against them. In June 1934, the Congress passed a resolution prohibiting its members from associating themselves with the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Dr.Hedgewar, however, continued to enrol fresh members in the Sangh irrespective of their party affiliations.

When Hardikar, Chief of the Hindustani Seva Dal, impressed with the successful organisation of the Sangh, wished to meet him in 1934, he was welcomed to study the Sangh at close quarters. In 1938, when his old friend from revolutionary days, Balaji Huddar returned from Spain a leftist, he was welcomed and even invited to talk to the swayamsevaks of Nagpur about his experiences abroad. Huddar later observed about the genuine friendship of Dr.Hedgewar : "He was at once one with others — whatever their views or age."

Establishing the Sangh

When the police banned bhajan processions, Dr.Hedgewar mobilised the people to defy orders. Over 40,000 people including Raja Bhonsle joined or watched the protest. The Muslims then withdrew their protest and allowed a group of five bhajan singers to pass before the mosque. That evening, the Nagpur branch of Hindu Mahasabha was formed in a mammoth meeting presided over by Dr.Hedgewar. Dr.Hedgewar became its secretary. The bhajan processions continued with greater vigour and participation in face of Muslim threats. Dr.Hedgewar's presence was often sought in these processions as well as in family functions to instil confidence against Muslim attacks.

Meanwhile, after a public campaign that included Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel speaking in the Bombay Legislative Council, and several public meetings, Veer Savarkar was released in 1923. Along with Dr.Khare and others of Nagpur National Union, Dr.Hedgewar started a daily newspaper called "Swatantrya". Collecting funds, assisting the editor Kelkar, solving printing problems, Dr.Hedgewar stood by the newspaper till it closed due to mounting losses.

1924 was a year of churning and debate. An attack by the Muslims in Nagpur in July was foiled by the prescience and preparedness of Dr.Hedgewar. Day and night vigil had been put up, while Hindus in Muslim majority areas were moved to the Bhonsle palace. The attacking Muslim goondas received a severe thrashing and 30-35 were hospitalised. Meanwhile, Dr.Hedgewar confabulated with Bhauji Kawre, Appaji Joshi, Sri Kelkar and others. He also met Veer Savarkar, then in detention in Ratnagiri. There was a growing realisation that Muslims, though few in numbers, were emboldened to attack the Hindus because they were divided and disorganised.

Nationalism and the Hindus

By then, Dr.Hedgewar had delved deep into the problem of nationalism in India, mulling over the reasons for the floundering of and divisions in the freedom struggle. Patriotism was at the time, mainly a negative anti-British reaction, and no one seemed to realise the need for constructively arousing the self-confidence of society, building discipline and organisation that would lay foundations for real freedom, and consolidate the patriotic fervour of individuals instead of letting it evaporate after periodic outbursts.

There was also the question of who could naturally incline to protect the integrity and fight for the freedom of this country? Who could with natural ease, develop pride in the ancient glory and achievements of this nation?

Who would burn with zeal to worship this country as mother, father, and guru, as the land of deed, duty and merit (karma, dharma and punya) ? Who in this land, would glimpse the universal mother in every clod of this soil, feel in every drop of its water the all purifying Mother Ganges; sense the presence of the sacred ash of a thousand yagnas in every spark of fire; and inhale with every gust of wind, the Pranava exhaled by the Supreme Lord, the murmur of "Truth is one, the wise describe it differently" (Ekam Sat, vipra bahuda vadanti)?

The basic problem was not the attitude of individuals, or the Muslim question or the Christian problem etc. It was a matter of primal responses, of psychology and attitudes bred from culture, traditions and practices of different communities.

Every movement in this country has had Hindus as its object, whether it was for religious reforms, for social reforms, or for social equality. Thus, the Hindu has been the presiding deity of every major change in this sub-continent. It was therefore on the Hindu that nationalism had to rest. In the body of this country of many peoples, the Hindu was the vital life-force. Hence all the reasons, evils, and weaknesses that made the Hindus effete, dividing them in the name of language, caste, region and class, had to be eliminated in order to rejuvenate nationalism.

This was the approach that led to the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh.

Inauguration, Values and Approach

On the sacred day of Vijaya Dashami in 1925, Dr.Hedgewar met at his house, with about 15-20 young men⁸ and announced the formation of the Sangh. The sole capital of the Sangh at the time was Dr.Hedgewar's life of utter dedication and sterling character, his unsurpassed organizing ability and spirit of self-effacing service.

This was the first step in the future victorious march of the Hindu Nation – from individual to collective life, from subservience to invincibility. There was no publicity, in line with Tagore's dictum: "Till we achieve something solid, let us remain anonymous: let us be in the background and away from limelight."

Anna Sohni imparted physical training, Martandrao Jog - training in drill and marching, while Dr.Hedgewar and Vishwanathrao Kelkar gave discourses on national affairs. To inculcate a sense of strict organisation, weekly parades were organised by Jog who was also the chief of Congress Seva Dal at the time. Uniforms were made compulsory, and a few Swayamsevaks were sent on deputation to Gwalior for physical fitness and training.

Dr.Hedgewar believed in efficient execution of allotted tasks, strict accountability, and humility in success. He always warned against the pride that stemmed from success in any venture. This would detract from the spirit of selfless service to Hindu society, which lay at the core of the Sangh ethos. He abhorred sloppy thinking, and encouraged precision. To inculcate self-respect among Hindus, he started the Shraddhananda Orphanage, named after the assassinated Swami.

He did not believe in differences in status within the Sangh. In this context, his notes on being chosen as Sarsanghchalak are very revealing. He wrote that he was neither the founder, nor originator of the Sangh, but only its nurse, selected by members until replaced by a successor. While differences in functions did not mean differences in status, they defined a clear chain of authority which was essential to discipline. So he added that the Sarsanghchalak would command implicit obedience of swayamsevaks as long as he occupied the position.

Dr.Hedgewar continued to live in extreme poverty, refusing financial help. At different times, he resisted efforts of Raja Bhonsle, Nanasaheb Talatule, and finally Narayanrao Deshpande and Appaji Joshi to help him. Around this time, some friends of Dr.Hedgewar set up a company called the "Ideal Insurance Company", and persuaded Dr.Hedgewar to become the chief medical examiner. This arrangement which brought him an annual remuneration of a few hundred rupees continued till 1935-36. Much later, Bhai Paramanand observed on Dr.Hedgewar: "For the past few years Doctorji

⁸ among them were Bhauji Kawre, Anna Sohni, Vishwanathrao Kelkar, Balaji Huddar and, Bapurao Bhedi.

has been devoting all his time and energy to the Sangh work, totally unmindful of the needs of his home. He does not ask for funds, and he shuns publicity.”

He taught the Sangh to cultivate a positive attitude and engage in positive work, ignoring criticism. Thus, when the socialists of Kashi accused the Sangh of being fascist, and called Dr.Hedgewar the “Paigambar of the Sangh”⁹, he ignored the pamphlet completely and instead worked in Kashi for three weeks. While the pamphlet created curiosity about the Sangh, his calm and non-acrimonious explanation of its philosophy, convinced many to join it. Thus converting a negative into a positive, he said “Instead of doing harm to us, the pamphlet has in a way done a signal service to us.”

He always put the nation above self and ego as shown by the Faizpur Flag Fiasco. During the 1936 Faizpur Congress session, when Jawaharlal Nehru was unfurling the flag, it got stuck midway. Many tried to climb the pole and failed. But a Swayamsevak of Sirpur, Kishensingh Pardesi, volunteered climbed the pole, untangled the rope and helped to unfurl the flag. On coming down, he was carried on shoulders in jubilation, and was even tipped for honour at the public session, until someone came to know that he was a Swayamsevak, and all proposals of honouring him were abruptly dropped! When Dr.Hedgewar went to Dhule, he called Kishensingh, seated him next to himself on the dais, and felicitated him saying: “When there is a call of the Nation, one must obey it irrespective of one's party or group.”

Dr.Hedgewar always gave importance to Man not to money. When Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya visited the Mohitewada Shakha of Nagpur in 1929, and offered to collect funds, he replied: "Panditji, I am not in need of money. Blessings of elderly people like you are enough for me." Panditji was extremely pleased and remarked: "Many institutions first think of money, and then only about men. You are the very opposite of this! You place the heart above everything else. In future, I shall make it a point to mention this speciality of yours wherever I go."

Similarly when in 1937, Seth Jugal Kishore Birla, impressed with the ideology and method of working of the Sangh offered a donation of Rs. 500, Dr.Hedgewar said, "The Sangh wants you, and not your donation!" Gandhi was aware that Dr.Hedgewar had tried to organise a volunteer corps within the Congress, before starting the RSS. So when he met Dr.Hedgewar in 1934, he asked whether lack of financial assistance was the cause of the failure of Dr.Hedgewar's attempt to set up a volunteer corps within the congress. Dr.Hedgewar replied: “Money can be a great help, no doubt. But money alone cannot accomplish everything. The problem that faced us was not one of money but of attitudes.”

Dr.Hedgewar was well aware that service to the nation required a deepening of the self into a state of selflessness. Speaking in 1938, he said: "While thinking of offering our service to Hindu Rashtra we have to remove from our minds all thoughts of the 'self'. A real servant of the nation is one who identifies himself totally with the nation. There are some who take pride in proclaiming their 'sacrifices for the sake of the nation'. ... any service offered to our broader national family does not amount to sacrifice. It is just a sacred duty to be performed by us."

His half-humorous, half-serious question that he often posed to Swayamsevaks was : “Has not the ghost of Sangh possessed you yet?” The intent of the question was: Just as a possessed person forgets his own personal desires and acts only as an instrument to fulfil the wishes of the possessing

⁹ Beware of the little fascists, 1937

spirit, so should the Swayamsevaks become instruments for carrying out the objects of Sangh with single-minded devotion.

Swadeshi was another topic which he often emphasized. And he himself practised it as a principle of life. So long as Swadeshi metal-polish was not available, he polished his buckle with brick powder.

He believed that reason alone could harden effervescent emotionalism into the steel of conviction. "Accept only that which stands to your reason. Never accept anything merely because it is preached by some great leader. Test its truth on the touchstone of your intellectual discrimination. If the followers of any ideology are to be tossed over by the fancies of every new leader, how can they hope to reach their chosen goal?"

He was also aware that imitation of heroes played a great role in progress of common men who took them as role models. Ascribing divinity to such heroes could hamper social progress, since common men would hesitate to take them as role models. Hence, when Chatrapati Shivaji was being portrayed as an incarnation of Lord Shiva, he exclaimed to Raja Bhonsle: "Your Highness, ... Why should we inflict the stamp of divinity on a great human personality such as Shivaji, who out of his peerless courage and manly efforts breathed new life into the Hindu people?"

The personality of Dr.Hedgewar and the emotional rapport he struck with the listeners played a great role in spreading the ideals of the Sangh. By the end of 1928, there were 18 Shakhas in Vidarbha alone.

As the Sangh expanded, the matter of finances had to be settled. Dr.Hedgewar was keenly aware of the moral corruption inherent in the system of donations. Donees would experience a feeling of inferiority, while the ego of donors would be inflated. Both effects were deleterious to dedicated and selfless organisation. There was also the matter of keeping the ideology and ideal of the organisation above the person and personality of its leaders.

Solving both problems in a single stroke, Dr.Hedgewar declared the Bhagwa flag to be the Guru of the Sangh, and that Guru Dakshinas offered to the Guru would serve to finance the organisation. His words on the occasion are important:

"The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh does not recognize any individual as its Guru. The sacred Bhagwa Flag alone is our Guru. An individual, however great, is after all temporal and imperfect. The individual is conditioned by time; it is the principle alone which is timeless. The Bhagwa Flag symbolizes that timeless principle.

The very sight of this Flag brings before our mind's eye the entire history, the glorious culture and tradition of our land; inspiration wells up in our mind. That is our true preceptor. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh therefore accords the place of Guru to none else, and has accepted the Bhagwa Flag as its Guru."

Finally, Dr.Hedgewar took great care to see that Swayamsevaks obtained university degrees. This would increase the credibility of the Swayamsevaks among the people. Also, he sent several better placed Swayamsevaks like Bhaiyaji Dani, Baburao Telang and Taty Telang etc. to Kashi for university education. Thus, the Sangh began to travel to the North.

Public Interface and National Outreach

Even as he developed the Sangh, Dr.Hedgewar maintained a strong public interface and reached out to the nation in many ways.

Defending Hindus

In the very year of the foundation of the Sangh, the Nehru-Azad-Dr.Mohammad committee visited Nagpur and made suggestions as to when music could be played before mosques. However, Muslims continued to become more aggressive, and frequently Swayamsevaks had to be dispatched to protect Hindu women participating in festivals from being harassed by Muslims.

By 1927, news of plans of a large scale attack by Muslims during Mahalaxmi puja in Nagpur reached Dr.Hedgewar's ears. Warning the Hindus, preparing the Swayamsevaks, he ostensibly left town to give lectures in other cities. Thousands of Muslims took out a procession on the death anniversary of a Syed Mir Saheb, armed with lathis, daggers and other lethal weapons. The police looked on placidly, as with slogans of "Allaho hu Akbar" and "Din Din", they started first abusing and then attacking Hindus. To their shock, strategically placed Swayamsevaks repelled their attacks instantly, and soon other Hindus were emboldened to join the fray, even though the latter were dressed in silk dhotis for the puja!

Pitched battles went on for three days! Hundreds of Muslim goondas were hospitalised, 10-15 died, and 4-5 Hindus died as well, one of them a Swayamsevak: Dhundiraja Lehgaonkar. It took the arrival of the British army to restore peace to the city. After that momentous day, Hindus lost their fear and sense of inferiority. Even then, Dr.Hedgewar warned against the pride that would come from jubilation, and appealed for sobriety and more work, visiting the wounded, the jailed and their families, organising assistance.

Similarly, Dr.Hedgewar came to the assistance of Chounde Maharaj, who was dedicated to cow-protection and wanted to take out a procession of cows on a sacred occasion, but was afraid of Muslim attacks. On Dr.Hedgewar's instructions thousands assembled before the Ram Mandir and protected the procession.

The Revolutionaries

Dr.Hedgewar's connections with the revolutionary underground continued. When Avare wanted to protest the government ban on carrying weapons by taking out a procession with weapons, Dr.Hedgewar dissuaded him arguing that the weapons would simply be seized by the government and would thus become unavailable for a national uprising. Instead, he suggested that dummy weapons should be used for the Satyagraha.

Not only arms, but also the Sangh had to be preserved for the eventual uprising. Gangaprasad's hideout contained the arsenal of the revolution as well as information on the revolutionaries. Thus, when Gangaprasad Pandey's revolver was inadvertently used for committing a dacoity, taking great personal risk, Dr.Hedgewar went with Appaji Joshi, then Provincial Secretary and member of AICC, to Gangaprasad's hideout, and recovered the revolver. His and Appaji's involvement came to be known to the British through their informer, but could not be conclusively proved. When forced to drop proceedings by local gentry, the District Collector lamented: "What can we do, if even such respectable people take to dacoity."

In 1929, after assassinating Saunders at Lahore in December 1928, Rajguru escaped to Nagpur. As a student of Bhonsle Vedashala, Nagpur, he used to attend the Shakha at Mohitewada in 1927-28 and was acquainted with Dr.Hedgewar. Dr.Hedgewar arranged for a safe house for him at the farmhouse of Bhaiyaji Dani at Umred, and specially warned him not to go to Poona. Unfortunately, Rajguru disregarded this advice and went to Poona, and was arrested.

The Congress

With a view to enlisting the sympathy and support of national leaders, Dr.Hedgewar who was in 1928, a member of the Working Committee of AICC, met Subhash Chanda Bose, then the Mayor of Calcutta. There was a detailed discussion and exchange of views, and Dr.Hedgewar briefed Subhash Babu on the long term significance of the work of the Sangh. Subhash Babu appreciated his work, but expressed his inability to do more due to prior political commitments, saying: "Dr.Hedgewar, ... There is no doubt that yours is the only effective method of emancipating the nation. But I am already too much engrossed in the work of a purely political kind, and am not in a position to venture anew in another direction ..."

With the same objectives, Dr.Hedgewar met Ketkar the famous Marathi encyclopaedist, and introduced the work of the Sangh to the leaders of Akhil Maharashtra Taruna Hindu Parishad: Masurkar Maharaj, Loknayak Bapuji Ane, Swami Sivananda, Dr.Shivajirao Patwardhan, Pachlegaonkar Maharaj, and others. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya also visited the Shakha in this period.

Meanwhile as the Sangh grew, opposition from the Congress grew. In some places, the Hindustani Seva Dal units even vowed to "demolish the Sangh". Dr.Hedgewar was pained at these developments, but refused to reply in kind, reasoning that one wrong could not be set right by another, reposing instead faith in God and the dictates of conscience.

He went on to welcome the declaration of the goal of Complete Independence as the goal of Congress in 1930, recalling that this proposal was put forward by him in the early 1920s, and directing all Shakhas to observe the Independence Day, where they were to hoist the Bhagwa, i.e., the National Flag, and to congratulate the Congress for adopting this ideal."

Shortly later Mahatma Gandhi launched the Salt Satyagraha. Dr.Hedgewar was pleased, but he had the task of reconciling the immediate struggle for freedom with the enduring task of national rejuvenation through the Sangh. In order to harmonise the two efforts, Dr.Hedgewar directed Swayamsevaks, so wishing, to participate in the Satyagraha after taking the permission of Sanghachalaks. A medical corps of a hundred volunteers was trained at Nagpur, and accompanied the Satyagrahis in full uniform, working round the clock, treating victims of police assaults, transporting them to hospitals or homes.

Soon Dr.Hedgewar decided to join the Jungle Satyagraha of Loknayak Ane in order to reach out to the patriots in the prisons. For this purpose, he resigned from the post of Sarsanghachalak, handed over the reins to Dr.Paranjpe, announcing: "I would undertake any means in order to achieve Independence. ... I have no prejudice against any of the methods. I have only one supreme goal before me – the driving out of the British."

On 21st July, in front of ten thousand spectators, the Satyagrahis courted arrest by entering the reserve forest. Dr.Hedgewar was sentenced to six months in prison. In prison, Dr.Hedgewar

explained the ideals and activities of the Sangh to different Satyagrahis, many of whom became Swayamsevaks. He organised parades, prayers and other Sangh activities in the prison itself. The Vidarbha unit of the Sangh was thus born in Akola jail.

After his release, Dr.Hedgewar grappled afresh with the Muslim question. The National Flag committee, consisting of Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru, Pattabhi Seetaramayya, Dr.Hardikar, Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, Master Tara Singh and Maulana Azad, recommended the adoption of the Bhagwa as the colour of the national flag. Knowing Gandhi's thinking well, Dr.Hedgewar apprehended a roll back on this suggestion at the behest of Gandhi, and lobbied hard for the adoption of the recommendation. Unfortunately, his apprehensions proved to be true and the Tricolor was accepted as the National Flag in the place of the Bhagwa.

In 1932, Dr.Moonje returned from the Round Table Conference to report that the British Imperialists had formed an unspoken alliance with Muslim Communalists to thwart nationalism and encourage separatism.

Growth of the Sangh and Ban

After his release from Akola jail, Dr.Hedgewar travelled to Bombay to organise the Sangh. On his return, he received an appeal for help from Babarao Savarkar in Kashi, where Muslims were expected to attack the Hindus. Staying in Kashi for twenty days, he helped to set up ad-hoc protective measures, and also set up two shakhas, one in BHU, and one in the city. During his stay in Kashi, Dr.Hedgewar heard of one Madhavrao Golwalker, a lecturer at BHU, although he did not meet him.

Babarao Savarkar who was at the time convalescing in Kashi, was so impressed by the work of Dr.Hedgewar, that he later dissolved the Tarun Hindu Mahasabha and merged it in the Sangh. After attending the Akola conference of the Hindu Mahasabha, Dr.Hedgewar started shakhas in 15-20 more places in Vidarbha. Professionals began to join the Sangh in increasing numbers. After this, Dr.Hedgewar toured Chattisgarh to start shakhas in all the district headquarters of the area.

Dr.Hedgewar visited Karachi for six days in 1932, speaking to young men from Punjab and Sind. Finally, a shakha was started in Karachi under D.D. Chowdhary. On returning, he joined Babasaheb Savarkar launching shakhas across Maharashtra and even North Karnataka. He charged Madhavrao Mulye of Nagpur who was planning to settle in Konkan with the responsibility of the Sangh in that area. Subsequently, Mulye became the Prant Pracharak for Punjab. The expansion continued steadily and inexorably.

In 1934, the Mukteshwar Dal of Sant Panchlegaonkar Maharaj, which was formed to protect Hindus from Muslim onslaughts merged with the Sangh with 25 branches across Maharashtra. In 1936, Rashtriya Sevika Samiti was formed. In 1937, Dr.Hedgewar deputed ten associates, to North Bharat, and they spread the Sangh across Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Central Bharat. Dr.Hedgewar himself went to Delhi and stayed there guiding the work in Punjab. By this time, there 17 subunits in Nagpur alone, a hundred Shakhas in the country, and the number of Swayamsevaks exceeded ten thousand.

Alarmed at the rapid growth of the Sangh, the Government of CP and Berar in 1932 prohibited government servants from joining the Sangh, and later pressurised local governments to pass similar

orders. Dr.Hedgewar's many sided activities, wide ranging contacts, and his national outreach now came to good use.

Moving swiftly to counter the government's moves, he invited distinguished people from different fields to preside over Sangh functions. Public protests were organised. A former Home Minister of CP, Sir Moropant Joshi presided over the Sankranti celebrations of the Sangh, where he showered praise on its work. The New Year festival was presided over by the former Governor of CP, B. Tamba, who said that the organisation represented the innermost feelings and aspirations of Hindus, was aloof from contemporary politics, and that there was no better way of serving the Hindu society than by joining the Sangh.

Newspapers were pressed into action. Kesari of Pune and papers from Nagpur supported Dr.Hedgewar's campaign. Hitavada from Nagpur, wrote an editorial castigating the government policy. Dr.Hedgewar invited the participants of the Akhil Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan to watch the training camp of the Sangh. Krishnaji Pant Khadilkar, President of the Sammelan, was so impressed that he acclaimed it as a Divine spectacle.

Appaji Joshi, the Secretary of PCC, was also the Sanghachalak of Wardha. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj met Dr Moonje and Dr.Hedgewar in Nagpur in 1934, and discussed various aspects of Sangh activities and approach. However, he remained under the misapprehension that the Sangh was opposed to the Congress.

As a result of the protracted campaign, the municipalities of Wardha, Umred, Savaner, Katol, Bhandaraj, etc. and the Akola District Board passed protest resolutions demanding the revocation of the Government order. In the debate in the Legislative Council, the reason advanced for the ban was that a speech of Dr.Hedgewar indicated that that had adopted the policy of Hitler, and modelled their programmes on those of the Nazi Party. When challenged to read from the reports of the alleged speech, Raghavendar Rao, the Home Minister started fumbling, and the Chairman came to his rescue and closed the matter. Later, a resolution condemning the government order was moved, and carried after 3 days of discussion. Although the government refused to annul the order, it refrained from enforcing it.

In June 1934, the Congress passed a resolution prohibiting its members from associating themselves with the Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Muslim League. The Sangh however continued to be open to Congress members.

On 10th December 1934, Dr.Hardikar of the Hindustani Seva Dal wrote to Dr.Hedgewar expressing desire to study Sangh activities at close quarters. On 25th December 1934, Gandhi visited the Sangh camp at Wardha, and one day later met Dr.Hedgewar.

Gandhi's Visit to Sangh and Meeting with Dr.Hedgewar

Gandhi was at the Sevagram Ashram in Wardha, when he saw 1500 volunteers of RSS set up camp opposite the Ashram. Observing the camp activities, Gandhi expressed the desire to inspect it at close quarters to Mahadev Desai, who spoke to Appaji Joshi. Appaji went to Gandhi and invited him, and Gandhi who was observing silence, wrote that he would visit the next morning at 6 am and spend an hour and half there.

On 25th December, at 6 am, Gandhi walked across to the camp, and was greeted by pranams by the Swayamsevaks. He was accompanied by Mahadev Desai, Mirabehn and a few others. Impressed by the camp, he patted Appaji Joshi on his back and said : "I am really delighted. I have not witnessed such a sight anywhere in the country before."

Gandhi, a master organiser, had an eye for detail. So he inspected the kitchen and observed how food was prepared and served without confusion. He expressed surprise when he was told that the food cost just a rupee and some grain, and that any shortfall was made by the Swayamsevaks themselves. He later visited the sick ward and the tents of the Swayamsevaks. He also visited the store.

Closely questioning the Swayamsevaks, he asked why they paid entrance fees, spent money on travel and uniform, in order to participate in the camp. The reply he got pleased him. "We live together, play together, eat and sleep together. This gives us happiness and it also gives us the noble pleasure of doing all this for the nation."

Gandhi could not observe caste distinctions. Intending to pursue the matter further, he spoke to a group of Swayamsevaks. In reply to his question, one of the swayamsevaks said he was a Brahmin, another said he was a Maratha, the third a Mahar and the fourth a Teli.

Then leaving out the Mahar he asked the other three, "You belong to higher castes. Then how do you live with this Mahar, dine with him, sleep near him? Don't you feel it is demeaning?"

"In the Sangh we do not observe such distinctions," the swayamsevaks replied. "We neither know, nor desire to know, to what caste the swayamsevak by our side belongs. We are all Hindus, and so brothers. Therefore the feeling of higher-lower does not touch us".

Impressed, Gandhi inquired from Appaji how the Sangh had managed to eliminate caste distinctions, while in the Congress they were struggling with the problem for a long time. Appaji attributed it to the kindling of the feeling of brotherhood among all Hindus by the Sangh.

Gandhi then wanted to meet Dr.Hedgewar.

When Dr.Hedgewar met Gandhi the next day, he touched on many questions including untouchability and caste, the reason for founding the Sangh, and the notion of a Swayamssevak.

Untouchability and Caste Distinctions

Gandhi asked Dr.Hedgewar how he had managed to eliminate caste distinctions and untouchability. In reply, Dr.Hedgewar said "We have a 'boudhik varga' once a week, in which we put forth ideas that can help national integration, character, and love for dharma, society, culture and nation. We narrate to them historical stories and incidents from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. This, in my opinion, creates noble sentiments and intense idealism in the swayamsevaks. We do not do anything more than this."

Why RSS, Why not Congress ?

Gandhi also touched on a point uppermost in his mind :

"Doctorji, your organization is admirable. I am aware of the fact that you were for many years a Congress worker. That being so, why did you not build such a volunteer cadre under the aegis of a popular organization like the Congress itself? Why did you float a separate organization?"

In reply, Dr.Hedgewar referred to his unsuccessful attempt to set up a volunteer corps in Congress along with Dr.Paranjpe in 1920.

Gandhi: "Why did your attempt fail ? Was it for want of financial assistance ?"

Dr.Hedgewar: "No, no! There was no dearth of funds. Money can be a great help, no doubt. But money alone cannot accomplish everything. The problem that faced us was not one of money but of attitudes."

Gandhi: "Is it your opinion that noble-hearted people were not there in the Congress, or that they are not there now?"

Dr.Hedgewar: "That isn't what I meant. There are many well-meaning people in the Congress. What is at issue is certain basic attitudes.

The Congress has been formed primarily with a view to achieving a political end. Its programmes have also been drawn up accordingly, and it needs volunteers to arrange for these programmes. The Congress leaders are therefore used to looking upon volunteers as unpaid servants who arrange chairs and benches during meetings and conferences.

The Congress does not seem to believe that the problems of the nation can effectively be solved only when there is a large and disciplined body of dedicated Swayamsevaks who are eager to serve the country of their own accord and without waiting for inspiration from elsewhere."

What is a Swayamsevak?

Gandhi: "What exactly is your conception of a Swayamsevak ?"

Dr.Hedgewar : "A Swayamsevak is one who would lovingly lay down his life for the all-round upliftment of the nation. To create and mould such Swayamsevaks is the aim of the Sangh.

There is no distinction between a 'Swayamsevak' and a 'leader' in Sangh. All of us are Swayamsevaks and are therefore equal. We love and respect everybody equally. We give no room for any differences in status.

This is in fact the secret of the remarkable growth of the Sangh in such a short period without any outside help, money or publicity."

Gandhi: "I am indeed very glad. The country will certainly be benefited by the success of your efforts.

Where do you get Funds?

Gandhi: "I have heard of the vast following the Sangh has acquired in the Wardha district. ...How do you meet the expenses of such a huge organization ?"

Dr.Hedgewar: "The Swayamsevaks themselves bear the burden, each offering his mite as Gurudakshina."

Personal Life of Dr.Hedgewar

Gandhi: "It looks as if your entire time is consumed by this work. How do you carry on your medical profession?"

Dr.Hedgewar: "I have not taken to medicine as a profession."

Gandhi: "How then are you supporting your family?"

Dr.Hedgewar: "I am not married."

Gandhi was evidently taken by surprise. In the same surprised tone he said, "I see – you are not married! Very good. That explains the remarkable degree of success you have achieved in such a short duration!"

As the time came for Dr.Hedgewar to leave, Gandhi came up to the door to bid farewell, and said, "Doctorji, with your character and sincerity, there is no doubt you will succeed." Dr.Hedgewar offered his pranam to Gandhi and returned to the camp.

Golwalkar and Dr.Hedgewar

During his Kashi visit, Dr.Hedgewar had heard of a lecturer of BHU, Madhavrao Golwalkar, although he did not meet him. In 1932, Golwalkar came to Nagpur, and was walking on a road. Dr.Hedgewar chanced to see him, and remarkably enough asked him "Are you Madhavrao Golwalkar?", recognising him from mere description!

Golwalkar resigned the lecturer's post in Benaras in 1933 and came to Nagpur to study law. Dr.Hedgewar sent him to Bombay along with Babasaheb Chitale to organise the Sangh. Later Golwalkar was put in charge of the main branch in Nagpur. In 1936, Golwalkar went away to Saragachi Ashram of Swami Akhandananda, a disciple of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Gurubhai of Swami Vivekananda. On his return, inspired by Dr.Hedgewar, he began to visualise 'God in the form of society giving us a chance to serve.' After that, Golwalkar threw himself heart and soul into Sangh work.

In 1939, on Gurupoornima day, he was appointed Sakaryawaha. He had been taking more and more of the responsibilities over time. Throughout that year, Dr.Hedgewar invariably asked Golwalkar to speak on all public functions.

Further Expansion and the Last Phase of Life

Veer Savarkar started a mass agitation against the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1938, and thousands of Swayamsevaks participated in their personal capacity. Sangh shakhas multiplied rapidly in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other provinces. To suit the spreading influence of the Sangh, a new prayer and some new conventions were set in place. Bhaurao Deoras set up an impressive network of shakhas in Uttar Pradesh. Shakhas spread to princely states under different names, such as "Rajaram Swayamsevak Sangh" in Kolhapar, "Ramoji Swayasevak Sangh" in Gwalior etc.

Dr.Hedgewar started paying special attention to the qualities of the Swayamsevaks. In 1939, in order to test the battle readiness of the Swayamsevaks, he called for a meet at two hour notice in Pune. Explaining, he pointed out that quick mobilisation was one of the reasons why the British could rule

India from 5000 miles away. He himself had witnessed its effectiveness during his jail life, when at a danger signal, the entire jail staff assembled to bear arms.

When Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar visited Sangh Shiksha Varga in Pune in 1939, he was surprised to find the Swayamsevaks moving about in absolute equality and brotherhood without even caring to know the caste of the others. When Dr. Ambedkar asked Dr. Hedgewar whether there were any untouchables in the camp, the latter replied that there were neither touchables nor untouchables, but only Hindus.

Second World War and Final Effort at Armed Uprising

The outbreak of the Second World War threw England into turmoil. Veer Savarkar, now President of Hindu Mahasabha, wanted to exploit the situation, and even planned to start a Hindu army. Subhash Chandra Bose who had left the Congress, wanted to attack the British. Naturally both thought of Dr. Hedgewar.

Balaji Huddar¹⁰ and Dr. V. R. Sanjgiri came to Dr. Hedgewar carrying a brief from Subhas Bose. Dr. Hedgewar was at that time undergoing treatment at Deolali having suffered a severe attack of double pneumonia. The message from Subhas Babu was conveyed to him. It related to formulating a plan for a countrywide revolt against the British, with help from such countries as were opposed to Britain.

After attentively listening to the narration by the two emissaries, Dr. Hedgewar said : "It is a fact that the situation is ripening for a national uprising. But the crucial question is : How far has your preparation progressed? To start with, at least fifty per cent of preparation should be complete. How many people are there at present under the command of Subhas Babu? Without a corresponding preparation on our part, mere dependence upon foreign help would be of no avail."

It was then decided that Subhas Babu himself would shortly come to Nagpur to meet Dr. Hedgewar. However Subhas Babu could not come. Doctor Sanjgiri then wrote to Dr. Hedgewar to come over for the meeting. However, Dr. Hedgewar was then convalescing. In 1940, accompanied by the late R.S. Ruikar, Subhash Babu himself came to meet Dr. Hedgewar. Unfortunately, Dr. Hedgewar was on his death bed, and passed away the very next morning.

Trailokyanath Chakravarti of the Anushilan Samiti also visited Nagpur to discuss plans of armed revolt with Dr. Hedgewar. Dr. Hedgewar felt that although the time was ripe, the organisation was not yet ready. His anxiety to prepare the organisation for the expected armed uprising was often seen in his questions to Swayamsevaks : "How many Swayamsevaks would be needed for achieving the freedom of the country?" Indicating his own calculations, he wrote in a letter: "I should like to place before you a plan that could make the Sangh most effective. In the course of the next three years, at least three per cent of the population of cities and one per cent in villages should become Swayamsevaks equipped with full uniform."

¹⁰ Huddar was an early revolutionary associate of Dr. Hedgewar, and a swayamsevak, who had become a leftist after his experiences in Spain.

Shyama Prasad Mukherji and the Move to Bengal

In May 1940, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji called on Dr. Hedgewar, then sick, with an appeal from Bengal. Hindu properties were being looted, their women molested by Muslim ruffians. The condition of widows was most pitiable. Dr. Hedgewar noted that the Muslim government of Bengal which had British support would not allow a militia to come up. He suggested that organisation and an intense feeling of oneness was the only answer.

"Whether it is Punjab or Bengal or any other province – the chief cause for the pitiable plight of the Hindus is want of organization among themselves. As long as this is not set right, no solution is possible. Hindus will continue to undergo such travails at one place or the other.

The situation cannot be transformed by half-baked or retaliatory measures. The Hindus must be made to feel intensely that they are one single cohesive society. The concept of one nationhood must be deeply engraved in their hearts. They must love one another and share the common goal of raising up our country. This is the only way, the only positive and enduring way of national resurrection. And this is what the Sangh is doing."

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji returned to Calcutta and decided to set up a six-week training camp there. He asked for trained instructors and assistance from Nagpur. Dr. Hedgewar made the necessary arrangements.

Decline of Health and Passing On

Dr. Hedgewar was blessed with good health. However, in 1924, he was struck by pneumonia. After 1932, his health began to decline, and an old backache on his left side, returned. Often, he had to take rest for prolonged periods, as in 1934 and 1939. In the last year, his health was indifferent. Even then, he continued his work for the Sangh. His meeting with students when he was convalescing in Rajgir in Bihar in 1940, paved the way for the setting up of the Rajgir Shakha.

When Subhash Chandra Bose came to meet him to discuss the question of an armed uprising, he was already terminally ill. He perhaps had a presentiment of the end. Calling Sri Golwalkar near him, he said: "Well, hereafter you have to shoulder the responsibility of the Sangh."

He passed away on 21st June, 1940, at 9.27 a.m.

His last journey was a tribute to his life's work. It was the biggest procession that Nagpur had ever witnessed. Bicycle-riders led the procession. Behind them followed in four rows several thousand Swayamsevaks in plain clothes, and thousands of residents of Nagpur. At the centre was Dr. Hedgewar's mortal body and the Bhagwa Dhvaj. Behind these were prominent citizens, followed by another long contingent of Swayamsevaks and bicycle-riders. Workers belonging to Congress, Hindu Mahasabha, Forward Bloc, Socialist Party, Mazdoor Sangh, Harijan organizations, Women's organizations and numerous other bodies joined in the procession to pay their last respects.

Almost every prominent person of Nagpur could be seen there.

Paying his tribute to Dr. Hedgewar and his mission, Swatantra Veer Savarkar said,

" Hedgewar is dead, Long live Hedgewar ! "

Quotes on Dr. Hedgewar

" Doctorji, with your character and sincerity, there is no doubt you will succeed. I am indeed very glad. The country will certainly be benefited by the success of your efforts."

- Mahatma Gandhi to Dr.Hedgewar

"Many institutions first think of money, and then only about men. You are the very opposite of this! You place the heart above everything else. In future, I shall make it a point to mention this specialty of yours wherever I go."

- Pt.Madan Mohan Malviya to Dr.Hedgewar

"Dr. Hedgewar wrung his heart dry to bathe the Hindu society in the nectar of vitality. With fearlessness, he gave the message of pride in Hindutva to the Hindu society."

**- Swatantra Veer Savarkar on
Dr.Hedgewar**

Words fail to describe the depth of that pure and selfless love. The boundless affection of the mother's heart, the sleepless care and diligence of the father and the inspiring guidance of the guru found their culmination in that single bosom. I for one feel it my proud privilege to worship him as my ideal. The worship of such a soul transcends the worship of an individual and becomes the worship of the ideal itself. He is verily my chosen deity"

- Guruji Golwalkar on Dr.Hedgewar

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