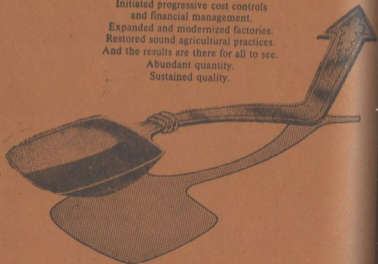


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The measure of a man.....

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When Mahatma Gandhi visited RSS Camp and met Dr. Hedgewar

By : Appaji Joshi

IT HAPPENED in 1934. The Wardha district winter camp of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was scheduled to be held at Wardha in December. Some of us started a hunt for a spacious place for the camp. We looked at quite a few likely spots around Wardha, including a farm owned by the late Shri Jamnalal Bajaj on the Sevagram Road. As it was spacious enough for a camp, and also quite near the road, we approved of it. Close by was Satyagraha Ashram, in the centre of which lived Mahatma Gandhi.

When I showed the selected place to a few eminent friends, some of them were doubtful if its use for an RSS camp would be permitted, as it belonged to a leading Congress worker like Shri Jamnalal. I said, "I have very close relations with Jamnalalji and I'm sure he would not say 'no' to me." On this these friends countered, "Even if this place is available, you should not take it. For, Mahatma Gandhi lives near by and the camp is likely to cause him disturbance. There would be young boys in the camp and naturally there would be some noise. Your band also, playing at odd hours, may disturb Gandhiji's sleep." I said, "I have also had an opportunity to serve Gandhiji and I also have some idea of his nature. Furthermore Jamnalalji knows him very well. If he is the least doubtful about our camp not causing any inconvenience to Gandhiji, he will not give this place. So I feel we should try for it. No other convenient spot is available anywhere near Wardha—and I have a feeling we will get this."

The next day, accompanied by a close friend, I went to Seth Jamnalal and requested his permission for the camp on his land. He thought about it a good deal, then said, "I have no objection to giving it. But, as you know, Gandhiji lives near by and I'm afraid the camp might cause him disturbance." I said, "You know the discipline of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. You also know the respect in which we hold Gandhiji. So I guarantee that Gandhiji will not be disturbed in any way." On this assurance, Jamnalalji not only gladly gave his consent but added, "Please let me know if you need anything else for the camp."

I am not here at the time of the camp, as is likely, I shall leave actions to give you whatever you require." I was happy to hear this. Jamnalalji loved me like a brother and even if our political differences since 1925 had led us into different directions, we still had great affection for each other. And as since 1932 I had stopped taking interest in politics, there was no cause for conflict.

With the land in our hands, we put up the camp and by midnight of Dec. 23-24 all participating swayamsevaks had arrived—some by railway, some by bus, some by bullock cart and some on foot. The next morning the inauguration took place at the hands of Shri Moropant Joshi of Amaravati. The function was attended not only by the elite of the town but also by ladies and gentlemen from the Satyagraha Ashram. Shrimati Janakibai Bajaj was also present and at the end of the function she casually asked me : "Is there anything more we could do for you ?" Actually almost all the tents, utensils and other equipment had been given by her but as she made this offer I said : "It was your help that enabled us to erect such a big camp. Everything is fine, but the number of participating swayamsevaks is 1500, which is greater than our expectations by 200. Consequently all covered space has been occupied. On 26th, the concluding day, our Sarasanghachalak, Pujaniya Dr. Hedgewar, would be coming, so we would like to have one more tent to accommodate him. There is a tent in the compound of your bungalow, which could serve the purpose."

"That tent is for Mahatmaji. He has his meetings there. So I don't think it would be possible to give that to you. Still I'll let you know after consulting Mahatmaji."

As the camp was so near the Satyagraha Ashram, inmates of the Ashram would be present at all activities of the campers. We had fixed 3 o' clock to 6 o' clock in the afternoon as visiting hours, but these friends used to come at all hours to look at all programmes, because most of them were known to me. I could not say no to them. They were particularly surprised to see all swayamsevaks taking their meals together. At night after eight there was no entry for any outsider. At ten, lights would be off and all the campers would retire. That rule was strictly observed. But the very next day of the commencement of the camp men and women from the Ashram came to visit the camp at 10.30 at night. The officer at the gate requested them to return as entry was prohibited at that hour. But they insisted on coming in and said : "Call Appaji Joshi."

I was called out of a meeting and they urged me to let them in. I said, "There is nothing to be seen in the camp now. All the swayam-

sevaks have gone to sleep." "But that is exactly what we want to see." One of the visitors countered. "We have seen how they eat, now we want to see how they sleep". I was amused and took four of them inside. They saw the sleeping swayamsevaks, some of whom had just a sack for bed and a torn blanket for covering. This surprised them very much and they said : "This is what we came to see. All your Swayamsevaks are in uniform from top to toe and you say they buy it themselves, so we thought that those who can afford to buy such an expensive uniform would be rich, or at least from the middle class. We had come to check how far this belief was right. We are surprised—and also pleased—to see that even poor swayamsevaks buy and wear uniforms to abide by your discipline."

On Dec. 24 Seth Jamnalalji's son Shri Kamalnayan Bajaj came to the camp with a letter from Mahatma Gandhi for me. The letter was written by Shri Mahadev Desai and said : "Mahatmaji was glad to look at your camp and would like to visit it". I was about to write a reply when Shri Kamalnayan suggested that it would be better if I personally called on Mahatmaji and invited him to visit the camp. So I accompanied him to the Ashram and respectfully requested Gandhiji to visit the camp. With a smile Gandhiji said, "You did not invite me. I have myself expressed the wish to visit the camp".

When invitation cards for the camp were sent out they had also been sent to Mahatmaji, of course. But these words of Gandhiji made me realise my mistake in not extending to him a personal invitation. I said, "You are busy with important affairs, while our camp is a get-together of ordinary youngmen. Its programme has also nothing special about it. So I did not think it proper that you should spend your valuable time is visiting it. All the same I apologise for not extending a personal invitation. I am really glad that you are interested in visiting it."

Gandhiji said, "I watch almost all your programmes from the terrace. I like your band very much and listen to it for a long time. Many people in the Ashram have visited the camp and have praised everything they saw. So I feel like having a look myself. The only problem is time. I would like to see your convenience too, so what time do you suggest ?" "Any time," I said, "anytime you care to come the campers would be glad to welcome you." "I can come at six in the morning on the way from my morning walk. Will that suit you ?" "Of course", I readily said, and took leave. When I told the swayamsevaks about Gandhiji's visit everyone was overjoyed.

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The next morning fifteen minutes before the appointed hour, all the Swayamsevakhs stood in neat rows in uniform. Exactly on time Mahatmaji arrived at the gate of the camp and I welcomed him with a garland. He was accompanied by a group of about 30-35 people including Mira Behn and Shri Mahadev Desai. As Gandhiji stepped inside the camp, all the Swayamsevakhs gave him a salute and followed it with a demonstration of yogic exercises. The grand scene impressed Gandhiji so much that he placed a hand on my shoulder and said: "I am tremendously pleased. Nowhere in the country have I ever seen much a spectacle." At this point the sun rose and the flag of the Sangh was hoisted. We Swayamsevakhs stood at attention while the flag was being hoisted and Gandhiji also stood at attention with us. Then we saluted the flag in the Sangh manner and Gandhiji also saluted the same way. It was indeed an unforgettable sight. A great leader of the country, the uncrowned king of the people, was devoutly bowing to the Bhagwa flag in the saffron rays of the rising sun.

After this Gandhiji was taken on an inspection tour of all sections in the camp. In the mess department fifty cooks were preparing the food and chapatis were piled in a heap. The cleanliness in this department came as a very pleasant surprise to Mahatmaji and he said, "Normally cooking department is expected to be dirty, but your mess is a unique exception. What is the meal time?" "From eleven to twelve," I replied. Gandhiji was surprised to learn from me that the whole camp could complete meals in just one hour, that nine meals were given on the contribution of one rupee plus some foodgrains, and that shortage, if any, would be made up by the Swayamsevakhs themselves.

Next he visited the hospital and during his conversation with the patients noticed that villagers and labourers were also Swayamsevakhs of the Sangh. After this Gandhiji moved around the living quarters. He entered one of the tents and had the following conversation with Swayamsevakhs inside it:

"Who gives you this uniform?"

"We make it ourselves."

"Who pays for it?"

"Our parents."

"Don't your parents feel it is a waste of money?"

"No, even if by chance they feel that way they listen to us and pay for it, as no one out of uniform is allowed to attend the camp."

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"What is so special about this camp that you should pay the entrance fee, incur expenditure on travel and spend money on a uniform to attend it?"

"We won't be able to say exactly what it is. But it is a pleasure for us to come here. 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."

Gandhiji was pleased with these answers. He then asked a different type of question, in reply to which one of the Swayamsevakhs 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 Swayamsevakhs 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."

Mahatma Gandhi was very much impressed with the answer and asked me: "How do you manage to make them forget caste distinctions? I and many organisations are striving for it but people keep clinging to these distinctions. You know how difficult it is to abolish untouchability: then how did you solve this difficult problem at least within the orbit of your organisation?" I did not know what to reply, but I said: "We don't do anything special for it. We don't have lectures on the subject, nor do we have specific programmes like other organisations. We just kindle the feeling of brotherhood among all Hindus. This has melted away all caste barriers. The entire credit for this goes to Dr. Hedgewar."

Gandhiji was greatly surprised at all this. Then we went to the exhibition section where all articles required in the Sangh were neatly displayed. There were also pictures and poems as well as sayings written on board. Gandhiji read the poems and sayings carefully and appreciated their noble sentiments. A saying that particularly appealed to him was: "A Swayamsevak is not a coolie engaged in volunteer service but a hero sacrificing his all for the nation."

Next Gandhiji's attention was drawn to the pictures. On one side were the pictures of Shri Rama and Shri Krishna, on the other pictures of Rana Pratap and Shivaji Maharaj and in the centre a huge picture of

Bharat Mata. In front of it, on a table, was the photograph of Dr. Hedgewar. Gandhiji was surprised that there should be only six pictures and said : "You have displayed pictures of only Rama and Krishna. Don't you consider Shankar and Ganapati gods ?"

"There are no pictures of gods here," I replied. "We have displayed pictures of Rama and Krishna because we consider them national heroes."

"And whose photograph is that in the Centre ?"

"That is Pujaniya Dr. Hedgewar."

"The same Dr. Hedgewar who you mentioned in connection with abolishing untouchability ? What is his connection with the Sangh ?"

"Can I meet Dr. Hedgewar ? I would like to learn about this organisation directly from him."

"Dr. Hedgewar is visiting this camp tomorrow. If you wish, he would call on you."

By now the visit was at an end, so I said : "You have seen our camp and tried to understand us. So I would request you to say what shortcomings you saw."

"No short-comings," he said. "From all points of view you are doing excellent work. If there is any short-coming at all it is that this organisation does not admit people of other religions."

"There is no question of other religions," I said. "The Hindu society, which is the national society of this land, is itself so divided with caste, provincial, linguistic and other differences, that we feel if we could instil a sense of oneness in this society all other problems would be easily solved. That is why we have decided to limit our work to organising Hindus. We have no hatred for other religions. We feel everyone should sincerely allow his own religion and have tolerance for other religions. If the Hindu does not love his own religion how can he love other religions ? So we feel the first duty is to instil a sense of respect for Hindu religion, Hindu culture and Hindu society. This, in our view, is a sacred national duty. Please tell us if there is anything wrong in this."

On this Gandhiji said, "It is not against national interest to organise Hindus without hating others, but I would like to discuss with your leader the background of this ideology. I do not know him personally, though I have heard his name. So please arrange a meeting with him and I shall send somebody tomorrow in the afternoon to invite him."

"I shall certainly try", I said, "and I think such a meeting can take place."

"One more thing," Gandhiji said. "Shrimati Janakibai Bajaj told me you want that tent in her bungalow. So if you require it, you can take it."

"We wanted the tent for Dr. Hedgewar," I said. "but if that would cause you inconvenience we would make some other arrangement." "You can certainly take the tent," Gandhiji said, "I shall myself arrange for it to be delivered here." I was naturally very glad at these words. Very respectfully, I took Gandhiji's leave. Before evening the tent was delivered in Shri Jinnalal's car and we erected it for Pujaniya Doctor Sahib.

December 25 was the concluding day of the camp. The concluding function was to be presided over by Shri Annasahib Bhopatkar, the well-known leader of Poona. Shri Bhopatkar and Dr. Hedgewar reached Wardha by train at about the same time and were accorded a ceremonial welcome by the swayamsevaks in uniform at the railway station. On way to the camp I told Doctor Sahib about Mahatma Gandhi's visit to the camp. He was immensely pleased and said : "This is wonderful. Now that such a great leader like Mahatma Gandhi visited our camp and praised it our organisation is bound to succeed. Ours is a divine mission. Fearless nationalist leaders can have nothing but blessings for it."

Sometime after we reached the camp, Swami Anand came to see Doctor Sahib with Gandhiji's invitation to see him. Half-past eight at night was decided upon.

At the appointed hour Dr. Hedgewar, Shri Bhopatkar and myself went to the Ashram where Shri Mahadevbhai Desai received us and took us to Gandhiji's room. Gandhiji also came forward to receive us and seated Doctor Sahib by his side. Then a discussion lasting about an hour took place between the two, in which Shri Bhopatkar also occasionally participated.

MAHATMAJI : Doctor Sahib, yesterday I visited your camp. I was very much pleased to see the efficient arrangements.

DOCTOR SAHIB : Your visit to the camp was a matter of great good fortune for the Swayamsevaks. I'm sorry I was not there. You seem to have decided upon this visit rather unexpectedly. Had I had some idea I would have tried to be present.

MAHATMAJI : In a way it was good that you were not present. Your absence enabled me to know something about you. The large number of campers, their discipline and cleanliness have been a matter of great satisfaction for me. You have a very fine band. I'm fond of listening to music. Your band plays after nine at night and nine is my retiring hour. Still I go to the terrace and listen to it. Where did your boys learn to play so well ?

DOCTOR : I chanced to meet a retired band major from the army and persuaded him to teach our boys.

MAHATMAJI : You buy such expensive band instruments and hold such big camps. How do you raise funds for it ? Do you take fees from the Swayamsevaks ?

DOCTOR : There is no system of fees in the Sangh. We consider the Bhagwa flag our 'guru' and celebrate 'guru Puja' once a year. At that time every Swayamsevak offers whatever he can as 'Guru-dakshina'. There is no rule about how much this 'guru-dakshina' should be. There are some Swayamsevaks who offer just a flower, while there are others who offer even a thousand rupees. And no one mentions what he gave. The funds thus raised help us to conduct the activities of the Sangh. As for the camp, the Swayamsevaks themselves do most of the jobs. So our expenses are quite modest and the fees paid by the Swayamsevaks are enough for the purpose.

MAHATMAJI : It is rather surprising that the Swayamsevaks make their own uniforms, pay their railway fare and even the camp fee. In other volunteer organisations volunteers do not attend camps even when the uniform is free, the meals are free and even when railway fare is paid for them. And even if they come they do not keep discipline. How does all this happen with your Swayamsevaks ?

DOCTOR : we do not do anything special about it. I think a young man is capable of everything if he is sufficiently dedicated to an ideal. In our organisation the Swayamsevaks do all these things gladly, and they do not feel they are doing anything special. On the other hand, they vie with one another in making uniforms and attending camps.

MAHATMAJI : It is good that you give physical training. But why drill ? And why orders in English ?

DOCTOR : It is my experience that drill instils a strong sense of discipline in the Swayamsevaks. As for the orders, we are coining Sanskrit terms and would soon change over to them.

MAHATMAJI : Have you ever seen if your Swayamsevaks can carry their things on the back for a distance of 5-10 miles ?

DOCTOR : We have not yet experienced with a long distance. They can easily carry their things for a couple of miles, but we have not yet travelled for 8-10 miles. Your suggestion is worth considering.

MAHATMAJI : I learn that your Swayamsevaks pay a rupee and some foodgrains as camp fee. Within that you give nine meals, which works out at 2-3 annas per meal. How do you manage this ? We have to spend a lot.

(Before Pujaniya Doctor Sahib could reply, Shri Bhopatkar intervened and said : "That is because of your system. You call it a hut but furnish it in royal style. I have just taken my meal with the Swayamsevaks and seen that there is no discrimination among them. If you follow the example of the Sangh you too can give a meal in 2-3 annas. You want everything in style and at the same time do it cheaply. How can these two things be reconciled ?" Everybody laughed at this little speech. Gandhiji ignored these remarks and said :)

Yesterday I saw Hindus of all castes, including Harijans, living together and eating together. I was very happy to see this but I do not know how you accomplish it. What do you do to achieve this ?

DOCTOR : Nothing in special. We keep before them the positive thought that we Hindus are all one. I think all this comes out of that feeling.

MAHATMAJI : I would be glad to know what particular programme you undertake to inculcate this feeling.

DOCTOR : Certainly. There is nothing that needs to be kept back in the work of the Sangh. 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 tell them historical stories and incidents from the Ramayana and Mahabharat. This, in my opinion, creates noble sentiments and intense idealism in the Swayamsevaks. We do not do anything more than this.

MAHATMAJI : Doctor, where did you get your education ?

DOCTOR : I matriculated at Nagpur. As the displeasure of the Government prevented me from prosecuting higher studies, I went to Calcutta and graduated from the National Medical College.

MAHATMAJI : Your organisation is certainly very good. But I learn that for a long time you were a Congress worker. Then, why did you not start a volunteer organisation under the auspices of a popular party like the Congress ? Why did you start a separate organisation ?

DOCTOR : I had first started this work within the Congress. In fact I was the Secretary of the volunteer department at the Nagpur Congress in 1920 and my friend Dr. Paranjape was the president. Later we tried for such an organisation under the leadership of the provincial Congress. But we did not succeed in our efforts, and so we started an independent organisation.

MAHATMAJI : Why did the efforts within the Congress not succeed. Were funds lacking ?

DOCTOR : No, no. There was no difficulty about funds. Money may make quite a few things easy, but nothing can succeed on the strength of money alone. It is not a matter of money, it is a matter of feelings.

MAHATMAJI : Do you mean to say there were, or are, no noble-minded persons within the Congress ?

DOCTOR : No. There are many good people in the Congress. I was myself in the Congress. But the question is about the mentality. The Congress mentality is oriented towards a certain political purpose. Congress programmes are organised with that purpose in view and volunteers are required to carry through those programmes. The Congress does not believe that all problems before the nation could be solved by a powerful organisation of those working under their own inspiration. People in the Congress believe that a volunteer is a labourer who helps arrange tables and chairs in a meeting without charging for the labour. How can dedicated workers in the cause of national progress be created by such a belief ? That is why the project within the Congress could not succeeded.

MAHATMAJI : Then what is your idea of a Swayamsevak ?

DOCTOR : According to our definition a swayamsevak is a leader who is prepared to sacrifice his all for the all-round emancipation of the

country. The Sangh is keen on preparing such Swayamsevaks. In this organisation there is no volunteer-leader difference. We are all Swayamsevaks, all on an equal level. There is no distinction at all. This is the secret of how the work of the Sangh could spread in such a short time even in the absence of funds and other resources.

MAHATMAJI : Good. Your work is indeed in the nation's interest. I hear that the Sangh has spread well in the Wardha district. I expect this must be largely due to Shri Jammalal Bajaj's assistance.

DOCTOR : We do not accept monetary help from anyone.

MAHATMAJI : Then how do you manage the expenditure of such a big organisation ?

DOCTOR : As I have already said, the Swayamsevaks themselves shoulder this burden by contributing more and more in the form of 'gurudakshina'.

MAHATMAJI : Strange. Won't you accept money from anybody at all ?

DOCTOR : We will, when the society feels this work necessary for its own development. Then people would pour heaps of money before the Sangh without our asking for it. We would not have any objection to accept such help. For the present, however, we have adopted the system of depending on our own selves.

MAHATMAJI : Then this must be a full-time activity for you. How do you manage to carry on your medical practice ?

DOCTOR : I do not practise at all.

MAHATMAJI : Then how you provide for your family ?

DOCTOR : I have no family, as I am not married.

Gandhiji was somewhat startled and exclaimed : "I see ! That explains why you have been so successful in such a short time. It was certainly a great pleasure for me to meet you. Now only one more question. As you conduct such a big organisation I expect it has a constitution. I would like to see it. You may send it to me at your convenience."

DOCTOR : There is no constitution at all. The original idea was to conduct the organisation by just consulting each other and without writing anything at all. The work started that way and by the grace of God some success was achieved. But as branches increased we have had to resort to writing to keep the organisation going well. The Sangh conducts its work to certain ideas. As yet there has been no occasion to frame a constitution. If and when the necessity arises we shall give it a thought.

MAHATMAJI : I too had similar ideas, but I found it impossible. Actually I have to write a lot. One day or the other you too will have to do the same. But I am very glad to see the noble sentiments with which you conduct the organisation and astonishing discipline that you have created. I sincerely wish you success. I thank you for coming to see me and explaining things to me.

DOCTOR : Our strength lies in the blessings of saintly persons like you. For me, too, this meeting with you has been a matter of great pleasure.

(Thus ended the meeting between the two great men, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Hedgewar, in the year 1934, at Wardha, in which the Mahatma blessed the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and wished it success.)

When Babasaheb Ambedkar visited Pune Shakha of RSS

BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR presided over the Makar Sankranti utsav of Pune Shakhan in 1936. Here he asked Dr. Hedgewar, who was present at the ceremony, if all RSS members were Brahmins. The Doctor's answer was that when Swayamsevaks were spreading their ideals and recruiting new members—i.e. using their mind—they were Brahmins; when they were performing their daily exercises they were Kshatriyas (warriors); whenever they handled money and other business matters for Sangha, they were Vaishyas; and when they did the sanitation work in their various camps and branches, they were Shudras. In other words, by naming the four main traditional castes into which Hindu society is divided, Dr. Hedgewar made the point that the RSS was attempting to demonstrate that caste meant nothing.

Dr. Ambedkar was very much impressed with RSS castelessness in the centre of orthodoxy in Maharashtra.

Gandhiji looked upon Jamnalal Bajaj as his son. And Jamnalalji was also Congress Working Committee member and Party Treasurer. When he saw RSS, he liked it so much that he wanted it to be an integral part of the Congress. For this reason he asked Appaji Joshi, PCC Secretary-turned-Sanghachalak of Wardha, to take him to Dr. Hedgewar. Shri Appaji knew Doctorji's Sangha point of view thoroughly well. He, therefore, tried to explain to him the futility of his plan. Doctorji wanted to keep the organization completely aloof from politics and party feuds. He, therefore, told Bajajji that it would be embarrassing for them to go to Doctorji and then get no response. But he could deter Jamnalalji from his resolve. On the contrary, Bajajji thought that Appaji was deliberately avoiding to take him to Doctorji. He, therefore, arranged to see Doctorji independently. Couple of days later, on January 31, 1934, Jamnalalji, accompanied by Late Shri Ganpatrao Tikekar, an esteemed friend of Doctorji, met him. He requested him to run the organization under the Congress control. By doing this, he assured Doctorji, Sangha would get all sorts of help, there would not be any monetary difficulty and it would attain an All-India status within a short period of time, as contemplated by Doctorji.

Doctorji conceded that Congress was the greatest political organization and that he was a member thereof. But Doctorji said : "I insist on RSS flourishing independently on its intrinsic organizational strength. It is our experience that plants never grow under gigantic trees. I do not want to produce volunteers for the politicking of politicians. Sangha does not want Swayamsevaks to merely abide by the orders of superiors. My intention is to create Swayamsevaks capable of thinking over all the facts of our national life and leading the nation towards progress, on their own strength. This work cannot be done by any political leader or party of the day. It is self-dependent. Swayamsevaks have to evolve it through their toil sacrifices. We shall not receive money or any other help from others; that will make us dependent upon them. Independently, we shall stand. That is our determination and so I cannot agree with you."

Seth Jamnalalji came back rather disappointed.

Shri Appaji Joshi writes : "Thereafter, Jamnalalji tried to organize different *vyayamshalas* by donating to them Band instruments, etc. It was a headache for us for a couple of years. But it bore no fruit. He also realised that it was not a joke to run an 'organization'. Seth Jamnalalji was a noble-hearted and cultured man. Even though he was disappointed by us, he was not angry at all. Till his last, he loved and helped us. But the Congress and its off-springs with varied socialistic tinges began to hate Sangha because of the fact that this great organization could not be

exploited for their narrow political ends. Many of them tried to create Dals, Senas and Sanghs on the lines of the RSS, but with no success. Our critics are angry with us not because of any ideological differences but because of the fact that Sangha cannot be exploited for their own ends and it is gaining strength day by day. This is the main reason why these people hate Sangha though Sangha never hates anybody."

IF CONGRESS was disappointed, the Hindu Mahasabha was, if anything, even more disappointed. Since both organizations, Mahasabha and RSS, were wedded to Hindutva, the Mahasabha assumed the RSS would back it in the political sphere. The expectation was the greater because Mahasabha leader Dr. B.S. Moonje had been like an elder brother to Dr. Hedgewar for decades. As long as Dr. Moonje was in Congress, there was no problem; but when he came out of Congress, and joined Mahasabha, a serious problem arose. They insisted on RSS support to the Mahasabha against the Congress.

Writes Appaji: "Sooner or later, a time was bound to come when they were to be told 'No' in plain words. When the time came, Doctorji asserted: Sangha is an organization totally aloof from politics. Hence it will work for no political party. A Sangha Swayamsevak is at liberty to join any political party and work for it. He may participate actively in elections too. But the organization will not follow him. It will be aloof from parties and will not abandon this stand for any reason."

Due to this frank expression, Mahasabha friends were rather angry. They started a new organization known as "Ram Sena". A "Vanar Sena" (Monkey Brigade) was already there in Nagpur for the Congress party. Two opposition parties (for their own purposes) started brigades in the name of Bhagavan Ram! Afterwards, there were a few clashes between Ram Sena and Sangha. Having seen Doctorji very much pained at this, Appaji went to Dr. Moonje and explained the Sangha point of view.

Veer Savarkar, long-time President of Hindu Mahasabha, had also been very unhappy with RSS for not helping his political activities. He once wrote: "The epitaph on a Sangha Swayamsevak will be: 'He was born; he joined RSS; he died.'" It was only years later that he appreciated the RSS decision to keep out of politics, as good and right.

"SANGHA, as an organisation, will work for no political party, a Swayamsevak may."

—Dr. Hedgewar

Govt. Defeated over RSS Cut Motion

THE DUSSEHRA 1932 function was attended by some 1200 Swayamsevaks in uniform. Work was also growing satisfactorily in the surrounding districts. This was an eye-sore to the British. And so on December 15, 1932, the Governor-in-Council of the Central Provinces and Berar issued orders prohibiting Government servants from attending RSS Shakhas. Sometime later this order was made applicable to municipal and district local board employees also. A number of DLBs and Municipal Committees protested. And on March 7, 1934, Shri Kolte, MLA, moved a one-rupee cut-motion against Demand No. 8, in the Assembly on this issue. Speaker after speaker denounced these orders. And apart from Home Minister E. Raghavendra Rao and his three English colleagues, N.J. Roughton, E.A. MacNee and E. Gordon, every single speaker supported the cut motion. The official side alleged communalism, fascism, politics and what not, but S.M. Rahman (Berar Municipal Mohammedan Urban) pointed out that no Muslim organisation had raised any objection to the RSS during its seven years of existence.

C.B. Parekh said: "Although I am not a Hindu and, as such, cannot feel in the same way as a Hindu would, yet I do feel that the Hindus have so completely neglected their self-training so as to defend themselves in the event of an attack, that often time the Muslim took it for granted that he had merely to attack a Hindu to make him run away."

Dr. D.T. Mangalmurti of the Nagpur University reminded Home Minister E. Raghavendra Rao that in 1929 he himself had laid the foundation-stone in Bilaspur of an Akhada that was the nucleus of RSS there.

By far the best speech came from Ramabai Tumble. She said: "This Rashtriya Sangha is a worthy movement. It has been started in the Central Provinces and I may say that it will spread throughout India and organise all the communities together."

She added: "If you go to any of the schools and see the boys, you would notice the difference at once. The Christian boy would be far better than the Mohammedan and the Mohammedan boy far better than the Hindu boy. I am referring to their physique, their posture and the way they stand. I think the boys belonging to other communities have these better than our boys, and I think this Rashtriya Sangha is helping us in this respect. I love to see boys trained in the Sangha and how they carry themselves. I do not believe that the Sangha makes them narrow-minded. There is some mischief somebody has played."

After two days of debate the cut motion was put to vote—and carried. The Government was defeated. And Government orders became a dead letter.

The RSS had arrived.

Congress & RSS : A Study in Contrasts

In 1938, an interesting incident occurred in Delhi.

The Delhi RSS was then having its Karyalaya in a few rooms in the Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan, New Delhi. The RSS Provincial Pracharak, Shri Vasantrao Oke, stayed here. One day he had held a baithak which had gone on till late in the night. So some of the workers who were staying rather far away, decided to spend the night there.

The following morning they were still there when they heard much commotion. They found that it was coming from the general direction of the just completed Lakshminarayan Mandir (Birla Mandira) about a furlong away. So Vasantrao Oke, Narayan Rao Puranic, Ved Prakash Kohli and some other, hopped their way over the high roadside retainer wall, to see what was the matter.

What they saw quite appalled them. Thousands had collected. Mahatma Gandhi had come to inaugurate the temple, and he wanted to take a Harijan boy inside with. But some old-style Pandas would not let in the boy—and Gandhi would not enter without him. Even Ganesh Dutt Goswami, the well-known Sanatani leader's appeal to the Pandas to let in the boy, made no impression on them. There were shouts and counter-shouts, pushing and pulling.

Soon it was confusion worse confounded, Gandhi was being pushed around, and even his companions were too busy saving themselves to be able to protect Gandhi. He was gasping for breath in the buffeting of the crowd. It was an alarming situation. And then something happened.

They were standing on the side-wall of the steps above. "Suddenly, like a panther," says V. P. Kohli's diary, "Vasantrao jumped down and carried the fainting Mahatma on his back, up the stairs." Kohli and others who followed, brought the Harijan boy in. And then everybody else came up. The Pandas had been defeated in their folly. The Mandir had been duly inaugurated to shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!'

At the 1936 Faizpur session of Congress, the Flag got stuck as Pandit Nehru was unfurling it. It was so very embarrassing all round. At last a young man, Kisan Singh Rajput of village Shirpur, climbed the eighty-foot high flag-staff and put the string back on the pulley. He was cheered by thousands and greeted with "Wah-Wah". They even proposed to honour him in the open session. When, however, they came to know that he was an RSS worker, they forgot all about it!

Dr. Hedgewar could never understand such pettiness. Later he congratulated Kisan Singh in Devpura Shakha of Dhulia for his Faizpur feat and presented him a silver cup.

Subhas Chandra Bose and Vitthal Bhai Patel on RSS

SUBHAS BOSE and Dr. Hedgewar had first met at the Calcutta session of Congress, 1928. Here 3,000 volunteers had been raised at a cost of Rs. 65,000. But they proved so undisciplined that they themselves had to be removed from the pandal. Dr. Hedgewar told him the kind of national volunteer force he was raising in and around Nagpur. Bose expressed interest in the movement and said: "Such work alone can lead to national regeneration."

In 1938, Bose as Congress President was visiting Nagpur. He wanted to see Dr. Hedgewar, but the Provincial Congress Committee said 'No'.

In 1939 Bose conveyed to Hedgewar through Balaji Huddar and Dr. Sanjivi that he was planning an armed revolt. Dr. Hedgewar was convalescing after double-pneumonia at Deoli and so he could not go and meet him. But he sent back word to Bose that he should not launch an armed revolt unless he was "at least fifty percent ready for a successful thrust."

Later still Trailokyanath Chakravarty, old revolutionary friend of Dr. Hedgewar, met him on behalf of Bose, after a lapse of 25 years. What transpired at this meeting is not known.

On June 20 1940, Bose came with Forward Bloc leader Ruikar to see the dying Hedgewar. But after a restless night Hedgewar had just gone to sleep. Subhas asked not to wake him up, folded his hands in 'pranam' and left. A few moments later Dr. Hedgewar woke up. When he was told that Bose had called, he sat up, uttered the word "Subhas" with great affection and did pranam. Next day he passed away.

SHRI VITTHAL BHAI PATEL, elder brother of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and then President of the Central Legislative Assembly, was drawn to the RSS. He visited the only RSS Shakha, then held in Mohite Wada, on the Dussehra of 1928. Addressing the Swayamsevaks, he said: "Wherever I have gone in this country or elsewhere, I have seen institutions where I found only lifeless, inert instruments. But here, before me, I am filled with happiness and hope to see Men with capital 'M', the mighty living hands which will be capable of shaping the future of our divine Motherland. I have witnessed this rare sight here alone and nowhere else."

Pandit Malaviya & Dr. Radhakrishnan

Kishin Mausharamani writes :

DR. RADHAKRISHNAN used to visit BHU RSS shakha once a week. One day he said that if we doubled the shakha strength he would visit us every day.

Shri Rajendra Sharma writes :

I remember one incident of BHU days vividly. Sir (later Dr.) Radhakrishnan was very well familiar with RSS Sarsangh-chalak Guruji and the then Karyavah of Varanasi Dr. P. K. Banerji. One day some foreign dignitaries came to visit BHU. In the evening it began to rain heavily. After the day's work Sir Radhakrishnan asked them if they would like to visit some places. They wondered whether in such a heavy down-pour, there could be anything worth visiting. Sir Radhakrishnan told them to take a chance and with a good measure of confidence brought them all to our RSS Sanghasthan. We were all holding the shakha with its normal activities even during the rain. The foreign dignitaries were surprised and Sir Radhakrishnan was immensely pleased to see the shakha going on even in rain. Sir Radhakrishnan told them that they were not ordinary boys soaking themselves in the rain and playing in muddy waters. He requested the Swayamsevak to fall in line under a shade and introduce themselves. It was during this introduction that the real revelation came that actually they were research scholars, lecturers, graduates and postgraduate students. The delegation went away with a deep sense of appreciation.

Mahamana Malaviyaji was impressed after a visit to RSS shakha in Nagpur and requested Dr. Hedgewar to start a branch in BHU too. There he was so good as to allot a plot to RSS for holding their day-to-day shakha activities and also got constructed an RSS pavilion for which the whole expenditure was re-imbursed by the BHU Swayamsevak at the time.

I had also seen Mahamana Malviyaji sometimes halting at our Sanghasthan while he was on his evening drive. Of course, being too old in 1945-46, he could not come out of his car and bestowed his blessings from the car itself. It was due to a sense of family feeling for Malaviyaji that the Varanasi branch of RSS participated in full uniform in good numbers in his funeral procession in Nov. 1946 and gave him a farewell salute at the pyre with great emotion.

Ved Mehta in the RSS

VED MEHTA, the blind but brilliant Indian writer notes in his Autobiography, 'Face to Face' : "I was very happy during the seven months at Emerson, Lahore, for starting at seven-twenty in the morning until five o'clock in the evening, when I reached home, I was busy. Then in the evening, I would go to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the RSS, a Hindu organization, determined to bring about political freedom for India. Sohan Lal, a student at Sir Ganga Ram Medical Hospital, would come by for me each evening at seven o'clock and together we would walk to the meeting grounds about a mile from my home.

"We would stay there until nine o'clock, playing games, doing calisthenics, but, more than that, praying and singing hymns. Almost all the people present were college students, and certainly I, at twelve, was the youngest person. Since the day of independence was fast approaching, the topic of conversation with everyone, particularly students, was politics, and long after the last hymn had been sung, we would sit around on the ground talking over the current political situation. There were hopeful people, there were frightened people. Some said that when the day of independence came, India would start on a path of greatness equal to the Western world. Then there were others who saw nothing but gloom. They pointed to the increasing nationalistic sentiments among the Muslims as a sure sign of destruction of the very independence for which we had struggled so long. They felt that the Indians, divided among themselves, would soon prove their inability to govern, and if not the British, then some other great power would come to take over.

"As the time passed, and we approached the months of December and January, 1946 and 1947, the tone of their talk changed. They pictured themselves as brave men who would rescue India from the bloody path towards which some fanatics were steering her.

"Give us time," they would say, 'we'll stop bloodshed.' As the pressure mounted for the partitioning of India, all differences were resolved into common purpose, to try to keep India united. There was no venom, no threat, nor, much less, any preparation for effecting these plans. But there was a sense of responsibility, of duty, of courage."

Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan on RSS

IT WAS 1938. Sir SIKANDAR HAYAT KHAN, Prime Minister of the Punjab, was staying with Rai Bahadur Sohan Singh in Rawalpindi, when some Swayamsevak—including Shri Krishan Kumar, now of 'Defence News Service, New Delhi—were called to meet him. Sir Sikandar told them: "One day RSS would come to be recognised as a big force in India. And my blessings are with you young men."

On February 11, 1947, there was Starred Question No. 178 in the Central Legislative Assembly by Mr. Ahmed E. H. Jaffer. It read:

- Will the Honourable the Home Member please state whether Government propose to appoint a committee to investigate the activities of the Rashtriya Sewak Sangh?
- Have Government received any representation in regard to the recent activities of the RSS?
- Is it a fact that the Sangha has branches all over India?

The Honourable Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's reply was:

- Government have no intention of appointing a Committee to investigate the activities of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.
- No.
- The Sangha has branches in several Provinces.

Before giving the above reply, the Home Minister had sent Shri Jaffer's Question to all the Provincial Governments. Replies were received from all the provinces. Except the Punjab, none of them - not even the Governments of the Muslim majority provinces of Sind, NWFP, Baluchistan and Bengal - found RSS working objectionable in any way. Fargue, Chief Secretary of NWFP, wrote: "In view of the fact that, Hindus are in great minority in the Frontier Province it would seem that their activities are chiefly directed towards instruction in the art of self-defence and it is unlikely that the volunteers themselves would be responsible for any aggressive attitude."

Shri T. P. Singh, ICS, of the Political Department, Government of Bihar, wrote in his note of January 23, 1947: "The Sangha has several branches all over the Province but there is nothing to show that it was at all responsible for the recent communal riots in Bihar."

As for the Punjab, that Province wanted curbs on both, RSS and Muslim National Guards.

And thereby hangs a tale. After the 1945 elections, the Unionist Party led by Khizar Hayat Khan had come to power in the Punjab. The Muslim League was in opposition. It started a wild and vulgar campaign to topple the new Government. The slogan most often heard in those days in Lahore streets was "Khizar Kanjar hai hai" (Down with Khizar the bastard). On one occasion society Muslim ladies, led by Lady Shafi, walked into his drawing room on the excuse of interviewing him. Once in, they started doing *Siapa* (formal mourning) as if the head of the family were dead.

All this was more than the Punjab Premier could stand. He sent feelers to Shri Dharamvir, Punjab Secretary of the RSS, to stone the Muslim Leaguers as they paraded through Beadon Road, Lahore, a Hindu area. He hoped that the Leaguers would then retaliate against the Hindus, which would be sufficient reason for his Government to come down with a heavy hand against the Leaguers and crush them. The Punjab RSS leaders discussed the proposal. While they had sympathy with Khizar, they decided that they would not like to tangle with Muslims in that manner and play politics. Such was the restraint of Sangha even in Lahore, even in the year of partition!

WHEN INDEPENDENCE came, Nehruite Congressmen began to attack RSS, while maintaining a guilty silence about Muslim League, Muslim National Guards and Khaksars.

Envious of the strength and popularity of Sangha, they wanted action against RSS. This envy showed very much in the anti-RSS pamphlet by Govind Sahai, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier of UP, in 1947, and printed, interestingly enough, in the State Government Press. In this pamphlet Shri Sahai moaned, "In the Western districts of UP, and specially in my own district of Bijnor, Hindus have contributed to the Sangha, from 1944 to this day, much more than what they contributed to the Congress during the last thirty years. Even small towns have contributed to the Sangha funds up to four to five thousand rupees."

Sardar Patel wanted Congressmen to be reasonable. He said at Lucknow on January 6, 1948: "In the Congress those who are in power feel that by virtue of their authority they will be able to crush the RSS. You cannot crush an organisation by using the 'danda'. The 'danda' is meant for thieves and dacoits. After all the RSS men are not thieves and dacoits. They are patriots who love their country."

Nor was Sardar Patel alone in seeing virtue in RSS. Shri Vasantrao Oke, Delhi Prant Pracharak, had more than one meetings with Gandhiji during those crucial days. Birlaji had made a few rooms in Bhangi Colony available to RSS. When Gandhiji expressed a desire to live in Bhangi Colony, during the Cabinet Mission talks, RSS gladly vacated a couple of rooms for him. One night a large number of Muslim goondas surrounded the place and hurled vulgar abuses at him. The following day Krishnan Nair of the Congress told RSS workers that it was a serious matter and that they should unite to protect the lives of national leaders. After that, Gandhiji's rooms were guarded by Swayamsevaks all night in batches.

Vasantrao was now taken by G.D. Birla to meet Mahatma Gandhi. Ghanshyamdasji introduced him and then paid glowing tributes to RSS. "We in Pilani," he said, "have expert instructors but the students' drill performance is none too good. The surprise is that those same boys hold RSS Shikha, and these are a marvel of discipline." Vasantrao explained that it was national idealism that made the difference between a drill class and RSS Shikha.

On another occasion when Vasantrao went to see Gandhiji, Maulana Azad was already closeted with him. Shri Ghanshyamdas expressed his anxiety about the continued disturbing of Gandhiji's prayer meetings to Vasantrao. He added that, for example, he may not like people like Azad coming to his place but he had to tolerate them for Bapu's sake. Likewise those who did not fancy Koran recitation at Gandhiji's prayer meetings, need not disturb the same. Vasantrao entirely agreed with him.

IN 1947, GANDHIJI had expressed a desire to meet Guruji. So when Guruji came to Delhi he went to see Babu in Birla House. Gandhiji requested Guruji to issue an appeal for peace. Guruji said that Gandhiji's appeal was enough but that if he wanted his, it was always available. Thereupon an appeal was issued which was duly published in the Press the following day and also broadcast by All India Radio.

Gandhiji also expressed his desire to Guruji to address RSS workers. Guruji, therefore, invited him to address them at any time and place of his convenience.

On Tuesday, September 14, 1947, Gandhiji came to address about 500 RSS workers in the open enclosure in Bhangi Colony. Vasantrao welcomed him and said: "We in the RSS have but one God, Bharat Mata." Gandhiji appreciated the discipline and idealism of RSS and said that an organisation which was rooted in high ideals and public service was bound to grow from strength to strength. He described himself as a "Sanatani Hindu" and deeply appreciated the patriotic song with which the meeting had started.

When he invited questions, one Swamsevaks asked him what should be done about the armed goondas. And Gandhiji replied: "Such people should be punished. But only Government or God can do that. It is not for you or me to take the law into our own hands and punish them." He added that if Pakistan persisted in wrong-doing, there was bound to be war between India and Pakistan.

When Gandhiji went on fast—to press the Government to give Rs. 55 crores to Pakistan—Lala Hansraj Gupta, on behalf of RSS, signed the appeal to him to break his fast.

But many Congressmen were bent upon crushing the RSS, which they regarded as a serious potential rival. They could not imagine that an organisation which could seize power, would not do so. They probably did not know—although the Government should have known—that first General Rajendra Singh, Delhi Area Commander, and later General Thimayya, had met Shri Guruji, at No. 20, Barakhamba Road, in the early uncertain days of Independence-Partition. They had requested his cooperation in stabilising the situation. Gen. Thimayya's parting words were: "We must not strike too early or too late. But we must strike at the proper time. And it is possible that time may come for action."

Shri Guruji heard them out in silence and did not make any response. Shri Guruji viewed politicians and political power as little more than the dog with a bone in his jaws. And he reassured Congressmen that internally we might be hundred versus five, but as against any threat to the country we would be together as "hundred and five" (*Vayam Pancharhikam shatam*).

RSS Vindicated : Ban Lifted

GANDHIJI's DEATH was a handy excuse for Nehruites to attack the Sangha. And so they promptly banned RSS and detained about 17,000 RSS workers and leaders—many of them, including Guruji and Balasaheb Deoras on the charge of "conspiracy to murder". Congressmen in Maharashtra led mobs, killing and looting Brahmins in general, and RSS workers in particular.

With a view to avoiding a bloody confrontation. Shri Guruji dissolved the Sangha for the time being. And the courts released all those who moved *habeas corpus* petitions, beginning with S.S. Apte, district pracharak of Trichy.

Even when it became clear that only a handful of Mahasabha extremists were involved in Gandhi murder, Nehru tried to implicate RSS in the case. On February 26, 1948, he wrote to Patel, "While the investigation about Babu's assassination by Godse is proceeding here and (in) Bombay and elsewhere, there appears to be a certain lack of real effort in tracing the larger conspiracy. More and more I have come to the conclusion that Babu's murder was not an isolated business but a part of a much wider campaign organised chiefly by the RSS."

Patel wrote back to him on February 27, 1948: "I have kept myself almost in daily touch with progress of the investigations regarding Babu's assassination case. I devote a large part of my evening to discussing with Sanjivi the day's progress and giving instructions to him on any points that arise. All the main accused have given long and detailed statements of their activities. In one case, the statement extends to ninety typed pages. It also clearly emerges from the statements that RSS was not involved in it at all."

After six months detention, when Shri Guruji was released, he came to Delhi to urge Nehru and Patel to lift the ban on RSS. Government claimed "a great deal of evidence in their possession to show that the RSS were engaged in activities which were anti-national and prejudicial from the point of view of public good."

Shri Guruji wrote back to Nehru on November 3, 1948, that Government must produce this evidence or withdraw all allegations. He added: "The one case in District Muzaffarnagar—upon which the whole superstructure of the so-called 'charge-sheet' of the UP Government seems to have rested has been decided only in the last week. A look at the learned and well balanced judgement is sufficient to prove the falsity of the 'great deal of evidence' against 'certain members of the RSS'."

Nehru in his reply of November 10, 1948 alleged : "Indeed it would appear that the declared objectives have little to do with the real ones and with the activities carried on in various forms and ways by people associated with the RSS. These real objectives appear to be completely opposed to the decisions of the Indian Parliament and the provisions of the proposed Constitution of India."

Shri Gururji wrote back on November 12, 1948 : "So far as my knowledge goes, there is nothing in the objectives of the RSS to which the Indian Parliament can take exception, nothing which is contrary to the decisions of the Parliament so far published. As for being 'opposed to the provisions of the proposed Constitution', it would have been better if this had not been written by you, our Prime Minister. It is as queer as to punish a man for attempted murder of an individual due to be born in a year or so."

A similar letter went to Patel who wrote back on September 11, 1948: "I am thoroughly convinced that the RSS men can carry on their patriotic activities only by joining the Congress and not by keeping aloof from it or by opposing it."

Shri Gururji in his letters both to Nehru and Patel protested that on the subject of lifting the ban, while the Prime Minister told him to ask the Home Minister, the Home Minister asked him to approach the Prime Minister. Also while the Centre asked him to ask the provinces, the provinces asked him to go to the Centre. But there was no response from the Government.

On November 13, 1948, Shri Gururji was arrested in Delhi and moved to Nagpur. This was followed by a countrywide Satyagraha from December 9, 1948 on. Government had expected only 500 Satyagrahis over the next two months; actually they had to arrest 1500 in the first two days alone.

During the next two months as many as 60,000 persons—ranging between the ages of 16 and 75—courted arrest. This was more than in any earlier satyagraha—whether in 1921, 1930-32 or 1942. Although it was mid-winter and the jails were not equipped to handle such large numbers, the Swayamsevaks faced their cold incarceration with patience and discipline. Many communists who had also landed in jails because of their Telangana movement, were often heard saying : "These people are jewels."

The moral pressure of sixty thousand supremely peaceful Satyagrahis was more than even the mighty Government of India could stand.

Government, therefore, informed Shri T.R.V. Shastri, President, Indian Liberal Federation, who was acting as intermediary, that RSS should have a Constitution. There could be no objection to that. A great big organisation like RSS was obviously not working without any Constitution. Only, it was an unwritten Constitution. When Mauli Chandra Sharma took the draft to Shri Gururji in Seoni Jail, he signed it without reading it. He had, he said, full faith in his co-workers outside. Incidentally, Congress had no Constitution of any kind from 1885 till 1889. It got provincial committees only in 1908—and a proper constitution only in 1921, some 36 years after birth.

Government now objected, to RSS funds. Shri T.R.V. Shastri referred the matter to Shri Gururji, who wrote back : "We never go begging to the public. The accounts are kept and those who are concerned—the members of the organisation—can always see them. Outsiders have no business to ask us about our family accounts. Still, if Sardar Patel insists, you may kindly ask him to publish the accounts of all the funds collected by the Congress from the public; let him begin with Tilak Swaraj Fund. Only then will it lie in his mouth to ask me to publish my accounts."

Nobody after that again talked of Sangha finances.

(Incidentally, early in the Thirties, Rao Saheb Datar, editor of 'Ali India Reporter', comprising the more important judgements, was once approached for a donation. He wanted to see the accounts. Dr. Hedgewar sent him the ledgers showing accounts down to the last pie right up to the previous evening. After that Datar Saheb was only too happy to contribute his mite.)

But Government had to justify to itself and to the public that there had been weightier reasons for the war on the RSS. And so it now started talking of RSS accepting the Indian Constitution and the State Flag. Home Secretary H.V.R. Iyengar in his letter of May 3, 1949, also objected to a nominated Sar-Sangha-Chalak and alleged that many important offices in Sangha were held by "persons belonging to a particular community from a certain area", meaning Maharashtrian Brahmins. It even said that the RSS pledge, implying a life-long obligation, was reminiscent of secret societies. It also wanted minors to be admitted only with the written consent of their guardians.

Shri Gururji wrote back that RSS had always respected the Constitution and Flag. He pointed out that the RSS Constitution was in fact modelled on the Congress pattern. "As you would see from the draft

Constitution of the Sangha, it follows broadly the Constitution of Indian National Congress. The Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha is a purely elected body comparable to the A.I.C.C. The Pranteeya Pratinidhi Sabhas are similarly modelled on the Provincial Congress Committees. The Sar-Karyavaha is like the Congress President, elected by the All India elected body viz., the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha. Again, like the Congress President, he appoints his whole executive, which is called the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal. This is comparable to the All India Congress Working Committee. Similarly P.K.M. is on par with Provincial Executive, The A.B.P.S. lays down the policy and programme of the Sangha and the Karyakari Mandals are merely to carry out that policy. Thus you will appreciate that the Constitution is completely based on the elective principle."

As for the pledge, "The RSS bases its work upon Hindu culture. In Hindu culture a pledge is always a life obligation and not a temporary contract."

When the Government persisted with its suggestions and objections, Shri T.R.V. Shastri came out with a statement on July 11, 1949. Among other things, Shri Shastri said: "One important objection was stated to be that the Head of the Organisation, Sar-Sangha-Chalak, was to be chosen by his predecessor, a method which was said to be undemocratic and fascist in character. I think the nomination was to be in consultation with a council of members. I confess that the objection never occurred to me and it appears to be to mistake the nature of the organisation. A Government or a State can be characterised as fascist, but not a private association to which no one is compelled to belong." He added: "In the realm of spirit, election by the population is not quite in place. If it is now a question of election, a competitor with the Head will only get an ignominious defeat. In any case, it is a question for the followers and not for an outsider to insist."

He said that as long as the Congress volunteer organisation did not require the written permission of parents for minors, Government could not reasonably demand the same of the RSS.

As for communalism, he said: "Living as I do in the midst of communalism in *excelestis*, I cannot but feel that the RSS was doing good work in trying to weld the much-divided Hindu community. It may also be helpful in counteracting other evils growing under our very eyes and requiring the attention of the Government."

He concluded: "I have seen another comment that though they profess to be a non-political body they may turn into one overnight. And

so they may. If they did, it would be no crime. But I am sure that these people know better than to commit such a mistake. They know that this organisation would disrupt and break into fragments directly they attempt to convert it into a political organisation. That is the reason—why they refuse to join any political group. At the last election I am told that vast mass of them voted Congress and the complaint of the Maha Sabha was that the weight of this organisation was not thrown on their side. What effect this action of the Government will have on the RSS at the next election, I cannot say."

The same day—July 11, 1949—Government unconditionally lifted the ban on RSS.

An unhappy episode was at last happily over. It would seem that, apart from Congress envy, RSS had been the victim of Nehru-Patel rivalries. Before Gandhiji's murder, in his Lucknow and Jaipur speeches, Patel had tried to bridge the gulf between Congress and RSS. He wrote to Shri Guruji on September 11, 1949: "There can be no doubt that the RSS did service to the Hindu society. In the areas where there was need for help and organisation, young men of the RSS protected women and children and strove much for them."

It is significant that the Nehru faction used Gandhi murder incident not only to crush RSS but also to throw out Sardar Patel. When RSS leader Vasantrao met Patel some time after Gandhiji's death, Sardar told him: "I know you have nothing to do with this dastardly crime. But the gentlemen who accuse you, are accusing me too!"

Shri Eknath Ranade—late President of Vivekananda Rock Memorial—was sent by Nagpur to Delhi to negotiate the lifting of the ban and help the intermediaries. He also had some interesting experiences with the Sardar in 1949.

He first met the Sardar in Birla House, Mussoorie. Shri G.D. Birla was also present. Eknathji found Patel aggressive. For ten long minutes he went on attacking the RSS, blaming all kind of violent acts on the RSS.

At the end of it, Eknathji asked him whether he really believed all that he was alleging. He also asked him whether he really believed that RSS had anything to do with the murder of Mahatma. At this he said: "No, but RSS was responsible for creating a psychological atmosphere in which this violence became possible."

Eknathji thereupon told him: "We in the RSS believed in Akhand Hindustan. We were opposed to partition. If this could be construed as

creating a psychological atmosphere for violence, then I would plead guilty to it."

Eknathji went on to say that the "Quit India" movement in 1942 had been followed by much violence all over the country. Men had been burnt alive. By the same token, therefore, Congress could also be held responsible for all that violence because it had created a certain "psychological atmosphere."

Eknathji added that after the murder of the Mahatma, thousands of RSS workers, including Shri Guruji, had been arrested and accused of murder. There had also been widespread violence, loot, arson and murder, particularly in Maharashtra. By the same token, therefore, the Government of India would also be held responsible for all that violence for creating a "psychological atmosphere."

The Sardar didn't reply. But Shri Birla seemed to be upset with what Eknathji had said. Therefore, turning to him, he said: "I hope you realise before whom you are speaking." Eknathji said that if he had said anything improper, he would not like to say anything more and he would go.

Before he got up the Sardar asked him to think deep over the matter and see him again.

When Eknathji met him next, again in Mussoorie, Sardar was a changed man. His mood this time was very different. He said he had been looking forward to seeing him. And he added: "Have you thought it over? There is a ban on the RSS but there is nothing eternal about these bans. There used to be a ban on the Congress too. However, these bans do not kill any organisation. So, this ban on the RSS is also bound to be lifted, sooner or later. The question is, what next?"

Eknathji told him where the Sangha stood; that it believed in Hindu Sangathan and Hindu Sanskriti. Thereupon, Sardar said: "Do you think I think differently?" Eknathji told him that not all Congressmen seemed to think like him.

Thereupon, the Sardar said: "What I say today, the whole Congress will say tomorrow." He said: "There are a few brethren ('Char Bhai') like Nehru who think differently and who are irritated by the talk of Sangathan and Sanskriti, but they too will come round. The point is, will you strengthen my hands?"

Eknathji told him that if that was the case, they would be happy to join hands with him. He added: "But before any cooperation is possible, you must remove the anti-RSS poison from Congressmen's minds."

Eknathji made it clear that RSS was interested in ideals and not in power. He also told him that they had much regard for him. Thereupon, he said: "Then all will be well." He said he would have to meet Shri Guruji and talk things over.

In an obvious reference to Communists, the Sardar said that there were people interested in creating lawlessness and disorders. It was, therefore, necessary, he said, that like-minded people should work together. He concluded: "Don't worry about the ban. It's only a matter of time."

It was. The ban was lifted soon after, on July 11, 1949.

"Utilise, and do not Sterilise, the Energies of lacs of Patriotic RSS Youths"

By : Dr. Bhagavan Dass, Bharat Ratna

A few days ago (October, 1948) three persons came to me and said: "We are members and office-bearers of RSS. Since ban has been imposed upon it by Central and Provincial Governments of India, several lakhs of young men, members and workers of it, scattered all over Bharata, find themselves tied hand and foot, prevented from taking part in even social activities helpful to the public. Thus in Banaras and all along Ganga and Yamuna we have been craving to help in flood relief operations but are not allowed to. We interviewed local authorities in Banaras, but were told that we were suspect and could not be allowed to, lest we carry on criminal activities under cover of social work. This state of things is intolerable. The energies of lakhs of young men, eager to help in any public work approved by Government, should not be allowed to go waste. You should help us."

I promised to do what I could. That is why I am writing this, to invite the attention of public and authorities to the need for a satisfactory solution.

It is well known that after Mahatmaji's assassination there was a storm of arrests of innocents and criminals alike, all over the country, mostly innocents. Within my own knowledge a number of utterly harmless persons, who could not harbour any murderous intention even in dreams, were thrust into jail in Banaras and neighbouring towns and were released after many weeks and even months in some cases.

I have been reliably informed that a number of youths of RSS underwent the self-imposed indignity and shame of pretending to become even converts to Islam in order to secure the confidence of Muslim Leaguers in New Delhi and so were able to inform Sardar Patel and Nehruji in the very nick of time of the Leaguers' intended "coup" on September 10, 1947, whereby they had planned to assassinate all Members of Government and all Hindu officials and thousands of Hindu citizens on that day and plant the flag of 'Pakistan' on the Red Fort and then seize all Hind.

Delhi had no loyal troops to speak of on September 7 when this all-important information was given to Sardar Patel and Nehruji and they held hurried consultations with the then C-in-C., F.M. Auchinleck and Generals, sent out frantic wires to outposts, called in all available troops, secured a few thousands of soldiers, discovered hiding places of

Leaguers all over Delhi, and very close to Viceregal Palace and grounds in which beneath the floors of a large Mosque, in huge cellars, vast quantities of ammunition and food of all sorts and large numbers of League soldiers were hidden; and these loyal officers and soldiers attacked these places, successfully slew thousands of treacherous rebels and saved the Government. It was said at the time that many thousands of Leaguers rushed to the chief Railway Station of Delhi and were shot down there and corpses covered all the platforms for two or three days until cleared off in municipal and army carts, and passengers who wished to catch trains had to thread their way over these dead bodies into bogies, holding their noses because of the stench.

The story is now known to all the world of the forlorn hope which rushed to Srinagar, Kashmir, by passenger planes belonging to private companies, the heroism of pilots who had never handled any firearms or even cold steel in their lives, had never run from Delhi to Kashmir over snow-hills, yet went over them in fog and sleet and, helped by God, succeeded in alighting with just a few scores of brave officers and soldiers at the aerodrome of Srinagar at about 8 p.m. in complete darkness, and the heroism of loyal Muslim as well as Hindu officers and soldiers who have been steadily beating back and driving out the 'Pakistani' invaders ever since at the cost of their lives and limbs.

The country has breathed a great sigh of relief on reading in dailies that the Government of India had decided to invade and had actually invaded Hyderabad on 13th instant, after many months of futile negotiations with the Nizam, who was saying 'Yes' today and 'No' the next, and was allowing wolfish 'Razakars' to murder, rape, loot Hindu men, women, children and destroy crores of rupees worth of their property. Great gatherings were held all over the country, of Hindus as well as sincerely loyal Muslims, which meetings have unanimously expressed their deep and thankful satisfaction at the action taken by the Indian Government. People are wondering how long it will be before similar action is taken against 'Pakistan' in West Punjab. Papers have been reporting atrocities which continue to be perpetrated on Hindu men, women, children and their property and have recently said that 'Pakistan' Government have publicly admitted that four regiments of their soldiers have been massed on both sides for about a hundred miles along with the frontier between West and East Punjab near Lahore and Amritsar. 'Pakistani' bombers have been frequently bombing Indian towns and villages, but the Indian Government has not retaliated.

Papers have also been reporting that thousands of Muslim Leaguers, who had rushed to Karachi, in hope of finding 'Paradise' open to them there, have been robbed of their goods and, not unoften, of even their wives

and daughters, and are now trying frantically to run back to India, and applying for permits in thousands daily to the High Commissioner for India in Karachi.

Why have I said all this, when the question was of dealing with RSS? Because if those high-spirited and self-sacrificing boys had not given the very timely information to Nehruji and Patelji, there would have been no Government of India today, the whole country would have changed its name into 'Pakistan', tens of millions of Hindus would have been slaughtered and all the rest converted to Islam or reduced to stark slavery and the super-orthodox and fanatically bigoted Pandit-gentlemen would have been either dead or eating cow's flesh with gusto.

Two other episodes might perhaps be worth mentioning though not directly relevant. In September 1923, when Mahatma Gandhi was going through his twenty-one days' fast in Dr. Ansari's house in Delhi, and a special Unity Conference had been called to devise ways and means to prevent recurrence of the epidemic of engineered communal riots which had been raging all over the country for some months, a small meeting of a few leaders of Hindus and Muslims had been called in a private house. The President, Maulana Kifayatullah, and Secretary, M. Saeed Ahmed, of Jamiat-ul-Ulema, and two or three others represented one community, and Pandit Malviyaji, Pandit Dindayal, Swami Shradhanand etc. the other. Somehow I also had been invited, though I was far from being a leader and was scarcely even a follower. One of the Muslim leaders in the course of discussions, said that Hindus had always been aggressors ("jarihana") and Muslims always only defenders ("dafaana"). I waited for some Hindu leaders to reply. None did, I was astonished. There was no help. I must do the work. So I said: "I have never heard or read in any book of history that Hindus had invaded Arabia or Persia but that Arab Muslims first invaded Sind about 700 A.D.; then Mahmud Ghazni and others followed. In the case of communal riots too, it was well known that Muslim 'goondas' usually began—excepting now and then in cases of cow-sacrifice, where the sacrifice was done with too much challenge and in public places. Otherwise, in the now-too-frequent music-before-mosque riots, it was patent that Muslim 'goondas' purposely hiding in mosques, began the trouble."

It was now the turn of the other party to be silent. It will be remembered that, just before his fast, Gandhiji had said in his weekly 'Young India', that "Hindus are cowards and Muslims are goondas". I had asked him publicly: "Why is it so?" He did not reply. The whole subject of communal riots and their causes and cures is discussed at length in my book, "World War and its only Cure—World Order and World Religion", and also in the report of the enquiry committee appointed by the Karachi Congress of March, 1921, to investigate causes of, and suggest cures for, communal riots, with special reference to the terrible riots which had just occurred in Cawnpore in that March, and of which committee I was appointed Chairman.

The other occasion was this. In the last week of January 1925, an All-Parties Convention was held in New Delhi. Mahatma Gandhi, Mrs.

BY : K.M. MUNSHI

Besant, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Pandit Motilalji, Shri C.Y. Chintamani, Pt. Malaviyaji, Dr. B.S. Moonje and many other Hindu leaders were present. On the other side, Mr. Jinnah, Ali Brothers, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari and many others were there. Lord Curzon's daughter and her husband, Sir Oswald Mosely, were also present as spectators. In the course of discussions, Shri C.Y. Chintamani usually so fearless and outspoken, in a somewhat low voice, hesitatingly objected to Maulana Mohammad Ali's writing in his paper 'The Comrade.' (I think it was, but am not sure now, pleading for a Muslim corridor from Baghdad to Bengal and Burma, and mentioning alliance with Afghanistan for the purpose. The Kaiser had wanted one from Berlin to Baghdad.) Maulana Mohammad Ali got up and look exception energetically to Shri Chintamani's "censorious remarks and advice to me as to how I should conduct my paper." M. Shaikat Ali followed—stood up, thrust two fingers of his right hand repeatedly up and down into his left side breast-pocket and said : "At this moment I have here a letter from Fakhri Bey, one of the ministers of Kamal Pasha, expressing sympathy with our aims," and so forth. Silence.

Then Dr. Moonje—he was much thinner then than later on, and had a very small beard, stood up. He had his faults—who has not?—but he had many virtues also. "If these gentlemen seek alliance with Afghanistan, have we not all the rest of the world to ally ourselves with and invite to our aid? We have Nepal next door and China and Japan and others and the British themselves will take good care not to allow a single Afghan to set foot in India except as an unarmed trader. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Sikh and Maharaja Gulab Singh's Dogras and Nepali Gurkhas have often measured swords with Afghans and never come off second best. Ranjit Singh's Generals planted the Sikh flag on the citadel of Kabul and struck coins in his name. When the Mughal power was at its strongest in the days of Aurangzeb, we arose—a handful of Maharattas in the South—under that hero of immortal fame, son of a petty chieftain then, but afterwards known as Maharaja Shivaji, and drove the Mughal armies back and back up to the very gates of Delhi. What fear can we have now of a handful of Muslims when they are so weak and crushed under the British heel." It was silence then on the other side. I heard M. Shaikat Ali whispering : "That is true, that is true."

Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari and many other sincere-hearted Muslims enjoyed the fullest confidence of Mahatmaji and all Hindus until their too premature and much mourned deaths. It may also be noted that what Mr. Shaikat Ali said about Fakhri Bey is very doubtful. For it was in the papers, shortly after, that when a deputation of Muslims went to Kamal Pasha to ask for help, he and his Ministers advised them to live on terms of friendship and co-operation with Hindus as fellow-citizens and not make British hold upon India stronger by mutual conflict.

Well, what is the net result of all this long story? Simply this that our Government should utilise, and not sterilise, the patriotic energies of the lakhs of R.S.S. youths.

Shri Golwalkar, the R.S.S. Chief, is on an all-India tour (in 1949). The ovation which he received in Delhi, for instance, is an indication that R.S.S. has come to stay. It is no use ignoring that fact.

R.S.S. has a strange life-story. It was started as a student movement by its founder in Nagpur. In its earlier stages, it was but an expression of the inarticulate ambition in the heart of every Chitpavan Brahmin—contemptuously referred to by the British as the Poona Brahmin. This caste could not forget that it was the governing corporation under the Peshwas in the days when the Maharattas were supreme in India. But the Sangh had an all-India outlook too. It claimed to be the redeemer of Hinduism against the Muslims—a sort of corporate Rana Pratap.

Quietly, unostentatiously but with unbending grimness, a little band of Chitpavan Brahmin workers won the allegiance of men, young and old, in Maharashtra and C.P. This was over ten years ago. Then came Mr Jinnah's gospel of Pakistan, which in the beginning was an anti-Hindu rallying only. The collective consciousness of the Hindus all over the country felt, in the aggressive attitude of the Muslim League, a challenge of violence to the social and cultural existence of the Hindus. In Hindu-Muslim riots, the Congress, with its creed of non-violence was often an impotent spectator.

Wherever "Pakistan Riots" were staged in different parts of India in 1941 and later, the influence of the Congress waned and that of R.S.S. grew. In my Akhand Hindustan tour in 1942-43, I first came to know of the great influence which R.S.S. wielded in many of our provinces. Un-supported by politicians, without financial backing, men sprang up at stated hours almost from nowhere to worship the Motherland and the Bhagwa Jhenda—the banner of the erstwhile Peshwas—and to drill. Colleges and schools came to be permeated with little cells of R.S.S. Quiet, well-disciplined groups of organisers took charge of the movement.

Some years ago, they had their annual camp in the Nav Gujarat campus of the Bhavan's college in Bombay. Four thousand young men came together with sparse bedding, three days' rations and couple of pots. They set about huts, making roads, setting up conservancy arrangements in the open field placed at their disposal. For four days the camp was brisk with quasi-military activities. On the fifth day, they disappeared. There was no advertisement; no fanfare verbal trumpets; not even a solitary figure of provincial importance to shed limelight upon them. But there was perfect order and perfect discipline.

Then came the days of the Partition. R.S.S. boys in the Punjab and Sind acquitted themselves with undeniable heroism. Hundreds of women and children owe their life and honour to these brave boys who repelled Muslim fury with equal violence and who, in some cases, paid the price of heroism with death.

R.S.S. today is the extreme Right—just as the Communist Party of India—C.P.I.—is the extreme Left, with the Congress controlled by the Gandhian Nationalists representing the Centre.

C.P.I. is the enemy of Indian Nationalism, tied to the chariot-wheel of U.S.S.R.; R.S.S. is fanatically nationalist, worshipping Bharat Mata with high-powered emotion, looking to ancient India alone for inspiration. C.P.I. seeks to undermine the foundation of well-ordered life in order to bring about an upheaval; R.S.S. builds up the foundation of an unyielding discipline to take over, should the nationalist movement fall before the C.P.I. C.P.I. attracts young men by providing a romantic background of revolutionary zeal and young women—possibly a more dangerous element—by offering an alluring breakaway from normal disciplined life. R.S.S. attracts young men by the lure of spectacular organisational life and a fanatic hatred of what they deem anti-Hindu; I do not know whether it has ever attempted to enlist the young womanhood in India. To C.P.I., Lenin, Stalin and U.S.S.R. are the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; to R.S.S. India is the Divine Mother, at whose altar self-immolation is bliss. What is U.S.S.R. to C.P.I., ancient Bharat is to R.S.S. The Church of C.P.I. is materialism; the Church of R.S.S. is Dharma, buttressed with ancient traditions.

There are many things in common too, between the two organisations. The real life and organisation of C.P.I. is underground; those of R.S.S. are beyond the public gaze. C.P.I., following Lenin, accepts the inevitability of violence; R.S.S. while proclaiming its recently acquired loyalty, follows Shri Krishna :

"The good are to be protected; the wicked, to be uprooted."

The Centre—Gandhian nationalists—stands between these two forces. The Centre and R.S.S. are united in their antagonism to Communism. If the leadership of the Centre leans towards the Left, a considerable section of it may come to look upon R.S.S. as a friend in need. If the Centre continues to revolve round the axis of Nehru-Patel policies, R.S.S. may find its occupation gone and slowly be absorbed into it. If the Centre weakens or disintegrates, R.S.S. may take up the challenge of C.P.I. If C.P.I. wins, India will be in chaos; if R.S.S. wins India may lapse into a strong Fascist State. But neither, I am sure, is likely to happen. Those who count on the weakness of the Congress take appearance for the substance. □

Congress Resolution of 1949 on RSS

IN SEPTEMBER 1949, the Congress Working Committee decided, on a reference made to it by the Bihar PCC, that RSS workers could join the Congress. (This was nothing surprising. As the Bihar PCC President put it as late as 1974, "There are more Sanghis in Congress than in Jana Sangha.") Subsequently, addressing Congress workers in Kanpur, Congress President Pattabhi Sitaramayya said : "The RSS is not the enemy of the Congress. It is not a communal political organisation."

When the C.W.C. took the above decision, Pandit Nehru was on a long foreign tour. When he returned, he said that Congress rules did not permit a member of any volunteer organisation, except that of the Congress Seva Dal, to join the Congress. He overlooked the facts that Congress Seva Dal existed only in name; that RSS was not a volunteer organisation like Boy Scouts or Seva Dal; and that many Congress leaders were also leaders of Arya Vir Dal, etc.

And he would not answer the question why RSS men could not join Congress when even Jamiat-ul-Ulema and Muslim League men could. The funniest part of the whole proceeding was that Nehru's November 20, 1949 Ramlila Maidan meeting was managed by red-uniformed volunteers of Ahrars, a fundamentalist Muslim organisation.

NEHRUJI once said that RSS was trying to influence everything and everybody. Soon after, Shri Ravi Shankar Shukla, then Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, happened to meet Shri Guruji. Shuklaji had been the first man to take the RSS pledge in Raipur. He now said to Guruji : "Is it true you are trying to influence everybody?" Shri Guruji laughed and said : "Very much so. And I am trying to influence you too." Both of them had a hearty laugh.

Dr. Zakir Hussain on RSS

DR. ZAKIR HUSSAIN told a Milad Mahfil in Monghyr on November 20, 1949 : "The allegations against RSS of violence and hatred against Muslims are wholly false. Muslims should learn the lesson of mutual love, cooperation and organisation from RSS."

1962 & 1965 Wars and RSS

WHEN CHINA attacked India in 1962, RSS extended its wholehearted support to the Government. Nehruji was so impressed that in what amounted to a tribute to RSS, he said that, "Given the spirit, even the Lathi could successfully face the bomb." For the Republic Day Parade of January 26, 1963, he specially invited an RSS contingent to take part. On just three days' notice, more than 2,000 Swayamsevaks of Delhi, in their full uniform—white shirt, khaki knickers, belt, black cap and full boots—took part in the parade and became a major highlight of the same. The rear of the RSS contingent was brought up by an impressive bagpipe-cum-bugle band, also manned by the Delhi RSS.

IN THE Congress Parliamentary Party meeting on January 27, some MPs raised the issue of RSS participation in the Republic Day Parade. But Nehruji quietly told them that all citizens had been called upon to participate and so the RSS also took part. This was followed by interesting exchanges among Congress MPs that were duly reported in the Press.

One Member : Why did not the Delhi Congress Seva Dal also take part in the parade ?

A Senior Congress MP of Delhi : We could have, but we had trouble about uniforms.

Another Member : What trouble ?

The Delhi Leader : Well, we had just 250 uniforms, and knowing that the RSS strength would be much greater, we thought, in contrast, the Seva Dal would make a poor showing.

The First M.P. : The RSS does not provide uniforms. Every Swayamsevak buys his own uniform.

WHEN IN 1965 Pakistan attacked India, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri was Prime Minister. He especially rang up Shri Guruji in Sangli on September 5, 1965, and requested him to be in Delhi for the All Leaders Conference at 10 A.M. the following day. He told him that his passage had already been booked on the morning flight from Bombay.

Shri Guruji extended complete cooperation on behalf of the RSS. Swayamsevaks throughout the country offered blood donations by the gallon. In Delhi itself, some police duties were transferred to Swayamsevaks, to free the police for more pressing duties. On the way to the border, Jawans were loaded with fruits. When the fighting ended, Gen. Kulwant Singh told Krishnalal Maini, a BJS legislator of Punjab: "Punjab is the sword-arm of India, and RSS is the sword-arm of Punjab." □

A Rich Bouquet of Tributes

Onkar Nath & Lata Mangeshkar

PANDIT ONKAR NATH, the great musician, appealed to all Gujarati young men as far back as 1949 to join RSS. When RSS workers needed some money to liberate Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Lata Mangeshkar gladly gave a charity performance for them in Pune.

Nilkantha Shastri

SHRI NILKANTHA SHASTRI, ex-Speaker, Orissa Assembly, said: "When Muslims threatened Jagannath with desecration and destruction, it was the Bhonslas of Nagpur who came to the rescue. Today the call to succour has again come from Nagpur. And this time the R.S.S. call is going to save not only Utikal but all Bharat."

General Cariappa

GEN. CARIAPPA, now Field-Marshal, told the Mangalore Shakhia in 1959: "RSS work is my heart's work." He added: "If Muslims can sing the praises of Islam, what wrong is there if RSS sings the praises of Hinduism?" He concluded: "My dear young men, don't be disturbed by uncharitable comments of interested persons. Dr. Hedgewar, the revered founder of this great organisation, has set before you a bright example of selfless devotion to the service of the motherland. Look ahead! Go ahead! The country is standing in need of your services alone."

Dr. R.C. Majumdar

DR. R.C. MAJUMDAR, doyen of Indian historians, told the winter camp of RSS in Calcutta in 1960: "All the programmes and activities of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha have been visualised with a great aim and plan by its creator. He started the work with a great view in mind, with the aim of inspiring the true spirit of nationalism, and making the nation strong and powerful. He rightly and boldly declared that Hindus are the true nationals of this great country. Many people feel ashamed to accept this fact, though they also feel that it is true. We must acknowledge boldly that it is Hindu History, Hindu Culture, Hindu Civilization that this country is proud of, when we people speak of the great past and great culture of the country. I do not know why they should feel ashamed of saying that the great past and the great culture was nothing but the Hindu past and the Hindu culture."

G.M. Laud

SHRI G.M. LAUD, editor, 'The Financial Express', said that in his view the Sangha was a symbol of patriotism and sacrifice. In 1947, and again in 1965, the Sangha had proved that it was "pure gold".

Sri Prakasa

SHRI SRI PRAKASA, India's first High Commissioner to Pakistan, and later Union Cabinet Minister and Governor, said at the Gurudakshina Utsav of Dehradun Shakha that culture does not mean "song and dance"; it means "Sanskriti", the sentiment which inspires conduct beneficial to all. He admired RSS reverence for Bharatiya values. He added: "There are forces around us which gravely imperil the freedom of our country. Quarrels about language, province, sect etc., threaten to split the country into bits. But you in the Sangha are votaries of Akhandata (indivisibility). Understand these problems. My blessings are with you that you may succeed in establishing unity in the country, and are able to safeguard its freedom for ever."

Justice K. Subba Rao

JUSTICE K. SUBBA RAO, after he retired as Chief Justice of India, addressed the Gurudakshina Utsav in Bangalore in 1968. He said: "National Integration is the latest slogan. It is projected through mass media—the press, the platform, the radio and even through laws. But the RSS realised the importance of this doctrine as early as 1925". He added: "RSS is a much misunderstood movement. It is accused of not being secular. Fact is that while the very word 'secular' is not found anywhere in the Constitution, Hindu Dharma pervades all our thinking and living." He concluded: "The RSS has now become a household word throughout India, and everybody recognises the selfless service it is rendering to this country. I wish it, therefore, every success."

Justice K.S. Hegde

JUSTICE K.S. HEGDE, Speaker of Lok Sabha 1977-80, said in 1973: "I have some knowledge of the working of RSS and I must say that I am greatly impressed by three of the great qualities of the Sangha—intense patriotism, discipline and dedication to our culture." He added: "Look at the irony of things at present. Government leaders think that the RSS is not sufficiently patriotic, that it is not a national organisation and that it is not dedicated to the national movement, but that another political party which looks up to a foreign country for leadership, philosophy and guidance, and the members of which are acting as agents of a foreign government, are sufficiently nationalistic for the government to be eager to have collaboration with them. It is surprising that our government should think that there is more patriotism among the communists than among the RSS."

Dr. K.N. Katju

DR. KATJU, who had been Nehru's Home Minister and Defence Minister, addressed an RSS Rally in Allahabad in 1963. Dr. Katju said that he had occasion to visit RSS camps and rallies in the past too. "Chinese aggression has made the nation conscious of its great unity, but this unity needs to be preserved for ever—whether there is war or peace. It is this unity that the RSS founder sought to build up." He added: "Who says this is not Hindu Rashtra? I am happy to see its miniature form in RSS."

Sardar Gurnam Singh

SARDAR GURNAM SINGH, retired High Court Judge, who became Chief Minister of Punjab in 1967, presided over the Gurudakshina Utsav of Ludhiana Shakha in 1963. He said: "Everyone who worships Bharat Mata and is ready to sacrifice for her sake is a Hindu." He added: "Soldiers in the army do not go to fight in their ordinary dress but do so in a prescribed uniform. They cannot be dubbed as a separate community for wearing this distinctive uniform. Similarly Guru Gobind Singh created a band of warriors to resist the onslaughts on the Hindu Society and ordained certain articles of wear—the five K's—for them. This does not turn the Sikhs into a separate entity. They are as much Hindu as Arya Samajists or anybody else." He said: "Guru Gobind Singh created Sant-Sipahis (saint-warriors)—that is, those who would work for attainment of God through renunciation in peace time but would wield the sword if injustice and oppression were perpetrated on them. The RSS, I am glad, is also engaged in preparing Sant-Sipahis."

Prof. V.V. John

"A disingenuous version of secularism is now being employed as an electoral slogan. In the current style of politics, it seems to be possible to establish ones secular credentials by denouncing the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh while making deals with communal parties and seeking the political support of religious demagogues."

Vinoba Bhave

"Mein Sangha ka asabhya sabhya hoon" (I am an honorary member of Sangha).

Swami Jayendra Saraswati, Kanchi Shankaracharya

WHAT is wrong in teaching moral values and moulding individual character, inculcating love for the motherland and stressing physical, mental and spiritual strength and selfless service to humanity, as the RSS does? After all, its advice to the youth is: *satyamvada, dharamam chara*—which is what is written in the Government insignia. The need of the hour is to help people to acquire 'fulness of manhood' and more such organisations are required.

Shringeri Maharaj

"THERE will be peace in the world only when Bharat, which is the salt of this earth, is kept healthy and strong. And the well-being of Bharat can be assured only by protecting the spirituality and Dharma of this land. There must be some means, some organisation to do that. And I am very glad to know that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh fulfils that purpose.

Swami Chinmayananda

SHRI ADI SHANKARACHARYA introduced timely changes in the framework of Dharma at that time. Today Revered Sri Guruji is doing the same work necessary for the protection and growth of the same Dharma in the present context.

Even Shri Shankaracharya had created a para-military organisation of Naga Sanyasins for the protection of Hindutwa and tried to save Hindu Religion from internal foes. I don't understand why some people oppose the physical training programme of the RSS. Shri Ramchandra is Kodandadhari and Shri Krishna has *Chakra* and *Gada* as His weapons. It is not wrong to take up arms and get ready to fight for protection of Dharma. It is wrong only if it is merely for aggression.

Swami Ranganathananda

HOLY BHARAT is full of good thoughts. But corresponding good action must also be there. But good actions are at a very low ebb in present-day Bharat. It is in this holy land that bad actions have increased much more than even in Mlechha countries. The only remedy for this disaster is the good actions performed collectively by organised young men. I feel that this great and urgent need is being fulfilled by RSS. □

Discussing the Muslim Problem with Shri Guruji

By : Dr. Saifuddin Jeelani

IT WAS NOT at all easy to secure this interview with Shri Guruji. His visit to Calcutta was brief and his programmes over-crowded. But my business was pressing. I wanted to discuss with him the communal problem during these difficult days when unscrupulous politicians are going all out to mislead the people. I had never met with Guruji before. But when he recently fell seriously ill and had to undergo a major operation, I felt it was my duty to enquire about his health, wish him speedy recovery and pray Allah to spare him for many years to come. I had conveyed this to him through my good friends Acharya S.S. Apte and R.P. Khanna.

I wonder how many, or how few, Muslim Indians other than myself felt about Shri Guruji the same way. If any, I will be happy to know them. They may please write to me. I will write back telling them how proud I am to know that fellow-Muslim Indians are living up to the true teachings of Islam.

If they are many, so much the better. If few, that will be still something. If none, it will be a stab in the back of Islam by violating its basic teachings. I wanted to meet Guruji and congratulate him on his restoration to perfect health. I felt that I was one of the happy millions of Indians whom God favoured by answering their prayer. Let us not allow petty prejudice to blind us to a fact that stares us in the face. In saying this, I am addressing not only the Muslims of this country but many Hindus as well.

Shri Guruji is the most important man in India. He is our country's Man of Destiny.

The opportunity to meet Guruji came when I learned that he would be in Calcutta for a short visit. I wanted to combine the pleasure of meeting him with a discussion on Hindu-Muslim relationship. My efforts have met with some success, thanks mostly to the vast amount of goodwill that many Hindus have for their Muslim brothers. But, I was not satisfied with the result, promising though it was. I am after a victory over the communal monster. Nobody can help in bringing this about except Guruji. Meeting Shri Guruji is a rare experience, inspiring and unforgettable. I have, in my time, met many of the world's greatest men from Hitler to Nasser with a galaxy of others thrown in between them. I have yet to come across one so impressive and at the same time fascinatingly confident and affable as Guruji. He smiles with his eyes. One has just to look at them to feel at home and know that he is face to face with a sincere friend of long standing.

Yes, Guruji is the one man to provide the guidelines for the solution of our communal problem. Am I forgetting the RSS? Indeed I am not. I have, for years, closely observed the activities of R.S.S. and can say that it is the greatest asset of our country. It is no doubt often painted in dark colours by people who designedly and otherwise ignore its significance as a vital necessity of India. The R.S.S. is not an enemy of the Muslims of this country. On the contrary it is their friend. But, they do not realise this because they never think for themselves. They sit back and allow an ignorant designing leadership to do this for them. Am I forgetting that the RSS membership is not open to Muslims? Indeed I am not. The RSS came into being to help the Hindu recover his Abhimana. When this is done its doors will at once be thrown open to all non-Hindu Indians. One has to build from the bottom, not from the top. The Hindu is the corner-stone of the mighty edifice called Bharat. Once that corner-stone is strengthened and is solidly established the edifice will rise up in all its splendour and glory as one people, the like of which has never been produced.

I asked Guruji whether, at least of late, any prominent Muslim Indian sounded him on the communal problem. He mentioned quite a number. Not one of them was any of the Muslim leaders I had in mind.

I asked Guruji if he would like to meet those I was thinking of. Came his answer without any hesitation, "I not only like it, I welcome it."

I could feel the challenge in these few words, uttered in all sincerity and goodwill. Will it fall on ears deafened, as the Holy Quran says, by perversity? I am an humble servant of the Indian people as a whole. But frankly those of them foremost in my mind are my fellow Muslim Indians. The Hindus do not lack leadership. The Muslims are more like sheep without a shepherd.

All I ask them to do is to open their eyes and minds and, for a change, think for themselves. With this my only end in view, I sought this interview with Guruji. The following is the report of the same.

JEELANY : Don't you think that a solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem must be found, specially at this critical moment when the country is faced with dangers from all sides?

GURUJI : So far as the work for the country is concerned I do not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims. But how do people look at this problem? Probably these days every one has become a political animal.

Every one thinks that he would be able to push forward his own claims or privileges for a certain community by exploiting political situations. This could be remedied if, from political, the people became patriotic. Only with patriotic point of view, all troubles will end in no time.

When I was in Delhi this time, many people came to me even though I am not in politics at all. I have kept myself and RSS free from active politics. But then because I have a number of old friends in B.J.S., people came to see me asking for mediation for various things. So this time I met a number of people of BKD, Congress (O) and so on. I asked many of them one simple question : You are all thinking of your parties and how to get into power. Is any one thinking of the country as a whole? No one came forward with the correct reply that they were. Had they been working for the country as a whole, they would have said it in so many words. But they hesitated. This meant that no political party thinks of the country.

I am working for the Hindus because I think in terms of the country. But if the Hindus were to go against the interests of the country, I would have nothing to do with them—nothing at all.

What of the Muslims? I can understand that they should be given their due share, as every one ought to have his due share. But this does not mean demanding various rights and privileges. I have heard about the demand of a sort of Pakistan in every state. The President of a Muslim organisation was reported to have said that he planned to see his flag fluttering over the Red Fort. And he never contradicted the report. Such are the things which irritate those who think in terms of the country.

Look at the insistence on Urdu. Fifty years back Muslims in various states spoke the local language, studied in local language, never thought that they had a different religious language of their own.

Urdu is not a religious language of the Muslims. Urdu is a hybrid product, evolved during the Mughal rule. It has nothing to do with Islam. It was in Arabia that Islam was born. The holy Quran is in Arabic. If there is a religious language for the Muslims, it is Arabic. So why this emphasis on Urdu? It is there because by one common language they want to unite all Muslims into a political force, that is all. Now this political force is not only likely but is certain to go counter to the interests of the country. Some Muslims say that Rustam is their National Hero. Rustam was a Persian hero. He has nothing to do with them. He was born long before Islam. Why then can he be considered a hero of the Muslims, and not Ram Chandra? I say : why don't you accept this history?

Pakistan celebrated the 5,000th anniversary of Panini who was born in that part which is now in what is called Pakistan. If Pakistanis can

claim Panini as one of their forefathers, why should not our local Hindu-Muslims—I call them 'Hindu-Muslim'—say that Panini, Vyas, Valmiki, Rama, Krishna are all their ancestors? There are so many people in Hindu Dharma who do not believe in the divine incarnation of Rama and Krishna. But they believe that they are great personalities, outstanding personalities. So what does it matter if Muslims do not believe that God incarnated himself? But why should we not consider such personalities as our National Heroes?

According to our ways of religious belief and our philosophy, a Muslim is as good as a Hindu. It is not Hindu alone who will reach the ultimate Godhead. Every one has the ability to follow the right path according to his own persuasion.

Let me give the example of the previous Shankaracharya of Sringeri Muth. An American approached him, to convert him to Hinduism. He asked him why he wanted to be a Hindu. The man replied that he was not satisfied with Christianity, that it left his spiritual longing unquenched. The Acharya asked him, "Have you honestly tried Christianity? If you have honestly tried Christianity and come to the result that it does not satisfy you then come to me. That is our attitude. Ours is a non-proselytising Dharma. Proselytisation is in almost all cases motivated by political or other gain. We reject it. We say: This is the plain truth. If yes, choose it, follow it. If you do not choose, you need not follow.

When I was in the South, some gentlemen met me at Madurai to discuss about the Muslims. I said I was happy they came to me. They asked me what was my attitude towards the Muslims. I said we are the children of the same forefathers and must always bear this in mind. Follow your religion honestly, but in the national context we have all to be one. There can be no claiming of rights and privileges at the cost of the nation. We do not say to anybody that because we are Hindus, we alone are entitled to this and that. Not at all. But if people come forward and say they want a separate existence altogether, a state within a state, then I think it is not tolerable. This problem is not only of the Hindus and Muslims; it is also within the Hindus themselves. For example, we have the Jains, Scheduled Caste people some of whom followed Dr. Ambedkar and became Buddhist and are trying to claim that they are separate. Because in our country a minority happened to have certain privileges, every one wants to prove that he is a minority and claim such privileges and thus cut the whole nation into so many fragments, and that spells ruin. As a matter of fact we are heading for it. Some Jain Sadhus told me while I was there that they were not Hindus and that they were going to enroll themselves as Jains in the coming 1971 census. I said they were dreaming of suicide. Such separatism means fragmentation of the country, which in turn means

suicide and total ruin. When people look at things from the point of view of political aggrandisement, dangerous difficulties crop up. But once this aggrandisement is left out, our country becomes one and we can meet the challenge of the whole world.

JEELANY : (Frankly I never expected this answer, I was stunned by Guruji's width of vision. In his reply to my question, he summed up all the country's most important problems and pin-pointed our weakness. Where the Muslim Indians are concerned, he diagnosed their disease and prescribed the only efficacious remedy.) Materialism in general and communism in particular threaten to engulf our country. Don't you think that Hindus and Muslims as, believers in God, should be the proper bulwark against these dangers?

GURUJI : This is the very question which was put to me sometime ago by a gentleman from Kashmir. His name is Sufi Nazir Ahmed. He is a good man. I met him at Aligarh in the house of one of my friends. He said to me that this threat of godlessness and communism is overtaking us all and we who believe in God should get together and meet the threat. I said I perfectly agree with you but the difficulty is that we have, as it were, broken the image of the God and each one has got his own piece. So what is to be done? You think of God in one particular way, the Christians think in another, Buddhism says there is no God, that all there is, is Nirvana; the Jain will say it is nothing; then so many will say that we worship God in the form of Rama, Krishna, Shiva etc. How to ask all these people to believe in one common God? Have you any recipe for this? Now this Kashmiri man is known to be Sufi which I take to be thinker and God-minded man. You will be surprised at his answer. He said, why not all of you come to Islam.

I said don't you think that people will say, why not join Christianity? Suppose I, devoted as I am to my religion, say why not become a Hindu. It comes to the same thing and the problem will never end. He then asked me what would be my suggestion.

My suggestion is to follow your own religion. There is one substantial philosophy which does not belong to the Hindus or to the Muslims. Call it Advaita or whatever you like. It says that there is one single existence which is truth, which is bliss. It is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer. All our conceptions of God are only our limited conceptions of that ultimate reality, so that the rock bottom of that ultimate reality will join us together. It does not belong to any one religion. Every one can accept it on this account. Religion is only a way of worship. This is not such a way; it is a philosophy, it is the philosophical understanding of the universe. It can be taken to be the rock bottom.

The God of Islam, Christianity and Hinduism is thus the same and we all are his devotees. Why don't you accept this? I asked him, "As a Sufi you should." He had no answer to this.

JEELANY : We know that both Hindus and Muslims have a vast amount of goodwill for each other. In spite of this, occasional frictions of varying magnitude do occur. What steps in your opinion, should be taken to minimize or altogether stop these?

GURUJI : In many of your articles you have been emphasising one of the causes of these frictions, the cow. Unfortunately our people do not look at it from this point of view. Our political leaders are also of the same colour now-a-days. This continues to breed a little ill-feeling in the minds of the vast majority of the people. I do not know why they are emphasising the slaughter of the cow. They need not. As a matter of fact, it is not a religious injunction. That was probably sort of a way of spiting the Hindus in the old days. Why should it continue now?

Can we not share each other's festivals? Our most popular festival which brings various strata of society together is Holi. Suppose in this Holi a Muslim is sprinkled with coloured water, do you think that the injunctions of the Quran are violated? They should regard it as a social affair at which we should get together. You sprinkle water on me and I sprinkle water on you. Our people are taking part in all the processions of Moharram. They have been taking part in all the various festivals such as the Urs in Ajmer. But suppose we ask Muslims to come and take part in Satyanarayana Puja, what will happen? As you might have heard, the DMK people took to Rameshwaram a Muslim minister; he was accorded all the conceivable honours by the temple authorities and all others concerned. But when the Prasad was given to him, he threw it away. Why did he do so? Suppose he had taken the Prasad, that would not have violated his religion! These small things are there. We have to learn to adopt an attitude of respect for one another. Toleration is not what I would like. To tolerate others doing particular things, is one thing; but respect is a nobler sentiment. This comes first. We want to respect all others; this is for the good of humanity. Ours is not *Sahishnavad* (tolerance) but *Samanawad* (equality). Respect first, then tolerance naturally comes in.

JEELANY : Who among us you think are the best equipped pioneers for this effort of bringing about harmony between Hindus and Muslims, the politicians, the educationists or the religious leaders?

GURUJI : The politician is the last man. The same could be said of the religious leaders also. At present, in our country there are religious leaders in both communities who are extremely narrow-minded. So we want a

third type of persons who will be religious, non-political but still will have the whole national concept in their mind. Religious they should be; without the religious background nothing can be achieved. Take for example the Ramakrishna Mission. It is striving to propagate a broad-based religion. Such an attitude is required now. Politicians are playing their own game and trying to divide the people more and more. They are trying to emphasise caste, language differences and Hindu-Muslim tension. It makes our problem all the more acute. Where communal matters in our country are concerned, the villain of the piece is the politician. Unfortunately the politician has become the leader of the people, whereas persons of high merit, pure character and real devotion to God, who should be the leaders of the people are nowhere. Instead we find leadership in politicians' hands. Two days back, I said at Prayag that people should not follow persons who are men of straw but should follow persons devoted to God, persons who have character and breadth of vision.

JEELANY : Don't you think that the Hindus, as the majority community, have a special and greater responsibility to create an atmosphere of inter-communal harmony?

GURUJI : Yes, certainly. But consider the difficulty. Our leaders are prone to put the blame upon the Hindus and absolve the Muslims. This has given the minority community, that is the Muslims, encouragement to continue to indulge in their own communal activities. So here we say that we must share the responsibility together.

JEELANY : What gesture do you suggest should be made by both communities to bring about harmony between them?

GURUJI : It is very difficult to say off-hand. Let us see that there is education on a mass scale with proper understanding of religion, not the non-religious education that is being spread now-a-days by our politicians. But good religious education gives people knowledge of Islam, Hinduism. Educate them to know that all religions teach men to be good, holy and pious. Then there is another thing: we are teaching history in a distorted manner. Let us teach history as it is. If there was aggression from Muslims, say that there was aggression from them, but it was from foreigners. Let the Muslims say that they are the Muslims of this land and that such aggression was not their heritage.

Instead of being taught what is true, they are taught what is distortion of the truth. Truth cannot be hidden for long. However long you hide it, it ultimately comes out and creates worse feelings in the minds of people. Therefore, I say, teach history as it is. If Afzal Khan was killed by Shivaji, say he was killed, say that it came about from strained rela-

tions between a foreigner, a foreign aggressor and a national leader, Shivaji. Say that we are all one nation and therefore that was not our tradition. But nobody has the courage to say so. I have denounced this distortion of history on so many occasions and denounce it now.

JEELANY: Much has been said about 'Indianisation', and a lot of confusion has arisen over it. Could you please tell me how to remove this confusion?

GURUJI: 'Indianisation' was of course the slogan given by Jana Sangh. Why should there be such confusion? 'Indianisation' does not mean making all people Hindus. As I have said, let us realise and believe that we are the children of the soil, which is what we are. Let us realise and believe that we are from the same stock. Let us realise and believe that our great fore-fathers were one and therefore, let us realise and believe that our aspirations are also one. This is the meaning of 'Indianisation'—that is all.

That does not mean that anyone should give up his way of worship. We can never advocate this, or even think of it. We believe that one single way of worship is not suitable for the whole of humanity.

JEELANY: Quite true, Guruji. I am very grateful to you for this clarification.

GURUJI: But I don't know whether I have been able to make this clear to all the people.

JEELANY: That doesn't matter. You have done your best. No reasonable person can disagree with you.

GURUJI: Many people believe that you do not exist, that you are a fiction of the R S S, J S and 'Organiser'. I say, well that is what Jeelany says. If any Muslim Mulla can accept his challenge let him come forward. Your challenge is unambiguous and very clear.

JEELANY: Don't you think it is high time that a meeting should take place between you and Indian Muslim leaders as would co-operate with you in finding ways and means to remove this communal discord once and for all? Would you like meeting such leaders?

GURUJI: I do not only like it, I welcome it.

The Soul of India : Today and Tomorrow

By : Amaury De Riencourt

AS ONE COMES closer to the present, one tends to lose sight of the forest and see only multitudes of individual trees. A constant effort must be made to extricate oneself from the day-to-day involvements and look at the problem of India from the great perspective which its immense past affords.

India is not merely an economically under-developed country; it is not just another Africa or Latin America. It is a very old civilization, ailing but still remarkably alive today. And it is from the depths of that old civilization that India is most likely to draw the strength needed to adapt itself to the modern world. It was from the depths of that old civilization that the powerful Dayananda Sarasvati sprang in the nineteenth century to shake the old, decrepit structure of a fossilized Hinduism to its foundations and start the Arya Samaj on its brilliant career in northern India. It was from those depths that the shuddhi movement aiming at the reconversion of Muslims back to Hinduism sprang, that Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the great Bengali thinker and novelist, extracted his collectivism and religious revivalism and Sri Aurobindo Ghose his mystical nationalism. It was from the same depths that Bal Gangadhar Tilak arose at the turn of the century to give further impetus to a Hindu political revival—and it was undoubtedly as the spiritual heir to Tilak that the Hindu Mahasabha was founded in 1928, a militant organization dedicated to a cultural and political revival of old Hindu India, temporarily side-tracked, in its opinion by Gandhi's debilitating non-violence.

Under the aggressive leadership of V.D. Savarkar, Dr. Moonje and Pandit Malaviya, it paid little attention to communism, then an insignificant movement in India, and turned violently against the Muslim communities. Instrumental in fanning to the utmost all the communal controversies, it had to watch with impotent rage the development of the Muslim League and the eventual Partition of India. It generated its own para-military organization of militant Hindu youth, the redoubtable Rashtriya Swayam Sevaka Sangh, and refused to accept Partition and the existence of an independent state of Pakistan. Indirectly, it became responsible for the murder of Gandhi by the fanatical, unrepentant Vinayak Godse, and sentiment ran so high against the Hindu Mahasabha that it was compelled to withdraw from politics altogether.

Gradually, the Mahasabha fell behind the times and began to lose all influence on the course of events. Its staunch communalism became outdated and the rising threat of communism compelled a new orientation of the movement. This was clearly perceived by its new leader, the

brilliant Shyama Prasad Mookerjee: a new incarnation was needed, a new inflection in the direction of the movement in an independent India shorn of Pakistan but with forty million Muslim citizens who had to be won over, if possible, to this new crusade. On October 21, 1951, Mookerji founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (Indian People's Party) as a modernized offshoot of the Mahasabha—a new political party, no longer communal but open to all Indians regardless of caste, creed or community. In tune with the prevailing conditions in India, its aim was stated to be the development of Indian "unity in diversity which has been the keynote of Bharat's (India's) culture and civilization," in Mookerjee's own words. Castigating Nehru for taking "special delight in outraging Hindu feelings and sentiments," he left no doubt as to the orientation of the new party. Claiming that the partition of India "was a tragic folly", he left no doubt either as to its ineradicable hostility to Pakistan.

The mysterious death of Shyama Prasad Mookerji in 1953 was a hard blow to Jana Sangh, yet it failed to prevent it from growing and expanding. Its center of strength lay in the Hindi-speaking areas of northern India (where Communism is weakest) and its influence fades away gradually toward the Deccan and South India. Soon rated among the four all-India political parties, it began to be heard with increasing frequency and violence in and out of Parliament—directing many of its shafts at the Caesarian nature of Nehru's power and at the monopolistic character of the Congress Party's rule. Handicapped all through the 1950's by a crippling lack of financial resources, its small achievements look all the more impressive when viewed against the background of the irresistible financial power of both the Congress Party and the CPI. And nothing is quite so fickle as financial backing for political parties. As soon as the heavy backing of the Congress Party by a large segment of the business community (which gets it back many times through corruption of officials, tax evasion and non-implementation of leftist policies) switches to some outspokenly right-wing party, Congress is likely to disintegrate and large numbers of Congressmen would join right-wing extremism, where they truly belong.

A party such as the Jana Sangh may not carry too much weight under Nehru's Caesarian rule; but it represents a nucleus with tremendous potential in northern India. Its economic policies are not particularly original and come close to a certain form of mild conservatism, tempered by a definite hostility toward great concentration of industrial and financial power in private hands—and a certain inclination toward Gandhi's economic views. But its potential as leader of right-wing extremism is considerable, insofar as it might become the political expression of Hinduism's enduring ethos. This atavistic Hinduism is still alive today and is likely to benefit directly from any major political upheaval that would pulverize the present Westernized structure of a united India. British

influence on social, legal and political matters has been wearing this never since Independence. And if there is to be any heir to it, in a great part of India, it will be some expression of Hinduism's traditional outlook. Bolstered by the fanatical Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, which commanded a highly disciplined membership of 400,000 and several million direct supporters in the 1950's, it represents the most potent expression of militant Hinduism—this immensely strong and durable Hinduism which could still send over five million devotees to the great Kumbha-mela at Allahabad in 1954 and still has at its disposal untold reserves of fanaticism and emotionalism, as well as genuine spiritual strength.

Certainly, without intellectual framework, it cannot become a dynamic antagonist of Marxism and, so far, has not come to grips with its most dangerous enemy. If still fights, purely instinctively, the only enemy of which it is really aware and with which it is familiar: Islam—that is, in its modern political expression, Pakistan. Incarnate at present in the Jana Sangh, it attempts to fight the centrifugal forces that have been building up relentlessly, conscious of their danger for the unity of what it calls Bharatmata, "Mother India". It wants to solve the problem of India's unity through a reintegration of Pakistan within the Indian fold and maximum decentralization. It sees a solution to the problem of India's linguistic unity in the adoption, not of Hindi but of Sanskrit—a dead language—as the national tongue of India in place of English. There is in all this, as in many things Indian, a strange blend of utter realism and dreamy wishful thinking. And even with a fairly complete political, social and economic program, it offers yet no dynamic ideology, no articulate philosophy, no consistent doctrine; it is merely an embryo with great potential. But contrasted with the Communist leaders, who at the national level strike one as being to an extent divorced from many of the realities of Indian life—especially in northern India—and who seem strangely brittle, the Jana Sangh leaders exude a certain elemental power which seems to spring directly from the Indo-Gangetic earth.

The strength of Hindu right-wing extremism does not lie among the Brahmins, especially those numerous Brahmin groups who have become successfully Westernized, who speak English and have benefited from the new political, social and economic order of India's modern industrial structure. It lies mostly in the non-English speaking middle and lower castes who remain rooted in the old pre-industrial order, and who remain faithful to the old Hindu civilization, dedicated to "Sanskritization" as opposed to Westernization. It is this old Hindu, not the new Westernized "bourgeoisie", that is likely to swing increasingly toward some form of right-wing extremism. The Indian revolution has barely started, as yet. Independence left things pretty much as they had been in the first half of our century: the British engaged in private business are more numerous

in India than ever before, and they still own 80 per cent of all foreign investments in India. They have transmitted political power to the small English-speaking, western-oriented ruling class, which numbers barely 1 per cent of the Indian population. But a violent antagonism is already growing in all political parties against the English-speaking "Neo-Brahmins" who took over from the British and who perpetuate, inspite of parliamentary trappings, the same type of rule. It is against this enduring but weakening Westernized structure that right-wing extremism is likely to strike in the future, and thus undercut Communism: that is where its revolutionary potential lies. The similarities with the background of German's National Socialism—middle classes impoverished by the First World War and its aftermath—are obvious.

Whatever the fate of this or that political party, there are certain constants in the Indian situation. Regardless of who gives shape to it and leads it, the rise of right-wing extremism seems almost inevitable in the future, especially in some areas of northern India (Hindustan, the Hindi-speaking areas). A perspective of Indian history, and especially of the cultural impact of India on nineteenth-century Germany, brings out very clearly the great similarities existing between the German and the Hindu *Weltanschauungs*, in their timeless aspects. They are both prone, when politically conscious and active, to be extremists, especially right-wing extremists. They are both essentially caste people, conscious of ethnic and class distinctions. They have no feeling of world brotherhood, of love of mankind as a whole. Marxism-Leninism could serve as vehicle for the greatest reactionary movement in modern China because of the many traditional cultural and psychological elements it could incorporate; it can do no such thing in India because it awakens no echo in the Indian ethos, because it can develop no organic relationship with the soul of India. Rather than Communism, it is some form of National Socialism that appeals to the more dynamic Indians (without the ghastly undertones of the Hitlerian regime) or some form of Fascism in some particular areas (the D.M.K. or Black Shirts of Madras, for example); and the spirit of Subhas Bose, the former rival of Nehru, and the Fascist revolutionary who worked hand in glove with the Japanese during the Second World War, still haunts Bengal.

Another important constant in India is the inveterate lack of interest in politics. India as a whole became briefly interested and involved in politics in the first half of the twentieth century when the first cracks appeared in the grandiose structure of the British Empire. But after the struggle for independence was over and the Indian nationalists remained masters of the battlefield, political consciousness began to wane steadily. Especially among the younger generation, it declined steadily all through the 1950's until now most students are considered to be decidedly apolitical. The atavistic inclination to leave politics, and every other

occupation as well, to the "professional", endures in India. With this goes an equally enduring distrust of the state and of rulers in general; thanks to its ethical aura, the Chinese state was always granted the benefit of the doubt; the Indian state never enjoyed this privilege and, at best, was always considered to be an inevitable evil. The Indian masses can still be moved, but only for matters that concern them locally and directly or for religious motives. And they will only give their heart-felt allegiance to that party and ideology that appear to be a true emanation, more or less modernized no doubt, of some aspect or other of timeless Hinduism—religious, social or economic. It was Gandhism yesterday because that particular emanation of Hinduism seemed best adapted to the immediate task at hand: ousting the British Raj. Tomorrow, it is likely to be another emanation—authoritarian rightwing extremism—that will be better suited to the tasks looming on the political horizon: the defence against Pakistan and against Communism. Along with a healthy respect for strength, the Indians have a compelling admiration for social hierarchy and an enduring feeling for caste distinctions—which is not at all incompatible with temporary and violent revolts against it, as in South India and Maharashtra. The most ruthless form of Communist rule would find itself, ultimately, powerless to streamline Indian society and overcome the fantastic gaps created by class and ethnic distinctions: ultimately, it would be defeated by it—unless backed by such overwhelming alien forces of occupation that the Indians could not physically expel it. Right-wing extremism would not fight such profound atavism but marry it and become its political expression; it would be the true political expression of the immemorial ethos of Hindu India.

Marxism awakens no true echo in the soul of India; but some form of Nietzschean philosophy does. Looking beyond the world of day-to-day politics to the more or less distant age when mankind will truly become one, one can see clearly that India's contribution to world culture will lie in the development and concrete application of some such philosophy. While Red China seeks the reduction of the human individual to the level of a mechanized ant, India will possibly seek or at least contribute to create, the "super-man." Such a pursuit was already brilliantly anticipated by the great mystic-philosopher Shri Aurobindo Ghose in several of his works, 'The Human Cycle' and 'The Ideal of Human Unity' especially. In this idealistic Nietzscheism, Aurobindo applies the Hindu genius for the elaboration of essentially subjective philosophies of transformation to the problem facing a modern man who is technically master of his natural environment, not so much the alteration of his political, social and economic structures as the metamorphosis of his human personality, which alone can afford a lasting solution of mankind's problems. He conjured out of the depths of his mystical awareness a strange vision of the superman of the future, evolving out of the imperfect human being

of today as man, hundreds of thousands of years ago, evolved out of the animal kingdom. Blazing new yogic trails, he prophesied that "the spiritual motive will be in the future of India, as in her past, the real originative and dominating strain." Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan anticipates in a similar vein when he writes: "In each geological period have appeared creatures which might have been represented as the highest types of creation. Yet those forms of life have been superseded by others. The next stage of evolution is not in man's physique but in his psyche..." The Indian mind is instinctively more at home in the vast space of geological ages than in the narrow confines of historical epochs. It can conceive and would welcome some staggering event that would put an end to history altogether and usher the world into a new geological age—something, in fact, that might very well be happening today. It could then conceive of the preordained emergence of supermen, a new species evolving out of a vast mass of socialized mankind that would remain as stuck in the grooves of the crystallized routine and paltry comforts of a *panem et circenses* (Bread and circuses) type of civilization as bees and ants have remained in their socialized mode of life for aeons.

India can contribute to the world of the future, not only out of its immemorial past but also out of its living present, because the essence of Indian philosophy does not lie so much in abstract thought as in actual 'living'—and even though Indian thought does not admit it consciously, in 'becoming', in the preservation of self-identity in the midst of metamorphosis according to Goethe's motto : *Stirb und werde*, "die and become." The psychological and cultural background of the Indian intellectual is fundamentally religious, even when formal religion has lost its grip. This spiritual and religious ethos of India is less vulnerable to scientific criticism than the Western creeds (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) because it is not connected with history—because the spiritual symbolism of history has no meaning for it. Its very limitations, its emphasis on psychology rather than theology, on the inner man rather than on man's relations with the external universe, shields it from the corrosive impact of our modern times. When the essence of Hindu religiosity has been distilled, what is left is basically a vague but powerful awareness of monism—that ecstatic feeling being "oned" with all things, seen and unseen. History, as we know, teaches us that this outlook so predominant in India, tends to fragment and dilute morality as understood in other civilizations. Under these circumstances, morality was in India, as it still is largely today, a relative thing, tied specifically to one's station in life and one's caste, indistinguishable from the vast pattern of taboos embedded in the caste system. Morality doesn't have the powerful appeal in India that it has in China; corruption does not revolt the Indian soul as it does the Chinese. More than anything else, this absence of emphasis on morality may justify a certain cynical ruth-

lessness in political matters which would make short shrift of all legal and democratic safeguards.

The India of the future is not likely to resemble Gandhi's idealized version of it; hammered into new shape by the hard blows of political realities from which it was shielded by the British Raj, the enduring remains of India's civilization are likely to slough off the cloak of Gandhian moralism which it has adopted instinctively as the best means of defeating the British—the self-doubting West of the postwar era being in the throes of an acute moral crisis and therefore sensitive to all forms of moral criticism. The India of the future is far more likely to revert to the world outlook expounded in the Mahabharata and the Arthashastra, where naked realism prevails, where strength (spiritual as well as mental or material) is equated with goodness and truth is viewed as more subjective than objective.

An anticipation of internal developments in the India of the future must not make us forget that India is not an isolated world of its own but is inexorably involved in the present history-in-the-making of this planet. Many of the events that took place in India during the nineteenth and early twentieth century were mere reflections of the momentous metamorphosis revolutionizing the West: the final exhaustion and winding-up of European Culture and the rise of American Civilization. All the immense labor of the so-called "synthesis" of the nineteenth century was largely for nothing; its results lie in ruins today, alongside the crystallizing remains of the great European Culture that can generate no more. The type of Western influence exerting itself on India in the second half of the twentieth century is fundamentally from its predecessor: it calls for no cultural synthesis since its cultural component is negligible. It has a profound impact on the economic life of India and on the techniques required to sustain that life; but it is perfectly compatible with a scrapping of all the cultural, political, social and legal elements and institutions dear to Europe which two centuries of close British connection had introduced in India.

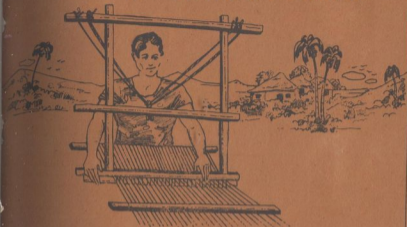
The fact that this scrapping is not likely to be carried out by Communism, at least single-handedly, is small consolation. The irony, however, is that most of the responsibility for this potential development will lie with the West—mostly in the hands of those naive Westerners who awoke with a start, not too long ago, when they realized that world Communism, allied with Soviet and Red Chinese imperialism, was a deadly menace to our civilization. The need to establish a steel ring of military bastions around the periphery of the great Eurasian land mass imposed itself on the dominant Western power: the United States of America. And as fast as the British Raj pulled out of India, American influence began its penetration. Blunted in India proper by the testy

"neutrality" of the Nehruvian regime, American influence fastened itself onto Pakistan and built up its military power. Instead of isolating the entire Indian subcontinent from the icy blasts of the Cold War, helping it economically and fostering a peaceful co-operation between its component nations, the West chose to aggravate the existing tensions and, indirectly, hasten the gradual wearing-out of the liberal, democratic and legalistic structure so painfully built up over a period of many generations. Not knowing where it is really going, guided only by short-term policies, the West is gradually contributing to destroying the institutions it had implanted in the Orient. The existence of parliamentary democracy in India, however imperfect, and the authority and influence of the small English-speaking ruling class in India, are the West's most precious assets in the Orient. To undermine them with ill-thought-out, hastily improvised policy stop-gaps is nothing short of madness. It takes time to destroy as to build; and while the subterranean process of destruction goes on, the innumerable cliché producers will assure the world that all is fine and democracy is progressing.

One by one in the 1950's, the flimsy democratic structures erected in the Middle East, Pakistan and Southeast Asia collapsed. India, the oldest by far of all the ex-colonies, still stands because the old democratic and liberal momentum inherited from the pre-Independence past is far greater. But at the present rate of erosion, it should not be expected to last very long. What happens next is in the lap of the gods. If the pressure of power politics throughout the world warrants it, India will become, like the Middle East since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and like the geographical rim of the Eurasian land mass, a political battleground between conflicting world powers. India would become a mere chessboard. And in India itself the conflict would take place between the political expression of Hinduism (right-wing extremism) and Marxism over the dying body of the Westernized, English-speaking all-Indian ruling class that took over from the British Raj in 1947. India would break up into a number of separate states and become Balkanized. A temporary military dictatorship could delay but not prevent the inevitable.

However, if a sudden and unexpected flash of wisdom struck the West in time, a new policy more consistent with long-term goals could be devised—such a policy as would aim at the preservation of peace in the whole area, at the integrity of India's unity and democratic institutions, along with a truly massive effort at economic betterment for which the West has ample resources. If the recent history of China's tragedy teaches us anything, it is that only long-term policies that are based on a profound analysis of reality and are consonant with the specific character of a given people can shape the future as we would like it shaped. □

Strengthening the social fabric



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