

Dr. Hedgewar

The Epoch

Maker



Chapter-1: BLOSSOMING BUD

Hundreds of villages and cities all over Bharat had gone gay with festivities that day. Banners and buntings adorned public places, and trumpets blew. There were processions and adulatory speeches everywhere. Sweets were distributed to boys and the poor were fed. The elite were accorded distinctions, and titles conferred on scholars. While the elders themselves were so jubilant, what to speak of young children? There was an endless flow of sweets and the children were exuberant. The 'grand' occasion was the 60th anniversary of the Coronation of Queen Victoria- 22nd June 1897. But one small boy-just eight years of age-remained sullen, sad. Though convivial by nature, he refused to join the other boys in the school celebration. He quietly came home, threw away the sweets in a corner and sat down depressed. Surprised at this stance, his elder brother asked him, "Keshav, didn't you get the sweets?" Keshav answered, "of course, I got it. But, our Bhonsle dynasty was liquidated by these Britishers. How can we participate in these imperial celebrations?"

It was this instinctive patriotism which in later days blossomed and burst forth in all its radiance in the form of the peerless patriot and incomparable moulder of men. Dr. Keshav Baliram hedgewar.

The hedgewar family originally hailed from Kandkurti village in telangana- a village with a population of just over two thousand. Kandkurti is in the Bodhana tehsil in the Indore (Nizamabad) district, situated on the border between Andhra and Maharashtra. Near the village is the sacred confluence of Godavari, Vanjra and Haridra rivers. The hallowed Vanjra confluence finds mention even in the puranas. As if reflecting this sangam, one finds in this area a delightful admixture of three languages-Kannada, Telugu and Marathi.

The place was at one time the abode of scholars and prosperous Brahmin families. The Hedgewar family was one such. They were Deshastha Brahmins of the Shakala branch, belonging to the Ashwalayana Sutra of the Rigveda. Their gotra was Kashyapa, and learning and transmission of the Vedas was their sole preoccupation. The agnihotra too was in vogue. There are documents indicating that in the course of his travels, Sri Shankaracharya used to nominate someone from the Hedgewar family to be in charge of propagation of Dharma in this area. Many are the families claiming to be followers of the Hedgewars, and their family documents speak with utmost reverence of the Hedgewars saying, "*Hedage kulaguru poorvapara, jaise suryavamsha vasisthavara*" ("The tradition of Hedge kulagurus is (glorious) like that of Vasishtha in the solar dynasty.")

In the beginning of nineteenth century, many Brahmin families left the Telangana region owing to the neglect and penury suffered by them under the Mughals. Several such families chose to settle in Nagpur since the Bhonsle rulers were great patrons of Vedic learning. Among them was Narahara Shastri, the great-grandfather of Baliram pant of the Hedgewar clan. In 1853, Nagpur came under the yoke of the British rulers, and English education gained prominence to the utter neglect of traditional learning. Great scholars, well versed in many shastras, had to resort to priestcraft to earn their livelihood. Even under such hard conditions, Vedamurti baliram pant Hedgewar sustained the family tradition with efficiency and erudition.

His wife Revatibai came from the Paithankar family, and was known for her serenity and amiable temperament. Despite poverty, the couple spent their days in peace and happiness. It was in such peaceful environs that Keshav was born, on the felicitous Yugadi (New Year) day, in the year Virodhi, 1811 of the Shaka Era, corresponding to Sunday, 1st April, 1889, in the early morning hours. And that was the auspicious hour when the bhonsle palace and every Hindu home in Nagpur hoisted the insignia-gudi-symbolizing the victory of Shalivahana over the invading Shakas, an historic moment of national deliverance. How significant the birth of the child Keshav at this hour was!

Keshav was the fifth issue for his parents. They had six issues in all: three sons-Mahadev, Seetaram and Keshav; and three daughters – Saroo, Rajoo and Rangoo. The frolics of the children enlivened the atmosphere of the household, and spread joy all around. From the moment of offering pranam to the family deity in the morning, up to the time of reciting “Shubham karoti kalyanam” after lighting the lamp in the evening, the children were constantly exposed to traditional samskars and cultural ways.

The boy’s concern for learning was not to the neglect of sound physique. They ate wholesome food, and possessed frames of steel. And among the lot, the eldest son mahadev Shastri was outstanding. He had the bearing of an ustad, wore shirts made of fine mulmul and sported talisman on his neck, adding to his distinguished appearance. He had completed his vedic training in Varanasi and taken to the family profession. He was, however, keenly interested in body-building, and had converted portion of the house into gymnasium. He had equipped it with weights, mace and other paraphernalia needed for workouts. He took delight in training the neighboring youth also in gymnastics. He contributed his share to the maintenance of the household, but a substantial part of his earning was spent for feeding the trainees and friends at the gymnasium.

Added to his forbidding physical appearance, Mahadev Shastri had a fiery temperament and would explode like volcano at the sight of injustice or discourtesy. He once espied from the terrace some mischievous persons pestering an innocent by passer. His blood rose. He at once jumped from the terrace directly on to the road and gave the mischief mongers the thrashing of their life. They felt lucky to have escaped alive.

In performing challenging tasks, the three brothers vied with one another. Once a new well had been dug, and the consecration was to take place. The brothers decided to remove all the dredge and clean the water. But they knew that the elders would not permit such a hazardous venture. At the dead of night, when the others were asleep, the irrepressible threesome got up, stored enough water for the next day, and carried out the dredging operation throughout the night. At dawn the next day, crystal-clear water was oozing from the well-spring.

For nearly a score of years, at the close of last century and the beginning of the present, there were repeated outbreaks of plague in the country. It is said the epidemic took toll of about a crore fo lives. People died like worms, partly for want of effective drugs and artly because of the callousness of the alien officialdom. Out of the one lakh population of Nagpur, two to three hundred people died every day for weeks on end. Baliram Pant Hedgewar was ever ready to help with the obsequies of the deceased. On some days he had to visit the crematorium as many as twenty times, but he never shirked from this religious obligation. He had to take bath a number of times each day. He refused to vacate the house, though many other families had moved to escape the dreaded epidemic. Though the house was maintained in a meticulously clean manner, eventually rats appeared, After this Baliram Pant shifted to the house of his son-in-law. There too, the plague did not spare him. His wife Revatibai contracted the disease. One day Seetaram Pant went out to buy drugs. When he returned he found both the parents dead (1902). Both the corpses were carried together and were consigned to the flames on the same pyre. Keshav was then just thirteen years of age. The sad and heart-rending death of both father and mother had left children rudderless on the ocean of life.

As if to make their cup of misery full, with the passing away of the elders, Mahadev Shastri took to a loose and indisciplined life. And the younger brothers Seetaram and Keshav had to bear the brunt. The latter had to do all the household chores from splitting firewood and storing water to cooking. On occasions they had to go without food. They had long since got used to moving about in torn clothes. And to add to it, they had to stand gratuitous abuse and beatings from their elder brother. Disgusted with all this, Seetaram Pant left the house and went away to Indore to pursue his Vedic studies. Keshav spent most of his time in friends’

houses.

But Keshav was highly self-respecting. Even when he was tormented by extreme hunger, he never accepted food from his friends. He never begged for money. His interest in the studies continued unabated. His name invariably appeared among the top five of the class. Calm and given to few words. He was of a very warm disposition. This trait earned him many lifelong friends. He was greatly liked by the teachers. Keshav's favourite routine included four or five miles of running, a hearty swimming session and various games with his friends. On holidays, the group adjourned to the nearby hill and, dividing themselves into two sides, played 'flag-battle' for hours. Each side fought with consuming passion to get the possession of the flag, which was the target. The spirit of adventure entered into their blood.

In his infancy, Keshav's imagination used to be fired with pride at the sight of the grand pageant of cannons, elephants, horses, band, body-guards etc. which accompanied the royal procession of Bhonsles. That would make him think that Bhonsles were the real kings. But when he joined the primary school, he began to see the light. Certain news items appearing in papers and thrilling episodes of the contemporary revolutionary heroes laid before his tender mind the shocking picture of foreign domination. And when as a child he stepped into the primary school and listened to the story of Shivaji, that great Hindu redeemer became his chosen hero. As a result, the fiery streak of patriotism began to manifest itself when he was hardly eight years old-when he spotted the better stain of slavery in the sweets on the occasion of an imperial celebration.

This instinctive national fervour of Keshav came to the fore on yet another occasion. In 1901, King Edward VII ascended the throne of England. The proprietors of the Empress Mills in Nagpur had arranged colourful fireworks on that day. The entire city had congregated to witness the rare event. But Keshav refused to go, and told his young friends, "it is shameful to celebrate the coronation of foreign ruler, and I shall not be party to it." Keshav was then just twelve years of age.

In those days it was customary to fly the Union Jack atop the Sitabudi fort in Nagpur. Keshav and his friends got a brain-wave: If only we could replace that flag by ours, the removing the Union Jack. But the premises were continuously guarded. How to reach the must? So, why not dig a tunnel leading to the fort from a distant building?

The boys set about their project straightway. One room in the house of their teacher Vaze had been kept apart for the boys' study. A pick-axe, shovel and other implements were brought and they began digging in right earnest, behind closed doors. When the room remained closed for two or three days continuously, Vaze became suspicious and entered the room. A deep pit stared him in the face, beside a corner, anticipating punishment. "what is this you have done?" shouted Vaze. Keshav and his friends explained their intended venture. Vaze patiently advised that boys should not waste their time in such foolhardy activities. However, he could not help admiring the fervent patriotism that had prompted their young minds to undertake the venture. In later days, after Keshav had left for Calcutta for higher studies, Vaze used to narrate this incident with great pride and affection.

In those days Dr. Moonje was the most outstanding public figure in Nagpur. He drew to himself youths of various persuasions, from constitutionalist Moderates to firebrand revolutionaries. Keshav, naturally, gravitated towards Dr. Moonje. Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak had just then launched his 'paise fund' through his newspaper Kesari. Keshav worked ceaselessly in Nagpur for the success of that project. He went from house to house for fund-raising. A true social worker neither asks for anybody's favour for him-self nor is he ashamed to beg for a social cause. And this attitude, Keshav had imbibed since his student days.

Attending public meetings and listening to leaders' speeches was Keshav's favourite pastime. He and his friends naturally nursed the ambition that they too would some day be able to deliver lectures for propagating patriotism. As a training-ground, they started a debating

society and arranged periodical debating sessions. This activity received great encouragement from the called “Swadesha Bandhava” ‘flag-battle’ for hours. Each side fought with consuming passion to get the possession of the flag, which was the target. The spirit of adventure entered into their blood.

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there as a salesman. He also spread the message of Swadeshi among his friends. These dynamic and purposeful activities naturally carried their message to the youngsters' hearts. Many of them made up their minds to stake everything in the cause of national emancipation. The stifling political and social environment stirred them to the core. The atmosphere in those days in Nagpur has been vividly described in his autobiography by the renowned revolutionary Ramlal Vajpayee, who had spent many years in the United States preparing the ground for the Indians here for their rising when the time came; "In a town with lakhs of people, an ordinary Pathan from Kabul enters, beats up the helpless poor, and goes away with his loot unhindered..... Slums have sprung up all round the Hislop College. Drunken Muslim rowdies have made it their habit to abuse us when we pass that way to reach the college. We do not react. An arrogant British soldier kicks a poor soul in front of thousands and walks away. Nobody reacts. When educated people like us go to the gymnasium for body-building, others look upon us with contempt. One is totally at a loss as to what could be done with such a society."

It was in such a depressing atmosphere that Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal in 1905. And this provided the much needed spark and the youth of the country exploded in revolt. Sparks of revolution flew in all directions. Protest meetings were held everywhere. Heaps of foreign clothes were set on fire. The extremist youth sent forth their battle-cry and many a British officer fell victim to their battle-cry and many a British officer fell victim to their fury. It was followed by the British officer fell victim to their fury. It was followed by the British displaying their brute power through lathi-charges and firings. Quite a few bright young men sacrificed their lives. Many more were thrown behind bars. 'Vande Mataram' became the thunderous battle-cry of an awakened nation. Maharshi Aurobindo Ghose wrote, "It was by means of the mantra 'Vande Mataram' that the vow of patriotism was administered to the entire country overnight."

It was in 1907. Keshav had gone to Rampayali to visit his uncle Abaji Hedgewar. Dasara had commenced. It was the custom to hold a mammoth fare on the Vijaya Dashami day in which the entire village community participated. Keshav was thrilled at the thought of such a god-sent opportunity to broadcast the call of Independence. He conceived of a plan along with his young companions.

A contingent of two or three hundred villagers started as usual in a procession led by a musical band. The elite of the place including many government officers, colourfully attired, joined the procession. Killing of the mythical Ravana in the outskirts of the village was part of the fare. Strangely, the number of young people this time was far more than it used to be, and they were all bubbling with enthusiasm. As soon as the procession reached the appointed spot, Keshav shouted at the top of his voice, "Vande mataram!" The entire body of youth echoed and re-echoed the slogan, in a loud and full-throated chorus.

This unexpected turn of events came as a bolt from the blue to the congregation. The killing of Ravana was coolly forgotten and the 'loyal' people broke out pell-mell. But the youths had virtually formed a cordon round the people. Keshav, accompanied by two other students, sang the entire poem 'Vande Mataram', and followed it up with a spirited discourse on the real significance of the 'killing of Ravana'!

The news spread like wildfire and soon became a topic of hot public discussion. While some people praised the daring of the youths, a few others denounced them for their 'foolhardiness'. Government officials, as could be expected, became unnerved and felt out of their wits.

The next day police officers arrived there for inquiry. They thought of instituting cases on those responsible for the incident. However, due to the intervention of a leading gentleman of the town, they dropped the idea. But a fall-out of the event was that Keshav began to be continuously shadowed thereafter. Keshav of course did not mind it. However, his uncle

Abaji became a 'suspect' and was transferred to a distant place. Self-respecting as he was, Abaji refused the transfer and resigned the job. This was how the elderly hedgewar too was drawn into the fiery by his own younger nephew.

Because of Keshav's activities, a few sympathetic elders became concerned about his future and felt that he was ruining his life. It once happened that Keshav had to accompany Abaji to the house of one Jakatdar in Bhandara. Among those present there was Amritrao Bambawala, the Assistant Commissioner. After the introductions, Jakatdar said, "Keshavrao is not at all interested in studies. He is spoiling his future by participating in student movements."

Amritrao felt pity for Keshav. He affectionately called Keshav near him and advised:

"Keshav, you are too young to understand things. These activities will land you in trouble in future. Listen to me, and stay away from politics. Such activities are not for students."

Keshav calmly replied, "Sir, I am ready to quit politics as advised by you. In that case, it is but proper that elders and learned persons like you should give up your jobs and jump into the political arena. Until that happens, students like me have no alternative except to take part in politics, even at the cost of our studies if need be." Amritrao, of course, had no answer to this logical rejoinder.

The year was 1908. Lokmanya Tilak had just visited Nagpur. The entire atmosphere of the city was vibrant with the call of Swaraj. One day the inspector of schools planned to visit the Neel City School. The loyalty of the inspector to the king Emperor was indeed unbounded. He started on his inspection, accompanied by the Headmaster, carrying an air of imperial majesty. They began with the Matriculation class. But as soon as they began with the matriculation class. But as soon as they appeared at its entrance, they were greeted by a deafening roar of "Vande Mataram." The inspector was taken aback, as if stung by a scorpion. He went to another class. There to the same greeting awaited him—only in a more uproarious pitch!

"Oh, no! This is treason!" – the inspector thundered in rage. The inspection came to an abrupt end. "Who has instigated these fellows with this slogan? The culprits must be expelled from the school forthwith," the inspector ordered and left.

Everybody was asking the same question: From where did this slogan originate? All knew that the Matriculation class was the source. But who was the guiding spirit behind it?

The teachers entreated the students, but in vain. They threatened expulsion, but to no avail.

None of the students volunteered expulsion, but to no avail. None of the students volunteered information as to who their leader was. Most of the parents, accustomed as they were to placid ways, were disturbed. As the school management could not ferret out the information, they expelled all the students of the two classes. The students left the school like a band of heroes, jubilantly shouting of the two classes. The students left the school like a band of heroes, jubilantly shouting "Vande Mataram." The entire student body of the school thereafter boycotted the classes. After nearly two months, the elders of the city met and arrived at a face-saving formal 'excuse me' and the strike was called off.

However, two of the students refused to step into the school again. One of them was Keshav. It was he who heralded the new era of "Vande Mataram" in the Nagpur student world.

"Vande Mataram" simply meant saluting the motherland and offering worship to her. To serve one's mother is the sacred duty of a child. "If the foreign rulers consider it a crime to salute one's motherland, I plead guilty. I shall, if need be, continue to commit the same crime any number of times, and shall gladly face the consequences" – such were the fiery expressions which often played on the lips of Keshav.

Because of his daring yet endearing personality, Keshav was liked by all the students, even as he was a favourite of the teachers because of his studiousness and humility. In order that his student career might not get 'spoiled', the teachers tried to 'wean' him. He preferred leaving the school to even uttering a formal apology.

After leaving the neel city School, Keshav joined the National school “Vidya-Griha’ in Yeotmal. Farsighted public men had started such national schools at many places in the country in order to help the students driven out from government institutions, to continue their studies. In Bengal, in particular, leaders like Babu Aurobindo Ghose, Dr. Rasbehari Ghose, barrister Surendranath Bandyopadhyaya and others had established a national university called Vidya-Griha for drawing up syllabi, holding examinations and awarding degrees.

Patriotic and self-sacrificing teachers taught in these schools accepting merely nominal salaries. The Vidya-Griha at Yeotmal had the benefit of guidance of such eminent nationalist leaders as Tapaswi Babasaheb Paranjpe and Loknayak Bapuji Ane. The institution was solely dependent on public munificence. Such was the ennobling environment that shaped the young Keshav.

But how could the British tolerate such institutions created to instil patriotic fervour? Yeotmal had verily become an inspiring centre of national awakening. In addition to textual studies, boys like Keshav avidly read periodicals like ‘Kal’, ‘Kesari’, ‘Bhala’, ‘Deshasevak’ etc. As the Vidya-Griha offered excellent 3 and 3½ year courses, many students left government schools and joined the Vidya-Griha. To suppress the activist movement in Vidarbha, the Government appointed Cleveland, an officer of the espionage branch. This officer, who had forced the closure of the national school in Amaravati, created an atmosphere of terror in Yeotmal too. He threatened the parents, and established a police outpost right in front of the school. The net result was that the Vidya-Griha came to be closed before Keshav could take the Matriculation examination.

But Keshav and his friends were not to be so easily deterred from their chosen path. As advised by the teachers, Keshav and two others continued their study in Pune. After putting in a couple of months of study, Keshav appeared for the ‘Praveshika’ examination of the Calcutta National Vidya-peetha from the Amaravati Centre. Keshav passed and started preparing to move for further studies to Bengal, the birthplace of ‘Vande Mataram’. Keshav’s patriotic heart was thirsting for the sight of that beehive of revolutionaries and centre of nationalist struggle.

2: IN THE HOMELAND OF “VANDE MATARAM”

KESHAV came to Nagpur after completing the Matriculation examination. By that time he was completely immersed in public activities. Close to Nagpur is a place called Ramtek, identified as the Ramagiri described by the poet Kalidasa in his ‘Meghadoota’. The annual fair at Ramtek is a mammoth and colourful affair. In those days, sugar was being imported from Java. Keshav therefore thought of replacing sugar phedas (made out of milk-concentrate) by those of jaggery which was locally available. He got these swadeshi phedas manufactured and arranged for their sale at a cheap price. How zealous his patriotism was even in apparently insignificant matters!

Keshav had, by then, developed close intimacy with the revolutionaries. He kept himself informed of the activities of the underground activists in various provinces. One such revolutionary from Bengal went by the name of Madhavdas Sannyasi. He had been asked to proceed to Japan by the Krantidal, and had come to Nagpur en route. Keshav arranged a secret hideout for him in the house of Appaji Halde in the Mohopa village, till the travel arrangements could be finalized. Appaji Halde, though Keshav’s senior by many years, took pride in carrying out Keshav’s wishes. As if that was not enough, he even made a substantial monetary contribution. After spending six months there, Madhavdas left for Japan.

The Nagpur group of revolutionaries had established contact with the Anusheelan Samiti of Calcutta. Indeed, a fund had been collected and forwarded from Nagpur to help the Calcutta

activists in the Alipore Bomb plot. There is documentary evidence showing that Bhayyasaheb Bobade, an advocate, handed a sum of rupees one hundred to Keshav for this purpose.

Amidst these happenings, the results of the examination were announced. Keshavrao had passed. The certificate carries the signature of Dr. Rasbehari Ghose, president of the National Council of Education (Bengal). It is dated 1st December 1909. Completing the Matriculation examination was no small matter in those days. It would have been natural for Keshav, with his pecuniary background, to have taken up a job to support the family. But other thoughts had stormed Keshav's mind. His one consuming passion was how to cleanse the motherland of the stigma of foreign slavery. It was hardly surprising that Keshavrao and other like-minded fiery youth saw armed rebellion as the only solution. Keshavrao therefore decided to go to Bengal, the 'Kashi of revolutionaries'. He was then staying in the house of Dr. Moonje and he too thought it desirable that Keshavrao should join the national Medical College in Calcutta. With this object in view, Keshavrao had saved some money, earned by private tuitions and as a tutor in a Sunday School. The Nagpur revolutionaries also favoured Keshavrao's going to Calcutta to establish rapport with Pulinbihari Das of the Anusheelan Samiti. These details have been chronicled by Ramlal Vajpayee in his autobiography: "With financial help from Sri Dajisaheb Buti, Sri Keshavrao Hedgewar, founder of the RSS, was sent to Calcutta more with the object of receiving training for revolutionary work under the supervision of Sri Pulinbihari Das, rather than prosecuting higher studies."

Thus, in the middle of 1910, Keshavrao left for Calcutta, seven hundred miles away from Nagpur and a place totally unfamiliar to him. He carried a letter of introduction from Dr. Moonje.

Soon after entering the College, Keshavrao began cultivating the acquaintance of students from various provinces. In his free time he visited the different hostels. He endeared himself to everybody by his warm and good-humoured disposition. It was only during the first one year that he was a boarder in the Shantiniketan Lodge. Though he continued to stay in the lodge during the next four or five years, on most days he ate in friends' houses. Once in a while he had his food in hotels.

The Punjabi Students' Hostel was located in the Nabutala Mohalla. Sardar Niranjana Singh and Shivatta Parashara, who were inmates of that hostel, were Keshavrao's intimate friends. Whenever Keshavrao went there, there used to be an instant outbreak of revelry – Keshavrao snatching away a book from somebody and passing it on to someone else, another putting out the light, and so on. In no time all the inmates would gather there and join in the fun. And as a result, Punjabi students would eagerly look forward to Keshavrao's visits. The charm and wit of his speech and the warmth of his behaviour would cast its spell wherever he went. Keshavrao often received gifts of Punjabi sweets from those friends. In return Keshavrao gave them Shrikhand (made out of condensed curds) of Maharashtra.

Keshavrao's room-mate was one Naik – at once friendly and quarrelsome by temperament. And Keshavrao would leave no chance to irritate him. Naik too would hit back saying, "After all, you are the 'head' of 'gavars' (fools)!" Keshavrao would then coolly remark, "Well, with persons like you around me, I have to be the head!"

As in Nagpur, in Calcutta too Keshavrao continued his vigorous physical exercises and naturally consumed substantial quantities of milk. He thus possessed an impressive physique, a broad chest, and powerful shoulders. His indeed was a figure with 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel.'

Once it so happened that a professor was late in arriving, and the students were having a field day. Howrababu (Dr. Amulyaratna Ghose), a co-student, stretching out his arm, challenged Keshavrao, "Try and defeat me; you can hammer with all your might." In reply, Keshav offered his own arm and countered, "Let me see you defeat me first." Howrababu accepted

the challenge and began delivering powerful blows. The entire class watched with stupefaction. Blows continued. But Keshavrao's visage remained unchanged. The outstretched arm was stiff like a ramrod. Recalling the incident, howrababu has recorded in *The Modern Review*, "Hedgewar did not budge an inch. Instead, I myself had to give up, as my hand began to ache."

Keshavrao's food too was of like proportion. He could, at one stretch, down 20-25 rotis. For some time he had arranged to get his food daily from a Madras meals hotel. His meal consisted of twenty rotis and the side dishes in a similar measure. Another customer who was also getting his food from the same hotel went to the proprietor and complained, "How is it that you send him such a huge quantity of food, and not to me?" The proprietor replied, "If you can really consume the quantity of food that I send to keshavrao, I shall gladly send you also as much. Earlier I was sending him the normal measure of food. He once mentioned that that was not adequate for him. I then invited him to have his food here for two or three days. I then witnessed his capacity, and have since been sending him the requisite quantity of food." The customer, of course, did not dare to take up the proprietor's challenge!

Keshavrao was quick to react at the sight of injustice or high-handedness of any kind. On one occasion a neighbouring bengali family picked up a Quarrel with keshavrao's friend Sardar niranjan Singh. They began trying various tricks to drive out the Punjabis from their lodging. During the night hours, stones were pelted on the lodging. But the miscreants could not be traced. One day, Keshavrao happened to be present there when the stones began raining. He immediately rushed to the street below. Niranjan Singh also followed. They encountered two strangers in the lane, and soundly beat them. Aghast at this sudden assault, they screamed, "Why are you beating us?" "Why are you pelting stones on our house?" Returned keshavrao. "We do not know who has been throwing stones," replied the strangers. Keshavrao thundered, "Somebody threw stones at us. And we, in return, beat somebody. When the hurling of stones stops, we shall also stop beating up." Thenceforward stone-throwing stopped all of a sudden, as if by magic. Evidently, the lesson had gone home!

Keshavraso had once gone to Yeotmal during holidays. One evening, he went for a stroll in the Civil Lines area, accompanied by his friends Govindrao Avade and Yadavrao Ane. The British District Collector happened to come from the opposite direction along with the government medical officer and one other official. Those were the days when the British officers were drunk with power, and had kept the people in mortal fear. At the sight of the Collector it had become customary for the local people to stand aside and, as soon as he approached, to offer a reverential salute. This had become almost an unwritten law.

Keshavrao's friends appraised him of this convention. But Keshavrao could hardly be expected to bow down to such haughty behaviour and to stomach the implied insult to the native community. "This is a public road and I see no reason to change my course," replied Keshavrao and walked on as before.

By then the Collector was within a few feet. Let alone the expected salute, Keshavrao did not even show signs of making way for the officer. Thus the officer was himself obliged to sidestep and go forward. Such a thing had never happened in his life before! After a few steps, the insulted officer turned back and called Keshavrao. Keshavrao responded, unperturbed. "Don't you know the etiquette of saluting?" asked the collector. Keshavrao replied, "Why should I bother about the norms of etiquette here? I am a citizen from the capital of the province: we have no such etiquettes there. I am not aware of any country where they salute people who are strangers to them."

And to top it all, Keshavrao had not even bothered to remove his hands from his coat pockets while speaking. The medical officer Dr. Pedro suggested that Keshavrao should take his hands out. He also advised Keshavrao to offer a salute, if not to meet the demands of etiquette, at least to forestall likely trouble. "Many thanks for the suggestion," said Keshavrao

smilingly, and went his way as if nothing had happened!

This incident stirred a hornet's nest in government circles. When, after Keshavrao returned to Nagpur, Dr. Moonje came to know of the incident, he heartily commended Keshavrao's action, "you did the right thing."

Keshavrao would not brook the smallest insult to the nation or its revered leaders. While Keshavrao was in Calcutta, once a public meeting had been arranged under the president-ship of the well-known patriot Moulvi Liaquat Hussain. One of the speakers spoke slightly of Lokmanya Tilak. Keshavrao became furious. He went straight to the dais and slapped the speaker on the cheek.

Keshavrao's professors in the college were also of a similar mould. Close to his residence was the national medical College on the Upper Circular Road. Dr. S.K. Malik, M.S., M.D. (Edinburgh) was the principal of the college. He had practised medicine abroad for many years and earned renown. Despite such achievement, Dr. Malik was completely Hindu in his speech, manners and deportment. He used English only while teaching in the college classroom. At all other times he meticulously stuck to his mother-tongue. His dignified and self-respecting attitude exerted a great influence over Keshavrao. Whenever someone needlessly flaunted English in domestic circles, Keshavrao was quick to correct them, and proudly presented the example of his professor.

Keshavrao's studies, however intense, never came in the way of his public activities. He had adapted himself whole-heartedly to the Bengali way of life. He once happened to be in the forefront of a morning procession carrying the flag. A British officer approached him and began straightway speaking to him in Marathi. Keshavrao was taken aback. He later inferred that his 'Marathi tuft' had given away his Maharashtrian origin to the Britisher. The very next day he began growing the tuft in the Bengali style. He had long since mastered the Bengali language and was dressing the Bengali way-so much so that he had free access even into the interior of houses which maintained strict traditions of purdah.

Public service was a consuming passion with Keshavrao. Pathans from Kabul were given to publicly butchering cows in the streets, and this often gave rise to riots. Muslims would recklessly loot the properties of Hindus. Instances were not rare when they cut off the ears and noses of hapless women to make away with their ornaments. And the most tragic part of it all was that even after witnessing such atrocities the neighbouring Hindus would not come to the rescue of the victims. This apathy of the Hindu society pierced the heart of Keshavrao. He lost no time in founding a service unit for the victims of these onslaughts and serving them with loving care. He, with a dozen of his student friends, would carry the injured on stretchers to medical homes and attend to their needs. Even after the riots subsided, Keshavrao often visited them in their homes and made affectionate enquiries.

Floods in the river Damodar had practically become an annual affair, causing severe hardship to the people. The flood in 1913 was unprecedented and had uprooted the entire population of the Vardhaman district on the western bank of the river. As news of the flood havoc reached Calcutta, many public institutions came forward to collect funds for the relief of the marooned people. Keshavrao joined the relief party sent forth by the Ramakrishna Mission. Besides Keshavrao there were five others in the group-Nalini, Gokhale, Deshpande, R.S. Surve and Venkataramana. Their only mode of transport was by boats. In many places, one had also to wade through waist-deep water. Carrying beaten rice and other food articles for the needy, one had to negotiate long distances in damp and mire. Since the water enveloped the houses from all sides, the families with children and nurslings had taken shelter on rooftops. They waited anxiously for relief of any kind and the sight of volunteers would at once raise their hopes of survival. As the volunteers waded through water, they often sighted snakes crossing their way. Venkataramana, who later on became a renowned patriot of Madras, and Keshavrao carried on became a renowned patriot of Madras, and Keshavrao carried on the

relief activity continuously for three days, on the 11th, 12th and 13th of August. Referring to those days Venkataramana records in his diary, "Hedgewar worked round the clock with untiring zeal. His capacity for work was factastic."

As if this was not enough, there was an outbreak of cholera right on the heels of the flood. And again Kesavrao was found attending on the sick and providing medical care to the needy up to as late as 1 to 2 o'clock for nights on end. Keshavrao's labours of those days were truly superhuman.

During his six-year stay in Calcutta, Keshavrao was to server the people on one more similar occasion. This time he was accompanied by Dr. N.D. Tendulkar and others. A huge fare takes place every year at the time of Sankranti at the Ganga-sagar confluence, sixty miles away from Cacutta reached every one of the far-flung huts to attend on the patients. Keshavrao was one of them, and he plunged into the field with his habitual vigour and zeal. He saw with his own eyes how poverty, ignorance and ill-health had utterly emasculated the villagers. His heart wept at that sight, for he knew from his own experience the cruel pangs of poverty and starvation. Even one whole lifetime, he felt, was insufficient to wipe the tears of the unfortunate brothers and sisters.

Because of his various activities inside the lodge and outside, Keshavrao had utterly emasculated the villagers. His heart wept at that sight, for he knew from his own experience the cruel pangs of poverty and starvation. Even one whole lifetime, he felt, was insufficient to wipe the tears of the unfortunate brothers and sisters.

Because of his various activities inside the lodge and outside, Keshavrao had developed close affinity with almost all the important nationalists of Bengal of those days. He would often visit them. Two of them need special mention: Shamsundar Chakravarti and Moulvi Liaquat Hussain.

Shamsundar Chakravarti was short and lean in appearance. Appropriately to his name, he was dark of complexion. But his life was clean and bright like the cloudless midday sky. He had returned to Calcutta in 1910 after a period of solitary confinement in Burma for his nationalist activities. Though steeped in poverty, his idealism burned bright as ever and he was a Karmayagi of the truest ring. Prior to his externment, he was writing articles for 'Prativasi', 'Sandhya', 'Vande Mataram' and other periodicals. His writing was penetrating, always exuding intense patriotism and marked by well-directed sardony. It was this that had prompted the government to 'honour' him by externment.

Shambabu had to suffer dire poverty as the price of patriotism. He was seen treading the streets of Calcutta barefooted. Often a single pair of dhotis was his entire worldly possession. Despite such indigence, his visits to the students' hostel never failed to rouse the sleeping lion of heroism in the young hearts. Keshavrao and a few of his friends were aware of Shambabu's economic plight. They therefore entreated him to have his meals with them whenever he came there. They also used to offer him some monetary help. At the time of the wedding of Shambabu's daughter, Keshavrao personally supervised all the details starting from selecting the bridegroom right up to the close of the ceremonies. He had even collected a fund for the purpose.

Moulvi Liaquat Hussain was a rare being at a time when counterfeit "nationalist" Muslims were ubiquitous. When Keshavrao arrived in Calcutta, the Moulvi was on the other side of sixty. But his smartness, enthusiasm and dedication to the cause of Independence would put to shame young men half his age. He was a devout follower of lokmanya Tilak, and had taken the vow of Swadeshi. He survived on but a few annas a day, but was untiring in collecting funds for the poor and needy. He used these collections for buying textbooks for the poor students and contributing towards their school fees. He thus spent his entire time and energy in public activity of one kind or another. He frequently organized early morning processions and public meetings in college squares. Keshavrao not only participated in these

functions with his friends, but also helped in their arrangements: once in a while he also addressed the meetings in his broken Hindi.

For a time, the moulvi ran a Swadeshi provision store called 'Kuber Vastu Bhandar'. A white cap, pyjamas and sherwani-this was his normal attire. His life alternated between the city and the prison. He once fell ill for nearly a couple of months; and Keshavrao served him night and day. Reminiscing about the Moulvi, Dr. Yadavrao ane has recorded a noteworthy detail. As soon as he took the vow of Swadeshi, the Moulvi gave up his Mohammedan cap, and was always found in the front line in all public meetings, holding the Bhagava flag.

Ever since Keshavrao left Nagpur he was under constant surveillance. But he was a pastmaster at scenting the others' intentions and evading traps. He gave no opportunity to the informers to lay their hands on him. On one occasion an informer, camouflaging himself as a student, found lodgment in Keshavrao's own room. His name was Gopal Vasudev Ketkar.

Quickly he struck acquaintance with all the students from Maharashtra. Keshavrao, however, spotted him out instantly, and warned his friends, "Do not discuss politics when that chap is here." But they all fell for Ketkar's ruse, and thought him harmless. Keshavrao kept quiet for the time being, saying, "Well, wait for some time. I will prove it to you some day."

In June 1910, Narayanrao Savarkar, brother of Veer Savarkar, was released from the prison. He decided to come to Calcutta to take up the medical course. Keshavrao came to know of this through a friend. He anticipated that a message to that effect would surely be received by Ketkar. One day, when Ketkar was away, Keshavrao broke open his box, and found in it a fresh letter saying, "N.R.S. is coming there. Keep an eye on him." Keshavrao showed the relevant portion of the letter to his friends, and replaced it in the box. Keshavrao's friends exploded, "Why should we not throw this rascal out at once?" But Keshavrao said, "He has been sent here to watch over him. Only we have to be a bit more careful with him, that is all." At about the same time, a police officer of the name of Tare was also deputed by the Madhya Pradesh Government to study medicine in the same college. He was always reeling off perorations on patriotism. The hollow ring in his effusions easily betrayed itself to Keshavrao. Keshavrao would impassively listen to his talk, and his friends too did likewise. Eventually Tare realized that he had made a fool of himself. He felt so ashamed that he resigned his job and left for Saugor.

While staying in Shantiniketan, Keshavrao, accompanied by Dr. Parashara and other friends, often visited Chowdhary, Professor of chemistry, late in the nights. They continued to stay there till past midnight. The government suspected that Chowdhary might be imparting training in the making of bombs. Therefore, as soon as the students went to the upstairs room of the professor, a member of the espionage used to station himself close to the house on the main road.

During one such session, which went on till past midnight, the poor informant became fatigued from waiting, and slumber overtook him. On their way out, two of the students stumbled against him and cried out, "Who is it?" The informer bolted instantly, not fully awake. The students caught him and gave him a couple of sound beatings and said they would take him to the police station. The poor fellow was entirely out of his wits, and implored them to release him. Keshavrao said, "Well, he is really our friend. He has not up till now given out our names." And this literally finished his nerves.

Later, they all ate sweets, in celebration of this 'new friendship!'

It was hardly surprising that amidst all these activities, Keshavrao could not pay much attention to his studies outside the class-hours. But he listened to the lectures with single-minded attention in the classrooms, and this was enough for his sharp intellect to keep them in memory. In the 1912 examination, he had scored 72% in Chemistry and 65% in Anatomy. Indeed, Keshavrao was as much a model student, as he was a model nationalist worker. During his stay in Calcutta, Keshavrao's mind was to-tally absorbed in grasping the true

meaning of patriotism. People who loudly voiced their solicitude for the country, but in actual life were totally immersed in their own or their family's welfare, were legion. But rare were those who really felt from the depths of their hearts and had sincerely devoted themselves to the cause of the people. Further, Keshavrao had seen from close quarters how students of one province viewed with jaundiced eyes those from other provinces. Likewise, he had seen how fleeting and shallow public enthusiasm often was. He had seen many a leader proclaim in the heat of emotion, "As far as Bengal is concerned, we can establish Swaraj within twenty-four hours." Even if that were possible, Keshavrao used to muse, such 'Quick independence' could as quickly evaporate in such a disorganized atmosphere. His mind was grappling with the question of how best to bring about a transformation in the convictions and attitudes of the people and organize them into a disciplined whole to face the many and varied challenges.

There was one more aspect which appeared to him to be of vital importance. Before a person began preaching patriotism to others, he had himself to become a shining example. For that one had to train one's body and mind to be able to fight on till the last breath in the cause of the country.

When Lokmanya Tilak visited Calcutta in 1906, he had initiated the public celebration of Ganeshotsav. After Keshavrao arrived in Calcutta he arranged similar celebrations in all the students' hostels. From the time of Lokmanya Tilak's incarceration in the Mandalay prison in 1908 up to the time of his release in June 1914, Keshavrao observed the vow of fasting on Ekadashi. His mind was in deep anguish at the hardship that Tilak was undergoing. Ever since Tilak was sentenced, Tapasvi Babasaheb Paranjpe wore a black piece of cloth over his coat. The renowned patriot Dadasaheb Khaparde often met Tilak in the Mandalay prison. And whenever these leaders happened to visit Calcutta, Keshavrao used to invite them to his lodge and anxiously listen to the condition of Tilak and Savarkar. From the dark dungeons of the Andamans veer Savarkar wrote occasionally to his brother Narayanrao. As Keshavrao read those epistles 'written in blood and tears,' his mind flew to the distant Andamans and resonated with that heroic spirit who was smilingly bearing all that gruesome suffering for the sake of the motherland.

The heat of the movement launched in the wake of partition of Bengal was now cooling down. On the heels of the movement the government had let loose a reign of terror. They sought to put down Tilak and the other revolutionaries in a ruthless fashion. In 1908, Khudiram Bose, a lad of barely sixteen years of age, exploded the first bomb and shocked the British out of their slumber. Veer Savarkar welcomed these activities saying "It is as if there is resurgence of the ancient spirit of national self-assertion, heralding a new era of armed rebellion against the foreign rule."

The British now geared up their repressive machinery in full steam. In the Alipore bomb case alone, thousands of people were rounded up and countless people imprisoned. Section 144 was universally clamped after sunset. Government stopped the publication of Yugantar, a weekly which had a circulation of more than twenty thousand.

These measures struck terror into the minds of common people. The situation was thus described by Aurobindo Ghose who came out of the prison in 1909: "Before I moved into the jail, it looked as if the entire nation had been set afire by the resounding cry of 'Vande Mataram'; the whole nation had articulated its aspirations and ideals. After I came out of the prison, I longed to hear the same reverberating cry. But there was nothing but muteness everywhere. Quiet and gloom pervaded the entire atmosphere. The people appeared benumbed..."

Even in such trying times, pulinbihari's Anusheelan Samiti carried on its activities assiduously. Being of a determined and irrepressible nature, Keshavrao kept himself busy in these and similar activities. The Samiti strove to quicken the public awakening through

underground literature. Keshavrao transmitted the books and pamphlets to Nagpur and other places through friends going home during vacations. And whenever he went to Nagpur during holidays, he carried revolvers for the revolutionaries there.

It was not easy to get admitted to the Anusheelan Samiti. The applicants were meticulously screened. The person's attitude, character, patience, endurance, obedience, self-control and such other traits were put to a severe test and only those who came through it successfully were admitted. The members were graded, and the best of them formed the hard-core, the others constituting circles of second and third removes, and so on. Each member on enrolment had to take a religious vow in the presence of ten or twelve people, or in the Kali temple or in the crematory. There were four strata of members, and the vows were different for each category. The severity of requirement increased as one proximated to the hard-core. Keshavrao was, of course, amongst the hard-core. His code name was 'Koken'. One of the leading members of the Samiti, Trailokyanath Chakravarti, has included the photographs of some top members of the Samiti in his book 30 years in Prison. Keshavrao's picture also figures in that group. Chakravarti has remarked, "Only those who had taken the ultimate vow were considered full and true members of the Samiti. And only those who had renounced their homes and families were entitled to take that vow." Keshavrao had fully merited admission in accordance with this stern norm.

One day, Shamsundar Chakravarti came to the Maharashtra Nivas and asked a select group of young men to proceed to a village near Calcutta that night. A young revolutionary of Ratnagiri who had mastered bomb-making in a foreign country was in hiding in that village, and was teaching the technique to the freshers. He had unfortunately fallen ill and died, despite friends' care and medical aid. It was his last wish that he should be cremated in accordance with Brahmin rites. Shambabu also accompanied the students to the village. Keshavrao was one of them. They carried the dead body from a dark unlit house to the outskirts. With heavy hearts they arranged the pyre; Shambabu brought a religious text and asked for the lamp. He remarked: "Since he has died in the cause of the motherland, he should not be cremated without proper incantation." Tears filled the eyes of all. Shambabu, reading through his delicately poised reading-glasses, recited the appropriate mantras, and the pyre was lit. Thus it was that an unknown patriotic spirit dissolved itself in the Eternal unknown. The handful of young men present there paid a tearful tribute to that noble soul. Keshavrao passed the final examination and secured the L.M.S. degree in 1914. The accordance with the requirement, he underwent practical training for the prescribed period and completed the course on 9th July 1915. He had on hand the offer of a lucrative job in Bangkok. But he refused. He had in fact no intention of taking up any job anywhere. However, when the First World War broke out and the government began recruiting doctors to serve on the warfront, Keshavrao felt it to be a unique opportunity to gather the war experiences at first hand. He and a few of his close friends hastened to meet Dr. Suhvardi Khan and get their names enrolled in the army. However, their names being already on another- the black! – list, applications proved to be mere dead-letters.

Degrees from the national institutions were not being recognized by the government in those days, and were frowned upon by it. Sir Parde Lukis had brought a motion in this matter in the Central Legislature. That legislation just enabled the native graduates to carry on their profession, but the government would not consider as valid the certificates issued to patients by these doctors. The intention was to discourage the institutions which had defied the government and were being run on public support. In order to counter this partisan and arrogant attitude of government, Keshavrao started an unusual movement, with the co-operation of the new as well as old graduates.

Reports suddenly began to appear in the newspapers of Bengal and other provinces of meetings held in Calcutta and elsewhere to protest against the 'Bogus Medical Degrees

Bill'. On the basis of these reports, editors of papers wrote scathing editorials. This naturally upset the government officials. But what puzzled them most was how the government espionage agencies were completely in the dark about these protest meetings.

The fact was that these meetings had never really taken place at all! Before launching the move, doctorji had met Dr. Ashutosh Mukherjee and explained the plan. Dr. Ashutosh fully supported it, and also emphasized the need for securing wide publicity in papers. Doctorji accordingly met leading newspaper editors. Motilal Ghose, the reputed editor of Amrit Bazar patrika, promised his fullest co-operation for the movement.

The "protest meetings" in various parts of Calcutta were "held" by Doctorji sitting in his own room. Reports of these "meetings" also emanated from his room. The papers promptly carried the reports. Prominent leaders were also mentioned as having participated in the meetings. Doctorji had met these persons in advance and intimated the strategy to them. Thus, even with the best of efforts, government intelligence failed to get advance information about these "meetings" when they went and checked with the individuals who allegedly presided over or spoke at the meetings, they straightway corroborated the newspaper accounts. The meeting thus eluded the informers, who earned the chastisement of their senior officials.

Arrangements were also made to transmit the reports of Calcutta papers to papers in other provinces. They too castigated the policy of the government. At the height of the 'movement', however, Doctorji actually did arrange a mammoth public meeting in Calcutta. The well-known national leader of those days Surendranath Banerjee presided over the meeting. The resolution adopted there voiced the public demand in no uncertain terms. The government was forced to yield. It agreed to accord recognition to all the medical graduates after holding a token examination.

The examination was held on 3rd November 1915. Many took advantage of it. Keshavrao was also permitted to take the examination. He, however, refused to appear, saying, "we have all studied in the National University. That University has examined us and awarded its degree. Where then is the question of government recognition? It is precisely to avoid having to submit to alien dictation that we boycotted government educational institutions!"

It is obvious that Dr. Hedgewar had no personal axe to grind in organizing the protest; he never had any desire to secure government's recognition to his own medical certificate; his sole intension was to expose the anti-people nature of the alien rule and arouse public indignation against it.

After completing the five-year course, Dr. Hedgewar returned to Nagpur in early 1916. Even prior to leaving for Calcutta he had determined not to become "your mostobedient servant" to the government. He returned to Nagpur with an even greater resolve about his future course of action. Many of his co-students, however, anxious to 'settle down in life', conformed to government requirements and started their professional careers. But as far as Dr. Hedgewar was concerned, it was not for earning money or personal prestige that he had studied. When the government had launched prosecution against Babu Aurobindo Ghose and he submitted his resignation from the principal ship of the National University, he had said: "it was not to provide some book-learning or means of livelihood to young men that we have started this educational instituion. Our aim has been to prepare them to serve the Motherland and undergo suffering and sacrifice if need be at her altar." Dr. Hedgewar volunteered to fulfil that high expectation.

3: THE REVOLUTIONARY

AFTER completing the medical course at Calcutta, Keshavrao returned to Nagpur. His elder brother Mahadev Shastri was residing in the parental house. The house was in a dilapidated condition, due to Mahadev Shastri's utter neglect. Every one expected that Keshavrao would begin his medical practice. But even after the lapse of several days Keshavrao showed no such signs. On the contrary he set up camp in the upstairs portion of the house of Tatyaji Phadnavis and engaged himself in various public activities. Seetaram Pant, Keshavrao's immediate elder brother, had also been staying there and carrying on his profession as a priest. It was at this time that there was a recurrence of plague in Nagpur.

People had experienced the horrors of the dreaded epidemic earlier, and therefore lost no time in moving to a safer zone on the outskirts of the town where they improvised hutments for lodging; and all the people got themselves inoculated. Seetaram Pant and Doctorji too shifted, and pleaded with Mahadev Shastri to join them. But being habitually obstinate, he replied, "what can this plague do not spare him; and he too, like the parents, fell a victim to it. Seetaram Pant and Doctorji returned to their house after the epidemic subsided.

There was mounting pressure from some friends and well-wishers that Doctorji should start his medical practice. They even offered to find a suitable place for his clinic. But Doctorji evaded the issue saying "Where is the hurry?" and sometimes laughing it away. He had in his possession a few drugs, a weighing balance and some medical books. He attended to the medical needs of close friends and acquaintances. However, he was not in the least interested in pursuing it as a career.

Doctors were few in those days. Around 1917 it is said there were not more than 75 private medical practitioners in the whole of Central Provinces and Berar. A lucrative career was thus open to Doctorji who also commanded considerable social esteem.

In addition to these pressures there were also proposals of marital alliance, with offers of a 'prestigious dowry'. While some people quietly dispatched the bride's horoscope to Doctorji and awaited his reaction, some others tried to exert pressure through mutual friends. But Doctorji was not in the least inclined to get involved in these planetary muddles. He avoided the proposals saying, "Let my brother's marriage be over first." But even this excuse soon became invalid. Seeta ramji's Marriage took place, and the sound of bangles filled the household. The inception of domestic felicity set in train fresh troubles for Doctorji.

Thereafter, when marital proposals came, Doctorji beat a retreat by directing them to 'the elder of the family' – his uncle Abaji. Several interested people rushed to Rampayali too. Being fed up with such endless entreaties, Abaji served 'notice' on Doctorji: "it is high time you made your stand clear in regard to your marriage." Doctorji, who had long back made up his mind in the matter, wrote to his uncle in a polite yet firm tone: "I have decided to remain a bachelor for life and devote all my time to the cause of the country. In that process, misfortune may overtake me at any moment. Knowing this full well, why should I endanger the life of an innocent girl?" That was the finale of the marriage proposals.

Clandestine revolutionary activity had been going on since 1908 in Central Provinces under the leadership of Bhauji Kawre. After returning to Nagpur Doctorji joined him. For two or three years they worked cheek by jowl. Doctorji provided the blueprint, and Kawre executed the plans. But Doctorji's services were needed elsewhere. He had wide contacts in other provinces, and was therefore called upon to strengthen the communications network.

Government agencies had continued their surveillance, and Doctorji was constantly shadowed. It was therefore necessary that Doctorji maintain a socially acceptable facade. He was frequently visiting the city's elite, and had earned their affection and confidence.

Everybody looked upon Doctorji as a public-spirited young man, and spoke with warmth about his activities.

Bhauji Kawre was senior to Doctorji by two years. He had studied up to matriculation and some basic medical literature and had been practicing. His dress was of the simplest kind, and

his nobility of character exemplary. A widower, he lived alone. He was always a picture of joy, unruffled and fearless. His face was radiant with enthusiasm and he sported a burly and matching moustache. Carrying an excellent physique, he faced adversity with rare fortitude. He exerted great influence over the members of the Krantidal, because of his warm and amiable disposition. One colleague who took pride in implicitly carrying out Bhauji's orders reminisced with tears in his eyes, "Should we regard Bhauji as our mother or father? Brother or friend? It is hard to say. He was an aggregate of all these and more."

Bhauji and Doctorji formed a wonderful pair. As two lips making the same sound, two eyes sharing the same sight, two ears listening to the same words, their heart was one though their bodies were apart. Bhauji was emotional by temperament, and saw blood-spilling revolution as the only effective path to freedom. He preferred the idol of Sri Rama wielding the mighty bow to the passive panduraga, and lost no opportunity of making fun of the Moderates in politics. Doctorji, in contrast, kept his emotions restrained. When he spoke of others it was in a tone of understanding and warmth. Though thus differing in nature, Bhauji and Doctorji were wedded to each other in unbreakable bonds of patriotism and genuine comradeship. Bhauji and Doctorji often visited each other and exchanged views. When more friends also joined them there was banter and gayful mirth. The uproarious laughter often drew the attention of the neighbours, who wondered at the merry young group's endless soirees. Do they have no occupation?

It was at these gatherings that armed rebellion was being thought of to achieve national freedom, and plans drawn to collect money and ammunition. To gather and train fresh recruits, a gentleman called Anna Khot started a gymnasium in Nagpur. Reading-rooms had also been started in Wardha and Nagpur with the same end in view.

Doctorji and Bhauji toured Central Provinces and Berar in pursuit of their plan. Even marriages and such routine occasions provided enough excuse for them to move about. They had managed to involve a few landlords in their activities, and were thus able to arrange strategic dinners and luncheons in new areas for fund-raising and purchase of arms. Each such get-together would procure five to six thousand rupees. A la royal durbars, the group jocularly called these meets 'Narendra Mandal'. One would find in these gatherings Sameemullah Khan of the Dhotiwada village solemnly attired in a dhoti, a tilak adorning his forehead.

Doctorji bought revolvers and other weapons from these funds and sent them to activist youths in various parts of the country. Agents were dispatched to Calcutta, Bhaganagar (Hyderabad) and Goa to purchase the needed arms. Dadasheb Bakshi, a close associate of Doctorji, attended to the repair and servicing of revolvers. Bakshi was an expert technician, and vividly recalled collecting the revolvers from Dr. Hedgewar and Dr. Savarkar.

By then Doctorji was also able to establish contacts with underground workers of Bengal and Punjab, and sent a contingent of 20 selected volunteers from Nagpur and Wardha districts, to organize work in Northern Bharat. Gangaprasad Pande, a most energetic and fervent revolutionary, was made the leader of the group. After surveying the whole of Rajasthan, Pande made Ajmer his headquarters. Ghandkiran Sarada, a leading public figure of Ajmer, also joined hands with Pande. From the Nagpur base, Doctorji co-ordinated the movement of volunteers, dispatch of funds for activities, etc.

World War I had just begun, and the British were obliged to deploy the greater part of the Indian army on the Warfield. However, in order to make a show of their power, the government continued to shift and parade the same units of army in all the principal cities of Bharat. The revolutionaries were not unaware of these tactics, and Doctorji set out to make the best of this situation. He felt that all the leaders of the nation could proclaim in concert, "From today onwards Hindusthan is an independent country." Doctorji spoke of his idea to Dr. Moonje, but failed to get his approval. He discussed the scheme with a few other leaders

also, but his response was lukewarm. At last he decided to meet Lokmanya Tilak, and obtained an introduction from Dr. Moonje. He met Tilak at Pune. Though extremely busy, Tilak personally attended to the guest's food and other needs, much to the young Doctor's embarrassment. After the talks concluded, Doctorji left for Shivaneri. Doctorji had discussed with Lokmanya the war situation and the revolutionary activities in Central Provinces and Berar. Evidently all the elderly leaders must have felt that the time was not yet ripe for Doctorji's daring plan to fructify.

The pilgrimage to Shivaneri, the birth-place of Shivaji, surcharged with the vibrant memories of Shivaji's childhood, further sharpened Doctorji's resolve to dedicate himself to the cause of national emancipation.

Doctorji was supplying to Punjab and Rajasthan arms and ammunition collected at Nagpur. Once, by a sheer misfortune, the group engaged in the work of transportation was caught. Since then it became the practice of the workers to move under feminine disguise, and recruits suitable for such disguise only were selected. Nanasaheb Talatule and Bhausaheb Talatule imparted training in handling revolvers to fresh batches of young men. Doctorji impressed upon the recruits the need for extreme caution and circumspection. One of these volunteers was Harikrishna (Appaji) Joshi who later became a lifelong confidant of Doctorji. Doctorji and Bhauji subjected the new recruits to close scrutiny and severe tests. They also administered the 'oath of dedication' to them, in front of portraits of Shivaji and Samarth Ramadas. One such incident by way of test has now come to light. Bhauji Kawre once took three aspiring young men to a well in the premises of Raja Bhonsle in the Indore village, five or six miles away from Nagpur. The well was over 40 feet deep and Bhauji asked them to jump into it. Two of the recruits shirked and stepped back, while the third jumped without a moment's hesitation. The bold youth was Baburao Harkare. In a moment, Bhauji too jumped into the well and helped the boy to come out. Baburao was later formally admitted to the Krantidal.

Meetings of these selected youth took place in Baradwari, Tulsibagh, Sonegaon Mandir, Colonelbagh, Indora Mandir, Mohitewada and other places in Nagpur. At each meeting the time and venue of the next meeting were indicated. Revolutionary literature was distributed. Lives of foreign revolutionary leaders like Mazzini and Joan of Arc, Bengali rebels, etc., reports of bomb incidents of Alipore and Manektal, Veer Savarkar's the 1857 war of independence under the disarming title of 'Two Beauties', etc. formed the basic study material.

As a result of these efforts, over 150 volunteers enrolled themselves with the Krantidal. Greatest attention was bestowed on maintaining absolute secrecy. No new recruits were admitted without a thorough scrutiny. Even the training was so conceived as not to give rise to undue curiosity. Strictest discipline was enforced. All communications were sent through messengers, and invariably in coded language. In Nagpur, Nanasaheb Telang and six or seven college students stayed together in Upadhye's block; Telang's ostensible book-cases housed revolvers and cartridges.

Many novel methods had been devised for collection of money and ammunition. Such great secrecy had been enforced that the exact modus operandi has remained unknown even to this day. Some recall that Doctorji himself used to prepare rice-cum-dal cakes for the volunteers on the move. Once Nanasaheb Telang had to be sent for from his village where he had just gone after completing his B.A. examination. Doctorji wrote to him that his attendance was required at a friend's marriage at Nagpur. The message enabled Nanasaheb to leave his place without arousing suspicion.

An ordnance storehouse of the army was situated in Kamthi near Nagpur. Doctorji had established links with some army personnel there for the secret purchase of revolvers. On one occasion members of the Krantidal rigged themselves up in army uniforms and carted away a

whole consignment of ammunition from the railway clearing-house in broad daylight. To destroy the last traces of evidence, Doctorji had all the army uniforms burnt and the ash disposed of through the drains. This and numerous other thrilling episodes, till recently kept in absolute secrecy, have only now been revealed by contemporaries. It is to be hoped that a full chronicle of these activities will be made available soon.

That all this armoury, funds, men and material so strenuously gathered was preparation for a nation-wide uprisal is obvious. The activities stretched from Nagpur to distant Punjab. To an extent, it also depended on the securing of ammunition from abroad,. Vamanrao Dharmadhikari of Yeotmal has stated, "By 1917-18 Doctorji had asked us to be prepared to rise in rebellion." In 1918, Doctorji sent him to marmagaon, briefing him, " a certain ship is scheduled to arrive there. Send a message to Nagpur as soon as it arrives." Vamanrao accordingly sailed for Goa from Bombay. Another volunteer of the Kranitdal, Patil from Satara, had already reached Goa in anticipation of the ship. Vamanrao met him. Patil arranged for Vamanrao's food and lodge in the house of Dadasaheb Vaidya in Keri. But though eight days elapsed there was no sign of the ship. News was, however, received that British had intercepted and seized an enemy ship on the high seas. Vamanrao thereafter returned to Nagpur and conveyed the disappointing news to Doctorji.

Britain's preoccupation with war had provided a golden opportunity for Indians to fight for their independence. But the strategy had failed owing to many reasons. The post-war spell of peace was a god end for the British, and a curse for Indian revolutionaries. The government was determined to crush the revolutionary activity, and had resorted to repressive measures on an unprecedented scale. Though there was a widespread network of underground workers, not much could be done, and hopes of revolution crumbled. Patriotic youth as also the general public became greatly depressed. The machinery which had been so painfully built up had to be dismantled. This operation naturally caused immense mental anguish to the concerned leaders. It was like pulling down the marriage pandal without celebrating the marriage ! Sometimes, in the game of chess, one's own moves work to one's disadvantage. It then becomes necessary to plan fresh moves with even greater ingenuity than before to win the game. Likewise, in politics too newer strategies will have to be worked out bearing in mind the developing trends. This was how Doctorji viewed the situation and prepared himself for the next move.

The forced withdrawal, however, had dampened the hopes of the general youth. Some took the extreme step of bidding farewell to public work altogether, while some retreated temporarily. The latter hoped that, even as fresh leaves sprout from the trees on the arrival of spring, they would be in a position to resume their activity as soon as circumstances were favorable. There was yet a third category. They were men with undaunted will who would continue their efforts, unmoved by failure, sharpening their wits and exploring fresh avenues of action by shedding old methods in favour of more effective ones. Pruning engenders fresh life in various plants. Such were Doctorji and his associates who faced the new challenge with determination.

Doctorji now plunged into open public activities. The Ganesha festival gave him an opportunity to tour the entire province and address meetings. He undertook another extensive tour for the work of the Home Rule League. Lokmanya Tilak had planned a visit to Berar, and Doctorji went round once again for the spadework. Doctorji thus made use of every possible occasion to educate and rouse the people. He addressed gatherings wherever he went, and his speeches were widely acclaimed for their incisive these travels were to meet the Krantidal workers in person and keep up their morale. He had also to decide what was to be done with the funds and ammunition stored already. This was in fact his major preoccupation in those days.

Among Doctorji's most active colleagues were Ganga Prasad Pande. Appaji Joshi, Baburao

Harkare and Nanaji Puranik. By the beginning of 1919 Doctorji had received information from Amritsar that the ammunitions sent there had been cleverly tucked away. But the workers who had been sent to the North had not yet returned. Appaji Joshi was sent to Amritsar, and he arranged for the return of the workers, making the necessary funds available in some cases. Appaji Joshi also received instructions that Arjunlal Sethi, a revolutionary who had just been released (1919) from jail, should be moved to Wardha. Arjunlal had faced imprisonment for his underground activities and subjected to endless torture. He had, however, stoutly withstood it all, and had not given out the name of even a single colleague. But the torture he underwent had ruined his health and affected his mental poise, and it was only this that had prompted the police to release him. In accordance with Doctorji's instructions Appaji Joshi brought Arjunlal to Wardha and arranged for his food and lodging. It took him some three to four years to regain his normal health and mental stability. There was no limit to the caution exercised by Doctorji and his co-workers. They knew well that if the government got the slightest scent, not only would their plans be dashed to the ground but lives and liberty of numerous people would also be endangered. In these circumstances some one who had returned from Punjab thoughtlessly exploded a bomb at Hingani, and the incident caused grave concern to Doctorji and his associates. Government immediately launched a thorough and vigorous investigation followed by arrests. As the situation worsened, discipline among the workers also weakened, and the selfishness of some individuals came to the fore. Though instructions were sent that all the revolvers etc. should be returned, many failed to comply. Even where there is strict accounting, people find ways of misappropriating money; and in this case no accounts could be kept. And it was also risky to reveal the names of people who had committed such breach of trust. Doctorji and Kawre had to stomach many bitter experiences. All this experience made Doctorji think deeply and comprehensively about our national life in general and the movement for national liberation in particular. Durable and healthy traditions alone, he knew, could sustain patriotism. And without genuine patriotism there could be no purity in public life. Doctorji had noticed yet another phenomenon. Many young men took to patriotic work in a flush of emotion or adolescent zeal. But a single blow dealt by the oppressive government made them beat a hasty retreat and bid permanent farewell to all social work. How can such people be relied upon to meet the challenges facing a slave nation? The need, therefore, was for young men of courage, determination and idealism- men who, unmindful of whether their path is strewn with roses or covered with thorns, would resolutely march forward towards the chosen ideal. Doctorji had also noticed that even patriotic young men often resented strict discipline. He also knew, selfless dedication to a great mission alone could breed true discipline. And also how futile it is to expect to uproot such a tremendously well-organized and well equipped alien government such as the British, without the required strength! Doctorji became convinced that it was necessary to give a totally different orientation to efforts of national emancipation.

4: IN THE THICK OF POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

THE COLLAPSE of revolutionary plans had not unnerved Doctorji in the least. He now engaged himself in organizing various kinds of social and political activities. At that time the followers of the Tilak school dominated the Nagpur Congress and had formed the 'Rashtriya Mandal.' The various political activities in Nagpur were all organized through this Mandal. Doctorji was one of those in its forefront. But he was younger and also more extremist in his views and actions than its leaders. While the congressmen in general dreamt of an 'Independent Dominion inside the British Empire' Doctorji consistently proclaimed that

nothing short of 'Complete Independence' should be the goal. In order to propagate this line of thinking, he, along with some of his close friends, started a new forum called 'Nagpur National Union'.

The Rashtriya Mandal decided to start a weekly by name Sankalpa in Hindi. To popularize the periodical, Doctorji undertook a brisk four-month tour of the Mahakoshal area. In addition to publicizing the weekly, he also developed many lasting friendships. In later days these friends co-operated actively in starting the work of the Sangh.

Wherever Doctorji went, Sankalpa was warmly welcomed. A sole exception was a Bengali gentleman by name Gnanaranjan Sen of Raipu who refused to become a subscriber. He exclaimed, "I am getting Bengali and English papers anyway. Why do I need a Hindi paper?" Doctorji's reply was caustic: "you have spent all your life in this Hindi province. That being so, is one local periodical devoted to a national cause such an unbearable burden to you?" continuing in the same vein Doctorji said: "Whichever be the province to which we emigrate, should we not look upon it as our own and join the mainstream of life there? If that is not possible, why should you at all reside in such a province?" Such was the intensity of Doctorji's national fervor that without a murmur of protest, Sen paid a year's subscription. Often, Doctorji used to participate in students' meetings and lecture to them. He thus developed close affinity with them. They too began to visit him of and on. In order to imprint on their young minds the noble ideals that had inspired the lives of great national heroes and savants, Doctorji Founded a 'Rashtriya Utsa Mandal'. As the secretary of the Mandal he organized functions like the birthday of chatrapati Shivaji, the anniversary of Shivasji's Coronation, the Ganesha festival, Shastrapooja, Dasanavami, Sankranti, etc. Distinguished leaders like Dr. Moonje, Khaparde, Loknayak Ane and others spoke on these occasions. Young men who gathered in vast numbers at these meetings longed to listen to Doctorji's inspiring oratory.

After the World War the entry of Mahatma Gandhi into the Indian political scene heralded a new era. The dissolution of the Turkish Empire by the British had given rise to strong anti-British feelings among the Indian Muslims. The Rowlatt Act passed by the British and the gruesome massacre of hundreds of innocent people at Jallianwalabagh in Amritsar on 13th April 1919 had shocked the Indian conscience beyond words. Gandhiji decided to take advantage of the mood of Muslims in particular and the nation in general. He presided over the All Indian Khilafat Conference organized by Shaukat Ali and Mohammed Ali in 1919 and later announced the launching of the non-cooperation movement.

And soon, as a result of government's oppressive measures in the wake of the Khilafat cum non-cooperation movement, the atmosphere in the country became tense. When in this background, the British government ordered observance of a 'Peace Day' in December in 1919, no wonder Nagpur stalwarts called upon the people to observe that day as 'Government Boycott Day'! As usual Doctorji was in the forefront. "Are we in a position to observe a peace Day?" –this was the mocking headline of that day's pamphlet.

Doctorji attended the Congress session held in Amritsar that year. He saw the blood-stained site of Jallianwalabagh at first hand. he felt the entire atmosphere fast reaching a boiling-point. The subsequent Congress session was to be held in Nagpur – the heartland of the Extremists. They decided that the session should be presided over by Lokmanya Tilak – an ambition which had not been fulfilled in 1907. the prospect of its fulfillment now infused in them added fervour and confidence. Preparations were started in full steam. A reception committee was formed; publicity campaign was launched. One report in the periodical Maharashtra read: "Accompanied by the leaders, the villagers elaborately decorated the villages and welcomed the guests. The enthusiasm of the peasant folk was unprecedented. The lectures by Dr. Moonje, Dr. Hedgtewar, Ganapathrao Joshi and Babasaheb Deshpande cast a spell over the masses."

In January 1920, Dr. L.V. Paranjpe started the Bharat Swayamsevak Mandal. Doctorji was his chief colleague. Efforts began in the month of July that year to organize a corps of some 1000-1500 volunteers for the Congress session. Doctorji threw himself heart and soul into that task.

While such fervent efforts were afoot, the tragic news of the passing away of Lokmanya Tilak at Bombay on the night of 31st July came like a bolt from the blue. The entire nation was plunged in indescribable grief. And more so the people of Nagpur. With a heavy heart, Doctorji attended to the work for organizing hartal, mourning and condolence meetings on the tenth day, and offered his tearful homage.

Consequent on the Lokmanya's demise, the organizers were faced with the task of finding another Extremist leader for the presidentship. It was decided that a deputation should go to Pondicherry and bring Babu Aurobindo Ghose for the session. Dr. Moonje accordingly set out for Pondicherry. Doctorji also accompanied him as a representative of the youth of Nagpur.

An incident that took place during the journey is worth recalling. Dr. Hedgewar was traveling in a third class compartment, while Dr. Moonje was in the first class. Dr. Hedgewar was looking after the needs of Dr. Moonje. When the train stopped at the station preceding Madras, Doctorji came to Dr. Moonje's compartment and began arranging his luggage. But before he could complete it the train started moving. Just at that time the inspector came in for checking. Seeing the Doctorji's third class ticket, the inspector demanded the difference in fare along with the penalty. Dr. Moonje patiently explained the situation to him. But the inspector was adamant. Dr. Moonje lost his temper and shouted, "Get out! We shall not pay a single pie. After all you are a mere servant of the railways, while we are the masters!" At this, the inspector also became furious and retorted, "who are you to tell me ? Remember, this is not a Muslim country. It is you who should get out !"

Dr. Moonje's black round cap, beard, and closely clipped hair on the head had given the inspector the impression that he was a Muslim! The two doctors laughed heartily at this faux pas.

The doctor duo stayed in Pondicherry for four or five days. They met Babu Aurobindo Ghose and explained the crucial situation in the country. They pleaded with him to accept the reins of leadership. But to their great disappointment Aurobindo refused to leave Pondicherry. At a mammoth meeting, the students of Nagpur decided to organize an all-India convention of college students, synchronous with the Congress session. In order to give the widest possible publicity to it, Rambhau Gokhale resigned from his government job and began touring the country. Doctorji furnished him with addresses and letters of introduction to his numerous friends. Gokhale has recorded: ".....Before I left, Doctorji gave me a silk turban. He also briefed me as to the line of exposition I should adopt in that area. His advice proved to be of immense value to me."

The Congress session took place by the end of December. Over 3000 members of the Reception Committee, nearly 15000 delegates and 7 to 8 thousand spectators participated in the session. As leaders of volunteer group Dr. Paranjpe and Doctorji was in charge of lodging and food. All were thoroughly impressed with his rare organizing skill, humility and service-mindedness. Adoption of an unequivocal resolution on non-cooperation was the highlight of the session.

Doctorji's independence of thought and outlook expressed itself in the Nagpur session of the Congress. At one of the meetings, Doctorji and his friends framed a resolution to the effect, "Complete Independence is our aim." They met Gandhiji and pleaded with him that Congress should endorse this resolution. Gandhiji simply said, "that meaning is implied in the effect, "Complete with him that congress should endorse this resolution. Gandhiji simply said, "that meaning is implied in the word Swaraj" and dismissed the suggestion. Prompted by

Doctorji's National Union, the Reception Committee submitted another resolution which declared, "it is the aim of the congress to establish democracy in India and to strive to liberate all nations from the grip of capitalist countries." But the resolution was discarded at the meeting of the steering committee itself. Commenting on this rejection, *The Modern Review* (March 1921) wrote: this resolution merited greater attention in the steering committee." Finally, the resolution concerning non-cooperation was adopted. Inspired by the slogan "Swaraj within one year," people jumped into the movement with added enthusiasm. To bring momentum to the movement, Doctorji toured scores of villages in Central Provinces. He also undertook lecture engagements along with Dr. Narayanrao Savarkar in the metropolis of Bombay and its suburbs. His inspiring lectures drew numerous young men to the freedom struggle. Dada Paramarth, who was also one among such, writes: "The very mention of the name of the British or their rule set Doctorji's mind afire. His words made the audience feel as if the enemy was physically present there and Doctorji was pouncing on him in fury! Deep indignation against the foreign domination ran through him like an electric current. Burning eyes, clenched fist, and violently gesticulating arms made him look the very image of Yamaraja."

It was this same fiery touch that brought Dada Paramarth to Doctorji. The shocking news of Tilak's death had just reached Nagpur. With a heavy heart, Dr. Hedgewar had started for Dr. Moonje's house. On the way, he saw five or six schoolboys gayfully playing. Immediately he thundered, "Tilak has died and you are making merry! Aren't you ashamed?" One or two of the boys thought of making fun. But Doctorji's flashing glance at them at once silenced them. The boys stopped playing and went home. But Doctorji's words had stuck in the mind of one of the boys and changed the entire course of his life. That boy was Dada Paramarth, who dedicated his life at the altar of the Sangh and became one of its pioneer builders.

Owing to these various activities, Doctorji came into close contact with political and social workers of varied age groups and mental persuasions. Doctorji started the practice of inviting such friends to his house on the Kojagiri Poornima day—the autumnal full-moon—which has its own peculiar charm. The sweet programme of drinking milk with kesar on the moonlit night—the moon coming out for the first time after the rainy season—naturally engendered an atmosphere of fraternity and absence of reserve. Doctorji used to gather some 70-80 friends. Raja Lakshmanrao Bhonsle of the royal house of Nagpur, Dr. Moonje and other celebrities also would join in the programme. Conversation and discussion on various topics went on without any inhibition. And as to humour and banter, there was no dearth. At the end, Doctorji used to thank the invitees; and the appropriateness of his words was of the nature of the tasty pan at the end of a sumptuous meal. In one such thanksgiving speech, Doctorji remarked, pointing to his friend Ruikar, "The sweet programme of Sharat Poornima has just concluded. The next part, namely washing the vessels, will be attended to by my friend Rambhau Ruikar, since he happens to be a labour leader!" Everybody burst out laughing. Whatever political differences there were used to dissolve in such friendly gatherings, and an atmosphere of warmth was generated. This annual fete continued in Doctorji's house for several years.

Doctorji disapproved of Gandhiji's policy of launching the non-cooperation movement with Khilafat as its major plank. The Khilafat agitation aiming to restore the Caliphate in Turkey, Doctorji argued, would only breed extra-territorial religious fanaticism among the Muslims here. But he was not the one to stand aloof as a passive spectator during a national struggle merely because it did not come up to his expectations on all points.

Doctorji moved like a hurricane lighting up the torch of freedom in the hearts and minds of people. A bonfire of foreign clothes would follow at many a place at the close of his meetings. How could the government tolerate all this? Restrictions were imposed upon Doctorji about participating in public meetings, lecturing and addressing gatherings of more

than five persons. Mr. Cyril James Irwin, the district collector, had passed this order on 23rd February 1921, as per Section 144. The order continued as before. At last, the government sued him (31st May 1921). However, it was not for violating the restrictive order; the complaint was that of “sedition.” Doctorji’s speeches in Katol and Bharatwada had been found “objectionable.”

Doctorji felt that no occasion should be missed to broadcast the message of Independence. Accordingly he decided to engage a defence counsel.

The hearing began on 14th June before a Judge by name Smely. Because of the biased attitude of the judge, Doctorji’s lawyers found it difficult to carry on defence. Doctorji therefore prepared to plead his case himself. He read out his written statement on the 5th of August:

1. It has been charged that my speeches have spread discontent, hatred and feelings of sedition towards the British Empire in the minds of Indians and sown seeds of enmity between Indians and Europeans. And I have been asked to explain. I consider it an affront to the dignity of my great country that a foreign government should subject a native Indian to inquiry and sit in judgment.
2. I do not recognize that there exists in India today any lawfully established government. It will be surprising if anybody should claim so. What obtains today is a regime of usurped authority and a repressive rule deriving power therefrom. The present laws and courts are but handmaids of this unauthorized regime. In any part of the world, it is only a government of the people constituted for the people that is entitled to administer law. All the other forms of rule are but ruses adopted by deceitful usurpers to loot helpless nations.
3. What I tried to do was to inspire in the hearts of my countrymen an attitude of reverential solicitude for their motherland which at the moment happens to be in a wretched condition. I tried to instill in the people the conviction that India belongs to Indians. If an Indian speaking for his country and spreading the nationalist feeling is regarded as committing sedition, if he cannot speak the truth without promoting hatred between Indians and Europeans, Europeans and those claiming to be the Indian government would do well to bear in mind that the day is not far off when foreigners will be forced to quit this country.
4. The government’s version of my speech is neither accurate nor complete. Some stray notes and absurd sentences have been sloppily put together. But that does not bother me. In dealing with Britain and Europeans I have borne in mind only the basic principles that ought to govern the relationship between two countries. Whatever I have said has been with a view to asserting the birthright of my countrymen and the inevitability of securing our independence. I am prepared to stand by each word that I have uttered. Though I cannot say anything else concerning the charges against me, I am prepared to justify each word and letter of my speech; and I declare that whatever I have said is lawful.”

It was no surprise that the presiding judge exclaimed: “His defense is even more seditious than his original speech!”

At the time of Doctorji’s examination the court was filled to capacity. Not content with his statement, Doctorji followed it up with a brief speech effectively an exposition and the mass of people waiting to hear every word of what he spoke, the court itself was virtually transformed into a nationalist platform! Those who heard Doctorji’s speech still recall it as an electrifying experience.

“India belongs to Indians. We therefore demand Independence. This is the content of all my

speeches People have to be told how to secure Independence, and also how to conduct themselves after securing it. Other wise it is quite likely that our people may imitate the British in Independent India. The British, though they are aggressing on other nations and governing them through repressive measures. But the very same British people are ready to shed blood when their own country's independence is threatened. The recent war bears testimony to it. We are therefore obliged to advise our people, 'Dear countrymen don't imitate the aggressive ways of the British. Secure independence by peaceful means; and be happy and content with your own country without hungering for others' territories.' In order to explain this idea I cannot avoid referring to current political issues. That the British have been carrying on their despotic rule in our beloved country is obvious to everyone. What law is there that gives one country the right to rule over another? I am asking you, the counsel for government, this simple and straight question. Can you answer it? Is it not against natural justice? If it is true that no country has a right to rule over another country, who gave the British the authority to trample the people of India under their feet? Do the British belong to this land? How then can they enslave us and declare that they own this country? Is it not the most blatant murder of justice, morality and dharma?

"We have no desire to dispossess Britain and rule over it. Just as the British in Britain and the Germans in Germany rule over themselves, we who this country of India wish to rule over ourselves and carry on our own affairs. Our mind revolts at the thought of remaining the slaves of the British Empire and carrying that stigma for all time. We demand nothing short of Complete Independence. Till we achieve it we cannot be at peace. Is our desire to be free and independent in our own country against morality and law? I believe that law exists not to demolish morality and law? I believe that law exists not to demolish but to enforce it. That ought to be the prime purpose of law."

In his judgment delivered on 19th August, Justice Smelly ordered Doctorji to give an undertaking in writing that he would not deliver seditious speeches in future for a period of one year and furnish bail of rupees three thousand.

Doctorji's reaction was sharp and short:

"My conscience tells me that I am completely innocent. A policy of repression would only add fuel to the fire already raging because of government's vicious policies. I am convinced that the day is not far off for the foreign regime to reap the fruits of its sinful actions. I have faith in the justice of the Omnipresent God. I therefore refuse to comply with the order for bail."

Even as Doctorji finished his reply, the judge pronounced one year's rigorous imprisonment for him. Doctorji smilingly received the verdict, and left the courtroom for the prison. People who had come to witness the hearing thronged round Doctorji in a surge of enthusiasm.

Rambhau Gokhale garlanded Doctorji on behalf of the City Congress, followed by Vishwanathrao Kelkar and others. Full-throated slogans filled the air. Doctorji bowed to Abaji Hedgewar, Sitaramji, Dr. Moonje and other elders. Barrister Abhyankar, Vaidya Harkare and others bade Doctorji a hearty farewell and urged him to speak a few words. Doctorji said:

"As you are aware, I have defended myself in this case of sedition against me. However, these days, there is an impression going round that arguing in one's defense is an act of treachery to the national movement. But I feel it is highly unwise to merely get crushed like a bug when a case is foisted upon us. It is our duty to expose to the whole world the wickedness of the foreign rulers. That would indeed be an act of patriotism. And not to defend ourselves, on the other hand, would be a suicidal policy. You may, if you so choose refuse to defend yourself; but for God's sake don't consider those who disagree with you as being less patriotic. If in the course of our patriotic duty we are called upon to enter the prison or be transported to the andamans, or even face the gallows, we shall have to willingly

do so. But let us not be under the illusion that jail-going is all in all, that it is the only path for achieving freedom. There are, in fact, so many fields of national service awaiting us outside the prison. I would be back amongst you after one year. Till then, of course, I will not be in touch with the national development, but I am confident that by then the movement for Complete Independence will have gained added momentum. Now, it is no more possible to keep down Hindusthan under the heels of foreign domination. I offer my gratitude to you all and bid you good-bye."

Doctorji left for the jail in a horse-drawn tonga, accompanied by police officials. The mass of people kept up continuous cheering: "Bharat Mata Ki Jai," "Doctor Hedgewar Ki Jai."

It was on Friday, 19th August 1921, that Doctorji moved into the prison. That very evening a public meeting to honour him *in absentia* was convened in the Townhall grounds.

Barrister Govindrao Deshmukh presided. Dr. Moonje, Narayanrao Harkare and Vishwanathrao Kelkar – all spoke in a warm strain. "Because of his sacrifice and deep concern for the nation, Dr. Hedgewar will doubtless be the leader of the coming generation," said Harkare. They all showered unstinted praise on Doctorji for his commitment to Complete Independence. Speaking at the end, Vishwanathrao Kelkar recalled the message Doctorji had delivered just before proceeding to the prison.

Doctorji spent his one year of rigorous imprisonment in the Ajani Jail. He was joined there by four other colleagues in the revolutionary movement. Doctorji hardly considered jail-life a burden. While in Calcutta, he had often spent several hours at a stretch in police stations. On some occasions he had been in the lock-up for periods of 4 - 6 days. Even as a boy he knew no fear of the police or of the informers. And as to hardships, Doctorji regarded them as life-long companions.

While in jail, Doctorji went through the jail schedule, including hard labour, ungrudgingly. He didn't like to escape the agony of work under some pretext or other. When Doctorji entered the prison, the jailor Sir Jathar had been newly appointed. And it was Doctorji who helped him to understand the jail manual in detail. However, as Jathar himself remarked later on : "Doctorji had no ulterior motive of securing some favours or to come to some underhand arrangement." Jathar was so much moved by the courteous and winning manners of Doctorji that he remarked : "Even though we were government servants we were so much drawn to Doctorji by his amiable behaviour that after his release, whenever we went to the city, our feet would automatically move in the direction of his house." During those days the political prisoners were treated at par with other criminals convicted for serious offences. After his day of hard labour, Doctorji would sit down to spinning with the *takli*. On some days, he would sit immersed in the Shantiparva of *Mahabharata*.

Once, an unpleasant incident took place. One Inamullah was also in the same jail for his participation in Khilafat movement. He was trying to kick up some controversy with Doctorji and others. One day he arrogantly said to Harkare, an associate of Doctorji: "Do not forget that it is because you are supporting us in our Khilafat agitation that we too are joining hands with you in the non-cooperation movement. Similar is our attitude towards cow-protection. If you humbly request us not to slaughter cows we may perhaps desist from it. But if you make a demand for it, then we shall consider cow-slaughter as our right." As soon as these words fell on Harkare's ears he leapt like a tiger, caught hold of Inamulla's beard and roundly slapped him in the face. However, Doctorji rushed to Inamullah's rescue and saved him from further beating. Such incidents as these only confirmed Doctorji's foreboding about the disastrous effect of Khilafat on the Muslim mind.

Doctorji was released from the prison on 12th July 1922. When he removed the prison uniform and tried to wear his old clothes, his old shirt and coat felt too tight ! He had gained 25 pounds in weight, in spite of the rigours of the prison life.

There was a heavy downpour of rain when Doctorji came out of the prison. Despite the rain,

Dr. Moonje, Dr. Paranjpe, Dr. N. B. Khare and numerous other friends waited at the prison gate to offer a rousing welcome to him. Doctorji bowed to them in humility. When he proceeded homeward, there were jubilations, welcome cheers and garlands throughout the route. The weekly *Maharashtra* described Doctorji's triumphant return thus: "No words can adequately describe Dr. Hedgewar's intense spirit of patriotism and selflessness. These traits of his have now become all the more resplendent after the fire ordeal."

The same evening, a public reception to Doctorji was arranged. It was presided over by Dr. Khare. Many of the prominent Congress leaders attending the meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Nagpur participated. Pt. Motilal Nehru and Hakim Ajmal Khan also addressed the meeting. Doctorji's reply was brief and poignant: "The fact that I was a 'guest' of the government for a year has not in the least added to my merit; and if at all it has increased, the credit for it should go to the government! We have today to place before the country the highest and noblest of ideals. Any ideal short of Complete Independence will take us nowhere. To expound to you the method whereby that goal can be achieved would be an insult to your intelligence as all of you doubtless are aware of lessons of history. Even if death were to stare us in the face, we are not to shirk in our path; we have to keep the ultimate goal constantly burning in our mind and calmly carry on the fight."

One more point which Doctorji clarified during the course of his speech, on this occasion as well as at other places, was regarding 'non-violence.' He would say, "Real non-violence lies in the attitude of the mind. At heart one should not harbour feelings of violence or hatred. One may outwardly carry out certain acts which appear to involve physical violence, but if it is done in a spirit of detachment and without any selfish motive or hatred, then the act can no longer be termed violent. This is what Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-Gita*."

After Nagpur, Doctorji received invitations from Yeotmal, Wani, Arvi, Wadhona, Mohopa and several other places. Enthusiastic processions and felicitations were held everywhere. He was often received with traditional *drati* and given gifts of Khadi clothes. Though outwardly he responded to the grand receptions, Doctorji's mind was heavy with sadness. The condition of the nation had greatly worsened.

6: IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS

THE NON-COOPERATION movement gradually died down; Gandhiji had been jailed. Many who had jumped into it in a momentary flush of enthusiasm were now disillusioned; they now sulked. On 5th February 1922, people in Chowrichowra in Uttar Pradesh made a violent assault on the police station. They murdered 21 policemen and one officer, and set fire to the police station. Gandhiji was shocked by the incident. He called off the non-cooperation movement on 12th February.

In all, over twenty thousand people had participated in the movement. What had prompted most of them was the catchy slogan "Independence within one year." People therefore became dispirited when the movement came to a grinding halt. Gloom and disappointment stared them in the face. Pt. Nehru, after he came out of the prison in 1923, described the situation thus: "We felt exhilarated, but this was a passing sensation, for the state of Congress politics was discouraging enough. In the place of ideals there were intrigues, and various cliques were trying to capture the Congress machinery by the usual methods which have made politics a hateful word to those who are at all sensitive." In such an environment, students who had forsaken their studies naturally went back to their books. Lawyers who had boycotted the courts recommenced their practice.

Even though the non-cooperation movement was directed against the government, it is clear that Gandhiji worked constantly with one eye on Hindu-Muslim Unity. He therefore set about

trying to woo the Muslims by fully supporting the Khilafat movement. But Doctorji sensed danger in that move. In fact, he did not even relish the newfangled slogan of 'Hindu-Muslim Unity.' He once met Gandhiji to explain his viewpoint. Without mincing words, Doctorji questioned Gandhiji : "There are in India people of various religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, etc. Why then do you harp upon only 'Hindu-Muslim Unity' instead of promoting the unity of all the various sects ?" Gandhiji replied, "This will secure the friendly attitude of Muslims towards our country. As you are witnessing, they can be persuaded to side wholeheartedly with us in the nationalist struggle."

Doctorji said : "Long before this slogan of Hindu-Muslim Unity came into vogue, many leading Muslims had identified themselves with our nation and worked shoulder to shoulder with Hindus under the leadership of Lokmanya Tilak — e.g., Barrister Jinnah, Dr. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan and others. But I am afraid that this new slogan, instead of helping unity, might further aggravate the feeling of separateness among the Muslims."

"I have no such fear," said Gandhiji and closed the issue. But, unfortunately, events of later years amply testified to Doctorji's fears.

By the time Doctorji came out of the prison, Muslims had begun loudly to mouth the slogan *Allah—ho—Akbar*' in place of *Vande Malaram*: Mullahs and moulvis were openly reciting passages of Koran wherein the execution of *kafirs* and pursuit of *jihad* (religious war) were invoked. What was surprising was that even well-educated Muslims entertained the notion that Islam was superior to all other faiths. English education which had deeply influenced the Hindus appeared to have had no effect whatever on the Muslims. As Jawaharlal Nehru remarked in his autobiography, "Even Western-educated Muslims who had no genuine religious feelings began to grow beards and observe external Islamic rituals !" As a result of the Khilafat movement, a sum of over Rs. 80 lakhs which had been contributed by Hindus went into the hands of fanatical Muslim leadership. It is hardly surprising that thereafter Muslims began to feel that it was more profitable for them to retain their separate identity. Once, Doctorji happened to attend a certain conference. Sameelullah Khan was with him. Doctorji used a Khadi cap in those days ; occasionally a Khadi upper garment too. Khan Saheb, however, was wearing the Turkish cap. Doctorji asked him, "Ever since the non-cooperation movement started, the Khadi cap is much in vogue. Why haven't you started using it ?" Without a moment's hesitation, Khan Saheb replied, "I am first and foremost a Muslim, and then an Indian. This cap is a symbol of my religion. I cannot give it up under any circumstances." This reply vividly reflected the Muslims' mood in general.

Even when Doctorji was in jail he had received news of the Moplahs' gruesome assaults on the Hindus in Malabar and their armed rebellion against the government. Because of the attempts of Congress to play it down, people did not come to know of the gravity of the situation. According to the report on the Moplah atrocities published by the Servants of India Society, "One thousand Hindus were killed. Twenty thousand Hindus were forcibly converted, and thousands of Hindu women dishonoured and abducted. Property to the tune of over Rupees 3 crores was looted." But what is the picture, viewed through the Congress glasses ? "....Families forcibly converted belong to the Majeri village. The fanatics who converted them were opposed to Khilafat and the non-cooperation movement. As per reports available up till now, only three families have been converted." To acquire first-hand knowledge of the happenings, Dr. Moonje personally toured the troubled areas of Malabar and placed before the public a factual picture of the situation. Through Dr. Moonje, Doctorji came to know of the conditions in Malabar in detail. He used to describe it as " the biggest Muslim attack on the Hindus after the Muslim rule here had ended. "

During the non-cooperation movement, people made bonfire of expensive foreign clothes. It set the people's patriotic instinct and self-respect afire. But the Muslims were totally unconcerned with this Swadeshi aspect of the movement. Instead, they asked for Mahatmaji's

permission to send the clothes to 'their Turkish brethren.' Mahatmaji too consented. Incident after incident began to testify to the growing feeling of separateness among the Muslims. It was for the establishment of the Caliphate in Turkey that the Indian Muslims had participated in the non-cooperation movement against the British government. But to their misfortune, there was no love left in the hearts of the Turkish people themselves for the Caliph. The leader of the renascent Turkey, Kamal Ataturk Pasha, had declared, "Oh Caliph, your throne today is merely a historical relic. There is henceforth no need for it," and had driven him out. The ousting of the Caliph had naturally spread despair and disappointment among the Muslims in Bharat. But their leaders cleverly converted their followers' discontent into an anti-Hindu hysteria. They set afloat the new slogan of Pan-Islamism, and thus continued to fan the flames generated in them by the Khilafat movement. As a result, everywhere Muslims rose in anti-Hindu rebellion in 1923. They slaughtered cows, attacked Hindu processions, molested Hindu women and desecrated Hindu temples. About the terrible incidents of Shahrampur in Uttar Pradesh in 1923, Bhai Parmanand wrote : "My heart wept at the pitiable condition and hardship of the Hindus. I came to know that the office-bearers of the local Khilafat committee were themselves personally responsible for inciting riots and destroying Hindu life, honour and property. It is clear that the Khilafat movement is the source of all these Muslim uprisings."

Unprecedented riots took place in Nagpur, Amethi, Sambhal, Gulbarga, Kohat and other places. The bloodcurdling riot at Kohat on 9th and 10th September took a toll of one hundred and fifty Hindu lives. Property worth lakhs of rupees was looted. Sarojini Naidu wrote to Mahatmaji saying, "We had better put an end to our talks of peace." Mahatmaji, too, was so greatly shocked by these happenings that he began at Delhi a 21-day fast in the house of Maulana Mohammed Ali, in the presence of Dr. Ansari and Abdul Rehman. As a consequence, Peace Committees were formed. Protesting friendship outwardly, Muslims chanted the formula of Hindu-Muslim Unity. The end result of all this exercise has been poignantly described by Dr. Ambedkar thus : "Lofty resolutions were passed in Peace Committee sessions. It looked as if each such resolution provided fresh licence for violence." It may be educative to recall the reactions of the various leaders to this explosive situation. After the Moplah rebellion, Swami Shradhdhananda actively pursued the Shuddhi movement. In his evidence before the Non-cooperation Enquiry Committee, he said : "I have found that these two communities regard each other with suspicion. Hindus are not as well organized as the Muslims, and are divided among themselves. The only solution to the problem is for Hindu leaders to organize their own society." The same sentiment was expressed by Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya at the Belgaum session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1924: "But for the weakness and fear enveloping the Hindus, many Hindu-Muslim clashes could have been averted. These clashes have driven the country to its present critical situation. It is therefore imperative to eradicate the weakness of the Hindus which has been very largely responsible for the Muslim violence."

That year Mahatmaji, too, struck a similar note. He said, "An average Hindu is a coward and an average Muslim is a bully." Pt. Nehru's experience was not different. Describing those days in his *Autobiography*, he wrote : "Many a Congressman was a communalist under a nationalist cloak." In the same book he has described the Hindus as given to 'stupor and a baseless slordliness.'

Doctorji's mind delved deep into the meaning of all these developments. While the cries of 'Hindu-Muslim BhaiBhai' continued to reverberate in the air, its prospect in reality was receding farther and farther. Doctorji became engrossed in finding answers to certain basic questions : Over these years of our fraternization, have the Muslims ever responded positively to any of our gestures ? Have they developed any warmth towards the Hindu society ? Have they reciprocated the Hindu tradition of tolerance, of 'live and let live' ? Have they

exhibited the slightest willingness to join us in paying homage to Bharat Man ?

By about the same time, the historical treatise *Hindutva* by Veer Savarkar reached Doctorji's hands. Savarkar had written it while in Andamans and with great difficulty and ingenuity had managed to smuggle it out. Savarkar's inspiring and brilliant exposition of the concept of 'Hindutva', marked by incontestable logic and clarity, struck the chord of Doctorji's heart. For he too, out of his clear historical insight and practical experience, had arrived at the same truth of Hindu Nationhood. If the Muslim onslaughts had shocked the Hindus out of their stupor, Savarkar's *Hindutva* fanned their dormant Hindu spirit into a national blaze.

Even as Doctorji's mind was deeply pondering over the basic philosophy which should form the bedrock for national emancipation, he continued to be busy with a variety of public activities. These resulted in new experiences and fresh acquaintances.

He was appointed a joint secretary of the Provincial Congress in 1922. He noticed pronounced indiscipline among the workers at every level. To counter it he tried to organize a disciplined volunteer corps as part of the Congress. To start with, he selected four volunteers from each taluk. But the experiment did not yield the expected results. Volunteers in those days were expected to merely act as 'charge-free hamals' and play second fiddle to leaders. Besides, those who had taken the Gandhian vow of non-violence were basically opposed to such an organization. Dr. N. S. Hardikar of Hubli whom Doctorji had known from his student days had started the Hindusthani Seva Dal in 1923 during the Kakinada Congress session. Dr. Hardikar was supported by Pandit Nehru. Referring to Dr. Hardikar's Seva Dal, Pandit Nehru wrote in his *Autobiography* : "We were surprised to find later how much opposition there was to the Seva Dal among leading Congressmen. Some said that this was a dangerous departure, as it meant introducing a military element in the Congress, and the military arm might overpower the civil authority ! Others seemed to think that the only discipline necessary was for the volunteers to obey orders issued from above, and for the rest it was hardly desirable for volunteers even to walk in step. At the back of the mind of some was the notion that the idea of having trained and drilled volunteers was somehow inconsistent with the Congress principle of non-violence."

With such distorted notions reigning supreme, Doctorji could not hope to organize a dedicated band of young men in the light of his ideas. He was not interested in merely training an army of 'yes'-men. It was Doctorji's dream that an organization be created consisting of lakhs of self-sacrificing and self-inspired young men willing to lead a disciplined life in the cause of the country. With this end in view he initiated certain moves. Gangaprasad Pandey, the revolutionary leader who had gone to Punjab and Rajasthan, was still in that area. He was highly dependable, fearless and intelligent. Doctorji invited him to Nagpur and started a national wrestling school. But within a year or so, informers were combing the place for Gangaprasad. Doctorji immediately closed the school and requested Appaji Joshi to arrange a safe place for Gangaprasad.

Doctorji's friend Govind Ganesh Cholkar had started an orphanage in Nagpur in 1922. From the time of its inception, Doctorji was on its executive committee. Once, two boys belonging to the orphanage had been kidnapped by a Christian matron. Doctorji traced them with great difficulty and brought them back to the orphanage.

Doctorji was also active in the Rifle Association started by Dr. Moonje. It was Doctorji's firm belief that discipline, marching, elementary drill and similar other exercises were very necessary in order to mould the character of a nation.

Doctorji's co-operation was always readily available in any constructive national activity in Nagpur. His name finds mention in the Provincial Sports Committee for conducting sports in 1922. He never missed the evening prayer in the Hanuman temple. He also used to participate in discussions and study groups. He sponsored and encouraged people to hold protest demonstrations in front of liquor shops. Though he was himself in poverty, he used to

contribute towards the Ganesh festival organized by young and enthusiastic boys. He also attended at that time one of the secret meetings of the underground revolutionaries held in Calcutta.

Doctorji used to be a most active participant in all national meets and conferences. He presided over a Congress conference at Dehgaon village in April 1923. The organizers had planned to perform *go-pooja* (cow-worship) at the commencement of the conference, and also to pass a cow-protection resolution during the session. But this was not to the liking of some of the followers of Gandhiji attending the conference. They were greatly upset. Mahatma Bhagawan Deen vehemently remonstrated with Doctorji, "Cow-worship and cow-protection are not part of the Congress programme. If you have these on the agenda I shall not take part in the session."

Doctorji coolly listened to the outburst. But he refused to make any changes in the arranged programme. As soon as cow-worship began Bhagawan Deen started leaving the meeting. But Doctorji somehow persuaded him to sit beside him. After the welcome speech, Doctorji requested Bhagawan Deen to present his point of view. He spoke, and this was followed by Doctorji's speech. Doctorji would not favour estrangement merely because of ideological differences. He knew that a spirit of cordiality and 'give-and-take' are the secret of collective public work. Referring to this, Ramgopalji, editor of the *Rajasthan Kesari* weekly of Wardha, wrote : "Doctorji never lost a friendship on account of differing viewpoints. Thus, whenever I went to his house, he used to say smilingly, 'I welcome you, but not your way of thinking !' " This attitude of Doctorji was beautifully manifest in the reverence he had for Gandhiji, in spite of his sharp differences with him in regard to several of his policies. When Gandhiji was arrested and convicted for six years on 18th March 1922, the 18th of every month came to be observed as Gandhi Day till his release. On that occasion in October, this is what Doctorji observed : "This is a most sacred day for us, for it is an occasion for us to listen to and contemplate on the noble virtues of the saintly life of Mahatmaji. And those, especially, who call themselves as his followers, have a special responsibility of emulating those qualities in their day-to-day life. The greatest virtue of Gandhiji lies in his capacity to dedicate himself wholly and solely for the nation's cause. To preach one thing and practise the opposite, would be the very antithesis of what Gandhiji stands for. To shout 'Mahatma Gandhiji ki Jai' and raise one's hands in support of his programmes in the public meetings and then coolly walk back to one's house and get totally lost in selfish affairs would be nothing less than hypocrisy. ... Let us not chant the hymn of peace just to cover up our weaknesses. Let us first become physically stronger than our adversary and then speak the language of peace. It is only he who is prepared to throw himself and his family into the sacrificial fire of struggle that can rightly claim to be a follower of Gandhiji."

Such was the beautiful harmony he was building up between diametrically opposite viewpoints. He never felt any contradiction in his participating in the non-violent Satyagraha launched by Gandhiji and following all its rules, even though he himself was a fiery revolutionary who believed that it was armed rebellion alone which would ultimately free the country from the shackles of foreign slavery. (Doctorji was himself an excellent marksman, having started on that line right from his Calcutta days. He loved to be in the deep jungles for days on end ostensibly for hunting and he would always excel others in marksmanship.)

The Muslims of Nagpur resorted to highhanded ways in 1923. They started objecting to the playing of music in front of Masjids, which had in fact been built in 1921 with the co-operation of Hindus and some of them endowed by Raja Lakshmanrao Bhonsle. They had now gone back upon their own earlier pledges. In 1923, all of a sudden, the Muslims brought an injunction from the district collector against the Ganesh immersion procession. As instructed by leaders like Raja Lakshmanrao Bhonsle, Dr. Moonje and Dr. Hedgewar, the Hindus decided that the entire Ganesh immersion ceremony be stayed till the playing of

music was permitted.

All this happened in September. In October the Bhajan groups had to pass through the same route. Muslims objected to this also. But ignoring their protests, the Bhajan groups went through the same route for two or three days. But later on the police sided with the Muslims and started obstructing the Bhajan processions. Dr. Hedgewar and other Hindu leaders went from house to house and mobilized a large number of people to join the Bhajan. On 8th November, 41 prominent leaders including Dr. Hedgewar, Dr. Paranjpe, Dr. Cholkar and others took part in the Satyagraha. Thousands of people had gathered. On 11th December, Raja Lakshmanrao Bhonsle also joined the movement. Over forty thousand people had congregated to witness this rare sight of Hindu resurgence. The Muslims then voluntarily allowed five people to pass in front of the Masjid singing Bhajans.

That evening a mammoth meeting was held under the presidentship of Doctorji. At that meeting Raja Lakshmanrao Bhonsle proclaimed that the Nagpur branch of Hindu Mahasabha had been formed. The Raja himself was the president, and Dr. Moonje the Vice-President. Dr. Hedgewar became its Secretary.

The institution of singing Bhajan in public was popularized with great vigour. The entire city was reverberating with full-throated chanting of '*Jai Vittal*', '*Jai Jai Vittal*'. After seeing the mood of the people, government allowed the Hindus to carry on Bhajan when passing in front of Masjids at any time except at the five stipulated *Namizz* timings.

This success resulted in more enthusiastic participation of people in Bhajans. The Ganesh immersion function, which had been kept in abeyance, was celebrated with great eclat on the full-moon day.

Irrked by this 'defeat', the Muslims attempted at revolting in a few places. Some threatening letters were also received by Dr. Hedgewar and Dr. Moonje. But they moved fearlessly all over the town with a view to keeping up the morale of the people. Because of the in-built fear of the Muslims among the Hindus, the band troupes sometimes shirked to play before the Masjid. On such occasions, Doctorji himself would take over the drums and rouse the dormant manliness of the Hindus.

Often he would be invited and urged to be specially present even for family functions such as marriages and thread ceremonies, just to ensure their smooth and undisturbed completion. Veer Savarkar was still in prison in those days. In 1923, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and others pleaded in the Bombay Legislative Council for his release. The Congress at Nagpur also arranged a public meeting in which Doctorji made a trenchant attack on the government : " In convicting Savarkar the government has murdered justice ; and if the government is interested in washing off this blot, let it forthwith release him. The government will not be bestowing any special favour if it were to release him now, after fourteen years of cruel incarceration. If even now the government does not care to release him, it will only be one more evidence of its evil intentions towards our country."

The Nagpur National Union founded by Doctorji was unreservedly dedicated to the goal of Complete Independence. Either for political reasons or because of personal inhibitions, not a single elderly leader of those days was prepared to think in terms of more than " Independence within the empire." In the atmosphere of frustration enveloping the country after the failure of the non-cooperation movement, it had become all the more essential to intensify the campaign for full independence. It was therefore decided by Dr. Hedge-war, Dr. Khare and others in the middle of 1923 to start a daily newspaper called "*Swatantrya*." After a couple of months' efforts, *Swatantrya* Prakashana Mandal was established on a co-operative basis. Dr. Hedgewar and Dr. Khare toured the Vidarbha area to collect necessary funds. At that time there were not more than six weeklies in that entire region. It was also a most backward province as far as education was concerned. Under such conditions, it was not easy to run a daily newspaper. But the idealist youths recognized no such handicaps and went

ahead with its publication.

Swatantrya began to appear under the editorship of Vishwanathrao Kelkar. However, Doctorji bore the main brunt of the work, from solving the day-to-day problems in the press to writing articles whenever needed. But the venture was short-lived. Within a year a loss of over ten thousand rupees was incurred. The editorship had to change hands twice. At the point of closure, nobody was prepared to assume the onus of editorship. Doctorji volunteered for this unpleasant duty too, and wrote the swansong as the editor.

A small incident that took place in the office of *Swatantrya* throws light on a distinctive trait in Doctorji's character. Once, a sub-editor of the paper sent a leave letter to Doctorji saying that he was unwell, but actually went to the house of one Phadnavis to play cards. Doctorji guessed straightway that the 'illness' was fictitious. Doctorji was also aware of the hideout of the card-addicts. After finishing his work in the office, Doctorji went straight to the house of Phadnavis. The game had just warmed up. Seeing Doctorji, the sub-editor turned pallid. But Doctorji did not seem to notice him at all. As usual he carried on a pleasant chat with Phadnavis for some time and returned.

Doctorji had his own ways of disciplining. Very often, Doctorji's silence itself was sufficient to correct errant colleagues.

Doctorji now began concentrating more and more on youth. He started teaching swimming to a few youngsters. During one such session he saw a boy passing by, and asked him, "Can you jump into the well?" The boy did not know the a b c of swimming; but he said, "Yes, I can." He at once removed his clothes, tied a rope round his waist and fearlessly jumped into the well. Doctorji was immensely pleased with the daring nature of the young boy. Thereafter Doctorji cultivated him more and more. The boy, who in later days became a devoted worker of the Sangh, was Gopalrao Yerkuntwar. For a long time Gopalrao used to recall the sharp eyes and imposing personality of the dark-complexioned stranger who drew him to himself near the well.

Doctorji often spoke to student gatherings. He contributed thought-provoking messages to students' manuscript magazines. Mentioning the young men's regard for Doctorji, Professor Sawalapurkar wrote: "Doctorji was deeply interested in all the programmes of the Nagpur youth. He was an unfailing source of inspiration and guidance for them all. Stories of his connection with the Krantidal thrilled us. We had invited Doctorji for our Rashtriya Charcha Mandal in 1923 or 1924. He then tellingly expounded the concept of true nationality."

In 1924, Doctorji gathered together Bhauji Kawre, Appaji Joshi, Vishwanathrao Kelkar and other friends and also a few political workers of the Central Provinces, and placed before them his ideas in regard to organizing the Hindus. Doctorji invited their reactions and suggestions. Appaji Joshi recalls the meeting thus: "The friends who had assembled that day belonged to different parties. Some had been influenced by Mahatmaji. Some owed allegiance to the Swarajya Party. Seeing their disparateness, Doctorji decided early in 1925 to initiate the work of resurrecting the Hindu nation with the help of only like-minded people." As soon as his ideas became crystallized, Doctorji went to meet *Swatantrya*-Veer Savarkar who was then in detention in Ratnagiri. As there was an outbreak of plague in those days, Savarkar had moved to the house of Vishnu Pant Damle in Sirgaon. Doctorji spent two days in useful exchange of views with Savarkar there.

In July 1924, the Muslims in Nagpur attempted one more uprising. But this time the Hindus were on the alert and prepared, due to the timely efforts of Dr. Moonje and Dr. Hedgewar. The Muslims fared badly this time. Some 30-35 of them had to be hospitalized. Hindus residing in Muslim localities had been moved to the Bhonsla Palace for safety. Day-and-night vigil had been set up for protection of the Hindus.

At that time, Muslims had carried out similar violent outbursts against the Hindus throughout the country, and Hindus had to suffer severe losses and hardships. Doctorji was searching for

an answer to the question uppermost in many minds : "How is it that Muslims, who are so few in number, are so fearlessly attacking the Hindus ? And why are not the Hindus, who constitute the majority, even able to protect themselves ? Isn't this a matter of shame ? Why is this so ?"

This situation gave rise to a variety of reactions among the Hindu leaders. Some were frankly in despair. "The Muslims are unified and powerful. We cannot hope to cope with them. God alone should save us." Some others would be content to find some make-shift solution to the problem. They would not bother to diagnose the root cause and find a permanent remedy.

7: FOUNDING OF THE SANGH

THE IDEA of establishing the Sangh became gradually crystallized in Doctorji's mind. It now only remained to translate that concept into actuality. Doctorji chose the sacred day of Vijaya Dashami, 1925, for the historic occasion) That day was, indeed, very auspicious for launching the work, since Vijaya Dashami traditionally symbolized the conquest of good over evil. Founding the Sangh was the first step in the future victorious march of the Hindu Nation – from the individual to collective life, from subservience to invincibility. About 1520 young men gathered in Doctorji's house on that day. Chief among them were Bhauji Kawre, Anna Sohni, Vishwanathrao Kelkar, Balaji Huddar and ,Bapurao Bhedi. Doctorji announced to the gathering : " We are inaugurating the Sangh today." He elicited the views of all of them in regard to the activities of the Sangh. "All of us must train ourselves physically, intellectually and in every way so as to be capable of achieving our cherished goal," he declared.

Founding of any institution is usually preceded by fixing up its name, constitution, office, fund collection, etc. There is also a lot of advance publicity. But strangely, there were no such preparations when the Sangh was started. The sole capital of the Sangh at the time of founding was Doctorji's own life of utter dedication and sterling character, his unsurpassed organizing ability and spirit of self-effacing service.

Activities relating to physical training were conducted by Doctorji's friend Anna Sohni, who was an adept at handling lathi, dagger, lance and such other conventional weapons. He was himself a well-built figure and his unique technique of coaching fascinated the youth. A special feature of his posture-training was the normal stance *siddha-sthiti* of the body, gracefully and perfectly balanced on the two feet. Even more impressive was the *yuddha-yoga*, an effective technique of defence. Training in drill, marching, etc., was imparted on Sundays by another friend of Doctorji, Martandrao Jog. On Thursdays and Sundays there were discourses on national affairs. These sessions later on came to be known as *Bouddhik Varga*. Doctorji and Vishwanathrao Kelkar lectured at these sessions. Among the younger leaders, Balaji Huddar, Dada Paramarth, Bhaiyaji Dani and others were encouraged by Doctorji to speak.

(In the earlier days, there were no daily meetings of Swayamsevaks. The requirement was that they should regularly attend some gymnasium, meet at one place on Sundays and attend the discourses. Physical exercise' was not Doctorji's primary aim. Therefore', within a short time, Doctorji evolved an integrated scheme of threefold training covering the three aspects – physical, intellectual and mental.)

The Swayamsevaks thus began to assemble every day on the grounds of a primary school. As the number grew, that place proved insufficient. The Mohitewada ground, which was then in utter neglect, was cleared and the Shakha was started there. From 28th May of 1926, the daily *Shdreerik* (physical culture) programme was commenced as a regular routine. New commands *Svdhdn'*, *Daksha'*, *yiratna'* were first used there. But Doctorji was not blind to

practical needs and exigencies. For the physical training he did not hesitate to employ the existing English vocabulary as well as methodology. He regarded the adoption of the British conventions in this field as *dpaddharma*. In more recent times, of course, Sangh has introduced Sanskrit expressions in place of the English ones.

The tradition of commencing the daily activities with salutation to the *Bhagawd Dhwaj* and concluding with the prayer was instituted with a view to deepening the intellectual and emotional content of the training)The prayer then consisted of a combination of a Marathi verse and a Hindi verse. The meaning of the first part of it was as follows :

Salutations to the Motherland where I am born.

Salutations to the Hindu Land where I have been brought up.

Salutations to the Land of Dharma for which may my body fall.

To Her, I salute again and again.

For the naming of the Sangh, Doctorji arranged a *baithak* in his house on 17th April 1926.

Twentysix Swayamsevaks participated in the discussion. Several names were suggested, and there was elaborate discussion about each. After the process of elimination, three names remained in the tally : (1) Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ; (2) Jaripatak Mandar ; and (3) Bhdratoddharak Mandar. The name 'Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh' was finally decided upon. Referring to that discussion, Professor Sawalapurkar says : "Surely, Doctorji must have decided about the name of the Sangh after prolonged thought even before that *baithak*. But he gave the aspiring Swayamsevaks an opportunity to suggest names, so that the young enthusiasts could feel themselves as part of the decision-making process. A student who had just joined the college also suggested a name and spoke vehemently in support of it. Others too suggested their choices and spoke. Doctorji then suggested to me to expound the appropriateness of the name 'Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.' I spoke for about half an hour. Doctorji was very much pleased, and patted me on my back. Needless to say, I was able to speak convincingly only because of the training that I had imbibed from Doctorji over a long period."

The name 'Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh' was evolved by Doctorji after long and intense deliberation. Especially, the choice of the word 'Rashtriya' to denote the work of Hindu consolidation was intended to emphasize the fact that it is the Hindus who form the backbone of the nation in Bharat and that organization of Hindus is a task of supreme national importance.

One lamp lights up another. One inspired heart kindles another. This was how Doctorji touched the hearts of countless Swayamsevaks and kindled in them the spark of idealism. While activities on the playground were many and varied, it was in Doctorji's house that the true character-moulding work was carried on. Doctorji's rapport with the Swayamsevaks was of the most intimate kind ; he evinced keen interest in the welfare of each Swayamsevak. His warmth and friendliness endeared him to every one of them, young or old. Through suggestive questions, he whetted their power of thinking, and goaded them into activity. All the Swayamsevaks would meet once a month, and plan the programme for the ensuing month.

Doctorji desired that Swayamsevaks should, out of their own devotion to the cause, be able to act without waiting for instructions from others. Doctorji had several ways of instructing the Swayamsevaks. He would ask, "Why did you take to learning lathi ?" "Suppose you learn lathi singly ?" "How many new persons can you contact and mobilize ?" Through such simple questions he would instil in them a sense of corporate thinking and working. When there were intelligent young men around, he asked questions such as "What is Swaraj ?" "How many people are there who demand Swaraj, and how many are there who work for it ?" He would thus bring home to the young minds the need for more young people to actively join the movement for Swaraj. And again he would put some searching questions such as

"Supposing on your way back home a policeman takes you to the station and confronts you with the question, 'You had gone to Dr. Hedgewar; what was the topic of discussion there ?' – what would you answer ?", "What makes you come to the Sangh ?", and so on and gauge the Swayamsevak's sharpness of understanding.

There is a report of a *baithak* held on 21st June 1926 recorded by Raghunathrao Bande who was the Nagpur Kciryavdha at that time. In that session Doctorji asked each Swayamsevak to state in writing his ideal, the ideal of the Sangh, and how he would organize the Sangh and its activities if he were made the Chdlak, i.e., chief. The statements were to be handed over to Doctorji before 28th. This indicated the measure of Doctorji's concern that the Swayamsevaks should themselves think over and imbibe the Sangh ideal and pursue the Sangh activities with self-sustaining zeal and devotion.

In 1926, Doctorji initiated certain measures to instil the spirit of hard discipline in the Swayamsevaks. He requested Martandrao Jog who had retired from the army in 1920 to conduct the weekly parade of Swayamsevaks. Jog was the chief for the Congress Seva Dal also at that time ; but no party considerations existed for Doctorji. Martandrao in a letter to Guruji later on wrote : "I am now totally one with the Sangh. It is the Sangh which has developed my personality. It was Doctorji's love which had carved out a place for me in Sangh." Doctorji also encouraged the setting up of cavalry units wherever it was possible. Wearing of uniform during parades was made obligatory for the Swayamsevaks. Upasani, an army officer of Gwalior, used to visit Nagpur during holidays. Doctorji deputed a few Swayamsevaks to him for advanced training in physical fitness and discipline. Swayamsevak who took part in the first route march numbered 30. Stepping signals were given through the whistle on that day, and the need for the bugle was then keenly felt. And it was with great difficulty that money was raised for purchasing the first ever band instrument. The throb of joyous enthusiasm that coursed through the Swayamsevaks at the first sound of the bugle truly defies description !

A special training programme for selected Swayamsevaks was also begun in May 1927. The object of the programme was to equip the Swayamsevaks to enable them to carry on the Sangh activities on their own, wherever they might go. The programme was therefore called the Officers Training Camp-0. T. C. In the first camp of 1927, there were only 17 participants. There were physical culture sessions from 5 to 9 in the morning and again in the evening. The afternoon hours from 12-30 to 5 p m were spent in discussion, writing, etc. There were also swimming exercises. These intensive summer training camps have continued to this day under the name of `Sangha Shiksha Varga.' Every province now has its own separate camp.

Doctorji was keen on developing the various necessary qualities among the Swayamsevaks. He was very particular that the allotted job should be executed well and efficiently by every one of them. A worker should never try to shift his responsibility to another, nor should he beat his own drum when the work is finished. Doctorji would narrate an experience of his own in this connection.

Once, after a feast at Raja Lakshmanrao's palace, chewing lime was exhausted, with only *pan* going round. Lakshmanrao ordered his junior to bring lime. He in turn passed on the order to his junior. Thus the order for lime passed on from mouth to mouth, but no lime came.

However, Doctorji, who was well acquainted with the household, quietly went inside and brought the lime. But the shouting for lime continued for quite some time even after that !

Doctorji had no dearth of interesting anecdotes to drive home his point. Here is one such.

Once a king ordered that every one of his subjects pour before sunrise a cup of milk into a big pot in the temple. However, each one thought, "After all, every one else is pouring milk.

What difference does it make if I pour a cup of water instead ? " As a result, every one poured his own quota of water. By sunrise the huge vessel was filled to the brim, with pure

water and not a drop of milk !

Another weakening trait among the Hindus was the firmly rooted mentality – "I am alone, what can I do ?" Once an incident took place in Nagpur which was narrated by Doctorji to bring home the disastrous results of such an attitude.

Once, all of a sudden, a commotion started in a public meeting. A few persons stood up, some began to run and soon the rest also took to their heels helter-skelter. In that mad rush several were trampled, hundreds left their chappals and dhoties behind, and the entire audience numbering thousands was speeding in all directions as if chased by some wild beast. The speakers and the president too did not lag behind; they too sped as fast as their legs could carry.

Later on, on enquiry it was found that it all started with a person in the middle of the meeting suddenly getting up as he felt something like a frog entering his dhoti. Persons sitting around him also got up, with one of them crying out 'snake, snake !' That was the signal for all others to join the running spree. Not one of them knew what had actually taken place : each said that because others were running he also started running ! Doctorji, who met the organizers the next day, asked them : "Let alone the audience, but why did *you* not try to control the situation ?" Each one of them replied, "What could I alone do ?" In fact, every one of the fleeing heroes was pleading the same reason – "What could I alone do ?"

The Sangh grew slowly but steadily with enrolment of young men one after another, in ever increasing numbers. Doctorji spent every single minute of his waking hours in building up the nascent organization.

Poverty continued to haunt Doctorji's household as before. It was not possible to run the household from his elder brother's meagre earnings. Because of his public activities, Doctorji had an endless stream of visitors from morning right up to midnight. Hospitality, which could not be avoided, meant expense. In addition to it, Doctorji was a strict adherent of *aparigraha*; no one dared to offer any financial help to him.

Raja Lakshmanrao Bhonsle, who was all admiration for Doctorji, once made a personal effort through his secretary Vasudeva Shastri Sangamkar to lessen Doctorji's financial strain. The effort failed. Nanasaheb Talatule of Sindi was a close friend of Doctorji, and Doctorji customarily spent a few days with him every year. He too sounded Doctorji a couple of times regarding financial assistance. But Doctorji remained cold. Once while in Sindi, Nanasaheb and Appaji Joshi broached the subject cautiously and told Doctorji, "Financial worry is chasing you like a shadow ; some arrangement must be made." Doctorji replied, "I shall ask for it when there is need. Help should not be felt like an obligation, and should not strain the mind. I have no objection to accepting help from people with whom I feel free, but right at present there is no need for it."

While Doctorji put his friends at ease, he continued to refuse help.

Coming to know of the trying situation at Doctorji's house, Narayanrao Deshpande of Arvi and Appaji Joshi began secretly handing over fifty rupees every month to Doctorji's sister-in-law. But Doctorji soon scented it, and the practice had to be given up after two or three months.

About this time some friends of Doctorji started a company under the name of Ideal Insurance Company, and made Doctorji the chief of medical examination unit of the company. This brought a remuneration of four to five hundred rupees every year. The arrangement, which continued up to 1935-36, met Doctorji's domestic needs to some extent. In the year 1926, for the *Ramanavami* festival, Doctorji took the Swayamsevaks, all in uniforms, to Ramtek. The Swayamsevaks helped in organizing the huge concourse for the *darshan* of the deity, in arranging for adequate supply of water, etc. The presence of Swayamsevaks saved the pilgrims from the guiles of the Muslim moulvis, as well as from the exploitation of the *pandas*.

Though the ideal of Sangh as well as its actualization through the Shakha was conceived and worked out by Doctorji, he never regarded the Sangh as his personal creation. He always described it as a collective effort, saying, "WE have started the Sangh." But in order to ensure smooth operation, it was unavoidable to have centralized planning and direction. For this reason, Doctorji was designated as the formal chief of the organization at a *baithak* held on 19th December 1926. The relevant resolution read : "In order to carry on the activities of the Sangh in a regular, smooth, and disciplined manner, it is essential that there should be one chief person at the helm. For this reason, this meeting unanimously appoints Dr. Hedgewar as the chief organizer (Chalak)."

After strenuous efforts of a year and a half, the Sangh became firmly rooted in Nagpur and Wardha. Through it was shaped the technique for rejuvenating the collective social life of Hindus, which had virtually gone out of existence for the past several centuries. Wherever the Shakha was started, every evening the *Bhagawa Dhwaj* fluttered with the glow of the sacrificial fire. And full-throated chants offering everything at the altar of *Matribhoomi* and *Dharmabhoomi* were heard in unison from scores of hearts.

8: IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY of the Sangh was celebrated at a simple function on the Vijaya Dashami day of 1926. On that occasion, Doctorji also started a library for the use of Swayamsevaks. The activities on the Sanghasthan had by then settled down to a regular routine. Swayamsevaks were grouped into several sections, according to age – children, boys, adolescents, adults ; and the groups were named after Lava, Kusha, Dhruva, Prahlāda, Abhimanyu, Bheema, Bhishma, etc. Doctorji himself would attend the Shakh daily. After the close of the Shdkh .., members of each unit met Doctorji before departing. Doctorji would keenly inquire about absentees, if any, and made it a point to visit their houses to find out the reason for their absence. If he was preoccupied, he sent some other worker to inquire and report. Often, Doctorji came to the Sliakha earlier than others. He would clean the ground and sprinkle water. He freely joined with the youngsters in various games, as he was convinced that that was the surest way to enter into their lives.

Doctorji used to say – "We need lakhs and lakhs of young men wholly dedicated to the uplift of the nation. It is they who can bring about the much needed national awakening ; and this national consciousness has to be transmitted to successive generations. Then only will the grave problems besetting our country be solved." The Shdkhd was the instrument he conceived of for realizing this goal of national self-rejuvenation.

Children and adolescent Swayamsevaks vied with one another in bringing new entrants to Doctorji's house for admission to Sangh. Whether it was in the house or in the school, the discussion of the Swayamsevaks centred round Sangh. Need for organizing the Hindus, message of the *Bhagawd Dhwaj*, National Independence, past invasions and the reason therefor, significance of the daily programmes, discipline – these were some of the topics which often came up for discussion in Doctorji's presence. Doctorji also gave the Swayamsevaks thought-provoking books such as 'Ilindutva', 'Danger Signal' etc. to study and discuss.

About this time Swami Shraddhananda, who had assiduously worked for organizing the Hindus, was heinously murdered. When Abdul Rashid, the murderer, was hanged, the Muslims honoured him as a martyr and widely distributed his pictures. The Muslims were in a violent mood everywhere and attacking the Hindus. However, these incidents were described as "Hindu-Muslim riots." Doctorji used to pertinently ask : "How can these be called Hindu-Muslim riots ? Why not call them simply as Muslim riots which in fact they are

? How can the Hindus, who are invariably the victims of Muslim onslaught, indulge in riots ?"

In 1925, an enquiry committee consisting of Pt. Motilal Nehru, Moulana Azad and Dr. Mohamed came to Nagpur to settle the "communal issue." It put forward a mutually agreed formula, as to when and where the music could be played before the mosques and when and where it was to be stopped. But so far as the Muslims were concerned the agreement remained only on paper. They continued to become more and more aggressive. Hindu ladies proceeding for religious festivities like Haritalika became subject to Muslim mischief. However, Doctorji promptly deputed batches of Swayamsevaks to such places and the women devotees could thereafter breathe a sigh of relief. Along with their prayers to the Almighty they must have also prayed for the welfare of Sangh ! However, Doctorji's reaction to this incident reflected his basic viewpoint : "It is a matter of shame that our society is reduced to a state in which a special band of Swayamsevaks has to be deputed to protect the honour of our motherhood. As a matter of fact, the entire society should be in such a vigilant and organized condition that no one would dare to cast an evil eye on any of our points of honour."

By 1926, Muslims in Nagpur were making hectic preparations for assaulting Hindus. Several anonymous letters threatening murder were received by Doctorji and Dr. Moonje. During informal chats, Doctorji would read out such letters to Swayamsevaks and would have a hearty laugh over it. He would remark, "If these fellows had indeed the guts, they would have simply acted instead of shouting about it !" Some of his friends would urge that he should never fail to take a couple of body-guards with him whenever he has to go out, whether during the day-time or nights. To one such suggestion by the editor of *Maharashtra*, Gopalrao Ogale, Doctorji solemnly replied, "Yes, these days I always take a *rakshak* along with me." Surprised at this answer, Ogale queried : "Who is he ?" Doctorji pointed to a tender boy standing by his side and said : "Here he is !" All burst into laughter.

Dr. Moonje received a threatening letter that his life would come to an end on the day of Id Milad. Doctorji and a few Swayamsevaks went and stayed that night at Dr. Moonje. At midnight a gang of Muslim goondas approached the house. But the Swayamsevaks took care of the mischief-mongers and the night passed off peacefully. Hindus in many other places were also subjected to frequent harassment and humiliation.

In order to reinforce the morale of Hindus, Doctorji undertook several steps. For instance, he collected hundreds of rupees for the *Shraddhananda* weekly being published from Bombay in memory of Swami Shraddhananda. He toured widely to publicize the periodical. He also helped in establishing the Shraddhananda Orphanage in Nagpur.

The day of Mahalakshmi festival dawned. The Muslims of Nagpur had secretly planned to rise in revolt on that day. This festival is celebrated with much fanfare in the Nagpur Vidarbha area. Images of the deities are gaily decked in costly silkwear and gold ornaments ; many delicacies are prepared. Muslims planned to loot the Hindus belonging to the rich and middle classes – including the ornaments decorating the goddesses – while they would all be in the festive mood of worship, eating, etc. And as everybody elsewhere also would be busy, no one would come to the help of the residents of Mahal, the main target area for attack.

Doctorji came to know of the murderous design well in advance, and set about to warn the Hindus about it. He then started out to Wardha, Chanda, and other places as arranged previously, to deliver lectures in connection with the Ganesh festival. At 2 o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday the 4th of September 1927, thousands of Muslims started out in a procession. They had advertised that they would be taking out a procession in observance of the death anniversary of a certain Syed Mir Saheb. The processionists were fully armed with lathis, daggers and other lethal weapons. Cries of ' *Allah ho Akbar* ', ' *Din din* ' etc. rent the air. While the armed procession was going on in a state capital the police nonchalantly looked

on like mute spectators. The reason was plain. As John Strachey had written, "Their interests are interwoven with ours."

The warlike posture of Muslims sent shock-waves through the hearts of the Hindus. But a little over hundred young men of the Sangh were determined to protect the Hindu society. Anna Sohni had divided them into sixteen groups and stationed them in strategic places in different Hindu areas. As planned, Muslim goondas began abusing the Hindus and attacking them. However, they were in for a rude shock. Swayamsevaks, who were on the alert, repelled the attacks instantly. The Muslims were totally taken aback at this unexpected turn of events and found it hard even to make a getaway. Seeing the Swayamsevaks repulsing the Muslims, other Hindus also felt emboldened and joined the fray – many of them barely dressed, some in their silk dhoti customarily worn during *pooja* !

The encounter went on for three days and ultimately the Hindus triumphed. Hundreds of Muslim goondas were hospitalized, and 10-15 died. 4-5 Hindus too succumbed ; one of them was a Swayamsevak by name Dhundiraja Lehgaonkar. Peace returned after the arrival of the army. After that day history had taken a new turn. The Hindus remained no longer at the receiving end of attack.

News of the Muslim onslaught reached Doctorji when he was in Chanda. He at once started back for Nagpur. He found the railway station totally deserted, and no vehicles in sight. People in the city were afraid to walk alone in the streets. But Doctorji calmly reached his house on foot. His house also had not been spared and bore the marks of attack.

He immediately proceeded to the hospital to enquire about the Swayamsevaks and other citizens who had been injured. He visited the houses of the deceased ; lie went to the houses of those who were imprisoned, and assured their near and dear ones of prompt efforts to secure their release. A committee was formed by the Hindu Mahasabha for the relief of the distressed, with Doctorji also as one of its members. The committee began attending to the cases.

After the Nagpur incident, the name of the Sangh as well as its founder Doctro Hedgewar spread throughout the length and breadth of Central Provinces. While the Hindus were being driven to the wall everywhere, the Hindus of Nagpur had stood up and given a fitting reply. This greatly surprised the Hindu leaders of other provinces. Referring to the incident, Dada Paramarth has written : "The Swayamsevaks' courageous conduct indeed augured well for the future. After 1927, there wasn't a whisper of Muslim trouble in Nagpur."

That year's session of the Hindu Mahasabha was to be held in Karnavati, i.e. Ahmedabad, under the presidentship of Dr. Moonje. The reception committee and Dr. Moonje specially invited Doctorji to introduce his unique organization to the workers from various provinces. For some unavoidable reasons, Doctorji could not attend the session personally ; instead, he deputed Balaji Huddar along with seven Swayamsevaks. All of them were dressed in the Sangh uniform.

Most of the other representatives repeated the crestfallen refrain of constant defeat of the Hindus in their places. Many also stressed the need for organizing the Hindus. When the turn of the Central Provinces came, Balaji Huddar stood up at the instance of Dr. Moonje. The self-confident personality of that youth, attired in the well-pressed uniform, appeared to be a living witness to the revolution wrought by the Sangh. His normal stance itself exuded courage and self-assurance. His speech reflected the conquering zeal of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh : "I come from the province where the Hindus have fought back Muslim aggression. This miracle of eradicating the lowly and submissive nature of our society has been achieved by the organization which has been created under the leadership of Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar." This was how leaders of different provinces were first introduced to the Sangh. It was natural that all of them developed great warmth towards the Sangh.

After this incident, Doctorji took care to see that this jubilation did not turn the heads of the Swayamsevaks. The merest shadow of pride would mean the end of service-mindedness. Such an attitude would be counter-productive to the Sangh's effort of organizing the collective social life. He therefore strove to inculcate a spirit of pure service in the minds of the Swayamsevaks : "We are part of this society. We happened to be in the vanguard when our society was attacked and we were duty-bound to protect it. There is thus no cause for pride. On the contrary, we should be grateful that we could render our humble bit of service to our people."

That year the self-styled 'general' Awari of Nagpur had launched an agitation against the Government's ban on carrying of arms. Processions were taken out with naked swords and the police would promptly arrest them and confiscate the arms. Doctorji sensed the foolishness of this step. He met Awari and told him : "Who knows when and in what form the opportunity would present itself to strike for our Independence ? It would be the height of folly to give up our arms into the enemy's hands in this fashion and render ourselves armless and helpless." Awari too at once understood the soundness of Doctorji's advice. "How then shall we proceed with our agitation ?" he asked. Doctorji suggested that dummy swords of tin with sharpened edge could be used for Satyagraha. Through this device, Doctorji could save thousands of swords in the possession of Hindus.

This incident also highlighted the great harmonizing trait of Doctorji's character. Many more are such incidents. During those days Dr. Moonje and Barrister Abhyankar were looked upon as the leaders of bitterly opposing camps in Nagpur. In October 1928, the Abhyankar group arranged the unveiling ceremony of Lokmanya Tilak's statue at the hands of Dr. Ansari.

Doctorji was looked upon by the Abhyankar group as a member of the Moonje group and none of the latter including Doctorji were invited for the function. However, Doctorji did not in the least feel insulted. On the contrary, he was joyous that Lokmanya's statue was being installed, whoever might have been instrumental in installing it. He also arranged a guard of honour to the statue by the Swayamsevaks. On that occasion, Doctorji was personally present in uniform and eulogized the shining virtues of Lokmanya Tilak. Newspaper reports of that function also mentioned that the chief of police who was present could not help expressing his high admiration for the disciplined turn-out of the Swayamsevaks.

As far as any issue of upholding Hindu honour and faith was concerned, Doctorji could always be counted upon for his ready helping hand. Chounde Maharaj who had dedicated his life to the cause of cow-protection desired to take out a colourful procession of cows on a particular sacred occasion. But he was nervous about the possible hostile reaction of Muslims. He approached Doctorji and what followed is best described in his own words : "Even as I saw Doctorji, who appeared to be the living manifestation of Hindutva, my fears were dispelled. When I presented my plan and the problem, the Sarsanghachalak reacted sharply – 'How can any one dare to come in the way of protection of the cow in this land of Hindusthan ?' He immediately called a worker, gave some instructions and assured me of full protection. Within an hour or so, I witnessed the miraculous sight of the Ramasena of Dr. Hedgewar assembled in thousands before the Ram Mandir and Doctorji himself present to guide."

By about this time, the institution of formally initiating the Swayamsevaks had begun. It is a vow of lifelong service and sacrifice. In the vow, the Swayamsevak pays homage to the Almighty and to one's ancestors, and pronounces his firm and lifelong resolve of offering himself entirely – body, mind and wealth – for the preservation and progress of the Hindu Nation.

The first ceremony of initiation took place in the month of March 1928. There is a hill covered with dense forest some four miles away from Nagpur on the Nagpur-Amaravati road. It bears the name of Storkey Point. A group of 99 selected Swayamsevaks were initiated at

that spot, the Swayamsevakas spending the whole day in the cradle of nature. The solemn oath-taking ceremony concluded in the presence of the holy Bhagawa Dhvaj.

Doctorji took extra precaution to ensure that the Sangh was not caught in the clutches of the British because of some inadvertent revolutionary incident. Here is a revealing instance of 1927. Dacoity had taken place using a pistol, near the Hinganghat railway station.

Gangaprasad Pande whose hideout was near the station found to his dismay that his own pistol had been employed by one of his friends for that purpose. Doctorji's intimate well-wishers who were spread in all the departments of government immediately conveyed to him that among the suspects his name topped the list. Doctorji surmised that the pistol with Gangaprasad might have been used in this affair.

One day, without giving any clue to any one else, Doctorji quietly slipped out of Nagpur and reached Appaji Joshi's house at Wardha in the night. There the secret agents of the government had already cast their net. But there was not a minute to be lost. The risk involved was too great. If the police were to get scent of Gangaprasad's hideout, the entire revolutionary network, along with the store of arms and whereabouts of other revolutionaries, would fall into the hands of the Government and the Sangh too could be caught in its clutches.

Doctorji took a calculated risk and both he and Appaji Joshi hurried to Gangaprasad's hideout in that darkness.

Doctorji sat beneath a neem tree at a distance and sent Appaji Joshi to bring the pistol. Even as Appaji Joshi brought the pistol and handed it over to Doctorji, from somewhere a man pounced upon him and catching hold of Doctorji's wrist, exclaimed in sheer delight, "See, how I have caught you red-handed." Instantly with a jerk Doctorji freed himself and handed over the pistol to Appaji Joshi. Then tightening his iron grip over the informer, he began delivering crushing blows and kicks on him. The informer felt that he would be finished ; he fell at the feet of Doctorji begging for mercy. Doctorji then told him, "See, is there anything in my hands ?" and leaving him to his fate, disappeared in the darkness. Gangaprasad and Appaji Joshi who were at a distance too vanished in different directions. The same night Doctorji reached Nagpur and on the next morning engaged himself in the routine organizational activities as if nothing had happened.

The informer ruefully reported the incident to his seniors but there was nothing that they could do about it, since the prey had already escaped the trap. However, thereafter, informers began to hover round Doctorji, Appaji Joshi and the activities of Sangh in general. Appaji Joshi was at that time the Provincial Secretary of Congress and a member of the A.I.C.C. Respected people in the society felt infuriated that such 'respectable persons' like Doctorji and Appaji Joshi should be shadowed like common criminals. They approached the Chief Secretary and the District Collector and protested against these unwarranted and high-handed actions of the police. When Govindrao Charade, advocate, pleaded with the District Collector, the latter remarked : "What can we do, if even such respectable gentry take to dacoity ?". Upon this Charade retorted, "Why do you indulge in such baseless allegations ? If you are so sure of your evidence, why don't you arrest them outright and proceed against them in a court of law ?" Of course, the Government knew pretty well that it had not a shred of concrete evidence. And in the face of mounting public protest, they thought it prudent to gradually withdraw the surveillance over the Sangh leaders.

Doctorji's role at that time was like walking on a razor's edge. On the one hand, he had to discharge his revolutionary obligations and at the same time protect the sapling of Sangh from government's clutches. It was in the beginning of 1929 that Rajguru, after assassinating Saunders at Lahore, came to Nagpur. He was already acquainted with Doctorji, because as a student of the Bhonsle Vedashala, Nagpur, he used to attend the Shakha at Mohitewada in 1927-28. Doctorji arranged a safe asylum for him in the farmhouse of Bhaiyaji Dani at

Umred. Doctorji had also specially warned him not to proceed to Poona. But Rajguru ignored it and reached Poona only to be caught there within a matter of days.

9: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

The ACTIVITIES of the Sangh continued to grow steadily. Doctorji was constantly on the move. Even his manner of propagation was unique. In an age when publicity is supposed to be the life-breath of any movement, he evinced but little interest in it. Doctorji believed in Rabindranath Tagore's dictum : "Till we achieve something solid, let us remain anonymous : let us be in the background and away from limelight." Doctorji concurred with Tagore's analysis of a serious social failing of ours : "But the mental composition of our people is not suited to such withdrawal. They do not pursue even the most elementary day-to-day tasks (which deserve no public attention at all) to their successful conclusion, but work with one eye on loud and vulgar publicity." Doctorji therefore concentrated on transformation of the hearts of people, and kept the character-forming activity of the Sangh away from the glare of publicity and propaganda.

Doctorji even refrained from written correspondence during the early years of the Sangh. If a message had to be conveyed, he sent it through a messenger. If it was crucially important he conveyed the same in person.

Soon, Sangh spread its activities to other places of Central Provinces. Since Doctorji had had a long and varied record of public life, he had numerous friends at almost every place. And whenever he toured, he always carried with him the Bhagawa Dhvaj, an image of Maruti, and a copy of the written oath. As soon as he reached a place, he would gather the enlightened citizens and explain to them the Sangh ideology in a simple and lucid style.

Doctorji possessed an impressive personality, and his talk was most appealing. Whenever the subject of aggression and insult to the Hindus came, his voice would quiver with emotion and his eyes would flash, as if emitting sparks of fire. His voice would often choke when he started elaborating on the pitiable state of the Hindu society. The eyes of the listeners too would well up in tears. Doctorji had also exemplified through the Sangh the fruition /of the long and keenly felt need of an organization for strengthening the Hindu society. It was therefore hardly surprising that his words carried conviction. At the end of the *baithak* he would administer the oath to those present in the presence of the Bhagawa Dhvaj. The branches thus set afloat were later strengthened and formalized.

The need to find funds naturally arose as the Sangh activities grew. Doctorji was up till now managing the affairs by raising money from well-meaning friends as and when need arose. As the organization acquired nation-wide dimensions, it became necessary to lay down a sound policy. Doctorji was at no time in favour of going to the people with a begging bowl. That would breed a feeling of inferiority in the recipients and also a feeling of self-glorification in the donors. An organization like the Sangh should be under no obligation to anyone, and be ever self-dependent. Donations should be offered voluntarily, prompted by a natural and self-inspired concern for the cause. People should donate in a spirit of selfless devotion. Just as a ripe fruit falls to the ground with effortless ease at a mere touch, dedication of the workers to the cause alone should inspire donations.

Doctorji gave a concrete shape to these ideas by introducing the system of *Guru-Dakshind*. *Guru-Dakshind* the humble offering to the Guru — imparts a feeling of pure joy and self-fulfilment to the giver. It thus becomes an instrument of expressing and strengthening his commitment to a noble cause.

It is customary among the Hindus to observe Vyasa-Pooja or Guru-Pooja (worship of the preceptor) on the full - moon day in the month of Ashvina. The institution of Swayam-

sevaks' offering their mite before the sacred Bhagawa Dhwaj was begun on that day in 1928. Doctorji had instructed the Swayamsevaks on the previous day : "Guru-Pooja is to be observed tomorrow. All of you should bring your offerings to the best of your ability, and flowers for worship of the Guru." Speculation ran rife among Swayamsevaks. "Here is an opportunity of offering our poojd to Doctorji," said one. "No, Anna Sohni will be worshipped," ventured another and so on.

Next day, however, surprise awaited them. After the Flag was hoisted, Doctorji addressed the Swayamsevaks asking them to offer worship to the Flag. Doctorji said : " The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh does not recognize any individual as its Guru. The sacred Bhagawa Flag alone is our Guru. An individual, however great, is after all temporal and imperfect. The individual is conditioned by time ; it is the principle alone which is timeless. The Bhagawa Flag symbolizes that timeless principle. The very sight of this Flag brings before our mind's eye the entire history, the glorious culture and tradition of our land ; inspiration wells up in our mind. That is our true preceptor. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh therefore accords the place of Guru to none else, and has accepted the Bhagavd Flag as its Guru."

Then Doctorji himself worshipped the sacred Bhagawa Dhwaj. He was followed by the Swayamsevaks. The GuruDakshind that day amounted to Rupees 84. As time went by the offerings registered a steady increase. Gradually, it proved adequate to meet all the financial needs of the Sangh.

In this arrangement, the rich as well as the poor could make their offering, each according to his capacity. None felt it a burden, nor as having made a sacrifice. It was a symbol of one's spirit of surrender in the cause of the Nation. It was not the amount involved in offering, but the spirit behind it that was all important. Even a flower offered with utmost devotion was equally holy and sanctified. This indeed is the speciality of the Guru-Dakshina institution. At one stroke it purged one's mind of distorted notions that invariably accompany a regular subscription. On the other hand, everyone would feel, "The cause of the Mother deserves much more than this. I shall increase my offering next year. And I shall not be satisfied with anything less than a total surrender of all that is mine at Her altar." Such is, in fact, the true spirit of Hinduism, which develops the personality of an individual by instilling in him a sense of duty and devotion.

By the end of 1928, there were 18 Shdkh5s in the Vidarbha area. Many of the Swayamsevaks were just matriculates. Doctorji suggested their undergoing university education so that they could be of even greater usefulness for spreading the Sangh activities. He was very particular that the Swayamsevaks should at least be graduates, because, in the initial stages of the organization especially, when the people were entirely unaware of the nature of the work, a university degree would naturally increase the credibility of the worker. They could carry conviction with the people much better and not be looked upon merely as dropouts or jobless young men or, worse, as self-seekers in the guise of social workers. Because of Doctorji's insistence, a number of Swayamsevaks completed their graduation. Doctorji helped the son of a priest to study up to M.A. Of course even in those days many young men studied in order to secure cosy jobs. But Doctorji instilled in the ,Swayamsevaks the idea of studying so as to be able to work better for the national cause. The better placed among the Swayamsevaks were sent by Doctorji to other provinces for advanced education. Bhaiyaji Dani, Baburao Telang, Taty Telang and others proceeded to the Banaras University. This was the first leap that Sangh took to reach another province.

Work of deepening the roots as well as expanding the branches of Sangh – such as cultivating the Swayamsevaks more and more intimately, instilling in them pure and positive patriotic zeal, involving prominent leaders of society in Sangh activities – kept Doctorji busy practically round the clock. Two workers, Babasaheb Apte and Barve, were staying in those days in a rented house. Doctorji and the other Swayamsevaks used to have countless 'chitchat

sessions' there. Time seemed to stand still on such occasions. Sometimes, because of the lateness of the hour and the Swayamsevaks' insistence, Doctorji joined them for supper. Food used to be prepared by Apte and Barve. The roti used to be as thick as one's palm ! Doctorji used to describe it as an excellent 'tonic'. The meal was accompanied by pleasantries and endless mirth. It was looked upon as a most enjoyable feast.

Doctorji once went to attend a music concert, reluctantly yielding to friends' persuasion. The programme took place in January 1929, in Venkatesh Chitrapat Griha. Students from three music institutions participated in the programme. In the visitors' book, Doctorji wrote : "...Many boys sang. Scholars in the field of music will be able to judge them professionally. But what appealed to an uninitiated person like me was the spell-binding singing of Prabhakar and Yadav Joshi. And I feel, such singing which goes straight to the heart could well be made into an effective medium for national awakening..." After this incident Doctorji drew Yadav close to himself. And the intimacy resulted in Sangh's becoming the music of life for Yadavrao Joshi !

As part of the customary Dasara festivities in the Hindu tradition, it became a practice in Sangh also to worship symbolic weaponry. Once it so happened, a Punjabi merchant selling some well-designed daggers and swords came to Wardha. The local I(Dyavaha, out of over-enthusiasm, thought it would be nice to have at least one real dagger for worship. He inquired about the price and went to the house of the Sanghachdlak to secure approval for the purchase. By a coincidence, Doctorji also happened to be there and discussion began in his presence. Doctorji raised the question, "Even though we were well equipped with weapons and armaments, why did we become a slave nation ?" He continued and replied to the poser himself : "From whichever angle you view the situation, there can be but one answer. The crying need of the hour is to instil a strong sense of loyalty to the motherland in the heart of each and every Hindu. When the nation becomes charged with such patriotic fervour, there will be no dearth of weapons of defence, and the country will be liberated from the foreign yoke in no time. During their *ajntaveisa* the Pandavas had hidden all their armoury in the Shami tree. So also let us not worry about weapons for the present. Let us concentrate on spreading our movement to all parts of the country and making our organization a most powerful and disciplined one."

Vijaya Dashami was celebrated with great enthusiasm on 23rd October 1928. The function acquired added lustre by the parade of Swayamsevaks in uniform and the participation of national leaders of the stature of Vitthalbhai Patel. Some five to six hundred Swayamsevaks took part in the parade. Vitthalbhai Patel was immensely pleased with their highly disciplined turn-out.

Doctorji was keen on securing the sympathy, goodwill and co-operation of senior national leaders. With this end in view he met Subhas Chandra Bose in Calcutta towards the end of 1928. Doctorji was at that time a member of the Working Committee of the Central Provinces Unit of All-India Congress, and had gone to Calcutta to attend its annual session.

Subhas was the Mayor of Calcutta at that time. Just ten minutes had been allotted for Doctorji's interview with him. But once the two of them got into the flow of conversation, the clock ticked away with neither of the two noticing it. There was detailed discussion and exchange of views. Doctorji's cogent and well thought-out replies to his searching questions deeply impressed Subhas. At the end Doctorji requested Subhas to extend his active support to the Sangh.

Subhasbabu replied, "Doctorji, I fully agree with what you have said. There is no doubt that yours is the only effective method of emancipating the nation. But I am already too much engrossed in the work of a purely political kind, and am not in a position to venture anew in another direction. You will therefore kindly excuse me."

By about the same time, Doctorji invited Dr. Ketkar to the Shakha. Dr. Ketkar is the

celebrated author of an encyclopaedia in Marathi. When he witnessed the Swayamsevaks in uniform carrying out demonstrations, he was overwhelmed with emotion. Subsequently, Doctorji attended the state convention of Hindu youths — Akhil Maharashtra Taruna Hindu Parishad — held at Akola on 20th April 1929. Doctorji used that opportunity to introduce the work of the Sangh to many prominent leaders assembled there. He had detailed discussions with distinguished persons like Masurkar Maharaj, Loknayak Bapuji Ane, Swami Sivananda, Dr. Shivajirao Patwardhan, Pachlegaonkar Maharaj, Brijlal Biyani and others. Doctorji never let go any opportunity of introducing the Sangh to prominent people in the Hindu society, irrespective of their party or ideological persuasions.

The visit of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to the Nagpur Shakha is worth recording.

Doctorji brought him to the Mohitewada Shakha. Looking at the dilapidated structures all around, Malaviyaji sensed that the Sangh was financially hard-pressed. He turned to Doctorji and said, "People call me a royal beggar. If you consent, I shall be happy to collect some funds for you also." Doctorji lost no time to reply, "Panditji, I am not in need of money. Blessings of elderly people like you are enough for me." Malaviyaji was simply amazed. In his long experience of public life, he knew that institutions were only too eager to welcome funds. He told Doctorji, "Many institutions first think of money, and then only about men. You are the very opposite of this ! You place the heart above everything else. In future, I shall make it a point to mention this speciality of yours wherever I go."

Yielding to Doctorji's entreaties, his uncle Abaji Hedge-war consented to come over to Nagpur in 1927 to live with him. The illness of Abaji's wife Gangubai took a serious turn in 1929, and Doctorji took her to Indore for treatment. He had to stay at Indore for a month. He corresponded with the various Shakhas from there itself. He was already familiar with the conditions in Indore. He now cultivated many new acquaintances. As a result, Shakhas were soon started in Indore and Dewas. Wherever Doctorji went, on whatever pretext, Shakhas would follow him !

The health of Gangubai showed no improvement and she was brought back to Nagpur. Eventually she expired when Doctorji was incarcerated for participation in Satyagraha in 1931.

The first winter camp of the Sangh was held in 1928. As part of the programme, parade of the young Swayamsevaks was in progress. Doctorji was showing that enthusiastic turnout to some elders. Just then a disciple of Bhauji Kawre happened to come there. The sight of him filled memories of Bhauji in Doctorji's mind. Doctorji took the young man aside and told him, "Bhauji should have been amidst us today to witness the performance !" Doctorji could not suppress his emotions evoked by the memories of his bosom friend and he began shedding tears like a child.

As the unique technique of Shākha for organizing the Hindu youth began to spread far and wide, it naturally attracted the attention of the public as well as of the government. The British government began eyeing the Sangh with suspicion. Swayamsevaks became the target of frequent interrogation by the police and the intelligence corps. Because of this development, Doctorji began appointing prominent local citizens for the office of Sanghachalaks. Financial responsibility for the unit was also entrusted to them. This arrangement helped in earning greater respectability for the Sangh and also in building up youth leaders.

Doctorji was keen that financial transactions in public bodies should be meticulously clean and above board. And so were the accounts of the Sangh kept. On one occasion in 1930, when Doctorji went to Raosaheb Datar, Editor of *All India Reporter*, to solicit funds, Datar was at first sceptical. He desired to see the accounts of the Sangh. Doctorji immediately had the account books brought there itself. Datar closely scrutinized the accounts. Even the single pie found on the Sanghasthan had been taken into account. Datar became fully satisfied and

happy and gave a handsome donation to the Sangh.

There was a meeting of Sanghachalaks in Nagpur on 9th and 10th November 1929. With regard to that meeting, Doctorji had sent a circular to all the Shakhas on 19th October. It reads in part : "Amidst the political and social storm that is about to engulf the country, how do we row the boat of the Sangh to safety ? What should be the policy of the Sangh ? What programmes should be undertaken to accelerate the growth of the Sangh ? To discuss these and other momentous issues, it has been decided to call a meeting of the Sanghachalaks at Nagpur on 9th and 10th November."

The meeting took place accordingly. There was free and frank exchange of views. Among other things, it was also decided that from the point of view of internal discipline, the organization should work under one leader who would mastermind the programmes.

On the 10th a full-fledged organizational meeting was held in the Mohitewada Sanghasthan, in which all the Swayamsevaks of Nagpur as well as mofussil workers who had come for the meeting participated. The Sanghachalaks and other workers stood with their back to the stone wall, which has survived to this day. Doctorji was standing next to the Flag and was visibly moved by the impressive congregation of such sincere and dedicated souls. Appaji Joshi had been assigned the task of announcing the decision of the *baithak*. Appaji Joshi, who had already briefed the workers, gave the command in a raised voice "*Sarsanghacheilak Pranam-Ek, Do, Teen.*" All the Swayamsevaks offered *Pranam* to Sarsanghachalak Dr. Keshavrao Hedgewar. This was followed by a talk by Vishwanathrao Kelkar who beautifully described the unique concept of 'chalak' in Sangh, as being the 'head of a wider family'.

Doctorji, however, was not happy. After the programme was over, he told Appaji Joshi : "Appaji, today you have done something unplanned. I do not approve of it. It is not proper for me to accept salutation from my own colleagues, many of whom are senior to me and entitled to my veneration." Appaji Joshi briefly replied, "All of us have decided on this procedure unanimously in the interest of efficient organization, even though you might not personally relish it."

Some critics compared this arrangement to the Fascist army of Mussolini. But the Sangh had no need to derive its inspiration from any such perverted foreign model; it modeled itself on an ideal Hindu family. The Swayamsevaks are like children of one family. All of them work unitedly for the welfare and prosperity of the family. And the Sarsanghachalak is the head of this family. He protects the family and nourishes it, often unmindful of his personal hardships. Appropriate to that position in a national organization, Doctorji was a fervent patriot, sincere to the core, and had not a shadow of ego. He harmonized in himself the best of discipline as a characteristic of centralized authority and democratic freedom of thought. Doctorji's reaction to being designated the Sarsanghachalak may be recalled in his own words. The notes he jotted down in 1933 in this context are indicative of his rare thoughtfulness and objectivity :

1. I am fully aware of the fact that I am not the originator of the Sangh nor its founder ; the Sangh owes its existence to you all.
2. In accordance with your wish and demand, I am in the place of a nurse to this Sangh which has been established by you.
3. Even in future, I shall continue to foster it as long as you desire and as long as I am ordered to do so by you. I shall not shirk from my responsibility at any time, even when faced with danger or the prospect of personal fame or ignominy.
4. However, if and when you feel that I am not competent to carry on this work and that this is hindering the progress of the Sangh, I request that you select someone else suitable to replace me.

5. When you choose my successor, I shall willingly hand over the reins to him with the same happiness that marked my acceptance of the office, and I shall from that very moment continue to function as an ordinary Swayamsevak devoted to him.
6. Because, as far as I am concerned, my personality is not of consequence ; the work of the Sangh is the one thing which is all-important. And I do not feel slighted in the least in doing any work conducive to the progress of the Sangh.
7. It is essential that the Swayamsevaks should implicitly obey the command of the Sarsanghachdlak. The Sangh should not reach a stage where the tail should wag the body. That is the secret of success of the Sangh.
8. It is therefore the primary duty of each and every Swayamsevak to carry out the given injunction and also ensure adherence to it by other Swayamsevaks.

A strong sense of duty, a complete absence of love of authority, an eagerness to project not himself but the organizational ideal, a spirit of renunciation and service – well, it is these traits of Doctorji that sanctified the seat of Sarsanghachalak.

As the Sangh grew, reports of opposition from Congress and Hindusthani Seva Dal came from many places. In some places the Seva Dal units even vowed to "demolish the Sangh." Doctorji was sad to hear of these developments. But it was not in his nature to get ruffled or indulge in counteroffensives. Doctorji felt that one wrong could not be set right by another. And he simply continued building up the Sangh work ignoring opposition. A letter that he wrote to Dada Paramarth and Krishnarao Mohrir reads:

"In your letter, you have informed me of a significant development. Let us pray to God that He guide these critics. As far as we are concerned, we work with faith in God and heeding to the dictates of our conscience. If in this process we fail to please some sections, or if some are inclined to oppose us, what can we do ? All this has its root in politics. We need not be afraid of these expressions of others born out of malice."

A few days after the *baithak* of Sanghachdlaks, news was received that the Congress had adopted a resolution proclaiming Complete Independence – *Samprana Swatantrya* – as its goal. Doctorji was immensely pleased. He immediately sent out a circular to all the Shakhas that they should congratulate the Congress and also celebrate 26th January 1930 as Independence Day. He said in the course of that letter: "This year the Congress has passed a resolution declaring Complete Independence as its goal. The Congress Working Committee has called upon the entire nation to celebrate Sunday the 26th of January 1930 as Independence Day. We of the Sangh are naturally immensely happy that the All-India Congress has endorsed our goal of Complete Independence. It is our duty to co-operate with any organization working towards that goal ... It is therefore suggested that all the Swayamsevaks of each Shdkha meet at 6 p. m. on Sunday, 26th January 1930, at the respective Sanghasthans. After offering salutation to the National Flag, i. e. the Bhagawa Dhvaj, the concept of Independence and the reason why this ideal alone should be kept before every one should be explained. The function should conclude with an expression of congratulations to the Congress for having accepted the ideal of Complete Independence." In accordance with these instructions, meetings were held in all the places where Shakhas were functioning.

It would be useful to refer to the notes put down by Doctorji in the above context. These jottings throw clear light on the policy of Sangh with regard to a crucial national issue: "The Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindusthan. It is therefore clear that if Hindusthan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture. If the Hindu culture perishes in Hindusthan itself, and if the Hindu society ceases to exist, it will hardly be appropriate to refer to the mere geographical entity that remains as Hindusthan. Mere geographical lumps do not make a nation. Unfortunately, the Congress organization has given no thought to

protecting the Hindu Dharma and Hindu culture. The organization keeps its eyes closed to the daily onslaughts by outsiders on the Hindu society. It is to fulfil this duty of protecting the Hindu society that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has come into existence. But the Sangh harbours no ill-will towards the Congress. The Sangh will co-operate with the Congress in the efforts to secure freedom, as long as these efforts do not come in the way of preserving our national culture. The Sangh has indeed been co-operating with the Congress all along."

10: IN THE FOREFRONT OF STRUGGLE AGAIN

WHEN MAHATMA GANDHI launched the 'Salt Satyagraha' in April 1930, Doctorji was naturally pleased. Many workers of the Sangh sought permission to participate in the movement. But Doctorji had undertaken the enduring and basic task of national rejuvenation through the Sangh. That longterm work had to go on unhindered and grow stronger whatever the external conditions. Doctorji wrote to all the Shalchds : "...The Sangh as such has so far not resolved to participate in this movement. However, those who would like to participate in their personal capacity are free to do so after obtaining permission from their Sanghachalaks."

The number of trainees for the annual training camp of the Sangh for the year 1930 far exceeded those of the previous years. By then a good number of workers had been moulded who could, on their own, operate the Shakhas in any area. Formation of a medicare and first-aid unit was a new feature of the programme. Doctorji strongly felt that whenever mass programmes or parades are held, there must be a medicare unit handy. If someone fell unconscious or someone needed first-aid, only the availability of such a unit could ensure smooth continuance of the programme. Otherwise there would be panic and disorder. In Delhi, when Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, was being taken in a procession, someone threw a bomb at him. A medicare unit had been thoughtfully arranged, and it took care of the situation so efficiently that the public hardly noticed anything amiss. The ceremonial procession continued as if nothing had happened. Doctorji often recalled this incident to emphasize the need for providing for all eventualities.

A contingent of one hundred Swayamsevaks of Nagpur Shikhd was trained for needs of medicare. This came in very handy in those stormy days of Satyagraha. The medicare unit accompanied the Satyagrahis. Victims of police atrocities were promptly treated, and transported to the hospitals or their homes. The Swayamsevaks were in their uniforms and wore the Swastika symbol on their shoulder. There were days when they worked continuously from morning till late in the night.

Some selected Swayamsevaks who came forward to participate in the Satyagraha were encouraged by Doctorji to carry on the Sangh work also simultaneously. In his style of constructive thinking, carrying on the Sangh work was no less patriotic than going to jail. However, Doctorji himself decided to participate in the Satyagraha. That would also give him an opportunity to get acquainted with the patriotic youth from many places who would throng the prisons ; and he could expound to them the need for the positive work of building up a disciplined nation-wide organization. That would greatly help in expanding the Sangh activities in future. Doctorji decided to join the Jungle Satyagraha which was being led by Loknayak Ane. It was decided that Appaji Joshi of Wardha also be permitted to join the movement. Doctorji transferred the responsibility of guiding the Sangh activities in his absence to Dr. L. V. Paranjpe, who was nominated as the new Sarsanghachal. Doctorji informed all the workers about the change in the organizational set-up. And on the Gurupooja

day, 12th July, he publicly announced it.

Doctorji cogently explained the position : "After I tender the vote of thanks in a few moments, I shall cease to be the Sarsanghachalak. Dr. Paranjpe has agreed to accept the stewardship of the Sangh. I express my gratitude to him on behalf of the Sangh. All of us are participating in this movement in our personal capacity. There has been no change either in our policy or in our way of working, nor has our faith in the Sangh suffered in the least because of these developments. It is the duty of all organizations working towards the country's independence to keep themselves abreast of all such movements in the country. All those Swayamsevaks who have already jumped into the Satyagraha movement, and we who are doing so presently, have been inspired by these considerations.

"Going to jail is today considered a sign of true patriotism. However, a person who would willingly court a two-year prison term hesitates when he is asked to come out of his house and work for organizing the freedom movement. Why should this be so ? Is six months or a year enough to secure the country's Independence ? However, the people are not yet prepared to realize the simple truth that organized work for several years alone can take us to our cherished goal. There can be no salvation for the country until this type of fleeting emotion gives place to positive and lasting feelings of devotion and sustained efforts. Preparedness to lay down one's life for the country is the essence of such lasting patriotism. The present fate of the country cannot be changed unless lakhs of young men dedicate their entire lifetime for that cause. To mould the minds of our youth towards that end is the supreme aim of the Sangh."

After this speech, Doctorji and the other Satyagrahi Swayamsevaks were garlanded. The group left Nagpur on the evening of 14th July. Hundreds of people came to the railway station to bid them farewell. They reached the Satyagraha centre at Pusad, after receiving felicitations on the way at Wardha and other places. Loknayak Ane had already initiated the Satyagraha at the Pusad centre. Organizers of that centre, therefore, felt that a leader of the stature of Doctorji should inaugurate the Satyagraha movement at another important place, Yeotmal. It was decided that Doctorji should proceed to Yeotmal and sound the clarion call there.

There is a telling instance of Doctorji's concern for the cow while he was in the Pusad Satyagraha centre. Early in the morning Doctorji had gone to the river for bath, and was returning to the camp. He sighted a couple of Muslim young men holding a hefty cow. Doctorji enquired, "Where are you taking the cow ?" "Nowhere," replied the young men, "We shall shortly be cooking it !" The locality was predominantly Hindu, and these Muslim boys wanted to kill the cow – in broad daylight and in public ! Doctorji was not the one to tolerate it. He asked the Muslim boys what the price of the cow was. "We have bought it for rupees twelve. But since selling beef is our business, we are not going to sell the cow" – they replied haughtily.

Just then an aged Muslim emerged from the nearby house. When Doctorji asked him why the cow was being butchered in such a locality, he replied, "For years this has been the place where we cut the animals and sell beef." "I shall pay the price of the beef. Give me the cow," pleaded Doctorji.

By then a few other Muslims also had gathered. When the old man said he would make Rs. 25-30 out of the beef, Doctorji offered to pay it. But the butcher refused to give up the cow. "I don't need the money. I shall kill it right in front of you," he said arrogantly.

Doctorji was infuriated. He snatched the rope tied to the cow in his hand and thundered, "As long as I am alive you shall not lay your hands on it." Seeing Doctorji's adamant stance, the Muslims went and brought a few prominent Hindu men of the locality. Even they began pleading with Doctorji, "It has been the custom to use this place for butchering cows. Please do not meddle with this practice."

Doctorji was shocked beyond words at this depravity of the Hindus. One of the Hindu gentlemen said, "You have come to participate in the Jungle Satyagraha. Why do you involve yourself in such trivial matters ?" Doctorji replied passionately, "Protecting the cow which is sacred to the Hindus cannot be a trivial matter. The Jungle Satyagraha and Satyagraha for saving the cow are both equally holy to me."

In the meantime the police arrived. They in turn tried to threaten Doctorji. But Doctorji was unyielding. At last the Muslims acquiesced and sold the cow for Rs. 30. Doctorji gifted the cow to the local cow-protection institution.

As a result of this incident, Doctorji's name was on the lips of everybody and the entire town was present to hear him in the evening. Doctorji's speech on that occasion was remembered for a long time for its fiery patriotism. Especially the following remark of his became deeply engraved on the minds of one and all :

"So far as I am concerned, I would undertake any means in order to achieve Independence. I would, if need be, take to polishing the boots of the English or take out his boot and crush his head with the same. I have no prejudice against any of the methods. I have only one supreme goal before me –the driving out of the British."

From Pusad, Doctorji and others reached Yeotmal. There, some of the Satyagrahis insisted that they would offer Satyagraha in Sangh uniform. A wire to Nagpur was also drafted for despatching uniforms to Yeotmal. Doctorji who was till then quietly listening to the arguments intervened : "I believe you would all keep the interest of Sangh uppermost in your minds. Have you realized the full implications of offering Satyagraha in uniform ? It will mean that Sangh itself has officially joined the agitation. But, as you are aware, that is not our policy ; we are participating in our individual capacity. This we have deliberately decided upon so that the basic and most important work of Sangh goes on unhindered ; for, it is Sangh which has to play the most effective role in times to come." Needless to say, the enthusiasm for uniform died away after Doctorji's remarks.

Doctorji and his batch had announced the breaking of the Jungle Law on the 21st of July. Over ten thousand people had assembled to witness the Satyagraha. As the Satyagrahis registered their defiance of authority by entering the reserve forest, the police officers promptly arrested them. Doctorji, before getting into the police van, gave a farewell message to the people to carry on the movement with ever greater momentum. Doctorji was awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment and three months' simple imprisonment. He and others were shifted to Akola Jail. All through the journey, at every railway station hundreds of people gathered with resounding shouts of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and 'Dr. Hedgewar ki Jai' playing on their lips.

En—route, the police officer got a brain-wave that the Satyagrahis might give a slip ; he ordered his junior to handcuff the Satyagrahis.

Doctorji retorted : "Why this order all of a sudden ? We have never been handcuffed previously and I shall not allow you to do so now." The youthful police officer was stung to the quick. In a threatening voice he said, "So, you will not allow me to handcuff you, is that so ?"

This threatening remark sparked off Doctorji into an explosion.

"Come on, handcuff me, if you dare ! What do you take us to be ? If you speak one word more I will throw you out of the train ! I may have to undergo a longer term of prison, that is all. After all, when we jumped into Satyagraha we never stipulated for ourselves just nine months !"

This fierce outburst had its desired effect on the officer and the journey proceeded as before. A moment later, Doctorji opened a basket of sweets, invited and treated all those in the compartment, including of course the police officials, with sweets. The police officer was speechless with surprise at this sudden transformation in Doctorji.

Satyagrahis of various political persuasions had joined Doctorji in the prison. Doctorji's dynamic personality, his spirit of selfless service and sense of humour immensely enlivened the prison atmosphere. Strong ties of friendship developed between Doctorji and others. The basic reasons for the pitiable state of the country and the right solution therefor were frequently discussed in depth. In this context Doctorji also explained to them the ideals and activities of the Sangh in great detail.

As a result, a considerable number of Satyagrahis enlisted themselves as Swayamsevaks. Daily parade, prayer and other activities of the Sangh were begun in the prison itself. Even as Sri Krishna was born inside the prison walls, the Vidarbha unit of the Sangh too took its birth in the Akola prison !

While in jail, Dada Paramarth contracted tuberculosis. Partly because of the illness and partly because of his temper, he became very restless. His treatment therefore demanded a lot of patience on the part of the attendants. But Doctorji served him for several months with exemplary concern and infinite patience and saved that loyal lieutenant of his from the jaws of death. There was no end to the physical and mental strain that Doctorji had to endure for the sake of his co-workers and friends.

While in jail, Doctorji was often found in deep contemplation over '*Gitarahasya*' of Lokmanya Tilak. He had a special love for the stars and planets in the sky, and he would unravel the secrets of the various planetary movements, the distance of the stars, etc., in a most fascinating manner. Doctor Thosar, a co-prisoner, writes : "Doctorji's style of narration was so gripping that even those of us who had no inclination previously for such things gradually became his ardent listeners. When darkness descended in the prison, we would eagerly look forward to this programme of recreation and illumination. Before this, most of us did not even know that anything other than the sun and the moon existed in the sky!" Doctorji had made a serious study of the science of astronomy during his revolutionary days. The positions of planets would enable one, when thrown into an unknown place during nights, to know the direction and the time – a faculty exceedingly necessary for a revolutionary.

Doctorji was keenly aware that an atmosphere of self-confidence and manliness had to be carefully maintained in the prison. The psychology of the prisoners would be very delicate ; even a small incident was sufficient to upset them. He would not allow, as far as it was in his power, any such tendencies to develop in the prison atmosphere. Once an interesting incident took place. There was an astrologer by name Agnihotri and there used to be a crowd around him extending their hands anxiously to know their future. Doctorji was a firm believer in the supremacy of manly effort and would often quote Samarth Ramdas : "Know that effort is Almighty" "The lines on the hand too will change," etc. This astrologer, who was not acquainted with Doctorji before, was surprised that Doctorji had not shown any interest in him at all. Once Doctorji and his friend Bedarkar planned a trap for him. Within the hearing distance of Agnihotri, Bedarkar would often ask Doctorji about his family affairs, whether he had received any letter from his wife, how his children were faring at home, and so on. Doctorji too would in solemn tones reply giving out the details of his 'family' conditions. One day Bedarkar, again within the hearing distance of Agnihotri, pressed Doctorji to show his hand to the 'reputed astrologer.' Doctorji consented and came to Agnihotri.

Agnihotri made a serious study of the lines and began to give out his findings : "You are now having a second wife and are having four children..." The other Satyagrahis who had crowded round Doctorji burst into an uproarious laughter. Doctorji took back his hand and just remarked : "All right, better luck next time." Needless to say that thereafter demand for Agnihotri slumped !

Outside the jail, the first-aid unit of the Sangh Swayamsevaks was busy offering aid to the Satyagrahis wounded in the brutal cane charges of the police. At the same time the

Swayamsevaks also took extra care to see that the Sangh work did not suffer in the least. The Sangh office was busy as ever. Dr. Paranjpe who was then the Sarsanghachalak would often visit Doctorji in jail and convey all the tidings. On the Rakslobandhan day of that year he had gone to offer his respects and Rakhi to Doctorji and other Satyagrahis.

Doctorji continued to play the same role of a harmonizer inside the jail as well. There was once a heated discussion over 'who was greater, Gandhiji or Savarkar ?' Just then, Doctorji chanced to come over there. Both the groups placed before Doctorji their respective viewpoints and requested him to give his judgment. Doctorji smilingly said : "This is just like asking, which is more pleasant, the rose or the jasmine ? The fact is, neither the rose is like jasmine nor is jasmine the same as rose. Of course, there is bound to be differences of opinion according to one's taste about which of the two is superior in beauty, softness and fragrance. In such a situation, rather than decrying the one and eulogizing the other, it would be far better to enjoy according to one's own liking." It was in fact this trait in Doctorji which had percolated into the Swayamsevaks and had made them whole-heartedly support the Congress movement in spite of the latter's criticisms against them.

As the day for the release of earlier batches of Satyagrahis approached and farewell was given to them, they invariably entreated Doctorji to come to their places to start the Sangh work. Many of them were in tears at being separated from Doctorji.

Doctorji was released on 14th February 1931. He stayed for a couple of days in Akola and Wardha, where felicitations were held, and reached Nagpur on the evening of the 17th. There was a vast crowd to welcome him at the railway station. Resounding shouts of "Doctor Hedgewarji ki jai" rent the air. Many organizations garlanded him. There was a mammoth procession, accompanied by band. At the close, Dr. Paranjpe delivered a short welcome speech. He then requested Doctorji to resume the office of Sarasanghachalak which he had temporarily relinquished.

The Swayamsevaks were overjoyed to see Doctorji after that long period. Doctorji enquired about the welfare of each of them. And before going home, he went to visit the sick.

11: RAPID STRIDES

EVEN WHILE coming out of the prison, Doctorji had sensed danger ahead. The Muslims had come out in their true colours at the Round Table Conference in London. Doctorji clearly foresaw the looming peril of partition. But the Hindu society was in a blissful slumber. It was this, more than anything else, which tormented Doctorji most.

But there was also a factor of joy waiting for him. In his absence the Swayamsevaks had vied with one another in expanding the organization. Doctorji was very much pleased and he proceeded to Bombay to press forward the expansion of the Sangh in that area. He held detailed discussions with Babarao Savarkar and Narayanrao Savarkar in that regard.

Within a few days of Doctorji's return to Nagpur from Bombay, he was asked to go over to KTishi (Banaras) by Babarao Savarkar who had gone there for convalescence. The Muslims there were planning an assault on the Hindus. Babarao thought it was imperative for the Hindus to organize themselves and therefore urgently sent for Doctorji. Doctorji simply wired back, "Wait, watch, pray and hope" and reached Banaras in a couple of days. Workers received Doctorji at the railway station, and took him to the residence of Bhaurao Damle, where Babarao was impatiently waiting for him. As soon as Babarao heard the sound of the tonga, he closed the door. Doctorji knocked. Babarao shouted back from inside : "Wait, watch, pray and hope !"

Doctorji stayed at Banaras for twenty days from 11th March to 1st April of 1931. Some ad-hoc measures were initiated to awaken the Hindus to the imminent danger ; but Doctorji was

not content with such temporary arrangements. He set about organizing a regular Shakha of the Sangh, and spoke to many local leaders about it. Madan Mohan Malaviya was already familiar with the work of the Sangh. Doctorji met him and with his blessings and active help, a branch of the Sangh was started in the University. Doctorji reported to Nagpur about the starting of the Shakha on 26th March. "Two new Shakhas have been commenced – one in Banaras City and the other in the Hindu University. I visited the University five or six times. I addressed three meetings ; there were also three sessions of discussion. The Shakha at the University promises to shape well ; and the one in the city is also not bad. Gradually elders and prominent citizens are taking interest."

At the close of one of the elderly persons' *baithaks* in the city, Doctorji suggested that those who liked the mission of Sangh should come forward to take the oath – *pratijnei*. Doctorji also explained the relevant ideas contained in the oath, one of them being 'to work life-long, offering one's body, mind and wealth.' One of the participants, thereupon, suggested an amendment for replacing these words with the words 'as far as it lies in one's power' – *yathjshakti*. Doctorji replied, "Well, no individual, in fact, can work beyond his powers. But often the expression 'as far as it lies in my power' is used just to save one's skin and plead one's inability to do one's duty." Doctorji's penetrating analysis had its effect, and with one of the advocates taking the lead all the rest followed.

While at Kashi, Doctorji had learnt that one Madhavrao Golwalkar, called 'Guruji', a lecturer in the Banaras Hindu University, was taking interest in the Sangh activities. During the next summer vacation in 1932, Guruji had returned to Nagpur. One day, as he was passing through a road, Doctorji chanced to see him. Immediately, he accosted Guruji, "Are you Madhavrao Golwalkar ?" Guruji was amazed because neither of them had seen each other before. Doctorji had just made a guess about him from the description he had heard about him while he was in Kashi. When Guruji said "Yes," Doctorji invited him to his house. Accordingly, Guruji went and met Doctorji. This was the first occasion when the two, the first and the future Sarsanghachalaks, met.

Describing his reactions to this sudden and unexpected meeting with Doctorji, Guruji humorously remarked : "This was how I was caught, as a mouse is caught by the cat !" In 1931, the Congress appointed a committee consisting of seven members-Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru, Pattabhi seetaramayya, dr. N.S. Hardikar, Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, Master Tara Singh and Maulana Azad-to decide about the National Flag for the country. The committee went into all the aspects and finally presented a unanimous report: "Our National Flag should be of one single colour and it is the saffron colour which can represent to the maximum extent the entire populace of India. This colour has a speciality of its own over the other colours and reflects the ancient tradition of India." Doctorji was no doubt happy when he learnt about the committee's recommendation. His views about the National Flag were, from the very beginning, clear and convincing. Bharat has been living as a nation since hoary times and as such all its national symbols too have been in existence since long. Bhagawa Dhvaj has, over the last several millennia, been signifying our national aspirations, our cultural and spiritual heritage and our historical tradition. As such, it is ni truth the National Flag of Bharat *par excellence*.

But Doctorji had his own apprehensions about the fate of the Flag Committee's recommendations at the hands of the Congress Working Committee. He felt that Gandhiji would oppose it and the Working Committee would meekly submit to his wishes. Doctorji met several leaders and even proceeded to Delhi at the time of the Congress Working Committee meeting to persuade the members to uphold the claim of Bhagawa Dhvaj, but to no avail. Doctorji's apprehensions only proved too true. Bhagawa was sacrificed at the altar of political and communal considerations and the tricolour was accepted in its place.

When Dr. Moonje returned from the Round Table Conference at London in 1931 he gave out

his reactions at a public meeting, of how British imperialists and Muslim communalists had made an unholy, powerful alliance in order to thwart the national aspirations and give a fillip to separatist forces.

At the conference, Dr. Moonje had taken an uncompromising nationalistic stand to which Doctorji paid glowing tributes in the meeting. The general atmosphere in the country had then become topsy-turvy, inasmuch as taking a bold and unadulterated nationalistic stance was dubbed as 'communal' and appeasement of communal and separatist demands was considered 'national'. Doctorji's depicting, in that background, of the distinguishing quality of a real national leader, was very significant.

"It is easy to achieve cheap popularity by flowing with the current of popular opinion. But the real leader is one who dares to stand up against the popular opinion if his discrimination tells him so. He will speak out his opinions, though they may be unfashionable at the time. Instead of being carried away by the circumstances he gives a turn to the circumstances themselves. The touchstone of real leadership lies in one's capacity to guide the popular opinion and not to be carried away by it."

Impressed by Doctorji's organizing ability, Babarao savarkar merged his Tarun Hindu Mahasabha with the Sangh.

In an emotion-choked voice Babarao told Doctorji :

"Doctor, I am today dissolving the Tarun Hindu Mahasabha. Please accept it and merge it in the Sangh. I shall henceforth devote whatever energy I have to the work of the Sangh. May the Sangh live long and achieve its goal. This is my benediction."

Doctorji had long been thinking of expanding the Sangh base in Vidarbha. The seed had been sown while he was in prison, and now it needed to be nourished. Doctorji, therefore, planned a tour of the province. Meantime, news was received that the Hindu Mahasabha had decided to hold its session at Akola on 8th and 9th August. Doctorji proceeded to Akola. There was already a Shakha there, though small. Doctorji tried to enthuse the workers into presenting an inspiring image of their Shakha to the delegates of the Hindu Mahasabha session.

After the Mahasabha session concluded Doctorji began his tour and was able to start Shakh5s in 15-20 places. In his 1 etter of 30th September, Doctorji reported to Nagpur :

"Many leading advocates and doctors have joined the Sangh.... However, it is not easy to work in Vidarbha ; we have to press forward through hard and difficult terrain. Our efforts are succeeding only because this is a divine work and carries God's belssings. The responsibility of the Nagpur Shakha is correspondingly increasing. And Swayamsevaks of all ages in Nagpur must realize this responsibility. It is only my complete trust in you which has prompted me to expand the Sangh activities outside Nagpur."

After the Dasara festivities at Nagpur, Doctorji resumed his tour. This time he set out to Chattisgarh and other Hindi-speaking areas of Central Provinces. His tour was briefly reported in *Maharashtra* of 9th December : "Dr. Hedgewar, the founder of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, toured the Chattisgarh area for three weeks to popularize the Sangh ideals. Branches of the Sangh have now been started in all the district headquarters of that area. Dr. Hedgewar has now undertaken a tour of Vidarbha."

It had been decided to hold the session of the All-India Tarun Hindu Parishat at Karachi in the first week of May 1932. Babarao Savarkar wrote to Doctorji urging him to attend the session. Bhai Paramanand had also asked Babarao to prevail upon Doctorji to attend. Doctorji too was eager to participate since that would give him an opportunity of meeting young men from all over the country and propounding the philosophy of Sangh to them. But the summer training camp of the Sangh was in progress. More than that, Doctorji was under severe financial strain and was therefore in two minds. But when Babarao wrote again, Doctorji was forced to explain his hard-pressed situation. Babarao's monetary situation too was no better. Having come to know of Babarao's plight, Bhai Paramanand had promised to meet his

travelling expenses. And Babarao in turn offered to share that allowance with Doctorji so that his burden could be lightened at least to some extent. Doctorji then decided to go to Karachi. Doctorji was in Karachi for six days. He met and spoke to many young workers from Punjab and Sind. People of those provinces, who had been the constant victims of Muslim onslaughts, eagerly endorsed the need for organizing the Hindus. But none knew how to go about it. Meetings, resolutions and lectures were the only method known to them till then. Doctorji, who had tremendous organizing ability, explained the right technique to them. After coming to know of Doctorji's plan in detail, the Tarun Hindu Parishat also emphasized the necessity of spreading the Sangh throughout the country. Doctorji, thereafter, got hold of a few workers from Karachi and started a Sh5khd there, nominating an enthusiastic worker by name D. D. Chowdhary as the Sanghachalak.

Doctorji seemed to have liked Karachi greatly. He wrote from there : "This city is definitely far better than Bombay or Calcutta. It excels all other cities in beauty, cleanliness, broad and well-tarred roads, electrical illumination, gardens and parks." What a tragedy that this most beautiful city itself has today disappeared from the political map of our country !

After the summer training camp (1932), Doctorji set out for a tour of Maharashtra with Babarao Savarkar. They visited Bombay, Pune, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Karhad and other cities. The wide contacts that Babarao Savarkar had developed over the years proved very useful to Doctorji. Because of the *baithaks* of young men, meetings of elders, administering of vows, launching of Shakhds, interviews with leaders and other varied activities, the Sangh quickly came to be known far and wide. This popularity came to the help of *prachcraks* from Nagpur who later went from place to place to launch new Shdkhds.

Doctorji's tour of Maharashtra extended for over a month. Bhaurao Deshmukh and Kasnathpant Limaye were appointed the Sanghachdlaks for Pune and Sangli respectively. It was also during this trip that Doctorji visited Jamkhandi in North Karnataka and started the Shakhd there.

Doctorji often used to say that each Swayamsevak should feel himself as a *prachärak* of the Sangh. Sangh was not the kind of activity which could be spread by publicizing through newspapers and public meetings. The Sangh was a living and vibrant body, and only the 'living' Swayamsevak could spread it. It became a rule that a Swayamsevak should attend the Shdkha at whatever place he may go to. And if there was no Shakhd he should take steps to establish one.

A Swayamsevak by the name of Madhavrao Mulye of Nagpur was planning to settle down in Konkan after completing his matriculation. Doctorji sent for him and talked to him about the ways of initiating Sangh activities in that region. A meeting was convened to bid farewell to Madhavrao Mulye on behalf of the Nagpur Shakha. Doctorji was also present. Later he also went to the railway station to see Mulye off. This gesture of Doctorji gave the Swayamsevaks a new vision. Everybody felt that a Swayamsevak leaving Nagpur was not merely a private individual going to some place ; on the other hand, he was a *prachdrak* setting out to a new place to broadcast the Sangh message of Hindu consolidation. Madhavrao Mulye subsequently became the *Prdnt Prachärak* for Punjab and, later on, the *Sarkdryavdha* of the Sangh.

Doctorji sent out invitations for the Vijaya Dashami celebrations at Nagpur to all those with whom he had come into active contact during his tours. In the course of a letter which he addressed to the Swayamsevaks of Nagpur on 1st September, he observed :

"Our Dasara festival at Nagpur is the measuring-rod for the people to gauge our strength and vitality. The enthusing sight of these celebrations is bound to instil a sense of pride and joy in the minds of our well-wishers. We should ever remember that it is such countless sympathetic hearts that are the pillars of strength for us. Not only from our province but even from distant provinces distinguished people come to attend the function. Since it ;is our

desire that branches of the Sangh should sprout in all the provinces of the country, we should see to it that these functions leave a lasting impression on the minds of those who attend." As expected, the Dasara festival went off on a grand scale. Over 1,200 Swayamsevaks attired in full uniform participated in the parade. Sadgopal and Madhavrao Golwalkar had come from Banaras. Doctorji introduced them to the Swayamsevaks as spirited and enthusiastic workers, and garlanded them.

As the Sangh grew in strength, it naturally attracted the wrath of the government. The intelligence agency in Bombay and Central Provinces was put on the alert. And as, at that time, there was a fresh upsurge of freedom struggle (1932), it was also rumoured that the government might ban the Sangh. Doctorji had in fact received reports to that effect from reliable sources in the government itself. However, he took it up as a challenge and decided to expand and strengthen the Shakhris in the quickest possible time. For that purpose he began constantly and tirelessly moving from place to place. Fatigue, worry, financial straits, and endless other obstacles began to tell upon his health. But, impatient as he was to expand the Sangh in the shortest possible time, Doctorji continued to toil from morning till past midnight, day after day.

While in Nagpur, in order to meet the Swayamsevaks and well-wishers, he often had to walk from the Mahal area to Dhantoli — a distance of over five miles — and return in the scorching sun by 1 p. m. ; and immediately after bath and the midday meal, he had to attend to the *baithak*, correspondence and so on — almost up to midnight. At no time could he afford transport, since his pockets were always empty. Even during summer, Doctorji would be totally unmindful of the severity of the Nagpur heat, though he was sweating profusely. Doctorji had brought home to the Swayamsevaks that the spread of the Sangh depended not on any external circumstances but on the sustaining efforts of the Swayamsevaks themselves. He was convinced that sincere efforts always bore fruit. An observation he made in his diary on 29th January 1934 is memorable : "It is only a worthless individual who puts the blame on circumstances."

While offering his guidance to the Swayamsevaks as to how they should face the looming challenge of the government, Doctorji said : "Granted that government is planning to ban the Sangh ; but how can they stop its functioning ? Shakhhas will spring up many-fold. At the most, government can stop the external activities, but how can they efface the feelings surging in the heart ? I am sure the number of Shakhhas will then become the same as the number of Swayamsevaks ! If this is so, then, why not we expand the Shakhhas now itself to the same extent ? That would be the fitting reply to the government's challenge."

Because of this robust approach ingrained in the workers, the Nagpur Shakh progressed in leaps and bounds. 17 subunits sprang up in the city. "My hands are full, and I find it well-nigh impossible to move out," writes Doctorji in one of his letters. That year the annual training camp was held in two places – Nagpur and Mehkar. By then, there were over a hundred Shakhhas in the country, and the number of Swayamsevaks exceeded ten thousand. Seeing the rapid spread of the Sangh, the Government of C. P. and Berar issued a circular in 1932 prohibiting government servants from joining the Sangh. Within a few days, government pressurized even local self-government institutions to pass similar orders. Timid as the Hindu society was, it was expected that this move of the government would discourage people from joining the Sangh. But by a bold and clever counter-offensive, Doctorji staved off that prospect.

12: SOME NOTABLE EVENTS

THE FOLLOWING was the text of the government circular issued by the chief minister of the Central Provinces, E. Gordon, on 15th December 1932: "The organization called Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is, in the opinion of the government, undoubtedly of a communal nature and its participation in political movements is increasing. Association with such an organization by the government servants is or likely to become a hindrance to impartial discharge of their duties. Government has, therefore, decided that government servants should not become members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh nor participate in its activities."

Doctorji immediately set about to counteract the mischief sought to be created by the order. He invited distinguished people from different fields to preside over Sangh functions. Programmes for mobilizing public protest were organized. Doctorji began a crusade for propagating the Sangh philosophy from countless platforms.

A former Home Minister of C. P., Sir Moropant Joshi, was invited to preside over the Sankranti celebration in January 1933. He showered praise on the work of the Sangh.

Cogently explaining the policy of the Sangh on that occasion, Doctorji said :

"The Sangh is aloof from politics. It is striving to strengthen the Hindu society and has hatred for none. I am surprised at the government order. I could hardly believe that C. P.

Government would take such a foolish step. If the government really believes in what it says in the order, I challenge it to prove it. Let them reply to these questions : In which political movement has the Sangh taken part ? Against which non-Hindu community has the Sangh taken up cudgels ? If 'European Association', 'European Chamber of Commerce' and such other bodies are not 'communal', and if government officers are allowed to participate in their activities, how could this organization established for organizing the Hindu society be 'communal' ? And how could government servants be prevented from participating in it ? If any community acts against another, then its actions could be called communal. But if there is an organization or a group of people who hate none and are interested in working for the welfare of their own society, how would it be justifiable to call it communal and try to curb it ? Maybe the government is worried about the activities of the Sangh, and would like to suppress it. I should like to submit, in all humility, that it will not be possible for the government to do so. We have undertaken this task trusting in God in utmost sincerity.

Whatever the obstacles in our way, we shall resolutely overcome them and achieve our goal."

The New Year festival Varshapratipada of that year was presided over by the former governor of C. P., B. Tambe. In his presidential speech he said : "No doubt the government has passed orders against the Sangh. However, for those who would like to serve the Hindu society, there is no better way than joining the Sangh, since this organization represents the inmost Hindu feelings and aspirations and is aloof from contemporary politics."

Kesari of Pune as well as papers from Nagpur strongly supported Doctorji's stand. *Hitavada*, the English daily from Nagpur, also wrote an editorial severely castigating the government policy. But despite these vehement public protests and objections, government stuck to its stand.

In December 1933, local self-government institutions were also asked to ban their servants' participation in the Sangh activities. The following was the relevant order : "It has come to the notice of government that many teachers in schools run by district councils have become members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. This institution being communal in character, government servants have been prohibited from either becoming members of that organization or participating in its activities. It is the opinion of the Home Secretariat of the C. P. Government that it is not desirable that even those in the service of local self-government institutions should associate themselves with this organization in any manner. They are the employees of institutions which represent all sections of society and these institutions derive their authority for collecting taxes from the ordinary voter. That being so,

it will not be proper for these local bodies to permit their functionaries to associate themselves with any communal organization. I therefore request you to explain this position clearly to the local bodies under your division and prevail upon them to clearly instruct their employees accordingly."

The local self-government institutions did not relish this government order. The councillors were enraged. Not all the members of these bodies were Sangh-sympathizers ; in fact most of them were connected with other institutions. But they were all infuriated that the government was interfering even in the little sphere of local autonomy granted to them. Doctorji helped this resistance manifest itself openly, and encouraged people to express their disapproval in no uncertain terms. He met many people in different walks of life and explained to them the positive and truly nationalist viewpoint of the Sangh. Workers in different parts vigorously campaigned to propagate the Sangh philosophy and expose the hollowness of government's objection.

In the last week of December, the Akhil Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan held its session in Nagpur. By a happy coincidence, the training camp of the Sangh was also held at about the same time. Doctorji was not the one to let slip such an opportunity. He introduced the Sangh to hundreds of leading intellectuals of the province. The sight of thousands of disciplined Swayamsevaks parading in uniform and of the township of tents built by themselves was enough to enrapture any patriotic heart.

Krishnaji Pant Khadilkar, a close associate of Lokmanya Tilak and editor of the daily *Nav?.71c1*, was the president of the prestigious literary conference. He visited the Sangh camp, accompanied by other leading men of letters. Seeing the inspiring spectacle of Swayamsevaks' parade he exclaimed, "This sight defies words. The very sight is its own description." Addressing the Swayamsevaks he said : "We are men of letters, revelling in words, words, and words. But what is being presented here is the Divine Power manifesting itself in a concrete form. Even thousands of lectures and writings will not be able to inculcate in the minds of the people the patriotic spirit which the mere sight of this organizational build-up will generate. The Sangh is a most telling instance of the saying that it is only the actual sight of its concrete manifestation that will effectively convince one of the truth of any sublime concept."

After the demise of Doctorji's intimate friend Raja Lakshmanrao Bhonsle, due to government's indirect pressure the branch of the Sangh which was located in Hathikl-ond had to be shifted to Tulsibagh. The latter place also belonged to the Bhonsle family. Anticipating further interference from government, Doctorji bought a plot of land measuring about 21--acres for a sum of rupees 700. The land was in Reshambagh on the other side of the river Naga. The Sangh activities were then onwards held in this spacious new locale.

It was not uncommon for Congress workers to heartily join in the Sangh activities in those days. The Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee, Appaji Joshi, himself was the Sanghachilak of Wardha, the centre of Gandhiji's activities. Appaji evinced keen interest in the Sangh work and because of his efforts, the Sangh soon made commendable progress in Wardha district. However, senior leaders of the Congress did not relish this.

With a view to making a "comparative assessment of the ideals and policies" of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj of Wardha sent a questionnaire to Dr. Moonje and Dr. Hedgewar. The questions related to prevention of untouchability, Khadi, the Congress programme, relationship between the Mahasabha and the Sangh, etc. Doctorji replied, "It is rather hard to send written replies to your questions. Kindly come over here whenever you are free. We can have a detailed discussion. Or if you so prefer, I shall myself come over to Wardha and meet you."

Jamnalal Bajaj came to Nagpur on the morning of 31st January 1934. He met dr. Moonje and dr. Hedgewar separately. He was accompanied by Ganapatrao tikekar and tarabehn. Doctorji

dealt with the various aspects clearly and cogently. "The Sangh is aloof from politics. It has no hatred for any other institution. Nor is it opposed to Khadi. And it totally disapproves of the practice of untouchability."

But during that discussion Sethji was repeating his presumption that the sangh was opposed to the Congress. Doctorji, however, presented instance after instance wherein Congressmen had tried to malign the sangh in the public eye. Doctorji also happened to remark: "Probably you too are aware that a certain Mirabehn or Tarabehn among you has made some irresponsible and uninformed comments about the Sangh just two or three days ago." Seth Jannalal was greatly embarrassed, and was also puzzled as to how Doctorji had come to know about it. He then introduced Tarabehn to Doctorji !

Doctorji sent several of his associates to Maharashtra area to spread the activities of Sangh – Gopalrao Yerkuntvar to Sangli, Dadarao Paramarth to Pune and Babasaheb Apte to Khandesh districts. Thus was begun the practice of sending out *pracharaks*.

Thus, while on the one hand efforts were being made to spread the Sangh activities far and wide, on the other the public were being mobilized to protest against the government order. The public response seemed highly encouraging. The C. P. Legislative Council was to meet in March 1934. Doctorji met several legislators and prepared the groundwork for mounting a strong opposition to the government order. The Akola District Board and the Municipalities of Wardha, Umred, Savaner, Katol, Bhandara, etc., had already passed resolutions in protest and demanding revocation of the order. It was significant that the government, while issuing the second order urging the local bodies also to fall in line with the government's policy vis-a-vis the Sangh, had quietly dropped the charge about the Sangh's participation in political activities contained in the first order.

It was against this backdrop that the session of Legislative Council began in Nagpur. Heated discussion about the government order took place on 3rd March and the Home Minister Raghavendra Rao found himself in a most unenviable position. Questions were raised – "How is a 'communal organization' defined ?" "Which Muslim organizations are 'communal' ?" There were also highly interesting exchanges such as the following.

Kashiprasad Pande : "Is it a fact that a former minister of C. P. has presided over a meeting of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ?"

Home Minister Rao : "It is only now that I am hearing about it."

Pande : "Has the government received no CID report about it ?"

Rao : "Perhaps reports may have been received. But it appears strange to me that while the government order banning the Sangh was in force a former minister should have presided over a meeting of the Sangh."

Pande : "When did the government ban the Sangh ?"

Rao : "I need notice for this question. Do not interpret the word 'ban' literally. I have used it in a general sense."

Babasaheb Khaparde : "Which policy or programme of the Sangh is objectionable to government ?"

Rao : "From the talks of the Sangh leaders it looks as if they have adopted the policy of Hitler and modelled their programmes on those of the Nazi party of Germany."

"Who are the leaders of the Sangh ?"

"Of course Dr. Hedgewar is one. I think the other is Dr. Moonje."

"Can you substantiate the charge that you have just made from the lectures of those two people ?"

"I based my statement on the report of a speech made in Nagpur by Dr. Hedgewar."

"Please read from that report."

At this demand Raghavendra Rao began fumbling. The Chairman came to the rescue of the Home Minister by closing the matter – "We may discuss this matter in detail at some other

time."

"When was this Sangh established ?"

"In 1918." (!)

"Will the government insist that local self-government institutions should enforce the order ?"

"We have made only a suggestion. It is not an order."

It emerged from this discussion that the 'notice' from government to the local bodies was only recommendatory and not mandatory.

While all this discussion went on, Doctorji was sitting in the visitors' gallery enjoying the outbursts of laughter emanating time and again from the Assembly Hall. As proceedings came to an end, he met and expressed his gratitude to all those members who had exposed the government's folly so effectively.

Babasaheb Kolte of Bhandara, who had been Doctorji's teacher, moved a resolution on the 7th of March condemning the government's order. Many members spoke passionately in defence of the resolution. Kedar, Ramabai Tambe, Mangalmurthy, Rahman, Phule and others supported the resolution. The discussion went on for three days. At last, the motion was put to vote, and was carried. It was a signal defeat for the government. Although, to save its face, the government refused to annul the order officially, it refrained from enforcing it. And for all practical purposes, the order remained a dead letter. And the ministry itself collapsed. After this sequence of events resulting in government's defeat, the atmosphere everywhere proved far more favourable to the Sangh than ever before.

Doctorji's concern for old friends and colleagues was deep and enduring. Dr. Mohrir of Arvi was in the Nagpur Jail. He was a friend of Doctorji from the Calcutta days. He had been given a life sentence because of his participation in the Arvi uprising. Busy though Doctorji was, he often met Dr. Mohrir in the jail, made affectionate enquiries about his needs and also facilitated visits of Dr. Mohrir's relations. And when he was released in 1934, Doctorji treated him to a party at Nagpur.

Another revolutionary friend of Doctorji was Ramlal Vajpayee who visited Bharat after a lapse of 17 years. Doctorji had not forgotten him. He showed him the various activities of the Sangh, and held free and frank discussions with him. Vajpayee was immensely pleased with Doctorji's achievement in the field of organization.

Another distinguished personality, who was destined to have a far-reaching influence over the Sangh, was coming close to Doctorji. He was Madhavrao Golwalkar who subsequently became the Sarsanghachalak of the Sangh. He had resigned his lecturer's post in Banaras in 1933 and had come to Nagpur to study law. He had, as mentioned earlier, been introduced to the Sangh in Banaras. His was a razor-sharp intellect and he went deep into any issue that faced him. Family attachment or earning money held no fascination for him. In 1934, Doctorji sent him to Bombay along with Baba-saheb Chitale, the Sanghachalak of Akola district. They spent a month in Bombay and did the spadework for initiating Sangh activities there. Golwalkar was later placed in charge of the main branch at Nagpur.

In 1934, Sant Panchlegaonkar Maharaj merged his Mukteswar Dal in the Sangh. The Dal had been formed for the protection of the Hindus during the periods of Muslim onslaughts. The Dal had 25 branches in Yeotmal, Khamgaon, Washim, Nagpur and other places. They all now became part of the Sangh.

In June 1934, the Congress passed a resolution prohibiting its members from associating themselves with the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Doctorji, however, continued to enrol fresh members irrespective of their party affiliations. For him, all Hindus were worthy of equal love and respect. In contrast to the narrow-minded policy of the Congress, Doctorji imposed no such restrictions on members of the Sangh.

The Sangh was steadily expanding and began exerting ever greater influence over the society.

Eager to know at first hand the secret of the Sangh's steady progress, Dr. N. S. Hardikar of Hubli, the Chief of the Hindustani Seva Dal, wrote to Doctorji about it. Doctorji replied with great warmth : "Your letter of 10th December 1934 has reached me. Reading it has given me much pleasure. I am indeed very happy that you are desirous of studying the Sangh activities at close quarters. I shall be out of town for a few days after the Akola Parishat. It might therefore be useful for you to go over to Nagpur a couple of days prior to the Parishat, so that you may familiarize yourself with the working of the Sangh." Dr. Hardikar, however, could not go to Nagpur on account of his indisposition. But he spent two days with Gopalrao Yerkuntvar, the *prachörak* at Bombay, and closely studied the Sangh activities.

A memorable event in the year 1934 was the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to the Wardha District Camp of the Sangh and the meeting 'between Gandhiji and Doctorji. Gandhiji was then camping at the Sevagram Ashram near Wardha. The Sangh camp was right opposite that house. Near about 1,500 Swayamsevaks of Wardha district were camping. Gandhiji had seen the preparations for setting up the camp. He also observed the camp activities from his residence and felt like seeing the camp from close quarters. He spoke to Mahadev Desai who in turn wrote to Appaji Joshi. Appaji immediately went and met Gandhiji and invited him : "Please do come whenever it is convenient for you. You will be most welcome."

That was the day of silence for Gandhiji. He wrote on a slip of paper : "I shall come at 6 tomorrow morning and shall spend an hour and a half there."

The next day, i.e. on 25th December 1934, Gandhiji arrived at the Sangh camp punctually at 6 a.m. All the Swayamsevaks offered their *pranam* to him. Gandhiji was accompanied by Mahadev Desai, Mirabehn and a few others. After seeing the camp in its impressive get-up, Gandhiji patted Appaji on his back and said : "I am really delighted. I have not witnessed such a sight anywhere in the country before." He then inspected the kitchen. Food was prepared and served to over 1,500 people without the least fuss or confusion ; the cost to each Swayamsevak came to just one rupee and a certain quantity of grain, and all the expenses of the camp were met by this ; the Swayamsevaks themselves made up the shortfalls, if any. All this information astonished Gandhiji.

He later visited the sick ward and the tents of the Swayamsevaks. He saw people of all castes and classes harmoniously engaged in work without any reservations. In order to confirm his observation, he interrogated the Swayamsevaks themselves. Their response was uniform : "There are no differences like Brahmin, Maratha, Asprishyas, etc., in the Sangh. We are in fact not even aware of what castes many of our Swayamsevak brethren belong to ; nor are we interested in knowing it. It is enough for us that we are all Hindus." Gandhiji asked Appaji, "It appears almost impossible to ward off the evil of untouchability from our society. How has this phenomenon been made possible in the Sangh ?" Appaji replied, "Feelings of high and low, touchability and untouchability can be abolished only by emphasizing the inherent oneness of all Hindus. Then only will the spirit of fraternity be reflected in their sincere behaviour, and not merely in words. The credit for this achievement goes to Dr. Keshavrao Hedgewar."

By then it was time for the general assembly. The bugle was sounded. All the Swayamsevaks stood to attention. Flag was hoisted. In accordance with the Sangh custom, Gandhiji also joined Appaji in offering *pranam* to the Bhagawa Flag.

Gandhiji then visited the stores. Provisions and various requisites had been neatly arranged. There was a decorated portrait prominently displayed. Mahatmaji looked at it intently and enquired, "Whose portrait is this ?"

"That portrait is of Dr. Hedgewar," replied Appaji.

"Is that the same Dr. Keshavrao Hedgewar you mentioned when we were talking about untouchability ? How is he connected with the Sangh ?"

"He is the Chief of the Sangh. We call him the Sarsanghach5lak. All the activities of the

Sangh are carried on under his guidance. It is he who has started the Sangh."

"Will it be possible to meet Dr. Hedgewar ? If possible I want to hear about the Sangh from him directly."

"He is due to visit the camp tomorrow. If you desire, we shall bring him to you."

Gandhiji then returned to his Ashram.

Next morning, Doctorji arrived at the camp. That evening the valedictory function was held under the presidentship of Bhopatkar of Pune. Afterwards, at Gandhiji's invitation, Doctorji went to meet him, accompanied by Appaji Joshi and Bhopatkar. The discussion between Doctorji and Gandhiji extended for over an hour. The general trend of discussion was as follows.

After preliminary exchange of courtesies, Gandhiji turned to a point uppermost in his mind :

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

"It is true that I worked in the Congress. I was also the Secretary of the Swayamsevak Dal at the time of the 1920 session of the Congress, when my friend Dr. Paranjpe was the Dal President. Subsequently the two of us tried to build such a volunteer cadre inside the Congress. But our efforts were not successful. Hence this independent venture" – replied Doctorji.

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

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

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

"That isn't what I meant. There are many well-meaning people in the Congress. What is at issue is certain basic attitudes. The Congress has been formed primarily with a view to achieving a political end. Its programmes have also been drawn up accordingly, and it needs volunteers to arrange for these programmes. The Congress leaders are therefore used to looking upon volunteers as unpaid servants who arrange chairs and benches during meetings and conferences. The Congress does not seem to believe that the problems of the nation can effectively be solved only when there is a large and disciplined body of dedicated Swayamsevaks who are eager to serve the country of their own accord and without waiting for inspiration from elsewhere."

"What exactly is your conception of a Swayamsevak ?"

"A Swayamsevak is one who would lovingly lay down his life for the all-round upliftment of the nation. To create and mould such Swayamsevaks is the aim of the Sangh. There is no distinction between a 'Swayamsevak' and a 'leader' in Sangh. All of us are Swayamsevaks and are therefore equal. We love and respect everybody equally. We give no room for any differences in status. This is in fact the secret of the remarkable growth of the Sangh in such a short period without any outside help, money or publicity."

"I am indeed very glad. The country will certainly be benefited by the success of your efforts. I have heard of the vast following the Sangh has acquired in the Wardha district. ...How do you meet the expenses of such a huge organization ?"

"The Swayamsevaks themselves bear the burden, each offering his mite as *Gurudakshina*."

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

"I have not taken to medicine as a profession." "How then are you supporting your family ?"

"I am not married."

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

At the end, Doctorji said, "I have probably taken too much of your time. I have no doubt that, with your blessings, our efforts will succeed. Permit us to take your leave now."

Gandhiji came up to the door to bid farewell, and said, "Doctorji, with your character and sincerity, there is no doubt you will succeed."

Doctorji offered his *prandm* to Gandhiji and returned to the camp.

13: WIDENING HORIZONS

THE MARCH of the Sangh began covering town after town and province after province. Every day brought fresh reports to Nagpur of the founding of new Shakhas in Vidarbha, Maharashtra, etc. A new Officers Training Camp was begun in Pune in the year 1935. Many in the northern parts of the country had by this time begun to realize the grim political prospects, and saw that the only way of countering it was to strengthen and expand the Sangh — the only effective organization of Hindus — speedily. A highly respected Hindu leader from Calcutta, Babu Padmaraj Jain, wrote several letters to Doctorji urging him to undertake a tour of Punjab and United Provinces. Dharmaveerji, son-in-law of Bhai Paramanand, wrote to Doctorji from Lahore on 3rd October 1935: "The position of the Hindus here is precarious. I want to spend a few days with you to train myself in the art of organizing mass self-protection of the Hindus. Another friend will be accompanying me." In the meantime, as instructed by Bhai Paramanand, Indra Prakash wrote to Doctorji requesting him to attend the session of Akhil Bharat Hindu Yuvak Parishat scheduled for January 1936. He also pleaded, "In order to organize the movement, you should spend at least a year in Punjab. We shall bear all your expenses."

In view of these developments, Doctorji started training a few Swayamsevaks to undertake study tours of different provinces and organize the movement there. Familiarity with the language of the new area and capacity to get used to the atmosphere of those places were essential for the Swayamsevaks. Doctorji therefore insisted on Swayamsevaks' learning Telugu, Hindi, Bengali and other languages. It was an advantage that Nagpur had a confluence of Hindi and Marathi. Doctorji himself began using Hindi in the Nagpur Shakha. He deputed some workers to spread the Sangh activities in the Mahakoshal sector. Whenever a Swayamsevak expressed a preference to go to a Marathi area, Doctorji used to tell him, "How can you sit in your own area merely because you don't know other languages ? Go to a new area and start the work. You will get to know the language automatically. Is it possible to learn swimming without stepping into the water ?" In 1935, Doctorji despatched a fresh batch of Swayamsevaks to Khandesh and Mahakoshal.

Doctorji bestowed much thought on the organizational aspects and streamlining of activities of the Sangh. He defined the responsibilities of the office-bearers of the Sangh, the conventions to be followed in the daily Shakha, etc., and saw to it that the same methods were adhered to in all the Shakh5s. In fact, officers were appointed precisely to ensure smooth and streamlined working. Doctorji had extensive exchange of views with his close associates in 1927 concerning the rules and methods.

In October 1935, Doctorji visited Chikkodi, Nipani and Sadalga in Belgaum district. This was his second visit to Karnataka. A *patha-sanchalana* — route march — was held in Sadalga. Doctorji delivered an inspiring speech elaborating the Sangh philosophy at a gathering of Swayamsevaks and the public. He also addressed a meeting at Chikkodi. A Shakha of the Sangh was established there on 23rd October 1935. Dadarao Paramarth stayed there for a few

days to brief the local workers about the technique of running the ShakhTi. That marked the beginning of Sangh activities in Karnataka.

In his tour of Karnataka, Doctorji added to his vocabulary the Kannada word '*fludugaru*' (boys) and continued to use it jocularly in the Nagpur headquarters. By nature, Doctorji responded warmly to the customs and usages of the places he visited.

In March 1936, Krishnarao Wadekar was sent to the Dhule–Jalgaon area in Maharashtra to establish branches there. On 24th March 1936, Doctorji gave him a written aidememoire – '*Sangha-stkipana Vidhi*'. That document clearly set down the conduct expected of a Swayamsevak. Its salient features included the following:

"Just as every officer under Shivaji was an expert strategist, every officer of the Sangh should be well versed in all aspects of the Sangh training...The Swayamsevak may, with the SanghachTlak's permission, participate in any activity not inimical to the welfare of the Hindus, on their personal responsibility. *Swadeshi* should be cultivated, inspired by a patriotic attitude. Keeping one's self aloof from the extremes of lack of any code of conduct on the one hand, and meaningless rituals on the other, the Sangh activities should strike a golden mean to energize the entire society. The Sangh must stay away from programmes born out of momentary enthusiasm and outbursts of mercurial emotion. Association with such programmes will only harm the stability of the Sangh."

Doctorji was bestowing extra care on all monetary transactions. He would insist that money offered for a particular purpose should be used only for that sake and never be diverted to other purposes. After the death of the famous jurist Dada-saheb Karandikar of Satara, his son Vitthalrao Karandikar sent one hundred rupees to Doctorji and conveyed the desire of his father that the amount be used to present a shield to the Swayamsevak who achieves mastery in archery. To this Doctorji replied : "Archery is not taught in Sangh. Though we have thought over the proposal of introducing it in our training, it has not been found possible to do so. In view of this, since it is not possible to use the amount for the purpose you have indicated, it is kept in deposit with us here. We shall make arrangements for its use in the manner you suggest." Later on, on receiving Vitthalrao's reply, the amount was used to purchase land for the Sangh office at Sangli.

In response to the requests from Punjab, Janardan Chinchalkar, Rajabhau Paturkar, Narayanrao Puranik and other workers were sent there. Simultaneously with studies, they went about organizing branches in the Lahore area. Babasaheb Apte and Dadarao Paramarth were touring, whenever needed, in Maharashtra, Mahakoshal, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. With a view to imparting military training to the youth, Dr. Moonje decided to start a military school. Doctorji was on the committee of conveners and participated in the first meeting of the committee held at Bombay in 1936. Later on Doctorji became a member of its executive committee also.

Doctorji never missed a chance to put the idea of nonviolence in its right perspective before the Swayamsevaks as also the rest of Hindu society. This had become especially necessary in view of the muddled thinking all around with respect to that concept. In his public speech at Nagpur in 1936, Doctorji said : "We should be clear in our minds that *ahimsa* (non-injury) is not *dtmahimsä* (self-injury) and that the former should not result in the latter. Further, the precept '*ahimsä paramo dharmah*' (the highest code of morality is non-injury) is well rooted in the Hindu mind. As such, it is the duty of the Hindu society to teach the same sublime principle to other communities as well. But if our well-meant teaching is to be listened to respectfully by others, we should have the necessary strength. Unfortunately, our society today is weak and the predatory communities simply do not care for the weak ones.

Therefore, we have first to eradicate the weakness from the Hindu society and make it invincibly strong. Strength, it should be remembered, comes only through organization. It is therefore the duty of every Hindu to do his best to consolidate the Hindu society. The Sangh

is just carrying out this supreme task."

The intensity of Doctorji's activities and the extraordinary strain that he had to undergo are vividly portrayed in a letter written by one of the accompanying workers after one such tour in the Vidharbha region : "After the Shdkhd programme in the evening, meetings of workers would start and continue right up to midnight ; then would follow informal chitchat extending up to nearly 3 a.m. The day-time was bristling with meetings with persons of various hues and shades of opinion."

In spite of such a physically exhausting schedule, Doctorji's face never showed any signs of fatigue. Wherever he went, he would radiate joy and enthusiasm and sometimes even indulge in playful jokes. In 1937, he was travelling from Nagpur to Pune to visit the training camp there. All through the way the Swayamsevaks would gather to meet him at stations. When the train reached Sindi station the local Sanghachalak and the Swayamsevaks began running here and there in search of Doctorji. In the meanwhile, Doctorji had coolly got down and was standing in front of his compartment. But nobody observed him. Having failed to locate Doctorji, the Swayamsevaks felt disappointed and stood at one end of the platform. When the train whistled and the train moved in front of them, Doctorji loudly called out the name of the Sanghachalak and offered his *prandm*. And as the Swayamsevaks' eyes became rivetted on Doctorji, they could not suppress laughter, because Doctorji was dressed in a Khadi kurta and pyjama, with a Khadi cap in a slanting position ! This amusing scene was repeated in station after station throughout the journey.

A noteworthy incident took place during his visit to the Pune camp. The government had then prohibited music in all routes near a particular Tambeli Musjid. Even the ringing of the small bells of Sonya Maruti temple, a little distance away from the Musjid, was objected to by the Muslims and the government had banned that also ! The Hindus of Pune took it up as a challenge and Satyagraha was launched by ringing the temple bells. After completing his programmes in the Sangh camp, Doctorji too offered Satyagraha. On all such occasions, Doctorji's approach was both basic and comprehensive. He explained the stand of Sangh vis-a-vis Satyagraha thus : " Programmes such as these are like external bandages to treat the boils on the body. But it is not a lasting cure for the basic malady of impurity of blood. So long as the germs remain in the blood, such boils would appear again and again. So also, it is only when the germs of disunity in the Hindu body-politic are eradicated and the society made healthy and robust that such frequent eruptions of external attacks on our society could be stopped for good. It is towards this end that the Sangh is striving its utmost. But until this goal is reached, external applications like Satyagraha also have their place."

The activities of the Sangh had their beneficial effect on women too. Smt. Lakshmibai Kelkar, mother of a Swayamsevak in Wardha, felt a strong urge to start similar activities among women. She met Doctorji in Appaji Joshes house.

The report is worth recalling in her own words : "Doctorji asked me about the purpose of my visit. 'Why don't you impart this training and idealism to women also ?' I asked. 'Well', he replied, 'for the present we have restricted the activities to men.' I said, 'If you can permit my son to teach me the techniques, I shall in my turn teach them to other women of the town.' Doctorji did not agree. I persisted, 'Just as women are part of the family, they are part of the nation too. If your message reaches women at home, that will certainly strengthen the Sangh.' Seeing my insistence, Doctorji finally agreed and said, "If you are prepared to take up the entire responsibility, Appaji Joshi will offer you the necessary help."

Lakshmibai met Doctorji thrice or four times subsequently and finalized the plans. She says : "Doctorji suggested that the name of the organization should be different from the Sangh, though conveying the same meaning ; the two organizations should work parallelly to each other, though independently. He also explained the peculiar problems that would confront a women's organization. At each meeting he was minutely observing and assessing my

firmness in the matter. r remained steadfast and told him, 'With your blessing and by the Grace of Almighty, I shall not waver in my effort.' I think I passed in Doctorji's test. At last, he agreed to give all possible help. On the Vijaya Dashami day, 25th October 1936, the 'Rashtra Sevika Samiti' was born."

During Doctorji's tour of Maharashtra in 1936, a couple of incidents took place which are worthy of note. In Kolhapur, a princely State, Sangh was started under the name of 'Raja Ram Swayamsevak Sangh', as the State had banned the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh' for fear of the displeasure of the British. A public speech by Doctorji was arranged in the premises of the famous temple of Ambabai. However, the president did not turn up because of government's fear. Promptly, Doctorji placed a picture of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in the presidential chair and began his address. His opening remark itself captivated the minds of the vast audience : "In a city like Kolhapur, with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj himself gracing the presidential chair, where is the need for any other president ? I consider myself most fortunate to address you under the presidentship of Shivaji Maharaj."

The famous cinema director Bhalji Pendharkar met Doctorji at Kolhapur. Pendharkar described the effect of that meeting, in one of his public speeches at Pune in 1940 : "I had heard that one Dr. Hedgewar of Nagpur had come to the town. Just out of curiosity, I went to meet him. But when, after conversing with him for about half an hour, I came out, I had become his ardent follower !"

In 1937, Doctorji deputed ten associates to Northern Bharat. Some of them were students and some *prachdraks*. Their efforts resulted in the spread of the Sangh activity in Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Central Bharat. Dadarao Paramarth and Babasaheb Apte were constantly on the move supervising the efforts of the workers and enthusing and guiding them. Doctorji himself went and spent a few days in Delhi and Banaras. His stay at Delhi helped to speed up the progress of the Sangh work in Punjab. He met and held discussions with Seth Jugal Kishore Birla and invited him to a function. Impressed by the ideology and method of working of the Sangh, Jugal Kishorji offered a donation of Rs. 500. Doctorji however said, "The Sangh wants *you*, and not your donation !"

The return to Nagpur of Guruji Golwalkar from Saragachi Ashram about this time provided immense relief to Doctorji. Motivated by a spiritual urge, Guruji had gone away in 1936 to the Saragachi Ashram of Swami Akhandanandaji, an associate of Swami Vivekananda, without informing anyone. Guruji's parents, as well as Doctorji, were in deep anguish at his sudden disappearance. Guruji spent over a year in spiritual practices in the ashram. After the passing away of the Swami, Guruji returned to Nagpur. His parents and Doctorji were naturally greatly relieved and happy. Guruji then onwards became the cynosure of Doctorji's eyes. Doctorji instinctively felt that Guruji had a great part to play in moulding the future of Sangh. As days rolled by the personality of Doctorji had its inevitable impact on Guruji. In Doctorji's company, Guruji visualized 'God in the form of society giving us a chance to serve.' Consequently, Guruji threw himself heart and soul into the Sangh work and followed Doctorji like a shadow.

By then the Shakha in Banaras had struck roots and made significant progress. However, some Socialists intolerant of the Sangh had started spreading wild and malicious rumours against it in student circles. And they redoubled their campaign when they learnt that the founder of the Sangh himself would be visiting Banaras. They strained every nerve to malign the Sangh ; they distributed a pamphlet titled "Beware of little fascists." The pamphlet had accused the Sangh of being fascist, and so on, and ended up calling on the students and the people to boycott the programmes of Dr. Hedgewar, 'the Paigamber of the Sangh.'

Doctorji had seen the pamphlet soon after his arrival in Banaras. However, he had instructed the Swayamsevaks to ignore it completely. Doctorji stayed in Banaras for three weeks, and not once did he refer to that pamphlet either in speeches or even in his casual conversation.

The opponents were severely disappointed : Doctorji's approach and cogent reasoning had drawn unstinted appreciation from the intellectual circles. Reporting about his visit in a letter, Doctorji wrote : "After listening to the exposition of the Sangh philosophy, people felt that those who had published the pamphlet had committed an injustice. As a result of the appearance of the pamphlet, even those who had not known about the Sangh became curious....Instead of doing harm to us, the pamphlet has in a way done a signal service to us." In December 1937, Veer Savarkar toured the Vidarbha area amidst scenes of unprecedented joy and enthusiasm. He had been released just four months before. Doctorji was naturally happy beyond words. He was convinced that Savarkar's triumphant tour would greatly help the work of organizing the Hindus ; that Savarkar was more than a mere individual, he was a dynamo of social force. Doctorji therefore accompanied Savarkar during his tour of Vidarbha area, Nagpur, Chanda, Wardha, Akola, Umred, etc. Savarkar was accorded a rousing welcome by the Nagpur Shakh on 12th December. Programmes for him had been arranged by other Shakhas also. Savarkar felt that the Sangh symbolized the self-resurrection of the Hindu society. He showered unstinted praise on Doctorji and heartily blessed the Sangh. Savarkar's programmes in Vidharbha drew epic crowds and literally shook the society out of its slumber. Referring to that tour, Doctorji wrote : "The tour of Savarkar is comparable to the churning of the ocean described in our mythology. A fresh spout of energy seems to be coursing through the people's veins now."

Subsequently too Savarkar maintained close liaison with the Sangh. He happened to visit the Officers Training Camp of the Sangh in Pune in 1940. At Doctorji's request he also addressed the Swayamsevaks. His talk, though it lasted for just five minutes, reflected the warmth of his feelings towards the Sangh : "In the present sad plight of the Hindu society, the Sangh appears to be the only ray of hope. What the Sangh is doing today is what all resurgent nations have been doing all along. The weak cannot become strong except by organizing themselves. We have in the past organized many movements for saving the nation. But none of them has met with the required degree of success. I, therefore, reiterate that the only hope for our nation lies in this great organization."

By this time winter camps of Swayamsevaks had become an annual feature in many districts. And Doctorji attended such camps at several places. The camp at Nagpur was inaugurated by the Raja of Aundh. He was so much captivated by the disciplined turn-out of over one thousand young Swayamsevaks that he instructed his cine-photographer to take a film. Even as a few moments had passed, Doctorji noticed it and stopped it forthwith as it was against the convention of Sangh. It was in those few moments that Doctorji has been filmed hoisting the Bhagawa. And that, fortunately, has remained as an inspiring legacy for the posterity to have a glimpse of the living image of that great national redeemer.

In the circumstances then prevailing, many Congressmen themselves felt the need to reconsider their stance vis-a-vis Sangh. It looked as if time itself had brought home to them the urgent need and inevitability of the work of Hindu consolidation. This was reflected in a talk of Loknayak Ane of those days. Presiding over the valedictory function of the Nagpur district camp of Sangh at Katol on 1st January 1938, he said :

"The flood of the Sangh activity is rapidly advancing, shattering the rock of indifference of our society and cutting through the mountain of opposition. In future, everybody will of necessity be obliged to co-operate with the Sangh. This organization has provided the much needed protective sheath to the Hindu nation, and I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Hedgewar for this great achievement. I ardently hope that this organization will spread to each and every corner of the country."

Dharmaveerji came from Punjab to Nagpur in the beginning of 1938. He felt profoundly inspired in the company of Doctorji. He wrote to Doctorji in most enthusiastic terms after his return to Punjab : " I am immensely delighted that I came to Nagpur. After this, I shall gladly

welcome even death while doing the work of Sangh. The credit for all this must go to you." Doctorji's letters always instilled self-confidence and conquering zeal. He wrote to a Swayamsevak of Delhi : "God has indeed given you a rich area to conquer. All of us are confident that you will succeed in your efforts." On another occasion, he wrote to Baburao More of Nagar : "We can now safely say that the hardest of our days are over. This is the result of the arduous work and unbounded loyalty of your colleagues and yourself."

Doctorji was nominated President of the Akhil Maharashtra Hindu Yuvak Parishat planned to be held at Pune in 1938. Veer Savarkar also had telegraphically asked Doctorji to accede to that request. Doctorji reached Pune on the morning of 30th April. He was welcomed at the Railway Station by hundreds of young men and the elite of the city like Ganapatrao Nalavade, J. S. Karandikar, Editor of *Kesari*, L. B. Bhopatkar, Acharya Atre, Rajabhau Rajwade, etc. Doctorji stopped for a while at Acharya Atre's house. Atre has recorded his impressions of Doctorji thus : "Doctorji's personality was imposing, majestic and serene... At home, we were anxious about the arrangements to be made for receiving such a high dignitary. But Doctorji's simplicity and informal manner of speech soon put us at ease." The presidential procession later started from there itself.

It was indeed a grand procession. The President and other leaders were seated in a decorated chariot followed by eight to ten thousand people. Their joyous shouts rose sky-high. One lame youth, passionately joining in the slogans, was following the procession close to the chariot, supporting himself on a stick. Doctorji observed him. As soon as the procession stopped for a while, Doctorji called him and made him sit on the chariot next to himself, and the procession moved on. None could escape Doctorji's affectionate care, whatever the circumstances. When the procession approached the city municipal office, the Municipal President welcomed Doctorji on behalf of the city.

The Conference went on for two days. Doctorji's speech, born out of rich experience, was marked by simplicity of style and a drive-home manner. Expounding the real meaning of national service, he said : "While thinking of offering our service to Hindu Rashtra we have to remove from our minds all thoughts of the 'self'. A real servant of the nation is one who identifies himself totally with the nation. There are some who take pride in proclaiming their 'sacrifices for the sake of the nation'. Such an expression only betrays their feeling of being something distinct from the nation. Just as a father never says that he has made sacrifices for the sake of his son, so also any service offered to our broader national family does not amount to sacrifice. It is just a sacred duty to be performed by us."

Doctorji also gave the call to the youth to cultivate intellectual honesty and courage of conviction : "Accept only that which stands to your reason. Never accept anything merely because it is preached by some great leader. Test its truth on the touchstone of your intellectual discrimination. Lokmanya Tilak propounded a particular school of thought. Many were the followers who took a pledge to stick to that path life-long. But later on, even as the Lokmanya died on the night of 31st July and the 1st of August dawned, a seachange came over. A new thought-wave took over in place of the old. And most of the followers of Tilak were swept away in that new current. If the followers of any ideology are to be tossed over by the fancies of every new leader, how can they hope to reach their chosen goal ?"

On the third day, Veer Savarkar, Kshatra Jagadguru and Hedgewar were felicitated by the 'Kesari' institution in the Gaikwad compound.

On his return journey from Pune to Nagpur, Doctorji was urged to spend a couple of days as a guest of the Raja of Aundh.

The temple adjoining the palace was decorated with artistic pictures. Doctorji's eyes fell on one picture, in which Lord Shankara was depicted as taking birth in the womb of Jijabai. Doctorji turned to the Raja and said : "Your Highness, it is this perverted concept of Divine Incarnation that has spelt the doom for our Hindu society. Why should we inflict the stamp of

divinity on a great human personality such as Shivaji, who out of his peerless courage and manly efforts breathed new life into the Hindu people ?" This unexpected remark of Doctorji came as a sudden revelation to the Raja. After a moment of stunned silence he exclaimed, "Well, Doctor Saheb, it had never occurred to me before. What you say is perfectly correct." By the end of December 1938, Balaji Huddar, a close friend and associate of Doctorji in former days, returned from Spain. Doctorji had taken great pains to send him to England, from where he had gone to Spain on some assignment. When, however, he returned to Bharat, he had turned a leftist. But it made no difference so far as Doctorji's friendly attitude to him was concerned. Huddar once reminisced about this trait of Doctorji in an emotional strain : "A spirit of genuine friendship formed the secret of Doctorji's success. He was at once one with others — whatever their views or age. And he would maintain that friendly spirit till the very last. Even with my differences of opinion with him, never once did the thought of breaking my bond of affection with him cross my mind. Such was Doctorji !" In fact, Doctorji even arranged a talk by Huddar to the Swayamsevaks of Nagpur in 1938 to narrate his experiences abroad.

Reports of progress of the Sangh work were received from Gujarat, Bihar and Karnataka in July-August. Doctorji asked the Vidarbha workers to initiate work in the neighbouring province of Andhra. In view of the spread of activities in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, Doctorji decided to establish a new Officers Training Centre in Lahore. Addressing that Centre, Bhai Paramanand referred to Doctorji's life of total self-sacrifice :

"For the past few years Doctorji has been devoting all his time and energy to the Sangh work, totally unmindful of the needs of his home. He does not ask for funds, and he shuns publicity. Many people do not know that in Central Provinces alone there are now over 35,000 Swayamsevaks.... No organization can be built merely by speeches or resolutions. It is only when someone makes a supreme sacrificial offering of one's life, and also moulds many other people like himself, that an organization can grow. The Sangh itself evidences this truth." Swayamsevaks of Punjab were eager to have the *darshan* of Doctorji and to listen to him. Doctorji reached Lahore on the morning of 22nd August. He delivered his first speech the next day. Guruji spoke on the 24th. Doctorji was scheduled to speak on the 25th, but he suddenly took ill and Guruji himself had to address the meeting. Doctorji was given a ceremonial salute on the 27th. Raja Narendranath was immensely delighted with the various programmes of the day. As Doctorji was indisposed he could address the Swayamsevaks for only about half an hour. But that speech, though brief, was full of feeling and vigour. Referring to it in the course of a letter, Guruji wrote : "It was a unique privilege to listen to such a logical, coherent and comprehensive exposition of the Sangh ideal. What a forceful and attractive address it was ! When it was over, everybody wished it had continued for another half an hour or more."

After the programme, Doctorji developed severe pain in the chest. Despite the handicap, he met Dr. Gokulchand Narang and invited him to preside over the Vijaya Dashami celebration at Nagpur. Dr. Narang gladly accepted.

Doctorji left Lahore on the night of the 29th. A musical homage to Doctorji by a Swayamsevak at the time of bidding farewell furnished a most touching finale to the entire programme.

Doctorji arrived at Delhi on the morning of 30th. By then his health had deteriorated further and he was therefore obliged to send Guruji in his place for the Gujarat tour. His tour of Maharashtra also had to be cancelled. Considering his own failing health, Doctorji began entrusting more and more of his responsibilities to Guruji. As the chief of the training camp at Nagpur in 1938, Guruji fulfilled the responsibility admirably. Doctorji was a judge par excellence of men and was given to observing the minutest details of a person's calibre and character. Often he arranged lectures by Guruji in his own presence. He scrutinized his way

of thinking again and again. Guruji's highly satisfactory performance of duties entrusted to him pleased Doctorji immensely. The problem of succession to the office of Sarsanghachalak seems to have been even then settled by Doctorji in his own mind.

The Vijaya Dashami celebrations of 1938 at Nagpur was a milestone in the triumphant march of the Sangh. Dr. Gokulchand Narang had come from Punjab to preside over the festival.

Over 3,000 Swayamsevaks in uniform participated in the parade. The hearts of thousands of Nagpur citizens proudly resonated with the marching rhythm of the endless rows of Swayamsevaks. The periodical *Sovadl7n* commented : "The musical band setting the rhythm for the stepping of the uniformed Swayamsevaks roused curiosity in the hearts of the indifferent, pride in the hearts of the sympathetic, and fear in the hearts of the enemies. It was a harbinger of hope for the future, a roar of the valourous and a trumpet call of battle. It symbolized the glorious future as much as the blessings and fruition of a timeless tradition."

A mass agitation against the Nizam of Hyderabad was begun in 1938 under the leadership of Veer Savarkar. The '13higanagar Non-violent Satyagraha Council' was established for the purpose. A massive Satyagraha was launched against the anti-Hindu repressive policies of the Nizam. About 1,500 - 2,000 Swayamsevaks also took part in the agitation. Bhayyaji Dani was one of the leaders of the movement. Doctorji had long before clarified the Sangh policy in regard to such political movements : "Whoever wants to take part in the Satyagraha may do so in his personal capacity." The same policy was observed with respect to this Satyagraha also.

During that period Doctorji had gone for a day to Bilaspur in connection with a marriage. He was to return to Nagpur the same night. However, his already deteriorating health touched a new low. Fever shot up to 104°. Everyone became anxious and insisted that he postpone his journey, but Doctorji stuck to his decision. He said, "Vishwanathrao Kelkar is leading a batch tomorrow for Bhagaganagar Satyagraha. I must be present on that occasion to bid him farewell." When pressure was again brought upon him, he turned it down, simply saying, "Rest and all that are not for me. God has created some others for that purpose !" He proceeded to Nagpur the same night and was present on the next day for the farewell function.

The Sangh Shakhas multiplied rapidly in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and some other provinces. It thus became inevitable to change the admixture of Marathi-Sanskrit and Marathi-Hindi being used for field commands and for *Prarthana*. In order to discuss this and other allied matters thoroughly, a meeting of prominent workers was held at Sindi in February 1939. In addition to Doctorji, Guruji, Appaji Joshi, Balasaheb Deoras, Tatyrao Telang, Vitthalrao Patki, Babaji Salodkar, Nanasahab Talatule and Krishnarao Mohrir participated in the meeting. The deliberations went on continuously for ten days, lasting for eight hours every day. Thoroughgoing discussions took place with regard to the constitution, commands, prayer, technique of the Sangh, the pledge, etc. The conventions of Sangh were revised in detail so as to conform to its fast developing all-Bharat character. It was decided that the Sangh prayer and the commands should be in Sanskrit, the fount of inspiration for all languages in the country. Doctorji outlined the ideological content of the prayer and Nanasahab Talatule wrote it down in prose. This was later put into verse. Operational and procedural changes were also effected. When the details were finalized, the new prayer and conventions were put into practice starting from the Officers Training Camp in 1940 at Nagpur.

After the meeting Guruji and Vitthalrao Patki were sent to Calcutta for establishing the Shakhd there. They inaugurated the Shakhd on the auspicious Hindu New Year Day, on 22nd March.

Reports of expansion of Sh5khas were pouring in from everywhere. Bhaurao Deoras who had gone to Uttar Pradesh for studies had built up a formidable network of Sh5khas in that area. "

The conditions in United Provinces are now very congenial for the growth of Sangh," he wrote in a letter of 29th April. Bapurao Bhishikar who had gone to Karachi to take up a job in an educational institution gave a strong push to Sangh activities in that area. Punjab was throbbing with enthusiasm. Appreciative letters from local workers and sympathizers poured in from Rawalpindi, Sialkot and other far-flung places. Those letters invariably showered praise on the workers who had gone there from Nagpur, and urged Doctorji to enable the workers to continue in those areas. Pratap Seth, impressed by the dedication of the Swayamsevaks, continued to send his contribution to Doctorji from time to time. By then some workers had been deputed to Bihar also.

Swayamsevaks from some northern provinces had come to participate in the Officers Training Camp at Nagpur that year in 1939. Doctorji personally supervised the arrangements for their board and lodging. To suit the differing food habits of participants, Doctorji had arranged for two or three different courses.

By this time Sangh activities had been begun in the Princely States as well, under different nomenclatures, such as 'Rajaram Swayamsevak Sangh' in Kolhapur, 'Ramoji Swayamsevak Sangh' in Gwalior, and so on.

On the *Guru-Poornim* day in 1939 (13th August) Doctorji announced the appointment of Sri Guruji as the Sarlosyav5ha and Babasaheb Ghatate as the Nagpur SanghachElak.

Doctorji had decided that that year's *Guru-Poornim*7 celebrations should find publicity in the leading newspapers of different provinces. Accordingly, the event was reported in *Tribune*, Lahore, *Hindu Outlook*, Delhi, *Leader*, Prayag, *Amrit Bazaar Patrika* and *Lokmanya* of Calcutta, *Sunday Times*, Madras, *Kesari*, *Trikala*, and *Nagarika* of Maharashtra. Doctorji's attitude to publicity was clear from the very beginning. From the point of view of shaping the public mind, publicity will, no doubt, be of some value. But it is neither useful nor necessary for moulding character and building up a strong organization of dedicated men. Daily regular meetings, group activities, lathi and other physical exercises, marching, music, singing of prayer, intellectual sessions — it is only such aids as these that can lay the foundation for a man-making organization such as the Sangh. It was also very likely that once Sangh entered the world of publicity, distorted reports about the Sangh would also appear in the press and endless controversies would ensue. Doctorji, therefore, felt it proper for the Sangh to send out authentic reports whenever it was felt necessary.

A glimpse of the strides taken by the Sangh by 1939 can be had from a letter Doctorji wrote to Dadarao Paramarth : "Encouraging reports have started coming from Punjab, United Provinces, Bihar, Bengal and Karachi. More than 150 Swayamsevaks have come from about 50 Shakhos in Lahore. It has been decided to give a special thrust to the Sangh activities in Punjab this year. As the session of the Aryan League was held at Nagpur this year, we had an opportunity of meeting many all-India leaders from Punjab and United Provinces. All of them have offered support to spread the Sangh activities in their respective regions. They seem deeply impressed by the successful working of the Sangh. As you are aware, four of our *pracharak*s have gone to Bihar. In a short while, Sri Mad'navrao Golwalkar will also join them. I am fully confident that you will manage the work entrusted to you in the Madras province quite competently."

Throughout that year Doctorji invariably asked Guruji to speak on all public occasions. Guruji also spoke when B. C. Chatterjee presided over the Dasara function at Nagpur. The activities of the Sangh were growing fast. And so was the number of sympathizers. The Maharaja of Kolhapur, pleased with the work of the Rajaram Swayamsevak Sangh, gave a donation of rupees five hundred to it.

Along with the rapid expansion of work, special attention was paid by Doctorji to develop the qualities of the Swayamsevaks. During his visit to Pune in June 1939, he posed a question to the workers : "How much time will you take to mobilize all the Swayamsevaks if a surprise

call is given ?" Someone answered 'four hours', some others 'six hours', and so on. Thereupon Doctorji remarked : "Supposing a house has caught fire ; what will be the use of Swayamsevaks arriving on the scene after such a long time ?" The subject was closed at that point. The next morning at 6 o'clock Doctorji called the City SanghachEilak Vinayakrao Apte and instructed him to call all the Swayamsevaks of Pune at Shivaji Mandir grounds within two hours. And exactly two hours later, nine hundred Swayamsevaks presented themselves at the spot.

Doctorji then made a brief speech in which he explained the idea behind the surprise rally : "I remember an incident of my jail-life. It was the meals time. Just then, all of a sudden, the danger call was heard. At once the guards, the police and every other jail official took up their rifles and lathis and rushed to the grounds. Some had come away in the midst of their meals, some had rushed out from their bath with wet clothes on, and some with just a half-pant on. Whatever work they had on hand was stopped instantaneously and all had presented themselves at the appointed place with arms. The significance of this incident became ingrained in my mind. The English are able to rule over this vast country of ours from a distance of over 5,000 miles, mainly because they have people at their command who are ever ready to respond whenever a call is given. If even mercenaries — the paid servants — could behave like this, then it is all the more imperative that missionaries in the cause of nation should be even more ready to respond and give up every other kind of personal preoccupations when the call comes. Without such preparedness, our country's present downfall can never come to an end."

Alongside the rapid growth of Sangh, opposition too grew. The Collector of Nagpur issued an order prohibiting Government servants from participating in the Sangh activities and also from presiding over Sangh functions. Congressmen and Socialists continued to mount opposition to Sangh. But, unmindful of all this, Doctorji pursued his efforts to strengthen and expand the Sangh with single-minded devotion. His words are worth recalling : "... on the one hand flowers of praise are being showered on the Sangh, and on the other brickbats of opposition are being hurled at us. But this is nothing to be surprised about. All well-intentioned efforts will have to face this ordeal at one time or other. However, one happy feature is that the public have realized that despite these antagonistic forces, the Sangh has continued to grow from strength to strength ; and that this has been made possible because of the unswerving devotion of the Swayamsevaks."

The joy of progress of his life-mission made Doctorji forget all about his illness. Many friends felt deeply concerned about his health and wrote to him advising rest. To one such, Dada Naik of Bombay, Doctorji replied : "True, I should have given my body some rest by now. But one engaged in the Sangh work can hardly afford to do that. However, I assure you that there is no cause for anxiety about my health."

A disciplined, country-wide social organization of the Hindus rising above all differences of caste and creed, language and sect, province and party, was unheard of before. It therefore appeared as nothing short of a miracle that Doctorji could organize so many thousands of such Swayamsevaks in every province within such a short duration. It had verily become the only ray of hope for the future security and glory of Hindu society. But compared to what was yet to be achieved, what had been accomplished was indeed very meagre. This was what worried Doctorji constantly ; and he sweated and toiled to speed up the pace of the Sangh, with a total lack of concern for his own health.

The burning intensity of his feelings during those days often came to the surface. When the news reached Nagpur that the period of internment of Veer Savarkar had been extended by the government, Doctorji called a gathering of Swayamsevaks and addressed them. When he had spoken for just five minutes, he stopped ; his voice became choked with indescribable grief at the endless suffering and humiliation being undergone by that peerless patriot at the

hands of the foreign rulers. Doctorji's those few words etched themselves deeply in the minds of the enraptured Swayamsevaks and steeled their resolve for self-surrender to the cause of Independence.

The kind of idealistic fervour created in the hearts of Swayamsevaks by Doctorji can be gauged by a small incident. A young Swayamsevak of Raipur, Narayan Kirwa, was down with high fever. After some days, he sensed that his end was near. He remembered Doctorji and wrote out a small note : "Please inform Doctorji that instead of sacrificing my life to Sangh and to the Hindu Cause I had to fall a prey to fever." What an intense and divine dissatisfaction at being unable to die for the chosen mission of Sangh ! It was after his death that Doctorji received his note.

14: IN THE THROES OF NATIONAL CRISIS

DOCTORJI saw clearly that because of the aggressive designs of the Muslims on the one hand and the appeasing policy of the Congress on the other, the country was fast heading towards a disaster. He was probably the first to warn the nation about the possibility of Pakistan, as early as in 1932. Speaking at the public valedictory function of the Wardha district Sangh Camp at Alipore, he warned : "The Gandharadesha of yore has now become Afghanistan. Likewise, I am afraid, the Hindusthan of today may well become Islamistan of tomorrow if things continue in the same strain as at present. People may soon start thinking of securing political independence even at the cost of our Dharma and Culture. Please ponder awhile : Of what use will such independence be ? We are not in a position to say that such a possibility does not exist. In fact, at the recent Round Table Conference a proposal had been brought to convert most of Northern Bharat into Pakistan. This clearly indicates the way the wind is blowing."

In July 1935 C. Rahmatally, President of Pakistan National Movement, had issued a statement in Cambridge supporting the demand for Pakistan. Plans had been drawn up to exterminate the Hindus. Doctorji was in possession of secret documents relating to these conspiracies. He referred to them in the course of his meetings and repeatedly warned the society of the dangers ahead. He addressed several public meetings in 1935 protesting against the 'Communal Award' and forewarning about the dire consequences that the Award would entail.

As reply to these challenges, Doctorji's one all-consuming passion was to accelerate the momentum of Sangh growth. His heart had been set aflame by the countless affronts being hurled against the Hindu people. A peep into the state of his mind can be had in a letter he wrote on 15th August 1934 :

..... The Sangh work is not something that can wait. We must complete the task of organizing the entire Maharashtra as soon as possible ; and with Maharashtra as the model, the entire Bharat must be organized within a period of ten or fifteen years."

The international situation took a new and sudden turn in 1939. The Second World War was sparked off on 1st September. England was in the thick of the turmoil. That presented a golden opportunity to Bharat to press for freedom. Veer Savarkar, who had been exiled to the Andamans during the First War, was now free and president of Hindu Mahasabha. He felt that the war situation must be exploited by the Hindus to receive military training. He had even planned to start a Hindu Army. Subhas Chandra Bose had severed his ties with the Congress and was preparing to launch an offensive against the British from outside. It was hardly surprising that Savarkar and Subhas both felt that Dr. Hedgewar's achievement and his organizing ability would provide a firm national base for their plans. Balaji Huddar and Dr. V. R. Sanjgiri came to Doctorji carrying a brief from Subhas Bose. Doctorji was at that time

undergoing treatment at Deolali having suffered a severe attack of double pneumonia. The message from Subhas Babu was conveyed to him. It related to formulating a plan for a countrywide revolt against the British with help from such countries as were opposed to Britain.

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

It was then decided that Subhas Babu himself would shortly come to Nagpur to meet Doctorji. However Subhas Babu could not come. Dr. Sanjgiri wrote to Doctorji on 12th of July 1939 :

" You can well imagine the sincerity of our mission in coming to meet you.-We thank you for your kind invitation to meet you at Nagpur. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Nagpur programme is cancelled for the present. Will you, therefore, come over to Bombay on the 20th instant ? We very much hope you will meet us there. I am sure you will not disappoint us. The person concerned will leave on the 20th night. Come for one day's stay. I am sure we can evolve a plan for common good."

It is obvious that the person referred to by Dr. Sanjgiri in his letter was none else than Netaji. But, Dr. Hedgewar was not in a position to go to Bombay as he was just convalescing after his serious illness. And the meeting between the two great leaders could not materialize.

Accompanied by the late R. S. Ruikar, Subhas Babu came to see Dr. Hedgewar on 20th June 1940. But Dr. Hedgewar was on his death-bed at that time and hence no discussion could take place. Doctorji died the very next morning, i. e., on 21st June 1940.

Trailokyanath Chakravarti, the fiery leader of the Anusheelan Samiti, was also planning to give a call for a nationwide revolution. Trailokyanath once came to Nagpur and explained his plan of armed revolt to Doctorji. Many independent efforts were afoot to shake off foreign slavery by striking a final blow to the British hegemony.

Time was, no doubt, getting ripe ; but Doctorji clearly felt that the organized strength of the people as also the general awakening so essential for the success were not yet ready. And his own body was also sinking day by day. The sight of the yawning gulf between the cup and the lip saddened him beyond words. Doctorji stayed at Rajgir during February, March and mid-April of 1940 for treatment. On one of those days, during his mid-day siesta, he was heard muttering : "O, look there ! The year 1940 is already passing ! And yet we have achieved nothing ; we continue to be a subject nation. But someday we shall attain freedom..." How deeply imbued Doctorji must have been with thoughts of Independence ! "Expand, grow fast, faster and faster still !" – was the tireless message of Doctorji during those days. When the Swayamsevaks persisted in their entreaties for securing a big building for the Sangh office at Nagpur, Doctorji would only give a short reply : "First expand the work, make it all-powerful. Otherwise, you will build a big bungalow and the Englishman will establish his own office with all pomp and show in that big building !"

In protest against the British resolve to involve Bharat in the war, Congress ministries in the seven provinces had resigned from office. Government kept a vigilant watch over all public institutions. The Punjab government banned military training and exercises. This, the government thought, would curb the Sangh work. In his letter of 5th March, Doctorji sent the following guidelines to the *pracharaks* in Punjab : "You need not stop the games. Continue the prayers. This will be enough for the present. I do not see the need to change the name, since our name has not so far been dragged in any context."

Doctorji was fully convinced that wherever there were branches of the Sangh, the

Swayamsevaks would be able to take care of any aggression from the Muslims.

The Muslim League held its session in Lahore in 1940. At that session the Muslims openly declared that they would carve out their own independent state. People belonging to the Khaksar movement took out an armed procession defying government's prohibitory order and clashed with the police. Some 20-30 of Khaksar militia were killed. Section 144 was clamped throughout Punjab.

Even in such troubled times, Doctorji continued to receive reports of the unceasing growth of the Sangh. This was highly satisfying to him and gladdened his heart immeasurably. In the course of a letter to Guruji he referred to it : "In the rapidly changing circumstances, our activities are also growing in full steam. It is clear from this that our organizational growth does not depend on any particular programme. Such indeed is the great potential of our ideal and our method of work. Our mission is bound to succeed despite any odds." It was this indomitable faith that enthused the Swayamsevaks into ever greater efforts.

But Doctorji was not satisfied even with this record progress of the Sangh. During that period Doctorji would often ask the workers : "How many Swayamsevaks would be needed for achieving the freedom of the country ?" Such queries would indicate the direction of his thinking. He worked out the requirements, and explained his calculations in a letter he wrote to Nagpur : "I should like to place before you a plan that could make the Sangh most effective. In the course of the next three years, at least three per cent of the population of cities and one per cent in villages should become Swayamsevaks equipped with full uniform."

Efforts were begun in right earnest in all the branches to fulfil this target. Many new workers joined the ranks. That year saw the starting of Shahas throughout the length and breadth of the country. And the entire country was represented at the Officers Training Camp at Nagpur that year. Over 1,400 Swayamsevaks took part in the programme, and out of them 600 were from the Frontier Provinces, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Madras, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

But Fate had willed otherwise. Doctorji became seriously ill just at that time and had to be strictly confined to bed. But his whole mind was in the training camp, and filled with thoughts of the Sangh.

About the same time, intimation was received that Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee would be coming to Nagpur on 20th May to meet Doctorji. After reaching Nagpur, he first visited the camp and then reached Doctorji's house at 9 p. m.

"Namaste, Doctor Saheb !" – greeted Doctorji standing at the frontage of his house.

"But why did you get up from the bed, Doctor ? I heard you were extremely sick and bedridden and I just came to look you up" – said Dr. Mukherjee in sheer surprise.

"The arrival of such an eminent doctor as yourself has driven away my disease !" replied Doctorji cheerfully.

Doctorji's informal and endearing reply spread cheer all round. Actually Doctorji was running a temperature of 103 degrees at the time. But he looked calm and tranquil throughout the meeting. Sri Guruji and others were also present.

Dr. Mukherjee had just come from Bengal. He had brought terrible news about the plight of the Hindus there. Their property was being looted, and Hindu women molested by Muslim ruffians. The condition of Hindu widows was most pathetic. Dr. Mukherjee's words bespoke unbearable anger and sorrow, and was appalling to the listeners. Organizing a martial Hindu protection force in Bengal had become an urgent necessity ; Hindus could not survive otherwise – said Shyambabu. His voice was choking with emotion.

For a while, Doctorji was lost in deep thought. Then he said :

" We cannot forget that there is a Muslim government in Bengal. I do not see how that government will tolerate a Hindu militia. And the British too are supporting them. For both of

them alike the rise of Hindu power is a nightmare. How then will they tolerate an organization of the Hindus such as you are planning ?"

This set Dr. Mukherjee thinking. "What then is the way open for the Hindus to survive ?" Doctorji stated his deeply thought-out thesis in a calm and dignified manner : " Whether it is Punjab or Bengal or any other province – the chief cause for the pitiable plight of the Hindus is want of organization among themselves. As long as this is not set right, no solution is possible. Hindus will continue to undergo such travails at one place or the other. The situation cannot be transformed by half-baked or retaliatory measures. The Hindus must be made to feel intensely that they are one single cohesive society. The concept of one nationhood must be deeply engraved in their hearts. They must love one another and share the common goal of raising up our country. This is the only way, the only positive and enduring way of national resurrection. And this is what the Sangh is doing."

In the course of the conversation Dr. Mukherjee suggested that the Sangh must take part in politics. Doctorji replied at once that the Sangh was not interested in the day-to-day politics. "With the support and blessings of enlightened people like you, there is no doubt that the beneficial Sangh activities in Bengal will grow fast. The protection and help needed by the Hindus will thus become automatically available."

Shyambabu was deeply impressed by the self-confident and basic viewpoint of Doctorji ; and it was apparent that both had developed close rapport in their feelings and views.

After the completion of the Nagpur training camp a letter was received from Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee. It carried news of his decision to start a similar training programme near Calcutta for six weeks starting on 18th June. Over a hundred trainees were expected to participate in the programme. Dr. Mukherjee had requested Doctorji to depute a few experienced instructors who could impart physical, military and intellectual training to the cadets. Doctorji made the necessary arrangements. Speaking in Bengali to the Swayamsevak-trainees from Bengal, Doctorji said : "But what is of greater importance is that local Bengali workers should themselves come forward to take up this responsibility."

15: A Bolt From The Blue

ALL KNEW that Doctorji had not been keeping well for some time. Many also knew that he was bedridden. But till the night of Thursday, 20th of June 1940, it did not occur to anyone — not even to those who were constantly by his bedside — that this sickness would prove fatal.

In order to give a clear picture of Doctorji's last illness it is necessary to trace the course of happenings preceding it. After the first attack of pneumonia in 1924 his health was satisfactory for about eight years — till 1932. Even during his imprisonment in 1930 he remained quite healthy. The period spent in the prison, Doctorji used to say, proved beneficial to both his body and mind. But in course of time he had to travel continuously for the Sangh work, and the nights were often sleepless. This routine gradually began to tell upon Doctorji's stamina, robust though it was by nature. The old backache on the left side reappeared and began to worsen. Massage and fomentation used to give some relief. It was only when pain became unbearable that those around him came to know about it. Seeing Doctorji's condition in 1932, doctors strongly advised him complete rest for some time. Accordingly, he spent two months in the house of Dr. Hardas in Dhantoli, Nagpur. In 1934 he had a relapse, and stayed for four months in the house of Krishnarao Vaidya in Dharampet, Nagpur. On both occasions, however, the rest was only nominal. Swayamsevaks, workers, and friends streamed to him practically all day. Even if Doctorji had gone to the ends of the earth, Swayamsevaks would have made a bee-line to him! And as for Doctorji,

would he have been himself if Swayamsevaks did not surround him all the time ? This being so, his body got little rest, and his mind had even less of it. His mind was filled with thoughts of Sangh and plans for expanding it. Intense concern for the nation had entered into the very marrow of Doctorji's being. The much needed rest proved elusive. Year after year the doctors repeated their advice that he should take rest. The Sangh was registering rapid growth, and responsibilities at the all-Bharat level were fast mounting. As days passed, tours, meetings and other programmes occupied Doctorji's entire time and no prospect of rest was in sight. At long last, owing to friendly pressure exerted by Baba-saheb Ghatate, Doctorji left for Deolali in Maharashtra, for rest on 20th June 1939 after the Officers Training Camp. But even there, rest eluded Doctorji as he contracted pneumonia. However, several doctors and other friends nursed him back to health, and Doctorji was saved for the time being.

During the next one year Doctorji's health remained fluctuating. He was sweating profusely, and had to change his banian half a dozen times every day. His illness greatly embarrassed him, and he would not like anybody to fuss over it. Even at the height of fever he used to fetch for himself the things he needed.

Due to strong persuasion of Gopalrao Ogale, Editor of *Maharashtra*, and other prominent people, Doctorji left for Rajgir in Bihar in January 1940, accompanied by Appaji Joshi and others. The warm-water springs at that place are well known for their curative properties. Doctorji stayed there for about two months. The medicinal baths resulted in considerable improvement of his health. But because of the onset of summer in April he had to return. His rest was thus interrupted. Anyway his correspondence had continued even from there. And when he was at Rajgir, how could he overlook starting a Sangh Shah-a there ?

One day, after his bath in the springs, he had returned to his residence and having a shut-eye. Just then a batch of students reached there for a subscription to their school function. Telang, who was attending on Doctorji, came out and asked them to come at some other time saying that the owner of the house was asleep. However, when Doctorji got up after a few minutes, he enquired whether anybody had come to meet him. He was told about the students' visit. Doctorji became upset and said, "We are in a new place. Whatever may be the reason for the students' coming here, it was not proper for us to send them away without making their acquaintance. Go at once and bring them back." The students came back. Doctorji enquired from the students about their activities in a most affectionate tone. He also gave them a contribution of one rupee for their school function. And it was on the basis of this acquaintance that the Sangh Shakh was later started in Rajgir.

By the time Doctorji left Rajgir, he had also completed his tour of the Bihar province and had established Shakhhas all over there. Such was the 'rest' enjoyed by Doctorji. Rest divorced from Sangh work was something he could not conceive of. It was only at the Sanghasthan – the meeting-place of Shakhha – that probably his mind was at peace.

After he returned from Rajgir, he stayed for fifteen days in the Training Camp at Pune. Doctorji arrived in Nagpur on 16th May and stayed in the Sangh camp. The same night he developed fever, which went on progressively worsening. The training camp was to continue for another twenty-four days. But as Doctorji was bedridden he could neither participate in the programmes nor talk to Swayamsevaks which he so intensely desired. This depressed him severely. At the same time, both the fever and backache steadily worsened. Sometimes the backache would become so acute as to make him virtually unconscious.

During the whole of the training camp the Swayamsevaks could see Doctorji only thrice. The first occasion was when, after his return from Pune on 16th May, he had sat through the *bouddhik* session. Subsequently, Swayamsevaks were eagerly looking forward to seeing Doctorji again. Doctorji too was anxious to spend some time with the Swayamsevaks. During the *bouddhik* session on the evening of Sunday, 2nd June, Doctorji managed to be once again present. At his request, Sri Guruji addressed the Swayamsevaks. The theme of that inspiring

talk, which lasted for over two hours, was Shivaji's celebrated epistle to Raja Jayasingh. Doctorji was so deeply impressed with that talk that he used to often refer to it in his informal chats with Swayamsevaks in highly appreciative terms.

Doctorji's third and last meeting with Swayamsevaks was at their gathering on the morning of 4th. He had been 9 eager to participate in the public valedictory function the previous day. But due to the health hazard he was, much against his desire, forced to stay at home. That made him feel extremely disappointed and dejected. It was with a view to giving him some solace that he was at last brought to the camp at its tailend. He was then hardly in a position to address that huge gathering of thousands of Swayamsevaks. Loudspeaker had been arranged. After speeches by Swayamsevaks from various provinces, Doctorji made a very short speech. That proved to be his last message and testament for posterity.

"I do not feel that I am today in a fit condition to say even a few words to you. As all of you know, I have been confined to bed for the last twenty-four days. From the point of view of the Sangh the last one year has been a glorious period. Today I am seeing before me the Hindu Rashtra in miniature. Because of my illness it has not been possible for me to get acquainted with each one of you individually, even though I have been in Nagpur for so many days. I spent a fortnight at the Officers Training Camp in Pune. I was able to get acquainted with every Swayamsevak there. I was hoping to be able to do so here also, but I found myself unable to be of even the slightest service to you. I have come today to have your *darshan*.

"Though you and I are not acquainted with each other, what is it that draws my heart towards you and your hearts towards me ? That is surely the result of the philosophy imbued in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Even if there is no previous contact, Swayamsevaks warmly take to one another even at the first meeting. And even before they talk to each other, they become mutual friends ! The smile on the face itself is enough for them to identify one another.

"When I was in Pune some days ago, Sri Kashinathrao Limaye of Sangli and myself were passing over the Lakdipool bridge. Just at that time two boys aged 8 or 10 were coming from the opposite direction. As they approached us they gently smiled at us and proceeded further. I told Kashinathrao, 'These boys are Swayamsevaks.' He was astonished. Without prior acquaintance, how could I identify them as Swayamsevaks with such certainty ? He looked puzzled and asked me, 'How do you say that these boys are Swayamsevaks ? There was nothing in their dress or deportment indicating that they are Swayamsevaks ?' 'You can take my word for that. Well, do you want me to prove the truth of my statement ?' Saying this I called back the two boys. I asked them, 'Do you know who we are ?' They answered at once, 'Yes, we know. Two years ago you visited our *Bal-Shakhi* at Shivaji Mandir. You are our Sarsanghachak Dr. Hedgewarji. And the gentleman accompanying you is Sri Kashinathpant Limaye of Sangli.' Such is the result of the incessant penance of the Sangh. Sri Sanjiv Kamath of Madras who spoke here a few days ago exclaimed, 'Well, I came here as a stranger, but am returning as one of your brethren.' In a matter of four days he became like a brother to all us and has returned with profound fraternal feelings. The credit for all this does not belong to any one individual, but to the Sangh. How did the Swayamsevaks from Punjab, Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Sind, etc., with differing behavioural backgrounds, come to love one another ? It was possible because they all belong to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. All the Swayamsevaks of the Sangh love one another as they love their own brethren. Even children of the same mother sometimes quarrel among themselves in regard to property. But such quarrels can never take place among Swayamsevaks.

"I have been confined to the four walls of my house for the last twenty-four days. But, while my physical body was there, my mind was continuously moving here amidst you all. I felt an

irrepressible urge to participate in yesterday evening's programme for at least a few moments, at least for prayer. But because of doctors' strict instructions I had to deny myself that pleasure.

"You are all leaving for your respective places today. I bid you all a loving farewell. Though the parting is painful, there is no cause for sadness. You are all returning to fulfil the very purpose for which you came here. I want you to take the vow that you will not forget the Sangh till your last breath. Let nothing distract you. May there never come an unfortunate moment in your lifetime when you will be obliged to say 'I was a Swayamsevak of the Sangh some five years ago.' Let us all remain Swayamsevaks till the very last breath of our life. Let us keep ever aglow our resolve to work for the Sangh ideal through body, mind and soul. Every day, before going to bed, let us ask ourselves, 'How much Sangh work did I do today ?' Mere execution of the routine programmes of Sangh or daily physical presence at Sanghasthan is not enough for achieving our goal. Remember, we have to organize the entire Hindu society from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas. In fact our main area of operation is the vast Hindu world outside the Sangh. The Sangh should not be the preserve of only the Swayamsevaks, but must cover the entire Hindu people outside the Sangh fold. Our object should be to show to the people the true path of national salvation. That true path is none other than ORGANIZATION. The Hindu race can save itself only through such organization. "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is not interested in any other work. To ask what the Sangh is going to do in future is meaningless. The Sangh will strive on to accelerate the pace of organization. As we continue our efforts, a golden moment will arrive when the entire Bharat will stand as one, undivided and indivisible entity. No power on earth will then cast its malicious eyes on Hindusthan. We have not set out to assault anybody. But we must always be vigilant and resist any outsiders' efforts to assault us.

"I am not telling you anything new. Every Swayamsevak must regard the Sangh work as his sole mission in life. I am confident that you will all depart from here with the firm conviction ingrained in the depths of your hearts that the Sangh work alone has the utmost priority in your lives. I bid you all farewell with this assurance."

As each day passed, Doctorji's condition worsened. Fever did not subside. As advised by the doctors, he was taken to the Mayo Hospital on 15th June for a special check-up. The specialists there examined him thoroughly. X-ray was taken of his back. But the cause of the backache could not be diagnosed. After a series of tests at the Mayo Hospital he was shifted to the residence of Babasaheb Ghatate.

The same day, Doctorji posed an unexpected question to Yadavrao Joshi attending on him : "If the seniormost *adhikari* in Sangh were to pass away, would you arrange a military funeral for him ?" Yadavrao naturally tried to evade the question. But after a while, Doctorji himself replied : "The Sangh is just a vast family and not a militia. As such, the normal funeral rites which will be observed when the head of a family expires, have to be followed here also." Such was Doctorji's forethought about how the organization should conduct itself even after his death.

The whole of Wednesday, 19th June, was spent in grave anxiety. On Thursday morning, when the doctors felt Doctorji's pulse, they noticed that the condition had further deteriorated. Blood pressure had shot up. Dr. Sharma started preparations for a lumbar puncture. The prospect of lumbar puncture gave Doctorji the hint as to the gravity of his condition. He became keenly aware that he had but a few moments left. He therefore asked for a little time. He called Sri Guruji near him and told him, in the presence of all, "Well, hereafter you have to shoulder the responsibility of the Sangh." Naturally the meaning underlying those words sent waves of shock and sorrow to Sri Guruji and all others present there.

The doctors had by then debated among themselves and decided that there was no need to perform the lumbar puncture just then; they could do it in the night or the next day.

In the afternoon Doctorji was no better. He appeared to be under some deep mental agony. His face was grim. He was extremely restless — suddenly sitting up in bed, walking from one end of the room to the other, again lying down and again getting up.

Everybody became torn with anxiety. Evening approached. Doctors came again. Seeing that time was running out, they performed the lumbar puncture. Usually, when lumbar puncture is done, a certain quantity of fluid comes out. But in the case of Doctorji fluid gushed out like a fountain.

Doctorji was in indescribable pain. The physical and more so his mental agony exceeded limits of tolerance. Doctorji covered his face with both palms, so that his suffering might not cause anguish to others. How could others imagine the tornado of emotions that might have hit his heart at that moment ? After midnight, Doctorji's face became grim, as if lost in some reverie. And he lost his consciousness around 2.30 p.m. By the early hours of the morning of 21st June, his face lost its grimness and became calm and serene, and a slight smile appeared on his lips.

Friday dawned. It was to become the fateful day – the day of Doctorji's ultimate departure. Fever had shot up to 106 degrees. The doctors gave up hope and declared that the end was near.

Waves of distress spread everywhere. Telephonic messages went out, and all the workers and senior office-bearers and sympathizers of Nagpur were informed. By the time they arrived, cruel death had already cast its dark shadow over Doctorji. It was only with supreme effort that people who had gathered there could suppress their emotions. All were helplessly pacing hither and thither. Tears broke out spontaneously. The difficulty that Doctorji seemed to be experiencing in breathing presented a most pathetic picture. People in the neighbouring rooms and the verandah sat with downcast faces. None uttered a word. The wheezing sound emanating from Doctorji's throat was clearly audible even outside and moved everyone to depths of sorrow. Merciless death seemed to be revelling.

The struggle went on for about an hour. At 9.27, breathing ceased finally; and the glow of life was extinguished. Dr. Hedgewar was no more; the first Sarsanghachdlok was dead.

Nagpur tearfully witnessed that day a most heart-rending scene which it could hardly have imagined a day earlier. Even as everyone was watching, the cruel hand of death had snatched away from amidst them the father-figure of the Sangh. Doctorji had dreamt of seeing the glory of a resurrected Hindu Nation with his own eyes, and had struggled all his life for the realization of that goal ; and the same physical body now lay lifeless, in eternal sleep ; his eyes closed permanently, his dream remaining unfulfilled.

The message was immediately transmitted telegraphically to all concerned. *Maharashtra* of Nagpur and *K'la* of Pune come out with special editions to cover the news. News spread far and fast. Swayamsevaks and sympathizers rushed to Ghatate's residence in a wild frenzy as it were.

Endless streams of people kept coming for the last *darshan* of Doctorji. Adults, adolescents and children came, offered their last *pranam* to Doctorji and departed with uncontrollable grief. Even the youngest of Swayamsevaks came running from four or five miles in scorching sun, their faces withered and wan. It was pathetic in the extreme to see these small children sitting helplessly in a corner.

It had been decided that the funeral procession should start by 5 p. m. Around 4 p. m. all of a sudden clouds began to appear. It began to drizzle lightly at first, but in a short while there was a heavy downpour. It looked as if even Nature was offering her tearful homage to the great departed. However the people stood in rain waiting to accompany the cortege. The final journey started as scheduled. Just before the cortege left the Ghatate bungalow, garlands and wreaths were placed on behalf of numerous organizations.

It was the biggest procession that Nagpur had ever witnessed. Bicycle-riders led the

procession. Behind them followed in four rows several thousand Swayamsevaks in plain clothes, and thousands of residents of Nagpur. At the centre was Doctorji's mortal body and the Bhagawa Dhvaj. Behind these were prominent citizens, followed by another long contingent of Swayamsevaks and bicycle-riders. Workers belonging to Congress, Hindu Mahasabha, Forward Bloc, Socialist Party, Mazdoor Sangh, Harijan organizations, Women's organizations and numerous other bodies joined in the procession to pay their last respects. Almost every prominent person of Nagpur could be seen there.

The procession passed through the various prominent roads. People thronging on either side and on housetops paid reverential homage as the cortege passed them. Flowers and garlands were showered continuously. Decorated portraits of Doctorji had been installed at several points. After a slow-paced four-hour journey the serpentine procession wound up at the Reshimbagh Sanghasthan.

Special permission of the government had been obtained for cremation of the body at that place. That was the hallowed spot where his life-work was being carried on continuously, the spot where to this day the central Officers Training Camp is being conducted year after year. The place which had just been sanctified by forty days of single-minded austerities of the Swayamsevaks had now been prepared to receive Doctorji's mortal remains. Doctorji's elder brother placed the body on the pyre. All stood up, recited the Sangh prayer, saluted the sacred Flag, and offered their last *prandm* to the mortal frame of the first Sarsanghachalak.

Amidst chanting of Vedic mantras, the pyre was lit in accordance with shastric injunctions. Fire soon consumed the physical body of Doctorji. All eyes were rivetted on the flames and, after a considerable time, the Swayamsevaks began to depart repeatedly offering *prandm* to their departed leader. Even as Doctorji's physical body was being reduced to ashes, his personality was enthroned radiantly in the hearts of countless Swayamsevaks. And so is it even now – a fount of deathless inspiration for the ever increasing number of Swayamsevaks in their determined march towards the fulfilment of his yet unfulfilled dream of a glorious Hindu Rashtra.

16: SIMPLE YET EXTRAORDINARY

DR. HEDGEWAR spent every ounce of his energy for the realization of his one all-consuming dream of seeing the Hindu Nation become invincibly powerful and shine in its full and effulgent glory ; and this, he was convinced, could be achieved only by nurturing the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to its full stature. In his total self-offering to this mission of his life, even the most malicious eye could not detect the slightest speck of selfishness. He was like the self-effacing and self-sacrificing *sannyasin* who dedicates himself totally at the altar of human service. True, Doctorji did not wear ochre clothes. Nor did he shy away from the mundane world. But his mental horizon transcended narrow personal and domestic confines and encompassed the entire Hindu people. He remained a lifelong celibate with a view to serving the country's cause to the utmost of his capacity. But he never made a show of it. He mixed freely and equally with all others in society and strove to change people's attitudes by his personal example and friendly persuasion.

An ordinary dhoti, shirt, conventional coat, a high black cap on the head, a casual pair of footwears — this was his simple attire. When going out he carried a walking stick with a knob bearing the inscription *Swayarneva mrigendratd*, propounding his dictum in life that one becomes great by the sweat of one's brow.

He occupied the front upstairs room in his house. Visitors sat on a clean carpet. After the visitors departed he would immediately dust it clean and respread it. Portraits of Lokmanya Tilak, Swami Shraddhananda and Bhauji Kawre adorned the walls. A bust of Chhatrapati

Shivaji was kept encased in a small glass case.

The upstairs portion was built in 1926 and was not very secure. Doctorji weighed well over 175 lbs. ; and whenever he climbed up or down, the stairs creaked and the walls shook ! The house, though small, was tidy. Everything had an allotted place, and Doctorji was habitually methodical. No work was too insignificant for him. After the congregation of Swayamsevaks every Sunday, he would thoroughly clean the upstairs portion as well as the hall and passages downstairs. Unless he was sick, he would also chop firewood along with his elder brother Seetaram Pant.

Doctorji's house was a confluence of the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. Seetaram Pant was highly religious and conservative. But Doctorji's upstairs rooms were ever open to people of all castes and sects. However, the strongest of bonds subsisted between the two. They addressed each other in the singular ; and on many a day both managed with the same set of eye-glasses ! Doctorji's sister-in-law, Ramabai, was the very embodiment of forbearance and adjusted herself remarkably to the brothers' different life-styles. Her spirit of service was exemplary. Doctorji too was ever ready to attend to the household chores such as taking care of his brother's children, cooking or preparing tea in the absence of his sister-in-law, nursing his brother in sickness, etc.

Doctorji's uncle Abaji was an elderly man. After moving to Doctorji's place in Nagpur, he began observing Doctorji's activities. Gradually, his interest was aroused and by 1932-33 he whole-heartedly collaborated with Doctorji in Sangh work. While Doctorji revered him as his uncle, Abaji too, just like other Swayamsevaks, gradually began to respect Doctorji as the Sarasanghachalak.

Many in the Congress camp were Doctorji's close friends. Even Barrister Abhyankar, a Congress stalwart and staunch opponent of Dr. Moonje, had great respect and admiration for Doctorji. A friend of Doctorji once urgently needed rupees five hundred. He approached Doctorji around 11 p.m. It was by no means easy to raise that amount at that odd hour. Doctorji went straight to Abhyankar's house, and expressed his need. Abhyankar at once handed over the amount to Doctorji. Doctorji said, "Well, Barrister Saheb, may I have a piece of paper and a pen ? I shall leave a promissory note with you." Abhyankar replied, "Doctor Saheb, I have not yet gone out of my mind, to take a promissory note from a man like Dr. Hedgewar !"

It was Doctorji's integrity and purity of life that had inspired such implicit confidence. None had a harsh word for him.

In a certain election Dr. Moonje had contested against •Abhyankar. Abhyankar was a consummate orator, and was a pastmaster in pecking at his opponents' failings and shortcomings. Abhyankar was under the impression that Doctorji had supported Dr. Moonje's candidature, and thought of lashing out at Doctorji. But when he started addressing the meeting, he was forced to confess, "I am afraid I am unable to utter a single word of criticism against Dr. Hedgewar, with whose support my opponent has made bold to contest against me." And this, amidst the heat of an election campaign ! Like Yudhishtira of the Mahabharata, Doctorji was that rare gem among men who could command the respect and trust even of his opponents. To his friends, of course, he was the very heart-beat of their lives. When Doctorji's friend Nanasahab Talatule of Sindi was on his deathbed, he requested that the picture of Doctorji be placed in front of him. He breathed his last paying his last homage to Doctorji.

It was this unimpeachable, transparent character and utterly dedicated life of Doctorji which had won over the future Sarsanghachalak, Sri Guruji, also to the Sangh. This is how Sri Guruji himself, while speaking before the provincial workers' meeting at Pune in December 1942, described in graphic detail his transformation : "I was known for my reckless and unbending ways of behaviour. I never stuck to any rules. In my school and college days my

teachers had always the same grouse against me. I had gone through thousands of books. I was proud of my vast learning in varied branches of knowledge. When I first heard Doctorji I never found in it any flash of intellect or profound learning. Still, gradually, the rock of my haughty nature was pierced. Doctorji's words began to sink into my heart. I myself was surprised at this transformation, this total submission on my part. The strangest part of it all was that I was not in the least sorry that I had surrendered my ego, my pride and everything at the feet of Doctorji. How could this metamorphosis take place? Because, Doctorji's mind, his intellect, his entire being had become saturated with the thoughts of the nation and Sangh. Even the silent company of that rare soul carried an eloquent message to my heart."

An unfading smile was part of Doctorji, as inseparable as fragrance from the flower. And his sense of humour was infectious. Whenever there was a congregation of friends, there was gay abandon, and Doctorji would lead the pranksters who threw pillows at one another and pulled one another's legs. Doctorji loved nothing better than the company of young Swayamsevak joining him in such revelries.

Doctorji was a pastmaster in nicknaming people fitting their special characteristics. "*Sriryavamshi*", "*Ajmeeree Lota*", "*Agadabamb*", "*Vaishakha Nandana*" – such were his coinages. "The donkey keeps glancing backwards in winter months. The sight of grass in its profusion gives it the impression that it has not eaten anything at all. And because of this belief, it grows lean. And at the heat of summer, in the month of Vaishakha, the donkey sees not a blade of grass anywhere ; it is now convinced that it has eaten it all and emptied the prairie. And so it grows fat. It is for this reason that the donkey is called '*Vaishakha Nandana*' (That which grows fat during summer)." Doctorji thus explained the reason for nicknaming a stout Swayamsevak !

Whenever Doctorji went out for Sangh work, Krishnarao Mohrir used to accompany him unfailingly. He was a 'shadow' of Doctorji in more than one sense. Doctorji was dark of complexion, and so too was Krishnarao. When the pair stepped out, they were jocularly referred to as a joint personification of the Sangh, and Doctorji too enjoyed it. And because of this, whenever they went to the house of Appaji Tijare, Krishnarao's maternal uncle and a Congressman, Doctorji used to call him '*Sanghache mama*' (Uncle of Sangh).

Doctorji had an associate from the days of underground revolutionary activity by name Thakur Haraharsingh Rajput. Because of his athletic build and gluttonous eating habits, Doctorji used to call him "*Agadabamb*". He too was very proud of that appellation. Once when he mentioned that name before the District Collector, the latter was taken aback and asked him what "*Agadabamb*" meant. "That is the title conferred on me by Dr. Hedgewar," he proudly replied !

Pandoba Bapat, who ran a hotel, was reputed as a miser of no mean order. But, in the case of Doctorji, he became the very opposite. Whenever Doctorji passed that way, he would unfailingly stop him, take him into his stall and feed him with sweets to his heart's content. Rambhau Ruikar, the labour leader of Nagpur, was a close friend of Doctorji. He was well off financially. Doctorji, in contrast, was barely able to make both ends meet. On one occasion Ruikar came to Doctorji to ask him to purchase a ticket for Bhai Saklatwala's speech. Doctorji replied, "You are a rich labourer, whereas I am but a poor capitalist. How can I afford money to attend a speech ?"

Once Doctorji landed a boyhood friend of his in embarrassment. That friend was used to reciting the adventurous exploits of Dr. Moonje with great gusto and verve. But he himself was awfully timid. He was once absorbed in narrating some thrilling episode about Dr. Moonje. As a well-known saying goes, "*Yuddhasya valid ramyd*" (Tales of the battlefield are always delectable). Doctorji was also among the audience. Just then a police officer briskly walked in and enquired in a harsh voice, "Who is Prahlad Pant Phadnavis here ? " The prowess that Phadnavis was displaying suddenly vanished into thin air ; valour made room

for pathos ! He turned pale, his tongue was dried up and his limbs began to shiver. Doctorji had briefed the other friends that a police officer of his acquaintance would be coming there. Prahladrao's pitiable condition gave rise to peels of laughter all around ! Doctorji had a fund of stories and parables to drive his message home. He had brought from an exhibition a couple of fans made of palm-leaves and bamboo. They were kept in his living room. One of them carried a picture of Chhatrapati Shivaji, and on the other was a picture of the famous actor Balgandharva in a female role. All were wondering why Doctorji had bought the latter. Someone asked Doctorji about it. Doctorji explained, "I intentionally brought these two just to show the contrast between the condition of Maharashtra some 300 years ago, and our present times !"

It is human nature to judge the condition of the world with one's self as the measuring-rod. To warn the Sangh workers against such a tendency, Doctorji used to narrate a story.

A certain barber used to serve a king. One day, seeing the barber in high spirits, the king enquired, " Well, how are the people of our kingdom faring ?"

"Very well indeed, Your Highness. They all eat well and live well. Everyone has bought at least four or five tolas of gold," replied the barber. The king expressed satisfaction, though he knew that the condition of the people was really not that satisfactory and there was indeed hardship. The king later called his prime minister and told him : "It looks like our barber has purchased a quantity of gold recently. See that it is somehow stolen." The order was carried out.

The barber, when he next came to attend to the king, looked crestfallen and steeped in misery. The king, mildly amused, enquired casually, "How is life in the capital?" The barber let out a sigh and replied, "Oh, what could I say, Your Highness ! The situation is utterly disheartening : theft has become so rampant."

Doctorji's *baithaks* (informal chats) were full of gaiety and at the same time an unfailing source of instruction. Twenty to twenty-five youngsters always surrounded him. The doors of his house were open to people at all hours of the day and night. All kinds of topics, from politics to religion, figured freely in the conversation. Doctorji brought his vast experience to bear on each issue, and his exposition left a vivid impression on the minds of his listeners. Even those who came with the intention of leaving early forgot themselves and stayed on to listen to Doctorji.

During such informal *baithaks* Doctorji would guide the Swayamsevaks in all matters, big and small. Once he described how a letter has to be drafted with regard to organizational matters : "The tone and contents of the letter should be such that even if by chance it were to be pasted in a public square, we should have no reason to entertain fear or shame."

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

A question which he would often pose to the Swayamsevaks half-humorously and half-seriously was : "Has the ghost of Sangh possessed you ?" The Swayamsevaks lost no time in grasping the intent behind the question. Just as a possessed person forgets his own personal desires and acts only as an instrument to fulfil the wishes of the possessing spirit, so should the Swayamsevaks become instruments for carrying out with single-minded devotion the objects of Sangh.

If a Sangh worker felt depressed and run down, a few moments with Doctorji would put new life into him. The nature of the human ego, the right conduct of a true follower, spirit of true friendship, power of strong resolve – many were the subjects of Doctorji's exposition, tintured with accounts of travel, problems facing the society, plight of the oppressed, etc. These informal *baithaks* became a most effective tool in the hands of Doctorji in moulding the minds of workers in a constructive fashion.

Whether at Nagpur or outside, Doctorji was never tired of going to elderly people and speaking to them about the Sangh. Doctorji used to call it *Weva-darshan'* or 'appointment with god'. God, not having to move out, confers blessings on devotees from his own place. Likewise, said Doctorji, these elderly persons blessed the Sangh work from their own places ! By 1937-38 Doctorji's health had greatly deteriorated. Walking had become impossible. Friends occasionally used to send a car or some other vehicle for him, but being shy of nature he hardly ever used them. With a view to putting him at ease, friends pooled funds and bought a car for him. It was a peculiar vehicle, of a very old model. When it was in motion there was no need for a horn. The rattle of the car would announce its arrival from afar. Doctorji never moved out alone. The car was thus always full; and others joined on the way. One often had to sit on the other's lap, like children at the time of adoption. They all called it 'state car'!

Doctorji's rail travel was always by third class, and often he had to stand throughout the journey. But Doctorji never complained about it, nor did he ever think of travelling in some other class. On 25th March 1938 Doctorji had to leave for Nasik to inaugurate the Bhonsle Military School. The train was crowded, and there was not even standing room. Sangh workers who had come to see him off pleaded that he might travel by second or first class. But Doctorji rejected the suggestion, and travelled by the next train. Doctorji scrupulously avoided vain argument. His mind was always preoccupied with but one thought — that of winning over people's heart. He was adept at avoiding unpleasant or rancorous exchanges. He had once gone to Nagar in Maharashtra for a Sangh programme. Nagar was a stronghold of Socialists. They had decided to heckle Doctorji with embarrassing questions. As soon as Doctorji concluded his speech, they were up on their feet : "We have a few questions : We want your replies." Doctorji calmly replied, "This type of casual and public type of question and answer is not in vogue in the Sangh. Nor is this a public meeting. If you have any questions you may come to my residence. I shall be glad to furnish my answers there." Seeing the disciplined atmosphere at the meeting, the Socialists withdrew. Late that evening they came to Doctorji's residence armed with several books. Before they started questioning, Doctorji posed them a straight question : "Do you believe in the concept of a 'Nation' ?" It was a simple question, but the Socialists found themselves flustered and replied, "No, we don't". "Our Sangh," said Doctorji, "is one hundred per cent nationalist, and therefore it differs basically from your way of thinking. There is thus no meeting-ground for discussion between us. You may work according to your ideology, and we shall continue to work in accordance with our own way of thinking. However, nothing need come in the way of our being courteous towards each other." Doctorji's words were logical and truthful. And the Socialists too realized it. The arguments they had proposed to advance had lost their foothold, and they returned without uttering a word.

Sri Guruji wrote his observations about this unique trait of Doctorji. "The art of knowing the other man's mind and conveying to him in a convincing manner the Sangh's viewpoint in a brief sentence or two and of overcoming the opposition of various types of people and winning them over into the organizational line, has been mastered by Doctorji. This requires a mental poise to an extraordinary extent – a quality so essential for carrying out the task of social consolidation."

Doctorji once went to the house of Ruikar the Socialist labour leader for the morning tea. "O the scion of the solar race, wake up !" shouted Doctorji.

"Come in, please," welcomed Ruikar. Over a cup of tea Doctorji asked Ruikar casually, "Ruikarji, I have a question to ask of you. Would you mind giving a frank reply ?"

"No, not at all," said Ruikar.

"What would you say if Shivaji took birth again tomorrow and established his kingdom here ?"

"What kind of a question is this, Doctor ? I would be the happiest man. I would distribute sweets to all !"

Doctorji then said, "If this is so, why should you go on calling us names ? At heart, both of us desire the same thing. It only means that we have the guts to speak out what we feel as truth, whereas you do not have it, that is all !"

Though imbued with self-effacing humility and deeply-felt affection for one and all, Doctorji could be quite caustic at times. A gentleman once made a suggestion to him – "Why don't you register the Sangh, so that the people will be inclined to offer financial assistance to it ?" Doctorji's reply was short and incisive : " It only means that you seem to place greater trust in the foreign British than in ourselves ! If the people are not as yet placing confidence in us, then we shall win their confidence, through our selfless actions. Then, what of mere money, the society will place its entire resources at our disposal."

Doctorji firmly believed that strict discipline and the mental stamina resulting from it are essential for the Swayamsevaks. He bestowed much attention on this aspect. This was the rationale behind his insistence on daily attendance of Swayamsevaks at the Shakra. Doctorji made it a rule that if a Swayamsevak was out of town, he should even then not miss the Sunday morning parade at any cost.

Doctorji had once gone with a few Swayamsevaks to attend a special programme at a village thirty-two miles from Nagpur. It was a Saturday. By the time they finished their food it was already late in the night. It had started to rain, and no buses were plying at that late hour. However, Doctorji decided to return to Nagpur on foot. A thorn embedded itself in Doctorji's foot, but he went on as if nothing had happened. But fortune seemed to favour him. When they had covered a few miles, a bus turned up by chance. Though it was already overfull, Doctorji and the Swayamsevaks somehow got in and reached Nagpur by 2 a.m. Everybody was surprised to see Doctorji at the Sunday morning parade on time and in full uniform. The incident carried its own lesson for them.

During the course of an inspection — after the switch-off for night rest — of the various tents in a camp in Nagpur, he asked the chief of a tent about the number of Swayamsevaks in his charge. When the *adhikari* replied 'twenty-seven or twenty-eight', Doctorji became furious and remarked : "What is this muddled reply you are giving ? Tell me accurately whether it is twenty-seven or twenty-eight." On another occasion at Pune, after an inspection of the Swayamsevaks' uniform he remarked : "I am happy that so many Swayamsevaks have equipped themselves with uniform. However, I don't find the military type of precision in it. It all appears Brahmanical!"

Another trait of Doctorji was to provide opportunities for the flowering of the Swayamsevaks' personality on constructive lines. The Congress session in December 1936 was held in Faizpur. When Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was unfurling the flag, the thread got entangled and the flag got stuck. Many tried to climb the 80-foot pole, but failed. Everyone looked on helplessly. But a Swayamsevak of the Sirpur branch by name Kishensingh Pardesi volunteered; he climbed the pole with ease, immediately disentangled the thread and saved the situation. All heaved a sigh of relief, and expressed hearty appreciation for Kishensingh. After he got down, the leaders carried him aloft on their shoulders in jubilation, and people around threw currency at him amidst cheering. It was decided that he should be honoured at the public session ; but as soon as it came to be known that he was a Swayamsevak of Sangh, the proposal was dropped. When Doctorji heard about the episode, he felt proud about Kishensingh and deplored the petty-mindedness of the Congress leaders. And when he went to Dhule he seated Kishensingh by his side and felicitated him saying, "When there is a call of the Nation, one must obey it irrespective of one's party or group."

Doctorji's personality was made up of many unique qualities like a thousand-petalled lotus. He had built a countrywide organization by his constructive genius and rare ability. Doctorji's

work was truly epoch-making, inasmuch as Bharat had not witnessed such a truly all-Bharat build-up of Hindu unity during the past one thousand years. But despite this achievement, Doctorji was totally self-effacing, and possessed not a trace of ego. In 1934 Shankaracharya Vidyashankara Bharati (formerly Dr. Kurtakoti) conferred the title *Rashtrasenapati* on Doctorji. This was publicized in the papers also. Many friends and admirers thereafter began appending the title to Doctorji's name in their communications. Doctorji put a stop to it saying, "The title awarded by Sri Shankaracharya is of no use to our work. On the contrary, it gives a wrong and distorted image of Sangh being an army. We should therefore desist from using it."

At another time Damodar Bhat of Miraj wanted to write a biography of Doctorji. As soon as Doctorji got scent of it, he said : "I have not done anything worth writing about, nor am I so eminent as to merit a biography " and immediately cried halt to it.

Doctorji returned to Nagpur in 1940 after completion of the Training Camp at Pune. He was accompanied by Babuaji (Sri Krishnavallabhprasad Narayansingh), the Sanghachalak of the Gaya branch. Sri Guruji, who was then the Sarvadhikari of the Nagpur camp, had come to the railway station with a huge garland to receive Doctorji. As soon as Doctorji alighted, however, he stopped Sri Guruji with a stern look. He then smilingly said, "Why should I be garlanded ? I am only returning to my own house. On the other hand we must honour our distinguished guest from outside." Sri Guruji then garlanded Babuaji. Recalling this incident, Sri Guruji emotionally reminisced, "It was only after life had left his mortal frame that I could garland his body."

Doctorji seemed to exemplify in his daily life the saying of Basaveshwara: "None is smaller than me; and none is greater than a Shivasharana (devotee of Shiva)." In his conception he was just a servant of the Nation — a Swayamsevak. It was a living faith with him. Describing an ideal public worker, Doctorji once said :

"He is not like an ochre-robed monk. He does not proclaim, 'I make no distinction between gold and mud.' He knows the difference quite well, but he is not enamoured of the glitter of gold. He willingly says, 'The gold is for the society. I shall be content with mud.' He painstakingly churns milk and extracts butter. He knows the difference between butter and butter-milk (diluted curds) ; and yet he prefers the latter for himself and willingly offers the butter to society. It is only such a worker who can render true service and also inspire the spirit of sacrifice in the people."

Doctorji had indeed grown into a colossal stature. But his associates did not seem to notice it at all. Such was his warmth, simplicity and easy affability. People of all age-groups mixed freely with him. Once during the course of a *baithak* an elderly acquaintance of his suddenly realized the loftiness of Doctorji's personality. He could not resist exclaiming, "O Keshav ! To what heights you have grown ! I was hardly aware of your achievement !" Observing the childish pranks of Krishna, his mother Yashoda could scarcely perceive the glory of his divine powers. Yashoda once learnt that Krishna had swallowed mud during play. But when she forced his mouth open, she saw illimitable universes dancing in his small mouth. In the next moment, however, she saw Krishna engaged in play, and she forgot all about his divine status. Such indeed are the great ones. Doctorji had built a tremendous nation-wide organization which was nothing short of a miracle. But to the outward eye he was but a simple and ordinary worker, ever smiling, good-humoured and gentle.

No words can capture fully the greatness of Doctorji's personality. It was 'high as the Himalayas and deep as the ocean.' When paying homage to his memory, millions of young men of Bharat even today sing out of the fullness of their heart :

"Endowed with but a spark of your effulgence, surely shall we dispel the darkness all around and light up the world."

Whenever Doctorji was in Nagpur there used to be visitors from outside, and Doctorji treated

them most cordially. He made enquiries as to where they were staying, their food, etc. If it turned out that they had not yet found lodgement, he would ask them to stay with him. Water for tea was kept boiling all day. On the one side there was the most hospitable Doctorji, and on the other was his sister-in-law ever worried about the wherewithal to keep the stove burning and cater to the guests !

Many were the occasions when there was nothing extra for the guest. But not once did Doctorji tell a guest, "Please be seated ; I shall have my food and join you." It was always his practice to joyfully share with the guests whatever was available however frugal it may be, no matter even if it was only a couple of plain *rotis*. If even that was in short supply he would tell the guests, "I have just had my meal ; please come and have your food." He would merely sit with the guests, regaling them with his banter. His dire poverty never showed in his face. Once some guests turned up late in the night. Even firewood was not available in the house. Doctorji took out some sitting-planks, split them and managed the emergency. Such was the domestic condition of the great soul who laid the foundations of an epoch-making organization !

Doctorji was not habituated to tea in his younger days. An incident at Chanda started him on tea. He happened to visit the house of a poor weaver, and was treated to some beaten rice. People in the household: were in a fix when they noticed that Doctorji was not used to tea ; and they were not in a position to offer milk. Doctorji, being sensitive, could not fail to notice their plight. The matter kept lingering in his mind long after he returned home ; his mind was harking back to the weaver's hutment. After the evening's work, he suddenly donned his coat and cap and said to his associates, "Come, we shall go to that Swayamsevak's house again and have tea there."

After this incident Doctorji began the practice of offering tea to visitors at his house also. Sometimes, however, there were embarrassing moments on this account. Once Doctorji's friend Vishwanathrao Kelkar came to see him. Doctorji entreated him to stay on for tea, and passed on the message to the kitchen. Conversation was resumed. Fifteen minutes elapsed, and still there was no sign of tea. Doctorji then went inside the kitchen himself. None of the requisites was available, except water ! His sister-in-law sat crestfallen in a corner. Hurriedly, Doctorji himself went to the grocer and brought some tea-powder, milk and sugar. Tea was somehow got ready.

Vishwanathrao was quick to notice the severe economic hardship in Doctorji's household. He had till then no inkling of it. Soon after, he called Guruji and asked him, "Why haven't you given any thought to the problems of Doctorji's household ?" Guruji calmly replied : "How can *Ekddashi* fill the belly of *Shivardtri*?" (*Ekddashi* and *Shivardtri* are both days of fasting according to tradition.)

"I cannot bear to see this suffering. Hereafter you must regularly accept a contribution from me for him," said Vishwanathrao, and after a while added, "At least to meet his expenditure on guests, I shall contribute rupees twenty-five every month. Please pass it on to the lady of the house. But take care that this does not reach Doctorji's ears." Guruji simply replied, "Kindly excuse me, I must ask you to do that job yourself." Doctorji's austere nature and stern nonacceptance were too familiar to one and all.

Doctorji was pious by temperament, and cherished deep faith in God. He invariably began his letters, and even entries in the diary, with the sacred syllable OM or *SRI*. Whenever he started out from his house he would invariably salute God. The Sangh work was for him a Divine Mission and this faith manifested itself in every word that he spoke or wrote. He sincerely believed that he was just an instrument to carry out His injunctions through the medium of the Sangh. Protection of the righteous and punishing the evil-minded is a divinely ordained task, and the Sangh, in Doctorji's view, was born to do just this. In the letters that he wrote, the inscription at the top carried a saying of Tukaram :

Daya tiche nay

bhootänche pcilan

anika nirdalana kantakdche

("Compassion means protection of the living and extermination of the wicked.")

Doctorji was a 'human magnet.' No one could escape from its charm. It was his sincere affection and warmth that lay at the root of this spell. In the course of his travels he once went to Satara. His visit had been announced in advance. An old-time revolutionary, Damodar Balwant Bhide, heard about it and waited for Doctorji at the Sanghasthan. As Doctorji arrived he recognized Bhide immediately. After *Dhwaja-prandm* Doctorji went and prostrated before Bhide. The fact that they had not met for a long time had not made the slightest difference in Doctorji's attitude ; he was instantly as warm and courteous as he was in the past.

Abaji was once out on tour for Sangh work. It was necessary to send a young Swayamsevak to accompany him. Doctorji went to the house of one Krishnarao Badekar and asked him, "Abaji is leaving on tour. Can you accompany him for these two months ?" He readily agreed. Krishnarao was a primary-school teacher. But unmindful of his job he went with Abaji. Doctorji's slightest wish was so sacrosanct for him. Later Krishnarao gave up the job and worked for many years as a full-time *pracharak*. However, Doctorji sensed that Krishnarao was feeling depressed for having not completed his education. Doctorji encouraged him to continue his studies and gave him all the needed help. Badekar is now a practising advocate in Nagpur. Doctorji's warmth and concern for his associates was as instinctive as of a mother for her children.

A Swayamsevak from Wardha once came to Nagpur. He had brought a message that a taxi be sent to Wardha at 6 a.m. next morning. Doctorji had a bout of fever at the time ; and yet he himself set out to arrange for a taxi. He asked a Swayamsevak to bring a tonga for him. Fearing that exposure might further affect Doctorji's health, a Swayamsevak volunteered to fix up a taxi. He made enquiries, but no taximan was willing to ply the vehicle so early in the morning. The Swayamsevak felt delicate about informing Doctorji of the failure of the mission ; after asking the Wardha Swayamsevak to inform the concerned people of the non-availability of the taxi, he returned to the Karyalaya to sleep. Doctorji, however, came to know of it. At that late hour he draped a shawl around himself and started on the taxi-hunt. Around 1 a.m. he was able to secure one. He also went to the Karyalaya and informed the Swayamsevak of it, in order to put him at ease. He then came back home and wrote a note to Wardha. It was only after despatching the taxi around 5 a.m. that he went to bed.

Doctorji's warmth for others manifested itself in countless ways. The renowned Marathi litterateur and editor Madkholkar was in a fix being unable to secure his elder's blessing for his marriage because of caste considerations. It was Doctorji who came to his help and saw through the successful conclusion of his union with the bride of his choice. He looked upon his friends' joys and sorrows as his very own, with the result that whoever came to be acquainted with him soon began to trust him implicitly.
