



## **Social-Engineering of Hedgewar's Contribution in the Indian Freedom Movement**

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### **Abstract**

*One of the largest mass movements in modern society has been compared to the nationalist movement in India. However, the Indian populace was never a uniform community, and nationalism meant different things to different people. The idea of a secular, democratic India, which united all people in the bonds of fraternity, and pluralism were the major themes of this nationalist movement. Indian nationalism, according to Sunil Khilnani, was plural rather than unified, "a dhoti with countless folds." The underlying unity of this statement, known as "the notion of India," is the obvious assumption that all those folds originate from the same piece of fabric. Sunil Khilnani believed that the shared democratic experience of all segments of the Indian populace was the source of this unity.*

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### **Introduction**

People from many areas and religions contributed to the liberation struggle, which was inclusive in nature. Its fundamental tenets were pluralism and the idea of a democratic, secular India that ties people together in bonds of fraternity. Even as India celebrates its 75th anniversary of independence and the Azadi Ki Amrit Mahotsav, little is known about Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar's role in the liberation struggle in public debate or on many academic and intellectual platforms. The Congress-Left historians' approach was explicitly intended to paint a negative picture of him in relation to the war for

independence in nationalist history writing. Recent evidence has demonstrated that many important sources come from British intelligence reports.

In the report, it is discussed how the RSS participated in the 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement and how K.B. Hedgewar's involvement energised the struggle. There is not the slightest suspicion that these Leftist historians are trying to mislead the Indian people into believing that the RSS was not involved in the freedom movement. The plan was really successful.

Strongly pro-Indian independence, Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedge earned a

prestigious place in Indian history. He put all of his efforts into creating the Non-Cooperation Movement. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the world's largest voluntary organisation, was founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. The public is unaware of other facets of Hedgewar's persona, such as his participation in the liberation movement. Young and influenced by the ferocious nationalism of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, he joined the agitation. Before moving to Calcutta in 1910 to pursue a career in medicine, Hedgewar completed his education in Nagpur, Yavatmal, and Poona. He also joined the renowned group of liberation fighters known as the Anushilan Samiti. Hedgewar was detained in May 1921 on suspicion of sedition in connection with his divisive comments in Maharashtra.

On June 14, 1921, the case's hearing got underway. After a few sessions, he made the decision to present his own case, and on August 5, 1921, he presented a written statement. Justice Smelly listened to it and declared, "His defence is much more seditious than his original speech!" In his August 19 ruling, the Judge ordered Hedgewar to give an undertaking in writing that he would not deliver treasonable speeches for one year, and impose a bail bond of Rs.3,000.

Pursuant to the judgement Hedgewar's reply was terse as hereunder:

*"My conscience tells me that I am completely innocent. A policy of repression would only add fuel to the fire already raging because of the 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."* (Anderson & Damle, 1987)

The Judge condemned him to one year of hard labour when he had finished his response. Hedgewar left the court and spoke to a sizable crowd there:

*"As you are aware, I have defended myself in this case of sedition against me. However, these days, there is an impression going around 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 foreign rulers. That would indeed be an act of patriotism. And not to defend ourselves, on the other hand, would be a suicidal policy."* (Golwalkar, 1938)

Dr. Hedgewar's additional thoughts on: *"You may, if you so choose refuse to defend yourself; but for God's sake doesn'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."* (Bhishikar, 1994)

He was transferred to the Ajani prison on Friday, August 19, 1921. A public gathering was called that same day evening with the intention of honouring him in his absence. B.S. Moonje,

Narayanrao Harkare, and Vishwanath Rao Kelkar were the speakers at the meeting, which was presided over by attorney Govindrao Deshmukh. Everyone spoke kindly about Hedgewar. In July 1922, he was let out of prison, and that evening a grand celebration was planned for him. Motilal Nehru and Hakim Ajmal Khan, two prominent Congressmen, addressed the crowd elegantly.

After the Congress passed a resolution designating Sampoorana Swatantrya (completely independent) as its objective as set forth herein, Hedgewar wrote to the shakhas:

*"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 Swayamsevak of each Shakha 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 everyone should be explained. The function should conclude with an expression of congratulations to the Congress for having accepted the ideal of Complete Independence."* This circular caused all RSS shakhas to mark Independence Day. In Yavatmal, Maharashtra, Hedgewar was once more detained for organising a satyagraha movement. From July 1930 to February 1931, he was imprisoned for six months under solitary confinement and

three months under a lesser sentence for leading the movement. (Chopra, 1976)

### **Member in Congress**

Hedgewar became involved in the Indian National Congress actively in 1919. In 1919, he was present at the Congress's Amritsar Session. He was an active participant in the Nagpur Congress organisation known as Rashtriya Mandal, which was founded by Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's supporters. He made a concerted effort to promote the Hindi weekly 'Sankalpa'. He established the 'Rashtriya Utsav Mandal' in order to encourage young people via the stories of Indian national heroes. Dr. L.V. Paranjpe founded the Bharat Swayamsevak Mandal in January 1920. Hedgewar collaborated closely with Dr. Paranjpe and was an active member of the Mandal. The process of assembling a corps of between 1,000 and 1,500 volunteers for the Congress session started in July 1920. The organisation of this corps was spearheaded by Hedgewar. However, despite the tireless efforts of Lokmanya Tilak's ardent supporters, tragedy struck when Bal Gangadhar Tilak passed suddenly on the sad night of July 31, 1920. Dr. Moonje and Hedgewar proceeded to Pondicherry following Tilak's passing. They both met the poet-philosopher Aurobindo Ghose and requested him to attend the Congress session but he politely declined. Congress met in session in December 1920. Nearly 15,000 delegates, over 3,000 Reception Committee members, and thousands of regular citizens came. The participants' lodging and meals were under the control of Dr. Paranjpe and Hedgewar.

### **Participation in Non-Co-operation Movement**

Gopal Rao Ogle, the head editor of Maharashtra Weekly and a personal friend

of Dr. Hedgewar, noted in his editorial *"After accepting voluntarily the hardships of rigorous imprisonment for one year, Dr. Hedgewar will return soon to lead directionless youth of Nagpur and work towards achieving the goal of complete freedom for the country."* News of one year of solitary confinement quickly circulated throughout the central province. Several locations hosted special meetings. Facilitating Dr. Hedgewar, criticising the government, and engaging in boycotts, among other things, became central to the campaign for non-cooperation. Thus, while Dr. Hedgewar's talks had fuelled the Non-Cooperation Movement, his imprisonment served as an additional source of motivation for people everywhere.

### **Taking Part in Dandi March**

In the Dandi March, Hedgewar, who had been completely indoctrinated with Gandhian principles, was working alone to inspire the populace to take part in a protest against British anarchic behaviour. Later, the freedom fighter Hedgewar was detained and given a year in prison for his involvement in the Khilafat campaign (1919-1924). Soon after being freed, Hedgewar became enthusiastic about and influenced by Savarkar's Hindutva ideology. In 1922, Hedgewar was chosen to serve as the Provincial Congress' joint secretary. He also belonged to the Congress volunteer group Hindusthani Seva Dal. Dr. N.S. Hardikar of Hubli, whom Hedgewar knew from his undergraduate days, founded the Seva Dal. A turning point was reached by the communal riots that broke out in 1923 following the Khilafat Movement. Hedgewar believed that because the Congress leadership had neglected to address Hindus' concerns, it was necessary to establish a group that would bring Hindus together.

### **Active Partaking of Dr. Hedgewar and his Colleagues**

Dr. Hedgewar differed with Gandhiji on a number of issues, but according to the social mores of the time, he never publicly criticised Gandhiji. Dr. Sahib did not intend to undermine that movement in any way, but he was not averse to voicing his viewpoint when necessary. *"We already have a lot of Nationalist Muslim leaders working under Lokmanya Tilak's leadership because of their love for the motherland,"* he stated to Gandhiji. Numerous Muslim leaders, like Dr. Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan, are working to liberate the country. However, I worry that instead of the Muslims joining our cause, this new pacification experiment may drive them apart. Gandhiji pushed his notion over opposition inside the party because he was not in the mood to discuss the subject with the youthful freedom warriors. Dr. Hedgewar belonged to the Anusheelan and Yugantar samiti. In order to collaborate with Sri Aurobindo, Trailokya Nath Chakraborty, and Rash Behari Bose, he consciously enrolled at National Medical College in Kolkata. He returned to Nagpur once his degree was earned. There were only 75 doctors in the Central province at the time, but he chose to strive for India's freedom instead of entering the medical field.

Dr. LV Paranjpe took part in a programme that was held at Nagpur on July 12, 1930, alongside Hedgewar. Hedgewar would take part in the 'Jungle Satyagrah,' it was stated. After Paranjape finished his brief statement, Hedgewar rose to his feet and declared his intention to join the 'forest satyagraha' and resign from his position as RSS chief.

The position of sarsanghchalak was given to Paranjape until Hedgewar's return. The arrest of Hedgewar was sought on July 21,

1930, at Nagpur. He broke 'Jungle Kanoon' alongside 11 other players and was taken into custody right away. On July 21, in the evening, he was put on trial. Congress also held a rally in his favour on the same day. He received a nine-month term of harsh imprisonment from Justice Bharuche. Only four months were imposed on the other eleven people who were with him. This was his second stint in jail. One of the most effective initiatives of the central province's civil disobedience movement was Hedgewar's satyagraha. In February, after serving his sentence in prison, he was reinstated as sarsanghchalak.

On August 15, 1947, the country was divided in two, along with our independence. This division took place as a result of the Muslim League obtaining the majority of the seats in the provincial parliament that were dominated by Muslims in the 1946 election. He was saddened by the enormous impact of the population transfer caused by this divide. A portion of the country was experiencing a bloodbath while the rest of it was celebrating its hard-won independence. People in Delhi also demonstrated their indifference to the plight of Hindus in those regions, particularly in West Pakistan. The Hindus were left on their own to defend themselves against armed Muslim league members due to a lack of equitable security measures. In his 1949 book 'Now It Can Be Told,' Professor AN Bali tells in great detail how the swayamsewak, directed by the leader 'Shri Guruji,' helped stranded Sikhs and Hindus cross the recently built border.

He writes, *"The police were mostly League-minded... non-violence and advice given by Mrs. Sucheta Kriplani, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Rajendra Prasad etc., to stay out where they were with a firm trust*

*in God appeared to most of the victims as a counsel of perfection which could only be given from a safe distance. Who else came to the rescue of the people at this stage, but a band of young selfless Hindus popularly known as R.S.S?"*

*He further writes, "They organised in every mohalla, every town of the province the work of evacuation of the Hindu and Sikh women and children from dangerous pockets to comparatively safe centres... these young men were the first to come to the help of the stricken Hindus and Sikhs and were last to leave their places for safety. If it was left to Sanghas alone, this problem of the rehabilitation of refugees from West and East Pakistan would have been solved long ago."* (Golwalkar, 1996)

In the process of saving Hindus and Sikhs for West Pakistan, Sangh lost a lot of swayamsevaks. To visualise a country being split in two under the guise of partition was incredibly agonising and miserable. We are still suffering from the pain of the partition as of this writing.

### Conclusion

Numerous such occurrences during Dr. Hedgewar's lifetime serve as a testament to his great contribution to the Indian independence movement prior to his passing in 1940. It is time to reflect on and recognise Dr. Hedgewar's contribution to the fight for India's independence. It would be a suitable tribute to the pioneer who established the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the biggest volunteer organisation in the world, to serve the nation. (Anand, 2022)

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its leaders were not active in the independence movement, as has been widely believed by the old establishment media, according to its new media personalities. They spread it across the

political system almost like a riddle, which exacerbates the group's harsh criticism. Although hired and privileged bourgeois historians periodically demonize and disparage the RSS as being antagonistic to the struggle, the Swayamsanghas' contributions to our country's freedom cause are generally acknowledged. It is obvious that Hedgewar contributed a lot to the struggle for freedom. The Indian National Congress's bourgeois leadership had a solid hold on the reins of the liberation movement. Even while mass movements occasionally went beyond the bounds set by the Congress, when people turned to violent resistance, the conscience of the masses recognizing this leadership did not change, and as a result, the conflicts could not spread throughout India. The swyamsevak, who are Indians, are thought to have pioneered and introduced nearly all of the contemporary ideas that are currently in use and that gradually gave rise to the national movement. This may seem strange in modern times.

It would be clear that Hedgewar was unwavering in his dedication to the necessities of the masses and the anti-imperialist fight, opening a new route for the Indian people to end their long-standing poverty and requiring everyone to take part in the freedom movement. His main strategy was to foster a sense of patriotism for the country. He was obviously not succeeding in his goals because his involvement was insufficient to counteract the leadership of Congress.

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