

Hedgewar And The Rise Of Hindu Nationalism

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Abstract

India has given rise to many intellectuals, ardent social reformers, and those in positions of authority who have exerted great effort and made significant sacrifices for the betterment and honour of our nation. And in this regard, Hedgewar undoubtedly was the prominent and influential figure in freedom struggle. Nevertheless, the distinguishing factor of his work is in his creation of an organisation that operates with a unique and inventive approach. He strongly advocated that those who want to contribute to society and their country should allocate one hour of their daily routine to the Sangh. The Swayamsevak who attend the Shakra engage in efforts to systematically arrange and unify society. As a result, the RSS has created a custom of regular individuals leading remarkable lives in service to the country. Several social reformers were actively striving to eliminate caste inequities and untouchability by challenging the caste system. Hedgewar adopted a novel approach of disregarding castes and instead emphasising the unifying principle of Hindutva (Hinduness). The instruction "Ekshah Sampat" (Fall in One Line) represents Hedgewar's deep ideology, which not only promoted unity in action but also encouraged communal dining, a new concept in that era. The whole functioning of RSS is aligned with this line of thought. He encouraged Swayamsevak to align themselves with the broader concept of Hindutva, rather than focussing just on their caste identity. The efficacy of this methodology used by Hedgewar is evident in the fact that even in contemporary times, individuals are not enquired about their caste or social status, therefore gradually diminishing the caste-based differences among the members of the Sangh Swayamsevak. This research paper explores the legacy of Hedgewar and his contribution to strengthen the Indian freedom movement. The article also discusses the role of Hedgewar in the subsequent rise of Hindu nationalism during the period by using historical, exploratory and analytical methodology.

Keywords: RSS, Hedgewar, Nation, Hindu, Society, Organization

The greatness of Hedgewar lies in the primordial purity of his firebrand patriotism. In contrast to most of the nationalists of his contemporary period, Hedgewar had not been fortunate enough to be born with silver spoon in his mouth. He had his roots in the economically lower strata of Indian society, yet he was the owner of the great mental wealth which have him the strength of conviction not to be guided by the petty economic requisitions of his life and till his last breath he tenaciously stuck to his convictions. His biographer depicts him as "sanyasi without saffron clothes."¹ The partition of Bengal and Swadeshi movement greatly stirred Hedgewar who sensed in a divinely provided opportunity to arouse and organise the masses against the alien domination. By 1905, Hedgewar had come to the conclusion that militant armed struggle was a pre-requisite for the overthrowing of the foreign domination. Hedgewar was instrumental in the formation of a revolutionary group in the name of Shivaji which soon become the focal point of revolutionary activities in the central provinces. He even established contacts with the revolutionary groups of other provinces for the formation of All-India revolutionary organization to lead an armed struggle. The name of Tilak was freely used by Hedgewar and other revolutionaries while passing messages for help and resource mobilisation. Furthermore, 'Bal Samaj' and later 'Arya Bandhav Samaj' were established for the furtherance of revolutionary activities. The emphasis on role of mass mobilization by Tilak also influenced Hedgewar strongly enough to believe in the utility of using the religious sentiments of the populace against the British imperialist forces. By 1907-08 his rebellious thoughts and activities had lent a new dimension to his personality. In May 1921, the British colonial authority arrested him on accusations of treason in reaction to Hedgewar's assertive remarks at Katot and Bharatwara.² The trial began at the court on June 14, 1921, under the observation of a British judge called Smemi. After a brief period of contemplation, Hedgewar resolved to use this chance for fostering national consciousness and chose to advocate for his own defence. Hedgewar was released from Jail in July 12, 1922. He was appalled at the lack of organisation in the Congress volunteer Organisation. He felt that it was a prerequisite that a disciplined organisation should exist if the foreign was ever to be banished by patriotic youths. Moreover, he felt that a non-violent programme would not capture the imagination of youth. Despite perceptible rumblings within the ranks of the Congress, he was elected to the Central Provinces provincial Congress Committee and was appointed as Joint Secretary³. Hedgewar favoured joining legislative assemblies and joined the responsivists in the internal Congress controversy on this issue. He was the only one among his politically oriented friends who did not join the Swarajya party. He was firm in his conviction that a necessary condition to Independence was a dedicated cadre inspired by the nation's tradition and history. He participated in many confabulations with the prominent politicians in Nagpur during 1922-24 regarding the means to make the existence of such an organisation in reality. He visited Gandhi's ashram at Wardha in 1924 and discussed this issue besides other Congress policies. He is reported to have disagreed with Gandhi on his support of the Khilafat movement and maintained that it created separatist tendencies in the Muslim

community. He left Wardha to ponder on how to unite the often-antagonistic Hindu groups into a common nationalist movement. The formation of the RSS was politico-cultural watershed, both from the point of view as a departure from the politics of minority appeasement and the search for the cultural nationalism in politics. According to Swapna Das Gupta, "Hedgewar's legacy is far more tangible and of greater consequence in contemporary India".⁴

The success of the RSS would be crucial to the fate both Marxism and the western ideologies in the third world as the RSS is not merely a cultural or political body but a 'movement and a dynamic process of silent change aspiring to create the solid base of the cultural nationalism and a self-corrective and operative system. It is the symbol of a new wave sweeping the developing countries. Its growing strength, evolving ideology and acceptability into and accessibility to intelligentsia, Harijans, tribals, women etc. give it a unique position in our national life. H.V. Seshadri says, "the way the thought movement of the RSS has gathered momentum over the last six decades stands unparalleled. Since its birth, these past decades have seen the birth and meteoric rise of many a thought current in fields of political, economic and social transformation in Bharat".⁵ H.V. Seshadri, the All-India General Secretary of the RSS further says, but all of them without exception have fast declined. Some of them have already gone into oblivion as shattered dreams. Even votaries of certain 'ism's' claiming them to be international have now found them as having mere feet of clay with their international godfathers themselves having abandoned them as a liability. The official document of the RSS also says, "the revered Doctorji and Sangh had become so identified with each other that in the story of his life, we can have an inspiring view of the systematic development of the Sangh".⁶

Thus, the concept of cultural nationalism in modern India was redefined by Hedgewar and his successors whether the RSS is for radical transformation or a status quo is a pertinent question before the political observers of the developing world. This new school of thought is indigenous in its origin, evolution and operation. There are three questions to be answered: Is it a totalitarian movement? Is it trying to establish a theocratic Hindu state and is it 'anti-equality' i.e., pro-capitalist? The Marxist thinkers question the internal structure as well as imaginative vistas of the R, S, S. and Ajit Roy says, "the entire organisation is run on explicitly authoritarian principle- 'Ek Chalak Anuvartika', or allegiance to a single leader. There is no democratic procedure for the choice of its leaders including the topmost one, the Sarsanghchhalak".⁷ At the apex of the RSS hierarchy is the Sarsanghchhalak and he is described as the 'guide and philosopher of the RSS'. The basic unit of the RSS is the 'Shaka', which according to K.N Gobindan, "is a system and process for tuning of human mind towards certain goals of life, non-material values, sense of sacrifice towards bigger entity and cultivation of human mind, and in the eternal conflict of matter and mind, keeping mind a superior entity".⁸ The RSS uses the term 'Samskar' for the character of an individual and the accompanying moral strength and conviction. It is not only the external mannerisms but is a broader concept and a process for the preparation of an individual to lead the mission of national reconstruction which is a multi-dimensional effort. Hedgewar concentrated on individual citizen and his unique contribution was to create a mechanism, order and system of cultivating integral, conscious and sensitive human mind in the common man of the society. Mental transformation will be the basic systematic change and the change in the superstructure will be in a way natural corollary to it. Thus, the functioning of the Sakha is the nucleus of the functioning of the RSS. It is neither a political unit like the 'Soviet' nor a club but a 'power house' to evolve Swayamsevakas who are supposed to be vehicles of transformation. The concept of Pracharak (a full-time worker) is another important concept unique to the national reconstruction. A Pracharak is willing to work in any sphere of the national life according to the need of the hour. He is the life-breath of the organisation and directly associated with headquarter. At the apex of the organisation, two bodies 'Karyakari Mandal' and Pratinidhi Sabha' take all important policy decision and 'Sarkaryawah' is the highest elected post. In the RSS, the Sarsanghchhalak is the highly respectable man and according to Golwalkar, even a son of a shepherd, after becoming Sarsanghchhalak, would do justice and act like Vikramaditya.⁹ The concept of 'Ekchalak Anuvartika' is an important one to the RSS and the erroneous meaning of dictatorship derived from it by the Communist thinkers is due to the misunderstanding of this unique system. Dr. Hedgewar nominated his successor only after consulting all the important functionaries of the organisation. Moreover, the Sarsanghchhalak is not the highest executive post. All decision are taken by the 'Sarkaryawah' in his The executive body, that is the Karyakari mandal. Sarsanghchhalak, of course, has an important place and he is highly respected by every RSS man. The term dictator does not exist in the RSS vocabulary. Dictatorship is a political concept while 'Skachalak Anuvartika' does not have a political connotation. The RSS has employed this term with a special connotation which is not translatable into English. Brotherhood, rather than command or fanaticism, is the basis of the organisational hierarchy of the RSS. Anderson have characterised it as "if it is the lure of office or rank which has brought you here, you will be sadly disappointed for that you can find fertile elsewhere outside the RSS. Here it is selfless service and sacrifice unqualified, ungrudging and absolute".¹⁰ RSS is the greatest 'Havankunda' in which Swayamsevakas plunge themselves like so many sandal sticks, unmindful of which burn without sound and smile, Here burning is the essence The RSS has evolved a system based on 'consensus' and 'commitment'. The concept of nationality is becoming the central issue of the RSS philosophy. E.M.S. Namboodripad analyses the mentality of Hedgewar as follows:

One of those who were highly impressed and inspired by the Savarkar thesis was Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS. As a nationalist who participated in the Gandhi-led movement, he continued to be a congressman for a decade and participated in the 1930 Salt Satyagraha. He however, disassociated himself from the Gandhian concept of Hindu-Muslim unity, and launched his new movement of Hindu revivalism.¹¹

The genesis of confusion regarding the cultural renaissance initiated by Hedgewar did not lie in the structure or philosophy of the RSS but in Hedgewar's intimate relationship with Hindu nationalist leaders and his respect for the supreme sacrifice of Savarkar. His political understanding therefore, could be easily dubbed as revivalist and his creation, that is the RSS was perceived to be a replica of the Hindu Mahasabha. Here it must be kept in mind that Dr. Moonje, one of the most militant Hindu leaders and described as a 'mentor' of Hedgewar, differed with latter on several political issues. The relationship between two was more of an informal nature. Yet, it must be accepted that Savarkar's concept of 'Hindutva' did undoubtedly influence Hedgewar but it could hardly leave a perceptible imprint on his own philosophy. Hedgewar was primarily a revolutionary

patriot and not a Hindu nationalist. He was in quest of Indian Nationalism and the pan-cultural identity of the people and not Hindu identity or Hindu nationalism. Hedgewar stood for unity but not for uniformity and he welcomed diverse religions, the national cultures. He emphasised feeling of national culture, that is the feeling of oneness and love for motherland. While, Savarkarism believes in the superiority of the Hindus, the majority community, and identified Hindu with Bharat and therefore, concludes that the glory of Hindu race is synonymous with the glory of Bharat. Hedgewarism takes a world view and to create a solid base for nationalism, it endeavours to unite Hindus beyond sectional, sectarian, lingual and regional diversities and wants to metamorphose every Hindu into a patriotic Indian. Thus, for Hedgewarism, Hindus are a means to regenerate cultural nationalism and the glorification of the motherland. V.P. Chopra in his article, "the RSS, and the nation state" views RSS as a representative of new emerging class of bourgeoisie, small and medium industrialists and as fanning communalism to help this class maintain the status quo. The RSS is opposed to the policy of the minority appeasement patronised by the Congress system, and not to any minority community as such. The RSS fought strongly against the policy of minority appeasement during the freedom movement. It also opposed the 'Communal Award' of 1932. The Communal Award evoked a spontaneous outburst of denunciation by the RSS as highly unjust and discriminatory to Hindus.

In those days, Hedgewar was sounding a grim note of warning in all his public meetings that the poisonous seed of separation in the form of communal Award would sooner or later result in the partition of the nation. The long-term objective of the RSS was character building which was a part of the cultural revolution. The emphasis on 'Hindu Rashtra' was a reflection of firm view of the RSS, that this nation and its culture is thousands of years old, that is a Sanatan Rashtra, and therefore, the Hindus have a crucial role in the cultural revolution of the nation. Thus, it laid the denudation of cultural nationalism. Hedgewar, the Sarsanghachalak of the RSS added a new dimension in the traditional approaches to cultural nationalism by pleading for 'total change in a man'. The RSS is an example of self-operative and self-corrective system and the Swayamsevakas are the log-wheel of the change. The RSS felt that for a country like India, what was imperative is the socio-cultural change and the political change would ensue as the corollary. In the RSS school, politics is treated as an inalienable ingredient of cultural regeneration. The critics of the RSS maligned it as a right reactionary Hindu force but verily it is a tool for transformation beginning for the grassroot level. The role of the RSS is comparable to the role of New People's Church in Latin America. H.C. Modi says, "Hedgewar is no more, but he lives in the idealist's heart, a fact which nobody can contradict. He took up the unfinished work of Swami Vivekanand, and I consider him as second incarnation".¹² In short, one can say that the RSS had conceived a scheme which took into account all the diverse problems of the country. In the RSS, plan, human beings are viewed in an integral perspective and not in an economic one only. This integral humanism inspired by Hedgewar and later evolved by Deendayal Upadhyaya is the only alternative approach left to the country.

Gurumurthy noted that the weakness of the Hindu society is the main cause for the degeneration of the country and says, "Wan as the central theme of living is the quintessence of eastern thought. That is the Hindu value by which entire world can benefit. The Hindu thought has suffered humiliation because of the weak and listless Hindu. It is this national disease that the founder of the RSS, Hedgewar diagnosed as the root cause for the failure of the nation".¹³ The RSS has both the option of using its strength to radically bring about a change in the system or to play the politics of majoritarianism. However, the RSS is determined to show down the politicians engaged in minoritism and in so doing it is also trying to show the strength of organised majority. However, it is still up to the RSS to reaffirm its faith in its founder's secular principles, which rejected the elitist and reactionary approaches of the Hindu sangathan. Hedgewar was the torch bearer of secular politics and rightly condemned the populist stand of the Congress on the one hand the communal politics of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha on the other hand and as a result was that the RSS role was highly acclaimed by Gandhi and Ambedkar, especially for his campaign against untouchability. Though not a social reformer like Arya Samaj, the RSS paved the way for radical reforms in Hindu society.

In the first phase of the RSS, it was helped and encouraged by the such as Dr. B.S. Moonje, Savarkar but it never surrendered its secular outlook. The growth of communal politics coincided with the evolution of the national movement. One of the most remarkable reasons of communal politics was social and economic cleavages, between two major communities of India - Hindus took full advantages of the western education, a microscopic Muslim population showed the courage to go for it. Thus, "it was from predominantly the Hindu community that they become the pioneer of Indian intelligentsia sprang and they become the pioneer of Indian nationalism".¹⁴ Political manipulation at upper levels by the elites of the two communities fanned the fire of the communal politics. In the process, the Muslim mind developed the feeling of minority, a concept unknown in the Indian political process. According to Nehru:

"The nationalism had a strong appeal to the Muslim mind in India and a large number of Muslims had played a leading part in its struggle for freedom. Yet Indian Nationalism was dominated by Hindus and had a Hinduised outlook. So, a conflict arose in the Muslim mind, many accepted that nationalism trying to influence it in the direction of their choice, many sympathised with it and yet remained aloof, uncertain, and yet many others began to drift in a separatist direction for which Iqbal's poetic and philosophic approach had prepared them".¹⁵

The RSS was averse to the use of the slogan of Hindu-Muslim unity. It was not convinced by Gandhi's tactical approach who tried to attract the Muslim masses into anti-imperialist struggle by giving this slogan. The RSS believed that it would create feeling of separatism in the minds of the Muslims. Hedgewar said "Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, many other communities lived together. Thus, we should dream of unity of all instead of beating the drum of Hindu-Muslim unity".¹⁶ The RSS wanted to create patriotic sentiments among the people who were divided into caste and seats and unite all for the regeneration of the Hindu society. The RSS was convinced that religious sentiments could be utilised as a tool for radical activities too. It aimed to organise meetings and processions to discuss the life and contribution of great men of the land. Events taking place between 1920-24 made deep impact on Hedgewar's thinking and provided the necessary framework for the idea and realisation of the structure and aim of the RSS. He was not convinced with Gandhi's logic on the Khilafat at issue, Gandhi believed that, "the Khilafat question gave the two communities the opportunity of a life time to unite. If the Hindus wish to cultivate eternal

friendship with Muslims. They must parish with them in attempt to vindicate the honour of Islam".¹⁷ Hedgewar was of the opinion that it would not help in the long run and create a sense of separatism in the Muslim mind. The slogan of Hindu-Muslim unity which Gandhi could establish during the Khilafat movement started crumbling when the Non-Cooperation movement was called off. RSS commentator, K.R. Malkani opines "the whole basis of the movement was wrong. It was religious fanaticism, therefore, foredoomed to failure".¹⁸

The Khilafat issue widened the gap between Hindus and Muslims. A movement that fails, naturally leads to adverse reactions and a fiery movement like the Khilafat agitation could only lead to fearful consequences. The Hindus blamed the Muslims for agitating for Khilafat and not for Independence of the country. The Muslims accused Hindus of using them to fight the British to win Swaraj in which they would be a majority. Hedgewar's aim was not to create a counterpart of the Muslim League. The feeling that Hindus must overcome their internal differences, emulate Muslims and organise themselves as a gaum, both within and without the Congress that motivated Hedgewar into founding the RSS in 1925. Its emphasis was on physical training Advait a philosophy, the RSS was merely acting on Swami Vivekanand's prescription for "an Islamic body and Vedantic heart". The RSS is against mixing politics with religion. It made no distinction merely because of one's religious beliefs. It believed that unorganised and divided Hindu community would lead the fundamentalists and communalists to create unsavoury condition in the society. Unprovoked by the prevailing tension and aggressive Muslim attitude, the RSS. awakened the Hindus to organise and defend themselves, weakness of the Hindu society invites anti-social elements to attack on it.

The RSS denounced the 'Hindu-Muslim' unity slogan of the Congress as a reactionary ideology. It felt that the weakness of the Hindu society gives opportunity to Gandhi and his followers to repeat the slogan of Hindu-Muslim unity in a political context. The RSS rejected both the prevailing approaches of the Hindu nationalists. The first approach was that the Muslims were as dangerous for the Hindu India as the Britishers.¹⁹ Another approach was represented by the Hindu nationalists toeing the line of the Hindu Mahasabha. The moderate line was represented by the leaders of the Mahasabha who did not like to abandon the Indian National Congress and leave national mainstream of politics. This group was represented by P.D. Tandon, M.M. Malviya, S.P. Mukherjee and others. The militant Hindu Nationalism represented by Dr. Moonje, V.D. Savarkar. etc. wanted to turn the religious community into a political community and considered that it was the right of the majority to rule the nation. The RSS outrightly rejected both the approaches.²⁰ Till 1929, the RSS was associated to the Hindu Mahasabha symbolically. But later it felt that the Hindu Mahasabha was raising its head against the minority and its voice reflected the aggrieved Hindu mind. Hedgewar's approach was nationalistic and instead of involving himself in the ideological polemics with the Hindu nationalists, he silently withdraws himself from the politics of Hindu majoritarianism, and in future also, refused to associate the RSS as a volunteer organ of the Hindu Mahasabha²¹. It is a folly to say that he desecrated politics. In fact, his political brain influenced the RSS working also. As Bharao Deoras says, during Doctorji's life the political influence on the Swayamsevak was more than the during Guruji (Golwalkar) leadership of the RSS. Guruji gave, 'cultural base' to the Hindu Sangathan. His 'Hindutva' had no political connotation; it was historical in nature and origin.

Hedgewar did not claim superiority of his action and vision and instead tried to give wider base to the RSS. In 1923 Hindu Mahasabha gave a call against untouchability though it was Brahminical in its thinking and action. Hedgewar's decision to form the RSS was not a reactionary move. As once he was asked to organise a route march of the volunteers in Nagpur to make the Muslims defensive, he not only rejected it out of hand and said, "we are not reactionaries to react to Friday and mosques".²² The RSS was against the Communal game played by the British government and silently supported by the Congress. The RSS opposed the Communal Award of 1932. The RSS also opposed the 'Two Nations' theory of Savarkar. Savarkar said, "But the solid fact is that the so-called communal questions are but a legacy handed down to us by centuries of cultural, religious and national antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims".²³ Savarkar's approach was a rude shock to all nationalists. Dr. Moonje and Savarkar did not feel comfortable with the RSS and its approach of Hindu nationalism as synonymous to the cultural nationalism. Moreover, the RSS denounced politics of Hindu majority by the Hindu Mahasabha. E.M.S. Namboodripad reveals that "Hedgewar and Savarkar did not see with eye to eye with each other. The Hindu Mahasabha of which he was a top leader, was like any other political party but confined to Hindus. Hedgewar on the other hand, engaged himself in what he termed as "character building" of Hindu youth. Physical and political training to make the volunteers conscious activists of a movement on the concept of Hindutva, was what he was striving for".²⁴ Referring to the opposition of the Muslim League to 'Vande Matram' Savarkar stated - It is the strife of different cultures and races and nations and these trifles are but the passing and outward symptoms of this malady deep seated in the Muslim mind". But the RSS view was totally different. Yadav Rao Joshi said, "Doctorji believed that a mere change in the faith does not change nationality. He expected every Muslims should respect India's culture and glorious heritage"²⁵. Many Muslims were drawn to the RSS due to Hedgewar's integrity. Saminullah Khan was the first man who had come to garland Hedgewar and give him a warm send-off before going to jail. Once an independent member of the Legislative Council, S.M. Rahman from Berar vehemently condemned the then Home Minister and blamed him for misleading the house by supply wrong information that the RSS was communal, fascist and political organisation and he pointed out that no Muslim organisation had raised any objection to the RSS. during its entire seven years of existence.²⁶

Various traits of Dr. Hedgewar's personality show that the philosophical background and understanding of the founder of the RSS was secular in nature and of course not on the pattern of contemporary Hindu nationalists during the national movement for freedom. The RSS criticised orthodox views sanctioned in the name of religion. It opposed the Sati, child marriage and social evils prevailing in the society which were the main cause of the weakness of the Hindu society. Thus, the RSS was a social reformer which was not to compromise with traditionalists and never cared for its unpopularity. The RSS also has an egalitarian view on the question women's right. A women wing of the RSS was established with an aim to train women physically and mentally. The RSS gave women equal place to men and expected their responsible outdoor role in the national movement. The RSS totally disapproves untouchability. The RSS has always been free from caste, class or provincial feelings. K.P. Sudarshan, head of intellectual wing of the organisation, in his essay comes to the conclusion that the kind of society the

RSS, visualised was similar to that of Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Hedgewar denounced the caste and untouchability and initiated a resolution against these two maladies of the Hindu society.²⁷ Another aspect which needs to be mentioned and has an importance is that both Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar attended the RSS camp were greatly impressed by the spirit of the 'Swayamsevakas whose brotherhood gave no room to caste, untouchability and economic differences. Ambedkar attended a training camp in Pune and presided the Makar Sankranti Utsav organised by the Sangh in 1936. Ambedkar was very much impressed with the RSS caste-lessness in the centre of orthodoxy in Maharashtra. Bala Sahab Deoras, A. B. Bajpai and Bachha Raj Vyas recall how Hedgewar compelled Swayamsevakas coming from orthodox Brahmin families to take their meal with the Swayamsevakas coming from the Harijan families. To further dismantle the untouchability, RSS opened its office in Delhi in the Bhangi colony. The broad social perspective of Hedgewar was reflected in the RSS, which became a dominant cultural organisation of the Hindus. Gandhiji, who visited the Wardha camp of the RSS on December 23-25, 1934 on his own initiative found the absence of untouchability among the Swayamsevakas and commented, "I am tremendously pleased. Nowhere in the country have I ever seen such a spectacle. From all points of view, you are doing excellent work, it is not against national interest to organise Hindus without hating others".²⁸ Hedgewar's rapport with the revolutionaries motivated many RSS volunteers to participate in revolutionary activities but he had no intention to letting his revolutionary association compromise the RSS. One of the most reliable workers of the RSS. Mr. Balaji Huddar committed a political dacoity in Balaghat in January 1931. Huddar was Sarkaryawah of the RSS.²⁹ 'Freedom within a year' and 'Boycott' were the slogans and the RSS decided to participate in it and give this experiment a trial. RSS organised a series of lectures in the Central Provinces and its members deliberately violated the law. For the first time, the Government banned movement of the Sarsanghchalak of the RSS for a year in February in 1931.³⁰ The RSS participated in the Salt Satyagraha of 1930. Since the Central Provinces had no coastal belt where one may violate the Salt Laws and offer salt satyagraha. The RSS decided to offer Jungle Satyagraha, in violation of the anti-vanvasi forest Laws. On July 21, 1930, Hedgewar, Appaji Joshi, Dadarao Parmarth and some others offered Satyagraha, with ten thousand other Swayamsevakas, in cutting the grass illegally. Hedgewar was sentenced to nine months with hard labour.³¹ A case was lodged against him in May 1931 for allegedly seditious speeches. The climax of his volcanic leadership and militancy could be described in trial of 1931. He was charged with bringing and attempting to bring in hatred and contempt and exciting people against the British rule. He trenchantly condemned the British rule and upheld India's right of national Independence. Addressing the Jury, he did not plea then for mercy but challenged their authority and the British system of justice and was prepared to stand by the consequences.³² The RSS had anti-imperialist attitude right from its foundation and it had positive content. It was not an aggressive nationalism or in the aftermath of the revolutionary zeal. It condemned all forms of the system whether monarchy or totalitarian. It cautioned the people to be aware of the frauds, totalitarians and demagogues. All other system of government that obtain are a huge fraud designed by adventurers for the pillage and plunder of those countries. The anti-imperialist and anti-imperialist approach to the freedom struggle was an appeal and message for all dependent nations to rise and fight against foreign domination. It propagated the concept of the 'pure Independence' when both the Tilakites and Gandhian's were pleading for the Dominion Status. The RSS's views on imperialism were based on both economic and political understanding. It outright rejected the doctrine of imperialism and emphasised to replace it by a new world worder based on international. fraternity. It also saw imperialism and world capitalist order as the two sides of one coin, both indicate the same malady. The RSS championed the cause of 'complete Independence' and end of imperialism, and declared 'pure Independence is our goal'. The RSS continued to help maintain revolutionaries in hiding or in distress. Hedgewar arranged shelter for Rajguru, right hand revolutionary of Bhagat Singh, on RSS Leader, Bhaiyaji Dani's farm at Umrer.³³ When 26th January 1929, Congress declared, 'complete Independence' as its goal, it was celebrated with great éclat all over the country.³⁴ Hedgewar took after being appointed as the Sarsanghchalak was to send a circular to all the Shakhshas that the Congress decision about observing January 25, 1930 as the 'Independence Day' should be complied with because it was accepted on the part of the Indian National Congress of the RSS goal.³⁵ The historic resolution for 'Complete Independence' was passed in Lahore Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the Congress, said:

"Independence for us means complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism. I do not think that any form of Dominion Status applicable to India will give us real power. The test of this power would be the entire withdrawal of the alien army of occupation and economic control".³⁶

The circular issued by Hedgewar reads:

"That the Indian National Congress too has adopted our goal of Independence naturally gives us immense joy. It is our duty to cooperate with any organisation working for the cause... therefore, on the evening of January 26, 1930 all the Shakhshas of the RSS should hold rallies of Swayamsevakas at their respective places".³⁷

The circular issued by Hedgewar apparently shows that adoption of the goal of Independence was a victory for the RSS. It also indicates that the RSS was aiming to train the Swayamsevakas to lead a final battle against the imperialism. The RSS had great respect for the Congress despite its differences on various issues. When Hedgewar came out of prison in February 1931, many prominent Congress leaders including Pandit Nehru, Dr. Moonje, Hakim Ajmal Khan addressed the meeting organised to felicitate Hedgewar.³⁸ He was elected to the Central Provinces Congress Committee and was its General Secretary despite considerable differences on many issues. Since 1925, he became deeply involved in the working of the RSS. Despite this involvement, he did not totally give up his participation in Congress. Since the formation of the RSS, Hedgewar's involvement in the Congress diminished but he made participation in all major movements of the Congress. He participated in the Salt Satyagraha after appointing Dr. L.V. Paranjpe, the Sarsanghchalak of the organisation so that the working of the RSS could not suffer. Many other Hindu nationalist leaders were critical to Gandhi's action but the RSS had great respect for him and it fully advocated for the social reform programmes of Gandhi.

The participation of the RSS and Hedgewar was the natural corollary to Gandhi's various social and political programmes. Notwithstanding, the RSS was not in any confusion about the result of the movements. The participation of the RSS was symbolic gesture because this movement was another step on the road of freedom.³⁹ The RSS shocked by the compromising

attitude of the Congress to placate the communalists on not only 'Vande Matram' but the question of the 'National Flag' for the country. In 1931, the Congress appointed a Flag Committee to finalise the National Flag. The Committee was composed of seven members- Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru, Pattabhi Seetaramayya, Dr. N.S. Hardikar, Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, Master Tara Singh and Maulana Azad.⁴⁰ The Committee elicited the opinions of various Provincial Congress Committees, the AICC members and the public. The Committees were unanimous in holding that colours of the National Flag should not bear any communal significance.... opinion has been unanimous that our National Flag should be of a single colour except for the colour of the device. If there is one colour that is more acceptable to the Indians as a whole, even as it is more distinctive than another, one that is associated with this ancient country by long tradition, it is the Keshari or Saffron colour. Accordingly, it is felt that the flag should be of Kesari colour except for the colour of device⁴¹. But, However, the AICC did not accept the decision.⁴² H.V. Seshadri remarks, "The mental background which prompted this decision was unfortunate in the extreme".⁴³ The Chief Minister of the Central Provinces, E. Gordon on December 15, 1932 issued the circular and branded the RSS as an illegal organisation. The text of the circular was: "The organisation called RSS is, in the opinion of the government, undoubtedly of a communal nature and its participation in political movement is increasing".⁴⁴ Hedgewar immediately set about to counter the mischief sought to be created by the order. He invited many distinguished people from different field to preside over the RSS functions. The New Year festival of that year (1933) was presided over by the former governor of Central Province, B. Tambe. He said, "no doubt the government has banned the RSS. However, for those who would like to serve the Hindu society, there is no better way than joining the RSS, since this organisation represents the inmost Hindu feelings and aspirations and is aloof from contemporary politics".⁴⁵ In December 1933, Local self-government institutions were also asked to ban their servants' participation in the RSS, activities. On the eve of the Second World War, Hedgewar was ailing. He wanted that the RSS to take advantage of the crisis faced by the imperialist forces. Thus, he felt that his desire to achieve Independence was not a dream now. He appealed to the RSS functionaries that the day one per cent people in rural areas and three per cent in the urban areas became the members of the RSS, the RSS would be able to play the most vigorous role against the imperialism. He wanted that instead of taking confrontation with the British rule, the RSS should concentrate on groundwork and create a band of dedicated and disciplined Swayamsevakas so that after the war, final battle would be fought on non-compromising terms.⁴⁶ Anderson says that two concerns were prominent in RSS thinking during the war period. One was the protection of the Hindu Community. Secondly, the preparation for the post war period and communal problems that was likely to develop concerned the leadership⁴⁷. Hedgewar opposed undemocratic, racial and totalitarian Nazi and Fascist regimes. It was one of the reason the RSS did not want to disturb the British war efforts but was preparing to defeat the imperialists as soon as the war would end. The Government of India prepared a comprehensive file on the activities of the RSS during the Second World War. It was on the forefront of the liberation struggle and there was no occasion when it did not participate in the struggle for freedom, Swapan Das Gupta says: "If Nehru was the foremost personality of Independent India, and internationally regarded as among the most powerful symbols of post-colonial resurgence, in his life time Hedgewar was scarcely known beyond the charmed circle of Hindu Nationalists. Even there, he was dwarfed by leaders such as N.M. Malviya, Vear Savarkar, Dr. B.S. Moonje and Bhai Parmanand, who were more prominent in articulating 'Hindu' interests. But whereas the Congress Nationalist party disappeared without trace and Hindu Mahasabha was reduced to a letterhead, Hedgewar's legacy (RSS) is far more tangible and of greater consequence in contemporary India."⁴⁸ Subhash Chandra Bose and Hedgewar had first met at the Calcutta session of Congress in 1928. Here 3,000 volunteers had been raised at a cost of Rs.65,000. But they proved so indisciplined that they themselves had to be removed from the Pandal. Hedgewar told Subhash Bose about the kind of national volunteer force he was raising in and around Nagpur. Bose expressed interest in the movement and said, "such work alone can lead to national regeneration". In 1938, Bose was Congress President and he was visiting Nagpur, Bose wanted to meet Hedgewar but the provincial Congress Committee refused to oblige him. In 1939, Bose was planning an armed revolt against British Government. He conveyed his wish to Hedgewar through Huddar and Dr. Shanjivi and wanted the help of the RSS. But unfortunately, Hedgewar was away in Deoli and so he could not meet Bose, but he sent back word to him that he should not launch an armed revolt unless he was at least fifty percent ready for a successful thrust. On June 20, 1940, Subhash Bose came with Forward Block leader Ruikar to see the dying Hedgewar, but he failed.⁴⁹ On May 20, 1940, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee came to see Hedgewar, but he had double pneumonia and acute pain in the back. Dr. Mukherjee related the sad plight of Hindus in East Bengal and he wanted RSS help to launch a Hindu Raksha Dal. Mukherjee suggested that the RSS should participate in politics. But in Hedgewar's views, organising society was more important than politics. After a protracted illness, Hedgewar died on June 21, 1940 in Nagpur and had designated Golwalkar as his successor on the day before he died. The last voyage served as an homage to his lifelong accomplishments as Nagpur had never seen a parade of such magnitude before. The parade was headed by cyclists; trailing after them were many thousand Swayamsevakas, dressed in ordinary attire, arranged in four rows. Additionally, there were thousands of Nagpur locals. In the middle lay Hedgewar's lifeless corpse with the Bhagwa Dhvaj. Members of the Congress party, Hindu Mahasabha, Forward Bloc, Socialist Party, Mazdoor Sangh, Harijan organisations, different women's organisations, and several other groups participated in the parade to express their last tributes to Hedgewar. He established a network of committed and altruistic Swayamsevakas, directing their efforts towards the development of the country. Even at the present day, dedicated, altruistic, and driven volunteers continue to uphold Hedgewar's goal, guaranteeing the perpetuation of his legacy.

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