

An influential lobby of intellectuals, which believes that Bharat came into existence on August 15, 1947, always raise a question on role of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) in the freedom struggle. They are more interested in hiding the history and portray a picture that RSS was never involved in freedom fight.

Intellectuals have been habitual to argue that freedom was the result of efforts taken by Mahatma Gandhi and Congress. In the process, they intentionally neglect Lal, Bal and Pal. They neglect work done by revolutionaries. They do not feel necessary to recognize great efforts taken by Netaji Subhashchandra Bose. In the process, these intellectuals are doing great injustice to all those, who sacrificed their lives and devoted all their energies for freedom. Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, who founded RSS, participated in two Satyagraha in 1921 and 1930. He was imprisoned on both the occasions. He died in 1940 before 'quit India' movement began. This needs to be highlighted as people are forced to believe that Congress was the only vehicle to bring the freedom. An impression is created that India won freedom because of 1942 'quit India' movement, which was launched by Mahatma Gandhi and Congress.

But this is half-truth. Indeed, Satyagrah, charkha and khadi were simple instruments, connecting to the common people but neglecting contribution of lakhs of people, who participated in the freedom movement by their ways, is a grave injustice. In fact, this is humiliation of their patriotic deeds.

Take the case of RSS founder Dr Hedgewar. He was born in 1889 in Nagpur. Discussion of freedom movement began in Nagpur in 1904-1905. Hardly any signs of freedom movement were seen in Nagpur before 1904-1905. Interestingly, an incident, involving Dr Hedgewar, took place in 1897, which indicated born attitude of Dr Hedgewar. Remember - Dr Hedgewar was only eight-years-old when the incident took place. In 1897, sweets were distributed among the students on celebrate Diamond Festival of Queen Victoria's accession. However, eight-year-old boy refused to accept the sweets. In fact, he threw the sweets in the garbage. This act was nothing less that manifestation of patriotic sentiments and anger against slavery.

In 1907, chanting of Vande Mataram at public places was banned by Risely Circular. However, Keshav made chanted Vande Mataram in the class in front of the government inspector at his Neil City School. As a result, school administration expelled Keshav for his act. This incident also reflects patriotic sentiments of Dr Hedgewar.

After completing school education, Dr Hedgewar joined medical education. It would have been natural for Dr Hedgewar to go to Mumbai, which had better facilities of medical education. Dr Hedgewar, however, preferred to go Calcutta. Dr Hedgewar opted to go to Calcutta as it was a major centre of revolutionaries. Dr Hedgewar soon joined Anushilan Samiti, the apex body of revolutionaries.

After completing medical education, Keshav returned to Nagpur in 1916. Practice prevailed that time that educated people used to get married, carried out family responsibilities and perform their social responsibilities, including freedom movement. Dr Hedgewar would have chosen the same path in normal circumstances. However, neither he started medical practice nor got married. Dr Hedgewar devoted all his potential, capacity, ability and energy for nation building. He never thought of his personal life.

Dr Hedgewar was a staunch follower of Lokmanya Tilak. In 1920, Congress held its convention in Nagpur when Dr Hedgewar, along with Dr Hardikar, was given responsibility of making all the arrangements. They had recruited 1,200 volunteers for this purpose. Dr Hedgewar was joint secretary of Nagpur Congress that time. A remarkable incident took place in the Congress convention. Dr Hedgewar suggested a resolution that Congress should aim for establishing Bharatiy Republic, which would free from the clutches of capitalism. He insisted on complete freedom before resolution committee. However, his proposal was neglected by the resolution committee. Curiously, the same resolution was adopted by Congress nine years later in Lahore session. Dr Hedgewar was delighted because of resolution in Lahore session and sent greeting message to all RSS shakhas. (RSS was founded in 1925).

After the death of Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi took over the Congress leadership. Mahatma Gandhi launched non-cooperation movement in 1921. During the same period,

British abolished Caliphate in Turkistan, which hurt Muslims all over the world. With a view to broaden anti-British movement, Mahatma Gandhi supported Caliphate movement. However, Mahatma Gandhi's stand was not welcomed by many Congress leaders and nationalist Muslims. Because of this Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement never gained momentum in Nagpur. Despite having different view, Dr Hedgewar, Dr Cholkar and Samimullah Khan etc. changed this situation. None of them publicly objected to Caliphate movement in the interests of national cause. Dr Hedewar participated in the movement whole heartedly.

Dr Hedgewar was well aware of importance of independence. But a fundamental question used to haunt him very often. He used to ask himself as how a handful of British came to Bharat from 7000 miles away for purpose trade and ruled this nation. He came to conclusion that it happened as society was divided in various sections, was unorganized and had several social ills, which made it possible for British to rule British. He had a fear that history will continue to repeat after gaining independence if Bhartiya society was not transformed fundamentally. He understood need to make society more awakened, filled with self-pride and organized. He always insisted on people with national qualities in independent India.

In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi gave a call for civil disobedience movement. On April 6, Dandi March was scheduled. Earlier in November 1929, a three-day meeting of all sanghchalaks was held in which RSS decided to support the movement

unconditionally. RSS had its own policy on various issues. As per the policy, Dr Hedgewar participated in the movement in personal capacity in satyagrah. He was accompanied by his other colleagues. The policy was chalked out with the aim of continuation of RSS work without any interruption. With this view in mind, Dr Hedgewar handed over responsibility of Sarsanghchalak to his long-time friend Dr Paranjape. Babasaheb Apte and Bapurao Bhedi were also given some responsibilities. On July 21, Dr Hedgewar led the satyagrah. Around 3000 to 4000 people participated in satyagrah. He reached Pusad enroute Wardha and Yavatmal. Around 10,000 people had gathered when he reached Pusad for satyagrah. He was imprisoned for nine months for participating in satyagrah. Dr Hedgewar took over the responsibility as sarsanghchalak after he was released from the jail. He devoted all his energies for RSS work.

In 1938, Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj gave a call for satyagrah against the atrocities by Nizam rule in Bhagyanagar (Hyderabad). This was launched under the banner of Bhaganagar Nishastra Pratikar Mandal. A few volunteers sought permission to participate in the agitation and Dr Hedgewar gladly granted permission. However, he asked some volunteers to stay away from agitation as to continue the RSS work. Dr Hedgewar was very cautious that fundamental work of RSS should not be disturbed because of other circumstances. Dr Hedgewar's this view was once again reflected at the time of jungle satyagrah. Dr Hedgewar participated in satyagrah but he handed over responsibility of Sarsanghchalak to Dr Paranjape again.

In August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi asked British to 'quit India' at Gwalia Tank in Mumbai. The agitation got momentum from next day. Several leaders were arrested. Vidarbha region saw agitation in Baoli (Amravati), Ashti (Wardha) and Chimur (Chandrapur). News from Chimur was even aired on Berlin Radio. The movement here was led by Uddhavrao Korekar of Congress and Sangh officials Dada Naik, Baburao Begde, Annaji Siras. Balaji Rajapurkar, a RSS volunteer was the only agitator, who died in British firing. Sri Gurudev Seva Mandal, founded by Sri Tukadoji Maharaj of Congress, along with Sangh volunteers together had organized Chimur movement and satyagraha. In Chimur struggle, 125 satyagrahis were prosecuted and innumerable volunteers were imprisoned. Several RSS volunteers participated in quit India movement. Some of them were : Pracharak Jaidevji Pathak in Rajasthan, who was later active in Vidya Bharati, Dr Annasaheb Deshpande at Arvi (Vidarbha), Ramakant Keshav (Balasaheb) Deshpande in Jashpur (Chhattisgarh), who later founded the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and Shri Vasantrao Oak who was later Prant Pracharak of Delhi. In Bihar (Patna), famous lawyer Krishna Vallabhprasad Narayan Singh (Babuaji) who later became the Sanghchalak of Bihar. In Delhi, Shri Chandrakant Bhardwaj, who faced bullet hit in his leg. (Later he became a famous poet and composer of many Sangh songs). In eastern Uttar Pradesh, Madhavrao Deode, who later became a state pracharak, and in Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh) Dattatreya Gangadhar (Bhaiyaji) Kasture, who later became a Sangh Pracharak. In addition, several RSS volunteers were involved in underground work. For example, Arun Asaf Ali was sheltered

by Hansraj Gupta in Delhi. Nana Patil of Satara in Maharashtra, was given shelter by Pandit Satavalekar, who was sanghchalak of Aundh. There could be more volunteers, who were involved in underground work but it was not possible to document them in view of the situation, prevailing at that time. All the above incidents prove that Dr Hedgewar's life – from childhood to last breath – was devoted to nation and independence. He had intentionally chosen the way of organizing society by way of awakening. He always dreamt for faultless and healthy society, which was inspired by nationalist ideas. Remarkably, RSS pledge mentioned independent Hindu Rashtra till 1947.

Bhartiya national life was always caught between in two extreme positions. For example, Congress and revolutionaries, Tilak and Gandhi and Hindu Mahasabha and Congress. In this complex situation, all the parties used to oppose each other mindlessly. Instead of fighting against British, they used to fight against each other. Take the case of Central Provinces Congress meeting in 1921. The meeting was to be conducted under the chairmanship of Loknayak Ane. A proposal was to move in the meeting, in which revolutionaries were to be condemned. Dr Hedgewar convinced them that it was improper and undesirable to condemn the and their patriotism cannot be challenged. Dr Hedgewar was never indulged in such dilemma as his goal was absolutely clear, which was above all the individuals and paths.

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Nation has been compelled to believe that Bharat is merely a political unit, mainly amalgamation of various cultures and traditions. Nation has been compelled to believe that credit for freedom goes to a particular school of thought and organization. This is propaganda and not the history. This propaganda is not merely unfair but a grave injustice to those, who devoted their lives for the freedom struggle. This attitude lacks sense of gratitude. Freedom is the cumulative effect of various factors including revolutionary ways, non-violent methods, Azad Hind Fauz and rebellion in the army.

England was in very bad condition after second world war. It was unable to run colonies like in the past. Remarkably, Bharat was the country, which witnessed a long struggle for freedom against British colonial rule. One must remember that colonies, which did not have freedom struggle, also got independence after second world war. It is therefore, ridiculous and unfair to credit particular organization, thought and movement for attaining freedom.

British Prime Minister Clement Attlee said at the time of Bharat's independence, "Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence movement has had zero impact on the British government". In the words of Chief Justice of Kolkata High Court and the then acting Governor of Bengal, P.M. Chakraborty. "When I was acting Governor, Lord Attlee, who had given us independence by withdrawing British rule from India, spent two days in the Governor's palace at Calcutta during his tour of India. At that time, I had a prolonged discussion with him regarding the real factors that had led the British to quit India. My direct question



to Attlee was that since Gandhi's quit India movement had tapered off quite some time ago and in 1947 no such new compelling situation had arisen that would necessitate a hasty British departure, why did they had to leave? In his reply Attlee cited several reasons, the principal among them being the erosion of loyalty to the British crown among the Indian army and Navy personnel as a result of the military activities of Netaji. At the end of our conversation, I asked Attlee how much influence Gandhiji had in the British government leaving India. Atlee's lips folded with a sarcastic smile upon hearing the question, and he spoke softly—Minimal". (Ranjan Bora, Subhas Chandra Bose,

(Reference: The Indian National Army, The War of India's Liberation. Journal of Historical Review, Vol. 20), (2001),

In his book "The India's Struggle' Netaji wrote, "The Congress and the Mahatma did not have any clarity on the plan laid out by him and no clarity regarding the orderly phases of the campaign to take India to the priceless goal of her independence. Didn't even think about it".

Ramesh Chandra Majumdar says, "It was the united influence of the three that liberated India. In this too, especially the facts revealed during the INA trial and the reaction in India due to this, which made it clear to the British government, which had already broken into war, that it could not depend on the loyalty of the sepoys to rule India. This was probably the biggest reason for his decision to leave India."

(Majumdar, Ramesh Chandra, - Three Phases of India's Struggle for Freedom, BVN Bombay, India 1967, pp. 58-59).

Lakhs of known and unknown people directly or indirectly, passively and actively contributed to the freedom struggle. Instead, nation was forced to think in particular manner by manipulative methods. Question, therefore arises, whether we really thought for independence or freedom or it was merely a struggle for political power. Bharat got political freedom in August 1947 but we were continued to be ruled by British or western ideas, which lacked a deep sense of freedom.

Take the case of rhyme, written by Henry Francis, which was dropped two years back beating the retreat ceremony. A huge controversy broke out two after a prayer written by Scottish Anglican cleric Henry Francis was dropped from the beating retreat ceremony of Republic Day. Convent educated people came out in support of Henry Francis and praised his prayer – 'Abide With Me', which was absolutely unknown for common people. The opposition got diluted when they came to know that 'Abide With Me' was replaced by a famous patriotic song – 'E Mere Vatan Ke Logo'. Those who opposed dropping of 'Abide With Me' were left nonplussed when they came to know about it.

Controversy died in natural course but left a serious question before our so-called independence. The reality is that what we gained on August 15, 1947 was political freedom but continued to be ruled by western ideas

planted by the British regime. What we gained in 1947 was merely a formal political independence. We used to think from the perception of British and Western ideas. Even the political dictionary of our country was decisively influenced by British or Western philosophy. We used to call ourselves the followers of the 'Westminster Model', which originated in England. We continued the education system, which was introduced by British rule. We continued with the laws, which were enacted by British rule to suit their agenda. We continue with the British agenda, without applying our own mind and brain. We forgot or were made to forget the real meaning of 'Swatantrya', which necessarily means emancipation from all kinds of slavery.

Intellectual independence was expected after 1947 but it did not take place. Nation was made to forget the sense of 'SWA' by vested interests. Because of this, people used to say sarcastically that 'India' is being governed by 'black Britishers'. Unfortunately, we even fail to understand 'black comedy' in this remark. Getting rid of colonial mindset was never part of our national agenda. In fact, people advocating for nation esteem were humiliated and ridiculed.

Bharat has paid a huge price for continuation of colonial mindset, which is fundamentally psychological in

nature. Slavery is never merely a physical condition but it is mainly a psychological – intellectual and emotional – state of mind. Slavery badly affects motivation and actions of an individual and society in large. In fact, slavery makes one forget about independence. In absence of independence, growth of an individual and society does not get merely stagnated but turns into a major obstacle for progress. We were undergoing this major psychological crisis as people were made to forget about 'self'.

Society gets dynamic only if it is aware of 'self'. Psychologists say that nothing stops an individual or society, whose self-esteem is at a higher level. High level self-esteem is considered as an energy, which takes the society in a positive direction or at desired destination. For seven decades, the nation's self-esteem was at the lowest. Continuation of colonial policies and mindset resulted into serious problems as British policies were basically formulated for their own rule and not for Bharat. For example, political parties continued to follow the British policy of 'divide and rule'. This fuelled superficial internal conflicts like Arya and Dravid or Shaiva and Vaishnav. These policies were based on British education, which aimed at dividing Hindus along with various lines like caste and language. This school of thought believed that Bharat came into existence in

1947 and denied the ancient and eternal existence of this nation.

However, we have some positive and encouraging signs of change in scenario. We have several incidents wherein we can experience changing the psyche/attitude/mindset of the people. People have become self-aware now. People have become responsible and duty-bound citizens, which is one of the basic necessities for all round progress.

People of Bharat had developed a sense of alienation as they were not aware of self. Alienation has been now replaced by a sense of self-belonging. Take the case of the new Parliament building, which stands as a testimony to cultural integration of Bharat. It is a showcase of rich Bhartiya heritage, incorporating its vibrance, unity and eternal human values. Sengol, placed in Sansad, reminds elected representatives their duties, responsibilities and boundaries. The old Parliament House, on the other hand, was built as an Imperial Legislative Council, which was evidence of colonial rule and slavery.

A sense of 'SWA' is needed to be inculcated, which will generate a new energy in the country. This new energy will reflect in all the spheres of the nation's life, including material progress. This confidence and self-

esteem can never be achieved by ridiculing or humiliating ancient Bhartiya values. We must remember that the ancient nation survived despite all the attacks and invasions because of the ancient value system. Establishing a sense of 'SWA' is a process to assert Bhartiya values. Asserting Bhartiya values is the real independence, which has no place for colonial ideas and attitude.