

CHAPTER XVII

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SWORD

Absolute non-resistance or absolute-violence, says Herbert Spencer, hurts both altruism and egoism. Spencer's view seems to portray the outlook and political ideology of the Hindu Mahasabha, third in importance among the Indian political parties. A militant body itself, the Mahasabha exhorts all its members and adherents to develop a spirit of resistance and militarism. Today, Hindu militarization is one of the foremost items in the programme of the Hindu Mahasabha. 'Militarise Hindudom'—this is its sheet-anchor. To the Mahasabha the means employed for achieving this end or, for attaining political independence are of little consequence. Whether it is by violent and revolutionary methods, or through pure and absolute non-violence, the end must be achieved at any cost. For the average Hindu Mahasabhaite, Aldous Huxley's philosophy that the end cannot justify the means, 'for the simple and obvious reason that the means employed determine the nature of the ends produced', has no meaning. For the Gandhian philosophy of absolute non-violence, of non-violent resistance even to aggression, he has nothing but scorn. The Mahasabha considers that resistance to aggression in all possible and practicable ways is not only justifiable, but imperative. According to Mr V. D. Savarkar, its President for seven successive sessions and the greatest among its leaders, perfect non-violence or non-resistance even to aggression is 'absolutely immoral' and he holds that it is bound to spell destruction to all human progress.

because it would sacrifice the innocent to spare the guilty, exterminate the nobler types of humanity, leaving only the wicked to multiply. The Hindu Mahasabha has never believed in such a 'queer and immoral' creed.

The Mahasabha, like the Indian National Congress, stands for complete independence for India. And when war broke out, this organization, like the Congress, strongly disputed the claims of the British and of other belligerent nations that they had been actuated solely by moral and altruistic considerations. This tall claim, it considered, would be nothing but a propagandist stunt so long as the British continued to hold India in bondage. But, unlike the Congress, the Mahasabha thought that in spite of the pretensions of the British Government, there was ample room for whole-hearted co-operation between India and England. India had been kept unarmed and emasculated by her rulers mainly out of fear and distrust. A country unarmed and unprepared to defend itself from military aggression cannot retain its freedom even for a single day. Britain had to revise her policy under pressure of the exigencies of war, and the army was thrown open to every Indian. The Hindu Mahasabha held the view that it would be suicidal for the Hindus to allow this opportunity for militarization to slip by. It exhorted all Hindu Sabhaite and Hindu Sanghatanists throughout the country to intensify their efforts, and to utilize this opportunity to press on the movement for militarizing the Hindu race and secure for it training in modern military science.

The Mahasabha was not anxious for co-operation in the war effort for its own sake, but it believed that the situation offered certain opportunities that could be exploited to its own advantage. The Mahasabha President said:

'There is no question of co-operating or non-co-operating with the British Government in their war effort. The only question before you is to find out how best you can make this inevitable co-operation with the British as profitable as possible to our own country in the circumstances today.'

It was therefore the part of realism, the Mahasabha argued, that it should render what it called 'responsive co-operation' to the British Government, in so far as the defence of India during the war was concerned. If the Hindu Sabhaites utilized this opportunity to the largest measure possible by extending co-operation to the British Government in a responsive spirit in so far as recruitment to the armed forces was concerned, they would be doing a double service to Hinduism. First, they would be able to defend their own hearths and homes, if they were actually attacked by allied forces from outside or faced by internal anti-Hindu anarchy; secondly, in addition to this immediate benefit, they would be able so to press forward with the Hindu militarization movement as to secure for Hindus permanently a dominant position in the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. Exhorting young able-bodied Hindus, Mr Savarkar said:

'Let the Hindus come forward now and enter the Army, the Navy, the Air Forces, the Ordnance and other war-crafts factories in their thousands and millions. Let them cross the seas to give fight and to pass through the baptism of fire in all the world theatres of war, learn to use the latest weapons the world knows of and measure their swords with the bravest races of the world today.'

The response to this stirring appeal was immediate and handsome. Large numbers of Hindu youth recruited themselves in the fighting forces and Hindu girls joined the Auxiliary services, and today the Hindus, including

Sikhs, form nearly three-fourths of the total strength of the different defence units of India, whereas when war broke out, they were less than one-third. And they did cross swords with the bravest soldiers of the world, coming out with flying colours and establishing the fair name of India in the eyes of the world by their incomparable heroism. Out of the total number of Victoria Cross awards, the highest military honour for individual valour, over two dozens have gone to Hindus.

The militarization of the Hindus owes its origin and development to Mr Savarkar and Dr B. S. Moonje, the two militant stalwarts of the Mahasabha who believe in the doctrine of the sword. Mr Savarkar was, in his earlier days, a turbulent revolutionary. He once jumped overboard from an English ship and swam the English Channel to the French shore in order to evade trial at British hands. True, an extradition order sent him back to Britain, and he was later sentenced to fourteen years in the Andamans. But this grim ordeal did not kill his revolutionary ardour and when he came out in 1937, one of the first and foremost tasks he undertook was the revival of the military spirit among Hindus. That was the Gandhian era. A quarter of a century's preaching of and propaganda for the cult of non-violence had just begun to show results and India was gradually veering round to Gandhiji's creed.

It was at this moment that the militant Savarkar burst upon the Indian political scene and at once pitted himself against the Gandhian gospel. In everything that he did, in every public speech, in every public statement, Mr Savarkar stressed the necessity of once again militarizing the manhood of the Hindu nation. To him the martial instincts and military efficiency of a nation constituted the very breath of its life. He demanded compulsory

military training in India and waged a tearing campaign against the deliberate policy of the authorities which led to the emasculation of the Hindus. The Hindu Public, accustomed only to the moral teachings of the Gandhian cult of absolute non-violence, was at first stupefied. But, later on a large number of them welcomed it and embraced it in all earnestness. The result was that when two years later the war touched Indian soil, hundreds and thousands of Hindu youth plunged headlong into the struggle and by their heroic deeds in the various war theatres won for themselves the highest military distinctions.

The Hindu Sanghatanists today are well-organized and well-disciplined, thanks to the great stress the Mahasabha laid on militarization. It was primarily the growing strength of the Muslim League and its ever-increasing demands that contributed to the present structure of the Mahasabha, but the policy of appeasement followed by the Congress at times also helped to popularize the Sabha. Let us analyse this point and see the relation between the Hindu Mahasabha, whose membership consists exclusively of Hindus, and the Congress, which has a majority of Hindus as its members.

The Mahasabha is, as an organization, thoroughly anti-Congress. It had been for a long period pro-Congress but under the leadership of Mr Savarkar it is gradually moving into the opposition camp and its criticism of the Congress and its policies are very bitter. In this respect its policy is similar to that of the Muslim League. Both the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League diametrically opposed to each other in their views as they are, fight as bitterly against the Congress as they fight each other.

Why is it so? Why cannot the Mahasabha join hands with the Congress in the common cause of Indian in-

dependence? The Congress policy of appeasement, as has already been stated, is responsible for this sharp cleavage between these two organizations. The British rulers of India first sowed the seed of communal discord by introducing separate and communal electorates for the Muslims in 1909. Ramsay Macdonald's Communal Award accentuated it further in 1932. The Award sacrificed Hindu interests to those of the Muslims. It was therefore expected that the Congress, whose leadership was dominantly Hindu, which was run on Hindu money and Hindu sacrifices, and which claimed to safeguard the interests of all communities equally, would start a country-wide agitation against this vicious project. But, unfortunately, at its Lucknow session, it adopted a resolution 'neither accepting nor rejecting' the scheme which rudely shocked the Hindu world. The Hindus felt that this neutrality on the part of the Congress was prompted by its anxiety to woo the Muslims of India and bring them in large numbers into its fold, even at the sacrifice of certain principles, and regardless of Hindu interests. That was the first time the Mahasabha realized that it must strengthen its own forces and cease relying on the Congress to safeguard Hindu interests though the majority of Congressmen were Hindus and though Mr Jinnah himself characterized it as a Hindu body. Said Mr Savarkar in his presidential address at the Nagpur session of the Mahasabha in 1938:

'We are out to chastize its anti-Hindu policy, to cure it of the intolerable hypocrisy which is all the more harmful for its strutting about under the mask of truth, truth absolute and nothing but truth, with its lathi charges and English bayonets going merrily hand in hand with non-violence, non-violence absolute and nothing but non-violence in thought, word and deed!'

Of all the Hindu Mahasabhaites, Mr Savarkar appears to be the most vehement critic of the Congress. Every utterance of his belches fire against the Congress. His words, his deeds and possibly his thought, also breathe an anti-Congress spirit. He says:

'The Congress draws all its supplies, men, money and votes, from the Hindus. Congressmen stand on Hindu shoulders as Hindu candidates and as soon as they raise themselves to those high places, they kick the Hindus back, disown the Hindus, call Hindu organizations communal, and therefore reprehensibly betray Hindu interests at every turn, but keep dancing attendance on the Muslim League.... They call themselves Indian nationalists! But every step they take is communal. They have guaranteed special protection to minorities, Moslems, Christians, Europeans, etc. Is that Indian nationalism?'

Mr Savarkar therefore suggests the following ways of chastizing what he calls the pseudo-nationalist fad of the Congress: (1) Boycott the Congress; (2) don't vote for the Congress; and (3) vote only for a confirmed and tested Hindu nationalist. Let no Hindu Sanghatanist pay a single farthing in support of, or register a single vote for a Congress candidate.

Another factor responsible for alienating the Mahasabha from the Congress was the Khilafat movement and Gandhiji's identification with it on behalf of the Congress. Then there were the offers of blank cheques, the fifty-fifty-ratio, to which the Congress agreed and which ushered in the parity formula adopted in the Wavell Plan. But the last straw was the demand for a complete division of India, the substance of which also Mahatma Gandhi conceded, though he confessed that he himself had no faith in it and saw only ruin in such vivisection.

The Mahasabha is the stoutest of all opponents of the Pakistan scheme, and threatens that the protagonists of Pakistan would have to walk over the dead bodies of millions of Hindus before they could achieve a division of India.

The Mahasabha's indictment of the 'anti-Hindu' policy of the Congress cannot be lightly brushed aside as frivolous. Congress policy may not strictly be called 'anti-Hindu', but it is definitely pro-Muslim. It has been the constant anxiety of the Congress to woo the Muslims and it has made tremendous sacrifices, sometimes seemingly unreasonable and indefensible, in pursuing that policy. The motives behind this policy are laudable inasmuch as the Congress is a nationalist body, striving first and foremost for the freedom of the country, for which it considers no sacrifice too great, especially in winning over the Muslims to its side. But the Mahasabha maintains that there is justification for its complaint that Hindu interests are not safe in the hands of the Congress. This apprehension is based on instances like the ban imposed by Mr Rajagopalachari's Congress Government on the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha against the anti-Hindu measures of the Nizam's Government, which the Madras Premier styled our 'Sister State', and also the prohibition by Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant, the Congress Premier of the United Provinces, of the Hindus in several localities from playing music even in their houses throughout Mohurrum Week. The Mahasabha claims that the policy of the Congress has reduced the Hindus of India to the position of political orphans in their own Motherland. Rightly or wrongly the Hindus are apprehensive, and as long as the Congress pursues a policy of appeasement the militant Mahasabha will ceaselessly fight it tooth and nail. And so Mr Savarkar declares

emphatically :

'So long as the Congress persists in hugging to the perverse conception of "Nationalism" which practically amounts to the betrayal of the Hindu cause, there cannot and should not be any co-operation between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress. On the contrary, it will be the bounden duty of every Hindu who does not want to sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage to undermine the Congress and free Hindudom in general and the Hindu electorate in particular from the grip of the so-called Indian National Congress.'

CHAPTER XVIII

SUPER-INTERNATIONALISM

In the modern world where armed conflicts among nations caused by their lust for power have brought about destruction on a colossal scale, the desire to foster an international outlook and live in peace and amity with other nations is natural and praiseworthy. History tells us that conflicts arose only when national interests were thought to be at stake. When Germany razed Belgium to the ground in the first World War or when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, the same idea, whether it was right or wrong, motivated their aggression. But the subordination of national interests to internationalism is rare, and nowhere in the world's history do we come across a people sacrificing their own national interest in the interest of international well-being.

The Communists of India, however, provide the exception. When the second World War broke out in September, 1939, following the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Indian Communists, like the Indian National Congress, declared it to be an imperialist war and were loud in denouncing Anglo-French-American imperialism as the main obstacle in the way of human progress. But when about two years later Germany invaded Russia, they suddenly changed their front and declared that the war had become a 'People's War'. To them the national interests of India did not matter. Russia was their Valhalla and they were only worried about the fate of their compatriots in Soviet Russia. And in their burning enthusiasm to help Russia, they even opposed the Indian National Congress.