

# THE R.S.S.

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THE R.S.S. has often been in the news in recent years. It came into head lines, however, only, since the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The organisation was banned on February 4, 1948 by the Central Government and similar action was simultaneously taken by the Provincial Governments. As the Government of India's *communique* stated: "It has been found that in several parts of the country individual members of the R.S.S. have indulged in acts of violence involving arson, robbery, dacoity and murder, and have collected illicit arms and ammunition. They have been circulating leaflets exhorting people to resort to methods of terrorism, to collect firearms, to create disaffection against the Government and suborn the police and the military". The *communique* added: "the objectionable and harmful activities of the Sangh have continued unabated", and "the cult of violence sponsored and inspired by the activities of the Sangh has claimed many victims. The latest and the most precious to fall was Gandhiji himself".

In reply the Sangh demanded that either the charges be proved or the ban withdrawn. Thousands of members of the R.S.S. were arrested for participating in the Satyagraha which was launched, and later were released on the understanding that the affairs of the Sangh would be run on democratic lines. The Sangh now has its own constitution and supposedly elects its functionaries excepting for the post of the Sar Sangh Chalak, which post is inherited by the nominee of the previous functionary. The ban having been removed, the Sangh is again engaged in the task of organising the country into its old way of thinking.

Many questions arise regarding the fundamental objectives with which the Sangh was founded, and the me-

thods of their fulfilment. Why were their objectives Contrary to the Congress way of thinking and work? What was the Sangh's attitude towards foreigners in general and Muslims in particular? Was it influenced by Nazi methods of mass organisation? Was it a reaction to Muslim propaganda for power, to fascist organisations like Allama Mashriqui's Khaksar movement, or was it a purely cultural organisation, aiming to regenerate the country into one heritage, one culture and one nation without any reference to Swaraj? The task of answering these questions has been rendered difficult because the Sangh, since it was founded, has been carrying on its organisational work silently, ever spurning publicity. Even so, an attempt has been made in this article to analyse the Sangh from the acknowledged sentiments of its founder, and his philosophy and from the famous treatise *We* which the present Sar Sangh Chalak, Shri M. S. Golwalkar, M.Sc, LL.B., wrote in 1949.

The Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, was founded on Dasserah day in 1925. The founder was Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar of Nagpur. Victim to the operation of the Risley Circular which prohibited students from taking part in politics, the Doctor was rusticated from the Neil High School for his *Vande Mataram* agitation. The Doctor joined the national school at Yeotmal (Berar). But the school was compelled to close, and the Doctor migrated to Poona and passed his Matric from the national school there. In 1910, he joined the National Medical College at Calcutta. He led the batch of Maharashtrian students which occupied the Santi Niketan Lodge, and owing to his notable patriotism came into intimate contact with highly respected leaders like Shri Shyam Sunder Chakravarty and Shri Motilal Ghosh.

Shyam Sunder in particular took a liking to him, and exercised a considerable influence on his development. His life in Calcutta further cemented the feeling of affection and respect which abounded between Bengal and Maharashtra since the days of anti-partition in Bengal. In due course he secured his L.M.S. Degree and returned to Nagpur. He was, no doubt, a Doctor but he hardly ever interested himself in setting up a practice. Patriot to the core, he had dedicated his life to the cause of his country's emancipation from slavery. He preferred to remain a bachelor because of the need he felt for devoting his years to the unbroken service of the Motherland. The present writer had the good fortune to be in contact with him from late 1919 to 1923 at Nagpur. Not a day passed without our meeting. The present writer even addressed a number of public meetings at various places along with him. Dr. Hedgewar was a renowned orator, he kept his audience spell bound. He was impatient of the slow progress the country was making in the direction of Independence. He disliked the constitutional agitation which was being conducted by the late Lokamanya for Swaraj "within the British Empire". He wanted complete freedom without being tied to any apron strings. Mahatmaji's non-co-operation movement having as its objective "Swaraj within one year" immediately enticed him. As the present writer recalls the proceedings of the Reception Committee of the Nagpur Congress, he remembers how the Tilak School of Politics was done away with brick by brick, in which youngsters like Dr. Hedgewar took not a small part. Although the Doctor and the present writer were later accepted as Associate Members of the Rashtriya Mandal led by Dr. B. S. Moonje, which governed and ran politics in C.P.

on Tilakite lines, Doctor Hedgewar in his objective of complete independence went headlong with the non-co-operation movement.

The movement having failed, the Doctor retired from it as quickly as he had entered it. He disliked the way in which the movement was conducted later on and the way the Muslim leaders were misdirecting it. The Mopla rebellion created a deep impression on him. Then came the Muslim riots in Nagpur and the weakness of Hindus became patent to all. The Doctor felt ashamed of the behaviour of the Hindu population which, though stronger in numbers, was totally disorganised and panicky. This set him furiously to the task of infusing confidence in the hearts of Hindus, and of preparing them to protect themselves. Thus was born the R.S.S. A fairly large number of volunteers were regularly drilled into the art of defending themselves. Timidity gave place to courage, and the next time there were riots, the Muslims had a new experience. They had to run away and leave Nagpur *en masse* for safety. They, as aggressors, had sown the wind. They had to reap the whirlwind. This success infused a feeling of courage in Hindu hearts, which was reflected in an influx of strength to the organisation.

The Doctor's pro-Hindu feeling having been awakened, it always had the upper hand. The Congress policy of appeasing the Muslims enraged him. Later, the Communal Award and the organisation of the Muslims on communal lines, not for Swaraj but for Pakistan, further spurred him into activity. Mention must be made here of the deep impression made on the Doctor's mind by Shri V. D. Savarkar's revolutionary past and his ideology which claimed Hindustan for the Hindus. The Doctor considered Veer Savarkar to be the stimulating source of all agitation for achieving the country's liberty. So, when the R.S.S. was formed, the Doctor ran to Ratnagiri where his apostle of liberty had been ordered to stay under restraint of movement. The Doctor was

the present writer's guest for a morning in Bombay, when he personally explained to him the reason of his visit. He wanted to consult Veer Savarkar concerning the rules and regulations of the R.S.S. organisation. Let it be said to the Doctor's credit, however, that although he held Veer Savarkar in great esteem, he never made his organisation subservient to the Hindu Mahasabha. The cleavage between the two became clearer as years went by until Veer Savarkar, in a speech at Panvel openly attacked R.S.S. neutrality in res-

pect of Hindu Mahasabha work and said: "The epitaph for the R.S.S. volunteer will be that he was born, he joined the R.S.S. and he died without accomplishing anything!"

So, the Doctor independently continued the activities of his organisation. His administrative methods may appear to have been shrouded in mystery. This was excusable, no doubt, because he had to work when a pro-Muslim foreign power like Britain was ruling India. His organisation kept away from party politics and worked entirely for

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strengthening the cultural instincts of Hindu society. There is reason to believe that Allama Mashriqui's Khaksar organisation, run positively on Fascist lines, copying the Hitler's and Mussolini's Youth movements, with its easy conquests, left a deep impress on the Doctor's mind. It seemed not altogether impossible that the attainment of Shakti on R.S.S. lines would one day mean release of forces that would not only win Swaraj for the country, but would also reserve Bharat-Hindus. A deep-dyed anti Britisher as he was, freedom from the foreign yoke was one of his main aims, though having no faith in the ideology of non violence or in the Congress way of political agitation, he entirely disbelieved that the Congress would ever be able to attain Swaraj because it lacked organisational strength. But had God granted him a longer life to see his country actually free on 15th August 1947, he would none the less have danced with sheer joy at seeing his dream fulfilled. Perhaps he would have even remodelled his organisation on different lines to suit new circumstances.

Instead, the country had to witness a different spectacle. All the R.S.S. members, those at least whom the present writer knew and had met, looked as if they were in mourning on 15th August 1947. Perhaps they were overcome by a sense of frustration that Swaraj, even a Sovereign Republic, was coming without a violent war being waged against Britain, without any official contribution by the R.S.S. to any of the civil disobedience movements initiated by the Congress. The ridicule they had heaped upon Congress was now flung back on them.

It was the partition of the country into Hindustan and Pakistan, however, that pained them most. Congressmen and others were soon to praise the services rendered by these R.S.S. stalwarts who rendered yeoman service to the thousands of Punjabi and Sikh families who were uprooted from West Punjab. But the feeling of disgust for the

miseries of Hindu and Sikh evacuees outweighed their joy at attaining Swaraj, a Swaraj which in expanse and greatness had no parallel in the history of Hindustan for the past 1000 years. The dreams of Shivaji, Rana Pratap, and Baji Rao I, had at last taken physical shape; India was free, and yet the R.S.S. continued to feel disgruntled and disappointed. The present Sar Sangh Chalak, the Shri M. S. Golwalkar in his speech at Shivaji Park, Dadar, delivered some time in November 1947 had not one good word to say about the architects who through life-long sacrifice and labour had actually been able to attain Swaraj without bloodshed, without ill will. On the contrary, he poured contempt on Gandhiji, who, according to him, had committed a series of blunders. To him, partition was the wound, and he would ignore the glorious Swaraj because it did not tally with his idea of one Nation and of an Akhand Hindustan for the Hindus. The feeling of contempt and hatred for the Congress even to this day amongst those of the many R.S.S. rank and file whom the present writer happens to know. Even the assassination of Gandhiji does not appear to have touched them.

I would recommend to the reader who wishes to understand the full ideology of the R.S.S. the Treaties entitled *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Bharat Publications I. Publisher: P. N. Indurkar, B.A. Mahal, Nagpur, Price Re. 1), and in particular the first edition of the book, which bears a straightforward foreward by Shree M. S. Aney, now H. E. the Governor of Bihar. This foreward, for reasons best known to the author, has been omitted from the second edition. This book is regarded almost as the Geeta by the R.S.S. rank and file, and to understand it is to understand everything worth knowing about the R.S.S. "The idea contained in the word Nation\*", says the author on page 18, "is a compound of five distinct factors fused into one indissoluble whole, the famous five 'unities'—geographical (country), racial

(race), religious (religion), cultural (culture), and linguistic, (language)V. "Hindustan is the land of the Hindus and is the terra firma for the Hindu Nation alone to flourish", says the Gurujī on page 45. Answering what is to be the fate of all those who, today, happen to live upon this land, though not belonging to the Hindu Race, Religion, and Culture, the author says:

"At the outset, we must bear in mind that so far as 'nation' is concerned, all those, who fall outside the five-fold limits of that idea, can have no place, in the national life, unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture and language of the Nation, and completely merge themselves in the National Race. So long, however, as they maintain their racial, religious and cultural differences, they cannot but be only foreigners, who may be either friendly or inimical to the Nation".

The Gurujī proceeds on page 47:

"There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minorities problem. That is the only logical and correct solution. That alone keeps the Nation safe from the danger of a cancer developing in its body politic of the creation of a State within the State. From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence the Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of glorification of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu

(Continued on page 131)