



One man, one mission, one movement: life & time of Dr. N. S Hardikar

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Abstract

Hardikar was a great nationalist. He imbibed in himself the ideas of patriotism, freedom and service to the people from his association with Lala Lajpat rai & others. He was successful in creating a corpse of dedicated volunteers called Sevadal whose work was praised by leaders like Mahatma Gandhiji & Jawaharlal Nehru. The Sevadal was the grassroots level prime organization of the Congress party. In 1923, following the Flag Satyagraha at Nagpur, many activists of the Congress were arrested and sentenced to prison. Unable to tolerate the rigors of prison, most of them tendered written apologies to the British authorities. However, members of the Hubli Seva Mandal, founded by Hardikar refused to surrender. This uncompromising stance gained the attention of the Congress' national leadership that had gathered in Nagpur to participate in the Satyagraha. It was here that the idea of establishing an organization of volunteers to combat the Raj was born. At the Kakinada session of the Congress in 1923, a board under him was constituted for setting up the Sevadal. This paper looks at the personal strategies of Hardikar in mobilizing the volunteers who could sacrifice for everything for their motherland.

Key words: Nationalist, volunteer, provinces, grass root , Kesari newspaper

Introduction

N. S. Hardikar was a great nationalist. He imbibed in himself the ideas of patriotism, freedom and service to the people from his association with Lala Lajpat rai & others. He was successful in creating a corpse of dedicated volunteers called Sevadal whose work was praised by leaders like Mahatma Gandhiji & Jawaharlal Nehru. The Sevadal was the grassroots level prime organization of the Congress party. In 1923, following the Flag Satyagraha at Nagpur, many activists of the Congress were arrested and sentenced to prison. Unable to

tolerate the rigors of prison, most of them tendered written apologies to the British authorities. However, members of the Hubli Seva Mandal, founded by Hardikar refused to surrender. This uncompromising stance gained the attention of the Congress' national leadership that had gathered in Nagpur to participate in the Satyagraha. It was here that the idea of establishing an organization of volunteers to combat the Raj was born. At the Kakinada session of the Congress in 1923, a board under Hardikar was constituted for setting up the Sevadal.



EARLY LIFE- Dr. Hardikar was born at Dharwar, May 1899. His father was a man of humble beginning. he was brought up by his uncle, who had a great fascination for this boy who was very intellectual & studious. As a school boy he was very eager at learning and highly fond of books. He was enthused by the teachings of Lokamanya Tilak. Quite at a tender age he took interest in politics. In his link towards great leaders he identified himself in the Nationalist Struggle. His zeal for politics was evident in his early works. He founded the Bhagini Samaj, the Kanya Shala and the Arya Bala Sabha where he strove for women upliftment through literacy. He became the head of literary and political associations. He became the rallying point of rising volunteers .In 1908 he joined the staff of the Kannada Kesari newspaper. Then he left for Calcutta where he studied at College of Physicians, & took the M.R.C.S degree. With the aid of the philanthropists' of Karnataka he proceeded to America for higher studies in Medicine. In 1916 he secured the M.Sc. degree from the Michigan University and specialized in public health subject .

While he was preparing for the Ph.D in politics he met great extremist leaders Lala Lajpat Rai. Their eventful meeting led to many historic developments later in the history of Indian Independence. Lalaji asked Hardikar to assist him in propaganda work. Hardikar gave up his studies and helped him in founding several associations like Indian Home Rule League, the Indian information Bureau and the

Indian Labour Union. As the managing Editor of the Young India, his journalistic elegance came into limelight. He became the General Secretary of the Indian Home Rule League and delivered a series of lectures in several American States. He challenged the might of the Britain with his courageous speeches. The visit of Lala Lajpat rai to Canada was a successful tour. He was welcomed with great cheers. After his return he actively interested himself in Indian politics. He was elected the Secretary of the K.P.C.C. then he laid the foundation of an All-India Volunteer organization at the Kakinada Congress (Agrawal, Lion M.G. (2008).

The Thirty-eighth session of the Congress held at Cocanada (Kakinada), was presided over by Maulana Mohammad Ali, who was released in 1919 after spending five years in prison. "Our Swaraj must be the Sarvaraj; the Raj of all and in order to be that, it must have been won through the willing sacrifice of all. If this is not so, we shall have to depend for its maintenance as well on the prowess of the fighting classes and this we must not do. Swaraj must be won by the minimum sacrifice of the maximum number and not by the maximum sacrifice of the minimum number," he said during his presidential address. During the session, the Civil Disobedience and Satyagraha Committees were absorbed into the Working Committee. (Agrawal, Lion M.G. (2008)

The difficulties that bristled in his way are vividly narrated by Pandit



Jawaharlal Nehru He says: "There has been no lack for volunteer organizations even before, both for organization work or goal going. But there was little discipline and cohesion. Dr. N.S. Hardikar conceived the idea of having a well-disciplined All-India Corps trained to do national work under the general guidance of the Congress. He pressed me to cooperate with him in this, and I gladly did so, for the idea appealed to me. The beginnings were made at Kakinada . We were surprised to find later how much opposition there was to the Sevadal among the Congressmen. Some said that this was a dangerous departure as it meant to introduce a military arm, which might overpower the civic authority; others seem to think that the only discipline necessary was for the volunteers to obey orders issued form above, for the rest it was hardly desirable for volunteer even to walk in step. At the back of the mind of some was the notion that the ideas of having a trained and drilled volunteers was somehow in consistent with the Congress principle of Non violence. Hardikar, however devoted himself to this task, and by the patient labour of years he demonstrated how much more efficient and even non-violent our trained Volunteers could be". (Agrawal, Lion M.G. (2008).

Sevadal Objectives

- (a) It shall act as a duly authorized institution for the training of officers and instructors.
- (b) It shall enroll and train recruits in Karnataka, or such other place as may

be determined by the Working Committee from time to time and these will form a permanent Central Corps for officers' training and will be liable to serve wherever necessary. It may also have training centres and camps for officers and instructors in other suitable places. (Halappa G.S.-History Of Freedom Movement In Karnataka)

(c) It shall lend the services of officers and instructors for provinces at the latter are expense .

d) It shall have power to form volunteer corps in provinces wherever so required by Provincial Congress Committees

In 1931, the Congress Working Committee decided to rename the Hindustani Sevadal as the Congress Sevadal, making it the central volunteer organization of the Congress. Every province was to have a general officer commanding the provincial Sevadal. The organization also focused specifically on three categories of people: children, adolescents and adults. All Sevadal members were required to take an oath, which, among other things, required them to stay aloof from political activity in the Congress. (Halappa G.S.-History Of Freedom Movement In Karnataka)

The task of imparting training and organizing volunteers was given to the Sevadal in 1938, which was then headquartered in the Karnataka Under Hardikar, an Academy for physical training was established and training camps established at several places across India. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Sevadal



played a stellar role in enrolling new members in the Congress, organizing activities like picketing and in arming the party with an organized but peaceful militia. The significance of the Sevadal in the Civil Disobedience Movement can be gauged from the fact that in 1934, when the Movement came to an end and the colonial authorities lifted the ban on the Congress and its organizations, they continued to exclude the Sevadal (Halappa G.S.-History Of Freedom Movement In Karnataka 1997). Amidst all impediments the Sevadal could manage to train the volunteers across India which resulted in building a corps of disciplined & regimented political activists.

1. These national volunteers played a gallant part in the freedom struggle.
2. It motivated & awakened the mass of people to involve willingly in nationalist struggle.
3. It successfully chained the attention of the Nation by its resolute & indomitable spirit.
4. The heroism displayed by the Sevadal during the Civil Disobedience Movement was so encouraging that in many parts of

India there were several such organizations of volunteers coming up. .

Conclusion

He imbibed in himself the ideas of patriotism, freedom and service to the people. During the visits of various States of America and Canada, he apprised the emigrant Indians about the freedom struggle of India. He was always at the forefront of the freedom struggle. He showed to the world that one stimulus, one motivated mind & one prompt impulsion can lead a nation to liberate itself from the shackles of colonial hegemony.

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