

CHAPTER II

YESHWANTRAOJI CHAVAN AS A FREEDOM FIGHTER 1930 TO 1946.

In Gandhian Era the Indian National Congress was transformed from a mere debating association into a strong mass organisation. After the death of Lokmanya Tilak on 1st August, 1920, Mahatma Gandhiji became the true leader of Congress. From 1920 to 1947 he dominated the political scene in India. In this respect A.R.Desai states, " Gandhiji dominated the political scene like a Titan. His contribution to the Nationalist Movement was unique"¹.

The time when Gandhiji entered Indian politics, the political conditions in India were far from satisfactory. The terrorist revolutionary were completely frustrated and the methods and means of the moderates had proved outdated. The extremists functioning within the limits of established state laws also failed to make further progress. When these three schools of political activities were rendered ineffective, Gandhiji appeared on the political horizon of India. He was not merely a politician. He added to the Congress the additional plans of social, economic and religious reforms. He always borne in mind that India mainly lived in the villages and accordingly prepared his programmes of village uplift. Hindu Muslim unit was his cherished ideals. He devoted his energies to eradicate untouchability. His educational views were

different. Due to these additional plans the Indian masses were largely attracted towards the Congress. Due to Gandhiji's leadership the Congress gradually became stronger and other political forces excepting the Muslim league became very much ineffective and insignificant. The non-Brahmin party in Bombay Presidency which mostly represented the ideologies of Mahatma Phule and Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur and which upheld the course of the bahunjan Samaj was also no exception to it. Gandhiji launched the following seven movements against the British Rule between 1917 and 1947. These movements were (1) Champaranya Satyagraha, 1917, (2) Kheda Satyagraha of 1918, (3) Raulat Act Satyagraha, 1919, (4) Non-violent, Non-cooperation 1920 to 1922, (5) Civil disobedience Movement in two phases from 1930 to 1931 and from 1932 to 1934, (6) Individual Satyagraha - 1940 (7) Quit India Movement - August 8, 1942. However, the Non-Co-operation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement were the three important stages through which Gandhiji could lead India to complete independence in 1947. As these movements had their beginning in Bombay Presidency, they were quite effective in it. The Bahunjan Samaj which was largely associated with the Non-Brahmin Party had joined the Congress by 1930 as the Nationalist Youths were permitted to join the Congress on their own. The exodus of the

natiolists, youths in large number under Keshavrao Jedhe's leadership make the Non-Brahmin Party very much ineffective and insignificant thereafter in the politics of the Bombay Presidency. Yeshwantraoji Chavan did not remain aloof from these spectacular changes. He took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement. This Chapter intends to assess the role of Yeshwantraoji Chavan as a freedom fighter in these movements.

No doubt Yeshwantrao took three years from 1930 to 1933 to pass his Matriculation examination, however, those three years were very important as far as his political thinking process was concerned. In jail he had meetings with many senior freedom fighters who were also thinkers. There were cross currents of socialism which had taken deep roots in the Congress itself. There was a great movement in the Congress to side line and oppose the reactionary rightists forces and progressive and socialists forces that were taking shape. On National level Shri. Jaya Prakash Narayan, Acharya Narendera Deo, and Usef Meher Ali, Achyutrao Patwardhan, S.M. Joshi, N.G. More had made a decision to strengthen the lobby of socialist movement. Yeshwantrao Chavan was aware of all this. As a

student^{he}_n used to attend all those meetings on the bank of the river Krishna in Karad. That was making a positive impact on his mind. This is how during the formation of the Socialist^c forum in the Congress party Yeshwantrao was little bit involved in it.²

In those stormy days Jail had become a training center for young political workers. Yeshwantrao was a voracious reader and a receptive student. During his confinement in jail he came in contact with many prominent leaders like Acharya Bhagwat, Raosaheb Patwardhan, S.M. Joshi and many others. The political prisoners used to meet and discuss among themselves various political problems. They even organised study classes for the less educated. Yeshwantrao read various books and bulletins on History, literature, politics and socialism. He also read Marxian literature and several works of the British Fabian Socialists. He also read ~~Harvard~~ ~~Russell~~ Bertrand Russell's 'Road to Freedom' and some Labour Party bulletins written by Sir Strafford Eripp. He had adjusted himself very well with the prison life. He read a lot and tried to understand various political problems. As he puts it, " that was really the year of revolution for me"³. His real political education began behind the prison bars. It was a ^{rare} ~~new~~ kind of education imparted

through book, bulletins and discussions which provided him an insight into the minds of national leaders. It also exercised a tremendous influence on him and he came out of jail 1933 a much wiser man.

After Matriculation, Yeshwantrao joined the esteemed Rajaram College at Kolhapur. However, though he was physically present at Kolhapur, mentally he was in Satara. Thus his higher education at Kolhapur and the political activities in Satara went on simultaneously. Politics however, was his first love and from 1934 onwards even ~~when he~~ when he was a student, he was actively involved in political work⁴. The Satara District was politically very active and a sense of political awareness was there. After the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, poor masses and the elites from the Maratha Community in the Satara Dist. started joining the main stream of political activity. This stream of young political workers decided to follow the leadership of Yeshwantrao for constructive political work and resultantly the Satara Dist. Congress Organisation was started. To fight with the mighty British Imperialist, the policy was to organise the Congress and side ~~and~~ by side ~~vigou~~ rigourously contest the Council Election of 1937 for whatever power strength could be achieved. Though Yeshwantrao was studying in Rajaram College, he used to

spend three days in a week for the Satara Dist. Organisation. During his absence in College, one of his Classmates (Mr. Ayachit (At present a practising lawyer at Mayani) used to give his proxy. Seven to eight months of his college life he used to devote for the organisational work by moving round (in the masses) and trying to inculcate political awareness in them. The last two months he would study sincerely and appear for his examination. In this way, though there were hardships both financial and otherwise he completed his college education with determination and completed his graduation in 1938 in economics. Among others his lecturers were Prof. N.S. Phadake and the Principal (was) Dr. Bal Krishna, the famous Historian. Both of them loved Yeshwantrao as he was a hard-working, sincere, and deeply committed to his studies. Dr. Bal Krishna was also very happy that his student was in the forefront of the National Movement. Though he was very strict in his dealings he often treated Yeshwantrao's difficulties with kind considerations.

In the mean time the Satara Dist. was becoming more and more politically aware and active. Yeshwantrao had started organising political meetings, seminars, public relationships, personal friendships and building organisation. He was so engrossed in his work that he even forgot to eat his meals. Only when he felt the pangs of hunger he would go to any political workers

house and eat 'Bhakari' and 'Chatani' and continue with his work. While going from place to place he either used to walk, go by bullockcart or go on a bicycle. During this period, as per the Government of India Act, 1935, in 1937 the Bombay Presidency Council Election was declared. In Satara Dist. at that time, Advocate Bhausahab Soman from Satara, Baburao Gokhale from Karad, Advocate Dadasaheb Altekar from Karad, Tarktirtha Laxman-shastri Joshi of Wai, H.R. Mahajani from Satara, Kashinath Deshmukh, Raghunath Limaye, Damuanna Ekbote, Kisan Veer, Indulkar, etc. were doing active political work in different Talukas of Satara Dist. But along with them a young politician in his mid twenties had made a great impact in the politics of the District⁵. This young man was young in ~~nature~~ age but matured in politics. He had abundant enthusiasm. This young man was no less than Yeshwantraoji Chavan.

During 1937, the most powerful and influential person in Satara was (Shri) Dhanaji Shaw Cooper. He was one of the wealthiest and most prosperous factory owners around. He had (plenty of land in Satara, a factory at Satara) road and Poona. He held the liquor monopoly of the District. An intelligent, ~~astute~~ astute and able student of the time. He took care to centralise the political power of the whole district in his own self. He captured the Chairmanship of the Satara Dist. Local Board.

He got a rich commercial magnet named Raosaheb Kalyani installed as the President of the Karad Dist. Local Board. It was Yeshwantrao's job to cut his way through the barrier of such strong and tough personages as Sir Dhanji and Raosaheb Kalyani. They were financially snug and comfortable old timers/^{both} without and within the Congress. These well to do traditionalists were opposed to the new revolutionary personalities of the great nationalists organisation. There had always been an engaging duel between socialism and capitalism and Yeshwantrao recked his brain as to how to resist the Capitalistic Cooperites. He finally found a way out. He started a socialist group which was not opposed to the capitalists but to Capitalism, not to individuals but to ism. He wanted a Congress Ticket for the son of the soil. His young followers fell in this design. He put up Bhausaheb Atmaram Patil(Borgaonkar) for the Assembly Election. But the candidate needed brisk election propaganda and that in its ~~at~~ turn needed money. The prospects of his own success looked dismal and ~~dim~~ dim. His supporters just picked up the Tricolour Flag and went walking from village to village to win votes for him. Yeshwantrao was at the head of this campaign. He plotted, ~~his~~ he spoke, he wrote. He strained every nerve, every resource possible to make his candidate successful. He forged ahead uncaring for/^{help} ~~health~~ and sympathy.

Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru spoke at Swami Baug in Karad.

9 Yeshwantrao put the country side under his ~~speech~~ feet, exhorting the farming populace to hear Nehru's message in Karad. In the election the Cooperites knuckled under. The Dist. Local Board administration slipped into the hands of ^{he} Congress. Anon power and influence fell out of the pocket of the Capitalist into the hands of ^{he} common man. Thus Yeshwantrao gave a brave show down to capitalism and to his thoughts, speeches and actions today are worthy of a free and united India⁶.

Yeshwantrao and his coworkers had already captured the Satara Dist. Congress by 1937. This made the conventional leaders quite upset. The 1938 Elections of the Congress Presidentship was on and Shri. Bhausaheb Soman had already decided the person who would be the leader; but Yeshwantrao and some political workers from Karad decided to put the name of Pandu Master of village Yede Nipani as the President of ^{to} Congress. This Election was supposed to be held at Karad. Some people were doubtful about the peaceful conduct of the Election. Particularly the Satara leaders were more anxious. But the election was held peacefully and the candidate

of Shri. Bhausahab Soman, Shri. Vyankatrao Pawar was elected.

Shri. Nana Patil, an important leader of that area supported Shri. Vyankatrao Pawar and that is why all the Karad Group and Yeshwantrao himself were astonished. But they accepted the decision of the meeting and charge of the Dist. Congress was given to Shri. Vyankatrao Pawar. Hereby at this young age Yashwantrao showed his political friends and force alike that his party discipline is most important, that any personal ambition or anything else⁷.

During his College days at Kolhapur, Yashwantrao kept himself in touch with M.N.Roy's stimulating writings on radical socialism. The great thinker had a tremendous influence on him. He was impressed by his historical perspective and revolutionary approach. Further, some of the Royists, namely, Wamanrao Kulkarni, Atmaram Patil, Laxmanshastri Joshi and H.R. Mahajani became his personal friends⁸. He was particularly attracted by their socialistic and dynamic outlook.

In 1937 after the Faizpur Congress Session, M.N.Roy presented his own thesis on politics. Under his leadership of firm revolutionary programme was taking shape in Yashwantrao's mind. During this period, both met at the Royists group conference, organised at Tasgaon, Satara Dist. in 1938. Rather Yashwantrao had taken the leadership in organising this Conference.

He had by that time studied deeply Roy's radical thoughts based on marxism and because of that he had acquired the power of studying and analysing the existing social problems. When the Tasgaon Conference was held the revolutionary leadership under M.N.Roy had already taken root in the Congress. His ways were drastically different from Gandhism and that worried the conventional leadership in Maharashtra Congress. Subsequently they disturbed the Tasgaon Royists Conference. The ^{rightists} ~~Royists~~ with the help of Nana Patil and his group ~~the~~ successfully foiled the Royists Conference. However, M.N.Roy was unmoved. He held a private meeting of the workers and Yeshwantrao attended this meeting. In the meeting, he analysed the role of ^{the} peasants in social revolution and also outlined the technique of their political mobilization. Roy was impressed by the intellectual acumen which Chavan exhibited in that discussion.⁹

Chavan's association with M.N.Roy and his group was limited to his participation in the activities of the League of Radical Congressmen. This League (of Radical Congressman) established by Roy in 1937, was a ~~finger~~ group within the Congress to push it further towards a programme of national liberation¹⁰. M.N.Roy and his group were in the Congress because they believe that it would help their cause of National and Social liberation. Their loyalty was to the cause and not to the Congress.

Yashwantraoji was to a certain extent, influenced by the ideology of M.N. Roy and he would have been happy if the Congress had adopted that ideology in its struggle for freedom. He was essentially a product of the Nationalists Movement which developed into a national upsurge under the leadership of Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. Jawaharlal Nehru gave a socialistic concept to that national upsurge and also broadened its vision. He made the Indian struggle a part of the anti-imperialist struggle of all the oppressed people of the world. Shri. Chavan was emotionally involved in that anti-imperialist struggle. M.N. Roy's ideas appealed to his intellect but Gandhi's and Nehru's influence and appeal were much stronger. However, interested as he was in larger social problems and in ideas in general, Roy's thought continue to exert a big influence on his mind.

Yashwantrao was certainly attracted towards socialism and Leninism. One of his Communist friends was Mr. Vishnupant Chitale with whom he used to have discussions day and night regarding Karl Marx's dialectical materialism. But Yashwantrao's personal character says that he never made one sided opinion. He first assessed the situation, weighed the pros and cons impartially and then decided accordingly.

No doubt, he had attraction for Royist thoughts. But when the Second World War started in 1939, at that time M.N.Roy, insisted instead of implementing the revolutionary process, in his own mind, he started telling his followers to help the Britishers. He felt that fascism was a weapon to finish off Communism and that is why we must strongly oppose fascism. Yeshwantrao was very much perturbed by this theory of Roy and he decided then that he must bid farewell to M.N.Roy and his radical philosophy. Regarding this decision he had a lot of difference of opinions with Atmaram Patil. Shri Atmaram Patil told Yeshwantrao, " You are my very good friend. You have co-operated with me very well. But when we are having difference of opinion regarding M.N.Roy, then you keep in mind that I will go with Roysaheb"¹¹

At that time, Yeshwantraoji was a student in a Law College in Pune. He was going through a mental crisis. In this regard he has said, " the Second World War had broken out. I felt the time was ripe for revolutionary movement in India to March ahead. It was a great moment in the country's life. I remember when the War was declared, I practically sat through a whole night discussing with friends our future programme of action. The Congress leadership was confused"¹². Though the Congress did

not have a militant programme which made Yeshwantrao unhappy, yet he continued to work in it. He was convinced that the Indian National Congress was the only organisation capable of winning freedom for the country.

The Congress (in June, 1940) again entered into negotiation with the Government and offered co-operation in the war effort, if Britain would make an unequivocal declaration that Indians would be given independence and Britain would immediately form an all-party national government. After another round of unsuccessful negotiations with the Viceroy, Gandhiji launched individual Civil disobedience the objectives of which were to symbolise the nation's protest against bringing India into the war without her consent and to establish freedom of speech without hurting Britain's war efforts. During this time Yeshwantraoji was elected President of the Satara Dist. Congress Committee and was named 'dictator' of Satara Dist. in the 1940-41 individual 'Satyagraha' - passive resistance¹³. Yet he was involved in it only at a minimal level, because he disagreed with the basic idea of individual civil disobedience.

Yeshwantraoji obtained his LL.B. Degree in 1941 inspite of failing in the first year in 1939¹⁴. About his

education he said that his education, " was an incidental thing and in all respects he was a political animal rather than a student in those days." ¹⁵ But to settle down and have a steady income he set up practice as a Criminal Lawyer at the Court of Karad. His concentration was little in his legal practice. His life became that of a horse rider - always running here and there. He became an important person of the Dist. and the people there had already accepted him as a leader. However, the family expectation was that Yeshwantrao must practice well and support the family and give them well to do status. His mother Vithabai and maternal uncle were very happy that their son had become an advocate and contemplated the marriage of Yeshwantrao.

Yeshwantrao had different ideas. He had the national flag in one hand and the Law Degree in the other. It was essential that he should earn some money by practising law. At the same time he felt deeply the importance of what was happening in the country and as an active congress leader of the Satara Dist. he had to give more attention towards the political activities. (also.) The resolution passed by the Congress executives at Wardhan and Bombay Convention and the repercussions in the politics had become very important. On the other hand Vithabai

was keen on getting Yeshwantrao married and paid little heed to his reluctance to do so. Her only obsession was getting a suitable bride for ^{him} Yeshwantrao and one day that happened. Phaltan's More family came to know of Chavan. More had four daughters and a son. Two of his daughters were already married and the third Venu was of marriagable age. More had been working in the Baroda State and ~~has~~ had recently died followed by his wife. Venutai's brother-in-law, Shri. Nikam had proposed for the Chavan lad, who was a lawyer and at the same time an enthusiastic political leader of Satara Dist. though the economic condition of the family was so so. As the saying goes marriages are settled in heaven ^{and} things started moving on a positive line. One fine day the seeing of the prospective bride and bridegroom was fixed up at Satara at Mr. Nalawade's House. Yeshwantrao's friend Mr. K.B. Patil was with him on the occasion. He did all that was to be asked while Yeshwantrao kept silent throughout. Yeshwantrao was impressed by Venutai's simple and attractive looks and dignified behaviour. In the same meeting the marriage was finalised which ultimately took place at Karad on 2nd June, 1942¹⁶. Vithai was very happy to see her daughter-in-law. The marriage ceremony was performed in a big way ^{and where} ~~where~~ many people graced the occasion.

Such a ceremony was rare in Karad at that time. The lawyer Yashwantrao now got married and his family's life commenced,

When Yashwantrao was married amidst all rejoicings there was no such hint that there was going to take place a very striky incidence in the Chavan family. Just after the marriage the political clouds in the Indian firmanent were thickening. In 1942, the IInd World War was raging fiercely. The Congress had demanded to the British Government complete independance and the session for that held in Bombay was attended by Yashwantrao Chavan. Along with ^{him} ~~Yashwantrao~~, Kashinath Deshmukh, Chandroji Patil, V.S. Page, Swami Ramanand Bharati and thousands of other political workers went to Bombay to attend this session. This historic session was held ^{on} ~~at~~ the ground of the Gowalia Tank. The Ist Congress Session was also held here on 28th December, 1885. On this session on the very Ist day of 7th August, 1942 the resolution passed at the Wardha Meeting was moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel seconded this resolution and Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement on August, 8th. The Quit India Resolution in this Session stated,

" Its desire to bring all subjects and oppressed

humanity on the side of the allies, as free nations so that a world federation of free nations may emerge at the end of the hostilities.

It also stated,

" On the declaration of India's independence, a provisional Government will be formed and a free India will become and ~~also~~ ally of the Allied Nations ".

The Quit India Resolution was the expression of the determination of the Congress to achieve its goal. It sanctioned the launching of the mass struggle. But Gandhiji elaborated that actual struggle did not commence the very movement. Since some powers had been put in ^{to} his hands he would first wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. But the Government ~~did~~ ^{has} not give Gandhiji any time to plead his case before the Viceroy. The very next day morning Gandhiji and many other top Congress leaders were arrested in Bombay and elsewhere in the country.

Simultaneously in Satara ^{some} Dist. pleaders, namely, Bhausaheb Soman, Ganpatrao Altekar, Raghuanna Limaye, Acharya Jawadekar, Shankarrao Sathe, Ganpatrao Tapase, etc. were arrested in Satara on 9th August also and put in Yerawada Jail. Police had made

all sorts of arrangements to arrest Yashwantrao and his colleagues on their return to Karad.¹⁷ There was discomfort everywhere. All the District Leaders were arrested and people were waiting for the guidance (for further instructions) in the struggle.

However, the Satara leaders in Bombay made an unexpected plan there on receiving Gandhi's message of 'do or die'. It was to be a real resistance which was to be dealt through non-violent activities. Yashwantraoji while outlining his idea to his colleagues said,

" We do not want to court Jail. That phase of the movement has disappeared. We want to organise massive action and we shall follow Guerilla tactics in organising this action. Let the Government feel it is difficult to rule over a discontented people. This is going to be our ~~decisive~~ decisive battle for freedom."¹⁸

In short it was decided that one must die for one's country and while doing so the main aim will be to disturb the working of the British Government and make them weak.

4/ A meeting was thus held at Yashwantrao's Bombay residency in a " Chaal " in Pan Bazar. This meeting was attended among others by Kashinath Deshmukh, K.D.Patil, Shantaram

Inamdar, Tatyasaheb Kore and about 300 other workers. It was decided that they would defy the Police and remain underground and work as per the instructions of the Higher Authorities of the Congress. They also met in one of the rooms in Badrikashram in Girgaon, Bombay, and chalked out a plan of action which included organising big marchas to every Taluka/ Kacheri the following month on the 9th.¹⁹ But it was decided to be a somewhat different type of a movement and all of them decided to participate in it. Thus they dispersed separately and on reaching Satara safely started arranging Pad Morchas.

Yashwantraoji went underground with some of his colleagues, prominent amongst them being Nana Patil, Pandu Master and Kisan Veer. In the nearby Sangli Dist. Vasantrao Dada Patil also went underground. Yashwantraoji organised a powerful resistance movement in Satara Dist. for which the Government put a prize of Rs. 1,000/- on his head to capture him. He eluded arrest for nine months till May 1943. The Government resorted to horrible atrocities to desist the people from Quit India Movement. The police hit back and resorted to severe firing especially at Vaduj where nine freedom fighters died. To organise the meetings and prepare the atmosphere it took about 10 to 15 days. Yashwantraoji addressed

a lot of meetings. He held a meeting at Kawathe where Kisan Veer was also present. In two weeks Yashwantrao held about ~~100~~ ¹⁵⁰ meetings in Karad, Satara, Wai, Koregaon, Tasgaon, Khanapur, Khatav, Patan, Walve and Shirale.²⁰ All these meetings attracted the village people. The struggle started taking grip gradually. Almost all the senior leaders were in jail and Yashwantrao did not have a particular programme chalked out for himself. But the people's over enthusiasm gave him strength and courage. In this respect he said that they had two alternatives. One was to destabilize the British Government to violent measures and the other was to carry the message to the masses and thereby organize and prepare them for the freedom struggle. According to him the second alternatively was more important and necessary and thus they accepted the second one.²¹

Their next step was to start some active work.

The programme was to put tricolour flags on all Mamlatdar Kacheris and take hold of them. The purpose of this was to show to the Government that the masses had started taking political power into their hand. Accordingly, thousands of people started organising Morchas at Karad, Patan, Tasgaon and other villages. In Tasgaon the Mamlatdar himself was compelled by the people to put on his

head the Gandhi Cap and flutter the tricolour on the Mamlatdar Office. V.S. Page, Dr. Soni Chintopant Kale, Krishnarao Karade, and Nana Patil actively participated in this movement.

The month of September was the climax of the Morchas. Some of the incidences were a frequent reminiscent in the memory of Yashwantrao till his death. The Morcha on Vaduth Office is one of them. Yashwantrao had been to Jairam Swami's Vadgaon to organise the Khatav Vaduj Morcha. On 9th Sept. the Morcha would march on to the Vaduj Office under the leadership of Parshuram Gcharge, a wrestler. Gaurihar ~~Sinhasane~~ Sinhasane, Rambhau Nalawade, Manikchand Doshi, Bandopant Lonte, Bapusaheb Kachare, Parshuram Gcharge etc. had already canvassed in this area and ^{had} prepared the ground for the Morcha. The Morcha well organised started its march towards the office. Yashwantrao was asked to remain underground and wait in the vicinity of about 10 to 15 miles.

When this Morcha came near the Vaduj Office, the police Inspector In charge warned the people to stay away from a particular distance. On this Parshuram Gcharge told the Police ^{they} Inspector that/just wanted to hoist the tricolour atop the Office

and hold the meeting in its premises. Saying so he went a foot ahead and the people followed him. When the Mamlatdar saw the mass forging ahead undauntedly he gave the order to open fire. Parshuram Gcharge was shot in the chest and six more bullets ~~pierced~~ pierced his body but he held on fast to the tricolour flag. Others in the Morcha were also injured. Even after the people lay flat on the ground, firing continued. There was a pool of blood in front of the office. Along with Gcharge there were seven others martyrs and hundreds of injured people. Yashwantrao always remember the enthusiasm of Gcharge when he went for the Morcha and his courage to carry the flag towards the office. Yashwantrao had a dinner at Gcharge's place the day before.²⁰ They had discussed at large and in the morning Gcharge left for the Morcha never to return again.

Yashwantrao and his coworkers realised that the inhuman firings led to a waste of man power amounting to sacrificial offering. So they decided to start a no-tax campaign and the non co-operation movement- a game of hide and see with the authorities. The no-tax campaign did not succeed. The Government was determined to crush the movement by all means. Yashwantraoji could not allow this merciless killing

of non-violent volunteers to continue. People too were getting exasperated. They desire to retaliate. They wanted some action which would have an impact on the general public as well as the Government. The question of sabotage came up which became a serious matter. For organising effective sabotage work they divided amongst themselves to form different groups. Yashwantrao kept in touch with the leaders in Bombay and they encouraged them to conduct raids on Railway Stations, destroy bridges and railway lines. Telephone wires, posts and telegraf offices and railway tracks were ready targets. Very reluctantly Yashwantraoji agreed to these proposals.

Though Yashwantrao ^{as}himself did not do any actual sabotage work, he was aware of its nature. As a first step, it was proposed to derail a goods train. He had one night been to the spot, where derailment of goods train was to be carried out with some co-workers to see how things happened. Unfortunately something went ^{amiss}~~amiss~~ and the plan failed. Apart from this Yashwantrao neither showed any interest in such works nor did he ever directly participated in the sabotage activities thereafter. ²³

Tremendous pressure was put on the underground revolutionaries by the police who often encircled villages in search

of them, arrested relatives of these political workers and put them in jail. Whenever there was pressure of this nature, they use to escape cunningly from the area and return later. Yashwantraoji and his group exercised considerable power in the Satara Dist. during the Quit India Movement. In many villages of the Dist. it was their writ that ran and not the writ of the British Government. Congress workers could travel freely ~~through the~~ ^{through} area through out the area, though warrants of arrest were pending against them. They employed some sort of guerilla tactics, but without arms. Yashwantrao was always with the non-violent form of agitation to attain freedom. The ^{was} youth generation politicians of the Satara Dist. made a decision to remain underground and carry on the movement instead of taking to Stayagraha and going to jail.²⁴ His idea of development of the movement was that of building up cadres of youthful political workers. That was the criterion of success for him. He kept the Congress flag flying both in the heyday of the movement and during its last stages in his own Dist. and in the nearby areas. He inspired the movement, organised its activities, many times peaceful but sometimes violent. He allowed a free hand to his associates who were keen on retaliating against those who helped the Government. All through out he took

on himself the responsibility for all actions of his comrades.

Consequently, he had to bear a good part of the blame for some of the activities which ran counter to the policies of the Congress.

The Satara Dist. was branded as the Hot bed of violence. Yashwantrao. quick in his repartee said,

" I do not know if Congress claims Satara Dist. or not. But I know if Congress is a living organisation, any-where, it is in ^{the} Satara Dist."²⁵

In ^{the} Satara Dist. the Quit India Movement had developed into a form of parallel Government called 'Prati Sarkar'. This retaliatory Government challenged not only the Government machinery but also terrorised those who supported the Government in its repressive activities. Its leaders and organisers were inspired by the ideals of the freedom struggle but some were motivated by personal considerations and village feuds thereby leading to some cruel and inhuman acts. Yashwantrao Chavan had to face problems in this context since he happened to be the leader of the underground revolutionary groups in the District. Clarifying his position later, he said,

" I did not like the violent turn of the Prati Sarkar. But once violence is started, it is difficult to fix the limit."²⁶

Shri. Chavan was personally going through a very tiring time during the course of the movement. As an underground freedom fighter, he had to elude the police and pass days and nights in strange places never quite sure of what the next day had in store for him. He had been recently married. However, he could not keep in touch with his wife or other members of his family. The police thought of an idea to force him to surrender of his own accord. They arrested his wife Venutai and put her in jail at Karad. She was interrogated for two days in the police lock up and jail for two months. She was an innocent woman who knew little of politics. It was a shock to her and she fell ill. She had to be released when her health took a serious turn. All this upset her relatives and after her release she was taken to her father's place in Phaltan. The police next arrested Ganpatrao. In the meantime Dnyanoba had succumbed to a surgical operation as a result of some serious illness. In spite of all these misfortunes that had be-fallen the Chavan family Yeshwantrao had gone ahead actively with his underground ^{programmes} activities. He and his co-workers distributed anti-Government pamphlets, trained recruits for sabotage and organised clandestine study groups.²⁷ In this context he admits that it

was difficult to keep up popular enthusiasm in the face of harsh police repression. After about ten months there was a lull. The police was on the offensive being supported by the big land owners and other vested interests in the villages. The freedom fighters were on the run. The underground ²⁸ revolutionaries in Satara resorted to violence and sabotage. Though Yeshwantraoji had his qualms of conscience, he was a member of one of the ~~terri~~ terrorist squads entrusted with the sabotage work.

In 1943 when Yashwantrao was working as an underground revolutionary in a village near Poona, he came to know his wife was very ill. After their marriage they had been together only for two weeks, when Yashwantrao went underground. He felt very guilty about everything and decided to go and see her at Phaltan one night inspite of the danger involved. He had taken good care to keep it ^a secret and his underground colleagues had arranged to put the police on a wrong track. He spent some happy hours with his wife only to be arrested the very next day. He was prosecuted and convicted and sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment in 1943 though by mistake he was released in 1944 but rearrested after a week. His mother met him in Jail and told him that since his elder brother was dead and his next brother was suffering from tuberculossis

it was his duty to look after the family now. At this
Yashwantraoji came out on parole . The Government ^{later} ~~Bakker~~
released him in 19²⁹45. Under his mother's pressure he spent
nearly a year in legal practice in Karad . He was concerned
with his family affairs, looking after his brother at the
Sanitorium at Miraj. But since politics remain his first
concern he did his quota of politics though in a lesser
dimension.

The IInd World War came to end in 1945. However,
there was ^{an} introspection all around but the Quit India Movement
continued to disrupt the British Administration. ^{sk} In Satara
Dist. Chavan and his colleagues were accused of having acted
contrary to the principles of ^{the} Congress. Some of the
opponents of Chavan, in his own district and outside singled
him out for their charges of violence and other deviations. Group
rivalries which are common in the district came to the surface
when ^{there} ~~there~~ was a lull in the movement after 1945. A couple of
murders were committed about this time and Yashwantraoji's name

was dragged into this sordid happening. Propaganda was let loose, to which he could not reply. One of his friends, K.D. Patil, a prosperous lawyer and a loyal follower was murdered in broad day light. Presumably in retaliation of the murder earlier of an other congress worker - Chandrojirao Patil. Very likely it was the result of an old fued between two groups of workers. Possibly both of them were innocent victims. But the murders which followed each other created a vicious atmosphere in the district and gave rise to deep misunderstanding. Inspite of this propaganda and quareels in the district, the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee selected Yashwantraoji as its candidate for the election when the Government decided to hold elections to the ~~the~~ Central and Provincial Legislative Assemblies in 1945. The slection was a demonstration of the Congress leaders' confidence in him.

Yashwantraoji was reluctant to contest the elections because of his domestic responsibilities. One afternoon when he was with his brother at the Sanatorium, some of his co-workers came to him and asked him to contest the election.

Yashwantraoji refused the candidature by saying that after his brother's health improved, he would go back to active politics. Ganpatrao overheard this and told Yashwantrao that,

" You have already done a lot for the country. It is only right that you should go forward and take some sort of responsibility. Don't run away from it. If you do not agree to contest, I will not stay a minute longer in the Sanatorium".³⁰

Consequently Yashwantrao contested the Election ~~through~~ to the Bombay Legislative Assembly in March, 1946. The Election was an easy job for him as his constituency was Karad, his home town. He had worked there selflessly since his childhood. He had created a cadre of loyal workers. He had won the sympathies of the people through his selfless devotion to the noble national cause. His constituency had already been nursed by him. As a result, he won the election by a thumping majority and was returned to the Bombay Provisional State Assembly from South Satara by a substantial majority.

In this contest in his biography he wrote,

" I have contested in the last 40 years ten elections in all including MLA Elections. Sometimes a keen contest, some times with a lower vote of margin, sometimes with lakhs of votes and sometimes uncontested. But I have always won. 1946 Assembly election and 1963 Parliamentary elections were the easy uncontroversial ones for me." ~~He was~~

He was returned uncontested from Nasik constituency when he was called by Nehru to join as Defence Minister in the Central cabinet after the China debacle.

From the Satara Dist. South Constituency the congress candidates were Yashwantrao Chavan, Baburao Gokhale and Vyankatrao Pawar. All of these candidates were elected with huge margin of votes. Karad, Patan, Walve, Khanapur, Shirala, Tasgaon were the ^{Parliamentary} constituency of Yashwantrao Chavan. There were a number of opponents contesting the election but of little match to Yashwantraoji. He had spent a mere amount of Rs. 150/- for the election.³¹ He was hardly 32 years of age at that time. The election cleared off most of the

cobwebs of misunderstandings about him. He was responsible for the success of many other Congress candidates in the district. *Re*

Congress had scored similar success in other districts of the then Bombay Presidency and was soon called upon to form the Ministry. The elected members from ^{He} Satara Dist. pressed Chavan's claim for inclusion in the Ministry. B.G.Kher was chosen the leader of the Legislative Congress Party and became the Chief Minister. There were stalwarts like Morarji Desai and Jivraj Mehta who were included in the Ministry. Yashwantrao was the undisputed leader of the Satara Dist. and had his own clout in other parts of Maharashtra too. But Mr. Kher offered him the post of Parliamentary Secretary only. Yashwantraoji was rather reluctant to take up this post. In this connection discussion went on for about fifteen days amongst his friends and colleagues. They all advised him to take up the post ³². Shri. L.M.Patil, Tapase and Annasaheb Vartak, three members of the Maharashtra Provincial Committee were appointed Ministers. The M.P.C.C. was unhappy over Kher's decision to offer Shri. Chavan the post

of only a Parliamentary Secretary. In this contest Chandulal Shah Mehta understands on good authority that in view of his 1942 services to the nation, Balasaheb Kher had recommended him for the cabinet. But his ~~appoint~~ opponents in Satara had caused the scales to be tipped in favour of Tapase. These men new his intelligence and authority. They were afraid that [^] cabinet membership would lend overmuch importance to Yashwantrao. Perhaps they thought that ^{the} denial of a cabinet position would turn him against the Congress. If they did, they were sorely disappointed. Yashwantraoji's sacrifices never had a Ministership as their end and aim. 33

Yashwantrao accepted the post of Parliamentary Secretary on April, 14, 1946 in the Kher Ministry. ³⁴ Though his ~~fix~~ friends and relatives in Satara Dist. ardently desired that he should have been given the charge of a fullfleged ministry, Yashwantraoji was not after power and so he accepted happily whatever came his way. He was pleased that he had secured for

~~the~~

himself a seat in the Government. The son of a baillif, a court peon as he used to say about himself climbed to the first step of the ladder of a political career. His rise to the eminence of a political leader of Sahyadrian dimensions was not just an accident nor was it just thrust on him willily/hilly. He was a self made man and rose to his eminence through ambition, industry, patience, scrifice and perse^everance. He got his grooming of social and political revolutionary thinking in his early childhood and beyhodd as he put sensitively/~~but~~^{feel} the pulse of the tilling and toiling masses around him whose ignorance, backwardness and poverty stimulated his thinking and reasoning.

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