



WHAT SUSTAINS SANGH

D.B.THENGADI

What Sustains Sangh

As members of the august organization the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh we are ever in the process of learning more and more about this body. The sangh is no longer only a Rashtriya phenomenon. It has grown into a gigantic world organization spreading its branches in all the continents. A key to the understanding of this sky scraping banyan tree is to delve deeply into the myriad incidents of the hallowed life and the various aspects of the luminous personality of Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. After doing that we shall be able to clearly grasp the vision the revered Doctorji entertained of the future of the Sangh. Without clearly grasping these we shall never be able to understand the soul of the Sangh. The diversified shape of the Sangh is actually the blossoming and flowering of the great Doctor's vision. All the various branches in the form of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and the Bharatiya Janata Party are but the progressive informant of that vision. In its rudimentary form Dr. Hedgewar had conceived of specialized bodies for specialized functions like Seva Bharati. Today's multifarious growth of the Sangh in its several avatars is the vindication of the truth that Doctorji was a great seer.

Loving service

Once Swami Amitabh Maharaj and Swami Apurvananda were at the Ramakrishna Mission at Nagpur. Most swayamsevaks must have seen the former with the revered Shri Guruji. They heard a group of swayamsevaks passing the mission boisterously. When the swami duo came out, they found to their surprise Doctorji too was with them. Doctorji had walked four miles from his house. On inquiring, Dr. Hedgewar said that he was visiting a sick swayamsevak. So far and on foot, exclaimed the Swami. Doctorji's reply was most profound. Swamiji, distance is only in the mind. When a dear one is ill, the distance vanishes. In that close fellow-feeling of Hedgewarji lay today's well-knit family feeling that is the distinctive characteristic of the Sangh. For loving service is the swayamsevak's nature

Bag of food on Doctorji's back

Whenever and wherever natural calamities occur the swayamsevaks are always in the vanguard to rush to the rescue of the affected people, be it floods, earthquakes, draught or other disasters. The swayamsevaks are only following in the footsteps of Doctorji who carried bags of baked food to the affected people during the Damodar deluge, often carrying a bag on his own back across the raging river.

The venerable Doctor used to take turns with the swayamsevaks to attend to the sick, several wakeful nights on end. Many distinguished personalities

availed of these services of the Sangh including services related to the funeral rites.

Krishnarao Moharil once came to know that a railway porter's wife was in labor. He left the work in hand and rushed her to the hospital. Earlier, the swayamsevaks had the common traits of service to the fellow man. Now, bodies like Seva-Bharati, institutionalize them. Today's service organizations have their roots in that bag of food on Doctorji's broad back being carried across the flooded Damodar.

Right job for the man : right man for the job

Our swayamsevaks devote themselves to the work of service with the intention that their work will be complete in a proper manner. All of them have almost equal measure of love for society. All dedicate themselves almost equally. Still, each one of them has an inclination and an aptitude for a particular work. A worker achieves the best results if his aptitude and taste suit his entrusted work. This is the secret of fitting a job to a man. People who serve, should find a service suitable to their aptitude and liking. Some are suitable to undertake nursing and caring of the unwell while some to take up teaching, some are apt for work of cleaning and sanitation, some for water conservancy and some for road construction. If we allot work considering the nature

of work, aptitude of the worker and his taste, it not only results in good work but also in specialization of the skills and development of the worker's personality.

Spiritual blossoming through the 'Saadhana' of service

The Sangh is a creative endeavor. Its objective is national reconstruction. The development of and the caring for the entire nation, involves the entire society. We are instrumental to the advancement of the society. Therefore it is necessary that we should be fully honed instruments. We should have our own spiritual development along with the development of those for whose service we bend all our energies and faculties. Therefore, to the extent possible, each of us may get the field of his choice and his abilities. Let each be responsible for his chosen field so that in his sadhana of service, each would attain self development and spiritual blossoming. We may at every stage turn the searchlight inward and check the level of goodness we have attained and how far yet we are from perfection.

Atma-vilop : Self negation

Self-development is development of the soul, not the material development. To develop our virtues we have to undertake keen and minute self-evaluation, self-examination, self-criticism. We should objectively measure and inspect ourselves. We

should be always analyzing ourselves to find out our plus and minus points. Tirelessly endeavor to eliminate the minus points that are our shortcomings, and enhance the plus points that are our virtues. This is a steady, gradual and yet very difficult regime. There is no room for complacency, which not only is detrimental to the work of service but also harmful to all kinds of work. For this, practice the art of self negation. In the words of Shri Gururji we need to be atma-vilopi; try to be the stones of the foundation, always invisible, and not the shining spires that attract attention even to the distant passers-by.

From ancient times the roving mendicants and monks, including the Buddhist bhikshus carried two things with them, pothis (religious books) and potlis (pouches). They used books to preach and teach, used the pouches to offer some first aid medical care. Even in our old houses, our old women had such pouches containing medical herbs and seeds. Those were very handy to administer when anyone in the family was ill or injured. This checked the illness or injury from turning serious and could enable the ailing person to tide over till the special medicine expert arrived.

Speak the people's language

Those who choose social service as their lifelong occupation should first be able to speak the people's language. When we go to the villages to serve the village people, our work starts with understanding of the village and the villagers. Though we may suppose that we go there to teach, actually we go there also to learn. Therefore when people instruct the villagers about maintaining cleanliness around their dwellings, having tulsi plants, village sanitation, they themselves also have to acquire the humility and earnestness required for such service. So, such work needs people who have or can quickly acquire these qualities.

Work together smoothly by removing ego

We have therefore to scout for suitable talents for the mission of service we have chosen for ourselves. After gathering such apt and able persons for our mission in order to make them most serviceable for the task of social welfare and uplift, we shall have to fine-hone their spirit of dedication. Then to get the optimum results we shall have to organize small and efficient teams of workers. Formation of such teams is a continuous process like the cell-formation in a living organism. The service oriented workers work together smoothly and spontaneously if we polish-off the idiosyncrasies in their ego.

Coworker's blossoming

This polishing-off of the angularities arising out of unbridled ego is the state of atma-vilop mentioned by Shri Guruji. The very formation of the Sangh is the outcome of selfless service, the self negation of our founding fathers like the respected Dadarao Paramartha, Rambhau Jamgade, Babasaheb Apte and so on. They buried themselves to form the foundation of the magnificent Sangh edifice. This was possible because of that self-same team of self-negating workers who humbly formed themselves into the brick and mortar of the base of this edifice. The demoralizing commercial culture blowing from the west vitiates today's public life. The practically successful clever people ridicule the very mention of self negation in social service. To erect a stable and lasting citadel, a team of selfless, steadfast servants of the society is necessary. In such a team, each worker is anxious to find his coworker's blossoming and the team as a whole also feels responsible for every member's evolution.

Favorite post: A Swayamsevak

We would profit to recall Dr. Hedgewarji's views expressed in Sep. 1933. He said, I am not the founder of this Sangh. You are all the founding fathers of the organization. I only serve as the cementing agent, the 'dhatri'(foster mother). In compliance of your indication I have gladly accepted this position; but the moment you find someone else as a Sarsanghachalak, I shall equally gladly surrender the reins to him and immediately resume

my favorite post of a swayamsevak. Because, for me, my person has no value. The mission we have embraced is all important and valuable.

Keep away from the position

Once Guruji said to Prabhudatta Brahmachari: Maharaj some people say, I am after the position of the President or that of the Prime minister. And that, towards that goal, I am raising such a huge organization. I want to make it absolutely clear that I shall never in my life accept such an position. I propose to die remaining the way I am -- the fakkad -- (penniless?) and unattached. Why should I care for position or the politics involved? What little service of the people, I am destined to perform, I shall continue to do till my last breath and breath it while doing it.

Guruji used to site a poem of Alexander Pope to describe the concept of self- negation:

Thus let me live unseen, unknown,

Thus unlamented let me die,

Steal from the world and not a stone

Tell where I lie.

Remain behind the curtain

We shall have to be extremely wary of certain red signals, certain pitfalls in our course. Propaganda blitzkrieg is not for us. Gurudev Tagore had written about eight decades ago: Before we attain some solid success we should remain unknown and work silently. But our countrymen seem to work quite the other way. They ignore the necessity of completing ordinary simple tasks behind the curtain. All their mind is engaged in outward, superficial and contemptible exhibition of their achievements.

Beware of the publicity and the limelight

Doctorji was no stranger to publicity techniques or gimmicks. He knew very well the publicity technique and he demonstrated his skill during the strike by the Calcutta medical students. He scrupulously avoided the publicity after the formation of the Sangh. This was so, in spite of his friendship with Shri Gopalrao Ogale, editor of the Nagpur paper Maharashtra. Doctorji would not allow publicity to any Sangh activity, beyond a short report of speech on the Vijayadashmi or some such very important occasion. He restricted publicity to the need based minimum because he knew that excessive publicity might create an expectant atmosphere, but it can not create solid organization. If you have solid organization, then you can not care less what others say about you. Base your organization on a solid foundation. Bind it by strong bonds of dedication. Then it is itself the refutation of all criticism and it is a medium of real publicity. Such was Doctorji's

belief. To be ruffled by newspaper criticism and to rush to refute it betrays lack of confidence Doctorji used to say.

People once requested him to approve to publish a weekly from Pune, devoted to Sangh ideology. Doctorji wrote: It goes without saying that the weekly will propagate our ideology. But do not ever get caught into the snare of controversy arising out of the charges leveled against the Sangh by all kinds of people. We shall have to totally ignore them whether in the press or on the platform.

The silent publicity by dint of solid work is more lasting. It has a strong effect like the sweets that draw the ants without any tom-tomming. This kind of silent publicity creates a lasting impression. The very presence of the activity or of the active worker acts as a healthy publicity medium.

It is true that the desire for publicity arises often out of good intentions. While ceaselessly working, we frequently feel that if our good work gets due publicity, it will get an added impetus. Many people are ignorant of our work because of the lack of publicity. We can't draw the people towards the work. Inform them of the good work we are doing, then they will give all support to this work. So with this good intention we desire publicity. Initially the publicity apparently helps. Once the work and the workers find themselves in the limelight, imperceptibly they undergo a transformation. We

then tend to undertake only that much or only that kind of work that brings us publicity. All other work tends to appear pints. We fall prey to the narcissus complex.

Therefore, in the beginning, we should keep ourselves away from the limelight. Publicity has an optimum point of utility, like the optimum point of rainfall. Less than that result in draught, and more than that result in floods. Either way it is harmful. In the same manner, less than optimum publicity renders good work go unnoticed and more than that goes to the head of the worker. Either way it is harmful.

Need based assets

The rule of optimum point holds even for case of property or finances. We initially very rightfully feel that the lack of funds hinders much of the work. We realize the need for funds. With all good intentions in the world we seek monetary assistance. Steadily we acquire money. We also find that our work picks up pace. This is the optimum point. It passes out of our mind in our pursuit of money. We follow the rule of more the merrier. Quietly and stealthily, accumulation of money influences and changes our mind-set. Then we prefer to undertake only that work which fetches us handsome rewards.

After the independence the Congress government at the center and in the states provided funds, land,

buildings and other forms of assets to the bodies of workers engaged in Gandhi's constructive program. This totally transformed the constructive worker's psychology. In the words of Dada Dharmadhikariji, We committed a grave mistake in accepting the state aid. After receiving the funds all kind of facilities from the government, steadily our constructive worker's mentality underwent a profound change. In the place of earlier zest and zeal for work we now find a craving for ease and convenience. This changed the very character of the workers. Owing to this, we fail to find the expected results or outcome of constructive work. Therefore, we only require a need based, minimum of assets and resources.

Establishment without an 'establishment'

In the early days of Sangh, Doctorji's house functioned as his office. As the volume of Sangh activities grew, the house could hardly serve the purpose as the Sangh headquarters. Minimum required was a separate room for the office. When they acquired such an office, Doctorji cautioned the workers saying, The karya (work) will go on in the karyalaya (office), and the swayamsevaks will remain in their homes. Shri Guruji also smilingly replied to a taluka Sanghchalak complaining about the lack of proper office accommodation. Well, this is a blessing in disguise. For, that will facilitate the Sangh to enter in so many families. Shri Guruji registered a similar reaction while inaugurating the renovated Jullandar office. No doubt it is good we

have a new office. But karyalaya means alaya (abode) of karya (activity) and not laya (end) of karya (activity).

In the absence of a full-fledged office, they do all the work at the houses of different families. No doubt this involves some extra work for the office-bearers who are without an office and to the members of the families who volunteer to provide furniture, carpets, beds and other chattels as also services of cooking and catering to the needs of the guests coming from outstation. When they open a formal office, all the pieces of furniture and services are available at the office, at one place, saving time and energy of the office bearers. This deprives the families of the opportunities of service and the chance of forming closer ties with members of the Sangh. It develops the mentality of establishment. This is the sister of bureaucratic mentality. We have to avoid both of these disorders. Our aim is to have an establishment without establishment.

Be weary about 'donations'

We have to be equally suspicious about donations. In the early days, securing donations was a very difficult task. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya was a master in this art, and he earned the amusing sobriquet of the master beggar or the wealthy beggar for that. Now the donations are easy to come by because of the new income tax act and other laws. Doctorji was also not very enthusiastic about

receiving donations. He would smile and say to the philanthropic donor, We love you, not your money!. In the words of Peter Doucre, donors should be converted into contributors. Receiving donations of tainted money would certainly affect our work. We may not indulge in the clever sophistry, Whatever may be the source of money, as we are utilizing it for a good cause, there should be no compunction in accepting the ill gotten money because whatever sin the donor had committed would recoil on him only. Indeed our scriptures have stated that even dining at a sinful person's house affects the purity of mind of the diner. Therefore we should not follow the so called practical course or the pragmatic view In fact we should adopt the so called 'crazy' course of shunning all kinds of temptations. By accepting money, you turn yourselves into paid workers of an organization but not the missionaries for your cause.

Need to be 'mad'

Appreciate very well the need to be 'mad'. Vivekananda had called upon the youth to be mad after their mission. The work of the RSS requires similar obsession. All the pracharaks of the RSS obsessed with their ideal. That is why the Sangh grows from strength to strength. We of the Sangh, desire nothing, neither the position, nor the riches, nor the status. Such things do not enamor us. So much so that we do not even expect a sense of gratitude from those whom we help.

Expectations of praise or gratitude

Jesus Christ had the supernatural power of a 'healing touch'. He thus once healed a whole colony of lepers. The moment he restored their healthy skin, they ran to their dear ones. No one but a stray leper realized that he had not as much as nodded in thanks to the great healer and was rushing to his wife who had deserted him for this deformity. One among a score or even a hundred do not have the gratitude. A neighbor once accosted Pundit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar to warn him of his another neighbor who maligned Vidyasagar behind his back. To this, Vidyasagar replied, It is not possible. You might have had some misunderstanding. How can he malign me when I have never done him a good turn? That is, in fine, we should endeavor to fulfill our undertaking without expectations of any praise or gratitude and fortify ourselves against the likely event of ingratitude and caprice from those we have obliged. We should be always beware of a sense of patronage creeping into our mind. Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa used to say to those entertaining the feeling of patronage, What good could you do to others? Only the Lord can do 'any good' to anyone. You should be grateful to the Almighty for granting you this opportunity to attain merit of service to the needy.

Narrow path of service

Give a wide birth to the red signals of danger and pitfalls. Walk the straight and the narrow path of service to humanity. You will be subject to least errors and shortcomings. Indeed service without any blemish is extremely difficult, as the saying goes,

Sevaadharmaha paramagahano
yoginaapyagamyaha

The mission of service is very profound. Even the yogis can not always comprehend it.

