

CHAPTER - V

E P I L O G U E .

As I have observed in this dissertation Yashwantraoji was born on 12th March, 1913 in a very poor farmer's family which had hardly any means to make the both ends meet. And to add their measury Yashwantraoji's father died when he was hardly four years old. However, on account of sheer hardwork and determination on the part of his mother and elder brother he could complete his Higher Secondary Education at Tilak High School in Karad. He later completed his Higher Education at Rajaram College Kolhapur and completed his Law Graduation from Poona. His achievements as a boy from an illeterate, poor and rustic family to manager to pass the law degree was itself a great feat in those days. When in school he was once questioned by his teacher, what he would like to be when he grew up. His candid reply was, " I will be only Yashwantrao". He was truely prophetic in his answer and became Yashwantrao in his later life. We can hardly find the political leader in contemporary Indian politics, who came from such a lowly economical and social background rising to the pinnacle of political popularity and enviable achievements. Yashwantrao's early life was a saga of never

ending difficulties and deprivations. When he was a student, due to acute financial difficulty he went to a Congress leader from Karad to get a recommendation from him for school freeship but that person bluntly refused to sign the freeship certificate. Yashwantraoji firmly decided not to apply for any such freeship hence forth. This incident left a deep scar on his tender mind. It gave him a grim realisation of the existing social and economical inequality.

He overcame all these hurdles and plunged himself headlong into the freedom movement. Yashwantraoji comes from the hills of Satara which has been the home of avid lovers of freedom. They had ~~nurtured~~ nurtured Chhatrapati Shivaji and had been active participants of his deeds to establish 'Hindavi Swaraj'. They had ~~breed~~ stout hearts and tough bodies - men of determination, courage and defiance. When great leaders like Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru and so on raised the flag of National Movement, Satara awakened from stupor and responded with fervour. As a young boy, Yashwantraoji came under its influence and so also with the writings of Lokmanya Tilak which he devoured while still in schools. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, it was Yashwantrao who inspired and enthused his schoolmates by participating in the procession with the Tricolour flag on his

shoulders and shouting slogans like " Mahatma Gandhiki Jay " and "Inkilab Zindabad". Yashwantrao was undoubtedly in his formative stage of his political career in those days. But the political conference held at Masur gave Chavan an opportunity to meet and get acquainted with numerous political activists from Wai, Satara, Walve and Tasgaon Talukas. He got first hand information from them about the civil Disobedience Movement in their respective areas. These acquaintances, were to play a major part in Yashwantrao's future life as a freedom fighter from 1930-47.

On January, 26th 1931, Yashwantrao and his associate Tatya Doipode were arrested for distributing anti-Govt. pamphlets, sticking posters and hoisting the tricolour on a tree in the High School Premises and giving the slogan of ' Vande Mataram '. Afterwards they were produced before a Magistrate and given a punishment of 18 months imprisonment. After conviction Yashwantrao was taken to Yerawada Jail which had virtually become a sanctuary of many political leaders. Yerwada's jail in fact had become a school and a laboratory of young political workers. In the jail he came in contact with political thinkers and leaders such as Acharya Bhagwat, Raosaheb Patwardhan, and S.M. Joshi to name a few. It was here that Yashwantrao's real political education started. Here he started reading books on varied ideologies and had discussions

with various persons. By the time he came out of the jail he had a deeper insight into political ideologies and activities.

After this Yashwantrao completed his matriculation in the year 1934 and joined the Rajaram College, Kolhapur for his higher education. But all through this period he was active in the Congress organisation and had become well known as a budding leader of the Satara Dist. He later joined the Law College in Pune and completed his Law graduation in 1940.

In the meanwhile M.N.Roy was released from Jail towards the end of 1936. He regarded the Indian National Congress under the able and well directed leadership of Mahatma Gandhi as the people's movement and the most effective mode to fight British Imperialism. In the 1937 Faizapur Congress M.N.Roy read his own paper on political thesis of radicalism which influenced Yashwantrao a great deal. On account of this Yashwantrao took initiative in organising a political conference to determine the programme of action of Royists at Tasgaon. Some vested interests foiled this attempt and Tasgaon Conference ended up in confusion. But a private meeting was held and Yashwantrao attended it. Yashwantrao's contacts during this period with various royists such as Tarkteertha Laxmanshastri

Joshi and Atmaram Patil to name a few later developed into close political and personal friendships.

Though Yashwantraoji was immensely influenced by thoughts and writings of Marx, Lenin and M.N.Roy, his courtship with International Communism was shortlived. After the outbreak of Second World War in 1939, the stand taken by Royists was not acceptable to Yashwantrao and his mind and activities tilted more in favour of Gandhian philosophy and the leadership of Pt.Nehru which influenced his political ~~then~~ career throughout.

The turning point in the annals of Indian Freedom struggle was the visit of Sir Strafford Cripps and his mission to India and their so-called political progressive measures for India. The measures suggested by the Cripps Mission were totally unacceptable to Gandhiji. Yashwantrao read his views in 'Harijan' in April, May and June issues of the magazine and was convinced that Gandhiji was becoming more decisive, attacking and bold in his approach and wanted that Britishers should leave India on their own.

In April, 1942, Yashwantraoji, K.D.Patil and few other friends met at Shri. Vishwanathrao's alias Tatyasabheb Kore's place at 'Dagmala' in Kolhapur state to discuss the pros and cons of the proceedings of Allahabad Congress. In the meeting

Yashwantrao and his colleagues decided to follow the line of action of Mahatma Gandhi. After this Yashwantrao along with Tatyasaheb Kore and few other Congress Workers in the 1st week of August, went to Bombay and stayed at a chawl in Pan Bazar. On 7th August, they attended the historic A.I.C.C. meeting at Gawalia Tank. On that day Pt. Nehru moved the motion of 'Quit India'. Gandhiji also spoke twice in the same meeting and his thoughts left a deep impact on Yashwantrao's mind.

From the next day the British Government started to suppress the upsurge of the people after the declaration of the 'Quit India Movement'. All important leaders were arrested throughout the country. Yashwantrao and his colleagues decided to go underground and continue the work of freedom struggle. On 14th January, 1943, Chavan's wife Sou. Venutai was arrested and kept in the Karad Jail. His brother Ganpatrao was also arrested. In the meanwhile the underground movement in Satara Dist. was turning into armed guerilla movement which came to be later known as 'Prati Sarkar' (parallel Government). Yashwantrao was arrested in 1943 in Phaltan when he had gone to visit his wife. He was convicted and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment. He was relieved finally from the jail in a few months before 1946,

General Elections. Chavan won the election from Karad constituency with a thumping majority and joined the B.G.Kher Ministry as the Parliamentary Secretary.

Thus, Yashwantraoji's illustrious political and administrative career as Parliamentary Secretary commenced under Shri. Morarji Desai. During this period, there was a conflict between the Chief Minister Shri. B.G.Kher and Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee President Mr. Keshavrao Jedhe and it was Yashwantrao who played a pivotal role in patching up the differences between them. Thus Yashwantrao's political horizons were widened and rapidly he was emerging as the most promising leader of Maharashtra.

Within few years of attaining freedom by India in 1947, the Congress Party in Maharashtra had a major rift and eminent mass leaders such as Shri. Keshavrao Jedhe, Shankarrao More and Shri. Datta Deshmukh left the Congress to form the Peasants' and Workers party after the Dabhadli Session. Political stalwarts like S.M. Joshi and N.G. Gore were in the socialist party. Both these parties posed a virtual threat to the Congress Party. Yashwantrao decided to remain in the

Congress, and fight these two forces to the best of his capabilities

In 1952, General Elections, Yashwantrao was again returned to the Legislative Assembly with a thumping majority. This time Yashwantrao did not restrict himself to his own constituency but he campaigned for Congress Party throughout Maharashtra. After the elections he was inducted in the Cabinet of Morarji Desai as the Minister of Food and Supplies. Yashwantrao's policies and decisions as the Minister of this department were very well calculated and for the better cause of the masses. The then Central Minister for Food and Supplies, the illustrious, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, praised him immensely for his work.

In the mid 1950s the Sanyukta Maharashtra Movement was at its peak. After the departure of Morarji Desai to the Centre in 1956, Yashwantraoji became a natural successor and immediately made his mark as the youngest Chief Minister of the most important state. As the Chief Minister, he was face to face with the most widespread agitation for the formation of separate Maharashtra State. He faced a sort of crisis of conscience too in this matter. But with his constructive determination and monumental patience, Yashwantraoji controlled the agitation without wavering in his commitment to the nation

and the party he belong to. He made correct assessment of persons and politics and soldiered on firm in his belief that the Congress leadership in general and Pt.Nehru in particular can be persuaded to change their mind and attitude towards the legitimate demand of separate unilingual Maharashtra State.

In fact, Yashwantrao's personality revealed in this crisis a fine blending of a nationalist who could sublimate the regional sentiment for better service to the nation. And when Pt.Nehru announced the formation of separate Maharashtra State, Yashwantrao's foresight was acknowledged by both his friends and foes as the man who weathered the crisis.

His tenure as the Chief Minister of the Bi-lingual Bombay State was undoubtedly an eventful and illustrious one. In this short stint of two years as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra State, he played the crucial role by laying down a firm foundation of progressive and modern Maharashtra. He formulated firm and pragmatic policies for Agriculture, Education, Irrigation, Energy, Co-operatives and Industrial Sectors and started implimenting them with right earnestness. He also made many important policy decisions and legislations as regards to decentralisation of power and land reforms. Due to all his efforts it would be apt to call him as the ' Maker of Modern Maharashtra'.

By 1962, Yashwantraoji was estimated by the political observers as the best Chief Minister in the whole country. He was destined to play many other steller roles in future of the great and vast country. He was called upon by Jawaharlal Nehru to join the Defence Ministry in his cabinet when the nation was going to a traumatic experience after the military setback at the hands of chinese. It became his task to raise the moral of the armed forces and to put heart in the hierarchy responsible for the Defence of the Borders. In addition to this he had also the vital responsibility to instill a sense of confidence and pride in the minds of the people of the nation. He did this in a manner characteristic of him minimum of flamboyance and with any undue show of bravado. He made numerous changes in the mode of defence production and defence administration. The results of his endeavour became quite evident during the 1965 Indo Pak War. He was at the helm of affairs during this crucial war in which India emerged victorbus. The epoch-making decision of Y.B.Chavan to make use of the Air force at the right time was by far the most decisive factor on India's victory in this war.

When the Prime Minister Shri. Lal Bahadur Shastri died, in Tashkand after signing the Tashkand Treaty with

President Ayub Khan, Smt. Indira Gandhi was elected as the next Prime Minister of India. Yashwantrao played a vital role in the election of the Prime Minister in favour of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In fact in those days he himself was widely regarded as a potential Prime Minister. But there is an old theory which says that nothing can plight a politician's career more quickly than for him to be discussed as the future Prime Minister. This was quite true in the case of Yashwantraoji.

In a major reshuffle of her cabinet in 1966, Mrs. Indira Gandhi entrusted Yashwantraoji with the Home Ministry. Shri. Gulzarilal Nanda, the then Home Minister had failed to curb the disturbances created by communal, factionalist and anti-social elements. The general elections were just a few months away and Smt. Indira Gandhi wanted to have an able and sound Home Minister to handle the explosive situation in the country and she could find none other than Yashwantraoji to deal with it. Immediately after his taking over of the Home Ministry he ably handled the 'national students march' organised by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and his colleagues. He also handled the issue of 'anti cow-slaughter agitation' very confidently. He was also successful in discussing the situation created by a threat of

self-immolation by Akali leader Sant Fateh Singh. He also dealt with the police agitation competently. Although Yashwantrao's prime task as the Home Minister was mainly to maintain law and order, which he did with the stern hand, he also tried to solve them from a humanitarian point of view. He also successfully dealt with the passing of 'official language bill' (Amendment) which was illuding the Parliament for a long time. By this time Yashwantraoji was hailed as an astute parliamentarian and an able administrator.

He played a great role in the famous tussle between the old guards like Shri. Kamraj, Shri. Nijlingappa, Shri. S.K.Patil and others of the undivided Congress Party and then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi in the Bangalore Session of the All India Congress Committee, in 1969. Initially in this battle of supremacy and the candidature of the Presidentship after Dr. Zakir Hussein's death, he as a true party disciplinarian supported the official party candidate Shri. Sanjeev Reddy. In this election Smt. Indira Gandhi supported an Independent candidate Shri. V.V.Giri who subsequently won the Presidential Election. After this Yashwantraoji was the leading personality in trying to avoid the break up of the Congress. But personal

egoism of both the factions led to a vertical split in the congress party. It was his decision to cast his lot in favour of Smt. Indira Gandhi, in this split which tilted the balance heavily and decisively in favour of Smt. Gandhi.

No doubt he came in for a severe criticism from the Congress(O) leadership which termed him as a 'fence sitter'. But he was not deterred by it. If one makes an analytical study of his role in the split, one would come to the conclusion that his siding with Mrs. Indira Gandhi was purely based on ideological grounds and his left of centre stance which was a hallmark of his political character.

During this period Prime Minister Indira Gandhi introduced some drastic economic measures such as Nationalisation of four major banks, abolition of Privy purses and other measures to curb hoarding and profiteering of essential commodities. Yashwantraoji was the man Smt. Indira Gandhi had chosen as her new Finance Minister to implement effectively the progressive policies and programmes of Congress (R) Party and her Government. Yashwantraoji as the Finance Minister studied in detail the working of the newly nationalised banks and gave them a guide line which helped them make a head way in the process of economic revolution

in both urban and rural areas of our country. He also played a major role in the process of the 'green revolution' and the progress and modernisation of Agricultural Sectors. In the Industrial Sector the progress was not as significant as in the Agricultural Sector but the obstacle for progress had been broken and a firm base was laid down for Industrial Progress in both private and public sectors. An other major problems Yashwantraoji had to face on priority basis was the holding and stabilising the price line and undoubtedly it goes to his credit that after his taking over the price index during the fiscal year 1971 went up only by 4% compared to 7% price in the preceding year and this was quite an achievement in the prevailing circumstances. He also attended several international conferences pertaining to economic aspects and there he not only advocated the economic problems of India but he emerged as a spokesman of all the developing countries and came to be known as the most pragmatic and down to earth economist. Thus Yashwantrao did his stint as the Finance Minister as effectively as ever.

In the year 1974, he was made the Foreign Minister in Smt. Indira Gandhi's cabinet. During his tenure he followed the guide line of Pandit Nehru and attempted to express

India's perception and sensibilities within the framework of the policy enunciated by Pt.Nehru not rigidly but with elasticity and flexibility and with a clearcut aim of thriving for world peace, universal fraternity and global socio-economic equality. One of the major changes in International relationship which took shape during this period was the emergence of the concept of collective self-reliance in various non-aligned and commonwealth countries - conferences. Yashwantraoji was the leading figure in consolidating the non-aligned movement and a vociferous mouth-piece of the developing world.

During his tenure he was able to kept intact the bilateral relations based on Simla Agreement with Pakistan. In case of China he was successful in reestablishing diplomatic relations on Ambassadorial level. With the U.S.S.R. our friendship and co-operation was further strengthened and consolidated.

In 1975, June the Emergency was proclaimed in India and all the major Opposition leaders were put in prison and a strigent measure of press and media, censorship was introduced. This was ~~sharply~~ decried all over India and the world as the subversion of democracy. In 1977, the emergency and MISA were lifted and the General Elections were held in

which the Congress Party lost its power for the first time since the independence and the Janata Party Government under Shri. Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister came to power. Yashwantraoji was returned to Lok Sabha from Satara Constituency. The Congress party held within itself 150 members in Lok Sabha and Yashwantraoji became the Opposition Leader. As an Opposition Leader he always took principled stand on every issue. He played a role of the leader of the Opposition conveniently and constructively and with unflinching faith in the process of democracy and the dignity of a true and studied Parliamentarian. This great man died in New Delhi on 25th November, 1984 and in his sad demise Maharashtra had lost the ~~king~~ 'Lion of Sahyadri' as well as one of its most outstanding sons and the country a suave and dignified politician.

Thus it may be moderately concluded that various events tested Hon'ble Late Shri. Y.B.Chavan's integrity and firmness time and again; hard times, splits or temptations. However, he continued his political journey undeterred. His devotion, honesty, integrity and dedication to the cause of the State of Maharashtra and India are beyond question. He lent distinction to whichever office he was elected and a dynamism and a broader perspective to whatever cause he got involved in.

He was an astute politician, a great administrator, a great patriot and a staunch follower of humanism. His political career was multi-dimensional, dynamic and inspiring in the history of contemporary India.
